

the dark ships

BY HULBERT FOOTNER

SYNOPSIS: Neill, a young federal agent, finds Fanning, a gun and Prescott Fanning's freshly shot body locked in a cabin on Fanning's yacht at Absalom's Harbor, Md. Neill hides her nearby in a disguised liner, then joins Mark Bonniger, local investigator. When Neill learns Janet doesn't shoot the flashy stunner, 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 and Janet dodge the searchers. The yacht is mysteriously ransacked and Bonniger questions Buckless who involves Neill.

Chapter 33

The Snapshot Of Janet

"LOOK," said Buckless with an ugly grin, "Fanning was carrying that doll's picture in his pocket. I know it wasn't found on him after death because you never had no picture to publish. Maybe this guy is carrying it on him. That would be proof wouldn't it?"

The photograph was in Neill's inside pocket. He felt as if he were taking a nose dive through space and waited, tense, for the crash. He became aware that Bonniger was asking with a smile:

"You don't mind if I go through your pockets, do you?"

Neill had to think with lightning speed. "I'll save you the trouble," he smiled, and threw the card on the desk. "That's the photograph he's talking about."

It created a sensation. Kettering looked shocked; Wilson's honest eyes almost started from his head and the friendly smile on Bonniger's lips stiffened.

"Is that the photograph?" Bonniger asked Buckless.

"That's it," Buckless grinned. "That," said Neill. "Is the photograph of a witness wanted in a narcotic case. I have never set eyes on the original, and certainly she had nothing to do with this matter."

"How could this fellow have known you were carrying such a photograph?" asked Bonniger.

"His room is across the corridor from mine. I have reason to believe he has been through my things," Bonniger nodded. "All right. I'll show this to the crew of the yacht and that will clear you."

Neill felt dizzy again. The crash was not averted, but only delayed. He clenched his fist.

"Wilson," said Bonniger, "bring down McGee, will you? He's the most intelligent of that bunch."

Wilson went out. It seemed to Neill that half a lifetime passed before he returned. Bonniger kept drawing his hand over his face as if to smooth out a grin, and Neill longed to punch him.

McGee's Answer

McGEE, a stolid mechanic, came in wondering why he had been sent for. He had the look of a decent family man. Bonniger pushed the photo towards him.

"Did you ever see that woman?"

McGee looked at the photograph without changing a muscle. Before answering, he glanced from one man to another in his deliberate way and evidently made up his mind about the situation. The faintest flicker of understanding came into his eyes when they met Neill's eyes.

"No, I never seen her before. Who is she? Why do you ask me?"

Neill looked down on the floor. He wanted to sit down, but was afraid of calling attention to himself. It was only a temporary reprieve because he could not tell what Buckless would say next.

"Does that look like the woman Fanning had aboard the yacht?" asked Bonniger.

"No, sir. Nothing like!"

"Ah, you dirty liar!" Buckless burst out. "You're in cahoots with this guy. I told the boss you was a rat. And now I know you had a hand in killing him!"

"Quiet!" said Bonniger with surprising force for such a still man. Buckless subsided in an angry muttering. Neill glanced at him uneasily. Why didn't he say more? Afraid of incriminating himself perhaps. Anyway, it was clear that as was through for the moment. Neill ventured to sit down.

"That's all, McGee," said Bonniger. "Much obliged."

Bonniger handed the photograph back to Neill. His manner was less free than heretofore, and Neill doubted if he was fully satisfied as he was making out to be. He turned to Buckless.

"Now, mister, I'd be obliged if you'd answer a few questions about your own movements. When did you get to Absalom's?"

"About 10:15 Tuesday night."

"How did you come?"

"By automobile. A friend drove me down from Baltimore. He went back."

"Pretty obliging friend to drive 160 miles at night as a favor."

"He was under obligations."

"What sort of obligations?"

"He's a yacht broker. I bought

the yacht from him for Fanning. He never saw Fanning. There was nothing shady about that deal, so you needn't look for it."

"Well, if you ask me, buying a yacht for the purpose of abduction is pretty shady business."

