

The book cover features a marbled paper background with a pattern of red, branching veins on a tan or gold base. A central rectangular area is framed by a grey border, which is itself set within a larger white border. The title is printed in a black, serif font within this central area.

# The Girl Who Had to Die

by Elisabeth Sanxay Holding

## \* A Distributed Proofreaders Canada eBook \*

This eBook is made available at no cost and with very few restrictions. These restrictions apply only if (1) you make a change in the eBook (other than alteration for different display devices), or (2) you are making commercial use of the eBook. If either of these conditions applies, please check with a <https://www.fadedpage.com> administrator before proceeding. Thousands more FREE eBooks are available at <https://www.fadedpage.com>.

This work is in the Canadian public domain, but may be under copyright in some countries. If you live outside Canada, check your country's copyright laws. **If the book is under copyright in your country, do not download or redistribute this file.**

*Title:* The Girl who Had to Die

*Date of first publication:* 1940

*Author:* Elisabeth Sanxay Holding (1889-1955)

*Date first posted:* Feb. 25, 2023

*Date last updated:* Feb. 25, 2023

Faded Page eBook #20230238

This eBook was produced by: Chuck Greif & the online Distributed Proofreaders Canada team at <https://www.pgdpCanada.net>



CHAPTER ONE, TWO, THREE,  
FOUR, FIVE, SIX, SEVEN, EIGHT,  
NINE, TEN, ELEVEN, TWELVE,  
THIRTEEN, FOURTEEN.

# The Girl Who Had to Die

by Elisabeth Sanxay Holding

# CHAPTER ONE

“I’m going to be murdered,” she said in her muffled, sad little voice.

Killian sat on the foot of his deck chair beside her, hands clasped between his knees, his neat, dark head bent, no expression at all on his face. He could not help hearing her; but he did not have to answer, and he did not have to look at her.

“Don’t you *care*, Jocko?” she asked.

He hated that name she had invented for him, and maybe he hated her. He was not quite sure about that.

“Ever since I was fourteen,” she said, “I’ve known I was going to be murdered—”

“Too bad!” he said, smiling and still not glancing at her. But he knew well enough how she looked: slight and delicate, in a pleated white chiffon dress with a silver belt, her pale, tawny hair brushed back from her brow, her young face wan, hollow temples, hollows beneath the high cheekbones, great forlorn eyes, wide mouth.

She leaned forward and laid her hand on his knee, a frail little hand with nails cut short in a careless, childish fashion. Typical of her. She didn’t care about anything. More than once he had met her on deck in the early morning in faded blue cotton pajamas, her hair ruffled, last night’s mascara smudged about her eyes.

“Jocko,” she asked, “for God’s sake, can’t you say one kind word?”

He had to look at her then. “No,” he said, with a tight-lipped smile that broke up his swarthy young face, made

vertical lines in his cheeks, wrinkles at the corners of his eyes; he looked droll, and gay. "I'm not kind."

Her thin little fingers dug into his knee. "Oh, *please* be kind, Jocko! I'm only nineteen, Jocko. I don't want to die."

"How about a drink?" he asked.

She drooped forward and rested her cheek on her hand, so that her hair was directly beneath his downcast eyes; his breath stirred it. Misty hair, fine as gossamer, glittering, alive, fragrant. He turned aside his head.

"Let's have a drink, Jocelyn," he said.

"No," she answered, in a faint smothered voice.

"Well, sit up, anyhow," he said. "If someone comes along, they'll think—"

"I don't care what anyone thinks," she said. "Jocko, I'm cold. Jocko, I'm sick."

"Come on!" he said; taking her by the shoulders, he made her sit up. But her head drooped forward, the bright soft hair falling across her forehead; her eyes were closed. She looked dead, martyred. He pushed her back until she was lying in her deck chair. "Shall I bring you a drink?" he asked, trying to keep his fear out of his voice.

"Oh, God!" she cried. "*Why* do you want to keep pushing me down and down? Making me go on drinking—when there's nothing but gin running in my veins now. Little lights dancing in my head..."

"I don't want to push you down," he said. "Only what do you want?"

"I want you to be kind," she said. "I'm cold and sick and lonely."

A sort of rage came over him.

“If you wouldn’t be such a damn fool—” he said. “It’s nearly nine o’clock, and you haven’t had any dinner.... And you’ve kept me from having any either. Can’t you pull yourself together now, and come down to the dining saloon?”

She did not stir, or answer, or open her eyes. He hated her all right. He had had too many drinks with her; he was hungry, or tired—or something.... But he couldn’t walk off and leave her like this.

“If you’re sick,” he said, “I’ll get the doctor.”

“I’m going to die, Jocko,” she said.

He rose, straight and square-shouldered and stiff in his white dinner jacket, his dark face grim.

“Then you certainly need the doctor,” he said.

“The doctor can’t save me, Jocko. Not from murder.”

There were tears running down her thin, wonderful face from her closed eyes; her long lashes were wet.

“If you’ll give me the name of the murderer,” he said, “I’ll speak to the Captain.”

“Five of them, Jocko dear.”

“Five of what?”

“Five men who want to kill me,” she said, still weeping.

“You’re crazy!”

“Maybe I am, Jocko,” she said. “But I’m only nineteen. I don’t want to die.”

“Now look here, Jocelyn. Pull yourself together and come down to dinner.”

“I’ve got the names all written down in a little book,” she said. “I carry it with me all the time. My Murderers. That’s what I’ve written on the cover.”

“All five on board this ship?”

“One’s enough,” she said. “At a time.”

“When you’ve had some hot coffee—” he said.

“You’re such a damn little—*clerk*,” she said in a monotone. “I’ve seen your type everywhere—in Paris, London, in Vienna. The same face, like a fox—ears pricked, ready to jump when someone gives you an order. Just a little clerk. Why do I have to love *you*?”

“Maybe you’ll be able to conquer it,” he said. Hating her. She knew exactly the words that goaded him most cruelly; she held up to him the image of himself he didn’t want to see. The clerk, the subordinate who took orders, the obscure, hard-working young nobody.

“I’m going to get some dinner,” he said. “Anything I can do for you before I go?”

“What’s the matter with Starry Eyes?” asked a voice behind him.

It was Chauverney, the Purser, slender, olive-skinned, an Englishman queerly Latin. He spoke Spanish like a native, and with Latin gestures; seven years on this South American run had done something to him. All right! thought Killian. If he’s such a man of the world—such a smooth caballero—let him look after her. “I’m going to get some dinner,” he said aloud.

“How about Starry Eyes?” asked Chauverney, with a vivid smile; and she opened her eyes and looked at him. Starry Eyes.... Not blue, not grey. What colour? Violet? Misty with tears, the wet, dark lashes like rags, her mouth so sad and sweet. “Come along and have a bite with me, Starry Eyes?”

“Jocko asked me first, Purser,” she said.



“Oh, never mind about me!” said Killian, and walked off. “In five days we’ll be home,” he told himself. “Then I’ll never have to set eyes again on that hellcat.”

He went down to the dining saloon, and he was sorry that the other people had finished and gone. Dull enough people—two spinster schoolteachers and a prosy, middle-aged salesman of office fixtures—but he would have liked any or all of them now. They were cheerful and comprehensible. He didn’t feel like sitting alone to-night.

She’ll come and sit here if she feels like it, he thought. It was typical of her that she ignored her allotted seat in the saloon. She would wander in and sit where she chose; at his table, at the Purser’s, at the doctor’s, anywhere. Travels like a damn ghost, he thought. That last word startled him. A ghost? “I’m going to be murdered, Jocko.” Was it because she was close to death that she was a ghost?

“The chicken is good, sir,” said Angelo.

“Muy bien,” said Killian.

Angelo was half Italian, half Brazilian. He looked like a gigolo, tall and willowy, with sideburns, long black lashes, a gentle elegance about him. He was a good steward, but Killian didn’t like him.

“Soup first, sir?”

“No soup.”

“Little salad, sir?”

“No salad. Chicken, and a pot of black coffee.”

He lit a cigarette while he was waiting. Bad habit. Silly, neurotic habit. It’s because I’ve been drinking too much, he thought. Every day since we left B. A. I’m going to quit. Not to-morrow, but now. I’m not going into the smoke-room after

dinner. No nightcap. I'll take a walk and turn in early. I didn't know I had it in me to be like this.

A little clerk, she had called him. He had been a model clerk. Strictly sober and industrious. Ambitious. All ready and waiting when Opportunity knocked. We need someone who can speak Spanish, to substitute for Wilcox until he's well enough to go back to his work. Oh, I can speak Spanish, sir. I've been taking lessons in the evenings. Good little clerk. And where did it get me? Three months in B. A., and now home again to the same old job. Only now I'm ruined. I don't want to wander. I want to be rich, and important. On the inside of things.

Angelo hastened forward and pushed back a chair at the Purser's table. That was for Jocelyn; followed by Chauverney, she crossed the saloon with her light step, the pleated chiffon dress flattening back against her long legs. No one else had that grace of line and movement; no one like her.

"Jocko!" she called. "Come over here with us."

"Dinna fash yersel', laddie," said Chauverney, with his sudden vivid smile.

"I *want* you, Jocko!" she cried, as if in despair, or anguish.

But he wasn't going to take that seriously. "See you later," he said, and went on with his dinner.

Chauverney was able to talk to her. She was growing animated with him; she was leaning forward, looking into his face with a dazed, lost look in her eyes. She was interested, and suddenly she laughed. Killian couldn't stand that laugh of hers, low, almost hoarse. "Like one of those high-yaller wenches ..." he thought.

“Coffee, Angelo, and cheese.” Angelo did not answer, and did not hear him. He was staring at Jocelyn with his mouth open; giving him a forlorn and idiotic look. “Snap out of it, Angelo!” said Killian, sharply.

“Señor? Excuse. You want?”

“Nothing!” said Killian. He would have coffee in the smoke-room, or maybe he wouldn’t have any coffee. He wanted to get away from Jocelyn. But he had to pass her table, and she reached out and caught his hand.

“Jocko, wait for me on deck. Jocko, I’ve *got* to see you!” she said.

“Well, we’re on a ship,” he said. “I can’t escape.” Certainly he smiled, and she could take it as a joke if she chose. He gave her shoulder a pat and went on out of the saloon. He walked up and down the promenade deck for a while, not a long while; then he went to his cabin and locked the door. “And she can’t get me out,” he said to himself. “No matter what she says or does, she can’t get me out.”

He was mistaken about that.

He put on a dressing gown and lay down on the bed with a Spanish book to read. The air flowed in at the open port like fresh water, warm and sweet; the sea was quiet to-night. Homeward bound, he thought. All right! I’ll admit I don’t want to go home. Back to the office, back to another room in somebody’s apartment. In Buenos Aires he had lived in the house of a young German couple; a boy brought coffee to him every morning—coffee like nectar—ran his bath for him, cleaned his shoes. When he came in after dinner, the bed would be turned down, the lamp lighted, pajamas laid out.

He lit a cigarette and read; after a time he turned out the light and lay in the dark. I don't know what I want, he thought, filled with melancholy. Nothing much. That's the trouble. I'm negative now.

A few months ago he had been positive, definite. Ambitious to get on in the business. Now he didn't care. He felt cold, indifferent; he felt old. You can't measure age in years, he thought. I'm old—at twenty-three.

He was asleep, or half asleep, when a strange, horrible sound shocked him: a voice crying, "Oooooo...." He sat up straight, in a sweat, and it came again. "Man ooo-verboard...." The ship quivered and jarred, checked; the engines reversed.

He sprang up and ran across the cabin in the dark. When he opened the door, he came face to face with a tall man with a grey beard, standing motionless, his eyes dilated.

"I fancied I heard—man overboard ..." he said in a sort of bleat.

They stared at each other, and Killian ran past him along the alleyway and out on deck. He saw four women starting up the ladder to the boat deck like ducks. He went after them; the last one was stout and climbed slowly, bent forward from the waist—so slowly that he pushed her a little. She looked back over her shoulder.

"My! What a dreadful thing!" she said. "That poor girl!"

"What girl?" he asked.

"That bitch!" said another voice ahead of them.

The stout woman tried to cover that. "That Miss Frey," she said.

So it was Jocelyn.

The woman straightened up as she reached the boat deck, and Killian went past her. An officer was superintending the lowering of a lifeboat in a strong circle of light. “Oh, God ...!” he said to himself. “Oh, God! Jocelyn in her white dress.... She said that she was lonely.” *Lonely?* Now she knew what that word meant, all right. Still swimming, was she, in her white dress with the silver girdle? That made you think of fishes with silver scales. Sharks. Swimming, her long slender arms moving up and down, her slender legs wrapped in the long white skirt.... Calling, screaming for help, all alone—until something seized her and dragged her under.

“Got caught in the propellers,” a man said. “Inevitable....”

That would be better, that would be quicker than swimming all alone. *Lonely?* That was the absolute of loneliness, out there. There were stars in the sky, and it’s a fact that they twinkle. There were probably things in the depths of the sea not yet discovered. Things worse than sharks. You look at the ocean and call it empty, but that’s a damned lie. It is teeming and crawling with life. Different layers of life. Jocelyn would not sink to the bottom. She would drift down in her white dress. If the ocean was whisky, and I was a duck, I’d dive to the bottom, and I’d never come up.

“I want a drink,” Killian said aloud. There were a lot of people on the boat deck, but he was not talking to them. The ship had stopped, and that made him seasick. Very sick. He went below to the smoke-room and the bar was closed.

I’m glad! he thought suddenly. He did *not* want a drink, or anything to blunt his sick horror. If *she* had to go through this, let him bear his part of it, every moment of it. He sat

down on a table, barefoot in his dressing gown. “Oh, God!” he said to himself. “God, what a way to die! She said she was lonely....”

Some people were coming into the smoke-room, and he left it and went to his cabin. It was dark in there, and hot; the breeze was gone. Because we’re lying to, he thought. He could hear, or thought he could hear, the motor in the lifeboat. Only a gesture, to lower a boat into this vast, dark sea, to look for a girl in a white dress.

“I hope it’s all over now,” he said to her. “I hope you’re dead. Starry Eyes ... I hope to God you’re dead now.” Not still swimming; he had seen her in the pool in a black knitted suit. Slight and tall, elegant. Elegance in the set of her head, in her wrists and ankles. Only nineteen....

“So things like this *do* happen?” he said to himself. Life and death were real, were they? Merrily, merrily, merrily, merrily, life is but a dream.... Don’t kid yourself, you fool. It’s no dream.

Sitting on the edge of the bed, he lit a cigarette. They say there’s no use smoking in the dark. That’s another lie. The end of the cigarette burned red. Port light is red. She would have seen the lights of the ship rushing away from her. Did she call me? Did she call “Jocko”? She asked me, she begged me to wait for her. I didn’t. My fault? My fault?

The ship shook in a preposterous way, making his teeth chatter; everything in the cabin rattled. Then the breeze came back. We’re under way again. We’ve left her. Adios, Starry Eyes! Quede con Dios.... Remain with God. With the sharks, with the little fish and the great fish.... He lay flat on his back on the bed, so very sick....

He wanted another cigarette and he could find no matches; he felt in the pockets of his dressing gown, sat up and groped among the things on the table, rose and moved around in the dark cabin. Impossible to turn on the light. He rang the bell, and stood by the door waiting. Very promptly someone came, knocking.

“Can you get some matches for me?” he asked.

“Yes, sir,” said the voice of the watchman. A decent old fellow with a grey moustache. What does he do all night? Every night.... He knocked again. “Here you are, sir.” Killian opened the door and held out his hand, and the watchman filled it with matchbooks. “Nobody’s getting much sleep to-night, sir.”

“No, I suppose not,” said Killian.

“It’s a funny thing, sir.... Young lady like that.... You’d say she had everything to live for. Yet she wants to kill herself.”

“Kill herself?”

“That’s what they’re saying, sir. It’s a funny thing. I’m sixty six years of age, sir, but I can enjoy life. And there’s a young lady like that, rich, everything to live for, you’d say; and she tries to kill herself.”

“Tries ...?”

“Didn’t you hear, sir? They picked her up and brought her back. They’re working over her now.”

“Thanks,” said Killian, and closed the door.

## CHAPTER TWO

THE surf came raining down like hot silver that sizzled when it touched the deep blue sea; the sky was a bright burning blue. The steward came knocking at the door with Killian's coffee.

"Great excitement last night, sir," he said. "Wasn't it?"

"Just put the tray down, will you?" said Killian.

The moment he was alone, he began to drink the coffee, black and strong. "I wanted that," he said to himself. "In a way, I know what's the matter with me. In a way. The reason I'm so damn miserable is because I'm a fake. I've made myself into this. This good little clerk. Underneath it I'm—what? A crazy Irishman. I had to choose. I knew that when I was a kid. I knew that I could be either a crazy little fool or a good boy. I chose to be a good boy. Hard-working. I save money. I make plans and I stick to them. But if I let go for one minute, I'd be—the other one. It's there all right. I can't kill it. I can just kick it into a corner, and keep on kicking it...."

He lit a cigarette and looked out at the burning blue day. It's never like that at home. Home was never like this. When we stopped at Trinidad ... Hibiscus and bougainvillea, and there was a barracuda in the harbour.... She was nice that day. Nice when we first went ashore. She was gentle; sat in the car, holding my hand, and she was quiet. Until we stopped at that place and she started drinking rum.... Drunkard.... Little tramp.... She didn't die.

He got up and took a bath and dressed, all very slowly. I'll have to see her, he thought. Four days more. If we dock in



the morning, I'll go straight to the office.... Sunburnt. He looked at himself in the mirror, his narrow skull, his deep-set eyes, his long upper lip. Monkey face, he thought. Ears pricked up ready to take orders.... What'll I say to her? I hear you fell overboard. Quite an experience.

He went into the dining saloon at eight, as usual, and he was surprised not to see the schoolteachers there. They were cheerful; he had a great wish to see their faces, their eyes smiling behind their glasses.

“The ladies are late,” he observed to Angelo.

“They sit there, sir,” said Angelo, with a discreet gesture; and Killian saw them sitting at a table across the saloon.

“What’s the idea?” he asked.

“They asked the Purser to put them away, sir.”

“But what’s the idea?” he asked.

“I don’t know, sir,” said Angelo.

A queer thing to do. Rude. They had made rather a pet of him; they had laughed at his jokes; they had consulted him as an authority upon the whole continent of South America. He wanted them back. But if they didn’t want to be here, let them go. He ate his breakfast alone and went up on deck. The passengers were not given to early rising; he found no one there except the man with the grey beard whom he had confronted last night. “Good morning!” Killian said. And the man didn’t answer him; deliberately glared at him, and didn’t answer.

Killian walked off into a sort of nightmare. It was peculiarly lonely on deck; it had never been like this before. The schoolteachers had moved away from his table, and the old fellow with the beard wouldn’t answer him. “What’s the

idea?" he asked himself, and told himself that probably there wasn't any idea. It didn't mean anything.

But when other people came on deck, he avoided them. If anyone wants to talk to me, they can come after me, he thought. He regretted this course as soon as he had started it; pacing up and down the enclosed deck with his hands behind his back, he felt like a pariah, a melodramatic one. Nobody did come after him.

It's something to do with Jocelyn, he thought. It has to be. She's said something....

The ship's doctor was coming along the deck, stopping before a chair here and there, bending his lank body like a courtier; a blanched man with a lantern-jawed, white face, and white hair, dressed in a white suit. "He looks like a candle that's just been blown out," Jocelyn had said. I suppose she's clever, thought Killian. Only you never think of her that way. She can always find the right phrase for anyone. She speaks French, and Spanish, and German. Maybe she's clever. And maybe she's the most ghastly fool.

The doctor was approaching him, and Killian moved forward. And with a poor effort at absentmindedness, the doctor turned back. Killian went after him.

"Look here!" he said. "How is Miss Frey?"

"She's in a bad condition," said the doctor, with his eyes lowered. He had a face that expressed nothing at all but a faint peevishness; a flat voice.

"What's the trouble with her?" asked Killian.

"Bad condition," the doctor repeated, and moved aside to pass Killian.

But Killian was not satisfied. "Shock?" he asked.

The peevish expression on the white face deepened into a fretful frown. “The trouble is that she doesn’t want to recover.”

“You mean that she’s depressed?”

“I mean she doesn’t want to live,” the doctor answered irritably.

“Well,” said Killian. “As she gets stronger, I suppose that’ll pass.”

“You ought to know better,” said the doctor. He tried again to pass Killian but he found himself against the rail.

“I ...?” said Killian.

“You ought to know better,” the doctor said. “It’s deplorable.”

Killian let him go, and almost at once regretted this. “I should have had it out with him,” he told himself. “I ought to have made him put it into words. I’m responsible, am I? My fault if that neurotic little drunkard is in a ‘bad condition’? What’s she told him, I wonder?”

Had she gone around spreading that tale?

He thought of the two schoolteachers and the man with the beard. Doctors never tell. Maybe. And maybe the tale was running all over the ship. She doesn’t want to live because she loves Killian. Dying of love. It’s deplorable.

What’s the way to handle it? he thought. I’d better behave just as usual—pay no attention to anything hostile.

But he wouldn’t naturally go out of his way to invite rebuffs. He wouldn’t approach anyone. Simply when anyone approached him, he would be normal. Nobody did approach him. He went to his cabin and put on his bathing trunks; went up to the pool on the boat deck. The usual people were there

lying in the sun, some in dark glasses, some with their eyes closed; all of them silent, intent upon the even toasting of their bodies. The pool was empty at the moment; the sun shone in making the water a limpid green. Killian dived in and swam up and down fast. But he did not escape his preoccupation.

I'm bound to see her before long, he thought. That's going to be awkward. I'll have to speak to her. What's the tactful thing to say to someone who's tried to commit suicide? I hope this will be a lesson to you.

"Hello!" said a voice; and looking over his shoulder, he saw Mrs. L'O standing halfway down the ladder, dark and slim, ineffably stylish in a pale blue bathing suit with a flared skirt and a high collar in front, and at the back nothing above the waist but a little bow at the nape of her neck. A blue bandanna was tied in front in a coquettish bow; unsmiling, a little haggard, she presented a picture of detailed perfection. "W.O.W.," Jocelyn had called her. "And that doesn't mean Wow, Jocko. It stands for Woman of the World. Poise and Taste, and Savoir Faire—all laid on so thick."

"How are you?" he asked, civilly, but with no disposition to go on talking to her.

She slid into the water and swam toward him. She swam very well; she did everything very well. "I want a chance to speak to you alone," she said, stopping beside him. "I don't suppose you know—"

"Know what?"

"It's a beastly story," she said. "And it's spreading like wildfire." She grasped the rail with both hands, standing upright in the deep water, bending her head. With her neck arched, with her straight little nose, she looked, he thought,

like a little sea-horse. Spirited, and pleasing. “I hate to tell you,” she said.

“Kind of you to bother, Mrs. L’O.”

“Elly,” she said.

“Elly,” he repeated, suddenly liking her.

“You know that Piggott girl?” she asked. “She was on the boat deck last night when—the thing happened, and she’s running around telling everyone she heard Jocelyn call out your name when she went overboard.”

Killian felt as if he had got a violent blow in the midriff. He was silent for a moment, trying to get over it. “Not so good,” he remarked, presently.

“There’s more,” she said. “The Piggott girl says she saw you and Jocelyn sitting on the rail together, a little while before it happened.”

“She didn’t,” said Killian.

“There’s still more,” she said. “And worse. Mr. Bracey says—”

“Who’s Mr. Bracey?”

“The man with the grey beard. He says that, just after the sailor called out, ‘Man overboard,’ you came rushing down to your cabin, all white and shaking.”

