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Without a word Mungle strode up and struck Carlsen

# The Signal

By BILL ADAMS

*It was "limey" versus "squarehead" aboard that old sailing ship,  
with the sea as referee*

THE ship was ready to pull out to sea. All but one man of her crew were in her forecabin. One man had not shown up, and the mate had gone ashore to hunt up a substitute.

Except for Mungle you couldn't have said offhand to what nation any of the crew belonged. But for him, they were a spiritless-looking lot. Mungle, a small, scrawny man, reminded one of a belligerent

bantam rooster. Seated in a far corner of the forecabin, so that one entering from the deck couldn't see him very well, he was scowling at the others as they arranged their belongings in their bunks. He had taken the best bunk, the top one farthest from the door, and though he was the smallest man there no one had made any protest. He looked up as a big broad blond man with

wide blue eyes entered, and his scowl grew darker yet.

"Vell, dere ve ees," said the newcomer, and, tossing his sea bag into the only unoccupied bunk, smiled amicably at the others.

"Dere yer ees, ees yer?" snarled Mungle. "An' wot d'yer think yer doin' here? Don't yer know as this here's a Liverpool ship?"

The newcomer peered into the dark corner and said, "Meester mate say he vant goot man. So I ees coom."

"For a penny I'd poke yer in the eye!" exclaimed Mungle, and he jumped to his feet.

The big fellow looked at Mungle much as one who has never been in the country might look at a bull. "Vott ees matter veez you, my vren?" he asked.

Mungle struck the big fellow, flat-handed, on his ruddy face. The big fellow's hands went up. He set a huge paw on Mungle's chest and sent him reeling backward into the dark corner, whence he rebounded like a rubber ball.

The big man was no boxer, but, despite his great size, was quick. It was plain for any one to see that he would not have fought had he not been compelled to do so. He flailed his long arms about, pushing and poking, and now and then taking a swing with a huge fist. Though Mungle was handy with his fists he could seldom hit the big fellow.

Fighting not being in their line, the rest of the crew moved out to the deck. There was one Spaniard, and he, when Mungle came too close, fingered his knife. But when Mungle moved farther away he also went to the deck. It was the mate, ordering all hands to heave the anchor in, who put a stop to the fight. He stepped into the forecabin and thrust the combatants apart. "You two fools quit your scrapping!" he ordered.

"He's a squarehead, sir! Why don't he sail in his own ships?" muttered Mungle.

The Swede smiled amicably at the mate and said, "Int haff I done nuddings, sir."

The crew tramped round and round the windlass in silence, heaving the anchor in; till the mate called, "What's the matter? Isn't there a chantey-man amongst you?" At that both Mungle and the Swede started to sing. Mungle stopped at once, and looked up at the Other.

"Quit yer noise! I'm singing!" he said. But the Swede didn't hear him and continued to sing. "Quit yer noise;" he shouted, and, hearing him now, the Swede paused. But the mate called, "Go ahead and sing, Carlsen!" So Carlsen went on singing.

"I'll take the chant out of yer afore I'm done," muttered Mungle. The rest of the crew joined in the chantey chorus, but he remained silent. When the chantey came to an end the mate said, "Now, Mungle, let's hear you sing!" So then he sang.

The Swede had been silent when the chorus of his chantey came, as though to save his breath that he might the better roar out the next verse. But Mungle sang verse and chorus, too. Joining in the chorus, Carlsen drowned Mungle's voice and everyone else's; and that made Mungle furious. But there was nothing he could do about it.

Till evening all hands were busy setting sail, and all the time Mungle nursed his resentment in impotent silence. Carlsen had forgotten all about any trouble. Sometimes when a sail was hoisted one sang, sometimes the other. When Carlsen sang he did so plainly for the joy of singing. When Mungle sang he did so with but one idea—to sing better than Carlsen. "We've got two cracking good chanteymen," said the mate to himself. The ship had gone to sea with her flag flying. When sunset came the mate said, "One of you men go haul that flag down!"

Carlsen went to the signal halliards and lowered the Bag. As he reached to take it Mangle glanced up from the compass. The mate was down on the main deck, the skipper out of sight in the chart room.

"Ye ain't fit to touch the old red Duster, ye big pig!" the skipper heard, and, wondering what was up, looked from the chart room door. What he saw was Carlsen folding the flag, and Mungle glowering at him instead of watching the compass.

