

THE OCEAN

Leonid Andreyev

Table of Contents

<u>THE OCEAN</u>	1
<u>Leonid Andreyev</u>	2
<u>THE OCEAN</u>	3
<u>CHAPTER I</u>	4
<u>CHAPTER II</u>	10
<u>CHAPTER III</u>	17
<u>CHAPTER IV</u>	21
<u>CHAPTER V</u>	23
<u>CHAPTER VI</u>	26
<u>CHAPTER VII</u>	35

THE OCEAN

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- CHAPTER I
- CHAPTER II
- CHAPTER III
- CHAPTER IV
- CHAPTER V
- CHAPTER VI
- CHAPTER VII

THE OCEAN

THE OCEAN

THE OCEAN

CHAPTER I

A misty February twilight is descending over the ocean. The newly fallen snow has melted and the warm air is heavy and damp. The northwestern wind from the sea is driving it silently toward the mainland, bringing in its wake a sharply fragrant mixture of brine, of boundless space, of undisturbed, free and mysterious distances.

In the sky, where the sun is setting, a noiseless destruction of an unknown city, of an unknown land, is taking place; structures, magnificent palaces with towers, are crumbling; mountains are silently splitting asunder and, bending slowly, are tumbling down. But no cry, no moan, no crash of the fall reaches the earth—the monstrous play of shadows is noiseless; and the great surface of the ocean, as though ready for something, as though waiting for something, reflecting it faintly, listens to it in silence.

Silence reigns also in the fishermen's settlement. The fishermen have gone fishing; the children are sleeping and only the restless women, gathered in front of the houses, are talking softly, lingering before going to sleep, beyond which there is always the unknown.

The light of the sea and the sky behind the houses, and the houses and their bark roofs are black and sharp, and there is no perspective: the houses that are far and those that are near seem to stand side by side as if attached to one another, the roofs and the walls embracing one another, pressing close to one another, seized with the same uneasiness before the eternal unknown.

Right here there is also a little church, its side wall formed crudely of rough granite, with a deep window which seems to be concealing itself.

A cautious sound of women's voices is heard, softened by uneasiness and by the approaching night.

"We can sleep peacefully to-night. The sea is calm and the rollers are breaking like the clock in the steeple of old Dan."

"They will come back with the morning tide. My husband told me that they will come back with the morning tide."

"Perhaps they will come back with the evening tide. It is better for us to think they will come back in the evening, so that our waiting will not be in vain.

"But I must build a fire in the stove."

"When the men are away from home, one does not feel like starting a fire. I never build a fire, even when I am awake; it seems to me that fire brings a storm. It is better to be quiet and silent."

"And listen to the wind? No, that is terrible."

"I love the fire. I should like to sleep near the fire, but my husband does not allow it."

"Why doesn't old Dan come here? It is time to strike the hour."

"Old Dan will play in the church to-night; he cannot bear such silence as this. When the sea is roaring, old Dan hides himself and is silent—he is afraid of the sea. But, as soon as the waves calm down, Dan crawls out quietly and sits down to play his organ."

The women laugh softly.

"He reproaches the sea."

"He is complaining to God against it. He knows how to complain well. One feels like crying when he tells God about those who have perished at sea. Mariet, have you seen Dan to-day? Why are you silent, Mariet?"

Mariet is the adopted daughter of the abbot, in whose house old Dan, the organist, lives. Absorbed in thought, she does not hear the question.

"Mariet, do you hear? Anna is asking you whether you have seen Dan to-day."

"Yes, I think I have. I don't remember. He is in his room. He does not like to leave his room when father goes fishing."

"Dan is fond of the city priests. He cannot get used to the idea of a priest who goes fishing, like an ordinary fisherman, and who goes to sea with our husbands."

"He is simply afraid of the sea."

"You may say what you like, but I believe we have the very best priest in the world."

"That's true. I fear him, but I love him as a father."

THE OCEAN

"May God forgive me, but I would have been proud and always happy, if I were his adopted daughter. Do you hear, Mariet?"

The women laugh softly and tenderly.

"Do you hear, Mariet?"

"I do. But aren't you tired of always laughing at the same thing? Yes, I am his daughter—Is it so funny that you will laugh all your life at it?"

The women commence to justify themselves confusedly.

"But he laughs at it himself."

"The abbot is fond of jesting. He says so comically: 'My adopted daughter,' and then he strikes himself with his fist and shouts: 'She's my real daughter, not my adopted daughter. She's my real daughter.'"

"I have never known my mother, but this laughter would have been unpleasant to her. I feel it," says Mariet.

The women grow silent. The breakers strike against the shore dully with the regularity of a great pendulum. The unknown city, wrapped with fire and smoke, is still being destroyed in the sky; yet it does not fall down completely; and the sea is waiting. Mariet lifts her lowered head.

"What were you going to say, Mariet?"

"Didn't he pass here?" asks Mariet in a low voice.

Another woman answers timidly:

"Hush! Why do you speak of him? I fear him. No, he did not pass this way."

"He did. I saw from the window that he passed by."

"You are mistaken; it was some one else."

"Who else could that be? Is it possible to make a mistake, if you have once seen him walk? No one walks as he does."

"Naval officers, Englishmen, walk like that."

"No. Haven't I seen naval officers in the city? They walk firmly, but openly; even a girl could trust them."

"Oh, look out!"

Frightened and cautious laughter.

"No, don't laugh. He walks without looking at the ground; he puts his feet down as if the ground itself must take them cautiously and place them."

"But if there's a stone on the road? We have many stones here."

"He does not bend down, nor does he hide his head when a strong wind blows."

"Of course not. Of course not. He does not hide his head."

"Is it true that he is handsome? Who has seen him at close range?"

"I," says Mariet.

"No, no, don't speak of him; I shall not be able to sleep all night. Since they settled on that hill, in that accursed castle, I know no rest; I am dying of fear. You are also afraid. Confess it."

"Well, not all of us are afraid."

"What have they come here for? There are two of them. What is there for them to do here in our poor land, where we have nothing but stones and the sea?"

"They drink gin. The sailor comes every morning for gin."

"They are simply drunkards who don't want anybody to disturb their drinking. When the sailor passes along the street he leaves behind him an odour as of an open bottle of rum."

"But is that their business—drinking gin? I fear them. Where is the ship that brought them here? They came from the sea."

"I saw the ship," says Mariet.

The women begin to question her in amazement.

"You? Why, then, didn't you say anything about it? Tell us what you know."

Mariet maintains silence. Suddenly one of the women exclaims:

"Ah, look! They have lit a lamp. There is a light in the castle!"

On the left, about half a mile away from the village, a faint light flares up, a red little coal in the dark blue of the twilight and the distance. There upon a high rock, overhanging the sea, stands an ancient castle, a grim heritage of grey and mysterious antiquity. Long destroyed, long ruined, it blends with the rocks, continuing and

THE OCEAN

delusively ending them by the broken, dented line of its batteries, its shattered roofs, its half-crumbled towers. Now the rocks and the castle are covered with a smoky shroud of twilight. They seem airy, devoid of any weight, and almost as fantastic as those monstrous heaps of structures which are piled up and which are falling so noiselessly in the sky. But while the others are falling this one stands, and a live light reddens against the deep blue—and it is just as strange a sight as if a human hand were to kindle a light in the clouds.

Turning their heads in that direction, the women look on with frightened eyes.

"Do you see," says one of them. "It is even worse than a light on a cemetery. Who needs a light among the tombstones?"

"It is getting cold toward night and the sailor must have thrown some branches into the fireplace, that's all. At least, I think so," says Mariet.

"And I think that the abbot should have gone there with holy water long ago."

"Or with the gendarmes! If that isn't the devil himself, it is surely one of his assistants."

"It is impossible to live peacefully with such neighbours close by."

"I am afraid for the children."

"And for your soul?"

Two elderly women rise silently and go away. Then a third, an old woman, also rises.

"We must ask the abbot whether it isn't a sin to look at such a light."

She goes off. The smoke in the sky is ever increasing and the fire is subsiding, and the unknown city is already near its dark end. The sea odour is growing ever sharper and stronger. Night is coming from the shore.

Their heads turned, the women watch the departing old woman. Then they turn again toward the light.

Mariet, as though defending some one, says softly:

"There can't be anything bad in light. For there is light in the candles on God's altar."

"But there is also fire for Satan in hell," says another old woman, heavily and angrily, and then goes off. Now four remain, all young girls.

"I am afraid," says one, pressing close to her companion.

The noiseless and cold conflagration in the sky is ended; the city is destroyed; the unknown land is in ruins. There are no longer any walls or falling towers; a heap of pale blue gigantic shapes have fallen silently into the abyss of the ocean and the night. A young little star glances at the earth with frightened eyes; it feels like coming out of the clouds near the castle, and because of its inmost neighbourhood the heavy castle grows darker, and the light in its window seems redder and darker.

"Good night, Mariet," says the girl who sat alone, and then she goes off.

"Let us also go; it is getting cold," say the other two, rising. "Good night, Mariet."

"Good night."

"Why are you alone, Mariet? Why are you alone, Mariet, in the daytime and at night, on week days and on merry holidays? Do you love to think of your betrothed?"

"Yes, I do. I love to think of Philipp."

The girl laughs.

"But you don't want to see him. When he goes out to sea, you look at the sea for hours; when he comes back—you are not there. Where are you hiding yourself?"

"I love to think of Philipp."

"Like a blind man he gropes among the houses, forever calling: 'Mariet! Mariet! Have you not seen Mariet?'"

They go off laughing and repeating:

"Good night, Mariet. 'Have you not seen Mariet! Mariet!'"

The girl is left alone. She looks at the light in the castle. She hears soft, irresolute footsteps.

Old Dan, of small stature, slim, a coughing old man with a clean-shaven face, comes out from behind the church. Because of his irresoluteness, or because of the weakness of his eyes, he steps uncertainly, touching the ground cautiously and with a certain degree of fear.

"Oho! Oho!"

"Is that you, Dan?"

"The sea is calm, Dan. Are you going to play to-night?"

"Oho! I shall ring the bell seven times. Seven times I shall ring it and send to God seven of His holy hours."

THE OCEAN

He takes the rope of the bell and strikes the hour—seven ringing and slow strokes. The wind plays with them, it drops them to the ground, but before they touch it, it catches them tenderly, sways them softly and with a light accompaniment of whistling carries them off to the dark coast.

"Oh, no!" mutters Dan. "Bad hours, they fall to the ground. They are not His holy hours and He will send them back. Oh, a storm is coming! O Lord, have mercy on those who are perishing at sea!"

He mutters and coughs.

"Dan, I have seen the ship again to-day. Do you hear, Dan?"

"Many ships are going out to sea."

"But this one had black sails. It was again going toward the sun."

"Many ships are going out to sea. Listen, Mariet, there was once a wise king—Oh, how wise he was!—and he commanded that the sea be lashed with chains. Oho!"

"I know, Dan. You told me about it."

"Oho, with chains! But it did not occur to him to christen the sea. Why did it not occur to him to do that, Mariet? Ah, why did he not think of it? We have no such kings now."

"What would have happened, Dan?"

"Oho!"

He whispers softly:

"All the rivers and the streams have already been christened, and the cross of the Lord has touched even many stagnant swamps; only the sea remained—that nasty, salty, deep pool."

"Why do you scold it? It does not like to be scolded," Mariet reproaches him.

"Oho! Let the sea not like it—I am not afraid of it. The sea thinks it is also an organ and music for God. It is a nasty, hissing, furious pool. A salty spit of satan. Fie! Fie! Fie!"

He goes to the doors at the entrance of the church muttering angrily, threatening, as though celebrating some victory:

"Oho! Oho!"

"Dan!"

"Go home."

"Dan! Why don't you light candles when you play? Dan, I don't love my betrothed. Do you hear, Dan?"

Dan turns his head unwillingly.

"I have heard it long ago, Mariet. Tell it to your father."

"Where is my mother, Dan?"

"Oho! You are mad again, Mariet? You are gazing too much at the sea—yes. I am going to tell—I am going to tell your father, yes."

He enters the church. Soon the sounds of the organ are heard. Faint in the first, long-drawn, deeply pensive chords, they rapidly gain strength. And with a passionate sadness, their human melodies now wrestle with the dull and gloomy plaintiveness of the tireless surf. Like seagulls in a storm, the sounds soar amidst the high waves, unable to rise higher on their overburdened wings. The stern ocean holds them captive by its wild and eternal charms. But when they have risen, the lowered ocean roars more dully; now they rise still higher—and the heavy, almost voiceless pile of water is shaking helplessly. Varied voices resound through the expanse of the resplendent distances. Day has one sorrow, night has another sorrow, and the proud, ever rebellious, black ocean suddenly seems to become an eternal slave.

Her cheek pressed against the cold stone of the wall, Mariet is listening, all alone. She is growing reconciled to something; she is grieving ever more quietly.

Suddenly, firm footsteps are heard on the road; the cobblestones are creaking under the vigorous steps—and a man appears from behind the church. He walks slowly and sternly, like those who do not roam in vain, and who know the earth from end to end. He carries his hat in his hands; he is thinking of something, looking ahead. On his broad shoulders is set a round, strong head, with short hair; his dark profile is stern and commandingly haughty, and, although the man is dressed in a partly military uniform, he does not subject his body to the discipline of his clothes, but masters it as a free man. The folds of his clothes fall submissively.

Mariet greets him:

"Good evening."

THE OCEAN

He walks on quite a distance, then stops and turns his head slowly. He waits silently, as though regretting to part with his silence.

"Did you say 'Good evening' to me?" he asks at last.

"Yes, to you. Good evening."

He looks at her silently.

"Well, good evening. This is the first time I have been greeted in this land, and I was surprised when I heard your voice. Come nearer to me. Why don't you sleep when all are sleeping? Who are you?"

"I am the daughter of the abbot of this place."

He laughs:

"Have priests children? Or are there special priests in your land?"

"Yes, the priests are different here."

"Now, I recall, Khorre told me something about the priest of this place."

"Who is Khorre?"

"My sailor. The one who buys gin in your settlement."

He suddenly laughs again and continues:

"Yes, he told me something. Was it your father who cursed the Pope and declared his own church independent?"

"Yes."

"And he makes his own prayers? And goes to sea with the fishermen? And punishes with his own hands those who disobey him?"

"Yes. I am his daughter. My name is Mariet. And what is your name?"

