

IMAGES

Part Two

“PHOTO”: defined: Yesterday’s Light. A Fading Soul. “

30 Days !

Each and every one of those 30 days he would showed up.

He did a Duck-like waddling down the marina ramp, past all of the other boats, until he stood alongside me and *“Myndir”*.

Always smiling that crooked smile of his, he’d greet me with a croaking a soft “Haloo”.

He'd slowly walk around the slip, titling his head composing the next photo he’d take. At times, stoping to stare at me with those odd “Dead” colored eyes of his.

Then off he’d go again quietly moving around, studying the angles.

The equipment he carried was odd. It looked very old and was scratched and cracked having seen what must have been decades of use.

A wide leather strap draped over one of the old man’s shoulder held The camera loosely at his side.

It’s not what these days we’d call a camera.

It sure wasn’t some pricey digital wonder with a monstrous zoom lens and a fancy brand name that people like to brag about.

No, it was big and black like those old fashioned cameras I’ve seen in museums.

Each day he arrived at my boat, he would open its box shape, unfold a bellows that stretched out several inches, and begin.

His fingers were at the end of some kind of cord that had a plunger.

There was a black hood on the top of the box that he would stare into as he set up to take a photo.

The routine was always the same. Every one of the 30 days he showed up, he’d cackle a laugh, hack out some nastiness he had in his throat, look at me and say, “Do wha cha was doin’, ne’r mind wha I be doin’ “.

Those first few days, I would try to chat with him, but he’d just smile and move around peering into that hood.

I finally gave up trying and just went on with my cleaning and prep work on *“Myndar”*

Every day he’d walk around while mumbling things like, “Yep”. “Tha’s it” or “Tha’ll work”.

He’d giggle some, do a little dance, Then push that plunger thing and I’d hear the click of the shutter. I was beginning to hate that shutter sound

“Sssnik “

He took only one. One shot each day. Only one photo each day of me and the boat.

No series of shots, no artsy stuff, just that one click and then he’d shuffle away down the slip, waddle back up the ramp and disappear.

I thought about not coming to the boat one day, just to screw him up, but I had too much to do to get ready for my cruise.

“I’ll just have to put up with the old SOB !” I told myself.

The last day of September and I was ready to drop the mooring lines and, as they say, Go forth. The tide tables showed a helping current would happen around midnight. That would be perfect.

I could leave without having to say goodbye to all of the “hanger’s on” that one gathers when you have a sailboat in a public marina.

The boat digital clock showed 11:45. I started the engine, dropped the shore power line and was just about to slip the lines. My excitement level jumped up to 10 on a scale of 10 ?

Just as I was about to move out....

That crazy old "Gnome" came waddling down the dock.

"Hey der, young fella, I tot I's goin' ta miss ya" he screeched.

"I becha almost forgot I's gonna give ya some copies of da pichers I took of ye, didn't ye ? "

Clutched in his hand was a bundle of papers. I had no idea what they were.

"I made a special ting fer ye. It be a kind of a weekly calendar fer a cupple month. ders a differr'n't photo of You an' de Boot . I made it so's you'd see a photo of you each week "

That got my attention. I'd forgotten I'd made him promise to give me copies of the photos, and now the idea of a calendar was kind of neat.

"Why , thank you old timer ! I be happy to see what you've done. That's a great idea for a weekly calendar. What do I owe you for it ? "

"Ahh me lad, Not a damn ting, I be glad to do it fer ye and yer comin' cruise. Maybe yoo'l ting of old Orisk Boggart once in a while .." Then he cackled that "Calk of a blackboard" laugh of his... And. Just walked away !

I watched him walk up the ramp and fade into the dark. All the time laughing that maddening cackle of his. His sounds died out just as my clock ticked over to 00:00, It was time to shove off.

Riding an ebb tide at night can be a lot of fun, sometimes and sometimes it can be pretty hARRY. This night it was a smooth ride, albeit some what like an INDY 500.

We were moving at an outstanding rate. The SOG (speed over the ground) was almost 15 knots. Fast even with the waterline this boat had. A fluorescent frothing at the bow and a wake of glowing bugs zipping away from the boat would have said "Quick" even without the GPS reading. The main channel came up sooner than I expected so it wasn't long before we settled in to a groove.

I set a waypoint on the GPS, engaged the autohelm and relaxed. All had gone so well, it was time for a beer.

It had been an hour since dropping the mooring lines. Now relaxed, the regular cleanup jobs done, and with the boat pretty much on its own, I was bored.

It was still dark so I couldn't sight see. Suddenly I remembered the stack of papers the old guy had given me. He'd said something about a calendar.

Now that the sailing chores were done and I had nothing to do, it'd be a good time to see what that crazy "Gnome" had done.

