

Every fisherman's son in the Philippines knew that a storm at sea could arrive without warning. The air felt electric. The wind smelled sour, like rotten seaweed. Instinctively, the boys grabbed the girls and pulled them toward the center of the boat, where Antonia and a now wide-awake Perla crouched together.

The boat bounced up, down, and in every direction, as small in the towering waves as a grain of Suluan sand. The unpredictable jolts threw the youths to the wet floorboards of the sailboat. The crash and roar of the ocean covered their desperate screams for help.

From the top of every crest, Antonia could see the waves grow bigger and blacker all around. The wind rose and the boat surrendered to the sea. When it dropped down, the massive waves rose up around it with twenty-foot walls of solid water.

Secure within the crusty walls of the cave on Suluan yesterday, Antonia had been safe. Here, she was in peril. At one moment, the waves completely encompassed them, and the next moment the boat rose again and was on top.

Frightened beyond words, the teens huddled closer together and grabbed on to the boxes and bags surrounding them. Everything else slid. Helplessly tethered to the mast, the fat pig lay wet on his side and squealed in terror. The chickens, trapped in their make-shift cages, squawked and flew on top of each other.

The sky unzipped, and rain fell in sheets and torrents. Antonia's stomach was uneasy. A deep, ominous rumbling filled the air, like the sound of drums echoing in a cavern. Lightning flashed, and a boisterous boom of thunder seemed to break the sky in two just over their heads.

Wave after wave rose up before them, beside them, behind them as if they were nothing to the great swells. Suddenly, the mast shattered with a deafening crack, and wood splintered in every direction. The white sail ripped apart, and the halves flapped and tangled among flying ropes and flailing wet arms.

The heavy, drenched cloth wrapped around Peter's upper torso and face until he disappeared into a ghostly mass. As he attempted to wrestle himself free, he lost his grip of the rudder and thus the command of the ship

Excerpt from Chapter 7, *The Storm, SULUAN*, by Nancy Lueckhof.