"Get your eyes on that compass!" shouted the skipper. But Mungle was too late. In the little time that he had been looking away from the compass the ship had come up into the wind. Now all her sails were flapping.

"Get away from that wheel, you worthless rat!" shouted the skipper, and ordered Carlsen to take the wheel in Mungle's place.

"Dere," said Carlsen, and, as he took the wheel, thrust the folded flag into Mungle's hands. Boiling with rage, Mungle let it fall to the deck.

"You'd let the flag fall, would you, you scum!" shouted the skipper, and strode threateningly from the chart room. Mungle hurriedly picked up the flag and put it away. When next minute he joined the rest of the crew down on the main deck the mate said, "Mungle, I supposed you were a sailor and could steer!" So it is easy to see how very much Mungle loved Carlsen.

DUSK fell. All hands were ordered to the quarterdeck. One by one, the two mates picked their watches, each choosing in turn the man whom he judged likeliest to be the best sailor. The mate had planned to take Mungle for his first choice. Now he said to the second mate, "I'll take that man at the wheel." For he supposed that if Mungle were no good as a helmsman he would be no good at anything else. Thinking as the mate did, the second picked one of the others. The skipper came to look on then. Had he not done so the mate would have taken Mungle next. He hardly liked to pick him now with the skipper watching, so took another. The second mate skipped Mungle again. And so it went till Mungle alone was left.

The second mate took charge of the first night watch, from eight till midnight. The wind had freshened, and the ship was steering hard. "You, Mungle! Get to the wheel!" he ordered, and added, "I'll teach you to steer, by gad!"

Up to the wheel again went Mungle, while the mate's men, with Carlsen amongst them, went off duty. Pretty soon the second mate said, "I ought to have taken this fellow Mungle for my first pick. I guess he'd had a drop too much booze. He's a fine helmsman."

When the watches were changed at midnight, Mungle, instead of going to his bunk to turn in, sought Carlsen. The moon was high and full. The skipper had gone below long ago. The second mate was gone. The mate was on the poop.

Without a word Mungle strode up to and struck Carlsen. As they had fought before, they fought again. A deck house hid them from the mate, but he came down from the poop in a minute or two to take a walk round the decks and see that all was as it should be. He had supposed that their first fight had been only a quarrel between two boozy sailors. Now he said, to himself, "Rivalry's a good thing to have between the watches." He stepped between them and said, "There's a better way to settle any quarrel you two fools have. From now on let's see who heads the best watch. Get to your bunk, Mungle!"

So Mungle went to his bunk, saying to himself, "The mate's right. I'll show that squarehead pig up!"

Day by day after that it was run and jump with Mungle, trying to prove himself a better watch leader than Carlsen. Carlsen took no notice of him at all, but went about his work complacently, doing everything in first rate style.

The Spaniard saw Mungle's hate for Carlsen, and, wanting to curry favor with him, being afraid of him, came to him one dark night. "Meestaire, you see!" said he, and drew his

knife. "You says so, and I stick my knife in the big man some dark night, eh?"

"You dirty dog!" said Mungle, and shook the Spaniard till his teeth rattled.

Then one dark night the Spaniard went to Carlsen, drew out his knife, showed it to him, and said, "I sticks the knife in the Englishman, eh?"

Carlsen grasped the knife and flung it overboard. "You makes again sooch foolish talks I tells zee mate," said he. And neither Mungle nor Carlsen spoke of the Spaniard to the other.

WHEN she had been a week at sea the ship ran into dirty weather. Then you should have seen Mungle run and jump, and haul, and furl, trying to show himself a smarter seaman than Carlsen. Carlsen noticed him and said, "Zee Englishman ees goot sailor. Me too, I am ze goot sailor. Vee shows dem now!"

"See those two fellows handle that sail, eh, mister?" said the mate one day to the second mate, while the two were rolling up a topsail high aloft. Mungle was first to come down to the deck, and to him the mate said, "You're a cracking good hand, Mungle!"

Mungle grinned. "There's one fer the squarehead pig!" he thought. But next moment Carlsen dropped from the rigging to the deck, and the mate said, "Carlsen, you're a first rate sailor. I've never seen a better." Mungle's face went black.

