NEAL of the NAVY

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AUTHOR OF "RED MOUSE," "RUNNING FIGHT," "CATSPAW," "BLUE BUCKLE," ETC.

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At the Majestic Theatre each Friday.

SYNOPSIS.

On the day of the eruption of Mount Pelee Capt. John Hardin of the steamer Princess rescues five-year-old Annette Illington from an open boat, but is forced to leave behind her father and his valuable papers. Illington is assassinated by Hernandez and Ponto in a vain attempt to get papers which Illington has memorized but used aboard the Princess with his associate, proving his title to and telling the whereabouts of the lost island of Cinnabar. Illington's injury causes his hand to become a blunk. Thirteen years elapse. Hernandez, now an opium smuggler, with Ponto, Inez, a female accomplice, and the mindless brute that once was Illington, come to Seaport, where the widow of Captain Hardin is living with her son Neal and Annette Illington, and plot to steal the papers left to Annette by her father. Neal tries for admission to the Naval academy, but through the treachery of Joey Welcher is defeated by Joey and disgraced. Neal enlists in the navy. Inez sets a trap for Joey and the conspirators get him in their power. Annette discovers that heat applied to the map reveals the location of the lost island. Subsequently in a struggle for its possession the map is torn in three parts, Hernandez, Annette and Neal each securing a portion. Annette sails on the Coronado in search of her father. The crew mutiny, and are overcome by a boarding party from U. S. Destroyer Jackson, led by Neal. In Martinique Annette and Neal are captured and taken to a smugglers' cave to be blown up with dynamite, but are rescued by a sponge diver. Inez forges identification papers for herself as Annette. In an insurrection Neal and Annette are again captured, carried to the Sun City and Annette is offered as a sacrifice to the sun god. They are rescued by marines from the Albany.

NINTH INSTALLMENT

THE YELLOW PERIL

CHAPTER XL.

The Pests of Tortuga.

The commander of the Albany lowered his glasses. He beckoned to Neal Hardin, a gunner on his ship. Neal answered the summons and saluted.

"You may inform your friend Miss Ilington and her party that in half an hour they will be set ashore at Tortuga," he directed.

Neal started off. "One moment," added the commander. "Tell Miss Ilington that I'd like to speak to her."

Neal found Annette and delivered the message—and in a moment Annette was at the commander's side.

"Miss Ilington," said the commander, "without intruding, may I ask the purpose of your extensive peregrination?"

"Peregrination describes it," said Annette laughing, "and you may." She glanced about her—even there—a bit stealthily, and produced her chamois bag, and from it took the map—the old time-worn, yellow, tattered parchment map of the Lost Isle of Cinnibar. The commander glanced at it with interest.

"Hum," he said at length, "no longitude, no latitude."

Annette smiled. "Heat brings out the hidden inscription," she returned, "the latitude is there but you can't

Annette Ministers to the Sick.

see it—so is the longitude. I know it by heart—18 degrees 30 minutes north and 123 degrees 40 minutes west—and there, somehow, I hope to meet my father—and find his quicksilver mines."

"Pacific ocean," mused the commander, "off Mexico, Central America—South America—but not far off. There's something in my mind about that locality—what is it? I've heard talk about it somewhere. Something—I can't recall."

He returned the map. "What I desired to say, Miss Ilington," he went on, "is this—if I had my way I'd take you there. But the United States navy has other duties to perform. Yonder is Tortuga. We'll see you safe ashore—and if we find the shore isn't safe, we'll see you safe ashore some other place. I am expecting orders daily, to return. Glad to have been of service.

An hour later Annette and her party disembarked from one of the Albany's launches.

Back in the jungle, on the outskirts of the Aztec village of Corazon del Sol, a few days before, three men—accompanied by a native guide or two—had crept through the jungle toward civilization and the shore. On the second day they had reached a railway station, such as it was, and a railroad, such as it was. They found the stationmaster.

"When does the next train go?" demanded Hernandez.

The official yawned. "When she returns from Tortuga, the pestilential—possibly tomorrow afternoon."

Hernandez stamped his foot impatiently.

Hours later from a clump of trees on the outskirts of Tortuga Hernandez, Ponto and Brute peered across the bay.

