

MAX BRAND

HARRIGAN

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Harrigan

CHAPTER 1

"That fellow with the red hair," said the police captain as he pointed.

"I'll watch him," the sergeant answered.

The captain had raided two opium dens the day before, and the pride of accomplishment puffed his chest. He would have given advice to the sheriff of Oahu that evening.

He went on: "I can pick some men out of the crowd by the way they walk, and others by their eyes. That fellow has it written all over him."

The red-headed man came nearer through the crowd. Because of the warmth, he had stuffed his soft hat into a back pocket, and now the light from a window shone steadily on his hair and made a fire of it, a danger signal. He encountered the searching glances of the two officers and answered with cold, measuring eyes, like the gaze of a prize fighter who waits for a blow. The sergeant turned to his superior with a grunt.

"You're right," he nodded.

"Trail him," said the captain, "and take a man with you. If that fellow gets into trouble, you may need help."

He stepped into his automobile and the sergeant beckoned to a nearby policeman.

"Akana," he said, "we have a man-sized job tonight. Are you feeling fit?"

The Kanaka smiled without enthusiasm.

"The man of the red hair?"

The sergeant nodded, and Akana tightened his belt. He had eaten fish baked in ti leaves that evening.

He suggested: "Morley has little to do. His beat is quiet. Shall I tell him to come with us?"

"No," grinned the sergeant, and then looked up and watched the broad shoulders of the red-haired man, who advanced through the crowd as the prow of a ship lunges through the waves. "Go get Morley," he said abruptly.

But Harrigan went on his way without misgivings, not that he forgot the policeman, but he was accustomed to stand under the suspicious eye of the law. In all the course of his wanderings it had been upon him. His coming was to the men in uniform like the sound of the battle trumpet to the cavalry horse. This, however, was Harrigan's first night in Honolulu, and there was much to see, much to do. He had rambled through the streets; now he was headed for the Ivilei district. Instinct brought him there, the still, small voice which had guided him from trouble to trouble all his life.

At a corner he stopped to watch a group of Kanakas who passed him, wreathed with leis and thrumming their ukuleles. They sang in their soft, many-voweled language and the sound was to Harrigan like the rush and lapse of water on a beach, infinitely soothing and as lazy as the atmosphere of Honolulu. All things are subdued in the strange city where East and West meet in the middle of the Pacific. The gayest crowds cannot quite disturb the brooding peace which is like the promise of sleep and rest at sunset. It was not pleasing to Harrigan. He frowned and drew a quick, impatient breath, muttering: "I'm not long for this joint. I gotta be moving."

He joined a crowd which eddied toward the center of Ivilei. In there it was better. Negro soldiers, marines from the *Maryland*, Kanakas, Chinamen, Japanese, Portuguese, Americans; a score of nationalities and complexions rubbed shoulders as they wandered aimlessly among the many bright-painted cottages.

Yet even in that careless throng of pleasure-seekers no one rubbed shoulders with Harrigan. The flame of his hair was like a red lamp which warned them away. Or perhaps it was his eye, which seemed to linger for a cold, incurious instant on every face that approached. He picked out the prettiest of the girls who sat at the windows chatting with all who passed. He did not have to shoulder to win a way through the crowd of her admirers.

She was a *hap haoli*, with the fine features of the Caucasian and the black of hair and eye which shows the islander. A rounded elbow rested on the sill of the window; her chin was cupped in her hand.

"Send these away," said Harrigan, and leaned an elbow beside hers.

"Oh," she murmured; then: "And if I send them away?"

"I'll reward you."

"Reward?"

For answer he dragged a crimson carnation from the buttonhole of a tall man who stood at his side.

"What in hell—" began the victim, but Harrigan smiled and the other drew slowly back through the crowd.

"Now send them away."

She looked at him an instant longer with a light coming slowly up behind her eyes. Then she leaned out and waved to the chuckling semicircle.

"Run away for a while," she said; "I want to talk to my brother."

She patted the thick red hair to emphasize the relationship, and the little crowd departed, laughing uproariously. Harrigan slipped the carnation into the jetty hair. His hand lingered a moment against the soft masses, and she drew it down, grown suddenly serious.

"There are three policemen in the shadow of that cottage over there.

They're watching you."

"Ah-h!"

The sound was so soft that it was almost a sigh, but she shivered perceptibly.

"What have you been doing?"

He answered regretfully: "Nothing."

"They're coming this way. The man who had the carnation is with them.

You better beat it."

"Nope. I like it here."

She shook her head, but the flame was blowing high now in her eyes. A hand fell on Harrigan's shoulder.

"Hey!" said the sergeant in a loud voice.

Harrigan turned slowly and the sergeant's hand fell away. The man of the carnation was far in the background.

"Well?"

"That flower. You can't get away with little tricks like that. You better be starting on. Move along."

Harrigan glanced slowly from face to face. The three policemen drew closer together as if for mutual protection.

"Please—honey!" urged the whisper of the girl.

The hand of Harrigan resting on the window sill had gathered to a hard-bunched fist, white at the knuckles, but he nodded across the open space between the cottages.

"If you're looking for work," he said, "seems as though you'd find a handful over there."

A clatter of sharp, quick voices rose from a group of Negro soldiers gathering around a white man. No one could tell the cause of the quarrel. It might have been anything from an oath to a blow.

"Watch him," said Harrigan. "He looks like a man." He added plaintively: "But looks are deceivin'."

The center of the disturbance appeared to be a man indeed. He was even taller than Harrigan and broader of shoulder, and, like the latter, there was a suggestion of strength in him which could not be defined by his size alone. At the distance they could guess his smile as he faced the clamoring mob.

"Break in there!" ordered the sergeant to his companions, and started toward the angry circle.

As he spoke, they heard one of the Negroes curse and the fist of the tall man darted at the face of a soldier and drove him toppling back among his comrades. They closed on the white man with a yell; a passing group of their compatriots joined the affray; the whole mass surged in around the tall fellow. Harrigan's head went back and his eyes half closed like a critic listening to an exquisite symphony.

"Ah-h!" he whispered to himself. "Watch him fight!"

The policemen struck the outer edge of the circle with drawn clubs, but there they stopped. They could not dent that compacted mass. The soldiers struggled manfully, but they were held at bay. Harrigan could see the heaving shoulders of the defender over the heads of the assailants, and the crack of hard-driven fists. The attackers were crushed together and had little room to swing their arms with full force, while the big man stood with his back against the wall of the cottage and made every smashing punch count.

As if by common assent, the soldiers suddenly desisted and gave back from this deadly fighter. His bellow of triumph rang over the clamor. His hat was off; his long black hair stood straight up in the wind; and he leaped after them with flailing arms.

But now the police had managed to pry their way into the mass by dint of indiscriminate battering. As the black-haired man came face to face with the sergeant, the light gleamed on a high-swung club that thudded home; and the big man dropped out of sight. He came up again almost at once, but with men draped from every portion of his body. The soldiers and police had joined forces, and once more a dozen men clutched him, spilling over him like football players in a scrimmage. He was knocked from his feet by the impact.

"Coming!" shouted Harrigan.

He raced with long strides, head lowered and back bowed until his long arms nearly swept the ground. Gathering impetus at every stride, he crushed into the floundering heap of arms and legs. The police sergeant rose and whirled with lifted club. Harrigan grunted with joy as he dug his left into the man's midsection. The sergeant collapsed upon the ground, embracing his stomach with both arms. Harrigan jerked away the upper layers of the attackers and dragged the black-haired man to his feet.

"Shoulder to shoulder!" thundered Harrigan, and smote Officer Akana upon the point of the chin.

The victory was not yet won. The black soldiers of Uncle Sam's regular army need not take second place to any body of troops in the world. These men had tasted their own blood and they came tearing in now for revenge.

Harrigan, standing full in front of the rescued man until the latter should have recovered his breath, found food for both fists, and his love of battle was fed. The other man had fought stiffly erect, standing with feet braced to give the weight of his whole body to every punch; Harrigan raged back and forth like a panther, avoiding blows by the catlike agility of his movements, which left both hands free to strike sledge-hammer blows. Presently he heard a chuckling at his side. Out of the corner of his eye he saw the black-haired man come into the battle, straight and stiff as before, with long arms shooting out like pistons.

It was a glorious sight. Something made Harrigan's heart big; rose and swelled his throat; rose again and came as a wild yell upon his tongue. The unfortunates who have faced Irish legions in battle know that yell. The soldiers did not know it, and they held back for a moment. Something else lowered their spirits still more. It was the clanging of the police patrol as it swung to a halt and a body of reserves poured out.

"Here comes our finish!" panted Harrigan to his comrade in arms. "But oh, man, I'm thinkin' it was swate while it lasted!"

In his great moments the Irish brogue thronged thick upon his tongue.

"Finish, hell!" grunted the other. "After me, lad!"

And lowering his head like a bull, he drove forward against the crowd. Harrigan caught the idea in a flash. He put his shoulder to the hip of his friend. They became a flying wedge with the jabbing fists of the black-haired man for a point—and they sank into the mass of soldiers like a hot knife into butter, shearing them apart.

