

the dark ships

BY HULBERT FOOTNER

SYNOPSIS: Neill, a young agent, finds his beloved locked in a cabin on President Fanning's yacht at Abaton Harbor. With her are a gun and Fanning's freshly shot body. Neill hides her nearby in a disguised liner, then joins Mark Bonninger, keen local investigator, to keep tabs on developments. He thinks Janet shot the flashy scoundrel until he learns a man was hiding on the yacht. Then he suspects queer little Eyster, who hated Fanning. Also in the picture are Kettering, a Baltimore lawyer down to fish, and Ira Buckless, a tough who trails Neill. Bonninger decides to search the dark ships, asking Neill to help. Neill offers an excuse to break camp.

Chapter 29 "We Are Trapped!"

"YOU don't mind rowing yourself ashore, do you?" Bonninger asked. "I don't want to take another man off the job."

"Sure, that's all right," Neill assented.

"Take one of the cars and get back as quick as you can."

Meanwhile Captain Bickel had unlocked a cabin door and the search party passed into the Montmorenci. Neill turned the other way. The constables guarding the first gangway spoke to him as he came over.

"Are you leaving us?"

"Got to go to the village," said Neill casually. "Back in an hour."

This man's boat was back and forth across the forward deck of the Montpelier so that he could watch the gangway on one side and the ladder on the other. He leaned over the rail watching while Neill ran down the ladder and cast off a skiff.

Neill headed for the shore. There was a fresh southerly breeze tonight which capped the whole surface of the water with a gentle phosphorescence. This helped Neill in one way, hindered him in another. Amidst the general phosphorescence the dip of his oars could not be distinguished; but on the other hand he realized that the skiff itself must be silhouetted against the faintly luminous water.

He went all the way to the landing. Satisfied then that he was out of sight, he rowed up river keeping close to the beach for a hundred yards or so, and headed back for the stern of the Montpelier. If the man on the after bridge caught sight of him it was all up.

He gained the shadow of the overhanging stern without any alarm being raised. Keeping as close as possible to the vessel, he rowed on around the bow of the Montmorenci and into the narrow space between the second and the third ships. It was like a chasm between the towering walls of steel, with a narrow slit of the night sky showing overhead.

He had chosen to board the Montmorenci because the two outer vessels were of a newer style of construction, built so high they could not hope to climb to the deck. The Montmorenci had two promenade decks and he thought he could make the lower one.

Amidships only about four feet separated the two vessels. He softly took in his oars, and pushed himself along with his hands. At intervals heavy square cribs of timber had been lowered between the vessels to keep them from chafing. Neill tied his skiff to one of these, and climbed upon it. By the aid of one of the ropes he suspended it from above, he hauled himself up to the promenade deck, and crouched under the rail, listening.

The Alarm Goes Up

ALL was still. Alongside ran the Columbia with a row of dark port-holes. Her promenade was some 10 feet higher. There were 11 men stationed about the decks of the vessels but Neill had the advantage of knowing where each was placed. At the moment he was safe under cover of the promenade, but he would have to expose himself when he leaped over to the Columbia, and again from the Columbia to the Abraham Lincoln.

Aft of where he crouched, he could see a faint radiance issuing from the windows opening on the deck. It came and went. This would be the searching party inside the ship. He crept to a ladder and ascended to the upper promenade. He was now on a level with the Columbia's promenade. Between four and five feet separated the rail from rail. He took off his boots and hung them around his neck.

He made the first leap in safety and ran noiselessly aft along the promenade of the Columbia and around her stern. A roof overhead shielded him from the observation of the watcher on the after bridge. The promenade deck of the Abraham Lincoln alongside was on the same level.

As Neill made his second leap a surprised voice from above rang out: "Hey! What's that? Halt!" and the light of a flash struck down between the vessels.

The flash didn't pick him up. He ran forward on the promenade

a deer. (The Lincoln was running upstream). To get around the watcher above, but this man had been drawn aft by the cry of alarm and Neill was not seen.

