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KATHERINE
ANNE
PORTER



a novel

SHIP OF
FOOLS



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Ship of Fools

A Novel

Katherine Anne Porter



For Barbara Wescott

*1932: Paris, Rambouillet, Davosplatz, Salzburg, Munich,
New York, Mulhocaway, Rosemont: 1962*

Author's Note

The title of this book is a translation from the German of *Das Narrenschiff*, a moral allegory by Sebastian Brant (1458?–1521) first published in Latin as *Stultifera Navis* in 1494. I read it in Basel the summer of 1932 when I had still vividly in mind the impressions of my first voyage to Europe. When I began thinking about my novel, I took for my own this simple almost universal image of the ship of this world on its voyage to eternity. It is by no means new – it was very old and durable and so deeply familiar when Brant used it; and it suits my purpose exactly. I am a passenger on that ship.

K. A. P.

CONTENTS

Cast of Characters

PART I EMBARKATION

Quand partons-nous vers le bonheur?
(BAUDELAIRE)

PART II HIGH SEA

Kein Haus, Keine Heimat ...
(SONG BY BRAHMS)

PART III THE HARBORS

For here have we no continuing city ...
(SAINT PAUL)

A Biography of Katherine Anne Porter

CHARACTERS

On board the North German Lloyd S.A. *Vera*, between Veracruz, Mexico, and Bremerhaven, Germany, August 22–September 17, 1931.

German

Ship's Captain Thiele.

Dr. Schumann, ship's doctor.

The purser, and a half dozen young ship's officers.

Frau Rittersdorf, who keeps a notebook.

Frau Otto Schmitt, recently widowed in Mexico.

Herr Siegfried Rieber, publisher of a ladies' garment trade magazine.

Fräulein Lizzi Spöckenkieker, in the ladies' garment business; from Hanover.

Herr Professor Hutten } Former head of a German school in Mexico, and his wife
Frau Professor Hutten } traveling with them is their white bulldog Bébé.

Herr Karl Baumgartner } Lawyer from Mexico City – hopeless drunkard; his wife Greta
Frau Baumgartner } and their eight-year-old son.
Hans Baumgartner }

Herr Karl Glocken, a hunchback, who has sold out his little tobacco and newspaper stand in Mexico, and is returning to Germany.

Herr Wilibald Graf, a dying religious enthusiast who believes he has the power of healing.
Johann, his nephew and attendant.

Herr Wilhelm Freytag, “connected with” an oil company in Mexico, returning to Germany to fetch his wife and her mother.

Herr Julius Löwenthal, Jewish manufacturer and salesman of Catholic Church furnishings, returning to his home in Düsseldorf for a visit with his cousin Sarah.

Swiss

Herr Heinrich Lutz } A hotelkeeper from Mexico, returning to Switzerland after fifteen
Frau Lutz } years, with Elsa his wife and their daughter, eighteen years old.
Lutz }

Spanish

A zarzuela company, singers and dancers who call themselves gypsies, returning to Spain after being stranded in Mexico.

Women: Amparo, Lola, Concha, Pastora.

Men: Pepe, Tito, Manolo, Pancho.

Children: Ric and Rac, Lola's twins, boy and girl, six years old.

La Condesa, a déclassée noblewoman who has lived many years in Cuba; political exile being deported from Cuba to Tenerife.

Cuban

Six Cuban medical students on their way to Montpellier.

Mexican

The bride and groom from Guadalajara, Mexico, on a honeymoon trip to Spain.
Señora Esperón y Chavez de Ortega, wife of attaché of the Mexican Legation in Paris, traveling with her newly born son and Indian nursemaid Nicolasa.

Father Garza
Father Carillo } Mexican Catholic priests on a journey to Spain.

Political agitator: Fat man in cherry-colored shirt, who sings.

Swedish

Arne Hansen, at feud with Herr Rieber.

American

William Denny, from Texas, a young chemical engineer going to Berlin.

Mary Treadwell, a woman of forty-five, divorced, returning to Paris.

David Scott
Jenny Brown } Two young painters living together, on their first voyage to Europe.

In Steerage

Eight hundred and seventy-six souls: Spaniards, men, women, children, workers in the sugar fields of Cuba, being deported back to the Canaries and to various parts of Spain (wherever they came from) after the failure of the sugar market.

Cabin Mates

Frau Rittersdorf

Frau Schmitt

Mrs. Treadwell

Fräulein Spöckenkieker

Jenny Brown (Jenny angel)

Elsa Lutz

Father Garza

Father Carillo

Wilhelm Freytag

Arne Hansen

David Scott (David darling)

William Denny

Karl Glocken

Wilibald Graf

Johann, his nephew

Herr Rieber

Herr Löwenthal

Señora Ortega
Nurse and baby

La Condesa (alone)

Bride and groom

Herr Lutz

Frau Lutz

Professor Hutten

Frau Hutten

Bébé the bulldog

Herr Baumgartner

Frau Baumgartner

Hans Baumgartner

The six Cuban students occupy two adjoining cabins.

The zarzuela company:

Manolo and Concha

Tito and Lola, with Ric and Rac

Pepe and Amparo

Pancho and Pastora

Embarkation

Quand partons-nous vers le bonheur?

Baudelaire

August, 1931—The port town of Veracruz is a little purgatory between land and sea for the traveler, but the people who live there are very fond of themselves and the town they have helped to make. They live as initiates in local custom reflecting their own history and temperament, and they carry on their lives of alternate violence and lethargy with a pleasurable contempt for outside opinion, founded on the charmed notion that their ways and feelings are above and beyond criticism.

When they entertain themselves at their numerous private and public feasts, the newspapers publish lyric prose saying how gay an occasion it was; in what lavish and aristocratic—the terms are synonymous, they believe—taste the decorations and refreshments; and they cannot praise too much the skill with which the members of good society maintain in their deportment the delicate balance between high courtesy and easy merriment, a secret of the Veracruz world bitterly envied and unsuccessfully imitated by the provincial inland society of the Capital. “Only our people know how to enjoy themselves with civilized freedom,” they write. “We are generous, warmhearted, hospitable, sensitive,” they go on, and they mean it to be read not only by themselves but by the polyglot barbarians of the upper plateau who obstinately go on regarding Veracruz as merely a pestilential jumping-off place into the sea.

