

WEIRD TALES *The Unique Magazine*

EDWIN BAIRD, *Editor*

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The Author of "Whispering Wires" Offers Another Thriller to WEIRD TALES Readers---

The Voice in the Fog

By HENRY LEVERAGE

THE *SERIPHUS* was a ten thousand ton, straight bow ocean tanker, and her history was the common one of Clyde-built ships—a voyage here and a passage there, charters by strange oil companies, petrol for Brazil, crude petroleum that went to Asia (for anointment purposes among the heathen) and once there was a hurried call to some unpronounceable Aegean port where the *Seriphus* acted against the Turks in their flare-up after the Great War.

The ordinary and usual—the up and down the trade routes—passed away from the *Seriphus* when Ezra Morgan, senior captain in the service of William Henningay and Son, took over the tanker and drove her bow into strange Eastern seas, loading with oil at California and discharging cargo in a hundred unknown ports.

of the Orient and traded with them, on the side, for all that he could gain for his own personal benefit.

Trading skippers and engineers with an inclination toward increasing wage by rum-running and smuggling were common in the Eastern service. Ezra Morgan's rival in that direction aboard the *Seriphus* ruled the engine-room and took pride in declaring that every passage was a gold mine for the skipper and himself.

The chief engineer of the *Seriphus* saw no glory in steam, save dollars; he mopped up oil to save money. His name was Paul Richter—a brutal-featured man given to boasting about his daughter, ashore, and what a lady he was making of her.

Paul Richter—whom Morgan hated and watched—was far too skilled in anything pertaining to steam and its ramifications to be removed from his position aboard the *Seriphus*. Henningay, Senior, believed in opposing forces on his many tankers—it led to rivalry and efficiency, instead of closeheadedness and scheming against owners.

Of Ezra Morgan it was said that he had the daring of a Norseman and the thrift of a Maine Yankee; he worked the *Seriphus* for everything the tanker could give William Henningay and Son; he ranted against the outlandish people



The *Seriphus*, after a round passage to Laichau Bay, which is in the Gulf of Pechili, returned to San Francisco and was dry-docked near Oakland, for general overhauling.

Richter, after making an exact and detailed report to Henningay, Jr., visited the opera, banked certain money he had made on the round-passage, then went south to his daughter's home. He found trouble in the house; Hylda, his daughter, had a heart affair with a marine electrician, Gathright by name, a young man with a meager wage and unbounded ambition.

Through the Seven Seas, from the time of his Bavarian wife's death, from cancer of the breast, Richter, chief engineer of the *Seriphus*, had sweated, slaved, saved and smuggled contraband from port in order to say:

"This is my daughter! *Look at her!*"

Now, as Richter discovered, Hylda, twenty-seven years of age, somewhat prim and musical, had given her promise to an electrician whom the engineer believed was not fit to dust her shoes. Richter, used to breaking and thrashing coolie oilers, ordered Gathright from the house and locked up his daughter.

She cried for seven days. Gathright was seen in town. Richter's rage gave way to an engineer's calculation.

"What for I study in University and college? Why do I hold certificates? I fix Gathright!"

No oil was smoother than Richter's well-laid plan; he sent Hylda away and met Gathright.

"All right about my daughter," he told the electrician. "You go one voyage with me—we'll see Henningay—I'll fix you up so that you can draw one hundred and fifty dollars in wage, with a rating as electrician aboard the *Seriphus*."

Gathright went with Richter to San Francisco. They recrossed the Bay, without seeing Henningay, Jr., and, at dusk, climbed over the shoring timbers and went aboard the *Seriphus*. Richter's voice awoke echoes in the deserted ship and dry-dock:

"Come, I show you my dynamo and motors. We go to the boiler-room first, where the pumps are."

The boiler-room, forward the engine-room of the tanker, was a place of many snakelike pipes, valves, sea-plates and oily seepage from the feedtanks. The *Seriphus* was a converted oil-burner, having been built before crude petroleum was used for steaming purposes. Three double-end Scotch boilers made the steam that drove the tanker's triple-expansion engine.

Richter knew the way down to the boiler-room, blindfolded. He struck matches, however, to guide Gathright, and remarked that the newer ships of Henningay's fleet had a storage-battery reserve for lighting purposes when the dynamo ceased running.

