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Peyton Howard

Upon the Blue and Glistening Sea

Kayla untied the springline at her father's request and tossed it overboard. She refused to show more than her eyebrows in response to her mother's goodbye. After stowing the bumpers below the seats in the cockpit, she hoisted herself over the bow and tucked her knees tightly under her chin, resisting the urge to watch the sea cliffs fade into the horizon.

"It's not your mother's fault, Kayla. You know that." Her father smiled warmly, his sun-streaked hair ruffling about in the breeze. His white towel shirt hung open, revealing his strong chest, just beginning to show with age.

Kayla fingered the shell necklace that Sasha had given her the year before, admiring the soft shades of pink and orange. *The color of the Caribbean water*, she thought. She was going to miss Dominica almost as

one

Kayla untied the springline at her father's request and tossed it onto the dock. She turned to wave one last time to Sasha, but refused to raise more than her eyebrows in response to her mother's goodbye. After stowing the bumpers below the seats in the cockpit, she hoisted herself onto the boom and tucked her knees tightly under her chin, resisting the urge to watch the sea cliffs fade into the horizon.

"It's not your mother's fault, Kayla. You know that." Her father smiled warmly, his sun-streaked hair ruffling about in the breeze. His worn, cotton shirt hung open, revealing his strong chest, just beginning to soften with age.

Kayla fingered the shell necklace that Sasha had given her the night before, admiring the soft shades of pink and orange. *The color of the Roseau sunset*, she thought. She was going to miss Dominica almost as

much as she was going to miss her best friend. "Why can't I just stay here? I don't need to go to some fancy school."

"We've been over this. Your mother and I feel it's best."

"Best for what?"

"Kayla, There aren't a lot of opportunities here."

"But Mom has done just fine and she never went to school."

"She's never left the islands either."

"Well, I don't want to leave the islands, and I certainly don't want to move to some land-locked city and live with complete strangers," Kayla said.

"They're not strangers; they're my parents."

"I don't remember ever meeting them," she mumbled. The sound of grinding static cut off abruptly below deck.

"I'm going to have to take the radio apart to fix it, Jonathan," Kayla's uncle shouted to her father from the main cabin and quickly poked his head through the galley hatch. "Breakfast is ready, Sport."

"Uncle Max, you don't think I need to go to school, do you?" Kayla crossed her fingers and then her arms across her chest. If anyone could persuade her father into letting her stay, it was Maxwell.

"I'm just the cook on this cruise, Sport." He winked and ducked below deck. Kayla followed him into the galley and sat down at the kitchen table.

"What's for breakfast?" Kayla knew the first breakfast on the voyage would be the best, and decided to try and fatten up before the milk spoiled and the bread went stale.

"Do you remember what we had yesterday?"

Kayla nodded.

"And the day before?"

Another nod. "Bacon and eggs," she said

Maxwell set a plate before her and poured a glass of milk. "Well, that's what we're having today."

"That's what you've made every day since you got here." Kayla said. Max was on leave from the Navy. He flew himself down to help sail Kayla back to the United States. "Don't you know how to make anything else?"

Max smiled. "Sorry, Sport. I haven't had a whole lot of experience as a gourmet chef." He looked hopefully at Kayla as she took a bite of the runny eggs that were oozing across her plate as the boat

pitched from side to side. "Sasha's mother milked that cow," he said, pointing at the glass above Kayla's plate.

She pulled the glass toward her, frowning at her uncle with a mouth full of eggs. "But I didn't get a chance to thank her. Make dad go back, Max!"

"I think your dad knows what's best for you. You're going to have to trust him on this one. Besides, Dominica isn't the best place for young girls to grow up."

"I'm not so young—nearly thirteen."

Max smiled. "You can go back to the island one day."

Kayla wondered how things would change while she was away, and even if she would recognize Dominica when she returned. "I miss Sasha, Max."

"You haven't even been gone an hour," he laughed. "Besides, you're going to make all kinds of new friends in the states."

"But Sasha's my *best* friend! Who am I going to go crabbing with? Or sailing?"

"You can do all of those things in Jersey, Sport. There might not be too many crabs wandering around, but there are plenty of places to sail.

Your grandfather has a boat, two to be exact. I think you'll find that one of them is just your size."

"But it won't be the *Zephyr*," she argued. There were only a handful of nights Kayla hadn't slept aboard her father's boat. It had been her home ever since she was born. She wondered what it would be like to lie completely still night after night without her bed bobbing gently in the water, or what it would be like to wake up in the city without the smell of the ocean.

"Why don't you sit tight, Sport. I'm going to take your father his breakfast."

Kayla stared at the table. She wondered about her grandparents' home in Trenton. She'd never been to a big city before, except Roseau, and that hardly counted. All she knew about the States came from outdated encyclopedias in the city library or the stories her father and uncle told about their college days. Kayla rested her chin in the palm of one hand and pushed her breakfast back and forth across the plate. The eggs left a soupy trail as they made their way from rim to rim. Her father's voice drifted through the companionway.

"How's she doing, Max?" he asked.

at. "You'll fall in."

Kayla wrapped her feet around the stanchion below her and crossed her arms over her chest, smiling defiantly. She looked over her shoulder at the breaking waves ahead. The white caps sat briefly on top of the cresting surf before tumbling into the churning sea.

"I really wish you wouldn't do that," Max said.

Kayla turned to look at her uncle and leaned backwards over the railing with a smirk.

"Kayla, stop." She leaned back a little farther and uncrossed her arms, sticking them straight out to her sides. Max stood up. The smile was gone from Kayla's face, her eyes wide. One foot came loose from the stanchion, and she began to flail her arms about her sides, searching for something to hold onto. Max raced toward her, stretching his arms out.

Max dodged the forestay, reaching for Kayla, but as he closed his arms around his niece, she ducked his embrace. Kayla sat upright again and laughed at her uncle away, laughing.

"I'm more comfortable on this boat than you'll ever be on land, Uncle Max."

He backed up as Kayla hopped down and causally strolled past

him before lowering herself through the open hatch of the V-berth. She closed it behind her, and locked the door before lying down on her back. Through the tinted glass, she could see her uncle staring down at her. His face was purple, and she waved up at him, happy to be alone for a while.

*

Kayla could feel the bow of the boat pounding its way through the chop. The echo of the water slapping against the hull reminded her of the waves breaking against the seawall beneath the fisherman's pier. On long summer days, when there was nothing better to do, she and Sasha would sit at the end of the pier, waiting on the ships to return, betting on who could spot them first.

"There they are," Sasha would always say, mistaking a distant crag for the first of the fishing fleet.

"That's just a rock," Kayla would argue, and they'd sit in silence, breath bated, until their eyes fell upon the *Neptune*, leading the fleet back to the docks. It glided through the parting waters, its rigging extending triumphantly from either side of the deck.

"There," she would point, pretending she could see her father standing at the helm, even a mile away.

She thought about the island, little more than a speck on the horizon now, and wondered how another country would feel beneath her feet. The soft sands of Dominica always felt so warm and smooth sifting between her toes. She already missed that. Kayla ran her feet up the wall and across the ceiling. Even as much as she loved her father's boat, it only felt cold and hard under her feet.

"Kayla, I need you out here." Her father tapped lightly outside of the cabin. She reached over her shoulder to unbolt the lock. Her dad pulled the door open and gazed in at her. Kayla's black hair draped wildly over the edge of the berth and hung in strings halfway to the floor.

"What's up with you today?" her father asked.

She shrugged and brushed a stray hair away from her brown eyes. Her father smiled and sat down on the berth beside her. "I need you to take the helm," he said.

Kayla nodded and sat up. "Do we really have to do this, Dad?" she asked with the last shreds of hope.

Jonathan turned his eyes away from his daughter. "I'm sure," he said, pretending to search the horizon for obstructions through the portholes in the V-berth.

Kayla dropped to the floor and stomped her way through the cabin. The broken plate of eggs had already been cleaned up. She climbed the ladder into the cockpit. Max watched her from behind the wheel.

“Are you taking over?” he asked.

She nodded, taking the helm. As her uncle walked away, she stopped him. “Uncle Max?” He turned to her with hopeful eyes. “All your eggs need is a little salt—and you could cook them a bit longer.”

Max smiled at her. “I know an apology when I hear one,” he said.

Kayla’s father climbed out of the cabin. “Turn her into the wind.”

She glared straight ahead, clutching the helm tightly, and turned the wheel hard over. Beneath her, she could feel the keel forcing torrents of water aside. Her father untied the mainsail, letting it drape across the canvas awning that covered the cockpit. The white sail draped over the edge, limp and ragged from nearly two decades of use. Kayla could hear the wind whistling through its tucks and folds. She wondered if this was how it sounded when her grandfather had stood at the helm. Stretching her neck around the masses of white canvas, Kayla checked their path for channel markers and other boats. The fishing fleet sat as tiny specs on the horizon just for a second before vanishing into the distance. As her father

and uncle hoisted the sail, it fluttered violently in the head-on breeze.

“Fall off the wind,” her father ordered when the sail had reached the top of the mast. Kayla pulled hard on the wheel in the opposite direction. The billowing sail filled with wind, cupping it tightly within its deep belly. The last few wrinkles smoothed away, and the pounding boat began to slice its way through the channel just beyond Dominica.

“Keep her on a heading of about 332,” her father said as he and Max unfurled the jib. Kayla watched the compass spin around until they were on course. Once under full sail, her father and uncle rejoined her in the cockpit, damp with sweat from the humid, June day.

“So, where are we going first?” she asked.

“Guadeloupe.” Her father smiled.

“How long will that take?”

“That depends on how hard the wind blows.”

Kayla raised her eyebrows, asking her father to be a little more specific.

“It’ll be dark when we get there,” he answered.

She nodded and looked around at the reaches of never-ending ocean. Realizing exactly how long this trip was going to be, she put her

hand to her neck and ran her index finger along her shell necklace. Kayla wondered what she and Sasha would be doing if they were at home together. Monday was usually their day in town, beginning with a long trek to the market, grocery list in hand. Last week, she'd been allowed to buy a watermelon along with the usual cabbage, bananas, and bundles of sweet maize, though she later recognized this as a bribe.

"Kayla," her father had begun, "your mother and I have something we want to talk to you about." She thought they were going to tell her that a baby was on the way, but midlife had simply added pounds to her mother's waist. Kayla's eyes quickly lost their glimmer when they told her she was going to move in with her grandparents, thousands of miles away.

"You're coming too, right?" she asked her father.

"Not this time, sweetie, but we'll come visit. I promise."

"Why not?" she demanded.

"Kayla, your mother just isn't prepared for a move like this right now."

Kayla glared at her mother with cold, empty eyes. "And who said I was prepared!" She stormed off the boat, hot with anger, her hair

clinging to her damp cheeks.

Later that night, she was tucked safely into bed at Sasha's house, spending one of her few nights on land.

"What are you going to do?" Sasha asked her, perched on the end of the bed.

"What can I do?" They shook their heads.

Now a week later, Kayla stood behind the wheel, driving herself away from everything she wanted to hold onto, anything but regretful that she hadn't spoken a word to her mother since their argument.

Kayla left the helm in her father's care and found a comfortable seat in the shade of the mainsail. Her hair streamed straight back as she hid from the morning sun. The heat made her drowsy, and the melodic splashing of the boat through the sea served as a pleasant lullaby as she drifted in and out of dreamless sleep. With eyes too heavy to open, she heard the occasional flutter of sails dancing above her as the boat tacked back and forth upwind.

"It's been a long week," her father whispered just above the breeze.

Max nodded. "And this is just the beginning."

Kayla awoke to the sound of the grumbling engine. Around her, the water reflected the deep black of nighttime and the cockpit was moist from sea spray. She could taste the salty layer beginning to form on her lips. At the wheel, her father concentrated hard on the growing landscape. The volcanic hillsides of Basse-Terre, Guadeloupe flickered with low intensity electric lights that could have been the last smoldering embers of century-old ash.

“Aren’t you glad we didn’t fly?” her father asked.

“Maybe, just for now,” Kayla said, glancing across the water at the strange land taking shape before the *Zephyr*, “we could pretend we’re on vacation.”

Kayla stood on the bow of the boat and peered past her waving reflection, through the surface of the sea below. Even through the depths of gently rippling water, the ocean floor seemed only inches away. A small crab crawled awkwardly over chipped shells and slow-shifting rifts in the silver sand, stopping occasionally to tap his claws at the path ahead. Kayla spit into the water, sending a series of eddies expanding across the surface. The crab scuttled on, leaving only Kayla's distorted reflection bobbing across the cresting ripples.

"What do you see?" Her father asked, standing behind her.

"Nothing really," she answered.

"I have to go into town to take care of some business," he went on.

"Why don't you and Max do some exploring ashore when he wakes up?"

Kayla half-smiled and glanced at the shoreline. The sun was

hovering above the smoky top of La Soufrière, and people were beginning to show their faces to the beaming daylight. “Can I come with you?” She turned to face her father.

“I think you’ll have more fun with your uncle. We can spend all tomorrow together. There’s something I want to show you.” Kayla nodded and her father squeezed her shoulder. “You can call the harbor master on channel 16 when you’re ready. He’ll take you to the dock.”

