Helen Simpson

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THE END

FIRST ENCOUNTER

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E. K.: Here is Madimi.

DEE: Blessed be the God of Heaven and Earth, who regardeth the sincere intent of his silly ones.

A True and Faithful Relation of what passed for many years between Dr. John Dee and some Spirits.

The young gentlemen of Magdalen College, going about their lawful occasions, halted to observe a sensible-looking woman talking to herself below their outdoor pulpit. The academic life offered many opportunities for baiting, none of which they were apt to neglect; poor scholars, professors, and nonconformists of various kinds were mischief's daily bread. But women, apart from complaisant persons in taverns, did not often offer. The undergraduates therefore gave some attention to this creature's words, as they were wont to give attention to the mannerisms of those who instructed them, with a view to reproducing in caricature what was meant to edify. To their displeasure, the woman was sermonizing.

She was saying that each man and woman must be visited personally by God. Each must know God in his heart of hearts and acknowledge him there in the spirit; without this, no ceremony under vaulted stone could avail. The young gentlemen found it dry stuff, and were drifting away after a few conventional catcalls, when they heard words which swung them like weathercocks. The woman, when

naming them Antichrists, a statement received with ironical cheers and some yelping in Latin from the elders, went on to assail them as a corporate body and more particularly to blacken by comparison the College of which they were members.

They had no objection to being told that they were sinners; indeed, the complaint had a flattering ring to those who were hardly old or rich enough to be able to do much sinning save in a general unspecialized way. They had no quarrel with anyone who told them that they were wasting their time at the University learning things that were not of God. They were amused to hear their chapel called a steeple-house when it had in fact no steeple. But that the College to which they owed loyalty should be denominated a cage of unclean birds and the synagogue of Satan was a prick beyond ordinary symptoms of impatience. They began throwing whatever came first to hand, apples, books; those who were near enough launched spittle; all were certain of righteousness.

The women—there were two of them, but one had done all the talking—did not budge, or avoid what was flung at them. Thus the affair went on longer than it ought to have done, long enough to attract the attention of a young Master of Arts who found his translation of Horace's Art of Poetry difficult to pursue owing to the din. He had written:—

"Wise sober folk a frantic poet fear
And shun to touch him, as a man that were
Infected with the leprosy, or had
The yellow jaundice, or were furious mad
According to the moon—"

His nodding head approved the version thus far, and the pen began once more to skirmish:—

"But then the boys
They vex and follow him with shouts and noise,
The while he—"

It was perhaps the coincidence of his matter with the evidence of his senses that made him aware at last of the riot and brought him to his window. Indulgently, for he was young, he called down to the youths to cease their riot. They replied, with the identical din observed by Horace centuries before, that it was the women who were causing disturbance. The Master of Arts, on the tip of whose tongue an airy grammatical construction complete with needed rhymes was trembling, answered briefly that women were not matters to which even the junior members of any university should devote attention, and recommended the constable and the bride-well. A spokesman, above the laughter of the rest, cleared away this misapprehension. The women had no notion of leading into temptation (yells of mock disappointment) but rather sought to deliver from evil; were, in fact, trying to convert their hearers.

"Convert the Grand Turk!" replied the Master of Arts in a phrase which combined mistrust of female powers with recognition of the futility of the task, and withdrew his head. Banging his window and snibbing it, he paused an instant to hear if the noise would ebb, though it was none of his affair to check it if it should continue. It seemed, however, to dwindle satisfactorily in the course of the next couple of minutes, leaving him to measures more polished, and the proper allocation of stresses. He was a young man not

unusual in that University at that time, one who had fought for his King, and lost his patrimony, but in so doing had discovered how to command both words and men. No man was better fitted than he to bring order out of confusion of sense, to discipline rebel meanings. In the peace which ensued he worked well. And in the benevolence which flows from knowledge of labour well accomplished, he had nothing but disgust for the news which later in the day a servant brought him.

"Strip Christian women and whip them through the streets! Why, the Jews, the Turks are less barbarous than that."

