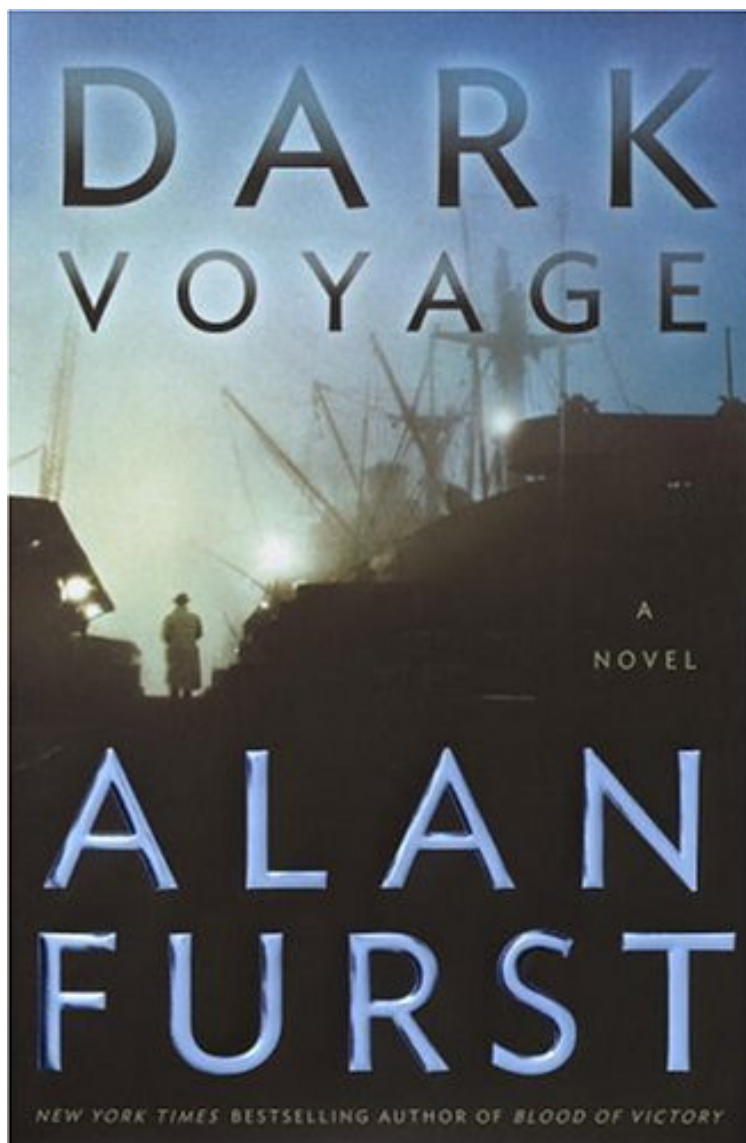


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# Dark Voyage: A Novel



*Par Alan Furst*  
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## Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurIn the first nineteen months of European war, from September 1939 to March of 1941, the island nation of Britain and her allies lost, to U-boat, air, and sea attack, to mines and maritime disaster, one thousand five hundred and ninety-six merchant vessels. It was the job of the Intelligence Division of the

Royal Navy to stop it, and so, on the last day of April 1941 . . .May 1941. At four in the morning, a rust-streaked tramp freighter steams up the Tagus River to dock at the port of Lisbon. She is the Santa Rosa, she flies the flag of neutral Spain and is in Lisbon to load cork oak, tinned sardines, and drums of cooking oil bound for the Baltic port of Malm.But she is not the Santa Rosa. She is the Noordendam, a Dutch freighter.

Under the command of Captain Eric DeHaan, she sails for the Intelligence Division of the British Royal