There were few who wished more action, for the police reserves were capturing man after man. One or two resisted, but a revolver fired straight in the air put a sudden period to such thoughts. The crowd scattered in all directions and Harrigan was taking to his heels among the rest when an iron hand caught his shoulder and jerked him to a halt. It was the black-haired man.

"Easy," he cautioned. He pulled a cap out and settled it upon his head.

Harrigan followed suit with his soft hat.

"Are you after givin' yourself away to the law?" he queried, bewildered.

"Steady, you fool," said the other; "they're only after the ones who run away."

An excited Kanaka confronted them with brandished club.

"What's the cause of the disturbance, officer?" asked the big man.

The policeman for answer waved them away and darted after a running soldier.

"I'll be damned!" murmured Harrigan, and his eyes dwelt on his companion's face almost tenderly.

They were at the edge of the crowd when a shrill voice called: "Those two big men! Halt 'em! Stand!"

Officer Akana ran through the crowd with his regulation Colt brandished above his head.

"The time's come!" said Harrigan's new friend, and broke into a run.

CHAPTER 2

They were past the thick of the mob now and they dodged rapidly among the cottages until the clamor of police fell away to a murmur behind them, and they swung out onto the narrow, dark street which led back toward the heart of Honolulu. For ten minutes they strode along without a word. Under the light of a street lamp they stopped of one accord.

"I'm McTee."

"I'm Harrigan."

The gripping of the hands was more than fellowship; it was like a test of strength which left each uncertain of the other's resources. They were exactly opposite types. McTee was long of face, with an arched, cruel nose, gleaming eyes, heavy, straight brows which pointed up and gave a touch of the Mephistophelian to his expression, a narrow, jutting chin, and lips habitually compressed to a thin line. It was a handsome face, in a way, but it showed such a brutal dominance that it inspired fear first and admiration afterward.

Such a man must command. He might be only the boss of a gang of laborers, or he might be a financier, but never in any case an underling. Altogether he combined physical and intellectual strength to such a degree that both men and women would have stopped to look at him, and once seen he would be remembered.

On the other hand, in Harrigan one felt only force, not directed and controlled as in McTee, but impulsive, irregular, irresponsible, uncompassed. He carried a contradiction in his face. The heavy, hard-cut jaw, the massive cheekbones, the stiff, straight upper lip indicated merely brutal endurance and energy, but these qualities were tempered by possibilities of tenderness about the lips and by the singular lights forever changing in the blue eyes. He would be hard for the shrewdest judge to understand, for the simple reason that he did not know himself.

In looking at McTee, one asked: "What is he?" In looking at Harrigan, the question was: "What will he become?"

"Stayin' in town long?" asked Harrigan, and his voice was a little wistful.

"I'm bound out tonight."

"So long, then."

"So long."

They turned on their heels into opposite streets without further words, with no thanks given for service rendered, with no exchange of congratulations for the danger they had just escaped. That parting proved them hardened knights of the road which leads across the world and never turns back home.

Harrigan strode on full of thought. His uncertain course brought him at last to the waterfront, and he idled along the black, odorous docks until he came to a pier where a ship was under steam, making ready to put out to sea. The spur touched the heart of Harrigan. The urge never failed to prick him when he heard the scream of a steamer's horn as it put to sea. It brought the thoughts of far lands and distant cities.

He strolled out to the pier and watched the last ropes cast loose. The ship was not large, and even in the dark it seemed dingy and dilapidated. He guessed that, big or small, this boat would carry her crew to some distant quarter of the world, and therefore to a place to be desired.

A strong voice gave an order from the deck—a hard voice with a ring in it like the striking of iron against iron. Harrigan glanced up with a start of recognition, and by the light of a swinging lantern he saw McTee. If he were in command, this ship was certainly going to a far port. Black water showed between the dock and the ship. In a moment more it would be beyond reach, and that thought decided Harrigan. He made a few paces back, noted the aperture in the rail of the ship where the gangplank was being drawn in, then ran at full speed and leaped high in the air.

The three sailors at the rail shouted their astonishment as Harrigan struck the edge of the gangplank, reeled, and then pitched forward to his knees. He rose and shook himself like a cat that has dropped from a high fence to the ground.

"What're you?"

"I'm the extra hand."

And Harrigan ran up the steps to the bridge. There he found McTee with the first and second mates.

"McTee," he said, "I came on your ship by chance an' saw you. If you *can* use an extra hand, let me stay. I'm footfree an' I need to be movin' on."

Even through the gloom he caught the glint of the Scotchman's eye.

"Get off the bridge!" thundered McTee.

"But I'm Harrigan, and—"

McTee turned to his first and second mates.

"Throw that man off the bridge!" he ordered.

Harrigan didn't wait. He retreated down the steps to the deck and went to the rail. A wide gap of swarthy water now extended between the ship and the dock, but he placed his knee on the rail ready to dive. Then he turned and stood with folded arms looking up to the bridge, for his mind was dark with many doubts. He tapped a passing sailor on the shoulder.

"What sort of an old boy is the captain?"

He made up his mind that according to the answer he would stay with the ship or swim to the shore, but the sailor merely stared stupidly at him for a moment and then grinned slowly. There might be malice, there might be mere ridicule in that smile. He passed on before another question could be asked.

"Huh!" grunted Harrigan. "I stay!"

He kept his eyes fixed on the bridge, remaining motionless at the rail for an hour while the glow of Honolulu grew dimmer and dimmer past the stern. There were lights in the after-cabin and he guessed that the ship, in a small way, carried both freight and passengers. At last McTee came down the steps to the deck and as he passed Harrigan snapped: "Follow me."

He led the way aft and up another flight of steps to the after-cabin, unlocked a door, and showed Harrigan into the captain's room. Here he took one chair and Harrigan dropped easily into another.

"Now, what 'n hell was your line of thinkin', McTee," he began, "when you told me to—"

"Stand up!" said McTee.

"What?"

"Stand up!"

Harrigan rose very slowly. His jaw was setting harder and harder, and his face became grim.

"Harrigan, you took a chance and came with me."

"Yes."

"I didn't ask you to come."

"Sure you didn't, but if you think you can treat me like a swine and get away with it—"

It was wonderful to see the eyes of McTee grow small. They seemed to retreat until they became points of light shining from the deep shadow of his brow. They were met by the cold, incurious light of Harrigan's stare.

"You're a hard man, Harrigan."

He made no answer, but listened to the deep thrum of the engines. It seemed to him that the force which drove the ship was like a part of McTee's will, a thing of steel.

"And I'm a hard man, Harrigan. On this ship I'm king. There's no will but my will; there's no right but my right; there's no law but my law. Remember, on land we stood as equals. On this ship you stand and I sit."

The thin lips did not curve, and yet they seemed to be smiling cruelly, and the eyes were probing deep, deep, deep into Harrigan's soul, weighing, measuring, searching.

"When we reach land," said Harrigan, "I got an idea I'll have to break you."

He raised his hands, which trembled with the restrained power of his arms, and moved them as though slowly breaking a stick of wood.

"I've broken men—like that," he finished.

"When I'm through with you, Harrigan, you'll take water from a Chinaman. You're the first man I've ever seen who could make me stop and look twice. I need a fellow like you, but first I've got to make you my man. The best colt in the world is no good until he learns to take the whip without bucking. I'm going to get you used to the whip. This is frank talk, eh? Well, I'm a frank man. You're in the harness now, Harrigan; make up your mind: Will you pull or will you balk? Answer me!"

"I'll see you damned!"

"Good. You've started to balk, so now you'll have to feel the whip."

He pulled a cord, and while they waited, the relentless duel of the eyes continued. A flash of instinct like a woman's intuition told Harrigan what impulse was moving McTee. He knew it was the same thing which makes the small schoolboy fight with the stranger; the same curiosity as to the unknown power, the same relentless will to be master, but now intensified a thousandfold in McTee, who looked for the first time, perhaps, on a man who might be his master. Harrigan knew, and smiled. He was confident. He half rejoiced in looking forward to the long struggle.

A knock came and the door opened.

"Masters," said McTee to the boatswain, "we're three hands short."

"Yes, sir."

"Here are the three hands. Take them forward."

CHAPTER 3

Masters looked at Harrigan, started to laugh, looked again, and then silently held the door open. Harrigan stepped through it and followed to the forecandle, a dingy retreat in the high bow of the ship. He had to bend low to pass through the door, and inside he found that he could not stand erect. It was his first experience of working aboard a ship, and he expected to find a scrupulous neatness, and hammocks in place of beds. Instead he looked on a double row of bunks heaped with swarthy quilts, and the boatswain with a silent gesture indicated that one of these belonged to Harrigan. He went to it without a word and sat down cross-legged to survey his new quarters. It was more like the bunkhouse of a western ranch than anything else he had been in, but all reduced to a miniature, cramped and confined.

Now his eyes grew accustomed to the dim, unpleasant light which came from a single lantern hanging on the central post, and he began to make out the faces of the sailors. An oily-skinned Greek squatted on the bunk to his left. To his right was a Chinaman, marvelously emaciated; his lips pulled back in a continual smile, meaningless, like the grin of a corpse.