"It's preachers, master. They don't deserve no better. The Mayor, he's very strong on the subject."

"Is toleration, then, also a lost cause? What women are these?

"Why, you saw them, they were here breaking the peace. You gave the order to commit; so the gentlemen say."

"I did?" The voice of the Master of Arts, which had lifted indignantly, sank. "I do now recollect something. I told them to let the constable deal with the matter. Whips! Yet the Mayor goes to sermon, I suppose."

With his eye upon the fair copy of his verses, he began to argue the immediate issue into a larger one. If, in the peaceful hours brought at the price of these strangers' pain, he had caught up for a moment the torch of the centuries, was not that, considered sub *specie aeternitatis*, a fair exchange? And if, through what he had that day written, some English boy yet unborn were brought to the knowledge and love of the Roman poets, was not this in

effect to make pain bear good fruit? That pain could be fruitful in men he, a soldier, had not often observed. It seemed, indeed, to tumble them down from man's estate and make children or madmen of them. But that pain might be fruitful in women he need not deny, God having declared this penalty upon them for Eve's fault, besides making them tender, weakly, and obstinate, snares set to catch pain. The spell of the place being upon him he stood thus splitting hairs awhile, finding a sort of pleasure in detachment from that world into which he was soon once more to venture. To consider pain in the abstract; to consider women in the abstract; to be free of the senses for a week or two, and to view action as an aspect of thought was delightful. He stretched his arms wide.

But an image of the whipped women intruded; he was obliged, this being one of the penalties of imagination, the other side of being half a poet, to see their poor bodies striped with blows, to hear them cry out. He shook the vision away impatiently, and took up his soldier-scholar argument once more. The women must sooner or later, if they persisted in their preaching, come to be whipped. This was the law; only thus, in a time of religious uneasiness, could that peace be preserved which enabled true preachers of the word, poets and Masters of Arts, to continue their labours. Was it not better, then, that these torn bodies should serve a holier purpose than such bodies were wont to do, bringing to birth spirit rather than flesh?

He took his pen and, standing, scrawled above the first lines of his version of the Art of Poetry a Latin dedication: To

one unknown who has trodden the press, this draught of Falernian wine.

PART ONE

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E. K.: She falleth down on her face prostrate: Now she riseth again. The fire entreth into her mouth, she is Waxen of higher stature than she was, she hath now three faces.

DEE: Now it is the virtue of the Trinity in her so represented.

MADIMI: And I have a few things to say, and I say.

E. K.: I hear a marvellous noise, as of many Mountains falling.

MADIMI: Arise and believe. The time is come, that of the foolish I will make the wise. And of such as are sinfull men many anointed: if they encline their ear unto my voice.

E. K.: The noyse is marvellous: And which of the mouths doth speak, I cannot discern.

A True and Faithful Relation of what passed for many Years between Dr. John Dee and some Spirits.

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The *Nonsuch* struck south into seas opaque, so thickly and darkly blue that it seemed as though the buckets slung overboard must rise filled and dripping with colour. Winds which had pursued the ship, thrusting her at a good pace towards these seas, now accosted her more languidly, and occasionally slept altogether, so that there was some concern on the part of the master for his water holding out,

it having been his intention to take in fresh at St. Jago in the Cape Verdes.

His passengers hitherto had been reasonable. They appeared to have forgotten, very conveniently, all the promises he had made them at the docks of excellent victual, and were content, after the first distaste for food of any kind had passed, to take their chance of the ship's stores—butter from Holland that had already made a voyage or two, flour from which the worms had daily to be sifted. To fast for a few weeks from food did nobody any harm, but stinking water was another matter. The Master, his mate, and his male passenger dosed the stuff with strong liquor, and so got enough moisture, as he put it, to sweat by. But the crew were permitted no such resource, and the women rejected it. Women were nothing. Thirsty men were liable to make trouble. The Master, lifting his eye to where the topsail hung lank, instead of rounded like a dragoon's breastplate, addressed a joke concerning the wind to his boatswain, a Swedish man. He had some notion of touching up the pious ladies, and thus delivered himself in the hearing of the three passengers, sitting on deck where the sails would shade them.