There is maybe a small sign of uneasiness in this pugnacious assertion of high breeding; in this and in the methodical brutality of their common behavior towards the travelers who must pass through their hands to reach the temporary haven of some ship in harbor. The travelers wish only to be carried away from the place, and the Veracruzanos wish only to see the last of them; but not until every possible toll, fee, extortion, and bribe due to the town and its citizens has been extracted. It is in fact to the passing eye a typical port town, cynical by nature, shameless by experience, hardened in showing its seamiest side to strangers: ten to one this stranger passing through is a sheep bleating for their shears, and one in ten is a scoundrel it would be a pity not to outwit. In any case, there is only so much money to be got out of each one, and the time is always short.

In the white heat of an early August morning a few placid citizens of the white-linen class strolled across the hard-baked surface of the public square under the dusty shade of the sweet-by-night trees and seated themselves at leisure on the terrace of the Palacio Hotel. They stretched out their feet to cool their shoe soles, greeted the soggy little waiter by name, and called for iced limeades. They had all grown up together in the several generations, married each other's cousins or sisters or aunts, knew each other's business, told all the gossip they heard, and heard all they had told repeated to them; had assisted indeed with the intimacy of midwives at the making of each other's histories: and still they met here almost every morning on the way to their shops or offices for a last hour of repose and to catch up on the news before beginning the serious day's work.

The square was deserted except for a small, emaciated Indian sitting on a bench under a tree, a country Indian wearing weathered white cotton drawers and a long shirt, a widely curved old straw hat over his eyes. His feet with their ragged toenails and cracked heels, in sandals fastened with leather thongs broken and knotted together again, lay meekly together on the gray earth. He seemed to sleep sitting upright, arms folded. With a drowsy motion he pushed back his hat, took out of his twisted blue cotton belt a roll of cold tortillas and ate, eyes roving or fixed on distance, setting his square teeth in the tough bread resolutely, chewing and swallowing without enjoyment. The men at leisure on the terrace did not notice him except as a part of the scene, and he seemed unaware of them.

The beggar who came to the terrace every morning in time for the early traffic appeared around the corner shambling and crawling, the stumps of his four limbs bound in leather and twine. He had been in early life so intricately maimed and deformed by a master of the art, in preparation for his calling, that he had little resemblance to any human being. Dumb, half blind, he approached with nose almost

sidewalk as if he followed the trail of a smell, stopping now and then to rest, wagging his hideous shock head from side to side slowly in unbearable suffering. The men at the table glanced at him as he were a dog too repulsive even to kick, and he waited patiently beside each one for the sound of the small copper coins dropped into the gaping leather bag around his neck. When one of the men held out to him the half of a squeezed lime, he sat back on his haunches, opened his dreadful mouth to receive the fruit, and dropped down again, his jaws working. He crawled then across the street to the square and lay down under the trees behind the little Indian, who did not turn his head.

The men watched his progress idly without expression as they might a piece of rubbish rolling before the wind; their gaze then roved still idly but with expert observation to the working girls walking in groups to their jobs, all dressed in flimsy light-colored cotton dresses, with bright pink and blue celluloid combs in their black hair; and to the upper-class girls in formal church attire, black gauzy dresses and fine black lace mantillas over high tortoise-shell combs, going slowly, already opening their wide black fans, into the church across the square.

When the last girl had disappeared, the eyes of the lolling men wandered then to the familiar anti-faces of creatures inhabiting the windowsills and balconies nearest them. A long gray cat huddled watchfully in the window of his own house, staring at his enemy the parrot, that interloper with the human voice who had deceived him again and again with an invitation to come and get food. The parrot cocked his bronze-agate eye towards the monkey who began jeering at him every morning at sunrise, and jeered at him all day long in a language he could not understand. The monkey, from his neighboring balcony rail, leaped the length of his chain at the parrot, who screamed and fluttered tugging at his leg-leash. Bored with this, the monkey sidled away, and the parrot settled down cursing monotonously and shaking his feathers. The smell of cracked coconuts in the vendor's basket on the sidewalk below tempted the monkey. He leaped downwards towards them, dangled in frenzy by his delicate waist, and climbed again up his own chain to safety.

A woman reached her bare arm out of the window to the parrot and gave him a rotten-ripe banana. The parrot, with a little croak of thanks, took it in one claw and ate, fixing a hard dangerous eye on the monkey, who chattered with greed and fear. The cat, who despised them both and feared neither because he was free to fight or run as he chose, was roused by the smell of the raw, tainted meat hanging in chunks in the small butcher's stand below him. Presently he slid over the sill and dropped in silence upon the offal at the butcher's feet. A mangy dog leaped snarling at the cat, and there was a fine, yelping, hissing race between them to the nearest tree in the square, where the cat clawed his way out of danger and the dog, in his blindness of fury, stumbled across the abused feet of the Indian on the bench. The Indian seemed hardly to move, yet with perfect swiftness and economy swung his leg from the knee and planted a kick with the hard edge of his sandal in the dog's lean ribs. The dog howling all the way, rushed back to the butcher's stand.

One of the men yawned freely, shaking out the newspaper lying rumped before him, and examined again the page-sized photograph of the shattered, disemboweled corpse lying near a small crater made by the exploding bomb, in the patio of the Swedish Consulate, against a background of potted plants and wicker bird cages. It had been a young Indian servant boy, the only person killed, after all. The face had not been damaged and the wide-open eyes were peacefully melancholy; one hand lay spread delicately upon a lump of clotted entrails beside him. A man at a near table got up and leaned over to look also at the photograph, and shook his head. He was an older man with an oily dark face, his white linen clothes and soft collar were sweated limp.

"A bad business, though," he said rather loudly, "a mistake, as usual!"

"Of course, and the newspaper says so, in so many words," said the younger man, agreeing with

both. They began reading the editorial notice. The editor was quite certain that no one in all Mexico and least of all in Veracruz, could wish to harm a hair of the Swedish Consul, who had proved himself a firm friend of the city, the most civilized and respectable of all its foreign residents. The bomb fact had been intended for a rich, unscrupulous landlord who lived next door; by some fatal error never to be too severely reprobated, the explosion had taken place in the wrong house. By such mischances, the editor was well aware, international incidents of the utmost gravity might be brought about. The city of Veracruz therefore hastened to offer its most profound and heartfelt apologies to the Consul, to the great and peaceful nation which he represented, and indeed, was prepared to make and all reparations required by civility between governments in such cases. Most fortunately, the Consul himself had been absent at the time, enjoying his afternoon aquavit and lime juice with members of his household at the home of a friend. It was the hope of every citizen of Veracruz that the Swedish Consul would consent to overlook and forgive the tragic error, since these were stern days with danger lurking everywhere for all. In the meantime, the lamentable incident might even so have its good uses if it should serve as a warning to the heartless, shameless exploiters of honest Veracruz tenants that the Revolution had indeed arrived in its power, that the workers were adamant in their determination to put an end to social and economic wrongs, as well as to avenge themselves fully for wrongs already done them.

