

JASON

CRULL

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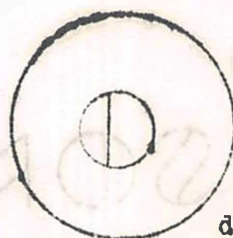
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"Jason
Crull"

by
Leslie A. Crouch



LD CAPTAIN JASON CRULL hadn't led a very good life. He'd drank and stole on occasion and did his share of whoring around. Very few church doors had been darkened by his tall and portly form. Collection plates and ministers collecting for their favorite charities he'd considered as highly unnecessary evils would, if he could have had his way, been consigned to the lowest and darkest pit in hell. Even when it came time for Jason Crull to cash in his chips and go on the inevitable journey we all have to take, he'd been unrepentant. In fact, his last words, preserved for posterity by the horrified man of the cloth they were uttered to, had been, "Jesus Murphy, can't you buzzards even let a man die in peace? You badgered me all my life and you're still hanging around when I'm dying!"

The minister, a highly righteous man, in his own lights, had thrown up his hands in horror and fallen to his knees and started to pray for the Lord's forgiveness.

To which Harry Jason Crull had laughed, closed his eyes, and died.

The undertaking parlors had, on orders of the minister, tried to straighten the old sea captain's face out, as the worthy servant of the church considered it indecent for a man to lie in his coffin apparently laughing in everybody's face. But try as the undertaker would, that mirthful twirl to the lips remained. So they'd perforce had to bury Jason Crull, laugh and all, and when the skies opened and poured so hard the earth grew muddy and let one of the men lowering the casket slip into the hole right on top of it, one of the deceased captain's old crew members, there to pay his last respects to a beloved boss, for, say what they might, Crull had been a man's man and a good fellow to work under, grinned to himself and muttered, "I bet old Cap is laughing like hell over that!"

The minister, considering he'd done his duty towards what he thought an evil man, an atheist and a blasphemer, turned his steps homeward, full of righteous thoughts and high opinions of himself. Maybe if he'd had his eyes down where they belonged instead of up in the skies trying to spy on the Lord, he wouldn't have slipped in the patch of slimy mud and took a cropper into the road. His head landed solidly on a rock and the next thing his spirit knew it had left its earthly shell and was bound towards its heavenly reward.

The reverend gentleman had often considered the souls going to that Paradise in the Sky would be taken in by a horde of angels with trumpets blasting to beat all hell and the air full of the rustling of wings. Instead he was somewhat indignant to find he was lined up like any other mortal in a que on earth and maid to wait his chance to get through the Pearly Gates.

Looking about him he was somewhat amazed to find so many people waiting to pass through. According to his ways of thought hardly anybody had been living well enough to go anywhere but down to

hell to sup with the devil with a long spoon. But here it appeared as though every mother's son and his uncle was lined up.

Then his eyes lighted on a familiar form and would have swooned on the spot but the crush was so bad he was held to his feet regardless of his inclinations. For over there to his right he could see the portly form of the late Captain Jason Crull!

Now we'll switch the scene to that worthy person for this chronicle has to do with him. The preacher expected to go to heaven so to be almost there was not unexpected. But the late sea captain hadn't even believed in such a place, let alone going there, so his surprise, and somewhat indignant reactions place him somewhat outside the norm.

Yes, he

was indignant. Highly so. Though he had never gone to church and hadn't believed in an after life, Jason Crull was a logical man and believed what his eyes told him. He knew he'd kicked the bucket and had been buried so being here after sort of waking up, he knew damned well this must be some sort of life after death.

He had to admit that so far things didn't look like heaven. There were no mighty minarets or streets paved with gold. Not even any angel with wings and in a night shirt was to be seen. As for harps and horns and other heavenly music there just didn't seem to be any. And on looking about him at his companions he had to admit some looked like they might be headed in the wrong direction. Of course, you couldn't tell what sort of a fellow a man was just by looking at him, but he didn't judge the place the preachers said heaven had to be would be the logical destination of men who cussed and used certain virile English words in their speech. No sir, not even old devil Captain Jason Crull figured that.

And what was all this crush about? It looked like bargain day in the girdle department of a ladies wear store. He had once docked in China and the line-ups there at the soup kitchens had been almost as bad.

Then he began to wonder if any of his old friends were about so the next thing Jason was doing was standing on tip toe to look over the heads of the others, jumping up and down, and generally making a bloody nuisance of himself.

So much so that someone took him by the elbow with a "Here now, what's all this?" and he looked into the red-hued countenance of a tall personage clad in, of all things, the uniform of an English policeman.

