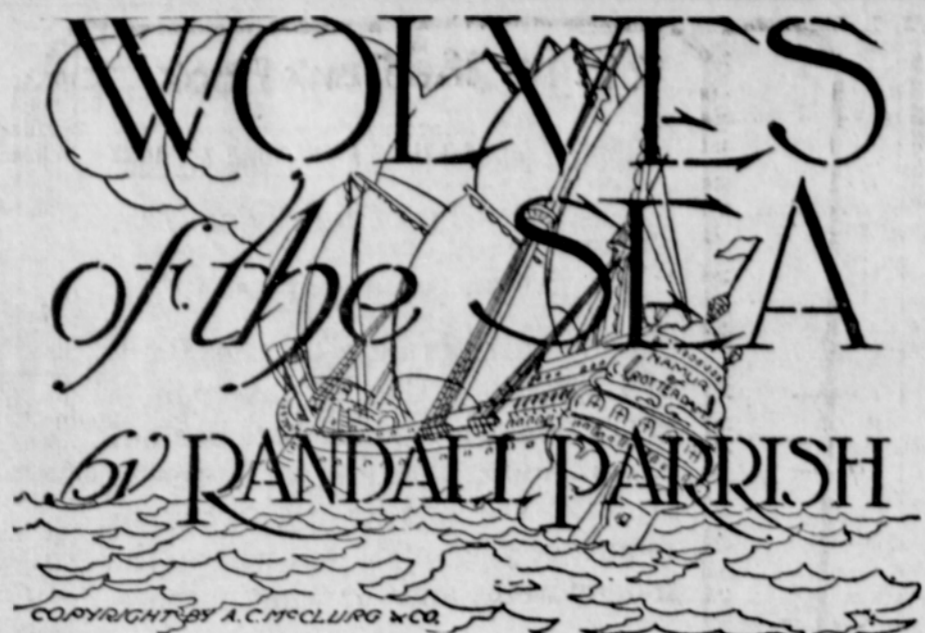


WOLVES of the SEA



BY RANDALL PARRISH

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CHAPTER XVI—Continued.

"Yes; hold my hand while I guide you; we can sit here."

It was a couch of some kind against the outer wall. She did not release her grasp, seemingly gaining courage from this physical contact, and my fingers closed warmly over her own.

"Now, please," breathlessly, "how is it possible you are aboard this vessel—an officer?"

I told her the strange story, as swiftly and simply as possible, speaking scarcely above a whisper, feeling as I progressed that I related a dream rather than a series of facts. It seemed to me she could scarcely be expected to believe the truth of what I said, and yet she did, almost unquestioningly, the clasp of her fingers perceptibly tightening as I proceeded. She sat so close beside me that I could feel her breath upon my cheek.

"Why, if—if you had not told me this yourself I could hardly believe such a tale," she exclaimed. "Yet it must be true, miraculous as it seems. But what is to be the ending? Have you any plan of escape?"

"Hardly a plan. I have had no opportunity even to learn the true nature of the crew. Watkins is an honest sailor, and he has told me of others on whom I could rely. There are those aboard—but I do not know how many—who would mutiny if they had a leader and a reasonable chance of success. I must reach these and learn who they are. Fortunately the voyage promises to be long enough to enable me to plan carefully."

"You have discussed the voyage with this man—Estada?"

"He told me that he had decided upon; not to return to their rendezvous until after they had captured some prizes and could go with gold chinking in their pockets."

"Where is their rendezvous?"

"An island in the West Indies, probably not on the chart. They call it Porto Grande."

"And they will sweep the ocean between here and there seeking victims? Unarmed merchantment to rob and sink? And you—you will be compelled to take part in such scenes, such acts of pillage and perhaps murder?"

"I presume I must seem to be one of them to avoid suspicion. Have you any suggestions?"

"There is conspiracy on board already," she said quickly, "that you may not know about."

"You mean to depose Sanchez?"

"Yes; you had suspicion of it? They thought me unconscious in the boat, and talked among themselves—the two at the stern, Estada and that beast Manuel. I did not understand all they said, but I do not think they intend the captain shall recover."

"You think it best that he should?"

"Oh, I do not know; there is no best that I can see. Yet I would have more faith in being spared disgrace if at the mercy of Sanchez, than his lieutenant. Both may be equally guilty, equally desperate, but they are not the same men. I may be wrong, for I judge as a woman, yet I would feel safer with Sanchez. The other merely desires with the passions of a brute. No appeal would reach him; he would laugh at tears and find pleasure in suffering. And yet you would have me appear friendly with Estada?"

"We cannot permit him to feel that either of us are enemies. He is the power aboard; our lives, everything are in his hands. If he means to be rid of Sanchez the man is doomed, for he will find a way to accomplish his purpose; murder means nothing to these men."

"Of course you are right," she acknowledged. "Our case is so desperate we must resort to any weapons. You believe it will serve the possibility of escape if I permit this monster to imagine that I have some interest in him?"

