

Tucholsky Wagner Zola Scott
Turgenev Wallace Fonatne Sydon Freud Schlegel
Twain Walther von der Vogelweide Fouqué Friedrich II. von Preußen
Weber Freiligrath Frey
Fechner Fichte Weiße Rose von Fallersleben Kant Ernst Richthofen Frommel
Engels Fielding Hölderlin Eichendorff Tacitus Dumas
Fehrs Faber Flaubert Eliasberg Eliot Zweig Ebner Eschenbach
Feuerbach Maximilian I. von Habsburg Fock Ewald Vergil
Goethe Elisabeth von Österreich London
Mendelssohn Balzac Shakespeare Rathenau Dostojewski Ganghofer
Trackl Stevenson Lichtenberg Doyle Gjellerup
Mommsen Thoma Tolstoi Lenz Hambruch Droste-Hülshoff
Dach Thoma von Arnim Hägele Hanrieder Hauptmann Humboldt
Karrillon Reuter Verne Rousseau Hagen Hauff Baudelaire Gautier
Garschin Defoe Hebbel Hegel Kussmaul Herder
Damaschke Descartes Schopenhauer George
Wolfram von Eschenbach Darwin Dickens Grimm Jerome Rilke Bebel Proust
Bronner Campe Horváth Aristoteles Voltaire Federer Herodot
Bismarck Vigny Gengenbach Barlach Heine Grillparzer Georgy
Storm Casanova Lessing Tersteegen Gilm Gryphius
Chamberlain Langbein Lafontaine Iffland Sokrates
Brentano Strachwitz Claudius Schiller Bellamy Schilling Kralik Raabe Gibbon Tschechow
Katharina II. von Rußland Gerstäcker Raabe Gleim Vulpius
Löns Hesse Hoffmann Gogol Morgenstern Goedicke
Luther Heym Hofmannsthal Klee Hölty Kleist
Roth Heyse Klopstock Puschkin Homer Mörike Musil
Luxemburg La Roche Horaz Kraus
Machiavelli Kierkegaard Kraft Kraus Moltke
Navarra Aurel Musset Lamprecht Kind Kirchhoff Hugo
Nestroy Marie de France Laotse Ipsen Liebknecht
Nietzsche Nansen Lassalle Gorki Klett Leibniz Ringelntz
Marx vom Stein Lawrence Irving
von Ossietzky May Michelangelo Knigge Kock Kafka
Petalozzi Platon Pückler Liebermann Korolenko
Sachs Poe de Sade Praetorius Mistral Zetkin



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Smugglers' Reef

John Blaine

Imprint

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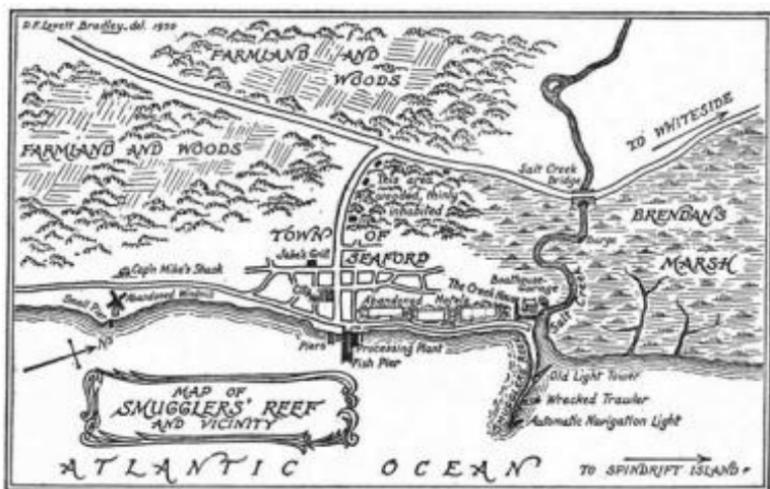
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MAP OF SMUGGLERS' REEF AND VICINITY

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[1]

SMUGGLERS' REEF

CHAPTER I

Night Assignment

"Adventure," Rick Brant said, "is kind of hard to define, because what may be adventure to one person may be commonplace to another." He took a bite of cake and stretched his long legs comfortably. "Now, you take flying with Scotty. That's the most adventurous thing I do."