This so flabbergasted poor Jason that he didn't get his wind back in his sails, so to speak, until he found himself standing before a long desk, behind which was sitting a row of kind faced men with huge ledgers before them.

"Name?" Asked the first man,

"Captain Jason Crull".

The man did some leafing and searching about in books and finally said, "Oh yes, here you are." He did some checking off, saying "Hum, hum, uh huh," from time to time.

Someone created a commotion about now and the late preacher who had buried Jason pushed his way from his own line over to Jason's side.

"If there is any doubt as to the qualifications of this person," said his reverence, "I can assure you he was an unfaithful blasphemer on earth."

The man behind the table looked up and said, "I'm sure you are trying to be of aid, but we never listen to gossip up here. It's all down in the books."

"What's all down in the books?" Demanded Jason, thinking of various escapades during his youth and sea faring days before promotion to a captaincy had instilled in him some small iota of respectability.

"Why, the things you have done that you shouldn't— and the things you did that you should have."

Jason was interested. "You mean it'll all be down there? Like the time I got drunk and beat up two policemen with the broken leg off a piano?"

The clerk smiled. "Yes, but that was just a small demeanor. Worth 1 black mark."

"Hah hah!" Snorted the preacher in high glee. "I imagine there must be many thousands of such black marks."

"I'll admit there's a fair share, all right. But there are also some very good marks— such as the time he saved the life of a seaman during a storm. We count such deeds as being worth many many thousands of marks. In fact, there is only one deed that will cancel such a deed, and that is the taking of a life."

"And what of his blasphemy?" Demanded the preacher. "The times he has called 1 a beggar— the church a foul blot on the conscience of humanity?"

The clerk smiled again. "Oh, those are worth one black mark each, that's all!"

The preacher's mouth opened and closed several times until Jason felt like saying something concerning his apparant relationship to a certain type fish. Finally the preacher managed to get some words out-- "But, sir--
BLASPHEMY!"

"Up here we believe in freedom. Every man is entitled to what he believ and to what he says. A man is naturall

doing some small harm in referring to a minister as a 'thieving scapegoat' but he isn't trying to make others believe the same-- he isn't inciting to riot-- he isn't taking a life-- he is merely pronouncing his own personal opinion, and if, though experience, he firmly believes ministers are thieving scapegoats and he has never experienced anything to make him believe otherwise, then that man is not pronouncing a lie-- but what, to him, at least, is an irrevocable truth. Besides, maybe the man IS a thief-- and furthermore, we judge a man by what he has been and done, not by what he has said and believed."

With which he stamped a card and handed it to Crull. "Here you are, Captain. You have a very healthy credit standing up here. We are glad to have you with us. I hope you enjoy being with us."

Jason muttered something under his breath, took the card and moved on, but not fast enough to prevent hearing, with delight, the words spoken to the minister: "And now you sir. I fear your credit isn't so good. You haven't done many bad things-- but you haven't done very many really good things, either."

Jason
Inside, ~~Jason~~ looked about. Where was the city of gold, he asked himself? As far as he could see, he was standing in a pastoral countryside. Behind him was the great white wall. Through it led the broad road, built of blocks of some whiteish material. This led off into the distance, curving up over a gentle rise, bordered with many varieties of trees, equally spaced.

Somewhere a bell rang silverly. Jason turned and saw the clerks changing places with a new group. He decided to wait a few seconds and catch the man who had passed him through.

"Oh hello," said that worthy on seeing Jason. "I thought you had gone on."

"Look chum, what's all this?" Jason asked, waving his hand.

The clerk looked about. "This? Why this is what you humans term 'Heaven'."

"Sure, sure, I figured that-- but where's the City-- and the streets paved with gold?"

The other raised his eyebrows. "There's nothing like that up here. What need do we have for cities and gold?"

"You mean it's just all country like this?"

"Oh no-- but we have no cities. Nobody wants them, you see. We have just medium sized towns for those that like to group up to have someone to talk to and so on."

Here the preacher hurried up. Seizing the clerk by the sleeve, he demanded peremptorily, "Where's the angels? I must see all the angels. And the Great White Throne." Seeing Jason, he scowled, "Oh-- Mr. Crull. I certainly didn't expect to see you here."

Jason grinned and fished one of his evil-smelling cigars out of his waistcoat. Lighting it he puffed with satisfaction. "Maybe we're both in Hell, reverend! You always said that was where I was headed."

"I am certainly NOT in hell!" The reverend drew himself up haughtily.

"You said I wouldn't go to heaven-- so take your pick. Where are we? I can't be in heaven-- and you can't be in hell."

