



CAPTAIN McAULIFFE, going over the side of his ship, paused as he caught sight of Captain Winton coming along the wharf. Then McAuliffe slipped back to the deck and disappeared into his cabin.

Winton grinned maliciously.

"I got the fear o' God into his heart at last, all right," he said to himself. "I knowed he was a coward at bottom, and this proves it. He don't want to meet me."

Winton continued along the wharf as if he had not noticed McAuliffe's action. He came to a corner on which a low warehouse stood. Without a backward glance, he passed around the corner. But once shut off from McAuliffe's view, if the latter should come on deck, he stopped. The malicious grin was still on his lips.

In his cabin, McAuliffe waited long enough to give Winton time to climb the hill from the river to the street above. Then he emerged again and went over the side. He followed the course which Winton had taken. As he rounded the corner of the warehouse he came face to face with Winton.

Winton laughed aloud. His merriment brought deep wrinkles into his weather-beaten face, especially about his mouth and eyes. He pulled himself up to his six feet two inches and looked down at McAuliffe, whose height stopped short of six feet.

They were both strong men, but there was a subtle as well as a gross difference in that strength. Winton was husky. He was built more heavily than even his height warranted. His legs were like the piles in the river. He was rotund of waist. His shoulders wore massive. His unbuttoned shirt collar disclosed a bull neck. His eyes were slate-colored, cold, quick to show hate, never gentle. His close-cropped hair was red to its roots. He was human physical force at its best or worst.

McAuliffe tapered up from his feet. He was slender of leg, slender of hip, carrying no abdominal excess. But his shoulders spread out almost to the width of Winton's, and his chest was deep. He had very black hair, close-cropped like Winton's, and his eyes were a deep brown. He was rather thin of face, as if he had been

drawn a trifle fine in the recent past. His composed dignity was a foil for Winton's grinning malice.

"Whatcha duck below for, all of a sudden?" Winton asked, as they stood eye to eye.

"Why do you want to know, Captain Winton?" McAuliffe asked.

"I don't *want* to know," Winton retorted. "I know a'ready."

"Why do you ask me, then?"

"To hear you lie."

McAuliffe caught at his breath. His hands hardened as they hung at his sides. Winton's reply was not one to be lightly disregarded. The captain of a three-and-after fifty years ago had a reputation to maintain. He could not let another thus question his honesty. "Liar" was a strong word. That Winton had thus stigmatized him would pass like flame along the docks. It would be gossiped about at the ports of Great Lakes sailing ships. The eye of suspicion, silently questioning McAuliffe's ability and intention of defending his name, would be on him.

The two men, as they stood there with the descending July sun at their backs, were both well aware that six months before Winton would have hesitated to venture to talk to McAuliffe like that. By nature a bully, Winton before that time had held McAuliffe in respect. He knew that there was no fear in McAuliffe's heart then. McAuliffe had proved that a hundred times. And, habitually a silent man, he had never boasted. That silence in him had made the garrulous Winton pause. Winton was wont to measure men as much by what they said as by what they did. In McAuliffe he saw only a silent man of action.

This change in McAuliffe had been coincident with the return from school of Dora Colvin. She was the only daughter of Colvin Brothers, who kept a ships' supply store on River Street. That she was a daughter of Colvin Brothers was a joke along the water-front. It was said that her uncle was as much her father

as her father really was. It was true that the uncle spent a little more on her than his brother did. He had suggested that she be sent East to finish her education, and there had been nearly a quarrel between the brothers as to who should bear the expense. They ended by dividing it. The uncle was a bachelor, uncertain of temper to every one except Dora. She, men said, could wind him about her little finger.

That was doubtless true; and, in fact, Dora could wind most men about her little finger. She was an amazing beauty, a big girl with copper-colored hair and wide, gray eyes. When her uncle and her father had started their store, she had been a tom-boy of thirteen. Her uncle and her father had been deep-sea men, and had come inland to settle down on account of Dora. They had never known anything but the sea, and so they took quite naturally to selling ships' supplies.

Their aim was to make a lady of Dora. She was kept at her books, but her books seemed not to interest her unduly till she had passed through such grades as the lake village afforded. She liked the docks and she liked the decks of moored ships better than she liked the classroom. But just before she had gone away to be "finished," a certain sedateness had come to her. When she had returned six months before, she was a self-contained young woman of the world.

Her home-coming caused a flurry among the male population of Lakeport. She was besieged by many men, from captains to roustabouts. But she was not to be easily won, and gradually those quickly discouraged left her alone. At the end of five months, only McAuliffe and Winton remained as steadfast wooers. And then Winton had been ordered from the house by Dora's uncle. He had drunk a little too much black rum. The gossips observed that McAuliffe spent most of his time ashore at the Colvin home.

