



“DON’T see any reason for all this hard talk, Martin. We been good pals until Rosa come between us. Let’s forget it, play fair, and the best man wins,” protested Joe Willat, his strong, brown face overclouded with distaste for the subject that had arisen.

“Forget nothing!” his companion retorted angrily. “You’ve said too much to be forgot. Just you leave my gal alone if you don’t want more to be said.”

Martin Fogarty swung on his sea boot heel and marched off, leaving behind him a reeking streak of smoke from a cutty pipe that was all but red-hot from the force of his agitated drafts. Joe stared after him for perhaps thirty seconds before he could control his speech, then laughed scornfully:

“Your gal? Hey, you poor squid, when did you take lien an’ lease on Rosa Chiappa?”

Martin stopped, dropped his pipe, the stem bitten through, and his retort was almost a shriek.

“Never you mind when, where or how! You speak to her again, and it’s me and you

for it, see?”

The two salvage tug pilots had been born on the same day, on the same tiny islet in the Bermudas, had chummed and fought as boys at the same little school, and had grown up together in the ancient and honorable calling to whose followers many a stout ship owed continued existence around the stilt vexed isles.

As rival pilots their comradeship had strengthened rather than diminished; and in all their many races offshore, each keen to be first to reach a distressed vessel in their separate owners’ interests, nothing but honest competition had entered. Neither self-interest nor loyalty to employers could induce Joe or Martin to bring into play any trick save the tricks of clever seamanship.

But into the Eveless Eden of two clean, strong men’s lives danced Rosa Chiappa, and she brought her own serpent. Modern usage might sanction the word “jazz” to describe her entry into the peaceful, age mellowed town of St. Georges; but since jazz is only known by disrepute in the Blessed

Isles, let's say that this Dame Discord arrived with a bang by way of the shilling stage from Hamilton, in which city a Portuguese schooner had just deposited her along with several more compatriots from the Azores.

It is not necessary to make a picture of Rosa, because she plays a very small part on the stage of this tale; but since she does hang in the wings and pull strings which would be better left alone by her slim fingers, it is well to mention that she was just big enough to hold a heap of sin, and small enough to make people believe her only capable of innocence; she had soft, red lips, and hard, black eyes; the manners of a kitten, and the morals of a cat. But of this last feature be it said neither Joe nor Martin knew. They saw the softness of her lips, and missed the hardness of her eyes; noted the small, trim body which seemed only capable of holding innocence, and forgot that sin may be packed tight.

This is enough of Rosa, except that she had soon singled out the two successful, unmarried pilots as her prey, and, as the record shows, had succeeded in starting something.

Joe Willat walked past the town and along the shores of the New Cut, puzzling over the strange thing that had darkened the lives of himself and Martin. He had time to spare, for his tug, the *Racer*, lay at the shops, having a new radio set installed; so he continued on until he reached the outer rocks of the narrow Cut, and sat there smoking and staring fixedly seaward as if seeking in the face of old Ocean an answer to his puzzle.

After awhile he heard the well-known whistle blast behind him which called for a clear channel for an outgoing tug, and soon the *Strong*, commanded by Martin Fogarty, foamed out through the narrow passage bound to sea. Instinctively Joe waved a salute as she passed him; Fogarty shook a threatening fist from his pilothouse window, then turned his back. The action did more to convince honest

Joe of the true seriousness of their quarrel than any amount of wordy argument could have done.

He slumped into deeper despondency, his pipe cold and comfortless. How many times had he given Martin the channel on the way out, glad to start the race a little astern rather than take advantage of his tug's speed when the other happened to be foul with grass? How many times had Martin given him right of way under the same circumstances? That was all there was between the two big tugs: a slight difference in speed when one was clean and the other foul. And now, for a black-eyed, saucy imp of a girl, the friendly wave of the hand was answered by a knotted fist shaken in anger. Joe slid nearer to anger himself as he thought of it.

"Hello Joe, sweet'art!"

A hand light as hibiscus bloom fell on his shoulder as he sat, and a laugh, mocking as Satan, musical as swirling waters, sounded close to his ear, and Rosa Chiappa slipped into a seat on the rock beside him.

"Lo, Rosa," he replied. No more.

