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## Casting off

With Ben at the wheel, the *Ark* heeled over and struck for open water. Eve stood alone at the prow. Tendrils of spray-soaked hair whipped unattended about her face. Sucking in lungfuls of salt wind she sighed with the sheer pleasure of leaving the troubled world far behind.

They'd had five wonderful days getting the boat seaworthy, and the *Ark* now ploughed a furrow into a new and unpeopled future ... Four hours out, Eve had Ben help her to mount the prow gun, and another in the stern. She took great pleasure in his look of boyish delight, as she handed him a missile launcher and told him to find a handy place for it. The need to hide her lethal horde was long past. On this voyage, he was her trusted companion. "Pirates won't find us easy pickings this time Ben." Smiling broadly, he shouldered the weapon and headed amidships. "Ben? I've been looking at the charts. We can be in deep and fairly unpopulated waters by nightfall. Right now, it's calm, and visibility is excellent, so no one is likely to surprise us. I think we can afford to relax a little. I'm for a swim and some lunch. How does that sound for you?"

"A warm shower and a hearty lunch will be waiting my Lady." Having escaped the weight of responsibility that had confined him these long months, he was flushed with excitement and exhilaration at the prospect of embarking on another lone adventure with the mistress he so idolised and worshipped, and was more than eager to attend to her comforts.

"Still calling me Lady; can't you just say Eve, Ben? We are friends now, aren't we?"

"Always Lady Eve, but it wouldn't be proper."

"You know my history Ben. You know that I was once a man, so that epithet is not really very appropriate."

"I was a man too Lady Eve, but things are different now. We are different."