The reverend turned to the clerk. "Is such blasphemy allowed here?" He

asked, plaintively.

The clerk grinned and nodded. "What's wrong with it? I find his sense of humor and somewhat illogical logic highly refreshing. It's wonderful to find someone taking things so assuredly as the Captain. Most newcomers go around for days in a dither of perfect unbalance. Sometimes it takes a lot of work getting them straightened out."

"But such blasphemy-- such evil pronouncements. It wouldn't be allowed in the Church. The Book tells us to beware of blasphemers."

The clerk nodded. "I know-- but who wrote the Book? You never heard and Angel-- of what you fondly term an Angel-- or Christ, say that, did you?"

"But-- but--"

"All that is said is something or other-- I forget what-- about actively trying to lead people from the way of Christ into the way of the devil."

Here Jason put in his oar. "By the way, where IS the devil, anyway?"

This was too much for our preaching friend, who gave vent to any agonized yell, and, clapping his hands over his ears, took off up the road like a dog with a can tied to its tail.

"The Devil?" Repeated the clerk. "Oh, he's in Hell, I suppose. He'd better be, anyway. If he isn't, the Boss will be mad as blazes. Mephisto is prone to play sick at times and go fishing."

Jason almost swallowed his cigar. "Go-- go fishing!"

"Oh, sure-- the River Styx you know-- or at least, we call it that. Those condemned to Hell are put in a boat that takes them down the river to the Devil's Dock. But the human is a pretty tough soul to handle and some of

them still refuse to accept their lot. So there are fights on the boat and some always manage to jump over the side. Most of them are caught in the current and are washed down stream. The Devil sits on the bank and baits his hook with promises of better times and maybe forgiveness and they grab at it. It's a favorite sport of his. Tickles his sense of humor to pull in a soul that thinks it's beaten the game and march it off to Hell."

Jason

thought this over. "You say most of them get swept downstream. You mean some get away?"

"Oh sure. Now and then a hardy swimmer, or someone with more than his share of luck manages to get to shore."

"What happens to them?"

The clerk shrugged. "Never heard tell, exactly. I think they just wander around, banned from Heaven and scared of Hell. A mighty risky existence, I'd say. I know nobody from here ever goes out after them."

Jason pursued the thought in the back of his mind. "I wonder if any of my old chums are out there."

"I wouldn't know about that," the clerk said. "Of course, you can find out if they were passengers on the boat and whether they jumped overboard. There our records end."

"Where would I find that out?"

"In the library."

"Library?"

"Yes, everyone who has died has his name entered along with his earthly record and the verdict."

Jason said, "I think I'll have to visit that library. There's a little Malay wench I had for a cabin boy once--

or-- beg your pardon-- nobody know about that but me."

The clerk smiled. "If she was a good girl she'll be here somewhere."

"Oh, I'm afraid she wasn't. She killed a coupla fellows once."

"I'm sorry--"

"Yossir," said Captain Jason Crull, as they started off up the road. "I'll sure have to visit that library, first chance I get."

II

The library sure was a mighty big place, according to Jason Crull's way of thinking. Jason hadn't been much of a reading man on earth. The papers had been his main form of recreation when it came to the world of letters.

He looked down the long, long aisles walled with shelves of books. He wondered where he'd find his old pals' names.

There was an attendant behind a huge desk at the entrance. To this worthy Jason went.

It was really quite simple: first the librarian looked up the name in a huge filing system and this told where the book was that was given over to that person. There was a whole volume to each soul that had left earth. The first name Jason looked up was Whiskey Jones. He remembered Whiskey fondly. The man's penchant for the drink that had given him his name had been legendary in the South Seas. The last time he had seen Whiskey the bleary-eyed old sailor had been conducting a serious transaction with a greasy old madame. The next time he had heard Whiskey's name was that Whiskey had died under somewhat mysterious circumstances. Knowing Whiskey's love for drink and members of the opposite sex, single and

attached, Jason had figured Whiskey had either fallen down in some gutter and there drowned in the next rain, or some husband had come home and caught Whiskey with his trousers hanging on the foot of the bed.

All the books were identical. Deep red leather with the name stamped on the spine in some shimmering material that glowed like fire. No matter what Jason looked at all the names shimmered in that unearthly fire.

"Humph," thought the old sea captain. "Must be all good guys in here. They wouldn't likely print a guy's name what had gone to hell in that sort of ink."

There was Whiskey Jones' book. Only the name wasn't just "Whiskey Jones". It was "Cuthbert Percival Jones", and in brackets, "Whiskey Jones". Jason stared then started to guffaw. "Why the old bugger," he said. "He never told anybody his right name. And I don't blame him, with a monicker like that. Cuthbert Percival-- oh my God!"

