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THE AFFAIR OF THE SCARLET CRAB

Winner of the $2000 Red Badge-Forum Detective Story Prize Contest.

By **Clifford Knight**

THE AFFAIR OF THE SCARLET CRAB *was chosen as the winner of the $2000 Red Badge Mystery Prize for 1937, the competition in which over three hundred new manuscripts were entered. It is a story which will meet the exacting requirements of connoisseurs and at the same time send many a spine-chilling thrill up their backbones.*

South from California sails a gleaming pleasure yacht, carrying aboard a strangely assorted group of persons, men and women, friends and strangers, enemies and lovers, who have abandoned their shore pursuits in a common love of science. South steams the ship, through the warm Pacific waters, into the chill range of the Humboldt Current, to that bizarre, isolated archipelago, the Galapagos Islands—once a haunt of whalers, now of a few lonely fishermen, goats, giant turtles and an outlandish crustacean, a crab as red as blood. Human passions, roused in the clash of personalities aboard the questing vessel, prove stronger than the spirit of science, and suddenly the peaceful floating laboratory is a center of violence and death.

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The Red Badge $2,000 Prize Mystery

THE AFFAIR OF THE SCARLET CRAB

by

CLIFFORD KNIGHT

DODD, MEAD & COMPANY
NEW YORK 1937

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TO

JESSAMINE PARET KNIGHT

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1

It was three o'clock on Wednesday afternoon that the strange head appeared above the top of the dazzling white garden wall. It was a well-shaped, rather round head and the hair on top was blond. A neat blond mustache a little thicker than a debutante's eyebrow was lodged above full red lips; the cheeks were very bronzed, the nose quite masculine. But the arresting thing about this sudden and unexpected appearance of the head was its extraordinary air of earnestness.

"I say, you're Bartlett, aren't you?" was the question fired at me without preliminary.

I sat up hurriedly on my blanket where I had been lying in the bright California sunshine in what I thought was the privacy of the yard.

"Why, yes," I answered. "That's my name."

"You're something of an ornithologist." The roundish head lifted higher and a pair of thick shoulders clad in a lemon-colored polo shirt came into view.

I drew my legs under me. The sun was warmly caressing my bare back. I didn't know this fellow on the wall who was trying to talk to me in this abrupt fashion. But

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At least twenty times during the course of the story the shadow of the murderer is cast across the page. At the back of the book is a sealed insert containing an index of these clues. As you read note the clues and at the end check your list against the author's.

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he'd made the statement, almost an accusation, that I was an ornithologist, and his manner indicated that he doubted I could successfully deny it.

"Something describes it," I answered. "Something of an amateur. It's just a hobby with me."

"You're the fellow I'm looking for. I'm Lanfrey—Carlos Lanfrey. I live back of you here—" and he jerked his head in the direction of the house whose red tile roof was visible among the live oaks across the top of the wall.

"Yes," I said, my mind becoming more active. "There was a picture or something in the Los Angeles *Times* this morning. Something about an expedition—"

"Oh, that—" he said, making a gesture with a ham-like fist. "That's why I'm here. Saw somebody taking a sunbath from my bedroom window. Thought it might be you, so I came right over to see if you would like to take a little trip with me. I telephoned Chandler, the curator at the Museum, to recommend an ornithologist and he said you were good. Gad! Here you were living right here and I've been nuts all morning wondering what I was going to do. Can you get ready right away?"

"I'm not getting ready to do anything. Where was it—?"

"Oh—it's just down to the Galapagos Islands," he said hopefully. "Be gone a couple of months, maybe. Longer if we decide to. Had a fellow who knew all about birds. From the Museum—"

"You mean Risner?"

"Yeah. Took sick last night. They operated on him this morning and he'll be laid up for six weeks. We can't wait. All his traps are aboard. Get what clothes you want and I'll drive you down to the harbor when I go. We sail

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at six."

"Galapagos?"

"Yes. Ever been down there?"

"Once. It's interesting enough, but I'm comfortable here in San Marino. I've been thinking I'd stay here in Southern California until fall."

He seemed disappointed and a bit incredulous.

"There isn't anything wrong with you? Physically? So that you have to take sunbaths?" he asked.

"No."

"Gorell is going, and French and Ardleigh. Top men in their lines," he continued hopefully.

The sun was warm on my back; the peacefulness of the yard with its flowers already had cast a spell upon me; the soft contours of the San Gabriel Mountains looming up beyond Carlos Lanfrey's house across the wall were soothing. Here was Lanfrey, sportsman and amateur scientist, hanging over the wall with a request that I leave this peaceful retreat in San Marino and go off on a scientific expedition at a moment's notice. I was too comfortable. I was never given to precipitate action. It wasn't that I was, so to speak, second fiddle in Lanfrey's plans. For Risner was by far the best man that could be chosen for such work. And birds with me, after all, were only a hobby begun in high school and kept going through the years since. I wouldn't have cared if the Museum had recommended Corbin or Hal Trimble. They could do as well as I so far as the scientific work was concerned.

Carlos Lanfrey turned on whatever he was standing on, on the other side of the wall, and looked away. He

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rubbed his forehead with his right hand, a gesture that suggested he was stumped. A final argument occurred to him. A shadow crossed his face, a self-accusing expression appeared about his blue eyes.

"I apologize," he said. "I should have thought of it before. But I was so interested in getting you that I didn't think. But, please, feel free to bring anybody along with you that you want." His face brightened. "Your wife—there's plenty of room on the *Cyrene*. My wife is going. Gorell is taking Mrs. Gorell. There's another woman—Alice Wilmer—a scientific artist—"

"Thanks, but I'm not married."

"Well, anybody else then. Your sister. Friend. Crony. There's plenty of company for them. Huntoon Rogers from the University—"

"Not Hunt Rogers?" I said.

"Yeah. Know him?"

"Yes. But what's a professor of English doing on a scientific expedition?"

"Oh, Hunt's just a supercargo. I like him and he needs the rest. He's been working hard."

"The old skate," I said. "I've been wanting to talk to him."

Carlos Lanfrey's face had brightened engagingly; his smile developed into a chuckle. He made a move as though to disappear behind the wall that separated his place from that of my sister, with whom I lived.

"I'll be by for you in about an hour," he said. "I've got to get down to San Pedro as soon as I can."

With that last word his head disappeared completely. I hadn't said definitely that I would go. I merely had

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said I'd been wanting to talk to Hunt Rogers. But why not? It was only for a couple of months. Other plans I had been slowly maturing could wait. At least I shouldn't be lonely if Hunt Rogers was a member of the party, and I had always meant to go back to the Galapagos for a second look.

My sister Marjory's voice floated to me through the upper hall inquiringly: "What's all the row about, Benny? Lose something?"

Perhaps I had been making considerable of a stir as I gathered my stuff together. "It's nothing," I called out reassuringly to her. "Just packing up."

"Packing? What for?"

"Leaving."

"Where to?"

"Down to the Galapagos for a couple of months with Carlos Lanfrey."

There was no sound for a moment and then her determined footfall clicked on the floor of her room and came along the upper hall to my quarters. I looked up and Marjory's slim figure stood in the doorway. Marjory is young and beautiful and something of a Sybarite, loathing the thought of primitive places. She looked at me rather challengingly.

"Did I hear you correctly?" she inquired.

"I presume so."

"But you just got back from Mexico."

"What of it?"

She took a new tack: "I didn't know you knew Carlos Lanfrey."

"I don't. Never saw or heard of him until he climbed

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up on the back fence and introduced himself."

"Is Carlos taking that yacht of his?"

"I didn't ask him. Didn't know he had a yacht. But there's probably some such means provided for the expedition."

"Carlos has just married a new wife. Eight months ago. Number three."

"He said he was taking her."

"Number two divorced him because he was always running off to queer places. And I don't blame her."

"Interesting," I commented. "But not important."

Marjory picked up my cigarettes and lit one. "How soon are you starting? Tomorrow?"

"No. Today. In a few minutes," I answered, glancing at the clock.

"What is there down at Galapagos that's so interesting?"