Mr. and Mrs. Brant and Jerry Webster looked at Don Scott, the object of Rick's jibe, and waited for his reply. Verbal warfare between the two boys was a usual feature of the evening discussions on the big front porch of the Brant home on Spindrifft Island.

Scotty, a husky, dark-haired boy, grinned lazily. "You've proved your own point," he returned. "Flying with me is adventure to you but safe travel to anyone else. I'd say the most adventurous thing you do is drive a car."

Mrs. Brant, an attractive, motherly woman, poured another cup of coffee for Jerry Webster. The young reporter had started the discussion by stating wistfully that he wished he could share in some of the Brant ad [2] ventures. "Why do you call Rick's driving adventurous?" she asked.

"The dictionary says so," Scotty replied. "One definition of adventure is 'a remarkable experience.'"

Hartson Brant, Rick's scientist father, grinned companionably at his son. "I agree with Scotty. Not only is Rick's driving a remarkable experience, but it fits the rest of the definition: 'The encountering of risks; hazardous enterprise.'"

Jerry Webster rose to Rick's defense. "Oh, I don't know. Rick always gets there."

"Sure he does," Scotty agreed. "Of course his passengers always have nervous breakdowns, but he gets there."

Rick just grinned. He felt wonderful tonight. When you came right down to it, there was nothing that matched being at home with the family in the big house on Spindrift Island. The famous island off the New Jersey coast was home for the scientific foundation that his father headed, and for the scientist members. It was home for Scotty, too, and had been since the day he had rescued Rick from danger, as told in *The Rocket's Shadow*. As junior members of the foundation, Rick and Scotty had been included in a number of experiments and expeditions. Rick wouldn't have missed a one of them, and if opportunity offered he would go again with just as much eagerness. But it was nice to return to familiar surroundings between trips. More than once, during lonely nights in far places, his thoughts had turned to evenings just like this one with the family and perhaps a close friend like Jerry gathered on the porch after dinner. [3]

Rick, Scotty, and Barbara Brant had only recently returned from the South Pacific where they had vacationed aboard the trawler *Tarpon* and had solved the mystery of *The Phantom Shark*. Barby had gone off to summer boarding school in Connecticut a few days later. Chahda, the Hindu boy who had been with the Brants since the Tibetan radar relay expedition described in *The Lost City*, had said good-bye to the group at New Caledonia and had returned to India. The scientists, Zircon, Weiss, and Gordon, were away doing research.

Suddenly Rick chuckled. "Speaking of adventure, I'll bet the biggest adventure Barby had on our whole trip to the Pacific was eating *rosette sauté* at the governor's in Noumea."

"What's that?" Jerry asked.

"Bat," Scotty replied. "A very large kind of fruit bat. Barby thought it was wonderful until she found out what it was."

"I should think so!" Mrs. Brant exclaimed.

"It tasted good," Rick said. "Something like chicken livers." He grinned. "Anyway, I sympathized with Barby. I felt kind of funny myself when I found out what it was."

Hartson Brant, an older edition of his athletic son, looked at the boy reflectively. He knocked ashes from his pipe. "Seems to me

you've been pretty quiet since you got back, Rick. Lost your taste for excitement? Or are you working on something?"

"Working," Rick said. "We scientists must never rest. We must labor always to push back the frontiers of ignorance." He put a hand on his heart and bowed with [4] proper dramatic modesty. "I am working on an invention that will startle the civilized world."

"We will now bow our heads in reverent silence while the master tells all," Scotty intoned.

