

Bitter Voyage

By David Vern

Author of "The Golden Boneyard," "Secret of the Silent Drum," etc.

The sun boiled them and the sea was a shriveling glare, as they waited furtively for their new passenger: Horror was coming aboard. And then a fever ran through the ship, more personal and sinister than any plague, while a man's bones slowly turned to dust. A gripping story of a ship with two masters

THEY said the war had tangled up our Atlantic shipping, and they wanted me to come back from Shanghai to see what I could do about it, so I came. I spent four hours of a beautiful morning sitting around impressive mahogany conference tables, but in the afternoon I managed to get Buchanan alone.

J. J. Buchanan was the kind of a man you wanted in a situation like this. He saved the charts and the diagrams until he'd spoken to you for half an hour. After that you didn't need them. In the five years I'd spent with Iverness Maritime, I'd come to appreciate Buchanan just from reading his memos and speaking to him over the phone, Shanghai to New York, ten dollars a minute. Buchanan didn't waste money, so this was the first time I'd ever really spoken a whole sentence to him.

We put in an hour smoking and talking. Things like, "You agree we ought to put so-and-so back in such-and-such a department?" and we always agreed. Until he mentioned Dr. Avin Simpson.

That's how I happened to hear the strange story of Simpson's first voyage, which I mean to pass on to you in about a minute. Because when I said I couldn't see my way clear to putting such a young man in a job that had beaten two good men already, Buchanan invited me downstairs to meet him. We went down; but when we got to the balcony that led to a large office directly under it something was going on, so we stopped.

A seaman, a big fellow the size of Buchanan, was standing with his legs apart and shouting at two men behind a desk. One of them was a clerk, but the other had a little gold Caduceus embroidered on his uniform sleeve. I wondered if this was Dr. Simpson, but he looked too old for the man I'd heard about.

The doctor seemed agitated, and we could barely hear him. "Look here, Mr. Franks," he said, conscious that the whole office was looking on, "there's nothing I can do. The checker at the hiring hall said you were on their sick list, and you're on ours. You were supposed to have kept that cast on for three weeks." He tapped a nervous finger on a pink sheet on the desk. "Let me have a look at that arm," he said.

"Like hell," said the sailor, stepping closer. "Since when do I let a two-bit medic swindle me out of a chance at a premium berth?" He pointed a savage finger at the pink sheet. "Whose arm is it?" he shouted. "You keep me on that sick list and I'll ram it down your throat!"

It was an ugly moment. I'd seen moments like it explode; they called for the smoothest kind of handling. The doctor licked his lips and took a step back. A girl at a nearby desk got up. Then, at the far end of the

room, a door opened and a young, slender fellow in white trousers and an open shirt stood in the doorway. I met Buchanan's glance. "That would be the redoubtable Simpson?" I asked. He nodded.

This Simpson walked down the room on rubber-soled shoes, coming quickly. He stopped at the desk and picked up the pink sheet. "Hold out your right arm, Abe," he said.

The sailor hesitated, then raised his arm. Simpson took the sailor's hand and stretched the arm out full length. Then he raised his own right hand, holding the palm sideways. Suddenly he hammered his hand down. The blow landed just below the sailor's elbow. A stifled, staccato cry of pain burst from the sailor, and he went halfway to his knees before Simpson caught him.

"That's a bad arm, Abe," Simpson said. "We'll have to put a new cast on." He made a notation on the pink sheet. "Come on, Abe," he said. "I've got some good applejack if you want it."

Just like that, you understand. The seaman caught his breath about the same time I did. He wiped the sweat off his face, picked up his jacket and followed Simpson across the room. Halfway back, Simpson saw us in the balcony and he walked over right below us. "Hi!" he said cheerily to Buchanan. "I'm coming up for dinner tonight. Tell Helen." He waved and went back to his office.

That wave of his made it clear to me. I'd been thinking he looked like the college kids you see around tennis courts. Young, clean, open-faced, about five feet nine, hair the color of dark sand, rather pleasant. . . . But certainly not the same—

Buchanan coughed into his hand. "Helen's my daughter," he said with a slight smile. "Simpson's engaged to her."

"Interesting," I said, wryly, "but it doesn't explain it." I took another deep breath. "Buchanan," I said, "I'll be damned! Is that the one they call—is that snip of a boy—"

"He's twenty-seven," Buchanan said. "I know how you feel. One just doesn't swallow a local legend like Simpson the first time."

"Not so local. The redoubtable Simpson, they call him, don't they?" Buchanan nodded again. "Uh huh," I said. "I've heard stories about him. Some good ones too. But this job—"

We went back to the office. Buchanan wrinkled his forehead and lit a pipe. "Settle back," he said. "I'm going to tell you the story of Dr. Avin Simpson's first voyage. It happened almost five years ago, and it's the

story of a struggle between him and a fellow we'll call Captain Casey."

He smiled for a long, exasperating minute while he drew on his pipe. "That was the beginning of the legend. Maybe you'll understand."

CHAPTER I

THE CAPTAIN STRIKES FIRST

DR. AVIN SIMPSON stood at the pier, watching the big freighter *Typee* taking on the last of her cargo. The afternoon was well advanced, and it was time he

and a log-raft hammered slowly and insistently against the piling near him.

He was part of this now, Simpson thought, and there was an omen. The late sun stretched the shadow of a nearby bridge until the steel spiderweb of the bridge's cables fell over the dock, the piers, the warehouses, the ship and him, binding them together in a shadowy net of squares. Across the river, the high towers of lower Manhattan were becoming silhouettes against a green and crimson sky.

Young Dr. Simpson looked down at the oil-stained water and remembered what he had been told about Captain Casey, and what his first voyage might mean. Then he went aboard.

Complete Short Novel



The men held Casey while he smashed at them in convulsive fury

came aboard, but he wanted to stand there and watch and listen, because he was part of this scene now. And waiting would help calm him, he thought. He needed calming. He smiled to himself as he thought, *Pulse, 120; respiration, fast and shallow.*

The gray and white *Typee* rode low, the red stripe of her Plimsoll line inches over the water, and the ship strained her ropes in sympathy with the pull of the outgoing tide. Three lighters lay alongside, their cranes swinging up heavy crates marked with the trade names of automobiles and phonographs, and the careless letters of their destination: Puerto Cortez, Honduras.

The dock was noisy with the shouts of men, the singing of pulleys. Nearby, a donkey engine thundered as it struggled with boxcars from a railroad barge in the next dock; a coastal passenger ship, steaming into the East River, let go with a nerve-shattering whistle; boxwood

... "All right, Dr. Simpson." Captain Casey had been watching the loading, leaning over the starboard side when the second mate brought Simpson to him. He didn't turn around, and for a moment that was all he said.

But when the mate started to leave, he moved his hand slightly and said, "One minute, Mr. Foster. I'll want you to show the doctor to his quarters." Then he was silent again, until the silence became hostile, until Simpson became aware of his own breathing again.

By then he knew there was going to be no chance with Captain Casey. He could see it in the stiff line of the captain's smooth-shaven jaw.

"The *Typee* is the finest ship of the Iverness line." Slowly, the captain turned as he spoke, until he faced the doctor. "They told you that uptown, didn't they? They told you a lot of things, didn't they? You know

you're not welcome aboard this ship." He spoke quietly, in measured words. He was tall, heavily built, with a sun-baked, almost florid handsomeness that was the combination of good health and cleanliness. His blond-gray hair was neatly combed, his eyes were light.

"I'm the master here. Remember that." The captain turned his back again. "Now that we understand each other, Mr. Foster will show you to your quarters."

DR. SIMPSON nodded and said nothing. He followed the second mate forward to the deckhouse. The last cabin off the passageway was small and scrupulously clean. It held two cots, a chest of drawers, a knee-hole desk and a chair. The mate closed the door, sat down on one bed and held out a pack of cigarettes.

"I'll bunk here with you if you stay," Foster said. "It ain't too late to change your mind."

Simpson took the light and inhaled deeply. "You know," he said, "I started smoking the first day I had to cut open a cadaver in med. school. Wonderful habit—lets all the tension out." He took another drag. "They told me about him," he said. "It isn't as if I didn't know."

"Yep," said Foster, looking intently at his cigarette. "I been with the old man two years now. They told me too, but it's different when you find out for yourself." He was thin and red-faced, and his hair was falling out though he was a young man. He meditated on his words. "You know what's back of it, don't you?" he asked.

"Mmmmm," Simpson nodded. "Avoid things like that business last month on the *Robin White*, where half the crew came down with typhoid. This is a fine experiment, putting doctors on the large freighters, even when there aren't any passengers."

"To hell with typhoid," Foster said. He stretched his arms over his head. "That's what the old man says. The *Robin White* was near two weeks late getting into port. That couldn't happen to the old man. One thing about this ship: she's on schedule, like a damned express train, and she'd stay that way if the crew had to stand watch on crutches to do it."

An ash dropped on the bed and Foster blew it off. "Now you get a sawbones on a ship—Hell, this morning the old man gave the crew one of his talks. Warned them about getting ideas they could take vacations aboard ship by applying to the sick bay." He laughed. "Vacations—ha!"

