

# BY A CUT OF THE CARDS

*By Susan M. Scott*



*ILLUSTRATED BY BRIAN DUKEHART*

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**AN 'ADULT TV' NOVEL**

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## **BY A CUT OF THE CARDS**

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By A Cut of the Cards

### **CAST OF CHARACTERS**

#### **THE CREW**

**Captain Steve Michaelson**, Skipper of the Scarlet Sarong;

**Jack Taylor**, First Mate on the Scarlet Sarong;

**Al Jamison**, Second Mate on the Scarlet Sarong;

**Chip Carson**, Chief Bosen's Mate on the Scarlet Sarong.

**Tom Hanson**, Cabin Boy and recent high school graduate, later known as Tammy;

**David Paul**, Cabin Boy and recent high school graduate, later known as Diane;

#### **THE PASSENGERS**

Dr. Sarah Hunter, a young gynecologist who has just completed her residency and received her board certification;

**Richard Steward**, a retired hair stylist, a passenger on the Scarlet Sarong;

## CHAPTER I The Boys Go To Sea

David Paul thought he was going to die. He and Tom Hanson, his best friend from high school, had been in their tiny cabin for three days. Both boys were very sea sick, just able to leave their bunks long enough to occasionally get a cup of water or visit the head their tiny cabin shared with an adjoining cabin.

Outside the storm that raged, tossing the freighter about like a cork in a bathtub. It had started as a squall over a week before, but the storm seemed to be getting worse each day. Now, according to the ship's Captain, it was a full fledged Typhoon named Judy. Looking out the porthole David could see that the sea was still running high. Twenty foot waves slammed their small ship again and again.

For David the rocking cabin was plenty of reminder of the storm without looking out the window. The boy tried closing his eyes. David had discovered that if he kept his eyes closed his stomach would sometimes settle.

Just as he was starting to feel a little better a particularly big wave hit the ship nearly turning it over. Tom heard a low rumble as he was literally tossed out of his bunk. Slowly, all too slowly, the ship righted itself leaving the two boys in a pile on the floor. Both were dry heaving. After resting a while they had enough energy to help each other back to their bunks.

"Glade you suggested we come on this trip Dave," Tom sarcastically commented as he lay back down. "So far all we have seen is the ocean."

"Well if you don't like it why don't you just leave!" David replied. "Besides how do you know that hitch hiking would have been any better. We could have traveled for days and only seen the inside of cars and a lot of highway. This ship will take us across the Pacific and beyond. We wanted to see the world and we are seeing it. A lot of the world is water but be will be in Tahiti in a few more days, and then on to New Zealand, then Australia, and then the orient." In spite of his sea sickness his voice still reflected his youthful enthusiasm for their voyage,

"If we aren't drowned when this tub goes down," Tom replied. "I think that last wave nearly sank us. Lets hope the worst is over."

They two stopped talking and just lay in fear and agony starring at the ceiling. They both new it was pointless to bicker. Yet they had been having this argument for days. The ship seemed to settle for a moment and the sky outside lightened. They were entering the eye of the storm.

After high school the two friends had wanted to see the world before going to college. They had both been working part time since they were sophomores and each had saved a small nest-egg. Their parents had objected but since they were both eighteen they couldn't be stopped.

"You both look so young. Why not wait till after college?" David's mother had pleaded with them. "It's a cold, cold world out there, and we won't know even if you need out help."

The boys hadn't liked ignoring their parents advice but felt the must be firm. Of course they still looked young. That was one of the reasons they wanted to go on this

trip. Both boys were still too underdeveloped to be seen by the world as men. Yet they yearned for a place in the world of men. David had great difficulty in school even getting girls to go out with him. Several had turned him down because he was too short. Tom was a little taller but also had experienced difficulty being taken seriously by girls. David and Tom had talked about their problem and decided that they needed to become men as quickly as possible, and definitely before they had to deal with 'College Women!'

They had decided, "We won't go to college until we can go as men!"

