… Torment in Teak

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***Part Three-The Conclusion – I Am Become Many… yet NONE***

Sleep came in spurts during the night. I dreamed that dream again. A shadow that kept trying to reach me, but each time it got close, I woke. I couldn’t sleep much anyway. The excitement of the day before had my brain racing. I was going to own “EVIG”. That beautiful sailboat was mine!

I called the marina to ask what the outstanding bill was. Mrs. Steen had been close. It was only $1100. I had that much in my savings account! Then the guilt hit me. I was getting a sailboat given to me. Mrs.Steen would get nothing from the sale. True, she had said that she hated the boat. But I felt that I was cheating her. I vowed to pay her something as soon as I was able.

There was a knock on my door. It was a messenger with a package. Mrs. Steen had sent a folder of documents of ownership. Each had been legally signed off and she’d included a Bill of Sale for the amount owed the marina... Now, “EVIG” was really mine!

It usually takes me only 15 minutes to drive from my place to the marina. On the way to the docks, I took an extra few minutes to stop off at the Quickie Mart. I wanted to buy some Heineken’s, a bag of chips and a couple sandwiches. Then I drove to the Englund’s Marine Supply. My boat… I liked the way that sounded… My boat needed new mooring lines. I’d deal with the running rigging later. They would need to be measured first. Now with some food and drink and new dock lines, I headed to the marina. The plan was going to be to spend the day checking every space of my new boat. Maybe I’d have time to do some clean up too.

It was mid morning by the time I arrived at Evig’s slip. In the full daylight, she was gorgeous. I pulled her lines to bring her close. This time I didn’t worry about someone complaining that I had moved the boat. It was MY boat. She moved close and I cleated off the lines and walked to the Starboard gate. She had a deep shear so the boarding gate was low. This allowed for a low freeboard letting me step on board. I grabbed a stanchion gate and took the first step.

The weather must have changed. I suddenly felt the air get warmer. It seemed too warm for this time of the year. I was beginning to sweat. Off came my coat and sweater. It was comfortable. For the next two hours I opened cabinets and hatches, unhooked latches and opened inspection ports. The engine, an older Yanmar, was clean enough. It looked like all the filters had been recently changed. I later found a maintenance log and it confirmed that the engine had indeed been cared for. The batteries were at full charge. That was very odd. I had found that contrary to my first thoughts about some kind of shore power leak, there was no shore power cord. Then what had kept the batteries up full? Everything down in the cabin was clean and neatly laid out. Cushions were clean. I was amazed that there was no mildew on any cloth. In fact the whole cabin had a “fresh washed” smell. There must have been a caretaker all this time. I’d have to call Mrs. Steen to find out.

What I DID figure out was, the boat was perfect on the inside. It could go on a cruise today.

It was also apparent that the outside was a different matter. Work must be done. Scrubbing all weather surfaces and sanding of the Teak. A LOT of Teak! That was the one thing I HAD to do right away. She had to look Bristol. EVIG deserved that.

It was really odd about the warm weather. I had seen some people walk by during the day and they were all bundled up. Everyone looked chilled to the bone, yet, I was perfectly comfortable in just my T-shirt.

After a couple hours of poking around, I sat down, ate a sandwich and opened a beer. It had been a happy day and I was feeling great. I thought “Well, it’s time to start working on the dirty topsides and decks.” A good hose down would be a start. I finished the beer and gulped down some chips and headed for the life line gate. Moving out of the cockpit I steadied myself by holding onto the coach roof.

But as I stepped off onto the dock, I felt slightly sick to my stomach and I become dizzy. I tried to step onto the dock and to find a place to sit down...

But… I couldn’t move my hand! It felt like it was being held in a clamp. I gently pulled, it didn’t budge. I jerked my arm, my hand stayed like it had been glued there.

I started to panic what was happening? I was about to yell for help when one of the other boat owners walked by. My hand dropped away! I jumped off the boat and stood there shaking. Had I had a stroke? Had I blacked out and dreamed the whole thing?

Did the fellow walking by awaken me? Then I felt a chill. I hadn’t noticed how cold it had gotten. My coat and sweater were still onboard. My teeth were starting to chatter. The cold was beginning to seep into my body core. I needed that sweater soon.

But, I wondered, should I go back on board before I find out what had happened to me? It was getting colder and I couldn’t wait. I carefully put one foot on the coaming. Nothing. I swung my weight up and over the side. Nothing happened. I grabbed my coat and sweater and slipped them on. It had really gotten very cold by now. I was standing there wondering what to do next when I brushed my hand against the edge of the pedestal. I felt a tingle and my hand grew warm. To test this some more, I sat down on the cockpit seat, my body no longer felt chilled. It was comfortably warm. What the hell was going on here?

