



W.G.A. Registration #1059779

## The Dark Shore

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### Concept

Driven to desperate measures by the Great Depression, Will Maxwell ships out on a mysterious tramp freighter. The existence of the S.S. Falkenberg is considered to be a myth or a joke by many professional seamen but there *is* a ship by that name and it has a reputation among some of the waterfront's shadier characters as a ship that will carry the world's most dangerous or illegal cargos to the world's most remote or dangerous destinations. She is run by a crew of deportees and deserters, stateless men, some of whom cannot even go ashore in a civilized port.

As he journeys from the United States to China and the Dutch East Indies, Maxwell discovers that, even as he struggles to make his place among the ship's crew, the situation is worse than he can even imagine. The freighter *does* engage in running contraband and weapons, it's clientele *are* warlords and gangsters, and it's officers break every law of the sea and take every risk in the book.

But that's *not* the strange part ...



*The Following is the True Account of Hendrick Van der Decken, the ship's master who became known as "The Flying Dutchman," his crew, and how their Malign Fate became Legend.*

### The Curse

In May of 1652 a Dutch pirate, or privateer (when he wanted to claim some slight legitimacy), named Hendrick Van der Decken raided the compound of a Portuguese trader on the island of Zanzibar and came away with gold and ivory, a box of ancient jewelry and a small number of captives. Van der Decken put to sea just ahead of a detachment from the city garrison and headed for the newly formed Dutch colony at the Cape of Good Hope ... his ship was the first to be named Falkenberg.

Their captives were the trader, several members of his family and a traveling Ethiopian scholar and mystic named Yohannes Makonnen. Makonnen demanded they be returned immediately, but the Captain refused, claiming the trader would be ransomed and if the Ethiopian was not careful he would be sold into slavery. The scholar warned that if they were not put ashore dire circumstances would arise and the vessel would never reach Cape Town. The Captain was contemptuous of this threat and continued on. Soon a fever swept through the ship, killing many of the crew.

Their hopes rose as they approached the Cape of Good Hope ... but then the wind began to blow from the direction of the land. The ship beat back and forth for days fighting the gale and powerful seas. Soon provisions began to run out, fresh water was inundated with salt, and the vessel's hull, already riddled with ship worm, began to leak badly. Land was constantly in sight; sometimes the lights in the few buildings at Table Bay were even visible, but the ship could not make enough headway to approach the shore.

All this time the disease kept up its deadly work. Finally, the Captain discovered that the trader and his companions had come aboard sick and all this time Makonnen had been treating them in some way to preserve their lives. When the African refused to treat the crew, the Captain killed the trader and his family.

In a fury, the scholar, who had traveled the African and Arabian coast for many years and studied much of its magic, religion, alchemy and astrology caused a curse to be brought upon the Falkenberg ... that all aboard her would never again be able to walk on land and would live in darkness until the end of time. His tool in this magical incantation was a ring worn on a thong around his neck with a strange triangular device inscribed in the metal. The Captain cut the Ethiopian's throat, and threw his body overboard.

Then they discovered what had been done to them ...



### The Damned and the Un-damned

In the two hundred and eighty-four years since, the Captain and men of the Falkenberg have learned how to live with their curse, though not happily. New ships were taken but, in later years, vessels have been purchased. New crew members of normal, un-damned, men were brought aboard to take up the slack and do the jobs better suited to those not afflicted with the curse. By the nineteenth century they had settled into a particular role; carrying cargo but, because of their desire to not attract attention, it is often a smuggler's cargo, trouble cargo.

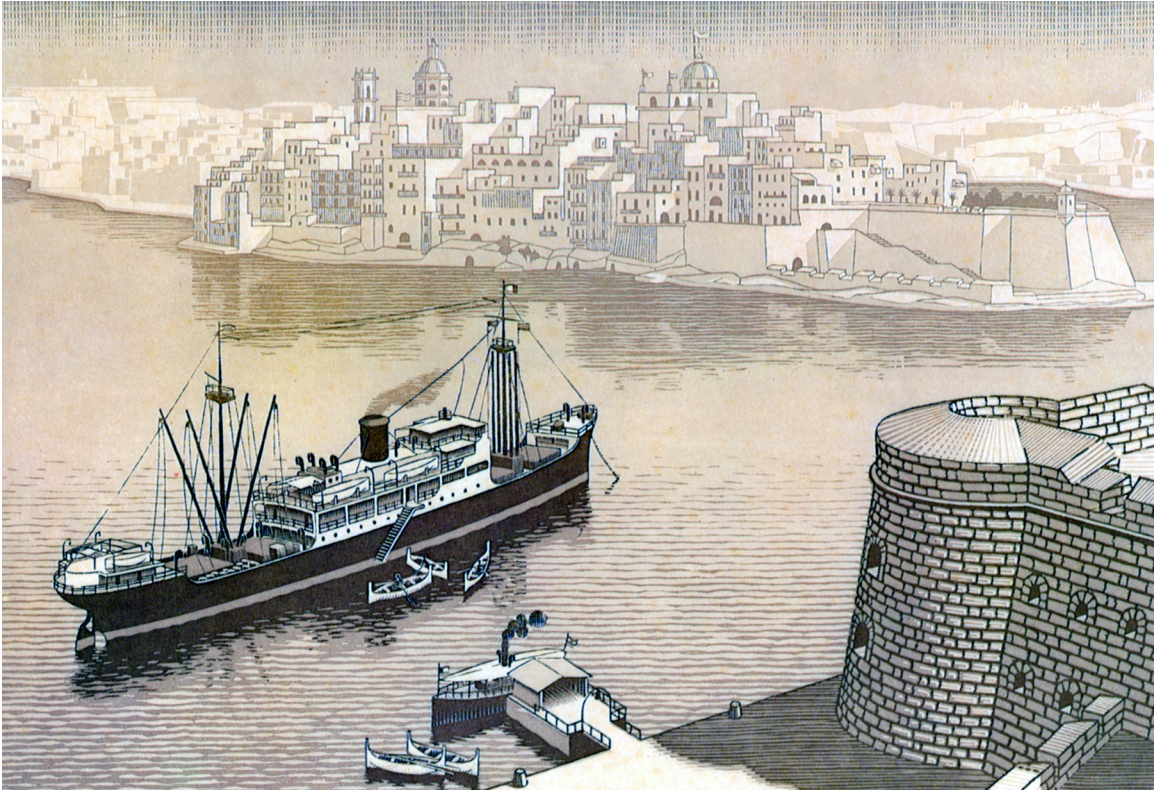
The African's magic was a blunt and, perhaps, not well understood instrument. The crew of the Falkenberg have, by trial and error, discovered the following things about their predicament

- ✚ If they go ashore, they age to the equivalent of eighty or ninety; old enough to be infirm and miserable, not so far into doddering senility to not be able to appreciate that they are old and infirm. They are stricken with arthritis, palsy, and other diseases that come with age. It is a state that becomes noticeable within a couple of hours and after three or four hours the full aging has occurred. When they are returned to the sea the process reverses itself.
- ✚ Daylight causes a splitting, almost incapacitating, headache and a horrible sunburn. This can partially be dealt with by wearing dark glasses or slitted goggles, long sleeves, gloves and hats.
- ✚ Otherwise they do not age or die, they cannot be killed; but any wound or privation (like hunger) produces a normal amount of pain. An injury that might be deadly in an un-cursed man is as painful and hard to heal as if it had been just one degree less deadly. Basically, they live in much the same way as a normal human but without the potential relief that death might bring. Though some of these men have, in the misery of depression, tried to commit suicide, they do not seek death ... they just want to go ashore, live as others do. Most would give up their seeming immortality in an instant in order to just live, age, and die, in a normal manner, in daylight and on dry land.
- ✚ There may be other quirks to the curse; no one knows exactly how it works ... not even, they will discover, the African magician who created it. Wracked with emotion over what was happening to himself and his comrades, he pulled the worst thing he had out of his bag of tricks; a curse he didn't completely understand.