David was still as thin as a rail and only about five foot six inches in height. His hundred and fifteen pound weight and youthful features often resulted in his being mistaken for a boy of twelve or thirteen. He had thick reddish brown hair. On more than one occasion, and much to his embarrassment, he had even been mistaken for a prepubescent girl. To avoid such humiliations he now kept his hair very short, never more than a couple of inches long and dressed exclusively in Levi's and flannel shirts. Yet with his thick eye lashes, higher than average voice, and beardless face, strangers sometimes still mistook him for a girl.

Tom was only an inch taller than David and weighed five pounds less. It was almost impossible to imagine someone being thinner than David until you saw Tom. His features were a little stronger than David's, his lashes not quite so thick, yet he too had on occasion been mistaken for a girl. His hair was blond and he had worn it in a pony tail till one night at a school dance another guy, thinking Tom a girl, had asked him to dance. The next day the pony tail had been cut off and he now wore his hair in crew cut. Tom's mother had cried when he came home from the barber. She had always loved his lovely long blond hair.

The first idea the boys had for becoming men was to join the marines. When David and Tom had tried to enlist the recruiter had laughed at them. Another Marine at the recruiting station, a woman, had weighed them and told them that they were both under weight.

"Go work out with weights for a few months and eat lots of milkshakes," she had advised.

They two boys left the recruiting station commiserating with each other over the unfairness of life. They had been lifting weights all winter in an effort to put on weight and lean muscle but had ended up weighing less than they had before they started their workout regime. They were a little firmer but to the eye they only looked thinner than they had the previous fall.

Tom had wanted to travel across the country and then back, hopping trains and hitch hiking. He had visions of hopping freight trains with Ho-bows and meeting many interesting people that he would someday write about. He had been sure that hard living would quickly hammer his body into manhood.

David had suggested they ship out on a tramp steamer as an alternative. They would see the whole world rather than just the road and be paid while they traveled. He reasoned that a year or more at sea working as a sailor would harden his all to youthful frame into that of an adult male.

Tom had secretly loved the romance of David's idea. Both boys were still virgins and they imagined themselves visiting distant ports and the many woman they would meet who would eagerly teach them ways to please a lady in bed. But Tom couldn't give in to easily.

In their many years of friendship it was well established that Tom was the dominant of the two. Tom as a little taller and much more aggressive than the more passive David. He seemed to almost always made the decisions. Generally David went along with Tom's decisions without argument. When David did have his own ideas they would talk about it for days. Tom had made it his practice if David had a good idea to not agree or go along with it until David thought Tom was doing him a favor. They had argued for days while they researched their options.

Finally the argument had been resolved in their usual way. By cutting a deck of cards, high card wins. For years this had been the way the two resolved disputes. They had even cut the cards to see who would ask Mary Alice Cunningham to the prom. Alice was the only girl at Ridgewood High who seemed to not mind the boys underdeveloped frames. Although, like the boys, she was over eighteen she was underdeveloped being very thin and flat as a board. Still she was a girl, and both boys had taken her out several times. Although things had never progressed beyond a good night kiss both boys hoped for more from Alice after the prom. Tom had won the cut and David had asked another girl. Who had turned him down. In the end he had not gone to the prom.

David never suspected that Tom's deck of cards was marked. Tom used the marked cards when he wanted to be sure of the outcome.

Tom was rewarded for his cheating that time by getting to slip a hand up Alice's dress, and more. The boy had stolen a bottle of Sherry from his parent's liquor cabinet. After the dance he had parked the car on a secluded street and managed to get Alice to drink a considerable amount of the sweet amber substance. She loosened up quite a bit under the liquors influence letting Tom, even encouraged him, to massage her groin through her panties.

Alice had stopped the boy when he attempted to slip his fingers inside her panties. She had however, allowed him to continue massaging her groin until he felt her shudder with her orgasm. Alice had kissed him very deeply after he had brought her off. Then she had opened his pants and using her satin handkerchief she had started to jerked him off. Tom had wanted more, and had pushed her head down onto his erect member and forced the girl to take it in her mouth. She had cried and resisted but he eventually succeeded in getting her to suck him off. After Tom came in Alice's mouth he had let her head go and she had quickly turned to the open window and been sick, then started to cry. When Tom took Alice home she was still very upset.

