

AND THE DEEP BLUE SEA

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**A master storyteller's
most menacing sea adventure**

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by
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At sunset the next day after the *Shoshone* went down, the wind dropped to a gentle breeze, and by midnight it was calm. Now that the sea no longer broke, the raft stopped capsizing and throwing him, and he slept for the first time in forty hours. He awoke at dawn, cramped, chilled through, shivering in his wet clothes in spite of the fact he was only a few degrees south of the Line. After the first gut-twisting impact of returning consciousness of where he was and what was coming, he was able to subdue the black animal and slam the door of the cage, wondering at the same time why it mattered. He had nothing to lose now. And he'd already panicked once, or he wouldn't be here. He could have done it the easy way.

He lay stretched out on the rubberized fabric of the raft's bottom, his head on its inflated rim, a big man with graying dark hair too long uncut, gray eyes, and a broad, flat-planed face burned dark by the sun and now salt-inflamed and covered to the cheekbones with a week's stubble of beard. His feet were bare, and he wore only the faded and sodden dungarees, a blue shirt, and a gold-cased Rolex watch which was waterproof and still running. He was alone on the raft, which wasn't much larger than he was and contained nothing else except a whiskey bottle with a little water

in it. His name was Harry Goddard, he was forty-five years old, divorced, childless for the past five months, and until the last of his luck ran out two days ago he had been single-handing across the Pacific in the thirty-two-foot sloop *Shoshone* for reasons he wasn't sure of himself except that the horizon provided a sort of self-renewing objective if you no longer had any other.

He was overtaken by another attack of shivering and wished for the sun's warmth to begin, knowing that long before the day was over he'd be praying even more fervently for its torture to end. The raft lifted under him, mounting softly and in utter silence, poised for an instant, and began to fall away again down the back of another swell rolling across the wastes of the southern hemisphere. The square shape of the Jack Daniels bottle was under his left leg, its neck secured to the fabric eyelet of one of the oarlocks with the lanyard he had fashioned from a strip of cloth cut from his shirt tail. He lifted it and squinted at it against the sky. It still held nearly a half pint of water, and he was conscious of no torment yet from thirst. The only hell was the certainty that it was coming.

What happened at the end, just how did you die? Did you go mad and jump overboard? Drink seawater and kill yourself with nausea and empty retching? How long did it take? He didn't know, but there was no point in speculating about it now, and he might as well go ahead and sit up to look around. He was sufficiently awake and in command of himself to accept what he would see. Pretending there was still some chance, as long as he hadn't looked, that there could be a ship on the horizon was something to hang onto, but you couldn't keep it alive all day.

He raised up, his hands braced against the inflated rim of the doughnut, and as it rose to the crest of another swell he turned, searching the rim of his world where the sea met the sky. There was only emptiness. Well, he thought, you wanted solitude; you've got it. You're up to your ass in it.

As deadly as it was, there was no escaping the beauty of it. In the vast hush of early morning, the sea was smooth as glass except for the heave and surge of the

long swell running up from the south. It was full daylight now, the eastern sky a pale wash of rose becoming barred with gold, and the towering masses of cloud above him were touched with flame. A school of flying fish lanced out of the sea, scattering fanwise, leaving their takeoff trails etched for a fleeting instant across the mirror of its surface. But above all, and pervading everything, was the silence; it was the silence of the world's dawn, before the beginnings of life. Under sail there were always sounds, the rushing of water past the hull, breaking seas, the flutter at the luff of a sail, spattering of spray, the creak of timbers, and the singing of wind in the rigging, and even becalmed there was the slatting of sails and the rolling and banging of gear that went on forever, but here there was nothing, no sound at all. The raft was an air bubble cushioned on a sea of oil that pushed it up, slid under it without friction or effort, and went on in its silent march toward infinity.

More flying fish shot out of a swell just ahead of him like an explosion of silvery projectiles, pursued by some larger fish below the surface, and he was suddenly reminded of hunger, remembering other dawns when he had found two or three of them on deck where they'd flown into the sails during the night to wind up unconscious in the scupper and then, cleaned and breaded, into the frying pan for breakfast. He thought of how they tasted, with crisp bacon and a boiled potato, as he sat in the cockpit with the plate on his knees and a mug of hot coffee beside him, watching the sun come up. And then the first cigarette of the day—For Christ's sake, he thought, knock it off.

He felt a moment's light-headedness with the withdrawal pangs of a cigarette addict nearly three days without a smoke. You could get drunk, he thought, on simple, uncontaminated air. He glanced at the bottle again, but resisted the urge to take a swallow, wondering at the same time why this insistence on cutting the puppy's tail off an inch at a time. If he had anything to write with, he reflected, he could put a note in it when it was empty. What final bit of wisdom for the ages, what capsuled summation? A single Anglo-

Saxon word? No, that was grandstanding. He could do better. *Greetings from Harry Goddard, who didn't have sense enough to drown.*

Not that it was important any more, but he would never even know what he'd hit that had sent the *Shoshone* to the bottom. It couldn't have been a whale. Yachts had been damaged by whales, but they usually made their presence known; they didn't like it any better than the yachtsmen who'd hit them. After the first crashing impact there'd been nothing, no swirl of flukes or sound of blowing, or any disturbance on the surface of the sea. And a reef was out of the question; there would have been white water on it, and there wasn't one within a thousand miles, anyway. A derelict would have had something showing above the surface. He couldn't swear, of course, that there hadn't been, since it was a dark night and he'd been staring into the binnacle except for an occasional glance around the horizon for lights, but it was still improbable. The most likely suspect was a half-submerged log, some forest giant washed down one of the great tropical rivers and carried across the Pacific on its currents or perhaps lost from the deck cargo of a freighter during a storm.

He'd been fighting the frustrating calms and fluky airs along the Equator for nearly a week when it happened. Around noon he'd picked up a gentle breeze out of the south and had ghosted along under the main and big genoa, momentarily expecting it to die out or go swinging around the compass, but it had held, backing into the southeast and freshening slightly by the hour. At sunset the *Shoshone* was heeled down smartly and reeling off the miles on a broad reach, her best point of sailing, with the wind still freshening and the sea beginning to kick up, and by ten p.m. her starboard rail was awash and she was logging her maximum hull speed through the darkness. If it picked up any more he'd have to shorten sail. He was listening carefully to the moaning sound of the wind in the rigging and debating whether he ought to get the genoa off her when she hit.

The sea was almost abeam. One had just rolled under her, and the *Shoshone* was dropping into the trough

behind it so that in addition to nearly seven knots forward speed she came down on whatever it was with enough force to break the back of a lesser boat. Goddard shot forward in the cockpit to slam into the end of the deckhouse beside the companion hatch, momentarily stunned, while shrouds and backstay parted like violin strings. The mast went overboard with its two big sails in a welter of stainless steel wire and Dacron, and by the time he could push himself groggily to his feet he could hear it banging against the hull. He groped inside the hatch for the flashlight, but in his haste he knocked it out of its clips on the bulkhead and it fell to the cabin sole. The *Shoshone* was rolling violently now, dead in the water, and there was another crash as the mast swung into her side.

He plunged down the ladder, lost his balance, and was thrown to his hands and knees against the chart table. The flashlight rolled into him. He grabbed at it, but it went clattering away in the darkness. He tried to calm himself; he was losing his head in a situation where wasted minutes could mean disaster. He pushed himself to his feet, switched on the cabin light, and scooped up the flashlight. It was broken. But there was another in one of the drawers of the chart table. He grabbed it out and ran on deck.

He'd already swung the beam of light in a wide arc across the darkness and the piled and breaking sea astern, searching futilely for what he'd hit, before the idiocy of it finally got his attention. What was he after—a license number, witnesses? He shot the light into the churning mess along the starboard side. The mast and the two sails were still fast to the hull by the forestay, the starboard shrouds, and tangle of halyards and sheets, so he wasn't in any danger of losing them, but the sails were full of water and would have to be lowered before he could even start to get the spars back aboard. They were still banging against the hull with every roll, but the mast itself was hollow and the boom too light to do any immediate damage to the planking. It would have to wait. He turned and plunged down the ladder again, and even as his eyes came below the level of the hatch he felt the icy tingle of

gooseflesh between his shoulder blades. A tiny rivulet of water had rolled out of the bilge and was spreading across the cabin sole that had been dry less than a minute ago.

At the forward end of the cabin, beyond the foot of the mast, was the narrow passage into the forepeak, flanked on one side by the enclosed head and on the other by a locker. He shot through it, switched on the light, and looked, expecting to see the whole bow caved in. There was no visible evidence of damage. But everything he could see was above the waterline. The cabin sole extended into this small triangular space in the bows, and on both sides were benches with lockers beneath, the whole area piled with sailbags, spare rope, extra water cans, unopened cases of food, a sea anchor, and a bundled pneumatic raft. Somewhere under all this, the *Shoshone* was badly holed below the waterline.

He cleared the compartment by the simple expedient of hurling everything behind him into the cabin, banging water cans, sailbags, and cases of canned goods that burst open and scattered when they hit. As he threw the last of it out of the way, he looked behind him and saw there was now at least an inch of water sweeping back and forth across the cabin sole through this confusion of gear.

In the center of the compartment there was a two-by-two-foot hatch in the floorboards. He grasped the recessed ring-bolt and yanked it out. Water rolled up through the opening and went running aft—ominously clear water, fresh from the sea. A small river of it was flowing in somewhere just forward of him. With the light overhead he could see the frames and planking directly below the hatch. They were unbroken. He grabbed the flashlight and lay flat, training the beam forward under the edge of the hatch. Still no damage. But he couldn't see far enough; the angle was too sharp, unless he put the flashlight in the water.

He was assailed by a savage compulsion to hurry, and realized he had been cursing ceaselessly and monotonously under his breath. He seemed to be moving forever through a nightmare in slow motion.

What the hell difference did it make whether he could see the damage from here or not? He knew it was there, and seeing it wasn't going to do any good until he could get at it to try to repair it. He sprang up and attacked the lockers.

The chain locker first. It was at the apex of the triangle, right in the bow. The two anchors with their lengths of chain went flying back to land on the cabin sole, and then as he grabbed out the big coil of anchor warp, he saw it—or rather, he saw the upper part of it. Two frames on the starboard side were broken and pushed inward, and water poured in through a shattered plank. But the real damage was still below the bottom of the locker.

The next contained tools. He threw it open, grabbed out the small handax, and began smashing at the side of the locker. He had to tear it out of the way before he could get at the floor beneath it. It was marine plywood, fastened with bronze screws, and there was little room to swing the ax. Before he had half of it hacked away, he looked down and saw with horror that he was already standing in several inches of water. He'd never get to it in time, not from here. He had to shove something in the hole from outside to slow the flood enough to hold it with the bilge pump, at least until daybreak. Grabbing up the flashlight, he ran back through the cabin, picking up one of the sailbags on the fly, and hurried on deck.

The *Shoshone* still lay in the trough, rolling heavily, but there was already a different feel to her, a reluctance to come back each time with the inertia of the water inside her. He threw the light into the surging mess of spars and cordage and Dacron along the starboard side and knew it would be suicide to go under it or between it and the hull. The plunging hull itself was dangerous enough without the broken mast battering into it. There was no time to fool with turnbuckles and shackles, working one-handed on a lurching deck while he tried to hold a light. He ran below again for the handax. The steel forestay was tough, and the ax only buried it in the wood, so it took a half dozen swings before he severed it. With nothing

holding it forward of the shrouds, he was able to haul the whole mess aft along the hull and secure it back out of the way. The sailbag he'd brought up held a storm jib. He pulled it out of the bag and went over the side with it.

The dark mass of the bow heaved up and plunged down on him. He pushed clear, waiting, and when it steadied for a moment, came in against it. He groped, felt the jagged ends of broken planking and the water pouring through, and tried to stuff the jib into it. There was no clearly defined hole, only a great area of split and shattered planks and pushed-in frames, nowhere enough of an opening to get the cloth in far enough to hold. The *Shoshone* lurched to starboard and came down on him with stunning force, pushing him under the surface. He kicked backward and got clear, and when she steadied again the sail was gone. He threshed around with his hands, groping for it; they encountered nothing. The *Shoshone* rolled down again and hung there, wallowing sluggishly. He grabbed the rail and climbed back aboard. Just as he reached the companion hatch the cabin lights went out. Water had covered the batteries. There was no longer any hope. She was filling too fast for anything to save her.

The next half hour was never very clear in his mind. He had no precise recollection of how he had got the raft out of the cabin, found the pump, and inflated it—nor even why he had done it, except that the survival instinct was apparently basic and not to be denied by trifles like logic and realistic appraisals of the situation. It wasn't even supposed to be a life raft; he had it aboard only for skin-diving forays along the reefs of the South Pacific which he would never reach now. There were no oars, no sail, and no food or water, but somewhere in the confusion he had grabbed up the Jack Daniels bottle he kept in the cockpit so he wouldn't have to go below for water during long spells at the tiller. Each time the doughnut capsized and threw him he righted it and dragged himself back aboard, still clutching the neck of the bottle. After an eternity of this it was dawn, and he secured it to the oarlock tab with the lanyard cut from his shirt tail. At

the same time he scooped from his pocket the sodden pulp which was all that remained of a pack of cigarettes and threw it overboard, thinking of the old gags about fighter pilots and lung cancer.

The sun rose. The glare began, eye-searing and brutal, broken only intermittently by the tilting planes of the swell. His skin itched and chafed inside his salt-saturated clothing, and as his face and arms began to dry they felt as though they were encased in a crust that would shatter when he moved. The only relief, which was temporary and merely an illusion, was to plunge overboard and wash it away with water that would leave its own accumulation. The swell was smaller now than it had been last night, and if it died out completely the sea would become the polished metal sheet of a reflector oven.

He searched the horizon again, and lay back, an arm across his closed eyes to shield them from the glare. He thought of mountain streams he had fished where the water was cold enough to make his teeth hurt when he drank it, and after a while he found himself remembering beer—beer in foaming steins and cold bottles beaded with moisture. Tüborg and Dos Equis and Budweiser and Lowenbrau, the gaseous and ecstatic sighs of punched cans, beer in waterfront dives and yacht club bars, in sidewalk cafes in Paris and the parlors of Texas whorehouses and the cockpits of sports fishermen off Cape San Lucas and Bimini.

There was the place in Tampico a long time ago, so cool and dim after the incandescent whiteness of the street, where draft beer was served in frosted earthen steins and there were saucers of olives on the polished mahogany bar with sliced limes to squeeze over them. That was on the other *Shoshone*, the first one, when he'd run away from home and shipped as ordinary seaman, and afterward he'd gone out to La Union, where the girls sat beside the doorways of their cribs, and he'd got into a fight with the second mate of a Sinclair tanker over something he couldn't even remember now, and the second mate had beaten hell out of him. He was only nineteen then and still filling

out, but too cocky, and he probably deserved to have his ass kicked.

It was a long way from the fo'c'sle of an old Hog Islander to skippering your own Cal 40 in the Acapulco race, but it had been a long time, too, and where did it go, that feeling of being nineteen, or twenty-three, or even thirty-six? You not only didn't know what had become of it, you weren't even sure what it was any more and couldn't remember what it had been when you'd had it. Juice? Drive? Confidence? No, it wasn't as simple as that; as close as you could come to it was caring. Stoically accepting the fact that within a few days he was going to die was no longer courage; it was merely apathy. The only real regret was that he'd suckered himself into such a hell of a sad way of doing it. He smiled now at the transparency of christening the sloop *Shoshone*. Did he think the nineteen-year-old Harry Goddard was still out here somewhere, to be searched for and reclaimed?

The sun reached the meridian. Reflected from the oily surface of the sea, it burned its way even through closed eyelids and felt like flame against his skin. Real thirst began, a foretaste of the agony to come, and he took a swallow of the water, rolling it around his mouth for long seconds before he let it trickle down his throat. A shark appeared from somewhere and circled the raft three or four times as though intrigued by the strange yellow bubble. Goddard watched its dorsal slicing the surface and, more to break the eerie silence than anything else, said to it, 'Shove off, you silly bastard. That's a low-budget routine.' The shark came closer on its next pass, and he took out his knife and opened it, ready to stab if it decided to roll up and take an experimental bite out of the fabric. The shark lost interest and went away. Around two p.m. a light breeze sprang up, ruffling and darkening the surface of the sea and lessening the intensity of its glare. It continued until late afternoon, making the heat at least endurable, and died out only with the vast chromatic explosion of sunset. He watched the colors fade in the sudden velvet night of the tropics and wondered how many more he would see. Two? Four? After a while he slept.

When he awoke, shivering again, he saw from the positions of the constellations overhead that it was after midnight. The sea was still slick and almost flat now, and beyond his feet propped on the rim of the raft a shimmering path of light stretched away toward a waning moon hung low in the eastern sky. He sat up to stretch his cramped muscles, and when he turned he saw the ship, not more than a mile away.

His first thought was that he must be dreaming. He rubbed both hands across his face, feeling the beard stab his salt-ravaged face, and looked again. It was real. But there was something wrong. When he realized what it was he had to choke down the cry pushing up into his throat. He could see only a stern light. It was going away from him. It had already passed, only minutes ago, while he slept.

No! How could it? He looked around at the placid unruffled sea. It would have passed within a few hundred yards, and the bow wave would have tossed the raft end over end like a bit of flotsam. There wasn't even a trace of wake anywhere. He was almost directly astern of the ship, but it hadn't gone by him. The only answer was that it was lying dead in the water. It had stopped for something, and had swung around as it lost steerage-way. Unless, he thought, his mind was already playing him tricks and there wasn't any ship there at all.

2

Madeleine Darrington Lennox was lying naked on her bunk in the sweltering darkness of Cabin C when she heard the engine stop and wondered what was wrong with the stupid ship now. She didn't care particularly except to the extent the stoppage might affect the rendezvous whose anticipation had made it almost impossible for her to lie still since she had switched out the light a half hour ago and begun her nightly wait for Barset to slip down the passageway and into the cabin. It had been her experience that when anything happened to break the routine of a ship, even on the midnight-to-four watch, there were apt to be people abroad in the passageways either seeking information or trying to right the matter, whatever it was, and Barset was too shrewd to run the risk of being seen by one of the deck officers or perhaps the captain himself. Laying the passengers was no part of the steward's duties, no matter how great his virtuosity in this field, and as he put it with his gift for unprintable vulgarity, Holy Joe would defecate a ring around himself. So he might not come. And if he didn't, in the state she was in now she'd need three of the capsules to get to sleep.

There was no air-conditioning, and the cabin would have been stifling in any event here in the tropics, but it was made worse by the fact she had closed the

porthole, as she always did in anticipation of these delights, because it opened onto a deck outside, with no privacy at all if anybody happened to be out there. The door was closed all the way, too, instead of being on the hook, because he could open it and slip in a fraction of a second faster that way rather than having to fumble with the hook. The electric fan mounted on the bulkhead beyond the foot of her bunk was an oscillating type, sweeping an intermittent flow of air across her perspiring body, but there was nothing cooling about it; it was merely in motion. She didn't mind the heat a great deal, however; it merely excited her, as did the vibration of a ship. Face it, she thought, what doesn't?

There was complete silence except for the faint whirring of the fan and now and then a muted clanging sound from somewhere deep in the bowels of the ship. Suppose he didn't come? How the hell was she going to get through the night like this, sleeping pills or no sleeping pills? Sometimes she could bring herself to orgasm by thinking about it, but she couldn't always depend on it, and going that far without the final release always left her half crazy. She started twisting on the bunk again, but at that moment the door opened quickly and he was framed in it for an instant against the lighted passageway. It closed, and the darkness was complete again.

He said nothing. She flicked on the lighter and reached for a cigarette with a show of nonchalance she was aware didn't fool him any more than it did her. With no more than an amused and condescending glance in her direction, he unbelted and slipped out of the seersucker robe which was the only thing he had on aside from the slippers. The flame cut off, but she could still see him in her mind's eye, a bony middle-aged man with a sharp face and thinning blond hair combed diagonally back over a bald spot. She'd told him once that he reminded her of a ferret, to which he'd merely laughed and said it took one to know one; ferrets and mink were of the same family.

He walked over and stood naked beside the bunk, only a pale blur in the darkness. She put out a hand, touching his hip, and slid it diagonally downward. God,

who would ever believe it? She took another shaky puff of the cigarette, fighting herself, and asked, with beautifully simulated indifference, 'Why are we stopped?'

'That shaft bearing again,' Barset replied. 'So the chief says.'

'Whatever a shaft bearing is,' she said idly. With another movement of the hand, she murmured, 'You're so accommodating, darling.'

'Have you decided yet?' he asked. 'Whether it's me or not?'

'I'm not annoying you, am I, Steward?' She couldn't resist the 'Steward', even though it was risky. Once he'd merely turned and gone back to his own cabin, leaving her in torment, knowing she would apologize the next day for whatever snotty remark she'd made, that she'd crawl if she had to. But how much of that lordly condescension could you take? 'I assure you I'm filled with all the awe to which you're accustomed, but this is the only way I can express it. Being by nature shy and inarticulate—'

'Turn it off,' he said.

We come to bury Caesar, not to praise him, she thought, but didn't say it. The chances were he'd not only never heard the joke, but hadn't even heard of Shakespeare. He lay down beside her and slid a hand between her thighs to spread them.

'And put out that stupid cigarette,' he added.

She stubbed out the cigarette with a shaky hand, hurriedly, scarcely able to breathe now. The widow, she thought, of a man who was eleventh in his class at the Academy and commanding officer of a cruiser when he retired. Oh! Oh! *Oh, God!*

* * *

In Cabin D, Karen Brooke had been asleep, but she awoke when the engine stopped and the ship's vibration ceased. She lay for a moment wondering what had happened, but decided it probably wasn't serious. Her door was on the hook and the porthole open, and

she could hear no running footsteps or voices which might indicate an emergency of some kind. She could remember her father telling her when she was a little girl that a ship's engines stopping at sea, while rare, wasn't particularly alarming, but if she ever heard them go abruptly from full ahead to full astern to get on deck and away from the bow as fast as she could. No doubt it was just another breakdown in the engine room; there had been two stoppages, one for twelve hours, since their departure from Callao six days ago.

She had the wind-scoop out the porthole, but now that the ship had come to rest it picked up no air at all and it was suffocatingly hot inside the cabin, even with the whirring of the fan. It would be some relief to take off the cotton pajamas she was wearing, but that would mean drawing the curtains over the porthole. They scrubbed down the deck outside very early in the morning, and five feet seven of sleeping nude blonde might cause God knows what havoc among seamen wielding forgotten fire hoses. Even a thirty-four-year-old blonde, she thought; sailors a week at sea were notoriously generous critics.

She heard a door open and close, and then a murmur of voices, one of them male, just beyond the bulkhead in Cabin D. She winced. Oh, no, not again! Not tonight! You'd think that now the ship stopped, in this complete silence without the throb of the engine and the vibration to lend at least an illusion of privacy to their lovemaking, they might be a little more discreet.

She felt trapped, embarrassed, and angry. The first time it happened, the night they sailed from Callao, in her revulsion at being a captive audience to the impassioned grapplings and ecstatic shrieks from beyond the bulkhead, she had buried her head under her pillow and suffered through it. Mrs. Lennox was aware that she occupied Cabin D, so it was obvious she just didn't realize how sound-transparent that flimsy bulkhead really was. The next day, when she was sure the other woman was in her cabin, she had gone bustling around her own, singing fragments of song, dropping a book, creating other small sounds which should carry the message without being too obvious

about it. It had done no good at all. The next night was a repetition of the first, and the following was even worse, with the result that by now she was afraid to make any sound in her cabin at all. Just once, it could be assumed without too much embarrassment on either side that she'd been asleep, but that was impossible now, after nearly a week of it. She wasn't certain that even Mrs. Lennox herself was aware of some of the things she cried out in her transports, but any recognition between them now that they'd been overheard would be mutually humiliating to the point their one desire would be never to see each other again. Which would be somewhat awkward under the circumstances; the old freighter was a small ship, they were the only women on it, and it was a long way to Manila.

With the initial moan from the other cabin she sat up wearily and reached for her robe. The only escape was in flight, but she was damned if she'd get dressed again. Belting it around her, she dropped cigarettes and a lighter in the pockets, located her slippers in the darkness, and went out, softly closing the door behind her. Her hair was a mess, and she had on no makeup, but she was too angry to care. The worst of it was that by leaving her cabin she was committed to staying away until she was certain the man, whoever he was, would have left. It would be embarrassing in the extreme to meet him in the passageway coming out of Mrs. Lennox' cabin at this hour of the morning.

She'd thought once or twice of asking the steward or captain if she could move to another cabin, but always ran into the unanswerable question of what excuse she could give. Besides, it would have to be a double cabin, and she'd paid only for a single. While there were only four passengers aboard and the *Leander* had accommodations for twelve in four double cabins and four singles, they were all people travelling alone, so only the doubles were unoccupied.

Her cabin was the last one aft in the starboard passageway. There was no one in sight. She turned into the thwartships passageway, went on past the entrance to the dining saloon on her left, and stepped out on

deck on the port side. This level, referred to in the usual grandiose language of travel brochures as the promenade deck, contained the eight passenger cabins, the steward's cabin, and the passenger dining and smoking saloons. On the next deck below were the crew's quarters and messrooms, while the deck officers and engineers occupied the one directly above, along with their messroom and the wireless room. Passengers were encouraged to stay in their own area, except that they were allowed on the boat deck, the uppermost one, as long as they kept clear of the bridge.

She went around to the ladders at the after end of the midships house and mounted to the boat deck, which was in darkness except for the faint moonlight, since the bridge was at the forward end of it. Between the two wings of the bridge was the wheelhouse, the rest of the structure aft of it containing the chartroom and captain's quarters. She walked forward and stood leaning against the rail between the davits of the two lifeboats on the starboard side, gazing out at the star-studded night and the dark, unmoving surface of the sea.

Three bells struck in the wheelhouse, repeated a few seconds later by the lookout on the fo'c'sle head. It was one thirty. The lookout reported the running lights, and was acknowledged by the second officer, whose shadowy figure she could see on the starboard wing of the bridge. For a moment she considered walking forward far enough to ask him why they were stopped, but decided against it. He was a dour and taciturn man she had seen only once or twice since she'd been aboard, and she wasn't even sure he spoke much English. The chief mate was the only one of the officers she knew, since he sometimes ate in the passengers' saloon, along with the captain.

From the engine room ventilators behind her issued the faint pulsing sounds of the generator and sanitary pump, but aside from these the ship was caught up in an almost total silence. There wasn't the whisper of a breeze, and no movement at all. She could be standing on a pier, she thought, or a seawall. She looked down. When the ship was under way at night here in the

tropics she loved to watch the glowing sheet of light along its skin, but it was absent now that there was no disturbance of the water, and there were only random pinpoints of phosphorescence winking on and off like fireflies in the darkness. She leaned on the rail and stared moodily off into the night. After a while she heard footsteps coming across the deck behind her, and turned. It was the chief mate.

Even in the darkness it was impossible to mistake that figure. He must be six feet four, she thought; at any rate he dwarfed everyone else aboard, not only tall but massive of shoulder, with powerful arms and a big, craggy head and wild mop of blond hair that seemed to fly outward as though charged by some endless source of energy within him. In spite of his size, he moved with the casual ease of the perfectly co-ordinated, and there was in all his mannerisms and in the rather sardonic, ice-blue eyes a sort of total male confidence that no doubt innumerable women had found attractive. She wondered what he was doing up at this hour, since he didn't go on watch until four. Maybe he was the man— She wrenched her mind away from this speculation with distaste.

He saw her between the boats and stopped. 'Ready to abandon ship, Mrs. Brooke? Stick around; we can still beat the lifeboats.'

She smiled. 'I was just out admiring the night. I woke up when the engines stopped.'

'Everybody does. Sudden silence is a noise.'

'Is it anything serious?'

'No, just a hot bearing. The galley slaves say we'll be under way in a half hour or so.'

She took out a cigarette. 'The who?'

He snapped the lighter for her, and grinned. 'Engine room. The first marine engineer was a convict with an oar.'

He went on toward the bridge, and she resumed her silent contemplation of the night. He was an unusual man in a number of ways, she thought; he was obviously well educated, and she knew he spoke fluent

French and German in addition to English. She didn't know what his nationality was. The *Leander* was under Panamanian registry, but her crew was from everywhere. His name was Eric Lind, so he was probably of Scandinavian descent, as she was herself.

Then it was her own reaction—or utter lack of it—that she was thinking of. What woman, talking to a devilishly attractive man in the moonlight, even if she had no interest in him at all, would indifferently invite inspection in the revealing, close-up flame of a cigarette lighter when her hair looked like a fright wig and her face like something that had been stored for the winter in a coat of grease? You're hopeless, she thought.

* * *

The ship loomed large and distinct ahead of him now, and he knew he was within a quarter mile. She was still lying motionless in the water, but had swung around by imperceptible degrees during the past hour until she was broadside to him, and he could see the green glow of her starboard running light as well as the overall silhouette and a few lighted portholes. She was a freighter, with well-decks forward and aft of the big midships house, and whatever her trouble was it must be in the engine room. There was no sign of fire, or activity of any kind on deck.

Sweat ran into his eyes. There was a sharp pain in his side, making every breath an agony, and his mouth was dry and full of the taste of copper. His hands were on the inflated rim of the raft, pushing it ahead of him as he swam. The dungarees and shirt were inside the raft, and he was naked except for a pair of boxer shorts. Normally, he had no particular fear of sharks, but he knew that what he was doing was tantamount to asking to be cut in two, threshing on the surface at night like something wounded and helpless. Well, if one took his legs off, it would be over in a few minutes at most; that beat the other program, the thirst.

Between the lash of urgency and the gray sea of fatigue that was engulfing him, he was conscious of

random and disconnected thoughts that made him wonder again if he were entirely rational. There was a haunting impression of *déjà vu* about the whole thing that baffled him, since neither he nor anybody else in maritime history, as far as he knew, had ever been rescued by swimming over to a stationary ship in mid-ocean and asking for a lift. *Ahoy aboard the freighter! You going my way?* He giggled, and his fright at this was sufficient to clear his mind momentarily.

He knew then when he had done this before. It was at the hospital after the highway patrol had got Gerry out of the wreckage of the Porsche and called him at the studio, and he had sat in a small room at Emergency with his whole being concentrated like a laser beam into a single state of wanting, of trying to control with an effort of will something that was out of his hands. When the intern and resident had come out and told him she was dead, he had known he would never want anything again. It was all used up. But apparently there was always a little left somewhere, because this was the same thing again. Either the ship would remain there motionless in the water until he reached it, or it wouldn't. They couldn't see him in the darkness, and he had no way to signal it.

Three hundred yards. Two hundred. He could see the silhouette of the stowed booms now, and one of the lighted portholes winked off momentarily as though somebody had walked in front of it, but it was still too far and too dark to make out any movement on deck or on the bridge. He tried to increase the beat of his scissoring legs, but he was too near complete collapse. He sobbed for breath. Then, almost as clearly as though he were aboard, he heard the *ding, ding*, pause, *ding, ding*, of four bells from the wheelhouse, repeated a moment later by the lookout on the fo'c'sle head. The lookout reported the running lights. I'll make it, he thought. Just a few more minutes. Then there was another sound, the ringing of a telephone, and he felt the hackles lift on his neck. Engine room calling the bridge? He kicked ahead.

It was less than a hundred yards now. Then he heard the sound that struck terror in his heart, the jingle of

the engine room telegraph. He tried to shout, but he had no breath. A great boil of water appeared under her counter, and he could hear the massive vibration set up by the engine going full ahead while she was still lying dead in the water. He clawed his way onto the raft and stood on his knees, fighting for breath so he could scream at them. They couldn't hear him over the vibration. She began to move. He shouted, endlessly now, feeling himself engulfed in madness. She gathered way, beginning to swing to his right to get back on course, and her counter went past. Turbulence from the propeller spread outward, rocking the raft and spinning it around as she drew away from him in the night.

* * *

The captain was on the wing of the bridge along with the first and second mates when Karen Brooke heard the telephone ring in the wheelhouse. The three of them went inside, and in a minute she heard the engine room telegraph. The deck trembled under her feet, and there was a noisy shuddering of the whole midships structure as the ship began to move slowly ahead. Then, strangely, above this sound, she thought she heard a voice crying out somewhere in the night in front of her. She moved back to the railing between the boat davits and looked out into the darkness where the faint path of light from the moon began to come abeam as the ship gathered steerageway and started to turn. She thought she heard the strange cry again. Then she gasped as she saw something flat and dark on the surface of the sea less than a hundred yards away. Extending upwards from it was the unmistakable silhouette of a man violently waving his arms. She stood frozen, knowing it was impossible, but with the ship still moving very slowly the figure was caught for several seconds in the path of light and there could be no doubt of what she saw. She wheeled and ran towards the bridge. The second mate was just emerging from the wheelhouse.

'A man!' she cried out, pointing. 'There's a man out there, on a raft or something.'

He stared blankly, startled by the suddenness of it, but then turned and looked in the direction she was pointing. She ran out onto the wing of the bridge, her arm still extended. 'Right out there! I heard him shout! He was waving!' But the raft was out of the moon path now and lost in the darkness behind it. The captain emerged from the wheelhouse. She whirled to him.

'Captain! Stop! Back up!' She realized she must sound like an idiot; what was the nautical term?

'What is it, Mrs. Brooke?' he asked.

'She says she saw a man on a raft,' the second mate said.

She saw the exchanged glance. *Passengers!* The ship was gaining speed, the raft falling farther astern by the minute. She was frantic. Wasn't there any way she could make them believe it? The captain had reached into a box below the bridge railing and lifted out a pair of binoculars. 'Back there!' she cried out again, gesturing. 'He was in the path of the moonlight! I heard him shout!'

The captain searched the area with the glasses. He lowered them and said, in the tone of one indulging a child, 'It was probably a piece of dunnage, Mrs. Brooke. Or some weed.'

'Captain, I'm not an idiot, and I'm not drunk! It was a man! Wouldn't he show on the radar?'

'Not on our radar.' It was the chief mate, who had emerged from the wheelhouse. He spoke to the captain. 'Maybe she did see something. We'd better take a look.' Before the captain could reply, he stepped past them and lifted a life ring from its brackets on the rear railing of the bridge. It was attached to a canister. He ripped the canister loose from its supports and threw the whole thing over the side. Karen heard it splash in the water below them, and in a moment a torchlike flame appeared, lighting up the surface of the sea as it began to drop astern. The chief mate turned and called out to the helmsman inside the wheelhouse. 'Hard left!'

'Mr. Lind!' the captain said angrily, drowning out the helmsman's reply. It was obvious even to Karen that Lind had vastly exceeded his authority, since it wasn't

his watch and the captain was on the bridge besides, but the big man was completely at ease.

He winked at Karen. 'Cap, it'll cost us ten minutes to find out. If there's nobody there, I'll buy the company a new life ring, and Mrs. Brooke will give a cocktail party.'

The ship was already beginning to swing. The captain started to countermand the order, then shrugged and remained silent. Karen sighed with relief as she retreated from the bridge where she had no business. Lind, she thought, was something of a man.

And with a mocking and reckless sense of humor that could have wrecked it, she added to herself, thinking of the 'cocktail party'. Captain Steen was a Baptist, a teetotaler, and a dedicated crusader against alcohol. She crossed to the port side of the boat deck where she could continue to watch the flare after they completed the turn, trying to sort out her reactions to the odd fact that she had probably saved a man's life. What was that old Chinese belief? That if you saved somebody's life you had meddled in his destiny and you were responsible for him from then on?

* * *

Goddard saw the flame blossom on the surface of the sea, and collapsed, shaking all over and too weak to do anything for a moment. He saw the ship begin to swing in her hard-over turn, circling to come back through the area, and when he had his breath back he slipped over the side again and began to push the raft toward the circle of light, some two hundred yards away. By the time he came up to it the ship had already reached the limit of her opposite course and was turning toward him again. He stopped in the edge of the illuminated area with the raft between the flare and the oncoming ship so he would be silhouetted against it, and climbed back aboard. He waved, knowing they would have their glasses on the light and would have seen him by now. Lying on his back, he fought his way into the soggy dungarees. He sat up, drank the last of the water in the bottle, and waited.