Navy, and she will load detection equipment for a clandestine operation on the Swedish coast a secret mission, a dark voyage. A desperate voyage. One more battle in the spy wars that rage through the back alleys of the ports, from elegant hotels to abandoned piers, in lonely desert outposts, and in the souks and cafes of North Africa. A battle for survival, as the merchant ships die at sea and Britain the last opposition to Nazi Germany slowly begins to starve. A voyage of flight, a voyage of fugitives for every soul aboard the Noordendam. The Polish engineer, the Greek stowaway, the Jewish medical officer, the British spy, the Spaniards who fought Franco, the Germans who fought Hitler, the Dutch crew itself. There is no place for them in occupied France; they cannot go home. From Alan Furst whom The New York Times calls America's preeminent spy novelist there is an epic tale of war and espionage, of spies and fugitives, of love in secret hotel rooms, of courage in the face of impossible odds. Dark Voyage is taut with suspense and pounding with battle scenes; it is authentic, powerful, and brilliant. .com A new historical espionage thriller by Alan Furst is always cause for celebration, and in his eighth novel, the talented writer who's made a particular time and place his own--Europe on the eve of World War II--takes his fortunate readers aboard the tramp ship Noordendam. Its captain, E.M. DeHaan, is recruited by Dutch Naval Intelligence to smuggle arms and spies past the watchful eyes of the German Navy. Like most of Furst's protagonists, DeHaan is at first a reluctant hero, certain that disguising the Noordendam as a Spanish freighter flying the flag of a neutral nation that won't attract the attention of the Nazi authorities will never work. The plot takes DeHaan, his crew and a handful of passengers that include a refugee family, a beautiful woman, and a mysterious Russian through the dangerous waters of the Mediterranean, the North Sea, and the Baltic. Putting DeHaan ashore in the exotic port cities affords Furst an opportunity to evoke the sights, smells and atmosphere of Alexandria's waterfront alleys, Lisbon's intrigue-filled cafes, and Tangier's shadowy souks, which he does with consummate skill. Maintaining a measured but never lagging pace, Furst takes the Noordendam on its final dangerous voyage past the Baltic Fleet in a tour de force by a writer who's inherited the mantle of Eric Ambler and Graham Greene and wears it as if it had been custom tailored for him. --Jane Adams

**Extrait UNDER SPANISH FLAG** In the port of Tangier, on the last day of April, 1941, the fall of the Mediterranean evening was, as always, subtle and slow. Broken cloud, the color of dark fire in the last of the sunset, drifted over the hills above the port, and street lamps lit the quay that lined the waterfront. A white city, and steep; alleys, souks, and cafes, their patrons gathering for love and business as the light faded away. Out in the harbor, a Spanish destroyer, the *Almirante Cruz*, stood at anchor among the merchant steamers, hulls streaked with rust, angular deck cranes hard silhouettes in the dusk. On board the tramp freighter Noordendam, of the Netherlands Hyperion Line, the radio room was like an oven and the Egyptian radio officer, known as Mr. Ali, wore only a sleeveless undershirt and baggy silk underdrawers. He sat tilted back in his swivel chair, smoking a cigarette in an ivory holder and reading a slim, filthy novel in beautifully marbled covers. From time to time, he would remove his gold spectacles and wipe his face with a cloth, but he hardly noticed. He was used to the heat, the effect of a full day's sun on the ship's steel plate, and, come to that, used to these ports, hellholes always, Aden or Batavia, Shanghai or Tangier, and he was much absorbed in the noisy pleasures of the people in his novel. On the wireless telegraph before him, a gray wall of switches and dials, the ether crackled with static, his duty watch had less than an hour to run, and he was at peace with the world. Then, from the static, a signal. On the BAMS frequency--Broadcasting for Allied Merchant Ships--and, he thought, far out at sea. He set the book face down on the work shelf below the radio, put on the headphones, and, with delicate thumb and forefinger, adjusted the dial for the strongest reception. Q, Q, Q, Q. For this message he didn't need the BAMS codebook--not since May of 1940 he didn't. It meant I am being attacked by an enemy ship and he'd heard it all too often. Here it came again, the operator fast and heavy on the key. And again, and again. Poor man, he thought. His fellow radio operator on some battered old merchantman, tapping out his final message, his ship confronted by a surfaced submarine or an E-boat raider, the shot already across her bows or her engine room torn apart by a torpedo. What Mr. Ali could do, he did. Opened the radio logbook, noted the date and the time, and recorded the anonymous cry for help. DeHaan, captain of the Noordendam, would see it when he put the ship to bed for the night--he never failed to check the logbook before going to his cabin. If they had been at sea, Mr. Ali would have notified the captain immediately but now, in port, there was no point. Nothing they could do, nothing anyone could do. It was a big ocean, British sea power concentrated on the convoy routes, there was nobody to challenge the enemy or pick up survivors. The ship would die alone. The signal went on for a time, fifty seconds by the clock on the radio array, and likely went on longer still, perhaps sending the name of the ship and its coordinates, but the transmission disappeared, lost in the rising and falling howl of a jammed

