

# DUNCAN NORMAN

EVERY MAN  
FOR HIMSELF

**Norman Duncan**  
**Every Man for Himself**

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*Every Man for Himself:*

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# Norman Duncan

## Every Man for Himself

### I – THE WAYFARER

The harbor lights were out; all the world of sea and sky and barren rock was black. It was Saturday – long after night, the first snow flying in the dark. Half a gale from the north ran whimpering through the rigging, by turns wrathful and plaintive – a restless wind: it would not leave the night at ease. The trader *Good Samaritan* lay at anchor in Poor Man's Harbor on the Newfoundland coast: this on her last voyage of that season for the shore fish. We had given the schooner her Saturday night bath; she was white and trim in every part: the fish stowed, the decks swabbed, the litter of goods in the cabin restored to the hooks and shelves. The crew was in the forecabin – a lolling, snoozy lot, now desperately yawning for lack of diversion. Tumm, the clerk, had survived the moods of brooding and light irony, and was still wide awake, musing quietly in the seclusion of a cloud of tobacco smoke. By all the signs, the inevitable was at hand; and presently, as we had foreseen, the pregnant silence fell.

With one blast – a swishing exhalation breaking from the depths of his gigantic chest, in its passage fluttering his unkempt mustache – Tumm dissipated the enveloping cloud; and having

thus emerged from seclusion he moved his glance from eye to eye until the crew sat in uneasy expectancy.

“If a lad’s mother tells un he’ve got a soul,” he began, “it don’t do no wonderful harm; but if a man finds it out for hisself – ”

The pause was for effect; so, too, the pointed finger, the lifted nostrils, the deep, inclusive glance.

“ – it plays the devil!”

The ship’s boy, a cadaverous, pasty, red-eyed, drooping-jawed youngster from the Cove o’ First Cousins, gasped in a painful way. He came closer to the forecandle table – a fascinated rabbit.

“Billy Ill,” said Tumm, “you better turn in.”

“I isn’t sleepy, sir.”

“I ’low you better *had*,” Tumm warned. “It ain’t fit for such as you t’ hear.”

The boy’s voice dropped to an awed whisper. “I wants t’ hear,” he said.

“Hear?”

“Ay, sir. I wants t’ hear about souls – an’ the devil.”

Tumm sighed. “Ah, well, lad,” said he, “I ’low you was born t’ be troubled by fears. God help us all!”

We waited.

“He come,” Tumm began, “from Jug Cove – bein’,” he added, indulgently, after a significant pause, “born there – an’ that by sheer ill luck of a windy night in the fall o’ the year, when the ol’ woman o’ Tart Harbor, which used t’ be handy thereabouts, was workin’ double watches at Whale Run t’ save the life of a trader’s

wife o' the name o' Tiddle. I 'low," he continued, "that 'tis the only excuse a man *could* have for hailin' from Jug Cove; for," he elucidated, "'tis a mean place t' the westward o' Fog Island, a bit below the Black Gravestones, where the *Soldier o' the Cross* was picked up by Satan's Tail in the nor'easter o' last fall. You opens the Cove when you rounds Greedy Head o' the Henan'-Chickens an' lays a course for Gentleman Tickle t' other side o' the Bay. 'Tis there that Jug Cove lies; an' whatever," he proceeded, being now well under way, with all sail drawing in a snoring breeze, "'tis where the poor devil had the ill luck t' hail from. We was drove there in the *Quick as Wink* in the southerly gale o' the Year o' the Big Shore Catch; an' we lied three dirty days in the lee o' the Pillar o' Cloud, waitin' for civil weather; for we was fished t' the scrapper-holes, an' had no heart t' shake hands with the sea that was runnin'. 'Tis a mean place t' be wind-bound – this Jug Cove: tight an' dismal as chokee, with walls o' black rock, an' as nasty a front yard o' sea as ever I knowed.

“Ecod!” thinks I, ‘I’ll just take a run ashore t’ see how bad a mess really *was* made o’ Jug Cove.’

“Which bein’ done, I crossed courses for the first time with Abraham Botch – Botch by name, an’ botch, accordin’ t’ my poor lights, by nature: Abraham Botch, God help un! o’ Jug Cove. ‘Twas a foggy day – a cold, wet time: ecod! the day felt like the corpse of a drowned cook. The moss was soggy; the cliffs an’ rocks was all a-drip; the spruce was soaked t’ the skin – the earth all wettish an’ sticky an’ cold. The southerly gale ramped over the

sea; an' the sea got so mad at the wind that it fair frothed at the mouth. I 'low the sea was tired o' foolin', an' wanted t' go t' sleep; but the wind kep' teasin' it – kep' slappin' an' pokin' an' pushin' – till the sea couldn't stand it no more, an' just got mad. Off shore, in the front yard o' Jug Cove, 'twas all white with breakin' rocks – as dirty a sea for fishin' punts as a man could sail in nightmares. From the Pillar o' Cloud I could see, down below, the seventeen houses o' Jug Cove, an' the sweet little *Quick as Wink*; the water was black, an' the hills was black, but the ship an' the mean little houses was gray in the mist. T' sea they was nothin' – just fog an' breakers an' black waves. T' land-ward, likewise – black hills in the mist. A dirty sea an' a lean shore!

“Tumm,’ thinks I, ‘tis more by luck than good conduct that you wasn’t born here. You’d thank God, Tumm,’ thinks I, ‘if you didn’t feel so dismal scurvy about bein’ the Teacher’s pet.’

“An’ then —

“Good-even,’ says Abraham Botch.

“There he lied – on the blue, spongy caribou-moss, at the edge o’ the cliff, with the black-an’ – white sea below, an’ the mist in the sky an’ on the hills t’ leeward. Ecod! but he was lean an’ ragged: this fellow sprawlin’ there, with his face t’ the sky an’ his legs an’ leaky boots scattered over the moss. Skinny legs he had, an’ a chest as thin as paper; but aloft he carried more sail ’n the law allows – sky-scraper, star-gazer, an’, ay! even the curse-o’-God-over-all. That was Botch – mostly head, an’ a sight more forehead than face, God help un! He’d a long, girlish face, a bit

thin at the cheeks an' skimped at the chin; an' they wasn't beard enough anywheres t' start a bird's nest. Ah, but the eyes o' that botch! Them round, deep eyes, with the still waters an' clean shores! I 'low I can't tell you no more – but only this: that they was somehow like the sea, blue an' deep an' full o' change an' sadness. Ay, there lied Botch in the fog-drip – poor Botch o' Jug Cove: eyes in his head; his dirty, lean body clothed in patched moleskin an' rotten leather.

“An' —

“Good-even, yourself,’ says I.

“My name's Botch,’ says he. ‘Isn't you from the *Quick as Wink*?’

“I is,’ says I; ‘an' they calls me Tumm.’

“That's a very queer name,’ says he.

“Oh no!’ says I. ‘They isn't nothin' queer about the name o' Tumm.’

“He laughed a bit – an' rubbed his feet together: just like a tickled youngster. ‘Ay,’ says he; ‘that's a wonderful queer name. Hark!’ says he. ‘You just listen, an' I'll *show* you. Tumm,’ says he, ‘Tumm, Tumm, Tumm... Tumm, Tumm, Tumm... Tumm –’

“Don't,’ says I, for it give me the fidgets. ‘Don't say it so often.’

“Why not?’ says he.

“I don't like it,” says I.

“Tumm,’ says he, with a little cackle, ‘Tumm, Tumm, Tumm —’

“Don't you do that no more,’ says I. ‘I won't have it. When you

says it that way, I 'low I don't know whether my name is Tumm or Tump. 'Tis a very queer name. I wisht,' says I, 'that I'd been called Smith.'

“‘Twouldn't make no difference,’ says he. ‘All names is queer if you stops t' think. Every word you ever spoke is queer. Everything is queer. It's *all* queer – once you stops t' think about it.’

“‘Then I don't think I'll stop,’ says I, ‘for I don't *like* things t' be queer.’

“Then Botch had a little spell o' thinkin'.”

Tumm leaned over the forecastle table.

“Now,” said he, forefinger lifted, “accordin' t' my lights, it ain't nice t' see *any* man thinkin': for a real man ain't got no call t' think, an' can't afford the time on the coast o' Newf'un'land, where they's too much fog an' wind an' rock t' 'low it. For me, I'd rather see a man in a 'leptic fit: for fits is more or less natural an' can't be helped. But Botch! When Botch *thunk*– when he got hard at it – 'twould give you the shivers. He sort o'drawed away – got into nothin'. They wasn't no sea nor shore for Botch no more; they wasn't no earth, no heavens. He got rid o'all that, as though it hindered the work he was at, an' didn't matter anyhow. They wasn't nothin' left o'things but botch – an' the nothin' about un. Botch *in* nothin'. Accordin' t' my lights, 'tis a sinful thing t'do; an' when I first seed Botch at it, I 'lowed he was lackin' in religious opinions. 'Twas just as if his soul had pulled down the blinds, an' locked the front door, an' gone out for a walk, without leavin'

word when 'twould be home. An', accordin' t' my lights, it ain't right, nor wise, for a man's soul t' do no such thing. A man's soul 'ain't got no common-sense; it 'ain't got no caution, no manners, no nothin' that it needs in a wicked world like this. When it gets loose, 't is liable t' wander far, an' get lost, an' miss its supper. Accordin' t' my lights, it ought t' be kep' in, an' fed an' washed regular, an' put t' bed at nine o'clock. But Botch! well, there lied his body in the wet, like an unloved child, while his soul went cavortin' over the Milky Way.

"He come to all of a sudden. 'Tumm,' says he, 'you is.'

"Ay,' says I, 'Tumm I is. 'Tis the name I was born with.'

"'You don't find me,' says he. 'I says you *is*.'

"'Is what?'

"'Just —*is*!'

"'With that, I took un. 'Twas all t' oncet. He was tellin' me that I *was*. Well, I *is*. Damme! 'twasn't anything I didn't *know* if I'd stopped t' think. But they wasn't nobody ever called my notice to it afore, an' I'd been too busy about the fish t' mind it. So I was sort o' – s'prised. It don't matter, look you! t' *be*; but 'tis mixin' t' the mind an' fearsome t' stop t' *think* about it. An' it come t' me all t' oncet; an' I was s'prised, an' I was scared.

"'Now, Tumm,' says he, with his finger p'intin', 'where was you?'

"'Fishin' off the Shark's Fin,' says I. 'We just come up loaded, an' –'

"'You don't find me,' says he. 'I says, where was you afore you

was is?

“Is you gone mad?’ says I.

