

Live Steam
By H. F. WILKINS

The *Monoga* was a vessel likely as any on the Pacific run to pick up a queer crew. She was known as a jinx ship, and old Cap McGill had a hard time getting enough men aboard to run her. There was nothing the matter with her to look at. She was bigger than the average, and could tear off her twelve knots an hour, usually without breaking anything. But once a ship comes to be known as a jinx ship, that reputation is a hard one to lose, just about as hard as a previous conviction and a fingerprint record.

The *Monoga* had killed half a dozen men in her day. Her booms were fractious and her hatches yawned like mantraps. Her superstructure was charmed with special ability to trip a man up, or to cause his foot to slip at the worst possible moment. Yet she never seemed to do herself much damage. She came back home each trip with a glistening coat of fresh paint and an innocent look about her that fooled some of those who didn't know. But she had a bad name.

Goofy was a prime example of the known inability of the *Monoga* to get a crew any member of which could possibly get a job anywhere else. Goofy was an unknown quantity. If his sensibilities were more penetrable, his existence would have been less bearable. It must have been bad enough for him as it was. He was the object of everybody's attempts at humor. Chips would growl and roar at him and chase him around the deck, pretending the lad had stolen his hammer. Chips was always losing his hammer, and Goofy somehow was always responsible for the loss.

One of the able seamen named Slim used to take particular delight in tormenting Goofy. His tortures were largely vocal and his emphasis was always on Goofy's alleged lack of brains. Slim could hold forth an hour at a time on Goofy's faults and never mention the same one twice. He was at his best when he had been privately hitting up the cocaine. Then his abuse became a veritable tirade.

Goofy could fool and dream over sweeping up a bit of dirty deck until he drove the bo's'n into fits. The bo's'n was a big Welchman with a voice like a pipe organ and a fist like a steam hammer. He scorned confining his abuses to mere vocal exercise. He wasn't built that way. When the bo's'n was exasperated he had to strike out at something. More than once had he slapped Goofy into a whimpering heap in a dark corner and gone off grumbling because Goofy wasn't big enough and bold enough to come back at him.

There was some excuse for all this persecution. Goofy really was almost hopeless. He never did anything right, no matter how often it was kindly explained to him, or perhaps bent into him. He could polish for an hour and a half on a dark piece of brass and then find out to his sorrow that he had been working on the wrong thing. Told to fetch anything, invariably he brought back something else. If his work required manuevering a bucket of water, invariably he set it where somebody in a hurry would upset it.

Goofy's personal appearance was against him, too. He was sallow of complexion with a concave face and hair like a porcupine's. He walked with a stoop and scuffed his heels. Always when he walked his head was bent down so that his gaze rested on a spot about two feet in front of him. Frequently he bumped into things.

"What for do you walk that way, sapeahd?" Slim asked him one day. "What are you doin', lookin' for nickers?"

"No I ain't," said Goofy. "You cut it out now."

He was exceedingly careless about his dress, even for a cabin boy. Always he was borrowing a needle and thread to mend something, or a pair of scissors to cut rag tags off his garments.

He mended only when he had to, and the chances were, even then, that the marks of mending resulted in the opposite of improvement.

But somehow there was a spark about Goofy that excited compassion. Slim had been known to take the boy under his wing after one of his worst tirades and present him with a new shirt out of the slop chest. Chips, after finding his hammer, had more than once motioned Goofy down below to share with him a surreptitious shot of whiskey, even though it made Goofy more foolish than usual and probably led finally to another two-man parade around the deck in search of a lost hammer. Goofy needed a mother, a sister and two or three good friends to put him to rights. He seemed to be quite alone in the world.

