

A Lady of the Sea

THE STRANGE VOYAGE OF THE CLIPPER YOLANDA—THE STORM GODS OF OCEAN HAVE SUNK MANY A GOOD SHIP, BUT A TRAITOR ON BOARD IS A VESSEL'S MOST DANGEROUS ENEMY

By Captain Dingle

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SOME ships seem to know when a master hand is guiding them. Such are the aristocracy of sea ladies. Age may bring a clipper down to sordid trades, or even to the lowly condition of a hulk; but as long as a clipper sails the seas she will react to her handling like a thing of life.

Load her badly, give her the wrong combination of sail when shortened down, and she will protest in a fashion clear to a sailor. A blunt-built butter box of an iron freight drogher, meant only to bear tremendous burdens, may be mishandled, misladen, mis-everything else that can be done to a square-rigger, and it will make little difference, since she will be a clumsy lump of wrong-headedness anyhow; but the clipper, the dainty sea lady, is not only living and breathing, but understanding.

The Yolanda was a clipper, and therefore it was the more of a puzzle to Barney Read to find her grow less and less sea kindly as she reeled the miles astern of her. The weather was good, yet the Yolanda made bad courses in the other watch. She labored queerly, too, when there was no more wind than should have driven her foaming down through the latitudes in a smother of spray and flying fish.

"It's the way you trim the yards, mister. Haven't you been in a clipper before?" the old man would grunt if the mate remarked about it.

Captain Lute had a way with him—a bitter, unpleasant, evil way. For one who pretended such a deep interest in his ship's behavior, he himself gave small heed to her trim; yet he kept close track of her course in general, always scanning the chart, measuring off distances between the thin line of penciled runs and adjacent islands or coast lines.

Another thing that had puzzled Barney on joining the ship as mate was the way she was loaded.

She was ready for sea when he joined. He saw she was by the head a bit, and no sailing ship ever built would do her best that way; but he was curtly told to get the hatches on, and the Yolanda was towed to sea. New to the ship, and not quite sure what to make of the captain, Barney did his work and kept quiet, though not very well satisfied. "

Had it not been that Muriel Grey was on board, Barney would have seen small prospect of anything but a miserable voyage. As it was, in spite of the old man's surly tongue and evil eye, Muriel so radiated brightness and cheer that much of the ship's queerness was noticed far less than it might have been.

Yet even Muriel proved a puzzle to Barney—for awhile. She called the skipper "father".

"There's nothing in breeding, if he's her father!" Barney mused on the first day at sea.

When the steward addressed her as "Miss Grey," the mate went so far as to ask the man if he had said "Miss" or "Mrs."

"Better ask her father, Mr. Mate," the steward said sourly, giving Barney such glance as to make the evil eye of old Lute seem glowing with benevolence,

Little cared Barney. He went about his work singing, getting the best he could out of men more fit for a farm than a ship, and seeing to it that in his watch, at least, the steering was fair and the trim beyond reproach. Still the ship rooted like a hog, down by the head as she was.

Everything was balanced when Muriel came on deck in Barney's very first morning watch, as the dawn was breaking, and stood at the windward rail, gazing as if enchanted at the rising gold behind the gray horizon. Her eyes and lips seemed dewy. Her hair caressed her face, a filmy frame of loveliness. She, too, was singing:

"Hying with flowing sail over the summer sea;

Sheer through the seething gale, homeward bound is she!"

The sight of her thrilled Barney, and unconsciously he joined in her song. She heard him, and smiled, so that he blushed. Upon the innocent Eden burst Captain Lute, looking from one to the other of them with swift, angry suspicion.

"Did I sign you on to sing, or to sail the ship?" he snarled "Are the men sick, that the ship's not washed down? Get to your work! And you, Muriel, leave my men alone—hear me?"

"Yes, father," the girl said. "Please don't blame Mr. Read. I don't think he knew he was singing my song."

"Don't mind father's grumpiness. He's always that way in the morning," Muriel told Barney later.

Lute had gone down to get dressed, and the mate looked down from the poop upon sullen men plying lazy brooms while the boatswain shot buckets of bubbling

brine among their skinny bare legs. The sun was up, and it was a morning fit to breathe a prayer to. Barney couldn't feel resentful. He smiled back at Muriel, once more keenly scanning her eager, colorful face.

"I'm not supposed to mind anything my skipper says or does, Miss Grey. I'm only the mate; but I'm allowed to wonder."

"Wonder?" she echoed, with a pretty raise of the brows.

"Yes—how you can be his daughter."

Barney at once started to apologize, surprised at his own boldness; but she put him at ease with a tinkling little laugh.

"Stepdaughter," she explained. "Captain Lute was mate here when father owned and sailed the Yolanda. He married mother when father died; but I—"

Lute's step on the companionway stairs sent Barney away from the girl. He was unwilling to cause her further unpleasantness. When Lute emerged this time, Muriel was briskly walking the deck, while the mate was setting the men to work on the poop brasswork.

