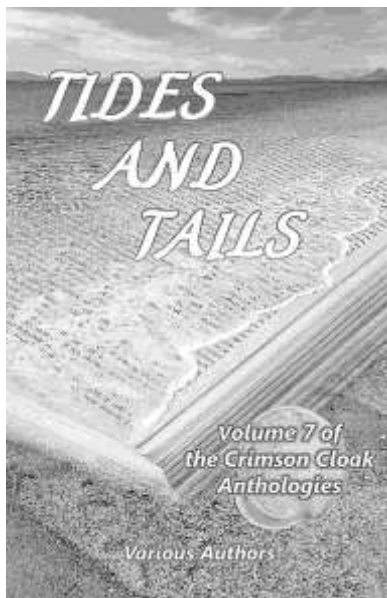


# TIDES AND TAILS

## Crimson Cloak Anthologies

Volume 7



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# The Beach

A Micro-poem

**By Lisa Beere**

Sun ...

Surf ...

Sandflies!

# In the Moment

A poem

**By Lisa Beere**

Sunshine streams across the shore  
Whilst overhead the gulls scream  
Their wailing song  
Piercing  
My fragile shell

My hold on this world weakens  
Momentarily shaken  
Until you come  
Sitting  
Now at my side

My fear gradually abates  
As your friendship pulls me here  
Back to what's real  
Living  
In the moment

## For Just a Little While

By Eva Bell

The quiet stretch of road behind Emma's bungalow was where I took my morning walks. Wild flowers – white, purple, yellow – spread out on either side like colourful carpets. The yellow flowers were exceptionally beautiful, their faces aflame as they looked skyward, reflecting the golden rays of the sun. *A bunch of these would look lovely in Emma's porcelain vases* I thought. They would bring sunshine into a room which in spite of rich Persian carpets, expensive artifacts, and paintings by Rembrandt and Matisse, lacked soul. I bent down to pluck the yellow flowers when a strong grip on my shoulders made me scream with fright.

“Stop it. Are you out of your mind? Do you want to die?”

My trembling body was rotated to look directly into a pair of blue eyes. Water dripped from his hair, and his taut deltoids exuded an animal strength through his T-shirt. He was a good six feet tall.

“Who are you?” he asked. “Where have you come from?”

“I've been walking up and down this road for the past week and I've never met a soul so far. Where did you

spring from? Were you spying on me? Is this your property?"

"You ought to thank your lucky stars I happened this way. Those flowers are fatal. Scotch Broom can kill you faster than a tidal wave. Breathless one moment and dead the next. Where do you live? Come on, I'll walk you home."

My trip to the USA was a present from my parents for my eighteenth birthday. I had finished with an organized tour around the country. Mother insisted that I spend some time with her sister Emma who lived in Oregon, before returning home to India.

"I'm a guest at Random House, the beautiful villa with a rock garden."

"You mean that ugly house with a pompous name? Does the owner fancy herself an English duchess?"

"Hey," I said, "She's my aunt. I'm sure you know nothing about her. Don't be so rude."

"I'm her closest neighbour," he laughed. "Though she wouldn't pass the time of day with the likes of me."

He walked me up to the gate.

"Bye, and don't go touching those flowers again."

Then he strode away leaving me transfixed, until he turned the corner and was lost to sight.

Emma had been watching us through her window. She opened the door before I could knock.

"For Goodness' sake, where did you meet that fellow and who is he?"



“He says he is your neighbour. You ought to make his acquaintance. He’s good at rescuing damsels in distress, in case you are in trouble.”

“What was the distress you were in when he rescued you?”

“I was about to pluck a bunch of yellow flowers when he pounced on me as if I was attempting suicide.”

Emma’s face turned pale.

“Didn’t I tell you that this is a killer weed that spreads so rapidly? It can cause severe allergies and has even proved fatal in some cases. Please don’t ever touch them again.”

I didn’t see the man again for a few days even though I kept looking over my shoulder. Sometimes I relived the vibes that went through me when I looked into his incredibly blue eyes.

When Emma and I sat on her patio after dinner one day, we heard a banjo strumming some distance away, and a low sensuous voice drifted through the night in a touching ballad. Did I imagine it or was he singing ‘You were only mine for just a little while’?

Could this be the same man, and for whom was he pining? Why was Emma fidgeting in her chair?