“I thought the radio was broken,” she said.

“Max fixed it while you were sleeping,” he said and smiled reassuringly. “It’ll be nice to be in contact with the outside world again, won’t it?”

Kayla watched her father lower himself into the rowboat and paddle away before ducking into the cabin to wake Max up. She shook him gently, but it didn’t do any good. Fast asleep in his quarter berth, Max snored lightly. Kayla stomped around the cabin, rattling pots and pans, making as much noise as she could, but he just rolled onto his side and tucked his face into his pillow. Kayla grabbed an air horn from the navigation desk. With out-stretched arms, she prepared to squeeze the trigger, shouting, “Our left wing’s been hit, and we’re going down,

Private!” Max bolted upright before she had the chance to sound the horn, smacking his head on the ceiling. Kayla fell over with laughter and Max threw his pillow at her head.

“Come on, let’s go do something.”

“Just another five minutes,” he groaned.

Kayla walked toward him, pushing her hair over her shoulders and watched Max draw in a deep, slow breath. She shook her head and grabbed the hand-held radio from the nav desk.

“*Zephyr, Zephyr*, come in Harbor Master,” she began, trying to imitate her father’s radio etiquette.

“This is the Harbor Master, switch to channel 18.”

Kayla dialed the knob on the old VHF radio to the directed channel.

“*Zephyr on 18*,” she said.

The voice from the radio relaxed a bit. “What can I do for you?” it asked.

“This is the *Zephyr* requesting a water taxi immediately,” she said.

The harbor radioed back confirming the request, location, and number of passengers. “Only one,” she spoke into the radio before making her way to the V-berth to pull a linen dress on over her swimsuit. She turned to

leave, but paused in thought, reaching into her top drawer. Her fingers fell upon a silk handkerchief, as smooth as calm water. She pulled it out, folded it neatly and placed it in the pocket that she had stitched to the front of her dress.

Outside, she could hear the rumble of the approaching taxi and the double blast of its horn, notifying her of its arrival. Kayla stomped through the companionway, giving Max one last chance to wake up before climbing on deck.

“Are you sure it’s just you?” the taxi operator asked, raising his eyebrows at Kayla.

“I’m going to town for fruit,” she lied. “My father gave me money.” The man nodded skeptically.

Kayla looked at the boy on her left. “Try the breadfruit,” he said and blew his well-trimmed, blond bangs to one side of his forehead with a puff of hot breath. “Guadeloupe is famous for it.” He closed the guidebook he was clutching and offered his hand. “I’m Wallace.”

“I’m Kayla,” she said, taking a seat beside the boy.

“Are you vacationing too?”

“No, I’m being deported,” she replied.

Wallace laughed and grabbed a pencil from behind his ear. He began to scrawl Kayla's words in the front of his book. "Have you ever tried breadfruit?"

"Once or twice," she sneered. "I'm from Dominica, it's native."

"Actually," Wallace went on, thumbing through his guidebook, "breadfruit wasn't introduced to the Caribbean until Captain Bligh brought it over on the HMS Providence in 1793. You've heard of the Mutiny on the Bounty I assume?"

"Sorry, no."

"Well, basically, Bligh began to ration his crew's water supply to save the breadfruit trees and the crew mutinied."

Kayla glanced back at her father's boat. "Mutinied, huh?"

"Yeah, they threw the Captain and his loyalists overboard, along with all the fruit."

I wonder if I could steer the Zephyr back to Dominica myself, she wondered.

"Isn't that interesting, Kayla?"

The taxi operator pulled up alongside a wooden dock and looked at them knowingly. "Alright you kids, the last taxi runs at 10 p.m."

They nodded their heads.

“Not a minute later.”

Kayla took off down the dock with Wallace at her heels. “Would you like me to accompany you to town, Kayla?” She looked over her shoulder at the boy. He was a full head taller than her, probably 14 or 15 years old. His pale blue eyes glistened above his pasty white, freckled cheeks.

“If you’d like,” she answered, glad to have some company her own age.

They set off down the semi-paved road that ran along the coast. Kayla dragged her feet through the crumbling asphalt, kicking up a hot cloud of dust. As she walked, she watched little black clouds rise into the air and spiral down toward the pavement, stepping forward into a new cloud before the old one could settle on her feet or between her toes.

“Is that really necessary?” Wallace asked, waving the dirt away from his pressed slacks.

Kayla shrugged. “Just getting a feel for the place,” she said.

“Are you always so messy?”

Kayla smiled and ran her fingers through her tangled hair. “So,

what's there to do here, anyway?" she asked.

Wallace opened his book, thumbing through the crisp pages. "I think I remember reading something about the banana harvest, perhaps we could watch."

Kayla grabbed the book from his hands and sent it flying into the bushes lining the road.

"What did you do that for?"

"Really, how much fun does watching a banana harvest sound?"

Wallace shrugged.

"That book won't teach you anything you can't learn just by looking around," she said.

"But it had a map."

"That's what locals are for." She smiled and took off in a trot down the road, leaving Wallace in a gray, dusty cloud.

*

Near town, the road smoothed into a solid asphalt bed and wound away from the coast through heavily populated neighborhoods. The houses, like dominos, were lined up carefully side by side, and looked as if they might collapse, one on top of the other with the slightest tap or shove.

The wind whistled across their tin rooftops, sending a warm breeze tumbling down the street,, pushing them toward town. Ahead, the road widened into a giant square, crowded with wooden carts and canopied fruit stands. Mountains of papayas and mangos erupted with steam as drops of condensation oozed down their slick skin.

“Voulez-vous acheter des fruits?” a woman’s voice sang from behind the cart.

Kayla looked at the piles of fruit.

“I could eat them all,” she said.

“You’d be sick,” Wallace responded, shaking his head.

“I’d be happy.”

Wallace shoved his fist into his pocket and pulled out a handful of coins. “Do you want to split one?” he asked, counting the change.

“Huh?” Kayla said, peering at the shop behind the fruit stand. Its soft, painted curtains fluttered like silk birds caged behind glassless windows. With every draft, brilliant streaks of stained flowers danced toward the sky like a quiver of doves, only to drift earthward again in the hot, still lulls.

“Kayla?”

"Come on," she said and grabbed Wallace by the wrist, leading him toward the shop.

"So, you're not hungry?"

Kayla paused outside of the store. "Aren't they beautiful?" she asked.

"The curtains?"

"Yes, and the paintings."

"They're nice, I guess," Wallace said and followed Kayla through the door.

The wooden floor creaked with every step, their deep groans a mantra of its age. Slatted light bounced off the low-lit walls and clung to the silk paintings like golden patches. Kayla reached out to touch the bottom of a panel of blue cloth. She lifted it up with her palm and let the corners drop between her fingers like a waterfall rushing over smooth, hard stones. From the back of the store, a rocking chair moaned in a steady rhythm, and a weak voice hummed a familiar tune. Kayla dropped the piece of cloth and made her way toward the old woman in the rocking chair, peering first from behind the racks before revealing herself in the open air. As she approached, the woman's rocking slowed and she opened

her sagging eyes in unsure recognition.

“Ma Petit,” she whispered, extending her shaking hands.

Kayla looked into the woman’s dark brown eyes. They were familiar, but old and tired and set deep in her wrinkled face, casting dark shadows down her cheeks.

“My sweet Ciel,” she struggled in slow English.

Kayla shook her head at the sound of her mother’s name and stepped away from the woman in the rocking chair. “My name is Kayla,” she corrected her.

“I hoped,” the woman said and shut her eyes, “that you were my daughter. You look so much like her.” She smiled.

“My mother’s name is Ciel,” Kayla said, recognizing the soft curve of the woman’s smile.

“Mon Dieu!” the woman gasped, reaching her arms out again.

“Ou est ma petit?” she asked, but corrected herself, “Where is my Ciel?”

Kayla took the woman’s wrinkled hands reluctantly with one hand, running her fingers along the silk handkerchief in her pocket with the other. She shook her head at the woman, not quite understanding what she

was talking about, but found herself answering anyway, though more for her own benefit. “She wanted to come, but she couldn’t.” It was an easy lie, Kayla had told it to herself a hundred times in the last two days. She almost believed it. She looked around avoiding the woman’s deep, dark eyes. “My mom has a shop just like this one. There wasn’t anyone else to run it.” But the truth was, her mother didn’t want to come. She needed a break—from her husband, from her responsibilities, but especially from her daughter. Kayla had heard it herself one night after she’d gone to bed. She propped her hatch open, to capture the breeze, but she only caught her mother’s words, wafting forward from the cockpit.

“I’m an artist Jonathan, not a mother. I was never meant to be a mother. I don’t love being a parent. I love painting, and when I’m parenting, I’d rather *be* painting.”

Kayla’s heart had broken, but mostly for her father, who always wanted a hundred children, enough to crew on even the largest of sailboats. Kayla pushed the incident out of her mind for nearly a year, long enough for her father to do all of the paperwork, long enough to make sure his daughter would have a home. And Kayla had nearly forgotten about it, convincing herself it was all said in jest, until the night

her dad told her she was moving away.

“You’ve made friends already?” Wallace asked, approaching Kayla and the old woman.

Kayla stared at him, not knowing what to say, and not wanting to look at the woman clinging to her hand. As she struggled to loosen her grasp, she felt the hardened calluses across the woman’s palms and remembered holding pleadingly to her mother’s own callused hands as a small child. “Take me with you,” she would beg before her mother left for her shop in town.

“Jonathan,” her mother would call, and Kayla’s father would take her into his arms. Together, they would watch as Kayla’s mother climbed onto the dock and waved goodbye, her eyes vapid and distant, before disappearing down the road.

“Why don’t we go get that mango now?” Wallace asked and started for the door. The woman squeezed Kayla’s hand tighter and reached for a small silk mat painted with a waterfall. She offered the cloth to Kayla, who shook her head and bent over to look closely at the woman.

“Don’t you want it?” Wallace asked.

“I don’t have any money,” she told him, and looking at the

woman's wrinkled, leathered skin, Kayla imagined how her mother would look in thirty years. "You keep it," Kayla told the woman as she placed her loosening hand back on her lap. She turned and hurried past Wallace toward the door before either he or the stranger could explain that it had been offered as a gift, not as a purchase.

*

Kayla and Wallace sat on the dock, cupping half a mango each in their hands, slurping the juice as it ran down their arms.

"Not bad," Wallace said, drinking from the center of his fruit.

"I've had sweeter fruit."

"Really? You don't see a lot of mangos where I live."

"You live in the States?" Kayla asked.

Wallace nodded his head, juice dripping from the corners of his full mouth. "So who was that woman in the store?" he asked through clenched teeth.

"She thought she knew me, but she must have been confused because I've never been here before. She knew my mother's name though."

"I thought your mom was from Dominica."

"She was born in Guadeloupe. After she married my Dad, they moved to Dominica." Kayla swung her feet beneath the dock.

"So, I bet you're ready for a little excitement. I mean, it's beautiful down here, but there isn't very much to do."

"Yeah, America, the land of opportunity," she scoffed and ran a sticky thumb along the shell necklace Sasha had given her. A shadow fell over the dock and Kayla looked up to see her father and uncle standing above them. Max grabbed her under the arms and pulled her to her feet, looking only half-relieved to see her.

"Where have you been?" her father demanded.

"We went to town," she said.

"We've been looking everywhere for you."

"I don't know why. Max was there when I called the water taxi." Kayla's father eyed her uncle who gave a helpless shrug.

"I asked you to do one thing," her father said to Max.

"This is Wallace," Kayla interrupted and motioned to her friend still sitting on the pier. The men gave Wallace a quick nod, barely taking their eyes off each other.

"It's nice to meet you Wallace," Max said, finally breaking his

brother's stare and making his way to the rowboat, "but if you'll excuse us, dinner will be ready soon."

Kayla slid her fingers into her father's hand dangling by his side. He looked down at her and gave a quick squeeze. "I'll see you later, Wallace," Kayla said and led her father to the end of the dock.

*

Kayla ducked into the main cabin and sniffed curiously. "What's for dinner, Max?"

"Some guys at the dock sold me a couple of crabs."

"You can make crab?"

"Well, you just steam them like vegetables, right?"

Kayla rolled her eyes at her uncle and lifted the lid to the peek into the pot on the stove. "How long have they been in there?"

"Since your father got in the shower."

Kayla laughed. The water shut off, and she could hear her father humming the old woman's song in the bathroom. "Mom sings that when she paints," she told her uncle. Her father came out of the captain's quarters, still bare-chested. His hair was uncombed and dripped down the back of his neck.

“What’s that smell?” he asked, wrinkling up his nose as he and Kayla peered into the pot.

“Very funny,” Max said and chased them to the table, snapping a pair of stainless steel tongs after them like pinching claws.

“I talked to your grandmother today,” her father said, taking his seat at the table.

“So what?” Kayla asked.

Her father shot her a stern look. “We were just hammering out the final details about our arrival. They’ve booked a hotel in Miami, so we can all spend some time together before you head...” he paused, considering the word he was about to say, “home.”

Kayla looked her father in the eyes. “I think I’d like to go into town again tomorrow,” she said. “There were some really great shops...one was just like mom’s.”