Then Jones' book was in his hands. Jason wasn't interested in a resume of how many women Whiskey had slept with or how many men he had robbed. He was interested in one thing only. Where was Whiskey now?

At the back were several pages: ledger-like pages. There were dates, particulars of the deed, and a regular debit credit column followed by a balance column. Whiskey's debit column was pretty black. In fact, all there was was one long unbroken column of figures. On the first page there were no credit marks at all. And one on the second-- or the third-- or the fourth.

"Looks like the Devil got you, Whiskey, old man." And Jason wiped away an imaginary tear.

On the final page he didn't dare

look at the credit column. The debit total was terrible. It was so large Jason winced. He took a hurried peek at the balance then started to return the book to the shelf.

As though struck by some fast-freezing alchemy, Captain Jason Crull immobilized. Then the book was down again and open at that astonishing balance.

There was only one credit entry, but it was huge. So huge it wiped out Whiskey's black marks and left him with a wonderful green credit. Jason stared at the entry and could hardly believe his eyes.

Whiskey had gone out in one solitary blaze of glory. A reprobate, a drunkard, a loose liver all his life, he had racked up debit after debit until there had been nothing but a swift ticket to Hell. And then he had gone out in such a manner as to build up that huge credit-- Whiskey Jones, who had never counted anything sacred, had died in such a fashion that in return for his miserable, wasted life, ten men had lived that would otherwise have been dead. And thus had Whiskey earned his ticket to Heaven, a better man in the end than some good-livers had been all their lives.

"Where'd I find Whiskey Jones?" The Captain asked the librarian.

The other shook his head. "I wouldn't know. When you enter Heaven your life is your own. The books never tell where you are or what you are doing."

"Isn't there any way I could find him?"

"Well, you might try the Sailor's Haven."

"Huhhh?" Jason stared.

The librarian smiled. "Where else would ex-sailors hang out, Captain? They club together and meet at the Sailor's Haven, a sort of seafaring man's club on the waterfront."

"Where is that?" Jason asked.

The librarian gave him directions and Jason left with all due haste, questions building up in his brain.

As he logged it along the street, looking neither to the right nor the left of him, he thought. "What kind of a Heaven is this, anyway? No streets of gold. No Heavenly choir. No harps or nightshirts or angels or wings? Shucks this might be earth but for one thing-- I feel too goldanged peaceable to be on earth!"

Maybe this would be a good place to tell you that the library was located in a fair-sized town of comfortable buildings that resembled almost any fair-sized town on earth except for one thing. There were no commercial establishments. The streets were winding and tree-lined. People wandered here and there, none of them in a hurry and yet all of them appearing to be bound on some mission. It was just a case of having something to do and all eternity to do it in. This town was located perhaps four miles from the entrance to Heaven.

The captain turned a corner and there before him was a long slope, at the bottom of which was the shoreline of a vast ocean. It was a beautiful silvery beach that stretched for as far as the could see, lapped by the gentle rollers that came in stately procession from the bosom of the deep, to gently kiss the shore and then recede.

The road led down this slope to a vast, rambling building, that looked like an old English tavern, beyond which could be seen the thin finger of

a broad pier stretching out into the water. Moored to this dock were perhaps a dozen vessels.

It was the sight of these ships that convinced Jason Crull that he either must be raving nuts or still dead and suffering from delirium. For there was a modern yatch-- a brigantine of the time of the American Revolution-- a stately Viking longboat, and on or two others he couldn't identify.

Jason shook his head and faced the inn. It was a conglomeration like the shipping. It appeared to have been added to from time to time, and each builder had come from a different time, for nowhere was the architecture the same. The doorway was broad, stone outlined, and English. So was the weathered sign swinging overhead. Through the door roared an old seafaring ditty, the words not a whit cleaned up.

It was cosily brightwithin, nosiy and warm. It was crowded, round and square tables ringed by boisterous men, tankards, glasses, ancient-looking mugs in hands, heads tilted back as they shouted the lurid words to the rough-hued, smoke-stained rafters overhead.

Suddenly a huge voice roared forth. Immediately the voices died down. The voice sounded again.

"Behold! A stranger in our midst!"

All eyes focussed on Jason. Questioning eyes, curious faces. Many times had Jason faced such looks in the dives of Malay and the South China Coast. Immediately he felt he should be wary, but strangely the feeling of fear or or danger would not come. The memory was there, but somehow he felt the assurance that these men meant no harm. There was only friendly curiosity in their faces.

