



*The other two Chinks leaped toward Hamilton. A knife flashed, and Hamilton backed against his desk.*

# Typhoon Seas

By

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In the murky blackness of the Hongkong waterfront, Bill Hamilton came face to face with a lean, starved beachcomber. And instantly that hell hole of China became alive with grim drama. A powerful story of the sea.

THE rasping melody of an untuned piano swelled above the hoarse voices of seamen in Sailor Jack's Retreat, halfway down the odorous Street of Celestial Peace—a name that mocked the crooked lane cutting off sharply from the Hongkong waterfront.

It was a street of vengeful hatreds, of black, brooding passions. In all the fetid Orient, Bill

Hamilton could not have found a more fitting region in which to encounter a foe, the man he had sworn to crush into the bitter dust. Strange how the passing years had cooled his hate.

Hamilton shoved his way arrogantly through the crowd in Sailor Jack's. Two score of eyes stared at him suspiciously through the dense smoke wafted about the room. Ship's officers, chesty with the

pride of caste, seldom visited the turbulent dive.

For a few moments Hamilton paused near a vacant table, idly studying the surging mob that hailed from a score of countries. Two Dutch sailors shouted furious oaths at each other, but the skipper of the freighter *Black Hawk* paid scant attention to them. Hamilton's glance rested for an instant on the painted girl at the piano, and his lips curled derisively.

Fighting his way through the throng came a burly figure. The bronzed-faced skipper turned swiftly as a hand was placed on his shoulder, and glanced at Jim Carey, his chief engineer.

"Seen him tonight?" Hamilton demanded.

"Nope—not yet. But I guess he'll show up. He haunts this place like a spook, they tell me!"

"Sit down and let's swallow a drink. Damned hot tonight! Curse this roasting country! What'll you have, chief?"

"Whiskey and soda."

"We'll make it two. Hey, waiter!"

A slippered Chinaman moved fearfully through the knots of sailors and bowed subserviently as he took Hamilton's order. He vanished among the clouds of smoke and sweating bodies, as the skipper again faced his chief engineer.

It was strange, Hamilton reflected, how he had run across Phil Gordon in Hongkong. Ten years had passed like winter gales since they had served together in the destroyer fleet far up in the torpedo-menaced North Sea. Gordon's destiny seemed linked with his own. It was Gordon who had wormed him out for appointment as chief petty officer. Three times they had fought bloody fist battles—and Gordon had always won. Back in Brooklyn, Gordon had become his rival in love, and had married Kitty Higgins.

"I was thinkin', Jim, what a helluva proposition life is," said Hamilton as he sipped his liquor. The Chinese boy hovered about the table and Hamilton flung him a silver dollar, then waved him impatiently away. The skipper's eyes grew moody.

"Was this feller, Gordon, a pal of yours, cap'n?" asked Carey.

"No! Hate him like hell! Worse'n any man I know on the globe!"

"He sure sneaked out of here last night when he saw you. I made some inquiries about him today as you told me to, cap'n. Seems like this here guy Gordon has gone native. Just a lousy beachcomber of the rottenest type. Even the birds that hang out

around here look down upon him."

"Anything else about him?"

"Yep. This will surprise you. He used to be first officer on a tub runnin' to Java until about six months ago. Fairly steady feller. Then he took to drink all of a sudden. Went from bad to worse as some bozos seem to do."

"Talkin' about the devil, Jim!"

Carey glanced up quickly at a lean, half-starved man who was pushing his way through the mob that loitered about the swinging bamboo doors. The newcomer's face was gaunt, and he wore a native hat of coarse straw. He was clad in a dirty white drill suit, two sizes too small. An English seaman turned on him with a snarl, his loud voice rising above the medley of noise.

"Damn yer, 'ow dare you push me?" he shouted.

"Let 'im be, 'Awkins!"

"Ave a dirty dorg like 'im push into me? Like 'ell!"

The Englishmen raised a ham-sized fist and crashed it into the jaw of the derelict. Hamilton half rose to his feet to watch the altercation. He wondered if Gordon still retained enough fighting guts to send him into a hopeless battle.