"Dere ees goot sailor too, sir," said Carlsen, with a nod toward Mungle.

"The condescendin' squarehead pig!" muttered Mungle, boiling with rage.

Mungle went to the wheel. The ship was plunging in a high sea, and steering her hardest. It took every ounce of his strength to hold her. And, seeing him straining, the skipper called to him from the chart room doorway, "D'ye want a man at the lee wheel to help you?" Mungle shook his head, belligerently. But, noticing that a black

squall was coming up, the skipper, despite him, ordered Carlsen, who was coiling a rope up near the wheel, to go help him. So Carlsen stepped to the lee wheel and set his big paws on the spokes.

Mungle had not heard the skipper's order to Carlsen. Now, aware that the ship was steering easier, he looked up and saw him at the lee wheel. Thinking that the Swede had come to help him unordered he reached out a hand and as the ship rolled hard down to lee gave him a shove that sent him sprawling.

The skipper had not seen Mungle's action, and, seeing Carlsen prostrate on the deck, supposed that he had slipped and fallen as any sailor may.

Mungle's face was dead white with anger. The skipper saw it, and, supposing that its pallor was caused by the effort of holding the hard-steering ship, shouted to Carlsen, "You take the weather helm and steer her. You're stouter than that little fellow. He can take the lee wheel and help you."

So Mungle had to turn the responsibility of steering over to Carlsen and to go to the lee wheel and act merely as his helper.

When, after two hours, Mungle and Carlsen were relieved by two others, they started forward together along the water-swept deck, with the ship pitching and rolling hard. They were not yet halfway along the deck when a big sea came over the bulwarks and knocked Mungle from his feet. Carlsen reached out a big paw, clutched him, and hauled him from the water.

"Heverything plays into the hands of the big pig," muttered Mungle savagely, as, sea-soaked and shivering, he followed the complacent Swede.

That night while Carlsen was on the lookout in the bow all hands were hauling on the main braces. Mungle was nearest to the brace blocks, when a mountainous sea came roaring toward the ship. Everyone but he let go the rope and ran. As the water thundered

aboard he was entirely submerged, and, what was much worse, his right hand was drawn into the block and crushed between the sheave and the shell. Had it not been for the mate, who got hold of the rope just in time to save it from slipping further, his hand would have been smashed. The mate took him to the forecandle, looked at his bruised fingers, and said, "You'll have to lay up, Mungle."

"Not me! I ain't no furriner pig, sir!" said Mungle. And back to work he went, determined not to give in while Carlsen was still strong and fit. Soon afterward Carlsen came down from lookout.

Again a sea roared over the bulwarks, flooding the deck shoulder-deep. Save for Mungle and Carlsen all the crew ran. Gripping a stanchion with one hand, Carlsen flung his other arm round Mungle and held him fast.

Mungle was quite submerged, but, hating Carlsen, struggled and cursed. When the deck cleared he looked up at him and screamed savagely, "I'm going to take the chantey out of ye yet, see if I don't!"

"Vott ees?" asked the amazed Carlsen. "Vott I haf done?" Muttering by himself, Mungle made no answer.

THE gale abated that night, and ill the following week light winds blew. Mungle and Carlsen worked in the rigging; and, despite Mungle's hurt fingers, both men's splices were perfection. But while the Swede's manner was complacent, the little Englishman looked sour. Sometimes when they met the big Swede beamed amicably down at him.

"Wait!" muttered Mungle to himself, "just wait! I'm going to get even wi' ye yet!"

And one day when Carlsen had just passed by him he said half-aloud, "I wishes I'd let the dago stick his knife in ye!" But he had no more than said it when he thought, "Hold on, there! Don't go running away wiv

yerself, Mungle, me lad!" And, ashamed of the half-uttered thought, he spat. And he didn't know that the Spaniard, passing close after Carlsen, had heard him. That night was moony, and the next, and the next.

The fourth night came in squally and dark, and at midnight all hands were called to furl the foresail. Last man to come down the rigging after the sail was furled was Carlsen. Just ahead of Carlsen, the Spaniard came; and just ahead of the Spaniard came Mungle. All the rest were gone to the quarterdeck when these three came down the dark rigging.

