

# the dark ships

BY HULBERT FOOTNER

**SYNOPSIS:** Neill, a young general agent, finds his beloved Janet, a girl and Prescott Fanning's freshly shorn body locked in a cabin on Fanning's yacht at Absecon Harbor, Md. Neill hides her nearby in a disused liner, then joins Mark Bonniger, local investigator. When Neill learns Janet didn't shoot the flashy swindler, he suspects queer little Eyster, who hated Fanning. Also on hand are Kettering, a Baltimore lawyer, and Ira Buckless, a tough who trails Neill. The dark ships are searched, but Neill sees Janet cleverly dodge the searchers. Neill is having a friendly chat with Bonniger when they are halted from the yacht. They row out.

## Chapter 32

### Buckless Talks

THEY went aboard. The lights were off. Their electric torches revealed that the doors of the forward hatch, the dining saloon and the after compartment had all been forced. Down below, the yacht was a scene of wreckage. At first glance it appeared as if somebody had wantonly torn and smashed his way through the cabins, but upon closer examination it was clear that there had been a painstaking search for something. Neill thought: Buckless!

"What was he looking for?" asked Wilson.

"Some loot that Fanning had or that the murderer thought he had," said Bonniger. "Judging from the general ruin, he didn't find it. That's all to the good."

Bonniger was only one step from the truth.

"He was scared off on the night of the murder," Bonniger went on, "and tonight he came back to look again for it."

For a moment Neill thought he was rowing out. He heard oars up the inlet. But by the time he had got aboard, he had landed.

Longcope, Wilson and Trueman rowed back to the shore, the sergeant to spread what men he had to search through the village. Bonniger and Neill remained on board to make a closer examination. It was evident that the man had worn gloves because there were no fingerprints to be found anywhere. He had torn up the carpets, slit the mattresses and cut open the pillows. He had even gone down into the bilge under the cabin floor. But he ran into some grease, for they found the print of a whole hand under a hatch cover.

"He was wearing gloves, sure enough," said Bonniger examining it. "Pigskin gloves of all things!"

There was nothing more to be done aboard. For a moment Neill and Neill shared in the only returned to his post. The news had spread around the village and a small crowd of men in various stages of undress was waiting on the wharf. Newspaper men and photographers were lined up as Bonniger. He led them across the road and into the store to look them over under the lights.

Kettering was in the thick of the crowd and on the edge slouched the uncouth figure of Ira Buckless. Neill edged around behind the latter without attracting his notice. Buckless was closely attending to the questions the reporters were asking and Bonniger's answers. Neill took note of a bulge in the right-hand pocket of his jacket, and with delicate fingers pulled the pocket open a little. Inside lay grease-stained pigskin gloves.

Neill moved away from him. He had no intention of passing on the tip to Bonniger. He could not risk a show-down until he had proof that Buckless was the killer.

However, Bonniger's keen glance picked Buckless out as the only completely dressed man in the crowd before him. "Hey you, whatever your name is—I mean the big fellow there," he said sternly. "I'd like to ask you a few questions. Come back into the office with me, will you?"

Buckless looked around scowling, made up his mind that escape was impossible and, pushing through the crowd, went with Bonniger. Neill remained in the background. Anxious as he was to keep in touch with what was going on, he knew that for him to be present at this scene would only precipitate disaster.

**The Soiled Gloves**

VIRGIL, uneasy about the fingers in his cracker boxes, was shepherding the crowd out on the porch. As the floor cleared, Neill saw a pair of soiled, trampled gloves lying there. Virgil pounced on them. "Here! Here!" he cried running to the office with them.

Neill went into the hotel and paced his room in a torment of suspense. What was going to come of this interview? During the last two days Buckless had had reasons of his own for keeping his mouth shut about Janet, but Bonniger was pretty sure to get him in a corner. And what then?

In a few minutes there was a knock on the door. When he opened it, "Here! Here!" he cried at the sight of the waiting constable. The man said: "Mr. Bonniger says he's

sorry to disturb you, but will you please come down to the store!"

The crowd was still hanging around the store when Neill passed in, talking over what had happened in low voices. He saw Eyster in the group with the top of his pajamas tucked in his pants. Eyster grinned at him in his crazy fashion, and nodded to assure Neill that he could depend on him.