Simpson stamped out his cigarette. "Where's the infirmary?" he said. "You mind showing me?"

"After house, on the poop deck. We call it a sick bay aboard ship," Foster said. He led the way back to the deck. "How long you been a doc?" he asked.

"I don't look that young, do I?"

"Yep." The mate grinned. "You look it, and more. You might be the youngest man aboard if you let your age get out."

The booms near the after holds were no longer being used as the two men walked to the poop deck. A tug had come into the dock and the last lighter was almost empty. Captain Casey stood where they had left him, leaning over the side.

The cabin into which Foster led the way was large and bare. A square table stood against a bulkhead near a narrow cabinet and a chair lay on its side in the middle of the cabin. Tacked on one bulkhead was a first aid

chart, an advertisement from a famous drug company.

The cabinet had one shelf. On it were some boxes of absorbent cotton and gauze bandages, a dirty roll of adhesive tape, a half bottle of peroxide, two bottles of iodine and a broken pair of scissors. On the floor of the cabinet lay some pink sheets labeled, *Medical Reports*, with the Iverness Maritime seal on them, and a dusty book: *The Family Doctor—One Thousand Common Ailments and Their Cure*.

"Mr. Foster," Simpson said, shaking his head, "the ship can't sail with the infirmary in this condition."

"The *Typee* sails in about fifteen minutes, doc," said Foster, his voice very low.

Outside, suddenly, the tug let go two sharp blasts.

The doctor looked past Foster, staring at the first aid chart. "You've got to help me, Mr. Foster. The captain won't—"

The mate was shaking his head. "You better not need help, doc, because you won't get it from anyone." He looked down at the deck, and his thin face was troubled. "Hell," he said, "I'm just the second. I get kicked around too. I've been carrying a master's papers for three years. If the old man boots me out, I'm out." He stepped over the sill. "You got to know it, doc," he said. "You're on your own here."

"I see," said Simpson. He ran a hand through his sandy hair. "I can't do anything with this," he said, half to the mate. "It isn't fair to expect any experiment to work this way." He pushed past Foster and went out on deck, then down the accommodation ladder.

IT WAS dark when Dr. Simpson returned, four hours later. The *Typee's* running lights were on, and the tug stood by, the orange glow of her boiler painting the dark water. The second mate was near the top of the ladder as Simpson came on deck.

"Where've you been?" he asked anxiously. "How'd you know we'd still be here?" He looked directly at Simpson. "The old man's going crazy in his cabin. He's been drinking for the last two hours. They won't let us sail until we get word from the front office."

"I know. I phoned them. They said they'd call the captain and hold the ship until I got what I needed." A truck came rumbling along the street that bordered the docks. It stopped at the *Typee's* pier and men sprang out. "Here it is," Simpson said. They were taking out three large crates from the truck.

"Listen, doc!" Foster took the doctor's arm. "Don't tell the old man you know anything about this. You don't know, understand?"

"Thanks, Mr. Foster," Simpson said. "But if he asks me, I'll tell him. I'm not afraid of him. This just had to be done."

The sides of the warehouse doors creaked loudly as they opened, and a man shouted up for a boom to hoist the crates. The second mate ran down the deck. He passed the deckhouse just as Captain Casey came out.

The captain was without his coat, and his sleeves were unbuttoned. Steadily he walked toward the doctor. "What's going on here?" he asked of the crew on deck. No one answered. The booms of the aft mast were being lowered. "What's coming aboard?" Casey said, his voice louder as he stared.

"It's medical supplies, sir," Simpson said, advancing toward the captain. "Mr. James of the main office said

I might get them when I called him. He said he'd hold the ship for me."

Captain Casey was standing quite close to Simpson. He backed away a step. His light eyes were almost invisible in the gloom, his large frame immobile, towering over the doctor. "Would you mind explaining, Dr. Simpson?" he said. "Do I understand you to be saying that you held my ship here to wait for your supplies?"

"Yes sir. I don't think it necessary to wait for the call any longer. Mr. James is only waiting for me to phone him."

The captain was standing about two feet away from Simpson. He took a short step forward and brought his right arm up in a swift arc. His fist smashed squarely into Simpson's face. The doctor fell against the rail, and he didn't move.

Later, when Simpson stirred and saw the second mate undressing him in his bed, he heard Foster mutter, "You wouldn't listen to me. A fine voyage this is going to be for you. A fine . . ."

The rest of it was lost when the tug hooted dully. The *Typee* was under way and the cabin bulkheads were dim and unsteady.

CHAPTER II

CARGO OF CHAOS

TOWARD the middle of the afternoon on the second day out, the *Typee* began to labor in a heavy sea. The clouds had piled up in layers. The sun continued to shine intermittently until the whipping breeze brought dark thunderheads from the horizon. After that there was a long twilight, and the sea smashed against the *Typee's* sides.

Dr. Simpson had been standing in the bow when he felt the first spasm of nausea seize him. He went below and lay down in his cabin, but it didn't help, and after a while he was sick. He caught a glimpse of himself in the mirror; his face was the gray-green of moldy bread, all but the dark stain on his cheekbone. He tried to sleep.

The singing was coming from amidship. Simpson's watch told him that he had been asleep forty minutes, but the singing had wakened him. An accordion suddenly joined in, and the melody became more evident. It was the old *Mademoiselle From Armentiers*. The words came faintly against the wind, but listening carefully, Simpson heard them.

Oh, the doc he's got a belly-ache, parlee voo
The Doc he's got a belly-ache, parlee voo
The Doc he's got a belly-ache
Stop the ship, for Heaven's sake,
Hinky dinky parlee voo.

Sometimes the verses were funny, and the singing grew louder. Simpson began to feel his head throbbing in rhythm with the music, and his pulse was racing. He wondered whether he would have gotten out of bed and ordered them to stop if he had been able.

The air had become thick and odorous. He tried to open the porthole, but it was jammed. When he opened the door, he saw a basin filled with stew in the passageway. The stew kept spilling over the basin's edges as the ship rocked; it was still warm, and the smell of it was choking. The instant Simpson had opened the door,

the singing on deck had stopped. They had been waiting for him to discover it.

The doctor closed the door, and laughter floated down the ship. He tore small strips from a handkerchief and stuffed his nostrils. He had been lying in the gloom for an hour when Foster came in. The mate sat down on his bed. "I got rid of that damn stew," he said. "There's a blow coming up. Ought to hit us soon." He started to take out a cigarette, then put it back. "You look like hell," he said.

"I feel a lot better now."

"Well, you don't look it." Foster lapsed into silence. "I'll be wanted on deck," he said presently, rising. "First dog is my watch." Before he opened the door, he added, "I'd have gotten them away if I didn't know the old man had put them up to it."

When the doctor woke again, the ship had stopped pitching. He sat up, remembering vaguely that Foster had come in again and left quietly after taking his oilskins. There had been rain after that. He had heard it falling on deck, distant and soothing. Now it had stopped.

The deck was still wet, and an occasional drop fell, but the easterly wind had cleared the lower horizon and stars showed. He stood against the rail and heard four bells ring, their sound clear and lonely. Steps sounded on deck, and someone came hurrying along on the port side and disappeared into the deck house. When he came out, he saw Simpson. It was Foster.

"Looking for you, doc," he said. "Glad to see you're all right. Don't like to bother you, but I'd like to borrow the keys to those new cabinets you got in the sick bay. You mind?"

"Why do you want the keys?"

"Nothing important. Somebody slipped on deck. He said not to bother you. All he wants is for me to give him some cotton to stuff in his mouth.."

"In his mouth?" Foster was silent. "I'll have a look at him. Where is he?"

"In the sick bay. Look, doc, you don't have to go. It's nothing at all. Only reason I'm asking you is because this is Hales' watch and he doesn't know you."

THERE were three men in the sick bay. They had turned on the large standing lights that Simpson had screwed into the floor. One of them sat on a white enameled stool, holding a blood-stained handkerchief in his mouth. The other two stood beside him. When Simpson entered the room, they all looked at the second mate. They had drawn up in a close circle in the middle of the white furniture, uneasily, it was clear. There was blood on the floor.

Simpson walked to the man who was sitting and took his hand away, and pulled away the bloody handkerchief. "How did this happen?" Simpson asked.

Foster filled in the momentary silence by answering quickly, "He hit his face against the ventilator in the fo'c'sle."

The doctor took out his keys and opened a steel cabinet. He turned on another light and began taking out several instruments.

"Doc," one of the men said, hesitantly, "all Joe wants is some cotton. He's all right."

"Are you all right, Joe?" Simpson asked. Joe was nodding his head when Simpson looked up. "Fine," said

Simpson. "Now we'll stop the pain before it drives you crazy." He wiped away the tears that were running down the man's cheeks, then squirted a hypodermic syringe on the floor while he kept speaking. "As soon as this takes, the pain will stop." He opened the seaman's mouth and slid the needle into the blood-smeared gums; they were bleeding so profusely it was impossible to keep them clean.