Tom hadn't given it much thought until he had given David all the details. David pointed out that Alice may have felt humiliated by Tom's semi successful attempt at seducing her. David was quite upset at having missed the opportunity. David was even more upset when Alice refused to go out with him later.

“You and Tom are just alike and only want one thing from me! I thought you were different! I thought we were friends! I never want to see or hear from either of you again!” Alice had screamed as she hung up on the boy.

Even having been proved right about Alice's reaction couldn't overcome David's anger at Tom who had alienated the only girl who had been willing to go out with him. Eventually he had gotten over his anger with his best friend. David recognized that in Tom's place he might have tried the same thing. And after all, Tom had won the cut of the cards.

When they cut the cards to decide whether to hitch cross country or go to sea it had been David who won. After David had cut to a Jack, Tom had carefully cut to a ten. Tom had a secretly smile on his face as he turned his card up. David had seen that smile and thought it meant that Tom really was happy with David's idea. David had no idea the smile was Tom's satisfaction at successfully cheating.

It still took the two boys several weeks to find a shipping line that would take them on. David was pleased but not terribly surprised when Tom turned out to be in a bigger hurry to make arrangements than he was. Finally they had succeeded with a small fly-by-night company that had just lost two crewmen. The crewmen had jumped ship in the boys home town, San Francisco. Pacific Island Shipping had a freighter that was ready to sail but needed two new stewards or cabin boys who were willing to work for next to nothing. The Captain had been surprised when the two boys had accepted his offer of a cabin, food and twenty dollars a day. The Scarlet Sarong had sailed almost immediately after the boys had signed on. After a tearful farewell from their parents the voyage had gone well for the boys during their first week aboard.

Captain Michaelson was pleased with his new crewmen. They were willing to learn and worked hard. The other members of the crew had seemed to readily take to the Tom and David. They liked the respectful and attentive attitude they had when they were working. Even the passengers seemed happy about the boys presence.

There were two passengers who had signed on for the first leg of the trip. A young women doctor, Sarah Hunter, and recently retired women's hair stylist, Richard Steward occupied the ships two passenger cabins. The Captain was a little concerned about Doctor Hunter. She was about five feet two, had bright blue eyes and a thick mass of short strawberry blond hair that framed her freckled face. When she laughed, which was not as often as most people would have liked, she looked about fourteen years old. She was thin, clearly a woman who had not yet had any children. Her well formed breasts were only B cups but were large enough to immediately attract the attention and admiration of the crew. Captain Steward had taken the crewmen aside, one by one, and explained that their attractive passenger was to be left alone. She was of course to be waited on hand and foot but, no one was to make any advances. The Captain wanted her report of his ship to be glowing since she would meet many of Pacific Lines commercial customers in her new post.

Richard Steward was a thin man, about five foot eleven in height with thick white hair. Only his hair color revealed his age, which was fifty eight. He had a kind smile and a cheerful word for everyone he met. The Captain, and the whole crew liked the man although some suspected that he was gay. Again the Captain took each crewmen

aside and explained that Mr. Steward was to be left alone. Those of the crew who might consider an affair were warned off. Those who might consider making a derogatory comment were told to "button it!"

When the two passengers had met the crew members they seemed to withdraw. The Captain suspected that neither of his passengers were sure that this slow boat to the tropics was going to be the ideal trip they probably imagined when they reviewed Pacific Island's travel literature. But once the passengers met Tom and David they seemed to relax. The two boys were an attractive contrast to the older and crustier crewmen aboard.

Thinking about the passengers reaction Captain Michaelson decided that the rest of the crew did have sort of a cutthroat air. Having Tom act as steward and Dave as cook's helper softened the passengers perception of the crew. The two young men were in frequent contact with the passengers and in a way buffered them from the other members of the crew. Steve Michaelson had decided he was also glad the boys were along for another reason.