The ship came on. While still a quarter mile away they backed down briefly on the engine to take most of the way off her there, before they came abreast, so the wash from the propeller wouldn't sweep him away from her. The engine stopped, and she began to drift slowly down on him, coming to rest at last not more than fifty yards away. He saw men working on the boat deck, and one of the starboard boats started to swing out in its davits. They didn't know what kind of shape he might be in, or whether there could be somebody else lying in the bottom of the raft.

He cupped his hands. 'Don't lower a boat! Just a ladder!'

A voice came back from the darkness of the bridge. 'You sure? How about the accommodation ladder?'

That would be stowed, and it would take twenty minutes to break it out and rig it. 'Just a pilot ladder,' he shouted back. He took a quick look around to be sure there were no cruising dorsals attracted by the flare, slipped over the side, and began pushing the raft ahead of him. In a minute the beam of a flashlight probed downward from the after well-deck to give him a mark, and just before he reached the ship's side there was the rattle and bumping of a pilot ladder being dropped over. The lower end of it was in the water under the beam of light. He pushed the raft aside and swam over to it. The end of a line dropped into the sea beside him.

'Make it fast around yourself,' a voice called down. They were determined to make a stretcher case out of him, he thought, but they might have a case, at that. He was pretty well used up. He treaded water while he passed the line around under his arms and made it fast. Grasping the chains at the ends of the ladder treads, he started up, while the men above took up the slack in his safety line. It was a long way up, and he found he was weaker than he'd thought. Hands grasped his arms and helped him over the bulwark and down on deck. He shook with fatigue while water dripped from his body, vaguely conscious of an excited buzzing of voices from a number of the crew gathered in the well-deck. One of the cargo lights was turned on. Somebody unbent the

safety line while two men continued to support him, apparently trying to lead him over to a seat on a hatch cover. He shook his head.

‘I’m all right,’ he gasped.

The blond giant who had hold of his right arm let go, grinned at him, and said, ‘I guess you are, at that. And I thought I had a patient to practice on.’ He indicated the open first-aid kit on the hatch cover. Beside it was a pitcher of water. He poured a glass half full. ‘Easy does it’.

Goddard drank it and returned the glass. ‘I had a little on the raft.’

The only man present with an officer’s cap stepped forward. ‘I’m Captain Steen. Are there any others?’

‘No, just me.’ Goddard grinned painfully, his sun-and-salt-ravaged face feeling as though it would crack. ‘I’m glad to meet you, Captain.’ He held out his hand. ‘My name’s Goddard.’

They shook hands, Captain Steen somewhat stiffly, apparently a man with very little humor. Steen turned to one of the crew, and said, ‘Tell Mr. VanDoorn he can get under way.’

Goddard looked at the big man who had helped him aboard and given him the water. Though he was bare-headed and clad only in khaki trousers and a short-sleeved shirt with no insignia of any kind, he wore authority as casually as he did the bedroom slippers and the untamed shock of blond hair. ‘Mate?’ Goddard asked.

The other nodded. ‘Lind.’ They shook hands, and he asked, ‘Yacht, I suppose, with that Mickey Mouse life raft?’

‘Yeah,’ Goddard replied. ‘I was single-handing—’ He stopped, overcome with another attack of weakness and shaking, and began to sway. Lind and another man caught him before he could fall. They led him toward the ladder to the deck above.

Karen Brooke had been watching from the corner of the promenade deck as Goddard made his way up the pilot ladder, marveling that a castaway would have the

strength to do it. Apparently he hadn't been aboard the raft very long. Just as they helped him over the bulwark, Mrs. Lennox came out of the passageway on the starboard side and joined her at the rail.

'Isn't it exciting?' Mrs. Lennox asked. 'A real rescue at sea. Who do you suppose he is?'

'He must be off a small boat of some kind,' Karen replied. 'It was a tiny raft, one of the inflated kind, and I don't think ships have them.'

'A yachtsman! And look how tall he is.' The older woman's interest quickened. 'Almost as big as Mr. Lind.'

Karen was amused, now that it appeared the man was neither ill nor dying of thirst and no longer an object of concern. He had cheated one species of man-eater, and now was being marked down by another. Mrs. Lennox had all the healthy interest in men of any normal, red-blooded, fifty-year-old widow, and she went to no great lengths to conceal it. She was still quite attractive, with a trim and sexy figure, smoky gray eyes, and a cascade of ash-blond hair. She was wearing pajamas, slippers, and a nylon robe, but the hair was neatly combed and she had put on makeup.

Karen gazed musingly down into the well-deck where the man, surrounded by curious crew members, shook hands with the captain and then with Mr. Lind, and wondered if, in accordance with the old Chinese belief, she should try to summon up some feeling of responsibility for him. He really didn't appear to need it. Even exhausted, barefoot, naked from the waist up, with water draining off him and his face covered with a week's stubble of beard, he was an imposing figure and stamped with the competent look of a man who could take care of himself.

'Good show, Mrs. Brooke.' The two women turned. It was Mr. Egerton, coming down the ladder from the deck above to join them.

He was the passenger in Cabin G, a lean, erect man in his sixties with a gray moustache and gray hair, against which the black eye patch was undoubtedly dramatic but, to Karen, somehow vaguely theatrical, as

though he had set out to contrive the effect. This was unfair, of course, and she realized that part of it was the clipped British accent, the occasional use of military terms, and expressions like that same 'good show'. If you were a retired English army officer who had lost an eye somewhere, you could hardly be blamed if this were exactly the way a not very imaginative actor would play the part. He kept to his cabin a good deal of the time and seldom came to breakfast or lunch, so she didn't know him very well, but he had beautiful manners and was an urbane and interesting dinner companion.

'The second officer informs me you were the heroine of the affair,' he went on. 'Bit of good fortune for the chap that you were up and about, what?'

Karen caught the swift glance from Madeleine Lennox. The older woman recovered instantly, however, and exclaimed, 'Darling, you mean you were the one who saw him? And you didn't tell me?'

'It was just an accident,' Karen replied. 'I woke up when the engine stopped and went up on the boat deck to look at the stars.' Does that do it, dear? She went on to tell how she sighted the raft at the moment it was in the path of moonlight. Down in the well-deck, Mr. Lind and a seaman were helping the man toward the ladder. 'I wish somebody would come up and tell us *something*.'

There was a shuddering vibration of the deck then as the *Leander's* engine went full ahead. She began to move. Karen glanced off to starboard where the flare was still burning in the darkness, starting to drift slowly astern now as they went off and left it in the vastness of the Pacific. She shivered, thinking of being out there alone on a raft and seeing the ship moving away.

Just as she started to turn back, she became aware of the figure standing at the corner of the deckhouse. It was Mr.—what was his name—Krasuscki? No, Krasicki, she corrected herself. He was the passenger in Cabin H, but she had seen him only two or three times because of the illness that had kept him confined nearly

ever since their departure from Callao. He was wearing pajamas and a heavy flannel robe, and he did look ill, she thought, with the hollow, almost cadaverous face and the feverish brightness of the eyes. She started to speak to him, but paused struck by the strangeness of his behavior. Stock still except for a nervous twitching at the corner of his mouth, he was staring past her at Walter Egerton.

Egerton turned then, and saw him. Krasicki continued to stare into his face with the same unwavering intensity for another two or three seconds, then wheeled and went back around the corner.

Egerton glanced at Karen, apparently puzzled. 'I say, that must be our fellow-passenger. Does seem a spot feverish, doesn't he?'

She nodded. It was odd, but entirely possible under the circumstances; they had been aboard the ship for six days now, but this was the first time they had seen each other. But why had Krasicki stared that way? It wasn't simply ill-mannered, she thought; there'd been a trace of madness in it, or the horror of a man seeing a ghost.

3

It was called the hospital but it was only a spare room on the lower deck that had originally housed the gun crew when the *Leander* was built and put into service toward the end of World War II. It contained four bunks, a washbasin, some metal lockers, and a small desk. Naked and still dripping, Goddard was seated on one of the lower bunks toweling himself after the ecstasy of a freshwater shower, knowing that any minute now the reaction would hit him and he'd collapse like a dropped soufflé. Lind had just come back from somewhere, and the passageway outside was still jammed with crew members peering in.

Word had already spread that he'd been sailing a small boat single-handed across the Pacific, and as they grinned and voiced their congratulations and the cheerful but inevitable opinion of working seamen that anybody who'd sail anything across the ——ing ocean just for the fun of it ought to have his ——ing head examined, they tossed in on the other lower bunk a barrage of spare gear including several pairs of shorts, some slides, a new toothbrush in a plastic tube, toothpaste, cigarettes, matches, and a pair of dungarees. A young Filipino in white trousers and a singlet pushed his way through the jam with a tray

containing cold cuts, potato salad, bread, fruit, and a pitcher of milk. He set it on the desk.

Goddard let the towel drop and began a shaky-fingered attack on the cellophane of one of the packs of cigarettes. Lind held the lighter for him. With the first deep and luxurious inhalation he began to float away and wasn't sure he'd last as far as the food.

Lind produced a pint bottle of whiskey from somewhere and twisted off the cap. 'Better splice the main brace.'

Goddard lifted the bottle in a gesture that included all his rescuers, and said, 'Cheers.' He took a small drink, felt it burn its way down his throat, and returned the bottle to Lind. One might prop him up for a few minutes, but two would drop him in his tracks. He looked around. Captain Steen was regarding him with pious disapproval from the doorway.

'You ought to be down on your knees thanking God,' he said, 'instead of drinking that stuff.'

'Believe me, Captain, I was,' Goddard said. 'When I saw your flare light off, it struck me that might be an appropriate spot for a little dialogue.'

It was obvious Steen regarded this as flippant, but he merely said, 'Yes. Well, get some rest. Come up to my office tomorrow and we'll get all the information for the log entries and reports.'

He disappeared, leaving grins and amused winks behind him. Somebody made a remark in a language Goddard didn't understand, provoking laughter, and another said, 'Who this guy better thank is that babe with the knockers. She was the one seen him.' This called forth a chorus of whistles, universal gestures, and cries of '*Mamma mia!*' and '*Sweet Jesus!*'

'All right, all right, that'll do!' Lind's voice, though good-humored, cut through the ribaldry with a parade-ground authority that brought silence.

It all seemed to Goddard to be coming from far away through a dreamlike and winy haze compounded of total exhaustion and the euphoria of alcohol and tobacco. He drew on a pair of shorts, took one more

long drag on the cigarette, and reached toward the tray of food. 'There's a woman aboard?' he asked.

'Two,' Lind said. 'It was Mrs. Brooke that sighted you. We're a real gung-ho crowd on here; with a radar and a crew of thirty-eight, we find out from the passengers what's going on.'

Goddard drained the glass of milk and put it down with elaborate care. He'd never been this drunk in his life. For an instant he was back there on the raft watching the ship draw away from him in the night, and it started to come for him. Gripping the pipe railing of the bunk so they couldn't take it away from him, he looked up at the big mate with profound solemnity.

'Eternal vigilance,' he said, 'is the watchword of the successful passenger, Mr. Lind. Suppose I'd swum over to a ship that didn't carry any?'

He pitched forward. Lind caught him and stretched him out on the bunk.

* * *

He was aboard the raft in a kidney-shaped pool swinging the Jack Daniels bottle at a succession of sharks hurtling out of the water at him while a nude but faceless woman suntanned on a mattress at the pool's edge, watching boredly and murmuring an occasional and indifferent olé. He awoke, thrashing and shiny with sweat. It was daylight, and heat was stifling inside the room. He saw the pipe bunks and blue bedspreads, and for a moment he was transported back across a quarter century and it was the fo'c'sle of the old *Shoshone* and he was an ordinary seaman again. He remembered then where he was—except, he thought sardonically, he didn't know where he was, or even where he was going. Nobody had told him the name of the ship or where she was bound.

In effect, he mused, he was reborn, as innocent of information and at the moment as schooner-rigged as the standard day-old infant. He had on a pair of shorts somebody had given him and a Rolex watch as a legacy from the previous avatar that by all logic had ended when the ship started to go off and leave him in the

night, and that was about it. He glanced at the watch. It said nine eighteen, which was the local apparent time of his longitude the day the *Shoshone* had gone down, and wouldn't necessarily agree with the ship's time, but it should be within an hour. Almost at the same moment he heard three bells strike. He set the watch to nine thirty; chronologically at least, he was now meshed with his new existence.

He was conscious of being ravenously hungry, and sat up, wondering if they had left the tray of food. Vertigo assailed him. The faintness and black spots passed in a moment, and he saw there was a bowl of fruit on the desk. He quickly peeled and ate two bananas and then an apple, and lighted a cigarette. He could get a complete hot breakfast simply by opening the door and letting them know he was awake, but he wanted to be alone a few minutes longer. It wasn't every day you were reborn, and he'd like to examine the phenomenon. Of course, sitting here he wasn't going to find out where he was bound, but that was unimportant; he found he didn't care in the slightest.

The cigarette was making him light-headed again. Traditionally, he thought, life was supposed to take on some deep and newfound significance now that it had been given back to him. If it weren't already in the script, somebody would bring it up at the first conference. I'm just spit-balling, fellas, but to me right here is the turning point for Liebfraumilch—we gotta find a better name for him, let's make a note of that—not just some penny-ante resolution he's gonna stop knocking back the sauce with both hands and screwing everything in sight, but I mean, you know, something big. Of course, he's too old for the Peace Corps, unless there's a change in the casting, and I've just heard from Bedfellow's agent and he's read the script and he's ape for it.

Goddard's thoughts broke off then, and he grinned as he remembered what Lind had said. It was a passenger, a woman, who had sighted him, a Mrs.—Brooks? No, Brooke. And judging from the comment, she must be pretty, even after due allowance for the fact that among seamen this far from port, Tugboat Annie or a

reasonably chic orangutan would arouse some lewd speculation. Fellas, believe me, I'm all for it—it's a sweetheart of a gimmick—here's our guy, he owes his life to this absolute doll with boobs you wouldn't believe—but that's just it. Nobody will believe it. It's just too improbable, you with me? I mean, everybody knows on a ship you got all these sailors on lookout up there in the crow's nest and on the yardarm and like that, so who's going to buy it was just the doll that saw him? You're right, Mannie, it would never work.

And anyway, Goddard thought, with another dizzying inhalation of smoke, I've already ruined the staging of the scene where they meet. Pommeffrite—we gotta find a better name for him, let's make a note of that—Pommeffrite opens his eyes and she's here in the room. It's a two-shot; his viewpoint is her back, about threequarters, so he can see her hands, and she's filling a syringe very professionally from a vial with a rubber membrane. The second setup, of course, we get Pommeffrite's reaction: *eccchhh!* another needle-throwing dragon. She turns, radiantly beautiful, eyes right into the camera, widening a little and almost shy as she sees he's awake—

The door opened a few inches and somebody looked in at him. 'Oh, you're up.' A sharp-faced man pushed the door on back and came in. 'How do you feel?'

'Fine,' Goddard replied. 'A little woozy yet. And hungry.'

'We'll fix you up. I'm the chief steward. George Barset.'

They shook hands, and Barset asked, 'How about a whole breakfast, ham and eggs and the works? Can you handle that?'

'Sure,' Goddard replied.

'How long was it? On the raft, I mean?'

'Less than three days.'

Barset grinned. 'Well, you sure came up smelling of roses. I'll be right back.' He went out.

Goddard brushed his teeth, and looked at himself in the mirror above the washbasin. Takes class, he told

himself, to face something like that without a gun. All his face not covered with a mottled black and gray wire-brush of whiskers was burned a shiny red over the old tan, and skin was peeling from his ears. And note, gentlemen, that while this species of moose appears to have no antlers, this is not true at all, as even the most outstanding rack can be tastefully concealed in its hair. Whether this concealment is a symbolic castration forced on the bull by feminist and aggressive elements within the harem or whether he simply hopes with this camouflage to elude the constant demands for money has never been completely established.

Barset came back bearing a pot of coffee. 'Here you go, Mr. Goddard. Rest of it'll be along in a few minutes.'

'Thanks a lot,' Goddard said. He poured a cup, black and very hot, and sipped it. He grinned. 'Good coffee. It's got authority.'

Barset lit a cigarette and sat down on the opposite bunk. 'Where you from?'

'California,' Goddard replied. 'I sailed from Long Beach about twenty-five days ago.'

'Where to?'

Goddard shrugged. 'Marquesas, and on down through the islands. Australia, maybe. All ad lib.'

'Just alone, in a puddle-jumper? Not even a babe?' It was obvious this made no sense to the steward. 'You going to write a book about it?'

'No' Goddard replied, aware that by thus disavowing both sex and money as possible objectives he was leaving the other no alternative to the seaman's blanket rationale for all types of exotic behavior: you don't have to be crazy but it helps. 'What ship is this? And where are we bound?'

'*Leander*,' Barset replied. 'Manila and Kobe, from South America. Callao was the last port.'

He went on. She was under the Panamanian flag, but registry was the only thing about her connected with Panama; she was owned by Greeks and under charter to the Hayworth Line, with offices in London. She was

built in 1944, reciprocating engine, single screw, and she'd be pushed to make thirteen knots downhill. Goddard began to form a picture of her, an old bucket verging on obsolescence as she shuttled around the Pacific basin from Hong Kong to Australia and the west coast of South America to the Philippines and Japan, able to compete with modern eighteen-knot freighters only with the aid of tax breaks and lower wages.

Captain Steen, known as Holy Joe, was scowegian, a Bible-pounder who got sidetracked and went to sea, a booze-hater and a nickel-squeezer. It was that big mate, Lind, who really ran the show; he'd go to bat for you, and Holy Joe didn't impress him at all, but he was too good at his job for the skipper to get mad enough to fire him. The second mate was a Dutch-Indonesian type and the third mate was a young Swede.

The Filipino entered with a tray, and Goddard ate as Barset went on talking. He himself was American. He offered no explanation as to why he was on here, working for probably half of what he'd get as chief steward on an American ship, but Goddard was aware there could be any number of reasons for this—union trouble, woman trouble, or police trouble back in the States. In his speech and manner there were faintly discernible overtones of the wise guy, the promoter and angle-shooter, which were always the same no matter in which part of the jungle you ran into them.

'Do you carry many passengers?' Goddard asked.

Not many. They had accommodation for twelve, but it was pretty hard for an old pot like this to compete with those new freighters clipping it off at sixteen to eighteen knots with air-conditioned staterooms and fancy lounges. They had four at the moment, two men and two women.

One of the men was a Limey, but not a bad sort of Joe, about sixty-five, retired from Her Majesty's Bengal Lancers or something. He'd been living in BA, but apparently the Argentine inflation was getting to be too much for his pension so he was going to try the Philippines. The other man had a Brazilian passport, but must be some kind of Polack; his name was

Krasicki. He'd been sick nearly ever since they'd sailed from Callao. Lind treated him, but hadn't been able to find out what was wrong with him. A weirdo, anyway. Stayed shut in his cabin when the temperature was ninety degrees even out on deck, porthole closed, curtain drawn, like he couldn't stand daylight. Seemed to sleep most of the day and stay up all night. Sometimes in the afternoon you'd hear him having a nightmare in there, yelling his head off. Kept a steamer trunk in his cabin with three padlocks on it. Honest to God, three. Reminded you of those store fronts in Lima when they closed down for siesta, padlocks all over the shutters like an overloaded mango tree.

One of the women was the widow of a retired U.S. navy captain. Fifty, around there, probably, but looked younger. Seemed to spend her time just knocking around the world on freighters, and she'd been everywhere at least once. A little on the Southern belle side, but a real savvy type and interesting to talk to. The other was younger, in her early thirties and a real looker, pleasant and friendly enough but played it cool and didn't say much about herself. She was a widow too, in spite of being that young, but he didn't know what had happened to her husband. She'd been working in Lima and was on her way to another job in Manila with the same company. He guessed it was pretty dull for them up there with just two old crocks in their sixties and one of them a kook who stayed crapped out in his cabin all the time. They'd be tickled pink to have another man aboard. Or was Goddard going to be up there?

'I don't know,' Goddard said. 'Be up to the skipper, I suppose.'

'You stay down here,' Barset said. 'Holy Joe'll probably want you to turn to with a chipping hammer.'

Barset's trouble, Goddard thought, was that he was working entirely in the dark. There must be an angle here somewhere, if he could only find it; a man you fished naked out of the ocean a thousand miles from land was a consumer right out of a huckster's dream, not only virginal but captive, but he was also an enigma. Another man up in the passenger country

would mean more tips, of which no doubt Barset got his cut, plus the sale of drinks or bottled goods and possibly other services, but you had to know something of the prospect's financial status. He was aware the other was using the two women as bait, but it had been just as obvious he'd kept himself severely under wraps in speaking of them. Any smirks or nudges could backfire on him disastrously if, for example, it developed the prospect was another Holy Joe, or for that matter, a fellow operator ready to embrace the fuller life with an unverifiable line of credit, and it wasn't easy to pinpoint the cultural, moral, and socioeconomic background of a man whose only visible status symbols were a watch and somebody else's underwear.

'What do you do for a living?' Barset asked, coming to the point at last.

'Nothing at the moment,' Goddard said. 'I used to work in pictures. Writer. Producer.'

Barset came to attention. This was a live one, if he was telling the truth. 'What pictures have you done?'

'*Tin Can*,' Goddard said. '*The Amethyst Affair*. And several others. The last one was *The Salty Six*.' And a bomb. A comedic idea that didn't work.

'Hey, I saw *Tin Can*,' Barset said, excited. 'Destroyers, in World War II. It was terrific. Well, look, you don't want to stay down here in this dog-hole.'

Goddard shrugged. 'Why not?' It would be interesting to live in the fo'c'sle with working seamen again.

* * *

The Filipino boy, whose name was Antonio Gutierrez, was a good barber, an AB gave him a sport shirt, and one of the black gang the loan of an electric razor. His face was still raw from sun and salt, but he managed to mow off the crop without too much discomfort, and he looked considerably more presentable as he mounted to the boat deck shortly after eleven. He didn't see anybody on the passengers' deck as he passed it, but as soon as he finished with the skipper he'd look up Mrs. Brooke and express his thanks.

It was a beautiful morning, sunny and hot, with just enough breeze out of the southeast to put a slight chop on the long groundswell as the *Leander* plowed ahead across an infinity of blue. Looked a lot better from up here, too, he thought, with the throbbing sound of power from the engine room ventilators and a solid deck under his feet; no matter how much you liked the sea, there was such a thing as getting too close to it.

The third mate was walking the starboard wing of the bridge. The captain was up, he said, and his office was through the wheelhouse, the door on this side. Goddard nodded to the helmsman, and knocked on the facing of the door, which was open. 'Yes?' a voice asked, and Captain Steen appeared. He was in tropical whites, the shirt having short sleeves and shoulder boards bearing four gold stripes. 'Come in, Mr. Goddard.' He gestured toward a big armchair. 'Sit down.' He was a gaunt, balding man with a solemn countenance, baby-blue eyes, and a long neck and prominent Adam's apple, but to Goddard the impression was not so much the stern asceticism he had expected as it was a sort of self-righteous stuffiness and lack of warmth.

There was another armchair, a threadbare rug, and a desk with a swivel chair in front of it. On the bulkhead above the deck were two framed photographs, one of a small, neat house set in the awesome beauty of a Norwegian fjord, and the other of a woman and two young girls. At the rear of the office another door opened into the stateroom. Captain Steen sat in the swivel chair and took notes as Goddard told him the story. It was obvious he disapproved of the whole thing.

'You realize you were very foolish,' he said. 'It's a wonder to me your coastguard allows it.'

Goddard pointed out that single-handed passages in small boats were commonplace by sailors of all maritime nations and sanctioned by yacht clubs, and that there had been a number of single-handed races across the Atlantic. There was a difference between a competent seaman going to sea in a sound boat and some nut going over Niagara Falls in a barrel. He stopped when he realized he was wasting his breath.

'But you did lose your boat,' Steen said. 'And it's just the Lord's infinite mercy you're alive. Your passport was lost too, I suppose?'

'Yes,' Goddard replied. 'Somehow it didn't seem important at the time.'

'Very unfortunate.' Steen frowned and tapped on the pad with his pencil. 'There will be complications, you realize, and a great deal of red tape.'

Goddard sighed. 'Captain, every maritime nation on earth has machinery for processing shipwrecked and castaway seamen.'

'Yes, I know that. But you are not a seaman, legally signed on the articles of a merchant vessel. To the Philippine authorities you will be simply an alien without identification visa or money. This places the company in the position of having to post bond.'

I'll be a sad sonofabitch, Goddard thought. 'I am sorry, Captain. I guess it was selfish and inconsiderate of me to swim over here and hail you that way.'

Captain Steen was pained, but forgiving. 'I think you'll agree that was uncalled for, Mr. Goddard. We are very happy to have been the instruments of Providence, but the formalities and red tape are something we have to take into account. Now, about your arrangements on here; you can continue in the hospital where you are now and eat with the deck crew's mess, but you won't be required to work your passage—'

'Thank you.'

'—unless you feel you'd rather, of course. The bos'n can always use an extra hand, and I am sure you wouldn't want them to carry you for cigarettes and toilet articles you will need.'

'But I understand you carry passengers.' Goddard's voice was still quiet, but there was a hard edge to it. 'And the cabins are not all sold. I'll take one, at the full rate from Callao to Manila.'

This earned him a pale but condescending smile. 'Passage has to be paid in advance. And I'm afraid I have no authority to change the company rule.'

'Is your wireless operator on duty now?'

'He is subject to call at any time. Why?'

'Would you ask him to come up and bring a message blank? I'd like to send a radiogram.' Goddard slipped off the watch and set it on the desk. He felt like the type of overbearing, exhibitionist jerk he detested above everything, but he was too angry to care. 'Lock this in your safe as security for the message charges; it's a Rolex chronometer that sells for around six hundred dollars in this type of case. If you'll tell me the name of your agents in Los Angeles, my attorneys will deposit with them this afternoon the money to cover my passage and other expenses from here to Manila, the bond you will have to post, and my fare back to the United States if the Philippine authorities hold you responsible for it.'

'Uh—yes. Of course.' Steen appeared to hesitate for a moment, and then calmly handed back the watch, immune to insult. 'I guess it will be all right.' He stepped out into the wheelhouse and spoke into the telephone, and in a minute the wireless operator appeared, a young Latin with a slender, inscrutable face still bearing traces of some ancient bout with smallpox.

'Sparks, this is Mr. Goddard. He wants to send a message,' Steen said.

Goddard stood up and said, 'How do you do.' Sparks nodded, neither volunteering his name nor offering to shake hands, and Goddard caught the little flicker of hatred in the jet depths of the eyes before they became impassive again. Yanqui go home. Could be Cuban, Goddard thought, or Panamanian. Or from anywhere south of San Diego, with our record.

'You can get the States all right?' he asked.

'Yes,' Sparks said, but it was Steen who volunteered the information they had shortwave. Sparks handed him the pad of blanks and went out into the wheelhouse to wait. Captain Steen looked in his files for the line's agents in San Pedro, and said the fare from Callao to Manila was five hundred and thirty dollars.

'Then two thousand should cover everything,' Goddard said. 'Any balance, you can refund in Manila.'

He wrote out the message, addressed to his attorneys in Beverly Hills.

SHOSHONE DOWNWENT STOP PICKED UP
BY SS LEANDER BOUND MANILA STOP
PLEASE DEPOSIT TODAY WITH LINE'S
AGENTS BARWICK AND KLINE SAN PEDRO
TWO THOUSAND DOLLARS TO COVER
PASSAGE, MANILA EXPENSES, AND
RETURN FARE TO STATES STOP REQUEST
AGENTS VERIFY RECEIPT SOONEST
CAPTAIN STEEN LEANDER—

GODDARD

Sparks made the word count and computed the charges. 'That will be eleven thirteen.' There was a barely perceptible pause, and he added. 'In real money.'

'You don't have to lean on it,' Goddard said softly. 'I heard you the first time.'

Steen told the operator the company guaranteed payment, and the young Latin went out. 'I'll notify the steward,' Steen said to Goddard. 'He will take care of you.'

'Aren't you going to wait for the verification?' Goddard asked. Steen indicated it wouldn't be necessary. Maybe the watch had impressed him. Goddard went out, a little ashamed and regretting the whole thing; he didn't care in the slightest where he was quartered, and working on deck would have been fun. He was surprised, too, that the sanctimonious fraud could have made him lose his cool; he'd thought he was impervious to the Steens of the world.

Lind was just coming in. He was bareheaded, in khakis and moccasins, and apparently never wore shoulder boards. He grinned at Goddard. 'Stick around a minute. I've got some things in my room you may be able to use.'

'Sure,' Goddard said. 'Thanks.' He went out and leaned on the rail on the starboard wing of the bridge.

It would be a different ship, he thought, if Lind were master of it.

4

‘Appendectomy?’ Lind asked. ‘Spinal tap? Bothered with impacted teeth? Lover’s catarrh? I’m always looking for a live one.’

Goddard grinned and indicated the skull jammed behind some books on the desk. ‘Not if that’s a former patient.’

‘Bought it from a Moro down in the Celebes,’ Lind said. ‘You can still see where somebody got him with a bolo; probably the guy who sold it to me. Drink? Short one before lunch?’

‘Sure, if it’s that or surgery,’ Goddard said.

Lind yanked open a drawer and brought out a bottle of Canadian Club and two glasses. ‘Did you know that the references to wine in the New Testament really meant Welch’s grape juice? It was a faulty translation from the Greek.’

‘Yeah, I’ve heard that,’ Goddard said. He looked around the cabin again. While at first glance it would appear it could only have been assembled by a pack rat, a madman, or the vortex of a tornado, a more subjective appraisal revealed the blazing and restless mind that complemented the vast male exuberance of its tenant. More outpatient clinic or dispensary than living quarters, it also bore some resemblance to a library after an earthquake, with traces here and there

of a museum. Anchored to the deck was a sterilizer containing scalpels, tooth forceps, hemostats, and hypodermic syringes. Boxes and specially built shelves held the contents of a small pharmacy—bottles, vials, tubes, splints, packaged sutures, and rolls of gauze and tape. There were several ebony carvings and a bolo, and books were everywhere, in English, German, and French, two full shelves plus more piled on the settee and on the deck. Some were medical textbooks, in addition to the standard first-aid manuals. Cugle and Bowditch were sandwiched between Faulkner and Gide. Goddard ran his eye on down the rows—Goethe, *African Genesis*, Vance Packard, Also *Sprach Zarathuslra*, *L'Être at le Néant*. There was a combination, Nietzsche and Sartre.

Lind handed him the drink, and they clicked glasses. 'Down the hatch.'

'Skol,' Goddard said. 'You were a medical student?'

'Two years. And you used to be a merchant seaman?'

'A few trips as ordinary when I was a kid. How'd you know?'

'You asked me if I was the mate, remember? Not chief mate or first mate.' Lind opened a closet. 'I've got some slacks here that might fit you. How big are you?'

'Six feet one,' Goddard said. 'One-ninety.'

'Should be just about right then.' Lind handed him two pairs of light flannel slacks. 'Some Chileno dry-cleaner shrunk 'em. And here's another sport shirt, a drip-dry.' He added socks, belt, a pair of slippers, handkerchiefs, and a spare safety razor.

'Thanks a million,' Goddard said.

'I've got a weak stomach. Can't eat with people who never change their clothes.' Lind tossed off the rest of his drink, and shook his head. 'I don't see why in hell you couldn't have had scurvy, at least. Pick up a guy drifting around in a million square miles of ocean on some woman's diaphragm, and he's healthy as a horse.'

* * *

Cabin B, in the starboard passageway of the promenade deck, contained two bunks on opposite sides of the room, a desk, closet, and small rug, and had its own shower. Lunch was served at twelve thirty, Barset said, and dinner at six. There was no bar, but he could buy anything he wanted from the bonded stores. Goddard looked over the list and ordered six bottles of Beefeaters gin, a bottle of vermouth, and three cartons of Camels.

‘And would you ask the cabin steward to bring me a pitcher and some ice?’ he added.

He showered, put on a pair of Lind’s slacks and a sport shirt and the slippers, and stowed the rest of his meager possessions. Closet space was going to be no problem. The cabin steward pushed open the door and came in without knocking. He was young and looked tough, with a meaty face, green eyes in which there was no expression whatever, and shoulders that strained at the white jacket. Brutal hands with a number of broken knuckles held a tray containing ice and a pitcher. ‘Where you want it?’ he asked.

‘On the desk,’ Goddard said. ‘What’s your name?’

‘Rafferty.’

‘And where are you from, Rafferty?’

‘Oakland. Or maybe it was Pittsburgh.’

It’s done to death, Goddard thought. If he were trying out for the young storm trooper or the motorcycle hoodlum I’d turn him down as a cliché. Rafferty put down the tray and asked, with just the right shade of insolence, ‘Why?’

‘I don’t know,’ Goddard said. ‘But in Oakland or maybe it was Pittsburgh, somebody probably told you about pushing open doors without knocking.’

‘I’ll try to remember that, Mr. Goddard, sir. I’ll try real hard.’

‘I would, Rafferty,’ Goddard said pleasantly. ‘Inevitably in this vale of tears you’ll run across some mean son of a bitch who’ll dump you on your stupid ass the second time you do it.’

There was the merest flicker of surprise at this unusual reaction from the square world; then the turntable started again and the needle dropped back into the groove. 'How about that?' Rafferty said. He went out.

Goddard mixed a pitcher of martinis, for the second time today a little disgusted with himself. But maybe he was simply becoming aware of people again and had a tendency to overreact, the way sensation is exaggerated in a part of the body that has been numb for a long time. He poured a drink over ice and went out into the passageway. He remembered the dining saloon was aft, next to Barset's quarters, so the lounge should be forward. There was a thwartships passageway here with doors opening onto the deck, port and starboard, and a wide double door into the lounge. He looked in.

There was a long settee across the forward end with portholes above it looking out over the forward well-deck, several armchairs, a couple of anchored bridge tables, and some bookshelves and a sideboard. A blonde woman in a sleeveless print dress was standing with her back to him, one knee on the settee as she looked out an open porthole. She was bare-legged and wore gilt sandals, and her arms and legs were tanned. 'Mrs. Brooke?' he asked.

She turned. He was conscious of a slender, composed face with high cheekbones and just faintly slanted blue eyes. The sailors were right, of course; she was pretty, but it was the impression of poise that interested him more. She smiled at him, the eyes cool and supremely self-possessed. 'Yes. How do you do, Mr. Goddard.'

'Nobody ever saved my life before,' he said, 'except possibly a few people with iron self-control who didn't kill me, so I'm not sure of the protocol.'

'Well, I didn't *really* save your life. I just happened—'

'Mrs. Brooke, there were witnesses, so there's no way you can weasel out of it. Cop out, and throw yourself on the mercy of the court.' He indicated the glass. 'Do you drink?'

'We-e-ell, not to excess,' she said gravely. 'But I do have a small one now and then with motion-picture producers I meet floating around on rafts.'

'I'd say you still had it under control. So if that includes ex-motion-picture producers, how about a martini?'

'Thank you,' she said. He went back to his cabin and brought out the pitcher and another glass.

He poured her drink, and they sat down at one of the bridge tables. 'There are certain biographical data,' he said, 'that we require here in the Central Bureau of Heroine Identification.'

'It's confidential, of course?'

'Oh, absolutely. It's processed by our computer complex buried under Fort Sill, Oklahoma, and purely benevolent in aim because it protects you from annoyances like privacy or forgetting to report all your income. Now, all I know about you is that you're blonde, very attractive, probably of Scandinavian descent, you hate airplanes, and you have insomnia and twenty/ twenty vision. What kind of file is that?'

'Flattering,' she said. 'And largely inaccurate. For one thing, I don't hate airplanes.'

Oh, don't be frightened, Mrs. Brooke,' he assured her. 'You can hate airplanes all you like, as long as you don't start questioning the divinity of the automobile.'

She smiled. 'But I really don't. It's just that I like ships better. Also, I work for a steamship company that is agent for the Hayworth Line in Lima. And my father was a shipmaster.'

'American?' he asked.

'No, Danish,' she said. She went on. Her father was lost at sea in World War II when his ship was torpedoed by a German submarine. Her mother remarried when Karen was twelve. Her stepfather was an American businessman living in Europe, later transferred to Havana for several years and finally back to the States. Karen had gone to school in Berkeley, majoring in business administration, and until her marriage had

worked for the San Francisco offices of her father's old steamship company, the Copenhagen Pacific Line.

