

The Missing Rudder

By Caroline Schrope

Waves crashed and smashed against the hull of the little sailboat. “This is amazing,” Caroline said in astonishment as wind whipped across her joyous face. Barking could be heard from the other side of the deck.

“What, Dango?” Caroline asked. Dango, Caroline’s dog, never barked like this. Dango was a 14-year-old Lab mix. Her long, floppy ears always made it hard to read her expression, but she was always joyful.

The canine companion seemed to be barking because she knew something was wrong. With one look, Caroline knew what it was – the rudder!

“MOM!” Caroline hollered as her family came rushing out of the cabin. “The rudder ... it’s gone!”

“I’ll call the Coast Guard,” her mom said as she dashed into the compact room below.

“The bolt must have come loose. The rudder is probably floating out there somewhere,” her father said.

Just then, Caroline’s mom reappeared on the deck above. “I can’t get a signal out here,” she said.

“We are doomed to be lost in this wilderness forever!” Ryan, Caroline’s brother, wailed.

Suddenly, they heard an “ouch” come from the other side of the boat. The family spun around to see Caroline sitting in a chair, glaring at her bare foot. She was petting her beloved Dango.

“I think I found an important part of the boat,” she said as she yanked a sharp, metallic object out of her swollen foot. “The bolt!” Nathan, her other brother, exclaimed in excitement.

“I’m sorry it had to happen this way,” her father said as he tried to comfort her.

“Now we need to find the rudder. But even if we saw it, we couldn’t steer our boat toward it,” Ryan said with sadness. Just then, a sharp bark pierced the air like a siren.

“What is it now, Dango?” Caroline’s mother said as they rushed to the scene. Dango’s ears were pointed at an item bobbing up and down in the water.

“Could it be? THE RUDDER!” they all shouted.

“But we can’t steer our boat toward it,” said Nathan.

Suddenly, they heard splashing in the distance.

“DANGO!” Caroline screamed as she hurried to the place where her dog had plunged into the water below.

“Come back, Dango!” they all screamed. But Dango kept on paddling. The dog knew what she had to do.

“She’s got it!” Caroline’s dad exclaimed. In five minutes, Dango was back at the boat.

“How are we going to get her up?” Ryan asked.

“Ryan, go get the ladder, please,” his dad said.

“OK,” Ryan answered as he dashed to the storage closet. He was back in seconds.

“You can do it, Dango,” they all chanted. It was a bit of a challenge to get the 60-pound dog out of the freezing seawater.

Soon, the job was done and Dango was covered with hugs, kisses and towels. Because of this amazing dog heroine, the



family would all be snug in their beds that night.