

# CAP'N ERI

By JOSEPH C. LINCOLN

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(Continued from last week)



"If I don't feel like a fool!"  
as he sat in the kitchen wrapped in an old ulster of Mr. Mayo's and toasting his feet in the oven. "If I don't feel like a fool! All that scum and det for nothin'."

"Oh, not for nothin', Perez," said Miss Patience, looking tenderly down into his face.  
"Well, no, not for nothin' by a good deal! I've got you by it, and that's everything. But, say, Pashy," and the captain looked away by the coincidence, "I went through fire and water to get you."

### CHAPTER XVII.

CAPTAIN PEREZ made a clean breast of it to Captain Eri when he reached home that night. It was after 12 o'clock, but he roused his friend out of bed to tell him the news and the story. Captain Eri was not as surprised to hear of the engagement as he pretended to be, for he had long ago made up his mind that Perez meant business this time. But the tale of the fire and the voyage in the carryall tickled him immensely, and he rolled back and forth in the rocker and laughed until his sides ached.

The next evening, when the three captains were together in Jerry's room after supper, Perez said:  
"Eri, it seems to me we've got to do something 'bout Mrs. Snow. She was hired to be housekeeper while John was sick. Now he's dead, and she'll think it queer if we don't settle that marryin' business. Ain't that so?"  
"Yes," answered Captain Eri laconically.  
"I wish you'd mind your own concerns and give me time," protested Captain Jerry.  
"Time! How much time do you want? Land of Goshen! I should think you'd had time enough."  
"Well," Captain Jerry wriggled and twisted, but saw no loophole. "Well, give me a month to get up my courage in and—"  
"A month! A month's ridiculous! ain't it, Eri?"  
"Yes."  
"Well, three weeks then."  
"This offer, too, was rejected. Then Captain Jerry held out for a fortnight— for ten days. Finally it was settled that within one week from that very night he was to offer his heart and hand to the lady from Nantucket, and pledged his solemn word to do it.

Josiah went up to the postoffice late in the afternoon of the next day. The "able seaman" was behaving himself remarkably well. He had become a real help to Captain Eri, and the latter said that sailing alone would be doubly hard when his foremost hand went back to school again, which he was to do very shortly, for Josiah meant to accept the captain's offer and try for the Annapolis appointment when the time came.  
The boy came back with the mail and an item of news. The mail, a paper only, he handed to Mrs. Snow, and the news he announced at the supper table as follows:  
"Mr. Hazeltine's goin' to leave the cable station," he said.  
"Goin' to leave?" repeated the housekeeper. "What for?"  
"I don't know, ma'am. All I know is what I heard Mr. Wingate say. He said Mr. Hazeltine was goin' to get through over at the station pretty soon. He said one of the operators told him so."

"Well, for the land's sake! Did you know anything 'bout it, Eri?"  
"Why, yes, a little. I met Hazeltine yesterday, and he told me that some folks out west had made him a pretty good offer, and he didn't know whether to take it or not. Said the salary was good, and the whole thing looked sort of temptin'. He hadn't decided what to do yet. That's all there is to it!"  
There was little else talked about during the meal. Captain Jerry, Captain Eri and Mrs. Snow argued, surmised and questioned Captain Eri, but said little. Elsie said almost nothing and went to her room shortly after the dishes were washed.  
"Humph," exclaimed Captain Perez, when they were alone. "I guess your matchmakin' scheme's up spout, Jerry!"  
And, for a wonder, Captain Jerry did not contradict him.  
The weather changed that night and it grew cold rapidly. In the morning the pump was frozen and Captain Jerry and Mrs. Snow spent some time and much energy in thawing it out. It was later than usual when the former set out for the schoolhouse. As he was putting on his cap Elsie suggested that he wait for her, as she had some lessons to prepare and wanted an hour or so to herself at her desk. They

walked on together under a cloudy sky.  
"I s'pose you was glad to hear the news last night?" asked Captain Jerry.  
"What news?"  
"Why, that 'bout Mr. Hazeltine's goin' away. You're glad he's goin', of course?"  
Miss Preston did not answer immediately. Instead she turned and looked wonderingly at her companion.  
"Why should I be glad, pray?" she asked.  
"Why, I don't know. I jest took it for granted you would be. You didn't want him to come and see you, and if he was gone he couldn't come, so—"  
"Just a minute, please. What makes you think I didn't want Mr. Hazeltine to call?"  
And now it was the captain's turn to stare and hesitate.  
"What makes me think"—he gasped.  
"Why—you told me so yourself," "are you losin' your mem'ry or what? Didn't you pitch into me hotfoot for lettin' you give me 'hark from the tomb' for gittin' up and goin' away? Didn't you say his calls was perfect torture to you, and that you had to be decent to him jest out of common politeness? Now, didn't you?"  
"No, I didn't. You misunderstood me. I did object to your leaving the room every time he called and making me appear so ridiculous, and I did say that his visits might be a torture for all that you knew to the contrary, but I certainly didn't say that were."  
"Sufferin'! And you ain't glad he stopped comin'?"  
The air of complete indifference assumed by the young lady was a triumph.

