

WOLVES
of the SEABy
RANDALL
PARRISH

(Continued from Last Sunday)

CHAPTER XXVIII.

On Board the Slaver.

The terror of the two men as this thought dawned upon them in all its horror was apparent enough. Nothing, not even fire, was more to be dreaded than a visitation of this awful nature on shipboard. Charnel ship, though this might be, it was safer by far than the cockleshell towing alongside.

"Let's find out the truth first, men," I said quietly. "Hold your tongues. There is no use giving up until we know what the danger is. Will you come with me?"

The terror in Sam's eyes caused me to laugh and my own courage came back with a rush.

"Afraid of dead men, are you? Then we'll face them together, my lads, and have it over with. Come on, now, both of you. Buckle up; there is nothing to fear, if you do what I tell you—this isn't the first cholera ship I've been aboard."

It was no pleasant job confronting us, although we had less dead men to handle than I anticipated. Indeed, we found only five bodies on board. There were only two on deck, a giant, coal-black negro, and a gray-headed white man, his face puffed with smallpox.

Determined on what was to be done, I wasted no time with either body. The two sailors hung back, terrorized at the mere thought of touching these victims of plague. I stooped myself to the job and handled them alone, dragging the bodies across the deck and launching them over the low rail into the sea. I ordered Schmitt to cut the lashings and take charge of the wheel.

"See here, Sam, and you too, Schmitt, I am in love with that girl in the boat. Do you suppose I would ever have her come on this deck if I believed she might contract cholera? You do as I say and you are perfectly safe. Now, Schmitt, remain at the wheel, and you, Sam, come with me. There will be a dead nigger aboard unless you jump when I speak."

He trotted close at my heels as I flung open the door leading into the cabin. The air seemed fresh enough and I noted two of the ports wide open. A tall, smooth-skinned man, with an ugly scar down one cheek, lay outstretched on a divan at the foot of the after mast, his very posture proclaiming him dead. His face was the color of parchment, wrinkled with age.

The negro crept up behind me and stared at the upturned face.

"My Gaud, mah, he was de ol' captain. Paradilla, sah; damn his soul!"

In what was evidently the captain's room I discovered a prickled chart and log-book, with no entry in it for three days. Without waiting to examine these I stowed them away in my pocket. Between us we forced the stiffened form of the captain through the open after port and heard it splash into the sea astern. There were two dead seamen in the forecabin, both swarthy fellows, with long Indian hair. I never saw a dirtier hole, the fifth overprowling, and once satisfied that both men were beyond help, I was content to lower the scuttle and leave them there. God! it was a relief to return once more to the open deck and breathe in the fresh air. I halted the boat towing below.

"Come aboard, Watkins," I called sharply. "Pass the lady up first, and turn the boat astern."

I caught Dorothy's hands and aided her over the rail.

"Why was the vessel abandoned?" she asked. "What has happened? Do you know?"

Quietly I told her the truth and assured her that if we staid on deck and used our own bedding and provisions we were in no danger.

"How can I help you?"

"Tell the men just what I have told you," I said gravely. "They will be ashamed to show less courage than you."

We turned and faced them together as they formed a little group against the rail. Hallid was first to speak.

"Not was set you say 'bout dis sheep? Eet haf cholera—hey?"

Dorothy took a step forward and confronted them, her cheeks flushed.

"You are sailors," she said, speaking swiftly, "and ought not to be afraid of a dead man. It is true this vessel was ravaged by cholera, and the crew died;

but the bodies have been flung overboard—Captain Carlyle risked his life to do that before he asked us aboard. Now there is no danger so long as we remain on deck. I am not a sailor."

The Swag, she said, "his head, grumbling something, but before the revolt could spread Watkins broke in:

"An' that's right, miss. I was on the Bombay Castle when she took cholera, an' we hed twenty-one days of it beatin' agin head winds off the Cape. We lost sixteen of the crew, but not a man among us who stayed on deck got sick. Anyhow, these blokes are gonn' ter try their luck aboard yere, or else swim for it."

He grinned cheerfully, letting slip the end of the painter, the released quarter-boat gliding gently away astern, the width of water constantly increasing.