Other dark forces surround the crew of the Falkenberg. The Captain attracts St. Elmo's fire when agitated. When angry, thunderstorms gather. He has a slight ability to see the future along with a sense of how to navigate the ship without instruments; whether these are outgrowths of the curse or something that came from four normal lifetimes at sea is unknown. Recently, a stoker did succeed in doing something permanent to himself; he crawled into one of the fireboxes while the ship was under way ... his body was consumed but his screaming was heard for days afterward and since then that firebox has been haunted by his tormented ghost.

The men of the original crew are intensely vital, strong bodied and hot-tempered ... just the kind of thing that makes an eternity on a ship intolerable. These are men who, for the most part, started out as ignorant sailors. Two hundred and eighty-four years at sea has changed them considerably. Some have gone mad, some are nearly so; taking on either paranoid delusions or extreme forms of religion, others have educated themselves and made the best life possible at sea. The original crew have all been trained for jobs in the S.S. Falkenberg's engine room and maintain separate quarters from the Deck Gang.

Many of the new, mortal, crewmembers are men who, for one reason or another, are in some kind of purgatory of their own; criminals, sociopaths, enemies of one state or another, political refugees, they are the debris that accumulates along the waterfront. Like the men living under the curse they are driven to do desperate things because of inner demons just a little bit more real than yours or mine.



### The Dark Shore: Book One

*Being the Strange Tale of William Maxwell on his trip to Shanghai, China and Beyond with the crew of the Mystery Ship S.S. Falkenberg.*

Northern California, February 1936 A young man named Will Maxwell, the victim of hard times, is kicked off a freight train near San Francisco. In a hobo-jungle near the tracks he meets up with several more men traveling the country looking for work. The only thing he has that's worth anything is a bag of apples that he stole from his last job when his employers refused to pay him. He shares some of the apples and the men give him a cup of the stew they have cooking.

The next morning he is jerked violently awake as the other hobos steal his bed roll and few remaining apples. He stumbles to his feet and fights one of them off but the others close in and beat him to the ground. As they start to strip his coat off Will begins to shake, his eyes roll back and his spine arches ... spooked the men run off.

Drifting in and out of consciousness Will becomes aware of an ancient black man tending to him. Asked where he's going, Will mumbles that he's headed for the city looking for work. "No one is hiring," says the man in a strangely

accented voice, “though perhaps I have heard of a ship. You ask for the Falkenberg, of Reymerswaal, Holland. Captain Van der Decken.”

When Will comes to again, he’s alone. He slowly picks himself up, still hurting from the beating. As he re-buttons his shirt where the old man loosened it, an odd stone amulet is momentarily visible around his neck.

Will arrives in San Francisco and registers at the Marine Service Bureau, an employment agency for sailors. He’s told that he’s number 472 on the list ... possibly a 3 month wait. “Where would I find the Falkenberg?” Will asks. No one knows what he is talking about. “A Dutch ship, Captain Van der Decken?” Now they glance at each other, “Dutch you say? Van der Decken? Very funny. I can hear the orchestra tuning up. Bring out the broad in the helmet. Move along!”

After hours of wandering the docks in the rain, searching for any kind of work, Will ends up in the area close to Fisherman’s Wharf where an old, black hulled freighter is moored at a dilapidated pier. Squinting through the fog he can just make out, *S.S. Falkenberg* on it’s bow. The foredeck of the ship and the gangway are deserted, but there is some loading activity aft. Will starts up the ramp but as he reaches the deck reality seems to turn on him.

Instead of seeing the steel of the deck houses and the ship’s massive funnel, he sees masts and furled sails. Men turn to look at him, men dressed in cut off breeches with scarves tied around their shoulder length hair or wide brimmed hats on their heads. For a moment there is just the creak of wood and the slap of lines against the masts.

Again, Will starts to shake but before the seizure gets too bad, someone yells at him and he shakes his head, snapping out of it. A normally dressed crewman comes forward across the grey steel deck, demanding to know his business. “Nothing,” Will croaks, and bewildered by what he’s just seen, stumbles back down the ramp.

Near the waterfront, Will finds the Star of Hope Mission, where for a dime you get a meal, a sermon, and a bed. But after lights-out, the dormitory is run like a cell block by a crew who have a “protection racket” going. The pay off is sex. Unlike the altercation in the hobo jungle, this time Will is ready for trouble and shows himself to be a pretty good boxer. Two of the men go down and he’s working on a third when the minister and a couple of hard cases with clubs show up ... but the only one thrown out is Will.

Dead tired and soaked from the rain he spends part of the night huddled in a doorway trying to get some sleep until a couple of policemen come by and tell him to move along ... Will spends the next couple of hours 'carrying the banner' to keep from being arrested for vagrancy.

In his wanderings he ends up back by the waterfront, where the Falkenberg is moored. He stands there looking up at the dimly lit ship. He's been beaten, he's eaten only once in three days, he has no money, no prospects, and he's been up all night. He needs a place to rest, food, and to find work ... he needs a home. Will starts up the ramp cautiously, peering around the deck; the ship is an old rust bucket but there are no sailors from a different time, no wooden decks or sails. He isn't shaking or seeing things. He finds the night watchman and then is ushered in to see the mate.

The mate is a tired seeming Frenchman. He asks Will a few questions then says that there are hundreds of rated seamen on the beach. He seems about to turn Will down but, glancing up, Will sees a shadowy form in the passageway, a form that seems to be staring at a spot near Will's neck. Will's stone amulet is visible because of the buttons ripped off his shirt. The figure speaks sharply in French then disappears down the hall. Perplexed, the mate says to Will, "Okay, you got the job ... sign here."

A Seaman who has come in snickers when Will asks where they're headed, "Hell itself, young feller." The Mate tells him to shut up, "Shanghai and we're short handed. Now get to work, both of you. We sail before daylight."

Will Maxwell is thrown into the loading process, working alongside vague, half-lit figures, and he gets only a sense of who they are as he does his best to help out. Normally these jobs would be done by the port's longshoremen but he's told this is a "special cargo." The look he gets when he asks a question tells him he'd do better to shut up.

It's getting on towards morning when there's a commotion on the dock. A truck-load of Chinese pull up. They take up positions guarding the area as a limousine with an armed man on each running board pulls onto the pier at high speed. An elderly Chinese man and a young Chinese woman get out and make their way up the gangway surrounded by body guards. They are Ma Pu Fang and his daughter Yi Shun. My Pu Fang is a notorious gangster in San Francisco.

