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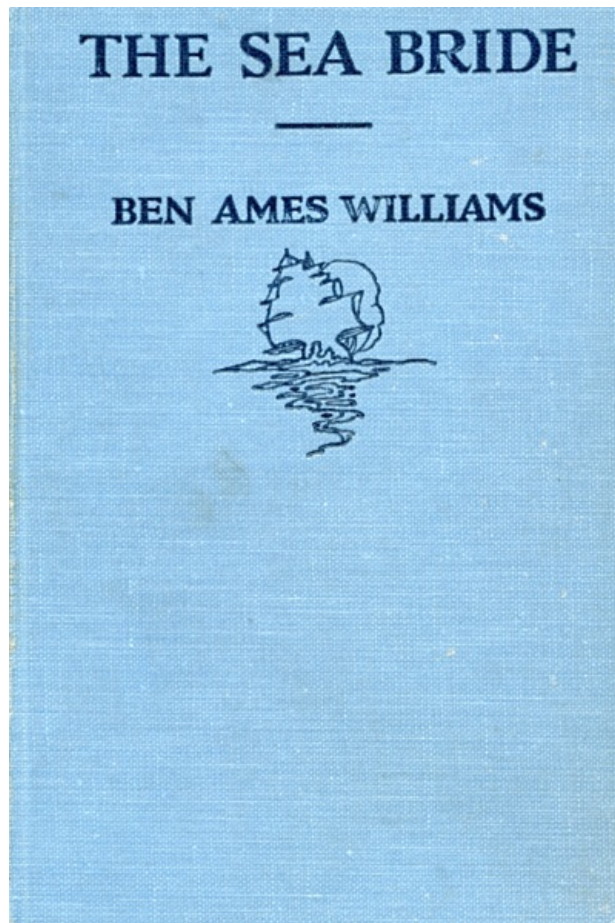
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THE SEA BRIDE

BY

BEN AMES WILLIAMS

AUTHOR OF

ALL THE BROTHERS WERE VALIANT



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THE SEA BRIDE

I

[Pg 1]

They were to be married before the open fire, in the big living-room of the old house on the hill. Upstairs, Bess Holt was helping Faith dress. Faith sat before the old, veneered dressing table with its little mirror tilting on the curved standards, and submitted quietly and happily to Bess's ministrations. Bess was a chatterbox, and her tongue flew as nimbly as the deft fingers that arranged Faith's veil. Faith was content; her soft eyes resting on her own image in the little mirror were like the eyes of one who dreams dreams and sees visions. She scarce heard Bess at all....

Only once she turned and looked slowly about this low-ceiled old room that had been her home: the high, soft bed, with its canopy resting on the four tall posts; the frame of that canopy was split in one place; she had wound it with wire to strengthen it. How many mornings, waking pleasantly as day stole in the little windows, she had seen that twist of wire first of all as her eyes opened. She used to look at it, and dream a little, before she rose.... One window, with its white hangings, was just at the foot of the bed. The cool, salt-laden winds from the sea used to whisper in there and soothe her sleep. She had always loved the sea. Would she always love it so, when there was nothing else but the sea on every hand?... When she should have sailed away with big Noll Wing....

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The high chest of drawers, the little dressing table, the delicate chairs.... These were all old and familiar friends—whom she was leaving behind her. And she loved them, loved the ugly paper on the wall, loved the old daguerreotypes above the chest of drawers, loved the crooked sampler by the never-used fireplace. Loved them....

She smiled happily and confidently. She loved them ... but she loved big Noll Wing better. She would not regret....

Below stairs, her father, Jem Kilcup, talked with Dr. Brant, the minister. They spoke of wind and weather, as men do whose lives lie near the sea. They spoke of oil, of ships, of tedious cruises when the seas were bare of whales.... The minister marked the old harpoon that stood in the corner by the fire, and Jem told how with that battered iron he had struck his last whale, a dozen years before.... A good tale. The whale fought hard, left Jem with a crushed chest that drove him from the sea. Their talk wandered everywhere save where their thoughts were; they did not speak of Faith, nor of Noll Wing. Jem could not bear to speak of his girl who was going from his arms to another's; the minister understood, and joined with him in a conspiracy of silence. Only, when Bess came whispering down to say that, Faith was ready, old Jem gripped Dr. Brant's arm and whispered harshly into the minister's ear: "Marry them tight, and marry them hard, and true, Doctor. By God...."

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Dr. Brant nodded. "No fear, my friend," he said. "Faith is a woman...."

"Aye," said Jem hoarsely. "Aye; and she's made her bed. God help her."

Things began to stir in the big house. Noll Wing was in the back room with Henry Ham, who had sailed with him three voyages, and would back him in this new venture. Young Roy Kilcup had found them there.... Old Jem had a demijohn of cherry rum, thirty years unopened. He sent it in to Noll.... And Noll Wing smacked his lips over it cheerfully, and became more amiable than was his custom. Roy Kilcup caught him in this mood and took quick vantage of it. When the three came in where Jem and Dr. Brant were waiting, Roy crossed and gripped his father's arm. "I'm going," he whispered. "Cap'n Wing will take me, as ship's boy. He's promised, dad."

Old Jem nodded. His children were leaving him; he was past protesting.

"I'm ready," Roy told his father. "I'm going to pack, right after they're married." He saw Dr. Brant smile, and whispered: "Be quick as you can, sir."

The minister touched the boy's shoulder reassuringly. "Quiet, Roy," he said. "There's time...."

People were gathering in the living-room from the other parts of the house. They came by twos and threes. The men were awkward and uneasy, and strove to be jocular; the women smiled with tears in their eyes. When one woman surrenders herself to one man, all women weep. Bess Holt, alone, did not weep. She was to play the organ; she sat down upon the stool and spread her pretty, soft skirts about her, and looked back over her shoulder to where Jem stood, in the hall, at the stair foot. He was to sign to her when Faith was ready. Dr. Brant crossed and stood beside the fireplace where the logs were laid, ready for the match. Noll Wing and Henry Ham took stand with him. Ham, the mate, was a big man, and an awkward one. His high collar irked him; his perilously shaven chin moved restlessly back and forth in the effort to ease his tortured throat. He coughed sepulchrally; and a woman giggled in the stillness, and wept quietly into her handkerchief.

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Cap'n Noll Wing stood easily, squarely upon his spread legs. He, too, was a big man; his chest swelled barrel-like; his arms stretched the sleeves of his black coat. Cap'n Wing was seldom seen without a cap upon his head. Some of those in that room discovered in this moment for the first time that he was bald. The tight, white skin upon his skull contrasted unpleasantly with the brown of his leather cheeks. The thick hair about his ears was tinged with gray. Across his nose and his firm cheeks, tiny veins drew lacy patterns of purple. Garnished in wedding finery, he was nevertheless a man past middle life, and no mistaking. A man almost as old as Jem Kilcup, and wedding Jem Kilcup's daughter. An old man, but a man, for all that; stout, and strong, and full of sap. He had the dignity of mastery; he had the bearing of a man accustomed to command and be obeyed. Roy Kilcup watched this man with eyes of worship.

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Bess, watching over her shoulder, saw old Jem look up the stairs, then turn and nod awkwardly to her. She pressed the keys, the organ breathed, the tones swelled forth and filled the room. Still, over her shoulder, she watched the door, as did every other eye. They saw Faith appear there, by her father's side; they saw her hand drop lightly on his arm. Jem moved; his broad shoulders brushed the sides of the door. He brought his daughter in, and turned with her upon his arm toward where Noll Wing was waiting.

Faith's eyes, as she came through the door, swept the room once before they found the eyes of Cap'n Wing and rested there. That single glance had shown her Dan'l Tobey, behind the others, near the window; and the memory of Dan'l's face played before her as she moved toward where Noll waited. Poor Dan'l. She pitied him as women do pity the lover they do not love. She had been hard on Dan'l. Not her fault; but still the truth. Hard on Dan'l Tobey.... And misery dwelt upon his countenance, so that she could not forget, even while she went to meet Noll Wing before the minister.

Janie Cox dropped her handkerchief and dove for it desperately, as Faith and Jem passed where she stood. Janie's swift movement was outrageously conspicuous in that still room. Faith looked toward her, and saw poor Janie crimson with embarrassment, and smiled at her comfortingly.

When she looked forward again, she found herself at Noll Wing's side, and Dr. Brant was already speaking....

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When they made their responses, Noll in his heavy voice of a master, and Faith in the level voice of a proud, sure woman, her eyes met his and promised him things unutterable. It is this speaking of eyes to eyes that is marriage; the words are of small account. Faith pledged herself to Noll Wing when she opened her eyes to him and let him look into the depths of her. A woman who loves wishes to give. Faith gave all herself in that gift of her quiet, steady eyes. Cap'n Wing, before them, found himself abashed. He was glad when the word was said, when the still room stirred to life. He kissed Faith hurriedly; he was a little afraid of her. Then the others pressed forward and separated them, and he was glad enough to be thrust back, to be able to laugh, and jest, and grip the hands of men.

The women, and some of the men, kissed Faith as she stood there, hanging on her father's arm. Her eyes flickered now and then toward Noll, her Noll Wing now. But she could not always be watching him. Too many others came to speak with her. Dan'l Tobey came; Dan'l with his round moon-face, and his freckles, and his sandy hair.... Dan'l was only a little older than herself; a chubby, strong young man.... Little more than a boy, but a man, too.... Two cruises behind him....

He was going out as second mate with Cap'n Wing, this afternoon. Faith knew Dan'l loved her. She was pleasantly sorry, and at the same time secretly glad. No woman is completely sorry that she is beloved. Faith told herself she must help Dan'l get over it, on this cruise that was to come. She must.... She decided, while she spoke to him, that she must find a wife for Dan'l. What married woman is not a matchmaker? Faith had now been a married woman for seven minutes by the tall clock a-ticking in the corner....

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Dan'l gave way to others; and Bess Holt cried in dismay, "Faith, the fire was never lighted!"

It was true. In the swift moments before Faith came downstairs, no one had remembered to touch a match to the kindling under the smooth, white birch logs in the great fireplace. When Faith saw this, she felt a sudden, swift pang of disappointment at her heart. She loved a fire, an open fire, merrily blazing.... She had always dreamed of being married before this great fire in her father's home. She herself had chosen these logs, and under her eye her brother Roy had borne them into the house and laid them upon the small stuff and kindling she had prepared. She had wanted that fire to spring to life as she and Noll were married; she had thought of it as a symbol of the new life that was beginning for Noll. She was terribly disappointed....

In that first pang, she looked helplessly about for Noll. She wanted comfort pitifully.... But Noll was laughing in the doorway, talking with old Jonathan Felt, the owner of his vessel. He had not heard, he did not see her glance. Bess Holt cried:

"Somebody light it quick. Roy Kilcup, give me a match. I'll light it myself. Don't look, Faith! Oh, what a shame...."

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Roy knew how his sister had counted on that fire. "I'll bet Faith doesn't feel as though she were really married," he laughed. "Not without a fire going.... Do you, Faith? Better do it over, Dr. Brant...."

Some one said it was bad luck; a dozen voices cried the some one down. Then, while they were all talking about it, round-faced Dan'l Tobey went down on his knees and lighted the fire that was to have illumined Faith's wedding.

Faith, her hand at her throat, looked for Noll again; but he and old Jonathan had gone out to that ancient demijohn of cherry rum.... Dan'l was looking hungrily at her; hungry for thanks. She smiled at him. They were all pressing around her again....

It was little Bess Holt who set them moving, at last, down to the wharf. Bess was the stage manager that day; every one else was too busy with his or her own concerns. She whisked Faith away upstairs to change her dress, and scolded the others out of the house.... All save Jem Kilcup and Roy. Roy had packing of his own to do; he was flying at it like a terrier. Jem would stay as long as he might with Faith. Noll, and Jonathan Felt, and Noll's officers went to play host at the wedding supper on the decks of the *Sally Sims*....

Faith's luggage had already gone aboard. When she and Jem and Bess reached the wharf, the others were at the tables, under the boathouse, aft. They rose, and pledged Faith in lifted glasses.... Then Faith sat down beside her husband, at the head of the board, and old Jem settled morosely beside her. They ate and drank merrily.

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Faith was very happy, dreamily happy. She felt the big presence of her husband at her side; and she lifted her head with pride in him, and in this ship which he commanded. He was a man.... Once or twice she marked her father's silence; and once she touched his knee with her hand lightly, in comfort.... Cap'n Wing made a speech. They called on Jem, but Jem was in no mind for chatter. They called on Faith; she rose, and smiled at them, and said how happy she was, and touched her husband's shoulder proudly....

Roy came, running, after a time.... And a little later, the tug whistled from the stream, and Cap'n Wing looked overside, and stood up, and lifted his hands.

"Friends," he said jocosely, "I'd like to take you all along. Come if you want. But—tide's in. Them as don't want to go along had best be getting ashore."

Thus it was ended; that wedding supper on the deck, in the late afternoon, while the flags floated overhead, and the gulls screamed across the refuse-dotted waters of the Harbor, and the tide whirled and eddied about the piles. Thus it was ended; their chairs scraped upon the deck; the boards that had been set upon boxes and trestles to make tables and seats were thrust aside or overturned. They swept about Faith, where she stood at her husband's side, arm linked in his, against the rail....

Old Jem kissed her first of all, kissed her roundly, crushing her to his breast; and she whispered, in his close embrace: "It's all right, dad. Don't worry.... All right.... I'll bring you home...."

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He kissed her again, cutting short her promise. Kissed her, and thrust her away, and stumped ashore, and went stockily off along the wharf and out of sight, never looking back. A solitary figure; somewhat to be pitied, for all his broad shoulders and his fine old head.

The others in their turn, little Bess Holt last of all. Bess, now that her tasks were done, had her turn at tears. She wept happily in Faith's arms. Faith did not weep. She was too happy for even the happiest of tears. She patted Bess's brown head, and linked arms with the girl while Bess climbed to the wharf, and they kissed again, there....

Then every one waited, calling, laughing, crying, while the *Sally Sims* was torn loose from her moorings. Cap'n Wing was another man now; he was never a man to leave his ship to another, Faith thought proudly. His commands rang through the still air of late afternoon; his eye saw the hawsers cast off, saw the tug take hold....

The *Sally Sims* moved; she moved so slowly that at first one must watch a fixed point upon the wharf to be sure she moved at all. Roy was everywhere, afire with zeal in this new experience; his eyes were dancing. Faith stood aft, a little way from her husband, calling to those upon the wharf. The tug dragged the *Sally* stern first into the stream, headed her around....

Last calls, last cries.... The individual figures on the wharf's end slowly merged into one mass, a mass variegated by the black garments of the men, by the gayer fabrics which the women wore. This mass in turn, as the *Sally* slipped eastward toward the sea, became a dot of color against the brown casks which piled the wharf. Faith took her eyes from it to glance toward her husband; when she looked back it was hard to discover the dot again. Presently it was gone....

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Men were in the rigging, now, setting the big, square sails. The wind began to tug at them. The voice of the mate, Mr. Ham, roared up to the men in profane commands. Cap'n Wing stood stockily on wide-spread legs, watching, joining his voice now and then to the uproar.

The sea, presently, opened out before them, inviting them, offering all its wide expanses to the *Sally Sims'* blunt bow. The *Sally* began to lift and tilt awkwardly. The tug had long since dropped behind; they shaped their course for where the night came up ahead of them.... They sailed steadily eastward, into the gathering gloom....

Cap'n Wing bawled: "Mr. Tobey." And Dan'l came aft to where Faith stood with her husband. He did not look at her, so that Faith was faintly disquieted. The captain pointed to the litter of planks and boxes and dishes and food where the wedding supper had been laid. Faith watched dreamily, happily.... She had loved that last gathering with her friends.... There was something sacred to her, in this moment, even in the ugly débris that remained....

But not to Cap'n Wing. He said harshly, in his voice of a master:

"Have that trash cleared up, Mr. Tobey. Sharp, now."

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"Trash?" Faith was faintly unhappy at the word. Dan'l bawled to the men, and half a dozen of them came shuffling aft. She touched her husband's arm. "I'm going below, now, Noll," she whispered.

He nodded. "Get to bed," he said. "I'll be down."

He had not looked at her; he was watching Dan'l and the men. Her own eyes clouded.... Nevertheless, she turned to the cabin companion and went below.

II

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For two weeks Faith had been aboard the *Sally Sims*, making ready the tiny quarters that were to be her home. When she came down into the cabin now, it was with a sense of familiarity. The plain table, built about the butt of the mizzenmast; the chairs; the swinging, whale-oil lamps.... These were old friends, waiting to replace those other friends she had left behind in her bedroom at home. She stood for a moment, at the foot of the cabin companion, looking about her; and she smiled faintly, her hand at her throat....

She was not lonely, not homesick, not sorry.... But her smile seemed to appeal to these inanimate surroundings to be good to her.

Then she crossed the cabin quietly, and went into the smaller compartment across the stern which was used by Cap'n Wing for his books, his instruments, his scant hours of leisure.... This ran almost entirely across the stern of the ship; but it was little more than a corridor. The captain's cabin was on the starboard side, opening off this corridor-like compartment. There was scant room, aft, aboard the *Sally Sims*. The four mates bunked two by two, in cabins opening off the main cabin; the mate had no room to himself. And by the same token, there was no possibility of giving Faith separate quarters. There were two bunks in the captain's cabin, one above the other. The upper had been built in, during the last two weeks. That was all....

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Faith had not protested. She was content that Noll was hers; the rest did not matter. She found a measure of glory in the thought that she must endure some hardships to be at his side while her man did his work in the world. She was, after the first pangs, glad that she must make a tiny chest and a half a dozen nails serve her for wardrobe and dressing-room; she was glad that she must sleep on a thing like a shelf built into the wall, instead of her high, soft bed with the canopy at home. She was glad—glad for life—glad for Noll—glad for everything....

She began, quietly, to prepare herself for bed. And while she loosened her heavy hair, and began the long, easy brushing that kept it so glossy and smooth, her thoughts ran back over the swift, warm rapture of her awakening love for Noll. Big Noll Wing.... Her husband, now.... She, his bride....

She had always worshiped Noll, even while she was still a school girl, her skirts short, her hair in a long, thick braid. Noll was a heroic figure, a great man who appeared at intervals from the distances of ocean, and moved majestically about the little world of the town, and then was gone again. The man had had the gift of drama; his deeds held that element which lifted them above mere exploits and made them romance. When he was third mate of the old *Bertha*, a crazy Islander tried to knife him, and fleshed his blade in Noll Wing's shoulder, from behind. Noll had wrenched around and broken the man's neck with a twist of his hands. He had always been a hard man with his hands; a strong man, perhaps a brutal man. Faith, hearing only glorified whispers of these matters, had dreamed of the strength of him. She saw this strength not as a physical thing, but as a thing spiritual. No one man could rule other men unless he ruled them by a superior moral strength, she knew. She loved to think of Noll's strength.... Her breath had caught in ecstasy of pain, that night he first held her close against his great chest, till she thought her own ribs would crack....

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Not Noll's strength alone was famous. He had been a great captain, a great man for oil. His maiden voyage as skipper of his own ship made that reputation for the man. He set sail, ran forthwith into a very sea of whales, worked night and day, and returned in three days short of three months with a cargo worth thirty-seven thousand dollars. A cargo that other men took three years to harvest from the fat fields of the sea; took three years to harvest, and then were like as not to boast of the harvesting. Oh, Noll Wing was a master hand for sperm oil; a master skipper as ever sailed the seas....

He came back thus, cruise after cruise, and the town watched his footsteps with pride and envy; he walked the streets with head high; he spoke harshly, in tones of command; he was, Faith thought, a man....

She remembered, this night, her first sight of him; her first remembered sight. It was when her father came home from his last voyage, his chest crushed, himself a helpless man who must lie abed long months before he might regain a measure of his ancient strength again. His ship came in, down at the wharves, at early dawn; and Faith and Roy, at home with their mother, had known nothing of the matter till big Noll Wing came up the hill, carrying Jem Kilcup in his arms as a baby is borne. Their mother opened the door, and Noll bore Jem upstairs to the bed he was to keep for so long.... And Faith and Roy, who had always seen in their father the mightiest of men, as children do, marveled at Noll Wing with wide eyes. Noll had carried their father in his arms....

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Faith was eleven, then; Roy not much more than half as old. While Noll's ship remained in port, she and Roy had stolen down often to the wharves to catch a stolen sight of the great man; they had hid among the casks to watch him; they had heard with awe his thundering commands.... And then he sailed away. When he came again, Faith was thirteen; and she tagged his heels, and he bought her candy, and took her on his knee and played with her.... Those weeks of his stay were witchery to Faith. Her mother died during that time, and Noll was her comforter.... The big man could be gentle, in those days, and very kind....

He came next when Faith was sixteen; and the faint breath of bursting womanhood within her made Faith shy. When a girl passes from childhood, and feels for the first time the treasures of womanhood within herself, she guards that treasure zealously, like a secret thing. Faith was afraid of Noll; she avoided him; and when they met, her tongue was tied.... He teased her, and she writhed in helpless misery....

Nineteen at his next coming; but young Dan'l Tobey, risen to be fourth mate on that cruise with Noll, laid siege to her. She liked Dan'l; she thought he was a pleasant boy.... But when she saw Noll, now and then, she was silent before him; and Noll had no eyes to see what was in the eyes of Faith. He was, at that time, in the tower of his strength; a mighty man, with flooding pulses that drove him restlessly. He still liked children; but Faith was no longer a child. She was a woman; and Noll had never had more than casual use for women. He saw her, now and then; nothing more....

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Nevertheless this seeing was enough so that Dan'l Tobey had no chance at all. Dan'l went so far as to beg her to marry him; but she shook her head.... "Wait ..." she whispered. "No. No.... Wait...."

"You mean—you will—some day?" he clamored. And she was frightened, and cried out:

"No, I don't mean anything, Dan'l. Please—don't ask me.... Wait...."

He told her, doggedly, the day he sailed away, that he would ask her again when he came home. And Faith, sure that she would never love Dan'l, was so sorry for him that she kissed him good-by; kissed him on the forehead.... The boy was blind; he read in that kiss an augury of good, and went away with heart singing. He did not know the philosophy of kisses. Let a girl permit a man to kiss her good-by—on cheek, or forehead, or ear tip, or hand, or lip, or what you will—and there's still a chance for him; but when she kisses him, sisterly, upon the forehead, the poor chap is lost and has as well make up his mind to't, Dan'l did not know, so went happily away....

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Noll Wing, on that cruise, passed the great divide of life without knowing it. Till then he had been a strong man, proud in his strength, sufficient unto himself, alone without being either lonely or afraid; but when he came home, there was stirring in him for the first time a pang of loneliness.... This was the advance courier of age, come suddenly upon him.

He did not understand this; he was not even conscious of the change in him. He left his ship, and

climbed the hill to his own house where his sister waited for him; and he submitted to her timid ministrations as he had never submitted before. He found it, somehow, faintly pleasant.... A woman, pattering about him.... But comfortable, just the same, he told himself. A man gets tired of men....

He had never tired of men before, never tired of himself before. Now there was something in him that was weary. He wanted comfort. He was worn with Spartan living; he was sick of rough life. He hungered for soft ways, for gentle things.... Some one to mend his socks.... Always wearing full of holes.... Some one to talk to, on ship board, besides the rough crew and the respectful officers....

This unrest was stirring in him when he went to see old Jem Kilcup, and Faith opened the door to him, and bade him come in.

He came in, tugging at his cap; and his eyes rested on her pleasantly. She was tall, as women go; but not too tall. And she was rounded, and strong, and firm. Her hair was thick, and soft; and her voice was low and full. When she bade him good evening, her voice thrummed some cord in the man. A pulse pricked faster in his throat....

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He had come to see Jem; Jem was not at home. Faith told him this. In the old days, he would have turned and stamped away. Now he hesitated; then looked about for a chair, sat down. And Faith, who for the life of her could not hold still her heart when Noll Wing was near, sat in a chair that faced him, and they fell a-talking together.

He talked, as men will do, of himself. Nothing could have pleased Faith better. Nor Noll, for that matter.... He loved to talk of himself; and for an hour they sat together, while his words bore her across the seven seas, through the tumult of storm, through the bloody flurry of the fighting whale, through the tense silence of a ship where sullen men plan evil.... She trembled as she listened; not with fear for him, but with pride in him. She was already as proud of Noll as though he belonged to her.

Thus began their strange courtship. It was scarce conscious, on either side. Noll took comfort in coming to her, in talking to her, in watching her.... His pulses stirred at watching her. And Faith made herself fair for his coming, and made him welcome when he came....

She was his woman, heart and soul, from the beginning. As for Noll, he found her company increasingly pleasant. She was a better listener than a man; his tales were fresh and new to her. At the same time, knowing him better, she began to mother him in her thoughts, as women will. She began to mother him, and to guide him. Men need guiding, ever. Noll might never have known what he wanted; but Faith was no weak girl. She had the courage to reach out her hand for the thing that was dear to her; she was not ashamed of her heart....

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They came together by chance one night when the moon played hide and seek with dark clouds in the sky; they met upon the street, as Faith came home with Bess Holt; and Noll walked with them to Bess's house, and then he and Faith went on together. She led him to talk of himself, as ever. When they came to her gate, some sudden impulse of unaccustomed modesty seized the man. He said hoarsely:

"But pshaw, Faith.... You must be sick of my old yarns by now...."

She was silent for a moment, there before him. Then she lifted her eyes, smiling in the moonlight, and she quoted softly and provokingly:

"... She thank'd me,
And bade me, if I had a friend that loved her,
I should but teach him how to tell my story,
And that would woo her...."

Noll Wing was no man of little reading. He understood, and cried out hoarsely....

'Twas then, the moon providentially disappearing behind a cloud, that he caught her and held her till her ribs were like to crack, while his lips came fumbling down to find her own....

Afterward, Faith hid her eyes in shame, and scolded herself for frowardness until he reassured her; she bade him, then, pay court in due form, at her feet. He knelt before her, the big, strong man.... And her eyes filled, and she knelt with him.

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It was in her heart that she was pledging herself sacredly, with this man, forevermore.

Followed the swift days of preparation; a pleasant flurry, through which Faith moved calmly, her thoughts far off. Old Jem Kilcup was wroth; he knew Noll Wing, and tried to tell Faith something of this knowledge. But she, proud and straight, would have none of it; she commanded old Jem into silence, then teased him into smiles till he consented and bade her take her man.

Roy was immensely proud of her. When it was decided that she should go away with Noll upon the *Sally Sims*, Roy begged to go. Begged fruitlessly, at first; for Noll Wing, having won the thing he wanted, was already beginning to wonder whether he really wanted it at all. But in the end, he consented.... Roy was to go with his sister....

Bess Holt.... Those were wild days for Bess; wild days of constant, fluttering excitement. She buzzed about Faith like a humming bird about a flower; and Faith quietly gave herself to the current of the days. She was so happy that even Dan'l Tobey could not cloud her eyes. There was one hot hour with Dan'l, when he accused, and swore, and begged. But Faith had strength in her, so that in the end she conquered him and held him.... He was silenced; only his eyes still accused her....

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So.... Marriage! It was done, now. Done.... She was away, with Noll, the world and life before them.... Brave Noll; strong Noll.... She loved him so....

When he came down into the cabin, she was waiting for him. She had put on a dressing-gown, a warm and woolly thing that she and Bess had made of a heavy blanket, to protect her against the chill winds of the sea. Her braids were upon her shoulders; her hair parted evenly above her broad brow. Her eyes were steady and sweet and calm.... Noll, studying her while his heart leaped, saw where the dressing-gown parted at her throat a touch of white, a spray of broidered blossoms which Faith herself had made, with every stitch a world of hope and dreams....

He took off his cap, and his coat and vest. He wore suspenders. When Faith saw them, she shivered in spite of herself. They were such hopelessly ugly things.... She lifted her eyes from them, came closer to him. He took her roughly in his arms, and she lifted one arm and drew it around his thick neck, and drew his face down.

"Ah, Noll ..." she whispered proudly.

III

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Faith Wing fitted easily into the life aboard the *Sally Sims*, as the whaler worked eastward before starting on the long southward slant that would bring her at last to her true hunting grounds. The mates saw her daily as a pleasant figure in the life of the cabin; the boat-steerers and the seamen and greenies caught glimpses of her, now and then, when she sat on deck with sewing, or a book, or with idle hands and thoughtful eyes. Faith, on her part, studied the men about her, and watched over Noll, and gave herself to the task of being a good wife and helpmate to him.

The first weeks of the cruise were arduous ones, as they are apt to be on a whaler; for of the whole crew, more than half were green hands recruited from the gutters, the farms, the slums.... Weak men, in many cases; rotted by wrong living; slack-muscled, jangle-nerved. Weak men who must be made strong; for there is no place for weakness in a whaler's crew.

It was the task of the mates to make these weaklings into men. The greenies must learn the rigging; they must learn their duties in response to each command; they must be drilled to their parts in the boats and prepared for the hunts that were to come. Your novice at sea has never an easy time of it; he learns in a hard school, and this is apt to be especially true upon a whaler. While the methods of the officers differed according to the habit of the officer, they were never gentle.

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Cap'n Wing watched over all this, took a hand here and there. And Faith, quietly in the background, saw a new Noll, saw in each of the officers a man she had never seen ashore.

Noll was the master, the commander. When his voice bellowed along the decks, even the greenest man leaped and desperately strove in his efforts to obey. Noll was the dominant man; and Faith was pleasantly afraid of him and his roaring tones.... She loved being afraid of him....

There were four officers aboard the *Sally Sims*. These four, with Roy—in his capacity of ship's boy—lived with Noll and Faith in the main cabin. They were Faith's family. Big Henry Ham, the mate, was a man of slow wit but quick fist; a man with a gift of stubbornness that passed for mastery. The men of his watch, and especially the men of his boat, feared him acutely. He taught them this fear in the first week of the cruise, by the simple teachings of blows. Thereafter he relaxed this chastisement, but held a clenched fist always over their cowering heads. He had what passed for a philosophy of life, to justify this. When Faith asked him, pleasantly, one day, whether it was necessary to strike the men, he told her with ponderous condescension that no other measures would suffice.

"They've no proper brains at all, ma'am," he explained. "Their brains is all in their faces; and when they don't jump at the word, your fist in their mouth jumps them. And next time, they jump without it. That's the whole thing of it, ma'am."

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And he added further: "They're children, ma'am." He smiled slyly. "When you've babies of your own, you'll understand. Take the switch to 'em, ma'am, till they learn what it is. Then they'll mind without, and things'll go all smooth."

He was, after a fashion, a Pecksniffian man, this Henry Ham. Faith did not like him, but she found it hard not to respect him. He was, after all, efficient.

Dan'l Tobey, the second mate, was a man of another sort. Faith was startled and somewhat amused to find what a difference there was between Dan'l afloat and Dan'l ashore. Ashore, he was a round-faced, freckled, sandy-haired boy with no guile in him; an impetuous, somewhat helpless and inarticulate boy. Afloat, he was a man; reticent, speaking little, speaking to the point when he spoke at all.... Shrewd, reading the character of his men, playing upon them as a musician plays upon his instruments. Of the five men in his boat, not one but might have whipped him in a stand-up fight. Nevertheless, he ruled them. This one he dominated by cutting and sarcastic words that left the man abashed and helpless; that one he flattered; another he joked into quick obedience.... The fourth, a surly giant who might have proved unmanageable, he gave into the keeping of his boat-steerer, a big Islander called Yella' Boy. He taught Yella' Boy to fear the man, provoked a fight between them in which the giant was soundly whipped, and thereafter used the one against the other and kept them both in balance eternally. Dan'l had, Faith decided, more mental ability than any man aboard—short of her Noll. He ruled by his wits; and this the more surprised her because she had always thought Dan'l more than a little stupid. She watched the unfolding of the new Dan'l with keenest interest as the weeks dragged by.

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James Tichel, the third mate, was a thin little old man given to occasional bursts of tigerish rage in which he was the match for any man aboard. In his second week, he took the biggest man in his boat and beat him into a helpless, clucking wreck of bruises. Thereafter, there was no need for him to strike a second time. Faith wondered whether these rages to which the little man gave way were genuine, whether he gave way because he chose to do so. In the cabin, he was distinguished for a dry and acid wit. Faith did not like him, even when she guessed the secret fear of the little man that he was passing his usefulness, that he was growing too old to serve. He told her, once, in a moment of confidence, that he had sailed as third mate for fourteen years, and once as second....

"But never as mate; nor as skipper, ma'am," he mourned.

She tried to comfort him. "You will, some day," she told him. "Every man's chance must come...."

He chuckled acridly. "Aye—but what if he's dead afore it?"

Willis Cox was fourth mate. He was a youngster; this his first cruise in the cabin. He had been promoted from the fo'c's'le by Noll Wing on Noll's last voyage. By the same token, he worshiped Noll as a demigod, with the enthusiasm of youth; and a jealousy not unlike the jealousy of women made him dislike Faith, at first, and resent her presence aboard. No one could long dislike Faith, however. In the end, he included her in his worship of Noll, and gave her all his loyalty.

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Roy, in these new surroundings, flourished. He was tireless, always stirring about the ship or clambering in the rigging, drinking in new impressions like a sponge. He and Faith, as is apt to be the case between brother and sister, fought each other constantly, bickering and striving back and forth. Faith had somewhat outgrown this way of childhood; but Roy was still a boy, and Faith felt toward him at times the exasperation which a mother feels toward a child. It came to pass, in the early stages of the voyage, that Roy included Noll Wing in his warfare against Faith; and he turned to Dan'l Tobey. Between Dan'l and the boy, a strange friendship arose, so that Faith often saw them talking together, Roy chattering while Dan'l listened flatteringly. Faith, ashore, had liked Dan'l; she was a little afraid of the new man he had become, since they sailed. Nevertheless, she was pleased that Roy liked him....

All these men had been changed, in subtle ways, by their coming to sea. Faith, during the first weeks, was profoundly puzzled and interested by this transformation. There was a new strength in all of them, which she marked and admired. At the same time, there were manifestations at which she was disquieted.

Noll Wing—her Noll—had changed with the rest. He had changed not only in his every-day bearing, but in his relations with her. She was troubled, from the very beginning, by these changes; and she was troubled by her own reactions to them.

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Noll, for instance, liked to come down to his cabin in his times of leisure and take off his coat and vest and open his shirt at the throat and lie down. Sometimes he took off his shoes. Usually, at such times, he went to sleep; and Faith, who sometimes read aloud to him, would stop her reading when Noll began to snore, and look at her husband, and try to convince herself he was good to look upon. She learned to know, line by line, the slack folds of his cheeks when he lay thus, utterly relaxed. The meandering of the little purple veins beneath his skin fascinated her and held her eyes. There were little, stiff hairs in his ears, and in his nostrils; and where his shirt was open at the throat she could glimpse the dark growth upon his broad chest. His suspenders pressed furrows in the soft, outer covering of flesh which padded the muscles of his shoulders. He was, by habit, a cleanly man; but he was at the same time full-fleshed and full-blooded, and there was always about him a characteristic and not necessarily unpleasant odor of clean perspiration. At times, as she sat beside him while he slept thus, Faith tried to tell herself she liked this; at times it frankly revolted her, so that she was ashamed of her own revolt....

She had worshiped the strength of Noll; she was in danger of discovering that at too close range, that strength became grossness.

The pitiless intimacies of their life together in the cabin of the *Sally Sims* were hard for Faith. They shared two small rooms; and Noll must be up and down at all hours of day and night, when the weather was bad, or the business of whaling engrossed him. Faith, without being vain, had that reverence and respect for herself which goes by the name of modesty. Her body was as

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sacred to her as her soul. The necessity that they were under of dressing and undressing in a tiny room not eight feet long was a steady torment to her....

She did not blame Noll for what unhappiness there was in these matters; she blamed herself for over-sensitiveness, and tried to teach herself to endure these things as a part of her task of sharing the rigors of Noll's daily toil. But there were times when even the nakedness of Noll's bald head revolted her.

She had been, when she married, prepared for disillusionment. Faith was not a child; she was a woman. She had the wisdom to know that no man is a heroic figure in a night shirt.... But she was not prepared to discover that Noll, who walked among men as a master, could fret at his wife like a nervous woman.

This fretful querulousness manifested itself more than once in the early stages of the voyage. For Noll was growing old, and growing old a little before his time because he had spent his life too freely. He was, at times, as querulous as a complaining old man. Because he was apt to be profane, in these moods, Faith tried to tell herself that they were the stormy outbreaks of a strong man.... But she knew better. When Noll, after they lost their second whale, growled to her:

"Damn Tichel.... The man's losing his pith. You'd think a man like him could strike a whale and not let it get away...." Faith knew this was no mere outbreak against Tichel, but an out and out whine.

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She knew this, but would not admit it, even in her thoughts.

Another matter troubled her. Noll Wing was a drinker. She had always known that. It was a part of his strength, she thought, to be able to drink strong liquor as a man should. But aboard ship she found that he drank constantly, that there was always the sickly sweet smell of alcohol about him.... And at times he drank to stupefaction, and slept, log-like, while Faith lay wide-eyed and ashamed for him in the bunk below his. She was sorry; but because she trusted in Noll's strength and wisdom, she made no attempt to interfere.

She had expected that marriage would shatter some of her illusions; and when her expectations were fulfilled and far exceeded, she thrust her unhappiness loyally behind her, and clung the closer to big Noll, striving to lend her strength to him.

More than once, when Noll fretted at her while others were about, she saw Dan'l Tobey's eyes upon her; and at such times she took care to look serene and proud. Dan'l must not so much as guess it, if Noll should ever make her unhappy....

But.... Noll make her unhappy? The very thought was absurd. He was her Noll; she was his. When they were wedded, she had given herself to him, and taken him as a part of herself, utterly and without reservation.

He might fail her high expectations in little things; she might fail him. But for all that, they were one, one body and soul so long as they both should live.

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She was as loyal to him, even in her thoughts, as to herself. For this was Faith; she was Noll's forever.

She thought that what she felt was hidden; but Dan'l Tobey had eyes to see. And now and then, when in crafty ways he led big Noll to act unworthily before her, he watched for the shadow that crossed her face, and smiled in his own sly soul.

IV

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There was, in Dan'l Tobey's boat, a little man named Mauger. It was he whom Dan'l ruled by a superior tongue, deriding the man and scorching him with jests that made Mauger crimson with shame for himself. Mauger was a greenie; he was a product of the worst conditions of the city. He was little and shrunken and thin, and his shoulders curled forward as though to hug and shelter his weak chest. Nevertheless, there was a rat-like spirit in the man, and a rat-like gleam in his black little eyes. He was one of those men who inspire dislike, even when they strive to win the liking of their fellows. The very fo'c's'le baited him.

It was through Mauger that the first open clash between Cap'n Wing and Faith, his wife, was brought to pass; and the thing happened in this wise.

Dan'l Tobey knew how to handle Mauger; and he kept the little man in a continual ferment of helpless anger. When they were off in the boats after a whale, or merely for the sake of boat drill, Dan'l gave all his attention to Mauger, who rowed tub oar in Dan'l's boat.

"Now if you'll not mind, Mauger," he would say, "just put your strength into the stroke there. Just a trifle of it. Gently, you understand, for we must not break the oars. But lean to it, Mauger. Lean to it, little man."

And Mauger strove till the veins stood out upon his narrow forehead, and his black little eyes gleamed.... And within him boiled and boiled a vast revolt, a hatred of Dan'l. Again and again, he

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was on the point of an open outbreak; he cursed between his teeth, and slavered, and thought of the bliss of sinking his nails in Dan'l's smooth throat.... The wrath in the man gathered like a tempest....

But always Dan'l pricked the bubble of this wrath with some sly word that left Mauger helpless and bewildered....

He set the man to scrub the decks, amidships, one day after an eighty barrel bull whale had been tried out. There were other men at work, scrubbing; but Dan'l gave all his attention to Mauger. He leaned against the rail, and smiled cheerfully at the little man, and spoke caustically....

"—not used to the scrub brush, Mauger. That's plain to see. But you'll learn its little ways.... Give you time...."

And.... "Lend a little weight to it on the thrust, little man. Put your pith into it...."

And.... "Here's a spot, here by my foot, that needs attention.... Come.... No, yonder.... No, beyond that again.... So...."

Or.... "See, now, how the Portugee there scrubs...." And when Mauger looked toward the Portugee, Dan'l rasped: "Come.... Don't be looking up from your tasks, little man. Attention, there...."

This continued until Mauger, fretted and tormented and wild with the fury of a helpless thing, was minded to rise and fling himself at Dan'l's round, freckled face.... And in that final moment before the outbreak must surely have come, Dan'l said pleasantly:

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"So.... That is nicely. Go below now, Mauger, and rest. Ye've worked well...."

And the kindness of his tone robbed Mauger of all wrath, so that the little man crept forward, and down to his bunk, and fairly sobbed there with rage, and nerves, and general bewilderment.

Dan'l was the man's master, fair....

This was one side of the matter; Cap'n Noll Wing was on the other side.

Noll Wing had been harassed by the difficulties of the early weeks of the cruise. It seemed to the man that the whole world combined to torment him. He was, for one thing, a compound of rasping nerves; the slightest mishap on the *Sally Sims* preyed on his mind; the least slackness on the part of the mates, the least error by the men sent him into a futile storm of anger....

Even toward Faith, he blew hot, blew cold.... There were times when he felt the steadfast love she gave him was like a burden hung about his neck; and he wished he might cast it off, and wished he had never married her, and wished ... a thousand things. These were the days when the old strength of the man reasserted itself, when he held his head high, and would have defied the world.... But there were other hours, when he was spiritually bowed by the burdens of his task; and in these hours it seemed to him Faith was his only reliance, his only support. He leaned upon her as a man leans upon a staff. She was now a nagging burden, now a peaceful haven of rest to which he could retreat from all the world....

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If he felt thus toward Faith, whom, in his way, the man did love, how much more unstable was his attitude toward the men about him. In his relations with them, he alternated between storming anger and querulous complaint. Once, when they were hauling up to the mainhead a blanket strip of blubber from a small cow whale, the tackle gave and let the whole strip snap down like a smothering blanket of rubber.... The old Noll Wing would have leaped into the resulting tangle and brought order out of it with half a dozen sharp commands, with a curt blow.... This time, he stood aft by the boat house and nagged at the mate, and cried:

"Mr. Ham, will you please get that mess straightened out? In God's name, why can't you men do things the right way? You...." He flung up his hands like a hysterical woman. "By God, I wish I'd stayed ashore...."

And he turned and went aft and sulkily down into the cabin, to fret at Faith, while Mr. Ham and Dan'l Tobey brought order out of chaos, and Dan'l smiled faintly at his own thoughts.

Now it is a truth which every soldier knows, that a commanding officer must command. When he begins to entreat, or to scold like a woman, or to give any other indication of cracking nerves, the men under him conspire maliciously to torment him, in the hope of provoking new outbreaks. It is instinctive with them; they do it as naturally as small boys torment a helpless dog. And it was so on the *Sally Sims*. The more frequently Noll Wing forgot that he was master, the more persistently the men harassed him.

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His officers saw the change in Noll, and tried to hide it or deny it as their natures prompted. The mate, Mr. Ham, developed an unsuspected loyalty, covering his chief's errors by his own strength; and young Willis Cox backed him nobly. Dan'l Tobey, likewise, was always quick to take hold of matters when they slipped from the captain's fingers; but he did it a little ostentatiously.... Noll himself did not perceive this ostentation; but the men saw, and understood. It was as though Dan'l whispered over his shoulder to them:

"See! The old man's failing. I have to handle you for him...."

Once or twice Dan'l bungled some task in a fashion that provoked these outbreaks; and whether

or not this was mere chance, Faith was always about on these occasions. For example, at dinner one day in the cabin, Dan'l looked mournfully at the salt beef that was set before him, and then began to eat it with such a look of resignation on his countenance that Noll demanded: "What's wrong with the beef, Mr. Tobey?"

Dan'l said pleasantly: "Nothing, sir. Nothing at all. It's very good fare, and almighty well cooked, I'd say."

Now it was not well cooked. Tinch, the cook, had been hurried, or careless.... The junk he had brought down to the cabin was half raw, a nauseous mass.... And Dan'l knew it, and so did Noll Wing. But Noll might have taken no notice but for Dan'l, and Dan'l's tone....

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As it was, he was forced to take notice. And so he bellowed for Tinch, and when the cook came running, Noll lifted the platter and flung it, with its greasy contents, at the man's head, roaring profanely....

Faith was at the table; she said nothing. But when Noll looked at her, and saw the disappointment in her eyes—disappointment in him—he wished to justify himself; and so complained: "Damned shame.... A man can't get decent food out of that rascal.... If I wasn't a fool, Faith, I'd have stayed ashore...."

