

*On a sunny, perfect day, James Chase sat in his catamaran out on the great lake, and was at peace. Then a red boat moved around a distant point, and roared toward him. And the man in the red boat was armed with a deadly weapon—the . . .*

## WEAPON OF FEAR

by JOSEPH WHITEHILL

FOR THE FIVE DULL MONTHS OF cautious terror which had passed since his heart attack, all through the grim winter and finally into spring, James Chase had awakened each day according to a self-set but unadmitted plan. The moment his mind came to life from sleep and his memory returned, he would clamp his eyes tightly shut and inwardly inquire of his heart how it had passed the sleeping time. And his heart would sometimes speak a modest complaint—of a slight heaviness or perhaps a feeling of strictured closeness or, rarely, a twinge. Most often, though, his heart answered nothing, and James Chase drew comfort then and breathed again.

Having thus assessed his heart for reassurance, he would open his eyes. If it were still dark night and if Mary's weight were still there beside him, he would ask of the darkness what had waked him. A truck in the Tulsa street? Or had his heart stirred and whispered? Then he would close his

eyes again and force the return of sleep, taking what pride he might in having been granted these four or five or six more hours he had slept—hours given to him to add to his time alive, not bought with his own wakeful vigilance.

But if it were day and Mary had left the bed to prepare breakfast, then he had won again and could keep his eyes open happily. And if it were a morning like this one, a fair soft May morning, and he waked in their cottage at the Lake ninety miles from Tulsa, and he could see the light of the new sun rippling across the pine ceiling, copying the wavelets' motion of the Lake outside, then he would smile a pale smile and put his hands behind his gray head, elbows high, and lie on his back watching the lapping glitter on the ceiling and listening to the clank of the coffee boiler and the hot snapping of bacon, and he would think, *Lord, how fine!*

When the end of the kitchen sounds came, and he judged Mary

was moving the hot breakfast to the table, James Chase sat up carefully and slowly put on his robe and slippers. He liked to be about and doing when she came to call him. He liked to be at his best for Mary, always.

They met in the short hall outside the bedroom. Mary bobbed to a halt with a slight start: "Oh! You're up, dear. Morning. Breakfast." She searched his face and his posture as she spoke.

James Chase watched her closely, just as she watched him. "Morning. Paper here?" He could tell more from her round, lined face about his morning state than he could from his own mirror. She seemed placid and unconcerned as he bent in courtly fashion to kiss her. It *had* been a good night, then. Which was something of a surprise, really, when he considered that awful scene with Bill Doyle at the store yesterday.

She turned back toward the living room saying, "It's over there by your plate."

Now that she was no longer watching him, he extended his hand for the guiding comfort of the wall beside him, then came aware of what he was doing and dropped it.

He lost interest in the newspaper after the headlines and Little Orphan Annie, and set it aside to finish his breakfast. He sipped his coffee slowly while he looked idly out through the big one-pane win-

dow at the bright blue Lake and his mooring float and his dainty little catamaran tied there. The bronze wind-arrow at her mast-head said South, and the wavelets on the Lake said steady and light. "Marvellous day. Marvellous." Not since his heart attack had he allowed himself a sail. All the fine days of warm and gentle winds this spring had happened in mid-week, while he was down in Tulsa attending to as much as he dared of the affairs of Chase & Doyle, Electronic Supplies. No, he thought, not too much wind at all. Really there isn't too much.

Mary looked up from her card-file of recipes. "Just lovely. And the Lake so high. We've never had it so high, have we?"

"No. They say the drought is over. They say this is the first time in eight years the Lake has been full to the datum level. You know, it was good last afternoon to see real water going over the tops of the gates at the dam. It's been a long time. . . . What're you going to do this morning?"

Mary tapped the brass ferrule of the pencil against her lower teeth. "Well, I have to go in to Grove after groceries first. I'm just trying to figure out what to have. What would you like?"

"Anything in your little head."

