



CHAPTER XXII—Continued.

"That phrase; the 'one small woman,' startled me like an electric shock. It was my own phrase, my pet, secret phrase, my love phrase for her. 'Where did you get that phrase?' I demanded, with an abruptness that in turn startled her.

"That phrase?" she asked.

"One small woman," she asked.

"Yes," I answered, "mine. I made it."

"Then you must have talked in your sleep," she smiled.

The dancing, tremulous light was in her eyes. Mine, I knew, were speaking beyond the will of my speech, I leaned toward her. Without volition I leaned toward her, as a tree is swayed by the wind, as a tree is very close together in that moment.

But she shook her head, as one might shake off sleep or a dream, saying: "I have known it all my life. It was my father's name for my mother."

"It is my phrase, too," I said stubbornly.

"For your mother?"

"No," I answered, and she questioned no further, though I could have sworn her eyes retained for some time a mocking, teasing expression.

With the foremast in, the work now went on again. Almost before I knew it, and without one serious hitch, I had the mainmast stepped. A derick-boom, rigged to the foremast, had accomplished this; and several days more found it stays and shrouds in place, and everything set up taut. To sail would be a nuisance and a danger for a crew of two, so I heaved the topmasts on deck and lashed them fast.

Several more days were consumed in finishing the sails and putting them on. There were only three—the jib, foresail, and mainsail; and, patched, shortened, and distorted, they were a ridiculously ill-fitting suit for so trim a craft as the Ghost.

"But they'll work!" Maud cried jubilantly. "We'll make them work, and trust ourselves to them."

Certainly, among my many new trades, I, of no least, as a sailmaker. I could make them better than make them, and I had no doubt of my power to bring the schooner to some northern port of Japan.

In fact, I had crammed navigation from text books aboard; and besides, there was Wolf Larsen's star-sail, so simple a device that a child could work it.

As for its inventor, beyond an increasing deafness and the movement of the lips growing fainter and fainter, there had been little change in his condition for a week. But on the day we finished heading the schooner's sails, he heard his last, and the last movement of his lips died away—but not before I had asked him, "Are you all there?" and the lips had answered, "Yes."

The last line was down. Somewhere within that tomb of the flesh still dwelt the soul of the man. Waited by the living clay, that fierce intelligence we had known burned on, but burned on in silence and darkness.

I Raced Aft, Putting the Wheel Up.

And it was disassembled. To that intelligence there could be no objective knowledge of a body. It knew no body. The very world was not, it knew only itself and the vastness and profundity of the quiet and the dark.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

The day came for our departure. There was no longer anything to detain us on Endor Island. The Ghost's stumpy masts were in place, her crazy sails bent. All my handiwork was strong, none of it beautiful; but I knew that it would work, and I felt myself a man of power as I looked at it.

"I did it! I did it! With my own hands I did it!" I wanted to cry aloud. But Maud and I had a way of voicing each other's thoughts, and she said, as we prepared to hoist the mainsail:

"To think, Humphrey, you did it all with your hands!"

"But there were two other hands," I answered. "Two small hands, and don't say that was a phrase, also, of your father."

She laughed and shook her head, and held her hands up for inspection.

"I can never get them clean again," she warned, "nor soften the weather-beat."

"Then dirt and weather-beat shall be your guardian of honor," I said, holding them in mine; and, in spite of my resolutions, I would have kissed the two tiny hands but she did not swiftly withdraw them.

Our comradeship was becoming tremulous. I had mastered my love long and well, but now it was mastering me. With all my love I could not resist, swaying the very body of me till I leaned toward her, all unconscious that I leaned. And she knew it. She could not but know it as she swiftly drew away her hands, and yet could not forbear one quick, searching look before she turned away her eyes.

By means of deck-tackles I had arranged to carry the halyards forward to the windlass; and now I hoisted the mainsail, peak and throat, at the same time. It was a clumsy way, but it did not take long, and soon the foresail as well up and fluttering.

"We can never get that anchor up in this narrow place, once it has left the bottom," I said. "We should be on the rocks first."

"What can you do?" she asked.

"Slip it," was my answer. "And when I do you must do your first work on the windlass. I shall have to run at once to the wheel, and at the same time you must be hoisting the jib."

This maneuver of getting under way was a hard, steady work, and a score of times, and with the jib-halyard to the windlass, I knew Maud was capable of hoisting that most necessary sail. A brisk wind was blowing from the north, and though the water was calm, rapid work was required to get us safely out.

