The westerly winds blowing into Southampton warned Captain William Wright of the storm before the Coast Guard radio did. This was no ordinary December day for the port. The Allure of the Seas was about to depart for Port Everglades, Florida on her maiden voyage. She was not only the biggest, but most magnificent and beautiful cruise ship in the world. A marvel of modern architecture, she was the largest moving thing ever created by man. However, the impending storm brewing in the North Atlantic could threaten the ceremonial and highly-profitable voyage of the ship.

Captain William, or Bill, as his friends called him, made his way up the eighteen decks to the bridge. It was already bustling with activity of the officers trying to plot a course that would take them as far south of the storm as possible. The Coast Guard had even ordered all other smaller ships to stay moored, allowing acceptance to the Allure of the Seas due to her grand size. Captain Bill took his seat in the center of the bridge next to the helm. From his position, he had a clear view of the open sea in front of him, as well as the Port of Southampton on the starboard side of the ship. His first officer, Trym Selvag, stood next to him. He was a very mysterious man, a new officer from Norway.

“Captain, all registered guests and crew all aboard. We are ready to depart on your command,” he said, not taking his eyes off the sea ahead of him.

“Thank you, Trym,” said William, picking up the intercom. “Allure of the Seas, forward and aft, let go all lines.”

The mooring crews released the enormous six-hundred-pound ropes from the dock, and the motors pulled them back into the ship. The fog horn sounded three prolonged blasts, and the Allure of the Seas was underway.

Captain William awoke the next morning in his suite. It was 5:00, time to get to work. He walked up to the bridge. It was quiet, as an early morning usually is. However the crew was already working quickly, for there was much to be done to navigate the immense vessel. William looked out over the blackness of the vast ocean. He had always felt at home here, as if this was where he was born to be. He approached the navigation officer, Frank Martinsen.
“What is our current heading, Mr. Martinsen?” William said, looking at the GPS monitor.

Startled, Frank looked at the captain and back at the screen, “Uh, well captain, we are headed 277 degrees southwest, and at about fifteen degrees north, nineteen degrees west, at about 21 knots.” Frank finished with a smile, satisfied at his elaborate response.

“Thank you, Mr. Martinsen, but next time try to know before I ask you.”

As Frank slowly looked back at his screen, William returned to his seat in the center of the bridge. He was extremely nervous of the approaching storm. It was already beginning to drizzle. They had navigated the ship slightly more south than usual, to try to avoid the worst.

Captain William was deep in thought when one of his officers came walking hurriedly up to him.

“Captain!” he began. “We need you to come see this sir!”

The officer led him over to the Doppler radar panel. William already knew what the problem was. Why else would he be needed so badly at the weather station?

“Sir, the system in the Mid-Atlantic has strengthened, and we believe it has shifted course… it seems… we will be heading straight into it, sir.”

The captain was silent. Most of the men on the bridge had heard him and now stood silent waiting for the captain’s response. William felt his forehead become hot with sweat.

There was no turning back. They were already on the edge of the system. Turning around and trying to outrun it would be worse. The crew looked at William, awaiting a response.

“Bring her speed down below five knots, and position the ship at a forty-five degree angle to the waves. Also, get the guests ready to ride this storm out… or if needed, to evacuate,” the captain ordered.

The crew looked at each other desperately. They had heard stories like this, but never thought it would happen to them. Some were comforted by denial, saying “It’ll be nothing. This is 2012. Ships are completely safe. The storm might die down right away.” Others started to pray, and even bargain, with God. There was a strange passive sense of panic aboard. William noticed this among all of the officers. That is, except for Trym Selvag. He seemed deep in thought, but not about his fate. He seemed to be unmoved by this situation. William ignored this, and proceeded with his plan.

The pool deck was cleared, and equipment was stowed. All outer decks were closed, and the doors locked (to prevent the ignorant guests from walking outside into hurricane force winds, and falling overboard.) just as it began to pour. Captain William then got on the intercom.

“Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. I hope you’ve enjoyed your cruise so far. This morning, our Doppler radar has indicated that we will be sailing into a rather strong
storm. These storms are not unusual. In fact the northern Atlantic is notorious for storms in the winter, but they can be very harsh. We do not feel the need to panic, and neither should you. However, for safety’s sake, we are asking that all guests return to their staterooms and stay there until the storm is over. Thank you very much, ladies and gentlemen.” The captain hung up the intercom. He had tried to be as calm as he could in the announcement, but he could already hear the sounds of worried guests rushing through the halls. The captain said a silent prayer as he felt the first wave pick the bow up, and let it roll steadily across.