Mary smiled. "More coffee? Don't forget your pills in the jigger there. You don't get an orange one today. Isn't that nice? And

then I expect I'll cut the grass or the hedge and water the dogwoods or something."

"That's my job. The grass and the hedge and the dogwoods are my department."

"Not yet they aren't. In two or three months, maybe."

"I can water the dogwoods, anyway. That isn't hard."

"But it wouldn't be fair."

He looked away from the Lake and gazed at her in puzzlement. "How d'you mean?"

"I mean after I get all hot and perspirey doing the grass and the hedge, then I deserve to have something cool and fun, like watering the dogwoods, don't you see?"

He smiled good-humoredly. "Okay, okay. What can I do, then?"

"How about reading out on the porch? And then when it's real warm you can take a little swim before lunch, and I'll watch."

He scowled shortly. "I've read myself sick for five months. Anyway, it's getting so I hate books. I can't even finish this paper here. You see that, don't you? Reading is out." A long silence ensued, which Mary made no sound to break. James's face darkened as he caught sight of the three bright pills waiting for him in the jigger-glass. He dumped them out aggressively into his hand and threw all three into his mouth together and swallowed them down with a gulp of coffee. Then he turned

his chair so he might speak to the Lake. "Mary, do you know what a valetudinarian is?"

"Isn't he the one that makes the speech at graduation?"

James's smile was brief and sad. He pulled the robe closer about him, watching the movement of his own colorless image in the big window. "No. That's a valedictorian. A valetudinarian is somebody who fakes sick . . . a professional invalid."

Mary's answering "Oh," was small behind him.

"That's what Bill Doyle thinks I am. He as much as said it right out yesterday when I left the store."

"Bill Doyle! What does *that* one know?" Mary sounded outraged and hurt, as he had half-hoped she might.

"Maybe he's right," James went on quietly. "I don't know. I don't think I am, but maybe he's right. Or maybe he was just mad. He was furious with me when I left."

"Over what? What about? That Bill Doyle! I never *have* liked him anyway, all these years." The eruption past, Mary sat silent, as though shocked by what she herself had said.

James pinched the inner corners of his eyes tiredly. "Liking or not liking hasn't got very much to do with it, really. I don't *like* him much myself. You don't pick a partner because you like him, or even because you like the same

things. A partner is somebody you *do* things well with. You know what they say about picking a business partner with more care than you pick a wife—it's a cliché by now, but it's partly true. A marriage has sex for glue to hold it together over the tough times. And I think sometimes a man can be hurt worse by the smashup of a partnership than he can by divorce."

"How would *you* know, dear?"

James wished Mary were closer, within reach of his fond hand. But he still stared out at the Lake and spoke in its direction. "My God, but he was cruel yesterday." James's voice was faint. "It's been a good partnership. For eleven whole years. Until this . . . this thing happened to me. And here's a queer thing; that it should have been me to come down with it instead of him! The statistics have failed me. Bill ever since I've known him has been the fireball, the highpowered hotshot, the bundle of tight springs. He's the one that flies his own plane and drives his little sport car and runs that speedboat of his around this Lake at fifty miles an hour, and courts three girls at once at the age of forty-three. But it wasn't him; it was placid me that had the heart attack."

"Well, what did he *say*?"

"Oh. . . . I came in yesterday morning—just to read my mail and write a few letters and say hello

to the counter boys and so on. Then Bill came whooping in a little later with a big fat Bid Request from Wichita Air Navigation, wanting a bid on something around a hundred thousand dollars' worth of analog computer parts—chart recorders and oil-filled capacitors and tenth-percent resistors, that kind of thing. Bill was jumping up and down, he was so excited, and shaking the bundle of spec sheets. He kept hollering, 'Let's get on this right away, right away!' I told him it didn't have to be returned to Wichita till next Wednesday, so we could begin it Monday morning just as well, so what was the hurry?"

"Well, you know how he is—always in a big sweat. Saturday doesn't mean anything to him. Neither does Sunday. He claimed it would look good if we had the bid in Wichita by Monday morning. It would look as though we were on the ball and alert."