"They won't jump ship," the Captain had thought to himself smiling

It seemed like every time he came into port he was losing crew. But these two were not looking for a free way to get somewhere. These two were signed on for the voyage. They wanted to see all the ports on the ship's itinerary. Several members of his crew had been with him for years but most were relatively new. He couldn't be too sure of them since he didn't really know them. Of the twenty some men aboard he felt lucky to have a half-dozen who he knew could be counted on. Other captains on Pacific Island ships had complained to him of having no one on board they could trust. Captain Michaelson prided himself on building a sense of family on ship that attracted good men and kept them with him.

He hoped he could convince the boys to stay on after they got back to San Francisco, in about six months. Neither he nor any member of the crew could know that the Scarlet Sarong would never return to that City.



## CHAPTER II Desertion

The typhoon had seemed to come out of nowhere.

Since they had become sick Sarah Hunter had looked in on the two boys nearly every day. She was a doctor in route to Tahiti where she was to start as chief resident in the Island Hospitals new gynecology department. The hospital was poor and had sent her the ticket for the Scarlet Sarong rather than air fare. Sarah was happy to have gotten the job and not unhappy about traveling by boat rather than plane. She had arranged to have a large quantity of medical supplies and pharmaceutical products shipped on the same boat. She was glade to know that everything she would need to set up and equip her new department would arrive with her. She had just finished her residency and was looking forward to a more relaxed pace.

She would be the first gynecologist at the hospital. Sarah knew that the hospital was not a wealthy institution. She had applied for the job knowing that her salary would be small. But she would be in charge. This was an unbelievable opportunity for the young doctor. The current staff was made up exclusively of midwives and a single registered nurse. Although she didn't look it she was 28 years old. Sarah had decided that a couple of years working in a tropical paradise would be a great way to celebrate her having received her OBG board certification. When she was ready to come back she would have a lot more experience and more impressive credentials than her classmates who took positions at home.

Doctor Hunter had liked the cheerfulness of the two boys and had been concerned when they had disappeared. The Captain had told her they were sick and shrugged his shoulders.

“Miss Hunter they are new to the sea and this is a big storm. I'm sure they will get better in a day or so,” he had tried to reassure her.

“You are without a doubt right Captain Michaelson but I'd feel better if I looked in on them. Dehydration could be a problem and it might be something more than sea sickness.”

“But Miss Hunter, you are a passenger, not a member of the crew. Please just relax and enjoy the trip.”

The Captain had smiled wryly as he spoke, bracing himself as the ship rocked violently beneath his feet. He was surprised that the attractive young woman wasn't sick herself. Thinking about it he realized that she must be bored to distraction stuck in her cabin with nothing to do day after day.

Sarah Hunter smiled, “Now don't worry about that. Actually I'm a little bit at loose ends. I'm used to working sixteen hour days and feel very strange having nothing to do.”

“Well if you really are interested of course you can look in the boys. I'll show you to their cabin. In fact, I'd appreciate it if you could get them back on their feet. Everyone is tired and we could use their help.”

“Let me get my bag first,” she had replied cheerfully.

Doctor Hunter had gotten her doctors bag and followed the Captain to the boy's quarters. She had been pleasantly surprised by the crews quarters. The cabins were very small and Spartan, but they were clean, and neat, except for the two boy's cabin which was neither.

The older crew members had greatly enjoyed watching the slim and attractive young doctor visiting the boys. Her tight jeans and well filled out blouse had drawn a number of wistful smiles. Sarah smiled knowingly. She was a pretty woman and knew that men found her attractive. Rather than becoming angry when she encountered male aggression she tended to just smile. Sarah had a very winning smile that melted the aggressive impulses of most of the men she had met. In fact it tended to turn the most aggressive wolves into her protectors.

Doctor Hunter checked Tom and David over and determined that they were both a little dehydrated and under nourished. Sarah had assured them that they would recover soon, gave each a vitamin injection and instructed them to drink all the water they could get down.

"We will worry about food after the sea calms a little," she had told the boys and the Captain as he had walked out of their cabin.

But after another three days she was more concerned. Both boys were losing weight and the storm seemed to have gotten worse rather than better. Sarah Hunter was about to stop by Tom and David's cabin when the ship was nearly capsized. She was knocked to the deck and hit her head hard on a steel ladder. Sarah was out cold.