Her father drew in a deep breath and concentrated on the pile of steaming crabs Max was placing in the center of the table. “Did you like what you saw?” he asked carefully. Max stood still, watching them.

“I don’t know,” she said and quickly added, “The shop was old, but the paintings were nice.”

“I was hoping I could take you to town myself.”

“Well, you promised to spend the day with me tomorrow.”

“Dig in,” Max said eagerly, setting a tinfull of nearly black muffins on the table with a heavy clatter.

Kayla grabbed a piece of bread and tossed it back and forth between her hands, blowing on it as it passed through the air. “These would make excellent ammo,” she joked and crunched through the side of the muffin. “Do we have any more of that bungee cord?” she asked her father with a full mouth.

“Hey, I worked really hard on those,” Max complained

“That’s right,” her father said, winking, “at least wait until they’ve cooled down before you make fun.”

Max fired a muffin at his brother, who grabbed a hot crab just in time to bat the bread away. Its body came loose from the rubbery leg he held onto and landed with a thump beside the crispy muffin on the floor. Max frowned as his brother erupted with laughter. Kayla rolled her eyes and excused herself from the table, slipping silently into her room. From behind the locked door, she could hear her father and uncle playing war games with the burned bread. “Well, there’s always bacon and eggs,” she

thought to herself and sat in front of her window to watch the sun drift toward the sea in a grand finale of dazzling colors and splashes of light.

three

Kayla rolled over, trying to ignore the persistent tapping at the hatch above her head. She buried her face, moist from the humid cabin, into her pillow, but the noise continued despite her efforts to discourage it. She turned her head toward the moonlight seeping through the glass and squinted one eye open. Wallace shivered on the other side and wrapped his bare arms across his chest. Kayla shook her head and sat up to prop open the hatch.

“What are you doing here?” She hissed.

Wallace’s index finger shot to his puckered lips to hush her. He reached through the hole to pull her up. Waterdrops rolled slowly down his bangs and fell like tears on Kayla’s face and nightgown. Out of the cabin, Kayla pushed the hatch closed. The wind swept her hair across her face, blowing it just short of Wallace’s shoulders. A few strands drifted

up in the breeze and tickled her nose.

“What are you doing here?” She asked again.

“I couldn’t sleep,” Wallace said.

Kayla nodded and looked around her. “How did you get up here?”

“I climbed up the anchor line.”

She fired a smile at Wallace and pushed her hair behind her ears.

“I wanted to say goodbye,” he said.

Kayla shook her head. “We aren’t leaving until after noon tomorrow. We can probably get together after breakfast.”

“No, we can’t,” Wallace said. “My dad got a business call. He has to fly home. We have to be in San Juan by Friday so he can make his flight. We’re pulling up anchor before the sun comes up.”

Kayla sat down on the deck of the boat. She wrapped her arms around her legs to keep the wind from cutting through her nightgown. Wallace sat beside her and stared at his feet.

“I had a lot of fun today,” he said.

Kayla nodded.

“This is for you.” Wallace handed her a sealed plastic bag.

She ran her fingers along a piece of cloth and an envelope enclosed

in the bag.

"I put a stamp on the envelope already, and my address. I hope you'll write me when you get home."

"I'm not going home," Kayla snapped.

"When you get..." Wallace struggled for an appropriate word. He drew in his breath with a sharp shiver, cradling his last word briefly on the end of his tongue. "...settled."

Kayla felt the shells of her necklace. They were still warm from resting between her neck and pillow. Only the metal clasp grew cool in the night breeze.

"What's the other thing?" she asked.

Wallace's pale cheeks flushed with color. "I went back to the silk shop," he said. "I wanted to get that painting for you."

"You didn't have to do that," Kayla told him.

Wallace shrugged. "Why are you moving anyway?" He asked.

"I haven't figured it all out yet," she lied.

"Didn't your parents explain it all to you?"

"Sometimes I just have to figure things out on my own." Kayla

drew closer to Wallace, hiding from the wind. She could feel his breath

skirt across the top of her head, and with her eyes firmly shut, she imagined the Dominica sunshine blowing in with the salt-kissed breeze.

"My mom learned how to paint here before she met my dad."

Wallace nodded a silent invitation to Kayla's story.

"She loves to paint."

"Why did she leave Guadeloupe?" he asked.

"She wanted to see new things, and Dad was on his way around the world."

"They didn't make it very far," Wallace said.

"That's my fault," Kayla responded. "I wasn't a part of her plan."

Wallace touched the back of her arm. His fingers were damp and shriveled from his swim. They felt like wet leather. Kayla imagined the old woman rocking back and forth in the creaking, wooden chair. She looked quickly at Wallace to make sure he was still beside her. He squeezed her arm.

"I have to go," he said.

Kayla nodded as he stood up. She followed him to the bow. "Do you think we'll see each other again?" she asked.

"We better," Wallace said. "You owe me a book." He lowered

himself into the water, hanging briefly by the railing before letting go completely. Kayla watched him swim away, until he was swallowed by the shadows cast by the other boats in the anchorage. She continued to listen for the steady strokes of his arms against the surface of the water as he made his way back to his boat. Once Wallace was beyond earshot, Kayla returned to her bed and tossed about until daylight, trying to get comfortable.

*

In the morning, Kayla pulled on the same dress from the day before and emerged from the V-berth to find her father fiddling with a number of navigational tools at the breakfast table. He walked an acrylic ruler back and forth across a dirty map spread out before him.

“Where are you taking us now?” she asked.

Her father let his eyes roam around the map a few seconds longer before pointing at Guadeloupe. “Pointe à Pitre, we’ll pick up a cab in town. Remember, I wanted to show you something.”

“Are we going to go back to that silk store?”

“I don’t think we’ll have enough time,” he said, staring first at Guadeloupe, then at Dominica.

Kayla pulled a family photo down from the wall above the nav desk. "Does it remind you too much of mom?"

Kayla's father took the picture from her hands and placed it face down on the table.

"Too much cargo weighs down a ship you know," she said.

"People aren't baggage, Kayla."

"Oh really? Why don't you ask mom about that?"

"We're not talking about your mother."

Kayla watched sad lines spread from the corners of her father's eyes as he squinted back down at the chart. Years before, the aging wrinkles had burst from his eyes only when his lips stretched into a smile. Kayla remembered her father scooping her into his arms one day as his crew tied the *Neptune* off to the fishing pier. They released their nets and hundreds of fish flopped onto piles of ice, bringing struggling life, however briefly, to the frozen, barren mountains. As her father gave a joyous laugh at the day's success, Kayla traced the happy wrinkles radiating from her father's eyes with her index finger.

"What are these Daddy?" she asked about the lines on his face.

"Gifts from the sun," he answered and squinted at his daughter as

re a blazing star. "It's beautiful, but if you look too long, it hurts
s."

Kayla giggled. "If it's beautiful, how can it hurt you?" She asked.

"It just can," he said.

*

he road to town didn't seem nearly as long as it had when Kayla
t with Wallace. A cool wind had blown in during the night,
up the surf breaking just beyond shore. The growing waves
n soft white tips before folding over on themselves, riding the
water onto the beach. The broken waves slid back into the ocean,
only small, bubbling streaks of sea foam to linger briefly before
sorbed into the sand.

Kayla walked a few steps behind her father as they came into
bove them, clouds were beginning to form small, silver clumps
ed the vendors' carts lining the city square.

"Do you think we're going to get some weather?" she asked.

"Nothing we can't handle," her father said. "It's not the season

Kayla nodded. "How long do we have?"

"At least three weeks before things get iffy. We'll be there before then."

"We had an early storm last year," Kayla said. "Maybe we shouldn't leave yet."

Her father slowed his pace so she could catch up. He gripped the back of her neck with his hand and gave a friendly squeeze. "I haven't heard anything on the radio."

"But the radio was broken until yesterday." Kayla stopped her father in front of the silk shop. "I want to go in," she said.

Her father sighed and turned his daughter away from the front of the store. "Trust me," he said. "This will be just as interesting."

Kayla gave into her father's wishes and allowed him to lead her to the street corner, a few shops down. She looked around at all the commotion along the road as her father waved a taxi over. A middle-aged woman emerged from the silk store and stopped to stare at them. Kayla tugged on her father's arm and pointed out the lady. "They must not see many strangers around here," she said.

Jonathan turned his head away from the silk store and edged his daughter into the cab. "I guess not," he agreed and snapped the door shut

behind them. "To Morne à L'eau," he told the taxi driver and patted the headrest of the seat in front of him before glancing back over his shoulder at the woman on the sidewalk.

"What's mom-uh-low?" Kayla asked, trying to mimic her father's words.

The cab driver narrowed his eyes at them through the rear-view mirror.

"It's a cemetery," her father answered.

"You're taking me to a cemetery?"

"You'll understand when we get there."

Kayla rolled her eyes at her father, trying to determine exactly when it was that he had decided it was no longer necessary to explain himself.

"I promise," he said.

They wound their way along the coastal road for nearly an hour as Kayla stared out over the ocean. Beneath the thickening clouds in the sky, the water took on a deep grayish-blue color. The waves were building; so was the wind. "Wow," she whispered as they approached their destination.

Morne à L'eau sat on the side of a hill. It didn't look like any other cemetery she had ever seen. There were very few headstones. Instead, the hillside was dotted with dozens of mausoleums, all covered in black and white checkered tile, standing like a miniature city.

"We'll just be a few minutes," Jonathan told the driver as he and Kayla got out of the car.

They stood at the entrance of the graveyard, taking it all in. The building clouds cast streaky shadows across the checkerboard tombs.

"Why are we here?" Kayla asked her father.

"Come on," he said and took her by the hand.

Kayla felt as if she were a giant, walking past row after row of the graves. Some were dark and sunken, lying in the shadow of their larger, statelier neighbors. Her father stopped her in front of small, modest headstone, seemingly out of place among the numerous mausoleums. One side of the grave marker was tiled in an inverse pattern of the other so that the left looked like a photographic negative of the right. A silver plate in the middle of the headstone held the inscription:

Rolfe J. Rochelle: Homme de la Mer

Kayla tried to sound out the inscription, but gave up, aware that her

French was iffy at best. “Who’s that?” She asked.

“Your grandfather.”

“Mom’s dad?” Kayla’s mother rarely spoke of her parents.

Consequently, she gave them little thought.

Jonathan nodded. “He taught me how to fish.”

“Where is grandma?”

Kayla’s father looked surprised and searched for his words. “We

lost touch,” he said.

“You liked him?”

“He let me marry your mother.”

Kayla looked at the ground. Dead, rotting flowers lay wilted at the

base of the headstone. They took on a mildewy shade of pale brown, and

Kayla could tell that they had once been streaked with bright pinks and

yellows. “Someone came to visit,” she said, bending down to touch the

flowers.

Her dad touched her shoulder to distract her, eager to avoid any

more questions. He pointed up at the forming clouds. “Mackerel skies,”

he said.

The small, puffy clouds looked like a bouquet of silvery fish scales

floating in the air. Kayla thought about the old proverb her father often uttered: *Mackerel skies and mare's tails make tall ships carry low sails*. "It's going to be windy," she told her father.

"It already is." He reached down and turned Kayla back toward the direction of the taxi. "Come on," he said. The breeze sifted between the tombs as they made their way to the car and slid into place on the rear seat. Jonathan nodded to the driver, and they were on their way.

Kayla watched the peak of La Soufrière as they wound along the road, back to town where they'd picked up the taxi, and wondered how much rain it would take to cool a volcano. "Do you think it's going to rain?" she asked.

The driver stared at her through the rear-view mirror again, looking more often at his passengers than the road. He stopped the car at the edge of town. "As far as I go," he said.

Kayla hopped out and stood by the door until her father finished paying the man. "Are you ready?" he asked, crawling out of the cab.

"I guess so." As they began their walk home, Kayla watched the taxi pull away and then stop abruptly in front of the silk store. The same woman emerged from the doorway and stooped by the front passenger's

window to talk to the man behind the wheel. "People around here sure are strange," she told her dad. Jonathan nodded, lost in his own thoughts as he stared up at the sky.

They were about a quarter of the way home before Kayla noticed an old gray truck approaching from behind them. The pick-up slowed, and drove along beside them as the woman at the wheel hung her head out the window.

"Jonathan?" she asked in a heavy island accent. Kayla's father gave a nod and pulled his daughter away from the stopping vehicle.

The woman got out of the truck and bent forward to examine the girl. "Then this must be Kayla." She pulled her tightly to her breast and then, with both hands clasped around Kayla's shoulders, held her at arms' length.

"Don't you look just like your mother?" the woman asked.

"I have my father's mouth."

"But those eyes...Mon Dieu, look at those eyes."

Kayla looked to her father for help, but he only held his breath tightly within his chest. His expression was sympathetic, but one of business. His firm posture told Kayla she would simply have to endure

this a little longer. She smiled briefly and wiggled out of the stranger's grasp.

"How long are you here for?" she demanded.

"We are leaving now," Jonathan said trying to edge past her.

"Wouldn't you like to stay, just for a few days?" she asked Kayla.

"No she wouldn't," her father answered.

"I asked Kayla, Jonathan."

Kayla stared blankly at the woman. "It's a long trip, right dad?" she asked, taking his hand into hers.