Faith thought she would have respected him more if, having given way to his anger, he had stuck to his guns, instead of seeking thus weakly to placate her. And Dan'l Tobey watched Faith, and was well content with himself.

It was Dan'l, in the end, who brought Mauger and Cap'n Wing together; and if matters went beyond what he had intended, that was because chance favored him.

It was a day when Mauger took a turn at the awkward steering apparatus of the *Sally Sims*. The *Sally's* wheel was so arranged that when it was twirled, it moved to and fro across the deck, dragging the tiller with it. To steer was a trick that required learning; and in any sea, the tiller bucked, and the wheel fought the steersman in eccentric and amazing fashion. This antiquated arrangement was one of the curses of many ships of the whaling fleet.... Mauger had never been able to get the trick of it....

Dan'l's watch came on deck and Mauger took the wheel at a moment when Cap'n Wing was below. Faith was with him. Dan'l knew the captain would be entering the log, writing up his records of the cruise, reading.... He also knew that if Noll Wing followed his custom, he would presently come on deck. And he knew—he himself had had a hand in this—that Noll had been drinking, that day, more than usual.

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That Faith came up with Noll, a little later, was chance; no more. Dan'l had not counted on it.

Mauger, then, was at the wheel. Dan'l leaned against the deckhouse behind Mauger, and devoted himself amicably to the task of instructing the man. His tone remained, throughout, even and calm; but there was a bite in it which seared the very skin of Mauger's back.

"You'll understand," said Dan'l cheerfully, "you are not rolling a hoop in your home gutter, Mauger. You're too impetuous in your ways.... Be gentle with her...."

This when, the *Sally Sims* having fallen off her set course, Mauger brought her so far up into the wind that her sails flapped on the yards. Dan'l chided him.

"Not so strenuous, Mauger. A little turn, a spoke or two.... You overswing your mark, little man. Stick her nose into it, and keep it there...."

The worst of it was, from Mauger's point of view, that he was trying quite desperately to hold the *Sally's* blunt bows where they belonged. But there was a sea; the rollers pounded her high sides with an overwhelming impact, and the awkward wheel put a constant strain on his none-too-adequate arms and shoulders. When the *Sally* swung off, and he fought her back to her course, she was sure to swing too far the other way; when he tried to ease her up to it, a following sea was sure to catch him and thrust him still farther off the way he should go....

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He fought the wheel as though it were a live thing, and the sweat burst out on him, and his arms and shoulders ached; and all the time, Dan'l at his back flogged him with gentle jeers, and seared him with caustic words....

The rat-like little man had the temper of a rat. Dan'l knew this; he was careful never to push Mauger too far. So, this afternoon, he brought the man, little by little, to the boiling point, and held him there as delicately in the balance as a chemist's scales.... With a word, he might at any time have driven Mauger mad with fury; with a word he could have reduced the helpless little man to smothering sobs.

He had Mauger thus trembling and wild when Noll Wing came on deck, Faith at his side. Dan'l looked at them shrewdly; he saw that Noll's face was flushed, and that Noll's eyes were hot and angry. And—behind the back of Mauger at the wheel—he nodded toward the little man, and caught Noll's eyes, and raised his shoulders hopelessly, smiling.... It was as if he said:

"See what a hash the little man is making of his simple job. Is he not a hopeless thing?"

Noll caught Dan'l's glance; and while Mauger still quivered with the memory of Dan'l's last word, Noll looked at the compass, and cuffed Mauger on the ear and growled at him:

"Get her on her course, you gutter dog...."

Which was just enough to fill to overflowing Mauger's cup of wrath. The little man abandoned the wheel.... Dan'l caught it before the *Sally* could fall away ... and Mauger sprang headlong, face black with wrath, at Cap'n Wing. [Pg 40]

He was scarce a third Noll's size; but the fury of his attack was such that for a moment Noll was staggered. Then the captain's fist swung home, and the little man whirled in the air, and fell crushingly on head and right shoulder, and rolled on the slanting deck like a bundle of soiled old clothes.... Rolled and lay still....

Cap'n Noll Wing, big Noll, whom Faith loved, bellowed and leaped after the little man. He was red with fury that Mauger had attacked him, red with rage that Mauger had, for an instant, thrust him back. He swung his heavy boot and drove it square into the face of the unconscious man. Faith saw....

The toe of the captain's boot struck Mauger in the right eye-socket, as he lay on his side. At the blow, for an instant, the man's eye literally splashed out, bulging, on his temple....

Some women would have screamed; some would have flung themselves upon Noll to drag him back. Faith did neither of these things. She stood for an instant, her lips white.... Her sorrow and pity were not for Mauger, who had suffered the blow.... They were for Noll, her Noll, her husband whom she loved and wished to respect.... Sorrow and pity for Noll, who had done this thing....

She turned quickly and went down into her cabin....

Noll came down, minutes later, after she had heard the feet of running men, the voices of men upon the deck. He came down, found her in the cabin which served as his office. She was standing, looking out one of the windows in the stern.... [Pg 41]

He said thickly: "That damned rat won't try that on me again...."

She turned, and her eyes held his. "That was a cowardly thing to do, Noll, my husband," she said.

V

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When Noll Wing kicked the unconscious man, and Faith slipped quietly away and went below, the life of the *Sally Sims* for an instant stood still. Yella' Boy and Loum, two of the boat-steerers, were lounging at the forward end of the boathouse, and saw. Dan'l Tobey, who had gripped the wheel, saw. And three or four of the men, amidships, saw. For a space they all stood still, watching, while Noll growled above his victim, and Mauger, limp and senseless, rolled slackly back and forth upon the deck with the motion of the vessel.

Then Noll looked around, and saw them all watching him with steady, hard, frightened eyes; and their silence irked him, so that he broke it with a cry of his own.

"You, Yella' Boy, sluice him off," he shouted.

Yella' Boy grinned, showed his teeth with the amiability of his dark race; and he took a canvas bucket and dropped it over the rail, and drew it up filled with brine, and flung this callously in Mauger's horribly crushed face. The water loosed the blood, washed it away in flecks and gouts.... It bared the skin, and through this skin, from many little slits and scratches like the cracks in a half-broken egg, more blood trickled, spreading moistly. The salt burned.... Mauger groaned hoarsely, slumped into unconsciousness again.

"Douse him again," Noll Wing commanded. "The dog's shamming." He looked around, saw Dan'l at the wheel. "You, Mr. Tobey, look to him," he commanded. [Pg 43]

Dan'l was one of those men whose hands have a knack for healing. He knew something of medicine; he had gone so far, upon a former cruise, as to trim away a man's crushed fingers after an accident of the whale fisheries had nipped them.... He hailed one of the men in the waist, now, and gave the wheel to this man, and then crossed to where Mauger lay and knelt beside him, and dabbed away the blood upon his face....

Cap'n Wing, leaning against the rail, his knuckles white with the grip he had upon it, watched Dan'l, and swayed upon his feet.... And Yella' Boy, with his bucket still half full of brine, stood by, and grinned, and waited.

Mauger came slowly back to life under Dan'l's ministrations; he groaned, and he began to twitch, and kick.... And of a sudden he cried out, like one suddenly waking from sleep. Then consciousness flooded him, and with it came the agony he was enduring, and he howled.... And then his howls grew weak and weaker till he was sobbing.... And Dan'l helped him to his feet.... He had put a rough bandage about the man's head, and from beneath this bandage, one of Mauger's eyes looked forth, blackly gleaming, wild with the torment he endured. This eye fixed its gaze upon Noll Wing....

Dan'l stepped a little nearer Noll, and said in a low voice: "His eye is gone, sir. No good. It ought to be dimmed out.... Cleared away...."

That shocked the liquor out of Noll; his face went white beneath the brown; and Mauger heard, and suddenly he screamed again, and leveled a shaking finger at Noll Wing, and cursed him shrilly.... Dan'l whirled and bade him be silent; he signed to Yella' Boy, and the harpooner half dragged, half carried Mauger forward. But as they went, Mauger, twisting in the other's arms, shook his thin fist at Noll Wing and swore terribly.... Cursed Noll, called death down upon him, vowed that he would some day even the score....

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Yella' Boy cuffed him and dragged him away.... And Dan'l watched Noll to see what the captain would say. Noll said nothing. He took off his cap and rubbed his bald head and looked for an instant like an old man; his eyes shifted furtively from Dan'l to the cursing man....

Abruptly, he turned and went aft to the stern of the ship and stood there by himself, thinking. He sought reassurance; he abused Mauger under his breath, and told himself the little man had been well served.... The *Sally* fell away; he turned and cursed the new man at the wheel, and got relief from the oath he spoke. It gave him a blustering sort of courage.... He wished Dan'l Tobey would tell him he had done right.... But Dan'l had gone forward to the fo'c's'le.... Mauger was howling.... Noll thought Dan'l might be trimming away that crushed eye.... And he shuddered. He was, suddenly, immensely lonely. He wished with all his soul for support, for a word of comfort, a word of reassurance....

He went down into the cabin, thinking to speak with Henry Ham. Mr. Ham was always an apostle of violence.... But the mate was sleeping; Noll could hear him snore. So was tigerish little James Tichel....

Noll went into the after cabin, and found Faith there. Her back was turned, she was looking out of the stern windows. He wished she would look at him, but she did not. So he said, his voice thick with anger, and at the same time plaintive with hunger for a reassuring word....

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"That damned rat won't try that again...."

Then Faith turned and told him: "That was a cowardly thing to do, Noll, my husband."

He had come for comfort; he was ready to humble himself; he was a prey to the instinct of wrongdoing man which bids him confess and be forgiven.... But Faith's eyes accused him.... When a man's wife turns against him.... He said, bitter with rage:

"Keep your mouth shut, child. This is not a pink tea, aboard the *Sally Sims*. You know nothing of what's necessary to handle rough men."

Faith smiled a little wistfully. "I know it is never necessary to kick a helpless man in the face," she said.

He was so nearly mad with fury and shame and misery that he raised his great fist as though he would have struck even Faith. "Mind your own matters," he bade her harshly. "The dog struck me.... Where would the ship be if I let that go? I should have killed him...."

"Did you not?" Faith asked gently. "I thought he would be dead...."

"No; hell, no!" Noll blustered. "You can't kill a snake. He'll be poisonous as ever in a day...."

"I saw ..." said Faith; she shuddered faintly. "I—think his eye is gone."

"Eye?" Noll echoed. "What's an eye? He's lucky to live. There's skippers that would have killed him where he stood.... For what he did...."

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Faith shook her head. "He's only a little man, weak, not used to sea life. You are big, and strong, Noll.... My Noll.... There was no need of kicking him."

The man flung himself, then, into an insane burst of anger at her. He hated the whole world, hated Faith most of all because she would not soothe him and tell him never to mind.... He raved at her, gripped her round shoulders and shook her, flung her away from him.... He was mad....

And Faith, steadfastly watching him, though her soul trembled, prayed in her heart that she might find the way to bring Noll back to manhood again; she endured his curses; she endured his harsh grip upon her shoulders.... She waited while he flooded her with abuse.... And at the end, when he was quiet for lack of words to say, she went to him and touched his arm.

"Noll ..." she said.

He jerked away from her. "What?"

"Noll.... Look at me...."

He obeyed, in spite of himself; and there was such depths of tenderness and sorrow in her eyes that the man's heart melted in him. "It's not Mauger I'm sorry for," she told him. "It's you, Noll.... That you should be so cowardly, Noll...."

His rage broke, then; he fell to fretting, whining.... She sat down; he slumped like a child beside her. He told her he was tired, weary.... That he was worried.... That his nerves had betrayed him.... That the drink was in him.... "They're all trying to stir me," he complained. "They take a joy in doing the thing wrong.... They're helpless, slithering fools.... I lost myself, Faith...."

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He pleaded with her, desperately anxious to make her understand; and Faith understood from

the beginning, with the full wisdom of woman, yet let him talk out all his unhappiness and remorse.... And because she loved him, her arm was about him and his great head was drawn against her breast long before he was done. She comforted him with touches of her light hands upon his head; she soothed him with murmurs that were no words at all....

The man reveled in this orgy of self-abasement. He groveled before her, until she began to be faintly contemptuous, in her heart, at his groveling. She bade him make an end of it....

"I was a coward, Faith," he cried. "You're right. I was a coward...."

"You are a man, Noll," she told him. "Stronger than other men, and not in your fists alone. That is why I love you so...."

"I know, I know," he told her. "Oh, you're a wonder, Faith...."

"You're a man. Always remember that," she said.

He got up abruptly. He started toward the main cabin; and she asked: "Where are you going, Noll?"

"Forward," he said. "I've wronged Mauger...." He was drunk with this new-found joy of abasing himself. "I'll tell the man so. I'll right things with him...."

And he added thoughtfully: "He cursed me. I don't want the man's hate. I'll right things with him...." [Pg 48]

She smiled faintly, shook her head. "No, Noll...."

He was stubborn. "Yes. Why not? I've...."

She said thoughtfully: "Noll, you're the master of this ship. Old Jonathan Felt put her in your charge. You are responsible for her.... And that puts certain obligations on you, Noll. An obligation to be wise, and to be prudent, and to be brave...."

He came back and sat down beside her. She touched his knee. "You are like a king, aboard here, Noll. And—the king can do no wrong. I would not go to Mauger, if I were you. You made a mistake; but there is no need you should humble yourself before the men. They would not understand; they would only despise you, Noll."

He said hotly: "Let them. They're sneaking, spineless things...."

"Let them fear you; let them hate you," she told him. "But—never let them forget you are master, Noll. Don't go to Mauger...."

He had no real desire to go; he wished only to bask in her new-found sympathy. And he yielded readily enough, at last....

The matter passed abruptly. She rose; he went up on deck; the *Sally Sims* went on her way. And for a day or two, Noll Wing, an old man, was like a boy who has repented and been forgiven; he was offensively virtuous, offensively good-natured.

Mauger returned to his duties the second day. He wore a bandage across his face; and when it was discarded a week later, the hollow socket where his eye had been was revealed. His suffering had worked a terrible change in the man; he had been morose and desperate, he was now too much given to chuckling, as though at some secret jest of his own. He went slyly about his tasks; he seemed to have a pride in his misfortune; when he saw men shrink with distaste at sight of his scarred countenance, he chuckled under his breath.... [Pg 49]

Dan'l Tobey had cut away the crushed eye-ball; the lids covered the empty socket. In the upper lid, some maimed nerve persisted in living. It twitched, now and then, in such a fashion that Mauger seemed to be winking with that deep hollow in his face....

The man had a fascination, from the beginning, for Noll Wing. The captain took an unholy joy in looking upon his handiwork; he shivered at it, as a boy shivers at a tale of ghosts.... And he felt the gleaming glance of Mauger's remaining eye like a threat. It followed him whenever they were both on deck together; if he looked toward Mauger, he was sure to catch the other watching him.

Dan'l Tobey was cheerfully philosophical about the matter. "He can see as well as ever, with what he has left," he told Noll one day. "And he ought to count himself lucky. Your boot might have mashed his head in.... And serve him right...."

"Aye," said Noll, willing to be reassured. "He's lucky to live. The dog must know that...."

And he looked forward to where Mauger lounged amidships, beside the try works, and saw the man's black eye watching him; and Mauger caught the captain's glance, and chuckled unpleasantly, his face twisting. Noll felt a quiver of horror, far within himself.... [Pg 50]

He began, even in the fortnight after the affair, to remember Mauger's curses and threats as the man was borne away by Yella' Boy, that day. Mauger had threatened to kill him, to cut his heart away.... The meaningless cries of a delirious man, he told himself.... No doubt Mauger had forgotten them before this.

He tried, one day, the experiment of giving the one-eyed man an order. Smoking his pipe, he

spilled ashes on the spotless deck; and he bellowed forward to Mauger to come aft, and when the man came, he pointed to the smudge of ashes, and:

"Clean that up," he said harshly. "Look sharp, now."

Mauger chuckled. "Aye, sir," he said respectfully, and on hands and knees at the captain's feet performed his task, looking up slyly into Noll Wing's face as he did so. The lid that closed the empty eye-socket twitched and seemed to wink....

That night, as they were preparing to sleep, Noll spoke of Mauger to Faith. "He does his work better than ever," he said.

She nodded. "Yes." And something in Noll's tone made her attentive.

"Seems cheerful, too," said Noll. He hesitated. "I reckon he's forgot his threat to stick a knife in me.... Don't you think he has?"

Faith's eyes, watching her husband, clouded; for she read his tone. Noll Wing, strong man and brave, could not hide his secret from her.... [Pg 51]

She understood that he was deathly afraid of the one-eyed man.

VI

[Pg 52]

The *Sally Sims* was in the South Atlantic on the day when Noll Wing kicked out Mauger's eye. The life of the whaler went on, day by day, as a background for the drama that was brewing. The men stood watch at the mastheads, the *Sally* plunged and waddled awkwardly southward; and now and then a misty spout against the wide blue of the sea halted them, and boats were lowered, and the whales were struck, and killed, and towed alongside. Held fast there by the chain that was snubbed around the fluke-chain bitt, they were hacked by the keen spades and cutting knives, the great heads were cut off, and dragged aboard, and stripped of every fleck of oily blubber; and the great bodies, while the spiral blanket strips were torn away, rolled lumberingly over and over against the bark's stout planks. Thereafter the tryworks roared, and the blubber boiled, and the black and stinking smoke of burning oil hung over the seas like a pall....

This smell of burning oil, the mark of the whaler, distressed Faith at first. It sickened her; and the soot from the fires where the scrapple of boiled blubber fed the flames settled over the ship, and penetrated even to her own immaculate cabin. She disliked the smell; but the gigantic toil of the cutting in and the roar of the tryworks had always a fascination for her that compensated for the smell and the soot. She rejoiced in strength, in the strong work of lusty men. To see a great carcass almost as long as the *Sally* lying helplessly against the rail never failed to thrill her. For the men of the crew, it was all in the day's work; stinking, sweating, perilous toil. For Faith it was a tremendous spectacle. It intoxicated her; and in the same fashion it affected Noll Wing, and Dan'l Tobey, and tigerish old Tichel. When there were fish about, these men were subtly changed; their eyes shone, their chests swelled, their muscles hardened; they stamped upon the deck with stout legs, like a cavalry horse that scents the battle. They gave themselves to the toil of killing whales and harvesting the blubber as men give themselves to a debauch; and afterward, when the work was done, they were apt to surrender to a lassitude such as follows a debauch. There was keen, sensual joy in the running oil, the unctuous oil that flowed everywhere upon the decks; they dabbed their hands in it; it soaked their garments and their very skins drank it in.

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Young Roy Kilcup took fire, from the beginning, at these gigantic spectacles. He wished to go out in the boats that struck the whales; but he lacked the sinews of a man, he lacked the perfect muscular control of manhood. He was still a boy, nimble as a monkey, but given to awkward gestures and leaps and motions. He could not be trusted to sit tight in a boat and handle his oar when a whale was leaping under the iron; and so he was condemned to stay on the ship.

But they could not deny him a part in the cutting in; and when that work was afoot, he was everywhere, his eyes gleaming.... He slashed at the blubber with a boarding knife; he minced it for the boiling; he descended into the blubber room and helped stow the stuff there. Faith, watching, loved his enthusiasm and his zeal....

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After the matter of Mauger, things went smoothly for a space. The whales came neither too fast nor too slow; they killed one or two, at intervals of days; they cut them in; they tried them out, while the fires flared through night and day and cast red shadows on the dark faces of the men, and turned their broad, bared chests to gold. And when the blubber was boiled, they cleaned ship, and idled on their way, and raised, in due time, other whales....

Cap'n Wing chose to go west, instead of eastward past the tip of Africa and up into the Indian Ocean. So they worked their painful way around the Horn, fighting for inches day by day; and when the bleak fog did not blanket them, Faith could see gaunt mountains of rock above the northern rim of the sea. And once they passed a clipper, eastward bound. It swept up on them, a tower of tugging canvas; it came abreast, slipped past, and dwindled into a white dot upon the sea behind before night came down and hid it from their eyes. In the morning, though they had idled with no canvas pulling, through the night, the clipper was gone, and they were alone again

among the mountains that came down to the sea....

So they slid out at last into the South Pacific, and struck a little north of west for the wide whaling grounds of the island-dotted South Seas. And struck their whales....

The routine of their tasks.... But during this time, a change was working in Noll Wing, which Faith, and Dan'l Tobey, and all who looked might see. [Pg 55]

The matter of Mauger had been, in some measure, a milestone in Noll Wing's life. He had struck men before; he had maimed them. He had killed at least one man, in fair fight, when it was his life or the other's. But because in those days his pulse was strong and his heart was young, the matter had never preyed upon him. He had been able to go proudly on his way, strong in his strength, sure of himself, serene and unafraid. He was, in those days, a man.

But this was different; this was the parting of the ways. Noll had spent his great strength too swiftly. His muscles were as stout as ever; but his heart was not. Drink was gnawing at him; old age was gnawing at him; he was like an old wolf that by the might of tooth and fang has led the pack for long.... He had seen strong men fail; he knew what failure meant; and he could guess the slackening of his own great powers and prevision the end of this slackening. The wolf dreads the day when a young, strong wolf will drag him down; Noll dreaded the day when his voice and his eye and his fist should fail to master the men. He had been absolute so long, he could endure no less. He must rule, or he was done....

At times, when he felt this failing of his own strong heart, he blamed Faith for it, and fretted at her because she dragged him down. At other times, he was ashamed, he was afraid of the eyes of the men; he fled to her for comfort and for strength. He was a prey, too, to regretful memories. The matter of Mauger, for instance.... He was, for all he fought the feeling, tortured by remorse for what he had done to Mauger. [Pg 56]

And he was dreadfully afraid of the one-eyed man.

At first, he half enjoyed this fear; it was a new sensation, and he rolled in it like a horse in clover. But as the weeks passed, it nagged at him so constantly that he became obsessed with it. Wherever he turned, he saw the one-eyed man regarding him; and this steady scrutiny of Mauger's one black eye was like a continual pin-prick. It twanged his nerves.... He tried, for a time, to find relief in blustering; he roared about the ship, bellowing his commands.... It comforted him to see men jump to obey. But from the beginning, this was not utter comfort. He was pursued by the chuckling, mirthless mirth of the one-eyed man. He thought Mauger was like a scavenger bird that waits for a sick beast to die. Mauger harassed him....

This change in Noll Wing reacted upon Faith. Because her life was so close to his, she was forced to witness the manifestations which he hid from the men; because her eyes were the eyes of a woman who loves, she saw things which the men did not see. She saw the slow loosening of the muscles of Noll's jaw; saw how his cheeks came to sag like jowls. She saw the old, proud strength in his eyes weaken and fail; she saw his eyes grow red and furtive.... Saw, too, how his whole body became overcast with a thickening, flabby garment of fat, like a net that bound his slothful limbs....

Noll's slow disintegration of soul had its effect upon Faith. She had been, when she came to the *Sally Sims* with him, little more than a girl; she had been gay and laughing, but she had also been calm and strong. As the weeks passed, Faith was less gay; her laugh rang more seldom. But by the same token, the strength that dwelt in her seemed to increase. While Noll weakened, she grew strong.... [Pg 57]

There were days when she was very lonely; she felt that the Noll she had married was gone from her.... She was, for all her strength, a woman; and a woman is always happiest when she can lean on other strength and find comfort there.... But Noll.... Noll, by this, was not so strong of soul as she....

She was lonely with another loneliness; with the loneliness of a mother.... But Noll had told her, brutally, in the beginning, that there was no place for a babe upon the *Sally Sims*. He overbore her, because in such a matter she could not command him. The longing was too deep in her for words. She could not lay it bare for even Noll to see....

Thus, in short, Faith was unhappy. Unhappy; yet she loved Noll, and her heart clung to him, and yearned to strengthen and support the man, yearned to bring back the valor she had loved in him.... There could never be, so long as he should live, any man but Noll for her.

Dan'l Tobey—poor Dan'l, if you will—could not understand this. Dan'l, for all his round and simple countenance, and the engaging frankness of his freckles and his hair, had an eye that could see into the heart of a man. He had understanding; he could read men's moods; he could play upon them, guide them without their guessing at his guidance. He managed skillfully. He held the respect, even the affection of the bulk of the crew; he had the liking of all the officers save Willis Cox, who disliked him for a reason he could not put in words. He bent his efforts to hold Roy Kilcup; and Roy worshiped him. He took care to please Noll Wing, and Noll leaned upon Dan'l, and trusted him. Dan'l was the only man on the ship who always applauded whatever Noll might do; and Noll, hungry as an old man for praise, fed fat on Dan'l's applause.... [Pg 58]

Dan'l was wise; he was also crafty. He contrived, again and again, that Noll should act unworthily in Faith's eyes. To this extent he understood Faith; he understood her ideals, knew that she

judged men by them, knew that when Noll fell short of these ideals, Faith must in her heart condemn him.... And he took care that Noll should fall short....

For one thing—a little matter, but at the same time a matter of vast importance—he used the fact that big Noll did not eat prettily. Noll, accustomed to the sea, having all his life been a hungry man among men, was not careful of the niceties of the table. He ate quickly; he ate loudly; he ate clumsily. Dan'l, somewhat gentler bred, understood this; and at the meals in the cabin when Noll was particularly offensive, Dan'l used to catch Faith into spirited conversation, as though to distract her attention.... He did this in such a way that it seemed to be mere loyalty to Noll; yet it served to create an atmosphere of understanding between Dan'l and Faith, and it showed him in her eyes as a loyal servant, without hiding the fact that big Noll was a gross man.

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When they were all on deck together, and Dan'l saw that burning sun or splattering rain was unpleasant to Faith, he used to remedy the matter by finding shelter for her; and in doing this he emphasized—by the doing itself—the fact that Noll had failed to think of her. How much of these things was, in the beginning, designed to win Faith from Noll it is impossible to say. Dan'l delighted in the very doing; for he loved Faith, had loved her for years, still loved her so intensely that there were hours when he could have strangled Noll with his bare hands because Noll possessed her.

Dan'l loved Faith with a passion that gripped him, soul and body; yet it was not an unholy thing. When he saw her unhappy, he wished to guard her; when he saw that she was lonely, he wished to comfort her; when he came upon her, once, at the stern, and saw that she had tears in her eyes, it called for all his strength to refrain from taking her in his arms and soothing her. He loved her, but there was nothing in his love that could have soiled her. Dan'l was, in some fashion, a figure of tragedy....

His heart burst from him, one day when they were two weeks in the South Pacific. It was a hard, bitter day; one of those days when the sea is unfriendly, when she torments a ship with thrusting billows, when she racks planks and strains rigging, when she is perverse without being dangerous. There was none of the joy of battle in enduring such a sea; there was only irksome toil. It told on Noll Wing. His temper worked under the strain. He was on deck through the afternoon; and the climax came when Willis Cox's boat parted the lines that held its bow and fell and dangled by the stern lines, slatting against the rail of the *Sally*, and spilling the gear into the sea. With every lurch of the sea, the boat was splintering; and before the men, driven by Dan'l and Willis, could get the boat inboard again, it was as badly smashed as if a whale's flukes had caught it square. Noll had raged while the men toiled; when the boat was stowed, he strode toward Willis Cox and spun the man around by a shoulder grip.

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"Your fault, you damned, careless skunk," he accused. "You're no more fit for your job.... You're a...."

Willis Cox was little more than a boy; he had a boy's sense of justice. He was heart-broken by the accident, and he said soberly: "I'm sorry, sir. It was my fault. You're right, sir."

"Right?" Noll roared. "Of course I'm right. Do I need a shirking fourth mate to tell me when I'm right or wrong? By...." His wrath overflowed in a blow; and for all the fact that Noll was aging, his fist was stout. The blow dropped Willis like the stroke of an ax. Noll himself filled a bucket and sluiced the man, and drove him below with curses.

Afterward, the reaction sent Noll to Faith in a rage at himself, at the men, at the world, at her. Dan'l, in the main cabin, heard Noll swearing at her.... And he set his teeth and went on deck because of the thing he might do. He was still there, half an hour later, when Faith came quietly up the companion. Night had fallen by then, the sea was moderating. Faith passed him, where he stood by the galley; and he saw her figure silhouetted against the gray gloom of the after rail. For a moment he watched her, gripping himself.... He saw her shoulders stir, as though she wept....

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The man could not endure it. He was at her side in three strides.... She faced him; and he could see her eyes dark in the night as she looked at him. He stammered:

"Faith! Faith! I'm so sorry...."

She did not speak, because she could not trust her voice. She was furiously ashamed of her own weakness, of the disloyalty of her thoughts of Noll. She swallowed hard....

"He's a dog, Faith," Dan'l whispered. "Ah, Faith.... I love you. I love you. I could kill him, I love you so...."

Faith knew she must speak. She said quietly: "Dan'l.... That is not...."

He caught her hand, with an eloquent grace that was strange to see in the awkward, freckled man. He caught her hand to his lips and kissed it. "I love you, Faith," he cried....

She freed her hand, rubbed at it where his lips had pressed it. Dan'l was scarce breathing at all.... Fearful of what he had done, fearful of what she might do or say....

She said simply: "Dan'l, my friend, I love Noll Wing with all my heart."

And poor Dan'l knew, for all she spoke so simply, that there was no part of her which was his. And he backed away from her a little, humbly, until his figure was shadowed by the deckhouse. And then he turned and went forward to the waist, and left Faith standing there.

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He found Mauger in the waist, and jeered at him good-naturedly until he was himself again. Faith, after a little, went below.

Noll was asleep in his bunk above hers. He lay on his back, one bare and hairy arm hanging over the side of the bunk. He was snoring, and there was the pungent smell of rum about him.

Faith undressed and went quietly to bed.

VII

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"There is a tide in the affairs of men...." Their lives ebb and flow like the tides; there are days, or months, or years when matters move slackly, seem scarce to move at all. But always, in the end, the pulses of the days beat up and up.... A moment comes when all life is compressed in a single act, a single incident.... Thereafter the tide falls away again, but the life of man is a different thing thereafter.

Such a tide was beating to the flood aboard the *Sally Sims*. Faith felt it; Dan'l felt it; even Noll Wing, through the fury of his increasing impotence, felt that matters could not long go on in this wise. Noll felt it less than the others, because the waxing tension of his nerves was relieved by his occasional outbursts of tempestuous rage. But Faith could find no vent for her unhappiness; she loved Noll, and she wept for him.... Wept for the Noll she had married, who now was dying before her eyes.... And Dan'l suffered, perhaps, more than Faith. He suffered because he must not seem to suffer....

The thing could not go on, Dan'l thought; he told himself, in the night watches when he was alone on deck, that he could not long endure the torment of his longing. Thus far he had loved Faith utterly; his half-unconscious efforts to discredit Noll were the result of no malice toward Noll Wing, but only of love for Faith. But the denial of his longing for the right to care for her was poisoning him; the man's soul was brewing venom. The honorable fibers of his being were disintegrating; his heart was rotting in the man.

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He was at the point where a little thing might have saved him; he was, by the same token, at the point where a little thing could set him forever upon the shameful paths of wrong.

Noll passed, at this time, into a period of sloth. He gave up, bit by bit, the vigorous habits of his life. He had been accustomed of old to take the deck at morning, and keep it till dusk; and when need arose in the night, he had always been quick to leap from his bunk and spring to the spot where his strength was demanded. He had, in the past, loved to take his own boat after the whales that were sighted; he had continued to do this in the early stages of this cruise, leaving Eph Hitch, the cooper; and Tinch, the cook; and Kellick, and a spare hand or so to keep ship with Faith and Roy Kilcup. But when they came into the South Seas, he gave this up; and for a month on end, he did not leave the ship. The mates struck the whales, and killed them, and cut them in, while Noll slept heavily in his cabin.

He gave up, also, the practice of spending most of the day on deck. He stayed below, reading a little, writing up the log, or sitting with glazed eyes by the cabin table, a bottle in reach of his hand. He slept much, heavily; and even when he was awake, he seemed sodden with the sleep in which he soaked himself.

He passed, during this time, through varying moods. There were days when he sulked and spoke little; there were days when he swore and raged; and there were other days when he followed at Faith's heels with a pathetic cheerfulness, like an old dog that tries to drive its stiff legs to the bounding leaps of puppy play. He was alternately dependent upon her and fretful at her presence....

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And always, day by day, he was haunted by the sight of the one-eyed man. He burst out, to Faith, one night; he cried:

"The man plans to knife me. I can see murder in his eye."

Faith, who pitied Mauger and had tried to comfort him, shook her head. "He's broken," she said. "He's but the shell of a man."

"He follows me," Noll insisted. "I turned, on deck, an hour ago; and he was just behind me, in the shadow...."

Faith, seeking to rouse the old spirit in Noll, said gently: "There was a man who tried to stab you once. And you killed him with your hands. Surely you need not be fearful of Mauger."

Noll brooded for a moment. "Eh, Faith," he said dolefully. "I was a hard man, then. I've always been a hard man.... Wrong, Faith. I was always wrong...."

"You were a master," she told him.

"By the fist. A master by the fist.... A hard man...."

He fell to mourning over his own harsh life; he gave himself to futile, ineffectual regrets.... He told over to Faith the tale of the blows he had struck, the oaths, the kicks.... This habit of

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confession was becoming a mania with him. And when Faith tried smilingly to woo him from this mood, he called her hard.... He told her, one day, she was un-Christian; and he got out a Bible, and began to read.... Thereafter the mates found him in the cabin, day by day, with the Bible spread upon his knees, and the whiskey within reach of his hand....

The disintegration of the master had its inevitable effect upon the crew; they saw, they grinned with their tongues in their cheeks; they winked slyly behind Noll's back. One day Noll called a man and bade him scrub away a stain of oil upon the deck. The man went slackly at the task. The captain said: "Come, sharp there...." And the man grinned and spat over the side and asked impudently:

"What's hurry?"

Noll started to explain; but Henry Ham had heard, and the mate's fist caught the man in the deep ribs, and the man made haste, thereafter. Ham explained respectfully to the captain:

"You can't talk to 'em, sir. Fist does it. Fist and boot. You know that, well's me."

Noll shook his head dolefully. "I've been a hard man in the past, Mr. Ham," he admitted. "But I'll not strike a man again...."

And the mate, who could not understand, chuckled uneasily as though it were all a jest. "I will, for you, sir," he said.

If Dan'l Tobey had been mate, and so minded, he could have kept the crew alert and keen; but Dan'l had his own troubles, and he did not greatly care what came to Noll and Noll's ship. So, Noll's hand slackening, the men were left to Mr. Ham; and the mate, while fit for his job, was not fit for Noll's. Matters went from bad to worse....

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This growing slackness culminated in tragedy. Where matters of life and death are a part of every day, safety lies in discipline; and discipline was lax on the *Sally Sims*. On a day when the skies were ugly and the wind was freshening, they sighted a lone bull whale, and the mate and Willis Cox lowered for him while the ship worked upwind toward where the creature lay. The boats, rowing, distanced the bark; the mate struck the whale, and the creature fluked the boat so that its planks opened and it sank till it was barely awash, and dipped the men in water to their necks. Silva, the mate's harpooner, cut the line and let the whale run free; and a moment later, Willis Cox's boat got fast when Loum pitchpoled his great harpoon over thirty feet of water as the whale went down....

The big bull began to run headlong, and the men in Willis's boat balanced on the sides for a "Nantucket Sleigh-ride." The whale ran straightaway, so tirelessly they could not haul up on the line.... The weather thickened behind them and hid the *Sally* as she stopped to pick up the mate and his wrecked boat. Then a squall struck, and night came swiftly down....

When Willis saw it was hopeless to think of killing the whale, he cut. It was then full dark, and blowing. Some rain fell, but the flying spume that the wind clipped from the wave tops kept the boat a quarter full of sea water, no matter how desperately they bailed. Toward midnight, the thirsty men wished to drink.

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A whaleboat is always provisioned against the emergency of being cast adrift. Biscuits and water are stored in the lantern keg, with matches and whatever else may be needful. The water is replenished now and then, that it may be fresh....

When Willis opened the lantern keg, he found the water half gone, and so brackish it was unfit to drink. A condition directly to be attributed to the weakening of discipline aboard the *Sally*.... A serious matter, as they knew all too well when the next day dawned bright and hot, with the bark nowhere to be seen. Their thirst increased tormentingly; and on the third day, when the searching *Sally* found them, two men were dead in the boat, and the other four were in little better case....

Willis had worked his boat toward an island northeast of the position where he lost the *Sally*; Dan'l Tobey had guessed what Willis would do, and had persuaded Noll to cruise that way. When they picked up the half dead men, Noll decided to touch at the island for food and fresh water; and they raised it in mid-morning of the second day.

They had seen other lands since the cruise began. But these other lands had been rocky and inhospitable.... The harsh tops, for the most part, of mountains that rose from the sea's depths to break the surface of the sea. Men dwelt on them, clinging like goats in the crannies of the rocks.... But they were not inviting. This island was different. When Faith, coming on deck at the cry, saw it blue-green against the horizon, she caught her breath at the beauty of it; and while the *Sally* worked closer, she watched with wide eyes and leaping pulses. She felt, vaguely, that it was the portal of a new world; it was lovely, inviting, pleasant.... She was suddenly sick of the harsh salt of the sea, sick of the stinking ship.... She wanted soft earth beneath her feet, trees above her head, flowers within reach of her hand....

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This island was fair and smiling; it seemed to promise her all the things she most desired.... She sought Noll Wing.

"Are you going ashore, Noll?" she asked.

He was in one of his slothful moods, half asleep in the after cabin; and he shook his great head.

"No.... Mates will get what we need. We'll be away by night."

She hesitated. "I—want to go ashore," she said. "Won't you go with me?"

"You can go," he agreed, readily enough. "Nobody there but some niggers—and maybe a few whites, on the beach. Nothing to see...."

"There's land," she told him, smiling. "And trees, and flowers.... Do come."

"You go along. I'm—tired, to-day."

"I'd like it so much more if you came with me."

He frowned at her, impatient at her insistence. "Stop the talk," he told her harshly. "I'm not going. Go if you want to. But be still about it, let a man rest.... I'm tired, Faith.... I'm getting old...."

"You ought to look after getting the stuff for the ship," she reminded him. "After all—you are responsible for her...." [Pg 70]

"Mr. Ham will do that, better than me," he said. "Go along."

She went out, reluctantly, and sought the mate. His boat and James Tichel's were to go ashore, leaving Dan'l in charge of the ship. He grinned cheerfully at Faith's request, and bade his men rig a stool to lower her into the boat. Faith protested, laughingly. "I can jump down, as well as a man," she said; and he nodded assent and forgot her.

She was in his boat when they put off presently; she sat astern, while Mr. Ham stood above her, his legs spread to steady himself against the movement of the boat, his weight on the long steering oar that he always preferred to the tiller. The *Sally* had dropped anchor a mile off shore, and canoes were already spinning out to her. The island spread before them, green and sparkling in the sun; and the white beach shone like silver.... It was more than a coral island; there were two hills, a mile or so inland; and the white-washed huts of a considerable village shone against the trees. The canoes met them, whirled about them; the black folk shouted and clamored and stared.... Mr. Ham waved to them, talked to them in a queer and outlandish mixture of tongues, bade them go on to the *Sally*.... "Mr. Tobey'll buy what they've got," he told Faith, as the whaleboat drove ahead for the shore.

James Tichel's boat was well astern of them, dragging a raft of floating casks which would be filled with water and towed out to the *Sally*. He was still far from shore when they drove up on the beach; and the men jumped out into the shallow water and dragged the boat higher, so that Faith, picking her way over the thwarts, could step ashore dry shod from the bow. Her feet left scarce a mark upon the hard, white sand. [Pg 71]

Mr. Ham said to her: "You come up to the trees; you can be cool there while we're at our business."

But Faith shook her head. "I'm going to take a walk," she said. "I want to get into the woods. How long will you be here?"

He hesitated dubiously. "Guess it's all right if you do," he decided. "The niggers are friendly.... Most of 'em talk English, in a way. Go ahead."

"How long have I?" Faith asked again. He said they would be ashore an hour, perhaps more. "No matter, anyway," he told her. "Stay long as you like. Do you want I should send a man with you?"

Faith told him she was not afraid; he grinned. She turned southward along the beach, away from the huddled village. The smooth sand was so firm it jarred her feet, and she moved up into the shade of the trees, and followed them for a space, eyes probing into the tangle beyond them, lips smiling, every sense drinking in the smells of the land.... When she came, presently, to a well-marked path that led into the jungle-like undergrowth, she hesitated, then turned in.

Within twenty steps, the trees closed about her, shutting away all sight of the sea. For a little longer she could hear the long rollers pounding on the beach; then that sound, too, became indistinct and dim.... It was drowned in the thousand tiny noises of the brush about her. Bird-notes, crackling of twigs, stirring of furry things. Once a little creature of a sort she had never seen before, yet not unlike the familiar and universal rabbit, hopped out of her path in a flurry of excitement. [Pg 72]

She heard, presently, another sound ahead of her; a sound of running, falling water; and when she pressed on eagerly, she came out upon the bank of a clear stream that dropped in bright cascades from one deep, cool pool to another. She guessed this stream must come down between the hills she had seen from the ship.... It was all the things she had unwittingly longed for during the months aboard the *Sally*. It was cool, and clear, and gay, and chuckling; the sea was always so turbulent and harsh. She followed the path that ran up the northern bank of the stream, and each new pool seemed more inviting than the last.... She wanted to wade into them, to feel the water on her shoulders and her throat and her arms.... Her smooth skin had revolted endlessly against the bite of the salt water in which she bathed aboard the *Sally*; it yearned for this cool, crystal flood....

She put aside this desire. The path she was following was a well-beaten trail. People must use it. They might come this way at any time.... She wished, wistfully, that she might be sure no one

would come.... And so wishing, she pressed on, each new pool among the rocks wooing her afresh, and urging her to its cool embrace....

She heard, in the wood ahead of her, an increasing clamor of falling water, and guessed there might be a cascade there of larger proportions than she had yet seen. The path left the stream for a little, winding to round a tangle of thicker underbrush; and she hurried around this tangle, her eyes hungry to see the tumbling water she could hear....

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Hurrying thus, she came out suddenly upon the lip of the pool.... Broad, and dark, and deep; its upper end walled by a sheet of plunging water that fell in a mirror-like veil and churned the pool to misty foam. Her eyes drank deep; they swung around the pool.... And then, she caught her breath, and shrank back a little, and pressed her hand to her throat....

Upon a rock, not fifty feet from her, his back half turned as he poised to dive, there stood a man. A white man, for all the skin of his whole body was golden-brown from long exposure to the open air.... He poised there like some wood god.... Faith had a strange feeling that she had blundered into a secret temple of the woods; that this was the temple's deity. She smiled faintly at her own fancy; smiled....

God has made nothing more beautiful than the human body, whether it be man's or woman's. Faith thought, in the instant that she watched, that this bronzed man of the woods was the most beautiful thing she had ever seen.... She had no sense of shame in watching him; she had only joy in the sheer beauty of him, golden-brown against the green. And when, even as she first saw him, he leaped and swung, smooth and straight, high through the air, and turned with arms like arrows to pierce the bosom of the pool, she gasped a little, as one gasps on coming suddenly out upon a mountain top, with the world outspread below.... Then he was gone, with scarce a sound.... She saw for an instant the golden flash of him in the pool's depths....

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His brown head broke the water, far across the way.... And he shook back his hair, and passed his hands across his face to clear his eyes.... His eyes opened....

His eyes opened, and he saw her standing there....

There were seconds on end that they remained thus, each held by the other's gaze. Faith could not, for her life, have stirred. The spell of the place was upon her. The man, for all his astonishment, was the first to find his tongue. He called softly across the water:

"Good morning, woman...."

His voice was so gentle, and at the same time so gay, that Faith was not alarmed. She smiled....

"It's after noon," she said. "Good afternoon—man!"

VIII

[Pg 75]

When Faith answered him, the man's face broke in smiles; he told her laughingly: "If you're so familiar with the habits of the sun, you must be a real woman, and not a dream at all.... I'm awake.... I am, am I not?"

"I should think you would be," said Faith. "That water must be cold enough to wake any one...."

He shook his head. "No, indeed. Just pleasantly cool. Dip your hand in it...."

Something led her to obey him; she bent by the pool's sandy brink and dabbled her fingers, while the man, a hundred feet away at the very foot of the waterfall, held his place with the effortless ease of an accustomed swimmer, and watched her. "Wasn't I right?" he challenged.

She nodded. "It's delicious...."

He said quickly: "You being here means that a ship is in, of course."

"Yes."

"What ship?"

"The *Sally Sims*—whaler...."

"The *Sally*! I know the *Sally*," the man cried. "Is Noll Wing still captain?..."

"Of course."