"Gunnar," began the Master. And this very calling of the boatswain by name was, had the passengers but known it, a sign that something unusual was toward. "Gunnar, we've had too long a calm."

The boatswain nodded, looking up at the sky with a roll of his small grey eyes.

"D'ye think sixpence would do it?" the Master asked. The boatswain looked at the steady horizon, and shook his head

once, from right to left. "Or a shilling?"

The boatswain appeared to be calculating; and after some forty seconds, during which the shadow of a rope swung slowly across him and back, gave it as his opinion that a crown would do. The Master, feigning annoyance, repeated the words, asking if he supposed such a sum could be got together among the seamen and passengers.

"For I don't make complaint of the water," said the Master, his eye on a sailor who came near, "my old mother brought me up not to pick my food and drink ('pingle' was the word she had for it) and I've been thankful to her these forty years. But there's others not so easy satisfied."

The male passenger stirred. Lifting his head from the saltire of his folded arms, he regarded the Master with impudent intentness for some seconds.

"That's the way of these people," said the male passenger aloud but to the air, "these psalm-singers disguised as honest men. Cheat you with pig-swill, and then tell you it's a moral matter, the stomach should not be pandered to. The stomach should be pandered to, by your leave. From it all action flows. Even your psalms—if we trace the muddy distillation to its alembic—are only plum duff and biscuit emerging in nasty vapour through the nose. If you lack water, let us all drink wine while it lasts; then, if no wind comes before the barrels are empty, we can jump overboard drunk and wake up with sore heads in glory."

So saying, the male passenger allowed his head to drop on his arms again and forsook the discussion. The master stepped into the shadow of the sail.

"I'm no psalm-singer," said he. "I think for our safety. These are what my old captain used to call the horse latitudes, between the westerlies and the trades. They threw the horses over hereabouts, to lighten ship and because they drank too much. That's how the name comes."

"Throw Mrs. Sawyer over," the male passenger suggested, "if you want to lighten ship. As for Mrs. Askill, the next whale we see, feed her to him. She is a Jonah if ever I saw one."

Ann Sawyer, a fat woman, looked to her companion for help. It came, in a strong countrified voice.

"You that are used to courts, you don't know how a right woman should be shaped, or how a right prophet should look. Jonah, indeed! It was, how d'ye call her, Cleopatra you named me yesterday."

"Cleopatra was a serpent, and you are a serpent," answered the male passenger. "A kind of holy Satan. Here we all are in our earthly paradise, swilling away at our sins quite content, when in you come with your temptations to be holy, and upset the whole apple-cart."

"It was an apple-tree," said Mary Askill, "and it would take more than me to tempt you out of damnation. Master, are we soon to have wind?"

"Oh yes, we are," the male passenger answered, suddenly, with an easy spring, lifting himself on to his hands and approaching the Master thus, both feet in air. "We are soon to have a wind. We'll buy one—throw a shilling to the sea gods and look what they send you. Just the kind of thing," went on the male passenger, clapping his feet for emphasis, "that the Old Testament men strove against with

fire and sword. Just the kind of thing Oliver would cut off your head for doing if he caught you at it." A silver coin ran out of his pocket and rolled to the master's feet. "Take that and let us have a little witchcraft."

The Master put his foot on the coin to stop it rolling. He kicked it, with a sideways scrape of his shoe, towards the boatswain, who gathered it with his toes. The male passenger, after a final flourish with his feet, lowered them one after the other with great gravity and stood right way up.

"We could do with a wind, though," said the Master more seriously. "The water in store is uncommon low."

"Uncommon high," the male passenger answered. "It stinks to heaven. Well, I don't think less of a man for being a hypocrite. You, Master Bryant, are a man; I don't think less of you. Ergo—"

"You know how to make yourself civil, Mr. Conisby," said the Master, losing patience. What had begun as a joke had now lost that colour, and become a resolve. "We are not to rot in a calm for you. As for witchcraft, I have seen things happen at sea that it would not do to talk about on land. That's all I say."

