

SERIAL STORY

THE EDGE OF DARKNESS

BY WILLIAM WOODS

NEA SERVICE, INC.

SUBMARINE OFF SHORE

CHAPTER XX

They laid old Sixtus in a plain, unpainted coffin. When it was well into the evening, and the town was clustered, silent, in its war-darkened houses, a rough, gray-coated crew gathered at Pastor Aalesen's. It seemed the whole village was there. But not a man or woman entered the church. Instead they filed through the parsonage and into a bedroom where, on the pier, stood one lighted candle; they looked at the body lying in its black suit, then pressed on and out the farther door. When they were gone, the carpenter, a taciturn, nail-chewing fellow, hammered the coffin shut. The clock in the church tower struck the curfew, nine, and the women and most of the men went home. But Lars Malten stayed. So did Dr. Stensgaard (though no one spoke to him), and Gunnar, and his young cousin, who was also a fisherman and had gone to school under Sixtus. Nils Brategaard, who owned the canning factory, and was past middle age himself, stood in the shadow of the porch in a black hat and a rough fur collar. Near him stood Knut Osterholm who, now that they had stayed after the hour, was keeping an eye out for the guard. Mortensen was there, and Kjerlof, and Kaare Jensen, the one-legged shoemaker. They shifted uneasily, and picked up the long poles on which the coffin was to be carried. Gunnar Brogga and the carpenter brought the coffin endwise out of the house and laid it on the poles. Then they started off.

It was an hour's trip, part of the way through deep snow that had drifted down onto the path. They followed the tracks of men who had gone ahead that afternoon, their torches flaring redly, the pitch trailing out billows of black smoke whenever the wind rasped downward under the eaves. Like a giant they carried him, silent in the coffin, a hundred steps for every one of his years, an instant's silence for every word he had spoken.

Each of them in that desolate hour had his separate thoughts. Osterholm of the moment when that afternoon, for the first time, he had struck his child. She had grown deathly white and said in a low voice, "If mamma were alive..." and stood there and looked at him with wide and tear-struck eyes. Gunnar trudged upward under the weight of the dead man, and wished he could talk to Solveig. The strange awe he felt was something he could have told only to his wife. Their little Gunda was sick in bed, wrapped in one of his old coats. She had had a fever that afternoon. There were others. Some of the men, too, and their wives. "A bad time to get sick," he thought.

Just below the crest of the hill they laid the coffin down on the snow and rested, breathing heavily. The trees were thinner here, and the white moon high overhead cast all their shadows in sharp relief.

Now that they were in the clear the moon gave plenty of light, so they put out their torches before they started toward the level patch of ground that jutted out to sea.

It was where Mortensen had watched two nights before, and Kjerlof the intervening night. On the farthest lip of land, there was still a hollow in the snow where they had lain.

A LITTLE to one side of a black patch of new-dug earth they set the coffin down. The wind soared cold above them with a rushing noise. And there on that lonely land they buried him. As the shovels poured clouds over the hollow boards, the pastor began to pray in a loud, monotonous voice.

The doctor was stamping his feet. Men's coats were whipping sideways about their legs. The pastor lifted his voice. "Our Father, who art in heaven..." The words were lost in the wind. Men turned their heads away, unable to bear the sting.

"Hallowed be Thy name." And at that instant, as if in a dead march, they heard the faint, nervous rumbling of drums. Gunnar stiffened and looked quickly around. "Listen," he cried.

And then one of them saw a light flicker far out on the horizon. "Gunnar! To the west!"

The drums rolled landward again. The men looked up nervously at the pastor. "Kjerlof," Gunnar whispered, "Kjerlof, the glasses?"

"What is it?" somebody cried. They crowded forward to the land's edge, and out where the black water met the sky a pinprick of light flared and was as quickly gone. A tense hope sprang up in all of them. "Gun flashes," said Gunnar, who was watching through the glasses.

Someone began to count. The drums rolled in again. "About 12 miles."

"An English ship," the doctor said, and caused them all to look at him, for it was the first word he had spoken all evening.

The old man lay with his grave only half filled up. The pastor went back, finished his prayer silently, and started shoveling in earth mixed with snow.

Gunnar, arms up, shoulders hunched forward, kept scanning the horizon with his glass. At last he turned.

"Well, Gunnar?"

"Look for yourselves."

They passed the glasses from hand to hand, and finally Kjerlof

took them, lay down in the hollow formed by his body the night before, and trained them out to where the gunfire had been. Talking excitedly, the others went slowly back to the grave. "Was it an English ship, Gunnar? What do you think?"

"It was two ships," said Malten wisely, "and firing at each other." Gunnar put a hand on his shoulder. "You did not have the glasses, Lars. But I could see that only one ship fired. The flashes never shifted the whole time. They were running in toward land."

"And it stopped firing." "What does it mean?" "Either the ship was sunk..." Osterholm started to say, when suddenly Kjerlof called to them. "Gunnar. Knut. Aircraft."

