

A Sudden Storm

Tamsin looked out of the office window and frowned. The bright, clear, summer sky had darkened. A giant rain cloud fist enclosed the afternoon sun. She shivered in sympathy with the massed tourists basking on the beach. The storm had exploded out of nowhere, unexpected and violent. She saw the flash of lightening then the heavens opened drowning the town. Tamsin tensed anticipating the alarm that ordered her to drop everything and head out into the storm.

The car's wipers were going double time to clear the windscreen driving along the undulating cliff path. Where blue sea had smiled that morning was now blurred and grey, the water boiling and smashing furiously into the land below the road.

The rest of the crew reached the station at the same time. In a very few moments they got into the yellow survival suits and climbed aboard, launching into the heaving froth-foamed waves. Forging a path through the waves cresting over the bow then dipping down through the wall of water into the troughs between, they headed in the direction of the last known location. A small hired sailing dinghy on a family pleasure trip that summer's day. Dad, mum and three small children. Either side of the cabin in the wind Tamsin could see her colleagues. Human eyes seeking for a sign of their quarry just as she watched the radar for the blip that would show their position.

Tom, their coxswain, was using all his experience of that coast to keep the lifeboat on course. He shook his head. "Can't see a damn thing through the water," he said, making a slight correction to compensate for the push of the buffeting wind. "Hope to God we get to them. That dinghy is a fair-weather sailor and the family can't have been prepared for this." He leaned forward, over the wheel, trying to pierce the curtain of water. "We certainly weren't, it's a freak storm," Tamsin agreed. "Even the forecast missed this one. Let's hope it's as quick to stop." Tom shook his head "Set for some time I think."

He turned the bow into the cresting wave. They felt the screw vibrate in air then the hull fell into the trough where the propellor bit into the sea. Tamsin caught a shout and saw the port lookout

point. Phil appeared, face wet with seawater. “Jed reckons he saw a mast top.”

Tamsin checked the radar and saw a portside blip. “Confirmed.” She said as they lifted with the next wave. Please let them be alive she prayed silently while they drew closer to the slender pointer.

The wind and rain eased momentarily allowing the boat to pull alongside the listing hull. The exhausted, sodden family emerged from the cabin and were hauled across to dry safety Phil tied a tow to the dinghy. Tamsin swayed with the rocking of the boat, a contented smile on her face, thankful that no-one would be listed lost at sea.