"I have many names. Which one shall I tell you?"

"The one by which you were christened."

"What makes you think that I was christened?"

"Then tell me the name by which your mother called you."

"What makes you think that I had a mother? I do not know my mother."

Mariet says softly:

"Neither do I know my mother."

Both are silent. They look at each other kindly.

"Is that so?" he says. "You, too, don't know your mother? Well, then, call me Haggart."

"Haggart?"

"Yes. Do you like the name? I have invented it myself—Haggart. It's a pity that you have been named already. I would have invented a fine name for you."

Suddenly he frowned.

"Tell me, Mariet, why is your land so mournful? I walk along your paths and only the cobblestones creak under my feet. And on both sides are huge rocks."

"That is on the road to the castle—none of us ever go there. Is it true that these stones stop the passersby with the question: 'Where are you going?'"

"No, they are mute. Why is your land so mournful? It is almost a week since I've seen my shadow. It is impossible! I don't see my shadow."

"Our land is very cheerful and full of joy. It is still winter now, but soon spring will come, and sunshine will come back with it. You shall see it, Haggart."

He speaks with contempt:

"And you are sitting and waiting calmly for its return? You must be a fine set of people! Ah, if I only had a ship!"

"What would you have done?"

He looks at her morosely and shakes his head suspiciously.

"You are too inquisitive, little girl. Has any one sent you over to me?"

"No. What do you need a ship for?"

Haggart laughs good-naturedly and ironically:

"She asks what a man needs a ship for. You must be a fine set of people. You don't know what a man needs a

THE OCEAN

ship for! And you speak seriously? If I had a ship I would have rushed toward the sun. And it would not matter how it sets its golden sails, I would overtake it with my black sails. And I would force it to outline my shadow on the deck of my ship. And I would put my foot upon it this way!"

He stamps his foot firmly. Then Mariet asks, cautiously:

"Did you say with black sails?"

"That's what I said. Why do you always ask questions? I have no ship, you know. Good-bye."

He puts on his hat, but does not move. Mariet maintains silence. Then he says, very angrily:

"Perhaps you, too, like the music of your old Dan, that old fool?"

"You know his name?"

"Khorre told me it. I don't like his music, no, no. Bring me a good, honest dog, or beast, and he will howl. You will say that he knows no music—he does, but he can't bear falsehood. Here is music. Listen!"

He takes Mariet by the hand and turns her roughly, her face toward the ocean.

"Do you hear? This is music. Your Dan has robbed the sea and the wind. No, he is worse than a thief, he is a deceiver! He should be hanged on a sailyard—your Dan! Good-bye!"

He goes, but after taking two steps he turns around.

"I said good-bye to you. Go home. Let this fool play alone. Well, go."

Mariet is silent, motionless. Haggart laughs:

"Are you afraid perhaps that I have forgotten your name? I remember it. Your name is Mariet. Go, Mariet."

She says softly:

"I have seen your ship."

Haggart advances to her quickly and bends down. His face is terrible.

"It is not true. When?"

"Last evening."

"It is not true! Which way was it going?"

"Toward the sun."

"Last evening I was drunk and I slept. But this is not true. I have never seen it. You are testing me. Beware!"

"Shall I tell you if I see it again?"

"How can you tell me?"

"I shall come up your hill."

Haggart looks at her attentively.

"If you are only telling me the truth. What sort of people are there in your land—false or not? In the lands I know, all the people are false. Has any one else seen that ship?"

"I don't know. I was alone on the shore. Now I see that it was not your ship. You are not glad to hear of it."

Haggart is silent, as though he has forgotten her presence.

"You have a pretty uniform. You are silent? I shall come up to you."

Haggart is silent. His dark profile is stern and wildly gloomy; every motion of his powerful body, every fold of his clothes, is full of the dull silence of the taciturnity of long hours, or days, or perhaps of a lifetime.

"Your sailor will not kill me? You are silent. I have a betrothed. His name is Philipp, but I don't love him. You are now like that rock which lies on the road leading to the castle."

Haggart turns around silently and starts.

"I also remember your name. Your name is Haggart."

He goes away.

"Haggart!" calls Mariet, but he has already disappeared behind the house. Only the creaking of the scattered cobblestones is heard, dying away in the misty air. Dan, who has taken a rest, is playing again; he is telling God about those who have perished at sea.

The night is growing darker. Neither the rock nor the castle is visible now; only the light in the window is redder and brighter.

The dull thuds of the tireless breakers are telling the story of different lives.

THE OCEAN

CHAPTER II

A strong wind is tossing the fragment of a sail which is hanging over the large, open window. The sail is too small to cover the entire window, and, through the gaping hole, the dark night is breathing inclement weather. There is no rain, but the warm wind, saturated with the sea, is heavy and damp.

Here in the tower live Haggart and his sailor, Khorre. Both are sleeping now a heavy, drunken sleep. On the table and in the corners of the room there are empty bottles, and the remains of food; the only taburet is overturned, lying on one side. Toward evening the sailor got up, lit a large illumination lamp, and was about to do more, but he was overcome by intoxication again and fell asleep upon his thin mattress of straw and seagrass. Tossed by the wind, the flame of the illumination-lamp is quivering in yellow, restless spots over the uneven, mutilated walls, losing itself in the dark opening of the door, which leads to the other rooms of the castle.

Haggart lies on his back, and the same quivering yellow shades run noiselessly over his strong forehead, approach his closed eyes, his straight, sharply outlined nose, and, tossing about in confusion, rush back to the wall. The breathing of the sleeping man is deep and uneven; from time to time his heavy, strange hand lifts itself, makes several weak, unfinished movements, and falls down on his breast helplessly.

Outside the window the breakers are roaring and raging, beating against the rocks—this is the second day a storm is raging in the ocean. The ancient tower is quivering from the violent blows of the waves. It responds to the storm with the rustling of the falling plaster, with the rattling of the little cobblestones as they are torn down, with the whisper and moans of the wind which has lost its way in the passages. It whispers and mutters like an old woman.

The sailor begins to feel cold on the stone floor, on which the wind spreads itself like water; he tosses about, folds his legs under himself, draws his head into his shoulders, gropes for his imaginary clothes, but is unable to wake up—his intoxication produced by a two days' spree is heavy and severe. But now the wind whines more powerfully than before; something heaves a deep groan. Perhaps a part of a destroyed wall has sunk into the sea. The quivering yellow spots commence to toss about upon the crooked wall more desperately, and Khorre awakes.

He sits up on his mattress, looks around, but is unable to understand anything.

The wind is hissing like a robber summoning other robbers, and filling the night with disquieting phantoms. It seems as if the sea were full of sinking vessels, of people who are drowning and desperately struggling with death. Voices are heard. Somewhere near by people are shouting, scolding each other, laughing and singing, like madmen, or talking sensibly and rapidly—it seems that soon one will see a strange human face distorted by horror or laughter, or fingers bent convulsively. But there is a strong smell of the sea, and that, together with the cold, brings Khorre to his senses.

"Noni!" he calls hoarsely, but Haggart does not hear him. After a moment's thought, he calls once more:

"Captain. Noni! Get up."

But Haggart does not answer and the sailor mutters:

"Noni is drunk and he sleeps. Let him sleep. Oh, what a cold night it is. There isn't enough warmth in it even to warm your nose. I am cold. I feel cold and lonesome, Noni. I can't drink like that, although everybody knows I am a drunkard. But it is one thing to drink, and another to drown in gin—that's an entirely different matter. Noni—you are like a drowned man, simply like a corpse. I feel ashamed for your sake, Noni. I shall drink now and—"

He rises, and staggering, finds an unopened bottle and drinks.

"A fine wind. They call this a storm—do you hear, Noni? They call this a storm. What will they call a real storm?"

He drinks again.

"A fine wind!"

He goes over to the window and, pushing aside the corner of the sail, looks out.

"Not a single light on the sea, or in the village. They have hidden themselves and are sleeping—they are waiting for the storm to pass. B-r-r, how cold! I would have driven them all out to sea; it is mean to go to sea only when the weather is calm. That is cheating the sea. I am a pirate, that's true; my name is Khorre, and I should

THE OCEAN

have been hanged long ago on a yard, that's true, too—but I shall never allow myself such meanness as to cheat the sea. Why did you bring me to this hole, Noni?"

He picks up some brushwood, and throws it into the fireplace.

"I love you, Noni. I am now going to start a fire to warm your feet. I used to be your nurse, Noni; but you have lost your reason—that's true. I am a wise man, but I don't understand your conduct at all. Why did you drop your ship? You will be hanged, Noni, you will be hanged, and I will dangle by your side. You have lost your reason, that's true!"

He starts a fire, then prepares food and drink.

"What will you say when you wake up? 'Fire.' And I will answer, 'Here it is.' Then you will say, 'Something to drink.' And I will answer, 'Here it is.' And then you will drink your fill again, and I will drink with you, and you will prate nonsense. How long is this going to last? We have lived this way two months now, or perhaps two years, or twenty years—I am drowning in gin—I don't understand your conduct at all, Noni."

He drinks.

"Either I have lost my mind from this gin, or a ship is being wrecked near by. How they are crying!"

He looks out of the window.

"No, no one is here. It is the wind. The wind feels weary, and it plays all by itself. It has seen many shipwrecks, and now it is inventing. The wind itself is crying; the wind itself is scolding and sobbing; and the wind itself is laughing—the rogue! But if you think that this rag with which I have covered the window is a sail, and that this ruin of a castle is a three-masted brig, you are a fool! We are not going anywhere! We are standing securely at our moorings, do you hear?"

He pushes the sleeping man cautiously.

"Get up, Noni. I feel lonesome. If we must drink, let's drink together—I feel lonesome. Noni!"

Haggart awakens, stretches himself and says, without opening his eyes:

"Fire."

"Here it is."

"Something to drink."

"Here it is! A fine wind, Noni. I looked out of the window, and the sea splashed into my eyes. It is high tide now and the water—dust flies up to the tower. I feel lonesome, Noni. I want to speak to you. Don't be angry!"

"It's cold."

"Soon the fire will burn better. I don't understand your actions. Don't be angry, Noni, but I don't understand your actions! I am afraid that you have lost your mind."

"Did you drink again?"

"I did."

"Give me some."

He drinks from the mouth of the bottle lying on the floor, his eyes wandering over the crooked mutilated walls, whose every projection and crack is now lighted by the bright flame in the fireplace. He is not quite sure yet whether he is awake, or whether it is all a dream. With each strong gust of wind the flame is hurled from the fireplace, and then the entire tower seems to dance—the last shadows melt and rush off into the open door.

"Don't drink it all at once, Noni! Not all at once!" says the sailor and gently takes the bottle away from him. Haggart seats himself and clasps his head with both hands.

"I have a headache. What is that cry? Was there a shipwreck?"

"No, Noni. It is the wind playing roguishly."

"Khorre!"

"Captain."

"Give me the bottle."

He drinks a little more and sets the bottle on the table. Then he paces the room, straightening his shoulders and his chest, and looks out of the window. Khorre looks over his shoulder and whispers:

"Not a single light. It is dark and deserted. Those who had to die have died already, and the cautious cowards are sitting on the solid earth."

Haggart turns around and says, wiping his face:

"When I am intoxicated, I hear voices and singing. Does that happen to you, too, Khorre? Who is that singing

THE OCEAN

now?"

"The wind is singing, Noni—only the wind."

"No, but who else? It seems to me a human being is singing, a woman is singing, and others are laughing and shouting something. Is that all nothing but the wind?"

"Only the wind."

"Why does the wind deceive me?" says Haggart haughtily.

"It feels lonesome, Noni, just as I do, and it laughs at the human beings. Have you heard the wind lying like this and mocking in the open sea? There it tells the truth, but here—it frightens the people on shore and mocks them. The wind does not like cowards. You know it."

Haggart says morosely:

"I heard their organist playing not long ago in church. He lies."

"They are all liars."

"No!" exclaims Haggart angrily. "Not all. There are some who tell the truth there, too. I shall cut your ears off if you will slander honest people. Do you hear?"

"Yes."

They are silent; they listen to the wild music of the sea. The wind has evidently grown mad. Having taken into its embrace a multitude of instruments with which human beings produce their music—harps, reed-pipes, priceless violins, heavy drums and brass trumpets—it breaks them all, together with a wave, against the sharp rocks. It dashes them and bursts into laughter—only thus does the wind understand music—each time in the death of an instrument, each time in the breaking of strings, in the snapping of the clanging brass. Thus does the mad musician understand music. Haggart heaves a deep sigh and with some amazement, like a man just awakened from sleep, looks around on all sides. Then he commands shortly:

"Give me my pipe."

"Here it is."

Both commence to smoke.

"Don't be angry, Noni," says the sailor. "You have become so angry that one can't come near you at all. May I chat with you?"

"There are some who do tell the truth there, too," says Haggart sternly, emitting rings of smoke.

"How shall I say it you, Noni?" answers the sailor cautiously but stubbornly. "There are no truthful people there. It has been so ever since the deluge. At that time all the honest people went out to sea, and only the cowards and liars remained upon the solid earth."

Haggart is silent for a minute; then he takes the pipe from his mouth and laughs gaily.

"Have you invented it yourself?"

"I think so," says Khorre modestly.

"Clever! And it was worth teaching you sacred history for that! Were you taught by a priest?"

"Yes. In prison. At that time I was as innocent as a dove. That's also from sacred scriptures, Noni. That's what they always say there."

"He was a fool! It was not necessary to teach you, but to hang you," says Haggart, adding morosely: "Don't talk nonsense, sailor. Hand me a bottle."

They drink. Khorre stamps his foot against the stone floor and asks:

"Do you like this motionless floor?"

"I should have liked to have the deck of a ship dancing under my feet."

"Noni!" exclaims the sailor enthusiastically. "Noni! Now I hear real words! Let us go away from here. I cannot live like this. I am drowning in gin. I don't understand your actions at all, Noni! You have lost your mind. Reveal yourself to me, my boy. I was your nurse. I nursed you, Noni, when your father brought you on board ship. I remember how the city was burning then and we were putting out to sea, and I didn't know what to do with you; you whined like a little pig in the cook's room. I even wanted to throw you overboard—you annoyed me so much. Ah, Noni, it is all so touching that I can't bear to recall it. I must have a drink. Take a drink, too, my boy, but not all at once, not all at once!"

