

the dark ships

BY HULBERT FOOTNER

Chapter 11

Janet Under Arrest

TAKING off his boots, Neill crept up the ladder, letting his weight down gradually on each step. At the top he peeped over the edge of the deck. No lights; nobody stirring.

He made his way softly aft over the promenade deck and around the stern. As on the previous occasion, he leaped across from one vessel to another.

As Neill climbed to the boat deck of the Lincoln he saw the regular watchman's light over on the Monticello, and moving the other way. No danger from him at the present. Neill hastened to the little door in the port engine shaft that he and Janet had so often used. Here a new obstacle faced him. Staples had been bolted through the steel door and its frame, and a padlock put on.

How could he get in? Useless to lower himself over the side when the window was closed. It couldn't be opened from the outside, and he couldn't break it because it was made of plate glass thick enough to withstand high seas. He and Janet had already satisfied themselves that there was no other way into the vessel except by this little door.

The huge ventilators that served the engine room gave him an idea. He had seen the outlets when he had been below. Each was greater than the girth of a man, and there was plenty of rope about. He picked up a strong light line and, fastening the end to the wheel that turned the ventilator, let it fall down inside. Climbing up on the wheel he entered the mouth of the steel tube and lowered himself hand under hand.

He came out in the engine room. He had no flashlight with him now and had to strike matches in order to find the bottom of the steel stairway. Once he was through the door that served the engineers' quarters on E deck, he knew his way. The interior of the ship was as black as a mine. Groping his way through the galley, the pantries and across the great saloon, he ran up the stairway to D deck with his heart in his mouth.

Outside the door of the royal suite, his courage failed him and he hesitated. When he tried the door, it opened in his hands. "Janet! Janet!" he whispered urgently.

Only silence. He struck a match. The candles were still there and he lighted one. Janet was gone. Stealing his nerves, he looked around and tried to deduce what had happened.

The rooms were in disorder. Everything that he had brought her at different times—the rope ladder, the bucket, the remains of food and water—was still there. The boy's clothes lay in a heap on the floor of her bedroom; her own clothes were gone.

It was clear that the worst had not happened. If she had made away with herself, the window would be open. She had either given herself up, as she had threatened to do, or she had been taken. Anyway, the bolts on the doors of the suite were all intact and there was no evidence that a struggle had occurred.

Immediately Neill's whole idea was to get out again. It was too slow to pull himself up through the ventilator. He ran up to B deck and, unfastening a window, let himself out on the promenade. It would make no difference now if he left evidences of his visit behind him.

On deck Neill thought of rousing Captain Bickel and demanding information, but decided against it. It was clear from the darkness and silence enveloping the four ships, that Janet was not being kept aboard. He got back to his skiff without any alarm being raised. Putting his back to the oars, he rowed on down the river.

The Crowd Threatens
REACHING the village, he tied his craft to a wharf on the river side and ran across to Longcope's store. There was plenty of excitement here. Though it was nearly two o'clock, there was a crowd around the porch, and more coming every moment. Men were calling to each other.

"The girl has been found!"
"The hell you say! Where?"
"She was hidden on the big ships all the time!"

Anyhow, it was a relief to know she was there.

Neill was recognized as he came under the porch lights. "Here's the fellow! Here's the fellow!" they cried. A mutter of rage swept over the crowd. Curses were flung at Neill from out of the dark. Those behind pushed forward and the circle around him narrowed dangerously. He put his back against the door and held them with his eyes.

"Well, what about it?" he said.

Those behind reach ventured to lay hands on him. The door opened behind him. He backed in and closed it. Virgil dropped a bar in place.

Virgil's leathery face glistened with sweat and excitement and the cigar in his mouth was completely disintegrated. "So it was you!" he gasped. "It was you all the time!"

Neill couldn't stop for Virgil then. Further back in the store he saw the tall figure of Mark Boninger leaning back against the counter with his head lowered in a gloomy way. He was alone. It was extraordinary to see the self-contained Boninger in an attitude of dejection.

