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about 550 words

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LIFESAVER

by Aryn Free Kelly

The wind blows white caps in the distance as a storm blows in. A lifesaver floats off the portside riddled with bulletholes.

"You 'eady to go in?" Gheorge asks.

"Yeah. Let me take a leak off the back first," Lou says. Lou shuffles to the rear of the pristine, recreational fishing boat anchored out at sea.

Gheorge enters the captain's cabin and fires up the engine, checks gauges, and taps the face of the compass. He looks at a map and says, "Sixty miles back in. 'ere we go."

As Gheorge fires up the engine Lou unzips his pants to relieve himself, his back to the captain's cabin. He puts a finger in his mouth and then holds it up to test the wind direction. "The flag doesn't lie, I guess." He exhales as he releases into the water. He aims between the two propellers behind the craft.

The flag shifts direction.

"You have got to be kidding me," Lou says, frustrated that he just sprayed himself a little. He reaches down to zip back up.

The boat dips.

"We gotta get outta 'ere quick, Lou. 'ang on," Gheorge says.

Raindrops fall.

"Hang onto what?" Lou says as he loses his balance.

The engine roars.

Lou grabs his chest, his gasp drowned out as the propellers spew water. "Gheorge, no."

The vessel lurches with gusto then whiplashes backward.

"Damn anchor, again," Gheorge says.

He exits the cabin and walks toward the front of the vessel where the anchor should be laying on deck, but the rope hangs overboard. "Come help me, Lou, with this anchor."

Thunder rolls.

"Lou?" Gheorge looks back where Lou should be standing. Lou's feet face Gheorge as Lou slips backwards into the water between the propellers.

Lightning flashes across the sky.

Gheorge skids to the back of the boat. "Lou. Come 'ere you mudder-flocker."

The boat rises and sinks on a massive swell. It's coming.

"Get back in 'ere," Gheorge says.

Lou's hand stretches out to Gheorge.

"Come 'ere!"

The boat pitches. Gheorge catches himself on the ledge, his arms outstretched. Lou's fingers slip through Gheorge's and he disappears under the water.

Under the flag there is a net wedged between two coolers. Gheorge grabs it.

Lightening illuminates the dark clouds overhead and thunder rattles the glass windows aboard.

Gheorge thrusts the net into the water where he last saw Lou. He hits something and pulls. Every muscle in his arms strain with the weight.

The rain pounds the deck.

"Don't do this, Lou."

The boat pulls hard. Gheorge looks up. A swell of massive proportion grows before him. The anchor holds. Gheorge looks down.

The net loses its hold on Lou. Water runs through it.

"Nooooo."

Gheorge skids and stumbles to the front of the boat to the anchor's rope. He heaves the anchor.

The swell grows. A whitecap forms forty feet overhead.

Gheorge falls backward and pulls. The rope comes up empty.

"Seriously?"

The wall of water upon him. Gheorge scrambles to the captain's cabin and guns the engine full throttle away from the imminent tower of water.

The wave crests.

"Mudder..."

The boat holds its position despite the power of the engines.

"...Flocker."

The wave tumbles toward the boat. The thunderous, crushing power of God falls upon the vessel. Whitewater envelopes the ship.