Barney was humming a song. He had found out one tremendously pleasing fact about her—she was none of Lute's blood or kin. For a moment he wondered just what she was about to say when Lute's appearance interrupted; but it mattered very little.

"Always something to be thankful for—even at sea," he cogitated, "I wonder if she knows how thankful she ought to be!"

II

There was no doubt about the quality of the Yolanda's crew. The boatswain might have been a sailorman once, but now he had more of the earmarks of a gang foreman on a jail building job. He got work done, after a fashion, but only when the job was given to him. He had no sailorly initiative. He seemed to be always

on the point of telling the mate that work was unnecessary.

As for the second mate, he frankly admitted that he was a steamboat man, and knew nothing of square-riggers. The steward was civil only to Lute. Even Muriel, more often than not, failed to win a civil word or dutiful act from the sour flunky.

Barney kept on the lookout for a chance to enjoy an occasional moment of the girl's cheery company, and Muriel was entirely willing to meet him halfway; but old Lute was on the watch too. He bullied the girl and rode the mate—rode him before all hands, so that very soon Barney was forced to resort to almost forgotten deep water methods to get any sort of obedience or respect.

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“The old man's crazy!” he whispered to Muriel in a swift moment of opportunity. “He can't expect me to get work done if he bawls me out before the men. Bad for the ship, too. Some day quick action'll be needed, and how does he expect me to get it?”

She only shook her head in answer. Often, as the days went by, she seemed to be deeply immersed in thoughts not all easy or pleasant. That was strange, too, for the days were all blue and gold, the merest fleecy tufts of cloud breaking the brilliant blue of the sky, the softest of curling crests whispering to the seas of the sparkling breeze that sped the ship southward.

When squalls began to break up the daily level of placid comfort, Muriel brightened up more than she had during the fine weather. When rain flew in sheets she remained on deck, all rosy and alight with excitement, taking in every phase of the handling of the ship; following Barney, with eyes that glowed admiringly, as he led the men.

“Keep her away to the westward!” Lute growled, when the squalls merged and settled down into a screaming half gale.

“She roots—won't steer—down by the head!” yelled Barney.

He couldn't understand the idea of keeping away to the westward. She would steer better, and make time, too, on her proper course.

“Never mind! You make her steer,” Lute retorted. “If you can't, there are men in the fo'c'stle who can, poor as they are. Keep her away, with the wind aft— that's your job!”

Barney waited until the old man had gone below, then bawled for the watch.

“Brail in the spanker! Take all the mizzen canvas off her!”

He stood at the helm himself while the after sails were furled, watching her actions. She still yawed wildly from side to side. Muriel stood at the taffrail behind him, watching the big seas rising in the wake.

They rose higher as the ship sailed more slowly. One roaring crest flung a bucketful of water over the turtleback and filled the girl's shoes. She ran from it with a little cry, then laughed and returned to her place. To her it was fun.

To Barney, with the wildness of the ship in mind, it was anything but fun. The men were moving forward.

“Take in the main t'gallants'l, and stand by the tops'l halyards!” he yelled.

The mainsail had been furled at the first increase of wind beyond a fresh breeze. Barney took the wheel in his own hands, making the helmsman stand by. As sail came in on the main, he felt the ship dragging more. She yawed almost as badly as ever. It was cruel, the way the fine old clipper was being manacled!

“Take the maintops'ls off her!” he ordered grimly, and silently prayed that the gale would harden, so that the ship might be driven to keep ahead of those following seas.

“Oh, I think those big seas are grand!” the girl cried beside him.

“They are,” he gritted. “Too damned grand for this ship!”

"Nonsense! Why, when I was small, I saw her in tremendous storms, and father always said she was the finest ship afloat in bad weather."

"No doubt your father was right," he retorted.

She wondered at his tone, but she would not bother him again. He was sweating at the wheel. She didn't know why, but she respected him for being ready to undertake hard work.

Only the stiffening of the gale kept the seas from overtaking the ship and breaking over her stern. She had only forward sail; she could not run before the wind under any more sail without grave danger of broaching to, so deeply did she bury her overloaded head as she plunged onward.

Muriel clung to the rail, in the shelter of a square of canvas that Barney rigged up, watching the elemental warfare with wide, bright eyes and parted lips, enjoying it all with a sort of fearful fascination. She saw a roaring sea slop over the rail, and uttered a gasping cry when the galley burst from its fastenings and went hurtling across the deck, to smash against the bulwarks. She gasped helplessly when Barney dashed down into the welter of foam and debris and hauled the cook clear, half drowned, and singed by the outpoured contents of his stove.

"Make the wreckage secure, bos'n. Then all hands come aft to the poop for safety!" the mate shouted; and Muriel thrilled to the sailorly matter-of-factness of him.

She may have wondered, perhaps, why Barney seemed to be so constantly on duty. She knew that the second mate was supposed to share the watches, but Barney seemed to be on deck even when the second mate was on watch. Somehow, she felt much more contented and safe because of that.