“The damned old liar!” said Killian, astounded. “He saw me open my cabin door and look out, after the sailor had shouted a couple of times. He was standing there in the alleyway.”

“Well; that’s his story,” she said.

Killian still had the feeling of having got a violent blow; it made him confused.

“But what’s the *idea* of his telling such a lie?” he asked, staring at Elly L’O.

“He doesn’t think it a lie any more,” she said. “Both he and the Piggott girl believe the stories now. It makes them very, very happy.”

Killian began filling his cupped hand with water and splashing it on his head. He had to do something.

“Hard to believe that people can be like that,” he said. “To lie that way out of sheer malice—”

“I don’t think it’s exactly malice,” said Elly L’O. “They’re delighted with anything sensational. Everybody’s running after them now, and naturally they like that.”

“Well,” said Killian after a moment, “let them go ahead. I’m not going to bother.”

“You’ll have to bother, John,” she said. “It’s too ugly, and too serious to ignore.”

“I’m not going to bother with it.”

“You were sitting on the rail with Jocelyn,” said Elly L’O. “You had a quarrel with her. You were so cruel to her that she jumped overboard. And you ran to your cabin—without giving an alarm. That’s the story.”

He was stricken; and that was the only word for it. This attack on him was so senseless, so insane, he could not feel any anger, any impulse to protect himself. The tribe had turned upon him; he could only face them in stoic silence.

“All right!” he said. “If anyone can believe that tale—”

He swam away. Elly L’O stayed where she was, holding to the rail, and he came back to her. She was the only friendly creature left in the world.

“I didn’t tell you the story just to make you miserable,” she said. “I’ve thought of a way to stop it. When the Piggott girl told it to me, I said I knew for a fact that there wasn’t a word of truth in it, and I just walked off. I needed time to think up something, and now I have. It’s beautifully simple. You spent all the evening in the Purser’s cabin with him and me.”

“Chauverney wouldn’t agree to that.”

“I know he will.”

“He can’t do it. He’s an officer. If there’s any sort of enquiry—”

“Really, he will,” she answered him. “He’ll say that you and I were in his cabin having a quiet little chat, and we didn’t hear anything, or notice anything, until the engines began to go astern. Of course, that sent us all flying out to see what was the matter.”

“No,” said Killian, “you couldn’t get Chauverney to agree to that.”

“I can,” she said.

He looked at her sidelong, but she was looking down into the clear green water.

“Yes,” she went on. “We’ll all three stick to that story, and it will stop the other ones.”

“You’re taking a lot of trouble,” Killian said. “You’re very kind.”

“Aren’t I?” she said, and smiled. “I’m like that, you know. A heart of gold.”

Killian caught sight of three other people coming down the ladder into the water; he turned his head away from them. “I think I’ll be going,” he said.

“I’ll speak to Chauverney,” she said, “and I’ll let you know. But I promise you in advance that he’ll agree. You can start telling our version to anyone you like.”

“You’re very kind,” he said again.

He did not see who had come into the pool; he climbed out, put on his dressing gown, and went dripping down to his cabin without looking at anyone. He dressed, and then he sat down in the wicker armchair and took up a book. He lit a cigarette; he turned pages; he wanted to improve his Spanish. He was perfectly cool, composed, sensible. The steward knocked and came in to fill his thermos jug with ice water; he slipped in and out with a downcast, almost a demure air.

“All right!” Killian said to himself. “I’ll admit it. I’m afraid to go out of here. Miller knows that. He never saw me sitting in my cabin in the morning before. He knows I’m afraid. I can’t face the music. Sweet music. This is something I didn’t know. I didn’t know how you’d feel when you were slandered. What the hell is the matter with me? Why don’t I defend myself?”

There was no impulse in him to defend himself. He was stricken and he wanted only to abide. He was stunned, appalled. Two of his fellow creatures were willing to lie about him, for no reason at all, and others accepted the lie without question. They were not surprised to hear that he had done a monstrous thing, that he was guilty of the most brutal cowardice. Perhaps everyone believed it; Miller, too.

The Captain would have to investigate such a rumor. Mr. Killian, I’ve been informed that when Miss Frey jumped overboard you went to your cabin without giving an alarm. Mr. Killian, I’ve been informed that you ran away and left Miss Frey to drown. Swimming in the sea in a white dress



with a silver girdle. With the sharks. With all the monsters of the deep. Well, no, I didn't, Captain Portman. Oh, you didn't, didn't you? Miss Piggott says you did. Mr. Bracey says you did. You look like that. You look like a mean, cowardly, little clerk who'd do exactly that. There's something in your face that makes everyone believe that about you.

*Maybe you are like that.*

I've never been tested, he thought. How do I know what I'd do in an emergency?

He made up his mind that he would not try to defend himself. He wouldn't say anything. If the Captain asked him questions he would simply say, "No, I wasn't with her. I didn't know anything about it." And his statement would be completely unconvincing. He did not expect anyone to believe him. He would sit alone in the dining saloon; he would walk alone on deck.

Elly means well, he thought. But her idea won't work.

Exactly as if he had had a violent blow in the midriff. He just wanted to be left alone. But someone came knocking at the door.

"What d'you want?" he called.

"It's Doctor Coyle," said the toneless voice.

"Come in!" said Killian, not stirring.

The doctor entered, closing the door behind him; he stood with his hand on the knob, and Killian pretended to go on reading.

"Miss Frey has made a statement," said the doctor.

A dying statement, thought Killian. In a statement made shortly before her death, Miss Frey accused Mr. John Killian of—everything.

“A statement to the Captain—in my presence,” the doctor went on, the peevish frown on his white face again. “The Captain—naturally—has to enter the matter in his log.”

“All right! Let him!” said Killian.

“Miss Frey wants to see you.”

“Is she dying?” asked Killian.

“No, she’s not!” said the doctor, irritably. “She wants to see you.”

“What about?”

“That girl’s in a very bad condition,” said the doctor. “As a matter of common decency, if she wants to see you—”

“What does she say in her statement?” Killian asked.

“That’s confidential,” said the doctor. “Are you coming, or not?”

“No,” said Killian. But that was his mind speaking. His blood, his muscles, his nerves, his soul, perhaps, brought him to his feet. “Where is she?” he asked.

“In her cabin, of course.”

This amazed Killian. Her cabin was on the promenade deck; he knew that well enough. She had got him in there once to drink a cocktail with her, and she had tried to get him there other times. But when he had been walking up and down the deck, it had never occurred to him that she might be lying in there, a few feet from him. He had thought vaguely of a sick bay, the ship’s hospital; he had thought of her as shut away somewhere.

The doctor went before him, walking in a nervous, fussy way; he knocked at the door.

Her low, mournful voice drifted out to them. “All right.” The doctor opened the door, and they went in. She was alone. That was queer, thought Killian. Someone ought to be with her—a stewardess, someone. But there she lay, alone, in her unearthly beauty.

I didn’t know her hair was so long, Killian thought. It was spread out over the pillow in a soft mist about her pale, worn face. Her eyes were heavy with sorrow; her bare arms lay at her sides above the top of the neatly folded sheet. He saw a band of delicate ecru lace against her white breast.

“Monty, go away, will you?” she said.

The doctor raised her limp wrist, lifting his eyebrows; and she looked up into his face, with her lips parted in a smile.

“Monty, you’re such a phony,” she said.

He smiled back at her as if complimented. “Five minutes!” he said. “No more. See that she doesn’t excite herself, Mr. Killian.”

They were alone together.

“Give me a cigarette, Jocko,” she said.

“Better not.”

“Give me a cigarette,” she repeated. “I’ve been smoking on and off, from four o’clock this morning.”

“It can’t be good for you.”

“No,” she said. “You’re right. It can’t. And I’ve got to look after my health, haven’t I, Jocko? So that this can happen again.”

“I don’t know what you’re talking about,” he said flatly.

“I died,” she said. “It was just the same as dying. Try it, sometime, and see. Try swimming alone in the ocean in the

middle of the night. Then you'll know exactly what it's like to die. But they fished me out, so that I'll have to die all over again sometime. That's what I call hard luck. Jocko, give me a cigarette, my precious one! I need one."

He gave her one, and bent over to light it. And he thought that a bitter smell of salt water came from her hair.

"The Captain came in," she went on. "He explained how he had to write a report about this 'occurrence.' He called it an 'occurrence' a hundred thousand times. He was so shocked, Jocko. He asked me if I was strong enough to give him an account of the 'occurrence'; and I did."

She moved her head on the pillow and gave a tiny sigh.

"You won't ask any questions, will you, Jocko? Why don't you fold your arms? It would look more suitable. Don't you want to hear what I told the Captain?"

"Yes."

"I told him I was drunk, Jocko. I told him I was so drunk I didn't know what I was doing. I told him. I went staggering out on deck, and sat on the rail all alone, and fell overboard."

"Did he believe it?"

"Why shouldn't he? It's much easier to believe than the truth."

He lit a cigarette for himself, standing by the bed. "Well," he said. "I'll buy it. What is the truth?"

"You must have talked to people about it," she said. "What explanation have you given?"

"Nobody's asked me for an explanation."

"If you do get asked?"

“Nothing to say. I don’t know whether you fell overboard or jumped overboard.”

“Yes,” she said slowly. “I thought you were the one who started all that suicide talk.”

“I didn’t.”

“The Captain had heard it,” she said. “He was terribly shocked. I had to make up my mind on the spot which tale I’d give him, and I liked the accident one better than the suicide one.”

“It was one or the other.”

“Like hell it was!” she said. “What’s the idea of this, Jocko? I’m not drunk now. Do you think I don’t remember? Or did you think I didn’t know?”

“Didn’t know what?”

“It was murder, Jocko.”

“That’s just what I’d expect from you,” he said; and his voice shook with anger, with a sort of fury.

“You mean, to be murdered?”

“I mean, to say a thing like this.”

“Don’t worry,” she said. “I haven’t told anyone else. I’ve protected you.”

“Protected *me*?” he almost shouted.

“Take it easy!” she said.

“This is one time in your life when you have to be rational,” he said. “What are you talking about?”

“I’m talking about how you murdered me,” she said.

## CHAPTER THREE

“TAKE it easy,” he said to himself. “Don’t yell. This needs a bit of thinking over. I’ve got to get away from her, and think it over.”

“Where are you going, Jocko?”

“Just out on deck,” he answered, in a nice persuasive way. “Just to take a walk.”

“Jocko! Even after this, can’t you say one kind thing?”

“Listen, Jocelyn,” he said, still in that persuasive way. “What you said startled me. It’s—I can’t talk to you now.”

“If *I* can talk after what happened to *me*, you can listen.”

He stood still, with his hand on the doorknob.

“I was sitting on the rail,” she said. “I was tight. As usual. All those little sparks twinkling inside my head. When I get to that stage, I’m happy. I forget all my troubles. Only it’s growing harder to reach that stage. I *am* a little tramp, aren’t I, Jocko?”

“I haven’t known you long enough to answer that, Jocelyn,” he said. Trying to be ironic, to be cool and detached, maybe amused.

“I was sitting there looking at the moon. There wasn’t any moon, but I didn’t know that. Suddenly somebody took me by the throat in a queer way. Not squeezing my throat, just pressing it at the sides, and I went out like a light. Until I struck the water. I went over backwards, headfirst. I went down—oh, God knows how far. Down to the bottom of the sea, down to hell. When I came up, the ship was rushing away. You don’t know how fast. I screamed—when I could

—but the ship was far away then. I swam after it, and the lights were getting littler and littler. I was left alone in the dark to struggle as long as I could. That’s dying, Jocko. I went on swimming like a mouse in a pail of water. Only there weren’t any sides to my pail. I didn’t squeak any more. I kept on swimming the way you keep on breathing, because you don’t know how to stop. But all I thought was: Let this be over. Let this finish, quick. I kicked off my slippers. My skirt got wound around my legs, and I tore most of it away from the waist. The ship was a million miles away then. I thought: When it’s out of sight... Give me your hand to hold!”

He sat down on the bed beside her and took her hand. “Don’t talk about it any more,” he said.

Her thin little fingers clung to his hand frantically, as if she were drowning now this minute, with her pale hair floating out from her pale face.

“I didn’t know when the ship stopped. It was too far away. I didn’t know when the boat came after me. I didn’t hear it coming. The waves make a noise, or something does. Something roars in your ears.”

“Take it easy,” he said. He had known it was like that.

“Then I thought of the fishes,” she said. “I knew they were all around me, and underneath me.”

“Take it easy. Smoke your cigarette.”

She threw it, alight, on the floor, and he set his foot on it.

“Then I saw the light from the boat, whatever it was. A torch, was it, Jocko? That was the worst. I turned back and tried to swim faster, away from it. I thought it was something horrible, coming after me. Something worse than the fishes.”

He could not get his hand away from her desperately clinging fingers. Clumsily, with one hand, he got out another cigarette and put it between her lips. "Let go, Jocelyn, just a moment, and I'll give you a light."

"All right," she said. Her fingers relaxed; her lashes went down, brushing her pale cheeks. "They say you see your whole past when you're drowning. But I wasn't drowning. I was just dying of loneliness, and I didn't see anything but you."

He struck a match and held it for her. I'm sorry for her, he thought. I'm so sorry for her. She's not responsible. Maybe she's crazy. Maybe she really believes what she said. Maybe if I talk to her... Don't say you can't talk, because you've damned well got to talk. You've got to end this thing. Take the right tone. That's important. What is the right one?

She put her hand around his neck and tried to pull down his head, but he kept it rigid.

"We're a lot alike, Jocko," she said. "We could go places, you and I. If I had you, I could pull myself together. That's because you know why I've gone all to pieces. It's something that could have happened to you, but you didn't let it. You know how it is when everyone throws stones at you. When you hate everything, even the sun. That's why I have to turn to you. You're the only one."

"I couldn't help you," he said, with a sort of gentleness.

"Kiss me," she said.

"I could do that," he said.

She pulled his head down on the pillow beside her, so that her cheek was against his. He thought that there was that



smell of salt water in her hair, and with it the perfume she used, musky and subtle.

“I don’t care if you murdered me, Jocko,” she said.

“You exaggerate things, darling. You don’t feel dead.”

“I’ve been told, Jocko, that you didn’t wait on deck to see the lifeboat come back. Other people thought that was strange, but I didn’t.”

“Didn’t you?” he said.

“The nice people,” she said, “the kind, tolerant people are saying that all you did was to lead me on and make me so desperate I tried to kill myself. That is the kindest thing that’s being said about you.”

“We-ell,” he said. “No. No, I don’t think so. You don’t impress people like a girl who is easily led on.”

“Would you like to hear what some other people are saying, Jocko?”

“I have heard.”

“About how you pushed me overboard, and then rushed down to your cabin? How you came up on the boat deck for a few minutes, looking like a ghost, and couldn’t stand it, couldn’t wait, until the boat came back. Mr. Bracey saw you going into your cabin, looking like a ghost. And your steward says you looked like a ghost when he told you I’d been saved.”

“Why not? Maybe I felt like a ghost.”

“One word from me, Jocko, and you’re sunk.”

He moistened his lips. “I’m sorry about that, Jocelyn. I— it’s hard to explain.”

“You don’t have to explain things to me. I know how you felt. I know why you did that.”

“Jocelyn, let’s get things straight. If you can get anything straight. I did not choke you and throw you overboard.”

“Skip it!” she said. Her lashes fluttered against his cheek. “You did it, and somebody saw you, Jocko; but I don’t care.”

“Who saw me?”

“Skip that, too, Jocko; when we land, I’m going to visit the Bells out on Long Island. Come with me.”

“No. Who saw me committing this little murder?”

“That’s my trump card. I don’t play it yet, Jocko. Come with me just for the weekend.”

“No.”

“If you’re going to resist, Jocko, I’ll turn on the heat.”

He pushed away her head and sat up, looking down at her.

“Do whatever you please, Jocelyn,” he said. “I won’t try to stop you. You could make a lot of gossip on the ship, that’s all. But I’m getting off the ship—”

“You just don’t get the point,” she said, interrupting him. “If I say you pushed me overboard, you’ll go to jail.”

Yes, he thought, she might be able to do that. There’s plenty of suspicion against me already. God knows why. If she felt like it, she could make it serious. Let her! I’m sick and tired of this. Of her.

“Will you come with me to the Bells’, Jocko?”

“I will not, Jocelyn.”

“You’d rather go to prison?”

“Much rather.”

“Think it over,” she said. “You’d hate it. But I shouldn’t. I like things to be dramatic and sensational. I’d like to see you in the dock charged with assault and intent to kill, and the whole thing in the headlines. You’d probably get off in the end, but you’d be ruined. I’m ruined already, so I don’t care. I’d a damn sight rather see you in prison than lose you.”

“You could see both, you know. I suppose you could make trouble for me with a trumped-up charge.”

“Why trumped-up?” she said. “Somebody else saw you, too. There was a witness to that little job of yours.”

“I’m going,” he said. “I don’t want to talk any more.”

“You *can’t* go!” she cried. “Good God! What more do you want! You *murder* me, and I forgive you. I keep on loving you.”

“Jocelyn ...” he said unsteadily. “Please—”

He was shaking, and that worried him; he wanted to give all his attention to stopping that. His hands shook, his knees; his heart was doing something.

“I only ask you to give me that weekend. Just a chance to make you love me. You’ve *got* to do it!”

“Can’t!” he said.

“You *murdered* me!” she cried. “I’ll never forget the look on your face.”

“Please don’t talk so loud,” he said.

“Look at me!”

He turned his head. She was sitting up straight; her mouth was open in a queer way; tears were raining from her wide-open eyes. That’s anguish, he thought. That’s what they call anguish. How can I make her shut up? What can I say? What’s the matter with me?

“Jocko!” she screamed. “You look the same way *now*! You’re ready to kill me *again*!”

He strode across the room, opened the door, and went out. He ran full tilt into the doctor; it knocked the breath out of him for a moment.

“I was coming to turn you out,” said the doctor. “She’s been talking too much.”

There was nothing to see in his face but that look of peevish fretfulness. That’s the only way he can look, Killian thought. He’d look just the same if he’d heard her. I don’t know what to do. I’ll have to think this out. Very serious, this is. Or isn’t it?

He went to his cabin and locked the door. Then he hastily unlocked it. If the steward came, it would look.... How would it look? Everything he did, or could do, would look wrong. Time for lunch. Go down and sit at that table like a pariah? I must say he has a wonderful appetite. Not much upset about the poor girl, is he? Or, he can’t eat a thing. Naturally.

Elly means well, he thought. And maybe Chauverney would have agreed to that story about my being in his cabin. Would have, when it was just a matter of shutting up a lot of gossips. But not if Jocelyn’s going to accuse me of murdering her. That is very silly. You can’t talk about murdering someone who’s alive. But if she says I tried to kill her, Chauverney won’t stand by that story. Not if Jocelyn makes a charge against me. Chauverney wouldn’t commit a perjury for me. Nor for Elly, either.

He lit another cigarette. Smoking too much, he thought. He stood in the middle of his cabin because he didn’t know what to do. Whether to go down to lunch or not.

You look the same way *now*! You're ready to kill me *again*!

It worried him that his hands shook so. Of course, I didn't try to kill her. I never even thought of it. But when she started screaming like that, you felt ... You felt that you wanted to stop her—at any cost. Want to make her be quiet. At any cost. You felt.... You felt....

Let it alone. Never mind how you felt. There are those things below the surface immemorially old and hideous, like black, prowling beasts. Leave them alone. You've got them chained. They can't get out. As a man thinketh in his heart.... Not at all! You've thought some damn queer things about that girl, on and off. And it doesn't matter. As long as you don't *do* anything. You can shake like a leaf, shut up in your own cabin, and whose business is that?

“This is a curious experience,” he said aloud.

There was a knock on the door. “Purser's compliments, sir,” said a cheerful little boy, “and will you please join him in his cabin for cocktails in ten minutes, sir?”

“Tell him, yes, thanks,” said Killian.

Chauverney moved about in his cabin; the word for it was ‘flitting,’ thought Killian. He was impressed with the extraordinary frivolity of the Purser as he talked—talked nonsense, smiling his very vivid smile. His boy brought in cocktails and left them on the table; three glasses, Killian noticed. “The stock market ...” Chauverney was saying. On and on. “Reminds me of the story of the stockbroker and the parson's daughter.” On and on.

There was a light knock at the door, and Elly came in. She had her black hair done in a pompadour, and she wore a dark green silk dress with tiny glittering buttons up the front of it; she looked, thought Killian, like a heroine from a novel of the Nineties, stylish and self-possessed.

“Not so hot,” she said.

“Who isn’t?” Chauverney demanded.

“Oh, I mean the *weather!*” she said, and they all laughed.

Chauverney sat down, but the effect of flitting remained. His mind was flitting, obviously reluctant to settle.

“There’s been some shifting about in the dining saloon,” he said suddenly. “I’d be very pleased if you’d sit at my table, Mr. Killian.”

“Thanks,” said Killian, and waited for more. But Chauverney and Elly were both silent. Killian was silent, too, trying to think, but his mind was doing something else; it was not possible to think until he got free from this smothering cloud that oppressed him. He thought that if he could talk.... “Well, why?” he asked.

“Oh, glad to have your company,” said Chauverney.

“No,” said Killian. “The women who were sitting at my table....” He raised his hand and checked it in mid-air. He realized with some surprise that he had been going to make a very theatric gesture; he had been going to draw the back of his hand across his forehead. “All this....”

“Oh, least said, soonest mended,” said Chauverney briskly.

*Least said?* thought Killian. I’ve just been listening to Jocelyn. You wouldn’t call that the least. All about my murdering her. Love—murder.

“I think Mr. Killian would rather have things more definite,” said Elly.

“But there’s nothing definite about the situation, Mrs. L’O,” said Chauverney. “Nothing but gossip—ship’s gossip. When you’ve been at sea as long as I have.... I assure you it’s better to ignore the whole thing. If Mr. Killian will sit at my table.... We’ll simply carry on, eh?”

Mr. Killian, Mr. Chauverney, and Mrs. L’O—all sitting here. The Gay Nineties. Let’s behave like ladies and gentlemen. Jocelyn is impossible. Let us ignore her, and then she will disappear.

“Another cocktail, Mr. Killian?”

“No, thanks.”

Elly took another, and so did Chauverney.

“This idea of Miss Frey’s is very sound,” said Chauverney. “This idea of our going to the Bells’ for the weekend.”

“Our going?” said Killian.

“Yes. You and I. Miss Frey spoke to me about it as a practical way to put a stop to—everything. I mean to say the passengers will certainly go on talking after they go ashore. But if we both go off with Miss Frey.... That’s the best thing. The Captain will make his report, of course. The newspapers may get hold of something; but if we accept Miss Frey’s idea.... Very sound. The whole thing will blow over then.”

“You’ll have to go with her,” said Elly without emphasis. “She’s a damned dangerous, sadistic liar. It’s a great pity she was ever fished out of the sea. I wish she had been drowned.”

“My God!” murmured Chauverney.

Elly rose and took up her white purse, very smart.

“Let’s go down to lunch,” she said.



## CHAPTER FOUR

THE people at the Purser's table were superior. There was a doctor, a heart specialist taking a holiday; and a young couple, very rich and very unostentatious—both of them tall, good-looking, serious about social problems, and conscientious about taking part in things. They signed up for everything, bridge tournaments, ping-pong tournaments; they were superlatively good at games—they would have won everything if they had ever played as partners. They talked about the entertainment they were getting up; they wanted to consult with Chauverney, but their good breeding and their social conscience made them include the doctor and Elly and Killian in everything.

If they've heard that talk about me, thought Killian, they wouldn't believe it. They're like that. But I'm not. I can believe in evil without any trouble.

