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THAT TOUGH GUY HOBBS! THE OCEAN OUTLAW! HIKE
AND MIKE! DYNAMITE DON! ACES OF THE LEGION!
THE CHEERIO CASTAWAYS! HERNE THE HUNTER!

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The RANGER 2^D



That Tough Guy Hobbs!



THE CHEERIO CASTAWAYS

By FRANK RICHARDS.

Two in the Trap!

“A” CH! Urrrg! Gurrgh! Himmel! Urrgh! Fritz Splitz gurgled. Fritz was running. Sprinting was not Fatty Fritz's long suit. He never ran, and seldom walked, if he could help it. And in the hot sunshine on Castaway Island, in the West Indies, Fritz was

less likely to run than at Grimsdale School, on the Yorkshire moors—if only he could have helped it. But he couldn't!

There was danger behind Fritz von Splitz! The fact that he had already left the danger a couple of miles behind did not occur to his terrified fat mind. He ran, and ran, and ran, while gurgling gasps escaped him, the perspiration poured in streams down his fat face, and trickled down his podgy neck.

Not once did Fatty Fritz look back. Had he done so he might have discovered that he was not pursued. Fritz's one idea was to put a safe distance between himself and the three convicts from Devil's Island, who had attacked Jim Dainty & Co. at the castaways' hut, on East Bay.

In Fritz's fat brain there was room for only one idea at a time. What might have happened to the other fellows he did not know—and did not stop to think. What might happen to him personally, was the important matter. And he ran, and ran, and ran!

Not only did he not look back, but he did not even look where he was going! By one jungle path after another he barged on. He had a faint hope of falling in with Dr. Samuel Sparshott, who had gone in that direction earlier in the day. But he hardly thought of Sammy—he hardly thought at all. He ran and ran!

That was how disaster came. It was a case of more haste and less speed! He came out on an open tract of dusty sand, between two stretches of tropical jungle. Across it he went panting, blinded by brilliant sunshine, his vision blurred by the perspiration that dripped down his fat forehead. Suddenly he found himself rolling and falling.

“Ach!” gurgled Fritz. There was a split in the sandy earth—a deep sun-crack in the arid soil. Fritz barged into it before he saw it.

He found himself lying half buried in soft sand at the bottom of the twelve-foot-deep rift, hardly knowing how he got there. It was fortunate for Fritz that there was soft sand at the bottom, or Fritz might have been damaged by the fall. As it was, he was half-buried and three-quarters suffocated. He wriggled up from the sand, gurgling horribly.

“Ach! Himmel! I was joked in mein troat!” gasped Fritz. “Mein gootness, I have no more to breff! Urrrrgh!”

Sitting on the sand, Fritz blinked up with his round, saucer eyes, in terrified expectation of seeing a savage-featured, brawny, bearded convict glaring down at him over the edge. But no such dreadful apparition appeared;

and there was no sound, save the gurgling of Fritz himself. It dawned on his fat brain at last that he had not been followed in his flight from the castaways' hut.

That was a tremendous relief to Fritz. Unpursued, he could keep on at a more leisurely pace, and look for Dr. Sparshott. Having rested and recovered his wind, he scrambled up to climb out of the fissure. It was then that he made the unhappy discovery that it was impossible to climb out.

The sides were steep, of a soft, sandy earth that gave in the grasp. He explored each end of the fissure, and found it closed by a similar sandy wall. Sand fell on him in showers as he attempted to clamber. He gathered handfuls of it. But there was nothing else doing.

“Mein gootness!” groaned Fritz, at last, as his podgy brain realised the trap into which he had stumbled.

THERE'S A WAR ON ON CAST-
AWAY ISLAND, BUT THAT
MAKES NO DIFFERENCE—FATTY
FRITZ HAS TO “BEND OVER”
AND TAKE SIX!

There was no escape without help. Even Friday, the monkey, could hardly have climbed out had he been there instead of Fritz. Fritz von Splitz gazed up at the strip of bright blue sky over the fissure.

“Mein gootness! I vas vun tead Cherman!” groaned Fritz.

How far he was from the castaways' hut he did not know; but he knew it must be at least two miles.