The younger man turned the page, and the two read on together. The editor wished to explain the further circumstance. It was clearly the fault of no one that the festival planned in celebration of the bombing had taken place after all, in spite of the awkward failure of aim in those dedicated to the work of destruction. The preparations had been made at some expense and trouble, the fireworks had been ordered and paid for eight days before, the spirit of triumph was in the air. It would have been inglorious to the last degree to have disappointed the merrymaking workers of Veracruz, the charming ladies, and their children growing up in the new world of freedom for all. That the life of an honest young boy, a humble member of the downtrodden proletariat, had been extinguished so prematurely was of course a cause for public mourning. An immense, honorable funeral was being planned for his remains, as a martyr to the great cause of liberty and justice; ample material compensation as well would be extended to his grieving family. Already two truckloads of floral offerings had been provided by voluntary contributions from every labor union in the city; there would be five bands to play funeral marches and revolutionary songs from the Cathedral door to the graveside, and it was expected that every working man and woman able to walk would be in the great procession.

“Whew, it’s getting hot around here,” said the younger man, running his handkerchief into the back of his collar. The older man said, lowering his voice almost to a whisper, speaking with very little movement of his lips, “These swine are going the whole way, that’s plain. I haven’t collected a peso in rent from any of them for more than a year, I may never collect another. They sit there in that block of thirty-five houses in the Soledad section scratching their lice at my expense—” The two looked at each other quietly in the eye. “They don’t seem to realize that this kind of thing can be made to work both ways.”

The younger one nodded. They moved away together out of earshot of the waiters. “My shoemaker has struck four times in seven months,” said the younger man. “They talk almost in my face about taking over the factory. On the day they try it, the whole plant will burn down, I promise you. Everything is well insured.”

“Why do we wait?” asked the older man, a compulsive violence bursting suddenly through his guarded tone. “Why hadn’t we got fifty machine guns to turn on that celebration last night? The

don't own the army yet—why didn't we send for troops? Fifty machine guns? Why not five thousand? Why not a carload of hand grenades? What is the matter with us? Are we losing our senses?"—

The younger man stared before him intently as if some exciting spectacle were taking place in his mind. "It's just begun," he said with a smile of relish. "Let it work up a little more to something worth doing. Don't worry, we'll smash them to pulp. They never win. They're such cattle they don't even know they are just fighting for a change of masters.... Well, I'm going to be master for a while yet."

"Not if we just sit and let them swarm over us," said the older man.

"They never win," said the younger man. They walked on.

Those left behind began to drift slowly away from the terrace, leaving their newspapers on the tables. The streets, they observed with distaste, were again beginning to crawl with the latest lot of people in town for the next boat, birds of passage from God knew where, chattering their ungainly tongues. Even the Spanish was not the Spanish of Mexico. As for the women among them, except for the occasional soft beauty of some real Mexican girl, they were always the same, no matter of what freakish nationality: middle-aged painted scarecrows too fat or too thin: and young flat-chested loud-voiced things with cropped hair striding around in low-heeled shoes, their skirts shortened to show legs never meant to be seen by any eye but God's. If any exceptions to these rules occurred, they were quite simply ignored; all strangers as such were odious and absurd. The people of Veracruz never tire of the pastime of ridiculing the looks of the foreign women, their costumes, their voices, their unwomanly ways—the North American ones more especially. Rich and important persons sometimes arrived and departed by those boats; but being rich and important, they hardly showed themselves except in swiftly moving motors, or in lordly pauses among their clutter of expensive luggage on dock or platform. Their looks did not so much matter, anyway; they were ridiculed on other and higher grounds. *They*—all unconscious and at ease as they seemed, surveying a world made for them and giving orders to everybody in sight without turning a hand themselves—*they* were marked for destruction, so the labor leaders told their followers, and could already be regarded with some curiosity as a disappearing race. The new crowd, the watchers decided, was regular—no better, no worse, but there were always a few amusing variations.

The clerk of the hotel came out for a glimpse of daylight, and the waiters in their stained rumpled white jackets began slapping dust and crumbs off the tablecloths in preparation for lunch. They observed with contempt that their particular share of the day's travelers was straggling in again for rest after swarming all over the town all morning.

Certainly the travelers were not looking their best. They had crept off the train which brought them from the interior, stiff from trying to sleep fully clothed in their chairs, sore in their minds from the recent tearing up of their lives by the roots, a little gloomy with some mysterious sense of failure, a forced farewell, of homelessness no matter how temporary. Imperfectly washed, untidy and dusty, vaguely not-present in eyes dark-circled by fatigue and anxiety, each one carried signed, stamped papers as proof that he had been born in a certain time and place, had a name of his own, a foothold of some kind in this world, a journey in view for good and sufficient reasons, and possessions worth looking into at international frontiers.

Each hoped that these papers might establish for him at least a momentary immunity from the hazards of his enterprise, and the first thought of each was that he must go instantly, before the rest of that crowd could arrive, and get his own precious business settled first at the various bureaus, consulates, departments of this and that; it was beginning to resemble not so much a voyage as an obstacle race.

So far they were all alike, and they shared a common hope. They lived individually and in mass for the sole purpose of getting safely that same day on board a German ship then standing in dock. She had come from South America the long way round and she was going to Bremerhaven. Alarming rumors had sped to meet the travelers even before they left Mexico City. There were serious hurricanes all along the coast. A revolution or a general strike, time must decide which, was going on at top speed in Veracruz itself. A light epidemic of smallpox had broken out in several coastal towns. At this piece of news, the travelers had all rushed to be vaccinated, and all alike were feverish, with a crusted, festering little sore above the knee or elbow. It had been said also that the German ship might be delayed in sailing, for she had lost time getting stuck for three days on a sand bar off Tampico; but the latest word was that she was in harbor and would sail on time.

They were to travel, it appeared, more than ordinarily at their own risk, and their presence in Veracruz proved that necessity and not the caprices of a pleasure voyage drove them to carry out their intentions in face of such discouragements. They were all of them obviously in circumstances ranging from modestly comfortable to uncomfortably poor, but each suffered from insufficiency in his own degree. Poverty was instantly to be deduced by a common anxiety about fees, a careful opening of wallets and handbags, a minute counting of change with wrung brows and precise fingers; a start of terror by a man who put his hand into his inside coat pocket and feared, for one shattering instant, that his money was gone.

