

The Rough Crossing, F. Scott Fitzgerald

I

Once on the long, covered piers, you have come into a ghostly country that is no longer Here and not yet There. Especially at night. There is a hazy yellow vault full of shouting, echoing voices. There is the rumble of trucks and the clump of trunks, the strident chatter of a crane and the first salt smell of the sea, You hurry through, even though there's time. The past, the continent, is behind you; the future is that glowing mouth in the side of the ship; this dim turbulent alley is too confusedly the present.

Up the gangplank, and the vision of the world adjusts itself, narrows. One is a citizen of a commonwealth smaller than Andorra. One is no longer so sure of anything. Curiously unmoved the men at the purser's desk, cell-like the cabin, disdainful the eyes of voyagers and their friends, solemn the officer who stands on the deserted promenade deck thinking something of his own as he stares at the crowd below. A last odd idea that one didn't really have to come, then the loud, mournful whistles, and the thing—certainly not a boat, but rather a human idea, a frame of mind—pushes forth into the big dark night.

Adrian Smith, one of the celebrities on board—not a very great celebrity, but important enough to be bathed in flash light by a photographer who had been given his name, but wasn't sure what his subject "did"—Adrian Smith and his blond wife, Eva, went up to the promenade deck, passed the melancholy ship's officer, and, finding a quiet aerie, put their elbows on the rail.

"We're going!" he cried presently, and they both laughed in ecstasy. "We've escaped. They can't get us now."

"Who?"

He waved his hand vaguely at the civic tiara.

"All those people out there. They'll come with their posses and their warrants and list of crimes we've committed, and ring the bell at our door on Park Avenue and ask for the Adrian Smiths, but what ho! the Adrian Smiths and their children and nurse are off for France."

"You make me think we really have committed crimes."

"They can't have you," he said, frowning. "That's one thing they're after me about—they know I haven't got any right to a person like you, and they're furious. That's one reason I'm glad to get away." "Darling," said Eva. She was twenty-six-five years younger than he. She was something precious to everyone who knew her.

"I like this boat better than the Majestic or the Aquitania," she remarked, unfaithful to the ships that had served their honeymoon. "It's much smaller."

"But it's very slick and it has all those little shops along the corridors. And I think the staterooms are bigger."

"The people are very formal—did you notice?—as if they thought everyone else was a card sharp. And in about four days half of them will be calling the other half by their first names."

Four of the people came by now—a quartet of young girls abreast, making a circuit of the deck. Their eight eyes swept momentarily toward Adrian and Eva, and then swept automatically back, save for one pair which lingered for an instant with a little start. They belonged to one of the girls in the middle, who was, indeed, the only passenger of the four. She was not more than eighteen—a dark little beauty with the fine crystal gloss over her that, in brunettes, takes the place of a blonde's bright glow.

"Now, who's that?" wondered Adrian. "I've seen her before."

"She's pretty," said Eva.

"Yes." He kept wondering, and Eva deferred momentarily to his distraction; then, smiling up at him, she drew him back into their privacy.

"Tell me more," she said.

"About what?"

"About us—what a good time we'll have, and how we'll be much better and happier, and very close always."

"How could we be any closer?" His arm pulled her to him.

"But I mean never even quarrel any more about silly things. You know, I made up my mind when you gave me my birthday present last week"—her fingers caressed the fine seed pearls at her throat—"that I'd try never to say a mean thing to you again."

"You never have, my precious."

Yet even as he strained her against his side she knew that the moment of utter isolation had passed almost before it had begun. His antennae were already out, feeling over this new world.

"Most of the people look rather awful," he said—"little and swarthy and ugly. Americans didn't use to look like that."

"They look dreary," she agreed. "Let's not get to know anybody, but just say together."

