

ALL AT SEA.

By Alexander Harvey.

"Don't kill one of the others," he said. "Kill me. I am not so starved as they." "Griggs," I replied, "has begged me to kill him first."

The emaciated passenger turned as I said the words and shot a look at Griggs. The twelve days we had spent on that raft in the trackless ocean had set the seal of starvation upon each of us, although the young woman bore it best, but Griggs had suffered unspeakably.

He was prostrate against the solitary water barrel which a rain had filled the night before. But for that Griggs must have died, surely. The girl was holding the wet end of a rag to his lips.

"I suppose," I said, slowly, and with pain, for the long-drawn-out agony of thirst and starvation seemed to have affected my throat most of all, "I suppose there's no use hoping for land or a sail."

Before the starving man could reply, the girl had made her way to where we crouched. The sea was running high, but she did not crawl when she moved about, as did the rest of us.

"I know what you men have been talking about these two days," she said.

There she paused. So weak was this young creature from lack of food and drink that her voice was the merest whisper. I wanted to support her with an arm but my weakness had grown upon me since the last biscuit was eaten and I could do no more than get up on my hands and knees. I felt dizzy.

"Can we not," she said, "wait another day before anyone is killed and eaten?"

"You've made us wait two days as it is," I managed to answer. "Another twenty-four hour of this and there won't be any of us left alive to eat at all. That's why I want to be killed and eaten here and now."

I sank back to the board that had been my bed for so many hungry hours. I had not spoken so much for a week. The effort tried me like felling timber.

The girl placed her skinny elbow beneath my head and placed her lips against my ear.

"I've saved a mouthful of bread for you," she whispered.

The next moment there was a running stream down the inside of my cheeks, like a flood. The feeling had been brought on by the bit of food the girl had put stealthily on the end of my tongue. I nearly gasped as I moved that bite of crust into the side of my jaw where my teeth came down upon it like sledge hammers. I chewed furtively two or three times, for I was afraid to let them see me do it. Not that they would have fallen upon me. They were all too weak. But I knew that the sight of me eating a lump of bread would prove to my companions on that raft as tormenting as fire and faggot.

The girl had left my side and was now standing beside the Dutch cook. I could not see his face, but the sight of her lips close to the big, hairy ear gave me an idea.

"Jinks!" I whispered as loudly as I could.

The emaciated passenger, who had begged me to kill him turned his gaunt eyes upon me when he heard his name.

"That girl gave you a mouthful of bread yesterday when she whispered in your ear."

He bent his head.

"She's just given me a mouthful of bread. I believe she's giving the cook a mouthful now."

We both looked over towards the sea chest against which the cook's head was propped. The girl had crossed the raft to where the improvised mast bore its fluttering signal of distress but the cook was furtively chewing a mouthful.

I crawled upon my hands and knees to where the girl was.

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