

the dark ships

BY HULBERT FOOTNER

SYNOPSIS. When flashy Prescott Fanning abducted Janet from Baltimore on his yacht, she gets word to Neill, a young federal agent who loves her. Dashing to Absalom's Harbor, he boards the yacht and finds, in a locked cabin, Fanning shot dead and Janet in a faint, a gun beside her. Neill hides her nearby in a disused liner. Back at the village, he sees queer little David Eyster who hated Fanning. Neill offers to help Mark Boninger, local investigator. They confer with Lawyer Kettering of Baltimore. Then Neill breaks food and clothes to Janet.

Chapter 20

The Packet Of \$5 Bills

"HAVE you had your supper?" Neill asked.

"No, I was waiting for you," Janet said.

"I'm not going to touch any of this food. Every crumb's for you."

"I'm not hungry now."

"Sit down and I'll feed you."

And feed her he did, mouthful by mouthful like a bird.

When she protested that she could swallow no more, Neill said she needed exercise. Taking the flashlight, they started for a prow around the ship. The silence of the long passages laid a kind of spell on them. Janet's hand stole inside Neill's and they spoke in whispers.

On B deck above, they passed through a series of immense public rooms—palm garden, lounge and smoking room—all lavishly gilded and decorated with paintings. The movable furniture had been taken away, but the carpets were still on the floors and the built-in settees around the wall. The flashlight, wherever it was turned, revealed circles of light magnificence. And so empty!

"Imagine this scene with the lights turned on, the orchestra playing and the passengers dancing," murmured Janet.

"Sure," said Neill, "and imagine it in a storm with the ship rolling like a barrel and the passengers seasick."

She laughed. It was good to him to hear her laugh.

The most attractive room was the restaurant up on the boat deck.

"This is where the champagne corks popped," said Neill.

They went down a flight after flight of stairs to E deck, because Neill wanted another piece of rope and a bucket out of the galley. Back again in the royal suite, he showed her how to lower the bucket out of the window when she wanted water for washing.

Afterwards they sat pressed close together on the sofa, smoking comfortably while Neill gave her an account of the happenings of the day. He left out what he thought would distress her too much.

"Well, what are we going to do?" Janet asked.

"You had better stay here a couple of days longer if you can stick it out."

"The worst is over now. I can stand it."

"By then the first crazy excitement ought to have died down."

"And then what?" she asked him.

However, he wasn't going to let her see that he was at a loss.

"I'll arrange to have a car waiting for us across the river," he said confidently. "They are watching this side too close."

"How will you get a car?"

"I'll go up to town. I know a man who will help us."

Plenty Of Money

AS THEY talked things over, Neill was obliged to confess that his money was running short.

"Oh, there's plenty of money, luckily," said Janet.

Neill stared at her. "What?"

She got up and, crossing to the desk, pulled out a drawer. She brought him a packet of new \$5 bills, fastened with a paper strap and a pin, and with the stamp of the bank on the strap. Neill could scarcely believe his eyes. It was the same packet that he had seen Fanning put in his wallet two nights before, and he would as lief have seen a venomous snake in Janet's hands. The sight of that money reminded Neill that Janet had not told a credible story of what had happened aboard the yacht, and because he loved her so much it hurt him as if his flesh had been torn.

"Where did you get that?" he demanded.

"I found it in the pocket of my wrap," she said, astonished at his tone.

"Who put it there?"

"I don't know."

"It's Fanning's money!"

"Well... I suppose it must be. But if it's a case of life and death with us..."

Anger swept through Neill like a gasoline fire. Snatching the money from her, he strode across the room and sent it flying through the outer window into the river.

"I'd sooner starve than touch a dollar of it!"

Janet stared at him silently.

"You are lying to me!" he said.

"I reckon you have been lying from the beginning!"

She was no tame woman. She

sprang up. "I'm not lying! And I'm not going to take that!"

"I don't care whether you smoke Fanning or not," he said.

"I hope you did. It was coming to him. What makes me sore is that you don't trust me. After I have risked everything for you, you are still lying to me!"

"I'm not going to talk to you," she said, starting for the bedroom.

He seized her wrist. "Oh, yes, you are! We're going to have this out here and now! I'm willing to believe that you shot him without knowing what you were doing, and that you can't remember anything about it now. That's natural. But you couldn't take his money and put it in your pocket without knowing what you were doing."

"I didn't take his money!"

"Listen! I broke in that door and found you two alone in the cabin. The key was still on the inside of the door, and the portholes were closed and fastened on the inside. If you didn't take Fanning's money, who did?"

"Perhaps there was somebody else aboard the yacht. Somebody of whom we know nothing."

"Somebody else?" said Neill, staring. He dropped her wrist.

"Fanning had told me more than once that he had enemies. That night when we were having dinner on the yacht I thought I saw somebody skulking on the deck. Perhaps he slipped on board when nobody was looking and hid himself below. Perhaps he was hidden in my cabin."

"In your cabin?"

"There was a clothes closet in there. I tried the door when I first went in and it was locked. Perhaps he had locked himself in there?"

Neill laughed harshly. "For God's sake don't tell that story to anybody but me! That's exactly the kind of story that every harassed defendant tells when he has no defense!"

Janet looked at him strangely, and went quickly into the bedroom. He let her go, and dropped on the sofa, pressing his head between his hands. Anger sickened him so that he could not think.