Jim Dainty & Co. could not help him—even if they had not already been massacred by the convicts, as Fatty Fritz dreaded. Dr. Sparshott, if he was on his homeward way from the western side of the island, might hear a shout. But so might the Devil's Island gang if they were looking for him. Fritz did not shout. He groaned.

Up and down and round about that deep sandy fissure the fat Rhineland roved, like a fat rabbit in a cage. But there was no outlet, and he sat down to rest at last. He was tired, he was terribly thirsty, and he was, of course, hungry—that being Fritz's permanent state.

Again and again he almost made up his mind to shout for help. But every time the terrible thought of that shout reaching the ears of the convicts deterred him.

It seemed to the hapless Fritz that whole centuries passed. The fissure was like an oven for heat; Fritz was almost cooking. The red in the sky told him that the sun was setting and the heat was a shade less baking.

At sunset, Dr. Sparshott was scheduled to return to the hut. There had been no sign of the convicts. At long last Fritz resolved to risk it. He shouted and shouted:

“Help! Help! Gum to me! Help!”

His fat throat was dry and husky. But now

that he had started he kept on. Shout after shout, howl after howl, echoed up.

A dark shadow fell suddenly across the fissure above. It was a man's shadow, and the sight of it almost brought Fritz's fat heart to his mouth. If it was one of the Devil's Island gang—The next moment the familiar face of Dr. Samuel Sparshott, headmaster of Grimsdale, was looking down at him.

“Ach! Is tat Sammy?” gasped Fritz. “It is your headmaster!” said Dr. Sparshott severely. “What are you doing there, you young donkey?”

“I tink tat I tumble in.” “I gave you all orders to remain at the hut!” said Sammy, frowning. “It was lucky for you I was coming back this way, Splitz. Otherwise, you would certainly have remained there all night. I shall give you six for disobeying orders when I get you out.”

Fritz opened his mouth—and closed it again. He had a good excuse to give for disobeying Sammy's orders to remain at the hut. But if he told Sammy that the Devil's Island gang was there, it was only too probable that Sammy would rush off to the rescue, leaving Fritz's rescue till a later and more convenient time. In fact, it was certain. Fritz sagely decided to say nothing till he was safe out of the trap!

Dr. Sparshott disappeared from his sight. One glance had shown Sammy that it was impossible to climb out. He needed a rope. Materials for ropes grew in abundance in the jungle. With his keen knife the headmaster of Grimsdale cut length after length of thick, wiry liana, and returned to the rift with his arms full.

Fritz was glad to see his shadow fall again. The headmaster of Grimsdale sat down to plait the wiry creepers into a rope. It was swift work in Sammy's active hands. The rope, as he manufactured it, snaked down, Fatty Fritz watching it with eager eyes as it came.

Swift as Sammy's fingers were, half an hour passed before the rope was ready. The sun was low in the west now, behind the island hill. Shadows deepened at the bottom of the deep rift. But the end of the rope reached Fritz Splitz at last.

“Catch hold! Hold tight!” barked Sammy Sparshott. “You are too clumsy to climb—I must pull you up!”

Fatty Fritz wound his fat arms round the liana rope. He held on for dear life, as Dr. Sparshott braced himself for the pull, and put his beef into it.

Even for a strong and sinewy man like Sammy, it was no easy matter to pull up the fat Rhineland's weight. But up he went, inch by inch, and foot by foot, brushing away showers of sand and earth from the side of the fissure as he was dragged, his fat legs kicking wildly.

Up and up, till he was at the top. His fat, crimson face looked at Sammy over the edge. Sammy was breathing hard and deep, and the perspiration stood out in beads on his sunburnt forehead.

“Ach! Tat you giff me a hand!” grasped Fritz.

With a grunt Sammy bent over to him and

gave him a hand. The rope had scored deep into the sandy edge. Fritz flung both his arms round Sammy's neck.

"Don't pull me in!" yelled Sammy.

"Ach! Ton't led me go!" gurgled Fritz, clutching frantically.

Dr. Sparshott made a herculean effort to fling himself back, dragging Fritz after him. He would have succeeded, heavy as the strain was, but the treacherous earth gave way. Under the pressure of Sammy's feet, and Fritz's weight hanging to him, a great chunk of sandy soil was dislodged. It shot down into the fissure, and with it shot Fritz Splitz and Dr. Sparshott. They landed, sprawling, in clouds of dust.