A gong was beating now, and stewards were shouting down the decks, "Visitors ashore, please!" and voices rose to a strident chorus. For a while the gangplanks were thronged; then they were empty, and the jostling crowd behind the barrier waved and called unintelligible things, and kept up a grin of good will. As the stevedores began to work at the ropes a flat-faced, somewhat befuddled young man arrived in a great hurry and was assisted up the gang-plank by a porter and a taxi driver. The ship having swallowed him as impassively as though he were a missionary for Beirut, a low, portentous vibration began. The pier with its faces commenced to slide by, and for a moment the boat was just a piece accidentally split off from it; then the faces became remote, voiceless, and the pier was one among many yellow blurs along the water front. Now the harbor flowed swiftly toward the sea.

On a northern parallel of latitude a hurricane was forming and moving south by southeast preceded by a strong west wind. On its course it was destined to swamp the Peter I. Eudim of Amsterdam, with a crew of sixty-six, to break a boom on the largest boat in the world, and to bring grief and want to the wives of several hundred seamen. This liner, leaving New York Sunday evening, would enter the zone of the storm Tuesday, and of the hurricane late Wednesday night.

II

Tuesday afternoon Adrian and Eva paid their first visit to the smoking room. This was not in accord with their intentions—they had "never wanted to see a cocktail again" after leaving America—but they had forgotten the staccato loneliness of ships, and all activity centered about the bar. So they went in for just a minute.

It was full. There were those who had been there since luncheon, and those who would be there until dinner, not to mention a faithful few who had been there since nine this morning. It was a prosperous assembly, taking its recreation at bridge, solitaire, detective stories, alcohol, argument and love. Up to this point you could have matched it in the club or casino life of any country, but over it all played a repressed nervous energy, a barely disguised impatience that extended to old and young alike. The cruise had begun, and they had enjoyed the beginning, but the show was not varied enough to last six days, and already they wanted it to be over.

At a table near them Adrian saw the pretty girl who had stared at him on the deck the first night. Again he was fascinated by her loveliness; there was no mist upon the brilliant gloss that gleamed through the smoky confusion of the room. He and Eva had decided from the passenger list that she was probably "Miss Elizabeth

D'Amido and maid," and he had heard her called Betsy as he walked past a deck-tennis game. Among the young people with her was the flat-nosed youth who had been "poured on board" the night of their departure; yesterday he had walked the deck morosely, but he was apparently reviving. Miss D'Amido whispered something to him, and he looked over at the Smiths with curious eyes. Adrian was enough at being a celebrity to turn self-consciously away. "There's a little roll. Do you feel it?" Eva demanded.—"Perhaps we'd better split a pint of champagne."

While he gave the order a short colloquy was taking place at the other table; presently a young man rose and came over to them.

"Isn't this Mr. Adrian Smith?"

"Yes."

"We wondered if we couldn't put you down for the deck-tennis tournament. We're going to have a deck-tennis tournament." "Why—" Adrian hesitated.

"My name's Stacomb," burst out the young man. "We all know your—your plays or whatever it is, and all that—and we wondered if you wouldn't like to come over to our table."

Somewhat overwhelmed, Adrian laughed: Mr. Stacomb, glib, soft, slouching, waited; evidently under the impression that he had delivered himself of a graceful compliment.

Adrian, understanding that, too, replied: "Thanks, but perhaps you'd better come over here."

"We've got a bigger table."

"But we're older and more—more settled."

The young man laughed kindly, as if to say, "That's all right."

"Put me down," said Adrian. "How much do I owe you?"

"One buck. Call me Stac."

"Why?" asked Adrian, startled.

"It's shorter."

When he had gone they smiled broadly.

"Heavens," Eva gasped, "I believe they are coming over."

They were. With a great draining of glasses, calling of waiters, shuffling of chairs, three boys and two girls moved to the Smiths' table. If there was any diffidence, it was confined to the hosts; for the new additions gathered around them eagerly, eying Adrian with respect—too much respect—as if to say: "This was probably a mistake and won't be amusing, but maybe we'll get something out of it to help us in our after life, like at school."

In a moment Miss D'Amido changed seats with one of the men and placed her radiant self at Adrian's side, looking at him with manifest admiration.

"I fell in love with you the minute I saw you," she said, audibly and without self-consciousness; "so I'll take all the blame for butting in. I've seen your play four times."

Adrian called a waiter to take their orders.