"I didn't know there was a woman going until the night they sailed," Buckless coolly retorted. "And for all I know, she went willingly. Up until Monday I thought the boss was going to take me with him to Cuba, but he wouldn't. We had words about it."

There was a wicked roll to Buckless' eyes. He suggested that he enjoyed keeping Neill on the rack. Neill got up and went to the window.

This window looked towards the rear of the building on a space heaped with the litter of years. When Neill struck his head out, he discovered that there was a figure crouching under the window. Eyster's twisted face looked up at him in terror at first, then upon recognizing Neill, with the familiar sly grin. Neill left the window.

Bracelets For Buckless

"WHAT brought you down here Tuesday night?" Bonniger was asking.

"The boss called me up from here about seven o'clock," Buckless answered. "Told me how he had to put in here on account of the engine broke. Well, there was some business I wanted to talk over with him, so I got the car."

"What business?"

"That I won't tell."

"Man," said Bonniger sternly, "don't you realize that you are in a serious situation?"

"I ain't got nothing to fear," Buckless looked at Neill. "I will tell everything when it's time."

Bonniger let it go at that. "Will you give me the name and address of the man who drove you here?"

"Sure!" He gave it and Bonniger wrote it down. "Here's some further particulars for you. We filled up at the gasoline station on Hanover street just before you came to the bridge. It was then 20 past eight."

"You got here a little after 10, you say. Did you try to see Fanning?"

"No. I didn't try to."

"Why not?"

"Well, I was told as how the crew had come ashore to the movies and I didn't know what I'd bust into if I went out there."

"Unusual delicacy!" commented Bonniger. "What did you do?"

"I just fooled around and listened to the talk at the store, then I got a room and went to bed."

"And in the morning?"

"Didn't want to go out to the yacht too early. While I was waiting, word came in of the killing. 'Why didn't you come forward at once as Fanning's friend?'"

"I wanted to find out first what had happened."

Bonniger shrugged. "Wilson, where can we lock this man up?"

"In the jail at King's Green, Mr. Bonniger."

"Too far away. I must have him convenient for questioning."

"There is no place in this village that would serve as a lock-up."

"Put him aboard the yacht. There's only one door to the forepeak, and you have to keep a man out there on guard anyhow."

"Okay," said Wilson. "Here, you!" he added, producing a pair of handcuffs.

Buckless, without any protest, extended his hairy right wrist. Wilson snapped one of the bracelets around it and the other on his own left wrist.

Buckless only had one request to make: "Can I see my lawyer?"

"Who's your lawyer?" asked Bonniger.

"Mr. Rudy Morris."

"What's his address?"

"He's here in Absalom's. I sent for him."

"So you reckoned you'd be needing a lawyer, eh? . . . You can't see him tonight."

"In the morning?"

"All right."

Wilson led the big fellow out. Neill looked after them in perplexity. Why did Buckless choose to hold back the most damning part of his story? As the big man went through the door, he gave Neill a sullen look.

When they had gone, Bonniger's expression hardened. He, too, showed signs of strain. "What do you think of this thug's story?" he asked Neill.

"I think he's lying."

"Oh, sure! Even if the rest of it were true, after dashing down here at night to see Fanning he wouldn't wait until morning. He is likely the murderer himself."

"Sure. If he's lying, that's the natural inference."

"Don't you think he's lying?"

"Partly. But I can't tell at what point the truth ends and the lies begin. He doesn't seem bright enough to have thought it all up."

Neill had an uneasy feeling that Bonniger might be right. "Maybe the lawyer's been prompting him."

"It's a possibility."

Neill decides to make a break for a getaway 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.

