

# Jack Grey Second Mate



by  
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**S**HE stepped aboard from one of the wooden jetties projecting from the old Longside wharf, where the sailing ships used to lie above Telegraph Hill, San Francisco. She rejected almost disdainfully the great hand extended by the second mate to assist her over the gangway.

The big man flushed somewhat under his tan, but otherwise gave no sign that he was aware of the semi-unconscious slight. She, on her part, moved aft daintily to meet the captain's wife, under whose wing she was to make the passage from Frisco to Baltimore.

At first it seemed as if she were to be the only passenger in the big steel bark; but, about half an hour before sailing, a second appeared on the little jetty, accompanied by several bearers carrying his luggage. These, having dumped their burdens at the outer end of the gangway, were paid and dismissed; after which the passenger, a gross, burly-looking man, apparently between forty and forty-five years of age, made his way aboard.

It was evident that he was no stranger to sea-craft; for without hesitation, he walked aft and down the companionway. In a few minutes he returned to the deck. He glanced ashore to where his luggage remained piled up as he had left it, then went over to where the second mate was standing by the rail across the break of the poop.

"Here, you!" he said brusquely, speaking fair English, but with an unfamiliar accent. "Why don't you get my luggage aboard?"

The second mate turned and glanced down at him from his great height.

"Were you speaking to me?" he asked quietly.

"Certainly I was addressing you, you—"

He stopped and retreated a pace, for there was

something in the eyes of the big officer which quieted him.

"If you will go below I'll have your gear brought aboard," the second mate told him.

The tone was polished and courteous, but there was still something in the gray eyes. The passenger glanced uneasily from the eyes to the great, nervous hand lying, gently clenched, upon the rail. Then, without a word, he turned and walked aft.

THE *Carlyle* had been two days at sea, and was running before a fine breeze of wind. On the poop the second mate was walking up and down, smoking meditatively. Occasionally he would go to the break and pass some order to the boatswain, then resume his steady tramp.

Presently, he heard a step on the companion stairs, and, the moment afterward, saw the lady passenger step out on deck. She was very white, and walked somewhat unsteadily, as if she were giddy.

She was followed by the captain's wife, carrying a rug and a couple of cushions. These the good woman proceeded to arrange on the captain's own deck-chair, after which she steadied the girl to a sitting position and wrapped the rug around her knees and feet.

Abruptly, in one of his periodic journeys, as the second mate passed to windward of the place where they were sitting, the voice of the lady passenger reached him. She was addressing the captain's wife, but was obviously indifferent whether he heard or not.

"I wish that man would take his horrible pipe somewhere else. The smell of it makes me quite sick!"

He was aware that the captain's wife was trying

to signal to him behind the girl's back; but he made no sign that he saw. Instead, he continued his return journey to the break of the poop, with a certain grimness about the corners of his mouth.

Here he proceeded to walk athwartships, instead of fore and aft, so that now he came nowhere near to the girl whose insolent fastidiousness had twice irked him. He continued to smoke; for he was of too big a mind to give way to the smallness of being huffed over the lady's want of manners. He had removed from her presence the cause of her annoyance, and, being of a logical disposition, saw no reason for ceasing to obtain the reasonable enjoyment of his pipe.

As he made his way to and fro across the planks, he proceeded to turn the matter over in his own calm way. Evidently she regarded him—if she thought at all about him—as a kind of upper servant; this being so, it was absurd to suppose that there was an intentional rudeness, beyond such as servants are accustomed to receive in their position of living automata. And here, having occasion to go down on to the main deck to trim sail, he forgot the matter.

When he returned to the poop, the girl was sitting alone; the captain's wife having been called below to attend to her husband who had been ill enough to be confined to his bunk for upward of a week.

As he passed across the planks, he cast occasional glances aft. The girl was certainly winsome, and peculiarly attractive, to such a man as he, in her calm unknowing of his near presence. She was sitting back in the chair, leaning tiredly and staring full of thought out across the sea.

A while passed thus, perhaps the half of an hour, and then came the sound of heavy steps coming up from the saloon. The second mate recognized them for those of the male passenger; yet the girl did not seem to notice them. She did not withdraw her gaze from the sea, but continued to stare, seeming lost in quiet thought.

The man's head appeared out of the companionway, then the clumsy grossness of his trunk and fat under-limbs. He moved toward her, stopping within a couple of yards of her chair.

"And how is Miss Eversley?" the second mate heard him ask.

At his voice, the girl started and turned her head swiftly in his direction.

"You!" That was all she said; but the disgust

and the undertone of something akin to fear were not lost upon the second officer.

"You thought—" began the man in tones of attempted banter.

"I thought I had seen the last of you—forever!" she cut in.

"But you see you were mistaken. If the sickness of the sea hadn't claimed you for the last two days, you would have discovered earlier that regret for my absence was wasted."

"Regret!"

"My pretty child—"

"Will you go away! Go away! Go away!" She put out her hands weakly with a gesture of repulsion.

"Come, come! We shall have to see much of one another during the next few weeks. Why—"

She was on her feet, swaying giddily. He took a step forward, as if with an unconscious instinct to bar her passage.

"Let me pass!" she said, with a little gasp.

But he, staring at her with hot eyes, seemed not to have heard her. She put up a hand to her throat, as if wanting air.

"Allow me to assist you below."

It was the deep voice of the second mate. His naturally somewhat grave face gave no indication that he was aware of any tensions.

"I will attend to that," said the male passenger insolently.

But the officer seemed to have no knowledge of his existence. Instead, he guided the lady to the companionway, and then down the stairs to the saloon. There he left her in the charge of the captain's wife, telling the latter that the sea air had proved too much for the young lady.

Returning on deck, he found the passenger standing by the opening of the companion. He had it in his heart to deal with the person in a fashion of his own; but the fellow had taken the measure of the big officer and, though full of repressed rage, took good care to invite no trouble.

On his part, the second mate resumed his steady tramp of the deck; but it may be noted that his pipe went out twice, for his thoughts were upon the girl he had helped below. He was pondering the matter of her repulsion for the male passenger. It was evident that they had met elsewhere, probably at the port where the *Carlyle* had picked them up. It was even more evident that the girl had no desire to continue the acquaintance, if it could be named as

such.

Upon this, and much more to the same effect, did he meditate. And so, in due time, the first mate came up to his relief.

## II

THREE days later, the captain died suddenly, leaving his wife helpless with grief at her loss. By this time, Miss Eversley had gathered strength after her bout with seasickness, and now did her best to comfort the poor woman. Yet the desolate wife would not be comforted, but took to her bunk as soon as her husband had passed into the deep, and there stayed, refusing to be accompanied by any one. This being so, Miss Eversley was, perforce, left greatly to her own devices, and her own company; for that of Mr. Pathan, the other passenger, she avoided in a most determined manner.

This was by no means an easy matter to accomplish, save by staying in her berth; for did she go upon the poop, the man would, in defiance of all her entreaties or commands, pursue her with his hateful attentions. Yet help was to come; for it happened one day that, the poop being empty save for the man at the wheel, with whom, however, Pathan seemed curiously familiar, the fellow took advantage of the opportunity to try to take her hands. He succeeded in grasping her left, making the remark:

“Don’t be so skittish, my pretty. What are your hands, when I am to have the whole of you?” And he laughed mockingly.

For answer, she tried to pull away from him, but without success.

“You see, it’s no good fighting against me!”

She glanced round, breathlessly, for help and her gaze fell upon the helmsman, a little, hideous dago who, with an evil grin upon his face, was watching them. At that, she went all hot with shame and anger.

“Let go of my hand!”

“I shall not!”

He reached his left out for her right, but she drew it back; and then, as if with the reflex of the movement, clenched it and struck him full in the mouth.

“Beast!” she said with a little savage note in her voice.