"It's about 350 miles to Puerto Rico. It'll take close to a week to get there."

"Well, I guess you had better get going then," the woman said through gritted teeth. "I'll give you a ride."

"We can walk," he said.

"Don't be ridiculous. I'm headed the same direction you are." She walked around the hood to open the door. "Hop in," she said.

"I'll just ride in the back," Jonathan said.

The woman looked at Kayla.

"I'll ride with my dad."

"Very well," the stranger said and slammed the door as her passengers climbed into the truck bed. It was pieced together from 2x4 scraps and bolted to the frame. Kayla rested her back against the dingy slab that shook from the sputtering engine. She felt the wooden boards rattling below her. The truck lurched forward and she reached for the wobbly railing, but realizing it was just as unsteady as the flatbed, she opted for her father's arm instead. With his other hand, he laid Kayla's head against his shoulder and held her safely in place.

"It's a short ride," he said and looked back up at the sky. Palm trees waved furiously against the horizon, bending westward toward Puerto Rico. "It'll go quickly."

four

The truck threw a cloud of dust into the air as the tires slid to a stop at the foot of the pier. Kayla waved the dirt away from her face. Through a brown haze, she could see her father's boat docked next to the gas pump. Max held the nozzle into place.

"How soon are we pulling away?" she asked her father as he climbed out of the bed of the truck.

"As soon as we can."

Kayla nodded and jumped down after her father. "It was, um, nice to meet you," she told the woman and hurried down the dock.

"Is it almost full, Uncle Max?" she asked, approaching the boat.

"Just a few more minutes, Sport." He leaned against the boat and wrapped his free arm across his chest. "Are you in a hurry?"

Kayla stared down the dock. "It's just going to take a while to get

there, that's all."

Max raised his eyes at the woman standing beside the old truck. Her arms flew wildly through the air as her words came pouring out.

"Why don't you go inside and make sure everything is ready to go, Sport."

Kayla hopped over the lifelines and ducked into the cabin, looking around to make sure everything was in its proper place. Inside, she could barely hear the heated conversation. Kayla peeked through the companionway as her father sprinted down the dock with the angry woman close at his heels. She wondered how they knew each other, and why she was so angry. Perhaps they should have ridden in the cab instead of the truck bed after all. Kayla felt her father's footsteps on the deck. She watched as the stranger invited herself onto the boat, stomping aboard behind her father. Her knees bobbed briefly back and forth before she reached down to steady herself on a sagging lifeline. Kayla buried her mouth in the palm of her hand as the woman groped about for something sturdier to cling to. She staggered into the cockpit and quickly lowered herself into a sitting position.

"Well, isn't this nice?" the woman asked when she saw Kayla

climbing out of the galley.

“We like it,” Kayla answered. She winked at Max before sitting across from the intruder.

“Does it always rock so much?”

Max jumped onto the boat, heeling it toward the dock. The woman eyed him over her shoulder.

“A lot more, usually.” Kayla moved her hand through the air as if it were on a roller coaster track. “It goes up and down on the waves too.”

“I hope it doesn’t get too rough out there, Jonathan. I’d hate for you to fall overboard.”

“We’ll be fine,” he snapped. “Is everything ready, Max?”

“We’ve got water, fuel, and food,” he said, “not to mention plenty of breeze.”

Kayla’s father gave one last look around. “I guess we’re ready to cast off then.”

“I’ll just be getting out of the way,” the woman said. She scurried back over the lifelines onto the dock. “Au revoir, Kayla,” she said and added sharply, “Good bye, Jonathan.”

“Bye,” he mumbled.

“Why don’t you get the engine started, Kayla?” Her father asked.

“Max and I will take care of the lines.”

Kayla did as her father asked. She looked inside the companionway and turned the battery on before moving back to the ship’s wheel. She made sure the choke was in the correct place and turned the key. The boat growled beneath the deck and shook violently until the engine turned over. Her father and uncle worked quickly, untying the lines. The crosswind pushed the vessel away from the dock. Kayla’s father gave her a nod and she bumped the boat into gear.

“Give her some gas,” he said as he and Max jumped aboard.

Kayla pushed on the throttle, and the boat began to glide forward. She looked over her shoulder at the woman who waved mechanically, calling, “Bon voyage.” She stood like a tiny toy at the end of the pier and looked like nothing more than plastic and paint compared to the towering peak of La Soufrière.

Kayla’s father took the wheel from his daughter.

“Not bad,” Max said, stepping into the cockpit.

“It isn’t hard when the wind blows from the right direction,” she responded.

“Still, you make it look easy.”

Kayla nodded. She sat down and looked at her father, trying to think of something to say. She began several times, but nothing seemed appropriate. Kayla looked at her feet. She shuffled them around and kicked lightly at the air in front of her.

“Who was that woman?” she asked her father finally.

“Someone your mother used to paint with.”

“But why was she so mad at you?”

“Just a difference of opinions, that’s all.”

Kayla looked around, knowing her father was keeping something from her. Guadeloupe grew smaller behind the boat. They were far enough away to tell it was an island now. The beaches looked whiter, and the palm trees seemed not to wave back and forth in the breeze, but to stand permanently hunched to one side.

“We might as well use this wind to our advantage,” Kayla’s father said. “Let’s raise the sails and turn the motor off.”

Kayla jumped to her feet, happy to be distracted from her father’s disgruntled mood. “I’ll guide, you crank, Uncle Max.”

Her Uncle reached for a winch handle and made his way up to the

mast.

Jonathan turned the boat into the wind, almost 180 degrees from the direction they were pointing. He backed off on the engine; it grumbled just above neutral. "Alright, you guys," he said, "take it up."

Kayla guided the sail into its track as Max cranked it up the mast. Jonathan watched as the sail waved back and forth in the wind. Once it reached the top of the mast, Max tied off the halyard. He and Kayla returned to the cockpit to unfurl the jib. The sails filled as Jonathan fell away from the wind. He cut the engine and all was quiet except for the gentle wake churning behind the boat.

"How long do you think this weather will hold?" Jonathan asked his brother.

"I hope it will take us all the way," Max said, "But I bet we're in for some rain toward the end of the trip. There's something brewing off the coast of Tobago."

"I thought you said there wouldn't be any storms," Kayla said.

"I said there wouldn't be anything we couldn't handle," her father answered.

"We should stay on the front end of it, Sport," Max said. "If all

goes well, we'll beat it to San Juan."

Kayla took in a deep breath and let it out with a puff. She reached for the jib sheets and eased the sail out a little further. "So there isn't anything between Guadeloupe and Puerto Rico?" she asked.

"Why don't you check the charts," her uncle said.

Kayla cleated off the jib and climbed into the cabin. She opened up the nav desk and pulled out a chart of the Caribbean. Light shone through the holes that ran along the creases in the map where it had been folded time and time again. The bottom right hand corner hung loosely, attached by only a few quadrants. Kayla laid the chart on the kitchen table and carefully lined up the ripped edges. As she traced a penciled line from Guadeloupe to Puerto Rico, her finger bypassed several small islands. She squinted at the tiny print to read their names—Antigua, St. Kitts, Virgin Islands.

"Why aren't we stopping at any of these places?" She hollered through the companionway.

"What?" her father asked.

Kayla folded the map in half and climbed back on deck. She held it tightly to her chest as a burst of wind rocked the boat gently on its side.

"Why aren't we going to stop at any of these islands?" she asked again.

"We can," her father said, "if we need to, but I'd rather make it to Puerto Rico before the weather gets bad."

five

After it got dark, Kayla took over the helm while her father and uncle slept. They rested just inside the cabin, within earshot in case Kayla called for help during her driving shift.

"You take the first shift," her father had said. He knew it would be next to impossible to wake her once she'd fallen asleep. When Kayla had first learned to walk, she passed an entire night sleeping in her father's arms as tornadoes touched down all around them. They'd been dining at Sasha's house when the storm blew in. Kayla had fallen asleep to the first few raindrops bouncing off the tin roof. She never noticed when her father scooped her up and ran into the back bedroom for cover. When she woke up the next morning, the sun was shining through a hole that had been ripped in the ceiling during the night. The soft, morning light jumped off scattered shards of the roof as Sasha chased the jagged

reflections dancing around the room.

Kayla was aware that the wind had really picked up over the past few hours as it sent the boat reeling back and forth in the choppy waters.

Glad I'm up here and not down below, she thought and reached for the hand-held radio lying on the seat beside her. She turned it to the weather station for company and smiled at the mechanical voice. Still, above the broadcast, she could hear the metal rigging clang against the top of the mast. The noise was silenced only by the occasional gust that whistled around the sails. Kayla gripped the wheel and pulled with all her strength to keep the boat from rounding into the wind. She kept her eyes locked on the compass to make sure she never deviated from the course her father had given her, though there really wasn't anything else to look at. The water, usually a crystal blue, was as black as the moonless, night sky. Kayla kept time with her right foot in anticipation of the next burst of wind. She was getting sleepy now, and her eyes felt heavy as she counted down the hours until her shift was over.

At one o'clock, her uncle began to stir in the cabin below. He climbed groggily into the cockpit and edged Kayla out of the driving position.

"Any trouble?" he asked.

She shook her head no.

"Do you think you could put on a pot of coffee?" Max asked.

Kayla yawned and nodded. In the galley, she replaced the dirty filter in the old percolator and scooped in fresh coffee grounds. She plugged the pot into the wall and collapsed into her uncle's quarter berth, too tired to even pull the covers up.

*

At dawn, Max was still at the helm. Kayla rolled over, shivering. Half asleep, she reached for the tangled mess of blankets wrapped around her feet and ankles. She could hear the radio still broadcasting the weather and soon became aware of her father clanging around in the galley. She turned to look at him; her eyes squinted to filter out as much sunlight as possible. He raised a coffee mug in her direction.

"Thirsty?" he asked.

Kayla wrinkled her nose. "How's Max doing?" she asked.

Her father took a quick look at his brother. "He's about to fall asleep," he said, "but his shift is up."

Kayla stood up and peered through the companionway. "Just in

time for the rain to start,” she said.

The canvas awning was still in place, but the deck of the boat was damp from a light drizzle nonetheless. Kayla’s father pulled a coat on over his tattered khaki shorts and reached for his hat hanging above the nav station. “Lucky me,” he said, securing the hat on top of his head. “Are you coming up?” he asked.

“I’m still tired,” she answered and crawled back into bed.

Her father nodded and left to exchange places with Max. “Time’s up,” Kayla heard him say.

Max scurried into the cabin, happy to give up his position at the wheel. His hair and shoulders sparkled with moisture. He pulled his shirt off and tossed it where Kayla was lying.

“Hey!” she said.

“That’s what you get for stealing my bed.”

Kayla laughed and pushed the shirt onto the floor. She pulled the covers up to her chin and rolled toward the wall.

“Hey, come and look at this,” her father yelled from the cockpit.

Max rolled his eyes. “I’m never going to get to sleep, am I?” he asked his niece.

"Maybe when we get there," she said.

Her uncle pulled two jackets out from below one of the bench seats. They threw on the coats and joined Jonathan on deck. The rain was coming down much harder now. It hit the ocean and boat with enough force to send it splashing back toward the sky. Kayla examined the water. It looked as if it was raining the wrong way.

"What do you think that is?" Jonathan asked. He pointed to a white shape off their starboard bow, nearly half a mile away.

Kayla squinted at the object, trying to bring it into focus. It was barely visible through the pouring rain. "It looks like a boat," she said.

"Well, it isn't moving," her father responded. "Not very quickly anyway."

"Maybe it's anchored," Max suggested.

"You can't anchor in the middle of the ocean, Max," Kayla pointed out.

"You can if it's a shallow spot," he argued and bent over to check the depth gauge.

They all watched as the *Zephyr* drew closer to the drifting boat.

"Kayla, try and hail them on the radio," her father said and gave

her the hand-held. She took it into her hands and switched to channel 16.

“This is the *Zephyr* calling unknown vessel.” They waited but there was no answer. “Go get the binoculars,” she told Max. “They’re hanging inside.”

Max did as he was told. He held the binoculars up to his eyes and adjusted the focus. “It looks like that trawler that was next to us in the anchorage,” he said.

Kayla looked up from the radio. “Can you read its name?” she asked.

Max looked again. “I think it says *Mutual Fund*.”

“That’s Wallace’s boat,” Kayla yelled.

“What kind of name is *Mutual Fund*?” Max asked.

“The name of a businessman’s boat,” she answered and held the radio back up to her mouth. “This is the *Zephyr* calling *Mutual Fund*.”

They waited.

“This is *Mutual Fund*, come in,” they heard at last.

Kayla’s father took the radio from her. “*Mutual Fund*, this is *Zephyr* switching to channel 6-8.” He motioned for Kayla to take the helm and switched channels.

"This is *Mutual Fund* on 6-8."

Jonathan's voice relaxed into a more conversational tone. "*Mutual Fund*, is everything alright?" he asked.

The voice on the other end of the radio began again. "Actually, we seem to be out of fuel," it said, "and unsuccessful at calling for assistance."

"We are about a fourth a mile off your port stern. Permission requested to come up alongside."

"Permission granted," the voice said.

"This is the *Zephyr* switching back to channel 16, over."

