

...SOME YEARS AGO,
I ENGAGED
PASSAGE FROM
CHARLESTON SOUTH
CAROLINA TO THE
CITY OF NEW YORK,
IN THE FINE PACKET-
SHIP **INDEPENDENCE**
OF CAPTAIN HARDY...
ON THE PASSENGER
LIST I WAS REJOICED
TO SEE SEVERAL
OF MY
ACQUAINTANCES.
AMONG THEM
CORNELIUS WYATT,
A YOUNG ARTIST,
AND A CLOSE
FRIEND...



...I OBSERVED
HIS NAME WAS
CARDED UPON
THREE
STATE-ROOMS
AND FOUND
THAT HE HAD
ENGAGED
PASSAGE FOR
HIMSELF, WIFE
AND TWO
SISTERS (HIS
OWN)... WHAT
I FOUND QUITE
REMARKABLE
WAS THE NEED
FOR **THREE**
ROOMS FOR
JUST **4**
PERSONS...



...AT FIRST I
CONCLUDED
IT WAS A
SERVANTS'
QUARTERS.
BUT THEN I
BEGAN TO
THINK OF HIS
OCCUPATION,
AND DEDUCED
IT WAS FOR
EXTRA
BAGGAGE
IN THE FORM OF
A **PRICELESS**
PAINTING...



...ON THE DAY WE
SAILED I SAW THE
BOX BROUGHT
ABOARD AND MY
SUSPICIONS WERE
CONFIRMED
(**OBVIOUSLY** IT
WAS A **PAINTING**)
...IT WAS ABOUT 6
FEET IN LENGTH...
BY TWO AND A
HALF IN BREADTH...
BUT EVEN ITS ENTRY
ONTO THE SHIP
WAS OF SOME
MYSTERY TO ME,
FOR IT WAS NOT
PUT INTO THEIR
"SPARE-ROOM" AT
ALL, BUT INTO HIS
OWN CABIN...
...SUCH MYSTERIES
COMPOUNDED
THROUGHOUT MY
TRIP, AS I AM NOW
BOUND TO TELL AS
I BEGIN MY TALE OF



THE OBLONG BOX

...AS WYATT'S PARTY BOARDED I WAS INTRODUCED AROUND...THERE WERE THE TWO SISTERS, THE BRIDE, AND THE ARTIST- THE LATTER IN ONE OF HIS CUSTOMARY FITS OF MOODY MISANTHROPY... MRS. WYATT WAS CLOSELY VEILED ...AND WHEN SHE REMOVED IT SHE **ASTONISHED** ME, FOR SHE WAS DECIDEDLY **PLAIN**, IF NOT POSITIVELY **UGLY**...



...WE THEN SET OUT TO SEA...AND FOR THE FIRST FEW DAYS WE HAD FINE WEATHER...MRS. WYATT MINGLED WITH THE OTHERS ON BOARD, BUT WYATT KEPT ENTIRELY TO HIMSELF WITHIN HIS ROOM...



...MRS. WYATT 'AMUSED' US ALL VERY MUCH... I SAY "AMUSED"-AND SCARCELY KNOW HOW TO EXPLAIN MYSELF...THE TRUTH IS SHE WAS LAUGHED **AT** NOT **'WITH'**...



...THE GENTLEMEN SAID **LITTLE** ABOUT HER BUT THE LADIES PRONOUNCED HER "A GOOD HEARTED THING, RATHER INDIFFERENT-LOOKING, **TOTALLY UNEDUCATED**, AND DECIDEDLY **VULGAR**"...I COULD NOT IMAGINE HOW A MAN LIKE WYATT, AN **ARTIST** SO **SENSITIVE** TO **BEAUTY**, COULD **MARRY** SOMEONE SO **GROTESQUE** IN BOTH **BEAUTY** AND **MANNER**



...WYATT CAME OUT AFTER A FEW DAYS AND TALKED WITH ME...NATURALLY I ASKED HIM ABOUT THE NATURE OF THE OBLONG BOX, AND SAID SOMETHING ABOUT: "THE PECULIAR **SHAPE** OF THE BOX"...



...AS I SPOKE THE WORDS, I SMILED 'KNOWINGLY', WINKED AND TOUCHED HIM GENTLY WITH MY FOREFINGER IN THE RIBS... PRESUMING HE'D LAUGH AND ADMIT IT WAS LEONARDO'S ODD SHAPED 'LAST SUPPER' OR SOME SUCH VALUABLE. BUT HIS ONLY REPLY WAS ASTONISHMENT...



...HIS FACE GREW VERY RED, THEN PALE, AND HE LAUGHED TILL I THOUGHT HE WOULD **EXPLODE**. THEN HE FELL FLAT AND HEAVILY UPON THE DECK... AND WHEN I RAN TO UPLIFT HIM, TO ALL APPEARANCES HE WAS **DEAD**...



MY **GOD** WYATT... ARE YOU ALRIGHT...?

LEAVE ME ALONE I TELL YOU...

"WHY DID YOU BECOME SO...UPSET...I ONLY INQUIRED AFTER YOUR **PAINTING**?"



..WYATT WENT TO HIS STATEROOM THEN AND I DIDN'T SEE HIM FOR DAYS... BUT THAT NIGHT I SAW SOMETHING VERY CURIOUS TO EXPLAIN THE **EXTRA ROOM**. I SAW **MRS. WYATT** ENTER IT JUST BEFORE **MIDNIGHT**...