"Ach!" gurgled Fritz. "I vas tead and puried!"

"You young idiot!" spluttered Dr. Sparshott.

He dragged himself to his feet. He glared round him. The liana rope lay tangled by the side of the gasping Fritz. Sammy Sparshott gritted his teeth. Fritz's terrified clumsiness had done the trick. Instead of getting Fritz out, Fritz had got Sammy in! Both were in the trap now.

Dr. Sparshott drew a deep, deep breath.

"Mein gootness!" Fritz wriggled out of the sand. "Vat ve do now? Ve vas bofe in tat peastly pit before! Vat ve do?"

"I have a great mind," said Dr. Sparshott quietly, "to give you the thrashing of your life for your clumsiness! But you will probably suffer enough before we are through. We can do nothing—until our friends search for us and find us, Splitz."

"But tey cannot!" gasped Fritz, in horror.

"Tose peastly gonvicts are at te hut—"

"What?" roared Dr. Sparshott.

"That vas vy I run mit meinself before!" groaned Fritz. "Tose gonvicts vas tere, and I tink tat Tainty and Chinger and te odders are ferry likely knock on te head mit temselves after—"

Fritz broke off, silenced by the look that came over Dr. Sparshott's face.

Sammy did not speak. He turned to the sandy wall of the fissure and strove, by desperate and almost frantic efforts, to climb out. Again and again he rolled back in showers of sandy earth and stones. Again and again he strove, Fritz watching, with palpitating heart.

Once, by sheer iron will, the headmaster of Grimslade won half the distance. But it was only to come rolling back as the soft earth crumbled in his grasp. At last he lay exhausted, breathing in gulps, the thoughts in his mind too bitter for words.

The sun was gone, and darkness fell on Castaway Island. Faintly, from the far distance, came an echo of sound that might have been the popping of corks. But Sammy Sparshott knew what it was. It was firing at the hut! And the headmaster of Grimslade groaned in sheer misery, as he knew that his boys were at grips with the Devil's Island gang, and he could not go to their aid.

Friday!

JIM DAINTY gritted his teeth.

"If Sammy would only come! Where's Sammy?" he muttered.

But Jim's comrades could not answer that question. Sammy Sparshott, expected back at the hut at sunset, had not come, and there was no sign of him.

The sun was gone; darkness lay like a cloak on the lonely island and the vast, murmuring sea that circled it. Among the rocks, at a little distance from the hut that backed under a tall cliff, the five schoolboys of Grimslade crouched, watching the hut and waiting, eyes gleaming and nerves tense.

There was a glimmer of light from the chinks of the little building; one of the convicts there had lighted a candle. But for that glimmer, all was black.

Jimmy Dainty and Ginger Rawlinson gripped six-shooters—the only firearms on Castaway Island, with the exception of the one carried by Dr. Sparshott. Dick Dawson and Streaky Bacon and Sandy Bean had axes in hand.

So long as daylight had lasted, the schoolboys held the trumps; the desperate rascals

from Devil's Island did not venture to face their fire. But after the fall of night it was a different matter. Shooting in the dark was not likely to help much.

The schoolboys were five against three; but the three were brawny, desperate men, hardened convicts from the French penal settlement on the coast of Guiana. And now that they had captured the hut, they were in possession of weapons—axes, knives, terrible weapons in such hands.

The shipwrecked Grimsladers were brave enough, but they knew only too well how doubtful such a struggle would be when it came. Even if they were victorious, it meant grim death to some of them. If Sammy would only have come!

Of Fritz they thought not at all; they had hardly remembered the fat Rhinelander since he had fled early in the day, and certainly did not guess that he was the cause of Sammy's continued absence. Sammy was hunting the convicts on the other side of the island—and they were here, almost at the throats of the schoolboys! If he was on his way back, he must surely have heard the firing. But he had not come.

In the silence came the muttering of the convicts' voices in the hut. Lautrec and his gang had taken a desperate chance, but it was not so desperate now that Sammy had failed to return. And they were not likely to wait till he came.

Now that they were armed, and the fall of night protected them from the shooting, Jim Dainty & Co. expected an attack at any moment. A rush in the dark, with flashing axe and knife! As soon as the candle was extinguished in the hut, the castaway schoolboys knew what to expect.