Why Captain Lute could not be satisfied was more than she understood. The captain bobbed up at all sorts of

unexpected moments, looking as if he never undressed or slept while the gale lasted.

On the second day of the storm the Yolanda began to root more deeply than ever, and Barney sounded the well himself. He went aft with a grimly thoughtful face and reported a leak to the skipper. Lute went on deck and drew out the working chart on the chart table, looking not very greatly concerned.

On the last day, when a sight had been secured, the ship had passed within fifty miles of a small island. Now she was three hundred miles farther on her way, and in her course there lay no land within a week of fair sailing.

"Start the pumps! The water runs for'ard. Seems a lot," the captain growled. He glowered for a moment at the girl, there in her shelter, aglow with the whipping of the windy spray. "You better get below, Muriel. This is no place for you."

"But I enjoy it, father. I'm quite all right here. Mr. Read says it's safe," the girl pleaded, looking gently mutinous.

"Safe?" the old man snarled, glaring from her to Barney. "Nobody said it wasn't safe. I don't want you up here taking the attention of the men from their work."

"Miss Grey isn't bothering anybody, sir," Barney turned at the ladder to blurt out.

"Don't give me your damned slack!" roared Lute. "Get to your work, and don't dare meddle! Muriel, you go below!"

Barney went along the drowned main deck to the pumps, to give his men a start. He hated Captain Lute very heartily just then. As he saw to the clearing of the pump lips and the placing of the obviously unaccustomed and unwilling men, he glanced aft and saw the girl slowly and rebelliously entering the companionway to go below.

"Start a song, bos'n," he urged. "Come on, lads—whirl her free! Drier she is, the

faster she sails!"

"I don't know no song," the boatswain grumbled. "Why don't you have a windmill pump if she leaks this easy?"

Barney let the insolence pass. He had seen much of it in the Yolanda.

The pumping job was monotonous, and not easy. The seas crashed aboard continually, swirling about the men's legs. A song would help. It always did. Barney started one himself:

"Oh, Sally Brown, she's a bright mulatto---

Way, hay, roll and go!

Oh, she drinks rum and chews tobacco;

Spend my money on Sally Brown!"

There was no response. The big iron wheels turned sullenly; the rods clanked and squealed; a gush of water appeared.

"Come on, lads! Put some life into it!" Barney shouted, his own strong arms already doing half the work.

"G'wan aft, and leave the men alone. They can't work if ye're on their backs all the time," the boatswain said harshly.

Barney looked at the man as if about to assert his authority manually. He thought better of the impulse, turned aft, and left the gang to their pumping.

Lute did not appear as anxious as a shipmaster should with a leak developing in his ship and a gale blowing. Barney decided to leave the worrying to others; but of course he could not do that entirely, since Muriel Grey was on board. He could keep an eye on her safety, however, and still claim all the watch below that was his, instead of looking after an incompetent second mate.

He ate supper with the girl that night. When he saw the boatswain come down and go to the steward's pantry, and draw no harsh reprimand from either skipper or steward, he let no sign of surprise escape him. He knew the boatswain got rum, for he smelled it.

Through the night the seas grew heavier. In the slaty dawn the ship was

staggering through a wild ocean. She looked forlorn, with the water streaming down from her drenched foresail and topsails, and her two jibs black with wet clear to the head cringles. She rolled, sticking her nose deeply at every roll, and scooping up the seas all along her main deck rails; and the pumps still clanked.

Captain Lute was up early, and at last evinced some interest in the weather and the condition of the leak. The barometer was rising with the steady, slow rise that presages a favorable change. The ship still labored, but she had been much worse.

"Haven't you got the water out of her yet?" he demanded querulously. "When did you sound?"

"Half an hour ago," replied Barney. "Four feet in her then. The men won't sing, and they work like a lot of navy yard stiffs. It's the bos'n. He told me I ought to rig a windmill pump."

Barney made no effort to conceal his disgust. The skipper entered the chart room, glanced at the ship's track, and reappeared.

"I'll not have a windmill on my ship. If you're the sort of mate to let the men tell you what to do—"

Barney swore. Before the old man recovered his breath, the mate was halfway along the main deck, bound for the pumps, still swearing soulfully. Barney's fists were closed, too, and he swung his arms in a way that promised nothing very good for the first man he picked upon.

The gang then at work paid little heed to him. The boatswain was just coming out of his berth, carrying his hook pot to the wrecked galley for his coffee.

"Get a move on with that pumping!" Barney sang out, shouldering among the sullen men.

He seized the wheel lanyard and forced the men to speed up.

"Leave the men be, mister!" the boatswain snarled, stopping abreast.

Barney needed just that incentive. He dropped the lanyard, stepped out, and flattened the boatswain's nose with a drive of his left fist that would have smashed a wooden nose. When the man staggered to his feet, groping for the rolling hook pot, and looking bewildered, Barney was in front of him again, with the right fist ready.

"Don't hit me, mister! I ain't lookin' for trouble. Make them pumps talk, you fellers! What's the big idea?" the boatswain blustered.