"Now, bullies, jump fer it if yer want ter go. All right then, my hearties, let's hunt up something to work with and scrub this deck. That's the way to clean out cholera."

He led the way and they followed him, grumbling and cursing, but obedient. I added a word of encouragement, and in a few minutes the whole gang was busily engaged in cleaning up the mess forward, their first fears evidently forgotten in action. Watkins kept after them like a slave driver.

It was not difficult finding plenty for the lads to do, making the neglected schooner shipshape, and adjusting the spread of canvas aloft to the new course I decided upon. Sam started a fire in the galley and prepared a hot meal, singing as he worked, and before noon I had as cheerful a ship's crew forward as any man could possibly ask for. Dorothy and I planned over the log, but gained little information. As the sun reached the meridian I ventured again into the cabin and returned with the necessary instruments to determine our position.

With these and the prickled chart, I managed fairly well in determining our location, and choosing the most direct course toward the coast.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

A New Plan of Escape.

Nothing occurred during the afternoon to disturb the routine work aboard or to cause me any uneasiness. Sunset brought clouds, and by the time it was really dark the entire sky was overcast, but the sea remained comparatively calm and the wind steady.

It was a pleasant night in spite of the darkness, the air soft and refreshing. The locker was filled with flags, representing almost every nation on earth. I dragged these out and spread them on the deck about the cabin, thus forming a very comfortable bed, and at last induced the girl to lie down, wrapping her in a blanket. Finally I found a seat beside her on a coil of rope, and we fell into conversation.

This was the first opportunity we had enjoyed to actually talk with each other alone.

"Dorothy," I said humbly, "you were frightened last night. I cannot hold you to what you said to me then."

"You mean you do not wish to? But I was not frightened."

"And you still repeat what you said then? You said, 'I love you.'"

"Yes, I can repeat that—I love you."

"Those are dear, dear words; but I ought not to listen to them, or believe, I am not free to ask a pledge of you, or to beg you to trust me in marriage."

"Is not that rather for me to decide?" she questioned archly. "I make a confession now. You remember the night I met you on deck, when you were a prisoner, and told you that you had become the property of Roger Fairfax?"

"I loved you then, although I scarcely acknowledged the truth even to myself. We are all alike, we Fairfax; we choose for ourselves, and laugh at the world. That is my answer, Geoffrey Carlyle; I give you love for love."

"I would ask an opportunity denied me—to stand once more in honor among men. I would not be ashamed before Dorothy Fairfax."

"Nor need you be," she exclaimed impetuously, her hands pressing mine. "You wrong yourself, even as you have been wronged. You have already done that which shall win you freedom, if it be properly presented to those in power. I mean that it shall be, once I am safely back in Virginia. Tell me, what are your plans with—this schooner?"

"To beach it somewhere along shore, and leave it there a wreck, while we escape. The men insist on it with good reason. They have been pirates, and might be hung if caught."

"And yet to my mind," she insisted earnestly, "that choice is most dangerous. I am a girl, but if I commanded here, do you know what I would do? I would sail this vessel straight to the Chesapeake and surrender it to the authorities. The men have nothing to fear with me aboard and ready to testify in their behalf. The governor will accept my word without a question. These men are not pirates, but honest seamen compelled to serve in order to save their lives; they mutilated and captured the bark, but were later overcome, and compelled to take the boats. The same plea can be made for you, Geoffrey, only you were there in an effort to save me. It is a service which ought to win you freedom. If the governor fail me, I will bear my story to the feet of the king. I am a Fairfax, and we have friends in England, strong powerful friends."

"I am convinced," I admitted, after a pause, "that this course is the wiser one, but for the opposition of the men. They will never go willingly."

"There is an argument which will overcome their fear. I mean a tidbit. Every sailor aboard has a interest in the salvage of this vessel under the English law. Also there must be gold aboard—perhaps treasure also. Let the men dream that a man and you

will need no whip to drive them into an English port."