Suddenly, a crewman steps onto the bridge wing and calls out, "Captain says get the gangplank up and cast off ... now!" At the word "Captain" everyone on

deck freezes. The Bo'sun, who is supervising the stowing of the cargo snaps around to look at the bridge, "*The Captain!?*" The bridge ports are dark except for a dim, flickering red light.

Off down the waterfront several sets of headlights are approaching. The Bo'sun and crew explode into action. Orders ring out and the gangway comes up. On the wharf the Chinese react nervously. Following an officer, Maxwell and another crewman carry the luggage of the old Chinese and his daughter to their staterooms. Off the starboard side a tug begins to pull the ship toward the channel.

They hurriedly climb ladders and pass men scrambling to get underway. Down on the docks, the first of the approaching cars skids to a stop and a burst of gunfire rings out. Men from the cars fan out, firing, and the defenders on the dock shoot back. The bodyguards take the old man and the woman inside and down the alleyway to their cabins.

The ship is now away from the dock and the fighting has grown into a small war. "In there," the Officer says, indicating the woman's cabin to Maxwell. Will places the bags on the bed and looks up to notice the Chinese girl looking out the port toward the battle on the wharf. He tries to say something comforting but he's not very convincing. At a noise from the door Maxwell turns, one of her large bodyguards is standing there, a pump shotgun in his hands. Maxwell hurries out.

Soon the tugboat casts off and the ship heads for the Golden Gate.

The Falkenberg heads East at a little bit under 250 miles a day, and Will Maxwell learns something of the life of an Ordinary Seaman. He and the other crew members clean up the ship from it's stay in port, chipping rust, and repaint the areas scraped with red lead primer, splicing cable and doing routine maintenance. Will also stands a watch in the bow, working four hours on, four hours off, around the clock.

The food is lousy, the other crew members a tough and surly bunch. The Bo'sun, his immediate boss, is a huge Maori, covered with tattoos. A constant reminder of his dominance is that he gets to serve himself first in the crew's mess and he takes what he wants even if that means someone goes without. His bellowed commands can be heard almost from one end of the Falkenberg to the other. Under his harsh tutelage and that of the Able Bodied Seamen, Will is taught the skills he do his job.

Among the other seamen of the crew there is one, "Shorty," a smallish, older man with blue birds tattooed on his chest, who most often offers Will his advice and opinion, cynical as it may be. He cautions that it's better to not ask too many questions aboard this ship. He fills Will in on some of the general conditions, "It's a hungry ship, get use to it. Captain's one of the last owner/operator's so the pay's lousy. That smell? A cargo of sulfur caught on fire, you get used to it." Shorty makes a number of attempts to learn about Will. Nearly everybody on this ship has a story. They are a crew of misfits, criminals and displaced persons. The only way the Falkenberg can get a loyal crew is by taking on men who have no place else to go.

The elite of the deck crew are A.B.s; the Able Bodied seamen. Pete, another Ordinary Seaman, develops into Will's special persecutor, doing whatever he can to make Will look foolish or to goad him into a fight. He and Will are the most junior members of the crew and it seems like Pete is trying to show that he is one-up on somebody, *anybody*. Shorty seems to always be there ready to suggest a boxing match ... a suggestion that Will avoids.

Amongst the crew the Falkenberg has a reputation of being jinxed or haunted. Some crewmen have fled the ship in the past and told wild stories. None of the current crew denies the rumors ... mysteriously, they just don't talk about it in detail. They all have respect for the Black Gang; apparently it takes some special kind of nerve to work in the engine room ... the ship's cook says he wouldn't go there for all the money in the world.

While working near the grimy engine room skylight, Will hears sounds almost like moans of pain over the rumble of the engines. Another time, Will gets a look down the ladder into the fiddley (the huge vent for the boilers). It is a world that is dim and lit by flame, with powerful men shoveling coal into the fireboxes ... one of whom looks like he's chained to the wall. Suddenly an Assistant Engineer appears and slams the door in Will's face.

Slowly, through occasional meetings and then ones that are better planned, Will and Yi Shun, the gangster's daughter, get to know one another. She grew up in California and has never been to China. The whole idea of moving back is definitely not how she has seen her life progressing. However, her uncle in Shanghai has been killed and, as his accountant, she is so deeply connected with her father's business that she has no real option but to go with him. Will tells her some of his story; how his father was sponge diver down on the gulf coast who died of the bends and that he was nearly drowned when he was a child and ever since has occasionally had strange seizures ... it makes it hard for him to keep a job. Though they are constantly under the eye of one of her

father's huge Tibetan bodyguards, she and Will are able to strike up something that seems headed to being more than a friendship ... a fact that gets him no end of ribbing in the fo'c'stle; some good natured, some more malevolent and racial in it's tone.

Behind it all, there is something *really* odd about the ship and it's crew, something unworldly and disturbing. Mysteries lurk in things said off-hand or left unsaid, even when a direct question is asked. It's days before Will realizes he almost never sees any of the engine crew on deck, and then only after dark. Will eventually strikes up a friendship with one of the stokers who seems to spend the entire night roaming the deck or just staring off into the distance. Houtman, the stoker, asks a lot of questions about Will's life ashore, almost seeming to live vicariously through him. His return to the engine room or the quarters of the black gang at dawn is always with reluctance.

Quite out of the blue Will is invited to train as a quartermaster or helmsman, a job usually left to the A.B.s. This sends minor ripples through the pecking order of the crew but it's an idea that came from the Captain ... so Will begins to stand a watch in the wheelhouse or on the flying bridge.

One night when Will is standing wheel watch under the supervision of the second mate the Captain visits the flying bridge. At a nod of the Captain's head the mate sets off to take a turn around the deck. Sailing through the dark night, smoke speckled with sparks drifting away on the wind behind them, the ship's master asks Will questions about Will's background and then about Will's amulet. When, without answering, Will turns one of the questions back on the Captain, the ship's Master pauses then says, "Mind your course, sailor," and leaves. Though the Captain never even glanced at the compass, Will realizes that he has drifted off a couple of points. After this the late night visits and the questions become more and more common.

Heavy seas cause some shifting of their load and forces the deck crew to do the dangerous work of stabilizing it. In "tween decks," the upper hold, Will discovers that the "special cargo" the Falkenberg is carrying is enough weapons to equip a small army. Not just guns and ammunition but mortars, aircraft, and bombs ... all of it belonging to Ma Pu Fang. Talking to both Yi Shun and some of the crew members, Will learns her father is not just fleeing trouble in San Francisco but is headed back to China to make war on the Japanese. His opponents on the dock and certainly those they will face in the Far East are; the Black Dragon Society, a right wing political group attempting to push Japanese politics toward expanding the war in China; Izumi Kikan, an

Espionage Agency; and the Yakuza crime organization. He may have pissed off the Chinese Communists too ... they are not sure.

Will discovers the radio operator has a large library of books bought by the Captain. Many are on the occult, sorcery and curses, ancient religion and mysteries of the sea. One fall's open naturally to a chapter on the Flying Dutchman ...

A pair of the engine crew get into a vicious argument. These guys seem to be kind of 'on the prod' about nearly everything anyway and it quickly escalates into a full on brawl amongst several men with the Bo'sun being called from his bunk to maintain order. He wades into the fight with a short club and seems willing to kill any or all of the stokers and oilers in the brawl. He pummels the last man standing to the deck, striking him over and over with his bludgeon, breaking his arm and his jaw. When Will recoils from this violence, the third mate, standing nearby, shakes his head and says, "They're a bunch of bloody animals. He'll live, don't worry about that."