Gordon scrambled to his feet, rubbing his injured jaw with a filthy hand. He glared at the Englishman and tore in furiously. The Britisher drew back mockingly as Gordon struck him on the chest; then the big sailor's fist swung into action. The blow sent Gordon reeling halfway across the room. The seaman laughed unpleasantly.

"Dirty, filthy scum!" he yelled.

The chief engineer banged his hand on the liquor-stained table. Hamilton raised his glass to his lips, drained the last drop of whisky and soda and encountered Carey's eyes.

"Well, that's that!" Hamilton muttered. A sickly smile distorted his large mouth.

"What's your game, cap'n?"

"My game? Guess I don't get you, Jim. Mebbe I ought to be just contented lettin' Gordon rot to hell in Hongkong. Still, he's a white man, ain't he, and a former shipmate of mine? I wonder if he's rotten clean through. Except for him, I guess I'd have married the sweetest little girl in America."

Carey nodded, and the freighter captain continued, "You say he used to be chief officer on a steamer in the Java trade? That shows he must have had something in him. Even tonight he

showed guts in a scrap. Drink has knocked many a good man to hell."

The rouged girl at the piano lighted a cigarette and puffed on it somberly. Her lips were of an unnatural carmine hue, and two gold teeth gleamed like the beady eyes of a cobra as she turned. For the first time, Hamilton perceived that she was a half-caste. She smiled at him with wanton coquettishness, and his lids narrowed angrily.

"Hell!" he growled.

The girl turned, and her thin fingers spread above the yellowed keys. For a few moments her hands remained poised in the air with thoughtless grace, then crashed upon the keys. The softly melancholy lilt of "Silver Threads Among the Gold" filled the gaudily lacquered front room of Sailor Jack's Retreat.

A lantern-jawed Swede, lured by the music, shambled to his rocking feet and shuffled to her side. The beefy Englishman who had sent Gordon reeling to the dirty floor shouted an oath, and followed him angrily. A swarthy Greek got in the Englishman's way and was knocked aside with a clenched fist.

"Both of them guys has been after her a week. She's kinda sweet on the limey."

"There'll be trouble now!" said a voice that carried the nasal twang of Vermont.

Hamilton crouched back in his chair as an ominous hush fell on the room. Fitful lights cast a bleak yellow cone over the girl at the piano and the two rivals for her love. Through the gloom, Hamilton peered at Gordon, who was huddled over a table at the far corner. The beachcomber's hat had fallen to the floor, and his head was buried in his hands. A glass of whisky was on the table.

Suddenly the girl, filled with the madness of too much liquor, increased the tempo until the old air was distorted into raging jazz. Gordon raised his head and glared angrily. "Play that right, damn you!" he yelled. "Play it with a little sentiment, you—!"

The Englishman wheeled about angrily. "I'll beat you to a pulp!" he shouted.

**G**ROWLING with rage, the Swede turned on his rival as Gordon leaped around the table.

Hamilton wondered if the Swede thought the remark was addressed to himself. The blond head ducked low and the Swede's fist shot out with fury, catching the Englishman on the temple. For an

instant the Britisher paused, half-dazed by the blow. The girl darted from the piano and screamed.

Jing Lee, portly native owner of the Retreat since the lamented death of Sailor Jack in a knife fight two years before, hurried toward the brawling men. The Chinese carried a Colt automatic in his muscular fingers, and stern determination gleamed in his almond eyes. He made two steps through the still mob; then heavy hands seized him. The pistol clattered to the floor.

The events that followed dazed Hamilton by their swiftness. They seemed to melt in each other like scenes in a motion picture. Out of the ground darted a Greek seaman, laughing wildly. The man was beastly drunk, but he still remembered the crack of the Englishman's fist. He picked up the weapon and pointed it at the Britisher. The helpless Chinese proprietor watched him.

"Catchee him!" shouted Jing Lee.

The venomous bark of a bullet tore through the tobacco smoke, and the Englishman clawed at his thick throat. A foolish look of amazement crossed his heavy face. Then, with a gurgling groan, he sagged to the floor. The bullet had plowed its burning way through his jugular vein.

The painted half-caste girl cried out piteously, and fell across the body of the dying man, smothering his lips with kisses. Somebody yelled, "Give him air!" A laugh followed, as tables were overturned by patrons in a mad rush for the door. Hamilton saw Gordon lurch against a table and falter. Seamen smashed the electric lights with vandal fury.