Then one morning we met again.

“You haven’t been playing with Scotch Broom, have you?” His face lit up with a smile.

“Now why would I do that after you’ve put the fear of God into me? You have the knack of springing up suddenly and shocking people.”

“You don’t seem disturbed by my presence. Have you missed me?”

I blushed and he knew it was true.

“So what have you been doing with yourself? Have you seen any interesting places?”

“Not really. Emma is always busy at the hospital. She’s tired when she gets home. I’m making the best use of her well stocked library.”

“A poor way to enjoy your holiday. Look, I have some time on my hands. I could show you a few places. We could start with a cruise down the Columbia River. Have you been on a motor boat before?”

“No. Just a rowing boat a few times. I know how to swim.”

“You ask your aunt if she can trust you in my company. Or else she might send the police after me for kidnapping you.”

“Do I detect sarcasm in your voice when you refer to Emma? She doesn’t even seem to know you.”

“She wouldn’t. The lady of Random House has only two things on her mind – money and popularity. I couldn’t give her either. But tell me, would you like to spend a day on my boat?”

When I broached the subject to Emma, she wasn’t pleased.

“You know nothing about him. I wonder if you should take the risk.”

“I’m going Emma. He seems to be a good man and fun to be with.”

That night I heard her phone my mother. “Sheila is going on a cruise on the Columbia River tomorrow. Some guy has offered to take her.”

I could imagine my mother’s worried face way back in Bangalore. She had warned me before I took the trip to the USA. ‘Bad things happen to young girls all the time. You be careful how you behave.’

*Gale Force* was docked on the Astoria waterfront.

“Let’s introduce ourselves properly. I’m Bill and this is my boat.”

“I’m Sheila and I’m happy to travel on your boat.”

He had a blanket in case I felt very cold and a picnic basket as well. He gave me a running commentary on the history of the place and how, long before the white man came this way, there were Indian tribes living in these parts. The Americans not only encroached on their land but appropriated all their resources.

I kept surreptitiously looking at his profile and admiring his features. He turned to look at me. The wind had blown out my hair and I must have looked like Medusa. He smiled.

“My dear, you look like a water goddess with your hair flying in the wind. Are you cold? I’ve been talking my head off and haven’t noticed.”

He drew me close to his side and it felt warm and cosy as one arm encircled me.

“Keep talking. I like to hear about the Indians. Why do you say they suffered injustice from the Americans? Emma says they have been given many concessions, but they are lazy, alcoholic and immoral. She says women

coming to her hospital from the Reserves sometimes don't know who the father of their child is and don't care."

Bill's face turned an angry red. "Yes, it would justify her behaviour towards the unfortunate women who dare to enter her hospital."

Tugging at his sleeve I said, "You don't know Emma well enough to judge her. She's kind, loving and charitable."

"It's too beautiful a day to talk about that woman."

He did not speak again for some time as *Gale Force* sped over the water, shocking the sea lions out of their lassitude and sending a flurry of grey gulls skyward.

After we docked, he took me on a trip through the town of Astoria before bringing me home.

"I promised you an enjoyable day. Has it been good so far?"

"Oh yes! I've never been in such a boat before, that too alone with a man."

He laughed. "Don't laugh," I said, "Life back home isn't as it is here. Mingling of the sexes isn't so liberal. My mother would throw a fit if she knew I was out alone with a perfect stranger."

"Don't give me ideas, Sheila," he said, grabbing my hand. "Oh don't look so worried. I'm not a cradle snatcher."

"I'm all of eighteen and can take care of myself."

"I'll get you a souvenir from every place you visit with me."

"Is that a bribe?"

“You can call it an inducement. Who would not love the company of a pretty girl?”

“How many have you chaperoned so far?”

There was a firm set to his jaw. “None.”

It meant *no further questions*.

“Tomorrow we’ll make an early start. I’ll take you along the Pacific Coast and we’ll return after dinner.”

“What will Emma say?” I wondered.

“She should be glad someone else is willing to do so.”

Bill dropped me off at the gate and drove away.

*Couldn’t he even say ‘Hullo’ to Emma? Why does he dislike her so much?* I wondered.

She was eager to know about my day out and I filled her in on every detail.

“Did he say anything about me?” she asked.