"Why, of course," she said. "Mr. Hazeltine is a free agent, and I don't know of any reason why he should be compelled to go where he doesn't wish to go."  
Captain Jerry was completely crushed. My! My! My! he murmured. "And after my beggin' his pardon and all!"  
"Begging his pardon? For what?"  
"Why, for leavin' you two alone. Of course, after you pitched into me so I see how foolish I'd been actin', and I—honest, I didn't sleep scarcely a bit that night thinkin' 'bout it. Thinks I, 'if Elsie feels that way, why, there ain't no doubt that Mr. Hazeltine feels the same.' There wa'n't but one thing to be done. When a man makes a mistake, if he is any kind of a man, he owns up and does his best to straighten things out. 'Twa'n't easy to do, but duty's duty, and the next time I see Mr. Hazeltine I told him the whole thing, and—"  
"You did!"  
"Sartin I did."  
"What did you tell him?"  
They had stopped on the sidewalk nearly opposite the postoffice. Each was too much engrossed in the conversation to pay any heed to anything else. If the few passersby thought it strange that the schoolmistress should care to loiter out of doors on that cold and disagreeable morning they said nothing about it. One young man in particular, who, standing just inside the postoffice door, was buttoning his overcoat and patting on his gloves, looked earnestly at the pair, but he, too, said nothing.  
"Why, I told him," said Captain Jerry, in reply to the question, "how you didn't like to have me go out of the room when he was there. Course, I told him I didn't mean to do nothin' out of the way. Then he asked me some more questions, and I answered 'em best I could, and—well, I guess that's 'bout all."  
"Captain Jeremiah Burgess!" exclaimed Elsie. Then she added, "What must he think of me?"  
"Oh, I'll fix that!" exclaimed the captain. "I'll see him some time today, and I'll tell him you didn't mean it. Why, I declare! Yes, 'tis! There he is now! Hi! Mr. Hazeltine! Come here a minute."  
A mischievous imp was certainly directing Captain Jerry's movements. Ralph had, almost for the first time since he came to Orham, paid an early morning visit to the office in order to send an important letter in the first mail. The slamming of the door had attracted the captain's attention and, in response to the hail, Mr. Hazeltine crossed the road.  
And then Captain Jerry felt his arm clutched with a grip that meant business, as Miss Preston whispered, "Don't you dare say one word to him about it. Don't you dare!"  
If Ralph had been surprised by the request to join the couple, he was more surprised by the reception he received. Elsie's face was crimson, and as for the captain, he looked like a man who had suddenly been left standing alone in the middle of a pond covered with very thin ice.  
"Did you want to speak with me, captain?" asked Ralph.  
"Why—why, I did," stammered poor Captain Jerry. "but—but I don't know I do now." Then he realized that this was not exactly complimentary, and added, "That is, I don't know—I don't know's I—Elsie, what was it I was goin' to say to Mr. Hazeltine?"  
"I'm sure I don't know," she said coldly.  
"Well," went on the captain, intent on making the explanation as plausible as possible, "we've missed you considerable. We was sayin' we hoped you wouldn't give us up altogether. Ain't that so, Elsie?"  
Miss Preston's foot tapped the sidewalk several times, but she answered, though not effusively:  
"Mr. Hazeltine is always welcome, of course." Then she added, turning