"To do so might delay the explosion," I replied gravely, "and just now any delay is welcome. I doubt if even Estada will resort to force on board; indeed force will be the very last card he will care to play in your case. You are English and all the practical seamen on board are from northern Europe—English and Scandinavian. These men are not pirates from choice—they are prisoners who have taken on to save their own lives. With his

bullets and cutthroats amidships he can compel them to work, but he dare not go too far. Once these fellows unite in mutiny they could take the ship. An assault on you would be dangerous."

"It is these men you count on?"

"Yes; but for me to gain their confidence and leadership will require time. The slightest slip would mean failure and merciless punishment. At best the situation is absolutely desperate—but I see no other solution."

"And my service is deceit—the acting of a part to blind the eyes of Estada?"

"I sincerely believe your greater chance of security lies in this course. The fellow is a supreme egotist; opposition will anger him, while flattery will make him subservient. You have the wit and discretion to hold him within certain limits. It is a dangerous game, I admit, and a disagreeable one, but the case requires desperate remedies."

She lifted her eyes, searching my face through the dim light.

"Geoffrey Carlyle," she said at last, a tremor in the low voice, "there is no sacrifice I would not make to preserve my honor. I hate this man; I dread his touch; I shrink from contact with him as I would from a snake, but I am not going to refuse to do my part. If you say this is right and justified I will consent."

"I believe it is."

"And you will not lose faith in me?" she questioned earnestly. "It will not lower your belief in my womanhood?"

"Nothing could do that. Mistress Dorothy, I want you to realize the depth of my interest and respect. Your friendliness has meant much to me, and I would never urge you to lower your ideals. But we must face this situation as it is. We possess but two



She Lifted Her Eyes.

weapons of defense—deceit or force. A resort to the latter is at present impossible. I cannot conceive that you are lowering yourself in any way by using the power you possess to escape violence—"

"The power I possess?"

"Yes—beauty and wit. These are your weapons, and most effective ones. You can play with Estada and defeat him—temporarily, at least. I confess there is danger in such a game—he is a wild beast, and his evil nature may overcome his discretion. Take this pistol. Keep it hidden about your person, but use it only when all else fails. You retain faith in me?"

"Implicitly."

"And pledge yourself to your part, leaving me to attend to mine?"

Her two hands clasped my fingers, her eyes uplifted.

"Geoffrey Carlyle, I have always believed in you, and now, after the sacrifice you have made to serve me I can refuse you nothing you ask. I will endeavor to accomplish all you require of me. God knows how I hate the task; but—but I will do my best. Only—only," her voice sank, "if—if the beast lays hands on me he—he pays the price. I could not do otherwise. Geoffrey Carlyle—I am a Fairfax."

Satisfied with my mission and confi-

dent nothing more need be said, I arose to my feet.

"Then we can do nothing further until I learn the disposition of the crew," I said quietly. "Estada is not likely to resort to extreme measures at present. That is why I believe you are comparatively safe now—his own position of command is in the balance."

"I will see you again?"

"Perhaps not here; it is too dangerous; but I will find means to communicate with you. Good-by."

We stood with hands clasped in the darkness. I thought she was going to speak again, but the words failed to come. Then suddenly, silently the door opened a mere crack, letting in a gleam of yellow light from the main cabin, while the crouching figure of a man, like a gliding shadow slipped through the aperture, closing the door behind him as softly as he had opened it. I heard her catch her breath and felt her hands grasp my sleeve, but I never stirred.

Who could he be? What might be the purpose of his entrance? But one answer occurred to me—Pedro Estada, driven by unbridled passions to attack the girl. I thrust her behind me, and took a step forward, with body poised for action. I was unarmed, but cared little for that in the swift desire to come to hand grips with the brute. I could hear him now, slowly and cautiously feeling his way toward us through the darkness.

CHAPTER XVII.

A Murder on Board.

To be certain of free space I extended one hand and my fingers came into unexpected contact with the back of a chair. Without moving my body I grasped this welcome weapon of defense and swung it above my head. Whoever the invader creeping upon us might prove to be, he was certainly an enemy, actuated by some foul purpose, and no doubt armed. To strike him down as quickly and silently as possible was therefore the plain duty of the moment. I had no other thought.

The slowness with which he groped his way forward indicated unfamiliarity with the apartment, although his direct advance proclaimed some special purpose. Clearly he had no fear of attack. I could determine almost his exact position as his advancing foot felt cautiously along the deck. He came forward inch by inch. I measured the distance as indicated by faint, shuffling sounds.

I could not see but I knew. With all my force I struck! Blindly as it had been delivered the blow hit fair; there was a thud, an inarticulate groan, and the fall of a body upon the floor—beyond that nothing. I waited breathlessly listening for the slightest movement. I felt Dorothy touch my shoulder and caught the sound of her voice trembling at my ear.

AVOID THAT "DOUBLE CHIN"

Investigation Has Shown It Can Be Controlled If Not Entirely Done Away With.

Among the other strange ideas advanced in this era of strangeness is the one which would make it appear that the personal form of plumpness known as a double chin is not strictly patriotic. The critic, presumably a person of lathlike build, declares that a double chin is an indicator of disregard for conservation. Generous feeders are usually marked by this fleshy excess.

