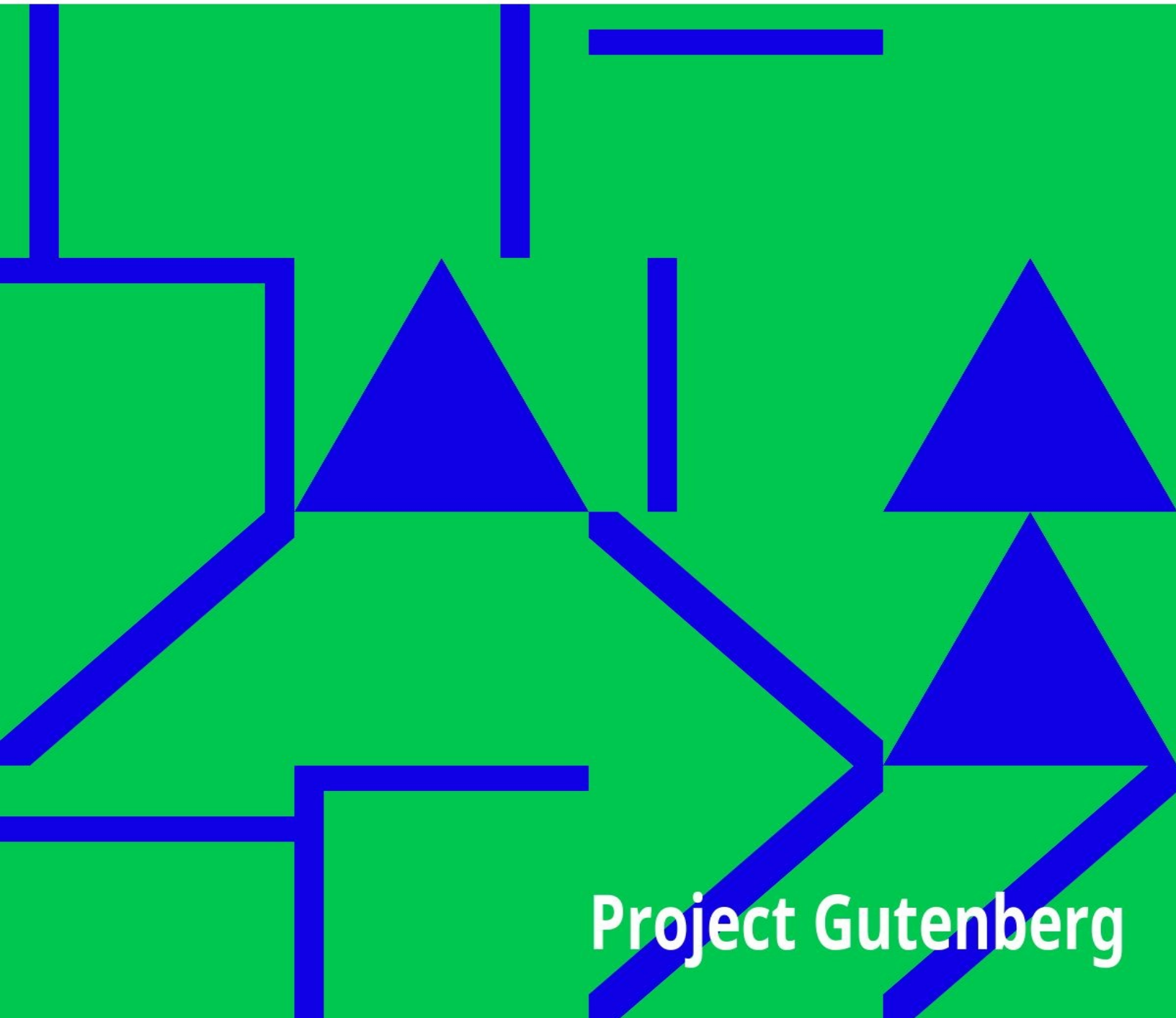
The Pagan Madonna

Harold MacGrath



Title: The Pagan Madonna

Author: Harold MacGrath

Illustrator: W. H. D. Koerner

Release Date: November 27, 2008 [EBook #27339]

Language: English

Produced by Roger Frank and the Online Distributed
Proofreading Team at http://www.pgdp.net

Books by Harold MacGrath

ADVENTURES OF KATHLYN
ARMS AND THE WOMAN
BEST MAN
CARPET FROM BAGDAD
DEUCES WILD
ENCHANTED HAT
GOOSE GIRL
HALF A ROGUE
HEARTS AND MASKS
LUCK OF THE IRISH: A ROMANCE
LURE OF THE MASK
MILLION DOLLAR MYSTERY
PARROT & CO.
PIDGIN ISLAND
PLACE OF HONEYMOONS
PRINCESS ELOPES
PUPPET CROWN
SPLENDID HAZARD
THE DRUMS OF JEOPARDY
THE GIRL IN HIS HOUSE
THE GREY CLOAK
THE MAN ON THE BOX
THE MAN WITH THREE NAMES
THE PAGAN MADONNA
THE PRIVATE WIRE TO WASHINGTON
THE YELLOW TYPHOON
VOICE OF THE FOG

"*'Thank you for coming up,' said Cunningham. 'It makes me feel that you trust me.'*"

THE
PAGAN MADONNA

BY

HAROLD MACGRATH

FRONTISPIECE
BY
W. H. D. KOERNER

GARDEN CITY, N. Y., AND TORONTO
DOUBLEDAY, PAGE & COMPANY
1921

The Pagan Madonna

CHAPTER I

Humdrum isn't where you live; it's what you are. Perhaps you are one of those whose lives are bound by neighbourly interests. Imaginatively, you never seek what lies under a gorgeous sunset; you are never stirred by any longing to investigate the ends of rainbows. You are more concerned by what your neighbour does every day than by what he might do if he were suddenly spun, whirled, jolted out of his poky orbit. The blank door of an empty house never intrigues you; you enter blind alleys without thrilling in the least; you hear a cry in the night and impute it to some marauding tom. Lord, what a life!

And yet every move you make is governed by Chance—the Blind Madonna of the Pagan, as that great adventurer, Stevenson, called it. You never stop to consider that it is only by chance that you leave home and arrive at the office alive—millions and millions of you—poor old stick-in-the-muds! Because this or that hasn't happened to you, you can't be made to believe that it might have happened to someone else. What's a wood fire to you but a shin warmer? And how you hate to walk alone! So sheer off—this is not for you.

But to you, fenced in by circumstance, walls of breathless brick and stone, suffocating with longing, you whose thought springs ever toward the gorgeous sunset and the ends of rainbows; who fly in dreams across the golden south seas to the far countries, you whose imagination transforms every ratty old square-rigger that pokes down the bay into a Spanish galleon—come with me.

For to admire an' for to see,
For to be'old this world so wide.

First off, Ling Foo, of Woosung Road, perhaps the most bewildered Chinaman in all Shanghai last April. The Blind Madonna flung him into a great game and immediately cast him out of it, giving him never an inkling of what the game was about and leaving him buffeted by the four winds of wonder.

A drama—he was sure of that—had rolled up, touched him icily if slightly, and receded, like a wave on the beach, without his knowing in the least what had

energized it in his direction. During lulls, for years to come, Ling Foo's consciousness would strive to press behind the wall for a key to the riddle; for years to come he would be searching the International Bund, Nanking Road, Broadway and Bubbling Well roads for the young woman with the wonderful ruddy hair and the man who walked with the sluing lurch.

Ah, but that man—the face of him, beautiful as that of a foreign boy's, now young, now old, as though a cobweb shifted to and fro across it! The fire in those dark eyes and the silk on that tongue! Always that face would haunt him, because it should not have been a man's but a woman's. Ling Foo could not go to his gods for comparisons, for a million variations of Buddha offered no such countenance; so his recollection would always be tinged with a restless sense of dissatisfaction.

There were other faces in the picture, but with the exception of the woman's and the man's he could not reassemble the features of any.

A wild and bitter night. The nor'easter, packed with a cold, penetrating rain, beat down from the Yellow Sea, its insensate fury clearing the highways of all save belated labourers and 'ricksha boys. Along the Chinese Bund the sampans huddled even more closely together, and rocked and creaked and complained. The inscrutable countenance of the average Chinaman is the result of five thousand years of misery. It was a night for hand warmers—little jigsawed brass receptacles filled with smoldering punk or charcoal, which you carried in your sleeves and hugged if you happened to be a Chinaman, as Ling Foo was.

He was a merchant. He sold furs, curios, table linen, embroideries. His shop was out on the Woosung Road. He did not sit on his stool or in his alcove and wait for customers. He made packs of his merchandise and canvassed the hotels in the morning, from floor to floor, from room to room. His curios, however, he left in the shop. That was his lure to bring his hotel customers round in the afternoon, when there were generally additional profits and no commissions. This, of course, had been the *modus operandi* in the happy days before 1914, when white men began the slaughter of white men. Nowadays Ling Foo was off to the Astor House the moment he had news of a ship dropping anchor off the bar twelve miles down the Whangpoo River. The hour no longer mattered; the point was to beat his competitors to the market—and often there was no market.

He did not call the white people foreign devils; he called them customers. That they worshipped a bearded Buddha was no concern of his. Born in the modern town, having spent twelve years in San Francisco, he was not heavily barnacled

with tradition. He was shrewd, a suave bargainer, and as honest as the day is long. His English was fluent.

To-night he was angry with the fates. The ship was hours late. Moreover, it was a British transport, dropping down from Vladivostok. He would be wasting his time to wait for such passengers as came ashore. They would be tired and hungry and uncomfortable. So at seven o'clock he lit a piece of punk, dropped it into his hand warmer, threw his pack over his shoulders, and left the cheery lobby of the hotel where he had been waiting since five in the afternoon. He would be cold and wet and hungry when he reached his shop.

Outside he called to a disconsolate 'ricksha boy, and a moment later rattled across the bridge that spans the Soochow Creek. Even the Sikh policeman had taken to cover. When he finally arrived home he was drenched from his cap button to the wooden soles of his shoes. He unlocked the shop door, entered, flung the pack on the floor, and turned on the electric light. Twenty minutes later he was in dry clothes; hot rice, bean curd, and tea were warming him; and he sat cross-legged in a little alcove behind his till, smoking his metal pipe. Two or three puffs, then he would empty the ash in a brass bowl. He repeated this action half a dozen times. He was emptying the ash for the last time when the door opened violently and a man lurched in, hatless and apparently drunk—a white man.

But instantly Ling Foo saw that the man was not drunk. Blood was streaming down his face, which was gray with terror and agony. The man made a desperate effort to save himself from falling, and dragged a pile of embroidered jackets to the floor as he went down.

Ling Foo did not stir. It was not possible for him to move. The suddenness of the spectacle had disconnected thought from action. He saw all this, memorized it, even speculated upon it; but he could not move.

The door was still open. The rain slanted across the black oblong space. He saw it strike the windows, pause, then trickle down. He could not see what had become of the man; the counter intervened. A tingle ran through Ling Foo's body, and he knew that his brain had gained control of his body again. But before this brain could telegraph to his legs three men rushed into the shop. A bubble of sound came into Ling Foo's throat—one of those calls for help that fear smothers.

The three men disappeared instantly below the counter rim. Silence, except for the voices of the rain and the wind. Ling Foo, tensely, even painfully alive now,

waited. He was afraid, and it was perfectly logical fear. Perhaps they had not noticed him in the alcove. So he waited for this fantastic drama to end.

The three men rose in unison. Ling Foo saw that they were carrying the fourth between them. The man who carried the head and shoulders of the victim—for Ling Foo was now certain that murder was abroad—limped oddly, with a heave and a sluing twist. Ling Foo slid off his cushion and stepped round the counter in time to see the night absorb the back of the man who limped. He tried to recall the face of the man, but could not. His initial terror had drawn for him three white patches where faces should have been.

For several minutes Ling Foo stared at the oblong blackness; then with a hysterical gurgle he ran to the door, slammed and bolted it, and leaned against the jamb, sick and faint, yet oddly relieved. He would not now have to account to the police for the body of an unknown white man.

A queer business. Nothing exciting ever happened along this part of Woosung Road. What he had witnessed—it still wasn't quite believable—belonged to the water front. Things happened there, for these white sailors were a wild lot.

When the vertigo went out of his legs, Ling Foo cat-stepped over to the scattered embroidered jackets and began mechanically to replace them on the counter—all but two, for these were speckled with blood. He contemplated them for a space, and at last picked them up daintily and tossed them into a far corner. When the blood dried he would wash them out himself.

But there was that darkening stain on the floor. That would have to be washed out at once or it would be crying up to him eternally and recasting the tragic picture. So he entered the rear of the shop and summoned his wife. Meekly she obeyed his order and scrubbed the stain. Her beady little black eyes were so tightly lodged in her head that it was not possible for her to elevate her brows in surprise. But she knew that this stain was blood.

Ling Foo solemnly waved her aside when the task was done, and she slip-slapped into the household dungeon out of which she had emerged.

Her lord and master returned to his alcove. Ah, but the pipe was good! He rocked slightly as he smoked. Three pipefuls were reduced to ashes; then he wriggled off the cushion, picked up his cash counter and began slithering the buttons back and forth; not because there were any profits or losses that day, but because it gave a welcome turn to his thoughts.

The storm raged outside. Occasionally he felt the floor shudder. The windows

ran thickly with rain. The door rattled. It was as if all objects inanimate were demanding freedom from bolts and nails. With the tip of his long, slender finger Ling Foo moved the buttons. He counted what his profits would be in Manchurian sables; in the two Ming vases that had come in mysteriously from Kiao-chau—German loot from Peking; counted his former profits in snuff bottles, and so on.

The door rattled furiously.

Ling Foo could consider himself as tolerably wealthy. Some day, when this great turmoil among the whites subsided, he would move to South China and grow little red oranges and melons, and there would be a nook in the gardens where he could sit with the perfume of jasmine swimming over and about his head and the goodly Book of Confucius on his knees.

A thudding sound—that wasn't the wind. Ling Foo looked over his buttons. He saw a human face outside the door; a beautiful boy's face—white. That was the first impression. But as he stared he saw a man's fury destroy the boyish stamp—gestures that demanded admission.

But Ling Foo shook his head with equal emphasis. He would not go near that door again this night.

The man outside shook his fists threateningly, wheeled, and strode off. Three strides took him out of sight; but Ling Foo, with a damp little chill on his spine, remarked that the visitor limped.

So! This would be the man who had carried the bloody head and shoulders of the unknown.

Oriental curiosity blazed up and over Ling Foo's distaste. What was it all about? Why had the limping man returned and demanded entrance? What had they done with the body? Pearls! The thought struck him as a blow. He began to understand something of the episode. Pearls! The beaten man had heard that sometimes Ling Foo of Woosung Road dealt in pearls without being overcurious. A falling out among thieves, and one had tried to betray his confederates, paying grimly for it. Pearls!

He trotted down to the door and peered into the night, but he could see nothing. He wished now that he had purchased those window curtains such as the white merchants used over on the Bund. Every move he made could be seen from across the way, and the man who limped might be lurking there, watching.

The man had come to him with pearls, but he had not been quick enough. What

had he done with them? The man with the slue-foot would not have returned had he found the pearls on his moribund partner. That was sound reasoning. Ling Foo's heart contracted, then expanded and began to beat like a bird's wing. In here somewhere—on the floor!

He turned away from the door without haste. His Oriental mind worked quickly and smoothly. He would tramp back and forth the length of the shop as if musing, but neither nook nor crevice should escape his eye. He was heir to these pearls. Slue-Foot—for so Ling Foo named his visitor—would not dare molest him, since he, Ling Foo, could go to the authorities and state that murder had been done. Those tiger eyes in a boy's face! His spine grew cold.

Nevertheless, he set about his game. With his hands in his sleeves, his chin down, he paced the passage between the two counters. As he turned for the fifth journey a red-and-blue flash struck his eye. The flash came from the far corner of the shop, from the foot of the gunpowder-blue temple vase. Diamonds—not pearls but diamonds! Russian loot!

Ling Foo pressed down his excitement and slowly approached the vase. A necklace! He gave the object a slight kick, which sent it rattling toward the door to the rear. He resumed his pacing. Each time he reached the necklace he gave it another kick. At length the necklace was at the threshold. Ling Foo approached the light and shut it off. Next he opened the door and kicked the necklace across the threshold. Diamonds—thirty or forty of them on a string.

The room in the rear was divided into workshop and storeroom. The living rooms were above. His wife was squatted on the floor in an unlittered corner mending a ceremonial robe of his. She was always in this room at night when Ling Foo was in the shop.

He ignored her and carried his prize to a lapidary's bench. He perched himself on a stool and reached for his magnifying glass. A queer little hiss broke through his lips. Cut-glass beads, patently Occidental, and here in Shanghai practically worthless!

In his passion of disappointment he executed a gesture as if to hurl the beads to the floor, but let his arm sink slowly. He had made a mistake. These beads had not brought tragedy in and out of his shop. Somehow he had missed the object; some nook or corner had escaped him. In the morning he would examine every inch of the floor. White men did not kill each other for a string of glass beads.

He stirred the beads about on his palm, and presently swung them under the droplight. Beautifully cut, small and large beads alternating, and on the smaller a

graven letter he could not decipher. He observed some dark specks, and scrutinized them under the magnifying glass. Blood! His Oriental mind groped hopelessly. Blood! He could make nothing of it. A murderous quarrel over such as these!

For a long time Ling Foo sat on his stool, the image of Buddha contemplating the way. Outside the storm carried on vigorously, sending rattles into casements and shudders into doors. The wifely needle, a thread of silver fire, shuttled back and forth in the heavy brocade silk.

Glass beads! Trumpery! Ling Foo slid off the stool and shuffled back into the shop for his metal pipe.

Having pushed Ling Foo into this blind alley, out of which he was shortly to emerge, none the wiser, the Pagan Madonna swooped down upon the young woman with the ruddy hair and touched her with the impelling finger.

CHAPTER II

It was chance that brought Jane Norman into Shanghai. The British transport, bound from Vladivostok to Hong-Kong, was destined to swing on her mudhook forty-eight hours. So Jane, a Red Cross nurse, relieved and on the first leg of the journey home to the United States, decided to spend those forty-eight hours in Shanghai, see the sights and do a little shopping. Besides, she had seen nothing of China. On the way over, fourteen months since, she had come direct from San Francisco to the Russian port.

Jane was one of those suffocating adventurers whom circumstance had fenced in. In fancy she beat her hands against the bars of this cage that had no door, but through which she could see the caravans of dreams. Sea room and sky room were the want of her, and no matter which way she turned—bars. Her soul craved colour, distances, mountain peaks; and about all she had ever seen were the white walls of hospital wards. It is not adventure to tend the sick, to bind up wounds, to cheer the convalescing; it is a dull if angelic business.

In her heart of hearts Jane knew that she had accepted the hardships of the Siberian campaign with the secret hope that some adventure might befall her—only to learn that her inexorable cage had travelled along with her. Understand, this longing was not the outcome of romantical reading; it was in the marrow of her—inherent. She was not in search of Prince Charming. She rarely thought of love as other young women think of it. She had not written in her mind any particular event she wanted to happen; but she knew that there must be colour, distance, mountain peaks. A few days of tremendous excitement; and then she acknowledged that she would be quite ready to return to the old monotonous orbit.

The Great War to Jane had not been romance and adventure; her imagination, lively enough in other directions, had not falsely coloured the stupendous crime. She had accepted it instantly for what it was—pain, horror, death, hunger, and pestilence. She saw it as the genius of Vasili Vereshchagin and Émile Zola had seen it.

The pioneer—after all, what was it he was truly seeking? Freedom! And as soon as ever civilization caught up with him he moved on. Without understanding it, that was really all Jane wanted—freedom. Freedom from genteel poverty, freedom from the white walls of hospitals, freedom from exactly measured hours. Twenty four hours a day, all her own; that was what she wanted; twenty-four hours a day to do with as she pleased—to sleep in, play, laugh, sing, love in. Pioneers, explorers, adventurers—what else do they seek? Twenty-four hours a day, all their own!

At half after eight—about the time Ling Foo slid off his stool—the tender from the transport sloshed up to the customs jetty and landed Jane, a lone woman among a score of officers of various nationalities. But it really wasn't the customs jetty her foot touched; it was the outer rim of the whirligig.

Some officer had found an extra slicker for her and an umbrella. Possibly the officer in olive drab who assisted her to the nearest covered 'ricksha and directed the placement of her luggage.

"China!"

"Yes, ma'am. Mandarin coats and oranges, jade and jasmine, Pekingese and red chow dogs."

"Oh, I don't mean that kind!" she interrupted. "I should think these poor 'ricksha boys would die of exposure."

"Manchus are the toughest human beings on earth. I'll see you in the morning?"

"That depends," she answered, "upon the sun. If it rains I shall lie abed all day. A real bed! Honour bright, I've often wondered if I should ever see one again. Fourteen months in that awful world up there! Siberia!"

"You're a plucky woman."

"Somebody had to go. Armenia or Siberia, it was all the same to me if I could help." She held out her hand. "Good-night, captain. Thank you for all your kindness to me. Ten o'clock, if it is sunshiny. You're to show me the shops. Oh, if I were only rich!"

"And what would you do if you had riches?"

"I'd buy all the silk at Kai Fook's—isn't that the name?—and roll myself up in it like a cocoon."

The man laughed. He understood. A touch of luxury, after all these indescribable

months of dirt and disease, rain and snow and ice, among a people who lived like animals, who had the intelligence of animals. When he spoke the officer's voice was singularly grave:

"These few days have been very happy ones for me. At ten—if the sun shines. Good-night."

The 'rickshas in a wavering line began to roll along the Bund, which was practically deserted. The lights shone through slanting lattices of rain. Twice automobiles shot past, and Jane resented them. China, the flowery kingdom! She was touched with a little thrill of exultation. But oh, to get home, home! Never again would she long for palaces and servants and all that. The little wooden-frame house and the garden would be paradise enough. The crimson ramblers, the hollyhocks, the bachelor's-buttons, and the peonies, the twisted apple tree that never bore more than enough for one pie! Her throat tightened.

She hadn't heard from the mother in two months, but there would be mail at Hong-Kong. Letters and papers from home! Soon she would be in the sitting room recounting her experiences; and the little mother would listen politely, even doubtfully, but very glad to have her back. How odd it was! In the mother the spirit of adventure never reached beyond the garden gate, while in the daughter it had always been keen for the far places. And in her first adventure beyond the gate, how outrageously she had been cheated! She had stepped out of drab and dreary routine only to enter a drabber and drearier one.

What a dear boy this American officer was! He seemed to have been everywhere, up and down the world. He had hunted the white orchid of Borneo; he had gone pearl hunting in the South Seas; and he knew Monte Carlo, London, Paris, Naples, Cairo. But he never spoke of home. She had cleverly led up to it many times in the past month, but always he had unembarrassedly switched the conversation into another channel.

This puzzled her deeply. From the other Americans she never heard of anything but home, and they were all mad to get there. Yet Captain Dennison maintained absolute silence on that topic. Clean shaven, bronzed, tall, and solidly built, clear-eyed, not exactly handsome but engaging—what lay back of the man's peculiar reticence? Being a daughter of Eve, the mystery intrigued her profoundly.

Had he been a professional sailor prior to the war? It seemed to her if that had been the case he would have enlisted in the Navy. He talked like a man who had spent many years on the water; but in labour or in pleasure, he made it most

difficult for her to tell. Of his people, of his past, not Bluebeard's closet was more firmly shut. Still with a little smile she recalled that eventually a woman had opened that closet door, and hadn't had her head cut off, either.

He was poor like herself. That much was established. For he had said frankly that when he received his discharge from the Army he would have to dig up a job to get a meal ticket.

Dear, dear! Would she ever see a continuous stretch of sunshine again? How this rain tore into things! Shanghai! Wouldn't it be fun to have a thousand dollars to fling away on the shops? She wanted jade beads, silks—not the quality the Chinese made for export, but that heavy, shiver stuff that was as strong and shielding as wool—ivory carvings, little bronze Buddhas with prayer scrolls inside of them, embroidered jackets. But why go on? She had less than a hundred, and she would have to carry home gimcracks instead of curios.

They were bobbing over a bridge now, and a little way beyond she saw the lighted windows of the great caravansary, the Astor House. It smacked of old New York, where in a few weeks she would be stepping back into the dull routine of hospital work.

She paid the ricksha boy and ran into the lobby, stamping her feet and shaking the umbrella. The slicker was an overhead affair, and she had to take off her hat to get free. This act tumbled her hair about considerably, and Jane Norman's hair was her glory. It was the tint of the copper beech, thick, finespun, with intermittent twists that gave it a wavy effect.

Jane was not beautiful; that is, her face was not—it was comely. It was her hair that turned male heads. It was then men took note of her body. She was magnificently healthy, and true health is a magnet as powerful as that of the true pole. It drew toward her men and women and children. Her eyes were gray and serious; her teeth were white and sound. She was twenty-four.

There was, besides her hair, another thing that was beautiful—her voice. It answered like the G string of an old Strad to every emotion. One could tell instantly when she was merry or sad or serious or angry. She could not hide her emotions any more than she could hide her hair. As a war nurse she had been adored by the wounded men and fought over by the hospital commandants. But few men had dared make love to her. She had that peculiar gift of drawing and repelling without consciousness.

As the Chinese boy got her things together Jane espied the bookstall. American newspapers and American magazines! She packed four or five of each under her

arm, nodded to the boy, and followed the manager to the lift! She hoped the lights would hang so that she could lie in bed and read. Her brain was thirsty for a bit of romance.

Humming, she unpacked. She had brought one evening gown, hoping she might have a chance to wear it before it fell apart from disuse. She shook out the wrinkles and hung the gown in the closet. Lavender! She raised a fold of the gown and breathed in rapturously that homy perfume. She sighed. Perhaps she would have to lay away all her dreams in lavender.

A little later she sat before the dressing mirror, combing her hair. How it happened she never could tell, but she heard a crash upon the wood floor, and discovered her hand mirror shattered into a thousand splinters.

Seven years' bad luck! She laughed. Fate had blundered. The mirror had fallen seven years too late.

CHAPTER III

Outside the bar where the Whangpoo empties into the Yang-tse lay the thousand-ton yacht *Wanderer II*, out of New York. She was a sea whippet, and prior to the war her bowsprit had nosed into all the famed harbours of the seven seas. For nearly three years she had been in the auxiliary fleet of the United States Navy. She was still in war paint, owner's choice, but all naval markings had been obliterated. Her deck was flush. The house, pierced by the main companionway, was divided into three sections—a small lounging room, a wireless room, and the captain's cabin, over which stood the bridge and chart house. The single funnel rose between the captain's cabin and the wireless room, and had the rakish tilt of the racer. *Wanderer II* could upon occasion hit it up round twenty-one knots, for all her fifteen years. There was plenty of deck room fore and aft.

The crew's quarters were up in the forepeak. A passage-way divided the cook's galley and the dry stores, then came the dining salon. The main salon, with a fine library, came next. The port side of this salon was cut off into the owner's cabin. The main companionway dropped into the salon, a passage each side giving into the guest cabins. But rarely these days were there any guests on *Wanderer II*.

The rain slashed her deck, drummed on the boat canvas, and blurred the ports. The deck house shed webby sheets of water, now to port, now to starboard. The ladder was down, and a reflector over the platform advertised the fact that either the owner had gone into Shanghai or was expecting a visitor.

All about were rocking lights, yellow and green and red, from warships, tramps, passenger ships, freighters, barges, junks. The water was streaked with shaking lances of colour.

In the salon, under a reading lamp, sat a man whose iron-gray hair was patched with cowlicks. Combs and brushes produced no results, so the owner had had it clipped to a short pompadour. It was the skull of a fighting man, for all that frontally it was marked by a high intellectuality. This sort of head generally gives the possessor yachts like *Wanderer II*, tremendous bank accounts; the type that will always possess these things, despite the howl of the proletariat.

The face was sunburned. There was some loose flesh under the jaws. The nose was thick and pudgy, wide in the nostrils, like a lion's. The predatory are not invariably hawk-nosed. The eyes were blue—in repose, a warm blue—and there were feathery wrinkles at the corners which suggested that the toll-taker could laugh occasionally. The lips were straight and thin, the chin square—stubborn rather than relentless. A lonely man who was rarely lonesome.

His body was big. One has to be keen physically as well as mentally to make a real success of anything. His score might have tallied sixty. He was at the peak of life, but hanging there, you might say. To-morrow Anthony Cleigh might begin the quick downward journey.

He had made his money in mines, rails, ships; and now he was spending it prodigally. Prodigally, yes, but with caution and foresight. There was always a ready market for what he bought. If he paid a hundred thousand for a Rembrandt, rest assured he knew where he could dispose of it for the same amount. Cleigh was a collector by instinct. With him it was no fad; it was a passion, sometimes absurd. This artistic love of rare and beautiful creations was innate, not acquired. Dealers had long since learned their lesson, and no more sought to impose upon him.

He was not always scrupulous. In the dollar war he had been sternly honest, harshly just. In pursuit of objects of art he argued with his conscience that he was not injuring the future of widows and orphans when he bought some purloined masterpiece. Without being in the least aware of it, he was now the victim, not the master, of the passion. He would have purchased Raphael's Adoration of the Magi had some rogue been able to steal it from the Vatican.

Hanging from the ceiling and almost touching the floor, forward between the entrance to the dining salon and the owner's cabin, was a rug eight and a half by six. It was the first object that struck your eye as you came down the companionway. It was an animal rug, a museum piece; rubies and sapphires and emeralds and topaz melted into wool. It was under glass to fend off the sea damp. Fit to hang beside the Ardebil Carpet.

You never saw the rug except in this salon. Cleigh dared not hang it in his gallery at home in New York for the particular reason that the British Government, urged by the Viceroy of India, had been hunting high and low for the rug since 1911, when it had been the rightful property of a certain influential maharaja whose *Ai, ai!* had reverberated from Hind to Albion over the loss. Thus it will not be difficult to understand why Cleigh was lonely rather than

lonesome.

Queer lot. To be a true collector is to be as the opium eater: you keep getting in deeper and deeper, careless that the way back closes. After a while you cannot feel any kick in the stuff you find in the open marts, so you step outside the pale, where they sell the unadulterated. That's the true, dyed-in-the-wool collector. He no longer acquires a Vandyke merely to show to his friends; that he possesses it for his own delectation is enough. He becomes brother to Gaspard, miser; and like Gaspard he cannot be fooled by spurious gold.

Over the top of the rug was a curtain of waxed sailcloth that could be dropped by the pull of a cord, and it was generally dropped whenever Cleigh made port.

It was vaguely known that Cleigh possessed the maharaja's treasure. Millionaire collectors, agents, and famous salesroom auctioneers had heard indirectly; but they kept the information to themselves—not from any kindly spirit, however. Never a one of them but hoped some day he might lay hands upon the rug and dispose of it to some other madman. A rug valued at seventy thousand dollars was worth a high adventure. Cleigh, however, with cynical humour courted the danger.

There is a race of hardy dare-devils—super-thieves—of which the world hears little and knows little. These adventurers have actually robbed the Louvre, the Vatican, the Pitti Gallery, the palaces of kings and sultans. It was not so long ago that La Gioconda—Mona Lisa—was stolen from the Louvre. Cleigh had come from New York, thousands of miles, for the express purpose of meeting one of these amazing rogues—a rogue who, had he found a rich wallet on the pavements, would have moved heaven and earth to find the owner, but who would have stolen the Pope's throne had it been left about carelessly.

It is rather difficult to analyze the moral status of such a man, or that of the man ready to deal with him.

Cleigh lowered his book and assumed a listening attitude. Above the patter of the rain he heard the putt-putt of a motor launch. He laid the book on the table and reached for a black cigar, which he lit and began to puff quickly. Louder grew the panting of the motor. It stopped abruptly. Cleigh heard a call or two, then the creaking of the ladder. Two minutes later a man limped into the salon. He tossed his sou'wester to the floor and followed it with the smelly oilskin.

"Hello, Cleigh! Devil of a night!"

"Have a peg?" asked Cleigh.

“Never touch the stuff.”

“That’s so; I had forgotten.”

Cleigh never looked upon this man’s face without recalling del Sarto’s John the Baptist—supposing John had reached forty by the way of reckless passions. The extraordinary beauty was still there, but as though behind a blurred pane of glass.

“Well?” said Cleigh, trying to keep the eagerness out of his voice.

“There’s the devil to pay—all in a half hour.”

“You haven’t got it?” Cleigh blazed out.

“Morrissy—one of the squarest chaps in the world—ran amuck the last minute. Tried to double-cross me, and in the rough-and-tumble that followed he was more or less banged up. We hurried him to a hospital, where he lies unconscious.”

“But the beads!”

“Either he dropped them in the gutter, or they repose on the floor of a Chinese shop in Woosung Road. I’ll be there bright and early—never you fear. Don’t know what got into Morrissy. Of course I’ll look him up in the morning.”

“Thousands of miles—to hear a yarn like this!”

“Cleigh, we’ve done business for nearly twenty years. You can’t point out an instance where I ever broke my word.”

“I know,” grumbled Cleigh. “But I’ve gone to all this trouble, getting a crew and all that. And now you tell me you’ve let the beads slip through your fingers!”

“Pshaw! You’d have put the yacht into commission if you’d never heard from me. You were crazy to get to sea again. Any trouble picking up the crew?”

“No. But only four of the old crew—Captain Newton, of course, and Chief Engineer Svenson, Donaldson, and Morley. Still, it’s the best crew I ever had: young fellows off warships and transports, looking for comfortable berths and a little adventure that won’t entail hunting periscopes.”

“Plenty of coal?”

“Trust me for that. Four hundred tons in Manila, and I shan’t need more than a bucketful.”

“Who drew the plans for this yacht?” asked Cunningham, with a roving glance.

“I did.”

“Humph! Why didn’t you leave the job to someone who knew how? It’s a series of labyrinths on this deck.”

“I wanted a big main salon, even if I had to sacrifice some of the rest of the space. Besides, it keeps the crew out of sight.”

“And I should say out of touch, too.”

“I’m quite satisfied,” replied Cleigh, grumpily.

“Cleigh, I’m through.” Cunningham spread his hands.

“What are you through with?”

“Through with this game. I’m going in for a little sport. This string of beads was the wind-up. But don’t worry. They’ll be on board here to-morrow. You brought the gold?”

“Yes.”

The visitor paused in front of the rug. He sighed audibly.

“Scheherazade’s twinkling little feet! Lord, but that rug is a wonder! Cleigh, I’ve been offered eighty thousand for it.”

“What’s that?” Cleigh barked, half out of his chair.

“Eighty thousand by Eisenfeldt. I don’t know what crazy fool he’s dealing for, but he offers me eighty thousand.”

Cleigh got up and pressed a wall button. Presently a man stepped into the salon from the starboard passage. He was lank, with a lean, wind-bitten face and a hard blue eye.

“Dodge,” announced Cleigh, smiling, “this is Mr. Cunningham. I want you to remember him.”

Dodge agreed with a curt nod.

“If ever you see him in this cabin when I’m absent, you know what to do.”

“Yes, sir,” replied Dodge, with a wintry smile.

Cunningham laughed.

“So you carry a Texas gunman round with you now? After all, why not? You never can tell. But don’t worry, Cleigh. If ever I make up my mind to accept

Eisenfeldt’s offer, I’ll lift the yacht first.”

Cleigh laughed amusedly.