Hamilton leaped across the room and seized Gordon by the collar. The beachcomber glared at him angrily. "Leave me be, damn you!" he shouted.

The skipper struck him across the face. Gordon attempted to resist, but sagged in a drunken stupor. "Come with me, you bloody fool!" Hamilton commanded. He dragged Gordon from a chair, though the other resisted with ferocious determination. The struggle seemed to sober Gordon. Glancing up, Hamilton saw a Sikh policeman, black-bearded and wearing a huge turban, standing in the doorway.

The wails of the half-caste girl filled the room. "He's dead!" she sobbed. "Oh, God, he's dead!"

Hamilton raised his fist and crashed it in a sweeping arc against Gordon's chin. With a sudden spring the Sikh leaped toward Hamilton. He was armed with a stout club. As Hamilton, dragging

Gordon, continued to advance, the Sikh raised the club above his head. Had the blow descended on Hamilton's head, it would have fractured his skull. The freighter captain ducked the blow, and the club landed on the flexed muscle of his right arm.

Shouting an oath, Hamilton drew back, gritting his teeth in pain. Carey watched the Sikh narrowly and with a dexterous move of his foot tripped him. Before the turbaned policeman could regain his feet, Hamilton stepped on his wrist, kicked the club out of his grasp, bent over and seized the weapon.

"Hurry!" he shouted.

Gordon darted through the door with Hamilton and Carey at his heels. The ragged American ran up the noisy Street of Celestial Peace for a dozen feet and darted toward a black doorway. Then Hamilton caught up with him. The Sikh's club swung in the captain's hand and crashed into the base of Gordon's skull. The beachcomber's legs sagged under him, and his face fell into the dust.

Hamilton wondered if the blow had killed him. Those fellows who went native and drank themselves half to death hadn't much resistance. He seized Gordon by the collar and turned the limp body over, placing his hand over the other's heart. A faint beat reassured him. Hamilton turned swiftly to his chief engineer.

"Grab him under the arms!" he ordered. "I'll carry him by the legs."

"Takin' him to the ship?"

"Yep!"

THE strange procession made its way along the half-deserted street. As it passed the Café of the Three Lanterns, a half-dozen shouting seamen rushed through the door and stared at the group curiously. The sight of a supposedly stupefied seaman, however, was not one to evoke excessive amazement on the part of chance spectators.

"Yer pardner drunk?" inquired a Yankee merchant sailor.

"Yep, he passed out," responded Carey.

Eight minutes' hasty walk brought the ship officers and their unconscious burden to the waterfront. The Black Hawk lay out in the roadstead. Hamilton stumbled across a cargo-laden wharf and hailed a small native boat. The unconscious man was flung into the little bark.

Through the junk-filled harbor, the little sailboat made its way to the port side of the Black Hawk.

Hamilton's second officer, George Johnson, stood on the darkened deck.

"Here's a new member of the crew," said the master of the freighter.

Johnson bent over the heavily breathing form and muttered a protest. "He's a white man, captain! Say, all the crew we got are Lascars and coolie Chinks."

"This guy is lower in the scale than a Lascar," said Hamilton bitterly. "And, by the way, Mr. Johnson, not a word—"

The second officer nodded. As Hamilton and Carey walked across the deck, with Gordon swaying crazily between them, he muttered, "I'll be damned. So the Ol' Man's gone in for the shanghai racket?" But Johnson knew on which side his bread was buttered. He shook his head dismally, and a crooked smile played about his lips. "What the hell!" he said under his breath. It was none of his business what the skipper did.

Hamilton led the way forward into the well deck and up to the fo'c's'le head of the Black Hawk. He glanced idly over the port bow at the gleaming lights of the city. From somewhere in the darkness near the waterfront came the rasping notes of Chinese music. Voices floated through the still air. Hamilton dropped Gordon's legs.

"Down in the fo'c's'le with him?" asked Carey.

"I wonder if I ought. But I guess not, on second thoughts. Remember he's a white man even if he ain't much to look at. Hey, Li, Togi!"