The gang whirled the wheel as if they loved the job—at least until the mate was safely aft again.

When Barney reached the poop the skipper was in the chart room, fiddling with rulers and dividers over a map. The helmsman looked queerly at Barney, and immediately dropped his eyes to the card. Lute turned to the doorway and called out:

"Can't understand how that leak gains so much. Can't have been pumping half the time. Double up on the gangs!"

"They're taking water out now," returned Barney grimly.

The clank of the pumps was like the rattle of a steam engine lacking oil. For an hour the mate stood at the poop rail and saw to it that the pumping never let up. All the while the seas were going down and the gale losing its bitter weight. The wind shifted, too.

"Call the watch, and set the main and mizzen topsails!" Barney roared.

The men obeyed briskly. The boatswain, his nose still bloody, jumped to the job almost like a good sailorman, darting a glance aft that plainly said he sought no more attention from the mate.

"Were yo' ever down in Mobile Bay?"

Oh, roll the cotton down!

A rollin' cotton fo' a dollar a day—

Oh, roll the cotton down!"

Barney stole a look at Captain Lute. Here was a result to be noted. The men

were howling a hauling chantey without being driven to it. They kept right on until the topsails were set and the spanker hauled out; yet the captain still wore a scowl. The wind was falling light already, and it had steadied abeam, so that the ship sailed without rooting like a hog; but still that scowl on the skipper's face!

There was no appreciable change in the leak even at noon, though the breeze by then had died to the lightest of airs and the sun shone pleasantly upon a placid sea. Barney went on deck at seven bells, when the captain took his sextant up for the noon sights, and found the boatswain and four men there waiting. All the forenoon the second mate had been on watch, and the men were employed making good the damages about the decks.

The moment Lute appeared, the boatswain stepped forward, a finger at his nose.

"Mr. Read knocked me about cruel, sir," the man said. "For nothing. These men seen it. He abused them, too. Are we to stand that? The law says—"

"Yes, yes—never mind the law!" the skipper cut in irritably. "Go for'ard. I'll see into it."

"You'd better, if you want yer work done," retorted the boatswain impudently, giving the mate a saucy look.

Barney stood in amazement, wondering how the old man meant to take that; but Lute waved the men away, fell to work with his sextant, and got his sights with unusual care. Then, as soon as the observations were safely secured, he set down his instrument on the chart room settee and faced Barney with red anger in his eye.

"I'll have you understand, mister, that my men are not to be knocked about by you! The bos'n is a good man, and knows his work. Keep your hands off him, or I'll get me a mate who can work the ship without brutality!"

"Brutality?" Barney was stupefied.

“Do you expect a mate to take guff from the bos’n? See here, Captain Lute, you’ve cracked on more than once about getting another mate. If you think you can—”

“Well?” interrupted the skipper, grinning expectantly.

“Nothing!” snapped Barney, suddenly thinking of the girl.

It may have been conceited of him, but he did have an idea that what pleasant hours she spent aboard the Yolanda were spent in his company. If he were disgraced and sent into the fore-castle, good-by to her company—good-by to those pleasant hours for her!

III

The days following were not easy for Barney. He was a good mate, and he knew it. It galled him to encounter open indifference in the crew, and to know that it was winked at by the master. Indifference grew until it became general insolence and rank neglect of duty. The ship began to look like a garbage scow. Ropes lay in bunches instead of coils. Yards hung askew; sails that were slack-sheeted were never trimmed; halyards that gave after a night’s dews were never sweated up.

The only sign of interest evinced by Captain Lute was in the steering, which he scrutinized fiercely, and in the pumping, to which he drove the men for all their insolence. The ill feeling between master and mate persisted, and, on the master’s side, increased, until every man in the ship knew that the after-guard was divided against itself.

Even Muriel showed that she noticed it. She stole little moments to talk to Barney; but she was careful to avoid letting her stepfather catch them together, and she never permitted herself to speak of ship’s affairs. When she could, she would chat of things they had found themselves to enjoy in common—the thrill of sailing, the beauty of the sea, the

departing glories of clipper ships.

Barney puzzled over the skipper’s idea of holding so far to the westward. With the leak gaining daily, in spite of all the men could do at the pumps, and in spite of the pleasant weather that persisted after the gale, it would seem to any sailorman that the wise course was either to put back to the last island sighted, or to hold more easterly, so that the ship might get into traffic lanes, and perhaps in touch with the coast. Day by day, however, old Lute pricked off his position and measured the distance between points of land, getting farther away from any port. He held his course as if satisfied, yet watched the pumps anxiously, growing a scowl that darkened hourly, and making the lives of everybody near him wretched with his surliness and venom.

The steward alone appeared willing to endure without audible complaint. The boatswain frequented the pantry in a manner that staggered Barney Read, who was used to ships conducted in shipshape fashion. The mate had resolved to let the voyage tell its own tale, so far as he was concerned; and he would have kept quiet, obeying orders to the letter without comment, but for one small happening which he really had no right to notice.