Gathright, somewhat suspicious of Hylda's father, took care to keep two steps behind the chief-engineer. They reached and ducked under the bulkhead beam where the door connected the engine-room with the boiler-room. Richter found a flashlamp, snapped it on, swung its rays around and about as if showing Gathright his new duties.

"There's a motor-driven feed-pump," he said. "Something's the matter with the motor's commutator. It sparks under load—can you fix it up?"

There was a professional challenge in the chief engineer's voice; Gathright forgot caution, got down on his knees, leaned toward the motor and ran one finger over the commutator bars. They seemed polished and free from carbon.

Richter reversed his grip on the flashlamp, swung once, twice, and smashed the battery-end of the lamp down on Gathright's head, just over the top of the electrician's right ear.

Gathright fell as if pole-axed and dropped with his hands twitching on a metal plate.

Striking a match, Richter surveyed the electrical engineer.

"Good!" he grunted. "Now I put you where nobody'll ever look—unless I give the order."

A STUMP of candle, stuck by wax to a feed-pipe, allowed Richter illumination sufficient to work by. Swearing, sweating, listening once, he fitted a spanner to bolt-heads on a man-plate in the spare boiler and removed the stubborn bolts until the plate clanged at his feet.

Gathright was a slender man, easy to insert through the man-hole; Richter had no trouble at all lifting the electrician and thrusting him out of sight.

It seemed to the engineer, as he hesitated, that Hylda's lover moaned once and filled the boiler with a hollow sound.

Hesitation passed; and Richter swallowed his superstitious fears, put back the man-hole plate, bolted it tighter than it ever was before, almost stripping the threads, and stepped back, mopping his brow with the sleeve of a shore-coat.

There was nothing very unusual in Richter's further actions that evening. The ship-keeper, who came aboard at daylight, long before the dry-dock men began work, noticed a wet shore-hose, a thin plume of steam aft the tanker's

squat funnel, and there was a trailing line of smoke drifting aslant the *Seriphus*' littered deck.

"Been testing that spare boiler," explained Richter, when the ship-keeper ducked through the bulkhead door. "I think it's tight an' unscaled, but th' starboard one will need new tubes and general cleaning. Get me some soap—I want to wash up."

Richter dried his hands on a towel, tossed it toward the motor-driven feed-pump, then, when he left the boiler-room, his glance ranged from the tightly-bolted man-hole cover up to a gauge on a steam-pipe. The gauge read seventy-pounds—sufficient to parboil a heavier man than Hylda's lover.

"I think that was a good job," concluded the first engineer of the *Seriphus*.

The second engineer of the tanker, a Scot with a burr on his voice like a file rasping the edge of a plate, stood watching Richter balance himself as the stout chief came along a shoring-beam.

"I mark ye ha' steam up," commented the Scotchman, when Richter climbed over the dry dock's wall.

"Yes, in the spareboiler."

Mr. S. V. Ferguson tapped a pipe on his heel.

"I made an inspection, myself, of that, not later than yesterday forenoon. She was tight as a drum an' free from scale. I left th' man-hole—"

"Damn badly gasketed!" growled Richter.

Ferguson started to explain something; but the chief was in a hurry to get away from sight of the *Seriphus*. There was a memory on the tanker that required a drink or two in order to bring forgetfulness. Richter gave the Scot an order that admitted of no answering back.

"Go aboard an' blow off steam! That boiler's all right!"

A roar, when Richter strode past the dry-dock's sheds, caused him to wheel around and listen. Ferguson, according to orders, was blowing off the steam from the spare boiler.

Something, perhaps water or waste, clogged the pipe; and the escaping vapor whistled, sputtered, and rose to a high piercing note that sounded to the chief's irritated nerves like the cry of a soul in agony. The note died, resumed its piercing screeching. Richter's arm and hand shook when he mopped his brow and drew a wet sleeve down with an angry motion.

In fancy the noise that came from the *Seriphus*' starboard side, echoed and deflated by the hollow dock, was Gathright calling for Hylda. Richter covered his ears and staggered away.

EZRA MORGAN hastened such repairs as were required for making the *Seriphus* ready for sea; the tanker left the dry-dock, steamed out the Golden Gate, and took aboard oil at a Southern California port.

All tanks, a well-lashed deck load of cased-lubricant—consigned to a railroad in Manchuri—petroleum for the furnaces, brought the *Seriphus* down to the Pillsoll Mark; she drove from shore and crossed the Pacific where, at three God-forsaken Eastern roadsteads, she unloaded and made agents for the oil-purchasers happy with shipments delivered on time.