"Doc," said the same man who had spoken before, "If you don't—"

"I work better without interruptions," Simpson said evenly. "Now, Joe, you've broken your upper incisors clean off, flush with the gum. I think the bone's all right, so the best thing to do is let them stay that way until you can get a dentist to make you a couple of pivot teeth. You beginning to feel a numbness in your mouth? Good. Now, this upper left canine is almost out. I can pull it easily enough and it won't hurt. But I'll have to sew up the lacerations here—"

"Alex!" a voice called from the deck. "You there?" Hale, the third mate, climbed up the poop and came in. He blinked in the light. "Captain Casey wants the watch down in number four hold." His eyes had become accustomed to the light, and he hesitated when he looked at Joe. The blood was still running and the sight wasn't pleasant. "Cargo's shifted," he said to Foster.

"All right, Mr. Hale," Foster said. "Alex and Buck, you report to the captain. I'll stand Joe's trick. Be along in a minute."

Later, when Simpson remembered the events of that night, he saw Foster's face the way it had looked when he said, "Doc, get through with him as fast as you can." The light had defined his features sharply, almost harshly, and there was more urgency in the thinness of his lips than in the words he said, though he whispered them. It was a look of expectancy, suspended and almost fearful.

The doctor saw the same look in Joe's eyes when he went back to him: an attitude that combined waiting and listening.

WHEN Captain Casey climbed the ladder to the sick bay, Simpson knew who it was before he had entered. Although, strictly speaking, the captain didn't enter at first. He kept one hand on the doorknob and looked in. "Mr. Panelli," he said, "didn't you hear the order to the watch? Why aren't you down in the hold?"

"He can't answer you, sir. I've got a forceps in his mouth." Simpson turned back to Joe. "He heard your order, but he's in no condition to work."

"The order was mine, doctor. Did you countermand it?"

"No sir. No one had to. This man is on the sick list."

"By whose order?"

"My judgment, sir." Simpson could feel Joe Panelli's breath coming quickly over his hands as he fastened the forceps more securely. "I'm ship's doctor. I'll file a detailed report."

Casey walked into the room then. "Take that damned thing out of his mouth. I want him in the hold. We've had meen lose teeth before. It isn't important."

"It's important to him, sir. He'll be able to work tomorrow, but if I don't help him, he won't be able to eat."

Casey said, "Did you hear me?"

The doctor took out the forceps. His hands fell to his sides. "I'm afraid I can't obey that order, captain. You stay put, Joe." He pushed Panelli back to the stool,

and turned again to Casey. "You can put me in irons after I'm through, but not until then."

Rapidly, the captain strode across the deck to the steel cabinet. He swept his arms across the glass shelves and threw the instruments to the deck. Two heavy bottle crashed into the bulkheads, staining them and filling the room with the sharp odor of alcohol. He couldn't open either of the other cabinets, so he swung back a chair and smashed it against them until their sides buckled. He wheeled around with the chair, kicking the glistening instruments under his feet, and threw the chair at one of the stand lights. The bulb exploded and glass flew in a thin shower. When he raised the chair again, he saw Simpson and stopped.

The doctor was holding Panelli with one hand. In the other he held a long, thin scalpel. He stood completely immobile; even his breathing seemed to have stopped, only his fingers moved on the scalpel, and his eyes were fixed stonily on Casey. He might have been rooted with fear, like Panelli. He might have been poised.

Casey met his eyes, and suddenly he began to laugh quietly. He put the chair down and brushed a splinter of glass from his coat. The laughter ended as abruptly as it had begun. "Doctor," he said, and his voice was almost pleasant, "before this voyage is over—" He didn't finish. He let the words hang in midair and walked quickly out of the room.

When the doctor cleaned up the room, Joe Panelli didn't raise a finger to help him. Simpson cleaned the instruments, swept the deck, put new bulbs in the battered stands. Panelli didn't utter a sound even after the doctor was through with him. They had sat close together for more than an hour then, and they were both exhausted.

Just before Simpson turned off the lights, he saw Panelli looking at him; and whether it was fatigue or the slow relaxing from pain, or something else—because Simpson had seen people cry in hospitals and knew that often there was no reason for it—whatever it was, he thought Panelli was on the verge of crying. But of course, the moment he saw it, Simpson turned aside and went out.

CHAPTER III

RESPIRATION FAST

THE remarkable thing was that only Avin Simpson foresaw what would follow the episode in the sick bay, which was—nothing at all. Simpson told Foster nothing would happen and nothing did. He based his foresight on an understanding of Captain Casey. Whether his supposition would have proved true had the voyage remained a normal one—

But it didn't. Off Puerto Cortez, the whole business blew up without a fair trial.

"You see," the doctor had said to Foster one day, "when the captain hit me the night we left port, it wasn't because he thought I'd questioned his authority. If he'd thought that, he'd have acted according to law and clapped me in irons. No, he socked me because he felt I had *ignored* his authority. And he went right to the heart of it when he began to smash the infirm—the sick bay."

Foster looked blank. "I've lost it again," he said.

"It's simple enough. I'm aboard to do a doctor's job, and I'm going to do it. When the captain ordered me to

send Panelli out, as his subordinate I should have obeyed. But not as a doctor. Am I fool for believing in the mandate of my work?

"That's what galls and enrages Captain Casey; the thought that someone claims another, not necessarily prior, authority, even if it's no more than an ideal." Simpson added dryly, "Not such a strange ideal, either. It's more a way of living."

"But why in hell should he want to smash the sick bay?"

"Well," said Simpson, "this ship is the captain's church, and he leads it." The doctor half smiled. "The sick bay is something he considers a heretic's altar."

Foster nodded. "I told you the same thing, now that I see what you mean. I told you the captain's the boss here."

"I never denied it. Anyway, I don't see that he can do anything much now. When his anger died down, he realized that wrecking the sick bay was no answer. He's got to find a new way to get at me, and I don't think he can."

"You mean you'll keep on this way?"

Simpson said quietly:

"I'll keep doing my job."

Simpson used the same words during dinner one day, in a conversation with Captain Casey. It was toward the close of the meal that Casey, sitting at the head of the officers' table, remarked, "Dr. Simpson?" with an odd inflection. "May I congratulate you on the growth of your practice?"

Simpson drew his breath in slowly. "Thank you, sir," he said. It meant that Casey had found out after all, and the crew would be more reluctant than ever now.

Presently the captain said, "I presume you've made out medical reports in every instance? I'd like to see them when we tie up in Cortez, if you don't mind."

The doctor put down his coffee and surveyed Casey. "I'll keep doing my job," he said.

To most of the men at the table, the conversation was an enigma, and the doctor's closing remark obscure and gratuitous; but there were several who understood. Chief Engineer McAllister, for instance, who had cut his hand on a can of grease, and asked Simpson to come to his quarters to sterilize and bandage it. When he'd thanked the doctor, his customary heartiness thinned a little and he said, "I'm not afraid of the old man, doctor, but I have to live with him. It'd be just as well if he didn't know you'd helped me."

Dr. Simpson had gained something after the night in the sick bay. Foster said the crew didn't understand it, but they liked him.

They liked him, but it was Foster who had to tell the doctor that Shorty Ryerson had a cough that kept him awake all night. And Simpson had to make a guess diagnosis on Sam Carey, because Carey wouldn't tell the doctor himself. He probably had cirrhosis of the liver: vomiting blood, constant retching, pain over the liver, but the best Simpson could do was send the second mate around with yeast tablets.

Captain Casey, however, had extended his congratulations at dinner, and the doctor realized Casey knew everything that went on aboard ship and Simpson acknowledged it. He knew there was nothing Casey could do. But then, he didn't expect any part of what happened in Puerto Cortez, on their eighth day out of New York.

THE *Typee* had come within a mile of the shimmering green shore of Puerto Cortez when she was hailed by a dilapidated motor launch. The ship cut her speed down and the launch drew up alongside. Four men climbed up the Jacob's ladder, all of them dressed in white. They were with Captain Casey for five minutes, and then the *Typee* cautiously moved toward shore and dropped anchor.

Dr. Simpson was sitting in the bow and reading, and from there he had watched the proceedings without great interest. He knew something was up, however, because for the first time he saw the first mate, Guernsey, on the bridge with the captain though it was not his watch. The four men were also there.

After several minutes more, one of the men left the bridge and walked to the bow. "I'm Roger Farrow," he said. "Welcome to Cortez, Dr. Simpson."

"Thank you, Dr. Farrow," Simpson said, shaking hands. "Only we don't seem to be in Cortez."

Farrow smiled. "For all practical purposes, the *Typee* is in Cortez," he said. There was a trace of an English accent in his speech. He was slightly taller than Simpson, and though his hair was entirely white, his sun-baked face looked strong and his eyes snapped.

Yet, despite his hardy appearance, there was an indefinable, almost incidental seediness about him; it might have been the result of nothing more substantial than the fact that he wore no tie, or the way he ignored the droplets of perspiration on his upper lip.

"Matter of fact, doctor," he said, "that's what I want to speak you to about. I want your advice."

Simpson couldn't resist a grin. Roger Farrow, he knew, had been the doctor at the Honduras shore office of Iverness Maritime for fifteen years.