Suddenly Hernandez clutched Ponto by the arm. "Look," he cried, "they come."

Through the opening in the leaves he pointed toward the wharf. Annette and her little coterie were landing on the wharf.

"Ponto," said Hernandez, "that little wildcat of a girl—she and her smooth-faced sweetheart—they have tricked us long enough. This time they shall not get away."

CHAPTER XLI.

Pestilence.

As Annette's party passed along, single file, up the narrow overgrown shore road, slapping and swatting mosquitoes to their heart's content, they heard a quick step behind them. They turned. An officer closing up their rear, saluted.

He was the ship's surgeon. He strode on with brisk pace. "Let me get ahead there if you please," he said, "there's something that I don't like about this place—I want to have a look."

Scarcely had he said it before a native woman darted out of a tumble-down hut—one of many that fronted on the shore road.

"Madre di Dios," she cried in shrill accents. "Americanos—help—succor. For the love of heaven."

She kneeled by the roadside and as the surgeon swung along, she clasped him by the knees.

"My child—my man child—my only one," she wailed, in the Spanish tongue, "he is at death's door. Help, Senor, senora, senorita—help."

The surgeon lifted the woman to her feet. He spoke soothingly in Spanish to her, and turned and told the others what she said.

"Go on, everybody," he cried, pointing up the road, "let nobody follow me. Go your way."

Annette and her little party proceeded forthwith to the hotel—a flimsy affair, rejoicing in the cognomen of the Inn of the Spanish Don.

Hut after hut the surgeon entered, glancing quizzically into the face of some sufferer—nodding solemnly with pursed-up lips—left tablets and directions, and then went on his way.

Fihally he found his way to the center of the town and made an inquiry. He was directed to a somewhat formal looking building.

The surgeon strode on into the house. He found the mayor in his pajamas, smoking a cigar.

The surgeon seated himself and accepted a palmleaf fan. "Sorry," he said, "but your place reeks with yellow fever—you've got an epidemic on your hands—"

Mayor Ramon Carrol started up. "Madre di Dios," he cried, "what—not another one. They will impeach me—it is ruin. Say not so."

The surgeon nodded. "Don't get excited, Senor Carrol," he returned, "fortunately the Albany is in the roadstead. I'll fetch over a hospital force. We'll do what we can. Have you got a piece of paper—I want half a dozen sheets. That's what I came here for."

He got them and went on his way. His way lay past the Inn of the Spanish Don. He stopped.

"Here, Gunner Hardin," he cried, "come out in the road and spray me with this." Neal sprayed him. The surgeon sat down in the hotel office and harangued Annette's party. He harrangued them from a distance. "You people," he said, "are in no danger—not even Mrs. Hardin—if you follow my instructions.

"The important thing," went on the surgeon, "is the mosquitoes. It isn't likely the bites you've got have done you any harm. I'll leave you tablets anyhow, to ward the fever off. But I'll do more—I'll have mosquito netting fetched over from the ship and you can sleep under it at night. Now I want help—"

He distributed the sheets of official paper he had obtained from Mayor Ramon Carrol.

"Sit down—all of you—anywhere," he commanded, "and write out what I say. It'll be in Spanish—and it's got to be plain. I'll spell the words so you won't go wrong. Begin."

And then he dictated the warning that was posted that afternoon in all the public places of the town.

NOTICE.

All people are hereby warned that yellow fever is carried by mosquitoes. Avoid being bitten if you can and kill all the mosquitoes you find.

RAMON CARROL, Mayor.

In co-operation with U. S. S. Albany.

"Gunner," he said to Neal, "you're on shore leave, I know. But I'd be glad if you'd buckle to and tack these up in town. I'll go back to the ship and get my squad and a few supplies. Until then good-by."

That afternoon Ramon Carrol, the mayor of Tortuga, stood, now clad in his official uniform, in the middle of his doorway, surrounded by a clamoring mob.