"Full pardon, and possibly wealth with it," I laughed. "A beautiful scheme, Dorothy, yet it might work. Still, if I know sailormen, they would doubt the truth, if it came direct from me, for I am not really one of them."

"But Watkins is. Explain it all to him; tell him who I am, the influence I can wield in the colony, and then let him whisper the news to the others. Will you not do this—for my sake?"

"Yes," I answered; "I believe you have found the right course. If you will promise to lie down and sleep I will talk with Watkins now. I may catch some catnaps before morning, but most of the time shall be prowling about deck. Good night, dear girl."

"You are actually afraid of me still," she said. "Why should you be?"

"Somehow, Dorothy, you have always seemed so far away from me I have never been able to forget. But now the touch of your lips has—"

"Broken down the last barrier?"

"Yes, forever."

"Are you sure? Would you not feel still less doubt if you kissed me again?"

I held her closely, gazing down into the dimly revealed outline of her face, and this time felt myself the master.

I left her there and groped my own way forward. I found Watkins awake. He listened gravely to what I had to say, with little comment, and was evidently weighing every argument in his mind.

"I've bin in Virginia and Maryland, sir," he said at last seriously, "and if the young woman is a Fairfax, she'll likely have influence enough ter do just what she says. I'll talk it over with the lads. If they was only sure that was treasure aboard I guess most of 'em would face hell ter git their hands on a share of it."

"Then why not search and see?" He shook his head obstinately.

"Not me, sir! I don't prowl around in no cholera ship, loaded with dead men—not if I never git rich."

"Then I will, and I got to my feet in sudden determination. 'You keep the deck while I go below. Light the lantern and bring it here. If there is any specie hidden aboard this hooker it will be either in the cabin or lazaret. And, whether there is or not, my man, the Santa Maria turns north tomorrow if I have to fight every sea wolf on board single-handed.'"

CHAPTER XXIX.

A Struggle in the Dark.

He came back with the lantern in his hand, a mere tin box containing a candle, the dim flame visible through numerous punctures. Neither of us spoke until my hand was on the companion door ready to slide it open.

"I'll not be long below," I said soberly. "Better go forward and see that your lookout men are awake, and then come back here."

The port stateroom I had not previously entered because of a locked door. I determined on breaking in here. There was no key in the lock, and the stout door resisted by efforts. Placing the lantern on the deck I succeeded finally in inserting the blade of a hatchet so as to gain a purchase sufficient to release the latch. As the door yielded a sharp cry assailed me from within. It came forth so suddenly and with so wild an accent I stepped blindly backward in fright, my foot overturning the lantern, which, with a single flicker of the candle, went out. In that last gleam I saw a dim, grotesque outline fronting me. Then, in the darkness, gleamed two green, menacing eyes, growing steadily larger, nearer, as I stared at them in horror. Was it man or beast? Devil from hell, or some crazed human against whom I must battle for life? The green eyes glared into my face. I lifted my hand toward him, and touched—hair! My antagonist was a giant African ape.

Even as the big ape's grip caught me, ripping through jacket sleeve to the flesh, I realized my great peril, but I was no longer paralyzed with fear, helpless before the unknown. I drove my hatchet straight between those two gleaming eyes. The brute staggered back, dragging me with him. His humanlike cry of pain ended in a snarl, but, brief as the respite proved, it gave me grip on his under jaw and an opportunity to drive my weapon twice more against the hairy face. The pain served only to madden the beast, and before I could wrench free he had me clutched in an iron grip, my jacket torn to shreds. His jaws snapped at my face, but I had such purchase as to prevent their touching me, and midless of the claws tearing at my flesh I forced the animal's head back until the neck cracked and the lips gave vent to a wild scream of agony. I dared not let go; dared not relax for

an instant the exercise of every ounce of strength. I felt as though the life was being squeezed out of me by the grasp of those hairy arms; yet the very vice in which I was held yielded me leverage. The hatchet dropped to the deck and both my hands found lodgment under the jaw, the muscles of my arms strained to the utmost, as I forced back that horrid head. Little by little it gave way, the suffering brute whining in agony, until, the pain becoming unbearable, the clinging arms suddenly released their hold, letting me drop heavily to the deck.