Going on deck one day at eight bells, he reached the companionway door at the moment when old Lute was forcing Muriel inside, and cursing at her savagely. She cried out that his grip hurt her; and Barney jumped forward and wrenched the grip off with no pretense of apology.

“Captain Lute, you forget yourself!” he snapped.

Lute stared at the mate, and at his own wrist, which bore bloody signs of Barney’s intensity of purpose. Muriel stood inside the door, her usually pleasant face marred with real anger. She rubbed her arm, too, as if it pained her, and that steeled Barney for whatever might come. It came quickly.

"Lay hands on me, will you? Damme, that's mutiny! Go to your room. I'll see you hanged for this! Get below!"

"Don't be silly!" the girl burst forth. "I'll let people know it was no mutiny, but a gentleman defending a girl from a foolish old beast! Don't mind him, Mr. Read!"

"You go below, too!" the captain stormed.

The girl did not obey. Lute caught her about the waist and rushed her down the stairs, and Barney heard her cabin door shut upon her still protesting.

"You take your dunnage for'ard, Read! You don't belong aft," rasped Lute on his return. "You won't get off with that, either. The minute we anchor I'll see about you, you mutinous dog!"

"Aye, and I'm glad to go for'ard," retorted Barney. "As for coming to anchor, it'll be a lucky man who sees this ship come to anchor!"

"What d'ye mean by that?" Lute stepped forward, his fists bunched, his knuckles white, his face a mask of bitter rage. "What d'ye mean?"

"What I say, and you can find the answer," replied Barney, and walked away.

He hurried to get his belongings out of his room, feeling truly relieved of a burden in being disgraced. Had not the girl been on board he might have felt entirely happy. Captain Lute looked far less content than the officer he had disgraced.

In the forecastle Barney expected to have trouble. It was scarcely to be avoided; but his recent handling of the boatswain had given him a prestige not to be ignored. All the unpleasantness that arose was by way of clumsy sarcasm, sneers, and evil looks. The men let him see plainly that while he was with them, he was not of them.

When he had spent one watch below in the rolling discomfort of a falling calm, he felt glad that he could never be of them. They talked of the ship and the

captain, as their kind will. Barney had no right to resent it. He knew that, and so did they; but it almost made him choke to hear the sort of things they said. Had he been aft, an officer, when a man uttered such sentiments in his hearing, there would have been another flattened nose, if no worse. Now he tried not to hear. It was all he could do.

The leak increased. The light breeze dropped. Old Lute grew savage as the evening crept on.

"Double up on the pumps!" he roared. "Set three gangs, and keep her going all the time till she's free!"

He took the boatswain aft, and made him an officer. All through the night he took star sights. Barney noticed him from his place at the pumps. There was such a frenzy of anxiety in the old man's position finding that it seemed as if he was in search of a sunken treasure.

At the same time, he would not have a windmill rigged to take care of the leak. That puzzled Barney. It set him pondering over many things; but his job was to put his share of brawn into hard labor, and he did his work at the pumps as scrupulously as he had done his duty aft.

"Come on, boys—a song helps!" he urged.

There being no response except a curse, he courageously set the example for them to follow if they would:

"Oh, seven long years I courted
Sally

Way, hay, roll and go!

She called me slowcoach dilly-
dally—

Spend my money on Sally Brown!"

No one joined in the chantey, nor did the pumps gain on the leak. Men pumped for two hours, snatched food from the miserable wreck of a galley, and slept where they dropped. In their spare moments they hauled the yards for every fleeting air that blew.

"Let him rig a windmill!" they said,

and shouted it, too.

"I'll have no windmill. Pump!" the captain retorted.

There was rum aft. The second mate had some. The boatswain had too much, and so did the steward. The men saw it, and grew sore.

Barney awoke from a fitful sleep in the coil of the fore brace, vaguely aware of trouble. There was a great moon, lacking a day of full, and it shone straight into his eyes, blinding him for a moment. Then he was on his feet, running aft. Men were fighting on the poop, snarling like wolves.

Others ran aft with Barney.

"Come on, mate! Let's jump the dirty old dog properly now!" panted in Barney's ear. "This is your pie, too!"

"I think you're right!" snapped Barney, and leaped for the poop ladder ahead of the man.

Midway up the ladder he turned and kicked out, and the man tumbled to the deck, lacking interest in further events.

Barney made out something of the trouble, by sound and sight. Old Lute battled alone—that was clear. The second mate was there, but standing aloof. The boatswain was there, making a great talk to the men, who were mobbing and pounding at the captain. Bits of panting expletive jerked out the men's grievance. It was mainly about the pumping and the rum. The skipper, it seemed, had beaten a man with a belaying pin for demanding both rum and a windmill as an alternative to the men refusing duty.

"Here's Read! Let him have a wallop at the old stiff!" a sailor roared, stepping out of the mob and shoving Barney in.

Lute was bleeding from a dozen bruises. His eyes flickered out from among the thudding fists and lit upon the man whom he had disgraced before all hands. Fear clouded those evil eyes for an instant.