They drink. Haggart paces the room heavily and slowly, like a man who is imprisoned in a dungeon but does not want to escape.

THE OCEAN

"I feel sad," he says, without looking at Khorre. Khorre, as though understanding, shakes his head in assent.

"Sad? I understand. Since then?"

"Ever since then."

"Ever since we drowned those people? They cried so loudly."

"I did not hear their cry. But this I heard—something snapped in my heart, Khorre. Always sadness, everywhere sadness! Let me drink!"

He drinks.

"He who cried—am I perhaps afraid of him, Khorre? That would be fine! Tears were trickling from his eyes; he wept like one who is unfortunate. Why did he do that? Perhaps he came from a land where the people had never heard of death—what do you think, sailor?"

"I don't remember him, Noni. You speak so much about him, while I don't remember him."

"He was a fool," says Haggart. "He spoilt his death for himself, and spoilt me my life. I curse him, Khorre. May he be cursed. But that doesn't matter, Khorre—no!"

Silence.

"They have good gin on this coast," says Khorre. "He'll pass easily, Noni. If you have cursed him there will be no delay; he'll slip into hell like an oyster."

Haggart shakes his head:

"No, Khorre, no! I am sad. Ah, sailor, why have I stopped here, where I hear the sea? I should go away, far away on land, where the people don't know the sea at all, where the people have never heard about the sea—a thousand miles away, five thousand miles away!"

"There is no such land."

"There is, Khorre. Let us drink and laugh, Khorre. That organist lies. Sing something for me, Khorre—you sing well. In your hoarse voice I hear the creaking of ropes. Your refrain is like a sail that is torn by the storm. Sing, sailor!"

Khorre nods his head gloomily.

"No, I will not sing."

"Then I shall force you to pray as they prayed!"

"You will not force me to pray, either. You are the Captain, and you may kill me, and here is your revolver. It is loaded, Noni. And now I am going to speak the truth, Captain! Khorre, the boatswain, speaks to you in the name of the entire crew."

Haggart says:

"Drop this performance, Khorre. There is no crew here. You'd better drink something."

He drinks.

"But the crew is waiting for you, you know it. Captain, is it your intention to return to the ship and assume command again?"

"No."

"Captain, is it perhaps your intention to go to the people on the coast and live with them?"

"No."

"I can't understand your actions, Noni. What do you intend to do, Captain?"

Haggart drinks silently.

"Not all at once, Noni, not at once. Captain, do you intend to stay in this hole and wait until the police dogs come from the city? Then they will hang us, and not upon a mast, but simply on one of their foolish trees."

"Yes. The wind is getting stronger. Do you hear, Khorre? The wind is getting stronger!"

"And the gold which we have buried here?" He points below, with his finger.

"The gold? Take it and go with it wherever you like."

The sailor says angrily:

"You are a bad man, Noni. You have only set foot on earth a little while ago, and you already have the thoughts of a traitor. That's what the earth is doing!"

"Be silent, Khorre. I am listening. Our sailors are singing. Do you hear? No, that's the wine rushing to my head. I'll be drunk soon. Give me another bottle."

"Perhaps you will go to the priest? He would absolve your sins."

THE OCEAN

"Silence!" roars Haggart, clutching at his revolver.

Silence. The storm is increasing. Haggart paces the room in agitation, striking against the walls. He mutters something abruptly. Suddenly he seizes the sail and tears it down furiously, admitting the salty wind. The illumination lamp is extinguished and the flame in the fireplace tosses about wildly—like Haggart.

"Why did you lock out the wind? It's better now. Come here."

"You were the terror of the seas!" says the sailor.

"Yes, I was the terror of the seas."

"You were the terror of the coasts! Your famous name resounded like the surf over all the coasts, wherever people live. They saw you in their dreams. When they thought of the ocean, they thought of you. When they heard the storm, they heard you, Noni!"

"I burnt their cities. The deck of my ship is shaking under my feet, Khorre. The deck is shaking under me!"

He laughs wildly, as if losing his senses.

"You sank their ships. You sent to the bottom the Englishman who was chasing you."

"He had ten guns more than I."

"And you burnt and drowned him. Do you remember, Noni, how the wind laughed then? The night was as black as this night, but you made day of it, Noni. We were rocked by a sea of fire."

Haggart stands pale-faced, his eyes closed. Suddenly he shouts commandingly:

"Boatswain!"

"Yes," Khorre jumps up.

"Whistle for everybody to go up on deck."

"Yes."

The boatswain's shrill whistle pierces sharply into the open body of the storm. Everything comes to life, and it looks as though they were upon the deck of a ship. The waves are crying with human voices. In semi-oblivion, Haggart is commanding passionately and angrily:

"To the shrouds!—The studding sails! Be ready, forepart! Aim at the ropes; I don't want to sink them all at once. Starboard the helm, sail by the wind. Be ready now. Ah, fire! Ah, you are already burning! Board it now! Get the hooks ready."

And Khorre tosses about violently, performing the mad instructions.

"Yes, yes."

"Be braver, boys. Don't be afraid of tears! Eh, who is crying there? Don't dare cry when you are dying. I'll dry your mean eyes upon the fire. Fire! Fire everywhere! Khorre—sailor! I am dying. They have poured molten tar into my chest. Oh, how it burns!"

"Don't give way, Noni. Don't give way. Recall your father. Strike them on the head, Noni!"

"I can't, Khorre. My strength is failing. Where is my power?"

"Strike them on the head, Noni. Strike them on the head!"

"Take a knife, Khorre, and cut out my heart. There is no ship, Khorre—there is nothing. Cut out my heart, comrade—throw out the traitor from my breast."

"I want to play some more, Noni. Strike them on the head!"

"There is no ship, Khorre, there is nothing—it is all a lie. I want to drink."

He takes a bottle and laughs:

"Look, sailor—here the wind and the storm and you and I are locked. It is all a deception, Khorre!"

"I want to play."

"Here my sorrow is locked. Look! In the green glass it seems like water, but it isn't water. Let us drink, Khorre—there on the bottom I see my laughter and your song. There is no ship—there is nothing! Who is coming?"

He seizes his revolver. The fire in the fire-place is burning faintly; the shadows are tossing about—but two of these shadows are darker than the others and they are walking. Khorre shouts:

"Halt!"

A man's voice, heavy and deep, answers:

"Hush! Put down your weapons. I am the abbot of this place."

"Fire, Noni, fire! They have come for you."

THE OCEAN

"I have come to help you. Put down your knife, fool, or I will break every bone in your body without a knife. Coward, are you frightened by a woman and a priest?"

Haggart puts down his revolver and says ironically:

"A woman and a priest! Is there anything still more terrible? Pardon my sailor, Mr. abbot, he is drunk, and when he is drunk he is very reckless and he may kill you. Khorre, don't turn your knife."

"He has come after you, Noni."

"I have come to warn you; the tower may fall. Go away from here!" says the abbot.

"Why are you hiding yourself, girl? I remember your name; your name is Mariet," says Haggart.

"I am not hiding. I also remember your name—it is Haggart," replies Mariet.

"Was it you who brought him here?"

"I."

"I have told you that they are all traitors, Noni," says Khorre.

"Silence!"

"It is very cold here. I will throw some wood into the fireplace. May I do it?" asks Mariet.

"Do it," answers Haggart.

"The tower will fall down before long," says the abbot. "Part of the wall has caved in already; it is all hollow underneath. Do you hear?"

He stamps his foot on the stone floor.

"Where will the tower fall?"

"Into the sea, I suppose! The castle is splitting the rocks."

Haggart laughs:

"Do you hear, Khorre? This place is not as motionless as it seemed to you—while it cannot move, it can fall. How many people have you brought along with you, priest, and where have you hidden them?"

"Only two of us came, my father and I," says Mariet.

"You are rude to a priest. I don't like that," says the abbot.

"You have come here uninvited. I don't like that either," says Haggart.

"Why did you lead me here, Mariet? Come," says the abbot.

Haggart speaks ironically:

"And you leave us here to die? That is unChristian, Christian."

"Although I am a priest, I am a poor Christian, and the Lord knows it," says the abbot angrily. "I have no desire to save such a rude scamp. Let us go, Mariet."

"Captain?" asks Khorre.

"Be silent, Khorre," says Haggart. "So that's the way you speak, abbot; so you are not a liar?"

"Come with me and you shall see."

"Where shall I go with you?"

"To my house."

"To your house? Do you hear, Khorre? To the priest! But do you know whom you are calling to your house?"

"No, I don't know. But I see that you are young and strong. I see that although your face is gloomy, it is handsome, and I think that you could be as good a workman as others."

"A workman? Khorre, do you hear what the priest says?"

Both laugh. The abbot says angrily:

"You are both drunk."

"Yes, a little! But if I were sober I would have laughed still more," answers Haggart.

"Don't laugh, Haggart," says Mariet.

Haggart replies angrily:

"I don't like the tongues of false priests, Mariet—they are coated with truth on top, like a lure for flies. Take him away, and you, girl, go away, too! I have forgotten your name!"

He sits down and stares ahead sternly. His eyebrows move close together, and his hand is pressed down heavily by his lowered head, by his strong chin.

"He does not know you, father! Tell him about yourself. You speak so well. If you wish it, he will believe you, father. Haggart!"

THE OCEAN

Haggart maintains silence.

"Noni! Captain!"

Silence. Khorre whispers mysteriously:

"He feels sad. Girl, tell the priest that he feels sad."

"Khorre," begins Mariet. Haggart looks around quickly.

"What about Khorre? Why don't you like him, Mariet? We are so much like each other."

"He is like you?" says the woman with contempt. "No, Haggart! But here is what he did: He gave gin to little Noni again to-day. He moistened his finger and gave it to him. He will kill him, father."

Haggart laughs:

"Is that so bad? He did the same to me."

"And he dipped him in cold water. The boy is very weak," says Mariet morosely.

"I don't like to hear you speak of weakness. Our boy must be strong. Khorre! Three days without gin."

He shows him three fingers.

"Who should be without gin? The boy or I?" asks Khorre gloomily.

"You!" replies Haggart furiously. "Begone!"

The sailor sullenly gathers his belongings—the pouch, the pipe, and the flask—and wabbling, goes off. But he does not go far—he sits down upon a neighbouring rock. Haggart and his wife look at him.

THE OCEAN
CHAPTER III

The work is ended. Having lost its gloss, the last neglected fish lies on the ground; even the children are too lazy to pick it up; and an indifferent, satiated foot treads it into the mud. A quiet, fatigued conversation goes on, mingled with gay and peaceful laughter.

"What kind of a prayer is our abbot going to say to-day? It is already time for him to come."

"And do you think it is so easy to compose a good prayer? He is thinking."

"Selly's basket broke and the fish were falling out. We laughed so much! It seems so funny to me even now!"
Laughter. Two fishermen look at the sail in the distance.

"All my life I have seen large ships sailing past us. Where are they going? They disappear beyond the horizon, and I go off to sleep; and I sleep, while they are forever going, going. Where are they going? Do you know?"

"To America."

"I should like to go with them. When they speak of America my heart begins to ring. Did you say America on purpose, or is that the truth?"

Several old women are whispering:

"Wild Gart is angry again at his sailor. Have you noticed it?"

"The sailor is displeased. Look, how wan his face is."

"Yes, he looks like the evil one when he is compelled to listen to a psalm. But I don't like Wild Gart, either.
No. Where did he come from?"

They resume their whispers. Haggart complains softly:

"Why have you the same name, Mariet, for everybody? It should not be so in a truthful land."

Mariet speaks with restrained force, pressing both hands to her breast:

"I love you so dearly, Gart; when you go out to sea, I set my teeth together and do not open them until you come back. When you are away, I eat nothing and drink nothing; when you are away, I am silent, and the women laugh: 'Mute Mariet!' But I would be insane if I spoke when I am alone."

HAGGART—Here you are again compelling me to smile. You must not, Mariet—I am forever smiling.

MARIET—I love you so dearly, Gart. Every hour of the day and the night I am thinking only of what I could still give to you, Gart. Have I not given you everything? But that is so little—everything! There is but one thing I want to do—to keep on giving to you, giving! When the sun sets, I present you the sunset; when the sun rises, I present you the sunrise—take it, Gart! And are not all the storms yours? Ah, Haggart, how I love you!

HAGGART—I am going to toss little Noni so high to-day that I will toss him up to the clouds. Do you want me to do it? Let us laugh, dear little sister Mariet. You are exactly like myself. When you stand that way, it seems to me that I am standing there—I have to rub my eyes. Let us laugh! Some day I may suddenly mix things up—I may wake up and say to you: "Good morning, Haggart!"

MARIET—Good morning, Mariet.

HAGGART—I will call you Haggart. Isn't that a good idea?

MARIET—And I will call you Mariet.

HAGGART—Yes—no. You had better call me Haggart, too.

"You don't want me to call you Mariet?" asks Mariet sadly.

The abbot and old Dan appear. The abbot says in a loud, deep voice:

"Here I am. Here I am bringing you a prayer, children. I have just composed it; it has even made me feel hot. Dan, why doesn't the boy ring the bell? Oh, yes, he is ringing. The fool—he isn't swinging the right rope, but that doesn't matter; that's good enough, too. Isn't it, Mariet?"

Two thin but merry bells are ringing.

Mariet is silent and Haggart answers for her:

"That's good enough. But what are the bells saying, abbot?"

The fishermen who have gathered about them are already prepared to laugh—the same undying jest is always repeated.

"Will you tell no one about it?" says the abbot, in a deep voice, slyly winking his eye. "Pope's a rogue! Pope's

THE OCEAN

a rogue!"

The fishermen laugh merrily.

"This man," roars the abbot, pointing at Haggart, "is my favourite man! He has given me a grandson, and I wrote the Pope about it in Latin. But that wasn't so hard; isn't that true, Mariet? But he knows how to look at the water. He foretells a storm as if he himself caused it. Gart, do you produce the storm yourself? Where does the wind come from? You are the wind yourself."

All laugh approval. An old fisherman says:

"That's true, father. Ever since he has been here, we have never been caught in a storm."

"Of course it is true, if I say it. 'Pope's a rogue! Pope's a rogue!'"

Old Dan walks over to Khorre and says something to him. Khorre nods his head negatively. The abbot, singing "Pope's a rogue," goes around the crowd, throws out brief remarks, and claps some people on the shoulder in a friendly manner.

