

CHAPTER XXI

The fine, three-topmast schooner Ariel, on a cruise around the world, had already been out a year from San Francisco when Jerry boarded her. As a world, and as a white-god world, she was to him beyond compare. She was not small like the Arangi, nor was she cluttered fore and aft, on deck and below, with a spawn of niggers. The only black Jerry found on her was Johnny; while her spaciousness was filled principally with two-legged white-gods.

He met them everywhere, at the wheel, on lookout, washing decks, polishing brass-work, running aloft, or tailing on to sheets and tackles half a dozen at a time. But there was a difference. There were gods and gods, and Jerry was not long in learning that in the hierarchy of the heaven of these white-gods on the Ariel, the sailorizing, ship-working ones were far beneath the captain and his two white-and-gold-clad officers. These, in turn, were less than Harley Kennan and Villa Kennan; for them, it came quickly to him, Harley Kennan commanded. Nevertheless, there was one thing he did not learn and was destined never to learn, namely, the supreme god over all on the Ariel. Although he never tried to know, being unable to think to such a distance, he never came to know whether it was Harley Kennan who commanded Villa, or Villa Kennan who commanded Harley. In a way, without vexing himself with the problem, he accepted their over-lordship of the world as dual. Neither out-ranked the other. They seemed to rule co-equal, while all others bowed before

them.

It is not true that to feed a dog is to win a dog's heart. Never did Harley or Villa feed Jerry; yet it was to them he elected to belong, them he elected to love and serve rather than to the Japanese steward who regularly fed him. For that matter, Jerry, like any dog, was able to differentiate between the mere direct food-giver and the food source. That is, subconsciously, he was aware that not alone his own food, but the food of all on board found its source in the man and woman. They it was who fed all and ruled all. Captain Winters might give orders to the sailors, but Captain Winters took orders from Harley Kennan. Jerry knew this as indubitably as he acted upon it, although all the while it never entered his head as an item of conscious knowledge.

And, as he had been accustomed, all his life, as with Mister Haggin, Skipper, and even with Bashti and the chief devil devil doctor of Somo, he attached himself to the high gods themselves, and from the gods under them received deference accordingly. As Skipper, on the Arangi, and Bashti in Somo, had promulgated taboos, so the man and the woman on the Ariel protected Jerry with taboos. From Sano, the Japanese steward, and from him alone, did Jerry receive food. Not from any sailor in whaleboat or launch could he accept, or would he be offered, a bit of biscuit or an invitation to go ashore for a run. Nor did they offer it. Nor were they permitted to become intimate, to the extent of romping and playing with him, nor even of whistling to him along the deck.

By nature a "one-man" dog, all this was very acceptable to Jerry. Differences of degree there were, of course; but no one more delicately and definitely knew those differences than did Jerry himself. Thus, it was permissible for the two officers to greet him with a "Hello," or a "Good morning," and even to touch a hand in a brief and friendly pat to his head. With Captain Winters, however, greater familiarity obtained. Captain Winters could rub his ears, shake hands with his, scratch his back, and even roughly catch him by the jowls. But Captain Winters invariably surrendered him up when the one man and the one woman appeared on deck.

When it came to liberties, delicious, wanton liberties, Jerry alone of all on board could take them with the man and woman, and, on the other hand, they were the only two to whom he permitted liberties. Any indignity that Villa Kennan chose to inflict upon him he was throbbingly glad to receive, such as doubling his ears inside out till they stuck, at the same time making him sit upright, with helpless forefeet paddling the air for equilibrium, while she blew roguishly in his face and nostrils. As bad was Harley Kennan's trick of catching him gloriously asleep on an edge of Villa's skirt and of tickling the hair between his toes and making him kick involuntarily in his sleep, until he kicked himself awake to hearing of gurgles and snickers of laughter at his expense.

In turn, at night on deck, wriggling her toes at him under a rug to simulate some strange and crawling creature of an invader, he would dare to simulate his own befoolment and quite disrupt Villa's bed with his

frantic ferocious attack on the thing that he knew was only her toes. In gales of laughter, intermingled with half-genuine cries of alarm as almost his teeth caught her toes, she always concluded by gathering him into her arms and laughing the last of her laughter away into his flattened ears of joy and love. Who else, of all on board the Ariel, would have dared such devilishness with the lady-god's bed? This question it never entered his mind to ask himself; yet he was fully aware of how exclusively favoured he was.

Another of his deliberate tricks was one discovered by accident. Thrusting his muzzle to meet her in love, he chanced to encounter her face with his soft-hard little nose with such force as to make her recoil and cry out. When, another time, in all innocence this happened again, he became conscious of it and of its effect upon her; and thereafter, when she grew too wildly wild, too wantonly facetious in her teasing playful love of him, he would thrust his muzzle at her face and make her throw her head back to escape him. After a time, learning that if he persisted, she would settle the situation by gathering him into her arms and gurgling into his ears, he made it a point to act his part until such delectable surrender and joyful culmination were achieved.

Never, by accident, in this deliberate game, did he hurt her chin or cheek so severely as he hurt his own tender nose, but in the hurt itself he found more of delight than pain. All of fun it was, all through, and, in addition, it was love fun. Such hurt was more than fun. Such pain was heart-pleasure.

All dogs are god-worshippers. More fortunate than most dogs, Jerry won to a pair of gods that, no matter how much they commanded, loved more. Although his nose might threaten grievously to hurt the cheek of his adored god, rather than have it really hurt he would have spilled out all the love-tide of his heart that constituted the life of him. He did not live for food, for shelter, for a comfortable place between the darkneses that rounded existence. He lived for love. And as surely as he gladly lived for love, would he have died gladly for love.

Not quickly, in Somo, had Jerry's memory of Skipper and Mister Haggin faded. Life in the cannibal village had been too unsatisfying. There had been too little love. Only love can erase the memory of love, or rather, the hurt of lost love. And on board the Ariel such erasement occurred quickly. Jerry did not forget Skipper and Mister Haggin. But at the moments he remembered them the yearning that accompanied the memory grew less pronounced and painful. The intervals between the moments widened, nor did Skipper and Mister Haggin take form and reality so frequently in his dreams; for, after the manner of dogs, he dreamed much and vividly.