“Not at all, Tumm,’ says he. ‘Not at all! ’Tis a plain question. You *is*, isn’t you? Well, then, you must have been *was*. Now, then, Tumm, where *was* you?’

“Afore I was born?’

“Ay – afore you was is.’

“God knows!’ says I. ‘I ’low *I* don’t. An’ look you, Botch,’ says I, ‘this talk ain’t right. You isn’t a infidel, is you?’

“Oh no!’ says he.

“Then,’ says I, for I was mad, ‘where in hell did you think up all this ghostly tomfoolery?’

“On the grounds,’ says he.

“On the grounds?’ Lads,” said Tumm to the crew, his voice falling, “*you* knows what that means, doesn’t you?”

The Jug Cove fishing-grounds lie off Breakheart Head. They are beset with peril and all the mysteries of the earth. They are fished from little punts, which the men of Jug Cove cleverly make with their own hands, every man his own punt, having been taught to this by their fathers, who learned of the fathers before them, out of the knowledge which ancient contention with the wiles of the wind and of the sea had disclosed. The timber is from the wilderness, taken at leisure; the iron and hemp are from the far-off southern world, which is to the men of the place like a grandmother’s tale, loved and incredible. Off the Head the sea is spread with rock and shallow. It is a sea of wondrously changing

colors – blue, red as blood, gray, black with the night. It is a sea of changing moods: of swift, unprovoked wrath; of unsought and surprising gentlenesses. It is not to be understood. There is no mastery of it to be won. It gives no accounting to men. It has no feeling. The shore is bare and stolid. Black cliffs rise from the water; they are forever white at the base with the fret of the sea. Inland, the blue-black hills lift their heads; they are unknown to the folk – hills of fear, remote and cruel. Seaward, fogs and winds are bred; the misty distances are vast and mysterious, wherein are the great cliffs of the world's edge. Winds and fogs and ice are loose and passionate upon the waters. Overhead is the high, wide sky, its appalling immensity revealed from the rim to the rim. Clouds, white and black, crimson and gold, fluffy, torn to shreds, wing restlessly from nowhere to nowhere. It is a vast, silent, restless place. At night its infinite spaces are alight with the dread marvel of stars. The universe is voiceless and indifferent. It has no purpose – save to follow its inscrutable will. Sea and wind are aimless. The land is dumb, self-centred; it has neither message nor care for its children. And from dawn to dark the punts of Jug Cove float in the midst of these terrors.

“Eh?” Tumm resumed. “*You* knows what it is, lads. ’Tis bad enough t’ think in company, when a man can peep into a human eye an’ steady his old hulk; but t’ think alone – an’ at the fishin’! I ’low Botch ought to have knowed better; for they’s too many men gone t’ the mad-house t’ St. John’s already from this here coast along o’ thinkin’. But Botch thinked at will. ‘Tumm,’ says he, ‘I

done a power o' thinkin' in my life – out there on the grounds, between Breakheart Head an' the Tombstone, that breakin' rock t' the east'ard. I've thunk o' wind an' sea, o' sky an' soil, o' tears an' laughter an' crooked backs, o' love an' death, rags an' robbery, of all the things of earth an' in the hearts o' men; an' I don't know nothin'! My God! after all, I don't know nothin'! The more I've thunk, the less I've knowed. 'Tis all come down t' this, now, Tumm: that I *is*. An' if I *is*, I *was* an' *will be*. But sometimes I misdoubt the *was*; an' if I loses my grip on the *was*, Tumm, my God! what'll become o' the *will be*? Can you tell me that, Tumm? Is I got t' come down t' the *is*? Can't I build nothin' on that? Can't I go no further than the *is*? An' will I lose even that? Is I got t' come down t' knowin' nothin' at all?

“Look you! Botch,” says I, “don't you know the price o' fish?”

“No,” says he. “But it ain't nothin' t' know. It ain't worth knowin'. It – it – it don't matter!”

“I 'low,” says I, “your wife don't think likewise. You got a wife, isn't you?”

“Ay,” says he.

“An' a kid?”

“I don't know,” says he.

“You *what!*” says I.

“I don't know,” says he. “She was engaged at it when I come up on the Head. They was a lot o' women in the house, an' a wonderful lot o' fuss an' muss. You'd be *s'prised*, Tumm,” says he, ‘t' know how much fuss a thing like this can *make*. So,’ says

he, 'I 'lowed I'd come up on the Pillar o' Cloud an' think a spell in peace.'

"An' what?" says I.

"Have a little spurt at thinkin'."

"O' she?"

"Oh no, Tumm," says he; *that ain't nothin' t' think about*. But, says he, 'I s'pose I might as well go down now, an' see what's happened. I hopes 'tis a boy,' says he, 'for somehow girls don't seem t' have much show.'

"An' with that," drawled Tumm, "down the Pillar o' Cloud goes Abraham Botch."

He paused to laugh; and 'twas a soft, sad little laugh – dwelling upon things long past.

"An' by-and-by," he continued, "I took the goat-path t' the water-side; an' I went aboard the *Quick as Wink* in a fog o' dreams an' questions. The crew was weighin' anchor, then; an' 'twas good for the soul t' feel the deck-planks underfoot, an' t' hear the clank o' solid iron, an' t' join the work-song o' men that had muscles an' bowels. 'Skipper Zeb,' says I, when we had the old craft coaxed out o' the Tickle, 'leave me have a spell at the wheel. For the love o' man,' says I, 'let me get a grip of it! I wants t' get hold o' something with my hands – something real an' solid; something I knows about; something that *means* something!' For all this talk o' the *is* an' *was*, an' all these thoughts o' the *why*, an' all the crybaby 'My Gods!' o' Abraham Botch, an' the mystery o' the wee new soul, had made me dizzy in the head an' a bit sick at the

stomach. So I took the wheel, an' felt the leap an' quiver o' the ship, an' got my eye screwed on the old Giant's Thumb, loomin' out o' the east'ard fog, an' kep' her wilful head up, an' wheedled her along in the white tumble, with the spray o' the sea cool an' wet on my face; an' I was better t' oncet. The Boilin'-Pot Shallows was dead ahead; below the fog I could see the manes o' the big white horses flung t' the gale. An' I 'lowed that oncet I got the *Quick as Wink* in them waters, deep with fish as she was, I'd have enough of a real man's troubles t' sink the woes o' the soul out o' all remembrance.

"I won't care a squid," thinks I, "for the *why* nor the *wherefore* o' nothin'!"

"N neither I did."

The skipper of the *Good Samaritan* yawned. "Isn't they nothin' about fish in this here yarn?" he asked.

"Nor tradin'," snapped Tumm.

"Nothin' about love?"

"Botch never *knowed* about love."

"If you'll 'scuse me," said the skipper, "I'll turn in. I got enough."

But the clammy, red-eyed lad from the Cove o' First Cousins hitched closer to the table, and put his chin in his hands. He was now in a shower of yellow light from the forecandle lamp. His nostrils were working; his eyes were wide and restless and hot. He had bitten at a chapped underlip until the blood came.

"About that *will be*" he whispered, timidly. "Did Botch never

say —*where?*”

“You better turn in,” Tumm answered.

“But I wants t’ know!”

Tumm averted his face. “Ill,” he commanded, quietly, “you better turn in.”

The boy was obedient.

“In March, ’long about two year after,” Tumm resumed, “I shipped for the ice aboard the *Neptune*. We got a scattered swile [seal] off the Horse Islands; but ol’ Cap’n Lane ’lowed the killin’ was so mean that he’d move t’ sea an’ come up with the ice on the outside, for the wind had been in the nor’west for a likely spell. We cotched the body o’ ice t’ the nor’east o’ the Funks; an’ the swiles was sure there – hoods an’ harps an’ whitecoats an’ all. They was three St. John’s steamers there, an’ they’d been killin’ for a day an’ a half; so the ol’ man turned our crew loose on the ice without waitin’ t’ wink, though ’twas afternoon, with a wicked gray look t’ the sky in the west, which was where the wind was jumpin’ from. An’ we had a red time – ay, now, believe me: a soppo red time of it among the swiles that day! They was men from Green Bay, an’ Bonavist’, an’ the Exploits, an’ the South Coast, an’ a swarm o’ Irish from St. John’s; they was so many men on the pack, ecod! that you couldn’t call their names. An’ we killed an’ sculped till dusk. An’ then the weather broke with snow; an’ afore we knowed it we was lost from the ships in the cloud an’ wind – three hundred men, ecod! smothered an’ blinded by snow: howlin’ for salvation like souls in a frozen hell.

“‘Tumm,’ thinks I, ‘you better get aboard o’ something the sea won’t break over. This pack,’ thinks I, ‘will certain go abroad when the big wind gets at it.’”

“So I got aboard a bit of a berg; an’ when I found the lee side I sot down in the dark an’ thunk hard about different things – sunshine an’ supper an’ the like o’ that; for they wasn’t no use thinkin’ about what was goin’ for’ard on the pack near by. An’ there, on the side o’ the little berg, sits I till mornin’; an’ in the mornin’, out o’ the blizzard t’ win’ward, along comes Abraham Botch o’ Jug Cove, marooned on a flat pan o’ ice. ’Twas comin’ down the wind – clippin’ it toward my overgrown lump of a craft like a racin’ yacht. When I sighted Botch, roundin’ a point o’ the berg, I ’lowed I’d have no more’n twenty minutes t’ yarn with un afore he was out o’ hail an’ sight in the snow t’ leeward. He was squatted on his haunches, with his chin on his knees, white with thin ice, an’ fringed an’ decked with icicles; an’ it ’peared t’ me, from the way he was took up with the nothin’ about un, that he was still thinkin’. The pack was gone abroad, then – scattered t’ the four winds: they wasn’t another pan t’ be seed on the black water. An’ the sea was runnin’ high – a fussy wind-lop over a swell that broke in big whitecaps, which went swishin’ away with the wind. A scattered sea broke over Botch’s pan; ’twould fall aboard, an’ break, an’ curl past un, risin’ to his waist. But the poor devil didn’t seem t’ take much notice. He’d shake the water off, an’ cough it out of his throat; an’ then he’d go on takin’ observations in the nothin’ dead ahead.

“‘Ahoy, Botch!’ sings I.

“‘He knowed me t’ oncet. ‘Tumm!’ he sings out. ‘Well, well! That *you?*’

“‘The same,’ says I. ‘You got a bad berth there, Botch. I wish you was aboard the berg with me.’

“‘Oh,’ says he, ‘the pan’ll *do*. I gets a bit choked with spray when I opens my mouth; but they isn’t no good reason why I shouldn’t keep it shut. A man ought t’ breathe through his nose, anyhow. That’s what it’s *for*.’