"Hello, Katerina, you are getting stout. Oho! Are you all ready? And Thomas is missing again—this is the second time he has stayed away from prayer. Anna, you are rather sad—that isn't good. One must live merrily, one must live merrily! I think that it is jolly even in hell, but in a different way. It is two years since you have stopped growing, Philipp. That isn't good."

Philipp answers gruffly:

"Grass also stops growing if a stone falls upon it."

"What is still worse than that—worms begin to breed under the rock."

Mariet says softly, sadly and entreatingly:

"Don't you want me to call you Mariet?"

Haggart answers obstinately and sternly:

"I don't. If my name will be Mariet, I shall never kill that man. He disturbs my life. Make me a present of his life, Mariet. He kissed you."

"How can I present you that which is not mine? His life belongs to God and to himself."

"That is not true. He kissed you; do I not see the burns upon your lips? Let me kill him, and you will feel as joyful and care-free as a seagull. Say 'yes,' Mariet."

"No; you shouldn't do it, Gart. It will be painful to you."

Haggart looks at her and speaks with deep irony.

"Is that it? Well, then, it is not true that you give me anything. You don't know how to give, woman."

"I am your wife."

"No! A man has no wife when another man, and not his wife, grinds his knife. My knife is dull, Mariet!"

Mariet looks at him with horror and sorrow.

"What did you say, Haggart? Wake up; it is a terrible dream, Haggart! It is I—look at me. Open your eyes wider, wider, until you see me well. Do you see me, Gart?"

Haggart slowly rubs his brow.

"I don't know. It is true I love you, Mariet. But how incomprehensible your land is—in your land a man sees dreams even when he is not asleep. Perhaps I am smiling already. Look, Mariet."

The abbot stops in front of Khorre.

"Ah, old friend, how do you do? You are smiling already. Look, Mariet."

"I don't want to work," ejaculates the sailor sternly.

"You want your own way? This man," roars the abbot, pointing at Khorre, "thinks that he is an atheist. But he is simply a fool; he does not understand that he is also praying to God—but he is doing it the wrong way, like a crab. Even a fish prays to God, my children; I have seen it myself. When you will be in hell, old man, give my regards to the Pope. Well, children, come closer, and don't gnash your teeth. I am going to start at once. Eh, you, Mathias—you needn't put out the fire in your pipe; isn't it the same to God what smoke it is, incense or tobacco, if it is only well meant. Why do you shake your head, woman?"

WOMAN—His tobacco is contraband.

YOUNG FISHERMAN—God wouldn't bother with such trifles. The abbot thinks a while:

"No; hold on. I think contraband tobacco is not quite so good. That's an inferior grade. Look here; you better drop your pipe meanwhile, Mathias; I'll think the matter over later. Now, silence, perfect silence. Let God take a

THE OCEAN

look at us first."

All stand silent and serious. Only a few have lowered their heads. Most of the people are looking ahead with wide-open, motionless eyes, as though they really saw God in the blue of the sky, in the boundless, radiant, distant surface of the sea. The sea is approaching with a caressing murmur; high tide has set in.

"My God and the God of all these people! Don't judge us for praying, not in Latin but in our own language, which our mothers have taught us. Our God! Save us from all kinds of terrors, from unknown sea monsters; protect us against storms and hurricanes, against tempests and gales. Give us calm weather and a kind wind, a clear sun and peaceful waves. And another thing, O Lord! we ask You; don't allow the devil, to come close to our bedside when we are asleep. In our sleep we are defenceless, O Lord! and the devil terrifies us, tortures us to convulsions, torments us to the very blood of our heart. And there is another thing, O Lord! Old Rikke, whom You know, is beginning to extinguish Your light in his eyes and he can make nets no longer—"

Rikke frequently shakes his head in assent.

"I can't, I can't!"

"Prolong, then, O Lord! Your bright day and bid the night wait. Am I right, Rikke?"

"Yes."

"And here is still another, the last request, O Lord. I shall not ask any more: The tears do not dry up in the eyes of our old women crying for those who have perished. Take their memory away, O Lord, and give them strong forgetfulness. There are still other trifles, O Lord, but let the others pray whose turn has come before You. Amen."

Silence. Old Dan tugs the abbot by the sleeve, and whispers something in his ear.

ABBOT—Dan is asking me to pray for those who perished at sea.

The women exclaim in plaintive chorus:

"For those who perished at sea! For those who died at sea!"

Some of them kneel. The abbot looks tenderly at their bowed heads, exhausted with waiting and fear, and says:

"No priest should pray for those who died at sea—these women should pray. Make it so, O Lord, that they should not weep so much!"

Silence. The incoming tide roars more loudly—the ocean is carrying to the earth its noise, its secrets, its bitter, briny taste of unexplored depths.

Soft voices say:

"The sea is coming."

"High tide has started."

"The sea is coming."

Mariet kisses her father's hand.

"Woman!" says the priest tenderly. "Listen, Gart, isn't it strange that this—a woman"—he strokes his daughter tenderly with his finger on her pure forehead—"should be born of me, a man?"

Haggart smiles.

"And is it not strange that this should have become a wife to me, a man?" He embraces Mariet, bending her frail shoulders.

"Let us go to eat, Gart, my son. Whoever she may be, I know one thing well. She has prepared for you and me an excellent dinner."

The people disperse quickly. Mariet says confusedly and cheerfully:

"I'll run first."

"Run, run," answers the abbot. "Gart, my son, call the atheist to dinner. I'll hit him with a spoon on the forehead; an atheist understands a sermon best of all if you hit him with a spoon."

He waits and mutters:

"The boy has commenced to ring the bells again. He does it for himself, the rogue. If we did not lock the steeple, they would pray there from morning until night."

Haggart goes over to Khorre, near whom Dan is sitting.

"Khorre! Let us go to eat—the priest called you."

"I don't want to go, Noni."

THE OCEAN

"So? What are you going to do here on shore?"

"I will think, Noni, think. I have so much to think to be able to understand at least something."

Haggart turns around silently. The abbot calls from the distance:

"He is not coming? Well, then, let him stay there. And Dan—never call Dan, my son"—says the priest in his deep whisper, "he eats at night like a rat. Mariet purposely puts something away for him in the closet for the night; when she looks for it in the morning, it is gone. Just think of it, no one ever hears when he takes it. Does he fly?"

Both go off. Only the two old men, seated in a friendly manner on two neighbouring rocks, remain on the deserted shore. And the old men resemble each other so closely, and whatever they may say to each other, the whiteness of their hair, the deep lines of their wrinkles, make them kin.

The tide is coming.

"They have all gone away," mutters Khorre. "Thus will they cook hot soup on the wrecks of our ship, too. Eh, Dan! Do you know he ordered me to drink no gin for three days. Let the old dog croak! Isn't that so, Noni?"

"Of those who died at sea... Those who died at sea," mutters Dan. "A son taken from his father, a son from his father. The father said go, and the son perished in the sea. Oi, oi, oi!"

"What are you prating there, old man? I say, he ordered me to drink no gin. Soon he will order, like that King of yours, that the sea be lashed with chains."

"Oho! With chains."

"Your king was a fool. Was he married, your king?"

"The sea is coming, coming!" mutters Dan. "It brings along its noise, its secret, its deception. Oh, how the sea deceives man. Those who died at sea—yes, yes, yes. Those who died at sea."

"Yes, the sea is coming. And you don't like it?" asks Khorre, rejoicing maliciously. "Well, don't you like it? I don't like your music. Do you hear, Dan? I hate your music!"

"Oho! And why do you come to hear it? I know that you and Gart stood by the wall and listened."

Khorre says sternly:

"It was he who got me out of bed."

"He will get you out of bed again."

"No!" roars Khorre furiously. "I will get up myself at night. Do you hear, Dan? I will get up at night and break your music."

"And I will spit into your sea."

"Try," says the sailor distrustfully. "How will you spit?"

"This way," and Dan, exasperated, spits in the direction of the sea. The frightened Khorre, in confusion, says hoarsely:

"Oh, what sort of man are you? You spat! Eh, Dan, look out; it will be bad for you—you yourself are talking about those who died at sea."

Dan shouts, frightened:

"Who speaks of those that perished at sea? You, you dog!"

He goes away, grumbling and coughing, swinging his hand and stooping. Khorre is left alone before the entire vastness of the sea and the sky.

"He is gone. Then I am going to look at you, O sea, until my eyes will burst of thirst!"

The ocean, approaching, is roaring.

THE OCEAN
CHAPTER IV

At the very edge of the water, upon a narrow landing on the rocky shore, stands a man—a small, dark, motionless dot. Behind him is the cold, almost vertical slope of granite, and before his eyes the ocean is rocking heavily and dully in the impenetrable darkness. Its mighty approach is felt in the open voice of the waves which are rising from the depths. Even sniffing sounds are heard—it is as though a drove of monsters, playing, were splashing, snorting, lying down on their backs, and panting contentedly, deriving their monstrous pleasures.

The ocean smells of the strong odour of the depths, of decaying seaweeds, of its grass. The sea is calm to-day and, as always, alone.

And there is but one little light in the black space of water and night—the distant lighthouse of the Holy Cross.

The rattle of cobblestones is heard from under a cautious step: Haggart is coming down to the sea along a steep path. He pauses, silent with restraint, breathing deeply after the strain of passing the dangerous slope, and goes forward. He is now at the edge—he straightens himself and looks for a long time at him who had long before taken his strange but customary place at the very edge of the deep. He makes a few steps forward and greets him irresolutely and gently—Haggart greets him even timidly:

"Good evening, stranger. Have you been here long?"

A sad, soft, and grave voice answers:

"Good evening, Haggart. Yes, I have been here long."

"You are watching?"

"I am watching and listening."

"Will you allow me to stand near you and look in the same direction you are looking? I am afraid that I am disturbing you by my uninvited presence—for when I came you were already here—but I am so fond of this spot. This place is isolated, and the sea is near, and the earth behind is silent; and here my eyes open. Like a night-owl, I see better in the dark; the light of day dazzles me. You know, I have grown up on the sea, sir."

"No, you are not disturbing me, Haggart. But am I not disturbing you? Then I shall go away."

"You are so polite, sir," mutters Haggart.

"But I also love this spot," continues the sad, grave voice. "I, too, like to feel that the cold and peaceful granite is behind me. You have grown up on the sea, Haggart—tell me, what is that faint light on the right?"

"That is the lighthouse of the Holy Cross."

"Aha! The lighthouse of the Holy Cross. I didn't know that. But can such a faint light help in time of a storm? I look and it always seems to me that the light is going out. I suppose it isn't so."

Haggart, agitated but restrained, says:

"You frighten me, sir. Why do you ask me what you know better than I do? You want to tempt me—you know everything."

There is not a trace of a smile in the mournful voice—nothing but sadness.

"No, I know little. I know even less than you do, for I know more. Pardon my rather complicated phrase, Haggart, but the tongue responds with so much difficulty not only to our feeling, but also to our thought."

"You are polite," mutters Haggart agitated. "You are polite and always calm. You are always sad and you have a thin hand with rings upon it, and you speak like a very important personage. Who are you, sir?"

"I am he whom you called—the one who is always sad."

"When I come, you are already here; when I go away, you remain. Why do you never want to go with me, sir?"

"There is one way for you, Haggart, and another for me."

"I see you only at night. I know all the people around this settlement, and there is no one who looks like you. Sometimes I think that you are the owner of that old castle where I lived. If that is so I must tell you the castle was destroyed by the storm."

"I don't know of whom you speak."

"I don't understand how you know my name, Haggart. But I don't want to deceive you. Although my wife

THE OCEAN

Mariet calls me so, I invented that name myself. I have another name—my real name—of which no one has ever heard here."

"I know your other name also, Haggart. I know your third name, too, which even you do not know. But it is hardly worth speaking of this. You had better look into this dark sea and tell me about your life. Is it true that it is so joyous? They say that you are forever smiling. They say that you are the bravest and most handsome fisherman on the coast. And they also say that you love your wife Mariet very dearly."

"O sir!" exclaims Haggart with restraint, "my life is so sad that you could not find an image like it in this dark deep. O sir! my sufferings are so deep that you could not find a more terrible place in this dark abyss."

"What is the cause of your sorrow and your sufferings, Haggart?"

"Life, sir. Here your noble and sad eyes look in the same direction my eyes look—into this terrible, dark distance. Tell me, then, what is stirring there? What is resting and waiting there, what is silent there, what is screaming and singing and complaining there in its own voices? What are the voices that agitate me and fill my soul with phantoms of sorrow, and yet say nothing? And whence comes this night? And whence comes my sorrow? Are you sighing, sir, or is it the sigh of the ocean blending with your voice? My hearing is beginning to fail me, my master, my dear master."

The sad voice replies:

"It is my sigh, Haggart. My great sorrow is responding to your sorrow. You see at night like an owl, Haggart; then look at my thin hands and at my rings. Are they not pale? And look at my face—is it not pale? Is it not pale—is it not pale? Oh, Haggart, my dear Haggart."

They grieve silently. The heavy ocean is splashing, tossing about, spitting and snorting and sniffing peacefully. The sea is calm to-night and alone, as always.

"Tell Haggart—" says the sad voice.

"Very well. I will tell Haggart."

"Tell Haggart that I love him."

Silence—and then a faint, plaintive reproach resounds softly:

"If your voice were not so grave, sir, I would have thought that you were laughing at me. Am I not Haggart that I should tell something to Haggart? But no—I sense a different meaning in your words, and you frighten me again. And when Haggart is afraid, it is real terror. Very well, I will tell Haggart everything you have said."

"Adjust my cloak; my shoulder is cold. But it always seems to me that the light over there is going out. You called it the lighthouse of the Holy Cross, if I am not mistaken?"

"Yes, it is called so here."

"Aha! It is called so here."

Silence.

"Must I go now?" asks Haggart.

"Yes, go."

"And you will remain here?"

"I will remain here."

Haggart retreats several steps.

"Good-bye, sir."

"Good-bye, Haggart."

Again the cobblestones rattle under his cautious steps; without looking back, Haggart climbs the steep rocks. Of what great sorrow speaks this night?

THE OCEAN
CHAPTER V

"Your hands are in blood, Haggart. Whom have you killed, Haggart?"

"Silence, Khorre, I killed that man. Be silent and listen—he will commence to play soon. I stood here and listened, but suddenly my heart sank, and I cannot stay here alone."