Just as Mungle jumped from the rigging to the deck the ship trembled to the onrush of a great sea sweeping up to top her bulwarks. Instead of hurrying after the others, Mungle ran close in under the bulwarks to let it pass harmlessly over him. As it swept down to the lee scuppers he looked up and in the dim light saw the Spaniard standing on top of the bulwark, a little to one side as though to let Carlsen pass by him. But he saw also that in the Spaniard's hand was a knife. And instantly he knew that the Spaniard planned to knife the big Swede and heave him to the sea. No one would ever know but that Carlsen had fallen overboard!

Mungle's hand closed on the Spaniard's ankle, and he jerked him to the deck just as another sea broke over the bulwarks. Then, while they were swept across the dark deck together, Carlsen dropped from the rigging and hurried to the quarterdeck.

"Ye dirty yellow dog!" screamed Mungle, and shaking the Spaniard as a terrier shakes a rat, beat him and kicked him. Flung down at last he followed the others.

A few evenings later Mungle, on his way to the wheel, passed by the open door of the forecandle. He had been sitting alone in the bow, sullenly brooding because that day he had overheard the mate say to the skipper, "If Mungle was as beefy as the big Swede there'd be nothing to choose between them.

As it is, the Swede would be the best man in a tight place."

Except for Carlsen and one other all the crew were sitting on the hatch, yarning. Those two were in the forecabin. Carlsen stood before the other man, who was seated on his sea chest. And in Carlsen's hand was a flag, which he was holding up for the other to see. At the moment that Mungle looked in he was saying, "Zee flag of mine country. Always ven I go to sea I takes mig me zee flag of mine country."

"You there, Mungle! Get to the wheel!" called the mate, seeing Mungle dawdling at the forecabin door. So with no time' to snatch the foreign flag from Carlsen and throw it to the sea Mungle merely spat on it and hurried off.

"Ah, dat ees dee mooch bad ting," said Carlsen; "Int vould I on Eenglish flag spit! Vat ees matter mig heem?"

FIRST thing next morning the mate sent Mungle to the forepeak to roll a barrel of salt pork from the tiers of barrels stored there to beneath the hatch, where it would be handy to hoist to the deck later. The Spaniard was already down in the forepeak, having been sent there to put a coil of rope away. He was sitting in a dark corner, fingering his knife and thinking of Mungle. When he saw Mungle come down the hatch he slipped noiselessly farther into the dark corner.

His eyes not yet accustomed to the gloom, Mungle set his hands on the first barrel he came to; without noticing that it was so stowed that if it were moved a whole tier of barrels would be displaced.

"I'll show 'em I'm as strong as any lousy squarehead!" he muttered, and gave the barrel a heave. Next instant he was on his back, powerless to move, with a barrel on his chest and another on his legs; and behind those two a half dozen others that threatened at any minute to roll upon him. He tried to

shout for help and could not, because of the weight on him. And then he was aware of some one else in the forepeak.

"'Elp me, matey! 'Urry up and 'elp me!" he gasped.

The Spaniard scowled down at Mungle. "Meestaire Eenglishman, I pay my score now," said he. "I leave the barrels to crush you."

"Leave 'em, ye dirty dog!" muttered Mungle, and closed his eyes. Waiting to be crushed he thought, "I 'aven't no luck! I wanted ter be even wiv the square'ead."

Unseen by the Spaniard a big barefooted sailor dropped silently down the hatch. Carlsen was come to get a piece of spun yarn wherewith to make a new lanyard for his marlinspike. For a moment or so he stood beneath the hatch, to accustom his eyes to the gloom. And then he heard Mungle's voice, "Kill me, ye dirty rat! W'y don't ye kill me if yer goin' to?"

And he heard the Spaniard's reply, "I enjoy to see you die slowly, meestaire Eenglishman. In a minute now the barrels will roll and crush you."

With a swing of his long arm, Carlsen sent the Spaniard sprawling. Then, as though they had been ninepins, he hove the barrels away from Mungle. Powerless to move, Mungle remained still. "Ees you hurt, mine vren?" asked Carlsen, and bent above him, and took one of his hands and chafed it between his big palms.

Mungle drew his hand away and rolled over on his face. Sobs shook him.

"Ah, you ees hurt, mine vren!" cried Carlsen, and, stepping to beneath the hatch, shouted for the mate.