The lunch was immeasurably soothing to him; and when the young couple asked him to play quoits with them, he accepted gladly. He had stepped into another world, polite and normal, in which Jocelyn was impossible. He could forget her. The young couple introduced him to some other people he had not spoken to before, and everybody liked him. He felt popular, quite blithe. Later he went into the pool again; before dinner he had cocktails with a little group in the smoke-room. And that evening he danced.

He had not danced since he came on board, nor wanted to; several times he had sat with Jocelyn watching the others, both of them in that mist of loneliness that she evoked. "I hate dancing," she had told him. "Being guided around. I get

in a sort of panic.” It was a defiance of Jocelyn to be dancing with the tall, superior girl from the Purser’s table; the music and the little coloured lights were a defiance of the ocean. None of these pleasant, nice people had mentioned Jocelyn, and that put her in her place. She was something that had happened on a voyage, that’s all.

Elly spoiled everything. “John,” she said, when he was dancing with her, “you’re going to the Bells’ aren’t you?”

“Let’s not talk about that now,” he said.

“Let’s *never* talk about it,” said Elly. “Just go, and that will be the end of it.”

“Sorry,” he said, “but it’s the end of it for me when I put my foot on shore.”

“It won’t be the end, if you thwart our little friend,” she said.

“She might just as well be thwarted now as later,” he said.

She gripped his hand and frowned, with a look of exasperation. “Don’t be pig-headed! I’ve tried to help you,” she said.

“I know that,” Killian said. “I appreciate it. But—”

She still held his hand, still frowning. “Then do this for me,” she said. “One weekend out of your life can’t hurt you, and it will really help me.”

“How do you mean, help *you*?” he asked.

“Oh, it’s complicated,” she said. “It’s crazy and horrible. But Jocelyn’s got it in her head that I can persuade you to come, and if you won’t come she’ll blame me.”

“Does that matter?” he asked, frowning himself. “Do you mind being blamed by her?”

“We all have our horrible little secrets,” she said with a sigh. “I do mind. She could make things *very* unpleasant for me.”

So she’s got something on you, has she? thought Killian. And this weekend is the cure for everything? I can’t see it. It’s easy to believe that Jocelyn would make all the trouble she could for anyone. I like Elly. She helped me, and I’d be glad to help her. But this weekend idea won’t do any good. Couldn’t. I’m not going to visit these Bells. I’m going to get away from Starry Eyes. Maybe it’s because I hate her, or maybe I’m afraid of her; but I’m going to get away from her.

He went to bed, and he was nearly asleep when someone knocked at the door.

“Radio message for you, sir,” said the calm and melancholy voice of the watchman.

He put on the light, and took the message. “Delighted to welcome you. Will meet ship. Luther Bell.”

He tore the message into pieces and threw them out of the port. He saw them spin and flutter in the light, and then float away into darkness. He put out the light and lay down and went to sleep at once, feeling that he had accomplished something important.

He went down to breakfast in the morning with a feeling of confidence, of vigour, that made him happy. Across the room he saw the two spinsters who had abandoned him; one of them gave a bleak little smile, but he did not return it. He was now, thank God, in another world, and they were left behind with Jocelyn and Mr. Bracey and the doctor and other shadows. Chauverney was alone at his table, smoking a cigarette.

“Oh, good morning!” he said eagerly, and pushed back his chair as if he were about to rise respectfully.

Angelo came forward, anxious and gentle, and Killian gave him his unvarying order.

“Did you get a wireless from Bell?” asked Chauverney, and laughed. “I never quite get used to American hospitality. It’s overwhelming. Still, I hear that the Bells do you very well. We ought to have a good weekend.”

“I’m not going,” said Killian.

Chauverney’s dark face was too mobile; his expression of surprise was exaggerated. “Oh,” he said, “I understood that when we talked the thing over yesterday with Mrs. L’O.... I thought the thing was settled.”

“I never considered it for a moment,” said Killian. “I have my own arrangements. I’m not going to visit these people I never heard of before.”

“Look here, Killian!” Chauverney began, and was unable to go on for a while. “Killian,” he said at last, “that girl can do you a great deal of harm.”

“Not too much.”

“Killian,” he began again, “it’s a matter of—” He stopped and made an odd grimace. “I’ll be frank,” he said, getting out another cigarette. “The situation is dangerous, Killian.”

“For me?”

“Yes.”

Killian waited.

“The doctor ...” said Chauverney. “He told me he heard the girl say—a very peculiar thing.”

“Oh, yes! She said I murdered her. But I don’t think that needs to be taken very seriously. In the first place, y’see, she’s not dead. And, in the second place, she’s already given the Captain one account of the thing. If she suddenly came out with another version, he wouldn’t be entirely convinced, would he?”

“If she makes a charge against you, he’s got to take it seriously.”

“I don’t have to,” said Killian. “When a girl tells me I’ve murdered her, I take it with a grain of salt.”

“There’s a bit more to it than that,” murmured Chauverney. “The doctor says he heard her say—says he couldn’t help hearing her say—that you were going to try it again.”

“She did say that.”

“In the ordinary course of things, I’d have reported it to the Captain. But in the circumstances, I advised the doctor to let it drop. I told him it was obviously”—he paused—“a love affair.”

“Very tropical love,” said Killian.

“And if you and she leave the ship together—go off for a weekend together—he’ll be convinced. He’s very fond of talking, y’know, Killian.”

“Everybody seems to be,” said Killian.

“For God’s sake!” said Chauverney in a sudden rage. “*Can’t* you behave decently? If you don’t care anything for your own reputation, can’t you consider other people?” He jerked back his chair. “Take my word for it,” he said. “If you won’t do this very trifling thing, all hell will break loose.”

He walked off, slender and elegant in his white uniform; and Killian drank his coffee. I won't go to the Bells', he thought. I won't behave decently. I won't consider other people. How many other people? I wouldn't know.

All morning he was waiting for a summons from Jocelyn; at noon he went to look for the doctor. "How's Miss Frey getting on?" he asked.

"She's exhausted," the doctor answered fretfully. "I've forbidden any visitors."

And it went on that way.

Everything was so pleasant. The weather was pleasant, calm and warm; the young couple and the heart specialist were pleasant, and they introduced Killian to two or three other pleasant people. This little group stayed together all the time; they never broke up without arranging to meet again. "Then I'll see you up at the swimming pool at four?... Then we'll meet in the smoke-room at half-past six?"

Nobody mentioned Jocelyn; she was not to be seen. Killian was able to forget her. He lived in this pleasantness for three days as if it were Heaven—no past, no future; and he made no plans. Then on the last night the weather changed.

The rain came down hissing into the rumbling sea; a rough wind blew; the ship rolled heavily. Killian started his packing before dinner, and it was difficult and irritating. Things fell down; the little wicker chair balanced on its hind legs, creaking; everything creaked and strained; his cabin was damp and chilly and blue with smoke. It was sad.

He shut and locked his trunk and got ready for dinner. They had had the Captain's dinner last night. Paper cups,

noisemakers, champagne at the Purser's table. Elly had been given a little Scotch bonnet of plaid paper, and she put it on with the style that was natural to her. To-night everyone looked strange. No more white suits. Everyone in dark clothes; all looking strange and a little common. Peasants going to town. I look like a gun-man, he thought. Dark and sinister. *What's happened to me, anyhow?*

The pleasantness had evaporated; no one had anything to say. All of them preoccupied, thinking ahead.

"There's Miss Frey," said the heart specialist in his quiet voice. "At the doctor's table."

Killian had his back to that table. If he didn't look at her, maybe she wouldn't really be there. The orchestra was playing Gems from Gilbert and Sullivan. Gems from Victor Herbert. The ship wallowed slowly, and the stewards came slanting across the saloon. Angelo leaned back a little, carrying his great ceremonious tray loaded with silver dishes.

Well, she's there, thought Killian. The more you don't look at her, the worse it is. He turned in his chair and saw her. He saw her face in profile, pale, sweetly delicate against her bright, misty hair. She wore a white silk blouse and it took the gentle lines of her slight shoulder and bosom. "That is beauty," he said to himself. Oh, I could look at you forever. Anyone could write a poem, looking at you. Your throat is beautiful, my beloved, and your little narrow feet are swift. Your waist is like a wand, and your legs are slim and nervous as a gazelle's. Beauty is only skin deep. Beauty is a delusion and a snare. Get thee to a nunnery.

He rose and went to her. "Glad to see you down again," he said earnestly "Feeling better?"

She raised her tired lids, and her eyes were violet, not starry. Dark; fathomless and dark. She didn't answer at all, and he went back to his place.

The pleasant people all went up to the smoke-room together. They had to do that. They sat there and had liqueur brandy. Only Elly had a Kümmel. The steward was nimble and composed. He had already presented his chits; he had already got his tips. Was he disappointed, or did he have some infallible system by which he could figure out in advance what he would get? They broke up early; they all had packing to do. Killian went to his cabin, and Jocelyn was there.

She was sitting in the little wicker armchair, her long legs stretched out, her arms hanging limply.

"Close the door," she said, and he did so. She held up her arms to him, and he drew her to her feet. She clung to him wildly, trembling. There was a dreadful sense of urgency and haste upon them, as if in a moment the world was going to end.

"*Forgive me!*" she cried. "I don't know any better."

"Dear," he said. "Don't, dear."

He stroked her hair back from her forehead; he had wanted to do that for a long time. She was sobbing, but with no tears; she clung to him; she turned to him for comfort, for help. But he felt no triumph, only a tenderness that was almost anguish, an overwhelming gentleness.

"Don't, dear," he said.

"I love you so," she said. "I don't care about anything else."



She was right. Nothing else mattered. He sat down on the chair and took her on his knees; she laid her head on his shoulder, one arm around his neck. “It’s only for a little while,” she said. “Let’s be happy while we can. Let’s not care.”

He didn’t care.

## CHAPTER FIVE

AT breakfast he gave Angelo a good tip—not lavish, but good. A degrading custom, the heart specialist thought, but Killian didn't agree. "It must make life a damn sight more interesting than a fixed salary," he said. "And it's an incentive to work, too. I wish I got tips myself."

"It's a matter of self-respect," the specialist said.

"Well," said Killian, "I have to get my money from somebody else. I can't demand anything. I have to take what's given to me, and I'd be glad of a little extra now and then. I could call it a bonus, of course."

He went on deck. They had run out of the bad weather; it was a fresh and glittering May morning, very exhilarating. He was not able to think and could see no necessity for trying. He lit a cigarette and stood by the rail; two or three people stopped to talk to him, and they were all happy. We're like convalescents, he thought, getting back into life. Where's my girl?

If people wanted to talk to him, he would talk. If they let him alone, it was just as good. He saw the gentle hills of Staten Island, and that made him remember taking a ride on the ferry last summer with a girl. A fat man in a grey cap with a camera slung over his shoulder sat down in Jocelyn's deck chair, and that upset Killian. He wanted to tell the fellow to get out. Get off the earth.

It was her earth. She came out on deck in a black suit with a collar of silver fox that brushed her pale face, a black hat with a veil across her eyes. She was a princess, shrinking a

little from contact with other people, aloof, almost frightened.

“Jocko?”

“All packed, dear?” he asked. “Everything under control?”

“I haven’t any money for tips,” she said. “All my money was in my little silver evening bag; and that went overboard.”

“Sit down, and I’ll get you some money.” He went to the Purser’s office and got a couple of traveler’s checks cashed.

“You pay them, Jocko,” she said. “I never know how much to give.”

“Steward, stewardess, table steward—anyone else, dear?”

“I don’t know, Jocko. The deck steward? He’s done things.”

Nobody came to talk to her. When he returned after distributing largesse, she still sat there alone. “How about your passport, Jocelyn? And your landing card?”

“I don’t know,” she said.

“You can’t land without your card.”

“Chauverney will do something about it,” she said.

He got her to look in her purse, and then in her pockets, and she found the card. “Do you feel all right?” he asked, troubled.

“I hate to go ashore,” she said. “I’m frightened.”

He sat down on the foot-rest of her chair; he lit a cigarette for her and tried to make her talk. Nothing she did, or said, was irritating to him. He had never before been patient with anyone, but for her he had a patience without limit. “Nothing to be afraid of,” he told her.

“I don’t want to go to the Bells’,” she said.

“Don’t then.”

“I have to,” she said. “Please, Jocko, don’t ask me about it. I have to go, Jocko. I wish I’d never told you anything about myself.”

“What you told me doesn’t matter.”

She gave him a veiled, furtive glance. “I haven’t had a drink for five days,” she said. “I hope I’ll never take another.”

You wouldn’t, he thought, if you had someone to look after you. A crazy kid, drifting around, lost and lonely. Wasting her life, throwing away her youth, her beauty, all the bewildered gentleness of her heart. If there were someone to help her....

The people at the rail were beginning to wave at friends they saw, or thought they saw, on the pier.

“Any of your family coming to meet you, Jocelyn?” he asked.

“No,” she answered. “They don’t know I’m on this ship. If they knew, they’d meet me, all right. With their hard-luck stories. They’d want money.”

“Have you any money?”

“Enough,” she said, and took his hand. “Jocko, don’t go away! Not yet! Wait till I get back on earth.”

“I’m going along with you.”

They waited until the first eager crowd had gone ashore; then they rose, without speaking, without looking at each other. She went down the gang-plank first. A woman came up to her and drew her aside, and Killian went to wait for his luggage. He did not look in Jocelyn’s direction. I don’t want

to see the Bells, he thought. They're rich. Probably Jocelyn's rich. And I'm feeling very poor, just now. My dear Jocelyn, who is this impossible young man? A mere clerk. A fortune hunter. I have nothing to declare. That's symbolic. C'est la vie. La vida. Vida es sueño. Well, if life is a dream, it's not a peaceful one.

"Mr. Killian?" said a voice. "I'm Harriet Lamb."

That's nice, thought Killian. Only who is Harriet Lamb? A darn cross-looking lamb *you* are, if you ask me. A tall girl, sunburnt to a biscuit colour, with sandy brows straight across her face, and half-closed eyes, and a straight, wide mouth; sandy hair, curly and short, with two points at the temples like little horns. No hat, no coat, no gloves—just standing there in a blue cotton dress.

"We're ready," she said. "If you'll come along."

"I'm sorry," Killian explained, "but I'll have to clear my baggage."

"The chauffeur will do that. Give me your keys and that thing—that slip—whatever you call it."

"Do you belong to the Bells?" he asked.

"Yes. Of course," she said, and held out her hand.

You want the keys, he thought. You're a bully. A rich vixen. He took her outstretched hand and shook it. "Very nice to see you, Miss Lamb," he said, earnestly.

Her eyes got a little narrower. "If you'll hand over your keys," she said, "we needn't waste any more time. The others are waiting."

He gave her his key ring, and she handed it to the chauffeur in uniform who hovered near her. "This way," she said, and set off, walking fast, toward the little group waiting

for her: Jocelyn, and Elly, and Chauverney. “Ready?” she asked.

“I’ll see you later,” said Chauverney, smiling at everyone.

“This way!” said Harriet Lamb again. She herded them into an elevator and down to the street, where a very superior open car waited. “Mr. Killian, will you sit in front with me?” she said.

She set off, driving adroitly through the traffic, and Killian looked sidelong at her. She’s handsome, he thought. In her way. Her features were a little sharp, and her underlip a little outthrust; and that, combined with her narrowed eyes, gave her a dogged and even menacing look. But, just the same, she was handsome, and finely put together—nice spaces, strong lines, good wrists. And who may *you* be, Miss Lamb? What’s a Lamb doing among Bells?

What am I doing among Bells? I don’t even know where I’m going. Long Island, Chauverney said. I’m just going along with Jocelyn. As if I couldn’t help myself. And maybe I can’t. That’s love, isn’t it? To get caught in a current, and dragged along. And drowned?

Very likely. I don’t know what I’m going to do with Jocelyn. Marry her and put her into a cute little apartment in Brooklyn? She may have a lot of money. She said she had “enough,” but God knows what that means. If she has a lot of money, that will be a problem. And if she hasn’t, that will be another problem. And it is my job to solve all problems, forever more. The great handicap is that I don’t seem to have any brains.

“Did you have a nice trip?” asked Harriet, suddenly.

“Fine, thanks!” he said.

She waited a moment. “Do you live in New York?” she asked, with the same suddenness.

“Yes, I do,” he answered.

“Do you work in New York?” she asked.

She wants to know about me, he thought. Why not? “I’m a clerk,” he said.

“A clerk?” she repeated. “What’s that?”

“I work in an office,” he said.

“Oh, that? ‘Clerk’s’ a funny word to use.” She waited again for a moment. “Have you got any judges or generals and so on in your family?” she asked.

“I had an uncle who was killed by the Black and Tans in Ireland,” he said.

“Well,” she said in a pompous way. “That’s very interesting.”

“I don’t think so,” said Killian.

“Rebel, are you?” she said, looking at him sidelong.

“No,” he said. “I’m resigned.”

“My mother likes to get a line on people,” she said.

“Mrs. Lamb has the right idea,” said Killian.

“My mother is Mrs. Bell,” she said.

They were out of the city now, and Killian looked about him dispassionately, at a landscape like a nightmare, filling stations of crude, fantastic designs and bright colours, hot-dog stands, fields of broken-down old cars.

“This is how the world is going to look after the next war,” said Killian.

“Nope,” said Harriet. “This is nothing but a transition stage.”

“It could be a transition into something even worse.”

“No,” she said in her curt fashion. “We’ve got enough brains and enough good will to make it better.”

“Who’s we?” asked Killian.

“If you’re psychologically healthy,” said Harriet, “you’ll always think We. Not Me—and the rest of the world.”

“What do you call it if you just think about Me, and not about the rest of the world at all?” he asked.

“That’s insanity,” said she.

Now they were driving through a town, old houses with wide lawns and fine trees delicately green.

“We had a letter from Jocelyn,” said Harriet. “She sent it air mail from Trinidad.”

“Oh, did she?” said Killian.

“It was a pretty queer letter,” Harriet said. “About her being murdered.”

“Well, well!” said Killian affably.

“She wrote that if anything happened—anything that looked like an accident—it would really be murder.”

They drove on and on.

“Did she say who was going to murder her?” Killian asked.

“I didn’t see all of the letter,” Harriet answered. “It was to Mr. Bell. But I think she did say.”

“Dramatic,” said Killian.

“Well,” said Harriet, “nothing did happen to her—no accident. So we needn’t bother.”

With nonchalance, with style, Harriet turned the car into a driveway. This is an Estate, thought Killian. You couldn’t see



the house at all until you turned a curve in the road. This is a Mansion, he thought. A long façade of yellow brick, faced with white, a brick terrace with a blue and white striped awning over it.

I'm going to meet Mr. Bell, he thought. I'd like to know... But it's what you'd call a delicate subject. Oh, Mr. Bell, by the way, I wonder if you got a letter from a—er—mutual friend, mentioning me as a possible murderer? If you did, I assure you, my dear Mr. Bell, that the thing is very much exaggerated. In the first place, the party is still alive; and, in the second place, she's engaged to me. If that's what you call it.

A man-servant came running down the broad stone steps and opened the doors of the car; and they got out: the lean and sandy Harriet, chic little Elly, and Jocelyn, like a lost princess, pale and strange.

He went up the steps with her, and a man came out of the house. He had to be Mr. Bell, Killian thought, a big man with a big chest pushed out nobly, a square, handsome, noble face, and white hair. The Stuffed Shirt Supreme, he thought. You could never talk to him, and he avoided talk. He has records inside that head.

“Mr. Killian? I'm glad to welcome you to Christmas House... There's a little story connected with that name. Some years ago a nephew of mine came here, as a small boy. It had been snowing, and he was much impressed by the various evergreens we have here. ‘Are those Christmas trees?’ he asked his mother. ‘Yes,’ she answered. ‘Yes.’ ‘Then,’ cried the little fellow, ‘this must be where Santa Claus lives!’ ”

Killian laughed and laughed, and Bell was pleased. “Harriet,” he said, “we might foregather, don’t you think?”

“They’ll want to wash first,” she answered.

“Then shall we say in fifteen minutes?” asked Bell.

“In half an hour,” said Harriet.

She herded the guests into the house. She gave Jocelyn to a housemaid; she gave Killian to the man-servant; and she herself took Elly. It was all done quietly and with an air of inexorable coolness.

“This is your room, sir,” said the butler, opening a door. A fine, large room furnished in chilly grey and blue; with the Chesterfield upholstered armchair, the thick carpet, the framed pictures, it looked wrong to see a stark little bed there. “This is the telephone, sir, connected with my quarters. If you wish anything.... This is the bathroom, sir.” He opened a door, and there was the bathroom with a man in it, a huge fellow wearing no more than a pair of white trunks. He stared at them from under his knitted brows, his head lowered like a bull’s, his big, brawny body easily balanced, his fingers curled. The white-tiled room glittered with light; he looked as if he were being exhibited in a box, or something too menacing to be let loose.

“Pardon me, sir!” said the butler, and shut him in again. “The bathroom is also used by Doctor Ponievsky, sir,” he explained, and went out, closing the door behind him.

“Now I’ve got to think,” Killian said to himself. He lit a cigarette and began to smoke, standing in the middle of the room, where he could watch the door into the bathroom and the door into the hall. That was how he felt. Threatened.

“That’s damned nonsense,” he told himself. But, just the same, that was how he felt. I’ve got to think. Suppose the worst has happened. The worst being that Jocelyn wrote about me to Bell. About me murdering her. But, my God, she’s not dead! That ought to count for something in my favour. What they call extenuating circumstances. Every time she accuses me of murdering her, that’s going to be my defense. But, Your Honor, she’s not dead. That’s a good point.

This is a nice room. This is a nice house. It’s a nice day. See it? Blue sky, sun shining. But I am frightened. I don’t know what I’m afraid of, but I’m frightened all right. It must be the devil. No use watching the doors. Dat ole Deb-bil, he come whar he want. It’s not funny. It’s like a fog. Like a damn cold sea fog. You can’t see ahead. What’s happened to my life? What’s happened to me?

There was a knock at the door. He moistened his lips and said, “Come in!” very politely. It was the chauffeur with his three bags.

“Will you want your trunk up, sir?”

“No thanks. I’m leaving to-morrow,” he answered.

When the man had gone, he rapped on the bathroom door and, getting no answer, went in there and washed. He took his comb and stood before the mirror, and his face was like a mask. A mask of a man in torment, black hollows under his cheekbones; his deep-set eyes were hollow; his mouth looked stretched.

“What’s the matter with me?” he cried in his heart.

It was the light over the mirror. It was nothing else. When he looked at himself in the bedroom mirror, he was all right.

A neat, sober young man in a dark suit. I don't know whether it's ten minutes or half an hour, or an hour and a half, he thought, but I'm going down now. To foregather. This must be where Santa Claus lives.

They were all out on the terrace, having drinks. As Killian appeared, a woman came toward him, a thin and long-waisted blonde, with a horse-like face, hollow cheeks, big, square teeth revealed by a dazzling smile. "Mr. Killian, I'm Sibyl Bell," she said. "This is Doctor Ponievsky. Eric, Mr. Killian."

"I think we have met before," said the doctor, with a wonderfully foxy look. He burst into a great laugh, and held out his hand. "I did not know, in that moment, that I had a neighbour yet," he said. "From now, we shall live very harmoniously, eh?"

"Help yourself, Mr. Killian," said Sibyl, with a gesture of her hand toward a table; and he went there and poured himself a modest drink of whisky. "There's soda and ginger ale," said Mrs. Bell.