And so, "to hear you lie," said Winton now.

"Let me pass. Winton," McAuliffe said

coldly, as he stepped aside.

"In a minute." Winton grinned. "We got lots of time. Leastwise I have. Mebbe you think you ain't, but I guess you can spare one minute."

"What do you want?" McAuliffe demanded.

"I want to know when you're goin' to stop callin' on Dora Colvin," Winton said, and the grin died from his lips.

His face was like red-mottled stone, his eyes like gray. His hamlike hands were knotted. McAuliffe showed no fear; only hesitation and some dismay.

The hesitation vanished as three sailors from McAuliffe's own ship appeared around the corner of the warehouse. They knew there was bad blood between the two captains, and, scenting a climax, they stopped. McAuliffe looked once at them and backed away from Winton.

"I have no answer for you to that question, Winton," he said.

He had taken but three paces when Winton sprang forward. One of his big hands had gone lax, and the open palm smacked against McAuliffe's cheek. Even so, it was a blow which would have sent a weak man reeling. McAuliffe retreated a little, his own hand covering the marks which Winton's heavy palm had made on his cheek. His face was as white as the foam on the crest of a leaping wave.

"Don't do that again, Winton," he said hoarsely. "I don't want any trouble with you. I can't have any trouble with you. I only want you to leave me alone."

He was retreating as he spoke. Winton poised himself as if he would strike McAuliffe again, but then he suddenly laughed jeeringly. He turned to the sailors.

"A fine lad you sail under, this," he said. "Hell's own spawn, I say." He turned back to McAuliffe. "That'll be all for this time," he went on. "You wouldn't answer my question, so I'll give you an order. It's this: stay away from Dora Colvin's house to-night. If you go there,

I'll learn about it. To-morrow I'll beat you with my two fists. You're done goin' there for good and all. Understand me?" McAuliffe turned away without a word.

Winton watched him go. Then he turned to the sailors once more.

"Come, you lads," he said. "I'll buy you a drink."

Events transpired thus easily in Winton's thick imagination. He had seen nothing obscure in the promptings which had led to McAuliffe's recent conduct. When McAuliffe had begun to seem meek, Winton had jumped to the conclusion that McAuliffe was afraid of him. In his opinion, McAuliffe's past reputation had been built upon a bluff. Winton had called that bluff, and that's all there was to it. The clothing of the notion was Winton's own. Winton was sure that McAuliffe would not visit Dora Colvin that night.

But Winton was mistaken in his man. An army of men could not have kept McAuliffe from seeing Dora that night. He not only wanted to see her, naturally enough since he worshiped her, but he was smarting under wrongs. It had taken the last drop of his resolution and courage of the highest order to restrain him from giving battle to the burly Winton.

He told the girl about it as soon as he was established in her sitting-room that night. But the recital left Dora cool and composed. It is one thing to listen to a telling of such an encounter; it is quite another thing to feel a smarting blow on your cheek. And McAuliffe had never been taught to turn the other cheek. He had learned from experience that the best and safest thing to do in an emergency like that is to strike out as quickly and as forcibly as possible.

"He insulted you, of course, Jim," Dora said in all the wisdom which her education had given her. "But he didn't hurt you. You haven't a mark. You don't want to be brawling along the river-front with a man like him, now, do you?"

Ugly beast.”

McAuliffe loved Dora so well that he could see through her eyes in spite of himself. He thought her a wonder-woman, and wonder-women do not take false positions in their sweetheart’s eyes.

Captain McAuliffe came around on another tack.

“It’s Wednesday,” he said. “Can’t you marry me Saturday night? We’ll be getting under way after dusk some time. Dora, it’s hard for me to follow the route you’ve picked for me. I’ve given you my word I would not brawl, and I wilt not. I’ll be a gentleman as you want me to be, or I’ll die trying. But it’s difficult when I’m away from you.”

Dora Colvin loved her captain dearly. Few women can withstand a plea of loneliness from the men they love.

“Saturday evening,” Dora mused, while the light of hope burned in the captain’s deep eyes. “Four days. And if you sail after dusk, where would we spend out honeymoon?”

“Aboard the ship,” said the captain, the light in his eyes a blaze now. “Say ‘yes,’ Dora. It’s fine, fair weather. It will be a nice passage east. Why not?”

Why not, indeed? And so before the captain left, the net result of Winton’s attack on him had been to set forward the captain’s wedding-day by three months.