"Don't confuse my mind, Noni; don't tempt me. I will run away from here. At night, when I am already fast asleep, you swoop down on me like a demon, grab me by the neck, and drag me over here—I can't understand anything. Tell me, my boy, is it necessary to hide the body?"

"Yes, yes."

"Why didn't you throw it into the sea?"

"Silence! What are you prating about? I have nothing to throw into the sea."

"But your hands are in blood."

"Silence, Khorre! He will commence soon. Be silent and listen—I say to you—Are you a friend to me or not, Khorre?"

He drags him closer to the dark window of the church. Khorre mutters:

"How dark it is. If you raised me out of bed for this accursed music—"

"Yes, yes; for this accursed music."

"Then you have disturbed my honest sleep in vain; I want no music, Noni."

"So! Was I perhaps to run through the street, knock at the windows and shout: 'Eh, who is there; where's a living soul? Come and help Haggart, stand up with him against the cannons.'"

"You are confusing things, Noni. Drink some gin, my boy. What cannons?"

"Silence, sailor."

He drags him away from the window.

"Oh, you shake me like a squall!"

"Silence! I think he looked at us from the window; something white flashed behind the window pane. You may laugh. Khorre—if he came out now I would scream like a woman."

He laughs softly.

"Are you speaking of Dan? I don't understand anything, Noni."

"But is that Dan? Of course it is not Dan—it is some one else. Give me your hand, sailor."

"I think that you simply drank too much, like that time—remember, in the castle? And your hand is quivering. But then the game was different—"

"Tss!"

Khorre lowers his voice:

"But your hand is really in blood. Oh, you are breaking my fingers!"

Haggart threatens:

"If you don't keep still, dog, I'll break every bone of your body! I'll pull every vein out of your body, if you don't keep still, you dog!"

Silence. The distant breakers are softly groaning, as if complaining—the sea has gone far away from the black earth. And the night is silent. It came no one knows whence and spread over the earth; it spread over the earth and is silent; it is silent, waiting for something. And ferocious mists have swung themselves to meet it—the sea breathed phantoms, driving to the earth a herd of headless submissive giants. A heavy fog is coming.

"Why doesn't he light a lamp?" asks Khorre sternly but submissively.

"He needs no light."

"Perhaps there is no one there any longer."

"Yes, he's there."

"A fog is coming. How quiet it is! There's something wrong in the air—what do you think, Noni?"

"Tss!"

The first soft sounds of the organ resound. Some one is sitting alone in the dark and is speaking to God in an incomprehensible language about the most important things. And however faint the sounds—suddenly the silence

THE OCEAN

vanishes, the night trembles and stares into the dark church with all its myriads of phantom eyes. An agitated voice whispers:

"Listen! He always begins that way. He gets a hold of your soul at once! Where does he get the power? He gets a hold of your heart!"

"I don't like it."

"Listen! Now he makes believe he is Haggart, Khorre! Little Haggart in his mother's lap. Look, all hands are filled with golden rays; little Haggart is playing with golden rays. Look!"

"I don't see it, Noni. Leave my hand alone, it hurts."

"Now he makes believe he is Haggart! Listen!"

The oppressive chords resound faintly. Haggart moans softly.

"What is it, Noni? Do you feel any pain?"

"Yes. Do you understand of what he speaks?"

"No."

"He speaks of the most important—of the most vital, Khorre—if we could only understand it—I want to understand it. Listen, Khorre, listen! Why does he make believe that he is Haggart? It is not my soul. My soul does not know this."

"What, Noni?"

"I don't know. What terrible dreams there are in this land! Listen. There! Now he will cry and he will say: 'It is Haggart crying.' He will call God and will say: 'Haggart is calling.' He lies—Haggart did not call, Haggart does not know God."

He moans again, trying to restrain himself.

"Do you feel any pain?"

"Yes—Be silent."

Haggart exclaims in a muffled voice:

"Oh, Khorre!"

"What is it, Noni?"

"Why don't you tell him that it isn't Haggart? It is a lie!" whispers Haggart rapidly. "He thinks that he knows, but he does not know anything. He is a small, wretched old man with red eyes, like those of a rabbit, and to-morrow death will mow him down. Ha! He is dealing in diamonds, he throws them from one hand to the other like an old miser, and he himself is dying of hunger. It is a fraud, Khorre, a fraud. Let us shout loudly, Khorre, we are alone here."

He shouts, turning to the thundering organ:

"Eh, musician! Even a fly cannot rise on your wings, even the smallest fly cannot rise on your wings. Eh, musician! Let me have your torn hat and I will throw a penny into it; your lie is worth no more. What are you prating there about God, you rabbit's eyes? Be silent, I am shamed to listen to you. I swear, I am ashamed to listen to you! Don't you believe me? You are still calling? Whither?"

"Strike them on the head, Noni."

"Be silent, you dog! But what a terrible land! What are they doing here with the human heart? What terrible dreams there are in this land?"

He stops speaking. The organ sings solemnly.

"Why did you stop speaking, Noni?" asks the sailor with alarm.

"I am listening. It is good music, Khorre. Have I said anything?"

"You even shouted, Noni, and you forced me to shout with you."

"That is not true. I have been silent all the time. Do you know, I haven't even opened my mouth once! You must have been dreaming, Khorre. Perhaps you are thinking that you are near the church? You are simply sleeping in your bed, sailor. It is a dream."

Khorre is terrified.

"Drink some gin, Noni."

"I don't need it. I drank something else already."

"Your hands?"

"Be silent, Khorre. Don't you see that everything is silent and is listening, and you alone are talking? The

THE OCEAN

musician may feel offended!"

He laughs quietly. Brass trumpets are roaring harmoniously about the triumphant conciliation between man and God. The fog is growing thicker.

A loud stamping of feet—some one runs through the deserted street in agitation.

"Noni!" whispers the sailor. "Who ran by?"

"I hear."

"Noni! Another one is running. Something is wrong."

Frightened people are running about in the middle of the night—the echo of the night doubles the sound of their footsteps, increasing their terror tenfold, and it seems as if the entire village, terror-stricken, is running away somewhere. Rocking, dancing silently, as upon waves, a lantern floats by.

"They have found him, Khorre. They have found the man I killed, sailor! I did not throw him into the sea; I brought him and set his head up against the door of his house. They have found him."

Another lantern floats by, swinging from side to side. As if hearing the alarm, the organ breaks off at a high chord. An instant of silence, emptiness of dread waiting, and then a woman's sob of despair fills it up to the brim.

The mist is growing thicker.

THE OCEAN
CHAPTER VI

The flame in the oil-lamp is dying out, having a smell of burning. It is near sunrise. A large, clean, fisherman's hut. A skilfully made little ship is fastened to the ceiling, and even the sails are set. Involuntarily this little ship has somehow become the centre of attraction and all those who speak, who are silent and who listen, look at it, study each familiar sail. Behind the dark curtain lies the body of Philipp—this hut belonged to him.

The people are waiting for Haggart—some have gone out to search for him. On the benches along the walls, the old fishermen have seated themselves, their hands folded on their knees; some of them seem to be slumbering; others are smoking their pipes. They speak meditatively and cautiously, as though eager to utter no unnecessary words. Whenever a belated fisherman comes in, he looks first at the curtain, then he silently squeezes himself into the crowd, and those who have no place on the bench apparently feel embarrassed.

The abbot paces the room heavily, his hands folded on his back, his head lowered; when any one is in his way, he quietly pushes him aside with his hand. He is silent and knits his brows convulsively. Occasionally he glances at the door or at the window and listens.

The only woman present there is Mariet. She is sitting by the table and constantly watching her father with her burning eyes. She shudders slightly at each loud word, at the sound of the door as it opens, at the noise of distant footsteps.

At night a fog came from the sea and covered the earth. And such perfect quiet reigns now that long-drawn tolling is heard in the distant lighthouse of the Holy Cross. Warning is thus given to the ships that have lost their way in the fog.

Some one in the corner says:

"Judging from the blow, it was not one of our people that killed him. Our people can't strike like that. He stuck the knife here, then slashed over there, and almost cut his head off."

"You can't do that with a dull knife!"

"No. You can't do it with a weak hand. I saw a murdered sailor on the wharf one day—he was cut up just like this."

Silence.

"And where is his mother?" asks some one, nodding at the curtain.

"Selly is taking care of her. Selly took her to her house."

An old fisherman quietly asks his neighbour:

"Who told you?"

"Francina woke me. Who told you, Marle?"

"Some one knocked on my window."

"Who knocked on your window?"

"I don't know."

Silence.

"How is it you don't know? Who was the first to see?"

"Some one passed by and noticed him."

"None of us passed by. There was nobody among us who passed by."

A fisherman seated at the other end, says:

"There was nobody among us who passed by. Tell us, Thomas."

Thomas takes out his pipe:

"I am a neighbour of Philipp's, of that man there—" he points at the curtain. "Yes, yes, you all know that I am his neighbour. And if anybody does not know it—I'll say it again, as in a court of justice: I am his neighbour—I live right next to him—" he turns to the window.

An elderly fisherman enters and forces himself silently into the line.

"Well, Tibo?" asks the abbot, stopping.

"Nothing."

"Haven't you found Haggart?"

THE OCEAN

"No. It is so foggy that they are afraid of losing themselves. They walk and call each other; some of them hold each other by the hand. Even a lantern can't be seen ten feet away."

The abbot lowers his head and resumes his pacing. The old fisherman speaks, without addressing any one in particular.

"There are many ships now staring helplessly in the sea."

"I walked like a blind man," says Tibo. "I heard the Holy Cross ringing. But it seems as if it changed its place. The sound comes from the left side."

"The fog is deceitful."

Old Desfoso says:

"This never happened here. Since Dugamel broke Jack's head with a shaft. That was thirty—forty years ago."

"What did you say, Desfoso?" the abbot stops.

"I say, since Dugamel broke Jack's head—"

"Yes, yes!" says the abbot, and resumes pacing the room.

"Then Dugamel threw himself into the sea from a rock and was dashed to death—that's how it happened. He threw himself down."

Mariet shudders and looks at the speaker with hatred. Silence.

"What did you say, Thomas?"

Thomas takes his pipe out of his mouth.

"Nothing. I only said that some one knocked at my window."

"You don't know who?"

"No. And you will never know. I came out, I looked—and there Philipp was sitting at his door. I wasn't surprised—Philipp often roamed about at night ever since—"

He stops irresolutely. Mariet asks harshly:

"Since when? You said 'since.'"

Silence. Desfoso replies frankly and heavily:

"Since your Haggart came. Go ahead, Thomas, tell us about it."

"So I said to him: 'Why did you knock, Philipp? Do you want anything?' But he was silent."

"And he was silent?"

"He was silent. 'If you don't want anything, you had better go to sleep, my friend,' said I. But he was silent. Then I looked at him—his throat was cut open."

Mariet shudders and looks at the speaker with aversion. Silence. Another fisherman enters, looks at the curtain and silently forces his way into the crowd. Women's voices are heard behind the door; the abbot stops.

"Eh, Lebon! Chase the women away," he says. "Tell them, there is nothing for them to do here."

Lebon goes out.

"Wait," the abbot stops. "Ask how the mother is feeling; Selly is taking care of her."

Desfoso says:

"You say, chase away the women, abbot? And your daughter? She is here."

The abbot looks at Mariet. She says:

"I am not going away from here."

Silence. The abbot paces the room again; he looks at the little ship fastened to the ceiling and asks:

"Who made it?"

All look at the little ship.

"He," answers Desfoso. "He made it when he wanted to go to America as a sailor. He was always asking me how a three-masted brig is fitted out."

They look at the ship again, at its perfect little sails—at the little rags. Lebon returns.

"I don't know how to tell you about it, abbot. The women say that Haggart and his sailor are being led over here. The women are afraid."

Mariet shudders and looks at the door; the abbot pauses.

"Oho, it is daybreak already, the fog is turning blue!" says one fisherman to another, but his voice breaks off.

"Yes. Low tide has started," replies the other dully.

Silence. Then uneven footsteps resound. Several young fishermen with excited faces bring in Haggart, who is

THE OCEAN

bound, and push Khorre in after him, also bound. Haggart is calm; as soon as the sailor was bound, something wildly free appeared in his movements, in his manners, in the sharpness of his swift glances.

One of the men who brought Haggart says to the abbot in a low voice:

"He was near the church. Ten times we passed by and saw no one, until he called: 'Aren't you looking for me?' It is so foggy, father."

The abbot shakes his head silently and sits down. Mariet smiles to her husband with her pale lips, but he does not look at her. Like all the others, he has fixed his eyes in amazement on the toy ship.

"Hello, Haggart," says the abbot.

"Hello, father."

"You call me father?"

"Yes, you."

"You are mistaken, Haggart. I am not your father."

The fishermen exchanged glances contentedly.

"Well, then. Hello, abbot," says Haggart with indifference, and resumes examining the little ship. Khorre mutters:

"That's the way, be firm, Noni."

"Who made this toy?" asks Haggart, but no one replies.

"Hello, Gart!" says Mariet, smiling. "It is I, your wife, Mariet. Let me untie your hands."

With a smile, pretending that she does not notice the stains of blood, she unfastens the ropes. All look at her in silence. Haggart also looks at her bent, alarmed head.

"Thank you," he says, straightening his hands.

"It would be a good thing to untie my hands, too," said Khorre, but there is no answer.

ABBOT—Haggart, did you kill Philipp?

HAGGART—I.

ABBOT—Do you mean to say—eh, you, Haggart—that you yourself killed him with your own hands? Perhaps you said to the sailor: "Sailor, go and kill Philipp," and he did it, for he loves you and respects you as his superior? Perhaps it happened that way! Tell me, Haggart. I called you my son, Haggart.

HAGGART—No, I did not order the sailor to do it. I killed Philipp with my own hand.

Silence.

KHORRE—Noni! Tell them to unfasten my hands and give me back my pipe.

"Don't be in a hurry," roars the priest. "Be bound awhile, drunkard! You had better be afraid of an untied rope—it may be formed into a noose."

But obeying a certain swift movement or glance of Haggart, Mariet walks over to the sailor and opens the knots of the rope. And again all look in silence upon her bent, alarmed head. Then they turn their eyes upon Haggart. Just as they looked at the little ship before, so they now look at him. And he, too, has forgotten about the toy. As if aroused from sleep, he surveys the fishermen, and stares long at the dark curtain.