"No, thanks," said Killian. He drank the whisky straight; then he looked round with a smile. A genial smile. Hello, boys and girls. Harriet was sitting on the stone balustrade; and Ponievsky stood beside her, looking down at her with bland delight. And she looked up at him with a frown.

He turned his head to find Jocelyn. She was sitting in a wicker chair at the end of the terrace all alone, no one talking to her, no one standing near her. She was still wearing her hat with a veil, and that gave her a fugitive air; she didn't belong here, or anywhere else.

"Where do you live, anyhow?" he asked.

“I told you I had a family,” she said. “They’ve got a floor in a house.”

“Is that your home?”

“Sure,” she said, with a faint smile.

“You’re too mysterious,” he said, curtly.

“It’s a good line.”

“Only it’s not a line,” he said.

“I’ll tell you anything you want,” she said. “Just ask me.”

“All right! Why are we all here?”

“I come here a lot. And I wanted you with me, Jocko.”

“All right! But why the others?”

She looked affrighted, and almost humble. “It came into my head, Jocko....”

“All right! We’ll let it go. But there’s another thing?”

“Yes?” she said, with her sorrowful dark eyes fixed upon his face.

Maybe I won’t go on, he thought. Maybe I’ll keep clear of the murder motif. It gets on your nerves. He finished his drink and stared into the empty glass. No, let’s be frank and manly. Square your shoulders and look the wench in the eye. Humph, humph. “You wrote to Mr. Bell,” he said. “Air mail from Trinidad. All about how you were going to get yourself murdered?”

“I didn’t know then,” she said.

“Didn’t know what?”

“I didn’t know I was going to love you,” she said, faintly.

“I’m sorry,” he said, “but I’m dumb. Brutish. No finesse. I’m afraid we’ve got to have an understanding.”

“We have an understanding,” she said. “We love each other.”

“Yes,” he said. “That’s nice. That’s cute. But still I want to know. Did you write Mr. Bell, air mail, that I was going to murder you?”

“I didn’t mention any names.”

“But you thought I *was* going to?”

She still looked down, and not at him. “I knew how you felt,” she said in a low, unsteady voice. “But I didn’t know how I felt. I didn’t know that even that wouldn’t kill my love.”

“Either you’re crazy,” he said, “or you’re a damned liar. Or both.”

She looked up then, straight into his eyes. They looked and looked at each other.

“I wasn’t the one who brought this up,” she said. “If you’d let me alone, I’d never have spoken of it again. I don’t care. If I’d died, I’d have gone on loving you until the end.”

Fury rose in his throat, choking him; his head pounded. “As long as you think that,” he said, “I quit.”

“Wait!” she said as he turned away.

“Nope! All is over.”

“It will be,” she said. “I’ll kill myself.”

“That’ll be a nice little change from murder,” he said.

He had turned his back on her. He could walk away now. This was the time to go; this was the only time, the last chance. If she had called him, he could have left her; but the blank silence was unbearable. He had to see what she was doing.

She was sitting there in her hat, with the veil over her eyes, completely alone, abandoned, and in despair. Yet it was not pity that made him stop, and it was not love. We belong together, he thought.

It was like that. Not pity and not love. When he had sat beside her, the day after she had been fished out of the sea, she had clung to him. She couldn't help it; she had nobody else. And he couldn't help it, either. They belonged together. He went back to her with a business-like smile. "Have a cigarette?" he said. "Pull yourself together. Don't be so morbid. It's boring."

"I'm tired!" she cried, and her eyes filled with tears.

"All right! Go upstairs and go to sleep."

"Come with me?" she asked.

"No," he said. "We'll meet at dinner."

She got up; stood with her hand on the back of her chair, swaying a little. As if she were drunk, or as if she were faint, ill—very ill. Her eyes were wide and blank in her pale face. She was incredibly slight and frail. She turned and started to walk away.

"Whither now?" he asked.

"Just going to take a walk, Jocko."

"I'll be seeing you," he said, in a hearty way, and went back to the others.

Ponievsky was now sitting on the balustrade beside Harriet; his twinkling, smallish eyes were fixed upon her steadily; he looked amused, pleased, charmed. His very obvious interest didn't embarrass her; she was talking to him in her own fashion, composed, curt, with long pauses. When she had nothing to say, she was silent, making no effort.

He went over to Elly, who sat beside Sibyl; Luther Bell was standing before them, nobly benevolent. They all talked very nicely. The country at this time of the year... Lovely, but we do need rain. Now—er—in Buenos Aires, the climate? Nice climate. Is that so? Luther Bell had a fine voice, flexible and deeply sincere. Did he, or did he not, receive a letter containing a statement to the effect that the defendant did wantonly, and with malice aforethought, murder the said Jocelyn Frey?

If she did write that to him, thought Killian, he's the wonder of the world. Doesn't show any curiosity about me. Maybe she mentioned another murderer. She said there were five, didn't she? It's a mistake; it's a big mistake to have drinks at half-past three in the afternoon. You don't want to go on drinking until dinner time, but what else can you do?

Sibyl took charge of that. "We'll have time to go and look at the sea wall and the pier," she said. "The storm made a perfect holocaust of them."

"Holocaust is a burnt sacrifice," said Ponievsky. "It cannot be that a storm should make it." He was not rude, he just knew everything, that was all.

"I'll take your word for it," said Sibyl.

She herded them all into the car, with Killian beside her, and she drove them off along a road lined with estates, down to the shore. They got out, and walked on a wide, empty beach; they inspected a stone wall battered down by the sea, and a wooden pier broken in two. The sea was calm enough to-day, pallid, no colour at all beneath the sky that was filled with mother-of-pearl light from the westering sun.

"The sea is a great hypocrite," said Ponievsky. "You see how she is purring now, when she has done all this bad



work.” He was pleased with this. “She is purring, but she is not asleep. She will strike again.” He glanced at Harriet to see if she appreciated this. But her face was not to be read; she was looking out over the sea. She moved away and he went with her.

“Don’t go there!” Sibyl screamed, suddenly.

Ponievsky and Harriet were on the pier; they were standing at the very edge of the break, both so tall, outlined against the pearly sky.

“They know what they’re doing, my dear,” said Bell.

“Come back!” screamed Sibyl, in a voice as harsh as a seagull’s; and they heard her, and they did come back.

It was growing chilly now. The tide was running out; the light was running out of the sky; a raw little salt wind blew up against their faces. They stood on the damp sand and waited until Sibyl gave the order to retreat; then two by two they went up the steps to the road and got into the car.

All very sad, thought Killian. But tranquil. Like the end of something. I got away from Jocelyn for two hours, and I didn’t think about her. I forgot her. That shows character. I’m not the type to be dominated by a woman. Oh, no, indeed! Not me.

Sibyl turned the car into the drive, and stopped before the house. A little army of men hurried toward them, coming out from behind the trees, like an ambush. It was astonishing.

“What’s this?” Sibyl demanded.

“We represent the press, madam,” said a bald little fellow with a cynical and tired face. “We’d like to get a couple of pictures.”

“Of what?” asked Sibyl.

“Of the victim,” said he.

Now it’s starting again, thought Killian, with a sort of despair.

## CHAPTER SIX

SIBYL had superb aplomb. She looked the invaders over with a hardy and calculating eye. "What victim?" she asked.

"We want a couple of pictures of the girl who went overboard," another man said. "You Miss Frey?" That was addressed to Harriet.

"Miss Frey isn't here," said Harriet.

A camera clicked, and another one. This will be a funny picture, thought Killian. A carload of us, sitting here like dummies. The victim—

"Miss Frey is resting," said Sibyl. "Come back tomorrow."

"Too late," said the little bald man. "Give us something now, will you? How did she happen to fall overboard?"

"She's too tired to talk now," said Sibyl.

"You her mother? Any relation?"

"I was on the ship when it happened," said Elly. "I'll be glad to tell you what I can." She got out of the car and faced the army, polite and smiling.

"Find Jocelyn!" said Sibyl in Killian's ear.

She and her husband joined Elly, it was their duty to stand by her. And it's my duty, is it, to find Jocelyn? He went into the house; and there was a parlourmaid standing in the hall with an eager air, which she quickly banished. "D'you know where Miss Frey is?" he asked.

"Yes, sir. Miss Frey's in her room, sir, resting."

"Show me which room is hers, please," he said; and the girl went briskly and neatly up the stairs, and along the

carpeted corridor.

“This is Miss Frey’s room, sir,” she said; trained not to say “her” or “she”; trained not to ask any questions, and not to show any curiosity. Only she lingered.

“Thank you,” said Killian, and she went away.

He knocked on the door, and there was no answer. Quite natural, he thought. She wouldn’t be in any room where you’d expect her; and if she was, she wouldn’t answer. He knocked again. “Jocelyn?” he said. Then he tried the knob, and the door opened. It was dusk in there, and a chilly breeze blew in at the open window. He felt for the switch and two lights came on: one over a dressing-table; and a little lamp on a desk. In that mild, rosy light he saw Jocelyn lying on the bed in her blouse and skirt, her shoes and her hat on the floor. Her eyes were closed, and she did not stir.

He went over to her; when he saw that she was breathing, he gave a profound sigh. So you’re not dead, he thought. You’re a nuisance and a pest, but God knows I don’t want you to be dead. You’re lovely, and gentle, and young—when you’re asleep. You look nice now when you’re peaceful.

No use waking her up just to tell her to keep quiet. Maybe she’ll wake up in a minute, he thought: and he lit a cigarette and sat down in a chair where he could look at her. I’ll watch over your slumbers, lady. Maybe we can be different, Starry Eyes. Maybe we can be a Young Couple. A nice, pleasant young couple. I wouldn’t know.

She stirred, and opened her eyes. “Jocko?”

He went over to her and sat on the bed beside her; he took her hand.

“I’m tired,” she said.

“Then take it easy,” he said.

“D’you care if I don’t come down to dinner?” she asked.

“No,” he said, “I don’t care.”

“Jocko,” she said, after a moment, “you couldn’t stop loving me now. No matter what happened.”

“Yes, I could,” he said.

“No!” she said, gripping his hand. “Tell me you couldn’t stop!”

“I won’t tell you that,” he said. “I’m not that type. Not the knightly type that suffers gladly.”

“You can’t get away from me,” she said. “No matter what happens.”

He rose, still holding her hand. “Take it easy!” he said. “I’ll stop in to see you after dinner.” He let her hand go, and she turned on her side again and closed her eyes.

I’m not that type, he thought. I would not love thee, whatever thou didst. I could get away. He went to his room; he took a cold shower, and dressed in his dinner jacket. Six o’clock, and time for a cocktail, he thought. I’m timid about going down. Sibyl and Mr. Bell and Harriet all know now about Jocelyn being murdered. Elly wouldn’t tell them that I was the murderer, but it might come into their heads. Maybe I look like that. It’s going to be in the newspapers now. The victim, that guy called her.

As he descended the stairs, he heard a pleasant sound of voices from below; and he heard Sibyl laugh, a loud and hearty laugh that didn’t go with her manner. She wasn’t born Mrs. Luther Bell, he thought. She’s been around. She’s a little battered. And her child’s a tough little guy. He followed the sound of voices to the library. The real McCoy, he

thought, shelves of books on three sides, thousands of books, an air of dignity and rather shabby comfort. Not Luther's doing. He must have had ancestors.

He was surprised to see Chauverney's neat, slender back, in a grey suit. I'd forgotten Chauverney, he thought. Here we all are, boys and girls.

"Martini or a Manhattan?" asked Sibyl, and Chauverney turned at the sound of her voice; he gave Killian his quick, vivid smile, only it turned into a grimace.

He looks shot to pieces, thought Killian. He looks ill.

"Oh, Martini, thanks," Killian answered. He felt unreasonably concerned about Chauverney. I never saw anyone look like that before, he thought. He looks like a ham actor registering mental anguish. Overdone.

Harriet was sitting in a chair, and Ponievsky on the arm of it. Elly was standing beside Luther Bell, talking to him, looking up at him with that artificial but very effectual charm of hers. So I talk to Sibyl, thought Killian.

She looked him up and down, smiling, as if to cover her secret calculations. "We're beginning to think about the Flower Show," she said, instantly. "In July. You must try to come. We got two prizes last year." She went on, talking about flowers, and she doesn't, thought Killian, give a damn about flowers. She was wearing a black dinner dress with floating sleeves that now and then fell away from her muscular arms; her black hair was done high on her head in glossy curls. "We're hoping for great things from this Angelo," she said.

The name checked Killian's wandering thoughts. "Angelo?" he repeated.

“Jocelyn found him somewhere,” said Sibyl. “She asked us to give him a job. Apparently he can do anything—gardening, cooking, anything.”

“That’s nice,” said Killian.

“Isn’t it?” said she.

There was Jocelyn, in a room upstairs, sleeping because she had taken something. Yet she ruled everything, as the moon rules the tides of the sea. She had brought them all here; she drew some people together, and others apart. Does she know what she’s doing? he thought. Why Angelo? It’s mysterious; I don’t like it. Tough luck to be in love with the moon.

The butler announced dinner, and they went into the dining room. It was a good dinner, a very good dinner, with superb service. Sibyl knows her job, he thought. The talk, too, was well handled; they all knew the right things to say. They talked about the theater, about books—best sellers—about how nice Maine was in the summer.

They had coffee in the library, and Bell suggested bridge. Killian didn’t know how to play, and Sibyl took charge; she put him on a sofa with Ponievsky, and she showed them rare books. She knew all the points, like a dealer, but she wasn’t interested; neither were they. It was a long evening, very long.

At the end of the first rubber, Chauverney excused himself. “I brought along some work,” he said. “We’re sailing again on Wednesday.”

Ponievsky took his place, and the game went on.

Sibyl brought another book for Killian to examine. Yawns rose in his throat; he could choke them down, but his eyes

filled with tears.

“Why don’t you go to bed?” she said.

“But I—” he began.

“Luther will keep on playing until somebody faints from exhaustion,” she said. “Come into the dining room, and I’ll give you a nightcap.” He pretended no more; he rose gladly and went with her, and she poured him a drink from a decanter on the sideboard. “I’ll join you,” she said, and sat on the edge of the table. With the floating sleeves thrown back, she looked, Killian thought, like a big, solid bird, a formidable bird.

“That’s a queer story about Jocelyn, isn’t it?” she said.

“Isn’t it?” he said.

“She fainted, and fell overboard,” Sibyl went on. “She didn’t mention it. Nobody mentioned it to anyone. The reporters picked up the story from the other passengers.”

“Well,” said Killian, “you know how it is. You don’t feel like talking about a thing of that sort.” His reasonable and confidential tone did not seem effective. Her pale eyes were fixed upon him steadily.

“It’s a queer story,” she said again.

“A distressing experience for Jocelyn,” he said. “But why queer?”

“Damn queer,” said Sibyl.

A furious impatience rose in him. He resented her calculating glance, her tone of mysterious significance. “And after that letter Mr. Bell got?” he said. “That makes it all very sinister, doesn’t it?”

She sipped her drink, which was a big one. “There’s only one thing on earth I’m really afraid of,” she said, “and that’s



newspapers. I don't give a hoot what happened on the ship  
—”

“I do, though,” he interrupted. “I'd like very much to know what you're thinking about that accident.”

“I don't think about it,” she said. “I don't care what happened. I don't care what's going to happen, either, as long as it doesn't happen here.”

The butler had come to the doorway; and there he stood, a heavy-shouldered man, with arms that hung in a helpless-looking way and dry black hair, parted in the middle. It's dyed, Killian thought, or it's a wig.

“What is it, Moffatt?” asked Sibyl.

“Drinks are required in the library, madam.”

She got up from the table. “Good night, John!” she said. “Sleep well.”

There's one comfort, thought Killian, as he went up the stairs. I'm having a nightmare now. Maybe when I'm asleep, it will be nicer. The hall upstairs was perfectly quiet; he stopped and listened, and then went hastily to Jocelyn's room. He knocked lightly; no answer. He tried the knob, and the door opened into windy darkness. He closed it and went to his own room. This is a nightmare, he thought, and I have no one to talk to about it.

No importa. What d'you want to talk for? Go to bed and go to sleep. It's now eleven P.M., courtesy of my own watch. To-morrow we will resume the adventures of our persecuted hero, John Killian, falsely accused of murder by practically everyone on earth. In the end the truth will triumph.

The bed was turned down; pajamas, dressing gown, and slippers laid out; there were two brand-new books on the

bedside table, a thermos jug of ice water, an ash tray, a cedarwood box of cigarettes. Sibyl knew her job, all right. A comfortable bed; a fresh wind blowing in at the open window. To-morrow will be another day.

He waked with a jerk; he sat up with his heart thudding. The curtains were streaming out into the room; there was a curious sort of stir in the dark; something flapped. And something was breathing. There was a pale rectangle before him. That's the door, he thought. The door is open. And there's something in here. If I move, it will move.

Face it. He reached out and turned on the lamp. And he saw Chauverney standing just inside the door, leaning against the wall, and staring at him with enormous dark eyes.

“What's wrong?” he asked. Chauverney didn't answer. He looked amazed. “What are you doing here?” asked Killian. “What d'you want?”

Chauverney raised his left arm a little, and his hand was red with blood. “A burglar,” he said. Killian got up and went toward him. “A burglar,” Chauverney said again. “I thought Ponievsky.... Get Ponievsky. Don't tell.”

He slipped down on the floor and lay there, graceful and limp in his light grey suit, his eyes closed. Killian shut the door into the room, and went through the bathroom to Ponievsky's room. “Ponievsky!” he said, not loudly.

He got an answer at once. “Yes?” The light came on, and the big man sat up in bed.

“Come and take a look at Chauverney,” said Killian, in a low, disagreeable voice. The great thing was for everyone to be quiet. He had a feeling that someone might suddenly yell, and that would be horrible.

Ponievsky got up and came along, barefoot, in red and white striped pajamas. He knelt beside Chauverney, he lifted that bloody hand; he rose with effortless ease, went back to his room, and returned with a little black bag and a wooden shoe tree. "I will raise him, and you will take off the jacket," he said.

He took Chauverney under the arms and held him up, and his head lolled forward on his chest, his face as white as paper and very tranquil. Killian got the jacket off, and the shirt sleeve beneath was soaked in blood. Ponievsky laid him down again, rolled up the sodden sleeve, and made a tourniquet with the shoe tree just above the wrist.

"We will take him on the bed," he said, and together they lifted Chauverney and carried him across the room.

"Is he dead?" asked Killian.

"He must go at once to the hospital," said Ponievsky. "A transfusion is necessary. Will you telephone for an ambulance?" He was getting things out of his bag, a hypodermic of some sort.

Killian took up the French telephone from the table, but nothing happened. "The wire's dead," he said.

"That telephone's only for the house," said Ponievsky. "You must go down to the library for an outside wire. Dial the operator and say you want an ambulance."

"No!" said Chauverney unexpectedly. "No, thank you."

"Take it easy," said Ponievsky with great gentleness.

"No hospital," said Chauverney. "No—talk..." He was crying out of a ghastly weakness; his eyes were a little open. "An accident," he said. "My razor—" Ponievsky wiped away

the tears that ran down his face. “Razor slipped,” said Chauverney. “Accident.”

Ponievsky raised him again and looked over his shoulder at Killian, raising his brows and forming the word “telephone” with his lips. Chauverney’s eyes were closed now; his head rested against Ponievsky’s broad chest as if in supreme trust. Killian crossed the room, opened the door, and came face to face with Sibyl in a scarlet chiffon negligee.

“What’s going on here?” she asked in a low, furious voice.

“A little accident,” said Killian. “I want to telephone.”

“What’s going on?” she repeated. She tried to push past him; and when he barred her way, she rose on tiptoe like a big, angry bird. She tried to look over his shoulder, but she was not tall enough. “I insist!” she said, raising her voice.

Killian went into the hall, and closed the door, and stood against it. “Chauverney’s had an accident,” he said. “I want to get an ambulance.”

“No, you don’t!” she said. “I’ll see for myself first, before you do anything of the sort. Let me in!”

“No!” said Killian, growing angry himself. “There’s no time to lose.”

She stood facing him, her pale eyes blinking; you might expect her to flap her wings and peck at him. “Now, see here!” she said. “Before you make all this trouble and scandal, I’m going to see if it’s necessary. You let me in.”

“Ponievsky’s there. He says it’s necessary—”

“Eric!” she said with a laugh. “If you leave Chauverney alone with Eric, he won’t need any ambulance. He’ll need a coffin.”

The door opened and Ponievsky looked out. "You telephoned?" he asked.

"I'll telephone," said Sibyl. "For my own doctor."

"For an ambulance," said Ponievsky. "It must be quick, too."

"All right!" she said curtly, and turned away.

Ponievsky withdrew, closing the door. Killian stood where he was for a moment, and then an idea came into his head. He went after Sibyl. She was halfway down the stairs when she heard him; she glanced back and began to run. He ran, too; but she had a good start. She went into the library and locked the door. He could hear the little clicking of the telephone dial; he heard her voice. "Doctor Jacobs? This is Sibyl Bell. Can you come at once, please?... Yes. Yes, an accident. Yes...."

She came out; she had the key in her hand, and—she locked the library door. She went by Killian with a glare, and up the stairs again. Again he went after her, and into the bedroom. Ponievsky was smoking a cigarette, standing at the bedside; there was an odd look on his face. A noble look, was it?

"She didn't send for an ambulance," said Killian. "Only for a doctor, and she locked the library."

"Give me the key, madam!" said Ponievsky.

"No!" said she.

With no appearance of effort he opened her fingers and took the key. "Please wait here, Killian," he said, and he and Sibyl disappeared.

There was a dark patch on the brown rug where Chauverney had lain. Dark, not red, a very large patch.

Everything was perfectly quiet. Here I stand, thought Killian, with my two hands as long as each other, and the man on the bed dying; or maybe it's dead he is already. What's the idea of talking to myself like a stage Irishman? Well, because it's like a play. A high-brow play, done with masterly restraint. A burglar, Chauverney said at first. And then said an accident. What if it's murder?

## CHAPTER SEVEN

I've got murder on the brain, he thought. Murders aren't like this. They're done in the dark, with a scream, chairs and tables upset. People start running around. Not quiet, like this. Chauverney looked astonished when he came in. Surprised to find himself murdered? Well, who wouldn't be? Jocelyn wouldn't. She expected it. Maybe she wants to be. Perhaps there's a name for that. Desire-to-get-murdered neurosis. Ponievsky was smoking. I could smoke.

He looked at Chauverney to see if he would object to smoking. He looked very comfortable now, very graceful. He also looked dead. I'm sorry, old man. I'm damn sorry. This is sad. This is the saddest thing I ever saw.

"No need for you to stay here," said Ponievsky.

"Is he dead?"

"No. An ambulance is coming."

"A knife wound?" said Killian.

"Exactly," said Ponievsky, and paused. "The wound had been bleeding for quite some time before you called me."

"So what?" asked Killian.

Ponievsky shrugged his big shoulders. "Another doctor is coming. He will give his opinion."

"I suppose we'll be asked questions."

"Then we shall answer them," said Ponievsky.

He sat down near the bed, and Killian wandered out of the room. It was dim and quiet in the hall, all the doors closed. That wasn't right. People ought to be running around, up and down the stairs, bringing up hot water, being agitated.

The library door was unlocked now, the lights were on; it looked bright and comfortable in there. He lay flat on the divan, with no pillow, his knees drawn up, hands clasped above his head. I want to think this out. It's important....

Sibyl was shaking him in a rough way that made him furious. "Stop that!" he said. He wanted to kill her.

"You must get to bed," she said. "You can't stay here."

"Yes, I can!" he said.

"My dear," she said, using the society voice. "I've got a nice comfy room ready for you, and all your things moved into it. You must get to bed."

"I'm very comfy here."