'Danes keep in touch with each other,' she continued, 'even if they become citizens of another country, so after my husband died I asked the line if they had a job for me in South America. I speak Spanish, of course, from those years in Havana, so they gave me one in Lima. I was there for a year, and now I'm going to the Manila office. Copenhagen Pacific doesn't have direct service there, so I booked passage on here.'

Thumbnail biography, he thought, is a good term. It's impervious, and protects the raw nerve-ends beneath. And does nothing at all, of course, to explain why a pretty young widow would desert the action around the game preserves where she caught the first one and go wandering across the Pacific alone on a bucket of rivets like this.

A man appeared in the doorway then and looked in at them and then around the lounge as though searching for someone. Goddard hadn't seen him before, but Barset's term 'weirdo' came unbidden to his mind, and he knew it must be the passenger with the Polish name. There was no doubt he looked as though he had been ill, and for a long time, and in spite of his outlandish garb of white linen suit and open-throated purple sport shirt with a figured tie draped around it, there was something almost chillingly funereal and somber in his aspect. He gave the appearance of having once been a robust man who had shrunk to a rack of bones, for the suit hung from him in loose folds, as did the skin of his neck, and the gaunt face and the almost totally bald head were a glistening and unnatural white as though he hadn't been out in sunlight in years.

'Good morning, Mr. Krasicki,' Karen said. 'I'm glad to see you're up and around today.' She introduced Goddard, who stood up and shook hands.

'You have been very—how do you say?—fortunate,' Krasicki spoke with a strong accent. 'You must excuse me. I have little English.'

'You're Polish?' Goddard asked.

'Yes. But since many years I live in Brazil.'

Probably a DP, Goddard thought, one of the homeless of World War II. Krasicki muttered something and turned abruptly and went out. A moment later Madeleine Lennox swept in, pausing dramatically just inside the doorway to chide Karen, 'So! You've already grabbed off our celebrity.'

She proceeded to dominate the scene with an animation that Goddard appraised as falling somewhere between kittenish and hectic, and which after a while began to puzzle him as he became aware there was an alert and cultivated mind being sabotaged by all this determined girlishness. Normally you could ascribe it to the desperation tactics of fifty having to compete with thirty, but that would seem to make little sense here where there was no competition and nothing to compete for. They sat down at the table, Karen across from him and Madeleine Lennox on his right. She thanked him a little too effusively but would just have to pass up the martini. She limited herself to one a day, and always took that just before dinner. But he was going to give her a rain check, wasn't he?

She did look younger than fifty, Goddard thought, particularly the figure, and he realized the one martini a day was part of it, along with a rigid diet and exercises to keep the waist in. Her face, while quite pretty, showed perhaps a few more lines than the face of an actress the same age, but the actress would have had a larger and more expensive staff at work on the project and plastic surgeons would have winched up on the halyards once or twice by this time. The ash-blond hair, which was shoulder-length, had no doubt been carefully chosen as the easiest shade for hiding the gray, but she had fine eyes with the intelligence showing through at moments when she forgot to be captivating.

She'd seen *Tin Can*, and adored it. It was so authentic, dear, she cooed, turning to include Karen in the conversation; it was obvious Mr. Goddard was an old navy man himself. Wouldn't it be the most fantastic thing if he'd known her late husband, who'd been in destroyers then himself? He was the executive officer of one in that same battle. Goddard said he was sorry,

but he didn't remember a Lieutenant Lennox, so they'd probably never been on the same ship. He was an enlisted man, anyway.

She knew a lot of people around Southern California, mostly in San Diego but some in Bel Air and Beverly Hills. It was while she was gaily tossing off these names, all unknown to Goddard, that her left leg first brushed against his under the table. He paid no attention then; it was an accident, of course. No woman could be that unsubtle. She launched into an explanation of why she was aboard the *Leander*. She'd been taking a cruise around South America on a freighter of the Moore McCormack line, intending to get off when she reached the Canal where she had a reservation to board a Lykes freighter bound for the Far East, but she'd become ill and had to go to a hospital in Lima. By the time she recovered it was too late to catch the Lykes ship, so she'd booked passage on the *Leander*. Her knee brushed lightly against Goddard's again, came back, made a little stroking movement up and down, and remained. It didn't take Mrs. Lennox forever to finish with the weather and move on to more significant topics; they'd known each other about ten minutes.

She couldn't be that desperate, he thought; she'd be walking up the bulkhead. It was just that she was afraid of the younger woman and wanted to tie him up with an option. He wasn't sure whether he was sorry for her, amused, or merely bored. It had been months since he'd slept with a woman, or even thought about it, and he'd assumed, with no particular interest, that he might be impotent.

Haggerty, during that marathon drunk when he discovered the underground skyway, had brought up the subject the night they'd shared the same room, and asked him whether he was gay. He'd said no, he was researching an article for *Reader's Digest*; continence was the new hope for alcoholics with a time problem. Exactly, she'd said; something had to go, and she'd always advocated sexual freedom herself. People had a perfect right not to go to bed with each other; all it took was courage. And now that they'd made this bow in the

direction of conformity, why didn't he open the other bottle? He'd never known what particular hound was pursuing Haggerty down the nights and down the days, but he hoped she'd worked it out. She was nice.

There was the sound of chimes in the passageway then, announcing lunch. Goddard excused himself and took the pitcher back to his cabin. There was a dividend in it, which he poured and drank as he dumped the ice in the basin, still thinking idly of Madeleine Lennox. He went aft to the dining saloon. There were two tables, each seating eight, extending fore-and-aft on opposite sides of the room, but only the port one was used. Captain Steen sat at the aft end of it, with Karen Brooke on his right and Madeleine Lennox on his left. Goddard looked inquiringly at the dining room steward.

'You sit there,' the latter said, indicating the place next to Madeleine Lennox. He was a heavyset youth with a florid and rather sullen face. Goddard sat down, wondering what luck of the draw had placed him again within range of that gregarious left leg. Or was it luck? At the same moment Mr. Krasicki entered. He seemed uncertain as to where he was to sit, and the steward indicated the chair next to Karen Brooke. The two women smiled at him, and Captain Steen said, 'We're very glad to see you up, Mr. Krasicki.' The latter nodded and attempted a smile, but said nothing. Goddard noted there were two other places set, the one at his left, and the one at the forward end of the table, which would no doubt be Lind's. The steward made no move to serve the soup, and Captain Steen appeared to be waiting for something.

'Mr. Egerton said he didn't want any lunch,' the steward said. 'And Mr. Lind won't be here.'

Captain Steen nodded, lowered his head, and said grace. When he had finished, Krasicki asked, 'That is the other passenger, Mr. Egger—Edger—?'

'That's right, you haven't met him, have you?' Mrs. Lennox said. 'It's Mr. Egerton. You'll like him; he's very nice.'

She turned to Goddard and went on brightly, 'He's English. A retired colonel.'

Krasicki interrupted, his face screwed into a frown of intense concentration as though he had difficulty following her. 'An English, you say?'

'Yes,' Madeleine Lennox replied. 'But he's been living in Argentina.'

The steward had begun serving the soup, but Krasicki paid no attention to it. He was still staring at Madeleine Lennox with that rapt concentration. 'For many years?' he asked. Goddard noted at the same time that Karen had turned and was looking at Krasicki thoughtfully. Madeleine Lennox replied that she didn't know how long.

Krasicki appeared to become self-conscious under their regard and mumbled, 'You must excuse me. I have little English.' The corner of his mouth began to twitch. He lowered his head over his soup and began to eat it rapidly.

Both women then demanded Goddard tell them what had happened to the yacht. With apologies to Captain Steen, who'd already heard it, he gave an understated account of the affair, hoping he wouldn't have to go through it again for Egerton.

Still feeling some of the aftereffects of his three-day ordeal, he took a nap after lunch. It was nearly five when he awoke, logy and dispirited. He showered and went on deck to walk off some of the torpor. After a few laps he mounted to the boat deck. Lind was on the wing of the bridge. Goddard made a gesture of greeting but didn't go forward; as a passenger he had no right on the bridge unless invited. He was walking back and forth along the starboard side when the wireless operator came up the ladder aft and passed him with a blank stare. He was carrying a message form. At the same time Captain Steen emerged from the wheelhouse. He read the message, and called out to Goddard. Goddard walked forward.

'It's the confirmation from our agents in San Pedro,' Steen said. 'They've received the deposit.'

'Good. Fast work,' Goddard said.

The wireless operator spoke to Captain Steen. 'The station in Buenos Aires has a message for us, but I haven't been able to raise him yet.'

'Well, keep trying, Sparks,' Steen said. The wireless operator nodded and left. 'Buenos Aires?' Steen said, puzzled. 'I wonder what that could be. Unless it's for one of the passengers.'

'One of my girl friends wishing me a happy birthday,' Lind said. He winked at Goddard. 'They pour in from all over the world.'

Goddard went back to his cabin, mixed a pitcher of martinis, and lay back on the bunk propped on two pillows as he stared moodily up at the ceiling. So? After Manila, what? Where did you go from there? And why? Consider the noblest of the apes, he thought; the only rational animal, by his own admission. He throws in another gallon of adrenaline and goes bounding over the landscape like a goosed gazelle to save his life, and then after he saves it he stops and looks back and says, what the hell am I running for, my name's not Smith. He was roused from these somber reflections by the sound of chimes in the passageway. He finished the martini and went back to the dining room. Karen and Madeleine Lennox were already there, standing talking to Captain Steen. He suddenly remembered he'd forgotten all about the drink he'd promised Mrs. Lennox.

She hadn't. Somewhat overdressed and made-up, she accused him archly as he walked in, 'Mr. Goddard, I must inform you your verbal promise isn't worth the paper it's written on.'

'Guilty, with extenuating circumstances, Your Honor,' Goddard said with a grin. 'I dozed off.' He turned to Karen. 'Mrs. Brooke, if I'm typical of the characters you save, I wouldn't blame you if you went into some other line of work.'

She smiled, and said, 'I don't believe you've met Mr. Egerton.' Goddard turned. Egerton had just entered behind him, looking very striking with the neat gray hair and moustache, the black eye-patch, and a white jacket over a white sport shirt. He shook hands warmly,

and said, 'Welcome aboard, Mr. Goddard.' Beaming at the two women, he added, 'Sporting of you, I must say, to go to all that trouble so we'd have a fourth for bridge.'

Lind came in then, and they sat down. Egerton was on Goddard's left, next to Lind at the end of the table. This was the side of the table next to the bulkhead, so they were facing toward the doorway. Just as Captain Steen was about to say grace, Krasicki appeared in the door. He stopped abruptly, staring at Egerton. Goddard, watching him, was aware of something faintly disturbing about it. Krasicki gave a start then, and came on in. Karen spoke to him kindly.

'I think you've met everyone except Mr. Egerton. This is Mr. Krasicki.'

Egerton stood up and held out his hand. 'Delighted, Mr. Krasicki. And happy to see you're feeling better.'

Krasicki mumbled something and shook hands. They sat down, Krasicki directly across from Goddard. Captain Steen said grace, and the steward began to take their orders. Egerton turned to Goddard, and said, 'I understand you're in the cinema.'

'I used to be,' Goddard said.

'He's gathering material for his next opus,' Lind said. '*Across the Pacific on a Hot-Water Bottle.*'

There was a laugh, and Captain Steen inquired, 'Was your boat insured?'

'No,' Goddard said. 'The theory was that if it went to the bottom, the odds were that I would too. Sound, I thought, but Mrs. Brooke loused it up.'

'Women,' Egerton agreed, 'are incapable of understanding dedication to a scientific principle.'

'Exactly,' Lind said. 'You have to feel sorry for them. They never experience the deep personal satisfaction of being dead and knowing they were right.'

'Karen,' Mrs. Lennox remarked. 'I think we're outnumbered. Should we counterattack or retreat?'

'Maybe Mr. Krasicki is on our side,' Karen replied. She turned and smiled at the Pole, trying to put him at ease in this exchange that was obviously too much for

his English. But the latter was paying no attention. He was staring across the table again at Walter Egerton with almost maniac intensity.

'You have—' He stopped, appearing to grope for words. 'You are many years in Argentina?'

'Why, yes, about twenty,' Egerton replied.

'Twenty? Twenty?' Krasicki repeated, frowning. He looked at Lind.

'*Zwanzig*,' Lind translated. He added, for the others, 'Mr. Krasicki is actually quite a linguist. He speaks Polish, Russian, German, and Portuguese, but German is the only one I know.'

'*Zwanzig*. Aha,' Krasicki muttered, still never taking his eyes from the Englishman's face. 'You have—how do you say?— become unactive—' He gave up then and spoke to Lind in rapid German. Lind nodded and turned to Egerton.

'He says you must have retired quite young.'

Even Egerton's natural poise was a little shaken by that unwavering scrutiny, but he managed to smile. 'Thank you, Mr. Krasicki; that's quite flattering. But I was invalided out. Spot of bad luck in Normandy.'

Lind translated this for the Pole. The dining room steward was putting their orders in front of them, but no one began eating. There was another exchange in German between Krasicki and Lind. Lind shook his head as he spoke, and Goddard's impression was that the Pole had said something he was reluctant to translate. Krasicki turned to Egerton again and tried English.

'The—aye? The—eye?'

The two women turned their attention to their plates embarrassed by this bad taste, but Goddard continued to watch, aware of some undercurrent here that was more serious than poor manners.

'Ah—yes,' Egerton said stiffly. 'That, among other things.'

It was Karen who smoothed it over. She smiled at Goddard and asked, 'You do play bridge, I hope?'

‘A little mama-papa bridge,’ Goddard replied. ‘Nothing spectacular. And only after a careful search for weapons.’

The awkwardness passed for the moment, and conversation became general. Goddard continued to study Krasicki between replies to Mrs. Lennox’ chatter on his right. The Pole appeared to withdraw inside himself, eating silently as he bent over his plate, oblivious to the others except to look up now and then at Egerton. Then in a lull he began a rapid exchange in German with Lind. They both smiled. Krasicki turned then and included Egerton in the conversation, still in German. To Goddard’s surprise, Egerton replied in the same language. The Pole stiffened, and his eyes glittered accusingly.

‘Ah! You speak German. I thought you were English.’

‘Yes, of course I speak it,’ Egerton said easily. ‘I attended Heidelberg for two years. Before Sandhurst, that is.’

The others had fallen silent. Krasicki’s eyes continued to burn into Egerton. ‘But you did not say this.’

Egerton shrugged, obviously annoyed but still urbane. ‘Well, really, old boy, one doesn’t normally go about boasting of one’s accomplishments. Bit of a bore to one and all, what?’

Krasicki made no reply, but Goddard noted the nervous twitching at the corner of his mouth. Karen came to the rescue again. ‘I think what we should do is find out why Mr. Goddard doesn’t speak Hollywood.’

The others laughed, and Madeleine Lennox exclaimed, ‘Yes. What about this Mrs. Lennox bit? I thought you were supposed to say Madeleine baby.’

Krasicki bent over his plate again, but his lips were moving silently as though he were talking to himself. Then abruptly he stood up, threw down his napkin, and stalked out.

There was a moment of embarrassed silence, and then Karen said, ‘The poor thing; he’s been very ill.’

Lind nodded. ‘And I think he had a pretty rough time of it during the war. He has horrible nightmares.’

'Pity,' Egerton agreed. 'A frightful shame—all that wreckage.'

The others began to question Goddard about film-making, and the incident was forgotten. The dining room steward went out to get coffee. Goddard was relating a comic foul-up of some kind on a sound stage and everybody was laughing when in the edge of his peripheral vision he saw Krasicki reappear in the doorway. He thought the Pole had come back to excuse himself or perhaps to finish his dinner, and by the time he'd got a good look at the man's face and the foaming madness in his eyes it was too late to do anything but witness it.

Krasicki screamed something that sounded like *mire!* *You go mire!*, the tendons standing out on his throat, and the mindless, primordial sound of it lifted the hair on Goddard's neck. He came on, raving in some language Goddard had never heard, while spittle ran out of the corner of his mouth, and raised the automatic in his right hand and shot Egerton through the chest at a distance of six feet.

Both women screamed with the crash of the gun, and Egerton shook under the impact of the slug. Goddard hit Madeleine Lennox with a shoulder, driving her to the deck on the other side of her chair, while Captain Steen snatched at Karen and threw her down. Lind was out of his chair then, lunging around the corner of the table for the Pole, who went on spraying spittle across it with the demonic force of his outcry which rode up over the continuous screaming of the women and then was punctuated by the crash of the gun as he shot again. Egerton jerked spasmodically against the back of his chair and started to slump.

Lind had Krasicki's arm then, swinging it up and grabbing for the gun, while Captain Steen and Goddard were trying to get around the other end of the table to reach them. Krasicki was still pulling the trigger. The third shot smashed the overhead light fixture, showering glass, and the fourth, as Lind spun him around, shattered the long mirror on the bulkhead across the room.

Lind tore the gun from his grasp, bumped him under the jaw with a forearm, and shoved. Krasicki slammed backward and collapsed on deck like a bundle of rags. The screams cut off then, and there was an instant of unearthly silence, broken only by the tinkle of glass as another shard of the mirror fell to the deck and broke. The dining room steward came running in followed by Barset, who braked to a stop, and whispered, 'Sweet, suffering mother of Christ!'

Goddard turned and looked at Egerton. A trickle of blood ran out of the corner of his mouth, and under the hand clutching at his chest the white shirt was stained with a growing circle of red. His left hand clawed at the tablecloth as he tried to hold himself erect, and when he toppled and fell over sideways he dragged it with him to the accompaniment of breaking china and a marimba tinkling of silverware.

5

Lind flipped the safety on the gun and tossed it to Captain Steen. Already lunging around the end of the table toward Egerton, he snapped at Baret and the dining room steward, 'Tie him up and sit on him. Better get help; he's crazy.' 'I'll send for the bos'n,' Steen said.

Goddard jumped to help Lind. They got Egerton out from behind the table and picked him up by shoulders and legs. Madeleine Lennox and Karen ran out of the door, sobbing as they averted their faces from the limp and bloodstained figure of the Englishman. Lind and Goddard hurried down the passageway with him and put him on the bunk in his cabin.

'The first-aid kit on the settee in my cabin,' Lind said. 'And bring the sterilizer, the whole thing.'

'Right.' Goddard ran up to the next deck. Men were coming out of the officers' messroom. 'What is it?' they asked. 'What happened?'

'Krasicki went berserk,' Goddard said. 'Shot Egerton.'

The sterilizer was secured to the desk with catches. He released them, unplugged it, and grabbed up the first-aid kit. When he hurried back into Egerton's cabin, Lind was bent over the bunk. He straightened, holding a bloodstained towel, and gestured wearily.

‘Put ‘em down anywhere,’ he said. ‘A couple of aspirin would have done just as well.’

Goddard looked past him, and nodded. Egerton was already unconscious and obviously dying of massive hemorrhage. Lind had spread the jacket open and cut the shirt away, exposing his chest. Blood was everywhere, in the thick mat of gray hair, running down his ribs, and staining the jacket and bedspread beside him. The pillow under the side of his mouth was soaked with it. The eye was closed, and his breathing ragged and labored. There was no froth in the blood on his chest Goddard noted; he would have thought there would be, since one or both the shots must have gone through the lungs. He was about to mention this to Lind when Captain Steen appeared in the doorway. Sparks, he said, was trying to locate a ship in the area with a doctor. Lind shook his head.

‘It’s no use,’ he said. He felt Egerton’s pulse, gave a despairing shrug, and gently lowered the wrist. ‘Just a matter of minutes.’

‘Seems dark for arterial blood,’ Goddard remarked, wondering at the same time what difference it made. When you lost enough of it, you died, no matter what shade it was.

‘Probably the pulmonary,’ Lind replied. ‘It carries venous blood.’

Egerton’s breathing changed to a gasping rattle that went on for over a minute and then stopped abruptly. Lind reached for the wrist again, probing for the pulse that had apparently ceased. He put it down and gently raised the eyelid with a thumb to look at the pupil. He sighed and closed the eye.

‘That’s all,’ he said.

Captain Steen lowered his head. He appeared to be praying. Then he straightened and said, ‘I’ll tell the steward to bring a sheet.’

Lind turned on the basin tap to wash the blood from his hands. Goddard turned to go out. He felt something under his shoe and looked down. It appeared to be a tiny awl. He pushed it over against the bulkhead with his foot and went out into the passageway, and as he

neared the entrance to the dining room he heard the sudden, mad sound of Krasicki's voice again. He looked in, and at the same moment Lind ran past him, still drying his hands on a towel.

Captain Steen was in the room, along with Barset and two other men, one of whom Goddard recognized as the AB who'd given him the shin. The other was a squat, ugly man in his thirties with almost grotesquely massive shoulders and arms. He had an old knife scar in the corner of his mouth and the coldest blue eyes Goddard had ever seen. Krasicki's hands were bound in front of him and his feet were tied together, but he was sitting up and trying to slide backward away from the men in front of him, still shouting in that unknown language. The squat man and the AB reached down and caught his arms to pick him up. He shrank away from them, and screamed.

'Easy, Boats,' Lind said. 'Let me try to talk to him.' The two men let go and stepped back. Lind knelt and spoke quietly to Krasicki. 'We're not going to hurt you. Everything's all right.'

This had no effect at all; the mad eyes were completely without comprehension. Lind spoke in German. Insulated within his madness, Krasicki paid no attention, merely continuing to rave in the language none of them understood.

Lind spoke to Barset. 'Take a couple of your men and canvass the whole crew; see if anybody speaks Polish. It might help some if we knew what he's saying.'

'We already have,' Barset replied. 'No dice.'

'Well, we've got to quiet him down,' Lind said. He went out and came back with the first-aid kit. He filled a hypodermic syringe and motioned for the bos'n and AB to hold Krasicki. When the latter saw the syringe, as old and frail as he was it took three men to pin him down sufficiently for Lind to inject the sedative. Goddard felt sick.

In a few minutes Krasicki began to subside. He slumped. 'Get a stretcher,' Lind said to the bos'n.

Goddard went forward to the lounge. It was empty. He wondered if Karen and Mrs. Lennox had gone to

their cabins. Then he saw them pass in front of one of the portholes. He went on deck and around to the forward side of the midships house. They were leaning on the rail, still looking badly shaken as they watched the reddening western sky. He told them Egerton was dead.

Madeleine Lennox said faintly, 'I'll have nightmares the rest of my life. That poor man.'

All three exchanged a glance then with the identical thought: *Which one?*

'What will happen to Mr. Krasicki?' Karen asked.

'They'll turn him over to the Philippine authorities,' Goddard said, 'but after that it'll be like Kafka with LSD. An Englishman is murdered on the high seas by a Pole with Brazilian citizenship who's obviously insane and couldn't be legally guilty of murder in the first place, and it all happens on a Panamanian ship that's probably never been to Panama. He'll be committed, but at his age I doubt he'll live till they figure out where.'

'And what about poor Mr. Egerton?' Madeleine Lennox asked. 'Will he be buried at sea?'

'I don't know,' Goddard replied. 'Depends on what they hear from the next of kin.' It was probably another twelve days to Manila, but the body could be preserved by packing it in ice if the *Leander's* facilities were up to it.

Karen Brooke shuddered. 'It's so horribly senseless. Just because Mr. Egerton reminded him of somebody.'

'Some German, apparently,' Goddard agreed. 'The chances are he was in a concentration camp during the war. Incidentally, why do you say Mr. Egerton, if he was a colonel?'

'He asked us to,' Karen said. 'He was retired, he said, and "colonel" sounded pompous and Blimp-ish.' Tears came into her eyes then, and she brushed at them with her fingertips. 'Oh, damn! He was so sweet.'

They fell silent, watching the splendor of sunset as the *Leander* plowed ahead across the gently undulating sea. Goddard thought moodily of man's journey through

this flicker of light between the two darkesses, a journey he fondly believed he charted and scheduled in spite of the fact it lay across a landscape subject to a random precipitation of falling safes. Egerton lived through the attempts of countless trained and dangerous men to kill him during World War II, and then was casually swatted by a frail and helpless old man about as deadly as Peter Rabbit except that he was mad. *As flies to wanton boys, are we to the gods; they kill us for their sport.*

Lind came around the corner of the deckhouse then, and beckoned to him. 'I want to show you something,' he said. Goddard followed him. They went back to Egerton's cabin. The bos'n and AB were standing outside the door, and Captain Steen was just inside. Egerton's body was still on the bunk, now covered with a sheet, the ends of the stretcher projecting from under it.

'Look at this,' Lind said. He stepped to the head of the bunk and pulled back the sheet from Egerton's face. The black eye patch had been removed and was lying beside his cheek. Goddard gave a little start of surprise.

'I'll be damned,' he said. Both the eyes were closed, but the left, which had been covered with the patch, bore the same rounded contour of lid as the other.

'It came off when we were rolling him onto the stretcher,' Lind said. With a thumb he gently pushed the lid up as far as the iris, and then closed it again. 'Perfectly normal eye. The patch was a phony.'

'Why?' Goddard asked. 'But maybe there was something wrong that made it light-sensitive.'

'Photophobia?' Lind said. 'He obviously didn't have measles, and in iritis and other inflamed conditions the eye's as red as a grape. Anyway, it was on his passport picture.'

Captain Steen held out the passport, opened to the photograph. It was a perfect likeness of the slender, patrician face, and the eye patch was there. 'We're involving you in this, Air. Goddard,' Steen explained,

'because obviously you are already involved. We'll all have to testify at a hearing in Manila.'

'Yes, of course,' Goddard said. 'But I don't get the fake eye patch.' He looked at Lind. 'Any ideas?'

Lind shook his head. 'No. Unless he was mentally a little off himself, but it didn't show in any other area.'

'Beats me,' Goddard said. 'But what about burial? Docs his passport give the name of somebody to be notified?'

'Yes,' Captain Steen said. 'The same as he gave on his reservation application.' He turned a page in the passport. 'It's apparently not a relative, though. A *Señora* Consuela Santos, in Buenos Aires. She's being notified now.'

Goddard nodded. Lind pulled the sheet back over Egerton's face, and called out, 'All right, Boats.'

Goddard went back to his cabin and mixed a double martini in a water tumbler. He carried it into the lounge. It was dark outside now, and the lights were turned on. Barset came in to draw the curtains over the portholes, since they were directly below the bridge. He shook his head, and sighed.

'Ke-rist! My hair's still going up and down like a porcupine's quills.'

'Where'd they put Krasicki?' Goddard asked.

'In the hospital, where you were. Engineers installed a hasp and padlock on it. Mate shot enough junk in him to keep him quiet all night, but if he stays screamin' crazy they may have to move him forward somewhere. Nobody'd ever get any sleep down there.'

'Let's hope he quiets down. He's not very strong anyway; he'll kill himself.'

'Probably be better off, the poor old bastard. Jesus, what a home away from home; a crazy on one deck and a stiff on another.' Barset sat down and lit a cigarette. 'Tell me something. Around Hollywood, is the tail situation really as wild as they say it is? I mean, you pick it off trees, like oranges?'

'I know,' Goddard said, 'you want to become an actor.'

‘Nah! I’m not that goofy. But I often thought I might try to get on in the commissary of one of those studios. Not as a busboy or anything like that, you understand; I’ve had a lot of experience in the food business and catering. Is it pretty much union?’

‘Everything’s strongly unionized,’ Goddard replied.

‘Umh-umh,’ Barset said. ‘Well, I’d like to talk to you about it sometime. Maybe you could give me a couple of contacts.’ He went out.

Goddard’s thoughts returned to Egerton and the puzzle of the affected eye patch. It could never make any sense at all as long as you assumed that Egerton was what he said he was and gave every evidence of actually being: an English officer with a distaste for ostentation, invalided out of the army for typically understated wounds. So the next assumption had to be that the whole Egerton identity was a fake, an image that had been skillfully put together by a smooth con artist. But what in the name of God would a con man be doing in a seagoing low-rent district like this? No doubt there were numbers of them working the first class on the trans-Atlantic liners, but on here if he cleaned out the whole passenger list he wouldn’t make expenses.

Karen and Madeleine Lennox came in. He told them about it. They were incredulous, and then as mystified as he was. It was totally unlike Mr. Egerton. ‘Where did he join the ship?’ Goddard asked. ‘At Callao,’ Karen replied. ‘We all did.’ But he and Krasicki didn’t see each other at all?

Karen frowned thoughtfully. ‘No, they came aboard at different times; Mr. Krasicki just before we sailed, I think. Then he must have become ill almost immediately; we thought for the first day or so he was just seasick, until Mr. Lind said he had a fever. They did see each other once before today, though.’ She told them about the episode when Goddard was being rescued. ‘It was the same thing,’ she added. ‘I mean, the impression that Mr. Krasicki thought he recognized Mr. Egerton, but Mr. Egerton had never seen him at all.’

'Delusion.' Goddard nodded. 'Paranoia. God knows what.' But why had Krasicki asked about the eye? Captain Steen came in then to assure the two women that Krasicki was safely locked up and under sedation. He was soothing and apologetic to them, but bleakly distressed over the martini Goddard was sipping.

'I'm surprised, Mr. Goddard, that you wouldn't have shown a little more respect for the dead.'

It must be, Goddard thought, that they never attempt to reconcile the flaws in their argument simply because they're not aware of them. They assure us our departed brother's not just an unfortunate lump of cooling meat that'll never see another sunrise or hear a mockingbird, or feel softness under him or wine in his belly again, or design a toilet seat he's proud of. Perish the thought. He hasn't died at all; he's just gone on to the richer, more beautiful life for which this was merely the apprenticeship; and now that he's caught the brass ring and entered into this eternal paradise, for some unaccountable reason they feel sorry for him. Apparently his luck ran out before he could enjoy all the suffering he was entitled to.

'It's only a different estimate of the appropriate, Captain,' he said. 'And since there's no way we can poll Colonel Egerton, we'll never know who was right.'

Sparks entered, carrying a message form. He ignored the others and spoke to Captain Steen. 'I got it off, by way of KPH in California. And then I finally raised that Argentine-station that had a message for us.' He held it out. 'It was for Colonel Egerton.'

'It's a little late, Sparks.'

'Yes sir. I'm sorry I couldn't get it earlier, but it was only filed this morning. And they should have routed it through one of the North American stations.'

'Well, I'd better see what it is.' Steen opened it, and looked surprised. 'Hmmm. It's signed Consuela. That must be Consuela Santos, the same woman our message is to.'

'Yes, sir. Probably. We should have an answer from her in a few hours. I'll stand by.' The operator went out.

'It's not important,' Steen said wearily, 'but it would have been nice if he could have received it.' He read the message aloud. *'Colonel Walter Egerton S/S Leander Enrique joins me in wishing you bon voyage All our love Consuela.'*

Karen and Madeleine Lennox both had tears in their eyes at the tragic and unintended aptness of the message under the circumstances. Goddard was conscious of the thought that six days out was a little late for filing a bon voyage message. Well, the sailings of freighters were usually erratic and unpredictable.

* * *

The dining room was empty when Goddard went in at a quarter after eight the next morning. Captain Steen had already had breakfast, the young steward said, and the two women had asked for coffee and fruit juice in their cabins.

'I don't think I blame them,' Goddard said. It would take a little time to knock some of the sharp edges off the memory of their last meal here. 'What's your name, steward?'

'Karl,' the youth said. 'Karl Berger.'

'Well, I think all I want, Karl, is some coffee and a dish of the stewed apricots.'

The crew had done what it could to eradicate the traces. A new light fixture of a different type had been installed in the overhead, and the broken mirror removed. Where the bullet had entered the bulkhead behind the mirror, the hole had been drilled out and a plug installed, stained to approximate the shade of the paneling. Goddard finished the fruit, lighted a cigarette, and was sipping coffee when he was struck by the thought that it was curious that Krasicki should have had a gun aboard. No doubt it had been in that triple-locked steamer trunk Basset had spoken of, but unless the trunk had a Customs-proof secret compartment he was asking for trouble in wholesale lots. The authorities of all countries took a very dim view of tourists packing handguns. He shrugged. The

man was unbalanced; he might have been carrying around a whole arsenal.

Goddard turned then and looked at the back of Egerton's chair beside him. Apparently neither of the bullets had gone on through; the backrest was unmarked. Unless, he thought, they had passed under it, between it and the seat, in the space between the two upright members. He looked around at the bulkhead directly behind it, thinking this was a grisly pastime to accompany his morning coffee. There was no trace of a bullet hole in the paneling.

'They didn't go through, Sherlock,' a voice said behind him. Goddard turned. Lind was smiling at him from the doorway, seeming to fill it with his height and great width of shoulder. He came on in and sat down.

'I was just wondering about it,' Goddard said. 'What was the caliber of the gun?'

'Nine millimeter,' Lind said. 'It was a Czech automatic. But it's not the caliber that matters; it's what it hits. You got a good grip on your breakfast?'

'Sure,' Goddard said.

'I probed both of 'em. One broke a rib going in, and as near as I could tell from the angle the second one hit one of the vertebrae. There was no exit wound at all, which is why there was so much hemorrhaging through the entrance wounds. Where they come out, you could drain a swimming pool.'

'I know,' Goddard said. Something about it still bothered him, but he wasn't sure what it was; anyway, Lind knew more about it than he did. 'Any word yet from Consuela Santos?'

'Yeah.' Lind lit a cigarette. 'Skipper got a reply about one this morning. She says Egerton had no living relatives except a cousin he'd been out of touch with for years. She thought he was in Australia, but she doesn't know where, and he could be dead himself by now.'

'So you'll bury him at sea?'

Lind nodded. 'That's all we can do, and turn his effects over to the British consul in Manila. It'll be at

four this afternoon, just at the change of watch. Have you ever seen one?’

‘No,’ Goddard said.

‘Not much to it.’ There was a nicker of amusement in the sardonic blue eyes. ‘Dress is optional. With your extensive wardrobe, I’d suggest a frock coat, black top hat, and a dark ascot.’ He looked at his watch. ‘I’ve got to check Krasicki again, see if I can get through to him. You want to come along?’

‘Sure.’ Goddard started to get up.

‘Finish your coffee. There’s plenty of time.’

‘Do you know anything about him at all?’ Goddard asked. ‘Family? Why he was going to Manila?’

Lind nodded. ‘I talked to him quite a bit while I was trying to treat his fever. He doesn’t know whether he has any family or not; he was never able to find any of them after the war. He was in the Polish army and taken prisoner in 1939. He’s Jewish, of course, so he went the usual route, the concentration camps, cattle cars, labor battalions, medical experimentation, waiting for the gas chamber. Somewhere along the line I think he was castrated. Couple of times I’ve gone into his cabin and he’d have a hand in his crotch, crying—’

‘Oh, Christ.’ Goddard said.

‘Yeah. Anyway, after the war he was a DP, shuffled around from one country to another, but he finally made it to Brazil and they let him become a citizen. He’s a botanist, and before the war was an associate professor of silviculture at Cracow University. He became quite an expert on tropical hardwoods, and does surveys for timber exporters. He just finished one over in the *montaña* of Peru, and was going to do the same thing in Mindanao and Luzon. Likes being out in the jungle; he’s afraid of people.’

‘You wonder why,’ Goddard said.

They went outside and down the ladder to the deck below. It was a brassy, stifling morning with no breeze at all except that set up by the forward progress of the ship itself. The bow wave spread outward and back in a long V toward the horizon, and far out a school of

porpoises leaped and played in it, keeping pace with its steady march across the flat and unending prairie of the sea. Off to port, several miles away, was a piled dark mass of thunderheads shot through with the fitful play of lightning and trailing a purple veil of rain.

‘Going to have some squalls today,’ Lind said.

No sound issued from the padlocked door. Lind unsnapped the lock, and they went in. Krasicki, clad only in the wrinkled white linen trousers and no longer bound, lay on one of the lower bunks. His eyes were open, but he did not even turn his head as they entered, and gave no indication he was aware of them at all. Goddard watched carefully as Lind spoke to him in English, and then in German, but there was no expression of any kind in the eyes, simply blankness. Except for the faint rise and fall of the hairless and emaciated chest, and the motion of a hand as he brushed an imaginary fly from in front of his face, he might have been a corpse. University professor to vegetable, by easy stages, Goddard thought. The *wreckage*, Egerton had said; and then he’d been killed by it. ‘The lines are all down,’ he said.