"I know," Jerry guessed. "You're working on a radar-controlled lawn mower so you can cut the grass while you sit on the porch."

"That's too trivial for a junior genius like Rick," Scotty objected. "He's probably working on a self-energizing hot dog that lathers itself with mustard, climbs into a bun, and then holds a napkin under your chin while you eat it."

"Not a bad idea," Rick said soberly. "But that isn't it."

"Of course not," Hartson Brant put in. "You see, I happen to know what it is, due to a little invention of my own—an electronic mind reader."

Scotty gulped. "You didn't tell Mom what happened to those two pieces of butterscotch pie, did you? I wanted her to blame it on Rick."

Rick asked unbelievably, "An electronic mind reader? All right, Dad, what am I working on?"

"A device to penetrate the darkness."

Rick stared. His father had scored a hit. He demanded, "How did you know?"

"My new invention," Hartson Brant said seriously. "Oh, and one other clue. Yesterday morning the mail brought me a bill for a thousand feet of 16-millimeter infrared motion-picture film."

So that was it. Rick grinned. "I hope your new invention told you I asked the film company to send the bill to me and not to you."

"It did. The bill actually was addressed to the Spin [5] drift Foundation, attention Mr. Brant. Since I didn't know which Mr. Brant was meant, I opened it. Don't worry, Rick. I'll let you pay it."

"Thanks, Dad," Rick said. "But don't make any sacrifices. You can pay it if you want to."

"Don't want to," Hartson Brant replied. "I haven't the slightest use for motion-picture film."

"Because Rick has the only motion-picture camera on the island," Scotty finished. He frowned at his friend. "Keeping secrets, huh?"

"I'm not sure it will work," Rick explained. He hated to brag about an idea and then have it turn out to be a dud. Consequently, he seldom mentioned that he was working on anything until he knew it would be successful.

"What does the film have to do with penetrating the darkness?" Jerry Webster inquired.

Rick caught the look of interest on his father's face. "Ask Dad," he said. "The electronic mind reader probably has told him all about it."

"Of course." The scientist chuckled. "Rick is planning to take movies at night without lights."

Jerry looked skeptical. "How?"

Rick stood up. "Long as we've started talking about it, I may as well show you."

The others rose, too. As they did so, a shaggy little dog crawled from under Rick's chair where he had been napping.

"Dismal and I will put the cake away," Mrs. Brant said.

At the sound of his name the pup rolled over on his back and played dead, his only trick. Rick bent and [6] scratched his ribs in the way the pup liked best. "Go with Mom," he commanded. "Come on, the rest of you. Maybe I can get some free advice from the director of the Spindrift Foundation."

Hartson Brant smiled. "If you're looking for a technical consultant, Rick, my price is very reasonable."

"It would have to be," Rick admitted ruefully. "I've spent my entire fortune on this thing."

"The whole dollar," Scotty added.

The boys' rooms were on the second floor in the north wing of the big house. But where Scotty's was usually neat as a barracks squad room, the result of his service in the Marines, Rick's was usually a clutter of apparatus. Living on Spindrift Island with the example of his father and the other scientists to follow, it was natural that he should be interested in science. He was more fortunate than most boys with such an interest, because he was permitted to use the laboratory apparatus freely and his part-time work as a junior technician gave him spending money with which to buy equipment. Another source of revenue was his little two-seater plane. He was the island's fast ferry service to the mainland.

His room was neater than usual at the moment because he had not bothered to connect most of his apparatus after returning from the South Pacific. The induction heater that he used for midnight snacks was in a closet. His automatic window opener was not in use, nor was his amateur radio transmitter.

He opened a workbench built into one wall and brought out a motion-picture camera. It was a popular make with a type of lens mount that permitted fast [7] switching of lenses. It used one-hundred-foot rolls of 16-millimeter film. He put the camera on the table, then from a cupboard he brought out what appeared to be a searchlight mounted on top of a small telescope.

