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## *Courtship and Consummation*

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# COURTSHIP AND CONSUMMATION

(From Chapters One and Five of the novel  
VOYAGE OF THE HONOUR BOUND)  
by Angelee Sailer Anderson

Her figurehead was a gold-haired lady with weather-worn breasts and sad green eyes. The English oak of which she was built had known better years; the great barnacles that clung to her hull were sign of a sickness, not fatal, yet one she could not forget. She had seen far too many lands, felt too many times the rollers lift and plunge her prow; she could not endure to reckon the intolerable weight of the fathoms that had passed beneath her. Wooed and raped by blackguard breezes, what now remained of her once-bright flags and streamers flew in tatters. She was a warship who warred no longer, and she could not remember why they had named her the **Honour Bound**.

She sailed before a southeasterly wind, marking off the degrees -- fifteen south, a hundred and ten west. Twenty-one south . . . Sea-worthy still yet sea-weary, how she yearned to let out her anchor-chain to its end and sail no more. But he who manned her helm drove her on toward the Cloud of Islands, till she came to the threshold of where the hundred and twentieth meridian crosses the Tropic of Capricorn.

As she recorded that threshold within her log of wandering the wind died suddenly, and the helmsman nodded briefly to sleep beneath the afternoon glare. She was left, fearfully, to her own device. More fearfully, she discovered that she could choose.

There across the threshold she saw him, though her mariners did not, for with purpose he confounded their vision. His ferny grottoes, his canopy of green, his aisles of coconuts and deep glens where lovers delight to stray, his caves and carven pools and shining beaches of volcanic and coral sand, the glittering ribbons of his waterfalls leaping in ecstasy from palis that scrape the under-roof of heaven -- in an instant of revelation she knew him, the perfect image of her heart's eternal dream. He smelled sweetly of sandalwood and red ginger, and he was beckoning to her, to her, the **Honour Bound**.

"Heave to, beloved," he said. "Enter in beyond the barrier of my reef and remain. You only have I courted: the **Resolution** passed near me and I did not speak to her, nor did I unfold my beauty to the **Adventure** or to the galleons of the Spaniards who came before her. Pirates and privateers would fain have sounded the blue-green pleasures of my lagoon; mutineers would have made me their refuge from infamy. Whalers would have rested in me from their labours, merchantmen defiled me with their

commerce, and the armadas of many nations made me a game-piece in their wars. But none of these have I permitted to behold me, for it is you for whom I have waited. How fair past telling are the masts and bowsprit that support your sails, how worthy beyond praise your fore-castle, your quarter-deck, and the figurehead that embodies your spirit and adorns your prow. I have desired you with profound desire, and at last you are come. Now come nearer, beloved, and heave to within my arms."

So the Island spoke, and she did not at once answer. His beauty was too exalted, his majesty too terrible; she could scarcely believe it was her ravaged self for whom his words were meant. Yet fearing to hope while not daring to doubt, nearly the lonely ship forsook all thought of prudence and hearkened to his call. Then suddenly she remembered her pride, and remembered, a little, why she had been given her name.

