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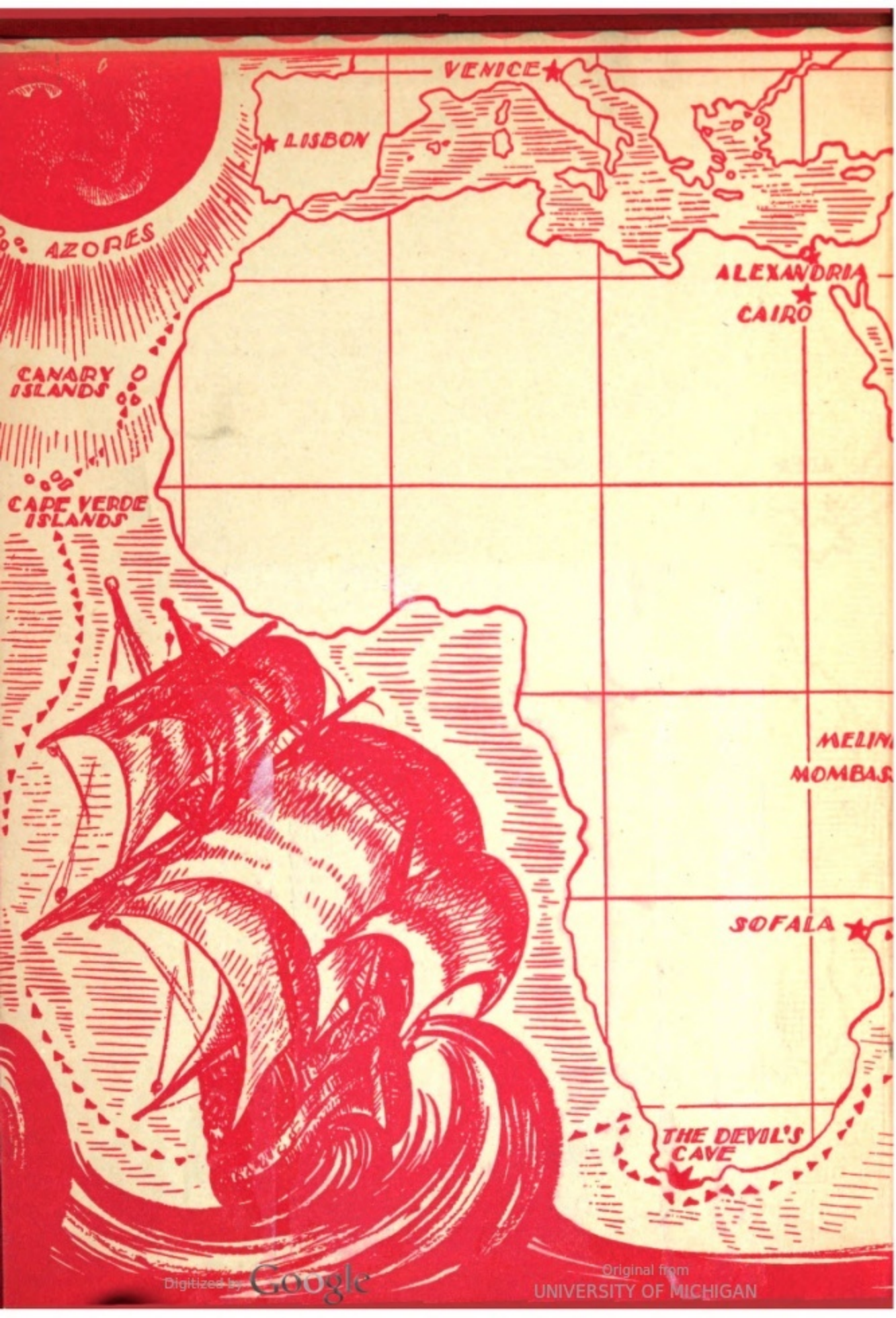

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A tale of the struggle between Venice and Portugal to gain control of the all-sea route to the spices of India and the Far East. The scene is laid in Lisbon at the end of the fifteenth century. Young Magellan with his burning eyes, Vasco da Gama, Bartholomew Diaz, and the amazing Jewish banker, Abel Zakuto, a beautiful and mysterious Arab girl, Nejmi are some of the characters in this dramatic tale.

"A book for boys and girls who have a zest for exciting adventure stories."—*The New York Herald Tribune.*

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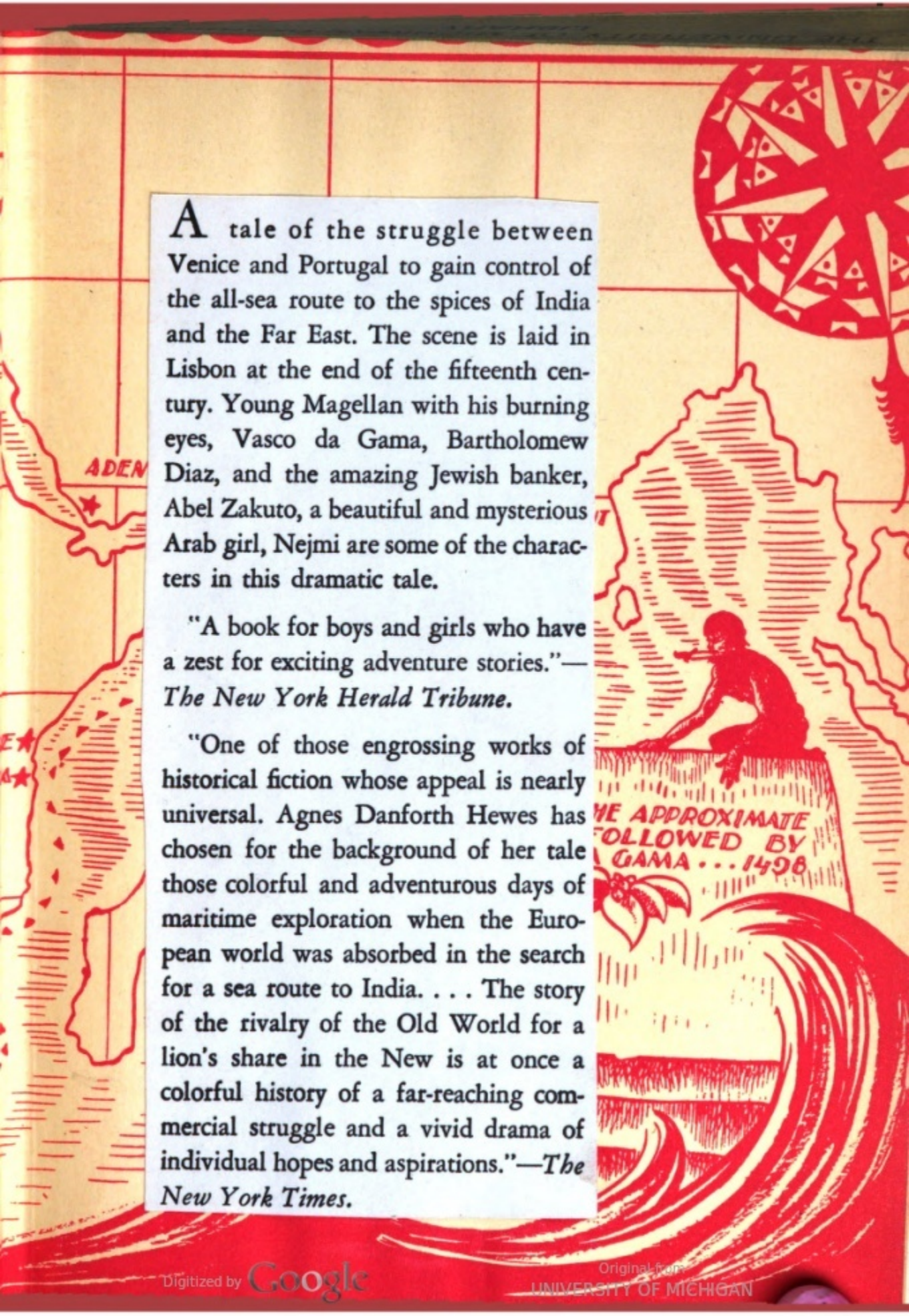

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" Those who are familiar with Mrs. Hewes' fine novels for young people, *Swords on the Sea, The Codfish Musket,* and others, know that she is a past master at presenting with drama and vision the influence of trade upon the course of history."

— ELLEN LEWIS BUELL in *The New York Times*

BY

AGNES DANFORTH HEWES

SWORDS ON THE SEA

SPICE AND THE DEVIL'S CAVE

GLORY OF THE SEAS

SPICE HO! A STORY OF DISCOVERY

These are Borzoi Books for Young People

PUBLISHED BY ALFRED · A · KNOPF

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Spice And The Devil's Cave

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"The group in Abel Zakuto's workshop hitched chairs closer to the table spread with a huge map."

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SPICE AND THE DEVIL'S CAVE

by

Agnes Danforth Hewes

Decorated by

Lynd Ward

NEW YORK · ALFRED · A · KNOPF · 1942

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MANUFACTURED IN THE
UNITED STATES
OF
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To the memory of

ARTHUR STURGES HILDEBRAND

BECAUSE OF HIS BEAUTIFUL

MAGELLAN

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Introduction

NOTHING has ever given me quite so much pleasure as the request that I write an Introduction to Agnes Danforth Hewes' *Spice and the Devil's Cave*. In the first place I am a firm believer in the value of historical fiction and I now have an opportunity to go on record to that effect. In the second place, I have witnessed Mrs. Hewes' struggle against heavy odds which has already produced *A Boy of the Lost Crusade* and *Swords on the Sea*. So I am glad to have the first chance to say what a splendid piece of work she has done in *Spice and the Devil's Cave*.

And what a story it is! How pervaded with that atmosphere of the East in which the author herself was cradled and nurtured! Again, as in *Swords on the Sea*, we are fascinated by a swiftly moving story of deadly rivalry over trade and trade routes. This time Venice, instead of winning the fight for supremacy on the Mediterranean from Genoa, loses to Portugal the contest to dominate the all-sea route to the spices of India and the Far East.

Mrs. Hewes has that wizard's touch which makes the past live but she also has the scholar's patience which enables her to make an imaginative reconstruction that is convincing and lives in the memory. In addition she brings out

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phases of the story that ordinarily do not receive proper emphasis.

By making Abel Zakuto and his workshop at Lisbon the central point in the little knot of enthusiasts bent on proving the existence of an all-sea route from the Cape to India there is effectively brought out the significant part played by the Jews in furthering the work of discovery. To Zakuto, banker by calling and maker of navigation instruments and maps in his leisure, comes for comfort and encouragement the great Bartholomew Diaz, fretting his heart out because the king will not push the explorations. Vasco da Gama comes too, and the young Magellan with his burning eyes. All get comfort and inspiration from Zakuto.

But perhaps the most novel part of the tale is the emphasis laid on Portugal's attempts to work overland down the East Coast of Africa for the supposed connection with the Cape of Good Hope, somewhat beyond which Diaz had set up the furthermost of Portugal's White Pillars. The heroic Covilham gave his life to this effort. There are few tenser moments in any work of fiction than the scene in Zakuto's workshop where, by the uncomprehending lips of the mysterious Nejmi, Covilham's success and her own father's voyage to the White Pillars is revealed to the breathless and astounded listeners. Upon them then breaks the great realization that the darkness hitherto enshrouding the unknown strip of coast between Sofala and the last White Pillars has been dispelled; that now the existence of an all-sea route to India is established.

Very striking also is the story of Venice's frantic efforts to block Portugal from reaping the reward of her efforts. Getting from scouts on the East Coast advance information

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that Vasco da Gama's ships are returning, the Venetians stir up pirates to block his return to Lisbon. Furthermore, anticipating De Lesseps, Venice conceives the design of cutting through the Isthmus of Suez, in order to maintain her hold on the Spice Trade. But her failure in both schemes spells her doom.

Portugal is triumphant – but what will come? One is eager to know; to follow the thesis of Mrs. Hewes that maritime trade inspiring youth has played an undreamed-of role in world civilization. The shores of India, of China, and of America beckon the successors of young Magellan in these last pages. Older readers become one with Mrs. Hewes' juvenile audiences in their eagerness for more.

CURTIS HOWE WALKER

Vanderbilt University

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CHAPTER I

Out of the Night

THE GROUP in Abel Zakuto's workshop hitched chairs closer to the table spread with a huge map, eyes intent on Captain Diaz' brown forefinger, as it traced along the bulge of Africa's west coast.

I

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"Cape Verde, Guinea – all that's an old story to Portugal now; and this . . . and this . . . as anyone can see by our stone pillars all along the way. Then" – the brown forefinger that had slid rapidly southward stopped short – "then, the big Cape. . . . And the last of our pillars!" he added under his breath.

The circle of eager eyes lifted to the tanned face with something very like reverence, for not one around the table but knew that, if Bartholomew Diaz had had his way, the stone pillars would never have stopped at the Cape.

Into the mind of young Ferdinand Magellan, hunched up over the table, flashed a memory of the first time he had heard of Bartholomew Diaz. Up to the family home, in high, lonely Sabrosa,[1] had come the story of this man who had marked the farthest bound in the search for the sea route to India, which he had named the Cape of Storms. Ferdinand quickened to the picture that the story had called up to his childish fancy: the man gazing from his fragile, tossing ship at the awesome rock, while the great Cape, waiting through the ages, bared its storm-swept head to hail this first white face.

He suddenly leaned over the map and closely inspected it. Then he looked up at Abel Zakuto. "What does this name mean?"

Abel glanced where he pointed. "Why, that's really the big Cape. But Fra Mauro[2] showed it as an island which he called *Diab* – probably from the legends of the Arab sailors that the surrounding sea was the Devil's Cave.

[1] Magellan's birthplace, in Portugal's most northern province, Traz-os-Montes.

[2] A Venetian cartographer of the fifteenth century.

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You know King John liked to call it The Cape of Good Hope."

"I like Devil's Cave! " exclaimed Ferdinand. "Sounds exciting."

Diaz gave him an amused look. "You'd think 'twas exciting," he told him. "Greatest commotion of wind and water there ever I saw – like ten thousand devils set loose – just as the Arabs believed."

