

• SERIAL STORY

SECRET VOYAGE

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CHAPTER I

THE boat lay with a list to starboard at 10 fathoms. Jim Mallory walked cumberously around it, careful not to foul his lines in the masts, and peered through the glass of his diving helmet at the hole in the bow. It didn't look like much of a job to raise. It looked like a little easy money for the Ajax Salvage Company.

From above, Curly Bates' voice came over the telephone in an incoherent mutter. Jim Mallory replied, "Yeah, I found her."

Curly's voice, distant now, said, "Shut up, you!"

Men didn't talk like that to Jim Mallory; certainly not one of his crew. Astonished, he demanded, "What?" And Curly's voice was instantly apologetic.

"Not you, Spike. I was talking to..."

Jim Mallory had a quick hunch, a gripping suspicion. "Listen," he said, "haul me up." He was a man who always played hunches.

He heard Curly shout an order; he felt his lines pull taut, and slowly he began to rise through water that was green and crystalline. He saw the tug's black bottom, then reached the Jacob's ladder. He climbed into the bright Florida sunlight.

Blacksheep unbolted and removed the iron helmet. Blacksheep was grinning, his teeth shining ivory in the ebony of his face.

"Boss, we done got comp'nry. Sure 'nough!"

"So I feared," Jim Mallory said, and came aboard. His eyes ran along deck to where the girl sat amidst him, and halted there on her for a moment, narrowing. He was surprised that it was a girl. He hadn't expected them to put a girl onto him. But it was clever. Where bribes and threats won't work, use a woman.

Curly Bates came and put a cigarette between Jim Mallory's lips and held a match. Curly was a stooped little man of 55, much battered by life. He was very bald. His eyes were worried.

"They've put a dame onto you, Spike."

"Yeah."

"I don't like it a little bit. She's smooth as silk."

"I'll watch my step," Jim Mallory said.

He came out of the diving suit, and he was big and brown and solid. He moved with smooth ease. Beneath a tight sweater his shoulders and chest rippled with corded muscles. He ignored the girl.

"She's down there," he said to Curly. "We'll get some grapnels on her tomorrow, and some pontoons. She'll come up like a cork."

"Shall I drop a buoy over before we ship anchor?"

"You may as well."

The girl rose from the bulwark, drawing Jim Mallory's eyes. She was in a green swim suit, and her skin was a smooth brown. Her rubber cap was in her hand and, Jim Mallory thought, that was the place for it. You wanted to see her hair. It was thick and tousled, and the sunlight made it look like bright copper. Her eyes were wide and brown, with golden flecks. With her face and figure, Jim decided, you had the right sort to bait a man.

He spoke with the cigarette between his lips, saying, "Hello, hello," in a cautious, offhand fashion.

"Hello." The girl's voice was nicely husky. "Who is she?"

"A sport cruiser named Hannah that some landlubber let founder."

"Quite a beauty, I suppose. With trim lines. Or is she something else again?"

Jim smiled warily. He said, "I don't know you. Should I?"

"I don't think so. The name is Mary Larsen. I'm just a visitor, a sightseer aboard. It was quite a swim, from shore. How deep is it here?"

"Six fathoms."

"In English, I mean."

"About 36 feet."

"Deep enough to drown in," Mary Larsen said, shivering a little.

Jim Mallory glanced shoreward. The white palm-fringed beach was pretty far. The man who had sent her was a fool; he must be paying her well. Jim was about to tell her to clear out and swim back when Blacksheep called from the galley, "Grub, Spike huh." And that gave him an idea. He might learn something from her.

He said, "Eat with us. I'll be beans and bacon, bread and coffee. If you can take it."

"I can take it. Thanks."

SHE followed him down into the tug's crowded cabin. He gave her a sweater to cover her bare shoulders. She thanked him with a smile. It was a nice, warm and friendly smile, and he took it and looked away.

Curly came in, sat down, and wolfed the food Blacksheep served. Curly didn't like women aboard ship, and sulked with resentment. Blacksheep, however, was pleased. He'd opened a can of peaches for the visitor. He hovered about for a time, then reluctantly went back to the galley.