"That's a sniper scope!" Scotty exclaimed.

Rick nodded.

"No reason why it shouldn't work very well, Rick," Hartson Brant said.

Jerry Webster sighed. "Excuse my ignorance. What's a sniper scope?"

"They were used during the last war," Scotty explained. He picked up the unit and pointed to the light, which was about the size and shape of a bicycle head lamp. "This searchlight throws a beam of black light. Rick would call it infrared. Anyway, it's invis-

ble. The telescope is actually a special telescopic rifle sight which will pick up infrared. You can use the thing in total darkness. Mount it on a rifle and then go looking for the enemy. Since he can't see the infrared, he thinks he's safe. But you can see him through the 'scope just as though he had a beam of white light on him."

"I see," Jerry said. "Where are the batteries?"

Rick brought out a canvas-covered case that looked like a knapsack. It had a crank on one side and a pair of electrical connections. "It's not a battery," he explained. "It's a small, spring-driven dynamo."

Jerry nodded. "I get it now. You rig this thing on the camera, which is loaded with infrared film. The film registers whatever the infrared searchlight illuminates. Right?"

"That's the idea," Hartson Brant agreed. "But it isn't as simple as that, is it, Rick?" [8]

"Far from it. I have to determine the effective range, then I have to run a couple of tests to find out what exposure I have to use, and then I have to find the field of vision of the telescope as compared with the field of the lens. A lot depends on the speed of the film emulsion. That will limit the range. The searchlight is effective at eight hundred yards, but I'll be lucky if I can get a picture at a quarter of that."

"Where did you get the sniperscope?" Scotty wanted to know.

"By mail. I read an ad in a magazine that advertised a lot of surplus war equipment, including this."

"You might have said something about it," Scotty reproached.

Rick grinned. "You were too busy working on the motorboats. I knew you couldn't have two things on your mind at once."

Since the boys returned from vacation, Scotty had been overhauling the engines on the two motorboats which were used, along with Rick's plane, for communication with Whiteside, the nearest town on the mainland.

"I have a book downstairs that you'll find useful, Rick," Hartson Brant said. "It gives the comparative data on lenses. It may save you some figuring."

"Thanks, Dad," Rick replied. "I may have to ask your help in working out the mathematics, too. Anyway...." He stopped as the phone rang.

In a moment Mrs. Brant called. "Jerry, it's your paper."

"Something must have popped!" Jerry ran for the door. [9]

Rick hurried after him, Scotty and the scientist following. The Whiteside *Morning Record*, for which Jerry worked, must have had something important come up to phone Jerry on his night off.

In the library, Jerry picked up the phone. "Webster. Oh, hello, Duke. Where? Well, why can't one of the other guys cover it? Okay, I'll be on my way in a minute. How about a photographer? Hold the phone. I'll ask him." He turned to Rick. "Duke wants to know if you can take your camera and cover a story with me. A trawler went ashore down at Seaford."

Rick nodded quick assent. The little daily paper had only one photographer, who evidently wasn't available. It wouldn't be the first time he had taken pictures for Duke Barrows, the paper's editor.

"He'll do it. We're on our way." Jerry hung up. "Have to work fast," he said. "We start printing the paper at midnight."

"It's nine now," Scotty said.

Rick ran upstairs and opened the case containing his speed graphic, checking to be sure he had film packs and bulbs, then he snapped the case shut and hurried downstairs with it. Jerry and Scotty were waiting at the door.

"Don't stay out too late," Mrs. Brant admonished.

Dismal whined to be taken along.

"Sorry, boy." Rick patted the pup. "We'll be home early, Mom. Want to come along, Dad?"

"Not tonight, thanks," the scientist replied. "I'll take advantage of the quiet to catch up on my reading."