The romance of caravan routes, and pale kerosene lamps burning in Tartar tents, escaped both Ezra Morgan and Richter; they went about their business of changing American and English minted gold for certain contrabands much wanted in the States. The chief engineer favored gum-opium as a road to riches; Ezra dealt in liquors and silks, uncut gems and rare laces.

Fortunately for the chief engineer's peace of mind, the spare, double-end Scotch boiler was not used on the Russian voyage. Gathright was forgotten and Hylda, safe in an eastern music school, was not likely to take up with another objectionable lover. Richter, relieved of a weight, went about the engine-room and boiler-room humming a score of tunes, all set to purring dynamos, clanking pumps, and musical cross-heads.

At mid-Pacific, on a second voyage—this time to an oilless country, if ever there were one, Mindanao—a frightened water-tender came through the bulkhead door propelled by scalding steam, and there was much to do aboard the *Seriphus*. The port boiler had blown out a tube; the spare, midship boiler was filled with fresh water and the oil-jets started.

Richter, stripped to the waist, it being one hundred and seventeen degrees hot on deck, drove his force to super-human effort. Ezra Morgan, seven hours after the accident, had the steam and speed he ordered, in no uncertain tones, through the bridge speaking-tube.

Ferguson, a quiet man always, had occasion, the next day, to enter the chief's cabin, where Richter sat writing a letter to Hylda, which he expected to post via a homeward bound ship. Richter glared at the second engineer.

"That spare boiler—" began Ferguson.

"What of it?"

"Well, mon, it's been foamin' an' a gauge-glass broke, an' there's something wrong wi' it."

"We can't repair th' port boiler until we reach Mindanao."

Ferguson turned to go.

"Ye have m' report," he said acidly. "That boiler's bewitched, or somethin'."

"Go aft!" snarled Richter, who resumed writing his letter.

He hesitated once, chewed on the end of the pen, tried to frame the words he wanted to say to Hylda. Then he went on:

"—expect to return to San Francisco within thirty-five days. Keep up your music—forget Gathright—I'll get you a good man, with straight shoulders and a big fortune, when I come back and have time to look around."

Richter succeeded in posting the letter, along with the Captain's mail, when the *Seriphus* spoke a Government collier that afternoon and sheered close enough to toss a package aboard. Ezra Morgan leaned over the bridge-rail and eyed the smudge of smoke and plume of steam that came from the tanker's squat funnel. He called for Richter, who climbed the bridge-ladder to the captain's side.

"We're only logging nine, point five knots," said Ezra Morgan. "Your steam it low—it's getting lower. What's th' matter? Saving oil?"

"That spare boiler is foaming," the chief explained.

"Damn you and your spare boiler! What business had you leaving San Francisco with a defective boiler? Your report to Mr. Henningay stated that everything was all right in engine-room and boiler-room."

"Foam comes from soap or—something else in the water."

"Something else—"

Richter got away from Ezra Morgan on a pretense of going below to the boiler-room. Instead of going below, however, he went aft and leaned over the taffrail. Somehow or other, he feared that spare boiler and the consequence of conscience.

Limping, with three-quarters of the necessary steam pressure, the *Seriphus* reached Mindanao and was forced to return to California without repairs to the port boiler. While repairs, new tubes and tube-sheet were put in place by boilersmiths, Richter saw his daughter, who had come west from music school.

The change in her was pronounced; she spoke not at all of Gathright, whose disappearance she could not understand; and Richter, keen where his daughter

was concerned, realized that her thinness and preoccupation was on account of the missing electrician.

"I get you a fine fellow," he promised Hylda.

He brought several eligible marine engineers to the house. Hylda snubbed them and cried in secret.

An urgent telegram called Richter back to the *Seriphus*. He made two long voyages, one down Chili-way, the other half around the world, before the tanker's bow was turned toward California. Much time had elapsed from the night he had thrust Gathright into the spare boiler and turned on the oil-jets beneath its many tubes. Once, in Valparaiso, an under engineer pointed out red rust leaking from the gauge-glass of the spare boiler.

"Looks like blood," commented this engineer.

Richter scoffed, but that afternoon he drank himself stupid on kummel, obtained from an engineer's club ashore. Another time, just after the tanker left the port of Aden on her homebound passage, a stowaway crawled out from beneath the cold boiler and gave Richter the fright of his life.