The man staggered a moment; for the blow had been shrewdly delivered, and his surprise almost

equaled the pain. Then he came back at her with a rush. The man was no better than some bestial creature at the moment. He seized her about the neck and the waist.

“—— you!” he snarled. “I’ll teach——”

But he never finished. A great knuckled hand came between their faces, splaying itself across his forehead. His sweating visage was wrenched from hers. A rough, blue-sleeved arm comforted his neck mightily, tilting his chin heavenward. His grip weakened upon her, then gave abruptly, and she staggered back dizzily against the mizzen rigging.

There came a sound of something falling. It was a very long distance away. She was conscious of the second mate in the immediate foreground, his back turned to her; and beyond him, her gross-featured antagonist huddled limply upon the deck. For a moment neither moved; then the man upon the deck rose shakily, keeping his eye mateward.

The big officer never stirred, and the passenger began backing to get the skylight between him and the second mate. He reached the weather side and paused nervously. Then, and not till then, the officer turned his back upon him, and, without vouchsafing a glance in the direction of the girl, walked forward toward the break of the poop.

As she made to go below, she heard the little steersman mutter something to the defeated man; and he, now that he was in no instant danger of annihilation, raised his voice to a blustering growl. But the big man?

## III

THE fore-hands of the big steel bark *Carlyle* were a new lot who had been signed on in Frisco, in place of the outward-bound crew of Scotch and Welsh sailormen, who had deserted on account of the high pay ruling in Frisco. The present crowd was composed chiefly of “Dutchmen,” and in each watch, consisting of eight men and a boy, there were only two Americans, one Englishman and a German. The remainder were dagoes and mixed breeds.

The two Americans were in the first mate’s watch, the Englishman and the German being with the second’s crowd, and the whole lot of them, white, olive and mixed, were about as hard a “rough-house” crew, scraped up from the waterfront, as one could find, and acceptable only because of the aforementioned high wages and

shortage of men.

And, to complete the number of undesirables aboard, there was Mr. Pathan, the half-breed passenger.

Finally, Mr. Dunn, the first mate, was a nervous little man, totally unfitted to handle anything more than an orderly crew of respectable Scandinavians. The result was that already his own watch had been once so out of hand he had been forced to call upon the second officer to help him maintain authority; since when, automatically, as it were, the second mate had taken, though unofficially, the reins of authority into his own hands.

Thus the situation five days after leaving port, on the homeward passage.

A week had passed.

"If you please, sir, I'd like a word with you."

It was the big boatswain who spoke. He had come halfway up the poop ladder, and his request was put in a low voice, yet with an apparently casual air.

"Certainly, Barton! Come up here if you have anything about which you wish to speak."

"It's about the men, sir. There's something up, an' I can't just put me finger on it."

"How do you mean, something up?"

"Well, sir, they're gettin' a bit at a loose end, an' they're gettin' a bit too free-like with their lip if I tells 'em to do anythin'."

"Well, you know, Barton, I cannot help you in that. If you cannot keep them in hand without aid, you'll never do it with."

"'Tisn't exactly that, sir. I can handle a crowd right enough along with any man; savin' it be yourself, sir"—with an acknowledging glance at his officer's gigantic proportions—"but there's somethin' in the wind, as is makin' 'em too ikey. It's only since the cap'n went, an' it's my belief as yon passenger's at the bottom of it!"

"Ah!"

"*You* noticed somethin' then, sir?" asked the boatswain quickly.

"Tell me what makes you think the passenger may be in anything that is brewing?" said the second mate, ignoring the man's question.

"Well, for one thing, sir, he's too familiar with the men. An' I've seen him go forrard to the fo'cas'le of a night when 'twas dark. Once I went up to the door on the quiet, thinkin' as I'd get to see what it was as he was up to; but the chap on the lookout spotted me an' started talkin'. I reckoned

he meant headin' me off; so I asked him to pass me down the end of me clothesline, for a bluff, an' then I made tracks."

"But didn't you get any idea of what the fellow was doing in the fo'cas'le?"

"Well, sir, it seemed to me as he was palaverin' to 'em like a father; but as I was sayin' I hadn't time to get the bearin's of what was goin' forrard. Then there's another matter, sir, as—"

"And you might tell the man, while he's up, to take a look at the chafing gear on the fore swifter," interjected the second mate calmly.

The irrelevancy of this remark seemed to bring the boatswain up all standing, as the saying goes. He glanced up at the officer's face, and in so doing the field of his vision included something else—the very one of whom they were talking. He understood now the reason of the second's apparently causeless remark; for that keen-sensed officer had detected the almost cat-like tread approaching them along the poop-deck, and changed the conversation on the instant.

For a couple of minutes the boatswain and the second mate kept up a talk upon certain technical details of ship work, until Mr. Pathan was out of hearing.

"I reckon as he thought he'd like to know what it was we're talkin' about, sir," remarked the boatswain, eying the broad back of the stout passenger.

"What is this other matter that you want to speak to me about?"

"Well, sir, some of the hands 'as got hold of booze somehow. I keeps smellin' of 'em whenever one of 'em comes near me, and I reckon as he"—jerking his head in the direction of Mr. Pathan—"is the one as is givin' it to 'em."

The second mate swore quietly.

"What's his game, sir? That's what's fozzlin' me. I thinks it's time as you looked inter ther matter!"

"If I thought—"

"Yes, sir?" encouraged the boatswain.

But whatever the second mate thought, he did not put it into words. Instead, he asked the boatswain if he were of the opinion that any of the fore-castle crowd were to be depended upon.

"Not one of 'em, sir! There isn't one as wouldn't put a knife inter you if he got half a chanst!"

The second nodded, as if the man's summing-up

of the crew were in accordance with his own ideas. Then he spoke.

“Well, Barton, I cannot do anything till we know more definitely what is in the wind. You must keep your eyes open and report to me anything that seems likely to help.”

Behind them they heard again the pad of Mr. Pathan’s deck shoes.

“You had better overhaul the sheaves in those main lower topsail brace blocks,” he remarked for the benefit of the listening passenger. “That will do for the present.”

“Very good, sir,” said the boatswain, and went down the ladder on to the main deck.

#### IV

IT WAS in the afternoon watch, and Miss Eversley was sitting with a book in her lap, staring thoughtfully out across the sea.

Forward of her, the second mate tramped across the break of the poop. When she had appeared on deck, he had been pacing fore and aft along the poop, but had kept since then to the fore part of the deck.

Of the male passenger there was no sign. Indeed, since the big officer’s “handling” of him, he had kept quite away from her, so that at last she was beginning to find her stay aboard not at all unpleasant. Occasionally the girl’s glance would stray inboard to the great silent man, smoking and meditating as he paced across the planks.

It was curious (she recognized the fact) how often of late she had found her thoughts dwelling upon him. He was no longer a nonentity—something below the line of her horizon—but a man, and a man in whom she was beginning to be interested. She remembered now—what at the time she had scarcely noticed—her casual ignoring of his proffered aid as she stepped aboard. It had seemed nothing then to her, no more than if she had casually rejected the aid of a footman; but now she could not comprehend how she had done it.

From this her memory led her to that distinctly-to-be-regretted remark about his smoking. She watched him, and realized the more completely as she did so that she would be vitally afraid to do such a thing again; for, all unaware to herself, the manhood of the man was mastering her. Yet, at this time, she had no realization of the fact; nothing beyond that she was interested in him, perhaps

somewhat afraid and certainly a little desirous of knowing him.

On the second mate’s part, he was thinking of other things than her. The preceding day he had been obliged to step down on the main deck to exert authority, and had succeeded only by laying out a couple of the crew. That the disaffection was due, in part at least, to Mr. Pathan he had very little doubt; but no proof that would justify him in putting the man in irons, as he had determined to do the very moment such was forthcoming. Also, he knew that the captain’s death had unsettled them, and that there were vague ideas among them that now they were under no compulsion to obey orders. It was doubtless, along these lines that Pathan was working with them, and the thought made the big officer grit his teeth.

