

## IN VALHALLA AND OUT

(Continued from page 8)

"but as you see Miss Cutler a service well overtook that." He fumbled in his pocket and drew out a bill. "I'll reward you for saving the bag," he added. "But you must positively leave the dock, and not return. Here, take this!"

Dick glanced from the man's face to the bill extended to him, a slow, sly, smug smile on his lips. Then he suddenly smiled and took the bill. Grumbling in his hand, he made a dash of it, and deliberately thrust the hook through it.

"This might be good bait for suckers," he remarked. "Anyway, I'll try it."

He flung the money-baited hook back in the water, and calmly resumed his seat on the pier. Mr. Blake stared furiously at him, his eyes glowing dangerously; but before he could speak Alice Cutler was up the steps and by his side. "Dick could see by the amusement in her eyes that she had witnessed the whole proceeding."

"Oh, let him fish here as long as he wants to, Mr. Blake," she exclaimed impulsively. "I love him that much." Dick smiled into her eyes, but when she furnished him her bag for something his face grew red and hot.

"Now please don't use this for bait," she said merrily, "but keep it until some day you may need it. It's more than a card of introduction. I'll return it in any way you ask at any time."

Dick looked at the white piece of pasteboard thrust into his hand. It was an ordinary visiting card, with her name engraved neatly across the face.

## CHAPTER II

About the shabbiest trick that fate can play on us is to bring us into the world with a silver spoon in the mouth, and then, when we are accustomed to it, change it into cheap yester metal. It leaves an unpleasant taste for years after, and some never quite get rid of that tin-copery-brassy flavor.

Dick Van Ness was an amiable young man, without more than his share of faults and possibly with as many virtues as a potential saint. The average mind carries around in its system when fate subjects him to this acid test.

How he met it is not necessarily nearly so interesting and spectacular as many fictitious writers would invent for their heroes. It was, in fact, put out by it, considerably chagrined and disappointed, but being young and in fine health he thought the world was his oyster, and he could open it.

A chip of the old block, who couldn't be made a fortune as easily as his father? There was no reason, except that apparently he didn't inherit the peculiar quality of mind that had made the elder Van Ness a power in the financial world.

Dick didn't know it at the time, but it was revealed to him in the course of years. Combined with the utter lack of all experience and training, the handicap was fatal. He drifted and floundered, driven from pillar to post, making fog mistakes that an office boy could have put him straight on, and in the end he returned in disgust.

Dick had a vein of romance in his system, inherited from his mother, perhaps, and a love for adventure; but neither of these had found lodgment in the elder Van Ness, which may have accounted for his remarkable success in finance. They are not necessarily incompatible with achievement, but they have to be held in subjection when business calls.

Self-acknowledged, and by common consent ridiculed by the world, to be a failure, Dick had no scruples in giving full vent up to his imaginings. Forgetting his fishing, he dreamily pictured scenes quite different from the reality until suddenly aroused by the footsteps of the watchman.

He effected his escape from the private dock with much greater celerity and safety than the previous owner of his fishing tackle. Once on solid land again, he gave a last whistle loud and long.

"I'd sell my right hand for a long cruise in her again," he sighed. "I'd even be willing to go as a deck hand." He stopped and looked startled at his own suggestion. Why not? Then he answered himself with a sad shake of the head. Because he had no experience or references, they would not employ him even as a deck hand. Deck hands had to know something.

"And I don't know anything worth knowing!" he blurted out in disgust. Nevertheless all that afternoon and evening the fancy clung to him that his future was in some way mysteriously mixed up with his father's old yacht and the girl who had rewarded him with the gift of her visiting card. She had promised to redeem it in any way he asked at any time, and if he went to her and begged a berth on her uncle's yacht she would undoubtedly grant his request; but such a course was repugnant to him, and not to be considered.

Late in the evening Dick, still lingering in the vicinity of the waterfront, as if fascinated by the smell of the harbor, rubbed elbows with a couple bound in the opposite direction. The night was dark, and the waterfront poorly lighted; but for all that Dick recognized one of the men. He stopped abruptly in his tracks, and watched the receding figure.

"Mr. Blake," he mused, placing ironic emphasis on the name. "Wonder if he's going aboard the Pelican."

