

Preface

A man who appears to be a citizen of Japan is not expected to be on a ship idly floating on the waves of the Pacific Ocean when he should be enraptured only by the captivating sight of Mount Fuji.

A laurel crown of honor and glory, and a pennant of wealth and power have already left the shore and moved onto the oceans of the world.

Who wears this crown and holds this pennant of wealth and power? He is no one other than a courageous man of the seas. This courageous man of the seas should be a valiant man of the world.

* On the occasion of the auspicious day of the Emperor's Birthday

Viscounts: Admiral Itoh and Rear Admiral Kimotsuke

Count: Lieutenant Captain Yoshii

Viscounts: Lieutenant Captain Ogasa and Lieutenant Captain Uemura

* I gave a title and a preface to this trifle of a book to bring happiness and to express my sincere thanks to all.

The thorough instruction and careful proofreading by Lieutenant Captain Uemura are not only a delight to the author, but if you, the reader, gains some knowledge about the oceans from this book, you should thank the Lieutenant Captain.

Finally, I pray for the good health of Professor Iwatani Konami in far off Berlin, the capital of Germany.

Shunro Oshikawa

Chapter 1: Japanese in Foreign Lands

Six years ago, I departed from the Port of Yokohama with the goal of traveling the world. I first journeyed to America, then crossed the rough seas of the Atlantic Ocean to amuse myself in Europe. For more than twenty months, I visited well-known historic sites in England, France, and Germany. After a long journey of nearly 37,300 miles, I arrived in Italy, a country renowned since antiquity for art. I had seen my fill of many magnificent sights and was set to return to the Japan I longed for. Tonight at eleven thirty, I will board the steamship *Crescent Moon* and set sail to the east to home. Exactly four years ago, I arrived at the famous Port of Naples of this country at noon on a clear day in the middle of May, the season of sakura blossoms.

In town, I hired one of the horse-drawn carriages waiting for passengers outside the station to take me to a hotel near the coast. After arranging for a room and having lunch, I had nothing to do for more than ten hours until the ship set sail.

Travelers on long journeys understand that in a strange land where you know no one, waiting for the departure of a train or a boat is tedious. You try standing, sleeping, looking around for something to read, a newspaper or a magazine, but find nothing. You think maybe I'll take a nap; stroll around town; lose myself in thought; gaze into various windows; or look out at the ships arriving, departing, and floating anchored on the mirror-like surface of the Port of Naples, the patterns of their decks, the flag insignia waving on their masts, and the unique styles of the rooftops of merchant houses extending to the distant seawall. This had been the experience of a man called Hamajima Takebumi.

While still in high school about twelve or thirteen years ago, Hamajima Takebumi was my friend in the same course. He was four or five years older than I and in a different grade. We weren't acquainted the whole time, but we were adept athletes who shared a taste for spur-of-the-moment adventures. Our bond was strong, and we believed that a

brotherly parting would be difficult. But he soon graduated and had greater aspirations than college. Before long, he left Japan.

First, he traveled to China then on to Europe. That was six or seven years ago. An acquaintance of mine ran into him at a major exposition in Paris, the capital of France. But in my restless wanderings, I have heard little news of him. Although patchy, I've heard from friends that these days he is heavily involved in the trading business at the huge mercantile houses erected on a prosperous port in Italy.

A prosperous port in Italy and the greatest as well is the Port of Naples. Several hundred or thousand mercantile houses stand on the pier along the coast. I wondered whether Hamajima conducted business at this port? Talk like this could be likened to trying to grab onto a cloud. Despite the improbability, I asked the hotel proprietor who was silent until I finished my question. He slapped his bald head and said, "Oh! Mr. Hamajima. I know him well. He has a thousand employees and a dozen branch offices. Isn't it that house? Go there, that way." He thrust his head out the window and gestured.

"There...that palatial three-story building. See it over there!"

In a foreign country thousands of miles away from home, I was overwhelmed to hear from the first person I met that the familiar face of a man, a dear friend, who was born near the same mountains and rivers, is here. I couldn't contain myself, and immediately changed clothes and exited the hotel.

Following the proprietor's directions, I walked west along the boulevard for men and horses, turned left at the lone cross street, and about four or five blocks down I stopped at the third building, a magnificent brick structure with *T. Hamajima* inscribed on the entrance. I passed through a room with a fine view and heard footsteps approaching and was soon face to face with Hamajima. During the decade we had not seen each other, he had grown an impressive mustache. He appeared to be the same easygoing fellow. He greeted me with "Hey, Yanagawa. This is amazing. Just amazing."

Hearing this made me ecstatic.

