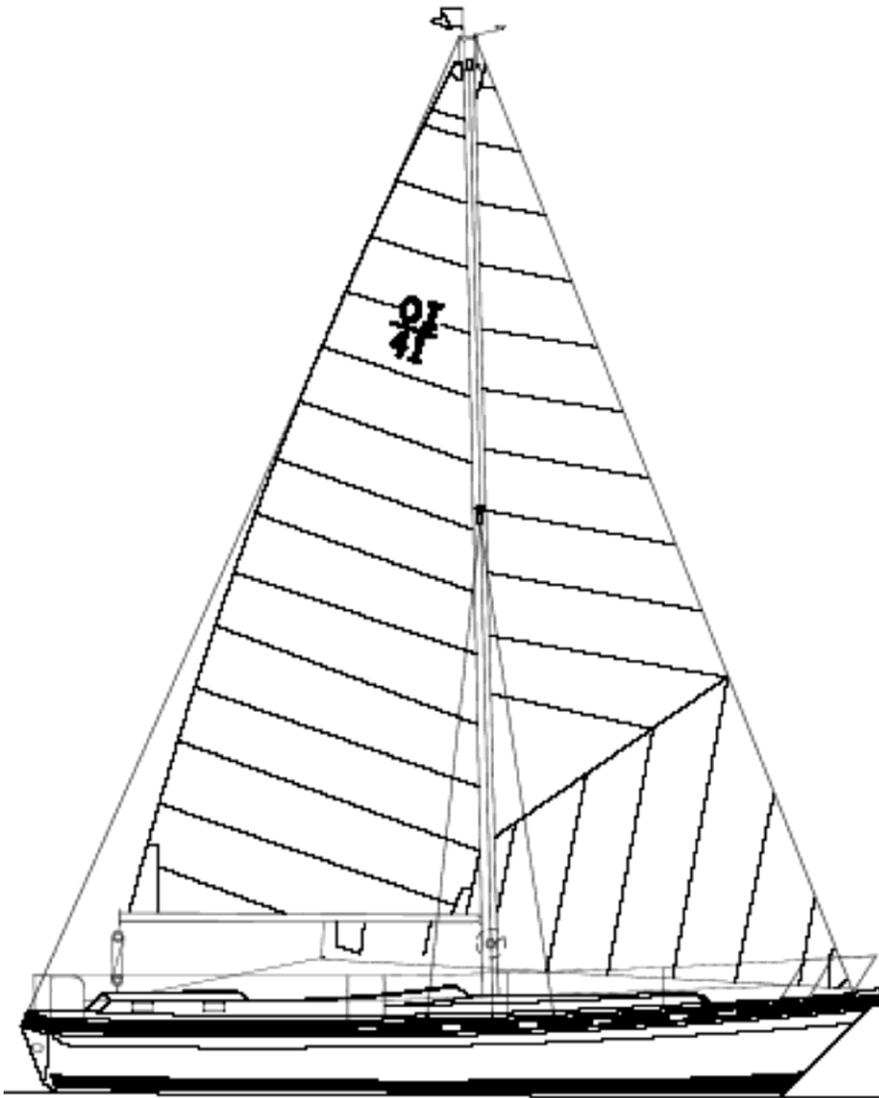


**M. Randolph Mason**

**Morgan 41**

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am the son-of-a-son-of-a-sailor. I owe a great debt of gratitude to my father, a sea captain, who put me on the water and drew from an unbelievable supply of patience... and to my family, some of whom have passed on and will never know what those summers meant to the scrawny boy.

I am profoundly grateful to my wife, family, and friends who have been nothing but encouraging and tolerant.

Line drawings extracted from the Morgan 41 Out Island Owners Manual available at <http://www.dv-fansler.com/Sailing/Annabelle/morgan.htm>. and used by permission.

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“She’s Like the Swallow” is a Canadian folk song of unclear origin and authorship. Occurrences of its passages in this work are metaphorical.