Quick as a cat the girl sprang up, flung a handful of loose rock dust at him, and clambered away across the rocks to a point from which she could watch him unseen. As she left him her face was dark with rage at his reception. As she waited for him to crawl contritely after her, waited fruitlessly, her expression changed, to a pout, to a puzzled frown, to dawning alarm. She suffered an impatient hour, then returned to Joe.

"Wassa matter, Joe dear?" she whispered, running her hot hand over his unsmiling face. Out behind the jutting rocks sounded the bellow of a tug's whistle. Joe stood up, glanced once seaward, and started to walk back to town, taking no heed to the raging girl beside him, whose hot blood almost suffocated her in her effort to hold back the fury that scorched her.

"Spik to me," Joe," the girl said, her

hard black eyes glittering in fierce contrast to the softness forced into her voice.

Joe marched on, and Rosa, desperate from fear that she had lost one of her men, seized his hand and thrust her lithe body close to his, gazing up into his face with panting breath. And down the channel foamed the returning *Strong*, with a dancing madman in her pilot house as he caught sight of the couple standing in sharp silhouette against the sky on the rocky summit.

That night, in Market Square, a battle of the giants was waged which is still spoken of when the World War is but a memory. Nobody remembers anything passing until Joe Willat's outstretched hand was knocked aside, an oath was spat, and Martin Fogarty's fist smashed home into his friend's amazed face.

The response was swift and convincing. No word was uttered as those two sea hardened, wind toughened, lifelong chums clashed in terrific fight. Across the square they reeled; a store window was shattered to shivers, a strong door splintered and fell under the impact of furiously hurled bodies; and crimson drops marked a maze which crisscrossed the white coral square like holly berries on snow.

Once, when a blind, headlong collision sent both combatants crashing backwards half unconscious, a woman's scream rang out on the quiet night, and a crouching, hard eyed little figure half emerged from the shadow of the nearby hotel veranda: but a swift recovery, bringing the fighters back to stubborn feet, still blood crazed, sent the small figure back behind the dodging crowd of spectators.

Then police arrived, the crowd molted, and Joe and Martin were taken to the station. Their characters saved them from any serious results; but the encounter intensified the bitterness in Martin's breast, and the shame of appearing before the police engendered a similar feeling in Joe, where it had never dwelt before. A sharp warning from their

individual employers prevented another open break between them, and Rosa, perhaps a little overawed for the moment by the tremendous forces she had stirred up, was less bold in her advances; thus many days went by without bringing further strife to the old town. A period of storm came, however, which kept both tugs busy night and day seeking for steamers short of fuel, and sailing vessels shorn of spars; towing ships in, and helping ships out. The town was full of mariners of all nations, and Rosa found no difficulty in filling the places left by the almost continuous absence of her two greater flames. On the return to port of either tug, her skipper would be slyly made aware of the carryings-on of a certain vivacious young lady; but when was there ever a fair schemer who lacked the skill to keep two suitors quietly dangling if only she could see them one by one?

"You are a big silly lx>y," she told, Joe, her small dark face upturned to his, her red lips pouting. She had perfected the trick of veiling those hard black eyes behind entrancingly long silken lashes. Joe Willat's vital fluid was as warm and humanly susceptible as any man's; though, as he often laughingly claimed, he was fitted with a safety valve, which other men lacked usually. Now he swept the girl into a bear hug and kissed her lips bruisingly.

"Then let's have yes or no. right now!" he demanded.

"Oh, you are too rough!" she protested, with a show of displeasure. "Besides, I've told you many times, Joe, I like Martin as well as I like you—sometimes," she added quickly, seeing the danger signal in his eyes. "I will make a bargain with you, though," she went on, scanning him narrowly from under her veiling lashes. "At the end of one month I will marry one of you, the one who—"

"Want to set us fightin' again, eh?" Joe broke in with a harsh laugh.

“There are many ways of fighting,” she retorted, turning to leave him shortly. “If I’m worth wanting, I’m worth fighting for, anyway. Good-a-night, Joe faint heart!”

Within four hours Martin Fogarty heard much the same decision, but he did not receive it as Joe did. He swept the girl into a hug, it’s true, but his lips only snarled; it was with upraised fist he sought to force better terms from her mocking lips, and for once her true nature proved too strong for her to repress.

“You do that to me?” she panted, furiously, fumbling wildly in her hair. “There! Pig!” she gasped, and struck a dagger shaped pin deeply into his suffused cheek.

