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For days and days the weather had been lovely and quiet, the sun regularly going down behind the island rayless in the whirl of his crimson haze, the evening opening to his descent soft, dark and fragrant as the heart of a violet; nights of marvellous stillness, saving always the island voices, with the firmament that that seemed to hover like a sheet of silver dim in places, so lustrous was the starshine so thick the dust of the constellations when the moon was gone and left the heavens unobscured from sea-line to sea-line; with calm blue dawns dazling fast into tropical glory, and then the long, brassy fiery day, and the silent sea sparkling with the tingling glitter of new tin under the soaring luminary. At intervals a cloud would show no bigger than a man's hand, like a burst of steam from a boiler on the horizon, and then melt into the blue air as though the heat within the cincture of which our island was the centre was so fierce as to absorb the substance of it ere it could float to its shoulders.

But one afternoon, three weeks after the date on which we had been set ashore, there came a change. That a shift of weather was at hand one might have gathered from the general uneasiness expressed by the life on the island. The birds' whistling had a subdued note, the parrots' scream was softened somewhat, the ear detected a hint of agitation in the peculiar snoring noise made by the tree-toad; there was a general hurried flight of feathered things among the trees, the continued restless glint of colored plumage darting like prismatic rays among the leaves. The insects bit fiercely, and the universal humming rose with a sharp note of anger and fear in the shrilling that was new to me. Miss Grant told me that these queer symptoms of disquiet might be prophetic of an earthquake, and certainly the intolerable heat of that day should have led one to suspect such a thing. Indeed the sultry air seemed to press down upon one with a sensible weight, and with the stifling breath of the atmosphere of a hot oven.

When I saw the blue thickening into a sort of dinginess of no color that I could give a name to, with a rounding of the sea at the edge of it like a lifting up of its flood, though it would be no more than the shadowing it got from the sky, with a sort of airy whitish gleam the whole horizon around, I thought to myself, if a tropical outburst is to happen, it is as well that I should turn to at once and provide that all things under hatches should be as snug as possible. So I fell to work to bring up the hatch-cover I had knocked to pieces, and shipped the fragments into a compact form over the opening, regretting that I had ever been fool enough to break it up. I then took a view of the skylights and mused awhile over them; for, thought I, when they are shut, the sweep of wind and wet will speedily load them with sand, and then, with the entrance covered by the hatch, how is fresh air to enter these cells so that we will be able to breathe? But it was imperative any way that the skylight should be closed if, supposing the rain to fall heavily, the rooms were not swamped out of hand. I tried to consider how the buccaneering folks who had dug out the place dealt with an extremity of this kind, but was quite at a loss. Some trick they must have had, but it was above my art. I conferred with Miss Grant and she was for facing the coming tempest above. I told her that she must know more about tropical weather than I did, but it seemed to me if a West Indian tempest was threatened by the gathering gloom, we were bound to perish if we did not shelter ourselves from it; and what shelter was there on the island save the vaults in which we lived?

"Yes," she exclaimed "but should they be flooded we must be drowned; for how shall we escape when the water is pouring in?"

Well, I understood this danger clearly and was fairly nonplussed; and indeed how we should have managed, had the weather fulfilled its threat of a tropic storm, I don't know. But very fortunately for us, a little before sundown the sulky dimness above shaped out into bodies of clouds heading south, with the seaboard full of well-defined shaggy heads showing rusty to the sun lifting fast in the north. Then it came on to blow, in small moans at first, a sullen swell leagues in length rolling along the coast and whistling in the clouds and swinging silent to the island, where it burst in thunder with a roaring foamless slide of it past the eastern facing beach. But the moans quickly grew into the hooting and whistling of a brisk wind increasing yet, even as one listened to it to tempestuous bellowing; high aloft, with a wild flying of the dry white sand, a fierce stooping and shearing of the trees, through which the wind seethed with a sound as of red-hot hissing, and a magnificent smoky scarlet that put a lining of blood while it lasted to the shadows flying athwart the angry beams. I saw, or hoped perhaps, that there was to be no rain, and that was comforting; but the weight of wind, and the blinding flashing into the eyes of the coral grit soon forced us below; though not before we had seen enough of the suddenly enraged ocean to stamp a memory fit to last for life. You almost feared for the island, so thunderous was the blow of the surge, so tearing the sight of the pallid bodies of foam sweeping in shrouds

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Total Assets, \$5,305,004 23

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of faintness—like the color of the brow of the snow-cloud discharging its white burden to the tempest—to the evening gloom that rapidly followed the sun's going. The wind struck the cheek salt and heavy with spray, which swept through the lashed and writhing trees with the crackling, rending and tearing noise of storm after storm of bullets volleying into them.