To the crew, the funniest thing about the whole business was the Old Man's attitude toward Goofy. That was a puzzle that nobody could solve. Why Goofy remained a member of the *Monoga's* crew in spite of all that happened that should have led to immediate and personal dismissal at the hands of Cap McGill was to Goofy's shipmates a deep and dark mystery. Why wasn't he fired with maledictions proper and deserved when he finished his first trip on the *Monoga* as a wiper in the engine room? And why did Cap McGill stand and watch the lad when he found him at his work, watch him with a deep scowl on his face? Sometimes he had been known to come down to the crew's quarters all alone to watch Goofy, watch the crew tease him, watch Goofy's clumsy attempts at retaliation. On these occasions he left without saying anything. It was truly a mystery, and subject for speculation.

Cap McGill was something of a character himself. That was really his shore name. On board it was just the Old Man. Ashore, they say, he was one of the best of good fellows. He could drink with any man alive and hold up his end of the conversation. But let him once take command and order up the mud hooks, and he became sour and dour the rest of the trip. He rarely opened his mouth except to give orders or to curse at members of the crew and officers as well. With the possible exception of the chief engineer, it was believed that he had no friend on board, and these two were usually on the outs about something.

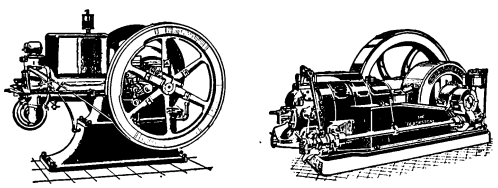
The Old Man was built close to the deck, broad in the beam though not by any means fat, and he had a face as forbidding as the Rock of Gibraltar. It is doubtful if any member of the crew was not afraid of him, though of course none of them would admit it. It was the stated wish of everybody from the cook to the first mate to "take a crack at the Old Man," though nobody had ever done it, to anybody's knowledge.

Goofy was one, however, who had never stated such a wish. His fear of the Old Man was something he couldn't help but admit. His actions admitted it for him. Whenever the Old Man hove in sight Goofy would sink off, his tail between his legs. If there was no place to sink to, he cringed and whimpered. It was a shameful thing to watch. When the Old Man turned his back, Goofy's eyes followed him with a wistful, still frightened look. Nobody had ever seen the Old Man lay a hand to Goofy. He never whipped him, or treated him as the bo's'n did. Nor did he interfere if he happened to see the bo's'n whack Goofy into a heap. Yet Goofy's fear of the Old Man was far more intense than any he had for the bo's'n, for all his blows.

That first trip Goofy made on the *Monoga* was no exception to the ship's predilection for minor disaster, and Goofy had his share in keeping up her reputation. He was supposed to be a general utility man around the engine room, but his utility was more doubtful than general. The first thing that happened was hardly Goofy's fault. In fact he had nothing to do with it.

They were taking on a load of coal oil at Richmond, across the bay from San Francisco. For two or three days they had been held up by rain. The kerosene was stowed in shiny tins, bound for China. The company that owned them refused to let the tins collect a coat of rust by exposing them to a leaky sky. So everybody was chafing under the delay in getting off, especially the Old Man. For once he discarded his shoreside conviviality before leaving port, and stormed up and down the deck.

About eight o'clock in the evening of the third day the rain let up and they commenced working cargo. The thing happened at hatch number four, where they were easing over a sling full of oil tins. A cable guide broke on one of the booms and let the sling down in a wide arc. One of the stevedores was caught in the middle of the back. He pitched headlong into the open hatch and fell three decks, striking on the back of his neck, which gave way under the strain. There was really no sense in taking him to the hospital. He died before they got him there.



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The newspapers made the most of the story and the *Monoga* got another death to her discredit.

The next day, Goofy got in his first piece of dirty work. It led to a run-in with the Old Man which, if it could have been heard by the crew, would have solved the mystery of Goofy and Cap McGill for them.

They had gone back to the San Francisco side to take on a load of deck logs and were just about to cast off for the Orient. Goofy was busy in the machine shop, tending to some minor wiper's duties. He had instructions to get rid of a can of trash, most of it rags covered with sloppy oil and red lead. He let the whole business fly out of the nearest port hole without a thought to the consequences.