His eyes were thoughtful. "I'm in luck, woman," he said. "Listen. Will you do a thing for me?"

"What do you want me to do?"

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"I've a sort of a home, up on the hill above us here.... Observatory.... I've been waiting four months for a ship to come along, keeping a lookout from the top there.... Missed the *Sally*, somehow.... Must have come up after I came down...."

"We made the island a little before noon," she said.

He chuckled. "Ah, I was in my boudoir then.... I want to ship on the *Sally*. Does she need men?"

Her eyes clouded thoughtfully. "I—think so," she said. "They lost two, three days ago."

"What was it?" he asked quickly. "Fighting whale...."

She shook her head. "Boat got lost ... and they were short of water. The jug wasn't fresh filled."

The man whistled softly. "That doesn't sound like one of Noll Wing's boats," he said. "Noll is a stickler on those things...."

Faith bowed her head, tracing a pattern in the sand with her forefinger. She said nothing. The man asked: "How long before they sail?"

"They're going to wait for me," she said.

His eyes lighted, and he chuckled. "Good. Now, listen.... If you'll be so kind as to turn your back.... You see, I've been running wild here for the past few months, and my clothes are all up at my place. I'll trot up there and get them and come back here.... Get a few things that I don't want to leave.... Will you turn your back?..." She had done so, and she heard the water stir as he raced for the shore and landed. "I'm going, now," he called.

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"How long will you be?" she asked.

"Not over an hour," he told her. "About an hour."

"I'm afraid some one may come along this path.... Will they?... Should I hide from them?..."

He laughed. "Bless you, this is my private path; it's officially taboo to the natives, by special arrangement with the old witch doctor effect that runs their affairs. There won't be a soul along.... I'll be back in an hour...."

"I'll wait," she agreed softly. There was a light of mischief in her eyes. Still standing with her face down stream, she heard his bare feet pad the earth of the path for a moment before the sound was lost in the laughing of the waterfall.... A moment later, his shout: "I'm gone."

She sat down quickly on the sand, smiling to herself, sure of what she wished to do. She slipped off her shoes and her stockings with quick fingers; and she gathered her skirts high about her thighs and stepped with one foot and then another into the pleasant waters of the pool. They rippled around her ankles; she went deeper.... The waters played above her knees, while she balanced precariously in the swirling current and gathered her skirts high....

The water was soothing as Heaven itself, after the salt.... But she was not satisfied.... Merely wading.... She stood for a little, listening, gathering courage, striving to pierce the shadows of the bush about her with her eyes.... These first months of her marriage had driven a measure of her youth out of Faith; they had been sober days, and days more sober still were yet to come. But for this hour, a gay irresponsibility flooded her; she waded ashore, singing under her breath.... She began swiftly to loosen her skirt at the waist....

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When the man came trotting down the trail at last, shouting ahead to her as he came, Faith was sitting demurely upon the sand, clothed and in her right mind.... She was trying to appear unconscious of the fact that around the back of her neck, and her pink little ears, wet tendrils of hair were curling.... When he came in sight, she rose gravely to meet him; and he looked at her with quick, keen eyes, and laughed.... She turned red as a flame....

"I don't blame you," he said. "It's a beautiful pool...."

She wanted to be angry with him; but she could not.... His laughter was infectious; she smiled at him. "I—couldn't resist it," she said....

She was studying the man. He wore, now, the accustomed garments of a seaman, the clothes which the men aboard the *Sally* wore. Harsh and awkward garments; yet they could not hide the graceful strength of the man. He was not so big as Noll, she thought; not quite as big as even Dan'l Tobey.... Yet there was such symmetry in his limbs and the breadth of his shoulders that he seemed a well-bulked man. His cheeks were lean and brown, and his lips met with a pleasant firmness.... A man naturally gay, she thought; yet with strength in him....

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They started down the path toward the sea together. He carried a cloth-wrapped bundle, swinging in his hand. She looked at him sidewise; asked: "Who are you? How do you come to be here?"

"My name's Brander," he said. "I was third mate on the *Thomas Morgan*."

She tried to remember a whaler by that name. "New Bedford?" she asked.

"No.... Nantucketer."

Faith looked at him curiously. "But—what happened? Was she lost?..."

Brander's face was sober; he hesitated. "No, not lost," he said. He did not seem minded to go on; and Faith asked again:

"What happened?"

He laughed uneasily. "I left them," he said, and again seemed to wish to let the matter rest. But Faith would not.

"Is there any reason, why you should not tell me all about it?" she asked.

"No."

"Then tell me, please...."

He threw up his free hand in a gesture of surrender. "All right," he said....

They were following the narrow path down the stream's side toward the sea. Faith was ahead, Brander on her heels. After a moment, he went on....

"A man named Marks was the skipper of the *Thomas Morgan*. I shipped aboard her as a seaman. I'd had one cruise before.... Not with him. I shipped with him.... And I found out, within two days, that I'd made a mistake. [Pg 80]

"Not that they were hard on me. I knew my job, after a fashion; and ... they let me alone. But the men had a tough time of it. It was a tough ship, through and through. Marks; and his mate.... Mate's name was Trant, and I'd not like to meet that man on a dark night. There was murder in him.... The sheer love of it.... He was the sort of man that will catch a shark just for the fun of spiking the creature's jaws and turning him loose again.... I was in Taku once.... Saw a little China boy catch a dragon fly and tie a twig to its tail and let it go. The twig overbalanced the dragon fly—it went straight up into the air, fast as it could wing.... May be going yet.... That was the sort of trick Trant would have liked.

"Not that he ever actually killed a man on this cruise. Better if he had, for the men. But he didn't.

"A big fellow. Heavy fisted; but he wasn't satisfied with the fist. The boot for him...."

They were climbing a little knoll in the path; he fell silent while they climbed; and Faith thought of Noll Wing and Mauger....

"Well," said Brander. "Well, you know how things drag along.... We dragged along.... Then, one day, we touched.... We'd gone around into the Japan Sea. Marks and Trant walked up to the second mate and took him, between them, into a boat, and took him ashore.... They came back without him. He was a man as big as Trant, but he had crossed Trant, more than once.... Trant had a face that was cut to ribbons when he came back aboard; but the other man did not come back at all. I never knew what the particular quarrel was.... [Pg 81]

"They shoved the third mate up to the second, and put me in as third. I said to myself: 'All right.... But don't go to sleep, Brander.' And I didn't. It didn't pay.... I couldn't."

He waved his hand as though to dismiss what followed with a word.... Nevertheless, he went on:

"There was a man in my boat.... He was called 'Lead-Foot' by every one, because he was a slow-moving man. He was not good for much. He was very much afraid of every one. Especially Trant. He was bigger than Trant, so Trant took a certain satisfaction from abusing him. I decided to interfere with this. I told this big coward who was in my boat to keep out of Trant's way; and I told Trant, jokingly, one day, to leave my men alone. He was huffed at that; growled at me." Brander chuckled. "So I swelled up my chest like a fighting cock and told him to keep hands off. Oh, I threw a great bluff, I can tell you. But Trant was not a coward. He waited his time; and I knew he was waiting....

"And while he waited, he talked to the captain; and I could see them both whispering together. They whispered about me. They did not like to have me about; and once Marks threatened to put me back in the fo'c's'le; but he changed his mind.

"So matters were till we came past an island to the north of here, forty or fifty miles. We made that island at dusk, and worked nearer it after darkness had fallen. It came on cloudy and dark.... [Pg 82]

"I met Trant on the deck; and I said to him: 'Do we go ashore here?' He grinned at me with his teeth and bade me wait till morning and see. And that was enough for me. I knew what was coming. I thought I would hurry it a little; but luck hurried it for me, in a way that worked out very well.

"This lead-footed man was at the wheel. When the anchor went down, he started forward and brushed against Trant. Trant may have meant it to be so. Anyway, Trant knocked the lead-foot flying, and went after him with the boot, jumping, as lumbermen do. There happened to be a belaying pin handy. So I took it and cracked Trant, and he dropped in mid-leap.... Then Marks jumped me; and I managed to wriggle out from under him, and he fell and banged his head. And he lay still; but Trant was up, by then, and at me.

"The lead-footed man was yelling in my ear. I told him to go overboard and swim for it; and he did. And just then Trant got in the way of the belaying pin again, and this time he did not seem to want to get up.

"There was some confusion, you understand. I did not stay to straighten things out. I went over, after Lead-Foot.... He could swim like a porpoise. He was ahead of me, but half way in he met a

shark, and came clamoring back to me to be saved. So I got out of his way for fear he would drag us both under, and then I kicked at the shark, and it went about its business, and we swam on.... They were too busy sluicing the Old Man and Trant to come after us in a boat.... They could have knocked us in the head with an oar.... But they didn't....

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"However, Lead-Foot took the shark so seriously that he swam too fast. Or something of the sort.... Anyway, he keeled when we touched sand, and I felt him and found that he was dead with heart failure or the like. I didn't stop to work over him. I could hear Trant bellowing. He had come to life; and a boat was racing after me.

"So I went into the bush and stayed there till the *Thomas Morgan* took herself off. After that, not liking the island, which was low and marshy, I borrowed a native canoe and came over here.... And I've been here, since."

They were within sound of the rollers on the beach when he finished. Faith was silent for a little; then she asked: "Were there other white men here? Why didn't you stay at the village?"

"There was too much society there," said Brander, grinning amiably. "I'm a solitary man, by nature. So I went up into the hills. Besides, I could watch for ships, there.... I'd no notion of staying here indefinitely, you understand...."

Faith was filling out the gaps in his narrative from her own understanding of the life aboard a whaler. She could guess what Brander must have endured; she thought he had done well to come through it and still smile.... She thought he was a man....

They could see the surf, through the thinning bush, when he said: "You haven't told me how you happen to be aboard the *Sally Sims*...."

Faith had almost forgotten, herself. She remembered, and something like a chill of sorrow struck down upon her. But: "I am Noll Wing's wife," she said.

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They came out, abruptly, into the white glare of the beach, Mr. Ham's boat was drawn up, a quarter-mile away. Brander looked toward it, looked at Faith.

"Ah," he said quietly. "Then yonder is your husband's boat, waiting.... Noll Wing is an able skipper...."

Faith said nothing. They went on, side by side, toward Mr. Ham.

IX

[Pg 85]

When Mr. Ham, waiting by the boat with his men, saw Faith coming and saw the stranger at her side, he came to meet them. His bearing was inclined to truculence. Faith was ashore here in his charge; if this man had disturbed her....

Faith reassured him. "I've a hand for you, Mr. Ham," she called. "You need men."

Mr. Ham stopped, ten paces from them, with legs spread wide. He looked from Faith to Brander. Brander smiled in a friendly way. "Can you use me?" he asked. "I know the work."

Mr. Ham frowned thoughtfully. "What's this, ma'am?" he asked Faith. "Who's that man?"

Faith said quietly: "Ask him. I believe he wants to ship. I told him we were short."

The mate looked to Brander. His attitude toward Faith had been deferential; toward Brander he assumed unconsciously the terrorizing frown which he was accustomed to turn upon the men. "What do you want?" he challenged.

Brander said pleasantly: "To ship with you."

"What are you doing here?"

"I was third mate on the *Thomas Morgan*," said Brander.

"Cap'n Marks?" Mr. Ham asked.

"Yes."

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"We've no use for any o' Marks's mates aboard the *Sally*."

Brander smiled. "I wasn't thinking of shipping as mate. Can you use a hand?"

"Where's the *Thomas Morgan*?"

"On th' Solander Grounds, likely."

"How come you're not with her?"

"I left them, hereabouts."

"Left them?"

"Yes."

"They've not the name of letting men go."

"They had no choice. They were—otherwise engaged when I took my leave."

"That's a slovenly ship," said Mr. Ham.

"One reason why I'm not on her now."

The mate frowned. "I'm not saying it's not in your favor that you got away from them.... And we do need men." He added hastily: "Men; not officers."

"That suits me."

Mr. Ham looked around. Faith stood a little at one side, listening quietly. The *Sally* rocked on the swells outside.... "Well, come aboard," said the mate. "See what the Old Man says."

Brander nodded. "Thanks, sir," he said. He adopted, easily and without abasement, the attitude of a fo'mast hand toward the officer, and went ahead of the mate and Faith to stow his bundle in the boat. The other men waiting there questioned him; but they all fell silent as Mr. Ham and Faith came to where the boat waited.

Tichel had already taken the water casks out to the whaler. The men took the whaleboat and dragged it down to the water. When it was half afloat, Faith and the mate got in. The men shoved off, wading till the water was deep enough for them to clamber aboard and snatch their oars and push out through the rollers.... They worked desperately for a little, till they were clear of the turbulent waters of the beach; then settled to their work....

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Brander sat amidships, his bundle at his feet, lending a hand now and then on the oar of the man who faced him. Once he looked toward Faith; she met his eyes.... Neither spoke, neither smiled.... The island was receding behind them; Brander turned to watch it. They drew alongside the *Sally*.

Dan'l Tobey was at the rail to receive them. The mate stood in the tossing boat and lifted Faith easily to Dan'l at the rail; he swung her aboard. Mr. Ham followed; then Brander; then the men. The mate saw to the unloading of the boat, saw it safely stowed. Then turned to Brander, "Come and see the Old Man," he said.

Dan'l Tobey heard. "He's asleep," he told Mr. Ham. "Who is this?"

The mate said: "He wants to ship. Says he was on the *Thomas Morgan*."

Dan'l looked at Brander. Mr. Ham added: "The captain's wife found him in the bush."

Dan'l drawled: "Beach comber.... Eh?"

Brander said respectfully: "No, sir. I lived on the hill, there.... The highest one. You can make out my place with the glass...."

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"He was third mate on the *Thomas Morgan*," said Mr. Ham.

"We don't need an officer," Dan'l suggested. Brander sensed the fact that Dan'l disliked him; he wondered at it.

"I'm asking to ship as a seaman, sir," he said.

Mr. Ham looked at Dan'l. "Best speak to the captain?" he asked.

"Oh, set him ashore," Dan'l suggested. "He's a troublemaker. Too wise for the fo'c's'le...." He looked to Brander insolently. "Can't you see he's a man of education, Mr. Ham? What would he want to ship before the mast for?"

Mr. Ham looked puzzled. "How about it?" he asked Brander sharply. Brander smiled.

"I did it, in the beginning, for sport," he said. "Now I'm doing it to get home. If you need a man.... If not, I'll go ashore...."

Faith, standing by, said quietly: "Ship him, Mr. Ham." Her words were not a request; they were a command. Dan'l looked at her swiftly, shrewdly. Mr. Ham obeyed, with the instant instinct of obedience to that tone....

It was not till days later that Faith wondered why she had spoken; wondered why she had ventured to command.... And wondered why Mr. Ham obeyed.... It gave her, somehow, a sense of power.... He had obeyed her, as he would have obeyed Noll, her husband....

At the moment, however, having spoken, she went below.... She went quickly, a little confused. She found Noll asleep, as Dan'l had said; and she did not wake him. The *Sally* got to sea.... The island fell into the sea behind them. Before it was fully gone, Faith, with the captain's glass, had searched that highest hill from the windows of the after cabin; she discerned a little clearing, a rude hut.... Brander's home....

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She watched it for a space; then put the glass aside with thoughtful eyes.

Brander's coming, in ways that could hardly be defined, eased the tension aboard the *Sally*. When the man went forward to stow his belongings in the fo'c's'le, he found the men surly....

Quarrelsome.... They looked at him sidewise.... They covertly inspected him....

The men of a whaler's crew are a polyglot lot, picked up from the gutters and the depths. There were good men aboard the *Sally*, strong men, who knew their work.... Some of them had served Noll Wing before; some had made more than one voyage on the ships of old Jonathan Felt. There was loyalty in these men, and a pride in their tasks.... But there were others who were slack; and there were others who were evil.... The green hands had been made over into able seamen, according to a whaler's standard; and some of them had become men in the process, and some had become something less than men. Yet they all knew their work, and did it....

But they were, when Brander came among them, surly and ugly. In the days that followed, tending strictly to his own work, he nevertheless found time to study them.... A man with a tongue naturally gay, and a smile that inspired friendship, he began to jest with them.... And little by little, they responded.... Their surliness passed....

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The officers felt the change. Willis Cox, still half sick from the ordeal that had killed two of his men, took Brander into his boat. Brander was only a year or two older than Willis, but he was vastly more mature.... He knew men, and he knew the work of the ship; and Willis liked him. He let Brander have his way with the other men, and his liking for the newcomer led him to speak of it in the cabin, at supper one night. "He's a good man," he said. "The men like him."

Dan'l Tobey said pleasantly: "He's after your berth, Will. Best watch him."

Willis said honestly: "He knows more about the work than I do. I don't blame him. But—he keeps where he belongs...."

"He will ... till he sees his chance," Dan'l agreed. "Don't let him get away from you."

Old James Tichel grinned malignantly. "Nor don't let him get in my way, Mr. Cox," he said, showing his teeth. "I do not like the cut of him."

The mate looked at Cap'n Noll Wing; but Noll was eating, he seemed not to have heard. Faith, at her husband's side, said nothing. So Mr. Ham kept out of the discussion. Only he wondered—he was not a discerning man—why Dan'l disliked the newcomer. Brander seemed to Mr. Ham to be a lucky find; they had needed a man, they had found a first-rater. That was his view of the matter.

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Brander's coming had worked like a leaven among the men. That was patent to every one.... But this was not necessarily a good thing. A dominant man in the fo'c's'le is, if the man be evil, a dangerous matter. The officers rule their men by virtue of the fact that the men are not united. Union among the men against the officers breeds mutiny.... Dan'l said as much, now.

"He'll get the men after him like sheep," he said angrily. "Then—look out."

"We can handle that," said Mr. Ham.

Dan'l grinned. "Aye, that's what is always said—till it is too late to handle them. The man ought to have been left on the beach, where he belonged."

Faith said quietly: "I spoke for him. It seems to me he does his work."

Dan'l looked up quickly, a retort on his lips; but he remembered himself in time. "I'm wrong," he said frankly. "Brander is a good man. No doubt the whole matter will turn out all right...."

Cap'n Wing, finishing his dinner, said fretfully: "There's too much talk of this man. I'm sick of it. Keep an eye on him, Mr. Ham. If he looks sidewise, clip him. But don't talk so much...."

The mate nodded seriously. "I'll watch him, sir."

Dan'l said: "I've no right to talk against him, sir. No doubt he's all right."

Noll shook his great head like a horse that is harassed by a fly. "I tell you I want no more words about him, Mr. Tobey. Be still." He got up and stalked into his cabin. Faith followed him. The officers, one by one, went on deck. Willis, there, came to Dan'l.

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"You really think he means trouble, Mr. Tobey?"

Dan'l smiled. "If he were in my boat, I'd keep an eye peeled," he said.

Young Willis Cox set his jaw. "By God, I will that," he swore.

Dan'l pointed forward; and Willis looked and saw Brander talking with Mauger, the one-eyed man, by the lee rail. "Mark that," said Dan'l. "They're a chummy pair, those two."

Willis frowned. "That's queer, too," he said. "Mauger—he's not much of a man. Why should Brander take up with him, anyhow?"

Dan'l smiled, sidewise. "Does Mauger—Is Mauger the captain's man?" he asked.

"No. Hates him like death and hell."

"And Brander plays up to him...."

"Because Mauger hates the Old Man. Is that it?" Willis asked anxiously.

"I'm saying no word," protested Dan'l Tobey. "See for yourself, Will."

Roy Kilcup was another who did not like Brander. This was in part a consequence of his position on the *Sally*, in part the result of Dan'l Tobey's skillful tongue. Dan'l saw the tendency in Roy, and capitalized it.

Roy lived in the cabin, where his duties as ship's boy kept him for most of the time. It was true that in pay he ranked below the men, that he was of small account in the general scheme of work aboard the whaler; but he lived in the cabin, he was of the select, and to that extent he was set apart from the men. Also, he was the brother of the captain's wife, and that gave him prestige.

There was no great harm in Roy, but he was at that age where boys worship men, and not always the best men. Also, he was at what might be called the cocky age. He felt that the fact of his living in the cabin made him superior to the men who hived in the fo'c's'le; and this feeling showed itself in his attitude toward them. He liked to order them around.... They were for the most part willing to obey him in the minor matters with which he concerned himself.

Roy saw, as soon as any one, that Brander was a man above the average. The day Brander was found on the island, he had gone ashore with Mr. Tichel, and roved through the little native village, and returned to the ship with the third mate before Faith appeared. Faith had suggested that he go with her, but the boy scorned the notion of poking through the woods.... He was thus back on the ship when Brander appeared.... But he heard Dan'l Tobey object to the man, and he took his cue from Dan'l. He disliked Brander.

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This dislike was accentuated by a small thing which happened in the second week Brander was on the *Sally*. They had killed a whale and cut it in; and because the weather was bad, it had been a task for all hands. The men were tired; but after the job was done, the regular watches were resumed.... Dan'l Tobey's watch, which included Brander, took first turn at scrubbing up; and when they went off and the other watch came on, Roy was forward, fishing over the bow. He saw the tired men trooping forward and dropping into the fo'c's'le; and he hailed Brander.

"You, Brander," he called, in his shrill, boy's voice. "Get my other line, from the starboard rail, under the boathouse. Look sharp, now!"

Now Roy had no right in the world to give orders, except as a messenger of authority, and Brander knew this. So Brander said amiably: "Sorry, youngster. I'm tired. Your legs are spry as mine...."

And he descended into the fo'c's'le with no further word, while Roy's face blazed with humiliation, and the men who had heard laughed under their breath. Some boys would have stormed, beaten out their strength in futile efforts to compel Brander to do their bidding; Roy had cooler blood in him. He fell abruptly silent; he went on with his fishing.... But he did not forget....

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He told Dan'l Tobey about it. Dan'l was his confidant, in this as in other things. And Dan'l comforted him.

"Best forget it, Roy," he said. "No good in going to the Old Man. The man was right.... He didn't have to do it...."

"There was no reason why he should be impertinent," Roy blazed. "He holds himself too high."

"Well, I'll not say he does not," Dan'l agreed. "Same time, it never hurts to wait." And he added, a little uncomfortably, as though he were unwilling to make the suggestion: "Besides, your sister shipped the man. She'd have the say, in any trouble."

"I guess not," Roy stoutly boasted. "I guess she's nothing but a woman. I guess Noll Wing is the boss around here."

"Sure," said Dan'l. "Sure. But—let's wait a bit."

This pleased Roy; it had a mysteriously ominous sound. He waited; and he fell into the way of watching Brander, spying on the man, keeping the newcomer constantly under his eye. Brander marked this at once, smiled good-humoredly....

Brander and Faith saw very little of each other in those days; they exchanged no words whatever, save on one day when Brander had the wheel and Faith nodded to him and bade him good morning. For the rest, the convention of the deck kept Brander forward of the tryworks; and Faith never went forward. But now and then their eyes met, across the length of the *Sally*; and one night at the cutting in, she heard Brander singing a chanty to inspire the men as they tugged at the capstan bars.... He sang well, a clear voice and a true one. In the shadows of the after deck, she listened thoughtfully.

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Dan'l came upon her there, when he paused for a moment in his work. He saw her before she saw him, saw her face illumined by the light of the flare in the rigging above the tryworks. And for a moment he stood, watching; and the man's lip twisted....

That moment was a turning point in Dan'l Tobey's life. Before, there had been a measure of good in the man; he had loved Faith well and decently.... His capacity for mischief had been curbed.

But in those seconds while he studied Faith's countenance as she listened to Brander's singing, he saw something that curdled the venom in the man. When he stepped nearer, and she heard him, he was a different Dan'l.... The stocky, round-faced, freckled, sandy young man had become a power for evil.... He was to use this power thenceforward without scruple....

Faith smiled at him; he said pleasantly: "The man sings well."

"Yes," Faith agreed. "I like it."

Then Dan'l turned back to his tasks, and Faith slipped down into the cabin where Noll was, and offered to read aloud to her husband. Noll sleepily agreed; he went to sleep, presently, while she read. When she saw he was asleep, she dropped her book in her lap and studied the sleeping man; and suddenly her eyes filled, so that she went down on her knees beside him, and laid her arms gently about his shoulders, and whispered pleadingly:

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"Oh, Noll, Noll...."

Roy Kilcup, coming up from the cabin one day, saw Dan'l Tobey strike a man. He saw this at the moment his head rose above the companion. Dan'l and the man were amidships, and Dan'l cuffed him and drove him forward.

Dan'l was not given to blows; he seldom needed to use them. So Roy was curious. He went forward along the deck, and touched Dan'l's elbow, and pointed after the cuffed man and asked huskily:

"What's the matter? What did he do?"

Dan'l had not seen Roy coming. He took a moment to think before he answered; then he said in a fashion that indicated his unwillingness to tell the truth:

"Oh—nothing. He was spitting on the deck."

Now a whaler is, when she is doing her work, a dirty craft; she is never overly clean at best. But it is never permitted, on a ship that pretends to decency, to spit upon the deck. Any man who did that on the *Sally* would have been punished with the utmost rigor; and Roy knew this as well as Dan'l. And Dan'l knew that Roy knew. Roy grinned youthfully, protested:

"Oh, say, what's the secret about? What did he do?"

Dan'l smiled in a way that admitted his misstatement; he shook his head. "Nothing," he said.

Roy looked angry. "Keep it to yourself if you want to." He had known Dan'l all his life, and had no awe of him. "Don't tell if you don't want to. If it's a secret, I guess I can keep still about it as well as any one."

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Dan'l looked sorrowful. "Just forget it, Roy," he said. "It doesn't matter."

Roy flamed at him. "All right.... Keep it to yourself."

And Dan'l yielded reluctantly. "Well, if you've got to know," he said, "I'll tell you.... He was laughing at Brander's story of why Faith brought him aboard the ship here."

Roy's cheeks began to burn. "Brander.... What did Brander say?"

Dan'l shook his head. "I don't know. I didn't hear. He wasn't here at the time. Probably didn't say anything. Probably the men just made it up. The fo'c's'le is a dirty place, you know, Roy. Dirty men.... And dirty talk...."

Roy said hotly: "By God, I won't have them talking about my sister...."

"I felt the same way," Dan'l agreed. "But—you can't do anything."

"What did Brander say? The sneak...."

"I don't know that he said anything," Dan'l insisted. "Probably not. I just heard this man snickering, and telling two others something.... Heard him name Brander, and your sister.... So I struck in. The others were just listening. They got out of the way. I asked this man what he said; and he wouldn't tell me, so I hit him a clip and told him to keep his tongue still...."

Roy whirled to look forward. The deck was all but empty, but Brander and another man were by the knight's heads, talking casually together. Roy said under his breath: "I'm going to...."

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Dan'l caught his arm. "Wait...."

Roy shook loose. "No. This is my family affair, Dan'l. Let me alone...." He started forward. Dan'l hesitated; then he drew back, turned aft, stopped, watched.... He took a malicious pleasure in seeing what would happen.

Brander had seen Roy coming; he was watching the boy, and smiling a little. The other man's back was turned. Roy strode forward, head up, eyes blazing; he kept on till he was face to face with Brander; he stopped, and his hands trembled.

"You, Brander," he said thickly. "You keep your tongue off my...."

Brander moved like a flash of light. He swung Roy to him, swung the boy around, pinned his arms with one of his own, clapped his hand over Roy's mouth.... He lifted the boy easily and carried him, thus pinned and gagged, aft as far as the tryworks. The other man stared in astonishment; Dan'l took a step nearer the two. The others were out of easy hearing when Brander stopped. Still holding Roy's mouth he said quietly:

"Don't lose your head, youngster. You'll only do harm. Speak quietly. What do you want to say?"

He released Roy and stepped back; and again Roy showed that he was more than a boy. He did not spring at Brander; he did not curse; he did not weep. He stood, straight as a wire, and his eyes were blazing. His voice, when he found it, was husky and low, so that none but Brander could hear.

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"I don't know what you're saying about my sister," said Roy. "Whatever it is, it's not true. If you say it again, I'll kill you."

Brander's eyes shadowed unhappily. He asked: "Why do you think I have said anything?"

"No matter," said Roy harshly. "I know. Keep your tongue between your lips, or I'll shoot you like a yellow dog. That's all...."

He swung abruptly, and went aft so quickly that Brander made no move to stop him. Dan'l came quietly across the waist of the ship as Brander took a step after Roy. "Get forward, Brander," he said.

Brander nodded pleasantly; he said: "Yes, sir."

And he went back to the forward deck, his eyes troubled. He fought, that afternoon, with one of the hands, and whipped the man soundly. Dan'l Tobey reported this in the cabin that evening; and Mr. Ham frowned and said:

"He'd best learn we'll do all the fist work that's done aboard here."

Dan'l smiled. "He was an officer once," he reminded the mate. "It's a habit hard to break."

Big Noll was there; he seemed not to listen. His attitude toward the new man was still in doubt. Dan'l Tobey was wondering about it; and so was Faith. It was to be decided, two days later, in a fashion peculiarly dramatic.

Mauger, the one-eyed man, had an increasing hold on the imagination of Noll Wing. The captain encountered the other wherever he went; and he never encountered Mauger without an uneasy feeling that was half dread, half remorse. He could not bear to look at Mauger's face, with the dreadful hollow covered by the twitching lid; and Mauger sensed this and put himself in the captain's path whenever he had the opportunity. Noll wished he could be rid of the one-eyed man; and in his moments of rage, he thought murderously of Mauger. But for the most part, he feared and dreaded the other, and shivered at the little man's malicious and incessant chuckling.

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Again and again he spoke to Faith of Mauger, voicing his fear, wishing that she might reassure him; till Faith wearied of it, and would say no more. He spoke of his dread to Mr. Ham, who thought he was joking and laughed at him harshly. Mr. Ham lacked imagination.

Brander, as has been said, was friendly with Mauger. He was sorry for the little man; and he found in Mauger a singularly persistent spirit of cheer which he liked. He was, for that matter, a friend of all the men in the fo'c's'le, but because Mauger was marked by the cabin, his friendship for Mauger was more frequently noted. Dan'l had seen it, had pointed it out to Willis Cox....

Cap'n Wing came on deck one afternoon, a few minutes before the masthead man sighted a pod of whales to the southward. The captain was more cheerful than he had been for days; he was filled with something like the vigor of his more youthful days. There was a joyful turbulence in him, like the exuberance of an athlete.... He stamped the deck, striding back and forth....

When the whales were sighted, the men sprang to the boats. Mauger, since Willis Cox's tragic experience, had been put in the fourth mate's boat with Brander, to fill the empty places there. Brander and Mauger were side by side in their positions as they prepared the boat for lowering. But the whales were still well away, the *Sally* could cruise nearer them, and Noll Wing did not at once give the signal to lower. He stalked along the deck....

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As he passed where Mauger stood, he marked that the line in the after tub was out of coil a little. That might mean danger, when the whale was struck and the line whistled like a snake as it ran. Noll Wing stopped and swore sulphurously and bade Mr. Cox put his boat in order. Willis snapped: "Mauger, stow that line."

Mauger reached for the tub, but his single eye had not yet learned accurately to judge distance; he fumbled; and Brander, at his side, saw his fumbling, and reached out and coiled the line with a single motion....

Noll Wing saw; and he barked:

"Brander!"

Brander looked around. "Yes, sir."

"When a man can't do his own work here, we don't want him. Keep your hands off Mauger's tasks."

Brander said respectfully: "I helped him without thinking, sir. Thought the thing was to do the work, no matter who...."

Noll Wing stepped toward him; and his eyes were blazing, not so much with anger as with sheer exuberance of strength. He roared: "Don't talk back to me, you...."

And struck.

Now Noll Wing was proud of his fists, and proud of his eye; and for fifteen years he had not failed to down his man with a single blow. But when he struck at Brander, a curious thing happened.... [Pg 103]

Brander's head moved a little to one side, his shoulders shifted.... And Noll's big fist shot over Brander's right shoulder. The captain's weight threw him forward; Brander stepped under Noll's arm. The two men met, face to face, their eyes not six inches apart. Noll's were blazing ferociously; but in Brander's a blue light flickered and played....

The men waited, not breathing; the officers stepped a little nearer. Dan'l Tobey licked his lips. This would be the end of Brander.... It was not etiquette to dodge the Old Man's blows....

But, amazingly, after seconds of silence, Noll Wing's grim face relaxed; he chuckled.... He laughed aloud, and clapped Brander on the shoulder. "Good man.... Good man!"

Mr. Ham called: "We'll gally the sparm...."

And Noll turned, and waved his hand. "Right," he said. "Lower away, boats...."

The lean craft struck the water, the men dropped in, the chase was on.

XI

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When the boats left the *Sally*, Mr. Ham's in the lead as of right, Faith came from the after deck to where Noll stood by the rail and touched his arm. He turned and looked down at her.... He was already regretting what had happened. His recognition of Brander's courage had been the last flame of nobility from the man's soul; he was to go down, thereafter, into lower and lower depths.... He was already regretful and ashamed....

Faith touched his arm; he looked down and saw pride and happiness in her eyes; and with the curious lack of logic of the male, he was the more ashamed of what he had done because she was proud of him for it. She said softly:

"That was fine, Noll."

"Fine—hell!" he said hoarsely. "I ought to have smashed him."

Faith smiled; she shook her head.... Her hand rested on his arm; and as he turned to look after the departing boats, she leaned a little against him. He mumbled: "Fool.... That's what I was. I ought to have smashed him. Now he—every man aboard—they'll think they can pull it on me...." His big fists clenched. "By God, I'll show 'em. I'll string him up for a licking, time he gets back."

"I was—very proud," she said. "If you had struck him, I should have been ashamed." [Pg 105]

"That's the woman of it," he jeered. "Damn it, Faith; you can't run a whaler with kisses...."

She studied his countenance. He was flushed, nervous, his lips moving.... He took off his cap to wipe his forehead; and his bald head and his gray hair and the slack muscles of his cheeks reminded her again that he was an old, an aging man.... She felt infinitely sorry for him; she patted his arm comfortingly.

He shook her off. "Yes, by God," he swore. "When he gets back, I'll tie him up and give him the rope.... Show the dog...."

Roy had come up behind them; neither had heard him. The boy cried: "That's right, sir. The man thinks he's running the *Sally*, sir. You've got to handle him."

Faith said: "Roy, be still."

He flamed at her: "You don't know what you're talking about, Sis. You're just a girl."

Noll said impatiently: "Don't have one of your rows, now. I'm sick of 'em. Roy, go down in the cabin and stay there...."

"I can't see the boats from there," the boy complained. Noll turned on him; and Roy backed away and disappeared. Noll watched the boats, dwindling into specks across the sea.... Beyond he could see, now and then, the white spouts of the whales. Once a great fluke was lazily upreared.... Faith watched beside him.

Whether, in the normal course of things, Noll would have carried out his threat to whip Brander cannot be known. Chance, the dark chance of the whale-fisheries, intervened. [Pg 106]

Tragedy always hangs above a whaling vessel. This must be so when six men in a puny boat with slivers of iron and steel go out to slay a creature with the strength of six hundred men. When matters go well, they strike their whale, the harpoon makes him fast, he runs out his strength, they haul alongside and prod him with the lance, he dies.... But there are so many ways in which matters may go wrong. The sea is herself a treacherous hussy, when she consorts with the wind, and becomes drunk with his caresses. Under his touch she swells and breaks tempestuously; she writhes and flings herself about.... Her least wave can, if it chooses, smash the thin sides of a whaleboat and rob the men in it of their strength and shelter; her gentlest tussle with her consort wind can overwhelm them....

And if the sea be merciful, there remain her creatures. She is the wide, blue pasture of the whale; a touch of his flukes, a crunch of his jaw, a roll of his great bulk is enough to crush out the lives of a score of men. If he had wit to match his size, he would be invulnerable; as it is, men with their wits for weapons can strike and kill him in the waters that are his own. It is rare to encounter a fighting whale, a creature that deliberately sets itself to destroy the attacking boats; the tragedies of the whale-fisheries are more often mere incidents, slight mischances, matters of small importance to the whale....

A little, little thing and men die.

This day, the day when Brander faced Noll Wing and went unscathed, was bright and fair, with a gentle turbulent wind, and a dancing sea. It was warm upon the waters; the sun burned down upon them and its glare and its heat were reflected from them.... The skin of men's faces was scorched by it. The men, tugging at the oars in the boats, sweated and strove; the perspiration streamed down their cheeks, trickled along the straining cords of their necks, slid down their broad chests.... Their shirts clung to them wetly; they welcomed the flying spray that lashed them now and then. [Pg 107]

The pod of whales was perhaps five miles from the *Sally* when the boats were lowered; but the wind was favoring, and its pressure upon the sail helped them on for a space. When half the distance was covered, the oars were discarded as the boats swung around with the wind almost dead astern, and headed straight for the whales' lay. Before they reached the basking, sporting creatures, the whales sounded; and it was necessary for the men to lie upon their oars and wait for a full half hour before the first spout showed the cachalots were back from their browsing in the ocean caves below. The boats swung around and headed toward them, sails pulling....

Mr. Ham's boat was in the lead; for that is the right of the mate. The others were closely bunched behind him; and as they drew near the pod, they separated somewhat, so that each might strike a whale. Dan'l Tobey went southward, where a lone bull lay with the waves breaking over his black bulk. Willis Cox and Tichel swung to the north of the mate, into the thick of the pod.

The mate marked down his whale; a fat cow that would yield full seventy barrels. He was steering; Silva, the harpooner, stood in the bow, knee braced, ready with his irons. The men amidships prepared to bring down mast and sail at the word, and stow them safely away so that they might not hinder the battle that would come. The boat drove smoothly on.... Mr. Ham, looking north and south, saw that the others were drawing up abreast of him, so that they would strike the whales at about the same time. He thought comfortably that with a little luck they would kill two whales, or perhaps three. That each boat should kill was too much to be hoped for. [Pg 108]

Then he gave his attention to his own prey. They slipped up on the basking cow from almost dead astern, slid alongside her; and Mr. Ham swung hard on the steering oar. The boat came into the wind; he bellowed:

"Now, Silva; give her iron."

The harpooner moved quick as light, for all the power of the thrust he put behind his stroke. He sank his first iron; snatched his second, drove it home as the whale stirred.... Threw overboard the loose line coiled forward.... The whale ran.

The sail came fluttering down, mast and all; and the four men amidships rolled it awkwardly, stowed it along the gunwale.... Silva and the mate, at the same time, were changing places in the boat. Silva, the harpooning done, would now come into his proper function as boat-steerer. It is the task of the mates to kill the whales. The boat, half smothered in canvas, with Silva and Mr. Ham passing from end to end, and the whale line already running out through the chock in the bow, was a picture of confusion thrice confounded. [Pg 109]

In this confusion, anything was possible; anything might happen. What did happen was humiliating and ridiculous.

When Silva struck home the harpoons, he flung overboard a length of line coiled by his knee. This slack line would allow the whale to run free while the sail was coming down and he and the mate were changing places. He threw it overboard—and failed to mark that one loop of it caught on the point of one of the spare irons in the rack with the lances, at the bow. He leaped for the stern, groped past Mr. Ham amidships....

The whale was running. As Mr. Ham reached the bow, the line drew taut. That loop which had caught across the point of the harpoon was straightened like a flash.

Now a harpoon is shaped, not like an arrow, but like a slanting blade. It has a single barb; and the forward side of this barb is razor-sharp. This razor edge cuts into the blubber and flesh; then the shank of the barb grips and holds. But the edge that will cut blubber will also cut hemp....

The loop of whale line was dragged firmly back along this three-inch blade; it cut through as though a knife had done the trick, and the whale was gone with two irons and thirty fathoms of line. Mr. Ham and his boat bobbed placidly upon the water; and Mr. Ham looked, saw what had happened, and spoke sulphurously. Then looked about to see what might be done.

It was too late to think of getting fast to another whale. The pod was galled; the great creatures were fleeing. After them went James Tichel in his boat, the spray sluicing up from her bows. Tichel was fast; the whale was running with him.... Mr. Ham looked from Tichel for the other boats. He saw Dan'l Tobey in distress. A whale had risen gently under them, opening the seams of their craft; and they were half full of water and sinking. They had cut. [Pg 110]

Willis Cox had hold of a whale; and this one had sounded. Ham saw Willis in the bow, watching the line that went straight down from the chock into the water. This line was running out like a whip-lash, though Willis put on it all the strain it would bear without dragging the boat's bow under. It ran down and down....

Mr. Ham rowed across; and Willis called to him: "Big fellow. But he's taken one tub."

"Give him to me," Mr. Ham said.

Willis shook his head. "I'd like to handle him. Get me the line from Mr. Tobey's boat. He's mine."

Mr. Ham grinned. "All right; if you're minded to work...." He swung quickly to where Dan'l and his men floated to their waists in water, the boat under them. "Takin' a swim?" he asked, grinning.

Dan'l nodded. "Just that. You cut, I see. Why was that, now?"

Mr. Ham stopped grinning and looked angry. "Pass over your tubs," he ordered; and Dan'l's men obeyed. Mr. Ham took the fresh line to Willis....

He was no more than just in time. "The black devil's still going," Willis said. "Second tub's all but gone...." [Pg 111]

"Bound for hell, more'n like," Mr. Ham agreed. "Hold him."

Dan'l's line was running out by this time; for Willis had worked quickly.... And still the whale went down.... Mr. Ham stood by, waiting.... The line ran out steadily; the whale showed no signs of rising. The bow of Willis's boat was held down within inches of the water by the strain he kept upon the line. One tub was emptied; he began to look anxious.... And the whale kept going down.

Mr. Ham said abruptly: "There.... Pass over your line. He'll be gone on you, first you know."

Willis looked at the smoking line.... And reluctantly, he surrendered. With no more than seconds to spare, the end of his line was made fast to the cut end of Mr. Ham's, and the whale continued to go down. He had taken all the line of two boats—and wanted more.

"He's hungry," Mr. Ham grinned, watching the running rope. "Gone down for supper, likely."

And a moment later, his eyes lighting:

"There.... Getting tired.... Or struck bottom, maybe."

They could all see that the line had slackened. The bow of Mr. Ham's boat rode at a normal level; the line hung loose. And the mate turned around and bellowed to his men:

"Haul in."

They began to take in the line, hand over hand; it fell in a wide coil amidships, overlapping the sides, spreading.... A coil that grew and grew. They worked like mad.... The only way to kill a whale is to pull up on him until your boat rides against his very flank. All the line this creature had stolen must be recovered, before he could be slain.... They toiled with racing hands.... [Pg 112]

Mr. Ham began to look anxiously over the bow, down into the blue water from which the line came up. "He's near due," he said.

It is one of the curious and fatal habits of a sounding whale to rise near the spot where he went down. It is as though the creatures followed a well-known path into the depths and up again. This is not always true; often a whale that has sounded will take it into his mind to run, will set off at a double-pace. But in most cases, the whale comes up near where he disappeared.... The men knew this. Dan'l Tobey, in his sinking boat, worked away from the neighborhood to give the mate room. So did Willis. And Mr. Ham, leaning one knee on the bow, peering down into the water, his lance ready in his hand, waited for the whale to rise....

The line came in.... The nerves of each man tautened.... Mr. Ham said, over his shoulder: "Silva, you coil t'line. Rest of you get in your oars. Hold ready...."

He heard the men obey, knew they were ready to maneuver at his command.... The whale was coming up slowly; the line was still slack, but the creature should have breached long before....

The mate thought he detected a light pull on the line; it seemed to draw backward, underneath the boat; and he said softly: [Pg 113]

"Pull her around."

The oars dipped; the boat swung slowly on a pivot.... The line now ran straight down....

Abruptly, Mr. Ham, bending above the water, thought he saw a black bulk far down and down.... A bulk that seemed to rise.... He watched....

It was ahead of the boat; it became more plainly visible.... He waved his hand, pointing: "There ..." he said. "There...."

Deep in the water, that black bulk swiftly moved; it darted to one side, circling, rising.... Mr. Ham saw a flash of white, a huge black head, a sword-like, saw-toothed jaw.... The big man towered; he flung his left hand up and back in a tremendous gesture.

"Starn.... Oh, starn all!" he cried.

The oars bent like bows under the fierce thrust of the men as they backed water.... The boat slid back.... But not in time....

Willis Cox, and the men in his boat, saw the long, narrow under jaw of the cachalot—a dozen feet long, with the curving teeth of a tiger set along it—slide up from the water, above the bow of the boat. The bow lifted as the whale's upper jaw, toothless, rose under it.... The creature was on its back, biting.... The boat rolled sidewise, the men were tumbling out....

