

ABIE AN' SLATS



Serial Story—
Secret Voyage
By JOSEPH L. CHADWICK

CHAPTER TWELVE
JIM'S head reeled. A curious numbness stole through the whole of his strong body. He could feel the water, though, seeping in through his rubber suit because of the falling air pressure. He wondered, in a vague way, if he'd suffocate or drown first.

He tried to call Curly on the phone, but his voice was only a thick weak sound and the buzzing in the earphones told him nobody was listening. His tongue was a thick wad in his mouth, his eyes had weights on them, and his nose began to bleed. His lungs felt caving in.

This then, was what the end was like, 240 feet down. It was all pain and horror, then blackness like this . . .

THERE was something solid under him when he came to. He opened aching eyes and found himself in his cabin, lying on his bunk, with someone sitting silently beside him. He turned his head toward the man.

It was the man of the careful voice and careless money.

He grinned, a friendly sort of grin, without malice. "Have a drink, Mallory baby, and you'll be all right."

A bottle was held to Jim's lips. The liquor burned his throat. He lay awhile, then said hoarsely, "So we meet again, Halloran."

"Right. And under different circumstances. This time, old man, I do the talking. My crew has yours covered with guns that will shoot. We had to knock out that black boy and the bald guy and lock them in the fo'c'ste. The others didn't want trouble. You're a sneaky guy, Mallory, going after a million in gold unarmed. Did you underestimate me?"

"Not that," Jim said. He sat up, even though his head spun. "I knew you were tough and smart. You see, I didn't know about the gold."

"You didn't? Then Forbes was right. He said you only wanted to salvage the Sonora's non-existent cargo, but I didn't believe it. I thought you had wind of the gold from the girl."

"From what girl?"

"Hammond's secretary. She had been doing a lot of running after you back at Miami Beach."

"Did she know about the gold?"

"Maybe, and maybe not. I think she suspected something. You see, after the Sonora was lost she asked a lot of questions of the Coast Guard. They couldn't tell her anything, so she wrote to the couple of white men among the crew. But they had been paid a bonus to keep quiet, and they stuck to their story that the Sonora went down in a storm."

Jim said, "She wasn't working with you?"

Halloran looked surprised. "No. She was trying to find out what happened to the Sonora because of me. You see, she and I were engaged."

"JIM SWUNG his legs off the bunk and sat facing the man. Halloran had an automatic pistol balanced on his right knee. There wasn't a chance of jumping him."

"Now that you're taking over the gold I suppose you'll be going back to her."

"No," came the slow reply. Halloran was frowning now. "I'm a mug, Mallory. Mary Larsen is a swell kid, straight as they come. I—well, I'm a sucker for women. I fell for that little Cuban nurse who worried over me in the hospital, and I married her."

He paused still, frowning, then said, "Look, Mallory, do me a favor. When you see her again tell her about the Cuban nurse. Will you? She knows I'm alive, and I don't want her to go on with this."

"I'll tell her, Halloran. I've got a lot to tell her."

Jim said, "Yes. But I treated her pretty shabbily. I'll make it down. Jim took advantage of his

OUR BOARDING HOUSE