You will read conversations as if you are with them. Telephone conversations are heard as if you are standing in their presence and listening to only one side. I believe, if you pause between lines, you will easily imagine what is being said on the other end.

When one of the main characters is talking to themselves - and they do - *their unspoken words are in italics.*

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A warning: This is a book in which emotional and physical intimacy have significant impact.

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### Excerpts from Chapter 1

“...I don’t think so,” she repeated, her eyes now wide with fear as she realized what he wanted to do.

He grasped her by the wrist as she struggled. His face changed to a different sort of aggression.

“Don’t be a bitch! Come on!”

He swung her around as if to head for the parked cars.

Neither he nor she saw the light pole by the pier. As he yanked her around, she slammed, face first, into the creosote covered pole. The tiny silver bracelet fragmented as her hand slipped through his grip. He passed to the inside of the

pole, but she launched over the bulwark. The fallen canvas purse tangled in his feet and he pitched forward onto the gravel.

For her, time decelerated to slow motion. Her back arched as her view panned up the pole, past the light arm, past the bright mercury vapor lamp, and then the evening sky. Droplets of blood flew in formation before her eyes. One little white sandal passed in and then out of view. Her legs rotated upward following the spiraling inertia of her body. They splayed wide, splitting the back seam of her dress most of the way up to the zipper stop. Outward and downward... her fading, one eyed stare rotated into the twilight.

Four feet away and facing the slimy pilings, the now stunned and nearly unconscious girl penetrated the water, feet now together, as if standing upright. In a nice neat configuration, she entered the dark cold inlet with hardly a splash. Under the pressure of her plunge, the split dress immediately inverted over her arms and face but caught at her armpits.

Down she sank like a dart until her delicate feet pressed into the muddy bottom of the inlet. The cold of the water shocked her into awareness - except for the confusion of having her arms pinned over her head. She struggled with the dress, managing to work it back down to her chest. Her lungs burning, she kicked back up towards the surface. Her underwear sagged on her slight body and bunched down on her thighs. Mercifully, the water was only slightly over six feet deep. Immediately after she broke the surface, she banged into a timber cross member bolted to the face of the pilings. Gasping for air, she reached up and clung to the slippery wood. Not 60 feet away, the back-porch bar crowd was in full swing, Saturday night, hot and sweaty, rock and roll

Above her was the angry young man pitching a temper tantrum. Looking over the edge to the water ten feet below, he was mouthing off into the darkness below.

The restaurant spotlights, triggered by the photovoltaic sensors, came on and lit up the water below the deck... so that the ducks could see. The island of light did not include the shivering, near drowned waif.

Holding on to the timber with one hand, she struggled to pull the remnants of the summer dress over her head and finally pushed it away from herself. Gasping from the effort and the coldness of the water, she looked up but could not see the bulwark above. From her water level perspective, she saw no end to the inlet.

The bar crowd was still in boogie... oblivious of her... as usual.

Trading hands, she turned to face away from the pilings. She could see across the inlet to a row of slips with yachts, about a hundred feet away. A little to the left was a low floating landing with small open boats clustered all about it. The spotlights were reflecting off the shiny ones.

With one hand clutching the waistband of her underwear, she side-stroked across to the low landing. Exhausted again, she pushed between the small boats and clung to the edge of the float. After many tries, she managed to scratch and drag herself onto the float. She lay panting for a moment and then passed out. In time she awoke and after laboriously hauling herself to sit with her back against the dock ladder, she examined herself in the light gleaned from the back porch spotlights. The loudspeakers blared the raucous song about friends in low places.

