

His friends have said he's been away somewhere for his health; but the truth is, he's been missing. There's a man I want you to look at, Captain—if you used to know Mr. Corvet."

"I heard of that." The captain moved alertly now. "Where is he?"

ALAN led the master to the Ferry. Old Burr had left the car deck; they found him on his way to the wheelhouse.

The Stoughton's skipper stared. "That the man?" he demanded.

"Yes, sir. Remember to allow for his clothes and his not being shaved and that something has happened."

The Stoughton's skipper followed to the wheelhouse and spoke to Burr. Alan's blood beat fast as he watched this conversation. Once or twice more the skipper seemed surprised; but it was plain that his first interest in Burr quickly had vanished; when he left the wheelhouse, he returned to Alan indulgently. "You thought that was Mr. Corvet?" he asked, amused.

"You don't think so?" Alan asked. "Ben Corvet like that? Did you ever see Ben Corvet?"

"Only his picture," Alan confessed. "But you looked queer when you first saw Burr."

"That was a trick of his eyes. Say, they did give me a start. Ben Corvet had just that sort of trick of looking through a man."

"And his eyes were like that?" "Sure. But Ben Corvet couldn't be like that!"

Alan prepared to go on duty. He would not let himself be disappointed by the skipper's failure to identify old Burr; the skipper had known immediately at sight of the old man that he was the one whom Alan thought was Corvet, and he had found a definite resemblance. It might well have been only the impossibility of believing that Corvet could have become like this which had prevented fuller recognition. Mr. Sherrill, undoubtedly, would send some one more familiar with Benjamin Corvet and who might make proper allowances.

Alan went forward to his post as a blast from the steam whistle of the switching engine, announcing that the cars all were on board, was answered by a warning blast from the ferry. On the car decks the trains had been secured in place; and, because of the roughness of the weather, the wheels had been locked upon the tracks with additional chains as well as with the blocks and chains usually used. Orders now sounded from the bridge; the steel deck began to shake with the reverberations of the engines; the mooring lines were taken in; the rails upon the fantail of the ferry separated from the rails upon the wharf, and clear water showed between. Alan took up his slow pace as lookout from rail to rail across the bow, straining his eyes forward into the thickness of the snow-filled night.

Because of the severe cold, the watches had been shortened. Alan would be relieved from time to time to warm himself, and then he would return to duty again. Old Burr at the wheel would be relieved and would go on duty at the same hours as Alan himself. Benjamin Corvet! The fancy reiterated itself to him. Could he be mistaken? Was that man, whose eyes turned alternately from the compass to the bow of the ferry as it shifted and rose and fell, the same who had

sat in that lonely chair turned toward the fireplace in the house on Astor Street? Were those hands, which held the steamer to her course, the hands which had written to Alan in secret from the little room off his bedroom and which pasted so carefully the newspaper clippings concealed in the library?

Regularly at the end of every minute, a blast from the steam whistle reverberated; for a while, signals from the shore answered; for a few minutes the shore lights glowed through the snow. Then the lights were gone, and the eddies of the gale ceased to bring echoes of the obscuration signals. Steadily, at short, sixty-second intervals, the blast of Number 25's warning burst from the whistle; then that too stopped. The great ferry was on the lake alone; in her course, Number 25 was cutting across the lanes of all ordinary lake travel; but now, with ordinary navigation closed, the position of every other ship upon the lakes was known to the officers, and formal signals were not thought necessary. Flat floes, driven by wind and wave, had windrowed in their course; as Number 25, which was capable of maintaining two thirds its open water speed when running through solid "green" ice two feet thick, met this obstruction, its under-cut bow rose slightly; the ice, crushed down and to the sides, hurled, pounding and scraping, under the keel and along the black, steel sides of the ship; Alan could hear the hull resounding to the buffeting as it hurled the floes away, and more came, or the wind threw them back. The water was washing high—higher than Alan had experienced seas before. The wind, smashing almost straight across the lake from the west, with only a gust or two from the north, was throwing up the water in great rushing ridges, on which the bow of Number 25 rose jerkily up and up, suddenly to fall, as the support passed on, so that the next wave washed nearly to the rail.

Alan faced the wind with mackinaw buttoned about his throat, but

to make certain his hearing, his ears were unprotected. They numbed frequently, and he drew a hand out of the glove to rub them. The windows to protect the wheelsman had been dropped, as the snow had gathered on the glass; and at intervals as he glanced back, he could see old Burr's face as he switched on a dim light to look at the compass. The strange placidity which usually characterized the old man's face had not returned to it since Alan had spoken with him on the dock; its look was intent and queerly drawn. Was old Burr beginning to remember—remember that he was Benjamin Corvet? Alan did not believe it could be that; again and again he had spoken Corvet's name to him without effect. Yet there must have been times when, if he was actually Corvet, he had remembered who he was. He must have remembered that when he had written directions to some one to send those things to Constance Sherrill; or, a strange thought had come to Alan, had he written those instructions to himself? Had there been a moment when he had been so much himself that he had realized that he might not be himself again and so had written the order which later, mechanically, he had obeyed? This certainly would account for the package having been mailed at Manitowoc and for Alan's failure to find out by whom it had been mailed. It would account too for the unknown handwriting upon the wrapper, if some one on the ferry had addressed the package for the old man. He must inquire whether any one among the crew had done that.

WHAT could have brought back that moment of recollection to Corvet, Alan wondered; the finding of the things which he had sent? What might bring another such moment? Would his seeing the Sherrills again—or Spearman—act to restore him?

For half an hour Alan paced steadily at the bow. The storm was increasing noticeably in fierceness; the wind-driven snowflakes had changed to

hard pellets which, like little bullets, cut and stung the face; and it was growing colder. From a cabin window came the blue flash of the wireless, which had been silent after notifying the shore stations of their departure. It had commenced again; this was unusual. Something still more unusual followed at once; the direction of the gale seemed slowly to shift, and with it the wash of the water; instead of the wind and the waves coming from dead ahead now, they moved to the port beam, and Number 25, still pitching with the thrust through the seas, also began to roll. This meant, of course, that the steamer had changed its course and was making almost due north. It seemed to Alan to force its engines faster; the deck vibrated more. Alan had not heard the orders for this change and could only speculate as to what it might mean.

His relief came after a few minutes more.

"Where are we heading?" Alan asked.

"Radio," the relief announced. "The H. C. Richardson calling; she's up by the Manitowoc."

"What sort of trouble?"

"She's not in trouble; it's another ship."

"What ship?"

"No word as to that."

Alan, not delaying to question further, went back to the cabins.

There stretched aft, behind the bridge, along the upper deck, some score on each side of the ship; they had accommodations for about a hundred passengers; but on this crossing only a few were occupied. Alan had noticed some half dozen men—business men, no doubt, forced to make the crossing and, one of them, a Catholic priest, returning probably to some mission in the north; he had seen no women among them. A little group of passengers were gathered now in the door of or just outside the wireless cabin, which was one of the row on the starboard side. Stewards stood with them and the cabin

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