Two Lascars, dozing on heavy tarpaulins beyond the winches, scampered through the gloom from the starboard side. Hamilton pointed to Gordon. The man who had gone native was coming to. His breath was exhaled in hoarse bursts, and he mumbled incoherently. The Lascars picked him up.

"Put him in the lazaret," said Hamilton gruffly. "Tie his arms and legs. Savee?"

Li nodded and, aided by his companion, dragged the struggling prisoner down into the well deck and on toward the poop. Hamilton made his way to the starboard rail and stared contentedly over the harbor. He lighted a thickly caked pipe and puffed on it reflectively. His air was that of a man at peace with the world.

Shortly after daybreak the Black Hawk weighed anchor and steamed slowly through the bumboats and frowsy junks that cluttered up the harbor. Her whistle sounded shrilly through the haze that hovered over the waterway. Out of the mist swept a

steamer toward the port bow of the Black Hawk. The freighter's whistle belched noisily, and Hamilton, standing near the starboard wing of the navigating bridge, swore.

Johnson, in the chart room, clutched the telegraph, and the Black Hawk slowed suddenly. The offending steamer swerved sharply, leaving a clear path for the freighter. Hamilton shaded his eyes with a cupped hand, and watched the crew battening down the hatches. Then he made his way to the chart room.

"Where's Mr. Holmes?" he demanded. Holmes was the chief mate.

"He didn't show up. He's been on a hell of a bat since we struck Hongkong."

Hamilton's outburst blistered the sultry atmosphere of the chart room. He was pleased in one way to sail without Holmes. The man was a troublemaker if ever there was one. He turned to Johnson and demanded to know why the other had failed to tell him Holmes had not come aboard.

A sickly grin spread across Johnson's face. "Thought he'd show up at the last minute like he generally did. I clean forgot about him when we started to shove off."

"Like the devil you did! Out after his job, eh? Well, you'll do double tricks, Mr. Johnson. Don't forget that. To hell with this lousy drunk, Holmes, anyway! Mr. McMasters, our new third, is around all right?"

"Yes, sir."

The burning glare of full daylight found the Black Hawk well beyond the harbor and headed into the open China Sea toward the Lema Islands. The freighter was bound for Borneo. Hamilton sniffed the clean ocean air delightedly. The foul stench of the native district, in the heart of the treaty port, still oppressed him, lingering in his imagination like something vile.

The treacherous waters of the China Sea were cut by a perverse wind that lashed up heavy waves. Ground swells surged about the Black Hawk, and spindrift dashed against the plates, causing the decks to roll. But the motion of the ship was joy to Hamilton, and the Black Hawk was his first command.

Hamilton called Li and directed him to release Gordon. Twenty minutes later, Hamilton made his way aft and found Gordon huddled over the fantail. An ugly welt disfigured the base of Gordon's closely cropped skull. Hamilton's lips tightened

with repulsion as he noticed a layer of filth on Gordon's neck. The fellow would shame a heathen coolie, he reflected, with his lack of cleanliness.

"Gordon!" said Hamilton sharply.

The beachcomber turned around. The fury of a cornered rat crept into his eyes, and his fists clenched. "Goin' to hit me, eh?" demanded Hamilton growling. "Try an' do it, mister, and you'll never forget it! Recognize me, do you?"

"Yes, blast you, I do! An' I want to tell you, Hamilton, you're goin' to face hell for dragging me on your bloody ship. This shanghai business is illegal nowadays!"

Gordon leaned against the taffrail and glared at his old-time enemy. The bitter thought swept his mind that Hamilton had risen like a skyrocket in the world of ships. He thought of his own fall into the abyss, and tears glistened in his eyes.

The skipper turned. With a catlike leap, Gordon sprang toward a hammer which had been left on the poop deck by the ship's carpenter. Murder surged in the heart of the prisoner. If he could crush Hamilton's skull to pulp, he would gladly leap to his own death in the tossing seas.

HAMILTON walked toward the starboard rail, his head sunk on his chest. The soft patter of

Gordon's bare feet on the deck failed to penetrate his consciousness. The yellow sun beat furiously on the lurching deck, casting a grotesque shadow of the slinking figure behind Hamilton. He turned swiftly and seized Gordon's upraised wrist in an iron grip. Gordon uttered a low cry of pain as Hamilton twisted the wrist until the bone threatened to snap. The hammer fluttered across the deck.