“Little devil!” swore Martin, letting her go and clapping a hand to his face. Then he started forward, but she fled from him, and over her shoulder came the taunting challenge:

“If you fought a man as bravely as you fight a woman, I would perhaps—” The sentence was abruptly cut off as she darted around a corner; but a rippling laugh echoed for a breath when words could not be heard, and Martin turned away, seeking the waterfront with a new vision before him, and a resolution which would brook no more obstacles in the path of his desire.

On his return to the tug he found incipient trouble. The *Strong’s* radio man had picked up an urgent call from a steamer eighty miles off to the northeast; the steamer was out of fuel, a storm warning was flashing broadcast over the seas, and, to cap the tale of urgency. Martin Fogarty’s powerful tug was helpless with suddenly developed boiler trouble.

“Nothing for it but to give it to the *Racer* people,” the owner of the *Strong* remarked in annoyance. “It’s like handing them the bank in a hat, by gosh!”

The *Strong’s* people, owner and crew, stared at each other blankly. It was not necessary to rush at such a conclusion as that, surely. They

watched while the engineer’s crew plunged again into the task of patching up the defect sufficiently for offshore work in a breeze, and faces lengthened with the time. Then a voice shrilled down the voice pipe.

“Wanted on the phone, Mr. Dawson.”

The owner clambered on deck and ashore. In his wharf office he took up the telephone receiver. The *Racer* people were speaking to him, and as he got the message in full his eyes opened wide, and astonishment made his lips drop.

“What’s that?” he shouted. “Fogarty taking your tug out? Why no, I didn’t send him. Where’s your own pilot?”

Linking up the broken parts of the message, it amounted to this: Martin Fogarty had appeared at the office of the tug *Racer* just ten minutes after Joe Willat had jumped into a hack and driven off at a fast pace in the direction of Hamilton, thirteen miles away. He had told the office manager of the distressed steamer offshore, told of his own tug’s helplessness, and said that they’d better get after the job.

Then, Willat’s absence remarked, Fogarty had placed himself at the *Racer’s* service, and the tug was now steaming down the harbor.

“What’s your pilot gone away for, just when our tug is disabled?” fumed Dawson. If, by a miracle of engineering, his own tug should be made serviceable quickly, here he was left now without a pilot. And Saint Georges was never overstocked with deepwater pilots of her own.

“Got a message that our missing radio parts were ready. He’s gone for them,” came the reply.

Back on his own tug, Dawson watched morosely while the *Racer* stormed into the distance: a plum gone into his rival’s basket, and his own man helping to pick it. But Mr. Dawson was a clean business man in spite of his keenness; when the *Racer* vanished from

his sight he returned to the engine room and helped the perspiring toilers there who greeted him with sweaty grins of renewed hope.

Half an hour after he went below the patch was complete, and he went on deck for air while eager firemen began to raise steam in the boiler. And to the owner came the inevitable sycophant to be found wherever favor is to be had, in the shape of a junior clerk from his office.

"Fogarty's acting queerly, isn't he, Mr. Dawson?"

"How? What d'ye mean?" snapped the owner, impatiently. Fogarty was at that moment a sore point with him.

"Oh, perhaps it's nothing, but I wondered why he came to the office, just before I went to supper, and phoned to Joe Willat that his radio stuff was ready. It seemed he might have stuck to his own business instead of helping the opposition these busy days."

For once a sycophant scored, though only a fluke directed his shot. Mr. Dawson left him without a word, and rushed to the telephone again. He called up the shop where the *Racer's* radio gear still lay, and found that the work would not be done for a week yet. He roared a peremptory order over the wire to have Joe Willat sent back without a moment's delay, and, further, to have a boy dispatched on a bicycle along the road to turn Joe back if possible before he reached town.

Before the steam sent the white feather to the tug's pipe, another radio message from the distressed steamer urged speed in sending assistance. Utterly out of control, her master unacquainted with those seas, with a strong gale increasing from the northeast and a falling barometer in hurricane time, she was in a bad plight unless speedily picked up. And her position, as now given, indicated that she had either given an erroneous position previously, or that she was in the grip of a strong current. The last presumption was most

likely; though as the weather was such, and seemed likely to be such for miles offshore, as to preclude any observation being taken for position, her situation must, in any case, be a matter of guesswork; and the *Racer*, speeding out to her aid, could not receive a radio message to warn her of the new or doubtful position.

