

weren't different from other people—it only seemed they were.

The sun rose and set. The days passed. Slowly, like autumn leaves falling, shadowing the ground, no hurry, falling to be forgotten. More and more to bury the others. It was the monotony of those days, not danger or thoughts of danger, that made me fearful—for the days to come. Everlastingly. A silvery rushing of water straight for the ship several times made me cry "torpedoes." My listening ears heard the bump. There was never the explosion I waited for. Not torpedoes, but porpoises. Smack into the side they would come. I wondered whether in the night they could not see the blackness that was our ship; or perhaps with the freedom of a million miles of rolling ocean always before to themselves they were not caring. Had no need to care. They frightened me.

We steamed through the days. Through the ocean; seas alive, breathing with the tides, ebbing and flowing to and from rocky ribs of coast-line. Our throbbing engines were this ocean's heart. But they had not the strength—the beating-power of the engines of a thousand ships would not have the strength. The ocean has no heart. Mighty, impersonal, and cruelly impartial in its might. Nothing warm—no feeling there to show a heart.

The greyness of early dawn. A submarine. A torpedo. No porpoise. A torpedo. A crash of explosion that was purple in the intensity of its sound. A sheet of flame, vivid lightning, rising from the crash.

We had been hit. Fire. We were on fire. The ship was on fire. Spreading flames, spreading through our forward compartment. It all happened quicker than my realization of its happening. It was true; I knew it to be true when I found myself shouting words that had no sense, with excitement rather than fear.

The sea was dead flat, greasily calm. We might have been sliding in the oil we carried. The oil that now was on fire. Somewhere out there was a submarine, satisfied. We did not see her, nor did we care.

The captain worked like a madman. But he was beaten and outwitted. Something stronger than himself, more deadly, had taken control of the ship that was his. We waited for the second explosion that must have meant the end. It did not come. A light breath of wind stirred into a breeze, swelling the roaring of fire, the flames spreading.

We must get away, minutes wasted and it would be too late. The men had not waited to hear the captain's order to lower the boats, to abandon the ship. But he gave that order; even he realized there was no use fighting the fury that was oil on fire.

"I name this ship 'Skaanen,' and Bless all that sail in her." That was said, years ago, with flags and shouting and champagne, said over bows that were white and fresh. It did not matter that the clear-cut eagerness of those bows had been lost, the freshness of colour gone forever, against the wharfs of the world and from ill-considered encounters with other ships—ships that still cared—and from rocks and reefs that did not.

"Bless all that sail in her." For more than thirty years in the importance of life and death, and—to the owners—the still greater importance of a safe ship, cargoes delivered, that Blessing had held. Now those bows were twisting and cowering with flame, oil was on fire—the Devil was mocking that Blessing, safe and sure of success in his mockery, laughing in his work.

Down splashed the boats, the men into them, tumbling and rushing. The captain, too; frightened and full of fear, not from terror of the flames and the danger of the second explosion that must be the end, but because his ship was burning and lost. Only the ocean could still that fury, but he knew that when it did all, already, would have been lost; it would be too late.

He did not realize, and if there had been realization there would have been no caring with it, that this Fate that had knifed into his being so shockingly, with such grim suddenness, was similar to that which he—this man himself—by his flaunting for profit of the rules of sea safety had imposed on others less strong than himself. Now strength greater