In a swift, searching glance Barney saw the pale, wide-eyed face of Muriel at the chart room porthole. The doors had

been shut, and a man stood at each. No chance for Lute to dodge below, for shelter or for a gun.

The mutineers fell back to let Barney through. They had treated the disgraced mate as mutinous sailors would be likely to do, but now they saw a tremendous chance to look on at the settling of a score between the broken mate and the man who broke him.

"Sock it to him, Mr. Read!" they yelled.

Lute, stumbling on shaky knees, blinded with bloody sweat, facing the inevitable end, seemed to bow his gray head in despair. Barney faced him grimly. In the flooding moonlight he swiftly sought a weapon.

The man standing by the companionway door on that side gripped a fourteen-inch brass belaying pin like a club. He grinned expectantly. All hands had piled upon the skipper and hammered him; but when the finish was in sight, every man of the forecandle gang preferred that some other hand should deal the final blow. Who better than the broken mate? He had a reason, certainly!

"Give me that!" snapped Barney.

He snatched the brass club from the man's hand and felled him with it. A growl went up from the mob. Then Barney attacked them like a fury. The brass pin thudded home on heads and guarding arms. Men fell down the poop ladders before the onslaught; but many of the men had pins, too, and numbers were woefully unequal.

The boatswain ran around, as soon as he realized the truth, to attack Barney from behind. Others rallied, until the battle surged back again, and Barney was forced against the chart room. Clubs rose above his head. A blow sent the captain to the deck in a heap. Barney's head rang under savage blows. The fight seemed over.

"Here, Barney!" cried a trembling, panting voice at his ear.

Through the chart room porthole, suddenly opened from inside, Muriel Grey thrust a pistol—Lute's own gun. As Barney's fingers clutched it, he knew that it was cocked for service.

There was no time for palaver. Barney fired, and the boatswain fell, screaming. The other mutineers fell back again.

A running figure came from the after companionway, and Muriel cried a warning from the porthole. Barney whirled and fired blindly, and the steward fell with a clatter of steel on the deck as his carving knife flew from his shaking hand.

The men huddled uncertainly at the ladder. The helmsman had left the wheel to see the fight. Now a breeze struck down, and the upper sails flogged gently. It was a moment to be snatched, and Barney snatched it. He ran at the men.

"Get to the braces! Brace her sharp up! Wheel there, bring her to her course! Jump, you swine!"

Men ran, cursing him and calling to each other that he was not the mate now; but Barney had a gun, and had been willing to use it. The braces were manned and the yards trimmed.

When the last man was off the poop, Barney brought the second mate to the ladder and threatened him with dire results if he did not hold the after part of the ship against all comers. Then he brought the girl out.

"Let's look to these men," he said, and knelt beside Lute.

Muriel knelt beside him, her face full of sweet concern in the moonlight.

"It was splendid of you!" she murmured. "After the way he treated you—"

"Nothing else to do. Don't imagine that it was any love for him," Barney retorted shortly, ripping away the shirt from the captain's throat to let him breathe.

In the midst of his examination, he could still find time to realize that the

pumps were not working.

"Make 'em pump, mister, and see they keep pumping, unless you want to drown with 'em," he told the second mate.

Again the clank of the pumps rose harshly above the rising harmony of the moving ship.

IV

The evil-looking old captain was battered so that it was dangerous to move him, but he was carried into the chart room while the boatswain and steward were overhauled.

The boatswain was cold, but the steward lived, and whimpered, as his kind will, instead of conserving his breath. The girl plugged the bullet hole in the man's chest, and he tried to look his thanks; but the grim, gasping old man on the settee kept his glittering eyes upon the steward, and seemed to attract him like a basilisk. The steward was powerless to ignore that gaze.

Barney glanced at the ship's position on the chart and then ran forward to take a sounding of the well. As he passed dose by the men, the pumps clattered around furiously. They seemed willing to accept his resumption of authority.

But there was a grievous amount of water now. No amount of hand pumping could clear the ship or keep the inflow down for long. Many a long league lay between her and a harbor; and the breeze moved her but sluggishly.

He went over the log again. The day by day positions alone might give him some idea of his chance of getting the Yolanda to safety. The scrutiny was discouraging. The daily runs had never been good, because of the ship's faulty lading. Besides, he saw the entry in the log which told the official world of his own disrating for assault upon his commander.

For a moment he saw red. Then the girl was calling him to hear something that the steward was trying to say, and he

went to her side. Old Lute hung over the edge of his settee, gasping almost as painfully as the steward, but there was a metallic light in his fast closing eyes which focused upon the steward's face.

"I can't make out what he's saying," the girl whispered.

Barney leaned lower. Again the steward tried to say something, but as he looked up and met those evil old eyes above him, he sank back and died without saying it. Lute, too, sank back upon his pillow, cackling hoarsely, with a sort of devilish triumph.

"Will you take care of Captain Lute?" Barney asked. His lips asked that, but every line in his expression said: "Can't blame you if you won't!"