“‘Twas a bad day – a late dawn in a hellish temper. They wasn’t much of it t’ see – just a space o’ troubled water, an’ the big unfeelin’ cloud. An’, God! how cold it was! The wind was thick with dry snow, an’ it come whirlin’ out o’ the west as if it wanted t’ do damage, an’ meant t’ have its way. ’Twould grab the crests o’ the seas an’ fling un off like handfuls o’ white dust. An’ in the midst o’ this was poor Botch o’ Jug Cove!

“‘This wind,’ says I, ‘will work up a wonderful big sea, Botch. You’ll be swep’ off afore nightfall.’

“‘No,’ says he; ‘for by good luck, Tumm, I’m froze tight t’ the pan.’

“‘But the seas’ll drown you.’

“‘I don’t know,’ says he. ‘I keeps breakin’ the ice ’round my neck,’ says he, ‘an’ if I can on’y keep my neck clear an’ limber I’ll be able t’ duck most o’ the big seas.’

“‘It wasn’t nice t’ see the gentle wretch squattin’ there on his haunches. It made me feel bad. I wisht he was home t’ Jug Cove

thinkin' of his soul.

“Botch,’ says I, ‘I *wisht* you was somewheres else!’

“Now, don’t you trouble about that, Tumm,’ says he. ‘Please don’t! The ice is all on the outside. I’m perfectly comfortable inside.’

“He took it all so gracious that somehow or other I begun t’ forget that he was froze t’ the pan an’ bound out t’ sea. He was ’longside, now; an’ I seed un smile. So I sort o’ got his feelin’; an’ I didn’t fret for un no more.

“An’, Tumm,’ says he, ‘I’ve had a wonderful grand night. I’ll never forget it so long as I lives.’

“A what?’ says I. ‘Wasn’t you cold?’

“I – I – I don’t know,’ says he, puzzled. ‘I was too busy t’ notice much.’

“Isn’t you hungry?’

“Why, Tumm,’ says he, in s’prise, ‘I believes I is, now that you mentions it. I believes I’d *like* a biscuit.’

“I wisht I had one t’ shy,’ says I.

“Don’t you be troubled,’ says he. ‘My arms is stuck. I couldn’t catch it, anyhow.’

“Anyhow,’ says I, ‘I wisht I had one.’

“A grand night!’ says he. ‘For I got a idea, Tumm. They wasn’t nothin’ t’ disturb me all night long. I been all alone – an’ I been quiet. An’ I got a idea. I’ve gone an’ found out, Tumm,’ says he, ‘a law o’ life! Look you! Tumm,’ says he, ‘what you aboard that berg for?’ Tis because you had sense enough t’ get there. An’ why

isn't I aboard that berg? 'Tis because I didn't have none o' the on'y kind o' sense that was needed in the mess last night. You'll be picked up by the fleet,' says he, 'when the weather clears; an' I'm bound out t' sea on a speck o' flat ice. This coast ain't kind,' says he. 'No coast is kind. Men lives because they're able for it, not because they're coaxed to. An' the on'y kind o' men this coast lets live an' breed is the kind she wants. The kind o' men this coast puts up with ain't weak, an' they ain't timid, an' they don't think. Them kind dies – just the way I 'low I got t' die. They don't live, Tumm, an' they don't breed.'

“‘What about you?’ says I.

“‘About me?’ says he.

“‘Ay – that day on the Pillar o' Cloud.’

“‘Oh!’ says he. ‘You mean about *she*. Well, it didn't come t' nothin', Tumm. The women folk wasn't able t' find me, an' they didn't know which I wanted sove, the mother or the child; so, somehow or other, both went an' died afore I got there. But that isn't got nothin' t' do with *this*.’

“‘He was drifted a few fathoms past. Just then a big sea fell atop of un. He ducked real skilful, an' come out of it smilin', if sputterin'.

“‘Now, Tumm,’ says he, ‘if we was t' the s'uth'ard, where they says 'tis warm an' different, an' lives isn't lived the same, maybe you'd be on the pan o' ice, an' I'd be aboard the berg; maybe you'd be like t' starve, an' I'd get so much as forty cents a day the year round. They's a great waste in life,' says he; ‘I don't

know why, but there 'tis. An' I 'low I'm gone t' waste on this here coast. I been born out o' place, that's all. But they's a place somewheres for such as me – somewheres for the likes o' me. T' the s'uth'ard, now, maybe, they'd *be* a place; t' the s'uth'ard, maybe, the folk would want t' know about the things I thinks out – ay, maybe they'd even *pay* for the labor I'm put to! But *here*, you lives, an' I dies. Don't you see, Tumm? 'Tis the law! 'Tis why a Newf'un'lander ain't a nigger. More'n that, 'tis why a dog's a dog on land an' a swile in the water; 'tis why a dog haves legs an' a swile haves flippers. Don't you see? 'Tis the law!

“I don't quite find you,' says I.

“Poor Botch shook his head. ‘They isn't enough words in langwitch,’ says he, ‘t' 'splain things. Men ought t' get t' work an' make more.’

“But tell me,' says I.

“Then, by Botch's regular ill luck, under he went, an' it took un quite a spell t' cough his voice into workin' order.

“Excuse me,' says he. ‘I'm sorry. It come too suddent t' be ducked.’

“Sure!’ says I. ‘I don't mind.’

“Tumm,' says he, ‘it all comes down t' this: *The thing that lives is the kind o' thing that's best fit t' live in the place it lives in.* That's a law o' life! An' nobody but *me*, Tumm,' says he, ‘ever knowed it afore!’

“It don't amount t' nothin',’ says I.

“'Tis a law o' life!’

“‘But it don’t *mean* nothin’.’

“‘Tumm,’ says he, discouraged, ‘I can’t talk t’ you no more. I’m too busy. I ’lowed when I seed you there on the berg that you’d tell somebody what I think out last night if you got clear o’ this mess. An’ I *wanted* everybody t’ know. I did so *want* un t’ know – an’t’ know that Abraham Botch o’ Jug Cove did the thinkin’ all by hisself! But you don’t seem able. An’, anyhow,’ says he, ‘I’m too busy t’ talk no more. They’s a deal more hangin’ on that law ’n I told you. The beasts o’ the field is born under it, an’ the trees o’ the forest, an’ all that lives. They’s a bigger law behind; an’ I got t’ think that out afore the sea works up. I’m sorry, Tumm; but if you don’t mind, I’ll just go on thinkin’. You *won’t* mind, will you, Tumm? I wouldn’t like you t’ feel bad.’

“‘Lord, no!’ says I. ‘I won’t mind.’

“‘Thank you, Tumm,’ says he. ‘For I’m greatly took by thinkin’.’

“‘An’ so Botch sputtered an’ thunk an’ kep’ his neck limber ’til he drifted out o’ sight in the snow.’”

But that was not the last of the Jug Cove philosopher.

“‘Next time I seed Botch,’ Tumm resumed, “we was both shipped by chance for the Labrador from Twillingate. ’Twas aboard the dirty little *Three Sisters*— a thirty-ton, fore-an’-aft green-fish catcher, skippered by Mad Bill Likely o’ Yellow Tail Tickle. An’ poor Botch didn’t look healthful. He was blue an’ wan an’ wonderful thin. An’ he didn’t look at all *right*. Poor Botch – ah, poor old Botch! They wasn’t no more o’ them fuddlin’ questions;

they wasn't no more o' that cock-sure, tickled little cackle. Them big, deep eyes o' his, which used t' be clean an' fearless an' sad an' nice, was all misty an' red, like a nasty sunset, an' most unpleasant shifty. I 'lowed I'd take a look in, an' sort o' fathom what was up; but they was too quick for me – they got away every time, an' I never seed more'n a shadow. An' he kep' lookin' over his shoulder, an' cockin' his ears, an' givin' suddent starts, like a poor wee child on a dark road. They wasn't no more o' that sinful gettin' into nothin' – no more o' that puttin' away o' the rock an' sea an' the great big sky. I 'lowed, by the Lord! that he couldn't *do* it no more. All them big things had un scared t' death. He didn't dast forget they was there. He couldn't get into nothin' no more. An' so I knowed he wouldn't be happy aboard the *Three Sisters* with that devil of a Mad Bill Likely o' Yellow Tail Tickle for skipper.

“Botch,’ says I, when we was off Mother Burke, ‘how is you, b’y?’

“Oh, farin’ along,’ says he.

“Ay,’ says I; ‘but how *is* you, b’y?’

“Farin’ along,’ says he.

“It ain’t a answer,’ says I. ‘I’m askin’ a plain question, Botch.’

“Well, Tumm,’ says he, ‘the fac’ is, Tumm, I’m – sort o’ – jus’ – farin’ along.’

“We crossed the Straits of a moonlight night. The wind was fair an’ light. Mad Bill was t’ the wheel: for he ’lowed he wasn’t goin’ t’ have no chances took with a Lally Line steamer, havin’

been sunk oncet by the same. 'Twas a kind an' peaceful night. I've never knowed the world t' be more t' rest an' kinder t' the sons o' men. The wind was from the s'uth'ard, a point or two east: a soft wind an' sort o' dawdlin' careless an' happy toward the Labrador. The sea was sound asleep; an' the schooner cuddled up, an' dreamed, an' snored, an' sighed, an' rolled along, as easy as a ship could be. Moonlight was over all the world – so soft an' sweet an' playful an' white; it said, 'Hush!' an', 'Go t' sleep!' All the stars that ever shone was wide awake an' winkin'. A playful crew – them little stars! Wink! wink! 'Go t'sleep!' says they. "'Tis our watch,' says they. '*We'll* take care o' *you*.' An' t' win'ward – far off – black an' low – was Cape Norman o' Newf'un'land. Newf'un'land! Ah, we're all mad with love o' she! Good-night!' says she. 'Fair v'y'ge,' says she; 'an' may you come home loaded! Sleep? Ay; men could sleep that night. They wasn't no fear at sea. Sleep? Ay; they wasn't no fear in all the moonlit world.

"An' then up from the forecastle comes Botch o' Jug Cove.

"'Tumm,' says he, 'you isn't turned in.'

"'No, Botch,' says I. 'It isn't my watch; but I 'lowed I'd lie here on this cod-trap an' wink back at the stars.'

"'I can't sleep,' says he. 'Oh, Tumm, I *can't*!'

"'Tis a wonderful fine night,' says I.

"'Ay,' says he; 'but –'

"'But what?' says I.

"'You never can tell,' says he

"'Never can tell what?'

“‘What’s goin’ t’ happen.’