"I told him that the only person in Wichita who would know how on the ball and alert we are would be the mail clerk who would throw our bid into the cubbyhole until Opening Hour on Thursday. That was when he got sore. He said I was losing my enthusiasm. (He almost said I was losing my grip.) I told him I was tired. He said it smelled like laziness to him. I told him maybe it was, and maybe when he got to be sixty and had a heart attack he'd be lazy that

way too.

"Then he said, 'Well, why don't you sell me your stock, then?' I asked him if he had the cash to buy it. He said no, he'd buy it out of income, and I said no thanks, and got up to leave.

"He wanted to know where I was going. I told him you were coming downtown in the car to pick me up and drive me up to the Lake for the weekend. Then he really blew up. '*Lake!*' he said—he said it just like that—'*Lake!* Fine! Swell! Maybe that's what I should do too. Just throw it all up for grabs and walk out and leave the door open and go up to the Lake and piddle around in my piddly little garden! The hell with the business!' he said. He was mocking me, Mary. 'The hell with the business—let it take care of itself. My heart feels a little puny. I want to go up to the Lake.'

"So as I was going out the door I said to him, 'Why don't you go up to the Lake too? Really. It would do you a lot of good.' And he just stood there by the desk with the Bid Request all crumpled up in his hand, looking at me very queer. And his voice was very funny and he said, 'Maybe I will, James. I think I will.' And that was that. . . . Maybe that's what he needs—to get in that three hundred horsepower run-about of his and go tearing around some. He likes that. That's the only kind of thing he does like, real-

ly." And how he does like that, James Chase thought. There's such an amazing difference in people. He only seems happy and relaxed and peaceful when he's going fifty or a hundred or two hundred miles an hour, depending on what he's driving at the time.

Mary came quietly to take James's hand. While she stood beside his chair looking out at the Lake, James watched their pale images in the window; he thin and gray-haired and drawn closely into his robe, she rather plump and standing at ease beside him. And on the other side of the window, out-of-doors, a fair May morning waited for a man to come out in it.

Mary said, "Just a perfectly lovely beautiful day. Don't you worry about Bill Doyle, honey. Sufficient unto the day, and all that sort of thing."

"That really isn't much wind," James said. "Not too much at all."

Mary's hand tightened a little on his, then she turned away from the window and began clearing the table. "Have you read that new Wouk novel yet over there?"

"I don't want to read. I can't read." He rose from his chair a little breathless with a daring decision which had just come upon him. The day was too fine to waste. "I think I'll get dressed now. Is my heavy red sweater up here?"

"In the second drawer."

"Where—where are the sails for

the boat?"

James wondered, as he measured her pause, whether it was a pause before a veto or a pause to remember about the sails. It seemed to go on and on, and the antipodal answers surged from side to side in his head. ("The doctor said—" or "The sails are in the—") Which?

She said finally, "You won't stay out long, will you? Only an hour the first time?"

God bless her. "Just an hour."

"And you'll stay where I can see you?"

"Right off the point here. Why don't you come along for once?"

On the way into the kitchen she smiled and shook her head. From the kitchen she called brightly, "You know me and water. A tubful is my limit, still. The sails are hanging out in the garage in the sailbag. I'll put them out on the float while you dress."

The exertion of dressing told on him more than he would admit in his face as he walked down the short gravel path to the mooring float. He consciously extended his stride in an effort to recapture some of the oldtime bounce in his step, and evidently succeeded, for Mary said, "You look just fine. Here. I'll hold the boat in while you get in. That's right. Now here are the sails." She handed the sailbag over to him. "I'll just sun here while you put them on, then I can shove you out."

"Fine," he said as he bent over the mouth of the sailbag. Untying the knot in the drawstring, his hands trembled with the old joy of doing all over again this familiar thing of pulling out the black-and-white, zebra-striped sails and finding which edge of the mainsail with slides was the foot and went on the boom, and which was the luff, to be fitted on the mast. But when he thought of the effort of going forward to bend the jib onto its stay, and the later effort there would be in tending the jib sheets, he said, "I think I'll skip the jib. It never does its share anyhow."