"And Fogarty's but a damned poor navigator once he thinks he's lost!" muttered Dawson, peering along the dark road for sign of Joe Willat returning.

It was late that night when the tug *Strong* steamed out past the Fairway buoy, her boilers leaky but capable, with puzzled Joe Willat at the wheel and Mr. Dawson standing beside him in the darkened pilot house.

It had cost Joe a struggle to accept Dawson's story of Fogarty's trick. For all their recent quarrel, Joe regarded Martin as his friend deep down in his heart; and he could not believe this thing of him. Perhaps had he not run into Rosa, lurking around the wharf, and seen for himself the look of scorn she flung at him, her small head erect, her lissome fingers flicking contempt at him in real Carmen style, he would never have taken the *Strong* to sea, for all Dawson's offers and entreaties. But—

"What is worth winning is worth fighting for, Joe!" she had laughed at him with a flirt of skirts. "I wait for my man!"

"Oh, forget it!" he had growled back, his welcome smile for her suddenly wiped out; and now he was steering his rival's tug into howling darkness with a fiercer resentment in his breast than \_had ever dwelt there before.

To the sailor who has attempted the approach to the Bermudas on a black, night in a gale, in a crippled vessel, there is nothing to add to the plain statement that all the sixteen-mile-wide reefs off North Shore were crooning welcome, that the two big lights lost their visibility at half their stated range, and the southwesterly current ran doubly strong

under an opaque sky which blinded the stars.

"Where's the deviation table?" growled Joe, when open water lay ahead. It was a new ship to him. He knew his own tug's compass vagaries.

"There is none," replied Dawson, himself a manager and not a navigator. "There's a standard compass on top of the pilot house."

Joe gave the wheel to the tug's mate, a mud pilot, and climbed out into the storm. In two minutes he was back.

"Might as well sell it," he snapped.

"Why?"

"Try to get up to it. How d'ye expect a man to get to it with no rail around the house, a wet canvas deck, and the tug rolling gunnels under? Yer radio wires come down to a nutted bolt in the deck, without any protection, and that's all ther' is to stop a feller rolling overboard. Damned cheap outfit to ask a man to come to sea with! Here—"

He took the wheel from the mate and swung the tug around.

"What are you doing?" demanded Dawson, anxiously. "You are not going back?"

"I'm goin' to try to figger out this compass's error before we lose them lights," stated Joe emphatically. And for an hour, rolling giddily, her decks sluiced to the rails, the tug was turned all about the compass, and Joe laboriously took down her compass readings of the fixed light on every bearing.

"There!" Joe announced at last. "Ain't much good, anyhow. But, close as the light is, it's the best we'll get tonight. Now we'll carry on till you say back, Mister Dawson. It's a fool's trip at that."

A sudden shift of wind towards morning proved the gale to be developing into a real hurricane. It set up a cross sea of devilish whim; one nine inch towing hawser snaked away over the rail like a mammoth sea serpent before the battered deckhands could

claw aft to save it; high up on the house a rearing sea kicked in two of the pilothouse windows and filled the tiny navigating chamber knee-deep. Half of the crew, hardened seamen, were murmuring; grim Joe Willat took turn and turn about with the mate at the wheel, disdaining even to glance at the white-faced owner for fear that he would see in his drawn face a hint of uneasiness.

Six hours they had reeled the miles astern, and no radio message had come to assure them. Joe knew that the prevailing current, aided by the first wind of the gale, must have brought the drifting steamer down close to the islands; and here they were, fifty miles offshore, and never a sign or signal.

"Suppose the *Racer's* found her?" queried Dawson at last.

"No," grunted Joe, "I don't think Martin can get the old *Racer* over this hell broth like I could. He ain't makin' more'n about seven knots in this, I'll bet. Maybe the steamer's wireless is busted. Where's yer searchlight? Same place as yer standard compass?" he asked the mate.

"I can work, it from here."

"Then get it started—"

The radio operator burst in at that moment with a fresh bearing of the steamer.

"He reckons St. David's light bears forty-eight miles due southwest of him at the time of sending," the operator said.