Despite the mustache, our simple friendship remained. We talked about many things, hunting together in the mountains and fields long ago, accidentally shooting a

farmer's duck, the hard times we've had, the spring field day when we both became the champion of our respective class and fiercely competed for the winner's flag, and many other memories. I lost track of time, but eventually noticed the whirlwind of activity in this house, the different boisterous voices coming from the surrounding rooms, and the footsteps of people rushing up and down the hall.

Hamajima had always been composed and took everything in stride. Nothing surprised him. But I noticed the harried look on the face of the maid who brought us coffee. I realized that today may be a bad time amid all of this activity and quickly looked up at him and asked, "You're busy, aren't you?"

"No, no. Don't worry," he answered and sipped his coffee as he gently stroked his mustache.

"The truth is, a few people are setting off on a trip."

Before I could ask who was going and where, he said,

"Yanagawa, suppose you stayed at this port. From here, you could tour Spain, and later set out on an expedition of America."

"Ha ha ha," I responded scratching my head.

"Our enjoyable talk about old times has made me a little late. The truth is I must leave soon. Tonight at eleven thirty, I'm leaving on a ship to return to Japan."

"What? You too?" he said staring at me, "Tonight at eleven thirty on the *Crescent Moon*?"

When I answered, "Unfortunately, yes. I've given up on Spain and America," he slapped his knee and said, "Now this is strange."

As he gazed at my face, I wondered what was strange, then he continued,

"Isn't this strange? This introduction came from heaven. The truth is my wife and son are also returning to Japan tonight on the *Crescent Moon*."

"What? Your wife and son!" I shouted in surprise. Although it's no surprise that during those ten years of no contact he would find a wife and have a child, I hadn't known about them until that moment, not to mention their returning to Japan. I was stunned.

Hamajima laughed loudly, “Ha ha ha.... You didn't know a thing about my family. Forgive me.”

He promptly rang a bell and the maid returned.

“Please tell my wife, we have a special guest....”

He turned to me, moved a little closer, and continued, “The truth is...the summer two years after I established this trading company, I returned to Japan. At that time, you were traveling around Siam. On my return trip, through the good offices of a go-between, the younger sister of Captain Matsushima, who is also from our province, became my wife.

“That happened about ten years ago, the child who was born a little later is already eight years old. For a long time, I, standing in the world as a businessman, would like to see my son become, if possible, a navy man capable of defending the Empire of Japan. I deeply feel that if a Japanese child is not raised in the country of Japan, his love of country will be weak. Fortunately, my wife's older brother is a worthy military man, and for some time, I have been thinking about asking him to take my son and take full control of his education, but haven't had the opportunity.

“From letters we received from Japan earlier this month, Captain Matsushima, my wife's brother who was captain of the Imperial Warship Takao, had fallen ill while awaiting orders, of course, not seriously ill. My wife wished to visit her only brother, if possible, and, after such a long absence, gaze at the moon from home. The opportunity arose, and because the child is young, the two of them are to leave on the *Crescent Moon* tonight at eleven thirty.

“Naturally, depending on the Captain's condition, they will return sooner or later. However, the child would forever stand in the world as an admirable military man of Imperial Japan and never abandon the incomparable Mount Fuji,” he concluded. Calmly looking at me, he said, “Well, if you are also departing tonight, I would appreciate your kindness in looking after them on the ship and during their stay in Japan.”

I understood completely. Hamajima Takebumi seemed as cheerful as always. He dared to cut the ties of his deep love for his only child and send him home to mold him into a military man for the Empire.

Although I had not yet met his wife, the younger sister of Navy Captain Matsushima, I felt a deep admiration for her commendable behavior of soon bidding farewell with a young child on a trip crossing thousands of perilous miles to visit her brother in his sickbed.

The more I thought about it, the more this situation resembled a novel. On a whim to seek out an old friend upon arriving at this port in a land thousands of miles overseas, without any advanced plans, I was going to board the same ship at the same time as his wife and child. My fate would be entwined with theirs on a voyage lasting several months. Just as Hamajima said, this was probably a mysterious introduction by heaven. I had been absorbed in thought for a short time when the door to room quietly opened and two people entered. Needless to say, they were his wife and beloved child.

Hamajima stood to introduce them to me, "This is my wife Harue."

He turned to her and briefly described our mysterious bond given the circumstances of my trip and how we would be sailing together to Japan. Her exclamation rang with nostalgia. She was a beautiful woman who looked to be twenty-six or twenty-seven years old, her eyebrows were delicate, her mouth superb. In a glance, I thought that his wife was the most noble woman in the world with a beautiful soul like a goddess.

When the greeting ended, his wife called over the child. A timid, pale boy approached me. His name was Hideo. He was about eight years old and wearing a tidy Western-style sailor's suit. His thick hair was oddly white. His mouth had the distinguished look of his father's. His eyes were pretty, clear like his mother's. I couldn't help associating him with the cute, little hero of the novel, *Little Lord Fauntleroy*, I read last night on the train ride from Rome.