All believed they were bound for a place for some reason more desirable than the place they were leaving, but it was necessary to make the change with the least possible delay and expense. Delay and expense had been their common portion at the hands of an army of professional tip seekers, fee collectors, half-asleep consular clerks and bored Migrations officials who were not in the least concerned whether the travelers gained their ship or dropped dead in their tracks. They saw too many of the kind all day, every day, with that disturbing miasma of financial and domestic worry rising steamily from their respectable-looking clothes. The officials did not care for the breed; they had enough such troubles of their own.

For almost twenty-four hours the anonymous, faceless travelers, their humanity nearly exhausted by their separate sufferings, memories, intentions and baffled wills locked within them, ran doggedly (for there was a taxicab drivers' strike), sweating, despairing, famished (there was a bakers' strike, and a icemen's strike), from hotel to Migrations to Customs to Consulate to the ship's side and so on and more back to the railway station, in a final series of attempts to gather up the ragged edges of their lives and belongings. Each one had his luggage seized by a porter at the station, who took charge of it once with a high hand, laying down the grimly one-sided laws of the situation; these fellows all then disappeared with the property into thin air, and where had they gone? When would they come back? Everybody began to miss his hairbrush, clean shirts, blouses, pocket handkerchiefs; all day grubbing they ran, unrefreshed even by clean water.

So the travelers fretted, meeting up with each other again and again in all the uncomfortable places where they were all fated to be, sharing the same miseries: almost unbearable heat, a stony white rays of vengeful sunlight; vile food, vile beyond belief, slapped down before their sunken faces by insolent waiters. All of them at least once had pushed back a plate of some greasy substance with a fly or cockroach in it, and had paid for it without complaint and tipped the waiter besides because the very smell of violence was in the air, at once crazed and stupefied. One could easily be murdered for a irrelevant word or gesture, and it would be a silly end. All had taken to a diet of black coffee, lukewarm beer, bottled synthetic lemonade, damp salted biscuits in tin boxes, coconut milk drunk directly from the shell. Their porters came back at unexpected times to heckle them, giving wrong

advice and demanding more tips for correcting their own errors. The steady trivial drain upon the purses and spirits went on like a nightmare, with no visible advance in their pressing affairs. Women gave way to fits of weeping, men to fits of temper, which got them nowhere; and they all had reddened eyelids and badly swollen feet.

This common predicament did not by any means make of them fellow sufferers. On the contrary each chose to maintain his pride and separateness within himself. After ignoring each other during the first feverish hours, there crept into eyes meeting unwillingly, for the twentieth time, a look of unacknowledged, hostile recognition. "So there you are again, I never saw you before in my life," the eyes said, flickering away and settling stubbornly upon their own matters. The travelers witnessed each other's humiliations, rehearsed their private business in everybody's hearing, answered embarrassing questions again and again for some sticky little clerk to write down once more. They paused in small groups before the same sights, read signs aloud in chorus, asked questions of the same passers-by, but no bond was established between them. It was as if, looking forward to the long voyage before them, they had come to the common decision that one cannot be too careful of chance met, haphazard acquaintances.

"Well," said the desk clerk to the waiters nearest him, "here come our burros again!" The waiters dangling their greasy rags, aimed spiteful stares meant to be noticed at the badly assorted lot of human beings who took silent possession of the terrace, slumping about the tables and sitting there aimlessly as if they were already shipwrecked. There, again, was the unreasonably fat woman with legs like tree trunks, her fat husband in the dusty black suit and their fat white bulldog. "No, Señora," the clerk had told her with dignity the day before, "even if this is only Mexico still we do not allow dogs in our rooms." The ridiculous woman had kissed the beast on his wet nose before turning him over to the boy who tied him up in the kitchen patio for the night. Bébé the bulldog had borne his ordeal with the mournful silence of his heroic breed, and held no grudges against anybody. His owners now began once to explore the depths of the large food basket they carried everywhere with them.

A tall thin young woman—a leggy "girl" with a tiny, close-cropped head waving on her long neck, a limp green frock flapping about her calves—strode in screaming like a peahen in German at her companion, a little dumpling of a man, pink and pig-snouted. A tall looseboned man with unusual large hands and feet, with white-blond hair clipped in a brush over his intensely knotted forehead wandered by as if he did not recognize the place, turned back and sat by himself, relapsed into a trance. A delicate-looking red-haired boy of perhaps eight years was heaving and sweating in his Mexican riding costume of orange-colored leather, his brassy freckles standing out in the greenish pallor of his skin. His sick-looking German father and sad, exasperated German mother urged him along before them. The little boy was saying monotonously, "I want to go, mother—I want to go," and he wriggled all over.

"Go where?" asked his mother, shrilly. "What do you want? Speak clearly. We are going to Germany, isn't that enough for you?" "I want to go," said the little boy dismally, appealing to his father. The parents exchanged a glance, the mother said, "My God, my brain is giving way!" The father took the boy's hand and hurried him through the cavern of the lobby.

"Figure these tourists," said the clerk to a waiter, "dressing a child in leather in August, making a monkey of him!" The mother turned her head away at these words, flushed, bit her lips, then quietly hid her face in her hands and sat there, perfectly still for a moment.

"Speaking of monkeys, what do you call *that*?" asked the waiter, with a barely perceptible flip of his rag towards a young woman, an American, who wore dark blue cotton trousers and a light blue cotton shirt: a wide leather belt and a blue figured bandanna around her neck completed her outfit.

which she had lifted without leave from the workday costume of the town-dwelling Mexican Indian. Her head was bare. Her black hair was parted in the middle and twisted into a bun at the nape of her neck, rather old-fashioned-looking in New York, but very appropriate still in Mexico. The young man with her wore a proper-looking white linen suit and an ordinary Panama hat.

The clerk dropped his voice, but not quite enough, and spoke the deadliest insult he knew. "It's a mule, perhaps," he ventured. As he moved away he observed with satisfied spite that the American understood Spanish also. The young woman stiffened, the young man's handsome nose turned white and pinched, and they stared at each other like enemies. "I told you to put on a skirt here," said the young man. "You do know better."

"Hush," said the young woman, in a weary, expressionless voice, "simply hush. I can't change now until we get to the boat."