He sat back in his chair, his smile gone. He appeared to have forgotten the map as he stared absently before him.

Across the table a man eyed him as if pondering something he wished to say. A black-bearded stocky figure he was, not much past thirty, with a long-nosed, forceful face – Vasco da Gama, a gentleman of King Manoel's court. His father had once been Comptroller of the royal household, and had been intended, in John's reign, to head an expedition to explore a sea route to India. Vasco, himself, had seen service at sea and had soldiered in Spain and Africa. Lately, with all Europe agog over the Way to the Spices, he'd begun to brush up on navigation, and occasionally came to look at Abel Zakuto's maps.

"Have you any doubt, Captain," he at last ventured, "that the coast east of the Cape makes up to India as Mauro showed it? "

"No, I haven't," Diaz replied bluntly. "But what use is that if I can't say I *know* it does? No, Gama, all I know is only what I've seen, and that's the coast this side of the Cape – barring some score leagues beyond."

Young Magellan made an impatient gesture. "Covilham had no doubts about the coast east of the Cape," he said, pointedly.

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His tone made the older men smile. This youngster just missed being a nuisance with his ever ready willingness to challenge one's statements, only that he was always so sure of his facts, and so amazingly well informed! Covilham! – What other lad in Lisbon would have known enough to ask this question? For Pedro de Covilham had started out on his great errand to verify by land what Bartholomew Diaz was sent to verify by sea, when this boy was hardly more than waist high – at least half a dozen years before he had come down from Traz-os-Montes to the palace at Lisbon for his page's training.

"Covilham said it was clear sailing," Ferdinand persisted, "east of the Cape, now didn't he?"

From under his grizzled brows Bartholomew Diaz studied him with amused pride. After his own heart, this lad, with the great, sombre eyes that seemed to see beyond ordinary vision. That readiness to question, that rebellion against the passive acceptance of the mass – ah, *that* was the stuff of which pioneers were made! His own kinsmen, for instance: suppose they had believed all that nonsense about there being nothing beyond Cape Bojador but a chaos of boiling seas. But now, no one would soon forget that John Diaz was the very first of his race to take the dare of the great promontory and double its forbidding coasts; that Diniz Diaz was first to reach Cape Verde, and Vicente Diaz first at the Cape Verde islands; that he, Bartholomew, had sailed farther than any of them – though he did say it, who shouldn't! And young Magellan, you could depend on it, would go as far some day; perhaps farther.

"But Covilham didn't come home to tell what he'd found, as Captain Diaz did," Gama observed. "All we have

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to go by is that he sent word back from Cairo to Lisbon that he'd got down the east coast of Africa as far as Sofala, and that if our ships would just keep on from Guinea they'd find a clear passage to India and the spices. But, if he didn't get beyond Sofala, how could he be sure of that? "

"Well, even so – " Ferdinand's arm shot out to the map, thumb on the Cape, and little finger on Sofala – "all that's left to prove is the gap between *this*, where you left off, Master Diaz," tapping with his thumb, "and *this*," tapping with his finger, "where Covilham left off." Triumphantly he looked around the table to score his point, as he flattened his palm to indicate the reach from thumb to finger tip.

"Yes, anyone can see that's 'all,'" Gama drily retorted. "The point is, how much of an 'all' is it? If the coast runs north from the Cape to Sofala, well and good; but if, somewhere in between, it should happen to make out to the east, and then down into the frozen south . . . "

Ferdinand heaved a long sigh. "I'd be willing to stake everything I had to settle it! "

Captain Diaz shrugged. "So would any of us, if there were only one's self to consider." Wouldn't he, he meditated, have "settled" this tantalizing gap, ten years ago and more, only for having to turn back for that doubting, homesick crew of his?

"The one thing to do, King Manoel won't do – go and find out! " Abel Zakuto quietly stated.

Everyone always listened to what Abel had to say. He always struck at the core of a situation; led you back to the main argument when you inclined toward side issues.

"He's too busy trying to manoeuvre his head into the

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Spanish crown to bother with finding a passage to India! " Ferdinand said, sarcastically.

" He'd have no trouble getting crews," Diaz grumbled. " Everybody'd want to go! All he has to do is to finish the ships that King John began for an eastern expedition and would have sent out – under your father, Gama – if death hadn't blocked him."

There was no one in the room who had forgotten that it was Diaz, himself, who had designed those ships and watched over their beginnings; but only he knew the bitterness of seeing those idle hulls and their half-finished rigging left to rot – for all Manoel seemed to care – in the dockyards.

" It always seemed to me," Abel took him up, " that John got just what he deserved. Here, years ago, John Cabot came all the way from Venice to beg an outfit to discover a passage to India; the same thing happened again, in the case of Columbus, and John turned both of them away – deliberately lost two great chances for Portugal. Life doesn't go on holding the door open, you know. There comes a time when it slams it shut in your face! "

" But wouldn't you think," Diaz demanded, " with Spain so keen over Columbus's two cruises that they're outfitting him for a third voyage, and news that the English Henry is getting John Cabot ready to find a sea passage, that Manoel would be afraid they'd find the way to the Indies first? "

The evening always finished that way: eager speculation, comment, mounting hopes, finally ending against the dead wall of Manoel's callousness to the big issue of the time.

Bartholomew Diaz pushed his chair back from the table, got up, said good night and went out. Gama soon followed, and only Ferdinand and Abel remained. In fact, it

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was the usual sequel of these meetings, that the boy would stay on to talk of the all-engrossing topic.

Abel studied him now, as Bartholomew Diaz had, earlier in the evening. But where Diaz had noted evidence of personal traits, Abel read evidence of the national character. The sturdy build, the air of ruthless determination coupled with a certain arrogance toward danger, all reflected, Abel said to himself, generations that had been trained on Portugal's littoral to the combat of the sea, or hardened in struggles with the Moors.

At this point in Abel's meditations, his wife, Ruth, came in with a dish of figs preserved in grape treacle from a famous recipe that she claimed came from Palestine. Ferdinand sprang up and greeted her with an affectionate little gesture. He'd been a favourite with Ruth ever since she had seen him as a toddling youngster, when she was visiting friends at Sabrosa, and he knew those figs had been brought in especially for him.

"Help yourself, child, they'll sweeten your dreams after all that dry talk," she told him. "How you can spend so much time over those stupid old maps I can't see. Stuffy in here as a dungeon, too, with all you men hived up together!"

She pushed the map to one side of the table, set the dish at Ferdinand's hand, bustled across the room, and flung open the door into the garden-court.

Ruth was short and stout, with a way of trotting about as she talked, while she punctuated her remarks with little sidewise nods that reminded one of a bird cocking its head from side to side. Everything about her was intensely practical. When other women's skirts swept the ground, Ruth's neatly cleared, and homespun for every day but the Sabbath

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was, to her mind, wasteful and frivolous. She prided herself on a fresh muslin cap each morning as much as she did on her clean house and the trim flower beds. Her mind was as practical as her capable hands: anything, for instance, outside of established fact she treated as cobwebs or weeds, and neither Abel nor his friends were under any illusions as to her opinion of the discussions in his workshop.

"You'd stay here in this close air till you choked!" she scolded, as she sat down; then, "Aren't you going to sample my preserves?" she impatiently demanded, while she pulled at the girdle of her tight-fitting waist.

Abel reached over and helped himself to the confection, meditatively gazing into the darkness beyond the open door. Ferdinand, seething to continue the theme of the evening, watched the older man for a sign to begin.

"Well, Ferdinand, let's have it!" Abel finally said, his eyes twinkling.

"Yes, sir!" The boy's hand smote the table with a blow that made Ruth jump, and his sombre eyes blazed. "I can't get over it, Master Abel – the shame of it! Here's the merchantmen of Venice and Genoa bringing back the goods of the Orient, and trading with everybody all up and down both sides of the Mediterranean, their flags flying as complacent as you please, here in Lisbon harbour, as if they owned the place, while our ships sometimes – only sometimes, mind you – get left-over cargoes that no one else is keen about. Think of it – Portugal taking the leavings of Venice, by heaven! Why shouldn't *we* be bringing back the cargoes from the Orient? I don't mean by way of the Mediterranean, either!"

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"I know, I know," Abel nodded. "You mean direct from the Orient, around by the Devil's Cave."

"Heavens, yes! Of course that's what I mean," Ferdinand snapped out. "*Then* where'd Venice and Genoa be? And Spain and England?"

"I declare," laughed Ruth, "I believe you'd like a chance to spite Spain and England!"

"Don't you think for a minute that they don't feel the same way about us!" the boy retorted. "Aren't they both doing their best to crowd us out of the race for India? And we could have been there before Spain ever thought of sending out Columbus, if we'd only followed Captain Diaz' lead! But now, Spain claims that Columbus has reached the Orient; by way of the west, to be sure, but still reached it."

"There is no doubt Columbus has found something," Abel said thoughtfully, "but whether it's the Orient, or even any part of the Orient – Look here, Ferdinand," he broke in on himself, "you know, and I know, that those half-naked savages and those rude gewgaws that Columbus brought back don't tally with the great cities and the costly trade that men who've been in the Orient tell about – men like Marco Polo and his compatriots Conti, and Cabot, and even our own Covilham."

"Well," Ferdinand offered, "to do Columbus justice, all he claims is that what he's found is the undeveloped outskirts of Cipangu [1] or Cathay.[2] But if we could settle what we've all but proved," he pursued, in a low, vehement voice, "if we could reach India by way of the Cape, then, Portugal – Lisbon –" He broke off, his face working.

"Lisbon would be," Abel finished for him, "the port

[1] Japan. [2] China.

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of entry to Europe of the Orient's trade. Lisbon would be – what Venice now is! "

"But if we lose," the boy choked out, "if we lose, we'll have to stand by, while Spain, or London gets the trade. And yet, Manoel can't see it! The biggest chance the world has ever offered – and he letting it slip through his fingers! "

"Just listen to the child! " cried Ruth. "Breaking his heart over something he doesn't even know exists! "

"Don't say that! " Ferdinand said, sharply. "I'd – I'd – stake my soul that the Way of the Spices lies as plain as a road from us to India, just as Covilham says." He turned almost pleadingly to Abel. "*You* believe that, Master Abel, don't you? "

As Abel started to speak, the two others saw his lips, even in the very act of forming an answer, freeze into stark amazement, his eyes focused on some object behind them.

With one impulse they whirled about to see, poised in the doorway, as if in arrested flight, a bare-legged, ragged figure. Out of the pallid face stared great, dark eyes dilated by a madness of fear that wiped out every other expression.

For an astounded moment Ferdinand waited for the apparition to vanish – as it had come – like a wraith. No! . . . That was *flesh*, human, alive, that quivered under the torn breeches, and that was blood on the thin hands – one could even see where it had stained the tattered coat. Just a poor, frightened lad, of perhaps his own age!

A chair scraped the floor – Ruth ran past him to the door, and drew the pitiful figure inside. All at once he heard her cry out, saw her draw back. He started forward – as suddenly halted. Had he seen – or imagined – two braids of long, dark hair tucked under the ragged coat?

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"It's a girl, Abel – a *girl!*" Ruth was stammering.

At the sound of her voice the terror-stricken eyes glanced back into the court; then, like a wild creature seeking cover, the girl seized Ruth's hands and dragged her into the room beyond the workshop.

"Someone is hunting her!" Abel cried. "The door, Ferdinand – quick!"

Ferdinand was out of the room, across the court, and already turning the key in the outside gate, when Abel, coming up, a little out of breath, reached out and tried the heavy door. Too amazed to talk, they stood, looking at each other.

"You'd think," Ferdinand said under his breath, "that we'd have heard her come in, or that someone would have seen her climbing the hill up here."

"Suppose you'd gone away when the others did, and I'd locked the gate after you," Abel meditated aloud, "where might this poor creature have wandered?"

"I'm glad I stayed," Ferdinand said, soberly, falling into step with Abel who had begun to pace slowly up and down the court.

Without speaking, they walked its length and back. Unconsciously they muffled their steps on the stone flags, as though they listened for some clue from the night.

To Abel, the very garden about them was an expression of what was in their minds. The gray old fig tree, the laden damsons that his own hands had trained along the wall, even the beds of dew-sweet flowers seemed to listen, to wait. . . .

"Where in the world did that child come from?" he mused aloud.

"She might have been brought in on a slave ship,"

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Ferdinand threw out at random. "But slaves are black as ebony," he quickly amended, "and this girl has skin – well – like ivory, with sunlight striking across it."

He was a little embarrassed at this lapse from his usual literal speech, but Abel seemed not to notice it.

"Exactly," he rejoined, "like yellowed ivory, or like those lilies of mine in moonlight. However, that idea of yours is something to follow up. We can very soon find out at the docks whether any slave ship has put in here."

From the court they could see Ruth's shadow moving about in the lighted room where the girl had fled. At last, the light went out, and Ruth appeared at the workshop door.

"She's quieted down a little," she whispered, as Abel and Ferdinand stepped into the room.

"What does she say?" Abel eagerly demanded. "Did she tell you –"

"'Tell' me! " Ruth echoed with fine contempt. "I don't believe she can speak a word of our language. I tried to talk with her, but all she did was to huddle in a corner, and stare at me with those big, terrified eyes. She acts almost as if her brain was turned. But when I gave her some warm milk, she drank it like a kitten, and she let me bind up her poor hands."

"Did you see how they'd bled over her coat?" Ferdinand broke in.

"It's clear enough that she's had a terrific fight to escape," Abel thoughtfully observed.

Ferdinand got up to go. "I'll look around the docks tomorrow, and see what craft are in," he said. "Perhaps I might pick up a clue about her."

Ruth started up with an alarmed face. "But mind you

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don't do or say anything that'll rouse suspicion! Those she was running from must be lying in wait for her, right here in town, and if they should find her, it's my belief the child would die of fright."

"Don't be afraid, Ruth," Abel assured her, curiously touched by this new tenderness. "Not a soul outside of us three shall know she's here."

"I'll keep my mouth shut," Ferdinand declared, "and my ears and eyes open. No one shall drag a word out of me!"

"Right!" Abel took him up. "So it's just between ourselves to discover where she comes from."