"So you thought you'd kill me, you sneaking cur?" demanded Hamilton. "Damn you for a rat—"

The freighter captain's fist swept in a swift arc that forewarned Gordon of the punishment to follow. The beachcomber attempted vainly to dodge the blow, but Hamilton's fist followed the moving head with unfailing skill. The knuckles tearing into Gordon's jaw caused his teeth to rattle. His eyes glazed as he fell to the deck.

"I'm puttin' you on as bos'n, Gordon!" remarked Hamilton. "Guess I ought to make you sign on as a spud-peeler to the Chink cook or as a mess boy. You belong with the native crew, all right, but white men can't mix with those birds—not under me. Will you sign?"

Hamilton paused with his toes pointed toward Gordon's gaunt ribs. The fallen first officer of the Java route sputtered with hatred, but he shook his head affirmatively as Hamilton's foot drew back.

The second night out found the Black Hawk sweeping into a stiff squall. A howling wind lashed the masts and the wireless antennae hissed under the cutting currents of air. A deadly calm followed. Hamilton stood in the chart room, watching the barometer drop ominously.

"We're in for some dirty weather, Mr. Johnson," he said, turning to his acting first officer, who bent over a chronometer.

A cross-swell set in from the direction of the Strait of Formosa. The dying sun poured leaden heat across the lonely China Sea, and Hamilton, stripped to his undershirt, oozed with sweat. Down in the well deck, he saw Gordon directing a Lascar and three Chinese sailors in the holystone art. The thump of the propeller sounded dully in Hamilton's ears as he walked to the bridge.

The beachcomber had proved himself an efficient bos'n. For a few moments the skipper idly watched him; then he shouted his name. Gordon left the group of seamen and climbed up the ladder to the bridge. The sickly yellow pallor had been erased from his face by the sun and hard work. Hamilton was surprised at the transformation. Gordon stared at him sullenly.

"You have done good work, Gordon!" Hamilton began fumblingly.

The other laughed unpleasantly. "Maritime laws are strict. Right now I'm a member of your crew. I guess you know me long enough to admit I'm a good sailor."

The skipper nodded. For half a minute his hands fumbled on the rail. The face of Kitty Higgins rose before his eyes.

"When you went to pieces, Gordon, didn't you figure you were sticking a knife into Kitty?" he muttered.

"What the hell is that to you?"

"Remember I wanted to marry her once, myself. You beat me out."

"She's dead. Passed out seven months ago in Seattle. We lived there."

Hamilton's harsh face softened, and he laid his hand on Gordon's shoulder. "I'm sorry, ol' man, sorry as hell. Guess her death shot you to pieces. Any kids?"

"Two—boy and girl. They're with her parents

in Brooklyn now."

Hamilton turned on the bridge. The tragedy of Gordon's downfall was pitifully plain. Words of sympathy failed him, and he turned to the bos'n, his voice hard and matter-of-fact. "Get below and rout out all hands," he ordered. "We're in for a bad storm. Have 'em cover up all the ventilators."

The voice of Johnson came from the chart room. "Which way is the swell comin' from, Mr. Hamilton?"

"Northeast."

He knew that down in the engine room, the temperature was that of a living hell—at least a hundred and fifteen degrees. He saw Jim Carey, a black figure, crawl to the deck for a breath of air. Angry voices rose through the skylight from the stokehold. The stokers were the first to suffer.

Hamilton knew Gordon well enough to realize that he could depend on the man in an emergency. The beachcomber might still harbor bitter hatred toward his old enemy, but the rasping life of the sea had instilled in his mind a spirit of rigid obedience to authority.

The skipper might have voiced amazement, indeed, if he could have read the thoughts in Gordon's mind as the bos'n scampered down the ladder to assemble the native crew. In the Far East there are two courses open to the white man who goes native. Either he can drop completely into the abyss, or, catching himself in time, he can drag himself figuratively by his boot straps back to solid ground again.

