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CHAPTER XII—Continued

The captain studied the papers again. "Pulled a boner bringing that fool Besser on board," he said softly.

"Why didn't you—?" The captain's gentle voice trailed off suggestively.

"Two reasons, and both d-d good ones. We couldn't get rid of him in that cove. You ought to know that—"

"Blakely was no more a crook than I am," Ronald muttered doggedly.

The captain laughed jovially. "Well, bless us, boy, what else are you?—Come, have more coffee—"

"There's a reward of three thousand for him, but he had plenty on him, so I said five."

One of the men from the Little club came in, his hat in his hand. The two officers nodded to him curly, without offering him a chair.

"John D. Rivers. London. Passports, visas, birth certificate, everything O. K.—Ninety dollars, Mr. Rivers. I understand you are going home on this old freighter because of the economy—"

"The man Rivers without a word counted out five thousand from his wallet, and laid it on the table. Ingram handed him a receipt for the money."

One after another the men from the Little club were ushered into the captain's room, their papers examined with great attentiveness, their money taken—usually fat rolls of bills for which a form receipt was given in exchange.

When the last man had gone out the captain figured swiftly on the back of an envelope for a moment. Then, detaching a small amount from the heap in his open drawer, he counted out a portion of it, and put it in a section of the wall safe beside the desk.

"One thousand eight dollars for the good ship Roger Williams," he said. "Twelve stalwart passengers at ninety dollars a head."

The rest of the money he tucked quickly into a steel box, and touching a secret spring in his table, fitted the box within it, closed it again. "And for the brains and blood behind the Roger Williams—a wee mite more," he said laughingly.

They smoked for a moment in silence. The captain poured out fresh coffee. "The papers were good," the captain said in a tone of satisfaction.

appraising look he gave her, a look that swept her from leather boots to leather cap, and then he turned about in his chair and looked at Ronald Ingram.

His voice was a dangerous purr. "This, Mr. Ingram, is a flagrant infraction of rules, as you know very well. You have deliberately disobeyed the one order to which I have held every one around me in all of my various sailings—"

"Madame, I am sorry. I can understand that a woman may have quite as good reasons as a man for wishing to sail without the fanfare of publicity. The ladies, madame, have my sympathy, but they do not sail on my ship."

"But—I am aboard," said Gay faintly. "You are, yes. Worse luck to all of us. But you won't be—very long. Where are your papers?"

"Sir," interrupted Ronald Ingram quickly, "I beg your pardon, but—you do not understand. Miss—the lady is—not a fugitive. She is my—my fiancée. We love each other—we—we could not bear to be separated—"

The captain's dark eyes were still boring into Gay's face, and in that instant Ronald was able to flash her a warning signal with his eyes. Quickly she realized that he wished to help her, and the warm gratitude in the look she gave him might easily have been misconstrued by one who thought she loved him.

The captain's eyes had not wavered from her face. "How much do you know of our—business ventures?" he demanded curtly.

And then, in hope forgetting to seek advice in Ronald's pleading eyes, she blundered into her great error. Her desire was to intimidate the captain, show him her power, make him respect her for her knowledge, and she cried triumphantly:

"Everything! I know everything—Smuggling Chinese, forged passports—Yes, the murder of poor Blakely—everything!"

It was no less than murder that showed in the captain's black eyes then. His voice was a whisper, the whisper of a wild animal panting.

"So! Everything." His eyes turned slowly upon Ronald Ingram. And Gay, following his glance, seeing his fury, seeing Ronald's consternation at her revelation, realized the gravity of her mistake.

"Oh, no," she gasped. "Oh, no." The captain's eyes traveled slowly that deadly trail from Ronald's eyes to hers again.

"Yes?" he purred. Gay pulled herself together. "He did not tell me," she disclaimed quickly. "He told me you were just independent shippers, running a tramp steamer wherever you could get a cargo."

"Who told you—everything—then? Not—Moy Sen?"

"Certainly not." But she gained confidence, strengthened by the firm timbre of her own voice. "But it was Moy Sen who first aroused my suspicions. I live in the cottage next to the clubhouse. Moy Sen watched me—and I caught him. That was curious. And then I put things together. Why Ronald went away so suddenly,

Why Ronald went away so suddenly, why he had purchased the clubhouse, how Blakely's body came into the cove—I put everything together and it was strange. So—I—just snooped."