Opposite was the inevitable Englishman, slender, good-looking, with pale hair and bright, active eyes. Harrigan had traveled over half the world and never failed to find at least one subject of John Bull in any considerable group of men. This young fellow was talking with a giant Negro, his neighbor. The black man chattered with enthusiasm while the Englishman listened, nodding, intent.

One thing at least was certain about this crew: the Negro, the Chinaman, the Greek, even the Englishman, despite his slender build, they were all hard, strong men.

The cook brought out supper in buckets—stews, chunks of stale bread, tea. As they ate, the sailors grew talkative.

"Slide the slum this way," said the Englishman.

The Negro pushed the bucket across the deck with his foot.

"A hard trip," went on the first speaker.

"All trips on the *Mary Rogers* is hard," rumbled a voice.

"Aye, but Black McTee is blacker'n ever today."

"He belted the bos'n with a rope end," commented the Negro.

"He ain't human. This is my last trip with him. How about you, John? You got a lump on your jaw yet where he cracked you for breakin' that truck."

This was to the Chinaman, who answered in a soft guttural as if there were bubbling oil in his throat: "Me sail two year Black McTee, an'—"

To finish his speech he passed a tentative hand across his swollen jaw.

"And you'll sail with him till you die, John," said the Englishman. "When a man has had Black McTee for a boss, he'll want no other. He's to other captains what whisky is to beer."

The white teeth of the Negro showed. "Maybe Black McTee won't live long," he suggested.

There was a long silence. It lasted until the supper was finished. It lasted until the men slid into their bunks. And Harrigan knew that every man was repeating slowly to himself: "Maybe Black McTee won't live long."

"Not if this gang goes after him," muttered Harrigan, "and yet—"

He remembered the fight in Ivilei and the heaving shoulders which showed above the heads of the swarming soldiers. With that picture in his mind he went to sleep.

They were far out of sight of land in the morning and loafing south before the trade wind, with a heavy ground swell kicking them along from behind. Harrigan saw the *Mary Rogers* plainly for the first time. She was small, not more than fifteen hundred or two thousand tons, and the dingiest, sootiest of all tramp freighters. He had little time to make observations.

In the first place all hands washed down the decks, some of the men in rubber boots, the others barefooted, with their trousers rolled up above the knees. Harrigan was one of this number. The cool water from the hose swished pleasantly about his toes. He began to think better of life at sea as the wind blew from his nostrils the musty odors of the forecabin. Then the bos'n, with the suggestion of a grin in his eyes, ordered him up to scrub the bridge. He climbed the steps with a bucket in one hand and a brush in the other. There stood McTee leaning against the wheelhouse and staring straight ahead across the bows. He seemed quite oblivious of his presence until, having finished his job, Harrigan started back down the steps.

"D'you call this clean?" rumbled McTee. "All over again!"

And Harrigan dropped to his knees without protest and commenced scrubbing again. As he worked, he hummed a tune and saw the narrow jaw of McTee jut out. Harrigan smiled.

He had scarcely finished stowing his bucket and brush away when the bos'n brought him word that he was wanted in the fireroom. Masters's face was serious.

"What's the main idea?" asked Harrigan.

The bos'n cast a worried eye fore and aft.

"Black McTee's breakin' you," he said; "you're getting the whip."

"Well?"

"God help you, that's all. Now get below."

There was a certain fervency about this speech which impressed even Harrigan. He brooded over it on his way to the fireroom. There he was set to work passing coal. He had to stand in a narrow passage scarcely wide enough for him to turn about in. On either side was a towering black heap which slanted down to his feet. Midway between the piles was the little door through which he shoveled the coal into the fireroom.

All was stifling hot, with a breath of coal dust and smoke to choke the lungs. Even the Greek firemen sweated and cursed, though they were used to that environment. An ordinary man might have succumbed simply to that fiery, foul atmosphere. It was like a glimpse of hell, dark, hopeless.

It was not the heat or the atmosphere which troubled Harrigan, but his hands. His skin was puffed and soft from the scrubbing of the bridge. Now as he grasped the rough wood of the short-handled scoop the epidermis wore quickly and left his palms half raw. For a time he managed to shift his grip, bringing new portions of his hands to bear on the wood, but even this skin was worn away in time. When he finished his shift, his hands were bleeding in places and raw in the palms.

As he came on deck, he tied them up with bits of soft waste in lieu of a bandage and made no complaint, yet his fingers were trembling when he ate supper that night. He caught the eyes of the rest of the crew studying him with a cold calculation. They were estimating the strength of his endurance and he knew at once that they had been through the same trial one by one until they were broken.

He could see that they hated the captain and he wondered why they would ship with him time and again. He watched their expressions when Black McTee was mentioned, and then he understood. They were waiting for the time when the captain should weaken. Then they would have their revenge.

The second day was a repetition of the first. He began with scrubbing down the bridge. The suds, strong with lye, ate shrewdly at his raw hands. Still he hummed as he worked and watched McTee's frown grow dark. When he was ordered below to the fireroom, he wrapped his hands in the soft waste again. That helped him for a time, but after the first two hours the waste matted and grew hard with perspiration and blood. He had to throw it away and take the shovel handle against his bare skin. He told himself that it was only a matter of time before calluses would form, but what chance was there for a formation of calluses when the water and suds softened his hands every morning?

On the third day he was a little more used to the torture. His hands were hopelessly raw now, but still he made no complaint and stuck with his task. That night he secured a rag and retreated to the stretch of deck between the wheelhouse and the after-cabin, where he squatted beside a bucket of water and washed his hands carefully. Both hands were puffed and red; one of the creases in the

left palm bled a steady trickle. He washed them slowly, with infinite relish of the cool water, until he felt that peculiar sensation which warns us that we are watched by another eye.

He looked up to see a young woman standing above him at the rail of the after-cabin. She had been watching him by the light from the window of the wheelhouse.

CHAPTER 4

"Let me bandage your hands," she said. "I have some salve in my room."

Her voice was a balm to the troubled heart of Harrigan. His knotted forehead relaxed.

"Are you coming up?"

"Aye."

He ran up the ladder and followed her to a cabin. She rummaged through a suitcase and finally brought out a little tin box of salve and a roll of gauze. As she stooped with her back to him, he saw that her hair was red—not fiery red like his, but a deep dull bronze, with points of gold where the light struck it. When she straightened and turned, her eyes went wide, looking up to him, for he bulked huge in the tiny cabin.

"What a big fellow you are!"

He did not answer for a moment; he was too busy watching her eyes, which were sea-green, and strangely pleasant and restful.

"Do you know me?" she asked with a slight frown.

"Scuse me," muttered Harrigan. "I thought at first I did."

He abased his glance while she took one of his hands and turned it palm up.

"Ugh!" she muttered. "How did this happen?"

"Work."

"Do you mean to say they make you work with your hands in this condition?"

"Sure."

"Poor fellow! That black captain!"

Her voice had changed from a peculiarly soft, low accent to a shrill tone that made Harrigan start.

"Poor fellow!" she repeated. "Sit down."

The campstool creaked under the burden of his weight. She pulled up the chair in front of him and placed his left hand on her knees.

"This is peroxide. Tell me if it hurts too much."

She spilled some of the liquid across his palm; it frothed.

"Ouch!" grunted Harrigan involuntarily.

She caught his wrists with both hands.

"Why, your whole arm is trembling! You must be in torture with this.

Have you made any complaint?"

"No."

She studied him for a moment, scenting a mystery somewhere and guessing that he would not speak of it. And she asked no questions. She said not a word and merely bowed her head and started to apply the salve with delicate touches. For the result, a confession of all his troubles tumbled up the big man's throat to his tongue. He had to set his teeth to keep it back.

She became aware of those cold, incurious eyes studying her face as she wrapped the gauze bandage deftly around the injured palms.

"Why do you watch me so closely?"

It disarmed him. Those possibilities of tenderness came about his stiff-set lips, and the girl wondered.

"I was thinkin' about my home town."

"Where is it?"

He frowned and waved his hand in a sweep which included half the points on the compass.

"Back there."

She waited, wrapping up the gauze bandage.

"When I was a kid, I used to go down to the harbor an' watch the ships comin' in an' goin' out," he went on cautiously.

She nodded, and he resumed with more confidence: "I'd sit on the pierhead an' watch the ships. I knew they was bringing the smell of far lands in their holds."

There was a little pause; then his head tilted back and he burst into the soft, thick brogue: "Ah-h, I was afther bein' woild about the schooners blowin' out to sea wid their sails shook out like clouds. An' then I'd look down to the wather around the pier, an' it was green, deep green, ah-h, the deep sea-green av it! An' I would look into it an' dream. Whin I seen your eyes—"

He stopped, grown cold as a man will when he feels that he has laid his inner self indecently bare to the eye of the world. But she did not stir; she did not smile.

"I felt like a kid again," said Harrigan, recovering from the brogue. "Like a kid sittin' on the pierhead an' watchin' the green water. Your eyes are that green," he finished.

