

# A Man and his Ship

Fleeing from Pirates

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Hap and Sarialla skimmed the surface of the One Ocean as quickly as they could. They'd caught the attention of the Doom Pirate and had to push hard. There were a series of crests ahead they could lose him in, maybe wait him out, but on the open water they stood no chance.

"Can you go any faster, Sari?" asked Hap. He was holding onto her power orb for dear life and could feel himself weakening by the second. He could rest and eat and recover once they were in the crests.

"I'm trying," said Sari. She spun her motor harder, turned in her steering wings as far as they would go. Hap heard a creak from her hull and saw a crack in her wing.

"Careful, don't go too fas—"

An explosion in the water near them sent them off course, but Sarialla corrected and kept on towards the crests. Another few minutes and they'd be safe. Hap couldn't believe that the Doom Pirate would be using alkaline bombs against someone who had just been in its territory by accident, but there is was.

Another bomb went off and Hap held up his spyglass, one-handed and not letting go of Sarialla's power orb, so he could look back at the Doom Pirate. A ship with no crew. The rumours were true. How was it getting supplies then? Someone must be funding it.

"Hap," said Sarialla. He looked ahead and they were entering the crests.

“You did good, Sari. Slow down.”

She did as he asked and he let go of her power orb. Transferring energy from soul to soul was exhausting, so he sat on her deck and leaned back on the bench. She wasn't a large boat, or even the fastest, but he wouldn't trade her for any other.

“Hap,” she said again.

“What is it?” he asked.

“Hap,” she said.

Something was wrong. He looked back at the power orb and didn't see anything wrong. He checked the metal lining the deck and saw no issues. A shadow passed over them from one of the crests, one of the ancient mountain tops he'd heard stories about, and in the shade he saw it. A tiny crack leaking red mist.

He burst into action. He climbed past the power orb to get to his tool chest and pulled out the silvered tape and a pair of scissors. He vaulted back to where he saw the crack and took a moment to find it again in the bright sunlight. He cut off a piece of tape and carefully put it along the metal track, making sure to not connect two tracks while also completely covering the crack.

“Hap,” said Sarialla. “Thank you.” She was too quiet. Her voice came from a little speaker by the bench and he checked the connection but it looked fine.

“We'll coast back to Ardell,” said Hap. “No need to rush yourself. Just hold on. Preserve your mind and we'll get you repaired. Don't worry.”

“I lo—” she started but then cut out. He panicked and started looking for more cracks but couldn't find any.

As he pulled out the oars he was crying, hoping that she

wasn't dead. He wanted her to just be asleep, resting, ready for repair. He couldn't lose her, not without telling her how he felt.