

# Lloyds of London

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## CHAPTER FIVE

As the ward of John Angerstein, Jonathan Blake was given admittance to the oldest public school in England—Eton. In the younger boys' class he stood, upon his entrance, at the foot of the lowest class. But not for long. He had a lust for education, he had a marvelous ability to learn and he was readily disciplined. The hardest task he found was to break himself of the idiom of the street and his habit of dropping his aitches, for this evidence of his common origin made of him a pariah in this school where the sons of well-to-do Englishmen were admitted. In those days the curriculum taxed the intelligence, even the strength of the students, for it was a severely classical one from which no deviation was permitted. Fortunately for the late gamin from Burnham-Thorpe, he developed a perfect mania for languages. Greek and Latin fascinated him; like most persons who are mentally alert he was inclined to be physically lazy and indulged in athletics only enough to keep himself fit. He stood number one when he graduated into the senior class, for in addition to his lust for learning and his ability to learn he had a never weakening ambition to make John Angerstein proud of him. He would prove to John Angerstein that he had made no mistake when, in the kindness of his heart, he had picked Jonathan out of the gutter and proceeded to make a gentleman of him — or at least as much of a gentleman as one, not born to that status, could hope to achieve in those days.

And John Angerstein, widower and childless, was tremendously proud of his ward. During those early years he had the boy come up to London for his vacations and secured for him employment at Lloyd's as an errand boy at six shillings a week for he was desirous that, since Jonathan was destined for a business career in the insurance world, he should earn some money for his boyish spending and absorb something of the atmosphere at Lloyd's. Jonathan stopped at Angerstein's home, but not in the servants' quarters.

On such a vacation, during his third year in the preparatory school at Eton, Watson came to John Angerstein. If you discovered Jukes developing a flair of philanthropy, Mr. Angerstein," he said, "what would you suspect?"

"I should suspect that Jukes was losing his mind or else making a very sound investment." Angerstein glanced across the room where another underwriter, Henry Jukes, sat at his table. The man was well past middle age; his features, of predatory cast, resembled those of a fox. Angerstein did not like Jukes; he knew him for one given to sharp practices. Nor did his fellow underwriters care for the

man.

He looked up at his faithful Watson and asked, "And what is this philanthropy you have discovered the unsavory Jukes indulging in?"

"A minute ago I saw him covertly pass young Blake something that brought a smile of pleasure to the lad's countenance. I suspect it was a coin."

"This, Watson, calls for immediate investigation. Send the boy over to me, please."

Jonathan came and stood before his patron's desk. "Jonathan, lad," Angerstein began, "a minute or two ago Mr. Juke gave you something, which apparently he did not wish anybody to know he was giving you. What was that something?"

Jonathan opened his hand and displayed half a crown.

"And why did Mr. Jukes give you that half crown, my boy?"

"In payment for some work I did for him, sir."

"Ah! During your holidays you are employed by all of the underwriters. They do not particularly require your services, but they elect to believe they do, because they still remember the tremendous loss you saved them in that Maggie-O matter. Do you, therefore, consider it quite fair to devote some of that time for which all of the underwriters pay you, to the service of any one underwriter?"

Jonathan, stood, embarrassed, thinking this out. "It would seem unfair, sir, but I hadn't thought about it in that way."

"Quite likely. One should not demand or expect decisions of such nicety on the part of little boys. However, you will soon be a big boy so your education in this matter of business ethics and commercial honesty may as well start here and now. What was this service you rendered Mr. Jukes?"

"Why, sir, as you know, I am frequently sent on errands to the docks, and Mr. Jukes told me that if I would keep my ears open, and bring him any news of importance he would give me half a crown."

"I see. And did he expect you not to inform any other underwriter?"

"Oh yes sir, naturally. He reminded me that this service did not interfere with my duties to Lloyd's; hence it was a private service—"

"What news did you bring him this morning that was worth half a crown to him?"

"I told him, sir, that while I was at the docks this morning a sloop came in from Portugal and I heard the master tell a gentleman on the dock that the schooner *Gladiator* with a cargo of lumber, had been wrecked off the coast near Lisbon, and would be a fatal loss."

Watson, listening to all this, went purple with indignation. He and Angerstein exchanged glances, then looked at Jukes. The latter was rising from his desk and approaching one of the largest and wealthiest syndicates at Lloyd's. "Going to try to unload his risk on the *Gladiator*," Watson whispered.

"Quite likely, my dear Watson, quite likely. I have always felt the

fellow was not above chicanery." He crooked a finger at a waiter who hurried over.

"Ring the bell—once," Angerstein ordered. The waiter departed and Watson stumped after him to the rostrum.