He walked off towards the bows, where sailors were slashing sea-water over the deck.

"What's this he's to do?" Mary Askill asked.

"Oh, a piece of charming," Conisby answered, "nothing to what you could compass if you tried."

"I know a plenty charms," said Mary Askill composedly. "We was great for them when I was a girl. Cure toothache, and find husbands, and all. To think you could get into God's

mind and know the future with any old piece of apple-peel or spitting over your shoulder."

The male passenger laughed. Ann Sawyer looked at them both and drew down her upper lip. She had her own notions of how a chosen vessel should behave, which did not include these freedoms of speech. She knew Mary's steadfastness, had seen her moved by the spirit to signs and wonders, but this other side of her was a thing not acceptable. She felt called upon to make protest.

"Are you going to set there and let such a thing come to pass? When even this man, this mocker, condemns it?"

"I do not condemn, Mrs. Ann. Nor should you. If this fellow can buy us wind (from whom, we need not ask) he saves you and your companion for a larger mission than that of converting me. Thanks to him, if he succeeds, the blackamoors of Barbados will be washed whiter than snow, and the fear of the Lord stalk through American forests like the pillar of cloud before Israel. All by reason of one piece of silver thrown into the sea which otherwise might have been changed for stronger waters. How do you answer that, Mrs. Ann?"

"I can't answer you. I only know what you have said is not truth, and you're mocking me."

"I have more faith than you, let me tell you," said the male passenger, "for I am willing to risk a shilling on the gods of the sea, while you won't throw the Almighty so much as a penn'orth of prayer. The truth, now. Have you prayed for wind?"

"We may not petition," said Ann Sawyer angrily; "save as we are moved. It is not for sinners to be reminding their

Creator."

"Well," Conisby said, "let us make a match of it." He spoke ambiguously, watched the flush come, then amended: "A wager would be nearer my meaning, but I supposed that ungodly term might not please you. If I ask Mr. Bosun not to toss his shilling to-day, will you use the time to pray for wind? That is, if you should be moved, as you call it."

"Sit down, Ann," said Mary Askill. "He's tempting you to tempt God. No good comes of that. Swallow it; you've held worse."

"Admit," said Conisby reasonably, "that God has not so far had fair trial. For my own part, prayer is not my trade, I do it awkwardly. If a man could worship by eating beefsteaks I might be a saint. But since it is a matter not of beefsteaks but of marrowbones—" He broke off with a laugh and stood defying the two women, head on one side, the sun catching and burnishing a lock of hair by his ear. "Well, will you put up a prayer? Will you give God first chance?"

"Be quiet," said Mary Askill, her hand on the other's sleeve. Under that sleeve she could feel a trembling. She tightened her grasp, shook the arm. "No, Ann, no!"

"The spirit!" answered the other, harshly. "The spirit moved once upon the face of the waters. Shall we not require that it may move again to confound unbelievers?"

She stood, petitioning. It was the first time, though the ship's company knew the women religious, that either had prayed publicly. Now the Master drew near, the boatswain, and two or three sailors with buckets. They did not laugh, they were grateful for the unusual spectacle, and stared as

at a play. The male passenger looked from Ann Sawyer to her companion, who to the astonishment of all sat attentive to the book in which she was teaching herself to read.

"Don't you join her?" he asked suddenly.

"It is not me that is moved," Mary Askill answered. The prayer went on. It came in rushes; it was a fierce challenging prayer. From the stout woman's mouth the poetry of the Bible spurted, then for a while was lost; she was like a murky night on whose horizons lightning played. Loudly she recalled the mighty wind that came upon the apostles, and David's praise of the Lord who bringeth the wind out of his treasuries. There was a kind of refrain, that the unbelievers should be confounded and the safety of the chosen regarded. She spoke for three minutes, then, very white in the face, sat down upon the deck where she had sat before, and wiped her mouth. A scar on her forehead showed red.

