

"Mister Taylor, get a gang at the pumps, and for God's sake hurry! D'you think this is a tea party?"

Abbott's companion turned and ran back along the deck. Abbott stood still. He would have been glad to lend a hand; but his passive nature forbade him offering his assistance. He waited for someone to shout at him.

Gradually, he noticed a variation in the motion of the vessel. There was a halting stagger between each forward lunge.

"She's fillin' fast!" he muttered. He fought his way up the ladder and hunched along the reeling upper deck. The wireless house loomed in front of him, and he crouched in the lee of it for shelter. The wind shrieked through the brass like the high pitched wail of violins. It awed him a little. He felt depressed by his loneliness and the lack of anything to do. Always before, he had been fighting with cracking sails, or clinging to a bucking wheel.

The swish of rubber boots coming around the other side of the wireless house, startled him. He heard the creak of an opening door, saw a strip of light from it sweep across the deck, and heard it slam shut again. Through the port-hole just above him, boomed the voice that had shouted from the bridge.

"Get anybody yet?" it questioned. Then, after a pause: "Well, hurry! The old scow's settlin'."

The door banged again, and the swish of boots died away in the direction from which it had come.

Abbott hesitated; then slipped around the corner and tried the latch. It lifted under his fingers, and the door swung open. The wireless operator vouchsafed him a quick glance as he softly shut it behind him; then turned back to his table. Abbott stood staring at the man's figure, crouching over his instruments. He watched his fingers manipulate the key that regulated the blinding greenish flashes of the spark.

"Aash—crash—ash—ash!"—hummed the ead of the wireless, and died away in angry spittings. Abbott stole over to a battered plush chair and sat down. The operator reached out for a pad and dragged it to him. He scribbled long lines and circles upon it.

After an interval, he once more turned the room into a bedlam with his "send." He waited a moment or two. Abruptly, his shoulders drew lower over the table, and he began to write. Suddenly he twisted his head around and grinned.

"By Golly, I did get 'em; and I told the 'old man' I couldn't! Long range for so much breeze! It's the *Wampum* coming down from the 'Scow.'"

He whirled back to his key, and sent another string of dots and dashes crashing out through the dark. Before he spoke again, he scribbled down the answer that came back.

"She's coming; but it'll be daylight before she can do us any good. That's three hours." The operator shook his head.

The door banged open to admit the captain again.

"I've got the *Wampum*!" cried the operator.

The captain's face lightened.

"When'll she be here?"

"By daylight."

"We'll hold out," he growled. He turned menacingly toward Abbott.

"Who'n blazes are you?"

"— I'm a passenger," stammered the stowaway.

"I don't remember ye. Git down with the rest of 'em any way. I don't want ye interferin' round here."

"I'm an able seaman, capt'n. Can't I help?" he begged.

The captain scowled a minute, then snapped: "Tell Mister Taylor I sent ye down to take a hand at the pumps."

Abbott sprang eagerly to the door. Here was a chance to get busy, to do something that would keep him from thinking. He dashed across the deck and slid down the ladder. At its foot, he waited while the ferry drove her blunt nose down into the trough. Just at the bottom of her lunge, she listed heavily. He heard a scream of grinding metal beneath his feet; then a battering crash that shook every fiber of the steamer's construction. She wallowed her way through a big roller that swept a curling, white sheet of spray over the rail. From her bowels came staggering blows, as if some giant titan were trying to pound his way out.

"Them cars are loose!" the stowaway gasped.

Slowly, the ferry's bow lifted. He felt as if he stood in the center of an enormous sea-saw. Fascinated, he stared back along the deck. He saw a wave of black water roll in over the rail. It seemed to come with the slowness of the hours. He stood and gaped at it, till it yawned above him like a steep wall. Then, some spring within his brain released his muscles. He gulped a deep breath, stood poised for a moment, then leaped up and out.

Abbott, fighting desperately with arms and legs, felt himself drawn down, down; then he was spewed upward. Just as his lungs were about to burst, a gust of wind whipped into his straining nostrils. He barely caught a mouthful before another wave buried him. As he rose a second time, something hit him across the shoulder. Instinctively, he clutched at it. His fingers gripped wood. It was a car door, wrenched some how from its hinges in the sucking whirlpool of the ferry's sinking. He got his shoulder over its edge and floated. As he rose over each wave-crest, he strained his eyes for a trace of the steamer. At last, he became convinced that she had gone under like a bar of lead.

Frothy clots of spindrift splashed into his face. Each crumbling wave top surged over him. The chill water began to congeal his very blood. Carefully, he climbed upon his frail support, till he lay spread-eagled on it, gripping the edges tightly with his fingers. It held up under his weight, and the cold air was not as numbing as the water. He nestled his face under his arm pit, half strangled by the spray that swept over him.

He raised his head for another look around. Suddenly, a white face peered up at him at his very side. He heard the gasping, whistling breath of a spent swimmer. Two hands came up and scratched like claws at the door.

Abbott crawled over till he could reach the other man's wrists. He gripped them and held him up. The eyes in the white face stared into his for a moment; then they closed. The stowaway slipped off his life raft, and kept the drowning man's head above water by holding him under the arm pits.

"Don't worry, Jimmy," he spluttered. "I got you now. It's me, Tom. Don't yuh know me, Jimmy? Tom Abbott." But the man in his arms did not reply.

Eventually, Jimmy Burke's exhaustion passed somewhat, and he revived. He exerted his aching muscles in an effort to climb over its edge and, by dint of heavy lifting on Abbott's part and the battering of a wave, he succeeded. Then he

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