"Unusual flora and fauna. The unanswered question of how it got there. Shells. Fish. Birds. Reptiles. A naturalist's paradise—"

I was interrupted by the sound of the chimes at the front door, and I heard the Filipino houseboy going to answer it as I crammed the last shirt into my bag and locked it.

"But, Benny," Marjory's voice suddenly held a note of dismay. "The Fernalds are coming for dinner and bridge. They're bringing Betty for you—"

"Call up Eric Meeker," I said. "Tell him I said he's to substitute for me. Good-bye," and I kissed her and went down stairs to one of the strangest and most terrifying experiences any man has ever had.

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2

I AM not a seafaring man, and ships have never meant anything to me except as a means of transportation. But even so I am not insensible to their charms. When we came in sight of the *Cyrene II* as she lay at her dock, an exclamation of pleasure escaped me. The sheer beauty of her lines, the rakish smartness of her appearance, the chunk she must have knocked out of Lanfrey's bank roll amazed me. Carlos Lanfrey's eyes shifted from the yacht to me, a slow smile appeared upon his full red lips.

"Like her?" he inquired proudly.

"She's a beauty," I answered.

"Right you are. Two hundred and eight feet over all," he said, and then I could see that his mind was on other things, as indeed it had been nearly all the way down from San Marino to the harbor. He had sat with the chauffeur checking over a mass of data he carried in his pockets, leaving the rear seat to me and my luggage.

We drew up on the open dock near the gang-plank, and Lanfrey leaped out. "Clark will put your luggage on board," he said, indicating the chauffeur. "And make yourself at home. I'll be busy for a while. I'll introduce you at dinner time. We won't eat till we get outside the breakwater."

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With that he left me. I followed my stuff on board where a steward took it in charge. He was a neat, soft-spoken man of about thirty-five, with blond hair and two prominent gold teeth when he smiled. He had the appearance of extraordinary efficiency.

"I am Starr, the steward," he said, touching his cap. "You have cabin number 10. I'll show you—" He picked up my stuff.

"Take it on down," I said; "I'll find the room later."

"Yes, sir. Thank you." He whisked away, sagging under the weight of my stuff.

Stores were still coming aboard. Last minute things that clutter up the dock just before sailing time. A number of persons were idling about on the dock, some of whom plainly were members of our party. I saw Ardleigh and waved to him from my place at the rail. As I stood there a small coupé drove rapidly down the roadway and turned in upon the dock. Two persons alighted, a man and a woman. A few minutes later the coupé drove away and I noted the efficient Starr, although how he had arrived on the scene I did not know, bent under the load of luggage, piloting them up the gangplank.

The man was young, possibly thirty, tall, muscular and dark. He had a sensitive under lip and bushy eyebrows. The woman was youthful. Indeed almost a girl. But her carriage was businesslike, her step confident and sure. She was amazingly beautiful; a perfect blonde with blue eyes that almost seemed to speak.

As the couple passed me she turned to her companion and said: "Is all your stuff on board, Jack?"

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"Yep," he answered. "This morning. Stowed in the laboratory. They've fixed up a regular studio for me. You'll have to see it."

"I want to see it—later," the girl replied. They disappeared, leaving me to reflect upon the pleasing quality of her voice. Here was a girl I wanted to know, and oddly enough I was glad she was going with us.

Dr. Gorell and Dr. French came aboard. I knew French. He introduced Gorell, a pudgy, oldish man with a dark, masklike visage. His small eyes gleamed from behind gold-rimmed glasses. French was a sort of enigma to me, a tall, red-haired, freckled enigma, as silent almost as a deaf mute. He was about thirty-five, a terrific worker and a man of extraordinary ambitions. He was an all around naturalist, but lately had been confining himself to marine life. Both Gorell and French were from the University, and I recalled that Gorell was head of the department with which both were identified.

As we stood talking, Mrs. Gorell came hunting her husband. Gorell introduced me. She was a woman well along in middle years, with a dark fleshy face and a fat, dumpy body. She had an abrupt, almost blunt manner of speech. It was not difficult to imagine that she had held her own in many a social battle among the faculty on the campus. Her small dark eyes bored through me.

"Bartlett?" she repeated my name. "Are you one of the San Marino Bartletts?"

"My home is in San Marino," I said.

"Humph!" she grunted, but whether from approbation or disapproval I'll never know. She ended in taking herself off with Gorell and French, and I returned to my

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contemplation of the scene on the dock.

The sun already was down behind the smooth brown hills to westward of San Pedro, and a golden light blazed in the sky beyond their soft profile. The last sling load came over the side, the winches ceased to rumble, the longshoremen deserted us, the gang-plank came in, the whistle blew and the lines were cast off. We backed over to the turning basin, executed the slow maneuver and headed down the main channel towards the open sea. Uncle Sam's great gray fleet of warships lay anchored in the outer harbor, glamorous and sparkling in the last rays of the setting sun.

"I always get a thrill when I see them," said a pleasing voice at my side, a delightfully sweet voice. "I wish I could join the Navy."

I turned to see who this fellow voyager was who spoke so enthusiastically of our fighting craft, knowing, of course, that it must be the alert, businesslike girl who had come aboard with the young man she called Jack.

"Have you never tried?" I asked. "The boys are permitted to marry as soon as they are out of Annapolis."

She made a face at me, but she didn't move away. We passed under the guns of the *New Mexico* and the *Pennsylvania,* long powerful rifles that stretched their necks from the gray turrets as though hungry for the distant enemy. Soon, however, they were behind us. We passed the breakwater light and the *Cyrene II* dipped her nose into a long green roller of the open sea. To westward the great red disk of the setting sun was half below the horizon. A flock of seagulls, hopeful of scraps from the galley, hovered at our stern.

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"Aren't you excited?" demanded the girl, talking with her eloquent blue eyes as well as with her lips.

"About leaving?"

"Yes, of course."

"I suppose so. Usually, however, on leaving my native land my mood is one of solemnity. It is now."

She looked directly at me, her eyes searching mine. The faintest shadow of uneasiness flashed across her face; her hand let go the rail and made a gesture towards her throat.

"Oh, you're joking," she said, and laughed. "I've been so excited for days that I've hardly slept at all. When Dr. French said I was to go I threw my arms around him and kissed him. It nearly embarrassed him to death. Isn't it wonderful to go adventuring on a yacht like this? Isn't it?" she demanded.

"Oh, yes. Imagine, though, wasting kisses on French."

She didn't say anything to that. An odor of roasting meat came from the galley forward, mingled with the cool salt breeze. The sun had been swallowed by the sea as we talked, although its rays still lingered on the two peaks of Santa Catalina Island to our right, and on the now distant San Gabriel range to the north.

"What is your specialty?" inquired the girl. "I've met everybody but you. Are you taking Dr. Risner's place?"

"Yes. As best I can."

"What's your name?"

"Bartlett. Benny for short."

"I'm Alice Wilmer," she said.

"May I inquire what you do?"

"I'm the artist. I paint the strange creatures of the

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vasty deep for Dr. French; I catch the ethereal, the elusive colors before they fade—"

"Of course. There was a young chap who came aboard with you—"

"Jack Quigley?"

"You called him Jack. What does he do?"

"He's the photographer. Takes stills and motion pictures. Mr. Lanfrey got him from one of the film studios in Hollywood. We live in the same apartment hotel in Hollywood. That was his sister who drove us down to San Pedro. She and I room together."

"Have I got them all, do you know?" I asked. "There's Gorell and Mrs. Gorell. And French and Ardleigh. You and Jack Quigley. And Lanfrey."

"You left out Mrs. Lanfrey."

"That's so. Have you seen her?"

"No, but Mrs. Gorell said she was aboard."

"You could count on Mrs. Gorell to know that—"

"Oh, yes, and there's a strange man in a brown suit. He's got funny ears—"

"Hunt Rogers," I said. "Now why would I forget Hunt? Are you sure he's aboard?"

"Yes. He was in his bunk groaning when we were coming down the fairway. I said: 'Can I help you, sir?' and he said: 'Yes, please; by getting out.' He was very polite for a sick man."

"That's Hunt," I said. "He gets green at the sight of a bucket of water."

"Who is he?"

"Teaches English at the University."

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"Why did they bring him?"