away: "Heary, captain Jerry, I must hurry to school. I have a great deal of work to do before 9 o'clock. Good morning, Mr. Hazeltine!"  
The captain paused long enough to say, "We'll expect you now, so come," and then hurried after her. He was feeling very well satisfied with himself.  
That afternoon when Captain Eri returned from the fishing grounds he found Captain Jerry waiting for him at the shanty. The humiliated matchmaker sent Josiah up to the grocery store on an errand and then told his friend of the morning meeting.  
When he had finished Captain Eri said:  
"Oh, Jerry, Jerry! Your heart's big as a bucket, but fishin's more in your line than gittin' folks married to order fish, I'm afraid. You stay here and unload them fish in the dory. There ain't many 'em, and Josiah 'll help when he gets back. I'm goin' out for a few minutes."  
He went down to the beach, climbed into a dory belonging to a neighbor, and Captain Jerry saw him row away in the direction of the cable station.  
That evening, after the dishes were washed and the table cleared, there came a knock at the door. Mrs. Snow opened it.  
"Why, for goodness sake! Mr. Hazeltine!" she exclaimed. "Come right in. What a stranger you are!"  
Ralph entered, shook the snow, which had just begun to fall, from his hat



"This is my doin's, not Jerry's," and coat, took off these articles in response to the hearty invitation of Captain Eri and shook hands with all present. Elsie's face was an interesting study. Captain Jerry looked scared.  
After a few minutes' talk Captain Eri rose.  
"Mrs. Snow," he said, "come upstairs a little while. I want to talk to you 'bout somethin'. You come, too, Jerry."  
Captain Jerry looked from Elsie to the speaker, and then to Elsie again. But Captain Eri's hand was on his arm, and he rose and went.  
Elsie watched this wholesale desertion with amazement. Then the door opened again, and Captain Eri put in his head.  
"Elsie," he said, "I jest want to tell you that this is my doin's, not Jerry's. That's all." And the door shut.  
Elsie faced the caller with astonished mien written on her face.  
"Mr. Hazeltine," she said icily, "you may know what this means, but I don't."  
Ralph looked at her and answered solemnly, but with a twinkle in his eye.  
"I'm afraid I can guess, Miss Preston. You see Captain Jerry put Captain Eri in a call, and as a result Captain Eri called upon me. Then as a result of that I—well, I came here."  
The young lady blushed furiously.  
"What did Captain Eri tell you?" she demanded.  
"Just what Captain Jerry told him," "And that was?"  
"What you told Captain Jerry this morning concernin' somethin' that you told him before, I believe."  
There was no answer to this. Miss Preston looked as if she had a mind to run out of the room, then as if she might cry, and finally as if she wanted to laugh.  
A little later Captain Eri knocked at the door.  
"Is it safe for a feller to come in?" he asked.  
"Well," said Elsie severely, "I don't know whether talebearers should be admitted or not, but if they do come they must beg pardon for interfering in other people's affairs."  
"Ma'am, and the captain made a profound bow, "I hope you'll be so kind and condescendin', and stoop so low, and be so benighted as to forgive me. And while I'm 'bout it, I'll apologize for Jerry too."  
"No, sir," said the young lady decidedly. "Captain Jerry must apologize for himself. Captain Jeremiah Burgess," she called up the stairway, "come into court and answer for your sins."

### CHAPTER XIX.

IT had begun to snow early in the evening—a light fall at first, but growing heavier every minute—and as the flakes fell thicker and faster the wind began to blow, and its force increased steadily. Ralph, hearing the gusts as they swooped about the corners of the house and the "swish" of the snow as it was thrown against the window panes, several times rose to go out, but Captain Eri in each instance urged him to stay a little longer. Finally the electrician rebelled.  
"I should like to stay, captain," he said, "but how do you think I am going to get over to the station if this storm grows worse, as it seems to be doing?"  
"I don't think," was the calm reply. "You're goin' to stay here."  
"Well, I guess not."  
"I guess yes. S'pose we're goin' to let you try to row over to the beach a night like this? It's darker'n a nigger's pocket, and blowin' and snowin' great guns besides. Jest you look out here."  
He rose, beckoned to Ralph and then opened the outer door. He had to use considerable strength to do this, and a rust of wind and a small avalanche of