"You see," continued Miss D'Amido, "we're going into a storm, and you might be prostrated the rest of the trip, so I couldn't take any chances."

He saw that there was no undertone or innuendo in what she said, nor the need of any. The words themselves were enough, and the deference with which she neglected the young men and bent her politeness on him was somehow very touching. A little glow went over him; he was having rather more than a pleasant time.

Eva was less entertained; but the flat-nosed young man, whose name was Butterworth, knew people that she did, and that seemed to make the affair less careless and casual. She did not like meeting new people unless they had "something to contribute," and she was often bored by the great streams of them, of all types and conditions and classes, that passed through Adrian's life. She herself "had everything"—which is to say that she was well endowed with talents and with charm—and the mere novelty of people did not seem a sufficient reason for eternally offering everything up to them.

Half an hour later when she rose to go and see the children, she was content that the episode was over. It was colder on deck, with a damp

that was almost rain, and there was a perceptible motion. Opening the door of her stateroom she was surprised to find the cabin steward sitting languidly on her bed, his head slumped upon the upright pillow. He looked at her listlessly as she came in, but made no move to get up.

"When you've finished your nap you can fetch me a new pillowcase," she said briskly.

Still the man didn't move. She perceived then that his face was green.

"You can't be seasick in here," she announced firmly. "You go and lie down in your own quarters."

"It's me side," he said faintly. He tried to rise, gave out a little rasping sound of pain and sank back again. Eva rang for the stewardess.

A steady pitch, toss, roll had begun in earnest and she felt no sympathy for the steward, but only wanted to get him out as quick as possible. It was outrageous for a member of the crew to be seasick. When the stewardess came in Eva tried to explain this, but now her own head was whirring, and throwing herself on the bed, she covered her eyes.

"It's his fault," she groaned when the man was assisted from the room. "I was all right and it made me sick to look at him. I wish he'd die."

In a few minutes Adrian came in. "Oh, but I'm sick!" she cried.

"Why, you poor baby." He leaned over and took her in his arms. "Why didn't you tell me?"

"I was all right upstairs, but there was a steward—Oh, I'm too sick to talk."

"You'd better have dinner in bed." "Dinner! Oh, my heavens!"

He waited solicitously, but she wanted to hear his voice, to have it drown out the complaining sound of the beams. "Where've you been?"

"Helping to sign up people for the tournament."

"Will they have it if it's like this? Because if they do I'll just lose for you."

He didn't answer; opening her eyes, she saw that he was frowning.

"I didn't know you were going in the doubles," he said. "Why, that's the only fun." "I told the D'Amido girl I'd play with her." "Oh."

"I didn't think. You know I'd much rather play with you."

"Why didn't you, then?" she asked coolly.

"It never occurred to me."

She remembered that on their honeymoon they had been in the finals and won a prize. Years passed. But Adrian never frowned in this regretful way unless he felt a little guilty. He stumbled about, getting his dinner clothes out of the trunk, and she shut her eyes.

When a particular violent lurch startled her awake again he was dressed and tying his tie. He looked healthy and fresh, and his eyes were bright.

"Well, how about it?" he inquired. "Can you make it, or no?"

"No."

"Can I do anything for you before I go?"

"Where are you going?"

"Meeting those kids in the bar. Can I do anything for you?"

"No."

"Darling, I hate to leave you like this."

"Don't be silly. I just want to sleep."

That solicitous frown—when she knew he was crazy to be out and away from the close cabin. She was glad when the door closed. The thing to do was to sleep, sleep.

Up—down—sideways. Hey there, not so far! Pull her round the corner there! Now roll her, right—left—Crea-eak! Wrench! Swoop!

Some hours later Eva was dimly conscious of Adrian bending over her. She wanted him to put his arms around her and draw her up out of this dizzy lethargy, but by the time she was fully awake the cabin was empty. He had looked in and gone. When she awoke next the cabin was dark and he was in bed. The morning was fresh and cool, and the sea was just enough calmer to make Eva think she could get up. They breakfasted in the cabin and with Adrian's help she accomplished an unsatisfactory makeshift toilet and they went up on the boat deck. The tennis tournament had already begun and was furnishing action for a dozen amateur movie cameras, but the majority of passengers were represented by lifeless bundles in deck chairs beside untasted trays.

