



"I suppose I'll have to let you come aboard," came the coffee-grinder voice

bit chilly. Depend upon it, Willie, Captain Ashley shall not be forgotten, nor the first officer and purser, nor — here she turned with a smile to the quartermaster — "nor shall Gronwold go unrewarded."

"A penny for your thoughts," Patty challenged Harrison several minutes later.

He started and looked at her, shook off his absent-mindedness with a laugh, and declined the offer.

For he had been revisiting the horrors of less than twenty-four hours before. It had happened at dinner. The crash of collision had come just as coffee was serving. Yes, there had been confusion and disorder, if so could be termed the madness of a thousand souls in the face of imminent death. He saw again the silk-gowned Chinese table stewards join in the jam at the foot of the stairway, where blows were already being struck and women and children trampled. He remembered, as his own party, led by Captain Ashley, worked its devious way up from deck to deck, seeing the white officers, engineers, and quartermasters buckling on their revolvers as they ran to their positions. Nor would he ever forget the eruption from the howels of the great ship of the hundreds of Chinese stokers and trimmers, nor the half a thousand terrified steerage passengers — Chinese, Japanese, and Koreans, coolies and land-creatures all, stark mad and frantic in desire to live.

Not all the deaths would be due to drowning, he thought grimly, as he recollected the crack of revolvers and sharp barking of automatic pistols, the thuds of clubs and boat-stretchers on heads, and the grunts of men going down under the silent thrusts of sheath-knives.

Mrs. Gifford might believe what she wished to believe; but he, for one, was deeply grateful to his lucky star that had made him a member of the only party of passengers that had been shown any consideration. Consideration! He could still see the protesting English duke flung neck and crop from the boat deck to the raging steerage fighting up the ladders. And there was number four boat, launched by inexperienced hands, spilling its passengers into the sea and hanging perpendicularly in the davits. The white sailors who belonged to it and should have launched it, had been impressed by Captain Ashley. Then, there was the American Consul-General to Siam — that was just before the electric lights went out — with wife, nurses, and children, shouting his official importance in Captain Ashley's face and being directed to number four boat hanging on end.

Yes, Captain Ashley surely deserved the commo-

doreship of the Asiatic Mail — if he lived. But that he survived, Temple Harrison could not believe. He remembered the outburst of battle — advertisement that the boat deck had been carried — that came just as their boat was lowering away. Of its crew, only Gronwold, with a broken head, was in it. The rest did not slide down the falls, as was intended. Doubtlessly they had gone down before the rush of Asiatics; and so had Captain Ashley, though first he had cut the falls and shouted down to them to shove clear for their lives.

And they had, with a will, shoved clear. Harrison recalled how he had pressed the end of an oar against the steel side of the *Mingalia* and afterward rowed insanely to the accompaniment of leaping bodies falling into the sea astern. And when well clear, he remembered how Gronwold had suddenly stood up and laid about with the heavy tiller overside, until Patty made him desist. Mutely taking the rain of blows on their heads and clinging steadfastly to the gunwale, were the two Chinese stokers who now crouched forward by the mast. No; Willie Gifford had not been asleep. He, too, had pressed an oar-blade against the *Mingalia's* side and rowed blisters into his soft hands. But Mrs. Gifford was right. There were several things it would be well to forget.

II

DAYBREAK found the boat rolling on a silken sea. Half the night had been dead calm. The big spritsail had demagogically covered coolies, servants, and masters. It was now thrown aside, and Harrison began doling out half-cups of water. Willie, smoking another of the precious cigarettes, looked studiously away when a sip more than the others received was poured for his sister.

A screeched "*Santo Cristo!*" from Mercedes Martinez, Patty's maid, startled them. Harrison nearly spilled the water he was passing to Sedley Brown. The two Chinese had set up an excited chatter. Peyton was turning his head stiffly to see what all quickly saw: a large, yacht-like schooner, with an enormous spread of canvas, becalmed half a mile away. The Chinese were the first to get oars over the side. Peyton delayed, until ordered by Sedley Brown.

"Now, Willie, row — we're saved!" Patty cried.

"Nothing to stop me from getting my drink of water first," replied that imperturbable youth, addressing himself to the forgotten water-breaker and drinking cupful after cupful.

As the boat drew near the schooner, they saw several faces peering at them over the rail in the waist of the ship. On the poop a large, heavy-shouldered man smoked a blackened pipe and surveyed them stolidly.

Sedley Brown did not know the etiquette of being rescued at sea from an open boat; but he felt that this, some how, was not the way. It was embarrassing. He resolved to make an effort.