ing of the lifeboat as the crew put off to the schooner.  
"There ain't nothin' to worry 'bout," observed Captain Eri. "It's no stunch of a pull off to the Hog's Back this weather, and, besides, I'd trust Lute Davis anywhere on salt water."  
"Yes, I know," replied the unconvinced Captain Perez, "but he ought to have been back afore this. There was a kind of letup in the storm jest afore I got here, and they see her fast on the shoal with the crew in the riggin'. Luther took the small boat 'cause and that's what's worryin' me; I'm afraid she's overloaded. I was jest thinkin' of goin' out on the p'int to see if I could see anything 'em when you folks come."  
"Well, go ahead. We'll go with you, if Mr. Hazeltine's got any of the chill out of him."  
Ralph was feeling warm by this time, and after Perez had put on his coat and hat they went out once more to the gate. The point of which Perez had spoken was a wedge shaped sand ridge that, thrown up by the waves and tide, thrust itself out from the beach some few hundred yards below the station. They reached its tip and stood there in the very midst of the storm, waiting for the lulls, now more frequent, and scanning the tumbling water for the returning lifeboat.  
"Schooner's layin' right over there," shouted Captain Perez in Ralph's ear, pointing off into the mist. "Bout a mile off shore, I call 'em. Wicked place, the Hog's Back is, too."  
"Wind's lettin' up a little mite," belated Captain Eri. "We've had the worst of it, I guess. There ain't so much."  
He did not finish the sentence. The curtain of sleet parted, leaving a quarter mile long lane through which they could see the frothing ridges racing one after the other endlessly. And across this lane, silent and swift, like a moving picture on a screen, drifted a white turtleback with black dots clinging to it. It was in sight not more than a half minute; then the lane closed again as the rain lashed their faces.  
Captain Perez gasped and clutched the electrician by the arm.  
"What was it?" shouted Ralph.  
"What was it, Captain Eri?"  
But Captain Eri did not answer. He had turned and was running at full speed back to the beach. When they came up they found him straining at the side of the dory that Luther Davis used in tending his lobster pots. The boat, turned bottom up, lay high above tide mark in the little cove behind the point.  
"Quick, now," shouted the captain in a tone Ralph had never heard him use before. "Over with her! Live!"  
They obeyed him without question. As the dory settled right side up, two heavy oars, that had been secured by being thrust under the seats, fell back with a clatter.  
"What was it, captain?" shouted Ralph.  
"The lifeboat upset. How many dory you make out hangin' on to her, Perez? Five, seemed to me."  
"Four, I thought. Eri, you ain't goin' to try to reach her with this dory? You couldn't do it. You'll only be drowned yourself. My Lord," he moaned, wringing his hands, "what'll Pashy do?"  
"Catch a-holt now," commanded Captain Eri. "Down to the shore with her! Now!"  
They dragged the dory to the water's edge with one rush. Then Eri hurriedly thrust in the thole pins. Perez protested again.  
"Eri," he said, "it ain't no use. She won't live to get through the breakers."

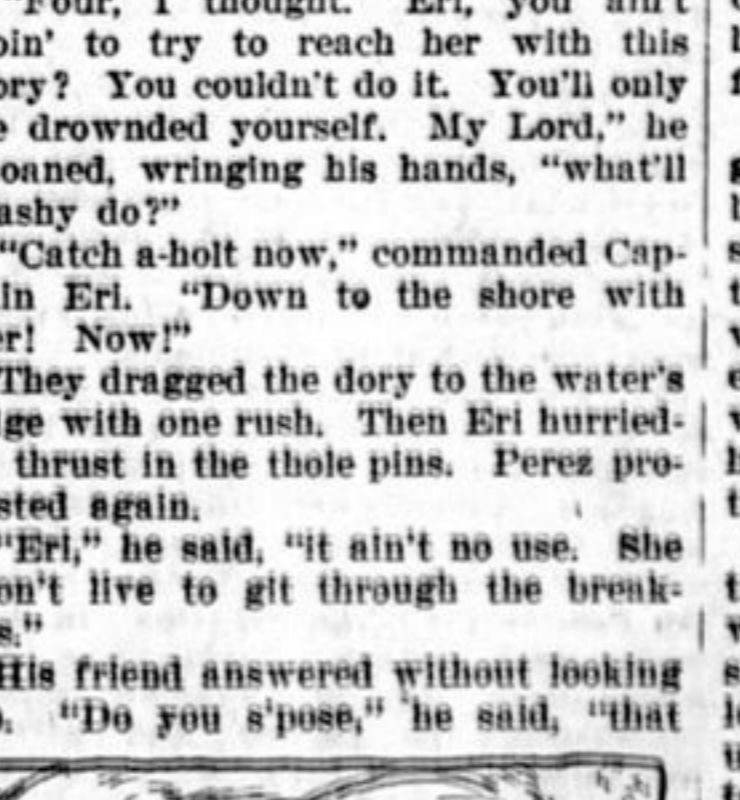
His friend answered without looking up. "Do you s'pose," he said, "that the flying dory here down upon the lifeboat, and the captain risked what little breath he had in a hail. The clinging figure raised its head and Captain Eri felt an almost selfish sense of relief to see that it was Luther Davis. If it had to be but one, he would rather it was that one.  
The bottom of the lifeboat rose like a dome from the sea that beat and roared over and around it. The centerboard had floated up and projected at the top, and it was about this that Captain Davis' arms were clasped. Captain Eri shied the dory along, pulled in one ear and the two boats fitted closely together. Then Eri reached out and seized his friend by the belt round his waist pulled him from his hold. Davis fell into the bottom of the dory, only half conscious and entirely helpless.  
It was out of the question to attempt to get back to the cove. The landing must be made on the open beach, and, although Captain Eri had more than once brought a dory safely through a high surf, he had never attempted it when his boat had nearly a foot of water in her and carried a helpless passenger.  
Little by little, still running before the wind, the captain edged in toward the shore. Luther Davis moved once or twice, but said nothing. His oilskins were frozen stiff, and his beard was a lump of ice. Captain Eri began to fear that he might die from cold and exhaustion before the attempt at landing was made. The captain resolved to wait no longer, but to take the risk of running directly for the beach.  
He was near enough now to see the leaping spray of the breakers, and their hollow sounded louder than the howl of the wind or the noises of the sea about him. He bent forward and shouted in the ear of the prostrate saver.  
"Luther!" he yelled. "Lute!"  
Captain Davis' head rolled back, his eyes opened and in a dazed way he looked at the figure swinging back and forth with the oars.  
"Lute," shouted Captain Eri, "listen to me! I'm goin' to try to land. D'you hear me?"  
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CHAPTER XX.  
CAPTAIN ERI knew that the hardest and most dangerous portion of his perilous trip was just at its beginning. If the dory got through the surf without capsizing it was an even bet that she would stay right side up for awhile longer at any rate, so he pulled out of the little cove and pointed the boat's bow toward the thundering smother of white.