ABBOT—Haggart, I am asking you. Who carried Philipp's body?

HAGGART—I. I brought it and put it near the door, his head against the door, his face against the sea. It was hard to set him that way, he was always falling down. But I did it.

ABBOT—Why did you do it?

HAGGART—I don't know exactly. I heard that Philipp has a mother, an old woman, and I thought this might please them better—both him and his mother.

ABBOT—(With restraint.) You are laughing at us?

HAGGART—No. What makes you think I am laughing? I am just as serious as you are. Did he—did Philipp make this little ship?

No one answers. Mariet, rising and bending over to Haggart across the table, says:

"Didn't you say this, Haggart: 'My poor boy, I killed you because I had to kill you, and now I am going to take you to your mother, my dear boy'?"

"These are very sad words. Who told them to you, Mariet?" asks Haggart, surprised.

"I heard them. And didn't you say further: 'Mother, I have brought you your son, and put him down at your door—take your boy, mother'?"

THE OCEAN

Haggart maintains silence.

"I don't know," roars the abbot bitterly. "I don't know; people don't kill here, and we don't know how it is done. Perhaps that is as it should be—to kill and then bring the murdered man to his mother's threshold. What are you gaping at, you scarecrow?"

Khorre replies rudely:

"According to my opinion, he should have thrown him into the sea. Your Haggart is out of his mind; I have said it long ago."

Suddenly old Desfoso shouts amid the loud approval of the others:

"Hold your tongue! We will send him to the city, but we will hang you like a cat ourselves, even if you did not kill him."

"Silence, old man, silence!" the abbot stops him, while Khorre looks over their heads with silent contempt. "Haggart, I am asking you, why did you take Philipp's life? He needed his life just as you need yours."

"He was Mariet's betrothed—and—"

"Well?"

"And—I don't want to speak. Why didn't you ask me before, when he was alive? Now I have killed him."

"But"—says the abbot, and there is a note of entreaty in his heavy voice. "But it may be that you are already repenting, Haggart? You are a splendid man, Gart. I know you; when you are sober you cannot hurt even a fly. Perhaps you were intoxicated—that happens with young people—and Philipp may have said something to you, and you—"

"No."

"No? Well, then, let it be no. Am I not right, children? But perhaps something strange came over you—it happens with people— suddenly a red mist will get into a man's head, the beast will begin to howl in his breast, and— In such cases one word is enough—"

"No, Philipp did not say anything to me. He passed along the road, when I jumped out from behind a large rock and stuck a knife into his throat. He had no time even to be scared. But if you like—" Haggart surveys the fishermen with his eyes irresolutely—"I feel a little sorry for him. That is, just a little. Did he make this toy?"

The abbot lowers his head sternly. And Desfoso shouts again, amidst sobs of approval from the others:

"No! Abbot, you better ask him what he was doing at the church. Dan saw them from the window. Wouldn't you tell us what you and your accursed sailor were doing at the church? What were you doing there? Speak."

Haggart looks at the speaker steadfastly and says slowly:

"I talked with the devil."

A muffled rumbling follows. The abbot jumps from his place and roars furiously:

"Then let him sit on your neck! Eh, Pierre, Jules, tie him down as fast as you can until morning. And the other one, too. And in the morning—in the morning, take him away to the city, to the Judges. I don't know their accursed city laws"—cries the abbot in despair—"but they will hang you, Haggart! You will dangle on a rope, Haggart!"

Khorre rudely pushes aside the young fisherman who comes over to him with a rope, and says to Desfoso in a low voice:

"It's an important matter, old man. Go away for a minute—he oughtn't to hear it," he nods at Haggart.

"I don't trust you."

"You needn't. That's nothing. Noni, there is a little matter here. Come, come, and don't be afraid. I have no knife."

The people step aside and whisper. Haggart is silently waiting to be bound, but no one comes over to him. All shudder when Mariet suddenly commences to speak:

"Perhaps you think that all this is just, father? Why, then, don't you ask me about it? I am his wife. Don't you believe that I am his wife? Then I will bring little Noni here. Do you want me to bring little Noni? He is sleeping, but I will wake him up. Once in his life he may wake up at night in order to say that this man whom you want to hang in the city is his father."

"Don't!" says Haggart.

"Very well," replies Mariet obediently. "He commands and I must obey—he is my husband. Let little Noni sleep. But I am not sleeping, I am here. Why, then, didn't you ask me: 'Mariet, how was it possible that your

THE OCEAN

husband, Haggart, should kill Philipp'?"

Silence. Desfoso, who has returned and who is agitated, decides:

"Let her speak. She is his wife."

"You will not believe, Desfoso," says Mariet, turning to the old fisherman with a tender and mournful smile. "Desfoso, you will not believe what strange and peculiar creatures we women are!"

Turning to all the people with the same smile, she continues:

"You will not believe what queer desires, what cunning, malicious little thoughts we women have. It was I who persuaded my husband to kill Philipp. Yes, yes—he did not want to do it, but I urged him; I cried so much and threatened him, so he consented. Men always give in—isn't that true, Desfoso?"

Haggart looks at his wife in a state of great perplexity, his eyebrows brought close to each other. Mariet continues, without looking at him, still smiling as before:

"You will ask me, why I wanted Philipp's death? Yes, yes, you will ask this question, I know it. He never did me any harm, that poor Philipp, isn't that true? Then I will tell you: He was my betrothed. I don't know whether you will be able to understand me. You, old Desfoso—you would not kill the girl you kissed one day? Of course not. But we women are such strange creatures—you can't even imagine what strange, suspicious, peculiar creatures we are. Philipp was my betrothed, and he kissed me—"

She wipes her mouth and continues, laughing:

"Here I am wiping my mouth even now. You have all seen how I wiped my mouth. I am wiping away Philipp's kisses. You are laughing. But ask your wife, Desfoso—does she want the life of the man who kissed her before you? Ask all women who love—even the old women! We never grow old in love. We are born so, we women."

Haggart almost believes her. Advancing a step forward, he asks:

"You urged me? Perhaps it is true, Mariet—I don't remember."

Mariet laughs.

"Do you hear? He has forgotten. Go on, Gart. You may say that it was your own idea? That's the way you men are—you forget everything. Will you say perhaps that I—"

"Mariet!" Haggart interrupts her threateningly.

Mariet, turning pale, looking sorrowfully at his terrible eyes which are now steadfastly fixed upon her, continues, still smiling:

"Go on, Gart! Will you say perhaps that I—Will you say perhaps that I dissuaded you? That would be funny—"

HAGGART—No, I will not say that. You lie, Mariet! Even I, Haggart— just think of it, people—even I believed her, so cleverly does this woman lie.

MARIET—Go—on—Haggart.

HAGGART—You are laughing? Abbot, I don't want to be the husband of your daughter—she lies.

ABBOT—You are worse than the devil, Gart! That's what I say— You are worse than the devil, Gart!

HAGGART—You are all foolish people! I don't understand you; I don't know now what to do with you. Shall I laugh? Shall I be angry? Shall I cry? You want to let me go—why, then, don't you let me go? You are sorry for Philipp. Well, then, kill me—I have told you that it was I who killed the boy. Am I disputing? But you are making grimaces like monkeys that have found bananas—or have you such a game in your land? Then I don't want to play it. And you, abbot, you are like a juggler in the marketplace. In one hand you have truth and in the other hand you have truth, and you are forever performing tricks. And now she is lying—she lies so well that my heart contracts with belief. Oh, she is doing it well!

And he laughs bitterly.

MARIET—Forgive me, Gart.

HAGGART—When I wanted to kill him, she hung on my hand like a rock, and now she says that she killed him. She steals from me this murder; she does not know that one has to earn that, too! Oh, there are queer people in your land!

"I wanted to deceive them, not you, Gart. I wanted to save you," says Mariet.

Haggart replies:

"My father taught me: 'Eh, Noni, beware! There is one truth and one law for all—for the sun, for the wind, for

THE OCEAN

the waves, for the beasts—and only for man there is another truth. Beware of this truth of man, Noni!' so said my father. Perhaps this is your truth? Then I am not afraid of it, but I feel very sad and very embittered. Mariet, if you sharpened my knife and said: 'Go and kill that man'— it may be that I would not have cared to kill him. 'What is the use of cutting down a withered tree?'—I would have said. But now— farewell, Mariet! Well, bind me and take me to the city."

He waits haughtily, but no one approaches him. Mariet has lowered her head upon her hands, her shoulders are twitching. The abbot is also absorbed in thought, his large head lowered. Desfoso is carrying on a heated conversation in whispers with the fishermen. Khorre steps forward and speaks, glancing at Haggart askance:

"I had a little talk with them, Noni—they are all right, they are good fellows, Noni. Only the priest—but he is a good man, too—am I right, Noni? Don't look so crossly at me, or I'll mix up the whole thing! You see, kind people, it's this way: this man, Haggart, and I have saved up a little sum of money, a little barrel of gold. We don't need it, Noni, do we? Perhaps you will take it for yourselves? What do you think? Shall we give them the gold, Noni? You see, here I've entangled myself already."

He winks slyly at Mariet, who has now lifted her head.

"What are you prating there, you scarecrow?" asks the abbot.

Khorre continues:

"Here it goes, Noni; I am straightening it out little by little! But where have we buried it, the barrel? Do you remember, Noni? I have forgotten. They say it's from the gin, kind people; they say that one's memory fails from too much gin. I am a drunkard, that's true."

"If you are not inventing—then you had better choke yourself with your gold, you dog!" says the abbot.

HAGGART—Khorre!

KHORRE—Yes.

HAGGART—To-morrow you will get a hundred lashes. Abbot, order a hundred lashes for him!

ABBOT—With pleasure, my son. With pleasure.

The movements of the fishermen are just as slow and languid, but there is something new in their increased puffing and pulling at their pipes, in the light quiver of their tanned hands. Some of them arise and look out of the window with feigned indifference.

"The fog is rising!" says one, looking out of the window. "Do you hear what I said about the fog?"

"It's time to go to sleep. I say, it's time to go to sleep!"

Desfoso comes forward and speaks cautiously:

"That isn't quite so, abbot. It seems you didn't say exactly what you ought to say, abbot. They seem to think differently. I don't say anything for myself—I am simply talking about them. What do you say, Thomas?"

THOMAS—We ought to go to sleep, I say. Isn't it true that it is time to go to sleep?

MARIET (softly)—Sit down, Gart. You are tired to-night. You don't answer?

An old fisherman says:

"There used to be a custom in our land, I heard, that a murderer was to pay a fine for the man he killed. Have you heard about it, Desfoso?"

Another voice is heard:

"Philipp is dead. Philipp is dead already, do you hear, neighbour? Who is going to support his mother?"

"I haven't enough even for my own! And the fog is rising, neighbour."

"Abbot, did you hear us say: 'Gart is a bad man; Gart is a good-for-nothing, a city trickster?' No, we said: 'This thing has never happened here before,'" says Desfoso.

Then a determined voice remarks:

"Gart is a good man! Wild Gart is a good man!"

DESFOSO—If you looked around, abbot, you couldn't find a single, strong boat here. I haven't enough tar for mine. And the church—is that the way a good church ought to look? I am not saying it myself, but it comes out that way—it can't be helped, abbot.

Haggart turns to Mariet and says:

"Do you hear, woman?"

"I do."

"Why don't you spit into their faces?"

THE OCEAN

"I can't. I love you, Haggart. Are there only ten Commandments of God? No, there is still another: 'I love you, Haggart.'"

"What sad dreams there are in your land."

The abbot rises and walks over to the fishermen.

"Well, what did you say about the church, old man? You said something interesting about the church, or was I mistaken?"

He casts a swift glance at Mariet and Haggart.

"It isn't the church alone, abbot. There are four of us old men: Legran, Stoffle, Puarar, Kornu, and seven old women. Do I say that we are not going to feed them? Of course, we will, but don't be angry, father—it is hard! You know it yourself, abbot—old age is no fun."

"I am an old man, too!" begins old Rikke, lisping, but suddenly he flings his hat angrily to the ground. "Yes, I am an old man. I don't want any more, that's all! I worked, and now I don't want to work. That's all! I don't want to work."

He goes out, swinging his hand. All look sympathetically at his stooping back, at his white tufts of hair. And then they look again at Desfoso, at his mouth, from which their words come out. A voice says:

"There, Rikke doesn't want to work any more."

All laugh softly and forcedly.

"Suppose we send Gart to the city—what then?" Desfoso goes on, without looking at Haggart. "Well, the city people will hang him—and then what? The result will be that a man will be gone, a fisherman will be gone—you will lose a son, and Mariet will lose her husband, and the little boy his father. Is there any joy in that?"

"That's right, that's right!" nods the abbot, approvingly. "But what a mind you have, Desfoso!"

"Do you pay attention to them, Abbot?" asked Haggart.

"Yes, I do, Haggart. And it wouldn't do you any harm to pay attention to them. The devil is prouder than you, and yet he is only the devil, and nothing more."

Desfoso affirms:

"What's the use of pride? Pride isn't necessary."

He turns to Haggart, his eyes still lowered; then he lifts his eyes and asks:

"Gart! But you don't need to kill anybody else. Excepting Philipp, you don't feel like killing anybody else, do you?"

"No."

"Only Philipp, and no more? Do you hear? Only Philipp, and no more. And another question—Gart, don't you want to send away this man, Khorre? We would like you to do it. Who knows him? People say that all this trouble comes through him."

Several voices are heard:

"Through him. Send him away, Gart! It will be better for him!"

The abbot upholds them.

"True!"

"You, too, priest!" says Khorre, gruffly. Haggart looks with a faint smile at his angry, bristled face, and says:

"I rather feel like sending him away. Let him go."

"Well, then, Abbot," says Desfoso, turning around, "we have decided, in accordance with our conscience—to take the money. Do I speak properly?"

One voice answers for all:

"Yes."

DESFOSO—Well, sailor, where is the money?

KHORRE—Captain?

HAGGART—Give it to them.

KHORRE (rudely)—Then give me back my knife and my pipe first! Who is the eldest among you—you? Listen, then: Take crowbars and shovels and go to the castle. Do you know the tower, the accursed tower that fell? Go over there—"

He bends down and draws a map on the floor with his crooked finger. All bend down and look attentively; only the abbot gazes sternly out of the window, behind which the heavy fog is still grey. Haggart whispers in a fit

THE OCEAN

of rage:

"Mariet, it would have been better if you had killed me as I killed Philipp. And now my father is calling me. Where will be the end of my sorrow, Mariet? Where the end of the world is. And where is the end of the world? Do you want to take my sorrow, Mariet?"