"Gentlemen," he announced, "information has just reached us that the English schooner *Gladiator* has been wrecked on the Portuguese coast near Lisbon and with her cargo of lumber may prove a total loss. We will await confirmation."

Jukes had paused in mid-room. He glared at Watson, then his baleful glance shifted to Angerstein and the boy standing beside the latter's desk. His face paled, as Angerstein beckoned Jukes over. The latter came, striving to appear casual.

"Mr. Jukes," said Angerstein, "the news of the wreck of the *Gladiator* first reached Lloyds in a report which Jonathan first picked up at the docks this morning. You gave him half a crown to give you this information exclusively."

"The boy lies," Jukes blustered.

"Watson saw you. Here is the half crown which the boy says you gave him. Shall we make an issue of this, Jukes? If we do I imagine you will be expelled from Lloyd's. In your fix I should unhesitatingly resign and engage in some other business, for naturally, should this scandal break nobody but a fool would accept your underwriting on a policy. A scandal in Lloyd's, a name for over a hundred years synonymous with integrity, would to some extent shatter the faith of the public in an institution absolutely necessary to the British mercantile marine, consequently hurt our foreign trade and be a vicious blow at business. Will you go peaceably, Jukes, or must we kick you out?"

Jukes set his lips, paled and flushed alternately. "I'll go," he said.

"Not in too great a hurry," Angerstein suggested. "Announce tomorrow that it is your intention to resign and retire to private life on the first of next month. That will save your face; a more hasty retirement from Lloyd's might excite comment of an unsavory nature. Good-bye, sir."

As Jukes made off, crestfallen and humiliated, Angerstein turned to his ward. "You saw—you heard," he asked gently. "You understood perfectly; and you realize you must mention the incident to no one?"

"Yes, sir." There were tears in Jonathan's eyes.

"Information as to maritime disasters travels slowly, Jonathan. We have but one means of communication in this world — couriers on horseback, stage coaches and sailing vessels. News from foreign shores must necessarily be brought by ships. Now news, honestly acquired and honestly shared, is the foundation of this business. When a vessel has been out a long time and unreported and an underwriter or his syndicate begin to feel apprehensive for her safety and suspect they have been let in for a loss, they often insure themselves at Lloyd's against such a prospective loss. This is known as insur-

ance. Mr. Jukes, having acquired through you, advance information of the wreck of the *Gladiator*, knew very well he was going to have to take a loss and he was on his way to reinsure with a big syndicate that handles ninety per cent of our re-insurance, when the bell stopped him; when the news was made available to everybody at Lloyd's, as it should have been made in the first place Mr. Jukes' brave plan to swindle his associates was thwarted. Do you realize, Jonathan, that you have, unwittingly, been a party to a very low deal?"

"Yes, sir."

"Lloyd's," Angerstein went on gently, "has never advanced a technicality as an excuse to repudiate a risk. Lloyd's is the very soul of honor and square dealing. The public knows this. If the public did not know it there would be no Lloyd's. A successful business is always builded on trust, on public confidence. Lloyd's is not merely a business for profit and loss. It is something bigger, finer, nobler; it is the life-blood of British commerce; when you betray Lloyd's you betray England. Think, lad, of the thousands of British ships sailing to the farthest ports of the world, and their owners and the owners of their cargo, protected for a fee, against loss — protected by our honesty."

He paused, looking into Jonathan's tear-filled eyes; then he flicked the half crown toward the boy, who picked it up and strode over to the desk of the discomfited Jukes. When he returned, Angerstein asked him what he had said to Jukes.

"I said, sir: 'Here is your change, Mr. Jukes. Thank you for offering to let me keep it, but I may not do that, sir.'"

"Good. You realized I did not wish Mr. Jukes exposed?"

"Yes, sir."

"And you'll never let England down again, son?"

"Never, sir. I'll never let England down."

"In a way I'm glad this has happened, Jonathan. One must have experiences in order to profit by them. It is easy for him to preach virtue who has never known sin or temptation." He took a sovereign from his pocket and held it up. "This evening I will give you this for spending money when you return to Eton. It will be proof to you that honesty pays, trickery never. You're a good boy. Now run along and wipe your eyes."

Jonathan gulped, touched very deeply by the magnanimous attitude of this man he had learned to love and respect as a father. "I do not want the sovereign, but I would like a six-pence, sir, to remember this day by. I could bore a hole in the six-pence, sir, and hang it on the chain when I get a watch."

"I will buy you a watch this day," Angerstein replied, himself deeply moved now, "so you can hang the six-pence on it. And inside the case of the watch I shall have engraved: to Jonathan Blake—For his promise never to let England down."

(Continued Next Week)