"Compared with which even finding the Way of the Spices might be simple!" Ferdinand laughed, as he took himself off.

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CHAPTER 2

Nicolo Conti

FROM the rail of the Venetian merchantman, the *Venezia,* Nicolo Conti watched her crew send the last of the Lisbon consignment of sugar hurtling to the long quay. The *Venezia* had come in late the day before, and by the time she

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had made her way past Portuguese fishing boats and English vessels, Spanish galleons and Dutch, and found a berth between the craft tied up to the sea-wall, there had not been time to finish unloading. The crew now was hurrying, for they were already overdue, and it was nip and tuck to catch the flood tide over the bar.

Someone behind him spoke his name, and Nicolo turned to see a rugged figure coming toward him. "Got your luggage together, Conti? We're about ready to go."

"It went ashore first thing this morning, Captain. All I've to do is to get myself ashore."

"Unless," said the *Venezia's* captain, looking hard at Nicolo, "unless—you change your mind, and go back with me. I'll give you the best accommodations on board!"

Nicolo laughed good-naturedly. "I'm not going to change my mind, sir!"

But the captain was not to be put off: "Venice was good enough for all your people," he insisted. "That's where they built their fortune and there's where you should stay and increase it, instead of risking it on the wild talk these Portuguese have started over this chap Bartholomew Diaz—" He broke off as the mate came for orders; then, "Don't go yet," he told Nicolo, as he went off with the officer. "I'll be back to say good-bye."

With rising excitement Nicolo glanced at the quay. There was his box. Presently he would be with it, ready for this Lisbon venture from which his old friend had so tried to dissuade him. Then, he must look up lodgings; lucky that he could speak Portuguese.

A boy's head and shoulders, leaning out over the edge of the quay, suddenly crossed his vision—what in the world

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was that chap about? Nicolo watched him peer down at the *Venezia's* bow. Trying to read her name, was he?

The bent figure straightened up, and he saw a young fellow, rather younger than himself, well set up and stocky, with the most remarkable eyes – eyes that made you stop and look, for they seemed like fires under his thick black brows. He was sorry when the boy moved away to scrutinize the vessel next the *Venezia*, and wondered idly why he was interested in the names of ships.

A shout from the crew! – The unloading was finished. A hatch cover slammed down. There was a cry to stand by and slip the hawsers. Next thing they would be drawing in the gang plank – he must go. He glanced at the captain hurrying forward.

"Well, Conti, so it's really good-bye? Sure you won't change your mind?"

Nicolo laughed and grasped his hand. "Not till I've given Portugal a fair trial, anyhow."

The captain shrugged. "Personally, I like to be at the hub of the wheel. This settling yourself on the edge of the world –"

"*Edge!*" Nicolo broke in. "I'll remind you of that word when the trade is roaring around us and *this* is the hub!"

"A fine, loyal Venetian you are!" retorted the other as he gave him a friendly shove.

"Good luck, sir! And look out that you don't have another brush with pirates!"

The man's eyes glittered. "Pirates better watch *me!* They can't afford to lose any more pilots to Christians!"

"We were in great luck to get that chap to take the place of our own pilot – he certainly knew his business."

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"As good a pilot as I ever saw," the captain heartily endorsed. "I tried to get him to stay with me, but he'd had enough of the sea for a while."

Nicolo sprang up the gangplank and from the quay called out his last word: "Let me know when you're in again —I'll be right here!"

On the impulse he decided to wait for the *Venezia* to clear, and, after he had arranged for the storage of his box, he loitered about until he could see her tall mainmast with the familiar Lion of St. Mark beyond the harbour shipping. He watched the flag out of sight, and had turned to find the main thoroughfare, when a sound of angry voices made him look back.

Around the *Venezia's* discharged cargo he saw several prosperous looking men engaged in a vehement discussion. They had evidently halted the stevedores, for only part of the load had been removed. Nicolo watched, as they made gestures toward it and consulted indignantly among themselves. Gradually, he approached them. His Portuguese was not too good, but he gathered that there was something wrong with the freight that the *Venezia* had left.

"There it is—see for yourselves," one of the group was protesting. "Empty as a sucked egg! And I'm out the price of a barrel of sugar."

Nicolo edged up and looked over the speaker's shoulder. With real dismay he saw that the barrel was empty.

"You could get a consideration, if you hadn't signed the bill of lading," someone suggested.

"But I *have* signed it. And talk of consideration—why, a Venetian'd rather sell his soul than part with a ducat!"

"The captain of the *Venezia* wouldn't!" Nicolo spoke

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up from behind him. "How do you know your own men aren't responsible for that empty barrel?"

The other wheeled around and stared at him. "Because I was standing by when my men discovered the shortage," he retorted. "And what's the *Venezia's* captain to you, young fellow, that you're so free to put your nose into other people's business?"

There was a murmur of approval from his companions. A heated reply was on Nicolo's lips—when all at once the humour of the situation struck him, and he laughed. Here he'd come to establish himself in a strange city, and the first thing he did was to get into a full-fledged quarrel.

"It happens that he's a good deal to me," he said good-naturedly. "I've known him all my life, and the last thing he'd do would be to cheat anyone out of anything. Now, here"—he took out his wallet—"what do you figure that sugar is worth?"

"Oh, I didn't mean anything like that," the man awkwardly protested. "I can stand the loss, but it's—it's the principle of the thing!"

"Just so," Nicolo agreed, biting his lips to keep a grave face, "the 'principle,' for the captain's a great stickler for principle—like yourself, sir! Now," opening his wallet, "what do we owe you?"

The man named a sum, which Nicolo handed over. "No hard feelings, I hope," he said, a little sheepishly, as he took the money. "If there's anything I can do for you at any time—"

"I'll take you up on that," laughed Nicolo. "Can you tell me where I can get a bite?"

"I can that! If you aren't particular about style—"

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"Not in the least – I'm hungry!"

"Well, then –" the man turned Nicolo around, and pointed down a narrow outlet from the quay – "that'll take you to the main thoroughfare. Follow along to a big square, and, to your right, in an alley way, you'll see a little tavern, The Green Window, kept by an old fellow they call Pedro. It's not much to look at, but you can get the best mutton and vegetable stew in there that's made."

Once clear of the noisy quay, Nicolo stopped to look about him. Portugal . . . Lisbon . . . after all these months of doubt, of inward debate, of final decision, here they were, bright reality. His eyes, accustomed to the levels of Venice, mounted, with a sense of adventure, hillsides up which quaint, high-roofed houses seemed to climb on each other's shoulders. Enchantments of colour caught, and held, his exploring eyes: sunlit walls broken by sociable little balconies and outside stairways; bursts of blossoming shrubs, a glowing patch of tiny, steep garden. Everywhere, Nicolo noted, was colour, virile, vivid, of an almost primitive quality, as if the crude essence of it had been laid on without care of shade or tone. The sky itself blazed, from zenith to horizon, a deep even blue. Where, he wondered, was the palace? Perhaps it was the solid gloomy structure that crowned that hill or, more likely, that larger building with dome and pillars half-way down the hillside.

Mentally he contrasted the disciplined beauty of Venice – mellow sumptuousness, noiseless waterways – with the gay helter skelter of this hill city and the clatter of its cobble-stone pavements. Life moved faster here, and more simply. That boy, for instance, milking his goats from door to door! . . . This woman urging you to buy from the tray of glistening

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fish she balanced on her head, and those men telling you how fresh were the vegetables in the baskets slung across their shoulders.

In the square that the merchant had mentioned, Nicolo noticed the shops of linen drapers and silk mercers – not so different from the displays of the Merceria, only that a Venetian instantly missed the enormous variety which the Oriental trade gave to the shops of Venice.

He found The Green Window without trouble, an amusing little place with one huge, green-cased window set into its diminutive, peaked front. Several men, unmistakably sailors, were eating and talking at a table. Nicolo sat down near them, and was promptly served with a bowl of the famous stew. The innkeeper was a quaint little man with kind eyes, and scrupulously anxious to please. Nicolo at once took a fancy to him, and ended by ordering a second portion of the stew.

Half-way through his meal, he absently noticed that someone came in and dropped into a seat at the far end of the room, but immediately he forgot the incident in the talk of the sailors. They were now topping off with good red wine, and were in high spirits. Nicolo made out that they belonged to crews which were to sail that very day.

"You'll be bringing back sugar and lumber, I suppose?" one of them asked.

"Yes, all the yew and cypress we can load without sinking her."

"They say there's no better hard wood than this Madeira timber," someone commented, "but, for big money, give me a good shipful of black men and a ballast of gold ore!"

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So that was where they were going, Nicolo said to himself – Madeira, one of the important Portuguese colonies. As for the reference to "black men" –

"From your talk of blacks and gold," cut in another, "I reckon you're bound for Guinea."

Ah, the much talked of Guinea Coast – another of Portugal's discoveries.

"That's what!" was the hearty rejoinder, "And a bonus if we get back on schedule time!"

"That for your bonus" – a snap of the fingers – "when they get the water route to India going in good shape! Watch me enlist on the first trip!"

More talk followed, of places that to Nicolo had been half myths: Cape Verde, the Azores, the Canaries.

They went out, laughing and scuffling, and Nicolo, his fancy on fire, watched them roister down the street. As he got up to pay for his meal, he glanced at the one remaining customer in the room, the one who had come in so quietly. – The boy with the eyes!

Arms folded on his chest, head dropped a little forward, the great eyes seemed to burn far into some future world. Glowing fires, thought Nicolo; the most extraordinary eyes ever lodged in a human head; uncanny, only for the sheer beauty of them.

The boy looked up, surprising his scrutiny. "Interesting, weren't they?" he said, nodding toward the departed sailors. "I saw you listening to them."

"You Portuguese have a right to be very proud of your navigators," Nicolo said warmly, responding to this friendly ignoring of formalities.

The boy seemed to seize at the last words. "Have

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you done any voyaging – seen any sea service?" he demanded.

"Only in the Mediterranean – but enough to get my sea legs," laughed Nicolo. "I take it you've been to sea, or expect to go?"

"As soon as I can!"

Nicolo caught the note of impatience in the brief reply. "Perhaps your people won't let you go?" he suggested.

"No – not till I've finished my tour of duty at the palace." He flushed as though embarrassed at revealing so much to a stranger. "You see, I'm a page," he explained with a little grimace, "and I've a half dozen more years of service."

Their eyes met, understandingly, and Nicolo laughed. There was something refreshing, lovable, in this frankness. "So in the meantime you get the sea at second hand from The Green Window!"

The boy nodded. "Every chance I see, I slip out of my uniform and into some old hunting clothes they sent me from home, and come down here. It's good to be quit of those stiff things that saw your neck in two, and keep you laced up so tight you can't breathe!" He ran his fingers around the open throat of his loose leather jacket and squirmed luxuriously.

"A homesick, country lad," Nicolo silently mused, as much touched as he was amused by the ingenuous gesture. But well born, you could tell, from that forthright way of his. No heritage of the yoke in him! Aloud, "Old clothes *are* a comfort," he agreed. "What do you have to do at the palace?"

"Oh, play errand boy, serve the King at table, stand by

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when he rides or drives out, wait on the ladies for this, that, and the other."

"Not too exciting, eh? I don't believe I envy you!"

"It's deadly," the other pursued, "the routine that a page has to go through, like a dog at its tricks. I never could see the sense of pulling on the King's hose for him! And–" he lowered his voice, "why the devil shouldn't a woman pick up her own handkerchief when she drops it?"

"Sh–careful!" Nicolo laughed under his breath. "Women have a way of getting back at rebels like you! By the way," he ventured, "didn't I see you on the dock this morning?" Almost, he had added "What were you looking for?"

"I was certainly down there," the boy returned, "and I saw *you*–twice! You made a friend for life out of that sugar dealer!"

"To tell the truth, I was thinking of my own interests as much as his! It was hardly good business to make an enemy the moment I'd set foot here, where I expect to stay."

The great eyes lighted up. "You really mean to live here? Good! I thought I heard you say something like that, when you and the captain were talking. I–I–" the colour rose to his cheeks–"listened to you!"

"Oh, so you understand Italian?" Nicolo laughed, inwardly amused with the ingenuous admission.

"After a fashion; you know, we pick up a smatter of everything in the palace. But you have me beaten, the way you speak our language. Didn't I hear you mention pirates?" he continued. "What happened?"

"Not very much–to us! The pirates and a Venetian vessel had been having it back and forth, when we overhauled

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them. After that we were two to one, of course, and the pirates broke and ran. That was all."

"There was something else that you said: that Lisbon was going to get all the trade. What makes you think that?"

"What I've heard about Diaz. I believe he's on the right track to India."

Something leaped in the boy's eyes, and his hand shot out to Nicolo's. "Diaz is the greatest man in the world! I know him . . . if you'd like to meet him."

"Would I! – That's a chance in a lifetime."

"Then I'll arrange it. Now," with a little grimace, "I must be going back to the palace."

Nicolo rose and walked with him to the door.

"Where is the palace?" he inquired. "Up there on top of the hill?"

"That? Oh, that's the Castle of St. George – old citadel that dates back to the time of the Moors. Here – " Magellan drew Nicolo from the doorway – "step out where you can see. Might as well begin to get your bearings! Now, that big bulk of a building with the dome and arches, half-way between us and the Castle, is the Sé Patriarchal.[1] That's where St. Vincent's tomb is – Lisbon's patron saint, you know. Some say it used to be a Moorish mosque."

"I noticed it first thing and wondered if it weren't the palace."

"Why, the palace is in the other direction!" exclaimed Magellan. "It's down by the harbour, you know – faces square on the Tagus. You must have seen it this morning."

"I'm afraid I was too busy with the empty sugar barrel!" laughed Nicolo.

[1] Old Lisbon's Cathedral.

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The other grinned sympathetically. "Don't know that I blame you! But the next time you're down at the water front, take notice of a great three-sided building with an enormous square in the middle that opens on the river. That's Manoel's palace."

"Where you pull on the royal stockings, and pick up handkerchiefs that the ladies drop!" bantered Nicolo.

The boy made a face. Then, a little bashfully, he asked, "Perhaps I'll see you here soon again?"

"If there's a chance to see *you*," Nicolo said heartily. "And what do you say we exchange names?"