"Good morning," he said politely.

"Good morning," growled the big man in a vast, husky voice that seemed to proceed from a scorched throat, and that caused Mercedes and Matilda to jump and cross themselves. "What luck?"

"Finest in the world," Sedley Brown replied brightly. "We're saved."

"Aw hell!" was the surprising comment. "I thought you was out fishing."

This was too much for Sedley Brown, who retired from the negotiations.

"We're the sole survivors of the *Mingalia*, sunk in collision night before last," Willie cried out.

"I suppose I'll have to let you come aboard," came the coffee-grinder voice. "— Harkins! — throw 'em a line there!"

"You don't seem a bit glad to see us," Mrs. Gifford said airily, as she stepped on deck from the rail.

"I ain't, madam, not a damn bit," was the reply of the strange skipper.

III

MRS. GIFFORD came up the companion ladder from the stifling cabin, looked vainly about for a deck chair, and collapsed against the low side of the cabin house. Her handsome black eyes were flashing.

"It's atrocious," she cried. "It is not to be endured. He is an insulting brute. Anything — the open boat — is better than this horrible creature. And it is n't as if he did n't know better. He does it deliberately. It is his way of showing we are not welcome."

"What has he done now?" Patty Gifford asked, from where she stood with Harrison in the shade of the mainsail.

There was no awning, and the pitch oozed from the sizzling deck. From below, came the mild protesting accents of Sedley Brown, and squeals and *Ave Maria's* from the maids.

"Done!" Mrs. Gifford exclaimed. "What has he not done? He has insisted on putting Mr. Brown and me into the same stateroom. They're awful little cubby-holes; no ventilation, no conveniences —"

She ceased abruptly as Captain Decker emerged from the companionway and approached her. Patty shuddered and drew closer to Harrison; for the skipper's brown eyes were a-smoulder.

"You must excuse me, madam," he rumbled at Mrs. Gifford. "How was I to know? I thought you and the gentleman below was married. But it's all right." His face beamed with a labored benevolence. "I tell you, it's all right. I can splice the two of you legal any time, such bein' a captain's authority on the high seas."

"Go away, go away!" Mrs. Gifford moaned.

Captain Decker fixed his terrible eyes yearningly on Patty and Harrison.

"I've pulled teeth," the skipper began, voluminously husky, "and I've buried corpses, and, once, I sawed off a man's leg; but damn me if I've ever spliced a couple yet! Now, how about the two of you?"

Patty and Harrison shrank instantly apart.

"It might make things more convenient down below," the other was urging, when Sedley Brown arrived on deck.

Him the captain immediately addressed:

"Hey — you; don't you want to get married? I can do it."

Sedley Brown looked involuntarily at Mrs. Gifford and gasped in astonishment.

No; bless me, no; of course not, certainly not! he declined with embarrassed haste.

Captain Decker's disappointment was manifest in his coffee-grinder throat.

"All right, my bully. May be you ain't seen the cook yet. I won't say he's clean; but I will say he's a Chinaman. "You'll bunk with him." He turned upon Harrison. "You still got a chance. Say the word an' I'll tie you up to the girl tighter 'n all hell."

"And if I don't?" Harrison demanded.

"Why, you'll bunk with —"

At that moment the cabin boy, a grinning, turbaned, moustached Lascar, passed aft along the poop.

"With the cabin boy — that's him," the skipper completed his sentence.

"Then, I'll bunk with the cabin boy," Harrison decided.

"Suit yourself." Captain Decker strode to the companionway and shouted down: "Where's that mate? . . . asleep, hey? . . . Rout 'm out. Tell 'm I want 'm. . . . Jump! you black devil, you! Jump!" He turned about to the survivors of the *Mingalia*. "Now, here's the sleepin' arrangements. Down below there's six rooms; two starboard, two port, two aft under the deck. You two women'll bunk in number one port; the two dago girls in number two port; the cook and his nibs here in port after-room —"

"I shall not sleep there," Sedley Brown announced. "I shall sleep on the cabin floor."

"You'll sleep where I tell you to," Captain Decker roared. "Who asked you aboard the *Susan Drew*? I did n't. You'll sleep with the Chink, or I'll know the reason why, or my name ain't Bill Decker. That servant of yours'll sleep on the cabin floor." He now addressed Harrison: "You will bunk with the cabin boy in the starboard after-room — Where's that mate?"

A most forbidding individual came up through the companion. He was as large as the skipper and as

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