For the rest of the day I walked around the boat touching different places with the tip of my finger. Some felt warm others didn’t. I carefully picked up a few movable objects. I could let go of them all. However, some felt warm and some cold. It didn’t seem to make much difference what or where they were on the boat. It was funny that I hadn’t noticed this strange effect hours ago when I was doing my survey. It HAD to be some kind of Atmospheric condition. Since it was not possible for a shore power problem (No cord was connected), It MUST be some natural phenomenon.

There was a possibility that some heavy electrical charge had paralyzed my muscles and made my hand cramp so it felt stuck. I knew that some times people can’t let go of a house appliance if it has a short. That might explain what had happened. It could also explain why some things felt warm. But, could an electrical charge make objects feel warm? I didn’t know how to answer that one. What ever it was, it sure had scared the pee out of me! I left the boat still a bit shaky.

The next day, I awoke to a clear sunny day. I’d slept very well and without the dream I’d had the night before. I drank my first cup of coffee and started to make a list of the things I wanted to do for EVIG today. It was going to be a very busy day.

Boat soap and a scrub brush, some Teak bleach and disks for the sander I had in the truck.

I was going to make my boat the envy of every owner in the marina. With the day clear and cloudless, there would be no chance that any electrical disturbances would be zapping me.

I could really get to work taking all the dirt and corrosion off. I might even think about laying some varnish on her. This was going to be the day I made EVIG a thing to behold.

It may have been a sunny windless day, but the air was cold. Januarys can be like that out here in the Northwest. I pulled my winter coat tight around me as I walked the finger pier leading to my slip. She was still a beauty and my heart picked up it’s rhythm as I got closer. She still needed some care.

It was so cold I decided not to wash her today. I’d wait until a warmer time of the year. But there were lots of other things to do.

I decided to sand down some of the teak in the cockpit where weathering had raised some of the wood grain. I’d easily do that using my oscillating sander.

But I’d have to plug it into an electrical service. After all the scary moments with electricity, I think I’ll pass on that for a while. It was going to be an Up Close and Personal hand sanding.

That was ok by me. I could get a real “feel” for EVIG by getting in close and doing small details.

It had gotten warmer. At least I could set in the cockpit without my heavy coat. Sanding would be better without the bulk of the jacket.

I found a small block of wood and wrapped a sheet of 400 grit sandpaper around it. I huddled down close to the cabin bulkhead and slowly started smoothing out the rough surfaces.

It was slow work and I had only covered a few square inches. But it was comfortable work. And like thousands of sailors had done before me, I was spending my time working to make my boat more presentable. Something that other boaters would praise me for. EVIG was going to be my personality. People would know me because of my boat. I’d BE somebody! I won’t need anyone else. My boat will be pretty and she’ll be mine.

I’d been sanding for a half hour when I noticed the strange patterns on some of the tongue and groove cockpit planks. Most Teak wood has a grain that is a bunch of rather straight lines. Or depending on how it’s cut, it may have wiggles or a cascade of “V” shapes. Occasionally, the wood may even have oval swirls. Some of EVIG’S Teak had those swirls. The odd thing about them was that they all had a similar shape. The darker part of the wood grain was a long rounded egg shape. Rounded on top and a kind of inverted “V” at the bottom. There were smaller layers of dark grain running along each side of the larger shape. I did a quick look around and saw nearly identical swirls on a few boards in the cockpit. Each slightly different, but still, very much alike. It was as if the sawyer had cut all those planks from the same board. That’s what it was. They had all been cut at a single place on a larger piece of Teak. The thing was, the boards were scattered randomly around the cockpit and cabin’s bulkhead. It was too bad that the builders hadn’t seen those shapes and placed them better. The way they were now broke up the symmetry of the lay out. I picked up my sanding block and got back to the smoothing job. After a minute or two of sanding using the 400 grit paper, the surface of one of the planks had been evened up.

I grabbed some toweling I’d brought along. With it, I wiped away the sanding dust that had gathered.

My hand suddenly stopped. My cloth wouldn’t budge. It was like the towel had been glued to the wood. I pulled my hand away and the cloth Dropped onto the seat. I slowly carefully touched the wood plank. The surface of the Teak board was “sticky”. It was like the Velcro piece with the hooks. Any material, or skin, that came in contact with it, Stuck solid. But as quickly as it stuck, it would let go again.

I tried to experiment with other objects. Screwdrivers STUCK! My coffee cup Stuck! Any object that wasn’t really heavy would hang there on the surface of the Teak, would stick…THEN drop off.

I tried the experiment on some of the other planks. Plain straight grained wood did nothing. The other “Swirled” boards didn’t either. Until it occurred to me that the sticking panel was the one I had been working on. So I picked up the sanding block and slowly smoothed the surface of another plank. The towel stuck to it as solidly as on the first board!