They ran back to the lookout post, and there in the moon-glittering sky they saw three Heinkels coming in fast from the south and turning out to sea.

"Ja," cried Gunnar excitedly, "it they hunt..." He snatched the glasses from Kjerlof, put them to his eyes, and waited. "Gunnar, what is it?" Gunnar. He did not move; he hardly blinked, but with a terrible and tense expectancy stood staring out to the point from which he knew his sign must come.

The bombers vanished into the darker western sky. He was still watching out to sea. "Did you ever hear of an unarmed ship off the coast in wartime?"

"No," said Malten. "No."

They heard the planes come

back, flying very low. Gunnar's face fell, and he swore, looking at them through the glasses. But then suddenly, some three miles out, he saw them circle and turn out to sea again. Gunnar's eyes were almost afloat with life. But he looked away at the ground, trying to hide his triumph. "There is an English submarine off shore," he said in a low voice.

(To Be Continued)

There were 2,858,000 horses on Canadian farms in June, 1940.

Elk in Yosemite valley are wearing new fur coats of light tan—but don't tell your wife.

A shiner is the best proof that quickness of the hand deceives the eye.

Authorized Repair Service

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THIS CURIOUS WORLD

By William Ferguson

"BLACK" BEARS
ARE FOUND IN
COLOR PHASES OF
JET-BLACK,
BROWN, GRAY,
SMOKEY
AND WHITE.

ARMY ISSUES 238
SIZES OF SHOES RANGING
FROM
4 1/2 TO 16.

**THE LAST DAY OF THE WEEK-
END IS THE FIRST DAY OF
THE WEEK!** Say
PHYLLIS PUTNAM AND
BLANCHE NELSON,
Thierville, Wisconsin.

U. S. NORTHERN OUTPOST

HORIZONTAL

1. Depicted U. S. possession.
6. Beyond it are the Islands.
13. 1416.
14. Deed.
15. Aid.
16. Pass away.
17. Spread for drying.
19. Type measure.
21. Like.
22. Metal pin.
23. Globe.
26. Edward (abbr.).
28. Wicked.
30. Negative.
32. Render harmless.
35. Within.
36. Therefore.
38. Unusual.
40. Unhappy.
41. Bustle.
42. It borders the Bering Sea.
44. Low, as a cow.
45. Upon.
46. Cloth measure.
47. Headpiece.
48. Messages.
51. Paints.
53. Written form.

Answer to Previous Puzzle

MOA
EMBERS
STAR
CABIN
STATED
AGENTS
PAC
POA
UNA
SER
LOO
SECT
LA
END
CLASP
URSA
SNEER
AMPLE
TONE
AGE
SN
ORT
CROSS
ST
ONE
AIDS
THE
LAD
PLAY
AD

MOA'S GIST

27. Doctor (abbr.).
29. Transgress.
30. One of its cities is.
31. Scent.
33. Particles of rock.
34. Mother.
36. Close.
37. Cereal grain (pl.).
39. Dormitory (colloq.).
42. Laid.
43. Fragments of pottery (var.).
49. Measure of area.
50. Spain (abbr.).
51. Direction.
52. Males.
55. Symbol for lithium.
56. It has many deposits.
59. Arm bone.
60. Organs of sight.
62. Coasting vessel (naut.).
64. Away.
67. Biblical pronoun.
69. Either.
70. "Cracker" State" (abbr.).
25. Buffaloes.

VERTICAL

1. Suitable.
2. Prevaricate.
3. South America (abbr.).
4. King's College (abbr.).
5. Devoured.
6. Expression of surprise.
7. Meadow.
8. Otherwise.
9. Upward.
10. Object of worship.
11. Feel pain.
12. Seine.
18. Perform.
20. Fermented drink.
22. Coal receptacle.
24. Royal dragons (abbr.).

COME ON WITH THAT BATTER—BUT DON'T EXPECT ME TO GUARANTEE MY COOKIN'! THIS IS A SWELL TIME TO PICK PANCAKES!

WELL, WE CAN'T REACH THE ICE BOX FOR HAM OR EGGS—I'M CONVINCED YOU USED THE VARNISH BRUSH IN OIL OR SOMETHING.

YES—OR YOU DIDN'T WASH THE SOAP ALL OFF BEFORE YOU VARNISHED THE FLOOR—IT SHOULD BE DRY IN FOUR HOURS.

Out Our Way
By J. R. Williams

WHY MOTHERS GET GRAY
J. R. Williams 12-2

IF YOU WERE TO EXPLAIN WHERE YOU'VE BEEN, DENVER, I MIGHT LOCATE THAT LADDER SO YOU CAN GET BACK IN YOUR ROOM!

IF IT'S ANY OF YOUR BUSINESS, I RODE DOWN TO MAIL A LETTER!