"Why, mon," said Ferguson, who was present in the boiler-room, "that's only a poor wisp o' an Arab."

"I thought it was a ghost," blabbered Richter.

Barometer pressure rose when the *Seriphus* neared mid-Pacific. Ezra Morgan predicted a typhoon before the tanker was on the longitude of Guam. Long rollers came slicing across the *Seriphus'* bow, drenched the forecastle, filled the ventilators and flooded the boiler-room.

Richter went below, braced himself in the rolling engine-room, listened to his engines clanking their sturdy song, then waddled over the gratings and ducked below the beam that marked the bulkhead door. An oiler in high rubber-boots lunged toward the chief engineer.

"There's something inside th' spare boiler!" shouted the man. "Th' boiler-room crew won't work, sir."

Richter waded toward a frightened group all of whom were staring at the spare boiler. A hollow rattling sounded when the tanker heaved and pitched—as if some one were knocking bony knuckles against the stubborn iron plates.

"A loose bolt," whispered Richter. "Keep th' steam to th' mark, or I'll wipe a Stillson across th' backs of all of you," he added in a voice that they could hear and understand.

Superstition, due to the menacing storm and high barometer, the uncanny

noises in the racked boiler-room, Richter's bullying manner, put fear in the hearts of the deck crew. Oil-pipes clogged, pumps refused to work, valves stuck and could scarcely be moved.

"I've noo doot," Ferguson told his Chief, "there's a ghost taken up its abode wi' us."

Richter drank quart after quart of trade-gin.

THE BAROMETER became unsteady, the sky hazy, the air melting hot, and a low, rugged cloud bank appeared over the *Seriphus*' port bow.

Down fell the barometer, a half-inch, almost, and the avalanche of rain and wind that struck the freighter was as if Thor was hammering her iron plates.

Ezra Morgan, unable to escape from the typhoon's center, prepared to ride out the storm by bringing the *Seriphus* up until she had the sea on the bow, and he had held her there by going half speed ahead. A night of terror ruled the tanker; the decks were awash, stays snapped, spume rose and dashed over the squat funnel aft the bridge.

Morning, red-hued, with greenish patches, revealed a harrowed ocean, waves of tidal height, and astern lay a battered hulk—a freighter, dismantled, smashed, going down slowly by the bow.

"A Japanese tramp," said Ezra Morgan. "Some *Maru* or other, out of the Carolines bound for Yokohama."

Richter, stupid from trade-gin was on the bridge with the Yankee skipper.

"We can't help her," the engineer said heavily. "I think we got all we can do to save ourselves."

Ezra Morgan entertained another opinion. The storm had somewhat subsided, and the wind was lighter, but the waves were higher than ever he had known them. They broke over the doomed freighter like surf on a reef.

"Yon's a distress signal flying," said Ezra Morgan. "There's a few seamen aft that look like drowned rats. We'll go before th' sea—I'll put th' sea abart th' beam, an we'll outboard oil enough to lower a small-boat an' take those men off that freighter."

The maneuver was executed, the screw turned slowly, oil was poured through the waste-pipes and spread magically down the wind until the freighter's deck, from aft the forehouse, could be seen above the waves.

Over the patch of comparative calm oars dipped, and a mate, in charge of the small boat lowered from the *Seriphus*, succeeded in getting off the survivors who were clinging to the freighter's taffrail.

The small boat lived in a sea that had foundered big ships. It returned to the tanker's bow; and the four men, bruised, broken, all half-dead from immersion, were hoisted to the forepeak and taken aft. Two were Japanese sailors and two were Americans—a wireless operator and an engineer. The engineer had a broken leg which required setting, and the wireless operator was in a bad fix; wreckage had stove in his features, and twisted his limbs.

Ezra Morgan was a rough and ready surgeon-doctor; he turned the *Seriphus* over to the first-mate and made a sick room out of Richter's cabin. The chief protested.

"Get below to your damn steam!" roared Ezra Morgan. "You hated to see me bring aboard these poor seamen; you said I wasted fuel oil; your breath smells like a gin-mill. Below with you, sir!"

The engine-room and boiler-room of the tanker, she being in water ballast, was not unlike an inferno; the first-mate, acting on Ezra Morgan's instructions, drove the *Seriphus* at three-quarter speed into a series of head-on waves; the ship rolled and yawed, tossed, settled down astern, then her screw raced in mingled foam and brine.