"Ah," Farrow said happily, "I see you're amused. Good." He paused. "Dr. Simpson, we've a problem on our hands. I'll be very direct. It seems the health officials of the city claim they've discovered traces of *bacillus pestis* in the harbor."

"What?" Simpson started, and recovered immediately. "You mean bubonic plague?"

"We needn't use that term, doctor." Farrow looked distressed. He took out a handkerchief and mopped his forehead. "Though that, of course, is what I mean. There probably isn't a gram of sense in what they say, but they insist, and they've quarantined the harbor."

"Naturally. They'd have to."

"Yes and no, doctor. Yes and no. That is, if we could accept what they say, by all means, the quarantine. Matter of fact," he went on suddenly, "if the harbor's quarantined, the minute the *Typee* goes in, she won't be allowed out. And the wharves are piled twenty feet high with the banana crop. The fruit would rot long before quarantine was lifted. You see what I mean?"

"It's a problem, all right," Simpson said.

"It's a disaster," said Farrow, "but there is a way out. That's what I want your opinion on. Suppose some time tonight several barges were to come out here, carrying the fruit. We could unload the ship, take on the fruit, and pull out quietly in a day or two. Work only at night; the ship's out of sight around this peninsula here."

Farrow smiled triumphantly. "No fuss or feathers. The damned quarantine intact, the fruit saved, and all of you neatly dispatched on time. How does it strike you?"

Simpson lit a cigarette before he answered. "It doesn't

strike me, doctor. How does it strike Captain Casey?"

"Frankly, he thinks the plan has merit. It's the only way of keeping the *Typee* on her schedule. Cortez is the only Atlantic port with facilities to service the ship. The only other Honduras port is Amapala, on the Pacific side. That means going down through the canal and back."

"And by then the fruit would rot? I see."

"Exactly. Now you should talk to Rico, the dock chief. He has the whole thing worked out. He knows officials and he can get us clearance papers from another port. They just wouldn't understand in New York. Banana republic; barefoot officials in bunches."

"Dr. Farrow," Simpson said, "I don't understand. Do you mean that you would help smuggle aboard contaminated cargo? Are you suggesting that I agree to that plan?"

"BUT there may not be one chance in a thousand that it is—" Farrow stopped. Captain Casey and one of the men from the launch were coming toward the bow. Casey stopped at the ladder, and the man climbed up. He was slender and dark, with a jaunty air.

Farrow looked annoyed. "*Que quieres aqui?*" he asked.

"*Tengo uno ideo magnifico,*" said the other softly.

"*Que es?*"

"*Si el medico sera al tierra algun tiempo, no tenemos la necesidad a fixar su fecha.*"

Farrow puckered his lips thoughtfully. "Dr. Simpson, Senor Rico Roas y Sanchez," he said. Simpson took the limp hand the other offered. Roas smiled broadly. Most of his teeth were gold. He looked as if he bathed in oil.

"What is this about my going ashore and my signature being unnecessary?" Simpson said.

"My word!" Farrow jumped. "I had no idea you spoke—" He traced a fingertip across his lips. "It is a thought, though, and much the best. We'll have you come ashore. I'll file a report: you were ill, needed rest. Then you can have a holiday until the *Typee* returns. By then all this nonsense about the quarantine will be over."

"I don't understand."

"There's a formality, you see. If there's a doctor aboard ship, the Honduras officials insist that he countersign all clearance papers, certifying they were issued at the port designated on them."

Roas smiled. "Hondurans are zmart *hombres*," he said. "We do not truzt our own officials."

"But if you're ill," Farrow said, "and not aboard the *Typee*, you're not remotely involved. Three weeks in Honduras can be a positive miracle."

"I don't see how that changes things," said Simpson. "The cargo can't come aboard."

"You mean you'd tell them in New York?"

"I'm not thinking about New York. I might have bubonic in the sick bay by the time we got to New York."

"There wouldn't be any bu—there wouldn't be any, and you wouldn't be aboard the ship."

"But I would," Simpson said. "Of course I would."

Captain Casey called out, "Come along, Roger. You're wasting time." He was standing close enough to have heard every word.

Simpson started down the ladder. "Captain, I'd like you to understand my position."

"But I do, doctor," Casey said, and turned to Farrow and Roas. "Now, Rico, you'll go ashore with Sequilla—"

"I'm not leaving the ship, sir," Simpson broke in. His

face was clouded and dull. "I don't want to make any trouble. I can't stand aside and let quarantined cargo come aboard."

Casey said, placidly, "You won't make trouble, doctor. This is my ship, and we'll load any cargo I like. Come along, Roger."

"No," Farrow said. "I think I'll stay for supper. Tell Sequilla I'll stay."

Casey walked away. Rico Roas bowed to Simpson, said, "Greatly pleased to meet you," and hurried after Casey

DR. FARROW took out a silver cigar case and impatiently bit the end off a long black cigar. He stood at the rail with Simpson and puffed away. "Trouble, doctor," he said. The launch was pulling away from the *Typee* and Roas waved, then the other two dark-skinned men waved. "Trouble, definitely," said Farrow.

Trouble, definitely. Yes, Simpson could see it coming too; it seemed to him he had been waiting for this since that night in the sick bay, that it had been impossible for things to happen any other way.

"Why do you shake your head, doctor?" said Farrow.

It was quite dark already. They had finished supper half an hour before, and Farrow and Simpson had gone on deck together. In the east there was a narrow line of white-blue. A breeze came from the shore, bringing the smell of land.

"Did I shake my head?"

"You did," Farrow looked toward the east. "We have a three-hour twilight down here. Beautiful. Why don't you stay?"

"What will he do?" Simpson said. "I keep turning it over in my mind."

"You're wrong. Whatever you're thinking is wrong, because you don't know Casey," Dr. Farrow sounded different, somehow. Or was it that at all? Was it not perhaps, Simpson thought, stirring himself from his half bemused state, that Dr. Farrow was beginning to sound like *something*? He was taking on an identity; there had been none until now.

Dr. Farrow had amounted to nothing more than a man who had spoken for several minutes to Simpson that day; but now this impersonal man seemed to be coming alive. The difference lay in the note of urgency that had begun to sound in his words, Simpson reflected. "I know what happened between you on the way down here," Farrow said.

"I'd begun to wonder if you did know. What do you think, honestly?"

"Honestly?" Farrow said nothing for a minute. "I left my cigar case on the table," he said, finally. "Excuse me."

The pale streak on the sea had vanished. Somewhere on shore there was music. It sounded very gay. Simpson closed his eyes. "Pulse; 120," he said aloud. "Respiration; fast and shallow." It seemed so long ago.

CHAPTER IV

PRESCRIBED FOR DESTRUCTION

SHORTLY after six bells, from the darkness on the starboard side, there came the rhythmic, hushing sound of steam. A guarded voice hailed the *Typee*. A lantern showed immediately on the bridge. Several of the crew

were on deck, swinging out the booms. In the quiet, even the gentle sound of the tug seemed loud.

Dr. Simpson went aft. A yellow beam of light flashed on the ship, and lanterns sprang into light on the sea. There was a string of barges behind the tug, the leading ones flat and empty, those behind dimly visible and piled high with canvas covering. Presently the first of them hit the starboard and subdued voices came from the barges.

"Mr. Guernsey," said Simpson, "the port is under quarantine. You can't load or discharge cargo."

"I'm following instructions, doctor," Guernsey said. "Stand aside, please."

Dr. Farrow appeared at Simpson's elbow. He took Simpson's arm firmly. "Doctor, you'll be a good deal better—" Simpson wrenched himself loose and ran to the rail. A man's head had appeared as someone from the barges climbed the Jacob's ladder. Simpson gripped the rail and shoved his hand into the man's face. The head fell from view, and from below a chorus of voices yelled.

"Doctor!" shouted Guernsey, running to Simpson. He held his hands away from his body, but he made no move. Instantly, the men from the holds directly below had begun clambering up on deck. "Doctor!" the first mate said again, "what in the name of hell are you doing?"

"Get back!" Simpson said harshly. "You're not going to take on any of that cargo." He stood there, facing Guernsey, while the shouting of the men on the barges kept up, and footsteps thudded on deck as Captain Casey came running together with others of the crew.

"You!" Simpson cried, turning on Casey when he saw him. "Tell them there'll be no loading." He was shouting at all of them, turning in a half circle. "You can't take that plague aboard!"

"Get out of here." Captain Casey's voice was a cold monotone as he walked toward Simpson. In the orange light of the lanterns, Simpson's face was impassive. "Throw that knife away before I break your arm off!" Casey had seen the long scalpel appear in Simpson's hand.

Simpson backed to the rail. "You won't load," he said.

Captain Casey stooped and picked up a crowbar.

"Casey!" Farrow cried. "Casey—stop it!"

Casey kept walking. "I'm going to break every bone in your body," he said. His voice was low and savage, his body bent forward. "Get below."

"Simpson, he'll kill you!" Farrow shouted, trying to hold back the captain. Casey jerked his arm away and sent Farrow sprawling with a push.

Simpson raised his hands, the scalpel in his right. His mouth was slightly open and he shook his head.

