

North Sea, Highland Natural Gas Rig 3 (NGrid3), Operations Room.

Offshore Installation Manager Bryan Campbell looked out at the storm as it proceeded to build in strength and ferocity. Turning to his Radio Operator he voiced his concerns

"I don't like it, Stan; this is going to be rough one. I want all crew on Emergency standby. This rig has got to be secure if those waves are going to reach the height and strength that I think they will."

"Aye, sair, I've already alerted the crew and the drilling rig has been secured, I dinna see what else kin be done at..." He was suddenly interrupted by the outside radio signal.

"NG Rig 3, G' ahead"

"Highland Rig 3, this is International Rescue calling. We have been alerted by the World Navy ship Excelsior that the trawler Saucy Lady has pulled up a mine and has been rendered inoperable. She is currently drifting towards your position. The mine is tangled in her propeller and the Navy are unable to reach her. More mines have been freed and are floating between the Excelsior and the trawler. We are sending help and will need the cooperation of the rigs in the area, but particularly yours."

Stan and Bryan immediately knew what this meant. "International Rescue, we read you loud n' clear. All emergency procedures are in place. You have access t' whatever ya' need."

"Thank you rig 3. We'll be in contact again shortly."

Stan sat back and looked at his boss. "Well, what d' ya make o' that then? International Rescue!"

Bryan was more concerned about the mines. "If that damn trawler hits this rig, we could all be blown to bits. Those mines are over 100 years old: there's no telling what damage they could cause."

Stan merely looked at him. Bryan may have a Scot's name, but his English accent was unmistakable and so was his tendency to be overwrought!

"Now, Bryan, listen t' me. That wee boat may no' even hit. The Navy and International Rescue will do everything t' prevent it. We just have t' work wi' them."

Bryan took a deep breath and sighed. "We will, Stan, that you can count on."

Up in TB5, John turned to Callie "Well, now that the closest rig has been notified, they'll contact the ones nearest to them. We're going to need landing pads and with that sea being so rough I doubt if Vee can drop Pod 4 in the water. I sure hope those mines don't blow."

Callie returned his worried look. Their unspoken words echoed the thoughts of disaster if those mines blew.

Below deck, Saucy Lady.

The crew continued to huddle together, as Mother Nature unleashed her worst above decks. The howling winds and treacherous waves pounded the fishing vessel over and over, tossing her every way possible. The men below were all scared; they all knew the risk of dying out on these waters, but it didn't make it any easier to accept.

Captain Bowers walked over to First Mate Ian Drummond. "The temperature outside is dropping. We're going to have to try to prevent 'icing up'. If we dinna try, we're going t' g' down fur sure."

Ian swallowed hard and nodded. He knew that if the steady build up of ice on the superstructures was an all too present danger out on the North Sea and it would mean capsizing was inevitable.

Although improved de-icing components had been installed on all fishing trawlers, the fact that their boat was now inoperable mean that the Dunlop De-icier had probably quit working too.

"Aye, sair, I'll make m' way t' the engine room. If the heating elements on the Dunlop pads are broke, we're gonna t' ave t' break ice off manually."

"I know, lad, I know."

Ian gave his skipper one last lingering look before turning and making his way to the engine room. The Saucy Lady continued to roll and pitch, the sound of the relentless ocean pounding on the vessel. Captain Bowers turned to his men. "Right, crew, Ian has gone t' check the Dunlop heating system. We all know what kin happen if it's no' working. I want you all t' know, that no' matter what, we are no' gonna die out here! I refuse t' let any man think that! We're a crew and we're gonna make it! D' ye all understand!"

His voice was so authoritative that every man on board had no choice but to say "Aye!" even if they thought otherwise. They all knew their Captain was doing what he needed to do.

Ian made it to the engine room, and his worst fears were confirmed. The heating elements were not working. The ice had started to build up above decks. "Damn!" he muttered angrily, as he made his way back to the Captain. Passing a window, he caught a glimpse of a gas rig, very close to them, as the boat pitched forward. He hurried back to where James Bowers was standing.

"Heating elements are no' working, and there's worse..." James shot him a look of disbelief.

"Worse?"

"Aye, we're veering towards a gas rig. If that mine we're towing makes contact..." Ian didn't need to finish his sentence. James Bowers knew what it meant for him and his crew.

Post by FrankieCTB2 on 09/08/2004

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