Self-consciousness, the very thing which she had been trying to keep the big sailor from, turned her blood to fire. She knew the quick color was running from throat to cheek; she knew the cold, incurious eye would note the change. He was so far aware of the alteration that he rose and glanced at the door.

"Good-by," she said, and then quite forgetting herself: "I shall ask the captain to see that you are treated like a white man."

"You will not!"

"I beg your pardon?" she said, but the hint of insulted dignity was lost on Harrigan.

"You will not," he repeated. "It'd simply make him worse."

She was glad of the chance to be angry; it would explain her heightening color.

"The captain must be an utter brute."

"I figger he's nine tenths man, an' the other tenth devil, but there ain't no human bein' can change any of them ten parts. Good-by. I'm thankin' you. My name's Harrigan."

She opened the door for him.

"If you wish to have that dressing changed, ask for Miss Malone."

"Ah-h!" said Harrigan. "Malone!"

She explained coldly: "I'm Scotch, not Irish."

"Scotch or Irish," said Harrigan, and his head tilted back as it always did when he was excited.

"You're afther bein' a real shport, Miss Malone!"

"Miss Malone," she repeated, closing the door after him, and vainly attempting to imitate the thrill which he gave to the word. "What a man!"

She smiled for a moment into space and then pulled the cord for the cabin boy.

CHAPTER 5

The cabin boy did duty for all the dozen passengers, and therefore he was slow in answering. When he appeared, she asked him to carry the captain word that she wished to speak with him. He returned in a short time to say that Captain McTee would talk with her now in his cabin. She followed aft to the captain's room. He did not rise when she entered, but turned in his chair and relinquished a long, black, fragrant cigar.

"Don't stop smoking," she said. "I want you in a pleasant mood to hear what I have to say."

Without reply he placed the cigar in his mouth and the bright black eyes fastened upon her. That suddenly intent regard was startling, as if he had leaned over and spoken a word in her ear. She shrugged her shoulders as if trying to shake off a compelling hand and then settled into a chair.

"I've come to say something that's disagreeable for you to hear and for me to speak."

Still he would not talk. He was as silent as Harrigan. She clenched her hands and drove bravely ahead. She told how she had called the red-headed sailor up to the after-cabin and dressed his hurts, and she described succinctly, but with rising anger the raw and swollen condition of his fingers. The captain listened with apparent enjoyment; she could not tell whether he was relishing her story or his slowly puffed cigar. In the end she waited for his answer, but evidently none was forthcoming.

"Now," she said at last, "I know something about ships and sailors, and I know that if this fellow was to appeal against you after you touch port, a judge would weigh a single word of yours against a whole sentence of Harrigan's. It would be a different matter if a disinterested person pressed a charge of cruelty against you. I am such a person; I would press such a charge; I have the money, the time, and the inclination to do it."

She read the slight hesitation in his manner, not as if he were impressed by what she had to say, but as though he was questioning himself as to whether he should give her any answer at all. It made her wish fervently that she were a man—and a big one. He spoke then, as if an illuminating thought had occurred to him.

"You know Harrigan's record?"

"No," she admitted grudgingly.

McTee sighed as if with deep relief and leaned back in his chair. His smile was sympathetic and it altered his face so marvelously that she caught her breath.

"Of course that explains it, Miss Malone. I don't doubt that he was clever enough to make you think him abused."

"He didn't say a word of accusation against anyone."

"Naturally not. When a man is bad enough to seem honest—"

He drew a long, slow puff on his cigar by way of finishing his sentence and his eyes smiled kindly upon her.

"I knew that he would do his worst to start mutiny among the crew; I didn't think he could get as far as the passengers."

Her confidence was shaken to the ground. Then a new suspicion came to her.

"If he is such a terrible character, why did you let him come aboard your ship?"

Instead of answering, he pulled a cord. The bos'n appeared in a moment.

"Tell this lady how Harrigan came aboard," ordered the captain, and he fastened a keen eye upon the bos'n.

"Made it on the jump while we was pullin' out of dock," said the sailor. "Just managed to get his feet on the gangplank—came within an ace of falling into the sea."

"That's all."

The bos'n retreated and McTee turned back to Kate Malone.

"He had asked me to sign him up for this trip," he explained. "If I'd set him ashore, he'd probably have been in the police court the next morning. So I let him stay. To be perfectly frank with you, I had a vague hope that gratitude might make a decent sailor out of him for a few days. But the very first night he started his work he began to talk discontent among the men in the forecabin, and such fellows are always ready to listen. Of course I could throw Harrigan in irons and feed him on bread and water; my authority is absolute at sea. But I don't want to do that if I can help it. Instead, I have been trying to discipline him with hard work. He knows that he can come to me at any time and speak three words which will release him from his troubles. But he won't say them—yet!"

"Really?" she breathed.

She began to feel deeply honored that such a man as McTee would make so long an explanation to her.

"Shall I call him up here and ask him to say them now?"

"Would you do that? Captain McTee, I'm afraid that I've been very foolish to bother you in this matter, but—"

He silenced her with a wave of the hand, and pulled the cord.

"Bring up Harrigan," he said, when the bos'n appeared again.

"I've considered myself a judge of human nature," she apologized, "but I shall think a long time before I venture another decision."

"You're wrong to feel that way. It would take a shrewd judge to see through Harrigan unless his record were known."

The door opened and the bos'n entered with Harrigan. He fixed his eyes upon the captain without a glance for Kate Malone.

"Harrigan," said McTee, "I've been telling Miss Malone that you can be released from your trouble by saying half a dozen words to me. And you know that you can. You will be treated better than anyone in the crew if you will put your hand in mine and say: 'Captain McTee, I give you my word of honor as a man to do my best to obey orders during the rest of this trip and to hold no malice against you for anything that has happened to me so far.'"

"For you see," he explained to the girl, "he probably thinks himself aggrieved by my discipline. Will you say it, Harrigan?"

Instead of answering, the cold eye of Harrigan turned on Kate.

"I told you not to speak to the captain," he said.

"Ah," said McTee, "you were clever enough for that?"

"Do you say nothing, Harrigan?" she said incredulously. "Do you really refuse to speak those words to the captain after he has been generous enough to give you a last chance to make a man of yourself?"

Harrigan turned pale as he glanced at the captain. Her scorn and contempt gave a little metallic ring to her voice.

"You need not be afraid. Captain McTee hasn't told me anything about your record."

Harrigan smiled, but in such a manner that she stepped back. "Easy," said McTee, "you don't need to fear him in here. He knows that I'm his master."

"I'm glad you didn't tell me his record," she answered.

"I can read it in his eyes."

"Lady," said Harrigan, and his head tilted back till the cords stood strongly out at the base of his throat, "I'm afther askin' your pardon for thinkin' ye had ever a dr-rop av hot Irish blood in ye."

"Take him below, bos'n," broke in McTee, "and put him in on the night shift in the fireroom."

No hours of Harrigan's life were bitterer than that night shift. The bandages saved his hands from much of the torture of the shovel handle, but there was deep night in his heart. Early in the morning one of the firemen ran to the chief engineer's room and forced open the door.

"The red-headed man, sir," he stammered breathlessly.

The chief engineer awoke with a snarl. He had drunk much good Scotch whisky that evening, and the smoke of it was still dry in his throat and cloudy in his brain.

"And what the hell is wrong with the red-headed man now?" he roared.

"Ain't he doin' two men's work still?"

"Two? He's doin' ten men's work with his hands rolled in cloth and the blood soakin' through, an' he sings like a devil while he works. He's gone crazy, sir."

"Naw, he ain't," growled the chief; "that'll come later. Black McTee is breakin' him an' he'll be broke before he goes off his nut. Now get to hell out of here. I ain't slept a wink for ten days."

The fireman went back to his work muttering, and Harrigan sang the rest of the night.

CHAPTER 6

In the morning there was the usual task of scrubbing down the bridge. The suds soaked through the bandages at once and burned his hands like fire. He tore away the cloths and kept at his task, for he knew that if he refused to continue, he became by that act of disobedience a mutineer.

The fourth day was a long nightmare, but at the end of it Harrigan was still at his post. That night the pain kept him awake. For forty-eight hours he had not closed his eyes. The next morning, as he prepared his bucket of suds and looked down at his blood-caked hands, the thought of surrender rose strongly for the first time. Two things fought against it: his fierce pride and a certain awe which he had noted as it grew from day to day in the eyes of the rest of the crew. They were following the silent battle between the great Irishman and the captain with a profound, an almost uncanny interest.

As he scrubbed the bridge that morning, McTee, as always, stood staring out across the bows, impassive, self-contained as a general overlooking a field of battle. And the temptation to surrender swelled up in the throat of Harrigan like the desire for speech in a child. He kept his teeth hard together and prayed for endurance. Only five days, and it might be weeks before they made a port. Even then the captain might put him in irons rather than risk his escape.

"Harrigan," said McTee suddenly. "Don't keep it up. You're bound to break. Speak those words now that I told you to say and you're a free man."