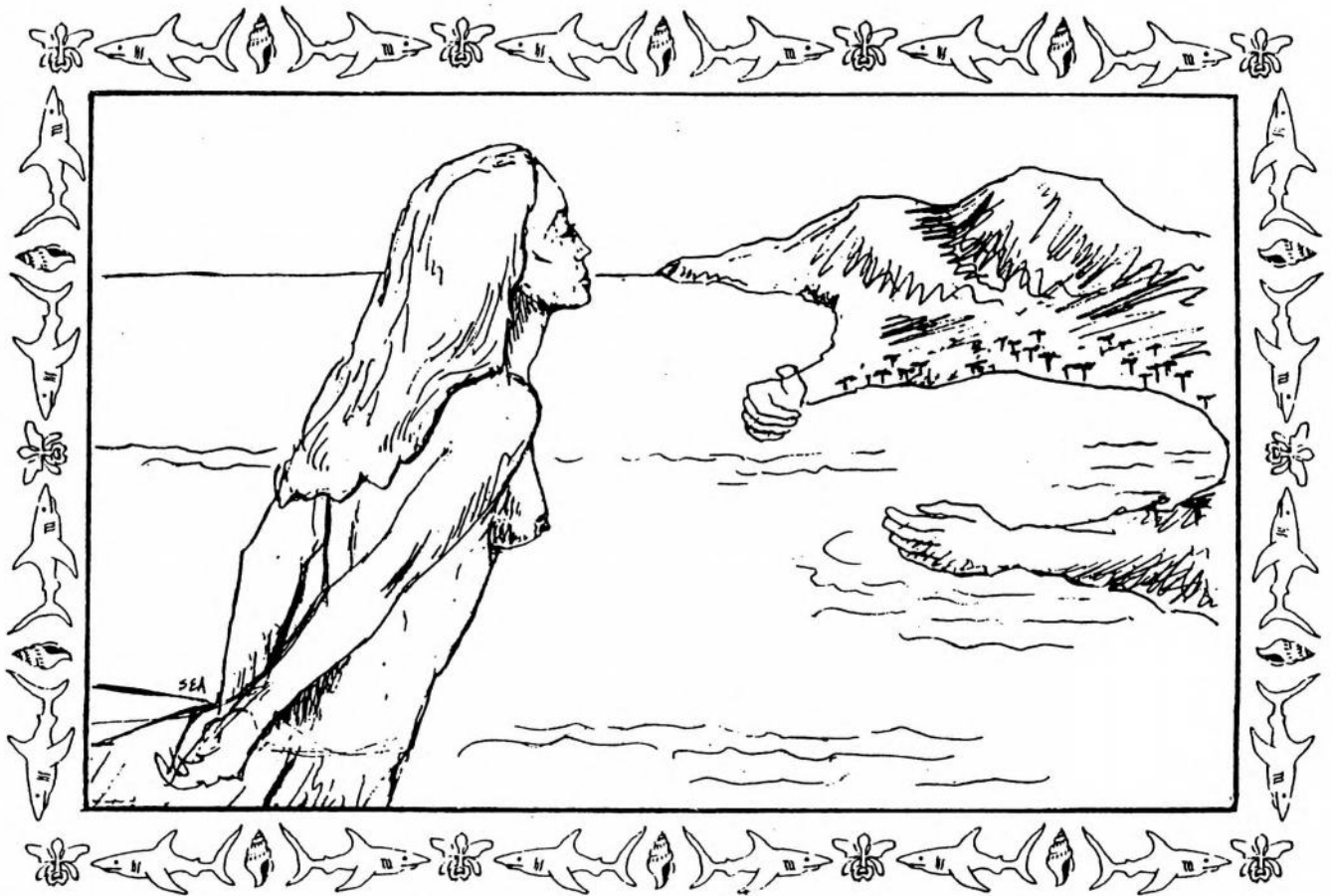
"Why should I heave to in the arms of you, a stranger, and not rather return to the landfalls of lovers I know well? What bridal gift have you to offer that they have not already bestowed? I have heard the music of their ripe fruits bursting with liquid joy as they drop to the ground; I have worshipped the moon where it hangs low over their basalt pinnacles, and praised the delicacy of tree skeletons encased in the hardened overflow of their volcano gods' passion. I have blessed the colours of a thousand shells and gloried in the impossible forms of ten thousands of fishes, and I have seen the spider, moth and tiger orchids blooming beside the hibiscus and the golden shower tree on many shores. What have you to offer me more than these? I will not come to you, I will not heave to, for I am bound to Honour until I sink with rotted planks beneath the tide."

Thus haughtily the ship replied, though within her hollow hold she was trembling. "I am bound to Honour," she repeated in a voice as hollow.

"You have strayed far from Him," said the Island. His voice was brimming with pity she could not bear.

The ship began to weep. Ocean-spray dashed itself upon her figurehead's cheeks and gifted the sad-eyed lady with tears. A blue shark broke through the mirror-smooth surface at her starboard side, but she did not heed it.

"I have strayed far, farther than the Deluge was deep, and there is no way back," she wailed.



Straining his sinews mightily, the Island opened the coral-rampart of his arms. Where had been an unbroken reef there was now a breach.

"The way lies forward and through me," he whispered, and waited.

*(Here follow three chapters concerning the ship's three mariners. Then commences Chapter Five...)*

"I have strayed far, farther than the Deluge was deep, and there is no way back," wailed the ship, swaying tipsily in her distress to port and starboard. Her figurehead, portrait of a love forsaken, showered the waves with salt-wetness which had not sprung from them.

The Island opened the coral-rampart of his arms, making a breach in his reef only wide enough for her to pass. "The way lies forward and through me," he whispered, waiting to enfold her or watch her recede from him forevermore.

"I cannot," she moaned in agony, her planks shaking and bowing outward. "If you shut your arms too soon I will be driftwood on your sand. I cannot go for-

ward, for there is no wind; I cannot go back, for I would burst my heart in leaving you. I cannot, I cannot, so I shall capsize, rock my mariners to a seven hundred fathom grave and an everlasting sleep."

Then so might the Honour Bound have done, but that she felt a thing of power, a thing of holiest beauty and loveliest good brush against her. She could not see it for her tears, but at its touch its deep blueness entered her, lading her with celestial cargo, and she heard its voice murmuring softly and low, "The way lies forward. Take the way." And the blue that was in her answered, "Yes"; and there, where the hundred and twentieth meridian crosses the Tropic of Capricorn, she began with windless sails to ghost forward.

Then the trade wind rose again and took the way with her, for trade is an ancient word for path. Her mariners roused themselves too late to stay the Island's arms from completing their circle, and she sailed on into the bethel of his lagoon and there hove to. And the sun prepared to sink, to hide from dishonouring eyes the honourable end of courtship in consummation.