Hideo had been born in a land thousands of miles away from Japan and rarely saw any Japanese other than his parents. I thought his young heart was wistful or elated as he looked up at me with those amazing eyes and said, "Oh, Uncle, you are Japanese!"

“I’m Japanese, like you Hideo,” I said and hugged him.

“Hideo, do you like Japanese people? Do you love Japan?” I cheerfully asked.

“Yup...I like Japan a lot. I want to go home to Japan. Everyday, I will raise the Hinomaru flag and fight in the streets. The...the Hinomaru is a strong flag and will win everytime.”

“That’s right,” I said raising the face of this cute boy. When we joyfully shouted, “The Empire of Japan. *Banzai! Banzai!*” and did a little dance. Hamajima heartily laughed, Harue narrowed her eyes and said, “My, my...Hideo is so happy,” and covered her smiling mouth with a crimson handkerchief.

Chapter 2: The Devil's Hour on the Day of the Devil

Our conversation flourished. As the sun set at the end of that long day in May, I took an opportunity to leave, “Well, I'll see you tonight at the *Crescent Moon*.” A flustered Hamajima said, “Please wait...wait a moment. What are you going to do after you return to the hotel? We haven't had enough time to talk today. You should leave from my home this evening.”

His wife agreed completely. Given their feelings and that I have always been uninhibited, I borrowed two grooms of the house to retrieve my luggage from the hotel, and the three of us left together.

In addition to such fine treatment, at eight o'clock that evening, I was invited with everyone from the head clerks to the servants of the house to a gathering to bid farewell.

Harue was filled with great affection for the world, the most being reserved for Hideo from whom she could never part. However, her husband Hamajima kept it all in his heart because he is a hero of the East, the type who hates crying. Not one tear flowed down a single face. No, one exception caught my eye. An elderly Italian woman seated in the back row of seats. She was Hideo's nanny. A long time ago, she had come a long way from the countryside to work. She was short with white hair and looked to possess great integrity. Her head was hanging down more sorrowfully than before and tears flowed as if someone were being sent to his grave.

For some reason, I was disturbed.

“Oh, Annie is crying because she still believes this journey is foolish,” said Harue looking at the old woman's face.

It was almost ten o'clock when the gathering ended. The time to board the *Crescent Moon* had come. Many people were at the sea wall to see off the Hamajima family and me, their companion who arrived in the same carriage. We went to a nearby coffee shop. I

thought they might have a few things to talk about, so I tactfully went out for a stroll along the shore. Suddenly, I sensed someone following me and glanced back. In an instant, a shadow ran up to me as if tumbling. I stared at it and eventually recognized Annie, the old woman who had been sitting and crying during the farewell.

“Oh, it's you,” I said and stopped walking. The old woman, still crying, put both hands together, looked up at me, and said, “Sir, I have a favor to ask of you.”

“You're Annie, aren't you? What is it?” I asked.

The old woman stared at me and in a raspy voice said, “Sir... You are going to Japan with my Mistress and Hideo on the *Crescent Moon* tonight. But could you please postpone your trip?” she asked fearfully. What a strange thing to ask, I thought knitting my brow. I scrutinized her. She seemed to be in deep pain, so I couldn't rebuff her.

“Yes, I am, but I can't postpone the trip,” I gently replied.

When I kindly asked, “But why are you grieving so?”

She raised her head slightly and said, “Sir, the truth is I am not that sad. I was surprised when I first heard that the Mistress and Hideo were returning to Japan, but it couldn't be helped. Only later when I heard that they were leaving tonight at eleven thirty...”

Her lips quivered as she spoke, “By leaving tonight at eleven thirty...”

“What about the ship leaving tonight?” I asked fixing my gaze on her.

Annie tapped her chest and said, “I prayed to God. You don't know this, but something is terribly wrong. Time and again I begged the Master and Mistress to postpone the departure tonight, but they just laughed and said, 'Oh Annie, you worry too much,' and wouldn't listen anymore. But Sir, I know that the Mistress and Hideo will not be safe if they leave tonight on the *Crescent Moon*.”

“They won't be safe...,” I interjected.

“That's right. They won't be safe,” appealed a sober Annie.

“I believe you. I won't laugh at you,” I pledged.

“According to legends from long ago as told by the Saint of Mt. Urbino, certain dates must not be chosen for ships to set out on journeys. People who travel on unlucky

days will meet certain misfortune. This is the truth. In fact, seven or eight years ago, I begged my son not to leave. He left the house on a cursed day in October and, in the end, was captured by a frightening sea serpent. I know that if the Mistress and Hideo leave tonight, they won't be safe because today is May 16, the Day of the Devil. Tonight at eleven thirty is especially frightening. It's the Devil's Hour.”