Moments later a member of the crew saw her laying on the deck but thought she was dead. The floor around her was covered with her blood from a gash on the side of her head. If he had checked he would have realized that she was still bleeding and that dead people don't bleed, but he had already panicked and was headed for the lifeboats. He didn't even slow down as he went by the prone body of the woman.

Doctor Hunter and the boys were unaware of the panic that hit the almost the whole crew after the ship's near capsized.

The bridge crew had seen the sea come crashing through the windows destroying the old ship's vintage electronics, its helm controls, badly injuring the Captain, and nearly drowning the rest of the crew.

Someone shouted, "She's going down!" and the newer crew members had raced for the ship's two lifeboats. Several of the older crew members tried to calm the younger men but were unable to stop the panic. Moments later the ship emerged into the storm's eye and both lifeboats were launched. The seventeen crewmen who had taken the boats were never seen or heard from again. Miraculously, although the Scarlet Sarong had taken on considerable water she stayed afloat. Three hours later the Sarong drifted out of the eye of the storm back into the raging blackness.

Winds over 100 miles per hour now steered the nearly crewless ship. Spray from the rain coming threw the shattered ship's bridge windows and brought the Captain around. The Captain looked out into the darkness and realized the lifeboats were gone. The crew had deserted him and the ship.

"Damn!" He swore as he looked around.

Steve Michaelson realized the ship might well be doomed. The Sarong was sitting low in the water, her electronics, communications gear, and helm were out, and the crew was gone. With a full crew he might have been able to save her but alone it was near hopeless.

“Better see if there is anyone but me left,” he thought.

Captain Michaelson was surprised as he moved through the ship. He found that his passenger, Mr. Steward was still aboard as were three other crewmen. He found Richard Steward tending Al Jamison who had been injured when a container had come loose and falling on him. Jamison told him that two other crewmen were below working to start the ships bilge pumps. The Captain went below to see that they weren't wasting there time. One look and he was sure they were.

“Taylor, Carson, good to see you! You can give up on the pumps for now. The circuits are shorted out. Go rig a sea anchor and I'll try to rewire her. If we can get the Sarong pointed into the sea we stand a chance of ridding the storm out.”

“Thought you were dead captain. It's good to know your still with us,” Taylor said clasping the Steve Michaelson by the hand.

Jack Taylor was first mate on the Sarong. His companion Chip Carson was chief bosons mate. Captain Michaelson felt very lucky to have their help. Although he wished his friends were somewhere safe. The two quickly left to set the sea anchor.

Steve Michaelson went to the crew's quarters where the ship's tool cabinet was located. Coming up a companion way he found Sarah Hunter. Going to her quickly he was pleased to discover that she was alive. She had a nasty cut in her scalp but it had stopped bleeding. He hoped she hadn't lost to much blood. Picking the light young women up he kicked open the door to the Tom and David's cabin and carried her inside.

“Hit the deck you two!” Captain Michaelson yelled, “If you want to live to see another day your going to have to help.”

The boys looked at the Captain with amazement in their eyes. But there was no mistaking the assertive nature of his order. He looked wildly at them as they scrambled from their bunks. Steve Michaelson then carried Sarah Hunter to the lower bunk, Tom's, and gently placed the young woman on the messy bed.

“Poor kid. Why she can't weigh more than a hundred pounds,” he thought as he set her down.

Captain Michaelson looked over the two boys. Both looked unsteady but he decided that Tom looked a little stronger than David. Quickly he outlined their situation. As he spoke Tom and David's eyes grew large with fear.

“David I want you to break out the first aid kit in my quarters and see what you can do for the doctor here. At least get her cleaned up and bandage that cut. Try to bring her around and see if she can advise you about what else to do. Tom come with me. Were adrift and the seas are getting higher. If the Sarong is going to make it through the night we need to set a sea anchor and then get the pumps working.

“Jack Taylor and Chip Carson are already at work trying to rig a sea anchor. I want you to help them while I try and repair the wiring in this old bucket. Never move without at least one hand on a life line and follow my instructions. Now both of you, get to it!”