"Mark!" said Neill. Boninger was electrified by the voice. "You... you!" he exclaimed.

In spite of all he had on his mind, Neill had to grin. "Whom were you expecting?" he said.

Boninger's face expressed a world of amazement. "But I thought—Matingly said..."

"Matingly told you that I had flown the coop. He was wrong."

"Well, I'm right glad to see you. Not that I would blame a man for trying to save himself. But to abandon the girl!"

"Where is she?" demanded Neill. "What's going on?"

Boninger jerked his head towards the little office at the back. The door was open and voices could be heard from inside.

"Wilson is trying to break her down," Boninger said, scowling. "I couldn't face it. Not with a woman... and a woman like that!... I reckon she had a good right to shoot him. Such a one couldn't do it for money."

Neill's heart warmed towards him. "How did you find her?"

"Wilson and I have been keeping after Buckless. He's a stupid brute, and we finally tripped him up. Everything came out then. Buckless said we would find the girl in room 212 on the Abraham Lincoln."

"Was there... any trouble?"

"No. Wilson knocked on the door and told her it was the police and she opened immediately. Asked for time to put on her own clothes, that was all... By God! I don't like this job!"

"You know now what my part in it was?" ventured Neill. Boninger shrugged. "Buckless tried to protect you, but I could guess it."

"I suppose you blame me for it?" Boninger refused to commit himself, but his glance was not altogether unfriendly. "Well, anyhow, you are not a quitter," he said grimly.

"Thanks," said Neill. "Who is this man?"

HE STARTED back for the office. For a moment he paused outside the door listening. He heard Wilson ask in the rasping voice of the cross-examiner:

"What man helped you?" Janet quietly replied: "No man helped me."

"Come now, we know there was a man in this. Who is he?" "No man helped me," she repeated.

"Was it Ford Wheatley?" "I don't know anybody by that name."

"Who broke in the door of your cabin on the yacht?" "Mr. Fanning."

"Did you shoot him?" "No, I fainted."

"That's not true!" rasped Wilson. Neill could stand no more. He pushed his way in. Kettering, Sergeant Wilson and Captain Bickel were seated in three chairs against the far wall with the desk pulled around in front of them. This gave the look of the courtroom. Janet stood facing the judges. Her head was up. The sight of her, so alone, so fragile-looking in the pink evening dress, soiled and rumpled now, hurt Neill like a stab. She was not aware of his entrance. Constable Forsythe stood behind her.

Wilson was evidently at a loss. He scowled at the prisoner and rubbed his lip. Then he turned to Kettering. "Mr. Kettering, you're an experienced cross-examiner. See if you can make her talk."

Kettering smiled. "I don't think it would be proper for me to intervene, sergeant. It's possible I may be called upon to take part in this case. I feel the profoundest sympathy for this young lady, and I should be happy to serve, as her counsel, should she so desire."

"Janet!" said Neill softly. She whirled around and looked at him as at an enemy. "Who is this man?" she demanded of Forsythe.

Neill was staggered. "Mr. Wheatley," answered the constable. "What right has he to address me like that?"

"Janet!" cried Neill reproachfully. "I don't know you," she said, looking him squarely in the eye.

Neill uncovers the murderer, 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.



AN AUTO RACE WAS RUN FROM NEW YORK TO PARIS... IN 1908...

THE WINNER, "SPEEDWAY FLYER," CROSSED THE U.S., SAILED TO JAPAN, CROSSED ASIA AND EUROPE AND ARRIVED IN PARIS IN 170 DAYS...

New York to Paris By Auto
Imagine driving a mile in an automobile of 1908 through snow up to your wheel tops, across streams, along railroad tracks and over rock-strewn, bumpy stretches hardly worthy of being called a road—multiply that by 13,341 miles and you will have a mild idea of the trip made by Thomas "Speedway Flyer" in winning a New York to Paris auto race more than 29 years ago.

