

Unexpectedly, my head popped out of the water. A few metres away, Wavewalker was near capsizing, her masts almost horizontal. Then a wave hurled her upright, my lifeline jerked taut, I grabbed the guard rails and sailed through the air into Wavewalker's main boom. Subsequent waves tossed me around the deck like a rag doll. My left ribs cracked; my mouth filled with blood and broken teeth. Somehow, I found the wheel, lined up the stern for the next wave and hung on.

Water, Water, Everywhere. I could feel that the ship had water below, but I dared not abandon the wheel to investigate. Suddenly, the front hatch was thrown open and Mary appeared. "We're sinking!" she screamed. "The decks are smashed; we're full of water." "Take the wheel", I shouted as I scrambled for the hatch.

Capsizing – be overturned in the water

Hurled – throw with a great force

Taut – stretched or pulled tightly

Boom – pole that controls the angle and shape of the sail

Scrambled – climb; claw one's way

Hatch – door

The narrator's head popped out of water. The ship was about to overturn but a wave turned her upright. His lifeline jacket was stretched, he grabbed the guard rails and sailed to the ship's main pole. The waves tossed him around the deck. He was injured as his left ribs cracked, his mouth filled with blood and he had a broken tooth. He found the wheel, lined the stern for the next wave and waited. There was water everywhere. The narrator could feel water below the ship but he didn't leave the wheel alone. Suddenly, the front door opened and his wife, Mary, came screaming that they were sinking. She said, 'the decks are smashed; we're full of water'. The narrator handed her the wheel and climbed towards the door.

Larry and Herb were pumping like madmen. Broken timbers hung at crazy angles, the whole starboard side bulged inwards; clothes, crockery, charts, tins and toys sloshed about in deep water. I half-swam, half-crawled into the children's cabin. "Are you all right?" I asked. "Yes," they answered from an upper bunk. "But my head hurts a bit," said Sue, pointing to a big bump above her eyes. I had no time to worry about bumped heads. After finding a hammer, screws and canvas, I struggled back on deck. With the starboard side bashed open, we were taking water with each wave that broke over us. If I couldn't make some repairs, we would surely sink.

Timbers – wood board used in building of a ship

Starboard – side of a ship which is on the right side when one is facing forward

Bulged – swell

Sloshed – move through liquid with a splashing sound.

Bashed – strike hard; hit

The crewman Larry and Herb were pumping the water very fast. The timbers of the ship were broken and were hanging badly. The starboard of the ship had sunk, clothes, crockery, charts, tins and toys were roaming around in deep water. The narrator swam and crawled to the children's cabin and asked the children whether they were alright. The children replied

'yes'. Sue, his daughter complained about a big bump on her head. The narrator didn't pay much attention to it as his major concern was to save them. The narrator found screws, hammer and canvas, he went back to the deck. The broken starboard side was letting so much water in, if the narrator could not fix the problem, they would all sink in the sea.

Somehow I managed to stretch canvas and secure waterproof hatch covers across the gaping holes. Some water continued to stream below, but most of it was now being deflected over the side.

More problems arose when our hand pumps started to block up with the debris floating around the cabins and the electric pump short-circuited. The water level rose threateningly. Back on deck I found that our two spare hand pumps had been wrenched overboard — along with the forestay sail, the jib, the dinghies and the main anchor.

Then I remembered we had another electric pump under the chartroom floor. I connected it to an out-pipe, and was thankful to find that it worked.

Deflected: turned aside

Canvas – a strong unbleached cloth

Debris – rubbish

Wrenched – pull suddenly, removed

Forestay – a rope to support ship's foremast

Dinghies – a small boat for recreation with mast or sail

The narrator stretched the canvas cloth and secured the waterproof hatch which covered the gaping holes. Some water streamed below and some was now deflected over the side. The handpump was blocked as rubbish was floating around the cabins and entered it, the electric pump short-circuited. As the water level rose, the narrator found two hand pumps had been removed along with a rope, jib, a small boat, and the main anchor. He found another electric pump under the chartroom. He connected it to an out pipe and it started working.