"Oh, I know yours, already! I heard your captain say it; Nicolo Conti, isn't it? And mine's Magellan – Ferdinand Magellan."

From the door of The Green Window Nicolo looked after him with a warm little stir at his heart. Those brilliant, brooding eyes . . . that lovable frankness, even if indiscreet . . . the sensitive colour, and, again, those altogether extraordinary eyes!

He stepped into the alley way and stood, for a moment, stretching himself in the warm sun and exultantly breathing in the tang of the clear air. He had made no mistake in leaving Venice for Portugal. Here the future was in the shaping, with a chance to share in the process; in the result, too. For the moment, Life seemed a joyous effervescent that foamed gloriously over the edge as he drank. He was glad to be here. Glad!

He started to walk on, when an idea occurred to him. He turned, amusedly contemplated the big green window in the tiny front; then he re-entered the inn.

Pedro was giving a final scouring to the long board top

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of a table. He had taken it off its trestles, the better to clean it, and, now, as Nicolo watched, he lifted it back.

"You forgot something, perhaps?" he asked, as he suddenly perceived Nicolo.

"I was just wondering if—well—I don't suppose you'd consider a lodger, would you, Pedro?"

"I've never taken lodgers, Senhor. I have nothing but a small room overhead." The tone was deprecatory but Nicolo could see that the kind eyes were pleased.

"Let me see it," he said. "All I want is a place to sleep in. I'm sure of good food here at any rate."

Eventually it was agreed that he should move in at once. The room was small, but it was clean and sunny and had a tolerable bed.

"I'll have my box brought here," Nicolo concluded, "shall I, Pedro?"

Pedro nodded. "If you're satisfied." Then, "Are you staying in Lisbon for long?" he inquired.

"For always, I hope!" Nicolo told him, good humouredly.

"So! Then you have friends here?"

"Only one, so far—the young fellow I was talking to, downstairs. But presently I expect there'll be more, There's a banker here that I mean to look up, a Master Abel Zakuto. You don't happen to know him, do you?"

"Of course! Who, in Lisbon, doesn't? A kind of a sailor-fellow on land, he is; always pottering with navigation instruments, and hobnobbing with anyone who's either been to sea or is going."

"Oh, that isn't the Zakuto whom I've heard about at

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home," Nicolo broke in. "My man is a banker, a Jewish banker."

Pedro nodded. "He's that, too, a Jewish banker; same person. Yes, I can show you where he lives."

Directed by a graphic finger, Nicolo's eyes finally made out, high on the hillside, a certain house at the head of a long stairway. Along the front a row of windows were bright gold in the afternoon sun. It struck Nicolo's fancy – perched up there with an air of satisfaction at having out-climbed all those other climbing houses! He would go there some day soon and make acquaintance with this banker that he'd heard of in Venice – Abel Zakuto.

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CHAPTER 3

Abel Zakuto's Workshop

ABEL quietly let himself through his gate, and crossed the court to the workshop. A little breathless from the last few stairs, he sat down and reviewed this morning's work.

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It had been just another fruitless search for some clue to the Girl. He could think of nothing more to do, and he had to own himself completely baffled. Presently Ruth would come in to inquire if he had any news. He could hear her moving about in the further end of the house. Whatever she was doing, he knew she was near the Girl, for from the first she had watched over her with a fierce tenderness that amazed, while it touched, Abel. Later, perhaps, Ferdinand would drop in, with some light on the mystery.

Meanwhile – the whole of a golden afternoon with his tools and his instruments, and the blossoming court lovingly watching him through the open door!

He looked about the room like a boy who has successfully manoeuvred an afternoon for play – triumphant, but a little guilty; for, after his morning's search, he had deliberately come home instead of going to business. A feeling of happy seclusion and security stole over him. It was like a fortress, this room of his, high above streets and noise, and the wide outlook from its windows gave him a sense of command. Beneath him lay Lisbon's hills, and, in the blue bowl of a harbour that the widening Tagus had made at their feet, he could even distinguish the flags of the crowded shipping. He could, too, look directly down on Manoel's palace; on the massive wings and the huge colonnaded quadrangle open on the south to the river front.

He never gazed through his windows without recalling his friends' comments and Ruth's protests at his choice of large panes of clear glass in face of the fashion for mullions. He had let them talk. But he had gone on fitting those panes into casements that ran the width of the workshop – for one of Abel Zakuto's necessities was a view.

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They'd laughed a little, too, when he'd made such a huge lamp to hang over the table. But when he'd got it done – a sturdy column of wrought iron and glass – they'd all admitted that it made studying the maps at night as easy as by day. "A regular lighthouse" someone had laughingly dubbed it – and the name had stuck.

But he must get to work; before he knew it, midday would be afternoon. There was so much to do . . . the astrolabe . . . the compass box. He opened a cupboard, and stood looking at two plates of copper within. Gently he took one up – almost as if it were alive – turned it in his hands. No, not that today; too much else to be done. Besides, before he could cut the copper into the proper discs, he must first put on paper the design that he had pretty well in mind. Already he could see in its completeness the new instrument that he had in mind: a metal astrolabe like those the Arabs had used for centuries, but as yet unknown to western navigation. This was Abel's newest and most precious secret, and that was why his fingers trembled a little, as he put the plate back into the cupboard.

He'd better go on with the compass box, he decided, since it was begun; but the piece of mahogany on which he'd started was so hard that first he must sharpen his saw.

As he began filing, he had a mental picture of Ruth – Ruth as she would presently stand, in the doorway, fix him with her bright, black eyes, and say – he knew well enough what she would say: "The time you waste in this workshop of yours, Abel! . . . Think of the money you could be making!"

Ruth had a heart of gold, he reflected, but when it came to imagination, one had to be patient with her. Besides, to

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do her justice, she wasn't alone in her opinion; for he knew it was said, here in Lisbon, that Abel Zakuto's astuteness could have made him rich even in this city whose Jews were known over Europe for their sagacity.

"Rich!" Abel snorted contemptuously. "Money!" What money could buy the wealth of this room? Poor enough it might look to some with its bare table and plain chairs. But think of the men who'd sat around that table! . . .

Diego Cam, with his first glowing tales of how he'd seen the Congo's vast flood rush far into the sea, of how he'd set up at its mouth the stone pillar of Portugal; Christopher Columbus and John Cabot, who'd come here, sad and disheartened by King John's indifference, but who'd gone away fired with the courage that they'd found here in the workshop; and Pero d'Alemquer, chief pilot of the Diaz expedition to the Cape; and Martin Behaim, the German. Conceited Martin was, Abel reflected, but such charts as he had made, with such German thoroughness! Would these men have gathered in his workshop, if he'd been only a money maker? Would Bartholomew Diaz come here night after night, if he, Abel Zakuto, had been merely a rich man?

He laid down the sharpened saw, and stood up to reach a partly worked piece of mahogany. He lingered to survey a row of shelves on which were ranged delicate tools and packets of metal and blocks of fine-grained wood. There was one shelf that ran entirely to compasses. Mentally Abel contrasted them with the unwieldy "Genoese Needle"[1]—and gave a sigh of content. . . . Not but what he could improve on his present workmanship—and would! "Getting money,"

[1] A magnetized piece of iron floating on a raft of cork or reeds in a bowl of water.

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he mused, " when one could be making instruments to help find new worlds! "

His eyes roved to a niche in the wall, and lovingly dwelt there – his precious, even if tiny, library! What wealth would tempt from him those parchment treatises on astronomy and geometry, or that volume of Marco Polo's *Travels* transcribed from the very copy once owned by the Great Navigator,[1] and bound by Abel's own hands in boards half-covered with sheepskin.

He sat down at his carpenter's bench and made fast the mahogany block. This was to be a compass larger than those on the shelf, and in his mind it had already been dedicated to a certain enterprise – another of his secrets. By and by, he ran on to himself, when he had finished it and the astrolabe, then, *then* – he was going to make maps. . . . Maps!

He sawed on, till the severed block fell to the floor. Then he laid down his work, slid open the table drawer and began to lean over his copies of maps, inscribed with such signatures as Giovanni Leardo, Fra Mauro, Cadamosto. One of these days, he promised himself, he, too, would make maps – not, as these other chaps made them, as they fancied or hoped the earth was – but as it really was; but for that, of course, he would have to wait till Diaz put the final link in the sea route to India, and could give him facts.

He closed the drawer and went on with his sawing. Then – as he had foreseen – Ruth stood in the doorway.

" Abel – "

When Ruth began that way, and then paused, it was a sign that her mind must be unloaded.

" Yes, Ruth? "

[1] Prince Henry of Portugal called The Great Navigator.

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She came into the workshop, and sat down, without so much as a glance at the litter of sawdust to which she usually objected. "Abel – I'm worried about that child. Why doesn't she talk?"

Abel took up a chisel and ran his thumb over its edge. Vaguely he was wondering at Ruth's silence about the sawdust. He stole a look at her. Her face was anxious, softer than he remembered.

"Shouldn't you think she'd talk," she continued, "and tell us what frightened her?"

"No, I shouldn't. Just think of the terror that was in her poor face; that still is. The child is simply beyond speech."

"Beyond speech, Abel? You don't mean –"

"Oh, nothing but what'll right itself," he hastily assured her. "By and by, when she feels at home with us –" He was absorbed, as he applied the chisel to an uneven edge.

Ruth watched him in silence. "I wonder," he heard her say, as if she were talking to herself, "I wonder what her voice will sound like." And not waiting for him to comment, she left the room.

What *would* the Girl's voice sound like? Abel pondered. If Ruth hadn't suggested it, he would never have thought of such a thing, but now he began to feel a growing curiosity to hear it. Perhaps if he approached her, spoke to her very gently . . . But so far she had persistently clung to Ruth, and had shrunk from him.

As he worked, his mind alternated between ways to persuade her to speak, and the mystery that so completely wrapped her. There was a last possibility that Ferdinand might have got hold of some clue.

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But when Ferdinand finally appeared, late that afternoon, Abel saw at a glance that he had been no more successful than himself.

"That girl must have got here on wings," the boy declared, "for I was down at the docks first thing the morning after, and there wasn't a sign of anything like a slave cargo. I made sure of that: I got the name of every craft that had tied up here, where she hailed from, what stops she'd made, and what she was carrying. After that I inquired at the inns to find out who'd come in to town in the last day or two."

Abel nodded. "Just what I did."

"I saw something odd while I was hunting a clue down on the quay," Ferdinand continued. "Some merchant had just found a shortage in a consignment that a Venetian galleon had brought, and he was cursing Venice and Venetians for cheats and thieves, when, from behind him, up comes a young fellow with blood in his eye; says he's a Venetian and wants to know what the man means." Ferdinand stopped to laugh at the recollection. "In another minute I expected to see fists fly, when, all of a sudden, I noticed the young chap smile to himself, and pull out his wallet. 'I'll stand your loss, sir,' says he, and then there was some more about his being a friend of the captain who was responsible for the cargo. Well, you should have seen the merchant back water: money was nothing to him – it was just the 'principle' of the thing!"

"Nevertheless, he took the money?" Abel drily insinuated.

"Oh, of course! And then he couldn't do enough for the Venetian chap, told him where to find an inn, and so on."

"That young man has brains, Abel admiringly observed.

Ferdinand nodded. "At first glance you'd think him a

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bit of a dandy, from his pointed shoes and the gold button on his cap and the fur collar of his cloak, but when you saw the swell of his chest under his doublet, and the buttons of his hose all strained out at the calf . . . And he's plucky, too. I met him afterward – in The Green Window, you know – and he told me he had left Venice because he believed Portugal was going to have it all her way with trade."

"Oh, so?" Abel exclaimed, with fresh interest. "That's the kind of citizens we need. Bring him here some time, Ferdinand. Did you get his name?"

"Nicolo Conti. Of course he's anxious to meet Master Diaz."

"Conti . . . Conti . . ." Abel mused aloud. "I wonder if he's any connection of the Venetian traveller of that name."

They returned to the search for the Girl, and Ferdinand admitted he was at a standstill.

"If she would only talk!" said Abel.

The boy laughed. "One of these days she will – being a woman!"

"But suppose she doesn't know our language?"

Ruth came into the room in time to catch Abel's last words. "If she wanted to tell us about herself, she'd find a way even if it was only by signs. My guess is that she's hiding from someone who's so crazed her with fear that she doesn't dare tell anything to anyone."

"There's no doubt that she was trying to hide, and meant to disguise herself," Ferdinand agreed. "I took her for a boy, myself, until I saw her long hair."

Ruth nodded reminiscently. "Those eyes of hers are just the same as they were that first night – they stare and

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stare into space as if they were looking at ghosts. But the rest of her is different, I can tell you, in the new dress I've made her! You know, Ferdinand"—she became confidential—"I hunted the shops over till I found the right stuff, all shimmery and gauzy, like . . . like moonlight on a misty night . . . or like those lilies, out there at dusk."

Abel shot an astonished glance at her. Was Ruth, the practical, turning poet? Was there, after all, a love of beauty, hidden deep within her, that had welled at last to this sweet outlet?

"Anyway," Ruth pursued, "she's as lovely a sight as you'll ever see!"

Ferdinand's face lighted with sudden mischief. "Let me see her, Aunt Ruth—I'll get her to talk!" He sprang up and pretended to make a dash for the next room.

"You young jackanapes!" She caught his sleeve and pulled him back. "You'd frighten her so, she'd never open her lips!"

"Then I'll be going." He pretended to sulk, while he winked at Abel behind Ruth's back.

"She'll talk," Abel comfortably observed, "when she feels at home with us—feels that she's safe." But to himself he wondered what would have happened if they had taken the lad at his word and had let him see the Girl!

Ferdinand lingered in the door for a last word. "Your cousin, Master Abraham Zakuto, said he and Gama would be up here tonight."

"Good!" Abel was genuinely pleased. "I haven't seen Abraham in some time. How is he?"

"Oh, Manoel and he are thick as thieves—Manoel's always consulting him."

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"I'm glad Gama's coming – if for nothing more than to lend Abraham an arm up the stairs. On any account, though, I'm glad – I think a great deal of Vasco."