"I asked Carlos Lanfrey that, and it's because Hunt needs a change. Been working too hard."

"I'm going to like you," the girl said suddenly.

"That goes double," I said, and meant it.

"I thought at first I wasn't going to. You looked too much like a crab; and somebody said you were swell rich—"

"Neither swell nor very rich," I corrected her. "I can't afford a yacht like this."

"Well—" she said, a bit breathlessly. "Nobody else but Carlos Lanfrey could own a boat like this. He's worth millions, isn't he?"

"Hungry?" I asked, as the tantalizing odor from the galley was wafted to us again on the salt air.

"I could eat anything."

"Lanfrey said we'd eat as soon as we got outside the breakwater."

She looked back along our wake at the rapidly vanishing harbor. The purple shadows of night were gathering upon the mountains rising ever higher in the background. A tall figure swung along the deck towards us. The girl said:

"Hello, Jack. This is Mr. Bartlett, Mr. Quigley."

We shook hands. He had a frank, pleasing manner and impressed me as thoroughly resolute and self-reliant, the kind of fellow who could make his way alone.

"Isn't dinner ready, Jack?" asked the girl.

"Almost," answered Quigley. "I came by the dining room just now and they look just about all set."

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"There! Listen!" exclaimed the girl.

The soft notes of a gong were sounding inside; a moment later Starr stepped out upon the deck caressing the dinner call with a soft mallet as he walked hurriedly along.

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3

FEW scientific expeditions had ever put to sea more luxuriously than we. My previous trip to the Galapagos had been on a serviceable ship but with cramped quarters and less than average food; there had been much efficiency and something suggestive of discipline. But here on the *Cyrene II* I had only the feeling of a luxury cruise. The table, as we entered the beautifully paneled dining saloon, glittered with crystal and silver. However, that was Carlos Lanfrey's business. Even though he was very rich, and his hobby was the leading of small scientific expeditions into out-of-the-way places on a palatial yacht, there wasn't anything to be done about it. My thoughts were interrupted by Alice Wilmer at my elbow.

"Who am I to criticise?" she murmured.

"Stow it," I said to her. "This is one of the hardships you'll have to endure." For which she smiled at me. I was very sure I was going to like her.

Seriously, though, I did wonder as I took my place whether anything worth while would be accomplished against this background of splendor.

At the head of the table, standing very tall in gold braid, Carlos Lanfrey was waiting for us to take our places. I presume he had planned to say something by way of formal greeting on our first assembly. But if he

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had, the opportunity was lost when Mrs. Gorell picked up her glass and proposed a toast to the success of the expedition, to the genius of the men assembled, to Carlos Lanfrey as an intrepid leader of men, to the sturdy ship, to the dear ones at home, and to Old Glory. I noted an expression of irritation flicker on the masklike visage of Gorell as he listened to his spouse's determined but ill-timed toast. When she had quite finished we drank it down, and then took our seats. I imagine there might have been other toasts had not Mrs. Gorell seemed to have covered the ground so thoroughly.

In the moment of settling a strange woman appeared among us, passed along behind me and sat down at a vacant place. She was a striking looking person, somewhere in her middle thirties. She was dark and slender for her height, for she was tall. Simply gowned, there was, however, an ineffable air of smartness about her. Perhaps it was the fine nose and forehead, possibly the little wisp of gray that was brushed back from her right temple in her dark hair; anyhow, something stamped her as a thoroughbred is stamped.

"My dear," said Carlos Lanfrey, looking directly at her with a welcoming smile on his full red lips, "I want you to meet these interesting people. Mrs. Lanfrey," he said, addressing us. He began at his right and went round the table with the introductions. Her brown eyes met mine when my name was pronounced, but there was no warmth in them, only cold, rather indifferent appraisal.

"Mr. Bartlett," Lanfrey addressed me at the conclusion of this formality, "you perhaps need introducing to some—"

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"It's quite all right, Captain," I said. "I've managed to meet everybody present."

"Good. That's good. Since we are to be together for a period of two months or more," Lanfrey began, looking eagerly about the table at us, "I trust we all will quickly arrive at that feeling of comradeship towards one another which in my experience is the inevitable result on an expedition of this kind. We have considerable work mapped out. It will be hard work, some of it. Tempers may fray a bit at times, interests may overlap and clash a little, but I hope we all will come through it with our friendships unimpaired. I want to do everything I can to make you people comfortable; I want to do what I can to make your work a complete success. If at any time any of you can suggest to me a way to further our common purpose, or if anyone of you is unhappy in his or her accommodations, if you will come to me I shall be happy to do what I can to serve you. Just because I am in command I do not want you to feel that I am not one of you. I am a scientist at heart if not in training and experience, rather than a yachtsman. I rejoice in having you as my guests. There is a certain ship's discipline, of course, that must be observed, but that will obtrude as little as possible."

It probably was the speech that Lanfrey had in mind to make when Mrs. Gorell jumped the gun with her toast. And now that he had made it we all clapped loudly and he bowed. Jack Quigley, with something of the intrepidity of youth, in view of Mrs. Gorell's previous effort, proposed Captain Lanfrey, and we drank it down.

"For Heaven's sake," a voice murmured at my side.

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"I'm starving!"

"Are blondes always hungry?" I asked Alice Wilmer.

"This one is hungry now."

"Here's Starr. Good old Starr with food," I said, as the efficient Starr set a plate before her. If he heard me he gave no sign, but with the help of a boy went on serving the plates.

It was not until we were waiting for the dessert and cigarette smoke was perfuming the air that the table as a whole got back to business again. This time it was Ardleigh. Ardleigh long had been top in geology at the University. I once had been a student under him, and I knew the old boy, or I thought I did. He was past sixty, but beyond a few gray hairs and a slight wrinkling of the skin of his cheeks like an apple that is beginning to dry out, there was nothing to indicate his advancing age. He had piercing gray-green eyes beneath overhanging brows, a nose that curved like a handle, the hard lips of a turtle, and his tall slender body seemed strengthened with reenforcing steel.

"Is he as mean as he looks?" whispered Alice Wilmer.

"On the contrary. Get him away from his field and he is a mewing kitten. Don't cross him on his subject, though."

"What is he?"

"Geologist. He knows all the answers."

"Of everybody here," she said softly, "I think I like Dr. Gorell the least. And his wife—"

"Woman's intuition?"

She shook her head and lighted a cigarette.

"I've been wondering, Captain Lanfrey—" Dr. Ard-

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leigh spoke up with something of his old class room drawl as he flicked the ash from his cigarette. "There are some of those here who are unaware of just how this expedition got its start. Perhaps, also, the purpose, the precise purpose of the expedition might be stated—for the better understanding—"

"Right," Lanfrey interrupted quickly, gulping a drink from his water glass. "Even Mrs. Lanfrey here," and he indicated his wife with a motion of his hand, "has scarcely heard anything at all. I've been so rushed getting organized. I—"

"Oh, I know it has something to do with desert isles," said Mrs. Lanfrey, with what seemed an effort to be gayly companionable.

"Yes, my dear," Lanfrey smiled amusedly at her. "Desert isles." Then his blue eyes sought mine. "And Bartlett," he said, "three hours before we sailed didn't know he was to go along with us. I owe him some sort of apology for jerking him into this thing—at least an explanation. And there are others—Miss Wilmer, Mr. Quigley—who would like to know—"

"The thing has been on Chandler's mind for a long while," interrupted Ardleigh. "That collection of his at the Museum has been incomplete."

"Yes. It was Chandler who is responsible for the idea," Lanfrey went on. "I was talking to him at the Museum six or eight weeks ago and he mentioned that there were many items he still lacked in his Galapagos collection. About that time Charley Risner came in and we got to talking about the problem at Galapagos, which dates back to Darwin's time, maybe farther. Whether there was

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a land bridge to Mexico or Central America in ancient times over which the flora and fauna of the islands came, or whether it was ocean borne. One thing led to another. We got to talking over men who might profitably be sent to the Galapagos, and I said that I had two or three months free and the yacht which I would be willing to offer if he would name the members of the expedition. And so that's rather the beginning of this thing—"

"Of course," said Ardleigh, drawling slightly, and flicking the ash from his cigarette, "this expedition is not prepared to settle the old problem of how the archipelago got its flora and fauna, whether over an ancient land bridge or by sea transport—"

Dr. Gorell, who until now had been silent, suddenly thrust out his lower jaw. The gold-rimmed spectacles astride his nose seemed almost to sparkle with the fire in his small eyes, they gleamed so belligerently.