Of course nobody wants a double chin. As far as known it never has found a welcome. Nobody desires to lose the precious neck line of youth. A double chin with its curving crease is quite enough of an anxiety without coupling it with an intimation of disregard for loyalty.

Happily the charge has brought a quick response. An investigator declares that the double chin can be controlled and very largely mitigated. It depends largely upon the carriage and pose of the head. The person who has a repeated chin, or is threatened with one, should recall and practice Dr. Edward Everett Hale's famous advice: "Look up, not down." The person who sits, or stands, or walks, with an erect body and keeps the chin uplifted, can defy the crease and the fatty ridges—yes, and defy the insinuations of the lathy critic.—Cleveland Plain Dealer.

Putting Off the Dark Moment.

Robert had been arriving home late from school. At nontime his mother told him if he repeated the offense she would punish him. When he came home that evening it was five o'clock and supper was ready. Upon seeing his mother he thought he might coerce her into forgetting, and said, "Mamma, I am nearly starved—let's eat first and talk business later."

Deep Sea Stuff.

He looked her out and asked her to sail the sea of matrimony with him. When she said O. K. (or words to that effect) they launched out with a little smack. A wave of color swept over her cheeks and her eyes swam in tears.

"What is it? What did you do?"

"I struck him with a chair; he lies there on the deck. Wait where you are."

I bent over and touched him. The fellow lay in a heap with no perceptible heart-beat, no semblance of breathing. My fingers sought his face, and I could scarcely suppress a cry of surprise—he was not Estada. Who, then, was he? What could have been his purpose in thus invading this stateroom? All I could grasp was the fact that the fellow was not the Portuguese—he possessed a smooth face, long hair, and was a much smaller man. I dragged the body where the light illumination from the after port fell directly on the upturned face. The features revealed were unfamiliar—those unquestionably of a half-breed Indian. Dorothy crossed to my side, her foot striking a knife, which came glimmering into the narrow range of light. She stared in horror at the ugly weapon, and then at the ghastly countenance.

"He came to murder! See, his knife lies there. Why should he have sought to kill me?"

"It is all mystery," I admitted. What shall be done with the body? It cannot be left lying exposed here; no one would believe you killed him, and my presence must not be suspected."

"Could it," she suggested, "be dropped through the port?"

She shrank back from touching the inanimate figure, yet it required the combined efforts of both to force the stiffening body through the porthole. We could distinguish footsteps on the deck above, but these were regular and undisturbed—the slow promenade from rail to rail of the officer on watch. Clearly nothing had been heard or seen to awaken suspicion.

"If you should be questioned tomorrow you had best know nothing," I said gravely. "I do not think you will be, for surely an attack can be no plan of Estada's. It could gain no advantage. The fellow was pillaging on his own account; if he is missed it will be supposed he fell overboard, and no one will care. You are not afraid to remain here alone?"

"No; I am not greatly frightened, but shall try and bar the door with a chair. I have no key."

"Then I'll leave you; half of my watch below must be gone by now. I'll take the fellow's knife along, as it must not be found here."

We parted with a clasp of hands, as I opened the stateroom door and slipped out into the cabin. To my surprise the light over the table had been extinguished, rendering the cabin so black I had to actually feel my way forward. The lantern must have been put out since then by some confederate. After a moment of hesitation I found my way across to my own stateroom and pressed open the door.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Largest Earth Embankment.

The Belle Escurie irrigation dam in South Dakota is the largest earth embankment in the world. Its construction was authorized by congress at a cost of \$5,000,000. From an engineering standpoint this project is one of the most interesting which the government has yet undertaken. Its principal structure is the earthen dam. This dike, which closes the lowest depression in the rim of a natural basin, is 6,200 feet long, 20 feet wide on top and 15 feet high in the highest place. The inside face of this structure, which has a slope of one to two, is protected from wind and wave action by two feet of screened gravel, on which are placed concrete blocks each four by six feet. The cubical contents of this dike are 42,000,000 feet, or about half of the famous pyramids of Cheops in Egypt. The reservoir created by this dam covers about 9,000 acres and will be the largest lake in the state.

Rain Parasols.

Parasols are of ancient lineage, but before umbrellas became common an article resembling a parasol was used by the ladies to keep off the rain. These were called "quitasols," a name derived from the Spanish; they were of oiled muslin, were of various colors and were imported from India by way of England. After these came umbrellas, which were also made of oiled linen, but the linen was coarse and the umbrella large and bulky. In 1771 a noted doctor and a famous preacher tried to introduce the fashion of using umbrellas, to keep off the sun, but "they were scouted in the public gazettes as a ridiculous effeminacy."

Palestine in Christ's Time.

At the time of the birth of Christ, Judea, that portion in which Jerusalem was situated, was a dependency of the government of Rome. In the year 70 A. D., about thirty-five years after the death of Christ, Jerusalem itself was captured by the Romans under Emperor Titus and was destroyed. It was rebuilt by the Romans and held for varying periods by them, by the Persians, by the Mohammedans, by the Crusaders and by the Turks. It was under Turkish rule from 1516 until capture by the British.

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