..I CREEPT UP TO WYATT'S DOOR AND **HEARD** HIM **WITHIN**...FIRST THERE WAS THE SOUND OF A **MALLET** AND **CHISEL**. OBVIOUSLY **OPENING** THE OBLONG BOX... THEN THE NOISES OF HIS **SOBBING**. OR **MURMURING**. WHICH **LASTED UNTIL DAYBREAK!**



..THE NEXT NIGHT I OBSERVED **SAME THING**. AND ON THIS OCCASION **PEEPED** THROUGH THE **KEYHOLE** TO SEE WYATT IN **CONVULSIVE AGONY** OVER WHAT (I COULD NOT SEE) WAS IN THE BOX...



..THE NEXT DAY THE SEAS TURNED ROUGH AND A **GALE** ENVELOPED US... THEN A **HURRICANE** WHICH SPLIT US TO RIBBONS... TOSSING US ABOUT HOPELESSLY... WE WEATHERED THIS STORM FOR 24 HOURS, LOST THREE MEN, AND WERE ABOUT TO GIVE OURSELVES UP TO **GOD**. WHEN THE **MIZZEN-MAST**. IN A HEAVY LURCH TO WINDWARD. **CRASHED** DOWN UPON THE **DECK**. PRACTICALLY **TOPPLING** US ON OUR **SIDE**...



...WE HELD... AND THE **GALE** HELD... WE ATTEMPTED TO LIGHTEN OUR LOAD BY THROWING OVERBOARD AS MUCH OF THE CARGO AS COULD BE REACHED. BUT SHE WAS **LEAKING** AND **WATER** WAS **GUSHING** IN **FURIOUSLY** INTO THE **HOLD**...



...AT SUNDOWN, THE **GALE** HAD **DIMINISHED** IN **VIOLENCE**, AND, AS THE **SEA** WENT **DOWN** WITH IT.

WE STILL ENTERTAINED **HOPES** OF **SAVING** **OURSELVES**... THANKFULLY **AIDED** BY A **FULL** **MOON**...



...WE **LAUNCHED** A **LONG-BOAT** AND **CROWDED** **EVERYONE** INTO IT...

IT WAS A **MYSTERY** IT DID NOT **SWAMP** THE **SECOND** IT **TOUCHED** **WATER**...



...NO SOONER HAD WE PUSHED OURSELVES AWAY FROM THE SINKING SHIP THAN **WYATT** SEEMED TO **AWAKE** FROM A **TRANCE** AND JUMPED UP **SCREAMING**, ALMOST **CAPSIZING** US...



...I MUST GO **BACK**... I MUST GO **BACK**...



...ARE YOU **MAD** **WYATT**! **SIT** **DOWN** FOR **GOD'S** SAKE

...THE **BOX**... THE **BOX**, I SAY! CAPTAIN HARDY... YOU CANNOT, YOU WILL NOT REFUSE ME... ITS WEIGHT WILL BE BUT A TRIFLE... IT IS NOTHING... MERE NOTHING...



...BY THE **MOTHER** WHO **BORE YOU**... FOR THE **LOVE OF HEAVEN**... BY YOUR **HOPE OF SALVATION**... I **IMPLORE** YOU TO PUT **BACK** FOR THE **BOX**...



...IN A MOMENT WE SAW HIM ENTER HIS CABIN AND DRAG OUT THE **BOX**. STRAP HIMSELF TO IT BY ROPE THEN JUMP INTO THE WATER ATTACHED TO IT...

WHY... HE **SLUNK!!** BUT WHY? THE **BOX** WAS OF **WOOD**... WHY DID IT NOT **FLOAT**?



...THEY WILL RISE SOON... BUT... NOT TILL THE **SALT** MELTS!...

...HE WOULD SAY MORE INDICATING RESPECT FOR THE WIFE AND SISTERS OF THE DECEASED ON BOARD...WE LANDED AFTER 4 DAYS OF INTENSE DISTRESS

AND I BEGAN TO THINK I WOULD NEVER LEARN WHAT WAS IN IT...



WYATT WAS FRANTIC WITH GRIEF... BUT CIRCUMSTANCES FORBODE PUTTING OFF HIS NEW YORK TRIP...

NOW AS YOU KNOW, NO PASSENGER WOULD HAVE TRAVELLED UPON MY SHIP KNOWING A **CORPSE** WAS **ABOARD**...THUS... SHE WAS CONCEALED WITHIN THE **BOX**... HER **COFFIN**...



...A MONTH LATER I RAN ACROSS THE CAPTAIN AND AS WE LUNCHEd HE TOLD THE STORY OF THE **BOX**...

...THE WOMAN YOU KNEW AS **MRS. WYATT** WAS **NOT**... SHE WAS ONLY A **SERVANT PLAYING THE ROLE**... THE DAY OF THE VOYAGE **WYATT'S WIFE DIED**... SHE WAS INDEED A **LOVELY... BEAUTIFUL** WOMAN...



THE CAPTAIN EXPLAINED HE HAD **PACKAGED** THE **CORPSE** WITH A QUANTITY OF **SALT** TO PREVENT ITS **DECOMPOSITION**... AND THUS THE **SIMPLE MYSTERY** OF THE **OBLONG BOX** IS **EXPLAINED**...



...MY **OWN** MISTAKE WAS THE PROBLEM... MY DISCOVERY OF ONLY **SOME** OF THE FACTS DURING THE VOYAGE... BUT NOW THAT I KNOW **ALL-I SHUDDER!!!** FOR I HEARD **WYATT'S** INSANE **GIBBERING** AND **WHIMPERING** AND **SOBBING** IN HIS CABIN... I SAW HIS **CONVULSIONS**... I AM THE ONLY UNFORTUNATE PERSON WHO CAN **CONJECTURE** WHAT **MADNESS**... WHAT **HORRORS** DID HE COMMIT INSIDE HIS CABIN COME **THE NIGHT!**...