"There's only one explanation of how those islands were supplied with life." His voice seemed to bite. "It was by sea transport. The Humbolt Current—other currents, perhaps, in prehistoric times—man himself—"

"Well, now, Gorell," drawled Ardleigh, a faint smile on his hard lips, "there's the Galapagos Tortoise, for example. It's a land animal. Can't swim. It wouldn't be caught in the first place on a raft of driftwood; if it were it wouldn't survive the hundreds of miles it had to drift to reach those islands—"

"You don't use your head, Ardleigh," snapped Gorell. "You overlook the fact that the Galapagos Tortoise is a toothsome meal to any man, modern or prehistoric. There's evidence all around the Pacific of prehistoric

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men—of their movements. Suppose they put the tortoise on the islands for a future food supply, just as in more modern times Captain Cook and the navigators of his day left goats and pigs and cattle on the various islands of the South Seas—"

"It's possible that could have happened with the tortoise," said Ardleigh, snuffing out the fire of his cigarette stub in an ash tray with a bit more energy than was necessary.

"It's plausible," said French, speaking up for the first time, "adaptive changes no doubt—"

"Plausible?" almost shouted Gorell. "It can't be denied. Sea transport and adaptation is the answer. It's reasonable—more so than that there once was a land bridge between mainland and the Galapagos. Why go so far back in geologic time when it's not at all necessary? It's bosh, Ardleigh. It's tommyrot!"

A hand touched my arm and a voice whispered softly in my ear: "Is he mad at anybody, do you think?"

"Do you want my cake?" I asked, shoving it towards Alice Wilmer to keep her quiet. As a matter of fact, though, she had asked the question that was in my own mind. Dr. Gorell had launched upon something more than a friendly argument; there was irascibility there, almost there was animus. I noted a swift expression of anger cross the countenance of Ardleigh. French moved uneasily in his chair. But more interesting than either of these evidences of feeling was the fat dark face of Mrs. Gorell. Her lips were set, her eyes almost glittered; nervously but abstractedly with her spoon she was cutting at her cake as though with each dig she were inflict-

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ing a mortal wound upon an enemy.

It was puzzling to me. I've seen raw nerves react from the tedium of long expeditions, observed the clash of personalities rendered explosive by the accretion of small irritations. But such incidents came only towards or at the end, not at the beginning. There long have been two schools of thought as to how the volcanic Galapagos were supplied with animal and vegetable life. These schools have been opposed in their views for at least forty years. So this late date was no time for heat over a question so academic as this one.

I puzzled over the thing alone on the after deck where I went when dinner was concluded. With a cigarette and the gentle wash of the wake for company I began to wonder if I hadn't been rash in accepting Carlos Lanfrey's offer to accompany the expedition. Far down upon the dark horizon was the faint glow in the sky cast by the lights of the tremendous area of Los Angeles and the harbor cities. If there was lack of harmony in the expedition at the outset, what possibly could be accomplished?

A figure passed me, making a turn around the after deck. I called.

"Yes, sir," was the quick response.

"Is it you, Starr?"

"Yes, sir, Mr. Bartlett. What may I do for you?"

"It's a nice night."

"Beautiful night, sir." He drew up in the darkness to my side.

"Are you still on duty?"

"I'm always on duty, sir, if you wish something."

"But you have this time to yourself—"

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"Yes, sir. I am taking my constitutional."

"After all the luggage, and the serving of dinner?"

"Yes, sir. I must keep in good trim. I seem to need more exercise than most men, sir. I was at one time in the prize ring."

"What were you?"

"Light heavy, sir. But it meant only pork and beans and I was glad to come with Mr. Lanfrey. I've saved money—"

"All right, Starr, go ahead with your constitutional. Don't let me interfere. But first tell me in what state-room I'll find Professor Huntoon Rogers."

"In seventeen, sir."

"Thank you, Starr. Good night."

"Good night, sir."

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4

For a while longer I continued on deck. Perhaps it was in character with Carlos Lanfrey, I mused, to pick up a pork and beans fighter to make of him a steward aboard his yacht. My cigarette end went over the rail, a mere spark that flickered out in the vast darkness below. I lighted another and continued with my thoughts.

Voices now and then reached me from somewhere. Voices not engaged in conversation, but voices that spoke only in monosyllables and only at intervals. It seemed the sound came from a rear porthole on the deck below. I moved farther along the rail to escape it, for it disturbed my thoughts, inconsequential as they were. I couldn't get away from the scene at dinner when Gorell warmed up so over a mere difference of opinion. Ardleigh I had known for ten years. French was a newer acquaintance, but of three years' standing. I had never laid eyes on Gorell before until tonight, but I had known him by reputation as an outstanding naturalist whose specialty was conchology. He was at the University. That reminded me that Hunt Rogers probably knew him. And I hadn't seen Hunt yet.

I tossed my cigarette over the rail, walked the short distance to the companionway and went down to the deck below. Starr had said Rogers was in seventeen. As

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my foot touched the deck I observed a stateroom door partly open. Not wide, but sufficient, as I walked past it, to give me a view of practically the entire room. Whose room it was I did not know, but guessed it was Quigley's, for he was there. I didn't linger in the passageway; I merely saw what I saw as I walked by. Indeed I could not help seeing.

Quigley, wearing a dressing gown, was in the room. And Starr and the boy who had helped him serve dinner, and a strange young man who from his dress was one of the crew. All four were bending over a table across which a counterpane from the bed had been drawn and they were shooting craps. Quigley was shaking the dice in his shut hand close beside his ear. He rolled them out upon the table. There was considerable money on the counterpane.

I walked onward towards Rogers' stateroom. Gambling aboard ship was inevitable, I supposed. I've talked with seamen who have told me of the gambling among the crew that goes on forward at the start of any voyage, and subsequently whenever there's any money. And I've sat in more than once in the smoking room in a friendly game. But here was the point that disturbed me as I walked on down the passageway. Quigley was a member of the expedition; not a principal member, but nevertheless an important one, since he was the photographer. It was in very poor taste for him to start gambling with the crew. He couldn't be excused on the grounds of youth, for he looked to be thirty; not only that, but apparently he had been around and knew his way about.

In my disturbed state of mind I passed Hunt Rogers'

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door and had to retrace my steps. I rapped. I rapped a second time.

"Come in," murmured a blurred voice.

I pushed open the door and entered. The slumped figure of Professor Huntoon Rogers was sitting on the edge of the bed, holding his head in his hands. The light from the desk lamp threw a somber shadow upon the unhappy face. I crossed over to him, and laid my hand upon his shoulder.

"Feeling better, old man?" I asked.

At the sound of my voice his relaxed muscles stiffened a trifle. Slowly he lifted his head and his eyes sought my face.

"Who—?" he began; then, "Bartlett? Benny? What are you—?"

"Sure. You're not seeing ghosts. I just dropped in for a moment. If you're not feeling well enough I won't stay."

"Oh, I'm all right—I guess," he said uncertainly. "Sit down."

I sat down on a chair beside the desk. Hunt Rogers continued to sit on the edge of the bed, his head had dropped back to its former resting place in his hands. I thought of Alice Wilmer's description of "a strange man in a brown suit. He's got funny ears." Hunt's ears were small and stood out noticeably from his head. But you soon overlooked that feature. He wore glasses with rather large lenses, slightly thicker than ordinary, for he had always had trouble with his eyes which seemed to bulge somewhat in their sockets. His blond hair was getting thin on top, although he still was a young man, and his

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nose was large. He had a powerful frame, standing close to six feet in height.

At the moment I sat down in the chair, however, few of these features were obvious. The man looked more or less a wreck. His hair was tousled, his glasses were on the night stand, his hands concealed his prominent ears, and his large frame was slumped in the depths of dejection.