The captain was in high good humor as he went down the hill toward his ship. He was worried not at all about Winton or any of his kind. He was lost in self-congratulation over the success of his sudden plea. He went aboard ship and slept the sleep of the just.

Meanwhile Captain Winton was guzzling rum in many a barroom. He told and retold the tale of his slapping Captain McAuliffe’s face—“and not a sound from him but a whimpering cry.” Winton, growing as drunk as he ever got, swore he would break McAuliffe in two if McAuliffe dared disobey his mandate.

Winton’s spree was somewhat protracted. He heard nothing of McAuliffe till Saturday morning. In the mean time he had not seen McAuliffe. Coming to the barroom of the hotel he lived in along toward noon on Saturday, he was informed by a sensation-seeking bartender that Captain McAuliffe and Dora Colvin were to be married at five o’clock that afternoon.

Winton stared at his informant in stupefaction. He swore that the bartender was a liar. That was Winton’s pet retort when he did not wish to believe. The bartender assured him that the story was quite true.

Forgetting his morning drink, Winton went seeking confirmation. And he found plenty of it. He stepped from one buzz of gossip into another. It would have appeared that everybody but himself knew of the event. He wondered about that till he reflected that he had been sleeping a good deal in the past few days. When he was awake he had been ugly. Men had shunned him.

He realized after a while that this was no emergency to be met by merely slapping McAuliffe’s face, or, indeed, by beating McAuliffe within an inch of his life. He had known all along that Dora was lost to himself; but the fact that she was to marry McAuliffe, whom he hated, within a few hours, hurt him with the force of a fresh loss. He saw that he would have to use his brains to mete vengeance to McAuliffe, who had had the temerity to disobey him.

He had several drinks that afternoon and at five o’clock he was aboard his own ship, by now only half loaded. He was standing at the rail, a sour and sinister figure, when he saw McAuliffe and his bride come down to the wharf in a closed carriage. McAuliffe stepped out and proudly handed Dora down. The watching Winton sank his teeth into his lower lip till he could taste his own blood. He had never seen Dora look so beautiful. There was a kind of radiance about her. And McAuliffe

walked beside her, and helped her aboard his ship with the air of a king newly come into his inheritance.

Winton turned from the rail, cursing in low, muttered speech. He was choked with his anger now. It sickened him, weakened him. He would have to have a little time before that anger would become a flame. Now it was wet-blanketed by a dozen other emotions. He hailed a sailor, and the sailor came on nimble feet. They usually did when Winton used a tone like that.

"When does the Flying Spray sail!" he demanded.

"I haven't heard, sir," said the man.

Winton cursed him dully and bade him find out. The man was back from McAuliffe's ship in a few minutes.

"She sails just after dusk, sir," he reported.

"Send the first mate to me." Winton commanded, and went to his cabin.

The first mate, a prototype in little of his brutal master, appeared.

"The Flying Spray sails soon," Winton said.

"Follow her. If she goes under her own sail, as she doubtless will, have a steam tug layin' by to take us out. Don't lose sight of her."

"Our cargo will not be aboard till tomorrow night, sir," the mate said formally.

"Damn the cargo!" Winton cried. "Do as I tell you. And don't you lose sight of the Flying Spray."

The mate scuttled aft to give his orders and to make arrangements for the steam tug. As the summer dusk settled down on the river and descended later but more quickly on the wide expanse of lake, Winton emerged from his cabin and went forward. He stood motionless in the bow of his ship, his red eyes fixed on the stern of the Flying Spray.

His mind was still chaotic. He did not know what he was going to do. But he was not going to let McAuliffe slip away with his woman like that. He would keep the Flying Spray in sight.

He would know where McAuliffe went. When he had made up his mind he would strike, and that would be a blow which McAuliffe would remember as long as he lived, though Winton hoped he might not live very long.

Black passion swept up through Winton, like thick smoke from the flame of his wrath. He was lost to whatever decency had been in him. At his sides his hands closed and unclosed unceasingly. If he had had McAuliffe there he would gladly have throttled him even if he swung for it the next minute. He had not known how much he desired the beautiful girl. He had scoffingly yielded her up when she had flouted him, though he had meant that McAuliffe should not have her. But now that she definitely belonged to McAuliffe he would have lost his soul to take her from him.

The summer night was over the harbor as the Flying Spray went down the river. There was a brisk breeze and the ship was flying her foresail and jibs. Winton could see the men standing by to shake out her mainsail.

