

The Nightmare

CHAPTER I.

MR. JONES, CASTAWAY.

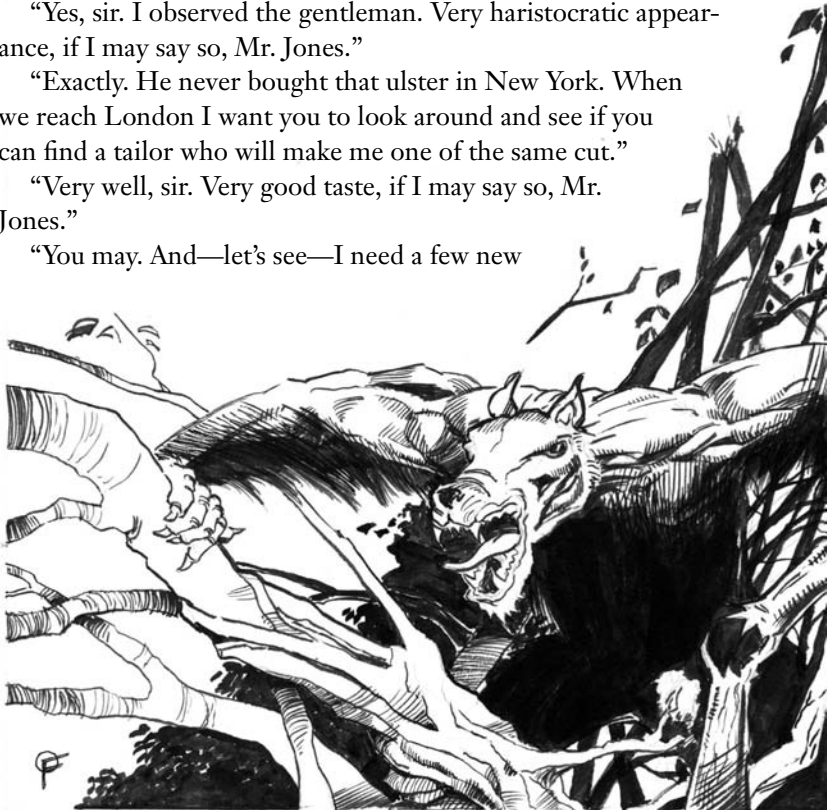
“Philip, did you notice that tall, thin man in the gray ulster, who was walking up and down the boat-deck just before dinner?”

“Yes, sir. I observed the gentleman. Very haristocratic appearance, if I may say so, Mr. Jones.”

“Exactly. He never bought that ulster in New York. When we reach London I want you to look around and see if you can find a tailor who will make me one of the same cut.”

“Very well, sir. Very good taste, if I may say so, Mr. Jones.”

“You may. And—let’s see—I need a few new



golf sticks, and—a dozen new shirts. Why did you pack this automatic in this trunk, Philip? Put it in that suitcase.”

“Yes, sir. I ’ardly thought you’d require it while on board the Lusitania, sir, if I may say so, Mr. Jones.”

“Certainly you may. No, events requiring a pistol as stage-property are not frequent on a liner. By the way, you never showed me how to work the thing, Philip.”

“No, sir. The shopman from whom I purchased it declared it simple of hoperation, but I ’ave not found it so, sir.”

“Well, find out in London and show me. I never met a burglar, but if I ever should it would be embarrassing to point a pistol at him and not be able to fire it off. I admire the heroes of burglar stories. They’re always such efficient people.”

“Hunder exciting circumstances, sir, one becomes much more efficient. They bring it out of a man, if I may say so, Mr. Jones.”

“By all means. Well, golf is exciting enough for me. Merridale and I are going to run over to the St. Andrews links. It’s been the dream of my life to play the St. Andrews, but something has always come up to prevent.”

“Nothing is likely to hoccure, I am sure, sir. Shall I repack the steamer trunk now, Mr. Jones?”

“Yes. And call me a little earlier, in the morning, Philip. I have an idea it’s going to be fine weather, and since it’s the last of the voyage I want to make the most of it. What time is it? Eleven, eh? Well, I’ll go to bed early for once and get a good night’s rest. Thank Heaven for a quiet life, Philip. Cribbage and the *Times* for you, golf and—”

“Beg pardon for hinterrupting, sir, but do you want this book packed in the trunk?”

“‘Paradise Island’? Yes, pack the thing away. Did you ever read it, Philip?”

“No, sir. I don’t care for them himpossible stories, if I may say so, sir.”