I let out a sigh as I listened, but she didn't calm down.

“Sir, don't laugh. The Devil's Hour on the Day of the Devil is the most unlucky time of the entire year. With so many other days, to leave on this day and at this time invites misfortune. And all that gold and pearls gathered on the *Crescent Moon*, which I heard about from a friendly sailor, on the rough waves of the sea is a terrifying curse. Bad luck upon bad luck. Sir, if you had an ounce of sympathy with my heart, I thought you would somehow find a way to help my Mistress and Hideo. Please postpone your departure,” she said bowing and clasping her hands together.

Hearing this, I thought what nonsense! There are people in the West with tales of omens! But someone like this old woman is an oddity. Bursting out in laughter crossed my mind, but even if this were mere superstition, I carefully considered the Master's situation. I felt that a serious person should not be ridiculed flat out. I forced down the laughter that was welling up.

“Annie!” I shouted.

“Annie! I understand what you are saying. Your Master and Mistress should be congratulated for this devotion. But...,” I said looking straight at her, “but what you are saying is from a bygone era. Now, the Day of the Devil is no longer a cursed day.”

“Oh, Sir, are you going to make fun of me, too?” asked an expressionless Annie with her eyes closed.

“No, I will not, but there is nothing to worry about. I will protect the lives of your Mistress and Hideo,” I said, but Annie's face was a mask of despair.

“Oh...this is useless,” she said while crying and abruptly stood.

“Please God and Guardian Angel, please save the souls of the Mistress and Hideo,” she cried and ran away as if she were a lunatic. At that moment, I could hear Hamajima calling me to check the preparations for boarding at the service area.

Chapter 3: A Mysterious Ship

At half past ten, Harue, Hideo, and I took leave of the many people who had come to see us off and boarded a small steamship at the seawall to take us to the *Crescent Moon* anchored far off shore. Hamajima Takebumi and three companions accompanied us to the steamship.

The *Crescent Moon* was a special ship manufactured by the Eastern Shipping Company of Italy with a tonnage of 6,400 tons. It was a huge ship with four masts and two funnels. The heavy load of large quantities of iron and quite a lot of precious cargo, like gold and pearls, for a voyage headed to many ports in China and Japan made the draft of the ship so deep, it appeared to be sinking.

When we reached the gangway of the *Crescent Moon*, the crewmen knew we would be boarding from the passenger list and came running and efficiently transferred our luggage. The greeter doffed his hat, and respectfully made a path through the throng of people on deck to guide us to the first-class cabin near the center of the ship. On any steamship, the center cabin is the most desired spot, even among the first-class cabins. You may wonder why. That is where the rocking of a ship at sea is felt the least. Many competitors vied for this room, Germans with bristly mustaches, and Frenchmen with aquiline noses. Fortunately, due to the exceptional hard work of the renowned and prosperous Hamajima Takebumi, “a famous and wealthy Japanese man” living in Naples, we occupied the best cabins. All was fine because Harue and Hideo's cabin was adjacent to mine.

As a lone traveler, I could blithely toss my bag into my cabin and visit Harue's cabin. Hideo was sitting on her lap, and she was conversing with the boy and the three other people. She noticed me and said, “Oh, you've already settled in.” Her graceful frame hurriedly stood to welcome me.

“What? Yanagawa doesn't have luggage to arrange,” roared Hamajima, “Well,” he said offering me a chair and I joined the group. The time to leave soon arrived. During the course of the assorted conversations, we heard the clanging of a bell echoing throughout the ship.

“Hey...what's that sound?” asked Hideo looking at his mother with widened eyes. Harue looked at him, but said nothing. Hamajima Takebumi quietly stood, glanced at his three companions, and said, “Well, the time has come for us to go.”

By the Law of the Sea, ten to fifteen minutes before a ship leaves port, a bell is heard echoing throughout the ship, and all those not taking the journey must disembark. When the time to leave came, after Hamajima shook my hand and said some warm parting words to me and a few more words to his wife, he drew his beloved child close to hug him. As he patted the boy's thick hair, he said, “Hideo, you and I will be apart for a long time. As I have often said, you must not forget that my wish is for you to become a great man of the world, a capable naval officer, and a defender of the Empire of Japan.” He smiled at the boy who was nodding and prompted his three companions to leave the cabin.

We, who had been seen off earlier, were now seeing others off from the ship. I led Hideo by the hand and helped a sad Harue out onto the deck. On this evening of the thirteenth day, not even a wisp of a cloud was in the midnight blue sky. The moon was bright. Three or four warships of some country were anchored near the far off shore and continuously illuminated the surface of the sea with search lights so bright it resembled daylight. The buoys bouncing in the light between the waves reminded one of soldiers.

