

## 4.1 Miles

By Suzy Hopkins

On the Greek police radio, “The call just came in. A boat full of people has appeared in the ocean between Syria or Libya and Greece. We don’t know what country they came from.”

The Captain of the only Greek Coast Guard ship from the island of Lesbos contacts his staff and they search for the boat. It turns out to be a large inflatable raft filled to overflowing with people in life jackets, barely still afloat. The Coast Guard ship gently approaches the raft so the wake doesn’t tip it over. Their language is unknown so they motion them to climb aboard. First the crew pulls the women and children up the side of the ship. One woman is holding two tiny children and as she attempts to board the rescue ship she falls back in the water with both children falling free of her arms. The ship leaves the raft and pursues the three floating refugees. The Coast Guard men grab them from the rough water. Unfortunately, both children are unconscious. The frustrated Captain is the only one who knows CPR and must try to bring them both back – breathing. Quickly, all the refugee men climb aboard so the ship heads for shore.

When the crammed-full ship reaches land some nurses take over. Silver colored blankets are wrapped around all the wet survivors to heat them up as many are shivering. One child lives. One does not.

The smugglers tell the refugees it is a short distance, their boats are safe. They take your money and provide a life jacket for each adult. Several million refugees take that chance every year. Hundreds of thousands drown trying to reach land away from their war-torn countries.

The Greek Captain, with tears in his eyes, says, “My country has no more money. We can’t take in any more refugees. We need help. We must continue to rescue these desperate people who risk their lives by travelling the 4.1 miles to escape the wars ... we need help.”

A short time later, on the Greek police radio the call comes in, “A boat full of people ...”