

then enter my cabin to shoot himself?"

"I do not know, sir."

Captain Hayward stooped down and opened the dead man's shirt, exposing a small blue hole in the breast.

"Shot through the left lung," he said as he stood up; "and the bullet may have grazed the heart. There are no powder marks. He was shot from a distance. You tell a somewhat fishy yarn, Mr. John Wilson. You'll have to tell it in court."

"Do I look and act like one who had just shot down a fellow man, Captain?" I asked, warmly. "What yarn can you tell in court. Who, after all, really took my pistol, and where were you when it shot him?"

"In my berth, d—n you, and the shot woke me up. D'you mean to accuse me?"

"I have the same right to accuse you as you have to accuse me. If you were asleep how could you tell which cabin he was in?"

He glared at me, but I returned his glare and added: "Why not consult your daughter, Captain? She must have heard the shot?"

He stiffened as though struck a blow, his chin dropped and the glare left his eyes as they opened wider. The glare must have left mine, too, for I smiled.

"Give me that gun first," he said, with a choke in his voice. "I don't want you to pot me, too."

"I'll empty it first," I answered; "I don't want you to pot me," suiting the action to the word and ejecting the cartridges upon the table. I was vaguely hoping to find the whole ten. But, no, there were only nine.

"This gun killed him, Captain," I said, quietly handing it over. "I admit that much."

HE stupidly pocketed the pistol, entered the after cabin, and called, audibly: "Florence, Florence, are you awake?"

Then, in a moment, his voice came in a roar:

"Great God, what devil's business is this?"

And now his face, ghastly gray in the lamplight, appeared at the swinging door.

"Steward," he called. "Come in here and lend a hand. My girl is dead, too."

The steward made a detour to avoid the body and followed him, while I stood over it and waited, mystified, wondering, trying to understand. I had heard but one shot.

Soon the Captain appeared, calmer now, but with a set face.

"Mr. Wilson," he said, sternly, "the steward says she is only in a deep faint, and he is trying to bring her to. Meanwhile, will you go into your room, quietly, and stay there while the carpenter puts a lock on your door or shall I call all hands and put you in irons?"

"I'll submit without force, Captain Hayward," I replied. "But what's the need of it. I'm harmless now, and as anxious to solve this mystery as you are."

"It's already solved—just as I said. He was a good friend of my girl and must have seen you from the main deck, sneaking out of your room and heading aft. He followed you to protect my girl, and you shot him. The shot scared her into a faint, for she is full dressed and must have been awake."

Disdaining to ask that he wait for her testimony, I merely said: "Very well, sir. Have it your own way." And went to my room, where I lay in my berth smoking, while the carpenter fitted a lock to the door. When I was properly locked in I heard the sound of the body being dragged out, and an occasional order from the Captain, who had taken the deck.

I was not alarmed at my situation; but sleep was impossible, and I smoked and pondered over the problem, a few factors of which could not be eliminated. That Taynter should take my pistol while I slept and return to the deck to deliberate, was

feasible. That a girl should be awake and dressed at three in the morning might well accord with an intended elopement on shore. But at sea? No. It indicated an exactly opposite state of mind, thoroughly in keeping with her laughter of the evening before. And why had not my mental alarm clock aroused me at four bells instead of waiting until six?

I mused on these things until about daylight, then fell into a doze from which I was awakened by the opening of my door. Captain Hayward stood looking at me, with the key in his hand.

"Turn to," he said, gruffly. Then, tossing the key into my berth, he added: "My girl wants to see you in the after cabin. Get through with it, quick. It's your watch on deck."

I rolled out and reached for a hair brush.

"Don't primp," he growled. "She looks tougher than you."

HE departed, and, first rubbing the sleep from my eyes and smoothing my tousled hair, I passed through the forward cabin, wondering what had happened and why this unpleasant, flirtatious, and mischief-making girl wanted to see me. After a preliminary knock I pushed through the swinging door and looked at her—standing near the chronometer—but did not immediately know her. I only recognized her dress, which was wrinkled and soiled from the sea-dust of the floor. Her brown hair—a wealth of it—was free from pins and combs, hanging loose, one-half down her back, the other flung over her right shoulder. Her face was the face of an old woman, white, drawn and twitching; her lower lip drooped and quivered, while in her wide-open, staring, brown eyes was a look which, as a boy, I had once seen in the eyes of a captured and frightened wood pigeon.

"Your father said that you wished to see me," I ventured, after a moment of mutual scrutiny.

"Yes," she answered, in a voice not her own—not the soft, musical voice that had sung Taynter on to his fate. There was a raspy, unnatural sound to it that seemed hardly human. "Yes," she repeated, and tottered, rather than walked, toward me. "I—I—Oh, John, they shall not—they shall not—they must not hang you. The speech had begun with a gasp, risen to a shriek, and sunk to a moan; then she threw her arms around my neck and clung to me.

Does a man know that he loves a woman? Not always—only when his sleeping consciousness is awakened. Does he know that he dislikes her? As certainly not. For such secondary emotions as jealousy, pique and apprehension arise equally from love and hate, and often dominate the primal emotion. No sooner had that limp, clinging form touched me than I had my arms around the girl—taut and stiff and tense as two handspikes—while unknown assailing pulses surged through me, and I planted kiss after kiss upon the white and wasted face.

"Oh," she articulated, in a voice that held neither gasp nor shriek, but rather the note of a preacher speaking over the dead, "you did—did care for me, John—just a little. And you'll be sorry when I'm gone?"

"Gone where?" I demanded, still holding her tightly.

"To the gallows—or the chair. John, dear, do they hang women in California, or do they—do they—"

"Electrocute?" I interrupted. "Neither, in that state. But what are you talking about?"

"I killed him," she said, in tones of utter abandon and despair. "I shot him, and when I confessed to father, and asked him about this, he told me to wash my face and tie up my hair. Then they will not execute me, John?"

"Not much," I assured her, "nor imprison you, nor even accuse you—not if the three only witnesses are



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