"The wager's on, then," said Conisby, clapping his hands. "You have the courage of your belief, Mrs. Ann."

He sauntered off to confer with the boatswain. The Master, becoming aware of sailors gaping beside him, scattered them with an oath or two, and casting his eyes at the sky, to whose pale dome the masts steadily pointed, observed that it must be about midday.

"We'll give it twice round the clock," said he to Ann Sawyer. "That was a fine prayer, and should do the trick."

He tapped his forelock, grinning, and departed to take the sun. Mary Askill spoke at last.

"Here's a nice thing," said she.

"I was moved," said the other sullenly.

"By anger. Because that young cavee made you hot with his nonsense. Now you have put our God in a cleft stick. Either he is to heed a prayer offered for spite, or be deaf, and let us all become laughing-stocks."

"They were about to perform enchantments."

"Well, well, I dare say you have turned the money in your own pocket before now when the moon was new."

"Not since I saw the light."

"When they see it, they will be as wise as you. Ann Sawyer, Ann Sawyer, is grapes to be looked for from thorns, or figs from thistles?"

She laughed as she said it, but glancing at the stout woman's forehead she became grave.

"Does that place hurt you?"

"It might."

"Poor soul."

She went to Ann, and kneeling, began to rub the damp forehead lightly but strongly.

"We did wrong to come on this ungodly ship."

"There was no other. They are all cavaliers that deal with Barbados. I wish, though, there was some useful thing that you and me could do, instead of sitting all day on our bums."

"You won't find that word in Scripture."

"Nor no need for it. They was all up and doing in Israel. Will you go to sleep?"

"I might."

"Do, then."

Mary Askill took the stout woman's head on her knees, and continued the quiet motion of her hand. She gazed at

the sea, whose polished surface only the stuttering flying fish broke. She looked aloft at the sails, that swung instead of straining; she became aware that her mouth was dry, and remembered the foulness of the only water they had. The day was very hot. She sighed briefly, once.

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Wind came up before midnight. Mary Askill, lying awake, heard waves begin to slap at the sides of the vessel, and a thumping of feet on the deck as the seamen were whistled up to set sail. The ship, which had lain like a dead thing, now stirred; she had been breathed upon, she lived. All her own sounds that had been quiet awoke with this wakening of the air. Timber groaned, cordage cried, up aloft there came a snapping from some rope's end loosened.

Ann Sawyer, who slept heavily all night, came to her senses as the ship rolled her against a bulwark; stared, took in the meaning of the noises and stated the obvious.

"The ship moves!"

"She does," said Mary Askill, dressing as she swayed.

"Have you given praise?"

"I've blessed God. But pat the Almighty on the head because his will runs for once with ours, like a schoolmistress praising a boy that gets his lesson—that I haven't done, and won't do. Dress quick, Ann. Oh, the pleasure to see whitecaps again!"

The sea indeed was covered with breaking waves. As the ship bowed to this side and that, Mary Askill observed a

curiosity; that though these waves advanced towards the *Nonsuch*, their crests of spray, which should have broken forward, blew back over their shoulders. The Master, when she spoke of this, told her that they had run into a cross sea, and might look for a rough time of it before they came into St. Jago.

"And I wish," said he, "Mrs. Ann had been more particular to ask only for a breeze. We have enough wind now; but so far as I can tell, this will not be the end of it."

The two women, encountering Mr. Conisby at dinner, had a few compliments from him, with a more complete appraisement of their situation than the Master had thought fit to give.

