



THE CAPTAIN of The SUSAN DREW

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A SUNSET OF gilt and blue and rose palpitated on the horizon. A tapestry of misty rain, draping downward from indefinite clouds, obscured the eastern line of sea and sky. Midway between, slightly nearer to the rain, a painted rainbow reached almost to the zenith. So lofty was its arch that the ends seemed to curve inward to the ocean in a vain attempt to complete the perfect circle. Into this triumphal arch, toward the blue twilight beyond, sailed an open boat.

Nor did ever more strangely freighted boat float on the Pacific. In the sternsheets, on the weather side, a stupid-looking Norwegian sailor, in uniform of a quartermaster, steered with one hand, while with the other he held the sheet of the spritsail. From a holster, belted about his waist, peeped the butt of a business-like revolver. His cap lay on his knees, removed for the sake of coolness; and his short flaxen hair was prodigiously ridged over a bruise of recent origin.

Beside the sailor sat two women. The nearer one was comfortably stout and matronly, with large, dark eyes—full, direct, human. Her shoulders were protected against sunburn by a man's light overcoat. Because of the heat, this was open and unbuttoned, revealing the décolleté and rich materials of dinner dress. Jewels glinted in the hair, at the neck, and on the fingers. Beside her was a young woman of two or three and twenty, likewise décolleté, sun-shielded by a strip of stained oilskin. Her eyes, as well as the straight fine nose and the line of the red curve of the not too passionate mouth, advertised the closest relationship with the first woman. In the opposite sternsheet and on the first cross-seat, lolled three men in black trousers and dinner jackets. Their heads were protected by small squares of stained oilskin similar to that which lay across the young woman's shoulders. One, a youngster of eighteen, wore an expression of deepest yearning; the second, half as old again, talked with the daughter; the third, middle-aged and complacent, devoted himself to the mother.

Amidships, on the bottom alongside the centerboard case, sat two dark-eyed women, as evidently maids as their nationality was, respectively, the one Spanish and the other Italian. On the other side of the centerboard, very straight-backed and erect, was an unmistakable English valet, with gaze always set on the middle-aged gentleman to anticipate any want or order. For'ard of the centerboard and just aft the mast-step, crouched two hard-featured Chinese, both with broken heads swathed in bloody sweat-cloths, both clad

in dungaree garments, grimed and blackened with oil and coaldust.

When it is considered that hundreds of weary sea-leagues intervened between the open boat and the nearest land, the inappropriateness of costume of half of its occupants may be appreciated.

"Well, brother Willie, what would you rather have or go swimming?" teased the young woman.

"A cigarette, if Harrison were n't such a pincher," the youth answered bitterly.

"I've only four left," Harrison said. "You've smoked the whole case. I've had only two."

Temple Harrison was a joker. He winked privily at Patty Gifford, drew a curved silver case from his hip pocket, and carefully counted the four cigarettes. Willie Gifford watched with so ferocious infatuation that his sister cried out:

"B-r-r! Stop it! You make me shiver. You look positively cannibalistic."

"That's all right for you," was the brother's retort. "You don't know what tobacco means, or you'd look

cannibalistic yourself. You will, any way," he concluded ominously, "after a couple of days more. I noticed you were n't a bit shy of taking a bigger cup of water than the rest when Harrison passed it around. I was n't asleep."

Patty flushed guiltily.

"It was only a sip," she pleaded.

Harrison took out one cigarette, handed it over, and snapped the case shut.

"Blackmailer!" he hissed.

But Willie Gifford was oblivious. Already, with trembling fingers, he had lighted a match and was drawing the first inhalation deep into his lungs. On his face was a vacuous ecstasy.

"Everything will come out all right," Mrs. Gifford was saying to Sedley Brown, who sat opposite her in the sternsheets.

"Certainly; after the miracle of last night, being saved by some passing ship is the merest bagatelle," he agreed. "It was a miracle. I can not understand now how our party remained intact and got away in

the one boat. And if it had n't been for the purser, Peyton would n't have been saved, nor your maids."

"Nor would we, if it had n't been for dear, brave Captain Ashley," Mrs. Gifford took up. "It was he, and the first officer."

"They were heroes," Sedley Brown praised warmly. "But still, there could have been so few saved, I don't see . . ."

"I don't see why you don't see, with you and Mother the heaviest stockholders in the line," Willie Gifford dashed in. "Why should n't they have made a special effort? It was up to them."

Temple Harrison smiled to himself. Between them, Mrs. Gifford and Sedley Brown owned the majority of the stock of the Asiatic Mail—the flourishing steamship line that old Silas Gifford had built for the purpose of feeding his railroad with through freight from China and Japan. Mrs. Gifford had married his son, Seth, and the stock at the same time.

"I am sure, Willie, we were given no unfair consideration," Mrs. Gifford reproved. "Of course, shipwrecks are attended by confusion and disorder, and strong measures are necessary to stay a panic. We were very fortunate, that is all."

"I was n't asleep," Willie replied. "And all I've got to say is, it's up to you to make the board of directors promote Captain Ashley to be Commodore; that is, if he ain't dead and gone, which I guess he is."

"As I was saying," Mrs. Gifford addressed Sedley Brown, "the worst is past. It is scarcely a matter of hardship ere we shall be rescued. The weather is delightful, and the nights are not the slightest



The skipper again caught sight of his hands and tried to fling them from him.