"What's up?" asked the mate-, dropping into the peak. And Carlsen replied, "Moongle ees mooch hurt, sir."

"I ain't 'urt, sir," gasped Mungle, defiantly, and tried to rise. He couldn't rise. So Carlsen lifted him and carried him up to the deck and laid him in his bunk.

The skipper came to look at Mungle, and went away saying, "I reckon his ribs must be broken. Maybe they'll mend if he lays up."

Mungle was left alone in the forecandle. Sobs shook him. Once when Carlsen came in to look at him he said fiercely, "Go away, will yer? Get out of 'ere! Can't yer leave a man alone?" When the perplexed Carlsen was gone Mungle said, "If any man was ever to spit on th' old Duster I'd leave the blighter die, yer bet!"

For many days Mungle lay in his bunk, and grew no stronger. It's something more than just cracked ribs," said the skipper.

ON a black night some ten days after Mungle was hurt a squall of hurricane force caught the ship under full sail, and snapped her three topmasts short off. As she lurched, unmanageable in the wild sea, the wreckage tore away her bulwarks along one side. With them gone, the waves that swept her deck smashed in her hatches, so that water began to pour into her. Water leaked in also through one of her side plates, pierced by a fallen mast that swung against it. When the mates shouted for the crew, Carlsen alone answered.

While the mates drove the others to the pumps, Carlsen worked alone; cutting the wreckage away; swinging an ax in the darkness and slashing with his knife. Till dawn the mates pumped with the crew. And then, with no time taken for food or rest, they pumped all day; and pumping their hardest just managed to keep the water from gaining in the ship. All day no one but Carlsen remembered Mungle. Carlsen ran twice to the forecandle and set sea biscuit by him and held water to his lips. He looked at Carlsen dolefully.

"Ye gets all the luck, Square'ead!" he said, and Carlsen replied, "Int I know vot goes to happen mig sheep. But I look out for you, you bets!"

Night came, and still the mates kept the weary men at the pumps. Maybe the wind would ease and the sea fall before another day. Then there would be time for rest. As night fell the second mate fetched biscuit and gave some to each man, bidding him eat as he pumped. That night Carlsen also pumped. And as he pumped he sang. Hour after hour he sang, his deep voice defiant above the noise of wind and sea.

At a couple of hours after midnight a sea yet greater than any of the great seas that had from time to time rolled over the decks thundered aboard. And when it had passed there was no longer any sound of singing. And there was no longer audible the clank-clank of the pumps.

At first no one replied to the mate's shout. Then, as the wind lulled, the voices of weary men answered him. Save for Carlsen, the crew gathered about him. "The blow's over," he said. "The gale's blown itself out. Where's the second mate? Where's Carlsen?"

They found the second mate jammed under a stanchion, bruised and half-drowned. They carried him up to the chart room, where the skipper was. Then the mate shouted for Carlsen again and again. There was no answer from the utter dark. So the mate went to the skipper and said, "Carlsen's gone over the side, sir."

The skipper looked at the mate, and the mate at the skipper. The same thought was in the mind of each. With Carlsen gone it would no longer be possible to keep the worn-out crew at work, no longer be of any use to try to save the ship.

"Get the boat cleared away, mister. We'll have to leave her," said the skipper.

They slung the boat out. When they had carried the second mate into her the skipper said to the mate, "Send two men to fetch Mungle, mister."

Two men started toward the forecandle to fetch Mungle. But before they were halfway there the ship gave a lurch that made them

think she was going to sink. So one said to the other, "Say, ain't the forecastle been washed overboard, eh?" And the other at once replied, "Aye. The forecastle's gone. It ain't no good to look for Mungle. He's drowned." And without having come within thirty feet of the forecastle they ran back to the waiting boat and told the skipper that the forecastle was over the side. They leaped, into the boat. The mate followed them. The skipper followed the mate.

All the wind was knocked clear out of Carlsen by that great sea that swept him from his feet. The ship pitched just after the sea boarded her, so that the water on her deck ran forward, carrying him with it, and banging him against stanchions and bits. When he came to his senses he was far up in the bow. There was a terrible pain in his side. One arm was well nigh useless. One of his ankles hurt him horribly. But he managed to get to his feet, and he at once made for the forecastle to see if Mungle was still there.