The cockpit of this boat was slung between two slim, deep hulls. James leaned cautiously sideways and lifted the small bailing hatch and peered into the darkness below. That hull was dry. He closed the hatch and slid across the thwart and raised the other. Dry also. "Old Peebler must have been around pumping."

Mary, with her face upturned, was returning the sun's smile. "He's come over from Grove to check the place every week this winter. He called me long distance when he heard you'd been sick. He was awfully worried about you. He said to tell that young feller to get well and come up to the Lake to help him keep ahead of the white bass."

"Gosh. . . . He must be seventy-five, and never sick a day. That's what country living does

for you."

"All ready, dear?"

James loosed the mainsheet and felt of the soft wind with his up-turned cheek. Conveniently, the catamaran was already headed into the wind. He hoisted the mainsail briskly, listening with love to the clacking of the slides as they ran up the track, then he cleated down the halyard. He caught the boom scissors as it fell, closed its legs, and stowed it under the forward apron. "Now. All ready."

Mary pushed the bow out with her foot and said finally, "You stay in sight, now."

"Don't you hand around just to watch me. I'm fine. Go on after your groceries."

"Well, no. . . . I'll be up at the house, I think."

The mainsail filled and began to draw as James held the tiller-yoke over toward him. When he had achieved a beam reach that suited him he eased the tiller and steadied on a course. *Which* course was unimportant to James at the moment. Something high inside his left arm distracted him. A pain? Is it a real pain, as might come from hauling on the halyard? Or is it something starting from inside the—inside the chest? Or is there anything there at all? Please, Lord, let it be just a simple ordinary pain without any meaning past itself, or else let it be no pain at all, but just a passing nerve

thing.

James squinted up at the sail by way of distraction while he moved his left shoulder in a small circle. Still there. Please let it be just excitement. Please. He conceived the idea of lifting his left arm high over his head and flexing his fist to try to pull the little pain out. But how do you lift your arm without having Mary notice and wonder?

Turning his head, James saw his wife reach the head of the path and turn to look back at him. He raised his left arm high and waved at her. She waved back. And before he dropped his arm he flexed his fist twice. That did it. All gone. Thank God.

He slouched down in the corner of the cockpit and put his feet up on the opposite seat to retard their swelling, and he basked in the sunshine. He steered with a gentle pressure of his finger and thumb, for the wind was truly light and the boat carried no weather helm at all. He held for the wooded point at the south end of Monkey Island, two miles off, sighting on the place where the old flinty section-line road came out of the oaks and ran right down into the water. How good it was to see the Lake so full! The water came now all the way up to the edge of the woods, as it had that rainy year when the engineers first impounded the Lake with their mile-long dam far off to the south. The



dangerous stumps were all safely covered now, too, and there was nothing in his sweet green and blue world to worry about except holding some sort of steady course.

Then he saw the first log. Glossy black and barely awash, it lay ahead across his course glistening in the sunlight like a sea-polished basalt reef. Sitting straighter for more circumspect vision, he passed the log close aboard and marveled at its great length and girth and speculated idly about its tonnage.

Surely; with every new blessing (like a full Lake) there has to be a new qualifier of that blessing (like the presence of drifting logs). James Chase smiled slightly as he assembled in his head the tidy reasoning which explained the floating log. First of all, you have a drought in the country that lasts for eight years, and all the driftwood earlier sunk at the banks of the Lake is exposed to the air and the sunlight. The Lake had lain ten feet or more below its datum level all that time, and the great free-logs of driftwood had dried out slowly and turned from black to brown, to gray, and then almost white, and the slime on the wood had dried to short, gray fur. So, for eight years they had lain above the low waters of the Lake, all around its shores. Consider the tortuous eighty-mile length of the Lake and its extravagant thirteen hundred miles of shoreline, and

ask how many floating logs like this there must be.