*“Look out, Mr. Grey!”*

The words came shrill and sudden in the voice of Miss Eversley, and the second officer turned sharply from where he had stopped a moment to lean upon the rail. He saw that she was on her feet, her arm extended toward him, while her gaze flickered between him and aloft. In the same instant, there was a sort of sogging thud behind him.

His stare had followed the girl’s, and for an instant he had seen the dark face of one of the crew over the belly of the mizzen topsail; then he had twisted quickly to see the reason of that noise, though already half comprehending the cause. In that portion of the rail over which he had just been leaning was stuck a heavy steel marlinspike, the sharp point thereof appearing below, for it had penetrated right through the thick teak.

For a moment he looked at it, while his face grew quietly grim. Then he turned and walked toward the mizzen rigging. From here he could look up abaft the mast. Thus he saw the man who had dropped the spike making his way rapidly from aloft.

Getting into the lower rigging, the man—who proved to be one of those the second mate had floored the previous day—called out in broken English his regret for the accident; but the officer, knowing how little of an accident there had been about the affair, said nothing. Then, as soon as the creature put foot on the deck, he caught him by the nape of the neck and walked him forward to where the spike stood up in the rail.

Below on the main deck stood several of the

crew, watching what would happen, and fully prepared to make trouble if they got the half of a chance. They saw the second officer grasp the embedded spike with one great hand, then with apparent ease bend it from side to side till it broke, leaving in the rail that portion which had penetrated.

Immediately afterward, quite coolly, and calculating the force of the blow, he struck the man with it upon the side of the head, so that he went limp in his grasp; then he laid him down gently on the hencoop and bade a couple of them come up and carry him to his bunk. And this, being thoroughly cowed, as was the second mate's intention, they did without so much as a murmur.

As soon as the men were gone with their burden, he walked aft to where the girl stood.

"Thank you, Miss Eversley," he said simply. "I should have been spitted like a frog if you had not called."

She made no pretense of replying, and he looked at her more particularly. She was extraordinarily pale, and staring at him out of frightened eyes. He noticed also that she held to the edge of the skylight as if for support.

"You are not well?" he said, and made as if to support her.

But she warded him off with a gesture.

"What a brute you are!" she said in a voice that would have been cold had it been less intense.

He looked at her a moment before he replied, as if weighing the use of speech.

"You don't understand," he remarked at last, calmly. "We have a rough crowd to handle, and half measures would be worse than useless. Won't you sit down?" And he indicated the chair behind her.

"It—it was butchery!" she remarked with a sort of cold anger, and ignoring his suggestion.

"Very nearly—if you hadn't called." There had come a suggestion of humor about the corners of his mouth.

"I—"

She groped backward vaguely for the chair, and seemed unconscious that it was his hands which guided her there.

"Now, see here, Miss Eversley. You must really allow me to be the better judge in a matter of this sort. I cannot afford to sign for the long trip, if only for your sake."

"For my sake!" Her voice sounded scornful. "In

what way does it concern me?"

The grimness crept back into his face and chased away the scarcely perceptible humor.

"In this way," he replied in a voice as nearly as cold as her own but for a certain almost savage intensity. "I, and I alone, am keeping matters quiet aboard here; for I may as well tell you at once that the first mate does not count for that much"—and he snapped his finger and thumb—"among the crowd we've got in this packet. They're quiet at present only because they're afraid of me."

"What do you mean?" She asked the question with a brave assumption of indifference, to which her frightened eyes gave no support. "How does it matter to me whether your men are quiet or not?"

He looked at her a moment quietly and with something in the expression of his face that would have been contempt had it not been tempered by a deeper emotion.

"Listen!" he said, and she quailed before his masterfulness. "If that spike had done its work just now, you had been better dead than here. Do you think—"

He did not finish but turned from her and walked forward along the deck, leaving her gazing at the nakedness of a hideous possibility.

## V

A WEEK passed in quietness, and, though the second mate and the boatswain between them had kept a strict watch upon the male passenger's movements, there had been nothing that could be looked upon with suspicion; for they had no knowledge of the tightly folded notes flipped to the helmsman, and by him conveyed forward, and read for the delectation of the mutinous crowd in the forecabin.

It was extraordinary that Pathan should discontinue so abruptly his nocturnal visits to the men. Possibly he had caught a stray word or two of the boatswain's confabulation with the second mate, and so taken fright. Whatever it was, the fact remained that it was impossible to come upon anything which would justify their putting him out of the way of doing mischief. Even the boatswain's complaints about the men's behavior seemed to be lacking foundation during this time, and altogether the ship appeared to be quieting down nicely.

Though there had seemed of late little need for anticipating trouble, yet the second mate had his

doubts but that there was something under this apparent calm, and, having his doubts, took the precaution to carry a companionable weapon in his side pocket.

In the end, events proved that he was right; for, one afternoon on watch, the boatswain, chancing to have physical trouble with one of the men, the rest of the watch closed in upon him in a mob. At that the second mate went down to take a turn, which turn he took to such a tune that he had three of them stretched out before they were well aware that he was among them. They were beginning to give before his onslaught when suddenly he heard Pathan's voice, away aft, singing out:

"Get on to him, lads! Now's your time! Give the bully a taste of his own sort!"

At that the rest of them turned upon him with a rush, leaving the sadly mauled boatswain to himself. And now the second mate showed of what he was made. They were clinging on to him like a lot of weasels—gripping his legs to trip him, grasping at his hands and arms, and climbing on his back. One of these latter having clasped hands under his chin, was doing his utmost to throttle him.

This the second mate foiled by unclasping the fellow's dirty paws and pulling him bodily over his head, bringing him, with a continuation of the movement, crashing down upon those of his attackers immediately in front. At the same instant, the boatswain, being by now somewhat recovered, laid hold upon one of those in the rear and hauled him off. Even as he did so, there came the sound of a pistol shot.

The second mate hove himself round carrying the mass of clinging men with him. He saw Pathan coming along the decks toward them at a run. In his hand was a pistol, with the smoke still rising from it. Upon the deck lay the boatswain. He was kicking and twitching; for it was he whom the passenger had shot.

"You —— skunk!" roared the second mate. He caught two of his attackers by the hair of their heads and beat their skulls together so they became immediately senseless.

He saw Pathan halt within a dozen feet of him and aim straight at his head. He had been dead the following instant, but that there happened a diversion.

A white face flashed into the field of his vision, and the next moment Miss Eversley had thrown a

handful of some whitish powder into the man's face. The pistol dropped with a thud, and from Pathan there was nothing save a mixture of gasps and shouts, violent sneezing, and coughs that broke off oddly into breathless blasphemy.

The second mate shouted incoherently. Then the girl was upon his assailants, throwing handfuls of the powder into their faces; whereupon they loosed him, as if their strength had gone from them, and fell to much the same antics as had Pathan. Some of the powder rose and assailed the second officer's nostrils, so that he sneezed violently. It was pepper!

He turned to the girl. At her feet lay the tin with which she had wrought his relief. She herself was standing, crying and sneezing along with the rest, and trying to wipe her eyes with a peppery handkerchief.

The second mate's glance noted the pistol dropped by Pathan, and he stepped over, and, picking it up, put it in his pocket. Between him and the group of sneezing, choking men lay the body of the boatswain. A lot of the pepper had been spilt upon his upturned face, yet he moved no whit. He was quite dead.

"What's happened, Mr. Grey?" asked a thin voice at his elbow.

"Rank mutiny!" he replied.

"Whatever shall we do?" returned the voice, the owner of which was the first mate. "Whatever shall we do?"

"Nothing," said the second mate shortly.

He turned from the mate and bellowed to the other watch who were coming aft in a body, having been aroused by the noise.

"Now then, my lads! Up forrard with you! Smartly!" And he pulled out his revolver.

They went backward with a surge as he covered them.

