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great gusto and no little astonishment at the source of our meal; he, in common with myself, never before having seen flesh that was preserved in sealed tins, nor had he ever tasted wines and heady liquors of any sort till this same night. We drank wisely, and, in spite of the manifest danger of the action, fell asleep where we had eaten, this being the first night that I had spent under a roof since the day that I and Thomas Snoad set out from Hythe.

Chapter V

“**H**AIRY MAN!” said I next morning, as we rubbed our eyes and stretched our limbs, for we had slept deep, “henceforth thou shalt be known as Esau, a fitter name and a more ancient. Now, Esau, let us to breakfast, and afterwards we will hold a council and resolve on what measures we can take to quit this thrice accursed island, and all that it holds.”

It was of little use, this converse with Esau; but it was good and cheering to hear the sound of my voice, and, when I spoke, my companion smiled with over-great intelligence, although he understood no single word.

“Esau,” said I, when our meal was done, and we had lain for some time

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on the floor a-blinking upward at the roofing, "what shall we do now?"

I waited not for a reply, but continued:

"A ship we will build, even though it be but a small one, and in it we shall sail away from this witch-ridden land, where naught is safe or of good health."

Thereupon we arose, and made our way to the great room beyond the hall, the chamber that was like to a huge smithy. Here there were axes and saws and shipwright's tools in plenty; also a barrow with wheels and a light truck. These two carriages we filled with all manner of implements, and some sacks containing the smallware of our trade. On the canvas of one of these last was painted, strange to say, in a black lettering, *clavos de fierro*, words that signify ship's nails in the Spanish tongue, a language with which I am well acquainted from frequent

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intercourse with the mariners of that great nation.

Three times in all did Esau and I make the journey, 'twixt the castle and the sea shore. After our first journey we built a rude hut wherein to place the contents of our barrow; also a somewhat stronger habitation that would give us shelter at night time; for I was o'erweary of sleeping in the open, exposed to rain and whatever wind and weather with which Providence might favour me.

Before we once more set our faces inland, we bathed and made merry in the sea, spending much such a day as do English townsfolk who go to the shore in summer-time.

All about us was unchanged, and the great bronze idol kept watch and ward over the coast, silent and passive as ever, while at its feet the bleached skeletons, all sundered in the middle, were strewn here and there. At sight

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of the strange god the smile vanished from Esau's face, and he beat his head on the sand and made moan, and with clenched fist he cried aloud in the idol's face, and made deep noises in his throat that were his manner of cursing; so that I knew that he could be no worshipper of the great bronze god.

"It is well, friend Esau," said I, "and I am overjoyed to find thee not idolatrous and a heathen, as are most wild men."

After that we departed once more inland, and on our return to the shore we were laden with sheets and cloths that we had taken from the great beds, and wax and stout cords and threads, for we would have to make sails and shrouds for our mast. What space we had over we filled with the flesh that was in the sealed tins, and flasks of wine, and swords and spears from the great hall, with which weapons we hoped to slay many of the

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birds and beasts in the woods, so that we might eat fresh meat every day.

All these goods were stowed carefully away in our hut, and then we set to work on our ship, hewing down trees in the woods, and labouring with great vigour from daybreak to dusk. In the evening when our work was done we would walk round the coast spying for a sail or sign of man, yet none such did we ever see; and always there confronted us the great bronze idol, with the thirteen white gems at its throat.

Now, one day when we had walked maybe half a league along the lonely strand, we chanced on what seemed to be a bower, and, as we came closer, we could see that what we had mistaken for an arbour was a long low house of wood with but three walls and a roof, all overgrown with moss and trailing plants. Carefully we approached, and walked round the house,

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first on one side and then on the other, till we came to the front that faced the sea, the side that was open and had no wall, and here we discerned the prow of a small ship. The blood rushed to my face at the sight, and I ran forward in great haste so that my hands might feel what mine eyes had beheld. Of truth, it was a ship, wondrous light, yet of a marvellous secure build, as I that am a seaman could rightly vouch for, and as you that have seen it without my house in Stade Street can testify.

This strange vessel had neither mast, sail, nor oar. It was all open and bare, save but for a single cabin that was furnished for extreme comfort and ease, and, at the one end, the body of the vessel was made solid with wooden planking, atop of which were three handles of silver, wrought like the handles of a door. At first I feared that the ship was of witchcraft like unto the

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other marvels that I had encountered in this island; nevertheless, Esau and myself slept that night secure within the cabin, without evil dream or other harm, so that on the morrow I be-thought me that this was of good omen, and, be the silver handles what they might, I would venture across the seas in this strange barque.

Under the ship was a wooden stage, long and broad, with wheels that I greased with the fat of a beast, so that, without great ado, Esau and I were able to float our new-found prize, and, with the oars that we had already fashioned, we rowed near a league along the shore without mishap, save that Esau, who was no waterman, did fall heavily backward more times than once. The last part of our journey was performed at some speed, for this barque was marvellously light, being mostly built of cork that weighs but little; and what steel and timber that

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was used in its construction was of a fine quality, very strong, yet in nowise weighty.

Thankful was I that Providence had put in my path the thing that of all things I most desired; and now that we had a vessel, I resolved that we would put to sea with the least possible delay, and get us away from the heathen land where but to be alive was a great danger.