“How would you go about to steal a yacht like this?”

“That’s telling. Now I’ve got to get back to town. My advice for you is to come in to-morrow and put up at the Astor, where I can get in touch with you easily.”

“Agreed. That’s all, Dodge.”

The Texan departed, and Cunningham burst into laughter again.

“You’re an interesting man, Cleigh. On my word, you do need a guardian—gallivanting round the world with all these treasures. Queer what things we do when we try to forget. Is there any desperate plunge we wouldn’t take if we thought we could leave the Old Man of the Sea behind? You think you’re forgetting when you fly across half the world for a string of glass beads. I think I’m forgetting when I risk my neck getting hold of some half-forgotten Rembrandt. But there it is, always at our shoulder when we turn. One of the richest men in the world! Doesn’t that tingle you when you hear people whisper it as you pass? Just as I tingle when some woman gasps, ‘What a beautiful face!’ We both have our withered leg—only yours is invisible.”

The mockery on the face and the irony on the tongue of the man disturbed Cleigh. Supposing the rogue had his eye on that rug? To what lengths might he not go to possess it? And he had the infernal ingenuity of his master, Beelzebub. Or was he just trying Anthony Cleigh’s nerves to see whether they were sound or raw?

“But the beads!” he said.

“I’m sorry. Simply Morrissy ran amuck.”

“I am willing to pay half as much again.”

“You leave that to me—at the original price. No hold-up. Prices fixed, as the French say. Those beads will be on board here to-morrow. But why the devil do you carry that rug abroad?”

“To look at.”

“Mad as a hatter!” Cunningham picked up his oilskin and sou’wester. “Hang it, Cleigh, I’ve a notion to have a try at that rug just for the sport of it!”

“If you want to bump into Dodge,” replied the millionaire, dryly, “try it.”

“Oh, it will be the whole thing—the yacht—when I start action! Devil take the weather!”

“How the deuce did the beads happen to turn up here in Shanghai?”

“Morrissy brought them east from Naples. That’s why his work to-night puzzles me. All those weeks to play the crook in, and then to make a play for it when he knew he could not put it over! Brain storm—and when he comes to he’ll probably be sorry. Well, keep your eye on the yacht.” Cunningham shouldered into his oilskin. “To-morrow at the Astor, between three and five. By George, what a ripping idea—to steal the yacht! I’m mad as a hatter, too. Good-night, Cleigh.” And laughing, Cunningham went twisting up the companionway, into the rain and the dark.

Cleigh stood perfectly still until the laughter became an echo and the echo a memory.

CHAPTER IV

Morning and winnowed skies; China awake. The great black-and-gold banners were again fluttering in Nanking Road. Mongolian ponies clattered about, automobiles rumbled, ’rickshas jogged. Venders were everywhere, many with hot rice and bean curd. Street cleaners in bright-red cotton jackets were busy with the mud puddles. The river swarmed with sampans and barges and launches. There was only one lifeless thing in all Shanghai that morning—the German Club.

In the city hospital the man Morrissy, his head in bandages, smiled feebly into Cunningham’s face.

“Were you mad to try a game like that? What the devil possessed you? Three to one, and never a ghost of a chance. You never blew up like this before. What’s the answer?”

“Just struck me, Dick—one of those impulses you can’t help. I’m sorry. Ought to have known I’d have no chance, and you’d have been justified in croaking me. Just as I was in the act of handing them over to you the idea came to bolt. All that dough would keep me comfortably the rest of my life.”

“What happened to them?”

“Don’t know. After that biff on the coco I only wanted some place to crawl into. I had them in my hand when I started to run. Sorry.”

“Have they quizzed you?”

“Yes, but I made out I couldn’t talk. What’s the dope?”

“You were in a rough-and-tumble down the Chinese Bund, and we got you away. Play up to that.”

“All right. But, gee! I won’t be able to go with you.”

“If we have any luck, I’ll see you get a share.”

“That’s white. You were always a white man, Dick. I feel like a skunk. I knew I

couldn’t put it over, with the three of you at my elbow. What the devil got into me?”

“Any funds?”

“Enough to get me down to Singapore. Where do you want me to hang out?”

“Suit yourself. You’re out of this play—and it’s my last.”

“You’re quitting the big game?”

“Yes. What’s left of my schedule I’m going to run out on my own. So we probably won’t meet again for a long time, Morrissy. Here’s a couple of hundred to add to your store. If we find the beads I’ll send your share wherever you say.”

“Might as well be Naples. They’re off me in the States.”

“All right. Cook’s or the American Express?”

“Address me the Milan direct.”

Cunningham nodded.

“Well, good-bye.”

“Good-bye, Dick. I’m sorry I gummed it up.”

“I thought you’d be. Good-bye.”

But as Cunningham passed from sight, the man on the cot smiled ironically at the sun-splashed ceiling. A narrow squeak, but he had come through.

Cunningham, grateful for the sunshine, limped off toward Woosung Road, grotesquely but incredibly fast for a man with only one sound leg. He never used a cane, having the odd fancy that a stick would only emphasize his affliction. He might have taken a ’ricksha this morning, but he never thought of it until he had crossed Soochow Creek.

But Ling Foo was not in his shop and the door was locked. Cunningham explored the muddy gutters all the way from Ling Foo’s to Moy’s tea house, where the meeting had taken place. He found nothing, and went into Moy’s to wait. Ling Foo would have to pass the restaurant. A boy who knew the merchant stood outside to watch.

Jane woke at nine. The brightness of the window shade told her that the sun was clear. She sprang out of bed, a trill of happiness in her throat. The shops! Oh, the beautiful, beautiful shops!

“China, China, China!” she sang.

She threw up the shade and squinted for a moment. The sun in the heavens and the reflection on the Whangpoo were blinding. The sampans made her think of ants, darting, scuttling, wheeling.

“Oh, the beautiful shops!”

Of all the things in the world—this side of the world—worth having, nothing else seemed comparable to jade—a jade necklace. Not the stone that looked like dull marble with a greenish pallor—no. She wanted the deep apple-green jade, the royal, translucent stone. And she knew that she had as much chance of possessing the real article as she had of taking her pick of the scattered Romanoff jewels.

Jane held to the belief that when you wished for something you couldn’t have it was niggardly not to wish magnificently.

She dressed hurriedly, hastened through her breakfast of tea and toast and jam, and was about to sally forth upon the delectable adventure, when there came a gentle knock on the door. She opened it, rather expecting a boy to announce that Captain Dennison was below. Outside stood a Chinaman in a black skirt and a jacket of blue brocade. He was smiling and kotowing.

“Would the lady like to see some things?”

“Come in,” said Jane, readily.

Ling Foo deposited his pack on the floor and opened it. He had heard that a single woman had come in the night before and, shrewd merchant that he was, he had wasted no time.

“Furs!” cried Jane, reaching down for the Manchurian sable. She blew aside the top fur and discovered the smoky down beneath. She rubbed her cheek against it ecstatically. She wondered what devil’s lure there was about furs and precious stones that made women give up all the world for them. Was that madness hidden away in her somewhere?

“How much?”

She knew beforehand that the answer would render the question utterly futile.

“A hundred Mex,” said Ling Foo. “Very cheap.”

“A hundred Mex?” That would be nearly fifty dollars in American money. With a sigh she dropped the fur. “Too much for me. How much is that Chinese

jacket?”

“Twenty Mex.”

Jane carried it over to the window.

“I will give you fifteen for it.”

“All right.”

Ling Foo was willing to forego his usual hundred per cent. profit in order to start the day with a sale. Then he spread out the grass linen.

Jane went into raptures over some of the designs, but in the end she shook her head. She wanted something from Shanghai, something from Hong-Kong, something from Yokohama. If she followed her inclination she would go broke here and now.

“Have you any jade? Understand, I’m not buying. Just want to see some.”

“No, lady; but I can bring you some this afternoon.”

“I warn you, I’m not buying.”

“I shall be glad to show the lady. What time shall I call?”

“Oh, about tea time.”

Ling Foo reached inside his jacket and produced a string of cut-glass beads.

“How pretty! What are they?”

“Glass.”

Jane hooked the string round her neck and viewed the result in the mirror. The sunshine, striking the facets, set fire to the beads. They were really lovely. She took a sudden fancy to them.

“How much?”

“Four Mex.” It was magnanimous of Ling Foo.

“I’ll take them.” They were real, anyhow. “Bring your jade at tea time and call for Miss Norman. I can’t give you any more time.”

“Yes, lady.”

Ling Foo bundled up his assorted merchandise and trotted away infinitely relieved. The whole affair was off his hands. In no wise could the police bother him now. He knew nothing; he would know nothing until he met his honourable

ancestors.

From ten until three Jane, under the guidance of Captain Dennison, stormed the shops on the Bunds and Nanking Road; but in returning to the Astor House she realized with dismay that she had expended the major portion of her ammunition in this offensive. She doubted if she would have enough to buy a kimono in Japan. It was dreadful to be poor and to have a taste for luxury and an eye for beauty.

“Captain,” she said as they sat down to tea, “I’m going to ask one more favour.”

“What is it?”

“A Chinaman is coming with some jade. If I’m alone with him I’m afraid I’ll buy something, and I really can’t spend another penny in Shanghai.”

“I see. Want me to shoo him off in case his persistence is too much for you.”

“Exactly. It’s very nice of you.”

“Greatest pleasure in the world. I wish the job was permanent—shooing ’em away from you.”

She sent him a quick sidelong glance, but he was smiling. Still, there was something in the tone that quickened her pulse. All nonsense, of course; both of them stony, as the Britishers put it; both of them returning to the States for bread and butter.

“Why didn’t you put up here?” she asked. “There is plenty of room.”

“Well, I thought perhaps it would be better if I stayed at the Palace.”

“Nonsense! Who cares?”

“I do.” And this time he did not smile.

“I suppose my Chinaman will be waiting in the lobby.”

“Let’s toddle along, then.”

Dennison followed her out of the tea room, his gaze focused on the back of her neck, and it was just possible to resist the mad inclination to bend and kiss the smooth, ivory-tinted skin. He was not ready to analyze the impulse for fear he might find how deep down the propellant was. A woman, young in the heart, young in the body, and old in the mind, disillusioned but not embittered, unafraid, resourceful, sometimes beautiful and sometimes plain, but always splendidly alive.

Perhaps the wisest move on his part was to avoid her companionship, invent some excuse to return by the way of Manila, pretend he had transfer orders. To spend twenty-one days on the same ship with her and to keep his head seemed a bit too strong. Had there been something substantial reaching down from the future—a dependable job—he would have gone with her joyously. But he had not a dollar beyond his accumulated pay; that would melt quickly enough when he reached the States. He was thirty; he would have to hustle to get anywhere by the time he was forty. His only hope was that back in the States they were calling for men who knew how to manage men, and he had just been discharged—or recalled for that purpose—from the best school for that. But they were calling for specialists, too, and he was a jack of all trades and master of none.

He knew something about art, something about music, something about languages; but he could not write. He was a fair navigator, but not fair enough for a paying job. He could take an automobile engine apart and reassemble it with skill, but any chauffeur could do that.

“Hadn’t we better go into the parlour?” he heard Jane asking as they passed out.

“We’ll be alone there. It will be easier for you to resist temptation, I suppose, if there isn’t any audience. Audiences are nuisances. Men have killed each other because they feared the crowd might mistake common sense for the yellow streak.”

Instantly the thought leaped into the girl’s mind: Supposing such an event lay back of this strange silence about his home and his people? She recalled the ruthless ferocity with which he had broken up a street fight between American and Japanese soldiers one afternoon in Vladivostok. Supposing he had killed someone? But she had to repudiate this theory. No officer in the United States Army could cover up anything like that.

“Come to the parlour,” she said to Ling Foo, who was smiling and kotowing.

Ling Foo picked up his blackwood box. Inwardly he was not at all pleased at the prospect of having an outsider witness the little business transaction he had in mind. Obliquely he studied the bronze mask. There was no eagerness, no curiosity, no indifference. It struck Ling Foo that there was something Oriental in this officer’s repose. But five hundred gold! Five hundred dollars in American gold—for a string of glass beads!

He set the blackwood box on a stand, opened it, and spread out jade earrings, rings, fobs, bracelets, strings. The girl’s eagerness caused Ling Foo to sigh with relief. It would be easy.

“I warned you that I should not buy anything,” said Jane, ruefully. “But even if I had the money I would not buy this kind of a jade necklace. I should want apple-green.”

“Ah!” said Ling Foo, shocked with delight. “Perhaps we can make a bargain. You have those glass beads I sold you this morning?”

“Yes, I am wearing them.”

Jane took off her mink-fur collaret, which was sadly worn.

Ling Foo’s hand went into his box again. From a piece of cotton cloth he drew forth a necklace of apple-green jade, almost perfect.

“Oh, the lovely thing!” Jane seized the necklace. “To possess something like this! Isn’t it glorious, captain?”

“Let me see it.” Dennison inspected the necklace carefully. “It is genuine. Where did you get this?”

Ling Foo shrugged.

“Long ago, during the Boxer troubles, I bought it from a sailor.”

“Ah, probably loot from the Peking palace. How much is it worth?”

Murder blazed up in Ling Foo’s heart, but his face remained smilingly bland.

“What I can get for it. But if the lady wishes I will give it to her in exchange for the glass beads. I had no right to sell the beads,” Ling Foo went on with a deprecating gesture. “I thought the man who owned them would never claim them. But he came this noon. Something belonging to his ancestor—and he demands it.”

“Trade them? Good heavens, yes! Of all things! Here!” Jane unclasped the beads and thrust them toward Ling Foo’s eager claw.

But Dennison reached out an intervening hand.

“Just a moment, Miss Norman. What’s the game?” he asked of Ling Foo.

Ling Foo silently cursed all this meddler’s ancestors from Noah down, but his face expressed only mild bewilderment.

“Game?”

“Yes. Why didn’t you offer some other bits of jade? This string is worth two or three hundred gold; and this is patently a string of glass beads, handsomely cut,

but nevertheless plain glass. What's the idea?"

"But I have explained!" protested Ling Foo. "The string is not mine. I have in honour to return it."

"Yes, yes! That's all very well. You could have told this lady that and offered to return her money. But a jade necklace like this one! No, Miss Norman; my advice is to keep the beads until we learn what's going on."

"But to let that jade go!" she wailed comically.

"The lady may keep the jade until to-morrow. She may have the night to decide. This is no hurry."

Ling Foo saw that he had been witless indeed. The thought of raising the bid of five hundred gold to a thousand or more had bemused him, blunted his ordinary cunning.

Inwardly he cursed his stupidity. But the appearance of a witness to the transaction had set him off his balance. The officer had spoken shrewdly. The young woman would have returned the beads in exchange for the sum she had paid for them, and she would never have suspected—nor the officer, either—that the beads possessed unknown value. Still, the innocent covetousness, plainly visible in her eyes, told him that the game was not entirely played out; there was yet a dim chance. Alone, without the officer to sway her, she might be made to yield.

"The lady may wear the beads to-night if she wishes. I will return for them in the morning."

"But this does not explain the glass beads," said the captain.

"I will bring the real owner with me in the morning," volunteered Ling Foo. "He sets a high value on them through sentiment. Perhaps I was hasty."

Dennison studied the glass beads. Perhaps his suspicions were not on any too solid ground. Yet a string of jade beads like that in exchange! Something was in the air.

"Well," said he, smiling at the appeal in the girl's eyes, "I don't suppose there will be any harm in keeping them overnight. We'll have a chance to talk it over."

Ling Foo's plan of attack matured suddenly. He would call near midnight. He would somehow manage to get to her door. She would probably hand him the glass beads without a word of argument. Then he would play his game with the

man who limped. He smiled inwardly as he put his wares back into the carved box. A thousand gold! At any rate, he would press the man into a corner. There was something about this affair that convinced Ling Foo that his noon visitor would pay high for two reasons: one, to recover the glass beads; the other, to keep out of the reach of the police.

Ling Foo considered that he was playing his advantage honestly. He hadn't robbed or murdered anybody. A business deal had slipped into his hands and it was only logical to make the most of it. He kotowed several times on the way out of the parlour, conscious, however, of the searching eyes of the man who had balked him.

"Well!" exclaimed Jane. "What in the world do you suppose is going on?"

"Lord knows, but something is going on. You couldn't buy a jade necklace like that under five hundred in New York. This apple-green seldom runs deep; the colour runs in veins and patches. The bulk of the quarried stone has the colour and greasy look of raw pork. No; I shouldn't put it on just now, not until you have washed it. You never can tell. I'll get you a germicide at the English apothecary's. Glass beads! Humph! Hanged if I can make it out. Glass; Occidental, too; maybe worth five dollars in the States. Put it on again. It's a great world over here. You're always stumbling into something unique. I'm coming over to dine with you to-night."

"Splendid!"

Jane put the jade into her hand-bag, clasped the glass beads round her neck again, and together she and Dennison walked toward the parlour door. As they reached it a tall, vigorous, elderly man with a gray pompadour started to enter. He paused, with an upward tilt of the chin, but the tilt was the result of pure astonishment. Instinctively Jane turned to her escort. His chin was tilted, too, and his expression was a match for the stranger's. Later, recalling the tableau, which lasted but a moment, it occurred to Jane that two men, suddenly confronted by a bottomless pit, might have expressed their dumfounderment in exactly this fashion.

In the lobby she said rather breathlessly: "You knew each other and didn't speak! Who is he?"

The answer threw her into a hypnotic state.

"My father," said Dennison, quietly.

CHAPTER V

Father and son! For a while Jane had the sensation of walking upon unsubstantial floors, of seeing unsubstantial objects. The encounter did not seem real, human. Father and son, and they had not rushed into each other's arms! No matter what had happened in the past, there should have been some human sign other than astonishment. At the very least two or three years had separated them. Just stared for a moment, and passed on!

Hypnotism is a fact; a word or a situation will create this peculiar state of mind. Father and son! The phrase actually hypnotized Jane, and she remained in the clutch of it until hours later, which may account for the amazing events into which she permitted herself to be drawn. Father and son! Her actions were normal; her mental state was not observable; but inwardly she retained no clear recollection of the hours that intervened between this and the astonishing climax. As from a distance, she heard the voice of the son:

"Looks rum to you, no doubt. But I can't tell you the story—at least not now. It's the story of a tomfool. I had no idea he was on this side. I haven't laid eyes on him in seven years. Dinner at seven. I'll have that germicide sent up to your room."

The captain nodded abruptly and made off toward the entrance.

Jane understood. He wanted to be alone—to catch his breath, as it were. At any rate, that was a human sign that something besides astonishment was stirring within. So she walked mechanically over to the bookstall and hazily glanced at the backs of the new novels, riffled the pages of a magazine; and to this day she cannot recall whether the clerk was a man or a woman, white or brown or yellow, for a hand touched her sleeve lightly, compelling her attention. Dennison's father stood beside her.

"Pardon me, but may I ask you a question?"

Jane dropped the fur collaret in her confusion. They both stooped for it, and collided gently; but in rising the man glimpsed the string of glass beads.

“Thank you,” said Jane, as she received the collaret. “What is it you wish to ask of me?”

“The name of the man you were with.”

“Dennison; his own and yours—probably,” she said with spirit, for she took sides in that moment, and was positive that the blame for the estrangement lay with the father. The level, unagitated voice irritated her; she resented it. He wasn’t human!

“My name is Cleigh—Anthony Cleigh. Thank you.”

Cleigh bowed politely and moved away. Behind that calm, impenetrable mask, however, was turmoil, kaleidoscopic, whirling too quickly for the brain to grasp or hold definite shapes. The boy here! And the girl with those beads round her throat! For the subsidence of this turmoil it was needful to have space; so Cleigh strode out of the lobby into the fading day, made his way across the bridge, and sought the Bund. He forgot all about his appointment with Cunningham.

He lit a cigar and walked on and on, oblivious of the cries of the ’ricksha boys, importunate beggars, the human currents that broke and flowed each side of him. The boy here in Shanghai! And that girl with those beads round her throat! It was as though his head had become a tom-tom in the hands of fate. The drumming made it impossible to think clearly. It was the springing up of the electric lights that brought him back to actualities. He looked at his watch.

He had been tramping up and down the Bund for two solid hours.

And now came, clearly defined, the idea for which he had been searching. He indulged in a series of rumbling chuckles. You will have heard such a sound in the forest when a stream suddenly takes on a merry mood—broken water.

To return to Jane, whom Cleigh had left in a state of growing hypnosis. She was able to act and think intelligently, but the spell lay like a fog upon her will, enervating it. She grasped the situation clearly enough; it was tremendous. She had heard of Anthony Cleigh. Who in America had not? Father and son, and they had passed each other without a nod! Had she not been a witness to the episode, she would not have believed such a performance possible.

Through the fog burst a clear point of light. This was not the first time she had encountered Anthony Cleigh. Where had she seen him before, and under what circumstance? Later, when she was alone, she would dig into her storehouse of recollection. Certainly she must bring back that episode. One thing, she had not known him as Anthony Cleigh.

Father and son, and they had not spoken! It was this that beat persistently upon her mind. What dramatic event had created such a condition? After seven years! These two, strong mentally and physically, in a private war! She understood now how it was that Dennison had been able to tell her about Monte Carlo, the South Sea Islands, Africa, Asia; he had been his father's companion on the yacht.

Mechanically she approached the lift. In her room all her actions were more or less mechanical. From the back of her mind somewhere came the order to her hands. She took down the evening gown. This time the subtle odour of lavender left her untouched. To be beautiful, to wish that she were beautiful! Why? Her hair was lovely; her neck and arms were lovely; but her nose wasn't right, her mouth was too large, and her eyes missed being either blue or hazel. Why did she wish to be beautiful?

Always to be poor, to be hanging on the edge of things, never enough of this or that—genteel poverty. She had inherited the condition, as had her mother before her—gentlefolk who had to count the pennies. Her two sisters—really handsome girls—had married fairly well; but one lived in St. Louis and the other in Seattle, so she never saw them any more.

Tired. That was it. Tired of the war for existence; tired of the following odours of antiseptics; tired of the white walls of hospitals, the sight of pain. On top of all, the level dullness of the past, the leaden horror of these months in Siberia. She laughed brokenly. Gardens scattered all over the world, and she couldn't find one—the gardens of imagination! Romance everywhere, and she never could touch any of it!

Marriage. Outside of books, what was it save a legal contract to cook and bear children in exchange for food and clothes? The humdrum! She flung out her arms with a gesture of rage. She had been cheated, as always. She had come to this side of the world expecting colour, movement, adventure. The Orient of the novels she had read—where was it? Drab skies, drab people, drab work! And now to return to America, to exchange one drab job for another! Nadir, always nadir, never any zenith!

Her bitter cogitations were interrupted by a knock on the door. She threw on her kimono and answered. A yellow hand thrust a bottle toward her. It would be the wash for the jade. She emptied the soap dish, cleaned it, poured in the germicide, and dropped the jade necklace into the liquid. She left it there while she dressed.

Dennison Cleigh, returning to the States to look for a job! Nothing she had ever read seemed quite so fantastic. She paused in her dressing to stare at some inner

thought which she projected upon the starred curtain of the night beyond her window. Supposing they had wanted to fling themselves into each other's arms and hadn't known how? She had had a glimpse or two of Dennison's fierce pride. Naturally he had inherited it from his father. Supposing they were just stupid rather than vengeful? Poor, foolish human beings!

She proceeded with her toilet. Finishing that, she cleansed the jade necklace with soap and water, then realized that she would not be able to wear it, because the string would be damp. So she put on the glass beads instead—another move by the Madonna of the Pagan. Jane Norman was to have her fling.

Dennison was in the lobby waiting for her. He gave a little gasp of delight as he beheld her. Of whom and of what did she remind him? Somebody he had seen, somebody he had read about? For the present it escaped him. Was she handsome? He could not say; but there was that in her face that was always pulling his glance and troubling him for the want of knowing why.

The way she carried herself among men had always impressed him. Fearless and friendly, and with deep understanding, she created respect wherever she went. Men, toughened and coarsened by danger and hardship, somehow understood that Jane Norman was not the sort to make love to because one happened to be bored. On the other hand, there was something in her that called to every man, as a candle calls to the moth; only there were no burnt wings; there seemed to be some invisible barrier that kept the circling moths beyond the zone of incineration.

Was there fire in her? He wondered. That copper tint in her hair suggested it. Magnificent! And what the deuce was the colour of her eyes? Sometimes there was a glint of topaz, or cornflower sapphire, gray agate; they were the most tantalizing eyes he had ever gazed into.

"Hungry?" he greeted her.

"For fourteen months!"

"Do you know what?"

"What?"

"I'd give a year of my life for a club steak and all the regular fixings."

"That isn't fair! You've gone and spoiled my dinner."

"Wishy-washy chicken! How I hate tin cans! Pancakes and maple syrup! What?"

“Sliced tomatoes with sugar and vinegar!”

“You don’t mean that!”

“I do! I don’t care how plebeian it is. Bread and butter and sliced tomatoes with sugar and vinegar—better than all the ice cream that ever was! Childhood ambrosia! For mercy’s sake, let’s get in before all the wings are gone!”

They entered the huge dining room with its pattering Chinese boys—entered it laughing—while all the time there was at bottom a single identical thought—the father.

Would they see him again? Would he be here at one of the tables? Would a break come, or would the affair go on eternally?

“I know what it is!” he cried, breaking through the spell.

“What?”

“Ever read ‘Phra the Phœnician’?”

“Why, yes. But what is what?”

“For days I’ve been trying to place you. You’re the British heroine!”

She thought for a moment to recall the physical attributes of this heroine.

“But I’m not red-headed!” she denied, indignantly.

“But it is! It is the most beautiful head of hair I ever laid eyes on.”

“And that is the beginning and the end of me,” she returned with a little catch in her voice.

The knowledge bore down upon her that her soul was thirsty for this kind of talk. She did not care whether he was in earnest or not.

“The beginning, but not the end of you. Your eyes are fine, too. They keep me wondering all the time what colour they really are.”

“That’s very nice of you.”

“And the way you carry yourself!”

“Good gracious!”

“You look as if you had come down from Olympus and had lost the way back.”

“Captain, you’re a dear! I’ve just been wild to have a man say foolish things to me.” She knew that she might play with this man; that he would never venture

across the line. “Men have said foolish things to me, but always when I was too busy to bother. To-night I haven’t anything in this wide world to do but listen. Go on.”

He laughed, perhaps a little ruefully.

“Is there any fire in you, I wonder?”

“Well?”—tantalizing.

“Honestly, I should like to see you in a rage. I’ve been watching you for weeks, and have found myself irritated by that perpetual calm of yours. That day of the riot you stood on the curb as unconcerned as though you had been witnessing a movie.”

“It is possible that it is the result of seeing so much pain and misery. I have been a machine too long. I want to be thrust into the middle of some fairy story before I die. I have never been in love, in a violent rage. I haven’t known anything but work and an abiding discontent. Red hair——”

“But it really isn’t red. It’s like the copper beech in the sunshine, full of glowing embers.”

“Are you a poet?”

“On my word, I don’t know what I am.”

“There is fire enough in you. The way you tossed about our boys and the Japs!”

“In the blood. My father and I used to dress for dinner, but we always carried the stone axe under our coats. We were both to blame, but only a miracle will ever bring us together. I’m sorry I ran into him. It brings the old days crowding back.”

“I’m sorry.”

“Oh, I’ll survive! Somewhere there’s a niche for me, and sooner or later I’ll find it.”

“He stopped me in the lobby after you left. Wanted to know what name you were using. I told him rather bluntly—and he went on. Something in his voice—made me want to strike him!”

Dennison balanced a fork on a finger.

“Funny old world, isn’t it?”

“Very. But I’ve seen him somewhere before. Perhaps in a little while it will come back.... What an extraordinarily handsome man!”

“Where?”—with a touch of brusqueness.

“Sitting at the table on your left.”

The captain turned. The man at the other table caught his eye, smiled, and rose. As he approached Jane noticed with a touch of pity that the man limped oddly. His left leg seemed to slue about queerly just before it touched the floor.

“Well, well! Captain Cleigh!”

Dennison accepted the proffered hand, but coldly.

“On the way back to the States?”

“Yes.”

“The *Wanderer* is down the river. I suppose you’ll be going home on her?”

“My orders prevent that.”

“Run into the old boy?”

“Naturally,” with a wry smile at Jane. “Miss Norman, Mr. Cunningham. Where the shark is, there will be the pilot fish.”

The stranger turned his eyes toward Jane’s. The beauty of those dark eyes startled her. Fire opals! They seemed to dig down into her very soul, as if searching for something. He bowed gravely and limped back to his table.

“I begin to understand,” was Dennison’s comment.

“Understand what?”

“All this racket about those beads. My father and this man Cunningham in the same town generally has significance. It is eight years since I saw Cunningham. Of course I could not forget his face, but it’s rather remarkable that he remembered mine. He is—if you tear away the romance—nothing more or less than a thief.”

“A thief?”—astonishedly.

“Not the ordinary kind; something of a prince of thieves. He makes it possible—he and his ilk—for men like my father to establish private museums. And now I’m going to ask you to do me a favour. It’s just a hunch. Hide those beads the moment you reach your room. They are yours as much as any one’s, and they may bring you a fancy penny—if my hunch is worth anything. Hang that pigtail, for getting you mixed up in this! I don’t like it.”

Jane’s hand went slowly to her throat; and even as her fingers touched the beads, now warm from contact, she became aware of something electrical which drew her eyes compellingly toward the man with the face of Ganymede and the limp of Vulcan. Four times she fought in vain, during dinner, that drawing, burning glance—and it troubled her. Never before had a man’s eye forced hers in this indescribable fashion. It was almost as if the man had said, “Look at me! Look at me!”

After coffee she decided to retire, and bade Dennison good-night. Once in her room she laid the beads on the dresser and sat down by the window to recast the remarkable ending of this day. From the stars to the room, from the room to the stars, her glance roved uneasily. Had she fallen upon an adventure? Was Dennison’s theory correct regarding the beads? She rose and went to the dresser, inspecting the beads carefully. Positively glass! That Anthony Cleigh should be seeking a string of glass beads seemed arrant nonsense.

She hung the beads on her throat and viewed the result in the mirror. It was then that her eye met a golden glint. She turned to see what had caused it, and was astonished to discover on the floor near the molding that poor Chinaman’s brass hand warmer. She picked it up and turned back the jigsawed lid. The receptacle was filled with the ash of punk and charcoal.

There came a knock on the door.

CHAPTER VI

Now, then, the further adventures of Ling Foo of Woosung Road. He was an honest Chinaman. He would beat you down if he were buying, or he would overcharge you if he were selling. There was nothing dishonest in this; it was legitimate business. He was only shrewd, not crooked. But on this day he came into contact with a situation that tried his soul, and tricked him into overplaying his hand.

That morning he had returned to his shop in a contented frame of mind. He stood clear of the tragedy of the night before. That had never happened; he had dreamed it. Of course he would be wondering whether or not the man had died.

When Ling Foo went forth with his business in his pack he always closed the shop. Here in upper Woosung Road it would not have paid him to hire a clerk. His wife, obedient creature though she was, spoke almost no pidgin—business—English; and besides that, she was a poor bargainer.

It was hard by noon when he let himself into the shop. The first object he sought was his metal pipe. Two puffs, and the craving was satisfied. He took up his counting rack and slithered the buttons back and forth. He had made three sales at the Astor and two at the Palace, which was fair business, considering the times.

A shadow fell across the till top. Ling Foo raised his slanted eyes. His face was like a graven Buddha's, but there was a crackling in his ears as of many fire-crackers. There he stood—the man with the sluing walk! Ling Foo still wore a queue, so his hair could not very well stand on end.

"You speak English."

It was not a question; it was a statement.

Ling Foo shrugged.

"Can do."

"Cut out the pidgin. Your neighbour says you speak English fluently. At Moy's

tea-house restaurant they say that you lived in California for several years."

"Twelve," said Ling Foo with a certain dry humour.

"Why didn't you admit me last night?"

"Shop closed."

"Where is it?"

"Where is what?" asked the merchant.

"The string of glass beads you found on the floor last night."

A sense of disaster rolled over the Oriental. Had he been overhasty in ridding himself of the beads? Patience! Wait a bit! Let the stranger open the door to the mystery.

"Glass beads?" he repeated, ruminatively.

"I will give you ten gold for them."

Ha! Now they were getting somewhere. Ten gold! Then those devil beads had some worth outside a jeweller's computations? Ling Foo smiled and spread his yellow hands.

"I haven't them."

"Where are they?"

The Oriental loaded his pipe and fired it.

"Where is the man who stumbled in here last night?" he countered.

"His body is probably in the Yang-tse by now," returned Cunningham, grimly.

He knew his Oriental. He would have to frighten this Chinaman badly, or engage his cupidity to a point where resistance would be futile.

There was a devil brooding over his head. Ling Foo felt it strangely. His charms were in the far room. He would have to fend off the devil without material aid, and that was generally a hopeless job. With that twist of Oriental thought which will never be understood by the Occidental, Ling Foo laid down his campaign.

"I found it, true. But I sold it this morning."

"For how much?"

"Four Mex."

Cunningham laughed. It was actually honest laughter, provoked by a lively sense

of humour.

“To whom did you sell it, and where can I find the buyer?”

Ling Foo picked up the laughter, as it were, and gave his individual quirk to it.

“I see,” said Cunningham, gravely.

“So?”

“Get that necklace back for me and I will give you a hundred gold.”

“Five hundred.”

“You saw what happened last night.”

“Oh, you will not beat in my head,” Ling Foo declared, easily. “What is there about this string of beads that makes it worth a hundred gold—and life worth nothing?”

“Very well,” said Cunningham, resignedly. “I am a secret agent of the British Government. That string of glass beads is the key to a code relating to the uprisings in India. The loss of it will cost a great deal of money and time. Bring it back here this afternoon, and I will pay down five hundred gold.”

“I agree,” replied Ling Foo, tossing his pipe into the alcove. “But no one must follow me. I do not trust you. There is nothing to prevent you from robbing me in the street and refusing to pay me. And where will you get five hundred gold? Gold has vanished. Even the leaf has all but disappeared.”

Cunningham dipped his hand into a pocket, and magically a dozen double eagles rolled and vibrated upon the counter, sending into Ling Foo’s ears that music so peculiar to gold. Many days had gone by since he had set his gaze upon the yellow metal. His hand reached down—only to feel—but not so quickly as the white hand, which scooped up the coin trickily, with the skill of a prestidigitator.

“Five hundred gold, then. But are you sure you can get the beads back?”

Ling Foo smiled.

“I have a way. I will meet you in the lobby of the Astor House at five”; and he bowed with Oriental courtesy.

“Agreed. All aboveboard, remember, or you will feel the iron hand of the British Government.”

Ling Foo doubted that, but he kept this doubt to himself.

“I warn you, I shall go armed. You will bring the gold to the Astor House. If I see you after I depart——”

“Lord love you, once that code key is in my hands you can go to heaven or the devil, as you please! We live in rough times, Ling Foo.”

“So we do. There is a stain on the floor, about where you stand. It is the blood of a white man.”

“What would you, when a comrade attempts to deceive you?”

“At five in the lobby of the Astor House. Good day,” concluded Ling Foo, fingering the buttons on his counting rack.

Cunningham limped out into the cold sunshine. Ling Foo shook his head. So like a boy’s, that face! He shuddered slightly. He knew that a savage devil lay ready behind that handsome mask—he had seen it last night. But five hundred gold—for a string of glass beads!

