

the dark ships

BY HULBERT FOOTNER

Chapter 39 Billets Fly

IT WAS now about 8:30 and since Maryland does not use daylight saving time, perfectly dark.

The blond young man was not visible in the street outside. There were no taxicabs cruising in this part of town, and Neill regretted that he had not told his driver to wait. However, he saw a taxicab standing at the curb across the street about a hundred yards towards town. Probably the taxi used by the blond young man. Neill crossed over. The back of the cab was empty.

"Will you take me into town?" he asked the driver. "Sorry, mister. I've got a fare." "Where is he?" "Can't tell you that. He paid me to wait." "I'll pay double fare." "Can't do it, after taking his money. He's got my name and number."

"He won't say anything," Neill laughed. "He can't afford to." "So you say. But I ain't gonna risk my job."

Neill returned across the street. There was a trolley line, but no car was in sight. He walked slowly back and forth as if waiting for a car, but in reality trying to spy out where his trailer was hidden.

It was a quiet neighborhood. Across the road where the taxi waited, there was a high bank not yet built upon. On Neill's side the little houses and occasional stores were lighted up, but there was nobody moving on the sidewalk. At the corner a newly-opened street dipped down steeply and was swallowed in the dark.

Neill found his man partly hidden behind a syringa bush at the side of a house on the corner. "Good evening," he said pleasantly. "Evening," mumbled the man huskily. He was trying to disguise his voice. Neill had a sense that he had heard it before. Perhaps the blond hair, the ashy cheeks, the spectacles, also constituted a disguise. Impossible to tell in the darkness.

"Nice night," said Neill. "No answer." "How often do these blame trolley cars run?" "Don't know. I'm a stranger in the neighborhood."

The young man's voice was shaky. He was evidently laboring under a powerful excitement. However, Neill apprehended no special danger to himself. The taxicab was almost directly across the street, and Heinrich's with its beer drinkers not a hundred yards away. Neill aimed to quiet him by adopting a friendly air.

"You Know Too Much" "HAVE a cigarette?" he asked. "Don't use them."

"Gosh! I didn't think that there was a fellow of your age in the country didn't smoke 'em."

No answer. "Maybe you prefer a pipe?" No answer.

"I thought from the way you were standing here that you belonged in the neighborhood."

The young man's voice began to break. "Is it any business of yours?"

Neill looked at him steadily. "Well, yes, since you ask me. You've been following me around ever since I arrived in town this afternoon. Also this morning. Naturally I'm curious. What's the idea?"

The young man made an effort to get a grip on himself. "You're mistaken, fellow. I never saw you before until this minute."

"Come off," said Neill good-naturedly. "That's your taxi waiting across the street."

"Wrong again, fellow." "What's the use of stalling?" said Neill. "I've had my eye on you for five hours past. In the Belvedere I heard you reading the plain-clothes men off on a wild-goose chase. Good comedy."

The young man's voice broke completely. "Damn you..." he cried. "Damn you... you know too much!" He whipped out a gun and fired at Neill point blank.

Neill saw the movement coming, and dropped in time. Bent almost double, he ran down the steep side street into the enveloping darkness. The man fired again, and a third time, but his aim was wild. He came charging after Neill. As in a dream, Neill heard a shout from the taxi driver and the sounds of other people roused by the shots. Then silence. They were afraid to follow.

The street was only half a block long. It ran out on a kind of waste land where the earth from excavations had been dumped, making irregular hummocks all around. Rubbish was heaped everywhere and it was impossible to run. Neill swerved sharply to the left and dropped behind a hummock hoping that the man would run by.

But when his pursuer came to the broken ground, he stopped, gun in hand, looking around and listening. He was only half a dozen paces away and Neill could

see the starry sky Neill drew out his own gun, but he was resolved not to shoot the man if it could be avoided. He could hear the murmur of the crowd gathering at the top of the street.

Neill tried to edge a little further away under cover of the dark. The man heard him and fired again. Neill ran for some yards in a zig-zag course and dropped again. The man had him pretty well placed now, and came creeping towards him, close to the ground. Neill figured that he would have either two or four shots left in his magazine.

"Here I am," Neill said, to draw him in. "But he only kept creeping closer. From far away Neill heard the sound of a clanging gong, rapidly drawing near. Somebody had phoned for the police. A new anxiety attacked him, for he couldn't afford to face an investigation, even though he was the innocent victim.