It so happened that the Old Man was standing on the gangplank just under that port. He had somewhat recovered from the previous day's testiness. But when he accumulated the lion's share of Goofy's trash can on the outside of his person, he assumed his seagoing disposition with a vengeance. He let out a bellow of rage and stalked up the gangplank with as much dignity

as his appearance would permit. He called for the first assistant engineer and the first mate and demanded in bluish terms to know immediately who was responsible for the humiliating blunder. The culprit was to be sent to the captain's room with all possible dispatch.

They found Goofy puttering around in the machine shop, blissfully ignorant of the crime he had committed.

"Did you throw them rags out that port?" demanded the first assistant in a terrible voice. Goofy turned white and backed off.

"You said I was to it—"

"Did I say you was to throw them rags on the Old Man? Did I? Didn't I tell you never to throw anything out of them port holes? Didn't I?"

The First was trying to clear himself of any possible blame. Goofy was bewildered. He didn't know yet what he had done. They sent him to the captain's room in a state bordering on collapse.

Cap McGill was pacing up and down the cabin, muttering to himself. Goofy knocked with a trembling hand.

"Come in!" thundered Cap McGill.

Grease-smearred and yellow-white in the face, Goofy went in. Cap McGill checked an outburst of profanity and stared.

"You little fool!" said Cap finally. "What the hell are you doing here?"

"I don't know," said Goofy truthfully and miserably.

But by this time the Old Man had a firm grip on himself again, and listeners outside heard no more. They could only marvel at the Old Man's unwonted self-control; they only heard some muffled interchange, and presently Goofy emerged from the conference, none the wiser for it.

Goofy spent a truly awful week, that first one out of port. They were making the best of a heavy sea. Six days out of the Golden Gate, Goofy was busy in the early morning polishing brass and glossing steel around the engine. The throttle got in his way, so he grasped it and shoved it down, shutting off all the steam. The sudden cut-off nearly burst the boilers. The ship lost steering way before three

engineers could get things straightened out, and Goofy went on polishing as if nothing had happened.

"Why didn't you tell me that thing was the throttle?" Goofy asked when they got around to him. "How should I know?"

Such things are exasperating.

The next mishap was more in line with the *Monoga's* usual tricks. They were having fire drill up on the boat deck one sunny day at noontime. Goofy's station was next to one of the ordinary seamen at the last boat aft, on the starboard side. Goofy was laboring with as much apparent work and as little actual effort as possible to get the boat down into position for lowering off the davits. The seaman next to him sought a new grip on the crank. His foot slipped over the edge of the boat deck and he went all the way down with nothing to stop him until he landed on a capstan two decks below. His jaw was fractured, two or three ribs broken and a leg and arm banged up badly. It laid him up for the rest of the trip, but he recovered.

II

It seemed as if the *Monoga* was mad at losing an intended victim. She made bad weather worse by refusing to answer the wheel, and they finally found something wrong with the steering engine that they never could seem to fix properly. In the Inland Sea of Japan she ran herself aground in a heavy fog one night and tore a gaping hole in her plates on a rock ledge. That was the first time she had really damaged herself. It took two months to fix her up. Cap McGill became a raving maniac.

They made Manila and completed the trip without further mishap, but Goofy remained incorrigible. The crew marveled at his ability to act without thinking. He made boner after boner, took more than the full measure of punishment for them, and lived to repeat his offenses. Those who remained with the *Monoga* when they lost most of the crew at San Pedro marveled most at the fact that Goofy was still with them. They had marked Cap McGill's apparent disgust and disapproval. They had seen him watch the lad with a frown on his face and silence on

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his lips. They knew not what to make of it when the chief engineer fired Goofy as a wiper and the Old Man promptly signed him on again as cabin boy. Chips and Slim remained with the ship, and by virtue of previous experience with Goofy's foibles they led the persecution. Chips had him trotting day and night after the lost hammer, much to the amusement of the new crew. Most of them took up the sport with delight.