With a sudden thrust, the captain had lifted the crowbar and brought it down in a swift arc. It came down on Simpson's upthrust of his left arm, and the arm swung down and hung crookedly at the doctor's side. Casey was off balance, moving back, when Simpson lunged. Casey dropped to one knee and rolled over on the deck. The gleaming hyperbola of the scalpel missed him by a foot.

Simpson propped himself against the starboard rail again. His upper shoulder moved and his left arm dangled. In gasps, he said, "You won't—load," hardly able to speak. He had become covered with sweat.

The captain started toward him again, slowly raising the long crowbar. Someone cried out, "Stop him!" Farrow got in front of the captain and put both arms around

him. "Guernsey! Foster!" he shouted. "*For God's sake, help me!*"

FOR an instant longer the paralytic quality of violence held, and suddenly shattered. Simultaneously, several of the crew leaped to clutch Casey. They pulled him away without a struggle. His hands went limp and the crowbar fell to the deck.

He sat down on a hatch and kept his eyes on Simpson. He had never taken them away, never uttered a sound.

Then, with ruthless swiftness, soundlessly Casey had seized the crowbar and made a headlong rush for Simpson. Simpson tried to duck back, and the iron bar caught his crippled arm against the railing. It rang out as it hit part of the rail and leaped from Casey's grip, to fall into the sea.

By then the men were on the captain again. They held him while he smashed at them in convulsive fury. His breath was spurting in great hoarse wheezes, and now and again he cried out in unintelligible passion as he fought. Little by little the men subdued him, and the paroxysm passed. They took him forward to the deckhouse.

Five minutes later, Dr. Farrow came up on deck. His coat had been half torn off his back, and his white hair was hanging over his face. When he approached Simpson, the young doctor raised himself from his crouch near the rail. "You too, Dr. Farrow," he said.

Farrow went to the rail and called out, "*Vamos, chicos!*" The men from the barges had all climbed the superstructure of the tug, from where they had mutely witnessed the struggle on the *Typee's* afterdeck. "*Vamos! No carga esta noche! Pagan la boca sobre toda esa!*" He added, "Understand, Rico? Tell them to keep their mouths shut!"

"*Cargan dios!*" a voice swore back.

The tug's steaming grew louder. The lanterns on the barges went out. Slowly the barges moved away, vanishing into the darkness that surrounded the *Typee*.

"All right, Dr. Simpson," said Farrow. He was holding his face in both hands. "They're gone. There will be no loading in Puerto Cortez." He came up to Simpson and took the scalpel. He cut open the left sleeve carefully, holding Simpson's arm up. Two white slivers of bone stuck out, the skin bloody where it had been pierced. "Compound fracture," Farrow said. "Probably radius and ulna."

"Probably?" Simpson snorted. He was as white as wax, and his arm trembled as Farrow held it. In the cold breeze, he was sweating . . .

DR. FARROW looked up from the splints he was tying together. "Why don't you answer me?" he demanded. "What are you staring at? You haven't heard a word I've said."

Simpson said, mechanically, "You've been very kind. Thank you."

"Don't thank me. Don't thank me, please. Just listen to me. You've got to go ashore. I don't mean Casey. This is a bad fracture. I'm not the least bit satisfied with the way I've handled it. You've got to come ashore. Do you understand?"

Simpson nodded. "I'm going to get him. Remember what he said? He said he would break every bone in my body." The pain had worn him out. He sat listlessly, his eyes half closed, but there was a fire burning in them.

"Can't you forget that phrase?" Farrow looked anx-

iously at Simpson. "What's the matter with you? You look like a madman. Simpson!" His voice was sharp again.

"I'll never forget the way he said it."

"You don't know what you're talking about. I'm sick of hearing you talk about it." Farrow got up and began to pace the deck of the sick bay. Then he stopped and brought his face close to Simpson's. "You've got to come ashore. I told you you didn't know him. You're in a life-and-death struggle if you stay on. There are no rules for Casey, no right or wrong. He follows the rules as long as he wins with them, *but he must win!* Don't you see? He'll win without the rules; but he'll win!"

"Let me think," Simpson said quietly.

Farrow ran his fingers stiffly through his hair and groaned. "You've gone crazy." He stood up dazedly. "Try to get some sleep. We can talk in the morning."

IT WAS early dawn when Dr. Farrow cautiously opened the door to Simpson's cabin. Simpson was sitting up in bed, smoking. "You've got to come with me, doctor," said Farrow. "The launch is back."

Simpson said, exhaling a long plume of smoke, "I'm staying."

Farrow sat down on Foster's empty bed. "Listen to me," he said. "Do you think I ordered those barges away last night? The orders were Casey's. He knew he couldn't hope to load secretly anymore. The news of that fight is all over the waterfront. The *Typee's* going to Amapala, to unload there. What more do you want? Come ashore. When the *Typee* returns, you can board her and go home."

Simpson lit a fresh cigarette from the butt he held. He shook his head silently, and shifted his broken arm to one knee. He hadn't undressed, hadn't even taken off his shoes.

"Simpson, can't I make you understand?" Farrow clenched his fists, and little muscles showed in his jaw. His eyes were haggard and bloodshot as he stared at Simpson. "Why do you think I stayed here yesterday after the launch left? Because I knew what was coming. I stayed with you, to make sure you weren't sent ashore unconscious. I know what's coming if you stay."

"You've only one arm now. If you're aboard when the *Typee* gets back, you won't be able to stop him any more." Farrow's voice was impassioned. "He'll see to it!" he said, shaking his hands. "He'll destroy you!"

Simpson threw a cigarette at Farrow. Farrow's hands trembled as he struck a match. "I've been thinking all night," Simpson said. "I think you're right about Casey. There are no rules for him."

"You do see it then? You know I'm right?" Farrow stood up. He sucked his breath in audibly. "Simpson, you're young. Maybe I'm not the man to speak to you. Maybe I've no right to; I'm no great example. But this once, listen to me."

"I didn't mean it that way," Simpson said slowly. "I want you to do something for me."

"What?"

"How long will it take us to get to Colon?"

"A little over two days."

"That's time enough," Simpson said. He took a crumpled bit of paper from his pocket, maneuvering awkwardly with his one free hand. Then he took out two twenty-dollar bills. "There's an address here," Simpson continued, "and money enough to pay for it." He hesitated momentarily.

"I want you to wire them. They've an office in New Orleans. The name is Peerless Pharmaceutical. Tell them to ship me the package air mail, deliverable to me, care of the ship at Colon. There are three separate things here. half a pint of croton oil; half a pint of oil of cantharides; fifty c.c.'s of parathormone, which is parathyroid extract in solution." He pushed the paper and the money into Farrow's hand.

The engines were starting. The deck vibrated and a loose hinge on the door chattered metallically. Dr. Farrow's face was inscrutable. The bloodshot eyes stared at Simpson, somber and intent. "Simpson," he said, "what are you thinking?"

"What I've been thinking all night." The smoke masked his face. He looked down at his broken arm. "The way he said it. I'll never forget it."

"Dr. Farrow!" someone shouted down the passageway. "We're raising anchor!"

CHAPTER V

KILL THE CAPTAIN!

THE heat came down upon the *Typee* suddenly that day, as if it had bided its time until now. A huge, fiery sun burned the decks and made the brass untouchable. Inside the cabins, the air was like steam. Dr. Simpson had fallen asleep some time after the ship had left Puerto Cortez, completely fatigued.

It was late afternoon when Captain Casey entered the doctor's cabin. He slammed the door and Simpson opened his eyes. He tried to sit up in bed, but he was too late.

Casey half sprang from the door to Simpson's cot. His eyes seemed pupilless and transparent. He grabbed Simpson's hair and battered his head against the bulkhead. He struck Simpson with both hands, heavy, brutal smashes with the full of his palms.

The doctor's head snapped from left to right as he tried to avoid the blows and couldn't. He was pinned in bed by the covering, and when he tried to free his feet, Casey punched him in the belly until he stopped moving. He kept hitting Simpson until the doctor's face was covered with blood and his eyes were closed from the swelling over them. Then he went out.

There hadn't been a sound from either man. Only the scraping of Casey's feet on the deck as he moved; the stinging, smashing sound of flesh on flesh; and once, the hard knock of the plaster cast when Simpson's sling tore and his left arm hit the bulkhead.

After a time, Simpson got out of bed. His legs buckled under him and he fell to the deck. He lay there until he was able to get up again, then he filled a basin with water from the sink and washed his face carefully. He was leaning against a bulkhead, facing the corner, when Foster came in; and he continued washing.

"Hello. I see you're up," Foster said. He took a cigarette from Simpson's pack on the chest and struck a match. "I've got news for you," he began to say, when Simpson turned around and reached for a towel. "Doc!" Foster cried out. The match burned his flesh as he stood there petrified, and he let it drop to the floor still burning.

Simpson took the towel away and looked at Foster from the thin line of his eyes. "I'm all right, Mr. Foster," he said. "Light me a smoke, please." A twisted smile came over his lips. "You see," he said, "there aren't any rules."