"I feel better than I did," he said hopefully. "But tell me how you happen to be here."

"That's easy. I was invited and I accepted," I replied, going on to relate how Carlos Lanfrey had importuned me over the garden wall that afternoon.

"That's like Carlos," he commented. "He's a man of action; more the warrior than the gentle poet—the contemplative spirit is far removed from him." His voice was dull and lifeless.

"This is a fine way for you to rest up; seasickness does such wonders to the system—" I began with mild sarcasm.

"Now, don't do that, Benny," he protested. "I'll get over it. I always have recovered along about the time I've begun to hope I won't." He actually forced a smile. "I passed that point half an hour ago."

"I came down to talk to you about the personnel of this expedition," I said, "but I see I'll have to let it wait—"

"There's a dish of dried beef and crackers on the table there," he said.

"I see it."

"Will you bring it to me? Starr provided it. My stomach is empty."

I carried the dish over to him, and he took a cracker

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and nibbled it. Presently he had eaten it all. He next tried a piece of salty dried beef. It stayed down. I could see that he was recovering. The boat was rolling slightly and there was less pitch than at dinner time. He didn't seem to notice it now. Finally he said: "It's the smell around the harbor, that brackish odor; it's the first few hours aboard; it's the anticipation of seasickness that actually induces the illness. When I am out away from land and get over the first attack, then I'm all right. I feel like going up on deck now."

He picked up his glasses and put them on, smoothed down his hair. I carried the dried beef and crackers, and together we went down the passageway and up to the after deck. The door to Quigley's room was closed when we passed it, but I heard inside the murmur of voices and concluded that the gambling still went on.

"We're well away from land, are we not?" asked Rogers, as we hooked our elbows on the rail.

"Quite."

There was no longer the glow of lights from land. Save for the few illuminated areas on the deck, there was everywhere a vast darkness about us; the ship under a few dim stars moved onward in what seemed sheer nothingness.

"What did you want to ask me about the personnel of the expedition?" inquired Rogers, the dry sound of crackers in his mouth.

"Have you met them all?"

"I don't know. I don't think so. Name them over, if you've met them."

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"All right. Stop me when I name somebody you don't know. Carlos and Mrs. Lanfrey, Dr. Ardleigh, Dr. French—"

"French is merely an acquaintance," he interrupted.

"Dr. and Mrs. Gorell, Jack Quigley and Alice Wilmer," I went on.

"I've not met Miss Wilmer."

"I'll introduce you. She looks interesting."

"Thanks. Is that all?"

"I think so—except for ourselves."

"Now, whom did you want to ask me about?"

"Gorell."

He was silent, except for the sound of crunching crackers. I repeated the name.

"I heard you," he said. "Why do you pick on him?" There was the sound of a chuckle.

"He seems—" I began.

"He not only seems; he is," he laughed. "I told Carlos when he said Gorell was coming, that it was a mistake. He said Chandler had named him and as he had agreed to accept Chandler's selections, there wasn't anything to be done about it. This objection, you understand, isn't on scientific grounds. Gorell rates high; he is a brilliant fellow. But he's narrow; and I wonder sometimes if his is what you'd call the scientific temperament. What's he done?"

"Made a little scene at dinner," I said, detailing the argument for his benefit. "It was uncalled for. Absolutely. Seemed to me he just felt like a fight."

Rogers didn't say anything for a moment. I felt his

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hand groping for what remained of the dried beef and crackers. Finally he remarked: "That's characteristic. If you and I weren't old friends, Benny, and if you were the kind to relay gossip, I wouldn't be saying what I am. But the truth is that while Gorell is something of a genius, he's a much bigger ass, an irritating ass. If you'll permit me to mix metaphors, he's been a thorn in the side of the faculty at the University for a long time. And his wife, even though I shouldn't say so, is worse than he is. They have a daughter who is in difficulty with her husband; but she's not on board and that's beside the point anyway. I've never seen her. Don't know who her husband is. Now, there you've got the Gorells."

"Thanks. I suspected as much."

"Gorell is irritating; one can get along with him by keeping out of his way as much as possible, and not arguing."

"Feeling better?"

"I'm feeling all right again. Let's walk."

We took a turn around the deck. Rogers had recovered his sea legs in a remarkably short time; he was no longer the lugubrious individual I had found earlier in his cabin. I was ready to stop walking long before he was, but he kept on for another and still another turn around the deck.

"I'm going to enjoy this cruise," he remarked once.

"Yes, you big ham," I reminded him, "you haven't got any responsibilities. You're just a supercargo in a luxury cruise."

"I've brought along Gibbon and a complete one volume Shakespeare. I'm going to read them both through

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if the cruise lasts long enough," he chortled. "I've been meaning to do it for a long time."

"That's a swell vacation," I said.

"Suits me. While you're climbing around on volcanic isles, I'm going to be lying in the shade reading."

Far to port the lights of a vessel appeared dimly, the merest flicker in the darkness. We stopped at the rail and studied its faint rays, but could make nothing of it.

"Probably a coasting vessel," remarked Rogers. "We're standing farther out, I imagine. Carlos said he was going directly to the islands. If we touch at Panama, or any of the Central American or Mexican ports, we'll do it on our way back."

As we stood there we were directly over the portholes of Quigley's stateroom. Voices below us suddenly were lifted. I didn't recognize anyone's, however. Of a sudden one was high pitched and accusative; others sought to calm it. Then came the confused sounds of a scuffle, of blows, and oaths that blistered. A door slammed, and feet scurried up the companionway at our backs.

We turned to observe the fleeing figure that had mounted from the deck below. He tucked his head down against his shoulder when he saw us and ran swiftly forward along the rail. So quickly did he appear and disappear, that we were left wondering whether we had seen anyone at all. Below all was quiet for a moment, then a door opened and closed. Whether anyone came out of the room we could not tell. After a moment we went to the companionway and looked below. There was no one there. If someone had come out he had gone forward on the deck below, his footfalls softened by the rubber run-

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ner which carpeted the passageway.

"That's odd," Rogers said slowly, when all was quiet again.

"Crap game," I explained. "In Quigley's room. It's been going on for some time."

"But the fellow who ran by us. I've seen him somewhere."

"He must be one of the crew. He ran forward."

"Yes, I know. But his face—I saw it in the light just as he reached the top of the stairs. I've seen it somewhere before."

"You probably saw him earlier, on the dock before we left."

"No, I didn't. I came aboard and went straight to my bed. If I remember rightly this fellow wouldn't be signed on as one of the crew—well—"

"Think we ought to investigate?"

"I doubt if it's any of our business, Benny. I'm satisfied to let it stay just where it is."

"So am I."

A moment later Rogers remarked: "I'm thinking of turning in. It's late and I'm getting sleepy now."

"All right. I'm sleepy too."

Together we went towards the companionway and descended to our rooms.

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5

WHAT evidence there was remaining next morning of the row in Quigley's stateroom the night before, was slight indeed. But it was significant. As Starr set coffee beside my breakfast plate I noted a slightly swollen knuckle on his right hand; the boy helper remained near the buffet, doing something with the silver. The lad was sunk in gloomy depths.

"Nice morning," I remarked, glancing across the table at Quigley.

"Nice enough," he replied, without enthusiasm. In the light, as he sat, I noted a place on his left cheek where the skin had a slightly greenish cast and looked as if it had escaped abrasion by the lightest of chances. I was aware of an antagonism between Quigley and Starr; it was not apparent on Starr's part, for in addition to being something of a prize fighter, he seemed to possess also the talent of an actor in his ability to conceal his feelings towards Quigley. For I fancied he regarded the man he served with disfavor.

But nothing was said of it; nothing apparently came of it that day. Huntoon Rogers didn't mention it to me when I talked with him after breakfast, as we took our constitutional about the deck. It seemed to be one of those things that may be important at the moment but

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which later fades out. I separated from Rogers. He dropped into a deck chair and opened his Shakespeare, while I went below to look through the stuff Risner had had sent on board in anticipation of the work he expected to do, and which illness had prevented him from doing.