By some good fortune I fell upon the discarded hatchet, and stumbled

WHO WILL GET
THE BIG GUNS?STATES TO BE REWARDED FOR
FAST WORK ON THE LAST
LOANFederal Government Will Bestow
German Cannon on the
Worthy Ones.

Until the figures for the last Victory Loan have been compiled an announcement will not be made telling the states that have been awarded the German cannon which are to be presented by the federal government to the states that showed speed in their work.

Four German cannons taken by American dough-boys as the booty of the war when they smashed the Hun lines in the final drive of the Allied armies, will be awarded in the Victory Liberty Loan to states and cities oversubscribing their quotas according to the following rules of competition laid down today by the Twelfth Federal Reserve District.

CLASS A. One cannon will be awarded to the state oversubscribing its quota by the highest percentage. CLASS B. One cannon will be awarded to the city of more than 200,000 population oversubscribing its quota by the highest percentage. CLASS C. One cannon will be awarded to the city of more than 75,000 and less than 200,000 population oversubscribing its quota by the highest percentage. CLASS D. One cannon will be awarded to the city of more than 10,000 and less than 75,000 population oversubscribing its quota by the highest percentage. States and cities will be classified as follows:

CLASS A. Northern California, Southern California, Hawaii, Idaho, Nevada, Oregon, Utah, Washington and Arizona.

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to my feet once more, gripping the weapon again in my fingers. I sprang straight toward him, sending the sharp blade of the hatchet crashing against the skull. The aim was good, the stroke a death blow, yet the monster got me with one paw, and we fell to the deck together, he savagely clawing me in his death agony. Then the hairy figure quivered and lay motionless. I released the stiffening grip, rising to my knees, only to immediately pitch forward unconscious.

When I came back once more to life I was upon the schooner's deck breathing the fresh night air, Dorothy and Watkins bending over me.

CHAPTER XXX.

Opening of the Treasure Chest.

The dawn came slowly, and with but little increase of light. The breeze had almost entirely died away, leaving the canvas aloft motionless, the schooner barely moving through a slightly heaving sea, in the midst of a dull-gray mist. When Watkins emerged from the mist I proposed to him that we go below and continue the search for gold. He was not anxious to go and Dorothy persuaded me to let her go with me. In the room where the ape had been hidden we found a big chest and I set to work to open it.

It proved harder than I had believed, the staple of the lock clinging to the hard teak wood of which the chest was made. The lid was heavy, but as I finally forced it backward a hinge snapped and permitted it to drop crashing to the deck. For an instant I could see nothing within.

"Lift up the lantern, Dorothy, please. No, higher than that. What in God's name? Why, it is the corpse of a woman!"

I heard her cry out, and barely caught the lantern as it fell from her hand. At first I doubted the evidence of my own eyes, snatching the bit of flaring candle from its tin socket and holding it where the full glare of light fell across the greasy object. Ay, it was a woman, with lower limbs doubled back from lack of space, but otherwise lying as though she slept, so perfect in preservation her cheeks appeared flushed with health, her lips half smiling. It was a face of real beauty—an English face, although her eyes and hair were dark and her mantilla and long earrings were unquestionably Spanish. A string of pearls encircled her throat, and there were numerous rings upon her fingers. The very contrast added immeasurably to the horror.

"She is alive! Surely she is alive!" The words were sobbed into my ear

(Continued on Page 4)

In outlining the rules of competition for these cannon every effort has been made to give the several states and principal cities an opportunity to compete on a fair basis. The cities have been divided into classes in accordance with the Federal census of 1910.

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Riverdale, Redlands, Boise, Aberdeen, Bakersfield, Fresno, Eureka, Santa Cruz, Pomona, Long Beach, Salem, Bellingham, Stockton, Vallejo, San Bernardino, Santa Barbara, Everett, Yakima, Walla Walla and Reno.

Provision is made, however, that not more than one cannon may be awarded to any one state. For instance: In the event of a city winning located in a state that is leading in Class A, the cannon will go to the city, while the next highest state in Class A without a winning city will be given the award in Class A.

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