As the Flying Spray neared the mouth of the river, the steam tug which the mate had arranged for picked up Winton's ship and started for the lake. As the tug cast off outside the harbor the Flying Spray was a quarter of a mile away, standing off to the northeast. Winton set his own course in pursuit of her and went to the bow again.

As the two ships stood away in their respective positions. Winton saw ghostlike wisps of fog go floating past the bow of his ship. He cursed them violently, for he did not want a fog-blanket to shut off his view of the Flying Spray. But his curses were impotent. The fog thickened, hilly shapes crowding in fast after the wisps as if those had been merely advance couriers.

For an hour Winton held to his course, guessing that the Flying Spray would hold to the one which McAuliffe had originally set. At the end of the hour the Flying Spray had not been

sighted for twenty minutes. Then overhead Winton heard his sails begin to flap. The little wind there had been died out. The fog was motionless, hugging down to the bosom of the lake. Winton's ship came to a standstill. It was becalmed in that sea of fog.

Winton could glean one comfort from the situation. Since he was becalmed, McAuliffe was also. The situation might be made to work to his purpose. He bellowed a few orders and then he began to pace up and down the deck, a ghostly figure in the fog.

Suddenly he lifted his head and his eyes were on fire. He called the first mate.

"Three men in the yawl with me," he ordered when the mate came on flying feet.

The boat was lowered from the stern-davits. Winton ordered the men to follow the course which his ship had been following when the wind had died.

In ten minutes the hull of the Flying Spray bulked up ahead of them.

"Come up in the lee of her," Winton said in a low, thick voice.

On board the Flying Spray the dogwatch had just ended and McAuliffe, who had been standing it with the second mate, turned his ship over to the first mate and went to his cabin. He had barely closed the door when there was a knock on it. Dora, sitting at the table in the middle of the room, lifted her head. McAuliffe opened the door. Winton stood on the threshold.

McAuliffe straightened up and took a forward step. His face was ashen with fury. Behind him Dora got to her feet. Winton thrust forth his sodden, red face.

"What 're you doing aboard my ship, Winton?" McAuliffe demanded.

"I came to make a call," Winton said with a grin which was ghastly in its lack of mirth. "Come out on the deck." His hot eyes roved past McAuliffe and sought the girl's face. The fire in those eyes increased in intensity. "Come out, McAuliffe, and face a man," he cried.

"Go up on deck," McAuliffe said in a low voice which was new to his wife. "I'll be there in a minute."

Winton hesitated a moment and then he backed slowly up the stairs, his eyes clinging to Dora's face till the closing of the door shut her from his view.

In the cabin McAuliffe turned to Dora.

"That man has had the nerve to follow me out here," he said. "He has come for trouble, he is rum-soaked and half-wild with the thought of losing you." He walked to his wife and put his hands on her shoulders. "I'm going up there and settle with him once and for all," he went on. "Dora, you made me promise not to fight any more. I've kept that promise till now. I understand everything you told me—how it was better to live quiet and decent and not mix with these roughnecks. But there are some things a man can't stand. There are some things a husband can't stand, at any rate. I'll get Winton to-night or he'll get me, and I don't think he will get me. You'll stay here, Dora. You'll promise me to stay here or I'll lock the door."

"Can't you have your crew arrest Winton and put him in irons?" the girl asked. "He has no right to board your ship unless he is in trouble and we know he isn't. Have him put in irons, dear."

"He probably has some of his men with him," McAuliffe said steadily. "There will be a fight, no matter what. Would you have me remain below here, hiding behind your skirts, while the crew fights a fight that is my own?"

In that school she had gone to in the East they had veneered this girl who was sprung from a long line of men and women of the salt seas. For the moment the veneer hid her, but she felt something stronger than that—something which it could not hide—surging up in her soul. Yet she was not ready to surrender the position she had taken about brawls and brawling. On the other hand she could not bid her new husband stay in hiding and let others fight his

fight.

"You needn't lock the door, dear," she said.

McAuliffe raised her head and kissed her on the lips. It was a rough kiss, yet it stirred her strangely, more strongly than any tenderness could have done at that moment. She wondered about it as her husband turned, threw open the door, closed it, and mounted the stairs.

On deck McAuliffe saw the big figure of Winton standing at the rail. Along the rail, shadows of the fog, other men were grouped. McAuliffe could not make out whether they were men of his own ship or of Winton's.

He strode up to Winton and faced him. Winton leaned forward. For an instant they stood eye to eye, breathing thickly, wordless because of the fury which was burning in the heart of each of them.