Later those involved in the brawl are punished with a cat'o'nine tails ... Will is amazed that the men stay on board the ship, especially when he's told they have the option of taking the punishment or being put ashore.

With the exception of Houtman, Will is aware that the majority of the Black Gang resent him for something and it has to do with the amulet he's wearing. He tries to explain that he doesn't know anything about it but all Houtman will say is that it wouldn't hurt to make that fact clear to people ... if you want to stay healthy. Will takes it off but keeps it in his pocket.

During some rough weather near the Philippines the Bo 'sun tells Will to change a burnt out running light on the ships foremast. The two of them go forward, get a bulb and then Will is sent up the mast to change the light. As the ship rolls and pitches, the top of the mast swings out well beyond the edge of the deck. Will pops the housing open and drops out the old lamp. Hanging on for dear life, he changes in the new lamp and comes back down. As he hits the deck a huge wave crashes in. The wave picks the Bo 'sun up but before he can be washed away, Will reaches out and grabs his collar, holding on while the water rushes by. When they are back on their feet, the Bo 'sun cuffs Will on the side of the head. "You almost hit me when you dropped the God Damn light," he says ... but it's actually to avoid thanking him.

More and more often, the Falkenberg appears in Will's dreams but the dreams are also interspersed with visions of another vessel, a ship from the 17<sup>th</sup> century

and it's hard-worked crew. He sees moments of bloody battle, terrible sun-scorched calms with no fresh water ... a world of blinding and painful light. Though he hasn't had a seizure since coming aboard, odd in itself, the dreams are getting more powerful and detailed and the men from the ship he is now on seem to appear as characters in the dreams of the more ancient ship. He is also taken back to his father's boat and the strange black man who dove from the deck of a ship to rescue him and the brought him back to life when he seemed to be dead. Slowly, the story of the sailing vessel and it's crew comes together.

Will feels that he must find out what is going on aboard the Falkenberg. It seems like the center of the mystery, besides the Captain, centers around the Black Gang and the engine spaces. The only problem is that the fireman's fo'c'stle is pretty much off limits to the deck crew. On the wall of the first mate's cabin is a cutaway drawing of the ship. Will notices a ladder running from the stern stores locker down to the shaft alley, the tube that houses the drive shaft between the engines and the screw. The shaft alley runs through to the engine room..

At the first opportunity Will makes his way aft, slips into the store room and pulls up the hatch. A narrow tube with a ladder in it drops away into darkness. He makes his way down the tube and then forward beside the spinning drive shaft. He sneaks through the engine room, between the hissing boilers into the fire room where men feed the roar of the fires and flame occasionally pours from the furnace doors.

Suddenly, from nearly under his feet, a black figure arises from a pallet on the floor. A chain clanks and moves, a chain attached to the figure's leg. It's a man known from Will's dreams but now so covered in coal dust as to be almost unrecognizable. He bellows some inarticulate warning to the others and Will is caught. All Will's visions and dreams come to a head. The men of the engine crew are the men Will has seen on the ancient sailing vessel. They shove and threaten him, tearing his shirt open and demanding to know where the stone amulet is, Houtman tries to intervene but is pushed aside ... a kaleidoscope of images rush into Will's mind: unveiling the story of the Swahili sorcerer's capture, disease laying waste to the crew, the curse, and the Captain reaching out to touch the ring that marked the amulet that Will wears now; the ring burning his hand. The sorcerer stabbed and thrown overboard. A violent seizure overwhelms Will.

We go back to when he was a boy, falling off a boat, the black man diving in to save him, taking a piece of slate and pressing the ring from around his neck to it, the ring burning it' design into the rock and then giving it to the boy, "I

saved you, now you must save me,” he whispers into Will’s ear. The young black man turns into the old man from the hobo jungle ...

When Will awakes he is still in the engine room and the Captain is bending over him, “What is this thing?” he demands. Electrical sparks jump from the machines, a haze of St. Elmo’s fire hangs in the fiddley, the huge heat vent above them. “Tell me quick or I’ll throw you in there,” he motions to the furnace. Will insists he doesn’t know, it was given to him. The Captain tells him that they are looking for a man with a ring carrying this same design. “You and me, we are going to find out what it means, yes?” the Captain turns to go back to the bridge, “We’ll find that man and maybe we’ll put *him* in the fire ... until he tells us what he knows!”

Houtman helps Will leave the engine spaces. He tries to explain away the violent action of his crew members and the Captain, telling Will that the man is in chains to keep him from throwing himself in the furnace in sympathy with another man who already immolated himself that way ... that future; madness, is what awaits them all if they don’t get help.

Over the next few days Will goes through the motions of his job like a man in a dream. It is while he is in this frame of mind that, one night as they make their way across the Sea of Japan, he meets Yi Shun on the forepeak, the triangular, raised deck in the bow. They discuss how different their circumstances are now from the worlds they once knew; Yi shun going from Chinese/American debutant to the present realization that she is the daughter of a gangster, to a future as the Americanized daughter of a warlord in the traditional society of China. Although Will doesn’t tell her what has transpired in the engine room and in his dreams, he does admit that he too has found himself in a strange world too ... a world that suddenly offers answers to his past but also makes a riddle of his future. In many ways their situations are very much the same. This leads to some certain ... intimacies.

While Will and Yi Shun are occupied forward, shadows flicker over the stern; dark forms rush from the steering gear housing across the poop and down to the well deck. A squad of Japanese commandos lock down the Black Gang’s quarters and move on to the main super-structure. The radio room is taken and the alleyways controlled by machine pistol wielding soldiers. An officer takes over the bridge, taking the first mate and Captain captive.

From the forepeak, Will looks up and sees static electricity humming around the ship’s antenna wires. “Something’s wrong ...” he tells Yi Shun. Suddenly,

from off their starboard quarter an enormous searchlight fires up. The outline of a destroyer is silhouetted in the reflection off the water.

Will and Yi Shun start aft but Will, peering over the edge of the deck, sees a soldier already guarding the door to the Deck Crew's quarters in the fo'c'stle. From up on the boat deck gunfire suddenly erupts as the Japanese run into Ma Pu Fang's body guards. With the help of the Bo 'sun the bodyguards are trying to evacuate Ma Pu Fang to a more defensible position. Gunshots hammer along the steel plates of the alleyways and smash through portholes. On the bridge the Captain and mate glance at one another ... outside the wind begins to blow.

The battle continues, but now it is drawing in other members of the squad including the man who had been standing guard over the crew's quarters; Will and Yi Shun back off and turn to the fo'c'stle skylight, rapping on the dirty panes until a member of the crew opens it. They drop down into the fo'c'stle. The crew want to know what's going on and Yi Shun is worried about her father. Will tells them the guard is gone but A.B. Raffi, a long time crew member and ex soldier, tells them to wait. He holds up a hand for quiet, "You feel that?" The ship is beginning to plow into ever increasing swells. "The Captain will tell us when it's time ... he's done it before." "Don't worry, ma'am." another crewman says, "Your father will be alright, there's no way The Old Man will let a buncha slant-eyes take over his ship ... beggin' yer pardon, of course."