“‘I took one look – just one look into them shiverin’ eyes – an’ shook my head. ‘Do you ’low,’ says I, ‘that we can hit that berg off the port bow?’

“‘You never can tell,’ says he.

“‘Good Lord!’ says I. ‘With Mad Bill Likely o’ Yellow Tail Tickle at the wheel? Botch,’ says I, ‘you’re gone mad. What’s *come* along o’ you? Where’s the *is* an’ the *was* an’ the *will be*? What’s come o’ that law o’ life?’

“‘Hist!’ says he.

“‘Not me!’ says I. ‘I’ll hush for no man. What’s come o’ the law o’ life? What’s come o’ all the thinkin’?’

“‘Tumm,’ says he, ‘I don’t think no more. An’ the laws o’ life,’ says he, ‘is foolishness. The fac’ is, Tumm,’ says he, ‘things look wonderful different t’ me now. I isn’t the same as I used t’ be in them old days.’

“‘You isn’t had a fever, Botch?’ says I.

“‘Well,’ says he, ‘I got religion.’

“‘Oh!’ says I. ‘What kind?’

“‘Vi’lent,’ says he.

“‘I see,’ says I.

“‘I isn’t converted just this minute,’ says he. ‘I ’low you might say, an’ be near the truth, that I’m a damned backslider. But I *been* converted, an’ I may be again. Fac’ is, Tumm,’ says he, ‘when I gets up in the mornin’ I never knows which I’m in, a state o’ grace or a state o’ sin. It usual takes till after breakfast t’ find out.’

“Botch, b’y,’ says I, for it made me feel awful bad, ‘don’t you go an’ trouble about that.’

“You don’t know about hell,’ says he.

“I *does* know about hell,’ says I. ‘My mother told me.’

“Ay,’ says he; ‘she told you. But you doesn’t *know*.’

“Botch,’ says I, ‘twould s’prise me if she left anything out.’

“He wasn’t happy – Botch wasn’t. He begun t’ kick his heels, an’ scratch his whisps o’ beard, an’ chaw his finger-nails. It made me feel bad. I didn’t like t’ see Botch took that way. I’d rather see un crawl into nuthin’ an’ think, ecod! than chaw his nails an’ look like a scared idjit from the mad-house t’ St. John’s.

“You got a soul, Tumm,’ says he.

“I knows that,’ says I.

“How?’ says he.

“My mother told me.’

“Botch took a look at the stars. An’ so I, too, took a look at the funny little things. An’ the stars is so many, an’ so wonderful far off, an’ so wee an’ queer an’ perfeckly solemn an’ knowin’, that I ’lowed I didn’t know much about heaven an’ hell, after all, an’ begun t’ feel shaky.

“I got converted,’ says Botch, ‘by means of a red-headed parson from the Cove o’ the Easterly Winds. *He* knowed everything. They wasn’t no *why* he wasn’t able t’ answer. “The glory o’ God,” says he; an’ there was an end to it. An’ bein’ converted of a suddent,’ says Botch, without givin’ much thought t’ what might come after, I ’lowed the parson had the rights of

it. Anyhow, I wasn't in no mood t' set up my word against a real parson in a black coat, with a Book right under his arm. I 'lowed I wouldn't stay very long in a state o' grace if I done *that*. The fac' is, he *told* me so. "Whatever," thinks I, "the glory o' God does well enough, if a man only *will* believe; an' the tears an' crooked backs an' hunger o' this here world," thinks I, "which the parson lays t' Him, fits in very well with the reefs an' easterly gales He made." So I 'lowed I'd better take my religion an' ask no questions; an' the parson said 'twas very wise, for I was only an ignorant man, an' I'd reach a state o' sanctification if I kep' on in the straight an' narrow way. So I went no more t' the grounds. For what was the *use* o' goin' there? 'Peared t' me that heaven was my home. What's the use o' botherin' about the fish for the little time we're here? I couldn't get my *mind* on the fish. "Heaven is my home," thinks I, "an' I'm tired, an' I wants t' get there, an' I don't want t' trouble about the world." 'Twas an immortal soul I had t' look out for. So I didn't think no more about laws o' life. 'Tis a sin t' pry into the mysteries o' God; an' 'tis a sinful waste o' time, anyhow, t' moon about the heads, thinkin' about laws o' life when you got a immortal soul on your hands. I wanted t' save that soul! *An I wants t' save it now!*

"Well," says I, 'ain't it sove'?

"No," says he; 'for I couldn't help thinkin'. An' when I thunk, Tumm – whenever I fell from grace an' thunk real hard – I couldn't believe some o' the things the red-headed parson said I *had* t' believe if I wanted t' save my soul from hell.'

“‘Botch,’ says I, ‘leave your soul be.’

“‘I can’t,’ says he. ‘I can’t! I got a immortal soul, Tumm. What’s t’ become o’ that there soul?’

“‘Don’t you trouble it,’ says I. ‘Leave it be. ’Tis too tender t’ trifle with. An’, anyhow,’ says I, ‘a man’s belly is all he can handle without strainin’.’

“‘But ’tis *mine*—*my* soul!’

“‘Leave it be,’ says I. ‘It’ll get t’ heaven.’

“Then Botch gritted his teeth, an’ clinched his hands, an’ lifted his fists t’ heaven. There he stood, Botch o’ Jug Cove, on the for’ard deck o’ the *Three Sisters*, which was built by the hands o’ men, slippin’ across the Straits t’ the Labrador, in the light o’ the old, old moon – there stood Botch like a man in tarture!

“‘I isn’t sure, Tumm,’ says he, ‘that I wants t’ go t’ heaven. For I’d be all the time foolin’ about the gates o’ hell, peepin’ in,’ says he; ‘an’ if the devils suffered in the fire – if they moaned an’ begged for the mercy o’ God – I’d be wantin’ t’ go in, Tumm, with a jug o’ water an’ a pa’m-leaf fan!’

“‘You’d get pretty well singed, Botch,’ says I.

“‘I’d *want* t’ be singed!’ says he.

“‘Well, Botch,’ says I, ‘I don’t know where you’d best lay your course for, heaven or hell. But I knows, my b’y,’ says I, ‘that you better give your soul a rest, or you’ll be sorry.’

“‘I can’t,’ says he.

“‘It’ll get t’ one place or t’other,’ says I, ‘if you on’y bides your time.’

“How do you know?’ says he.

“‘Why,’ says I, ‘any parson’ll *tell* you so!’

“‘But how do *you* know?’ says he.

“‘Damme, Botch!’ says I, ‘my mother told me so.’

“‘That’s it!’ says he.

“‘What’s it?’

“‘Your mother,’ says he. ‘Tis all hearsay with you an’ me. But I wants t’ know for myself. Heaven or hell, damnation or salvation, God or nothin’!’ says he. ‘I wouldn’t care if I on’y *knowed*. But I don’t know, an’ can’t find out. I’m tired o’ hearsay an’ guessin’, Tumm. I wants t’ know. Dear God of all men,’ says he, with his fists in the air, ‘I *wants t’ know!*’

“‘Easy,’ says I. ‘Easy there! Don’t you say no more. ’Tis mixin’ t’ the mind. So,’ says I, ‘I ’low I’ll turn in for the night.’

“Down I goes. But I didn’t turn in. I couldn’t – not just then. I raked around in the bottom o’ my old nunny-bag for the Bible my dear mother put there when first I sot out for the Labrador in the Fear of the Lord. ‘I wants a message,’ thinks I; ‘an’ I wants it bad, an’ I wants it almighty quick!’ An’ I spread the Book on the forecastle table, an’ I put my finger down on the page, an’ I got all my nerves t’gether —*an’ I looked!* Then I closed the Book. They wasn’t much of a message; it *done*, t’ be sure, but ’twasn’t much: for that there yarn o’ Jonah an’ the whale is harsh readin’ for us poor fishermen. But I closed the Book, an’ wrapped it up again in my mother’s cotton, an’ put it back in the bottom o’ my nunny-bag, an’ sighed, an’ went on deck. An’ I cotched poor Botch by

the throat; an', 'Botch,' says I, 'don't you never say no more about souls t' me. Men,' says I, 'is all hangin' on off a lee shore in a big gale from the open; an' they isn't no mercy in that wind. I got my anchor down,' says I. 'My fathers forged it, hook-an'-chain, an' *they* weathered it out, without fear or favor. 'Tis the on'y anchor I got, anyhow, an' I don't want it t' part. For if it do, the broken bones o' my soul will lie slimy an' rotten on the reefs t' leeward through all eternity. You leave me be,' says I. 'Don't you never say soul t' me no more!'

"I 'low," Tumm sighed, while he picked at a knot in the table with his clasp-knife, "that if I could 'a' done more'n just what mother taught me, I'd sure have prayed for poor Abraham Botch that night!"

He sighed again.

"We fished the Farm Yard," Tumm continued, "an' Indian Harbor, an' beat south into Domino Run; but we didn't get no chance t' use a pound o' salt for all that. They didn't seem t' be no sign o' fish anywheres on the s'uth'ard or middle coast o' the Labrador. We run here,' an' we beat there, an' we fluttered around like a half-shot gull; but we didn't come up with no fish. Down went the trap, an' up she come: not even a lumpfish or a lobser t' grace the labor. Winds in the east, lop on the sea, fog in the sky, ice in the water, colds on the chest, boils on the wrists; but nar' a fish in the hold! It drove Mad Bill Likely stark. 'Lads,' says he, 'the fish is north o' Mugford. I'm goin' down,' says he, 'if we haves t' winter at Chidley on swile-fat an' sea-weed.

For,' says he, 'Butt o' Twillingate, which owns this craft, an' has outfitted every man o' this crew, is on his last legs, an' I'd rather face the Lord in a black shroud o' sin than tie up t' the old man's wharf with a empty hold. For the Lord is used to it,' says he, 'an' wouldn't mind; but Old Man Butt would *cry*.' So we 'lowed we'd stand by, whatever come of it; an' down north we went, late in the season, with a rippin' wind astern. An' we found the fish 'long about Kidalick; an' we went at it, night an' day, an' loaded in a fortnight. 'An' now, lads,' says Mad Bill Likely, when the decks was awash, 'you can all go t' sleep, an' be jiggered t' you!' An' down I dropped on the last stack o' green cod, an' slep' for more hours than I dast tell you.

"Then we started south.

"'Tumm,' says Botch, when we was well underway, 'we're deep. We're awful deep.'

"'But it ain't salt,' says I; 'tis fish.'

"'Ay,' says he; 'but 'tis all the same t' the schooner. We'll have wind, an' she'll complain.'