I'd forgotten that I hadn't put them below in the cabin. They were somewhere out here in the dark cockpit.

Feeling around all the spaces I finally found them tucked away under some of the control lines. Because leaving the cockpit wouldn't be a good idea .. yet, I grabbed the little LED flashlight I had, flicked it on and started flipping through the pages.

What he'd done was to print up a week-to-week calendar for the whole year ! Starting with Sundays and ending on Saturday. A Flip Book of weeks.

Even in the light of that little flashlight, I could see that the Flip side of each page was a photograph of me on the boat.

I rippled through several pages and found that each page of the week had a photo of me.

Wow, how neat is that?

It had been several days of motoring, occasionally sailing, and parking at a half dozen marinas, before I picked up the calendar again.

I'd pulled into this marina a couple of days ago and with all the hand shaking, story swapping between the other sailors and and way too much beer, I'd finally had some "Alone time".

I could listen to some good music, and just kick back. I even had time to scan through the calendar that old nutty guy had done up for me.

Each week for 30 weeks, there was a photo of me doing the work I'd done. They were great photos too. Oddly, the photos stopped after the first 30 weeks.

The rest of the 52 weeks had the days but blank spaces where photos or art might have been.

"Oh I know why. " I said outloud . " He only had 30 days to take my photo before I left". There would have been more had I stayed longer.

I spent a lot of time looking at the photos that he had done. Remembering what I was doing at the time , what I was wearing,

The next few days were pretty much the same as before. Some sailing, a lot of motoring and many days sitting in marinas.

I stuck the calendar up on the Navigation desk and flipped through each up coming week And ,Yes, I did admire myself in each photo.

It was a couple weeks later, while anchored out, I looked at the calendar for that week.

"Odd?" I mumbled, " I look really tired. I must have had a bad night ".

Two more week's past and I skipped flipping over the calendar pages, I had to jump a couple pages.

I couldn't believe what I saw. My image on this week's page was of an older ME !. I quickly flipped through the rest of the weeks, and yes, I DID look older in each photo.

"That old SOB, he did some Photoshopping of the images just to piss me off". I was a little confused. I thought that when I first looked at all of the photos, they were me then.

The first time I had a chance to look at the calendar I must have not noticed the subtle changes he'd done by Photoshopped them. "Crazy old dude. I wonder why he did that ?

Probably just to mess with me".. I chuckled to myself thinking what fun he must have had pulling this stunt on me.

When the next Sunday I tore the last calendar sheet off and looked.

"My god, I look like a middle aged man now. The calendar must have some kind of changable ink for the photos. This week didn't look like this the last time I checked !"

Flipping over the pages, each shot was of me as a middle aged man. This was some kind of printing magic , I guessed.

I could hardly wait until the week finished so I could flip the page.

Sunday again, page turned again, and yet again, the image had aged. Each photo showing an older version of me. Actually, this was kind of fun.

Seeing what the old man had "cooked up" for each week and trying to figure out the technical magic he'd used to get the images to change each week.

Months had rolled by and it was a game to see what the new images would look like.

As each page was flipped over, a new, older me became the calendar art of that week.

Three months since I'd dropped the dock lines and started my cruise.

My plan had been to slowly make my way up North, stopping along the way to take in the scenery and the life of each location.

That all changed now. I was getting to be more interested in what that damned calendar was going to do next.

That next Sunday, there I...HE..was, now gray hair and with a full beard. Setting at the Nav desk, I laughed to myself think "He"has a beard and so do I .. Now.

I looked at the photo and thought "That beard makes Him/Me look ugly. I'm going to shave my growth now !

In the Head , I got out all of the seldom used shaving gear. Scissored off most of the long growth and lathered up the remaining stubble.

I pulled the plastic mirror out of the drawer of the storage shelf, propped it up on the sink and looked into it ready to shave.

I dropped the razor and damn near fainted.

Looking out of the mirror was that old man with the beard that was the guy in the calendar photo !

It was ME !

I had gained years in just the last couple of months.

What the hell was happening to me ? Was the calendar some how causing me to age ?

I forgot about shaving and ran to the Nav table, grabbed the calendar, climbed out of the cabin and stood in the cockpit. It was a beautiful sunny morning in the isolated bay.

A good day to rid one's self of troubles. I looked around to see if anyone would see me.. The anchorage was empty.

I threw that stupid calendar as far as I could and watched it sink into the deeps of the bay around me.

The next morning feeling like crap. I hadn't slept. I was haunted by the image of me, a 40 year old that now looked 60. Well that was going to stop now .

I had taken care of the evil thing.

I got up, breakfasted, poured the second cup of coffee and sat down at the Navigation table to plot out the next day's run.

IT.. was setting there. The calendar was there and it was Sunday.