He meditated in silence a few moments, and then followed. It was easy to keep the couple within sight without exposing himself to view. They were going in the direction of the private dock, and Dick had no doubts about

their objective. He took advantage of every favorable street lamp to study their backs, and, as when he recounted man stopped to light a cigar, he got a glimpse of his face.

"That isn't old man Cutler, either," he said, frowning. "Too young for my money, too big and husky. If I remember right he was a small, wizened, dried-up man."

The one accompanying Mr. Blake was anything but that. Tall, square shouldered and bony of arm and leg, he was the very picture of health and muscular strength. Dick caught a glimpse of gold braid on an arm sleeve and the flash of something on his cap.

"The captain of the Pelican," he breathed.

He suited as he recalled the amount of gold braid and emblems that his father's skipper wore. Captain Blake? Where was he? Had he lost his job with the sale of the old Beacon? Apparently he had, for this one was the very antithesis of the short, fat, bearded man who had been his former owner.

There was in these glances, except for red light emanating at the end, and a white one at the entrance. There was no such of a watchman, and as the men were unchallenged Dick felt that he was in the clear. He stopped abruptly at the head of the steps leading down to the boat dock was within twenty feet of them. He hid behind a spile and remained motionless.

"The captain of the Pelican," Mr. Blake was saying. "Take enough aboard for a couple of months. We may need it. We don't want to get caught short."

"That's all right," replied the other chuckling. "I would sort of let the cat out of the bag if we had to sneak into some harbor for coal before time was gone."

"Yes, I'm just against any such thing," replied Mr. Blake, who for the first time in the morning felt all the coal you can store aboard."

"What time?" the old man went to come aboard?" queried Captain Brent, puffing volubly at his cigar.

"Shortly after sundown. Lay off here at sunset, and when you see the signals head the boats ashore."

"You'll be a lot of damage, I suppose."

"No, nothing but light traps—chiefly personal things of Miss Cutler's. Most of the baggage will go aboard earlier."

"You'll there'll be four of 'em?"

"Yes, Mr. Cutler, Miss Alice, her maid and Doctor Alister."

"And yourself?"

"Certainly," said Mr. Blake, a little tartly. "I'll come down with the party."

"All right," replied Brent, moving toward the steps. "Now, if I don't have any trouble finding that island we'll have a night's sleep."

"Why do you say that?" demanded Blake uneasily. "Have you any doubts about finding it?"

"Why, no, if the map you gave me's correct."

"Well, it is," snapped the other. "I've verified it in every particular. You don't think I'd slip up on such a small thing as that when there's so much at stake?"

"No," replied Mr. Blake, but it's a bit puzzling in places. Some of them dots and marks look like as if they'd been put there for private use. You don't suppose, now, that captain was up to some mischief, marking the location wrong and shifting the channel booby, do you?"

Mr. Blake smiled and shrugged his shoulders.

"You forget," he said coldly, "that I'm running this little expedition, and I never make mistakes. The chart is correct."

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"Why, no, if the map you gave me's correct."

for that baffled Dick for a long time. It was hours later when the truth seemed to dawn upon him.

"That's it!" he exclaimed suddenly, seizing his two hands together. "It's a treasure hunt, or something like that. Old Cutler's come into possession of some old sea captain's chart of an island where the treasure's buried. And hoglike, he's tricked the owner of it, and intends to gobble up the whole thing. It's like Steve Cutler!"

He went over the conversation again, sentence by sentence as he recalled it, and in the end his conclusion was strengthened. All the facts fitted admirably into this theory. With the chart of the unknown island in his possession, Cutler intended to pay a visit to it, and if there was any treasure on it, dig it up and add it to his already swollen fortune. In the event of his proving a hoax he could hush up the matter, and no one but a few of his servants would be any wiser.

"A treasure hunting expedition in the Pelican!" Dick mused thoughtfully. "What an adventure! I wish I were going!"

He cast longing glances at the yacht in the distance. The tide was ebbing, and his head of swimming out to the craft and smuggling himself aboard. As a stepway he might take the trip and bluff it out when discovered.

But this was impractical for several reasons. The tide in the river was strong, and even if he made the yacht safely the chances were ten to one that he could not climb about unobserved. That, he concluded, would have to be his last resort.

The yacht would coal at Blank's pier in the morning. Could he disguise himself as a coal heaver and slip the lustie, hide in one of the bunkers? Dick knew every nook and corner of the craft, and he felt if he could once get below decks he would be safe from discovery.