The girl said, "I didn't know they came so colorful."

"Oh, Blacksheep is a Cayman," Jim Mallory said. "Nice fellow. His sweet disposition comes from being raised on Bahama sugar cane. But—he looked squarely at the girl—"but he can be tough."

She missed the point of that, and asked, "Is his name really that?"

"So he claims."

Jim started to eat, watching the

girl with covert glances. She wasn't tough; she was definitely the opposite, and there was intelligence in her eyes. He began to think that she wasn't just another girl. He was surprised that such a girl was mixed up in this thing. It proved what he had suspected—that the thing was plenty big.

She ate as he liked to see people eat, even though the food wasn't much. She was still eating after he was finished, and after Curly Bates had left the cabin. She caught Curly's sour look as he went to deck.

"He doesn't like me," she said.

"And you don't either."

"What makes you think I don't?"

"Your eyes do a narrowing act every time you look at me. It makes me squirm. It's disconcerting."

She didn't seem offended. She finished her coffee and sat back to watch Jim as he filled his pipe.

A smile came and went on her lips. She turned frowningly sober, as if she just remembered she hadn't come aboard solely to eat his food.

She said, "Spike, could I ask you a question?"

HE took the unlighted pipe from his mouth. His eyes grew wary. He knew what the question would be. He had been approached before, two weeks ago first, by a man who offered him a bribe. The amount of the bribe had been doubled later, over the telephone, and then two days ago a man had phoned and threatened him. He could stand off bribes and threats, and this girl too. He knew the ship's location but he wasn't going to reveal it—until he learned why that sunken ship was so important.

"You can ask," he said, "but you won't be answered. I know

your little game, my dear, and it won't work. Go back to the man who pays you and tell him he'll have to try more than a pretty face."

He saw how startled she looked; her eyes widening and her lips quivering. She gripped the edge of the table, as if to brace herself.

"I wanted to ask a civil question," she said. "I suppose a civil answer was too much to expect from a member of a tug's crew. From a diver who fancies himself quite a tough fellow."

She threw off the borrowed sweater and started to rise. Jim Mallory reached out and gripped her wrist. He jerked her back into the chair. Keeping his grip on her arm, he could feel her trembling with anger. He'd had a sudden inspiration. She didn't know Spike was Jim Mallory, it seemed, and so maybe Spike could play her game and learn something.

"Maybe you better talk," he said. "Go on, talk. I like the sound of your voice. Who sent you here, baby?"

But he saw by the fury in her eyes that she wouldn't talk.

(To Be Continued)

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Doesn't This Look Cool to You?



Carol Beth Lea is probably the coolest person in the country as she sets up easel near a rock-seat in a pool. She's a student at Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts at Chester Springs.

BRITISH STATESMAN

1 State.	Answer to Previous Puzzle	12 City in Nevada.
5 Antic.		13 Short branch.
10 Glass containers.		19 Plural suffix.
14 Grade.		20 Negative.
15 Sent.		23 Chew.
16 English foreign secretary.		25 Drinks.
17 Catholic society (abbr.).		28 Mother.
18 Loss.		29 Permission to come in.
21 A continent (abbr.).		30 More uncommon.
22 Edge.		31 Balance.
24 Point of the compass.		34 Lifeline.
25 Swamp.		35 Trials.
26 Part of "to be."		37 Suffix.
27 Neat.		38 Nights (abbr.).
28 Pronoun.		43 Shave again.
29 Bitter vetch.		46 Put in order.
32 Residence (abbr.).		49 To implant.
33 Ship attachment.		50 A single thing.
36 A country.		51 A prong.
39 Compass point.		52 One (Scot.).
40 Three in one.		53 Sign.
41 Thing (law).		54 Suffix.
42 Retreat.		55 Young nation-als (abbr.).
44 Skill.		57 A continent.
45 An age.		58 Incline.
46 Iron (symbol).		60 Pinnacle.
		61 Black liquid.
		64 Baby's "thank you."
		67 International language.

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OUT OUR WAY

By J. R. Williams



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WASH TUBBS



FRECKLES AND HIS FRIENDS



ALLEY OOP



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