"They're out of gas?" Max asked.

"Boy am I glad we have sails," Kayla said.

"Well, let's take them down," her father responded. "We'll need to dock under power. Take her into the wind, Kayla."

They worked quickly to prepare the boat for docking. After the sails were down, Kayla's father took the wheel back and she opened a storage compartment to pull out four rubber fenders. She drew her hood up over her head and made her way to the starboard lifelines, dragging the fenders behind her. They were getting close to the trawler. Kayla tied on

the first three fenders and headed for the bow. A gust caught the boat and tipped it to the side. Kayla tried to balance herself, but her ankle turned in. She fell to the side and hit the deck, skidding toward the water.

“Kayla!” her father yelled. He started for his daughter, but as he let go of the wheel, the boat jerked into the wind. He quickly grabbed it again and turned back onto course, aware that any sudden motion might cause his daughter to slide into the churning waters. He watched as Kayla caught herself on the lifelines with one arm. Max darted to the bow to pull her back into the boat. He grabbed her wrists and drew her toward him.

“I dropped the last fender,” she said.

Max shook his head and held her to him. “They’re just rubber and air,” he said. “They can be replaced.”

Kayla held tightly to his arm as she limped back to the cockpit behind her uncle. Her father grabbed her upper arm and pulled her to his side. He kissed her forehead.

“My ankle hurts,” she said.

“Let’s get docked, and then we’ll check it out.”

Kayla sat down and looked at the other boat, dead in the water.

Through the rain, she could see a crew of men lined up along the port side

of *Mutual Fund*, ready with lines. The docking went smoothly, and she was soon warm and dry inside the trawler with Wallace at her side.

"We had a fuel leak," he told her. "The bilge was pumping all night long and when we woke up, there was a rainbow streaming off the stern of the boat."

A woman approached Kayla with a first aid kit.

"This is my mom," Wallace said.

Kayla just looked at her.

"I promise I won't hurt you," the woman said. She cupped Kayla's ankle gently in her hands and slowly turned it back and forth. "It's just a sprain." The woman filled a bag with ice and draped it over Kayla's swollen ankle. "You'll need to stay off of it."

Kayla nodded. "Thank you," she said.

Her father came into the main cabin, followed by Wallace's father and the captain of the trawler. "The Coast Guard will be here within the hour," he said. "They're going to tow you to the St. Thomas."

"How am I supposed to get to Puerto Rico?" Wallace's father asked.

"Someone will be able to repair the leak when you get to the

Virgin Islands. You can ride out the storm and continue from there.”

“I have a plane to catch in San Juan on Friday,” the man snapped.

Wallace looked at the floor.

“Well, it would be a little crowded, but I guess you could come on with us.”

“And leave my multi-million dollar yacht on some foreign island?”

Wallace’s mother interrupted. “We could go in with the boat, Richard, and fly out from there.”

“Our plane tickets are non-refundable,” he said through gritted teeth.

“Well, Wallace and his mom could still come with us, right Dad?”

Kayla asked.

“We don’t want to cause any problems,” the woman said.

“It really isn’t any trouble,” Jonathan assured her. He looked at Kayla’s ankle. “We’re a little short-handed.”

Max slid open the cabin door and stepped inside.

“What are the chances we can get it fixed today and be on our way again in the morning?” Richard asked.

“People move a little slower around here,” Jonathan said. “You’d

be hard pressed to find anyone to fix it that quickly.”

“I just checked the weather,” Max said. “It’s going to get a lot worse before it gets better. If you don’t go now, it’s going to be a week before it’s safe to leave again. Your plane might not even make it off the ground.”

Richard looked around the room, considering his options. He let out a long breath and looked at his wife. “Katherine, you and Wallace go on with Jonathan. I’m going to go in with the boat and fly out from here.” He pulled out his wallet and tossed a few credit cards at his wife. “This should cover your expenses.” He walked into his stateroom and closed the door.

“Thank you very much,” Wallace’s mother said. “We’ll just gather our things.” They walked quietly to their rooms.

Max picked Kayla up and carried her back to the *Zephyr*. Jonathan followed them.

“What a jerk,” Max said after he put Kayla down.

“I’m sure he’s just stressed out,” Jonathan said.

“Why do you always stick up for the bad guy?” Kayla asked.

Her father shook his head. “Let’s just get to Puerto Rico.”

six

Kayla and Wallace watched *Mutual Fund* being towed away through a window in the V-berth. Their parents looked up occasionally to check on them from the main cabin. Jonathan sat at the nav station and shuffled haphazardly through a stack of charts, trying to check their current position against their intended course. Wallace's mother was familiarizing herself with the rest of the boat

"I didn't know they could tow boats that big," Kayla said.

Wallace nodded and kept his gaze fixed out the window. "They could tow a cruise ship if they had a big enough boat."

"Really?" she asked.

Wallace continued. "I was in Norfolk once with my dad," he said. "I walked down to the Navel base while he was in a meeting and watched them tow a battleship into the dock."

Kayla closed her eyes trying to imagine a battleship under tow. "I'm sorry you had boat problems," she said and turned away from the window, leaning her back against the wall.

"Worse things could have happened."

Kayla raised her eyebrows.

"Besides, I've never been sailing before."

"Well, these aren't the best conditions for your first time," she said.

"I don't think I'll mind," Wallace mumbled. His eyes drifted quickly toward Kayla. He caught her wide-eyed glance, and they sat silently for just a moment before forcing their gazes elsewhere.

Kayla's father stuck his head through the doorway. "What are you guys up to?" he asked.

"Nothing," Wallace said.

Kayla shrugged. "Nothing at all," she added quickly.

"Why don't you guys come on out here. We need to come up with a game plan."

They scurried into the main cabin. Kayla began hopping on one foot, dragging her hand along the wall to steady herself as the boat rose

and fell through the waves, but Wallace's mother came to her aid. She helped her to a seat across the way from Wallace. Looking around the room and out the companionway, Kayla spotted Max at the helm.

"Do you think you'll still be able to drive?" her father asked.

"Probably, but I won't be able to get to the sails very quickly if they need to be adjusted."

"Maybe Wallace can help you," his mother suggested. "He's a quick learner."

Jonathan smiled at her. "I'm sure Kayla would appreciate the company."

"It gets pretty lonely up there when everyone is asleep," Kayla said. She smiled at Wallace.

"Kayla, you and Wallace need to rest up then," her father said. "Your shift is coming back up after I finish mine."

"I don't think I'm tired anymore," she said. "I'm getting pretty hungry."

"Are you coming back up here or not?" Max yelled from the cockpit.

"I guess that's my cue," Jonathan said. He nodded at Wallace's

mother. "Make yourself at home, Katherine."

"Please, call me Kathy," she said. "You too, Kayla."

Jonathan relieved his brother from his position at the helm. Max shook his head as he entered the main cabin.

"What's for breakfast, Max?" Kayla asked.

"Oh, no. I'm going to sleep. You're just going to have to feed yourself this morning." He took off his rain jacket and shook it out onto the floor, making a tiny puddle in front of the nav station.

"I can make breakfast," Kathy said.

"You don't have to," Kayla told her.

"No, I'd like to pull my own weight around here. What would you like?"

"Whatever we have, I guess." Kayla hobbled to the galley. She stuck her head in the ice chest and poked around. "We have eggs, and some milk. Here's a stick of butter." She pulled her head out of the chest and opened a few cabinets, continuing her inventory. "Bread...sugar...that's about all the breakfast stuff. Max usually scrambles some eggs. That's all he knows how to make for breakfast."

"I can make other things," he said from his quarter berth. "I just

like scrambled eggs.”

Kathy led Kayla out of the galley. “Why don’t you and Wallace have a seat? I’ll just surprise you.”

Kayla sat down at the kitchen table, followed by Wallace. He leaned his head back and closed his eyes.

“Are you tired?” she asked.

“This boat rocks a lot more than my Dad’s.”

“Only when it’s this stormy out.”

“Does it bother you?” he asked.

“No. When your house is always rocking, you just get used to it,” she said. “It feels as natural as my heartbeat.”

Wallace put his hand up to his chest. “I’ve never been on our boat for longer than two weeks. We always fly home when the weather gets rough.”

“Where is home?” Kayla asked.

“Ohio,” Wallace answered.

“How far is that from New Jersey?”

He thought for a moment. “Pretty far...about 500 miles.”

Kayla sighed. “That’s further than the entire width of Dominica.

Great, I only know one person in the United States, and he lives so far away that I'll never see him."

Wallace's mother looked up from what she was doing. "You know, Kayla, Richard travels a lot. He does business in New York every so often. Maybe Wallace can fly up there with him sometime."

"Really?" Kayla asked.

Kathy smiled at her. "I don't see why not." She cracked two eggs into a small bowl and went after them with a fork. "Breakfast will be ready in a few minutes."

Kayla watched her take a stack of bread out of its bag. One by one, she dredged the slices through the egg mixture and placed them in the heated skillet on the stove. The smell of warm bread, milk, egg, and butter exploded into the air. Kayla took a deep breath, her mouth watering. "That smells so good," she said.

"Do you like French toast?" Wallace asked.

Kayla reached for her shell necklace and spun it slowly around her neck. "I love it," she said. "Sasha's mom used to make it for me."

"How about Max?" Wallace asked. "Did he ever make it for you?"

"I don't think he knows how," Kayla whispered.

"I heard that," Max grumbled from his bed.

Wallace and Kayla laughed. Kathy put the breakfast on plates and brought them to the table.

Kayla took one last smell before digging into the golden toast stacked before her. "It's very good," she said with her mouth full and crammed in another bite. She looked at Wallace. His eyes were barely open.

"I don't think I'm hungry." He groaned and held his stomach.

"Go up top," Max said. "Keep your eye on the horizon."

Wallace stood up, but was knocked back into his seat when a wave hit the side of the boat. He gripped the table and tried again, keeping his knees bent and his other arms reaching straight in front of him. As the boat rose and fell in the waves, he tottered forward, finally taking hold of the railing beside the companionway.

"So you're not going to eat this?" Kayla asked, reaching for his plate as he climbed into the cockpit.

Wallace shook his head.

"Do you think he'll be alright?" Wallace's mother asked.

"I hope so," Kayla said, taking another bite of her breakfast. "But it's getting pretty rough out there."

"How long do you think it will take us to get to San Juan?"

"Well, the wind is at our back...that's a good thing. It means we won't have to fight it. Probably only another two days, assuming all goes according to plan."

"What could go wrong?" she asked.

Kayla shrugged. "Nothing, I hope." She pushed Wallace's plate away from her, getting full, and looked out the window. The rain was still coming down. "Thank you for breakfast," she said and excused herself.

Kathy smiled and took the plates to the sink. Kayla grabbed a slicker and made her way up to her father and Wallace. She was surprised to find her friend at the helm.

"Well, how does he look?" her father asked, motioning to Wallace.

"He looks just fine." Kayla blushed and pulled up the hood on her jacket, pretending to shiver. "There's breakfast downstairs," she told her father.

"That sounds good," he said. "Do you think you two can handle this for awhile?"

"I think we'll be alright, Mr...Um." Wallace paused, trying to recall Kayla's last name.

"Hyatt," Kayla said.

"Jonathan will do just fine," her father said and went to find his breakfast.

Kayla sat down by Wallace. She examined her bare ankles, comparing one against the other. "I think the swelling has gone down she said,"

"Good," Wallace answered, not knowing what else to say. He stared at the compass, trying to keep the boat on course. The wind whistled through the rigging making lengthy conversation difficult.

"Do you feel better?" Kayla asked.

"A lot, thanks," he said and pulled himself into the captain's chair.

Kayla wrapped her jacket tightly around her and leaned back against the damp seat. "Do you need anything?" she asked.

"Nothing that I can think of."

Below deck, they could barely hear their parents' conversation. Wallace's mother clanged around in the kitchen, and Jonathan went for the radio. He switched it on. The monotonous voice of the weather station

rose from below, not quite silenced by the wind and rain.

"Areas of low pressure will continue to develop across the Lesser Antilles," it hummed. "Heavy rains and high winds are expected throughout the region."

"I guess it's not going to let up anytime soon, is it?" Wallace asked.

"I think this is just the beginning."

seven

All around the *Zephyr* the water continued to churn, sending wave after wave crashing over the bow of the boat. The small waves puddled briefly on the deck before sliding back into the ocean, but the larger ones rushed toward the stern and washed into the cockpit.

"I'm soaked," Wallace said as a particularly large wave crashed over the side and pooled at his feet. He lifted his legs, one at a time, and shook as much water as possible from his shoes. "My toes haven't been dry for hours."

Kayla grinned. "That's why I don't wear shoes," she said and looked beyond the lifelines. It was late afternoon, hours before the sun would be completely set. Still, the strong winds drove the rain harder than ever, and Kayla could barely see the bow of the boat. The breaking waves were quickly growing into rolling swells that thrust the *Zephyr* mercilessly

from crest to trough.

Wallace gripped his stomach with one arm, trying to steer down the waves with the other. "Maybe you should drive for awhile," he said.

Kayla took the wheel from her friend. She remembered Max's advice. "Keep your eyes on the horizon," she suggested.