frequency. Bastards. Mr. Ali watched the clock; five minutes, six, until the jamming stopped, replaced by empty air. He was taking the headphones off when the signal returned. Once only, and weaker now, the ship's electrical system was almost gone. Q, Q, Q, Q, then silence. DeHaan, at that moment, was ashore--had just left the gangway of the harbor launch and approached a battle-scarred Citroen parked on the pier, taxi tarzan painted on its door, its Moorish driver stretched out in the back, hands clasped beneath his head, for his evening nap. DeHaan looked at his watch and decided to walk. The rue Raisuli was supposedly just beyond the Bab el Marsa, Gate of the Port, which he could see in the distance. He had been invited--ordered, he thought, that was the honest word--to a dinner given by a man called Hoek. Other than the fact that such things never happened, a perfectly normal request, so, one better go. Put on the shore uniform--double-breasted navy blazer over a soft gray shirt and dark wool trousers, and the tie, blue with a silver spaniel--and go. He walked purposefully along the quay, thanking his stars as he passed a Norwegian tanker berthed at the pier and caught the rich aroma of aviation fuel. Of all the ways he didn't want to die. DeHaan was tall, seemed tall, and lean, with strength in the arms and shoulders. Regular features: a North Sea face, gray eyes, sometimes cold, sometimes warm, with seafarer's lines webbed at the corners, and rough, fair hair, almost brown, its first gray--he'd just turned forty-one--visible in sunlight. A certain lift to this face; pride, maybe, of profession not position--good as any man, better than none. Thin lips, not far from a smile, that Dutch set of the mouth which found the world a far more eccentric, and finally amusing, place than its German versions to the east. He had big hands, appreciated by women, who'd told him about it. Surprise to DeHaan, that idea, but not unwelcome. Should he have worn his uniform? The Hyperion Line had one, plain and blue, for their captains, traditional on the first day of a voyage and never seen again, but DeHaan disliked the thing. It wasn't, to him, a real uniform, and a real uniform was what he'd wanted. In May of 1940, when the conquering Germans had stripped out the filing cabinets of the Royal Dutch Navy administration building in The Hague, they'd surely found, and just as surely refiled for their own purposes, the 1938 application of one DeHaan, Eric Mathias, virtually begging for a commission, and service on a destroyer, or a torpedo boat, or anything, really, that shot. He walked past the railway station and, a few minutes later, entered the narrow streets behind the Bab el Marsa gate--another world. Fragrant, the Maghreb. Stronger than he remembered; twenty-five years at sea, he thought, and too many ports. Fresh orange peel on the cobbled street, burning charcoal and--grilled kidney? He rather thought it was, nothing else quite smelled like that. Ancient drains, cumin, incense. And hashish, nothing else quite smelled like that. A scent encountered now and again aboard the Noordendam, but one mostly ignored it, as long as the men weren't on watch. He was himself, as it happened, not entirely innocent of such things, the stuff had been one of what Arlette called her vile little pleasures. One of many. They'd used it one night in her room in the rue Lamartine, balancing tiny morsels on a burning cigarette end in an ashtray and sucking up the smoke through a tightly rolled hundred-drachma note he'd found in his pocket. Then they'd made ferocious and wildly chaotic--Ah, this! No, this! But what about this?--love, after which he'd fallen dead asleep for ten hours then woke to make Arlette a colossal Dutch pancake swimming in butter. In the rue Raisuli, Arab music from a dozen radios, and two Spanish Guardia, in their Napoleonic leather hats, strolling along in a way that told the world they owned the street. Which, officially, they did. Tangier had been since 1906 an International Zone, a free port trading in currency, boys, and espionage. Now Spain had taken control of the city, incorporated into Spanish Morocco, which meant that Casablanca was French, ruled from Vichy, and Tangier Spanish, and neutral, and governed by Madrid. But DeHaan and everybody else knew better. It was, like Paris, one of those cities emphatically owned by the people who lived in it. And how, DeHaan wondered, did Mijnheer Hoek fit into all this? Trader? Emigre? Decadent? All three? Number 18 in the rue Raisuli turned out to be a restaurant, Al Mounia, but not the sort of restaurant where important people gave private dinners. DeHaan parted the bead curtain, stepped inside, and stood there for a moment, looking lost. This can't be right, he thought. Tile floor, bare wooden tables, a few customers, more than one reading a newspaper with dinner. Then a man he took to be the proprietor came gliding up to him, DeHaan said, "Monsieur Hoek?" and that turned out to be the magic phrase. The man clapped his hands twice and a waiter took DeHaan through the restaurant and out the back, into a courtyard bounded by tenements where life went on at full pitch; six stories of white laundry hung on lines strung across the sky, six stories of families eating dinner by open windows. From there, DeHaan was led through a damp tunnel into a second courtyard, an unlit, silent courtyard, then down an alley to a heavy, elaborately carved door. The waiter knocked and went on his way as a voice from within called out, "Entrez." Inside, a small, square room with no windows and, except for a ceiling painted as the night sky--blue background, gold dots for stars, a silver sickle moon on the horizon--there was only fabric.