Ling Foo was an honest man. He would pay you cash for cash in a bargain. If he overcharged you that was your fault, but he never sold you imitations on the basis that you would not know the difference. If he sold you a Ming jar—for twice what it was worth in the great marts—experts would tell you that it was Ming. He had some jade of superior quality—the translucent deep apple-green. He never carried it about; he never even spoke of it unless he was sure that the prospective customer was wealthy.

His safe was in a corner of his workshop. An American yegg would have laughed at it, opened it as easily as a ripe peach; but in this district it was absolute security. Ling Foo was obliged to keep a safe, for often he had valuable pearls to take care of, sometimes to put new vigour in dying lustre, sometimes to peel a pearl on the chance that under the dull skin lay the gem.

He trotted to the front door and locked it; then he trotted into his workshop, planning. If the glass beads were worth five hundred, wasn’t it likely they would be worth a thousand? If this man who limped had stuck to the hundred Ling Foo knew that he would have surrendered eventually. But the ease with which the stranger made the jump from one to five convinced Ling Foo that there could be no harm in boosting five to ten. If there was a taint of crookedness anywhere, that would be on the other side. Ling Foo knew where the beads were, and he would transfer them for one thousand gold. Smart business, nothing more than that. He had the whip hand.

Out of his safe he took a blackwood box, beautifully carved, Cantonese.

Headbands, earrings, rings, charms, necklaces, tomb ornaments, some of them royal, all of them nearly as ancient as the hills of Kwanlun, from which most of them had been quarried—jade. He trickled them from palm to palm and one by one returned the objects to the box. In the end he retained two strings of beads so alike that it was difficult to discern any difference. One was Kwanlun jade, royal loot; the other was a copy in Nanshan stone. The first was priceless, worth what any fool collector was ready to pay; the copy was worth perhaps a hundred gold. Held to the light, there was a subtle difference; but only an expert could have told you what this difference was. The royal jade did not catch the light so strongly as the copy; the touch of human warmth had slightly dulled the stone.

Ling Foo transferred the copy to a purse he wore attached to his belt under the blue jacket. The young woman would never be able to resist the jade. She would return the glass instantly. A thousand gold, less the cost of the jade! Good business!

But for once his Oriental astuteness overreached, as has been seen. And to add to his discomfiture, he never again saw the copy of the Kwanlun, representing the virtue of the favourite wife.

“I am an honest man,” he said. “The tombs of my ancestors are not neglected. When I say I could not get it I speak the truth. But I believe I can get it later.”

“How?” asked Cunningham. They were in the office, or bureau, of the Astor House, which the manager had turned over to them for the moment. “Remember, the arm of the British Government is long.”

Ling Foo shrugged.

“Being an honest man, I do not fear. She would have given it to me but for that officer. He knew something about jade.”

Cunningham nodded.

“Conceivably he would.” He jingled the gold in his pocket. “How do you purpose to get the beads?”

“Go to the lady’s room late. I left the jade with her. Alone, she will not resist. I saw it in her eyes. But it will be difficult.”

“I see. For you to get into the hotel late. I’ll arrange that with the manager. You will be coming to my room. What floor is her room on?”

“The third.”

“The same as mine. That falls nicely. Return then at half after ten. You will come to my room for the gold.”

Ling Foo saw his thousand shrink to the original five hundred, but there was no help for it. At half after ten he knocked on the panel of Jane’s door and waited. He knocked again; still the summons was not answered. The third assault was emphatic. Ling Foo heard footsteps, but behind him. He turned. The meddling young officer was striding toward him.

“What are you doing here?” Dennison demanded.

His own appearance in the corridor at this hour might have been subjectable to inquiry. He had left Jane at nine. He had seen her to the lift. Perhaps he had walked the Bund for an hour or two, but worriedly. The thought of the arrival in Shanghai of his father and the rogue Cunningham convinced him that some queer game was afoot, and that it hinged somehow upon those beads.

There was no sighing in regard to his father, for the past that was. An astonishing but purely accidental meeting; to-morrow each would go his separate way again. All that was a closed page. He had long ago readjusted his outlook on the basis that reconciliation was hopeless.

A sudden impulse spun him on his heel, and he hurried back to the Astor. The hour did not matter, or the possibility that Jane might be abed. He would ask permission to become the temporary custodian of the beads. What were they, to have brought his father across the Pacific—if indeed they had? Anyhow, he would end his own anxiety in regard to Jane by assuming the risks, if any, himself.

No one questioned him; his uniform was a passport that required no visé.

Ling Foo eyed him blandly.

“I am leaving for the province in the morning, so I had to come for my jade to-night. But the young lady is not in her room.”

“She must be!” cried Dennison, alarmed. “Miss Norman?” he called, beating on the door.

No sound answered from within. Dennison pondered for a moment. Ling Foo also pondered—apprehensively. He suspected that some misfortune had befallen the young woman, for her kind did not go prowling alone round Shanghai at night. Slue-Foot! Should he utter his suspicion to this American officer? But if it should become a police affair! Bitterly he arraigned himself for disclosing his

hand to Slue-Foot. That demon had forestalled him. No doubt by now he had the beads. Ten thousand devils pursue him!

Dennison struck his hands together, and by and by a sleepy Chinese boy came scuffling along the corridor.

“Talkee manager come topside,” said Dennison. When the manager arrived, perturbed, Dennison explained the situation.

“Will you open the door?”

The manager agreed to do that. The bedroom was empty. The bed had not been touched. But there was no evidence that the occupant did not intend to return.

“We shall leave everything just as it is,” said Dennison, authoritatively. “I am her friend. If she does not return by one o’clock I shall notify the police and have the young lady’s belongings transferred to the American consulate. She is under the full protection of the United States Government. You will find out if any saw her leave the hotel, and what the time was. Stay here in the doorway while I look about.”

He saw the jade necklace reposing in the soap dish, and in an ironical mood he decided not to announce the discovery to the Chinaman. Let him pay for his cupidity. In some mysterious manner he had got his yellow claws on those infernal beads, and the rogue Cunningham had gone to him with a substantial bribe. So let the pigtail wail for his jade.

On the dresser he saw a sheet of paper partly opened. Beside it lay a torn envelope. Dennison’s heart lost a beat. The handwriting was his father’s!

CHAPTER VII

Jane had gone to meet his father. How to secrete this note without being observed by either the manager or the Chinaman? An accident came to his aid. Someone in the corridor banged a door violently, and as the manager's head and Ling Foo's jerked about, Dennison stuffed the note into a pocket.

A trap! Dennison wasn't alarmed—he was only furious. Jane had walked into a trap. She had worn those accursed beads when his father had approached her by the bookstall that afternoon. The note had attacked her curiosity from a perfectly normal angle. Dennison had absorbed enough of the note's contents to understand how readily Jane had walked into the trap.

Very well. He would wait in the lobby until one; then if Jane had not returned he would lay the plans of a counter-attack, and it would be a rough one. Of course no bodily harm would befall Jane, but she would probably be harried and bullied out of those beads. But would she? It was not unlikely that she would become a pretty handful, once she learned she had been tricked. If she balked him, how would the father act? The old boy was ruthless when he particularly wanted something.

If anything should happen to her—an event unlooked for, accidental, over which his father would have no control—this note would bring the old boy into a peck of trouble; and Dennison was loyal enough not to wish this to happen. And yet it would be only just to make the father pay once for his high-handedness. That would be droll—to see his father in the dock, himself as a witness against him! Here was the germ of a tiptop drama.

But all this worry was doubtless being wasted upon mere supposition. Jane might turn over the beads without bargaining, provided the father had any legal right to them, which Dennison strongly doubted.

He approached Ling Foo and seized him roughly by the arm.

"What do you know about these glass beads?"

Ling Foo elevated a shoulder and let it fall.

“Nothing, except that the man who owns them demands that I recover them.”

“And who is this man?”

“I don’t know his name.”

“That won’t pass. You tell me who he is or I’ll turn you over to the police.”

“I am an honest man,” replied Ling Foo with dignity. He appealed to the manager.

“I have known Ling Foo a long time, sir. He is perfectly honest.”

Ling Foo nodded. He knew that this recommendation, honest as it was, would have weight with the American.

“But you have some appointment with this man. Where is that to be? I demand to know that.”

Ling Foo saw his jade vanish along with his rainbow gold. His early suppositions had been correct.

Those were devil beads, and evil befell any who touched them.

Silently he cursed the soldier’s ancestors half a thousand years back. If the white fool hadn’t meddled in the parlour that afternoon!

“Come with me,” he said, finally.

The game was played out; the counters had gone back to the basket. He had no desire to come into contact with police officials. Only it was as bitter as the gall of chicken, and he purposed to lessen his own discomfort by making the lame man share it. Oriental humour.

Dennison and the hotel manager followed him curiously. At the end of the corridor Ling Foo stopped and knocked on a door. It was opened immediately.

“Ah! Oh!”

The inflections touched Dennison’s sense of humour, and he smiled. A greeting with a snap-back of dismay.

“I’m not surprised,” he said. “I had a suspicion I’d find you in this somewhere.”

“Find me in what?” asked Cunningham, his poise recovered. He, too, began to smile. “Won’t you come in?”

“What about these glass beads?”

“Glass beads? Oh, yes. But why?”

“I fancy you’d better come out into the clear, Cunningham,” said Dennison, grimly.

“You wish to know about those beads? Very well, I’ll explain, because something has happened—I know not what. You all look so infernally serious. Those beads are a key to a code. The British Government is keenly anxious to recover this key. In the hands of certain Hindus those beads would constitute bad medicine.”

Ling Foo spread his hands relievedly.

“That is the story. I was to receive five hundred gold for their recovery.”

“A code key,” said Dennison, musing.

He knew Cunningham was lying. Anthony Cleigh wasn’t the man to run across half the world for a British code key. On the other hand, perhaps it would be wise to let the hotel manager and the Chinaman continue in the belief that the affair concerned a British code.

“If I did not know you tolerably well——”

“My dear captain, you don’t know me at all,” interrupted Cunningham. “Have you got the beads?”

“I have not. I doubt if you will ever lay eyes on them again.”

Something flashed across the handsome face. Ling Foo alone recognized it. He had glimpsed it, this expression, outside his window the night before. He recalled the dark stain on the floor of his shop, and he also recollected a saying of Confucius relative to greed. He wished he was back in his shop, well out of this muddle. The jade could go, valuable as it was. With his hands tucked in his sleeves he waited.

Dennison turned upon the manager. He wanted to be alone with Cunningham.

“Go down and make inquiries, and take this Chinaman with you. I’ll be with you shortly.” As soon as the two were out of the way Dennison said: “Cunningham, the lady who wore those beads at dinner to-night has gone out alone, wearing them. If I find that you are anywhere back of this venture—if she does not return shortly—I will break you as I would a churchwarden pipe.”

Cunningham appeared genuinely taken aback.

“She went out alone?”

“Yes.”

“Have you notified the police?”

“Not yet. I’m giving her until one; then I shall start something.”

“Something tells me,” said Cunningham, easily, “that Miss Norman is in no danger. But she would never have gone out if I had been in the lobby. If she has not returned by one call me. Any assistance I can give will be given gladly. Women ought never to be mixed up in affairs such as this one, on this side of the world. Tell your father that he ought to know by this time that he is no match for me.”

“What do you mean by that?”

“Innocent! You know very well what I mean. If you hadn’t a suspicion of what has happened you would be roaring up and down the corridors with the police. You run true to the breed. It’s a good one, I’ll admit. But your father will regret this night’s work.”

“Perhaps. Here, read this.”

Dennison extended the note. Cunningham, his brows bent, ran through the missive.

> MISS NORMAN: Will you do me the honour to meet me at the bridgehead at half-past nine—practically at once? My son and I are not on friendly terms. Still, I am his father, and I’d like to hear what he has been doing over here. I will have a limousine, and we can ride out on the Bubbling Well Road while we talk.
>
> ANTHONY CLEIGH.

“Didn’t know,” said Cunningham, returning the note, “that you two were at odds. But this is a devil of a mix-up, if it’s what I think.”

“What do you think?”

“That he’s abducted her—carried her off to the yacht.”

“He’s no fool,” was the son’s defense.

“He isn’t, eh? Lord love you, sonny, your father and I are the two biggest fools on all God’s earth!”

The door closed sharply in Dennison’s face and the key rasped in the lock.

For a space Dennison did not stir. Why should he wish to protect his father?

Between his father and this handsome rogue there was small choice. The old boy made such rogues possible. But supposing Cleigh had wished really to quiz Jane? To find out something about these seven years, lean and hard, with stretches of idleness and stretches of furious labour, loneliness? Well, the father would learn that in all these seven years the son had never faltered from the high level he had set for his conduct. That was a stout staff to lean on—he had the right to look all men squarely in the eye.

He had been educated to inherit millions; he had not been educated to support himself by work in a world that specialized. He had in these seven years been a jeweller's clerk, an auctioneer in a salesroom; he had travelled from Baluchistan to Damascus with carpet caravans, but he had never forged ahead financially. Generally the end of a job had been the end of his resources. One fact the thought of which never failed to buck him up—he had never traded on his father's name.

Then had come the war. He had returned to America, trained, and they had assigned him to Russia. But that had not been without its reward—he had met Jane.

In a New York bank, to his credit, was the sum of twenty thousand dollars, at compound interest for seven years, ready to answer to the scratch of a pen, but he had sworn he would never touch a dollar of it. Never before had the thought of it risen so strongly to tempt him. His for the mere scratch of a pen!

In the lobby he found the manager pacing nervously, while Ling Foo sat patiently and inscrutably.

"Why do you wait?" inquired Dennison, irritably.

"The lady has some jade of mine," returned Ling Foo, placidly. "It was a grave mistake."

"What was?"

"That you interfered this afternoon. The lady would be in her room at this hour. The devil beads would not be casting a spell on us."

"Devil beads, eh?"

Ling Foo shrugged and ran his hands into his sleeves. Somewhere along the banks of the Whangpoo or the Yang-tse would be the body of an unknown, but Ling Foo's lips were locked quite as securely as the dead man's. Devil beads they were.

“When did the man upstairs leave the beads with you?”

“Last night.”

“For what reason?”

“He will tell you. It is none of my affair now.” And that was all Dennison could dig out of Ling Foo.

Jane Norman did not return at one o’clock; in fact, she never returned to the Astor House. Dennison waited until three; then he went back to the Palace, and Ling Foo to his shop and oblivion.

Dennison decided that he did not want the police in the affair. In that event there would be a lot of publicity, followed by the kind of talk that stuck. He was confident that he could handle the affair alone. So he invented a white lie, and nobody questioned it because of his uniform. Miss Norman had found friends, and shortly she would send for her effects; but until that time she desired the consulate to take charge. Under the eyes of the relieved hotel manager and an indifferent clerk from the consulate the following morning Dennison packed Jane’s belongings and conveyed them to the consulate, which was hard by. Next he proceeded to the water front and engaged a motor boat. At eleven o’clock he drew up alongside the *Wanderer II*.

“Hey, there!” shouted a seaman. “Sheer off! Orders to receive no visitors!”

Dennison began to mount, ignoring the order. It was a confusing situation for the sailor. If he threw this officer into the yellow water—as certainly he would have thrown a civilian—Uncle Sam might jump on his back and ride him to clink. Against this was the old man, the very devil for obedience to his orders. If he pushed this lad over, the clink; if he let him by, the old man’s foot. And while the worried seaman was reaching for water with one hand and wind with the other, as the saying goes, Dennison thrust him roughly aside, crossed the deck to the main companionway, and thundered down into the salon.

CHAPTER VIII

Cleigh sat before a card table; he was playing Chinese Canfield. He looked up, but he neither rose nor dropped the half-spent deck of cards he held in his hand. The bronzed face, the hard agate blue of the eyes that met his own, the utter absence of visible agitation, took the wind out of Dennison's sails and left him all a-shiver, like a sloop coming about on a fresh tack. He had made his entrance stormily enough, but now the hot words stuffed his throat to choking.

Cleigh was thirty years older than his son; he was a finished master of sentimental emotions; he could keep all his thoughts out of his countenance when he so willed. But powerful as his will was, in this instance it failed to reach down into his heart; and that thumped against his ribs rather painfully. The boy!

Dennison, aware that he stood close to the ridiculous, broke the spell and advanced.

"I have come for Miss Norman," he said.

Cleigh scrutinized the cards and shifted one.

"I found your note to her. I've a launch. I don't know what the game is, but I'm going to take Miss Norman back with me if I have to break in every door on board!"

Cleigh stood up. As he did so Dodge, the Texan appeared in the doorway to the dining salon. Dennison saw the blue barrel of a revolver.

"A gunman, eh? All right. Let's see if he'll shoot," said the son, walking deliberately toward Dodge.

"No, Dodge!" Cleigh called out as the Texan, raised the revolver. "You may go."

Dodge, a good deal astonished, backed out. Once more father and son stared at each other.

"Better call it off," advised the son. "You can't hold Miss Norman—and I can make a serious charge. Bring her at once, or I'll go for her. And the Lord help the woodwork if I start!"

But even as he uttered the threat Dennison heard a sound behind. He turned, but not soon enough. In a second he was on the floor, three husky seamen mauling him. They had their hands full for a while, but in the end they conquered.

“What next, sir?” asked one of the sailors, breathing hard.

“Tie him up and lock him in Cabin Two.”

The first order was executed. After Dennison’s arms and ankles were bound the men stood him up.

“Are you really my father?”

Cleigh returned to his cards and shuffled them for a new deal.

“Don’t untie him. He might walk through the partition. He will have the freedom of the deck when we are out of the delta.”

Dennison was thereupon carried to Cabin Two, and deposited upon the stationary bed. He began to laugh. There was a sardonic note in this laughter, like that which greets you when you recount some incredible tale. His old cabin!

The men shook their heads, as if confronted by something so unusual that it wasn’t worth while to speculate upon it. The old man’s son! They went out, locking the door. By this time Dennison’s laughter had reached the level of shouting, but only he knew how near it was to tears—wrathful, murderous, miserable tears! He fought his bonds terrifically for a moment, then relaxed.

For seven years he had been hugging the hope that when he and his father met blood would tell, and that their differences would vanish in a strong handclasp; and here he lay, trussed hand and foot, in his old cabin, not a crack in that granite lump his father called a heart!

A childish thought! Some day to take that twenty thousand with accrued interest, ride up to the door, step inside, dump the silver on that old red Samarkand, and depart—forever.

Where was she? This side of the passage or the other?

“Miss Norman?” he called.

“Yes?” came almost instantly from the cabin aft.

“This is Captain Dennison. I’m tied up and lying on the bed. Can you hear me distinctly?”

“Yes. Your father has made a prisoner of you? Of all the inhuman acts! You

came in search of me?”

“Naturally. Have you those infernal beads?”

“No.”

Dennison twisted about until he had his shoulders against the brass rail of the bed head.

“What happened?”

“It was a trick. It was not to talk about you—he wanted the beads, and that made me furious.”

“Were you hurt in the struggle?”

“There wasn’t any. I really don’t know what possessed me. Perhaps I was a bit hypnotized. Perhaps I was curious. Perhaps I wanted—some excitement. On my word, I don’t know just what happened. Anyhow, here I am—in a dinner gown, bound for Hong-Kong, so he says. He offered me ten thousand for the beads, and my freedom, if I would promise not to report his high-handedness; and I haven’t uttered a sound.”

“Heaven on earth, why didn’t you accept his offer?”

A moment of silence.

“In the first place, I haven’t the beads. In the second place, I want to make him all the trouble I possibly can. Now that he has me, he doesn’t know what to do with me. Hoist by his own petard. Do you want the truth? Well, I’m not worried in the least. I feel as if I’d been invited to some splendiferous picnic.”

“That’s foolish,” he remonstrated.

“Of course it is. But it’s the sort of foolishness I’ve been aching for all my life. I knew something was going to happen. I broke my hand mirror night before last. Two times seven years’ bad luck. Now he has me, I’ll wager he’s half frightened out of his wits. But what made you think of the yacht?”

“We forced the door of your room, and I found the note. Has he told you what makes those infernal beads so precious?”

“No. I can’t figure that out.”

“No more can I. Did he threaten you?”

“Yes. Would I enter the launch peacefully, or would he have to carry me? I didn’t want my gown spoiled—it’s the only decent one I have. I’m not afraid. It isn’t as

though he were a stranger. Being your father, he would never stoop to any indignity. But he'll find he has caught a tartar. I had an idea you'd find me."

"Well, I have. But you won't get to Hong-Kong. The minute he liberates me I'll sneak into the wireless room and bring the destroyers. I didn't notify the police from a bit of foolish sentiment. I didn't quite want you mixed up in the story. I had your things conveyed to the consulate."

"My story—which few men would believe. I've thought of that. Are you smoking?"

"Smoking, with my hands tied behind my back? Not so you'd notice it."

"I smell tobacco smoke—a good cigar, too."

"Then someone is in the passage listening."

Silence. Anthony Cleigh eyed his perfecto rather ruefully and tiptoed back to the salon. Hoist by his own petard. He was beginning to wonder. Cleigh was a man who rarely regretted an act, but in the clear light of day he was beginning to have his doubts regarding this one. A mere feather on the wrong side of the scale, and the British destroyers would be atop of him like a flock of kites. Abduction! Cut down to bedrock, he had laid himself open to that. He ran his fingers through his cowlicks. But drat the woman! why had she accepted the situation so docilely? Since midnight not a sound out of her, not a wail, not a sob. Now he had her, he couldn't let her go. She was right there.

There was one man in the crew Cleigh had begun to dislike intensely, and he had been manœuvring ever since Honolulu to find a legitimate excuse to give the man his papers. Something about the fellow suggested covert insolence; he had the air of a beachcomber who had unexpectedly fallen into a soft berth, and it had gone to his head. He had been standing watch at the ladder head, and against positive orders he had permitted a visitor to pass him. To Cleigh this was the handle he had been hunting for. He summoned the man.

"Get your duffle," said Cleigh.

"What's that, sir?"

"Get your stuff. You're through. You had positive orders, and you let a man by."

"But his uniform fussed me, sir. I didn't know just how to act."

"Get your stuff! Mr. Cleve will give you your pay. My orders are absolute. Off with you!"

The sailor sullenly obeyed. He found the first officer alone in the chart house.

“The boss has sent me for my pay, Mr. Cleve. I’m fired.” Flint grinned amiably.

“Fired? Well, well,” said Cleve, “that’s certainly tough luck—all this way from home. I’ll have to pay you in Federal Reserve bills. The old man has the gold.”

“Federal Reserve it is. Forty-six dollars in Uncle Samuels.”

The first officer solemnly counted out the sum and laid it on the palm of the discharged man.

“Tough world.”

“Oh, I’m not worrying! I’ll bet you this forty-six against ten that I’ve another job before midnight.”

Mr. Cleve grinned.

“Always looking for sure-thing bets! Better hail that bumboat with the vegetables to row you into town. The old man’ll dump you over by hand if he finds you here between now and sundown.”

“I’ll try the launch there. Tell the lad his fare ain’t goin’ back to Shanghai. Of course it makes it a bit inconvenient, packing and unpacking; but I guess I can live through it. But what about the woman?”

Cleve plucked at his chin.

“Messes up the show a bit. Pippin, though. I like ’em when they walk straight and look straight like this one. Notice her hair? You never tame that sort beyond parlour manners. But I don’t like her on board here, or the young fellow, either. Don’t know him, but he’s likely to bust the yacht wide open if he gets loose.”

“Well, so long, Mary! Know what my first move’ll be?”

“A bottle somewhere. But mind your step! Don’t monkey with the stuff beyond normal. You know what I mean.”

“Sure! Only a peg or two, after all this psalm-singing!”

“I know, Flint. But this game is no joke. You know what happened in town? Morrissy was near croaked.”

Flint’s face lost some of its gayety.

“Oh, I know how to handle the stuff! See you later.”

Cleigh decided to see what the girl's temper was, so he entered the passage on the full soles of his shoes. He knocked on her door.

"Miss Norman?"

"Well?"

That was a good sign; she was ready to talk.

"I have come to repeat that offer."

"Mr. Cleigh, I have nothing to say so long as the key is on the wrong side of the door."

Cleigh heard a chuckle from Cabin Two.

"Very well," he said. "Remember, I offered you liberty conditionally. If you suffer inconveniences after to-night you will have only yourself to thank."

"Have you calculated that some day you will have to let me go?"

"Yes, I have calculated on that."

"And that I shall go to the nearest authorities and report this action?"

"If you will think a moment," said Cleigh, his tone monotonously level, "you will dismiss that plan for two reasons: First, that no one will believe you; second, that no one will want to believe you. That's as near as I care to put it. Your imagination will grasp it."

"Instantly!" cried the girl, hotly. "I knew you to be cold and hard, but I did not believe you were a scoundrel—having known your son!"

"I have no son."

"Oh, yes, you have!"

"I disowned him. He is absolutely nothing to me."

"I do not believe that," came back through the cabin door.

"Nevertheless, it is the truth. The queer part is, I've tried to resurrect the father instinct, and can't. I've tried to go round the wall—over it. I might just as well try to climb the Upper Himalayas."

In Cabin Two the son stared at the white ceiling. It seemed to him that all his vitals had been wrenched out of him, leaving him hollow, empty. He knew his father's voice; it rang with truth.

“I offer you ten thousand.”

“The key is still on the outside.”

“I’m afraid to trust you.”

“We understand each other perfectly,” said Jane, ironically.

The son smiled. The sense of emptiness vanished, and there came into his blood a warmth as sweet as it was strong. Jane Norman, angel of mercy. He heard his father speaking again:

“Since you will have it so, you will go to Hong-Kong?”

“To Patagonia if you wish! You cannot scare me by threatening me with travel on a private yacht. I had the beads, it is true; but at this moment I haven’t the slightest idea where they are; and if I had I should not tell you. I refuse to buy my liberty; you will have to give it to me without conditions.”

“I’m sorry I haven’t anything on board in shape of women’s clothes, but I’ll send for your stuff if you wish.”

“That is the single consideration you have shown me. My belongings are at the American consulate, and I should be glad to have them.”

“You will find paper and ink in the escritoire. Write me an order and I promise to attend to the matter personally.”

“And search through everything at your leisure!”

Cleigh blushed, and he heard his son chuckle again. He had certainly caught a tartar—possibly two. With a twisted smile he recalled the old yarn of the hunter who caught the bear by the tail. Willing to let go, and daring not!

“Still I agree,” continued the girl. “I want my own familiar things—if I must take this forced voyage. But mark me, Mr. Cleigh, you will pay some day! I’m not the clinging kind, and I shall fight you tooth and nail from the first hour of my freedom. I’m not without friends.”

“Never in this world!” came resonantly from Cabin Two.

Cleigh longed to get away. There was a rumbling and a threatening inside of him that needed space—Gargantuan laughter. Not the clinging kind, this girl! And the boy, walking straight at Dodge’s villainous revolver! Why, he would need the whole crew behind him when he liberated these two! But he knew that the laughter striving for articulation was not the kind heard in Elysian fields!

CHAPTER IX

“If you will write the order I will execute it at once. The consulate closes early.”

“I’ll write it, but how will I get it to you? The door closes below the sill.”

“When you are ready, call, and I will open the door a little.”

“It would be better if you opened it full wide. This is China—I understand that. But we are both Americans, and there’s a good sound law covering an act like this.”

“But it does not reach as far as China. Besides, I have an asset back in the States. It is my word. I have never broken it to any man or woman, and I expect I never shall. You have, or have had, what I consider my property. You have hedged the question; you haven’t been frank.”

The son listened intently.

“I bought that string of glass beads in good faith of a Chinaman—Ling Foo. I consider them mine—that is, if they are still in my possession. Between the hour I met you last night and the moment of Captain Dennison’s entrance to my room considerable time had elapsed.” 102

“Sufficient for a rogue like Cunningham to make good use of,” supplemented the prisoner in Cabin Two. “There’s a way of finding out the facts.”

“Indeed?”

“Yes. You used to carry a planchette that once belonged to the actress Rachel. Why not give it a whirl? Everybody’s doing it.”

Cleigh eyed Cabin Four, then Cabin Two, and shook his head slightly, dubiously. He was not getting on well. To come into contact with a strong will was always acceptable; and a strong will in a woman was a novelty. All at once it struck him forcibly that he stood on the edge of boredom; that the lure which had brought him fully sixteen thousand miles was losing its bite. Was he growing old, drying up?

“Will you tell me what it is about these beads that makes you offer ten thousand for them? Glass—anybody could see that. What makes them as valuable as pearls?”

“They are love beads,” answered Cleigh, mockingly. “They are far more potent than powdered pearls. You have worn them about your throat, Miss Norman, and the sequence is inevitable.”

“Nonsense!” cried Jane.

Dennison added his mite to the confusion:

“I thought that scoundrel Cunningham was lying. He said the string was a code key belonging to the British Intelligence Office.”

“Rot!” Cleigh exploded.

“So I thought.”

“But hurry, Miss Norman. The sooner I have that written order on the consulate the sooner you’ll have your belongings.”

“Very well.”

Five minutes later she announced that the order was completed, and Cleigh opened the door slightly.

“The key will be given you the moment we weigh anchor.”

“I say,” called the son, “you might drop into the Palace and get my truck, too. I’m particular about my toothbrushes.” A pause. “I’d like a drink, too—if you’ve got the time.”

Cleigh did not answer, but he presently entered Cabin Two, filled a glass with water, raised his son’s head to a proper angle, and gave him drink.

“Thanks. This business strikes me as the funniest thing I ever heard of! You would have done that for a dog.”

Cleigh replaced the water carafe in the rack above the wash bowl and went out, locking the door. In the salon he called for Dodge:

“I am going into town. I’ll be back round five. Don’t stir from this cabin.”

“Yes, sir.”

“You remember that fellow who was here night before last?”

“The good-looking chap that limped?”

“Yes.”

“And I’m to crease him if he pokes his noodle down the stairs?”

“Exactly! No talk, no palaver! If he starts talking he’ll talk you out of your boots. Shoot!”

“In the leg? All right.”

His employer having gone, Dodge sat in a corner from which he could see the companionway and all the passages. He lit a long black cigar, laid his formidable revolver on a knee, and began his vigil. A queer job for an old cow-punch, for a fact.

To guard an old carpet that didn’t have “welcome” on it anywhere—he couldn’t get that, none whatever. But there was a hundred a week, the best grub pile in the world, and the old man’s Havanas as often as he pleased. Pretty soft!

And he had learned a new trick—shooting target in a rolling sea. He had wasted a hundred rounds before getting the hang of it. Maybe these sailors hadn’t gone pop-eyed when they saw him pumping lead into the bull’s-eye six times running? Tin cans and raw potatoes in the water, too. Something to brag about if he ever got back home.

He broke the gun and inspected the cylinder. There wasn’t as much grease on the cartridges as he would have liked.

“Miss Norman?” called Dennison.

“What is it?”

“Are you comfortable?”

“Oh, I’m all right. I’m only furious with rage, that’s all. You are still tied?”

“Yes, ma’am.”

“I really don’t understand your father.”

“I have never understood him. Yet he was very kind to me when I was little. I don’t suppose there is anything in heaven or on earth that he’s afraid of.”

“He is afraid of me.”

“Do you believe that?”

“I know it. He would give anything to be rid of me. But go on.”

“With what?”

“Your past.”

“Well, I’m something like him physically. We are both so strong that we generally burst through rather than take the trouble to go round. I’m honestly sorry for him. Not a human being to love or be loved by. He never had a dog. I don’t recollect my mother; she died when I was three; and that death had something to do with the iron in his soul. Our old butler used to tell me that Father cursed horribly, I mean blasphemously, when they took the mother out of the house. There are some men like that, who love terribly, away and beyond the average human ability. After the mother died he plunged into the money game. He was always making it, piling it up ruthlessly but honestly. Then that craving petered out, and he took a hand in the collecting game. What will come next I don’t know. As a boy I was always afraid of him. He was kind to me, but in the abstract. I was like an extra on the grocer’s bill. He put me into the hands of a tutor—a lovable old dreamer—and paid no more attention to me. He never put his arms round me and told me fairy stories.”

“Poor little boy! No fairy stories!”

“Nary a one until I began to have playmates.”

“Do the ropes hurt?”

“They might if I were alone.”

“What do you make of the beads?”

“Only that they have some strange value, or father wouldn’t be after them. Love beads! Doesn’t sound half so plausible as Cunningham’s version.”

“That handsome man who limped?”

“Yes.”

“A real adventurer—the sort one reads about!”

“And the queer thing about him, he keeps his word, too, for all his business is a shady one. I don’t suppose there is a painting or a jewel or a book of the priceless sort that he doesn’t know about, where it is and if it can be got at. Some of his deals are aboveboard, but many of them aren’t. I’ll wager these beads have a story of loot.”

“What he steals doesn’t hurt the poor.”

“So long as the tigers fight among themselves and leave the goats alone, it

doesn’t stir you. Is that it?”

“Possibly.”

“And besides, he’s a handsome beggar, if there ever was one.”

“He has the face of an angel!”

“And the soul of a vandal!”—with a touch of irritability.

“Now you aren’t fair. A vandal destroys things; this man only transfers——”

“For a handsome monetary consideration——”

“Only transfers a picture from one gallery to another.”

“Well, we’ve seen the last of him for a while, anyhow.”

“I wonder.”

“Will you answer me a question?”

“Perhaps.”

“Do you know where those beads are?”

“A little while gone I smelt tobacco smoke,” she answered, dryly.

“I see. We’ll talk of something else then. Have you ever been in love?”

“Have you?”

“Violently—so I believed.”

“But you got over it?”

“Absolutely! And you?”

“Oh, I haven’t had the time. I’ve been too busy earning bread and butter. What was she like?”

“A beautiful mirage—the lie in the desert, you might say. Has it ever occurred to you that the mirage is the one lie Nature utters?”

“I hadn’t thought. She deceived you?”

“Yes.”

A short duration of silence.

“Doesn’t hurt to talk about her?”

“Lord, no! Because I wasn’t given fairy stories when I was little, I took them

seriously when I was twenty-three."

"Puppy love."

"It went a little deeper than that."

"But you don't hate women?"

"No. I never hated the woman who deceived me. I was terribly sorry for her."

"For having lost so nice a husband?"—with a bit of malice.

He greeted this with laughter.

"It is written," she observed, "that we must play the fool sometime or other."

"Have you ever played it?"

"Not yet, but you never can tell."

"Jane, you're a brick!"

"Jane!" she repeated. "Well, I don't suppose there's any harm in your calling me that, with partitions in between."

"They used to call me Denny."

"And you want me to call you that?"

"Will you?"

"I'll think it over—Denny!"

They laughed. Both recognized the basic fact in this running patter. Each was trying to buck up the other. Jane was honestly worried. She could not say what it was that worried her, but there was a strong leaven in her of old-wives' prescience. It wasn't due to this high-handed adventure of Cleigh, senior; it was something leaning down darkly from the future that worried her. That hand mirror!

"Better not talk any more," she advised. "You'll be getting thirsty."

"I'm already that."

"You're a brave man, captain," she said, her tone altering from gayety to seriousness. "Don't worry about me. I've always been able to take care of myself, though I've never been confronted with this kind of a situation before. Frankly, I don't like it. But I suspect that your father will have more respect for us if we laugh at him. Has he a sense of humour?"

“My word for it, he has! What could be more humorous than tying me up in this fashion and putting me in the cabin that used to be mine? Ten thousand for a string of glass beads! I say, Jane!”