Many. No wonder he had seen the running lights of no cruisers at all last night while he sat on the porch. No wonder there were no boats about today. Looking now for logs, James counted four in sight. And if I stood up there on the deck by the mast I'll bet I'd see a dozen.

Some time later, shortly after he had brought the boat about and laid his course for his own float far across the Lake, he heard an airplane. He turned about in the sunny cockpit and searched the western sky astern, knowing even as he did it which plane of all planes he would see.

Dropping down fast in powered descent was a shiny Ryan ST. Bill Doyle's plane. James stared at it rigidly, his breath half-arrested, waiting to see something else of the plane besides its cowl intake and its bulbous wheel pants and the leading edges of its wings. It continued directly toward him smoothly growing larger, spanning a greater and greater width of sky, and still the angle did not change. Now James could see the wing wires and the windshield of the forward cockpit, and he heard the scream of the engine blower. Just as James moved his hand over his heart to shield it, the plane levelled off and roared over his masthead no more than fifty feet up and passed sharply into a left



climbing turn that exposed both cockpits to sight from the catamaran. The plane wobbled as the leather-skulled pilot turned and waved. The forward cockpit was empty.

No electronic blonde this time, anyway, James thought. *Think about anything. Think about anything else but this heart.* My, but it must take arm muscle to wave like that from a plane going so fast! James waved in return, using his left arm and flexing his fist twice as he did it.

The glittering plane banked sharply to the left, momentarily passing out of sight behind the zebra-striped sail, and headed back toward Monkey Island, where there was an airstrip. The engine slowed and the plane commenced a series of horsing pitches as it sank from sight behind the oaks on the island.

He's happy that way, James thought. Old No-Approach Doyle they called him at the Tulsa airport, and Bill had seemed to accept the name. Who else but Bill Doyle would have bought a trainer almost twenty years old and then have spent thousands of dollars on it to bring it up to CAA Bulletin standards? Who else would prefer the discomforts of open cockpits and a rock-stiff landing gear and a plane you had to fly hard every second? But he's happy. That sort of thing makes him happy. And to think that Surviving Partner In-

surance was *my* ideal!

*God, what a scare! Go on, keep thinking.* James looked at his wrist watch. Assuming I'm making good three miles an hour, he thought, and I have a mile and about a half to go back to the float, that should take half an hour. If the wind holds. James hooked his knee over the tiller-yoke and massaged his hands together. Ever since the plane had buzzed him his hands felt bloodless and cold and full of prickles. He dropped his knee and steered slightly upwind to avoid another log.

A little later, when he heard the remote, open-muffled exhaust of a boat, he knew he had been waiting for it since the plane had disappeared. James stared fixedly at a point of land far up the shore of Monkey Island; Airport Cove was just around that point. James thought about the long concrete stair which connected the floating boat sheds to the airstrip at the top of the bluff.

Then a white thread of wake grew out of the mouth of the cove like a cave snake with a red eye, and the red eye was the fastest runabout on the Lake (Grand Lake, thirteen hundred miles of shoreline, eighty miles long, fifty-five thousand acres).

By some sort of natural, degrading alchemy, James Chase's golden day was turning to lead as he lived it. He watched the red boat turn as it cleared the point

by the mouth of the cove and head directly toward him. Then he looked ahead, toward his own distant cottage, trying to see Mary somewhere about. She was not in sight. . . . She must be clipping or mowing over on the other side of the house.

Yes, that's Bill's idea of a holiday, he thought. It involves about fifty gallons of gas and never staying in one place ten minutes and buzzing me whenever he can catch me out. People are amazingly different. James looked to windward on the water, hoping for a darkening there that would mean the wind was freshening, but there was no such sign. The sun was high enough now for its track to have spread to a mica-twinkling breadth, and its warmth was making his sweater too heavy. Steering with his knee again, he pulled his sweater up with slow and careful movements. When his head was inside, and the filtered red light was in his eyes and he was smelling the moth crystals and his own close warm body-smell, it was then he heard the sound of the oncoming runabout slow away to nothing. He quickly came the rest of the way out of the sweater and looked toward the north.