Richter's stomach belched gas; he became sea-sick, climbed into a foul-smelling "ditty-box" of a cabin, aft the engine-room, and attempted to sleep off the effect of the gin. Picture-post-cards, mostly of actresses, a glaring electric over the bunk, oil and water swishing the metal deck below, and the irritating clank of irregular-running engines drove sleep away from him.

Ferguson, the silent second-engineer, came into the "ditty-box" at eight bells, or four o'clock. Ferguson's thumb jerked forward.

"I'll have t' use that spare boiler," said he.

"What's th' matter, now?"

"Feed-pipes clogged in starb'ard one, sir."

"Use it," said Richter.

Steam was gotten up on the spare, double-end Scotch boiler; the starboard boiler was allowed to cool; Ferguson, despite the tanker's rolling motion, succeeded in satisfying Ezra Morgan by keeping up the three-quarter speed set by the skipper.

Richter sobered when the last of the trade-gin was gone; the *Seriphus* was between Guam and Frisco; the heavy seas encountered were the afterkick of the simoon.

Rolling drunkenly, from habit, the chief went on the bridge and asked

about getting back his comfortable cabin aft. Ezra Morgan gave him no satisfaction.

"Better stay near your boilers," advised the captain. "Everything's gone to hell, sir, since you changed from kummel to gin."

"Are not th' injured seamen well yet?"

"Th' wireless chap's doing all right—but th' engineer of that Japanese freighter is hurt internally. You can't have that cabin, this side of San Francisco."

"What were two Americans doing in that cheap service?"

Ezra Morgan glanced sharply at Richter.

"Everybody isn't money mad—like you. There's many a good engineer, and mate, too, in th' Japanese Merchant Marine. Nippon can teach us a thing or two—particularly about keeping Scotch boilers up to th' steaming point."

This cut direct sent Richter off the bridge; he encountered a bandaged and goggled survivor of the freighter's wreck at the head of the engine-room ladder. The wireless operator, leaning on a crutch whittled by a bo'sain, avoided Richter, who pushed him roughly aside and descended the ladder, backward.

White steam, lurid oaths, Scotch anathema from the direction of the boiler-room, indicated more trouble. Ferguson came from forward and bumped into Richter, so thick was the escaping vapor.

"Out o' my way, mon," the second engineer started to say, then clamped his teeth on his tongue.

"What's happened, now!" queried Richter.

"It's that wicked spare boiler—she's aleak an' foamin,' an' there's water in th' fire-boxes."

Richter inclined his bullet shaped head; he heard steam hissing and oilers cursing the day they had signed on the *Seriphus*. A blast when a gasket gave way, hurtled scorched men between Richter and Ferguson; a whine sounded from the direction of the boiler-room, the whine rose to an unearthly roar: Richter saw a blanket of white vapor floating about the engine's cylinders. This vapor, to his muddled fancy, seemed to contain the figure of a man wrapped in a winding shroud.

He clapped both hands over his eyes, hearing above the noise of escaping steam a call so distinct it chilled his blood.

"*Hylde!*"

NOW there was that in the ghostly voice that brought Richter's gin-swollen brain to the realization of the thing he had done in disposing of Gathright by bolting him in the spare boiler.

No good luck had followed that action; Hylda was still disconsolate; trade and smuggling was at a low ebb; there was talk, aboard and ashore, of reducing engineers' and skippers' wage to the bone.

Richter had a Teutonic stubbornness; Ezra Morgan had certainly turned against his chief engineer; the thing to do was to lay the ghostly voice, make what repairs were necessary in the boiler-room, and give the tanker's engines the steam they needed in order to make a quick return passage to San Francisco and please the Henningays.

An insane rage mastered Richter—the same red-vision he had experienced when he threw Gathright out of his daughter's house. He lowered his bullet head, brushed the curling vapors from his eyes, and plunged through the bulkhead door, bringing up in scalding steam before the after end of the midship, or spare boiler.

Grotesquely loomed all three boilers. They resembled humped-camels kneeling in a narrow shed by some misty river. Steam in quantity came hissing from the central camel; out of the furnace-doors, from a feed-pipe's packing, around a flange where the gauge-glass was riveted.