When I knocked the shackles loose the chain roared out through the hawse-hole and into the sea. I stood aft, put the wheel up, and the Ghost seemed to start into life as she heeled to the first fill of her sails. The jib was rising. As it filled the Ghost's bow swung off and I had to wait the wheel down a few spokes and steady her.

I had devised an automatic jib-sheet, which passed the jib across of itself, so there was no need for Maud to attend to that; but she was still hoisting the jib when I put the wheel hard down. It was a moment of anxiety, for the Ghost was rushing directly upon the beach, a stone's throw distant. But she swung obediently on her heel into the wind. There was a great fluttering and flapping of canvas and reef-points, most welcome to my ears, then she flung away on the other tack.

Maud had finished her task and come aft, where she stood beside me, a small cap perched on her wind-blown hair, her cheeks flushed from exertion, her eyes wide and brilliant with the excitement, her nostrils quivering to the rush and bite of the fresh salt air. Her brown eyes were like a startled deer. There was a wild, keen look in them I had never seen before, and her lips parted and her breath suspended as the Ghost, charging upon the wall of rock at the entrance to the inner cove, swept into the wind and flung away into safe water.

My first mate's berth on the sealing grounds stood me in good stead, and I cleared the inner cove and laid a long tack alone the shore of the outer cove. Once again about, and the Ghost heeded out to open sea. She had now caught the boom-breathing of the ocean, and she was back with the rhythm of it as she smoothly mounted and slipped down each broad-beamed wave. The day had been dull and overcast, but the sun now burst through the clouds, and welcome omen, and shone upon the curving beach where together we had dared the lords of the harbor and slain the holocaustic. All Endor Island brightened under the sun. Even the grim southwestern promontory showed less grim, and here and there, where the sea-seeped its surface, high lights flashed against the dark background of the shore.

"I shall always think of it with pride," I said to Maud.

She threw her head back in a queenly way, but said, "Dear, dear Maud, never! I shall always love it."

"And I!" I said quickly.

It seemed our eyes must meet in a great understanding, and yet, lo! both, they struggled away and did not meet.

There was a silence I might almost

call awkward, till I broke it, saying:

"See those black clouds to windward. You remember, I told you last night the barometer was falling."

"And the sun is gone," she said, her eyes still fixed upon our island, where we had proved our mastery over matter and attained to the true comradeship that may fall to man and woman.

"And it's slack off the sheets on Japan!" I cried gayly. "A fair wind and a flowing sheet, you know, however it goes."

Lashing the wheel, I ran forward, eased the fore and main sheets, took in on the boom-tackles, and trimmed everything for the quartering breeze which was ours. It was a fresh breeze, very fresh, but I resolved to run as long as I dared. Unfortunately, when running free, it is impossible to lash the wheel, so I forced an all-night watch. Maud insisted on relieving me, but proved that she had not the strength to steer in a heavy sea, even if she could have gained the wisdom on such short notice. She appeared quite heartbroken over the discovery, but recovered.

I closed my eyes and went to sleep again. I did not know it, but I had slept the clock around and it was night again.

Once more I woke, troubled because I could sleep no better. I struck a match and looked at my watch. It marked midnight. And I had not left the deck until three! I should have been puzzled had I not guessed the solution. No wonder I was sleeping broken. I had slept twenty-one hours. I listened for a while to the behavior of the Ghost, to the pounding of the seas and the muffled roar of the wind on deck, and then turned over on my side and slept peacefully until morning.

When I arose at seven I saw no sign of Maud and concluded she was in the galley preparing breakfast. On deck I found the Ghost doing splendidly under her patch of canvas. But in the galley, though a fire was burning and water boiling, I found no Maud.

I discovered her in the storeroom, by Wolf Larsen's body on deck ready for burial, the man who had been hurled down from the topmast pitch of life to be buried alive and be worse than dead. There seemed a relaxation of his expressions face, which was new. Maud looked at me and I understood.

"His life flickered out in the storm," I said.

"But he still lives," she answered, infinite faith in her voice.

"He had too great strength."

"Yes," she said, "but now it no longer shackles him. He is a free spirit."

"He is a free spirit surely," I answered, and taking her hand, I led her on deck.