Lind nodded. ‘Complete withdrawal. There may be a chance it’s only temporary; all we can do is wait.’

The Filipino boy entered with a bowl of fruit, some sandwiches, and water. Goddard noted that the bowl and pitcher were of soft plastic and the sandwiches were on a paper plate. Krasicki’s belt had been removed, and the garish tie was nowhere in the room. They were taking no chances of a suicide attempt. There was no head, but he had been given a sanitary pail; any attempt to lead him to a toilet might provoke another outburst.

They went out. As Lind was relocking the door, Goddard remarked, ‘It’s odd he’s so pale; I mean, with an outdoor job.’

‘Heliophobe,’ Lind said. ‘Can’t stand sunlight at all; his skin burns like a crisp, so he has to stay covered completely. And as a matter of fact, in the jungle there’s practically no sunlight anyway. He had kind of a lame botanical joke about it; said if he were a plant

he'd be classified as negatively heliotropic. It means turning away from the sun.' He broke off as they came to a companionway at the end of the passage. 'Come on down. You can see how it's done.'

'Egerton?' Goddard asked.

'Yeah. Bos'n's working on him now.'

They went down to the next deck. There was a dimly lighted passageway here outside the engine room casing which contained a number of locked storerooms and the steward's big freezer and chill box. One of the doors was unlocked. Lind opened it and stuck his head in. 'How you doing, Boats?' He went in, followed by Goddard.

It was a bleak steel cubicle with a single overhead light, empty except for two wooden horses with a door lying across them. Egerton's body was on the door, being sewn into the canvas burial sack by the bos'n and one of the sailors, a blond-bearded, heavily built man in his twenties whom Goddard had heard addressed as Otto. They looked up from their work and nodded, but said nothing. The sack was a single long strip of white canvas a yard wide, doubled under Egerton's feet and stitched up the sides by the two men with sail needles and white twine. They were almost finished; only the head remained exposed. The gray hair was still neat, even in death, Goddard noted, and the slender face was pale as marble under the naked light.

'It's weighted at the foot,' Lind said. 'The engineers gave us the cap of an old bearing. Weighs about fifty pounds.'

Captain Steen came in, carrying a rolled flag. 'Good morning, Mr. Goddard,' he said, and turned to the mate. 'Here's the Union Jack, Mr. Lind.'

Lind took the flag. 'After well-deck, port side; that all right?'

'Yes. And I would appreciate it if everybody who can would change to shore clothes. That doesn't include the black gang on watch, of course.'

Lind nodded. 'I'll pass the word. Incidentally, there are two British subjects in the crew; the eight-to-twelve

fireman and the second cook. It might be a gesture of some kind if we asked them to bear a hand bringing the body out. And maybe Mr. Goddard would like to represent the passengers.'

'I'd be glad to,' Goddard said.

He watched moodily as the bos'n pulled the remaining canvas up over Egerton's face and matched the corners. The two men went on stitching up the edges of the white anonymous sack.

6

There were poisonous-looking squalls on the horizon on both sides of them, but here the sun bore down with leaden weight and there was a dead stillness to the air like the feeling of vacuum before a tornado. It was oppressive, and Goddard found himself wishing nervously that Captain Steen would advance the service a few minutes so they could complete it before one of the squalls came screaming down on them and wrecked Egerton's chances of departing from the visible world with a little grace and dignity. But he'd said four p.m., and apparently four it would be.

A single wooden horse had been set five feet in from the bulwark on the port side of the after well-deck, and all the crew not on watch on the bridge or in the engine room were gathered in a semicircle about it, most of them in shore-going trousers and white shirts that were already limp with perspiration by the time they'd got them on. Lind was wearing tropical whites, the first time Goddard had seen him in uniform. In the background were two or three of the black gang, just come up from below and still in singlets and sweat rags. Goddard was standing by the horse with Lind, the bos'n, and the two English members of the crew, the only ones of the whole assemblage wearing ties.

There was a growl of thunder from one of the squalls. Then Goddard saw Karen Brooke and Madeleine Lennox coming down the ladder from the deck above, followed by Captain Steen in full uniform with jacket, carrying his Bible. The two women were in simple white summer dresses. Four bells struck, followed immediately by the jingle of the engine room telegraph. The engine stopped, and in a moment the ship began to go astern as the second mate backed her down to take the way off her.

Lind nodded to the bos'n. 'All right, Boats.'

The dogs had been knocked loose and the steel door opening onto the well-deck pulled back and latched. Goddard followed the bos'n and the two Englishmen into the passageway. The door to the small cubicle was open, and the white burial sack still lay upon the door supported by the two horses, now with the Union Jack draped across it. The vibration of the reversed engine ceased and there was silence as they picked up the door by its four corners and carried it down the passageway into the sullen glare of afternoon. They put it down with one end on the wooden horse and the other extending out over the bulwark about a foot, the weighted end of the sack toward the sea. They stepped back, Goddard positioning himself next to the bulwark. He looked over the side. The *Leander* was still ghosting through the water, but slowing as she gradually came to rest.

'Let us bow our heads,' Captain Steen said. The sun beat down, and there was another roll of thunder as he intoned the prayer. When he said, 'Amen,' at last, they straightened and there was a general shuffling of feet. Lind stepped to the bulwark and looked down. He turned and nodded to the captain. The *Leander* was stopped.

Lind and the bos'n positioned themselves at opposite corners of the door where it rested on the horse. Captain Steen stood before it, opened the Bible, and began to read the sea burial service.

'Man that is born of woman hath but a short time to live and is full of misery; he cometh up and is cut down

like a flower; he fleeth as if he were a shadow, and never continueth in one stay. For as much as it hath pleased the Almighty God in His great mercy to take unto Himself the soul of our dear brother here departed: we therefore commit his body to the deep.'

With the last words, Lind and the bos'n raised the end of the door, holding the upper edge of the Union Jack clamped against it. The weighted burial sack slid from under the flag and dropped over the bulwark into the sea. It splashed below them. Goddard looked down. The top of the sack was ballooned with the air trapped inside it, and it sank slowly at first, trailing bubbles, as it began its long slide into the abyss. He followed it moodily, being very careful not to think of Gerry's funeral five months ago, and considered that Egerton would have liked it. 'Good show; didn't drag on with a lot of silly eulogies and bore the chaps, what?'

It began to fade from view. There was another growling reverberation of thunder along the horizon, and Lind turned and signed to the captain. It was well below the propeller now. Captain Steen spoke to one of the crew. 'Tell Mr. VanDoorn he can get under way.' Goddard looked around at Karen Brooke and Madeleine Lennox. They both had tears in their eyes

Dinner began quietly. Goddard had had three martinis but could get no lift from them at all. Depression weighed on everybody except possibly Lind, and even he was less than his usual vital self. The weather did little to improve their mood, Goddard thought. They still hadn't run into a squall, but the stillness and the muggy, oppressive heat continued. The typewritten menu was as limp as a piece of cheesecloth, and cigarettes, ten minutes after a pack was opened, were almost too damp to bum. Both fans whirled at full speed in the dining room, circulating air that was already too saturated with moisture to have any cooling effect at all.

'One more day and we should be out of this,' Lind said. 'When we pick up the trades we'll be all right.' He turned to Goddard. 'Must drive you crazy, trying to get across it under sail.'

Goddard grinned. 'The secret of it is don't eat grapefruit.'

Even Lind looked mystified. Then Karen Brooke said, 'All right, I'll be the goat. Why?'

'The rinds float,' Goddard said. 'It does something to you when you can throw today's overboard and hit yesterday's with it.'

The wireless operator came in. He handed Captain Steen a message. 'I just got this from KPH in California. Manila's calling us too, but I think it may be the same message.'

'Thanks, Sparks.' Captain Steen tore it open, read it, and stood up abruptly. 'If you'll excuse us. Mr. Lind, will you come up to my office?'

They hurried out, followed by the wireless operator. Goddard and the two women looked at each other, puzzled and vaguely uneasy, and Madeleine Lennox asked, 'What on earth could that be?'

'Nothing serious,' Goddard said. 'My check bounced, and they're going to bill Mrs. Brooke for my passage.' 'That's the code of the sea?'

'It's invariable. Harsh, I'll admit, but the sea demands it. Well, I always wanted to be the pampered plaything of a beautiful woman.'

'I should warn you then,' Karen said, 'that my standard contract with pampered playthings has a clause they have to address me by my first name.'

It was no use; the banter fell flat. It was too hot to eat, the place weighed on their spirits, and they were all thinking of the radiogram. There was something very urgent about it for Captain Steen to depart that way. As if on cue, they got up and went out. Karen apologized to the dining room steward.

'It's no reflection on the food, Karl. It's just too hot.'

They went on deck on the port side and walked forward. The sun had disappeared behind another ominous mass of clouds in the west and there was a faintly sulfurous cast to the light. It was twenty minutes later when Goddard saw Lind come around the corner of the deckhouse aft and disappear into the

passageway. Something was happening, all right, if he hadn't gone back to his watch; the third mate relieved him only long enough for dinner. They walked back, and as they came abreast of the porthole of Egerton's cabin they saw the mate inside.

'What is it?' Goddard asked.

'All hell's breaking loose. Tell you about it in a minute.' Lind closed the porthole, and they could see him tightening down the dogs. They went around into the passageway. He was just emerging from the cabin. He locked the door and dropped the key in his pocket. 'Come on into the lounge.'

They followed him, completely mystified and conscious of a vague foreboding. When the women were seated, he said, 'You're already involved, so the skipper decided there's no point in any cloak-and-dagger secrecy about it. We're all going to be hit by a wave of police and newspaper reporters when we dock in Manila, and you might as well be prepared.'

'Egerton,' Goddard said.

Lind nodded. He took two folded radiograms from his shirt pocket, and handed one to Goddard. 'Read 'em aloud. This one first. They were filed about two hours apart, in Buenos Aires, and Sparks is having trouble keeping up now.'

Goddard unfolded it and started to read.

MASTER S/S LEANDER SAN FRANCISCO
RADIO

URGENTLY REQUEST IMMEDIATE
VERIFICATION FOLLOWING PHYSICAL
DESCRIPTION OF PASSENGER ABOARD
YOUR VESSEL USING NAME WALTER
EGERTON CARRYING BRITISH PASSPORT
AND CLAIMING BE EX-COLONEL ENGLISH
ARMY STOP WEARS EYE PATCH LEFT EYE
FIVE FEET ELEVEN ONE HUNDRED SIXTY
POUNDS GRAY HAIR GRAY MOUSTACHE
UPPER-CLASS ENGLISH ACCENT STOP IF
DESCRIPTION TALLIES IMPERATIVE DO

NOT AROUSE SUSPICIONS THIS MAN OR
REVEAL CONTENTS THIS MESSAGE AND
IF RADIO NEWS DISSEMINATED ABOARD
VESSEL PLEASE CENSOR ACCORDINGLY
STOP DELIVER NO MESSAGES TO HIM
STOP POLICE WILL BOARD VESSEL WITH
PILOT BOAT YOUR ARRIVAL MANILA STOP
PASSPORT IS FORGERY AND THERE IS
STRONG EVIDENCE MAN IS HUGO MAYR—

Goddard broke off and looked at Lind, suddenly remembering Krasicki's scream: *Mire! You go Mire!* There were simultaneous exclamations from the two women. 'That's what he was saying!'

Lind nodded. Goddard continued reading.

—HUGO MAYR STOP REPLY LT. HANS
RICHTER CARE BUENOS AIRES POLICE.

It was Karen who broke the silence. 'But he couldn't have been!' She cried out incredulously. 'That sweet, charming man!'

Lind spread his hands. 'Krasicki seemed to have no doubts.'

'But everybody's believed Mayr was dead,' Madeleine Lennox said. 'For over twenty years.'

'Not everybody,' Lind replied. 'They were still looking for him.'

'He must have discovered they were on his trail,' Goddard said, 'and tried to run for it.'

'My guess,' Lind said, 'is that Egerton was a new identity. Simply running wouldn't have done any good, if they were closing in on him.'

'Sure,' Goddard said. 'And wait—that wireless from *Señora* Santos. Warning, probably, that they were about to crack the Egerton identity, or were asking questions.'

'Good thinking, Sherlock,' Lind said. He handed over the second radiogram. 'You're right on the button.'

Goddard read it aloud.

MASTER S/S LEANDER SAN FRANCISCO
RADIO

JUST LEARNED THIS HOUR OF YOUR
WIRELESS TO CONSUELA SANTOS
REVEALING DEATH OF ALLEGED WALTER
EGERTON STOP HER TESTIMONY
APPEARS ESTABLISH CONCLUSIVELY
MAN WAS HUGO MAYR BUT IMPERATIVE
REPEAT IMPERATIVE YOU PRESERVE
BODY BY ANY MEANS POSSIBLE TO
PERMIT FINAL IDENTIFICATION
THROUGH FINGERPRINTS YOUR ARRIVAL
MANILA STOP ACKNOWLEDGE SOONEST
HANS RICHTER.

There was a moment of stunned silence. Then Goddard whistled softly. 'Buenos Aires time is—what? Sixtieth meridian?'

Lind nodded. 'Roughly four hours ahead of ship's time now.'

'There will be hell to pay. The first message was filed at least two hours before he was buried.'

"No, Sparks is in the clear,' Lind said. 'His hours of watch are set by international agreement, according to time zone. And it's no fault of the skipper's. He notified the responsible party named by the deceased, and was told there was nobody wishing to claim the body. And, anyway, the ship's not operated as a branch of the West German police; it's just an unfortunate foul-up, and not irrevocable, by any means. We've already anticipated the next message.'

'What? Oh.' Goddard saw what he meant. 'Sealing off the room.'

'Right,' Lind said. 'Skipper fired back a reply to the first message saying Egerton was dead and had been buried at sea, and then Sparks got the second one, from the same station. So they passed each other. It's obvious what they'll want. Apparently Mayr's fingerprints are on file, so if the room's untouched till we get to Manila it's almost certain the experts can raise enough prints to establish positive identification.'

'It was locked, anyway, wasn't it?' Goddard asked.

'Yes. Last night, just as soon as the bed linen was removed. But I've closed the porthole, and we'll put a padlock and hasp on the door to double-lock it.'

'Should be fairly routine,' Goddard agreed. 'There's the tooth glass, and the mirror on the medicine cabinet.'

Lind nodded. 'And the cabin steward says he had a set of silver-backed military hairbrushes. Well, I've got to get back on watch.'

He went out. The others were silent for a moment, trying to absorb the fact that the urbane and charming Englishman they'd all liked so well was the infamous Hugo Mayr, the butcher of Poland and the most widely sought Nazi since Eichmann.

Madeleine Lennox shook her head. 'No. I simply can't believe it. I try, but it just won't go down.'

'Of course,' Karen said, 'they'll find out it's a mistake.'

No, Goddard thought; they wouldn't find out it was a mistake. It all fitted together too beautifully; the fake eye patch alone destroyed the whole Egerton identity, so you started fresh from that point with a man who could be anybody. And when a West German police officer in Buenos Aires and a Polish concentration camp victim on a ship four thousand miles away simultaneously made the same identification, it was hard to argue with. He stopped then, and frowned, aware of something disturbing about it. Was it the fact that Krasicki had recognized him after a quarter century? No, he thought, the basic configuration of a man's face might change a great deal between, say, twenty and forty-five, but after that it was identifiable until it began to go to pieces in extreme old age. And the Pole had known him under circumstances calculated to impress the face on his memory, to say the least. No, it was something else. He knew what it was then, and smiled to himself.

He had dealt too long in illusion, and was trying to make life conform to the rules of fiction. Believe me, fellas, I'm not trying to pick the script to pieces, but

this I just can't buy. Look, we've got this Nazi *schmuck* the whole world's been looking for for twenty-five years, and then all of a sudden, on the same day and practically the same hour, two people make him, halfway around the world from each other, so he's killed, buried, and identified like it was something programmed on a computer. You see whattamean? He's running from this West German fuzz, and just *happens* to wind up on a ship with this poor joker he gelded in 1943. You're right, Mannie, it would never work.

Madeleine Lennox asked, 'What do you think, Mr. Goddard?'

'Oh,' he said. 'That the only tragedy of the whole thing is Krasicki.'

'Then you do believe he was Hugo Mayr?' Karen asked.

'Yes. And if they'd discovered it only a few hours earlier, Krasicki wouldn't have had to spend what's left of his life in an institution for the criminally insane.'

By eight thirty the two women had to concede there no longer appeared to be any doubt. The messages had continued to come in. As Lind had predicted, Lieutenant Richter requested the cabin be sealed immediately. Fingerprint experts would board the *Leander* the moment she arrived in Manila. And by now they had begun to grasp that they were the focus of the world's attention—briefly perhaps, but the world wanted news of just what had happened aboard this rusty old freighter lost in the immensity of the Pacific where the notorious Nazi war criminal had met his end. Captain Steen had already received requests from Associated Press, United Press International, and Reuters, bidding for the exclusive story. He sat drinking coffee with them in the lounge, dazed as they all were. Lind came in with the news there was no change in Krasicki's condition. He poured a cup of coffee and sat down.

Karen sighed. 'But it's still incredible that he fooled us so completely.'

Lind smiled. 'Well, he's been fooling a lot of people for over twenty years.'

'He was a consummate actor,' Goddard said. 'He had to be, or they'd have got him long ago.'

Madeleine Lennox lit a cigarette and smiled faintly. 'Well, that's praise from an authority. And incidentally, now that we can begin to think of the scene without screaming, how would you direct it in a picture?'

'I wouldn't change a thing,' Goddard replied.

'No, but I mean, the technical aspects of it, the breakdown of the individual parts, where the cameras would be.'

'Camera,' Goddard said. 'In a scene like that you can use only one, because of the lighting. You break it down into several setups, from different points of view, and shoot them individually. Usually, there's a master shot and then as much backup coverage as the director feels he needs or can get. The broken glass—' He stopped, and asked, 'Are you sure you want to hear this?'

'Yes,' she said. 'After the real, I don't think the make-believe will bother us. Do you Karen?'

Karen shook her head. Lind watched with interest.

'In the make-believe,' Goddard went on, 'it's still the touches of realism that give it the emotional impact. For instance, in a cheap Western a man is shot at point-blank range with a .44 and nothing happens except that, unaccountably, he drops dead. He's been slammed with something with the foot-pounds of energy of a moving truck, but there's not the slightest indication of it. With a good director, it's different. You see what happens.

'You shoot it this way: from my point of view, Krasicki with the gun, screaming, he raises the gun, and shoots. He's not shooting at anything, because Mayr's not even there beside me, and you may or may not use the shot itself, depending on the way it works best when you edit it. Then you set up just back of Krasicki and to one side to get the shot and the reaction of Mayr's body to the impact of the bullet. And on to the next setup for the best view of Mr. Lind going for him to get the gun, and of course when you go back to Mayr again the makeup people have applied the red dye to the shirt and the corner of the mouth.

'Breaking the light fixture and the mirror are just routine special effects jobs. It's a small explosive charge that's set off electrically—'

Madeleine Lennox interrupted. 'I see. Then all the shots are blanks, and not just the first two.'

'Oh, hell, yes; you never use live ammunition. You'd be locked up. But do you want to know the real accent of the scene, though, the thing that caps it, and that only a really superb director would ever think of?'

'What's that?' Lind asked. He had his legs swung over the side of the armchair, sipping coffee as he watched with that same smiling interest.

'When Mayr clutches the tablecloth as he falls. And in that terrible silence after all that screaming and gunfire you hear just a faint and very musical tinkling of silverware. That would leave 'em gasping. It'd be a genius of a director who could improve on the staging of that scene.'

Goddard was conscious then of something very cold moving up his back, as though somebody were drawing an icicle slowly along his spine, and the hair began to stab his neck. He was looking right at Lind, who was still smiling faintly, and as he realized what he'd said he knew he was staring straight into the eyes of the devil.

'Seems to be a case, then,' Lind murmured, 'of nature holding a mirror up to art.'

And only the two of them knew it, Goddard thought; the others didn't even suspect it.

7

How many were there? Goddard lay naked on his bunk in the darkness and thought about it. The bos'n and that big sailor named Otto were obviously part of the apparatus, but was that all? What about the wireless operator? Or even Captain Steen himself? That was the chilling part of it; they could be all around him and he didn't know who was involved. And maybe Lind already suspected him; with that diabolical mind you couldn't be sure of anything, except that underestimating it was a mistake nobody would ever make twice.

Lightning flashed, illuminating the whole interior of the cabin for over a second. Without conscious thought, he began counting: *one-oh, two-oh, three-oh . . . nine-oh*. A great crash of thunder rolled and reverberated over the ship. It was still two miles away but coming closer. The fan whirred, stirring the lifeless air, but the cabin was like a sweatbox. The wooden door was pulled back and hooked, but the screen, which had louvered slats across it for privacy, was latched. In the silence he heard the faint sound of six bells striking in the wheelhouse. It was eleven p.m.

It'd be a genius of a director who could improve on the staging of that scene. One more stupid remark like that, he thought, and the next burial sack that goes over the side will have somebody in it, all right. Lind

was the ship's doctor, and with an imagination of that order there'd be no dearth of illuminating detail to enter in the log as to cause of death. *Found dead in bunk of obvious cardiac arrest. Went to bed drunk, set mattress afire with cigarette, and suffocated. Suffered severe concussion in fall, and died two days later without regaining consciousness.* With enough morphine in him to kill a rhinoceros. The findings would be subject to review by higher medical authority, of course, except for the minor difficulty that the body was buried in the ooze five miles down in the Pacific Ocean.

But there's still a chance you're wrong, he told himself. You don't really know any of this; you're only assuming it. All you really know is that it could be the greatest piece of illusion since Thurston, you know why it could have been done, and how it could have been done, but there's no proof whatever that it was done. The cabin was lit up by another long flash of lightning, and the thunderclap came almost on the heels of it. A faint breeze came in the porthole now, with the smell of rain in it. Lightning flashed again, and the thunder was a sharp, cracking explosion that was very near.

Maybe he'd been led down the garden path by his subconscious distrust of all those coincidences of timing between the ship and Buenos Aires, and then when Mrs. Lennox had asked that ridiculous question about the first two shots being blanks he'd booby-trapped himself and leaped to the conclusion that just because it was possible it had to be true. Of course Mayr would like to be written off as dead, and what better way than being shot to death in front of five reliable witnesses and buried in the middle of the Pacific Ocean?

Then what about Krasicki, or whatever his real name was? If the thing had been staged, there had to be some plausible and foolproof escape already prearranged; no matter how great his devotion to the cause or how high the pay, it was hardly likely he would set himself up as a human sacrifice. Just how did they wave the wand and make him disappear?

An escape could be engineered, of course, even after he was turned over to the Philippine authorities, but there was a flaw in that. The chances were there had been a real Krasicki, a Polish Jew and a botanist resident in Brazil, who'd either died out in the jungle or received an individual dose of the 'final solution' so they could take over his identity, in which case this one could hardly be put on display for the world's press with the obvious danger that somebody who'd known the real one would spot the fraud. Passports could be doctored, if you had the price and connections, and a blown-up reproduction of a 2½ by 2½ passport photo would seldom be recognized by the sitter's mother, but turn those Time-Life photographers loose on the subject himself and you were in real trouble.

No, Krasicki—he might as well continue to call him that—Krasicki had to disappear before they reached Manila. And the simplest way, of course, was another death and sea burial. The cast and staging wouldn't have to be anywhere near as elaborate as the first one, and the groundwork for it had already been laid—the precautions against suicide, removal of the tie and belt and the serving of his food in soft plastic containers without cutlery. Conveniently, of course, nobody had given a thought to the fact that he could tear strips from the bed linen and hang himself. Some morning when they opened the door, he'd be dangling from those overhead pipes. Lind would send the other party, the witness, for something, cut him down, and announce with that manly and understated despair he did so well that it was no use; Krasicki'd been dead for hours.

He wondered what the mate would use to simulate the bruises of strangulation and to give the lips that distinctive blue of cyanosis, but no doubt that had been carefully planned. He'd done a beautiful job with Mayr's death pallor, with the aid of that white overhead light; probably just a light cream base of some kind with a liberal application of ordinary talc. Nobody had been within ten feet of the body except the two men who were sewing it into the sack. He'd been invited to

watch the final stitches, of course, but what about Steen? Was he a witness, or a party to it?

There was another flash of lightning, followed immediately by a crashing explosion of thunder that seemed to shake the whole cabin. Then he sat up, suddenly alert. Somebody had rapped on the screen door. He pulled on the boxer shorts and slipped over to it. Opening the louvers, he looked out through the screen into the lighted passageway. It was Madeleine Lennox, in pajamas and a nylon robe. He unlatched the screen. 'May I come in?' she asked.

'Sure,' he said. 'Just let me put on—'

She pushed the screen on back and stepped in. 'Men and their idiotic modesty. We could be dead in the next five seconds.'

There was another searing flash that illuminated the cabin as though an arc light had been turned in the porthole, with a simultaneous crash of thunder. He saw her wince. She really was afraid of it, he thought. 'I can't stand it, on a ship,' she said. 'There's nothing else for it to hit.'

'It's perfectly safe,' he reassured her. The darkness was impenetrable after the flash. 'Sparks grounds his antenna, and it acts as a lightning rod.'

'Thank you, Dr. Faraday,' she said. A groping hand brushed his arm, and then she was against his chest. 'Who the hell needs science?'

He took her in his arms; if she needed comforting, why be a churl about it? She felt very slender and soft inside the nylon robe, and her arms came up around his neck. In the next jagged flash of lightning he could see her uptilted face with the eyes closed, waiting to be kissed. He kissed her. Her mouth opened under his, and the arms tightened, and he noted with a detached sort of interest that he apparently wasn't impotent after all. At the same moment the squall struck with a wild shriek of wind and horizontal rain that came slashing through the porthole. He broke free, slammed it shut and tightened one of the dogs. Thunder crashed, and another searing flash of lightning left him blinded as he turned back to her.

They brushed together, and she was in his arms again, as adhesive as a Band-Aid. 'We might be more comfortable,' he suggested humorously, 'if we sat down.'

'I'm sure you would,' she murmured with her lips brushing his. 'And I feel guilty as hell about it.'

He unbelted the robe and slipped it back over her shoulders. It dropped, and was followed by the pajama top. She guided his hand to the zipper at the side of the remaining garment and helped him slide it down over the rounded hips. He picked her up and carried her to the bunk.

There was no holding her back or pacing her, and she had no need for subtlety of finesse in her headlong flight to throw herself shrieking over the precipice. She came to climax three times, crying out and digging her nails into his shoulders as though driven by some kinship with the demonic force of the squall battering at the ship. He would have timed his own release to coincide with this final paroxysm as a matter of simple courtesy and the obligatory gesture of appreciation under the circumstances, but his attention had strayed and he was thinking of the time the *Shoshone* had been knocked down in a squall that had caught her lying dead in the water, with the result that he was late and the act ended on a note of anticlimax. He expected to be taken to task for this wooden performance, but apparently she hadn't even noticed. Male flesh and willingness were all she demanded; she'd furnish the fire herself.

'In these days of instant everything,' she murmured, 'it's refreshing to meet a man who takes his time.'

He lit a cigarette for her. 'I thought you were afraid of lightning?'

'Afraid? I expected to die every second.' She sighed. 'But what a way to go. Men have no monopoly on that old barracks joke.'

The *Leander* was beginning to roll a little now as wind continued to howl around her. Rain drummed on the bulkhead beyond their heads. There was another simultaneous white flash of lightning and explosion of

thunder. She gasped and pressed against him, and at the same time a hand slid down his body and began its seductive manipulation. He wondered idly if Freud had never considered the phallus as a symbolic lightning rod.

* * *

There was no one else in the passageway except the young Filipino carrying a plastic cup of milk and a sandwich on a paper plate. Lind unlocked the door of the hospital and they entered. A single light was burning over the desk. The portholes were dogged against the fury of the squall outside, the deadlights closed down over them. Krasicki lay on the same lower bunk, motionless, staring blankly up at the bottom of the one above him. He gave no indication he was aware of them at all.

'He has closed the deadlights,' Gutierrez observed as he exchanged the sandwich for the stale one still untouched. 'You think he is afraid of the lightning?'

'No,' Lind said. 'Probably the portholes are eyes looking at him.'

The youth shook his head. '*Pobrecito*.' He went out, closing the door behind him.

Lind stepped over and bolted it, and turned. 'Okay,' he said softly.

Krasicki sat up and grinned with a display of yellowed teeth. 'How's it going?' he asked.

'Fine,' Lind replied. He pulled a chair over and sat down, leaning forward so they could converse in low tones covered by the tumult of the squall. 'Hugo sends his congratulations.'

'And what about our audience? Still no complaints about the performance?'

'No,' Lind said. 'They feel very sorry for you.'

'And the rendezvous? You're in contact with the boat?'

Lind nodded. 'It's directly on our course, waiting. Five hundred and fifty miles away at eight p.m. Rendezvous is two a.m., two nights from now.'

'We'll make it all right?'

'Yes, with several hours to spare. The timing will be adjusted by another engine room breakdown if necessary.' Lind smiled. 'And of course there's the other stoppage. For your funeral.'

Krasicki chuckled. 'Put on a good show for the sentimental sheep.'

'The rope's ready?' Lind asked.

'Yes.' Krasicki stood up and pulled back the blue bedspread of the upper bunk. Strips torn from one of the sheets had been braided into a length of thin, strong rope. Lind examined it. He nodded.

'Make one end fast to an overhead pipe,' he said. 'Stand on a lower bunk and put the noose around your neck. Tie it so it won't tighten, of course. Five minutes after one bell strikes at eight thirty you'll hear me unlocking the door. Goddard or the captain will be with me, but I'll come in first. When you see the door start to open, step off the bunk, but support your weight with your hands on the rope until I'm all the way in. I'll have you cut down in less than five seconds, so there's no danger.'

'And what about the witness?'

'He won't have a chance to touch you. I'll send him for the first-aid kit. He just sees you, that's all.' 'And the materials for the artwork?'

Lind tapped his pocket. 'I have them here, and you can use the mirror to put them on. You know how the bruises look, and the congested face?'

Krasicki smiled coldly. 'I have seen many men who danced upon the air, Herr Lind.'

Lind stepped over with his back against the door and appraised the angle of view. He came back to where Krasicki was standing, and pointed upward to the pipe. 'I think right there, beside the flange. The witness will see you the second I throw the door open and jump in, but I'll block his view of any details in case you move.'

Krasicki looked up. Lind flipped the rope over his head from behind, tightened it around his throat, and twisted. Krasicki's eyes appeared to bulge, going wide

with horror, and his mouth flew open in a silent scream. Hands clawed futilely at the rope for several seconds, and then dropped with a grotesque flapping motion. His body sagged and went limp. Lind eased him to the deck, but knelt beside him, the big muscles of his shoulders and forearms still corded with the brutal strain on the garrote. The whole thing had been done in total silence, like some ghastly ballet performed without music on a soundproof stage.

After another minute the big mate relaxed the tension on the rope, fashioned it into a slip-knot about the dead man's neck, and passed the other end over the pipe above them. He hoisted Krasicki up with the ease of a mother picking up a baby, held him clamped in his left arm while he used the right to take up the slack in the rope, pass it around the pipe again, and tie it off. He let go. Krasicki's feet dangled a few inches off the deck, and his body began to swing slowly back and forth with the gentle rolling of the ship. Lind went out and relocked the door.

* * *

Madeleine Lennox made one final hoarse outcry, and a flash of lightning revealed the mask of ecstasy now become pain as it approached the unbearable, the face twisted and distorted and the eyes clamped tightly shut as her head rolled from side to side. The writhing body strained upward against Goddard's as though in some dying effort to engulf and devour this instrument of her torture, and then collapsed and went limp with the suddenness of a snapping spring. The ragged exhalations of her breath were hot against his naked shoulder where a moment before the nails had gripped and dug.

Insatiable, Goddard thought, and wondered what her husband's life had been like when he was at sea, knowing, as he must, of the succession of lovers bracketed by these silken, frenetic thighs. Maybe he didn't even mind, he reflected, knowing her emotional involvement in the encounters was probably no greater than it would have been with a procession of repairmen trying to deal with a recalcitrant television set.

There was no doubt she'd worked out a novel system for coping with it, by staking out a male world where there was no competition at all. Women passengers on freighters were nearly always elderly, with exceptions like Karen Brooke a one-chance-in-a-hundred possibility, and the younger, swinging crowd wouldn't be caught dead on one. The ship's officers, though probably married in most cases, were still sailors, and far from home, living a monastic life where sexy females were a collector's item. All steamship companies frowned on this sort of hanky-pank on the part of their masters and mates, of course, but in man's long journey toward the light, fornication had survived harsher edicts.

He sat up and lit a cigarette. In a moment she stirred drowsily, and murmured, 'I thank you.'

'For what?' he asked.

'For the obvious. You're very good, Mr. Goddard, at a social activity that bores you to death.'

'Bored? Of course I wasn't.'

'Oh, I'm not complaining, dear man. I feel wonderful, and believe me, getting there is more than half the fun. I just wondered why. You could have burned your draft card; you obviously don't have to prove anything.'

'It wasn't like that at all,' he said.

'Good manners,' she decided. 'I think that's the clue. You see, you're not even angry now, at this classic example of the perversity of females.' She laughed softly. 'I like you; you're nice. Uninvolved and totally aloof, but nice. Could I have a cigarette?'

He lit one and passed it to her, and set the ashtray on his stomach. Thunder continued to rumble, but it was farther away now and the fury of the squall was diminishing.

She was silent for several minutes, and then she said musingly, 'There's still something about it that bothers me.'

'About what?' he asked.

'Krasicki. Going berserk that way,' she said. 'If he did.'

Alarms tripped and began to ring their warning. 'I don't think I'm following you.'

'Don't let it bother you. I'm not sure I know myself what I'm talking about. But there was something you said afterward that I've never been able to get out of my mind.'

So that stupid remark may get both of us killed, he thought. Unless he was being sounded, which was just as dangerous.

'You remember,' she went on, 'you said it would be a very good director who could have staged that scene any better. I know you didn't mean it that way, but afterward I got to thinking about it, and began to have the craziest feeling that what I'd seen hadn't even happened. Am I making any sense to you at all?'

'No,' he said. 'Unless you're taking off into philosophical concepts of reality that're too deep for me.'

'I'm not talking about philosophical concepts,' she replied. 'I'm talking about deliberate, planned illusion.'

'Wait a minute!' He tried for the right tone of amazement and incredulity. 'You mean you think that could have been faked?'

'I don't know. But it was too perfect. Too many separate elements came together at exactly the right point in space and time for random chance, and there are two or three things about it that bother me. One is the way Krasicki tricked Egerton—I mean Mayr—into speaking German. That was clever, but could a man with a deranged mind have done it?'

'A disturbed mind doesn't mean a moronic mind,' Goddard protested. 'And he had been a university professor.'

'I know,' she said. 'But there's another thing. In the theater, I think you call it blocking.'

Sharp, Goddard thought, unless she's been coached. 'That's right. The movement of actors in a scene.'

'Umh-umh. So with three men at the table, Lind is the only one in a position to grab Krasicki and try to stop

him. The captain is clear at the other end, and you're behind it.'

'The skipper always sits at the head of the table,' Goddard said. 'And in my case it was pure chance.'

'I'm not so sure,' she replied. 'Where you were sitting had been Krasicki's place. He'd never come to the dining room since we left Callao, but the place was always laid for him in case he did show up.'

Goddard was thinking swiftly and uneasily. Barset could be involved in it, or the dining room steward, or both. Or they could have been merely following instructions from Captain Steen. But it was Madeleine Lennox who was the dangerous problem at the moment. It would seem absurd, of course, that she could have any part in the plot itself, but there was a very real possibility she could be involved with Lind. Suppose the mate was using her to find out just how much he suspected?

As a trap it was deceptively simple, and beautiful in its deadliness. He was supposed to warn her, tell her there was a good chance she could be right but to keep her mouth shut if she hoped to get to Manila alive. If she were innocently playing with dynamite, that would stop her. But if she weren't, if she reported it to Lind, he'd very neatly positioned his own neck on the block. But there was another way.

'You'd better cut down on spy movies,' he said. 'You're beginning to believe them.'

'Then you think I'm imagining things?'