Both boys were unsteady on their feet as they jumped to obey. The Captains manner left no doubt in their minds that this was an emergency. Tom headed for the rear deck and David went to get the Captain's first aid kit. When David returned he found Sarah alone. He could hear Captain Michaelson swearing at the Sarong's ancient wiring as he began to dab the cut on Doctor Harding's head with antiseptic.

When Sarah Harding started to come to the first thing she was aware of was a stinging sensation in her scalp.

“That hurts!” She cried as she opened her eyes.

“Oh, I'm sorry Doctor Harding. You have a bad cut on your head and I was just applying some antiseptic. How are you feeling? You seem to have lost a lot of blood.”

Sarah was instantly a little contrite. She saw the kindness in David's eye and knew he hadn't intended to do anything but help her.

“I'm not sure how I am David. Sorry I yelled at you. Please bring me a mirror and let me see how bad it is. I do feel a little weak, am I still bleeding?”

“No Doctor Harding. The bleeding seems to have stopped. I'll be right back with a mirror.”

David jumped to his feet and nearly fell over. He caught himself on the side of the bed as he fell. Slowly he rose to his feet again. Then, moving with the rolling deck he moved to the cabin's head. David used his Swiss Army knife to unscrew the mirror from over the sink. It was only about one foot square and was held in a steel frame by four brass screws. In a few minutes he returned with his treasure. David found that Sarah had sat up on the bed and was leaning back against the cabins wall gently touching her head.

“Here's the mirror Doctor Harding,” David offered.

“Thanks David. Bring it over here and hold it on my right side so I can see my head. I'm going to have a hell of a goose egg, that's for sure.”

David took a while but finally got the mirror into a position where Sarah could see her injury. She clinically examined it for a while turning her head this way and then that trying to see every side. At the same time she gently probed the cut with her fingers. After a few minutes she was through.

“You can set the mirror down now David. I'm afraid I'm going to need some help patching myself back up. Please ask the Captain or Jack Taylor to come help me to my cabin. I think it will be easier if I get repaired there.”

“I'm sorry Doctor Hunter but there not available right now. I'm afraid the ship is sort of in trouble and their both trying to keep us from going down.”

Sarah looked at the boys ashen face. She knew he was afraid, she had thought he was afraid of her blood or something. Now she knew that he was afraid they would die.

“Well if not one of those two maybe the Second Mate or someone else who knows a little about doctoring. There must be someone,” Sarah asserted.

“If it could wait they might be available in a little while, but there is only eight of us on board and the Second Mate, Al Jamison is also injured. Mr. Steward is looking after him. I'm afraid the rest of the crew took the lifeboats and abandoned us.”

Sarah sat in shock for a moment absorbing the bad news.

“David I've got to get this cut stitched closed soon. If I don't the swelling will get worse and I will never get my scalp to look right again. At least not without major plastic surgery. I need about twenty five stitches. If I tell you what to do can you follow my instructions?”

“Me? You want me to give you stitches? Oh Doctor Hunter! I don't know how. Can't it wait until the Captain or someone else can do it?”

“I know its asking a lot David but it has been longer than I like now. It may be hours before the few sailors on board have time for doing anything other than saving the ship. I don't want to wait even an hour, its important that it be done soon. It's not hard and I will tell you what to do, step by step. Please give it a try. As a favor to me. You know you can't make it any worse, but you might make it better.”

David saw the pleading in the attractive woman's eyes. He knew that he was already deep in her debt. And she was beautiful. Of course he had to at least try if she wanted him to.

“If you think you can talk me through it Doctor Hunter I'll try. How do we get started?”

“Good boy David. Go get my medical bag. It must be in the hall around the companionway to the next deck. I had it with me when I fell.”

David again slowly got to his feet. Each time the deck rolled his stomach rolled with it. The smell of Doctor Hunter's blood in the air didn't help. But he realized he had to get a grip on himself. David forced himself out into the companionway and started to look for the Doctor's bag. A few minutes later he returned with it.

“It was at the bottom of the stairs on the next deck below Doctor Hunter,” David informed Sarah as he returned.

“Bring it her David. Now sit down beside me,” she said as she opened the bag.

Doctor hunter got out surgeons thread, a needle, antiseptic and a local antiseptic.

