

daylight left.”

“We can go a long way in two hours,” said Rose.

Allnutt sighed. There was no point in trying to argue with Rose, so he decided to do what she wanted. The mechanic pulled up the anchor, gave Rose a brief lesson on how to turn the tiller, then turned his attention to the engine.

Learning to steer the boat was challenging for Rose, but soon she began to enjoy her task.

As she took the boat around the many small islands in the river, Rose thought about her brother and the life she had left behind. All she had now was her plan to sink the Queen Louisa.

A few hours later, Allnutt found a suitable spot to drop anchor for the night, and the pair decided to have supper. Allnutt boiled some water and offered Rose a cup of tea, which she gratefully accepted. They dined on bread and tinned meat, swatting flies and mosquitoes as they ate. When it was time to go to sleep, Allnutt made a bed for himself on top of the boxes of blasting gelatine, while Rose lay down on some rugs on the deck.

“You cover up well,” said Allnutt. “It gets cold on the river at night.”

“I will,” said Rose. And with that, she fell asleep.



CHAPTER 3

SHORTLY BEFORE DAWN THE FOLLOWING MORNING, ROSE WAS awakened by loud thunder. A sudden, fierce wind caused the African Queen to rock from side to side, and soon Rose felt warm raindrops on her face. “What can we do?” she called out to Allnutt, who had also woken up. “We have nowhere to take shelter!”

“I know,” Allnutt shouted back. “We can’t do anything. We just have to wait for it to pass. It probably won’t last long.”

Allnutt was right. The storm was over almost as quickly as it had begun. Unfortunately, the boat was full of water and now the pair had to pump the water out manually, otherwise they were in danger of sinking. Allnutt showed Rose how to use the hand pump, then went ashore to collect more wood for the furnace.

Allnutt’s instructions seemed easy, but Rose soon discovered that it was very hard work. She had to move the handle of the pump up and down forcefully to return the water into the river. But the pump was old and rusty, and it pinched Rose’s fingers; she very quickly grew to hate it.