This was getting interesting!

I moved around the boat trying several of the swirled panels. After a light sanding of each one, the towel would stick. The less I sanded the looser the holding. If I really worked the surface hard, the towel would stay “glued” to the wood for as much as 10 seconds, then drop.

Now, I was sure that **EVIG** had some kind of electrical/magnetic mystery built into her. I’d have to find the answer before I’d sail her. I couldn't invite anyone else on board. They’d freak out. It had gotten late and I was tired. Time to go home. It had been an intriguing day. But then, it HAD been fun. …In a weird way.

I couldn’t sleep very well. The shadow returned with its “friends”. In the dream, I was surrounded by shadows, all trying to reach out to me. They still seemed kindly in the dream. But, I wanted to run away. I couldn’t move because my feet were stuck to the ground. Before the shadows touched me, I would wake up. Each time with a warm tingle in my hands and feet.

A quick breakfast and I was in the truck headed back to the boat. This time I’d brought my voltmeter. I was going to chase down the odd electrical problem.

As I stepped on board EVIG, I suddenly felt my whole body warming. It was like sunshine but the day was a rainy cloudy day. A typical January day in the Northwest. There was no sun to radiate my skin. But, I felt no need for the winter coat I wore. And as the morning progressed I took off the sweater then the shirt. A T-shirt was all I wore as I worked. I didn’t feel the cold at all.

I moved the voltmeter’s probe to every place where, yesterday, I’d experienced the “Sticking” effect. I saw no needle deflection. No indication that there was a stray current flowing anywhere.

What had caused the odd effect? I was really stumped by now. It seemed like a good idea to duplicate yesterday’s happening. I sat down on the cockpit seat next to the cabin’s Starboard bulkhead. Where the first mystery had happened. The towel I had used yesterday was still there. A quick wipe over the surface of that Teak board... And.

“WHAT the hell?” I shouted. I leaned in closer to get a better look. The dark Grain pattern in the wood had ….CHANGED! It had been an undefined shape but now it had changed. It had taken on the shape of a man’s body. The top “egg” shape had become sharper. I could see the outline of a HUMAN FACE!

I couldn’t believe what I saw. I must be losing it. Not enough sleep, I thought. Just to make sure I hadn’t imagined what I had looked at, I moved around to the other wooden planks. I took my time and looked at each panel closely. Each plank that yesterday I had sanded and experimented on had CHANGED! Each piece of wood had a well defined HUMAN shape where there had been only dark grain. I sat back against the cockpit seat, stunned.

Closing my eyes, I hoped that when I opened them again, this unnerving thing would be gone.

But when I looked back at one of the Teak planks….. It had changed AGAIN! All of them had.

I must be going mad. I’m starting to see things that can’t be...But I was awake, I was sane. Something was happening here, I knew that.

I got very close to the original board. Close enough to see the individual wood fibers. I didn’t take my eyes off of it... My god! My god! The shape was ..MOVING! The face part was moving closer. I could make out the eyes and mouth and the mouth was moving like it was trying to talk.

I couldn’t stand it. I had to know if the others were doing the same...

They were!

I couldn’t leave now. I was scared but the transformation of the outlines held me. I moved around to a half dozen different boards. Some in the cockpit, others on the cabin. ALL were moving. Coming closer. I could identify hair lines and eye glasses. Each “mouth” was moving. Like they were all trying to say something to me.

As the faces got clearer, I saw the look of horror and fear. They appeared to be begging. Begging for what I didn’t know. I thought maybe they just wanted to know a human saw them and cared. My sympathy for their plight made me do something foolish. I reached out and touched the face I saw before me in the wood. A flash of pain ran down my arm. Followed by a sense of despair. I was being held tight. I couldn’t move my hand from the wood. My feet felt like they were set in stone or glued to wood.

Glued to Wood!... Made of WOOD!

Now I knew what it had been all about. I knew why **EVIG** had made me feel alive.

She wanted men to love her. To take care of her. But she could never get enough. She CONSUMED all who had known her. No one would ever satisfy her.

EVIG …was ETERNAL!

And never finding what she needed, she made us a part of her... There would always be another, willing to give his soul to this vessel that has no soul.

My feet had disappeared and now were part of the cockpit deck. My hands had “melted” into the teak plank I had touched. My skin had changed to a reddish brown and wood grain lines were showing. I could hear the cries of despair by the others that had been imprisoned in the Teak of EVIG. They had tried to warn me. The shadows of my dreams tried to warn me.

But, like those before me, I am CONSUMED!

I have become just another board of Teak on … EVIG

*(Ende)*

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