Carpets covered the walls and the floor, a circle of hassocks was gathered around a low table with a brass tray that occupied most of its surface. As DeHaan entered, a man seated in a wheelchair--made entirely of wood except for rubber tires on the spoked wheels--extended his hand and said, "Captain DeHaan, welcome, thank you for coming, I am Marius Hoek." Hoek had a powerful grip. In his fifties, he was pale as a ghost, with sheared fair hair and eyeglasses that went opaque, catching the light of a lamp in the corner, as he looked up at DeHaan. Rising from their hassocks to greet him, the other dinner guests: a woman in a chalk-stripe suit and a dark shirt, a man in the uniform of a Dutch naval officer, and Wim Terhouven, owner of the Netherlands Hyperion Line--his employer. DeHaan turned to Terhouven, as though for explanation, and found him much amused, all sly grin, at the prospect of the famously composed Captain DeHaan, who couldn't imagine what the hell was going on and showed it. "Hello, Eric," Terhouven said, taking DeHaan's hand in his. "The bad penny always turns up, eh?" He patted DeHaan on the shoulder, don't worry, m'boy, and said, "May I present Juffrouw, ah, Wilhelm?" Formally, DeHaan shook her hand. "Just Wilhelm will do," she said. "Everybody calls me that." She wore no makeup, had fine, delicate features, was about thirty-five years old, he guessed, with thick, honey-gold hair cut very short and parted on the side. "And," Terhouven said, "this is Commander Hendryk Leiden." Leiden was broad and bulky, bald halfway back, with a drinker's purplish nose, a sailor's wind-chapped complexion, and a full beard. "Good to meet you, Captain," he said. "Come sit down," Terhouven said. "Enjoy the walk over here?" DeHaan nodded. "It's the same restaurant?" "The private room--who says it has to be upstairs?" He laughed. "And, on the way, a taste of the real Tangier, assassins behind every door." "Well, that or couscous." Wilhelm liked the joke. "It's good, Al Mounia, a local favorite." DeHaan lowered himself onto a hassock as Terhouven poured him a glass of gin from an old-fashioned ceramic jug. "Classic stuff," he said. "They sell this in Tangier?" Terhouven snorted. He had a devil's beard and the eyes to go with it. "Not this they don't. This came across on a trawler in May of '40 and flew with me all the way from London, just for your party. Real Geneva, made in Schiedam." He tapped the label, hand-lettered and fired into the glazed surface. "My friends," Leiden said, "with your permission." He stood, glass held high, and the others, except for Hoek, followed his example. Leiden paused for a long moment, then said, "De Nederland." In one voice, they echoed his words, and DeHaan saw that Hoek, knuckles white where his hand gripped the arm of the chair, had raised himself off the seat to honor the toast. They drank next to victory, Hoek's offering, and, from Wilhelm, success in new ventures, as Terhouven caught DeHaan's eye and gave him a conspiratorial flick of the eyebrows. Then it was up to DeHaan, who'd been desperate for the right words from the moment Leiden lifted his glass. Finally, as the others turned to him in expectation, he said, quietly, "Well then, to absent friends." This was conventional and wellworn but, on that night, with those friends in a Europe held by barbed wire and searchlights, it came back to life. Terhouven said, "Amen to that," and began to refill the glasses. When he was done he said, "I propose we drink to Captain Eric DeHaan, our guest of honor, who I know you will come to appreciate as I have." DeHaan lowered his eyes, and was more than grateful when the toast had been drunk and the group returned to conversation. Terhouven told the story of his flight from London, on a Sunderland flying boat, his fellow passengers mostly men with briefcases who were rather pointedly disinclined to make conversation. A nighttime journey, hours of it, "just waiting for the Luftwaffe." But then, "the most beautiful dawn sky, somewhere off the coast of Spain, the sea turning blue beneath us." Hoek glanced at his watch. "Dinner should appear any moment now," he said. "I took the liberty of ordering--I hope you don't mind, it's better if you give them time." A good idea, it seemed, they were happy enough to wait, the table talk wandering here and there. You had to be Dutch, DeHaan thought, to know that the gin was at work. Not much to be seen on the exterior, everyone calm and thoughtful, attentive, in no hurry to take the floor. They were, after all, strangers, for the most part, together for an evening in a foreign city, who shared little more than citizenship in a conquered nation, and its corollary, a certain quiet anger common to those who cannot go home. "Years since I've been back," Hoek said to Terhouven. "Came out here in, oh, 1927. Looking for opportunity." An unvoiced naturally lingered at the end of his sentence--Holland was a trading nation which had, for centuries, used the whole world as its office, so commerce in foreign climes was something of a national commonplace. "And I found a way to buy a small brokerage, in ores and minerals, then built it up over the years. They mine lead and iron, in the south, and there's graphite, cobalt, antimony, asbestos. That's in addition to the phosphates, of course. That pays the rent." From the Hardcover edition.