“And welcome. Now, I’m thirty-two years old, I’ve yachted, ridden, motored and been about the world a good bit, and I’ve never had a real adventure in my life. People don’t have adventures—unless they’re gentlemen in the filibustering line, or polar explorers, or something like that. This modern world of ours is as safe as a church, barring accidents, and they are never romantic. End in a hospital or a beastly morgue. Anybody I suppose, can find trouble by looking for it, but that’s not exactly in my line.”

“No, sir. Very bad form, sir, if I may say so, Mr. Jones.”

“You may indeed. Here, I’ll help you with that strap, and then—bed.”

Ragged fragments of cloud raced across a sky where great, brilliant stars

beamed fitfully. The wind hurled the wave crests through space, so that the air was almost as watery as the wide waste of billows and creaming surges in the midst of which Mr. Roland C. Jones, of New York City, found himself most unexpectedly struggling.

How it could be that he was here, battling for his life, with the stars, the wind and raging, tumbling seas for his sole companions, did not immediately trouble him. He was too thoroughly engaged in trying to get a breath that was not half or all salt water to concern himself about either past or future. The mere physical present was a little bit more than he could comfortably handle.

But the fight between man and sea was too unequal. Mr. Jones was a fair swimmer, but not being provided with gills he found it impossible to get a living modicum of oxygen out of the saturated air, even when the waves did not go clean over his head. Thoroughly exhausted, more than half drowned, he had just decided that he might as well throw up his arms and let the sea have its will of him when he found himself rising upon the shoulder of a particularly mighty billow.

For an instant he caught a glimpse of something dark and huge looming above him. Then he was in the trough again, but only for a moment. Up, up he was borne in a long, swift, surging motion. The water seemed to fall away from under him. He was on his knees in sand and the receding breaker was trying to drag him back with it. The next wave, however, carried him much farther up the beach, dropping him with a vicious thud when it was done with him.

Barely conscious of his own efforts, Jones dragged himself along on hands and knees until he was actually out of reach of the ocean which had been so unappreciative as to spew him up.

For a time he lay still, gasping the water out of lungs and stomach, then rolled over and sat up. He felt like a man in a dream, yet the pain he suffered informed Mr. Jones that this was no dream, but a grim, incredible reality.

It was not alone the question, where was he, although that seemed pressing enough. But how had he gotten into the water at all? The last thing he remembered was a little, pleasant, white-finished room—a state room—ah, that was it. He was in his state room on board the liner. He was on board the *Lusitania*, and he was going to London to visit his cousin, the Hon. Percy Merridale. And he had—let's see, he had been going over the things in his steamer trunk with his man, Philip. And then—then he was going to bed. He must have gone to bed, and then—

He cudged his memory, but failed to beat out one single further recol-

lection back of that dazed, strangling moment when he had found himself struggling with the waves.

Where was the liner? While in the water he could not recall having seen any lights, receding or otherwise. Stare earnestly as he might now across the sea, there were certainly no lights visible, other than the stars, which storm-clouds now obscured at ever-increasing intervals.

Where was the Lusitania? And how had he come to part company with her so inexplicably? If the huge ship had melted away from about his slumbering form like a dream thing, instead of the vast solid steel hulk she was, she could not have vanished more thoroughly or mysteriously.

Only one explanation occurred to Mr. Jones, and even that was inadequate to explain the liner's total disappearance. When a boy he had been given to the habit of sleep-walking. He had usually slept locked in, in those days, but had thought the habit long since dead and gone. Nevertheless, he must have risen in a dream, gone on deck, and in some way fallen over the rail without being seen by any one.

What an extremely awkward predicament. Where could he be? What land lay near enough for him to have reached it undrowned? In view of the approximate position of the liner, so far as he knew it, Ireland seemed the only possible answer to that question. Had he been cast upon some portion of the Irish coast? Certainly the only thing for him to do was to get up and walk along this lonely, God and man forsaken beach until he came to some place where he could get dry clothes and cable his friends in London.

His clothes! He was fully dressed, and he examined the garments as well as he was able by starlight. They seemed—wrong, some way. They were not *his* clothes, at all, but the clothes of a stranger. Had he, in his sleep, wandered into a neighboring stateroom and robbed some innocent stranger? He recalled that he had been talking to Philip about burglars and pistols; lightly, it is true, but perhaps the suggestion of that conversation had led him into such an astounding exploit.

Mr. Jones searched this hypothetical other person's pockets, but all he brought to light were some wet, useless matches, a small penknife, an unmarked handkerchief, and a little loose change. There were no letters or anything by which the rightful owner could be identified.