In addition to the collecting equipment, which included many labels reading, "Carlos Lanfrey Galapagos Expedition," there was a rather lengthy list of various items which Risner had expected to find and bring back, both sea and land birds. From his extensive preparations it was obvious that he had planned a thorough search of the Galapagos for specimens. That meant hard work and much climbing over a terrific volcanic terrain. However, if I had been rash in accepting Lanfrey's offer, there was no help for it now. And after all, I didn't really regret it. Now that we were at sea and the expedition well started, I began to feel somewhat the eagerness, the anticipation of the other members of the party.

I had thought that of all the ship's company I had been the only one lacking that eagerness at our departure. I said as much to Mrs. Lanfrey, as we stood at the rail that afternoon. She had spoken to me as I came along the deck, and had patted the rail beside her as an invitation to stop. "You don't look so terribly in earnest," she remarked, offering me a cigarette from the case she carried in the pocket of her scarlet slacks. "You don't even look like a scientist."

"Thank you," I said. "Running away from them, are you?"

"Yes. They bore me terrifically."

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I think I raised my eyebrows at that; at least I looked at her rather steadily. "Oh, I know," she laughed. "You're wondering about Carlos. He knows I loathe scientists; he knows I loathe scientific expeditions. He knows, too, that I'm going along just to please him."

"Then, except for that," I remarked, "you're just wild about the trip."

"Exactly," she replied with a slow smile that showed her even, white teeth. She was a beautiful woman. Her eyes were fine, her features as precisely cut as a cameo's; there was something almost regal in the way she carried her head and shoulders. And yet I felt sorry for her. For there was something pathetic in those eyes of hers, a restlessness, an unsatisfied hunger. She was a woman who never had found herself, probably never would find herself; life stretched before her, a highway of discontent. Moreover, she didn't suspect it; never would realize it.

"I'm a scientist—" I said, "if I'm anything at all. I'm a hunter of birds—"

"Don't let it break out on you like a rash if you want to be my friend."

"I—"

She suddenly fixed me with her eyes, as though remembering something long forgotten. "Have you a sister named Marjory?"

"Yes."

"I used to see her at the Coconut Grove in town. I thought she was as beautiful as any young girl ever dared to be."

"The kid is good looking," I replied, somewhat pleased. For Marjory is something to be proud of.

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"Whatever happened to her?"

"She got married."

"Oh." Her interest was gone instantly, and our conversation lagged for a time. We were on our second cigarette apiece when Quigley came along the deck as though seeking someone. The moment he espied us he came directly to the rail. I nodded to him and he stared at me a moment as though wondering if he had ever seen me before.

"You know Mr. Bartlett, don't you, Jack?" Mrs. Lanfrey asked.

"Yes. Sure. Hello," he said, his eyes fixed on me for a brief moment. He seized a cigarette which she offered him, and lighted it from the tip of hers. I noted that his hand shook a trifle.

"Enjoying yourself?" Mrs. Lanfrey inquired, lazily indifferent.

"Yes. Sure," Quigley answered, and looked away at the sea. There was something on his mind, something important; he seemed debating what to do. Suddenly he spoke to Mrs. Lanfrey in a voice intended for her, but which I could not help overhearing. "Listen, Reba," he said, "I've got to see you. Now. Somewhere. Somewhere where I can talk to you alone."

"Surely, Jack. Anywhere you say. Let's go to the lounge."

He took her arm and turned from the rail.

"Excuse us, won't you, please, Mr. Bartlett?" Mrs. Lanfrey said.

"Of course."

I did not notice at the moment of their going that

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Carlos Lanfrey was in our vicinity. But when I turned my back to the deck to look off over the empty sea, I saw him standing near by. He was watching his wife and Jack Quigley as they went down the deck towards the lounge. Presently he came over to me and leaned against the rail, the sun glittering on the gold braid of his uniform. We exchanged greetings. He seemed to have nothing in particular to impart to me.

"Are you comfortable in your quarters, Bartlett?" he asked.

"Very. Thank you. You have a wonderful boat."

"She's all of that. We're turning up seventeen knots."

"That's good running."

He pursed his full red lips, and his eyes narrowed; he seemed to be mulling something over in his mind. Finally he said: "Bartlett, have you by any chance learned of any gambling going on between members of the expedition and the crew?" He faced the ocean, his shoulder close to mine, waiting for an answer.

"Yes," I said, "but—"

"I know," he interposed hastily. "I'm not asking you to be a talebearer. I'm merely trying to get at the bottom of something. One of the crew has a beautiful shiner. He won't say how he got it. Ernest, the boy who helps Starr, is sulking. The rumor is that there was a game in one of the cabins last night that ended in a row. I'm sorry; I apologize, of course, for having to dig into—"

"Do you mind calling Rogers over here?" I asked.

"Hunt Rogers?"

"Yes. Sitting there in his chair—" Carlos Lanfrey twisted about to discover Rogers and called: "Hunt!

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Oh, Hunt! Come here a minute."

Huntoon Rogers joined us at the rail. A moment later Lanfrey began: "We were just talking a little, Hunt, about something that went on last night. Do you know anything about a row in one of the cabins—?"

"Yes." Rogers looked at me a moment questioningly, then went on, "There was a row of some sort."

"Tell me about it."

"Oh, I wasn't there," he laughed. "I've got a witness. Benny and I were back at the rail when it happened just under us." From there he went on to detail the sounds of scuffling below us in Quigley's stateroom; the blows, the oaths, the banging door, and the member of the crew who charged up the companionway and ran forward.

"Quigley," mused Lanfrey. "Probably the breaking up of a crap game."

"Since you are getting at the bottom of this," I said, "I suppose it's only fair to tell you what I saw. I passed Quigley's door earlier, on my way to see Hunt. The door was ajar sufficiently to give me a view of most of the room as I walked by. Quigley and Starr and the boy Ernest, and a member of the crew I had not seen before, were there. Quigley was shaking dice and he rolled them out on the table on which there was considerable money. Without any conclusions or extenuations, or efforts to implicate or condone—for it's none of my business—that's the story as we know it together. You asked for it; there it is."

Captain Lanfrey looked away to sea for a considerable moment. Finally he said: "Thank you, gentlemen. We'll drop it right where it stands. Unless it occurs again. I'll

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not have the discipline of the crew undermined." He shut his jaws firmly on the last word, straightened to his full height and walked forward.

All this seems hardly worth the setting down. Ordinarily, I suppose, it should be omitted. But in view of what was to follow, it is necessary to include it. Moreover, the *Cyrene II* was not a passenger boat in the sense that a liner is; she was a private yacht engaged upon a scientific expedition, and the responsible members owed something more than a mere passenger's obligation to the captain, who had the welfare and the success of the expedition at heart.

"Quigley had no business starting a crap game like that," said Rogers. He still leaned over the rail, a finger in his volume of Shakespeare, his large nose like a figurehead pointed towards the sea.

"Of course not."

After a moment Rogers said, "Quigley, you know, is a substitute at the last moment, like yourself."

"I didn't know that."

"Yes. The man Carlos expected to get from the studio was called back at the last moment for some retakes on a picture he had been shooting. And they sent Quigley in his place."

"Things haven't gone so smoothly for Lanfrey, then, taking it all around, have they?"

"No, they haven't. They never do, I guess."

"Quigley seems to be an acquaintance of Mrs. Lanfrey's. I thought, of course, that might have had something to do with his being along."

"No, I think not. If she knows him, his being aboard

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is probably just a coincidence. Nothing more."

' We were just gossiping idly. Ship life lends itself peculiarly to gossip. As a party we had not yet shaken down to that point where our curiosity in each other was satisfied. As we talked, now looking out over the water, again with our backs to the rail, Mrs. Lanfrey came along the deck alone, smoking a cigarette as she walked. She passed us by without speaking, then suddenly she stopped and came back. Standing a little apart from us she said to Rogers:

"Perhaps I am being a little remiss, Mr. Rogers, as a hostess. I've not inquired as to whether you are comfortable in your quarters. Are you?"

"I'm very comfortable, Mrs. Lanfrey, thank you."

"And you, Mr. Bartlett?"

"The same, and thanks."