They looked squarely at each other.

"Has Chauverney.... Is Chauverney ..." he asked.

"He's fine!" she said, a little shrill. "Doctor Jacobs is upstairs now. He's a marvellous doctor."

He lay flat on his back, and she stood over him like a big, angry bird.

"For God's sake, get up and go to bed," she said.

"Why?"

"I don't want the servants to find you lying here. It's getting on for five o'clock."

"I don't want to go to bed at five o'clock."

"I ask you as a favour to get out of here—go upstairs where you belong."

"I'll get out of here," he said.

"And go upstairs."

"No," he said. "No, thanks."



She sat down on the divan near his feet. “You’re plenty hard, my lad,” she said.

His eyes narrowed; he lay still, thinking about that, in wonder and something like fear. What makes her say that? I’ve never been quarrelsome. I’m quiet. Orderly. Excellent sense of discipline. They wrote that to my father when I was in boarding school. Sure. All right. But *you* know about that other one. That crazy Irishman you *could* be. You haven’t been like that yet, but you could be. Maybe you will be. Maybe it’s coming on you now. Jocelyn said I tried to kill her. She said I had “that look” on my face. “Well, I haven’t any grudge against you,” he said.

“Then couldn’t you cooperate a little?” she asked.

“Just by going upstairs?”

She gave a one-sided smile, curiously tough. A tough baby, she was. That soft, red chiffon negligee didn’t suit her. The whole house was full of emotion, grief, pity, fear. The great motif—Love and Death—kept coming up now and again. Like a Wagner opera. Liebestod. And the only one who seemed undisturbed by love or pity was this Sibyl.

“All right!” he said. “I’ll cooperate.”

As he sat up straight, he saw her stiffen; she sprang up and went toward the door with a slightly rolling gait. A little bow-legged, he thought.

“Well, doctor?” she said in a brisk tone. “How’s the patient?”

“There’s no immediate danger,” said a deep, deep grave Voice. “But I should advise a nurse.”

“Oh, of course! If it’s *necessary*,” said Sibyl. “But you know how a nurse upsets a household. Harriet and I are both

good at looking after sick people. Don't you think we might manage, doctor?"

"Possibly," said the deep, deep voice. "Possibly. I'd like to know where she got that stuff."

"*She?*" Killian said to himself.

"I know she's in the habit of taking some sort of sleeping medicine," said Sibyl. "I've always thought it was dangerous to keep that stuff beside you. You might take a dose, and then forget you'd taken it and take another. That must happen sometimes."

There was a pause.

"I have an operation at the hospital at eight," the deep voice resumed. "I'll come back here as soon after that as I can. And possibly Miss Frey will be able to answer a few questions then."

"Oh, I'm sure she will," said Sibyl.

"I trust so," said the deep voice. "In the meantime, your daughter has full instructions."

"Harriet is wonderful with sick people," said Sibyl.

"She seems level-headed," said the deep voice. "Well, I'll be back, Mrs. Bell."

The front door closed, and Killian came out into the hall. "New developments," he observed.

"Yes," she said. "Jocelyn was sleeping too soundly. We couldn't rouse her, and sent for the doctor."

"What about the other patient?"

"There isn't any other patient," said she.

"I thought Chauverney was a little indisposed?"

“He rallied,” she said, with a one-sided smile. “He’s gone.”

“What d’you mean by ‘gone’?”

“He’s left the house,” she said. “He was in a temper, and he left.”

“Well, no,” said Killian, “I don’t think it was like that.”

“You think too much,” said Sibyl, and turned away and went up the stairs. Killian went after her.

“I want to see Jocelyn,” he said.

“Come right along!” said Sibyl, and opened the door of Jocelyn’s room.

In the little circle of lamplight Harriet had turned into a blonde, fair-haired, fair-skinned, in a white terry robe over white pajamas. She sat in an armchair facing the bed, her knees crossed, hands clasped behind her head, in an attitude of quiet, unshakable patience. She looked at Killian out of the corners of her long, narrowed eyes and didn’t stir.

He went to look down at Jocelyn. There was a change in her. She looked flat, sunken into the mattress, as if crushed. Her breathing was shallow; she was white as paper, with dark rings under her eyes and a reddish stain about her mouth. “What’s that?” he asked, in a whisper. “What’s happened to her mouth?”

“Doctor Jacobs gave her an emetic,” said Harriet, in an ordinary tone. “And then a stimulant.”

“Has she been like this—been unconscious long?” he asked, and he would keep on whispering. Harriet would keep on using a normal tone.

“She was conscious while the doctor was working on her,” said Harriet. “Very much so. Now she’s supposed to be

resting.”

“How would you know if she got worse?”

“By her pulse,” said Harriet.

“I’d like a nurse for her,” said Killian.

“My dear,” said Sibyl, “don’t be a fool. *You* ought to be just as anxious as we are to keep this quiet.”

He meditated upon that for a moment.

“Doctor Jacobs will be coming back before long,” said Harriet. “He’d be almost sure to notice if we murdered Jocelyn.”

“And we hate publicity,” said Sibyl.

There was an unholy humor in these two women, and a complete understanding. I probably am a joke, thought Killian. Doctor Jacobs said she wasn’t in any immediate danger. He was willing to leave her in their charge. Of course, he doesn’t know all I know. I’m a sort of expert on murders that aren’t murders. But even at that.... “I’ll stop in later,” he said.

Harriet smiled a drowsy, tigerish smile. It irritated him and he wanted to say something about it, but that was not practical. He went away, with a curious sense of defeat. It was unbelievably quiet on the upper floor. All the doors were closed except one. He went to that one, found a neat, well-lighted room, bed turned down, his pajamas laid out for him. He surveyed this for a moment and then went to that other room. It was in darkness, and the window wide open; he turned on the switch, and there was the dark patch on the rug. They can’t get away with this, he thought. This is too much.

Chauverney had been dying. Maybe he was dead now. They couldn’t hide him permanently, dead or alive. Who’s

“they?” Who wants to do this? What did they *do* with the poor devil? Throw him out the window? Well, questions will be asked. If not by anyone else, then by me.

The sky outside the windows was pale, a strange filmy grey; he stared at it, disturbed. Ha! It’s the dawn! I’ve got to make enquiries. I must be kind-hearted because I care. I care a hell of a lot about what’s happened to Chauverney. I didn’t like to see him lying there, dying. Ponievsky seemed to be kind. But he’s a dark horse. Sibyl said if you leave Chauverney alone with Eric, he’ll need a coffin. What did she mean by *that*? She’s a dark horse, too. Veneer of grande dame on top of something very different.

The air had a piercing chill in it. The dawn wind, he thought, if there is such a thing. So Jocelyn had taken a drug, had she? Took it herself, or did someone give it to her? Trying to murder her? She’s so fond of murder. This thing is certainly developing. Drugs and knife wounds. Steps ought to be taken. By me? Certainly. By you. Do something. Find out what’s happened to that poor devil. Find Ponievsky. I am a good citizen. Law-abiding. I will not countenance murders.

The dawn wind was very cold. That, or something else, made him shiver. He went through the bathroom and knocked on Ponievsky’s door. No answer, and it was locked on the other side. He went back and then into the room got ready for him, and Sibyl came in there after him.

“For God’s sake, what a pest you are!” she said. “Why don’t you go to bed?”

“I want to find Chauverney,” he said.

“My dear, I told you he went away. He packed his bag, and telephoned for a taxi.”

“Well, no. He couldn’t pack a bag. He couldn’t telephone.”

“You don’t *want* to make trouble, do you?” she asked.

“I don’t care much about that,” he said. This room faced east, and from the window he saw rosy clouds coming up softly above the horizon, beautiful and amazing. The moon is beautiful, but it is not amazing. You wait for it calmly. But the sunrise takes your breath away.

“Come back to earth!” said Sibyl.

You bird of ill omen, he thought. “I’m going to find Chauverney,” he said. “If I have to tear everything wide open.”

“He’s probably gone back to his ship. You can call him up on Monday.”

“Let’s not be funny. The man was dying.”

“My dear, be sensible. You wouldn’t know if a man was dying or not. I tell you he went away in a taxi.”

“Alone?”

“With a driver.”

“I’ll get hold of the driver then. What’s the name of the garage he got the taxi from?”

She didn’t answer.

“I’m going through with this,” said Killian.

She looked ugly, with deep lines from her nostrils to the corners of her mouth; she looked weary and miserable. “Be sensible,” she said in a half-hearted way.

“I will be,” said Killian. “I just want a few words with the driver who took Chauverney—somewhere.”

The sun was sliding up, bright gold; the rosy clouds were vanishing in the flood of light; everything was growing clear

in outline but still without colour. A man was walking over the lawn, far away, looking all black and grey, like a figure on the screen; he was slender and straight, and slanting backward a little. “That’s Angelo,” Killian said to himself. “I’d think it was queer, seeing him here, if I had any standards of queerness left.”

“Charlie Chauverney didn’t go in a taxi,” said Sibyl. “And didn’t pack a bag.”

“Elly packed a bag for him. She and Eric Ponievsky took him in one of our cars.”

“Took him where?”

“To a hospital, a good long way off.”

“Like a rat,” said Killian thoughtfully. “Will not, *must* not, die in the house.”

“He’ll be lucky if he dies,” she said. “He tried to die.”

“Suicide?”

“What do *you* think?” she asked. “Do you believe in the burglar—cutting his wrist with a knife? Or do you think it was an accident?”

“Well, how about murder?”

“Be sensible,” she said. “Would he just stand still and let somebody cut his wrist? And not even complain about it?”

“I’ve got more imagination than you,” said Killian. “How do you like this? Someone creeps up on him with a knife. There’s a struggle, in which Chauverney gets hurt. He dies without mentioning the name of his assailant, because it’s someone he loves.”

“Elly?” said she. “Do you see Elly creeping up on anyone with a knife?”

“Doesn’t have to be Elly.”

“Well, he didn’t love *me*,” she said. “So I’m out of it. And Jocelyn was sleeping off a dose of something. There’s nobody else in the house he would have loved—except Harriet, and he didn’t love Harriet. No, you’d better keep out of this.”

“The hospital’s going to make enquiries. The steamship company, too.”

“I know that,” she said. “There’s going to be plenty of trouble. You needn’t make it worse.”

“D’you think it’s making things better, to do this?” asked Killian. “To hustle a dying man out of your house? By the way, what happened to the ambulance?”

“Eric sent for it, and I countermanded it the moment he was out of the way. I’ll do more than that,” she said. “You’d be surprised how much I’d do to avoid a scandal.”

“I don’t think much of your technic.”

“I took a chance,” she said. “I’ve taken a lot of chances in my lifetime.”

“Are you lucky?” asked Killian.

She looked very ugly and very tired now. “Yes,” she said, “I’m a damn sight luckier than I deserve.” She gave a sigh. “Be sensible, will you?” she said once more, and left him.

Maybe I will be sensible, he thought. Ponievsky I don’t know about. But I’d bet on Elly. If she’s had a hand in this, it can’t be what it looks like. Perhaps it’s not complicated. Just a plain honest suicide. He slashed a vein, like a Roman. But when the end comes, you want someone else around.

Why was it me, I wonder? No reason, maybe. He just opened the first door that was handy. Motive? That’s outside



my field. I don't know enough about him.

The suit he had worn ashore was hanging up in the closet; he changed into that; taking plenty of time about dressing. "This is Sunday morning," he said to himself. "I'll have to go back to New York to-night, so that I can be at the office bright and early Monday morning." But I'm not going until I've talked to Jocelyn, he thought. Not until I know she's all right. Maybe I could take her with me. And what would I do with her? Put her in a pumpkin shell. And there he kept her very well. Ancient wisdom in that nursery rhyme. Poor guy who had a wife and couldn't keep her. Even in those days that happened.

There was a knock at the door. "*Come* in!" he called; and in came Harriet, in a neat, clean, rust-coloured linen dress. This time her hair was red.

"Would you like to come and have breakfast on the boat?" she asked.

"No, thanks," Killian answered. "I'm waiting until the doctor comes back."

"I'd like to tell you something before the doctor comes back," said Harriet. "We can be back here when he comes. It's something you'd better hear."

"Something I'll like to hear?" he asked, warily.

"No," she said. "Something pretty bad for you to hear."

"Then suppose we skip it?"

"And just let it come down on you like a ton of bricks?" asked Harriet.

"All right!" said Killian, after a moment. "Let's go."

## CHAPTER EIGHT

THERE was a car waiting outside the house, and they got into it.

“Give!” said Killian.

“Wait till we get on the boat,” said Harriet.

“That’s a good technic,” he said, approvingly. “That’s the way to make bad news worse.”

“Oh, don’t be such a clown!” she said. “This isn’t any fun for me.”

“Then why are you doing it?”

“I’ve got to.”

“I know why you’re *going* to tell me this bad news,” Killian said. “Because it’s *right*. It’s the Decent Thing to do. It’s playing the game. It’s—”

“Oh, shut up!” she said, and that made him laugh.

He liked her to say that. She narrowed her eyes so that her ginger-coloured lashes were meshed; she looked like a cross little yellow cat, and he liked that. He liked her to be cross and vigorous and young.

“How old are you?” he asked.

“Twenty-two,” she answered.

Three years older than Jocelyn, are you? he thought. Only Jocelyn hasn’t any age. She’s like the Lorelei, or one of those things. This Harriet is young. “Do you go to college?” he asked.

“No,” she said, “I’m a teacher.”

“What kind of teacher?”

“I teach art,” she said. “Want to make something of it?”

“Well, are you an artist?”

“Very talented,” she said.

He was delighted; that was the only word. He was pleased by everything she said, pleased by her looks and by her voice that was a little rough. He admired the way she handled the car.

“Do you like me?” he asked.

“Yes,” she said.

She turned into a lane, with high rocky banks; they came out of this on to the shore road and, abruptly, upon a miserable little settlement of tumbledown houses, wired chicken yards, a clothesline strung between two pine trees, and then a strange blank space, with a shack, a pier, and a signboard. Boats for Hire. A motorboat was tied up to the pier, very smart, white and yellow paint, and a dark blue awning. As Harriet was locking the car, a man came out of the cabin, stepped on to the pier, and came toward them. A big, gaunt man, burnt brick red, with fair hair rather long and parted on the side, a string of fair moustache. He was in shirt sleeves and braces, with a white-covered yachting cap on the back of his head.

“Well, good morning, Captain,” said Harriet.

He touched the visor of his cap. “ ’Morning,” he said. “Where’s Miss Jocelyn?”

“Sound asleep,” said Harriet. “I’ve brought Mr. Killian.”

He touched his cap again, and turned back to the boat. There were wicker armchairs on the afterdeck, and a table. Harriet and Killian sat here, and the Captain brought them an excellent breakfast: coffee, toast, bacon and eggs, melon.

Nobody said a word. When he had set everything before them, he went inside and started the engine, and off they went. There was a good breeze, the awning slatted, the white tablecloth fluttered.

“Swede?” Killian asked.

“Scandinavian of some sort,” she answered. “Anderson, or Peterson, or Larsen— I’ve forgotten, because he’s always called Captain. He was a ship’s captain once, but something happened to him.”

“What happened to him?”

“It’s a mystery,” said Harriet.

“Do you know it?”

“Yes,” she said. “It’s pretty ghastly. Poor devil ...! Jocelyn found him, you know. She brought him here, and Mr. Bell gave him a job—sort of caretaker and so on.”

She poured him another cup of coffee, in a nice domestic way. “Light a cigarette,” she said, “and take it easy.”

“Because now you’re going to tell me the worst?”

She lit a cigarette for herself and leaned back, looking out over the water with her narrowed eyes. “It’s about Eric Ponievsky,” she said. “And it’s not nice.”

“And it’s about Jocelyn too,” he said.

“You’re right,” said Harriet. “Pretty nearly every damn thing is about Jocelyn.”

“Maybe you don’t like her.”

“I don’t dislike her,” said Harriet. “I’m sorry for her. But I wish she was dead.”

“Out of sheer kindness?” asked Killian.

“I want to tell you about Eric,” she said. “I’m going to marry him.”

“Is that bad news?”

“You needn’t be so flip,” said Harriet. “You won’t be when I’ve finished. Eric was on the way to being a famous surgeon. And Jocelyn ruined him.”

“I knew that was coming,” said Killian.

“This happened two years ago—”

“She started ruining people at seventeen?”

“God knows when she started,” said Harriet. “This was two years ago. Eric had offices in New York then, and a fine practice. Somebody sent Jocelyn to him—I don’t know why. She said she suffered a lot of pain; but he couldn’t find anything wrong with her, and he told her so.”

“Because he’s like that,” said Killian. “Honest. Sterling. Noble.”

“He’s a professional man with decent standards,” said Harriet. “Does that seem so extraordinary to you?”

“All right! I’ll take Ponievsky’s high standards for granted,” said Killian.

Harriet gave him a steely look, which he met without wilting. They were enemies now, and perfectly frank about it.

“She kept at him to give her something for this mysterious pain,” Harriet said. “When he refused, she went back to the waiting room and sat there, crying.”

“Is that what ruined him?” Killian asked.

“It didn’t help him any. One of his patients tried to console Jocelyn, and she told Eric he was heartless about the poor

child.”

“Yes,” said Killian.

“She came back the next day, and Eric thought it would be better to see her. He tried to talk honestly to her. He advised her to see a neurologist. But she said she’d taken a fancy to him.”

“Girls of seventeen don’t talk like that.”

“She probably didn’t talk like that,” said Harriet. “I’m just giving you the gist of it.”

“And he repulsed her.”

“He did. The next evening she came to the hotel where he lived and called his room from the lobby, where everyone could hear her. She said the pain was unbearable, and would he please give her something for it. That put him in a spot.”

“Why?”

“Doctors can’t afford that sort of thing. He came downstairs to see her; and he gave her a prescription for some harmless little pills, to keep her quiet. Then he tried to find out who was responsible for her, and the next day he got in touch with her father. After that he had the whole crew on his neck. They tried to blackmail him; and when he wouldn’t pay, they put on the screws. They came to his office and to his hotel. They accused him of giving her habit-forming drugs. They drove away his patients, and it finished up with a scene in his hotel that got into the newspapers. He had to quit.”

“That’s Eric’s story.”

“Yep,” she said, “that’s Eric’s story. He came out here, to start over again. Mother introduced him to people, and he

was just getting on his feet again. You can imagine how he felt when she turned up yesterday.”

“No, I can’t imagine Doctor Eric Ponievsky’s feelings.”

“He knew he was likely to meet her some day at the house. He was ready for that. But she started right in again with the old game. Begging him to give her something for her nerves.”

“And he still wouldn’t.”

“Naturally not.”

“Does he expect to be ruined all over again?”

The Captain appeared and began clearing the table. “I lash de wheel,” he said. “I know dese waters like a book. Like a book.”

“You certainly do,” said Harriet.

“Maybe Miss Jocelyn come out dis afternoon?”

“Maybe she will,” said Harriet.

“My! Such a lovely young lady,” he said.

He took off the cloth and shook it out over the rail. Seagulls came swooping down for the crumbs. “Dose birds are wise,” he said, and vanished again.

Harriet was trying to light another cigarette, but the wind blew out one match after another.

“Allow me!” said Killian, rising. He shielded a match in his hands, and their eyes met. She drew on her cigarette, and leaned back again.

“Eric’s gone,” she said. “He waked me up last night and told me. He said Jocelyn had taken some sort of drug. And he said she’d be sure to say he gave it to her.”

Killian remained standing. “I wonder how he knew she’d taken this subtle drug?” he said.

“He went to her room,” said Harriet. “He wanted to talk to her. And he found her in a stupor.”

“Then what did he do?”

“He waked me. He told me he was going to get out and stay out until Jocelyn had gone.”

“Then I suppose you sent for Doctor Jacobs?”

“No. Eric said there wasn’t any danger.”

“I think Eric understated the case.”

“Think whatever you please,” said Harriet. “Now I’ve told you.”

“Was it just to warn me?”

“No,” she said, “I want to make a plea. I want to beg you to take Jocelyn away.”

Killian stood with his hands in his pockets, looking out at the water. “Let’s go home,” he said.

Harriet got up and called inside to the Captain. “Let’s go home!”

The boat made a fine sweeping curve, and headed back. “You don’t believe me?” Harriet asked.

“It’s not your story,” he said. “It’s Ponievsky’s.”

They didn’t say another word. A kid of seventeen, Killian thought, crying in a doctor’s waiting room. A blackmailing family. What sort of life has she led? What sort of breaks has she had? And if there could be anyone to give her a break, anyone to stand by her, who knows if she wouldn’t turn out to be quite a decent little guy? She’s stopped drinking. Maybe she’ll stop all the rest of it. Maybe it’s worth trying.



The boat was heading toward the pier, straight as an arrow.

“Anyhow, I’ve told you,” said Harriet. “You know what to expect. Jocelyn’s going to accuse Eric of giving her something. Poison; she’ll probably say.”

“And what’s her motive for that?” Killian asked. “Just for the sheer fun of ruining Eric?”

“She’s afraid of Eric. She’s afraid he’ll tell you the truth about her.”

“A subtle revenge,” said Killian. “She poisons herself so that Eric can be accused of poisoning her.”

“All right!” said Harriet. “I quit.”

The boat glided along into the pier, and Harriet jumped ashore, quick as a cat. “Thanks, Captain!” she said.

“Come again! Come again!” he said.

They moved toward the car, side by side.

“There’s this,” said Killian. “Jocelyn won’t stay in your house forever—”

“Not *my* house,” said Harriet.

“She won’t stay in Mr. Bell’s house forever. She’ll leave, and this Eric can come out of hiding, and all will be well.”

She said nothing to that; she started the car and they drove off.

“Eric isn’t hiding,” she said presently. “He’s just staying at a sort of little hotel until Jocelyn gets out. We’ll stop and see him.”

“I don’t want to see him.”

“I do,” said Harriet.

“In fact, I won’t see him,” said Killian. “I want to get back to see Doctor Jacobs.”

“You’ll get back in plenty of time,” said Harriet. “I’m just going to stop by and see Eric.”

“I suppose I can get a taxi,” Killian said.

She drove down the lane that was like a miniature canyon again, and this time she turned right, along a smooth, empty road lined by fields, up a hill, through a stone gateway with a sign: The Maples. Private Board.

What’s private board, anyhow? Killian thought. What would public board be? Before them was a big, old-fashioned house with a veranda. Rocking chairs, he thought. Stewed apricots and baker’s cake, Sunday night.

“I’ll only be a minute,” said Harriet. “I want to tell Eric that *you* know the truth.” She stood in the road, looking down at the ground. “Look here!” she said, glancing at him. “If I bring Eric out here, could you say something?”

“No,” he said. “I’m sorry, Harriet.”

“You wouldn’t have to say anything direct. You could just have an attitude. Just let him see that you don’t think he’s a—a criminal.”

“I’m sorry,” he said again, “but I haven’t got any attitude yet.”

“You’ve seen Eric,” she said. “You know perfectly well he’s not a poisoner.”

“I don’t know anything,” said Killian.

“You don’t believe what I told you?”

“I believe you believe it,” he said. “But everything has two sides, or more. Don’t bring him out, Harriet.”

“I’m going to,” she said. “If you can look at him, and still think he’s poisoned anybody, all right.”

“Let’s skip it, Harriet. Give me time to think about this.”

“Time to hear Jocelyn’s version,” she said. “No! You’ve got to see Eric, even if it’s just to say good morning, before you listen to Jocelyn.”