"My giddy goloshes!" breathed Ginger Rawlinson. "I wish they'd start! Anything's better than waiting for the brutes!"

Streaky Bacon gave a start. His ear caught a scuttling sound from the palm grove, dark as pitch at a little distance.

"Is that Sammy coming? Did you hear something?"

The juniors listened intently, but there was no sound of a footstep. Jim shook his head.

"Not Sammy. A monkey, perhaps. Old Friday coming home, very likely! What can have happened to Sammy?"

Friday, the monkey, had been absent all day, rambling in the woods of the island. Even Jim had forgotten him. He remembered him now for a moment. But his thoughts were on Sammy. If only Sammy came before the Devil's Island gang emerged from the hut in the dark—

"Look out!" whispered Sandy Bean.

The light of the candle was suddenly gone. The hut vanished from sight, swallowed up in the black shadow of the cliff against which it backed.

"They're coming!" breathed Dick.

Jim Dainty, kneeling behind a boulder, raised his revolver. There was nothing to be seen, but he hoped to guide a shot by hearing. From the blackness under the cliff came a sound of footsteps. The three convicts were emerging from the hut.

Jim pulled trigger, firing at the sound. A startled yell followed the shot, and a heavy fall, then a succession of imprecations in French. One of the ruffians was down!

"Oh, good luck!" breathed Ginger; and he blazed away in his turn.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

The howling of the wounded man sounded from the hut; he had not

stirred from where he fell. There were only two enemies to deal with when the tussle came. But it was coming now.

The two ruffians rushed on, guided by the flashing of the revolvers. Only by luck could a shot tell in the darkness—and there was no more such luck for the castaways. They stood in a bunch, weapon in hand, with set teeth. Lautrec, the black-haired convict, and a brawny, bull-necked ruffian leaped at them from the darkness, striking and slashing. Gleaming axe and lunging knife were met by slashing axe and clubbed revolver.

"Back up, Grimslade!" panted Ginger Rawlinson.

His revolver was dashed from his hand. Lautrec's axe glinted over his head. Ginger ducked his red head and ran in, barely escaping the blow, the handle of the axe crashing on his shoulder.

He grappled with the black-haired convict and struggled. Lautrec's knife, in his left hand, was touching the junior's ribs when they stumbled into Streaky, who grasped the convict and dragged him over. The knife clattered on the earth, and the three of them struggled together.

Jim Dainty and Dick Dawson were defending themselves desperately from the bull-necked convict, who wielded a heavy axe with both hands. Sandy rushed to their aid. But the three schoolboys had to retreat under the heavy slashes of the axe. Had the third convict been in action, matters would have been desperate. But the wounded wretch was still howling at the hut.



"Ach! Ton't led me go!" gurgled Fritz, clutching Sammy frantically round the neck. Dr. Sparshott made a herculean effort to fling himself back, but a great chunk of the sandy soil was dislodged—and Fritz and Sammy went topping downwards into the pit!

Lautrec tore himself loose from Ginger and Streaky and sprang for his fallen axe. As he groped for it they hurled themselves on him desperately, but he eluded their blows with the agility of a cat and sprang away, the axe in his hand. Then he turned on them like a tiger.

From the palm grove came a sound of running feet. A figure in glimmering cotton shirt and trousers loomed up in the glimmer of the stars, uttering strange yells as it dashed on the scene.

"Sammy!" roared Ginger, mad with delight. "Oh, Sammy! Help here! Sammy!"

"Sammy!" roared Jim Dainty.

"Mille diables!" yelled Lautrec; and he backed from the schoolboys and ran for the hut.

The diversion had only come in time to save at least one of the schoolboy castaways from his slashing axe. But with Sammy rushing on the scene, the black-haired convict dared not waste a second. He raced for the hut, and plunged headlong in. The wounded convict had barely time to crawl in before Lautrec slammed the door and the bars jammed into place.

The bull-necked convict, engaged with Jim and Dick and Sandy, was not so lucky. He backed away, but the juniors followed him up. Ginger and Streaky joined them, their own opponent having vanished; and the five castaways pressed the ruffian hard. He retreated desperately up the path to the hut, defending himself with fierce slashes of his axe, yelling to Lautrec for aid.

