

equipped with a plant, and a moment later he was hammering at the operator's door.

"I want to send a message right away!" he cried excitedly. But the "wireless" shook his head with a smile.

"We're installing a new system. The old apparatus wasn't satisfactory, and it's being changed throughout."

"Then you—you can't send a message—possibly?"

"Nothing doing until the next trip." Kirk strode forward and stared disconsolately down upon the freight deck in a vain endeavor to collect his thoughts. He recalled the incidents of that wild night and began to have a disquieting doubt. Did that chance meeting with the chap from St. Louis have anything to do with his presence here, or had he really decided in some foolish, drunken whim to take a trip to Central America? He recollected that Jefferson Locke had not impressed him very favorably at the start.

The sound of a bugle, which Kirk interpreted as an invitation to breakfast, reminded him that he was famished, and he lost no time in going below. Upon his appearance the steward made it plain to him in some subtle manner that the occupant of suit A needed nothing beyond the mere possession of those magnificent quarters to insure the most considerate treatment. Kirk was placed at the captain's table, where his hunger was soon appeased, and his outlook grew more cheerful with the complete restoration of bodily comfort.

"Getting your sea legs, Mr. Locke?" inquired the man at his right.

"My name is Anthony."

"I beg your pardon! The passenger list said—"

"That was a mistake."

"My name is Stein. May I ask where you are bound for?"

"I think the place is Panama."

"Going to work on the canal?"

"What canal? Oh, of course! Now I remember bearing something about a Panama canal. Is that where it is?"

"That's the place," Stein replied dryly.

"Oh, I've heard it mentioned."

"Well, you won't hear anything else mentioned down here. It's the one and only subject of conversation. Nobody thinks or talks or dreams about anything except the canal. Everybody works on it or else works for somebody who does. See this fellow coming down the stairs?" Anthony beamed a slender, bald headed man of youthful appearance. "That is Stephen Cortlandt. You've heard of the Cortlandts?"

"Sure! One of them pitched for the Cubs."

"I mean the Cortlandts of Washington. They're swell people, society folks and all that"—He broke off to bow effusively to the late comer, who seated himself opposite. Then he introduced Kirk.

Mr. Cortlandt impressed Anthony as a cold blooded, highly schooled person, absolutely devoid of sentiment. He seemed by no means effeminate, yet he was one of those immaculate beings upon whom one can scarcely imagine a speck of dust or a bead of perspiration.

"By the way, we're getting up a pool on the ship's run," Stein told his new acquaintance. "Would you like to join?"

"Yes, indeed. I'm for anything in the line of chance."

"Very well. I'll see you in the smoking room later. It will cost you only \$5."

Kirk suddenly recalled his financial condition and hastened to say, a trifle lamely:

"Come to think about it, I believe I'll stay out. I never gamble." Chancing to glance up at the moment he found Mr. Cortlandt's eyes fixed upon him with a peculiarly amused look and a few minutes later he followed Mr. Stein to the deck above.

Once in his own stateroom search showed Kirk that even his watch was gone and that his only asset, evidently overlooked by the hilarious Higgins and his co-partner in crime, was a modest three stone finger ring. He had neither baggage nor money. He was regarding his ring speculatively when the purser knocked, then entered at his call.

"I've just heard that there's a mistake about your ticket," the newcomer began. "It is made out to 'Mr. Jefferson Locke,' but the doctor says you insist your name is something else."

"That's right. My name is Anthony."

"Then how did I get this ticket?"

"I'm sure I don't know."

"Have you any baggage?"

"I don't know."

"What is your destination?"

"I don't know. You'll pardon my limited vocabulary?"

"But I don't understand."

"Neither do I. But I must have some luggage. I need a clean shirt and collar."

"If you are not Mr. Locke the ticket is no good."

"Hurrah! Put me off."

"You don't understand—the ticket is good, but—"

"Pardon the personal nature of the question—but what size shirt do you wear?"

"Seventeen."

"Saved! Let me have about six, will you?"

"Certainly not," returned the other. "I need all I have. I'll have a look for your baggage, Mr.—Anthony, and I'll see the captain about this ticket also. I'll look you up later."

He departed, shaking his head as if this were a form of insanity he had never before encountered. A moment later Kirk followed him and made a round of the deck, staring at each man he met and mentally estimating the

Continued next week.

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