“We will proceed very slowly. First I want you to thread the needle. Yes that's fine. Now lets make a few practice stitches. The sheets should work to give you a sense of what its like. You see the needle is curved. Now try to stitch the two pieces together. That's right. David make the stitches a little closer together. Yes, that's better. I think you can do it.”

She smiled at the boy who melted under her gaze.

After several tries he still didn't know if he could do it, but he was willing to try. The rocking ship hadn't made the task anything but more difficult. Sarah assured the boy that if he was calm and took his time he would do just fine.

Sarah had David finish cleaning the wound. She then had him spray the area with a disinfectant followed by an anesthetic.

“We will need to proceed quickly now David. In just a seconds the anesthetic will take full effect. We need to be done in about ten minutes when it wears off. But wait between stitches for the ship to settle. I don't want you having to fight the sea while you stitch me up. Work with the ships movement.”

Following Doctor Hunter's instructions David pulled the torn skin together and began to stitch. His biggest problem proved to be keeping Doctor Hunter's thick reddish blond hair out of the way while he worked. It felt very strange to doing this to human flesh but David found he was OK as long as he concentrated on the task rather than thinking about what he was doing. Dr. Hunter had David make the stitches quite small. She didn't want any scares to show. In just under ten minutes they were done.

“Pass me the mirror please David,” Dr. Hunter asked.

Sarah examined the work David had done as well as she could. It looked OK. Not a real even professional job but, where it was, on the side of her head, hidden by her hair Sarah, was sure the scaring would be covered by her hair and not show. David had made twenty eight stitches in all.

“Thank you David. I think I'll just lay down for a while now. Could you get me some water please. I feel dehydrated. Also go to the galley and see if you can get me some cookies or Orange juice or something else sweet. I must have lost more than a unit of blood.”

“Sure Doctor Hunter. I'll be happy to get you something,” David replied.

He was very pleased with himself. He had done what she asked and successfully helped her. As he stood up he felt stronger, better about everything. He had to remind himself that they were still in danger of the ship going down at any moment. He quickly went to and returned from the galley bring a tin of cookies and a pitcher of orange juice. He continued to follow Sarah advice about moving with the ships motion. Even though the ship was steal healing over badly with each new wave he found that he was much better able to move about. Even his stomach seemed to settle a little.

“Thanks,” Sarah said as he presented her with these treasures.

“Your very Welcome Doctor Hunter. Is there anything else I can do for you?”

“David you can call me Sarah, please. It feels uncomfortable for you to be calling me Doctor Hunter all the time. Even my patients call me Sarah.”

“OK Sarah, I'd like that,” David replied with a smile.

“I'm fine here for now. Why don't you go see if you can help Captain Michaelson keep us afloat somehow. The ship seems to be rocking less, maybe were coming out of the storm. I'll rest here until I feel a little stronger.”

“I'll do that Sarah, but you should stay here until Captain Michaelson can come take a look at you. Captain Michaelson told me that he was having a sea anchor rigged. If that's done it may have moved the Sarong's nose into the sea. That would account for the stabile feel of her. I promise I'll come back in a while and let you know what's going on and how were doing.”

David left and went to find Captain Michaelson. Although the sea was as rough as ever he found that he didn't feel as sick as he had. The role of the ship was now clearly shifting away from side to side to a bow to aft kind of motion.

“Probably the rush of adrenaline coupled with fear of drowning has also helped snapped me out of it,” he thought.

### CHAPTER III A Fight For Their Lives

It was dark below but David looked around until he saw a light moving. As he approached he realized that someone was using a flashlight. A moment later he was close enough to see that it was the Captain working on the wiring for the pumps.

“How may I help sir?”

“David? Glad to see you boy. Yes I can sure use some help. Is Doctor Hunter OK?”

“Yes Captain. She had me give her some stitches and she is resting now. Before I came to look for you I got her oranges and cookies from the galley. When you are free I think you should take a look at her Sir. She told me what to do and I did it but she still seems very pale.”

“I shouldn't wonder. Stitched her up yourself David?”

