

Monday, March 5, 2068, 10:28 a.m., somewhere in the North Sea

The skipper of the fishing trawler Saucy Lady looked out to sea. The gathering storm clouds made it look darker than it would have been at this time of day. The iron-grey waters of the North Sea seemed to merge with the low menacing clouds, giving the impression that they were cocooned in a large bowl of darkness. The wind was biting cold and he knew that the water would be freezing as well. Large waves were crashing over the bows of the ship as it pitched and tossed helplessly.

They had been fishing for more than a week, and the catches were not good. In fact, they seemed to be the worst for a very long time, hence the reason for staying out as long as possible. The weather forecast that morning had been for heavy weather and the skipper knew the problems of storms in the North Sea; he had been a fisherman all his life, it was the only life he had ever known. His crew gathered on the dangerously wet and slippery deck. They were all seasoned fishermen, all family men, and this was their very livelihood.

"We can always head back early, if the storm begins to break," he told them.

The storm hit earlier than had been forecast. It broke with such ferocity that it alarmed the skipper. He had seen many storms in his lifetime, but none as bad as this appeared to be. Miles from land, they had no option but to try and weather it out. Whilst cranking the heavy chain to wind in their catch, they were all horrified to see that tangled in the nets was a moored mine, a relic of World War Two. Just the slightest touch from any of the spikes would blow them sky high. To make matters worse, somehow the chain of the mine had fouled the propeller and the Saucy Lady was drifting along helplessly, lashed by both heavy rain and seas.

"Skipper!" one of the trawler men called out, but his breath was taken by the howling gale and his words disappeared as if he had never spoken.

Slipping and sliding on the dangerously wet deck, the trawler men tried to free the bomb free by cutting the chain, but the more they tried the more hopeless it became. The Saucy Lady was beginning to roll and pitch in a frightening and dangerous way, and with no propeller they were absolutely helpless.

The skipper waved his arms indicating that they were to leave it where it was. His philosophy was that left where it was, the mine would not come any closer, but just be dragged along behind them. He hoped and prayed that this would prove to be the case.

Now as the skipper surveyed the storm, and the mine pulling along behind them, he felt suddenly so very helpless. He had a crew of men, all of them with families to take care of. He wasn't sure if the Navy or indeed the Life Boat crew would be able to help them.

He went down below deck and ordered the young man on the radio to contact the Navy.

"Mayday, Mayday!" the young man almost shouted into the radio.

Post by Tawnyangel22 on 04/08/2004

---