"Hello, Square'ead!" called Mungle from his bunk. "Is the old hooker going to sink? W'y don't ye get out on deck so's to 'ave a chance ter swim round fer a time anyway?"

THERE was no answer. Carlsen had fallen unconscious to the deck.

"Good ol' Square'ead! He's a' goin' 'ter swim round fer a bit," thought Mungle, and tried to get from his bunk that he also might be saved from drowning like a rat in the forecastle. He managed to get to his feet, but couldn't get to the door. So he sat down on a sea chest, in the dark, and waited for the ship to sink. He sat there till dawn came streaking through the portholes, and then saw Carlsen.

"Well jigger me if here ain't Square'ead!" cried Mungle, and bent above Carlsen and took one of his big hands and chafed it. "'Ee's all crippled up an' looks like 'ee was bloomin' well done, fer," said he.

Carlsen opened his eyes and smiled up at Mungle. "Vat ees, mine vren?" he asked dully.

"The old hooker's agoin' ter sink, chum," said Mungle. "D'yer think yer could make it out to the deck?"

Carlsen reached for the edge of the table and dragged himself laboriously to his feet. "I helps you to zee deck, Moo'ngle," said he.

"No yer don't. I 'elps you, Square'ead," retorted Mungle.

They put their arms around each other. Together they opened the door. Together they tottered out to the deck. Sea and wind had fallen. The ship was very low in the water,

"Now den, ve to der poop go, mine vren," said Carlsen, and, both limping, both with pain in their faces and both trying to hide their pain from the other, they started toward the poop. It took them a long time to get there, but they made it at last.

"Gude," said Carlsen, when they were come to the head of the poop ladder. "Now den, better you rest she."

"Aye, sit down an' rest fer a bit, chum. It'll be good fer yer," said Mungle.

Side by side they sat at the head of the poop ladder, each with his face turned from the other lest his pain be seen. They rose bye and bye, helping each other up with much effort, and made their slow way to the cabin skylight. There they sat again.

Presently Mungle turned to Carlsen. Carlsen's head was fallen to his breast. His eyes were closed.

"Pore ol' Square'ead's dyin'," thought Mungle. He rose and, wincing with pain, laid Carlsen lengthwise on the skylight.

Mungle looked down at Carlsen, and a sob shook him. Then, as though he had heard, Carlsen opened his eyes and looked up.

"Now den, eef I could, I would help you, mine vren," murmured Carlsen.

"I'd do anything for yer, old chum," said Mungle.



And then suddenly Mungle straightened and gazed along the deck toward the forecastle. A look of resolve came to his wan face. He hobbled slowly to the head of the poop ladder and contrived to lower himself laboriously down it to the quarterdeck. It took him a long time to get to the forecastle, but he made it at last.

Mungle hobbled slowly past Carlsen's bunk, thrust his hand beneath the straw pillow, and brought out the Swedish flag. He tucked the flag under his jumper and made his way wearily back to the poop.

Mungle hobbled slowly past Carlsen and looked up to where there fluttered at half mast the Duster, so hoisted upon the preceding day as a distress signal. He lowered it, unbent it from the halliards, and in its place made fast the Swedish flag. "Then he hobbled back to Carlsen.

"Square'ead, old pal! Square'ead!" said Mungle.

Carlsen opened his eyes,

"See wot's at the mast'ead, chum!" said Mungle, pointing.

Carlsen looked up, and saw the Swedish flag. "Now den, I t'ank you, mine vren," he murmured, and closed his eyes again, Mungle lifted Carlsen's head and pillowed it upon the Duster. "It ain't much of a piller, chum, but it's the finest I kin give yer," said he.

Mungle lay down on the deck beneath Carlsen, and closed his eyes.

For a time Mungle and Carlsen lay motionless. Then suddenly Mungle opened his eyes and sat up. A steamer lay close by on the sea, and beside the slowly sinking ship was one of the steamer's boats. Her chief mate stood above Carlsen and Mungle. "What sort of a distress signal do you call that?" asked the steamer's mate. "A foreign flag at the masthead of a Liverpool ship, eh?"

"That ain't no distress signal, sir," said Mungle. "That there flag means as all's well aboard this 'ere ship."

Carlsen opened his eyes and tried to sit up. "Yah, sir. All's vell now," said he.

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