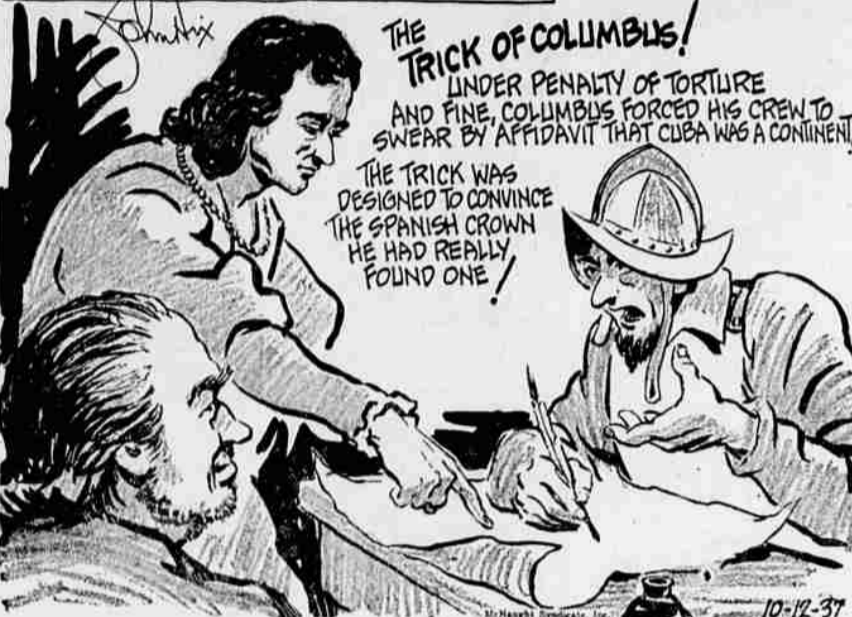
OCTOBER--10TH MONTH--WAS ORIGINALLY THE 8TH MONTH... ITS NAME WAS CHANGED FROM OCTOBER TO GERMANICUS, ANTONINUS, FAUSTINUS, HERCULES AND THEN BACK TO OCTOBER AGAIN...



ERNEST LOMBARDI—Cincinnati, N. L., HIT INTO 24 DOUBLE PLAYS IN A SINGLE SEASON...—1934—



GROVER CLEVELAND'S TWO TERMS AS U. S. PRESIDENT SPANNED A PERIOD OF 12 YEARS -- 1885 TO 1897 -- MORE THAN ANY OTHER PRESIDENT...



THE TRICK OF COLUMBUS! UNDER PENALTY OF TORTURE AND FINE, COLUMBUS FORCED HIS CREW TO SWEAR BY AFFIDAVIT THAT CUBA WAS A CONTINENT!

THE TRICK WAS DESIGNED TO CONVINC THE SPANISH CROWN HE HAD REALLY FOUND ONE!

Columbus' Trick
Whether or not Christopher Columbus ever reached the mainland of either North or South America remains a moot question. Certain it is, however, that Columbus did discover the island of Cuba, where he landed and found the city of Isabella.

On February 2, 1494, Columbus, stationed at Isabella on his second voyage into the New World, sent home 12 of his 17 vessels under Antonio de Torres with information to the Spanish Crown that he definitely touched upon a continent.

Columbus then put to sea again and cruised about the West Indies through a labyrinth of islands he named the "Garden of the Queen."

He returned to Isabella, where he forced the signing of one of history's oddest documents—an affidavit stating it was possible to reach Spain from Cuba by land, across Asia, and that Cuba was a continent!

The document, drawn on June 12, 1494, was signed in the presence of a notary, Perez de Luna, by the officers, men and boys of his three caravels. Any officer breaking this oath was subjected to a fine of 10,000 maravedis; sailors were threatened with punishment of 100 lashes and the extraction of their tongues if they broke their vows.

Columbus is believed to have resorted to this coercion to dispel any doubt that Torres might have communi-

ated to the throne that a continent had not been found. Whether he himself believed Cuba was a continent remains as another mystery of Columbus.

12-Year President
Grover Cleveland, inaugurated as President of the United States in 1885, served a full term as leader of the Democratic party. In 1890 Benjamin Harrison was inaugurated by the Republicans and served out four years. Cleveland was re-elected in 1893, and served until his retirement in 1897—12 years after the first took office.

Food Up in Britain.
LONDON.—(AP)—It is costing Britain 55 per cent more to live in 1937 than it did in 1914. The cost of food alone has risen 40 per cent in that period.