The red boat had stopped and was lying dead in the water, and Bill Doyle was standing up in the cockpit. This, at the distance of more than a mile, was all James could see. He's hit a log, James

thought. No. No, he hasn't. He's seen a log is all, and he's just looking at it. And he's looking around for more, I expect. Those logs'll slow him down today, you bet. . . .

The far manikin figure sat down again; the white bow wave foamed up and, seconds later, there came the distant thundering cough as the three hundred horsepower engine cleared its manifold-throat balkily and returned to life.

Twice as James watched the fast boat close the distance between them, it deflected from its course and showed him some hull—bright joy came for a moment (is he turning around?)—then the joy fled for the red boat straightened back each time and continued toward the lazy catamaran. . . . Just dodging logs is all. . . .

And to James's surprise a soft pleading cry escaped from his own constricted throat: "*Go away! Go away! Please, Bill, none of your kind of fun today!*" But his voice fell of its own weight, echoless, and again the only sound was the straining roar of Bill Doyle's boat coming. . . . Just like a steeplechaser. The logs don't slow him down at all. He *likes* the logs. Each one gives him a chance for another narrow squeak.

With an effort that made his eyelids flutter, James broke his rigid gaze away from the oncom-

ing boat, and looked instead at his own mooring float. From out here it looked no bigger than a soup crouton, but it was his, and it spoke to him of peace and privacy and lazy rest in the sunshine.

*He won't hit me.* At great cost, James continued to look directly ahead, while the mounting thunder of the oncoming boat seemed to put vision in his hearing. The note never changed; it just grew. And as it grew, James thought, "Now it's half a mile off. . . . Now a quarter-mile. He's not changing course any at all."

Finally the fear in him rose into his throat and stopped his breath and he had to look, and child-weakness hit him with a blow, for the runabout was almost upon him. Somehow overrunning the safe turning margin, the boat kept on, and at the last second in James Chase's world it heeled abruptly to the right and passed the stern of the catamaran with a foot to spare, raining a deluge of wake into the sailboat and leaving it tossing. The sail was glossy-wet halfway to the masthead. The man in the sailboat's cockpit did not move for some time. Physically rigid out of the certain knowledge that if he moved he would break into pieces like a crazed porcelain figure, he swept his disordered brain and cleared from his ears the horrible complex of noise that persisted there. So close

had the red runabout come that James had heard sounds of it that he had never heard before from any boat. To use up thirty seconds—to be certain not to die by keeping his brain moving—he sorted out the sounds. With his feet he had heard the concussive beating of the propeller in the water, jarring the floorboards of his boat. And there had been a hideous licking hiss; the sound of water tortured in shear under the motorboat. And then the open-stack blasting of the exhausts as the boat had passed.

When he dared move again—when the cement had crumbled away from his joints and he knew he was still alive, James turned his head. The runabout had passed into a wide, skidding turn and was coming back. It passed abeam at some distance off, running under partial throttle. Bill Doyle still wore his flying helmet, but he had turned up the flaps cockily and fastened the straps on top of his head. He seemed to scrutinize the catamaran carefully as he went by. Then he flashed a hectic grin and waved and opened the throttle wide.

James Chase waved back. Same old Bill Doyle, he thought. When Bill feels gay, then everybody has to feel gay. When he wants to horse around, then everybody's got to horse around with him. But listen, Bill, old boy, this isn't ten years ago. This isn't *last* year,

even. I'd go along with you then, any time. But things are a little different now. I've been a little sick, you see, and I'm not up to much of your kind of thing any more, see? You do see, don't you? Sure you do. So let's quit, all right? I'm tired, and I don't think this sort of thing is too good for me. Sure; you understand. Why don't you make a fast run down to the dam and beat your own mark for the run?