The first wave tripped over the bar and whirled beneath him, sending the dory high into the air and splashing its occupant with spray. The captain held the boat stationary, waiting for the second to break, and then, half rising, put all his weight and strength on the oars. The struggle had begun. The dory climbed and ducked, rolled and slid, but gained inch by inch, foot by foot. The advancing waves struck savage blows at the bow, the wind did its best to syring her broadside on, but there were 150 pounds of clear grip and muscle tugging at the oars, and, though the muscles were not as young as they had been, there were years of experience to make every pound count. At last the preliminary round was over. The boat sprang clear of the breakers and crept out farther and farther, with six inches of water slopping in her bottom, but afoot and seaworthy.

It was not until she was far into deep water that the captain turned her bow down the shore. When this was done it was on the instant, and, although a little more water came in-board, there was not enough to be dangerous.  
The dory jumped from crest to crest like a hurdler. The sleet now beat directly into the captain's face and froze on his eyebrows and lashes, but he dared not draw in an oar to free a hand. The wind caught up the splinter drift and poured it over him in icy baths, but he was too warm from the furious exercise to mind.  
In the lulls he turned his head and gazed over the sea, looking for the boat. Once he saw it, before the storm shut down again, and he groaned aloud to count but two black spots on its white surface. He pulled harder than ever and grunted with every stroke, while the perspiration poured down his forehead and froze when it reached the ice dams over his eyes.  
At last it was in plain sight, and the two dots, now clearly human beings, were still there. He pointed the bow straight at it and rowed on. When he looked again there was but one, a figure sprawled along the keel, clinging to the centerboard.