“Yes Sir. Doctor Hunter told me what to do. She sure is brave.”

“You can say that again boy. It takes a lot of guts to sit through having your skin stitched on a rolling sea. It also takes guts to help her they way you did. I'm proud to know you both. Head wounds bleed a lot. I'll look her over as soon as we get this pump working. We will all be dead soon if the Sarong keeps taking on water.”

Looking at the boy closely the captain continued, “David I'm glade your here. There are some wires I think have come loose under this baby. I'm to big to crawl under and see if I'm right but with your light build you should be able to. Climb under her over there and tell me what you see.”

David dropped to the still rolling deck and crawled under the heavy machine. It was tight but he could just squeeze in. The Captain handed him the flashlight and told him what to look for. Soon David had found a mass of wires that were jumbled together like a rats nest. It looked like no one had done any maintenance on the wiring for years.

“There are a bunch of loose wires Captain! What should I do?”

“Just stay calm boy and follow my instructions.”

Captain Michaelson had David describe what he was saw. Then he told him where to reconnect the wires. It was slow work but David found that if he listened carefully and asked questions when he got confused he could make progress. Thirty minutes later he was sliding out from under the pump. He was covered with sweat but felt a real sense of accomplishment. When he was clear the Captain through the switch and the pump started.

“Great! I think with the pump working we may live to see tomorrow after all!” Captain Michaelson, reassuring the boy.

Just then the three who had been setting the sea anchor returned. They were soaked and looked tired. Tom could barely stand.

“We set a sea anchor Captain. It's working. The Sarong's bow has come around and were now facing the sea rather than taking it on the side. It's pitch as coal out though. We couldn't tell what heading were now on,” Jack Taylor reported.



“That's great Jack. Thank you and my thanks to you to Chip and Tom. I know it can't have been any fun being out on that deck.”

Jack grinned at his old friend, “She is quite the blow. Why poor Tom here was nearly blown overboard by the wind. We got to get a little more meat on him before we can expect him to pull his weight. Chip fished him back, just in time, and he did real good helping out once we got him tied down proper.”

As he finished he laughed but he patted Tom on the back good naturally. Tom looked at the floor embarrassed at the reference to his near mishap but was pleased at the mate's friendly tone.

“There's a heap more to do men,” began the captain.

David and Tom looked up and smiled at being refereed to as men.

Captain Michaelson sent Jack, Chip, and David to the engine room.

“See if you can get the auxiliary helm to work. Tom you go around and shut out the lights in all the rooms that we aren't using. Were running the lights and the pumps off batteries and the pumps have to take precedence. I'll go check in on Doctor Hunter and the others. Meet me in the officers mess in an hour. Jack, if you can't leave the engine room then send David with your report.”

They scattered to their varies tasks. All through the night the Sarong's skeleton crew fought valiantly to save their ship and their lives. Al Jamison and Mr. Steward joined them in their labors. They rigged a two person hand pump and took turns working it in shifts to augment the electric pump. The pump had a ladder like lever across its top. One man pushed down on one side, the other side went up to be pushed down in turn by the second man. It looked and was simple to use but it was back breaking work. After a few tries Captain Michaelson pulled first David and later Tom off pumping duty. Neither boy was really any help and the task was to important to be done poorly. Even if it did damage their youthful pride.

Jack Taylor had found the auxiliary helm impossible to move and the engine room filled to waist depth with sea water. They were disappointed by his report, which David delivered to the Captain.

“Screws are bent, bearings burnt out, and the rudder is jammed Sir. Mr. Taylor said it would take a month in dry dock to get her engines and helm back in shape. He's also a little worried about the batteries. He said they were lower than he expected. Mr. Taylor is still down there working on the helm. He thinks he may be able to free it. Mr. Carson is helping him,” David had reported.

They kept at the hand pumps all night. Slowly the Captain felt they were making progress. Between the hand and the auxiliary pumps they were getting more water out of the ship than was coming in. He fantasized about getting the engine room dry and starting up the ships twin motors. Then Captain Michaelson remembered that the bearings were burnt out.

“Well, at least we wont be drowned tonight,” he thought as he stroked his gray beard with his left hand.