When Hamajima reached the gangway of the ship, he turned to look at the faces of his wife and child, then he looked at me as if something weighed heavy on his heart.

“Yanagawa, although I've said this before, please take care of Harue and Hideo....”

The extent of his anxiety was uncharacteristic given his usual impressive demeanor, and he increasingly seemed unable to leave as if he had been captured by some strong force in the air.

I later thought that perhaps this was a premonition, but, at that time, I felt he was merely apprehensive about the separation. I nodded and smiling replied, "Hamajima, I swear on my life to protect the lives of your wife and child," and shook hands with each of his three companions as they descended the gangway onto the small steamship. Immediately, the small steamship kicked up waves and returned to the seawall. Two or three agitated sea birds cried as in a dream. Amid the heartrending scene of the passengers, Hideo innocently said, "Papa left by himself. Is he going home already?" he said clinging to his mother's delicate hand. This noble woman's heart filled with compassion. Moonlight as bright as daylight surrounded the husband she had sadly seen off. The form of the small steamship gradually faded away until only a long trail of smoke lingered.

"Harue, shall we go up to the deck and have a look around?" I suggested. I felt that looking at a bustling scene when one is melancholy diverts the heart somewhat. I led them to the bow that appeared full of life at that moment.

The time to leave port came quickly, and the area was crowded. Officers dressed in light clothing were dashing about. Many sturdy crewmen formed lines at their posts and raised the stern gangway. Under the orders of the first mate now on the bow deck, a group of able-bodied seaman hurried to the winder and readied to raise the anchor cable on the next command. The portly barrel-chested ship's captain on the bridge stroked his red beard as he proudly and contemptuously surveyed the scene. I stood among the groups of two and three passengers and looked around at this eye-popping scene that included a Belgium with a strikingly pale complexion, a young French gentleman with a mustache painted on like a sword with cosmetics, a German military officer with a nose reddened by too much drink, an Italian actress who epitomized a beautiful woman, and a wealthy Indian with a very black complexion. I was chatting with Harue, when out of nowhere, a sailor behind me cried out, "Hey...hey! Whoa! Watch out!" At that instant, I heard something crash onto the deck.

When I quickly turned to look, two or three sailors had been using a pulley to raise a light high on the foremast. It was the masthead light for signifying safe progress during

a voyage. The connection snapped for some reason, and the bulb fell from a mast just twenty feet high. In an instant, the bulb crashed into the bridge where the Captain was standing and smashed into pieces. The lamplight went out, and the startled Captain lost his footing trying to dodge the glass and fell back two or three steps off the bridge. The sailors flushed from surprise. The agitated Captain stood up. He looked outraged, but he couldn't be angry at himself. He slapped his barrel-shaped belly and scowled fiercely at the sailors. A noble, balding English gentleman with a long beard was standing near me. He was trembling from the sight of that dramatic scene and cried out, "Oh my! This is bad...very bad luck. Heaven help us! This ship may be cursed."

What?! Superstition again! What is going on today?

Of course, there may not be a profound reason. It must be chance. Nonetheless, it seemed strange. Anyone would feel that way. If a minor but strange event occurs when setting out to battle or on a journey, you can't help but feel a bit concerned. In particular, the goal of our *Crescent Moon* is to cross thousands of miles. On the way, the ship will pass through treacherous waters like the famous Mediterranean Sea, the Red Sea, and the Indian Ocean, but the white masthead light that should signal the safe voyage of the steamship had been smashed to pieces; its light extinguished; and simultaneously, the Captain, the leader of this ship, had fallen off the bridge and appeared disgusted and angry. Are these omens that the *Crescent Moon* may be cursed? These events definitely didn't put you at ease.

Naturally, fantastic ideas like these are easily dismissed, but I felt uneasy as I recalled Annie's talk earlier about the Devil's Hour on the Day of the Devil and Hamajima's uncharacteristic concern. When I considered leaving this place and glanced at Harue, she also seemed to be troubled by the situation and the mutterings of the old English gentleman.

"Why don't we go to the stern?" I urged and took a few steps in that direction.

When we reached the stern of the ship and looked around, there were a few people. The bright moon reflected off the scrubbed deck with a misty film.

“Just as I thought, it's quiet here,” said Harue managing a sad smile. She walked over to the side with Hideo and looked at the far-off pier while leaning against the railing.

“Hideo, do you remember that tall mountain over there?” she asked and pointed at a towering mountain southeast of Naples, their home for so long.

“It looks like Mount Molise. See I remembered,” replied Hideo looking at his mother.