The men on the different ships were shouting back and forth to each other, and Neill could hear running feet converging on the Lincoln. He worked with feverish haste. First to count windows on the promenade; 12 from the bow there were plenty of rope. He unrolled a coil and tied it in a slip knot to a stanchion opposite the twelfth window, letting both ends hang overboard.

He lowered himself over the rail. His calculations were right; he came down opposite the open window of the veranda outside Janet's suite. Swinging his legs inside, he caught hold of the top of the frame and dropped to the deck. The suite was dark, but he was aware of Janet's presence. He heard her catch her breath in mortal fear, and snatch up the gun.

"Jen!" he whispered. "It's me, Neill!"

A shuddering breath escaped her and the gun dropped to the floor. Neill jerked the rope, bringing it free above, and let the whole thing fall in the river. The tide would carry it away. He caught Janet in his arms and held her close.

There's Always A Way

"OH, N-NEILL!" she stammered, trying to laugh. "I thought they had me! . . . I thought they had me!"

"It's all right, Honey."

"Why did you come that way?"

"I had no choice. They are searching the ships!"

"Searching the ships?"

He laughed to reassure her. "I'm one of the searching party!"

"Oh, Neill!"

"It's all right! We'll fool them yet!"

She clung to him silently. After a moment she murmured, speaking with difficulty: "No! . . . You must go back to them, Neill!"

"What!"

"When I am found you must make out that you never saw me before."

He laughed, rubbing his cheek in her hair. "Don't be foolish!"

"I mean it, Neill! There is no need for you to be drawn into it. You can help me more! If you are free and unsuspected."

"I'm not going to leave you. We're in this together!"

"But Neill . . ."

"Listen! Let's see if we can't dope out what they're up to."

He drew her out on the veranda and they stood listening at the open window. In the intense stillness, voices came drifting down from the boat deck. They distinguished Bonninger's voice.

"You say you saw somebody aboard this vessel?"

"I saw something, Mr. Bonninger. A shadow, like, flitting across from rail to rail. When I turned my light that way, it was gone."

Somebody else said: "I heard a splash."

"We'll search this vessel," said Bonninger.

"If we was on deck he couldn't get down below," put in Bickel.

"There is always a way, captain. I have already found one unlocked door, yonder. It leads into the engine room."

There was a silence while Bickel presumably examined the door.

"Well, I'll be darned!" he said. "I'll rope this up right now. If he went down here he can't get again."

"Forsythe," said Bonninger, "go back to the Montmorenci and bring over the rest of the search party. You men who are posted on deck, go back to your stations and keep a sharp lookout!"

The voices moved away out of hearing.

"We are trapped!" murmured Janet.

"As Bonninger says, 'there is always a way,'" said Neill with more confidence than he felt.

"Let us go down the rope ladder and swim for it."

"Useless, Honey. The ladder would be found and we wouldn't get far."

"Let us give ourselves up and be done with it. What's the use of prolonging the agony?"

"No!"

"Have you any plan?"

"Wait! I'm not going to give up until I am forced to. . . . Quick! We've got to clean up this cabin. We must leave it looking exactly as we found it!"

He snapped on the flashlight and laid it on the floor. He closed the windows on the veranda and the French windows, and they set about gathering up everything they had brought into the suite: ropes, bucket, spare clothes. The remains of the food and water were put in the bread box. It made a considerable load to divide between them.

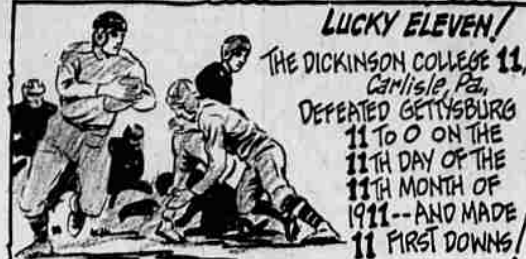
When they were ready, Neill unbolted all the doors giving on the corridor as they had been when they came. They stole out, carrying their belongings.

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Janet and Neill play hide and seek with the searchers, tomorrow.

STRANGE AS IT SEEMS—By JOHN HIX

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



LUCKY ELEVEN!
THE DICKINSON COLLEGE 11,
Camille, Pa.,
DEFEATED GETTYSBURG
11 TO 0 ON THE
11TH DAY OF THE
11TH MONTH OF
1911--AND MADE
11 FIRST DOWNS!