... The two days were like a hideous dream. Foster stayed with Simpson all of his free time, and the two men sat in the cabin, stewing in the heat, unable to breathe the fetid air. There was no time, only the alternating daylight and darkness, the steady hum of the engines, the ship's gentle rolling. And the heat like a curse, spoiling the water, draining their strength.

Foster brought Simpson some food, lit his endless cigarettes, and talked to him when Simpson wanted to talk. But Foster's watch came again the second evening; and when he left, the captain came in and beat Simpson again.

Later, First Mate Guernsey came in with Foster. Guernsey kept his eyes averted as he spoke. "Leave the ship at Colon, Dr. Simpson," he said. Foster's cot had been overturned in the struggle, and he was righting it. The bedclothes were strewn about the room. Simpson was holding cold compresses to his nose, and it was impossible to see where he was looking, but he shook his head.

"He's told me his plans," Guernsey said. "The quarantine cannot legally be lifted for three weeks more. We will unload at Amapala, but we are coming back to Cortez for the next shipment from the interior. He intends to make it impossible for you to stop him again." He had a slow, precise way of talking, and each word came from his small mouth like a tangible thing. "What happened yesterday and today will continue. You must leave of your own accord."

"No," Simpson said, shortly. "There will be no loading at Cortez." He took his hand away from his nose. Thick mats of blood lay on his upper lip. "This time," Simpson said—and he actually grinned, though he looked like a monstrosity—"this time Captain Casey loses. There are rules, even in solitaire. I'm going to show him what happens when he forgets that."

THE *Typee* struck five bells on the midwatch in Colon, and the doctor was on deck. A fat moon had been half swallowed up by the sea, and its light was cold and brilliant. There was no wind in the harbor; the heat lay dormant on the city with its endless wooden buildings, pressing it down until it seemed that the restless buzzing which hung over it was a protest, but even that was tired and weak.

The sea sloshed listlessly at the *Typee's* sides as she moved at reduced speed, and the calm wake purred and glinted with moonlit phosphorescence. Simpson stood on the afterdeck and gripped the rail with all his strength.

Just before they entered the first of the canal locks, a small, heavily-wrapped package was delivered to the doctor. Hale, whose watch it was, handed it over without a word. Simpson watched the little motor boat chug away and went to the sick bay.

All the larger scissors and scalpels were gone; the locks had been broken on the cabinets. He put the three bottles from the package into the cabinet he had found when he first came aboard ship, and went back to his room. He was still wearing the clothes he had worn the day they came to Puerto Cortez. Now he took them off and went to sleep. Foster lay down again, mumbling to himself until he heard the deep rhythm of Simpson's breathing.

Toward noon of the next day, after the *Typee* had sailed past Balboa and into the Gulf of Panama, Simpson and Foster were eating in their cabin when they heard footsteps in the passageway. The captain's cabin was the first one off the passageway as one came from the deck, and

the door that had opened was unmistakably his. Foster put down his plate and his face paled. "He's coming," he whispered to Simpson. "He thinks I'm at mess."

Simpson listened intently. The footsteps came down the passageway slowly, in Casey's heavy tread. They stopped just short of the door, then sounded again, but they were going away, out on deck. The doctor took a hungry bite out of a sandwich and spoke to Foster with his mouth full. "You know what Dr. Farrow would say?" he asked. "He'd say, 'trouble, definitely'."

Foster gulped and looked with distaste at his food, then inquisitively at Simpson. "Now what in the hell are you talking about?" he said, and he rubbed his jaw in apprehension. He was still listening for the steps to return, but Simpson kept eating.

"Got to keep my strength up," Simpson said between bites. "I made a nice showing yesterday. I hit him one on the head with this cast. Still," he added, pausing reflectively, "he may not be feeling up to it, today."

The second mate regarded the doctor silently. The sweat was pouring down Simpson's forehead, past a row of small, dark bruises spaced as closely together as knuckles, down into the still-open cuts over his eyes. He was battered and scarred and discolored, but it was not so much this as the unwavering brightness that seemed to shine through his barely opened eyes, that made him appear pathetic.

Foster brushed his face with a sticky hand. "Aaaaah," he sighed, shaking his head wretchedly, "aaaah, hell."

THE *Typee* was due west off Cape Blanco late the following day when the first mate knocked on the door of Simpson's cabin. Simpson had remained in his quarters since the time he had come on deck at Colon. When Guernsey entered, the choking, imprisoned heat of the room hit him like a blow.

"Thank you, doctor," he said, quietly, "I prefer to stand." He clasped his hands together and looked through the porthole. "I don't know whether you've heard about Captain Casey, lying here in this stink these two days. His face and hands are like raw meat. The salt air gets into his skin and he mauls his face. He's been drinking steadily since yesterday."

The mate opened his coat. "As far as I'm concerned, he can fall dead on the bridge, and welcome. But there is a lot of liquor left, and we're still far enough from Amapala to make the combination of his pain and his drinking something to think about. He's lying in the sick bay, up to his hair roots in alcohol, if you're interested."

Simpson put on his coat. "You know, Mr. Guernsey," he said as he followed the mate out, "if things hadn't worked out the way they did, I think I could have been happy aboard this ship."

"Thank you, doctor," Guernsey said. He never looked at Simpson when he spoke. "I wonder if the captain is too drunk to be able to express his gratitude." The precision of his speech gave the words an ironic shading that was perhaps not intended.

Captain Casey was sitting in the white chair he had thrown at the lights not so many days before. His head rested on an arm folded on the wooden table. His breathing was harsh and uneven and his eyes were closed. Even in the gloom Simpson could see the blisters that covered the captain's face. The skin over his cheekbones was gone, and under the thick stubble of unshaven beard his skin

was inflamed. His hands looked as if they had been held over a fire. Simpson picked up one of the seared hands, examined it, and stood for awhile in thought.

He went to a cabinet and took out a hypodermic syringe. From a small package he took a vial and filled it with the contents of a bottle on one of the shelves in the old cabinet. Following Simpson's quiet instructions, the mate took off the captain's whiskey-stained coat and rolled up the shirtsleeve of his left arm, then rubbed alcohol under the biceps. Simpson had to rest his broken arm on the table when he sank the glistening needle into the captain's arm.

Casey's eyes opened. Dreamily, he watched the liquid in the syringe vanish, and when he looked up, his blood-streaked eyes met the doctor's. For seconds the two men stared at each other, until the mate touched Simpson's elbow.

That seemed to break the spell. The doctor withdrew the needle and spoke to Guernsey. "This is the beginning of an extraordinarily interesting phenomenon known as Von Recklinghausen's disease," he said, finding the words difficult to pronounce through his swollen lips. "It will need treatment every day."

"Naah!" It was more of a sullen, growling sound than a word. Casey pushed himself erect. "No!" he said loudly. "Nothing every-day—" He was twisting his dirty coat with his raw hands. "You think you'll—get away from me!" He took a step toward Simpson, swaying. His red-rimmed eyes were like bits of glass, and there was dried spittle on his lips. "You think—I'll come to you—now," he panted. Suddenly he swung the coat, bringing it down like a whip across Simpson's battered face. "Get back to your hole!" Casey spat out. Guernsey moved swiftly and caught the captain's arm before it could descend again. He held Casey until the doctor was gone.

Minutes later, Simpson heard a clamor on deck. Men were running aft from the fo'c'sle and bridge, and for a while there was incoherent shouting echoing through the ship. Then Foster burst into Simpson's cabin, his mild, thin face feverish, his mouth working loosely.

"Doc!" Foster cried, "Guernsey just tried to kill the old man!"

"What?"

"Yeah. With a scissors." Foster half fell to his bed. He held his head in his hands. "Someone heard them shouting at each other. When we broke in the door to the sick bay, the old man had Guernsey on the floor, unconscious."

"Where is Guernsey now?"

"They locked him in the brig. The old man's on the bridge." Foster groaned. "Doc," he said, hopelessly, "I'm leaving the ship at Amapala. I can't stand it."

CHAPTER VI

THE LAST PATIENT

THE *Typee* docked at Amapala twenty hours later, in the middle of the night, with Captain Casey on the bridge. His face was no longer as raw as it had been. His hair was neatly brushed, and he stood stiffly at the bridge rail in spotless white. When the ship tied up, he watched First Mate Guernsey cross to the pier as he left the ship, and then retired for the night.

Early in the morning, when the captain went ashore,

Dr. Simpson went to the galley and had a leisurely breakfast. When he came out, he found Dr. Farrow standing amidships, watching the *Typee* unload. Dr. Farrow surveyed Simpson grimly. "Well, doctor," he said, "experience has left its mark on you."

Simpson grinned. "All the way across Honduras for the sake of that observation?" he asked, shaking hands.

"No," Farrow said, incisively. "An errand of mercy. That's the term, I believe?" He snapped his silver cigar case shut, and he swept the ship with his dark eyes. "Let's get ashore," he said. "I've a few things to tell you. Don't worry—the damned ship'll be in the damned port when you get back."

... From the high green cliff the placid, simmering sea stretched away endlessly. Below, between the cliff and the sea, a little village squatted and sweltered in the sun. Its unpainted shacks and colored tile houses formed a bright mosaic which was held together by interlocking shadows that looked like black pools of oil.