Through them pushed an immense figure of a man. He was clad in some unknown garb that seemed to be partly of animal skins and partly of burnished metal. On his head a gleaming helmet canted itself gaily over one ear, the horns on it catching the light. He sported a luxurious red beard that covered his whole face but for the upper cheek bones and the eyes and forehead.

A huge hand banged down on Jason's shoulder and he felt as though his knees would buckle.

"Ho!" Roarer Redbeard. "Who-beist thou?"

Mason found his tongue. "I am Captain Jason Crull, late of Halifax."

"A seafraining man!" Roared Redbeard and Jason felt buffeted by the volume of the man's voice. "Mates-- another sailor. A Captain. Now we have another ship."

A hot tankard was thrust into Jason's hand. He raised it to his lips and drank. The fiery liquid, unlike anything he had ever tasted before, coursed down his throat to send fingers of living fire through his veins. Then he was coughing as he fought for his breath. Gales of laughter made the rafters ring.

But he felt fine. Suddenly Jason Crull was happier than he had ever been before. He felt strong and wide awake and he knew he was among his own kind, that these men were friends, eager to meet him, eager to have him with them.

Fingers caught at his and vaguely familiar face was thrust into his. "Cap'n!" Cried a well-remembered voice. "Cap'n-- it's me-- Whiskey! Lordy but I'm glad to see you!"

It was Whiskey-- and Jason felt ho

would like to cry but instead he laughed. And as he laughed the old devil that was within him put the words in his mouth-- "Cuthbert, you little runt! I've been looking for you!"

Immediately he had used the other's right name he felt sorry. He expected roars of laughter to come and knew the little man would never live down such a name. But nobody seemed to notice it. And Whiskey showed no surprise. He just grinned.

"I bet it floored you, Cap'n, when you found out my name. Ain't it a bastard to hang on a guy, though?"

Whiskey started toward one of the tables and something unusual about his walk bothered Jason. Not until they had sat down did he know what it was.

"Whiskey--" he said, "you log-- you don't walk with that stiffness--."

Whiskey laughed and hoisted the member. Pulling up his pants leg he exposed healthy flesh, well-haired, muscular. "How do you like it, Cap'n? Feel it-- don't that beat that pogleg you whittled out for me when I lost the other?"

Jason poked it, kneaded it, pulled the hair on it.

"Is it real, Whiskey?"

"Sure it's real, Cap'n. And look Cap'n, lay off the 'Whiskey' hug? I never touch the stuff anymore. Up here I'm just Bert to the guys."

Jason stared. "You quit drinking? Lord, that's good, Whiskey. Bert. This life has sure worked wonders for you."

"It sure has, and it will for you, too. You wait and see, Cap'n. You'll be a new man before the year is out. You're looking better already. Last

time I saw you you had white hair. It's sort of iron-grey now."

Harry brushed his hand across his balding pate. He brushed it again. Then he felt carefully.

"Something wrong?" Bert asked.

Jason looked puzzled. "I was bald when I died, Bert. I don't think I am now."

Bert grinned. "Naturally not. Up here you get rejuvenated. Your whole body changed gradually until you are at your best. The very best. When were you at your best, Cap'n?"

"Around 40, I guess."

"Then that's the age you'll always be up here-- around 40. And you'll never be sick, Cap'n. And boy, the fun you'll have. This is sure the life."

Jason looked slightly unboleiving at this. "What do you do these days? On earth you went in pretty strong for wine, women, and some song."

"Well-- I gave up the wine."

"What about the women and song?" Jason pressed.

"Well, I can sing a bit better now."

"What about the women?" Demanded Jason Crull.

Before Bert could squirm out of that one the door to the Sailor's Haven banged open, admitting a long tall hungry figure clad in somber black. Its face was a long and it looked somewhat like a spavined horse down on its feed. On its head sat squarely a broad brimmed black hat. Under its arm reposed a hefty tome. Jason thought he looked slightly familiar but the face was in shadow and besides, by now Jason

had had almost one too many and everything else? I never had any need for you on earth and I got to Heaven, so I sure don't need you now."

From this awe inspiring vision came forth equally awe inspiring tones.

"Arise, ye wicked men!" It cried. "Cease this drinking and carousing and singing of lewd songs."

Loud laughs greeted these words. Cries of "Have a drink, Sam," and "How many have you saved today, Sam?" filled the room. The comfortable waviness departed Jason.

"My God," he said, "if it isn't the preacher. Hiyah, Preach!"

The newcomer stepped forward. "It is you, Captain Jason Crull," proclaimed the reverend gentleman who had buried Jason. "I see you have returned to your evil ways. I had hopes that you would repent and fall down and bless your Savior when you had finally realized your good fortune."

