



Rough Waters: Stories of Survival from the Sea

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"The sea is not cruel, but it is sometimes without mercy," Willis says in his introduction to this collection. "Godlike, the sea seems truly boundless. I see the sea every day and I still fear it." The stories he has compiled give life to the stinging saltwater, biting gales and roaring depths.

From Samuel Leach's emotional account of the gory sea battle on the Macedonian in the War of 1812 to Sebastian Young's report in 1995 on the last of the old whale hunters, the authors and readers portray a fear, respect and adoration of the sea's immense powers. The length, writing style and tone of each of the eight stories included on the tapes vary from historic and factual to emotional sagas that honor the human spirit. By keeping the focus tightly centered on stories of the sea, however, *Rough Waters* fluidly flows from one tale to the next.

The collection seems almost to portray the sea as the main character of an epic novel, serving as both villain and mighty protagonist. It carries Ernest Shackleton and his men to safety after their boat was crushed by ice in an Antarctic exhibition. The same black waters send adventurer David Lewis of New Zealand into such extreme delirium that he destroyed portions of his journal so that the world could never know how corrupted his mind became.

Three of the more colorful stories include a reading of the typhoon scene from "The King Mutiny," memories from a survivor of the Titanic and a stomach-turning account of Steven Calahan's seventy-six days lost at sea in a five-and-one-half foot boat called "Rubber Ducky." Listeners can clearly imagine the cries emitted from the Titanic as it plunged and Calahan gives gruesome detail of the squirt fisheye produces when made one's dinner.

"*Rough Waters*" also includes a modern and real-life version of *The Old Man and the Sea*. Young tells the simple story of the simple life led by Anthony Oliver, seventy-four, the last of the Bequis whale hunters. The detailed account of his difficult, dangerous and often unsuccessful work abhorred by environmentalists worldwide inspires a keen sense of respect for Oliver and the traditions he keeps alive.

Readers of the stories have extensive experience and portray their sagas well. With enthusiasm and amazing emotion they express both despair and delight of life on the seas in this adventurous collection of stories diving into their mysterious depths.

MARJORY RAYMER (March / April 2000)

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