Cap McGill, his old congenial shoreside self, was sitting one afternoon in a San Francisco speakeasy with the chief engineer, the first mate, and two officials of the shipping company that owned the *Monoga*. Talk had drifted around to the *Monoga's* reputation.

"I've got my own suspicions about that ship of mine," said Cap McGill. "You men who stay ashore can afford to laugh at this jinx business, but how much talk there is. It's harder every time I come in to get a crew to fill her up."

"I tell you, Cap," said one of the officials, a kindly faced gray-haired man. "I admit I'm not superstitious. Or rather I claim it. Also I'll admit that the thing does look funny. We know she's in perfect shape every time she comes in, and these men find out and yet she does more than her share of accidents. But I hardly think you can hold that against the ship. After all, she's nothing more than a big pile of steel and machinery."

Cap McGill was in a rather precarious position when he came home after that accident in the Inland Sea. A captain is solely responsible to his company. It was only his long term of service and his unimpeachable record that kept him from losing his master's ticket. And the two company officials who were with him now, shoreside friends of long standing, were in large measure responsible for his retention.

Cap had taken a little too much liquor for complete discretion in speech, and he spoke out his mind.

"Nothing more hell!" he exploded. "Nothing more than a piece of machinery? Listen to me. That ship of mine has got a soul to her. She's got the meanest soul that sails the green seas. Don't you tell me she's nothing more than a piece of machinery. You haven't lived with her like I have."

"I tell you men, and maybe I shouldn't be saying it, but if you'd lived with her and fought with her as long as I have, if you'd seen her do her deliberate little tricks, if you'd listened to the noises she makes with the mean grunts of her when she's laying in port plotting to kill somebody—then you'd know what I know about her."

"She hates me, that's who she hates. She wants to get me. She's been trying for six years to do it, an' by God, the only reason she hasn't done it is because I'm too smart for her. When she can't get me she takes the next guy that comes along."

Cap called for another drink. He had spoken with energy and vehemence.

It occurred again, as it had occurred before to the two company officials, that perhaps Cap McGill had been living too long with the *Monoga*. Perhaps they had made a mistake in influencing the captain to favor the ship.

Cap, being by no means a man without brains, sensed the recurrence of that very idea. Ideas can flow and take hold regardless of the words that pass around the drinking table.

"It isn't just because I'm Cap McGill," he said. "She'd be the same with any man who was her master. Listen, I'll tell you something. You know how gratings are fixed over the cylinder heads? It's the funniest arrangement I ever saw on a ship, anyway. Well, twice this has happened to me. I've been walking across those gratings an' have a bar come loose and stick up to trip me. The first time I hardly noticed it. It was in the bay out here about a year ago. The thing happened to snap up an' hit me in the left knee after I stepped on it with my right foot. I told you to fix it, remember, Chief?"

"It was fixed," said the chief engineer.

"Well, the second time was when we were laid up there in Japan, it happened about the same way. I swear I couldn't find a bar loose in that grating. I looked for ten minutes, an' tested

every one of 'em. They were all tight."

"Maybe there was a stick lying there," suggested the first mate. "I'll check it out." "There wasn't any stick. I'd have heard it fall if it knocked it off. No, I tell you that ship is layin' for me, an' it would be the same with anybody else who was her master."

"She sure does make some funny noises with her gruts, as you say, when she's tied up in port," remarked the chief engineer. "Don't know as I ever heard a ship like her. About four o'clock in the morning the main feed pump takes on a howl that drives a man crazy. Any ship makes phony noises when she's tied up. The auxiliaries are all clanking in a different key, an' the pumps going, and the fans breezing. Anybody that's not used to it is liable to turn green the first couple of nights down there. The *Monoga* sure has got a funny howl to her. Sounds like she's got heart trouble, a bad case of T.B."

"Heart trouble, huh," said Cap McGill.

"It's soul trouble she's got."

"Do you agree with the Cap, Chief? Do you think she's jinxed?" asked one of the officials.