Harrigan looked up and the words formed at the base of his tongue. Harrigan looked down and saw his crimson hands. The words fell back like dust on his heart.

"Take you for my master an' swear to forget what you've done?" he said, and his voice was hardly more than a whisper. "McTee, if I promised you that I'd perjure blacker 'n hell an' kill you someday when your back was turned. As it is, I'll kill you while we're standin' face to face."

McTee laughed, low, deep, and his eyes were half closed as if he heard pleasant music. Harrigan grinned up at him.

"I'll kill you with my bare hands. There's no gun or knife could do justice to what's inside of me."

His head tilted back and his whisper went thick like that of a drunkard: "Ah-h, McTee, look at the hands, look at the hands! They're red now for a sign av the blood av ye that'll someday be on 'em!"

And he picked up his bucket and brush and went down the deck. The laugh of McTee followed him.

Having framed the wish in words, it was never absent from Harrigan's mind now. It made that day easier for him. He stopped singing. He needed all his brain energy to think of how he should kill McTee.

It was this hungry desire which sustained him during the days which followed. The rest of the crew began to sense the mighty emotion which consumed Harrigan. When they saw both him and McTee on the deck, their eyes traveled from one to the other making comparisons, for they felt that these men would one day meet hand to hand. They could not stay apart any more than the iron can keep from the magnet.

Finally Harrigan knew that they were nearing the end of their long journey. The port was only a few days distant, for they were far in the south seas and they began to pass islands, and sometimes caught sight of green patches of water. Those were the coral reefs, the terror of all navigators, for they grow and change from year to year. To a light-draught ship like the *Mary Rogers* these seas were comparatively safe, but not altogether. Even small sailing craft had come to grief in those regions.

Yet the islands, the reefs, the keen sun, the soft winds, the singing of the sailors, all these things came dimly to Harrigan, for he knew that his powers of resistance were almost worn away. His face was a mask of tragedy, and his body was as lean as a starved wolf in winter. His will to live, his will to hate, alone remained.

Each morning it was harder for him to leave the bridge without speaking those words to the captain. He rehearsed them every day and vowed they would never pass his lips. And every day he knew that his vow was weaker. When he was about to give in, he chanced to see McTee and Kate Malone laughing together on the promenade.

It was McTee who saw Harrigan first and pointed him out to Kate. She leaned against the rail and peered down at him, shuddering at the sight of his drawn face and shadowed eyes. Then she turned with a little shrug of repulsion.

McTee must have made some humorous comment, for she turned to glance down at Harrigan again and this time she laughed. Blind rage made the blood of the Irishman hot. That gave him his last strength, but even this ran out. Finally he knew that the next day was his last, and when that day came, he counted the hours. They passed heavy-footed, as time goes for one condemned to die. And then he sat cross-legged on his bunk and waited.

The giant Negro came, bringing word that the bos'n wanted him to scrub down the bridge. He remained with his head bowed, unhearing. The bos'n himself came, cursing. He called to Harrigan, and getting no answer shook him by the shoulder. He put his hand under Harrigan's chin and raised the listless head. It rolled heavily back and the dull eyes stared up at him.

"God!" said the bos'n, and started back.

The head remained where he had placed it, the eyes staring straight up at the ceiling.

"God!" whispered the bos'n again, and ran from the forecastle.

In time—it seemed hours—Harrigan heard many voices approaching. McTee's bass was not among them, but he knew that McTee was coming, and Harrigan wondered whether he would have the strength to refuse to obey and accept the fate of the mutineer; or whether terror would overwhelm him and he would drop to his knees and beg for mercy. He had once seen a sight as horrible. The voices swept closer. McTee was bringing all the available crew to watch the surrender, and Harrigan prayed with all his soul to a nameless deity for strength.

Something stopped in the Irishman. It was not his heart, but something as vital. The very movement of the earth seemed to be suspended when the great form blocked the door to the forecastle and the ringing voice called: "Harrigan!"

At the summons Harrigan's jaw fell loosely like that of an exhausted distance-runner, and long-suppressed words grew aching large in his throat.

"I've had enough!" he groaned.

"Harrigan!" thundered the captain, and Harrigan knew that his attempted speech had been merely a silent wish.

"God help me!" he whispered hoarsely, and in response to that brief prayer a warm pulse of strength flooded through him. He sprang to his feet.

"I refuse to work!" he cried, and this time the sound echoed back against his ears.

There was a long pause.

"Mutiny!" said McTee at last, and his voice was harsh with the knowledge of his failure. "Bring him outside in the open. I'll deal with him!"

He retreated from the door, but before any of the sailors could go in to fulfill the order, Harrigan walked of his own accord out onto the deck. The wind on his face was sweet and keen; the vapors blew from eyes and brain. He was himself again, weaker, but himself. He saw the circle of wondering, awe-stricken faces; he saw McTee standing with folded arms.

CHAPTER 7

"Mutiny on the high seas," the captain was saying, "is as bad as murder on dry land. I could swing you by the neck from the mast for this, Harrigan, and every court would uphold me. Or I can throw you into the irons and leave your trial until we touch port. But—stand back!"

At the wave of his hand the circle spread. McTee stepped close to Harrigan.

"I could do all that I've said, but why should I waste you on a prison when there's a chance that I can use for myself? Harrigan, will you stand up to me, man to man, and fist to fist, fighting fair and square without advantage, and then if I thrash you, will you be my man? If I beat you, will you swear to follow me, to do my bidding? Harrigan, if I have you to work for me—I'll be king of the south seas!"

"Man to man—fair and square?" repeated Harrigan vaguely. "I'm weak.

You've had me in hell an' sweated me thin, McTee. If I was my old self, I'd jump at the chance."

"Then it's irons for you and ten years for mutiny when we reach port."

"Ah-h, damn your heart!"

"But if I beat you, you'll be a lord of men, Harrigan, with only one king over you—McTee! You'll live on the fat of the land and the plunder of the high seas if you serve McTee."

"What oath could I swear that you'd believe?"

"Your hand in mind for a pledge—I ask no more."

He held out his hand. The lean, strong fingers fascinated Harrigan.

"I'd rather take your throat than your hand, McTee—an' mebbe I will—an' mebbe I will!"

He caught the hand in his own cracked, stained, black palm. The smile of McTee was like the smile of Satan when he watched Adam driven from the Eden.

"Strip to the waist," he said, and turned on the crew.

"You know me, lads. I've tried to break Harrigan, but I've only bent him, and now he's going to stand up to me man to man, and if he wins, he's free to do as he likes and never lift a hand till we reach port. Aye, lick your chops, you dogs. There's none of you had the heart to try what Harrigan is going to try."

If they did not actually lick their chops, there was hunger in their eyes and a strange wistfulness as they watched Harrigan strip off his shirt, but when they saw the wasted arms, lean, with the muscles defined and corded as if by famine, their faces went blank again. For they glanced in turn at the vast torso of McTee. When he moved his arms, his smooth shoulders rippled in significant spots—the spots where the driving muscles lay. But Harrigan saw nothing save the throat of which he had dreamed.

"This is to the finish?" said McTee.

"Aye."

"And no quarter?"

Harrigan grinned, and slipped out to the middle of the deck. Both of them kicked off their shoes. Even in their bare feet it would be difficult to keep upright, for the *Mary Rogers* was rollicking through a choppy sea. Harrigan sensed the crew standing in a loose circle with the hunger of the wolf pack in winter stamped in their eyes.

McTee stood with his feet braced strongly, his hands poised. But Harrigan stole about him with a gliding, unequal step. He did not seem preparing to strike with his hands, which hung low, but rather like one who would leap at the throat with his teeth. The ship heaved and Harrigan sprang and his fists cracked—one, two. He leaped out again under the captain's clubbed hands. Two spots of red glowed on McTee's ribs and the wolf pack moistened their lips.

"Come again, Harrigan, for I've smelled the meat, not tasted it."

"It tastes red—like this."

And feinting at McTee's body, he suddenly straightened and smashed both hands against the captain's mouth. McTee's head jarred back under the impact. The wolf pack murmured. The captain made a long step, waited until Harrigan had leaped back to the side of the deck to avoid the plunge, and then, as the deck heaved up to give added impetus to his lunge, he rushed. The angle of the deck kept the Irishman from taking advantage of his agility. He could not escape. One pile-driver hand cracked against his forehead—another thudded on his ribs. He leaped through a shower of blows and clinched.

He was crushed against the rail. He was shaken by a quick succession of short arm punches. But anything was preferable to another of those long, driving blows. He clung until his head cleared. Then he shook himself loose and dropped, as if dazed, to one knee. McTee's bellow of triumph filled his ears. The captain bore down on him with outstretched hands to grapple at his throat, but at the right instant Harrigan rose and lurched out with stiff arm. The punch drove home to the face with a shock that jarred Harrigan to his feet and jerked McTee back as if drawn by a hand. Before he recovered his balance, Harrigan planted half a dozen punches, but though they shook the captain, they did not send him down, and Harrigan groaned.