James hopefully watched the red runabout as it turned astern of him, but its turn persisted past the heading for the dam. The turn completed, it steadied on a straight course for the catamaran. James Chase sorely needed to call to someone for help; and because he could not call, because there was no help for him, the words he had been suppressing rose in a whisper, "He's trying to kill me. He's trying to scare me to death. Oh. . . . That damned Surviving Partner Insurance."

He watched the approach of the runabout. Once it dodged aside quickly, then resumed its course. Another log, he thought dully as he composed himself as best he might for this next murderously narrow pass. He reached for his cast-off sweater, intending to raise it as a shield against the imminent drenching spray, but he was arrested in mid-reach by a fiery knot of pain under his left collar-bone. He slumped back

into the corner of the cockpit, and in his eye-fixing pain he accepted that he would be soaked again.

*Think about something else.* Okay. I—I took one close pass all right, I can take another. . . . If I could only breathe right. . . . I'll irritate him. I'll wave at him again. Show him I'm right in there with him. Keeping even.

So when the motorboat thundered past James Chase had his wave ready for use and raised his arm in the curtain of water and waved, and smelled the gassy exhaust through the spray. The catamaran heaved and James Chase's head lolled against the cockpit coaming with a sharp blow. But James Chase was grateful to have a distracting hurt someplace else besides his chest, and he rubbed his wet head at the sore spot and thought, I can't go that again, that's all. Twice is all. Twice is too much. I'm scared. Oh Lord and I don't want to die. Not now. Not this way on a pretty day. Suppose he thought I'd died that time? Suppose I fake it? Won't he go away as fast as he can then? It's really just that all I want to do is lie down and rest, so admit it. Golly I wish I could breathe.

And as James Chase let go the tiller-yoke and the mainsheet and prepared to slide to the floorboards and give everything over to chance and his fatigue, he saw the log ahead. He stared at it

blankly, and made no move to take the tiller and steer to avoid it. His thought, if it could rightly be called a thought, was Here's an old friend. For this was the same log he had seen long ago when his world was gold, when he had first started out this morning and had speculated idly about its length and girth and tonnage.

By now the catamaran had lost much of its way, and when its slim twin hulls mounted the log there was hardly a jar. The boat came to a smooth, braked stop perched erect on the log. The mainsail luffed in a slow, flapping rhythm, making the slides click in gentle chorus on the mast track. The great log slowly sank deeper in the water, until it was wholly immersed.

The red runabout had turned again, and was making straight for the catamaran once more, before the suffocating man could get to his feet. He had no breath to call a warning. He stood swaying precariously in the cockpit, a lean wet little gray-haired man, compressing his lips spasmodically, trying to swallow down the swelling in his throat. He drew a great rattling breath and waved both his arms in semaphore fashion.

In the little hurtling runabout, Doyle half-rose in his seat and, holding the wheel with one arm, waved gaily back with the other.

The boat's course did not change.

James Chase wavered until he lost his balance and fell to the bottom of the cockpit. With neither the strength nor the time to rise again, he lay with his head on his arm until the great blow came. The floorboards struck up at him hard from below and a pall of solid water shut off the sun. James Chase lost consciousness in the midst of a roaring, garbled explosion.

The next he heard was the rubber-hung song of a little outboard, curiously confused with the sound of people's voices. Down here at the bottom of the wet cockpit, the sounds echoed and distorted themselves almost beyond recognition, but James heard old Mr. Peebler say, "He don't appear to be *in* the boat."

And then Mary said, "He *is*, he *is*! Oh, hurry, please. Get closer."

"I am," Mr. Peebler said, and the outboard slowed. "But I got to watch out for all them red boards an' trash left over fum that speedboat."

And James Chase opened his eyes and saw the sunshine again and thought with confused simultaneity, Now, isn't that brave of her to come out on the water, and, Golly! I'm still here.

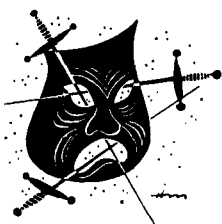
Then he sat up and blinked at them over the cockpit coaming.





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