"Well, I don't know. She sure does make some funny tricks."

The official turned to the mate. "What do you think?"

"I've hesitated for a minute, played with my empty glass."

"Well, I don't know either. I don't think anybody can afford to take risks with her after what's happened."

The mate had something to get off his chest.

"Can't take any risks, an' you got to hire men that know how to be careful. I think most of what happened last trip—oh I don't know about that, but a good deal of it anyway—was the fault of that wiper you had. Of all the—"

The mate wandered off into a mild imitation of one of Slim's tirades.

"I don't see why the hell you put him up on deck," he said, looking directly at Cap McGill. "He's useless. He's goofy in the head. That's how he got the name they call him. Far as I'm concerned, I think he'd make a good mark boy."

The reaction on Cap McGill was a curious thing to watch. His face flushed slowly and he kept looking at the table top. He stuck a dead cigar in his mouth and chewed the end. He called for another drink. Just as the chief and the two officials were casting about for something appropriate to say to relieve an embarrassing silence, Cap McGill spoke.

"That would be a good thing for you to remember," he said to the mate, speaking slowly, "that I'm hiring the men I choose to hire, and taking the risks myself. You know how hard it is to get a crew."

Nothing more was said about it. A significant look passed between the chief and the mate. The two officials knew nothing of the mystery "Chief" and Cap McGill, but they knew something must be wrong. The gathering broke up shortly afterward.

On the day before the departure of the *Monoga* again for the Orient, one of the company officials was talking to Cap McGill. It was the one with the gray hair and the kindly face. He had strong influence in high circles, and was perhaps the best friend Cap McGill had, ashore.

"After their conversation had taken on a pertinent tone,"

"Cap," said the gray-haired man, "I like you, as you well know. This thing you were talking about the other day, about the *Monoga* being a jinx ship and out to get you—I admit you had me going. I'm puzzled about it. Well now, you know the problem I'm up against. There's a man here who thinks you ought to have been taken out of command after what happened in Japan. And to tell you the truth, Cap, they have something on their side."

"I know it," said Cap. "And I've got a nasty hunch that something else is going to happen this trip."

"That's one trouble with you, Cap. I'm not superstitious myself, as I tried to make plain the other day. On I've got my little pet aversions just like anybody else. But there are two kinds of hunches. One of them is born of intuition, and if you know how to train and develop that kind of hunch, it is one of the greatest business assets any man can have. It is a guide to action.

The other kind of hunch is just what you have now. You think something bad is going to happen. That kind is born of apprehension, not intuition. Just because you think it will happen, it is the more likely to happen. I've watched men with hunches, and I know. Your actions are sometimes guided by your apprehensions, whether you realize it or not, straight into the situation you fear."

"There's something in that all right," said Cap McGill. "But I don't know as I fear anything. I'm master of the *Monoga*, an' I can do what I want with her."

"Yes, I know. That attitude is far more valuable to you and to the company than the hunch you just mentioned. Remember that. At the same time— Tell you what I'll do, Cap. As I said, this jinx business interests me. It is a tangible thing, no question about that. You've got to get good men, or even enough men to ship with you because of the *Monoga's* reputation as a man killer. The rest of the gang in the office—you know how they stack up. If anything more happens they will be damn hard to handle. Tell you what I'll do. If anything does happen, and if you can convince me in my own mind that the *Monoga* is a jinx, that she has a mean soul, and that she's out to get you, as you say, then I'll give you a guarantee to swing the gang your way. You know I'll be fair about it, Cap. If you can convince me, you have nothing to worry about."

"Fair enough," nodded Cap McGill. "That leaves it up to me and the ship. Sink her soul! I'll get the goods on her for you, because if I don't need it this trip I may need it later on."

"Is anything else bothering you, Cap, besides the hunch you mentioned? I thought the other day—"

"No," said Cap slowly. "Nothing else I guess. At least nothing to do with the company."