She smiled, and with a polished finger nail flicked her cigarette deftly over the rail. There was something else she wanted to say, but hesitated to do so; then suddenly she said:

"Carlos never gambles. He detests it. I'm not apologizing for that lack in him, you understand. I merely wanted to say that whatever you may hear about a game having already occurred, will you please not say anything about it to Carlos?" She flashed us a smile, and before either Rogers or I could reply, walked away.

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6

By the following morning we were far down the coast of Lower California. In the early hours the *Cyrene II,* glistening white in the sun on a blue and empty sea, possessed an atmosphere of loneliness. Her decks were deserted; her lounge and dining room unoccupied. All life seemed to have fled.

"Where is everybody?" Alice Wilmer asked, coming in to breakfast. I had been alone when she entered. Ardleigh and Captain Lanfrey had eaten and gone, for the service had been cleared away from their places.

"What did you expect of a scientific expedition? A levee, a chattering tea party?" I asked.

"Certainly not the quiet of the grave," she answered.

"Well, figure it out," I said. "Carlos Lanfrey takes his duties as captain and leader very seriously. He has much work to do in his office just off the bridge. His chief officer, the second mate, the chief engineer and sparks are busy men; they have their own mess, and you didn't expect to see anything of them anyway. Mrs. Lanfrey is a law unto herself. The scientific members of the expedition brought along something to do. Dr. Gorell is writing something, and his wife is helping him. Ardleigh is revising his text book on geology. French is trying to put a book together. What time Huntoon Rogers isn't exer-

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cising, he's reading. You and Jack Quigley and I seem to be the only play boys of this luxury cruise—"

"Have you seen Jack this morning?" she asked. Her complexion was unusually fresh and lovely at this early hour.

"No."

She lifted her blue eyes towards Starr, as the latter came in with her egg and toast. "Has Mr. Quigley had his breakfast yet, Starr?"

"No, Miss Wilmer."

"Jack is going to take pictures of everybody this morning," she said, turning back to me. "It's official. On deck at ten-thirty, everybody. He told me so last night."

"Picture taking is inevitable. You'll have to be taken and like it—"

"But I do like it."

"Not once but many times—"

"All right. The more the better."

"You're hopeless."

She laughed and we became gay; and I forgot that feeling of loneliness which earlier I had detected settling down upon the yacht. It probably was just as well that we started the day like that; there was enough to come later to overbalance by far any gaiety at breakfast time.

However, it was not until somewhat after ten o'clock that the boy Ernest went down the companionway to the deck below and rapped on Quigley's door. He rapped twice, he said later, and then entered and found Quigley not there. He went back to Captain Lanfrey and reported he could not find him. Lanfrey had wanted to discuss with Quigley the pictures he desired of the mem-

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bers of the expedition.

"Go forward and see if he is in the crew's quarters," Lanfrey instructed the boy.

I overheard the instructions, for I happened to be standing where Lanfrey's voice carried to me. The thought crossed my mind that perhaps Quigley, in his devotion to the gods of chance, had invaded the fo'c'sle in search of gaming companions. I wondered if perhaps Lanfrey was thinking the same thing.

Ernest came back in a few minutes and reported that Quigley was not in the crew's quarters. "Go find him. Get Starr to help you," said Lanfrey. The boy hesitated a moment, then said:

"Mr. Quigley's bed wasn't slept in last night, sir."

Captain Lanfrey looked a moment at the boy with no change of expression in his bronzed face. "You should have told me that at once," he said. Then peremptorily: "Well, go find him for me."

"Yes, sir."

Lanfrey came over to me at the rail where I was leaning, enjoying the sunshine. "This fellow Quigley," he said without preliminary, "is beginning to get in my hair."

"He's young," I said.

"He's too young and unsettled for this business, I'm afraid."

"Taking pictures of the expedition personnel this morning?" I inquired.

"Yes. By the way, Bartlett, while we're waiting for Quigley, would you mind passing the word along to the other members of the expedition to come on deck? We

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won't keep them long. Quigley's probably got his stuff all ready. I told him last night."

"Yes, sir," I said, and tossed my cigarette end overboard and started towards the companionway.

I knocked on French's door and he snarled at me. He apologized promptly, however, when he recognized my voice. Mrs. Gorell opened her door suspiciously and thrust her dark fleshy face out as I approached, having overheard me talking with French.

"On deck, please, for official photographs," I said, and passed on. I found Ardleigh in the lounge reading a magazine. Huntoon Rogers was in his deck chair wrapped in a rug, his eyes on a book, his thoughts doubtless on a bank where the wild thyme blows. Alice Wilmer was forward, gazing at the sea. Coming along the shady port side I met Mrs. Lanfrey. She saw me and flung out an impulsive hand to stay my progress.

"Have you seen Jack Quigley this morning?" she asked.

"No. But he is to take pictures shortly on deck."

"I'm—worried," she said. "I—I can't find him this morning."

"Starr and Ernest have gone to look him up," I told her.

"Nothing's happened to him, of course," she remarked, more to reassure herself than to ply me with conversation. "He's such a kid, though. And he's impulsive—"

"Are you afraid he's got into difficulties?" I asked.

"No-o. I don't know. He's a perfect fiend for gambling and he has a quick temper—"

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"The sooner there is a showdown, Mrs. Lanfrey," I said, "the better it will be for the success of the expedition. That's between you and me. The Captain is going to have to crack down on him."

Starr came rapidly along the deck as we talked. His face was sober. Mrs. Lanfrey called out to him as he approached.

"Have you found Mr. Quigley, Starr?" There was a note of concern, almost alarm in her voice, as if her intuitions were running ahead of events.

"No, ma'am," Starr answered, pausing.

"You must find him. Go look everywhere," she urged. Starr glanced at her startled, then touched his cap and walked away. We stood a moment silently. She looked at me carefully, although, I believe, without seeing me. There was an arresting expression in her eyes, a strange light that puzzled me.

"Come around on the other side in the sun," I said. "They must be about ready for the pictures."

Around on the other side they were ready; that is, those who expected to be taken were waiting. Dr. Gorell and his wife were leaning on the rail. Ardleigh and French were talking. Hunt Rogers had laid aside his book and was chatting with Alice Wilmer. But there was no Quigley. Mrs. Lanfrey avoided the Gorells and went over to Alice Wilmer and Rogers. But their conversation was scarcely more than an exchange of pleasantries. I could not escape a feeling of growing tenseness; I thought at first that it was due to the interruption suffered by those who were engaged with their work. The Gorells already were fidgeting. Ardleigh about this time openly

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commented on the situation.

"That young man has only the one job, that of photographer. It would seem that he could look after it better."

His drawling voice carried over to Mrs. Lanfrey, and I noted a look of impatience on her face.

At this moment Starr came along the deck towards us. He singled out Rogers with a lift of his head, and then me, and stopped short of joining us. We went over to him. He waited until we were close then he said:

"Captain Lanfrey asks you two gentlemen to come to the bridge."

Without speaking, Rogers and I walked forward, climbed up to the bridge and found Lanfrey in the doorway of his office just off the bridge. He asked us in. We didn't sit down. He didn't ask us to. He merely began to talk.

"Listen," he said. "Get this. Something has happened. This fellow Quigley ought to be on this ship, but I can't put my hands on him now that I want him. I don't know whether he is hiding out purposely or whether something has happened to him. Hunt, you've been all over this ship; take Benny here with you. Start forward and work aft on all the decks. Starr and I will start aft and work forward. Starr and Ernest say they have searched the ship but I want to be sure."

Rogers and I climbed down off the bridge and went below decks. I don't know what Rogers was thinking, for we did not speak as we walked along together. We invaded the crew's quarters. Three men were sleeping in their bunks. We turned them out, then told them to go back to sleep again.

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Captain Lanfrey had said that Rogers had been over the ship. He took me into places I had not thought existed in a ship no larger than the *Cyrene II*. "Well," said Rogers, as we walked along a passageway, "if Carlos thought he might be stowed away in the fo'c'sle, he's mistaken."

"You don't suppose—" I began.

"I don't suppose anything," he cut me off shortly.