'Twas as wild a night as ever I remember; the glass frames above were speedily covered with wet sand, but the occasional flash of lightning darting out of some rushing cloud glanced like a violet glare in the passage through the chinks in the cover; but if ever thunder followed it was outbellowed by the hurricane or swept by the headlong rush of the blast clean out of hearing.

"It is the proper sort of storm," said I on one occasion to Miss Grant, "to blow vessels ashore here. It should be an ill wind indeed if it blows us no good. What an imprisonment is ours! Enough to make one so wicked as to pray for a shipwreck, on chance of the sight of a survivor, or of a boat washing ashore, or material to help us get away."

"It would frighten a poor shipwrecked sailor horribly, I think," she said, "to cleanse that glass up there and look through, and see an illuminated room with a man and a woman sitting in it."

She gave a little hysterical laugh, bringing her hands to her eyes. All through that night up to an hour past dawn, it blew a fierce and heavy gale of wind, never rising, however, to the hurricane force that is to be expected in weather of this kind herabouts. We knew by the cessation of the humming noise that there was tranquility overhead. It took me some time to break my way out through the entrance in consequence of the heavy plastering of the hatch-cover by the wet soil hove by the wind upon it. I battered the hatch with one of the muskets and so forced it open, and on emerging found a sullen, wild, though silent morning, dense masses of white cloud hanging, brooding fashion over the sea, with their violet shadows, lifting up to them, as it were, great lagoons of blue sky between the sun in one of them shining with a fiery and piercing light.

Indeed the wind was all gone; but there was a great swell still running which made the sea a noble and majestic sight. We stood eagerly looking toward the sea along the sands far as our sight could trace them not knowing what might have happened during the long, dark, howling hours; but there was nothing to be seen saving the mighty, brilliant blue welter sending its brows washing to the edge of the brilliant sky. The prospect was barren wreck; not a glimpse of the wet flash of a fragment of black timber wallowing—no hint of any sort of disaster at sea.

What were we to do? Was it the will of Heaven that we should end our days on this beautiful but most melancholy island? As we sat conversing, Miss Grant on a sudden gave way. Never once during our imprisonment had she let fall a tear; but now she broke down. She covered her face with her hands, wept most piteously, sobbing as if her heart were broken. If ever I had wondered whether I was in love with her, my doubts would have ended as I watched her in her grief, waiting for the first passion of her sorrow to spend itself before I addressed her. I waited a little, and then I could no longer bear it. I took her hand and put it to my lips and fondled it, and said—but I know not what I said, only that I was sensible my secret had slipped from me. Whether she gathered the import of my words, whether indeed she even knew what I spoke, I cannot tell. The cloud passed presently, and she was again met by my gaze with steadfast, shining eyes, the more brilliant they looked for the very tears she had wept.

It was on the morning of the twenty-first day of our captivity. I was awakened from a dream of my old home in England by the loud singing of a bird perched on the edge of the open skylight, which I need hardly say I had long before purified of the sand that the storm had accumulated upon it. I had passed a good night, felt strengthened and refreshed by the long rest, and at once kicked off my rug with the design of taking my usual morning plunge off the sand away round past the creek. I climbed the steps and found it a brilliantly clear morning, roastingly hot after the pattern of the days here, the sea very calm, with a light swaying like a long sigh running through it, and a soft air floating languidly down out of the north with just weight enough to put a trembling into the needle-like rays spiking off the edge of the sun's light in the water, as though the seams of his wake were raveled. I cast a careless look around the ocean, thinking more of my bath, may be, than of what might be in view; for this looking for ships had grown into a habit, and habit becomes mechanical. I then undressed and waded to the height of my hips, a depth I durst not exceed for fear of sharks and after reveling for nigh half an hour in the cold blue swing of the little breakers whose caressing foam sung to the ears like the seething of the froth of a sparkling wine, I stalked again on the beach, dried, and fell to dressing myself.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

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33

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