

Danger on Board

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This is a story i wrote in seventh grade. I redid some of the story for submission to the public. It tells the story of a man who won a cruise. He took his wife along. However, the show's prize began to turn deadly.

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DANGER ON BOARD

As Terry Johnson boarded the luxury cruise ship, the *Princess Lucy*, he thought of what brought him here. He won the trip as the grand prize on the game show *Spinning Sweeps*. He never had much luck with contests of any type, so he felt especially lucky to have won such a luxurious prize. He brought Tina, his wife of twelve years, with him. He was particularly glad for her, since they were never able to do anything so extravagant.

Terry had been anxiously anticipating this trip ever since he had won it. Ships were his hobby: in fact he won the trip by correctly answering the question, *What year was the Lusitania launched?* He knew a lot about famous ships such as the *Titanic*, which was lost in 1912 after striking an iceberg, and the *Lusitania*, which was launched in 1906 and was lost during World War I after being struck by a torpedo. The *Princess Lucy* was almost brand new; it was only her third voyage. She was the showpiece of the Princess America Line and had all the latest amenities: two pools, a health club, a movie theater, and a dance hall that would rival the grandest dance hall on land.

The wondrous ship was under the command of Captain Ben Steek; a qualified man with fourteen years of experience at the helm of many passenger ships. Next in line was First Officer John Jones, an experienced seaman, and Second Officer Jake Millard, who was new to his position.

It was a warm day for the twelfth day of February when the *Princess Lucy* pulled out of her Boston port on her way to Cuba with 3501 passengers and crew on board. They would be making two stops (New York and Miami) to visit different ports and load and unload passengers. Terry and Tina were looking to shopping and sightseeing, but first they wanted to view the ship.

The second day out the weather took a sudden turn. The air was chilly and the wind was strong. Terry and Tina decided to make the best of it and take a stroll on deck. Even with the wind biting at their faces, they were happy. Terry smiled at Tina and said, *When the most exciting thing in your life happens, you want to share it with the best thing in your life.* Tina just looked back at him. She was excited to be here, but she would be happy being anywhere with her husband.

That night, First Officer Jones and Second Officer Millard were on duty in the wheelhouse. The weather had worsened, and Second Officer Millard was on duty in the wheelhouse. The weather had worsened and Second Officer Millard voiced his concern to First Officer Jones. *How does the Princess Lucy handle storms, John?*

Feeling nervous, Jake? No need to worry. Our Princess is a reliable ship. We have all the latest technology available to us.

It isn't that, sir. I guess I'm just feeling the stress of the new job. I have a lot of new responsibilities, and I'm feeling the pressure to prove myself. A lot of people don't think I can handle this, and that my promotion to this rank was a mistake.

Patting him on the back, John, Jake's best friend since high school, reassured him. *I trust you, Jake, and the Captain trusts you too. We are all that you need. Still Jake could not shake his lack of confidence in himself.*

The *Princess Lucy* was spectacular. She was built in New York City at a cost of \$457 million. She was 1600 feet from bow to stern, weighed 95,000 tons, and could move at an amazing rate of 30 knots. One of the two pools was Olympic-sized and the other was indoor and heated. The health club had daily

classes, a jogging track, twelve treadmills, twenty exercise bikes, a steam room, and a small boxing ring with five punching bags. The movie theater could hold three hundred people and showed the latest films. The dance hall, however, was the centerpiece of the ship. It had three chandeliers designed by the world-renowned Tiffany Company. It had sculptures of Greek gods lining the walls. The marble floors were imported from Italy. The most impressive thing about this room was the fact that murals, painted by French impressionist Jacques Leland, depicting ocean travel.

On February 14, the weather was still rough, but Terry was not about to let anything get his spirits down. Tonight was the Valentine's Day dance in the dance hall. This was the highlight of the trip for him. He would wear his tuxedo, and Tina would wear the new dress she had purchased for this occasion. He felt like he was in high school going to the prom.

That night the storm continued to grow outside, but inside everything was festive. The chandeliers glowed pink, streamers cascaded from the ceiling, and ice sculptures of Cupid were at the buffet tables. The beauty of the room overwhelmed Terry and Tina. They had never been part of anything so grand. They quickly found their way to their table and sat down. Terry was amazed at how they could be in a place decorated so lavishly, and yet Tina was the most beautiful thing in the room. May I have the pleasure of dancing with you? he asked her.

I would love to, she replied. As Terry danced with her, he remembered how he had met Tina at a dance studio. He had gone to take lessons at a different studio first, but they were closed. So he went to a second one, and Tammy was in his class. It always made him smile when he thought of how his life would have been different if the first studio had been open. Tina was also thinking of how happy she was. She realized it didn't matter if they were on the grandest ship in the world or back in their simple home, as long as they were together.

The passengers at the party were unaware of the events going on in the bridge that would change their lives. Captain Steek had just been handed an emergency warning. The storm heading toward them was worse than originally predicted. The winds were blowing at sixty miles per hour and the waves were 150 feet high! The storm was heading directly at them and the worst of it would be on them in thirty minutes. Captain Steek immediately ordered all the watertight doors to be closed and emergency precautions should be taken. Second Officer Millard asked, Captain, what about the dance? Should we frighten the passengers with this news?

We don't have a choice, he replied. We can never put the safety of our passengers second. When they board this ship, they are putting their trust in us. We can never forget that.

