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The Lesson

by Juliet Robinson

The mainsheet pulled and snapped, it strained to get loose and fly away. I grabbed the rope just as the knot worked free snatching it as it whipped into the air. Suddenly I held the wind, the full force of it as it ploughed into the sail. The strength of it was terrifying and electrifying all at once. I felt like Hercules battling a Titan. I roared into the wind, my lungs burning with the fury of my scream, but it was drowned by the howling gale.

The rope, desperately tried to pull itself free, it writhed like a snake. It burned my hand with what felt like fierce hatred. But I didn't let go. All around me the ocean rocked and roared. The clinker-built folds of Wind Gypsy groaned against the strain of the sea. I was ripped back and forth, near tossed over the gunwale and the skin of my hand shredded and melted.

Then Marten's hand grasped my shoulder.

'Let it go!' he bellowed over the storm. Spray washed over us both as the sea tried to swallow our small and battered boat.

I started at him, if I did that, we would lose what little control we had left.

'Now!'

He shouted with such ferocity, such conviction that I let the rope go. It whistled from my bleeding hands and cracked like a whip as the sail billowed into the sky. We were at the mercy of the storm now.

I followed Marten to the wheelhouse, where he went to the helm, though he made no attempt to steer Wind Gypsy. He just stood his watch.

Fear gripped me, threatened to slash my sanity. But Marten's unflappable calm began to sooth me. As the burning pain in my hands began to lessen, I realised that sometimes you just have to let go. You can't control everything. We went with the storm, allowed Wind Gypsy to run her race.