On the bridge wing the Captain is arguing with the Japanese commander. The Captain wants to turn into the weather and the Japanese officer's assistant is frantically signaling the destroyer with an Aldis lamp, trying to get permission. A message comes back that allowing them to make the 45 degree course correction. The Captain steps to the wheelhouse door to order the course change, the quartermaster brings the helm over, and as the Captain steps back onto the bridge wing he grabs the Japanese Commander by the belt and collar and heaves him over the side. In a flash the Mate turns and shoots the soldier in the wheel house with a gun he has concealed in a locker. With the electric glow of St. Elmo's fire crackling along the wheelhouse roof, the Captain turns to the man with the Aldis lamp, his expression so terrifying that the man jumps overboard!

The Captain steps into the wheelhouse and yells down the speaking tube to the engine room to, "Make smoke," then rings up Full Ahead on the telegraph. Lastly, he pulls down on the whistle lever sending a series of resounding blasts echoing through the old ship's hull.

At that sound the men from the crew's fo'c'stle burst through the door of their quarters armed with all sorts of personal and improvised weapons. As they rush the superstructure, they join in the fray, appropriating better weapons when possible.

In the engine room buckets of lubricating oil are dumped into the fire boxes, causing a dense black smoke to pour from the funnel. As it begins to obscure the warship's searchlight the destroyer's main gun begins firing but in the wildly tossing seas the Falkenberg is a poor and rapidly disappearing target.

Now, besieged on two fronts, the commandos have lost the initiative. One by one they are being cut off from the fight or killed. Members of the Black Gang and the ship's officers join in with guns either captured or from the ship's armory. Though Ma Pu Fang is down to one lone Tibetan bodyguard the fight is over. Yi Shun runs to her father's side; he is wounded but more worried about his daughter and his men. Suddenly, one of the Japanese, thought to be dead, pulls a pistol and shoots the old man in the heart.

Bloodied and battered the Falkenberg makes it's way up the Wangpoo to Shanghai. Arriving at the docks they are given a secure pier and can begin to unload. From here they will go on to pick up and deliver cargo in Brooklyn, New York, Algiers and Venice, Italy.

Yi Shun meets her uncle's lieutenant who is glad to have the weapons but is patronizing to her and seems to have some agenda of his own. Ultimately, he offers to sell the weapons and give her a "gratuity," suggesting that she go back to the U.S. She tells him she intends to see that the weapons are used against the people who killed her father, not just sold to line someone's pocket. The man pulls a gun saying that she'll be shipped back where she came from one way or the other ... Yi Shun stares him down for a moment then snaps her fingers. The big Tibetan, though wounded and in a cast grabs the man and in a move that breaks the cast clear off his arm, snaps the man's neck.

That evening Yi Shun finds Will in a waterfront café. He doesn't know if he will go back to the ship, it's been a dramatic month and there must be an easier way to make a living. On the other hand, there are all these questions about himself, the amulet, the fact that he seems connected to the Falkenberg but doesn't understand why. Regardless, it's a trade off he doesn't necessarily want to make. Yi Shun tells him she's staying in China to carry on her father's mission. "There are new forces affecting our lives." She doesn't have high hopes for her chances of success or survival, but she'll have to discover what

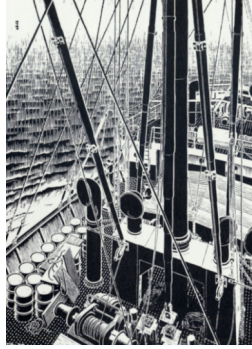
this new future has in store. She leaves Will with a kiss and a simple statement, “We can’t go back to being who we were, no matter how much we want to.”

Will watches her disappear into the crowd. He looks around him; all he sees is poverty and chaos, China at it’s worst. If life was bad back home what would it be like here? He walks along the dimly lit waterfront toward where the Falkenberg is preparing to cast off in the distance. Suddenly he sees a familiar face; the old black man from San Francisco. Will calls out, pushing through the crowds along the quay. The figure shifts in and out of the throng, disappearing one moment, reappearing the next. In front of a shop with a large Yin-Yang seal over the door Will sees the backs of two men, both of who may be the man. He takes after one of them but when Will finally catches up it’s a Melanesian islander ... Will heads back to the shop.

It is the place of business for an aging alchemist, full of bizarre apparatus, herbs, and magical iconography. He demands to know about the man who was just there but the proprietor doesn’t speak any English. From far off he hears the ship’s whistle blow ... he has to go or be stranded in China. As he turns to leave the old man presses an envelope into his hands, it is addressed to Will Maxwell! He tears it open. Inside is a key and a card with an address in Venice, Italy, one of the ports the Falkenberg will stop at in the next four months.

The Falkenberg is in the process of casting off. Will begins to run along the docks, clambering aboard just as the lines are being drawn up.

His destiny is with the Falkenberg whether he likes it or not.



*Dim light filtered up from the compass housing causing the Captain's ruined, heroic, face to float, disconnected, in the darkness. "Do you believe in ghosts?" he asked. "There's more than one kind of ghost story."*

### Dramatis Personae

OS stands for Ordinary Seaman which is self explanatory, AB stands for Able Bodied Seaman, which is a certified rating commanding more pay and responsibility.

### Main Characters

**O.S. Will Maxwell** grew up on the Gulf Coast of Texas where his father was a sponge diver. Since then he has been an 'Orphan of the Road,' riding the rails in search of work since he was 14. In his whole adult life all he has known is an endless cycle of harder and harder times. When he arrives near San Francisco he is worn out, desperate for three square meals and a bed, a place to stop where he can count on any kind of a stable tomorrow. For his size he is a better than average boxer and reads whenever he gets a chance in a vane hope of self improvement. There is not much future in his future.

As a child Will was saved from drowning by a mysterious black fisherman diving from a nearby boat. It seemed at first that he is dead but after a long time the fisherman manages to revive him. Will's destitute father apologizes for having nothing to offer the man. "He knows," the man says, "he knows what he owes me." Then, picking up a fragment of slate from the beach, he presses it to the ring he wears on a thong around his neck ... and the strange design from the ring is branded onto it. "Keep this, it will bring you luck."

Since that time Will has been stricken with occasional seizures and visions he can barely remember afterward. Will wonders if he was hurt in some strange way from the fall or if he was actually briefly dead and thus brain damaged. The fits make him self conscious and isolated from the rest of society ... one step short of being sent to an institution. The man who saved him is in his hallucinations as are, strange men, ancient ships, terrible storms at sea, and a

modern black hulled freighter. A freighter he will soon get to know very well ...

As the story progresses, Will must decide how to play the limited hand that he has been dealt: He is under the command of a 300 year old pirate. He is the unwilling agent for a feral mystic of uncertain abilities. Both are pursued by a homicidal maniac who isn't the least bit worried about collateral damage. Who can he trust? Who must he fear?



**Captain Hendrick Van der Decken** the reclusive master of the S.S. Falkenberg. Never seen in daylight, rarely seen at night, he is only sure to appear when there is trouble brewing. He runs his ship with a will of iron taking it through weather, through reef strewn waters, and across river bars that would terrify any other ship's officer. Discipline is enforced as if he were still on a sailing ship, the Bo'sun meeting out punishment with a cat-o-nine tails or a club. While he has his own agenda and no patience or interest in the needs of others, he protects his ship and crew with a vengeance, but he demands from them a similar attention to duty. He is like an intense and abusive father to his crew ... but a father nonetheless.