"We coaxed her from harbor t' harbor so far as Indian Tickle. Then we got a fair wind, an' Mad Bill Likely 'lowed he'd make a run for it t' the northern ports o' the French Shore. We was well out an' doin' well when the wind switched t' the sou'east. 'Twas a beat, then; an' the poor old *Three Sisters* didn't like it, an' got tired, an' wanted t' give up. By dawn the seas was comin' over the bow at will. The old girl simply couldn't keep her head up. She'd dive, an' nose in, an' get smothered; an' she shook her head so

pitiful that Mad Bill Likely 'lowed he'd ease her for'ard, an' see how she'd like it. 'Twas broad day when he sent me an' Abraham Botch o' Jug Cove out t' stow the stays'l. They wasn't no fog on the face o' the sea; but the sky was gray an' troubled, an' the sea was a wrathful black-an'-white, an' the rain, whippin' past, stung what it touched, an' froze t' the deck an' riggin'. I knowed she'd put her nose into the big white seas, an' I knowed Botch an' me would go under, an' I knowed the foothold was slippery with ice; so I called the fac's t' Botch's attention, an' asked un not t' think too much.

“I've give that up,” says he.

“Well,” says I, ‘you might get another attack.’

“No fear,” says he; ‘tis foolishness t' think. It don't come t' nothin’.’

“But you *might*,” says I.

“Not in a moment o' grace,” says he. ‘An’, Tumm,’ says he, ‘at this instant, my condition,’ says he, ‘is one o' salvation.’

“Then,” says I, ‘you follow me, an' we'll do a tidy job with that there stays'l.’

“An' out on the jib-boom we went. We'd pretty near finished the job when the *Three Sisters* stuck her nose into a thundering sea. When she shook that off, I yelled t' Botch t' look out for two more. If he heard, he didn't say so; he was too busy spittin' salt water. We was still there when the second sea broke. But when the third fell, an' my eyes was shut, an' I was grippin' the boom for dear life, I felt a clutch on my ankle; an' the next thing I

knowed I was draggin' in the water, with a grip on the bobstay, an' something tuggin' at my leg like a whale on a fish-line. I knowed 'twas Botch, without lookin', for it couldn't be nothin' else. An' when I looked, I seed un lyin' in the foam at the schooner's bow, bobbin' under an' up. His head was on a pillow o' froth, an' his legs was swingin' in a green, bubblish swirl beyond.

“Hold fast!” I yelled.

“The hiss an' swish o' the seas was hellish. Botch spat water an' spoke, but I couldn't hear. I 'lowed, though, that 'twas whether I could keep my grip a bit longer.

“Hold fast!” says I.

“He nodded a most agreeable thank you. ‘I wants t' think a minute,’ says he.

“Take both hands!” says I.

“On deck they hadn't missed us yet. The rain was thick an' sharp-edged, an' the schooner's bow was forever in a mist o' spray.

“Tumm!” says Botch.

“Hold fast!” says I.

“He'd hauled his head out o' the froth. They wasn't no trouble in his eyes no more. His eyes was clear an' deep – with a little laugh lyin' far down in the depths.

“Tumm,” says he, ‘I – ’

“I don't hear,” says I.

“I can't wait no longer,” says he. ‘I wants t' know. An' I'm so near, now,’ says he, ‘that I 'low I'll just find out.’

“Hold fast, you fool!” says I.

“I swear by the God that made me,” Tumm declared, “that he was smilin’ the last I seed of his face in the foam! He wanted t’ know – an’ he found out! But I wasn’t quite so curious,” Tumm added, “an’ I hauled my hulk out o’ the water, an’ climbed aboard. An’ I run aft; but they wasn’t nothin’ t’ be seed but the big, black sea, an’ the froth o’ the schooner’s wake and o’ the wild white horses.”

The story was ended.

A tense silence was broken by a gentle snore from the skipper of the *Good Samaritan*. I turned. The head of the lad from the Cove o’ First Cousins protruded from his bunk. It was withdrawn on the instant. But I had caught sight of the drooping eyes and of the wide, flaring nostrils.

“See that, sir?” Tumm asked, with a backward nod toward the boy’s bunk.

I nodded.

“Same old thing,” he laughed, sadly. “Goes on t’ the end o’ the world.”

We all know that.

## II – A MATTER OF EXPEDIENCY

Sure enough, old man Jowl came aboard the *Good Samaritan* at Mad Tom's Harbor to trade his fish – a lean, leathery old fellow in white moleskin, with skin boots, tied below the knees, and a cloth cap set decorously on a bushy head. The whole was as clean as a clothes-pin; and the punt was well kept, and the fish white and dry and sweet to smell, as all Newfoundland cod should be. Tumm's prediction that he would not smile came true; his long countenance had no variation of expression – tough, brown, delicately wrinkled skin lying upon immobile flesh. His face was glum of cast – drawn at the brows, thin-lipped, still; but yet with an abundant and incongruously benignant white beard which might have adorned a prophet. For Jim Bull's widow he made way; she, said he, must have his turn at the scales and in the cabin, for she had a baby to nurse, and was pressed for opportunity. This was tenderness beyond example – generous and acute. A clean, pious, gentle old fellow: he was all that, it may be; but he had eyes to disquiet the sanctified, who are not easily disturbed. They were not blue, but black with a blue film, like the eyes of an old wolf – cold, bold, patient, watchful – calculating; having no sympathy, but a large intent to profit, ultimately, whatever the cost. Tumm had bade me look Jowl in the eye; and to this day I have not forgotten...

The *Good Samaritan* was out of Mad Tom's Harbor, bound

across the bay, after dark, to trade the ports of the shore. It was a quiet night – starlit: the wind light and fair. The clerk and the skipper and I had the forecastle of the schooner to ourselves.

“I ’low,” Tumm mused, “*I* wouldn’t want t’ grow old.”

The skipper grinned.

“Not,” Tumm added, “on this coast.”

“Ah, well, Tumm,” the skipper jeered, “maybe you won’t!”

“I’d be ashamed,” said Tumm.

“You dunderhead!” snapped the skipper, who was old, “on this coast an old man’s a man! He’ve lived through enough,” he growled, “t’ show it.”

“’Tis accordin’,” said Tumm.

“To what?” I asked.

“T’ how you looks at it. In a mess, now – you take it in a nasty mess, when ’tis every man for hisself an’ the devil take the hindmost – in a mess like that, I ’low, the devil often gets the *man* o’ the party, an’ the swine goes free. But ’tis all just accordin’ t’ how you looks at it; an’ as for *my* taste, I’d be ashamed t’ come through fifty year o’ life on this coast alive.”

“Ay, b’y?” the skipper inquired, with a curl of the lip.

“It wouldn’t *look* right,” drawled Tumm.

The skipper laughed good-naturedly.

“Now,” said Tumm, “you take the case o’ old man Jowl o’ Mad Tom’s Harbor – ”

“Excuse me, Tumm b’y,” the skipper interrupted. “If you’re goin’ t’ crack off, just bide a spell till I gets on deck.”

Presently we heard his footsteps going aft...

“A wonderful long time ago, sir,” Tumm began, “when Jowl was in his prime an’ I was a lad, we was shipped for the Labrador aboard the *Wings o’ the Mornin’*. She was a thirty-ton fore-an’-after, o’ Tuggleby’s build – Tuggleby o’ Dog Harbor – hailin’ from Witch Cove, an’ bound down t’ the Wayward Tickles, with a fair intention o’ takin’ a look-in at Run-by-Guess an’ Ships’ Graveyard, t’ the nor’ard o’ Mugford, if the Tickles was bare. Two days out from Witch Cove, somewheres off Gull Island, an’ a bit t’ the sou’west, we was cotched in a switch o’ weather. ’Twas a nor’east blow, mixed with rain an’ hail; an’ in the brewin’ it kep’ us guessin’ what ’twould accomplish afore it got tired, it looked so lusty an’ devilish. The skipper ’lowed ’twould trouble some stomachs, whatever else, afore we got out of it, for ’twas the first v’y’ge o’ that season for every man Jack o’ the crew. An’ she blowed, an’ afore mornin’ she’d tear your hair out by the roots if you took off your cap, an’ the sea was white an’ the day was black. The *Wings o’ the Mornin’* done well enough for forty-eight hours, an’ then she lost her grit an’ quit. Three seas an’ a gust o’ wind crumpled her up. She come out of it a wreck – topmast gone, spars shivered, gear in a tangle, an’ deck swep’ clean. Still an’ all, she behaved like a lady; she kep’ her head up, so well as she was able, till a big sea snatched her rudder; an’ then she breathed her last, an’ begun t’ roll under our feet, dead as a log. So we went below t’ have a cup o’ tea.

“Don’t spare the rations, cook,” says the skipper. ‘Might as

well go with full bellies.’

“The cook got sick t’ oncet.

“‘You lie down, cook,’ says the skipper, ‘an’ leave me do the cookin’. Will you drown where you is, cook,’ says he, ‘or on deck?’

“‘On deck, sir,’ says the cook.

“‘I’ll call you, b’y,’ says the skipper.

“‘Afore long the first hand give up an’ got in his berth. He was wonderful sad when he got tucked away. ’Lowed somebody might hear of it.

“‘You want t’ be called, Billy?’ says the skipper.

“‘Ay, sir; please, sir,’ says the first hand.

“‘All right, Billy,’ says the skipper. ‘But you won’t care enough t’ get out.’

“The skipper was next.

“‘*You goin’, too!*’ says Jowl.

“‘You’ll have t’ eat it raw, lads,’ says the skipper, with a white little grin at hisself. ‘An’ don’t rouse me,’ says he, ‘for I’m as good as dead already.’

“The second hand come down an’ ’lowed we’d better get the pumps goin’.

“‘She’s sprung a leak somewheres aft,’ says he.

Jowl an’ me an’ the second hand went on deck t’ keep her afloat. The second hand ’lowed she’d founder, anyhow, if she was give time, but he’d like t’ see what would come o’ pumpin’, just for devilment. So we lashed ourselves handy an’ pumped away –

me an' the second hand on one side an' Jowl on the other. The *Wings o' the Mornin'* wobbled an' dived an' shook herself like a wet dog; all she wanted was a little more water in her hold an' then she'd make an end of it, whenever she happened t' take the notion.

"I'm give out,' says the second hand, afore night.

"Them men in the forecastle isn't treatin' us right,' says Jowl. 'They ought t' lend a hand.'

"The second hand bawled down t' the crew; but nar a man would come on deck.

"Jowl,' says he, 'you have a try.'

"Jowl went down an' complained; but it didn't do no good. They was all so sick they wouldn't answer. So the second hand 'lowed he'd go down an' argue, which he foolishly done – an' never come back. An' when I went below t' rout un out of it, he was stowed away in his bunk, all out o' sorts an' wonderful melancholy. 'Isn't no use, Tumm,' says he. '*It* isn't no use.'