"See, now, my people," he exclaimed, "there is no cause for alarm. See what I am doing for you—what other mayor has done so much? Note the magnificent cruiser—of the United States—the Albanez— I have sent for it—it has come—at my request. Upon that cruiser are the most wonderful specialists in the world—they are among you—see, yonder—see their white coats—here, there, everywhere. Out of my private fortune (which is vast, my children) out of my private fortune I am paying all these specialists. . . ." He sighted suddenly a figure on the outskirts of the crowd. His manner changed. The figure was that of the surgeon of the Albany—he pressed forward and joined the mayor.

"Ah, senor," said the mayor, speaking in a low tone and rapidly, "I have been telling my people—see I have congregate them for the purpose—how noble, beneficent your country is—how you have, free of all charge and without expense—come to our prosperous little community and have fight the pestilence. They are grateful."

The surgeon snorted. "Excuse me for a moment," he exclaimed. He darted down the street and caught a young woman by the arm just as she was entering an adobe hut.

The young woman was Annette Ilington.

"You young renegade," he cried, sternly, "I thought I told you to keep away—hands off—you'll kill yourself."

From inside there came a low moaning sound—a wail.

Annette broke away from the surgeon's grasp. "Gee whiz," he said, "you're strong."

The wail inside turned to speech—quavering Spanish—

"Little white angel," cried the voice, "come, little white angel—and lay your hands on me. Come quick, before I die."

CHAPTER XLII.

Pernicious Plots.

It was after dark. Out of a clump of trees upon a hill there sauntered forth a man—this man was Ponto. He picked his way carefully—warily. Before he knew it he was where he wanted not to be—in the streets of the town. Once in, he started out, but something attracted his attention. A little crowd of men and women stood about a placard tasked upon the side of a hut. Ponto read it swiftly.

Ponto raised his eyebrows significantly. He had heard rumors—this confirmed them.

"Mosquitoes," he said softly to himself, "mosquitoes." He tucked the word mosquitoes back in the inmost recesses of his mind and went his way. Skirting the town he reached the Inn of the Spanish Don. From the rear he spied a figure in a window. He whistled softly.

A woman in the window started slightly, and peered out.

Ponto clambered up to the window and noiselessly tore the net from it, immediately replacing it as best he might. He sniffed the air.

"Ah," whispered Inez Castro softly, "I am smeared with crude oil—face and hands and ankles. I am immune. Here, you smear also, Ponto."

"Where," queried Ponto, "is the map?"

"So far as I determine," answered Inez, "she has it still."

"You cannot get it?"

"Not unless I show my hand," said Inez.

Ponto shook his head. "Not," he returned, "until the chief says the word. What of mine host?" he queried.

"A blood-sucker," answered Inez; he'll do anything for coin."

"Summon him," said Ponto.

The proprietor was summoned. At the door, at sight of Ponto he started back in surprise. But Ponto held his finger on his lips, and exhibited a multitude of coins in the open palm of his hand. The proprietor advanced and quickly appropriated the coin.

"More later," whispered Ponto, "sit down—confer with us."

An hour later Ponto—a black patch on the background of black night itself—stealthily pushed open the door of a hut in the middle of a clump of small trees on a hill.

A man inside, waking suddenly, as suddenly sprang up, knife in hand.

"Soft, capitan," whispered Ponto, "it is but I."

The two men struck a light and sat down facing each other.

Ponto spoke in measured tones—every word that he uttered from now on contained portent. He knew what he was about. In the back of his head he had an idea—baleful but useful.

"Yes," he said, "the mosquitoes carry the pestilence. One might call it the mosquito sickness just as well. And at dusk, then is their time—then they bite the worst—"

"Go on," commanded Hernandez, grimly. He felt that Ponto was holding something back.

"Little White Angel," Whined the Native.

"The little white angel," went on Ponto as though reciting a lesson.

"Eh," cried Hernandez.

"Our young friend of the map—that is what they call her—everywhere. The little white angel. She goes about from hut to hut—from fever-stricken patient to fever-stricken patient—yet she survives. But she will answer any call."

He leaned forward. "You understand, capitan," he said, "she will answer any call. Let sickness call to her, she goes."

"Ah," said Hernandez, "that is well. And the gunner—where is he?"

"Everywhere—he, too, will answer any call."

"Um," said Hernandez, "go on—go on."

Ponto's eyes gleamed. "Ah," he said, "one mile out of town—and through this clump of bushes where we sit—down in yonder hollow—"

"Go on," commanded Hernandez, "what lies down in the hollow by this hill?"