“What?”

“When he comes back tell him you might consider twenty thousand, just to get an idea what the thing is worth.”

“I’ll promise that.”

“All right. Then I’ll try to snooze a bit. Getting stuffy lying on my back.”

“The brute! If I could only help you!”

“You have—you are—you will!”

He turned on his side, his face toward the door. His arms and legs began to sting with the sensation known as sleep. He was glad his father had overheard the initial conversation. A wave of terror ran over him at the thought of being set ashore while Jane went on. Still he could have sent a British water terrier in hot pursuit.

Jane sat down and took inventory. She knew but little about antiques—rugs and furniture—but she was full of inherent love of the beautiful. The little secretary upon which she had written the order on the consulate was an exquisite lowboy of old mahogany of dull finish. On the floor were camel saddle-bays, Persian in pattern. On the panel over the lowboy was a small painting, a foot broad and a foot and a half long. It was old—she could tell that much. It was a portrait, tender and quaint. She would have gasped had she known that it was worth a cover of solid gold. It was a Holbein, The Younger, for which Cleigh some years gone had paid Cunningham sixteen thousand dollars. Where and how Cunningham had acquired it was not open history.

An hour passed. By and by she rose and tiptoed to the partition. She held her ear against the panel, and as she heard nothing she concluded that Denny—why not?—was asleep. Next she gazed out of the port. It was growing dark outside, overcast. It would rain again probably. A drab sky, a drab shore. She saw a boat filled with those luscious vegetables which wrote typhus for any white person who ate them. A barge went by piled high with paddy bags—rice in the husk—with Chinamen at the forward and stern sweeps. She wondered if these poor yellow people had ever known what it was to play?

Suddenly she fell back, shocked beyond measure. From the direction of the salon

—a pistol shot! This was followed by the tramp of hurrying feet. Voices, now sharp, now rumbling—this grew nearer. A struggle of some dimensions was going on in the passage. The racket reached her door, but did not pause there. She sank into the chair, a-tremble.

Dennison struggled to a sitting posture.

“Jane?”

“Yes!”

“Are you all right?”

“Yes, what has happened?”

“A bit of mutiny, I take it; but it seems to be over.”

“But the shot!”

“I heard no cry of pain, only a lot of scuffling and some high words. Don’t worry.”

“I won’t. Can’t you break a piece of glass and saw your way out?”

“Lord love you, that’s movie stuff! If I had a razor, I couldn’t manage it without hacking off my hands. You are worried!”

“I’m a woman, Denny. I’m not afraid of your father; but if there is mutiny, with all these treasures on board—and over here——”

“All right. I’ll make a real effort.”

She could hear him stumbling about. She heard the crash of the water carafe on the floor. Several minutes dragged by.

“Can’t be done!” said Dennison. “Can’t make the broken glass stay put. Can’t reach my ankles, either, or I could get my feet free. There’s a double latch on your door. See to it! Lord!”

“What is it?”

“Nothing. Just hunting round for some cuss words. Put the chair up against the door knob and sit tight for a while.”

The hours dragged by in stifling silence.

Meanwhile, Cleigh, having attended to errands, lunched, had gone to the American consulate and presented the order. His name and reputation cleared away the official red tape. He explained that all the fuss of the night before had

been without cause. Miss Norman had come aboard the yacht, and now decided to go to Hong-Kong with the family. This suggested the presence of other women on board. In the end, Jane’s worldly goods were consigned to Cleigh, who signed the receipt and made off for the launch.

It was growing dark. On the way down the river Cleigh made no attempt to search for the beads.

The salon lights snapped up as the launch drew alongside. Once below, Cleigh dumped Jane’s possessions into the nearest chair and turned to give Dodge an order—only to find the accustomed corner vacant!

“Dodge!” he shouted. He ran to the passage. “Dodge, where the devil are you?”

“Did you call, sir?”

Cleigh spun about. In the doorway to the dining salon stood Cunningham, on his amazingly handsome face an expression of anxious solicitude!

CHAPTER X

Cleigh was not only a big and powerful man—he was also courageous, but the absence of Dodge and the presence of Cunningham offered such sinister omen that temporarily he was bereft of his natural wit and initiative.

“Where’s Dodge?” he asked, stupidly.

“Dodge is resting quietly,” answered Cunningham, gravely. “He’ll be on his feet in a day or two.”

That seemed to wake up Cleigh a bit. He drew his automatic.

“Face to the wall, or I’ll send a bullet into you!”

Cunningham shook his head.

“Did you examine the clip this morning? When you carry weapons like that for protection never put it in your pocket without a look-see. Dodge wouldn’t have made your mistake. Shoot! Try it on the floor, or up through the lights—or at me if you’d like that better. The clip is empty.”

Mechanically Cleigh took aim and bore against the trigger. There was no explosion. A depressing sense of unreality rolled over the *Wanderer’s* owner.

“So you went into town for her luggage? Did you find the beads?”

Cleigh made a negative sign. It was less an answer to Cunningham than an acknowledgment that he could not understand why the bullet clip should be empty.

“It was an easy risk,” explained Cunningham. “You carried the gun, but I doubt you ever looked it over. Having loaded it once upon a time, you believed that was sufficient, eh? Know what I think? The girl has hidden the beads in her hair. Did you search her?”

Again Cleigh shook his head, as much over the situation as over the question.

“What, you ran all this risk and hadn’t the nerve to search her? Well, that’s rich! Unless you’ve read her from my book. She would probably have scratched out

your eyes. There's an Amazon locked up in that graceful body. I'd like to see her head against a bit of clear blue sky—a touch of Henner blues and reds. What a whale of a joke! Abduct a young woman, risk prison, and then afraid to lay hands on her! You poor old piker!" Cunningham laughed.

"Cunningham——"

"All right, I'll be merciful. To make a long story short, it means that for the present I am in command of this yacht. I warned you. Will you be sensible, or shall I have to lock you up like your two-gun man from Texas?"

"Piracy!" cried Cleigh, coming out of his maze.

"Maritime law calls it that, but it isn't really. No pannikins of rum, no fifteen men on a dead man's chest. Parlour stuff, you might call it. The whole affair—the parlour side of it—depends upon whether you purpose to act philosophically under stress or kick up a hullabaloo. In the latter event you may reasonably expect some rough stuff. Truth is, I'm only borrowing the yacht as far as latitude ten degrees and longitude one hundred and ten degrees, off Catwick Island. You carry a boson's whistle at the end of your watch chain. Blow it!" was the challenge.

"You bid me blow it?"

"Only to convince you how absolutely helpless you are," said Cunningham, amiably. "Yesterday this day's madness did prepare, as our old friend Omar used to say. Vedder did great work on that, didn't he? Toot the whistle, for shortly we shall weigh anchor."

Like a man in a dream, Cleigh got out his whistle. The first blast was feeble and windy. Cunningham grinned.

"Blow it, man, blow it!"

Cleigh set the whistle between his lips and blew a blast that must have been heard half a mile away.

"That's something like! Now we'll have results!"

Above, on deck, came the scuffle of hurrying feet, and immediately—as if they had been prepared against this moment—three fourths of the crew came tumbling down the companionway.

"Seize this man!" shouted Cleigh, thunderously, as he indicated Cunningham.

The men, however, fell into line and came to attention. Most of them were

grinning.

“Do you hear me? Brown, Jessup, McCarthy—seize this man!”

No one stirred. Cleigh then lost his head. With a growl he sprang toward Cunningham. Half the crew jumped instantly into the gap between, and they were no longer grinning. Cunningham pushed aside the human wall and faced the *Wanderer’s* owner.

“Do you begin to understand?”

“No! But whatever your game is, it will prove bad business for you in the end. And you men, too. The world has grown mighty small, and you’ll find it hard to hide—unless you kill me and have done with it!”

“Tut, tut! Wouldn’t harm a hair of your head. The world is small, as you say, but just at this moment infernally busy mopping up. What, bother about a little dinkum dinkus like this, with Russia mad, Germany ugly, France grumbling at England, Italy shaking her fist at Greece, and labour making a monkey of itself? Nay! I’ll shift the puzzle so you can read it. When the yacht was released from auxiliary duties she was without a crew. The old crew, that of peace times, was gone utterly, with the exception of four. You had the yacht keelhauled, gave her another daub of war paint and set about to find a crew. And I had one especially picked for you! Ordinarily, you’ve a tolerably keen eye. Didn’t it strike you odd to land a crew who talked more or less grammatically, who were clean bodily, who weren’t boozers?”

Cleigh, fully alive now, coldly ran his inspecting glance over the men. He had never before given their faces any particular attention. Besides, this was the first time he had seen so many of them at once. During boat drill they had been divided into four squads. Young faces, lean and hard some of them, but reckless rather than bad. All of them at this moment appeared to be enjoying some huge joke.

“I can only repeat,” said Cleigh, “that you are all playing with dynamite.”

“Perhaps. Most of these boys fought in the war; they played the game; but when they returned nobody had any use for them. I caught them on the rebound, when they were a bit desperate. We formed a company—but of that more anon. Will you be my guest, or will you be my prisoner?”

The velvet fell away from Cunningham’s voice.

“Have I any choice? I’ll accept the condition because I must. But I’ve warned

you. I suppose I'd better ask at once what the ransom is."

"Ransom? Not a copper cent! You can make Singapore in two days from the Catwick."

"And for helping me into Singapore I'm to agree not to hand such men as you leave me over to the British authorities?"

"All wrong! The men who will help you into Singapore or take you to Manila will be as innocent as newborn babes. Wouldn't believe it, would you, but I'm one of those efficiency sharks. Nothing left to chance; all cut and dried; pluperfect. Cleigh, I never break my word. I honestly intended turning over those beads to you, but Morrissy muddled the play."

"Next door to murder."

"Near enough, but he'll pull out."

"Are you going to take Miss Norman along?"

"What, set her ashore to sic the British Navy on us? I'm sorry. I don't want her on board; but that was your play, not mine. You tried to double-cross me. But you need have no alarm. I will kill the man who touches her. You understand that, boys?"

The crew signified that the order was understood, though one of them—the returned Flint—smiled cynically. If Cunningham noted the smile he made no verbal comment upon it.

"Weigh anchor, then! Look alive! The sooner we nose down to the delta the sooner we'll have the proper sea room."

The crew scurried off, and almost at once came familiar sounds—the rattle of the anchor chain on the windlass, the creaking of pulley blocks as the launch came aboard, the thud of feet hither and yon as portables were stowed or lashed to the deck-house rail. For several minutes Cleigh and Cunningham remained speechless and motionless.

"You get all the angles?" asked Cunningham, finally.

"Some of them," admitted Cleigh.

"At any rate, enough to make you accept a bad situation with good grace?"

"You're a foolhardy man, Cunningham. Do you expect me to lie down when this play is over? I solemnly swear to you that I'll spend the rest of my days hunting you down."

“And I solemnly swear that you shan’t catch me. I’m through with the old game of playing the genie in the bottle for predatory millionaires. Henceforth I’m on my own. I’m romantic—yes, sir—I’m romantic from heel to cowlick; and now I’m going to give rein to this stifled longing.”

“You will come to a halter round your neck. I have always paid your price on the nail, Cunningham.”

“You had to. Hang it, passions are the very devil, aren’t they? Sooner or later one jumps upon your back and rides you like the Old Man of the Sea.”

Cleigh heard the rumble of steam.

“Objects of art!” went on Cunningham. “It eats into your vitals to hear that some rival has picked up a Correggio or an ancient Kirman or a bit of Persian plaque. You talk of halters. Lord lumme, how obliquely you look at facts! Take that royal Persian there—the second-best animal rug on earth—is there no murder behind the woof and warp of it? What? Talk sense, Cleigh, talk sense! You cable me: Get such and such. I get it. What the devil do you care how it was got, so long as it eventually becomes yours? It’s a case of the devil biting his own tail—pot calling kettle black.”

“How much do you want?”

“No, Cleigh, it’s the romantic idea.”

“I will give you fifty thousand for the rug.”

“I’m sorry. No use now of telling you the plot; you wouldn’t believe me, as the song goes. Dinner at seven. Will you dine in the salon with me, or will you dine in the solemn grandeur of your own cabin, in company with Da Vinci, Teniers, and that Carlo Dolci the Italian Government has been hunting high and low for?”

“I will risk the salon.”

“To keep an eye on me as long as possible. That’s fair enough. You heard what I said to those boys. Well, every mother’s son of ’em will toe the mark. There will be no change at all in the routine. Simply we lay a new course that will carry us outside and round Formosa, down to the South Sea and across to the Catwick. I’ll give you one clear idea. A million and immunity would not stir me, Cleigh.”

“What’s the game—if it’s beyond ransom?”

Cunningham laughed boyishly.

“It’s big, and you’ll laugh, too, when I tell you.”

“On which side of the mouth?”

“That’s up to you.”

“Is it the rug?”

“Oh, that, of course! I warned you that I’d come for the rug. It took two years out of my young life to get that for you, and it has always haunted me. I just told you about passions, didn’t I? Once on your back, they ride you like the devil—down-hill.”

“A crook.”

“There you go again—pot calling kettle black! If you want to moralize, where’s the line between the thief and the receiver? Fie on you! Dare you hang that Da Vinci, that Dolci, that Holbein in your gallery home? No! Stolen goods. What a passion! You sail across the seas alone, alone because you can’t satisfy your passion and have knowing companions on board. When the yacht goes out of commission you store the loot, and tremble when you hear a fire alarm. All right. Dinner at seven. I’ll go and liberate your son and the lady.”

“Cunningham, I will kill you out of hand the very first chance.”

“Old dear, I’ll add a fact for your comfort. There will be guns on board, but half an hour gone all the ammunition was dumped into the Whangpoo. So you won’t have anything but your boson’s whistle. You’re a bigger man than I am physically, and I’ve a slue-foot, a withered leg; but I’ve all the barroom tricks you ever heard of. So don’t make any mistakes in that direction. You are free to come and go as you please; but the moment you start any rough house, into your cabin you go, and you’ll stay there until we raise the Catwick. You haven’t a leg to stand on.”

Cunningham lurched out of the salon and into the passage. He opened the door to Cabin Two and turned on the light. Dennison blinked stupidly. Cunningham liberated him and stood back.

“Dinner at seven.”

“What the devil are you doing on board?” asked Dennison, thickly.

“Well, here’s gratitude for you! But in order that there will be no misunderstanding, I’ve turned to piracy for a change. Great sport! I’ve chartered the yacht for a short cruise.” His banter turned into cold, precise tones. Cunningham went on: “No nonsense, captain! I put this crew on board away back in New York. Those beads, though having a merit of their own, were the

lure to bring your father to these parts. Your presence and Miss Norman's are accidents for which I am genuinely sorry. But frankly, I dare not turn you loose. That's the milk in the cocoanut. I grant you the same privileges as I grant your father, which he has philosophically agreed to accept. Your word of honour to take it sensibly, and the freedom of the yacht is yours. Otherwise, I'll lock you up in a place not half so comfortable as this."

"Piracy!"

"Yes, sir. These are strangely troubled days. We've slumped morally. Humanity has been on the big kill, with the result that the tablets of Moses have been busted up something fierce. And here we are again, all kotowing to the Golden Calf! All I need is your word—the word of a Cleigh."

"I give it." Dennison gave his word so that he might be free to protect the girl in the adjoining cabin. "But conditionally."

"Well?"

"That the young lady shall at all times be treated with the utmost respect. You will have to kill me otherwise."

"These Cleighs! All right. That happens to be my own order to the crew. Any man who breaks it will pay heavily."

"What's the game?" asked Dennison, rubbing his wrists tenderly while he balanced unsteadily upon his aching legs.

"Later! I'll let Miss Norman out. That's so—her things are in the salon. I'll get them, but I'll unlock her door first."

"What in heaven's name has happened?" asked Jane as she and Dennison stood alone in the passage.

"The Lord knows!" gloomily. "But that scoundrel Cunningham has planted a crew of his own on board, and we are all prisoners."

"Cunningham?"

"The chap with the limp."

"With the handsome face? But this is piracy!"

"About the size of it."

"Oh, I knew something was going to happen! But a pirate! Surely it must be a joke?"

So it was—probably the most colossal joke that ever flowered in the mind of a man. The devil must have shouted and the gods must have held their sides, for it took either a devil or a god to understand the joke.

CHAPTER XI

That first dinner would always remain vivid and clear-cut in Jane Norman's mind. It was fantastic. To begin with, there was that picturesque stone image at the head of the table—Cleigh—who appeared utterly oblivious of his surroundings, who ate with apparent relish, and who ignored both men, his son and his captor. Once or twice Jane caught his glance—a blue eye, sharp-pupiled, agate-hard. But what was it she saw—a twinkle or a sparkle? The breadth of his shoulders! He must be very powerful, like the son. Why, the two of them could have pulverized this pretty fellow opposite!

Father and son! For seven years they had not met. Their indifference seemed so inhuman! Still, she fancied that the son dared not make any approach, however much he may have longed to. A woman! They had quarrelled over a woman! Something reached down from the invisible and pinched her heart.

All this while Cunningham had been talking—banter. The blade would flash toward the father or whirl upon the son, or it would come toward her by the handle. She could not get away from the initial idea—that his eyes were like fire opals.

"Miss Norman, you have very beautiful hair."

"You think so?"

"It looks like Judith's. You remember, Cleigh, the one that hangs in the Pitti Galleria in Florence—Allori's?"

Cleigh reached for a piece of bread, which he broke and buttered.

Cunningham turned to Jane again.

"Will you do me the favour of taking out the hairpins and loosing it?"

"No!" said Dennison.

"Why not?" said Jane, smiling bravely enough, though there ran over her spine a chill.

It wasn’t Cunningham’s request—it was Dennison’s refusal. That syllable, though spoken moderately, was the essence of battle, murder, and sudden death. If they should clash it would mean that Denny—how easy it was to call him that!—Denny would be locked up and she would be all alone. For the father seemed as aloof and remote as the pole.

“You shall not do it!” declared Dennison. “Cunningham, if you force her I will break every bone in your body here and now!”

Cleigh selected an olive and began munching it.

“Nonsense!” cried Jane. “It’s all awry anyhow.” And she began to extract the hairpins. Presently she shook her head, and the ruddy mass of hair fell and rippled across and down her shoulders.

“Well?” she said, looking whimsically into Cunningham’s eyes. “It wasn’t there, was it?”

This tickled Cunningham.

“You’re a woman in a million! You read my thought perfectly. I like ready wit in a woman. I had to find out. You see, I had promised those beads to Cleigh, and when I humanly can I keep my promises. Sit down, captain!” For Dennison had risen to his feet. “Sit down! Don’t start anything you can’t finish.” To Jane there was in the tone a quality which made her compare it with the elder Cleigh’s eyes—agate-hard. “You are younger and stronger, and no doubt you could break me. But the moment my hand is withdrawn from this business—the moment I am off the board—I could not vouch for the crew. They are more or less decent chaps, or they were before this damned war stood humanity on its head. We wear the same clothes, use the same phrases; but we’ve been thrust back a thousand years. And Miss Norman is a woman. You understand?”

Dennison sat down.

“You’d better kill me somewhere along this voyage.”

“I may have to. Who knows? There’s no real demarcation between comedy and tragedy; it’s the angle of vision. It’s rough medicine, this; but your father has agreed to take it sensibly, because he knows me tolerably well. Still, it will not do him any good to plan bribery. Buy the crew, Cleigh, if you believe you can. You’ll waste your time. I do not pretend to hold them by loyalty. I hold them by fear. Act sensibly, all of you, and this will be a happy family. For after all, it’s a joke, a whale of a joke. And some day you’ll smile over it—even you, Cleigh.”

Cleigh pressed the steward's button.

"The jam and the cheese, Togo," he said to the Jap.

"Yess, sair!"

A hysterical laugh welled into Jane's throat, but she did not permit it to escape her lips. She began to build up her hair clumsily, because her hands trembled.

Adventure! She thrilled! She had read somewhere that after seven thousand years of tortuous windings human beings had formed about themselves a thin shell which they called civilization. And always someone was breaking through and retracing those seven thousand years. Here was an example in Cunningham. Only a single step was necessary. It took seven thousand years to build your shell, and only a minute to destroy it. There was something fascinating in the thought. A reckless spirit pervaded Jane, a longing to burst through this shell of hers and ride the thunderbolt. Monotony—that had been her portion, and only her dreams had kept her from withering. From the house to the hospital and back home again, days, weeks, years. She had begun to hate white; her soul thirsted for colour, movement, thrill. The call that had been walled in, suppressed, broke through. Piracy on high seas, and Jane Norman in the cast!

She was not in the least afraid of the whimsical rogue opposite. He was more like an uninvited dinner guest. Perhaps this lack of fear had its origin in the oily smoothness by which the yacht had changed hands. Beyond the subjugation of Dodge, there had not been a ripple of commotion. It was too early to touch the undercurrents. All this lulled and deceived her. Piracy? Where were the cutlasses, the fierce moustaches, the red bandannas, the rattle of dice, and the drunken songs?—the piracy of tradition? If she had any fear at all it was for the man at her left—Denny—who might run amuck on her account and spoil everything. All her life she would hear the father's voice—"The jam and the cheese, Togo." What men, all three of them!

Cunningham laid his napkin on the table and stood up.

"Absolute personal liberty, if you will accept the situation sensibly."

Dennison glowered at him, but Jane reached out and touched the soldier's sleeve.

"Please!"

"For your sake, then. But it's tough medicine for me to swallow."

"To be sure it is," agreed the rogue. "Look upon me as a supercargo for the next

ten days. You'll see me only at lunch and dinner. I've a lot of work to do in the chart house. By the way, the wireless man is mine, Cleigh, so don't waste any time on him. Hope you're a good sailor, Miss Norman, for we are heading into rough weather, and we haven't much beam."

"I love the sea!"

"Hang it, you and I shan't have any trouble! Good-night."

Cunningham limped to the door, where he turned and eyed the elder Cleigh, who was stirring his coffee thoughtfully. Suddenly the rogue burst into a gale of laughter, and they could hear recurrent bursts as he wended his way to the companion.

When this sound died away Cleigh turned his glance levelly upon Jane. The stone-like mask dissolved into something that was pathetically human.

"Miss Norman," he said, "I don't know what we are heading into, but if we ever get clear I will make any reparation you may demand."

"Any kind of a reparation?"—an eager note in her voice.

Dennison stared at her, puzzled, but almost instantly he was conscious of the warmth of shame in his cheeks. This girl wasn't that sort—to ask for money as a balm for the indignity offered her. What was she after?

"Any kind of reparation," repeated Cleigh.

"I'll remember that—if we get through. And somehow I believe we shall."

"You trust that scoundrel?" asked Cleigh, astonishedly.

"Inexplicably—yes."

"Because he happens to be handsome?"—with frank irony.

"No." But she looked at the son as she spoke. "He said he never broke his word. No man can be a very great villain who can say that. Did he ever break his word to you?"

"Except in this instance."

"The beads?"

"I am quite confident he knows where they are."

"Are they so precious? What makes them precious?"

"I have told you—they are love beads."

“That’s rank nonsense! I’m no child!”

“Isn’t love rank nonsense?” Cleigh countered. He was something of a banterer himself.

“Have you never loved anybody?” she shot back at him.

A shadow passed over the man’s face, clearing the ironic expression.

“Perhaps I loved not wisely but too well.”

“Oh, I’m sorry! I didn’t mean——”

“You are young; all about you is sunshine; I myself have gone down among the shadows. Cunningham may keep his word; but there is always the possibility of his not being able to keep it. He has become an outlaw; he is in maritime law a pirate. The crew are aware of it; prison stares them in the face, and that may make them reckless. If you weren’t on board I shouldn’t care. But you are young, vital, attractive, of the type that appeals to strong men. In the dry stores there are many cases of liquor and wine. The men may break into the stuff before we reach the Catwick. That will take ten or twelve days if Cunningham lays a course outside Formosa. What’s his game? I don’t know. Probably he will maroon us on the Catwick, an island I know nothing about, except that it is nearer to Saigon than to Singapore. So then in the daytime stay where I am or where Captain Dennison is. Good-night.”

Dennison balanced his spoon on the rim of the coffee cup—not a particularly easy job.

“Whatever shall I do with the jade?” Jane asked, irrelevantly.

“What?”

“The jade necklace. That poor Chinaman!”

“Ling Foo? I wish I had broken his infernal yellow neck! But for him neither of us would be here. But he is right,” Dennison added, with a jerk of his head toward the door. “You must always be with one or the other of us—preferably me.” He smiled.

“Will you promise me one thing?”

“Denny.”

“Will you promise me one thing, Denny?”

“And that is not to attempt to mix it with the scoundrel?”

“Yes.”

“I promise—so long as he keeps his. But if he touches you—well, God help him!”

“And me! Oh, I don’t mean him. It is you that I am afraid of. You’re so terribly strong—and—and so heady. I can never forget how you went into that mob of quarrelling troopers. But you were an officer there; your uniform doesn’t count here. If only you and your father stood together!”

“We do so far as you are concerned. Never doubt that. Otherwise, though, it’s hopeless. What are you going to demand of him—supposing we come through safely?”

“That’s my secret. Let’s go on deck.”

“It’s raining hard, and there’ll be a good deal of pitching shortly. Better turn in. You’ve been through enough to send the average woman into hysterics.”

“It won’t be possible to sleep.”

“I grant that, but I’d rather you would go at once to your cabin.”

“I wonder if you will understand. I’m not really afraid. I know I ought to be, but I’m not. All my life has been a series of humdrum—and here is adventure, stupendous adventure!” She rose abruptly, holding out her arms dramatically toward space. “All my life I have lived in a shell, and chance has cracked it. If only you knew how wonderfully free I feel at this moment! I want to go on deck, to feel the wind and the rain in my face!”

“Go to bed,” he said, prosaically.

Though never had she appeared so poignantly desirable. He wanted to seize her in his arms, smother her with kisses, bury his face in her hair. And swiftly upon this desire came the thought that if she appealed to him so strongly, might she not appeal quite as strongly to the rogue? He laid the spoon on the rim of the cup again and teetered it.

“Go to bed,” he repeated.

“An order?”

“An order. I’ll go along with you to the cabin. Come!” He got up.

“Can you tell me you’re not excited?”

“I am honestly terrified. I’d give ten years of my life if you were safely out of

this. For seven long years I have been knocking about this world, and among other things I have learned that plans like Cunningham's never get through per order. I don't know what the game is, but it's bound to fail. So I'm going to ask you, in God's name, not to let any romantical ideas get into your head. This is bad business for all of us."

There was something in his voice, aside from the genuine seriousness, that subdued her.

"I'll go to bed. Shall we have breakfast together?"

"Better that way."

To reach the port passage they had to come out into the main salon. Cleigh was in his corner reading.

"Good-night," she called. All her bitterness toward him was gone. "And don't worry about me."

"Good-night," replied Cleigh over the top of the book. "Be sure of your door. If you hear any untoward sounds in the night call to the captain whose cabin adjoins yours."

When she and Dennison arrived at the door of her cabin she turned impulsively and gave him both her hands. He held them lightly, because his emotions were at full tide, and he did not care to have her sense it in any pressure. Her confidence in him now was absolute, and he must guard himself constantly. Poor fool! Why hadn't he told her that last night on the British transport? What had held him back?

The uncertain future—he had let that rise up between. And now he could not tell her. If she did not care, if her regard did not go beyond comradeship, the knowledge would only distress her.

The yacht was beginning to roll now, for they were making the East China Sea. The yacht rolled suddenly to starboard, and Jane fell against him. He caught her, instantly turned her right about and gently but firmly forced her into the cabin.

"Good-night. Remember! Rap on the partition if you hear anything you don't like."

"I promise."

After she had locked and latched the door she set about the business of emptying her kit bags. She hung the evening gown she had worn all day in the locker, laid

her toilet articles on the dresser, and set the brass hand warmer on the lowboy. Then she let down her hair and began to brush it. She swung a thick strand of it over her shoulder and ran her hand down under it. The woman in “Phra the Phœnician,” Allori’s Judith—and she had always hated the colour of it! She once more applied the brush, balancing herself nicely to meet the ever-increasing roll.

Nevertheless, she did feel free, freer than she had felt in all her life before. A stupendous adventure! After the braids were completed she flung them down her back, turned off the light, and peered out of the rain-blurred port. She could see nothing except an occasional flash of angry foam as it raced past. She slipped into bed, but her eyes remained open for a long time.

Dennison wondered if there would be a slicker in his old locker. He opened the door. He found an oilskin and a yellow sou’wester on the hooks. He took them down and put them on and stole out carefully, a hand extended each side to minimize the roll. He navigated the passage and came out into the salon.

Cleigh was still immersed in his book. He looked up quickly, but recognizing the intruder, dropped his gaze instantly. Dennison crossed the salon to the companionway and staggered up the steps. Had his father ever really been afraid of anything? He could not remember ever having seen the old boy in the grip of fear. What a devil of a world it was!

Dennison was an able seaman. He had been brought up on the sea—seven years on the first *Wanderer* and five on the second. He had, in company with his father, ridden the seven seas. But he had no trade; he hadn’t the money instinct; he would have to stumble upon fortune; he knew no way of making it. And this knowledge stirred his rancor anew—the father hadn’t played fair with the son.

He gripped the deck-house rail to steady himself, for the wind and rain caught him head-on.

Then he worked his way slowly along to the bridge. Twice a comber broke on the quarter and dropped a ton of water, which sloshed about the deck, drenching his feet. He climbed the ladder, rather amused at the recurrence of an old thought—that climbing ship ladders in dirty weather was a good deal like climbing in nightmares: one weighed thousands of pounds and had feet of lead.

Presently he peered into the chart room, which was dark except for the small hooded bulbs over the navigating instruments. He could see the chin and jaws of the wheelman and the beard of old Captain Newton. From time to time a wheel spoke came into the light.

On the chart table lay a pocket lamp, facing sternward, the light pouring upon what looked to be a map; and over it were bent three faces, one of which was Cunningham's. A forefinger was tracing this map.

Dennison opened the door and stepped inside.

CHAPTER XII

“How are you making out, Newton?” he asked, calmly.

“Denny? Why, God bless me, boy, I’m glad to see you! How’s your dad?”

“Reading.”

“That would be like him. I don’t suppose if hell opened under his feet he’d do anything except look interested. And it ’pears to me’s though hell had opened up right now!”

A chuckle came from the chart table.

“What’s your idea of hell, Newton?” asked Cunningham.

“Anything you might have a hand in,” was the return bolt.

“Why, you used to like me!”

“Yes, yes! But I didn’t know you then. The barometer’s dropping. If it was August I’d say we were nosing into a typhoon. I always hated this yellow muck they call a sea over here. Did you pick up that light?”

“Yes, sir,” answered the wheelman. “I take it she’s making south—Hong-Kong way. There’s plenty of sea room. She’ll be well down before we cross her wake.”

Silence except for the rumble of the weather canvas standing up against the furious blasts of the wind. Dennison stepped over to the chart table.

“Cunningham, I would like to have a word with you.”

“Go ahead. You can have as many as you like.”

“At dinner you spoke of your word.”

“So I did. What about it?”

“Do you keep it?”

“Whenever I humanly can. Well?”

“What’s this Catwick Island?”

“Hanged if I know!”

“Are you going to maroon us there?”

“No. At that point the yacht will be turned back to your father, and he can cruise until the crack o’ doom without further interference from yours truly.”

“That’s your word?”

“It is—and I will keep it. Anything else?”

“Yes. I will play the game as it lies, provided that Miss Norman is in nowise interfered with or annoyed.”

“How is she taking it?”

“My reply first.”

“Neither I nor the crew will bother her. She shall come and go free as the gull in the air. If at any time the men do not observe the utmost politeness toward her you will do me a favour to report to me. That’s my word, and I promise to keep it, even if I have to kill a man or two. I wish to come through clean in the hands so far as your father, Miss Norman, and yourself are concerned. I’m risking my neck and my liberty, for this is piracy on the high seas. But every man is entitled to one good joke during his lifetime, and when we raise the Catwick I’ll explain this joke in full. If you don’t chuckle, then you haven’t so much as a grain of humour in your make-up.”

“Well, there’s nothing for me to do but take your word as you give it.”

“That’s the way to talk. Now, Flint, this bay or lagoon——”

The voice dropped into a low, indistinguishable murmur. Dennison realized that the moment had come to depart; the edge of the encounter was in Cunningham’s favour and to remain would only serve to sharpen this edge. So he went outside, slamming the door behind him.

The word of a rogue! There was now nothing to do but turn in. He believed he had a glimmer. Somewhere off the Catwick Cunningham and his crew were to be picked up. He would not be going to the Catwick himself, not knowing whether it was jungle or bald rock. But if a ship was to pick him up, why hadn’t she made Shanghai and picked him up there? Why commit piracy—unless he was a colossal liar, which Dennison was ready enough to believe. The word of a rogue!

Some private war? Was Cunningham paying off an old grudge? But was any grudge worth this risk? The old boy wasn't to be scared; Cunningham ought to have known that. If Cleigh came through with a whole skin he'd hunt the beggar down if it carried him to the North Pole. Cunningham ought to have known that, too. A planted crew, piracy—and he, Dennison Cleigh, was eventually to chuckle over it! He had his doubts. And where did the glass beads come in? Or had Cunningham spoken the truth—a lure? A big game somewhere in the offing. And the rogue was right! The world, dizzily stewing in a caldron of monumental mistakes, would give scant attention to an off-side play such as this promised to be. Not a handhold anywhere to the puzzle. The old boy might have the key, but Dennison Cleigh could not go to him for the solution.

His own father! Just as he had become used to the idea that the separation was final, absolute, to be thrown together in this fantastic manner! The father's arm under his neck and the cup at his lips had shaken him profoundly. But Cleigh would not have denied a dog drink had the dog exhibited signs of thirst. So nothing could be drawn from that.

Morning. Jane opened her eyes, only to shut them quickly. The white brilliancy of the cabin hurt. Across the ceiling ran a constant flicker of silver—reflected sunshine on the water. Southward—they were heading southward. She jumped out of bed and stepped over to the port. Flashing yellow water, a blue sky, and far off the oddly ribbed sails of a Chinese junk labouring heavily in the big sea that was still running. Glorious!

She dressed hurriedly and warmly, bundling her hair under a velours hat and ramming a pin through both.

"Denny?" she called.

There was no answer. He was on deck, probably.

An odd scene awaited her in the main salon. Cleigh, senior, stood before the phonograph listening to Caruso. The roll of the yacht in nowise disturbed the mechanism of the instrument. There was no sudden sluing of the needle, due to an amateurish device which Cleigh himself had constructed. The son, stooping, was searching the titles of a row of new novels. The width of the salon stretched between the two.

"Good morning, everybody!"

There was a joyousness in her voice she made not the least attempt to conceal. She was joyous, alive, and she did not care who knew it.

Dennison acknowledged her greeting with a smile, a smile which was a mixture of wonder and admiration. How in the world was she to be made to understand that they were riding a deep-sea volcano?

“Nothing disturbed you through the night?” asked Cleigh, lifting the pin from the record.

“Nothing. I lay awake for an hour or two, but after that I slept like a log. Have I kept you waiting?”

“No. Breakfast isn’t quite ready,” answered Cleigh.

“What makes the sea so yellow?”

“All the big Chinese rivers are mud-banked and mud-bottomed. They pour millions of tons of yellow mud into these waters. By this afternoon, however, I imagine we’ll be nosing into the blue. Ah!”