Adrian and Miss D'Amido played their first match. She was deft and graceful; blatantly well. There was even more warmth behind her ivory skin than there had been the day before. The strolling first officer stopped and talked to her; half a dozen men whom she couldn't have known three days ago called her Betsy. She was already the pretty girl of the voyage, the cynosure of starved ship's eyes.

But after a while Eva preferred to watch the gulls in the wireless masts and the slow slide of the roll-top sky. Most of the passengers looked silly with their movie cameras that they had all rushed to get and now didn't know what to use for, but the sailors painting the lifeboat stanchions were quiet and beaten and sympathetic, and probably wished, as she did, that the voyage was over.

Butterworth sat down on the deck beside her chair.

"They're operating on one of the stewards this morning. Must be terrible in this sea."

"Operating? What for?" she asked listlessly.

"Appendicitis. They have to operate now because we're going into worse weather. That's why they're having the ship's party tonight."

"Oh, the poor man!" she cried, realizing it must be her steward.

Adrian was showing off now by being very courteous and thoughtful in the game.

"Sorry. Did you hurt yourself? ... No, it was my fault... You better put on your coat right away, pardner, or you'll catch cold."

The match was over and they had won. Flushed and hearty, he came up to Eva's chair.

"How do you feel?"

"Terrible."

"Winners are buying a drink in the bar," he said apologetically.

"I'm coming, too," Eva said, but an immediate dizziness made sink back in her chair.

"You'd better stay here. I'll send you up something."

She felt that his public manner had hardened toward her slightly. "You'll come back?"

"Oh, right away."

She was alone on the boat deck, save for a solitary ship's officer who slanted obliquely as he paced the bridge. When the cocktail arrived she forced herself to drink it, and felt better. Trying to distract her mind with pleasant things, she reached back to the sanguine talks that she and Adrian had had before sailing: There was the little villa in Brittany, the children learning French—that was all she could think of now—the little villa in Brittany, the children learning French—so she repeated the words over and over to herself until they became as meaningless as the wide white sky. The why of their being here had suddenly eluded her; she felt unmotivated, accidental, and she wanted Adrian to come back quick, all responsive and tender, to reassure her. It was in the hope that there was some secret of graceful living, some real compensation for the lost, careless confidence of twenty-one, that they were going to spend a year in France.

The day passed darkly, with fewer people around and a wet sky falling. Suddenly it was five o'clock, and they were all in the bar again, and Mr. Butterworth was telling her about his past. She took a good deal of champagne, but she was seasick dimly through it, as if the illness was her soul trying to struggle up through some thickening incrustation of abnormal life.

"You're my idea of a Greek goddess, physically," Butterworth was saying.

It was pleasant to be Mr. Butterworth's idea of a Greek goddess physically, but where was Adrian? He and Miss D'Amido had gone out on a forward deck to feel the spray. Eva heard herself promising to get out her colors and paint the Eiffel Tower on Butterworth's shirt front for the party tonight.

When Adrian and Betsy D'Amido, soaked with spray, opened the door with difficulty against the driving wind and came into the now-covered security of the promenade deck, they stopped and turned toward each other.

"Well?" she said. But he only stood with his back to the rail, looking at her, afraid to speak. She was silent, too, because she wanted him to be first; so for a moment nothing happened. Then she made a step toward him, and he took her in his arms and kissed her forehead.

"You're just sorry for me, that's all." She began to cry a little. "You're just being kind."

"I feel terribly about it." His voice was taut and trembling.

"Then kiss me."

The deck was empty. He bent over her swiftly.

"No, really kiss me."

He could not remember when anything had felt so young and fresh as her lips. The rain lay, like tears shed for him, upon the softly shining porcelain cheeks. She was all new and immaculate, and her eyes were wild.

"I love you," she whispered. "I can't help loving you, can I? When I first saw you—oh, not on the boat, but over a year ago—Grace Heally took me to a rehearsal and suddenly you jumped up in the second row and began telling them what to do. I rewrote you a letter and tore it up."