"Back into the fo'cas'le! Don't stir out till I tell you!"

The threatening weapon, backed by the determination of the man, overawed them and they went quickly.

"Close that door!" he roared.

It was closed immediately. Then he turned his attention to those around. Miss Eversley was standing near, her cheeks white, but her eyes and nose very red. It was plain to him that she was all of a tremble and like to fall, so that, without more ado, he took her by the shoulders and led her to a seat upon a spar lashed along by the bulwarks.

“Now, don’t faint,” he commanded.

“I’m not going to,” she said soberly.

He left her hurriedly; for the men, having recovered from the effects of the pepper, were gathered in a clump and eying him doubtfully. To the right, Pathan had got upon his feet. It is just possible that in another moment they would have been upon him, which would have meant the loosing of the other watch, had he not acted with decision.

“Cyrone and Andy,” he shouted, facing them squarely, “aft with you, and tell the steward to pass out the irons!”

At the word, Andy started aft to obey. But Cyrone, one of those who had been foremost in the trouble, made no move.

“Cyrone!” said the second mate.

The man had done well to understand the dangerous quiet in his tone; but he did not. Instead, with unbounded insolence, he turned to the fellows surrounding him.

“Who for the irons, hey? They for we! I know! I know!” he shouted excitedly, and broke off into an unintelligible jargon of words.

“Cyrone!”

“For to — you go!” shouted the wretch in reply. It was evident that he was depending on the others to back him up.

The second mate said no word, but raised his pistol. The men about Cyrone scattered to each side. They had seen the second mate’s eyes. In that last moment the fellow himself must have come suddenly into knowledge; for he started back, crying out something in an altered tone.

There was a scream from Miss Eversley, which blent with the sudden crack of the weapon; then Cyrone staggered and fell sideways on to the hatch. There was an instant of strange silence, broken by a dullish thud on the deck behind.

“Jardkenoff, go along with Andy for those irons,” said the second mate in a level tone.

At his order the whole of them had started forward like frightened animals.

Jardkenoff ran past him, crying “Yi, yi, sir!” in a shaking voice.

While they were gone for the irons, the second mate bade the others lift the bodies of the boatswain and Cyrone on to the hatch. Then he looked round to discover the cause of that thud upon the deck. He saw that Miss Eversley had fallen forward off the spar on to her face, and at

that he hastened to lift her. Fortunately, she had escaped injury, at which unconsciously he sighed relief. Then, taking her into his arms, he carried her to the hatch, singing out to one of the men by name to run aft to bring the steward with some brandy.

All this while, Pathan, the passenger, had stood in a dazed fashion beside the main-mast. Now, thinking he perceived a chance to steal aft to the temporary safety of his room, he began to sidle quietly away. It was no use, for the mate’s voice pulled him up short before he had gone a dozen feet.

“You will stay where you are, Mr. Pathan!” was all that he said.

When the irons came, the steward accompanied them, carrying a glass full of brandy. This, under the eye of the second mate, he proceeded to administer. At the same time, the officer was superintending the ironing of Pathan. By the time that this was accomplished, Miss Eversley had begun to come to a knowledge of her surroundings, and presently sat up. Before this, however, the second mate had seen to it that Pathan was removed to the lazarette, for he would not have her upset further by sight of the murderer.

As soon as she was strong enough, he gave her his arm and led her aft to her cabin. In the saloon they came upon the captain’s wife sitting limply in one of the chairs. At their entrance, she started up, and cried out something in a frightened voice. The poor woman seemed demented and quite incapable of rational speech. It was evident that the scene on deck—which apparently she had witnessed—had, in conjunction with her recent loss, temporarily unsettled her mental balance.

With difficulty they persuaded her to go to her room, after which the second mate returned to the deck, with the intention of trying to put a little heart into the nonentity whom Fate had placed above him in the scale of authority.

That evening, in the second dog-watch, the body of Cyrone was, by his orders, ignominiously dumped over the side without ceremony, and with a piece of rope and holystone attached to his feet.

## VI

THE following day it was a somewhat cowed lot of men who came aft, at the second mate’s bidding, to the funeral of the boatswain. Nor did his opinion of them, expressed tersely after the body had gone



down into the darkness, help to reassure them. He told them that, at the first sign of further insubordination, he would shoot them down like the dogs they were; that, in future, there should be no afternoon watch below, and that work should be continued right through the two dog-watches. On learning this, there came a slight murmur, expressive of discontent checked by fear, from the men grouped below the break.

"Silence!" roared the second officer, and whipped out a pistol from his side pocket.

Instantly the murmur ceased; for the men, as was the second's intention, realized that he would stop nowhere to enforce his commands. And there was still vividly in their minds the execution of Cyrone.

As the men went forward, the first mate ventured a weak protest against the second's measures.

"You'll have 'em murdering us, Mr. Grey, if you go on like that! Why don't you speak to 'em nicely?"

The second mate looked down upon his superior. At first his glance denoted impatient contempt; but after the first moment an expression of tolerance spread over his features as he took in the other's almost pathetic weakness of face and figure.

"I believe you read the Bible, Mr. Dunn?"

"I—I—" began the mate, flushing slightly. "Yes—perhaps I do sometimes. Why?"

"Well, you should know how little use swine have for pearls."

"You think, then, Mr. Grey—"

"I'm certain. That scum would take kindness for a sign of weakening on our part, and then—"

He made an expressive gesture.

"I wish to God we were home!" said the mate fervently.

"You cheer up, mister!" replied the big officer. "If you have any trouble with your lot, don't stop to talk—shoot!"

"It's an awful thing to take a life."

"It is a necessary thing sometimes. And, besides, you have only to bang on the deck for me, and I'll be up in a brace of shakes."

And so, after a few more words of encouragement to the frightened man, the second left him in charge, and went below for a sleep.

True to his word, the second mate kept the mutinous crowd of sailormen hard at it from dawn

to dusk. Even the first mate, inspired by his example and encouragement, made a brave attempt to follow in his wake. As the second mate put it, "Sweat the flesh off their bones, and they'll be too tired to use their dirty brains." Also, he was the more confident of keeping them in subjection, now that Pathan was safely ironed in the lazarette.

Thus, at last, matters seemed in a fair way to tend to a happy ending of the troubles that had beset them so far. Yet of one person this could not be said; for the mental condition of the captain's wife showed no signs of improvement. Fortunately, she was in no way violent and gave little trouble, her state being that of one suffering from melancholia in one of its quieter forms.

Then one morning it was discovered she was missing. A search was made through the ship, but without success. She was never found. Evidently the poor creature had crept on deck some time during the night and gone overboard.

From this, onward, nothing disturbed the monotony of the voyage for many days. The second mate kept the crew well in hand, in no way abating rigorous treatment of them, so that did he but raise a hand they jumped to do his bidding.

And now of Miss Eversley. Day by day the girl had found her thought centering upon the second mate. The horizon of her mind seemed bounded by him. She caught herself watching his least gesture as he paced the poop in his meditative fashion, or gave some order to the crew. Did the first mate relieve him, so that he could go below for a sleep, the deck seemed strangely empty, the wind chilly, the sea dull and uninteresting. Yet when he relieved the first mate, how different! Then the wind was warm, the sea full of an everlasting beauty, the deck, nay, the very planks of the deck, companionable.

And so she grew into the knowledge that she loved him, even to the extent of looking forward to her future life as a hideous blank, if he were not to share it; while he—silly man! He would break off his walks to sit and chat with her; but of that which she most desired to hear, not a word. Yet, by his eyes, she guessed that he cared; but for some reason—possibly because she was so much alone—he said nothing.

And so, at last, she might have come to aid him in spanning the gulf that remained yet between them; but that fate, in its own terrible way, took a hand.

## VII

“MR. GREY! Mr. Grey! Jack! Jack!”

The second mate woke with a start and leapt up in his bunk.

