


Captains Courageous

Rudyard Kipling



 TIMELESS CLASSICS



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Boy Overboard!

The huge ocean liner blew its whistle again and again. The whistle warned the small fishing boats to keep their distance. The liner rolled and lifted in the North Atlantic fog. The fog blew into the smoking room, for the door had been left open. A man stepped inside, banging the door shut.

“That Harvey Cheyne’s the biggest nuisance around,” the man snorted.

“Yeah, I know that kind,” a white-haired German added. “America is full of that kind.”

A man from New York said, “Pshaw! There isn’t any real harm in Harvey Cheyne. He’s more to be pitied than anything. They’ve dragged him from hotel to hotel since he was a kid. I was talking to his mother just this morning. She’s a lovely lady—but she can’t even pretend to manage him. The boy’s on his

way to Europe to finish his education.”

“Ha! His education hasn’t *begun* yet,” another man growled. “That boy gets two hundred a month just for pocket money.”

“His father owns railroads, ain’t that right?” the German grunted.

“Yep. And mines and lumber mills and shipping. Owns a couple of houses, too,” the New Yorker said. “Too busy, I guess, to bother with his son. He’ll find out his error a few years from now. It’s a pity—because there’s a heap of good in the boy.”

Once more the door banged open, and Harvey Cheyne entered. His complexion was pasty yellow, and a half-smoked cigarette hung from one corner of his mouth. About 15 years old, he wore a cherry-colored blazer, knee pants, bicycle shoes, and a red cap.

“The fog is sure thick out there,” he said in a loud, high voice. “You can hear the fishing boats all around us. Say, wouldn’t it be great if we ran one down?”

The New Yorker sighed. “Shut the door, Harvey,” he said. “Shut it and stay outside.”

“Who’ll make me?” Harvey asked. “Did *you*

buy my ticket?” He picked up some dice from a checkerboard and began tossing them from one hand to another. “Say, how about a game of poker, gentlemen?”

Getting no answer, he pulled out a roll of bills as if to count them. “Pff!” he went on. “My cigarette’s out. Any of you gentlemen got a good cigarette?”

The German opened his cigar case. He handed a skinny black cigar to Harvey. “This is the proper thing to smoke, my young friend—if you’re up to it,” he said.

Harvey lit the thing. “It’d take more than this to knock me out,” he said.

“That we shall see,” said the German.

Then the chief engineer entered, and the German turned to him. “Where are we now, Mr. Maconal?” he asked.

“We’ll be on the Grand Bank tonight,” the engineer replied. “But already there’s fishing dories everywhere. Three of them have scraped up against us since noon.”

The German turned back to Harvey. The boy’s eyes were red and wet. “You like my cigar, eh?” he asked.

“Fine, full flavor,” Harvey croaked. “I think I’ll go outside for a bit of air now.”

“I might if I were you,” the German said.

Harvey was glad no one saw him as he staggered across the deck. He fell to his knees and crawled to the flagpole. There he lay, doubled up in agony. The bitter taste of the cigar coated his throat. His head swelled, and sparks of fire danced before his eyes. He was fainting from seasickness.

Then a giant wave rose up and washed him off the deck! Harvey lost consciousness in the cold green water.

He woke to the sound of a horn. Slowly, he remembered that he was Harvey Cheyne, the boy who’d drowned in the ocean. Clammy chills went down his back.

He opened his eyes and found he was lying on a pile of half-dead fish. He groaned. A man with a broad back, wearing a blue sweater, turned to look at him.

The man had curly black hair and gold earrings. “Good job I catch you,” he said. “Even better, your big ship not catch *me*! Just in time I blow my horn. Your ship, she turn a little



and I see you come over the side. How come you fall out?”

“I was sick,” Harvey tried to explain, “and I couldn’t help it.”

The man’s eyes twinkled merrily. “I make a big fish of you and catch you! So you shall not die this time,” he said.

“Where am I?” Harvey asked weakly.

“You are with me in the dory. Manuel, my name. I come on the schooner *We’re Here*, from the town of Gloucester. By and by we get supper. Eh wha-at?”

Harvey lay very still. He was terrified at the size of the rolling waves around him. The little boat would lift up 20 feet before sliding down a green mountain of water.

At the sound of another horn, shouts came through the fog. Then the dory was next to a larger boat. Several voices spoke at once. Men in oilskins gave Harvey a hot drink and removed his wet clothes. He slept.

Harvey woke in a room that was like a cave, low and dark. At one end, behind an old stove, a boy about his age looked at him. He had a flat red face and clear gray eyes. He wore a blue sweater and rubber boots. Several pairs of boots lay on the floor, along with worn, wool socks. Yellow oilskins swayed back and forth beside bunk beds. The air smelled of oilskins, fried fish, burnt grease, paint, pepper, and tobacco. Harvey noticed with disgust there were no sheets on his bed. He lay on a dingy mattress, full of lumps and nubbles. Water noises ran close to his ear. The beams creaked and whined around him.

The boy grinned. "Feeling better, are you?" he asked. "Here you go—have yourself some

hot coffee.” He handed Harvey a tin cup.

“Isn’t there any milk?” Harvey asked.

“Well, no,” the boy laughed. “Not likely to be any milk until about September. Try the coffee. It ain’t bad. I made it myself.”

Harvey drank in silence. Then the boy handed him a plate of crisply fried pork. Harvey ate ravenously.

“I dried your clothes,” the boy said. “Guess they’ve shrunk some. Fix yourself and go on deck. Dad wants to see you. I’m his son—Dan. I’m the cook’s helper, and I do everything else around here that’s too dirty for the men. There ain’t no other boys here. Not since Otto fell overboard, and he was older. Hurry now! Dad’s waiting.”

Never in his life had Harvey been given a direct order. His mother had been afraid of breaking his spirit.

“Your dad can come here if he’s so anxious to see me,” Harvey said. “I want him to take me to New York right away. I’ll pay him.”

Dan thought he was joking. He opened his eyes wide and shouted up the hatch, “Hey, Dad! This boy says you can come down here if

you want to see him. Hear that, Dad?"

The deepest voice Harvey had ever heard called out, "You quit fooling, Dan, and send him to me."

Dan sniggered, and threw Harvey his bicycle shoes. When Harvey climbed up a ladder to the deck, he saw a small, thick-set man with gray eyebrows.

"Good morning," the man said. "Or good afternoon, I should say. You've about slept around the clock, young feller. Now, let's hear all about it. It's very good luck for you that we were there to fish you out of the water last night."

Harvey gave his name, the name of the ocean liner, and a short account of the accident. Then he said he needed to be taken to New York immediately. His father would pay the man whatever he asked.

"Hmm," the man said. "I'm afraid we don't think special of any man or boy that falls overboard in a dead calm sea. Especially when his excuse is being seasick."

"*Excuse!*" Harvey yelled. "Do you think I'd fall into your dirty little boat for fun?"