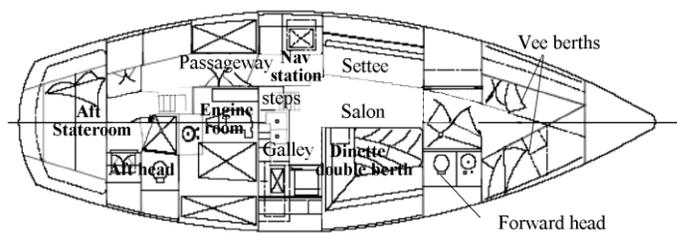
Her hollow stomach and the tops of her legs and feet were scraped and weeping blood. She touched her face. Her trembling lips were swollen. Her left cheekbone and eye brow were slippery with half clotted blood. Her head pounded. Knuckles were skinned and she had at least one splinter in each hand. Her shivering was uncontrollable as were her tears.

She moved back into the dark... back down the long dock. Through her remaining but poorly focusing eye, she discerned a sleek white yacht tied alongside the pier. It was away from the others. The cockpit of the yacht was ringed with white, vinyl cushioned seats. There was a soft glow from its cabin windows. She peeked in - no one. Just a little lantern on a counter top. Gingerly lowering herself to the cockpit, she tested the hatch. It wasn't locked. She was desperate.

With no luck, she looked for something to wear. Above each narrow bed there were compartments for storage. There were blankets and a pillow stuffed into each compartment.

She wrapped herself in one of the blankets and collapsed onto a bunk.

Blessed rest came quickly.



Morgan 41 Out Island Sloop - Cabin/Interior

### Excerpts from Chapter 3

Captain Mikey had not started Tattoo's shakedown by the night of the 10<sup>th</sup> of September, when *she* mysteriously arrived aboard.

On Saturday, the 11<sup>th</sup>, Captain Mikey planned to switch out of Royale and into Tattoo. He began by packing his duffel bag and lugging it up the dock to Tattoo. He dropped the bag down into her cockpit, and then went on to the gatehouse to check the mail and get a cart to bring the rest of his belongings from Royale. Sure enough there was a letter from the Levins... probably their last minute modifications to the provisions list, and their travel plans. He pushed the cart back to Tattoo. He opened the hatch to swing his duffel down into the cabin. It was unlocked. He must have forgotten to lock up yesterday evening before he went over to Calhoun's. Following the bag down, he dropped the unopened letter onto the dinette table. The little battery lantern was still on, so he switched it off and pushed it into a corner.

The cabin smelled funny. Captain Mikey reached up and slid the main hatch all the way forward, pushed back the curtains, and opened the main cabin windows. Then "*that's strange*", there seemed to be a head odor, but then the head hadn't been used since renovation. He went to the head and looked in. Sure enough, the bowl had urine in it.

It was then that he noticed the towels and panties wadded up in the corner. He reached down and fished them out. One towel was wet but clean, the other was damp but smudged with something... and blood. The small panties were smudged with mud and green slime and what looked like tar or oil, and on the front of them, streaks of blood.

His heart leapt in his chest and he jumped back into the main cabin. He looked quickly around, and soon enough, spotted the small figure curled up and partially covered by a blanket in the starboard vee-berth. He rushed forward and knelt next to the small girl. The thin legs and small feet were exposed below the blanket. Knees, shins, and foot-tops were skinned raw, but scabbing over. He held his breath and peeled back the blanket from her head. Lifting the tangle of black hair, he discovered her little face lying, right side down, in a huge clot of blood that had flowed across the bridge of her nose and pooled on the white pillow. The condition of the left side of her face took the wind out of him. Her eye was caked shut with blood. Both her eyebrow and cheek bone were gashed, but not bleeding. The entire side of her face was one nasty bruise.

And also, she was breathing.

He gently removed the blanket to discover the tiny little naked body beneath. Her chest, stomach, forearms, and upper thighs had the same abrasions as her feet and legs. A fingernail was partially ripped away from her right ring finger. This young lady had put up a hell of a fight and had lived to tell about it. Recovering his wits, he made the hatch in two jumps. He sprinted down the dock to Doctor Richardson's trawler "Caduceus Ret."