Bert stared. "This guy a pal of yours, Cap'n?"

"Forsooth and Ods Bodkins and lather my britches," roared Redbeard, coming up. "Is this long-shanked purveyor of doom bothering you, Captain?"

Jason explained the somewhat incongruous acquaintanceship. Redbeard roared with laughter. "Here, Joe," he cried, thrusting forth his tankard, the contents slopping jovially on the preacher's black frockcoat. "Have a snort!"

Jason was somewhat speechless at Redbeard's mixed vocabulary. But he was even more speechless at the advent of the minister. "L ck," he finally managed to get in. "How about you going and peddling your wares somewhere

The erstwhile man of the cloth drew himself up and in a voice of doom proclaimed. "Ah that I should come to this! On earth I labored mightily to save doomed souls for my Master. And In Heaven I find my work still to do. Oh Lord, is there no rest for the weary?"

"How'd you like a swift kick in the britches?" Asked Jason, interestedly.

"Oh leave him alone, friend," roared Redbeard, waving his now empty tankard at a passing waitress. "After all, this is your Heaven-- Valhalla-- the World in the Hereafter. Here everyone gets his just rewards. That means every man can do to his heart's content what he had always wanted to do-- only he can't hurt anybody while doing it. Now this caf here is enjoying himself, no doubt. He he doing what he wants to do above all else: save souls! He's hurting nobody. So enjoy yourself and pay no attention to him."

Jason pondered these words and decided them to be wisdom, indeed. So he turned to the righteous gentlemen. "Scram, spoilsport! Enjoy yourself saving souls that want to be saved--" His voice died off. "Say--" he said, turning to Redbeard, who by now had a tankard on one knee and the serving wench on the other. "Mightn't there be people up here who's greatest joy in life is getting saved-- going into religious spasms of hair-pulling, screeching, and all that?"

"Aye!" Answered Redbeard, giving the wench an appreciative pinch on the buttock.

Jason turned to the preacher. "Heard that, Charlie?" He asked.

Somewhere here there are benighted hooligans that want to be saved-- who want to roll in your sloppy sermons-- go find them and be happy with your own kind-- but for the Larva God, leave me alone!"

Redboard heaved himself from his seat and departed for spots unknown, the wench hanging gigglingly on one arm. Bert watched them go, a far away look in his eyes.

"Damn," grumbled Jason. "The Lord took me as I was so I guess He's satisfied. And that's the way I'm saying. So I guess He'll still be satisfied-- hey, where are you going?"

Bert looked back. "That big Viking swiped my girl! The sunnavabitch!"

III

It wasn't until the third day in the Sailors Haven that Jason was approached by a little round tub of a fat man who looked as though he had just finished laughing and might start again any minute.

"I'm Round John, the Port Master," he introduced himself. "Now that you are with us to stay, and seeing you are a Captain, no doubt you'll be wanting a ship?"

Captain Jason Crull stared at the little man. "Say that again," he demanded.

Round John did. "And a crew," he added.

"You mean," said Jason slowly, "that I can have a ship, and a crew? That I can go sailing, just as I did on earth?"

"Sure, what else did you think you'd want to do? You're a sailor-- that is what you are happiest doing,

isn't it?"

Jason stared out over the rolling sea. Golden clouds way off on the horizon billowed and rolled. Nearby some strange bird sang a song of indescribable beauty.

"Where is there to sail?" He asked. "What is there out there?"

Round John shrugged. "Who knows? This is Eternity. Heaven is eternal in space and time. Everything is out there for a sailor. Olaf, the Viking with the red beard, has been discovering new and strange lands for hundreds of years. We have a Greek from Homer's time who has been exploring mystic lands of enchantment, where dragons breathe fire and sirens sing from rocky isles."

"You're spoofing me," Jason accused.

The Port Master shook his head.

"Consider. This is Heaven. It is eternal in space-- that means that no matter how large we think it is it is always larger. No matter how many of us come here and sail it will always be big enough for them to find new lands, see new things. What did you sail for on earth, Captain Crull?"

Jason's eyes grew dreamy. "I guess it was because I had an itchy foot. I couldn't stay in one place too long. I had to see new people-- new places-- I had to be always travelling."

Round John's arm waved. "Then think of this great ocean. In it you can sail for all time and you never need visit the same place twice unless you want to. Gather the crew you want-- and sail into the sunrise. And no matter how strange the thing has been that you have seen, or want to see, you will see stranger. For this is Heaven-- here every man is happy doing

what he likes to do the most-- here there is no end to that."