"I'd like him more," Ferdinand rejoined, "if he were keener on exploration – seeing as his father was to have commanded an expedition to India, if he hadn't died. Another thing: Gama's as stubborn as a mule – never gives you an inch in an argument."

Abel laughed indulgently. "Why should he, if the argument's worth anything? No – I like him for standing his ground."

"Well – have it your way," the boy retorted. "But when I'm his age," he shot back from the gate, "you won't see me content to dawdle around Manoel. Not while there's seas to sail and lands to be found!"

From the door of the workshop Abel's eyes affectionately followed him. "What should we do, Ruth, without that lad running in and out all the time?"

She came and stood beside him. "The saucy rascal!" she laughed. "Talking about the King and his court with no more respect than if they were common human beings!"

Abel chuckled. "Perhaps you'd do no better if you lived with Manoel day in and day out as Ferdinand does!"

She gave him a searching look: "I sometimes think, Abel, you haven't much of an opinion of Manoel."

"He seems to be treating Abraham as well as we could wish," he replied, evasively.

"You hit it just right," she declared, "when you thought of getting Abraham in as court astronomer."

"I doubt if I could have manoeuvred it without the

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help of Manoel's physician. It's lucky he and I are old friends, for Manoel will do anything he advises."

"Poor old Abraham!" Ruth sighed. "Thank God he's sure of peace and safety here as long as he lives." A look of suffering crossed her face, and Abel knew she was thinking of those days of horror when they had seen thousands of Jews, driven from Spain and fleeing into Lisbon, starved, crazed creatures ravaged by disease. It had been months before Ruth could nurse Abraham back to even a semblance of himself.

"There's something unforgivable in persecuting an intellect like Abraham's, let alone his body," Abel sombrely mused.

"I can't bear to think of what our people have gone through," Ruth burst out. "It was wicked—wicked! Oh, Abel—" she turned troubled eyes to him—"what if King Manoel should drive us out of Portugal?"

"He won't, my dear, he won't."

She murmured something about supper, and left the room. Slowly Abel's eyes roved between workshop and court. Suppose that which had happened to his people in Spain should suddenly happen here, and he should be torn from this house, where he had brought Ruth a bride; from this court that together they had planted and set out.

He felt his heart contract; then, what a fool he was to borrow trouble, he sharply told himself, for hadn't Manoel always been friendly with his Jewish subjects? Hadn't he sought their advice and openly laid the country's commercial prosperity to the Jewish financiers? No, Manoel wasn't the man wantonly to drain his kingdom of the very sources of that prosperity. Spain had done exactly that, when she had

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driven out her Jews and Moors; but then, Ferdinand and Isabella were religion-mad, and Manoel wasn't, at least, that.

Rage surged through Abel at the thought of the paupered exiles, which Spain had made of her most useful subjects. Paupered, they who had made Spain rich! Homeless, who had made it famous for its learning and its scholars! It was hard to think calmly of them as wanderers, as cold and hungry, these people who had been so open-handed to encourage their country's progress. No one had had to urge them, he recalled, to give – and generously – to Columbus' first expedition. His face hardened as he remembered how the second expedition – after their expulsion – had been financed: from confiscated Jewish estates!

He became aware of a growing coolness in the air. The sun had set, and dusk was falling, while he had let his thoughts run away with him! He turned from the doorway, and began to put away his work. Shavings and sawdust were no matter, but a tool out of place – never!

It was dark enough now to light the great lamp, but Abel decided to wait till after supper. He liked to sit, quietly, by himself, in the half light, his chair tilted against the wall.

He found himself thinking of that strange night that the Girl had come. He was gazing out into the court, as he was now, he recalled, when, like a phantom, she had flashed on the square of darkness framed in the doorway.

It had always pleased his fancy that it was the workshop where she had first appeared – where the talk was always of the undiscovered and of the unknown. In a curious, mystical sense she seemed to fit the spirit of this room. She, who was as baffling as anything that had ever been discussed around the big table and over the maps! If only, Abel

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whimsically mused, some chart might be found to reveal her mystery! By heaven – as that idea suggested another – *that* might work!

His tilted chair came down on all fours. He would send a message to Ferdinand by Abraham or Gama.

Yes, *that* might work!

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CHAPTER 4

The Two Abels

By keeping in sight its row of windows, Nicolo found the hillside house that Pedro had pointed out. Though the person who answered his knock acknowledged himself to be Abel Zakuto, Nicolo looked doubtfully at him. This spare,

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youngish-looking man with sawdust clinging to his breeches and to the turned-back sleeves of his plain round jacket, was like no banker Nicolo had ever known; nor was the whimsical smile lurking in the boyish eyes that were so oddly at variance with the high forehead. This was no banker, said Nicolo to himself – never in the world; more like a skilled artisan, or possibly a scholar, he looked, with that black silk skull cap.

"I've often heard, sir, at home, in Venice, of Abel Zakuto, the Lisbon financier," Nicolo began, "but here I was given to understand that it was not banks you were interested in, but navigation – exploration – something of the kind. Are there two Abel Zakutos? And have I come to the wrong one?"

"There *are* two Abel Zakutos," laughed Abel, "but they both live" – he tapped his forehead – "under the same roof. One of them is a banker – you're right about him. The other is a conscienceless fellow who steals most of the banker's time to do things that don't bring in money! But come in!" He pulled down his sleeves, seized Nicolo's arm and guided him toward the workshop. "You say you're from Venice? I wonder if you aren't the Nicolo Conti of whom Ferdinand was telling me?"

"Ferdinand Magellan, you mean? You know him?"

"Oh, for years; he's always running in and out."

Nicolo took the chair that Abel pushed toward him, while he glanced about. Tools . . . compasses . . . gay little ship models . . . a work bench littered with fine shavings. Yes, it fitted Pedro's comments about Abel: "A kind of a sailor-fellow on land; always pottering with navigation instruments."

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"I understand from Ferdinand," Abel bantered, "that your first taste of Lisbon wasn't too pleasant!"

"Oh – that little matter of the sugar barrel? Well, it did seem foolish of that merchant to get heated about a few pounds of sugar, when we'd successfully brought him some thousands of pounds."

"Did you make any stops on your way?" Abel asked.

"No; that is –" Nicolo smiled at the recollection of the pirates – "no official ones!"

Looking at Abel, he saw his eyes change, and knew instinctively that some new thought had suddenly entered his mind. When Abel spoke again Nicolo was conscious that his question disguised the real motive:

"Did you see any slave trade along the way?"

Nicolo shook his head.

Abel seemed to ponder. "No craft with a slave cargo?" he carefully asked.

Something in his expression and attitude made Nicolo think, vaguely, of young Magellan – Magellan as he had leaned out over the sea-wall, and peered at the names of the anchored ships.

"Were you expecting such a cargo," Nicolo inquired, "or some particular craft?"

"No, oh no," Abel hastily disclaimed, and – Nicolo fancied – almost guiltily. "I noticed," he said, shifting the subject, "that you've the same name as the famous Venetian traveller – or rather, one of your famous travellers, for you have many."

"We've a bent for out-of-the-way places," Nicolo agreed, "though I didn't expect to find anyone as familiar with us and our doings as you are, sir."

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Abel laughed. "Lay that to the scamp I was telling you about, the chap who keeps the banker from getting rich! One forgets about such stupidities as making money when one hears of exploits such as Conti's or reads chronicles like these." He reached for a book from a tiny library and handed it to Nicolo.

"Marco Polo!" Nicolo exclaimed at the title. "He's the master traveller of us all, isn't he!"

"And isn't it curious that, without any intention on his part, these *Travels* which he set down for people's entertainment should start – two hundred years later, mind you – the greatest sensation the world's ever known!"

"How do you mean, sir, 'greatest sensation'?"

"Why, it was Polo's account of the traffic of the East that started Christopher Columbus to thinking about a a water short-cut to it; he told me so himself, sitting in this room. And now all Europe is hot on the scent of a passage to India."

"We hear at home that Cabot has stirred up the English to send him on an expedition to find it. Do you know of him – John Cabot?"

"Know of him?" Abel ejaculated. "We've talked for hours in this very spot!"

Pedro's description of Zakuto as "hobnobbing with anyone who'd been to sea or was going," drifted across Nicolo's recollection.

"Yes," Abel continued, "Cabot's caught the passage-to-India fever. He saw enough of the Oriental trade on that trip of his down the Red Sea to convince him that it was worth trying for. About Conti's travels I know very little, but I've heard it rumoured that his special object was to get

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information about the source of spices, they being the richest item in the whole Oriental trade. Did he succeed, do you know?"

"Matter of fact, I hadn't meant to bring that subject up just yet, sir! But as long as you've put it to me—yes, I know a good deal about it, for I've read Conti's letters in which he tells how he discovered from where the different spices come. You see, sir, Nicolo Conti was my grandfather, and his letters are in the family."

"So!" Abel ejaculated. "So!" He drew his chair close to Nicolo's. "This is real news! Tell me all you care to."

"Well, sir, up to Conti's time, our merchants and explorers, even Marco Polo himself, had confused the ports where spices were shipped with the place where they grew. Whenever they asked an incoming caravan from where its spice cargo came, they were referred to the caravan's last starting point, and again, at that point, to one farther east; and so on. No one seemed to know where the spices grew and no one could find out, but it was always some place east of wherever the inquiry was made!"

"Looks to me," Abel interrupted, "as if all that evasion were intentional."

"Oh, Conti says it is, and charges the Arab merchants with it! So he made up his mind to keep on going east as long as there was an east. He finally reached Java and Sumatra, which was farther than any European had gone. And there he ran the scent down!"

Like an excited boy, Abel edged forward in his chair.

"He found out all about pepper and cinnamon," Nicolo continued, "and that cloves came from the island of Banda,

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and nutmegs from neighbouring islands to the eastward of India." He waited a moment, then, "Master Zakuto," he said, deliberately, "it was this information, together with my belief that Diaz has all but found the sea route to these islands, that brought me to Lisbon."

Abel's head went up proudly. "So you believe in Bartholomew Diaz?"

"If I didn't I wouldn't be here. I've come to Lisbon to follow up my convictions; and to you, in particular, Master Zakuto, because I've heard business men at home say they'd rather have your advice than each others'."

Abel made no reply at once; then, he said, carefully, "You would like financial counsel, or perhaps you wish to make a banking connection?"

The boyish eyes, Nicolo noted, had become quite astoundingly keen; unsuspected lines appeared around the mouth; chin and jaw, thrust ever so little forward, fitted the great forehead's testimony to a profound sagacity. This was Zakuto, the financier!

When Nicolo spoke he seemed to ignore Abel's question. "When Portugal reaches the Indies by sea she's going to take trade supremacy from Venice," he stated with a finality that brought an exclamation from the other.

"Strange, that, from a Venetian!"

"But it's true. My love for Venice can't change the lay of land and water!"

For several moments Abel studied Nicolo; then, he asked, "What do they say in Venice about this talk of a sea route to India?"

"You see, Venice has had the monopoly of Oriental commerce so long that she can't believe anyone can take it

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away from her. So, most of them at home laugh at the reports of the Diaz expedition, and a few take it seriously. I'm one of those few. Then, why live my life out in a city that shuts its eyes to what I'm convinced is bound to be? "

"So you're thinking of going into trade here? "

"As I figure, Master Abel – " again Nicolo waived the other's question – "when you get the Oriental trade to your side of the world, you'll need ships, more ships than you now have."

"Aha! " Swift comprehension broke over Abel's face. "So that's what you came to talk! Ship-building, eh? "

"That was my real business with you, sir – till we got started on Conti's letters, spice, and the rest of it! "

"Good! " Abel hitched his chair nearer to Nicolo. "You know, Conti, all they can think of, here in Lisbon, is getting their hands on that Eastern trade – but you never hear a word of how they expect to distribute it, after they have it. Of course they'll have to have more ships! Just as they'll have to arrange for more foreign credit. And the Jewish financiers have foreseen that. Why – " confidentially he lowered his voice – "my firm is already negotiating for branch houses abroad, even as far east as the Levant. But to come back to ship-building . . ."

They plunged into details of locations and sites and leases. Abel knew the right men for each connection.

"But above all, my boy," he warned, "lay in a stock of patience. Don't expect Manoel to send an expedition to India next week! "

"What! Isn't he interested? "

"When he can spare time from home politics! "

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"But how does he dare risk delay, with rivalry so keen about reaching the Orient? Why, we've heard at home that His Holiness even had to make an imaginary 'Line' somewhere out in the ocean to keep Spain and Portugal from quarrelling over each other's discoveries."

Abel's eyes twinkled. "That 'Line' makes a fine talking point! But it doesn't prevent Spain's galleons from skulking around to see what we're doing on our side of it, down by the Guinea coast, any more than it prevents them from lifting one of our cargoes, now and then. Not that we neglect a good chance on their side of the Line, either! Oh, we're a fine, civilized lot, Conti! But you were asking about Manoel—"

"He's indifferent, you say, to reaching India? Doesn't he believe in Diaz?"

"Oh, in a way; but I suppose Diaz is an old story to him by now."

"You mean, that Manoel will have to be waked up before he'll send an expedition?"

"Something like that, yes."

Absently Nicolo drummed on the table. He hadn't counted on this sort of a situation—waiting for a royal imagination to be tickled.

From under his great forehead Abel watched him: "Push right on with your plans," he said, at last. "Diaz hasn't yet given up hope of completing what he began! As for myself—" He drew Nicolo to the windows. "See here a minute, my boy."

Below them, in the late sunlight, the roofs of the city stood up sharp and bright, with the streets, already in shadow, like black gashes between.

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"I never look down on this city, Conti," – Abel's voice took on a new, deep note – "without saying to myself: 'Not Lisbon, the capital of Portugal, but Lisbon, the emporium of Europe!' . . . I'm sure of it, Conti, sure!"

There was a rush of colour to Nicolo's face, and his eyes looked unseeingly before him; for, in fancy, he was gazing on the Inland Sea that had nursed him, that had mothered the childhood of man. Ah, sea of measureless blues and crests of gold! Supreme through the marching centuries, it was now to yield its supremacy. Those to whom it had been highway and warpath would look henceforth to other waters; already, in fact, were so looking, so seeking, faring forth with the zest of the child who has outgrown the hand to which it clung.

