

**BETWEEN THE DEVIL AND THE DEEP BLUE SEA**  
**By Carole L. Cooney**

In the early 17<sup>th</sup> century, the heavy wooden plank fastened to the side of a ship as a support for guns was called the devil. To repair the ship, a sailor would have to go out on the plank. During stormy seas the sailor would be in danger of falling overboard and drowning because he was “between the devil and the deep blue sea.” Today, this idiom means being between two equally difficult dangers of any kind.

**Setting:** On board a sailing vessel, the *Crystal Queen*

**Characters:**

Narrator

Captain Hans

Sailor Andreas

Sailor Marcus

Lady Erica

Lord Eric

Lady Valerie

**Narrator:** The seas were calm on a sunny June afternoon. Lord Eric and Lady Erica were strolling on the deck talking with Captain Hans. Suddenly, Sailor Andreas rushed to the Captain.

**Sailor Andreas:** Sir, there’s water coming into the ship! Come quickly!

**Captain Hans:** (rushing away from his guests) Is there a leak? Sound the bell!

**Lady Erica:** (frantic) Oh! What shall we do? Are we to go to our cabin? Shall we stay on deck? Oh, Lord Eric, what are we to do?

**Lord Eric:** Stay calm, my dear. We’ll wait for the Captain’s report. I think it best to go inside.

**Lady Erica:** Where is Lady Valerie? What if we sink? What if they can’t stop the water from coming in? What...

**Lord Eric:** Please, my dear, it will do no good to fret and grow more anxious. Give me your hand and we’ll go to the dining room. Perhaps Lady Valerie is there. A beverage will cure all ills.

**Lady Erica:** How can you think of beverages at a time like this!

**Narrator:** Lord Eric gently leads Lady Erica into the dining room. They see Lady Valerie and join her for tea.

**Lord Eric:** Lady Valerie, have you heard the news?

**Lady Valerie:** What news? I’ve been sitting here enjoying my tea and reading this most wonderful book. What are you talking about?

**Lady Erica:** Oh, Lady Valerie, the most dreadful news! There is water coming into the ship!

**Lady Valerie:** Oh! What shall we do?

**Lord Eric:** I think we should remain calm and wait for the Captain’s report.

**Narrator:** In the meantime, Captain Hans calls for Sailor Andreas and Sailor Marcus.

**Sailor Andreas:** Sir, we've located the leak and must go out on the devil to repair the damage.

**Sailor Marcus:** Sir, I'll assist Andreas as the hole looks mighty big.

**Captain Hans:** Make haste as there's a storm approaching!

**Narrator:** Sailor's Marcus and Andreas climb over the ship's railing and land on the wooden plank called the devil. The storm comes quickly and makes huge waves crash into the side of the ship. The sailors tie themselves to the ship so that they will not fall as they make the repairs. The Captain enters the dining room to tell the guests what is happening.

**Captain Hans:** Friends, my best sailors are working quickly to mend the large hole on the side of our ship. The storm makes this work very difficult. Our sailors are between the devil and the deep blue sea.

**Lady Erica:** I hope they are very careful. Those huge waves could wash them into the sea. How dreadful!

**Lord Eric:** What created the hole?

**Captain Hans:** It seems there was some wood that had rotted and the sea's fierce movement washed that section of our ship away.

**Lady Valerie:** How brave your sailors are!

**Narrator:** The sailors finish patching the hole and climb onto the ship's deck. They stand at the dining room door.

**Captain Hans:** Ahhh. Here they are! What is your report?

**Sailor Andreas:** We've patched the ship's side good and tight.

**Sailor Marcus:** We've done such a good job that the no sea water will ever enter again!

**Captain Hans:** Excellent! Go down below and get some grog to celebrate your good work. And let us celebrate their success as well.

**Narrator:** As the guests were served warm drinks and sweets, they lifted their glasses to honor the brave sailors.