"Then the damn fool's about run over us!" growled Joe, sourly, "Hey, mate, send that searchlight straight up in the air! You, Sparks"—to the radio man—"send him a call to start all his lights goin', deck, cabins, and cargo lights, and to look out for our flash in the sky, then radio us our bearing from him."

Mr., Dawson settled back on the settee with a little sigh of relief. Joe Willat's worth as a seaman was a household word in Bermuda; but proof such as this made the word convincing to an anxious owner.

Sparks returned in ten minutes. The

searchlight sent its vivid beam aloft like a column of pale blue moonlight against the hellish blackness.

"He gives our light plain in sight, cap'n," said Sparks. "Bears due south of him—distance uncertain, but close."

"True south, or magnetic?"

"True, he said."

"Take the wheel," Joe told the mate. He went out, clawed forward by hands and teeth, and started to mount the spidery pole of the foremast. Inside the pilothouse three men stared from the windows in amaze to see a heavy, oil skinned, booted figure slowly climb up to the bracket of the towing lights. They held their breath as the tug rolled like a cask in a cataract, whipping the mast back and forth like a reed. Then down bellowed Joe's voice, rising above the shriek of the wind and the roar of a frenzied sea.

"Blaze o' lights three points to port! Sta'bo'rd yer helm! More yet—more—stiddy—\_hold that!"

Like a great ape he descended and reappeared in the pilothouse, dripping and hoary with flying spume, but with a light in his keen eyes which reflected a nerve unshaken. At half speed a mile was covered, then the steamer's lights were seen from the pilothouse. And at the same moment a deckhand aft bawled out:

"Light on port quarter! Searchlight or somethin'."

The new light flickered awhile, then steadied and fell on the *Strong's* upper works. Presently a masthead light and two side lights appeared, and a tug's shrill siren shrieked upon the storm.

"That's the *Racer!*" announced Joe, with a grim smile.

"Want the mate to handle her, Cap'n Willat?" asked Mr. Dawson anxiously. "Close work getting that steamer's line, y'know, and you don't know this tug very well, perhaps."

"I can handle this one a dam sight

better'n Martin 'll handle my old *Racer*, mister," retorted Joe with a queer expression.

"Oh, Fogarty's a good man," protested Dawson.

"He is. But he ain't handled a tug with a rudder 'leven foot by fourteen on hand-steerin' gear. Mister Dawson. You'll see, when he begins to back. Goldang it, I wish he wasn't in that pilot house!"

"You don't have to feel anxious about him. If he had stuck to his own business he wouldn't be there, would he? You took charge of my tug for this job, and I expect you to look to my interests only."

"Don't worry, Mister," laughed Joe, shortly, "I'm here to do what's right, that's all. Frini"—to the mate—"have two hands stand by with heavin' lines on the house, and the rest o' the hands aft at the towing gear. Looks as if there's work for both tugs this night. God! look at that!"

Joe whirled the wheel, gave the engine room four bells, and thrust his wide shoulders through a shattered window, while Dawson and the mate exchanged glances of rising doubt.

The engines began to go astern, and the loom of the steamer ahead grew thick and ominous. The *Strong*, circling, had brought the *Racer* abeam, and both lay to leeward of the plunging, wallowing steamer whose decks were glaring with lights and whose rails and bridge were black with anxious men.

Over the seething water the *Racer's* bells tinkled as Martin Fogarty saw his peril, and rang to stop and back his engines. Out of her pilothouse window jutted Fogarty's head and shoulders, and he shook his fist at Joe, who gesticulated wildly from his own pilothouse. The *Racer's* sharp stem was within twenty feet of the *Strong's* rail, which in turn was close under the swooping hull of the steamer: and all old Atlantic's bottled up wickedness was poised for pouring out.

"Damyersool!" roared Fogarty

furiously, "get out o' that! Back her! Th' tow's mine, by—"

"Hell!" bellowed back Joe, in a frenzy of fearful knowledge misunderstood by everyone about him as well as by Fogarty. "I don't want the blasted tow! Watch yerself, Martin, fer th' love o' Gawd! Don't back her brutal like that!"

