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### A NIGHT WITH A MADMAN. ❁ ❁ ❁

I had been fated to buy for my own execution. How soon, too, might he not, with the sudden impulse common to such cases, spring up, and attack me! It was quite evident now that his Bible-reading and earnest prayers had been meant only as preparation for death. There was thus "a method in his madness."

All the strategy I could summon was now directed to the gaining possession of the knife. First, I asked him to accompany me to the steerage, where the dispensary was, for some medicine I told him I wanted.

He simply sneered, as much as to say: "Do you think me so excessively green?"

"You would be all the better of an opiate, anyhow," I said. For a moment he seemed to approve of the plan.

"Will you let me help myself to the morphia, then?" he asked; adding, to prevent my suspicions, "you give so large a dose, you know."

"Certainly," I said, my hopes rising rapidly; "you shall help yourself."

He seemed to consider a moment, then concluded he would not budge; and my hopes fell again to zero, all the more quickly that for a few minutes after this he was very restless, and his hand frequently disappeared below the mat, where I knew he was fumbling with the knife. At length, a happy thought crossed me, and acting thereon, I got up, laid by my papers, and pretended to begin to undress.

"Oh, botheration," said I, winding up my watch; "it has stopped at one o'clock: just give a peep there, Wheeler, and see what time it is."

Now, in order to do this, he had to get up and stand on a locker, close by, as the clock was fastened to a beam overhead, and on a level with the upper deck. The bait took. With one frightened look at the darkened ward-room around him, he mounted; and, as quickly as I could, I bent down and clutched the knife. Not a moment too soon, however, for he was down from his perch in a twinkling, and at me like a catamountain. With a fearful imprecation, he sprang upon and seized me by the two arms; he then dashed me backwards into my cabin, and down against the chest of drawers. All the nervous excitability of madness aided his powerful arms, and I felt as if in a vice.

"Tuts!" cried I, forcing a laugh, though a deadly terror was at my heart—"tuts! old Wheels; you hurt me, man; and I want the whittle just half a minute." And I looked him straight in the face as I spoke.

And once again the devilish look left his eyes, the ferocity died away, and his face resumed the old idiotic grin. Then he laughingly released me, saying, as he re-

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