Hands shaking, I tore off last week's page

There I was , older than yesterday. The hair had thinned and my shoulders were stooped.

I stood up and Yes.. I was the person in the photo. I had changed over-night. I was older than yesterday by years !

Grabbing the calendar, I tore each page into shreds. Page by page. Put them into a paper bag and climbed back up to the cockpit.

There I fired up the BarBQ that was bolted down to the stern rail, Lit the burners and dropped the bag of those scraps of calendar.

I stood watching the flames until a small pile of ashes was the only thing remaining of it. A gust of wind came and the ashes flew out of the grill and scattered away.

"There, damn you !" I shouted "You're gone for sure now"

The rest of the week was as I'd hoped. The boat *"Myndar"* and I cruised along several fiords that were breathtaking.

I fished, did some writing, listened to good old rock and roll on the stereo and slept like the "log" you've heard about so many times.

It was the happiest days I'd had since leaving those few months ago.

We anchored that evening in one of the most gorgeous places one could imagine.

It was Saturday !

Sunday morning was like all the ones before, coffee helping "unstick" my eyes and brain.

I hated leaving the comfort of the breakfast table, but it was time to plot out the next destination. I dragged my butt to the Navigation table
My heart sank and I shrieked. It was a sound of the deepest woe
That devilish calendar was there ! Again !
It had returned from the ashes and winds.
Now, the realization exploded in me, I knew I'd never be free of it.

I flipped last week's page over to the new week. It was Sunday and I had to see ME on the page. The photo at the top of the calendar was of an aging man whose hair was white. He held a cane and in his eyes I could see the pain of a broken man
As I lookrf away from that image, sadness flowed over me. I felt lost.
There would be no further sailing cruises, no more handshakes with dock-mates, no beers and BarBQ's on warm nights.
The "Calendar" was eating away my life. Every turn of the page revealed my years passing by.

The boat and I no longer moved. We stayed anchored in this lovely place and each Sunday I turned the calendar's page over, and each Sunday, my days withered away.
Fearfully, once, I flipped all of the pages over trying to see what the future had for me.
Nothing had changed in the photos. Each new week only showed the condition I was in now.
The photo (And I) aged as each week changed. The images showing an older and older man at every flip of the calendar.
Each Sunday meant an older me. I didn't need a mirror to tell what was happening .

The 25th Week, 26th, 27th. Each Sunday flip of the calendar page, my life flew away.
Now the photos were of a feeble old man. I WAS that feeble old man.
In those earlier middle weeks, as Saturday's came, I wept . I decided that I would stop turning the pages. It didn't matter. The next week's calendar was showing each morning I woke.
The flipping of pages happened automatically now.

Getting up each morning was a drama of pain and cracking bones. Making my necessary cup of coffee each morning became torture. My boat was slowly falling apart as well.
I didn't have the strength or interest in upkeep. Leaks had started and it was all the bilge pump could do to keep the water out.
The solar panels managed to squeeze enough charge into the batteries for most of the needs of the boat and me.
My hands trembled and it was getting harder to see. I had to feel my way over the boat.
I hadn't bathed or shaved in weeks and my clothes were falling apart. It just didn't seem to matter anymore.
I spent most of my days staring at that awful calendar.

Today was the start of the 29th week. Only one more page of the calendar, one more photo taken by that evil little man.
This Sunday's calendar photo was of a bed ridden, skin and bones body that once was a man, ..That once was ME !
I could no longer get out of the bunk. I was in constant pain.
Wednesday, What food I could reach ,was gone.
It didn't matter anymore.

Thursday, I painfully opened the last of the bottled water I had stashed next to me.
Friday, The last drop of drinking water was gone.
It didn't matter anymore .

The bilge pump had quit days ago. Now the water was slowly filling the boat
It didn't matter anymore.

Late Saturday, my boat and I ...Slipped beneath the waters of the beautiful, unknown bay, in
some isolated spot somewhere in Southern Alaskan..
It didn't matter anymore.

As water flowed over me, I watched the last calendar page move to Sunday. My sight was
poor but I could see the photo. the last photo. It was what was to become of me !
A bright light flooded the cabin for a moment, then it faded and I drifted into a
blackness.
It didn't matter.... Anymore . .

Fathoms deep in an isolated bay somewhere in the Panhandle of Alaska, lies what once was
a sailing trawler.
Now just another of the many wrecks scattered on the bottoms of the oceans of the world.
Inside the cabin, in one of the bunks lies a decaying corpse.
Once a very old man, now mostly bones. What flesh still hangs on the frame is slowly being
harvested by the creatures of the seas.
Close by, propped upon the boat's navigation table, sets a disintegrating calendar.
The photo at the top of the page, shows a handsome young man standing on a beautiful shining
sailboat.

But, that doesn't matter anymore. Does it?

End

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