“Breakfast iss served,” announced Togo the Jap.

The trio entered the dining salon in single file, and once more Jane found herself seated between the two men. One moment she was carrying on a conversation with the father, the next moment with the son. The two ignored each other perfectly. Under ordinary circumstances it would have been strange enough; but in this hour, when no one knew where or how this voyage would end! A real tragedy or some absurd trifle? Probably a trifle; trifles dug more pits than tragedies. Perhaps tragedy was mis-named. What humans called tragedy was epic, and trifles were real tragedies. And then there were certain natures to whom the trifle was epical; to whom the inconsequent was invariably magnified nine diameters; and having made a mistake, would die rather than admit it.

To bring these two together, to lure them from behind their ramparts of stubbornness, to see them eventually shake hands and grin as men will who recognize that they have been playing the fool! She became fired with the idea. Only she must not move prematurely; there must arrive some psychological moment.

During the meal, toward the end of it, one of the crew entered. He was young—in the early twenties. The manner in which he saluted convinced Dennison that the fellow had recently been in the United States Navy.

“Mr. Cunningham’s compliments, sir. Canvas has been rigged on the port promenade and chairs and rugs set out.”

Another salute and he was off.

“Well, that’s decent enough,” was Dennison’s comment. “That chap has been in the Navy. It’s all miles over my head, I’ll confess. Cunningham spoke of a joke when I accosted him in the chart house last night.”

“You went up there?” cried Jane.

“Yes. And among other things he said that every man is entitled to at least one good joke. What the devil can he mean by that?”

Had he been looking at his father Dennison would have caught a fleeting, grim, shadowy smile on the strong mouth.

“You will find a dozen new novels on the shelves, Miss Norman,” said Cleigh as he rose. “I’ll be on deck. I generally walk two or three miles in the morning. Let us hang together this day to test the scalawag’s promise.”

“Mr. Cleigh, when you spoke of reparation last night, you weren’t thinking in monetary terms, were you?”

Cleigh’s brows lowered a trifle, but it was the effect of puzzlement.

“Because,” she proceeded, gravely, “all the money you possess would not compensate me for the position you have placed me in.”

“Well, perhaps I did have money in mind. However, I hold to my word. Anything you may ask.”

“Some day I will ask you for something.”

“And if humanly possible I promise to give it,” and with this Cleigh took leave.

Jane turned to Dennison.

“It is so strange and incomprehensible! You two sitting here and ignoring each other! Surely you don’t hate your father?”

“I have the greatest respect and admiration for him. To you no doubt it seems fantastic; but we understand each other thoroughly, my father and I. I’d take his hand instantly, God knows, if he offered it! But if I offered mine it would be glass against diamond—I’d only get badly scratched. Suppose we go on deck? The air and the sunshine——”

“But this catastrophe has brought you together after all these years. Isn’t there something providential in that?”

“Who can say?”

On deck they fell in behind Cleigh, and followed him round for fully an hour;

then Jane signified that she was tired, and Dennison put her in the centre chair and wrapped the rug about her. He selected the chair at her right.

Jane shut her eyes, and Dennison opened a novel. It was good reading, and he became partially absorbed. The sudden creak of a chair brought his glance round. His father had seated himself in the vacant chair.

The phase that dug in and hurt was that his father made no endeavour to avoid him—simply ignored his existence. Seven years and not a crack in the granite! He laid the book on his knees and stared at the rocking horizon.

One of the crew passed. Cleigh hailed him.

“Send Mr. Cleve to me.”

“Yes, sir.”

The air and the tone of the man were perfectly respectful.

When Cleve, the first officer, appeared his manner was solicitous.

“Are you comfortable, sir?”

“Would ten thousand dollars interest you?” said Cleigh, directly.

“If you mean to come over to your side, no. My life wouldn’t be worth a snap of the thumb. You know something about Dick Cunningham. I know him well. The truth is, Mr. Cleigh, we’re off on a big gamble, and if we win out ten thousand wouldn’t interest me. Life on board will be exactly as it was before you put into Shanghai. More I am not at liberty to tell you.”

“How far is the Catwick?”

“Somewhere round two thousand—eight or nine days, perhaps ten. We’re not piling on—short of coal. It’s mighty difficult to get it for a private yacht. You may not find a bucketful in Singapore. In America you can always commandeer it, having ships and coal mines of your own. The drop down to Singapore from the Catwick is about forty hours. You have coal in Manila. You can cable for it.”

“You are honestly leaving us at that island?”

“Yes, sir. You can, if you wish, take the run up to Saigon; but your chance for coal there is nil.”

“Cleve,” said Cleigh, solemnly, “you appreciate the risks you are running?”

“Mr. Cleigh, there are no risks. It’s a dead certainty. Cunningham is one of your efficiency experts. Everything has been thought of.”

“Except fate,” supplemented Cleigh.

“Fate? Why, she’s our chief engineer!”

Cleve turned away, chuckling; a dozen feet off this chuckle became boisterous laughter.

“What can they be after? Sunken treasure?” cried Jane, excitedly.

“Hangman’s hemp—if I live long enough,” was the grim declaration, and Cleigh drew the rug over his knees.

“But it can’t be anything dreadful if they can laugh over it!”

“Did you ever hear Mephisto laugh in Faust? Cunningham is a queer duck. I don’t suppose there’s a corner on the globe he hasn’t had a peek at. He has a vast knowledge of the arts. His real name nobody seems to know. He can make himself very likable to men and attractive to women. The sort of women he seeks do not mind his physical deformity. His face and his intellect draw them, and he is as cruel as a wolf. It never occurred to me until last night that men like me create his kind. But I don’t understand him in this instance. A play like this, with all the future risks! After I get the wires moving he won’t be able to stir a hundred miles in any direction.”

“But so long as he doesn’t intend to harm us—and I’m convinced he doesn’t—perhaps we’d better play the game as he asks us to.”

“Miss Norman,” said Cleigh in a tired voice, “will you do me the favour to ask Captain Dennison why he has never touched the twenty thousand I deposited to his account?”

Astonished, Jane turned to Dennison to repeat the question, but was forestalled.

“Tell Mr. Cleigh that to touch a dollar of that money would be a tacit admission that Mr. Cleigh had the right to strike Captain Dennison across the mouth.”

Dennison swung out of the chair and strode off toward the bridge, his shoulders flat and his neck stiff.

“You struck him?” demanded Jane, impulsively.

But Cleigh did not answer. His eyes were closed, his head rested against the back of the chair so Jane did not press the question. It was enough that she had seen behind a corner of this peculiar veil. And, oddly, she felt quite as much pity for the father as for the son. A wall of pride, Alpine high, and neither would force a passage!

They did not see the arch rogue during the day, but he came in to dinner. He was gay—in a story-telling mood. There was little or no banter, for he spoke only to Jane, and gave her flashes of some of his amazing activities in search of art treasures. He had once been chased up and down Japan by the Mikado's agents for having in his possession some royal-silk tapestry which it is forbidden to take out of the country. Another time he had gone into Tibet for a lama's ghost mask studded with raw emeralds and turquoise, and had suffered untold miseries in getting down into India. Again he had entered a Rajput haremlik as a woman, and eventually escaped with the fabulous rug which hung in the salon. Adventure, adventure, and death always at his elbow! There was nothing of the braggart in the man; he recounted his tales after the manner of a boy relating some college escapades, deprecatingly.

Often Jane stole a glance at one or the other of the Cleighs. She was constantly swung between—but never touched—the desire to laugh and the desire to weep over this tragedy, which seemed so futile.

"Why don't you write a book about these adventures?" she asked.

"A book? No time," said Cunningham. "Besides, the moment one of these trips is over it ends; I can recount it only sketchily."

"But even sketchily it would be tremendously interesting. It is as if you were playing a game with death for the mere sport of it."

"Maybe that hits it, though I've never stopped to analyze. I never think of death; it is a waste of gray matter. I should be no nearer death in Tibet than I should be asleep in a cradle. Why bother about the absolute, the inevitable? Humanity wears itself out building bridges for imaginary torrents. I am an exception; that is why I shall be young and handsome up to the moment the grim stalker puts his claw on my shoulder."

He smiled whimsically.

"But you, have you never caught some of the passion for possessing rare paintings, rugs, manuscripts?"

"You miss the point. What does the sense of possession amount to beside the sense of seeking and finding? Cleigh here thinks he is having a thrill when he signs a check. It is to laugh!"

"Have you ever killed a man?" It was one of those questions that leap forth irresistibly. Jane was a bit frightened at her temerity.

Cunningham drank his coffee deliberately.

“Yes.”

“Oh!”

Jane shrank back a little.

“But never willfully,” Cunningham added—“always in self-defence, and never a white man.”

There was a peculiar phase about the man’s singular beauty. Animated, it was youthful; in grim repose, it was sad and old.

“Death!” said Jane in a kind of awed whisper. “I have watched many die, and I cannot get over the terror of it. Here is a man with all the faculties, physical and mental; a human being, loving, hating, working, sleeping; and in an instant he is nothing!”

“A Chinaman once said that the thought of death is as futile as water in the hand. By the way, Cleigh—and you too, captain—give the wireless a wide berth. There’s death there.”

Jane saw the fire opals leap into the dark eyes.

CHAPTER XIII

The third day out they were well below Formosa, which had been turned on a wide arc. The sea was blue now, quiescent, waveless; there was only the eternal roll. Still Jane could not help comparing the sea with the situation—the devil was slumbering. What if he waked?

Time after time she tried to force her thoughts into the reality of this remarkable cruise, but it was impossible. Romance was always smothering her, edging her off, when she approached the sinister. Perhaps if she had heard ribald songs, seen evidence of drunkenness; if the crew had loitered about and been lacking in respect, she would have been able to grasp the actuality; but so far the idea persisted that this could not be anything more than a pleasure cruise. Piracy? Where was it?

So she measured her actions accordingly, read, played the phonograph, went here and there over the yacht, often taking her stand in the bow and peering down the cutwater to watch the antics of some humorous porpoise or to follow the smother of spray where the flying fish broke. In fact, she conducted herself exactly as she would have done on board a passenger ship. There were moments when she was honestly bored.

Piracy! This was an established fact. Cunningham and his men had stepped outside the pale of law in running off with the *Wanderer*. But piracy without drunken disorder, piracy that wiped its feet on the doormat and hung its hat on the rack! There was a touch of the true farce in it. Hadn’t Cunningham himself confessed that the whole affair was a joke?

Round two o’clock on the afternoon of the third day Jane, for the moment alone in her chair, heard the phonograph—the sextet from Lucia. She left her chair, looked down through the open transom and discovered Dennison cranking the machine. He must have seen her shadow, for he glanced up quickly.

He crooked a finger which said, “Come on down!” She made a negative sign and withdrew her head.

Here she was again on the verge of wild laughter. Donizetti! Pirates! Glass beads for which Cleigh had voyaged sixteen thousand miles! A father and son who ignored each other! She choked down this desire to laugh, because she was afraid it might end suddenly in hysteria and tears. She returned to her chair, and there was the father arranging himself comfortably. He had a book.

“Would you like me to read a while to you?” she offered.

“Will you? You see,” he confessed, “I’m troubled with insomnia. If I read by myself I only become interested in the book, but if someone reads aloud it makes me drowsy.”

“As a nurse I’ve done that hundreds of times. But frankly, I can’t read poetry; I begin to sing-song it at once; it becomes rime without reason. What is the book?”

Cleigh extended it to her. The moment her hands touched the volume she saw that she was holding something immeasurably precious. The form was unlike the familiar shapes of modern books. The covers consisted of exquisitely hand-tooled calf bound by thongs; there was a subtle perfume as she opened them. Illuminated vellum. She uttered a pleasurable little gasp.

“The Song of Songs, which is Solomon’s,” she read.

“Fifteenth century—the vellum. The Florentine covers were probably added in the seventeenth. I have four more downstairs. They are museum pieces, as we say.”

“That is to say, priceless?”

“After a fashion.”

“‘Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it; if a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be contemned!’”

“Why did you select that?”

“I didn’t select it; I remembered it—because it is true.”

“You have a very pleasant voice. Go on—read.”

Thus for an hour she read to him, and by the time she grew tired Cleigh was sound asleep. The look of granite was gone from his face, and she saw that he, too, had been handsome in his youth. Why had he struck Denny on the mouth? What had the son done so to enrage the father? Some woman! And where had

she met the man? Oh, she was certain that she had encountered him before! But for the present the gate to recollection refused to swing outward. Gently she laid the beautiful book on his knees and stole over to the rail. For a while she watched the flying fish.

Then came one of those impulses which keep human beings from becoming half gods—a wrong impulse, surrendered to immediately, unweighed, unanalyzed, unchallenged. The father asleep, the son amusing himself with the phonograph, she was now unobserved by her guardians; and so she put into execution the thought that had been urging and intriguing her since the strange voyage began—a visit to the chart house. She wanted to ask Cunningham some questions. He would know something about the Cleighs.

The port door to the chart house was open, latched back against the side. She hesitated for a moment outside the high-beamed threshold—hesitated because Captain Newton was not visible. The wheelman was alone. Obliquely she saw Cunningham, Cleve, and a third man seated round a table which was littered. This third man sat facing the port door, and sensing her presence he looked up. Rather attractive until one noted the thin, hard lips, the brilliant blue eyes. At the sight of Jane something flitted over his face, and Jane knew that he was bad.

“What’s the matter, Flint?” asked Cunningham, observing the other’s abstraction.

“We have a visitor,” answered Flint.

Cunningham spun his chair round and jumped to his feet.

“Miss Norman? Come in, come in! Anything you need?” he asked with lively interest.

“I should like to ask you some questions, Mr. Cunningham.”

“Oh! Well, if I can answer them, I will.”

He looked significantly at his companions, who rose and left the house by the starboard door.

“They can’t keep away from him, can they?” said Flint, cynically. “Slue-Foot has the come-hither, sure enough. I had an idea she’d be hiking this way the first chance she got.”

“You haven’t the right dope this trip,” replied Cleve. “The contract reads: Hands off women and booze.”

“Psalm-singing pirates! We’ll be having prayers Sunday. But that woman is my style.”

“Better begin digging up a prayer if you’ve got that bug in your head. If you make any fool play in that direction Cunningham will break you. I saw you last night staring through the transom. Watch your step, Flint. I’m telling you.”

“But if she should happen to take a fancy to me, who shall say no?”

“Hate yourself, eh? There was liquor on your breath last night. Did you bring some aboard?”

“What’s that to you?”

“It’s a whole lot to me, my bucko—to me and to the rest of the boys. Cleigh will not prosecute us for piracy if we play a decent game until we raise the Catwick. On old Van Dorn’s tub we can drink and sing if we want to. If Cunningham gets a whiff of your breath, when you’ve had it, you’ll get yours. Most of the boys have never done anything worse than apple stealing. It was the adventure. All keyed up for war and no place to go, and this was a kind of safety valve. Already half of them are beginning to knock in the knees. Game, understand, but now worried about the future.”

“A peg or two before turning in won’t hurt anybody. I’m not touching it in the daytime.”

“Keep away from him when you do—that’s all. We’re depending on you and Cunningham to pull through. If you two get to scrapping the whole business will go blooey. If we play the game according to contract there’s a big chance of getting back to the States without having the sheriff on the dock to meet us. But if you mess it up because an unexpected stroke put a woman on board, you’ll end up as shark bait.”

“Maybe I will and maybe I won’t,” was the truculent rejoinder.

“Lord!” said Cleve, a vast discouragement in his tone. “You lay a course as true and fine as a hair, and run afoul a rotting derelict in the night!”

Flint laughed.

“Oh, I shan’t make any trouble. I’ll say my prayers regular until we make shore finally. The agreement was to lay off the Cleigh booze. I brought on board only a couple of quarts, and they’ll be gone before we raise the Catwick. But if I feel like talking to the woman I’ll do it.”

“It’s your funeral, not mine,” was the ominous comment. “You’ve been on the beach once too often, Flint, to play a game like this straight. But Cunningham had to have you, because you know the Malay lingo. Remember, he isn’t afraid of anything that walks on two feet or four.”

“Neither am I—when I want anything. But glass beads!”

“That was only a lure for Cleigh, who’d go round the world for any curio he was interested in.”

“That’s what I mean. If it were diamonds or pearls or rubies, all well and good. But a string of glass beads! The old duffer is a nut!”

“Maybe he is. But if you had ten or twelve millions, what would you do?”

“Jump for Prome and foot it to the silk bazaar, where there are three or four of the prettiest Burmese girls you ever laid your eyes on. Then I’d buy the Galle Face Hotel in Colombo and close it to the public.”

“And in five years—the old beach again!”

Flint scowled at the oily, heaving rolls, brassy and dazzling. He was bored. For twelve weeks he had circled the dull round of ship routine, with never shore leave that was long enough for an ordinary drinking bout. He was bored stiff. Suddenly his thin lips broke into a smile. Cleve, noting the smile, divined something of the impellent thought behind that smile, and he grew uneasy. He recalled his own expression of a few moments gone—the unreckoned derelict.

“Thank you for coming up,” said Cunningham. “It makes me feel that you trust me.”

“I want to,” admitted Jane.

A disturbing phenomenon. Always there was a quickening of her heart-beats at the beginning of each encounter with this unusual gentleman rover. It was no longer fear. What was it? Was it the face of him, too strong and vital for a woman’s, too handsome for a man’s? Was it his dark, fiery eye which was always reversing what his glib tongue said? Some hidden magnetism? Alone, the thought of him was recurrent, no matter how resolutely she cast it forth. Even now she could not honestly say whether she was here to ask questions of Cunningham or of herself. Perhaps it was because he was the unknown, whereas Denny was for the most part as readable as an open book. The one like the forest stream, sometimes turbulent but always clear; the other like the sea through which they plowed, smooth, secret, ominous.

“Do your guardians know where you are?”—raillery in his voice.

“No. I came to ask some questions.”

“Curiosity. Sit down. What is it you wish to know?”

“All this—and what will be the end?”

“Well, doubtless there will be an end, but I’m not seer enough to foretell it.”

“Then you have some doubts?”

“Only those that beset all of us.”

“But somehow—well, you don’t seem to belong to this sort of game.”

“Why not?”

Unexpectedly he had set a wall between. She had no answer, and her embarrassment was visible on her cheeks.

“Here and there across the world rough men call me Slue-Foot. Perhaps my deformity has reacted upon my soul and twisted that. Perhaps if my countenance had been homely and rugged I would have walked the beaten paths of respectability. But the two together!”

“I’m sorry!”

“A woman such as you are would be. You are a true daughter of the great mother—Pity. But I have never asked pity of any. I have asked only that a man shall keep his word to me as I will keep mine to him.”

“But you are risking your liberty, perhaps your life!”

“I’ve been risking that for more than twenty years. The habit has become normal. All my life I’ve wanted a real adventure.”

She gazed at him in utter astonishment.

“An adventure? Why, you yourself told me that you had risked your life a hundred times!”

“That?”—with a smile and a shrug. “That was business, the day’s work. I mean an adventure in which I am accountable to no man.”

“Only to God?”

“Well, of course, if you want it that way. For myself, I’m something of a pagan. I have dreamed of this day. When you were a little girl didn’t you dream of a

wonderful doll that could walk and make almost human noises? Well, I'm realizing my doll. I am going pearl hunting in the South Seas—the thing I dreamed of when I was a boy."

"But why commit piracy? Why didn't you hire a steamer?"

"Oh, I must have my joke, too. But I hadn't counted on you. In every campaign there is the hollow road of Ohain. Napoleon lost Waterloo because of it. Your presence here has forced me to use a hand without velvet. These men expected a little fun—cards and drink; and some of them are grumbling with discontent. But don't worry. In five days we'll be off on our own."

"What is the joke?"

"That will have to wait. For a few minutes I heard you reading to-day. Your voice is like a bell at sea in the evening. 'Many waters cannot quench love,'" he quoted, the flash of opals in his eyes, though his lips were smiling gently. "The Bible is a wonderful book. Its authors were poets who were not spoiled by the curse of rime. Does it amuse you to hear me talk of the Bible?—an unregenerate scalawag? Well, it is like this: I am something of an authority on illuminated manuscripts. I've had to wade through hundreds of them. That is the method by which I became acquainted with the Scriptures. The Song of Songs! Lord love you, if that isn't pure pagan, what is? I prefer the Proverbs. Ask Cleigh if he has that manuscript with him. It's in a remarkable state of preservation. Remember? 'There be three things which are too wonderful for me, yea, four which I know not: The way of an eagle in the air; the way of a serpent upon a rock; the way of a ship in the midst of the sea; and the way of a man with a maid.' Ask Cleigh to show you that."

Cleigh! The name swung her back to the original purpose of this visit.

"Do you know the Cleighs well?"

"I know the father. He has the gift of strong men—unforgetting and unforgiving. I know little or nothing about the son, except that he is a chip of the old block. Queer twist in events, eh?"

"Have you any idea what estranged them?"

"Didn't know they were at outs until the night before we sailed. They don't speak?"

"No. And it seems so utterly foolish!"

"*Cherchez la femme!*"

“You believe that was it?”

“It is always so, always and eternally the woman. I don’t mean that she is always to blame; I mean that she is always there—in the background. But you! I say, now, here’s the job for you! Bring them together. That’s your style. For weeks now you three will be together. Within that time you’ll be able to twist both of them round your finger. I wonder if you realize it? You’re not beautiful, but you are something better—splendid. Strong men will always be gravitating toward you, wanting comfort, peace. You’re not the kind that sets men’s hearts on fire, that makes absconders, fills the divorce courts, and all that. You’re like a cool hand on a hot forehead. And you have a voice as sweet as a bell.”

Instinct—the female fear of the trap—warned Jane to be off, but curiosity held her to the chair. She was human; and this flattery, free of any suggestion of love-making, gave her a warming, pleasurable thrill. Still there was a fly in the amber. Every woman wishes to be credited with hidden fires, to possess equally the power to damn men as well as to save them.

“Has there never been——”

“A woman? Have I not just said there is always a woman?” He was sardonic now. “Mine, seeing me walk, laughed.”

“She wasn’t worth it!”

“No, she wasn’t. But when we are twenty the heart is blind. So Cleigh and the boy don’t speak?”

“Cleigh hasn’t injured you in any way, has he?”

“Injured me? Of course not! I am only forced by circumstance—and an oblique sense of the comic—to make a convenience of him. And by the Lord Harry, it’s up to you to help me out!”

“I?”—bewildered.

CHAPTER XIV

Jane gazed through the doorway at the sea. There was apparently no horizon, no telling where the sea ended and the faded blue of the sky began. There was something about this sea she did not like. She was North-born. It seemed to her that there was really less to fear from the Atlantic fury than from these oily, ingratiating, rolling mounds. They were the Uriah Heep of waters. She knew how terrible they could be, far more terrible than the fiercest nor'easter down the Atlantic. Typhoon! How could a yacht live through a hurricane? She turned again toward Cunningham.

"You are like that," she said, irrelevantly.

"Like what?"

"Like the sea."

Cunningham rose and peered under the half-drawn blind.

"That may be complimentary, but hanged if I know! Smooth?—is that what you mean?"

"Kind of terrible."

He sat down again.

"That rather cuts. I might be terrible. I don't know—never met the occasion; but I do know that I'm not treacherous. You certainly are not afraid of me."

"I don't exactly know. It's—it's too peaceful."

"To last? I see. But it isn't as though I were forcing you to go through with the real voyage. Only a few days more, and you'll have seen the last of me."

"I hope so."

He chuckled.

"What I meant was," she corrected, "that nothing might happen, nobody get hurt. Human beings can plan only so far."

“That’s true enough. Every programme is subject to immediate change. But, Lord, what a lot of programmes go through per schedule! Still, you are right. It all depends upon chance. We say a thing is cut and dried, but we can’t prove it. But so far as I can see into the future, nothing is going to happen, nobody is going to walk the plank. Piracy on a basis of 2.75 per cent.—the kick gone out of it! But if you can bring about the reconciliation of the Cleighs the old boy will not be so keen for chasing me all over the map when this job is done.”

“Will you tell me what those beads are?”

“To be sure I will—all in due time. What does Cleigh call them?”

“Love beads!” scornfully.

“On my solemn word, that’s exactly what they are.”

“Very well. But remember, you promise to tell me when the time comes.”

“That and other surprising things.”

“I’ll be going.”

“Come up as often as you like.”

Cunningham accompanied her to the bridge ladder and remained until she was speeding along the deck; then he returned to his chart. But the chart was no longer able to hold his attention. So he levelled his gaze upon the swinging horizon and kept it there for a time. Odd fancy, picturing the girl on the bridge in a hurricane, her hair streaming out behind her, her fine body leaning on the wind. A shadow in the doorway broke in upon this musing. Cleigh.

“Come in and sit down,” invited Cunningham.

But Cleigh ignored the invitation and stepped over to the steersman.

“Has Miss Norman been in here?”

“Yes, sir.”

“How long was she here?”

“I don’t know, sir; perhaps half an hour.”

Cleigh stalked to the door, but there he turned, and for the first time since Cunningham had taken the yacht Cleigh looked directly, with grim intentness, into his enemy’s eyes.

“Battle, murder, and sudden death!” Cunningham laughed. “You don’t have to

tell me, Cleigh! I can see it in your eyes. If Miss Norman wants to come here and ask questions, I'm the last man to prevent her."

Cleigh thumped down the ladder. Cunningham was right—there was murder in his heart. He hurried into the main salon, and there he found Jane and Dennison conversing.

"Miss Norman, despite my warning you went up to the chart house."

"I had some questions to ask."

"I forbid you emphatically. I am responsible for you."

"I am no longer your prisoner, Mr. Cleigh; I am Mr. Cunningham's."

"You went up there alone?" demanded Dennison.

"Why not? I'm not afraid. He will not break his word to me."

"Damn him!" roared Dennison.

"Where are you going?" she cried, seizing him by the sleeve.

"To have it out with him! I can't stand this any longer!"

"And what will become of me—if anything happens to you, or anything happens to him? What about the crew if he isn't on hand to hold them?"

The muscular tenseness of the arm she held relaxed. But the look he gave his father was on a par with that which Cleigh had so recently spent upon Cunningham. Cleigh could not support it, and turned his head aside.

"All right. But mind you keep in sight! If you will insist upon talking with the scoundrel, at least permit me to be within call. What do you want to talk to him for, anyhow?"

"Neither of you will stoop to ask him questions, so I had to. And I have learned one thing. He is going pearl hunting."

"What? Off the Catwick? There's no pearl oyster in that region," Dennison declared. "Either he is lying or the Catwick is a blind. The only chance he'd have would be somewhere in the Sulu Archipelago; and this time of year the pearl fleets will be as thick as flies in molasses. Of course if he is aware of some deserted atoll, why, there might be something in it."

"Have you ever hunted pearls?"

"In a second-hand sort of way. But if pearls are his game, why commit piracy

when he could have chartered a tramp to carry his crew? There's more than one old bucket hereabouts ready to his hand for coal and stores. He'll need a shoe spoon to get inside or by the Sulu fleets, since the oyster has been pretty well neglected these five years, and every official pearler will be hiking down there. But it requires a certain amount of capital and a stack of officially stamped paper, and I don't fancy Cunningham has either."

Cleigh smiled dryly, but offered no comment. He knew all about Cunningham's capital.

"Did he say anything about being picked up by another boat?" asked Dennison.

"No," answered Jane. "But I don't believe it will be hard for me to make him tell me that. I believe that he will keep his word, too."

"Jane, he has broken the law of the sea. I don't know what the penalty is these days, but it used to be hanging to the yard-arm. He won't be particular about his word if by breaking it he can save his skin. He's been blarneying you. You've let his plausible tongue and handsome face befog you."

"That is not true!" she flared. Afterward she wondered what caused the flash of perversity. "And I resent your inference!" she added with uplifted chin.

Dennison whirled her about savagely, stared into her eyes, then walked to the companion, up which he disappeared. This rudeness astonished her profoundly. She appealed silently to the father.

"We are riding a volcano," said Cleigh. "I'm not sure but he's setting some trap for you. He may need you as a witness for the defense. Of course I can't control your actions, but it would relieve me immensely if you'd give him a wide berth."

"He was not the one who brought me aboard."

"No. And the more I look at it, the more I am convinced that you came on board of your own volition. You had two or three good opportunities to call for assistance."

"You believe that?"

"I've as much right to believe that as you have that Cunningham will keep his word."

"Oh!" she cried, but it was an outburst of anger. And it had a peculiar twist, too. She was furious because both father and son were partly correct; and yet there was no diminution of that trust she was putting in Cunningham. "Next you'll be

hinting that I’m in collusion with him!”

“No. Only he is an extraordinarily fascinating rogue, and you are wearing the tinted goggles of romance.”

Fearing that she might utter something regrettable, she flew down the port passage and entered her cabin, where she remained until dinner. She spent the intervening hours endeavouring to analyze the cause of her temper, but the cause was as elusive as quicksilver. Why should she trust Cunningham? What was the basis of this trust? He had, as Denny said, broken the law of the sea. Was there a bit of black sheep in her, and was the man calling to it? And this perversity of hers might create an estrangement between her and Denny; she must not let that happen. The singular beauty of the man’s face, his amazing career, and his pathetic deformity—was that it?

“Where’s the captain?” asked Cunningham, curiously, as he noted the vacant chair at the table that night.

“On deck, I suppose.”

“Isn’t he dining to-night?”—an accent of suspicion creeping into his voice. “He isn’t contemplating making a fool of himself, is he? He’ll get hurt if he approaches the wireless.”

“Togo,” broke in Cleigh, “bring the avocats and the pineapple.”

Cunningham turned upon him with a laugh.

“Cleigh, when I spin this yarn some day I’ll carry you through it as the man who never batted an eye. I can see now how you must have bluffed Wall Street out of its boots.”

When Cunningham saw that Jane was distrait he made no attempt to pull her out of it. He ate his dinner, commenting only occasionally. Still, he bade her a cheery good-night as he returned to the chart house, where he stayed continually, never quite certain what old Captain Newton might do to the wheel and the compass if left alone too long.

Dennison came in immediately after Cunningham’s departure and contritely apologized to Jane for his rudeness.

“I suppose I’m on the rack; nerves all raw; tearing me to pieces to sit down and twiddle my thumbs. Will you forgive me?”

“Of course I will! I understand. You are all anxious about me. Theoretically, this

yacht is a volcano, and you're trying to keep me from kicking off the lid. But I've an idea that the lid will stay on tightly if we make believe we are Mr. Cunningham's guests. But it is almost impossible to suspect that anything is wrong. Whenever a member of the crew comes in sight he is properly polite, just as he would be on a liner. If I do go to the bridge again I'll give you warning. Good-night, Mr. Cleigh, I'll read to you in the morning. Good-night—Denny."

Cleigh, sighing contentedly, dipped his fingers into the finger bowl and brushed his lips.

The son drank a cup of coffee hastily, lit his pipe, and went on deck. He proceeded directly to the chart house.

"Cunningham, I'll swallow my pride and ask a favour of you."

"Ah!"—in a neutral tone.

"The cook tells me that all the wine and liquor are in the dry-stores compartment. Will you open it and let me chuck the stuff overboard?"

"No," said Cunningham, promptly. "When I turn this yacht back to your father not a single guy rope will be out of order. It would be a fine piece of work to throw all those rare vintages over the rail simply to appease an unsubstantial fear on your part! No!"

"But if the men should break in? And it would be easy, because it is nearer them than us."

"Thank your father for building the deck like a city flat. But if the boys should break in, there's the answer," said Cunningham, laying his regulation revolver on the chart table. "And every mother's son of them knows it."

"You refuse?"

"Yes."

"All right. But if anything happens I'll be on top of you, and all the bullets in that clip won't stop me."

"Captain, you bore me. Your father and the girl are good sports. You ought to be one. I've given you the freedom of the yacht for the girl's sake when caution bids me dump you into the brig. I begin to suspect that your misfortunes are due to a violent temper. Run along with your thunder; I don't want you hurt."

"If I come through this alive——"

"You'll join your dad peeling off my hide—if you can catch me!"

It was with the greatest effort that Dennison crushed down the desire to leap upon his tormentor. He stood tense for a moment, then stepped out upon the bridge. His fury was suffocating him, and he realized that he was utterly helpless.

Ten minutes later the crew in their quarters were astonished to see the old man's son enter. None of them stirred.

"I say, any you chaps got an extra suit of twill? This uniform is getting too thick for this latitude. I'm fair melting down to the bone."

"Sure!" bellowed a young giant, swinging out of his bunk. He rummaged round for a space and brought forth a light-weight khaki shirt and a pair of ducks. "Guess these'll fit you, sir."

"Thanks. Navy stores?"

"Yes, sir. You're welcome."

Dennison's glance travelled from face to face, and he had to admit that there was none of the criminal type here. They might carry through decently. Nevertheless, hereafter he would sleep on the lounge in the main salon. If any tried to force the dry-stores door he would be likely to hear it.

At eleven o'clock the following morning there occurred an episode which considerably dampened Jane's romantical point of view regarding this remarkable voyage. Cleigh had gone below for some illuminated manuscripts and Dennison was out of sight for the moment. She leaned over the rail and watched the flying fish. Suddenly out of nowhere came the odour of whisky.

"You ought to take a trip up to the cutwater at night and see the flying fish in the phosphorescence."

She did not stir. Instinctively she knew who the owner of this voice would be—the man Cunningham called Flint. A minute—an unbearable minute—passed.

"Oh! Too haughty to be a good fellow, huh?"

Footsteps, a rush of wind, a scuffling, and an oath brought her head about. She saw Flint go balancing and stumbling backward, finally to sprawl on his hands and knees, and following him, in an unmistakable attitude, was Dennison. Jane was beginning to understand these Cleighs; their rage was terrible because it was always cold.

"Denny!" she called.

But Dennison continued on toward Flint.

CHAPTER XV

Flint was a powerful man, or had been. The surprise of the attack over, he jumped to his feet, and blazing with murderous fury rushed Dennison. Jane saw a tangle of arms, and out of this tangle came a picture that would always remain vivid—Flint practically dangling at the end of Dennison's right arm. The rogue tore and heaved and kicked and struck, but futilely, because his reach was shorter. Dennison let go unexpectedly.

"Listen to me, you filthy beachcomber! If you ever dare speak to Miss Norman again or come within ten feet of her I'll kill you with bare hands! There are no guns on board this yacht—bare hands. Now go back to your master and say that I'd like to do the same to him."

Flint, his hands touching his throat with inquiring solicitude—Flint eyed Dennison with that mixture of pain and astonishment that marks the face of a man who has been grossly deceived. Slowly he revolved on his shaking legs and staggered forward, shortly to disappear round the deck house.

"Oh, Denny, you've done a foolish thing! You've shamed that man before me and put murder in his heart. It isn't as if we were running the yacht. We are prisoners of that man and his fellows. It would have been enough for you to have stepped in between."

"I haven't any parlour varnish left, Jane. His shoulder was almost touching yours. It was an intentional insult, and that was enough for me. The dog! Still looking at the business romantically?"

His tone was bitter. Her reproach, no doubt justified, cut deeply.

"No, I'm beginning to become a little afraid—afraid that the men may get out of hand. I don't care what you and your father think, but I believe Cunningham honestly wishes us to reach the Catwick without any conflict."

"Ah, Cunningham!"

"There you go again—angry and bitter! Why can't you take it sensibly, like your

father?”

“My father doesn’t happen to be——”

He stopped with mystifying abruptness.