Then the card that Alice Cutler had given him jogged his memory. He took it out and stared at it in the gloom as if trying to read some message from it.

For a long time he sat there, his head in a coil, and his lips parted; a smile slowly spread across his features, and a chuckle broke the silence.

"I could work it," he mused, "with a little luck. I believe I'll try it in the morning. At the worst I could say it was just a lark—an original method of making her redeem her promise."

He chuckled softly, and waved a hand as if in farewell to the city that had treated him so shabbily. "I'll bet," he murmured, "it will be a big improvement on this smoky, godless city of Miamon!"

## CHAPTER III

Dick Van Ness proceeded deliberately to put his little scheme to the test; but first he provided himself with a few hours of sleep to refresh the body and steady his nerves. By daylight he reviewed the situation calmly, and decided that the plan was as feasible as it had appeared the night before.

He ate a hearty breakfast at a nearby restaurant, and then ordered a huge batch of sandwiches, wrapping each one in oiled paper as if for a picnic. Leaving these to be called for later, he paid a visit to a dry goods store where he selected a couple of per box big enough to contain a man's suit of clothes. With wrapping paper and stout twine, he returned to the restaurant for his sandwiches.

They only half filled the box. The rest of the space was stowed with bottles of water and sweet drinks, pickles, olives, fruit, cakes and candy. The proprietor, who was a kindly, smiling man when he clapped the cover on the box.

"Looks as if you were loading up to last a week," he remarked.

"I may need it," replied Dick frankly. "I'm going where you may be hard to get. I don't want to take a chance."

As he paid for the food and trouble, the restaurant man made no further inquiries, and Dick volunteered no additional information. When the box was wrapped, he borrowed pen and ink, and wrote on the outside:

"Miss Alice Cutler,  
Steam Yacht Pelican,  
Blank's Pier, City."

"I guess that will do," he chuckled, adding his signature.

Five minutes later he was on his way to Blank's pier. The Pelican was already at the dock coaling. Dick took a swift survey of the scene, and then

whistling nonchalantly, with the box under his arm, he walked toward the end of the pier.

No one challenged him, and when he reached the Pelican's side he stopped. A dozen grays men were stowing coal aboard, a deck hand checking off on a card the number of bags carried into the hold. A small gangplank was thrown from the main deck to the pier.

Dick started up this and reached the deck before anyone challenged him. Then a booming voice-right behind him caught his ear.

"Hello, there! What d'you want? Don't you know this is a private yacht?"

It was Captain Brent.

"Sure!" replied Dick nonchalantly. "It's the Pelican, isn't it? Mr. Cutler's yacht?"

"Well, what if it is?" growled the captain.

"Nothing, except I guess I'll take a rest here. Hot day, isn't it?" He removed his hat and began wiping his forehead.

"Yes, it's hot, but it may be hotter if you don't look sharp. What you got in that box?"

Dick smiled and winked. "If I knew, cap, I don't know that I'd tell you, but well both have a guess. Miss Cutler didn't take me into her confidence. Maybe it's a bathing suit, or a diving dress."

"It's for Miss Cutler?" queried Brent, picking it up and reading the name and address. "Well, sorry, after weighing it with both hands, 'she ain't here. Leave it, and I'll give it to her. I'll put it in her cabin."

He started to walk away with the package, but Dick rescued it. "Wait a second," he said good naturedly. "She didn't tell me to leave it—she said not to leave it. If she wasn't here when I called, I was to wait half an hour. Then if she still didn't appear I was to carry it around to her house."

The skipper looked a little puzzled, and gave the package another sharp scrutiny.

"That's queer," he muttered. "I didn't know she expected to come aboard this morning."

"I'll bet she didn't know herself," grinned Dick. "That's why she said not to wait for her longer than half an hour. She gave me this card to make sure I could find her home."

He fingered the card carelessly, and when Brent reached out a hand to take it he let him have it. The man stared it a moment, and then returned it. Dick felt that the card might remove any suspicion that might find lodgment in the other's brain.

"All right," he said finally. "Stay on this dock, and when the boat-hour's up go down that gangplank you came up."

"Sure! You don't think I was going to jump overboard and swim, did you?"

The skipper frowned and eyed him with disapproval. Dick flirted out a

cigarette, and added: "Any objections to smoking, cap? I'm dead for a few whiffs."

