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## I've Got To Cover This Up As Soon As I Can

by Juliet Robinson

We rushed sternward as the ship bucked and started to list to port. Her propellers were wailing and protesting, and the engines continued to howl their distress.

The captain was well ahead of us, her feet skipping over the shuddering deck. The students who surrounded me sprawled all over the place, clung to each other and were frankly a danger. I tried to push through them but was nearly thrown over the rails as someone staggered into me, so I slowed and let them rush on ahead. It wasn't like arriving any quicker was really going to make a difference.

When I did arrive the captain was shouting down the radio at Peters who was on the helm. The engines had stopped, and her voice seemed unnaturally loud in their absence. Everyone was watching her, waiting for her lead.

I leant over the rail but couldn't see anything in the water. However, a slick oil coat lay sprawled on the deck below. The one the figure had been wearing, it must have come off as they fell and been blown back onto the ship.

I knew that coat. It was Ben's.

Ben for essential purposes is the cabin boy. He had been with captain for years, a sort of ward though he was actually older than her. He wasn't quite all there, but that didn't stop him being a valued member of the crew. He worked hard and never complained, unlike the rest of us. The captain was incredibly fond of him, she often said we could do with being more like Ben. He had been working in the galley kitchen with Carson today.

'Carson?' Nothing, no reply. 'Carson? You there?' Why wasn't he responding.

I headed down a deck and picked up Ben's coat, it was heavy. I glanced over the rail, surely Ben wouldn't have thrown himself off the ship.

'Carson?' Still no reply.

Resentfully I acknowledged the sense of foreboding that was brewing in my gut. I snarled and radioed the captain, 'I have Ben's coat, I think it was him who went off the ship. Carson isn't responding, I'm going down to the galley see what's what.'

She didn't respond immediately; I was already on route to the galley when she did. Her voice was low, I could hear the others in the background, it was apparent she had moved away from them.

'Whoever it was they are wedged in the starboard propeller. The body is already attracting ice eels, its rather grisly down there. I have a bad feeling about all of this, be careful.' She was on edge, that was disconcerting.

I pushed the door to the galley, but something was blocking it. I shoved it, it gave, and I staggered into the room, nearly tripping over Carson's body. He was sprawled on the floor; covered in blood. I flipped him over and checked his pulse. It was there, stronger than I expected and I could now see that he had suffered a blow to the head.

'Madeline! Carson not in a good way get down here now!' I radioed the ships medic.

I placed in the recovery position then turned to Ben's coat which I had dropped in the hall. Frantically I raided his pockets finding, pens, wrappers, an apple and from his inner breast pocket, Yolanda's missing scalped hair.

Gagging, I once again called the captain.

She beat Madeline to the galley arriving red faced and blowing hard. She looked from Carson to the grisly trophy and then snatched it out of my hand.

'I've got to cover this up as soon as I can!' She panted. Her eyes were wild, and I realised I had never seen her unnerved or unravelled like this.

'Why!' I demanded, shocked and appalled.

'It wasn't Ben! Ben wouldn't do this!' She shouted, spittle flying from her mouth. 'He just wouldn't trust me!'