Red Ryder

WHAT CAME IN THE MAIL, DR. BLUNT? IT MUST BE GOOD NEWS, WHATEVER IT IS--

THEY'VE RECONSIDERED AND I'VE BEEN ACCEPTED... I'M IN THE ARMY NOW! OR I SOON WILL BE--

CONGRATULATIONS! BUT YOU GOING WILL LEAVE FOLKS IN THIS COMMUNITY PRETTY SHORT OF DOCTORS--

WELL, ER, YES-- THAT'S RIGHT-- BUT I THOUGHT YOU'D SOON BE GETTING BACK INTO PRACTICE--

Little Orphan Annie

I'D GIVE ANYTHING TO OWN THOSE SKATES... BUT I GOTTA THINK OF HILDA'S PRESENT FIRST!

SMITH--KEEP OFF THE MAIN FLOOR! AND ZIP THAT JACKET--YOU LOOK VERY UNTIDY!

MR. FUDGE!

Freckles and His Friends 12-2

NO, THIS IS WHERE I LIVE. WELL... ARE YOU GOING TO STAND THERE HOLDING ME ALL DAY?

BUT THIS ISN'T A FIRST AID STATION!

NOW THAT YOU MENTION IT, I WOULDN'T MIND IN THE LEAST. BUT TELL ME, ARE YOU ALWAYS SO FRIGID AND CONTRARY?

ONLY TO MEN

Wash Tubbs

YOU MAY REMOVE THEIR GAGS, SIEGFRIED--NO ONE COULD HEAR THEM HERE IF THEY YELLED HEADS OFF

OUR RANGERS HAVE ESTABLISHED THEIR BEACH-HEAD, YOU BETTER BE OFF SO'S YOU WON'T BE HITTING OUR OWN MEN!

OKAY, BOYS, CEASE FIRING!

Boots and Her Buddies 12-2

OUR RANGERS HAVE ESTABLISHED THEIR BEACH-HEAD, YOU BETTER BE OFF SO'S YOU WON'T BE HITTING OUR OWN MEN!

OKAY, BOYS, CEASE FIRING!

Alley Oop

GREAT CAESAR, MARTHA! MUST YOU COME SWISHING INTO MY DEN LIKE A WITCH ON A BROOM, INTERRUPTING MY PEACE?-- ONE DAY SOON I'LL BE LEAVING THE MANOR FOR A TEACHING POSITION-- COULDN'T YOU LET ME KEEP MY LAST TRYST ALONE WITH THESE RELICS OF HEROIC HOOPLES OF OTHER YEARS WHO FIRED THE SHOTS HEARD ROUND THE WORLD?

LISTEN, ARE YOU CATCHING COLD AGAIN?-- IF THAT ISN'T A FEWER TALKING YOU BELONG OVER ON THE FUR FARM WITH THOSE NAPOLEONS AND BOOK OF DOLL CUTOUTS!-- NOW PUT DOWN THAT TOY AND GET OUT WHILE I FUMIGATE THIS KENNEL!

OUR BOARDING HOUSE WITH MAJOR HOOPLE
J. R. Williams 12-2

HORSE RADISH!! YOU WERE WITH MINX MARTIN, AND FOR LYIN' YOU CAN WAKE YOUR DAD TO GET IN!

NO-- WAIT-- I WAS WITH MINX! BUT DAD MUSTN'T KNOW! PLEASE-- HE-- MUSTN'T!

OH! I MUSTN'T KNOW I GOT A DOUBLE-CROSSIN' DAUGHTER, HUM?

By Fred Harman

WHAT? ME? DON'T TALK LIKE AN ASS! HOW CAN I EVER BE ANY GOOD AS A DOCTOR, NOW? NO! I'M WASHED UP--

NO! WHY YOU SHOULD HAVE SEEN DR. ZEE OPERATE ON THAT JENKINS BOY!

EH? WHY, I HELD THE LIGHT FOR YOU-- LITTLE MORE-- OH, I COULD TAKE PULSES-- PRESCRIBE PILLS-- BUT SURGERY? NO!

YES! SURGERY! ALL YOU NEED IS AN ASSISTANT-- WHY, EVEN AN INTERN--

By Harold Gray

OH, OH-- NOW I'VE GONE AND DONE IT!

ZIP!

YOUNG MAN, WHY ARE YOU HERE?

LADY, YOU WON'T BELIEVE IT WHEN I TELL YOU!

By Blosser

HMM! I THINK I UNDERSTAND. IS THIS PICTURE YOURS?

YES, MY FIANCEE. HE WAS SHOT DOWN OVER DUNKIRK

By Crane

NOW WE SHALL ENJOY HEARING THE PIGS PLEAD FOR MERCY

FIRST I WANT TO THANK YOU FOR HELPING US OBTAIN THE PLANS OF THE BUFFINGTON BOMB RACK FOR OUR LEADER

By Martin

AWRIGHT, MEN, THIS'LL HOLD THESE MOOZY RATS FOR A WHILE-- BACK TO OUR BASE WHILE WE'RE ALL IN ONE PIECE!

By V. T. Hamlin