"Sammy," yelled Ginger, "we've got 'em! Come on, Sammy!" In the wild excitement of the moment, Ginger rather forgot that it was his headmaster he was addressing.

"Sammy!" yelled Ginger, "we've got 'em! Come on, Sammy!" In the wild excitement of the moment, Ginger rather forgot that it was his headmaster he was addressing.

"That won't last long with Sammy here!" grinned Ginger. He stared round. "Dr. Sparshott! Where— My giddy goloshes! Where's Sammy?"

Lautrec and the wounded man were barred in the hut. The other convict lay senseless on the earth. The juniors had dealt with him—without the help of Sammy. Sammy was not the man to waste a second when a fight was going on. It was amazing that he had not joined in. Where was Sammy? What did it mean? The schoolboy castaways shouted Sammy's name.

A squeal answered from the shadows. A strange figure, in cotton shirt and trousers, with a tail whisking behind, hopped out of the gloom. The schoolboys stared at it, almost petrified. Evidently it was not Sammy!

"Friday!" shrieked Jim Dainty.

"Oh, my giddy goloshes!"

"The jolly old monk!" gurgled Streaky.

Friday, delighted to see his master again, skipped round him, squealing. The juniors gasped with laughter. Sammy had not returned. It was Friday the monkey who had caused the sudden diversion in favour of the castaways, and turned the tide of battle!

The juniors had believed that it was Sammy, coming in the nick of time—the convicts had believed so too. But it was not Sammy! It was Friday, capering and squealing, chattering and jabbering.

Jim Dainty fairly hugged his monkey pal.

To the Rescue!

SAMMY SPARSHOTT groaned aloud.

Fritz Splitz mumbled dismally. Never had the headmaster of Grimslade been so bitterly anxious and oppressed by dread. What had happened to his boys?

He had learned from Fritz that Lautrec had captured the hut—but more Fritz could not tell him, as he had not stayed to learn more before taking to flight. All Sammy knew was that there had been firing since—but now there was silence, oppressive silence; and he hardly dared to think of what that silence might mean.

He blamed himself for having left the boys while he hunted for the Devil's Island gang; yet what had happened, showed how necessary it had been to hunt them down. At the bottom of the sandy rift, Sammy was like a tiger in a cage.

Fritz had his troubles, too. He was hungry. Sammy had dropped his waterbottle in his struggles to escape from the rift, and Fritz had seized it and emptied it. So he was not thirsty. But he was hungry! Sammy had provisions in his rucksack; but in Sammy's present mood, and with that look on Sammy's face, Fritz dared not speak.

What did the silence mean? If the convicts had the hut, they had deadly weapons in their hands again, and that meant—Sammy shivered to think what it probably meant. He groaned aloud as he thought of it.

Several times he took the revolver from his belt, with the idea of firing a signal. But he refrained. Two shots in quick succession was the agreed signal for help, when the castaways were separated. But to call the boys to his help, when more likely than not they were hard-pressed by savage enemies—And yet, did the silence mean that the fight was over, and that it had gone against them?

"Mein gootness!" groaned Fritz Splitz. He could contain himself no longer. "Mein gootness! This is treading!"

Dr. Sparshott glanced at him, a fat shadow in the gloom. He had almost forgotten Fritz. But if Fritz was sharing his anxiety for the boys, he felt bound to comfort him.

"Hope for the best, my boy!" said the Head of Grimslade gently. "They may have held their own! We must hope so."

"But I was so hungry!" groaned Fritz.

"What?" roared Sammy. Evidently it was not the fellows at the hut that Fritz was thinking of.

"Ach, giff me somethings to eat, or I tink tat I tie!" groaned Fritz. "I was so hungry tat it is treading!"

Dr. Sparshott groped towards him. Fritz blinked at him hopefully. The next moment there was a sound like a pistol shot in the rift. It was a terrific smack on the fat Rhinelander.

"Yarooooooh!" roared Fritz. "Ach himmel! Vy for you pang me on mein trousers? Whoop!"

"Be silent!" barked Dr. Sparshott.

Fritz Splitz groaned, and was silent. Nothing that was happening on Castaway Island, so far as Fritz could see, mattered so much as the yawning vacancy inside Friedrich von Splitz! But he contrived to bear his woes in silence. He did not want any more hefty smacks.

Dr. Sparshott took the revolver from his belt again. He had to know! If the boys still lived, they would answer his signal.