He also must be a tough businessman, transporting cargos for some of the wickedest and most avaricious people on earth. The task of making enough money to keep his ship maintained, fueled and his crew fed, is difficult in these depression years and many times he must make highly compromised decisions. He must be prepared to defend his ship or his profits at a moments notice. He has a strangely burn-scared hand.

Over the years Van der Decken has made a few very serious enemies who must be dealt with and he must also consider the curse ... any information will need to be discovered and wrung out of the knowledgeable parties, if possible. All in all he has mellowed only a little from his previous life, merely acquiring the balanced perspective of a sinner who, if unrepentant, at least acknowledges the extent of his sins. He realizes the world has changed and has adapted.

However, he still keeps a weather eye on the main chance ... the pirate is still a force to be reckoned with.

**Yohannes Makonnen** The Ethiopian alchemist and sorcerer who put the curse on the original Falkenberg. As the years pass, Captain Van der Decken hears rumors of this powerful shaman along the African coast. He is known to be an old man, middle aged, or young and strong. He lives in a boat, as a hermit on a reef, as a sick old man in a village. After a hundred years of whispered stories and myths Van der Decken has realized that somehow, by accident or because it was the only way it could work, the scholar was included in his own curse. Perhaps it was like a military radio operator so closely under attack that he calls in an air strike on his own position; feeling retribution more important than safety. Regardless, he is alive and may have some answers to their situation. But he is also no longer in Africa ... so the search goes on.

In the early 1600s, prior to his capture by the pirate crew of the Falkenberg, Makonnen was a prodigy in the fields of medicine, magic and astrology. He traveled throughout the Arabic speaking world, from Morocco to Delhi, studying and searching out ancient mysteries. In the workshop of an alchemist in Istanbul he was shown an ancient ring. Reputedly once the “Ring of Solomon” and used to control the Jinn (spirits, genies, metaphysical forces) that constructed Solomon’s temple, it is still a potent source of magic. However, it was originally a set of two, interlocking rings which, in his wisdom, Solomon separated, sending one deep into southern Africa with the Queen of Sheba when she returned to her native land. After studying under the old alchemist for some time Makonnen eventually took the ring and set out on a quest to locate it’s other half.

It was years later, in the recently abandoned city of Great Zimbabwe that Makonnen discovered what he had sought. He had just returned to the African coast when he was abducted by Captain Van der Decken. The second ring still remains in its golden box, submerged in the wreckage of the Captain’s old sailing ship and the power of the two, combined, rings may well offer a solution to the predicament that the old crew of the Falkenberg and Makonnen find themselves in. With Will’s unwitting and, possibly unwilling, help Makonnen is slowly working out a plan ... however the only one who knows the exact location of the wreck is Van der Decken.

The other requirement for the curse to be altered, for it cannot truly be *undone*, is that all the cursed men must be together. Therein we find other problems; Lucien Theron and Hendrick Van der Decken are nearly psychotic enemies and either might choose to use Makonnen as a pawn in some plot against the

other. The situation is complicated further in that several of the men of the Falkenberg have chosen other lives for themselves around the world and there is no easy way of contacting them.

**Lucien Theron** was once a representative of the V.O.C. {the Dutch East India Company} and man who, in order to reduce competition had suggested the Captain raid the Portuguese compound on Zanzibar. But when the crew of the Falkenberg began to suspect something about them was different, they drew straws to chose someone who they would experiment on to test their mortality. Though Theron survived, even the toughest pirate aboard did not have the will to continue the experiments. Once a powerful young executive he was shot, stabbed, and attempts were made to drown him. Still alive, he has been traumatized into an intense hatred of Van der Decken and the rest of his crew. He left the ship long ago and after many years made himself into a successful pirate in his own right. Through a combination of cunning and psychotic aggressiveness he has taken down the grand prize of all freebooters; a Manila Galleon, loaded with gold and gems intended for the Spanish treasury. It is this treasure that has sustained him over many lean years.

Captain Theron and Van der Decken have had several violent altercations over the years with neither quite getting the upper hand. Van der Decken has gone from waging full scale warfare to avoidance whenever possible, but to Theron the capture and torture of his one-time tormenters is a constant priority in his life.

**Ma Yi Shun** daughter of San Francisco Tong leader Ma Pu Fang. Father and daughter left the U.S. aboard the Falkenberg for Shanghai when they heard of the death of Ma Pu Fang's brother, a leader of organized crime in China, at the hands of the Japanese. However, Ma Pu Fang is also assassinated as the ship enters the Wangpoo River. Until her father's death Yi Shun was his trusted accountant. Educated at Berkley, totally westernized while completely aware of the customs and culture of China, she has every aspect of her father's business, contacts, and assets committed to memory. Now, with her father and Uncle gone, she vows to carry the fight to the Japanese and help to free China.

**The Permanent Passengers: Larisa and Katrina Fedorovna** - Mother and daughter. Larisa is in her mid forties, elegant as a ballerina, while Katrina is just now in her mid teens. They are part of the Czar's extended family, they had been living in exile in Harbin, China until Soviet agents came after them. Having no papers and nowhere safe to go they have struck a deal with the Captain and now almost never leave the ship. They occupy a suite of cabins which have been opulently furnished and Larisa lives in a manner totally

disconnected from reality, as if she was on an extended cruise. When she is pushed, however, the personality of a useless aristocrat disappears and we see the kind of woman who walked across Siberia carrying her infant daughter.

Larisa has cut some kind of deal with the Captain. She has money but it is in the form of deposit boxes full of jewels and bouillon, hard to get to, and watched by agents of the NKVD.

Katrina is more curious about the world around her, though she's never been far from the ship since she was a child. The Falkenberg is the only home she has ever spent more than a few years in and like any kid she has explored it's every dark corner and is very much at ease at sea. She is treated as a mascot by the crew many of whom have a relationship with her like a father or older brother ... those who don't may face the wrath of Larisa or the Captain. Unlike her more dark and moody mother she is a bright and happy girl who makes the most of every situation. After Will comes aboard she considers him with a certain ... romantic interest.

### The Officers

**First Officer Jacques Dampier** A soldier in the French Foreign Legion, until he killed an officer in an argument and deserted to avoid punishment. He has a Master's Ticket of his own, spends much of his time as the acting Captain and is often resentful of Van der Decken's appearing and pre-empting his decisions at the last minute, pushing him out of the executive role and into that of lieutenant without warning. Occasionally, he imagines he will become Captain in his own right until he remembers he is a wanted man. Though a basically good officer he is a drunk when off duty.

As the Captain finds himself reluctantly paying attention to the occasional suggestions of Will Maxwell, Dampier feels his position is eroded even further.

**Second Mate Alexander Strenikoff** Once a rabid Bolshevik, a Trotskyite, he is now on the run from the Soviets he has a contrary relationship with nearly everything ... especially Larisa Fedorovna. On one hand she's Russian, beautiful, and living on the deck below him. On the other, she's a member of the hated aristocracy who won't admit anything has changed ... and he's just as on the run as she is, so his claim to the moral high ground is shaky. He also knows she has some kind of arrangement with the Captain and tortures himself with the fear that it may be romantic. His primary job is navigation and, while he glories in solving mathematics problems, he is prone to be very high strung and nervous. He has ulcers and they are getting worse.