"We've got to go."

She was weeping as they walked along the deck. Once more, imprudently, she held up her face to him at the door of her cabin. His blood was beating through him in wild tumult as he walked on to the bar.

He was thankful that Eva scarcely seemed to notice him or to know that he had been gone. After a moment he pretended an interest in what she was doing.

"What's that?" "She's painting the Eiffel Tower on my shirt front for tonight," explained Butterworth.

"There," Eva laid away her brush and wiped her hands. "How's that?"

"A chef-d'oeuvre."

Her eyes swept around the watching group, lingered casually upon Adrian.

"You're wet. Go and change."

"You come too."

"I want another champagne cocktail."

"You've had enough. It's time to dress for the party."

Unwilling she closed her paints and preceded him.

"Stacomb's got a table for nine," he remarked as they walked along the corridor.

"The younger set," she said with unnecessary bitterness. "Oh, the younger set. And you just having the time of your life—with a child."

They had a long discussion in the cabin, unpleasant on her part and evasive on his, which ended when the ship gave a sudden gigantic heave, and Eva, the edge worn off her champagne, felt ill again.

There was nothing to do but to have a cocktail in the cabin, and after that they decided to go to the party—she believed him now, or she didn't care.

Adrian was ready first—he never wore fancy dress. "I'll go on up. Don't be long."

"Wait for me, please; it's rocking so." He sat down on a bed, concealing his impatience. "You don't mind waiting, do you? I don't want to parade up there all alone."

She was taking a tuck in an oriental costume rented from the barber.

"Ships make people feel crazy," she said. "I think they're awful."

"Yes," he muttered absently.

"When it gets very bad I pretend I'm in the top of a tree, rocking—to and fro. But finally I get pretending everything, and finally I have to pretend I'm sane when I know I'm not."

"If you get thinking that way you will go crazy."

"Look, Adrian." She held up the string of pearls before clasping them on. "Aren't they lovely?"

In Adrian's impatience she seemed to move around the cabin like a figure in a slow-motion picture. After a moment he demanded:

"Are you going to be long? It's stifling in here."

"You go on!" she fired up.

"I don't want—"

"Go on, please! You just make me nervous trying to hurry me."

With a show of reluctance he left her. After a moment's hesitation he went down a flight to a deck below and knocked at a door.

"Betsy."

"Just a minute."

She came out in the corridor attired in a red pea-jacket and trousers borrowed from the elevator boy.

"Do elevator boys have fleas?" she demanded. "I've got everything in the world on under this as a precaution."

"I had to see you," he said quickly.

"Careful," she whispered. "Mrs. Worden, who's supposed to be chaperoning me, is across the way. She's sick."

"I'm sick for you."

They kissed suddenly, clung close together in the narrow corridor, swaying to and fro with the motion of the ship.

"Don't go away," she murmured.

"I've got to. I've—"

Her youth seemed to flow into him, bearing him up into a delicate, romantic ecstasy that transcended passion. He couldn't relinquish it; he had discovered something that he had thought was lost with his own youth forever. As he walked along the passage he knew that he had stopped thinking, no longer dared to think. He met Eva going into the bar.

"Where've you been?" she asked with a strained smile.

"To see about the table."

She was lovely; her cool distinction conquered the trite costume and filled him with a resurgence of approval and pride. They sat down at a table.

The gale was rising hour by hour and the mere traversing of a passage had become a rough matter. In every stateroom trunks were lashed to the washstands, and the Vestris disaster was being reviewed in detail by nervous ladies, tossing, ill and wretched, upon their beds. In the smoking room a stout gentleman had been hurled backward and suffered a badly cut head; and now the lighter chairs and tables were stacked and roped against the wall.

The crowd who had donned fancy dress and were dining together had swollen to about sixteen. The only remaining qualification for membership was the ability to reach the smoking room. They ranged from a Groton-Harvard lawyer to an ungrammatical broker they had nicknamed Gyp the Blood, but distinctions had disappeared; for the moment they were samurai, chosen from several hundred for their triumphant resistance to the storm.