The waves were becoming larger, the wind stronger, and the rain harder. The *Allure of the Seas* was designed much wider than the average ship, as to minimize the motion of the ship in rough seas. She also had stabilizers on either side of her, which extended from the keel and acted like airplane wings, keeping the ship centered. However, the designs were only adequate for up to a force ten gale. This was much worse. The ship began to list heavily from one side to another. Fine china crashed to the ground in the Galileo dining room. Souvenirs and other trinkets rolled off shelves in the Promenade. Six thousand panicked guests screamed from within their staterooms. The bridge was alive with officers as they held on to anything within reach to keep from falling.

Captain William sat gazing at the violent, unrestrained sea in front of him. Waves towering far above the bow crashed into the bridge window. Below the main decks, in the engine room, workers monitored the diesel-electric engines. The engines controlled the azipods, large pod-shaped motors below the hull which propelled the ship. In the storm, the engines were having problems running, despite the ship’s lower throttle. The crew at the computers was trying to ensure the engines kept running, for without them, *Allure* would be dead in the water without electric power. Suddenly, an alarm blared throughout the room, overpowering even the deafening engines. The crew raced to see what the emergency was. One of the engines had overheated, and the temperature continued to climb faster than they could work.

The head officer quickly examined the system monitor. He looked over the engine status itself, yet he could not see a clear problem. He found the answer in the coolant pipe. It had been sucking in air, and as the ship listed so heavily the intake was exposed. The motor which ran the cooling system was severely damaged. The engine continued to heat up to catastrophic levels. As the crew made their best efforts to cool it, it burst, sending a shower of metal and people against the wall. The blast ignited one of the engine’s fuel reserves, setting it off as well.

Up on the bridge, the officers felt the explosion, a small bump, as if maybe they had struck something. Captain William then heard a crackly voice coming from his radio.

“Captain!? Somebody, help!”

With a sick feeling, William picked up the radio and replied.
“This is Captain Wright. What do you need?”

“Captain- Engine three has had a major malfunction! A large explosion has killed many men and caused severe damage to the ship!” the voice on the radio replied. He seemed badly hurt, as if every word caused him excruciating pain.

“How many are dead? And how bad is the damage?”

“Captain… water… flood…” The radio crackled a bit more, then went dead.

Captain William held the radio loosely in his hand. The worse, he feared, had come true.

The maintenance officer yelled from the back of the bridge, “Sir, sensors on deck one have indicated the rear compartments are flooding!”

The bridge was silent as everyone looked at their captain, waiting for the command they knew was coming.

“Sound the general alarm. Muster all crew and guests to the lifeboats,” the captain said, standing up.

The crew began moving from the bridge to start the evacuation of six thousand guests. The Allure of the Seas was sinking. Captain William sounded the horn seven short times, followed by one long blast; the signal of emergency. He then pressed the general alarm activator. It was silent… He pressed it again. Still nothing. William began to grow frustrated and scared. He fumbled with the panel, even opened it and checked for faulty circuits. After a precious five minutes of examination, they discovered a small wire supplying power to the switch had been cut. The crew looked at each other with nervous gazes. As they were finally able to sound the shrill, piercing alarm, Captain William noticed something. The crew was one short. He counted, and re-counted. Then it struck him. Trym was gone.

Captain William tried to convince himself that Trym’s disappearance had nothing to do with the sabotaged alarm system. He had more important things to do now. The passengers needed to be rescued after the ship sunk, and he had to make sure it happened. Red flares launched from the top of the ship, and William walked over to the communications desk, only to find more horrifying news.

“Captain,” began the communications officer, “we have no communication with the coast guard, sir. Nor any close ships. The radio isn’t working at all.”

Captain William had no doubt anymore. Someone was trying to prevent everyone aboard from being rescued, and Trym seemed the most obvious suspect. But why on earth would he want to do that? Wouldn’t that mean he would die too?

Captain William ran out onto the lifeboat deck. It was total chaos. The power had gone out and the ship was at about a thirty degree angle now. One of the first life boats was being moved out over the water, when WHAP!!! The cables holding the lifeboat to the ship
weren’t connected. Someone had cut them. The lifeboat fell two hundred feet into the ocean, breaking it in half. The people on deck panicked; some were pushed overboard.