Sponsored jointly by an American and a French newspaper, the race started on February 12, 1908 from Times Square, New York City. Six cars roared off on the journey, loaded down with extra gas and oil tanks. Janet quietly replied: "No man helped me."

Three of the entries were French, one German, one Italian and one the "Speedway Flyer," American. Across the country, heading for San Francisco, the cars went with plans for the route including a trip through Alaska, across 50 miles of the ice-covered Bering Strait to Siberia, on through Siberia to Europe and then Paris.

One day out a French car was forced to withdraw from the race with a broken differential. A few more days and another car was forced to withdraw. Well in the lead, the American entry arrived in San Francisco after 42 days, setting a new cross-country record for winter driving. On up to Alaska the "Speedway Flyer" went, got as far as Fairbanks,

and turned back to Seattle, the route for the race being changed with the realization that the Bering Strait route was impassable.

Aboard a steamer, the car was transported to Japan, then to Vladivostok, Siberia. Across the wastes of Siberia they battled, taking as much as a full day to get 10 miles. On July 31, 170 days after the start, the "Speedway Flyer" rolled into Paris, winner of the race by a margin of 26 days over the only other car to complete the journey, the German car. During the trip, several changes were made in the crew of the American car. The only member who made the full journey was George Schuster, mechanic and driver.

Tomorrow: The Civil War Submarine!

his delegation today on the United States liner Washington. The conference, called at the invitation of the Belgian government, will begin October 30 at Brussels.

Toot and Be Darned
GRAZ, Austria.—(AP)—Special yellow plates bearing the word "Taubstumm," meaning deaf and dumb, have been put on bicycles of deaf mutes by police here. The plates show motorists it is useless to sound their horns. The regulation became necessary because it is a Graz custom to employ deaf persons to distribute newspapers.

AMERICANS SAIL FOR NINE-POWER PARLEY
NEW YORK, Oct. 21.—(AP)—Strengthening that the United States has "no commitments," Norman H. Davis, head of the American delegation to the nine-power conference on the Sino-Japanese conflict, sailed with

DIFFICULT DECISIONS

By GLUYAS WILLIAMS



10-15 (Copyright, 1937, by The Bell Syndicate, Inc.)

5 MATTER POF

By O M PAYNE



(Copyright, 1937, by The Bell Syndicate, Inc.)

TAILSPIN TOMMY—Bently Is Alarmed!

By HAL FORREST



By EDWIN ATGER



By SOL HESS



CANADIAN APPLES TO BE ADVERTISED

Apple growers of British Columbia who for the past few years have been making a concerted effort to create a demand for their product in the prairie provinces, and especially in Manitoba, have perfected plans for conducting an advertising campaign, according to a report to the department of commerce by H. M. Bankhead, American commercial attaché, Ottawa.

DEMOCRATS CALLED TO FORM SOCIETY

PORTLAND, Oct. 21.—(Sp1)—A call has been issued for a meeting of Oregon Democrats at Portland, October 30, to organize a statewide Democratic society or federation. The meeting will convene in west side W. O. W. hall at 8 p. m.

THE NEBBS—Thursday the 28th



EMMA HAS JUST TURNED OVER \$10,000 IN GOVERNMENT BONDS TO HER FRANK BRUCE ARDLEY.



DARLING, WHAT CONFIDENCE YOU HAVE IN ME AFTER ALL THE THINGS WHICH WERE SAID ABOUT ME—IT'S BEAUTIFUL—LET'S SET A DATE FOR OUR MARRIAGE.



OH, THIS IS SO UNEXPECTED.



WELL, IF WE'RE GOING AWAY FOR A WEEK OR SO I GOT TO GET THE WASHIN' DONE AND I WANT TO GET A DRESS FOR THE WEDDIN' AND I WANT TO BE ENGAGED FOR AWHILE—LET'S MAKE IT THURSDAY THE 28 TH.



GEE, I'M SO HAPPY—AND WILL SYLVY APPLEBY GET JEALOUS 'CAUSE I'M GETTIN' MYSELF SUCH A SWELL EDDICATED HUSBAND.

