

# "CARIBBEAN LOOT"

By WHITMAN CHAMBERS

CHAPTER VIII

valve wide, I inhaled a dozen deep lungfuls and allowed the foul air in the suit to clear. Then I shut off the air and listened.

No sound save the swift pounding of my heart and the faint noise from the deck above. The water was still inky black and gave no indication of clearing. I realized that we were in a virtual pocket on the floor of the sea, protected from whatever slight currents there were by the deck and the superstructure, which rose on three sides of us.

It might be hours before the water cleared sufficiently for us to see one another. Hours of playing hide and seek in the darkness, with death the stake. I didn't like it a little bit.

Again I heard that faint squish as a foot was lifted from the mud. It came now, from a little to my right. I knew the other man was searching for me, moving blindly through the water, ready at the instant of contact to slash open my suit.

Well, two could play at that game. I was about to turn on my air when I heard a call from Hoffman.

"Leslie, Ray! My boat crew just signaled back that the other diver's lines are fouled. They ordered Huertas to pull him up and when he refused they grabbed the life line and tried to haul him themselves. The line is fouled, all right."

"Fair enough," I said. "So are mine. That makes us even."

"Are you crazy, Ray? Listen, guy! My men have just signaled asking if they should cut the other diver's air line. How about it? If you say the word—"

"No!" I answered shortly.

"But Lord, man! We haven't another rig. We can't send down a man to help you. If that diver cuts—"

"No! Let us alone. I refuse to allow you to murder the man by cutting his air line. He started this

thing. I'm going to finish it. It's my right and I'll see it through in my own way. That's all now. Got to have air."

I opened my valve. I heard Hoffman's protesting voice, but his words were lost in the roar of air in my ears. I smiled, despite the situation—it was a good thing Dick Hoffman was my friend; superior officers may be defied, but not often with impunity.

With my legs wide apart, my left hand stretched out like a fighter on guard, my right drawn back to plunge home my knife, I waited in the inky darkness. I had not shifted my position since I first gained my feet after that plunge down the deck. And I had no intention of moving, for I knew that when finally we came in contact, as inevitably we must, the advantage would lie with the man who was on balance with both feet on the ground.

Possibly 10 minutes passed. They seemed as many hours to me. From time to time I shut off my air and listened for the other diver. I heard nothing further, no slightest sound that would betray the Andegoyan's position.

"He's decided to play a waiting game," I reflected. "Fair enough! I can wait as long as he can."

The minutes dragged slowly by. Once or twice Hoffman tried to persuade me to allow his men to cut the native's air line. Each time I curtly refused and turned on my air to cut off further conversation.

An hour passed, an hour with every nerve on edge, every muscle tense and straining. Then I noted that a faint light was beginning to penetrate my face plate. The slowly moving currents on the floor of the sea were at work. The foiled water was gradually clearing. Another hour possibly less, and we would be able to see each other.

I was fully conscious of my danger, and thinking about it wasn't pleasant. If, when the water cleared, I chanced to have my back to the native—well, it would be just too bad. However, I reflected grimly, if the situation happened to be reversed, it would be too bad for the native.

Unless the Andegoyan's air line was cut—and I knew Hoffman would not cut it without my order—there was no way of avoiding a fight. Neither of us could escape to the surface without laboriously climbing up on deck and clearing his fouled lines, and neither of us dared make the first move.

Thus the situation while the sluggish tide moved about the foundered ship and cleared the muddy water with exasperating, nerve-racking slowness. The light that penetrated from above grew

## 26-Ounce Baby Doing Fine



The 12-inch ruler indicates the size of 2½-months-old Virginia Ross Burgess, "toy baby" of New York's Bellevue Hospital. The infant weighed one pound ten ounces at birth and was given only one chance in a thousand of surviving, but now weighs three pounds two ounces, and is believed out of danger.

stronger.

I could see my outstretched arm, weary now and cramped. My straining eyes peered this way and that, striving for a glimpse of the native. My heart throbbed under the tension of waiting. Hot blood poured through my veins and I felt exhilarated, eager, like a well-trained and confident boxer waiting for the gong. High pressure does queer things to a man.