McTee bellowed again. It was not pain. It was not mere rage. It was a battle cry, and with it he rushed Harrigan. They raged back and forth across the deck, and the wolf pack drew close, cursing beneath their breath. They had looked for a quick end to the struggle, but now they saw that the fighters were mated. The greater strength was McTee's; the greater purpose was Harrigan's. McTee fought to crush and conquer; Harrigan fought to kill.

The blows of the captain flung Harrigan here and there, yet he came back to meet the attack, slinking with sure, catlike steps. The heel and pitch of the deck sometimes staggered the captain, but Harrigan seemed to know beforehand what would happen, and he leaped in at every opening with blows that cut the skin.

His own flesh was bruised. He bled from mouth and nose, but what was any other pain compared with the torture of his clenched fists? It made his arms numb to the elbow and sent currents of fire through his veins. His eyes kept on the thick throat of McTee. Though he was knocked reeling and half senseless, his stare never changed, and the wolf pack, with their heads jutting forward with eagerness watched, waited. The "Ha!" of McTee rang with the strength of five throats. The "Wah-h!" of Harrigan purred like a furious panther's snarl.

Then as the frenzy left Harrigan and the numbness departed from his arms, he knew that he was growing weaker and weaker. In McTee's eyes he saw the growing light of victory, the confidence. His own wild hunger for blood grew apace with his desperation. He flung himself forward in a last effort.

A ponderous fist cracked home between his eyes, fairly lifting him from his feet and hurling him against the base of the wheelhouse. Then a forearm shot under his shoulder and a hand fastened on the back of his neck in an incomplete half-Nelson. As McTee applied the pressure, Harrigan felt his vertebral column give under the tremendous strain. He struggled furiously but could not break the grip. Far away, like the storm wind in the forest, he heard the moan of the wolf pack.

"Give in! Give in!" panted McTee.

"Ah-h!" snarled Harrigan.

He felt the deck swing and jerked his legs high in the air. He could not have broken that grip of his own strength, but the sway of the deck gave his movement a mighty leverage. The hand slipped from his neck, scraping skin away, as if a red-hot iron had been drawn across the flesh. But he was half loosed, and that twist of his body sent them both rolling one over the other to the scuppers of the ship—and it was McTee who crashed against the rail, receiving the blow on the back of his head. His eyes went dull; the red hands of Harrigan fastened on his throat.

"God!" screamed McTee, and gripped Harrigan's wrists, but the Irishman heaved him up and beat his head against the deck.

McTee's jaws fell open, and a bloody froth bubbled to his lips; his eyes thrust out hideously.

"Ah-h!" snarled Harrigan, and shifted his grip lower, his thumbs digging relentlessly into the great throat. This time the giant limbs of the captain relaxed as if in sleep. Then through the fierce singing in his ears the Irishman heard a yell. He turned his head. The wolf pack saw their prey pulled down at last. They ran now to join the kill, not men, but raging devils. Harrigan sprang to his feet, catching up a marlinspike, and whirled it above his head.

"Back!" he shouted.

They shrank back, growling one to the other savagely, irresolute. There came a moan at Harrigan's feet. He leaned over and lifted the bulk of the captain's inert body. As if through a haze he saw the chief engineer and the two mates running toward him and caught the glitter of a revolver in the hands of the first officer. The Irishman's battered lips stretched to a shapeless grin.

"Help me to the captain's cabin," he said. "He's afther bein' sick."

CHAPTER 8

And the four of them went aft carrying McTee's body. On the promenade they passed Kate Malone. She shrank against the rail, her eyes blank and her face white.

"He's dead!" she cried.

"He's just beginnin' to live," said Harrigan.

The captain was muttering faintly as they laid him on the bunk in his room. "Now get out," commanded Harrigan. "I will be alone with him when he wakes up. I have something to whisper in his ear."

"Is it safe?" said the first mate to the chief engineer, gesturing with his weapon.

Harrigan snatched it away and waved it like a club above his head.

"Get out, or I'll bash your skull in."

His face was hideous, cut and blood-stained, starved with the long hunger and lighted with the victory. They slunk from the cabin, backing out as if they expected him to rush them. Harrigan locked the door and started to tend the captain. He washed McTee to the waist, cleansed the cut places carefully, and covered them with narrow strips of adhesive tape which he found in a small medicine chest. As the heavier breathing of the captain indicated that he was about to recover his senses, Harrigan performed the same services for himself. It was slow work, for now that the stimulus of action was gone, his weakness grew on him in recurrent waves. Finally a sound made him turn to see McTee propping himself up on the bunk with one elbow; his eyes, unconfused and steady, looked brightly out at Harrigan.

"You beat me?"

"It was the swing of the deck that rolled you over and broke your grip.

I've stayed to tell you that."

"Chances or no chances, you beat me."

"Man, you'd have busted my back if it hadn't been for that buck of the ship. When your hand came away, it took the skin with it."

"And that's why you didn't finish me?"

"Aye."

"You'll never have the chance again."

"I want no chances; I want no help except my own strength as it was before you withered me with your hellfire."

"When we stand up again, I'll kill you, Harrigan."

"When we stand up again, I'll break you, Black McTee—like a rotten stick."

"Lie down here," said the captain, rising quickly. "You're sick."

He forced Harrigan onto the bunk and stretched him out at full length. The Irishman clenched his hands and fought against the sleep which crept over his senses.

"There's fire in my brain," muttered Harrigan, "an' it's trying to burn its way out."

McTee dipped a towel in cool water.

"I kept the rest of them away," went on the Irishman. "When you woke up, I wanted you to hear why I didn't finish you."

He raised his shaking hands and gripped at the air.

"Ah-h! When me ould silf is back, I'll shtand up to ye. Tis a promise, McTee. Black McTee, Black McTee—I'll make ye Red McTee—red as the palms av me hands."

McTee tied the cold, wet towel around Harrigan's forehead.

"I'll kill you by inches, Harrigan. You'll read hell in my eyes before your end. Drink this!"

He raised Harrigan's almost lifeless head and forced the neck of a whisky bottle between his teeth.

"Ah-h!" said Harrigan, blinking and coughing after the strong liquor had burned its way down his throat. "The feel av your throat under me thumbs was sweeter than the touch av a colleen's hand, McTee! I'm dead for shlap!"

And instantly his eyes closed; his breathing was deep and sonorous. The captain watched him for a long moment, then sat down and laying a hand on the sleeping man's wrist, he counted the pulse carefully. It was irregular and feeble.

"Time is all he needs," muttered McTee to himself, and he sat staring before him, dreaming. "A fool can live well," he was thinking, "but it takes a great man to die well. Harrigan will make a fine death." In the meantime the big Irishman slept heavily, and Black McTee tended him well, keeping the towel cool and wet about his forehead. The pulse was gaining rapidly in strength and regularity; sleep seemed to act upon Harrigan as food acts upon a starved man. At times he smiled, and McTee could guess at the dream which caused it. He was dreaming of killing McTee, and McTee sat by and understood, and smiled with deep content. He, also, was tasting his thoughts of the battle-to-be when, without any warning rap, the door swung open and the burly form of Bos'n Masters appeared.

"The first mate—" he began.

"Did you knock?"

"I've got no time to waste, the first mate—"

McTee rose. In the frank, bold eyes of the bos'n he read the open revolt, and understood. He had been beaten in open battle; his crew felt that they were liberated by the victory of their champion.

"Who told you to enter without knocking?" he broke in.

"I don't need telling," said the dauntless bos'n. "The first mate's drunk an'—"

The heavy fist of McTee landed on Masters's mouth and hurled him in a heap into the corner of the cabin. The captain seized him by the nape of the neck and jerked him back to his feet, blinking and gasping, thoroughly subdued.

"Get out and come in as you should."

The bos'n fled. A moment later a timid knock came at the door and McTee bade him enter. He stepped in, cap in hand, his eyes on the floor.

"The first mate's drunk, sir, an' runnin' amuck with the ship. He's at the wheel an' he won't leave it. We've nearly scraped one reef already. You know this ain't any open sea, sir. There's green water everywhere."

"Go up and give the fool my orders. Tell the second officer to take the wheel."

The bos'n retreated, but he returned within a few moments.

"He won't leave the wheel," he reported. "He said you could take your orders to the devil, sir."

"I'll tie him to the deck and skin him alive," said McTee calmly. "Stay here and watch Harrigan while I—"

He was jerked from his feet and hurled across the room, crashing against the cabin wall. When his senses returned, he was sitting on the floor staring stupidly into the white face of the bos'n, who was in a similar posture. Harrigan, who had been flung from the bunk, staggered to his feet.

"What the deuce is up?" asked the Irishman.

A chorus of piercing yells rose in answer from the deck outside.

"The end of the *Mary Rogers*," said McTee. "Stay with me, Harrigan."

He caught the latter by the arm and dragged him out onto the deck. The hull of the ship at the bow must have been literally ripped away by the impact against the reef; already the deck sloped sharply to the bows.

McTee raised a voice that rang like a trumpet over the clamor as he gave his orders to clear away the boats. If he had been a moment earlier, he might have succeeded in getting at least one of them safely launched, but now the *Mary Rogers* was settling to her doom with a speed which made the crew senseless with terror. A half-gale which promised to swell soon into a veritable hurricane

seemed to be lifting the freighter by the heel and driving her nose into the sea. The quick settling twilight of the tropics made the waters doubly cold and dark.