"Get out o' this!' says the cook. 'You woke me up!'

"I 'lowed the forecastle air wouldn't be long about persuadin' me to the first hand's sinful way o' thinkin'. An' when I got on deck the gale tasted sweet.

"They isn't *treatin'* us right,' says Jowl.

"I 'low you're right,' says I, 'but what you goin' t' do?'

"What you think?' says he.

"Pump,' says I.

"Might's well,' says he. 'She's fillin' up.'

“We kep’ pumpin’ away, steady enough, till dawn, which fagged us wonderful. The way she rolled an’ pitched, an’ the way the big white, sticky, frosty seas broke over us, an’ the way the wind pelted us with rain an’ hail, an’ the blackness o’ the sky, was *mean*— just almighty careless an’ mean. An’ pumpin’ didn’t seem t’ do no good; for why? *we* couldn’t save the hulk – not us two. As it turned out, if the crew had been fitted out with men’s stomachs we might have weathered it out, an’ gone down the Labrador, an’ got a load; for every vessel that got there that season come home fished t’ the gunwales. But we didn’t know it then. Jowl growled all night to hissself about the way we was treated. The wind carried most o’ the blasphemy out t’ sea, where they wasn’t no lad t’ corrupt, an’ at scattered times a big sea would make Jowl splutter, but I heard enough t’ make me smell the devil, an’ when I seed Jowl’s face by the first light I ’lowed his angry feelin’s had riz to a ridiculous extent, so that they was something more’n the weather gone wild in my whereabouts.

“What’s gone along o’ you?” says I.

“The swine!” says he. ‘Come below, Tumm,’ says he, ‘an’ we’ll give un a dose o’ fists an’ feet.’

“So down we went, an’ we had the whole crew in a heap on the forecastle floor afore they woke up. Ecod! what a mess o’ green faces! A per-feck-ly limp job lot o’ humanity! Not a backbone among un. An’ all on account o’ their stomachs! It made me sick an’ mad t’ see un. The cook was the worst of un; said we’d gone an’ woke un up, just when he’d got t’ sleep an’ forgot it all. Good

Lord! ‘You gone an’ made me remember!’ says he. At that, Jowl let un have it; but the cook only yelped an’ crawled back in his bunk, wipin’ the blood from his chin. For twenty minutes an’ more we labored with them sea-sick sailors, with fists an’ feet, as Jowl had prescribed. They wasn’t no mercy begged nor showed. We hit what we seen, pickin’ the tender places with care, an’ they grunted an’ crawled back like rats; an’ out they come again, head foremost or feet, as happened. I never seed the like of it. You could treat un most scandalous, an’ they’d do nothin’ but whine an’ crawl away. ’Twas enough t’ disgust you with your own flesh an’ bones! Jowl ’lowed he’d cure the skipper, whatever come of it, an’ laid his head open with a birch billet. The skipper didn’t whimper no more, but just fell back in the bunk, an’ lied still. Jowl said he’d be cured when he come to. Maybe he was; but ’tis my own opinion that Jowl killed un, then an’ there, an’ that he never *did* come to. Whatever, ’twas all lost labor; we didn’t work a single cure, an’ we had t’ make a run for the deck, all of a sudden, t’ make peace with our own stomachs.

“‘The swine!’ says Jowl. ‘Let un drown!’

“I ’lowed we’d better pump; but Jowl wouldn’t hear to it. Not he! No sir! He’d see the whole herd o’ pigs sunk afore he’d turn a finger!

“‘*Me* pump!’ says he.

“‘You better,’ says I.

“‘For what?’

“‘For your life,’ says I.

“An’ save them swine in the forecastle?” says he. ‘Not *me!*’

“I ’lowed it didn’t matter, anyhow, for ’twas only a question o’ keepin’ the *Wings o’ the Mornin’* out o’ the grave for a spell longer than she might have stayed of her own notion. But, thinks I, I’ll pump, whatever, t’ pass time; an’ so I set to, an’ kep’ at it. The wind was real vicious, an’ the seas was breakin’ over us, fore an’ aft an’ port an’ starboard, t’ suit their fancy, an’ the wreck o’ the *Wings o’ the Mornin’* wriggled an’ bounced in a way t’ s’prise the righteous, an’ the black sky was pourin’ buckets o’ rain an’ hail on all the world, an’ the wind was makin’ knotted whips o’ both. It wasn’t agreeable, an’ by-an’-by my poor brains was fair riled t’ see the able-bodied Jowl with nothin’ t’ do but dodge the seas an’ keep hissself from bein’ pitched over-board. ’Twas a easy berth *he* had! But *I* was busy.

“Look you, Jowl,’ sings I, ‘you better take a spell at the pump.’

“Me?” says he.

“Yes, *you!*’

“Oh no!’ says he.

“You think I’m goin’ t’ do all this labor single-handed?” says I.

“’Tis your own notion,’ says he.

“I’ll see you sunk, Jowl!’ says I, ‘afore I pumps another stroke. If you wants t’ drown afore night I’ll not hinder. Oh no, Mister Jowl!’ says I. ‘I’ll not be standin’ in your light.’

“Tumm,’ says he, ‘I got a idea.’

“Dear man!’ says I.

“The wind’s moderatin’,’ says he, ‘an’ it won’t be long afore the

sea gets civil. But the *Wings o' the Mornin'* won't float overlong. She've been settlin' hasty for the last hour. Still an' all, I 'low I got time t' make a raft, which I'll do.'

“Look!’ says I.

“Off near where the sun was settin’ the clouds broke. ’Twas but a slit, but it let loose a flood o’ red light. ’Twas a bloody sky an’ sea – red as shed blood, but full o’ the promise o’ peace which follows storm, as the good God directs.

“I 'low,’ says he, ‘the wind will go down with the sun.’

“The vessel was makin’ heavy labor of it. ‘I bets you,’ says I, ‘the *Wings o' the Mornin'* beats un both.’

“Time’ll tell,’ says he.

“I give un a hand with the raft. An’ hard work ’twas; never knowed no harder, before nor since, with the seas comin’ overside, an’ the deck pitchin’ like mad, an’ the night droppin’ down. Ecod! but I isn’t able t’ tell you. I forgets what we done in the red light o’ that day. ’Twas labor for giants an’ devils! But we had the raft in the water afore dark, ridin’ in the lee, off the hulk. It didn’t look healthy, an’ was by no means invitin’; but the *Wings o' the Mornin'* was about t’ bow an’ retire, if the signs spoke true, an’ the raft was the only hope in all the brutal world. I took kindly t’ the crazy thing – I 'low I did!

“Tumm,’ says Jowl, ‘I 'low you thinks you got some rights in that raft.’

“I do,’ says I.

“But you isn’t,’ says he. ‘You isn’t, Tumm, because I’m a sight

bigger 'n you, an' could put you off. It isn't in my mind t' do it – but I *could*. I wants company, Tumm, for it looks like a long v'y'ge, an' I'm 'lowin' t' have you.'

“‘What about the crew?’ says I.

“‘They isn't room for more'n two on that raft,’ says he.

“‘Dear God! Jowl,’ says I, ‘what you goin' t' do?’

“‘I'm goin' t' try my level best,’ says he, ‘t' get home t' my wife an' kid; for they'd be wonderful disappointed if I didn't turn up.’

“‘But the crew's got wives an' kids!’ says I.

“‘An' bad stomachs,’ says he.

“‘Jowl,’ says I, ‘she's sinkin' fast.’

“‘Then I 'low we better make haste.’

“‘I started for'ard.

“‘Tumm,’ says he, ‘don't you go another step. If them swine in the forecastle knowed they was a raft 'longside, they'd steal it. It won't *hold* un, Tumm. It won't hold more'n two, an', ecod!’ says he, with a look at the raft, ‘I'm doubtin' that she's able for *that!*’

“‘It made me shiver.

“‘No, sir!’ says he. ‘I 'low she won't hold more'n one.’

“‘Oh yes, she will, Jowl!’ says I. ‘Dear man! yes; she's able for two.’

“‘Maybe,’ says he.

“‘Handy!’ says I. ‘Oh, handy, man!’

“‘We'll try,’ says he, ‘whatever comes of it. An' if she makes bad weather, why, you can – ’

“‘He stopped.

“Why don’t you say the rest?’ says I.

“I hates to.’

“What do you mean?’ says I.

“Why, damme! Tumm,’ says he, ‘I mean that you can get *off*.

What *else* would I mean?’

“Lord! I didn’t know!

“Well?’ says he.

“It ain’t very kind,’ says I.

“What would *you* do,’ says he, ‘if *you* was me?’

“I give un a look that told un, an’ ’twas against my will I done it.

“Well,’ says he, ‘you can’t blame me, then.’

“No more I could.

“Now I’ll get the grub from the forecastle, lad,’ says he, ‘an’ we’ll cast off. The *Wings o’ the Mornin’* isn’t good for more’n half an hour more. You bide on deck, Tumm, an’ leave the swine t’ me.’

Then he went below.

“All right,’ says he, when he come on deck. ‘Haul in the line.’ We lashed a water-cask an’ a grub-box t’ the raft. ‘Now, Tumm,’ says he, ‘we can take it easy. We won’t be in no haste t’ leave, for I ’low ’tis more comfortable here. Looks t’ me like more moderate weather. I feels pretty good, Tumm, with all the work done, an’ nothin’ t’ do but get aboard.’ He sung the long-metre doxology. ‘Look how the wind’s dropped!’ says he. ‘Why, lad, we might have saved the *Wings o’ the Mornin’* if them pigs had done their dooty last night. But ’tis too late now – an’ it’s *been* too late all

day long. We'll have a spell o' quiet,' says he, 'when the sea goes down. Looks t' me like the v'y'ge might be pleasant, once we gets through the night. I 'low the stars'll be peepin' afore mornin'. It'll be a comfort t' see the little mites. I loves t' know they're winkin' overhead. They makes me think o' God. You isn't got a top-coat, is you, lad?' says he. 'Well, you better get it, then. I'll trust you in the forecastle, Tumm, for I knows you wouldn't wrong me, an' you'll need that top-coat bad afore we're picked up. An' if you got your mother's Bible in your nunny-bag, or anything like that you wants t' save, you better fetch it,' says he. 'I 'low we'll get out o' this mess, an' we don't want t' have anything t' regret.'

"I got my mother's Bible.

"Think we better cast off?" says he.