**Third Mate David Jones** a young man, not too much older than Will Maxwell. He is seemingly quite idealistic and positive about his position and finding the upside of any situation ... until faced too forcefully with a problem. An abused child who was also praised for his looks and intelligence, his positive act is an *act*, one that can be shattered easily and puts him in desperate survival mode. He has convinced himself that the universe is looking out for him on one hand and he also is deeply sure he's no one on the road to nowhere. He's attempting to be a writer like Joseph Conrad and has produced an enormous, rambling and cliché ridden novel he refuses to send to a publisher.

Jones is interested in Katrina Fedorovna and his sense of authority is challenged when she becomes interested in Will Maxwell.

**Radio Operator "Sparks" Morton** a sophisticated man in his forties, homosexual, always clothed in some elegant manner, whether a perfectly creased uniform, silk shirt and trousers, or a embroidered oriental robe. He speaks several obscure languages and is always the essence of cool, even in the most outrageously dangerous situations. He maintains a demeanor that suggests he's seen it all and whatever is happening is a minor inconvenience. This is very true, whatever unspoken experience brought him to the Falkenberg was so horrible he'll never panic again.

Morton is a pat hand at fixing electrical circuits and also works as the ship's electrician. He has a blindingly fast touch on a Morse key and is equally good with an Aldis signal lamp. He is also the keeper of the Falkenberg's library and the ship's medic.

**Lieutenant Henry Albert R.N.** one of the few agents of the British Naval Intelligence Department operating in the Far East. He has documented *many* irregularities regarding the Falkenberg but, though all are suspicious, there is no pattern he can discern other than the typical low level smuggling common in ship's crews. It gnaws at him, however. He should be able to figure out what's going on. The activities of the Japanese, Germans in the Netherlands East Indies, native independence movements, and the Communists go by the way side ... he's going to catch the Falkenberg's crew at whatever it is they are up to or die trying.

### **The Deck Gang**

The sailors who take care of duty and maintenance topside, stand watches and, in more primitive ports, load and unload the ship.

**Bo'sun Akuhata** A powerful Maori sporting a mixture of traditional and western tattoos including a set of symbolic perforations across his throat with the caption "cut on dotted line," he is also covered with scars, some woven into the other markings. The story is that he was a fisherman until he ate several of his neighbors ... but no one asks him directly. He is the boss of the deck crew, the ship's disciplinarian and sergeant at arms. No one on the Falkenberg is tougher, stronger or meaner than Akuhata.

The Bo'sun is Will's immediate superior.

**AB Alfredo Raffi** An Argentine Italian. Handsome, vane about his beautifully groomed mustaches, he has been a soldier of fortune in both the Riff conflict in North Africa and the Gran Chaco in Paraguay. He has obviously lived a colorful life and would love to tell anyone who wants to listen, and some who don't, about conquests on the battlefield and in the bedroom but there's something of a showman and con artist to the man. He has a lot of talents and a complicated, heroic, and somewhat unbelievable story to explain every one.

**OS "Shorty" White** a smallish, older man from Canada, he has blue birds tattooed on his chest. Ostensibly friendly and helpful but secretly a spiteful, jealous, backstabbing pain in the ass ... but one who always puts a vague gloss of "Mr. Nice Guy" on it all. He leaves many of the crew alone for fear they will kill him but, turns the full force of his passive-aggressive/I'm your helpful pal personality on any newcomer. He's good at convincing these people that his enemies are their enemies, thereby making "friends." He's very much the working man and resents the officers, carrying around a "British Labor" attitude; the Toffs get all the credit, while the Stiffs do all the work. He's a bit of a forecandle lawyer but this isn't really the ship on which to go about insisting on your rights.

Promised wealth and power, Shorty will soon become an agent of Lucien Theron, informing him, when possible, of the destinations and activities on the Falkenberg.

**O.S. Pete Vandela** a young man who was muscle for a New York crime family. Very impressed with his connections but on the run for a shooting. He was a boxer for awhile and Shorty is always secretly trying to get he and Will to go at it, in the ring or otherwise. He is a wantabe tough guy on a ship full of men who are the real thing.

### The Black Gang

The engine room crew of wipers, stokers, oilers, and engineers. These are the crewmen of the first Falkenberg who survived the deadly fever on the original ship.

This Falkenberg, the *Steam Ship* Falkenberg, is rather old and therefore runs on coal that must be shoveled into the fireboxes by hand ... the men that do this and the other work this roaring, overheated crucible are the true lost souls on the ship and the engine room is their hell. Some have gone crazy and are chained in for their own safety. Others have adapted to their new life in various ways. When the weather is good, some spend the nights on deck but rarely see the world by daylight.

**Chief Engineer Tor Norretranders** Once the First Mate of the original Falkenberg, a man who is discovering he is slightly mad with the strain of an unending life at sea. He has trained himself to be a genius with engines but is a manic depressive who in his optimistic phases, can almost see the grand design of ... well, something. It's unbelievably frustrating. Like many of the damned he has attempted to kill himself.

Though once a topside sailing officer, he is now on his third steamship and has taken on all the quirks of a typical engineer; acting like the ship is actually his and the officers and crew are just passengers, behaving as if the only reason they haul a cargo is in order to feed his engines and to allow him to continue to do his job rather than the other way around. He runs his preserve his way and no deck officer is going to tell him where to get off.

**Stoker Francisco "Frank" Houtman** An apparently young man who befriends Will Maxell in occasional, night time, meetings on deck. Houtman is given to occasionally experimenting with his immortality; testing how close he can get to death despite the pain.

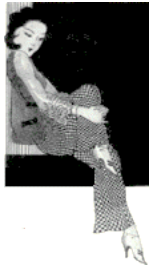
**2<sup>nd</sup> Assistant Engineer Neal Perkins** The only un-cursed man in the black gang. He was once an administrator in a mental institution until a scandal forced him out. He's right at home in his new job.

**Stokers Jan and Gysbert van Weldren** brothers, but after centuries together they can't stand one another. One is an atheist the other a fundamental Dutch Reformer; one sure that all that has happened to them is random chance the other an act of god. They work perfectly together though, almost like they were reading each others minds. They can even finish each other's sentences,

though this infuriates them when it happens. Fistfights erupt quickly and brutally.

**Pieter Dirxsoon** is a crewman who went crazy in the 1920s and crawled inside the firebox of number two boiler, incinerating himself. His agonized ghost still haunts the flames and serves as a warning to all of the cursed members of the crew who might attempt to kill themselves ... he is somehow still there, trapped in some state neither life nor death.

**Allert Speex, Ryckert Gerritsoon, Lucas Vogel, Giraldo Thibault, Guillermo De Vries, and Isaac Deschamps** are other members of the black gang who served on the original 1652 Falkenberg.