Wallace groaned. He looked around, helplessly searching through the rain for something that even remotely resembled a horizon. "What horizon?" he asked and took a seat beside Kayla. "How much longer until our shift is up?"

"We're about done," she said and looked wonderingly at the canvas awning covering the cockpit. The canopy's webbed straps hummed in the wind, but Kayla was quickly becoming aware of another sound—an incessant tapping at the canvas above her. "What's that?" she asked.

Wallace looked at her. "What's what?"

She pointed upward, indicating the awning. "What's that tapping noise?"

Wallace stood and turned one ear up. He touched the awning before sticking his head and hands out from under its protective cover.

“Ouch!” he yelled.

“What’s wrong?” Kayla asked.

“It’s hailing,” he answered, “and it’s sharp.”

“But these are the tropics,” she argued.

“Hail can form anywhere, Kayla.”

She gave him a blank stare. *Here he goes again*, she thought.

“You see, sometimes raindrops get caught in the updrafts of a storm...”

“Updrafts?” she interrupted.

“They’re winds that push the rain up instead of down, and sometimes the winds are so strong that they push the drops into the very upper levels of the storm, which can be freezing.”

Kayla nodded.

“It happens over and over again until the hailstones are too heavy to be held by the winds. Then they fall.”

“Why don’t they melt?” Kayla asked.

“They fall too fast,” Wallace continued. “They aren’t exposed to the warm air long enough to melt. At least not until they hit the ground.”

“You sure know a lot of stuff,” Kayla told him, and locked off the

wheel. She thrust her head into the weather. The small, jagged beads of ice stung her face, and she quickly pulled back under the cover, content to simply watch the frozen crystals dancing on the deck. "Is this what snow is like?" she asked.

Wallace laughed. "Snow doesn't hurt."

The bits of ice bounced from the deck into the cockpit, where they melted into tiny, fresh-water ponds before being washed away by the waves. Some bounced all the way across the cockpit before settling. Others bounced nearly straight up. At the wheel, Kayla's eyes darted from the compass, to the hailstones, and back to Wallace who was batting at the ice crystals as they jumped toward him.

"This isn't bad for the boat is it?" he asked.

Kayla picked up one of the fallen pieces and rubbed it between her thumb and forefinger. The rough edges poked at her skin, but the longer she rubbed the stone, the smoother it became until only dampness remained on her fingers. "They're so small," she said. "They probably won't even scratch the deck." She looked at Wallace, who was still playing hailstone baseball.

"Batting practice," he said and called out "Strike one," in a deep

voice when he missed his first stone.

Kayla giggled, and Wallace stopped his game. He looked up, drawn to her laughter. His mouth drew into a wide grin that quickly vanished as a hailstone came flying at his face. He reached up to bat it away, but missed. The jagged piece of ice struck him just below his right eyelid. Wallace winced. "Ouch," he said and put his fingers up to his eye to wipe away the tiny stone clinging to his bottom lashes. Kayla grimaced when she saw him wipe at his eye. The stone finally came loose, but pulled at his fair skin. A trickle of blood ran down his cheek. It looked like a red tear. Wallace wiped his eye again, smearing the patch of red across his face.

"Here," Kayla said, and without thinking, she reached beneath her raincoat. She pulled out the piece of silk that was still tucked in the pocket of her dress and pressed it to his cheek. Wallace put his hand over Kayla's and held it to his face.

"Is everything alright up here?" Max asked.

Kayla blushed, surprised to hear her uncle's voice. She hadn't seen him stick his head through the companionway. Wallace loosened his grip on her hand as she pulled away from his face.

"Wallace has a cut," she said.

Max climbed into the cockpit and took the helm from his niece.

"Go get dry," he told them.

Kayla passed her father as she climbed into the cabin. He'd dressed in a yellow slicker and a pair of yellow rain pants that squeaked against each other when he walked. "Stay close in case we need you," he said.

"Dad, it's getting really rough out there. Are you sure we shouldn't stop?"

"There's no reason to stop now," he said. "We're making great time."

"Almost twelve knots," Wallace said, checking their speed at the navigation desk.

Jonathan nodded. "Besides, I don't think we could see to dock until it lets up a little."

"When will that be?" Wallace asked.

"If you find out, let me know." Kayla's father climbed out of the cabin and half disappeared into the foggy mist that consumed the cockpit.

Kayla looked around her. The door to the V-berth was closed.

"Your mom must be sleeping," she said.

"Good. She doesn't get much sleep."

"Why not?" Kayla asked.

"Dad yells a lot," Wallace said, and quickly added, "but mostly at people on the phone. He says that's how business gets done."

Kayla nodded. "My mom's always asleep when my dad and I are around," she said. "She only wakes up when she has to."

Wallace slowly pulled the cloth away from his face. His cheek was a mess. Kayla took his free hand and led him to a seat at the table. She made her way around the cabin gathering first aid supplies and removed a plastic box from a cabinet set into the stairs. She laid it on the table and then took a paper towel from the galley and ran it under cool water. At the table, she took a seat beside Wallace and dabbed gently at his cheek, washing the red stain away from his pale, freckled skin. "It's not so bad," she told him. "Just a tiny cut."

Wallace spread the stained piece of silk out on the table before him. "I hope this wasn't important," he said, and traced around the painting with his finger.

Kayla shrugged. "I have lots of them; it's not that big of a deal."

"But it's beautiful," Wallace argued. "At least, it was beautiful."

"I have a dozen others," she said. "I've gotten one every year for my birthday. They're all in a drawer in my room."

"Can I see them?" he asked.

"Your mom's asleep in there."

"She won't wake up," he said.

Kayla tiptoed to the door of the V-berth and slowly pushed it open. Once inside, she pulled open her top drawer and reached inside for the stack of paintings, newly topped with the gift Wallace had given her two nights before. Wallace's mom shifted quietly in her sleep, drawing her arms toward her face. Kayla looked at her hands, clean and unstained. *They look so soft*, she thought, resisting the urge to reach out and touch them. Instead, she turned to leave and quickly pulled the door behind her.

"Here they are," she told Wallace and placed the stack of silk in front of him. Kayla cleaned up the first aid supplies while he rummaged through the paintings.

"These are really good," he said.

"What's a five year old supposed to do with a silk painting?" she snapped. "What's a twelve year old supposed to do with a silk painting,

for that matter?"

"I don't know," he whispered, shaking his head.

"Well I don't either." Kayla replaced the first aid kit and threw away Wallace's paper towel. "Are you hungry?" she asked, eager to take her mind off of the paintings. But Wallace hadn't heard her. He was examining Kayla's mother's signature.

"Why isn't there an 'H' in her initials?" he asked.

"Huh?"

"You know, an 'H', for Hyatt."

"She signs with her maiden name," Kayla explained. "She always has."

"Oh." Wallace pulled the painting he'd bought to the side, comparing it to those of Kayla's mother. "They sign the same way," he said.

"Most silk artists sign their work right there."

"Do they all sign with the same flower?" he asked.

"No," Kayla said.

"How about the same initials?"

"Of course not." Kayla sat back down at the table. Wallace

pushed two paintings toward her. One was the bloodstained piece of silk, a parrot painted in brilliant colors down the middle. The other was the piece from the old woman's shop. Kayla examined the two signatures. They were nearly identical, with crimson petals flowering from the top of the artists' initials.

"C.J.R.," Wallace said, pointing to both paintings.

"This must have been one of my mother's pieces," Kayla said. "I wonder why that woman had it."

"You said your mom learned to paint in Guadeloupe. Maybe it was one of her first paintings."

Kayla pulled out the painting her mother had given her on her first birthday. It was a painting of a tiny bassinet—the most meaningful of the twelve paintings. Kayla had always felt her mother painted it just for her. The colors, once vivid, were now faded into pale, muted tones, nothing like the painting she had just received from the old woman.

"This one doesn't seem that old," she told Wallace, indicating the newest piece of her collection.

"Look," he said and pointed to the gift from the old woman. Kayla looked at the signature where Wallace's finger sat. Barely noticeable, at

the base of the 'R', there was an extra loop. They rummaged through the rest of the paintings, searching for the minute loop on at least one of them, but they came up empty handed.

"It must not be my mom's then," Kayla said.

"Then why do they have the same initials?" Wallace asked.

"Coincidence?" Kayla guessed and shrugged.

"Or maybe they have the same name," Wallace suggested.

"Which would be a coincidence, if I'm not mistaken." Kayla looked at the old woman's painting, trying to remember the conversation they'd had in the shop. "You know, she said something to me when we met that I thought was really weird."

Wallace leaned closer to Kayla, not wanting to miss a word.

"What did she say?" he asked.

"She called me Ciel."

"So?" Wallace said.

Kayla pointed to the 'C' in the two signatures.

"Your mom's name?" he asked.

Kayla nodded. "Then she said I looked like her daughter."

Wallace looked at Kayla for a moment, trying to arrange the facts

in his head. "Didn't you want to go back there with your dad?" he asked.

"Yeah, but he told me we didn't have enough time. No wonder he didn't want to go in the store. He knew what was inside."

"Why didn't he tell you?" Wallace asked.

"I don't know," Kayla said, feeling a little hurt that her father was keeping secrets from her. "He did everything he could to keep me out of there. He took me to a cemetery instead."

Wallace took her hands in his.

"Why would he keep this from me?" Kayla asked.

Wallace shrugged. "Maybe you should ask him."

Kayla sat silently, searching her thoughts for answers. Maybe she had things all wrong. She pulled one hand away from Wallace and reached habitually to her neck. She ran her fingers along the shell necklace wishing Sasha was there.

In their silence, Kayla and Wallace could hear the pounding of hailstones against the deck of the boat.

"I think they've gotten bigger," Wallace said.

Kayla agreed. She could tell the waves had gotten bigger too. The dishes slid back and forth in the cabinets as the *Zephyr* descended each

wave. A cool breeze crept in through the companionway. Kayla shivered.

"It's really blowing out there," she said.

Wallace tightened his grip on her hand, and Kayla looked into his eyes. They were moist. His cheeks looked almost as clammy as his hands felt.

"You look awful," she said.

"I don't feel so great," he responded, sliding out from the table.

Kayla cleared the way to the cockpit, standing aside so Wallace would have an open path. He scrambled into the open air, heading straight for the transom.

"I'll just give him a minute," Kayla said out loud to herself. Standing beside the nav station, she looked at the picture of her family. It had been returned to its proper spot on the shelf. It was a good picture. They'd all been smiling. Kayla couldn't remember the last time they had all been smiling at once. Perhaps it had been during that photograph. They'd just returned from a walk along the beach. She remembered they'd seen a school of flying fish jumping near the sea cliffs. There had been hundreds of them, and her father had pretended that he was going to swim out and catch them all bare handed.

"We'll never go hungry," he'd shouted, raising Kayla high above his shoulders so she could get a better view. Then, he'd put her down, and she and her mother laughed wildly as her father splashed in the surf, pretending to catch fish after fish.

When they'd returned to the *Zephyr*, her father set up the camera, eager to capture the memory on film. Kayla's hair hung in tangles past her shoulders; the hem of her dress was wet with seawater. Her father's pants were soaked up to his knees, but he'd smiled nonetheless. Her mother, as always, looked immaculate, like she'd just changed into fresh clothes and brushed her hair.

Standing before the picture, Kayla gritted her teeth. She boiled with undirected anger, not knowing whom to hate. She settled upon hating everyone and everything, but those feelings were soon consumed by fear. Outside, she heard a distant ripping sound.

The sails, she thought and began to head toward the cockpit, but was forced backward as the *Zephyr* was knocked to its side. Kayla fell into the seat behind the navigation desk. She reached for various items as they went sailing by her, but missed the photograph of her family. Just beyond her reach, it toppled from the shelf. The frame's protective glass

plate shattered, sending tiny shards bursting across the desk. Kayla heard the engine turn over.

“All hands on deck!” her father yelled from the cockpit.

Kathy emerged from the V-berth, clinging to the walls. “What happened?” she asked.

Kayla held tightly to the edge of the desk. “Dad needs us up top,” she said.

eight

Before leaving the cabin, Kayla scavenged the room for lifejackets. She'd come too close to being flung overboard before to face the storm without one strapped securely around her neck. She finally found them stowed in the corridor that led to the captain's quarters. Making her way through the passage was more difficult than she'd expected. The boat was heeled so far onto its side that Kayla could almost walk on the walls. The waterline, now above the portholes on the leeward side of the boat, forced a thin stream of water through the seal around the glass panes, slowly soaking the walls and the floor.

Kayla made her way to the cockpit, life jackets in hand, barely aware that she'd been holding her breath since she'd spoken to Wallace's mom. Her chest ached as she gasped for air. "Here," she said, once on deck, unzipping the vinyl case that enclosed the life jackets.

“Good thinking,” Uncle Max yelled over the noise of the storm.

Kayla looked up, first at Max, who was fighting the wheel, then at the growing wall of water amassing behind the boat. The wave swelled to nearly fifteen feet. Kayla stopped what she was doing and stared. It swept beneath them, and they rode it up before sliding down the backside.

“Where’s dad?” she screamed.