“Well then, what is that place where all those electric lights are shining, that place where those five or six chimneys are lined up?”

“Via San Gallo. Mama, that's where our house is,” said Hideo resting both of his hands on the railing.

“Papa's probably home already.”

“Yes, he's home. Right now, he's probably telling Nanny and the head clerk Mr. Smith how bravely you boarded the ship,” Harue attentively told her son as she pressed her cheek, which seemed like a jewel, against his thick hair. This may be Harue's only comfort. I thought it insensitive to intrude on this scene, so instead of going toward them, I moved away slightly and lay down on a deck chair.

I took in the scenery, the moonlight this evening flooded the wide Bay of Naples with light. I could see the rotating beacon appear then disappear on the barely visible Ischia Island. I have no words to describe the white snow remaining on the peak of Mount Molise rising high in the sky and reflected by the glistening moonlight.

The scene was a dreamscape. On the gold-tipped waves running from the far-off pier brightly lit by electric lights to the ship, several hundred floating warships, departing ships, and arriving ships obeyed the Law of the Sea with a white light on the foremast, a green light on the starboard side, and a red light on the port side. The anchored ships resembled giant birds sleeping on the sea. I had never seen such a breathtaking sight. Fascinated, I could not look away and memorized the evening.

As I looked all around, something caught my eye. Anchored about five hundred meters away was a steamship. The searchlights of this warship of some country brightly lit up the area. I could see equipment on the deck and felt as though I could grab it. The

tonnage of that ship was 1,000 gross tons. Its hull was painted black. There were two masts on two funnels. I could see that it wasn't a warship. I couldn't tell whether it was a merchant vessel, a mail boat, or a ship with some other special purpose. Although its appearance was not suspicious, I do recall being struck by something peculiar. Its draft appeared to be unusually deep. One thousand gross tons is a very solid structure, but several pallets of guns may have been loaded below deck. The black smoke belching from the two funnels probably meant it was preparing to leave port. In an instant, the anchor at the bow was raised and the ship began to advance.

I casually searched my pockets for binoculars and focused them to inspect that deck. At that same moment on the other ship, a man who seemed to be a sailor was intently looking through binoculars at my ship. That was odd. When my line of sight unexpectedly collided with his, he instantly flung his binoculars away and turned away pretending not to have seen me. I cocked my head upon seeing that rather strange behavior.

For some unknown reason, a certain story sprang to mind at that moment. It was an unforgettable incident that occurred last fall during my journey from America to Europe. I had struck up a friendship with an old English sailor. Of the many interesting tales told by that old sailor, the one that stayed with me was a story about the most frightening sea route in the world, the Indian Ocean. Far off the island of Madagascar in eastern Africa is a pirate's island that is unknown even in the dreams of men.

Naturally, this isolated island cannot be found on any map of the world. Several hundred pirates who have deceived fierce gods formed a brigand. Seven fast and sturdy pirate ships continuously roam the sea lanes in that region. Sometimes, the ships set sail to coasts on the far-off Atlantic Ocean. When they encounter a ship loaded with precious cargo, they attack and sink it. They rage with despicable greed. Even some of his fellow European and American sailors were unaware of this fact. Unfortunately, the shrewd actions of this pirate brigand die in words, like incoming and retreating winds.

These pirates don't know how to track down their quarry. Instead they always target ships loaded with first-rate precious cargo. Because ships like that are seldom seen, the

pirates have conspired for some time with tyrannical nations in Europe for profit. Bribery amounting to nearly fifty million dollars is delivered annually in return for covert protection. Sometimes, a ship will anchor in a trading port as a ship with legal registration, fly the merchant flag of that powerful country above its deck, and behave audaciously. This is truly scandalous.

By some baffling actions of my nerves, this tale suddenly came to mind as I looked at this mysterious ship with two funnels and two masts. If the old sailor's words are true, could that be one of these ships? As I pondered this grim affair of pirate ships, the mysterious ship gradually accelerated. As she stealthily passed on the port side of the *Crescent Moon*, I made out the name emblazoned on her stern glinting in the light radiating from my ship's lamp, *Sea Snake*. As I looked, the waves were kicked up, and the ship vanished into the vast darkness.

I wondered aloud, "Why have these mysterious events occurred one after the other today?"

"Is something wrong?" startled, both Harue and Hideo turned.

"Harue," I started to speak, but caught myself. What if this talk were nothing more than my imagination. I considered whether I would trouble the kind heart of this beautiful person if I spoke carelessly.

"No. It's nothing," I said laughing loudly. At exactly this moment, seven bells rang out on deck to announce eleven thirty. Simultaneously, a whistle resembling the roar of a lion sounded to signal our leaving the port. At last, the *Crescent Moon* entrusted with our fates slowly pressed forward.