The gala dinner, overhung sardonically with lanterns and streamers, was interrupted by great communal slides across the room, precipitate retirements and spilled wine, while the ship roared and complained that under the panoply of a palace it was a ship after all. Upstairs afterward a dozen couples tried to dance, shuffling and galloping here and there in a crazy fandango, thrust around fantastically by a will alien to their own. In view of the condition of tortured hundreds below, there grew to be something indecent about it, like a revel in a house of mourning, and presently there was an egress of the ever-dwindling survivors toward the bar.

As the evening passed, Eva's feeling of unreality increased. Adrian had disappeared—presumably with Miss D'Amido—and her mind, distorted by illness and champagne, began to enlarge upon the fact; annoyance changed slowly to dark and brooding anger, grief to desperation. She had never tried to bind Adrian, never needed to—for they were serious people, with all sorts of mutual interests, and satisfied with each other—but this was

a breach of the contract, this was cruel. How could he think that she didn't know?

It seemed several hours later that he leaned over her chair in the bar where she was giving some woman an impassioned lecture upon babies, and said: lovely, Eva began to cry. "But he's gone to bed," her last attendants assured her. "We saw him go."

She shook her head. She knew better. Adrian was lost. The long seven-year dream was broken. Probably she was punished for something she had done; as this thought occurred to her the shrieking timbers overhead began to mutter that she had guessed at last. This was for the selfishness to her mother, who hadn't wanted her to marry Adrian; for all the sins and omissions of her life. She stood up, saying she must go out and get some air.

The deck was dark and drenched with wind and rain. The ship pounded through valleys, fleeing from black mountains of water that roared toward it. Looking out at the night, Eva saw that there was no chance for them unless she could make atonement, propitiate the storm. It was Adrian's love that was demanded of her. Deliberately she unclasped her pearl necklace, lifted it to her lips—for she knew that with it went the freshest, fairest part of her life—and flung it out into the gale.

III

When Adrian awoke it was lunchtime, but he knew that some heavier sound than the bugle had called him up from his deep sleep. Then he realized that the trunk had broken loose from its lashings and was being thrown back and forth between a wardrobe and Eva's bed. With an exclamation he jumped up, but she was unharmed—still in costume and stretched out in deep sleep. When the steward had helped him secure the trunk, Eva opened a single eye.

"How are you?" he demanded, sitting on the side of her bed.

She closed the eye, opened it again.

"We're in a hurricane now," he told her. "The steward says it's the worst he's seen in twenty years."

"My head," she muttered. "Hold my head."

"How?"

"In front. My eyes are going out. I think I'm dying."

"Nonsense. Do you want the doctor?"

She gave a funny little gasp that frightened him; he rang and sent the steward for the doctor.

The young doctor was pale and tired. There was a stubble of beard upon his face. He bowed curtly as he came in and, turning to Adrian, said with scant ceremony:

"What's the matter?"

"My wife doesn't feel well." "Well, what is it you want—a bromide?"

A little annoyed by his shortness, Adrian said: "You'd better examine her and see what she needs."

"She needs a bromide," said the doctor. "I've given orders that she is not to have any more to drink on this ship."

"Why not?" demanded Adrian in astonishment.

"Don't you know what happened last night?"

"Why, no, I was asleep."

"Mrs. Smith wandered around the boat for an hour, not knowing what she was doing. A sailor was set to follow her, and then the medical stewardess tried to get her to bed, and your wife insulted her."

"Oh, my heavens!" cried Eva faintly.

"The nurse and I had both been up all night with Steward Carton, who died this morning." He picked up his case. "I'll send down a bromide for Mrs. Smith. Good-by."

For a few minutes there was silence in the cabin. Then Adrian put his arm around her quickly.

"Never mind," he said. "We'll straighten it out."

"I remember now." Her voice was an awed whisper. "My pearls. I threw them overboard."

"Threw them overboard!"

"Then I began looking for you."

"But I was here in bed."

"I didn't believe it; I thought you were with that girl."