"I did. The *Wings o' the Mornin'* was ridin' too low an' easy for me t' rest; an' the wind had fell to a soft breeze, an' they wasn't no more rain, an' no more dusty spray, an' no more breakin' waves. They was a shade on the sea – the first shadow o' the night – t' hide what we'd leave behind.

"We better leave her," says I.

"Then all aboard!" says he.

"An' we got aboard, an' cut the cable, an' slipped away on a soft, black sea, far into the night... An' no man ever seed the *Wings o' the Mornin'* again... An' me an Jowl was picked up, half dead o' thirst an' starvation, twelve days later, by ol' Cap'n Loop, o' the Black Bay mail-boat, as she come around Toad Point, bound t' Burnt Harbor...

“Jowl an’ me,” Tumm resumed, “fished the Holy Terror Tickles o’ the Labrador in the *Got It* nex’ season. He was a wonderful kind man, Jowl was – so pious, an’ soft t’ speak, an’ honest, an’ willin’ for his labor. At midsummer I got a bad hand, along of a cut with the splittin’-knife, an’ nothin’ would do Jowl but he’d lance it, an’ wash it, an’ bind it, like a woman, an’ do so much o’ my labor as he was able for, like a man. I fair got t’ *like* that lad o’ his – though ’twas but a young feller t’ home, at the time – for Jowl was forever talkin’ o’ Toby this an’ Toby that – not boastful gabble, but just tender an’ nice t’ hear. An’ a fine lad, by all accounts: a dutiful lad, brave an’ strong, if given overmuch t’ yieldin’ the road t’ save trouble, as Jowl said. I ’lowed, one night, when the *Got It* was bound home, with all the load the salt would give her, that I’d sort o’ like t’ know the lad that Jowl had.

“Why don’t you fetch un down the Labrador?” says I.

“His schoolin’,” says Jowl.

“Oh!” says I.

“Ay,’ says he; ‘his mother’s wonderful particular about the schoolin’.’

“Anyhow,’ says I, ‘the schoolin’ won’t go on for all time.’

“No,’ says Jowl, ‘it won’t. An’ I’m ’lowin’ t’ harden Toby up a bit nex’ spring.’

“T’ the ice?” says I.

“Ay,’ says he; ‘if I can overcome his mother.’

“’Tis a rough way t’ break a lad,’ says I.

“So much the better,’ says he. ‘It don’t take so long. Nothin’

like a sealin' v'y'ge,' says he, 't' harden a lad. An' if you comes along, Tumm,' says he, 'why, I won't complain. I'm 'lowin' t' ship with Skipper Tommy Jump o' the *Second t' None*. She's a tight schooner, o' the Tiddle build, an' I 'low Tommy Jump will get a load o' fat, whatever comes of it. You better join, Tumm,' says he, 'an' we'll all be t'gether. I'm wantin' you t' get acquainted with Toby, an' lend a hand with his education, which you can do t' the queen's taste, bein' near of his age.'

"I'll do it, Jowl,' says I.

"An' I done it; an' afore we was through, I wisht I hadn't."

Tumm paused.

"An' I done it – nex' March – shipped along o' Tommy Jump o' the *Second t' None*, with Jowl an' his lad aboard," he proceeded.

"You overcame the wife,' says I, 'didn't you?'

"'Twas a tough job,' says he. 'She 'lowed the boy might come t' harm, an' wouldn't give un up; but me an' Toby pulled t'gether, an' managed her, the day afore sailin'. She cried a wonderful lot; but, Lord! that's only the way o' women.'

"A likely lad o' sixteen, this Toby – blue-eyed an' fair, with curly hair an' a face full o' blushes. Polite as a girl, which is much too polite for safety at the ice. He'd make way for them that blustered; but he done it with such an air that we wasn't no more'n off the Goggles afore the whole crew was all makin' way for he. So I 'lowed he'd *do*– that he'd be took care of, just for love. But Jowl wasn't o' my mind.

"No,' says he; 'the lad's too soft. He've got t' be hardened.'

“‘Maybe,’ says I.

“‘If anything happened,’ says he, ‘Toby wouldn’t stand a show. The men is kind to un now,’ says he, ‘for they doesn’t lose nothin’ by it. If they stood t’ lose their lives, Tumm, they’d push un out o’ the way, an’ he’d go ’ithout a whimper. I got t’ talk t’ that lad for his own good.’

“Which he done.

“‘Toby,’ says he, ‘you is much too soft. Don’t you go an’ feel bad, now, lad, just because your father tells you so; for ’tis not much more’n a child you are, an’ your father’s old, an’ knows all about life. You got t’ get hard if you wants t’ hold your own. You’re too polite. You gives way too easy. *Don’t* give way – don’t give way under no circumstances. In this life,’ says he, ‘tis every man for hisself. I don’t know why God made it that way,’ says he, ‘but He done it, an’ we got t’ stand by. You’re young,’ says he, ‘an’ thinks the world is what you’d have it be if you made it; but I’m old, an’ I knows that a man can’t be polite an’ live to his prime on this coast. Now, lad,’ says he, ‘we isn’t struck the ice yet, but I ’low I smell it; an’ once we gets the *Second t’ None* in the midst, ’most anything is likely t’ happen. If so be that Tommy Jump gets the schooner in a mess you look out for yourself; don’t think o’ nobody else, for you can’t *afford* to.’

“‘Yes, sir,’ says the boy.

“‘Mark me well, lad! I’m tellin’ you this for your own good. You won’t get no mercy showed you; so don’t you show mercy t’ nobody else. If it comes t’ your life or the other man’s, you

put *him* out o' the way afore he has time t' put *you*. Don't let un give battle. Hit un so quick as you're able. It'll be harder if you waits. You don't have t' be *fair*. 'Tisn't expected. Nobody's fair. An' – ah, now, Toby!' says he, puttin' his arm over the boy's shoulder, 'if you feels like givin' way, an' lettin' the other man have your chance, an' if you *can't* think o' yourself, just you think o' your mother. Ah, lad,' says he, 'she'd go an' cry her eyes out if anything happened t' you. Why, Toby – oh, my! now, lad – why, *think* o' the way she'd sit in her rockin'-chair, an' put her pinny to her eyes, an' cry, an' cry! You're the only one she've got, an' she couldn't, lad, she *couldn't* get along 'ithout you! Ah, she'd cry, an' cry, an' cry; an' they wouldn't be nothin' in all the world t' give her comfort! So don't you go an' grieve her, Toby,' says he, 'by bein' tender-hearted. Ah, now, Toby!' says he, 'don't you go an' make your poor mother cry!'

“No, sir,” says the lad. ‘I’ll not, sir!’

“That’s a good boy, Toby,” says Jowl. ‘I ’low you’ll be a man when you grow up, if your mother doesn’t make a parson o’ you.’”

Tumm made a wry face.

“Well,” he continued, “Tommy Jump kep’ the *Second t’ None* beatin’ hither an’ yon off the Horse Islands for two days, expectin’ ice with the nor’east wind. ’Twas in the days afore the sealin’ was done in steamships from St. John’s, an’ they was a cloud o’ sail at the selsame thing. An’ we all put into White Bay, in the mornin’ in chase o’ the floe, an’ done a day’s work on the swiles [seals] afore night. But nex’ day we was jammed by the ice – the

fleet o' seventeen schooners, cotched in the bottom o' the bay, an' like t' crack our hulls if the wind held. Whatever, the wind fell, an' there come a time o' calm an' cold, an' we was all froze in, beyond help, an' could do nothin' but wait for the ice t' drive out an' go abroad, an' leave us t' sink or sail, as might chance. Tommy Jump 'lowed the *Second t' None* would sink; said her timbers was sprung, an' she'd leak like a basket, an' crush like a eggshell, once the ice begun t' drive an' grind an' rafter – leastwise, he *think* so, admittin' 'twas open t' argument; an' he wouldn't go so far as t' pledge the word of a gentleman that she *would* sink.

“Whatever,’ says he, ‘we’ll stick to her an’ find out.’

“The change o’ wind come at dusk – a big blow from the sou’west. ’Twas beyond doubt the ice would go t’ sea; so I tipped the wink t’ young Toby Jowl an’ told un the time was come.

“I’ll save my life, Tumm,’ says he, ‘if I’m able.’

“’Twas a pity! Ecod! t’ this day I ’low ’twas a pity; ’Twas a fine, sweet lad, that Toby; but he looked like a wolf, that night, in the light o’ the forecandle lamp, when his eyes flashed an’ his upper lip stretched thin over his teeth!

“You better get some grub in your pocket,’ says I.

“I got it,’ says he.

“Well,’ says I, ‘I ’low *you’ve* learned! Where’d you get it?’

“Stole it from the cook,’ says he.

“Any chance for me?’

“If you’re lively,’ says he. ‘The cook’s a fool... Will it come soon, Tumm?’ says he, with a grip on my wrist. ‘How long will

it be, eh, Tumm, afore 'tis every man for hisself?"

"Soon enough, God knowed! By midnight the edge o' the floe was rubbin' Pa'tridge P'int, an' the ice was troubled an' angry. In an hour the pack had the bottom scrunched out o' the *Second t' None*; an' she was kep' above water – listed an' dead – only by the jam o' little pans 'longside. Tommy Jump 'lowed we'd strike the big billows o' the open afore dawn an' the pack would go abroad an' leave us t' fill an' sink; said *he* couldn't do no more, an' the crew could take care o' their own lives, which was what *he* would do, whatever come of it. 'Twas blowin' big guns then – rippin' in straight lines right off from Sop's Arm an' all them harbors for starved bodies an' souls t' the foot o' the bay. An' snow come with the wind; the heavens emptied theirselves; the air was thick an' heavy. Seemed t' me the wrath o' sea an' sky broke loose upon us – wind an' ice an' snow an' big waves an' cold – all the earth contains o' hate for men! Skipper Tommy Jump 'lowed we'd better stick t' the ship so long as we was able; which was merely his opinion, an' if the hands had a mind t' choose their pans while they was plenty, they was welcome t' do it, an' he wouldn't see no man called a fool if his fists was big enough t' stop it. But no man took t' the ice at that time. An' the *Second t' None* ran on with the floe, out t' sea, with the wind an' snow playin' the devil for their own amusement, an' the ice groanin' its own complaint...

"Then we struck the open."

"Now, lads,' yells Tommy Jump, when he got all hands

amidships, ‘you better quit the ship. The best time,’ says he, ‘will be when you sees *me* go overside. But don’t get in my way. You get your own pans. God help the man that gets in my way!’