Not till the bows of the *Mary Rogers* were deep below the waves and her propeller humming loudly in the air did the captain desist from his efforts to bring order out of the panic of the crew. Half a dozen men, with the Chinaman at their head, had cut one boat from its davits, but plunging into it before it fairly struck the water, they tipped it far to one side. It filled instantly and sank, leaving its occupants struggling on the surface. The Chinaman, who apparently could not swim, gave up the struggle at once. He threw his clutching hands high above his head and went down; his scream was the first death cry of the wreck of the *Mary Rogers*.

McTee, with Harrigan at his heels, rushed for the second lifeboat. Under the directions of the captain, pointed and emphasized by blows of his fist, the boat was swung safely from the davits and lowered to the sea. The instant that it rode the waves, bouncing up and down on the choppy surface, the crew began leaping in, the drunken mate being the first overside.

The lifeboat was loaded from stem to stern, and only Harrigan, McTee, and half a dozen more remained on the ship when the boat swung a dozen feet away from the *Mary Rogers* and with the next wave was picked up and smashed against the freighter. Its side went in like a matchbox pressed by a strong thumb, and it zigzagged quickly below the surface. The yells of the swimmers rose in a long wail. McTee caught Harrigan by the shoulder and shouted in his ear: "Stay close and do what I do."

"Miss Malone!" yelled Harrigan in answer, and pointed.

She stood by the after-cabin, clinging to the rail with one hand while she attempted to adjust a life preserver with the other. The *Mary Rogers* lurched forward, a long slide that buried half of the ship under the sea. A giant wave towered above the side and licked the wheelhouse away.

"Let her go!" roared McTee. "Save ourselves and let her go."

It was a matter of seconds now before the last of the *Mary Rogers* should disappear. They clambered up to the after-cabin.

"For the love av God, McTee, she's a woman!"

The Irishman struggled up the deck toward the girl, but the captain caught him and held him fast.

"There's one chance," shouted Black McTee, and he pointed to the litter of the wrecked wheelhouse which tossed on the waves. "Overboard and make for a big timber."

But the eyes of Harrigan held on the form of the girl. They could only make out the shadow of her form with her hair blowing wildly on the wind. Then as swift as the sway of a bird's wing, a mass of black water tossed over the side of the *Mary Rogers*. When it was gone, the shadowy figure of the girl had disappeared with it.

"Now!" thundered McTee.

"Aye," said Harrigan.

CHAPTER 9

They climbed the rail. Plainly Harrigan had made them delay too long, for now they had not time to swim beyond the reach of the swirl that would form when the ship went down. The *Mary Rogers* lurched to her grave as they sprang from the rail. A wave caught them and washed them beyond the grip of the whirlpool; another wave swung them back, and the waters sucked them down. Such was the force of that downward pull that it seemed to Harrigan as if a weight were attached to either foot. He drew a great, gasping breath before his head went under and then struck out with all his might.

When his lungs seemed bursting with the labor, he whirled to the surface again and drew another gasping breath. The storm had torn a rift in the clouds and through it looked the moon as if some god were peering through the curtain of mist to watch the havoc he was working. By this light Harrigan saw that he was being drawn down in a narrowing circle. Straight before him loomed a black fragment of the wreckage. He tried to swing to one side, but the current of the water bore him on. He received a heavy blow on the head and his senses went out like a snuffed light.

When consciousness returned, there was a sharp pain in both head and right shoulder, for it was on his shoulder that McTee had fastened his grip. The captain sprawled on a great timber, clutching it with both legs and one arm. With the free hand he held Harrigan. All this the Irishman saw by the haggard moonlight. Then they were pitched high up on the crest of a wave. As Harrigan grappled the timber with arms and legs, it turned over and over and then pitched down through empty space. The wind had literally cut away the top of the wave. He went down, submerged, and then rose to a giddy height again. As he caught a great breath of air, he saw that McTee was no longer on the timber.

A shout reached him, the sound being cut off in the middle by the noise of the wind and waves. He saw McTee a dozen feet away, swimming furiously. He came almost close enough to touch the timber with his hands, and then a twist of the wave separated them. Harrigan worked down the timber until he reached the end of the stanchion which was nearest Black McTee. All that time the captain was struggling, but could not draw closer. The wood was drifting before the wind faster than he could swim.

When he reached the end of the timber, Harrigan wound his long arms tightly around it and let his legs draw out on the water. McTee, seeing the purpose of the maneuver, redoubled his efforts. On a wave crest the storm swept Harrigan still farther away; then they dropped into a hollow and instantly he felt a mighty grip fall on his ankle. They pitched up again with the surge of a wave so sharp and sudden that what with his own weight and the tugging burden of McTee behind him, Harrigan felt as if his arms would be torn from their sockets. He kept his hold by a mighty effort, and the tremendous grip of McTee held fast on his ankle until they dropped once more into a hollow. Then the captain jerked himself hand over hand up the body of Harrigan until he reached the timber. They lay panting and exhausted on the stanchion, embracing it with arms and legs.

Sometimes the wind sent the timber with its human freight lunging through a towering wave; and several times the force of the storm caught them and whirled them over and over. When they rose to a wave crest, they struggled bitterly for life; when they fell into the trough, they drew long breaths and freshened their holds.

Save once when Harrigan reached out his hand and set it upon that of Black McTee. The captain met the grip, and by the wild moonlight they stared into each other's faces. That handshake almost cost them their lives, for the next moment the full breath of the storm caught them and wrenched furiously at their bodies. Yet neither of them regretted the handclasp, for all its cost. If they died now, it would be as brothers. They had at least escaped from the greatest of all horrors, a lonely death.

It seemed as if the storm acknowledged the strength of their determination. It fell away as suddenly as it had risen. A heavy ground swell still ran, but without the wind to roughen the surface and sharpen the crests, the big timber rode safely through the sea. The storm clouds were dropping

back in a widening circle beneath the moon when, as they heaved up on the top of a wave, Harrigan suddenly pointed straight ahead and shouted hoarsely. On the horizon squatted a black shadow, darker than any cloud.

All night they watched the shadow grow, and when the morning came and the tropic dawn stepped suddenly up from the east, the light glinted on the unmistakable green of verdure.

With the help of the steady wind they drifted slowly closer and closer to the island. By noon they abandoned the timber and started swimming, but the submerged beach went out far more gradually than they had expected. The last hundred yards they walked arm in arm, floundering through the gentle surf.

Then they stumbled up the beach, reeling with weariness, and sprawled out in the shade of a palm tree. They were asleep almost before they struck the sand.

It was late afternoon when they woke, ravenously hungry, their throats burning with thirst. For food McTee climbed a coconut palm and knocked down some of the fruit. They split the gourds open on a rock, drank the liquor, and ate heartily of the meat. That quelled their appetites, but the sweet liquor only partially appeased their thirst, and they started to search the island for a spring. First they went to the center of the place to a small hill, and from the top of this they surveyed their domain. The island was not more than a thousand yards in width and three or four miles in length. Nowhere was there any sign of even a hut.

"Well?" queried Harrigan, seeing McTee frown.

"We can live here," explained the captain, "but God knows how long it will be before we sight a ship. Our only hope is for some tramp freighter that's trying to find a short cut through the reefs. Even if we sight a tramp, how'll we signal her?"

"With a fire."

"Aye, if one passes at night. We could stack up wood on the top of this hill. The island isn't charted. If a skipper saw a light, he might take a chance and send a boat. But how could we kindle a fire?"

They went slowly down the hill, their heads bent. At the base, as if placed in their path to cheer them in this moment of gloom, they found a spring. It ran a dozen feet and disappeared into a crevice. They cupped the water in their hands and drank long and deep. When they stood up again, McTee dropped a hand on Harrigan's shoulder. He said: "You've cause enough for hating me."

"Pal," said Harrigan, "you're nine parts devil, but the part of you that's a man makes up for all the rest."

McTee brooded: "Now we're standing on the rim of the world, and we've got to be brother to each other. But what if we get off the island—there's small chance of it, but what if we should? Would we remember then how we took hands in the trough of the sea?"

Harrigan raised his hand.

"So help me God—" he began.

"Wait!" broke in McTee. "Don't say it. Suppose we get off the island, and when we reach port find one thing which we both want. What then?"

Harrigan remembered a word from the Bible.

"I'll never covet one of your belongin's, McTee, an' I'll never cross your wishes."

"Your hair is red, Harrigan, and mine is black; your eye is blue and mine is black. We were made to want the same thing in different ways. I've never met my mate before. I can stand it here on the rim of the world—but in the world itself—what then, Harrigan?"

They stepped apart, and the glance of the black eye crossed that of the cold blue.

"Ah-h, McTee, are ye dark inside and out? Is the black av your eye the same as the soot in your heart?"

"Harrigan, you were born to fight and forget; I was born to fight and remember. Well, I take no oath, but here's my hand. It's better than the oath of most men."

