… Torment in Teak

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***Part One –Discovery…***

She wasn’t just moored. She looked like she was resting on a cloud. Graceful, sleek and a little dangerous. It was fascination. I couldn’t take my eyes off her. Like a beautiful older woman that must have been gorgeous when she was young. She was still catching the eyes (and hearts) of anyone who came near her, She was the prettiest sailboat I had ever seen.

Most Sundays, I walk the marina’s docks checking out boats. I love boats, especially sailboats.I could never afford one though, but I can still wish. It’s a hobby. I love strolling along the slips taking notes about boats. Some are beautiful, some ugly. Boats the owners must spend

lots of time just taking care of them. Then there are others that look forlorn and neglected.

Needing attention soon or they’ll surely die. I’ve often wondered if the owner’s lives are as sad

as their boats seem. I guess it’s like most things, boats reflect the personality of the owner. Sometimes I think you can see a bit of the owner in each vessel.. I try to guess what the owner must look like. A few, all neat and prim but others, ragged and unkempt. It’s a fun game. I’ve even been close to guessing right, a few times.

THIS boat? Who had left this lovely lady of the past, neglected and fading away alone? Where had she come from? Who had once loved her? What was under all that grime? Carved in the transom with glints of gold color showing, there were the faint outlines of a name and hailing port. Most of the carvings were covered with mold and what looked like dried skin. The boat was moored stern end to the slip, just beyond my reach. I decided that I’d chance getting into trouble by releasing the dock lines and moving the boat closer to the slip. That way I could reach out and maybe clean off some of the neglect.

I knew that it wasn’t right to mess with someone else’s tie up, but I’d chance getting yelled at just this once. I had to find out more about this vessel. I loosened the springs and dropped the bow line. She began to slowly drift back toward the walkway of the dock. As soon as she got about a foot away, I snubbed off the bow line and made sure she wasn’t going to touch anywhere. Odd thing was, as I let go the lines I got kind of an electric tingle in my hand.. There must have been some static build up. When I had touched it, it kind of zapped me. Funny, I’m usually scared of getting shocked but this was a warm tingle. It didn’t hurt at all.

Standing at the head of the slip I could now reach out and touch her. Nearby I found a small cotton towel . Carefully, so as not to do any damage, I wiped what must have been years of collected detritus from the transom. Slowly the letters began to stand out. After a little more rubbing, I could make out where she was from. Gold leafed block letters at the bottom of the transom read “STEGE DANMARK”.

Well, I knew about Denmark. I even knew about Copenhagen, but I had no idea where STEGE was. I was going to have to Goggle it when I got home.

After some careful washing and rubbing, most of the dirt was gone, the name became readable. In tall gilded Script letters. Like they had been written with a quill pen …Was, ***“EVIG“.***

**EVIG**! A wonderfully magical name!. Well, why not. She’s obviously a mysterious Danish lady who’s appeared magically. I DID feel a rush of excitement race through me looking at her. Close enough to touch, she was even more beautiful. I loved her shape and design. A wooden hull painted a deep ocean blue, Teak decked. The house was teak, as well as the small bare cockpit. All exposed wood was fully teak. There wasn’t a bit of varnish anywhere except on the spars. Every inch of wood had weathered to a silvery grey. All metal fittings and gear, open to the weather, had a Verdigris. That bright blue green coating that covers old bronze when it’s been wetted by floods of salt water.

Even though **“EVIG”** had seen a lot of years and miles, she looked solid. I prodded and poked as much of the wood as I could reach and there didn’t seem to be a bit of rot.

Oddly, each time I touched the boat, I got an “electric” tingle. It was kind like the static electricity jolt you get from walking across a rug. There HAD been a little storm today and I’d seen some distant lightning. I guessed it must be some kind of atmospheric electrical discharge.

It was never strong enough to startle me. Just kind of warm feeling. Like touching bath towels fresh out of the dryer.

All the standing rigging looked to be in good shape. But all ropes, halyard and sheets, were in poor condition. They must have been left out in the weather for a very long time. All the hardware and gear, while old fashioned, looked to be useable. No sails were bent on. I supposed that they were stored somewhere down below in the locked cabin.

With just a little clean up and some sails**,…“EVIG”** could be out on the water. She NEEDED to be sailed! She was too pretty NOT to “dance”.

