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Fatal Forecast: An Incredible True Tale of Disaster and Survival at Sea

Michael J. Tougias

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A true story of catastrophe and survival at sea, *Fatal Forecast* is a spellbinding moment-by-moment account of seventy-two hours in the lives of eight young fishermen, some of whom would never set foot on dry land again.

On the morning of November 21, 1980, two small Massachusetts lobster boats set out for Georges Bank, a bountiful but perilous fishing ground 130 miles off the coast of Cape Cod. The National Weather Service had forecast typical fall weather, and the young, rugged crewmen aboard the *Sea Fever* and the *Fair Wind* had made dozens of similar trips that season. They had no reason to expect that this trip would be any different.

But the only weather buoy on Georges Bank was malfunctioning, and the National Weather Service had failed to share this fact with the fishermen who depended on its forecasts. As the two small boats headed out to sea, a colossal storm was brewing to the southeast, a furious maelstrom the National Weather Service did not accurately locate until the boats were already caught in the storm's grip, trapped in the treacherous waters of Georges Bank.

Battered by sixty-foot waves and hurricane-force winds, the crews of the *Fair Wind* and the *Sea Fever* (captained by Peter Brown, whose father owned the *Andrea Gail* of *Perfect Storm* fame) struggled heroically to keep their vessels afloat. But the storm soon severely crippled one boat and overturned the other, trapping its crew inside.

Meticulously researched and vividly told, *Fatal Forecast* is first and foremost a tale of miraculous survival. Most amazing is the story of Ernie Hazzard, who managed to crawl inside a tiny inflatable life raft and then spent more than fifty terrifying hours adrift on the stormy open sea. By turns tragic, thrilling, and inspiring, Ernie's story deserves a place among the greatest survival tales ever told.

Equally riveting are the stories of the brave men and women from the Coast Guard and the crew of a nearby fishing boat who imperiled their own lives that day in order to save the lives of others.

As gripping and harrowing as *The Perfect Storm* - but with a miracle ending - *Fatal Forecast* is an unforgettable true story about the collision of two spectacular forces: the brutality of nature and the human will to survive.

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