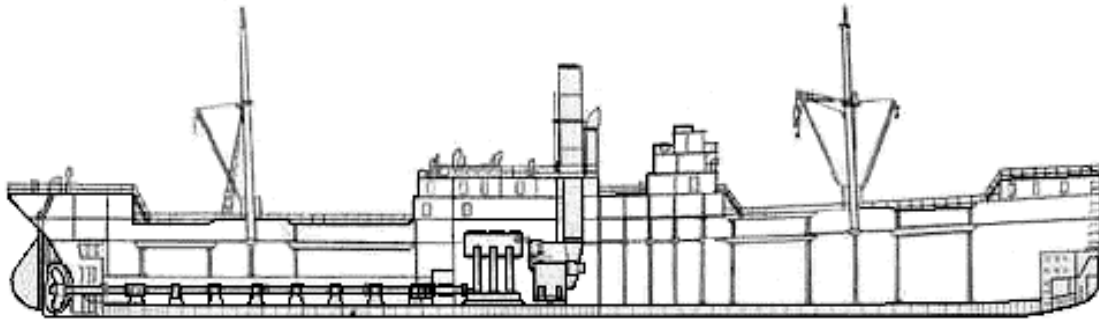
*“Weapons?” she smiled slightly, her almond eyes observing Will from behind the veil of smoke from her cigarette “You must understand ... we have a lot of enemies.”*

#### Additional Characters

A ship the size of the S.S. Falkenberg would have a crew of around 30 distributed through the Deck Gang, the Black Gang, the officers, and the Steward’s crew. Their stories can be created and explored as needed.

**Steward/Cook Stanley Fullalove** came aboard thirty seconds ahead of a posse of Klu Klux Klan members. He’s seen some strange and terrifying things since he came aboard and he’s a superstitious man ... but he’s realized there are far more real and physical dangers in the world ashore than aboard ship. Unlike most of the others who accept their status on the Falkenberg with reservations or regret, Stanley is unendingly grateful for his position aboard.

**Nicolaas Pelsaert** Van der Decken’s boatswain. Pelsaert went with Theron when he left the Falkenberg. After a brief career as a pirate he also left Theron and has established himself on Compton’s Abralhos an atoll at 180 degrees by 0 with a family made of several generations of Polynesian wives and children. He lives a nearly idyllic existence, far from the troubles of civilization.



The S.S. Falkenberg of Reymerswaal, Holland.

A four thousand, seven hundred ton, coal fired freighter, built in England before the First World War. She is a bit more than 440 feet long, about 56 ft at her widest point, and draws around twenty-eight feet when loaded. She has one of the last hulls build of nearly corrosion proof Staffordshire wrought iron and is graced with engines built by Blair of Stockton on Tees, the largest, best balanced, and most durable triple expansion engines ever built. A product of the British Empire at it's height, she was built to last an eternity. For all that she is a relic, ships built after the war run on oil and their boilers drive steam turbines ... far more of her space and tonnage is devoted to engine and fuel than a newer ship. This means that her voyages are not always as profitable as her competitors and riskier ventures must be sought.

The Falkenberg is capable of around twelve knots ... if the engineer wants to "break the seals" on the safety valves she might do fourteen and a half. There are six passenger cabins; however, two of them and a small head have been converted for the use of a pair of special passengers. As spartan as the crew's quarters may be, the officer's cabins are paneled, built with fine fixtures and a certain, compact, elegance ... a reminder, even in the 1930s, of the style of a bygone age.

The ship has had extensive repair and modification work done in the nearly thirty years she's been on the seas; there are several mysterious passageways and storerooms. Over the years there have been cargos that have not entirely been discharged, so a bit of nearly anything can be found on board.

The Falkenberg is registered in Reymerswaal, Holland, a town inundated by the sea hundreds of years ago and never rebuilt ...



### The Ring of Solomon

A ring bearing a design in silver and gold in the shape of two intersecting triangles, one pointing up the other down. In magic and alchemy they symbolize the conjunction or reconciliation of opposites, fire and water, male and female, the sun and the moon. With this ring and his knowledge of magic, Solomon was able to control the jinn or genies, talk to animals and raise up an army of the dead. Realizing that it's power could easily be misused the wise king unlocked the ring, separating it into two pieces and eventually gave the downward pointing triangle, the female or water symbol to the Queen of Sheba during her visit to his kingdom. The male or fire sign section he kept for himself. Each ring has some magic power, when they are in close proximity to one and other the power is increased, when they are locked together, they are the most powerful talisman the world has ever known.

Magic, however, is not based on any symmetrical set of forces. What is done cannot necessarily be undone or, at least, undone in the same way. If Makonnen is to change his destiny and that of the crew of the Falkenberg he will have to learn to control some powerful and unpredictable forces ... forces which could save them from their fate or throw the world into an ever tightening spiral of chaos.

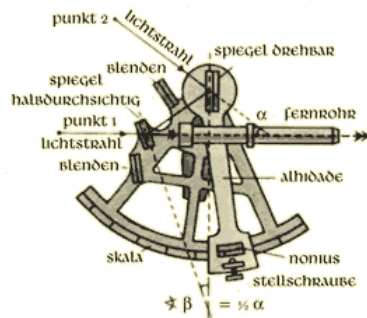
*“Long before the bankers and stockbrokers, the working man knew the depression was coming. Finding work was like a game of musical chairs and when the music stopped, half the world was left standing.”*

### World Situation

The year is 1936. The United States is in the depths of the Great Depression. Cracks are beginning to show in the armor of the once mighty British Empire. While the warlords and communists fight, the Japanese have invaded China. Spain is embroiled in a bloody civil war. The Soviets have begun a new round of purges. Mussolini has taken Ethiopia. Hitler is rounding up Jews and eyeing Eastern Europe. The refugees and weapons left over from The Great

War are still circulating around the globe. Another World War is imminent but exactly who will begin fighting who, and over what is not yet known.

There have never before been so many opportunities for soldiers or sailors of fortune, smugglers or black marketers. There has never been a time where the world hung so precariously between one holocaust and another.



### The Story Continues ...

Will has been given a the key to an ancient warehouse in Venice, Italy. It will contain the first of a series of clues that will prove to Captain Van der Decken that Isaac Makonnen has a plan to release the curse and allow him to live out the rest of his life as a normal man. However, they must first deal with Lucien Theron once a contemporary of Van de Decken, but now his nemesis, out for revenge on the men of the Falkenberg and recover the other half of the Ring of Solomon from the wreck of the original sailing ship. In order to undo the curse, they will need to gather up several members of the Falkenberg crew who have been missing for many years though the none cursed member of the crew are less enthusiastic about the risk in a venture that can't possibly be profitable to them. Lucien Theron steals the golden "fire" half of the ring, and escapes. The great powers are on the brink of war, two powerful talismans are at loose in the world, and the crew of the S.S. Falkenberg is splin by conflicting agendas. The genie, as they say, is out of the bottle ...

### Following the Trajectory

In the end the Falkenberg crew will reunite, including Makonnen and Theron (not necessarily peaceably) and they will sail into Nagasaki Bay just ahead of the Atomic explosion ... this being the ultimate conjunction of Fire and Water needed. When the bomb goes off they sail through a Black Rainbow, and event which has been foretold to them as the way to go and find themselves in a world where they will be free ...



### Further Information

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See beulamour.com for resume, writing samples (the script to the USA Network Movie The Diamond of Jeru would be appropriate to this project), and a downloadable file of this proposal.

*The Dark Shore W.G.A. Registration #1059779*