Max pointed forward. Midship, her father clung to the mast, yanking unsuccessfully at the mainsail. It was ripped nearly in two. The hole, extending from the luff to the leech three quarters of the way up the sail, looked like the outline of two giant lips, whistling huge gusts of air between them. All around the tear, other small holes dotted the sailcloth.

“What happened?” she asked her uncle.

“The hailstones,” Max yelled back. “They punctured the sail.”

Kayla pulled the orange, horseshoe-shaped life preserver over her head and strapped it around her neck and waist. Wallace followed her lead, as did Kathy.

“What do we do?” Wallace asked her.

“We have to get that sail down,” Kayla told him. She turned back to her uncle. “Shouldn’t you take it into the wind?”

Max shook his head violently from side to side. "No!" he yelled. "She'll broach."

Kayla felt helpless, angry and afraid. "I told him we should pull into shelter," she screamed and pointed to her father. "None of this would have happened if we'd just stayed at home."

"Pointing fingers isn't going to get that sail down," Max said. He reached into a pocket attached to the steering column and pulled out a winch handle. "Take this to your father."

Kayla grabbed it from his hands quickly so he could take better hold of the wheel. She turned and headed to the mast, clinging to anything she could get her hands on. Max handed Wallace a bundle of webbed sail ties, which he tied securely around his waist.

"I'm coming too," Wallace said, following Kayla.

"What can I do?" Kathy asked Max.

"Keep your eye on the kids," he told her. "No matter what, don't take your eye off the kids."

Kayla and Wallace crawled across the deck, keeping as low as possible. They could feel the hailstones beating against their backs. Jonathan tried to wave them away, back to the safety of the cockpit and its

thin, canvas awning, but Kayla refused to turn around. She and Wallace tucked their chins into their chests to shelter their faces from the pelting rain and hail that drove against them and continued their slow crawl toward the mast.

When they were close enough, Kayla's father picked her up by the back of her life jacket. "I told you to go back," he said.

Kayla handed him the winch handle. "I brought you this."

Her father shook his head and pointed to the main halyard. It was as old as the *Zephyr* itself and severed in two. "It snapped," he said.

Kayla stared up the mast, looking back and forth from the dangling halyard to the shredded sail. The pressure of the high winds held the giant piece of cloth firmly in place. Kayla knew it was going to be nearly impossible to bring it down, but there was no other alternative. They would never be able to round up and head for shelter, much less dock, if the sail stayed up.

"How did it rip?" Wallace yelled over the wind. He made his way shakily to his feet.

Kayla's father began to explain, but his words were lost in the squall, and he quickly gave up, realizing there were more important things

to do than chitchat.

"Tiny holes from the hailstones," Kayla quickly shouted.

Wallace nodded.

"How do we get it down?" Kayla asked her dad.

"Pull!" he yelled.

They worked to lower the sail with their hands, but the giant piece of cloth fought against them the entire way down the track. Kayla wondered what they were going to do with it once they got it down and hoped her father had thought ahead.

At first, they tugged at random, doing very little good, but they soon fell into rhythm with one another, resting and pulling at the same time.

"One, two, three, pull!" they cried out.

The sail began to lower bit by bit, and the struggling sailors became unaware, for just a moment, that their ragged vessel could be neither seen nor heard by anyone.

"One, two, three, pull!" they cried out again and again.

The sail was halfway down now. They took their breaths in unison, feeling that it would somehow make them stronger.

“One, two, three, pull!”

They laughed at the giant walls of water thrust at them by the sea, feeling as strong as the wind itself, fueled by the rain and hail.

“One, two, three, pull!”

There were only a few feet of sail left. They could see the end of this dilemma, forgetting there were a thousand more to face as soon as this one was over.

“One, two, three, pull!”

Finally, the head of the sail came free. They struggled to bunch it up against the boom, which Kathy was trimming in from the cockpit. Kayla and her father wrapped their arms around the sail and boom, hugging it tightly as if it were a loved one they hadn't seen for years. Kayla was relieved that she no longer had to compete with the sound of the whipping sail.

“Why did you lie to me?” Kayla asked her father.

“What?” He looked baffled.

Kayla wasn't sure if he hadn't heard her or if he just didn't understand. “Why didn't you tell me that old woman in the silk shop was my grandmother?”

Kayla's father closed his eyes, not knowing how to answer his daughter. "We'll talk about this later," he said.

Wallace let go of the boom and steadied himself to untie the sail lashings from his waist.

"I want to know now," Kayla demanded.

Her father sighed. "Right now you just have to trust me."

"I trusted you before," she said. "I've always trusted you, but you kept things from me."

Wallace reached out to give them each one of the webbed straps.

"Kayla," her father began, but she turned away from him and took the piece of webbing from Wallace. Her father did the same.

Wallace wrapped one of the straps around the sail, not knowing exactly how to tie it. Before he pulled it tight, a gust caught in the folds and whipped a segment of the sail loose from his grasp. He reached for the piece, extending one arm all the way over his head. His fingertips brushed the edge of the sail, and he made a second attempt to take hold of it.

Kayla tied off her lashing and turned to Wallace for another one.

Both of his arms flew through the air now, trying to tame the piece of

sailcloth. He went up on his tiptoes to catch it, but his feet slid out from under him on the wet deck. He reached out for Kayla, frantic to grasp hold and steady himself. His hand caught her wrist, but not in time to pull himself back onto his feet. Instead, he continued sliding toward the leeward rail, pulling Kayla quickly behind him.

Kayla's father watched them fall toward the rail and slip through the lifelines. He reached for his daughter, but she'd already slipped beyond safety. Kayla gripped the lifeline by the fingertips of one hand. Wallace clung tightly to her free hand, his feet and legs dangled in the water, pulling them further and further toward the churning sea. He choked on mouthfuls of seawater.

The weight of the teenaged boy was too much for Kayla to pull back into the boat. "Help!" she screamed to her father.

Jonathan lowered himself toward his daughter as quickly as he could without slipping and reached out to pull her back up to the high side of the boat. The tips of her fingers and knuckles were white where she barely held on to the flimsy line, sheathed in plastic coating.

Wallace looked up at her strained face, knowing he was pulling them both in. "I can't hold on," he lied, but Kayla twisted her dangling

arm around within his grasp and latched onto his forearm. "Let me go," he told her, but Kayla would do nothing of the sort.

"Hang on," Kathy yelled to her son from the cockpit.

Kayla held tight, but edged toward the ocean as the lifeline slowly ran through her fingers. Her father reached for her wrist, but she slipped through his damp hands and hit the water gasping for breath. She plunged into the sea, her head pulled down in the undertow, but she still clung to Wallace. They churned in the wake of the boat for what seemed like hours, finally resurfacing, very aware that the sky was now pitch black and the *Zephyr* was gone.

Wallace choked on a throatful of salt water, and Kayla encouraged him to cough it up until her neck began to burn and sting. With her free hand, she felt for her prized necklace, but it was gone too. All that remained were small scratches that had been dug into her neck as she hit the surface of the ocean.

"Help!" she yelled out into the night, and looked all around her. The waves caged them in, and Kayla could see neither beyond the swell in front of them nor the swell behind them. "They'll come back," she said, though more to herself than to Wallace. "They have to come back."

Wallace nodded. "I don't think I like sailing very much," he finally said and pulled Kayla toward him. He refused to allow his last resource to float away into the storm.

"What do we do now?" she asked.

Wallace looked around. "I don't know, be thankful that these waves aren't breaking," he said.

Kayla untied one of the sail lashings from his waist.

"What are you doing?" he asked her.

She tied it from his lifejacket to hers. "So you can't leave me too," she said and rested her head on his shoulder. "They *are* coming back, aren't they?" she asked one last time.

"I don't know," Wallace said. "Do you trust your dad?"

"I trust him," Kayla said.

Wallace gave a weak smile. "Then he's coming back."

*

"How long have we been drifting?" Kayla asked Wallace. She shivered and clung to her friend.

"Almost an hour," he said.

"They must be getting close by now," Kayla assured herself. She

listened, hopeful to hear the deep grumbling of the *Zephyr's* engine. Luckily, the hail had stopped soon after they hit the water, but the rain and wind continued to drown out any sound other than the storm or their frightened voices. Kayla knew they were being washed far away from the spot where they'd originally landed and continued to lose hope with every passing wave. It was all they could do to keep their mouths closed to the rushing water of the sea and their minds off the possible fate that lay ahead.

Wallace looked at Kayla's sad eyes. "Do you want to hear a joke?" he asked her, careening his neck and kicking his feet to push his head as far as possible above the surface.

Surprised by his question, Kayla just nodded her head.

Wallace kicked again, preparing for his joke. "Where do dogs sleep when they go camping?" he asked.

Kayla kept her mouth clamped shut and shrugged her shoulders.

"In pup tents," he said.

She gave a weak laugh, wishing for maybe the first time that she was on land and wondering if she would ever see America. She thought of Sasha, waving goodbye from the dock. She'd never thought it would

be the last time that he would wave goodbye to her. Kayla tried to push the thought from her head and rubbed her bare neck.

“What do you get when you cross an elephant with a rhino?” she asked Wallace. It had been Sasha’s favorite joke. He told it every time Kayla was upset. She didn’t really think it was funny, but she couldn’t help smiling when Sasha broke into a chortle, shaking with laughter.

“Eleph-I-Know!” he yelled.

“You’ve already heard it,” Kayla said. She and Wallace chuckled, trying to remember other jokes they’d heard.

“What would America be if everyone drove a pink car?” he asked.

“What?”

“A pink carnation.”

Kayla wrinkled her nose.

“Oh, come on,” Wallace said, sticking up for his joke.

It became a contest to see who could tell the best joke, the worst joke, the joke that made the least sense. When they ran out, they made up new ones, not caring whether they were funny or not. It was simply something to do. They rode up and down the waves, telling jokes and trying to keep their faces turned away from the swift winds that whipped

rain and salt water horizontally across the surface of the ocean.

“How many monkeys does it take to screw in a light bulb?” Wallace asked.

But Kayla stared over his shoulder. Reaching high above the next swell, was a light. It stood, red and green, on top of a tall, slender pole.

“The *Neptune*,” Kayla whispered, recognizing the type of rigging.

“That doesn’t make any sense,” Wallace told her.

“No, look.” Kayla pointed to the towering beacon, and Wallace turned to look. The ship soared triumphantly over the top of the wave. From the pilothouse, a great beam of light skimmed across the water.

“Over here,” they yelled.

nine

The vessel maneuvered through the waves, its rigging extended on each side like a pair of wings. The fishing boat idled about twenty feet from Kayla and Wallace, bobbing up and down in the restless waters. They held the blinding light firmly on the stranded swimmers and yelled, beckoning them toward safety. Someone threw them a rope, and Wallace grabbed it first. The stiff line burned his waterlogged hands, but he held tight, not caring about the pain and dragged Kayla toward the boat. Half a dozen weather-beaten arms plucked them from the water and didn't let go until they were shut securely indoors.

The warm air of the cabin enveloped Kayla and melted away her terror. She sat on the floor, her legs unable to support her weight.

"You kids are lucky," a strange voice said.

Kayla blinked the salt water from her burning eyes and looked up

Wallace wrapped his arms around Kayla, but kept his gaze fixed on the horizon. "Land," he said, squinting hard at an island that seemed to be growing out of the ocean.

"That's Tortola," Captain Hughes said.

"It's beautiful." Kayla felt like an explorer discovering a new world. A wide grin stretched across her face. "I can't believe we made it."

"That's Mt. Sage," the Captain told them, indicating the giant mound of green earth that stretched toward the sky. "It's the highest point in the British Virgin Islands."

Kayla wished she was standing on top of the mountain, looking down at the water. "So, where are we actually stopping?" she asked.

"Soper's Hole," Captain Hughes said. "It's over there, at the western end of the island."

As they approached, Kayla spotted the anchorage. She strained her eyes, trying to see the tiny buildings lining the waterfront. "Can I go up on the bow?" she asked the captain.

"Just don't fall in," he joked.

Kayla smiled and led Wallace down the stairs and out onto the

at the man standing before her. His shoulders were broad and his cheeks tinged with pink.

“Here are some blankets,” the man said and sat a stack of woolen sheets between the exhausted stowaways.

Kayla pulled off her slicker and dress, eager to remove her soaked clothes. Wearing only her bathing suit beneath, she wrapped blanket upon blanket around her body, trying to get warm. Wallace did the same. Kayla pulled the soft wool up around her head. It smelled musty from years of being stowed on a boat. She loved that smell and took another breath, burying it within her chest. Wallace curled up under a pile of blankets and closed his eyes.

“What’s your name?” the fisherman asked.

“Kayla, and this is Wallace,” she said, indicating her sleeping friend.

“Kayla, I’m Captain Willie Hughes.” The man spoke in an accent that reminded her of her father’s, and she wondered what an American fisherman was doing in the middle of the Caribbean Sea. “We’re going to get you back to your dad as soon as possible,” he said.

“Where is he?” Kayla yawned.

"They're probably in Tortola by now. We're going to meet them there."

"Does he know we're safe?"

"We've been in contact since shortly after you guys fell overboard," Captain Hughes said. "He knows you're all right."

"Why didn't he come back for us?"

"He tried, but the boat wouldn't come about in the wind and the waves."

Kayla nodded, disappointed. She'd always felt her father could do anything.