"She collapsed during dinner. I was taking a nap down here."

Frowning, he rang the bell and asked the steward for luncheon and a bottle of beer.

"Sorry, but we can't serve any beer to your cabin, sir."

When he went out Adrian exploded: "This is an outrage. You were simply crazy from that storm and they can't be so high-handed. I'll see the captain."

"Isn't that awful?" Eva murmured. "The poor man died."

She turned over and began to sob into her pillow. There was a knock at the door.

"Can I come in?"

The assiduous Mr. Butterworth, surprisingly healthy and immaculate, came into the crazily tipping cabin.

"Well, how's the mystic?" he demanded of Eva. "Do you remember praying to the elements in the bar last night?"

"I don't want to remember anything about last night." They told him about the stewardess, and with the telling the situation lightened; they all laughed together.

"I'm going to get you some beer to have with your luncheon," Butterworth said. "You ought to get up on deck."

"Don't go," Eva said. "You look so cheerful and nice."

"Just for ten minutes."

When he had gone, Adrian rang for two baths.

"The thing is to put on our best clothes and walk proudly three times around the deck," he said.

"Yes." After a moment she added abstractedly: "I like that young man. He was awfully nice to me last night when you'd disappeared."

The bath steward appeared with the information that bathing was too dangerous today. They were in the midst of the wildest hurricane on the North Atlantic in ten years; there were two broken arms this morning from attempts to take baths. An elderly lady had been thrown down a staircase and was not expected to live. Furthermore, they had received the SOS signal from several boats this morning.

"Will we go to help them?"

"They're all behind us, sir, so we have to leave them to the Mauretania. If we tried to turn in this sea the portholes would be smashed."

This array of calamities minimized their own troubles. Having eaten a sort of luncheon and drunk the beer provided by Butterworth, they dressed and went on deck.

Despite the fact that it was only possible to progress step by step, holding on to rope or rail, more people were abroad than on the day before. Fear had driven them from their cabins, where the trunks bumped and the waves pounded the portholes and they awaited momentarily the call to the boats. Indeed, as Adrian and Eva stood on the transverse deck above the second class, there was a bugle call, followed by a gathering of stewards and stewardesses on the deck below. But the boat was sound; it had outlasted one of its cargo—Steward James Carton was being buried at sea.

It was very British and sad. There were the rows of stiff, disciplined men and women standing in the driving rain, and there was a shape covered by the flag of the Empire that lived by the sea. The chief purser read the service, a hymn was sung, the body slid off into the hurricane. With Eva's burst of wild weeping for this humble end, some last string snapped within her. Now she really didn't care. She responded eagerly when Butterworth suggested that he get some champagne to their cabin. Her mood worried Adrian; she wasn't used to so much drinking and he wondered what he ought to do. At his suggestion that they sleep instead, she merely laughed, and the bromide the doctor had sent stood untouched on the washstand. Pretending to listen to the insipidities of several Mr. Stacombs, he watched her; to his surprise and discomfort she seemed on

intimate and even sentimental terms with Butterworth, and he wondered if this was a form of revenge for his attention to Betsy D'Amido.

The cabin was full of smoke, the voices went on incessantly, the suspension of activity, the waiting for the storm's end, was getting on his nerves. They had been at sea only four days; it was like a year.

The two Mr. Stacombs left finally, but Butterworth remained. Eva was urging him to go for another bottle of champagne.

"We've had enough," objected Adrian. "We ought to go to bed."

"I won't go to bed!" she burst out. "You must be crazy! You play around all you want, and then, when I find somebody I-I like, you want to put me to bed."

"You're hysterical."

"On the contrary, I've never been so sane."

"I think you'd better leave us, Butterworth," Adrian said. "Eva doesn't know what she's saying."

"He won't go. I won't let him go." She clasped Butterworth's hand passionately. "He's the only person that's been half decent to me."

"You'd better go, Butterworth," repeated Adrian.

The young man looked at him uncertainly.

"It seems to me you're being unjust to your wife," he ventured.

"My wife isn't herself."

"That's no reason for bullying her."