Miss Eversley was standing in the doorway of his berth.

“Quick! They’ve killed the first mate! And they’re coming down—now! Pathan has been let out, and he’s with them!”

Even before she had made an end of speaking, the second mate had reached the floor with a bound. He snatched the revolver from under his pillow, and ran into the saloon.

From the doorway, giving into the companion stairs came the sounds of whispering, and the padding of many bare feet descending. He made a quick step to meet them; but the girl caught his arm.

“Don’t, Jack! Don’t!” Then, as he still hesitated: “For my sake—remember! Oh! Is there no place?”

She stopped, for the second mate had caught her by the arm and was running her toward the fore part of the saloon. His wits, slightly bewildered by sleep, had flashed instantly to their normal clearness under the stress of her terror. He realized that, for her sake alone, he had no right to throw away his chances of life.

Just as the foremost of the mutineers stepped silently into the dimly lighted saloon, the big officer pushed open the door of the foremost berth on the port side and thrust Miss Eversley in. At the same moment, the man at the other end discovered them and gave a yell to announce the fact.

The following instant he lay dead, and the man behind him shared the same end. This caused a temporary hesitation on the part of the attackers, and in that slight interval the second officer slipped into the berth after the girl, slammed the door, and locked it.

“Stand to one side,” he whispered to her.

As she did so, he hurled himself at the forward bulkhead of the berth. One of the boards started, and he attacked it again, the noise he was making drowning that of the mutineers in the saloon.

*Crash!* The momentum of his effort had made a great breach in the woodwork and taken him clean through into the absolute darkness of the sail-locker beyond.

In a moment he was back. He caught the girl by the wrist and helped her through. Even as he did so

there came a loud report in the saloon, and a bullet stripped off a long splinter on the inner side of the door as it came through.

Immediately, the second officer raised his weapon, and fired—once—twice. At the second shot there came a sharp outcry from one of those beyond the door, and then three shots in quick reply. They hurt no one, for the big officer had bounded into the sail-locker. He had dropped his emptied weapon into his side pocket and was helping Miss Eversley over the great masses of stowed sails.

In the half of a minute he whispered to her to stand. An instant he fumbled, and she heard the rattle of a key. Then a square of pale light came in the darkness ahead of her, and she saw that he had opened a trap in the steel bulkhead that ran across the poop.

The following instant she was in darkness; for the huge bulk of her companion completely filled the aperture as he forced himself through. The light came again, and then she saw his head silhouetted against it in the opening.

“Give me your hand,” he whispered, and the moment afterward she was standing beside him on the deck, under the break of the poop.

For an instant they stood there, scanning the decks, but every soul, saving the helmsman, had joined in the attack. Through the opening behind them came the sound of blows struck upon the door of the berth which they had just quitted. No time was to be lost; for the moment that the brutes discovered that rent in the woodwork of the berth, they would be after them.

A sudden idea came to the second officer. He shut down the door of the vertical trap and locked it. The men would search the sail-locker for them, now that it was shut and fastened; while, if he had left it open, they would have been on their track immediately.

“Foward to the half-deck,” he muttered, and they ran out into the moonlight.

Now the half-deck was a little, strongly built steel deck-house, situated about amidships. It had one steel door on the after end, and once they were in, and this shut, they would be comparatively safe, at least for the time being.

Abruptly, as they ran, there came a muffled outcry, and they knew that the door to the berth had been broken down. They reached the half-deck, and, while Miss Eversley sprang over the

washboard, the officer ran to slip the hood which held the door back. Even as he reached up his hand there came a shout from the poop. They were discovered.

There came a thudding of rapid feet, and he saw the whole remaining crew of the boat tumbling hurriedly down the ladder on to the main deck. At that critical instant he found that the hook was jammed. He riddled at it a moment; but still it refused to come out of its eye.

The running men were halfway to him, howling like wild beasts, and brandishing knives and belaying-pins. In desperation he caught the edge of the door, put one foot against the side of the house, and tugged. An instant of abominable suspense; then the hook gave, parting with a sharp crack. Through the very supremacy of his effort, he staggered back a couple of paces, then, before he could regain the door to shut it, a couple of the men who had outstripped the others, leaped past him and into the half-deck, with a cry of triumph.

He heard Miss Eversley scream; then a third man was upon him. The second mate tried to slam the door in his face, but the fellow jammed himself in between the door and the side of the doorway. At that the big officer caught him by the chin and the back of the head, and plucked him into the half-deck by sheer strength. Then he brought the door to, and slipped the bolt, just as the rest of the men outside hurled themselves against it.

From the girl there came a cry of warning, and, in the same instant, the loud clang of some heavy missile striking the door by his right ear. He whirled round just in time to receive the united charge of the three he had imprisoned with himself in the deck-house.

Fortunately there was a sufficiency of light in the berth; for the lamp had been left burning by the former occupants when they left to join in the attack on the afterguard.

Two of the men had their knives. The third stooped and made a grab for the iron belaying-pin which he had just thrown at the officer. Him the second mate made harmless by a kick in the face; then the other two were upon him.

He snatched at the knife-hand of the man to the right, and got him by the wrist; tried to do the same to the other and missed. The fellow dodged, rushed in and slashed the second mate's shirt open from the armpit to the waist, inflicting a long gash, but the next instant was hurled across the berth by a

terrific left-hand blow.

The second mate turned upon the man whose wrist he had captured. His fingers were hurting intolerably, for the fellow was tearing at them with the nails of his loose hand so that they were bleeding in several places. He caught the wretch by the head, jammed the left arm under his chin, and leaned forward with a vast effort. There was a horrid crack, and the man shuddered and collapsed.

There came a little broken gasp of horror from the girl who was crouched up against the corner on the starboard side. The second mate turned upon her.

"Turn your face to the bulkhead, and stop your ears," he commanded.

She shivered and obeyed, trembling and striving to stifle back a tumult of sobbing which had taken her.

The officer stooped and removed the knife from the hand of the dead man. Upon the door behind him there sounded a perfect thunder of blows. Abruptly, as he stood up the glass of the port on the starboard side was shattered, and a hand and arm came into the light.

The second mate dodged below the line of the bunkboard. There was a loud report, and a bullet struck somewhere against the ironwork. He ran close up to the bunk, still keeping out of sight, then rose upright with a sudden movement and grasped the pistol and the hand that held it, leaned forward over the bunk, and struck with his knife a little below the arm. There came a howl of pain from outside and the body fell away from the port, leaving the loaded pistol in the second mate's grasp.

Not a moment did he waste, but slammed to the iron cover over the port and commenced to screw up the fastening. It was stiff, so that he had to take both hands to it, and because of this he placed the revolver down upon the bedding of the bunk.

This came near to causing his death, for, suddenly, as he wrestled with the screw, a hand flashed over his shoulder and grabbed the weapon. Instinctively the second mate dodged and swung up a defending arm. He struck something. There was a sharp explosion close to his head, and then the clatter of the falling weapon.

By this he had got himself about and saw that the two whom he had temporarily disabled were upon him. Before he could defend himself, one of them struck him with the iron belaying-pin across

his head. It sent him staggering across the floor.

As he fell, a scream from Miss Eversley pierced to his dull senses, and he got upon his knees, gasping and rocking, yet still full of the implacable determination to fight. For all his grit he would have been dead but for the girl. He had grasped the legs of one of his assailants; but was too dazed and weakened to put forth his usual strength.

The second man raised the heavy pin for another smite, but it never fell. To the second mate, wrestling pointlessly, there sounded a dull thud and a cry. Something fell upon him all of a heap, as it were, and he was brought to the deck upon his side; yet he had not relaxed his somewhat nervous grip upon the man's legs, so that the fellow came down with him.

For perhaps the half of a minute he held on stupidly while the man struggled violently to get away. Then, almost abruptly, nerve and reasoning-power came back to him, and in the same instant a violent pain smote him between the left shoulder and the neck. He got upon his knees, hurling the dead body of the other man from off his shoulders with the movement.