But that narrow jaw sheared down resistlessly. Through the stout sides of the boat, crumpling and splintering ribs and planking.... Through the boat.... And clamped shut as the jaws closed across the thick body of the mate.... They saw the mate's body swell as a toy balloon swells under a child's foot.... Then horribly it relaxed and fell away and was lost in a smother of bloody foam.... [Pg 114]

Loum, Willis's boat-steerer, swung them alongside the rolling whale. It was Brander who caught a loop of the loose line; and while the creature lay quietly, apparently content with what it had done, they hauled close, and Willis—the boy's face was white, but his hand was steady—drove home his lance, and drew it forth, and plunged it in, again and yet again....

The whale seemed to have exhausted its strength. Having killed, it died easily enough. Spout crimsoned, flukes beat in a last flurry, then the great black bulk was still....

They picked up the men who had been spilled from the mate's boat. Not a man hurt, of them all, save only Mr. Ham.

Him they never found; no part of him. The sea took him. No doubt, Faith thought that night, he would have wished his rough life thus to end.

XII

[Pg 115]

Mr. Ham was dead and gone. Faith was surprised to find, in the next few days, how much she missed him. The mate had been harsh, brutal to the men, ready with his fist.... Yet somehow she found in her heart a deep affection for the man. He was so amiably stupid, so stupidly good of heart. His philosophy of life had been the philosophy of blows; he believed men, like children, were best ruled for their own good by the heavy hand of a master. And he acted on that belief, with the best will in the world. But there had never been any malice in his blows; he frowned and glared and struck from principle; he was at heart a simple man, and a gentle one.... Not the stuff of a leader; never the man to take command of a masterless ship. Nevertheless, a man of a certain rude and simple strength of soul....

Faith was sorry he was gone; she felt they could have better spared another man.... Almost any other, save Noll Wing.

She did not at once perceive the true nature of the change which Mr. Ham's death must bring about aboard the *Sally*. In the balancing of man and man which had made for a precarious stability there, Mr. Ham had taken a passive, but nevertheless important part. Now he was gone; the balance was disturbed. But neither Faith nor the others at once perceived this; none of them saw that Dan'l Tobey as second mate, and Dan'l Tobey as first mate, with only a step between him and the command, were very different matters.... Not even Dan'l, in the beginning.... [Pg 116]

They were all too busy, for one thing; there were the whales to be cut in—for James Tichel had killed and towed his booty back to the *Sally* an hour after Mr. Ham died. Tichel's whale, and the one that had killed Mr. Ham, would give the whole ship work for days; feverish work, hard and engrossing. Cap'n Wing, who had leaned upon Mr. Ham in the past, perforce took charge of this work, and the strain of it wearied him. He no longer had the abounding vitality which it demanded.... It wearied him; and what with the death of the mate, and the rush of this work and his own weariness, he altogether forgot his threat to have the man, Brander, whipped in the

rigging. He forgot Brander, tried to drive the men at their tasks, and eventually gave up in a stormy outbreak of impatience and left the matter in the hands of Dan'l Tobey.

Dan'l went about the business of cutting in and boiling the blubber in a deep abstraction; he was considering the problem raised by the death of Mr. Ham, which none of the others—save, perhaps, Faith—had yet perceived.

This problem was simple; yet it had possibilities of trouble. Mr. Ham was gone; Dan'l automatically became first officer; old James Tichel ranked as second, Willis as third.... But the place of fourth mate was left empty.... It would have to be filled. The *Sally* could not go on about her business with one boat's crew forever idle. There would have to be a new officer.

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Dan'l was troubled by the problem, for the obvious reason that Brander was the only man aboard with an officer's training; that Brander was the obvious choice. Dan'l did not want Brander in the cabin; he had seen too much in Faith's eyes that night when she heard Brander sing by the capstan.... He had eyes to see, and he had seen. And there was boiling in Dan'l a storm of hatred for Brander. He was filled with a rancor unspeakable....

No one spoke of this necessity for choosing another officer until the last bit of blubber from the two whales had been boiled; the last drop of oil stowed in the casks; the last fleck of soot scoured from the decks. Then it was old Tichel who opened the matter. It was at dinner in the cabin that he spoke. Cap'n Wing was there, and Faith, and Dan'l, and Roy. Willis Cox was on deck; Mr. Ham's chair was vacant. Old Tichel looked at it, and he looked at Noll Wing, and he said:

"Who's to set there, cap'n?" He pointed toward the empty chair as he spoke. It was at Cap'n Wing's right hand, where Mr. Ham had been accustomed to sit. Dan'l Tobey had not yet preempted it. Dan'l was always a discreet man.

Cap'n Wing looked across at Tichel. "Mr. Tobey, o' course," he said.

Tichel nodded. "Natural. I mean—who's goin' to be the new officer? Or don't you figure to hev one?"

Noll had been drinking that day; he was befuddled; his brain was thick. He waved one of his big hands from side to side as though to brush Tichel away. "Leave it to me," he said harshly. "I don't call for any pointers, Mr. Tichel. Leave it to me...."

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James Tichel nodded again; he got up and wiped his mouth with the back of his hand and went on deck.... Dan'l and Roy, Faith and Noll Wing, were left together. Dan'l wondered whether it was time for him to speak; he studied Noll's lowered countenance, decided to hold his tongue.... He followed Tichel to the deck.

Noll said nothing of the matter all that day. At night, when they were going to bed, Faith asked him: "Who have you decided to promote to be an officer, Noll?"

He said harshly: "You heard what I told Tichel? Leave it to me."

"Of course," she agreed. "I just wanted to know. Of course...." She hesitated, seemed about to speak, then held her peace. Brander was the only man aboard who had the training; Noll must see that, give him time.

Faith wanted to see Brander in the cabin. She admitted this to herself, quite frankly; she did not even ask whether there was anything shameful in this desire of hers. She knew there was not.... The girl had come to have an almost reverential regard for the welfare of the *Sally*; for the prosperity of the cruise. It was her husband's charge; the responsibility lay on him. She wanted matters to go well; she wanted Noll to keep unstained his ancient record.... Brander, she knew, would help him. Brander was a man, an able officer, skillful and courageous; a good man to have at one's back in any battle.... She was beginning to see that Noll would need a friend before this cruise was done; she wanted Brander on Noll's side.

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It may be that there was mingled with this desire a wish that Brander might have the place that was due him; but there was nothing in her thoughts of the man that Noll might not have known.

She watched Noll, next day; and more than once she caught him watching where Brander aided with some routine task, or talked with the men. There was trouble in Noll's eyes; and because she had come to understand her husband very fully, Faith could guess this trouble. Noll was torn between respect for Brander, and fear of him....

Brander, that day of Mr. Ham's death, had faced Noll unafraid; Noll knew he was no coward. But by the same token, he had sworn to have Brander whipped, and had not done so. He recognized the strength and courage in the man; and at the same time he hated Brander as we hate those we have wronged. Brander was not afraid of Noll; and for that reason, if for no other, Noll was afraid of Brander. In the old days, when he walked in his strength, Noll Wing had feared no man, had asked no man's fear. His own fist had sufficed him. But now, when his heart was growing old in his breast, he was the lone wolf.... He must inspire fear, or be himself afraid.... He was afraid of Brander.

Afraid of Brander.... But Noll was no fool. No man who is a fool can long master other men as Noll had mastered them. He set himself to consider the matter of Brander, and decide what was to be done.

That night, when dark had fallen, and the *Sally Sims* was idling on a slowly stirring sea, Noll called the mates into the cabin. Faith and Roy were on deck together; and Roy, with a boy's curiosity, stole to the top of the cabin companion to listen to what passed. Faith paid him little attention; she was astern, watching the phosphorescent sparks that glowed and vanished in the disturbed water on the *Sally's* wake. The whaler was scarce moving at all; there was no foam on the water behind her; but the little swirls and eddies were outlined in fire....

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Noll looked around the table at the other mates; and he said heavily:

"We've got to have a new officer."

They knew that as well as he; the statement called for no reply. Only Dan'l Tobey said: "Yes, sir.... And a man we know, and can count on."

Noll raised his big head and looked at Dan'l bleakly. "Mr. Tobey," he said, "you know the men. Who is there that measures up to our wants, d'you think?"

Dan'l started to speak; then he hesitated, changed his mind.... Said at last: "I'm senior officer here, sir. But—I've not the experience that Mr. Tichel has, for instance. Perhaps he has some one in mind."

Noll nodded. "All right, Mr. Tichel. If you have, say out."

James Tichel grinned faintly. "I have. But you'll not mind me, so no matter."

"Out with it, any fashion," Noll insisted.

"Silva, then," said Tichel. "Silva!" He looked from one of them to another. Noll's face was set in opposition; Dan'l's was neutral; Willis Cox was obviously amazed. "Silva," said old Tichel, for the third time. "He's a Portugee.... All right. But he's a good man; he knows the boat; he's worked with Mr. Ham. And he can take the boat and make a harpooner out of one or the other of two men in her...." He stopped, unused to such an outbreak. "That's my say, leastwise," he finished.

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For a moment, no one spoke. Then Noll looked toward Dan'l again. "Now, Mr. Tobey," he said.

Dan'l leaned forward, resting his elbows on the table. "I've nothing against Silva," he said quietly. "He's a good man. The best man in the crew, I'm thinking.... But...."

"The man I have in mind is Roy Kilcup. No less."

Noll's eyes widened; and old Tichel snapped: "He's never been in a boat."

"I know the boy," Dan'l insisted. "I'll undertake to teach him all he needs know in a week. He knows boats; he has guts and heart.... All he needs to know is whales...."

"Aye," said Willis Cox scornfully. "Aye, that's all. But who does know them?"

Dan'l smiled. "You might well enough ask, Mr. Cox."

Willis flushed painfully. "He's just a kid," he protested.

"You were almost three months older when you struck your first whale, if I mind right," said Dan'l pleasantly.

Big Noll Wing interrupted harshly: "That's enough. Silva and Roy. Who would you have, Mr. Cox?"

"Only one man aboard," said Willis.

"That's who.... I've no mind for conundrums."

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"Brander," said Cox. "Brander!"

Noll seemed to slump a little in his chair; he smiled wearily. Dan'l Tobey thought the captain had never looked so old. His big fist on the table moved a little from side to side, then was still. In the silence, they all heard the voice of Roy Kilcup, from the deck above, crying to Faith in a trembling whisper:

"Dan'l wants to make me mate, Sis! He wants to make me mate...."

His voice was so tremulous, so obviously the voice of a boy, that every man of them save Dan'l Tobey smiled. Noll said slowly: "He's over youthful yet, Dan'l. Teach him the trade.... Happen, some day, we'll see...."

Dan'l was betrayed by anger into indiscretion. "Over youthful, that may be," he exclaimed. "But not a Portugee; and not a beach comber...."

Noll held up his big hand, silencing Dan'l. And he looked from man to man; and he said slowly, as an old man speaks: "I've no liking for Brander. He dared me to my face, t'other day. But there's this...."

"He holds the crew. They like him. And he's a man; and he knows the job; and he does not know how to be afraid. Also, he has a right to the place. If we don't give it to him, he might well enough make a bit trouble for us. Leastwise, that's the seeming of it to me...."

Dan'l said harshly: "I never heard that Noll Wing feared any man."

Noll smiled. "Age brings wisdom, Dan'l. I'm learning to fear.... So...."

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Dan'l Tobey found Brander on the fore deck, ten minutes later. Brander was smoking, with two of the men. Dan'l touched his shoulder; Brander stepped aside. The two men faced each other in the darkness for a moment; and it was as though an electric spark of hostility passed between them. Their eyes clashed....

Then Dan'l said pleasantly: "Get your traps and come aft to the cabin, Brander."

Brander chuckled softly; he tapped out his pipe in his palm and tossed the glowing ember over the rail. "Thank you, Mr. Tobey," he said. "I'm pleased to accept your kind invitation."

There was a mocking light in his eye that Dan'l, even in the dark, could see. Another man might have struck; but Dan'l was never one for blows. He turned on his heel and went aft; and Brander dropped into the fo'c's'le to collect his belongings.

XIII

[Pg 124]

Thus Brander came into the cabin. He and Willis Cox shared a small compartment off the main cabin; while Dan'l and tigerish old Tichel shared another. The four mates, Roy, Noll Wing, and Faith all lived in a space not much more than twenty-five feet square. This intimacy that could not be escaped served to intensify the clash of man and man. Brander and Dan'l Tobey became, within the week, open and avowed enemies.

They made no great show of their enmity, but each understood. Dan'l, by virtue of his position as mate, gradually gathered into his own hands the authority that old Noll Wing was letting slip; he assumed many of the small prerogatives of the captain; and he took advantage of his strength to give Brander irksome tasks, to make his work unnecessarily hard. Noll saw nothing. He had fallen into something like a stupor; he was rotting at the heart, like a great log that lies prone in the forest. He played with his authority; he had days when he liked to fancy that he was the Noll of old; but most of the time he spent in the cabin below, sleeping, or perhaps drinking, or reading the Bible and maundering over his own past sins. A wholesome interest in the Bible is a good thing for any man; but Noll's interest was not wholesome. He was morbidly absorbed in the Book; he read it and mourned to think how wicked he had been. He complained to Faith as though she were to blame for his ancient crimes.

It came to pass that he flooded Faith, little by little, with the details of his own misdemeanors. His own orgy of self-depreciation led him to decide that he was not worthy of her; he told her so; and when Faith sought to hearten him, the man—to prove his point—recited the tale of the hot blood of his youth. He told her the women he had known, so that Faith was sickened; and he begged her to forgive him, and she did. She forgave without rancor.... It was characteristic of Faith that she held no anger against Noll because he was not what she thought him. She had married him, eyes open.... He was her husband; she was his. She set herself to serve him, to protect him against himself, with all the loyalty that was in her. And more than all, she set herself to uphold Noll as the master of his ship. He must bring the *Sally* home with bursting casks; that was Faith's creed and prayer. He must fight the good fight; he must meet his responsibility; he must be master....

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She worked to this end unceasingly; and on the whole her efforts were without avail. Noll steadily degenerated.... His strength fled from him.

Faith was so concerned with Noll that she gave little heed to the hostility between Dan'l Tobey and Brander. These two fought their fight without her interference. And this struggle between them was a curious thing. On Dan'l's side, it was a constant and persistent effort to harass Brander and discredit him; on Brander's side, it was a good-natured opposition to this effort. When Dan'l gave Brander two men's work to do, Brander smiled—and did it. When Dan'l blamed Brander for what was another's fault, or no fault of any man, Brander silently and cheerfully took the blame. Now and then he looked at Dan'l with a blue flash of anger in his eyes; but for the most part he was good-humored; he seemed amused by Dan'l, nothing more.

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Dan'l chose, one day, to take Brander to task at dinner in the cabin. Noll and Faith were there, and the four mates. Brander, as was his duty, came down last; he sat at the foot of the board. The *Sally* was cruising idly, watching for a spout. Brander and Willis Cox had been on deck before dinner. There was little for either of them to do, save watch for any chance of harm, or wait for word of a whale.

When Brander came down, he caught Faith's eye from the foot of the companion ladder, and Faith nodded and said: "Good morning." Brander smiled. Dan'l looked at Faith; and he looked at Brander; and he gripped his chair to hold back a hot word that would have ruined him. Brander sat down at the foot of the table. Noll seemed scarce to know he had come, and Faith nodded to Brander to pass his plate. Brander did so, and Faith served him. The plate went back to Brander.

Dan'l said slowly: "Mr. Brander, the main hatch was not fast when I came down. Did you secure it?"

Brander looked up quickly, smiled. "No, sir," he said. "I...."

"Why not?" Dan'l demanded acidly. "Are you waiting for a squall to tear it off?"

Willis Cox said: "I had it made fast, sir. Before Mr. Brander came on deck."

Dan'l crimsoned in spite of himself; old Tichel grinned unpleasantly. Brander smiled; and Faith looked at Dan'l and waited for his word of acknowledgment. Dan'l saw her eyes.... He said to Brander: "Then, of course, you couldn't make it fast. Why didn't you say so—since it was done before you came on deck?"

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Brander said soberly: "Sorry, sir." But his eyes were twinkling. What use to explain; Dan'l could not be in a worse light. And Dan'l knew it. He said hotly:

"What is so funny?..."

Noll Wing rumbled from the head of the table, where he had seemed concerned only with his food: "Let be. Let be. The thing is done. That's all that's needful, Mr. Tobey."

And Dan'l got hold of himself; he said respectfully: "Right, sir."

The matter dropped there.... A small thing; but an incident very typical of the tension which was growing in the cabin of the *Sally Sims*. Dan'l, jaundiced by his own hatred of Brander, by his disordered passion for Faith, was not good company. Save Roy, all those in the cabin avoided him. Roy was fiercely loyal to Dan'l; and he hated Brander the more because Brander had been given the mate's berth to which Roy himself had foolishly aspired. That was Dan'l's doing, that aspiration; he had taken care to tell Roy that he had proposed Roy's name. "Brander does not belong in the cabin," he told Roy. "He is rag tag and bob tail, from God knows where. If I'd been Noll Wing, you would be fourth mate to-day...."

He fed Roy's sense of wrong; for the boy might some day prove a useful tool. Dan'l was full of venom in those days; but he had not yet formed his ultimate plan.

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He still loved Faith, with some faint traces of the old decency. He knew in his heart that she would never love him; yet he would never be content till he got this from her own lips. The inevitable happened one evening when a new moon's thin crescent faintly lighted the dark seas. Noll had gone early to a sodden sleep; Faith was not sleepy and went on deck. Dan'l, from his cabin, heard her go; he arose and followed her....

There was little wind; the sea was flat; the *Sally* scarcely stirred. Dan'l told the man at the wheel to leave her and go forward; he made the wheel fast and let the *Sally* go her own gait. Her canvas was all stowed; her yards were bare. When the man was gone, Dan'l turned to the after rail, where Faith was sitting. The man's mouth was hot and dry, and his pulse was pounding. He came to her; Faith said softly:

"Hello, Dan'l...."

Dan'l mumbled huskily.... "... Faith!" He stood beside her, and they looked out across the water, where the starlight played. Dan'l was trembling, and Faith felt the trouble in the man, as she had felt it for weeks.... She and Dan'l had been boy and girl together; she was infinitely sorry for him....

In the end, while he stood rigidly beside her, she laid her hand on his arm. "Dan'l," she said, "I wish—you would get over being so unhappy."

He looked at her through the dark; his voice was like a croak. "Unhappy ..." he repeated.

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"It's not good for you, Dan'l," said Faith gently. "Unhappiness is—it's like a poison. It burns...."

"Aye?" said Dan'l. "That's true, Faith. It burns...."

"Why not forget it?" she urged. "You're actually growing thin on it, Dan'l. Your face is lined...."

Dan'l tried to laugh. "One thing," he said, "the ship's on my hands, now. Noll Wing—he's aging. He's an old man, Faith."

Faith turned her head away from him quickly; she bit her lip in the darkness. Dan'l repeated: "The *Sally's* on my hands, Faith. I'm master—without the name of it."

She said quietly: "Noll Wing is master here, Dan'l. Never think he is not."

Dan'l turned abruptly away; he stood with his back to her. And as he stood there, the jealousy of Brander and all the rancor that was poisoning the man gave way for a moment to his tenderness for Faith. He swung back sharply, gripped her shoulders.... "Faith," he said harshly, "Noll is master. So be it. But, Faith—I may still love you. I do. Nothing on earth can stop it. It's all there is in me, Faith. You.... You.... I would worship you; he kicks you with every word, as he kicks a dog. Faith.... Faith...."

She faced him squarely. "Dan'l, you are wrong. You are wrong to tell me this—to speak so.... It is not—manly, Dan'l."

The reproach in her voice made him shrink; it fired him. He caught her, cried: "By God...." He would have swept her into his arms.... [Pg 130]

Brander said, from the top of the companion: "Mr. Tobey, shall I set a man at the wheel?... There's wind coming...."

Dan'l cursed. "Hell!" He flung loose from Faith, he whirled on Brander.... The two men faced each other tensely, Dan'l crouching with bared teeth, Brander erect.... The starlight showed a little smile on his face. Abruptly, Dan'l straightened....

"Set a man at the wheel—and be damned, Brander!" he said.

And he brushed past the fourth mate without a glance, and went below. Brander called through the darkness to a knot of men on the deck, forward. One came aft....

Faith still stood by the rail; Brander paid her no heed. The man took the wheel.... Brander leaned against the forward end of the deckhouse. After a little, Faith stirred, came to the companion to go below. At its top, she paused.

"Good night, Mr. Brander," she said.

"Good night," he called pleasantly.

She went below. Dan'l, writhing in his bunk below old Tichel, who snored above him, heard her cross the cabin and go into Noll's. And the nails on his fingers bit his palms.

The second day after, Dan'l came down into the cabin to find Noll. "Would you mind coming on deck for a moment, sir?" he asked. [Pg 131]

Noll was reading; he looked up resentfully. "What now, Mr. Tobey? Can't you handle the ship?"

"I want you to see a thing...." There was a hint of evil in Dan'l's tone. Faith was there, heard, wondered.... Noll looked at the mate; bestirred himself....

They went on deck together; and Dan'l pointed forward.

Brander was there, by the tryworks. Facing him, grouped about him, were four of the crew. Mauger was among them. Brander was talking; and the men were laughing at what he said. One of the men looked aft and saw Dan'l and Noll Wing watching them; and the man's face sobered instantly and he backed away from the group. Brander turned around and saw the captain. Noll called to him:

"Come aft, Mr. Brander."

Brander came, without haste, yet quickly. Noll and Dan'l waited for him in silence; they kept silent when he faced them. He met Noll Wing's sullen and angry eyes. His own were unashamed and unafraid. "What is it, sir?" he asked at last.

Noll lowered his big head like a bull. "What was your talk with the men, there?" he demanded.

Brander smiled. "The man Hatch tripped on a coil of line and fell. That minded me of a thing that happened on the *Thomas Morgan*, and I told them of it. A fat greeny caught his foot in the rigging and dove thirty feet overside into the sea.... It was a comical thing, sir. And they laughed at it." [Pg 132]

"I do not want my mates consorting with the crew," said Noll sulkily; and there was more complaint than accusation in his voice. Brander said:

"It does no harm to be friendly with the men. Liking is as good a handle as fear, to hold them with."

Old Noll tried to beat down Brander's eyes with his own; but his own were the first to shift. He shrank, the vigor of his anger passed, he was an old man again. "Damn it, if you'd rather be forward, go there and stay," he fretted. "Do you want to go back to the fo'c's'le, man?"

Brander said respectfully: "No, sir. I'll do as you say."

"For God's sake, do," Noll whined. He turned back to the cabin, brushed Dan'l. "And you, Mr. Tobey. Don't bother me with such matters."

Dan'l looked at Brander, eyes glinting. "I thought it important, sir," he said.

Noll grunted and went below. Dan'l, with a triumphant grin at Brander, followed him. Faith was in the main cabin; she looked at the two seriously. "What was it, Noll?" she asked.

Noll shook his head fretfully; he stumped past her toward his own cabin. "The man Brander, currying favor forward," he said. "I put a bee in his bonnet."

Dan'l said: "He meant no harm, sir. I'm sure of it...."

Noll whirled on him. "Then why did you run to me?"

"So that you might set him right, and put an end to't," said Dan'l. "He's a bit too friendly with the [Pg 133]

men.... It was time he was told...."

"Oh, aye," said Noll wearily. "Come, Faith...."

The door of the after cabin shut behind them; and Dan'l, left alone, smiled at his own thoughts and was content.

XIV

[Pg 134]

There was one circumstance that counted against Brander in the eyes of James Tichel, of Mr. Cox, and of some of the crew. This was the fact that for close on a month after he was made an officer, the *Sally Sims* sighted not one loose whale.

There were fish all about them. During the interval, they sighted three other whaling craft, and stopped to gam with them. Two of the three were cutting in when the *Sally* sighted them; the third had just finished trying out the blubber of a ninety barrel bull. But the *Sally* sighted not so much as a spout. And old Tichel, who had the superstitions of the sea in his blood, began to look sidewise at Brander, and whisper that he was a Jonah....

That new moon in whose light Dan'l tried to plead with Faith was another ill omen. Noll Wing, coming on deck the first night the moon appeared, saw it first over his left shoulder when Faith called to him to look. He swung his head to the left.... Saw the moon.... And old Tichel's cry was too late to stop him. Faith laughed at the second mate; Noll grumbled at him. But Tichel clung to his doubts; and Willis Cox was converted to them by the indisputable fact that the *Sally* sighted no whales.

The men on a whaling vessel have an interest in the cruise. They are not paid for the work they do, for the time they spend.... They are paid according to the earnings of the vessel. Their salary, or wage, is called a "lay." This ranges from the captain's lay down to that of the greeny. The captain's is a twelfth; or at least this was Noll Wing's lay. The greenies on the *Sally Sims* were on a hundred and seventy-fifth lay. Which, being interpreted, means that out of every twelve barrels of oil which the *Sally* brought home, one belonged to the captain; and out of every hundred and seventy-five, one belonged to each of the green hands. The captain got one in twelve, the mate one in eighteen; the second mate got one in twenty-eight, and so the shares ran down the scale. The lays were so arranged that out of every hundred and seventy-five barrels, some fifty-five went to the officers and crew, while the remainder went to the owner to pay the expenses of the voyage and give him his profits.... Three per cent., or six, or a hundred, as the luck of the cruise might decide.... The crew were sure of their money, such as it was, before the owner got his; for it was the custom of old Jonathan Felt to pay off his men at the current price of oil before figuring his own profit or loss.

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The effect of this arrangement was to give the mates and the men an incentive to harder effort. The effect was to make them acutely interested in the success of the cruise. And by the same token, the ill luck which now beset the *Sally* tended to fret their tempers and set them growling about their tasks....

Some blamed Brander; some blamed Noll Wing; some blamed their luck....

Brander felt the strain as much as any of them. He was, in addition, an untried man; he had not yet had his chance to strike a whale, and that is the final test of a whaler's officers. When he was taken into the cabin and given a boat, he was forced to be content with the poorest material aboard. That is the fourth mate's luck. He had Mauger, the one-eyed man; he had Loum as his harpooner; and he had to fill out his crew three others who were weak hands at the oars and slack at every task.

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He set himself to whipping this crew into shape; and in the luckless days when the *Sally* idled with double watches at the mastheads, he used to take his boat off and push the men to their work, training steadily, fighting to put pith into them. He was not a man given to the use of his fists; neither had his tongue the acid bite of Dan'l Tobey's. But he had a way of railing at the men good-naturedly, abusing them with a smile, that made them laugh and tug the harder at their oars; he won from them more than they had ever given before.... And he inspired in them a distinct loyalty which gave birth, in time, to a pride in their boat which pleased Brander, and promised well.

Mauger, in particular, was Brander's shadow and slave. The one-eyed man, who had been turned into a chuckling and harmless nonentity by the captain's blow and kick, found Brander kindly. And he repaid this kindness with a devotion that was marked by every man aboard.... This devotion was marked, above all, by Noll Wing. And Noll, in whom fear of the one-eyed man was growing like a cancer, dreaded Brander all the more because of it.

Noll and Faith were playing cribbage in the after cabin one night; and the door into the main cabin was open. Faith sat on the seat across the stern, and Noll was in a chair, his back to the door, his knees supporting the board they used as a table. Brander came down from the deck with word that one of the men had cut himself with his clasp knife; he wanted to go to the medicine chest in the after cabin for materials to care for the wound. The sea was turbulent; the *Sally* was rocking on it; the rigging was creaking and the timbers of the old craft groaned aloud.

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This tumult drowned the noise of Brander's footsteps as he came down the ladder and across the main cabin. When he appeared in the doorway behind Noll, Faith saw him. Noll neither saw nor heard till Brander said quietly:

"Sorry to bother you, sir...."

Noll, whose nerves were shaky, whirled up from his chair; the board slid from his knees, the cards were spilled.... His face was ghastly with fright; and when he saw Brander, this fright turned to rage.

"Damn you, Brander," he cried. "Don't you sneak up on me like that again...."

Brander said respectfully: "I'm sorry. I should have...."

"What do you want?" Noll barked. "Get out of here. Get out of my sight. Don't stand there gawping...."

"I want to get some...."

"I don't give a damn what you want," Noll cried. "Get up on deck, where you belong. Sharp...."

Brander stood his ground. "One of my men has cut his hand," he said. "I want some stuff to fix it up."

Noll wavered.... He threw up his hands. "All right. Get what you want.... I can't get rid of you any other way. But don't come sneaking up behind me again. I don't like it, Mr. Brander." [Pg 138]

Brander made no reply; he crossed to the medicine chest and found what he needed. Faith had picked up the fallen board, the cards.... She said quietly: "Sit down, Noll. We'll deal that hand over again...."

Big Noll sat down, watching Brander sidewise. When Brander was gone, Faith asked: "Why were you startled?"

"I don't like that man," Noll said. "He's too thick with Mauger for me. Mauger'll stick a knife in me, some night.... He will, Faith."

Faith shook her head. "Don't be foolish, Noll. Mauger's not worth being afraid of."

Noll laughed mirthlessly. "I tell you, there's murder in that man," he protested. "And Brander's with him.... I've a mind...."

"It's your crib," said Faith, and played a card. "Three."

Noll mechanically took up the game; but Faith, watching, saw that his eyes were furtively alert for half an hour thereafter.

On the twenty-fifth day after the death of Mr. Ham, at about ten o'clock on a warm and lazy morning, the man at the foremast head gave tongue to the long hail of the whale-fisheries....

"Blo-o-o-o-w! Ah-h-h-h-h blo-o-o-o-o-w!"

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The droning cry swept down through the singing rigging, swept the decks of the *Sally*, penetrated into the fo'c's'le, dropped into the cabin and brought Dan'l Tobey and Noll Wing from sleep there to the deck. Faith was already there, sewing in her rocking chair aft by the wheel. When Dan'l reached the deck, he saw her standing with her sewing gathered in her hands, the gold thimble gleaming on her middle finger, watching Brander. Brander was half way up the main rigging, glass leveled to the southward.

Noll Wing bellowed to the masthead man: "Where away?..." And the man swept a hand to point. Noll climbed up toward Brander, shouting to Mr. Tobey to bring the *Sally* around toward where the whale had been sighted. The men from the mastheads and the fo'c's'le and all about the deck jumped to their places at the boats to wait the command to lower. Brander took the glass from his eye as Noll's weight pulled at the rigging below him, and looked down at the captain, and started to speak; then he changed his mind and waited, glass in hand, while Noll scrutinized the far horizon....

Noll saw a black speck there, and focused his glass, and stared.... He watched for a spout, watched for minutes on end. None came.... The black speck seemed to rise a little, sluggishly, with the swell.... He looked up to Brander.

"D'you make a spout?" he asked.

Brander shook his head. "No, sir."

Noll looked again, and Brander leveled his glass once more. The *Sally* was making that way, now; the speck was almost dead ahead of them, far on the sea. Tiny bits of white were stirring over the black thing, like bits of paper in the wind.... Noll asked at last: "What do you make of it, Mr. Brander? A boat.... Or a derelict...." [Pg 140]

"I make it a dead whale," said Brander.

"No whale," Noll argued. "Rides too high."

"It will be rotten," Brander insisted. "Swollen.... Full of putrid gas."

They watched a while longer, neither speaking. The light wind that urged them on was failing; the *Sally* slackened her pace, bit by bit; but her own momentum and some casual drift of the surface water still sent her toward the floating speck. It bulked larger in their glasses.

They were within a mile of it before Noll Wing shut his glass. "Aye, dead whale," he said disgustedly, and began to descend from the rigging. Brander dropped lightly after him. Noll stumped past the men at their stations by the boats till he came to Dan'l Tobey. "Dead whale," he told Dan'l. "Let it be."

Brander, at Noll's heels, asked: "Do we lower?"

Noll shook his head. "No," he said sharply. The disappointment, coming on the heels of the hope that had been roused, had made him fretful and angry. Brander said:

"I was thinking...."

Noll turned on him querulously. "Some ships have truck with carrion and dog meat," he snarled. [Pg 141]
"Not the *Sally*. I'll not play buzzard."

Brander smiled. "It's not pleasant, I know.... But, aboard the *Thomas Morgan*, we got a bit of ambergris out of such a whale.... This one was lean, you saw.... It died of a sickness. That's the kind...."

Dan'l Tobey said, with a grin: "A man'd think you like the smell of it, Brander."

"Ambergris is fool's talk," Noll growled. "I've heard tell of it for thirty year, and never saw a lump bigger than a man's thumb. Fool's talk, Mr. Brander. Let be...."

He turned away; and Brander and Dan'l stood together, watching as the *Sally* drifted nearer and nearer the dead whale. They could see the feasting sea birds hovering; they caught once or twice the flash of a leaping body as sharks tore at the carcass. Here and there the blubber showed white where great chunks had been ripped away. They watched, and drifted nearer; and so there came to them presently the smell of it. An unspeakable smell....

The men caught it first, in the bow; Dan'l and Brander heard their first cries of disgust before the slowly drifting air brought them the odor. But five minutes later, it had engulfed the ship, penetrated even into the cabin. Noll got it; he stuck his head up out of the companion and bellowed:

"Mr. Tobey, get the *Sally* out o' range of that."

Dan'l said: "Not a breath of wind, sir." He went toward the companion, as Noll stepped out on deck; and he grinned with malicious inspiration, "Mr. Brander likes the smell of it, sir.... Why not send him off to tow it out of range?" [Pg 142]

Noll nodded fretfully. "All right, all right. Send him...."

Dan'l gave the order. Brander assented briskly. "I'll take a boarding knife with me, if you don't object, sir," he said.

Dan'l chuckled. He was enjoying himself. "I'd suggest a clothespin, Mr. Brander," he said; and he stood aft and watched Brander and his men drop their boat and put away and row toward the lean carcass of the dead whale, a quarter mile away. The jeers of the seamen forward pursued them.

Dan'l got his glass to enjoy watching Brander and his crew tow the whale out of the *Sally's* neighborhood. The men worked hard; and Dan'l said to Cap'n Wing: "They're in haste to be through, you'll see, sir." Once the tow was under way, it moved swiftly. Men on the *Sally* breathed again....

They saw, after a time, that Brander and his men had stopped rowing and brought their boat alongside the whale; and Dan'l's glass revealed Brander digging and hacking at the carcass with the boarding knife....

Brander came back alongside in due time; and long before he reached the *Sally*, Dan'l could see the exultation in the fourth mate's eyes. As they slid past the bow, Brander's men taunted those who had jeered at them. They were like men who have turned the tables on their enemies....

Dan'l was uneasy.... The boat slid into position, the men hooked on the tackles, then climbed aboard.... They swung on the falls, the boat rose into its cradle.... And Brander turned to Dan'l and said pleasantly: [Pg 143]

"It was worth the smell, Mr. Tobey."

He pointed into the boat; and Dan'l looked and saw three huge chunks of black and waxy stuff—black, with yellowish tints showing through—and he smelled a faint and musky fragrance. And he looked at Brander. "What is it?" he asked. "What do you think you've found?"

"Ambergris," said Brander. "Three big chunks, four little ones. Close to three hundred pounds...."

One-eyed Mauger chuckled at Brander's back. "And worth three hundred a pound," he cackled. "Worth the smell, Mr. Tobey!"

XV

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Brander's find, laid tenderly upon the deck, studied by Noll Wing and the officers on their knees, set the *Sally* buzzing with the clack of tongues.

There was a romance in the stuff itself that caught attention. It came from the rotting carcass of the greatest thing that lives; it came from the heart of a vast stench.... Yet itself smelled faintly and fragrantly of musk, and had the power of multiplying any other perfume a thousand fold. Not a man on the *Sally* had ever seen a bit larger than a cartridge, before; they studied it, handled it, marveled at it.

Cap'n Wing stood up stiffly from bending over the stuff at last; he looked at Brander. "It's ugly enough," he said. "You're sure it's the stuff you think?"

Brander nodded. "Yes, sir, quite sure."

"What's it worth?" Cap'n Wing asked.

"Hundred and fifty to three hundred dollars a pound—price changes."

Noll looked at the waxy stuff again. "It don't look it," he said. "How much is there of it?"

"Close to three hundred pounds...."

Noll's lips moved with the computation. He said, in a voice that was hushed in spite of himself: "Close to ninety thousand dollars...."

Brander smiled. "That's the maximum, of course."

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Dan'l Tobey said: "You've done the rest of us a service, Mr. Brander."

Brander looked at him; and an imp of mischief gleamed in his eye. He said quietly: "The rest of you. I was sent out to remove the carcass, not to dissect it. The digging for this was my private enterprise, Mr. Tobey."

Old James Tichel gasped under his breath. Dan'l started to speak, then looked to Noll. They all looked toward Cap'n Noll Wing.... It was for him to deal with Brander's claim.... They looked to Noll; and big Noll stared at the precious stuff on the deck, and at Brander.... And he said nothing.

Brander smiled. He called Mauger to come aft and help him, and he proceeded with the utmost care to clean the lumps of ambergris of the filth that clung to them. He paid no further heed to the men about him. Noll went below; and Faith, who had listened without speaking, followed him. Dan'l and old Tichel got together by the after rail and talked in whispers. Willis Cox stood, watching.... The young man's eyes were wide and his cheeks were white. These seven ugly lumps of something like hard, dirty yellow soap were worth more than the whole cruise of the *Sally* might be expected to pay.... They caught Willis's imagination; he could not take his eyes from them.

Brander had Mauger fetch whale oil; he washed the lumps in this as tenderly as a mother bathes a child. The black washed away, they became an even, dull yellow in his hands.... Here and there, bits of white stuff like bones showed in them.... Bits of the bones of the gigantic squid on which the cachalot feeds. Their faint, persistent odor spread around them....

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When the cleaning was done, Mauger fetched steelyards and they weighed the lumps, slinging each with care.... The larger ones were so heavy that they had to make the scales fast to the rigging.... The largest weighed seventy-four pounds and a fraction; the next was sixty-one; the third, forty-eight. The four smaller lumps, weighed together, tipped the beam at nineteen pounds.... The seven totaled two hundred and two pounds....

Mauger was disappointed at that; he complained: "I took 'em to weigh three hundred, anyways...."

Brander looked at Willis. "Two hundred isn't to be laughed at! Eh, Mr. Cox?"

Willis said hoarsely: "That must be the biggest find of ambergris ever was."

Brander shook his head. "The *Watchman*, out o' Nantucket, brought back eight hundred pounds, in '58. I've heard so, anyways."

Willis had nothing to say to that; he went aft to join Tichel and Dan'l Tobey and tell them the weight of the stuff.... Brander sent for Eph Hitch, the cooper.... He showed him the ambergris....

"Fix me up a cask," he said. "Big enough to hold all that.... We'll stow it dry...."

Eph scratched his head. He spat over the rail. "Fix you up a cask?" he repeated. "Oh, aye." He emphasized the pronoun; and Brander's eyes twinkled.

They packed the ambergris away in the captain's storeroom; the compartment at the bottom of the *Sally*, under the cabin, in the very stern. It rested there among the barrels and casks of food and the general supplies.... There was no access to this place save through the cabin itself; it was not connected with the after hold where water and general stores and gear were stowed away. Brander suggested putting it there; he came to Noll Wing with his request, and because Dan'l Tobey was with Noll, Brander framed his question in a personal form.

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"I'd like to stow this below us here," he said. "Best it be out of reach of the men."

Dan'l scowled; Noll looked up heavily, met Brander's eyes. In the end, he nodded. "Where you like," he said sulkily. "Don't bother me."

Brander smiled; and the cask was hidden away below....

But it was not forgotten; it could not be forgotten. From its hiding place, the ambergris made its influence felt all over the vessel. It was like dynamite in its potentialities for mischief. The mates could not forget it; the boat-steerers in the steerage discussed it over and over; the men forward in the fo'c's'le argued about it endlessly.

It was a rich treasure, worth as much as the whole cruise was like to be worth in oil; and it was all in one lump.... That is to say, it was no more than a heavy burden for a strong man. Two men could have carried it....

A thousand acres of well-tilled farm land are worth a great deal of money; but this form of riches is not one to catch the imagination. Wealth becomes more fascinating as it becomes more compact. Coal is more treasured than an equal value of earth; lead is more treasured than coal; and men will die for a nugget of gold that is worth no more than the unconsidered riches which lie all about them. Great value in small compass sets men by the ears....

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Every man aboard the *Sally* had a direct and personal interest in Brander's find of ambergris. And the matter of their debate was this: was the ambergris the property of the *Sally*, a fruit of the voyage; or was it Brander's? If it was a part of the profits of the cruise, they would all share in it. If it was Brander's, they would not....

Brander—and this word had gone around the ship—had spoken of it as his own. For which some condemned and hated him; some praised and chose to flatter him. If the worth of the stuff was divided between them all, Noll Wing and Dan'l Tobey would have the lion's share, and the men forward would have no more than the price of a debauch. If it were Brander's alone, they might beg or steal a larger share from him. Or—and not a few had this thought—they might seize the whole treasure and make off with it....

The possibilities were infinite; the potentialities for trouble were enormous.

This new tension aboard the *Sally* came to a head in the cabin; the very air there was charged with it. Dan'l and old Tichel were against Brander from the first; Cox was inclined to support him. Dan'l sought to sound Noll Wing and learn his attitude....

He said to Noll casually, one day: "The 'gris will make this a fat cruise, sir."

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Noll nodded. "Oh, aye.... No doubt!"

Dan'l looked away. "Of course, Brander doesn't intend to claim it all.... To push his claim...."

"Ye think not?" Noll asked anxiously.

"No," said Dan'l. "He knows he can't.... It's a part of the takings of the *Sally*...."

Noll wagged his head dolefully: "Aye, but will the man see it that way?"

"He'll have to."

The captain looked up at Dan'l cautiously. "Did you mark the greed in the one eye of Mauger when they came aboard?" he asked. "Mauger sets store by the stuff...."

Dan'l snorted. "Mauger! Pshaw!"

Noll shifted uneasily in his chair. "Just the same," he said, "Mauger holds a grudge against me.... He but waits his chance for a knife in my back.... And Brander is his friend, you'll mind."

"You're not afraid of the two of them.... There's no need. I'll undertake to see to that...."

"You're a strong man, Dan'l," said old Noll. "A strong, youthful man.... But I'm getting old. Eh, Dan'l...." His voice broke with his pity of himself. "Eh, Dan'l, I've sailed the sea too long...."

Dan'l said, with some scorn in his tone: "Nevertheless, you're not afraid...."

Then Faith opened the door from the after cabin; and Dan'l checked his word. Faith looked from Dan'l to her husband, and her eyes hardened as she looked to Dan'l again. "You'll not be saying Noll Wing is afraid of—anything, Dan'l," she said mildly.

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"I'm telling him," said Dan'l, "that he should not permit Brander to claim the ambergris for himself."

Faith smiled a little. "You think Brander means to do that?"

"He has done it," said Dan'l stubbornly. "He claimed it in the beginning; he speaks of what he will do with it.... He speaks of it as his own."

"I think," said Faith, "that something has robbed you of discernment, Dan'l. Why do you hate Brander? Is he not a good officer?... A man?"

Dan'l might have spoken, but Brander himself dropped down the ladder from the deck just then; and Dan'l stood silently for a moment, watching....

Brander looked at Faith, and spoke to her, and to the others. Then he went into his own cabin and closed the door. They all knew the thinness of the cabin walls; what they might say, Brander could hear distinctly. Dan'l turned without a word, and went on deck.

He met Tichel there, and told him what had passed. Tichel grinned angrily.... "Aye," said the old man. "He comes and Jonahs us, so we sight no whale for a month on end.... And then is wishful to hold the prize that the *Sally's* boat found." His teeth set; his fist rose.... And Dan'l nodded his agreement.

"We'll see that he does not, in the end," he said.

"Aye," said Tichel. "Aye, we'll see t'that."

Roy Kilcup was a partisan of Dan'l's, in this as in all things; and Roy alone faced Brander on the matter. He asked the fourth mate straightforwardly: "Look here, do you claim that ambergris is yours?"

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Brander smiled at the boy. "Why, youngster?" he asked.

"Because I want to know," said Roy. "That's why!"

"Well," Brander chuckled, "others want to know. They're not sleeping well of nights, for wanting...."

"Do you, or don't you?" Roy insisted.

Brander leaned toward him and whispered amiably: "I'll tell you, the day we touch at home," he promised. "Now—run along."

Thus they were all concerned; but Noll Wing took the matter harder than any, because Mauger, whom he feared, was concerned in it. His worry over it gave him one sleepless night; he rose in that night and found the whiskey.... And for the first time in all his life, Noll Wing drank himself into a stupor.

He had always been a steady drinker; he had often been inflamed with liquor. But his stomach was strong; he could carry it; he had never debauched himself.

This time, he became like a log, and Faith found him, when she woke in the morning, unclean with his own vomitings, sodden and helpless as a snoring log. He lay thus two days.... And he woke at last with a scream of fright, and swore that Mauger was at him with a knife, so that Dan'l and Willis Cox had to hold the man quiet till the hallucination passed.

