

M. RANDOLPH MASON



courtesy Captain Neal Parker

SKIPJACK

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Story Line

Byrne Gordon is one of two (twin) sons born to Bruce Gordon, a no nonsense CEO and major stockholder of an international engineering and logistics company. Byrne is less than industrious and even less interested in working hard for a living. He managed to pick up a degree in history from Old Dominion University, but fancies himself a classical guitarist... which he is... but not good enough to make a living at it.

Bruce Gordon also has twin daughters who are brilliant and industrious. These young women will inherit his shares and status in the company. To each of the two sons, Brian and our hero Byrne, he leaves a trust which produces just enough income on which to live... but not more.

Byrne has purchased a modified Skipjack and lives on it at a yacht club. He lives a Jimmy Buffett lifestyle while occasionally performing in the yacht club dining room. There he meets Mary Kate Ferguson, who is a graduate of Shenandoah Conservatory and a concert cellist in addition to her job waiting tables. Mary is indeed a virtuoso and easily recognizes Byrne for what he is... and isn't. It is fortuitous that Mary can look down on the Skipjack from the restaurant windows. She sees something in Byrne that no one else detects.

In an impulsive act of gallantry, Byrne rescues a woman, two little girls, and the woman's sister along the interstate highway. They are fleeing from an impossible life and poverty. Only after Byrne has loaded them and their life's possessions into his aging

SUV, does he learn that they are homeless. Byrne moves them onto his boat... temporarily. The mother is a methamphetamine addict. When Byrne declines to support this dependency, she steals his Jeep and disappears. She will never be heard from again.

The aunt doesn't like children and this distain is aggravated by the close quarters on the boat (Byrne sleeps in the captain's stateroom; separate from them). When he catches the aunt whipping the girls, he lays down the law about child abuse on his boat. The aunt abandons the two girls (Caroline, age 11 and Savannah, age 8).

Byrne has already enrolled the girls in private school... temporarily... of course. Byrne begins to act like a father to the girls. They begin acting like his children. His cash flow changes direction. Mary watches from the restaurant... and smiles.

Can they pull this one off for the next ten years? With a little discrete help from Byrne's sisters and some not so discrete help from Mary... well that is *the story*.