Four pretty Spanish girls, dark-skinned, long-necked, with an air of professional impudence, their sleazy black skirts too tight around their slender hips, their colored petticoat ruffles showing shabbily over their graceful legs, had been all over the square, back and forth, up and down and sideways in the narrow streets between the low soiled white plaster walls pocked with bullet holes. They had rushed in and out of shops, they sat on the terrace in a huddle eating fruit and scattering the rinds, their urgent Spanish chatter going on noisy as a flock of quarreling birds. They were accompanied by an equal number of dark slim young men with silky black hair oiled to their narrow skulls, wide belts cinched to their tapering waists; and a pair of sallow precocious children, male and female, twins, perhaps six years old. They were the only travelers who had come out and taken part in the show of fireworks and dancing the evening before. They cheered when the rockets went up, they danced with each other in the crowd, and then had gone off a little way by themselves and danced again, the jota, the malagueña, the bolero, playing their castanets. A crowd had gathered round them, and at the end one of the girls had gone among them collecting money, holding her skirt before her to catch the coins, and swishing her petticoat ruffles.

The affairs of this company had required an inordinate amount of arranging. They ran in a loose, imperfectly domesticated group, calling to the young, who disobeyed them all impartially and were equally slapped about and dragged along by all. Distracted with shapeless, loosely wrapped parcels, their eyes flashing and their hips waving in all directions, they grew more disheveled by the moment, but their spirits never flagged. Finally, rushing upon the terrace, they clustered tightly around one table, beat their fists upon it and shouted at the waiter, all screaming their orders at once, the children joining in fearlessly.

An inconspicuous slender woman in early middle age, conventionally dressed in dark blue linen with a wide blue hat shading her black hair and small, rather pretty face and intent dark blue eyes regarded the Spaniards with some distaste while raising the short sleeve over her right arm, to glance again at the place where the beggar woman had pinched her. A hard knot had formed in the soft arm muscle, already blotchy with purple and blue. The woman felt a wish to show this painful bruise to someone, to say lightly as if she were talking about someone else, This is surely not a thing that really happens, is it? But there was no one, and she smoothed down the rumpled linen. That morning she had set out from the hotel after a cold bath, and plenty of hot coffee beastly as it was, feeling a little less ghastly after sleep, for another visit to the Migrations Bureau. The beggar woman was sitting, back to the wall, knees drawn up in a profusion of ragged skirts, eating a hot green pepper rolled in a tortilla. She stopped eating when she saw the American woman, transferred her food to her left hand, scrambled up and came towards her prey with lean shanks flying, her yellow eyes aimed like a weapon in her leather-colored face.

“Give me a little charity at once in God’s name,” the beggar woman said threateningly, rapping the foreign woman sharply on the elbow, who remembered the pleasant, clear little thrill of righteous anger with which she had answered in her best Spanish that she would certainly do nothing of the sort. It was then that the beggar woman, fiercely as a pouncing hawk, had darted out her long hard claws, seized a fold of flesh near the shoulder and wrung it, wrung it bitterly, her nails biting into the skin, and instantly had fled, her bare feet spanking on the pavement. Well, it had been like a bad dream. Naturally things like that can’t happen, said the woman in the blue dress, or at least, not to me. She drooped, rubbed her handkerchief over her face, and looked at her watch.

The fat German in dusty black and his fat wife leaned their heads together and spoke secretly, nodding in agreement. They then crossed the square with their lunch basket and their dog, and seated themselves on the end of the bench opposite the motionless Indian. They ate slowly, taking glazes of white paper off huge white sandwiches, drinking turn about from the cover of a large thermos bottle. The fat white dog sat at their feet with his trusting mouth turned up, opening and closing with a *plap* over the morsels they gave him. Solidly, gravely, with dignity, they ate and ate, while the little Indian sitting near them gave no sign; his shrunken stomach barely moved with his light breathing. The German woman wrapped up what was left of the broken food with housewifely fingers and left it lying on the bench near the Indian. He glanced at it once, quickly, and turned his head again.

The Germans with their dog and their basket came back to their table and asked for one bottle of beer with two glasses. The maimed beggar rose from under the tree sniffing, and crawled towards the smell of food. Rising a little, he embraced the bundle with his leather-covered stumps and brought it down. Leaning against the bench, he hunched over and ate from the ground, gobbling and gulping. The Indian sat motionless, looking away.

The girl in the blue trousers reached out and patted the white bulldog on the head and stroked him. “That’s a sweet dog,” she said to the German woman, who answered kindly but vaguely, not meeting the stranger’s eyes, “Oh, my poor Bébé, he is so good,” and her English was almost without accent. “and so patient, and I am only afraid sometimes he may think he is being punished, with all this.” She poured a little beer on her handkerchief and wiped his big face, tenderly, and almost tenderly she ignored the unsightly, improperly dressed American girl.

The crop-haired young woman in the green gown startled everyone by leaping to her feet screaming in German, “Oh, look what is happening! Oh, what are they doing to him?” Her long arms flurried and pointed towards the great tree in the square.

A half dozen small Indian men came padding across from out the shadow of the church. They carried light rifles under their arms, and they moved with short light steps, not hurrying, towards the Indian sitting on the bench. He watched them approach with no change of expression; their faces were without severity, impersonal, secret. They stopped before him, surrounded him; without a word or glance or pause he rose and went away with them, all noiseless in their ragged sandals and white cotton drawers flapping around their ankles.

The travelers watched the scene with apathy as if sparing themselves a curiosity that would never be satisfied. Besides, what happened to anyone in this place, yes, even to themselves, was no concern of theirs. “Don’t trouble your head,” said the pig-snouted man to the green-clad girl, “that is nothing unusual here. They’re only going to shoot him, after all! Could be he stole a handful of chilis! Or it might be just a little question of village politics.”

This remark roused the gaunt blond man with the huge hands and feet. He unfolded his long body, uncrossed his legs and ranged his fixed scowl upon the pudgy man. “Yes,” he said in German with a foreign accent, his big voice rolling, “politics it may well be. There is nothing else here. Politics are

strikes and bombs. Look how they must even bomb the Swedish Consulate. Even by accident as the say—a lie! Why the Swedish Consulate of all places, may I ask?”

The pig-snouted man flew into a rage and answered in a loud common voice, “Why not the Swedish Consulate, for a change? Why should not other people sometimes have a little trouble, too? Why must it be always the Germans who suffer in these damned foreign countries?”

The long rawboned man ignored the question. He sank back, his white eyelashes closed over his pale eyes, he drew the limeade before him through the straw in a steady stream. The Germans about stirred uneasily, their features set hard in disapproval. Untimely, unseemly, their faces said prudishly that is the kind of German who gives us all bad reputations in strange lands. The little man was flushed and swollen, he seemed to be resenting some deep personal wrong. There followed a long heavy sweaty sunstricken silence; then movement, a rising and pushing back of chairs, a gathering up of parcels, a slow drift towards dispersal. The ship was to sail at four, it was time to go.

