

## Not All Angels Are Good Angels

Part Two....

"Madness, madness ! "

I woke with *Nat* singing some kind of odd chant. I hadn't slept well. Sharp pains hit each time I rolled over. While I no longer had pain in my left shoulder, my elbow and wrist were still stiff and sore. Moving them, I gasped in pain.

Driving the boat was going to be difficult. Maybe impossible if I ran into rough conditions. I still needed to get away soon. I'd just have to take a chance sailing away from here.

"I see you're up and around. How ya feeling? "

*Nat's* voice cut through my thoughts.

"Not too bad *Nat*. A little sore in spots, but I'll be ok "

"While you slept, I took the boat to the fuel dock, filled your tanks both fuel and water. I got the grocery list you'd made, bought all that stuff and stashed it all in the galley. OK?"

"Hell yeah , That's great. It's more than great, it's , it's , brilliant !". I couldn't have done it alone. What do I owe you *Nat* ? "

He looked at me and whispered,

"You're running away from something, right? I've been thinking. You ain't going to be healed for a while, and working a sailboat would be tough on you , right ? "

He was right. Hauling up sails, and doing dozen other things with a damaged left arm, was going to be damn near impossible.

" What are you thinking of ?", I asked

He stroked that silly black beard, took a deep breath and said.

" I've crewed on a lot of delivery boats. I'm here in Brookings 'cause I helped bring a boat up from Mexico. The owners tied up then left for Portland. I'm stranded now. I'm thinking, maybe you could use an experience hand on this boat. You're going South, ain't cha ?

While he had helped me getting food, water and fuel, he **was** a stranger. Having an unknown on board wasn't a good idea. There's lots of stories about hijacked vessels and murdered owners.

Before I could reject his offer, he pulled out a package of papers from inside his coat.

I saw 4 or 5 prestigious sailing school certificates. British Offshore (considered the best in the world), the ASA (American Sailing Assn. ), the impressive US Merchant Mariner Credentials. He had a dozen or so letters of introduction from well know sailors of the past.

They could be forgeries, but, I needed help. I didn't have a lot of options. I had to get away, soon!

" Nat, tell you what, I'll go to the pay phone at the end of the dock, I'll call the Merchant Mariner's school, I'll ask if your credentials are real. If they are, you and I will get the hell out of "Dodge" ASAP....Deal ? " ..

With a nod of his head he affirmed it.

I did call, his member ID was of a ' *N. Asmai* '. They commented that he'd scored in the top of his class. Now I had only one question. What was a highly trained individual like him was doing boat deliveries?

His answer made sense.

" I like being on boats. I like sailors who aren't the nice and safe kind. I want to help people get to where they're going. I don't need money. My promise to you is, I'll see you to the end of your destination. "

His voice sounded sincere, I was satisfied that we could get along just fine.

I told him to get his gear and I'd have the boat ready to go by the time he returned.

An hour later, he and I were in the cockpit, beers in hand, watching the coastline of Oregon slowly moving away.

My shoulder was getting better, but my left wrist still hurt like hell anytime I moved. *Nat*, did all of the heavy work. Mostly trimming sails. He cleaned the cabin and washed the dishes. All I had to do was navigate and kept him company.

I told him some, but not all, of why I was running away. He like the part about the lovers I'd left. He mumbled "Yep, I figured as much"

I got around to telling him about my troubles with the law. He roared with laughter. "I don't much care for them either". Then he went quiet.

It was like that for the rest of the day. An occasional comment about the workings of the boat, not much else.

I figured it wasn't time to tell about stealing from those bad guys. Even though they were crooks I worked for, it was stealing. .

Late in the day, the horizon began to "bite off" the bottom of the sun. Almost gone now, the sky went from yellow to crimson. I thought of the old proverb, "**Red skies at night, sailor's delight**". To old sailors, it meant tomorrow's weather would be good..

We were going to find out just how.. **wrong** that old saying was !

As soon as the sun fell out of our sky, it got chilly. The wind picked up and clouds filled in. The wind grew stronger. It was so cold now I had to put on several layers. It got colder by the minute. I couldn't get warm no matter what I put on. The icy winds cut into me.

The cold didn't seem to bother *Nat*. He moved around the boat in an old sweater. All the while he kept humming that odd little tune I'd heard earlier in the day. He stood at the wheel and shouted at the wind like some crazed prize fighter daring it to blow stronger. It did !

And I got colder !