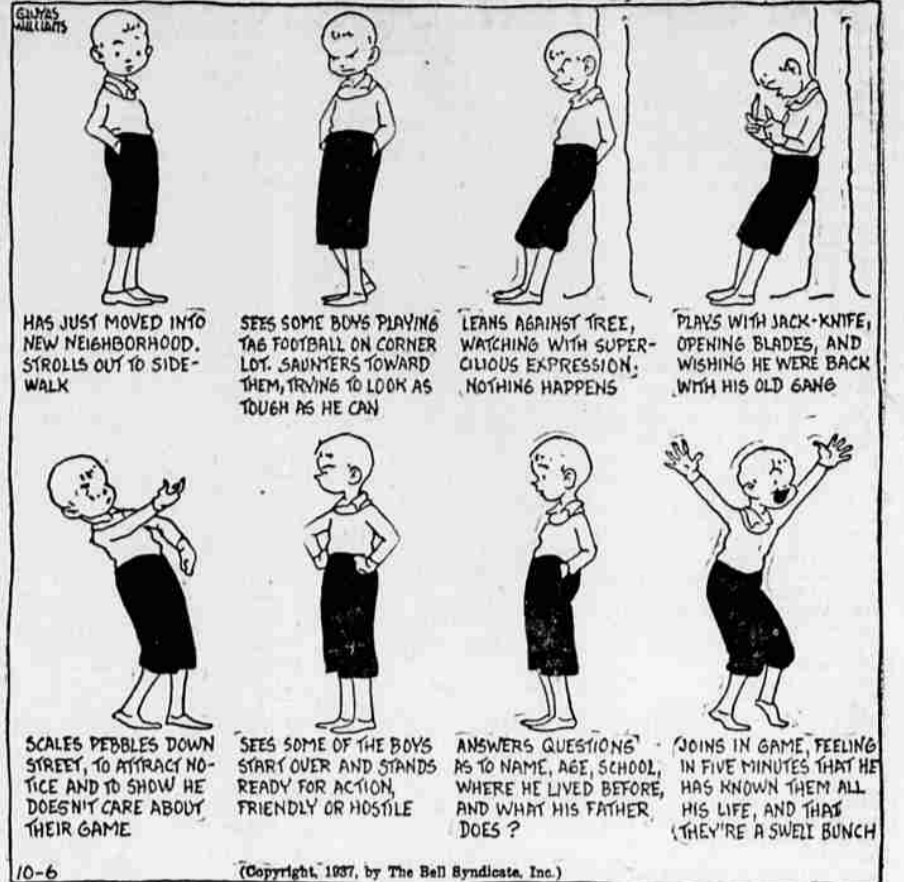
Phi Delta Theta Fraternity has the largest membership of any national men's fraternity. Its present enrollment is over 45,000.

Shippington Slaying IS HELD UNJUSTIFIED
KIAMATH FALLS, Oct. 12.—(AP)—A coroner's jury, after hearing testimony regarding the gunshot death of Orval Baldwin, 19, presented at an inquest Monday, declared the shooting unjustified and recommended that Denver Crowe, 33, Baldwin's alleged slayer, be held for the grand jury.

Baldwin, a former Roseburg resident, was killed at Crowe's boarding house at Shippington, north of here, early Friday morning. Crowe admitted the shooting but claimed it was in self-defense.

Tomorrow: Old Man of the Movies!

NEW BOY



HAS JUST MOVED INTO NEW NEIGHBORHOOD. STROLLS OUT TO SIDE-WALK

SEES SOME BOYS PLAYING TAG FOOTBALL ON CORNER LOT. SAUNTERS TOWARD THEM, TRYING TO LOOK AS TOUGH AS HE CAN

LEANS AGAINST TREE, WATCHING WITH SUPER-CULOUS EXPRESSION. NOTHING HAPPENS

PLAYS WITH JACK-KNIFE, OPENING BLADES, AND WISHING HE WERE BACK WITH HIS OLD GANG

SCALES PEBBLES DOWN STREET, TO ATTRACT NOTICE AND TO SHOW HE DOESN'T CARE ABOUT THEIR GAME

SEES SOME OF THE BOYS START OVER AND STANDS READY FOR ACTION, FRIENDLY OR HOSTILE

ANSWERS QUESTIONS AS TO NAME, AGE, SCHOOL, WHERE HE LIVED BEFORE, AND WHAT HIS FATHER DOES?