"I do, Haggart."

"No, you are a woman."

"Why do you torture me, Gart? What have I done that you should torture me so? I love you."

"You lied."

"My tongue lied. I love you."

"A serpent has a double tongue, but ask the serpent what it wants—and it will tell you the truth. It is your heart that lied. Was it not you, girl, that I met that time on the road? And you said: 'Good evening.' How you have deceived me!"

Desfoso asks loudly:

"Well, abbot? You are coming along with us, aren't you, father. Otherwise something wrong might come out of it. Do I speak properly?"

The abbot replies merrily:

"Of course, of course, children. I am going with you. Without me, you will think of the church. I have just been thinking of the church—of the kind of church you need. Oh, it's hard to get along with you, people!"

The fishermen go out very slowly—they are purposely lingering.

"The sea is coming," says one. "I can hear it."

"Yes, yes, the sea is coming! Did you understand what he said?"

The few who remained are more hasty in their movements. Some of them politely bid Haggart farewell.

"Good—bye, Gart."

"I am thinking, Haggart, what kind of a church we need. This one will not do, it seems. They prayed here a hundred years; now it is no good, they say. Well, then, it is necessary to have a new one, a better one. But what shall it be?"

"Pope's a rogue, Pope's a rogue.' But, then, I am a rogue, too. Don't you think, Gart, that I am also something of a rogue? One moment, children, I am with you."

There is some crowding in the doorway. The abbot follows the last man with his eyes and roars angrily:

"Eh, you, Haggart, murderer! What are you smiling at? You have no right to despise them like that. They are my children. They have worked—have you seen their hands, their backs? If you haven't noticed that, you are a fool! They are tired. They want to rest. Let them rest, even at the cost of the blood of the one you killed. I'll give them each a little, and the rest I will throw out into the sea. Do you hear, Haggart?"

"I hear, priest."

The abbot exclaims, raising his arms:

"O Lord! Why have you made a heart that can have pity on both the murdered and the murderer! Gart, go home. Take him home, Mariet, and wash his hands!"

"To whom do you lie, priest?" asks Haggart, slowly. "To God or to the devil? To yourself or to the people? Or to everybody?"

He laughs bitterly.

"Eh, Gart! You are drunk with blood."

"And with what are you drunk?"

They face each other. Mariet cries angrily, placing herself between them:

"May a thunder strike you down, both of you, that's what I am praying to God. May a thunder strike you down! What are you doing with my heart? You are tearing it with your teeth like greedy dogs. You didn't drink enough blood, Gart, drink mine, then! You will never have enough, Gart, isn't that true?"

"Now, now," says the abbot, calming them. "Take him home, Mariet. Go home, Gart, and sleep more."

Mariet comes forward, goes to the door and pauses there.

"Gart! I am going to little Noni."

"Go."

"Are you coming along with me?"

THE OCEAN

"Yes—no—later."

"I am going to little Noni. What shall I tell him about his father when he wakes up?"

Haggart is silent. Khorre comes back and stops irresolutely at the threshold. Mariet casts at him a glance full of contempt and then goes out. Silence.

"Khorre!"

"Yes."

"Gin!"

"Here it is, Noni. Drink it, my boy, but not all at once, not all at once, Noni."

Haggart drinks; he examines the room with a smile.

"Nobody. Did you see him, Khorre? He is there, behind the curtain. Just think of it, sailor—here we are again with him alone."

"Go home, Noni!"

"Right away. Give me some gin."

He drinks.

"And they? They have gone?"

"They ran, Noni. Go home, my boy! They ran off like goats. I was laughing so much, Noni."

Both laugh.

"Take down that toy, Khorre. Yes, yes, a little ship. He made it, Khorre."

They examine the toy.

"Look how skilfully the jib was made, Khorre. Good boy, Philipp! But the halyards are bad, look. No, Philipp! You never saw how real ships are fitted out—real ships which rove over the ocean, tearing its grey waves. Was it with this toy that you wanted to quench your little thirst—fool?"

He throws down the little ship and rises:

"Khorre! Boatswain!"

"Yes."

"Call them! I assume command again, Khorre!"

The sailor turns pale and shouts enthusiastically:

"Noni! Captain! My knees are trembling. I will not be able to reach them and I will fall on the way."

"You will reach them! We must also take our money away from these people—what do you think, Khorre?"

We have played a little, and now it is enough—what do you think, Khorre?"

He laughs. The sailor looks at him, his hands folded as in prayer, and he weeps.

THE OCEAN
CHAPTER VII

"These are your comrades, Haggart? I am so glad to see them. You said, Gart, yes—you said that their faces were entirely different from the faces of our people, and that is true. Oh, how true it is! Our people have handsome faces, too—don't think our fishermen are ugly, but they haven't these deep, terrible sears. I like them very much, I assure you, Gart. I suppose you are a friend of Haggart's— you have such stern, fine eyes? But you are silent? Why are they silent, Haggart; did you forbid them to speak? And why are you silent yourself, Haggart? Haggart!"

Illuminated by the light of torches, Haggart stands and listens to the rapid, agitated speech. The metal of the guns and the uniforms vibrates and flashes; the light is also playing on the faces of those who have surrounded Haggart in a close circle—these are his nearest, his friends. And in the distance there is a different game—there a large ship is dancing silently, casting its light upon the black waves, and the black water plays with them, pleating them like a braid, extinguishing them and kindling them again.

A noisy conversation and the splashing of the waters—and the dreadful silence of kindred human lips that are sealed.

"I am listening to you, Mariet," says Haggart at last. "What do you want, Mariet? It is impossible that some one should have offended you. I ordered them not to touch your house."

"Oh, no, Haggart, no! No one has offended me!" exclaimed Mariet cheerfully. "But don't you like me to hold little Noni in my arms? Then I will put him down here among the rocks. Here he will be warm and comfortable as in his cradle. That's the way! Don't be afraid of waking him, Gart; he sleeps soundly and will not hear anything. You may shout, sing, fire a pistol—the boy sleeps soundly."

"What do you want, Mariet? I did not call you here, and I am not pleased that you have come."

"Of course, you did not call me here, Haggart; of course, you didn't. But when the fire was started, I thought: 'Now it will light the way for me to walk. Now I will not stumble.' And I went. Your friends will not be offended, Haggart, if I will ask them to step aside for awhile? I have something to tell you, Gart. Of course, I should have done that before, I understand, Gart; but I only just recalled it now. It was so light to walk!"

Haggart says sternly:

"Step aside, Flerio, and you all—step aside with him."

They all step aside.

"What is it that you have recalled, Mariet? Speak! I am going away forever from your mournful land, where one dreams such painful dreams, where even the rocks dream of sorrow. And I have forgotten everything."

Gently and submissively, seeking protection and kindness, the woman presses close to his hand.

"O, Haggart! O, my dear Haggart! They are not offended because I asked them so rudely to step aside, are they? O, my dear Haggart! The galloons of your uniform scratched my cheek, but it is so pleasant. Do you know, I never liked it when you wore the clothes of our fishermen—it was not becoming to you, Haggart. But I am talking nonsense, and you are getting angry, Gart. Forgive me!"

"Don't kneel. Get up."

"It was only for a moment. Here, I got up. You ask me what I want? This is what I want: Take me with you, Haggart! Me and little Noni, Haggart!"

Haggart retreats.

"You say that, Mariet? You say that I should take you along? Perhaps you are laughing, woman? Or am I dreaming again?"

"Yes, I say that: Take me with you. Is this your ship? How large and beautiful it is, and it has black sails, I know it. Take me on your ship, Haggart. I know, you will say: 'We have no women on the ship,' but I will be the woman: I will be your soul. Haggart, I will be your song, your thoughts, Haggart! And if it must be so, let Khorre give gin to little Noni—he is a strong boy."

"Eh, Mariet?" says Haggart sternly. "Do you perhaps want me to believe you again? Eh, Mariet? Don't talk of that which you do not know, woman. Are the rocks perhaps casting a spell over me and turning my head? Do you hear the noise, and something like voices? That is the sea, waiting for me. Don't hold my soul. Let it go, Mariet."

THE OCEAN

"Don't speak, Haggart! I know everything. It was not as though I came along a fiery road, it was not as though I saw blood to-day. Be silent, Haggart! I have seen something more terrible, Haggart! Oh, if you could only understand me! I have seen cowardly people who ran without defending themselves. I have seen clutching, greedy fingers, crooked like those of birds, like those of birds, Haggart! And out of these fingers, which were forced open, gold was taken. And suddenly I saw a man sobbing. Think of it, Haggart! They were taking gold from him, and he was sobbing."

She laughs bitterly. Haggart advances a step toward her and puts his heavy hand upon her shoulder:

"Yes, yes, Mariet. Speak on, girl, let the sea wait."

Mariet removes his hand and continues:

"'No,' I thought. 'These are not my brethren at all!' I thought and laughed. And father shouted to the cowards: 'Take shafts and strike them.' But they were running. Father is such a splendid man."

"Father is a splendid man," Haggart affirms cheerfully.

"Such a splendid man! And then one sailor bent down close to Noni— perhaps he did not want to do any harm to him, but he bent down to him too closely, so, I fired at him from your pistol. Is it nothing that I fired at our sailor?"

Haggart laughs:

"He had a comical face! You killed him, Mariet."

"No. I don't know how to shoot. And it was he who told me where you were. O Haggart, O brother!"

She sobs, and then she speaks angrily with a shade of a serpentine hiss in her voice:

"I hate them! They were not tortured enough; I would have tortured them still more, still more. Oh, what cowardly rascals they are! Listen, Haggart, I was always afraid of your power—to me there was always something terrible and incomprehensible in your power. 'Where is his God?' I wondered, and I was terrified. Even this morning I was afraid, but now that this night came, this terror has fled, and I came running to you over the fiery road: I am going with you, Haggart. Take me, Haggart, I will be the soul of your ship!"

"I am the soul of my ship, Mariet. But you will be the song of my liberated soul, Mariet. You shall be the song of my ship, Mariet! Do you know where we are going? We are going to look for the end of the world, for unknown lands, for unknown monsters. And at night Father Ocean will sing to us, Mariet!"

"Embrace me, Haggart. Ah, Haggart, he is not a God who makes cowards of human beings. We shall go to look for a new God."

Haggart whispers stormily:

"I lied when I said that I have forgotten everything—I learned this in your land. I love you, Mariet, as I love fire. Eh, Flerio, comrade!" He shouts cheerfully: "Eh, Flerio, comrade! Have you prepared a salute?"

"I have, Captain. The shores will tremble when our cannons speak."

"Eh, Flerio, comrade! Don't gnash your teeth, without biting—no one will believe you. Did you put in cannon balls—round, east-iron, good cannon balls? Give them wings, comrade—let them fly like blackbirds on land and sea."

"Yes, Captain."

Haggart laughs:

"I love to think how the cannon ball flies, Mariet. I love to watch its invisible flight. If some one comes in its way—let him! Fate itself strikes down like that. What is an aim? Only fools need an aim, while the devil, closing his eyes, throws stones—the wise game is merrier this way. But you are silent! What are you thinking of, Mariet?"

"I am thinking of them. I am forever thinking of them."

"Are you sorry for them?" Haggart frowns.

"Yes, I am sorry for them. But my pity is my hatred, Haggart. I hate them, and I would kill them, more and more!"

"I feel like flying faster—my soul is so free. Let us jest, Mariet! Here is a riddle, guess it: For whom will the cannons roar soon? You think, for me? No. For you? no, no, not for you, Mariet! For little Noni, for him—for little Noni who is boarding the ship to-night. Let him wake up from this thunder. How our little Noni will be surprised! And now be quiet, quiet—don't disturb his sleep— don't spoil little Noni's awakening."

The sound of voices is heard—a crowd is approaching.

THE OCEAN

"Where is the captain?"

"Here. Halt, the captain is here!"

"It's all done. They can be crammed into a basket like herrings."

"Our boatswain is a brave fellow! A jolly man."

Khorre, intoxicated and jolly, shouts:

"Not so loud, devils! Don't you see that the captain is here? They scream like seagulls over a dead dolphin."

Mariet steps aside a little distance, where little Noni is sleeping.

KHORRE—Here we are, Captain. No losses, Captain. And how we laughed, Noni.

HAGGART—You got drunk rather early. Come to the point.

KHORRE—Very well. The thing is done, Captain. We've picked up all our money—not worse than the imperial tax collectors. I could not tell which was ours, so I picked up all the money. But if they have buried some of the gold, forgive us, Captain—we are not peasants to plough the ground.

Laughter. Haggart also laughs.

"Let them sow, we shall reap."

"Golden words, Noni. Eh, Tommy, listen to what the Captain is saying. And another thing: Whether you will be angry or not—I have broken the music. I have scattered it in small pieces. Show your pipe, Tetyu! Do you see, Noni, I didn't do it at once, no. I told him to play a jig, and he said that he couldn't do it. Then he lost his mind and ran away. They all lost their minds there, Captain. Eh, Tommy, show your beard. An old woman tore half of his beard out, Captain—now he is a disgrace to look upon. Eh, Tommy! He has hidden himself, he's ashamed to show his face, Captain. And there's another thing: The priest is coming here."

Mariet exclaims:

"Father!"

Khorre, astonished, asks:

"Are you here? If she came to complain, I must report to you, Captain—the priest almost killed one of our sailors. And she, too. I ordered the men to bind the priest—"

"Silence."

"I don't understand your actions, Noni—"

Haggart, restraining his rage, exclaims:

"I shall have you put in irons! Silence!"

With ever-growing rage:

"You dare talk back to me, riff-raff! You—"

Mariet cautions him:

"Gart! They have brought father here."

Several sailors bring in the abbot, bound. His clothes are in disorder, his face is agitated and pale. He looks at Mariet with some amazement, and lowers his eyes. Then he heaves a sigh.

"Untie him!" says Mariet. Haggart corrects her restrainedly:

"Only I command here, Mariet. Khorre, untie him."

Khorre unfastens the knots. Silence.

ABBOT—Hello, Haggart.

"Hello, abbot."

