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**An Imaginary Feast**  
A Thanksgiving Day Story  
By CLARISSA MACKIE

They had started out in Jack Henshaw's cabin launch for a cruise among the islands, with duck shooting as their object. It was a fair day in November, with an Indian summer warmth that did not hint of a sudden change in the weather. There were six in the party—Frank Carew and his wife, Mr. and Mrs. Bob Hayden and pretty Phyllis Hayden and Jack Henshaw. The three women occupied the cabin of the launch, and the men made themselves comfortable with blankets and salicloth on deck.

The first day had passed uneventfully, without even a shot at a duck. The second passed likewise, and the third dawned in the same glow of amber haze and ruddy sun.

"It looks very much as though we would have to return without those promised ducks for Thanksgiving day," observed Jack restlessly as he took the wheel after breakfast.

"If it would blow up a bit colder we might bag a few today. If my prophetic instinct serves me right those clouds ponder look like wind and rain." Bob Hayden puffed out a cloud of smoke and leaned lazily over the rail.

"I hope it doesn't storm. If we don't hurry we won't get back to Cromore in time for dinner tomorrow," said his wife.

"What's the matter with Thanksgiving dinner aboard the Nautilus?" asked her owner.

"It would be perfectly lovely, of course, only you know it couldn't seem like a real Thanksgiving feast. Everything is tinned or bottled. All the Thanksgivings I ever remember are accompanied by the aroma of delicious goodies cooking in the kitchen."

"Enough said," returned Jack grimly. "You spurn my invitation to dinner; therefore it is up to me to turn and beat it for Cromore. We will have barely time to make it before nightfall."

They might have done so easily had not those threatening clouds gradually massed toward the zenith and slowly covered the rest of the blue sky. There came a thick blanketing fog that blotched out the world and left them isolated in a dense white world of dripping moisture.

There was consternation aboard the Nautilus after that. Those November fogs were very deceiving, and it might be many hours, perhaps days, before the mist lifted. If they could keep in the winding channel among the islands they would be all right, but if they missed their way and nosed around outside in the track of the big steamers there was no knowing what would be the fate of the little craft and her passengers.

They anchored for awhile, and then, impatient of the delay that would prevent them from arriving home in time for Thanksgiving dinner, they started out again, feeling their way, Jack Henshaw at the wheel and Frank Carew blowing the siren at intervals. Bob Hayden and the three women remained in the cabin and played bridge by the light of the lamp. It was very cheerful in there, away from the fog. Jack Henshaw stared at the lighted windows of the cabin and thought rather ruefully that his task would be more attractive if Phyllis Hayden would come out and share his turn at the wheel.

The little Nautilus felt her way among the hidden rocks in the channel that snaked among the little islands, and it seemed that hours passed before the fog thinned sufficiently for them to glimpse the dark bulk of an island near at hand.

With the lifting of the fog, which was driven before a nasty easterly wind, the channel became unpleasantly choppy, changing to dashing waves as the wind increased.

While they debated whether to go on or to make an anchorage among the islands their fate was decided for them. A big wave rushed along the narrow channel, lifted the Nautilus upon its crest and sent her crashing upon the rocks of the nearest island.

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where she wedged tightly between two boulders.

It all came so suddenly that the duck hunters hardly realized what had happened before Jack Henshaw hustled them ashore with their belongings.

"She's sprung a leak, a big hole in her port bow. We can't do a thing except to carry a couple of lines ashore and fasten them to some of those large rocks."

He was hurrying them ashore with their burdens of hastily snatched clothing and bedding. He followed with all the provisions he could gather and later sent the small oil stove from the galley. By scrambling over the slippery rocks they could reach the firm white beach where ancient cedars fringed the foot of the sand bluff.

Here the women waited while the three men made the Nautilus fast in her cradle among the rocks in the manner suggested by Jack. When all was completed the six pleasure seekers gathered ruefully about their possessions.

"Goodby, Thanksgiving dinner!" said Carew in a hollow tone.

"And nobody knows how soon we may get to Cromore for any meals," added Mrs. Carew mournfully.

Phyllis Hayden and Jack Henshaw exchanged glances of amusement. To them the adventure savored of romance. To be cast away upon a desert island was a novel experience enough, but to be cast away together, these two, who were in love with each other, made that island a paradise.