A quick flash of amusement lightened the black fury of the captain's face. "Oh! You snooped!"

"Yes, I—I loved him, and I had to find out from the piazza floor and crawled under and peeked through the oilcloth over the window and—I saw everything."

"And knowing—everything—still you took a chance and came along?"

"I could not bear to—to let him go away—into such danger—alone. Besides—it is all your fault," she said accusingly, but there was no very convincing quality in the accusation.

"You are older than he, you are magnetic, powerful. You led him into it." The captain laughed softly at that, but frowned again in a moment.

"This is a devilish kettle of fish," he grumbled anxiously to Ronald. "Where are her papers?"

"She has no papers, sir. She only decided to come tonight."

"How do you expect to get her ashore—?"

"She won't go ashore, sir. She is an American citizen, so am I. She will stay on board when we are in foreign ports. And when we come back we can land her at the island—I couldn't come away—without her."

The captain lit a cigarette, and bit the end of it thoughtfully. His mildness of manner had returned.

"I'm not blaming him, you understand, Miss—Miss—"

"Gay is my name, Gay Delane."

"Gay. That's nice. Like that. Call you Gay then, right off, since you'll sort of be my mate-in-law as you might say.—You'll have to keep in your cabin, out of sight of the men.—"

"Why Do Women Have to Blab Everything They Know?"

You understand how men are, miss, when they're at sea, no women, you know—goes to their heads—nice chaps, our men, fine chaps—but the thought of a woman goes right to their heads."

"I—I wouldn't cause trouble for anything," Gay said quickly, and hope sprang into her heart again. "I am sorry I came. I see now how foolish I was. But things just—went to my head, too, I suspect.—Perhaps you'd be so just put me off and send me ashore in a small boat."

"I'd like to," the captain said pleasantly, and a smile showed in the dark mild eyes, "I'd like to first rate. But it's too late now. No, you'll have to stick it out with the Roger Williams this trip. Keep her in your cabin. Ronald, until—You'll have to be married! That's the dope. The men don't have much regard for women, but they show some respect to a wife."

Gay flashed a frightened, appealing look at Ronald. Married!

"The captain marry us," he stammered. "At sea. Captain's privilege. Yes, that would be—best." But he did not meet her eyes.

"Yes. And me time, keep her in your cabin, and out of sight." The captain's eyes wandered to Gay again warmly appraising, slowly approving. "Maybe she'd better stay here. My cabin is safe enough, for woman, child or beast. I'll keep her for you."

"No. She'll be all right in my cabin.—She—she is very nervous; I—I must console her."

"I could console her," said the captain, smiling broadly.

Ronald answered with a straight defiant stare. He stepped quickly to the door and opened it, then, after a moment's pause while he waited for a seaman to pass through the corridor, he took Gay's hand.

The captain, smiling, gave her a friendly touch on the shoulder. "Don't be frightened, little girl," he said. "I'm going to take care of you. I am the captain here. Don't be frightened."

"Th—thanks," stammered Gay weakly, and then, hurried by Ronald who held her hand, she ran, a boyish slim figure beside him, down the corridor to the farther cabin, and the door closed behind them.

Safe in their retreat, Gay faced Ronald Ingram defiantly, chin sturdily upturned, hands in pockets, eyes stubborn. She was not afraid of Ronald Ingram.

"What—what in the—the name of—heaven and earth—" he began wildly, "what in the name—of heaven—"

"You said that once," she interrupted coldly. "Don't be silly." And then she wilted suddenly. "D—don't scold me. I—I—feel just—terrible. I—I know I'm going to cry." Then, remembering Rand, she stiffened, faced him furiously again, drove the quiver from her lips. "Where is he, she cried, "where is Randolph Wallace? What have you done with him?"

"Oh! Ronald Ingram looked white and sick all at once. "Oh, the Cavalier!—So that's it. I might have known. Fool that I was, for a moment I believed it—I thought—I believed you really did come—because you loved me—"

His voice broke, and his eyes were smartingly bright.

