



by Barbarella

Furl the Jib

The acquisition of the knowledge of navigation has a strange effect on the minds of men. — Jack London

Lou and I waited on the dock for the others to catch up — they were keeping pace with Cami, who'd been made gimpy by tendonitis in her knee. Stephanie was the only one who'd dressed for the occasion Jackie O. style, in a *Mad Men*-esque sleeveless black-and-white dress with a fabric fuchsia belt and scarf that matched her floppy hat and equally pink nails. I was in my usual — more-New York-than-San Diego black button-down and black capri pants; Cami and Jenice wore jeans and sweatshirts. Despite the overcast, we all wore sunglasses.

"Loucifer," Stephanie cooed when she caught up with us, "would you mind taking a photo of me and the girls?" Ever obliging of the softer sex, Lou accepted all of the cameras passed to him and clicked until his friends were satisfied.

A speaker at the top of a pole was blasting rock music. A few notes in, I recognized the song: "Sober," by Tool. Stephanie and I sang along for a few bars, and then I asked

"Come on, that squirrel was insane," I said. I kept quiet about the various injuries I'd incurred as a result of me pestering dogs.

Lou, "What are those speakers for, to keep the birds away?" He laughed and shook his head. "Maybe to keep people from sleeping in boats that aren't theirs?" Lou laughed again but didn't offer any other explanation.

"I'm embarrassed to admit that I've lived in San Diego for as long as I have and have never gone sailing," I said as we made our way along the dock at Cami-speed. Brows were raised in surprise. "I've been out fishing on big boats at H&M and whale-

watching and whatnot; I've even been on a Japanese naval ship because the admiral was a friend of my father's. But not sailing, even though I've always wanted to." We continued to the end of the dock, where a young guy named Rory was waiting to hand over the boat.

About a year ago, Lou joined the Seaforth Sailing Club in Mission Bay. He'd become proficient at piloting smaller boats like the 22-footer we were about to get on. When, over drinks at Nunu's, he'd offered to take us for a spin around the bay, the ladies and I were quick to accept.

We climbed onto the boat and chose seats — Steph and I side by side across from Cami and Jenice, Lou at the helm. I had to lower my head an inch or so to see beneath the boom (the swinging horizontal pole at the bottom of the mast, which even I knew was the vertical pole to which the big sheet is attached). Rory untied a rope and tossed it to Lou, and four women smiled broadly as the boat drifted into the bay.

While Lou handled ropes and maneuvered the wooden steering rod, the rest of us argued over whether or not Stephanie had adopted a British lilt. "You did say 'queue' instead of 'line,' and 'loo' instead of 'restroom' yesterday," I said. "And your

voice kind of goes up at the end of each sentence now," added Cami. Steph was adamant that, despite having spent four years abroad, nothing in her cadence had changed.

"Coming about," Lou said. I was looking to Lou for clarification when the boom whacked me in the back of the head.

"What the — ?" More shocked than sore, I rubbed the point of impact and wondered when it was that the horizontal pole had made its way behind me. I must have lifted my head when it was no longer blocking my view. "So, I take it 'coming about' means 'duck'?" I said.

I was about to launch into a lecture about proper whacking notification when my irritation dissipated. "Look!" I said. "Sea lion on a buoy! Oh, it's a pup. Lou, can you bring us really close? Maybe I can touch it." A few weeks before, my cousin Fergal had sent me an underwater video he'd made while snorkeling in La Jolla. While swimming, he and a friend were visited by a sea lion; in the video, Fergal can be seen scratching the gorgeous beast's neck. He told me that on prior swims he'd been visited by the same sea lion, which he refers to as his "girlfriend."

"Haven't you been attacked by enough animals already?" Steph asked. She smiled and shook her head.

"Come on, that squirrel was insane," I said. "And the cat, that was all my fault; you can't blame the animal." I kept quiet about the various injuries I'd incurred as a result of me pestering dogs. "It's just a baby. Lou, bring us as close as you can."

"Okay, watch out, this is gonna jibe," Lou said. I looked at him in confusion, then caught the boom heading toward me and lowered my head a moment before it would have smacked me in the face.

"Jibe? Dude, he keeps changing the word on us," Jenice said.

"All this jargon is probably easier for you to pick up — it's not that different from law-speak," I said to Lou, who is an attorney. "You

should have provided us with a glossary of terms in advance — we don't speak Sail."

"Sorry about that," Lou said. He turned to Jenice. "You know when you helped me guide that rope around that metal thing a moment ago? Well, you were furling the jib."

This prompted snickers all around. "*Furling the jib?* Are all sailing terms so...dirty sounding?" I asked.

Lou laughed. "My favorite term so far is 'jibe ho,'" he said. "It's what the tillerman calls out before bringing the stern of the boat through the wind. Boating is totally filled with sexually charged terms, like 'harden up,' which means to bring the bow of the boat closer to the wind."

"It's no wonder I was so attracted to sailing," I said, elbowing Steph.

"There are so many more," Lou said. "Like, spanker, booby hatch, lumber hooker, poop deck, deckhead, midshipman's nuts, seacock. Look 'em up on Wikipedia. They're hilarious."

"Well, how 'bout till I learn them you just say 'duck' when that thing is going to come flying at my face," I suggested. I turned around to snap a few shots of the sea lion, which, I realized with disappointment, was just beyond my reach.

"Coming a — duck!" Lou said. I lowered my head and waited for the boom to pass over. The sail caught the wind just as the setting sun broke through the clouds, its reflection dancing on the water. For the first time since we stepped onto the vessel, we all took a moment to appreciate the bay breeze on our faces, the air around us quiet, save for the sound of water lapping at the hull.

As usual, I was the one to break the silence, voicing what I'm sure we all were thinking: "I could get used to this." ■

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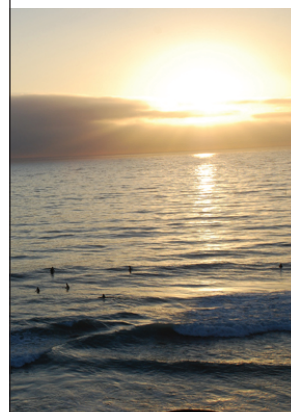
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