'Look, the man was shot twice through the chest in full view of five people. You saw the blood—'

She interrupted. 'I know. It must have been real, so that ought to clinch it, but something about it still bothers me. I keep trying to remember what it was.'

He sighed. 'You'd be a defense attorney's dream as a witness in a murder trial. *Yes, I saw this man's head blown off with a .45, but I don't believe for a minute he was hurt.*'

'I guess you're right,' she said.

Maybe he'd convinced her. But when she went back to her own cabin he still wasn't sure.

* * *

It was a hot, bright morning with a gentle breeze out of the southeast, almost directly astern. The *Leander* rose lazily and almost imperceptibly to the quartering swell as she plowed ahead. Eight bells struck as Goddard emerged from the passageway and began his morning walk around the promenade deck. The squall had sluiced all the salt from her decks and bulkheads, and there was a freshly scrubbed look to her paint that matched the clean and untroubled beauty of the day. Gone, too, were his suspicions of last night; the whole idea was ridiculous, he decided now, and thought with amusement that Mrs. Lennox wasn't the only one who'd seen too many spy movies.

He had completed four laps around the deckhouse when he noted the ship was passing through a vast colony of tiny Portuguese men-of-war, apparently newly hatched, their sails no larger than a fingernail. He stopped at the after end of the deck and lit a cigarette as he leaned on the rail to watch them drift past in numbers that must run into millions. It was a phenomenon he had encountered two or three times at sea and which always puzzled him. How could they hatch in such numbers in one place? He was wondering about it now when he became conscious of an odor like that of burning cloth. He looked down, thinking he must have set his shirt afire with the cigarette, but there was no sign of it. Then the odor was gone, as strangely as it had appeared. He must have imagined it.

Only Captain Steen and Madeleine Lennox were in the dining room when he entered. They were just finishing their breakfast, and he was struck by the odd preoccupation of their manner as they greeted him. Steen looked troubled. Mrs. Lennox turned as he sat down, and asked archly, 'Did that awful thunderstorm scare you last night, Mr. Goddard?' Lind came in at the same moment, and Goddard was conscious of a vague impression that wasn't what she'd started to say at all.

Lind laughed as he sat down. 'Don't be insulting, Mrs. Lennox. A line squall scare a man who'd go around the Horn in a Dixie cup?'

The others laughed, a trifle self-consciously, and after they had gone out, Lind said to Goddard, 'I've been reading up on catatonic states, and there are a couple of things I'd like to try on Krasicki. You want to come along?'

Goddard was startled for an instant, thinking of his fears of the night before; then he shrugged. 'Sure,' he said. They finished breakfast and went down to the deck below. Lind called out to the Filipino youth to bring Krasicki's breakfast, and Goddard stood in back of him as he unlocked the door. Lind pushed it open, let out a curse, and leaped inside. Beyond him, Goddard saw Krasicki's body dangling from the overhead pipe.

'Get the first-aid kit!' Lind shouted, drawing a knife and slashing at the braided rope.

Goddard wheeled and ran down the passageway, his mind racing even ahead of his feet. He'd been right. And now his performance had to be as convincing as Lind's. There was another shout behind him as he sped out on deck and up the ladder, but he kept going. He was panting as he hurried back down the passageway with the kit two minutes later. Several crew members were now jammed around the open door, peering in. He started to push through them, and Lind's voice barked, 'Clear the door! Let him through!'

Krasicki's body lay on the deck, the rope now gone from his throat, exposing the brutal mark it had left. Very realistic, Goddard thought; just don't get too close. Lind straightened, and said wearily, 'I tried to stop you. He's been dead for hours.'

Goddard shook his head. 'It's a rotten shame.' We're a real team, he thought; with a good director, we could do anything.

'*Goddamn it!*' Lind exploded. He gestured toward the braided rope. 'The one thing we didn't think of.' He whirled toward the door. 'Break it up, you guys! What are you gawking at?'

Nice touch, Goddard thought; male frustration, anger directed at self, relieved by shouts. And at the same time distracts attention from the exhibit in case its nose twitches or respiration is too evident for close scrutiny. He looked around the room, and noted the deadlights were closed over the portholes.

'He closed 'em last night,' Lind said. 'I noticed it when I was in here around eleven. And like a stupid bastard, I didn't even wonder why. Here, give me a hand to put him in the bunk.'

Goddard looked around for Otto or the bos'n, but neither was present. Then, in an instant of utter confusion, he realized Lind was speaking to him. The big mate was looking at him with a faintly sardonic smile. 'You're not afraid of a dead man, are you?'

'Oh. No,' Goddard said, fighting for recovery. Lind caught Krasicki's legs. Goddard stooped and grasped the bare arms near the shoulders, feeling the cold flesh and the rigidity of death, and they lifted him onto the bunk.

Lind pulled a sheet from one of the other bunks and covered the body. He turned then, and his eyes met Goddard's as he made a helpless gesture with his hands. 'For the rigor to be that far advanced,' he said, 'he must have done it right after I was here. I'm a hell of a doctor.'

Goddard was still trying to control his expression and sort out the chaos of his thoughts, but he managed an automatic reply of some kind. 'There was no way you could tell,' he said.

8

Goddard went out. The crew members in the doorway stepped back to let him pass, but they did it silently, and there was no longer any friendliness or recognition in their eyes. As he went down the passageway, he heard the muttering behind him.

‘This bucket’s beginning to give me the creeps.’

‘—ever since we picked that guy up—’

He was being cast as a Jonah; he’d lost his own ship, and now he’d brought his contamination of doom aboard this one. No seaman would admit to being that superstitious, but there was always some dark residue of it, even in the twentieth century. He paid no attention as he went outside and up the ladder; his mind was still trying to come to grips with questions attacking him from all sides at once.

Karen Brooke was walking the port side of the promenade deck. She always managed to look lovely and cool and completely self-possessed, he thought. She smiled. ‘Is there any change in Mr. Krasicki’s condition?’ At the same moment Captain Steen came hurrying down the ladder from the boat deck. He went on without speaking. She looked after him, puzzled.

‘Yes,’ Goddard answered. ‘He’s dead. He hanged himself.’ Or maybe I killed him, he added silently.

'Oh, how awful!' She shook her head, winking back the tears. 'It's not fair! His whole life was just one long tragedy.'

'I know,' Goddard said. Apparently she was prey to no doubts or suspicions, and he had no intention of raising any. He'd found himself beginning to like her, sensing in her some of the same loneliness that had marked his own life for the past five months, and he felt an urge to protect her if he could.

But from what, he asked himself after he had walked forward. Didn't Krasicki's death prove he'd been wrong? Didn't it demonstrate once and for all that the whole affair had been just what it seemed to be? Of course it did—unless it had been designed to do just that.

The trouble was, he reflected, that his thought processes and Lind's were too much alike, and they'd been on a collision course from the beginning. If Mayr's death had been a hoax, for it to work at all there could be no doubt, now or ever. That, of course, was the reason for the elaborately staged shooting in front of five witnesses instead of something simple like a heart attack. So now, if Lind had sensed his suspicions of it, the mate was backed into a corner; Krasicki still had to disappear, but there was no longer any possibility of getting away with a second fake sea burial. If Goddard had suspected the first, he would already have forecast the second. So Krasicki had been expendable, and Lind had killed him to plug this hole in the dike.

But that wasn't all, Goddard thought; the diabolical bastard ran a test on me at the same time, and I may have flunked it. If I had forecast the second fake and guessed how he'd carry it out, he knew exactly how I would react. I would realize I was there as a witness, but I would be very careful not to witness any more than I was supposed to. Then he threw the change-up pitch, and my reaction time may not have been fast enough. If I gave away the fact I didn't really believe Krasicki was dead, then he was killed for nothing and we're right back where we started—except that the deadly son of a bitch has really got me fingered now.

I'm no longer a reliable witness, and he's already measuring me for an accident.

His thoughts broke off then, and he frowned, conscious again of that odor of burning cloth. He was standing almost where he had been before, at the after end of the promenade deck. Maybe it was coming from one of the open portholes of the dining room. He looked in the nearest one, and sniffed again. No, it wasn't from there. He turned and searched the after well-deck and the ventilators of number three and four holds, but could see nothing. But now it was gone.

Karen Brooke came back around the corner of the deckhouse. 'Do you suppose poor Mr. Krasicki will be buried at sea also?' she asked.

'Probably,' Goddard said. 'I don't think he had any family at all.'

She nodded somberly. 'I love ships,' she said. 'But there's something about this one that is beginning to scare me. I know it sounds silly—'

'No, it's normal enough,' Goddard replied. 'Deaths at sea affect people that way; to coin a phrase, they're all in the same boat.' He lit a cigarette. 'Do you know what our cargo is?'

'Some copper ingots,' she said, 'and a little general cargo, but mostly cotton. Several thousand bales for the Japanese textile mills.'

He nodded. When she had gone on, continuing her walk, he stood looking somberly aft across the well-deck. Cotton. Great, he thought; that's all we need now.

* * *

What little breeze there was died out by mid-morning, and the heat became an ordeal. An air of sullenness and unease lay over the whole ship; the second death in three days left its mark on everybody. Word was passed that the sea burial would take place the following afternoon at four. Tempers were on edge. A fight broke out on the deck below; Rafferty, the hoodlum room steward, beat up one of the oilers, and Lind had to be called to stitch up a cut face.

Shortly after eleven there was another breakdown in the engine room, and the *Leander* slowed and came to rest on a sea like burnished steel. A shaft bearing running hot again, Barset said; the chief hoped to be under way again in an hour, but the hour passed, and then two, while the *Leander* continued to lie motionless under the burning sun. No one appeared for lunch. Both women were apparently in their bunks, under the fans. Goddard continued to prowl the promenade deck, stopping every few minutes at the aft end of it to sniff the air and study the ventilators in the well-deck. It was just after one p.m., when he finally saw it, a wispy thread of smoke snaking upward from the starboard ventilator of number three hold. It thinned and disappeared, but there was no longer any doubt. The *Leander's* cargo was afire.

Somewhere in the depths of number three hold was a smoldering bale of cotton like a cancer cell, being consumed by slow combustion that inexorably spread outward to attack adjoining bales. It could have been burning inside when it came aboard, or some longshoreman's stolen cigarette might have started it. The smoldering could go on for days or weeks without bursting into flame, eating away, charring, half-smoldering, while the temperature inside the mass continued to rise, until it came out on the surface and some of the bales below began to collapse, exposing enough of it to the air to become a raging fire.

Did Steen know about it? Probably, Goddard thought, but unless he had a fire-smothering system in the holds there wasn't much he could do about it but hold his breath and pray. If the burning bales were far down or in the center of the hold, trying to get water to them through thousands of others was futile, short of flooding the entire hold.

Sparks came down the ladder. He jerked his head curtly. 'Captain says to come up to his office.'

Goddard studied him with silent and calculated arrogance for thirty seconds, and then said, 'It must have suffered in the translation.' He could get enough of this surly bastard; if he were convinced all Yanquis were overbearing pigs, why disappoint him?

With no change of expression, Sparks repeated the message in Spanish, which Goddard knew well enough to follow. 'Thank you,' he said. 'But I wasn't referring to the language. Just the manners.' He went up the ladder.

Steen looked worried. 'Sit down, Mr. Goddard,' he said with attempted casualness that didn't quite go over. He was seated at his desk with a block of yellow paper in front of him. Goddard sat in one of the armchairs. Before Steen could speak, there was another knock outside the door. It was Mr. Pargoras, the chief engineer, a bald, swarthy man in khakis completely drowned with perspiration. He stepped inside and nodded to Goddard.

'What is it, Chief?' Steen asked. 'About finished?'

'It'll be another half hour.' The chief mopped his face with a sodden handkerchief. 'We can't work in that shaft alley more than a few minutes at a time. One man's already passed out.'

Goddard could imagine it, with the ship stopped and no air coming down the ventilators. The shaft alley was a steel runnel running across the bottom of number three and four holds from the engine room amidships to the propeller.

'What's the temperature now?' Steen asked.

'A hundred and twenty where we're working.' There was a faint pause, and he added, 'Under number three, you can't hold your hand on the plates.'

Goddard caught Steen's slight nod and the exchanged glance. They wouldn't have discussed it in front of him, except that they didn't think he would know what they meant. It was those burning bales of cotton, above or around the shaft alley, which meant they were right at the bottom of the hold. So Steen did know it was afire. That probably accounted for the strain visible on his face. Or at least part of it, Goddard thought.

The chief went out. Captain Steen cleared his throat, and said, 'The reason I asked to see you, Mr. Goddard, is that I'm writing a report of the—ah—shooting. You understand, of course, there will be a very thorough

investigation with a great deal of paperwork, depositions, testimony, eyewitness accounts—'

Goddard was puzzled, as much by the captain's uncertain manner as he was by this circuitous stalking of the obvious. Of course there'd be an investigation.

Steen went on. 'And there were one or two—ah—details I wanted to check with you.'

'Sure,' Goddard said.

'Now, you helped Mr. Lind carry Mayr into his cabin. You put him on the bunk, and Mr. Lind asked you to send somebody for the first-aid kit and sterilizer, is that right?'

'No,' Goddard replied. 'He asked me to get them. I'd been to his cabin, and knew where they were.' Lind had made sure of that, all right; he never missed a bet.

'I see. And during the possibly two minutes you were gone, Mr. Lind was there alone. You came back, and it was probably a minute or two before I came to the doorway. You remarked that the hemorrhaging seemed dark for arterial blood, and Mr. Lind said it was probably from the pulmonary artery. Now, Mr. Lind is a former medical student and very expert at first-aid, so he knows more about this, probably, than either of us, but since I'm the master of the ship, the responsibility is mine, and I have to be absolutely sure that we did everything we could to save the man. If one of the big arteries had been severed, of course, there was no chance at all. Mr. Lind had the shirt cut away and the chest exposed, but being outside the door I couldn't see very well. You were right at the foot of the bunk, so you could. Would you say the blood was pumping from the entrance wounds?'

Warning bells were beginning to ring everywhere. 'That I couldn't say for sure, Captain. All I know is there was a lot of it; enough to kill anybody.'

'I see.' Steen frowned. 'But you could see the wounds all right?'

So we've finally got to the point, Goddard thought. He either suspects I didn't see any, or he knows I didn't

see any, but that's not what he's after; he wants to know what I think. 'No,' he said, 'I'm not sure I did.'

'You didn't? But you were right there by the bunk.'

'Captain, the entrance wound of a nine millimeter slug is very small, sometimes no more than a dimple. Mayr had a thick mat of hair on his chest, and it was completely covered with blood, so his skin could have been punctured in six places without my seeing any of them. But I don't understand what difference it makes, anyway. We know he was shot twice through the chest and died within five minutes, so any doctor will tell you nobody could have saved him.'

Steen nodded. 'Then you have no doubts at all it was just as Mr. Lind said?'

'None whatever, Captain.' And you can quote me, if that's the object of this. By all means quote me.

Steen made a notation on his pad, still frowning and thoughtful, and said, 'Well, I guess that's all. Thank you for coming up, Mr. Goddard.'

Goddard went back to the promenade deck, puzzled and even more uneasy. What was that for? The obvious answer, of course, was that Steen was a party to the plot and was probing, pretending to have doubts himself in order to trap him into an admission he was suspicious of it. But suppose Steen's doubts were genuine. Where had they come from? And why now, with Krasicki dead? It was like sinking into quicksand, he thought; every time you think you're back on solid ground it starts to give way under you again.

With the *Leander* lying motionless in the water where there was no whisper of breeze, the smell of burning cotton was evident for minutes at a time near the after well-deck, and twice he saw heavy wisps of smoke issue from the ventilators of number three. They drifted straight up, thinned, and disappeared. He wasn't going to be very popular with the superstitious members of the crew when they discovered it, he thought; he'd already caused the death of two men, and now he'd set their ship afire. In spite of his uneasiness, there was a certain ironic fascination in the thought that while he might be able to cope with the blazing intelligence and

educated mind of the mate, against ignorance there was never any defense at all.

He walked forward and stood at the rail watching the bos'n and four sailors fish-oiling the rusty deck plates of the forward well-deck. They were burned black, stripped to the waist, and dripping sweat under the malevolent glare of the sun. One looked up and saw him, and said something, and the others turned to stare for an instant. He wondered if it were merely the standard salute to a useless slob of a passenger who had nothing to do but live a life of ease, or whether it was more serious.

Madeleine Lennox came out of the passageway and joined him. She was wearing near the irreducible minimum of clothing, only shorts, halter, and sandals, but her upper lip was moist with perspiration and damp tendrils of hair stuck to her neck. 'It's unbearable,' she said. 'Inside or out. My cabin's like a sauna.'

'It'll be a little better when we get under way again,' Goddard said.

She looked around and spoke in a lower tone. 'You recall what we were talking about last night? I finally remembered the thing that kept bothering me.'

He was instantly alert, but kept his face impassive. 'About what?' he asked.

'Mayr. And that blood that came out of his mouth. You remember, just before Krasicki came in and let out that scream, you were telling us a funny story. Everybody was laughing, and Mayr started to cough. He put his napkin up to his mouth, and I think he probably slipped something in it, a plastic capsule of some kind he could open by biting down on it. Don't you think that's possible?'

Goddard felt a little chill between his shoulder blades and was aware he knew the answer to the question even before he asked it. 'You haven't told anybody else this?'

'Just the captain,' she replied. 'At breakfast this morning.'

Maybe it was hopeless now, but he had to make one last effort. He smiled indulgently. 'But isn't there a flaw in your theory somewhere? If the thing was staged, why would Krasicki kill himself?'

'How do we know he did? It could be another illusion.'

'I hate to tear your script to pieces,' he said, 'but he's dead. I helped lift his body onto a bunk, and he was not only cold, but stiff.'

'Oh,' she said. 'Well, I guess that settles it.'

She would probably shut up now, but it was too late. Well, he asked himself, aren't you going to warn her at all? Take up the ladder, Mate, I'm aboard. He sighed. 'If there's a chance in a million you're right, you've stuck your neck out. Stay away from the rail at night, and keep your door locked.'

'But I only told the captain.'

And the captain is a deeply religious man, who couldn't possibly be involved in anything like that, he thought. Read the label attached to his arm. It identifies him the same as all other members of the cast. Krasicki was a gentle, persecuted Polish Jew, and Lind's a big, exuberant, fun-loving boy who likes to doctor people. He excused himself and went to his cabin. He'd done his best, hadn't he? And maybe Steen wasn't involved in it.

If she figured out the mechanics of that dribble of blood from the corner of Mayr's mouth, why hadn't she been able to go one step further and grasp the self-evident fact that if the thing had been staged you no longer knew who anybody was? Of course, it was simple enough; so, also, was the blood on the shirt. It had been in a small balloon, or perhaps even another rubber article more likely to be found in the possession of seamen, attached to the inside of the shirt and punctured by the tiny awl Mayr'd had in his hand as he clutched his chest so dramatically after the second shot. Unfortunately, Mayr had dropped the awl in his cabin as they were lifting him onto the bunk, the only slip-up in the whole operation.

Then he, Goddard, had accidentally stepped on it, and had looked down and pushed it over against the bulkhead. The chances were Lind, who was washing his hands at the basin, had seen this in the mirror. This coupled with Goddard's innocent remark that the hemorrhaging seemed dark for arterial blood, could be partly responsible for Krasicki's death. The rest of the massive hemorrhage, of course, was easy. Lind had been alone in the cabin with Mayr for over ninety seconds while Goddard was running up to the next deck for the first-aid kit and sterilizer, and the blood was already there in some kind of container in the bedclothes. Obtaining it would have been no problem, not with three of them to donate, and Lind's dispensary was equipped with hypodermic syringes and, no doubt, anticoagulants.

The rest, of course, was simply consummate staging and acting. Krasicki's scream was calculated to paralyze the witnesses for the length of time necessary for him to get off the first two shots, the blanks, into Mayr's chest, with the appropriate shuddering reaction from Mayr. Then Lind came in on cue, caught his arm and swung it up, while Krasicki kept pulling the trigger, now shooting live ammunition and breaking glass all over the place to give it the final touch of verisimilitude.

But all that was no longer important, he thought, as he lay in the sweltering stillness of his cabin. The question now was Steen. If he were involved, then Madeleine Lennox had told them the thing was never going to hold up; they had to eliminate her and anybody else they suspected she'd talked to. But even if the captain had had no part in it, there were still two very ominous possibilities. One was that he might now be suspicious enough, and naive enough, to order a search of the ship, which could trigger the final explosion of violence if Lind's forces were strong enough. The mate couldn't back out now; he was committed. The other danger was that even if the captain had better sense than to force the issue while the ship was at sea, Lind might already know of that breakfast conversation. Who knew where his spies were? The dining room

steward could have overheard them. So could Rafferty, or Barset.

And what about the fire? The tween-decks of number three hold was the most likely place for Mayr to be hidden. It was directly below that cubicle where he'd been stitched into the burial sack, and when the switch had been made they wouldn't have moved him any farther around the ship than they had to; the risk of detection was too great. What happened if the heat and smoke drove him out?

He swore irritably, and sat up to light a cigarette, trying to shake off the uneasiness. For God's sake, he still didn't know any of this, did he? The whole thing could be imagination. As though to corroborate this, the *Leander* began to vibrate then as the engine went full ahead and she got under way again. How could there be anything sinister about this prosaic old rust-bucket slogging her way around the Pacific?

* * *

The two fans droned monotonously in the dining room, stirring the muggy air. Krasicki's death weighed on everybody's spirits, as well as the enervating heat that apparently would never end. Captain Steen was more silent and withdrawn than ever, and even Lind was subdued. The state of their nerves was apparent when Karl dropped a dish as he was serving the jellied consommé. They all jumped, and had to restrain themselves from looking at him angrily. A sullen Rafferty came in to clean up the mess.

Karen Brooke spoke to Steen. 'This weather must make you long for the Norwegian fiords, Captain.'

He nodded and managed a wan smile. 'Yes. And it's been nearly two years since I was home.'

Lind said to her, 'But it just takes one winter gale in the North Atlantic to make this look good again.'

'I agree with you,' Madeleine Lennox said. She began an account of being on a freighter that had been hove to for three days in the Bay of Biscay and how eventually she'd been physically exhausted just from

the endless holding onto something and trying to keep from being thrown from her bunk.

Captain Steen interrupted her in a voice not much more than a whisper. 'If you'll excuse me.' Goddard looked around. Steen's face had gone white and was stamped with anguish as he pushed himself to his feet. He started to collapse, but caught himself with a hand braced on the table.

'Cap, what is it?' Lind asked quickly.

He and Goddard were leaping up to help him when he swayed, crumpled forward against Karen Brooke's shoulder, and fell to the deck. Both women cried out.

Lind and Goddard pulled his twisting body from under the edge of the table and into the open. Barset came running in. 'Good God, what happened?'

'I don't know,' Lind snapped. 'Get a stretcher!'

Barset hurried out. Steen's eyes were closed and he appeared to fight for breath as he continued to writhe in agony. Lind caught his wrist and tried to feel the pulse. Steen twitched spasmodically and he had to grab for it again. Goddard caught the arm with both hands and held it still. Lind jerked his head at Karl. 'Find the chief. Tell him to get an oxygen bottle up to the skipper's quarters.'

To Goddard's glance and the unasked question: *heart attack?* he replied, 'I don't know. But we'll have it if we need it.'

Barset ran in with the stretcher. They lifted Steen onto it, but he continued to double his body in pain and twist from side to side. He would never stay on it going up the ladders. 'We need some line!' Lind barked. 'Wait! This'll do.' With one explosive yank, he swept off the tablecloth, scattering dishes, food, water tumblers, and silverware across the deck. The big arms corded and there was a ripping sound as he tore it in two. He tossed one piece to Goddard, and they passed them under the stretcher and over the captain's body at thighs and chest to lash him in place. One of the sailors hurried in.

'Take him up,' Lind ordered. 'I'll get the kit and be up there.' He ran out. Goddard and the sailor picked up the stretcher, but at that moment the bos'n came in. 'I'll take it,' he said. Goddard surrendered it, and followed them down the passageway. They started up the ladder, the sailor going first; the bos'n, with the strength of those almost grotesque shoulders and arms, lifted his end of it straight overhead to keep it level. They mounted the second ladder and disappeared onto the boat deck.

Several of the crew had gathered in the well-deck, looking up. Goddard was conscious of blank stares. 'Jesus Christ, what next?' one asked. 'Anybody got a rubber raft?' another said. 'I'd bail out of this pot.'

Karen Brooke and Mrs. Lennox came out of the passageway and joined them, both badly shaken. Mrs. Lennox said she thought it was a heart attack; it was very similar to the one that had stricken her late husband. It wasn't necessarily fatal, she assured Karen; he'd had two, five years apart. As they stood waiting for some word, Goddard was conscious again of the odor of burning cotton. Ten minutes later Barset came down the ladder.

'Mate says it was a heart attack,' he said. The captain seemed to be in less pain now and was breathing easier, under the oxygen tent Lind had improvised. Sparks was getting medical information from the U.S. Public Health Service through a California station and was in contact with a cruise ship that had a doctor aboard. The liner was three hundred miles away, but if necessary both ships could change course and rendezvous in less than ten hours. Mr. Goddard could come up if he'd like.

The perennial witness, Goddard thought, as he mounted to the boat deck. The third mate was on the starboard wing of the bridge. Goddard knocked at the open door and went in through the office.

Steen lay on the bunk in his stateroom, still fully clothed except for his shoes. His head and shoulders were covered with an improvised tent made of a shower curtain suspended from overhead. A length of rubber

hose led in under the edge of it from an oxygen cylinder lashed to a leg of the bedside desk. The first-aid kit and sterilizer were on the desk, and Lind was standing beside the bunk withdrawing the needle of a hypodermic syringe from Steen's arm. He set it aside and took the captain's wrist as Goddard came in. He glanced up, but said nothing. Goddard waited.

In a moment Lind released the wrist and nodded with satisfaction. 'Much steadier now.' He indicated the shower curtain. 'Instant oxygen tent. But Boats is making one out of canvas, with a window in it.'

Goddard thought of Madame Defarge, knitting shrouds. Before this passage was over maybe the bos'n would sew everybody on the ship into canvas in one way or another. Sparks entered behind them and handed Lind a message. 'From the Public Health Service doctors,' he said.

Lind scanned it quickly, muttering to himself, 'Umh-umh... digitalis... oxygen...' He folded it and stuck it in his shirt pocket, and said to Goddard, 'Just the things we've already done.' He turned to Sparks. 'Tell the skipper on the *Kungsholm* we'll stay in touch, but unless there's a change we won't try to transfer him. There's not much they can do for him we can't do on here.'

Sparks nodded and went out. If I watch a few more of these performances, Goddard thought, I could qualify as a drama critic. He looked at Steen then, saw the slowly rising and falling chest of this man he was certain was doomed to die without ever waking again, and felt revulsion at this sleazy glibness. But it was only protective, he tried to tell himself; it was one way to keep from picking at the scab of his own impotence.

In the first place, he didn't know. Maybe it was a heart attack, instead of some kind of poison, and maybe it was digitalis Lind had given him, and not morphine. There was no way to find out, or prove it, and even if he could there was no place to take the information that Lind, the ship's doctor, was murdering a helpless man except to Lind, the ship's acting master. At sea, the next step up the chain of command was God.

‘Let us know if there’s any change,’ he said. He went out. As he passed through the captain’s office his eyes, in spite of himself, were drawn to the framed photograph of the woman and the two young girls. He winced.

9

It was a half hour before he had a chance to speak to Madeleine Lennox alone. She joined him on the promenade deck at sunset. 'Do you believe it was a heart attack?' she asked.

'I don't know,' he said. 'It could have been. But watch it.'

'How? You mean I don't even dare eat anything the rest of the trip?'

'Not that. The only thing sure is that he's too damned clever to repeat himself. And a heart attack in a woman's not as plausible, anyway. But keep your door locked.'

'Are you going to?'

'You're damned right I am.'

'Seems a duplication of effort.'

'What?' he asked.

The smoke-gray eyes were wide and utterly innocent. 'Bolting so many doors.'

Trying to warn her was futile, he could see that. 'Then you don't think it's serious?'

'Of course I do,' she said. 'But don't you remember how effective you were against lightning?'

Barset brought word shortly after ten that Captain Steen's condition seemed a little better. His pulse was stronger, and less erratic, and he was sleeping. Lind was with him constantly.

Goddard heard six bells strike as he lay naked on his bunk in the sweltering dark. Almost immediately there was a light rap on the screen door. Not even bothering to pull on the shorts, he padded over and looked out through the louvers. It was Madeleine Lennox. He unlocked the door and pulled it open. She stepped inside quickly, and was in his arms while he was still trying to secure the door again. He had an impression of amusement mingled with the eagerness.

'Your reputation's ruined,' she whispered against his ear. 'I think Karen saw me.'

'What about yours?'

'Oh, I'm sure she has no illusions about me. Women never do.' There was a little murmur of discovery and delight then. 'Mmmmm. You must have been expecting me. Or somebody. Are you sure you weren't in the coast guard, instead of the navy?'

'Why?' he asked.

'That motto of theirs I always adored. *Semper paratus*.' She began throwing off the robe and pajamas.

She was much better company, he thought, after she'd caught the streetcar than while she was chasing it. She jettisoned all pretense along with her clothing, gave not the slightest damn whether she captivated him or not, and demanded nothing but the mechanics of sex. She reminded him of Wilde's remark that England and America were two countries separated by the same language; the most intimate of all human relationships was the perfect barrier to any intimacy at all.

With Haggerty it had been speech. They'd been stoned together for five days up and down the coast from San Diego to Sea-Tac, talking constantly, once even spending the night in the same bedroom, and he didn't know her first name, nor she his. Apparently there was some quality about people who lived in bubbles that enabled them to recognize each other from the first, because in the whole period only once

had either of them asked a question to which he expected a serious answer.

He'd met her in the bar at the San Francisco airport. It was late in the afternoon on a weekend, so the place was overflowing, and the one double martini PSA allowed for the forty-minute flight up from Los Angeles International was wearing thin. There was no space at all at the bar, but he spotted a table occupied by a girl sitting alone, a slender, almost fragile-looking blonde with a mink coat thrown over the back of her chair. He went over.

'Do you mind if I sit here?' he asked.

'Not at all.' Her manner was as gravely gentle as that of a nun. 'Actually, I've always wanted to see Buenos Aires.'

'Oh, I'm off for the weekend,' he said. 'I don't take the job home with me.' He ordered a double martini, and she asked for another Jack Daniels, which could be significant. She looked perfectly sober, but he'd seen more than one ethereal blonde still lifting them off the tray when strong men were asleep in corners.

'Do you use chloral hydrate?' she asked.

'Oh, no. That went out with the crimps on the Barbary Coast. Our labs came up several years ago with a timed-release spansule; the opiate takes effect in about twenty minutes, and then an aphrodisiac eight hours later. Powdered rhinoceros horn.'

'I always assumed that was a male aphrodisiac. Connotation, I suppose.'

'Well, we add estrogen, of course, so there are no side effects, like facial hair. Actually, the world market is so depressed, now that Castro's cleaned up Havana, we're diversifying into pornography and textbooks, and phasing out the girl operation as fast as we can take care of key personnel.'

'What's your average net per unit laid down in, say, Saigon?'

'It depends,' he said. 'Age, and so on. Are you a virgin?'

'No, I'm sorry. I was violated in my teens by an ectomorph.'

He shook his head. "Trying to police the whole damn world, and a woman's not even safe on the street."

She introduced herself. She was Mrs. Haggerty, she said, from New Bedford. Her husband was a whaler.

* * *

Madeleine Lennox gave a shivery little gasp and said something, her lips moving against his. 'What?' he asked.

'You remembered right where they were. Ooooooh!'

He was conscious of momentary wonder; he must be programmed by punch cards. They lay nude in each other's arms in the darkness; he had a leg thrust between her thighs while his fingertips softly brushed the erogenous zones of her back. She jumped, and shivered again.

He was away a lot, Haggerty went on, but it was a good job challengewise, with the usual retirement, stock options, country club membership, expense account, and so on. Sparm, Inc., was one of the older companies with a reputation for being a little on the stodgy side, but it had been taken over by a conglomerate, shaken up, and given a transfusion of new blood, so it was a pretty gung-ho outfit and on the move, with plenty of room on the top side for a man who could carry the ball.

'He's just been picked to head up R and D,' she said, 'and I hardly see him from one month to the next. He's all wrapped up in a new white whale they're just getting off the drawing board and into hardware. The oil's much lower in cholesterol, and there's a big defense contract coming up as soon as they iron the bugs out of the polyunsaturated napalm they're working on.'

He winced at the subliminal flash of the red Porsche as it spun out and went through the guardrail at a hundred miles an hour. Now and then in an unguarded moment some random word would get to him, even

through the bubble, and he'd see Gerry's face as he'd seen it that last time less than an hour before she was killed, the view itself no more than a flash, two or three seconds at most, as she looked at him and her stepmother with loathing and disgust before she wheeled and ran back through the house and they'd heard the Porsche go snarling out the driveway. It hadn't burned; that wasn't why the word 'napalm' had triggered it. It was her sense of outrage at the use of it, the bombing, the whole Vietnam war. She'd be proud of him now, too, he thought, and then wondered which *now* he meant, which manifestation of her father's talents, the nonstop drunk or the automated lover.

'Did they come up with a revolutionary new deodorant just recently?' he asked Haggerty. 'It seems to me I read about it. The go-go funds discovered them, and the stock went up thirty points in a week.'

She nodded. 'Yes, that was Sparm, Inc. And another spin-off from R and D and the white whale. But it wasn't a deodorant; it was a revolutionary new filter that reduces tar and nicotine sixty-seven percent. It's made of the baleen, mixed with sintered yak wool. He made a lot of money out of it by exercising his stock options, but sometimes I get the impression he's married to that whale. And when he does get home—'

'I know, that damn wooden leg,' Goddard said. 'It must be awkward.'

'It's not really wood,' Haggerty said. 'Except for a Circassian walnut ferrule. Van Cleef and Arpels makes it. It's anodized titanium with inlays of jade and Mexican opal, and the socket is lined with the belly fur of an unborn agouti. On a special order you can have it fitted with a jeweled clasp to carry your key to the executive washroom.'

He told her about the underground skyway, and how he had discovered this sanctuary, this peaceful subculture existing within the larger, hostile culture of the automobile dwellers. He was a writer, he said, doing research for an article for *Reader's Digest*, 'New Hope for the Living: Never Leave the Airport.' And while this was aimed at any sector of the populace

which might have a cursory interest in survival, it would be of particular interest to serious drinkers.

In all bars except those in airports, you were marooned, he went on. You were safe enough as long as you were inside because the natives were disarmed at the doorway; this tradition had been established in the Old West even before the invention of the automobile, perhaps in anticipation of it, some prescience or foreboding that the day would come when there would be much more sophisticated weapons abroad in the land than the primitive and relatively harmless Peacemaker Colts and Frontier .45's checked at the door in that happy era. And a Californian, forcibly shucked from his automobile and separated from it for any length of time, while prey to the same vague feelings of resentment and unease as an oyster removed from its shell, will, like the oyster, seldom attack. But, inevitably, bars close, or you have to leave one and move to another to escape some bore, and they're out there by the hurtling millions, armed with Fords and Chevrolets and, for only dollars a month more, with Cadillacs. But from the airport bar you simply stepped out back, boarded a jet, and went to the one next door in San Diego, Portland, or Los Angeles, at thirty thousand feet.

Of course, at that altitude you did miss some of the beauties of the countryside, the beaneries, filling stations, used-car lots, neon, asphalt, smog, billboards, the proliferating acne of tract housing, and murmuring sylvan streams freighted with condoms and empty beer cans, but that was a small price to pay for being wafted from one sanctuary to another across four hundred miles of hostile territory whose populace was forever torn between devout but conflicting desires to maim you or sell you something. The ecology was simple; all airports had bars, nearly all had hotels, and all you needed was a drip-dry wardrobe and a few credit cards. And there was just enough challenge to keep it interesting; you had to *look* sober enough to get aboard the airplane in the first place and to buy the two drinks they allowed you during the flight, but still far enough from it to obviate any possibility you might really dry

out before you reached the next station on the underground.

She agreed with him that something should be done for serious drinkers, and offered to help with the study. As a minority group, they'd been sadly neglected, and with the oncoming generation turning increasingly to pot and acid there was a very real danger they might become extinct, their entire culture lost forever. Only yesterday, in some bar, she'd heard a man order a frozen daiquiri.