He was roused by Abel's suddenly hurrying to his carpenter's bench. From it he picked up an object which he blew clear of litter, and then, almost reverently, held in his palm for Nicolo's inspection: the frame of a compass. Just that, and only that, it appeared to his layman's eye till Abel enthusiastically pointed out the fine grain of the best Madeira mahogany. A long search it had been for this particular piece; sample after sample tested and discarded. But at last, this! And when it was rubbed down, polished! A swift vision of gleaming surfaces smote Nicolo's eye of fancy. And then he must see just how Abel would set the pivot on which the needle would rest.

"Makes the 'Genoese Needle' look pretty lame!" Nicolo admiringly commented.

All at once his arm was seized, Abel's face was thrust close to his. This, Nicolo perceived, was the Zakuto of the

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boyish eyes, and of the lovably incongruous features: the pilferer of Banker Zakuto's time!

"Conti . . . Conti . . ." he was stammering like an eager child—"do you know for what I'm making this compass? . . . For the first crew that sails out of Lisbon for India!"

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CHAPTER 5

The Locked Door

ABEL ZAKUTO came thoughtfully up the long, stone stairway. Inwardly, he was a good deal perturbed. This thing that was to happen – for which, in fact, he had deliberately set the stage – must be so managed as to appear not

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managed. It must be, he said to himself, like the unfolding of a flower – as delicate as all that.

Perhaps it was this particular thought that made him, when he crossed the court, stop to gather a cluster of late-blooming roses. With them in his hand he went into the room where Ruth sat sewing with the Girl.

"Ruth, see! Aren't they fine blooms?" He held them up for her to smell, and then pressed them to the Girl's cheek. Under his off-hand manner his keen, kind eyes noted the rise of colour in the still face, and the flutter of the listless eyelids.

"Come along into the court, Ruth!" He tossed the sewing from her hands and caught her round the waist, while his other arm swept the Girl up. If he saw Ruth's startled eyes, or felt the Girl's slender body stiffen and hang back, he paid no heed as, laughing and talking, he steered for the court.

As they stepped outside, he was aware that the Girl started violently, and, behind him, he heard Ruth's low "What are you thinking of – taking her out so suddenly?"

"Fresh air and sunlight never hurt anyone," he comfortably returned, while he guided them toward the lilies that had always reminded him of the Girl.

He picked one and put it into her hands, while he meditated aloud: "The narcissus bed must be thinned before long, and these gilly flowers. There'll be enough for a new plantation; or would a border be prettier, Ruth?"

His arm always around the Girl, he strolled on, stopping every few steps, to inspect a vine or a shrub; to notice that the mint bed was a bit dry; to rub a bit of sage between

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thumb and finger and hold it to his nostrils. Over her head he could see Ruth doubtfully eyeing him.

They had made tour of the court, and had halted under the old fig tree, when Abel heard a deep, tremulous sigh, and felt the Girl's arm drop from his. Quickly he glanced at her. As if she had forgotten his presence and Ruth's, she was gazing up into the sun-flecked shade while she stretched her arms like a drowsy child.

Almost holding his breath, Abel watched the pale cheeks warm with faint colour; then, as her eyes came back to him, he saw that they held something besides fear. She stood there, very still, between him and Ruth, and then, slowly, as if groping her way, she reached out to a jessamine vine, and picked a spray of its white stars. A look of triumph shot from Abel to Ruth as they covertly watched her smell the flowers, and Ruth found a chance to murmur in his ear, "I'd never have believed it!"

From time to time Abel furtively eyed the gate. At last, feet sounded on the stairs; the door swung back, and Ferdinand stepped inside. Abel saw him look hastily about the court, then draw back as he perceived the Girl.

Abel stole a glance at her. Thank heaven, she was not frightened! Soft, wondering eyes fixed on the figure at the gate, lips parted, head lifted as if listening, waiting – what was it that she looked like? Some young creature of the wild – ah, a fawn!

"I thought Master Abraham said –" Ferdinand broke off, then made another start: "Did you mean me to come now," he stammered, "or – or –"

"You're always welcome," said Abel serenely, "day

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or night." He waved a hand at the flower beds. "Garden looks well, doesn't it?"

From behind the Girl, he caught Ruth suspiciously eyeing him. "Abel Zakuto," he heard her whisper, "I believe you sent for the boy on purpose!"

Without appearing to hear her, he strolled over to a fruit tree and made a pretext of examining it. From under his eyelids he observed Ferdinand slowly advance. He was trying hard, Abel noted with a chuckle, to appear at ease, and so was Ruth.—If she only knew how near the truth she'd come with her dark suspicions!

The Girl, he exulted, seemed less concerned than either. Stealthily he watched her. Never once did she take her gaze from Ferdinand, and, as he came nearer, she bent toward him, and held up the jessamine spray for him to smell—the ingenuous gesture of a child with a playmate!

If Abel's blood quickened a little, he gave no sign, while he continued to potter about his tree, but he observed that Ferdinand had accepted the bloom, and was affably smelling it. He was making, on the whole, a fair show of manners—the young cub!

A new sound suddenly fell on his ears. Ferdinand's startled face, Ruth's eyes bulging with amazement, flashed before him. His gaze followed theirs—to the Girl. That sound . . . why, great heaven, it was coming from her! *It was her voice*. A voice, he noted, even in that first, incredible moment, that had the sweet vibrancy of metal struck on metal.

"Ruth," she was saying in that silver voice. "Ruth!" Then, "A-bel," she slowly pronounced, with a caressing little accent that brought a lump to Abel's throat. Her eyes

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now eagerly fixed on Ferdinand – eyes, Abel noted, that, for at least this moment, had almost forgotten their fright.

For a perplexed moment the boy's gaze questioned hers. All at once he seemed to understand what she wished, and, "*Ferdinand*," he said, distinctly.

She repeated the syllables, pausing between them like a child trying a new lesson.

"That's right!" he nodded, laughing and excited. "I told you she'd talk some day!" he slyly threw at Abel.

"Now – *her* name!" Abel whispered.

Ferdinand came a step nearer her. "I'm Ferdinand" – he pointed to himself. "And you" – he made a quick gesture – "what's your name?"

Instantly they saw her face cloud, as she drew away from him.

"What's wrong?" he demanded in surprise.

"Abel – you try," whispered Ruth.

Ferdinand stepped aside, and Abel came close to the Girl. In the sunny stillness he could hear her quickened breathing.

"See, my child," he said, "*this* is Abel, *that* is Ruth, and *that* is Ferdinand." He touched her arm as if he were wheedling a child. "Who are you? . . . What is your name?"

She only looked blankly back at him. Could she, he wondered, be feigning? He drew her down on a near-by bench. "What is your name?" he coaxed.

"She doesn't understand a word you say!" Ruth's voice was as crestfallen as her face.

"But she understands what he means," Ferdinand declared.

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Abel said nothing, but, secretly, he agreed.

"She's like a locked door without a key," sighed Ruth.

"There's always a key, my dear," Abel thoughtfully replied, while he studied the gently inscrutable face beside him – "if one can only find it."

"Well –" Ferdinand burst out laughing, "we have a key, sir! All we have to do is to teach her what she's begun to teach herself – our language. Then there'll be no trouble about unlocking the door!"

"Humph," Ruth sniffed, "if you think you can get her to open her lips one minute before she's ready . . . She's just what I said she was, a locked door."

Ferdinand's eyes glinted. "I'll guarantee she'll unlock, if *I* teach her," he teased.

Abel glanced down at the Girl. Out of the babel of words, of gestures, of varying expressions on the faces around her, what did she gather? Did some inkling of their import reach her? Again the image of a fawn flashed irresistibly before him – that attitude of pitiful vigilance, those wistful eyes that smiled at you, yet seemed never quite to forget a pursuing terror. He put out his arm and drew her to him. Never had she seemed to him so exquisitely piteous.

"I'll be here tomorrow," Ferdinand called back from the gate, "for the first lesson!"

"Abel," said Ruth, that evening, when they were alone, "did you send for Ferdinand on purpose?"

"Send for him?" Abel inquired innocently. "Why, he's been coming here for years, hasn't he?"

"You know perfectly well what I mean, Abel!"

"Come to think of it, I believe I did do something or other about it."

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"I knew it!" Ruth with her bright, black eyes and her head cocked to one side, reminded him of an exasperated blackbird.

"Well, what harm came of it? Seeing a young person—someone of her own age—did for our poor child what you and I couldn't have done in a hundred years. It started things going in that benumbed brain of hers."

"It certainly started something."

"What do you mean?" Abel demanded uneasily.

"Oh, nothing," was all Ruth could be got to say then, but, as he was dropping off to sleep, she volunteered, out of an apparently clear sky, "I don't believe Ferdinand will have to be sent for to come here again!"

And she was right. It had to be a full day at the palace that kept him from giving the Girl a lesson.

Ruth and Abel began by teaching her familiar, everyday words. Ferdinand went about it differently. As he talked to her, he would illustrate words by action; then, with infinite patience, he would make her re-tell what he had said, while Ruth and Abel sat by, sometimes laughing and always wondering at his ingenuity. And, gradually, almost without realizing what she was doing, the Girl began to piece words together.

One day, from a window where they could see the two in the court, Abel and Ruth heard him telling the Girl about his home away beyond the mountains; about the great forests, and the wolves he had trapped, and the boar he had hunted. Kindling to his own description, he said, a little regretfully, "I'd probably have stayed up there, if my father hadn't made me come down here to the King's court."

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They saw her look strangely at him, and then, in her halting way, she asked, "Are you sorry, Ferdinand, to be here?"

"Ruth! Ruth–" Abel clutched her arm in his excitement–"do you see what that young rascal has done? Got her so interested that she forgot herself!"

They held their breath, while they listened to Ferdinand follow up the cue so unwittingly given him.

"Of course sometimes I'm homesick," he was saying. "Everybody is." Then, quite naturally, "Aren't you?"

They saw her eyes widen with fear. For a moment he appeared to wait for her answer. "Don't you wish sometimes you could go home?" he urged.

This time the two at the window saw the delicate face quiver.

"Abel, stop him!" Ruth whispered in a panic.

"Yes–he's going too fast." He strolled into the court and made a pretext of asking Ferdinand when he'd seen Nicolo Conti. Presently, the Girl went into the house.

"You pushed her too hard, lad!" Abel remonstrated in a low voice.

"She knew as well as not what I wanted, but she's downright obstinate!"

"Not obstinate, Ferdinand, but *afraid*. I was watching her while you were talking, and I know."

When Ruth joined them, she reminded them of her own prediction. "Remember what I told you–not to count too much on her telling you anything even when she knew how!"

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As the days went by, Abel and Ruth found themselves less and less curious about her.

"I don't know that I care where she came from," Ruth would often say, "as long as she *stays!*"

"That's the point, after all, isn't it? What did we ever do without her?"

"I'm glad she's so lovely to look at, aren't you, Abel? If she were homely, now—"

"Your big heart would take her in just the same, Ruth! But I'm glad, yes."

Once, after one of these conversations, Ruth drily remarked, "Ferdinand doesn't act as if it were any great hardship to teach her."

Abel turned in his chair, and looked at her. "How could he? A hardship to teach that sweet child!"

"I sometimes think, Abel," she laughed, "that you've fixed your mind on such far things, you can't see what's under your nose."

Strange, Abel mused, after Ruth left the room, to go along for years and never know what you had been missing. The court, now, how empty it was unless the Girl were somewhere about, learning from him how to prune the grape-vine, or helping Ruth weed and water. Even the workshop, where he had been so content to be alone, seemed to take on a warmer life when she was watching him carpenter.

She asked him, one day, what he was making.

"Something," he told her, as he tested the accuracy of the compass frame, "to help sailors find their way on the sea."

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He glanced up to find her half-fearfully watching him. What had he said, he puzzled, to bring such a look? And afraid lest he should blunder into worse, he said nothing, and went on with his work. But in his own mind he turned the thing over. Sailors and compasses and the sea—what could they mean to her?

"Poor lamb!" Ruth said, when he told her and Ferdinand of the incident. "To think of all she's carrying in her mind and doesn't dare tell us."

"She lives in two worlds," Abel rejoined, "our own and the one she came from!"

"At least I'd like to know her name," declared Ferdinand, "even if she didn't tell us anything more."

The corners of Abel's mouth twitched. "There's nothing to prevent our giving her one. What would you suggest?"

Ferdinand carefully considered. "I can't think of a name that would suit her," he came out, at last. "It would have to be something—" he hesitated, flushing a little—"something lovelier than any name we have, and—"

"Go on!" urged Abel, closely watching him.

"And different from our language anyhow!"

"That's it—different!" Abel's fist on the table confirmed his agreement. "I tell you, Ferdinand, she doesn't belong to our race. I've made up my mind to that. How about it, Ruth?"

"I believe you're right, Abel."

"The colour of her skin's not like any I ever saw," Ferdinand suggested. "It's not dark enough for a Moor."

"Nor blonde enough for northern Europe," Abel added, with an image in his mind of a dusky, golden lily.

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"We aren't any farther along with her," Ferdinand fumed, "than when we started."

"Perhaps we never will be!" teased Ruth.

"There's a first time for everything, Aunt Ruth. You wait!"

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CHAPTER 6

Sofala – The Devil's Cave

FROM where Ruth sat sewing, in the room next to the workshop, she could see and hear Abel and Ferdinand. They had a map spread out on the table, and their voices drifted past her in a jumble of strange names.

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In the pauses of their talk she stopped sewing to watch the Girl as she moved about the court in the soft brilliance of late afternoon. Her eyes drank in, with a fulness of satisfaction, the grace of the figure that now was silhouetted in sunlight or tenderly outlined by leafy shade. That sharply delicate contrast of dark hair and ivory skin against a sweep of vivid bloom! Was there ever anything so lovely?

This child, Ruth often said to herself, was like some flower of golden grace, half hidden in shadow. And, again, when there was a sliver of moon behind a wisp of cloud, Ruth was as likely to say that she was like it, too. More and more, fear was leaving the soft eyes; some day, Ruth silently exulted, it would be wholly gone.

The hum of voices in the workshop rose again.