The gray-haired official was a shrewder man than most. He put two and two together and guessed the situation close to accurately. He said nothing more about it. They shook hands and parted in complete understanding.

III

For once in her life, the *Monoga* cleared port without an accident. Her gear ran sweetly, cargo was stored in record time and she steamed out of San Francisco Bay without additional stain on her black record. The Old Man mistrusted her docility however, and refused to let the apparent change of spirit alter his customary hard boiled dourness.

"I've got my doubts about the old lady," he told the chief engineer. "Keep your eyes open. I think she's laying low for a real bust."

Even Goofy's boners were comparatively mild. He wasted an hour or so of day hunting up a line of stinking sea snakes, then he succeeded in could dip it in the ocean instead of filling it at the top below decks. Of course when the lip of the bucket caught the sea the rope sizzled out of Goofy's hands and all but took him with it. The bucket was lost forever, and Goofy had to patronize the steward for balm to ease the pain in his palms.

Another time he was polishing a copper and brass fire extinguisher. He turned it upside down without noticing directions and the contents drenched the bo's'n's bunk. But he caused no lasting damage. The crew rode him as hard as ever for his faults. Goofy learned to laugh with the rest of the ship at jokes on himself, and thereby added another objectionable feature to his list against him, for the quality of his laugh was extremely nerve-jangling. It was high and strident, and grew to be incessant.

When he wasn't laughing, he was whistling. Goofy had the most exasperating whistle on the seven seas. He constantly repeated a single theme consisting of about half a dozen notes. Always it was in a different key and never twice did the notes come out quite the same. It belonged to no known song or tune. He made it up himself, Goofy smoothly admitted.

Good weather and smooth sailing lasted until they got about six hundred miles off the coast of Japan. There they hit a storm that probably was the tail end of a typhoon. The annual storm season off the Japan coast boils up some

unbelievable seas, and the *Monoga* took some of the worst that trip, though it was really a little early for the storm season to begin. The *Monoga* arrived in Yokohama with everything on her decks either washed overboard or smashed to pieces. The gale raged for twelve hours. Wireless antennae went overboard almost at the first gust. Soon afterwards, mountainous seas began to dash over the ship, clear over her, washing away two lifeboats and crushing two others.

Each hatch was bolted down and ironbound worked loose in the fury of the storm and were swept away. Seven hundred pigeons were stored on the decks in fifty-nine cages. They should have been born ducks, for the sea took them to her bosom at the first onslaught. So high were the waves that they carried away one of the fire room ventilators, high up by the funnel, with a great rending of steel and popping of cables.

The Old Man was frankly apprehensive at times, but secretly he rejoiced to "see the old girl get the pounding she deserves". He had all hands fighting the storm. Every man was on watch during the worst of it. The entire hull was so frequently under water that it seemed sometimes that she never could shake herself free. But they made port with the cargo virtually undamaged.

The Old Man had to admit she handled herself pretty well.

Goofy passed out from fright at the height of the storm and was useless for days afterward. "Got an attack of nerves I guess, something like shell shock," he admitted one day to Slim. "Nerves hell," said Slim. "They dropped you on your head when you was a baby, that's what's the matter."

Goofy laughed and walked off whistling, seeking to borrow needle and thread. He didn't know; mistreated or well treated, cudgeled or praised, he had but half wit for it all. He knew he was dreamy and irresponsible, but why he could not say. Fierce reprimands for one dismal blunder never prevented his making another. He didn't know. All his blurred memory held was a dim picture, like a charcoal grotesque, of a patoxym in the trenches that day, sudden, deadly as a slaughter pen, and the gas, just before all became blank, rolling toward him over the debris and the remnants of his comrades. Him they had taken out alive, to him fate had been the unkindest of all.

The *Monoga* continued on her best behavior. She steamed down the Inland Sea and passed without faltering the spot where some months before she had run aground. She turned out nine or ten or twelve knots and rolled up the mileage totals in a gratifying manner. She picked up a good load of cargo at Shanghai, some more at Hongkong, and headed into the China Sea for Manila with nary a mishap. It was too good to last.