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XVI

Faith and Brander had not, in this time, spoken a word together since they met Mr. Ham upon the beach after Brander joined Faith by the island pool. In the beginning, Brander was forward, and a gulf separated them.... Not to mention forty feet of deck. Faith stayed aft; Brander stayed forward. Afterward, when Brander came into the cabin, there was still a gulf.... They met at table; they encountered each other, now and then, in the cabin or on deck. But Brander had his work to do, and did it; and Faith was much with Noll.

In the bush, by the pool, Faith had forgotten Noll Wing for a little space; and in the forgetting, she and Brander had become friends very quickly.... His question, as they reached the beach, made her remember Noll; and her answer to that question, when she told him she was Noll's wife, had reared a wall between them. Brander was a man; too much of a man to forget that she was Noll's wife.... He did not forget.

In the *Sally*, after Brander came aft, Faith was toward him as she was toward the other mates.... With this difference. She had known them since the beginning of the voyage; she had known two of them—Dan'l and Willis Cox—since they were boys. They were ticketed in her thoughts; they were old friends, but they could never be anything more. Therefore she talked often with them, as she did with Tichel, and as she had done with Mr. Ham. She forgot they were men, remembering only that they were friends....

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Brander, on the other hand, was a newcomer, a stranger.... When a woman meets a strange man, or when a man meets a strange woman, there is an instant and usually unconscious testing and

questioning. This is more lively in the woman than in the man; she is more apt to put it into words in her thoughts, more apt to ask herself: "Could I love him?" For a man does not ask this question at all until he has begun to love; a woman, consciously or unconsciously, asks it at once.... And until this question is answered; until the inner thing that is sex has made decision, a woman is reticent and slow to accept the communion of even casual conversation....

Faith, almost unconsciously, avoided Brander. She spoke with him; but there was a bar in her words. She saw him; but her eyes put a wall between them. She thought of him; but she hid her thoughts from herself. And Brander felt this, and respected it.... There was between them an unspoken conspiracy of silence; an unspoken agreement that held them apart....

This agreement was broken, and broken by Faith, on an afternoon some ten days after the finding of the ambergris. The day was fair; the wind was no more than normal.... No whales had yet been sighted by the *Sally*, and her decks were clear of oil. Mr. Tichel's watch had the ship; but Tichel himself, old man that he was, had stayed below and was asleep in his cabin. Dan'l was asleep there, also; and Noll Wing dozed in the after cabin. Willis Cox was reading, under the boathouse; and two of the harpooners played idly at some game of cards in the lee of the rail beside him. Brander and the man at the wheel had the after deck to themselves when Faith came up from the cabin....

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Roy was with her; but the boy went forward at once and climbed the rigging to the masthead, to stand watch with the men there. He loved to perch high above the decks, with the sea spread out like a blue saucer below him. He teased Faith to go with him; but Faith shook her head. There was always a certain physical indolence about Faith that contrasted with the vigor of her habits of thought and speech; she liked to sit quietly and read, or sew, or think, and she cared nothing at all for such riotous exertion as Roy liked.

"No, Roy," she told her brother. "You go if you like. I'll stay down here."

"Come on, Sis," he teased. "I guess you're afraid.... You never could even climb a tree without squealing.... Come on."

She laughed softly. "No. I don't like to do hard things—like that."

"I won't let you fall," he promised.

"Some day, maybe.... Run along, Roy."

The boy went away resentfully; a little more resentfully because Brander had heard her refusal. He looked back from the fore rigging, and saw Faith standing near Brander.... And for a moment he was minded to go back and join them; but the dwindling line of the ropes above him lured him on. He climbed, lost himself among the great bosoms of the sails, stopped to ride a yard like a horse and exult when it pitched and rolled.... Climbed, at last, to the masthead perch where the lookouts stood in their hoops with their eyes sweeping the wide circle of the seas....

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And Faith and Brander were together. Save for the man at the wheel, whom neither of them heeded, they were alone. Brander was at the after rail when she appeared; he nodded to her, and smiled. She stood near him, hands on the rail, looking out across the sea astern. The wind tugged at her, played with the soft hair about her brow, whipped her cheeks to fire....

She did not look at Brander, but Brander looked at her. The man liked what he saw; he liked not so much the beauty of her, as the strength and poise that lay in her face. Her broad, low brow.... Her straight, fine nose.... Her sweetly molded lips, and rounding chin.... Strength there, and calm, and power.... Beauty, too; more than one woman's measure of beauty, perhaps. But above all, strength. That was what Brander saw.

It was no new thing for the man to study Faith's countenance. It was firm-fastened in his thoughts; he could conjure it up at will, and it appeared before him, many times, without his volition. Faith's eyes were blue, and they were large, and Brander could never forget them. The eye of a man or of a woman is a thing almost alive; it seems to have a soul of its own. Stand at one side, unobserved, and watch the eyes of your friend; you will feel that you are watching some living personality apart from the friend you know. It is like watching a wild thing which is hiding in the forest. The eye is so alert, so infinitely alert, so quick to swing to right or left at any sound....

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Women's eyes differ as much as women themselves. Faith's eyes were like Faith herself; there was no fear or uncertainty in them; and there was no coquettishness, no seduction. They were level and calm and perfectly assured; and Brander thought that to look into them was like taking a strong man's hand. He thought Faith as fine a thing as woman can be....

Brander made sure that Faith did not see him studying her thus; nevertheless, Faith must have felt his scrutiny. She was conscious of an unaccountable diffidence; and when she spoke to him at last, without looking toward him, her voice was so low he scarcely heard at all. She said some idle thing about the beauty of the sea....

Brander smiled. The sky was so clear, and the heavens were so blue that sky and heaven seemed to be cousins or sisters, hands clasping at the far horizon. He said amiably: "Always think—looking off into the blue on a day like this is like looking deep into blue eyes.... There seems to be a soul off there, something hidden, out of sight.... But you can feel it looking back at you."

Faith was so surprised that she looked up at him quickly, sidewise; and she smiled, her cheeks a little flushed. "I never felt—just that," she said. "But—did you ever look at a hill, so far away it is just a deep blue shape against the sky? Blue's a beautiful color to look at, I think."

He nodded. "From my hill," he said, "I used to be able to see an island northwest of the one where I was.... Barely see it. Just a line laid down along the sea.... A line of blue." [Pg 157]

She said nothing in reply to this; and he said no more. They were thus silent for a little before Faith asked: "Tell me.... You've never had a chance.... How did you live, there? Wasn't it lonely? Or ... were there others?..."

He laughed. "I wasn't lonely, in the least," he explained. "The old devil-devil doctor of the village struck up an acquaintance with me.... He knew whites; and I was the only one there at the time. He used to come and talk to me, and say charms over my garden.... I had a little compass on my watch chain, and I gave it to him, and the old heathen was my slave for life. So I arranged with him to have my path taboo—you remember I told you.... And he was the only company I ever had."

"You had a—garden?"

"Yes. Good one. I put up a house, about six feet square—big enough for me, and no more—and I trimmed down some trees around there; and there was a little brook, and a shallow basin in the side of the hill where rich soil had been collecting for a good many centuries, I suppose. I think if I had planted pebbles there, it would have grown boulders for me. It did grow all I wanted."

She was thoughtful for a little, looked at him once. "Why did you ever ship as a whaler?" she asked. "You don't look like the men that ship in the fo'c's'le."

He laughed. "I know it. Maybe because I like the sea. My home was in sight of it; a high old farm up in Maine, five miles inland. I used to sit out on the hill there and watch the night come up from the east and blanket the water; and when there was a surf I could hear it; and when I could, I went down and got acquainted with the water, swimming, or poking around in an old dory.... It was bound to get me in the end. My father sent me to school.... He wanted me to be a doctor. But after two years of it, I begged off.... And he let me go." [Pg 158]

She nodded. "I know—a little—how you feel. I've always loved the smell of the sea at home, and the sight of it.... But...." She grimaced harshly. "I'm getting a bit tired of salt water, all the time.... I want to get ashore."

"Sure," Brander chuckled. "And when you've been a month ashore, you'll be hungry for the sea again. It's like a drug; you get used to it, and you can't do without it."

She looked at him. "Do you think so?"

"I know it. Wait and see."

After a little, she spoke of the ill luck that had pursued the *Sally*. "Isn't it unusual to go almost six weeks without getting a whale?"

"No, not necessarily," he told her. "You may kill every other day for a year, and not see a fish for three months after. The whale seems to come and go, in some waters...."

"These?" she asked.

He nodded. "It's uncertain, here. We're working over now into better hunting grounds. The *Sally's* done well, thus far, anyway. Almost a thousand barrels, and not out a year. I've heard of ships that came home with empty casks." [Pg 159]

She looked at him curiously. "I think you know more about the work than most men aboard," she said. "Yet you've not had the experience...."

"I've picked it up at games, read it, guessed it," he said pleasantly. "They know more about the practical end than I. I haven't been tried out yet, you know."

She smiled. "Mr. Tichel says you're a Jonah," she told him. "I think he would be in favor of throwing you overboard."

He laughed cheerfully. She added: "I hope you're not one. I'm anxious that Cap'n Wing should make a big record on this cruise. It's my first with him, you know...."

His eyes were sober; but he said: "We'll fill the casks, all right. I wouldn't worry."

She looked toward him and said: "Yes, we will." There was an immense amount of quiet certainty and determination in her voice. Brander looked at her for an instant, then turned to give some direction to the man at the wheel. The *Sally* heeled awkwardly to the thrust of the wind, and battered at the sea with her blunt bows. The rigging creaked and tugged. Willis Cox, under the boathouse, had dropped his book in his lap and was dozing in his chair; the two harpooners had gone below. Forward, Faith could see two or three men sprawled on the deck, asleep.... The warm, afternoon wind seemed slumber laden; the *Sally Sims* herself was like a ship that walked in her sleep. A hush hung over them all, so that Faith and Brander unconsciously lowered their voices. [Pg 160]

Faith asked casually: "Why is it that you and Mr. Tobey do not like each other?"

If he was surprised at the question, Brander did not show it. He said frankly: "I've no dislike for Mr. Tobey. He's an able officer. He knows his business."

"He does not like you," Faith said. "Why not?"

Brander smiled. "It may be," he admitted, "that Mr. Tobey is lacking in a sense of humor. I've a way of laughing at things.... Mr. Trant, on the *Thomas Morgan*, used to curse me for grinning so much of the time. Perhaps Mr. Tobey...."

He did not finish the sentence; he seemed to consider it unnecessary, or unwise.... Faith said nothing.... They stood together, eyes off across the water, balancing unconsciously to the motion of the ship. Their shoulders were almost brushing.... Brander felt the light contact on his coat; and he moved away a little, inconspicuously....

She turned at last toward the companion; but after one step, stopped and looked back at him. "I think," she said, "that Mr. Tobey believes you mean to claim that find of ambergris belongs to you."

Brander smiled, and nodded. "I know he does. There's no harm in puzzling Mr. Tobey."

"There may be harm—for you—in his believing that," she said; and for a moment Brander's level eyes met hers, and she saw a flame in his. He said quietly:

"I'm not particularly concerned...."

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She bowed her head, to hide her eyes; and she went below so quickly it was as though she fled from him.

XVII

[Pg 162]

Faith had assured herself, from the beginning, that Brander had no real intention of claiming the ambergris was his personal booty. He was too sensible for that, she felt; and he was not greedy....

She had been sure; but like all women, she wished to be reassured. She had given Brander the chance to reassure her, speaking of the 'gris and of Dan'l Tobey's suspicions in the matter. It would have been so easy for Brander to laugh and say: "You know I have no such idea. It belongs to the *Sally*, of course...." That would have settled the thing, once and for all....

But Brander had not been frank and forthright. He had only said: "There's no harm in puzzling Mr. Tobey...." And when she had suggested that there might be harm for Brander in his attitude, his eyes had hardened with something like defiance in them.... He had said he was not worried as to what Dan'l might think or do. He thus remained as much of a puzzle to Faith as ever.... If he had deliberately planned to steal a place in her thoughts, he could have taken no better means. Faith, with her growing sense of responsibility for the *Sally*, for the success of the voyage, for the good renown of Noll Wing, was acutely concerned when anything threatened that success. The ambergris was properly a part of the *Sally's* takings.... Brander must see it so. Did he mean to push his claim, to make trouble?...

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She tried to find her answer to this question in Brander's face; she began to study him daily.... She perceived the strength of the man, and his poise and assurance. Brander was very sure of himself and of his capabilities, without in the least overrating them. He knew himself for a man; he bore himself as a man.... Faith respected him; without her realizing it, this respect and liking grew.

Unconsciously, Brander was ranked now and then in her thoughts beside her husband, Noll Wing; she compared the two men without willing to make the comparison. And in the process, she studied Noll Wing more closely than she had ever studied him before. It was at this time that she first marked the fact that Noll was shrinking, wasting the flesh from his bones. His skin was becoming loose; it sagged. His great chest was drawing in between his shoulders; his shoulders slumped forward. Also Faith saw, without understanding, that the great cords of his neck were beginning to stand out under the loose skin, that hollows were forming about them. The man's bull neck was melting away.... Faith saw, though she did not fully understand; she knew that Noll was aging, nothing more....

She was drawn to Noll, at this discovery, by a vast tenderness; but this tenderness was impersonal. She thought it a recrudescence of her old, strong love for the man; it was in fact only such a feeling as she might have had for a sick or wounded beast. She pitied Noll profoundly; she tried to make him happy, and comfortable. She sought, now and then, to woo him to cheerfulness and mirth; but Noll was shrinking, day by day, into a more confirmed habit of complaint; he whined constantly, where in the old days he would have stormed and commanded. And he resented Faith's attentions, resented her very presence about him. One day she went herself into the galley and prepared a dish she thought would please him; when she told him what she had done, he exclaimed:

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"God's sake, Faith, quit fussing over me. I got along more'n twenty year without a woman...."

Faith would not let herself feel the hurt of this.... But even while she watched over Noll, Brander

more and more possessed her thoughts. Her recognition of this fact led her to be the more attentive to Noll, as though to recompense him for the thing he was losing.... She had never so poured out herself upon him.

It was inevitable that this developing change in Faith should be marked by those in the cabin. Dan'l saw it, and Brander saw it.... Brander saw it, and at first his pulse leaped and pounded and his eyes shone with his thoughts.... On deck, about his duties, he carried the memory of her eyes always with him. Her eyes as she had looked at him, that day, and many days before. Questioning, a little wistful.... A little wondering....

But Brander was a strong man; and he put a grip upon himself. He was drawn to Faith; he knew that if he let himself go, he would be caught in a whirlwind of passion for her. But he did not choose to let himself go; and by the same token, he took care to have no part in what might be taking place in Faith herself. He knew that he might have played upon her awakened interest in him; he knew that it would be worth life itself to see more plainly that which he had glimpsed in her eyes; nevertheless, he put the thing away from him. When she was about, he became reticent, curt, abrupt.... He took refuge in an arrogance of tone, an absorption in his work. He began to drive his men....

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Dan'l Tobey saw. Dan'l had eyes to see; and it was inevitable that he should discover the first hints of change in Faith. For he watched her jealously; and he watched Brander as he had watched him from the beginning. Dan'l saw Faith and Brander drawing together, day by day; and though he hated Brander the more for it, he was content to sit still and wait.... He counted upon their working Brander's own destruction between them, in the end; and Dan'l was in a destructive mood in those days. He hated the strength of Brander, the loyalty of Faith, the age of old Noll Wing, and the youth of Roy.... He was become, through overmuch brooding, a walking vessel of hate; it spilled out of him with every word, keep his voice as amiable as he might. He hated them all....

But he was careful to hide his resentment against Roy; he cultivated the boy, he worked little by little to debase Roy's standards of life, and he looked forward vaguely to a day when he might have use for the lad. Dan'l had no definite plan at this time save to destroy.... But for all his absorption in Faith, he had not failed to see that Noll Wing's strength was going out of him. If Noll were to die, Dan'l would be master of the *Sally* and those aboard her....

Dan'l never lost sight of this possibility; he kept it well in mind; and he laid, little by little, the foundations upon which in that day he might build his strength. Roy was one of these foundations....

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Dan'l saw one obstacle in his path, even with Noll gone. The men forward, and some of the under officers, were hotly loyal to Noll Wing; and by the same token they looked upon Faith with eyes of awed affection. Faith had that in her which commanded the respect of men; and Dan'l knew that the roughest man in the crew would fight to protect Faith, against himself or any other. He never forgot this....

When Roy Kilcup, last of them all, marked Faith's interest in Brander, the boy unwittingly gave Dan'l a chance to strike a blow at the men's trust in the captain's wife.

Roy, though he might quarrel with her most desperately, was at his heart devoted to Faith, and wild with his pride in her. He marked a look in her eyes one day; and it disturbed him. Dan'l found the boy on deck, staring out across the water, his eyes clouded with perplexity and doubt. Roy was aft; there was one of the men at the wheel. Dan'l glanced toward this man.... One of his own boat crew, by name Slatter, with a sly eye and a black tongue.... Dan'l spoke to him in passing, some command to keep the *Sally* steady against the pressure of the wind, and stopped beside Roy, dropping his hand on the boy's shoulder.

"Hello, Roy," he said amiably.

Roy looked up at him, nodded. Dan'l caught a glimpse of the shadow in his eyes and asked in a friendly tone: "What's wrong? You're worried about something...."

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Roy shook his head. "No."

Dan'l laughed. "Shucks! You can't fool any one with that, Roy. If you don't want to talk...."

Roy hesitated; he studied Dan'l for a moment. "Dan'l," he said, "you've known Faith and me all our lives. I guess I can talk to you if I can to anybody. And I've got to talk to somebody, Dan'l."

Dan'l nodded soberly. "I'm here to be talked to. What's the matter, Roy?"

The boy asked abruptly: "Dan'l—have you noticed the way Faith looks at Brander?"

Dan'l had been half prepared for the question; nevertheless his fingers dug into his palms. He remained silent for a minute, thinking.... His thoughts raced.... And his eyes fell on foul-tongued Slatter, at the wheel.... There was a piece of luck; an instrument ready to his hand. Dan'l still hesitated for a space; his brows twisting.... Then the man threw all decency behind him, and flung himself at last into the paths toward which his feet had been tending. He moved to one side, so that Roy, facing him, must also face the man at the wheel; so that Roy's words would come to Slatter's ears. And Dan'l was very sure that Slatter would take care to hear....

For another moment he did not speak; then he laughed harshly; and he asked: "What do you

mean, Roy?"

Roy repeated: "I mean the way Faith looks at Brander all the time. Looking at him.... A queer way...."

Dan'l Tobey seemed to be embarrassed; he looked to right and left, and he said huskily: "Shucks —I guess you've got too much imagination, Roy." [Pg 168]

Roy shook his head. "No, I haven't, either, I've been watching her.... She looks at him, and her eyes get kind of misty like.... And if you say something to her, sometimes she doesn't hear you at all."

"She's got a right to think," Dan'l chuckled. "You talk too much, anyway, Roy.... No wonder she don't listen to you." His tone was good-natured. Roy fell silent for a moment, studying Dan'l's face; and Dan'l looked confused. Roy said sharply:

"Dan'l, haven't you seen, yourself, what I mean? Haven't you, Dan'l?"

Dan'l turned his head away; he would not meet Roy's eyes. Roy cried: "I knew you saw it.... Everybody must see...."

Dan'l said sternly: "Roy, you'd best not see too much. It don't pay. There's times when it's wise to see little and say nothing. If it was me, I'd say this was one of the times."

"That's all right," Roy admitted. "But I can talk to you...." He added suddenly: "Dan'l, Noll Wing is too old for Faith. She ought to have married you, Dan'l."

Children have a disconcerting way of sticking a word like a knife into our secret hearts; they see so clearly, and they have not yet learned to pretend they do not see. Roy, for all his eighteen years, was still as much child as man; and Dan'l winced. "Land, Roy," he protested. "Get that out of your head. Faith and me understand...." [Pg 169]

Roy turned his back, looking aft. Dan'l glanced toward Slatter at the wheel. Slatter's back was toward them; but Dan'l could have sworn the man's ears were visibly pricking to miss no word. And Dan'l's eyes burned unpleasantly. A woman's strongest armor is her innocence. If Faith were tarnished in the eyes of the men in the fo'c's'le, she would have few defenders there.... The roughest man will honor a good woman; but he looks upon one who is soiled with contemptuous or greedy eyes. Dan'l was willing, for his own ends, that the fo'c's'le should think evil of Faith Wing.

While they stood thus, Brander came on deck, and spoke for a minute with Dan'l, then went slowly forward. Because he and Dan'l clashed so sharply, Brander had fallen into the way of spending much time amidships with the harpooners, or forward with the crew.... Dan'l's place was aft.... Roy watched Brander now as he spoke to the mate, watched him walk away. When Brander was gone, Dan'l looked toward Roy. Roy said quietly:

"Dan'l, if Brander tries to—to do anything to my sister, I'm going to kill him."

Dan'l said nothing; and Roy moved abruptly past him and went below....

He was not seeking Faith; but he came upon her there, in the main cabin. She was at the table, with a book, and paper and pen; and he stopped to look over her shoulder, and saw that she was making calculations.... Latitude and longitude.... He asked: "What are you doing?" [Pg 170]

She looked up at him. "Studying navigation, Roy. Don't you want to?"

He stared at her. "What are you doing it for?"

"Because I want to. Besides.... It's a good thing to be able to find out where you are, on a world as big as this.... Don't you think?"

He flung himself into a chair across from her. "Look here, Faith.... Why do you keep looking at Brander? All the time?"

Faith was startled; she was startled not so much at what Roy said, as at what his words revealed to her. Nevertheless her voice was steady and quiet as she asked: "What do you mean, Roy?"

"The way you look at Brander. He's not fit for you to talk to.... To look at.... Anything. He's not fit to be around you...."

She laughed at him. "How do I look at Mr. Brander, Roy?" she asked.

"Why—like...." Roy groped for words; Faith was suddenly afraid of what he might say. She interrupted him.

"Don't be silly, Roy. Go away.... Don't bother me.... I'm busy with this, Roy."

He said: "You...." But she bent over her book; she paid him no attention for a moment. Roy, sitting opposite, studied the top of her head, and thought.... There was an expression in his eyes as though he were trying to remember something familiar that evaded him. In the silence, they could hear Cap'n Wing snoring in his cabin; they could hear old Tichel stir in his bunk at the other side of the ship; they could hear the muffled murmur of the voices of the harpooners, in the steerage. And all about them the timbers that were the fabric of the *Sally* creaked and groaned as [Pg 171]

they yielded to the tug of the seas. Roy still stared with a puzzled frown at the top of Faith's brown head.... Faith did not look up from her book....

Suddenly Roy cried, in a low voice: "Faith! I know...." And, all in a burst: "You look at Brander just like you used to look at Noll Wing when we were kids...."

Faith went white; and she rose to her feet so swiftly that the book was overturned on the table, the loose sheets of paper fluttered, the pen rolled across to the edge of the table and fell and stuck on its point in the cabin floor....

With a motion swift as light, forgetting book and paper and pen, Faith slipped across, into the after cabin. She shut the door in Roy's face, and he heard her slip the catch upon it.

Roy stared at the closed door; then he went abstractedly around the table and pulled the pen loose from the floor. The steel point was twisted, spoiled.

XVIII

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The *Sally* came, abruptly, into a sea that was full of whales. At nightfall they had not smelled oil for weeks; at dawn there were spouts on three quarters of the horizon; and thereafter for more than a month there were never three successive days when they did not sight whales.

This turn of the luck brought three things to pass: Roy Kilcup had his first chance in the boats during the chase; Brander killed his first whale as an officer of the *Sally*; and Noll Wing killed the last cachalot that was ever to feel his lance.

Dan'l Tobey had promised Roy, at the time when Brander was promoted to be mate, that he would give the boy a chance in his boat. He put Roy on the after thwart, under his own eye, and Roy leaned to the oar and pulled with all his might, and bit his lip to hold back the sobbing of his breath. The boy came of whaling stock; his father and his father's father had been men of the sea. And he did not turn white when the boat's bow slid at last alongside a slumbering black mass, and the keen harpoons chocked home.

That first experience of Roy's was a mild one. The whale, a fairish bull, showed no fight whatever. He took the irons as a baby takes soothing sirup; and he lay still while they pulled alongside and prodded him with a lance. At the last, when his spout was a crimson fountain, he gave one gigantic forward leap; but he was dead not ten fathoms from the spot where he lay when the first harpoon went home; and thereafter there was only the long toil of towing the monster back to the ship for the cutting in.

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A small affair, without excitement; yet big for Roy. It worked a change in the boy. He came back to the ship no longer a boy, but the makings of a man. He spoke loftily to Faith; and he brushed shoulders with the men on equal terms and was proud to do so, altogether forgetting the days when he had liked to think himself their superior, and to order them around. Dan'l catered to the new mood in the boy; he told Cap'n Wing in Roy's hearing that the youngster would make a whalerman.... That he had never seen any one so cool at the striking of his first whale.... Roy swelled visibly.

Brander's initiation as an officer of the *Sally* came at the same time; and a bit of luck made it possible for the fourth mate to prove his mettle. When they sighted spouts in three quarters, that morning, the mate had chosen to go after a lone bull; old Tichel and Brander attacked a small pod to the eastward; and Willis Cox went north to try for a fish there.

Brander gave Tichel right of way, since the old man was his superior officer; and they came upon the pod with a matter of seconds to choose between them. The whales were disappointingly small; nevertheless Tichel attacked the largest, and Brander took the one that fell to him. His irons went home a moment after Tichel's; his whale leaped into the first blind struggle, not fleeing, but fighting to shake off the iron.

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Now it is customary, among whalemens, to wait till this first flurry has passed, to allow the whale to run out his own strength, and then to pull in for the finishing stroke. But Brander was ambitious; the whale was small.... He changed places with Loum, and shouted orders to his men to haul in the loose coils of line that had been thrown over with the irons. The whale was circling, rolling, striking with its flukes; it had not seen them, gave them no heed, but the very blindness of its struggles made them a greater menace.

They drew in on the whale; and Loum at the steering oar swung Brander against the monster's flank. Brander got home his lance in three thrusts before they were forced to draw clear to avoid the whale's renewed struggles. But those three were enough; the spout crimsoned; he loosed and backed away from the final flurry, and the whale was dead ten minutes from the time when the first iron went home.

That was exploit enough to prove Brander's ability; his quick kill marked him as a man who knew his job. He could have afforded to be content; but when his whale was fin out, and he looked around, he was in time to see trouble come upon James Tichel.

The whale Tichel struck had sounded; and just after Brander killed, it breached before his eyes,

under the very bows of Tichel's boat. Brander saw the black column of its body rise up and up from the sea; it seemed to ascend endlessly.... Then toppled, and slowly fell, and struck the water so resoundingly that for a moment the whale and Tichel's boat were hidden alike. Tichel was dodging desperately to get clear; but the wallowing whale rolled toward him, over him, smothering his craft.... Brander, when the tossing and tormented water quieted, saw the bobbing heads of the men, and the boat just awash, and the gear floating all around....

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The whale showed no immediate disposition to run; it was rolling in a frenzy, bending double as though to tear at its own wounds.... Brander stuck a marking waif in his own whale, drove his men to their oars, cut across to see that Tichel and the others were kept afloat by the boat, and then managed to pick up one of the floating tubs of line, to which the whale was still attached. The rest was easy enough; the whale fought its strength away, and Brander made his kill.

Willis Cox had failed to get fast; the whales he sought to attack took fright as he approached them, and his game got away with a white slash across the blubber where Long Jim's desperate cast of the harpoon had gone wild. So Willis rowed to join Brander, and picked up Tichel and his men, and took their boat and Tichel's whale which Brander had killed, in tow. Brander took the other; they worked back to the *Sally*. When they got back to the ship, Noll Wing clapped Brander on the shoulder and applauded him. The excitement of the sudden chase, after the weeks of idling, had put life into Noll. His cheeks were flushed; his eyes were shining; he had the look of his old self once more....

Two whales at a time is as much as any whaler cares to handle; the *Sally* had three. A blow of any violence would have made it impossible for them to cut in even one of the carcasses before the steady heat of the southern seas rendered them unfit; but no squall came. The luck of the *Sally* had turned, and turned in earnest. The men welcomed the hard work after their long idleness; they toiled at the windlass and the gangway with the heartiest will. They raised chants as they walked the blanket pieces up to the main head or slacked them down the deck to be cut and stowed in the blubber room below the main hatch. The intoxication of the toil took possession of them; they went at it singing and exultant and afire; and even Noll caught the spirit of the day from them. Youth flooded back into the man; his shoulders straightened; his chest seemed to swell before their eyes. Faith, watching him, thought he was like the man she had loved.... She was, for a time, very happy....

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The fever of it got into Noll's blood; and when they killed another whale the third day after, he swore that at the next chance he would himself lower for the chase. He fed on the thought.... Faith, fearful for him, ventured to protest; her first thought was ever that on Noll's safety depended the safety of the *Sally*, that Noll's first duty was to bring the *Sally Sims* safely home again. She told Noll this; told him his place was with the ship.

"The *Sally* is your charge," she said. "You ought not to risk yourself.... Take chances...."

He laughed at her tempestuously. "By God," he cried, "I was never a man to send men where I was afeared to go. So let be, Faith. You coddle me like a child; and I am not a child at all. Let be."

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Faith surrendered helplessly; but she hoped he would forget, would not keep his word. He might have forgotten as she hoped; he was sinking back into his old lassitude when the masthead men sighted the next whale; but Dan'l sought Noll out and said anxiously:

"Best think better of it, sir. This looks like a big whale; a hard customer."

Noll had so nearly forgotten that he asked: "Think better of what, man?"

Dan'l smiled, as though he were pleased. "I thought you meant to lower," he said. "You do well to change your mind. Stay aboard here; leave us to handle him."

Which was like a goad to Noll, as Dan'l must have known it would be. The captain laughed angrily, and thrust Dan'l aside, and took the mate's own boat with Roy on the after thwart, and lowered. Faith was anxious; she found chance to say to Brander, as the other boats were striking the water: "Look after him, Mr. Brander." And Brander nodded reassuringly.

Dan'l climbed into the rigging to watch the battle; he scarce took his glass from his eye. What he hoped for, whether he thought chance and the whale might wipe Noll from his path, only Dan'l knew.

This whale, as it chanced, was sighted at early morning; and this was as well. A big bull, the creature lay quietly, just awash, while the captain's boat came upon it from behind. He stirred not at all till Noll Wing swung hard on the long steering oar and brought them in against the black side and bellowed to Silva:

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"Let go! Let go the irons!"

Silva knew his work as well as any man; and he got both harpoons home to the hitches, and threw the line clear as the bull leaped bodily forward and upward, half out of the water, and whirled in a smothering turmoil of spray and tortured foam to escape the blades that bit him. Noll swung them out of his way, shouted to Silva:

"Aft, now! Let me be at him, man...."

And Silva came stumbling back across the thwarts to take the steering oar, while Noll went forward and chose his lance and braced himself in the bow.

The whale, his first torment dulled, had stopped his struggle and lay still, swinging slowly around in the water. It was as though he looked about to discover what it was that had attacked him; and old Tichel—the other boats were standing by in a half circle about Noll and the whale—bawled across the water:

"Ware, sir. He's looking for you."

Noll heard and waved his hand defiantly; and at the same time, the whale saw Noll's boat and charged it.

The whale, as has been said, would be invulnerable if his wit but matched his bulk. It does not. Furthermore, the average whale will not fight at all, but runs; and it is his efforts to escape that blindly cause the damage, and even the tragedies of the fisheries. But when he does attack, he attacks almost always in the same way. The sperm whale, the cachalot, trusts to his jaw; he bites; and his enemy is not the men in the boat, but the boat itself. Perhaps he cannot see the men; his eye is small and set far back on either side of his great head. Certainly, when once a boat is smashed, it is rare for a whale to deliberately try to destroy the men in the water. The sperm whale tries to bite; the right whale—it is from him your whalebone comes—strikes with his vast flukes. He will lie quietly in the water and brush his flukes back and forth across the surface, feeling for his enemy. If his flukes touch a floating tub, an oar, a man, they coil up like an enormous spring, and slap down with a blow that crushes utterly whatever they may strike. The whalemens have a proverb: "'Ware the sperm whale's jaw, and the right whale's flukes." And there is more truth than poetry in that.

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When a sperm whale destroys a boat with his flukes, it is probably accident; but he bites with malice prepenes and pernicious. The whale which Noll had struck set out to catch Noll's boat and smash it in his jaws.

His very eagerness was, for a long time, his destruction. The whale was bulky; a full hundred feet long, and accordingly unwieldy. A man on foot can, if he be sufficiently quick, dodge a bull in an open field; by the same token, a thirty-foot whaleboat, flat-bottomed, answering like magic to the very thought of the men who handle her, can dodge a hundred-barrel bull whale. Noll's boat dodged; the men used their oars at Noll's command, and Silva in the stern swung her around as on a pivot with a single sweep. The whale surged past, the water boiling away from its huge head.

Surged past, and turned to charge again.... This time, as it passed, Noll touched the creature with his lance, but the prick of it was no more than the dart in the neck of a fighting bull. It goaded the whale, and nothing more. He charged with fury; his very fury was their safety.

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Noll struck the whale at a little after nine o'clock in the morning. At noon, the vast beast was still fighting, with no sign of weariness. It charged back and forth, back and forth; and the men swung the boat out of his way; and their muscles strained, their teeth ground together, the sweat poured from them with their efforts. They were intoxicated with the battle. Noll, in the bow, bellowed and shouted his defiance; the men yelled at every stroke; they shook their fists at the whale as he raged past them. And Silva, astern, snatching them again and again from the jaws of destruction, grinned between tight lips, and plied his oar, and cried to Noll to strike.

At a little after noon, the whale swung past Noll with such momentum that he was carried out to the rim of the circle in which the fight was staged, and saw Tichel's boat there. Any boat was fair game to the monster; and Tichel had grown careless with watching the breath-taking struggle. He had forgotten his own peril; he expected the whale to turn back on Noll again....

It did not; it swung for him, and its jaws sheared through the very waist of his boat, so that the two halves fell away on either side of the vast head. The men had time to jump clear; there was no man hurt—save for the strangling of the salt water—and the whale seemed to feel himself the victor, for he lay still as though to rest upon his laurels.

Willis Cox was nearest; he drove his boat that way, and stood in the bow, with lance in hand to strike. But Noll, hauling up desperately on the line, bellowed to him: "Let be, Willis. He's mine." And Willis sheered off.

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Then the whale felt the tug of the line, and whirled once more to the battle. Willis picked up Tichel and his men, towed the halves of the boat away, back to the ship.... The *Sally* was standing by, a mile from the battle. Such whales as this could sink the *Sally* herself with a battering blow in the flank. It was dangerous to come too near. Willis put Tichel and his men aboard, and went back to wait and be ready to answer any command from Noll.

The fifth hour of the battle was beginning.... The whale was tireless; and Noll, in the bow of his boat, seemed as untired as the beast he fought. But his men, even Silva, were wearying behind him. It was this weariness that presently gave the whale his chance. He charged, and Silva's thrust on the long oar was a shade too late. The boat slipped out of reach of the crashing jaws; but the driving flukes caught it and it was overturned. The gear flew out....

Noll, in the bow, clung to the gunwale for an instant as the boat was overthrown. Long enough to wrench out the pin that held the line in the boat's bow. Silva, astern, would have cut; his hatchet was ready. But Noll shouted: "No, by God! Let be...."

Then they were all in the water, tumbling in the surges thrown back by the passage of the monster.... And the whale drove by, turned, saw no boat upon the water, thought victory was

come....

Brander, at this time, was a quarter-mile away. When the boat went over, he yelled to his men: "Pull.... Oh, pull!" And they bent their stout oars with the first hot tug; fresh men, untired, hungry these hours past for a chance at the battle. Brander started toward where lay the capsized boat, the swimming men....

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And Noll Wing lifted a commanding arm and beckoned him to make all speed. Brander urged his men: "Spring hard! Spring.... Hard. Now, on!"

A whaleboat is as speedy as any craft short of a racing shell; and Brander's men knew their work. They cut across the vision of the loafing whale; and the beast turned upon this new attacker with undiminished vigor.

Brander's eyes narrowed as he judged their distance from the drifting boat; he swerved a little to meet the coming whale head on. The whale plowed at him; they met fifty yards to one side of the spot where the boat was floating; and as they met, Brander dodged past the whale's very jaw, and slid astern of him. Before the whale could turn, he was alongside the capsized boat, dragging Noll over his own gunwale.

He dragged Noll in; and he saw then that the captain held in his hand a loop of the line that was fast to the whale. And Brander grinned with delighted appreciation. Noll straightened, brushed Brander back out of the way without regarding him, passed the line to the men in Brander's boat. "Haul in," he roared. "Get that stowed aboard here. By God, we'll get that whale...."

They worked like mad, coiling the slack line in the waist, while Noll fitted it into the crotch and pinned it there. The whale was back at them, by then; they dodged again. And this time, as the creature swung past, Loum—Brander's boat-steerer—brought them in close against the monster's flank before dodging out to evade the smashing flukes. In that instant, Noll saw his chance, and drove home his lance to half its length.

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It was the first fair wound the whale had taken; a wound not fatal, not even serious. Nevertheless, it seemed to take the fight out of the beast. He sulked for a moment, then began—for the first time in more than five hours' fighting—to run.

The line whipped out through the crotch in the bow; the men tailed on to it, and let it go as slowly as might be, while Loum swung the steering oar to keep them in the creature's track. Noll, in the bow, was like a man glorified; his cap was tugged tight about his head; he had flung away his coat, and his shirt was open half way to the waist. The spray lashed him; his wet garments clung to his great torso. His right hand held the lance, point upward, butt in the bottom of the boat; his left rested on the line that quivered to the tugging of the whale. His knee was braced on the bow.... A heroic figure, a figure of strength magnificent, he was like a statue as the whaleboat sliced the waves; and his lips smiled, and his eyes were keen and grim. The line slipped out through the burning fingers of the men; the whale raced on.

Abruptly Noll snapped over his shoulder: "Haul in, Mr. Brander," And Brander, at Noll's back, gave the word to the men; and they began to take back the line they had given the whale in the beginning. It came in slowly, stubbornly.... But it came. They drew up on the whale that fled before them. They drew up till the smashing strokes of the flukes as the creature swam no more than cleared their bow. Drew up there, and sheered out under the thrust of Loum's long oar, and still drew on.... They were abreast of the flukes; they swung in ahead of them.... They slid, suddenly, against the whale's very side.

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The end came with curious abruptness. The whale, at the touch of the boat against his side, rolled a little away from them so that his belly was half exposed. The "life" of a whale, that mass of centering blood vessels which the lance must find, lies low. Noll knew where it lay; and as the whale thus rolled, he saw his mark.... He drove the lean lance hard; drove it so hard there was no time to pull it out for a second thrust. Nor any need. It was snatched from his hands as the whale rolled back toward them. Loum's oar swung; they loosed line and shot away at a tangent to the whale's course. And Noll cried exultantly, hands flung high: "Let me, let me, be. He's done!"

They saw, within a matter of seconds, that he was right. The whale stopped; he slowly turned; he lay quiet for an instant as though counting his hurts. The misty white of his spout was reddened by a crimson tint; it became a crimson flood. It roared out of the spout hole, driven by the monster's panting breath.... And the whale turned slowly on his side a little, began to swim.

A tiny trout, hooked through the head and thrown back into the pool, will sometimes race in desperate circles, battering helplessly against the bank, the bottom of the pool, the sunken logs.... Thus this monstrous creature now swam; a circle that centered about the boat where Noll and the others watched; that tore the water and flung it in on them. Faster and faster, till it seemed his great heart must burst with his own labors. And at the end, flung half clear of the water, threw his vast bulk forward, surged idly ahead, slowly.... Was still.

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Noll cried: "Fin out, by God. He's dead...."

A big whale, as big as most whalemens ever see, the biggest Noll himself had ever slain. A fitting thing; for old Noll Wing had driven his last lance. He was tired; he showed it when Brander gave the whale to Willis for towing back to the ship, and raced for the *Sally* with Noll panting in the bow. The fire was dying in the captain's eyes; he pulled Brander's coat about his great shoulders and huddled into it. He scarce moved when they reached the *Sally*. Brander helped him aboard.

Dan'l Tobey cried: "A great fight, sir. Six hours; and two stove boats.... But you killed."

Noll wagged his old head, looked around for Faith, leaned heavily upon her arm.

"Take me down, Faith," he said. "Take me down. For I am very tired."

XIX

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One-eyed Mauger sought out Brander three days later. Brander had been decent to him from the beginning; and Mauger, who had been changed from a venomous and evil thing into a cacklingly cheerful nonentity by Noll Wing's blow and kick, repaid Brander with a devotion almost inhuman. He sought out Brander three days later.... That is to say, he made occasion, during the work of scrubbing up after Noll's last whale, to come to Brander's feet; and while he toiled at the planking of the deck there, he looked up at the fourth mate and nodded significantly.

Brander understood the one-eyed man; he asked: "What's wrong, Mauger?" His tone was friendly.

Mauger chuckled mirthlessly, deprecatingly. "Don't want you should git mad," he protested.

Brander shook his head, his eyes sobering. "Of course not. What is it?"

"There's chatter, forward," said Mauger. "They're talking dirt."

Brander's voice fell. "Who?"

"Slatter was th' first. Others now. Dirt."

Brander looked about the deck; there was no one within hearing. He asked quietly: "What kind of dirt?"

Mauger looked up and grinned unhappily and apologetically. "You know," he said. "You and— her...." [Pg 187]

Brander's eyes hardened; he said, under his breath: "Thanks, Mauger." And he walked away from where the one-eyed man was scrubbing. Mauger rose on his knees to look after the fourth mate with something like worship in his eyes.

Brander went aft with his problem. A real problem. Faith besmirched.... He would have cut off his right hand to prevent it; but cutting off his right hand would have done no good whatever. He would have fought the whole crew of the *Sally*, single-handed; but that would have done even less good than the other. You cannot permanently gag a man by jamming your fist in his mouth. And Brander knew it; so that while he boiled with anger and disgust, he held himself in check, and tried to consider what should be done....

Must do something.... No easy task to determine what that something was to be.

Brander considered the members of the crew; the fo'm'st hands. Slatter he knew; an evil man. Others there were like him, either from weakness or sheer malignant festering of the soul. But there were some who were men, some who were decent.... Some who would fight the foul talk, wisely or unwisely as the case might be; some who had eyes to see the goodness of Faith, and hearts to trust her....

Brander's task was to help these men. He could not himself go into the fo'c's'le and strike; to do so would only spread the filth of words abroad. But—one thing he could do. He saw the way.... [Pg 188]

Avoid Faith.... That would not be easy, since their lives must lie in the cabin. Avoid Faith, avoid speaking to her save in the most casual way, avoid being alone with her. That much he must do; and something more. The crew would be spying on them now, watching, whispering. He must give them no food for whispers; he must go further. He must give them proof that their whispers were ill-founded. He must....

It was this word of Mauger's that led Brander to a determination which was to threaten him with ruin in the end; it was this word of Mauger's that determined Brander to give himself to the crew. To keep some of them always near him, always in sight of him; to force them, if he could, to see for themselves that he had little talk with Faith and few words with her. That was what Brander planned to do. He worked out the details carefully. When he was on deck, he must keep in their sight; and he must keep himself on deck every hour of the day save when he went below for meals. He decided to do more; the nights were warm and pleasant. He had a hammock swung under the boathouse, and planned to sleep there; he laid open his whole life to their prying eyes. Let them see for themselves....

He was satisfied with this arrangement, at last. It was the best that could be done; he put it into action at once, and he saw within three days' time that Slatter and the others had noticed, and were wondering and questioning.

The men were puzzled; the cabin was puzzled. And no one was more puzzled by Brander's new way of life than Dan'l Tobey. He was puzzled, but he was at the same time elated. For he perceived that Brander had given him a weapon, a handle to take hold of. And Dan'l was not slow to take advantage of it. [Pg 189]

They were working westward at the time, killing whales as they went. Ahead was the Bay of Islands, and Port Russell. Southward, the Solander Rock, and the Solander Grounds, where all the big bull whales of the seven seas have a way of flocking as men flock to their clubs. A cow is seldom or never seen there; the bulls are slain by scores. Toward this hunting ground, as famous for its whales as it was infamous for its ugly weather, the *Sally Sims* was working. They would touch at Port Russell on the way....