The storm broke that night, which is to say that it diminished as slowly as it had arisen. After breakfast next morning, when I had hoisted Wolf Larsen's body on deck ready for burial, it was still blowing heavily, and a large sea was running. The deck was continually awash with the sea which came aboard over the rail and through the scuppers. The wind smote the schooner with a sudden gust, and she heeled over till her lee rail was buried, the roar in her rigging rising in pitch to a shriek. We were in the water to our knees as I heard my head.

"I remember only one part of the service," I said, "and that is, 'And the body shall be cast into the sea.'"

All looked at me, surprised and shocked; but the spirit of something I had seen before was strong upon me, compelling me to give service to Wolf Larsen as Wolf Larsen had once given service to another man. I lifted the end of the hatch cover, and the canvas-shrouded body slipped feet first into the sea. The weight of iron dragged it down. It was gone.

"Good-by, Larsen! Good spirit!" Maud whispered, so low that it was drowned by the shouting of the wind; but I saw the movement of her lips and knew.

As we hung to the lee rail and worked our way aft, I happened to glance to leeward. The Ghost, at the moment, was upturned on a sea, and I caught a clear view of a small stomachy piece of two or three days' rolling and pitching, head on to the sea, as it steamed toward us. It was painted black, and from the talk of the hunters of their poisoning expeditions I recognized it as a United States revenue cutter. I pointed it out to Maud and hurriedly led her aft to the safety of the poop.

I started to rush below to the flag-sticker, then remembered that in rigging the Ghost I had forgotten to make provision for a flag-halyard.

"We need no distress signal," Maud said. "They have only to see us."

"We are not alone," I said, soberly and solemnly. "And then, in an exuberance of joy, 'I hardly know whether to be glad or not.'"

I looked at her. Her eyes were not so much as before, but I knew toward each other, and before I knew it my arms were about her.

"Need I?" I asked.

And she answered, "There is no need, though the tolling of it would be sweet, so sweet."

Her lips met the press of mine, and by what strange trick of the imagination I knew not, she came into the cabin of the Ghost dashed upon me, when she had pressed her fingers lightly on my lips and said, "Hush, hush."

"My woman, my one small woman," I said, my free hand petting her shoulder in the way all lovers know though never learn in school.

"My man," she said, looking down at me for an instant with trepidulous lids which fluttered down and veiled her eyes, as she suggested her head against my breast with a happy little sigh.

I looked toward the cutter. It was very close. A boat was being lowered.

"One kiss, dear love, I whispered. 'One kiss more before they come.'"

"And rescue us from our pursuers," she completed, with a most adorable smile, whimsical as I had never seen it, for it was whimsical with love.

THE END.

His Philanthropy.

"Look here," said the benevolent-looking man, "you have asked me for work every day I passed this corner for the last week."

"Have I?" was the surprised inquiry.

"Yes, you have, and I have given you money once or twice. Now, what would you do if I offered you work?"

"What would I do? I'd take your name and address, guv'nor, or then, if I found anybody that wanted work, I'd send 'em round 'er way. I'm a philanthropist, an' run 'er way."

"I don't get a penny for me time—only just what comes in accidental like from folks like you."

Morning had evidently not come, so

erred her spirits by colling down

tackles and halyards and all star

ropes. Then there were meals to be

cooked in the galley, beds to make.

And still the Ghost foamed and

she finished the day with a gr

housecleaning attack upon the

and steeage.

All night I steered, without relin

ing the wheel slowly and steadily in

creasing and the sea rising. At five,

in the morning Maud brought me

her coffee and biscuit she had baked,

and at seven a substantial and pip

ped breakfast put new life into me.

Throughout the day, and as slowly

and steadily as ever, the wind in

creased. It impressed one with its

silent determination to blow, and

blow harder, and keep on blowing.

And still the Ghost foamed and

and racing off the miles till I was cer

tainly making at least eleven knia

it was too good to lose, but by six

fall I was exhausted. The "in

crease" in the wind was a thirty-six

hour trick at the wheel was the limit

of my endurance. Besides, Maud

begged me to leave to, and I knew

if the wind and sea increased at

the rate during the night that it

would soon be impossible to heave

to. So, at twilight deepened, gaily

and at the same time reluctant,

giving the Ghost up on the wind

in an hour, I had not reckoned upon

the colossal task the reefing of it

meant for one man. While lan

guing away from the wind I had

not appreciated its force, but when

it ceased to run I learned to my

horror, and well-nigh to my despair,

how fiercely it was really blowing.

The wind balked my every effort, rip

pling the canvas out of my hands, and

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