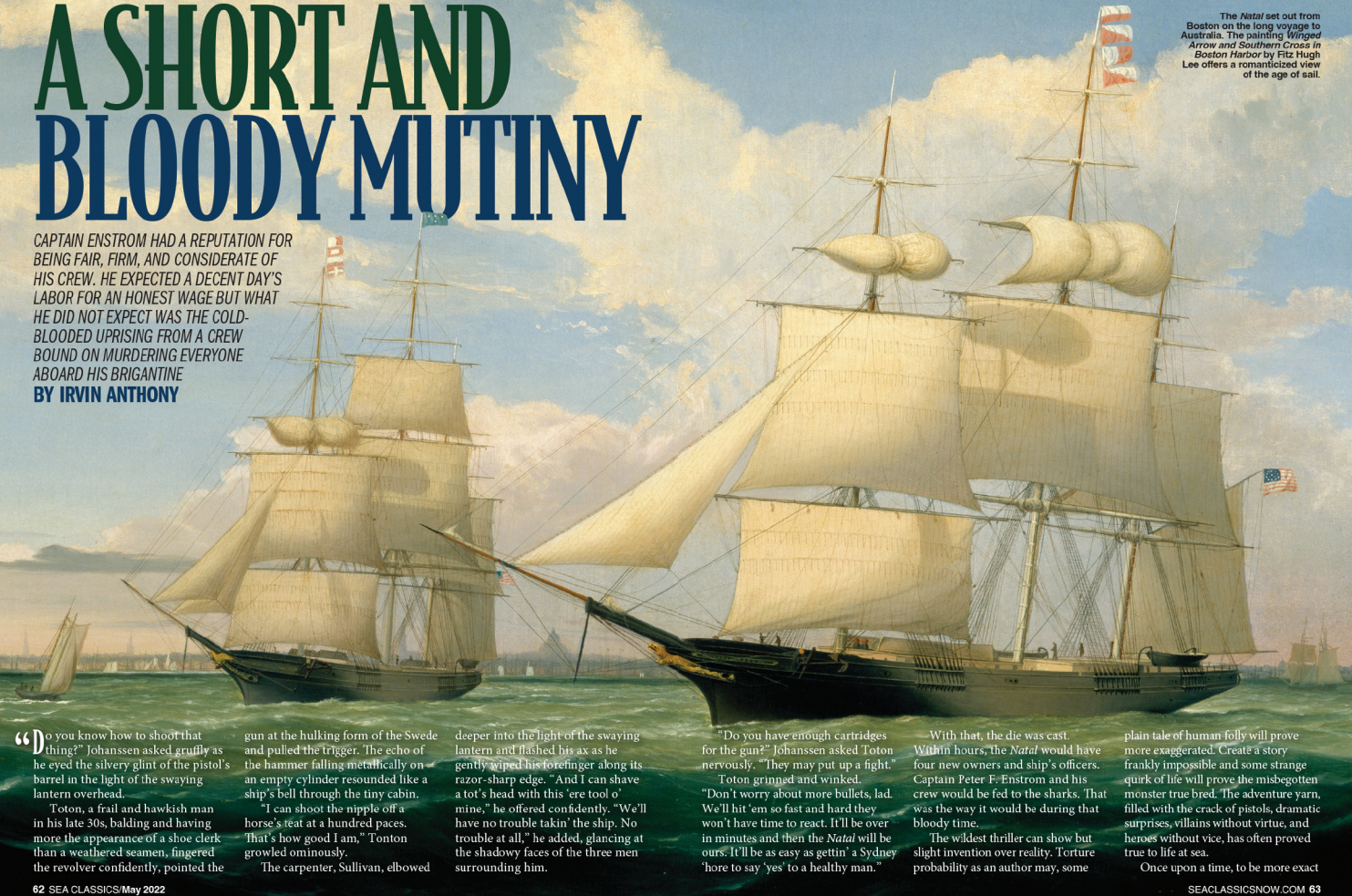


A SHORT AND BLOODY MUTINY

CAPTAIN ENSTROM HAD A REPUTATION FOR BEING FAIR, FIRM, AND CONSIDERATE OF HIS CREW. HE EXPECTED A DECENT DAY'S LABOR FOR AN HONEST WAGE BUT WHAT HE DID NOT EXPECT WAS THE COLD-BLOODED UPRISING FROM A CREW BOUND ON MURDERING EVERYONE ABOARD HIS BRIGANTINE

BY IRVIN ANTHONY

The *Natal* set out from Boston on the long voyage to Australia. The painting *Winged Arrow and Southern Cross in Boston Harbor* by Fitz Hugh Lee offers a romanticized view of the age of sail.



“Do you know how to shoot that thing?” Johanssen asked gruffly as he eyed the silvery glint of the pistol’s barrel in the light of the swaying lantern overhead.

Toton, a frail and hawkish man in his late 30s, balding and having more the appearance of a shoe clerk than a weathered seaman, fingered the revolver confidently, pointed the

gun at the hulking form of the Swede and pulled the trigger. The echo of the hammer falling metallically on an empty cylinder resounded like a ship’s bell through the tiny cabin.

“I can shoot the nipple off a horse’s teat at a hundred paces. That’s how good I am,” Tonton growled ominously.

The carpenter, Sullivan, elbowed

deeper into the light of the swaying lantern and flashed his ax as he gently wiped his forefinger along its razor-sharp edge. “And I can shave a tot’s head with this ‘ere tool o’ mine,” he offered confidently. “We’ll have no trouble takin’ the ship. No trouble at all,” he added, glancing at the shadowy faces of the three men surrounding him.

“Do you have enough cartridges for the gun?” Johanssen asked Toton nervously. “They may put up a fight.”

Toton grinned and winked. “Don’t worry about more bullets, lad. We’ll hit ‘em so fast and hard they won’t have time to react. It’ll be over in minutes and then the *Natal* will be ours. It’ll be as easy as gettin’ a Sydney ‘hore to say ‘yes’ to a healthy man.”

With that, the die was cast. Within hours, the *Natal* would have four new owners and ship’s officers. Captain Peter F. Enstrom and his crew would be fed to the sharks. That was the way it would be during that bloody time.

The wildest thriller can show but slight invention over reality. Torture probability as an author may, some

plain tale of human folly will prove more exaggerated. Create a story frankly impossible and some strange quirk of life will prove the misbegotten monster true bred. The adventure yarn, filled with the crack of pistols, dramatic surprises, villains without virtue, and heroes without vice, has often proved true to life at sea.

Once upon a time, to be more exact