A man and a small boy were leading three burros up a dusty, winding road, and the boy whistled beautifully to a solitary bird that circled in the cloudless sky. Farrow and Simpson sat on the running board of the ancient Durant phaeton that had served as their taxi, and watched their half-naked driver try to roll a cigarette.

"... and when I looked up from the card table," Farrow was saying, "I saw Guernsey at the hotel desk. Naturally, he'd come to the only hotel in town looking for a doctor. Two o'clock in the morning, and Guernsey looking for a doctor, with his hands trying to keep his nose from falling apart. Because your Captain Casey wouldn't allow him to come to you, you see."

Farrow traced a pattern on the ground with his sandal. "I don't know what he'd done if I hadn't been there. There is no doctor in Amapala at present. There were two last week, but one of them ran off with the other's wife, so the one who was left behind blew his brains out and had a funeral with a ten-piece band. Well, I patched up Guernsey's nose and he left for Nicaragua. Said he knew some people in Corinto, I think it was."

"You mean he left the ship for good?"

"My word, it was good. And why not? Didn't Foster sneak off this morning?"

"How do you know?"

"I've seen Casey."

"Oh," Simpson said.

"Yes, 'oh.' All the damned 'ohs' you want. I've seen him and if he finds anyone in Amapala who can identify skin burns from croton oil, you're as good as dead. And I very well mean dead." Farrow looked intently at Simpson. "Would you mind telling me exactly what you were trying to do?" He waved a hand at Simpson's face. "Revenge for the—experience?"

Simpson shook his head and was silent. "Any new developments on the quarantine?" he asked, at length.

"None, aside from several post mortems I attended," Farrow said, in a leaden voice. "Bubonic; all of them. The harbor's officially shut, but once or twice a week they'll be loading around the peninsula." He looked out at the sea. "That's why you're getting off the ship. You've a clear case. First and second mates left. The captain beat the doctor into submission, and the first mate tried to kill the captain, partly because he couldn't stand by any longer, partly because—"

"What?" Simpson said. "You mean Guernsey tried to kill Casey because of me? Why don't you finish?"

"There's no finish. Casey radioed that he wasn't taking on any cargo at Amapala. That means he's going back to Cortez."

Simpson's teeth gritted imperceptibly. "Like hell he's going back. What is this about Guernsey?"

"Will you stop those blasted questions?" Farrow snapped. "I'm no clairvoyant. Guernsey didn't trust me, and rightfully. You shouldn't trust me either."

"Why not?" Simpson said quietly. "You haven't asked me what I'm doing with the parathormone. And you've medical texts at home." He half sighed as he went on, "No, we both knew that Casey was going back to Cortez. I remember what you said the morning we left Cortez: 'If you're aboard when the *Typee* gets back, you won't be able to stop him any more.'"

"No, we both knew, and had no doubts. Casey has been playing his game since then, and so have I been playing mine. He dealt the cards; I'm still standing pat. There will be no loading at Cortez."

Simpson watched the driver clumsily spilling tobacco over himself, and reaching into a pocket he threw him a package of cigarettes he had bought in town. The driver's face lit up and he cried voluble thanks.

"He's been waiting for that," Farrow said sourly. "He can roll them like a machine, the humbug."

"I can't smoke them anyway. Too strong."

"You give up very easily, don't you?" Farrow said dryly, rising. "Let's go back to town. You've got that crazy look on you again."

"Have I?" Simpson said.

THE *Tepee* left Amapala with her holds empty, her bow riding high, whipping the sea aside in long, sleek rollers. Through the dead heat and a dead sea she made her way south. All day the deck was silent. In the mess room there was little talking. The figure of Captain Casey stalked the ship.

The captain came into Simpson's cabin an hour after the ship had sailed. He held several folded papers which he threw on the bed that had been Foster's. "Doctor," he said, "those are clearance papers, from Amapala, stating that the *Typee* took on her cargo there. I want you to sign them and bring them to my quarters." He paused. "The longer you delay," he said coldly, "the more I will like it."

"You should enjoy the voyage, sir," Simpson said. He made himself comfortable against a pillow, and added, "What would you say, Captain, if I told you I had wired to New York and informed them of your—"

Curtly, Casey interrupted. "You're not the type."

"Then we do understand each other, at last," Simpson took a long inhale on an ever-present cigarette.

"What are you staring at?" Casey said. He held his hands up, palms open. "Do you think I require your expert attention? Here," he said softly, and smashed the back of his right hand against Simpson's face. Again and again he struck the doctor, until his still raw hands were cracked and bleeding.

That night, Hale, the third mate, came to Simpson's cabin. There was no light, and he addressed Simpson, facing Foster's bed. He mumbled in a subdued way. "... be so good as to do what is necessary to make it operate, and I will do the rest."

The doctor turned up the light. From the several bottles that Hale had brought, Simpson took one and filled the hypodermic. "Rub the biceps with alcohol first," he said. "Don't jab with the needle; break the skin and slide it in."

"Thank you, doctor," Hale mumbled. He was just a little older than Simpson, a small, frightened man who was growing stout. "I appreciate this very much. I hope you realize I am merely obeying orders."

Simpson nodded and put out the light.

That day was the last time Casey came to Simpson's cabin. Now and again, Casey's footsteps would sound in the passageway, but he never again came in. Several times Simpson saw the captain, but that happened most frequently on the first days of the voyage back to Puerto Cortez.

For, as the days passed, the captain left his quarters less and less frequently, seldom stirring from them for more than an hour. Then he would emerge and take the bridge, standing under the awning. Carefully he would examine the charts and indicate a hair's difference between the compass mark and the lubber's line. A moment in the strong sun, sighting with the sextant. Then, having said no more than a word during the hour, he would return to his cabin.

His skin bore only traces of the blisters and burns that had been there; but there was pale fire in his eyes, and a deadly deliberateness in all his movements.

Coinciding with his retirement, Dr. Simpson gradually emerged from the deckhouse, spending the days basking in the sun on the poopdeck. Twice a day, Hale went with him to the sick bay and had the hypodermic prepared. Little by little, Hale was wearing down. He was standing two and three watches at a time, and occasionally the bosun would take the bridge at night to spell him, morbidly interested in the progress of the ship.

Otherwise, the voyage was quiet and without incident. One day McAllister, the chief engineer, sat with Simpson for a while on the poop. Simpson had been glancing over something that looked like clearance papers, but McAllister didn't ask. He was no different from the rest, though he was bolder. When the others saw Simpson, they always looked at him carefully, watching his broken face heal; McAllister had come closer to look. He had nothing to say.

PAST Colon, Sam Carey came to the sick bay with the doctor, and later agreed to stay in the fo'c'sle on the sick list. The cirrhosis had developed liquid. The long-range diagnosis had been accurate, but he was beyond yeast now, and fear of treatment had allowed it to happen. But it seemed as if fear had died away. Sam Carey was on the sick list, and nothing happened.

And then, one day from Puerto Cortez, the crew knew that the captain was drinking again. It became apparent that the fear which had sailed with the ship for almost twelve days had only been lying dormant. It was like a thing alive, sleeping while the captain slept, waiting for the moment of its awaking.

Now a fever ran through the ship. She was like someone ill, and the illness affected everyone aboard. Hale stood the watches alone most of the time, though they said he sometimes talked to himself. He would mumble that the captain wasn't feeling well, that he hadn't touched his food. His concern was a strange one, a child-like attachment to something he feared.

He came to Simpson once, and saw the clearance papers serving the doctor as a bookmark. He went away without saying anything, only to return and ask for the hypodermic.

"You would be amazed to see him, doctor," Hale said. "He is always drunk, but he keeps himself very clean. He shaves by himself, and his hands aren't steady, but he doesn't cut himself."

He kept looking this way and that, throwing his weight from one foot to the other as he kept speaking. "Today he asked me if I could see anything wrong with him, but I couldn't. What do you think it is, doctor? No one can run the ship as well as he does. He hasn't even checked our course all day. What do you think it is, doctor? He looks so well, and yet . . ."

Swiftly, the *Typee* sailed to Puerto Cortez with her holds empty.

Sunday at noon, a moment after the afternoon watch had come on, Captain Casey took the bridge and raised the peninsula that jutted out from the harbor of Puerto Cortez. He himself gave the order to stop the engines. After soundings, the anchors plunged into the sea and their cables sang. Then the master of the *Typee* descended from the bridge and slowly started walking to the poop-deck.

He wore spotless white. His hair was brushed back and his face was freshly shaved and glowing. In one hand he carried his cap, holding it away from his body. When he climbed up the poopdeck, Dr. Simpson put away his book and stood up.

"Did you sign the clearance papers, doctor?"

"I'd have brought them to you if I had," Simpson said quietly. "I can't sign those papers because this ship won't load anything from this port. I've said so before."

Casey's glance never wavered. The cap he held in his left hand fell to the deck.

"Don't, sir," said Simpson.

But Casey's hands had closed and he had taken a step toward the doctor. The instant he closed in, Simpson pulled his broken arm close to his body, and his right arm stabbed into the captain's chest. A short, sharp cry burst from Casey, almost covering the snapping noise that had preceded it by an instant.