In a moment the three boys were hurrying toward the hook-shaped cove in which the motorboats were [10] tied up. Although Spindrift Island was connected to the mainland at low tide by a rocky tidal flat, there was no way for a car to cross. The cove was reached by a flight of stairs leading down from the north side of the island. Elsewhere, the island dropped away in cliffs of varying heights and steepness to the Atlantic.

They ran down the stairs and got into the fastest of the two boats, a slim speedboat built for eight passengers. Rick handed Scotty his camera case and slid in behind the wheel. While Jerry cast off, he started the engine and warmed it for a moment. Then as Jerry pushed the craft away from the pier, he backed out expertly, spun the boat around, and roared off in the direction of the Whiteside landing.

"Let's have the story," Scotty shouted above the engine's roar.

"A fishing trawler from Seaford ran aground," Jerry shouted in reply. "Duke figures it's an unusual story because those skippers have been going out of Seaford for a hundred years without an accident. There's no reason why one of them should run onto well-charted ground in clear weather."

Scotty squinted at the sky. "It's not exactly clear weather. There's a moon just coming up, but it's kind of hazy out."

"Yes, but you couldn't call it bad weather, either," Jerry pointed out. "Not from a seaman's viewpoint, anyway."

"Where did this trawler run aground?" Rick asked.

"Arm of land that extends out into the sea above Seaford," Jerry replied. "It's called Smugglers' Reef."

[11]

CHAPTER II

Cap'n Mike

Jerry's car was an old sedan that had seen better days, but it could still cover ground at a good speed. The macadam highway unrolled before the bright head lamps at a steady rate while the beams illuminated alternate patches of woods and small settlements.

There were no major towns between Whiteside and Seaford, but there were a number of summer beach colonies, most of them in an area about halfway between the two towns. The highway was little used. Most tourists and all through traffic preferred the main trunk highway leading southward from Newark. They saw only two other cars during the short drive.

Many months had passed since Rick's last visit to Seaford. He had gone there on a Sunday afternoon to try his hand at surf casting off Million Dollar Row, a stretch of beach noted for its huge, abandoned hotels. It was a good place to cast for striped bass during the right season.

"Smugglers' Reef," he said aloud. "Funny that a Sea [12] ford trawler should go ashore there. It's the best-known reef on the coast."

"Maybe the skipper was a greenhorn," Scotty remarked.

"Not likely," Jerry said. "In Seaford the custom is to pass fishing ships down from father to son. There hasn't been a new fishing family there for the past half century."

"You seem to know a lot about the place," Rick remarked.

"I go down pretty often. Fish makes news in this part of the country."

Scotty pointed to a sign as they sped over a wooden bridge. "Salt Creek."

Rick remembered. Salt Creek emptied into the sea on the north side of Smugglers' Reef. It was called Salt Creek because the tide backed up into it beyond the bridge they had just crossed. He had caught crabs just above the bridge. But between the road and the

sea there was over a quarter mile of tidal swamp, filled with rushes and salt-marsh grasses through which the creek ran. At the edge of the swamp where Salt Creek met Smugglers' Reef stood the old Creek House, once a leading hotel, now an abandoned relic.

A short distance farther on, a road turned off to the left. A weathered sign pointed toward Seaford. In a few moments the first houses came into view. They were small, and well kept for the most part. Then the sedan rolled into the town itself, down the single business street which led to the fish piers.

A crowd waited in front of the red-brick town hall. Jerry swung into the curb. "Let's see what's going on." [13]

Rick got his camera from the case, inserted a film pack, and stuffed a few flash bulbs into his pocket. Then he hurried up the steps of City Hall after Jerry and Scotty. Men, a number of them with the weathered faces of professional fishermen, were talking in low tones. A few looked at the boys with curiosity.

An old man with white hair and a strong, lined face was seated by the door, whittling on an elm twig. Jerry spoke to him.

"Excuse me, sir. Can you tell me what's going on?"

Keen eyes took in the three boys. "I can. Any reason why I should?" The old man's voice held the twang peculiar to that part of the New Jersey coast.