Dr. Schumann crossed the deck with the ordered step of an old military man and stood firmly planted near the rail, relaxed without slackness, hands at his side, watching the straggling procession of passengers ascending the gangplank. He had a fine aquiline nose, a serious well-shaped head, and two crookedly healed dark dueling scars on his left cheek. One of these was a “beauty,” as the Germans call it, the enviable slash from ear to mouth perfectly placed that must once have laid the side teeth bare. Healed all these years, the scar still had a knotty surface, a wide seam. Dr. Schumann carried it well, as he carried his sixty years: both were becoming to him. His light brown eyes, level and calmly upon a given point where the people approached and passed, were without speculation or curiosity, but with an abstract goodness and even sweetness in them. He appeared to be amiable, well bred and in perfect possession of himself, standing against a background of light-haired, very young rather undersized ship’s officers in white, and a crew of big solid blunt-faced sailors moving about their duties, each man with the expressionless face and intent manner of a thoroughly disciplined subordinate.

The passengers, emerging from the mildewed dimness of the customs sheds, blinking their eyes against the blinding sunlight, all had the look of invalids crawling into hospital on their last legs. Dr. Schumann observed one of the most extreme forms of hunchback he had ever seen, a dwarf who, from above, appeared to have legs attached to his shoulder blades, the steep chest cradled on the rocking pelvis, the head with its long dry patient suffering face lying back against the hump. Just behind him a tall boy with glittering golden hair and a sulky mouth pushed and jostled a light wheel chair along, which sat a small weary dying man with weak dark whiskers flecked with gray, his spread hands limping on the brown rug over his knees, eyes closed. His head rolled gently with the movement of the chair, otherwise he gave no sign of life.

A young Mexican woman, softened and dispirited by recent childbirth, dressed in the elegant perpetual mourning of her caste, came up slowly, leaning on the arm of the Indian nurse who carried the baby, his long embroidered robe streaming over her arm almost to the ground. The Indian woman wore brightly jeweled earrings, and beneath her full, gaily embroidered Pueblo skirt her small bare feet advanced and retreated modestly. A nondescript pair followed, no-colored parents of the big girl walking between them, taller and heavier than either of them, the three looking about with dull confused faces. Two Mexican priests, much alike in their grim eyes and blue-black jaws, walked briskly around the slow procession and gained the head of it. “Bad luck for this voyage,” said one young officer to another, and they both looked discreetly away. “Not as bad as nuns, though,” said the second, “it takes nuns to sink a ship!”

The four pretty, slatternly Spanish girls, their dark hair sleeked down over their ears, thin-soled black slippers too short in the toes and badly run over at high heels, took leisurely leave, with kisses all around, of a half dozen local young men, who had brought flowers and baskets of fruit. Their own set of four wasp-waisted young men then joined them, and they strolled up together, the girls casting glances full of speculation at the row of fair-haired young officers. The twins, smeary in the face, eating steadily from untidy paper sacks of sweets, followed them in a detached way. An assortment of North Americans, with almost no distinguishing features that Dr. Schumann could see, except that they obviously could not be other than Americans, came next. They were generally thinner and lighter-boned than the Germans, but not so graceful as the Spaniards and Mexicans. He also found it impossible to place them by class, as he could the others; they all had curiously tense, preoccupied faces, yet almost nothing of their characters was revealed in expressions. A middle-aged, pretty woman in dark blue seemed very respectable, but a large irregular bruise on her arm below her shoulder sleeve, most likely the result of an amorous pinch, gave her a slightly ribald look, most unbecoming. The girl in blue trousers had fine eyes, but her bold, airy manner spoiled her looks for Dr. Schumann, who believed that modesty was the most beautiful feature a young girl could have. The young man beside her presented a stubborn, Roman-nosed profile, like a willful, cold-blooded horse, his blue eyes withdrawn and secretive. A tall shambling dark young fellow, whom Dr. Schumann remembered as having embarked at some port in Texas, had gone ashore and was now returning; he lounged along in the wake of the Spanish girls, regarding them with what could only be described as a leer.

The crowd was still struggling upward when Dr. Schumann lost interest and moved away, the officers dispersed, and the dock workers who had been loading the ship without haste began to shove and run back and forth. There remained luggage, children and adults not yet on board, and those on board wandered about in confusion with the air of persons who have abandoned something of great importance on shore, though they cannot think what it is. In straying groups, mute, unrelated, they returned to the docks and stood about idly watching the longshoremen hauling on the ropes of the loading cranes. Shapeless bundles and bales, badly packed bedsprings and mattresses, cheap looking sofas and kitchen stoves, lightly crated pianos and old leather trunks were being swung into the hold along with a carload of Pueblo tile and a few thousand bars of silver for England; a ton of raw chickpeas, bundles of hemp, and sugar for Europe. The ship was none of those specialized carriers of rare goods, much less an elegant pleasure craft coming down from New York, all fresh paint and interior decoration, bringing crowds of prosperous dressed-up tourists with money in their pockets. No, the *Vera* was a mixed freighter and passenger ship, very steady and broad-bottomed in her style, wallowing from one remote port to another, year in year out, honest, reliable and homely as a German housewife.

The passengers examined their ship with the interest and the strange dawning of affection even the ugliest ship can inspire, feeling that whatever business they had was now transferred finally to her hold and cabins. They began to move back towards the gangplank: the screaming girl in green, the pair with the bulldog, a small round German woman in black with sleek brown braids and a heavy gold chain necklace, and a short, worried-looking German Jew lugging a heavy sample case.

At the latest possible moment, a bridal party appeared in a festival flurry at the foot of the gangplank: a profusion of lace hats and tender-colored gauzy frocks for the women, immaculate white linen and carnation buttonholes for the men. It was a Mexican wedding party with several North American girls among the bridesmaids. The bride and groom were young and beautiful, though at the moment they were worn fine and thin and their faces were exhausted with their long ordeal, which even yet was not quite ended. The bridegroom's mother clung to her son, weeping softly and deeply.

kissing his cheek and murmuring like a mourning dove, "O joy of my life, little son of my heart, can be true I have lost you?"

While his father supported her on his arm, she embraced her son, the bridegroom kissed her, patted her heavily rouged and powdered cheeks and whispered dutifully, "No, no, dear sweet little Mama, we shall be back in three months." The bridegroom's mother shrank at this, moaned as if her child had struck her a mortal blow, and sobbing fell back into the arms of her husband.