Then suddenly McAuliffe's right fist shot out and up and crashed against Winton's jaw. It was a terrible blow, with all the strength of McAuliffe's thick chest and wide shoulders behind it. Winton went back against the rail and clung there for ten seconds while his vision cleared after the shock. Then he launched himself.

They were locked in each other's arms. The deck was slippery from the fog which dripped from the rigging and they slid across it in that mad embrace. What advantage Winton had because of his greater weight was overcome by McAuliffe's agility. Winton strove to crush the lighter man, to bend his back till the spine was near to cracking. But McAuliffe wriggled in his arms and eased the pressure when it became most serious. His right hand crept up and worried Winton's throat and eyes. Winton threw back his head to escape that clutching hand and then McAuliffe broke his hold and darted back.

Winton came forward like a mad animal and McAuliffe met him with right and left-hand swings. Winton went to his knees. McAuliffe threw himself upon the other captain. McAuliffe was crazed now. The remembrance of the

stinging slap on his face burned in his brain. Fury seethed in him when he recalled that it was his young wife whom Winton had pursued.

His attack sent Winton supine and McAuliffe's fingers, strong as steel, found Winton's thick throat. He threw the whole weight of his upper body against that grip and the fingers sunk in, closing like a trap. Winton began to gasp—

And then there was a flash of fire in McAuliffe's brain, blackness, and nothing more. One of Winton's men had struck him from behind, in a foul effort to curry favor with his brutal master.

The man helped the dazed Winton to his feet. They leaned together, the fog shrouding them.

"He's out," the sailor whispered. "Now's your chance to do what you come to do."

Winton stood a half minute till his brain cleared. Then he lurched toward the stairs leading down to the captain's cabin. But he did not reach the top of it. He suddenly saw Dora emerge from the fog, a revolver in her hand. The girl's face was as gray as the fog, but Winton perceived, in the one flashing instant he had, that her hand was perfectly steady as it held the weapon.

"Go back, Captain Winton," the girl said in a low, tense voice, "go back or I'll kill you. Go over the side with your men and get into your yawl."

But the animal in Winton was not to be easily cheated. He had no more notion that the girl would pull that trigger than he had that she could finally elude him, now that he had come thus far. With a cry, half of rage, half of triumph, he leaped for her. The revolver spoke.

Winton stood an instant, swaying, muttering. Then he went down to the deck and sprawled there. Amidships McAuliffe rose unsteadily. The man who had struck him had crept forward to the forecabin.

McAuliffe went seeking his foe through the

fog. Before he reached him, his wife caught him by the arm.

"Don't go back there," she pleaded. "I've shot Winton—killed him, I think. I don't want you to see him."

McAuliffe searched her face with his wide eyes. He expected to find her shaken and afraid. Instead, though she was a little dazed, she had herself well in hand.

"My dear," said McAuliffe, "We must look after him. He ought to die, but his death must not lie at your door."

She nodded, mute. McAuliffe went further aft and came upon Winton's stretched body. He knelt beside Winton and found his wrist.

"You needn't worry," Winton said. "I don't die so easy. She just got me through the shoulder. You cur, I knowed all along she was too good for you."

That was his tribute to the girl and thereafter, while McAuliffe cleansed and bandaged his wound roughly, he was silent. His men took him away in the yawl, though McAuliffe urged him to stay till the fog lifted.

"I'd see you in hell before I'd stay aboard your ship," Winton retorted.

As the slow-moving yawl was swallowed by the fog, McAuliffe took his wife to his cabin again. She faced him there under the low-hung lamp and spoke before he could find words.

"My teaching didn't amount to much, did

it?" she asked with a touch of whimsicality. "I stayed here one minute after you went on deck. Then I got the revolver you gave me, even though I had laughed at you when you had insisted that I keep it by me—my father has often told me a story of my mother how she put to sea in a small boat to rescue the crew of a stranded ship. I said to myself: this is danger to my man, too. I will go to him, no matter what. And, oh, Jim, when I faced him there—with his flaming eyes and his rum-hot breath and his coarse, red face—when I knew that somehow he had got the better of you, had hurt you very likely, I was glad to shoot him. What do you think of that?"

"I think," said the captain warmly, "that that was just the way I would have had you feel. I got one or two good smashes at him before his man took me from behind and I'm glad of that, too. The report of it will get abroad and it will keep me out of brawls. Men will know my old reputation was rock-founded."

"Well, you can take care of yourself, man to man, when the fight is fair," his wife said.

He caught her in his arms and drew her to him.

"You're admiring me for a fighting man," he challenged her.

For an instant her eyelids veiled her eyes and then they unclosed and she lifted her eyes to his. She lifted her lips, too.