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chanced to be no path beyond, discretion would compel an immediate return.

"Well," said he, crouching for the first leap, "I'm off, whatever comes of it!"  
 "Mind the slant o' the ice!"  
 "I'll take it in the trough."  
 "Not yet!"

Tommy Lark waited for the sea to roll on.

"You bother me," he complained. "I might have been half way across by this time."

"You'd have been cotedched on the side of a swell. If you're cotedched like that you'll slip off the ice. There isn't a man livin' can cross that ice on the slant of a sea."

"Be still!"  
 The pan was subsiding from the incline of a sea to the level of the trough.

"Now!" Sandy Rowl snapped.

When the ice floated in the trough, Tommy Lark leaped, designing to attain his objective as nearly as possible before the following wave lifted his path to an incline. He landed fairly in the middle of the first cake, and had left it for the second before it sank. The second leap was short. It was difficult, nevertheless, for two reasons. He had no time to gather himself for the impulse, and his flight was taken from sinking ground. Almost he fell short. Six inches less, and he would have landed on the edge of the cake and toppled back into the sea when it tipped to the sudden weight. But he struck near enough to the center to restrain the ice, in a few active steps, from sinking by the edge; and as the second cake was more substantial than the first, he was able to leap with confidence for the third, whence he danced lightly toward the fourth.

The fourth cake, however, lay abruptly to the right. A sudden violent turn was required to reach it. It was comparatively substantial; but it was rugged rather than flat—there was a niggardly, treacherous surface for landing, and as ground for a flight the cake furnished a doubtful opportunity. There was no time for recovery. When Tommy Lark landed, the ice began to waver and sink. He had landed awkwardly, his feet in a tangle; and, as there was no time for placing his feet in a better way, he must leap awkwardly—leap instantly, leaving the event to chance. And leap he did. It was a supreme effort toward the fifth cake.

**BY** this time the ice was fast climbing the side of a swelling wave. The crest of the sea was higher than Tommy Lark's head. Had the sea broken it would have fallen on him—it would have submerged and overwhelmed him. It did not break. The wind snatched a thin spindrift from the crest and flung it past like a squall of rain. That was all. Tommy Lark was midway of the sea, as a man may be on the side of a steep hill: there was the crest above and the trough below; and the fifth cake of ice was tipped to an increasingly perilous angle. Moreover, it was small; it was the least of all—a momentary foothold, to be touched lightly in passing on to the slant of the wide pan in the middle of the lane.

All this was clear to Tommy Lark when he took his awkward leap from the fourth cake. What he feared was less the meager proportions of the fifth cake—which would be sufficient, he fancied, to give him an impulse for the last leap—than the slant of the big pan to which he was bound, which was precisely as steep as the wave it was climbing. And this fear was justified by the event. Tommy Lark touched the little cake with the toe of his seal-hide boot, with the sea then nearing its climax, and alighted prostrate on the smooth slant of the big pan. He grasped for handhold: there was none; and, had not the surface of the pan been approaching a horizontal on the crest of the sea, he would have shot over the edge.

Tommy Lark rose and established his balance with widespread feet and waving arms.

"'Tis not too bad," he called.  
 "What's beyond?"  
 "No trouble beyond."  
 There was more ice beyond. It was small. Tommy Lark danced across to the other side of the lane, however, without

great difficulty. He could not have paused on the way. The ice, thick though it was, was too light.

"Safe over!" he shouted.  
 "I'm comin'."  
 "Mind the leap for the big pan. 'Tis a ticklish landin'. That's all you've t' fear."

**SANDY ROWL** was as agile as Tommy Lark. He was as competent—he was as practised. Following the same course as Tommy Lark, he encountered the same difficulties and met them in the same way; and thus he proceeded from the first sinking cake through the short leap to the second more substantial one, whence he leaped with confidence to the third, landed on the rugged fourth, his feet ill placed for the next leap, and sprang awkwardly for the small fifth cake, meaning to touch it lightly on his course to the big pan.

But he had started an instant too soon. When, therefore, he came to the last leap, with the crest of the wave above him and the trough below, the pan was midway of the side of the sea, its inclination at the widest. He slipped—fell; and he rolled off into the water and sank. When he came to the surface, the ice was on the crest of the sea, beginning its descent. He grasped the edge of it and tried to draw himself aboard. In this he failed. The pan was too thick—too high in the water; and the weight of his boots and clothes was too great to overcome. In the trough of the sea, where his opportunity was best, he almost succeeded. He established one knee on the pan and strove desperately and with all his strength to lift himself over the edge. But the pan began to climb before he succeeded, leaving him helpless on the lower edge of the incline; and the best he could do to save himself was to cling to it with bare, striving fingers, waiting for his opportunity to renew itself.

To Tommy Lark it was plain that Sandy Rowl could not lift himself out of the water.

"Hang fast!" he shouted. "I'll help you!"  
 Timing his start, as best he was able, to land him on the pan in the middle of the lane when it lay in the trough, Tommy Lark set out to the rescue. It will be recalled that the pan would not support two men. Two men could not accurately adjust their weight. Both would strive for the center. They would grapple there; and, in the end, when the pan jumped on edge both would be thrown off.