The storm hit us hard. Winds screamed and the rain stung my face like a swarm of bees. Nothing kept me warm. The boat rolled and pitched so much, I got sea sick for the first time in my life. Not just sick, but convulsively sick. I was so very cold and weak and my wrist ached like hell.

*Nat* finally put on some foulies. Standing at the wheel, he would sing to the top of his lungs. When he wasn't singing, he raged at the storm. It was like he was daring it to kill us. It might just do that.

All night long I suffered excruciating pain and vomiting. I couldn't do a thing but lie in the quarter berth.

He.... stayed at the helm all that time. When I, between throw ups, suggested he might put on the "Brain" and let the boat self steer, he laughed and sang even louder. Had I let a mad man on my boat?

I shuddered. Not from the cold, but from the fear of what he might do.

I didn't sleep very much. All night I watched the man driving my boat. He was smiling and singing the whole time. Standing out In that fierce storm thundering all around us. The storm continued for 5 days. *Nat* would climb into the cabin, make a sandwich, pop a beer, then climb back outside and stand at the wheel, smiling. He was a wild man riding a crazy storm in a beat up boat with an owner who was helpless.

I didn't know whether to treat him like a hero, an idiot, or try to throw him over the side. The thing is, he **was** getting us farther South. Away from the dangers piled up behind me. Without him, I'd probably be in Brookings staring at a gun. Bad guys or cops, it'd be the end of me.

As crazy as Nat seemed, he had said, he was getting me to my destination. Where ever that might be!

Late on the afternoon of the 5<sup>th</sup> day, the sun broke through the clouds. It was getting warmer. No more icy cold, no more seasickness, no more terror. Dragging up to the cockpit, I noticed that I'd used my left hand. Warm sun, no pain. The boat had quit pitching and rolling. We were slipping along on a gentle ocean swell with blue skies overhead.

I checked on *Nat*, he was still at the wheel, napping. He must have nodded off hours ago but kept his hand on the wheel driving the boat South, always South. My fear of him melted away. He was an amazing individual.

I gently shook him, his head jerked up and he smiled at me. "Well, Mister, the old ocean kicked us in the butt for a few days, didn't it ? " Laughing, I answered, "No more of that nasty stuff if you please ! ". " No sir, we'll have only warm days from now on. " Then he roared that creepy laugh that always ended with a snort.

Having been out of action for so many days, I thought it prudent to get the boat and me organized and get back into navigating the boat. The first thing to know was where in the world were we.

I checked the GPS monitors. Both had blank screens! They weren't working at all. I panicked and yelled at *Nat*, "Do you have any idea where we are? ". He winked at me and shouted back , " Don't worry I'll get you to your destination" .

That old fear crept into my head. What the hell was he talking about? Spreading my paper charts out on the cabin table, I did what the old sailors used to call "Dead Reckoning". You figure your boat speed, multiply that by the number of hours you've traveled, then plot a line on a chart. You get a close approximation of your location. Navigators since Magellan used this method to navigate. It's where the word for speed in "Knots" came from. A knotted cord let run out, behind a boat. You could figure out the speed of the boat by counting each knot as it passed through your fingers. In the case of my boat "**ifrinn**" our working speed meter read that we were making around 5 knots. Our last position check was just off Eureka California. 5 days of travel at around 5 knots speed, should put us somewhere below San Diego California. If we'd continued on a 180 degree course, we'd be about 300 miles West of the Baja coast. Ok, I guess that's our real position. But where is *Nat* taking us ? I looked at the charts again. YES ! There was the answer.

It would be a simple thing to choose a lower latitude, turn left and run until we make landfall. Something around 10 degrees North would put us in..... Guatemala ! Wow, what a stroke of genius. *Nat* was headed to a land that might have no extradition to the U.S.A... What a great idea. I could live there like a king. I certainly had enough money to last for a while .

I popped a couple of beers and climbed up to the cockpit, to *Nat* and a broiling sun. He took one of the beers and began singing that odd little song again. I never could catch the words. Now it was getting really hot . So hot, I'd shed all my clothes except a tee shirt and shorts. *Nat* looked like he was enjoying the heat. I glanced at my watch. It was getting late and time for dinner. It was 6:30 pm. No wonder I was hungry, it was noon the last time I had eaten.

Wait a second ! Something is wrong here! What the hell...The Sun ! The Sun ! It was hanging directly above us, full and bright. But that couldn't be. It's late afternoon. The sun should be low in the West. I sat there for a long time watching that sun... It **never** moved !

At 11:00 pm, the sun still stood high and hot above our heads.

The world had stopped turning.

End part two.

r. ahseIn October 29, 2018