The police car stopped at the head of the street. The crowd began to move down slowly. Neill arose and ran again. The man followed without attempting to shoot. Neill could hear his hoarse breathing. Neill collided with an invisible wire fence, and was flung back on the ground. The man was almost on him. There was no help for it now. Rolling over, Neill took aim at his legs and fired. The man stumbled forward and, falling almost within Neill's reach, lay there groaning. The gun had flown out of his hand.

Barbed Wire Helps

NEILL ran on as fast as he could down the hill, parallel with the fence. The police were now spreading over the hummocky ground. They had flashlights. They were moving cautiously. A wild anxiety lent Neill speed and sureness. If he were taken, everything would be wrecked. Just as he was beginning to see light ahead.

The police heard him running and began to spread down hill to cut him off. Neill put his hands on a fence post and, vaulting clear of the wire, ran straight away. His pursuers were less nimble in getting over the fence. He heard them cursing as their uniforms caught on the barbs, and he gained on them. He then had the notion of doubling and creeping back towards the fence, lower down. He wormed his way down hill close to the fence until he was stopped by a stream at the bottom. Meanwhile the police were searching the open ground above.

He climbed the fence again and, making his way upstream for a short distance, came to a group of dark buildings, a mill of some sort. There was a dam over the stream with a footway. He crossed it, and struck into a road that climbed the hill on the other side. Soon he was among the streets of another poor quarter of the town. Absolutely quiet over here. Across the street a taxi cab was being loaded with lights moving back and forth like fireflies.

He kept straight on until he had risen out of the slums into a better quarter. Upon coming to a wide suburban road, he turned into it. He was a dam over the stream, and a taxicab came bowling along, having delivered a fare in the suburbs. Neill hailed it and, sinking back in the seat, thanked God for his luck.

He changed taxis once on the way into town to baffle possible pursuers. He was still in some anxiety because he could not tell what the wounded man might say to the police. Not the truth, anyhow. To be on the safe side, he kept away from his usual haunts and made no attempt to communicate with Mattings who was still waiting for him at the midtown garage.

In a drugstore on North avenue Neill took possession of a booth, and started phoning. From the yellow pages of the phone book it was easy to establish that the only banana importer in Baltimore who ran his own ships was one A. Lanassa. Neill called him up at his home, and in Italian-American voice answered. It was Mr. Lanassa himself.

After giving him an agreeable spiel, Neill asked him who his lawyer was.

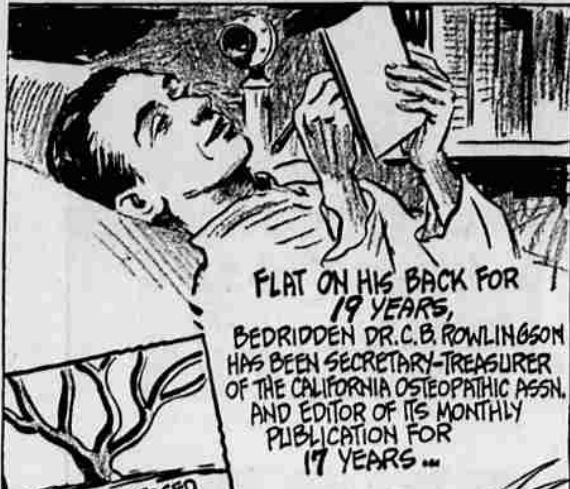
The voice turned wary. "What! I got all kinds of lawyers." "Well, who are they?"

"No information given over the phone. Come and see me in the morning." He hung up. This was a setback, but not a fatal one. Neill had other leads to follow. He did more telephoning and a satisfied grin began to spread over his face. The last number he called was that given him by Johnny Tingstrom, the taxi-driver who had once shown himself his friend. He was obliged to wait beside the booth until Johnny came in from a trip and called him.

Neill gets a shock when he returns to the Abraham Lincoln, 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.



FLAT ON HIS BACK FOR 19 YEARS, BEDRIDDEN DR. C. B. ROWLINGSON HAS BEEN SECRETARY-TREASURER OF THE CALIFORNIA OSTEOPATHIC ASSN. AND EDITOR OF ITS MONTHLY PUBLICATION FOR 17 YEARS...