And Gordon, filled with distaste at himself, was determined to force his way back to the ranks of ship officers in the Oriental trade. Hard work had lashed the last of the liquor fumes from his befogged brain.

"Damn him to hell!" he growled under his breath. "I'll beat him to pulp some of these days. I'll—" The boatswain's sour voice died. On ships, sometimes, a whisper carries.

In a way, Gordon welcomed the coming of the typhoon. He was too experienced a sailor not to recognize that a hurricane of unusual violence was about to tear into the Black Hawk. He felt that the fight would restore his long-lost self-respect and stamina.

Hamilton watched his surly bos'n order the crew into action. He walked toward the chart house and caught Johnson's eyes. "Well, Johnson, our new bos'n seems to be hittin' his job," he

remarked.

"He's just like the usual run of those birds."

"Like hell he is. Gordon holds his first officer's ticket. He's a damn fool. In lots of ways I used to hate him more than any man in the world, but ten years wipe out a lot of memories, Johnson."

The Black Hawk held to her course, not a fraction of a point off. At the wheel, boxed in a little house, stood a tall Lascar, apparently as immovable as the image of Buddha in a jungle temple. A dense bank of clouds scudded across the eastern sky, black and sinister, as the ship floundered forward like an exhausted monster.

"Think we're in for a typhoon, Mr. Hamilton?"

The skipper turned angrily toward the chart house from which his acting chief's voice came faintly. The rising wind made hearing difficult.

"I'll tell the cockeyed world we're in for a typhoon!"

The ship rolled in the heavy cross-swell with startling suddenness, and the bridge tossed under Hamilton's feet. He clutched the rail to keep from falling.

"That was a heavy one!" he yelled. "How is the barometer?"

"Still falling like blazes!"

The Black Hawk swung wildly about, each roll worse than the one before. Hamilton watched the Lascar at the wheel. The Oriental helmsman's arms seemed galvanized into frantic life.

"Hang on to it!" shouted Hamilton. "You must have gone off eight points that last time."

HAMILTON made his way with difficulty into the chart room and put on his oilskins, sou'wester and sea boots. A sudden gust of wind filled the little house and the patter of rain swept the deck. The storm had overtaken them, and was lashing the panting Black Hawk with demoniacal strength. Blackness filled the heavens.

The Lascar, nearly crushed by the wildness of the wind, which threatened the destruction of the wheel house, released his hold on the steering gear and fell backward through the open door. He was swept helplessly halfway across the bridge, and the ship tossed about until it dipped into a raging head sea. The decks were awash. Hamilton thanked his stars that the ship carried no deck load. Above the fury of the elements came the shouts of Chinese and Lascars.

The ship swung about despairingly, and her

beams shook as she took a breathless plunge from the top of a mountain of waves. Hamilton struggled to reach the wheel. Through the door of the chart house, framed by the light of a swaying lantern, he saw Johnson darting toward the madly racing helm.

The plunge into the abyss seemed everlasting. The frightened cries of the Chinese came faintly to Hamilton's ears. The Orientals, it was evident, believed that the Black Hawk was diving to her doom. Then the freighter hit bottom, in the depths of a valley of restless waters. With startling suddenness the bow rose high, sending both officers against the wall of the chart house. They saw a dim figure dash up the ladder and scurry across the perilously dipped bridge toward the wheel. The ship veered and swept again south.

Hamilton leaped toward the rail and made his way to the wheel house. He recognized the scarecrow form holding the wheel as Phil Gordon, and a glow of surprise filled him. Then the Lascar who had relinquished the wheel returned, on badly shaken sea legs, and took the helm.

Lightning flashed across the sky, illuminating the hills of waves momentarily. Hamilton perceived a low hanging bank of clouds directly above the Black Hawk. Then impenetrable darkness again fell over the China Sea. A great wind tore shrilly through the masts and mountainous waves swept the decks. Hamilton was hurled halfway across the navigating bridge, tossed in great volumes of water. He thrashed about helplessly with his arms and legs.

The skipper regained his feet as a second flash of lightning swept through the heavens. He caught a fleeting glimpse of men crazed with panic in the well deck; beneath him he saw a maze of battered companions, covered winches, a swaying mast and tops of hatches. Two of the boats, he observed, had been swept into the seas.