"No, as long as you stay outside," was the surly reply.

When he walked away, Dick moved a camp stool near the railing and contentedly puffed away at his cigarette. He was apparently interested only in the scene on the dock, and never once turned his head sideways or backward. He felt that eyes were watching him, but he wasn't sure.

The minutes sped along slowly, and after the third cigarette his head sagged to one side as if he slept. He snored once or twice.

He was conscious once of a cattle footstep coming along the forward cabin, and halting near him; but he continued to snore peacefully. Twenty minutes, and he was still in the same position. Out of the corners of his half-closed eyes, he saw Captain Brent go down the gangplank and walk aft where the men were finishing their job of coaling the yacht.

Once out of his sight a remarkable change came over Dick. He sat slowly upright and gazed swiftly and keenly around the deck. He was alone on it. Not a person was in sight.

Without further delay he picked up his package and darted for the main cabin door. As he closed the door softly and started around. The place was vacant. He gave vent to a chuckle of relief.

The cabin was not much changed from the days when his father owned it. The furnishings had been replaced, and the woodwork done over, and a few pictures distributed around; but in the main it was exactly as he had always known it. It was home to him, and a great desire to shout and proclaim the fact made him light-hearted for a moment.

But a babel of voices on the deck warned him that any moment Captain Brent might return, and find him gone. He crossed the richly carpeted floor in a few strides and came to a halt in front of a paneled wall. He gave one swift glance up and around it, and then dropped down on his knees.

His hands shook a little as he fumbled at the base with nervous fingers. His breath came and went in little sharp, tremulous waves. He knew that the critical moment had arrived that would decide the success or failure of his scheme. Like a bank burglar speering a safe with the fear of the police beating up his brain, he played his hands up and down fully and with precision, hunting for something that time had dimmed in his memory.

Suddenly a low exultant cry escaped his lips. His fingers had touched the thing he had been searching for. It was a tiny crack between the molding and baseboard. It was hardly wide enough to admit the blade of a pocket knife.

With one finger pressed on it for fear of losing it, Dick got his knife out of his pocket and opened the smallest blade, inserting the point of this in the crack he pressed it hard against something that gave forth a soft tinkling metallic sound.

The effect of his manipulations would have started Captain Brent had he appeared; then, but to Dick it was no more than he expected. The narrow panel before him slid slowly to one side, revealing an opening in the wall about the size of a small window.

The secret compartment in the wall had been destined by the architects of the yacht to satisfy a whimsical fancy of Dick's father. It had been used as a storage place for special papers and securities that the elder Van Ness often carried away with him on long cruises. It was never designed for human occupancy, and when Dick glanced in it, he felt a chill of doubt.

The dust of years had accumulated over the floor, showing that it had not been used by the present owner of the yacht. Dick had guessed right that the secret of it had not been passed on with the sale of the craft, and no one, by refuting the interior, had stumbled upon the spring that opened the panel.

It was just about wide enough and long enough for a man to stretch himself and move about without jangling his elbows or scarring his shins. It was high enough for the tallest man with an open register above through which the air of the cabin escaped. The presence of this register of iron grillwork, instead of exciting suspicion, allayed the curiosity of any one incautious enough to want to thump the walls to see if there was a hollow space behind.

Approaching footsteps on the deck warned Dick out of his reverie of indecision. With a shudder he wiped away the sweat of the brow and stepped inside. He hesitated a moment before closing the panel. Then Captain Brent's booming voice aroused him.

"Where's that young fellow with the package?" he called angrily.

Dick touched the spring and watched the panel slip noiselessly in position. At the same moment the cabin door opened with a bang, and Brent stamped inside.

"Search that yacht!" he commanded. "If you find him bring him to me. I'll teach him to snoop around. No, no in here! He's not in the cabin. Search below decks!"

Nevertheless, he made a careful examination of every possible hiding place in the cabin. Dick, holding his breath, heard him tramping around opening and closing doors and lockers and even thumping the soft cushions. Once he stood in front of the register, and remained quiet for so long that Dick feared he had discovered some clue.

(To Be Continued)

# Auction Sale Bills



They Only Half Filled the Box.

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Now is the time to get your Sale Bill copy ready. Look over your goods and list them as you go along.

When in doubt as to the proper arranging of details consult us and we will be pleased to advise you.

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