"New wine in old bottles is no good thing, we know," said he. "But a worse is new wind in old sails. This set that we have—I have been in talk with the sailmaker—is rotten from long trading on the Guinea coast. Our Master, a saving man rather than saved, has diddled the owner in some way, got money for new ones but never bought them; in short, we are remarkably ill-found. That your own noses may have told you. (This butter, pah!) But your noses would not guess that there is not a yard of thread in the vessel to mend our canvas with if it should crack. Your noses, pretty organs, built to turn up at lovers, did not warn you that if there should be a hurricane we have no way to deal with it. This is all very well for you that are godly, you have no preference, you had as lief be drowned now as eaten by Indians six months hence. But those of us who feel our blood run warm —"

He leered at Ann Sawyer, and gave attention to the biscuit which he had dipped in wine. It showed a certain liveliness; he shrugged, and addressed the weevils:

"You, too, that pay no passage-money, and take a voyage for pleasure; salt water or stomachs are the same to you. But I have a notion to live as long as I can, not being a saint or a stowaway worm." Seeing Mary Askill laugh he leant across the narrow table. "And what say you?"

"I say, we're all in good hands," she answered.

"Amen," said Conisby, for once not laughing. "They take good note of you in heaven, Mrs. Ann. I wish Mr. Bryant would shorten sail before it is shortened for him. This wind's rising."

Certainly the movement of the ship was becoming more violent. The pewter plates upon their table slid this way and that; the water-bottle cast a little jet at them. Ann Sawyer, not to see these things, shut her eyes fast. But this would not do, the closing out of the cabin made her own sensations her world; an uneasy world it was, filled with questionings, the forerunners of dread certainty.

"Best come on deck before you're sick," said Mary Askill shoving her companion up the ladder towards air.

On deck the wind was busy; they had to stoop going into it as into a tunnel, and turn out of it to catch their breath. The ship wore all her canvas, taking risks to make speed. But caution was beginning to commend itself to the Master. An order had just been shouted, and the sailors were going aloft, spray soaking them each time the *Nonsuch* plunged. The Master, visible on his quarter-deck wearing an old painted leather hat with a neck-piece as long as a shovel,

kept his eye upon the men as they climbed, and seemed to be arguing with his mate. By comparison with the waves, leaping up at the ship and falling back like dogs, and with the hastening clouds, the deck was tranquil. All movable matters were lashed tight; the struggling men seemed to be climbing out of their timber coffin, a projection from the element of earth, to tackle in their own territory the powers of air.

As the women stood there came a frantic gust. The bowsprit, with a crack heard above the wind, jerked up in an unnatural manner, then fell sideways under the lee bow. The man at the helm, not skilled to read the compass before him, and dependent upon the Quartermaster who shouted his order too late, brought the ship too near into the wind. She trembled throughout her length, the sails beat against the masts; and in a single minute, while the inevitable pressure of that gust was maintained, every sail she carried split into ribbons, whose ends stood out at right angles from the masts.

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"Ha!" said the Master, coming in to the cabin with his hat on. "What's this, fattening yourselves for the fishes?"

Mr. Conisby poured him some wine, and held the cup a moment in mid air. The liquor tilted, reached one side, fled to the other and lipped over.

"Playing cup and ball," said he. "What news?"

"We have cut away the bowsprit. She was dunting at our bow like a ram, there was no saving her or the sheet. I have timber in the hold, we could rig another to-night."

"Comfortable hearing," said Mr. Conisby.

"Comfortable," the Master answered, pausing with the cup at his chin. "You are easy comforted. I could rig the stick, but I have no rag of canvas left. That is to say, they are all rags. You might as well try to hold wind in a beggar's breeches."

"Ask the ladies to lend us their petticoats. They seem, from what little I see of them, to be of stout stuff."

The Master muttered something about, No more prayers, for the Lord's sake.

"Mrs. Askill is very calmly learning to spell, and holding her companion's head whenever she needs it. Her prayers won't hinder us. How do we stand?"

"This wind, if we could use it, might bring us to St. Jago in four days. But we are a hulk. I cannot get steering-way on her with a yard and a half of canvas. We must drift, and take our chance. No need to tell it to the women."

Conisby looked into his half-empty wine-cup, and poured its contents back into the jug.

"This stuff is too fiery. I take it you have still a hogshead left—well is it so called!—of that other sewage."