The flying dory here down upon the lifeboat, and the captain risked what little breath he had in a hail. The clinging figure raised its head and Captain Eri felt an almost selfish sense of relief to see that it was Luther Davis. If it had to be but one, he would rather it was that one.  
The bottom of the lifeboat rose like a dome from the sea that beat and roared over and around it. The centerboard had floated up and projected at the top, and it was about this that Captain Davis' arms were clasped. Captain Eri shied the dory along, pulled in one ear and the two boats fitted closely together. Then Eri reached out and seized his friend by the belt round his waist pulled him from his hold. Davis fell into the bottom of the dory, only half conscious and entirely helpless.  
It was out of the question to attempt to get back to the cove. The landing must be made on the open beach, and, although Captain Eri had more than once brought a dory safely through a high surf, he had never attempted it when his boat had nearly a foot of water in her and carried a helpless passenger.  
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"Your job's takin' care of Pashy!" I'm goin' to let Lute Davis and them other fellers drown without makin' a try for 'em? Push off when I tell you to!"  
"Then you let me go instead of you." "Don't talk foolish. You've got Pashy to look after. Ready now?"  
But Ralph Hazeltine intervened.  
"I'm going myself," he said firmly, putting one foot over the gunwale. "I'm a younger man than either of you, and I'm used to a boat. I mean it, I'm going."  
Captain Eri looked at the electrician's face. He saw nothing but determination there.  
"We'll all go," he said suddenly.  
"Mr. Hazeltine, run as fast as the Lord 'll get you back to the station and get another set of oars. Hurry!"  
Without answering, the young man sprang up the beach and ran toward the buildings. The moment that he was inside Captain Eri leaped into the dory.  
"Push off, Perez!" he commanded. "That young feller's got a life to live."  
"You don't go without me," asserted Perez stoutly.  
"All right! Push off, and then jump in."  
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waded into the water and gave the dory a push, but just as he was about to scramble in he received a shove that sent him backward.  
"Your job's takin' care of Pashy!" roared Captain Eri.  
Perez scrambled to his feet, but the dory was already halfway across the little patch of comparatively smooth water amid a shower of foam, poise on the crest, and slip over. The second line of roaring waves came surging on, higher and more threatening than the first. Captain Eri glanced over his shoulder, turned the dory's bow toward them and waited. They broke, and as they did so the boat shot forward into the whirlpool of froth. Then the sleet came pouring down and shut everything from sight.  
When Ralph came hurrying to the beach bearing the oars he found Captain Perez alone.

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Captain Perez attempted to obey. He

## "Run Down System"

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Davis' thoughts seemed to be gathering slowly. He was ordinarily a man of strong physique, courageous and a fighter every inch of him, but his strength had been beaten out by the waves and chilled by the cold, and the sight of the men with whom he had lived and worked for years drowning one by one had broken his nerve. He looked at his friend and then at the waves.  
"What's the use?" he said feebly. "They're all gone. I might as well go too."  
Captain Eri's eyes snapped. "Lute Davis," he exclaimed, "I never thought I'd see you playin' cry baby. Brace up! What are you, anyway?"  
The half frozen man made a plucky effort.  
"All right, Eri," he said. "I'm with you, but I ain't much good."  
"Can you stand up?"  
"I don't know. I'll try."  
Little by little he raised himself to his knees.  
"Bout as fur's I can go, Eri," he said between his teeth. "You look out for yourself. I'll do my durndest."  
The dory was caught by the first of the great waves and on its crest went flying toward the beach. Captain Eri steered with the oars as well as he could. The wave broke and the half filled boat paused, was caught up by the succeeding breaker and thrown forward again. The captain, still trying to steer with one oar, let go of the other and seizing his companion by the belt pulled him to his feet.  
"Now, then," he shouted, "stand by!"  
The boat poised on the curling wave, went down like a hammer, struck the sand and was buried in water. Just as it struck Captain Eri jumped as far shoreward as he could. Davis sprang with him, but it was really the captain's strength that carried them clear of the rail.

They kept their feet for an instant, but in that instant Captain Eri dragged his friend a yard or so up the shelving beach. Then they were knocked flat by the next wave. The captain dug his toes into the sand and braced himself as the undertow sucked back. Once more he rose and they staggered on again, only to go down when the next rush of water came. Three times this performance was repeated, and as they rose for the fourth time the captain roared, "Now!"  
Another plunge, a splashing run and they were on the hard sand of the beach. Then they both tumbled on their faces and breathed in great gasps.  
But the captain realized that this would not do, for in their soaked condition freezing to death was a matter of but a short time. He seized Davis by the shoulder and shook him again and again.  
"Come on, Lute! Come on!" he insisted. "Get up. You've got to get up!"  
And after awhile the life saver did get up, although he could scarcely stand. Then, with the captain's arm around his waist, they started slowly up the beach toward the station.  
They had gone but a little way when they were met by Ralph Hazeltine and Captain Perez.

Mrs. Snow had been, for her, rather nervous all that forenoon. She performed her household duties as thoroughly as usual, but Elsie, to whom the storm had brought a holiday, noticed that she looked out of the window and at the clock frequently.  
Dinner was on the table at 12 o'clock, but Captain Eri was not there to help eat it, and they sat down without him. And here again Mrs. Snow departed from her regular habit, for she ate little and was very quiet. She was the first to hear an unusual sound outside and, jumping up, ran to the window.  
"Somebody's drivin' into the yard," she said. "Who on airld would be comin' here such a day as this?"  
Captain Jerry joined her at the window.

(Continued on page two)

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