

FFICKLE FFANCY

Now I'm a simple country girl, a busy farmer's wife
And there's little time for glamour in my hectic daily life
What with washing, cooking, cleaning, garden, horses, dogs and sheep
Not to mention three young children- it's enough to make you weep!
So when there's something happening that brings visitors to town
With the chance to meet new people, you can hardly keep me down
And when I heard the Yacht Club was to host a huge regatta
I took the family to town for some well earned social chatter.

The World Championship for sailing in the Flying Fifteen class
Had brought to town the very best international top brass
Though a handful of the fairer sex had qualified to sail
The ones that really caught my eye were bronzed and lithe- and male!
I soon found out that in these sporty flying fifteen yachts
The skip and crew tripped round the world to sail in different spots
New Zealand, Hong Kong, Ireland, Durban, Cowes to name a few
Right then I knew I had to learn to sail a fifteen too.

For quite two weeks we watched them dash about the Esperance Bay
And the evening social programme nearly blew my mind away
We wined, we dined, we entertained - with bleary eyes they sailed
But still they raced away each day, their prowess uncurtailed
They made it look so easy as their spinnakers were set
And I vowed that I would buy a boat- to hell with all the debt!
So when it was all over and our new friends had departed
This simple country girl upon a brand new plan had started.

The husband sailed a lot before the poor man married me
But as wives can be expensive he had given up you see
He'd spent his dosh on horses when that was my current phase
And then forked out on golf clubs - and there'd been my tennis craze
Then there'd been the wet suit, when I thought I'd learn to dive
And all the tanks and gear one needs to breathe and stay alive
So when I mentioned sailing, and I thought I might be keen,
The husband staggered visibly, and he turned a little green.

He was lucky that he had a friend who let us use his boat
So we rigged it up and pulled on gear to keep us both afloat
We had a little dummy run for half an hour or so
And the husband quickly told me names of things I ought to know.
He barked out words like "halliard!", "sheet!" and "cleat!" and "jibe!" and "tack!"
And I think he thought I'd learnt it all by the time we both sailed back
To be honest I was so confused by the varied sail and rope
But not wanting to show weakness I concurred that I could cope.

My first attempt at racing came on Saturday that week
We got out on the water and across the waves did streak
The wind was fair, I got the kite up, did as I was told
I thought "I'm going to like this!" - and I wasn't wet or cold
It was a short course series, so I had to move quite quick
I was kept so flaming busy there was no time to feel sick
And as we crossed the finish line, I thought, "Hey! - I can sail!"
That's when the bloody wind changed to a howling South East gale.

Race two was very different from the one we'd sailed before
My arms were tired; my fingers stiff, my legs were bruised and sore
The twenty five knot wind was working "hubby" overtime
He was yelling out instructions, doing his job, checking mine
I was hiking out and lee-ing ho, and getting it all wrong
The kite was ruddy hard to raise- I'd left the cover on!
And then I got it twisted, and by the time I'd got it out
I had to get the damn thing down and prepare to go about.

That's when the trouble started and the husband lost his rag
I got the kite hooked on the bow, beneath the boat it dragged
"Oh, bloody hell!" the husband cried, "I'll do it -out the way!"
I grabbed the helm, he cleared the kite, we were soaked in spume and spray
I steered the boat towards the mark, a jibe was called for next
"Vang off!" he screamed, "VANG OFF, YOU FOOL!" he looked panicky and vexed
"VANG OFF YOURSELF!" I shouted back, the sails strained even tauter
And then the boat was on its side and completely filled with water.

Three grueling hours later we were heading back to shore
I was battered, bruised, exhausted, completely frozen to the core
I tried to get off gracefully, but I slipped and hit the deck
The husband helped me overboard with a firm grip to the neck.
He dragged me to the water's edge, where face down in the sand
I mumbled incoherently and wept and kissed the land
Some helpful hardened sailors pulled the boat in, which was handy
And I staggered off towards the bar for a large medicinal brandy.

Next day the husband seemed to be a very happy man
For I think he felt he'd just been saved from another costly plan
We were waiting outside for a friend to drop by in his plane
When the high pitched drone of aircraft buzzed inside my weary brain.
The Cessna swooped and climbed and soared, My God, it looked such fun!
And the wing tips glinted brightly as they dipped and caught the sun
I said, turning to the husband, with a twinkle in my eye
"I think I'll give up sailing- buy a plane - and learn to fly!"

(Traditionally Flying Fifteen yachts have a double 'f' in their names. Ours, when we eventually bought one, was aptly called "Difforce Material.")

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