IT WAS THE 11TH GAME
BETWEEN THE SCHOOLS...
DICKINSON DID NOT DEFEAT
GETTYSBURG AGAIN UNTIL 11
YEARS LATER!

IN A 13,000-WORD NOVELETTE,
Written by Rev. J. F. Carls, Mason, Ga.,
EVERY WORD BEGINS WITH "S"!

10-7-37 McNaught Syndicate, Inc.



THE PHANTOM HEIR
MONROE OWSLEY—
late screen actor
WILLED HIS ENTIRE ESTATE
TO A WOMAN WHO NEVER
LIVED...



MIGHTY SAHARA
FAMOUS AS THE "SEA OF SAND"
HAS MORE ROCK SURFACE THAN SAND...
IN THE MIDDLE OF THE GREAT DESERT ARE
SNOW-COVERED MOUNTAINS!

Strange Sahara.

A land of strange contrasts is the "Mighty Sahara" of northern Africa. Covering an area of some 3,500,000 square miles, nearly equal in size to Europe, it is not, as popularly supposed, a vast "sea of sand."

Actually, more than half the surface of the Sahara is composed of jutting rocky plateaus, reaching from above the 1,000-foot line to an altitude of 8,000 feet in the volcanic cone of Tuzideh. Many of the higher desert peaks are crested with snow during the winter months.

The lower reaches of the desert are covered by vast stretches of sand that pile into shifting dunes higher than the Washington monument. The Sa-

hara is crossed by the Great Rift valley, the longest valley in the world, which stretches nearly 5,000 miles from one end of Africa to the other. One section in the Sahara dips to 100 feet below sea level!

The sands of Sahara, once thought to be of marine origin, are now known to be otherwise. Scientists have learned that the sands were deposited in the Quaternary geological period, long after the last recorded marine transgression of pre-tertiary times. It is believed that they are the product of changing meteorological conditions which accompanied the retreat of Europe's great ice-cap toward the end of the ice age. The Sahara changed from a moist, tropical region to one of dry winds and

intense heat that left its soil to the elements.

Mystery Will.

"To my wife, if she be living with me at the time of my death, I bequeath all my monies, stock and jewelry, my automobile and household effects."

Three weeks before he died, June 7, 1937, Monroe Owsley, Hollywood screen actor, drew a will that included this paragraph. Yet, strange as it seems, his "wife" did not claim his effects, because Owsley never had married! If the "phantom bride" was a real person in Owsley's mind, her identity remains a mystery.

Tomorrow: Europe's "Mass Abdication."

Girl Shoots Suitor, Suicides in Quarrel

EMMETT, Ida., Oct. 7.—(AP)—With a bullet in her suitor's back and another through her own heart, 15-year-old Anna Jean Phipps ended a romance that blossomed for a year, authorities said today.

Miss Phipps, pretty daughter of Mr. and Mrs. William J. Phipps of Emmett, died with a bullet through her heart, Audie Roberts, 21, of Kansas City, Mo., was taken to a Boise hospital where physicians termed his condition favorable.

Coroner Merle Bucknum said the shooting occurred late last night near Ola, in western Idaho.

"From all we can gather," he said, "the two went for a ride. Apparently they quarreled."

SINGAPORE, Straits Settlements, Oct. 7.—(AP)—Three members of the crew of a K. L. M. Royal Dutch Airways plane and one passenger were killed today when the craft crashed near Palembang, Sumatra.

TAILSPIN TOMMY—Tommy Concerned About Betty-Lou!

IT IS NIGHT AT THE BENTLY DUDE RANCH... AND THE REGULAR WEEK-END DANCE IS BEING HELD. TOMMY AND BETTY-LOU HAVE MANAGED TO GET INTO THE GOOD GRACES OF BENTLY, ESPECIALLY THE PRETTY GIRL PILOT, MUCH TO THE OBVIOUS JEALOUSY OF RITA DUVAL AS THE SCENE NOW OPENS, WE SEE TOMMY AND HIS SWEETHEART DANCING.