To simplify the logistics of the operation he changed to bourbon too, and they carried a survival kit of three bottles in her luggage for the late hours of the night, morning horrors, and as insurance against election days, civil uprisings, or any natural catastrophe which might cause the bars to be closed. He had never known anybody who could drink as much as Haggerty and show as little effect of it except to talk, to talk incessantly, amusingly, and forever, apparently as a sort of perpetual exercise in the avoidance of all thought or of ever, in an unguarded moment, saying anything she meant. The night they'd shared the same room he had awakened toward dawn to see her sitting on the floor in pajamas, her cheek down on one arm spread across the seat of a chair while the hand slowly clenched and unclenched in agony.

'I'm sorry, Haggerty,' he said, for a moment forgetting the rules. 'Is there anything I can do?'

'That,' she said, 'is the first stupid thing I ever heard you say.'

She wasn't entirely in accord with him, however, that the automobile dwellers were hostile. This fallacy, she believed, had grown out of the slipshod methods of some of the early investigators intent only on a quick doctorate and nailing down a grant to be off to Africa, and was based on nothing sounder than the fact that so many anthropologists had disappeared into the Californian countryside never to be heard of again. Subsequent studies had revealed that nearly all of them were alive and well in Los Angeles.

She explained this one night when they were finishing off a last bottle of Jack Daniels in her room. He'd forgotten which airport hotel it was, but it overlooked a freeway, and they were watching the endlessly hurtling projectiles curving past them.

'All we can do,' he said, 'is pray that Slivovitz got through to Fort Huaracha. Can you keep loading the rifles while I deliver the baby?'

'No,' she said, 'you're falling into the same error, and for the same reason, as Huysmann when he first advanced the hypothesis that it was some sort of primate equivalent of the lemming migration. He wasted a whole seventy-thousand-dollar grant trying to find where they were throwing themselves off the cliff, and backtracking to discover where they were springing out of the ground. He simply didn't notice they were going in both directions. That's why I can't believe the intent of it is hostile at all. If they were chasing something, all eight lanes would be going the same way.'

Tieboldt did discover this, she went on, but he was just as baffled by it as Huysmann had been by overlooking it. It had already been established that they were highly sexed, and that they were a bartering people who subsisted by selling each other things they called goods and services. His theory was that it was a dance of some sort, a ritual evolved out of these aspects of their tribal heritage, but he could never come up with a satisfactory answer as to how either courtship or commerce could be carried on while they were going past each other in opposite directions at a combined velocity of a hundred and forty miles an hour.

Later investigators had decided the only way to the answer was to enter the dance and see where it led, which accounted for nearly all the missing scientists. It was estimated that at the present time there were still twenty-seven anthropologists circling endlessly around the Los Angeles freeways like spaceships in orbit, unable to find a way off.

Frownfelter's paper, 'The Carapace People of the San Fernando Valley,' was by far the most reliable work on

the subject, and the one that did the most to dispel the myth that they were hostile. 'He spent a whole winter observing the members of a group near Van Nuys,' she went on, 'gradually gaining their confidence and allaying their fears that he intended any harm to the carapaces until he was allowed to approach quite near and study them at first hand. He found them quite friendly and open, and even eager to point out the advantages of their particular shells.'

'He was surprised to discover that they weren't physically attached to the carapace in any way, even by an umbilicus, and that they could leave it at will, though they were always reluctant to do so. Whether this emotional attachment was sexual in nature or quasi-religious, he was never able to determine, but he inclined to the latter since it seemed to be shared equally by both sexes. Is there anything left in the bottle?'

One morning Haggerty was simply gone. She'd checked out before he got up, and left no message. Then, two days later, the drunk had abruptly come to an end. He was aboard an afternoon flight from San Diego to San Francisco. The miniskirted stewardess had just served him a double martini when he looked down and saw the blue of the Pacific below them and wondered how he could have been so stupid that it had never occurred to him before. He'd been searching in the wrong place all the time. It was out there. He handed the drink back to her. 'Tell the captain to have one on me.'

'You want him to lose his job?' she asked with mock severity.

'Give him a doggie bag. He can take it home.'

* * *

For the fifth time Karen Brooke tried to wrench her thoughts back to the book in her hands, but too many conflicting emotions were pulling at her. She was uneasy, and helpless, and illogically angry at herself. Captain Steen worried her, and she couldn't make up her mind about Lind. He remained a complete enigma.

One moment she trusted him, and then the next she was convinced he was a monster or madman.

And there was nobody she could talk to. Goddard? He was too self-sufficient and impervious to share any of her forebodings about this ship, and would only make her feel ridiculous. Further, in the past hour she had faced the fact, finally, that she didn't like him, and it was the timing of this that had occasioned her self-anger. Why couldn't she have arrived at the conclusion before she inadvertently saw Madeleine Lennox slipping into his cabin? This, she told herself hotly, had nothing to do with it, but the stupid fact remained there to taunt her.

She had found him attractive at first, with the homely male face, the assurance, and good manners, until she began to suspect this was all there was to him, that there was no warmth anywhere or capacity for feeling. She was sick to death of the hard, the smooth, and the impervious. They were too good at everything, and never seemed to have any doubts at all. Fear was alien to them because they were convinced they could, and nearly always did, walk away from the wreckage unscathed, while the involved, the less well-coordinated, and the earnest squares got their heads knocked off. And when, infrequently, one of the group did kill himself in the pursuit of kicks, the others bore it very lightly. Within a month after she'd watched in horror as Stacey fell from that sheer rock face in Yosemite, three of his very good, and very married, friends had made passes at her.

She was aware she was by no means unique in this; it probably happened to most widows and divorcees, but the callousness and the calm assumption they were doing her a favor had left her with what she felt was a permanent aversion to the breed. Too bad about old Stace, but they knew how rough it must be, and there was no sense in her wrecking her health. The fact that their marriage was already shaky and might have wound up in divorce hadn't changed her reaction to these impervious but magnanimous studs who were willing to service her until she had made a permanent arrangement of some kind. And Goddard was another

one, merely a few years older and hence a little smoother and more assured, and more immunized against the danger of ever feeling anything.

She dropped the book on the desk, and switched out the light. The fan droned on in its futile attempt to do anything about the heat. She felt very much alone and troubled, and it was a long time before she could get to sleep.

* * *

When Goddard awoke it was dawn and Madeleine Lennox was awake beside him, raised on one elbow to appraise the failure of her hand's manipulation. Their eyes met. 'O mighty Caesar! Dost thou lie so low?' she asked. She smiled, kissed him softly on the cheek, and climbed naked from the bunk to gather up her pajamas.

When she went out, he stepped to the door and watched until she was inside her own cabin again. There was no one else in the passageway. He was just about to close the door when Baret appeared at the far end of it. He called out to ask how Captain Steen was.

Improving, Baret replied; resting much easier. Goddard closed the door and lit a cigarette, knowing Madeleine Lennox would have heard the good news too. Hell, there was nothing to worry about; it was all imagination.

10

In the pantry next door to the dining room Rafferty stirred the coffee again in the small pot to be sure the two tablets were dissolved. He glanced at his watch. It was seven twenty-five a.m.; ten minutes to go. He set the pot on a tray with the little pitcher of condensed milk and the sugar bowl, slipped on the white jacket with its exciting hard slab of weight in the right-hand pocket, and carried the tray down the passageway to Madeleine Lennox' cabin. He knocked. 'Coffee,' he said.

'Just a minute,' she called out. There was the sound of the door's being unlatched. He went in. She was sitting on the side of the bunk in pajamas, lighting a cigarette. She smiled. 'You're a little early this morning. Thank you, Dominick.'

'Y'welcome,' he said. He set the tray on the desk beside the bunk, and as he turned he took the usual good look down the open collar of the pajamas. She never seemed to get wise. Not a bad-looking pair of knockers, either, for an old biddy, and several times he'd been tempted to reach down and cop a handful, but you never knew. She might squawk. Not that he was afraid of Barset, but he didn't want that big cold-eyed son of a bitch looking down his throat; he'd seen some of his work.

If he'd moved in soon enough he might have got some of it, he thought, stepping into the bathroom as though checking the towel supply and soap. Barset had beat him to it, though; he was pretty sure the scrawny bastard had been dipping his wick in it ever since they left Callao, and now it looked like Goddard-stein was having it delivered to his room. Out of sight, he whistled tunelessly, opened and closed the door of the medicine cabinet, and turned on a faucet momentarily. That Hollywood phony, who'd he think he was fooling, changing his name? The whole place was Jews and nigger-lovers, they ought to burn it down.

He came out. 'I'll bring you a couple of fresh towels,' he said, looking around at her as he reached for the door.

'Thank you.' She tilted the pot to fill the cup again, and added some more sugar. He went out into the passageway. She hadn't noticed a thing; that crappy condensed milk covered the taste of it all right. He stepped out on deck on the starboard side and looked forward. The bos'n and Otto and the other sailor were halfway down it now, coming this way as they washed down with the fire hose and brooms. Four minutes to go.

He stepped back into the passageway and went forward to the linen locker. He picked up two bath towels, came back, and knocked on the door of Madeleine Lennox' cabin. Before he slipped in he shot a glance both ways along the passageway; nobody was in sight. She looked up and patted back a yawn. She smiled at him with a puzzled shake of the head, and said, 'I feel so sleepy.'

'It's this heat,' he said. 'I better close your porthole; they're washing down.'

He stepped past her, brushing her knees as she sat on the bunk, and leaned over the desk to dog down the porthole. The coffeepot and cup were both empty; she'd drunk it all. He turned and went into the bathroom, still carrying the towels.

Madeleine Lennox gazed dreamily after him and yawned again. Why, he didn't look down my pajamas

that time, she thought in wonder. After a beautifully planned and executed maneuver like that—God, what's the matter with me, didn't we sleep at all last night?—after that perfect down-range turn to come in over target at the precise angle to see clear to my navel, he didn't even look. Could I have aged that much in five minutes?

She was conscious of a roaring sound that puzzled her for a moment; then she recognized it as the stream from the fire hose beating on the bulkhead of Harry's cabin next door. But she still seemed to be floating off into a rosy cloud, and it was hard to focus or keep her thoughts straight. What was she thinking about? Oh, yes, the twilight of the boob. Her declining box-office. Somewhere between age thirteen, when they started trying to see up your dress, down your dress, or through your dress, and age ninety, when the show had been warehoused for years, there had to be some precise instant of time like the exact balancing point of a teeter-totter when they simply stopped peeking, once and forever. Like that. Was it possible she had pinpointed this historic moment? Five minutes ago she could have sold advertising space on them, at least at sea—

There was a swishing sound of water along the deck outside, and then an even louder drumming as the stream from the fire hose beat on her own bulkhead and closed porthole. And coincident with this momentary din she saw Rafferty emerge from the bathroom. He had a towel in his right hand, and as he came toward her with his beefy grin he suddenly flipped the towel over into his left, and under it was a blue-black slab of metal which as the widow of a naval officer she could recognize as a sidearm even at the moment of dropping off to sleep like this. He raised it over her head, but there didn't seem to be much she could do about it.

Rafferty slashed downward with the .45, catching her just above the hairline on the left side of her head, the brutal impact lost under the beating of water against the bulkhead. As she pitched forward he caught her and stretched her out on the bunk with the towel under

her head. Dropping the gun back in his pocket, he began yanking at the legs of the pajamas. Damn it, there must be a zipper somewhere. He located it at her left hip, stripped off the garment, and hurriedly unbuttoned the pajama top. Being careful to keep her head on the towel, he turned her face down, and peeled this garment off to complete undressing her.

Stacked, for an old dame. He squeezed an appreciative handful of buttock, and wished he had time to tear off a quickie, but he didn't like the way that big bastard had looked when he'd told him just what would happen if he didn't get out of here on schedule. He was taking enough chances carrying this gun, instead of the sap he was supposed to use.

He carried her into the bathroom and stretched her out under the shower. A trickle of blood ran out of her hair onto the tile. He came out, carefully checking the deck between bathroom and bunk. The bos'n and his fire hose were drawing farther away now, and he had to hurry. There were two or three drops of blood. Grabbing the already stained towel off the bunk, he wiped them up, and rolled the towel inside another.

In the bathroom again, he turned on the shower, letting it beat down on her, and dropped a bar of soap on the streaming tile beside her body. He stepped back, surveying the scene and nagged by a feeling there was something he hadn't done, but it looked all right. She was wet all over, and the soap was there where she'd stepped on it and fallen. He shrugged and went out.

With the rolled towels under his arm, he opened the screen door and peered out into the passageway. No one was in sight. He stepped out quickly and strolled back to the pantry. Karl was in the dining room, setting up for breakfast. He shoved the towels into the bottom of a garbage can he was supposed to have emptied last night, and carried it aft, across the well-deck. The stink was everywhere this morning, and one of the deck apes was gawking up at the ventilators where you could see the smoke coming out. He pointed.

'It's burnin' worse all the time.'

‘Good man,’ Rafferty said approvingly. ‘Give me a report every hour.’ What a clown, you’d think it was his cotton. He went up onto the poop to the fantail and emptied the can. Lighting a cigarette, he stared boredly aft as the two towels and the flotsam of garbage dropped back in the white water of the wake and disappeared. It was going to be another hot day.

* * *

Goddard showered at a quarter of eight, and as he turned off the water he could hear the shower running on the other side of the bulkhead in Mrs. Lennox’s bathroom. He was putting a new blade in the razor to shave when he became aware that the smell of burning cotton had now penetrated clear in here. Clad only in slacks and slippers, he went out on deck and walked aft in the lifeless heat. A squall was making up far off on the horizon to starboard, but what little breeze there was here came from almost directly astern, so there was little movement of air along the superstructure of the ship. Smoke was curling from both ventilators of number three hold, no longer in intermittent wisps but in a steady outpouring that drifted straight up in the brassy sunlight of early morning. A sheen, or haze, seemed to hang over the well-deck itself, and the odor was strong enough to irritate the throat. The *Leander* was in trouble that was growing worse by the hour.

He’d come aboard the ship in a rubber raft, and he wondered now if he were going to leave it in a lifeboat. If it did come to that, he reflected, he wasn’t going to be in great demand as an occupant of either boat. ‘No, you take the hard-luck bastard in that one. We don’t want him in here.’ Maybe you couldn’t blame them, at that; a murder, a suicide, a heart attack, and a fire, all in three days, might start a witch-hunt almost anywhere.

He went back and shaved. He had finished and was drying the razor when he became aware that Mrs. Lennox’ shower was still running. He grinned. She’d be a great asset on a small boat; she would have used up the *Shoshone*’s six weeks’ supply of water before

breakfast the first morning. Well, it was one way to keep cool.

Karen Brooke was alone in the dining room when he went in a few minutes past eight. She was wearing a sleeveless summer dress of almost the same shade of blue as her eyes, which in combination with the swirl of honey-colored hair seemed to intensify her tan.

'You look very nice,' he said.

She smiled, but her manner was cool and impersonal. 'Thank you, Mr. Goddard. I consider that a real compliment, in view of the priority.'

'How's that?' he asked.

'Lots of men would have said the ship's afire, and then you look nice.'

'Oh, there are clods like that.' He sobered. 'How long have you known it?'

'Since yesterday. About the same time you asked me what the cargo was.'

'But there's still no official recognition?'

'No. Mr. Lind hasn't been down yet. But I suppose they've known it for the past few days. It might be what brought on Captain Steen's heart attack, don't you think?'

He nodded. 'Anyway, he's better this morning, according to Barset.'

'Yes, I know.'

Karl came in. Goddard asked for a poached egg and some coffee. Karl poured the coffee and went back to the pantry. 'Is all of number three loaded with cotton?' Goddard asked. 'Tween-decks too?'

'No-o.' She frowned, trying to remember. 'They were just finishing loading when I came aboard, and it seems to me the tween-decks in that one is general cargo—cases of canned goods, leather, a lot of big carboys in crates, things like that.'

'You don't know what's in the carboys?'

She nodded. 'Alcohol.'

He said nothing, but it was obvious from her expression she knew as well as he did the potentialities

of that combination— alcohol-saturated cotton—if those carboys started breaking in the heat down there.

Lind came in. He greeted them abstractedly, and it struck Goddard he came as near to looking troubled as he had ever seen him. Well, it might be understandable under the circumstances. When Karen asked how Captain Steen was doing, he shook his head and frowned.

‘I don’t know. I wish now I’d transferred him to the *Kungsholm*.’

‘Has he had another attack?’ Goddard asked.

‘No, not that. He rested quietly all night, and his pulse was all right. But the past hour he’s had more trouble breathing. And there may be some pulmonary edema—fluid in the lungs.’

‘Pneumonia?’ Goddard asked.

‘No. But it could be a symptom of congestive heart failure. Sparks is still in touch with the Public Health Service doctors, and we’ve got everything they recommend—but, I don’t know.’

‘Well,’ Karen said, ‘they wouldn’t have any more on the *Kungsholm*.’

‘Just one thing,’ Lind said bleakly. ‘A licensed doctor, instead of a ham-handed sailor.’ He shrugged then, and managed a wry grin, with a return of some of the old exuberance and self-confidence. ‘Oh, before I forget. We’re afire in number three hold. Not supposed to reveal things like that to you fluttery and hysterical passengers, but it’s getting a little like trying to hide an eight-month pregnancy.’

‘Is there anything you can do?’ Goddard asked.

‘We’re going to start throwing water in it as soon as we can get hoses down through the stuff in the tween-decks.’

‘Is there any chance of telling where the burning bales are?’

‘Not much. And if they’re very far down, it’ll be hard to get any water to them. But if we can wet enough of them on top maybe we can keep it under control.’ Lind drained his cup of coffee and got up without ordering

breakfast. 'You don't know anybody who's got a chicken farm for sale?'

He went out. Here we go again, Goddard thought. Will the real Eric Lind stand up? Wasn't there any way you could arrive at some answer, some definite and final conclusion that would remain valid for at least an hour? Steen was better, so it was all a pipe dream, but now we're prepared for the next bulletin that he's dead. Or are we? He thought uneasily of Madeleine Lennox. No, she was all right. She was up; he'd heard her taking a shower.

Karen excused herself and left. He finished his poached egg and lit a cigarette while he drank another cup of coffee. When he went outside and walked aft, the bos'n and two sailors were knocking out the wedges that secured the tarpaulins on number three's hatch cover. Smoke was filtering up here and there around the edges of it. Another man was unrolling a fire hose. He wondered if they had gas masks aboard; the smoke was going to be pretty bad down there.

He reached for a cigarette, but discovered the pack was empty. He tossed it over the side and went back to his cabin for another. As he was tearing the cellophane from it he was arrested by the faint sound issuing from the open door of his bathroom. He frowned, and stepped inside to be sure. The shower was still running in the one next door. After nearly forty-five minutes? He hurried out into the passageway.

Only the screen door was closed, and through it he could just hear the slight hissing of the water. He knocked. There was no answer, no sound of movement. Could she have gone off and forgotten it? He checked the dining room and the lounge and then the deck outside. She was nowhere around. Uneasy now, he came back and knocked again, and when there was still no response he stepped next door to Karen's cabin and rapped. She looked out.

He explained quickly, and added, 'I wonder if you'd look in and see if something's happened to her.'

'Yes, of course.' She knocked on the door herself, and called out, 'Madeleine.' She went in. Almost

immediately, Goddard heard her startled exclamation. 'She's lying under the shower! Wait'll I get a sheet.'

He heard the shower stop, and then quick footsteps, Karen opened the screen door, her eyes frightened. He hurried into the bathroom. Madeleine Lennox lay almost face down on the tile in the open shower stall, a little stain of pink still spreading from the hair plastered wetly to her skull, and the sheet Karen had spread across her nude body was already soaked. Goddard rolled her over and raised her to a sitting position, wrapping the sheet about her as he gathered her up. Karen threw a towel across the pillow, and he laid her on the bunk.

He grabbed her wrist while Karen watched anxiously. 'She's alive,' he said. The pulse was slow, but steady, and now they could see the rise and fall of her chest. 'I'll tell Barset to get Mr. Lind,' Karen said. She hurried out.

Goddard stepped to the door of the bathroom and looked in. He saw the bar of soap lying on the tile, but it was two other things that caught and held his attention. One was the shower head itself; it was the same as the one in his bathroom, fixed, directly overhead, like those in any men's locker room. The other item was the dry, unused shower cap hanging from a hook on the bulkhead. And the shower had come on during, or immediately after, all that din the bos'n was making with his fire hose at seven thirty. Well, he thought, you wanted to know. Now you do.

She'd been unconscious for nearly an hour, which meant that unless she'd been slugged hard enough for a genuine concussion she'd been given something to keep her under. He whirled and went back to the bunk. Sliding her arms from under the sheet, he examined both of them. There was no indication of puncture. He looked around then, and saw the tray with its coffeepot and cup on the desk. So it was given orally, beforehand. And the blow on the head was merely to provide a visible wound and some blood, another touch of artistry by the great master of illusion.

She would die without ever regaining consciousness, just as would Captain Steen—unless he was already dead. Lind would simply continue giving her enough morphine to keep her out for several days to simulate the coma from a severe concussion, and then inject the massive overdose that would kill her.

Well, he asked himself bleakly, was it abstract knowledge he'd been after, or did he intend to do something about it? Do what? Challenge Lind openly, tell him he knew the whole thing? What would that accomplish except to get him put on the list himself? Lind was the leader of the conspiracy, the ship's doctor, and its acting master. Mount his soapbox and incite the rest of the crew to mutiny, not even knowing which ones he was talking to? That would be good for a laugh. Get a load of that goofy bastard; he's not only a Jonah, but he hears voices.

Karen returned, but remained outside the door. There was the sound of hurrying footsteps along the passageway, and Lind came in. Barset appeared and passed in the first-aid kit. Goddard moved back. Lind checked her pulse, apparently with satisfaction, and raised one eyelid to look at the pupil. He had to wash his hands before he examined the wound, and as he scrubbed, Goddard told him how they'd come to find her.

Lind's face was serious. 'Hmmm. Unconscious for nearly an hour. She must have given herself a pretty good rap.'

You couldn't fault the performance anywhere, Goddard thought as he watched. Lind shaved a small area around the scalp wound, sponged away the blood, and examined it. It wasn't a bad cut, he announced; two stitches would close it. He probed with fingertips; the skull felt intact and certainly wasn't depressed. Only an X-ray could tell whether or not there was a fracture, but he didn't think there was. He cleaned the wound expertly with antiseptic, and put in the two stitches and added a small dressing. He checked her pulse again with a profound air, gently lowered the wrist, and radiated optimism. The great healer, Goddard thought.

So? So I open my stupid mouth, and I get killed too. And what good would it do her, except she'd have company on the bottom of the ocean? They might even sew us both in the same sack, if they're running short of canvas.

And what was Madeleine Lennox to him anyway? He'd known her for three days, they'd had a couple of casual and utterly impersonal rolls in the hay, and once they'd reached Manila he'd never have seen her again anyway. He wasn't involved any more; all he asked of the human race was to be left alone. That wasn't an exorbitant demand, was it? All he had to do was mind his own business. And let her die.

He sighed then. It was a nice try, but, maybe he'd known it wouldn't work. However he'd have to wait till he got Lind alone to heave it into the fan; he didn't want to involve Karen in it.

'Nothing more we can do at the moment,' Lind said. 'I don't know how bad the concussion is, but all we can do is wait till she comes around. I'll look in on her every hour or so.'

'Fine,' Goddard said. 'We'll keep checking her too.'

Lind went out, carrying the first-aid kit. Barsey sighed, shook his head in silent comment on this endless chain of disasters, and left. Karen watched them go down the passageway; then she stepped inside and closed the door. She took a cigarette from a pack on the desk, and leaned close as Goddard struck the lighter.

'Well,' she asked quietly, 'how do we stop him?'

Goddard marveled at his own stupidity. If a man could figure out that she wouldn't have been under the shower without her cap, washing her hair with a bar of soap instead of shampoo, twenty minutes before breakfast when it would take four hours to dry in this humidity, how had he expected another woman to fail to grasp it?

Before he could reply, the screen door swung open and Rafferty appeared, carrying a mop and a can of scouring powder. The beefy face was set in an expression of bland innocence and concern, which

Goddard expected and dismissed, but there were two items he did find of more interest. One was the slight sag to the right-hand pocket of the jacket, and the other was a faint but undeniable thump of something inside the pocket as it brushed against the door facing.

'Geez, I guess she really took a header, huh?' Rafferty asked with a glance toward the unconscious figure on the bunk.

'Yes, I guess she did, Rafferty,' Goddard said pleasantly. 'We're not in your way here?'

'Naw, I'll just crumb up the bathroom a little.' He disappeared inside it.

Karen was watching Goddard in wonder. He had taken a handkerchief from his pocket and was winding it tightly about his right hand like a cestus, and the expression in his eyes was one she'd never seen before in those of a civilized man. There was something feral and wicked and almost hungry about them as he shook his head for silence and stepped casually over toward the doorway. He unhooked and closed the heavy wooden door and silently slid the bolt. The slapping sound of Rafferty's mop continued inside the bathroom. Goddard stepped back and stationed himself beside its open doorway.

'Look!' he exclaimed. 'She's coming around. Her eyes are open.'

For a moment it fooled even Karen. She jerked her head around to look at Madeleine Lennox, and by the time she'd turned back Rafferty was emerging from the bathroom door, his eyes turned in the same direction. Goddard stepped out in front of him and swung, from far down and way back, with no necessity for subtlety or feinting, feet planted and all his weight moving forward. The fist clenched into a bound and rock-hard projectile at the instant of impact and buried itself to the wrist in Rafferty's unsuspecting belly.

Rafferty grunted and doubled over. Goddard caught a jacket lapel with his left hand, clawed him out of the doorway toward him, and shot the right again. It smashed into the side of Rafferty's jaw just below and in front of the ear. The head weather-cocked with the

force of it and he started to spin, went off balance, and crashed back against the heavy wooden door with his head and shoulders as he fell to the deck. Goddard leaped on him, landing with one knee in the belly and slashing the wrapped hand across his throat. Rafferty was a bull and not much more than twenty, and the inexorable law in this kind of thing was that if you were going to win it at forty-six you had to win it fast. The second round was doubtful, and there was never any third.

Rafferty gagged, but heaved upward under him, sheer strength pushing him off the deck. Goddard opened a cut above one eye, smashed him across the mouth, and pushed back, as though trying to hold him down. Rafferty was still scrambling up. Goddard suddenly removed his weight, came up with him, reached backward, got an arm around his neck, heaved forward, and threw him. Rafferty's body cartwheeled and slammed into the bulkhead. He fell down it on his head and one shoulder, and sprawled, reaching for the gun in the pocket of his jacket. It came clear. Goddard stamped down on the wrist and ground his heel. The gun slipped from Rafferty's fingers. Goddard grabbed it and slashed the barrel down across the side of his head hard enough to open the scalp. Rafferty pushed back against the bulkhead, dazed now, and tried to sit up. Blood ran down across his face.

Karen watched in horror. A face appeared momentarily at the closed porthole, and there were running footsteps on deck. Goddard jerked back the slide of the .45 to arm it. A cartridge jumped out, glinting as it spun across the deck. There was already one in the chamber. He shoved the slide back, slid off the safety, and pushed the muzzle against Rafferty's teeth.

'All right, you son of a bitch! What'd you give her, and how much?'

'Up yours,' Rafferty said, and then wished he hadn't. Goddard grinned, and he'd never seen a face like that before. Goddard flicked on the safety, caught him by the shirt collar, leaned in on him, hard, and slashed his head again with the gun barrel.

'You want to wear your scalp around your neck like a lei, go ahead,' he said, fighting for breath. Somebody was hammering on the door. He raised the gun again.

'Two tablets,' Rafferty said.

'Of what?'

'I don't know. He just give 'em to me. He didn't say what they was.'

Probably codeine, Goddard thought. But whatever it was, two couldn't be any more than double a prescription dose and unlikely to be fatal.

'Where's Mayr?' he asked.

'Mayr? He's dead and buried, you jerk.' He looked at Goddard's face, and at the gun, rising again. 'All right, he's down below somewhere. I don't know where.'

'How's he supposed to get off the ship? And where?'

'A boat, somewhere ahead of us.'

'How far?'

'I don't know.'

'How many are there besides Lind?' 'Otto, Sparks, Karl, Mueller—' 'Who's Mueller?'

'The bos'n.'

There were more people in the passageway now. Somebody was battering on the door with what sounded like a sledge. 'And who else?' Goddard asked.

'One of the black gang, but I don't know which one.'

'Any more?'

'I don't know. You think he tells me anything?'

'You're in it for the money, is that it?'

'Partly.'

The bolt was beginning to tear out of the door. Rafferty looked at it. Help was coming. 'What else?' Goddard asked.

Rafferty spat in his face. 'What do you think, Jew boy?'

'I see,' Goddard said. 'You're dedicated.' He wiped the spittle from his face. Without looking around, he spoke to Karen Brooke between crashes on the door. 'Karen, see if you can find that cartridge; we've only

got one clip. Stay close to me, and don't let anybody get behind you.'

He stood up and gestured to Rafferty with the gun. 'All right, save the hammering out there,' he called through the door. 'We're coming out.' He worked the bolt back and pulled the door open. The screen door had been torn from its hinges and was lying on deck. Otto was standing in front of it with the nozzle of a fire hose, Lind was beside him, and Karl was coming up the passageway behind them with a fire ax. Otto started to raise the nozzle until he saw the 0.45 dangling in Goddard's hand.

Goddard shoved Rafferty out. 'Here's your boy,' he said to Lind.

Lind nodded, but said nothing.

Goddard jerked his head at Otto. 'Throw that thing forward, and go aft. You too, Karl.'

The nozzle and fire ax clanged on the deck. Goddard looked out and checked to his right. There was nobody in the passageway forward. He gestured for Lind and the other three to go on aft and out on deck, and followed close behind them with Karen on his heels. Barset was in the thwartships passageway near the entrance to the dining room, looking frightened.

'Don't get behind me,' Goddard said. Barset turned and went the other way.

The four men went out on deck. Goddard checked to be sure they were all in view before he stepped out himself, followed by Karen. He moved to the right to get out from in front of the passageway. There was no breeze at all now and the sea was like polished metal. Just ahead and to starboard the sky was a poisonous mass of cloud veined with the nervous play of lightning. Thunder growled on the horizon, and the acrid odor of burning cotton stung his throat. Mueller, the bos'n, was running up the ladder from the deck below. Goddard gestured for him to stand clear, near the others, and spoke to Lind.

'Where Mayr is, or what you're going to do with him, I couldn't care less. But I'm going to move Mrs. Lennox into my cabin, and Karen and I are going to be there

with her from now on. I don't know how many of your crew are in this, but I've got a blanket policy that covers it; anybody who tries to get in will be shot. We may not make it to Manila, but some of you won't either.'

There were no threats, no bluster. Lind merely listened, and waited for him to finish. He turned to Rafferty then, and said quietly, 'I thought I told you not to carry that gun.'

Rafferty's eyes were crawling with fear, but he tried to bluff it out. 'Well, Chrissakes, we got plenty more—'

It was swift, deadly, and sickening. Lind made a quick movement of his hand. Rafferty threw up an arm. Lind caught it, twisted it behind his back, and ran him headfirst into the bulkhead. There was a meaty thud, and a grunt like that of a pole-axed steer. Lind picked him up by coat collar and crotch, stepped to the rail, and threw him overboard.

The whimpering little *yunh-yunh-yunh-yunh* he mouthed as he fell was cut off by the sound of the splash below them. Goddard winced. In spite of himself he turned and looked aft as Rafferty surfaced in the white water beyond the line of the poop and began to drop astern, his mouth open in a soundless scream and his arms flailing as he tried to swim after the ship like a dog chasing a car.

'Oh, God!' Karen cried out in a strangled voice beside him. She ran to the rail and gagged. Goddard raised the gun, but it was too late; Lind had already leaped and caught her. With his left arm about her waist, he swung her up over the rail as if to throw her into the sea. He caught a handful of her skirt and slip with his right hand and let her dangle over the rushing water below as the garments slid up under her arms. The slender body writhed as she struggled, face outward, trying to turn inward and grab the stanchion. Braced against the rail and holding her out behind him, Lind turned and looked at Goddard. 'All right,' he said, 'toss Otto the gun.'

Goddard heard a brief, blood-freezing sound of seams beginning to tear. He tossed the gun to Otto. At the

same time a voice in the after well-deck shouted, 'Mayr!' Lind turned and looked.

There was another ripping sound. 'Get her up!' Goddard shouted. He lunged for the rail. There was no way to tell whether Lind tried to lift her back or not. The dress tore away, she slid out of the half slip, and Goddard saw her body drop feet-first into the sea.

In the madness then, he didn't know who hit him first. A fist crashed against his jaw. He reeled backward, swung at one of the faces boring in, and then he was down as they swarmed him under. He got a knee into somebody's groin, smashed another in the face and managed to fight his way momentarily to his feet, trying to get to Lind. As he went down the second time, he saw Mayr running up the ladder just beyond him, carrying a machine pistol.

Somebody got a clear swing at his face, knocking his head back against the deck. The barrel of the .45 chopped downward. He could see it, but there was no way to avoid it. They heaved him up, dazed but still conscious, and threw him over the rail. He was turning as he fell, and he saw the sky wheel above him, and the far line of the horizon, and then the water rushing up.

The impact was numbing, and he was close to blacking out as he went under. The urge to fight his way upward and try to keep from being drawn into the wheel was instinctive—and admittedly irrational if he'd had time to think about it. The quick and sensible way would be to go on through the propeller and emerge in slices. But there was little danger of it with the ship loaded; the propeller was too far down. Then, slammed back and forth in the millrace of its turbulence and whirled and spun around by blows from water as solid as oak, he lost all sense of direction and had no idea which way was up anyway. His lungs were bursting and he was drifting off into a darkening winy haze when he came out on top, kicked to the surface by the violence itself. The counter loomed black and massive above him, drawing rapidly away to the thumping beat of the propeller. He was whirled again and kicked backward in the foaming water of the wake.

Blind panic seized him for a moment, and he had already taken two or three frenzied strokes after the ship before he got it under control. He didn't know whether it was his hatred of Lind and contempt for Rafferty, or whether he was still partially immunized by the massive charges of adrenaline, but he was able to stop the ludicrous flailing of his arms. No doubt he

would panic at the end or go completely out of his mind when he saw the ship go over the horizon, but at least he could do it in private. He treaded water instead, and turned to search the sea behind him. There wasn't much chance he would see her, though, even if she were still afloat. She would be several hundred yards astern, only a head showing above the surface and still below the intervening billows of the swell. Only, he thought, if they both rose to a crest at the same time.

He was still being thrown about in the diminishing turbulence of the wake, and now he was facing toward the ship again. He stared unbelievably. It was well over a hundred yards away, but it was beginning to swing in a hard-over turn to port, and he could see two figures out on the port wing of the bridge, undeniably looking back at him. Gooseflesh spread between his shoulder blades, but he killed the cruel surge of hope before it had time to start. It was only somebody who hadn't heard the word. Then he saw the big figure that could only be Eric Lind, running up the ladder to the boat deck. The word was on its way.

* * *

Antonio Gutierrez, the Filipino messman, had just emerged from the passageway at the after end of the crew's deck when he thought he heard something splash in the water on the starboard side. He walked over and looked down, but could see nothing; Rafferty was a hundred feet aft by that time and still below the surface. He looked off momentarily toward the squall, and was about to turn away when a gilt sandal fell past his face, followed by another, and then a long and very beautiful pair of legs dropped into view and stopped, suspended in front of his eyes so near he could have touched them if he had been capable of movement.

Apparently performing some sort of airy dance to unheard music, they were slender and tanned, and nude all the way to the fragment of white nylon at their juncture, and could belong only to the pretty blonde one he had embraced so often in the fantasies of his nights. He heard voices on the deck above him then, a shout, and a sound of tearing cloth, and she dropped

past him and fell into the sea. There were more sounds from above, and then a cry in the well-deck below. He drew a shaking hand across his face and looked down to see a tall figure running toward the ladder, carrying some kind of strange pistol in his hand. It was the dead man they had buried two days ago.