Then he surged forward, and again Simpson brought his body around, burying his fist in the captain's side. This time Casey went down on the deck, hitting a kneecap as he half spun to break his fall. There was a faint clicking sound as he struck the deck. He fell over on one side and violently moved an arm to stay his fall. The arm shivered and gave, and the captain lay full length on the deck.

"Don't move, sir," Simpson said, standing over him. Casey's face had gone white. He was gulping in air with his mouth wide open. Half the immaculate uniform was covered with a film of dirt. "Don't try to move, sir," Simpson said. "You'll have to be carried to your quarters." He stood rigidly, his face as pale as the captain's.

Casey closed his eyes in pain and tried to lift himself with his other arm. He clutched the rail and pulled. A series of brittle snaps sounded, and his hand fell limply to the deck. Simpson got down on his knees beside the captain and took one of his hands in his own. He took the left little finger and applied pressure. It snapped in his hands.

"Do you see, sir?" he said, very softly. "I could break every bone in your body." Casey's eyes remained closed.

He had lapsed into unconsciousness. Then Simpson took the short blue automatic out of the captain's coat pocket and hid it before he stood up again.

THE sun poured in through the portholes, and the large cabin seemed very cheerful. The bulkheads were covered with the pictures of ships on which Casey had sailed. Over his desk the *Typee* was framed, painted against a tropical sea in brilliant colors.

Dr. Simpson sat by the bed, holding the captain's pulse. The captain's eyes were open. He was staring at the overhead. After a while, Simpson got up and went to a medicine cabinet that hung on a bulkhead.

"Tomorrow I'll begin setting the fractures, sir," he said. "I want to give your body a chance to recover a little." He took out a bottle of shaving lotion and emptied it down the drain. Then he sat down again beside Casey.

For a long time he kept looking at the captain. It was very quiet, and when four bells sounded, it seemed as if the vibration had sought out the silent cabin. Then Simpson began talking.

"I hope you'll understand this some day," he said. "These last two days, thinking about it, it seems to me that I must have been crazy. But I know that I would do it again if I had to."

There was no sign that Casey was listening; he had closed his eyes as Simpson went on. "You see, the hypodermic contained a hormone taken from the parathyroid gland. Do you remember how I told Mr. Guernsey that you were at the beginning of Von Recklinghausen's disease? I didn't mean the burns on your hands and face. I meant that I was beginning to give you the disease, artificially."

"It came to me the night you broke my arm. I couldn't forget that you had said you would break me to bits before you were through. I couldn't get it out of my mind; and later, I thought of this. I duplicated what a tumor of the parathyroid will do; increased the amount of the hormone in your blood. That upset the calcium balance. What it did, actually, was suck the calcium from the bone to the blood stream. It brought on what doctors in their wisdom call a cystica condition."

"I burned you with croton oil on your soap and shaving brush, and I put cantharides in your shaving lotion. You had told me to stay in my cabin, and it wasn't difficult to cross the passageway and come in here. I knew you would be so badly burned you would have to come to me."

Simpson smiled ruefully. "Yes, they told us once, a long, long time ago, that people eventually came either to doctors or to undertakers . . . But when I gave you the first injection of parathormone, the burning died away. That was because you had washed off most of the oil from the soap and brush. Then, when you shaved each day, the cantharides in the lotion irritated your skin again, and that kept you asking for the injections."

Simpson paused and listened to Casey breathing. "To-day, you see, I could have carried out your threat," he said softly. "Now I realize that—" The captain was breathing heavily, in a long deep inhale; his eyes were shut. Simpson got up and went to the door.

Just as he reached the door, the doctor heard the noise behind him. He ducked instantly, and the water pitcher hit the door over his head and shattered into long slivers. The captain held his side in pain and slowly lay down again. His eyes were open and he stared at nothing.

Before the *Typee* sailed again, Dr. Farrow came aboard. He went to see the captain and then spoke to Simpson for awhile.

"There's something I ought to tell you, doctor," Farrow said. "You may not have known that I didn't possess a single medical volume until two days ago. I ordered it after we spoke that day in Amapala. Until then, I didn't know what I had done when I sent for the three things you wanted. I was ashamed to ask to borrow a book from anyone." He sighed. "Now I know that you might have killed him," he said.

"Yes," Simpson said. "Either his health would have carried him through to a point where his bones would break before the dosage killed him, or—" He shrugged. "Either I would have signed his clearance papers or he would have killed me. I knew it and I took the chance. I gave him an average of six c.c.'s a day."

"I was right when I said there was murder aboard this ship."

Simpson nodded.

"And now?"

"Now," Simpson said, "the *Typee* won't load. Mr. Hale will take the ship back to New York. Maybe he thinks he can't do it, but New York is eight days and a million light years from Puerto Cortez. I think he'll find out a lot in eight days."

He smiled as he shook Farrow's hand in farewell. "Yes," he said, "Mr. Hale will bring the ship in, and I'll take care of Captain Casey. He's just another patient now, and I'll keep doing my job."

* * *

"WELL, now," Buchanan said to me after he had finished, "you look immersed in thought."
I said, "Drowned is a better word."

"Did you like it?" He laughed. He filled his pipe for the third time and kept looking at me all the while.

"It'll do," I said shortly. But I had to ask him more. I couldn't let it go. "What happened when they got back to New York?"

"Nothing much. Casey went to a hospital and stayed there a month, and then he went back to the *Typee*." His expression became a bit more serious. "But something did happen to Casey in another way. He was a changed man from then on. That voyage and what happened on it did something to him. I don't know. Maybe that one taste of defeat gave him a better slant on what victory was meant to be."

He puffed away at the pipe, making a wry face. "But I'll tell you this," he said. "He never told anyone what happened to him, and it was due to him that Iverness adopted its present medical policy. When he was well again, he shipped with Simpson for more than a year. Yes," he mused, "they got to be very friendly indeed."

I kept thinking about it. "And Casey, you mean to say, recovered completely?"

"Completely. Oh yes," Buchanan said, putting the pipe down on his desk. "This little finger that he broke when I was lying on deck"—he was holding out his left little finger and it was crooked—"never did heal properly. I used to look at it all the time I was in the hospital, and—"

That was when he saw the way I was looking at him.

"Hell," he said, trying to keep from smiling, "I had to call him something. Don't look at me that way. You know you wouldn't have enjoyed the story—I couldn't very well talk about myself, and Casey is just a good a name as—"

Well, I was laughing too by then, so it didn't matter. I went to dinner with them that night, in case you're interested. It was a good dinner.

THE END



*A bright thought
for the lad in camp*

Give him a subscription to

ARGOSY

*the oldest and best all-fiction
weekly magazine*

13 WEEKS FOR \$1.00

ARGOSY, Sub. Dept. 280 BROADWAY, N.Y.C.

Here is my \$1.00, please send ARGOSY for 13 weeks to

NAME ADDRESS

From: Name Address



The two flyers, peering through the floor cracks, saw the Frenchwoman calmly fire at her husband

His Sword Is Rust

By Borden Chase

Author of "Farewell to the Indies," "Crooked Caribbean Cross," etc.

The moving story of a farmer in France who, standing quietly on the land he loved and had lost, wrote his defiance in the sky

THE LIGHTS were there. Three of them, spaced about five hundred feet apart to form a broken L. They were brave lights. Desperately brave. Flight Lieutenant Tindall took his hand from the control column long enough to toss a salute to the unknown friend far below.

"Three hundred miles to London," he said quietly over the intercom.

"Three hundred miles it is, sir," answered Sergeant Davis. "I see as 'ow our friend still tends 'is lights. Nervy devil, that one."

"He's all of that," agreed Tindall.

The crippled Hampden banked slowly and changed course above the lights. Tindall had brought her to the River Allier on 300. Now he swung to 335 and headed directly for London and home. Below, the French countryside rolled its low hills to the dark horizons. They were beautiful in the night-glow. Peaceful. There was no war in these hills. No war for the men who tilled them.

France was beaten and her sons had put aside their guns. They'd put aside their freedom. Some said they had put aside their courage, but that was a lie. Lieutenant Tindall knew it was a lie. Here in Moulins, where the fist of the conqueror was hardest, at least three sparks of courage shone brightly.

Tindall had first noticed them during an early raid on Turin. Curious, he had nosed the big Hampden down for a closer look. One light came from the window of a thatched-roofed farm house and splashed a yellow glow across the cobbled yard. Fanning out at a wide angle were two others that shone from a pair of small outbuildings.

The first pointed a slender finger toward Italy. The

second pointed toward London. It was a perfect beacon although no word of it had come from Intelligence. No word from Headquarters. But other flyers had noticed the lights and many a toast was drunk in Tindall's mess to the unknown farmer of Moulins.

"I'm glad 'e waited up for us," said Davis.

"He always has."

"That's what worries me, sir. The Germans have eyes as well as we."

"I know," said Tindall.

"Wonder 'ow long before they get 'im?"

Lieutenant Tindall didn't answer. He didn't like to think of what would happen to that French farmer when he was caught. The Germans would stand for no nonsense