The *Seriphus* climbed a long Pacific roller, steadied, then rocked in the trough between seas; iron plates, gratings, flue-cleaners, scrapers, clattered around Richter who felt the flesh on neck and wrist rising into water blisters.

No one had thought to close the globe-valve in the oil supply line, or to extinguish the fires beneath the spare and leaking boiler. Richter groped through a steam cloud, searching for the hand-wheel on the pipe line. All the metal he touched was simmering hot.

A breath of sea air came down a ventilator; Richter gulped this air and tried to locate the globe-valve with the iron wheel. Vision cleared, he saw the red and open mouth of the central camel—the flannel-like flames and he heard through toothed-bars a voice calling, "Hylda!"

Ferguson and a water tender drag-

ged their chief from the boiler room by the heels; blistered, with the skin peeled from his features, Richter's eyes resembled hot coals in their madness. Blabbering nonsense, the engineer gave one understandable order:

"Put out th' fire, draw th' water, search inside th' spare boiler—there's something there, damit!"

Ezra Morgan came below, while the spare boiler was cooling, and entered Richter's temporary cabin—the "ditty-box" with the play actresses' pictures glued everywhere. Ferguson had applied rude doctoring—gauze bandages soaked in petroleum—on face and arms.

"What's th' matter, man?" asked Ezra Morgan. "Have you gone mad?"

"I heard some one calling my daughter, Hylda."

"Where do you keep your gin?"

"It's gone! Th' voice was there inside th' spare boiler. Did Ferguson look; did he find a skeleton, or—"

Ezra Morgan pinched Richter's left arm, jabbed home a hypodermic containing morphine, and left the chief engineer to sleep out his delusions. Ferguson came to the "ditty-box" some watches later. Richter sat up.

"What was in th' spare boiler?" asked the chief.

"Scale, soda, a soapy substance."

"Nothing else?"

"Why, mon, that's enough to make her foam."

Richter dropped back on the bunk and closed his lashless eyes.

"Suppose a man, a stowaway, had crawled through th' aft man-hole, an' died inside th' boiler? Would that make it foam—make th' soapy substance?"

"When could any stowaway do that?"

Richter framed his answer craftily: "Say it was done when th' *Seriphus* was at Oakland that time th' boilers were repaired in dry-dock."

Ferguson drew on his memory. "Th' time, mon, ye went aboard an' tested th' spare boiler? Th' occasion when ye took th' trouble to rig up a shore-hose in order to fill th' boiler wi' water?"

"Yes."

"Did ye ha' a man-hole plate off th' boiler?"

"I removed th' after-end plate, then went for th' hose. We had no steam up, you remember, and our feed-pumps are motor-driven."

"Ye think a mon might ha' crawled through to th' boiler during your absence?"

"Yes!"

"Ye may b' right—but if one did he could ha' escaped by th' fore man-hole plate. I had that off, an' wondered who put it back again so carelessly. Ye know th' boiler is a double-ender—wi' twa man-holes."

Richter was too numbed to show surprise. Ferguson left the "ditty-box" and pulled shut the door. The tanker, under reduced steam, made slow headway toward San Francisco.

One morning, a day out from soundings, the chief engineer awoke, felt around in the gloom, and attempted to switch on the electric light.

He got up and threw his legs over the edge of the bunk. A man sat leaning against the after plate. Richter blinked; the man, from the goggles on him and the crutch that lay across his knees, was the wireless operator who had been rescued from a sea grave.

"No need for light," said the visitor in a familiar voice. "You can guess who I am, Richter."

"A ghost!" said the chief. "Gathright's ghost! Come to haunt me!"

"Not exactly to haunt you. I assure you I am living flesh—somewhat twisted, but living. I got out of that midship boiler, while you were bolting me in so securely. I waited until you went on deck for a hose, and replaced the after man-hole cover. I was stunned and lay hidden aboard for two days. Then I looked for Hylda. She was gone. I shipped as electrician for a port in Japan. I knocked around a bit—at radio work for the Japanese. It was chance that the *Seriphus* should have picked me up from the *Nippon Maru*."

"That voice calling for Hylda," cried Richter.

"Was a little reminder that I sent through the boiler-room ventilator; I knew you were down there, Richter."

The marine engineer switched on the electric light.

"What do you want?" he whined to Gathright.

"Hylda—your daughter!"

Paul Richter covered his eyes.

"If she will atone for the harm I have done you, Gathright, she is yours with her father's blessing."