Harald Svedberg, the young third mate, didn't know a word of Spanish or Tagalog, and even if he had it is doubtful he would have made any sense of the chaotic outpouring about dancing legs and ghosts with pistols and naked women falling so close you could reach out like that and touch them, but there is something universally compelling about the pointed finger, even that of an obvious madman. The eye follows involuntarily. He looked aft in the direction indicated by the stabbing and palsied hand and saw Goddard's head in the white water of the wake.

'Hard left!' he called out to the helmsman. He lifted the life ring from its bracket on the port wing of the bridge, yanked loose the canister, and threw them outward.

* * *

Goddard saw the ship steady up from her turn to port and then begin to swing back to starboard, as he had known she would as soon as Lind had reached the bridge. Almost at the same time he spotted the white circle of the life ring as it rose to the crest of a swell ahead of him, its attached flare glowing feebly in the sunlight.

Kicking off his slippers, he began to swim toward it. When he had reached it, the *Leander* had steadied up again and was back on course, going straight away from him a quarter mile ahead, trailing a plume of smoke from her ventilators as she headed into the dark line of the rain squall beyond. He tore his eyes from her, took the knife from his pocket, and cut loose the canister and its flare. Letting the knife drop, he tore off the shirt and the encumbering flannel slacks.

From here, where the *Leander* had started her first turn, the wake ran straight back, traces of it still visible

for several hundred yards. With no conscious thought as to why he was doing it, he slipped inside the ring, pushed straight down on it with both hands to give himself all the buoyancy possible, and raised his head as high as he could to look back along the line of the wake. He was lifted by a gentle swell, and then another, and it was while the third was passing under him that he was sure he saw her, a golden dot in the immensity of blue behind him. He dropped away down the slope and began to rise again, and this time there was no doubt. He marked her position against the edge of a cloud formation beyond, and began to swim back to her, towing the life ring.

It was slow work, but he had covered what he thought must be half the distance and had paused momentarily to hold onto the ring and rest when the question finally occurred to him. In the name of God, why? Wasn't it more merciful to let her drown? Unconsciousness came in probably less than a minute, and then it was over. Wasn't that better than four or five days, and ultimate madness and death by thirst?

He looked around then, and the *Leander* was gone, swallowed up in the squall, and he was only a speck in all this vast and aching void. He began kicking ahead, hurrying now, driven by fear that he might be too late. Each time he rose to the crest of a swell he looked anxiously ahead in the direction she had to be. Then he saw her. She rose to the top of a swell less than fifty yards away, only the back of her head visible above the surface.

She disappeared, and looked as though she had gone under. No, she'd probably just dropped away behind the swell. He threshed ahead. He saw her again, closer now, but she was in trouble. She went under, and he could see her struggling weakly. A hand came out. Then her face emerged for a few seconds. Her eyes were closed, but her mouth opened as she tried to gulp for air, water ran into it, and she sank from sight. She didn't come up again. He was still twenty yards away.

Gasping for breath himself and driven by the awful compulsion to hurry, he tried to keep his eyes fixed on the spot as he flailed ahead, but it was next to

impossible in the tilting planes of the swell. He was above it, then cut off from it, and then below it. The sun was in his face, glaring off the surface and making it impossible to see beneath. The only thing to do was go beyond, and turn, with the sun over his shoulder so he could see down. He should be over it now. He lunged on for a few more strokes, and swung around, searching frantically. It might already be too late.

Luck was with him; he saw her almost at once. A swell passed under him, and with the sun's rays striking almost perpendicularly into the plane of its retreating slope, it was like looking into a shop window. A flash of gold caught the corner of his eye off to the right, and he turned, and she was only three or four feet below the surface less than ten feet away. He swam over and dived, twined his fingers in the aureole of blonde hair streaming outward from her head, and kicked to the surface.

Her eyes were closed, and there was no responsive movement from her body, no attempt to clutch at him at all as he held her against him with her face above the surface. How did he get the water out of her when they were both immersed in it to their chins, with no way to raise her above it? Maybe if he lay flat with the life ring under his back he would have enough buoyancy. When he was positioned, he hauled her body over his and pushed up hard into her midriff, but before her face could clear the water they both went under.

That was hopeless, and he had wasted precious seconds. He threw one leg over the rim of the life ring and stood vertically in the water astride it. It supported them with no need to tread water when he took her in his arms and held her upright against him. He brushed back the wet hair plastered to her face. Taking a deep breath, he forced her mouth open, placed his over it, and blew. He pressed in hard on her ribs to force her to exhale.

He took another breath and blew it into her lungs, and repeated the cycle. Twice, three times, four times. He was doing it too fast, driven by the frantic need to sense in her some sign of returning life. Slow down, damn it, he told himself harshly; it has to be the same

rhythm as natural breathing. Keep going. She's not dead. She can't be. Please, she can't be.

He looked around at the numbing emptiness of the horizon and wondered if he were already mad. So after he had revived her, they'd have a scared and shaky laugh at what a close call it had been, get in the car, and drive home. Why the hell couldn't he leave her alone? She was free, already beyond the agony and the consciousness of dying; why condemn her to go through it again? He didn't know. She just had to open her eyes.

He had his lips against hers, blowing inward, when he felt her move. There was a little shudder, and a gasp, and a hand brushed against his side. He pressed, and she exhaled, and when he started to force breath into her again, her rhythm caught and she inhaled herself. He was suddenly aware then of the intimacy of the way he was holding her, as if they were kissing or making love, with his mouth over hers and her breasts pressed tightly against his chest. The bra had gone, apparently ripped away by the force of her plunge feet-first into the water or when she was whirled through the maelstrom of the wake.

He cursed himself for a voyeur and a ghoul, but he was aware at the same time there was nothing erotic about it; he just wanted her to open her eyes. When she did, and saw him, and said something, he would no longer be alone. Admittedly, this made no sense, but as far as he could see that was why he'd come back here. He freed the life ring, put it over her and under her arms, and held an arm across it behind her to keep her in it and to support himself. She gagged and retched and was briefly sick from the salt water she had swallowed. He washed her lips and continued to hold her while her breathing became stronger, and in a moment she opened her eyes.

There was no comprehension in them at first. She looked blankly at him, and then around at the lonely expanse of sea and the squall bearing down on them. He expected her to cry out, or become hysterical, or faint, but she didn't. Perhaps it couldn't penetrate fast enough to slug you all at once. She turned her eyes

back to his face, still seeming more bewildered than anything. 'You—' She gagged, and tried again. 'You didn't jump in—after me?'

'No,' he said. 'They threw me over.' He explained briefly how he happened to have the life ring. She said nothing. Her chin trembled for a moment, and he could sense her struggle for control.

'I'm sorry,' he said.

'No.' She took a shaky breath. 'It was my fault. If I'd stayed behind you—'

'That wasn't what I meant.' His gesture included them and all the empty sea. 'You had it made, if I'd left you alone.'

'Oh. You're apologizing for saving my life?'

'Saving?'

'Well, all it ever is is a postponement.' She choked, and began to cough. 'And the ship might come back if the others know about it.'

'The others haven't got guns,' Goddard said. He told her of Mayr's running out into the well-deck. 'Either the smoke drove him out or they'd already moved him to another hiding place and somebody discovered him.'

'Well, it's failed now. Everybody knows he's still alive. What can Lind do?'

'I don't know,' Goddard said. The thing that baffled him was that Lind could have saved himself any time in the past two days if he'd wanted to, simply by getting rid of Mayr. He'd apparently sacrificed Krasicki without a qualm; why not Mayr too? When he saw the illusion was coming apart at the seams and they were all going to be exposed it would seem the simplest way out, for a man as ruthless as Lind, would be to destroy the evidence. Instead, he had gone on in his futile and dangerous attempts to shore up the dike by getting rid of Captain Steen and Mrs. Lennox. Discipline? Ideological fanaticism? That made no sense. Of what value was Mayr to any resurgence of Naziism? He couldn't surface anywhere on earth without being arrested, and he was the symbol of nothing but butchery and final defeat. But still Lind was apparently

willing to destroy the whole crew if he had to in order to pull it off.

Thunder crashed, nearer now, and erratic puffs of wind began to ruffle the surface of the swell. To the north and west the sky was blotted out, and the impenetrable curtain of rain swept down toward them only a few hundred yards away. Suddenly Karen cried out, 'Look!'

Goddard turned and stared. Less than a half mile to the west of them the *Leander* had emerged from the gray line of rain. A towering column of smoke poured up from her after well-deck, shot through with red tongues of flame to the height of her stack. The fire had burst out of number three hold at last. She seemed to be on a southerly heading, but before he could be sure, the squall engulfed them and she was blotted out.

* * *

Antonio Gutierrez crossed himself, but seemed to be incapable of any further movement. He had never been on the bridge of a ship before and he wished devoutly that he had never seen this one, but if he moved somebody might notice him. He was no longer sure any of this was really happening, anyway; his belief in his own sanity already shaken by the resurrection of a dead man, he was now confronted with the fact that he had seen a woman with long blonde hair fall overboard but when he'd told the officer and pointed, what they had seen emerge from the foamy water back there was a man's head with short black hair. Fortunately, the officer hadn't seemed to notice this discrepancy in his story; he had told the steering man to turn the ship around and had thrown over the *salvavida*, but now the big first officer was striding through the wheelhouse toward them. Somebody had said he was now the captain, and his eyes were very cold and mean.

The ship had already started her swing and Harald Svedberg was staring aft, trying to determine whether the man in the water had seen the life ring fall, when he looked around and saw Lind coming through the wheelhouse.

'Mr. Svedberg!' Lind snapped. 'Back on your course!'

'There's a man overboard,' the third mate started to explain, when Lind cut him off.

'I said back on your course!' Lind turned to the helmsman. 'Hard right.'

The helmsman, a Greek ordinary seaman, glanced with momentary helplessness toward the third mate at this conflict of orders, and then began spinning the wheel back to the right. There was no arguing with that tone of voice, not from Lind.

'Mr. Lind! I tell you there's a man in the water back there!' the third mate said angrily. Lind might be the acting master, but this was his watch and he'd give the orders on it. He strode to the door of the wheelhouse. 'I saw him myself.'

The third mate's protest cut off then. He started. Hugo Mayr, now minus the eye patch, the beard-stubbed face wearing a chill smile, had just entered the opposite door of the wheelhouse carrying a machine pistol. Behind him was Karl with a Luger in his hand. The helmsman looked around at them, and his eyes grew wide with fear. The ship was swinging hard to starboard now and the squall was bearing down on them from dead ahead.

Antonio Gutierrez, still frozen into immobility out on the wing of the bridge, saw the big sailor called Otto come up across the port side of the boat deck, also carrying a black slab of a pistol. He stepped onto the bridge behind the third mate, looked beyond him to Lind standing in back of the helmsman, and nodded. He raised the pistol and slashed it down on the third mate's head. Svedberg's knees buckled. He fell forward against the door facing and slid to the deck just as the advancing curtain of rain swept down on them. Otto caught him by the arm and started to drag his body to the wing of the bridge where Gutierrez was still cowering.

'Ease your helm!' Lind snapped to the young Greek. The latter, still petrified, gave no indication he had ever heard. Lind yanked him away from the wheel and flung him toward the door. He fell to his hands and knees on

the bridge in the gusts of windswept rain, scrambled to his feet, and fled. 'Otto, take the wheel,' Lind ordered. Otto left the unconscious third mate lying in the rain and hurried in. Lind gave him the course. He spun the wheel left to steady up.

Lind turned to Mayr and started to say something in German just as the bos'n hurried in. Water streamed down his face, and he had a Luger shoved into the waistband of his dungarees.

He spoke rapidly to Lind. 'Those carboys are breaking in number three. Before the squall hit, you could smell alcohol all over the well-deck.'

Lind nodded. 'Nothing we can do about it. If it blows, maybe we can keep it under control. Where's Sparks?'

'He's coming.'

'Good. Cover the ladders. Shoot anybody who tries to get up here.'

The bos'n went out into the gray confusion of wind and rain. Sparks came up the inside companion way through the chart room. 'Call the Phoenix,' Lind ordered. 'Tell them to get under way on our reciprocal course at full speed. Give him a signal once an hour to home on with his RDF.'

Sparks looked questioning. 'Won't we rendezvous before dark?'

'What difference does it make now?' Mayr asked. 'We all board her,' Lind said.

'And what about—?' Sparks' gesture was inclusive—the ship and the rest of the crew. Lind drew a finger across his throat. Sparks nodded and went out.

The third mate still lay face down where Otto had left him, almost at Gutierrez' feet. His sodden cap was nearby, blown against the canvas dodger by the buffeting gusts of wind, and a pink stain ran out of his hair across the deck that streamed with water. The messman looked down at this man he assumed was dead, and then through the flung sheets of rain at the others inside the wheelhouse. Maybe they wouldn't notice him now if he moved. He had taken one step

when there was a sound like a gigantic exhalation of breath that made his ears pop. He turned.

Numb by now and beyond any emotion, he watched in a sort of bemused wonder as a great ball of fire and smoke shot skyward from the after well-deck, carrying with it the cartwheeling planks and flaming sections of tarpaulin from number three hatch cover, shattered and burning cases, baled cowhides, splintered dunnage, and an eruption of sparks like the climax of a fireworks display.

This fiery debris began to rain down on the poop and into the sea alongside to die a hissing death in the water above and below, but the column of flame continued to mount, shooting up from the hatch to the height of the stack and giving off boiling clouds of smoke and a rushing and crackling sound that could be heard above the lashing of rain and the shouts of men on the decks below. Lind ran out onto the starboard wing of the bridge, looked aft, and strode back to grab up the telephone on the bulkhead behind the helmsman.

‘Give us pressure on the fire line,’ he barked. He threw the phone back on the hook, rang the engine room telegraph to STOP, and ran back across the boat deck, followed by the others. With no one on the bridge except an unconscious third officer and a Filipino messman, the *Leander* continued blindly ahead into the squall.

Gutierrez stepped to the wheelhouse door and looked in, his face still suffused with wonder. The pretty blonde one was back there somewhere, and if they returned there was no doubt she would simply come aboard again. Perhaps not even wet. How was it the steering man had started to perform the return? This way? Yes, *a la izquierda*, without doubt. He grasped the spokes of the wheel and began turning it to the left. When it would go no farther, he left it, dragged the third mate inside out of the rain where he might await resurrection in more comfort, and went out onto the boat deck to watch the fire. On any other ship, a thing like that would be very unusual and frightening.

The *Leander*, her engine stopped but with full way on her and still plowing ahead at nearly twelve knots, began a hard-over turn to port through the opaque and wind-lashed sheets of rain where one direction was like another.

* * *

In a violent gray world less than a hundred yards across, they floated face to face with the rim of the life ring between them, eyes half closed against the beating of the rain. Thunder exploded on the heels of a jagged flash of lightning.

'Why do you suppose she was going that way?' Karen asked. 'They couldn't be looking for us?'

'No,' Goddard said. It was brutal, but raising false hopes was even more so. Lind would still be in command, even now that she was afire; there were at least six of them, and they'd all be armed. 'She could be out of control, or they changed course to keep the fire off the midships house.'

'Well, they couldn't find us, anyway. You can't see fifty yards.'

'Did you ever see anything of Rafferty?' he asked.

'No.' She wiped water from her face, and shivered. 'Why do you suppose he did it? One of his own men?'

'Rafferty was stupid. Lind would probably have killed him later, anyway. I mean, if the thing had worked. They'd never trust a secret like that to some two-bit punk who'd spill it in the first bar he hit.'

There was also a good chance Lind had done it with the knowledge her reaction would be just what it had been, to get her to the rail, but he saw no point in saying so.

'Do you suppose he was a Nazi too? An American?'

'Probably,' Goddard said.

The squall was kicking up a sharp and confused sea atop the swell. Spray blew off it to mingle with the rain. There was so much water in the air that breathing was difficult.

'It's strange,' she said, 'but I don't even know if you have any family or not.'

'A brother in Texas,' he replied. 'And an ex-Mrs. Goddard, somewhere in Europe. We communicate through a power of attorney and a bank account; if the dollar holds firm, it'll be years before she hears about this.'

'You didn't have any children?'

'A daughter,' he said, 'by a previous marriage. She was killed in a car crash.' Then he was surprised. Had he really said that?

'I'm sorry.'

'It was five months ago.'

Why? he wondered. Was it the imminence of death, or some latent tendency to spill himself he'd never suspected before, just waiting for a captive audience with no bra to get in the way? Since he'd walked away from the hospital that afternoon in his private and invisible bubble he'd never said anything to anybody except to call Suzanne and tell her that Gerry was dead, he would be home in three hours, and not to be there.

People had asked occasionally, and he'd said he had no children. Once or twice during that marathon drunk some more convivial and inquisitive type had forgotten and asked the question twice, to receive a brief smile that left him with an impression his martini was freezing to a lump of solid ice in his hand. Well, yes, I did have a daughter, but her stepmother and I killed her. How about a refill?

Her arms looked very soft and round on the rim of the life ring. Somehow he wanted to touch them. Water coursed down her face.

'Did you have any?' he asked.

'No.' Then, without knowing why, she added, 'I had abortions instead. Two of them.'

'I'm sorry.'

'They were induced. My husband didn't want children.'

'I'm not a professional Angeleno,' Goddard said, 'but don't they have the pill in San Francisco?'

'They were still experimental then.' She said nothing else. Well, it was an unlikely place to hold a seminar on planned parenthood. But at least neither of them had anybody else to worry about, and if they didn't start slopping over about each other— So why had he come back here? He didn't know.

'I'm sorry I said that,' he apologized. 'It must have been left over from some cocktail party. And God damn your husband.'

She gave him a strange look, but said nothing. That was understandable, however; he wasn't making sense even to himself. If he wanted to stamp his foot and stick out his tongue at somebody, why not Lind, instead of some anonymous dead man?

'I mean, it's degrading,' he said, still floundering. 'For Christ's sake. I don't know what I mean.'

'It's all right,' she said gently. 'I don't even know why I said it.'

We gotta do something with this scene, fellas; it's fuzzy as hell and the dialogue stinks. Maybe what the script meant was our boy Shrdlu—we got to find a better name for him, let's make a note of that—Shrdlu is about to buy the John Donne bit, only he's still all *futzed* up with his old behavior patterns. This babe is now the whole human race—I buy that—she's Everybabe, mother, sex object, sufferings, boobs, and all, and he feels the old tidal pull. He wants to tell her he's sorry, or buy her a chocolate Easter egg, but the best he can do is get mad because she was married to some guy thinks a pregnancy is a clogged drain, you send for a plumber.

There was a simultaneous flash of lightning and a crackling explosion of thunder. Water beat at his face. And after the squall would come the agony of the sun. I'm not so sure, Mannie; this is just off the top of my head, but I think what it is with Shrdlu is he's scared spitless.

* * *

Gerry hadn't entirely given up on the over-twenty-five generation; there was still hope even if a good many of them did seem to have the moral outlook of howler monkeys. The Haight-Ashbury routine wasn't for her, with its promiscuity and pot; she was at UCLA, fulminating against Rusk and the CIA and Dow Chemical recruiters, even if it was her opinion that blaming the latter for napalm was about as logical as crusading against fever because it sometimes killed people with malaria. You were still only treating the symptoms.

He didn't know what she'd come home for that afternoon. He'd come back from the studio for some notes he'd forgotten that morning in regard to the third cut they were taking at *The Salty Six* in a last desperate attempt to save what everybody was already calling 'a real nice picture, Harry.'

The studio had served notice they were going to drop his option, but that wasn't what was riding him; he was pretty well fixed financially. It was simply the failure. The picture was a bomb, and it was his baby from beginning to end; he'd written the script and produced it. On the surface it would seem to be a good comedy situation, the misadventures of a sailing yacht in mid-ocean with a male captain and a five-girl crew, but when it was in the can there wasn't a belly laugh in it. He should have known to begin with that there weren't five good comediennesses in the industry, that if there were they wouldn't work together, and that, finally, with all five of them in full cry after the one male within two thousand miles and he the Godhead, Authority, the Captain, nothing in Christ's world, script, director, or threat of death, was going to make them be funny; they were going to be sexy. He had a headache, which he'd had almost a month ago, and no amount of Miltown could any longer retract and sheathe his nerve-ends.

Gerry was living on campus, when she wasn't working in Watts or picketing an induction center somewhere, so she didn't know yet how near he and Suzanne were to calling it quits. Not, he thought, that he'd known it had gone that sour, until he got to the house. There was a strange car in the driveway, but he

didn't pay any attention to it; it was just one of Suzanne's friends. He went in through the front and back to the den, but he couldn't find the notes. Maybe she'd know where they were; she was probably out by the pool. He went out through the sliding glass door of the living room, apparently just ahead of Gerry. He hadn't heard the Porsche pull into the driveway, so it must have been while he was in the den.

He didn't see Suzanne, but the shallow end of the pool was around the corner of the master bedroom. He stepped around it and almost onto two nude bodies on the poolside mattress with the wet trunks and swimsuit discarded beside it, Suzanne in an equestrienne attitude with her eyes closed and beyond hearing anything less than an amphibious assault, the recumbent one a posturing and epicene writer named Ransome he'd always assumed was a fag. Ransome's eyes were open, looking up at him; they kept growing wider in horror as he made a strangled sound and fought to escape, both of which could have been interpreted as ardor until at last his voice returned and he wailed, 'Oh, good heavens!' Suzanne's eyes opened and she looked around at him with the blank stare of someone in a trance. It hadn't been more than two seconds.

In spite of the roaring in his head, his voice seemed to be perfectly matter of fact. 'I don't care if you lay this double-gaited son of a bitch,' he said, 'but could you do it somewhere else? I'd like to think the pool's exclusive, anyway.'

There was a gasp behind them then. He whirled, and Gerry was staring at all three of them, her eyes sick with loathing. She turned and ran. There was a snarl from the Porsche out in the driveway, a scream of rubber, and she was gone.

There was no use trying to catch her; he'd just have to keep calling her at the dormitory tonight until he could get her to come to the phone. Maybe he could make her understand he'd been operating in shock himself. He went back to the studio, and was in one of the projection rooms two hours later when the call

came from the California highway patrol. She'd spun out through a guardrail on the San Diego Freeway.

Afterwards, when he walked away from the hospital isolated from everything in his private world of silence, all he had to hang onto was the knowledge she hadn't done it deliberately; she was too healthy-minded and vital for that. She was just burning out her anger and disgust by driving too fast, a kid hitting back blindly at the only things available at the moment, the throttle of an overpowered car and the speed laws promulgated by the same can of worms.

* * *

It was a lovely face, he thought, with magnificent bone structure, and he was conscious of a desire to tell her this, but she was probably already convinced he was some kind of nut. He was appraising the exquisite effect of that slight tilt to the eyes when a little black streak trickled briefly down her cheek like running mascara and then disappeared under the pelting of the rain. Now another oozed from the blond hair plastered to her head. He was wondering at this when she said, 'There's soot or something in the rain. It's on your face.'

The ship, of course! It was the fallout from the fire. He swung his head, searching the limits of the rain-swept void around them, but could see nothing except the short and choppy sea fading away into the murk. In the squall it could be blown for miles. But there was more of it now. Sooty splotches were dotting her arms. It had to be nearby. He turned, eyes slitted against the spindrift and rain, and stared directly to windward. Then he saw it—not the ship itself, but a faint and shapeless wash of orange glowing through the gray. He spun Karen around and pointed.

There was no way to tell how far away she was or in what direction she was going. It was simply a color without form or dimension, and they had no framework or orientation except the wind, which could be veering all around the compass. But it was growing brighter, he thought, conscious of the pounding of his heart.

Then they could see the flames and the dark clouds of smoke, and the side of the ship began to materialize in the mists at the limit of visibility. It was in profile, going past them very slowly with scarcely any disturbance to the swell or the confused and choppy sea set up by the squall.

‘The engine’s stopped!’ Goddard said. ‘And she’s lost most of her headway.’

Karen slipped out of the life ring. They each hooked an arm through it and began to kick in the direction of the ship. She was fading from view into the curtain again, off to their right, but the glow was still visible and he knew she was slowing all the time.

12

They must be almost there, Antonio Gutierrez thought; he should see the pretty blonde one any minute now. One could see the ship was stopping, just as it had when they had gone back to pick up the big American on his rubber raft. The engine room telegraph meant nothing to him, and he had no way of knowing the *Leander* had been moving through the water only from her own headway ever since Lind and the others had run from the bridge.

But it was very difficult to see anything in all this rain, and to make it worse nobody even appeared to be watching for her. The officer still lay where he'd left him in the house where the wheel was, and on the decks below everybody was shouting and running around dragging hoses as they shot streams of water into the fire which still roared and threw flames as high as the stack. He himself had started to leave the boat deck once, before they discovered him up here where he had no business, but the men with guns were around the ladder below him, with no way for him to get past them unnoticed, so he had remained. His white jacket and trousers were drowned, and water ran out of his hair and down into his eyes. But since he was the only one watching, he would continue to watch.

He went over to the rail between the starboard lifeboats and looked down. She wasn't there, but he could see that the ship was barely moving now. He searched the surface as far out as he could see through the blown curtains of rain. *Nada*. He went over to the portside and peered outward and then down. Truly, they had not yet reached her. He went back to the door of the wheelhouse and looked in. The officer was trying to sit up. He was very weak and holding his head with the *dolor*, and a little stream of blood ran down across his face.

* * *

It was agonizingly slow and exhausting, trying to make any headway against the wind and the steep-sided chop it was kicking up into their faces, and they'd had to stop several times and rest. Goddard didn't know how long they'd been struggling after the orange glow in the rain, dragging the life ring. They'd almost lost it at first. It had faded until they could scarcely see it, but the ship had lost way rapidly as she continued to turn and had finally come head up into the wind and sea. She was dead in the water now, directly ahead. The dark shape of the counter materialized below the column of flame. In a few minutes they were under it. They looked up at the railing of the poop far above them, and then at each other in mutual admission of what they'd both known all along. When they did reach her, there was no way to get aboard.

To call out would be to attract the attention of Lind or one of his men. They'd simply be shot in the water, or ignored, to be left there when the ship got under way again. If she did, Goddard thought, looking up at the tower of flame and smoke blown back across the poop by the force of the squall. If they didn't get the fire under control very soon, the *Leander* was doomed.

Lind and the bos'n would be back here directing the fight, so their best chance of attracting the attention of someone else would be to go forward. He gestured to Karen, and they began kicking ahead along the black steel cliff of her starboard side. They could hear shouted orders and the roaring of the fire, but no one

appeared at the bulwark above them. They passed the well-deck, and were below the midships house.

* * *

Harald Svedberg climbed unsteadily to his feet, assisted by Gutierrez. He was nauseated, his head was splitting, and when he put a hand to his face, it came away with blood on it. The ship was stopped, he noted, they were still enveloped in the opaque fury of the squall, and there was nobody else on the bridge except this waterlogged and obviously insane Filipino messman who appeared to have taken up residence on it. There was a roaring sound in his ears, which he took to be part of the headache until he became aware the messman was speaking English now and was saying something about a fire. He made it to the door of the wheelhouse and looked aft, and the whole picture clarified itself then as he remembered Mayr and that other messman with their guns. Lind had taken over the ship, that man he'd seen back there in the wake had probably been thrown overboard, and now they were all fighting the fire.

Their only hope was that Captain Steen was still alive and that he might have a weapon of some kind. He went in through the office to the captain's stateroom. The improvised oxygen tent was gone now, but Steen still lay on the bunk in the same position he'd been in last night, and his eyes were closed. Svedberg grabbed a wrist. The flesh was warm, and after several hurried and fumbling attempts he located a pulse. Steen was alive, and still the legal master of the ship, whether drugged or not. It seemed unlikely that a man of his devout religious beliefs would own a gun, but captains quite often did, and a forlorn hope was better than none. He began yanking open drawers under the bunk, and then the desk, conscious of the ominous sound the fire was making and the fact that he had no idea how many of the crew were involved in this with Lind. He moved out into the office and began hurriedly ransacking the desk there. Then the crazy messman, dripping water like a sponge, ran in from the starboard wing of the bridge.

'We have arrived,' he said, pointing outward. 'She is right there.'

Svedberg pulled open another drawer and began scattering its contents, paying no attention.

'The man we saw too,' Gutierrez said. 'It is the big American.'

What in the hell was he talking about, anyway? If the skipper had a gun, it must be in the safe—Svedberg's head jerked around then. '*What?*'

'The people who fell into the water.'

People? It was one man, and he would be miles astern by now. But wait a minute! At the same time he'd noticed the engine room telegraph was on STOP, he'd automatically checked the rudder indicator. It was hard over! He sprang to his feet and ran out onto the wing of the bridge where Gutierrez was pointing. He looked down and saw Goddard and Karen Brooke clinging to the life ring right below them.

'Come on!' he ordered. Followed by Gutierrez, he ran back through the wheelhouse to the chartroom, and down the inside companionway.

In the confusion on the after end of the crew's deck, two fire hoses with a pair of sailors on each nozzle were throwing hard jets of water into the inferno of number three hold. The bos'n and Otto, armed with the Luger and the .45, were directing them and holding back excited crew members jammed into the entrance of the passageway and clustered in gesticulating groups forward of them. Lind and Mayr were standing at the starboard corner of the deck house. Lind was now carrying an automatic rifle, and they were speaking rapidly in German, with Mayr doing most of the talking, apparently giving orders. Lind nodded. He gestured to the bos'n, and to a member of the black gang, the twelve-to-four oiler, a thin, hard-faced man named Spivak. They came over. Lind spoke to them, still in German. Spivak nodded. The bos'n handed Spivak the Luger, and received the automatic rifle Lind had been carrying. Lind ran up the ladder to the boat deck.

In the wheelhouse, he lifted the phone off its hook, and rang the wireless room. 'Come up to the

chartroom, Sparks,' he ordered. He reset the selector switch, and called the engine room.

'The fire's out of control,' he said. 'Secure the pump. Kill the fires under the boilers, and bring your men out. We're going to abandon ship. Yes. Right now.'

He replaced the phone, strode into the chartroom and began to work up their position by dead reckoning since the star sights he'd got at dawn. Sparks came in. Lind wrote out the latitude and longitude, and gave it to him.

'Here's where we are right now,' he said. 'Give it to the *Phoenix*, and tell them to keep coming at full speed.' Then, on a second sheet of paper, he wrote out another position, and slashed a large X across it. 'So you won't get 'em mixed up,' he said. 'This is a fake, two hundred miles to the east of us. After you sign off with the *Phoenix*, get on the distress frequency, send an SOS, and say we're afire and it's out of control. As soon as you're sure somebody's got it, shut down, and smash the transmitter, just in case there may be another radioman aboard.'

Sparks looked at him, and then away. 'I don't like this,' he said.

Lind's eyes were dangerous. 'You don't what?'

'It's thirty men. This is not what I agreed to do.'

Lind caught the front of his shirt and pulled him close. 'When the *Phoenix* picks us up,' he said, 'if they didn't get this message and hear the SOS, I'll disembowel you alive, on deck in front of everybody. You ever see it done to a shark?'

* * *

Goddard and Karen Brooke held onto the life ring in the rain and blown spindrift and continued to stare anxiously up at the wing of the bridge. It had been two or three minutes since they'd seen Antonio Gutierrez, and then the third mate, look down at them and disappear. They expected any moment to see Lind or one of his men. Then Goddard sighed softly. Svedberg had appeared at the bulwark in the forward well-deck

just at the break of the midships house. He dropped over a roll of line which uncoiled as it fell. They swam over to it. Goddard threw a bowline in the end of it.

‘When I get up,’ he told Karen, ‘put your legs through here and sit in it. We’ll haul you up.’

She nodded. He caught the line, planted his feet against the steel plates, and began to walk up the side, hauling himself hand over hand. He grabbed the bulwark, got a knee on it, and dropped down on deck. No one was in sight except Svedberg and Gutierrez, but they had to hurry. Somebody could spot them any minute. Just beyond them, the steel door into the enclosed shelter deck was open.

‘Take off your jacket,’ he said to Gutierrez. The other looked at him blankly. ‘She’s got no clothes on,’ he explained. He leaned over the bulwark with Svedberg, and they began to hand her up. They lifted her over the rail, nude except for the nylon pants. He grabbed the jacket from the messman and passed it back to her as they slipped along the bulkhead toward the open door. There were no shouts of discovery. They were inside then, and she had the jacket on and was buttoning it. It covered her mid-thigh. Svedberg pulled the steel door shut and dogged it. They were safe for the moment, here below the crew’s deck where there were only storerooms and lockers and the cubicle where they’d sewn Mayr into the burial sack, but the air was thick with smoke and the odor of blistering paint, and the deck was hot to their bare feet. They were all dripping water, and Goddard was conscious then that he had on nothing but a pair of boxer shorts.

Karen finished buttoning the jacket and smiled at Gutierrez. ‘Thank you, Antonio.’ The youth nodded and blushed, and looked away from her, self-conscious about her legs.

‘He saved you,’ Svedberg said. He told them quickly what had happened on the bridge. There was still a little blood mixed with the water running out of his hair. ‘After they slugged me, he put the wheel hard over himself, and watched for you.’

Goddard grinned as he caught the messman by the shoulder and shook it. 'What some people will do to collect for a haircut. Thanks, Antonio.'

'They threw you over?' Svedberg asked.

'Yes,' Goddard said. He told them briefly about Madeleine Lennox and Rafferty and the fight on the promenade deck.

'Do you know how many there are besides Lind?' Svedberg asked.

'No,' Goddard said. 'The bos'n, Otto, Karl—the dining room steward—and one of the black gang. But there might be more. And they'll all have guns.'

'And there's not another one on the ship as far as I know,' Svedberg said. He told them about searching the captain's quarters, and that Steen was still alive. 'I don't know what they're going to do about the ship and the rest of the crew, but if any of them see you, you'll just go right over the side again. You'll have to stay out of sight until I can find out what's happening.'

'Have you got a radio license?' Goddard asked.

'No. Hardly any mates do any more, but I'll ask the second. And see if any of the engineers might have a gun. You won't be able to take this smoke very long, so I'll try to get you out of here. I'll come back or send word.'

Svedberg and Gutierrez hurried down the passageway toward the ladder to the crew's deck at the after end of it, almost invisible in the smoke by the time they reached it. Goddard shifted uncomfortably, and saw Karen do the same. The deck was burning their feet.

'How is the smoke getting in here?' Karen asked. At the far end, the door to the after well-deck was closed.

'Most of it's coming from here,' Goddard said. 'It's the paint scorching on the deck and bulkheads back there. The tween-decks of number three probably runs in under the after end of this deck.' And when the paint got hot enough, he thought, it would burst into flame. Then the fire would be loose in the whole midships house above.

The smoke was stinging their throats and making breathing difficult. Their eyes were watering. And they had to find something to stand on before their feet were blistered. He looked around. On their left, the engine room casing ran all the way down the passageway to the thwartships passage at the after end. Barset's big refrigerator and chill room were on their right, but they were both locked, as were the next two doors that he could see. But the one beyond that was open. He caught Karen's arm and they ran toward it, the deck growing hotter with every step they went aft. If they didn't find anything, they'd have to come back.

It was the small storeroom, he thought, where they'd stitched Mayr into the burial sack, and he remembered the wooden door on the two horses where the 'body' had lain. That would be perfect. He didn't remember Krasicki until they'd shot inside the doorway and there on the same platform was the canvas mummy in its familiar, grisly shape. He saw Karen shudder, and they were turning to run back out when he caught sight of the bolt of canvas on the deck. They leaped over, and stood on it, conscious only of the relief of getting off the burning steel.

There was the sound of a shot somewhere above them. They exchanged an uneasy glance, but said nothing. Then just above their heads there were footsteps, a great many of them. Goddard oriented himself with relation to the rest of the midships structure. The men would be going forward along the port side of the crew's deck. They were still passing. Were they fleeing the fire? The smoke was growing worse. His throat and nostrils burned with it, and he was seized with a fit of coughing. The temperature must be more than a hundred and twenty degrees. Sweat ran into his eyes. The footsteps ceased, and there was silence except for the rushing sound of the fire.

'They were going forward,' Karen said. 'Do you suppose it has started to spread?'

'I don't know,' he replied. 'But let's get out of this trap while we can make it to the ladder. If we can.'