He was now above his opponent, and at once attempted to capture the fellow's knife. In this he was not at first successful, with the result that he sustained a second stab, this time slitting open the front of his shirt, and cutting his breast. At that, growing inconceivably furious, he regarded not the knife, but smote the man with his bare fist between the eyes and again below the ear, and so shrewd and mighty were the blows that the fellow died immediately.

Perceiving that the man was indeed dead, the second mate got himself upon his feet. He was breathing deeply, and his head seemed full of a dull ache.

He took his gaze from the bodies at his feet, and glanced around. Not two yards distant stood Miss Eversley. She had a revolver in her right hand. At that, the second mate understood how he had escaped with his life. Yet he had no thought of thanking her; for the horror in her face warned him not to do anything that might increase her realization of what she had done. Instead, he made two steps to her, and took her in his arms.

With the feel of his arms about her, she dropped the pistol and broke into violent weeping. And he, having some smattering of wisdom, held his peace for a space.

Presently the extreme agitation of the girl passed off, and she sobbed only at intervals. Later still she spoke.

"I shall never be happy again."

And still the second mate preserved the sweet wisdom of silence.

"Never, never, never!" he heard her whispering to herself.

And so, in a while, she calmed down to quiet breathing. For a space they stood thus, and on the decks all about the little house was silence, save for the occasional pad, pad, of a bare foot, as those without moved hither and thither.

## VIII

THE day had come and passed, and it was again night.

Within the house things could be seen but dimly, for the lamp was turned no more than a quarter up, and of oil they had no supply beyond the quantity within the lamp itself. Fortunately, there was no immediate need to worry about water; for the water breaker, lashed to the port end of the table, was a quarter full, owing to the boatswain's and carpenter's dislike for soap and water.

As for food, an examination of the bread barge in one of the empty lower bunks showed him that there was enough biscuit to keep the two of them crudely fed for some days, provided they were careful. In the food cupboard there was also half a bottle of ship's vinegar, about half a pound of ship salt pork, some sugar in a soup-and-bully tin, and about three pounds of black molasses in a big seven-pound pickle jar; all of these being the usual savings of rations that might be found in the food locker of any other lime-juicer, windjammer in all the seven seas.

He had, aided by the girl, bound up his wounds, which were not sufficiently serious to trouble him with anything more than a constant smarting; and though he had bled a good deal, he was so full of life and vitality that he was scarcely aware of the loss, except that he was abnormally thirsty; which fortunately the water in the breaker enabled him to quench freely. Yet, all the same he held this need somewhat in check, for they must never run short of the precious fluid.

During the day a certain amount of light had driven in between the crevices about the door. Beyond this there had been none, for the ports were

all protected by their iron covers. Fortunately, as the second mate had discovered, all of them had been fastened on the preceding night, previous to their making a refuge of the house, all, that is, save the one through which they had been attacked. To this fortunate happening it is probable they owed their lives.

In the corner of the house to the right of the door there was a grim mound. The second mate had spread a couple of blankets over it to hide its full horror from the eyes of the girl; yet, by this very act, he had made it almost more unbearable than if he had left them in all the stark awesomeness of uncovered death.

Out upon the decks was quietness. Indeed, all through the day there had been but one attempt to molest them, and this the second mate had foiled by quietly opening one of the after ports and firing into the thick of the attacking party. In this way he was persuaded that he could have held the house for as long as it pleased him to do so but for the insurmountable obstacle that confronted him in the shape of lack of ammunition. Yet, even as it was, it was plain to him that the repulse he had given them was likely to keep them at a respectable distance—at least for some while. For, out of a crew of sixteen deck-hands, six had already been killed and several wounded.

In the brief time he had been at the port he had gathered something of the methods they had been about to apply to the felling of the door. They had rigged up a spar on a tackle, so as to form a rough sort of battering ram; yet, in the brief attempt that he had permitted them, the machine had proved unsuccessful, for the suspending rope had been too long, and the rolling of the ship had caused the spar to swing across the after end of the house, in the fashion of a clock pendulum, so that at one moment the business end of the ram was opposed to the door, and another to some portion of the end of the house.

In spite of the failure of the attackers, the big officer was well aware that with a more perfect appliance, and no ammunition with which to beat them off, they would not be long in forcing the door. And then . . .

The second night of the imprisonment had come. The second mate had gone to the door and was listening; but beyond the pad of a bare foot, or hum of hoarse voices, there was nothing to tell of the watchers about the decks.

For her part, the girl was busying herself clearing away the few eatables from which they had been making a meal. This done, she hesitated a moment, then went over to the second mate.

“Let me stay up tonight and watch, Jack. You have not had any sleep, and I have slept most of the day. I could wake you up the moment anything happened.”

The big man put a hand on each side of her shoulders and looked down upon her with a grave half-smile.

“Do, Jack! You can trust me,” she urged.

“Trust you, little girl,” he replied. “Yes, child, with a thousand lives if I had them.”

“Then you will let me stay up and watch?”

He shook his head slowly.

“There will be no need tonight, at any rate. They cannot get at us without noise. We may both sleep.”

This he said to quiet her entreaties; for he had no intention to allow her to sit alone in the darkness with her thoughts, and that blanket-covered mound, while he slept. More, he wished her to sleep; for he had a project which he hoped to carry out during the hours of darkness.

For a moment she stood looking up at him in the half-light. Then she slipped her hands on to his shoulders.

“Then I will say good night, Jack, for we must save the oil in the lamp.”

The second mate stooped and kissed her.

“Good night, Mary,” he said gravely.

“Good night,” she whispered, kissing him in return.

Then she left him and went behind the blanket which he had rigged up before the bunks on the starboard side.

A space of about two hours passed, during which the second mate lay awake listening. Presently, realizing that the girl was asleep, he got up and quietly opened the door of the house. He listened a minute and found no one about, then swiftly he carried out each of the dead bodies on to the deck and left them there. He returned to the house and locked the door.

All at once, from outside the door, there rose an outcry. At that, he knew that the dead had been discovered. The outcries sank to a subdued murmur; for there had come fear among the men. Yet from thence onward, the door was never left unguarded day or night.

## IX

THE morning of the fourth day of their imprisonment dawned, and the second mate was awakened by a noise of hammering close against the port on the left side of the door. He jumped from his bunk quietly, and crept softly to the one on his right. He had the revolver in his hand.

Very cautiously he unscrewed the fastening of the iron cover, and glanced out, but could see no one. For a little he listened, and between the blows he caught a murmur of talk some little distance away. Abruptly he recognized Pathan's voice. At that, quickly but silently, he unscrewed the fastening of the glass and opened it. He thrust his head out and looked to the left.

Close to him, and right in front of the door, stood one of the men. He held the muzzle of a clumsy ship's musket, the butt resting on the deck. The second mate remembered having observed this same antique weapon hanging in the steward's pantry. It was evident that they were but poorly supplied with firearms.

Beyond the guard, he made out a couple more of the men fixing a heavy piece of timber across the other port. Evidently they had hit upon this plan of preventing his interfering with their operations. With the two after ports blocked they could do much as they pleased.

Suddenly a sharp exclamation on his right startled the second officer. He glanced round. There was Pathan fumbling with his revolver.

Instantly the second mate snatched his head into the shelter of the house. Almost at the same moment there sounded a thunderous bang, close to the left. He heard Pathan give a scream of pain, breaking off into a blatter of cursing.

At the risk of his life he shoved his head out. Pathan was nursing his right hand, while big tears of pain were running down his cheeks to that strange accompaniment of blasphemy. On the deck, close to his feet, lay the shattered butt of his revolver. The second mate twisted to the left for a brief glance. He saw that the guard was sitting upon the deck, rubbing his right shoulder. He looked woefully scared, while nearby lay the cumbrous weapon with which he had been armed.