Three days before they were like to make the Port, Dan'l made an occasion to have words with Noll Wing. Noll was on deck, Faith and the officers—save Brander, who was with Mauger forward—were all below. There was a group of men by the tryworks; and Dan'l strolled that way. He moved inconspicuously, approaching them on the opposite side of the ship; and when he came near, he stopped and seemed to listen. Noll, aft, was paying him little attention though Dan'l made sure that the captain saw.

Slatter was among the group of men; Dan'l scattered them, angrily, and drove them forward. When they were gone, he went aft again; and as he had expected, Noll asked:

"What was that, Dan'l?"

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Dan'l smiled and said it was nothing that mattered; and his tone suggested that it mattered a great deal. Noll sternly bade him speak, and Dan'l said reluctantly:

"It was but the foolish talk of idle men, sir. I bade them keep their tongues still."

"What manner of foolish talk?"

Dan'l would not meet Noll's eyes. "Why, lies," he said. "Chatter."

Noll said heavily: "I'm not a man to be put off, Dan'l. Speak up, man."

Dan'l frowned sorrowfully: "It was just their talk about Mr. Brander and Faith, sir. Lies, as I told you. They shut up when I spoke to them."

"What talk of Brander and my wife?" Noll asked slowly.

Dan'l shook his head. "You can guess it for yourself, sir. The men have nothing better to do than chatter and gossip like old women. They've had no work for three days. We need another whale to shut their mouths."

"What talk?" Noll repeated.

Dan'l smiled. "I think too well of Faith and of Brander to say it for you," he insisted.

Noll fell silent, his brows lowering for a space; then he waved his great hand harshly. "Bosh," he said. "Foolishness."

Dan'l nodded. "Of course. Nevertheless, I...." He fell silent; and Noll looked at him acutely.

"You—what?" he asked.

"I don't blame Mr. Brander, you understand," said Dan'l. "But—it's in my mind that—being with the crew as much as he is—he should put a stop to it."

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Noll's eyes ranged the deck. Brander was amidships now; and Mauger was still with him. Mauger was scraping at the rail, cleaning away some traces of soot from the last trying out, under Brander's eye. They were talking together; and Noll frowned and looked at Dan'l and asked:

"You think Mr. Brander is too much with the crew?"

Dan'l shook his head. "No, not too much. It's as well for an officer to be on good terms with the men. Leastwise, some think so. I was never one to do it. But—no, not too much. Nevertheless, he's much with them."

Noll thought for a while, his brows lowering; and he said harshly, at the end: "That matter of Faith is trash. Their clacking tongues should be dragged out...."

Dan'l nodded. "Aye; but that would not stop them. You know the men, sir." And he added: "Still it seems Brander should be able to hush them." And after a moment more: "You mark, he's all but deserted us in the cabin. He sticks much with the men of late."

Noll's face contracted. He touched Dan'l's arm. "I've seen that he is much with Mauger," he agreed. "And Mauger...." His muscles twitched; and he said under his breath: "Mauger's whetting his knife for me, Dan'l. I'm watchful of that man."

"He has a slinking eye," said Dan'l. "But I make no doubt he's harmless enough, sir. I'd not fear him...."

Noll said stoutly: "I'm not a hand to fear any man, Dan'l. Nevertheless, that twitching eye of his frets me...." He shuddered and gripped Dan'l's arm the tighter. "I should not have kicked the man, Dan'l. I've been a hard man; too hard.... An evil man, in my day. I doubt the Lord has raised up Mauger to destroy me."

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Dan'l laughed. "Pshaw, sir.... Even the Lord would have small use for a thing like Mauger." He waited for a moment thoughtfully. "Any case," he said. "If you were minded, you could drop him

ashore at Port Russell and be rid of him."

Noll moved abruptly. "Eh," he said. "I had not thought of that." He seemed to shrink from the thought.... "But it may be he is meant to be about me.... I'd not go against the Lord, Dan'l...."

Dan'l looked sidewise at the captain; and there was something like contempt in his eyes. He said slowly: "If it was me, I'd set the man quietly ashore...."

He turned away, left Noll to think of the matter....

Dan'l wondered, all that day, whether Noll would act; but toward nightfall they raised a spout, and killed as dark came upon them. That held them, for cutting in and trying out, three days where they lay; and they killed once more before they made the Bay of Islands. They were touching at Port Russell for water and fresh vegetables; they put in there....

When the anchor went down, Noll sent for Brander to come down to him in the cabin. They had anchored at nightfall, and would not go ashore till morning. Noll sent for Brander; and when Brander came, Noll looked at him furtively....

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Brander saw the captain had been drinking; Noll's hands shook, and his fingers and his tongue were unsteady. The muscles of his face twitched; and there was a Bible open in his lap and a bottle beside him. Brander held his eyes steady, masked what he felt. Noll beckoned with a crooked finger.

"Come 'ere," he said huskily.

Brander faced him. They were in the after cabin; and Noll sat still. "We're staying here a day," he said.

Brander nodded. "Wood and stores, sir, I suppose."

Noll nodded heavily. "Oh, aye.... But, something else, Mr. Brander. I'm goin' leave here that man in your boat. Mauger...."

Brander's lips tightened faintly; he held his voice. "Mauger?" he echoed. "Why? What's wrong with him?"

"Don' want him around any more," said Noll slowly.

"Why not?" Brander insisted.

Noll's lips twitched with the play of his nerves, and he poured a drink and lifted it to his mouth with unsteady fingers. He set down the glass, spilling a little of the liquor; and he wiped his mouth with the back of his hand. "I had 'casion to discipline Mauger," he said, with awkward dignity, his head wagging. "I had 'casion to discipline Mauger. An' now he's got a knife for me. He's goin' kill me. I ought kill him; put the man shore, 'stead of that."

Brander smiled reassuringly. "Mauger's harmless, sir. And he does his work."

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Noll shook his head. "I know 'im. He's a murd'rer. I'm goin' put him ashore."

The fourth mate hesitated; then he said quietly: "All right. If he goes, I go too."

Noll's head jerked back as though he had been struck; and his red eyes widened and narrowed again as he peered at Brander, and he hesitated unsteadily. "Wha's that?" he asked. "Wha's that you say?"

"I say I'll go if he goes."

Noll's head drooped and swayed wearily; but after a moment he asked: "Wha' for?"

"The man shipped for the cruise," said Brander. "He does his work. I'll not be a party to putting him ashore—dumping him in this God-forsaken hole."

Noll raised a hand. "Don' speak of God," he said reprovingly. "You don' understand Him, Mr. Brander." Brander said nothing; and Noll's hand dropped and he whined: "Man can't do what he wants on his own ship...."

Brander said: "Do as you like, sir. I think you should let him stay. He means no harm...."

Noll waved his hand. "Oh, a'right," he agreed. "Say no more 'bout it at all. Let be. Keep'm; keep'm, Mr. Brander. But lis'en." He eyed Brander shrewdly. "Lis'en. I know one thing. He's goin' to knife me some night. I know. He's a murd'rer. And you're defending him.... Pr'tecting him. Birds of a feather flock t'gether, Mr. Brander." The captain got unsteadily to his feet, raised a threatening hand. "When he kills me; just r'member. My blood's on your own head, sir."

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Brander hesitated; his heart revolted. His impulse was to leave the ship, take Mauger, trust his luck.... But he thought of Faith. This man, her husband, was dying.... He could see that. And when he was gone, there would be trouble aboard the *Sally*. Faith herself meant trouble; the ambergris in the captain's storeroom meant more trouble.... Brander knew it might well be that Faith would need him in that day.... He could not leave her....

He said quietly: "I take that responsibility, sir."

Noll was slumped in his chair again. "Go 'way," he said, and waved his hand. "Go 'way."

That night, in the small hours, Noll screamed in a way that woke the ship; he had come out of drunken slumber, desperate with a vivid hallucination that appalled him....

He thought that Mauger was at him with a sheath knife, and that Brander was at Mauger's back. Faith and Dan'l fought to soothe him; Faith in her loose dressing-gown, her hair in its thick braid.... Dan'l had more eyes for Faith than for Noll. He had never seen her thus before; never seen her so beautiful; never seen her, he thought, so desperately to be desired.... His lips were wet at the sight of her....

Noll's terror racked and tore at the man; it seemed to rip the very flesh from his bones. When it passed, at last, and he fell asleep again, he was wasted like a corpse. [Pg 196]

Dan'l, looking at Noll and at Faith, wished Noll were a corpse indeed.

XX

[Pg 197]

A change was coming to pass in Faith at this time. As the strength flowed out of Noll, it seemed to flow into her. As Noll weakened, Faith was growing strong.

She had never lacked a calm strength of her own; the strength of a good woman. But she was acquiring now the strength and resolution of a man. At first, this was unconscious; the spectacle of Noll's degeneration moved her by the force of contrast. But for a long time she clung to the picture of the Noll of the past, clung to the hope that the captain would become again the man she had married. And so long as she did this, she made herself a part of him, his support.... She merged herself in him, thought of herself only as his helpmate.... She had always tried to stimulate his pride and strength; she had tried to lead him to reassume the domination of the *Sally* and all aboard her. And in the days before Noll went out to kill his whale, she thought for a time she had succeeded.

But when Noll came back to her that day, exhausted by the struggle, the fire gone out of him, Faith perceived that he was a weak vessel, cracking and breaking before her eyes.

Noll was gone; he was no longer a man. His hands and his heart had not the force needed to enable him to command the *Sally*, to make the voyage successful, to bring the bark safely back to port in the end. Faith saw this; but she refused to consider the chance of failure. She had married Noll when he was at the height of his apparent strength; the signs of his disintegration were not yet apparent. They had swept upon him suddenly.... But she would not have it said of him, when he was gone, that he had sailed the seas too long; that he had failed at last, and shamefully.... [Pg 198]

She had come to look upon the success of this last voyage of Noll's as a sacred charge; and when Noll's shoulders weakened, she prepared deliberately to take the burden on her own. The *Sally* must come safely home, with filled casks for old Jonathan Felt; she must come safely home, no matter what happened to Noll—or to herself. The prosperity of the *Sally Sims* was almost a religion to Faith....

She had begun to study navigation more to pass the long and dreary days than from any other motive; she applied herself to it now more ardently. And she began, at the same time, to study the men about her; to weigh them; to consider their fitness for the responsibilities that must fall upon them. The fo'm'st hands, and particularly the mates, she weighed in the balance. The mates, and above all Dan'l Tobey. For if Noll were to go, Dan'l, by all the ancient laws of the sea, would become master of the ship; and their destinies would lie in his hands....

Short of the Solander Grounds, they struck good whaling, and lingered for a time; and day by day the tuns and casks were filled, and the *Sally* sank lower in the water with her increasing load. They were two-thirds full, and not yet two years out. Good whaling.... At dinner in the cabin one day, Dan'l Tobey said to Faith: [Pg 199]

"You've brought us good luck, Faith, by coming along, this cruise. We never did much better, since I've been with Cap'n Wing."

Faith looked to Noll. Noll was eating slowly, paying them no attention. Silence was falling upon the captain in those days, like a foreshadowing of the great silence into which he would presently depart. He said nothing; so Faith said: "Yes. We've done well.... I'm glad."

Old James Tichel looked slyly from face to face. "And the 'gris, stowed below us here, will make it a fine fat cruise for old Jonathan Felt when we come home," he chuckled.

At the mention of the ambergris, a little silence fell. Brander was at the table, Brander and the others. Dan'l and Willis Cox and young Roy Kilcup looked at Brander, as though expecting him to speak. He said nothing, and old Tichel, gnawing at his food, chuckled again, as though pleased

with what he had said.

The ambergris, so rich a treasure in so small a bulk, had never been forgotten for a minute by any man in the cabin; nor by Faith. But they had not spoken of it of late; there was nothing to be said, and there was danger in the saying. It was as well that it be forgotten until they were home again.... There were too many chances for trouble in the stuff....

When Brander did not speak, however, Dan'l gently prodded him. He said to Tichel: "You're forgetting that Mr. Brander claims it for his own."

Tichel chuckled again. "Oh, aye, I was forgetting that small matter," he agreed. "My memory is very short at times." [Pg 200]

Still Brander said nothing. Dan'l looked toward him. "I'll be warrant Mr. Brander does not forget," he said.

Brander looked toward Dan'l, and he smiled amiably. "Thank you," he told the mate. "Keep me reminded. It had all but slipped from my mind."

There was so much hostility in the air, in the slow words of the men, that Faith said quietly: "We'll be on the Solander, soon. I'm looking forward to that, Dan'l. You've seen the Rock?"

She hoped to change them to another topic; but Dan'l brought it smoothly back again. "Yes," he said. "Yes.... Last cruise, the *Betty Howe*, out of Port Russell, picked up a sizable chunk of 'gris not a week before we touched the grounds. That brought two-sixty to the pound, I heard."

"How much was it?" Willis Cox asked; and Dan'l looked to Willis and said amiably:

"Fifteen pound or so. No more than a thimbleful to what we've got.... That is to say, to what Mr. Brander's got, below here."

Brander had finished eating; he rose to go on deck. But Roy Kilcup could no longer hold his tongue. He got to his feet in Brander's path, demanded sharply:

"Do you honestly mean to claim that for your own, Mr. Brander? Are you so much of a hog?"

Brander looked down at the boy; and he smiled. "I'll give you your share, now, if it will stop your worrying, youngster," he said. [Pg 201]

"I want to know what you're going to do," Roy insisted. "Are you going to stick to your claim?"

"Others want to know," said Brander, and stepped to one side to pass Roy. Roy would have spoken again; but Noll said heavily from the head of the table:

"Roy, let be."

That put a moment's silence upon them all. In this silence, Brander went on his way to the deck. Roy stared after him for a moment, then sat down in his place. His face was sullen and angry.... No one spoke of the matter again; but Dan'l saw that Faith was thoughtful. Faith was puzzling over Brander, trying to fathom the man.... She was troubled and uneasy.... Dan'l saw that Noll had lifted his heavy head and was watching her.

Afterward, Dan'l went with Noll into the after cabin. Faith had gone on deck; and she and Willis Cox were talking together, by the wheel, with Roy. Brander, as usual, had taken himself to the waist where he was under the eye of the crew. His harpooner, Loum, was with him. Mauger hung within sound of his voice like an adoring dog.

Dan'l, in the after cabin with Noll, made up the log. Noll sat heavily on the seat, half asleep. He got up, while Dan'l was still writing, and got his bottle. It was almost empty; and he cursed at that, and Dan'l looked up and said:

"Sit down, sir. Give that to me. I'll fill it up again."

Noll accepted the offer without speaking, and gave Dan'l the key to his storeroom, where there was a cask of whiskey, and another of rum. Dan'l came back presently with the bottle filled.... His eyes were shining with an evil inspiration, but he said nothing for a little. When his work on the log was done, however, he looked across to Noll, and after a little, as though answering a spoken question, said: [Pg 202]

"I wouldn't worry about him, sir."

Noll looked at him dully. "About who, Dan'l?"

"Brander. I saw you watching him...."

Noll dropped his head. "I don't like the man."

"He's a good officer."

"Oh, aye...."

"I doubt if he means trouble over the 'gris."

Noll waved a hand fretfully. "He's too much with the crew, Mr. Tobey."

Dan'l shook his head. "I doubt it. That's one way to handle men—Be one of them. They'll do anything for him, sir."

Noll's eyes narrowed with the shrewdness of a drunken man. "That's the worst part of it. Will they do anything for me, Dan'l? Or for you?"

Dan'l said reluctantly: "Well, sir, maybe they'd jump quicker for him."

"And that's not reassuring," said Noll. "Is it, now?"

"It wouldn't be, if he meant wrong. I don't think he does. Any case, he knows the 'gris is not his, in the end...." And he added: "You're concerned over Faith and him—the way they are when they're together. But there's no need, sir. Faith is loyal...." [Pg 203]

Noll looked at the mate, and he frowned. "How are they, when they're together?"

"I thought you had marked it for yourself.... I meant nothing."

"Nothing? You meant something. You've seen something. What is it you've seen, Dan'l?"

Dan'l protested. "Why, nothing at all. There's no harm in their being friends. He's a young man, strong, with wisdom in his head; and she's young, too. It's natural that young folk should be friendly."

Noll's head sank upon his chest; he said dully: "Aye, and you're thinking I'm old."

"No, sir," Dan'l cried. "Not that. You're not so old as you think, sir. Not so old but what you might strike, if there was need. I only meant it was to be expected that they should be drawn together, like. Faith's young...."

Noll's eyes were reddening angrily. "Speak out, man," he exclaimed. "Don't shilly-shally with your tongue. If there's harm afoot, by God, I can take a hand. What's in your mind?"

"Why, nothing at all. No harm in the world, sir.... I was only meaning to reassure you. I thought you had seen her eyes when she looked at the man...."

"Her eyes?"

"Aye."

"What's in her eyes?"

Dan'l frowned uncomfortably. "Why—friendship, if you like. Liking, perhaps. Nothing more, I'll swear. I know Faith too well...." [Pg 204]

Noll said heavily: "I'll watch her eyes, Dan'l."

Dan'l said with apparent anxiety: "You should not concern yourself, Cap'n Wing. It's but the fancy of youth for youth.... I...."

Noll came to his feet with sudden rage in him. "Have done, Dan'l. I...."

They both heard, then, Faith's step in the main cabin; and their eyes met and burned. And Dan'l got up quietly, and closed the log, and as Faith came in, he went out and closed the door behind him. Closed the door and crossed to the companion as though to go on deck; but he lingered there, listening....

Listened; but there was little for him to hear. When the door closed behind him, Faith had turned to her own cabin, hers and Noll's. Noll sat down, his eyes sullen.... He watched her through the open door to the cabin where their bunks were. She turned after a moment and came out to him; and he got to his feet with a rush of anger, and stared at her, so that she stood still....

He said hoarsely: "Faith.... By God...."

His words failed, then, before the steady light in her eyes. She was wondering, questioning him.... She met his eyes so fairly that the soul of the man cowered and shrank. The strength of rage went from him. He drew back.

"What is it, Noll?" she asked. "Why are you—angry?"

He lifted a clenched hand over his head; it trembled there for an instant, then came slowly down. He wrenched open the door to the main cabin, and went out and left her standing there.... [Pg 205]

Faith watched him go; perplexity in her eyes. Dan'l joined him, and they went on deck together.

XXI

[Pg 206]

They came to the Solander Grounds with matters still in this wise. Brander much with the crew; Noll Wing rotting in his chair in the cabin; Faith gaining strength of soul with every day; Dan'l playing upon Noll, upon Roy, upon all those about him to his own ends....

The Solander received them roughly; they passed the tall Solander Rock and cruised to the westward, keeping it in sight. There was another whaling ship, almost hull down, north of them, and the smoke that clouded her told the *Sally* she had her trypots going. Dan'l Tobey was handling the vessel; and he chose to work up that way. But before they were near the other craft, the masthead men sighted whales.... Spouts all about, blossoming like flowers upon the blue water. Noll had regained a little of his strength when they came upon the Grounds; he took the ship, and bade Dan'l and the other mates lower and single out a lone whale....

"They'll all be bulls, hereabouts," he said. "Big ones, too.... And we'll take one at a spell and be thankful for that...."

The whale was, as Noll had predicted, a bull. Dan'l made the kill, a ridiculously easy one. The vast creature lifted a little in the water at the first iron; he swam slowly southward; but there was no fight in him when they pulled up and thrust home the lance. The lance thrusts seemed to take out of him what small spirit of resistance there had been in the beginning; and when his spout crimsoned, he lay absolutely still, and thus died....

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An hour after lowering, the whale was alongside the *Sally*; a monstrous creature, not far short of the colossus Cap'n Wing had slain. He was made fast to the fluke-chain bitt, and the cutting in began forthwith.... That, too, on Noll Wing's order. "Fair weather never sticks, hereabouts," he said. "Work while there's working seas."

Now the first part of cutting in a whale is to work off the head; and that is no small task. For the whale has no neck at all, unless a certain crease in his thick blubber may be called a neck. The spades of the mates, keen-edged, and mounted on long poles with which they jab downward from the cutting stage, chock into the blubber and draw a deep cut along the chosen line.... The carcass is laboriously turned, the process is repeated.... Thus on, till at last the huge mass can be torn free....

Before the work on this whale was half done, it became apparent that a gale was brewing. Cross swells, angling together at the mouth of Foveaux Straits, kicked up a drunken sea that made the *Sally* pitch and roll at the same time; a combination not relished by any man. Nevertheless, the head was got off and hauled alongside for cutting up....

This work had taken the better part of the night; and with the dawn, there arose a whine in the wind that sang a constant, high note in the taut rigging. With the *Sally* pitching and rolling drunkenly, the fifteen ton junk was got off the head and hoisted aboard, while every strand of rigging creaked and protested at the terrible strain. The blubber was coming in; but the wind was increasing....

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In the end, the *Sally* had to let go what remained of her catch and run for it, losing thereby the huge "case" full of spermaceti, and a full half of the blubber. But it was time.... The wind was still increasing.... The *Sally* scudded like a yacht before it....

They ran into Port William for shelter, and Noll Wing swore at his ill luck, and when the ship was anchored, went sulkily below.... Dan'l drove the men to their tasks....

The weeks that followed were repetitions of this first experience, with such capricious modifications as the gales and the sea chose to arrange. They killed many big whales; some they lost altogether, and some they lost in part, and some few they harvested. They fell into the way of running for port with their kill as soon as the whale was alongside, rather than risk the storms in the open.... It was hard and steady work for all hands; and as the men had grumbled at ill luck when they sighted no whales, so now they grumbled because their luck was overgood. The deck of the *Sally* was filled with morose and sullen faces....

Dan'l found them easy working, ready for his hands; and by a word dropped now and then through these busy times, he led them in the way he wished them to go.... He never let them forget, for one thing, the ambergris beneath the cabin. When they grumbled, he reminded them it was there as a rich reward for all their labors.... And he reminded them, at the same time, that Brander claimed it.... Neither did he let the men forget that which he wished them to believe of Faith and Brander. By indirections; by words with Roy which he took care they should overhear; by reproofs for chance-caught words, he kept the matter alive in their minds, so that they began to look at Faith sidewise when she appeared upon the after deck....

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Brander was not blind to this; and if he had been blind, Mauger's one eye would have seen for him. He knew the matter in the minds of the men; but he could not be sure that Dan'l was putting it there.... Could not be sure; nevertheless, he spoke to Dan'l of it one day.... It was the first time since Brander came aboard that he and Dan'l had had more than passing word.

Brander made an opportunity to take the mate aside; and he held Dan'l's eyes with his own and said steadily: "Mr. Tobey, there's ugly talk among the men aboard here that should be put a stop to...."

Dan'l looked surprised; he asked what Brander meant. Brander said openly: "They're coupling my name with that of the captain's wife. You've heard them. It should be ended."

Dan'l said amiably: "I know. It's very bad. But that is a thing you can't stop from the after deck, Mr. Brander."

Brander said: "That's true. So what do you think should be done in the matter?"

The mate waved his hand. "It's not my affair, Mr. Brander. It's not me whose name is coupled with Faith's. You know that, yourself." [Pg 210]

Brander nodded. "Suppose," he said, "suppose I go forward again.... I'll make some occasion to commit a fault: Cap'n Wing can send me forward and put Silva, or another, in my place."

Dan'l looked at Brander sharply; and he shook his head. "The men would be saying, then, that it was because of this matter you were put out of the cabin."

"I suppose so."

"It is very sure."

"What would you suggest?" Brander asked, his eyes holding Dan'l's. Dan'l seemed to weigh the matter.

"How if you were to leave the ship completely?" he inquired.

Brander's eyes narrowed; and Dan'l, in spite of himself, turned away his head. If Brander left the ship.... There was no other man aboard whom he need fear when the time should come.... If Brander but left the ship....

Brander's eyes narrowed; he studied Dan'l; and after a little he laughed harshly, and nodded his head as though assured of something which he had doubted before. "No," he said. "No. I'll not leave the *Sally*...." He could never do that; there might come the day when Faith would have to look to him.... "No; I'll stick aboard here...."

Dan'l's hopes had leaped so high; they fell so low.... But he hid his chagrin. "You are right," he said. "That is a deal to ask, just to stop the idle chatter of the men. Stay.... Best stay.... It will be forgotten." [Pg 211]

Brander turned abruptly away, to crush down a sudden flood of anger that had clenched his fists. He knew Dan'l, now, beyond doubt. He had guessed the mate's eagerness to be rid of him.... Dan'l should not have his way in this so easily....

Dan'l's own eyes had been opened by this talk with Brander. The mate's heart had not yet formed his full design; he was working evil without any further plan than to bring harm and ruin.... But Brander's suggestion, the possibility that Brander might leave the ship, had revealed to Dan'l in a single flash how matters would lie in his two hands if Brander were gone. Noll Wing was nothing; old Tichel he could swing; Willis Cox was a boy; the crew were sheep. Only Brander stood out against him; only Brander must be beaten down to clear his path. With Brander gone....

Dan'l set himself this task; to eliminate Brander. He thought of many plans, a little mishap in the whaling, a kinked line, a flying spade, an ugly mischance.... But these could not be arranged; he could only hope for the luck of them. Hope for the luck.... But that need not prevent him working to help out the fates. Not openly; he could not do that without setting Brander on guard. And Brander on guard was doubly to be feared. Dan'l remembered an ancient phrase, the advice of an old philosopher to a rebellious soul, he thought. "When you strike at a king, you must kill him...." It was so with Brander; he must be destroyed at a blow.... Utterly.... [Pg 212]

Noll was a tool that might serve; Noll would strike, if he could be roused to the full measure of wrath. Dan'l worked with Noll discreetly, in hidden words, appearing always to defend Brander.... Brander and Faith meant no harm.... They were friends, no more.... Dan'l assured Noll of this, again and again; and he took care that his assurances should not convince. Noll stormed at him one night:

"Why must you always be defending Faith? Why do you stand by her?"

And Dan'l said humbly: "I've always known Faith, sir. I don't want to see her do anything.... That is, I don't want to see you harsh with her, sir."

And Noll fell into a brooding silence that pleased Dan'l mightily.... But still he did not strike at Brander....

Dan'l reminded the captain that Brander still gave much time to the crew; he played on that string.... Still hoping Noll might be roused to overwhelming rage. But Dan'l's poisoned soul was losing its gift of seeing into the hearts of men; the old Noll would have reacted to his words as he hoped. This new Noll was another matter; this Noll, aging and rotting with drink, was led by Dan'l's talk to hate Brander—and to fear him. His fear of Brander and of the one-eyed man obsessed even his sober mind. He would never dare seek to crush Brander openly; Faith he might strike, but not the man.

In the end, even Dan'l perceived this; he cast about for a new instrument, and found it in the man, Slatter.

Slatter had crossed Brander's path, to his sorrow. The loose-tongued man dropped some word of Faith which Brander heard, and Brander remembered.... He made pretext of Slatter's next small failure at the work to beat the man into a bleeding pulp.... No word of Faith in this; he thrashed Slatter for idling at the windlass when a blanket strip was being hoisted, and for impudence.... And Slatter was his enemy thereafter. Dan'l saw, and understood.... And he cultivated Slatter; he tended the man's hurts, and gave him covert sympathy for the beating he had taken.... And Slatter, emboldened, harshly swore that he would end Brander for it, give him half a chance. [Pg 213]

Dan'l said hastily, and quietly: "Don't talk such matters, man. There's more than you aboard ship would do that if they dared. I'm not saying even Noll Wing would not smile to see Brander gone.... No matter why...."

"I know why," Slatter swore. "Every man forrad knows the why of that...."

"Well, then you'll not blame Noll," said Dan'l. "I'm thinking he'd fair kiss the man that had a hand in ending Brander, if it was not done too open. But there's none aboard would dare it...."

"By God, let me get him forrad, right, and I'll...."

"Quiet," said Dan'l. "Here's the man himself...."

Here was his tool; Dan'l waited only the occasion. There was a way to make that.

A whaler's crew are for the most part scum; harmless enough when they're held in hand.... Harmless enough so long as they're kept in fear. But alcohol drives fear out of a man. And there was whiskey and rum in the captain's storeroom, aft....

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It was one of the duties of Roy, as ship's boy, to fetch up stores from this room at command; he was accustomed to fill Noll Wing's bottles now and then. Dan'l saw he might use Roy; and he did so without scruple. "I've need for liquor, Roy," he told the lad. "But I'd not ask Noll.... He's jealous of the stuff, as you know. So when next you're down, fill a jug.... Fetch it up to me."

He said it so casually that Roy agreed without question. The boy was pleased to serve Dan'l.... Dan'l held him, he had captured Roy, heart and soul. Roy gave him the jug full of liquor next morning, Slatter had it by nightfall, and that without Dan'l's appearing in the matter. Slatter came aft to take the wheel, and Dan'l saw to it the jug was in his sight and at hand.... Slatter carried it forward with him.... He passed Dan'l in the waist; and Dan'l looked at the jug and laughed and said:

"Man, that looks like liquor."

Slatter grinned uneasily. "Oil for the fo'c's'le lamp," he said.

Dan'l wagged his head. "See that that's so," he said. "If any ructions start in the fo'c's'le, I'll send Brander forward to quiet you. You'll not be wanting Brander to lay hand on you again."

Slatter's eyes shifted hungrily; he went on his way with quick feet, and Dan'l watched him go, and his eyes set hard.

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That was at dusk. Toward ten that night, when Brander was in his hammock under the boathouse, one of the men howled, forward, and there was the sound of scuffling in the fo'c's'le. Dan'l was aft, waiting.... He called to Brander:

"Go forward and put a stop to that yammering, Mr. Brander."

Brander slid out of his hammock, assented quietly, and started forward along the deck. Dan'l watched his dark figure in the night until it was lost in the waist of the *Sally*.... He waited a moment.... Brander must be at the fo'c's'le scuttle by now....

Came cries, blows, a tumultuous outbreak. The *Sally* rang with the storm of battle. Then, abruptly, quiet....

At that sudden-falling quiet, Dan'l turned pale in spite of himself; he licked his lips. The thing was done....

He ran forward, virtuously ready to take a hand.

XXII

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When Brander, at Dan'l's command, went forward to quiet the men in the fo'c's'le, he found two or three of the crew on deck about the scuttle, watching the tumult below.... When they heard him and saw him, they backed away. The light from the fo'c's'le lamp dimly illumined their faces; and Brander thought there was something murderous and at the same time furtive in their eyes.

More than that, he caught the smell of alcohol.... So there was whiskey loose below him.

A man boiled up the ladder past him to the deck, saw him and slid away into the dark. Another.... Six or eight were still fighting below.

Brander had that sixth sense which men must have who would command other men; he felt, now, the peril in the air. His duty was down there among those fighting men; to get down, he would ordinarily have used the ladder. But to do so would be to engage his hands and his feet, and he might well have need of both these members.... He put his hands on the edge of the fo'c's'le scuttle and dropped lightly to the floor of the fo'c's'le, without touching the ladder. He landed on his toes, poised, ready....

The narrow, crowded, triangular den was thick with the smell of hot men, of whiskey, of burning oil; the air was heavy with smoke. A single swinging lamp lighted the place.... Beneath this lamp,

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four or five men were involved in a battle from which legs and arms were waved awkwardly as their owners struggled. Two other men crouched at opposite sides of the fo'c's'le.... Watching.... One was Mauger; the other Slatter. Brander cried:

"Drop it, now...."

The character of the struggle changed; the fighting men straightened.... Then some one hit the lamp and sent it whirling into darkness; and at the same moment, Brander heard Slatter scream murderously.... He slipped to one side, backed into a corner, held hands before him, ready to meet an attack....

Slatter's charge, if he were attacking Brander, should have carried the man past the mate's hiding place. But Brander, in the dark, heard a thump of two bodies together, and heard Slatter bellowing profanity, and heard heels thumping upon the floor. Then two or three men made a rush up the ladder to the deck.... Another.... Brander stepped forward, tripped over a whirling leg, and dropped upon a smother of two bodies which writhed beneath him. An arm was flying; he gripped for it and felt the prick of a knife in his wrist. So.... Death in the air, then....

He dragged that arm down to his face and bit at the wrist and the back of the hand, till he felt the knife drop from the man's fingers.... The three of them were writhing and striking and kicking and strangling.... But the knife was gone.... So much the better. He began to fumble with his right hand, seeking marks for his fists.... He did not strike blindly, but when he struck, his blows went home.... On some one's ribs, and back, and once on the neck at the base of the ear....

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They were fighting in silence now.... All had passed so quickly that it was still scarce more than seconds since Brander dropped into the fo'c's'le. Their bodies thumped the planking resonantly; they struggled in a fashion that shook the ship. They were gasping and choking for breath....

Some one screamed terribly in Brander's very ear, and a hand that was gripping his neck relaxed and fell away. The bodies of the fighting men were for an instant still; and in that instant's silence, some one asked:

"You all right, Mr. Brander?"

Brander knew the voice. Mauger's. He said: "Yes...."

Mauger squirmed out from under Brander.... "What hit Slatter?" he asked sharply. "Did you get him?..."

Brander got up, and the body of Slatter fell away from him limply. It was about that time that Dan'l reached the fo'c's'le scuttle above, and looked down into the darkness. He saw nothing; and he called:

"Mr. Brander?"

Brander said quietly: "Yes, sir, all right."

"What's wrong, here?"

"Slatter tried to knife me," said Brander.

"Have you got him?"

"I don't know. He's still. Strike a light, if you please...."

Dan'l was already half way down the ladder; but even before his sulphur match scratched, Brander's nostrils told him what had happened. They brought him a smell.... Unmistakable.... Appalling.... The smell of blood....

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He was on his knees beside Slatter's body when Dan'l bent over him with the flickering match. They saw Slatter doubled forward over his own legs, and Brander explained swiftly: "I had a full-Nelson.... I was forcing him over that way when he yelled...."

He lifted Slatter's body; and they saw the hilt of a knife that was stuck downward, deep into his right thigh. Dan'l cried:

"You've killed him."

And one-eyed Mauger interrupted loyally: "No, he didn't. Didn't...."

Dan'l looked at the one-eyed man. "How do you know?"

"I did. I stuck the knife in him...."

Brander looked at Mauger, and he touched the little man's shoulder. "You're a liar, little friend," he said, and smiled. And he turned to Dan'l. "I bit the knife out of his hand," he said. "Out of Slatter's.... It fell against my chest and slid down.... It must have dropped between his body and his legs, and his own body, bending forward, drove it in."

Dan'l smiled unpleasantly. "All right; but Mauger says he did it."

Brander shook his head. "He didn't. For a good reason. He was flat on the floor, and I was kneeling on his back, between him and Slatter, when Slatter yelled and quit fighting...."

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Dan'l groped for the whale-oil lamp and lighted it and bent to look at the knife. "How did it kill

him, there?" he demanded.

"Struck the big thigh artery," said Brander. "It must have...."

Then Noll Wing's voice came to them from the scuttle. "What's wrong, below?" And his big bulk slid down the ladder....

Brander's explanation was the one that went down in the log, in the end. Noll wrote it himself, in the irregular and straggling characters which his trembling fingers formed. And that was Faith's doing; for Dan'l did not believe, or affected not to believe, and Noll was too shaken by the tragedy to know what he believed.

Dan'l and Noll and Faith talked it over between them, in the after cabin, the next morning. Faith had slept through the disturbance of the night before; but when she heard of it in the morning it absorbed her. She went on deck and found Brander and made him tell her what had happened. He described the outbreak in the fo'c's'le; he told how, when he went forward, he smelled liquor on the men.... How he dropped through the fo'c's'le scuttle, and some one knocked the lamp from its hanging, and Slatter rushed him.

"Mauger saw what the man meant," he said. "He jumped on him from the side; and then I took a hand; and we had it for a while, in a heap on the floor."

The other men in the fo'c's'le had fled to the deck, leaving Slatter to do his own work. "I made him let go of the knife," Brander explained, "and after we had banged around for a while, I got him from behind, my arms under his, my hands clasped behind his neck. I bent him over, forward.... He was trying to get hold of my throat, over his shoulder.... And he yelled and let go...."

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Faith's eyes were troubled. "You say the men had been drinking?"

"Yes."

"Where did they get it?"

Brander shook his head; he waited for her to speak. She said: "Let me talk to Mauger."

He sent the one-eyed man to her, and took himself away.... Mauger told his story volubly. The little man had added a cubit to his stature by his exploit; he had done heroically, and knew it, and was proud.... He told, straightforwardly, how Brander dropped down into the fo'c's'le...." Slatter had fixed it with a man to knock out the light," he explained. "I heard them whispering. I was watching.... I saw Slatter had a knife. So when he jumped for Mr. Brander, I tripped him, and he fell over me, and then Mr. Brander grabbed him...." The little man chuckled at the joke on himself. "They fit all over me, ma'am," he said, "They done a double shuffle up and down my backbone, right."

Faith smiled at him and told him he did well. "But where did the men get liquor?" she asked.

Mauger grinned and backed away. "I dunno, ma'am.... Did they have any?..."

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She said steadily: "Mauger, where did the men get the liquor?"

The man squirmed, but he stood still under her eyes; he tried to avoid her.... But in the end he came nearer, looking backward and from side to side. Came nearer, and whispered at last....

"Slatter brought a jug forward after his go at the wheel, ma'am."

"Slatter?" Faith echoed softly.... "Slatter.... All right, Mauger. And—don't talk too much, forward...."

The man escaped eagerly. He had been willing enough to talk about Slatter's knife and his own good deed; but this other was another matter. Whiskey in the fo'c's'le....

This was in the early morning, before the whole story had spread to every man. Faith went quickly below, and asked his keys from Noll, and went into the storeroom. Found nothing there to guide her.... But while she was there, Tinch, the cook, came down to get coffee.... She studied the man thoughtfully....

"Tinch," she said, finger pressing her cheek, "I left a jug down here.... It's gone. Have you seen it anywhere?"

Tinch, a tall, lean man with a bald head, looked at her stupidly, and ran a thin finger through his straggly locks and thought. "Waal, now, ma'am," he said at last, "I rec'lect I see Roy fetch a jug up out o' here, yist'day."

"Roy?" she asked. "What was he down here for?"

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"Come down to...." He looked at her, and was suddenly confused with fear he had played Judas. "Waal, now, ma'am," he drawled, "I cal'late you'd best ask the boy that there."

She nodded at once. "Of course.... Thank you, Tinch."

So Faith had this matter in her mind when Dan'l came down to find Noll, in mid-morning, and ask what was to be done about the tragedy. Noll said fretfully: "Slide Slatter over t'side, Mr. Tobey. Do I have to look after everything aboard this ship?"

Dan'l nodded. "Hitch is fixing for that," he said. "What I mean is, how about Mauger? He says he done it."

Noll said sullenly: "Well, if he says he done it, he done it."

"That's what I say," Dan'l agreed. "Only thing is, Brander stands up for him. So what do you aim t'do?"

"Brander stands up for him...."

"Says he couldn't ha' done it, any ways."

Noll threw up his fist angrily. "Damn it, Mr. Tobey; don't run to me with this. Find out what happened.... Then tell me. That's the thing.... My God, this ship is.... God's sake, Mr. Tobey, be a man."

Dan'l said steadily: "All right; I say Mauger did it."

Noll's cheeks turned pale and his eyes narrowed on the mate. "Stuck the knife in him?"

"Yes."

The captain's hands tapped his knees. "How did he know to stick it in the man's leg so neat? Most men would ha' struck for the back.... The man knows the uses of a knife, Mr. Tobey." [Pg 224]

Dan'l nodded. "Oh, aye...."

Noll looked furtively toward the door. "I've allus said he'd a knife for me.... He'll be on my back, one day...." He was trembling, and he poured a drink and swallowed it. Faith, sitting near him, looked up, looked at Dan'l, then bent her head over her book again. Dan'l said:

"I think it's wise to put him in irons."

Noll roared: "Then do it, Mr. Tobey. Don't come whining to me with your little matters. I'm an old man, Dan'l.... I'm weary and old.... Settle such things.... That's the business of a mate, Mr. Tobey...."

Faith said quietly, without looking up: "Why make so much talk? Mr. Brander has explained what happened."

The men were silent for an instant, surprised and uneasy. Dan'l looked at the captain; Noll's head was bent. Dan'l ventured to say:

"You think Mr. Brander is right?"

"Of course."

Dan'l suggested awkwardly: "You—think he's telling truth?"

Faith nodded. "Any one can see that...."

Dan'l laughed mirthlessly, "Then we'd best write.... We'd best let Mr. Brander write his story in the log, sir."

Faith looked at Dan'l steadily; then she turned to her husband. "Noll," she said, "you write the log. I'll tell you what to write." [Pg 225]

He looked up at her stupidly, not understanding. She got up and opened the log book and gave him a pen. He protested: "Faith, wait...."

She touched his shoulder lightly with her hand, silencing him. "Write this," she said; and when Noll took the pen, she dictated: "Some one gave the men liquor this day; they were drinking in the fo'c's'le. When Mr. Brander went forward to quiet them...." She saw Noll had fallen behind with his writing, and waited a moment, then repeated more slowly: "When Mr. Brander went forward to quiet them, Slatter attacked him with a knife. In the struggle, Slatter dropped the knife, and a moment later fell on it, dying from the wound."

She repeated the last sentence a second time, so that Noll got it word for word; and then she took the log from him, and blotted it, and put it away. Dan'l Tobey protested:

"Aren't you saying anything about Mauger?"

Faith smiled quietly. "Thank you for reminding me," She opened the log again, bade Noll write, said slowly: "The man Mauger saved Mr. Brander's life by tripping Slatter as he charged." Dan'l grimaced as she finished....

"Now," said Faith, "Slatter was not important; at least he is no longer important. But there is one thing, Noll, that you must stop.... The whiskey that went forward...."

Noll looked at her slowly, frowning as though he sought to understand; Dan'l said:

"That was probably Slatter, stole it. The men say so...."

"He took it forward," Faith agreed. "But he did not get it from the stores. He could not." She hesitated, her lips white; then she set them firmly. "Dan'l, fetch Roy here," she said.

Dan'l was so surprised that for an instant he did not stir. "Roy?" he repeated. "What's he...."

Faith looked to her husband. "Will you tell him to bring Roy?" she asked.

Noll asked heavily: "What's the boy.... Go along, Dan'l. Fetch him."

Dan'l got up at once, and went out, closing the door behind him. They heard him go on deck.... A minute later, he was back with Roy at his heels, and Faith saw her brother's face was white. She asked quickly:

"Roy, why did you steal a jug of whiskey from the stores?"

Roy cried, on the instant: "That's a lie."

Faith studied him. He expected accusation, questioning. Instead she nodded. "All right."

"Who says I stole whiskey?" Roy demanded.

"I," Faith told him.

"Who.... Somebody lied to you...."

"No."

Roy was near tears with bafflement. "Why.... What makes you...."

Faith asked quietly: "Don't you want to tell?"

"It's a lie, I say."

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She looked to her husband; and Noll saw they were all waiting on him, and he tried to rise to the occasion. "By God, Roy.... What did you go and do that for? God's sake, can't a man have a ship without a pack of thieves on her? Mr. Tobey, you...." He wavered, his eyes swung helplessly to Faith. He seemed to ask her to speak for him; and she said to Dan'l:

"Take him on deck, Dan'l. Till Cap'n Wing decides...."

Roy insisted. "I tell you, I didn't...."

But Dan'l Tobey hushed him. Dan'l was getting his first glimpse of the new Faith; and he was afraid of her. He took Roy's arm, led him out and away.... Faith and Noll were left alone.

At noon that day, at Noll Wing's profane command, Roy was put in irons and locked in the after 'tween decks to stay a week on bread and water. The boy cursed Faith to her face for that; and Faith went to her cabin, and dropped on her knees and prayed.

But she kept a steady face for the men, and in particular she kept a steady eye for Dan'l Tobey. She knew Dan'l, now.... Dan'l had warned Roy, before bringing him to the cabin. He must have warned the boy, for Roy was prepared for the accusation. He must have warned the boy, therefore he must have known what Faith would assert....

And Faith knew enough of Dan'l's ascendancy over Roy to be sure the mate had prompted her brother's theft.

She must watch Dan'l, fight him. And ... she thanked God for Brander. There was a man, a man on her side.... She was not to fight alone.

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She dreamed of Brander that night. He was battling for her, in her dream, against shadowy and unseen things. And in her dream, she thought he was her husband.

XXIII

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An unrest seized Noll Wing; an unrest that was like fear. He assumed, by small degrees, the aspect of a hunted man. It was as though the death of Slatter prefigured to him what his own end would be. His nerves betrayed him; he could not bear to have any man approach him from behind, and he struck out, nervously, at Willis Cox one day when Willis spoke from one side, where Noll had not seen him standing.