“Doesn’t happen to be what?”

“The sort of fool I am!”

“You’re not so good a comrade as you were.”

“Can’t you understand? I’ve been stood upon my head. The worry about you on one side and the contact with my father on the other would be sufficient. But Cunningham and this pirate crew as a tail to the kite! But, thank God, I had the wit to come in search of you!”

“I thank God every minute, Denny! You are very strong,” she added, shyly.

“Glad of that, too. But I repeat, I’ve lost the parlour varnish and the art of parlour talk. For seven years I’ve been wandering in strange places, most of them hard; so I say what I think and act on the spur. That dog had liquor on his breath. Is Cunningham secretly letting them into the dry-stores?”

“The man may have brought it aboard at Shanghai. What a horrible thing a great war is! In a week it knocks aside all the bars of restraint it took years to erect. Could a venture like this have happened in 1913? I doubt it. There comes your father. But who is the man with him? He’s been hurt.”

“Father’s watchdog. They had to beat him up to get his gun away from him. That was the racket we heard. Evidently Father expects you to read to him, so I’ll take a constitutional.”

“Why, where’s your uniform?” she cried.

“Laid it aside. From now on it will be stuffy. Those military boots were killing me. I borrowed the rig from one of the pirates, but I’ll have to go barefoot.”

“Will you come to your chair soon? I shall worry otherwise. You might run into that man again.”

“I shan’t go below,” he promised, starting off.

Twenty thousand at compound interest for seven years, he thought, as he made the first turn. A tidy sum to start life with. Could he swallow his pride? And yet what hope was there of making a real living? He had never specialized in anything, and the world was calling for specialists and discarding the others.

Another point to consider: Foot-loose for seven years, could he stand the shackles of office work, routine, the sameness day in and day out? He was returning to the States without the least idea what he wanted to do; that was the disturbing phase of it. If only he were keen for something! A typical son of the rich man. The only point in his favour was that he had not spent his allowances up and down Broadway. No, he would never touch a dollar of that money. That was final.

What lay back of this sudden desire to make good in the world? Love! There wasn't the slightest use in lying to himself. He wanted Jane Norman with all the blood in his body, with all the marrow in his bones; and he had nothing to offer her but empty hands.

He shot a glance toward the bridge. And because he had no right to speak—obligated to silence by two reasons—that easy-speaking scoundrel might trap her fancy. It could not be denied that he was handsome, but he was nevertheless a rogue. The two reasons why he must not speak were potent. In the first place, he had nothing to offer; in the second place, the terror she was no doubt hiding bravely would serve only to confuse her—that is, she might confuse a natural desire for protection with something deeper and tenderer, and then discover her mistake when it was too late.

What was she going to ask of his father when the time came for reparation? That puzzled him.

He made the rounds steadily for an hour, and during this time Jane frequently looked over the top of the manuscript she was reading aloud. At length she laid the manuscript upon her knees.

"Mr. Cleigh, what is it that makes art treasures so priceless?"

"Generally the depth of the buyer's purse. That is what they say of me in the great auction rooms."

"But you don't buy them just because you are rich enough to outbid somebody else?"

"No, I am actually fond of all the treasures I possess. Aside from this, it is the most fascinating game there is. The original! A painting that Holbein laid his own brushes on, mixed his own paint for! I have then something of the man, tangible, visible; something of his beautiful dreams, his poverty, his success. There before me is the authentic labour of his hand, which was guided by the genius of his brain—before machinery spoiled mankind. Oh, yes, machinery has

made me rich! It has given the proletariat the privilege of wearing yellow diamonds and riding about in flivvers. That must be admitted. But to have lived in those days when ambition thought only in beauty! To have been the boon companions of men like Da Vinci, Cellini, Michelangelo! Then there are the adventures of this concrete dream of the artist. I can trace it back to the bare studio in which it was conceived, follow its journeys, its abiding places, down to the hour it comes to me."

Jane stared at him astonishedly. All that had been crampedly hidden in his soul flowed into his face, warming and mellowing it, even beautifying it. Cleigh went on:

"Where will it go when I have done my little span? What new adventures lie in store for it? Across the Ponte Vecchio in Florence runs a gallery of portraits: at the south end of this gallery there is or was a corner given over to a copyist. He strikes you dumb with the cleverness of his work, but he has only an eye and a hand—he hasn't a soul. A copy is to the original what a dummy is to a live man, no matter how amazingly well done the copy is. The original, the dream; nothing else satisfies the true collector."

"I didn't know," said Jane, "that you had so much romance in you."

"Romance?" It was almost a bark.

"Why, certainly. No human being could love beauty the way you do and not be romantic."

"Romantic!" Cleigh leaned back in his chair. "That's a new point of view for Tungsten Cleigh. That's what my enemies call me—the hardest metal on earth. Romantic!" He chuckled. "To hear a woman call me romantic!"

"It does not follow that to be romantic one must be sentimental. Romance is something heroic, imaginative, big; it isn't a young man and a girl spooning on a park bench. I myself am romantic, but nobody could possibly call me sentimental."

"No?"

"Why, if I knew that we'd come through this without anybody getting hurt I'd be gloriously happy. All my life I've been cooped up. For a little while to be free! But I don't like that."

She indicated Dodge, who sat in Dennison's chair, his head bandaged, his arm in a sling, thousands of miles from his native plains, at odds with his environment.

His lean brown jaws were set and the pupils of his blue eyes were mere pin points. During the discussion of art, during the reading, he had not stirred.

“You mean,” said Cleigh, gravely, “that Dodge may be only the beginning?”

“Yes. Your—Captain Dennison had an encounter with the man Flint before you came up. He is very strong and—and a bit intolerant.”

“Ah!” Cleigh rubbed his jaw and smiled ruminatively. “He was always rather handy with his fists. Did he kill the ruffian?”

“No, held him at arm’s length and threatened to kill him. I’m afraid Flint will not accept the situation with good grace.”

“Flint? I never liked that rogue’s face.”

“He has found liquor somewhere, and I saw murder in his eyes. Denny isn’t afraid, and that’s why I am—afraid he’ll run amuck uselessly. His very strength will react against him.”

“I was like that thirty years ago.” So she called him Denny? Cleigh laid his hand over hers. “Keep your chin up. There’s a revolver handy should we need it. I dare not carry it for fear Cunningham might discover and confiscate it. Six bullets.”

“And if worse comes to worse, will—will you save one for me? Please don’t let Denny do it! You are old, and if you lived after it wouldn’t be in your thoughts so long as it would be in his—if he killed me. Will you promise?”

“Yes—if worse comes to worse. Will you forgive me?”

“I do. But still I’m going to hold you to your word.”

“I’ll pay the score, whatever it is. Now suppose you come below with me and take a look at the paintings? You haven’t seen my cabin yet.”

What was this unusual young woman going to ask of him? He wondered. The more he thought over it the more convinced he was that she had assisted in the abduction.

CHAPTER XVI

After they had gone below Dennison dropped into Jane's chair. Immediately Dodge began to talk: "So you nearly throttled that ornery coyote, huh? Whata you know about this round-up? The three o' 'em came in, and I never smelt nothin' until they were on top o' me. How should I smell anythin'? Hobnobbing together for days, how was I to know they were a bunch of pirates? Is your old man sore?"

"Naturally."

"I mean appertainin' to me?"

"I don't see how he could be. Who took care of you—bound you up?"

"That nice-lookin' greaser with the slue foot. Soft speakin' like a woman and an eye like a timber wolf. Some *hombre*! Where we bound for?"

"God knows!"—dejectedly.

"Bad as that, huh? Your girl?"

"No."

"No place for a girl. If they hadn't busted my arm I wouldn't care so much! If it comes to a show-down I won't be no good to anybody. Gimme my guns and we'd be headin' home in five minutes. These *hombres* know somethin' o' my gun play. Gee, it's lonesome here!" Dodge mused for a moment. "Say, what's your old man's idea hog-tyin' you that-a-way?"

"He'll tell you perhaps."

"Uh-huh. Say, what did the Lord make all that stuff for?" with a gesture toward the brazen sea. "What's it good for, anyhow?"

"But for the sea we wouldn't have any oysters or codfish," said Dennison, soberly.

Dodge chuckled.

“Oysters and codfish! Say, you’re all right! Never knew the old man had a son until you blew in. Back in New York nobody ever said nothin’ about you. Where you been?”

“Lots of places.”

“Any ridin’?”

“Some.”

“Can you shoot?”

“A little.”

“Kill any o’ them Bolsheviks?”

“That would be guesswork. Did you ever kill a man?”

“Nope. Didn’t have to. I’m pretty good on the draw, and where I come from they knew it and didn’t bother me.”

“I see.”

“Shootin’ these days is all in the movies. I was ridin’ for a film company when your old man lassoed me for this job. Never know when you’re well off—huh? I thought there wouldn’t be nothin’ to do but grub pile three times a day and the old man’s cheroots in between. And here I be now, ridin’ along with a bunch of pirates! Whata you know about that? And some of them nice boys, too. If they were riff-raff, barroom bums, I could get a line on it. But I’ll have to pass the buck.”

“You haven’t got an extra gun anywhere, have you?”

“We’d be headin’ east if I had”—grimly. “I’d have pared down the odds this mornin’. That *hombre* with the hop-a-long didn’t leave me a quill toothpick. Was you thinkin’ of startin’ somethin’?”—hopefully.

“No, but I’d feel more comfortable if Miss Norman could carry a gun.”

“Uh-huh. Say, she’s all right. No hysterics. Ain’t many of ’em that wouldn’t ’a’ been snivellin’ all day and night in her bunk. Been listenin’ to her readin’. Gee, you’d think we were floatin’ round this codfish lake just for the fun of it! She won’t run to cover if a bust-up comes. None whatever! And I bet she can cook, too. Them kind can always cook.”

Conversation lapsed.

Below, Jane was passing through an unusual experience.

Said Cleigh at the start: “I’m going to show you the paintings—there are fourteen in all. I will tell you the history of each. And above all, please bear in mind the price of each picture.”

“I’ll remember.”

But she thought the request an odd one, coming from the man as she knew him.

Most of the treasures were in his own spacious cabin. There was a Napoleonic corner—a Meissonier on one side and a Detaille on the other. In a stationary cabinet there were a pair of stirrups, a riding crop, a book on artillery tactics, a pair of slippers beaded with seed pearls, and a buckle studded with sapphires.

“What are those?” she asked, attracted.

“They belonged to the Emperor and his first Empress.”

“Napoleon?”

“The Corsican. Next to the masters, I’ve a passion for things genuinely Napoleonic. The hussar is by Meissonier and the skirmish by Detaille.”

“How much is this corner worth?”

“I can’t say, except that I would not part with those objects for a hundred thousand; and there are friends of mine who would pay half that sum for them—behind my back. This is a Da Vinci.”

Half an hour passed. Jane honestly tried to be thrilled by the splendour of the names she heard, but her eye was always travelling back toward the slippers and the buckle. The Empress Josephine! Romance and gallantry in the old, old days!

“The painting in your cabin is by Holbein. It cost me sixteen thousand. Now let us go out and look at the rug. That is the apple of my eye. It is the second finest example of the animal rug in the world. A sheet of pure gold, half an inch thick, covering the rug from end to end, would not equal its worth.”

Jane admired the rug, but she would have preferred the gold. Her sense of the beautiful was alive, but there was always in her mind the genteel poverty of the past. She was beginning to understand. To go in quest of the beautiful required an unlimited purse and an endless leisure; and she would have never the one nor the other.

“How much gold would that be?” she inquired, naïvely.

“Nearly eighty thousand. Have you kept in mind the sums I have given you?”

“Yes. Let me see—good heavens, a quarter of a million! But why do you carry them about like this?”

“Because I’m something of a rogue myself. I could not enjoy the rug and the paintings except on board. The French, the Italian, and the Spanish governments could confiscate every solitary painting except the Meissonier and the Detaille, for the simple reason that they were stolen. Oh, I did not steal them myself; I merely purchased them with one eye shut. If I hadn’t bought them they would have gone to some other collector. Do you get a glimmer of the truth now?”

“The truth?”—perplexedly.

“Yes—where Cunningham will get his pearls?”—bitterly.

“Oh!”

“And I could not touch him. A quarter of a million! And with his knowledge of the secret marts he could easily dispose of them. Worth a bold stroke, eh?”

“But how will he get them off the yacht—transship them?”

Her faith in Cunningham began to waver. A quarter of a million! The thought was as bells in her ears.

“Of the outside issues I have no inkling. But I have shown you his pearls.”

“But the crew! Certainly they will not return to any port with us. And why should he lie to me? There is no reason in the world why he shouldn’t have told me, if he had committed piracy to obtain your paintings. And he was poring over maps.”

“Some tramp is probably going to pick him up. He’s ordered us away from the wireless. Cunningham must have his joke, so he is beguiling you with twaddle about hunting pearls. He is robbing me of my treasures, and I can’t strike back on that count. But I can land him in prison on the count of piracy; and by the Lord Harry, I’ll do it if it takes my last dollar! He’ll rue this adventure, or they call me Tungsten for nothing!”

“I wanted so to believe in him!”

“Not difficult to understand why. He has a silver tongue and a face like John the Baptist—del Sarto’s—and you are romantic. The picture of him has enlisted your sympathies. You are filled with pity that he should be so richly endowed, facially and mentally, and to be a cripple such as children laugh over.”

“Have you never considered what mental anguish must be the portion of a man

whose body is twisted as his is? I know. So I pity him profoundly, even if he is a rogue. That's all I was born for—to pity and to bind up. And I pity you, Mr. Cleigh, you who have walled your heart in granite."

"You're plain-spoken, young lady."

"Yes, certain sick minds need plain speaking."

"Then my mind is sick?"

"Yes."

"And only a little while gone it was romantic!"

"Two hundred million hands begging for bread, and you crossing the world for a string of glass beads whose value is only sentimental!"

"I can't let that pass, Miss Norman. I have trusted lieutenants who attend to my charities. I'm not a miser."

"You are, with the greatest thing in the world—human love."

"Shall a man give it where it is not wanted? But enough of this talk. I have shown you Cunningham's pearls."

"Perhaps."

Night and wheeling stars. It was stuffy in the crew's quarters. Half naked, the men lolled about, some in their bunks, some on the floor. The orders were that none should sleep on deck during the voyage to the Catwick.

"All because the old man brings a skirt on board, we have to sweat blood in the forepeak!" growled Flint. "We've got a right to a little sport."

"Sure we have!"

The speaker was sitting on the edge of his bunk. He was a fine specimen of young manhood, with a pleasant, rollicking Irish countenance. He looked as if he had been brought up clean and had carried his cleanliness into the world. The blue anchor and love birds on his formidable forearms proclaimed him a deep-sea man. It was he who had given Dennison the shirt and the ducks.

"Sure, we have a right to a little sport! But why call in the undertaker to help us out? You poor fish, all the way from San Francisco you've been grousing because shore leaves weren't long enough for you to get prime soused in. What's two months in our young lives?"

“I’ve always been free to do as I liked.”

“You look it! I’ll say so! The chief laid down the rules of this game, and we all took oath to follow those rules. The trouble with you is, you’ve been reading dime novels. Where do you think you are—raiding the Spanish Main? There’s every chance of our coming out top hole, as those lime-juicers say, with oodles of dough and a whole skin.”

“Say, don’t I know this Sulu game? I tell you, if he does find his atoll there won’t be any shell. Not a chance in a hundred! Somebody’s been giving him a song and dance. As I get the dope, some pearl-hunting friend of his croaks and leaves him this chart. Old stuff! I bet a million boobs have croaked trying to locate the red cross on a chart.”

“Why the devil did you sign on, then?”

“I wanted a little fun, and I’m going to have it. There’s champagne and Napoleon brandy in the dry-stores. Wouldn’t hurt us to have a little of it. If we’ve got to go to jail we might as well go lit up.”

“Flint, you talk too much,” said a voice from the doorway. It was Cunningham’s. He leaned carelessly against the jamb. The crew fell silent and motionless. “Boys, you’ve heard Hennessy. Play it my way and you’ll wear diamonds; mess it up and you’ll all wear hemp. The world will forgive us when it finds out we’ve only made it laugh.” Cunningham strolled over to Flint, who rose to his feet. “Flint, I want that crimp-house whisky you’ve been swigging on the sly. No back talk! Hand it over!”

“And if I don’t?” said Flint, his jaw jutting.

CHAPTER XVII

Cunningham did not answer immediately. From Flint his glance went roving from man to man, as if trying to read what they expected of him.

“Flint, you were recommended to me for your knowledge of the Sulu lingo. We’ll need a crew of divers, and we’ll have to pick them up secretly. That’s your job. It’s your only job outside doing your watch with the shovel below. Somehow you’ve got the wrong idea. You think this is a junket of the oil-lamp period. All wrong! You don’t know me, and that’s a pity; because if you did know something about me you’d walk carefully. When we’re off this yacht, I don’t say. If you want what old-timers used to call their pannikin of rum, you’ll be welcome to it. But on board the *Wanderer*, nothing doing. Get your duffel out. I’ll have a look at it.”

“Get it yourself,” said Flint.

Cunningham appeared small and boyish beside the ex-beachcomber.

“I’m speaking to you decently, Flint, when I ought to bash in your head.”

The tone was gentle and level.

“Why don’t you try it?”

The expectant men thereupon witnessed a feat that was not only deadly in its precision but oddly grotesque. Cunningham’s right hand flew out with the sinister quickness of a cobra’s strike, and he had Flint’s brawny wrist in grip. He danced about, twisted and lurched until he came to an abrupt stop behind Flint’s back. Flint’s mouth began to bend at the corners—a grimace.

“You’ll break it yourself, Flint, if you move another inch,” said Cunningham, nonchalantly. “This is the gentlest trick I have in the bag. Cut out the booze until we’re off this yacht. Be a good sport and play the game according to contract. I don’t like these side shows. But you wanted me to show you. Want to call it off?”

Sweat began to bead Flint’s forehead. He was straining every muscle in his body

to minimize that inexorable turning of his elbow and shoulder.

“The stuff is in Number Two bunker,” he said, with a ghastly grin. “I’ll chuck it over.”

“There, now!” Cunningham stepped back. “I might have made it your neck. But I’m patient, because I want this part of the game to go through according to schedule. When I turn back this yacht I want nothing missing but the meals I’ve had.”

Flint rubbed his arm, scowling, and walked over to his bunk.

“Boys,” said Cunningham, “so far you’ve been bricks. Shortly we’ll be heading southeast on our own. Wherever I am known, men will tell you that I never break my word. I promised you that we’d come through with clean heels. Something has happened which we could not forestall. There is a woman on board. It is not necessary to say that she is under my protection.”

He clumped out into the passage.

“Well, say!” burst out the young sailor named Hennessy. “I’m a tough guy, but I couldn’t have turned that trick. Hey, you! If you’ve got any hooch in the coal bunkers, heave it over. I’m telling you! These soft-spoken guys are the kind I lay off, believe you me! I’ve seen all kinds, and I know.”

“Did they kick you out of the Navy?” snarled Flint.

“Say, are you asking me to do it?” flared the Irishman. “You poor boob, you’d be in the sick bay if there hadn’t been a lady on board.”

“A lady?”

“I said a lady! Stand up, you scut!”

But Flint rolled into his bunk and turned his face to the partition.

Cunningham leaned against the port rail. These bursts of fury always left him depressed. He was not a fighting man at all and fate was always flinging him into physical contests. He might have killed the fool: he had been in a killing mood. He was tired. Somehow the punch was gone from the affair, the thrill. Why should that be?

For years he had been planning something like this, and then to have it taste like stale wine! Vaguely he knew that he had made a discovery. The girl! If he were poring over his chart, his glance would drift away; if he were reading, the printed page had a peculiar way of vanishing. Of course it was all nonsense. But that

night in Shanghai something had drawn him irresistibly to young Cleigh's table. It might have been the colour of her hair. At any rate, he hadn't noticed the beads until he had spoken to young Cleigh.

Glass beads! Queer twist. A little trinket, worthless except for sentimental reasons, throwing these lives together. Of course an oil would have lured the elder Cleigh across the Pacific quite as successfully. The old chap had been particularly keen for a sea voyage after having been cooped up for four years. But in the event of baiting the trap with a painting neither the girl nor the son would have been on board. And Flint could have had his noggin without anybody disturbing him, even if the contract read otherwise.

Law-abiding pirates! How the world would chuckle if the yarn ever reached the newspapers! He had Cleigh in the hollow of his hand. In fancy he saw Cleigh placing his grievance with the British Admiralty. He could imagine the conversation, too.

"They returned the yacht in perfect condition?"

"Yes."

"Did they steal anything?"

Cunningham could positively see Cleigh's jowls redden as he shook his head to the query.

"Sorry. You can't expect us to waste coal hunting for a scoundrel who only borrowed your yacht."

But what was the row between Cleigh and his son? That was a puzzler. Not a word! They ignored each other absolutely. These dinners were queer games, to be sure. All three men spoke to the girl, but neither of the Cleighs spoke to him or to each other. A string of glass beads!

What about himself? What had caused his exuberance to die away, his enthusiasm to grow dim? Why, a month gone he would burst into such gales of laughter that his eyes would fill with tears at the thought of this hour! And the wine tasted flat. The greatest sea joke of the age, and he couldn't boil up over it any more!

Love? He had burnt himself out long ago. But had it been love? Rather had it not been a series of false dawns? To a weepy-waily woman he would have offered the same courtesies, but she would not have drawn his thoughts in any manner. And this one kept entering his thoughts at all times. That would be a joke,

wouldn’t it? At this day to feel the scorch of genuine passion!

To dig a pit for Cleigh and to stumble into another himself! In setting this petard he hadn’t got out of range quickly enough. His sense of humour was so keen that he laughed aloud, with a gesture which invited the gods to join him.

Jane, who had been watching the solitary figure from the corner of the deck house and wondering who it was, recognized the voice. The cabin had been stuffy, her own mental confusion had driven sleep away, so she had stolen on deck for the purpose of viewing the splendours of the Oriental night. The stars that seemed so near, so soft; the sea that tossed their reflections hither and yon, or spun a star magically into a silver thread and immediately rolled it up again; the brilliant electric blue of the phosphorescence and the flash of flying fish or a porpoise that ought to have been home and in bed.

She hesitated. She was puzzled. She was not afraid of him—the puzzle lay somewhere else. She was a little afraid of herself. She was afraid of anything that could not immediately be translated into ordinary terms of expression. The man frankly wakened her pity. He seemed as lonely as the sea itself. Slue-Foot! And somewhere a woman had laughed at him. Perhaps that had changed everything, made him what he was.

She wondered if she would ever be able to return to the shell out of which the ironic humour of chance had thrust her. Wondered if she could pick up again philosophically the threads of dull routine. Jane Norman, gliding over this mysterious southern sea, a lone woman among strong and reckless men! Piracy! Pearls! Rugs and paintings worth a quarter of a million! Romance!

Did she want it to last? Did she want romance all the rest of her days? What was this thing within her that was striving for expression? For what was she hunting? What worried her and put fear into her heart was the knowledge that she did not know what she wanted. From all directions came questions she could not answer.

Was she in love? If so, where was the fire that should attend? Was it Denny—or yonder riddle? She felt contented with Denny, but Cunningham’s presence seemed to tear into unexplored corners of her heart and brain. If she were in love with Denny, why didn’t she thrill when he approached? There was only a sense of security, contentment.

The idea of racing round the world romantically with Denny struck her as absurd. Equally contrary to reason was the picture of herself and Cunningham sitting before a wood fire. What was the matter with Jane Norman?

There was one bar of light piercing the fog. She knew now why she had permitted Cleigh to abduct her. To bring about a reconciliation between father and son. And apparently there was as much chance as of east meeting west. She walked over to the rail and joined Cunningham.

“You?” he said.

“The cabin was stuffy. I couldn’t sleep.”

“I wonder.”

“About what?”

“If there isn’t a wild streak in you that corresponds with mine. You fall into the picture naturally—curious and unafraid.”

“Why should I be afraid, and why shouldn’t I be curious?”

“The greatest honour a woman ever paid me. I mean that you shouldn’t be afraid of me when everything should warn you to give me plenty of sea room.”

“I know more about men than I do about women.”

“And I know too much about both.”

“There have been other women—besides the one who laughed?”

“Yes. Perhaps I was cruel enough to make them pay for that.

“‘Funny an’ yellow an’ faithful—
Doll in a teacup she were,
But we lived on the square, like a true-married pair,
An’ I learned about women from ’er!’

“But I wonder what would have happened if it had been a woman like you instead of the one who laughed.”

“I shouldn’t have laughed.”

“This damned face of mine!”

“You mustn’t say that! Why not try to make over your soul to match it?”

“How is that done?”

The irony was so gentle that she fell silent for a space.

“Are you going to take Mr. Cleigh’s paintings when you leave us?”

“My dear young lady, all I have left to be proud of is my word. I give it to you

that I am going after pearls. It may sound crazy, but I can't help that. I am realizing a dream. I'm something of a fatalist—I've had to be. I've always reasoned that if I could make the dream come true—this dream of pearls—I'd have a chance to turn over a new leaf. I've had to commit acts at times that were against my nature, my instincts. I've had to be cruel and terrible, because men would not believe a pretty man could be a strong one. Do you understand? I have been forced to cruel deeds because men would not credit a man's heart behind a woman's face. I possess tremendous nervous energy. That's the principal curse. I can't sit still; I can't remain long anywhere; I must go, go, go! Like the Wandering Jew, Ishmael."

"Do you know what Ishmael means?"

"No. What?"

"'God heareth.' Have you ever asked Him for anything?"

"No. Why should I, since He gave me this withered leg? Please don't preach to me."

"I won't, then. But I'm terribly sorry."

"Of course you are. But—don't become too sorry. I might want to carry you off to my atoll."

"If you took me away with you by force, I'd hate you and you'd hate yourself. But you won't do anything like that."

"What makes you believe so?"

"I don't know why, but I do believe it."

"To be trusted by a woman, a good woman! I'll tell that to the stars. Tell me about yourself—what you did and how you lived before you came this side."

It was not a long story, and he nodded from time to time understandingly. Genteel poverty, a life of scrimp and pare—the cage. Romance—a flash of it—and she would return to the old life quite satisfied. Peace, a stormy interlude; then peace again indefinitely. It came to him that he wanted the respect of this young woman for always. But the malice that was ever bubbling up to his tongue and finding speech awoke.

"Suppose I find my pearls—and then come back for you? Romance and adventure! These warm stars always above us at night; the brilliant days; the voyages from isle to isle; palms and gay parrakeets, cocoanuts and mangosteens

—and let the world go hang!”

She did not reply, but she moved a little away. He waited for a minute, then laughed softly.

“My dear young lady, this is the interlude you’ve always been longing for. Fate has popped you out of the normal for a few days, and presently she’ll pop you back into it. Some day you’ll marry and have children; you’ll sink into the rut of monotony again and not be conscious of it. On winter nights, before the fire, when the children have been put to bed, your man buried behind his evening paper, you will recall Slue-Foot and the interlude and be happy over it. You’ll hug and cuddle it to your heart secretly. A poignant craving in your life had been satisfied. Kidnapped by pirates, under Oriental stars! Fifteen men on a dead man’s chest—yo-ho, and a bottle of rum! A glorious adventure, with three meals the day and grand opera on the phonograph. Shades of Gilbert and Sullivan! And you will always be wondering whether the pirate made love to you in jest or in earnest—and he’ll always be wondering, too!”

Cunningham turned away abruptly and clumped toward the bridge ladder, which he mounted.

For some inexplicable reason her heart became filled with wild resentment against him. Mocking her, when she had only offered him kindness! She clung to the idea of mockery because it was the only tangible thing she could pluck from her confusion. Thus when she began the descent of the companionway and ran into Dennison coming up her mood was not receptive to reproaches.

“Where have you been?” he demanded.

“Watching the stars and the phosphorescence. I could not sleep.”

“Alone?”

“No. Mr. Cunningham was with me.”

“I warned you to keep away from that scoundrel!”

“How dare you use that tone to me? Have you any right to tell me what I shall and shall not do?” she stormed at him. “I’ve got to talk to someone. You go about in one perpetual gloom. I purpose to see and talk to Cunningham as often as I please. At least he amuses me.”

With this she rushed past him and on to her cabin, the door of which she closed with such emphasis that it was heard all over the yacht—so sharp was the report that both Cleigh and Dodge awoke and sat up, half convinced that they had

heard a pistol shot!

Jane sat down on her bed, still furious. After a while she was able to understand something of this fury. The world was upside down, wrong end to. Dennison, not Cunningham, should have acted the debonair, the nonchalant. Before this adventure began he had been witty, amusing, companionable; now he was as interesting as a bump on a log. At table he was only a poor counterfeit of his father, whose silence was maintained admirably, at all times impressively dignified. Whereas at each encounter Dennison played directly into Cunningham's hands, and the latter was too much the banterer not to make the most of these episodes.

What if he was worried? Hadn't she more cause to worry than any one else? For all that, she did not purpose to hide behind the barricaded door of her cabin. If there was a tragedy in the offing it would not fall less heavily because one approached it with melancholy countenance.

Heaven knew that she was no infant as regarded men! In the six years of hospital work she had come into contact with all sorts and conditions of men. Cunningham might be the greatest scoundrel unhung, but so far as she was concerned she need have no fear. This knowledge was instinctive.

But when her cheek touched the pillow she began to cry softly. She was so terribly lonely!

CHAPTER XVIII

The space through which Jane had passed held Dennison's gaze for two or three minutes. Then he sat down on the companionway step, his arms across his knees and his forehead upon his arms. What to say? What to do? She expected him to be amusing!—when he knew that the calm on board was of the same deceptive quality as that of the sea—below, the terror!

It did not matter that the crew was of high average. They would not be playing such a game unless they were a reckless lot. At any moment they might take it into their heads to swarm over Cunningham and obliterate him. Then what? If the episode of the morning had not convinced Jane, what would? The man Flint had dropped his mask; the others were content to wear theirs yet awhile. Torture for her sake, the fear of what might actually be in store for her, and she expected him to talk and act like a chap out of a novel!

Ordinarily so full of common sense, what had happened to her that her vision should become so obscured as not to recognize the danger of the man? Had he been ugly, Jane would probably have ignored him. But that face of his, as handsome as a Greek god's, and that tongue with its roots in oil! And there was his deformity—that had drawn her pity. Playing with her, and she deliberately walked into the trap because he was amusing! Why shouldn't he be, knowing that he held their lives in the hollow of his hand? What imp of Satan wouldn't have been amiable?

Because the rogues did not run up the skull and crossbones; because they did not swagger up and down the deck, knives and pistols in their sashes, she couldn't be made to believe them criminals!

Amusing! She could not see that if he spoke roughly it was only an expression of the smothered pain of his mental crucifixion. He could not tell her he loved her for fear she might misinterpret her own sentiments. Besides, her present mood was not inductive to any declaration on his part; a confession might serve only to widen the breach. Who could say that it wasn't Cunningham's game to take Jane along with him in the end? There was nothing to prevent that. His father holding

aloof, the loyal members of the crew in a most certain negligible minority, what was there to prevent Cunningham from carrying off Jane?

Blood surged into Dennison's throat; a murderous fury boiled up in him; but he remembered in time what these volcanic outbursts had cost him in the past. So he did not rush to the chart house. Cunningham would lash him with ridicule or be forced to shoot him. But his rage carried him as far as the wireless room. He could hear the smack of the spark, but that was all. He tried the door—locked. He tried the shutters—latched. Cunningham's man was either calling or answering somebody. Ten minutes inside that room and there would be another tale to tell.

In the end Dennison spent his fury by travelling round the deck until the sea and sky became like pearly smoke. Then he dropped into a chair and fell asleep.

Cunningham had also watched through the night. The silent steersman heard him frequently rustling papers on the chart table or clumping to the bridge or lolling on the port sills—a restlessness that had about it something of the captive tiger.

Retrospection—he could not break the crowding spell of it, twist mentally as he would; and the counter-thought was dimly suicidal. The sea there; a few strides would carry him to the end of the bridge, and then—oblivion. And the girl would not permit him to enact this thought. He laughed. God had mocked him at his birth, and the devil had played with him ever since. He had often faced death hotly and hopefully, but to consider suicide coldly!

A woman who had crossed his path reluctantly, without will of her own; the sort he had always ignored because they had been born for the peace of chimney corners! She—the thought of her—could bring the past crowding upon him and create in his mind a suicidal bent!

Pearls! A great distaste of life fell upon him; the adventure grew flat. The zest that had been his ten days gone, where was it?

Imagination! He had been cursed with too much of it. In his youth he had skulked through alleys and back streets—the fear of laughter and ridicule dogging his mixed heels. Never before to have paused to philosophize over what had caused his wasted life! Too much imagination! Mental strabismus! He had let his over-sensitive imagination wreck and ruin him. A woman's laughter had given him the viewpoint of a careless world; and he had fled, and he had gone on fleeing all these years from pillar to post. From a shadow!

He was something of a monster. He saw now where the fault lay. He had never

stayed long enough in any one place for people to get accustomed to him. His damnable imagination! And there was conceit of a sort. Probably nobody paid any attention to him after the initial shock and curiosity had died away. There was Scarron in his wheel chair—merry and cheerful and brave, jesting with misfortune; and men and women had loved him.

A moral coward, and until this hour he had never sensed the truth! That was it! He had been a moral coward; he had tried to run away from fate; and here he was at last, in the blind alley the coward always found at the end of the run. He had never thought of anything but what he was—never of what he might have been. For having thrust him unfinished upon a thoughtless rather than a heartless world he had been trying to punish fate, and had punished only himself. A wastrel, a roisterer by night, a spendthrift, and a thief!

What had she said?—reknead his soul so that it would fit his face? Too late!

One staff to lean on, one only—he never broke his word. Why had he laid down for himself this law? What had inspired him to hold always to that? Was there a bit of gold somewhere in his grotesque make-up? A straw on the water, and he clutched it! Why? Cunningham laughed again, and the steersman turned his head slightly.

“Williams, do you believe in God?” asked Cunningham.

“Well, sir, when I’m holding down the wheel—perhaps. The screw is always edging a ship off, and the lighter the ballast the wider the yaw. So you have to keep hitching her over a point to starboard. You trust to me to keep that point, and I trust to God that the north stays where it is.”

“And yet legally you’re a pirate.”

“Oh, that? Well, a fellow ain’t much of a pirate that plays the game we play. And yet——”

“Ah! And yet?”

“Well, sir, some of the boys are getting restless. And I’ll be mighty glad when we raise that old Dutch bucket of yours. They ain’t bad, understand; just young and heady and wanting a little fun. They growl a lot because they can’t sleep on deck. They growl because there’s nothing to drink. Of course it might hurt Cleigh’s feelings, but I’d like to see all his grog go by the board. You see, sir, it ain’t as if we’d just dropped down from Shanghai. It’s been tarnation dull ever since we left San Francisco.”

“Once on the other boat, they can make a night of it if they want to. But I’ve given my word on the *Wanderer*.”

“Yes, sir.”

“And it’s final.”

Cunningham returned to his chart. All these cogitations because a woman had entered his life uninvited! Ten days ago he had not been aware of her existence; and from now on she would be always recurring in his thoughts.

She was not conscious of it, but she was as a wild thing that had been born in captivity, and she was tasting the freedom of space again without knowing what the matter was. But it is the law that all wild things born in captivity lose everything but the echo; a little freedom, a flash of what might have been, and they are ready to return to the cage. So it would be with her.