Lifeboats were not necessarily safer, now. Boat after boat, problems emerged. Some had gaping holes, others were missing their engine. Captain William now sat on a higher deck, watching the pandemonium below. He had tried to help coordinate the evacuation, but now, had given up hope for survival. There was a killer preventing anyone from living, and they were stranded in the middle of the Atlantic. William admired The Allure one last time. She was magnificent and majestic. She would’ve been an incredible cruise ship. He tried again and again to reach another ship with a very small marine radio, but it was hopeless. The radio could only reach a few miles.

Suddenly, he heard someone behind him. Turning, he saw Trym staring at him with a twisted smile.

“What have you been doing, Trym?!” yelled the Captain.

“Just keeping you from preventing what should not be prevented.”

William was confused by this response, but also overwhelmed with anger.

“I can’t let—“ Trym’s sentence was cut short by a deck chair falling from the front of the ship. It was only now that the Captain noticed how severely the ship was tilting. William seized his opportunity and ran at Trym. Trym smiled, ran toward the edge, and jumped. William ran to the edge, thinking he had committed suicide, but the ocean was much higher now. Trym had fallen only seven feet into the seas below. (William thought it was strange that he would just run away, as if he knew William would die anyway.)

The ship had only minutes left. Only about a hundred people were still breathing. Oddly, one life boat wasn’t sabotaged. Maybe Trym had tried to, but he failed. William jumped off the low deck of the ship, and swam to the last boat. A few tired, cold passengers helped him onboard. He sat in a corner, though it was hard to do on this overcrowded boat.

William thought of how people might regard at him as a coward for not going down with his ship. He thought of the stories of the captains of the Oceanos, the Sea Diamond, and the Costa Concordia, all of whom had abandoned their passengers and ships out of fear when they started to sink. They are now some of the most hated men on earth. He prayed people wouldn’t think of him the same way.

William’s thoughts were cut short at a scratching sound on the boat.

“There’s someone in the water!” he heard a man say. Some people began to lift him into the boat, when William recognized him.

“Wait!” he yelled, before they lifted Trym any further. Seeing the Captain, Trym immediately pulled his rescuer into the water and climbed aboard himself. In a lightning fast movement, he pulled a kitchen knife out of his belt, stabbing a woman, and cutting through a man’s neck. Trym made a start for William, but staggered back as a large wave rocked the
boat, for the seas had not yet calmed completely. This time, William wasted no time. He lunged for Trym, knocking him against the wall of the boat. He grabbed the hand with the knife in it, trying to pry it from his grip. Seeing what was happening, a few of the passengers joined the fight, taking the knife from Trym. William kicked Trym, and he fell back into the water. Trym gave a sickening yell and swam back toward the boat. But as if the ocean knew of the evil he had done, a wave knocked the boat hard against his head. Trym blacked out, and as his lungs filled with water, he sank to the bottom of the Atlantic.

William sat back down with his radio, and the others on the boat gathered around him, thanking him for his heroism. William smiled, as he knew even though they would most likely die, the last people he knew didn’t think him a coward, but rather a hero.

William sat in the boat for hours making futile efforts with his hand-held radio. The ocean was quiet now. The storm had died down, and the ship was gone. The screams of the dying had become the silence of the dead. William was half asleep when he heard it.

*This is Captain Giovanni Cutugno of the Freedom of the Seas, is anyone there?*

William could not believe what he was hearing. It was another ship! It could rescue them!

“Yes, Yes! Please come help us! We will shoot a flare!” William yelled in to the radio. He was overwhelmed with joy. Not only was it another ship, but the *Allure of the Seas*’ sister ship, the *Freedom of the Seas*. William looked in the front of the boat for flares; the boats always had many of them. He found some and set them off. As soon as he went outside, he could see the magnificent lights of the other ship. They were saved.

Captain William sat at the bow of the *Freedom* as she sailed smoothly into the harbor at Port Everglades. He could see the terminal just ahead, which was scheduled to receive the *Allure*, though now she will never arrive. He felt the warm sun on his head, a sensation only yesterday he thought he would never feel again. He had been one of the lucky few to survive. Captain William Wright, however, would be known as a hero by the survivors, not a coward. However, William could only think of his ship, the grandest thing on earth, now at the bottom of the ocean.