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a rabbit-warren, and nobody comes nigh it, 'cepting in August—tourist folk with hammers chipping for fossils. If I was there still I could easy give them the slip."

The boy's face had grown eager with the disclosure of his plan, and Marigold realised that there must be some serious reason for his willingness to subject himself to the discomfort of a long residence in that sinister cavern. Besides, the scheme was impracticable. Her father, to say nothing of the fishermen in the other cottages, was up and down the beach at all times of the day and night. Billy would not be able to resist coming out for air and exercise, if she knew anything of him. He would be discovered within a week, and she told him so.

"We can do better than that," she added quickly, fearing that he was going to cry. "Miss Carlyon would let you stay at the Tower if I asked her, I am sure. Would you mind her knowing that you were left behind?"

Billy brightened at once. "Not if she didn't have to be told the reason why I got left," his answer came quickly. "I couldn't tell her that—not before the Captain comes home. I must see him—have his orders—before I open my lips to a living soul."

"Then let me think a minute," said Marigold. "Yes, you must hide in my bedroom as quiet as a mouse till after dark. Father isn't coming back to dinner. He's to eat with the minister and stay for evening service. He'll go straight to bed directly he gets home, and then you can creep out and go up to the Tower. I'll make it all right with Miss Hilda during the day."

The boy weighed his sister's proposal with pursed mouth and puckered brow. "I'd rather go back to the huer's hut and wait there," he said. "It would be a terrible moment when I heard Dad going up to bed, knowing as I had to get out without his hearing me."

"It's for you to choose," replied Marigold. "If it's so important for you not to be seen I should think it would be lesser risk than the chance of being seen leaving the house by the neighbours, or of someone finding you in the huer's hut. Penalva often smokes his pipe there on Sunday afternoons."

The argument prevailed, and Billy decided in favour of his sister's room. Weary and worn out, he fell asleep on the little truckle bed, and as his slumber lasted till ten o'clock at night he escaped the horror he had conjured up of hearing his father's return. He woke to find Marigold over him, candle in hand and finger to lips. A thunderous snore from the next room was reassuring, and two minutes later they were out on the moonlit beach. No word was spoken till they were climbing the hill to the Tower. Then Marigold said:—

"MISS HILDA has promised to take care of you. It's a good thing you kept indoors. There have been sharp eyes about here this afternoon."

"Whose eyes?" demanded Billy breathlessly, halting in his tracks.

"Superintendent Grylls and one of his men have been at the cove—on the beach and along the cliff first, and they came to the Tower while I was there talking to Miss Hilda about you," the girl replied.

"What did Grylls want?" the boy persisted.

Marigold answered the question with another: "Did you know that your ship was to call at the cove on Friday night?"

"Yes—es, I heard about that," was the tardy admission.

"Well, I think Mr. Grylls was trying to find out about it, though I was not present all the time he was with Miss Hilda. Anyhow I didn't hear him mention anything else."

The lad seemed to be satisfied, and resumed his climb up the hill. At the front door the ladies were awaiting their young refugee and, after bidding Marigold goodnight, took him into the house.

"Now you'll be all right, Billy," Mrs. Pengarvan comforted him.

"And stay with us till your Captain

comes home," added Hilda softly. "Only, if you want us to hide you, you mustn't be silly and go beyond the grounds."

The boy's brown face twitched with a pitiable nervousness. "I shouldn't dare do that, Miss," he faltered.

When he had been put to bed, and the two women were separating for the night Hilda said: "I believe we have captured the key to the mystery in that little curly-pate."

"Do not build on it, dear," Mrs. Pengarvan rejoined. "Keys are tricky things, and don't fit every hole. We do not know the hole we're in yet. But I'm glad we've got the boy—instead of Grylls getting him."

CHAPTER XII.

"By the Pricking of My Thumbs."

COMMUNICATION between St. Run-an's Tower and the town of Fal-mouth was difficult. The distance by road was a long seven miles, a detour having to be made by reason of the river that intervened. The nearest village was three miles off, wrapped in a slumber that dated from the middle ages. It was of no use to seek for authentic news there, and to have dispatched Pascoe to the centre of disturbance might have aroused suspicions which it was necessary to avoid. A daily paper, with the heavy charge for delivery, was beyond the resources of the lonely mansion, and the dwellers therein had to be content with a bi-weekly local, published on Wednesdays and Saturdays, and forwarded by post.

It was, therefore, Thursday morning, before the result of the inquest on Jacob Polgleaze was known at the Tower. The verdict of "Wilful murder against some person or persons unknown" put an end to a period of suspense which Lance's mother and sweetheart had found well nigh intolerable. For though Superintendent Grylls had treated them with the utmost courtesy on the Sunday, his visit and his questions had filled them with alarm. He had plausibly explained that a rumour was abroad that Captain Pengarvan had been seen at the Tower on Friday night, and that, concluding he might still be there, he had driven over on the chance of his being able to help in the inquiry he was prosecuting. Mr. Grylls had learned, he said, that the captain had called at Mr. Polgleaze's office shortly before "The Lodestar" left harbour, and it was just possible that he might have noticed some little thing which by the light of the subsequent discovery, might furnish a clue to the mystery of the shipowner's death.

It was an obviously fishing question, and Mrs. Pengarvan, perceiving the indignant flush that mantled in Hilda's cheeks, had hastened to reply. It was a case for treading warily, for the stout inquisitor had evidently been primed with a certain amount of information—how much remained to be seen. So with a great show of frankness she admitted that Captain Pengarvan had anchored his ship off the cove, while he came ashore on a private matter that required his attention, but that he had gone on board again almost immediately, and that the steamer had sailed for her destination. "Ah, so that was it! I was afraid I shouldn't find him, but you never know your luck," Mr. Grylls laughed in his genial way. "And I daresay the Captain—it seems but the other day when he put on his first uniform—couldn't have told me anything if he had been here."

"You surely didn't think that my son had deserted his ship at the last moment and handed over the command to someone else?"

"No, Madam, no. Such a thing never crossed my mind. Indeed I really did not pay much attention to the matter, except that I was bound to investigate a rumor which, after all, seems to have had a foundation. If you will excuse my saying so, Mrs. Pengarvan, what a fine man the captain has shaped in 'o, a fine seaman, too, from all accounts. The old salts down at the Quay are loud in his praise. Well, I'm sorry to have troubled you, and on a Sunday,