Neill entered the little office at the back. Bonniger was there with Sergeant Wilson, Kettering and the hulking Buckless. Bonniger's greeting was unchanged. So nothing serious could have happened yet. Buckless on the other hand was sweating and uneasy. Kettering's face wore its usual pleasant mask. The soiled gloves lay on the desk. Bonniger said:

"I picked up this fellow on suspicion of having broken into the yacht. He swears he has never been aboard her."

Neill coolly looked Buckless over. The big fellow showed his teeth.

"The gloves were picked up on the floor of the store," Bonniger continued. "Anybody in the crowd might have dropped them. I have no proof as yet that this is the man we want, but I have trapped him into an admission that he knew Fanning, and I have decided to take him into custody until I find out how much he does know."

"How can I help you?" asked Neill.

Bonniger smiled. "He has intimated that you know more about this case than you have let on."

"The usual red herring," said Neill easily.

"Sure. But I thought you wouldn't mind confronting him."

"Certainly not. Why does he pick on me?"

"Aah! you're a cool hand all right," growled Buckless. "You know what I know about you?"

"There was nothing for Neill to do but brazen it out. "Well, spill it!" he said.

"This guy is a federal agent," Buckless said to Bonniger. "I don't know what his right name may be, but he goes in the department by the name of Neill Tryon."

"I know it," said Bonniger. "So what?"

"He knows the girl in this case," Neill laughed out. "That's a good one!"

Kettering led the laughter of the others. But support from this quarter only angered Neill.

**Looking For Revenge**

"SHE was his girl," Buckless asserted. "Fanning took her away from him, and he was looking for revenge!"

"How do you know all this?" asked Bonniger.

"Fanning himself told me."

"How did you know that this was the man called Neill Tryon?"

"I seen him in Fanning's company Monday night."

"Under what circumstances?"

"I went to Fanning's room to report."

"Just a minute. What were your relations with Fanning?"

"I worked for him."

"In what capacity?"

"Body-guard."

"That's what I said. Fanning was a slick business man, and when he out-smarted a man sometimes the fellow would get sore and lay for him, and it was my job to protect him, see?"

"Ask him what Fanning's business was," put in Kettering.

"You heard the question," said Bonniger.

Buckless turned wary. "I don't know. Fanning was a slick operator, and I was just his strong-arm guy. He never told me nothing about his business and I never asked."

"Which may or may not be true," said Bonniger. "Let's go back a little. You say you went to his room Monday night to report."

"Yeah. And he says, 'Ira, you got a guy here who's entirely too nosy and I can't figure what he's after. Take a look at him through the door.' I takes a squint and I says: 'I never seen him before, boss, but I bet he's one of these college-boy federal dicks. I can smell out them buzzards.'"

Kettering laughed heartily.

"And then what?" asked Bonniger.

"That was all at the time," said Buckless. "But I seen Fanning again couple hours later and he says to me: 'Ira, you was right about that guy. I been through his pockets since I seen you and had a look at his papers.' And I says to Fanning: 'What the hell have the federal's got on you, boss?' And he says: 'Not a thing in the world. Irait's a personal matter with that feller. His bill has fallen for me. Is that my fault?' And he laughed. He showed me a picture of the doll that he had took out of Tryon's pocket."

All Buckless' hearers laughed together. Bonniger said:

"Have you any proof of this yarn?"

"Only what I'm telling you," growled Buckless.

"Well, as the self-confessed strong-arm man for a swindler, your word doesn't carry much weight."

(Copyright, 1937, by Hulbert Footner)

Neill produces the snapshot of Janet, tomorrow.

**47 TRUNKS, HUBBY, ACCOMPANY STAR**

HOLLYWOOD, Cal., Oct. 11.—(AP)—Danielle Darrieux, French movie star, arrived today to play in a musical for Universal studio.

With her she brought 47 trunks and her husband, Henri Devoin, French writer.

A crowd of reporters, cameramen, studio officials and members of French societies greeted her at the train.

"Americans are wonderful," she exclaimed. "I love them all!"

Hollywood notables will honor her with a gala reception this week.

**Lunch Donations Admit To Derby Club's Program**

DERBY, Oct. 11.—(Sp.)—Lunch donation program of the 1937 Derby Community club will be held Oct. 15 at eight o'clock. Following is the program to be given:

Songs by school rangers.

Short talks by Mrs. Conrad, 4-H club leader for boys in Jackson county and Mrs. C. G. Water, leader for girls in Jackson county 4-H club work.