He motioned for her to wait while he leaped to the door and hopped from one foot to another as he looked down the passageway to his right. The ladder was half obscured by smoke now, and for half the distance this way the paint on the steel deck plates was bubbling. It would stick to their feet and take the skin off. He turned back to Karen.

‘Let me have the canvas,’ he said. ‘Sit there for a minute.’ He gestured to the door supporting Krasicki’s body in its burial sack. She perched on the edge of it and lifted her feet. He grabbed up the bolt of cloth and leaped back into the passageway. Holding one end, he threw it toward the ladder. It unrolled to within a few feet of it.

He ran down the strip and kicked the remainder of the bolt. He could feel his feet blistering as he bounded the remaining distance and leaped to the ladder treads. He could see no one above him. ‘All right,’ he called softly. Karen emerged and ran toward the ladder. He watched to see she made it all right, and went on up.

There was no one in the passageway, and no sound except that of the rain and the roaring and crackling noises of the fire. That was odd. She came up behind him. They looked at each other, puzzled. They could duck into the hospital, which was just forward of them, but the silence worried him. The doorway opening onto the after end of the deck was less than six feet from them, but nobody had passed it, and there were no footsteps or voices from the men fighting the fire. He gestured for her to stay where she was, tiptoed over to it, and peered out. There was nobody fighting the fire. There was nobody in sight at all.

He beckoned, and she slipped up beside him in the doorway. The fire roared on unchecked from number three hatch, flames and boiling black smoke blowing off to starboard now in the wind, and they could feel the searing waves of heat on their faces. The steel hatch coaming glowed a dull red, and the deck all around gave off waves of steam as the rain lashed across it and vaporized on contact. At each corner of the deck up here, next to the ladders, was an abandoned fire hose, no water at all coming from the nozzles.

'If they'd abandoned ship,' Karen said, 'they'd have gone up. They were going forward.'

They wheeled and ran along the deserted passageway. The rooms and fo'c's'les were all empty. At the forward end, beyond the thwartships passage, were two messrooms. They were empty too, but there were portholes along the forward bulkhead. They hurried into the second one and around the long single table. Slipping up to separate portholes, they peered out cautiously, and saw at once why nobody was fighting the fire.

The forward well-deck below them was full of men standing in the blown curtains of rain. They were staring aft in the attitudes of animals at bay, some up at the bridge and others apparently at someone or something on this deck and just off to the right of where they were. It was the whole crew, Goddard thought. At a rapid glance he picked out Barset, Mr. Pargoras, Svedberg, the second mate, Gutierrez, two of the engineers, several of the sailors he knew by sight, and even two of the black gang who must be on watch now, wearing singlets and sweat rags.

Karen had moved around with the left side of her face against the bulkhead, peering out as far to the right as she could. She stepped back, looked at Goddard, and stabbed a finger in that direction. He looked. Otto was standing just beyond them where he could cover both ladders, an automatic rifle propped on the rail in front of him.

He beckoned to Karen, and they slipped back out into the passage. Just as they emerged they heard a noise somewhere on the starboard side as though somebody had dropped a pail. There was an instant of silence, and then a groan Goddard slipped on to the corner, and peered down the starboard passageway. Ahead of him was an open cleaning-gear locker. Sprawled on his side in front of it was a man clad only in dungarees and slides, near his head the empty pail he had apparently dislodged from a shelf while trying to pull himself erect. Goddard beckoned to Karen and ran back to him. He knelt and turned him on his back.

It was Koenig, the AB who'd given him the sport shin. He had apparently been shot through the chest. Blood was all over his rib cage and abdomen, and on the deck, and more bubbled from his nostrils and trickled from the corner of his mouth. Karen winced and closed her eyes for an instant, but she picked up his legs while Goddard caught him by the shoulders and they got him into a lower bunk in the fo'c's'le next door. Goddard turned his head and propped it on a pillow so he wouldn't strangle, cursing silently because there was nothing else he could do. Even a surgical team couldn't save him without several liters of blood. He'd lost too much, and was slipping into shock.

Goddard knelt beside him. 'Who did it?' he asked.

'The bos'n.' Koenig started to choke. Goddard turned him back on his side and snatched at part of the blue bedspread to wipe the blood from his mouth. He took a gasping breath. 'I tried to hide—in the locker. To get behind him—get the gun. I knew what they were going to do.'

'What?' Goddard asked.

Koenig gave no indication he had heard. His eyes closed, but he went on with his halting speech. He'd overheard Mayr and Lind speaking in German while the others were fighting the fire.

'I am German,' he said, with another fight for breath. 'Mayr was telling Lind what to do. Stop the fire pump—let her burn. Get a cutting torch from the engine room—wreck all the lifeboats except one. Send an SOS—with a phony position. Spivak—oiler—' Koenig's voice stopped.

'What about Spivak?' Goddard asked.

"In the engine room—opening the sea intakes.'

Goddard looked up at Karen. 'Thirty men,' she whispered. 'Who could do it?'

'Koenig.' Goddard leaned close to him. 'Koenig, can you hear me? You say Mayr was giving the orders. Was it military? You know—as if he were Lind's superior officer?'

‘No.’ Koenig’s voice was barely audible. ‘It was worse. He is Lind’s father.’

That answered a lot of things, Goddard thought, including Karen’s question: Who could do it? Blood would tell. And it didn’t matter in the slightest how much, or whose.

Koenig’s eyes opened wide for an instant as though he were watching something terrible he was powerless to escape. Did you see it coming for you in those last few minutes, Goddard wondered, even when you were in shock? He was trying to speak again, but his voice was only a whisper, and Goddard had to lean down almost to his lips to hear. ‘Oh, God. Another one.’

13

The only thing they had going for them, Goddard thought, was that Lind didn't know they were aboard. That wasn't much, considering the time margin they were operating with. In a half hour, or perhaps less, the fire was going to spread into the shelter deck and come roaring up through the whole midships house. The engine room was being flooded, and while he didn't know how fast it came in, you would reach a point of no return as soon as you could no longer get at the valves to stop it, and the pumps and the boiler fireboxes were flooded.

Koenig was still fighting for life, his breathing a series of rattling gasps it was awful to hear and which couldn't go on for more than a few minutes longer. They didn't want to leave him, but he was already unconscious, and time was flying past them. Goddard nodded to Karen, and they went out and hurried aft along the passageway.

She shuddered once, and drew a hand across her face. Then she asked, 'What can we do?'

'I want one of those guns,' he said. His voice was calm, but when she looked around at him she saw in his eyes that same feral yearning they'd had there in Madeleine Lennox' cabin before he went for Rafferty.

'One gun? Against six of them?' she asked.

They had reached the doorway opening onto the after deck. Opposite it was one of the steel doors into the engine room casing. He motioned for silence, stepped over, and quietly pulled it open a few inches. He peered in at the catwalks around the great mass of the main engine and the tracery of steel ladders leading down to the floor plates thirty feet below. On a grating halfway down where he could watch all the ladders was a man with a handgun shoved into the waistband of his dungarees. That would be Spivak, standing guard over the opened sea intakes. There was no way to reach him except down the ladders right in front of him. Scratch that one.

He looked down again. With the *Leander's* slow roll, a wave of water several inches deep was sweeping across the floor plates. It was already out of the bilges. He softly closed the door, and as he turned he saw the smoke swirling up around the ladder from the shelter deck where he and Karen had emerged a few minutes ago. It was coming at them from both directions.

He was thinking swiftly. The others? Lind, Mayr, the bos'n, and Karl would be on the boat deck, all armed, and only two of them, at most, busy cutting the bottoms out of the other three boats with the torch. Simple suicide. Lind alone, unarmed, could probably kill him with his bare hands. Otto? With a steel bulkhead behind him and fifty feet of open deck on each side, he was impregnable. And unless he was removed, they were all finished.

'What could you do with a gun?' she asked again. 'Against all six of them?'

'Kill Otto,' he said.

She understood what he meant. They had to get the crew back here. Even if he could get into the engine room, he didn't have the faintest idea how to shut off the sea intakes or start the fire pump, to say nothing of the fact he wouldn't recognize either of them if he fell over them.

'But as soon as they realize what Lind's doing,' she protested. 'Otto won't be able to keep them there.'

He could until it was too late, Goddard thought, but there wasn't time to explain. They knew already. Of the thirty, Otto could stop only the first six or eight, but who was going to be in the first six or eight? Until he emptied his clip, nobody would get to the top of either of those ladders. That also meant the second wave had to climb over a ladder full of wounded men, with Lind and Mayr shooting straight down on top of them from the bridge.

Sparks! He was the only one who'd be alone and where there was a chance to reach him. He grabbed Karen by the arm and ran her down the passage to the door of the hospital. 'Wait here,' he said. 'Bolt the door, and don't open it until you know it's me.'

'Where are you going?'

'The radio shack. I'll only be a few minutes.'

He went up the inside companionway on the run, trying to visualize where the wireless room would be. The cage for the antenna lead-in was on the starboard side of the boat deck near the bridge, so it should be forward in the starboard passageway. He emerged into the thwartships passage of the officers' deck and turned right, going softly now, and listening. As he turned the corner, he heard a noise ahead of him, but it wasn't a radio receiver or the staccato chirping of continental morse; it sounded like a wrecking crew at work, metallic crashings and a splintering of glass.

It was coming from the second door in front of him. He eased up to it and peered in. The radio console with its main, emergency, and high-frequency transmitters, its receivers, and its desk and typewriter stand, was in the middle of the room, facing the door. Sparks had all three transmitters tilted out in the servicing position with their circuits and components exposed, and was standing with his back to the door, using a fire ax to reduce them to electronic hash.

Lind never missed a bet, Goddard thought. He should have realized a mind like that would never overlook even the possibility there might be another qualified operator aboard. He sighed, stepped softly up behind the Latin on bare feet, and slugged him over a kidney.

Sparks slumped in agony, and dropped the ax. Goddard twisted an arm behind his back and ran him across the room into the steel bulkhead. His knees buckled. Goddard flipped him over onto his back even as he was collapsing, and he lay looking up, dazed but still conscious, the dark eyes eloquent with hatred. Kneeling beside him, Goddard patted his pockets. They were empty.

'I want a gun,' he said.

'La madre.'

'Where is it?' Goddard leaned back and could just reach the head of the dropped fire ax. He set the pointed side of it on Sparks' throat. 'Why not tell me now? When this goes through your voice box, you'll have to point.'

'I haven't got one.'

'I guess I should have told you,' Goddard said. 'I'm short of time.' He began to press on the ax.

'If I had a gun, I'd be glad to give it to you.'

'Sure, I know. And where.'

'Listen. If you'll take that thing out of my throat, maybe I can tell you so you'll believe me. I hate you. I hate your guts. I hate all of you arrogant pigs. But if I had a gun and thought you could stop that murdering *cabrón*, I'd give it to you.'

Goddard frowned, but released the pressure on the ax. 'Why?'

'I went into this for the money, because I needed it, and nobody was going to be hurt. But now it's gone bad, so he's going to leave the whole crew here to burn.'

'What about that?' Goddard gestured toward the wrecked transmitters.

'He said he'd gut me. In public. And he would.'

Score another one for the Lind mind, Goddard thought; public was the operative word. You couldn't depend on scaring a Spaniard with death; only with humiliation. He got up and tossed the ax into one of the transmitters. 'Have at it.'

Sparks stared. 'Just take my word for it? You're not going to tie me up?'

'I haven't got time,' Goddard said. 'Anyway, nobody that hates me could be all bad.' He went out and hurried down the companionway.

He might be taking a chance. If Sparks called Lind, he and Karen would be dead in the next five minutes, but he didn't think he would. In a world of office-seekers and deodorant commercials, how could you doubt a posture like that?

Smoke was growing thicker in the passageway on the crew's deck, boiling up in dense clouds through the hatch from below. When Karen opened the door of the hospital she was coughing with it and tears ran down her cheeks. They were out of time already; they had to do something, and now.

'Sparks didn't have a gun,' he said, 'so we're down to the desperation stuff. We've got to go for Otto, and there just may be a way I can do it. As long as he's in the middle of the deck, there's not a prayer, because it's at least fifty feet from the corner of the deckhouse, all in the open, and I'd never make it. But if I can get him to come toward me—'

'How?'

If I go out on deck on one side, the men in the well-deck will see me. They wouldn't give it away intentionally, but out of thirty at least ten will keep looking in that direction, so he'll know there's somebody around the corner. He'll come over to see, and if I can hear him I can tell when he's close enough to try to jump him.'

'And you're a producer?' She shook her head. 'Harry, that man has gone toward that corner, or door, in a thousand pictures, and the only thing that's always the same is that the gun is straight out ahead of him, ready to shoot. If you were close enough to dance, it wouldn't work. But there is a way.'

'What?'

'Diversion. It's just as old, but in this case it'll do the trick. We both step out, on opposite sides, but I come

on past the corner so he can see me. He's certain I'm dead miles back there in the water, so he'll freeze just long enough for you to reach him.'

'Sure. And that grease gun will be pointed right at you, so when I land on him he'll cut you in two.'

'No. Just before you hit him, I'll duck back past the corner. It'll be only one step.'

He nodded. There was another way, too, that he could ensure the gun would be off her before a reflex could trigger it. 'Okay,' he said, 'but one more thing. That rail where he is is solid, so if we crawl forward, the men in the well-deck won't see us and give it away. But you stand up two or three steps before you get to the corner. Give him some preparation, so you won't startle him into shooting before he thinks.'

'Don't worry, Harry.' She was supremely confident. 'I tell you he'll freeze.'

He had to have a weapon. They found a twelve-inch crescent wrench in a locker. It had a brutal heft to it, which was just what he wanted; it had to be done with one blow, and he didn't care if he drove Otto's skull into his pelvis. He slipped forward to the messroom porthole and checked again. The big sailor was still in the same place.

They stepped out onto the after end of the deck to the roar and the heat of the fire. It was like a scene from hell, he thought, but the fury of the squall was beginning to slacken a little. He chose the starboard side. That way he'd be running for Otto with the bulkhead on his left, his right unhampered. They went in opposite directions, and when they reached the corners they looked back at each other. She smiled and gestured with circled thumb and forefinger. He wished he felt that relaxed; he was beginning to have butterflies. That was going to be the longest fifty feet in the world. He dropped to his knees and started to crawl.

It was awkward because he could use only one hand. With nothing on but a pair of shorts he had no place to carry the wrench except in the other, and he couldn't let it bump the deck. As he went forward he rehearsed

it in his mind. One stride before he reached Otto, he'd sing out. The sailor would start to whirl, swinging the gun, so it would be well off her before the wrench landed. That was simple enough, but he wasn't as certain about the other signal, that to the men in the well-deck.

Mayr or Lind, or both, would be watching the well-deck too, and they would kill a lot of men on those ladders, shooting straight down from the bridge. But if he could signal them not to rush the minute they saw him get Otto, they wouldn't have to file up like ducks in a shooting gallery. They'd all make it if he could get them to hold, as if Otto were still there, until he could go up to the after end of the boat deck and give them covering fire.

He looked out at the sea. The wind and rain were lessening all the time now, and he could see the pall of smoke blowing out to leeward for several hundred yards. It was only a few more feet to the corner. He was beginning to tighten up. Suppose Otto happened to be looking this way just as he peeked around the corner? Well, for Christ's sake, what could he do about it? Why get in an uproar over something entirely out of his control?

He was there. With his hand as near the deck as he could get it, he leaned forward and peered around. Otto was in profile fifty feet away, staring unwaveringly down into the well-deck in front of him. His belly was against the rail, and though his forearms were resting on it, he held the weapon at ready, in both hands, with a finger inside the trigger guard. Goddard took a long, deep breath, and waited, conscious of that impulse to yawn which in a situation like this was just the opposite of what it implied.

Thirty more seconds went by. She was giving him plenty of time to be set. But not too much, Danish doll; this can get pretty hairy. Now! Otto's head was turning; he was looking to the left. The men in the well-deck had seen her. He tried to breathe against the tightness in his chest, and gathered himself to leap. Then Karen Brooke stepped out into the open at the other corner of the deck house. He stared, and almost forgot to go into

action, with an impression he must be as goggle-eyed as Otto. She'd taken off Antonio's jacket.

She was facing Otto completely nude above the nylon briefs, and if that weren't enough to nail any normal male under ninety-five solidly to the deck, she was also as wet and dripping as if she'd just emerged from the sea, and drowned strands of blonde hair were plastered over her face. She made a beautiful ghost, he thought, but he almost felt sorry for Otto as he got into gear at last and started running softly across the long expanse of open deck. It seemed almost superfluous to hit him.

But if Otto was no longer a problem, the men in the well-deck were something else. As he ran, presumably in full view of them, he made a slashing Cut! gesture with both arms and then pushed toward them with his palms, but not a damned one of them had even seen him. And suppose he couldn't even get Otto to whirl and swing that gun off her? Take him by the shoulders and turn him, like a manikin in Macy's window? It was less than ten feet now, and he was driving.

'Otto!' he snapped, and whacked the rail with the wrench at the same time. That did it.

The big sailor came unglued at last, and started to wheel, and at the same time Karen jumped back out of sight around the corner. He swung down with the wrench, getting the wrist into it at the end, and it made a sound he was afraid Lind might hear on the bridge. Otto simply collapsed, two hundred pounds of bone and cabled muscle folding up and settling to the deck like a deflating pneumatic toy. There was a good chance he'd killed him, and while it might bother him later, at the moment he didn't seem to care.

Strangely, the gun didn't fire at all. With his left hand he grabbed it from the other's lifeless grasp before it had a chance to drop. He turned. The men in the well-deck were catching up now, and when they saw him with the gun, two or three started to break for the ladders. He made a savage gesture of the arm: Back! But they didn't get it fast enough. There was a shout from the bridge, followed by the crash of a gun. He dropped the wrench, pointed the gun out toward the

sea, and pulled the trigger. It was on single fire, so he shot twice more.

He made the gesture again, and this time they all got it. Nobody had fallen at the shot from the bridge, but now he saw Barset, at his third shot, clap a hand dramatically to his chest, grimace with agony, sway, and fall forward on his face. Trust a con man to pick it up, but, God, what a ham.

The men were shifting back now, watching him with the same fear and hatred they had Otto, so it should be safe as far as the bridge was concerned. He gave it to them in pantomime: pointing to his watch, holding up five fingers, then to himself, pointing aft, up, and then swinging the gun forward with a raking motion. There was no way they could signal they understood, but they should have it. He dropped beside Otto and fanned him for spare clips. He had two.

He waved to the crew, and ran around the corner. Karen was waiting for him. She had the jacket on again and looked blandly innocent.

‘Now I know what they mean by overkill,’ he said, as they hurried aft.

‘Well, you were taking a terrible chance. And when I guaranteed he’d freeze, I meant it.’

‘Yeah, but didn’t you consider I might choke up too?’

‘Oh, come. The worldly Mr. Goddard?’

They stopped near the after corner of the deckhouse while he told her what he was going to do. Then he thought of something else.

‘I’ve got to get Spivak out of the engine room,’ he said. ‘They can’t start the fire pump or close the sea intakes even after they get here. And we need that gun.’

‘But if they hear any shooting down here, they’ll all come down.’

‘I think I know how we can do it.’ He told her while he made a quick inspection of the gun. He knew nothing at all about automatic weapons, and it was of European manufacture. Precious seconds flew by while he found out how to change clips, and then, with the

gun empty, experimented with the settings to discover which way it was on safety. Then the remaining one had to be continuous fire. He shoved in a full clip, and handed Karen the other two. 'Hold these for me. I'll be right back.'

He ran in through the smoke in the passage, and up the inside companionway to the wireless room. Sparks had closed the transmitters, and was seated at his desk with his head in his hands. When Goddard spoke from the doorway, he turned. He looked at the gun with no expression of any kind, and said nothing.

'The crew'll be back here in a few minutes,' Goddard said. 'If they get control of the ship again, it's not going to be any love feast, and they won't believe you wanted out of the mess unless I tell 'em.'

Sparks nodded. 'What do you want?'

'I've got to get Spivak out of the engine room.' He indicated the telephone. 'Can you call him from here?'

'No. The only master control is on the bridge.'

'Well, there's another way. Come down to the grating on the crew's deck and call out to him. Tell him Lind's launching the boat and is going to leave him. I'll take it from there. A deal?'

'Let's go,' Sparks said. They ran down the companionway. When they reached the crew's deck, flames were now shooting up in the smoke boiling from the hatchway. The shelter deck was afire.

'Make it fast,' Goddard said. He pulled open the steel door to the engine room casing and stood out of sight to one side. Sparks stepped in on the grating. 'Spivak!' he called out. 'You'd better get up here. They're launching the boat.'

From where he was, Goddard couldn't see in. He waited. The fire continued to mount around the ladder from the shelter deck, and paint was bursting into flame above it here in the passage. Smoke was choking him. Sparks stepped back into view.

'He's coming,' he whispered. 'On the last ladder. Gun's in his dungarees.'

Goddard nodded, and gestured for him to move back. Spivak lunged into view through the doorway. Goddard shoved the muzzle of the gun into his side. 'Hold it, Spivak!' The oiler gasped, and stiffened. Goddard pulled the Luger from his waistband, and tossed it to Sparks. 'Hang onto that for a minute.'

Spivak shot a look of hatred at the operator. Goddard prodded him again with the muzzle of the gun and jerked his head down the passage. 'Get going!' Spivak hesitated for a second, but turned and marched ahead of him. They reached the open door of the hospital. 'Inside,' Goddard ordered.

Spivak turned. His eyes were terrified as he gestured toward the flames and smoke boiling up at the end of the passage. 'But—but—she's afire.'

'I'm glad you called that to my attention,' Goddard said. He put a hand in Spivak's face and shoved. The oiler shot in against the bunks. 'Wish us luck.'

He pulled the door shut and dropped the padlock through the hasp, but didn't snap it. Running back down the passage, he gestured to Sparks. They leaped out on deck and around to the port side away from the searing waves of heat from number three hatch. Karen was waiting. Goddard took the Luger from Sparks and gave it to her.

'When they come up the ladder, give this to Mr. Svedberg,' he said swiftly. 'Tell him I'll need help up there, as fast as I can get it. Maybe they can get up through the chartroom. Spivak's in the hospital, and if they can't control the fire, let him out, but I don't think he'll be any better off when they get their hands on him. And tell them Sparks had nothing to do with leaving them here.'

She nodded, her eyes apprehensive. She knew what he meant: it was in case he didn't make it down from there himself.

'I promised,' he said. 'And they might get to the radio room before I have a chance to tell 'em. Let's go, Sparks.'

He grabbed the two spare clips, and they plunged back inside and ran up to the officers' deck. Smoke was

boiling up the companionway now, and pouring into the passages above. 'Lock yourself in till they've all got the word,' he told Sparks. The Latin nodded, and went toward the radio room. Goddard wheeled and hurried down the passage toward the exit at the after end of the deck, feeling the butterflies again.

He peered out. There was nobody in sight. Over the noise of the fire he could hear a metallic banging from the boat deck above him. It had been more than five minutes now, and he had to hurry before the men below decided something had happened to him and made a break for it. He set the gun on continuous fire, but was hampered by the spare clips; he had no way to carry them except in a hand. He stepped out, cautiously watching the openings at the tops of the two ladders, slipped over to the port one, and started up. His head came level with the deck above. He peered over.

Directly ahead of him near the forward end of the deck, the bos'n and Karl were wrecking the port lifeboats. The covers and strongbacks had been removed, and Karl was standing up in the forward one using the pointed side of a fire ax to destroy the flotation units. The after one already had a long hole cut out of the bottom along the turn of the bilge, and the bos'n was squatted on the deck below the forward one with the torch, doing the same to it. Karl's back was to him, and the bos'n was wearing goggles as he guided the torch. Goddard's view of the starboard side was cut off by the steel gable of the engine room skylight. Its high point was about three feet above the deck, and it was only a few feet forward of him.

He shot another glance toward Karl and the bos'n, slid up over the edge of the deck, and snaked his way toward it, crawling on his forearms as he carried the gun and spare clips. He was behind it now. He dropped the clips, took the gun in both hands, and peered over the edge of it. He had a clear view of the whole boat deck from here. The two starboard lifeboats also had their covers and strongbacks removed, and the after one was swung out in its davits and lowered until its gunwales were just below the level of the deck. Lind was standing in it, stowing something. Mayr was near the wheelhouse on the starboard side of the bridge, looking down into the forward well-deck with the machine pistol in his hand.

Goddard took another deep breath against the tight band around his chest, raised to his knees, and started shooting. He fired a burst of three into the canvas dodger where Mayr's legs should be, swung the gun right, and loosed three more into the starboard lifeboat where Lind was standing. The hulls were flying out of the gun, some of them still in the air and the noise assaulting his eardrums as he swept the gun left and raked a burst across the port lifeboats. Karl dived headfirst into the forward one, and the bos'n dropped the torch and hit the deck behind a cradle.

Goddard swung right again. Mayr was no longer in view on the wing of the bridge, but he loosed another burst into the canvas above where he should be as the gun swung on past onto the starboard boats. Lind had dived into the bottom of the one where he'd been standing, and now was raising his head above the level of the deck, lifting a gun. Goddard pulled the trigger again, and on the second shot the clip was empty. Lind ducked back.

Goddard dropped behind the steel wall of the skylight, yanked out the empty clip, and shoved in a fresh one. A gun crashed somewhere forward of him, and a bullet screamed off the skylight just over his head. He slid over three feet, and peered around the edge. The bos'n was prone behind the lifeboat cradle, his face and arm in view as he raised the gun for another shot. Goddard put a burst into the deck beside

him, throwing splinters, and swung fast to the right. Mayr was raising over the canvas dodger on the bridge. He shot. The bullet gouged the deck just to Goddard's left. Goddard fired, and Mayr dropped from sight. Still swinging, Goddard fired a string across the top of the boat Lind was in. Lind was still out of sight. He jerked the gun around and threw three more shots into the cradle in front of the bos'n. Karl had never appeared at all since the din began. Goddard put another short burst through the canvas dodger above Mayr, and that clip was empty.

All the crew should be up out of the well-deck now, and if he could keep them pinned down for another minute, help would come pouring out of the wheelhouse behind them. He'd dropped and was yanking out the empty clip when his whole back turned to ice and his mind shouted the warning he should have had seconds ago. Lind! He'd never reappeared. And from that partially lowered boat he could swing down to the rail of the deck below.

He swiveled and saw the face of the big mate already above the level of the deck just feet behind him, one hand out in front of it with the .45 ready to shoot him in the back of the head. In a continuation of the same turning movement, he threw the gun backhand. It hit the hand just as the .45 went off and then slammed on into Lind's face between the ladder railings. Lind dropped back down the ladder. Goddard plunged headfirst down on top of him. His momentum carried the two of them off the ladder, to wheel out and down onto the steel deck below, and even as they were falling he was conscious of shouts and the sound of guns going off above them.

They landed with a bone-jarring impact and rolled. Goddard broke free. The .45 had been knocked from Lind's hand, and he had to get to it first; against the great strength and catlike reflexes of this man he had no chance at all in a bare-handed fight. Lind would beat him to the deck and choke him to death in minutes. He looked frantically around and saw it behind the ladder. Lind was already bouncing up. The thrown gun had opened a cut on his cheek and blood was streaming

from it below the cold light of the eyes. He lunged at Goddard. Goddard sidestepped and hit him on the side of the neck hard enough to drop a lesser man, but Lind merely staggered for an instant and whirled to come for him again.

Goddard reached behind the ladder for the .45. He had it in his fingers when Lind hit him from the side. They went down, and the gun skated and bounced toward the scupper on the port side of the deck. They rolled. Goddard smashed at his face, and even in all this madness he was conscious of the smoke pouring out of the passage beside them and the shouts of the men on the boat deck above. He got a knee into Lind's stomach, slammed a fist into his throat, and managed to break free from those terrible arms once more. He plunged to his feet and ran toward the gun.

He scooped it up, but was going too fast on the wet and slippery deck and couldn't stop or turn. He was wheeling, still out of control and going on toward the rail, when the big man caught him from behind. His feet were snatched off the deck as Lind whirled him about and lifted him to throw him over the rail. Lind's hip crashed into the rail, and with all of Goddard's weight and his own pulling them outward, his feet skidded backward on the deck and they both wheeled over it and fell into the sea.

It was over thirty feet, past the promenade and crew's deck. They hit the surface with agonizing impact and went far under, still locked together. Goddard fought to break the grip of those arms. He caught a thumb, pulled back and down on it until he felt it break. The arm relaxed for a moment. He pushed, and then kicked, and was free, already losing consciousness as he rose to the surface. He gulped for air. The deck above was full of men, and he saw Karen, screaming. Then he was pushed under, and Lind had his legs locked about him, and he knew it was the end; they were like steel. He hadn't got enough air, and his struggles were growing weaker.

Darkness was closing in on him when somewhere far off through the singing in his ears he heard a cracking sound and then another as though his ribs were

beginning to break. Then, strangely, the massive legs went limp and he was free and drifting upward to flounder helplessly on the surface. He took a deep breath and opened his eyes. The great blond head was awash beside him, beginning to drop away below the surface, and the water around it was stained with blood. He looked up. Harald Svedberg was above him on the corner of the boat deck with a gun in his hand. Two sailors jumped in beside him from the crew's deck, and somebody was throwing a line. Goddard turned and looked down and saw the giant body make one last convulsive movement as Eric Lind drifted from his sight.

The sailors grabbed him and made the line fast under his arms. One of them grinned. 'Don't you ever get enough of this stupid ocean?'

They hauled him up and lifted him over the rail. His strength was returning now, and he was able to stand. Water ran out of his hair. His shorts were ripped all the way up one side, and his hands were battered and bleeding. The fire roared on from number three hatch, but two hoses were throwing water into it now, and he could hear more hard jets beating against the bulkheads inside the deckhouse. Men pounded him on the back as they unbent the line about his chest. Karen Brooke was looking at him with tears streaming down her face.

'I—I wonder what you would think,' she said in a tiny voice, 'if you ever saw people just walking aboard a ship on a g-g-gangplank.' She broke up then into sobs and laughter.

* * *

They began to gain on it, and in an hour they knew they were going to win. The fire in the shelter deck was out, and three hoses were pouring tons of water into number three hold where there was now more smoke than fire.

Mayr and the bos'n were dead, shot by Harald Svedberg in the fight on the boat deck. Mayr had been wounded in the legs by one of the bursts from

Goddard's gun, but had tried to shoot Svedberg as the men ran up through the chartroom and out onto the bridge. Karl had surrendered, and was locked in the hospital along with Spivak and Otto, who had regained consciousness. Sparks was allowed to remain free, and was assessing the damage to the radio equipment. The main and high-frequency transmitters were beyond repair, but he thought he could have the emergency in operation by the following afternoon.

By eleven o'clock there were no more flames, only dense steam and smoke rising from the hatch. Karen had gone up to her cabin to get dressed, and Goddard was watching as the crew continued to throw water into the hold. One of the sailors looked at him in his torn shorts, and shook his head.

'Well, men, I guess we got to take up another collection for this Hollywood big-shot.'

'Yeah,' another said, with a grin. 'Talk about schooner-rigged. Every time you see him his ass is hanging out somewhere else.'

'If I ever get back there,' Goddard said, 'I'm going to start a new status symbol. Owning your own underwear.'

The chief reported that everything below was under control and they could get under way. Sparks told them about the rendezvous with the *Phoenix*, so Mr. Svedberg said they would steam north for two hours before resuming course. Nobody had any desire to encounter the craft.

Twenty minutes later, the *Leander* vibrated hesitantly, as though testing herself, and began to move slowly ahead. Goddard mounted to the promenade deck. Karen Brooke was just emerging from her cabin. Her hair was still wet, but she had put on a dress and some makeup.

'Hey,' he said, 'what happened to the better half of my combat team?'

'She's just become a devout civilian. And you can quote me.'

'I can do better than that.' He grinned. 'I'm going to join you.'

They went into Madeleine Lennox' cabin, where, several years ago, it seemed, they had decided they should try to save her life. She still lay quietly, apparently in the same position, covered with her sheet. Goddard felt her pulse, looked at Karen, and nodded.

'She's okay.'

'And just think,' Karen said, 'sometime late this afternoon, she'll wake up and ask what happened.'

* * *

Captain Steen awoke late that night, but was ill and in pain from whatever Lind had given him, so it was three days before he was up. Until then, Harald Svedberg and the second mate stood watch-and-watch. Goddard found an ink pad in the captain's desk and he and Mr. Svedberg did what he thought was a fairly creditable job of taking Mayr's fingerprints before he was buried. The third mate had also started the job of questioning the remaining members of the plot.

'None of them know very much, or say they don't,' he told Goddard the second day after they were under way again. 'I think, actually, they're telling the truth; Lind kept it all under his hat. Sparks doesn't even have any idea what the *Phoenix* was, where she was from, or where they were going to take Mayr. Lind just gave him some fake call letters and a list of illegal frequencies they changed every day, and everything was coded. It was all handled in radiotelegraph, of course. We don't have a radiotelephone. He said the other man was a good operator, and that's all he knows.'

The rendezvous was supposed to be at night, Mr. Svedberg went on, with the *Phoenix* showing no lights. There would be another engine room breakdown rigged by Spivak, and Mayr and Krasicki would be slipped off the after well-deck on a rubber raft, to be picked up by the *Phoenix* after the ship had gone on. They all swore nobody was supposed to be killed. That could be true enough, the third mate thought, but there was no doubt

Lind and Mayr were prepared for it if it became necessary to judge from the number of guns they carried.

And where did you lay the blame for the fact that it had gone wrong, Goddard wondered, with the result that now six men were dead, one of them, Koenig, entirely innocent? On his casual remark about the direction of the scene? On Madeleine Lennox' careless meddling? No, the most probable answer was that Lind was unstable, as Karen insisted; he was paranoid, or on the borderline, and any trivial remark might have triggered the whole ghastly mess.

The *Leander* plowed on, shorthanded, scarred, and smelling of smoke, but she would make Manila only a little over a day late. Captain Steen took over a watch, and Antonio Gutierrez was moved up to be the dining room steward. Sparks got the emergency transmitter in operation on the second day, located a ship that would relay for him, and they rejoined the rest of the world. Pleas for news poured in from the wire services by the hour, and Goddard could imagine the furors in the world press.

The third evening after dinner Goddard mixed a tall gin and tonic and went out on the forward end of the promenade deck with Karen Brooke to watch the sunset. They were leaning on the rail struck silent by the vast orchestration of color when Captain Steen came by and remarked for what must have been the twentieth time that it had been an awful thing.

Then he regarded the drink with pious disapproval, and said, 'It seems to me, Mr. Goddard, you ought to be down on your knees thanking the Lord you're alive, instead of drinking that stuff.'

'I expect you're right, Captain,' Goddard agreed. Then, because the impulse was irresistible, he added, 'I imagine when we get to Manila, there'll be quite an investigation.' Steen shuddered.

'I mean,' Goddard went on innocently, 'what with a conspiracy, a fire, a mutiny, and a fake SOS. Probably be quite a bit of paperwork.'

Steen departed. Karen smiled at Goddard and shook her head. 'You shouldn't do that to the poor man.'

'Let him find his own sunset.'

They fell silent for a moment, and then she said, 'You claim I saved your life, and now you've saved mine. Is it a standoff?'

'Not a chance,' Goddard replied. 'I won going away; I saved the best one. Ask any of the crew.'

'Well, they're sailors. There is a certain amount of prejudice.'

He looked around at her. 'What about that old Chinese belief of responsibility? Do we cancel each other, or is it doubled?'

'That's an interesting point. What do you think?'

'I don't know,' Goddard said. 'But when we get to Manila, we could run over to Hong Kong and look into it.'

'I have to go to work.' She hesitated. 'But I suppose I could get another week's leave.'

'Then it's a deal,' he said. 'And don't feel you'll be ashamed of me; I'm sure the crew will give me another pair of pants.'

She laughed. 'Well, I'll think about it.'

'Forget that line,' he said. 'It's just that I'm out of practice and it's hard for me to say anything I mean. And what I meant was simply that I wish you would.'

'I know,' she said. 'I'm beginning to break the code. Now, tell me about your daughter.'

For the first time in five months he could. It was twenty minutes later when Madeleine Lennox came around the corner of the deckhouse looking for him. She stopped, arrested by something in the attitude of the two figures leaning on the rail, and shrugged. You won a few, you lost a few. She turned, and went aft in search of Barset.