

The boat seemed to have no passengers. So much the better, for the little black stick was dynamite. The engineer in the back of the boat would probably escape. The pilot would not fare so well, but he was the hated owner, and Pierre did not care.

And yet his heart beat fast as the little craft neared its destruction. He gazed at it as if fascinated. He thought he saw a dog cross its front deck. Well, a dog could swim. But was it a dog? No, it was a little boy, and a woman followed him from the cabin, taking his arm to keep him from the rail.

Pierre rose to his feet. He could hardly stand, for he saw that the woman and child were Rosie and little Tommy. This was their welcome from Pierre. He had dreamed of their coming during the long winter, and many times in fancy had caught them joyously in his arms. Now he would embrace only their mangled bodies.

He drew his hand across his forehead to wipe away the great drops of sweat which gathered there. He started to run and to cry, then stopped, for he knew it was useless. He turned to his rifle, resolved to die with them, and this determination calmed him.

As he took his gun in his hands he turned his eyes once more to the boat.

Rosie and Tommy were leaning over the rail together, looking at the shore. They were looking for Pierre, and there a little way ahead of them now lay the little black stick. Pierre leaned forward, but he did not step upon the trigger of the gun, which he held stock down between his hands and under his head. No, not yet. The bon dieu had told him what to do, and as you would count two, he grabbed his rifle by the middle, brought it to his shoulder, and fired.

The bullet cut the water a few yards from the bow of the boat. The little black stick disappeared. A deafening echo answered Pierre's shot. The channel rose in the air and fell upon the Nymph as she passed into the parted waters. She plunged down, her screw beating the air; righted herself, and then rocked from one side to the other, careening as if she must founder. Finally, when with her momentum she reached the smoother channel beyond, her screw found again the waters of Katchequa.

As the cloud of spray fell and cleared, Pierre's anxious eyes saw Rosie clinging to the rail with Tommy clasping her hard by the neck. Both were drenched and terrified but safe.