Adrian lost his temper. "You get out of here!" he cried.

The two men looked at each other for a moment in silence. Then Butterworth turned to Eva, said, "I'll be back later," and left the cabin.

"Eva, you've got to pull yourself together," said Adrian when the door closed.

She didn't answer, looked at him from sullen, half-closed eyes.

"I'll order dinner here for us both and then we'll try to get some sleep."

"I want to go up and send a wireless."

"Who to?"

"Some Paris lawyer. I want a divorce."

In spite of his annoyance, he laughed. "Don't be silly."

"Then I want to see the children."

"Well, go and see them. I'll order dinner." He waited for her in the cabin twenty minutes. Then impatiently he opened the door across the corridor; the nurse told him that Mrs. Smith had not been there.

With a sudden prescience of disaster he ran upstairs, glanced in the bar, the salons, even knocked at Butterworth's door. Then a quick round of the decks, feeling his way through the black spray and rain. A sailor stopped him at a network of ropes.

"Orders are no one goes by, sir. A wave has gone over the wireless room."

"Have you seen a lady?"

"There was a young lady here—" He stopped and glanced around. "Hello, she's gone."

"She went up the stairs!" Adrian said anxiously. "Up to the wireless room!"

The sailor ran up to the boat deck; stumbling and slipping, Adrian followed. As he cleared the protected sides of the companionway, a tremendous body struck the boat a staggering blow and, as she keeled over to an angle of forty-five degrees, he was thrown in a helpless roll down the drenched deck, to bring up dizzy and bruised against a stanchion.

"Eva!" he called. His voice was soundless in the black storm. Against the faint light of the wireless-room window he saw the sailor making his way forward.

"Eva!"

The wind blew him like a sail up against a lifeboat. Then there was another shuddering crash, and high over his head, over the very boat, he saw a gigantic, glittering white wave, and in the split second that it balanced there he became conscious of Eva, standing beside a ventilator twenty feet away. Pushing out from the stanchion, he lunged desperately toward her, just as the wave broke with a smashing roar. For a moment the rushing water was five feet deep, sweeping with enormous force toward the side, and then a human body was washed against him, and frantically he clutched it and was swept with it back toward the rail. He felt his body bump against it, but desperately he held on to his burden; then, as the ship rocked slowly back, the two of them, still joined by his fierce grip, were rolled out exhausted on the wet planks. For a moment he knew no more.

IV

Two days later, as the boat train moved tranquilly south toward Paris, Adrian tried to persuade his children to look out the window at the Norman countryside.

"It's beautiful," he assured them. "All the little farms like toys. Why, in heaven's name, won't you look?"

"I like the boat better," said Estelle.

Her parents exchanged an infanticidal glance.

"The boat is still rocking for me," Eva said with a shiver. "Is it for you?"

"No. Somehow, it all seems a long way off. Even the passengers looked unfamiliar going through the customs."

"Most of them hadn't appeared above ground before."

He hesitated. "By the way, I cashed Butterworth's check for him."

"You're a fool. You'll never see the money again."

"He must have needed it pretty badly or he would not have come to me."

A pale and wan girl, passing along the corridor, recognized them and put her head through the doorway.

"How do you feel?"

"Awful."

"Me, too," agreed Miss D'Amido. "I'm vainly hoping my fiance will recognize me at the Gare du Nord. Do you know two waves went over the wireless room?"

"So we heard," Adrian answered dryly.

She passed gracefully along the corridor and out of their life.

"The real truth is that none of it happened," said Adrian after a moment. "It was a nightmare—an incredibly awful nightmare."

"Then, where are my pearls?"

"Darling, there are better pearls in Paris. I'll take the responsibility for those pearls. My real belief is that you saved the boat."

"Adrian, let's never get to know anyone else, but just stay together always—just we two."

Be tucked her arm under his and they sat close. "Who do you suppose those Adrian Smiths on the boat were?" he demanded. "It certainly wasn't me."

"Nor me."

"It was two other people," he said, nodding to himself. "There are so many Smiths in this world."

Published in The Saturday Evening Post magazine (8 June 1929).