Second Officer Millard made his way to the dance hall. He went over to the orchestra, and when they finished their tune, he made his announcement. Ladies and gentlemen, I am sorry to interrupt the festivities. The ship is heading for some bad weather and we must take some safety precautions. I must ask all of you to return to your cabins and put on your life jackets and put on your life jackets. This announcement was met with moans of disappointment. I must insist, he emphasized. It's for your own safety.

Many passengers wanted to stay and dance, anyway, but the orchestra had been instructed to stop playing. The kitchen workers were putting the food away, so there really wasn't anything else for the passengers to do. The dance hall began to slowly empty out. Terry and Tina began the long walk back to their cabin. Just as they reached their cabin they felt a jolt.

The jolt was felt all over the ship. In the bridge, Millard was shaken so hard that his coffee cup was jerked out of his hand. Jones was thrown to the floor, landing on his elbow, injuring it. One of the junior officers came running in shouting, We've hit something! I can't tell what it is yet. It's probably a reef. Captain Steek knew some decisions had to be made immediately despite the violent weather. He phoned the boiler room to get more information. The chief stoker was upset. Captain, we've hit something hard. Water's pouring in and the engines are not responding.

Captain Steek realized how serious the situation was. He knew everyone was depending on him and he had to be sure that no mistakes were made. He ordered a distress signal to be sent out and lifeboats to be made ready for loading.

Stewards were sent to all decks to guide the passengers from their cabins to the proper lifeboats stations. This, however, was a complicated procedure. Some passengers did not want to follow orders, and others were too panicked to follow directions. In the meantime, the crew was struggling to prepare the lifeboats. The wind was so strong they could not keep the boats secure.

Back in the bridge, Captain was receiving more bad news. The radio operator was informing him that no other ships would be able to come to their rescue. The storm was too fierce for any ship to safely sail in. Captain Steek knew the *Princess Lucy* would founder, and he also knew the weather was too rough to launch the lifeboats. He had a difficult decision to make, and he did the only thing possible under the circumstances. Officer Jones, launch the lifeboats.

But sir, replied John, the lifeboats will be swamped! The people don't stand a chance in them.

I know their odds are not good, but it's the only chance they have, he said sadly.

The first boat was loaded then lowered. The minute it touched the ocean, a strong wave crashed into it and the boat was capsized. The passengers watching from the promenade deck watched in horror as the people below struggled against the waves and, one by one, were pulled under the water and drowned.

No one wanted to go on the next lifeboat. However, the situation on the *Princess Lucy* was getting grim. The ship was sinking and listing the port side. The officers had to force the passengers onto the lifeboats. Terry looked at Tina and said, We have to try and save ourselves. Let's go! They got into a lifeboat and held each others hands tightly as it was lowered. The boat swayed in the wind, and Tina thought they would be knocked out of the boat before it even reached the water. As it landed with a violent jerk, the passengers all screamed. The boat managed to stay upright, but the waves carried it away from the *Princess Lucy* into the storm. A large wave picked up the helpless lifeboat and pitched it into the reef that doomed the *Princess Lucy*. The lifeboat shattered into pieces, and the impact threw the passengers into the ocean. Terry and Tina were thrown in opposite directions. Terry spotted a life raft thrown from the *Princess Lucy*. He managed to climb aboard, but by the time he was able to catch his breath, he had barely any strength to try and paddle back by hand to save Tina. The only thing he could do was pray that he had the strength to go on in life.

Back on the *Princess Lucy*, the crew was unsuccessful in launching two more lifeboats. As soon as those boats were gone, the grand ship was thrown into her dooming reef once again. The reef was hard enough to break the ship into three pieces. Passengers and crewmembers were tossed into the ocean. Captain Steek stayed on the bridge, determined to go down with his ship. Officer Jones struggled in the water, but his injured arm prevented him from keeping afloat, and he was pulled under the water. Officer Millard was thrown off the deck and found himself being cast about by the waves. Amazingly, Terry was able to spot him struggling in the waves. By this time, the weather had cleared up a little. Terry was able to pull him aboard the raft. The two watched in dismay as the *Princess Lucy* made her final descent. By morning, the storm subsided. The *Floridian*, a frigate who had received the *Princess Lucy*'s mayday call, sailed to the last known coordinates of the great ship. The *Floridian*'s crew spotted a red flare and headed over the spot where the flare was fired. They spotted the raft Terry and Officer Millard was on and began to pull them aboard. The two were treated for hypothermia, but before the ship reached a Miami port, the two were able to fully recover themselves. They introduced themselves to each other, and Officer Millard thanked Terry for helping him save his life. That's when Tina came back in Terry's mind. He asked any of the crew if Tina was seen anywhere. As the *Floridian*'s crew continued to look for survivors, the only thing they saw was debris. As Terry sobbed for Tina's loss, Jake comforted him and told him that he also lost his high school buddy.

Back on land, the two talked about their amazing escape from the *Princess Lucy* and the ship's final moments to many reporters. They also commended the *Floridian*'s crew for saving their lives. Weeks later, the *Princess Lucy* was found lying on its starboard, completely showing the gash the reef had made on her hull. Terry remarried and had a son. Jake retired from the sea to become a computer engineer. He was there as Terry's son was born. He was named Jake, after Mr. Millard. Ever since, Mr. Millard was able to help out with the Johnson family. But the two would always remember the day they cheated death as the most eventful day of their lives.