I continued walking alongside until I got to the bow. There hanging on a pulpit rail was a For Sale sign.

**“CLASSIC WOODEN CUTTER, CEDAR ON OAK, 38 FEET LOA. INBOARD DIESEL**

**A *KNUD REIMERS* DESIGN. – NEEDS SOME CARE- CALL- 667-0991 “**

My hand shook as I wrote down the number. “ I can’t afford her but I’ll just call to see what a boat like this would cost” I though to myself. “I’ll pretend I’m interested.” I had never called anyone about a boat before. So it must have been the thrill of the chase. I was starting to play a new “Game”!

I managed to get “EVIG” back into her original position by slowly tugging on the mooring lines. Each time I let one of them slip out of my hand , I got that warm “buzz” again. I was beginning to look forward to it. It must be some kind of electrical effect but, I felt like it was coming from **“EVIG”** Some kind of message was being sent to me. Maybe she knew that I had fallen in love with her and wanted me to know that she felt the same way too. I reached out and lightly touched one of her lifelines. The warm “Buzz” was even more intense. So much so that I had to PULL to get free.

I laughed, “ Now I know what it is. It’s a stupid Grounding problem. A fault between the shore power and the boat!” I’d figured it out and now I felt really embarrassed. I’d been trying to make some kind of Personal thing of it. Something between that boat and me. All the time it was a damned power leak problem. Have to tell the owner about it when I call. It could be dangerous.

I was still laughing at myself as I was leaving the marina. At the top of the ramp I turned and took a last look at the boat. I knew I’d see her again. I was definitely going to call the number.

I had to know more about **“EVIG”.**

It was dark by the time I got home. I sat for a while trying to get up enough courage to call. Finally I grabbed the phone and punched in the numbers. It rang for a long time. A very long time. I was about to hang up when a faint voice said, “Hello? Who is calling please?” A woman’s thin timid voice was on the other end. Caution sounded in that voice. “Who’s there?“ She whispered. Her voice growing thinner and fading away.

I tried to sound as cheerful as I could “Hello, My name is Peter Morten. I’m calling about the sailboat at the city marina. I believe it’s name is EVIG. I’d like to know the price you’re asking and if it’s possible could you tell me something of the history of that lovely boat?“. I paused trying to catch my breath. It probably was a good thing because the woman at the other end didn’t say a word for quite a long time. Then that faint and shaky voice came back.

“Good evening Mr. Morten. I am Mrs. Steen, Mrs. Mildred Steen. I know the boat you speak of.

I’m very interested in selling. Could you possibly stop by at my home tomorrow? I think you’ll want to hear about the boat in some detail. I have much to tell you. It’s quite late now, and tomorrow would give us more time.” Now the voice had a warmth in it that hadn’t been there before. I quickly answered, “I’d be happy to meet with you tomorrow. Shall we say one o’clock?” She agreed and gave me her address. I said a good night and hung up.

I couldn’t believe it. She’d actually sounded relieved when I said I was interested in the boat. This was going easier than I could’ve hoped for.

I didn’t sleep well that night. I kept having dreams about some kind of shadow reaching out to me. It seemed that I wanted it to touch me, but I always woke before it could.

The next day I called in ‘Sick” to the office. Waiting around all day was one of the hardest things I’ve ever done. Finally at a little past noon, I crawled into my pickup and started on my way to meet Mrs. Steen. The address she’d given was in a part of town I hadn’t seen before. It’s one of those areas where Well To Do folks lived 30 or 40 years ago. Not the very rich, but the upper class. Now most of the houses had a “Worn” look. Slightly threadbare. Classy, but out of style. Lawns and shrubs uncared for.

I found the house. It’s front door was huge stained glass panel. I gave the brass handle at the side of door a tug. I could hear chimes playing. After a minute or so, The glass door opened a crack. A tiny figure peeked out. I introduced myself and the massive door opened fully. An elegant woman, early 70s, with the saddest eyes I’ve ever come across, beckoned me to come in.

“I’m Mrs. Steen. Would you follow me please?” I nodded assent and stepped inside. We walked in silence, through a hall and into an Atrium in the back of the house. There setting on a small table was a tea pot and a stack of those little dainty sandwiches. “May I pour you a cup, Mr. Morten” She asked.

That “Polite” Tea and Sandwich ritual began what was going to be a long and un-nerving day.

(Continued)...........

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