The bride, in her bridelike traveling dress, surrounded by her maids, stood between her parents, each of them holding her by a hand, and their three faces were calm, grave, and much alike. They waited with patience and a touch of severity as if for some tiresome but indispensable ceremony to end; at last the bridesmaids, recalled to a sense of duty, rather shyly produced each a little fancy so-called basket of rice, and began to scatter it about, fixed smiles on their lips only, eyes nervous and watchful, feeling as they did that the moment for merriment in this affair seemed rather to have passed. At last the bride and groom walked swiftly up the gangplank; almost at once it began to rise and the families and friends below formed a close group, waving. The bride and groom turned around and waved once, a trifle wildly, to their tormentors, then holding hands, almost running, they went straight through the ship to the farther deck. They arrived at the rail as if it were a provided refuge, and stood leaning together, looking towards the sea.

The ship shuddered, rocked and heaved, rolled slowly as the pulse of the engines rose to a steady beat; the barking sputtering tugs nosed and pushed at her sides and there appeared a slowly widening space of dirty water between the ship and the heaving collision mats. All at once by a common movement as if the land they were leaving was dear to them, the passengers crowded upon deck, lined along the rail, stared in surprise at the retreating shore, waved and called and blew kisses to the small lonely-looking clusters on the dock, who shouted and waved back. All the ships in harbor dipped their flags, the small band on deck spanked into a few bars of "*Adieu, mein kleiner Garde-Offizier, adieu, adieu*—" then folded up indifferently and disappeared without a backward glance at Veracruz.

There emerged from the bar an inhumanly fat Mexican in a cherry-colored cotton shirt and sagging blue denim trousers, waving an immense stein of beer. He strode to the rail, elbowed his way between yielding bodies, and burst into a bull bellow of song. "*Adios, Mexico, mi tierra adorada!*" he roared tunelessly, his swollen face a deeper red than his shirt, the thick purple veins standing out on his greasy sweating neck, his forehead and throat straining. He waved the stein and frowned sternly; his collar button flew off into the water, and he tore open his shirt further to free his laboring breath. "*Adios, adios para siempre!*" he bawled urgently, and faintly over the oily-looking waves came a small chorused echo, "*Adios, adios!*" From the very center of the ship rose a vast deep hollow moo, like the answer of a melancholy sea cow. One of the young officers came up quietly behind the fat man and said in a low voice, in stiff Spanish, his schoolboy face very firm, "Go below please where you belong. Do you not see that the ship has sailed? Third-class passengers are not allowed on the upper decks."

The bull-voiced man wheeled about and glared blindly at the stripling for an instant. Without answering he threw back his head and drained his beer, and with a wide-armed sweep tossed the stein overboard. "When I please," he shouted into the air, but he lumbered away at once, scowling fiercely. The young officer walked on as if he had not seen or heard the fat man. One of the Spanish girls directly in his path, smiled at him intensely, with glittering teeth and eyes. He returned her a mild glance and stepped aside to let her pass, blushing slightly. A plain red-gold engagement ring shone on his left hand, the hand he raised almost instinctively as if to ward her off.

The passengers, investigating the cramped airless quarters with their old-fashioned double tiers

bunks and a narrow hard couch along the opposite wall for the unlucky third corner, read the names on the door plates—most of them German—eyed with suspicion and quick distaste strange luggage piled beside their own in their cabins, and each discovered again what it was he had believed lost for a while though he could not name it—his identity. Bit by bit it emerged, travel-worn, halfhearted but still breathing, from a piece of luggage or some familiar possession in which he had once invested his pride of ownership, and which, seen again in strange, perhaps unfriendly surroundings, assured the owner that he had not always been a harassed stranger, a number, an unknown name and a caricature on a passport. Soothed by this restoration of their self-esteem, the passengers looked at themselves in mirrors with dawning recognition, washed their faces and combed their hair, put themselves to rights and wandered out again to locate the Ladies' (or Gentlemen's) toilets; the bar and smoking room; the barber and hairdresser; the bathrooms, very few. Most of the passengers concluded that, considering the price of the tickets, the ship was no better than she ought to be—rather a poor, shabby affair, in fact.

All around the deck the stewards were setting out the reclining chairs, lashing them to the bar along the wall, slipping name cards into the metal slots on the headrests. The tall girl in the green dress found hers almost at once and dropped into it limply. The big-boned man with the frowning brow who had been angry about the bombing of the Swedish Consulate already sprawled in the chair beside her. She waved her little head about, cackled with laughter at him and said shrilly, "Since we are going to sit together, I may as well tell you at once my name. I am Fräulein Lizzi Spöckenkieker, and I live in Hanover. I have been visiting with my aunt and uncle in Mexico City and oh, with what delight I find myself on this good German boat going back to Hanover again!"

The bony man without moving seemed to shrink down into his loose, light clothes. "Arne Hansen, at your service, my dear Fräulein," he said, as if the words were being extracted from him with pincers.

"Oh, Danish!" she shrieked in delight.

"Swedish," he said, flinching visibly.

"What is the difference?" screamed Lizzi, tears rising mysteriously to her eyes, and she laughed as if she were in pain. Hansen uncrossed his long legs, braced his hands upon his chair arms as though he would rise, then fell back in despair, his eyes almost disappearing in his knotted frown. "It is not a good ship," he said glumly, as if talking to himself.

"Oh, how can you say that?" cried Lizzi. "It is a beautiful, beautiful—oh, here again is Herr Rieber, look!" and she leaned far out and flung both arms above her head as signal to the advancing pig-snouted little man. Herr Rieber returned the salute gallantly, his eyes mischievously twinkling. He speeded up at sight of her, his trousers stretched tight over his backsides hard and round as apples, and over his hard high belly. His pace was triumphant, he was a little shortlegged strutting cock. The afternoon light shone on the stubby light bristles of his shaven skull full of ridges. He carried a dirty raincoat, with a folded newspaper in one pocket.

Herr Rieber, giving no sign that he had ever seen Hansen before, choosing to ignore the little scene on the terrace at Veracruz, stopped and peered at the card above Hansen's head and spoke, first in French, then in Russian, then in Spanish and at last in German, saying the same thing in each language: "I am sorry to trouble you, but this is my chair."

Hansen raised one eyebrow, wrinkled his nose as if Herr Rieber smelled badly or worse than badly. He unfolded himself and rose, saying in English, "I am a Swede," and walked away.

Herr Rieber, very pink in the face, his snout quivering, shouted after him valiantly, "So, a Swede? That is a reason why you should take my chair? Well, in such things, I can be a Swede too."

Lizzi cocked her head at him and almost sang: "He did not mean you any harm. You were not

sitting in your chair, after all.”

Herr Rieber said fondly, “Since it is next to yours, I want it always to be free for me.” Grunting a little, he eased himself down, took the old copy of the *Frankfurter Zeitung* out of the raincoat pocket and shuffled it about restlessly, his underlip pursed. Lizzi said, “It is not a nice way to begin a long voyage, quarreling.”