Hamilton turned toward the chart house. The solitary lantern swayed crazily. He glanced around for Johnson, and his face grew stern at failing to find his aide. Then he peered toward his feet. Johnson lay on the deck, unconscious, bleeding profusely about the skull. He had been flung against a bulkhead as the ship tossed to her beam's ends. Hamilton dipped his handkerchief in sea water and washed the wound.

The skipper made his way to the wheel house and bent over the binnacle, checking up the course. The helmsman's face seemed cold and far away in

the faint light.

Returning to the chart room he glanced at his acting chief mate and saw the young officer move. "He'll come through all right," he muttered.

Three Chinese, their faces distorted with fear, darted into the chart room. Behind them came Gordon. The white man's drawn countenance seemed like that of a man of sixty, but his eyes bespoke enraged determination. He seized one of the Chinese by the neck and struggled to force him from the chart house. The other two Chinks leaped toward Hamilton. A knife flashed in the hand of one of the seamen. Hamilton backed toward his desk on the starboard side of the room.

Hamilton flung a chair at the mutineers and opened a drawer of his desk. His fingers clutched an automatic. At the sight of the weapon the Chinese drew back. It was better in their minds to await death in the maddened sea than to encounter certain and immediate extinction in front of the muzzle of Hamilton's pistol.

"What's all this?" shouted Hamilton above the screaming wind.

"Devils get ship!" yelled one of the Chinese. "Turn back China!"

Hamilton turned in surprise toward the Chinese who had spoken. Then he glanced inquiringly at Gordon.

"They saw McMasters swept overboard!" he said. "Big comber got him."

The Black Hawk tossed furiously in a sudden swell, and Hamilton stumbled backward. One of the Chinese leaped on top of him, forcing him to the floor. The mutineer madly attempted to wrest the pistol from his grasp. It was all too evident that the men were crazed with panic and beyond words of reason. With a white crew, Hamilton knew, he might fight his way safely through the hurricane.

Gordon released his hold of the third Chinese and leaped to the aid of the captain. If he still harbored hatred of the man who had shanghaied him, he failed to show it in this mad situation. With a swift blow of his left fist, he knocked the seaman aside and gained possession of the pistol.

"Back, damn you, back!" he shouted.

Confronted by the pistol held in Gordon's determined hand, the three seamen edged toward the door. The Lascar helmsman still clung to the wheel, apparently oblivious of the battle in the chart house.

Hamilton stumbled to his feet and fell upon the

table as the ship lurched. "Good work, Gordon!" he shouted. "I have another gun. Keep hold of the one you got!"

The Chinese were in full flight, sweeping unsteadily across the bridge. Shouting an oath, the ragged bos'n pursued them, and watched them disappear into the darkness of the forward well deck.

Followed by Gordon, Hamilton made his way to the bridge rail. The death of the third officer, McMasters, had whipped the Chinese and Lascars into a frenzy of fear. Truly the sea gods were angry and demanded great sacrifices of human beings.

A grim story of a sea captain, tossed into the raging waves of a typhoon to appease the enraged deities of the deep, crossed Hamilton's mind. The human sacrifice had occurred two months before on the China Sea. He wondered if his own crew had similar designs on his life.

"About McMasters?" yelled Hamilton.

"Caught quick as hell! I managed—save—self. Caught rail. Three—Lascars—drowned!"

THE Black Hawk dived from atop a steep mountain, and Gordon was flung against the skipper by the force of the plunge. A flash of lightning, followed by a sharp volley of thunder, illuminated the ship. Crouched in the well deck, a refuge on their way to the fo'c's'le, were the mutineers. Two other men clambered out of the stokehold and joined them.

A pinpoint of flame flashed from the huddled ranks of the five seamen, and a bullet tore into the rail, a bare half a foot from Hamilton's clutching fist. Gordon leveled his pistol swiftly and fired. A yell of agony told him he had wounded one of the mutineers.

"Some of the black gang must tote guns!" he yelled.

Hamilton cupped his hand and placed it against Gordon's ear. "Gotta keep sharp lookout! Birds—ready—hell!"

"They want us—turn back."

"Like hell we will! We're scudding away from the storm!"