Chapter 4: A Scrap of Newspaper

I lingered on the side of the deck opposite Harue and Hideo and admired the scene until we left the mouth of the bay. I recall the fading lights of the Bay of Naples and the piercing, chilly evening winds before we left the deck. We said goodnight, and Harue and Hideo returned to their cabin and I to mine. In my cabin, I could clearly hear eight tolls of the bell on deck.

“Ah! It's already midnight!” I said to myself. It was quite late. The waves were gentle that evening and the ship swayed very little. Many of the passengers were probably peacefully dreaming. The only sounds were the noise from the steam engine and occasional stomping footsteps of the crewmen on duty going back and forth on the deck.

I changed into my bedclothes and lay across my bed. For some reason, however, I wasn't the least bit tired. A bright light radiated from the lamp hanging in the center of the room. The air weighed heavily on my head, as if an evil spirit lurked nearby, and I found sleeping difficult. You too may have had this experience, but this time I couldn't sleep at all. As I became more aggravated, even wilder thoughts raced through my head and kept me awake.

I decided to get up. I wanted a cigar, but didn't want to bother going to the smoking room. Although this was a minor infraction of the ship's regulations, I decided to smoke in my cabin. I searched my suitcase, but couldn't find even one. I suddenly remembered the many gifts Hamajima had given me at our departure from the Port of Naples. One was a square package wrapped in newspaper that I thought might be a pack of cigarettes. I quickly opened it and found the finest cigars! Hurray! I lit one. While looking around as I puffed away, I noticed the newspaper wrapping.

“Ah! This is a Japanese newspaper,” I snatched it up automatically.

As a globetrotter who left Japan two years ago, I sometimes heard about unusual events from home at Japanese diplomatic and consular offices, but rarely read anything

like a Japanese newspaper, so I was swept away with nostalgia. I quickly smoothed out the wrinkles and saw that this was a Tokyo newspaper from about eighteen months ago. A year and a half ago, I was still on the American continent. Although the newspaper was old, that didn't matter. I was filled with nostalgia and determined to read every word. My eyes instantly went to an article in the first column. It was general news printed on the left side of the second page.

Where is Reserve Navy Captain Sakuragi?

As the reader knows, a powerful explosive was discovered a few years ago and was effective in improving two or three weapons, like buoy mines and explosive rings. Since returning last year from a pleasure trip in England, Reserve Navy Captain Sakuragi Shigeo, a man well known in military circles, has been deeply involved in strategy and in making an astounding military discovery that will contribute to the defense of our nation.

Although you have heard an inkling about the reasons for this dire scheme, perhaps, the time has come to divulge it, or some other consideration has come into play. At the beginning of this month, a large sailing ship named the Bay of Waves was purchased from a certain merchant ship company in Yokohama and secretly loaded with food, coal, volatile oils, wax coils, wire rope, various chemicals, and many materials impossible for the general public to imagine. But it disappeared unnoticed by us.

When the figure of Captain Sakuragi disappeared and the sailing ship was no longer anchored in the port, thirty-seven sailors who had served under his command for many years and obeyed him like a god or a parent also vanished.

The Captain with his crew seem to have slipped out under the cover of darkness.

This incident was top secret even within the naval service. No one knows their whereabouts. One possible clue came from an English mail boat that arrived last night at the Port of Yokohama. In the dead of night four or five days ago, they had a confirmed sighting of a large sailing ship flying the Japanese flag near North Borneo Island.

If the profile of that ship fits that of the Captain's sailing ship, the suspicion is that he may be taking a sea route past the China Sea and not toward the Indian Ocean.

From the beginning, he kept his plan top secret, classified, and impossible to guess. In any event, if he possesses an extraordinary intellect and a grand objective, he may bring about some unforeseen achievement from some unexpected direction. We do not know and again eagerly await what will be revealed.

Any one, no matter how disinterested, who read this article would be deeply moved, but I was particularly moved. Several years ago, before I set out on my travels, I met Navy Captain Sakuragi. I was on a trip to Hokkaido I had planned to take that summer. While on a steamship from Yokohama to Hakodate, I happened to meet the Captain. He was about thirty-two or thirty-three years old. He had a commanding but pleasant personality, a sparkle in his eyes, and a deep, booming voice. I believed him to be a capable and bold man. This man had become a topic in the newspapers and was resolved to take a journey called into question by the world. What is his destination? What is his objective? Considering the great military invention, the large sailing ship, thirty-seven sailors, and the chemicals all together, although nebulous, anything imaginable was possible.

Today, many countries throughout the world are training soldiers, polishing their weapons, and expending all their energy, particularly on naval power. England, France, Russia, and Germany are fighting for power over us. However, current power disputes are often centered in lands in the East. These constant violations burden China and Korea.

