

The Watcher of White Island

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North American

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The isles of Shoals, a little archipelago of wind and wave-swept rocks that may be seen on clear days from the New Hampshire coast, have been the scene of some mishaps and some crimes. On Boone Island, where the Nottingham galley went down one hundred and fifty years ago, the survivors turned cannibals to escape starvation, while Haley's Island is peopled by shipwrecked Spanish ghosts that hail vessels and beg for passage back to their country. The pirate Teach, or Blackbeard, used to put in at these islands to hide his treasure, and one of his lieutenants spent some time on White Island with a beautiful girl whom he had abducted from her home in Scotland and who, in spite of his rough life, had learned to love him. It was while walking with her on this rock, forgetful of his trade and the crimes he had been stained with, that one of his men ran up to report a sail that was standing toward the islands. The pirate ship was quickly prepared for action, but before embarking, mindful of possible flight or captivity, the lieutenant made his mistress swear that she would guard the buried treasure if it should be till doomsday.

The ship he was hurrying to meet came smoothly on until the pirate craft was well in range, when ports flew open along the stranger's sides, guns were run out, and a heavy broadside splintered through the planks of the robber galley. It was a man-of-war, not a merchantman, that had run Blackbeard down. The war-ship closed and grappled with the corsair, but while the sailors were standing at the chains ready to leap aboard and complete the subjugation of the outlaws a mass of flame burst from the pirate ship, both vessels were hurled in fragments through the air, and a roar went for miles along the sea. Blackbeard's lieutenant had fired the magazine rather than submit to capture, and had blown the two ships into a common ruin. A few of both crews

floated to the islands on planks, sore from burns and bruises, but none survived the cold and hunger of the winter. The pirate's mistress was among the first to die; still, true to her promise, she keeps her watch, and at night is dimly seen on a rocky point gazing toward the east, her tall figure enveloped in a cloak, her golden hair unbound upon her shoulders, her pale face still as marble.

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