BEN WEBSTER'S CAREER—Great Expectations?

WELL, MR. STRALE, I'VE BEEN ALL OVER THE NUGGET LINE—

YES, MISTER WEBSTER—

HOW DID THINGS LOOK TO YOU?

TO BE PERFECTLY HONEST, THEY DON'T LOOK VERY GOOD—

JASON JONES SAYS THE AMOUNT OF FREIGHT WE CARRY IS HARDLY ENOUGH TO PAY EXPENSES—

OH, BUT MISTER WEBSTER, YOU'LL SOON CHANGE THINGS!

WHAT'RE YOU DOING, KIDDING ME?



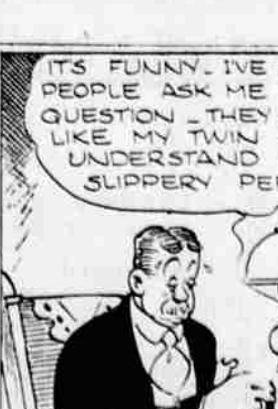
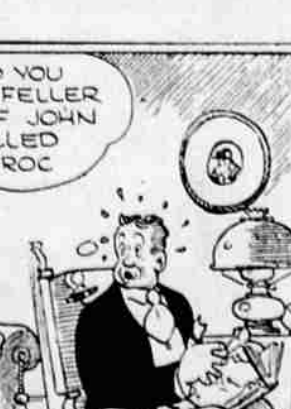
THE NEBBS—Stranger to Me

SAY, BRUCE DID YOU EVER MEET A FELLER BY THE NAME OF JOHN NIBROC—THEY CALLED HIM DANDY NIBROC

IT'S FUNNY, I'VE HAD OTHER PEOPLE ASK ME THE SAME QUESTION—THEY SAY HE LOOKS LIKE MY TWIN AND I UNDERSTAND HE'S A SLIPPERY PERSON

WHAT MADE YOU ASK THAT QUESTION, SWEETHEART—DID YOU MEET HIM AND WAS HE BRAGGING ABOUT KNOWING ME?

NO, I NEVER MET HIM—I NEVER SEED HIM NEITHER—MR. NEBB ASKED ME TO ASK YOU THAT



CRESCENT HARBOR PROJECT FAVORED

WASHINGTON, Oct. 7.—(AP)—Army engineers said today they will ask the budget bureau to include \$188,000 in the next war department civil functions appropriations bill for the construction of a seawall at Crescent City, Calif.

The project, involving construction of a rubble mound sand barrier from Whaley rock to the easterly shore of the harbor, has congressional approval.

However, it must wait the turn, and army engineers said "budget limitations" might force it out of the appropriations bill next year.

VETERINARY EXAMINER GIVEN REAPPOINTMENT

SALEM, Oct. 7.—(AP)—John P. Rankin, Astoria, today was reappointed by Governor Charles H. Martin a member of the state veterinary medical examiners' board. He will serve until July 23, 1941.

Dr. A. G. Paddock, La Grande, was appointed a member of the board to succeed Dr. W. H. Lytle, now at the head of the animal husbandry division of the state agricultural department.

Dr. B. T. Sims, Oregon State college, succeeds Dr. C. H. Seagraves of Oregon City.

Indict Garr Brothers

SHELBYVILLE, Ky., Oct. 7.—(AP)—The Garr Brothers, Roy, Jack and Dr. H. B., were charged with wilful murder of Brig. Gen. Henry H. Denhardt in an indictment here issued today by the Shelby county grand jury.

THE WORLD AT ITS WORST

By GLUYAS WILLIAMS



AFTER LYING UNCOMFORTABLY ON YOUR STOMACH UNDER THE BUSHES FOR HALF AN HOUR YOU DISCOVER THAT THE REST OF THE HIDE-AND-SEEK PLAYERS HAVE GOT TIRED OF THE GAME AND HAVE GONE OFF SOMEWHERE

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5 MATTER POFF

By O M PAYNE



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By HAL FORRESTER

By EDWIN ALGER

By SOL HESS