There is no accounting for the vagaries of current at the bottom of the sea. Possibly the tide changed. Possibly the Juarto or the Whipple turned over her engines to shift her position slightly. Whatever the cause, the sluggish current that moved through that pocket in the sea was suddenly increased.

One minute I could see my outstretched arm only dimly. The next minute, the current was sweeping away the mist of silt like a sudden gust of wind clears away the smoke above an anchored ship.

I leaned forward on my toes, knife ready, every sense alert. The light grew brighter. The last of the roily water was swept away. And then, not 10 feet away, I made out the form of the other diver.

We saw one another at the same instant. Knives outthrust, we lurched forward. We moved not as two fighters might leap toward each other in a prize ring, but slowly and ponderously, hampered by our inflated suits, our weighted shoes, our heavy belts.

The native struck first, lunging like a fencer holds a foil. I must have moved instinctively; I know I didn't have time to think, to reason that I could not parry such a thrust. I dropped to my knees and caught the blow on my metal breastplate.

My own knife swung upward in a short arc. I felt and heard the rip of heavy canvas. Then, with the muddy darkness closing in on me, I dropped my knife and caught the Andegoyan's right hand with both hands.

Our helmets were touching now, and I could hear the native cursing. I knew that, although my knife had not even pricked to the man's skin, I had him.

With his suit ripped open from breastplate to belt, he could never gain the surface alive. His precious air would escape. The pressure of the sea, no longer equalized by the pressure within his suit, would force the upper part of his body into his breastplate and helmet. Divers call it a "squeeze." It isn't a pleasant thing to think about.

I hung to the native's wrist grimly, holding his knife away from my own suit, waiting for that terrific pressure of nearly 50 pounds to the square inch to do its work. I had not long to wait. The man's struggles became more and more feeble. At last they ceased altogether.

Dropping the lifeless arm, I relaxed against the perpendicular deck while I got my breath. I was completely exhausted, more from nervous strain than from physical exertion. I barely had the strength to reach up and close my air valve and call to the deck. Hoffman was still at the phones.

"Ray! Are you all right?" he shouted anxiously.

"Yes, I'm all right. I'll be coming up as soon as I clear my lines."

"Is it—all over?"

"Yes. It's all over. I'll let you know when I want a pull."

I turned on my air again. Cautiously inflating my suit until I was almost light enough to float. I pulled myself up the steep deck by my own life line. Soon above the area of murky water, I saw that both my lines and those of the native diver's had fouled on a cargo winch. I cleared all four lines without much difficulty and asked for a pull to 40 feet.

I had been down, Hoffman told me, for more than two hours.

## F. D. R.'s Train Halted; Package Put Under Bridge

WASHINGTON—President Roosevelt's special train rolled into Union Station after a 40-minute delay attributed by Secretary Stephen Early to the discovery of a package—which turned out to be empty—under a trestle on the line of travel.

The train was halted about half way between Albany and Poughkeepsie, on a return run to Washington. Early said the package was only a cheap empty jewel case which a man spotted by a track-walker apparently had tried to hide.

Early said the man, who was not caught, was observed well before the train was due at the trestle and that the trackwalker had "done an excellent piece of detective work."

tion to Jenson. He shouldn't have much trouble getting into that room. Then I'm going to turn in for an hour or so. I'm fagged out."

I went to sleep in the commandant's cabin. It was just dusk when Hoffman came in and woke me.

"Well, old socks," Dick grinned, "Jenson brought up two of your precious bars of bullion."

I swung to my feet, feeling immeasurably better after my sleep. "Good stuff! Where are they? Let's see 'em."

"Out on the wardroom table. Come on."

We went to the wardroom. Two canvas sacks lay on the table. I hefted one of them. "Boy, they're certainly heavy!"

"Ever see gold that wasn't?" Hoffman grinned.

I looked at him sharply. "I wonder."

I fumbled with the drawstring at the top of the bag. It came unfastened and I jerked the sack off the bar. The "gold bullion" was dull gray.

"Well, I'll be hanged!" Dick Hoffman cried. "It's lead!"

(To be Continued)

## Leads U. S. Eagles



An all-American Eagle Squadron of thirty-four Americans, ranging from crop dusters to society play boys, is ready to take the air for England under command of William E. G. Taylor, 35, a first lieutenant in the U. S. Marine Corps Reserve.

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