By a mighty effort Jones forced the problem of the clothes out of his mind and fixed it upon the greater one of finding shelter and means of communication with London.

While he sat there the sky had completely cleared, and even by starlight he could make out that he was on a long, bare stretch of sand, which curved smoothly away on either side. From the inner edge of this strip a black wall

of rock rose sharply, looming to the stars above Jones's head. This enormous cliff also curved away on either hand, following the line of the beach.

Selecting a quarter from the small coins he had found, Mr. Jones flipped it into the air. "Heads to the right, tails to the left," said he. The coin fell with the eagle uppermost and the castaway obediently started off in the direction indicated by Fate.

Walking was easy on the smooth, wet sand. The night air was so warm that even in his wet clothes Jones was not uncomfortably cold, and although the interminable breakers still roared in almost to his feet, the storm had evidently blown itself out. These rushing seas were only the aftermath.

Presently the beach dwindled away to nothing, and the cliff extended itself into the sea in a sort of long, sloping foot of jagged rocks. Mr. Jones managed to feel his way around this point, drenched again with spray, and wading through shallow pools of water. He tore his clothes and scraped his hands raw, but at last achieved the place where the beach began again.

"Halt!" commanded a stern, uncompromising voice.

Before him loomed the dark bulk of a figure which seemed to be pointing something at him. The figure came closer and the "something" developed into an unpleasant-looking rifle, along whose leveled barrel the starlight glimmered. Behind the figure, a hundred yards or so, Jones saw a yellow gleam of lights, and not far out to sea, on the comparatively quiet waters of a little bay, some sort of vessel lay at anchor.

"Halt!" the man of the rifle again exclaimed in yet harsher tones.

"I have halted," replied Mr. Jones mildly. "May I ask—"

"None of your lip!" said the stranger ferociously. "Who are youse, and what do youse want around here?"

"Nothing—nothing at all. I was just walking along the beach—"

"Ho! Takin' y'r evenin' stroll up Fift' Avenoo, was youse? Well, just stroll along ahead of me now, and no more of your lip. I'll turn youse over to the captain, see? Now, march!"

Perforce Jones marched. He was unarmed, but even if he had carried the automatic pistol (and known how to use it) he could not see what would be gained by opposing this determined and ruffianly person. He stumbled along ahead of his captor, who occasionally hastened his footsteps by prodding him in the back most uncomfortably with his rifle-muzzle.

Luckily it was not far to the lights, where Jones presently discovered that three small tents were erected on the sand.

Another man came forward to meet them. He was a tall, well set-up figure. Even by the dim light of three ship's lanterns, set about in the sand, Jones could see that he was handsome, after a dark, foreign manner, and

generally rather aristocratic in appearance. Neatly attired in white ducks and of a fairly amiable expression, he seemed to Jones far preferable to his first acquaintance.

“What is this, Doherty?” inquired the gentleman in white.

“Youse c’n search me, y’r excellency,” replied the man with the rifle. “I found it up there by the point, and I brung it into camp for yous fellers to cut up or keep, just as you please. I don’t—”

“That will do, Doherty,” broke in the other, a shade of annoyance in his even, cultivated voice. “You may return to your post. And now,” turning to the castaway, “who are you, sir, and how did you come here?” He spoke courteously and with the slightest trace of foreign accent in his otherwise faultless English.

Several other men had now gathered about them. They were rough-looking fellows, unshaven, and with dull, uneducated faces. Their costumes were not elaborate, consisting mostly of a shirt and a pair of more or less ragged trousers, the only exceptions being the man in white and a tall, powerful-looking brute of a fellow who was dressed in a blue serge uniform, like a ship’s officer.

The moment had come for Mr. Jones to relate the tale of his strange misadventure and receive the aid and sympathy to which he knew himself entitled and which he fully expected to get, since rough clothes are by no means the natural insignia of unkind hearts.

“My name is Roland C. Jones,” he began. “I am an American, and during the storm I was cast up on the beach over beyond that point. By the way, is this the coast of Ireland?”

“Is this—*what?*” exclaimed the man in white with a look of intense astonishment.

“Oh, isn’t it?” stammered Mr. Jones, rather taken aback by the stranger’s amazement. “Well, you see I couldn’t very well know what place it was. As I said, I was cast here by the storm, and of course I am very glad indeed to run across you fellows. That’s a yacht you’ve got out there, isn’t it? I thought so by the look of her. I’m a yachtsman myself. My craft’s the little Bandersnatch, New York Yacht Club.”