Piano solo—Jane Mann.

A medley of songs.

Mr. Elrod and his doll—Ventello-quest.

Violin solo—Mr. Dean.

Piano solo—Stanley Gustin.

Violin solo—Mr. O'Neill.

Group of numbers by Whaley brothers.

# STRANGE AS IT SEEMS—By JOHN HIX

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



EXTREMES OF THE MONKEY WORLD... THE PROBOSCIS MONKEY OF BORNEO AND THE SNUB-NOSED MONKEY OF CHINA...

A BOOK CONTAINING THE LORD'S PRAYER IN 307 LANGUAGES was published by Padre Hervás... - Spain, 1787 -

TWICE AS MANY PLAYERS HAVE HIT 4 HOME RUNS IN A MAJOR LEAGUE GAME AS HAVE HIT 4 TRIPLES!

THERE WAS NO MESSAGE TO GARCIA!

THE FAMOUS TRIP OF LT. ANDREW ROWAN TO THE CUBAN REBEL LEADER WAS MADE TO GET A MESSAGE FROM GARCIA FOR THE U.S. GOVERNMENT!

NO WRITTEN MATERIAL WAS CARRIED EITHER WAY...

**No Message to Garcia**

An expert inspectionist was Cuban Patriot Calisto Garcia y Iniguez. Twice captured and held prisoner in Spain for inciting anti-Spanish revolutions in Cuba—the "Ten Years' War" of 1869 and the "Little War" in 1879—Garcia escaped twice, the last time to New York, where he fitted out a filibustering expedition which failed to reach Cuba because of a shipwreck. Later he landed successfully in Cuba with arms and supplies, and assumed command of rebel forces once more.

An expert militarist was Andrew Summer Rowan, American patriot and first lieutenant in the Ninth infantry, U. S. A., and West Point graduate. Because Rowan had once skillfully written a book, "The Island of Cuba"—although he had never visited the spot—he was selected early in 1898 to find Garcia, learn the strength of his forces, what supplies he needed, Garcia's plan of campaign and whether he would cooperate with an American invasion against the Spanish in Cuba.

Rowan's instructions were entirely oral; no scrap of paper was carried by him on his perilous trip. Disguised as a fisherman, he sailed to Cuba from Kingston, Jamaica. The next six days' journey through the teeming, tropical swamps to Garcia's rendezvous were memorable for the hardships Rowan endured.

Yet he obtained the required information and in six hours was on his return trip—with a MESSAGE FROM GARCIA—also oral. An even more dangerous journey of five days brought Rowan and two Cuban guides to the coast where he escaped Spanish patrols in a hidden boat with gunnysack sails. Eventually Rowan and his guides reached Nassau in the Bahamas after riding out a severe storm. Here they were quarantined for two days due to a yellow fever threat. The American consul then secured their release and they proceeded to Key West. Rowan here delivered his information to American army officials—information that was to lead to the fall of Santiago. Twenty-four years later Rowan received the Distinguished Service Cross for his act.

Tomorrow: Trick of Columbus!

**COYOTES TAKE TURKEYS SHEEP IN BEAGLE AREA**

BEAGLE, Oct. 11.—(Sp.)—Jim Martin caught three coyotes last week. The animals are becoming numerous and bold and are taking a number of turkeys and sheep in the neighborhood.

**PHOENIX HEALTH UNIT TO MEET ON TUESDAY**

PHOENIX, Oct. 11.—(Sp.)—An all-day meeting with a covered dish luncheon at noon is scheduled for the Phoenix health unit on Tuesday at the R. H. Wilcox home.

## TAILSPIN TOMMY—Tommy Arrives in Time!



## BEN WEBSTER'S CAREER—Gold!



## THE NEBBS—Poor Emma



## SUBURBAN HEIGHTS By GLUYAS WILLIAMS



SUPPER WAS READY ON TIME IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD BUT THERE WAS NOTHING TO EAT IT WITH WHEN FRED PERLEY, CHARGED WITH RETURNING THE CUTLERY AND CHINA-WARE, WHICH HIS WIFE HAD BORROWED FOR HER CLUB LUNCHEON, GOT DISTRACTED BY A 3-ALARM FIRE AND WAS STILL MISSING AT HALF-PAST SIX

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## S'MATTER POP By O M PAYNE



## By HAL FORRESTER



## By EDWIN ALGER



## By SOL HESS