Yet, before we hoisted our sail to the winds and disappeared down the horizon, I resolved to make one last journey to the castle on the hill-top, for our stores of flesh and wine were getting low, and I had hidden my gold platters in the wood; and these I resolved to take with us, they being of great price.

Esau and I had made us a mast and a stout sail, with all needful tackle in the shape of shrouds and sheets, and we had only to get provisions and

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fresh water aboard before setting out to a port of safety.

Once more we went a-journeying with our two barrows through the woods and pasture lands that lay between the seashore and the castle. As ever, the brazen hand still clenched my girdle of leather and the gate stood wide open.

First of all we went down to my old lair in the woods and loaded the gold vessels into my barrow, and then we spent some time going to and fro with armfuls of provisions and flasks of wine till both our barrows could hold no more. This done, we had a farewell repast in the store-room, and we sat making merry till Esau suddenly sprang up and ran swiftly to the gateway; then he rushed madly downhill to the wood, signing with his head and arms that he would return ere sundown. Marvelling greatly as to the meaning of this sudden flight, I

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watched him disappear in the foliage, and then for the last time I wandered through the castle. All was still as death and utterly deserted, and yet, thought I, as I sat in the great smith's shop, "It would be well were I to save other shipwrecked mariners from the spells and sorceries that had done unto death Thomas Snoad and Satan, the black cat; and from which I myself had but barely escaped, and of which Esau, the hairy man, stood in such evident fear." Therefore, I hid me to the cellar where were the barrels of gunpowder that I have spoken of before, and, labouring hard, I piled eight of these in the great hall, five I left below—they were sufficient to have destroyed a city—one barrel I placed at the closed doorway of the Dark Chamber, and, as I was rolling another towards the chamber with the beautiful maidens and the rosy light, whom should I espy but Esau, greatly

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exercised in mind and body, driving before him a wild pig that ran shrieking and in evident dread. The hairy man followed as swift as any hare, and in his hand he held a stout cudgel, with which he ever and anon belaboured the terrified hog.

Amazed, I surveyed this strange spectacle, wondering to what end could serve this baiting and harrying of the ill-looking creature. We were all three of us going in the direction of the chamber with the lovely maidens, and, as I approached, I could see that the door stood wide open as ever, and that the damsels were wondrous fair to gaze upon. From these pleasant reflections my mind was called back to my comrade, who now fell to thwacking the wild pig more mercilessly than before, so that the airs were filled with a piteous squealing that, mingled with the cries of Esau, made as great a tumult as the island had ever listened

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to. I marked the open door and then I guessed what Esau was attempting. With a final blow he drove the wild pig, now frantic with fear and pain, across the threshold of the chamber, and then I saw what manner of fate would have overtaken me, had I been foolish enough or hasty enough to have yielded to this great tempting and to have ventured into that house. The wild pig rushed headlong to its fate, as ghastly and as merciless a doom as any that e'er befel living man or beast. For one moment it stood within, hesitating which way to turn, and casting a wild eye over its shoulder at its barbarous pursuer; then, like to the gnashing of a thousand hungry teeth, there fell from roof to floor of the chamber countless sharp-pointed spears that dropped vertically, with a great clamour and clashing of steel as the metal heads struck the flag-stones. Upon every square foot of flooring

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there fell sure and straight no less than three of these sharp-pointed rods of iron, so that as I looked the chamber was barred from wall to wall, thick with iron staves as is a forest with trees. By eighteen such spears was pierced the wild pig, held hard and fast, so that he died upright standing dead and bleeding on his four legs. The lovely maidens neither stirred nor made signs either of horror or joy; they stood silent, untouched and uninjured, while all about them was bar on bar of iron.

So this was the special devilment that overhung the third chamber, and straightway I rolled my cask to its very threshold in the same manner as I had placed another against the doorway of the Dark Chamber. Esau and I fetched yet another barrel and this we stood upright before the Chamber of Riches, so that the ashes of the Hag of the Turret and her last dwelling

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place might be scattered in one common eruption.

All that there now remained for me to do, was to lay a powder train 'twixt all these barrels, which I cheerily set about, making a black line, thick and heavy, that ran from the cellar to the great hall and to the three chambers, then downhill to the wood. This done, we returned for our two barrows, that we trundled along to a good mile beyond where ended the train of gunpowder.

It was now quite dark, and we moved hastily, I holding in my hand a box of the red-tipped splinters of wood that when rubbed hard burst into flame. Cautiously and with great care I set fire to the end of the powder train, and then the two of us ran till we were out of breath. Presently there were two reports and a bright flame spread like sheet-lightning across the night.

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"The Chambers!" I cried, as a third explosion rang out.

We were now beyond the wood in an open country, and we could see the castle on the hill-top stand dark against the sky. An instant later and the countryside stood out green and gold as in broad daylight, and turret and walls toppled and fell as does a child's house that is built of wooden bricks, and then was blotted out and clouded with a huge volume of smoke, thick, dense and opaque; afterwards, silence and black night, and all was still and peaceful as before.

Esau, the hairy man, had witnessed this great spectacle, and now frantic with delight he capered about me and knelt at my feet and put his lips to my hands till I had perforce to kick him hard so that he might take himself away and be grateful with a lesser show of devotion. This he did, rub-