"Ah, you're a cheerful lot of Robinson Crusoes!" chided Jack at last. "You may never have the chance to be cast ashore again, and you sit here bemoaning because you can't spend Thanksgiving in the conventional way."

"Can't you be thankful without being prodded by the smell of pumpkin pie and roast turkey?" demanded Phyllis scornfully.

"Let us contrive a shelter from the tarpaulins, and you four may sit there and play bridge. Miss Phyllis and I will concoct a Thanksgiving feast for you to enjoy tomorrow."

The others shamelessly agreed to this unit division of labor, and after a very practical shelter had been constructed against the sloping bluff and under the shade of two wind blown cedars the married couple made themselves very comfortable with cushions from the boat and by the light of a ship's lantern played bridge.

In the meantime Jack Henshaw and Phyllis Hayden held several conferences, during which they displayed much merriment and a thorough contentment with their lot.

They fussed around a hastily improvised shelter that Jack arranged for a little kitchen, and there they prepared the evening meal with the aid of the oil stove.

A creditable meal it proved to be, though canned beans formed the principal dish, and other canned and bottled delicacies rounded out the menu.

Morning brought sunshine and scudding clouds across the blue sky. The wind still blew heavily, but from another quarter, and the waves were dashing over the deck of the Nautilus. The castaways tried to be cheerful, but it proved a dismal failure, except in the case of Jack and Phyllis. Those two seemed to have tapped some resourceful flow of good humor, for they laughed and jested and promised the most inviting dinner for the others, who clung to their bridge playing, now sitting on the sandy beach with their cards.

Jack and Phyllis disappeared and were gone for a couple of hours. While they were gone those left behind heard the report of Jack's gun.

"Aha! We'll have a duck, at any rate," murmured Carew.

"I'm afraid not," said his wife. "I notice that the supply of oil is gone, and the Nautilus is washed over with water. Every stick of wood on the island is too wet to burn. Cold canned beef and crackers and peanut butter will constitute our menu today," she ended drearily.

There was nothing cheering in the sight of Jack and Phyllis returning with a brace of ducks, for there was no fire to cook them by. When this evil news was announced to the young pair they merely laughed and said there was oil enough to boil coffee and heat some beans.

"Dinner's ready!" sang out Jack, and they gathered about the hastily prepared meal.

"I thought it was to be a big dinner with trimmings," remarked Carew as he unfolded a paper napkin and sniffed hungrily at the tinned soup.

To the four older ones of the party it was a ghastly feast. With most unseemly levity Jack and Phyllis insisted on referring to the various tinned foods as though they were delicious viands served at a well appointed Thanksgiving table.

"Do have some more turkey," insisted Jack, passing the tinned beans around.

"And some of the cranberry sauce," added Phyllis, holding up a bottle of tomato ketchup.

"This chestnut stuffing is delicious," commented Jack, nibbling a crisp cracker. "Mrs. Carew, you are not going to pass up the mince pie?"

"I've eaten many a badly cooked meal," observed Bob Hayden bitterly, "and I've partaken of food from Bombay to Bangor, but this is the first time I've ever eaten an imaginary meal. It gives me mental indigestion to think of it."

"Then what we all need is exercise!" cried Jack. And having disposed of the remnants of the meal by tossing them into the swift waters of the channel, he drove his guests before him up the steep bank and into a plowed field.

"This doesn't look like any of the islands I've met around here," marvelled Carew, gazing thoughtfully around.

"We went a good deal farther than we realized in the fog. I'll lead you to a place. Well, ladies and gentlemen, welcome to Cromore!"

A surprised shout went up as they found themselves on the hill back of Jack Henshaw's home. A curl of blue smoke from the kitchen chimney bore witness that dinner might be expected there after all.

They looked at Jack for explanation, and Jack struck the mainland instead of an island. I haven't been in that spot for years and didn't recognize it till Phyllis and I went out this morning. We shot a brace of ducks, and I believe mother has prevailed upon Chloé to include them in the dinner."

"A real dinner!" yelled Hayden and Carew in chorus.

"Yes," Jack laughed as the two men broke away pell-mell toward the house. Carew and Mrs. Hayden looked at blushing Phyllis and happy Jack.

"I believe you two have found something else to be thankful for," said Phyllis' mother softly.

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