Supposing—no, he would let her return to her cage. He wondered—had he made his word a law simply to meet and conquer a situation such as this? Or was his hesitance due to the fear of her hate? That would be immediate and unabating. She was not the sort that would bend—she would break. No, he wasn’t monster enough to play that sort of game. She should take back her little adventure to her cage, and in her old age it would become a pleasant souvenir.

He rose and leaned on his arms against a port sill and stared at the stars until they began to fade, until the sea and the sky became like the pearls he would soon be seeking. A string of glass beads, bringing about all these events!

At dawn he went down to the deck for a bit of exercise before he turned in. When he beheld Dennison sound asleep in the chair, his mouth slightly open, his bare feet standing out conspicuously on the foot rest, a bantering, mocking smile twisted the corners of Cunningham’s lips. Noiselessly he settled himself in the adjacent chair, and cynically hoping that Dennison would be first to wake he fell asleep.

The *Wanderer’s* deck toilet was begun and consummated between six and six-thirty, except in rainy weather. Hose, mops, and holystone, until the teak looked as if it had just left the Rangoon sawmills; then the brass, every knob and piping, every latch and hinge and port loop. The care given the yacht since leaving the Yang-tse might be well called ingratiating. Never was a crew more eager to enact each duty to the utmost—with mighty good reason.

But when they came upon Dennison and Cunningham, asleep side by side, they drew round the spot, dumfounded. But their befuddlement was only a tithe of

that which struck Cleigh an hour later. It was his habit to take a short constitutional before breakfast; and when he beheld the two, asleep in adjoining chairs, the fact suggesting that they had come to some friendly understanding, he stopped in his tracks, as they say, never more astonished in all his days.

For as long as five minutes he remained motionless, the fine, rugged face of his son on one side and the amazing beauty of Cunningham's on the other. But in the morning light, in repose, Cunningham's face was tinged with age and sadness. There was, however, no grain of pity in Cleigh's heart. Cunningham had made his bed of horsehair; let him twist and writhe upon it.

But the two of them together, sleeping as peacefully as babes! Dennison had one arm flung behind his head. It gave Cleigh a shock, for he recognized the posture. As a lad Dennison had slept that way. Cunningham's withered leg was folded under his sound one.

What had happened? Cleigh shook his head; he could not make it out. Moreover, he could not wake either and demand the solution to the puzzle. He could not put his hand on his son's shoulder, and he would not put it on Cunningham's. Pride on one side and distaste on the other. But the two of them together!

He got round the impasse by kicking out the foot rest of the third chair. Immediately Cunningham opened his eyes. First he turned to see if Dennison was still in his chair. Finding this to be the case, he grinned amiably at the father. Exactly the situation he would have prayed for had he believed in the efficacy of prayer.

"Surprises you, eh? Looks as if he had signed on with the Great Adventure Company."

His voice woke Dennison, who blinked in the sunshine for a moment, then looked about. He comprehended at once.

With easy dignity he swung his bare feet to the deck and made for the companion; never a second glance at either his father or Cunningham.

"Chip of the old block!" observed Cunningham. "You two! On my word, I never saw two bigger fools in all my time! What's it about? What the devil did he do—murder someone, rob the office safe, or marry Tottie Lightfoot? And Lord, how you both love me! And how much more you'll love me when I become the dear departed!"

Cleigh, understanding that the situation was a creation of pure malice on Cunningham's part—Cleigh wheeled and resumed his tramp round the deck.

Cunningham plowed his fingers through his hair, gripped and pulled it in a kind of ecstasy. Cleigh's phiz. The memory of it would keep him in good humour all day. After all, there was a lot of good sport in the world. The days were all right. It was only in the quiet vigils of the night that the uninvited thought intruded. On board the old Dutch tramp he would sleep o'nights, and the past would present only a dull edge.

If the atoll had cocoanut palms, hang it, he would build a shack and make it his winter home! *Dolce far niente!* Maybe he might take up the brush again and do a little amateur painting. Yes, in the daytime the old top wasn't so bad. He hoped he would have no more nonsense from Flint. A surly beggar, but a necessary pawn in the game.

Pearls! Some to sell and some to play with. Lovely, tenderly beautiful pearls—a rope of them round Jane Norman's throat. He slid off the chair. As a fool, he hung in the same gallery as the Cleighs.

Cleigh ate his breakfast alone. Upon inquiry he learned that Jane was indisposed and that Dennison had gone into the pantry and picked up his breakfast there. Cleigh found the day unspeakably dull. He read, played the phonograph, and tried all the solitaires he knew; but a hundred times he sensed the want of the pleasant voice of the girl in his ears.

What would she be demanding of him as a reparation? He was always sifting this query about, now on this side, now on that, without getting anywhere. Not money. What then?

That night both Jane and Dennison came in to dinner. Cleigh saw instantly that something was amiss. The boy's face was gloomy and his lips locked, and the girl's mouth was set and cheerless. Cleigh was fired by curiosity to ascertain the trouble, but here again was an impasse.

"I'm sorry I spoke so roughly last night," said Dennison, unexpectedly.

"And I am sorry that I answered you so sharply. But all this worry and fuss over me is getting on my nerves. You've written down Cunningham as a despicable rogue, when he is only an interesting one. If only you would give banter for banter, you might take some of the wind out of his sails. But instead you go about as if the next hour was to be our last!"

"Who knows?"

"There you go! In a minute we'll be digging up the hatchet again."

But she softened the reproach by smiling. At this moment Cunningham came in briskly and cheerfully. He sat down, threw the napkin across his knees, and sent an ingratiating smile round the table.

“Cleigh”—he was always talking to Cleigh, and apparently not minding in the least that he was totally ignored—“Cleigh, they are doing a good job in the Santa Maria delle Grazie, so I am told. Milan, of course. They are restoring Da Vinci’s Cenacolo. What called it to mind is the fact that this is also the last supper. To-morrow at this hour you will be in possession and I’ll be off for my pearls.”

The recipients of this remarkable news appeared petrified for a space. Cunningham enjoyed the astonishment.

“Sounds almost too good to be true, doesn’t it? Still, it’s a fact.”

“That’s tiptop news, Cunningham,” said Dennison. “I hope when you go down the ladder you break your infernal neck. But the luck is on your side.”

“Let us hope that it stays there,” replied Cunningham, unruffled. He turned to Cleigh again: “I say, we’ve always been bewailing that job of Da Vinci’s. But the old boy was a seer. He knew that some day there would be American millionaires and that I’d become a force in art. So he put his subject on a plaster wall so I couldn’t lug it off. A canvas the same size, I don’t say; but the side of a church!”

“A ship is going to pick you up to-morrow?” asked Jane.

“Yes. The crew of the *Wanderer* goes to the *Haarlem* and the *Haarlem* crew transships to the *Wanderer*. You see, Cleigh, I’m one of those efficiency sharks. In this game I have left nothing to chance. Nothing except an act of God—as they say on the back of your steamer ticket—can derange my plans. Not the least bit of inconvenience to you beyond going out of your course for a few days. The new crew was signed on in Singapore—able seamen wanting to return to the States. Hired them in your name. Clever idea of me, eh?”

“Very,” said Cleigh, speaking directly to Cunningham for the first time since the act of piracy.

“And this will give you enough coal to turn and make Manila, where you can rob the bunkers of one of your freighters. Now, then, early last winter in New York a company was formed, the most original company in all this rocky old world—the Great Adventure Company, of which I am president and general adviser. Pearls! Each member of the crew is a shareholder, undersigned at fifteen hundred shares, par value one dollar. These shares are redeemable October first

in New York City if the company fails, or are convertible into pearls of equal value if we succeed. No widows and orphans need apply. Fair enough."

"Fair enough, indeed," admitted Cleigh.

Dennison stared at his father. He did not quite understand this willingness to hold converse with the rogue after all this rigorously maintained silence.

"Of course the Great Adventure Company had to be financed," went on Cunningham with a deprecating gesture.

"Naturally," assented Cleigh. "And that, I suppose, will be my job?"

"Indirectly. You see, Eisenfeldt told me he had a client ready to pay eighty thousand for the rug, and that put the whole idea into my noodle."

"Ah! Well, you will find the crates and frames and casings in the forward hold," said Cleigh in a tone which conveyed nothing of his thoughts. "It would be a pity to spoil the rug and the oils for the want of a little careful packing."

Cunningham rose and bowed.

"Cleigh, you are a thoroughbred!"

Cleigh shook his head.

"I'll have your hide, Cunningham, if it takes all I have and all I am!"

CHAPTER XIX

Cunningham sat down. “The spirit is willing, Cleigh, but the flesh is weak. You’ll never get my hide. How will you go about it? Stop a moment and mull it over. How are you going to prove that I’ve borrowed the rug and the paintings? These are your choicest possessions. You have many at home worth more, but these things you love. Out of spite, will you inform the British, the French, the Italian governments that you had these objects and that I relieved you of them? In that event you’ll have my hide, but you’ll never set eyes upon the oils again except upon their lawful walls—the rug, never! On the other hand, there is every chance in the world of my returning them to you.”

“Your word?” interrupted Jane, ironically.

So Cleigh was right? A quarter of a million in art treasures!

“My word! I never before realized,” continued Cunningham, “what a fine thing it is to possess something to stand on firmly—a moral plank.”

Dennison’s laughter was sardonic.

“Moral plank is good,” was his comment.

“Miss Norman,” said Cunningham, maliciously, “I slept beside the captain this morning, and he snores outrageously.” The rogue tilted his chin and the opal fire leaped into his eyes. “Do you want me to tell you all about the Great Adventure Company, or do you want me to shut up and merely proceed with the company’s business without further ado? Why the devil should I care what you think of me? Still, I do care. I want you to get my point of view—a rollicking adventure, in which nobody loses anything and I have a great desire fulfilled. Hang it, it’s a colossal joke, and in the end the laugh will be on nobody! Even Eisenfeldt will laugh,” he added, enigmatically.

“Do you intend to take the oils and the rug and later return them?” demanded Jane.

“Absolutely! That’s the whole story. Only Cleigh here will not believe it until the

rug and oils are dumped on the door-step of his New York home. I needed money. Nobody would offer to finance a chart with a red cross on it. So I had to work it out in my own fashion. The moment Eisenfeldt sees these oils and the rug he becomes my financier, but he'll never put his claw on them except for one thing—that act of God they mention on the back of your ticket. Some raider may have poked into this lagoon of mine. In that case Eisenfeldt wins."

Cleigh smiled.

"A pretty case, Cunningham, but it won't hold water. It is inevitable that Eisenfeldt gets the rug and the paintings, and you are made comfortable for the rest of your days. A shabby business, and you shall rue it."

"My word?"

"I don't believe in it any longer," returned Cleigh.

Cunningham appealed to Jane.

"Give me the whole story, then I'll tell you what I believe," she said. "You may be telling the truth."

What a queer idea—wanting his word believed! Why should it matter to him whether they believed in the honour of his word or not, when he held the whip hand and could act as he pleased? The poor thing! And as that phrase was uttered in thought, the glamour of him was dissipated; she saw Cunningham as he was, a poor benighted thing, half boy, half demon, a thing desperately running away from his hurt and lashing out at friends and enemies alike on the way.

"Tell your story—all of it."

Cunningham began:

"About a year ago the best friend I had—perhaps the only friend I had—died. He left me his chart and papers. The atoll is known, but uncharted, because it is far outside the routes. I have no actual proofs that there will be shell in the lagoon; I have only my friend's word—the word of a man as honest as sunshine. Where this shell lies there is never any law. Some pearl thiever may have fallen upon the shell since my friend discovered it."

"In that case," said Cleigh, "I lose?"

"Frankly, yes! All financial ventures are attended by certain risks."

"Money? Why didn't you come to me for that?"

"What! To you?"

Cunningham's astonishment was perfect.

"Yes. There was a time when I would have staked a good deal on your word."

Cunningham rested his elbows on the table and clutched his hair—a despairing gesture.

"No use! I can't get it to you! I can't make you people understand! It isn't the pearls, it's the game; it's all the things that go toward the pearls. I want to put over a game no man ever played before."

Jane began to find herself again drawn toward him, but no longer with the feeling of unsettled mystery. She knew now why he drew her. He was the male of the species to which she belonged—the out-trailer, the hater of humdrum, of dull orbits and of routine. The thrilling years he had spent—business! This was the adventure of which he had always dreamed, and since it would never arrive as a sequence, he had proceeded to dramatize it! He was Tom Sawyer grown up; and for a raft on the Mississippi substitute a seagoing yacht. There was then in this matter-of-fact world such a man, and he sat across the table from her!

"Supposing I had come to you and you had advanced the money?" said Cunningham, earnestly. "All cut and dried, not a thrill, not a laugh, nothing but the pearls! I have never had a boyhood dream realized but, hang it, I'm going to realize this one!" He struck the table violently. "Set the British after me, and you'll never see this stuff again. You'll learn whether my word is worth anything or not. Lay off for eight months, and if your treasures are not yours again within that time you won't have to chase me. I'll come to you and have the tooth pulled without gas."

Dennison's eyes softened a little. Neither had he realized any of his boyhood dreams. For all that, the fellow was as mad as a hatter.

"Of course I'm a colossal ass, and half the fun is knowing that I am." The banter returned to Cunningham's tongue. "But this thing will go through—I feel it. I will have had my fun, and you will have loaned your treasures to me for eight months, and Eisenfeldt will have his principal back without interest. The treasures go directly to a bank vault. There will be two receipts, one dated September—mine; and one dated November—Eisenfeldt's. I hate Eisenfeldt. He's tricky; his word isn't worth a puff of smoke; he's ready at all times to play both ends from the middle. I want to pay him out for crossing my path in several affairs. He's betting that I will find no pearls. So to-morrow I will exhibit the rug and the Da Vinci to convince him, and he will advance the cash. Can't you see the sport of it?"

“That would make very good reading,” said Cleigh, scraping the shell of his avocado pear. “I can get you on piracy.”

“Prove it! You can say I stole the yacht, but you can’t prove it. The crew is yours; you hired it. The yacht returns to you to-morrow without a scratch on her paint. And the new crew will know absolutely nothing, being as innocent as newborn babes. Cleigh, you’re no fool. What earthly chance have you got? You love that rug. You’re not going to risk losing it positively, merely to satisfy a thirst for vengeance. You’re human. You’ll rave and storm about for a few days, then you’ll accept the game as it lies. Think of all the excitement you’ll have when a telegram arrives or the phone rings! I told you it was a whale of a joke; and in late October you’ll chuckle. I know you, Cleigh. Down under all that tungsten there is the place of laughter. It will be better to laugh by yourself than to have the world laugh at you. Hoist by his own petard! There isn’t a newspaper syndicate on earth that wouldn’t give me a fortune for just the yarn. Now, I don’t want the world to laugh at you, Cleigh.”

“Considerate of you.”

“Because I know what that sort of laughter is. Could you pick up the old life, the clubs? Could a strong man like you exist in an atmosphere of suppressed chuckles? Mull it over. If these treasures were honourably yours I’d never have thought of touching them. But you haven’t any more right to them than I have, or Eisenfeldt.”

Dennison leaned back in his chair. He began to laugh.

“Cunningham, my apologies,” he said. “I thought you were a scoundrel, and you are only a fool—the same brand as I! I’ve been aching to wring your neck, but that would have been a pity. For eight months life will be full of interest for me—like waiting for the end of a story in the magazines.”

“But there is one thing missing out of the tale,” Jane interposed.

“And what is that?” asked Cunningham.

“Those beads.”

“Oh, those beads! They belonged to an empress of France, and the French Government is offering sixty thousand for their return. Napoleonic. And now will you answer a question of mine? Where have you hidden them?”

Jane did not answer, but rose and left the dining salon. Silence fell upon the men until she returned. In her hand she held Ling Foo’s brass hand warmer. She set it

on the table and pried back the jigsawed lid. From the heap of punk and charcoal ashes she rescued the beads and laid them on the cloth.

“Very clever. They are yours,” said Cunningham.

“Mine?”

“Why not? Findings is keepings. They are as much yours as mine.”

Jane pushed the string toward Cleigh.

“For me?” he said.

“Yes—for nothing.”

“There is sixty thousand dollars in gold in my safe. When we land in San Francisco I will turn over the money to you. You have every right in the world to it.”

Cleigh blew the ash from the glass beads and circled them in his palm.

“I repeat,” she said, “they are yours.”

Cunningham stood up.

“Well, what’s it to be?”

“I have decided to reserve my decision,” answered Cleigh, dryly. “To hang you ’twixt wind and water will add to the thrill, for evidently that’s what you’re after.”

“If it’s on your own you’ll only be wasting coal.”

Cleigh toyed with the beads.

“The *Haarlem*. Maybe I can save you a lot of trouble,” said Cunningham. “The name is only on her freeboard and stern, not on her master’s ticket. The moment we are hull down the old name goes back.” Cunningham turned to Jane. “Do you believe I’ve put my cards on the table?”

“Yes.”

“And that if I humanly can I’ll keep my word?”

“Yes.”

“That’s worth many pearls of price!”

“Supposing,” said Cleigh, trickling the beads from palm to palm—“supposing I offered you the equivalent in cash?”

“No, Eisenfeldt has my word.”

“You refuse?” Plainly Cleigh was jarred out of his calm. “You refuse?”

“I’ve already explained,” said Cunningham, wearily. “I’ve told you that I like sharp knives to play with. If you handle them carelessly you’re cut. How about you?” Cunningham addressed the question to Dennison.

“Oh, I’m neutral and interested. I’ve always had a sneaking admiration for a tomfool. They were Shakespeare’s best characters. Consider me neutral.”

Cleigh rose abruptly and stalked from the salon.

Cunningham lurched and twisted to the forward passage and disappeared.

When next Jane saw him in the light he was bloody and terrible.

CHAPTER XX

Jane and Dennison were alone. “I wonder,” he said, “are we two awake, or are we having the same nightmare?”

“The way he hugs his word! Imagine a man stepping boldly and mockingly outside the pale, and carrying along his word unsullied with him! He’s mad, Denny, absolutely mad! The poor thing!”

That phrase seemed to liberate something in his mind. The brooding oppression lifted its siege. His heart was no longer a torture chamber.

“I ought to be his partner, Jane. I’m as big a fool as he is. Who but a fool would plan and execute a game such as this? But he’s sound on one point. It’s a colossal joke.”

“But your father?”

“Cunningham will have to dig a pretty deep hole somewhere if he expects to hide successfully. It’s a hundred-to-one shot that father will never see his rug again. He probably realizes that, and he will be relentless. He’ll coal at Manila and turn back. He’ll double or triple the new crew’s wages. Money will mean nothing if he starts after Cunningham. Of course I’ll be out of the picture at Manila.”

“Do you know why your father kidnaped me so easily? I thought maybe I could find a chink in his armour and bring you two together.”

“And you’ve found the job hopeless!” Dennison shrugged.

“Won’t you tell me what the cause was?”

“Ask him. He’ll tell it better than I can. So you hid the beads in that hand-warmer! Not half bad. But why don’t you take the sixty thousand?”

“I’ve an old-fashioned conscience.”

“I don’t mean Father’s gold, but the French Government’s. Comfort as long as you lived.”

“No, I could not touch even that money. The beads were stolen.”

“Lord, Lord! Then there are three of us—Cunningham, myself, and you!”

“Are you calling me a tomfool?”

“Not exactly. What’s the feminine?”

She laughed and rose.

“You are almost human to-night.”

“Where are you going?”

“I’m going to have a little talk with your father.”

“Good luck. I’m going to have a fresh pot of coffee. I shall want to keep awake to-night.”

“Why?”

“Oh, just an idea. You’d better turn in when the interview is over. Good luck.”

Jane stood framed in the doorway for a moment. Under the reading lamp in the main salon she saw Cleigh. He was running the beads from hand to hand and staring into space. Behind her she heard Dennison’s spoon clatter in the cup as he stirred the coffee.

Wild horses! She felt as though she were being pulled two ways by wild horses! For she was about to demand of Anthony Cleigh the promised reparation. And which of two things should she demand? All this time, since Cleigh had uttered the promise, she had had but one thought—to bring father and son together, to do away with this foolish estrangement. For there did not seem to be on earth any crime that merited such a condition. If he humanly could—he had modified the promise with that. What was more human than to forgive—a father to forgive a son?

And now Cunningham had to wedge in compellingly! She could hesitate between Denny and Cunningham! The rank disloyalty of it shocked her. To give Cunningham his eight months! Pity, urgent pity for the broken body and tortured soul of the man—mothering pity! Denny was whole and sound, mentally and physically; he would never know any real mental torture, anything that compared with Cunningham’s, which was enduring, now waxing, now waning, but always sensible. To secure for him his eight months, without let or hindrance from the full enmity of Cleigh; to give him his boyhood dream, whether he found his pearls or not. Her throat became stuffed with the presage of tears. The

poor thing!

But Denny, parting from his father at Manila, the cleavage wider than ever, beyond hope! Oh, she could not tolerate the thought of that! These two, so full of strong and bitter pride—they would never meet again if they separated now. Perhaps fate had assigned the rôle of peacemaker to her, and she had this weapon in her hand to enforce it or bring it about—the father's solemn promise to grant whatever she might ask. And she could dodder between Denny and Cunningham!

To demand both conditions would probably appeal to Cleigh as not humanly possible. One or the other, but not the two together.

An interval of several minutes of which she had no clear recollection, and then she was conscious that she was reclining in her chair on deck, staring at the stars which appeared jerkily and queerly shaped—through tears. She hadn't had the courage to make a decision. As if it became any easier to solve by putting it over until to-morrow!

Chance—the Blind Madonna of the Pagan—was preparing to solve the riddle for her—with a thunderbolt!

The mental struggle had exhausted Jane somewhat, and she fell into a doze. When she woke she was startled to see by her wrist watch that it was after eleven. The yacht was plowing along through the velvet blackness of the night. The inclination to sleep gone, Jane decided to walk the deck until she was as bodily tired as she was mentally. All the hidden terror was gone. To-morrow these absurd pirates would be on their way.

Study the situation as she might, she could discover no flaw in this whimsical madman's plans. He held the crew in his palm, even as he held Cleigh—by covetousness. Cleigh would never dare send the British after Cunningham; and the crew would obey him to the letter because that meant safety and recompense. The Great Adventure Company! Only by an act of God! And what could possibly happen between now and the arrival of the *Haarlem*?

Cleigh had evidently turned in, for through the transoms she saw that the salon lights were out. She circled the deck house six times, then went up to the bow and stared down the cutwater at the phosphorescence. Blue fire! The eternal marvel of the sea!

A hand fell upon her shoulder. She thought it would be Denny's. It was Flint's!

"Be a good sport, an' give us a kiss!"

She drew back, but he caught her arm. His breath was foul with tobacco and whisky.

“All right, I’ll take it!”

With her free hand she struck him in the face. It was a sound blow, for Jane was no weakling. That should have warned Flint that a struggle would not be worth while. But where’s the drunken man with caution? The blow stung Flint equally in flesh and spirit. He would kiss this woman if it was the last thing he ever did!

Jane fought him savagely, never thinking to call to the bridge. Twice she escaped, but each time the fool managed to grasp either her waist or her skirt. Then out of nowhere came the voice of Cunningham:

“Flint!”

Dishevelled and breathless, Jane found herself free. She stumbled to the rail and rested there for a moment. Dimly she could see the two men enacting a weird shadow dance. Then it came to her that Cunningham would not be strong enough to vanquish Flint, so she ran aft to rouse Denny.

As she went down the companionway, her knees threatening to give way, she heard voices, blows, crashings against the partitions. Instinct told her to seek her cabin and barricade the door; curiosity drove her through the two darkened salons to the forward passage. Only a single lamp was on, but that was enough. Anthony Cleigh’s iron-gray head towering above a whirlwind of fists and forearms!

What had happened? This couldn’t be real! She was still in her chair on deck, and what she saw was nightmare! Out of the calm, all in a moment, this! Where was Denny, if this picture wasn’t nightmare? Cunningham above, struggling with the whisky-maddened Flint—Cleigh fighting in the passage! Dear God, what had happened?

Where was Denny? The question let loose in her heart and mind all that was emotional, at the same time enchaining her to the spot where she stood. Denny! Why, she loved Denny! And she had not known it consciously until this moment. Because some presciential instinct warned her that Denny was either dead or badly hurt!

The narrowness of the passage gave Cleigh one advantage—none of the men could get behind him. Sometimes he surged forward a little, sometimes he stepped back, but never back of the line he had set for himself. By and by Jane forced her gaze to the deck to see what it was that held him like a rock. What she

saw was only the actual of what she had already envisaged—Denny, either dead or badly hurt!

What had happened was this: Six of the crew, those spirits who had succumbed to the secret domination of the man Flint—the drinkers—had decided to celebrate the last night on the *Wanderer*. Their argument was that old man Cleigh wouldn't miss a few bottles, and that it would be a long time between drinks when they returned to the States; and never might they again have so easy a chance to taste the juice of the champagne grape. Where was the harm? Hadn't they behaved like little Fauntleroys for weeks? They did not want any trouble—just half a dozen bottles, and back to the forepeak to empty them. That wouldn't kill the old man. They wouldn't even have to force the door of the dry-stores; they had already learned that they could tickle the lock out of commission by the use of a bent wire. Young, restless, and mischievous—none of them bad. A bit of laughter and a few bars of song—that was all they wanted. No doubt the affair would have blown itself out harmlessly but for the fact that Chance had other ideas. She has a way with her, this Pagan Madonna, of taking off the cheerful motley of a jest and substituting the Phrygian cap of terror, subitaneously.

Dennison had lain down on the lounge in the main salon. Restless, unhappy, bitter toward his father, he had lain there counting the throbs of the engine to that point where they mysteriously cease to register and one has to wait a minute or two to pick up the throb again.

For years he had lived more or less in the open, which attunes the human ear to sounds that generally pass unnoticed. All at once he was sure that he had heard the tinkle of glass, but he waited. The tinkle was repeated. Instinct led him at once to the forward passage, and one glance down this was sufficient. From the thought of a drunken orgy—the thing he had been fearing since the beginning of this mad voyage—his thought leaped to Jane. Thus his subsequent acts were indirectly in her defense.

"What the devil are you up to there?" he called.

The unexpectedness of the challenge disconcerted the men. They had enough loot. A quick retreat, and Dennison would have had nothing to do but close the dry-stores door. But middle twenties are belligerent rather than discreet.

"What you got to say about it?" jeered one of the men, shifting his brace of bottles to the arms of another and squaring off.

Dennison rushed them, and the mêlée began. It was a strenuous affair while it lasted. When a strong man is full of anger and bitter disappointment, when six

young fellows are bored to distraction, nothing is quite so satisfying as an exchange of fisticuffs. Dennison had the advantage of being able to hit right and left, at random, while his opponents were not always sure that a blow landed where it was directed.

Naturally the racket drew Cleigh to the scene, and he arrived in time to see a champagne bottle descend upon the head of his son. Dennison went down.

Cleigh, boiling with impotent fury, had gone to bed, not to sleep but to plan; some way round the rogue, to trip him and regain the treasures that meant so much to him. Like father, like son. When he saw what was going on in the passage he saw also that here was something that linked up with his mood. Of course it was to defend the son; but without the bitter rage and the need of physical expression he would have gone for the hidden revolver and settled the affair with that. Instead he flew at the men with the savageness of a gray wolf. He was a tower of a man, for all his sixty years; and he had mauled three of the crew severely before Cunningham arrived.

Why had the mutinous six offered battle? Why hadn't they retreated with good sense at the start? Originally all they had wanted was the wine. Why stop to fight when the wine was theirs? In the morning none of them could answer these questions. Was there ever a rough-and-tumble that anybody could explain lucidly the morning after? Perhaps it was the false pride of youth; the bitter distaste at the thought of six turning tail for one.

Cunningham fired a shot at the ceiling, and a dozen of the crew came piling in from the forward end of the passage. The fighting stopped magically.

"You fools!" cried Cunningham in a high, cracked voice. "To put our heads into hemp at the last moment. If anything happens to young Cleigh, back to Manila you go with the yacht! Clear out! At the last moment!" It was like a sob.

Jane, still entranced, saw Cleigh stoop and put his arms under the body of his son, heave, and stand up under the dead weight. He staggered past her toward the main salon. She heard him mutter.

"God help me if I'm too late—if I've waited too long! Denny?"

That galvanized her into action, and she flew to the light buttons, flooding both the dining and the main salons. She helped Cleigh to place Dennison on the lounge. After that it was her affair. Dennison was alive, but how much alive could be told only by the hours. She bathed and bandaged his head. Beyond that she could do nothing but watch and wait.

“I wouldn’t mind—a little of that—water,” said Cunningham, weakly.

Cleigh, with menacing fists, wheeled upon him; but he did not strike the man who was basically the cause of Denny’s injuries. At the same time Jane, looking up across Dennison’s body, uttered a gasp of horror. The entire left side of Cunningham was drenched in blood, and the arm dangled.

“Flint had a knife—and—was quite handy with it.”

“For me!” she cried. “For defending me! Mr. Cleigh, Flint caught me on deck—and Mr. Cunningham—oh, this is horrible!”

“You were right, Cleigh. The best-laid plans of mice and men! What an ass I am! I honestly thought I could play a game like this without hurt to anybody. It was to be a whale of a joke. Flint——”

Cunningham reached blindly for the nearest chair and collapsed in it.

An hour later. The four of them were still in the main salon. Jane sat at the head of the lounge, and from time to time she took Dennison’s pulse and temperature. She had finally deduced that there had been no serious concussion. Cleigh sat at the foot of the lounge, his head on his hands. Cunningham occupied the chair into which he had collapsed. Three ugly flesh wounds, but nothing a little time would not heal. True, he had had a narrow squeak. He sat with his eyes closed.

“Why?” asked Jane suddenly, breaking the silence.

“What?” said Cleigh, looking up.

“Why these seven years—if you cared? I heard you say something about being too late. Why?”

“I’m a queer old fool. An idea, when it enters my head, sticks. I can’t shift my plans easily; I have to go through. What you have witnessed these several days gives you the impression that I have no heart. That isn’t true. But we Cleighs are pigheaded. Until he was sent to Russia he was never from under the shadow of my hand. My agents kept me informed of all his moves, his adventures. The mistake was originally mine. I put him in charge of an old scholar who taught him art, music, languages, but little or nothing about human beings. I gave him a liberal allowance; but he was a queer lad, and Broadway never heard of him. Now I hold that youth must have its fling in some manner or other; after thirty there is no cure for folly. So when he ran away I let him go; but he never got so far away that I did not know what he was doing. I liked the way he rejected the cash I gave him; the way he scorned to trade upon the name. He went clean.

Why? I don’t know. Oh, yes, he got hilariously drunk once in a while, but he had his fling in clean places. I had agents watching him.”

“Why did he run away?” asked Jane.

“No man can tell another man; a man has to find it out for himself—the difference between a good woman and a bad one.”

“I play that statement to win,” interposed Cunningham without opening his eyes.

“There was a woman?” said Jane.

“A bad one. Pretty and clever as sin. My fault. I should have sent him to college where he’d have got at least a glimmer of life. But I kept him under the tutor until the thing happened. He thought he was in love, when it was only his first woman. She wanted his money—or, more properly speaking, mine. I had her investigated and found that she was bad all through. When I told him boldly what she was he called me a liar. I struck him across the mouth, and he promptly knocked me down.”

“Pretty good punch for a youngster,” was Cunningham’s comment.

“It was,” replied Cleigh, grimly. “He went directly to his room, packed, and cleared out. In that he acted wisely, for at that moment I would have cast him out had he come with an apology. But the following day I could not find him; nor did I get track of him until weeks later. He had married the woman and then found her out. That’s all cleared off the slate, though. She’s been married and divorced three times since then.”

“Did you expect to see him over here?”

“In Shanghai? No. The sight of him rather knocked me about. You understand? It was his place to make the first sign. He was in the wrong, and he has known it all these seven years.”

“No,” said Jane, “it was your place to make the first advance. If you had been a comrade to him in his boyhood he would never have been in the wrong.”

“But I gave him everything!”

“Everything but love. Did you ever tell him a fairy story?”

“A fairy story!” Cleigh’s face was the essence of bewilderment.

“You put him in the care of a lovable old dreamer, and then expected him to accept life as you knew it.”

Cleigh rumpled his cowlicks. A fairy story? But that was nonsense! Fairy stories had long since gone out of fashion.

“When I saw you two together an idea popped into my head. But do you care for the boy?”

“I care everything for him—or I shouldn’t be here!”

Cunningham relaxed a little more in his chair, his eyes still closed.

“What do you mean by that?” demanded Cleigh.

“I let you abduct me. I thought, maybe, if I were near you for a little I might bring you two together.”

“Well, now!” said Cleigh, falling into the old New England vernacular which was his birthright. “I brought you on board merely to lure him after you. I wanted you both on board so I could observe you. I intended to carry you both off on a cruise. I watched you from the door that night while you two were dining. I saw by his face and his gestures that he would follow you anywhere.”

“But I—I am only a professional nurse. I’m nobody! I haven’t anything!”

“Good Lord, will you listen to that?” cried the pirate, with a touch of his old banter. “Nobody and nothing?”

Neither Jane nor Cleigh apparently heard this interpolation.

“Why did you maltreat him?”

“Otherwise he would have thought I was offering my hand, that I had weakened.”

“And you expected him to fall on your shoulder and ask your pardon after that? Mr. Cleigh, for a man of your intellectual attainments, your stand is the biggest piece of stupidity I ever heard of! How in the world was he to know what your thoughts were?”

“I was giving him his chance,” declared Cleigh, stubbornly.

“A yacht? It’s a madhouse,” gibed Cunningham. “And this is a convention of fools!”

“How do you want me to act?” asked Cleigh, surrendering absolutely.

“When he comes to, take his hand. You don’t have to say anything else.”

“All right.”

From Dennison’s lips came a deep, long sigh. Jane leaned over.

“Denny?” she whispered.

The lids of Dennison’s eyes rolled back heavily.

“Jane—all right?” he asked, quickly.

“Yes. How do you feel?”

He reached out a hand whence her voice came. She met the hand with hers, and that seemed to be all he wanted just then.

“You’d better get your bathrobe, Mr. Cleigh,” she suggested.

Cleigh became conscious for the first time of the condition of his pyjama jacket. It hung upon his torso in mere ribbons. He became conscious also of the fact that his body ached variously and substantially.

“Thirty-odd years since I was in a racket like this. I’m getting along.”

“And on the way,” put in Cunningham, “you might call Cleve. I’d feel better—stretched out.”

“Oh, I had forgotten!” cried Jane, reproaching herself. Weakened as he was, and sitting in a chair!

“And don’t forget, Cleigh, that I’m master of the *Wanderer* until I leave it. I sympathize deeply,” Cunningham went on, ironically, “but I have some active troubles of my own.”

“And God send they abide with you always!” was Cleigh’s retort.

“They will—if that will give you any comfort. Do you know what? You will always have me to thank for this. That will be my comforting thought. The god in the car!”

Later, when Cleve helped Cunningham into his bunk, the latter asked about the crew.

“Scared stiff. They realize that it was a close shave. I’ve put the fools in irons. They’re best there until we leave. But we can’t do anything but forget the racket when we board the Dutchman. Where’s that man Flint? We can’t find him anywhere. He’s at the bottom of it. I knew that sooner or later there’d be the devil to pay with a woman on board. Probably the fool’s hiding in the bunkers. I’ll give every rat hole a look-see. Pretty nearly got you.”