While the girl looked down shudderingly, the skipper cackled again, as if to say:

"You don't dare refuse!"

"Of course I will," the girl replied. "Since you saved his life, I can't do less than try to keep it in him;" but even her sunny nature was not strong enough to make her appear in love with her task.

Barney went among the men. They looked askance at him.

"If you do your duty, men, I'll see that things don't go too hard with you," he promised.

"Can't do more than men's work," they grumbled.

"Do that, then—I'll ask no more," Barney told them, and went aft to sail his ship.

Hour after hour he watched the heavy swirling at the stern, which ought to have been a clean wake. Deeper and deeper the ship wallowed. He leaped among the pumping gang, shouting urgently for them to sing.

"A song doubles the gang, boys!" he told them, and made them follow him:

"Oh, Sally Browns a Creole Lady!

Way, hay, roll and go!

I'll bet she's got a yaller baby!

Spend my money on Sally Brown!"

The breeze freshened before dawn, and the ship made a furious commotion in the water, without making much progress. Presently two royals exploded like both barrels of a gun going off at once. Men labored aloft to clear away the wreck. The ship could not travel fast enough to take up any of the strain on her bursting canvas. The other royal went while the weary men were still in the rigging.

"Why don't he take to the boats?" they whined.

"Four of you come with, me, and we'll rig a windmill," Barney told them.

They went to work with all sorts of rod and wheel contrivances, making a forge and bellows, turning iron bars into cranks and bearings. By the middle of the forenoon they had set up the windmill, and the water gushed to its rattling clank.

"Hooray! That's talkin'!" they yelped.

When Barney took them aft and served out rum, they smacked their lips and gave him three cheers.

The breeze blew stronger. The morning was bright and sunny. The old ship wallowed no deeper, but she traveled no faster.

"How's Captain Lute?" Barney asked the girl.

"You ought to take some rest yourself," she told him. "All I can do for the captain doesn't take the horrid look out of his eyes. I'm not afraid of him any more, but I could hate him if he weren't so ill. Such evil eyes!"

"Don't worry about me, little lady. I'll have all the rest I want soon. Suppose you go to bed," Barney replied.

Neither went to bed. Barney sailed his sinking ship, because it was a sailor's duty so to do. Muriel Grey stayed with her stepfather, because it was a woman's duty to relieve pain.

Meanwhile the breeze hardened—not to more than a fine sailing weight, but the windmill worked like two, dragging the water out of the old ship until she began

to move fast once more, and Barney took heart anew.

"Come along, lads! Get the spare royal yard off the house and send it up on the main!" he roared.

While he did most of the work, men followed him, and the girl watched him with moist and glistening eyes. The yard was crossed, with the sail already bent, and Barney led the song that hoisted it:

"She's a fast clipper ship, and she's bound for to go!

To my way, hay, blow the man down!

With the girls at the tow rope she cannot say no—

Give us some time to blow the man down!"

"Damned if he won't get her home!" the men said as they went forward, no longer under the dreary burden of pumping.

Aft, the girl brought a hot meal into the chart room, and made Barney eat. Her eyes were warmly glowing and her cheeks were flushed as she waited on him.

"You must eat and rest, or you won't get my ship into harbor," she said.

Barney looked up at her in quick surprise.

"Your ship?"

"Yes—" she began.

Lute made a queer noise in his throat. Then, outside, on the breath of a windy gust, the windmill carried away and went screeching and clanking into the sea, and the newly set main royal cracked and shredded the sky with ribbons of canvas.

"You better take to the boats!" cackled Lute, in an ecstasy of evil triumph.

Barney leaped outside. The men were already milling aft, voicing their demand as they ran.

"Leave her! We can't do no more! We done all men can do!"

Barney, turning to the girl, saw that her eyes were wet.

"Don't be afraid," he said. "We're not more than sixty miles from a port of call

for traders. There's no danger, in this sea."

"I'm not afraid," she said shakily; "but the ship's all I have. She's not insured, and—"

"I understand," Barney said, patting her shoulder, while he told Lute more than a mere glance ever told a man before; "but your life's not to be thrown away because you lose everything else. It's precious to—to me," he finished with a rush. He swung around as Lute cackled again in his evil way.

"The boats!" bawled the men.

The second mate stood by in futile helplessness. Barney, looking around, saw that there was no more to be done.

"All right!" he cried. "Swing out both lifeboats! You," to the second mate "see if you can find provisions for them."

Barney went for the ship's papers, and for the few things he needed to navigate the boats to safety. Muriel went with him. As they went through Lute's desk together, they found private papers among the ship's documents. Back in the chart room they riffled through them, while the men yelled impatiently around the boats. The ship lay with her main yards aback, dipping into the seas. The captain seemed to sleep.

"Thought you said she wasn't insured," said Barney.

"He always told me that insurance was too costly—the Yolanda was too old, or something. He's always sailed her for me since my father died. I'm not a very good business woman. Why, is she insured?" Barney mutely showed her a full general insurance for a sum staggering to a plain sailor.