"And," said the Master, answered after a moment, "I had something to say about that. We have shipped a sea or two; you saw for yourself how she necked into it. With one thing and another, there is not so much fresh water as there was. We have enough for three days, if there is no hanky-panky with the men. And a gallon or so of spirits."

Conisby looked at him steadily, nodding from time to time as to a known tune. He got up when the other had done.

"Well, Mr. Bryant, this is no more than I expected, to tell the truth. It gives me pleasure to think you already know my opinion of you, which these events have hardly changed. You set out with a little stinking food and water, in the hope to buy cheaper from the benighted negroes of St. Jago. You trundle into a storm with all sail set, and come out of it—if we do come out—with not enough canvas to blow a Jew's nose for him. You are a pretty sailor and a prudent man. And we must all go to hell for your economies."

"I can't be talked to that way, I warn ye, Mr. Conisby," said the Master, taking off his sea-hat, as though suddenly remembering he had it on his head. "I risk my own life too."

"More fool you," said Conisby briefly, "to go to hell with a bag of saved halfpence round your neck."

He moved towards the ladder. The Master, standing at its foot, did not budge. When they stood face to face, a foot from each other, each straddling to keep his balance on the tossing floor, the Master said:

"It will do no good for us to have a rix now. If we come to shore, though, I'll request your company."

"Why not now?" said Conisby, not moving.

"Why, you fool, who is there to see to the ship?" the Master added, exasperated yet reasonable.

A woman's foot showed at the top of the ladder, a foot with no nonsense about it.

"Let the captain come up," Conisby called, "it's bad luck to cross on the stairs."

"He that is down fears no fall," Mary Askill answered, and descended the ladder. She moved neatly aboard ship, neither knocking her head nor being knocked, coming by none of the pretty feminine mischances. "They told me you were here, Mr. Bryant. I'd be thankful to know the truth of our situation."

"What good will it do you? Put your head under the blankets. I've been too long talking." Still he had more to say and said it, advancing his face to hers, spitting out his anger. "Our situation! Well, the *Nonsuch* has taken a knock from the wind, she is making water forrard where the sprit banged her, her sails is fit to trawl for mackerel, and what good does it do you to know it? You pair of holy Jennies."

"I once heard a man talk this way when his wife was dying in child-bed. It was his own fault, and he knew it, so he took out his woe on other people."

The Master, without answering, shoved her aside and went up the ladder. She said, looking after him:

"He loves his ship."

"Well, damn him," Conisby answered, "he's lost her." Then, putting on deliberately an air of false comfort:

"That is, we have a good chance of finding help, we should be on a trade-route here—" She shook her head. At once he changed his tone. "You must excuse me. There are times when I mistake you for just another female. In fact, we have no great chance. We cannot either use the wind or defend ourselves from it."

"I suppose," said she shrewdly, "the true danger is, we cannot hold out for water."

"Three days, he says. The wine-bibbers like me will come off best."

"There was a good man once got a name for that, who no more deserved it than you do."

"What man was that?" Conisby asked idly.

"Christ Jesus," Mary Askill answered.

There was a little silence.

"Another danger," said Conisby, "Mr. Bryant has a mixed crew. It will take a day for the apprehension of death to work in them. Then they may be troublesome. I will give you such warning as I can. Should I teach you to handle a weapon?"

She laughed, showing healthy teeth.

"My good soul, isn't that a man all over. Weapons!" She considered, frowning. "Now, what's the peaceable way out?"

Conisby said:

"You must take men as you find them. It goes against my grain to have a gaggle of Portugals and Dutchmen yelling over my carcase. I was brought up to the sword, and with your permission or without, I'll use it."

"I don't doubt that," she said. "What is there for me and Ann Sawyer?"

"Patience to wait. Courage to suffer. What else, for women?"

"How about wits?"

"Not against the elements," Conisby answered. Then, slowly:

"And yet—somebody, somewhere, once thought of catching the wind in a sheet. A woman, like as not. Yes, since we don't know the name, and nobody has the credit, it may have been a woman."