She went off along the drive, and Killian lit a cigarette. I don’t think Ponievsky tried to poison Jocelyn, he thought. I don’t believe in murder. It’s unnatural—very poor taste. I won’t countenance it. It’s quite possible that Jocelyn *will* accuse Ponievsky. She did it to me. She said *I* murdered her. But I lived through that, and I wasn’t ruined. Ponievsky can bear it. Harriet takes the whole thing too seriously. That’s love.

The Maples was very quiet, very, very quiet. Why wouldn’t it be, on a Sunday morning? I must be nervous. I’m having presentiments. Behind this Sunday-morning quiet lies Tragedy. Battle, murder, and sudden death. Harriet didn’t seem to be coming out and bringing Eric. I’ll smoke one more cigarette, and then I’ll take steps. I want to get back and see Doctor Jacobs.

The screen door gave a muffled bang behind Harriet. Coming out alone. She walked jerkily, coming down hard on her heels. He opened the door of the car, and she got in beside him.

“Well!” she said in a loud, harsh voice. “Well, he’s gone.”

Killian waited until they had turned into the highway, leaving The Maples behind them.

“Gone?” he repeated.

“He’s run away,” said Harriet.

## CHAPTER NINE

D’you realize what this means, you poor little devil? thought Killian. He glanced sidelong at Harriet. Yes, he thought. You realize, all right.

“Harriet,” he said. “I’m sorry. I mean it.”

“Well,” she said, “you ought to be glad. It’s a big help for Jocelyn’s version.”

“Jocelyn hasn’t given any version yet.”

“Please don’t be mild and wise!” she cried. “I’m not going to be hypocritical about this. I—Here! Do you want to drive?”

“Yes,” he said. She was crying. She stopped the car, and they changed places. “Next left turn,” she said. “I know what this means. Eric wouldn’t run away for nothing. It’s possible that he made some pretty awful mistake. Gave her the wrong medicine—something like that.”

“Yes,” Killian said, in a thoughtful way. “That’s possible.”

“Well!” she said. “I don’t believe that, and neither do you.”

“We’ll have to wait and hear what Jocelyn says.”

“Oh, no, we won’t! Eric left a note for me. He said he had to sail for Poland on the next ship. He said it’s to see about an estate over there. All of a sudden, on a Sunday morning. No. He’s running away.”

“If he’s made a mistake,” Killian said, carefully, “that’s probably the best thing he can do.”

“It *isn’t*!” she said, flatly. “It’s never the best thing, to run away.”

“You’re wrong, sister,” said Killian.

“Well,” said Harriet, “maybe it’s a good thing for him. But it’s a damn bad thing for me. I had a lot of respect for him. I honestly looked forward to marrying him.”

“That’s a funny way to put it. How about love?”

“Phooey,” she said, briefly.

“Love is a lot of things,” said Killian, “but it’s not phooey.”

She was silent for a while, blinking her ginger lashes. “I want a life with some *sense* to it,” she said. “Eric was doing a good job. Doctors are useful when they’re intelligent, like Eric. He’d have done his work, and I’d have done mine. But—well, it’s finished.”

“Maybe he’ll come back,” said Killian.

“Not to me,” she said. “The landlady at The Maples said Eric telephoned to someone this morning. She heard him ask, ‘How is Jocelyn?’ She was all agog; she knew there was something queer. He said, ‘Oh! She’s better? Jacobs has seen her?’ Then he went upstairs and began to pack, and he told the landlady he was called away on business.”

A mistake? thought Killian. It doesn’t look like that. It looks—My God! Jocelyn said five men wanted to murder her. Is it true? Ponievsky was one of them? *Is* this true?

He stopped the car before the house, and Harriet got out. “Thanks!” she said. She ran up the steps and into the house, and Killian went slowly after her. Elly was sitting on the terrace, and he sat down in a chair beside her.

“Hello!” she said gaily.

Her face shocked him. She had too much rouge on her cheekbones; her mouth was too red, and it was tight and

stretched, like a poor little clown's.

"Hello!" he answered. "Elly, how is Chauverney?"

"He's *fine!*" she said.

"Good!" said Killian, heartily. "That's good."

"Have you seen the newspapers?" Elly asked, and picked up a section from the floor beside her; she opened it and folded it over and handed it to Killian.

It was an inconspicuous item. Passenger Rescued at Sea. New York Girl Falls Overboard in Mid-Ocean. Miss Jocelyn Frey, nineteen, residing at the Hotel St. Pol, had an attack of vertigo while sitting on the rail of the Williams Line M. S. *Las Pampas* on the evening of May 12<sup>th</sup>, and fell overboard. Prompt action on the part of Captain K. E. Portman resulted in her immediate rescue by the crew of a lifeboat. Miss Frey is resting at the home of friends on Long Island.

"Not much, is there?" said Elly.

"No, there isn't," said Killian. There was a little silence.

"Well," he said, "I'll see you later, Elly."

He went into the house, with a sort of timidity. I'm nothing but a guest, after all, he thought. And Jocelyn's a guest. What you might call an inconsiderate guest. Always getting murdered.

He looked into the drawing room, with some idea of asking somebody, politely, if he might go up and see Miss Frey. But there wasn't anybody there, or in the library, and he went up, and knocked at her door. "Come in!" she called.

She was sitting up in bed in a little blue silk jacket, her soft hair loose; there was a breakfast tray across her knees, white cloth, pink and white china, a pink rose in a little vase. The sun was shining into the room, there was a glitter of

silver from the dressing table; the whole effect was luxurious and charming. And sweet. A delicate and beautiful young girl, having her breakfast on a spring morning.

“Hello, Jocko, dear!” she said, with a little anxious smile.

“Hello, Jocelyn!” he answered, and closed the door. “How are you feeling?”

“Tired,” she said.

“But happy?” he asked.

She took up the cup of coffee in both her thin little hands, and bent her head to drink it. Then she lay back on the pillow looking at him. “Take away the tray, will you?” she said.

As he took it, he saw that she had eaten nothing at all, and that made him angry. “Here!” he said, with a frown. He sat down on the bed beside her, and cut two slices of toast into neat strips. “Here!” he said. She took a bite; she went on eating. He held the glass of orange juice to her lips, and she drank it. When the toast was all eaten, he took away the tray.

“Give me a smoke, Jocko?” she said.

“I don’t know if it’s good for you,” he said.

“I don’t care,” she said. He gave her a cigarette and lit it for her; she leaned back, and took his hand. “I’m tired,” she said.

“Tell me about this drug business,” he said.

“Last night I asked Eric to give me something to make me sleep, and he did.”

“It looks that way.”

“Maybe it was something new, that he didn’t understand very well,” she said. “Or maybe I was especially susceptible to it.”

“You’re taking a very reasonable tone. Admirable.”

“I’m saying what you’d say. There’s no use telling you the truth.”

“The truth being that you’ve been murdered again?”

“What’s the use of talking about it?” she said.

“I’d like to hear,” he said. “I’d like to hear the whole story about you and Eric.”

“That means you’ve heard somebody else’s version already,” she said. “You can hear mine, if you like.”

“I won’t like.”

“I don’t remember when it was,” she said. “About two years ago, I guess. I was just about crazy with pain from a sinus infection, and somebody sent me to Eric. He gave me something that helped a lot. It was cocaine, but I didn’t know that. I didn’t care, anyhow. It stopped the pain, and it made me feel glorious. Some people react that way to cocaine. I was wildly excited and happy. But that night the pain came back. I wanted that stopped, and I wanted to feel glorious again. I wasn’t reasonable. I don’t stand pain very heroically. Eric took a lofty tone. I *think* he told me the pain in my head wasn’t bad. I just didn’t agree with him. I tried everything. I drank God knows how much whisky. I went to Eric’s hotel. I didn’t know what it was he had given me, but I wanted more of it quick. Do you want the rest of it?”

“I think so.”

“He went all Continental,” she said. “Maybe it was just to keep me quiet. We went into a little sort of sitting room. I led him on. I wanted to get my pain-killer, and I thought it was worth a little love-making. But he went too far. The pain in my head was awful. I made him a scene, a good one. When I



went out into the lobby, I was crying; and suddenly I had a terrific nosebleed. That made things worse. People thought Eric had hit me, or something. It cured me, though, and I went home. I didn't know until later what all that had done to Eric. I didn't care when I did know."

"Your family took an interest in it, didn't they?"

"My family's always taken a wonderful interest in my career," she said. "Do you want to hear that, too?"

"If you feel like talking."

"I was fifteen, Jocko, when I met a man on a Fifth Avenue bus."

"That was the first man you'd ever seen," said Killian.

"I wasn't a very nice kid," she said. "I thought I was going to be the world's greatest actress—without doing any work, of course. But I *was* a kid. He was old, and I thought he was being fatherly. He was sitting behind me, and he began to talk. I told him about my ambition, and he seemed to be impressed. He said I was a remarkable girl, and that I ought to have everything—clothes, education, and so on. That was just what I thought myself. He came that evening to see my mother and father. They thought he was the chance of a lifetime, and he began to ease things up for them and my brother."

"And you?"

"And me. He bought me a fur coat. It was a lousy little coat, but I didn't know much then. I wore it to school, and I thought I was a lucky girl. He talked about my taking dancing lessons and singing lessons and going to a private school, but that never happened. He took me around to

restaurants and shows. He took me out in his car, and my great ambition sort of vanished.”

“All this time you thought he was just your rich uncle.”

“Oh, no!” she said. “I found out what he was like. But my mother and father knew, too, and they didn’t care. I made up my mind then that I’d look out for myself, and get all I could. For nothing. That didn’t help my disposition any. And it gave me a champagne appetite, Jocko. Well, he passed on, and he left me my little income, and I drifted around. That’s my story.”

“Dictated, but not read.”

“Do you believe it, Jocko?”

“Yes. It doesn’t matter. I wasn’t going to ask you any questions about your past, ever.”

“I’ve never loved anybody but you. That sounds like old stuff, doesn’t it? Only it’s true. Nobody else ever made me eat toast. Maybe I can be nice now, Jocko.”

“Maybe you can,” he said. Her cold little fingers hurt, he thought. A pain runs up my arm to my heart, and squeezes it. “Let’s skip the past,” he said. “How’s about the present?”

“Well, what?”

“Why did you get us all here?”

“I wanted you here.”

“Yes. But why Chauverney? And Elly? And Angelo?”

“Chauverney wanted to meet Luther. He loves rich people. And I asked Elly because she’s in love with Chauvie.”

“All right. Now Angelo.”

“I didn’t ask him. He came. He’d signed off, and he didn’t want to go back to sea. He begged me to get him a job on

shore.”

“Luther Bell seems to be very obliging.”

“He’s no mystery,” she said. “He’s just a damned old fool. You can see that for yourself. He was married to one of these Ladies with a big bust and grey hair and pearls, very social. She kept him in order. But when she died, he went off the rails and married Sibyl, the artiste. She was in vaudeville a million years ago. A real old-timer in tights, winking at the boys.”

“You’re a gentle little thing.”

“I don’t like anybody but you,” she said.

He was silent for a while. “All right!” he said. “Where do we go from here?”

“Anywhere you want,” she said.

“The thing is, you’re rather exotic for my income,” he said. “I make all of thirty-seven fifty a week.”

“I’ve got that income. Two hundred a month.”

“You’re a clever little manager,” he said. “Traveling to Rio, so de luxe, on fifty dollars a week.”

“I’ll tell you about that, if you want,” she said.

“Never mind.”

“Plenty of things I’d hate to tell you,” she said. “It’s a nasty little story. I’m a nasty little tramp. But maybe I could be nice, with you.”

“I’m old-fashioned,” he said. “I want to get married.”

“You want to marry me?”

“Yes,” he said. “I think I do. Only I don’t like your little income.”

“I’ve been poor,” she said. “Mother had a sort of boarding house once, and I cooked for ten people.”

He stroked her hair back from her temples. “Thirty-seven fifty a week?” he said.

“Do you think I care about that?” she said. “All the other men I’ve known have hated me. They called it loving me, but it was hating. Nobody’s ever been kind but you. Go on feeding me little scraps of toast. That’s all I want.”

“We could try,” he said.

“Yes,” she said. “We could try.”

He unclasped her fingers, and laid her hand neatly at her side. “Get well,” he said. “I’m going to do some thinking.”

But it wasn’t thinking. He went into his own room and stood by the window. “It’s so damn sad,” he said to himself. “It’s so sad. Not only Jocelyn and me, either. There’s Ponievsky, and Harriet. And Chauverney and Elly. The whole house is so damn sad, it chokes me. I’m going downstairs to see what’s going on.”

He went down the stairs; and in the lower hall he stopped, listening for voices. Nothing to be heard, and he went out on the terrace. Luther Bell was sitting there in white flannels and a grey coat with a belt; he looked very handsome and very noble.

“Oh, good morning, Killian!” he said, seriously. “Good morning!”

“Good morning!” Killian answered.

Bell put down the newspaper he had been reading. “I’d like to have a talk with you, Killian,” he said. “We seem to be alone for the moment.”

“Yes, we do,” said Killian.

“It’s a little matter of business,” said Luther Bell. “You probably know something about Bell, Fiske and Waters.”

Killian sat down opposite him, and met Bell’s earnest glance with one just as grave.

“There’s one thing a man learns in business,” said Bell. “And that is to size up people. I find that I do that almost subconsciously.”

“I see!” said Killian.

There was a brief pause. “I’m always willing to back my own judgment,” said Luther Bell. “I’ve studied you, Killian, and I believe I know you.”

“I see!” said Killian again.

“I believe you’re intuitive, forceful—and loyal,” said Luther Bell. “Excellent executive material. We’d like you in our organization, Killian.”

“I scarcely know what to say, sir,” said Killian, looking modestly at his shoes.

“We can start you at seventy-five a week,” said Luther Bell. “And your future is whatever you choose to make it, Killian.”

“Well, I swan!” said Killian to himself. “This is so sudden, Mr. Bell. This smells, Mr. Bell.”

“I propose,” Luther Bell went on, “that you stop over until morning, Killian. Then you can come into town with me, and I’ll introduce you to my partner, Harvey Fiske.” He waited, and a faintly uneasy look came into his blue eyes. “I’m a great believer in intuition,” he said.

“I see!” said Killian.

“Then we’ll take it as settled.”

“If you don’t mind ...” said Killian. “I appreciate this, sir, but I’m afraid I can’t go so fast. You see, I’ve got a job already.”

“It’s possible that we may be able to do somewhat better in the way of salary,” said Luther Bell. “I’ll take it up with Harvey Fiske to-morrow, after he’s met you.”

“I’m sorry,” Killian said, “but I’m afraid I’ll have to take a little time to think, sir. That’s the sort of mind I have. Judicial.”

He’s baffled, Killian thought. Judicial is a word he can’t help respecting, even if he doesn’t like to hear it used against him. I certainly need time to consider this offer. Seventy-five a week is bribery. But bribing me to do what? To keep still about something? What important secret do I know?

Mr. Bell coughed—hem, hem. “If I’m going to think over this bribery, it’s only decent to go away and think privately,” Killian said to himself. And to Mr. Bell he said, “May I reopen this matter later, sir?”

“Yes,” said Mr. Bell indulgently. “This evening, no doubt.”

Killian moved away, with a serious and purposeful face. He had no idea where he was going. He walked deliberately to the end of the terrace and turned the corner. All very sad, he thought, but in a way I’m happy. Happy, because Jocelyn really was murdered. It wasn’t a lie. She sat in Ponievsky’s office, and she cried, and she was seventeen years old. A nice family, she must have. She’s been well brought up. She ate because I fed her. That’s symbolic, of something. It might mean that she needs me. Maybe that stimulates and inspires me, and maybe it paralyzes me with fright. I fed her, and she held my hand.

From this side of the house he saw a little plantation of pines and, through the trees, the roof of the garage. A chauffeur in uniform was coming through that little wood, very slowly, in a wandering way. He stopped, looking at Killian, and Killian looked at him. Everything here was peaceful, in the morning sun, and everything had been quiet at The Maples. After a while this sunny peace gets on your nerves. You think it's the quiet before the tempest, or something like that.

The chauffeur came out of the little wood, and stopped again; a stolid, thick-set young man with blue eyes. He stared and stared at Killian.

“What's the idea?” Killian asked.

“Could I speak to you for a moment, sir?” he said.

Killian went down the steps. “There's a man out in the road, sir,” the chauffeur said, very low. “It looks to me like he's dead.”

“Where?” asked Killian, brisk and business-like.

“If you'll get in the car, I'll take you, sir,” said the chauffeur.

“I'll come,” he said to the chauffeur, and went with him, through the wood, to a clearing in front of the garage.

They got into the car that stood there, and off they went down the drive. It's Chauverney, thought Killian. Someone had to be dead. For days and days everything's been working up to that. Up to murder. A good old-fashioned murder, with a body.

They went out on the highway. Very quiet there at this hour of a Sunday morning; no cars passed. The trees stirred in the light breeze, there were little clouds, white as milk, in

the blue sky. The car stopped just where the wall of Bell's place ended. There was a man lying face down on the side of the road. Not Chauverney. It was Angelo.

*He's dead, all right,* thought Killian, standing in the grass and looking down at him. Jocelyn was murdered, and she's still alive. But Angelo is dead, all right.

"Looks like he's been run over," said the chauffeur.

"Yes, very much so," said Killian, and suddenly felt sick.



## CHAPTER TEN

“I GUESS I ought to tell Mr. Bell,” said the chauffeur.

“You’d better tell the police,” said Killian.

“Well, I’d better tell Mr. Bell first,” said the chauffeur.

“Why? What’s this got to do with Mr. Bell?”

“Well, he hired this man yesterday.”

“Even at that, it’s a matter for the police.”

“Well, I better tell Mr. Bell first,” said the chauffeur. “See what he wants done about it.”

“Afraid he won’t like this?” asked Killian.

“He’s funny about things,” said the chauffeur.

“Funny about people getting killed?”

“About anything getting in the papers,” the chauffeur explained.

“This will get in the papers,” said Killian. He lit a cigarette and drew on it, not looking at Angelo.

“Hit-and-run driver,” said the chauffeur. “Only there’s elements in it.”

“Elements?” Killian repeated.

“Yes, sir, I’d say so. Look how far on the side of the road he’s lying. Straight road, too.”

“As if someone had moved him, after he was run over?”

“He was some kind of an Eytalian,” said the chauffeur. “That’s another element you got to consider.”

“Undoubtedly!” said Killian.

“They’re great ones for that, the Eytalians are,” said the chauffeur.

“For getting run over?”

“Well, for revenge,” said the chauffeur.

Killian threw away his cigarette; it had a bitter taste.

“Where’s the police station?” he asked.

“I’ll have to tell Mr. Bell first, sir. I’d lose my job if I didn’t.”

“Why did you bring me here?” asked Killian.

“Well, like a witness, sir,” said the chauffeur. “The cops ask you how the body was lying and all.”

They got into the car and drove away, leaving Angelo lying in the sun. It’s happened, thought Killian. It had to happen. After all this talk about murder, somebody had to be dead. In a way, it’s a relief. Everything’s been working up to a crisis, and this is it.

“Maybe he was chased,” the chauffeur proffered.

“What d’you mean?”

“Well, for revenge,” said the chauffeur.

Chased? thought Killian. I’m sorry you said that. It gives you images. After all, a murder isn’t a relief. It causes a lot of unpleasantness. It causeth the cops to come. It casteth a shadow upon the dwelling, and all those within. *All* those. Let’s call it an accident. Let’s forget it. Let’s skip it. Let’s *not* think who was driving around this morning.

He was glad to find the terrace deserted. “I’ll tell Mr. Bell,” he said. “Or Mrs. Bell.”

“Thank you, sir!” said the chauffeur. He sprang down to open the door, and stood as if frozen. Another car was coming. It was a sedan, driven by a cop, with two men sitting side by side in the back seat. It drew up beside them, and the two men in the back seat got out.

“Mr. Bell around?” said one of them, a severe, youngish man in spectacles. “Tell him that Captain Warren would like to see him.”

“Well, if you’ll ring the door-bell, sir ...” said the chauffeur.

Captain Warren and his companion, burly and red-faced, went up the steps shoulder to shoulder. The Captain rang the bell; they stood there very straight until the butler opened the door, then they marched in.

“They must of received information,” said the chauffeur.

“Yes,” answered Killian.

“Had I ought to wait here, sir?”

“Don’t ask me,” said Killian. “I don’t know anything—about anything.”

He sat down in a deck chair and stretched himself out comfortably, clasped his hands behind his head, and stared up at the sky. This is an interval, he thought. Sensible, to relax, while I can. Things are going to happen. Things I won’t like. Because this is the real McCoy. This is the kind of murder people get arrested for, and put into jail for. And get hanged for. The police won’t overlook the “Elements.” They’ll ask questions. Who was driving around this morning? Harriet and I were driving around. Maybe we’ll get arrested. But we haven’t any motive. At least, I haven’t. Harriet might have one.

All clear as daylight. Harriet gets up early and takes out the car. She chases Angelo and runs over him. Then she returns to the house, to get me. She takes me out on the boat and then to The Maples, for an alibi. The flaw in that theory

is, that Harriet is not a murderess. How do I know that? By instinct. By intuition. I never knew anything so well.

I could suspect Sibyl. I could suspect Luther Bell—if he even knows how to drive a car. I could suspect Ponievsky. Elly? Not Elly. My girl friend? She was in bed, recovering from her latest murder. Personally, I prefer Ponievsky. For excellent reasons. He’s already committed one murder; and that will count heavily against you, Doctor Ponievsky. And then he’s run away. That’s as good as a confession. All these murders have been committed by this fiend in human form. This man, masquerading as a healer of human bodies is at heart, gentlemen of the jury, a ruthless murderer. He has run away—to Poland. Give a verdict of guilty, gentlemen, and let’s drop it. Let’s forget it. It makes me nervous.

“What are *you* doing?” asked Sibyl.

“Thinking,” Killian answered.

“Let’s take a stroll before lunch,” she said.

“Lunch?” Killian repeated.

“Come on!” she said, and led him across the lawn, where they slackened their pace, out of hearing but in full view of the house.

“My dear,” she said, “if you’re going to take Jocelyn, take that job Luther offered you, too.”

“I’m high-minded,” he said. “I don’t want a job I can’t fill worthily.”

“You’ll be worthy, all right,” she said. “I’ve worked hard to fix this up for you.”

“You?”

“Me,” she said. “Take it, John. You’ll be worth anything they give you. You’re a smart boy. I gave you a wonderful

build-up to Luther.”

“That was certainly friendly.”

“Well, I am friendly,” she said.

They strolled on in silence. Used to wear tights, thought Killian, and wink at the boys. A million years ago. Not quite a million. In your forties, now, I’d say. And a good sport. Fighting for a place in the sun. “What happened to the police?” he asked.

“They’ve gone,” she said.

“Coming back, aren’t they?”

“Why should they?”

“I thought maybe they’d want to ask me questions.”

“My dear, they don’t know you exist,” she said. “A truck driver saw this man in the road, and he reported it to the police. They came here because it was the nearest house. They wanted to see if anyone could identify him, and, of course, Luther could. The poor man had been run over, and left there. They’ll try to check on cars that might have done it, but it’s practically impossible. Luther’s going to get in touch with the steamship company to-morrow, and try to find out if the poor man had any relations.”

“Chauverney might know about that.”

“My dear, a Purser really doesn’t know much about the private lives of the stewards.”

“He might,” said Killian.

“Well, we’ll ask him,” said she. “Luther’s going to pay for the poor man’s funeral,” she added.

“There’ll be a post-mortem, won’t there?”

“Oh, everything necessary will be done, of course,” she said. “There’ll be an inquest, and so on. But the cause of death is pretty obvious.” She paused. “And the police don’t want to cause Luther any more trouble than can be helped.”