Tommy Lark was aware of the capacity of the pan. Had that capacity been equal to the weight of two men, it would have been a simple matter for him to run out, grasp Sandy Rowl by the collar, and drag him from the water. In the circumstances, however, what help he could give Sandy Rowl must be applied in the moment through which he could remain on the ice before it sank; and enough of the brief interval must be saved wherein to escape either onward or back.

Rowl did not need much help. With one knee on the ice, lifting himself with all his might, a strong, quick pull would assist him over the edge. But Rowl was not ready. When Tommy Lark landed on the pan, Sandy was deep in the water, his hands gripping the ice, his face upturned, his shoulders submerged. Tommy did not even pause. He ran on to the other side of the lane. When he turned, Rowl had an elbow and foot on the pan and was waiting for help; but Tommy Lark hesitated, disheartened—the pan would support less weight than he had thought.

The second trial failed. Rowl was ready. It was not that. Tommy Lark landed awkwardly on the pan from the fifth cake of ice. He consumed the interval of his stay in regaining his feet. He did not dare remain. Before he could stretch a hand toward Rowl, the pan was submerged, and he must leap on in haste to the opposite shore of the lane; and the escape had been narrow—almost he had been caught.

Returning, then, to try for the third time, he caught Rowl by the collar, jerked him, felt him rise, dropped him, sure that he had contributed the needed impulse, and ran on. But when he turned,

confident that he would find Rowl sprawling on the pan, Rowl had failed and dropped back in the water.

For the fourth time Tommy essayed the crossing, with Rowl waiting, as before, foot and elbow on the ice; and he was determined to leap more cautiously from the fifth cake of ice and to risk more on the pan than he might gain more—to land more circumspectly, opposing his weight to Rowl's weight, and to pause until the pan was flooded deep. The plan served his turn. He landed fairly, bent deliberately, caught Rowl's coat with both hands, dragged him on the pan, leaped away, springing out of six inches of water; and when, having crossed on to the Sealawag shore of the lane, he turned, Rowl was still on the ice, flat on his back, resting. It was a rescue.

Presently Sandy Rowl joined Tommy Lark.

"All right?" Tommy inquired.  
 "I'm cold an' I'm drippin'," Sandy replied; "but otherwise I'm fair enough, an' glad t' be breathin' the breath o' life. I won't thank you, Tommy."

"I don't want no thanks."  
 "I won't thank you. No, Tommy. I'll do better. I'll leave Elizabeth t' thank you. You've won a full measure o' thanks, Tommy, from Elizabeth."

"You thinks well o' yourself," Tommy declared. "I'm danged if you don't!"

**AN HOUR** later Tommy Lark and the dripping Sandy Rowl entered the kitchen of Elizabeth Lute's home at Sealawag Harbor. Skipper James was off to prayer meeting. Elizabeth Lute's mother sat knitting alone by the kitchen fire. To her, then, Tommy Lark presented the telegram, having first warned her, to ease the shock, that a message had arrived, contents unknown, from the region of Grace Harbor. Having commanded her self-possession, Elizabeth Lute's mother received and read the telegram, Tommy Lark and Sandy Rowl standing by, eyes wide to catch the first indication of the contents in the expression of the slow old woman's countenance.

There was no indication, however—not that Tommy Lark and Sandy Rowl could read. Elizabeth Lute's mother stared at the telegram; that was all. She was neither downcast nor rejoiced. Her face was blank.

Having read the brief message once, she read it again; and having reflected, and having read it for the third time, and having reflected once more, without achieving any enlightenment whatsoever, she looked up, her wrinkled face screwed in an effort to solve the mystery. She pursed her lips, she tapped the floor with her toe, she tapped her nose with her forefinger, she pushed up her spectacles, she scratched her chin, even she scratched her head; and then she declared to Tommy Lark and Sandy Rowl that she could make nothing of it at all.

"Is the maid sick?" Tommy inquired.

"She is."

"I knowed it!" Tommy declared.

"She says she's homesick." Elizabeth's mother pulled down her spectacles and referred to the telegram. "'Homesick,' says she," she added.

"What else?"

"I can't fathom it. I knows what she means when she says she's homesick; I've been that myself. But what's this about Squid Cove? 'Tis the queerest thing ever I knowed!"

Tommy Lark flushed.

"Woman," he demanded, eager and tense, "what does the maid say about Squid Cove?"

"She says she's homesick for the cottage in Squid Cove. An' that's every last word that she says."

"There's no cottage in Squid Cove," said Sandy.

"No cottage there," Elizabeth's mother agreed, "t' be homesick for. 'Tis a very queer thing."

"There's no cottage in Squid Cove," said Tommy Lark; "but there's lumber for a cottage lyin' there on the rocks."

"What about that?"

"'Tis my lumber!" Tommy roared. "An' the maid knows it!"