“Tommy Jump went overside when the ice opened an’ the *Second t’ None* begun t’ go down an’ the sea was spread with small pans, floatin’ free. ’Twas near dawn then. Things was gray; an’ the shapes o’ things was strange an’ big – out o’ size, fearsome. Dawn shot over the sea, a wide, flat beam from the east, an’ the shadows was big, an’ the light dim, an’ the air full o’ whirlin’ snow; an’ men’s eyes was too wide an’ red an’ frightened t’ look with sure sight upon the world. An’ all the ice was in a tumble o’ black water... An’ the *Second t’ None* went down... An’ I ’lowed they wasn’t no room on my pan for nobody but me. But I seed the shape of a man leap for my place. An’ I cursed un, an’ bade un go farther, or I’d drown un. An’ he leaped for the pan that lied next, where Jowl was afloat, with no room t’ spare. An’ Jowl hit quick an’ hard. He was waitin’, with his fists closed, when the black shape landed; an’ he hit quick an’ hard without lookin’... An’ I seed the face in the water... An’, oh, I knowed who ’twas!

“Dear God!” says I.

“Jowl was now but a shape in the snow. ‘That you, Tumm?’ says he. ‘What you sayin’?’

“Why didn’t you take time t’ *look?*” says I. ‘Oh, Jowl! *why* didn’t you take time?’

“T’ look?” says he.

“Dear God!”

“What you sayin’ that for, Tumm?” says he. ‘What you mean, Tumm? ... My God!’ says he, ‘what is I gone an’ done? Who *was* that, Tumm? My God! Tell me! What is I done?’

“I couldn’t find no words t’ tell un.

“Oh, make haste,’ says he, ‘afore I drifts away!’

“Dear God!’ says I, ‘twas Toby!’

“An’ he fell flat on the ice... An’ I didn’t see Jowl no more for four year. He was settled at Mad Tom’s Harbor then, where you seed un t’-day; an’ his wife was dead, an’ he didn’t go no more t’ the Labrador, nor t’ the ice, but fished the Mad Tom grounds with hook-an’-line on quiet days, an’ was turned timid, they said, with fear o’ the sea...”

The *Good Samaritan* ran softly through the slow, sleepy sea, bound across the bay to trade the ports of the shore.

“I tells you, sir,” Tumm burst out, “’tis hell. *Life* is! Maybe not where you hails from, sir; but ’tis on this coast. I ’low where you comes from they don’t take lives t’ save their own?”

“Not to save their own,” said I.

He did not understand.

### III – THE MINSTREL

Salim Awad, poet, was the son of Tanous – that orator. Having now lost at love, he lay disconsolate on his pallet in the tenement overlooking the soap factory. He would not answer any voice; nor would he heed the gentle tap and call of old Khalil Khayyat, the tutor of his muse; nor would he yield his sorrow to the music of Nageeb Fiani, called the greatest player in all the world. For three hours Fiani, in the wail and sigh of his violin, had expressed the woe of love through the key-hole; but Salim Awad was not moved. No; the poet continued in desolation through the darkness of that night, and through the slow, grimy, unfeeling hours of day. He dwelt upon Haleema, Khouri's daughter – she (as he thought) of the tresses of night, the beautiful one. Salim was in despair because this Haleema had chosen to wed Jimmie Brady, the truckman. She loved strength more than the uplifted spirit; and this maidens may do, as Salim knew, without reproach or injury.

When the dusk of the second day was gathered in his room, Salim looked up, eased by the tender obscurity. In the cobblestoned street below the clatter of traffic had subsided; there were the shuffle and patter of feet of the low-born of his people, the murmur of voices, soft laughter, the plaintive cries of children – the dolorous medley of a summer night. Beyond the fire-escape, far past the roof of the soap factory, lifted high above the restless

Western world, was the starlit sky; and Salim Awad, searching its uttermost depths, remembered the words of Antar, crying in his heart: *“I pass the night regarding the stars of night in my distraction. Ask the night of me, and it will tell thee that I am the ally of sorrow and of anguish. I live desolate; there is no one like me. I am the friend of grief and of desire.”*

The band was playing in Battery Park; the weird music of it, harsh, incomprehensible, an alien love-song —

“Hello, mah baby,  
Hello, mah honey,  
Hello, mah rag-time girl!”

drifted in at the open window with a breeze from the sea. But by this unmeaning tumult the soul of Salim Awad, being far removed, was not troubled; he remembered, again, the words of Antar, addressed to his beloved, repeating: *“In thy forehead is my guide to truth; and in the night of thy tresses I wander astray. Thy bosom is created as an enchantment. O may God protect it ever in that perfection! Will fortune ever, O daughter of Malik, ever bless me with thy embrace? That would cure my heart of the sorrows of love.”*

And again the music of the band in Battery Park drifted up the murmuring street,

“*Just* one girl,  
Only *just* one girl!”

There are others, I know, but they're *not* my pearl.

*Just* one girl,

Only just one girl!

I'd be happy forever with *just* one girl!"

and came in at the open window with the idle breeze; and Salim heard nothing of the noise, but was grateful for the cool fingers of the wind softly lifting the hair from his damp brow.

It must be told – and herein is a mystery – that this same Salim, who had lost at love, now from the darkness of his tenement room contemplating the familiar stars, wise, remote, set in the uttermost heights of heaven beyond the soap factory, was by the magic of this great passion inspired to extol the graces of his beloved Haleema, Khouri's daughter, star of the world, and to celebrate his own despair, the love-woe of Salim, the noble-born, the poet, the lover, the brokenhearted. Without meditation, as he has said, without brooding or design, as should occur, but rather, taking from the starlit infinitude beyond the soap factory, seizing from the mist of his vision and from the blood of agony dripping from his lacerated heart, he fashioned a love-song so exquisite and frail, so shy of contact with unfeeling souls, that he trembled in the presence of this beauty, for the moment forgetting his desolation, and conceived himself an instrument made of men, wrought of mortal hands, unworthy, which the fingers of angels had touched in alleviation of the sorrows of love.

Thereupon Salim Awad arose, and he made haste to Khalil Khayyat to tell him of this thing...

This same Khalil Khayyat, lover of children, that poet and mighty editor, the tutor of the young muse of this Salim – this patient gardener of the souls of men, wherein he sowed seeds of the flowers of the spirit – this same Khalil, poet, whose delight was in the tender bloom of sorrow and despair – this old Khayyat, friend of Salim, the youth, the noble-born, sat alone in the little back room of Nageeb Fiani, the pastry-cook and greatest player in all the world. And his narghile was glowing; the coal was live and red, showing as yet no gray ash, and the water bubbled by fits and starts, and the alien room, tawdry in its imitation of the Eastern splendor, dirty, flaring and sputtering with gas, was clouded with the sweet-smelling smoke. To the coffee, perfume rising with the steam from the delicate vessel, nor to the rattle of dice and boisterous shouts from the outer room, was this Khalil attending; for he had the evening dejection to nurse. He leaned over the green baize table, one long, lean brown hand lying upon *Kawkab Elhorriah* of that day, as if in affectionate pity, and his lean brown face was lifted in a rapture of anguish to the grimy ceiling; for the dream of the writing had failed, as all visions of beauty must fail in the reality of them, and there had been no divine spark in the labor of the day to set the world aflame against Abdul-Hamid, Sultan, slaughterer.

To him, then, at this moment of inevitable reaction, the love-lorn Salim, entering in haste.

“Once more, Salim,” said Khalil Khayyat, sadly, “I have failed.”

Salim softly closed the door.

“I am yet young, Salim,” the editor added, with an absent smile, in which was no bitterness at all, but the sweetness of long suffering. “I am yet young,” he repeated, “for in the beginning of my labor I hope.”

Salim turned the key.

“I am but a child,” Khalil Khayyat declared, his voice, now lifted, betraying despair. “I dream in letters of fire: I write in shadows. In my heart is a flame: from the point of my pen flows darkness. I proclaim a revolution: I hear loud laughter and the noise of dice. Salim,” he cried, “I am but a little child: when night falls upon the labor of my day I remember the morning!”

“Khalil!”

Khalil Khayyat was thrilled by the quality of this invocation.

“Khalil of the exalted mission, friend, poet, teacher of the aspiring,” Salim Awad whispered, leaning close to the ear of Khalil Khayyat, “a great thing has come to pass.”

Khayyat commanded his ecstatic perturbation.

“Hist!” Salim ejaculated. “Is there not one listening at the door?”

“There is no one, Salim; it is the feet of Nageeb the coffee-boy, passing to the table of Abosamara, the merchant.”

Salim hearkened.

“There is no one, Salim.”

“There is a breathing at the key-hole, Khalil,” Salim protested. “This great thing must not be known.”

“There is no one, Salim,” said Khalil Khayyat. “I have heard Abosamara call these seven times. Being rich, he is brutal to such as serve. The sound is of the feet of the little Intelligent One. He bears coffee to the impatient merchant. His feet are soft, by my training; they pass like a whisper . . . Salim, what is this great thing?”

“Nay, but, Khalil, I hesitate: the thing must not be heard.”

“Even so,” said Khalil Khayyat, contemptuously, being still a poet; “the people are of the muck of the world; they are common, they are not of our blood and learning. How shall they understand that which they hear?”

“Khalil,” Salim Awad answered, reassured, “I have known a great moment!”

“A great moment?” said Khalil Khayyat, being both old and wise. “Then it is because of agony. There has issued from this great pain,” said he, edging, in his artistic excitement, toward the victim of the muse, “a divine poem of love?”

Salim Awad sighed.

“Is it not so, Salim?”

Salim Awad flung himself upon the green baize table; and so great was his despair that the coffee-cup of Khalil Khayyat jumped in its saucer. “I have suffered: I have lost at love,” he answered. “I have been wounded; I bleed copiously. I lie alone in a desert. My passion is hunger and thirst and a gaping wound. From fever and the night I cry out. Whence is my healing and satisfaction? Nay, but, Khalil, devoted friend,” he groaned,

looking up, “I have known the ultimate sorrow. Haleema!” cried he, rising, hands clasped and uplifted, eyes looking far beyond the alien, cobwebbed, blackened ceiling of the little back room of Nageeb Fiani, the pastry-cook and greatest player in all the world. “Haleema!” he cried, as it may meanly be translated. “Haleema – my sleep and waking, night and day of my desiring soul, my thought and heart-throb! Haleema – gone forever from me, the poet, the unworthy, fled to the arms of the strong, the knowing, the manager of horses, the one powerful and controlling! Haleema – beautiful one, fashioned of God, star of the night of the sons of men, glory of the universe, appealing, of the soft arms, of the bosom of sleep! Haleema – of the fingertips of healing, of the warm touch of solace, of the bed of rest! Haleema, beautiful one, beloved, lost to me!.. Haleema!.. Haleema!..”

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