A gasp went up from both tugs, and a yell of alarm from the steamer. Both tugs were bathed in the blazing radiance cast down by the steamer's many lights; and in the glow the *Racer's* pilot house was as open as day. In response to Fogarty's angry tug at the bell his vessel went suddenly from full ahead to full astern, and for perhaps one moment the tug merely slowed and stopped; but then she began to go fast astern, and in a breath all Joe's fears were realized. Martin did not consider the boat he was handling; all boats were alike to him just then: and the *Racer*, built for an ice breaker on the Great Lakes, had indeed that eleven-by-fourteen-foot rudder Joe had spoken of; she had, too, primitive hand steering gear which required a strong man to hold going ahead. Going fast astern in that turbulent sea, with a pilot who was unaware, that great rudder flung broadside with the irresistible force of a hydraulic ram, the big hand wheel spun with a whir! and the spokes rattled against Fogarty's chin and chest, carrying him bodily over the wheel and out of the broken pilothouse window a huddled, unconscious heap.

While yet mouths gaped wide and eyes popped, Joe Willat sent his tug full astern out of the mess, steadied her, then brought her alongside the *Racer* with a smash. Gone for all time was the memory of their quarrel; nothing existed in all the wide ocean then for Joe except the bleeding shape hanging over the *Racer's* rail helpless, while shocked mate and deckhands stood like statues, unable to lift a hand. Mr. Dawson touched Joe's arm, fearful for his property as well as for his seemingly

lost tow.

"Let go!" snarled Joe, savagely, and held his sternwise course until, crashing heavily to the splintering of wooden rails, the two tugs ran alongside each other, still backing.

Then, with a backward flung—"Course to th' light is sou-sou-west by compass!" he leaped to the other tug's rail, seized the gaping mate and half flung him aboard the *Strong* with a fierce order to lend a hand, then gathered Martin Fogarty in his powerful arms and laid him down on the pilothouse locker.

With one sweeping glance outside he determined the relative positions of the vessels, and rang his engines ahead. His tug swung about, headed on her course for home, and when Joe had got his own deckhand to stand a trick at the wheel he bawled down the tube for all the steam available, and bent over his friend in fear.

Martin had paid a stiff price for his trickery, even then, while home lay far off. His left jaw was smashed, his temple was a purple pulp; one side of his powerful chest and throat looked as if he had been crushed in a granite crusher.

Joe bade fair to pay a price, too, for he had forfeited his claim to any reward coming when he left the tug he had brought out before she got a line to the steamer. But that worried him little.

"I picked up th' tow," he muttered, "an' if Dawson's the sort o' man to beat me out for this, well—" A shrug of the shoulders said, plainly as speech—"Let him!"

Tireless as his own engines Joe stood in the pilot house through the night, conning the course in the intervals permitted him between giving ease to the pitiful figure on the lockers. And in the dawn, when the great St. David's light winked and went out before the greater light of day, the *Racer* sped through the narrow Town Cut, ignoring all channel

and harbor laws, with a flag flying for medical aid.

It was daylight, with people and birds stirring busily, when Joe helped the sailors ashore with Martin on a hatch cover. Outside the wharves the doctor had left his own buggy, and to this the stricken man was borne, sensible now, suffering torment.

At the gate a little, fluttering, hard eyed figure waited, and as Joe passed a feverishly impatient hand felt on his arm.

“Didn’t none of youse bring home the steamer?” panted Rosa, her black eyes flickering coldly over Martin’s form. “What’s the matter with him? Hey? Did you get it, Joe, dearie?”

Joe glanced at his friend. Martin had heard, and seen. Under the gateway arch the bearers paused while the horseman brought his vehicle around; and for a full minute Martin’s gaze rested unwaveringly on the girl.

She glanced once at his drawn face,

and turned to Joe again, peering, up into his grim visage with something of fright in her eyes.

And a low, pained, but bitterly understanding laugh burst from Fogarty’s bruised breast.

“Took a whale of a wallop to open my eyes, Joe,” he said. “I’m sorry, lad. She wasn’t worth—”

The bearers placed him inside the carriage, the doctor got on the box seat, and Rosa seized Joe’s arm again with an air of relief.

“Come along now, Joe, dearie,” she chattered. “He’ll be all right. I want to speak to you. Did you find that—”

Joe stepped into the carriage, slipping one stout arm around Martin’s shoulders. With the other he gently, but firmly, removed Rosa’s hand from the door.

“Let’s forget it, kid,” he grinned.