We found the Chief Officer in his tiny cabin. He even poked under his bunk for our benefit, and opened the door to the second mate's quarters. Through their mess room and the cook's galley we worked. No inch escaped us. We glimpsed Lanfrey and Starr together as we approached the center of the ship. With a gesture that indicated no result we went below to the engine room; we crawled into empty bunkers, banged on boxes in the hold, shifted ship's stores about in our effort to leave unexamined no corner that would hold a man.

We met Captain Lanfrey and Starr in the engine room. Lanfrey looked at us and shook his head. "Nothing," he said.

"We're just as empty handed," said Rogers, opening his palms outward.

For a moment the four of us stood there. Starr shifted uneasily on his feet and I saw him wet his lips. Rogers pulled a large white handkerchief from his pocket and mopped his brow. Captain Lanfrey pursed his lips slowly and thoughtfully.

"Well—" he said after a moment, and turned and climbed up to the deck.

We followed him silently, our feet making little sound

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on the padded companionway. As we reached the deck on which the staterooms were located, Lanfrey paused as though undecided, then walked aft to Quigley's room. He threw the door open suddenly, as if suspecting that Quigley had played some trick upon us all. But the room was empty. The four of us entered and stood in the center of it. The bed, as had been previously reported, had not been slept in. Quigley's clothes hung in the closet where he had left them, swinging gently to the slow roll of the ship. His watch and some money were on the dresser; the long gray ash of a burned out cigarette lay on the edge of the glass top.

Captain Lanfrey's eyes swept about the room. He walked over to the bed, touched it lightly with his knuckles, then dropped on one knee, raised the edge of the hanging counterpane and looked underneath. The space there was empty. Still without speaking, Lanfrey led the way outside and by the rear companionway to the upper deck. The little group of fellow passengers we had left waiting to have their pictures taken were still about. Mrs. Gorell was occupying Rogers' deck chair and was idly turning the leaves of his book. Her husband and French were leaning together over the rail talking. Ardleigh and Mrs. Lanfrey were strolling together. Alice Wilmer was walking alone farther forward.

Our appearance among them, somewhat disheveled as we were from our search, had the effect of a mild electric shock. Mrs. Gorell laid aside the book. Gorell and French faced about. Ardleigh and Mrs. Lanfrey quickened their pace and came up to us. I could see that Mrs. Lanfrey wanted to speak, but it was Ardleigh who spoke first.

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"Well," he said with a slight asperity, "when is our young photographer going to favor us with his presence?"

There was a silence that began to grow ominous. Then Captain Lanfrey said quietly:

"He's not coming."

Mrs. Lanfrey's hand went up to her face. She pressed her handkerchief to her lips, almost as if to stop a cry that was there.

"What's happened?" French asked.

"Mr. Quigley has disappeared."

Curious how that feeling of loneliness I had noted earlier seemed to have settled again about the ship. In the moment when Captain Lanfrey's words were sinking into the consciousness of those about us, I could feel it again with all the weight of the empty sea upon which we sailed alone.

"You mean you can't find him anywhere?" began Gorell, thrusting out his chin.

"Mr. Quigley has disappeared," repeated Captain Lanfrey.

"Oh, no, Carlos!" Mrs. Lanfrey cried out.

"But he must be somewhere about—" began Alice Wilmer, almost in desperation.

"I've said he is not to be found aboard ship," said Lanfrey.

"But where could he have gone, sir?" demanded Gorell, a fine sweat breaking out on his forehead.

"Gone?" echoed the Captain. "Overboard."

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7

THE *Cyrene II* moved onward under a cloudless sky. There was no sail, no thin blur of smoke in any quarter of the horizon; there was no point of reference by which to measure our interminable progress. Except for the slow roll and the slight noise of the water along the ship's sides, there was nothing to assure us that we even moved at all towards the distant goal of the expedition in the Galapagos Islands.

Nobody looked over the side now at the sea. It had become immensely formidable, forbidding. For Quigley, our youthful photographer, was gone. Lost overboard. I have no doubt that in Captain Carlos Lanfrey's mind in those first few minutes of realization that we had lost one of our number overboard, was the thought of turning back in search of Quigley. It was only a human and natural impulse. But the hopelessness of it! Anybody who far from land ever has seen the pitiful speck that is the head of a swimmer in so vast a thing as the open sea, realizes the futility of turning back. Besides Quigley had not been seen for hours. He had not been at breakfast. His bed had not been slept in. Everything pointed to the assumption that he had gone overboard in the night. Somebody asked:

"Could he swim?"

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There was a moment's silence, and then Alice Wilmer, the artist, with a strangely dry sound in her voice said:

"No. He couldn't swim—very well."

Captain Lanfrey turned and walked towards the bridge. The others, as by some compelling force, drifted slowly away to the greater security of their staterooms, leaving Huntoon Rogers and me alone on deck. I stood against the rail, my back to the sea, while Rogers dropped into his steamer chair, pulled the rug about his feet and picked up his book.

"Even if you are a professor of English, do you feel like reading now, Hunt?" I asked.

"No." He was silent a moment. He rubbed his finger along the side of his large nose. "I don't. But what else is there to do? The man is gone. Action in a situation like this is so absolutely futile. If we could do anything to help, take any steps whatever, naturally we would all want to do it. I don't envy Carlos his position. The only thing we can do is keep on with our plans. It's hard to see how a man as young and active as Quigley could have fallen overboard."

We talked idly for half an hour, discussing the situation, while the yacht plowed steadily onward towards the ever receding horizon that hemmed us in. At the end of that time Captain Lanfrey came down from the bridge and walked along the deck to our sides. His blue eyes regarded us thoughtfully for a moment.

"I've wirelessed Quigley's people," he said.

Perhaps that was all he had to say to us; I don't know. He had turned partly on his heel as though to walk away when Rogers got up out of his chair.

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"Carlos," he said, "I was just thinking. Doubtless it has occurred to you, too. Quigley's things ought to be gathered up and put away against the time we get home again. I volunteer to look them over and pack them away."

"All right, Hunt. Thanks," the Captain's response was quick. "I was going to have Starr do it, but it's just as well that you take charge of it. By the way, let's go down there now. Come on, Bartlett."

The three of us walked to the after companionway and descended to Quigley's room. It was as we had left it earlier. His watch and some money lay on the dresser; his clothes hanging in the closet still swayed gently to the roll of the ship. The bed was undisturbed. We stood in the room gazing about, reluctant to take up the task which signified the closing of a life.

"How in hell did it happen?" Captain Lanfrey said suddenly, in a tense voice.

Neither Rogers nor I answered him for a moment, then Rogers said:

"He was young and strong physically; he seemed like a very normal person. Of course an accident can happen to anybody."

"It can," said Captain Lanfrey. "But did it?"

"How do you mean, Carlos?" asked Rogers.

The Captain did not reply. He walked over to the closet and ran his hand over the clothing that hung there. He poked about at a bag that was set inside of it and came back to the dresser where the watch and money lay. He was making up his mind to some action. Suddenly he spoke.

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"Listen, Hunt," he said. "You and Benny make a thorough check of Quigley's things and put them back in his luggage, lock it up and bring me the keys. Better list the stuff you find. And any money—" he indicated the roll of bills on the dresser—"bring it to me and I'll put it in the safe." He cast a swift glance about the stateroom as if to make sure he had overlooked nothing, then added: "That's all." He walked towards the door, turned a moment, pursed his red lips thoughtfully and said: "I think this afternoon we'd better talk the thing over—the others too." He motioned with his large hand as though to include the other members of the expedition. His back disappeared and we heard him climbing the companionway.

Rogers walked over to the door and closed it and came back to where I stood at the dresser looking at the long ash of a burned out cigarette on the glass top.

"I've been wondering about that, Benny," he said. "That must have been a fresh cigarette just lighted when Quigley laid it down."

"He'd pulled about twice on it," I commented.

"You know," and Rogers rubbed the side of his large nose, "it strikes me that we might use a little reasoning power right here."

"Possibly."

"I've always noticed that a man, unless he is extraordinarily preoccupied, never loses interest in a fresh cigarette. It's pretty well smoked before he gets to the point where he will lay it down and forget about it. Now, he'll lay down a fresh cigarette, say, to take off his necktie or his shirt, but he'll pick it up again. Or he'll lay it down if

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