That would be nice, thought Killian. Just to drop this. When you come to think of it, a lot has been happening this last week. A strain, for a sensitive, high-strung lad like me. Less than a week since Jocelyn went overboard. That did something to me. Changed me—permanently. It’s as if I were the one who fell overboard. And was drowned. The good ambitious John Killian died, and there’s this left.

Everything passes, and this, too, will pass. A few weeks. A nice, quiet weekend in the country. Chauverney coming into my room bleeding to death. Angelo lying in the road. Elly crying, and Harriet crying. Ponievsky’s gone, and my youth has gone. That’s poetic. Gone, alas, like my youth too soon.

He began to sing to himself. “Oh, the sound of the Kerry dancers. Ah, the ring of the piper’s tune.” He couldn’t remember all the words, and it bothered him. “When the boys began to gather, in the glen of a summer night....”

That’s what my ancestors did, I suppose. Gathered in a glen on a summer night. The pipers played and they danced. With their girls. You can’t fit Jocelyn into that. She’d be sitting on a rock with a flask of whisky and a pack of cigarettes. Very morbid girl. Extremely morbid thing for a girl to swim around in the sea in a white dress. And I did it? She’ll have to get that idea out of her head. I don’t like it.

He felt sick of smoking. Everything was quiet in the afternoon sun. A Sunday in May. Chauverney won’t be ruined. And Elly won’t be ruined. Harriet isn’t ruined. She’s too young and strong for that. Only Angelo is ruined, very

definitely. And maybe me. Yes. Maybe that's what's the matter with me. I'm ruined. It makes you feel pretty flat, to be ruined.

"Well?" said Sibyl.

They looked at each other. Both sat down.

"I thought," she said, "that it would be nice for you and Jocelyn to have dinner on the boat."

"Just Jocelyn and me?" he asked. "I've never tried to run a cabin cruiser."

"The Captain will do that," she said. "I rang him up, and he'll be ready for you any time this afternoon."

"Will Jocelyn like that?"

"Tell her it's what you want," said Sibyl. "For God's sake, John, get her out of this house."

"Does she bore you?"

"Oh, I could take it," she said. "But she gets on Luther's nerves pretty badly. He's upset, anyhow. He'll have to identify that man—what was the name?"

"Angelo."

"He'll have to identify Angelo, and that bothers him. He objects to anybody dying. And Captain Warren wants to come back, and ask more questions about Angelo. He said he was not 'altogether satisfied.'" She sighed. "John," she said, "for a thousand dollars, will you take Jocelyn away, now, and keep her away?"

"Is this a joke?" he asked.

"No," she said. "I've got a check all written out."

"If it's not a joke," he said, "then probably it's an insult."

“I suppose I could have been more tactful,” she said. “But I’m tired, John. I’ve suffered from your girl friend for four years. The first time she went to South America, I hoped she’d marry a somebody there and be very, very happy. The second time she went, I hoped she’d break her neck. For four years she’s been blackmailing Luther.”

“Them’s fighting words,” said Killian.

“Yes. I’ve tried to fight her. But I’m licked, John. For the last year Luther has been trying to settle with her. But she won’t make any promises; she won’t sign anything.”

“Do you mean she’s got something on Luther?”

“He picked her up on a bus, four years ago,” said Sibyl. “She said she was eighteen, and he believed her. She said she was an actress, and he believed that, too. Luther has lots of good points, but he’s not very bright. It was quite a while before he found out that she was a schoolgirl of fifteen. Then, naturally, her family cracked down on him. He had to pay them to keep quiet. And he’s gone on paying and paying. It’s a story he wouldn’t like to see in the newspapers.”

“Is that where she gets her little income? From your husband?”

“I was pretty sure you didn’t know,” she said. “At first I thought I’d just let you go ahead. But I’ve changed my mind.”

“Why?”

“Kindness to you.”

“I don’t think it’s that,” said Killian.

“Maybe not,” she said. “The motive doesn’t matter, does it? You’re getting the truth. Your fiancée is living on



blackmail, and she means to go on. The job Luther offered you is blackmail, my dear.”

“I haven’t accepted it,” said Killian.

“You can’t get away from her,” said Sibyl. “I’ll tell you what she did to Eric.”

“I’ve heard that tale.”

“She’ll do worse than that to you, my dear. She loves you. She’ll never let you go.”

Killian said nothing.

“Wherever you go, whatever you do, she’ll follow you. Even if you leave the country, she’ll get money from Luther and go after you. She’ll make scenes such as you’ve never imagined. If you have any family, any friends, they’ll be dragged into it.”

He looked up and met her pale blue eyes.

“You’re inciting to riot,” he said.

“No, only trying to persuade you to take her away.”

“To take her where?” he asked.

They kept on looking at each other steadily.

“That’s not my business,” she said after a moment. “I’ve got a check for you—”

“Very kind of you, but I don’t want that check.”

“The job in Luther’s business is still good,” she said. “No matter what happens.”

“Nothing’s going to happen,” he said. “And I resign, here and now, from Bell, Fiske and Waters.”

Her pale blue eyes flashed over his face as he looked away over the lawn.

“I suppose,” she said, “that I married for money. That’s what everyone said. I certainly wanted money. But there’s more in it than that. I’m fond of Luther. I’ve been in love in my time, but this is something else again. As I told you, and you’ve probably noticed it yourself, Luther’s not very bright. But he’s different. I’ve never known anyone else like Luther. He has a code. It’s dumb. It’s—maybe it’s a thousand years out of date. But I like it. I like his ways. I like the way he treats the servants. He feels responsible for them.”

She paused for a time. “He trusts me,” she went on. “He trusts me with everything he has. His money, and his reputation. I’ve been a good wife to him. I’ve learned a lot. I can hold my own now, even with his damn snooty friends. He knows he can count on me. He depends on me. And I’ll never let him down.”

“You could forgive him when he strayed?”

“When Jocelyn got hold of him,” she said, “he was sixty-three, poor devil! He told me about it. He told me he was sorry; and he was sorry, even before she put on the screws. I’d do a lot, John, to save Luther from any more of this.”

“I believe you,” said Killian.

“Will you take her away to-night?”

He thought for a while. “Not to-night,” he said. “I’ll go back to town myself.”

“And leave her here?”

“While I make arrangements. I’ve got to do that.”

“What arrangements? What are you going to do with her? Have you any money?”

“Enough,” he said.

“Do you imagine she’ll be satisfied with what you’ve got?” asked Sibyl. “For four years she’s had everything she wants. If she wanted a mink coat, she got it; and I wore my old coat. She’s been to South America, to Paris, to London.” She paused again. “It’s not only that Luther’s afraid of the story getting known,” she said. “That’s bad enough. But he believes he’s ruined her life. And her character. He’s like that, you know. He says things like that. ‘I feel a great and crushing moral responsibility.’ Poor devil! She was fifteen, and he was sixty-three and he was a poor, silly little rich boy, and she was—well, I won’t go on with that.”

“Let’s not talk,” said Killian.

“All right!” she said. “Take her away for dinner, though. I’d—God! I’d choke to death if I saw her at the table tonight. I’ll order the car, and the chauffeur will drive you down to the wharf. You and Jocelyn can have dinner on board, and a nice, quiet talk.”

“About what?”

She turned her head away a little, and her face in profile looked old, and heavy, and sad. “If you’ll persuade Jocelyn to go away,” she said, “I’ll make the check for five thousand.”

“I don’t seem to make myself very clear,” said Killian. “I don’t want any of Mr. Luther Bell’s money. Jocelyn doesn’t want any more of it, either.”

“Suppose she does want more of it?” Sibyl asked, and waited; but he didn’t answer. “There’s one thing to remember,” she said. “If anything goes wrong, don’t worry. Luther’s like a king out here. Practically unlimited influence.”

They looked and looked at each other.

“Nothing will go wrong,” said Killian.

The butler was coming toward them, not looking at them.

Is there a rule about that? thought Killian. A butler must be three feet two and one-half inches from his betters before he addresses them.

“Lunch is served, madam.”

## CHAPTER ELEVEN

“LUNCH is an interlude,” Killian said to himself. “It’s a welcome interlude. I can pull myself together. After lunch, I’ll have to see Jocelyn. I didn’t know that anything could ever hurt me this much.”

She told me she was a little tramp, he thought. She told me about the bad old man. All right, then. Why does it hurt so much to find out that the villain is Luther Bell? I’ve eaten Mr. Luther Bell’s food and drunk his liquor; I am now mounting the steps to Mr. Luther Bell’s home, to break bread with him again. And it is hell. I’m being unreasonable. She told me this story. The past is past. But just the same, this is hell. I feel—how can you put it? My honour is tarnished.

“Want a drink, John?” asked Sibyl.

“No, thanks,” he said.

No more of Mr. Bell’s drinks. I’ll have to sit at his table. I can’t make a scene. But this is the finish. She asked me to take her away, and that’s what I’ll do. After lunch. Back to New York. Not out on Mr. Bell’s boat. I think Sibyl was hinting that I’d better murder the girl. Jocelyn doesn’t seem very popular. I’m afraid we won’t have much of a social life, after we’re married.

After we’re married. I’m going to marry her. I’ve got to. I’m elected, because I fed her with toast. Because, as far as I can see, I’m the only living soul who doesn’t hate her. I’m the only one who doesn’t feel injured by her. Or ruined by her. If I’m ruined, I did it myself. I let that crazy Irishman come out of his cave and take charge. I don’t like myself any more, but that’s not her fault.

Harriet was there at the lunch table, looking clean and alert and cross, in green linen. Elly was there, in a thin black dress with little pink bows up the front, very dainty. Still with that face like a piteous little clown. Mr. Luther Bell sat at the head of his table.

I won't look at him, Killian thought. After lunch, Jocelyn and I will go away. Somewhere. Five men, she said. Five names written in a little book. Ponievsky is one. And Luther Bell is another? He could want to murder her. Easily. He's not very bright, and he wouldn't know how; but he could want to. He might ask Sibyl to look after it for him. And Sibyl passes the buck to me.

There was something magnificent about Sibyl. She made a conversation. John, what was the *food* like in Buenos Aires? How *interesting*! Luther, do you remember the Brazilian woman with all the little dogs? Do tell that story. Mrs. L'O, *what* sort of hats will we have to wear in the autumn?

"I think that what I feel is called grief," Killian said to himself. "She's so beautiful, and she's nineteen, and there's all this. She told me about this. I don't think she's a liar. I think she's a victim. I do think that. Victim of what? Her family. Mr. Bell. Something born in her. I wouldn't know. And it doesn't matter. I'm elected. Maybe I can help her. Maybe yes, and maybe no."

It was a good lunch. But Mr. Bell's food doesn't agree with me, he thought. I do not like thee, Mr. Bell. I won't look at you, because if I did I'd look at your neck and think about choking you. Like a king, are you?

The lunch was coming to an end, and Sibyl was arranging their moves. Like an automatic chessplayer, Killian thought.

"Luther, I suppose you will go on with your writing?"

“Yes,” he said. “Yes.”

“His book, you know,” Sibyl explained. “It’s about progress.”

“Progress in relation to industry,” said Luther Bell.

“All his holidays given up to that,” said Sibyl. “Harriet wants to show you some of our lovely countryside, Mrs. L’O. She’ll drive you out to the Country Club for tea, and, of course, we’ll see you here in time for dinner. I’m going to keep John, and make him look at my flowers.”

Pushing me around, are you? thought Killian. I’m not going to look at your flowers. I’m going to take Jocelyn away. I’ll have to show her to my father, in the course of time. My bride. He won’t be pleased. An upright man. A C.P.A., and they send him all over, even to China, and what he says is so. He minds his own business; he doesn’t talk much. But he’ll look at Jocelyn. What sort of marriage is this? What are you thinking of? Father, this is love. Phooey on love.

Sibyl rose; they all rose.

“Come up to my room,” Elly murmured. “The first moment you can. I’ll be waiting.”

Sibyl and Luther went out onto the terrace, and Killian with them. He tried to think of an excuse for leaving them; and in the end he just walked off, into the house. He liked Elly; if she wanted to see him, he complied automatically. But as he was going up the stairs, an idea came into his head that stopped him.

Chauverney’s dead, he thought. That’s what she wants to tell me. He felt sure of that. That’s why she looked like that.

He's dead. Well, why *talk* about it? It's too bad. But there's nothing to be done.

It seemed to him impossible to go on up the stairs and face Elly. And talk. I'm sorry Chauverney's dead. But when a person's dead, he's dead. Nothing to talk about. Elly'd better go home and carry on as well as she can. There's no sense in my going up to her room, just to hear that Chauverney's dead.

The sound of footsteps in the hall below started him up in a hurry. You have to hear things. You have to listen, and be decent, even when you're completely indifferent. He knocked at Elly's door, and she opened it, and let him in, and closed it. She looks terrible, he thought.

He saw two suitcases, very smart, the lids open, showing some admirable packing. She does everything nicely, he thought. She was kind to me on the ship.

"I've got to tell you something," she said, standing with her hand on the back of a chair.

"I'm sorry," he said.

"But do you know ...?" she asked.

"Well ... Chauverney, isn't it?"

"Do you know?" she asked, again. "Did she tell you?"

"You mean he's worse," said Killian.

"No," said Elly. "He's better. But he told me last night... He and Jocelyn are married."

"Really?" said Killian, raising his eyebrows.

"If he'd only told me," she said, "I'd have understood."

"Sit down, Elly," said Killian. "And look here, Elly! Don't cry."



“I won’t,” she said. “At least, I don’t think I will. Only, it’s so....”

She did sit down in the chair; and he sat on the edge of the bed, facing her. “Take it easy,” he said.

“They were married nearly a year ago,” said Elly. “But they never got on. How could they? She went to Mexico and got a divorce.”

“Then they’re not married now,” said Killian.

“Yes, they are. Charlie thought he was divorced. He—we planned to be married in the autumn. But she came on board, in B. A., and she told him. Her lawyer had told her, months ago, that the divorce wasn’t valid, but she hadn’t bothered to tell Charlie. She told him then, on the ship.”

“I see!” said Killian.

“She was going to start divorce proceedings when she got back to New York. You know what that means, in this state. All that sordid, nasty business. And it suddenly came into her head that she’d name me as correspondent. Charlie told her there were no grounds, but she didn’t care. He was almost frantic. He felt he couldn’t let it go undefended, on my account. And if he did defend it, it would be in the newspapers and ruin him. The company wouldn’t keep a Purser who’d got mixed up in a scandal with a passenger.”

“I see!” said Killian again. He couldn’t say anything else.

“He tried to argue with her. But he couldn’t stop her.”

*Did he try to stop her?*

“That’s why he came here,” Elly went on. “He hoped Mr. Bell could persuade her. He really shouldn’t have left the ship yesterday; but he got twelve hours’ leave, and came here. And Mr. Bell was odious. He said he wouldn’t be

hurried. He said he wouldn't discuss the matter at night, because it kept him awake. So Charlie did *that*."

"Tried to kill himself."

"No! He only meant it to be an injury that would be an excuse to stay here a day or two, until he'd talked to Mr. Bell. He was going to say he'd cut himself while he was shaving."

"Cut his wrist?"

"The razor could slip. Anyhow, that was the only thing he could think of. But the cut began to bleed dreadfully. He held it under cold water; he tried to tie it up. He said he got so curiously lightheaded. He said he felt sure he was dying, but that he wasn't at all frightened or unhappy about it—only surprised."

"That's how he looked," said Killian.

"Sibyl Bell's one idea was to get him away, so that he wouldn't die here."

Like a rat, thought Killian. Positively will not die in the house. "Yes," he said.

"I was shocked, furious at her. And Doctor Ponievsky agreed with me that he must be moved. But then he came to, and he said he wanted to go. He told me—about this. He thought he was dying. We took him to a little private hospital, and they gave him a blood transfusion. He's going to live. But he's ruined."

"Well, not necessarily," said Killian.

"He is—unless you stop her from going on with this divorce."

"Well, she might change her mind," said Killian. "She often does."

“She won’t. She’s doing this, in a hurry, so that she can get free—to marry you.”

“Well,” said Killian, “the chances are she’ll drop it.”

“John, won’t you see to it that she doesn’t go on?”

He did not answer.

“Won’t you *stop* her?” cried Elly.

“Well ...” he said, with a vague smile.

Elly rose. “I suppose,” she said, unsteadily, “that you don’t care what happens to Charlie. You don’t care about anything but marrying Jocelyn.”

It was very hard for Killian not to burst out laughing. He could not control a wide grin.

“What are you grinning at?” Elly demanded.

“I’m sorry,” he said, hastily. “Just a reaction.”

“Will you stop her? Get her to go to Reno.”

“I’ll see what can be done,” Killian assured her.

But she was not satisfied. “Please try to realise what this means to Charlie,” she said. “His whole career is wrecked.”

“He hasn’t managed very well,” Killian said.

“He was desperate,” said Elly.

How desperate? thought Killian. Desperate enough to tip her overboard? Was he with you all the time that evening, Elly? Every minute? Or did he leave you for a little while? A thing like that wouldn’t take long to do.

“I thought you’d help me,” said Elly.

“Well, I’ll see,” he said.

Her stretched lip quivered; her dark eyes fixed on his face, filled with tears. She was hurt, astounded, bewildered by his vagueness.

“All right!” she cried. “If you don’t care...”

“I don’t care about anything but marrying Jocelyn,” he said to himself, and laughter came rushing up again, and he had to gulp it down. Jocelyn’s so absent-minded, he thought. She forgot to mention that she was married. Not that it matters, of course. Only, when she was talking about marrying me, she might just have mentioned it. Casually. Darling, I will marry you, as soon as I get rid of Chauverney.

He sat on the edge of the bed, staring at the floor. “You’ve made a fool of me, Jocelyn,” he said to himself. “Something more than a fool. You’ve done something to me. I don’t quite know what, but maybe you’ve ruined me, too. Among others. I think I feel ruined. You lied to me. You’ve been false to me. False, in every way. And now I quit.”

He got up. “I’ll see what I can do, Elly,” he said. “I’m sorry, very sorry.”

She didn’t believe that. She didn’t understand, and he could not explain.

“See you later,” he said, and left her.

He went into his own room, and locked the door. “I quit,” he said to himself. “I’m sorry about Elly; but I can’t help it. I quit. It’s finished. I can’t see Jocelyn again. I couldn’t speak to her. I don’t hate her. I just want to get away from her, that’s all. No explanation, no note. I’m going, that’s all.”

She’s poison, he thought. She can’t help that, any more than a rattlesnake can help it. But you have to get away from her. My father would be upset. He’s an upright man. He’d be very much upset if he knew I’d been making love to another man’s wife. Worse than that. Getting all set to marry another man’s wife.

He could laugh now. I fed her with toast. I knew she was a little tramp—but I did not know she was a rattlesnake. Married to Chauverney, and living on Mr. Bell. On blackmail. Chauverney's got away, to a hospital; and Doctor Eric Ponievsky is going to get away, to Poland. And where am I going?

Back to New York. To look for room with refined couple, mid-town section, references exchanged. I'll walk into the office to-morrow morning. Hello, Killian! How was the trip? Fine, fine! How about the beautiful señoritas down there in South America? Oh, boy! Oh, boy! Come out and have a drink and let's hear about the beautiful señoritas. Sorry, but I'm poisoned. By Cupid's darts.

Someone knocked at the door, but he thought he wouldn't answer. The someone rattled the knob.

"What do you want?" he called.

"It's Harriet."

What of it? he thought. "I'm dressing," he said.

"Put something on and open the door," she said. Not imperiously, just in a young way.

He opened the door, and in she came.

"I've been talking to mother," she said. "She says she's told you about—the situation. Of course, you had to know it; but it must have been hard to bear."

"Not so good," he said, embarrassed.

"I'm sorry," she said. "I think you're a darn nice boy."

He stared at her. A nice boy?

"Well, no," he said presently.

“I think so,” she said. “I wanted to tell you that before I go.”

“Going away?”

“Yep. Going home. I have a nice little apartment in New York.”

You’re a girl, he thought. You have a nice little apartment. You have a job, and you have friends. You go to the movies. You’re an honest-to-God girl. He felt as if he had known her a long time ago, and lost her, and now he wanted her back. He wanted all of that back. This is Sunday, he thought. You could go to the zoo, with everybody else. You could go to a little French table d’hôte for dinner, and take a ride on top of a bus. With everybody else. I used to have all that. I used to work and live along with everybody else—until somehow this happened, and I got cut off.

I am cut off now. Like a ghost.

Harriet came over to him, and put her arm around his shoulders; she tried to draw him close to her, but he was too bony and unyielding. Oh, God! he thought. I feel like going all to pieces. I feel like resting my head on your shoulder and closing my eyes. And letting go.

“I’m sorry about all this, Johnny,” she said.

“I’m sorry about what happened to *you*,” he said, politely.

“About Eric?” she asked. “That’s different. It was a jolt, but it’s different. I’m different from you. Tougher, I guess.”

“Maybe you are,” he said.

“Mother said you’re taking Jocelyn out on the boat.”

“I’m not!”

“Do!” she said. “Get it over with.”

“It is over with.”

“But you’ll have to hear what she’s got to say for herself.”

“No,” he said.

“You’ll hate yourself, if you don’t.” She took away her arm. “Johnny, ring me up soon, and I’ll ask you to dinner. I’m in the telephone book.”

“She thinks this is going to end,” he said to himself when she was gone. “That was a very strange idea. She thinks I can have an honest, manly talk with Jocelyn; and then we shake hands and say good-by. ’Tis better thus. Oh, God! A nice boy.”

Get it over with. You’ll hate yourself if you don’t. And you’ll hate yourself if you do.

## CHAPTER TWELVE

HE stayed in his room, sitting on the edge of the bed, smoking. He was on guard, very alert; he was all ready—for something. For a knock at the door. He was ready for it, tense and resolute. Waiting for something.

It came, as sudden and breath-taking as a pistol shot; a knock. He got up.

“Well?” he said evenly.

“Miss Frey says she’s ready, sir,” said a soft little voice.

“Oh! Oh, thanks,” he said.

“Miss Frey says she’ll meet you on the terrace, sir.”

“Thanks,” he said.

I’ll have to see Mr. Bell, Killian thought. And Elly. And Sibyl, and Harriet. Now, let’s see. What face shall I wear? The nice-boy face? I’ve lost it. He looked in the mirror while he combed his hair and straightened his tie. I don’t know what face to wear. Jocelyn’s made a fool of me, only I don’t feel like a fool. I feel like a ghost. All right! Be a ghost. Walk down the stairs and out on the terrace, like a zombie. Don’t speak, and don’t look at anyone.

He walked down the stairs and out on to the terrace, and there wasn’t anybody there. Nobody there. That made you feel pretty flat, my boy. Nobody here. Just look at the nice quiet Sunday afternoon. The sun is shining, and that lawn is like green velvet, and there are those fine old trees against a blue sky. You came ready to be melodramatic, and here’s what you find. I’m smoking up all the Bahia cigarettes I bought to give my friends.



Jocelyn came out of the house. She came in her drifting way, light as a leaf. Her hair was tied at the temples with little black bows, and she wore a thin, long-sleeved white blouse and a white flannel skirt, and she carried a white coat over her arm.

“Isn’t the car here?” she asked.

“I don’t see it,” he answered.

She sat down in a chair and leaned back, with her ankles crossed. She looks like a girl, he thought. She looks gentle and tired, and she’s beautiful, and she’s nineteen.

“What’s the matter?” she asked, in her slow, muffled voice.

“Nothing at all, Mrs. Chauverney,” he answered.

You thought that was going to be dramatic, did you? Wrong, m’boy! She never turned a hair.

“Do you want to talk about that?” she asked.

“Not here.”