What had happened was now clear to the big officer. The man had fired at the protruding head—but a fraction too late—with the result that the bolt, with which the gun had been loaded, had stricken

the passenger's revolver, destroying it and wounding his hand.

Even as the solution came to the officer, the guard had reached for his gun and scrambled to his feet. In another moment he would have clubbed the second mate, but that a bullet sent him twitching to the deck.

The second mate turned his pistol upon Pathan. Could he but rid the ship of that fiend, all might yet be well.

Yet, as he pressed the trigger for the second time, his elbow was joggled from within the house. He swore between his teeth and tried another shot, only to be warned by the unsatisfying click of the hammer that his ammunition had come to an end.

He drew away from the port with an angry gesture, and well it was for him that he did so, for one of the two at work upon the port, seeing that the weapon was empty of cartridges, had run at him with a hammer. The blow missed, and the following instant the second mate had slammed the covers and fastened up the port.

He turned and found the girl standing by him.

"Do you know," he said a trifle sternly, "you made me miss Pathan when you touched me. If I had shot that wretch the men would have been glad enough to come to terms."

He was hot with his failure, or he had not spoken so to her. And she, having but touched him because of the fear which had seized her at his rashness in so exposing himself, burst into crying; for she had been sorely overstrained with the rough happenings of late.

At this his anger left him and he made to comfort her, so, for that morning they sat together, she taking little heed of the various sounds about the house which told him that the fiends outside were preparing to batter down the door. They had covered up the second port immediately after his closing of the cover, so that he had no means of knowing how matters were progressing beyond such as his ears, trained in ship-craft, could tell him.

Very slowly the day passed to its close. He knew that the final struggle was at hand; but he did not by any means consider their chances of life beyond hope; for he knew that the crew had been greatly reduced, so that, could he but avoid the fire of the big musket, he might slay Pathan and put the rest to flight. Yet he had no knowledge but that the house might be their prison for a day or two longer;

though, beyond that time they could not hope to stay, for of food they had but little, and less water.

The day had been a fine one, as they could tell by the light which came through the crevices around the somewhat loosely fitting door, and when at last the evening came, the girl went to the door to try to get a look at the sunset.

"Come and look, Jack," she said suddenly, after a period of silence.

He turned from the water breaker at which he was busy emptying the last few drops.

"What is it, Mary?"

His voice was perhaps a trifle uneasy, for he had made the discovery that there was left only half a pannikin of water. During the last two days of their imprisonment he had been limiting his allowance; for he would not see her stinted, and now, through some mischance, the spigot, which someone had fixed near the bottom of the little cask, had been loosened, and the small quantity of the imperative liquid which had been theirs was all squandered save for the drainings which he had emptied into the enameled mug.

He came across to where she stood. For the moment he was minded not to tell her, then, remembering because of the fiends outside, that a clear knowledge of their position was her due, he told her not only of this matter but of the likelihood of the crisis being near at hand.

When he had made an end, she reached up one hand to his shoulder, then held out the other for the mug. She drew him down to the crevice through which she had been peering.

"See," she said, "did you ever see such a sunset?" Her voice dropped. "And it may be our last, Jack." She patted his shoulder as she spoke. "You know, boy, I may be only a silly girl, but I know nothing but a miracle can save us."

It was the first time she had spoken out so plainly, and he, having nothing to answer, stared out blindly into the dying glory outside.

In a little, perhaps the half of a minute, she drew him back somewhat and held the little mug up before them.

"We will drink it together, darling," she whispered, and bent her head over and kissed the brim, then handed it to him; but he was not deceived.

"Fair play, little woman. You have drunk nothing."

He passed it back to her, and she, knowing him,

sipped a little, then held it up to him and made him drink from her own hands. He was hideously thirsty, but controlled himself to one gulp only; then took the mug from her and set it down upon the table. For the end was not yet, and she might have need of it ere then.

It was almost dark in the berth, for the oil of the lamp was done this long while, the only light they had coming in through the crannies about the door.

For a while the two of them stood together. He was deep in pondering as to when the attack would come. Probably as soon as it was dark; for, of course, they could not be absolutely sure that he had no further supply of cartridges.

She for her part was leaning forward, peering through the narrow opening at the red splendor of the sun's shroud. Once or twice she ran her fingers up and down this crack, as if she would fain enlarge it. Possibly the tips showed outside, for her hands were very slender; yet, however it may have been, it is certain that one of the devils upon the deck was attracted and crept up on tiptoe. Inside, the girl, staring out, saw something come abruptly between her and the sun. The second mate saw it at the same moment, else she had been dead on the instant.

He pushed her from him, out of a line with the crack, and in so doing brought himself almost directly opposite. There came a sudden spurt of flame into the semi-darkness of the house, and a tremendous report close up against the door. The girl gave a little scream which almost drowned her lover's moan of pain, but not quite.

"You are not hurt, dearest?" she cried out loud.

For a moment he did not answer, and in that quick silence she heard a man outside laugh brutally.

The second mate had his hand up to his eyes and was very silent. In the dimness of the place she saw that he was swaying upon his feet.

"Jack," she said in an intense whisper of fear. "Are you hurt?"

She caught his wrist with a gentle hold. Still he did not reply. Beyond the door she heard the murmur of voices, and odd words and fragments of sentences drifted to her uncomprehending brain.

"— for?"

"Fiddlin' at ther door!"

"— bust! The gun's busted!"

"Thank God!" It was the second mate who had spoken, and the girl loosed her hands from his

wrists in her astonishment. Then, with a sudden applying of his words to satisfy the desire of her soul—

“You are not hurt, then, dear?”

“A—a little. My eyes—”

“What? Let me see!” But he swung round from her.

“Can you get me some—something for a bandage?” There was a desperate levelness in his tone.

He took two or three uncertain steps across the floor, as if bewildered. She followed him. He took his hands from his face and moved his head from side to side, as if peering about the house. Abruptly, he turned and blundered into her clumsily. She would have fallen, but that he caught and steadied her.

“Jack! Oh, Jack!” she cried, for even in the dimness of the place she had caught a glimpse of where his eyes ought to have been.

“It’s all right, little woman,” he replied in a voice that was nearly steady. “I—can’t see very well while the pain’s bad.” He had covered his face again with his hands.

She answered nothing. She was tearing one of her undergarments into strips, and trying to quiet her sobs.

## X

THE night had come. The second mate, the upper portion of his face swathed in wrappings, was seated on the sea-chest below his bunk. The girl was sitting by him, and their right hands were clasped.

The crack along the edge of the door had been stuffed up with a strip of blanket. Upon the edge of the table was stuck a tiny fragment of candle, and by the light of this she was reading slowly the betrothing passage from the Solemnization of Matrimony—that in which the man plights his troth. The second mate was repeating the words after her.

Presently they had made an end, and the girl slipped her hand gently from his; then, taking hold of his in turn, she read in a firm voice that passage in which the woman gives her troth. At the end, she released the second mate’s hand and drew a ring from off one of her fingers. This she put gently into his hand. Then having given him her left, he slid the ring on her third finger, repeating the

meanwhile, after her, the passage which she whispered to him.

And after that they sat a while, too full of thought for speech.

Presently the candle went out abruptly, and the two were alone in the darkness.

From the deck beyond the door came an occasional mutter of speech, an occasional padding of feet and an occasional creaking of gear, and the two within sat and waited.

Toward midnight the moon rose and limned the outline of the door in pale light. Presently the girl spoke.

“The moon has risen, Jack.”

She rose from his side and moved to the door. Perhaps she might be able to see what the crew were busied at. Abruptly, as she stooped forward to peer, something struck the door a tremendous blow, filling the interior of the house with a deafening, hollow boom. She cried out in fear, and even as she cried came the second blow and the crack of a breaking rivet.