"It's the same old knot," Ferdinand was saying, "that we've still to cut: that reach between the Devil's Cave and Sofala."

As he spoke the last words, Ruth saw the slender figure start, and stiffen into tense, listening stillness, her face stark and white. Her impulse was to run out – but already the Girl was stealing toward the workshop. A glance at Abel and Ferdinand, with their backs to the door, told Ruth they were quite unaware of the presence behind them.

Noiselessly the Girl sank on the threshold, face turned to the court, hands clenched on her knees. Ruth could see the straining knuckles and the rigid shoulders. What had made this ghastly change? Was it something the Girl had overheard Abel or Ferdinand say?

In vain Ruth tried to recall the conversation, and at last she went into the workroom and dropped into a seat where she could watch.

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"What are you two talking about?" she asked as casually as she could.

"Oh, nothing new," Ferdinand answered, without looking up. "I was saying that it was the same old knot that remained to be cut."

As he spoke, Ruth saw the head in the doorway turn ever so little. Just as she had suspected! Something connected with the map – and again she cudgelled her memory. Presently, with a yawn, Abel moved back from the table to where he could look at the sunset. She tried to draw him out, but he was no more inclined to talk than Ferdinand. After another pause, the Girl on the doorstep rose and Ruth heard her go to her room.

In an agony of suspense she debated with herself: should she follow? Should she tell Abel what had happened? Yet, after all, what was there to tell? No, she would delay a little, at least till Ferdinand went.

When supper was ready, she cautiously approached the Girl. She found her flung on the bed, her face turned to the wall. No, she wasn't ill – nor hungry. She wanted just to be quiet. Her voice was so natural, that Ruth's anxiety almost vanished. She went back to Abel, telling herself that her imagination had run away with her. She was glad she had had the sense to say nothing to him. But that night she found herself dropping off to sleep still puzzling over the curious change that had come over the Girl.

Suddenly, she woke, with an instant consciousness that Abel, too, was awake.

"Ruth," she heard him breathe, "someone's in the workshop."

A stealthy sound came to her ears. She recognized it

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at once: the drawer of the big table sliding on its grooves. The drawer where the maps were kept!

"There!" Abel was sitting bolt upright. "Don't you hear?"

He seized his cloak, and stepped into the court. In another moment she was stealing after him to the workshop. Yet, even before they reached it, Ruth knew who would be there.

Through its open door a faint ray of light streamed into the dark court. Cautiously they avoided it, and then, from the shadow of a vine, they looked into the room, and saw – as the first sound of the sliding drawer had told Ruth she would see – the Girl.

Crazed fear in every line of her face, of her trembling body, she stood at the table staring down at something on it: a map! As if she searched for something on its surface, they saw her lean over it, and then reel back with a stifled moan.

Ruth grasped Abel's arm. "Shall I go to her? She's suffering so!"

He held her back. "Wait a moment."

The Girl was now forcing herself to the table, as if to some ordeal. Shuddering, she bent over the map, and this time they saw a trembling finger creep to a definite spot. Slowly it began to trace along the surface. On and on it moved – faltered – stopped short. Suddenly her hands went to her eyes, as though to shut out some horror, and her shoulders were shaking with soundless sobs.

"Oh, Abel, what can be the matter?" Ruth breathed in his ear.

Then, in utter bewilderment they were staring at each

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other, while there smote on their ears a whispered wail: "*Sofala–Sofala–*"

In terrified suspense Ruth watched the slender figure within sway back and forth as if abandoned to despair, when, again, came that stifled voice: "Sofala–The Devil's Cave–"

"What, in heaven's name, does she mean?" Abel's startled face was close to Ruth's. "Is the child gone mad?"

The Girl was standing quite still now, gazing before her with wide, blank eyes. Suddenly and unexpectedly, she reached out and snuffed the candle. The next moment Ruth felt her brush past into the court. Breathlessly they watched her pause, and scan the starlit sky, and then–steal toward the gate.

In a flash Ruth had pushed Abel through the door of the workshop. "Quick–go back to bed!" she whispered, while from the threshold she called, "Trying to get some air, child? Too warm to sleep, is it?"

She saw the distant figure start–turn back. In a minute her arm was around the trembling form. She was saying, gently, that she couldn't sleep, either, that a turn around the court would make them drowsy.

From her manner no one would ever have suspected that Ruth wasn't in the habit of taking strolls at midnight. She rambled on about nothings; lingered, so they could both smell the dewy jessamine blossoms. Sometimes, in a dazed way, there were low murmured replies. At last Ruth declared she was sleepy, and that she'd spend the rest of the night on a couch near the door for the cooler air.

On the pretext of laying back the heavier coverings,

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she delayed in the Girl's room, and when she came out, she left the door ajar.

It was just before dawn, when she had made sure of the Girl's sound sleep, that she slipped back to Abel. He was dressed, and softly pacing back and forth, his head sunk on his breast – his habit when he was thinking out some problem.

She came close to him, feeling like a guilty child. "Abel – I – I saw her listening yesterday, when you and Ferdinand were studying over that map! I saw her face change – "

"You did?" Abel asked, in a startled voice. Anyone else would have added, "Why didn't you say something about it?" But Abel only said, very gently, "It was wonderful, my dear, just wonderful, the way you managed her in the court. I don't believe she suspected! "

A hurt look came into her eyes. "She was running away from us – though we've never done anything but love her."

"It wasn't from us," he comforted, "but from the same fear that drove her when she came to us."

"And I'd begun to think she'd forgotten! "

"That poor child must never know what we saw tonight."

"No; and another thing, we mustn't leave her to herself. I'd better go now and see if she's awake."

"Ruth," – Abel came close to her, and she saw that his eyes had an awestruck look – "did you notice that she said those words, *Sofala, Devil's Cave*, as if – as if, Ruth, they were familiar to her? "

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CHAPTER 7

The Caged Bird

NICOLO'S mood, as he watched his shipwrights at work, late one afternoon, matched the sunless day. Strips of sombre sky between the partly placed ribs of his caravel gave her an aspect of desolation that made him

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shiver. Would he have done better, he wondered, to have taken the advice of the *Venezia's* captain, and gone back to Venice? Suppose Manoel should remain indifferent to the Way of the Spices, and Spain or England should find it!

He recalled that Abel Zakuto had admitted, in so many words, that something was needed to awake Manoel to the situation. As if, Nicolo gloomily mused, anything more splendidly convincing than what Diaz had done were needed! If that couldn't spur the King into action, what could?

At this point in his reflections, he saw the men put up their tools and prepare to leave. He nodded to one of them whom he remembered hiring a few weeks ago, a short, wiry chap with a deeply tanned face and small, black eyes that looked like burnt gimlet holes in brown parchment. A rolling gait and an air of cat-like agility made one immediately visualize him as thoroughly at home at all heights and angles. Nicolo had hired him because the fellow had looked so in need, and because there was a haunting familiarity about him.

"Is she going ahead to suit you, sir?" he inquired, as he stopped at Nicolo's side to survey the caravel.

"I'm satisfied," Nicolo told him, "though I'm not as used to the Portuguese type of craft as I am to the Venetian."

At once the other looked interested. "You've been to sea, have you, sir?"

"I know the Mediterranean pretty well," Nicolo admitted. He scrutinized the tanned face. . . . Where had he seen it before? "You've had considerable experience at sea, I take it."

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"All over!" grinned the other. "Up and down the Red Sea, and across to India, and over by Malacca."

"So! Some sight-seeing! How do you come to be in a dockyard at this end of the world?"

"Oh – everybody likes a change," the man evasively returned. "What trade are you reckoning on, sir?"

"Madeira lumber and sugar and wine till I can do better. Spices, eventually, I hope – if Portugal ever finds the sea route to them."

"Humph!" There was frank defiance in the grunt.

"Why, there's more in spice than in anything else," Nicolo remonstrated.

"You're right there is! You'd be surprised if you only knew how much of a 'more' it is!"

Nicolo studied the sailor with curiosity. Almost he appeared to bear a grudge against spice. "How do you come to know so much about it, then?" he demanded.

"Oh – worked for years on ships that carried it. What between hauling on board and heaving over rail I reckon I've handled more pounds of the stuff than you're days old!"

"You haven't by any chance been where the spices grow?" Nicolo ventured.

"Over Ceylon way, you mean? And Penang, and Banda?"

"Banda!" Nicolo seized on the name so familiar to him through the cherished Conti letters, "How'd you get over there?"

The brown parchment face wrinkled into a grin. "I took to the sea from pretty near the time I was born – and I suppose I just kept on!"

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Nicolo laughed. "And where were you born?"

"Down river – at Belem.[1] My father was a bar pilot and he taught me his calling. I cut my teeth, you might say, on the Cachopos![2]

Nicolo eyed him with fresh interest. "Belem and the Orient are some distance apart!" he suggested.

The other nodded. "After my father was lost at sea, and my mother died, I quit the land for good. I got to know every port in the Mediterranean. One day, in Alexandria, I saw a caravan starting out for the Red Sea, and I took a notion to go along. Everybody said there was plenty of work down that way, and they were right, too. The harbour at Aden's just chock-a-block with craft coming and going!"

Nicolo felt his pulses leap – the very East seemed to drip off this fellow's tongue! "Where does all that traffic come from?"

"Everywhere; mostly from India, Cathay, the mess of islands betwixt and beyond; in Arab bottoms of course. They do all the carrying, and I'll tell you they keep the ocean churning!"

Nicolo impetuously started on more questions, but suddenly checked himself: this first hand experience belonged to the workshop! "Would you be willing to talk to some of my friends about these places where you've seen the spices growing?"

The man silently eyed him, and Nicolo again sensed his hostility toward this subject over which Europe was seething.

[1] Belem. At the mouth of the Tagus River. The site of the chapel built by Henry the Navigator.

[2] Shoals formed by the bar at the mouth of the Tagus.

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"Where are your friends?" he at last demanded.

"Up the hill a way – I'll take you there myself," Nicolo eagerly volunteered.

"Oh, I might go, some evening," the other agreed, as he turned away. "Perhaps I can tell you a thing or two about this spice business," he added over his shoulder, "seeing you're so keen on it."

Bursting with his news, Nicolo strode up the hill. Already he could see Abel's shining eyes when he should hear it: someone who had handled spices and seen them growing to tell about them first hand! They must arrange, too, for Gama and Diaz and the others to be there. It would be tremendous, epoch-making – and Nicolo quickened his step.

He found Ruth in the court, splitting figs from a heaped basket, and spreading them to dry in the sun. Abel was out, she said, but he would be back any moment.

Nicolo went into the workshop, took the Marco Polo *Travels* from its shelf, and sat down to see what he could make of the translation. At last, as no Abel appeared, he decided to delay no longer. He laid down the book and had started toward the door, when a stealthy sound arrested him, a sound which he knew instantly was not meant to be heard.

He glanced at Ruth busily dipping in and out of the figs. She, certainly, had not made that sound. There! . . . There it was, again.

On impulse he tiptoed into the next room, and looked into the room beyond. Back to him, by an open window, stood a girl, holding a bird-cage. Its tiny door, he noticed, was swung back, and the bird inside was fluttering uneasily. She lifted the cage to the window, and gently shook it. Nicolo watched her in amazement. Did she want to get

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rid of the little creature? Again she shook the cage, and, this time, out flashed the bird–not through the window, but into the room.

The girl wheeled around, and for a moment Nicolo had a swift vision of dark, velvety eyes in a face that was delicately, duskily golden. She seemed not even to see him. Her eyes were on the bird that was now darting about, and Nicolo perceived that they were very frightened. She had changed her mind, he guessed instantly–wanted her pet back!

He sprang forward, closed the door behind him, and then the window. Carefully he watched his chance, and when the downy little body dashed itself against a wall, his waiting hands closed gently around it. He held it so, until he felt the frantic wings and the fierce, tiny heart gradually quiet under his fingers–aware all the time that close to him a girl's breath came and went unevenly, that great, dark eyes wide with terror besought his.

He slipped the bird inside the cage and fastened the little door. Then, very gently, he turned to the girl, waited for her to speak, for he had the impression that something behind those terrified, beautiful eyes was waiting to be said. He could see the trembling of her clenched hands, and the pulsing of the soft, bare neck, and it came, curiously, to him that somehow she was the struggling bird that his hands had held and shielded; and suddenly he wanted, above everything he had ever wanted, to so hold and so shield her; to tell her that never again was she to be afraid–not of anything!

"You won't tell?" she whispered at last. "I was so frightened after I'd done it! He's Mother Ruth's pet–"

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"Of course I won't tell! Not for worlds." He had all he could do to keep back a rush of tender assurances. "But why . . . why . . . did you?" He nodded toward the cage.

"Because–because–" her hands clutched at her throat–"I was once like that bird–shut up in a cage. And I couldn't–couldn't–get out!"

"In–a–cage? *You?*"

Something seemed to burst within him. This tender body behind bars! . . . This soft, throbbing neck! His nails bit into his palms to keep back that furious, inward tumult. He saw a half-fearful expression come over her face –ah, he mustn't frighten her, not even by his own feeling about her.

"Don't be afraid," he begged her, "not of anything–ever again!" Was it his fancy that she seemed to waver toward him? He came close to her: *"Who are you?"*

She caught her breath. Nicolo noted the quick colour that swept upward from the delicate neck. He waited for her answer, his eyes entreating hers. . . . A sound outside . . . Steps . . . Ruth crossing the court to come into the house, perhaps into this very room!

They sprang apart–somehow Nicolo reached the workshop, dropped into a chair, and snatched up the *Travels* he had dropped.

He heard Ruth enter the room he had left, listened until her casual tone assured him that she suspected nothing. He stepped into the court, and closed the door behind him with a little bang.

Exactly as he had intended, the sound brought Ruth hurrying to him. "You're not going, already?"

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"I'll come again soon," he smiled back at her. "I have some splendid news for Master Abel!"

"He'll be sorry he missed you. Yes, come soon."

"Come soon" indeed! How was he ever going to keep away? Nicolo asked himself as he went down the long flight. "*I was . . . shut up in a cage.*" Great heavens! What did she mean? Why had Abel – or Ferdinand – never mentioned her? Something hotly-sweet surged through him: to hold her – even as his hands had held the bird – safe in the very hollow of his life!