“Nobody to interrupt,” she said. “Sibyl and Harriet are shut up together, and Elly’s gone, and Luther’s taking a nap. He doesn’t like that mentioned. He’s sixty-five years young. He does exercises in the morning. He has a sort of bicycle machine to sit on—all the windows open. He sits there pedalling away, with his chin up, and then he eats vitamins.”

“Sure. He’s a fool. Everybody’s a fool. Isn’t that so?”

“Maybe. But that’s not the way people look to me.”

“And how do people look to you, Mrs. Chauverney?”

She looked at him. “Cruel,” she said. “Like you.”

“Am I cruel to you?” he asked. “When you’re so kind to me? So kind, and faithful?”

“I’ve been kind to you,” she said, still looking at him steadily. “And faithful.”

“My feelings are hurt,” he said, “because you haven’t confided in me. I know it’s only a trifle, but I’m hurt that you didn’t mention you were married. I’d have felt very much embarrassed if I’d found that out after I’d married you.”

“I’d have told you before that,” she said. “But Chauvie’s begged me to keep quiet about it.”

“That’s a very worthy reason. But still and all, I do think a girl ought to tell her fiancée when she’s married to somebody else. It’s only etiquette.”

“This isn’t important,” she said. “I never pretended you were the first man in my life. Our marriage was just wretched. It didn’t last six weeks. It was finished months ago.”

“It seems not to be finished.”

“There won’t be any trouble with the legal part of it.”

“Mere man-made laws,” said Killian.

“I don’t understand you,” she said. “Does it really mean such a lot to you that I’ve been married?”

“Are married.”

“All right. Call it being married, if you like. Is it so important?”

“You’ve lied to me,” he said. “You’ve made a fool of me.”

“I’ve never lied to you,” she said. “Never once, about anything.”

“This is what’s called quibbling,” said Killian. “When I asked you to marry me and you said you would, and you didn’t tell me you had a husband, that’s what I call a lie.”

“All right,” she said.

He waited. But she didn’t go on.

“Now we just drop the subject?” he asked.

“Well, what more is there to say? Chauvie asked me to get a divorce, and I did. I went to Mexico and got one. I did it on his account. I didn’t care. I wasn’t thinking about marrying again, ever.”

“Your next plan was different, wasn’t it?” Killian asked. “This next divorce was going to ruin him.”

“He wanted to get rid of me, and I tried to do it his way. It didn’t work. Do you think I ought to go on, trying to spare Chauvie’s feelings? He’s nearly twenty years older than me.”

“Even at that age, he won’t like being ruined.”

“I’m not vindictive,” she said. “*You* ought to know that. But I won’t pretend I care too much what happens to Chauvie. I want to get free, that’s all.”

“I like Elly,” Killian said. “I don’t like to see her squashed.”

She clasped her hands behind her head, and then let them fall, as if she were too tired.

“You don’t want Elly to be hurt,” she said. “Or Chauvie, or anyone. Only me. I could tell you a little about that marriage. I suppose I could put up a case for myself. But I won’t. What’s the use? You’ve made up your mind in advance that I’m in the wrong, about everything. Let it go.”

Made up my mind in advance? Killian thought. Before I heard you? Maybe. But let it go. I don’t want Elly hurt, or Chauverney, or anyone, except you? Let that go, too. I’m a zombie, a ghost. I don’t feel at all any more. I hope I never do any more.

“Is this a trial?” she asked, in a low, even tone. “I love you. I tried to show you that. But you’re standing before me like a judge. What is it you want to know? I’ve never told you a lie. I’ll tell you the truth now, about anything you want. Only tell me what I’m accused of. What is it I’ve done to make you hate me?”

“I don’t hate you,” he said.

“What have I done?” she asked again. “I came here to clear up everything. I wanted to get out of that wretched marriage. Was it my fault that Chauverney nearly killed himself in his panic? I was finished with Eric. I wasn’t even interested in him. Was it my fault that he tried to kill me in his panic? Am I supposed to be so wicked and so dangerous that I’ve got to be killed?”

“I’m not your judge,” Killian said.

“You’ve judged me, and you’ve condemned me,” she said. “All right. I’m not going to beg for mercy.”

“What about Bell?” Killian asked, with a painful effort.

“Well? What about him? I told you that story, all of it, except his name.”

“And except that you were living—you’re living now, on his money.”

“Why *shouldn’t* I?” she demanded, sitting up straight. “I was a child when I met him. I might have grown into something decent. I wasn’t a drunken little tramp *then*. Doesn’t he owe me something?”

“This isn’t any good,” Killian said. “We don’t see things the same way, that’s all.”

“I don’t see things any way,” she said. “I don’t care about anyone or anything but you. I don’t care about a divorce. I

don't care about Luther's money. I'll walk out of this house with you now if you want. Just as I am. Without a nickel. Without even a hat."

"What the hell d'you think I could do with you?" he shouted.

Her eyes were wide, and he thought they were purple. The colour of sorrow? It made him sick to hear himself shout at her. It made him afraid. "I'm sorry," he said. "But—but that's not practical."

A car came gliding up, a great, long, sleek black car. She kept on looking at him, waiting to see what he would do, to hear what he would say. Only he didn't know what to do, or what to say.

I can't go now, like this, he thought. I can't turn my back on her, and go. The chauffeur was waiting, and she was waiting. For him. And how did he know what to do?

"Well," he said, with a nervous, silly smile. "Well, shall we go and get something to eat on the boat?"

She got up and went down the steps. She left her white coat behind, and Killian went back after it.

"You never know," he said. "It may turn chilly. This time of the year..." I'm talking like Luther Bell. They got into the back of the car, and they were all enclosed in glass; the chauffeur was shut off by a sheet of glass. Snow-white in a glass coffin, Killian thought. He glanced at Jocelyn; she was leaning back with her eyes closed, and her mouth had a line of sorrowful patience. As if she were horribly resigned to any blow.

You've ruined people? he thought. Or have they ruined you? Are you bad, corrupt, beyond any helping? Or are you a

victim? I don't know. Would I be a brute to leave you, or the fool of the world to stand by you? I don't know.

He opened a window, and the sweet air streamed in and blew her hair across her pale cheek. The sky was a clear, faint blue; they were driving past a red barn and a stone wall, and then they turned into that lane again. It's like a dream, he thought. I've seen all this before. It's as if everything that's going to happen has happened before. Jocelyn and I drove in a big black car—when?

They came to the squalid little settlement with the chicken yards; they came to the open space where the wooden pier was. The boat was there, too, just as it had been this morning, and the Captain. Only now he wore a white drill jacket, much too small for him, so that his sunburnt wrists showed, and his shoulder blades were pulled forward. "Miss!" he said, and gave her a smile that made a network of wrinkles in his face.

"What time shall I come back, sir?" asked the chauffeur.

"Oh, nine o'clock," said Killian at random.

The Captain was standing on the deck, holding out both hands to Jocelyn; she took them and stepped on board. He hurried ahead of her and moved one of the wicker chairs a little. She sat down, and he stood beside her, stooping with that broad smile of delight.

"Now we go to the Nort' Pole?" he said.

"Not to-night, Captain," she said, gently, and seriously.

"You want to see something fine, you come to the Nort' Pole," he said. "My, dat's fine! All snow and ice, all glittering. The vater, she's blue and green. Deep. Vat do you say, ye go to the Nort' Pole, hey?"

“I haven’t got my fur coat along, Captain,” she said. “I’ll need that, you know.”

“That’s right! That’s right!” he said. “Ve got to vait, hey?”

“I’m afraid we will, Captain.”

She did not smile. She looked into the man’s smiling face with a clear, steady gentleness. He wrinkled his nose and frowned, anxious and faintly confused.

“Some day you see dose Northern Lights,” he said. “My dat’s fine! I tell you one time I see a polar bear? She’s sitting on a berg, floating, floating along, far, far away from shore. She puts up her head, and she cries. She can’t get back home.”

“But that’s all over now, Captain. It’s nice here.”

“No,” he said.

“It’s nice when you play your radio.”

“Yes,” he said reluctantly. “Dat’s nice.”

“And your cat gets up in your lap.”

“Yes. Dat’s a good pussy,” he said. He was silent for a moment. “All right!” he said. “Now ye take a little ride, hey? Den I cook something?”

He disappeared into the cabin; the engine started, and the little craft shook. He came out again and cast off, and they started smoothly through the smooth water.

“He’s crazy,” Killian said, half to himself.

“No,” Jocelyn said. “Not really. He’s had a bad time, that’s all.”

“Who hasn’t?”

“He was in a shipwreck,” she said. “He was in a small boat with four or five other men, for days and days in the

tropics. And in that horrible sun he used to think about the North Pole.”

“And he still thinks about the North Pole.”

“That’s what everybody does,” she said. “When we’re perishing of thirst and anguish, we think about a cold, empty, white world.”

How can you talk like that? he thought. How can you look like that? So kind, and so patient.

“Why do you pick him out to be sorry for?” he asked.

“He’s had a bad time,” she said again.

I’ve judged you, thought Killian, looking at her. I’ve decided that you’re not capable of any pity, or any kindness, or anything good. I’ve decided that you’re poison. My decision is final. I stand before you, like a judge.

Her hands lying in her lap, looked helpless. The breeze blew her hair and fluttered the sleeves of her blouse. What have I done? he thought. Look at her! Nineteen. Look at her lovely face, so quiet and sad. Look at her lovely throat and her little hands.

“May I have a cigarette, please?” she asked.

He felt in his pockets, but he had none.

“I’ve got some, I think, in my coat,” she said.

The white coat lay over a chair behind her. He felt in the pocket and brought out a crumpled pack, and an envelope. It was addressed “Angelo,” and very dirty.

Killian took out the note that was in the envelope.

Meet me Sunday morning at six-thirty where the wall begins. I’ll bring what you want. Burn this.

JOCELYN.



He read it over again. When he glanced up, Jocelyn sat half-turned in her chair, looking at him through a veil of loose hair.

He first thought he could not speak a word. But he had to. “Did you—do that?” he asked.

“Yes,” she said.

“I mean,” he said, “did you run him over?”

“Yes,” she said again.

“It was an accident, I suppose.”

“No, it wasn’t,” she said. “He was the one who saw you throw me overboard. I had to keep him quiet. For your sake.”

## CHAPTER THIRTEEN

HE threw the pack of cigarettes overboard.

“Why did you do that?” she asked.

“I don’t know,” he said. “Keep quiet. Let me alone.”

She got up and wandered away, into the cabin, and he stood by the rail. The sun was very low, standing on the horizon in a lake of fiery gold.

I’m alone, he thought. Let me stay alone, that’s all I want. I’m free now.

He was as free as an unborn soul. He felt no love and no hate, no regret and no hope. He remembered nothing; he wanted nothing but just this—the salt wind and the swift motion, and the solitude. They were passing a low spit of land, and he saw little sandpipers moving on it; the quiet water lapped the shore; a shaft of sun made the reeds a pale, translucent green.

They’re alive, he thought, watching the sandpipers.

You talk about the sun going down, but that’s not what happens at all. The earth runs past it. You could almost think that the earth runs over it and crushes it out. Angelo had the life crushed out of him. When the sun came up this morning, he was alive. Now he’s dead. She did that. Then she went home and had her breakfast. I fed her with toast. She could do that. She could eat and drink, and look so sweet.

I’m free now. I’m alone.

When you are not thinking about anything and not feeling anything, the time slips by very easily. The earth has run over the sun now; nothing left but a few little light clouds. They

fade, and there is nothing but a vast grey calm. Rather a nuisance for those lights to spring out on the shore, twinkling. Why twinkling? Why not steady? A long string of them, twinkling sadly in the dusk. That must be a road.

The harbor of Rio is one of the most beautiful in the world. When I first saw Rio.... A horrible pain seized him. He remembered exactly how he had felt when he had first seen Rio. Before sunrise, it had been, and he had stood on deck, thinking how he would describe this when he got home. He had been violently happy, as if he had accomplished something admirable. This was the first foreign port he had seen. So the world is like this, he had thought. It's better than anything they told you. I'm young and strong; I can see all the rest of it. I got myself here; I can do anything.

Youth was gone now. All those strong, clear feelings were gone. Can I go back? Can I be like that again?

Lights came on in the roof of the deck. He resented them; he wanted to get away from them. The boat stopped; the anchor went overboard. What's the idea of this, he thought? What are we stopping here for?

"Come in and make a cocktail, Jocko?" said Jocelyn from the door of the cabin.

"I don't want a cocktail," he said in a queer voice. That was because his throat was stiff.

She came out to him. The overhead lights made her face look wan. "Cigarette, Jocko?" she said, holding out a pack.

"No, thank you. Where did you get those?"

"From the Captain," she said.

"Why have we stopped?"

“Oh, just while he cooks,” she said, and sat down on the rail.

Don’t sit on the rail! But he didn’t say that aloud. “The Captain’s an interesting character,” was what he said aloud.

He was only talking to stave off something that was pressing in on him. She was sitting on the rail in a white dress.

“I saw a lot of sandpipers a while ago,” he said.

“Jocko, are you thinking about Angelo?”

“Don’t talk,” he said. “Keep quiet and let me alone.”

“Nobody will ever know about it,” she said. “I got my note out of his pocket. Nobody will ever know what you did, either.”

“I didn’t do that,” he said.

“Angelo saw you. I gave him some money to shut him up, but he wanted more. He’d have kept on wanting more.”

Don’t ask any questions. “Did you chase him with the car?” he asked. Had to ask that one.

“No. I dropped my purse and he went to pick it up.”

“Then you ran over him. You squashed him. Then you got the note out of his pocket and you went home and had breakfast.”

“I did that,” she said, “because you made me.”

“No,” he said in a flat, unconvincing way. “No, I didn’t.”

“I’m glad I killed Angelo,” she said, very low. “I’m glad I’ve done what you did. It’s a bond between us, stronger than anything else could ever be.”

Two sinners. Two damned souls. Paolo and Francesca, flying through Hell in each other’s arms, forever and ever.

Only it's not like that. Sibyl sent you here to get murdered. By me. But I will not. There is no bond between us. I won't look at you, sitting on the rail in a white dress.

"Jocko, let's go away," she said, in that same low voice, a little unsteady. "Let's start again. Let's forget all this, and start again. I'll be different, Jocko. I'll try—"

"Please don't talk!" he said.

I've got to get away, he thought. There's a dinghy tied astern. If I could get rid of her for a few minutes, I could get into the dinghy and row ashore.

"Jocko, let's get out of this," she said. "I've got things I can sell for enough money to get us away."

She rose. He moved backward, but she followed him. "Don't!" he said. "Please don't, Jocelyn. Please let me alone."

"Oh, Jocko!" she cried. "What's happened? I haven't anyone but you. Have *you* turned against me?"

Thou, too, Brutus? You, the trusted one, you, too? Yes. I've gone, too.

"I'm sorry," he said anxiously, and put out his hand to keep her away. She caught it in both of hers. She was clinging to him again. "Dear ..." he said, with the most ludicrous falseness. "Sit down, dear."

She let his hand go, and he was off guard for a moment. She put her arm round his neck and laid her cheek against his. Her face was wet with tears.

"You *couldn't* not love me, now, Jocko. Not after this."

Not after murder? He caught her in an embrace so fierce that she gasped. She yielded completely, limp, crushed against him, breathing with difficulty. Murderess. You've

been talking too much about murder, my dear girl. You love me, do you? And I love you, do I? *Do I?*

You're wrong! This is not love—murderess. This is something else. You're hanging round my neck, murderess, and I've got to get rid of you. Somehow. *Anyhow.*

"No!" he cried, and pushed her away so suddenly that she staggered back against the rail.

"Jocko, what—"

"I have a chill," he said. Maybe that was true. He was shaking. "I want some whisky. See if there's any whisky."

She went into the cabin, and he ran aft and lowered himself into the dinghy. He was trying to untie the painter when a door opened just above him, and there she was again.

"*Jocko!*"

"I'm just going to row ashore," he said. "I'm just going to get some aspirin. I'm just going to get some cigarettes."

"Take me with you," she said, and she jumped down into the dinghy, and it rolled over and nearly capsized. The oars went overboard.

"I'll have to get the oars," Killian explained, and began to take off his shoes.

"Hurry!" she said. "The current's taking them away."

"Yes. I certainly will," he said.

He took off his coat and went into the water. It was very cold. He started to swim; the idea was to get out of the path of light from the boat. To get into the dark. He heard a clank on board. It didn't matter what happened there. What *he* had to do was to get away. He knew very well what he had to get away from.

“Jocko, are you all right?”

“Fine, thanks,” he answered, from the cold black water. Getting farther and farther away from her.

The engine started. “Jocko!” she screamed.

He stopped and turned, astonished. The boat was under way, pulling the dinghy after her. He saw Jocelyn stand up, swaying from side to side. She fell down on the seat.

“*Jocko!*”

The boat was going faster than anything you ever saw in your life, heading out for the open sea. Red light, green light, shooting forward like an arrow.

He knew about *this*. He knew what it was like to be swimming alone in the sea at night. Now the lights of the boat were gone, and there was nothing. Except whatever might be living in the water. “No,” he said to himself, “it’s not the same. The shore can’t be far. Stop swimming out to sea. The shore isn’t far. Take it easy. Stop swimming out to sea. You’re a fool.”

He turned his head until he saw that row of little twinkling lights. Not far? It was as far as Heaven.

“You can’t expect me to swim there,” he said indignantly. The water was like ice. He swam and swam, and made no progress at all. The little twinkling lights were fainter, he thought. I’m swimming like a mouse in a pail.

This was perfectly right. This was what had to happen, and what ought to happen. Everything was very clear in his mind now. It was Angelo himself who pushed her overboard. Must have been. Not me. I didn’t kill her.

Dying? There’s nothing to it. His arms were moving, trying to drag a tremendously heavy log through the water.

All he had to do was to stop this struggle. It's too damn cold to swim. But the sandpipers. He remembered them, running among the green translucent reeds, alive. Maybe they were somewhere near here, asleep. But alive. I'd like to see them again, he thought.

Cold, isn't it? Yes, *isn't* it, though! That was the way Sibyl talked. Here's five thousand dollars, and take her away. And kill her. I must be swimming upside down, it's so hard. If it wasn't for those damned little sandpipers, I'd quit. Too hard, this is. I'm not getting anywhere. The lights....

The lights had gone.



## CHAPTER FOURTEEN

THE lights had gone, and there was nothing at all. He turned on his back and floated, surging up and down on the gentle swell. "I'm sorry," he said. "I'm very sorry. I've done very badly. I took the wrong turn, and I knew it. I was a stubborn sinner. Well...."

He was no more than an immensely heavy log floating gently up and down, it wouldn't last much longer. But the sandpipers, he thought. You don't quit. I'm sorry, but I have to quit. Too cold, and too tired. You don't quit. Even one light would be enough. Even a star would be enough.

Well, if you haven't got a light or a star, then you go on in the dark. A mouse in a pail goes on. He turned over, and his face went under the water. He lifted his arms and his head; he pushed that tremendous weight through the water. A great black shadow loomed over him. What's that? he thought. That was The End.

It's all right to die, as long as you don't quit. Swim into that black shadow. His frozen numb feet touched something. He tried to stand, but that was not possible. He kept on moving his arms, and the water got shallow so that he could kneel. He went forward on his knees, and after a while he could see over the top of a bank. The lights were there, still twinkling.

Between him and the lights was an illimitable empty desert. He had to walk like a bear, like a gorilla, all bent forward, and he kept falling down. The wind was like a knife. An Arctic wind, he thought. His feet were certainly dead; but when they struck things, a pain came in his

shoulders. If you could call it a pain. He kept on falling down, and it was impossible to get up, and sometimes times he crawled for a little way.

A dog was barking. I've got to stand up, if there's a dog. If there's an animal, you can't crawl like an animal. Only this time it was hard to get up. The dog jumped up at him, and knocked him down.

"What's wrong with you, brother?" said somebody.

*Brother.* He did what he could about getting up. A little tremor went through the log lying on the grass. "Mr. and Mrs. Luther Bell," he said....

"You're certainly tough," said Sibyl.

He knew she wasn't really there. The thing for him to do now was to keep his eyes closed and not breathe.

"Swallow this, dear," she said.

And a glass came bumping against his mouth. He opened his lips, and whisky came flooding in. Only he had forgotten how to swallow; he kept it in his mouth until it burned his gums, and then he let it run down his gullet.

"More, please," he said.

He swallowed as much as she would give him. Unfortunately he had forgotten how to open his eyes. If I could find my hands, I could pull up my lids, he thought. Then the whisky began to run through his veins like hot sunlight. He could breathe now, and he could open his eyes.

And he saw the sun, up in a blue sky.

"Where?" he said.

"What, dear?" said Sibyl.

"When—is this?"

“It’s Monday, dear. Are you better?”

Monday? Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday.... No. Sunday.  
Monday. Tuesday ... Sunday....

“Jocelyn?” he said.

“Oh, she’s fine,” said Sibyl.

He was lying in bed. He was warm now, but much too heavy to stir.

“Who’s the other one—breathing?” he asked.

“Doctor Jacobs, dear.”

“I see,” he said.

He was all right now, except for being so heavy. He knew where his hands and feet *were*, anyhow.

“Where’s Jocelyn?” he asked.

“She’s *fine!*” Sibyl said, again.

“No,” he said, “I’m all right now. I want to know. Come on, sister. Give!”

She and Doctor Jacobs murmured together. The doctor came from somewhere and took his wrist.

“Give!” said Killian.

“My dear,” said Sibyl. “We don’t quite understand what’s happened.”

“Has the boat come back?”

She took a long time before she said, “No.”

“Anything heard of it?”

“No,” she said. “Not yet.”

“Wait!” he said, and dragged a great flapping hand across the blanket. “Time?” he said, with a lot of trouble.

“In a moment,” Sibyl said. She didn’t understand.

He pulled himself together, and it hurt. It was pulling hundreds of little strings and making them tight, “*Time!*” he said, again.

“Just a little while,” she said. He gave up. She didn’t understand.

He had to wait until the machinery was running better. My heart is picking up, he thought. Accelerating nicely. When the engine stops jumping like this, I’ll be all right. So when he was all right, he said, “What time is it, please?”

“Just about noon,” said Harriet.

“I see!” he said. “Wait, please.”

“I won’t go,” she said.

He looked at the sun in the blue sky for a while. “Harriet,” he said, “I want to know.”

“Yes,” she said.

She’s young, he thought. She’s young enough to understand. She’s cross. That’s a good thing to be. Young and cross, and she tells the truth.

“The Captain?” he said. “Is he crazy?”

“I never thought so,” she said. “He used to seem a little queer sometimes when he talked about the shipwreck, that’s all.”

He was quiet for a while, getting better.

“Are they looking for the boat?” he asked.

“Of course.”

“Is there any news of her?”

“Do you want it?” Harriet asked.

“Yes,” he said. “I do.”

She was young enough to tell the truth in the right way. “The Coast Guard station got a report from somebody,” she said. “Somebody saw the boat heading straight into a squall last night.”

“Nothing else?”

“Not yet,” she said.

Never, he thought. Jocelyn’s gone to the North Pole with a crazy skipper. Exaggerated. Very poor taste. Now she’s dead. She’s drowned. I did that. She said I would murder her, and I did.

“Well,” he said, “that’s that.”

I’m certainly being reasonable, he thought. I’m certainly taking this very well. Wonderfully well. I’m certainly a tough guy.

He turned over and buried his face in the pillow. Oh, God! Starry Eyes, I’m so sorry.... So sorry, Starry Eyes....

THE END

---

---

[The end of *The Girl who Had to Die* by Elisabeth Sanxay Holding]