Chase In The Dark

WHEN she did not return, when he heard no sound from the next room, a sudden fear struck through him and he ran in to look for her. The room was empty, the door unbolting and standing open on the corridor. His anger vanished then. Snatching up the flashlight, he hurried through the corridor softly calling her name.

"Jen! Jen! Jen! Wait!"

He assumed that there was only one way she knew: down to E deck across the dining saloon and the galley and into the engine room shaft. It was the way they had first come. Surely he could overtake her before she had gone far. She had to grope her way in the dark. He ran on, occasionally pausing to listen. He could hear nothing. He plunged down the two flights.

When he reached the galley, he realized that he must have passed her. She had hidden behind some corner to let him pass. He turned back. Suppose his anger had rendered her completely desperate. Suppose she returned to the suite and threw herself out of the window? He ran on, sick with fear.

However, there was no sound ahead of him. She had not come back to this part of the vessel. He ran into the suite and, without waiting to pull up the rope ladder, closed the window upon it, and also the other windows of the veranda. They were very stiff and he knew she could not open them.

He started down the stairs again. On D deck he heard some noise, like sounds in one of the corridors and searched it cabin by cabin. She was not there. Of course while he was looking on one side, she could run through a cross passage and return on the other. It was like searching a rabbit warren.

He went down to E deck again. While he was in the galley he heard the clang of an iron door ahead of him and plunged in the direction of the sound. She had entered the engine room shaft. She was going on deck.

When he got into the shaft he heard her far above him racing up the iron stairs. "Jen! Jen!" he called. "Wait!" He leaped up the stairs, straining every nerve to overtake her before she could get out on deck. Before he reached the top she was through the door and running forward on the boat deck. He caught her by the forward ladder, and none too soon, because across the decks of the other ship he could see the watchman's lantern coming towards them.

She struggled desperately in his arms. "Let me go! Let me go!" "Quiet, Jen, for God's sake!" he implored her. "The watchman is coming this way."

"All right, let him come! I want him to come! I'm going to give myself up!"

"No! No! Think what you're doing!"

"I will give myself up; I'm not going to let you risk yourself if you don't believe in me!"

"I do believe in you! I swear it!"

"It's too late to say that now!"

(Copyright, 1937, by Hulbert Footner)

An unseen brute attacks Neill en route to the village, tomorrow.

STRANGE AS IT SEEMS—By JOHN HIX

For further proof address the author, enclosing a stamped envelope for reply. Reg. U. S. Pat. Off.



Mystery People

So far as can be determined, the Basques are an entirely distinct people—related to no other race, living or dead. Where either they or their language originated is a complete mystery. Attempts to trace the history of the Basques have resulted in many fantastic theories, one of them affirming that they are survivors of the legendary lost continent of Atlantis.

Basques call themselves "Eskualdunak," meaning "clear-thinking people." Their spoken language bears no resemblance to any other in the world. They have no alphabet of their own, using the Roman one.

Every pure blooded Spanish Basque, no matter how menial his station in life, is a noble. Nobility was granted to every Basque and his descendants centuries ago in recognition of the fact that they were never conquered by the Moors.

Until rebel General Franco's troops fought their bitterly contested way into Bilbao several months ago, the Basques held a record of never having suffered invasion.

Governor at 26

Henry Clay Warmoth was admitted to the bar as an attorney in 1861 at the age of 19, was appointed district attorney of Louisiana's 18th judicial district a year later, and resigned to become a lieutenant-colonel in the Union forces of the Civil war.

Prominent in politics in the reconstruction period following the war, he was elected governor of Louisiana in 1868. A minimum age clause in the state constitution had to be removed to allow him to take office. He was only 26 at the time of his election. Included in his platform as candidate for governor was the promise to invent a machine for pumping blood from a negro's veins and replacing it with white man's blood.

Benny Leonard

When Benny Leonard floored Paul Bloom with a blow to the chin in the second round of their 1917 fight, he did more than wait Bloom off to the land of dreams. In falling, Bloom sat on his ankle, breaking it.

Tomorrow: The Birthspot of Presidents!

Investigators declined to disclose whether they considered a foreign power had plotted the abduction.

Italian Justice

ROME, Sept. 27. — (AP) — Four Italian workmen were executed early yesterday by Italian authorities at the scene of their robbery and assassination of five native Ethiopians.

According to dispatches published today in the Corriere Della Serra of Milan.

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FORT PECK POWER QUIZ THREATENED

HAMILTON, Mont., Sept. 27.—(AP)

—Representative Jerry J. O'Connell said today: "I intend to seek a congressional investigation into the activities of the war department and its engineers and the various big utility interests throughout the country at the next session of congress."

O'Connell (D., Mont.) said his intention to seek an investigation was contained in a protest to the war department on its recent decision on the question of power development at Fort Peck.

"I intend to personally confer with President Roosevelt on the question

of Fort Peck power," O'Connell said.

"President Roosevelt has assured me that power will be developed at the Fort Peck dam."

Congressman O'Connell plans to board the presidential special at Spokane, October 2.

Generals Vanish In Paris Puzzle

PARIS, Sept. 27.—(AP) Bottled Sur-

ette Nationale agents questioned a

retired Russian singer for several hours

tonight, seeking some clue to the

mysterious disappearance of two Rus-

sian czarist generals.

Mrs. Nadine Pleschanska, wife of

missing Gen. Nicholas Skobline, was

placed under arrest. Questioners fail-