Dim shapes were outlined on the port side of the bridge. Gordon rushed to meet the attack. His pistol spat twice. The Lascar with the pistol, one of Carey's stokers, fired. Smoke from the weapon burned Gordon's face. He heard Hamilton utter a cry.



"He got me!" the skipper shouted.

The Lascar pointed his weapon at Gordon and blazed away. Two of his companions attempted to seize Gordon's legs in an endeavor to trip him. The American shook them off. The report of another shot filled his ears. A Chinese had gained possession of Hamilton's gun and fired at him. A bullet tore through Gordon's shoulder and he winced in agony. The steel cut a blazing path through flesh and bone.

Gordon squirmed out of the grasp of brown and saffron fingers, then waited for a flash of lightning to reveal the whereabouts of his assailants. A yellow shaft of light flushed the murky sky, and he caught sight of the man who had seized Hamilton's weapon. Gordon squeezed on the trigger, and the Chinese slid across the deck, wounded.

Again the ship canted, and Gordon felt himself imprisoned under tons of icy water. He grasped a stanchion with iron fingers to save himself from being swept to death. His other hand stretched across the deck, and he felt a foot, clad in the shoes of a white man, pressed against it.

Gordon reached out desperately and seized Hamilton's thick ankle. The pressure of the water was almost unbearable. He felt as if his lungs were bursting, and he struggled to raise his head above the swirling seas. Once he nearly lost his grip on the stanchion. Only by a supreme effort of will did he retain consciousness. Then the giant wave passed over the ship.

Gordon weakly dragged Hamilton by the heels toward the chart house. He wondered if the skipper of the ill-starred freighter was dead. Inside the chart house he felt the other's heart. Hamilton was still alive. Blood flowed from his right arm. The bullet fired by the mutinous Chinese had caught him about three inches above the wrist.

Strangely enough, the terror of the great wave had wiped out all thoughts of the Chinese and Lascar mutineers from Gordon's mind. He recalled them with a start. Peering through the door, he looked about for the five seamen, but they were not in sight. The helmsman also had disappeared. Hamilton opened his eyes and stared at Gordon dazedly. Johnson, half-drowned, huddled in a corner.

"Where are those birds?" Hamilton demanded.

"Down in Davy Jones' locker by now, I guess."

Hamilton leaped to his feet and made his way to

the wheel. Gordon shoved him aside. "I'll hold it down," he said angrily. "How in hell, Hamilton, can you work the steering gear when your wrist is shot to pieces?"

The worst of the storm had passed. If it had continued fifteen minutes more, the ship would have had slight chance of keeping afloat. Part of the cargo had shifted, causing the Black Hawk to list perilously.

"Damn it all!" said Hamilton, half to himself.

The ship held fast under Gordon's powerful hands. He swung the wheel sharply in response to Hamilton's shouted commands. After all, he reflected, he could not help but respect the skipper even if he hated his guts. Damned few skippers in the Orient trade could have weathered the typhoon. Most of them, he told himself, should be running bumboats on the Hwang Ho.

The skipper studied the binnacle intently. Carey, black-faced and haggard, made his way to the navigating bridge.

"Turbines all right?" Hamilton demanded.

"Yes, sir. Shipped a lot of water, but it didn't reach the boilers."

"Keep agoin'! We're makin' straight for Borneo."

Carey nodded and disappeared. Li, the Lascar seaman, stumbled up the ladder to the bridge. Hamilton ordered him to relieve Gordon at the wheel. The skipper motioned Gordon to the chart room. Above the plunging ship, the wild wind died down.

"We just caught the tail end of the typhoon," said Hamilton. "Thank God it's over. If we had had to keep going through that hell much longer we'd never have made port."

"I'm afraid not, cap'n."

"And say! Guess I ought to apologize for the two beatings I gave you—in the dive at Hongkong, and that morning on deck."

Gordon grinned. "That's all right, cap'n. At that, I'm one ahead of you. Remember I cleaned you up three times when we were in the navy."

"So you did. By the way, Mr. Gordon."

"Yes, sir."

"Understand you got first officer's papers. Want a job as first mate on this tub?"

Gordon seized Hamilton's red fist. "I'll tell the cockeyed world, Bill, I want the job!"