The continual storms of the Solander irked him; the racking work of whaling, when it was necessary to run to port with each kill, fretted the flesh from his bones. They lost a whale one day, in a sudden squall that developed into a gale and swept them far to the southward; and when the weather moderated, and Dan'l Tobey started to work back to the Grounds again, Noll would have none of it.

"Set your course t'the east'ard," he commanded. "I'm fed up with the Solander. We'll hit the islands again...."

Dan'l protested that there was nowhere such whaling as the Solander offered; but Noll would not

be persuaded. He resented the attempt to argue with him. "No, by God," he swore. "A pity if a man can't have his way. Hell with the Solander, Dan'l. I'm sick o' storms, and cold. Get north t'where it's warm again...."

So they did as he insisted, and ran into slack times once more. The men at first exulted in their new leisure; they were well enough content to kill a whale and loaf a week before another kill. Then they began to be impatient with inaction; discontent arose among them. They remembered the ambergris; and their talk was that they need stay out no longer, that the voyage was already a success, that they had a right to expect to head for home.

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Brander, ever among them as he had promised himself he would be, worked against this discontent. He tried to hearten them; they gave him half attention, and some measure of liking.... But their sulking held and grew upon them.

There was as much ill feeling aft as forward. Roy, released from his irons long before, had not spoken to Faith since his release. He hated his sister with that hatred which sometimes arises between blood kin, and which is more violent than any other. Let lovers quarrel; let brothers clash; let son and father, or mother and daughter, or brother and sister go asunder, and there is no bitterness to equal the bitterness between them. It is as though the strength of their former affection served to intensify their hate. It is like the hatred of a woman scorned; she is able to hate the more, because she once has loved.

Roy hated Faith; and with the ingenuity of youth, he found out ways to torment her. He perceived that Faith must always love him, he perceived that her thoughts hovered over him as do the thoughts of a mother; and he took pleasure in agonizing her with his own misdeeds. He lied for the pleasure of lying; he swore roundly; and once, under Dan'l's gentle guidance, he pilfered rum and drank himself into the likeness of a beast. When Faith chided him for that, he told her with drunken good nature that she was to blame; that she had driven him to it. Faith's sense of justice was strong; she was too level of head to condemn herself; nevertheless, she was made miserable by what the boy had done.... Yet she led Noll to punish him for this theft, more sternly than before; and afterward, she had Roy sent forward to take his place among the men, and the cabin was forbidden ground to him thereafter.

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Noll was wax in Faith's hands in these days. His fear, growing upon him, had shaken all the fiber out of the man. He could be swayed by Dan'l, by old Tichel, by Faith, by almost any one.... Save in a single matter. He was drinking steadily, now; and drinking more than ever before. He was never sober, never without the traces of his liquor in his eyes and his loose lips and slack muscles. And they could not sway him in this matter. He would not be denied the liquor that he craved.

Faith tried to win it away from him; she tried to strengthen the man's own will to fight the enemy that was destroying him. She tried to fan to life the ancient flame of pride.... But there was no grain of strength left in Noll for her to work on. He waved her away, and filled his glass....

She might have destroyed what liquor remained aboard the *Sally*; but she would not. That would not cure; it would only put off the end. At their first port, Noll would get what he wanted.... And there were islands all about them; he could reach land within a matter of twenty-four hours, or forty-eight, at any time. She fought to help Noll help himself; she would not do more. Noll was a man, not a baby desiring the fire which must be kept beyond its reach. He knew his enemy, and he embraced it knowingly.

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Faith never felt more keenly the fact of her marriage to Noll than in those last days of his life. She never thought of herself apart from him; and when he debauched himself, she felt soiled as though she were herself degraded. Nevertheless, she clung to him with all her soul; clung to him, lived the vows she had given him.... There were other times, after that first, when she dreamed of Brander.... But she could not curb her dreams.... He was much in them; but waking, she put the man away from her. She was Noll's; Noll was hers. Inescapable....

Brander avoided her. His heart was sick; she possessed it utterly. But he gave no sign; he never relaxed the grip in which he held himself. Now and then, on deck, when Noll swore at her, or whined, or fretted, Brander had to swing away and put the thing behind him. But he did it; he was strong enough to do this; he was almost strong enough to keep his thoughts from Faith. Almost.... But not quite.... She dwelt always with him; he was sick with sorrow, and pity, and yearning for the right to cherish her.

They spoke when they had to, in cabin or on deck; but they were never alone, and they avoided each the other as they would have shunned a precipice....

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Save for one day, a single day.... A day when Faith called Brander to her on the deck and spoke to him.... A single day, that would have been, but for the strength of Faith, the bloody destruction of them both.

This incident was the climax of two trains of events, extending over days.... Extending, in the one case, back to that first day when Dan'l had roused the brand of jealousy in Noll to flame. Dan'l had never let that flame die out. He fanned it constantly; and when he saw in Faith's eyes, after the matter of Roy's first theft of the whiskey, that she had guessed his part in it, he threw himself more hotly into his intrigue. He kept at Noll's side whenever it was possible; he whispered....

He spoke openly of Brander's fondness for the men, of Brander's habit of talking with them so

constantly. Faith heard him strike this vein, again and again.... He harped upon it to Noll, seeming to defend Brander at the same time that he accused.... He played upon the strain until even Faith's belief in Brander was shaken. There was always the matter of the ambergris. Brander might have ended it with a word, but he would not give Dan'l Tobey that satisfaction. He would not say, forthright, that the 'gris belonged to the *Sally*.... And Dan'l magnified this matter, and many others.... Until even Faith found it hard not to doubt the fourth mate.... She caught herself, more than once, watching him when he laughed and talked with the men. Was there need of that? Why did he do it? She could find no answer....

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Noll feared Brander more and more; and Dan'l covertly taunted the captain with this fear. He roused Noll, time on time, to flagging gusts of rage; but always these passed in words.... And Noll fell back into his lethargy of drink again. Dan'l began to fear there was not enough man left in Noll to act.... He turned his guns on Faith, accusing her as he accused Brander....

But words were light things. Noll, moved though he might be, had in his heart a trust in Faith which Dan'l found it hard to shake. He might never have shaken it, had not luck favored him.... And this luck came to pass on the day Faith sought speech with Brander.

That move, on Faith's part, was the result of an increasing peril in the fo'c's'le. The men were getting drink again.

This began one day when a fo'm'st hand came aft to take the wheel and old Tichel smelled the liquor on him, and saw that the man's feet were unsteady, and flew into one of his tigerish fits of rage.... He drove the man forward with blows and kicks; and he came aft with his teeth bared and flamed to Noll Wing, and men were sent for and questioned. Three of them had been drinking. They were badly frightened; they were sullen; nevertheless, in the end, under old Tichel's fist, one of them said he had found a quart bottle, filled with whiskey, in his bunk the night before.... Tichel accused him of stealing it; the man stuck to his tale and could not be shaken.

The men could not come at the stores through the cabin; there was always an officer about the deck or below. Tichel thought they might have cut through from the after 'tween decks, and the stores were shifted in an effort to find such a secret entrance to the captain's stores. But none was found; there was no way....

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Three days later, there was whiskey forward again. Found, as before, in a bunk.... Two men drunk, rope's endings at the rail.... But no solution to the mystery.

Two days after that, the same thing; four days later, a repetition. And so on, at intervals of days, for a month on end. The whiskey dribbled forward a quart at a time; the men drank it.... And never a trace to the manner of the theft.

In the end, Roy Kilcup found a bottle in his bunk, and drank the bulk of it himself, so that he was deathly sick and like to die. Faith, tormented beyond endurance, looking everywhere for help, chose at last to appeal to Brander.

Brander had the deck, that day. Willis Cox and Tichel were sleeping.... Dan'l was in the main cabin, alone; Noll in the after cabin, stupid with drink. Roy had been sick all the night before, with Willis Cox and Tichel working over him, counting the pounding heart-beats, wetting the boy's head, working the poison out of him. Roy was forward, in his bunk, now, still sodden.

Faith came from the after cabin, passed Dan'l and went up on deck. Something purposeful in her face caught Dan'l's attention; and he went to the foot of the cabin companion and listened. He heard her call softly:

"Mr. Brander."

Dan'l thought he knew where Brander would be. In the waist of the *Sally*, no doubt. There was a man at the wheel. Faith did not wish this man to hear what she had to say. So she met Brander just forward of the cabin skylight by the boathouse; and Dan'l, straining his ears, could hear.

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Faith said: "Mr. Brander, I'm going to ask you to help me."

Brander told her: "I'd like to. What is it you want done?"

"It's—Roy. I'm desperately worried, Mr. Brander."

"He's all right, Mr. Cox tells me. He'll be well enough in a few hours...."

"It's not just—this drunkenness, Mr. Brander. It's—more. My brother's.... He is in my charge, in a way. Father bade me take care of him. And he's—taking the wrong path."

Brander said quietly: "Yes."

Dan'l looked toward the after cabin, thought of bringing Noll to hear.... But there was no harm in this that they were saying; no harm.... Rather, good.... He listened; and Faith said steadily:

"My husband is not—not the man he was, Mr. Brander. Mr. Tobey.... I can't trust him. I've got to come to you...."

Dan'l decided, desperately, to bring Noll and risk it, trust to his luck and to his tongue to twist their words.... He went softly across to the after cabin and shook Noll's shoulder; and when the captain opened his eyes, Dan'l whispered:

"Come, Noll Wing. You've got to hear this...."

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Noll sat up stupidly. "What? Hear what?... What's that you say?"

Dan'l said: "Faith and Brander are together, on deck, whispering...." He banged his clenched fist into his open hand. "By God, sir.... I've grown up with Faith; I like her.... But I can't stand by and see them do this to you...."

"What are they about?" Noll asked, his face flushing. He was on his feet. Dan'l gripped his arm....

"I heard her promise him you would soon be gone, sir.... That you were sick.... That you...."

Noll strode into the cabin; Dan'l whispered: "Quiet! Come...." He led him to the foot of the companion-stair, bade him listen.

And it was then the malicious gods played into Dan'l's evil hands; for as they listened, Faith was saying.... "Try to make him like you.... But be careful. He doesn't, now.... If he guessed...."

Brander said something which they could not hear; a single word; and Faith cried:

"You can. You're a man. He can't help admiring you in the end. I—" She hesitated, said helplessly: "I'm putting myself into your hands...."

Dan'l had wit to seize his fortune; he cried out: "By God, sir...."

But there was no need of spur to Noll Wing now. The captain had reached the deck with a single rush, Dan'l at his heels.... Faith and Brander sprang apart before their eyes; and because the innocent have always the appearance of the guilty, there was guilt in every line of these two now.

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Noll Wing, confronting them, had in that moment the stature of a man; he was erect and strong, his eyes were level and cold. He looked from Faith to Brander, and he said:

"Brander, be gone. Faith, come below."

Brander took a step forward. Faith said quickly to him: "No." And she smiled at him as he halted in obedience.

Then she turned to her husband, passed him, went down into the cabin. And Noll, with a last glance at Brander, descended on her heels.

Dan'l, left facing the fourth mate, grinned triumphantly; and for an instant he saw death in Brander's eyes, so that his mirth was frozen.... Then Brander turned away.

XXIV

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Faith went down into the main cabin, crossed and entered the cabin across the stern, turned there to await her husband. He followed her slowly; he came in, and shut the door behind him. The man was controlling himself; nevertheless, he thrust this door shut with a force that shook the thin partition between the cabins.... And he snapped the bolt that held it closed.

Then he turned and looked at Faith. There was a furious strength in his countenance at that moment; but it was like the strength of a maniac. His lips twitched tensely; his eyes moved like the eyes of a man who is dizzy from too much turning on his own heels.... They jerked away from Faith, returned to her, jerked away again.... All without any movement of Noll's head. And as the man's eyes wavered and wrenched back to her thus, the pupils contracted and narrowed in an effort to focus upon her. For the rest, he was flushed, brick red.... His whole face seemed to swell.

He was inhuman; there was an ape-like and animal fury in the man as he looked at his wife....

Abruptly, he jerked up his hands and pressed them against his face and turned away; it was as though he thrust himself away with this pressure of his hands. He turned his back on her, and went to his desk, and unlocked a drawer. Faith knew the drawer; she was not surprised when he drew out of it a revolver.

Bending over the desk, with this weapon in his hand, Noll Wing made sure every chamber was loaded.... He paid her no attention. Faith watched him for an instant; then she turned to the bench that ran across the stern and picked up from it a bit of sewing, embroidery.... She sat down composedly on the bench, crossed her knees in the comfortable attitude of relaxation which women like to assume. One foot rested on the floor; the other swayed back and forth, as though beating time, a few inches above the floor. It is impossible for the average man to cross his knees in this fashion, just as it is impossible for a woman to throw a ball. Sitting thus, Faith began to sew. She was outlining the petal of an embroidered flower; and she gave this work her whole attention.

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She did not look up at Noll. The man finished his examination of the weapon; he turned it in his hand; he lifted it and leveled it at Faith. Still Faith did not look up; she seemed completely unconcerned. Noll said harshly:

"Faith!"

She looked up then, met his eyes fairly, smiled a little. "What is it, Noll?"

"I'm going to kill you," he said, with stiff lips.

"All right," she said, and bent her head above her sewing once more, disregarding him.

Noll was stupefied.... This was not surprise; it was the helplessness which courage inspires in a coward. For Noll was a coward in those last days.... His face twisted; his hand was shaking.... He stared over the revolver barrel at Faith's brown head. Her hair was parted in the middle, drawn back about her face. The white line of skin where the hair was parted fascinated him; he could not take his eyes from it. The revolver muzzle lowered without his being conscious of this fact; the weapon hung in his hand.... His eyes were fixed on Faith's head, on the part in her hair.... She wore an old, tortoise comb, stuck downward into the hair at the back of her head, its top projecting upward.... A singular, old-fashioned little ornament.... There was a silver mounting on it; and the light glistened on this silver, and caught Noll's eye, and held it....

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Faith continued her quiet sewing. And Noll's tense muscles, little by little, relaxed.... His fingers loosed their grip on the revolver butt; it dropped to the floor with a clatter. The sound seemed to rouse Noll; he strode toward Faith. "By God," he cried. "You'll...." He swung down a hand and gathered the fabric of her work between harsh fingers. Her needle was in the midst of a stitch; it pricked him.... He did not feel the tiny wound. He would have snatched the stuff out of her hands.... He felt as though it were defending her....

But when his hand swept down between hers and caught the bit of embroidery, Faith looked up at him again, and she caught his eyes. That halted him; he stood for an instant motionless, bending above her, their faces not six inches apart.... Then the man jerked his hand away.... He released his grip on the bit of fancy work; but the needle was deep in his finger, so that he pulled it out of the cloth. The thread followed it; when his quick movement drew the thread to full length, the fabric was jerked out of Faith's unresisting hands. It dangled by the thread from the needle that stuck in Noll's finger; and he saw it, and jerked the needle out with a quick, spasmodic gesture, and flung it to one side. He did not look at it; he was looking, still, at Faith.

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"Put that away," he said hoarsely.

Faith smiled, glanced toward the bit of white upon the floor. "I'm afraid there's blood on it," she said.

"Blood ..." he repeated, under his breath. "Blood...." She folded her hands quietly upon her knee, waiting.

"I want to talk to you," he said.

She nodded. "All right. Do."

His wrath boiled through his lips chokingly. "You ..." he stammered. "You and Brander...."

Her eyes, upon his, hardened. She said nothing; but this hardening of her eyes was like a defiance. He flung his hands above his head. "By God, you're shameless," he choked. "You're shameless.... A shameless woman.... And him.... I took him out of a hell hole.... And he takes you.... I'll break him in two with my hands."

She said nothing; he flung into an insanity of words. He cursed her unspeakably, with every evil phrase he had learned in close to thirty years of the sea. He accused her of unnamable things.... His face swelled with his fury, the veins bulged upon his forehead, his eyes were covered with a dry film. His mouth filled with saliva, that splattered with the venom of his words.... It ran down his chin, so that he brushed it away with the back of his hand.... He was uncontrolled, save in one thing. Something made him hush his voice; he whispered harshly and chokingly.... What he said could scarce have been heard in the main cabin, six feet away from them....

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The man was slaving; there were flecks of foam upon his lips.... And Faith watched him in a curious detachment, as though he were something outside the world, below it, beyond it.... She scarce heard his words at all; she was looking at the man's naked soul.... It was so inexpressibly revolting that she had no feeling that this soul had once been wedded to hers; she could not have believed this if she had tried. This was no man, but a beast.... There could be nothing between them. She had married Noll Wing; not the body of him, nor the face of him, but the soul within the man. And this was not Noll Wing's soul she saw.... That was dead; this horrible thing had bred festering in the carrion....

Humanity has an immense capacity for rising to an emergency. The human heart sustains a grief that should kill; it throws this grief aside and is—save for a hidden scar—as gay as it was in the beginning. Man meets peril or death, meets them unafraid.... If he had considered these emergencies in the calm and security of his home, his hair would have crawled with terror at the thought of them. The imagination can conjure dreadful things; the heart and soul and body of man can endure catastrophes beyond imagining. There is no load too heavy for this immortally designed fabric of flesh and blood and bone to bear. There is a psychological phenomenon that might be called the duplication of personality. A soldier in battle becomes two men. One of these men is convulsed with lust for blood; he screams, he shoots, he stabs, he kills. The other is calm and serene; he watches the doings of his other self, considers them with calm mind, plans

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perilous combinations in the twinkling of an eye.... The soldier contains within himself a general who plans, and an army which executes the plan....

It was so with Faith. She shrank in spirit and heart before Noll's horrible outpouring; yet was she at the same time steady and undisturbed. There was a numbness upon her; a numbness that killed suffering and at the same time stimulated thought.... She was able to perceive the very depths of Noll; she looked, at the same time, into her own depths.... She heard him accuse her of foul passion for Brander; she knew, instead, that she loved Brander completely.... She had never known her love for Brander before; Noll showed it to her, dragged it out where she could see it beyond mistaking.... And even in that moment she welcomed this love; welcomed it, and saw that it was honest, and wholesome, and splendid, and clean.... She welcomed it, so that she smiled....

Her smile struck Noll like a blow in the face, stunning and sobering him. He flung out his hands.

"Come!" he commanded. "What do you say? Say something? Say...."

"What?" she asked. "What shall I say?"

"Is it true? Damn you.... Damn you.... Is it true?"

"Could I say anything you would believe?"

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"No, by God! You're dirty and false as hell. You...." He struck his hands together helplessly. "Nothing," he cried. "Nothing! Nothing you can say.... Dirty as hell...."

Yet his eyes still besought her to speak; she touched the bench beside her. "Sit down, Noll," she said gently.

The man towered above her, hands upraised. His fingers twisted and writhed and clenched as though upon a soft throat that he gripped. His features worked terribly.... And then, before her eyes, a change came upon him. The tense muscles of his fury sagged; the blood ebbed from his veins, so that they flattened; the black flush faded on his cheeks.... He opened his mouth and screamed once, a vast and stricken scream of a beast in pain. It was like the scream of a frightened, anguished horse.... It rang along the length of the *Sally*, so that the men forward shrank and looked over their shoulders, and every man aboard the ship was still....

He screamed, and then his great body shrank and collapsed and tottered and fell.... He dropped upon his knees, at her feet. He flung his head in her lap, his arms about her waist, clinging as a drowning man might cling to a rock. His cap dropped off; she saw his bald old head there.... He sobbed like a child, his great shoulders twitching and heaving.... His face was pressed upon her clasped hands; she felt his tears upon her wrists, felt the slaverings of his sobbing mouth upon her fingers....

He cried softly: "Eh, Faith.... Faith.... Don't you turn against me, now. I'm old, Faith...." And again: "I'm old, Faith.... Dying, Faith.... Don't leave me.... Don't turn against me now."

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She bent above him, filled with an infinite pity and sorrow. This was the wreck of her love; she no longer loved him, but her heart was filled with sorrow.... She bent forward and laid her smooth cheek against the smooth parchment of his bald old head. She loosed her hands, and drew them out from beneath his face, and laid them on his shoulders, stroking him gently.

"There, Noll.... There ..." she murmured. Foolish words, meaningless, like the comforting sounds of an inarticulate animal.... Yet he understood. There were no words for what was in her heart; she could only whisper: "There.... There.... There...." And gently touch his shoulders, and his head.

"They're all against me, Faith," he told her, over and over. "All against me. Even you...."

"No, no, Noll. There...."

"You love him.... You love him."

"No, Noll. No...." She lied, not to deceive her husband, but to comfort him. Her eyes, above Noll's head, seemed to ask her love's pardon for the lie. "No, Noll.... You're my husband."

His arms tightened about her waist; his great chest pressed against her knees. "You're mine," he begged. "You're mine. Don't go away from me."

"No. Never.... Never, forever."

He raised his face from her lap at last; and she saw that it was sunken like the countenance of one long dead. Cadaverous.... He cried, in utter self-abasement. "Eh, Faith. I don't deserve you. I'm an old, helpless man...."

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She smiled at him. "I married you, Noll."

"I'm no good. They're laughing at me...."

Her eyes heartened him. "Master them. Command them. You are the master, Noll."

"I can't.... There's no strength in me...."

"It's there. Master them, Noll."

"I can't hold myself, Faith. Not even myself. I'm rotted with whiskey, and years, and strife...."

"Master yourself, Noll."

"Faith, Faith.... It's too late. I'm gone. I can't."

"You can," she said. She spoke the two words quietly; yet somehow they gave him of her strength, so that his head lifted higher, and the muscles took form beneath his slack cheeks. He stared into her eyes, as though he were drinking her soul through them; his chest swelled as though virtue were going into him. They sat thus, minutes on end.... He got to his feet. His eyes cleared, with the tempestuous and short-lived fire of age in their depths. He swore:

"By God, Faith. I will. I'll command.... Myself and them."

"You can," she said again. "You can. So—do, Noll."

He turned away from her, looking about with new eyes.... She smiled sadly; she knew him too well, now.... She was not surprised when his first act was to go to the lockfast and get his bottle, and drink.... He smacked his lips, chuckled at her.

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"By God, Faith, I'll show these dogs," he cried, and flung open the door. She heard him go out and climb up to the deck.... She sat where he had left her....

Sat there, and knew her love for Brander. In those minutes while she remained where Noll had seen her last, she listened to the singing of new voices in her heart. Brander was before her, in her eyes, in her thoughts.... He possessed her, in that moment, more completely than Noll had ever done. She gave herself to him completely, without reluctance and without faintest reservation. No need to see him, no need to tell him. She knew, he must know.... She never asked whether he loved her; she had always known that. Known it without admitting the knowledge, even in her thoughts. She loved him, body and heart and soul; her eyes yearned for his, her tongue to tell him what her heart was singing, her arms to embrace him....

She got up, at last, a little wearily.... It was only a matter of minutes that she sat there, looking within herself. When she listened, now, she could hear Noll's voice, on deck, roaring in the old way.... Once she heard Brander answer him, from somewhere amidships. Again she caught the murmur of Dan'l Tobey's tones....

Brander was her love; but Noll.... Noll was her husband, she his wife. And Faith passed her hand across her eyes as though to wipe away these visions she had looked upon. Noll was her husband; her vows were his. She was his, and would be.... Nothing he could do would make her less his; he was in her keeping, his life and hers could never take diverging paths. He was her charge, to strengthen, and guide, and support; his tasks were hers, his responsibilities were her responsibilities, his burdens must rest upon her shoulders....

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But she did not deceive herself. Old Noll was dead, old Noll Wing who had mastered men for year on year. That Noll was dead; the Noll who lived was a weakling. But she was a part of the living Noll; and she was no weakling. So....

Her lips set faintly. Love Brander though she did, there was no place for him in her life. Her life was Noll; her life belonged to Noll. Noll was failing; his flesh might live, but his soul was dead and his strength was gone. His tasks fell upon her.

Quite simply, in that moment, Faith promised herself that whatever happened, the *Sally Sims* should come safe home again; that no man should ever say Noll Wing had failed in the end; that no man should ever make a jest of Noll's old renown. And if Noll could not manage these things for himself, she would....

She began, suddenly, to cry; she locked herself in her cabin and wept bitterly for hours.... But afterward, bathing her eyes, freshening herself to meet Noll's eyes, she looked into the mirror, and smiled and lifted her head. "You can do it, Faith," she told herself. "You can do it, full as well as he."

And then, more seriously: "You must, Faith Wing. You must bring the *Sally* home."

When she stepped out into the after cabin, she saw the revolver still on the floor where Noll had left it. She picked it up to return it to its proper drawer....

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But on second thought, she changed her mind, and took it and hid it in her bunk.

XXV

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A curious lull settled down upon the *Sally Sims* during the days after Noll's open accusation of Faith, and his collapse before her steady courage. There was an apathy in the air; they saw few whales, lowered for them without zeal, missed more than one that should have been killed.... There was a silence upon the ship, like the hush of listening men who wait to hear an expected call. This paralysis gripped every soul aboard—save Noll Wing alone.

Noll, in those last days, stalked his deck like a parody of the man he once had been. Faith had put

a fictitious courage in the man; he thought himself once more the master, as in the past. His heels pounded the planks; his head was high; his voice roared.... But there was a tremor in his stride; there was a trembling about the poise of him; there was a cracking quaver in his voice. He was like a child who plays at being a man.... They humored him; the men and the mates seemed to enter into a conspiracy to humor him. They leaped to his bidding; they shrank from his curses as though desperate with fear.... And Noll was so delighted with all this that he was perpetually good-natured, jovial....

He was, of course, drinking heavily and steadily; but the drink seemed to hearten him and give him strength. Certainly it made him lenient; for on three occasions when the men found a bottle, forward, and befuddled themselves with it, Noll only laughed as though at a capital jest. Noll laughed.... But Faith wondered and was distressed and watched to see how the liquor was being stolen. She was disturbed and alarmed; but Noll laughed at her fears.

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"A little of it never hurt a man," he told her boastfully. "Look at me, to see that. Let be, Faith. Let be."

When she protested, he overrode her; and to show his own certainty of himself, he did a thing that Noll sober would never have done. He had the rum drawn from the barrel in his storeroom and served out to the men, a ration daily.... It amused him to see the men half fuddled with it. He forced it on them; and once, while Faith watched hopelessly, he commanded a hulking Cape Verder—the biggest man in the fo'c's'le—to drink a bout with him. They took glass for glass, till the other was helpless as a log; and Noll vaunted his own prowess in the matter.

Dan'l Tobey contented himself with the progress of these matters; he no longer stuck a finger in the pie. Noll was going; that was plain to any seeing eye. The captain grew weaker every day; his skin yellowed and parched, and the lower lids of his eyes sagged down and revealed the flaming red of their inner surface. These sagging lower lids made crescent-shaped pockets which were forever filled with rheumy fluid.... Noll was an ugly thing; and his perpetual mirth, his cackling laughter were the more horrible.... He was a laughing corpse; dissolution was upon him. But he kept himself so steeped with alcohol he did not feel its pangs.

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Faith could do nothing; Brander could do nothing. Between these two, no further word had passed. But there was no need. Meeting face to face on deck, the day after Noll surprised them, their eyes met in a long and steady glance.... Their eyes met and spoke; and after that there was no need of words between them. There was a pledging of vows in that glance; there was also a renunciation. Both saw, both understood.... Faith thought she knew Brander to the depths....

Neither, in that moment, knew that Dan'l Tobey was at hand; but the mate had seen, and he had understood. He saw, slipped away, held his peace, considered.

Brander was fighting for Roy, to fulfill his pledge to Faith. He had set himself to win the boy's confidence and esteem; he applied himself to this with all the strength there was in him. Yet he was careful; he did not force the issue; he did not harass Roy with his attentions.... He held off, let Roy see for himself, think.... There were days when he thought he made some progress; there were days when he thought the effort was a hopeless one. Nevertheless, he persisted....

Noll Wing's good will, in those days, extended even to Brander. He offered Brander a drink one day.... Brander refused, and Noll insisted.... And was still refused. Noll said hotly, querulously:

"Come, Brander.... Don't be stiff, man. It will warm you, do you good.... You're needing warming. You're over cold and calm."

Brander shook his head, smiling. "Thanks; no, sir."

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"Damn it, man," Noll complained. "Are you too proud to drink with the skipper?"

Brander refused again; and Noll's brows gathered suspiciously. "Why not?"

"My wish, sir,"

"Ye've a grudge against me. I remember.... You stick with Mauger...."

"No, sir."

Noll flung out his hand. "Be off. Your sour face is too ugly for me to look at. Mauger's none so particular.... He'll drink with me."

It was true; Mauger had more than once accepted drink from Noll. Noll, at these times, watched the one-eyed man furtively, almost appealingly. It was as though he sought to placate him and make a friend of him. Mauger had a weak head; he was not one to stand much liquor. It dizzied him; and this amused Noll.... This day, after Brander had refused him, Noll sent for Mauger and made the one-eyed man tipsy, and laughed at the jest of it.

Then, one day, this state of affairs came abruptly to an end. Noll went down into the storeroom to fill his bottle; and the spigot on the whiskey barrel gasped and failed. The whiskey was gone.

Now Noll had given of the rum to the crew; he had exhausted that. But the whiskey he kept jealously. He knew there should be more.... Much more than this.... Gallons, at the least.... He turned the handle of the spigot again, tipped the barrel, unable to understand.... His bottle was half full.... But no more came....

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He frowned, puzzled his heavy head, tried to understand.... He came stumbling up out of the storeroom at last, with the half-filled bottle in his hand.... And the man's face was white. He sought Faith, held the bottle out to her.

"I say ..." he stammered. "It's gone.... Gone, by God...."

Faith asked sharply: "What is it, Noll?"

"The whiskey's gone."

Faith cried: "Thank God!"

He stared at her thickly. "Eh? You had a hand in it.... You've stole it away...."

"No."

He looked at her and knew she spoke the truth. He shook his head.... "Some hound ..." he whispered. "They've stole it...."

She questioned him; he had the shrewdness which occasionally characterizes the alcoholic. He had kept some count of the whiskey used during the cruise; he had himself handled the barrel two weeks before. It was then a quarter full. The thefts that had appeared in the fo'c's'le could not account for the rest. There was still a considerable amount that had been stolen, that had not yet appeared. "It's aboard here, by God," he swore at last. "They've got it hid away. You, Faith...."

She shook her head. He said placatingly: "No, you'd not do that trick. Not rob an old man.... I've got to have it, Faith...." His eyes suddenly flickered with panic. "It's life, Faith. Life. I've got to have it, I say...."

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He was right, she knew. There must still be a hidden store of the liquor aboard the *Sally*.... To be doled out to the men by the thief in his own good time.... And Faith knew enough of such matters to understand that Noll, without the ration of alcohol to which he was accustomed, would suffer torment, would be like a madman.... The stuff must be found....

Noll was already trembling at the prospect of deprivation; he hugged to his breast the scant store that remained to him.... And of a sudden, as though afraid even this would be stolen, he tipped the bottle to his lips. He gulped greedily.... Before Faith could interfere, the last of it was gone....

That fierce draught put some strength and courage back into him; he stamped his feet. "I'll make them give it up, by God," he swore. "Watch...."

He started for the deck; and Faith, afraid for him, followed quietly behind. Passing through the main cabin, he roared to the officers who were asleep in their bunks: "On deck, all hands.... On deck, all hands...." They leaped out to obey him, not knowing what to expect. He reached the deck, still bellowing: "On deck, all. On deck, every man of you...." Brander was amidships; and he called: "Rout out the dogs, Mr. Brander. Fetch them aft."

The men came; they tumbled up from the fo'c's'le; they slid down from the mastheads.... Harpooners, mates, under officers grouped themselves by the captain; the crew faced him in a huddled group. He cursed them, man by man, for thieving dogs. "Now," he swore at last. "Now some one o' you has got the stuff hid away. Out with it; or I'll cut the heart out of you."

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He paused, looking about him with flickering, reddened eyes. No man stirred, but Dan'l Tobey asked:

"What's wrong, Cap'n Wing?"

Noll told him, told them all, profanely. Somewhere there was hidden a store of whiskey; he meant to have it. If the thief gave it up, so much the better. He would get off with a rope's ending. If he persisted in silence, he would die.... Noll vowed that by all the oaths he knew.

The men stirred; they looked at their neighbors.... And then their eyes fastened on the captain, with a curious intentness. They licked their lips; and Faith thought they were enjoying this spectacle of Noll's weak rage.... She thought they were like dogs of a pack, with hungry eyes, watching the futile anger of a dying man.... She was afraid of them for an instant; then she was afraid of no man in the world.... She stood by Noll Wing's side, proud and level-eyed.

When Noll got no answer, his cackling fury waxed. He swore every man of them should be tied up and flogged unless the guilty spoke. They scowled at that; and one of them said sullenly:

"It's no man forra'd a-doing this, sir.... Look aft, at them that had the chance."

The word seemed to focus the sullen hate among the men; they growled like beasts, and surged a step forward. Brander, from the captain's side, moved toward them and lashed at him who had spoken with a swift fist, so that the man fell and lay still as a log. Brander looked down at the still man, faced the others. "Be silent," he said quietly. "Unless you've a word to say to the captain about what he wants. And get back.... Back into the waist; and stay...."

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They gave back before him; and Dan'l said softly from Brander's back: "They mind you well, Mr. Brander. You've a rare control of them." The words were innocent enough, but the tone was accusation. Brander faced the mate, and Dan'l grinned malignantly....

Noll passed abruptly from threats to pleadings; he tried to cloak his pleading under a mask of

fellowship; he spoke to the men as to friends, beseeching them to yield what he wanted. They remained silent; and his mask fell off, and he abased himself before them with his words, so that old Tichel and Willis Cox were sickened, and Dan'l was pleased. Brander made no sign; he stood loyally at the captain's side; and Faith was on Noll's other hand....

She was studying the faces of the men and of the officers, seeking for a shadow of guilt. The men were sullen; but there was no shame in their eyes. There was nothing furtive—save in the countenance of Mauger. The one-eyed man had ever a furtive look; the twitching of his closed eye irresistibly suggested a malignant wink. Faith watched him; she saw his eyes were fixed on Brander.... In spite of herself, a cold pang of doubt touched her.... Mauger had reason to hate Noll Wing.... Had he?...

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She put the thought away, to study Dan'l Tobey. But Dan'l, though he was obviously content with matters, had no trace of guilt or fear in his demeanor. He was perfectly assured, almost triumphant. Faith thought he could not appear so if he were the thief.... Not Dan'l; not Willis Cox, nor Tichel.... Not Brander; she would not have it so....

Yet she could not keep her eyes away from Mauger's leering, chuckling, furtive countenance.

Abruptly, she touched Noll's arm. The captain was near a collapse.... He was pleading helplessly, so that some of the men were beginning to grin. Faith touched his arm; she said quietly:

"Noll, do not beg. You are master."

He caught himself together with a terrific effort.... He turned and stumbled away down into the cabin, Faith after him. Dan'l came down a little later, respectful.... "Why not put into port somewhere, sir?" he suggested. "Get what you want...."

Noll clutched at that desperately.... "Aye, quick, Mr. Tobey. What's nearest?"

Dan'l named the nearest island where they were like to find a trading post; Noll nodded. "Put for it, Dan'l. All sail on. For God's sake, quickly, man!"

Ten minutes later, the *Sally* heeled to a new tack.... And Noll, with Faith, below in the cabin, bit at his nails, and tried to hold himself, and stifle the appetite that was tearing him. His passion and pleading had burned out the effects of the drink he had taken; his body agonized for more....

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By nightfall, Noll was shaking with an ague. He would not sleep that night. And toward dawn, a brewing gale caught the *Sally*....

She fought that storm till noon, giving way before it; and in the cabin Noll passed from tremors to paroxysms of fright. He gnawed at his own flesh; and hallucinations began to prey upon him. Faith fought him, bade him lie down, tried to soothe him. She knew the danger of his enforced abstinence; she gave him a draught that should have compelled sleep; but after an hour he woke with a scream, and clutched at her shoulders with fingers that bit the flesh, and flung her away from him, and cowered in the most distant corner, hands before him, shrieking:

"Back, Mauger! Get away.... You devil! Mauger, get back.... Eh, man, get away.... By God, I'll ... I never meant the kick, man.... Let be.... My God, let be...."

She called softly: "It's Faith, Noll. It's Faith, Faith.... Not Mauger...."

He recognized her, and ran and caught her and swung her around before him and besought her to keep Mauger and his knife away. She told him, over and over: "He's not here, Noll. He's not here. It's Faith...."

He cried: "Look at his knife...." He pointed horribly. "His knife.... It's red, now.... Look at the knife. Kill him, Faith.... Drive him away...."

She held him against her breast as she would have held a child. Brander came to the door, with Willis Cox. She called to them: "Stay away.... He's mine. I'll tend him." Noll saw them, and screamed at Brander:

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"There! Him! There's a knife in his sleeve...."

Brander slipped out of sight; she managed to quiet Noll for a space; but he broke out again: "Mauger! He's coming, Faith.... There...." And then, to the man he thought he saw: "Mauger! Get back, man. Let be.... God's sake...."

Then he wept whisperingly to Faith: "See his eye! Down on his cheek.... Hanging.... Make him put it back—where it belongs.... Mauger, man...."

Bit by bit she wooed him back to sanity, or the semblance of it. He was quiet when Dan'l Tobey came down; and when he saw Dan'l, Noll demanded:

"Are we making it, Dan'l? Are we near there?..."

Dan'l shook his head. "Not with this gale, sir.... We're going away...."

Noll came to his feet, cat-like. "By God, you're all cowards. I'll bring her in. I'll bring her in, I say...." He shook Faith away, went up to the deck with Dan'l at his heels. The *Sally*, riding high as whalers do, was reasonably dry; but she was fighting desperately in the gale, racking her rigging. The wind seemed to clear Noll's head; he looked about, aloft.... Bellowed an order to get sail on

her....

Faith protested: "Noll, she'll never stand...."

He brushed her away with clenched fist. She took shelter in a corner by the deckhouse, ten feet from him..... And Noll Wing took the ship, and under his hand the *Sally* did miracles.... [Pg 262]

That fight with the storm was a thing men still talk about; they say it was an inhuman and a marvelous thing. Noll stood aft, legs braced, scorning a hand hold. His voice rang through the singing wind to the remotest corner of the *Sally*, and the highest spar. Regardless of wind and sea, he crowded on sail, and brought her around to the course he wished to take, and drove her into it.... Time and time again, during that afternoon and that long night, every sane man aboard thought her very masts must be torn out of her. Three times a sail did go; but Noll would never slacken. On the after deck, he raved like a madman, but his commands were seamanly.... A miracle of seamanship, stark madness.... But madness that succeeded. The *Sally* drove into the gale, she fought as madly as Noll himself was fighting.... And Noll, aft, screamed through the night and drove them on.

Faith never left her post, so near him. No man aboard had sleep that night. No man dared sleep, lest death find him in his dreams. Willis Cox and Tichel came to Noll more than once, beseeching.... But he drove them away. Dan'l never interfered with the captain; it seemed there was a madness on him, too. And Brander and Dan'l Tobey between them were Noll's right hand and his left, driving the men to the tasks Noll set them, holding them sternly in hand....

They could only guess how far they had come through the darkness. An hour before daylight, Dan'l stopped to gasp to Faith: "We're near there, I'm thinking. If we're not nearer the bottom...." Brander took more practical steps; he found Mauger, and set the one-eyed man well forward, and bade him watch and listen for first sign of land. Mauger nodded chucklingly; he gripped a hold on the taut lines, and set his one eye into the darkness, and tuned his ear to the storm.... [Pg 263]

The wind, by this time, was moderating; even Faith could feel a slackening of the pressure of it that had torn at her garments the night through. She was weak with fighting it; nevertheless she held her post. And the steady thrust of the gale slowly modified and gave way.... The first hints of light showed in the skies.... They caught glimpses of scudding clouds, low overhead.... But the worst was passed; and every man knew it. Noll, still standing like a colossus at his post, knew it; and he shook his fist at the skies and the sea, and he cursed the wind and dared it.... Faith could see him, dimly, in the coming light.... Head bare, eyes frantic, cheeks sunken.... An enormous, but a wasted figure of a man....

The very waters about them were quieting somewhat.... Their nerves and their muscles relaxed; they were straining their eyes to see into the dimness of the coming day....

It was Mauger, in the bows, who caught first hint of danger. He saw that they drove abruptly from long-rolling swells into quieter waters.... He stared off to windward, looking to see what had broken the force of the seas.... Saw nothing; but thought he heard a rumbling roar there.... Looked forward, where the less turbulent waters were piling ahead of them.... [Pg 264]

Looked forward, and glimpsed a line of white that lived and never died; and he turned and streamed a warning aft.... Ran, to carry the word himself.... Screaming as he ran....

Brander, amidships, heard him and shouted to Noll Wing; but Noll did not hear. The captain was intoxicated with the long battle; he was delirious with the cry of tortured nerves and starved body.... He did not hear. Mauger flashed past Brander as he ran.... The one-eyed man's screams were inarticulate now.... Too late, in any case....

Noll saw Mauger coming; and he put up his hands; and his eyes glared. He shrieked with overwhelming terror.... Mauger flung on. Then the *Sally's* bows drove on the solid sand; Mauger sprawled; men everywhere fell headlong. Noll was thrown back against the after rail....

Mauger rolled over and over where he fell; and it chanced that his sheath knife dropped out in the fall, and touched his hand. He had it in his fingers when he scrambled to his feet, still intent on bearing his warning. He had the knife in his hand, he leaped toward the wheel.... He did not realize it was too late to swerve the *Sally*.... Toward the wheel, knife in hand, forgetting knife and Noll Wing....

To Noll's eyes, Mauger must have looked like a charging fiend; he saw the knife. He screamed again, and turned and flung himself in desperate flight but over the after rail. [Pg 265]

He was instantly gone. Perhaps the undertow, perhaps some creature of the sea, perhaps the fates that had hung over him struck then. But those aboard the *Sally Sims* were never to see Noll Wing, nor Noll's dead body, again.

Dawn came abruptly; a lowering dawn, with gray and greasy clouds racing past so low they seemed to scrape and tear themselves upon the tips of the masts. No sun showed; there was no light in the sky. The dawn was evidenced only by a lessening of the blackness of the night. They

could see; there was no fog, but a steady rain sprang up, and clouded objects at a little distance....

This rain had one good effect; it beat down the turbulence of the waves. Faith, from the bow, could see that they had grounded upon a sandy beach which spread like a crescent to right and left. The tips of the crescent were rocky points which sheltered the *Sally* from the force of the seas. She was not pounding upon the sand; she lay where she had struck, heeled a little to one side.... There were breakers about her and ahead of her upon the sand; but these were not dangerous. They were caused by the reflex tumult of the waters, stirred up in this sheltered bay in sympathy with the storm outside.

That gale was dying, now. Above them the wind still raced and played with the flying clouds; but there was no pressure of it upon what little canvas the *Sally* still flew. They were at peace....

At peace. Faith, studying the position of the *Sally*, was herself at peace. This was her first reaction to her husband's death; she was at peace. Noll was gone, Noll Wing whom she had loved and married.... Poor Noll; she pitied him; she was conscious of a still-living affection for him.... There was no hate in her; there was little sorrow.... He was gone; but life had burdened him too long. He was well rid of it, she thought.... Well rid of his tormented flesh; well rid of the terror which had pursued him....

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When Noll went over the stern, Dan'l Tobey appeared from nowhere, and saw Mauger with the knife in his hand, standing paralyzed with horror. Dan'l fell upon Mauger, fists flying.... He downed the little man, dropped on him with both knees, gripped for his throat.... Then Brander, coming from the waist of the ship on Mauger's heels, caught Dan'l by the collar and jerked him to his feet. Dan'l's hands, clenched on Mauger's throat, lifted the little man a foot from the deck before they let go to grip for Brander. The men clustered aft; old Tichel's teeth bared.... In another moment, there would have been a death-battle astir upon the littered decks.

But Faith cried through the gloom: "Dan'l. Mr. Brander. Drop it. Stand away."

There was a command in her clear tones which Dan'l must have obeyed; and Brander did as she bade instinctively. The two still faced each other, heads forward, shoulders lowered.... Behind Brander, Mauger crawled to his feet, choking and fumbling at his throat. Faith said to Dan'l:

"It was not the fault of Mauger, Dan'l."

"He had a knife...."

"He fell," she said. "I saw. He fell when she struck; his knife dropped from its sheath.... He picked it up.... That was all."

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"All?" Dan'l protested. "He drove Noll Wing to death."

She shook her head. "No.... Noll's own terrors. Noll was mad...."

"What was he doing aft, then? He'd no place here...."

Brander explained: "I had him forward, watching for breakers. He saw them, and yelled, and when no one heard he raced to give the word...."

Faith nodded. "Yes; he was gripping for the wheel to swing it down, even when Noll...."