Shipping men in Manila remember what the *Monoga* did that day, only a hundred miles off the Luzon coast. Never has the trick been duplicated in its diabolical details as it happened on the *Monoga*. Some laid it to the fact that she had strained her engines in the storm. Others said it was a bolt worked loose at the piston head in the H.P. cylinder. As a matter of fact no one knows just what did cause the cylinder to blow its head off.

Now just the mere fact of blowing a cylinder head is not unprecedented. That has happened more than once. The uncanny part of it was the precise moment at which the *Monoga* chose to go to sea.

The Old Man was standing alone on one of the grating decks over the engine room, not ten feet above the cylinder heads.

Exactly what happened could only be constructed from guesswork afterwards, but the engineers finally figured it out to their satisfaction.

The thing came off with a terrific roar and shot skyward through the fiddley like a vicious projectile. In going it struck a heavy beam overhead to carry a small crane for lifting off the cylinder heads. It went through steel like soft cheese, lifting that beam out and dropping one end of it so that it struck the grating deck about twelve feet from Cap McGill.

There was a heavy fire pump close to where he was standing. This was supported by steel brackets riveted to the bulkhead. These brackets were extra strong and were extended as a support for the grating on which stood Cap McGill. Acting as a fulcrum when the beam struck and tore the grating loose, one of the brackets balanced a section of it so that it turned completely over and crashed down onto the grating below. There it rested, a twisted mass of metal with Cap McGill caught inside of it, jammed against the bulkhead like an animal caught in the meshes of a steel cage.

He was horribly injured of course. No ordinary spectator would have wagered a counterfeited nickel that anyone caught in that mess of steel could come out alive.

The steel pan that was underneath the fire pump had jammed itself in a vertical position so that it protected the victim against flying bits of metal, bolts, nuts, pieces of corrugated plate from the cylinder head, pieces of grating—devil's artillery that rained for some time afterward, down through the lower gratings, bulkheads, pumps, condensers, to the engine room floor plates.

One other was killed outright when the fire pump dropped on him, and the engineer on watch was seriously injured by falling metal.

But the *Monoga* had deliberately abandoned in her wicked soul the worst torture to which she could subject the Old Man. For the worst of it was steam. Before they could shut off, the place was filled with it. Falling metal had jammed the throttle, and a fireman fought with it helplessly while the engineer on duty lay unconscious. Live steam is a horrible instrument of torture. Its searing caress is one of the most agonizing of pains.

And here was Cap McGill, caught in a twisted steel cage close to the belching, headless cylinder, denied the mercy of death by the diabolical contortions of the steel beast that trapped him.

Goofy was the only one besides the Old Man who happened to be close to the scene of disaster. He just pushed through the door starboard to port across one of the gratings. He had seen his father standing there, apparently wrapped in meditation, and had hurried through to avoid meeting his eye. He had just turned into the passage and was fortunately protected by a barrier of quarter-inch steel.

The explosion threw him down in a heap. Half stunned, he crawled to the doorway and looked into the engine room. It was sight to sicken better men than Goofy. The shock did something to his brain. For once in his life he had a flash of clear mental vision. He crawled out across a hanging grating until he could see his father caught there. He saw a movement and heard a groan.

Goofy's tortured flesh drove him back to fresh air to get help. Officers and men scurrying about distractedly, paid no attention to him. One of them kicked Goofy aside as he rushed by to make his way to the engine room through the alley along the keel. Goofy could make nobody understand.

Then in his desperation occurred to him probably the only bright idea of his unfortuné seaman—the saw. He saw his knife and nozzle laid out for flushing the deck. One end of it was screwed to the pipe and the valve handle had been left there.