These words should have been an open sesame to instant solicitude and hospitality, for to own a yacht is to belong to a sort of freemasonry, extending over the whole wide seas; but this stranger only stared at Jones with increasing coldness and suspicion.

“Exactly,” he commented briefly, his lips curling in a curious little smile. “And how did you come to be cast away? Has your yacht been wrecked? Did no one else come ashore? Where are your companions?”

In the teeth of this fusillade of questions Mr. Jones launched once more into his explanation.

“My yacht was not wrecked. I was not on my yacht. I was on board the Lusitania, and Heaven knows where she is now.”

“Heaven probably does,” interrupted the stranger, smiling coldly. “The Lusitania was torpedoed by a German submarine early this morning. We have but just received the information by wireless. If you were one of the victims you are indeed to be pitied. You have been forced to swim a very long way—several thousand miles, I think. Did you come around the Horn, or through the canal, my friend?”

Jones stared at him blankly. Was the man insane? Torpedoed—by Germans—thousands of miles! He clasped his head in his hands and groaned. It must be he himself who was mad. Then raising a very white face he spread out his arms in a gesture of despair.

“I’ll have to admit that I don’t know what you are talking about. I—I am afraid something has happened to my head—or I don’t hear you correctly. No one could possibly torpedo the Lusitania—unless it were an anarchist, and I can’t imagine what you mean by several thousand miles.”

“That is sad. Yes, your brain must be affected, sir. You recollect that you are an American, and that is much, but I think you are mistaken about your name. Well, we will keep you with us. I do not really think it would be safe for you to stray about any longer alone in your pitiful condition. Captain Ivanovitch,” he turned to the tall man in blue serge, “I will turn this young man over to you. You have heard him and will agree with me that it is wise to guard him carefully—against himself, of course. Do you understand?”

He still spoke in English, and it was in broken English that the captain replied. He spoke with a grin.

“Excellency, I und’stand. He have forgot his name. He have forgot even that there ees war. Have you suggest a name which he know perhaps better than that one he say?”

“Not yet. My friend, if I should address you as Richard Holloway, would it arouse no recollections in your mind?” The words were pleasant enough, but the voice was keen and cold as a winter wind.

Jones looked at the man in increased bewilderment. For the sake of peace and until he could escape from these madmen, had he better accept this now cognomen? Before he could make up his mind, “his excellency” turned aside with a short laugh. “Take good care of Mr. Holloway, Ivanovitch,” he flung back over his shoulder. “It is just possible that we may arouse his memory and make him useful.”

“Ah, Meester Hol’way,” said the captain, with deceitful politeness, “eet

is great pleasure to entertain you. So leetle we theenk Reecharde Hol'way come to us so, free of weel. Weel you accept shelter from one of our leetle tents? Yes?"

Some inner instinct informed Mr. Jones that this Holloway personality was a dangerous one to assume. Playing himself off as another man did not appeal to him, anyway.

"I am not the person you seem to think I am," he said rather doggedly. "But I'd go anywhere to get something to eat. I'm nearly starved."

The captain grinned again, mockingly, hatefully. "At once, Meester Hol'way. We are all humbly servants. Dmitri—" Here he turned to one of the seamen who stood by staring stupidly and launched a command in some language which was unfamiliar to Jones, although, judging by the captain's own name and that of the man addressed, he assumed it to be Russian.

The sailor sprang to obey, and Captain Ivanovitch led Mr. Jones to one of the small tents. "Here," said he, "weel Meester Hol'way permit to lodge himself. The tent, he is leetle, but you not mind that. Eet is more better than the ocean, no?"

"Humph! Perhaps," grunted Mr. Jones. He had taken an immediate dislike to the amiable captain. "By the way, you people seem to be very chary of introductions. Who is that gentleman I was just now speaking to? Your owner, I presume?"

"You not know? But of course. I forget you have jus' been sheepwreck. That ees his highness, Preence Sergius Petrofsky. The name also—it call nothing to your mind?"

"Nothing but Siberia and—er—Russian cigarettes. So, he's a connection of the royal family is he? Now, tell me, what is all this fuss about this man Holloway? There's no particle of use in calling *me* Holloway any longer, you know. I never even knew any one of that name."

"So sad, Meester Hol'way. Perhaps you receive the blow upon the head—from wreckage, you und'stand? Eef you will show the place, we try to play the good part. We weel put upon eet the bandage."

"My head is all right, I tell you. My stomach is the only part of me that is in need of attention."

"Ver' good. Here come my man now weeth the good food. We shall not starve you, my friend. Also comes once more hees excellency."