Crack! Crack! Two sharp shots rang out on the silence of the tropic night, ringing far, and dying away in a thousand echoes. The headmaster of Grimslade listened, with tense face and throbbing heart.

Crack! Crack! came back from the far distance, faintly but clearly. It was the answer to his signal—and Sammy panted with relief. The struggle could not have gone against the castaway schoolboys—some of them, at least, survived, or the answer could not have come!

Sammy waited. He could only wait. If they had the upper hand they would come to his help, following the sound of the signal shots.

The minutes dragged by on leaden wings. There was a glimmer of silvery light, as the moon came out over the island hill.

At last Sammy loosed off a couple more shots to guide the schoolboys if they were seeking him. It was but a few moments before the crack-crack of the answer came—nearer at hand, loud and sharp. And it was not long after that that he heard a shouting voice, and recognised it as Jim Dainty's. He shouted back, with all the force of his lungs.

"Hallo, Grimslade!"

Jim's shout came again, and at last there was a sound of running feet.

A shadow in the rising moonlight fell across the rift, as Jim stopped on the edge.

"Dr. Sparshott! Where—"

"Here! Take care not to tumble in!"

Dr. Sparshott stared up at a face that looked down over the sandy edge. Jim stared down at him.

"You're not hurt, sir?"

"No! What has happened—are all safe?"

"Safe as houses, sir! All safe!"

"Heaven be praised!" breathed Dr. Sparshott.

"Lautrec and another man, wounded, are in the hut. I've left the other fellows watching. We've got one man tied up—he was stunned and we made him a prisoner. As soon as we heard your signal I—"

"Get me out of this! I've a rope of lianas here—stand back, and I will toss it up."

Sammy's arm swung, and the rope went whirling up. Jim Dainty caught it. Sammy tied the lower end round Fatty Fritz.

"Dainty," he shouted, "fasten the end round your shoulders, lie down on the earth, and dig in your hands and feet. You've got to take my weight."

"Right as rain, sir!" called back Jim.

He did as directed. On his face, with hands and feet dug in the sandy soil, he took the strain of the rope. It was a heavy strain, for Dr. Sparshott was not a lightweight. But Jim stood it steadily; and the headmaster of Grimslade clambered out of the rift.

"Thank you, Dainty."

Jim scrambled up, panting. From the shadowy bottom of the rift came a squeal, which made Jim Dainty jump.

"Ach! Leaf me not here! Vill you not pull me up mit meinsel pefore?" howled Fritz.

"Is Fatty Fritz there?" gasped Jim Dainty.

"The fooling duffer tumbled in, and he dragged me in, too, when I was trying to get him out!" grunted Sammy. "Lend a hand!"

Two pairs of hands soon brought Fatty Fritz to the top. This time Dr. Sparshott stood well back, holding the rope, and Jim Dainty seized the fat Rhinelander and landed him like a fat fish. He got a grip on Fritz's collar with one hand, on his hair with the other, and tugged till Fritz was dragged out.

"Ach! Vill you pull te hair out pefore?" shrieked Fritz. "Peast and a prute, you pull me out te hair, and I shall be as pald as a pilliard pall after! Yarooooooh!"

That last yell came as Sammy brought down the end of his heavy creeper rope on the seat of Fritz's pants.

"I promised you a licking!" snapped the Head. "Six, wasn't it, Splitz?"

And, to the accompaniment of loud wails from Fritz, he proceeded to lay on five more hefty wallops.

"Now come along!" he barked, and started for the hut, with long strides. Jim Dainty trotted after him. Fritz roared.

"Leaf me not behind mit you! If you leaf me, giff me somethings to eat! I was so hungry as neffer was pefore, so treatfully hungry tat I tink tat I tie!"

Fritz did not even get an answer. Dr. Sparshott's tall figure vanished in the moonlight, with Jim Dainty trotting to keep pace; and Fatty Fritz, with many groans, rolled after them.

From the edge of the cliff, against which backed the hut, Sammy Sparshott stared down at Lautrec.

"I will give you five minutes to surrender!" he shouted. "Otherwise it will be the worse for you!"

What is Sammy's latest scheme to defeat the desperate convicts? Read all about it in next week's exciting story of the Grimslade cruises.



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