Captain Jason Crull gazed away into the face of the rising sun. Funny, he thought, he hadn't noticed the sun before. It was just like the one on earth. It was coming up in a clear sky through which a few fleecy clouds gambolled. It was a fine morning, Jason thought, a wonderful day, a day for sailing.

He threw his arms above his head and laughed loud and clear.

"To live like this for all time! What have I done to deserve this? Round John-- I want a ship-- a crew-- Captain Jason Crull sails again!"

He turned and walked along the pier and off it up the little slope to the door of the tavern. He halted before he stepped through its portals to watch a tall, lank, cadaverous creature clad all in black, plodding its mournful way along the crest of the hill. Behind him strung a straggly line of hunched figures. "Come and be saved!" Entoned the leader. "Hearken unto me and you shall eat of the honey of the angels and tread the streets of gold and sing hosannahs all day long." And behind him the figures sang "Praise be the Lord!" "Hallelujah!" "Amen!"

The doors closed cut the sound and Jason looked about him at the jolly men, shouting another of their apparently endless songs of love and drink and yellow girls and south sea nights.

And Captain Jason Crull thought, "Unto each a Heaven of his own!" Then he leaped to the top of a table and shouted loud and clear. "A crew for Captain Jason Crull. Who will sail with me on cruises of discovery and exploration and everything your heart desires?"

SOME NOTES ON "JASON CRULL"

I began this story on January 20, 1949. It was finally finished on January 22, 1950.

I have to give credit where credit is due. It was inspired by a book I read on a visit to Norman Lamb's in Simcoe, a book, the exact title of which I don't recall, but it was by Mark Twain, and was about a dour old sea captain who died and went to heaven and of his discussions with the angels there. I decided to write something similar but putting in it my own ideas and so forth. Thus the story began. But it soon branched off into trails all its own-- I became so interested in my lead character that he ran away with the story and soon I was but his biographer. Thus the sea captain may have started out somewhat of a kin to Mark Twain's but pretty soon he turned out to be an entity entirely different.

The story saw several changes of name. Originally it was "Captain Dockett Goes to Heaven". Later on it changed to "The Saga of Captain Harry Dockett". But this was too clumsy, too close to Twain's title. I wanted something different, something a little unusual, just as Jason turned out to be a little different than I had at first envisioned him to be.

So his name became Jason Crull, and the name of the story became simply, "Jason Crull".

No doubt you will find plenty of sloppy phraseology and grammar. But this is a first draft-- I have stencilled it directly from the very first writing just as it came from my imagination. Now you will see how a first draft of my work looks. If it had been for sale naturally there would have been many changes, much polishing, something added here and something deleted

there. I make no claims of having written a masterpiece. I give it to you and let it stand or fall on whatever merits it possesses.

No doubt you will note that I have left myself many openings for a sequel if I should ever become so brave as to consider to tell more about Jason Crull, and I think the opportunities are endless.

I hope the presentation of this in one complete instalment will make up in some small way for my recent FAPA inactivity.

Leslie A. Croutch.
March 12, 1960.

It is with some amusement that I noticed the foregoing date. Naturally, it should be "1961".

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SOME EXTRA NOTES ON VARIOUS THINGS

March 26, 1961.

This is being adlibbed at the last minute. After I have finished this column and a half this stencil will go into the duplicator and be run off. LIGHT for this issue will then be completed as far as the duplicating is concerned. I have planned this issue for the FAPA Issue appearing in May. This then will mean that another waiting-lister will be deprived of the honor of filling my place because I neglected making my renewal requirements. To that waiting lister, my sincere apologies.

On MARCH 16 1961 (notice the date, please) I received from Los Angeles a nice little request for some material for a magazine celebrating the coming nuptials Rapp will Share with Nancy. The request asked for all such contributions to be in by

MARCH 9, 1961. (Notice date please). Now unless the mails between Los Angeles and here are very slow, this could not have even been mailed in time for me to do anything about by the above date. So all I can do right now is to offer my sincere congratulations and hope that Rapp's Share-the-future-fen-plan will be a signal success and to hope that Nancy will not find she has walked into a Rat Trapp!

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And now you have read the current issue of LIGHT. Naturally I will be waiting to see what you will be thinking of it. I'll find out through the FAPA, I know. Those of you who are not members, be sure to drop me your brickbats and posios. I hope there are more of the latter than of the former. If you'd like me to pull a stunt like this again, be sure and say so. I've enough such material to do it quite a few times. I was really a prolific typewriter-pounder for a time there.