These days, the Empire of Japan, as a rising nation in the East, bears a heavy burden and requires extraordinary determination and true ability to maintain peace in the East and at least preserve the dignity of our nation. However, the resources of our nation are limited, as is any increase in warships. Gentlemen who mull over the state of the nation are concerned and are always adopting measures to address these issues.

Captain Sakuragi is essentially a man who laments the state of the nation. When our conversation touched on this point on the ship to Hokkaido, he reached into his pocket and showed me a portion of a mysterious new-style poem he had written yesterday evening as relief from the tedium of the inn. Aren't the refined tastes of the intrepid warrior interesting?

This is that poem.

Over the Indian Ocean, a high moon, sleeping
winds.

Above the mirrored surface of the sea

Mist suddenly rises.

A whale bellows.

A dragon leaps.

Look! Giant waves rage, the sky splits.

Black clouds hover low over the ocean.

A flash. Electricity?

A roar. Thunder?

Artillery fire. Booming rolling thunder.

Look! Escape into the smoke.

The moon illuminates a face of shame.

Several hundred cut through the waves.
Flags of ancient warships coil and release.
The whale flees, the flying dragon pursues!
The courageous dragon, the brave whale.
Black smoke without despair. Blowing.
 Shadows hide.
This whale, a strange land.
Until the border of the dominion is reached.
A surge hits. A place with treasure.
A mountain of waves becomes a ship.
A thousand winds become the sail.
Rampant domination lost. This alliance of
 European fleets.
What is the strategy? In the East. The rising sun
 seizes a key position.
A light shining on the sea. This name is the
 exalted Japanese fleet
Japan is the East. The small nation, like the
 flying dragon.
Europe, brave like the whale. Braver than an
 alligator.
The world scowls. A great nation.
Doubt.
The big defeated, the small victorious. Why?
Listen to the defeated general.
He climbs up to the bridge. He looks up and
 laments the stars.
A million huge warships. Swarms of officers
 and men.

Guns. Swords. Gunpowder.
What does the Japanese naval fleet fear?
Like the leaves of trees scattering in autumn.
Forced into wreckage on the sea.
Advance, fleets of England, France, German,
and Russia.
By chance. Japan has a mysterious charm.
This. The Gatling gun? No.
The Ciel Bleu torpedo boat? No.
A huge weapon.
Still unseen.
Still unheard.
Comes like the wind. Leaves like the wind.
Like a pod of killer whales in pursuit.
Like being struck by electricity.
Look, our fleet demolished. The great magical
power of lightning.
Ah, you should be afraid. Very afraid.
The dragon tears apart the Sea of Japan.
Black clouds fly above the East.
Light from the sun pierces the sky.
A huge weapon hidden by the sea.

This bizarre poem was, perhaps, a tax collected from the new school of masters. On the deck of the steamship belching a clear wind under the moonlight, a shout of joy escaped me during the recitation in that sonorous voice as the hilt of the Captain's sword swung behind him. Of course, I thought of nothing in particular at that time, but now is the first time I recalled that occasion.

In any case, according to the old newspaper article, Captain Sakuragi had planned this secret journey over a year and a half ago. As I said earlier, I was still touring America, perpetually wandering from place to place. The information in the article was new to me. What will the Captain do next? He may eventually achieve his objective and return to Japan. Given Captain Sakuragi's disposition, without a doubt, much hope can be found in his actions. Because he will not stop until the plan achieves his objective, when the Captain reappears in this world, an immense achievement will no doubt have been realized. Therefore, if Captain Sakuragi returns to Japan, his exploits will shine brighter than the sun and the moon.

As I wandered from place to place, some rumors never reached my ears. I've visited Japanese diplomatic and consular offices in various countries and never heard a whisper of this. This proves to me that the Captain concealed his whereabouts, which are still unknown to the world. Still many guesses bubbled up in my mind when I wondered, "Where is the Captain?"

At that moment, the bell tolled twice. (Signal bells onboard a ship cycle from one to eight strikes every four hours.)

"Ah, it's one o'clock." I yawned. I could ruminate over this forever. However, I had to be prudent about the effects of staying up this late on my health. I rolled up the old newspaper that became the source of my imaginings and pushed it into a corner of the cabin, and forced myself to lie down.

At first, my head felt queer. I struggled to erase many fantastic ideas, but like before, more floated up. I was haunted by the visions swimming in my head: the Devil's Hour on the Day of the Devil, Annie's face, the shattered white masthead light, the mysterious ship, and the binoculars. From the fatigue of the daytime hours, I fell into scattered dreams before the signal bell struck two o'clock.

