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## GRACE DARLING

The sea has many faces. Sometimes it is calm and gentle – as quiet as a swimming-pool. Sometimes it is wild, and angry, and dangerous. We build walls against the sea, and the sea washes them away. We build ships to sail on the sea, and the sea breaks them in two, like a child breaking a toy. When the sea wears its angry face, it is like a wild animal – that wants only to kill.

You, of course, are not afraid of the sea. You are safe on land, you are warm and dry. But it is different when you are on a small boat in an angry sea, with salt water flying into your face and the wind screaming in your ears. For us it is easy not to be afraid; this is only a book. But for Grace Darling it was no story. It was a very real, cold, wild night when she fought with the sea, and was not afraid.

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TIM VICARY

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# Grace Darling



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*The Times**London, 19th September 1838*

On the afternoon of 6th September, the steamship *Forfarshire* began its journey from Hull to Dundee, in Scotland. There were 60 people on the *Forfarshire*, which was a big, comfortable, modern ship. There was a strong, north-east wind that afternoon, but at first no one was afraid . . .

## 1

*The Forfarshire*

Daniel Donovan was a passenger on the *Forfarshire*. He stood on the deck of the ship, and looked at the sea. It was difficult to stand on the deck, because the wind was so strong. The ship was moving up and down uncomfortably and Daniel felt ill. Then a big wave hit the side of the ship, and salt water flew into his face.

‘The wind is getting stronger,’ said a passenger beside him. He was a tall, dark man with a black coat – Mr Robb, a churchman. ‘And it’s getting darker, too.’

‘Yes,’ said Daniel. ‘I can’t see the land now.’ He looked to the west, but he could see no land, no lights. Only water – big grey waves with white tops, which went up and down, up and down.

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‘But the *Forfarshire* is a good modern ship,’ said Mr Robb. ‘Nothing can happen to a new ship like this. Listen to those fine strong engines!’

Daniel looked down at the big paddle wheel on the side of the ship. It went round and round, down under the white water, and up again . . . under the water, and up. Then he looked up at the black smoke which came from the *Forfarshire*’s funnel.

‘Yes,’ he said. ‘They’re good, strong engines.’ But he was not really sure. He was an engineer, so he knew



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about engines. Sometimes the *Forfarshire*'s engines made strange noises, and the paddle wheels went round slowly. Then there was a crash, and they went quickly again. Daniel was not happy.

A sea bird flew low across the white tops of the big, grey waves. Daniel watched it, and felt wind and rain on his face. Then a door opened behind him, and a woman screamed.

'Simon, come back! Come back at once!'

Daniel looked behind him, and saw a small boy. He



*Sometimes the Forfarshire's engines made strange noises,  
and the paddle wheels went round slowly.*

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was running across the deck. He was only three or four years old, and the wind was much too strong for him. He fell over on the deck and began to cry. Then another big wave hit the side of the ship. The white water came over the side and carried the boy along the deck.

‘Help!’ the woman screamed. ‘Save my child!’

Daniel put out a hand and caught the boy’s coat. Then he carried him quickly back to his mother.

‘Quick! Get back in, out of the wind, woman!’ he shouted. He hurried through the door and closed it with a crash. ‘It’s too dangerous for children out there!’

‘Yes, I know,’ the woman said. ‘Come here, Simon!’ She sat down and held the boy with one arm. She had another child in her other arm – a little girl, about one or two years old. ‘Thank you, sir,’ she said.

The ship moved up and down very quickly, and Daniel sat down beside the woman. She smiled at him, but she looked very white and ill.

‘I’m Daniel Donovan,’ he said. ‘What’s your name?’

‘Mary Dawson,’ she said. ‘This is my son Simon, and my daughter Sarah.’

‘Isn’t your husband with you?’

‘No,’ she said. ‘He’s in Scotland. We’re going home to see him. It’s good we’re in a strong, modern ship.’

‘Yes,’ said Daniel. Then for a few seconds he said nothing. It was quiet in this room. Much quieter than outside.

‘Mr Donovan,’ said Mrs Dawson suddenly. ‘What’s

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happened to the engines? I can't hear them now. Can you?'

Daniel listened. 'My God,' he thought. 'She's right! The engines have stopped!' He could hear the noise of the wind and the sea, but not the engines. 'You're right, Mrs Dawson,' he said. He stood up, and ran to the door. 'Excuse me. I . . .' But then he opened the door, and his words were lost in the wind.

Outside, he looked up at the ship's funnel. There was no smoke above it. He looked over the side of the ship, at the big paddle wheels. He watched them for two minutes, but they did not move. And all the time the big



*'What's happened to the engines?' said Mrs Dawson suddenly.*

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grey waves lifted the *Forfarshire* up and down, and white water blew over the deck.

‘What’s happening?’ screamed Mr Robb. ‘Why aren’t we moving?’

‘The engines have broken down!’ shouted Donovan. ‘This isn’t a sailing ship – it can’t move without its engines!’

A big wave hit the side of the paddle wheel and sent white water over their heads. Some sailors were trying to put up a small sail, but the wind blew it out of their hands, away across the sea into the night.

‘There are women and children on this ship,’ shouted Mr Robb. ‘It’s nearly dark, and the weather is getting worse. What can we do?’

Daniel looked at him. ‘I don’t know, my friend,’ he shouted back. ‘I can’t do anything. Why not ask God – you’re a churchman! Perhaps He’ll send an angel to save us!’

## 2

### *The Lighthouse*

When the engines stopped, the *Forfarshire* was about five kilometres east of St Abbs Head, in Scotland. The ship was travelling north, from Hull to Dundee. But the wind came from the north, so the *Forfarshire*, without her engines, began to go south again, back to England. It was dark, and the wind was very strong.

**YOU HAVE REACHED THE END OF THE SAMPLE.**

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