Dan'l swung to Brander. "You're over quick to come between me and the men, Mr. Brander," he said harshly. "Best mend that."

"I'll not see Mauger smashed for no fault," Brander told him steadily. Dan'l took a step nearer the other.

"You'll understand, I'm master here, now."

There was battle in Brander's eyes. Men's blood was hot that morning.... But Faith stepped between. "Dan'l. Noll's gone. First thing is to get the *Sally* free."

Dan'l still eyed Brander for a moment; then he drew back, swung away, looked around. The island they had struck was barely visible through the drifting rain.... He said: "This is not where we headed."

"You know this place?"

"No."

"Then we'll get clear as quick as may be."

He smiled sneeringly: "I'm thinking we're here to stay, Faith. Leastwise, the *Sally*...."

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"The *Sally* does not stay here," Faith told him sternly. "She floats; she fills her casks; she goes safely home to Jonathan Felt," she said. "Mark that, Dan'l. That's the way of it, and nothing else."

Dan'l said sullenly: "You're not over concerned for Noll's going."

"He's gone," said Faith. "An end to that. But the *Sally* was his charge; she's my charge now. I mean to see her safe."

"Your charge?" Dan'l echoed. "It's in my mind that when the captain dies, the mate succeeds."

"You take his place, if I choose," Faith told him.

He met her eyes, tried to look her down. Mauger had slipped away; old Tichel, and Willis Cox, and Brander were standing by. "You take his place, if I choose," Faith repeated. And Dan'l looked from her to the faces of the officers....

There was a weakness in Dan'l's villainy; he could destroy, he could undermine trust, seduce a boy, kill honor.... But he lacked constructive ability. He had known for months that this moment must come, this moment when Noll was gone, and the ship and all the treasures aboard her should lie ready to his hand. Yet he had made no plan for this crisis; he did not know what he meant to do. Even now, by open battle he might have won, carried the day. Old Tichel was certainly for him; perhaps Willis, too. And Roy.... And many of the men.... A blow, a fight, and the day might have been his....

But Dan'l was never a hand for strife where guile might do as well; he was not by nature a man of battle. Also ... Faith was within his reach, now; Noll was gone; there was no barrier between them; he need not anger her, so long as there was a chance to win by gentler ways.... Gentler ways, guileful.... He nodded in abrupt assent. [Pg 270]

"All right," he said. "You were Noll's wife; your interest is a fair one.... I'll work with you, Faith...."

Faith was content with that for the moment. "We'll get the *Sally* away," she said.

Dan'l smiled. "And—how?..."

"Get out a kedge; we'll try to warp her off when the tide comes in."

He chuckled. "Oh, aye.... We'll try."

"Do," said Faith; and she turned and went below. Went below, and wept a little for pity of old Noll, and then dried her eyes and strengthened her heart for the task before her.... To bring Noll's ship safely home....

It was mid-tide when the *Sally* struck; and this was in some measure fortunate, because the ebbing waters left her free of the rollers that might have driven her hard and fast upon the sand. They broke against her stern, but with no great force behind them. At the slack on the ebb, the men could wade about her bows, to their waist in the water.... They got the kedge out, astern, and carried a whale line about the capstan; and when the tide came quietly in again, they waited for the flood, then strove at the bars to warp her free....

When she did not stir, though the men strove till their veins were like to burst, some cursed despairingly; but Faith did not. Nor Dan'l. Dan'l was quiet, watching, smiling at his thoughts.... He let Faith have her way. Before the next tide, they had rigged the cutting-in tackle to give a stouter pull at the kedge; but this time the whale line parted and lashed along the decks, and more than one man was struck and bruised and cut by it.... [Pg 271]

Dan'l said then: "You see, we're here to stay. Best thing is to lower and make for the nearest port."

"Leave the ship?" Faith asked.

"Yes. What else?"

"No. We'll not leave her."

He smiled. "What, then?"

"It's a week past full moon," she said. "There'll be higher tides on the new moon.... Still higher on the next full. We'll float her, one time or another."

Dan'l chuckled. "An easterly'll drive her high and dry, 'fore then."

Faith's eyes blazed. "I tell you, Dan'l, we stick with the *Sally*; and we get her safe away.... Are you afraid to stick?"

He laughed, outright, pleasantly. "Pshaw, Faith.... You know I'm not afraid." He could be likeable when he tried; she liked him, faintly, in that moment. She gripped his hand.

"Good, Dan'l. We'll manage it, in the end...."

So they settled for the waiting; and Dan'l put the men to work repairing the harm the storm had done the *Sally*. Her rigging was strained; it had parted here and there. She had lost some canvas. Willis Cox's boat had been carried away.... They rove new rigging, spread new sails, replaced Willis's boat with one of the spares.... There was work for all hands for a month, to put the *Sally* in shape again. [Pg 272]

One thing favored them. The *Sally*, for all her clumsy lines, was staunch; and the shock when, she drove her bow upon the sand had opened never a seam. She was leaking no more than a sweet ship will. They found a cask or two of oil that had burst in the hold; and there was some confusion among the stores.... But these were small matters, easily set right....

The new moon was due on the fifth day after they struck. On the fourth, another bottle of whiskey appeared in the fo'c's'le, and two men were drunk. Dan'l had the men whipped.... Faith made no objection to this; but she watched the faces of the others.... Watched the officers, and Brander in particular, and Mauger.... Brander, since that morning of Noll's death, had avoided her more strictly.... He and Dan'l did not speak, save when they must. She saw the man was keeping a guard upon himself; and she puzzled over this. She could not know that Brander was afire with joy at the new hope that was awakening in him; afire with a vision of her.... He fought against this, held himself in check; and she saw only that he was morose and still and that he avoided her eye....

The high tides of the new moon failed to float them; and there was growling forward. Dan'l said, openly, that he believed they would never go free. The men heard; and the superstitions of the sea began to play about the fo'c's'le. There was unrest; the men felt approaching the possible liberation from ship's discipline when they abandoned the *Sally*. They remembered the ambergris beneath the cabin. There was a fortune.... They could take no oil with them; but they could take that when the time should come to leave the ship. Plenty of room in one boat for it and half a dozen men besides.... They fretted at the waiting, called it hopeless, as Dan'l did.... The barrier between officers and men was somewhat lowered; more than one of the men spoke to Brander of the ambergris. Did he claim it for his own?...

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Faith, one day, heard a man talking to Brander amidships; she caught only a word or two. One of these words was "'Gris." She saw that the man was asking Brander a question; she saw that on Brander's answer, the man grinned with greed in his eyes, and turned away to whisper to two of his fellows....

She wondered what Brander had said to him, why Brander had not silenced the man. And she watched Brander the closer, her heart sickening with a fear she would not name....

They had landed before this and explored their island.... Low and flat and no more than a mile or two in extent, it had fruit a-plenty, and a spring of good water.... But none dwelt anywhere upon it. It soon palled upon them; they stuck by the ship; and the days held clear and fine and the nights were warm, and the crescent moon above them flattened, night by night, till it was no longer a crescent, but half a circle of silver radiance that touched the beach and the trees and the sea with magic fingers....

That night, with the fall tides still a week away, Roy Kilcup came into the waist and looked aft. There was no officer in sight at the moment save old Tichel, and Roy hailed him softly.... Tichel went forward to where the boy stood; they whispered together. Then Tichel went with Roy toward the fo'c's'le....

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Faith was in her cabin; Dan'l was in the main cabin; and Willis and Brander were playing cribbage near him when the outcry forward roused them. A man yelled.... They were on deck in tumbling haste; and Faith was at their heels....

Came Tichel, dragging Mauger by the collar. His right hand gripped Mauger; his left held a bottle. He shook the one-eyed man till Mauger's teeth rattled; and he brandished the bottle. "Caught the pig," he cried furiously. "Here he is. With this hid under his blanket...."

Mauger protested: "I never put it there...." Tichel cuffed him into silence. Dan'l asked sharply:

"What's that, Mr. Tichel?"

"Whiskey, Mr. Tobey. He took it forward and hid it in his bunk...."

Faith said: "Tell the whole of it, Mr. Tichel. What happened?" She looked from Tichel to Brander. Brander was standing stiffly; she thought his face was white. Mauger hung in Tichel's grip.

Old Tichel had given a promise to Roy; Roy had begged him not to tell that the boy had spied. Tichel said now:

"I saw him go forra'd, with something under his coat. Never thought for a minute; then it come to me what it might be. I took after him. Rest of the men were on deck, sleeping.... It's hot, below, you'll mind. I dropped down quietly. Mauger, here, was in his bunk. I routed him out, and rummaged, and there you are, ma'am." He shook the bottle triumphantly.

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Faith asked the one-eyed man: "Where did you get it, Mauger?"

"Never knowed it was there," Mauger swore. "Honest t'the Lord, ma'am...."

Tichel slapped his face stunningly.... Faith said: "No more of that, Mr. Tichel. Dan'l, what do you think?"

Dan'l lifted his hand, with a glance at Brander. "Why—nothing! Somebody's been doing it; him as well as another."

"Willis," Faith asked. "What's your notion?"

"I guess Mauger done it."

"Brander?"

Brander lifted his head and met her eyes. "Other men have found whiskey in their bunks without

knowing how it got there," he said. "I believe Mauger."

Old Tichel snarled: "I'm saying I saw him take it aft." He dropped Mauger and took a fierce step toward Brander. "Ye think I'd lie?"

"I think you're mistaken," Brander said evenly. Tichel leaped at him; Brander gripped the other's arms at the elbow, held him. Faith, said sharply:

"Enough of that. We'll end this thing, to-night. Mr. Tobey, get lanterns, lights, search the ship till you find the rest of this stuff." She took the whiskey bottle, opened it, and poured its contents over the rail. "Search it out," she said. "Be about it."

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Save Dan'l Tobey, the officers stood stock still, as though not understanding. Dan'l acted as quickly as though he had expected the order. He sent Silva, the harpooner, to get the fo'm'st hands together forward and keep them there under his eye. He sent Tichel and Yella' Boy into the main hold; Willis and Long Jim into the after 'tween decks. Brander and Eph Hitch were to search the cabin and the captain's storeroom; and Faith went down with them to give them the keys.... Loum, Kellick, and Tinch, the cook, were put to rummaging about the after deck and amidships....

There was no need of lights upon the deck itself; the moon bathed the *Sally* in its rays, and one might have read by them without undue effort. Below, the whale-oil lanterns went to and fro.... Brander and Hitch made short work of their task; and they came on deck with Faith. Dan'l sent Brander to rummage through the steerage where the harpooners slept; and at Faith's suggestion, Hitch and Loum went aloft to the mastheads to make sure there was no secret cache there.... They were an hour or more at their search of the *Sally*; and at the end of that time they were no wiser than they were before. Faith had gone below before the end; she came on deck as Tichel and Yella' Boy reported nothing found below. She asked Dan'l:

"Have you found anything?"

"No."

"Where have you looked?"

Dan'l said: "Everywhere aboard her, Faith. The stuff's well hidden, sure...."

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Faith said quietly: "If it's not on the *Sally*, it's near her. Search the boats, Mr. Tobey."

Dan'l nodded. "But it'd not be in them," he said. "That's sure enough."

"It's nowhere else, you say. Try...."

Willis Cox and Brander turned toward where their boats hung by the rail; and Faith called quietly: "Willis, Mr. Brander. Let Mr. Tobey do the searching."

Willis stopped readily enough; Brander—forewarned, perhaps, by some instinctive fear—hesitated; she spoke to him again. "Mr. Brander."

He stood still where he was. Dan'l was looking through his own boat at the moment. He passed to old Tichel's; to that of Willis Cox. Brander's came last. He flashed his lantern in it as he had in the others, studied it from bow to stern, opened the stern locker beneath the cuddy boards....

There was a jug there; a jug that in the other boats had contained water. He pulled the stopper and smelled....

"By God, Faith, it's here!" he cried.

XXVII

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The closer the bond between man and man, or between man and woman, the easier it is to embroil them, one with another. It is hard for an outsider to provoke a quarrel between strangers, or between casual acquaintances; but it is not hard for a crafty man to make dissension between friends; and almost any one may, if he chooses, bring about discord between lovers. And this is a strange and a contradictory thing.

When Dan'l found the whiskey in Brander's boat, and came toward Faith with the open jug in his hands, Faith stood with a white face, looking steadily at Brander, and not at Dan'l at all. Brander had made one move when Dan'l lifted the jug; he had stepped quickly toward the boat, but Faith spoke quietly to him, and he stopped, and looked at her....

Dan'l was watching the two of them. Mauger saw a chance, and as the mate passed where the one-eyed man crouched, Mauger leaped at him to snatch the whiskey away. Tichel caught Mauger from behind, and held him....

The little man had had the best intentions in the world; but this movement on his part completed the evidence of Brander's guilt; for Mauger was Brander's man, loyal as a dog, and Faith knew it. She thought quickly, remembering the past days, remembering Mauger's furtive air and Brander's aloofness, and his support of Mauger against Tichel.... She was sure, before Dan'l reached her with the jug, that Mauger and Brander were guilty as Judas.... That Brander was

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guilty as Judas.... She scarce considered Mauger at all.

Dan'l handed her the jug, and she smelled at it. Whiskey, beyond a doubt. She took it to the rail and poured it overside as she had poured the contents of the bottle. Then came slowly back and handed the empty jug to Brander.

"This is yours," she said. "You had best rinse it and fill it with water and put it in your boat again."

The moon was bright upon them as they stood on the deck. He could see her face, he could see her eyes; and he saw that she thought him guilty. His soul sickened with the bitterness of it; and his lips twisted in a smile.

"Very well," he said.

She looked at him, a little wistfully. "You're not denying it's yours?"

He shook his head. "No." If she believed, let her believe. He was furious with her....

"Why did you do it?" she asked.

He said nothing; and she looked up at him a moment more, and then turned to Mauger. "Why did you do it?" she asked the little man.

Mauger squinted sidewise at Brander. Mauger was Brander's man; and all his loyalty was to Brander. Brander chose not to speak, not to deny the charge she laid against them.... All right; if Brander could keep silent, so could he. If Brander would not deny, neither would he. He grinned at Faith; and the closed lids that covered his empty eye-socket seemed to wink; but he said nothing at all.

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Dan'l Tobey chuckled at Brander. "Eh, Brander, I'm ashamed for ye," he said. "Such an example t'the crew."

Brander held silent. He was waiting for Faith to speak....

When neither Brander nor Mauger would answer her, Faith turned her back on them all and went to the after rail and stood there alone, thinking.... She knew Dan'l would wait on her word.... What was she to do? She needed Brander; she would need him more and more.... Dan'l was never to be trusted; she must have a man at her back.... Brander.... In spite of her belief that he had done this thieving, she trusted him.... And loved him.... Loved him so that as she stood there with her back to them all, the tears rolled down her cheeks, and her nails dug at her palms.... Why had he done this? Why did he not deny? Protest? Defend himself? She loved him so much that she hated him. If he had offended against herself alone, she might have forgiven.... But by stealing whiskey and giving it to the crew he was striking at the welfare of the *Sally Sims* herself.... And the *Sally* was dearer to Faith just now than herself.

He had struck at the *Sally*; she set her lips and brushed the tears from her cheeks and turned back to them. "Mr. Tobey," she said. "Put Mr. Brander in irons, below. Give Mauger a whipping and send him forward." She hesitated a moment, glanced at Willis. "If you'll come down to the cabin with me," she said, "I'll give you the irons."

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Willis stepped toward her; and with no further glance for Brander, she turned and went below.

They had been two weeks hard and fast on the sand; there was another week ahead of them. An easterly storm would cement them into the sand beyond any help; and the men looked for it daily.... For the rest, there was little to do. The *Sally* was in shape again, ready to be off if she had the chance.... The men, with black faces, loafed about the fore deck and whispered man to man; and Dan'l went among them now and then, and talked much with Roy, and some with the others.... Roy was elated in those days; the boy went about with shining eyes and triumphant lips. Every other face among the crew was morose save his....

Dan'l was not morose. He was overly cheerful in those days. He spoke in louder tones than was his custom; and there was no caustic bite to his tongue. But his eyes were narrower, and more furtive.... And once or twice Faith saw him turn away from a word with some of the crew and catch sight of her watching him, and flush uneasily....

But Faith scarce heeded; she was sick with sorrow, and sick with anxiety.... The tides were rising higher every day; she watched for the hour when they should lift the *Sally*.... And at each high tide, she made the men stand to the capstan bars, and fight in desperate efforts to fetch the *Sally* free. The day before the night of the full of the moon, she had them fetch up casks from the hold and lower them overside and raft them there.... Cask after cask, as many as the men could handle during the day, so that the *Sally* was lighter at nightfall than she had ever been before.

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The tide was at the flood that night at nine; and for half an hour before, and for a full hour after the waters had begun to ebb, every man of them strove to stir the *Sally*.... And strove fruitlessly; for the ship seemed fast-bedded in the sand, beyond moving. At ten o'clock, Faith left the deck and went sick-heartedly below....

At half past ten, Dan'l knocked on the door of the after cabin, and she bade him come in. He

opened the door, shut it behind him, looked at her with his cap in his hands for a space, then sat down on the seat beside the desk where she was sitting.

"Eh, Faith," he said, "we're stuck."

For a moment, she did not answer; then she lifted her head and looked at him. "There's a high tide to-morrow night; comes a bit higher than it is on the flood," she said. "We'll get out more casks to-morrow, and to-morrow night we'll float her."

Dan'l shook his head slowly. "You're brave, Faith, and strong.... But the sea's stronger. I've sailed them long enough to know."

She said steadfastly: "The *Sally Sims* has got to come free. It's in my mind to get her off if we have to take every stick out of her and lift her off ourselves...."

"If we could do it, I'd be with you," he told her. "But we can't, Faith."

"We will," she said.

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He smiled, studied her for a moment, then leaned toward her, resting his hands on the desk. "Faith," he said softly, "you're a wonderful, brave woman."

She looked at him with a weary flicker of lips and eyes that might have passed for a smile. "It's not that I'm brave, Dan'l," she said. "It's just that I'll not let Noll Wing's ship rot here when it should be bound home t'the other side of the world."

"Noll Wing's ship?" he echoed. "Eh, Faith, but Noll Wing is dead and gone."

She nodded. "Yes."

"He's dead and gone, Faith," he repeated swiftly. "He's dead, and gone.... And but for Noll Wing, Faith, you'd have loved me, three year ago."

She looked up, then, and studied him, and she said softly: "You'll mind, Dan'l, that Noll Wing is not but three weeks dead.... Even now."

"Three weeks dead!" he cried. "Have I not seen? He's been a dead man this year past; a dead man that walked and talked and swore.... But dead this year past. You've been a widow for a year, Faith...."

She shook her head. "So long as the *Sally* lies here on the sand," she said, "I'm not Noll Wing's widow; I'm his wife. It was his job to bring her home; and so it is my job, too. And will be, till she's fast to the wharf at home."

"Then you'll die his wife, Faith; for the *Sally*'ll never stir from here."

"If she never does," said Faith, "I'll die Noll Wing's wife, as you say."

He cried breathlessly: "What was Noll Wing that you should cling to him so, Faith?"

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"He was the man I loved," she said.

His face blackened, and his fist banged the desk. "Aye; and but for him you'd have loved me. Loved me...."

"I never told you that, Dan'l."

"But 'twas true. I could see. You'd have loved me, Faith...."

"Dan'l," she said slowly, "I'm in no mind to talk so much of love, this night."

The man sat back in silence for a space, not looking at her; nor did she look at him. In the end, however, he shaped his words afresh. "Faith," he said softly, "we were boy and girl together, you and I. Grew up together, played together.... I loved you before you were more than a girl. Before you ever saw Noll Wing. Can you remember?"

He was striving with all his might to win her; and Faith said gently: "Yes, Dan'l. I remember."

"When I sailed away, last cruise but one, you kissed me, Faith. Do you mind?"

She looked at him in honest surprise. "I kissed you, Dan'l?"

"Yes. On the forehead...."

She shook her head. "I don't remember ... at all."

If he had been wholly wise, he would have known that her not remembering was the end of him; but Dan'l in that moment was not even a little wise. He was playing for a big stake; Faith was never so lovely in his eyes; and there was desperation in him. He was blind with the heat of his own desire.... He cried now:

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"You do remember. You're pretending, Faith. You could not forget. You loved me then; and, Faith, you love me now."

She shook her head. "No, Dan'l. Have done."

"I love you, Faith; you love me, now."

"No."

He leaned very close to her. "You do not know; you're not listening to your heart. I know more of your heart than you know, Faith...."

"No, no, no, Dan'l," she said insistently.

He flamed at her in sudden fury: "If it's not me, it's Brander.... Him that you...."

"Brander?" she cried, in a passion. "Brander? The thief that's lying now in the irons I put upon him? Him? Him you say I love?"

The very force of her anger should have told him the truth; but he was so blind that it served only to rejoice him. "I knew it," he cried. "I knew it. So you love me, Faith?..."

"Must a woman always be loving?" she demanded wearily.

"Aye, Faith. It's the nature of them.... Always to be loving.... Some one. With you, Faith, it's me. Listen and see...."

"Dan'l," she said steadily, "what's the end of all this? What's the end of it all? What would you have me do?"

"Love me," he told her.

"What else?"

"See the truth," he said. "Understand that the *Sally* is lost.... Fast aground, here, to rot her bones away.... See that it's hopeless and wild to stick by her. We'll get out the boats. You and I and Roy and a man or two will take one; the others may have the other craft. It's not fifty miles to..."

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"Leave the *Sally*?" she demanded.

"Yes."

"I'll not talk with you, Dan'l. I'll never do that."

"There's th' ambergris," he reminded her. "We'll take that. It will recompense old Jonathan for his *Sally* and her oil."

Her word was so sharp that it checked him; he was up on his feet, bending above her, pouring out his pleadings.... But she threw him into silence with that last word; and the red flush of passion in his face blackened to something worse, and his tongue thickened with the heat in him. He bent a little nearer, while her eyes met his steadily; and his hands dropped and gripped her arms above the elbows. She came to her feet, facing him....

"Dan'l," she said warningly.

"If you'll not go because you will, you'll go because you must," he told her huskily and harshly. "Go because you must.... Whine at my feet afore I'm through with you. Beg me to marry you in th' end...."

If she had been able to hold still, to hold his eyes with hers, she might have mastered him even then; for in any match of courage against courage, she was the stronger. But the horror of him overwhelmed her; she tried to wrench away. The struggle of her fired him.... In a battle of strength and strength she had no chance. He swung her against his chest, and she flung her head back that her lips might escape him. He laughed. His lips were dry and twitching as she fought to be away from him; he held her for an instant, held her striving body against his own to revel in its struggles....

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He had her thus in his arms, forcing her back, crushing her, when the door flung open and Roy Kilcup stood there. The boy cried in desperate warning:

"Dan'l, Brander is...."

Then he comprehended that which he saw; and he screamed with the fury of an animal, and flung himself at Dan'l, tearing at the man with his strength of a boy.

XXVIII

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Dan'l had laid his plans well; he had felt sure of success; but he had not counted on trouble with Faith. He thought, after their failure to float the *Sally*, she would be crushed and ready to fall into his arms; ready at least to yield to his advice and come away and leave the *Sally Sims* where she lay.

After that, Dan'l counted on separating the crew by losing the other boats. The ambergris would be in his; he would master the men with him.... Faith and the treasure would be his....

Brander was to stay in the *Sally*, ironed in the after 'tween decks. Dan'l thought Brander was

destroyed by the evidence of his thieving; he no longer feared the man.

Not all the crew would go with him when he left the ship. Old Tichel had refused. "I've waited all my days to be cap'n of a craft," Tichel declared. "With you gone, I'm master o' the *Sally*, I'll stay and get the feeling of it." And Dan'l was willing to let him stay. Willis Cox agreed to do as Faith decided. Long Jim, the harpooner, was loyal to Tichel. Loum, Dan'l did not trust. The man might stay with Brander if he chose.

But Dan'l had on his side Kellick, the steward; and Yella' Boy, and Silva, and four seamen from forward, and seven of those who had shipped as green hands. Silva hated Brander no less than Dan'l, for Brander had been given the mate's berth that Silva claimed.... Silva was Dan'l's right-hand man in his plans.

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And Roy, of course, was Dan'l's, to do with as he chose.

Mauger got some whisperings of all this in the fo'c's'le. There was no effort to keep it secret from him; no effort to keep the matter secret at all. Dan'l had said openly that if the *Sally* did not float, he was for deserting her; those might come with him who chose. Save Mauger, there were none openly against him. Tichel would stay, Willis waited on Faith's word, but the rest held off and swung neither one way nor another.

All of which Mauger, with infinite stealth, told Brander, sneaking down into the after 'tween decks at peril of his skin, night after night; and Brander, fast-ironed there, and taking his calamities very philosophically, praised the little man. "Keep your eyes open," he said. "Bring me any word you get. Warn me in full time. And—find me a good, keen file."

Mauger fetched the file, pilfering it from the tool chest of Eph Hitch, the cooper. Brander worked patiently at his bonds, submitting without protest to his captivity.

That night of the full moon, after they had failed to float the *Sally*, Dan'l called Silva and bade him prepare two boats. "Get food and water into them," he said. "Plenty. Make them ready. Tell the rest of them to lower if they've a mind. I'm for leaving."

Silva grinned his understanding. He asked a question. Dan'l said: "I'm going down, now, to convince her. She'll come, no fear."

He went below and left Silva to prepare the boats. Old Tichel was on deck, but Willis had gone below. Tichel did not molest Silva. Discipline had evaporated on the *Sally*; it was every man for himself. Those who were for leaving ship were hotly impatient; and one boat full of men lowered and drew slowly away toward the mouth of the cove where the *Sally* lay. There was no wind; the sea was glassy; and their oars stirred the water into sparkling showers like jewels. Kellick and Yella' Boy and four seamen were in that boat. Five of the green hands and Tinch, the cook, caught the infection, and dumped food into another and water, and followed....

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Silva got his boat overside. He had with him two men, men of his choosing who had signed as green hands but were stalwarts now. He saw that the boat was ready, then stood in her by the rail, waiting for Dan'l to come with Faith. Roy was on the after deck, where he would join them.

The men in the two boats that had already put off were lying on their oars, half a mile away, watching the *Sally*. In all their minds was the thought of the ambergris. They had no notion of leaving that behind; and they did not mean to be tricked of their share in it. Silva could see the boats idly drifting....

Mauger had slipped down to Brander with the word. "Two boats gone a'ready," he said. "Silva waiting for Dan'l Tobey, now."

"Where's Faith?" Brander asked.

"In the cabin. Mr. Tobey went to her. He've not come up, yet."

Brander considered. "Fetch a handspike," he said; and Mauger crawled on deck and returned with it, and Brander pried open the irons he had filed apart. He stood up and shook himself to ease the ache of his muscles. "Now," he said, "let's go see...."

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He climbed up on deck, Mauger at his heels, and started aft. Roy saw him coming, and Silva, from the rail, marked his movements and watched. Roy dropped into the cabin to warn Dan'l; Brander leaped to follow him. Silva spoke to his two men, and plunged up to the deck and darted after Brander.

Brander was at the foot of the companion ladder in the cabin when Roy threw open the door of the after cabin to shout his warning; he saw, as Roy saw, Dan'l gripping Faith and struggling with her. He heard Roy's cry.... Leaped that way....

Roy was before him. Roy, grown into a man in that moment. Dan'l had told him they would leave the ship, told him nothing more. Roy hated his sister, and Dan'l knew this, and feared no trouble from the boy. But he forgot that a boy's hate is not over strong. When Roy saw Faith in Dan'l's arms, helplessly fighting against his kisses, he leaped to protect her as though there had never been harsh words between them. Roy was on Faith's side, thenceforward.

The boy gripped Dan'l from behind; and for an instant more Dan'l clung to Faith. His encircling arm tightened about her so that she thought her ribs would crack; and when he flung her away, she was breathless and sick to nausea, and she fell on the floor and lay there, retching and

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gasping for breath. Dan'l flung her away, and swung on Roy.

"You young fool," he swore, "I'll kill you, now."

Roy was helpless before him. Dan'l held him by the throat, his fingers sinking home, Roy beat and tore at the man helplessly for a space, then his face blackened, and his eyes bulged, and Dan'l flung him away.

Brander might have helped him, but for the fact that three men dropped on him from the companion hatch and bore him smothering to the deck. The three were Silva and his allies. Silva had a knife; and Mauger had felt it, on the deck above. The one-eyed man lay there now, twisting and clutching at a hole in his side. Silva was first down on Brander; and he struck at Brander's neck as he leaped. But Brander had time to dodge to one side, so that Silva hit him on the hip and bore him down. Then the other two were upon him....

This sudden tumult in the cabin rang through the *Sally*. The night was still; the noise could be heard even by the boats that drifted half a mile away. Its abrupt outbreak was unsettling; it jangled taut nerves. The two remaining seamen and Long Jim, Loum, and Eph Hitch lost courage, raced for a boat, dropped it to the water and pulled off to see what was to come. Tichel, who was on deck, ran to try to stop them; but Loum struck out blindly and threw the mate off-balance for an instant that was long enough to let them get away.

The desertion of these last men left on the *Sally* only the four officers, Roy, Mauger, Silva, and Silva's two men. Faith was still helpless, so was Roy, and Mauger had dragged himself upright against the bulwarks and stripped up his shirt to investigate his wound. It was bleeding profusely, but he found he could breathe without difficulty, and told himself shrewdly that he would come out all right.

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Of men able to fight aboard the *Sally*, there were left Dan'l, Silva, and the two seamen on one side, against Brander and Tichel and Cox. The attitude of Tichel and Cox was in some sort uncertain. But the problem was quickly settled....

Dan'l, dropping Faith and flinging Roy aside, had charged into the main cabin to finish Brander; but Brander was so inextricably involved in his struggle with his three antagonists that Dan'l got no immediate chance at him. He was shifting around the twisting tangle of men, watching, when Willis came out of his cabin in a single leap.... Willis had been asleep; he was in shirt and trousers, his belt tight-girthed. He stared stupidly, not understanding.

Dan'l, balked of his chance at Brander, took Willis for fair game. If he thought at all, it was to remember that Willis was loyal to Faith. He attacked before Willis was fully awake, and bore the other man back into the cabin from which Willis had come. He bent Willis against the bunks so that for an instant it seemed the man's back would snap; but desperation gave Willis the strength to fling himself away.... They whirled into the cabin, still fighting. Dan'l was drunk with his own rage by now.... He had thrown himself into a debauch of battle; and he proved, this night, that he could fight when he chose....

He rocked Willis at last with a left-hand blow in the ribs, so that the younger man dropped his arms to hug his bruised body; and Dan'l drove home his fist to the other's jaw. The blow smacked loudly; and Willis went down without a sound, his jaw broken....

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If old Tichel had come down the companion ladder a minute sooner, he might have saved Willis; and he and Willis between them might have overcome Dan'l. But he was too late for that; he was in time to see Willis fall; and before he could speak, Dan'l Tobey had attacked him.

Dan'l was pure maniac now; he did not stop to ask whether Tichel were friend or foe. And Tichel, old man though he was, was never one to refuse a battle. He met Dan'l's charge with the tigerish venom that characterized him in his rages; he leaped and was fairly in the air when Dan'l struck him. But Dan'l's greater weight and the impetus of his charge were too much for old Tichel. In the flash of a second, Dan'l had him by the throat, down, banging his head against the floor till the skin of his scalp was crushed and the blood flowed, and Tichel at last lay still....

Dan'l got up, choking for breath, his chin down on his chest. There was blood on him; his shirt was torn; his hair was wild. The mild, round face of the man was distorted by wrinkles of passion. His lip was bruised by a blow, and it puffed out in a surly, drunken way.... He stood there, tottering, looking with blinking eyes at the heap of men fighting at one side of the cabin.... Brander was in that heap somewhere. It was still less than thirty seconds since Dan'l had smashed Willis's jaw. Dan'l stepped unsteadily toward the heap of men and peered down at them and laid hands on them to pull them away.... They were too closely intertwined....

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He backed off and looked around for a weapon. In a corner of the cabin he saw something that might serve.... The head of a killing lance.... A bar of metal three or four feet long, flattened at one end like the blade of a putty knife, and ground to the keenest edge.... In the whale-fisheries, it would be mounted on a staff; but there was no staff in it now. He picked the thing up, and balanced it in his hands, and walked gingerly back toward the striving knot of men.

When Brander dropped down into the cabin and through the open door saw Faith in Dan'l's arms, he was for an instant paralyzed.... Then, as rage surged up in him, he sensed the danger above

him, and dodged to one side as Silva leaped down from the deck. Silva struck against Brander's hip, his knife slitting the air. Brander was thrown headlong, and Silva flung after him. Brander rolled on his back, catching Silva in the stomach with both feet, as the other two men dropped across his body.

He had put little force into his kick at Silva, so that the man was unhurt. Brander gripped one of the men who had fallen on him, and whirled him under. At the same time, the other man attached himself to Brander's neck, his right arm about Brander's neck to choke him. Brander wedged his chin down and gripped this arm between his chin and his breast, holding it off a little from his throat. Then Silva came at him from the left side, and Brander's left hand flung out and gripped Silva's knife wrist....

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Brander was past the first flush of anger; he was cool, now, as he was always cool in danger. Save Silva, the men against him were unarmed. At least, neither made any effort to use a weapon. Therefore Brander flung the one man out of his arms, and gave his attention to Silva. He was just in time. Silva had shifted the knife to his other hand. Brander grabbed for it, and the blade slid along his fingers, barely scratching them.... Then he had the hand that held it; and he dragged it down and wrenched it over, and across, and the fingers opened and the knife fell. Brander groped for it, Silva swarming over him. He got the knife, but knew he could not use it, so he threw it with the half of his arm which was free. Crushed down by the man atop him, he saw that it slid across the floor and flew into the after cabin. He thought Silva had not seen it go....

Brander had not marked Dan'l when the man came first to crouch above them. Dan'l was at Willis when Brander threw the knife. That weapon being gone, Brander turned his attention to the man who had his throat. He worked as coolly as though this man was his only antagonist; and while he held off the others with his left hand and his knees, his right went up over his shoulder and found the face of the man who choked him. This groping hand of his came down against the man's face from above. His palm rested against the cheek of his antagonist; and his fingers groped under the other's jaw bone and clenched around it, biting far into the soft flesh at the bottom of the mouth. He got a grip on this that would hold; and the man screamed, and Brander jerked him up, and over his shoulder.... The man slid helplessly tearing at Brander's clenched fingers. Brander, at this time, was sitting up, with Silva at his left, arms gripping, fists striking, and the other at the right. The man whose jaw he had come down in Brander's lap, and he brought his right knee up with all his force against the other's head and the man became a dead weight across his legs. Brander wriggled free of him, thought calmly that one of the three was gone and only two remained, and turned his attention to the others.

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He had been forced to let them have their will of him for the seconds required to deal with the man who had choked him. They had him down, now, on his back on the cabin floor. One on either side.... He got a left-hand grip on the seaman; he set his right hand on Silva's arm and his fingers clenched on Silva's biceps. He flung them off a little, freeing himself, so that he might have fought to his feet....

But when he thrust these two back, thus to right and left, and started to sit up, he saw above him Dan'l. Dan'l, an insane light in his eyes, the whaling lance poised in the thrusting position. It flickered downward like a shaft of light....

Brander wrenched with all his strength at Silva; he swung Silva up and over his own body just in time to intercept the lance. It slid in between two ribs, an inch from Silva's backbone, and pierced him through to the sternum.... It struck obliquely, cut half way into the mingled cartilage and bone.... Then the soft iron of the shaft "elbowed" at right angles, and Dan'l had to twist and fight to pull it free. Silva, of course, was as dead as dead. Blood poured out of his mouth in Brander's very face.... He flung the corpse aside, rolling after it to be on his feet before Dan'l should strike again. But the remaining seaman was in his path, grappled him, held him for an instant motionless. Dan'l had had no chance to straighten the lance; he lifted it like a hoe to bring it down on Brander's back.

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Then Faith called, from the door of the after cabin:

"Dan'l! Have done!"

Dan'l looked and saw her, weak, trembling, gripping the doorsill with her left hand. In her right was a revolver.

He leaped toward her, roaring; and Faith waited till he was within six feet of her, then shot him carefully through the knee. He fell on his face at her feet, howling.

At the same time, Brander got home a blow that silenced his last antagonist, and a great quiet settled down upon the *Sally Sims*.

XXIX

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What shadows remained, Roy was able to clear away. Roy, who had hated Brander, and who had hated Faith, yet in whom lived a strain of true blood that could not but answer to these two in the end. The evil in Dan'l had been writ in his face for any man to see, when Roy found him clutching Faith; and Roy was not blind.

The boy abased himself; he was pitifully ashamed. Still hoarse from the choking Dan'l had given him, he told how he had stolen the whiskey at the man's bidding.... A little at first; a ten-gallon keg in the end.... Told how he had himself filled Brander's boat jug with the liquor, and hidden a bottle in Mauger's bunk, and lied to old Tichel in the matter. Told the whole tale, and made his peace with them, while Faith and Brander watched each other over the boy's sobbing head with eloquent eyes....

For the rest; Silva was dead, and they buried him in the sand of the beach. Mauger had a shallow knife slit along his ribs; Willis Cox had a broken jaw. The others had suffered nothing worse than bruises, save only Dan'l Tobey. Dan'l's knee was smashed and splintered, and he lay in a stupor in the cabin, Willis watching beside him.

Those who had fled to the boats came shamedly back at last; and Faith and Brander met them at the rail, and Faith spoke to them. They had done wrong, she told them; but there was a chance of wiping out the score by bending to the toil she set them. They were already sick of adventuring; they swarmed aboard like homesick boys. She and Brander told them what to do, and drove them to it....

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Before that day was gone, they had half her load out of the *Sally*; and at full tide that night, with every hand tugging at a line or breasting a capstan bar, they hauled her off. She slid an inch, two inches, four.... She moved a foot, three feet.... They freed her, by sheer power of their determination that she must come free. They dragged her full ten feet before the suction of the sand beneath her keel began to slack, and ten feet more before she floated free.... Then the boats lowered, and towed her safe off shore, and anchored her there.

After that, three days to get the casks inboard again and stowed below. Three days in which Dan'l Tobey passed from suffering to delirium. Brander had tended his wound as best he could; but the bone was splintered and the flesh was shattered, and there came an hour when the flesh about the wound turned green and black. It gave off a horrible fetid odor of decay.

Brander told Faith: "He's got to lose either leg or life."

She did not ask him if he were sure; she knew him well enough, now, never to doubt him again. But Dan'l, in an interval of lucidity, had heard; and he croaked:

"Take it off, Brander. Take it off. Get the ax, man."

Brander bent over the man. "I'll do my best for you."

Dan'l grinned with the old jeer in his eyes. "Aye, I've no doubt, Mr. Brander. Go at it, man."

They had not so much as a vial of morphia to deaden the pain; but Dan'l slumped into delirium at the first stroke of the knife Brander had whetted to a razor keenness. His body twitched in the grip of Willis Cox and Loum.... Faith helped Brander tie the arteries; Roy stood by to give what aid he could....

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When it was done, Faith said the *Sally* would lie at anchor till Dan'l died or mended; and in two weeks Brander told her the man would live. She nodded.

"Then we'll go out and fill our casks," she said, "and then for home."

Brander looked at her with shining eyes. "Aye, fill our casks," he agreed, as though it were the most natural thing in the world to stick to that task till it was done. They put to sea.

Dan'l was going to live; but the man was broken. He was not to quit his bunk through the months of the homeward cruise; he was wasted by the fury of his own passions, by the shock of his crippling injury.... He had aged; there was no longer any strength in the man. So old Tichel came into his own at last; he became the titular master of the ship, and Faith was content to let him hold the reins, so long as he did as she desired. Willis Cox yielded precedence to Brander; Brander was mate. When they sighted whales, all three of them lowered, while Faith kept ship. Their work had been nearly done before Noll died; they lacked less than a dozen whales to fill. Young Roy, to his vast content, was allowed to take out a boat and kill one of that last dozen, while Brander in his boat lay watchfully by.

Came a day, when the trying out was done, that Brander went to Faith. "We're bung up," he said. "The last cask's sweating full."

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Faith nodded happily, and swung to Mr. Tichel. "Then let's for home," she said.

For the rest, the matter tells itself. They hauled in to the nearest island port and overhauled and recoopered the water casks, and took on wood and water for the five months' homeward way. They stocked with potatoes and vegetables. The crow's nests came down, and to gallant masts were set to carry canvas on the passage. The gear was stripped from the whaleboats and stowed away, and two of the boats were lashed atop the boathouse, with the spares. The rigging had a touch of tar, the hull and spars took a lick of paint, the wood-work shone with scraping....

So, to sea. The first day out saw the dismantling of the tryworks; and broken bricks flew overside for half that day, all hands joining in the sport of it. Then a clean deck, and a stout northwest

wind behind them, and the long easterly stretch to the Horn was begun....

That homeward cruise was a pleasant time for Faith and Brander. They were much together, speaking little, speaking not at all of themselves.... Save once, Faith said, smiling at him shyly:

"I knew you hadn't done it, even when I told them to put you in irons...."

He nodded. "I knew you knew."

They both understood; their eyes said what their lips were not yet ready to say. There was a reticence upon them. Faith, on the deck of her husband's ship, felt still the shadow of Noll Wing in her life.... Brander felt its presence. It made neither of them unhappy; they respected it. Faith was never ashamed of Noll. He had been a man.... She had loved him; she was proud that he had loved her....

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Day by day they were together, on deck or below, while the winds worked for them and the stars in their courses watched over them. Through the chill of southern waters as they rounded the Cape.... Cap'n Tichel looking back at it, waved his hand in valedictory; and Faith asked: "What are you thinking, Mr. Tichel?"

"Saying good-by to old Cape Stiff there," he chuckled. "I'll not come this way again."

"Yes, you will," she told him. "You're captain of your own ship, now.... And will be, next cruise."

He shook his head. "I know when I'm well off, young lady. Old Tichel's ready to stick ashore, now...."

She left him, staring back across the dull, cold sea.... He stood there stiffly till the night came down upon the waters.

After that, they struck warmer winds, with a pleasant ocean all about, and the scud of spray sweet upon their cheeks, and the *Sally* fat with oil beneath their feet. A happy time, when Faith and Brander, with never a word and never a touch of hand, grew close as man and woman can grow....

Never a cloud in the skies from their last kill to the day they picked up the tug that shunted them alongside their wharf at home.

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There are many things that never get into the log. Faith had no vengeful heart toward Dan'l; the man had reaped what he sowed. With the *Sally*, Noll Wing's ship, safe home again, she was willing to forget what had passed. She told Dan'l so. Silva was dead; the others were but instruments. The matter was done....

Dan'l, possessed by a creeping apathy, nodded his thanks to her and turned away his head. The man was dying where he lay; he would not long survive.

Old Jem Kilcup was at the wharf to hug Faith against his broad chest. An older Jem than when she went away; but a glad Jem to see her home again. Jonathan Felt was with him, asking anxiously for Noll. When Faith told them Noll was gone, old Jonathan fell sorrowfully silent. The whole town would mourn Noll; he had been one of its heroes....

Faith said proudly: "He's dead, sir. But this was his fattest cruise. He never brought home better than he's sent, now."

"You're full?" asked Jonathan.

"Aye, every cask.... And more," said Faith. And told him of the ambergris. She gave Brander so much credit for that, and for other things, that Jonathan hooked his arm in that of the young man, and walked with him thus when they all went to the office to hear Cap'n Tichel make his report.

Jem sat there, listening, proud eyes on Faith, while Tichel told the story; and Faith listened, and looked now and then at Brander, where he stood in the shadows by the window. In the end, Tichel said straightforwardly that he was content with what life had brought him, that he was through with the sea. But he pointed toward Brander.

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"There's a man'll beat Noll Wing's best for you," he said.

Jonathan got up, spry little old figure, and crossed to grip Brander by the hand. "You'll take out a ship o' mine?" he asked; and Brander hesitated, and his eyes crossed to meet Faith's, as though to ask permission. Faith nodded faintly; and Brander said:

"Yes, sir, if you like."

"I do like," said Jonathan briskly. "I do like; so that's settled and done."

Afterward, Tichel and Willis went back to the ship. Jem, with Faith on his arm, were to go up the hill to Faith's old home. They stopped outside Jonathan's door to say good-by to Brander for a little while. Faith was free of the load of responsibility that she had taken on her shoulders; she had put Noll Wing's ship behind her. She looked up at him with eyes that offered everything.

Brander said quietly: "I've much to say to you that's never been said. Will you let me come to your

home this night for the saying?"

Faith looked up at her father, looked to Brander again, and smiled,

"Do come," she said.

THE END

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