"A strange fist," grinned Harrigan; "soft in the palm and hard over the knuckles—like mine."

They went down the hill toward the beach, Harrigan singing and McTee silent, with downward head. On the beach they started for some rocks which shelved out into the water, for it was possible that they might find some sort of shellfish on the rocks below the surface of the water. Before they reached the place, however, McTee stopped and pointed out across the waves. Some object tossed slowly up and down a short distance from the beach.

"From the wreck," said McTee. "I didn't think it would drift quite as fast as this."

They waded out to examine; the water was not over their waists when they reached it. They found a whole section from the side of the wheelhouse, the timbers intact.

On it lay Kate Malone, unconscious.

Manifestly she never could have kept on the big fragment during the night of the storm had it not been for a piece of stout twine with which she had tied her left wrist to a projecting bolt. She had wrapped the cord many times, but despite this it had worn away her skin and sunk deep in the flesh of her arm. Half her clothes were torn away as she had been thrown about on the boards. Whether from exhaustion or the pain of her cut wrist, she had fainted and evidently lain in this position for several hours; one side of her face was burned pink by the heat of the sun.

They dragged the float in, and McTee knelt beside the girl and pressed an ear against her breast.

"Living!" he announced. "Now we're three on the rim of the world."

"Which makes a crowd," grinned Harrigan.

CHAPTER 10

They started working eagerly to revive her. While McTee bathed her face and throat with handfuls of the sea water, Harrigan worked to liberate her from the twine. It was not easy. The twine was wet, and the knot held fast. Finally he gnawed it in two with his teeth. McTee, at the same time, elicited a faint moan. Her wrist was bruised and swollen rather than dangerously cut. Harrigan stuffed the twine into his hip pocket; then the two Adams carried their Eve to the shade of a tree and watched the color come back to her face by slow degrees.

The wind now increased suddenly as it had done on the evening of the wreck. It rose even as the day darkened, and in a moment it was rushing through the trees screaming in a constantly rising crescendo. The rain was coming, and against that tropical squall shelter was necessary.

The two men ran down the beach and returned dragging the ponderous section of the wheelhouse. They leaned the frame against two trunks at the same instant that the first big drops of rain rattled against it. Overhead they were quite securely protected by the dense and interweaving foliage of the two trees, but still the wind whistled in at either side and over and under the frame of boards. Of one accord they dropped beside their patient.

She was trembling violently; they heard the light, continuous chattering of her teeth. After her many hours under the merciless sun, this sudden change of temperature might bring on the fever against which they could not fight. They stripped off their shirts and wound them carefully around her shivering body. McTee lifted her in his arms and sat down with his back to the wind. Harrigan took a place beside him, and they caught her close. They seemed to be striving by the force of their will to drive the heat from their own blood into her trembling body. But still she moaned in her delirium, and the shivering would not stop.

Then the great idea came to Harrigan. He rose without a word and ran out into the rain to a fallen tree which must have been blown down years before, for now the trunk and the splintered stump were rotten to the core. He had noticed it that day. There was only a rim of firm wood left of the wreck. The stump gave readily enough under his pull. He ripped away long strips of the casing, bark and wood, and carried it back to the shelter. He made a second trip to secure a great armful of the powder-dry time-rotted core of the stump.

His third expedition carried him a little farther afield to a small sapling which he could barely make out through the night. He bent down the top of the little tree and snapped off about five feet of its length. This in turn he brought to the shelter. He stopped short here, frozen with amazement. The girl was raving in her delirium, and to soothe her, McTee was singing to her horrible sailor chanteys, pieced out with improvised and foolish words.

Harrigan listened only while his astonishment kept him helpless; then he took up his work. He first stripped away the twigs from his sapling top. Then he tied the twine firmly at either end of the stick, leaving the string loose. Next he fumbled among the mass of rubbish he had brought in from the rotten trunk and broke off a chunk of hard wood several inches in length. By rubbing this against the fragment of the wheelhouse, he managed to reduce one end of the little stick to a rough point.

He took the largest slab of the rim wood from the stump and knelt upon it to hold it firm. On this wood he rested his peg, which was wrapped in several folds of the twine and pressed down by the second fragment of wood. When he moved the long stick back and forth, the peg revolved at a tremendous rate of speed, its partially sharpened end digging into the wood on which it rested. It is a method of starting a fire which was once familiarly used by Indians.

For half an hour Harrigan sweated and groaned uselessly over his labor. Once he smelled a taint of smoke and shouted his triumph, but the peg slipped and the work was undone. He started all over again after a short rest and the peg creaked against the slab of wood with the speed of its rotation—a small sound of protest drowned by the bellowing of the storm and the ringing songs of McTee.

Now the smoke rose again and this time the peg kept firm. The smoke grew pungent; there was a spark, then a glow, and it spread and widened among the powdery, rotten wood which Harrigan had heaped around his rotating peg.

He tossed the peg and bow aside and blew softly and steadily on the glowing point. It spread still more and now a small tongue of flame rose and flickered. Instantly Harrigan laid small bits of wood criss-cross on the pile of tinder. The flame licked at them tentatively, recoiled, rose again and caught hold. The fire was well started.

With gusts of wind fanning it roughly, the flame rose fast. Harrigan made other journeys to the rotten stump and wrenched away great chunks of bark and wood. He came back and piled them on the fire. It towered high, the upper tongues twisting among the branches of the tree. They laid Kate Malone between the windbreak and the fire. In a short time her trembling ceased; she turned her face to the blaze and slept.

They watched her with jealous care all night. In lieu of a pillow they heaped some of the wood dust from the stump beneath her head. When their large hands hovered over her to straighten the clothes which the wind fluttered, she seemed marvelously delicate and fragile. It was astonishing that so fragile a creature should have lived through the buffeting of the sea.

Toward morning the storm fell at a breath and the rain died away. They agreed that it might be safe to leave her alone while they ventured out to look for food, and at the first hint of light they started out, one to the north, and one to the south. Harrigan started at an easy run. He felt a joyous exultation like that of a boy eager for play. He tried to find shellfish first, but without success. His search carried him far down the beach to a group of big rocks rolling out to sea. On the leeward side of these rocks, in little hollows of the stone, he found a quantity of the eggs of some seafool. They were quite large, the shells a dirty, faint blue and apparently very thick. He collected all he could carry and started back.

As he approached the shelter, he heard voices and stopped short with a sudden pang; McTee had returned first and awakened the girl. Harrigan sighed. He knew now how he had wanted to watch her eyes open for the first time, the cool sea-green eyes lighted by bewilderment, surprise, and joy. All that delight had been McTee's. It was that dark, handsome face she had seen leaning over her when she awoke. He was firmly implanted in her mind by this time as her savior. She opened her eyes, hungered, and she had seen McTee bringing food. Harrigan drew a long breath and went on slowly with lowered head.

They sat cross-legged, facing each other. The captain was showing Kate his prizes, which seemed to consist of a quantity of shellfish. She clapped her hands at something McTee said, and her laughter, wonderfully clear, reminded Harrigan of the chiming of faraway church bells. Blind anger suddenly possessed him as he stood by the fire glowering down at them.

CHAPTER 11

"Eggs! How perfectly wonderful, Mr. Harrigan! And I'm starved!"

She looked up to him, radiant with delight; but the triumphant eye of Harrigan fell not upon her but on McTee, who had suddenly grown pensive.

"But how can we cook them? There's nothing to boil water in—and no pan for frying them," ventured McTee.

"Roast 'em," said Harrigan scornfully. "Like this."

He wrapped several eggs in wet clay and placed them in the glowing ashes of the fire which had now burned low.

"While they're cooking," said McTee, "I'm going off. I've an idea."

Harrigan watched him with a shade of suspicion while he retreated. He turned his head to find Kate studying him gravely.

"Before you came, Mr. Harrigan—"

"My name's Dan. That'll save time."

"While you were gone," she went on, thanking him with a smile, "Captain McTee told me a great many things about you."

Harrigan stirred uneasily.

"Among other things, that you had no such record as he hinted at while we were on the *Mary Rogers*. So I have to ask you to forgive me—"

The blue eyes grew bright as he watched her.

"I've forgotten all that, for the sea washed it away from my mind."

"Really?"

"As clean as the wind has washed the sky."

Not a cloud stained the broad expanse from horizon to horizon.

"That's a beautiful way to put it. Now that we are here on the island, we begin all over again and forget what happened on the ship?"

"Aye, all of it."

"Shake on it."

He took her hand, but so gingerly that she laughed.

"We have to be careful of you," he explained seriously. "Here we are, as McTee puts it, on the rim of the world, two men an' one woman. If something happens to one of us, a third of our population's gone."

"A third of our population! Then I'm very important?"

"You are."

He was so serious that it disconcerted her. It suddenly became impossible for her to meet his eyes, they burned so bright, so eager, with something like a threat in them. She hailed the returning figure of McTee with relief.

He came bearing a large gourd, and he knelt before Kate so that she might look into it. She cried out at what she saw, for he had washed the inside of the gourd and filled it with cool water from the spring.

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