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CHAPTER 8

Scander

THE next evening found Nicolo and the sailor at the workshop. Nicolo had seen Abel down town that morning and had told him about his new acquaintance, and Abel had agreed to get word to the others to come that night.

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All day Nicolo thought of that coming visit. Would he see the precious secret that he had discovered, yesterday? Did Abel and Ruth mean to keep her hidden? . . . What did it all mean?

When he finally entered the court with the sailor, and saw Abel waiting for them in the workshop, he realized he'd forgotten to ask the man's name.

"Call me Scander," said he. "I got that name from hanging around so long in Scanderia – Arabic for Alexandria. I had a Portygee name once," he explained, "but 'twould be like the coat I wore when I was a lad – wouldn't fit now! "

"You've actually sailed in Arab vessels – been in the Indies? " Abel eagerly began. He broke off to hail Diaz and Abraham, who just then came in, with Gama a little behind them. "Spice at first hand, gentlemen! "

"Hold fast there, Master Abel! " cried the sailor, "I'm not giving a show performance! I came here only to please Master Conti – said he had some friends who'd like to hear what I know of the spice trade."

"Exactly what we want," someone replied. "Can't get enough of that."

Young Magellan arrived in time to catch the last words. "Can't get enough of what? " he demanded.

"Of spice! " laughed Abel.

"He's seen cloves and nutmegs growing," Nicolo added. "Fancy that! "

"Lord! " Scander stared, open mouthed, at Ferdinand. "Where'd you get those eyes? " Then, as the boy flushed, "So you've gone crazy over spice, too? " he asked. "Maybe" – a moody note in his voice – "maybe, I can tell

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you a thing or two about the stuff that'll calm you down! "

They all drew up to the table and Nicolo noticed that Ruth had conceded enough to the current excitement to bring her chair to the doorway that opened into the next room. The door beyond, which, yesterday, had stood ajar, was now, he saw, fast shut. Was the Girl behind it? . . . Or where? Why this mystery and secrecy about her?

Old Abraham's voice broke in on him. "Did you say you'd seen the spices growing?" he was eagerly asking Scander.

The sailor nodded. "Seen 'em and traded in 'em, both."

"In India, I take it?" Gama inquired.

"Well, sometimes. But oftener, the Arab captain I shipped with regular, got his spice first hand from the growers: cinnamon from Ceylon, and pepper where it's plenty, 'round Penang, and cloves and nutmegs from Amboyna and the Bandas."

No one spoke. The very air was charged with profound suspense. Abel and Nicolo exchanged elated glances and Nicolo said, in a low tone, "That checks my Conti letters! "

Ferdinand's eyes, fixed on Scander, seemed more than ever like smouldering fires. "Is the spice trade the big thing in that part of the world, as it is with us?" he asked.

"Yes and no, lad. It's this way: all east of Aden it's about the same, gold, pearls, ivory, silk." He reeled the list off as casually as one would say flour, eggs, milk. "But *at* Aden there's a change and spice jumps into the lead."

"Why there?"

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"Well, you see it's near enough to the Mediterranean to feel the European premium on spices."

"Then why couldn't a European," Nicolo quickly took him up, "who understood both ends of the business, make a good thing of it in Aden?"

"Humph! I was just waiting for someone to say that." Again that hostile note.

At once everyone was on the defensive: "Why not?" "What's the matter with that?"

"What's there against my Aden scheme?" Nicolo insisted.

"A European wouldn't be what you'd call exactly welcome at Aden. That's what there is against it!" Scander said shortly. He looked deliberately around the table. "You gentlemen thinking of going into spice?"

"Not so much for personal profit," Abel replied slowly, "as for the nation; for Portugal."

"Know anything about the other end of the spice trade, the *Arab* end? Well, before you break into it, I can tell you a thing or two that might save you some trouble."

In the words there was foreboding that riveted every eye on the tanned face.

"It was one time, some years back, when we'd just made Aden from Calicut," he abruptly began, "that we got wind of some gossip that had come up the African coast, about a Franj ship – their word for European – that had been seen away to the south."

There was a stir around the table. Everyone's eyes sought Diaz, and those near him saw his hands clench. But Scander, intent on his story, went on:

"It didn't sound sensible to me, but when we started

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south to Melinde, for ivory, up popped the story again; kept on popping, too. Seemed as if every place we went, we heard about this Franj ship."

"Didn't they know you were a European?" Gama asked.

"Funny part of that was that I'd been there so long and got into their ways so, that I didn't think of it myself – at least, not at first."

"Where did you say that place *Melinde* was?" Abel interrupted, and jotted hasty notes as the sailor directed.

"The next time we were at Aden," Scander pursued, "talk about the Franj was running high, and in particular about – about –" he nervously wet his lips – "a Franj spice dealer there."

For a moment he seemed to have forgotten his audience, and his eyes, staring over their heads, had a curious, dazed expression. Someone moved uneasily, and at once he recovered himself.

"Odd, how talking about it brings it all back," he said, apologetically. "They were telling it around that this Franj had the finest spice concern on the coast, and the story went that he'd married an Arab girl to keep in with the native merchants – who are all Arabs, you understand. I'd seen the place, sorting sheds and warehouse, and his own house, too, a big palace of a place. Well, instead of putting to sea, the way we usually did, we hung around. I noticed several merchants come on board, and they appeared to be having some sort of conference with Captain. *He* had something on his mind, too. The way I noticed it first, he was so in earnest over his prayers; seemed almost like he was having a real talk with Allah!"

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"How would you have happened to hear him at his prayers?" Abel inquired.

"That's so!" Scander exclaimed. "I've been among the Arabs so long, I forget you don't know their customs. You see, sir, every good Mohammedan prays three times a day: drops on his knees wherever he is, faces toward Mecca, and starts right in, loud and free. No whispering in dark corners or behind curtains the way you do here—nothing like that.

"Well, I began to suspect something was afoot, and sure enough, one morning, Captain told me that all up and down the African Coast and the Red Sea, across to Malabar and Cochin and Calicut, word had been passed to stand together against the Franj, to do no business with them, and to make way with them when it came handy."

"I'd like to take my chances with a good stout caravel and a Portuguese crew!" Gama quietly commented.

"All the time he was talking," the sailor went on, "I could feel something coming. Finally, he said Aden was going to start in by cleaning out the Franj merchant, and—'Will you help?' says he, looking me in the eye. It went through my head like lightning that he was trying me, which side was I on, for I knew he'd not forgotten I was a Franj. 'What you going to do, Captain?' said I, playing for time. He didn't mince words: 'Burn,' said he, 'burn and—kill. Are you with us?'"

"'When?' said I, still playing for time, and thinking that, if I couldn't warn this Franji, I'd at least find a way to get out rather than take up against one of my own kind, as you might say. But he was too sharp for me. 'At once, when evening calls the Faithful to prayer. Are you with

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us?' he asks again. But not a word did he say of *my* Franj blood! 'Certain, Captain,' I said, 'I'll go with you.' I reckoned that was the only way to save my skin. Later, I figured, I'd find some way to get back to the Mediterranean."

"Why folks want to kill each other," Ruth exploded from the doorway, "for stuff that makes your tongue smart and your eyes water, is more than I can see!"

"Maybe you could, ma'am," grinned Scander, "if you could sell it for half its weight in gold, as the Arab traders do!"

"But the call to prayer?" Nicolo reminded him.

"Yes . . . yes." Again there was that nervous wetting of the lips. "Well, just as soon as we heard it, Captain gave the word, and we all started for the Franj outfit. Some carried long, two-handed native swords, and some had knives. The warehouse was right on the water front, and I figured that as soon as we got there I'd make a break for the house and warn the Franj merchant.

"But no sooner had we reached the place, than Captain herded us around to the big sorting shed. Through the cracks we could see the pepper and cloves and cinnamon piled up, and the sweaty, half-naked natives with their brown arms and hands gliding in and out as they sorted. It was half-dark in there and hot – hot as hell's cockpit. And all the time we could see those shiny, brown bodies and their black eyes that sort of slipped around in their heads – instead of their heads turning, as yours and mine would, you understand!"

Scander paused, then, visibly bracing himself, he plunged on. "Next thing I knew, Captain flung open the

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door. 'At them!' he yelled. 'Every one of them—in the name of Allah!'"

Ruth cried out in the horrified stillness, and "You mean—in cold blood?" stammered Ferdinand.

"Did you . . . too?" someone gasped.

"How'd you suppose I know what I did in that hell's shambles?" he burst out. "Only thing I can remember is watching swords and knives, all red and dripping to their hilts, slipping in and out among those shiny, brown bodies just as *their* hands had been slipping in and out of the spices!"

A shudder ran through his listeners, but, apparently unmoved, Scander went on as if he were reciting by rote. "They killed, and they killed, and they killed," he deliberately pronounced. "Then I felt my head swim. I tried to get to the door—slipped—went down—" His voice broke, and he put his hand hastily over his mouth. "It was all warm and slimy down there—blood and spice mixed up together—"

"Go on," Abel hastily interposed. "Get to the rest of it."

"I promised myself," the sailor said slowly, "I'd never go over this, but seeing you all so keen on this spice business—these young chaps in particular—I thought you ought to hear the other side." He clutched his throat and swallowed hard. "That smell of warm blood and spice makes my stomach heave yet!"

"How about the spice merchant? Ever see him?" Nicolo inquired.

Scander ran his tongue around his lips before he answered. "I'll come to him in a minute. By the time we'd got

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through with the sorting shed, we could hear a terrible commotion all over the place and we could see the warehouse afire. 'Here's my chance to warn the Franji' thinks I, and I made a rush for the house, when – down jumps Captain from a wall behind me! 'Come on,' says he, 'you're the man I want,' and he drove me in front of him with that red, dripping blade of his at my back. I knew, then, he suspected what I had in mind.

"The moment we reached the house, we saw that others had been there before us. The place looked like the tail end of a typhoon; everything upside down, cupboards open, clothes scattered around. 'Where is *he?*' Captain kept asking. 'Where's the Franji?' We looked around for a while, and then, as we went into the court, we saw something on the stairs that led to the roof – something all huddled together. 'Go on up,' Captain orders me, 'till we make sure,' and he made me stand by whilst he jabbed at it with his foot – curse him. 'Twas a man with his arms around a woman, and a sword right through the two of them – the spice merchant and his wife. You could tell from his features that he was a Franji. She was an Arab; a real queen, poor creature, with long, black braids and big, dark eyes and slender hands.

"Well – that's about all," he ended, sombrely. "I stayed right by Captain, took his orders, and went back to the ship with him, quiet as a lamb. But I'd had enough. A night or two after, when we were to leave Aden first thing in the morning, I slipped over the side, got ashore, and shipped with a big slave vessel bound for Egypt."

There was a brevity in this winding up of the story that struck everyone with a feeling of something omitted.

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Diaz drew a long breath. "You never heard any more of the Franj ship, I suppose?"

"Never a word, sir."

"Did your captain try to follow you?" asked Nicolo.

"If he did, I never got wind of it. From the minute I quit him I was right on my way, and I never stopped till I saw Alexandria and knew I was in western waters. I wanted to get as far as I could from spice! And here I've stuck my nose right into the cursed stuff again. I hate the sight and the smell of it," Scander spat out. "Smells like blood to me!"

"Why, man," said Abel, "there's always been quarrels and bloodshed over trade. What you saw the Arabs do to that European merchant is no more than the Europeans will do to each other in trade rivalry."

"Of course," Diaz agreed. "If anyone has doubts about what Spain, or England, or the Dutch would do to us, suppose we found the Way of the Spices first, I haven't!"

"How about what we'd do, if they happened to be first?" Ferdinand slyly retorted.

In the laughter that followed this sally, Diaz reached out and tweaked the boy's ear. "You young jackanapes!" he said, with a gruffness that deceived no one.

"Well, gentlemen"—the sailor shrugged—"war's what you'll get, any of you who're going in for spice, and don't make any mistake about that. And for every hatchful, take my word, you'll pay in blood. Way of the Spices! Way of Blood is more like it!"

"But look here," Gama insisted, "what if we beat the Arabs at their own game?"

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"How are you going to, with them running the whole trade, and the carrying, too?"

"Well," Gama coolly maintained, "these Arab pirates aren't invincible!"

"'Pirates!'" Scander shot back. "They're no pirates, and don't you forget that for a minute. In their own eyes they're defenders of their faith, and it's the Franj that are infidels and thieves sneaking in where they don't belong and 've no right to go!"

"I suppose it was religion made them kill that Frankish merchant!" Nicolo said, sarcastically.

"Well, yes"—Scander laughed a little—"religion and business, together. It's religion with them to keep foreigners out, no matter how they do it. You have to live with them to see how 'tis," he continued. "Now, you'll go to your churches and mumble before images or whisper your sins to a priest, and then you'll come out into the streets and do business, and forget all about prayers and the saints till the next time. Not but what that's all right," he hastily interposed. "I make out to say an *Ave* once 'n a while, myself. But with the Arabs, religion's the whole thing all the time. Take that captain of mine now; he said his prayers three times a day, and so did his crews."

"What did you do—turn Mohammedan?" someone inquired.

"For the time being, yes."

"Show us how they say their prayers!" Ferdinand proposed.

The sailor gave him a glum look. "I'm not so particular about reminding myself of all that, but if 'twould amuse you—"

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He dropped on his knees, arms crossed on his breast. Even Ruth left her seat, and eagerly peered over Abel's shoulder.

"They begin by calling out, twice, *God is great*—this way." His upturned face seemed to search an imaginary sky, and, with a savage fervor, "Allahu Akbar!" he cried, delivering each syllable with a sonorous precision. He bowed profoundly, forehead to ground, and as he swayed back, "Allahu Akbar!" he called again. "Allahu—"

A shriek from some distant part of the house froze the unfinished words on his lips. Everyone started up. Ferdinand jumped to his feet. Abel and Ruth exchanged frightened glances. They heard a door flung open . . . a rush of soft footsteps through the next room. Then—into the workshop burst the Girl—the Girl, as she had leaped from bed, black hair streaming loose, slender body rigid, eyes, as on that first night, oblivious of all but a madness of fear.

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