JOINS IN GAME, FEELING IN FIVE MINUTES THAT HE HAS KNOWN THEM ALL HIS LIFE, AND THAT THEY'RE A SWEET BUNCH

B'MATTER POP



POP, WOULD YA BE SO SWEET AN KIND-

NEVER MIND THE REST! I GOT YA-

WHATCHA GOT YOUR EYES CLOSED FOR?

I WANTA BE SURPRISED!

NICKEL

PHI DELTA THETA FRATERNITY HAS THE LARGEST MEMBERSHIP OF ANY NATIONAL MEN'S FRATERNITY. ITS PRESENT ENROLLMENT IS OVER 45,000.

BEN WEBSTER'S CAREER—Action!



RITA, INSANE WITH JEALOUSY, WAS ABOUT TO PLUNGE A KNIFE INTO BETTY-LOU'S BACK, WHEN TOMMY ARRIVED JUST IN TIME TO PREVENT A TRAGEDY.

CALM DOWN, NOW, AND TELL ME WHAT IT'S ALL ABOUT!

YOU DON'T SEEM TO LIKE MISS BARNES, WHY?

I DON'T LIKE HER COMING BETWEEN MR. BENTLY AND MYSELF!

BETTER COME BACK TO THE HOUSE AND DANCE WITH ME. IT'S SAFER THAN PLAYING WITH KNIVES!

PERHAPS WE'D BETTER CONTINUE OUR TALK IN THE PLANE TOMORROW! WE WON'T BE INTERRUPTED IN THE SKY.

THAT WILL BE JUST DANDY!

GONNY, THERE'LL BE A RUSH TO THE HILLS—PROSPECTORS'LL BE AS THICK AS FLEAS!

GOSH!

—THE OLD NUGGET LINE'LL BE LIKE SHE WAS WHEN I STARTED TO WORK HERE—BUSY, EXCITING, TREMENDOUS—WOW!

AND YOU'RE THE LAD TO PUT IT OVER, BEN! YOUR CHANCE HAS COME! AND YOU'RE READY, TOO, AIN'T YOU?

YOU BET I AM, JASON—I'M GOING TO TELL SETH STRALE WHAT TO DO RIGHT NOW!

GOAT VIEWED AS PUBLIC NUISANCE

SKOPLJE, Yugoslavia (AP)—A goat that understands eight languages and is "so unusual" his mistress can't find a "proper wife" for him must go to court to face a charge of being a public nuisance.

Manno, the goat, is too handy with his horns for his neighbors in Georg Skopljantche street. His best score is three people at one out—among them the mayor's wife. They were walking single file to avoid a water puddle.

Again say the neighbors, when the breeze should be wafting the aroma

RUSSIA STARTS HUNT FOR ARCTIC ISLAND

MOSCOW.—(AP)—The ice-breaker Sadko and a seaplane have set out to search again for Sanikilof land, an island Arctic expeditions have tried fruitlessly to find for more than 120 years.

The ship and plane also will explore the northern sea route around Novosibirsk Islands, studying the ice-water and weather conditions in the area. If they find Sanikilof island,

THE NEBBS—And Now What?



EMMA IS HEART-BROKEN—BLAMES ME FOR HER TROUBLE WITH ARDLEY. SHE'S CRAZY ABOUT HIM

I DON'T FEEL RIGHT ABOUT THIS—HE SAID EVEN IF HE WAS NIBROC AND CHANGED HIS NAME AND LEFT, HE SAID EVERYBODY RESPECTED YOU AND YOU HAD BEEN SO CROOKED YOU COULDN'T SLEEP IN A ROUND-HOUSE

LET'S WALK OVER TO THE STUDIO AND I'LL SHOW YOU A LETTER I GOT IN THE MAIL THIS MORNING AND AFTER YOU READ IT MAYBE YOUR BIG HEART MAY CONTRACT A BIT

WHAT IS THE NEW INFORMATION FUNT HAS ????

WE JUST CAN'T WAIT UNTIL WE FIND OUT—WE'RE JUST ALL JITTERY.