Herr Rieber put down his paper, shoved the raincoat away. He eyed her sweetly, roguishly. “It was not, and you well know it, about the chair that I quarrel with that big ugly fellow,” he told her. Lizzi instantly grew more roguish than he.

“Ah, you men,” she screamed joyously, “you are all alike!” She leaned over and whacked him three times on the skull with a folded paper fan. Herr Rieber was all ready for a good frolic. How he admired and followed the tall thin girls with long scissor-legs like storks striding under their fluttering skirts, with long narrow feet on the ends of them. He tapped her gently on the back of her hand with his forefinger, invitingly and with such insinuation she whacked him harder and faster, her teeth gleaming with pleasure, until the top of his head went florid.

“Ah, what a wicked girl,” he said, dodging punishment at last but still beaming at her, unvanquished—indeed, quite stimulated. She rose and pranced along the deck. He rolled out of his chair and bounced after her. “Let’s have coffee and cake,” he cried eagerly, “they are serving it in the bar now.” He licked his lips.

Two inordinately dressed-up young Cuban women, frankly ladies of trade, had been playing cards together in the bar for an hour before the ship sailed. They sat with crossed legs in rolled-top gauze stockings to show their powdered knees. Red-stained cigarettes sagged from their scarlet full mouths; smoke curled towards their narrowed eyes and heavily beaded lashes. The elder was a commanding beauty; the younger was smaller, thinner, apparently in frail health. She observed the other attentively and played her cards as if she hardly dared to win. The tall shambling young Texan, whose name was William Denny, came in and sat in a corner of the bar and watched them with a wary, knowing eye. The ladies ignored him; though they paused in their game now and then to sip their *pousse-café*s and glance haughtily about the comfortably crowded bar, they never once glanced at Denny, who felt it a personal slight. He rapped sharply on the bar as if calling the barman, still staring at them, a mechanical cold little smile starting in his face. Chili Queens. He knew their kind. He had not lived most of his life in Brownsville, Texas, for nothing. They were no treat to him. He rapped again, noisily.

“You have your beer, sir,” said the barman. “Anything else, please?”

The ladies glanced at him then, their contemptuous eyes fixed upon him as if he were a drunk hoodlum making trouble in a bar. His gaze quivered, his smile vanished; he dived into his mug of beer, drank, lighted a cigarette, leaned over and examined his own shoes intently, fumbled for his handkerchief, which wasn’t there, and at last he gave up and broke for the open air, like a man of urgent business. There seemed nowhere to go, though, and nothing much to do, unless he went back to his cabin to start unpacking a few things. Might as well try to settle down.

Already he was beginning to feel exhausted from his efforts to maintain his identity among strange languages and strange lands. Challenged as he felt himself to be, to prove his own importance in every separate encounter, he was badly confused as to what appearance that importance should assume. The question presented itself not for the first time but most sharply when he reached Veracruz. In this small town on the border where his father was a prominent citizen, mayor for many years and rich from local real estate, the lower classes consisted of Mexicans and Negroes, that is, greasers and

niggers, with a few polacks and wops but not enough to notice; and he had always relied simply on his natural superiority of race and class, backed by law and custom. In Veracruz, surrounded by a coast race of Negro-Indian-Spanish, yellow-eyed, pugnacious people, whose language he had never troubled to learn though he had heard it all his life, he had taken the proper white man's attitude towards them and they had responded with downright insolence. He had begun by feeling broadminded: after all this was their country, dirt and all, and they could have it—he intended to treat them right while he was there. He had been made to realize his mistake almost at once: when he was polite to them, they thought he was patronizing them; when he was giving a perfectly legitimate order, they let him see he was trying to treat them like slaves; if he was indifferent and let things go, they despised him and played tricks on him. Well, damn it all, they *are* inferior—just look at them, that is all you need. Arriving it won't do to let the bars down for a minute. At the Migrations, he had called the little clerk Panchito just as back home he would have called a taxi driver Mac or a railway porter George, by way of showing good will. The little nigger—all those coast Mexicans had nigger blood, somebody had to have him—stiffened as if he had been goosed, his face turned purple and his eyes red. He had stared at Denny and said something very short and quick in his own lingo, then in good English had asked Denny to sit down, kindly, for a few minutes until the papers could be filled out. Denny, like a fool, had sat there streaming with sweat and the flies buzzing in his face, while the clerk looked after the whole line of people who had come in later than he. It came over him slowly that he was being given the hot-foot. That taught him something though. He had got up and gone to the head of the line and shouldered in towards the clerk and said very distinctly and slowly, "I'll take those papers now," and the clerk instantly produced and stamped them and handed them over without even a glance at Denny. That was what he should have done in the first place and the next time he'd know.

Opening the door of his cabin, he noted three names instead of two. Herr David Scott, said the sign, Herr Wilhelm Denny, and surprise Herr Karl Glocken. He looked in upon a crowded scene. The tight-faced medium-sized young man he had seen running around Veracruz with that bitchy-looking girl in the blue pants was cleaning the washhand basin with something that smelled like carbolic acid. There were two strange suitcases and a battered leather bag on Denny's berth, the lower. His ticket called for the lower, and he was going to have it; no use starting out letting himself get gypped. The young man raised his eyes briefly, said, "How do you do?"

"Fairly," said Denny, moving inside one step. The young man went on washing the basin. Seated upon a footstool, Herr Glocken was fumbling among the contents of a clumsy duffel bag. He was the most terribly deformed human being Denny had ever seen, except perhaps the maimed beggar in the square at Veracruz. Bending over as he was, his body was so close to the floor his long arms could stretch further than his out-spread legs. He got up with an apologetic air, and stood almost four feet tall, his long sad face cradled in a hunch high as his head, and backed into that end of the lower berth not occupied by the luggage. "I'll be out of here in just a minute," he said, with a pained smile. He then eased himself down upon the edge of the mattress among the luggage and appeared to fair. David Scott and William Denny exchanged unwilling looks of understanding; they were obviously stuck with this fellow, and there was nothing to be done about it that either could see at the moment.

"We'd better call the steward," said David Scott.

Herr Glocken opened his eyes and shook his head, waving one long hand limply. "No, no," he said in a dry flat voice, "don't trouble yourselves. It is nothing. I am only resting a little."

"Well, so long," said Denny, backing away, "I'll be in later."

"Here, let me move these," said David, laying hold of the suitcases. There was no place for them under the berth. Denny's luggage was already there. The closet was too small to hold them. He p

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