"He would have died trying if we hadn't made contact," the captain said.

Kayla shivered, and the captain pulled off his sweater to hand to her. "Why don't you rest," he said. "We'll be there in the morning."

Kayla laid her head against Wallace's arm and closed her eyes. She couldn't have stayed awake if she'd wanted to.

*

Kayla sat up, a little achy from napping on the hard, wooden floor of the fishing boat. Soft, morning light had begun to peek through the

windows. The cabin was empty except for Wallace, but she could hear Captain Hughes and his men talking in the pilothouse. The walls were cluttered with aged photographs of the captain and his crew. She remembered the walls of the *Neptune*, which held the same kind of memories—newspaper articles about a record catch, photos of piles of fish stacked as high as the tallest crew member, a framed copy of the captain's license. They were all there, a feeble attempt to make the fishermen feel at home. Kayla roamed the room, studying the memories. She stopped to stare at a calendar hanging beside the stairs that led to the pilothouse. It read *July, 1978*.

"They must have liked the picture," Kayla thought and examined the old calendar. The July photo was snapped as a rainstorm spread across an island beach. The moment was frozen in time, so that it was raining on one half of the beach and perfectly sunny on the other. The caption read: *Trouble in paradise*.

The captain's sweater hung to Kayla's knees, but she wrapped a blanket around her anyway before walking up the stairs to find Captain Hughes.

"The rain has let up a lot," she said, peering through the salt-

smearing glass.

Captain Hughes and two of his men turned around.

"The storm is headed back toward the Atlantic," the shortest crewmember said.

Captain Hughes motioned for Kayla to come all the way into the pilothouse. "The seas are still rough," he said.

Kayla looked around at all the instruments. They shone like brand new. It was hard to believe the boat had been around since the seventies. She looked at a brass placard that hung on the wall. "Sea Angel," she read aloud.

"That's her name," the captain said and patted the instrument panel.

"Why are you so far from home, Captain Hughes?" Kayla asked him.

"I go where the work is," he told her and placed his hand on her shoulder.

The salt stains looked like frost on the boat's windshield, but the clearing skies let Kayla know the air would soon be warm and dry again. She was thankful to see a handful of holes bursting through the clouds,

allowing a few dangling rays of early morning light to peek through.

“I wonder why the storm changed paths,” Kayla mused.

Captain Hughes smiled at her. “They have a tendency to do that when they hit land,” he said.

“What did it hit?” she asked.

“Oh, a handful of islands...Trinidad and Tobago, and a few others. I think Dominica took the worst of it though.”

“That’s where I’m from,” Kayla said.

Captain Hughes gave her shoulder a squeeze. “Don’t worry, they’ve seen much worse. If you could survive just floating in the water, imagine how safe they were in the cover of their own homes.”

Captain Hughes was right, Dominica had seen much worse. The storm was a mere depression compared to the hurricane they’d had a few years back. Still, Kayla was thankful she hadn’t had to endure the storm crouched in a cellar or backroom of someone’s house. People lost their homes all the time to high winds and thunderstorms. She was glad she wouldn’t have to see Dominica rebuild itself again. Kayla sighed and hoped everyone was safe. She remembered seeing the fishing fleet heading out to sea when the *Zephyr* departed a few days earlier and felt an

odd sense of guilt and relief, knowing her father was safe in Tortola. Her mother had probably taken shelter at the store or with Sasha's family.

"How did you know where to find us?" Kayla asked the captain.

"Well, I knew where you'd gone overboard. With the winds and the currents like they are, there's only one place you could be."

Kayla took a step back. She knew how impossible it would have been to pinpoint two lost sailors adrift in a horrible storm. She'd lost a hat once while sailing with her father. They tried to go back for it, but it never turned up, and that was on a perfectly sunny day.

Captain Hughes winked at her.

Wallace emerged from the doorway, staring over their shoulders at the fresh morning light that draped across the instrument panel. "Where are we?" he asked.

Kayla was relieved to see that Wallace was awake. She took his hand and pulled him toward the front of the pilothouse. "Look," she said and pointed at the sky. There were no stars to be seen through the breaking clouds. They'd already been swallowed by the light of early day, but Kayla made a wish anyway, knowing they were up there somewhere.

"I hope I get to keep my feet on the ground for awhile."

deck. They edged their way along the side of the boat, taking special care not to lose their footing. The wet deck glistened with water droplets that captured the soft blues and yellows of the morning sky. Kayla felt as if she was walking through a scattered pile of semi-precious stones.

Wallace pointed to a cove that was surrounded by brightly colored buildings. The shops and restaurants huddled alongside the seawall, leaving only enough room between their doorways and the water for a small boardwalk. "That must be the inlet," he said.

Long docks jutted out from the seawall, housing yacht after yacht. A dozen other boats dotted the harbor, their sleek, white hulls reflecting the crystalline waters of the anchorage.

"I've never seen anything like this," Kayla said, searching for the *Zephyr*. She couldn't wait to be reunited with her father and uncle. It felt like they'd been missing for much longer than one night. On the bow of the *Sea Angel*, she gripped the metal railing and danced with excitement. "Can you believe all the colors?"

The buildings were home to teal doors and flamingo-pink shutters, coral columns, and yellow and blue exteriors. The rainbow-painted town looked so bright nestled against the deep greens of the low-elevation

mountain range. Kayla blinked at all the colors. "I bet that one's a restaurant," she said, noticing the umbrella-covered tables situated in tidy rows on an elevated porch outside its front door.

"Do you think your dad is at the dock or a mooring?" Wallace asked.

"I don't know. I haven't spotted him yet."

The *Sea Angel's* waterline sank low in the ocean as Captain Hughes throttled down, drawing closer to Soper's Hole.

"It looks like a postcard," Wallace said.

"Postcard?" Kayla asked.

"Yeah, pretty pictures you send through the mail."

Kayla had never received a postcard, but then again, she didn't have a mailbox. Occasionally, her father's parents would send her a letter by way of Sasha's house, but she'd never known anyone that lived far enough away to write to. Maybe she would send Sasha a postcard once she got to America. Maybe she would send one to her mother.

The crew of the *Sea Angel* busied themselves with tying off the boat as they pulled up to the end of one of the piers in Soper's Hole. The wooden dock was well kept and looked as if it had just been laid yesterday. In fact, Kayla couldn't find one sour thing to say about the harbor. Only one boat, tied just a little further down the dock, appeared out of place in the immaculate port town. Fragments of a blue canvas awning hung in shreds around the cockpit, and its teak decks were dented in spots. They looked as if they'd been beaten with a baseball bat. The boat seemed so sad amidst the shiny white hulls surrounding it. Kayla couldn't believe her eyes.

"Is that the *Zephyr*?" Wallace asked her.

Kayla didn't answer.

Jonathan emerged from the cabin, carrying a bucket full of soapy

water in one hand, a new yellow sponge in the other. Kayla shuffled past Wallace and climbed down from the *Sea Angel*. She ran to her father, who looked up from his cleaning supplies at the sound of her footsteps. They were light and graceful, even on the hard, wooden dock. Kayla met her father halfway.

“Daddy,” she cried, half in relief at seeing him, half in dismay at the sight of the mangled boat.

Jonathan picked his daughter up and held her close. Kayla’s feet almost brushed the ground and she felt as if she had grown, even in the past few hours. Or maybe, her father just hadn’t held her like this for a while.

“I’m so sorry,” he whispered.

Wallace helped Captain Hughes and his men finish tying off the boat before joining Kayla and her father on the dock. It was still early and an intense quiet hung like sadness all around the harbor. Jonathan put Kayla down, but kept her clenched tightly to his side. He pulled Wallace to him, and breathed a deep, relieved sigh.

“Your mom just fell asleep,” Jonathan told Wallace. “She’s been watching the horizon since we arrived.”

“Should I wake her?” he asked.

“I think she would be upset if you didn’t,” Kayla’s father told him.

Wallace pulled away from his embrace and boarded the boat.

Kayla looked up at her dad, his brow furrowed but his eyes wide.

He didn’t say anything, but she understood him. She took his hand in hers and squeezed it tightly all the way back to the boat.

In the cabin, Max sponged seawater from the floor and wrung it out in a plastic bucket. Kayla let go of her dad’s hand and tackled her uncle. “Well look who’s here,” he groaned and dropped the sponge. “Just in time to do some cleaning.”

“How about some eggs?” she asked.

Max smiled. “I’m not sure they made it, Sport.”

Kayla got up and peeked into the ice chest. Bruised fruit crowned the pile of damaged goods. “I think you’re right,” she said, looking at the thick yellow ooze streaming from a crushed egg carton.

Wallace and his mother emerged from the V-berth.

“Welcome back,” Kathy said.

Kayla looked down at her rumbling stomach. “What time do the restaurants open up around here?” she asked, eager to digest something

that wasn't salt water.

Her father glanced at his watch. "Things should be opening up fairly soon."

"Good," Wallace said, "I'm starved."

"I could use a break too," Max said, dumping his bucket of water into the sink.

Kathy laughed at him. "You just started."

"Why don't you guys go ahead," Jonathan told them. "Kayla and I need to take care of some business."

Kayla felt the cushions for a reasonably dry place to sit and finally found one on the far side of the table. She breathed in the damp, musty air trapped in the cabin. "We should turn a fan on," she said.

Her father didn't answer, but took a seat next to her and leaned his head against the wall, his eyes closed. Kayla bent her head toward his shoulder and sat quietly. She looked around the boat, surveying the damage. It was going to take a little work, but they could fix it up again. However, she was unsure about the exterior, and knew the main sail was certainly shot.

"I think I made a mistake," her father said.

“About what?” she asked.

“I guess I didn’t know what was best for you after all.”

Kayla was surprised. Neither of her parents had ever admitted fault to anything. Her father let out a long breath that tousled the top of her damp, black hair, but he didn’t say anything else. It was as if he was waiting for her to tell him how wrong he had been. This was her chance to let him have it—the “I told you so” she’d wanted to say from the moment they cast off the dock in Dominica. But she couldn’t do it.

“I don’t think you were wrong about anything,” she said, just as shocked by her own words as her father was.

Jonathan shifted his weight so he could see Kayla’s face. He’d forgotten how she took him by surprise sometimes.

“Maybe you don’t understand,” he said. “We can go home now.”

“What about America?” she asked.

“I’m going to call my parents after breakfast and give them the final word.”

Kayla’s chest felt heavy with disappointment, though she didn’t know why. “So that’s it?” she asked. “We’re just going to turn around and go back to Dominica?”

"I thought that's what you wanted."

Kayla sighed, trying to organize her thoughts. Her father had been so adamant about the move, but floating in the ocean alone with Wallace, she'd finally come to trust him. Now she didn't know what to think. It was as if, not just falling overboard, but surviving had prepared her for everything that was supposed to happen. However, it hadn't prepared her to turn around and go home. Compared to all of the tension and hostility buried in the sands along the shore of Dominica, the storm and the weather-scarred boat seemed trivial.

"We can't turn around," she argued.

"Why not?"

"Because I don't want to anymore."

Her father wrapped his arms around her shoulders from behind and rested his chin on the top of her head. "I guess I didn't realize what it was going to be like without you until you were gone," he said.

"Come with me," Kayla told him.

Jonathan gave her a squeeze. "We'll see."

"Dad?" she whispered.

"Yes?"

“Why didn’t you tell me about my grandmother on Guadeloupe?”

Kayla wiggled loose from his grasp and turned to face him. He rubbed his chin with his thumb and forefinger in thought.

“I just didn’t want you to get tangled up in a messy situation.”

“How come she never talks to us? Or came to visit?”

“Because I took your mother away.”

“That’s it?”

Kayla’s father nodded as she stood up. “And that woman in the truck?”

“Your mom’s sister. Let’s go get some breakfast, Kayla.” Her father waited while she dug through her drawers and pulled out something clean and dry to wear. Kayla tied a printed sarong around her waist. It’s tasseled edge barely brushed the ground

“You look like your mother,” he said softly.

Kayla smiled. “I’m ready,” she said and remembered seeing pictures of when her father had taken her mother sailing for the first time. She’d been dressed the same way, her long black hair cascading over her shoulders and reaching down her back. She’d looked so happy, like a dark-featured pixie, standing on the dock, sunshine sparkling across her

cheeks and on the tips of her ears. Kayla wondered what had happened, what had gone wrong. She looked around at the shabby boat. Maybe her grandmother had known something her father didn't. Maybe she'd been trying to protect him, but standing in the galley, she promised herself that she would always try harder than her mother had. She felt so excited, ready to explore whatever world was ahead of her. Her father *had* been right after all. Kayla followed her dad out of the cabin, aware that she wasn't just following him to breakfast. There was so much else out there. She slipped her hand into his and held it very tightly.

"So you really want to do this?" he asked.

"Go to America?"

"Yes," he said.

"I do," she told him. "I just don't want to go by myself." Kayla sped up, but didn't let go of her father's hand, tugging him forward. "I bet that's the restaurant," she said, pointing to the patio filled with umbrella-covered tables. People had begun to move about the town, and she saw a family sit down to breakfast at one of the tables.

Kayla guided her father down the boardwalk, one step ahead of him, knowing they would end up in the right place.