

Inside This This Book...

“Miami, come in. Do you read me? Do you read me?”

Again, there was no answer from the airport tower, only static. Ever since his Cessna had unexpectedly hit a storm front over the Caribbean captain Greg Pearson, an experienced pilot with the Transaviac Charter airline, had tried to contact Miami airport. He hated not being in control of his aircraft. Dark clouds were swirling around and not even the frequent lightening had made a difference. The sight had been absolutely zero. Captain Pearson ran his hand nervously through his short grey hair. He had never experienced anything like this before.

“This is your captain speaking. Please remain seated with your seatbelts on. I don’t want to see anything else fly, except this plane.”

Captain Pearson had made a few encouraging and even funny remarks over the intercom at first. By now he felt more like screaming at whatever it was that had taken over his plane. Six passengers had embarked on the chartered flight in Bermuda thinking it a stroke of luck. The regular plane due to leave Hamilton for Miami at 7:25 am had been downed with a mechanical problem. The ocean had been calm and sparkling as the tiny, whining plane carried them across the blue sky morning. The passengers regretted their impatience sorely when a storm had hit them out of nowhere.

“Miami come in. Mayday!” The captain bellowed into the radio. “Mayday!”

Static answered. A hissing sound, which did not come from the equipment, had strangely risen and ebbed. None of the instruments worked from the onset of the turbulence, yet they hadn’t plunged into the sea. The Cessna seemed to simply glide as high winds were pulling and tugging at the wings. Now the lightening and swirling dark clouds morphed into heavy fog. A thick dark fog. The tugging stopped. Well, they were still in the air, weren’t they? But where?

“Betsy, keep them calm. Let them have champagne or whatever they want, just keep them calm,” he had told Betsy Fuller the flight attendant. Betsy had set her mouth in determination and went to work. She was a feisty woman with her black hair in a tight bun under the pert stewardess cap. This would not be her last flight, if she had anything to do with it. Jamal and Jerome, her three-year-old twins home in St. Petersburg needed their mother.

“Here is your Bloody Mary, sir.” Betsy Fuller put the red cocktail down on the folding table.

Lafayette Thomas, a civil engineer from Ohio, seemed to be asleep with his head leaning against the window. She left him alone. A British historian, Dr. Peter Spencer, and his son Scott sat rigidly upright, their faces chalky white. The other passengers sat still staring ahead of them in anticipation of the inevitable crash. No need yet for oxygen masks, but the passengers were wearing their yellow life jackets. Betsy Fuller, efficient even in the face of danger, had made sure of that.

“Champagne, sir?”

““Champagne? Is there something wrong? How much longer do we have to endure this?” Dr. Spencer asked timidly.

“Sir, it will be over sooner than you think.”

The plane lurched and Betsy had to steady herself against the seat.

“Have you ever been in weather like this?”

“Oh yes, sir, many times,” the stewardess lied. “And I’m still here.”

She poured a glass of champagne for the historian and a coke for his pop-eyed son. The strange hissing sound stopped abruptly.

“Ha, give me some champagne, too!” A half-drunk passenger roared at the back. “Why not go out on the good stuff?” He laughed hysterically.

“Mayday, Miami, do you read me?” Captain Pearson tried again to make contact, but the static had made way for dead quiet. “Great, that’s helping!”

The two engines sputtered back into action, but it was too dangerous to risk a blind emergency landing. All the captain could do was keeping the plane afloat. Then he saw lights on the ground. Could it be stars reflecting in the sea? But unbelievably, land appeared through the thinning mist and the lights were on the land! His joy turned to dismay. There shouldn’t be any land yet. Not in the Sargasso Sea, unless the force of the storm had driven them completely off-course. Then the fog lifted and Betsy entered the cockpit.

“Captain what is going on?”

“Something very strange, that’s for sure. There is land below, but I have no idea where we are.”

“Why is it dark outside? It can’t be that late. Darn, my watch stopped working.”

A half-moon stood out brightly against the starry sky. It had been broad daylight just before the storm. They had left Bermuda at 9:15 am sharp. The captain checked his watch. It had stopped at 11:12 am, May 28th.

“Are you going to attempt an emergency landing?” Betsy’s voice trembled.

“Without instruments? Too much of a risk. There is still enough fuel in the tank. We’ll have to cruise, while I try and establish contact.”

“What do I tell the passengers? They are asking questions.”

“Tell them everything is fine. We’re just a bit off course that’s all.”

But before Captain Pearson could contact the nearest airport, the instruments came on again, blinking and beeping. The captain tried to operate them, but it was as if something had taken over from him. The landing gear dropped. A few minutes later, the Cessna set down on an illuminated runway, narrowly missing two cone-shaped buildings. The passengers clapped. As soon as the plane touched down, people started to emerge from the buildings. Large people in long white robes...