The prince indeed came up at that moment. His features were set in a haughty frown, and he addressed himself immediately to Mr. Jones in a domineering tone.

"See here, Holloway, I have been considering this matter carefully and can see no reason for your continuing the farce. How you came to fall

into our hands is your own affair. But you must not rely upon the fact that your face is unfamiliar to us. There can be no question of your identity. You are the only man on the island—at least on the outside of it, for you yourself are the only person who knows what is inside,—who did not come here in the Monterey. Which places you beyond the shadow of a doubt as Richard Holloway. Now, answer me, yes or no. Will you tell me where lies the entrance to the caverns? If you help us we will make it well worth your while.”

“What caverns?” queried Jones impatiently and with rising anger. These Russians were intolerable.

“Your feigned ignorance will not help you in the least, my friend,” replied Petrofsky sternly. “I mean, of course, the caverns that lead beneath the cliffs. Out of all the caverns, the one which leads to that inner valley of yours. It was your story and yours alone which brought my brother across half a world to seek it.

“Come, sir, it is true that all of us here belong to the Brotherhood, and Paul has poisoned your mind against us. Also, by American eyes, I know that the great cause of nihilism is regarded askance. That is because you have experienced nothing of the evils which we plan to correct. But at least you know that I am a gentleman. If I give my word, I keep it. My brother has your trust.”

“I am glad to hear it,” murmured Jones wearily.

“What is that? I say that I, too, am a Petrofsky, and I swear to you that neither Paul nor those with him shall suffer the very least harm if you will help me. Nay, I will go further and promise that he shall receive his full share of the gains. The cause will not begrudge him that, although he has done his utmost to thwart our participation in this venture. But he and his little party can do nothing now. They have scarcely any provisions, hardly any arms or ammunition. We could sweep down and annihilate them at this moment if I did not always remember that Paul is indeed my brother. Come, Mr. Holloway, save him against himself and for the time at least cast in your lot with us. Will you give me your hand on it?”

Jones hesitated. To him this long rigmarole of nihilists and caverns failed to carry any meaning whatsoever.

“How can I convince you, sir,” he said at last, “that I know nothing whatever of these matters? That all I desire is to get away from this place and continue my quiet, respectable journey to London. And last and most emphatically that my name is certainly not Holloway, but Roland C. Jones, of New York City. You are making a serious mistake, Prince Petrofsky, and a most absurd one, if you will pardon me.”

The Russian's eyes flashed angrily.

"Ho! You are yet stubborn? We will see if we cannot loosen your tongue a bit. Now, listen to me, and remember that I pledge my word as a Petrofsky that this promise will be kept. If you persist in your present attitude you will be taken on board that yacht and triced up to the signal-mast. Then you will be beaten as they beat criminals in Russia. With the knout. Do you know what the knout means? I can see by your expression that you do. Well, make up your mind which it is to be. You may expect either our gratitude or—the other! You have until morning to decide. While making up your mind you may remain in that tent. Ivanovitch, set a guard over this man and see that he does not escape. Mr. Holloway, I give you a very good evening!"

Sergius Petrofsky turned his straight white back upon the dismayed American and stalked off down to the shore. There he got into a waiting dingey and was rowed out to the yacht.

Jones started, shivering slightly, as the captain touched his elbow and said in a soft voice, "You are foolish man, Meester Hol'way. But do not be so foolish as try leave us to-night. You und'stand?"

And Mr. Jones was left with his guard of two bearded sailors.

"Good Lord!" he muttered to himself. "What a crazy mess! Is knouting any worse than drowning, I wonder? I'll bet it is!"

CHAPTER II.

THE ADVENTURER ESCAPES.

Midnight found Mr. Jones sitting in his prison tent disconsolate. There was a neat cot and blankets, but he had never felt less like sleeping in his life. He clung to his wakefulness and the few hours intervening between him and the morrow, like a sick man anticipating an extremely painful but inevitable operation. For something told him that Sergius Petrofsky was not the man to make empty threats.

Mr. Jones could see no way out of his predicament—unless he might anger the Russian into shooting instead of torturing him. The man certainly possessed a violent temper behind those haughty eyes of his.

While the captive was still revolving in his mind this desperate expedient, he suddenly felt something poke him sharply in the back. At the same instant some one said "Sh!" in a sharp, sibilant whisper.

The pain of the unexpected jab made Jones spring to his feet, crashing into the tent-pole and shaking the whole tent so violently that one of his guards appeared in the entrance. He thrust a large hirsute countenance into