Goofy pulled that hose through the passage and got it to the engine room door at the level of the second deck, opposite the Old Man's torture chamber. Then he went back and turned on the steam. He saw the light guard the door so it struck the bulkhead just above sending a merciful shower of cool water over the victim in the steel cage. They found him there, holding faithfully to his post despite the steam that enveloped him, when finally they got the boilers cut out.

They had to saw through that mesh of steel to get Cap McGill free.

A passing ship took victims of the *Monoga*'s accident to the hospital in Manila, St. Paul's. Goofy was among those who needed hospital attention. He was badly scalded, although not parboiled in a grill the way Cap McGill had been. Nor did he have his hip broken, his arm fractured in two places, ribs crushed in and a kneecap

ruined, as did the Old Man.

Cap McGill lay at the door of death for a week or more. It was doubtful for a matter of days whether medical science could save him from the effects of the *Monoga*'s steel clutches and her searing breath. But slowly he gained strength. Consciousness returned and his mangled body began to mend. He was talking to the physician in charge of him one day when he learned something that speeded his recovery.

"Yes, sir," the physician was saying, "a few more weeks in the worst of the steel and we'd have had to dig a hole in the ground for you. The shower bath was all that saved you."

"What's that?" said Cap. "What shower bath?"

"Didn't they tell you about that? Somebody turned the hose on you while you were caught there."

"I didn't hear anything about it. Tell me."

The physician detailed as much as he knew of the occurrence.

"Who was it?" asked Cap McGill. "Who did it?"

"Just a youngster. Little fellow with bushy hair. He's in the next ward over here. Been asking about you every half hour. McGill is the name of your father, same as yours. Isn't a relative of yours?"

"My God!" said Cap. "Yes, I guess he is. Bring him in here, can't you?"

They wheeled Goofy in a little later, swathed in bandages, and placed him alongside Cap McGill. He was embarrassed and frightened. For a full minute neither of them spoke. The physician motioned the two nurses out of the room; he too started to leave, but Cap McGill motioned him back.

"What's this they've been telling me?" he said, turning to Goofy. "What the hell are you doing in here?"

"I don't know," said Goofy, "just trying to get well."

"This," said Cap McGill, turning to the surgeon, "is my son. Is he the one you say turned the hose on me, saved my life?"

"He's the one, all right! Everybody in Manila knows what he did. The papers have shouted it, the cables carried the heroism of it. A fine brave act it was, son or no son!"

"Hm," thought Cap McGill aloud. "Everybody doesn't know Ned's my son, though. Well, it might be enough to tell 'em that later." "Did you had them wheel Goofy close to his bedside, and Goofy bent his head down over the bed, and Cap McGill put out his unbound hand and ran his fingers through Goofy's tousled hair. Over the boy's bent figure Cap McGill told the surgeon:

"You see, when the boy's mother died, I told her I'd take care of him, make a man of him and let him be straight. He was in school, doing fine, getting ready for college. Then . . . the war . . . the war interrupted things. He came back . . . changed! I had to take him to sea with me. I had to . . . Yes, what is it, Ned?"

Goofy had settled back in his invalid's chair, anxiety to speak visible in his face. Now he leaned forward again.

"Father," he said, using the word diffidently. "Father, can you get well?"

The old bluster came back. It was a challenge, so the Old Man chose to pretend.

"You bet I can! You just bet I can!"

He gazed on the boy with the old-time tenderness. And the boy scrooped his chair closer still. "Did you Father?" he asked again. "Do you know, I'm real glad it all happened, if you are going to be all right—if you are going to get well. Do you understand, Father? Do you realize?"

The Old Man looked at him anew, and saw gleaming out of the mask of bandages the steady, fearless beacons of the soul of his boy of old, the soul the war had decimated. God! the mark had lifted at last! Oh, it was worth the scalding, the weeping, the lingering pain, to know this! His boy! his boy restored! Yet he could do nothing, only lie very quietly and be very glad in his pounding old heart. And he suddenly realized that he mustn't overtax the boy; there were two of them to get well, well as quick as possible, well for a life worthwhile.