But Gay was heartless. She caught his arm, held it in wrenching, strong young fingers. "You tell me," she commanded. "If you have hurt—one hair of his head—"

"I haven't seen him, Gay. I don't know anything about him. What has he to do with—us?"

Gay wilted again, broke into soft painful sobs. "Rand, Rand," she whispered through tears.

"Don't cry. Don't. He—he's all right. D—n him. I don't know where he is, but he's all right. Nothing ever—only us poor—devils—who—get—Don't cry, Gay." He put his arm about her tenderly, but Gay wept passionately and would not be comforted.

"What the dickens did you tell him all that for?" he broke in at last impatiently. "Nice mess you've got yourself into. Why didn't you keep your mouth shut, as I gave you a sign? Why do women always have to blab everything they know? You put yourself in his power by your own words. If he thought you were innocent, knew nothing, he would send you ashore. But now, knowing you have his life in your hands, you are his slave for life. You'll never get out of his sight as long as you live. He wouldn't dare let you go."

"I was afraid of it," she said faintly. "I knew I had made a mistake when I saw his eyes. I was very foolish. I was never—very wise," she admitted pathetically.

"No. But you are—very sweet," he said sadly.

"Help me, Ronald. Won't you help me? You said you—liked me. I only came because I thought—"

"You thought that chap—the Cavalier—"

"I thought you would kill him, so I came—"

"To intercede for him—to save him?"

"Alas, no, I had no hope. I thought you would let us die together."

"I will help you, Gay. It is putting my nose behind the bars to run the risk, but I will do what I can. We must think, we must plan it out. You must pretend to be in love with me—keep away from the captain—fear him more than the men. Gay, I am afraid he will insist that you marry me. I almost hope he will."

"Oh, no; oh, no."

"Old-Fashioned" Winter

Records kept by the United States weather bureau indicate that there has been no appreciable permanent change in the weather of the northern hemisphere during the last fifty or sixty years. Weather records show that the winters are as cold on the average as they were half a century ago. The "old-fashioned" severe winter that elderly people are fond of telling about is a psychological illusion. Winters seemed colder to the pioneers because they were not as well protected as people are now. The advance of civilization has relieved the inhabitants of this country from many of the hardships formerly suffered because of cold weather. Also, the difference between the child and adult mind has undoubtedly contributed considerably to the illusion. Things seen through the eyes of childhood are likely to have a distorted appearance. It is human nature for people in their reminiscences to exaggerate past events, especially the hardships of early life.

Water for Your Birds

Fresh water is a necessity for your bird, says Nature Magazine. Water for bathing should be made available daily during the warm months and twice a week during the winter. If the bird refuses to bathe do not force it. Always keep a supply of good gravel or grit in the cage to serve in place of teeth.

No Wonder

"My husband was furious yesterday. He came across one of my love letters unopened!"

"But if it were unopened what could he be angry about?"

"It was one that he had sent to me!"—Stockholm Kasper.

Meaning of "Greyhound"

The "grey" in greyhound is not meant to represent the color of the animal. "Grey" is a Scandinavian word for hound, this particular species of animal from that country having the name. So that when we use the word "greyhound" we are really saying "hound-hound."

Saving Machines

"Ah left mah last place," said Rastus in reply to his prospective employer's question, "cause of the labor-savin' contraptions."

"But why did you do that?"

"Cause they saved up all the labor fo' mahself."

Dogs

"You are fond of dogs?"

"I am."

"Why?"

"Because they are dumb animals who, after receiving favors, never talk about you."

Had Nothing to Say

"Don't you deny your wife anything?" "How can I when she won't let me?"

Enough people can be offended by bad taste in advertising to lose some money.

COULD NOT GET OUT OF BED

Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound Strengthened Her

Elkhart, Ind.—"I had a tired feeling and was unable to get out of bed without the help of my husband. We heard of the Vegetable Compound and decided to try it. I am still taking it and it sure is a help to me. I can do my work without feeling before I am through. I know that if women will give the Vegetable Compound a trial they can overcome those tired and worn-out feelings. I cannot express the happiness I have received and how completely it has made over my home."—Mrs. D. H. SIMS, 1325 Laurel St., Elkhart, Indiana.

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