"I'm a reporter," Jerry said. "*Whiteside Morning Record*."

The old man spat into the shrubbery. "Going to put in your paper that Tom Tyler ran aground on Smugglers' Reef, hey? Well, you can put it in, boy, because it's true. But don't make the mistake of calling Tom Tyler a fool, a drunkard, or a poor seaman, because he ain't any of those things."

"How did it happen?" Jerry asked.

"Reckon you better ask Tom Tyler."

"I will," Jerry said. "Where will I find him?"

"Inside. Surrounded by fools."

Jerry pushed through the door, Rick and Scotty following. Rick's quick glance took in the people waiting in the corridor, then shifted to a young woman and a little girl. The woman's face was strained and white, and she stared straight ahead with unseeing eyes. The little girl, a tiny blonde perhaps four years old, held tightly to her mother's hand. [14]

Rick had a hunch. He stopped as Jerry and Scotty hurried down the corridor to where voices were loud through an open door. "Mrs. Tyler?" he asked.

The woman's head lifted sharply. Her eyes went dark with fear. "I can't tell you anything," she said in a rush. "I don't know anything." She dropped her head again and her hand tightened convulsively on the little girl's.

"Sorry," Rick said gently. He moved along the corridor, very thoughtful, and saw that Jerry and Scotty were turning into the room from which voices came. Mrs. Tyler might have been angry, upset, tearful, despondent, or defiant over the loss of her husband's trawler. Instead, she had been afraid in a situation that did not appear to call for fear.

He turned into the room. There were about a dozen men in it. Two were Coast Guardsmen, one a lieutenant and the other a chief petty officer. Two others were state highway patrolmen. Another, in a blue uniform, was evidently the local policeman. The rest were in civilian clothes. All of them were watching a lean, youthful man who sat ramrod straight in a chair.

A stocky man in a brown suit said impatiently, "There's more to it than that, Tom. Man, you've spent thirty years off Smugglers'. You'd no more crack up on it than I'd fall over my own front porch."

"I told you how it was," the fisherman said tonelessly.

Rick searched his face and liked it. Tom Tyler was perhaps forty, but he looked ten years younger. His face was burned from wind and sun, but it was not yet heavily lined. His eyes, gray in color, were clear and direct as he faced his questioners. He was a tall man; that was apparent even when he was seated. He had a [15] lean, trim look that reminded Rick of a clean, seaworthy schooner.

The boy lifted his camera and took a picture. The group turned briefly as the flash bulb went off. They glared, then turned back to the fisherman again.

The town policeman spoke. "You know what this means, Tom? You not only lost your ship, but you're apt to lose your license, too. And you'll be lucky if the insurance company doesn't charge you with barratry."

"I've told you how it was," Captain Tyler repeated.

The man in the brown suit exploded. "Stop being a dadblasted fool, Tom! You expect us to swallow a yarn like that? We know you don't drink. How can you expect us to believe you ran the *Sea Belle* ashore while drunk?"

"I got no more to say," Tyler replied woodenly.

Jerry turned to Rick and Scotty and motioned toward the door. Rick led the way back into the corridor. "Getting anything out of this?" he asked.

"A little," Jerry said. "Let's go out and talk to that old man."

"Lead on," Scotty said. "I've always wanted to see a real news hound in action."

Rick dropped the used flash bulb into a convenient ash tray, replaced it with a new one, and reset the camera. At least he had one good picture. Tom Tyler, framed by his questioners, had looked somehow like a thoroughbred animal at bay.

Outside the door, the old man was still whittling. "Get a real scoop, sonny?" he asked Jerry.

"Sure did," Jerry returned. He leaned against the doorjamb. "I didn't get your name." [16]

"Didn't give it."

"Will you?"

"Sure. I ain't ashamed. I'm Captain Michael Aloysius Kevin O'Shannon. Call me Cap'n Mike."