Ponto shaded his mouth with his hand. "Whisper," he returned, "whisper. No one—not even he—shall hear."

For a moment he whispered into the ear of Hernandez. When he had finished Hernandez rose to his feet—with glittering eyes.

"It's here," he said, in his turn tapping his forehead. "I have it. By heaven, this time they shall not get away."

CHAPTER XLIII.

Perilous Places.

Ten days later Annette Ilington, now called the little white angel even by the shore squad from the cruiser, felt her skirts plucked by a clutching hand. She looked down. A native—a mere bag of bones in a jumble of rags—crouched at her feet.

"Little white angel," whined the native in Spanish—and Annette had learned enough of the tongue to listen to appeals for help—"my daughter—just like you—so kind, and pretty. She lies at death's door. You have food, you have medicine—and you can lay your hand on her. She will get well. What you have done for others you can do for her."

An officer from the Albany turned the corner. Annette's heart leaped. The man was Neal Hardin.

"Neal," she cried, "listen to him—talk to him for me. Ask him where his daughter is—I'll go unless it's too far."

Neal spoke to the man in his native language. The man jabbered back eloquently.

"Only a short distance out of town," said Neal, "over that hill."

"I'll go," said Annette.

Neal pondered for a moment. "All right," he said, "and I'm free just now. I'll go with you."

The native leaped to his feet with alacrity and ran crookedly ahead of them. Outside of the town they plunged into undergrowth and then through woods—but the ground was dry and the trail was fairly good.

At the door of a hut the native paused and motioned them in.

Neal and Annette entered side by side. In a dark corner was a huddled shape under a filthy cloth. Annette sprang toward it. At that instant the native dropped to the ground and clutched Neal's ankles tightly in each hand. At the same instant the huddled figure in the corner leaped to its feet—it was no stricken girl—it was Hernandez, with the light of triumph in his eyes. And at the same instant Ponto and the brute sprang into the fray. . . .

It was only a matter of a moment before Annette and Neal found themselves bound and lying on the floor. Neal, after a few gasps for breath, smiled at Annette forlornly.

Hernandez stamped his foot. "I will give you two minutes to produce the map of Lost Isle," he said, "and if it is not then forthcoming. . . ."

He paused. "Go on," said Neal, "what then?"

At the end of two minutes he thrust his watch back into his pocket. He signed to Ponto. "The helmets," he commanded, "and the gloves."

Ponto produced two sets of crudely-fashioned head nets and hand gloves made of mosquito netting. Inez had told him how to make them. Hernandez donned one set and Ponto donned the other.

Neal and Annette, each with a guard of two behind, were forced to leave the hut, and forced down the trail on the farther side of the small hill.

After fifteen minutes' walk they halted. Ponto spoke sharply to the native who was with them.

"Lead on," he commanded; "you know the way."

"Ah," said the native, "I and mighty few beside. Be careful now."

Ponto turned to Hernandez. "This," he said, "is the cause of all the pestilence—this is the quagmire at the bottom of our hill—mosquito swamp—"

"There are not so many mosquitoes here," returned Hernandez, "not enough in fact."

The native grinned. "Not now—but at night—at night they are legion—they are fiends, foul fiends. And they breed pestilence. On. Follow me."

Back at the Inn of the Spanish Don Neal Hardin's mother began to grow restive—Annette had not returned—Neal was nowhere to be seen. Once the surgeon stepped in and inquired for Neal. After that Mrs. Hardin made inquiries of her own. No one knew where he was—no one had seen the little white angel. . . .

Out in the swamp Neal and Annette were conducted to a small, swamp islet, green with dark growth—upon which there was barely foothold.

"This," said the native to Hernandez, "is the place of which I told. From this there is no escape.

Hernandez bowed. "You have chosen pests and pestilence, your friends," he said. "Good-night, and pleasant dreams. Now take us back."

Back at the hut, the native was bowing low. Hernandez poured much coin into his hand. "And mind," said Hernandez, "close mouth for two days at any rate, you dog."