"You have arranged a fine night, Haggart!"

Haggart speaks with restraint:

"It is unpleasant for me to see you. Why did you come here? Go home, priest, no one will touch you. Keep on fishing—and what else were you doing? Oh, yes—make your own prayers. We are going out to the ocean; your daughter, you know, is also going with me. Do you see the ship? That is mine. It's a pity that you don't know about ships—you would have laughed for joy at the sight of such a beautiful ship! Why is he silent, Mariet? You had better tell him."

ABBOT—Prayers? In what language? Have you, perhaps, discovered a new language in which prayers reach God? Oh, Haggart, Haggart!

He weeps, covering his face with his hands. Haggart, alarmed, asks:

"You are crying, abbot?"

THE OCEAN

"Look, Gart, he is crying. Father never cried. I am afraid, Gart."

The abbot stops crying. Heaving a deep sigh, he says:

"I don't know what they call you: Haggart or devil or something else—I have come to you with a request. Do you hear, robber, with a request? Tell your crew not to gnash their teeth like that—I don't like it."

Haggart replies morosely:

"Go home, priest! Mariet will stay with me."

"Let her stay with you. I don't need her, and if you need her, take her. Take her, Haggart. But—"

He kneels before him. A murmur of astonishment. Mariet, frightened, advances a step to her father.

"Father! You are kneeling?"

ABBOT—Robber! Give us back the money. You will rob more for yourself, but give this money to us. You are young yet, you will rob some more yet—

HAGGART—You are insane! There's a man—he will drive the devil himself to despair! Listen, priest, I am shouting to you: You have simply lost your mind!

The abbot, still kneeling, continues:

"Perhaps, I have—by God, I don't know. Robber, dearest, what is this to you? Give us this money. I feel sorry for them, for the scoundrels! They rejoiced so much, the scoundrels. They blossomed forth like an old blackthorn which has nothing but thorns and a ragged bark. They are sinners. But am I imploring God for their sake? I am imploring you. Robber, dearest—"

Mariet looks now at Haggart, now at the priest. Haggart is hesitating. The abbot keeps muttering:

"Robber, do you want me to call you son? Well, then—son—it makes no difference now—I will never see you again. It's all the same! Like an old blackthorn, they bloomed—oh, Lord, those scoundrels, those old scoundrels!"

"No," Haggart replied sternly.

"Then you are the devil, that's who you are. You are the devil," mutters the abbot, rising heavily from the ground. Haggart shows his teeth, enraged.

"Do you wish to sell your soul to the devil? Yes? Eh, abbot—don't you know yet that the devil always pays with spurious money? Let me have a torch, sailor!"

He seizes a torch and lifts it high over his head—he covers his terrible face with fire and smoke.

"Look, here I am! Do you see? Now ask me, if you dare!"

He flings the torch away. What does the abbot dream in this land full of monstrous dreams? Terrified, his heavy frame trembling, helplessly pushing the people aside with his hands, he retreats. He turns around. Now he sees the glitter of the metal, the dark and terrible faces; he hears the angry splashing of the waters—and he covers his head with his hands and walks off quickly. Then Khorre jumps up and strikes him with a knife in his back.

"Why have you done it?"—the abbot clutches the hand that struck him down.

"Just so—for nothing!"

The abbot falls to the ground and dies.

"Why have you done it?" cries Mariet.

"Why have you done it?" roars Haggart.

And a strange voice, coming from some unknown depths, answers with Khorre's lips:

"You commanded me to do it."

Haggart looks around and sees the stern, dark faces, the quivering glitter of the metal, the motionless body; he hears the mysterious, merry dashing of the waves. And he clasps his head in a fit of terror.

"Who commanded? It was the roaring of the sea. I did not want to kill him—no, no!"

Sombre voices answer:

"You commanded. We heard it. You commanded."

Haggart listens, his head thrown back. Suddenly he bursts into loud laughter:

"Oh, devils, devils! Do you think that I have two ears in order that you may lie in each one? Go down on your knees, rascal!"

He hurls Khorre to the ground.

"String him up with a rope! I would have crushed your venomous head myself—but let them do it. Oh, devils, devils! String him up with a rope."

THE OCEAN

Khorre whines harshly:

"Me, Captain! I was your nurse, Noni."

"Silence! Rascal!"

"I? Noni! Your nurse? You squealed like a little pig in the cook's room. Have you forgotten it, Noni?" mutters the sailor plaintively.

"Eh," shouts Haggart to the stern crowd. "Take him!"

Several men advance to him. Khorre rises.

"If you do it to me, to your own nurse—then you have recovered, Noni! Eh, obey the captain! Take me! I'll make you cry enough, Tommy! You are always the mischief-maker!"

Grim laughter. Several sailors surround Khorre as Haggart watches them sternly. A dissatisfied voice says:

"There is no place where to hang him here. There isn't a single tree around."

"Let us wait till we get aboard ship! Let him die honestly on the mast."

"I know of a tree around here, but I won't tell you," roars Khorre hoarsely. "Look for it yourself! Well, you have astonished me, Noni. How you shouted, 'String him up with a rope!' Exactly like your father—he almost hanged me, too. Good-bye, Noni, now I understand your actions. Eh, gin! and then—on the rope!"

Khorre goes off. No one dares approach Haggart; still enraged, he paces back and forth with long strides. He pauses, glances at the body and paces again. Then he calls:

"Flerio! Did you hear me give orders to kill this man?"

"No, Captain."

"You may go."

He paces back and forth again, and then calls:

"Flerio! Have you ever heard the sea lying?"

"No."

"If they can't find a tree, order them to choke him with their hands."

He paces back and forth again. Mariet is laughing quietly.

"Who is laughing?" asks Haggart in fury.

"I," answers Mariet. "I am thinking of how they are hanging him and I am laughing. O, Haggart, O, my noble Haggart! Your wrath is the wrath of God, do you know it? No. You are strange, you are dear, you are terrible, Haggart, but I am not afraid of you. Give me your hand, Haggart, press it firmly, firmly. Here is a powerful hand!"

"Flerio, my friend, did you hear what he said? He says the sea never lies."

"You are powerful and you are just—I was insane when I feared your power, Gart. May I shout to the sea: 'Haggart, the Just'?"

"That is not true. Be silent, Mariet, you are intoxicated with blood. I don't know what justice is."

"Who, then, knows it? You, you, Haggart! You are God's justice, Haggart. Is it true that he was your nurse? Oh, I know what it means to be a nurse; a nurse feeds you, teaches you to walk—you love a nurse as your mother. Isn't that true, Gart—you love a nurse as a mother? And yet—'string him up with a rope, Khorre!'"

She laughs quietly.

A loud, ringing laughter resounds from the side where Khorre was led away. Haggart stops, perplexed.

"What is it?"

"The devil is meeting his soul there," says Mariet.

"No. Let go of my hand! Eh, who's there?"

A crowd is coming. They are laughing and grinning, showing their teeth. But noticing the captain, they become serious. The people are repeating one and the same name:

"Khorre! Khorre! Khorre!"

And then Khorre himself appears, dishevelled, crushed, but happy—the rope has broken. Knitting his brow, Haggart is waiting in silence.

"The rope broke, Noni," mutters Khorre hoarsely, modestly, yet with dignity. "There are the ends! Eh, you there, keep quiet! There is nothing to laugh at—they started to hang me, and the rope broke, Noni."

Haggart looks at his old, drunken, frightened, and happy face, and he laughs like a madman. And the sailors respond with roaring laughter. The reflected lights are dancing more merrily upon the waves—as if they are also

THE OCEAN

laughing with the people.

"Just look at him, Mariet, what a face he has," Haggart is almost choking with laughter. "Are you happy? Speak—are you happy? Look, Mariet, what a happy face he has! The rope broke—that's very strong—it is stronger even than what I said: 'String him up with a rope.' Who said it? Don't you know, Khorre? You are out of your wits, and you don't know anything—well, never mind, you needn't know. Eh, give him gin! I am glad, very glad that you are not altogether through with your gin. Drink, Khorre!"

Voices shout:

"Gin!"

"Eh, the boatswain wants a drink! Gin!"

Khorre drinks it with dignity, amid laughter and shouts of approval. Suddenly all the noise dies down and a sombre silence reigns—a woman's strange voice drowns the noise—so strange and unfamiliar, as if it were not Mariet's voice at all, but another voice speaking with her lips:

"Haggart! You have pardoned him, Haggart?"

Some of the people look at the body; those standing near it step aside. Haggart asks, surprised:

"Whose voice is that? Is that yours, Mariet? How strange! I did not recognise your voice."

"You have pardoned him, Haggart?"

"You have heard—the rope broke—"

"Tell me, did you pardon the murderer? I want to hear your voice, Haggart."

A threatening voice is heard from among the crowd:

"The rope broke. Who is talking there? The rope broke."

"Silence!" exclaims Haggart, but there is no longer the same commanding tone in his voice. "Take them all away! Boatswain! Whistle for everybody to go aboard. The time is up! Flerio! Get the boats ready."

"Yes, yes."

Khorre whistles. The sailors disperse unwillingly, and the same threatening voice sounds somewhere from the darkness:

"I thought at first it was the dead man who started to speak. But I would have answered him too: 'Lie there! The rope broke.'"

Another voice replies:

"Don't grumble. Khorre has stronger defenders than you are."

"What are you prating about, devils?" says Khorre. "Silence! Is that you, Tommy? I know you, you are always the mischief-maker—"

"Come on, Mariet!" says Haggart. "Give me little Noni, I want to carry him to the boat myself. Come on, Mariet."

"Where, Haggart?"

"Eh, Mariet! The dreams are ended. I don't like your voice, woman—when did you find time to change it? What a land of jugglers! I have never seen such a land before!"

"Eh, Haggart! The dreams are ended. I don't like your voice, either—little Haggart! But it may be that I am still sleeping—then wake me. Haggart, swear that it was you who said it: 'The rope broke.' Swear that my eyes have not grown blind and that they see Khorre alive. Swear that this is your hand, Haggart!"

Silence. The voice of the sea is growing louder—there is the splash and the call and the promise of a stern caress.

"I swear."

Silence. Khorre and Flerio come up to Haggart.

"All's ready, Captain," says Flerio.

"They are waiting, Noni. Go quicker! They want to feast to-night, Noni! But I must tell you, Noni, that they—"

HAGGART—Did you say something, Flerio? Yes, yes, everything is ready. I am coming. I think I am not quite through yet with land. This is such a remarkable land, Flerio; the dreams here drive their claws into a man like thorns, and they hold him. One has to tear his clothing, and perhaps his body as well. What did you say, Mariet?

MARIET—Don't you want to kiss little Noni? You shall never kiss him again.

THE OCEAN

"No, I don't want to."

Silence.

"You will go alone."

"Yes, I will go alone."

"Did you ever cry, Haggart?"

"No."

"Who is crying now? I hear some one crying bitterly."

"That is not true—it is the roaring of the sea."

"Oh, Haggart! Of what great sorrow does that voice speak?"

"Be silent, Mariet. It is the roaring of the sea."

Silence.

"Is everything ended now, Haggart?"

"Everything is ended, Mariet."

Mariet, imploring, says:

"Gart! Only one motion of the hand! Right here—against the heart— Gart!"

"No. Leave me alone."

"Only one motion of the hand! Here is your knife. Have pity on me, kill me with your hand. Only one motion of your hand, Gart!"

"Let go. Give me my knife."

"Gart, I bless you! One motion of your hand, Gart!"

Haggart tears himself away, pushing the woman aside:

"No! Don't you know that it is just as hard to make one motion of the hand as it is for the sun to come down from the sky? Good-bye, Mariet!"

"You are going away?"

"Yes, I am going away. I am going away, Mariet. That's how it sounds."

"I shall curse you, Haggart. Do you know! I shall curse you, Haggart. And little Noni will curse you, Haggart—Haggart!"

Haggart exclaims cheerfully and harshly:

"Eh, Khorre. You, Flerio, my old friend. Come here, give me your hand—Oh, what a powerful hand it is! Why do you pull me by the sleeve, Khorre? You have such a funny face. I can almost see how the rope snapped, and you came down like a sack. Flerio, old friend, I feel like saying something funny, but I have forgotten how to say it. How do they say it? Remind me, Flerio. What do you want, sailor?"

Khorre whispers to him hoarsely:

"Noni, be on your guard. The rope broke because they used a rotten rope intentionally. They are betraying you! Be on your guard, Noni. Strike them on the head, Noni."

Haggart bursts out laughing.

"Now you have said something funny. And I? Listen, Flerio, old friend. This woman who stands and looks—No, that will not be funny!"

He advances a step.

"Khorre, do you remember how well this man prayed? Why was he killed? He prayed so well. But there is one prayer he did not know— this one—'To you I bring my great eternal sorrow; I am going to you, Father Ocean!'"

And a distant voice, sad and grave, replies:

"Oh, Haggart, my dear Haggart."

But who knows—perhaps it was the roaring of the waves. Many sad and strange dreams come to man on earth.

"All aboard!" exclaims Haggart cheerily, and goes off without looking around. Below, a gay noise of voices and laughter resounds. The cobblestones are rattling under the firm footsteps—Haggart is going away.

"Haggart!"

He goes, without turning around.

"Haggart!"

He has gone away.

THE OCEAN

Loud shouting is heard—the sailors are greeting Haggart. They drink and go off into the darkness. On the shore, the torches which were cast aside are burning low, illumining the body, and a woman is rushing about. She runs swiftly from one spot to another, bending down over the steep rocks. Insane Dan comes crawling out.

"Is that you, Dan? Do you hear, they are singing, Dan? Haggart has gone away."

"I was waiting for them to go. Here is another one. I am gathering the pipes of my organ. Here is another one."

"Be accursed, Dan!"

"Oho? And you, too, Mariet, be accursed!"

Mariet clasps the child in her arms and lifts him high. Then she calls wildly:

"Haggart, turn around! Turn around, Haggart! Noni is calling you. He wants to curse you, Haggart. Turn around! Look, Noni, look—that is your father. Remember him, Noni. And when you grow up, go out on every sea and find him, Noni. And when you find him—hang your father high on a mast, my little one."

The thundering salute drowns her cry. Haggart has boarded his ship. The night grows darker and the dashing of the waves fainter—the ocean is moving away with the tide. The great desert of the sky is mute and the night grows darker and the dashing of the waves ever fainter.