She realized that the attack had begun, and groped a moment for the matches. She struck one and examined the door. To the casual glance it was unharmed; but by the light of the third match she made out that a rivet in the bottom hinge was snapped. By this, a dozen blows had been dealt, and yet, from the second mate, seated upon the sea-chest, no sound.

All at once he spoke.

“Come here, Mary.”

She came to him quickly, wondering, half-consciously, at the strange harshness of his tone. By the light of the match which she carried, she saw that he had in his hand the revolver.

“It’s no good, Jack,” she said despairingly, thinking he had a mind that she should use it in their defense. “There are no cartridges!”

“I kept—one,” he said with a jerk, and still in that unnatural voice.

He reached out his left hand to her. And at that she comprehended, and comprehending shrank back with a little wail.

“O-o-h! O-o-h! Jack!” she sobbed, with a sudden plumbing of the abyss of mortal terror.

There came a louder crash on the door, and then the second mate’s voice.

“Mary!”

She went up to him, quivering.

“Not yet, Jack! Not yet!”



He put his left arm round her.

“Mary!” he said, and the fierce agony which possessed him spoke out in his voice. “Tell me when the door begins to go!”

And she knew that the time of the door’s standing was the span of her life.

At each ringing thud of the ram she could feel the place quiver. By now it had become a steady, almost rhythmic *boom, boom, boom*, which, as a rivet gave, blent into a crash. The inside of the steel house was like the inside of a great drum.

And so a minute passed, and another, and still the door stood, while that dread booming beat out the knell of the two within—he grim for very fear of himself, and she shaking because of the thing that was to happen, and still with some room in her soul for his sufferings, yet unable to say anything; for in those last moments he had become her executioner as well as her lover, and there were things she could not say to the two.

*Boom! Boom! Boom! Crash!*

“Mary?” His voice sounded like the cry of a lost soul, and the love in the woman answered to it. Yet the physical terror of death was upon her.

“The—the door—is—is—*stop!* It’s only the bottom hinge has broken. It isn’t down yet!”

*Crash! Crash! Crash!*

The girl, all of a shiver, turned suddenly and put her arms round his neck.

“Kiss me, Jack!”

*Crash! Crash!*

He repelled her for a moment, then, drawing her to him, kissed her good-by.

*Crash! C-r-a-s-h!*

“Don’t! Don’t! Not yet! It isn’t down yet! Give me—give me as long as you—you can!”

For the arm about her shoulders had tightened with a sudden grip. Then abruptly—

“Have you—have you a—a—a knife, Jack?”

He took his arm from about her and brought something from behind, which he held out for her to take.

She saw it faintly by the glimmer of moonlight that came through the shaken door.

“No, no, no!” she cried, and shuddered. “You—you take it! Give me the pistol. I—I can see.”

He gave up the revolver to her and shifted the knife to his right hand. Even as he did so, the door crashed in. He felt the girl thrill in the grip of his arm; then her right hand went up, and, an instant later came the click of the hammer, but no report—

the cartridge had missed fire. She had aimed at a dark figure beyond the doorway, which she had recognized as Pathan. Yet the cruelty of fate denied her even the consolation of knowing that she died leaving her lover not at the mercy of that creature.

She cried out her dismay, and then again in terror, for the grip of the second mate’s arm warned her that the end had indeed come. There came the rush of feet along the deck, and the blaze of a flare. Then Pathan’s voice:

“Don’t hurt the girl!”

She caught so much of it. Then the touch of her lover’s fingers upon her breast made her quiver. She felt his right arm go back for the blow.

“Oh, my God, help me! Help me! Help me!” he heard her whispering desperately, and it shook him badly in that supreme moment. But, for the love he bore her, he meant that there should be no faltering in his stroke. Abruptly, the girl felt him start violently, and he began to quiver from head to feet. He cried out something in a strange voice.

“Oh, my God!” he said in a sort of whispering, husky shout. “I can see! I can see! Oh, my God, I can see! We’re going to win! Mary, Mary! we’re going to win! I can see! I can see! I can see! I tell you, I can see!”

He loosed her and put both his hands up to his bandages, which had slid down on to his nose, and tore them away in a mad kind of fashion, while the girl stood limp and sick against him, still half-fainting.

“I can see! I can see!” he began to reiterate again.

He seemed to have gone momentarily insane with the enormous revulsion from utter despair to hope. Suddenly he caught the girl madly into his arms, staring down at her through the darkness. He hugged her savagely to him, whispering hoarsely his refrain of:

“I can see! I can see! I tell you I can see!”

He held her a single instant or two like this; then he literally tossed her into one of the upper bunks.

“Don’t move!” he whispered, his voice full of the most intense purpose. “I’m going to get square with that brute now. There’s a chance for both of us. Here, take the knife in case I don’t manage. Just lie still, whatever happens. You must be out of the way. I could tackle a hundred of them now.”

He was silent, listening. By the sound of the men’s voices, the second mate knew that they had halted some little distance from the doorway. There

they hung for a few moments, no man anxious to be the first to face the big officer. For they had no knowledge of his blindness.

Then he caught Pathan's voice urging them on.

"Go on, lads! Go on! There won't be much fight left in him!"

At that, a feeling of dismay filled him. It was evident that Pathan was not going to head the attack, and he might die without ever getting his hands on to him.

From the irresolute men came a shuffle of feet. Then a man's voice rose—

"Trow de flare into ze hoose."

To the second mate the remark suggested a course of action. He threw himself upon a sea-chest, so that his face could be seen from the doorway. He kept perfectly still. If the man threw the flare into the house they would see his damaged face and think him dead. It might be that the coward Pathan would venture to come into the place—*then!*

*Thud!* Something struck the floor near him.

He kept his eyes shut. He could see no light; but the smell of burning paraffin was plain in his nostrils. He listened intently and seemed to catch the sound of stealthy footsteps. Abruptly, a voice just without the doorway shouted:

"They're both dead! Both of 'em!"

"What?"

It was Pathan's voice. He heard the noise of booted feet approaching at a run. They hesitated one instant on the threshold, then came within, and a surge of barefoot pads followed. The booted feet came to a stand not two yards away.

For an instant there was silence, a bewildered, awestruck silence. Pathan's voice broke it.

"My God!" he said. "My God!"

Immediately afterward he screamed, as the huge, bloodstained form of the big officer hurled itself upon him. There were cries from the men, and a pell-mell rush to escape. Someone fell upon the flare and extinguished it.

There was a shivering silence. It was filled abruptly by the beginning of a sobbing entreaty from Pathan. This shrilled suddenly into a horrid screaming. The men were no longer trying for the doorway, for the second mate had got between it and them. They could see him indistinctly against the moonlight beyond. He was flogging the steel side of the house with something. Beyond the hideous thudding of the blows, the house was silent.

One of the crouched men, tortured to madness, threw a belaying-pin. The next instant the second mate hurled himself among them. He had the battered steel door for a weapon, and the edge of it was as a plowshare amidst soil.

Amid the cries of the men, the side of the house rang out a dull thunder beneath the weight of some blind, misdirected blow.

Most of the men escaped upon their hands and knees, creeping out behind the man who smote and smote. They got to the fore-castle upon all fours, too terrified and bewildered even to get to their feet. There, in the darkness, behind closed and barred doors, they sat and sweated, in company of those who had hesitated to enter the house.

Presently the ship was quiet.

The berserker rage eased out of the second mate and he perceived that the house was empty, and the mutiny truly ended. He cast the heavy steel door clanging through the open doorway, out on to the main deck, a dripping testimony of a man's prowess against enormous odds.

He stood a moment, breathing heavily. Then, remembering, he wheeled round in the darkness to where, in the gloom of the upper bunk, the girl lay shivering, with her hands pressed tightly over her ears.

He caught her up in his great arms, with the one word, "Come!" and stepped through the open doorway into the moonlight, the fallen door ringing under his tread. Then, master of his ship, he carried her aft to the cabin.