In one way he was close-mouthed. In another way he . . . well, he started for the nearest tavern, and bent his elbow with great frequency and every time he bent his elbow he opened his mouth—and to some purpose . . . after awhile he began to treat—and talk—and show his money. And then, to prove he was an honest man and no thief, like others there, he began to tell just how he had become so very, very rich in such a short space of time . . . they listened to him open mouthed. Among them were men, sober men, whose families had been ministered to by the angel sent from heaven—a little white angel. One of these men suddenly sprang to his feet and grabbed the boaster by the scruff of the neck—and, notwithstanding struggles, carried him, pell mell, from the wine shop. . . .

Back in the Inn of the Spanish Don, the proprietor was protesting that he had not seen Gunner Neal—had not learned of the whereabouts of the little white angel—Senorita Annette Ilington. A dozen bluejackets were on hand—the surgeon was there. Mrs. Hardin, wild-eyed in the glare of the smoky lamps, was sobbing hysterically. Inez looked on calmly. Suddenly into the midst of this company was propelled an intoxicated native—a bag of bones clad in a jumble of rags. Another native pounced upon him and shook him like a terrier shakes a rat.

"This man, senor," said the sober native, "curses on him—he knows where the little white angel is. Come, he will guide us there. Tell them, you dog."

The dog told. He didn't want to, but neither did he like the prick of bayonets through his hide—so he told, and then he led the way. By the time they had reached the outskirts of the town, the whole town was with them.

Hernandez, in his hut, heard the commotion. He knew in his bones what it was. "Come on," he cried to Ponto "we're going back into that swamp—I swore they should not get away—you swore it, too."

"How will we get there," shivered Ponto.

"The Brute is a brute," said Hernandez, "where he has been once, he can always find the way. Come. Lead on—lead on."

The Brute, under the usual stimulant of cuffs and blows, led on. Ponto followed. At the edge of the swamp, Hernandez, with a wicked smile, dropped silently to one side and crawled behind a clump of bushes.

Out on that fateful islet in the center of the quagmire, Neal, his eyes heavy lidded with sleep, was holding Annette in his arms. She was oblivious. Suddenly he woke her up and sprang to his feet, drawing her with him.

"Someone comes," he whispered. No sooner had he said it than the Brute was upon them. He seized Neal as in a vise. But Neal—a trickster in a wrestling match—wriggled out of his grasp. He seized a heavy stick and lunged at the Brute. The Brute engaged him once again. Ponto tore the stick away from Neal, and whirling it about his head, brought it down with a resounding crack upon Neal's head.

Neal dropped like a log.

Ponto, knowing the reason for haste, turned and looked about him. He was puzzled by Hernandez' absence, but this was no time to wonder. He drew a knife and started toward Annette.

"This time," he cried, "you shall not get away."

Annette ran, crookedly, hysterically, across the small islet. In another instant she was waist deep in the quagmire, and still sinking. Ponto from terra firma, lunged at her with his knife—but his lunge fell short. Annette struggled away—tried to reach some place of safety. But her way was blocked by a waterlogged piece of wood. Against this she rested wide-eyed, watching Ponto's efforts—sinking, sinking all the time.

For the first time she screamed. The Brute, busy with Neal who lay upon the ground, heard her and swung around. He saw what was happening. Ponto has raised his knife on high. Failing to strike—he was about to hurl it at the girl—and Ponto's aim was perfect.

". . . never get away," snarled Ponto. At that instant the Brute seized a heavy stone in his hand, and

He Spied a Figure in a Window.

hurled it with tremendous force at him. It grazed his head, stunning him. The Brute, grasping in his hand a sapling, leaned far out from the shore of the little islet and with one hand grasped Annette, drew her, dripping from the quagmire and set her on dry land.

. . . Behind him he heard shouts. In a frenzy of fear, he seized Ponto's body, slung it over his shoulder, and then, with the instinct of a brute and not a man, he leaped lightly, but surely, from bog to bog, and disappeared along some pathless trail.

Ten minutes later Annette, in the midst of a motley crowd of tars and natives—and in the glare of many torches, was answering Neal's whispered question.

"No, dear," she whispered back, "they didn't get the map. They couldn't get it. Last week I gave it—for safe keeping—to the commander of the Albany."

And then she fainted dead away.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)