THE CHINCHILLA MOST VALUABLE FUR-BEARING ANIMAL IN THE WORLD— IS NAMED AFTER A BEDBUG!

Named for a Bedbug. For as little as \$10,000 you might be able to pick yourself up a chinchilla coat, but it would be a real bargain. A first class, full length chinchilla coat costs around \$30,000. Yet, strange as it seems, the little rodents that supply the fur for these rather high-priced wind breakers derive their name from that of the lowly bedbug. It is taken from the Spanish word "chinche," because of a certain odor given off by the chinchilla similar to that of the bedbug. So rare is the chinchilla that only one chinchilla coat, consisting of about 140 pelts, is made in several years. The animal's only natural habitat is high in the Andes of Chile and Peru, but for the past few years a successful chinchilla farm has been conducted in Inglewood, Cal., by M. F. Chapman. First to successfully transport the delicate rodents to the United States alive, Mr. Chapman now has 1,250 of them, bred from the dozen he imported from South America. Chinchillas sell for \$3,200 a breeding pair and their pelts are worth from \$200 up.

Bredriden Editor. Since 1918, Dr. C. B. Rowlingson of Los Angeles has lain in bed, able to move only his hands and arms. Yet, for 17 of the 19 years in which he stands when he caught a pass in the first quarter which paved the way for the Cougars' lone touchdown.

Bridgroom Speeds To Football Game PULLMAN, Oct. 18.—(AP)—Joe Sienko, Washington State senior and Cougar half back, got to the clubhouse just in time Saturday to get into his suit for the contest against the University of Washington. He had good reason for his delay—he was getting married in Colfax to Miss Barbara Cahoun, of Olympia. His bride was in the stands when he caught a pass in the first quarter which paved the way for the Cougars' lone touchdown.

Young Beaver Found Enjoying City Life PORTLAND, Oct. 18.—(AP)—Portland residents are convinced the animal kingdom fails to recognize the existence of a big city. Recently a cougar raised pig pen near the westside city limits. Yesterday Mrs. R. R. Renner found a young mountain beaver making himself at home on her lawn.

Tails Spin Tommy—Tommy and Betty Compare Their Discoveries!



BEN WEBSTER'S CAREER—Conference



THE NEBBS—Forgive and Forget



SUBURBAN HEIGHTS

By GLUYAS WILLIAMS



MRS. PERLEY, WHO ENTERTAINED THE CLUB LECTURER AT LUNCHEON, GOT HER TO THE MEETING ALMOST AN HOUR LATE, BECAUSE WHEN IT CAME TIME TO DRIVE HER OVER SHE FOUND THAT FRED HAD TOLD THE MEN TO COME FIX THE CHIMNEY AND SHE COULDN'T GET THE CAR OUT OF THE GARAGE

GLUYAS WILLIAMS (Copyright, 1937, by The Bell Syndicate, Inc.) 10-13

S'MATTER POF

By O. M. PAYNE



By HAL FORREST



By EDWIN ALGER



By SOL HESS



SOVIET REMOVES TRADE COMMISSAR

MOSCOW, Oct. 18.—(AP)—Israel Veltzer, Soviet commissar for foreign trade, was removed from office today and M. P. Shiroff was chosen by the central executive committee to succeed him. Veltzer, the eighth member of the Soviet union council of people's commissars removed within a year, recently had been attacked for "rotten" conditions in Soviet retail trade. Yesterday Sergei Sudin, acting Soviet commissar of foreign trade, was removed from his post. Execution of nine local officials of the Zhiboin district in the White

MARCOA MILL FIRE EYED BY OFFICIALS

EUGENE, Oct. 18.—(AP)—State police fire investigators examined ruins of the \$100,000 Fischer Lumber company mill which burned Saturday. The plant, three miles north of Marcola, had not been operated since the previous night, owners said. Officials said the mill, with a daily cutting capacity of about 125,000 feet, provided employment for approximately 175 men. Fisherman Lost ROCKAWAY, Oct. 18.—(AP)—The coast guard searched fruitlessly today for Ralph Scott of Garibaldi who has been missing at sea since Sunday afternoon. A 16-year-old youth had put out in a new \$13,000 fishing boat.