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June 1946 No. 1

LIGHT FLASHES: A Light Publication, issued by Leslie A. Croutch, Box 121 Parry Sound, Ontario, Canada. This is a trade organ and is available gratis by fan authors, poets, artist and publishers only.

LIGHT PUBLICATIONS AGAIN ROLLING

Acquirement of a new duplicator sees Light Publications again going to town at Box 121, Parry Sound, Ontario. Half way through the duplication of the May issue of LIGHT, the machine which had been in use for years, broke down. The first machine to be looked at, a Mimeograph Model 90, proved unsuitable, and was returned to the company. A Speed-O-Print was next investigated and finally purchased. This is a nicely built little machine and appears equally suitable to fan work as the twice as expensive Mimeograph 90. This organ is the first to be turned out on the new machine, both in order to get acquainted with it, and to get back into the swing of things again.

LIGHT FLASHES CEASES TO BE A COLUMN

Yes, the headline is right. No longer will you see the name used in CANADIAN FANDOM, or in LIGHT. LIGHT FLASHES has branched out on its own as a full-fledged paper. No, NOT a magazine. This will be handled in the same fashion as a newspaper. No date for issuance has been set yet. For the time being it will probably be somewhat irregular. However it is hoped that it can be placed on some definite schedule. LIGHT FLASHES is free, but not to general use. It is intended ONLY to be mailed to fellow publishers, authors, poets, artists. It is intended to be a house organ, handing out news of what I am up to, what I plan in publishing, what future issues may contain, and what material I am looking for. No advertising policy has been set as yet and may not be.

LIGHT FLASHES THIRD NAME IN CROUTCH BANNER

LIGHT FLASHES is the third name to be published under the LIGHT PUBLICATIONS banner. They are: (1) LIGHT (2) THE VOICE (3) LIGHT FLASHES. LIGHT is, as most of you know, the "flagship of the fleet". THE VOICE appears in the Fantasy Amateur Press Association mailings, ONLY, LIGHT FLASHES has already been explained in a foregoing article.

LIGHT PUBLICATIONS PLAN OTHER TITLES FOR FUTURE

Robert D. Swisher, NEFF copyright bureau chief, was sent the names of two additional contemplated magazines some time ago. The names of these planned fan mags are: (1) SPECTRA, intended for the FLPA, (2) CINE-FAN. The latter is not, at the present time, planned as a regularly issued magazine. The first may be the last, though it is hoped it shall not be. More news on this will be issued at a future date when work definitely begins on it.

MAY LIGHT SPORTS MONOCHROME COVER BY GIBSON

The cover of LIGHT for May will be by Bob Gibson, but instead of being duplicated in the usual black ink will appear in a brilliant green. This is the initial step in LIGHT PUBLICATIONS use of color. Inside, the same issue sports two cuts in green. LIGHT PUBLICATIONS uses an English-made flat-bed duplicator for its color work. This is worked somewhat in the manner of a flat-bed job press, and extremely accurate registration is possible. The output is very slow, however, but this is more than offset by the use of color being made possible.

BOOKLETS PLANNED BY LIGHT PUBLICATIONS

Nebulous plans for the future output of the LIGHT Press have a place for various fan booklets. THESE

will definitely NOT be given away. Prices will be set on them. Some booklets intended for very limited circulation are also possible. Calls will be sent out for material when work definitely commences, and the nature of the contributions will be given.

RE FUTURE MATERIAL FOR ANY OF THE LIGHT MAGAZINES

In the future please do not send material that is unsolicited. The reason for this is due to the fact that at times the backlog of material here gets too large and your material may have to wait several months before seeing print. It is best to contact me and tell what you have as an idea, and if I want I will tell you so or work with you on it. Material accepted this way sees print in about a quarter of the time it otherwise would. However, and this is important, if you are an artist or cartoonist and are willing to submit your work already on stencil, get in touch with me right now. There is a place for more such artists. WHEN SUBMITTED ON STENCIL YOUR WORK IS DUPLICATED WITH ALL ITS ORIGINAL FIDELITY. THERE IS NO LOSS IN TRACING. But, get in touch with me first and send a sample.

PLUG!

This isn't usual, so don't ask me to do it. But I will when I have the room and it concerns a reader of this paper. But if you want books, etc., drop Norman V. Lamb at line at 203 Main St., Simcoe, Ontario. When I saw his prices I asked him what he was trying to do. Honestly gang, the blighter is practically GIVING the stuff away. S'fact! No, I don't get a cut out of this. But most of his stuff is less than a buck-cloth-bound editions is good conditions, too!

IF IT'S A LIGHT PUBLICATION IT'S BOUND TO BE GOOD!