

the decks, for the old man wouldn't leave the Ace-High dirty, not for a minute. Charlie and the skipper were havin' a little set-to, Charlie claimin' he hadn't been given credit for one moat-load o' skins he'd put aboard.

"Who do you reckon did get credit for 'em, Charlie?" asks the skipper.

"I dunno," says Charlie; "but it wouldn't surprise me none to find wery one of us got credit for 'em."

"That meant the skipper had been cheatin' us, and it made old Bedrock mad. He never said a word, but he took a long look at Charlie, and I was glad my name was Daniel.

"We'd made a long leg, and just come about on the port tack when the fog sort o' rolled itself up like a curtain at a show, and the whole sea laid open, gray lookin' and mean. Off behind us I made out the breedin' rock, with the surf breakin' on it tremenjous, and the seals gallopin' up and down in their funny, floppy way. I was lookin' back at it sort o' studyin' on the trouble we were leavin' behind us, when there came a yell from Turk McGraw:

"My God!" he says; "look at that!"

"The wind was light and flawy out o' the south-west, an' we were runnin' pretty near westerly on the port tack at this time. I switched around and followed where Turk was pointin'; and I tell you my breath stopped right up, like I'd swallowed a cork.

"Not more'n five miles away on our port quarter was a nice little shiny white gunboat, steamin' slowly up to the island to see was there anything doin'. We could make out the nasty lookin' quick-firers in her barbettes.

"Lord, but that was a sight to shock you! We watched her swing about slow till she pointed our way; and she looked so close I was wonderin' if she'd try a shot at us. Maybe she reckoned we'd lay down and die peaceful, without her wastin' any ammunition on us. Anyway, she didn't shoot. There wasn't a thing we could do, and we just stood there like gravestones in a churchyard and watched Siberia comin' for us.

"Then the fog rolled down between, solid as a wall, and old Bedrock let a yell out of him that sort o' woke us

out of a sound sleep. He drove us forward like savvies, and 'fore we knew it we were pulling and hauling with Japs on both sides of us. He set the vessel about, fair before the wind, and we piled every inch of canvas on her, flyin' jibs and stays'ls, swing the booms out wing and wing, and dove into the blessed another, headed about nor-east. We reckoned that gunboat would expect us to wait right where we were till she came up and put the handcuffs on us, and we aimed to be some little distance off when she got there.

"Well, the fog was good to us for a solid forty minutes; and the little Ace-High certainly did herself proud. She was rollin' some, but not bad, and considerin' the wind we had, she walked away surprisin'. When it lifted, sure enough, there laid the gunboat all o' four mile behind us, and probably about where we'd been when she first sighted us. She'd stopped her engines and just laid there heavin', all ready to shackle us up when the fog lifted. I wouldn't wonder now but what her feelin's were some hurt when it did lift.

"Turk McGraw came out o' the cabin with his arms full of American flag.

"What's that for?" snaps old Bedrock, glarin' at his out o' them white-gray eyes o' his.

"Goin' to show them fellers what they're up against," says Turk.

"The old man sort o' grinned; and McGraw and me we bent the flag to the balyards and sent her up. Meanwhile the gunboat had got her engines turnin' over full speed ahead, and was comin' for us like a thirty-six knot destroyer and madder'n a burnt wildcat. Directly she let go one of her forward guns. We saw the flash and heard the "boom," and maybe some of us sort o' grabbed hold o' something while we waited for the shell. Then it plumped into the sea a good piece behind us and well out o' line, and we felt better.

"Down come the fog again, and we jammed the scunner round, triced things up sharp, and stood away southerly on the starboard tack.

"Say," says Charlie Bennett, white as chalk and all a-tremble, "I don't like this. I say, let's heave to. I don't see

no sense in gettin' blowed to pieces."

"What's that?" snaps Bedrock, like he'd eat him. "If you don't like it, you suckin' lamb, you kin take one o' the boats and go aboard o' that Rooshian. The Ace-High'll give 'em a run for it first. I don't know," he says, kind o' thoughtful—"I don't know now but what I'd blow her up 'fore I'd see her sold in Vladivostok."

"I didn't think he meant it, and maybe he didn't, but I ain't quite sure. He thought a sight o' that scunner. Anyway Charlie shut up, though he was scart so his teeth chattered.

"We drove away southerly, now and then gettin' a puff that heeled the Ace-High over to what her skipper called her racing line; and I will say that when she got wind enough she was sinful fast. Bedrock had the wheel, and he'd talk to her and humour her, takin' advantage of every puff, and in between pokin' his nose out to windward and snuffin' the air.

"Git some wind directly," he says, cheerfullike, after a bit. "We'll give them fellers a run for it yet, won't we, old girl!"

"Thirty-five minutes by Turk McGraw's watch the fog held that time, while we scuttled off south, hopeful the enemy was steamin' up nor-east, to where we'd been last time they saw us. You see, they didn't dare to turn right or left to hear us, for we might 'a' gone any one o' three ways—straight away north-east, or westerly, or southerly; and if she tried to head us off it was two chances to one she'd miss our direction, and be farther away than ever when the fog lifted.

"So she did just what we reckoned she would, and plowed straight for the place she last saw us. Even so, she cut down our lead some every time, for the fog didn't hold long enough for us to make any distance. It was about ten o'clock in the evenin' now, and in another hour it would be night—or as near night as we'd get.

"The wind was freshenin', too, just as the skipper said, and if we could only hold our distance till it came dark we might give 'em the slip yet. Of course we couldn't keep that dodgin'

game up forever. We were just travelin' round a triangle, and there'd come a time when she'd get close enough to put a shell into us; and just one shell in that little scunner would 'a' been a plenty.

"When the fog drifted off to loo'ard this time we found we'd figgered right; for the gunboat was up where we'd been, but maybe a half-mile nearer than before. She no more than saw us when 'bang' she let fly at us; and when the shell plumped down only two hundred yards behind us it showed things were gettin' warm.

"Directly, she let go another, but either the range was beyond her or her gunners were rotten, for that fell short, too. Meantime she was comin' for us in scandalous leaps, buttin' into the sea and throwin' spray all over her. For all o' five minutes the fog was up between us, but, glory be! the wind was risin' fast, and the little Ace-High was a slappin' along gatherin' way with every jump, so that the gunboat, with all her steam, wasn't gainin' much.

"Then the wind backed a bit to the west and came down a-howlin'. The fog dropped in between and shut out the gunboat, and I expected we'd come about and go off on the other tack. It was gettin' along toward sunset, and what with the pea-soup fog it was fairly dark a'ready.

"But instead of goin' about, the skipper held straight ahead, everything creakin' with the strain; and the minute the fog shut us in he sings out for two of us to go below with a couple o' Japs and break out the powder-barrel and get it on deck. Turk and me went along down.

"What's doin'?" I says.

"Search me," says Turk.

"Will he blow her up?" I asked, feelin' some interested, as you might say.

"He'd leave it below if he meant for to blow her up," says Turk; "which the same it looked like sense, too, when you come to think about it."

"So we rolled out the barrel and h'isted it to the deck. It was chock-a-block, for we'd had enough cartridges

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