“Flint was out of luck—and so was I! I thought in pistols, and forgot that there

might be a knife or two. I'll be on my feet in the morning. Little weak, that's all. Nobody and nothing!" said Cunningham, addressing the remark to the crossbeam above his head.

"What's that?" asked Cleve.

"I was thinking out loud. Get back to the chart house. Old Newton may play us some trick if he isn't watched. And don't bother to search for Flint. I know where he is."

Something in Cunningham's tone coldly touched Cleve's spine. He went out, closing the door quietly; and there was reason for the sudden sweat in his palms.

Chance! A wry smile stirred one corner of Cunningham's mouth. He had boasted that he had left nothing to chance, with this result! Burning up! Inward and outward fires! Love beads! Well, what were they if not that? But that she would trust him when everything about him should have repelled her! Was there a nugget of forgotten gold in his cosmos, and had she discovered it? She still trusted him, for he had sensed it in the quick but tender touch of her hands upon his throbbing wounds.

To learn, after all these years, that he had been a coward! To have run away from misfortune instead of facing it and beating it down!

Pearls! All he had left! And when he found them, what then? Turn them into money he no longer cared to spend? Or was this an interlude—a mocking interlude, and would to-morrow see his conscience relegated to the dustbin out of which it had so oddly emerged?

When Dennison opened his eyes again Jane was still holding his hand. Upon beholding his father Dennison held out his free hand.

"Will you take it, Father? I'm sorry."

"Of course I'll take it, Denny. I was an old fool."

"And I was a young one."

"Would you like a cup of coffee?" Cleigh asked, eagerly.

"If it won't be too much trouble."

"No trouble at all."

A hand pressure, a few inconsequent phrases, that is always enough for two strong characters in the hour of reconciliation.

Cleigh out of the way, Jane tried to disengage her hand, but Dennison only tightened his grip.

“No”—a pause—“it’s different now. The old boy will find some kind of a job for me. Will you marry me, Jane? I did not speak before, because I hadn’t anything to offer.”

“No?”

“I couldn’t offer marriage until I had a job.”

“But supposing your father doesn’t give you one?”

“Why——”

“You poor boy! I’m only fishing.”

“For what?”

“Well, why do you want to marry me?”

“Hang it, because I love you!”

“Why didn’t you tell me that in the first place? How was I to know unless you told me? But oh, Denny, I want to go home!” She laid her cheek against his hand. “I want a garden with a picket fence round it and all the simple flowers. I never want another adventure in all my days!”

“Same here!”

A stretch of silence.

“What happened to me?”

“Someone hit you with a wine bottle.”

“A vintage—and I never got a swallow!”

“And then your father went to your defense.”

“The old boy? Honestly?”

“He stood astride your body until Mr. Cunningham came in and stopped the mêlée.”

“Cunningham! They quit?”

“Yes—Flint. I didn’t dream it wouldn’t be safe to go on deck, and Flint caught me. He was drunk. But for Cunningham, I don’t know what would have happened. I ran and left them fighting, and Flint wounded Cunningham with a

knife. It was for me, Denny. I feel so sorry for him! So alone, hating himself and hating the world, tortured with misunderstanding—good in him that he keeps smothering and trampling down. His unbroken word—to hang to that!”

“All right. So far as I’m concerned, that cleans the slate.”

“I loved you, Denny, but I didn’t know how much until I saw you on the floor. Do you know what I was going to demand of your father as a reparation for bringing me on board? His hand in yours. That was all I wanted.”

“Always thinking of someone else!”

“That’s all the happiness I’ve ever had, Denny—until now!”

CHAPTER XXI

A good deal of orderly commotion took place the following morning. Cunningham's crew, under the temporary leadership of Cleve, proceeded to make everything shipshape. There was no exuberance; they went at the business quietly and grimly. They sensed a shadow overhead. The revolt of the six discovered to the others what a rickety bridge they were crossing, how easily and swiftly a jest may become a tragedy.

They had accepted the game as a kind of huge joke. Everything had been prepared against failure; it was all cut and dried; all they had to do was to believe themselves. For days they had gone about their various duties thinking only of the gay time that would fall to their lot when they left the *Wanderer*. The possibility that Cleigh would not proceed in the manner advanced by Cunningham's psychology never bothered them until now. Supposing the old man's desire for vengeance was stronger than his love for his art objects? He was a fighter; he had proved it last night. Supposing he put up a fight and called in the British to help him?

Not one of them but knew what the penalty would be if pursued and caught. But Cunningham had persuaded them up to this hour that they would not even be pursued; that it would not be humanly possible for Cleigh to surrender the hope of eventually recovering his unlawful possessions. And now they began to wonder, to fret secretly, to reconsider the ancient saying that the way of the transgressor is hard.

On land they could have separated and hidden successfully. Here at sea the wireless was an inescapable net. Their only hope was to carry on. Cunningham might pull them through. For, having his own hide to consider, he would bring to bear upon the adventure all his formidable ingenuity.

At eleven the commotion subsided magically and the men vanished below, but at four-thirty they swarmed the port bow, silently if interestedly. If they talked at all it was in a whispering undertone.

The mutinous revellers formed a group of their own. They appeared to have been

roughly handled by the Cleighs. The attitude was humble, the expression worriedly sorrowful. Why hadn't they beat a retreat? The psychology of their madness escaped them utterly. There was one grain of luck—they hadn't killed young Cleigh. What fool had swung that bottle? Not one of them could recall.

The engines of the *Wanderer* stopped, and she rolled lazily in the billowing brass, waiting.

Out of the blinding topaz of the sou'west nosed a black object, illusory. It appeared to ride neither wind nor water.

From the bridge Cleigh eyed this object dourly, and with a swollen heart he glanced from time to time at the crates and casings stacked below. He knew that he would never set eyes upon any of these treasures again. When they were lowered over the side that would be the end of them. Cunningham might be telling the truth as to his intentions; but he was promising something that was not conceivably possible, any more than it was possible to play at piracy and not get hurt.

At Cleigh's side stood the son, his head swathed in bandages. All day long he had been subjected to splitting headaches, and his face looked tired and drawn. He had stayed in bed until he had heard "Ship ahoy!"

"Are you going to start something?" he asked.

Cleigh did not answer, but peered through the glass again.

"I don't see how you're going to land him without the British. On the other hand, you can't tell. Cunningham might bring the stuff back."

Cleigh laughed, but still held the glass to his eye.

"When and where are you going to get married?"

"Manila. Jane wants to go home, and I want a job."

Cleigh touched his split lips and his bruised cheekbone, for he had had to pay for his gallantry; and there was a spot in his small ribs that racked him whenever he breathed deeply.

"What the devil do you want of a job?"

"You're not thinking that I'm going back on an allowance? I've had independence for seven years, and I'm going to keep it, Father."

"I've money enough"—brusquely.

“That isn’t it. I want to begin somewhere and build something for myself. You know as well as I do that if I went home on an allowance you’d begin right off to dominate me as you used to, and no man is going to do that again.”

“What can you do?”

“That’s the point—I don’t know. I’ve got to find out.”

Cleigh lowered the glass.

“Let’s see; didn’t you work on a sugar plantation somewhere?”

“Yes. How’d you find that out?”

“Never mind about that. I can give you a job, and it won’t be soft, either. I’ve a sugar plantation in Hawaii that isn’t paying the dividends it ought to. I’ll turn the management over to you. You make good the second year, or back you come to me, domination and all.”

“I agree to that—if the plantation can be developed.”

“The stuff is there; all it needs is some pep.”

“All right, I’ll take the job.”

“You and your wife shall spend the fall and winter with me. In February you can start to work.”

“Are you out for Cunningham’s hide?”

“What would you do in my place?”

“Sit tight and wait.”

Cleigh laughed sardonically.

“Because,” went on Dennison, “he’s played the game too shrewdly not to have other cards up his sleeve. He may find his pearls and return the loot.”

“Do you believe that? Don’t talk like a fool! I tell you, his pearls are in those casings there! But, son, I’m glad to have you back. And you’ve found a proper mate.”

“Isn’t she glorious?”

“Better than that. She’s the kind that’ll always be fussing over you, and that’s the kind a man needs. But mind your eye! Don’t take it for granted! Make her want to fuss over you.”

When the oncoming tramp reached a point four hundred yards to the southwest of the yacht she slued round broadside. For a moment or two the reversed propeller—to keep the old tub from drifting—threw up a fountain; and before the sudsy eddies had subsided the longboat began a jerky descent. No time was going to be wasted evidently.

The *Haarlem*—or whatever name was written on her ticket—was a picture. Even her shadows tried to desert her as she lifted and wallowed in the long, burnished rollers. There was something astonishingly impudent about her. She reminded Dennison of an old gin-sodden female derelict of the streets. There were red patches all over her, from stem to stern, where the last coat of waterproof black had blistered off. The brass of her ports were green. Her name should have been Neglect. She was probably full of smells; and Dennison was ready to wager that in a moderate sea her rivets and bedplates whined, and that the pump never rested.

But it occurred to him that there must be some basis of fact in Cunningham's pearl atoll, and yonder owner was game enough to take a sporting chance; that, or he had been handsomely paid for his charter.

An atoll in the Sulu Archipelago that had been overlooked—that was really the incredible part of it. Dennison had first-hand knowledge that there wasn't a rock in the whole archipelago that had not been looked over and under by the pearl hunters.

He saw the tramp's longboat come staggering across the intervening water. Rag-tag and bob-tail of the Singapore docks, crimp fodder—that was what Dennison believed he had the right to expect. And behold! Except that they were older, the newcomers lined up about average with the departing—able seamen.

The transshipping of the crews occupied about an hour. As the longboat's boat hook caught the *Wanderer's* ladder for the third time the crates and casings were carried down and carefully deposited in the stern sheets.

About this time Cunningham appeared. He paused by the rail for a minute and looked up at the Cleighs, father and son. He was pale, and his attitude suggested pain and weakness, but he was not too weak to send up his bantering smile. Cleigh, senior, gazed stonily forward, but Dennison answered the smile by soberly shaking his head. Dennison could not hear Cunningham's laugh, but he saw the expression of it.

Cunningham put his hand on the rail in preparation for the first step, when Jane appeared with bandages, castile soap, the last of her stearate of zinc, absorbent

cotton and a basin of water.

“What’s this—a clinic?” he asked.

“You can’t go aboard that awful-looking ship without letting me give you a fresh dressing,” she declared.

“Lord love you, angel of mercy, I’m all right!”

“It was for me. Even now you are in pain. Please!”

“Pain?” he repeated.

For one more touch of her tender hands! To carry the thought of that through the long, hot night! Perhaps it was his ever-bubbling sense of malice that decided him—to let her minister to him, with the Cleighs on the bridge to watch and boil with indignation. He nodded, and she followed him to the hatch, where he sat down.

Dennison saw his father’s hands strain on the bridge rail, the presage of a gathering storm. He intervened by a rough seizure of Cleigh’s arm.

“Listen to me, Father! Not a word of reproach out of you when she comes up—God bless her! Anything in pain! It’s her way, and I’ll not have her reproached. God alone knows what the beggar saved her from last night! If you utter a word I’ll cash that twenty thousand—it’s mine now—and you’ll never see either of us after Manila!”

Cleigh gently disengaged his arm.

“Sonny, you’ve got a man’s voice under your shirt these days. All right. Run down and give the new crew the once-over, and see if they have a wireless man among them.”

Sunset—a scarlet horizon and an old-rose sea. For a little while longer the trio on the bridge could discern a diminishing black speck off to the southeast. The *Wanderer* was boring along a point north of east, Manila way. The speck soon lost its blackness and became violet, and then magically the streaked horizon rose up behind the speck and obliterated it.

“The poor benighted thing!” said Jane. “God didn’t mean that he should be this kind of a man.”

“Does any of us know what God wants of us?” asked Cleigh, bitterly.

“He wants men like you who pretend to the world that they’re granite-hearted

when they're not. Ever since we started, Denny, I've been trying to recall where I'd seen your father before; and it came a little while ago. I saw him only once—a broken child he'd brought to the hospital to be mended. I happened to be passing through the children's ward for some reason. He called himself Jones or Brown or Smith—I forget. But they told me afterward that he brought on an average of four children a month, and paid all expenses until they were ready to go forth, if not cured at least greatly bettered. He told the chief that if anybody ever followed him he would never come back. Your father's a hypocrite, Denny."

"So that's where I saw you?" said Cleigh, ruminatively. He expanded a little. He wanted the respect and admiration of this young woman—his son's wife-to-be. "Don't weave any golden halo for me," he added, dryly. "After Denny packed up and hiked it came back rather hard that I hadn't paid much attention to his childhood. It was a kind of penance."

"But you liked it!"

"Maybe I only got used to it. Say, Denny, was there a wireless man in the crew?"

"No. I knew there wouldn't be. But I can handle the key."

"Fine! Come along then."

"What are you going to do?"

"Do? Why, I'm going to have the Asiatic fleets on his heels inside of twenty-four hours! That's what I'm going to do! He's an unprincipled rogue!"

"No," interposed Jane, "only a poor broken thing."

"That's no fault of mine. But no man can play this sort of game with me, and show a clean pair of heels. The rug and the paintings are gone for good. I swore to him that I would have his hide, and have it I will! I never break my word."

"Denny," said Jane, "for my sake you will not touch the wireless."

"I'm giving the orders!" roared Cleigh.

"Wait a moment!" said Jane. "You spoke of your word. That first night you promised me any reparation I should demand."

"I made that promise. Well?"

"Give him his eight months."

She gestured toward the sea, toward the spot where they had last seen the

Haarlem.

“You demand that?”

“No, I only ask it. I understand the workings of that twisted soul, and you don’t. Let him have his queer dream—his boyhood adventure. Are you any better than he? Were those treasures honourably yours? Fie! No, I won’t demand that you let him go; I’ll only ask it. Because you will not deny to me what you gave to those little children—generosity.”

Cleigh did not speak.

“I want to love you,” she continued, “but I couldn’t if there was no mercy in your sense of justice. Be merciful to that unhappy outcast, who probably never had any childhood, or if he had, a miserable one. Children are heartless; they don’t know any better. They pointed the finger of ridicule and contempt at him—his playmates. Imagine starting life like that! And he told me that the first woman he loved—laughed in his face! I feel—I don’t know why—that he was always without care, from his childhood up. He looked so forlorn! Eight months! We need never tell him. I’d rather he shouldn’t know that I tried to intercede for him. But for him we three would not be here together, with understanding. I only ask it.”

Cleigh turned and went down the ladder. Twenty times he circled the deck; then he paused under the bridge and sent up a hail.

“Dinner is ready!”

The moment Jane reached the deck Cleigh put an arm round her.

“No other human being could have done it. It is a cup of gall and wormwood, but I’ll take it. Why? Because I am old and lonely and want a little love. I have no faith in Cunningham’s word, but he shall go free.”

“How long since you kissed any one?” she asked.

“Many years.” And he stooped to her cheek. To press back the old brooding thought he said with cheerful brusqueness: “Suppose we celebrate? I’ll have Togo ice a bottle of that vintage those infernal ruffians broke over your head last night.”

Dennison laughed.

October.

The Cleigh library was long and wide. There was a fine old blue Ispahan on the floor. The chairs were neither historical nor uncomfortable. One came in here to read. The library was on the second floor. When you reached this room you left the affairs of state and world behind.

A wood fire crackled and shifted in the fireplace, the marble hood of which had been taken from a famous Italian palace. The irons stood ready as of yore for the cups of mulled wine. Before this fire sat a little old woman knitting. Her feet were on a hassock. From time to time her bird-like glance swept the thinker in the adjacent chair. She wondered what he could see in the fire there to hold his gaze so steadily. The little old lady had something of the attitude of a bird that had been given its liberty suddenly, and having always lived in a cage knew not what to make of all these vast spaces.

She was Jane's mother, and sitting in the chair beside her was Anthony Cleigh.

"There are said to be only five portable authentic paintings by Leonardo da Vinci," said Cleigh, "and I had one of them, Mother. Illegally, perhaps, but still I had it. It is a copy that hangs in the European gallery. There's a point. Gallery officials announce a theft only when some expert had discovered the substitution. There are a number of so-called Da Vincis, but those are the works of Boltraffio, Da Vinci's pupil. I'll always be wondering, even in my grave, where that crook, Eisenfeldt, had disposed of it."

Mrs. Norman went on with her knitting. What she heard was as instructive and illuminating to her as Chinese would have been.

From the far end of the room came piano music; gentle, dreamy, broken occasionally by some fine, thrilling chord. Dennison played well, but he had the habit of all amateurs of idling, of starting something, and running away into improvisations. Seated beside him on the bench was Jane, her head inclined against his shoulder. Perhaps that was a good reason why he began a composition and did not carry it through to its conclusion.

"That was a trick of his mother's," said Cleigh, still addressing the fire. "All the fine things in him he got from her. I gave him his shoulders, but I guess that's about all."

Mrs. Norman did not turn her head. She had already learned that she wasn't expected to reply unless Cleigh looked at her directly.

"There's a high wind outside. More rain, probably. But that's October in these parts. You'll like it in Hawaii. Never any of this brand of weather. I may be able

to put the yacht into commission."

"The sea!" she said in a little frightened whisper.

"Doorbells!" said Dennison with gentle mockery. "Jane, you're always starting up when you hear one. Still hanging on? It isn't Cunningham's willingness to fulfill his promise; it's his ability I doubt. A thousand and one things may upset his plans."

"I know. But, win or lose, he was to let me know."

"The poor devil! I never dared say so to Father, but when I learned that Cunningham meant no harm to you I began to boost for him. I like to see a man win against huge odds, and that's what he has been up against."

"Denny, I've never asked before; I've been a little afraid to, but did you see Flint when the crew left?"

"I honestly didn't notice; I was so interested in the disreputable old hooker that was to take them off."

She sighed. Fragments of that night were always recurring in her dreams.

The door opened and the ancient butler entered. His glance roved until it caught the little tuft of iron-gray hair that protruded above the rim of the chair by the fire. Noiselessly he crossed the room.

"Beg pardon, sir," he said, "but a van arrived a few minutes ago with a number of packing cases. The men said they were for you, sir. The cases are in the lower hall. Any orders, sir?"

Cleigh rose.

"Cases? Benson, did you say—cases?"

"Yes, sir. I fancy some paintings you've ordered, sir."

Cleigh stood perfectly still. The butler eyed him with mild perturbation. Rarely he saw bewilderment on his master's countenance.

"Cases?"

"Yes, sir. Fourteen or fifteen of them, sir."

Cleigh felt oddly numb. For days now he had denied to himself the reason for his agitation whenever the telephone or doorbell rang. Hope! It had not served to crush it down, to buffet it aside by ironical commentaries on the weakness of

human nature; the thing was uncrushable, insistent. Packing cases!

“Denny! Jane!” he cried, and bolted for the door.

The call needed no interpretation. The two understood, and followed him downstairs precipitately, with the startled Benson the tail to the kite.

“No, no!” shouted Cleigh. “The big one first!” as Dennison laid one of the smaller cases on the floor. “Benson, where the devil is the claw hammer?”

The butler foraged in the coat closet and presently emerged with a prier. Cleigh literally snatched it from the astonished butler’s grasp, pried and tore off a board. He dug away at the excelsior until he felt the cool glass under his fingers. He peered through this glass.

“Denny, it’s the rug!”

Cleigh’s voice cracked and broke into a queer treble note.

Jane shook her head. Here was an incurable passion, based upon the specious argument that galleries and museums had neither consciences nor stomachs. You could not hurt a wall by robbing it of a painting—a passion that would abide with him until death. Not one of these treasures in the casings was honourably his, but they were more to him than all his legitimate possessions. To ask him to return the objects to the galleries and museums to which they belonged would be asking Cleigh to tear out his heart. Though the passion was incomprehensible, Jane readily observed its effects. She had sensed the misery, the anxiety, the stinging curiosity of all these months. Not to know exactly what had become of the rug and the paintings! Not to know if he would ever see them again! There was only one comparison she could bring to bear as an illustration: Cleigh was like a man whose mistress had forsaken him without explanations.

She was at once happy and sad: happy that her faith in Cunningham had not been built upon sand, sad that she could not rouse Cleigh’s conscience. Secretly a charitable man, honest in his financial dealings, he could keep—in hiding, mind you!—that which did not belong to him. It was beyond her understanding.

An idea, which had been nebulous until this moment, sprang into being.

“Father,” she said, “you will do me a favour?”

“What do you want—a million? Run and get my check book!” he cried, gayly.

“The other day you spoke of making a new will.”

Cleigh stared at her.

“Will you leave these objects to the legal owners?”

Cleigh got up, brushing his knees.

“After I am dead? I never thought of that. After I’m dead,” he repeated. “Child, a conscience like yours is top-heavy. Still, I’ll mull it over. I can’t take ’em to the grave with me, that’s a fact. But my ghost is bound to get leg-weary doing the rounds to view them again. What do you say, Denny?”

“If you don’t, I will!”

Cleigh chuckled.

“That makes it unanimous. I’ll put it in the codicil. But while I live! Benson, what did these men look like? One of them limp?”

“No, sir. Ordinary trucking men, I should say, sir.”

“The infernal scoundrel! No message?”

“No, sir. The man who rang the bell said he had some cases for you, and asked where he should put them. I thought the hall the best place, sir, temporarily.”

“The infernal scoundrel!”

“What the dickens is the matter with you, Father!” demanded Dennison. “You’ve got back the loot.”

“But how? The story, Denny! The rogue leaves me ’twixt wind and water as to how he got out of this hole.”

“Maybe he was afraid you still wanted his hide,” suggested Jane, now immeasurably happy.

“He did it!” said Cleigh, his sense of amazement awakening. “One chance in a thousand, and he caught that chance! But never to know how he did it!”

“Aren’t you glad now,” said Jane, “that you let him go?”

Cleigh chuckled.

“There!” she exclaimed, clapping her hands. “Just as he said! He prophesied that some day you would chuckle over it. He found his pearls. He knew he would find them! The bell!” she broke off, startled.

Never had Benson, the butler, witnessed such an exhibition of undignified haste. Cleigh, Jane, and Dennison, all three of them started for the door at once, jostling. What they found was only a bedraggled messenger boy, for it was now

raining.

“Mr. Cleigh,” said the boy, grumpily, as he presented a letter and a small box. “No answer.”

“Where is the man who sent you?” asked Jane, tremendously excited.

“De office pushed me on dis job, miss. Dey said maybe I’d git a good tip if I hustled.”

Dennison thrust a bill into the boy’s hand and shunted him forth into the night again.

The letter was marked Number One and addressed to Cleigh; the box was marked Number Two and addressed to Jane.

Mad, thought Benson, as he began to gather up the loose excelsior; quite mad, the three of them.

With Jane at one shoulder and Dennison at the other, Cleigh opened his letter. The first extraction was a chart. An atoll; here were groups of cocoanut palm, there of plantain; a rudely drawn hut. In the lagoon at a point east of north was a red star, and written alongside was a single word. But to the three it was an Odyssey—“Shell.” In the lower left-hand corner of the chart were the exact degrees and minutes of longitude and latitude. With this chart a landlubber could have gone straight to the atoll.

Next came the letter, which Cleigh did not read aloud—it was not necessary. With what variant emotions the three pairs of eyes leaped from word to word!

> FRIEND BUCCANEER: Of course I found the shell. That was the one issue which offered no odds. The shell lay in its bed peculiarly under a running ledge. The ordinary pearler would have discovered it only by the greatest good luck. Atherton—my friend—discovered it, because he was a sea naturalist, and was hunting for something altogether different. Atherton was wealthy, and a coral reef was more to him than a pearl. But he knew me and what such a game would mean. He was in ill health and had to leave the South Pacific and fare north. This atoll was his. It is now mine, pearls and all, legally mine. For a trifling sum I could have chartered a schooner and sought the atoll.
>
> But all my life I've hunted odds—big, tremendous odds—to crush down and swarm over. The only interest I had in life. And so I planted the crew and stole the *Wanderer* because it presented whopping odds. I selected a young and dare-devil crew to keep me on edge. From one day to another I was always wondering when they would break over. I refused to throw overboard the wines and liquors to make a good measure.
>
> And there was you. Would you sit tight under such an outrage, or would your want of revenge ride you? Would you send the British piling on top of me, or would you make it a private war? Suspense! Dick Cunningham would not be hard to trace. Old Slue Foot. The biggest odds I'd ever encountered. Nominally, I had about one chance in a thousand of pulling through.
>
> The presence of Mrs. Cleigh—of course she's Mrs. Cleigh by this time!—added to the zest. To bring her through with nothing more than a scare! Odds, odds! Cleigh, on my word, the pearls would have been of no value without the game I built to go with them. Over the danger route! Mad? Of course I'm mad!
>
> Four-year-old shell, the pearls of the finest orient! The shell alone—in buttons—would have recouped Eisenfeldt. He was ugly when he saw that I had escaped him. Threatened to expose you. But knowing Eisenfeldt for what he is, I had a little sword of Damocles suspended over his thick neck. The thought of having lost eight months' interest will follow him to Hades.

> The crew gave me no more trouble. They've been paid their dividends in the Great Adventure Company, and have gone seeking others. But I'll warrant they'll take only regular berths in the future.
>
> And now those beads. I'm sorry, but I'm also innocent. I have learned that Morrissy really double-crossed us all. He had had a copy made in Venice. The beads you have are forgeries. So the sixty thousand offered by the French Government remains uncalled for. Who has the originals I can't say. I'm sorry. Morrissy's game was risky. His idea was to make a sudden breakaway with the beads—lose them in the gutter—and trust to luck that we would just miss killing him, which was the case.
>
> Leaving to-night. Bought a sloop down there, and I'm going back there to live. Tired of human beings. Tired of myself. Still, there's the chart. Mull it over. Maybe it's an invitation. The lagoon is like turquoise and the land like emerald and the sky a benediction.

A spell of silence and immobility. Not a word about his battle with Flint, thought Jane. A little shiver ran over her. But what a queer, whimsical madman! To have planned it all so that he could experience a thrill! The tragic beauty of his face and the pitiable, sluing, lurching stride! She sighed audibly, so did the two men.

"Denny, I don't know," said Cleigh.

"I do!" said Dennison, anticipating his father's thought. "He's a man, and some day I'd like to clasp his hand."

"Maybe we all shall," said Cleigh. "But open the box, Jane, and let's see."

Between the layers of cotton wool she found a single pearl as large as a hazelnut, pink as the Oriental dawn. One side was slightly depressed, as though some mischievous, inquisitive mermaid had touched it in passing.

"Oh, the lovely thing!" she gasped. "The lovely thing! But, Denny, I can't accept it!"

"And how are you going to refuse it? Keep it. It is an emblem of what you are, honey. The poor devil!"

And he put his arm round her. He understood. Why not? There are certain attractions which are irresistible, and Jane was unconscious of her possessions.

Jane raised the bottom layer of cotton wool. What impulse led her to do this she could not say, but she found a slip of paper across which was written:

“An’ I learned about women from ’er.”

All this while, across the street, in the shadow of an areaway, stood a man in a mackintosh and a felt hat drawn well down. He had watched the van disgorge and roll away, the arrival and the departure of the messenger boy.

He began to intone softly: “‘Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it: if a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be contemned.’”

With a sluing lurch to his stride he started off down the street, into the lashing rain. A great joke; and now there was nothing at all to disturb his dreams—but the dim white face of Jabez Flint spinning in the dark of the sea.

THE END

THE COUNTRY LIFE PRESS
GARDEN CITY, N. Y.

1.E.8. You may charge a reasonable fee for copies of or providing access to or distributing Project Gutenberg-tm electronic works provided that

- You pay a royalty fee of 20% of the gross profits you derive from the use of Project Gutenberg-tm works calculated using the method you already use to calculate your applicable taxes. The fee is owed to the owner of the Project Gutenberg-tm trademark, but he has agreed to donate royalties under this paragraph to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation. Royalty payments must be paid within 60 days following each date on which you prepare (or are legally required to prepare) your periodic tax returns. Royalty payments should be clearly marked as such and sent to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation at the address specified in Section 4, "Information about donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation."

- You provide a full refund of any money paid by a user who notifies you in writing (or by e-mail) within 30 days of receipt that s/he does not agree to the terms of the full Project Gutenberg-tm License. You must require such a user to return or destroy all copies of the works possessed in a physical medium and discontinue all use of and all access to other copies of Project Gutenberg-tm works.

- You provide, in accordance with paragraph 1.F.3, a full refund of any money paid for a work or a replacement copy, if a defect in the electronic work is discovered and reported to you within 90 days of receipt of the work.

- You comply with all other terms of this agreement for free distribution of Project Gutenberg-tm works.

1.E.9. If you wish to charge a fee or distribute a Project Gutenberg-tm electronic work or group of works on different terms than are set forth in this agreement, you must obtain permission in writing from both the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation and Michael Hart, the owner of the Project Gutenberg-tm trademark. Contact the Foundation as set forth in Section 3 below.

1.F.

1.F.1. Project Gutenberg volunteers and employees expend considerable effort to identify, do copyright research on, transcribe and proofread public domain works in creating the Project Gutenberg-tm collection. Despite these efforts, Project Gutenberg-tm electronic works, and the medium on which they may be stored, may contain "Defects," such as, but not limited to, incomplete, inaccurate or corrupt data, transcription errors, a copyright or other intellectual property infringement, a defective or damaged disk or other medium, a computer virus, or computer codes that damage or cannot be read by your equipment.

1.F.2. LIMITED WARRANTY, DISCLAIMER OF DAMAGES - Except for the "Right of Replacement or Refund" described in paragraph 1.F.3, the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, the owner of the Project Gutenberg-tm trademark, and any other party distributing a Project Gutenberg-tm electronic work under this agreement, disclaim all liability to you for damages, costs and expenses, including legal fees. YOU AGREE THAT YOU HAVE NO REMEDIES FOR NEGLIGENCE, STRICT LIABILITY, BREACH OF WARRANTY OR BREACH OF CONTRACT EXCEPT THOSE PROVIDED IN PARAGRAPH F3. YOU AGREE THAT THE FOUNDATION, THE TRADEMARK OWNER, AND ANY DISTRIBUTOR UNDER THIS AGREEMENT WILL NOT BE LIABLE TO YOU FOR ACTUAL, DIRECT, INDIRECT, CONSEQUENTIAL, PUNITIVE OR

INCIDENTAL DAMAGES EVEN IF YOU GIVE NOTICE OF THE POSSIBILITY OF SUCH DAMAGE.

1.F.3. LIMITED RIGHT OF REPLACEMENT OR REFUND - If you discover a defect in this electronic work within 90 days of receiving it, you can receive a refund of the money (if any) you paid for it by sending a written explanation to the person you received the work from. If you received the work on a physical medium, you must return the medium with your written explanation. The person or entity that provided you with the defective work may elect to provide a replacement copy in lieu of a refund. If you received the work electronically, the person or entity providing it to you may choose to give you a second opportunity to receive the work electronically in lieu of a refund. If the second copy is also defective, you may demand a refund in writing without further opportunities to fix the problem.

1.F.4. Except for the limited right of replacement or refund set forth in paragraph 1.F.3, this work is provided to you 'AS-IS' WITH NO OTHER WARRANTIES OF ANY KIND, EXPRESS OR IMPLIED, INCLUDING BUT NOT LIMITED TO WARRANTIES OF MERCHANTIBILITY OR FITNESS FOR ANY PURPOSE.

1.F.5. Some states do not allow disclaimers of certain implied warranties or the exclusion or limitation of certain types of damages. If any disclaimer or limitation set forth in this agreement violates the law of the state applicable to this agreement, the agreement shall be interpreted to make the maximum disclaimer or limitation permitted by the applicable state law. The invalidity or unenforceability of any provision of this agreement shall not void the remaining provisions.

1.F.6. INDEMNITY - You agree to indemnify and hold the Foundation, the trademark owner, any agent or employee of the Foundation, anyone providing copies of Project Gutenberg-tm electronic works in accordance with this agreement, and any volunteers associated with the production, promotion and distribution of Project Gutenberg-tm electronic works, harmless from all liability, costs and expenses, including legal fees, that arise directly or indirectly from any of the following which you do or cause to occur: (a) distribution of this or any Project Gutenberg-tm work, (b) alteration, modification, or additions or deletions to any Project Gutenberg-tm work, and (c) any Defect you cause.

Section 2. Information about the Mission of Project Gutenberg-tm

Project Gutenberg-tm is synonymous with the free distribution of electronic works in formats readable by the widest variety of computers including obsolete, old, middle-aged and new computers. It exists because of the efforts of hundreds of volunteers and donations from people in all walks of life.

Volunteers and financial support to provide volunteers with the assistance they need, is critical to reaching Project Gutenberg-tm's goals and ensuring that the Project Gutenberg-tm collection will remain freely available for generations to come. In 2001, the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation was created to provide a secure and permanent future for Project Gutenberg-tm and future generations. To learn more about the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation and how your efforts and donations can help, see Sections 3 and 4 and the Foundation web page at http://www.pglaf.org.

Section 3. Information about the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation

The Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation is a non profit

501(c)(3) educational corporation organized under the laws of the state of Mississippi and granted tax exempt status by the Internal Revenue Service. The Foundation's EIN or federal tax identification number is 64-6221541. Its 501(c)(3) letter is posted at http://pglaf.org/fundraising. Contributions to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation are tax deductible to the full extent permitted by U.S. federal laws and your state's laws.

The Foundation's principal office is located at 4557 Melan Dr. S. Fairbanks, AK, 99712., but its volunteers and employees are scattered throughout numerous locations. Its business office is located at 809 North 1500 West, Salt Lake City, UT 84116, (801) 596-1887, email business@pglaf.org. Email contact links and up to date contact information can be found at the Foundation's web site and official page at http://pglaf.org

For additional contact information:
Dr. Gregory B. Newby
Chief Executive and Director
gbnewby@pglaf.org

Section 4. Information about Donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation

Project Gutenberg-tm depends upon and cannot survive without wide spread public support and donations to carry out its mission of increasing the number of public domain and licensed works that can be freely distributed in machine readable form accessible by the widest array of equipment including outdated equipment. Many small donations ($1 to $5,000) are particularly important to maintaining tax exempt status with the IRS.

The Foundation is committed to complying with the laws regulating charities and charitable donations in all 50 states of the United States. Compliance requirements are not uniform and it takes a considerable effort, much paperwork and many fees to meet and keep up with these requirements. We do not solicit donations in locations where we have not received written confirmation of compliance. To SEND DONATIONS or determine the status of compliance for any particular state visit http://pglaf.org

While we cannot and do not solicit contributions from states where we have not met the solicitation requirements, we know of no prohibition against accepting unsolicited donations from donors in such states who approach us with offers to donate.

International donations are gratefully accepted, but we cannot make any statements concerning tax treatment of donations received from outside the United States. U.S. laws alone swamp our small staff.

Please check the Project Gutenberg Web pages for current donation methods and addresses. Donations are accepted in a number of other ways including including checks, online payments and credit card donations. To donate, please visit: http://pglaf.org/donate

Section 5. General Information About Project Gutenberg-tm electronic works.

Professor Michael S. Hart is the originator of the Project Gutenberg-tm concept of a library of electronic works that could be freely shared with anyone. For thirty years, he produced and distributed Project Gutenberg-tm eBooks with only a loose network of volunteer support.