"And payable to him!" said the former mate.

Right there many things came to Barney's memory concerning the voyage—Lute's insistence on standing out to the westward; his refusal to rig a windmill; his relations with the boatswain and the steward. Now, as he turned around to

look at the gaunt figure of the evil old captain, supposedly nigh to death, he surprised upon Lute's face an expression which said: "Leave me behind if you dare!"

"No, old evil eye, we can't leave you behind!" he gritted. To Muriel he said: "Neither will we take him into the boats to rob you. We'll bring the ship in, and fool him!"

As he went about the business of forcing men back from boats already swung out, back to the dreary grind of the pumps, Barney had little doubt as to what the dying steward had tried to tell, or of the reason why Lute cackled so exultantly when the poor fellow died without telling. Worst of all was the grim suspicion that the old scoundrel had meant to leave his stepdaughter behind when he abandoned the ship, as he had planned to do. It was only the springing of a new and genuine leak that forced his hand. Barney believed that a hole had been driven through the ship's timbers, and controlled by Lute, from the beginning.

"You'll pump for your lives now, my lads! See here!" cried Barney.

He seized an ax and smashed in the planking of the boats. Then he drove the men to the pumps at the pistol end.

"Tell me where you made the leak," he demanded of Lute.

The old rascal grinned for all his pain. "You do me wrong, mister. Better trust to the boats. I need attention. Don't mean to let me die, do you?"

"You'll die before I let you make a fortune out of Miss Grey!" Barney retorted. "At that, I'll save you, and the ship, too. Tell me where the leak is to be got at!"

"You have a wicked mind," chuckled Lute. "The boats! You can patch 'em."

Barney went along to the pumps. He told the men they were working for a lady, who would reward them for saving her ship.

"We'll do what men can do," they

growled.

So they pumped her along. The breeze blew hard, and she began to labor. The men quit, and Barney sent them back with a bribe of rum and a promise of death if they refused to pump.

In the darkest hour before a gloomy dawn, when he reckoned that they were within twenty miles of a pleasant little island where broad golden beaches encircled a safe haven, he made the girl steer, and he and the second mate went to help at the pumps. Then, in the first gleams of real day, the girl cried out, and Barney ran aft, fearfully. The men again stopped pumping. The sea already washed through the scuppers whenever the ship rolled.

"Land! I see land!" cried Muriel excitedly, as Barney came up the ladder.

He turned to the men at the pumps.

"Just an hour more, lads! Just one hour for a lady!" he roared.

The weary men buckled to their job again, grumbling, but somehow dragging her through.

Barney ran into the chart room, for he needed to study the map of that island. Reefs and outlying rocks were plentiful. Old Lute watched him, saying nothing, but cackling dryly.

Barney gave the girl a new course, and the ship wallowed faster toward the land, now all green, pearl, and gold in the light of morning, with creamy surf all about its base, and birds wheeling over it. Even the second mate found his courage, and urged the men on. Perhaps the rum helped, but the bright sun, the balmy smell of earth and foliage, and the tang of weedy reefs did more; and, most of all, the approaching end of the Yolanda's terrible ordeal.

Barney stood in the door, midway of deck and chart room, conning the ship. The sea grew placid, and little birds settled in her rigging. Deep ground swells rolled her, and the reef surge staggered her.

At last she struck. She slid up a shelving, sandy beach and stopped with a shock that tumbled the men to the deck. They got sail off her, while a crowd of natives gathered to see.

Barney turned at a rattling cry from Lute. The old man lay writhing in some awful paroxysm that looked like unholy joy.

“So you’ve lost her for me after all!” he croaked. “Now get me into the boat. I’ll give you a present out of the insurance.”

He gasped, clutched his throat, and broke out again; but few words could be heard above the crew’s noisy mirth. The girl stood in the doorway with Barney, looking on in half pity.

“If you’d ha’ looked in the lazaret you’d ha’ seen where the leak is; but it’s all the same now. Get me to a doctor. Where’s Muriel?”

Muriel was in plain sight of him, but his eyes would not function. Barney stepped beside him angrily.

“And you let us kill ourselves pumping! Well, don’t laugh yet! I haven’t lost the ship for you—I’ve saved her for Miss Grey. When the tide leaves her, we’ll soon see all about your nice little leak.”

“Oh, Barney! Don’t be hard on him,” the girl said in lowered tones. “Look at him! He’s going to—”

Lute frothed at the lips, still grinning. He tried to stand up, but pitched forward on the floor in some sort of fit. He was dead before they got him into a canoe.

On the following day the captain’s body was buried by a missionary whom they found on the island. Then Barney reminded the girl that she was owner of the Yolanda. Her ship was beached, and was lacking both a master and a legal mate, since he himself had been disgraced and sent forward.

“You shall be captain, and engage your own mate, Barney. You told me that you have a master’s license, and certainly you have been worthy,” she said.

So Barney went to his job, with more

than a hope that before they sailed he might have another job to give the missionary.