“Oh yes. He said you were the most popular doctor in all of Astoria. Not a small achievement for an immigrant. He also said you were stinking rich and that Random House was the best on the waterfront this side of the Columbia River.”

I saw her blush as she turned away. I marveled at how I had spun such a story on the spur of the moment. Was it because I was desperate to get her consent for my trip the next day?

“Bill has promised to take me to see the Pacific Ocean tomorrow. He’ll bring me back after dinner.”

“You’ve not come to grief today. So I guess you are safe in his company. Does the man work at all?”

“I don’t know but I’ll ask.”

“No, don’t. Perhaps he’s taking a holiday from fishing.”

I lay in bed going over the incidents of the day. I’d seen so many things on the river and in town. I could feel his strong yet tender arms as he helped me to ascend the Astoria Column.

Then I heard a deep voice floating across the trees. “*Just for a while I had you and held you close to my heart.*” Was he singing for me? I jumped up from my bed and dashed to the balcony. Then I spied Emma’s shadow as she stood on her balcony. She moved away the moment she knew I was there. This was all too confusing. I was so naïve to think he was singing for me.

The next day was busy. We drove southwest to the ocean towards Canon Beach, through beautiful winding roads and wooded stretches, stopping briefly at Ecola Beach Park. Even through several layers of clothing I shivered. My cap was blown off and Bill ran a long way to retrieve it.

“We can’t stay here for long. It is just too cold and windy. I only wanted to show you those black rocks of which we are so proud – the Haystack Rock, the Needles Rock and in the distance you will see the Tillamook Rock with the light house.”

We wandered around the old town of Canon Beach, looking at heritage sites and many Art Galleries.

“I can’t thank you enough, Bill.”

“The pleasure is mine. I’ve never had a sister. I really don’t know what girls of your age like. I’m glad you’re enjoying yourself.”

It was almost evening when Bill said it was time to go back. “I want to take you somewhere special. It’s not on the tourist itinerary but it always is on mine.”

We turned off into a narrow trail that took us through a stretch of forest. In a small clearing there were a few modest houses. We entered the largest one. It was built like a traditional Indian plank house. The walls had paintings of Native Americans, with elk skins for clothes and bead chains around their necks. One picture drew my close attention. It was of a young girl probably about sixteen. Her hair fell about her shoulders cuddling her round face with sparkling brown eyes. She revealed a row of pearly white teeth.

I looked at Bill. He was staring at the picture too with a deep sadness in his eyes. Who was she? Why did he look so forlorn?

There was no time to think. Several people descended on us together.

“Bill, how good to see you! Where have you been all this time? And who is this young lady? She surely isn’t from this country.”

Another young man came forward and thumped him on his back.

“Is this another damsel in distress?” he asked, with an edge to his voice. “If so, I hope you do a better rescue job this time.”

Bill winced. The lady of the house broke in. “Tea time. The kettle is on the boil.”

They were friendly people. The house was spick and span. The décor and style was pure American. But here and there was an artifact or a painting showing their Indian roots. The lady took me into a small room on the east side of the house. It was the room of the girl in the picture. One picture on the wall showed her in native dress. The other was in her school uniform.

“Is this your daughter? Where is she?”

A tear glistened at the corner of her eyes.

“We lost her exactly three years ago.”

I did not ask any further questions.

Looking out through the bay window, I saw a movement among the trees. It was Bill. He was kneeling beside something I couldn't see and his back was turned to the house.

“It's a pilgrimage he never fails to keep. Her ashes are in an urn under the magnolia tree. He comes when the magnolias are in bloom.”

When Bill came back, we were invited to stay for dinner.

“Not today. I'm taking Sheila to the Sea Side Resort. I want to show her the aquarium, then walk her on the beach till she is tired. This will be followed by the best sea food she's ever had. She must carry back beautiful memories of the Pacific Ocean.”

The day climaxed with an early dinner at the Shilo Restaurant. The waitress brought in a tray with a portion of butternut ravioli, king prawns fried in batter with a creamy delicate sauce. I tucked into it as if I hadn't seen food for days. I looked up to see Bill smiling.



“What makes me happy is the delight on a child’s face when she’s licked the platter clean.”

“I’m not a child and I really shouldn’t have been that greedy. I guess the sea breeze made me hungry.”

He reached across the table and held my hand. “I’m so glad you feel so comfortable in my company. I told you I’ve not much experience with the opposite sex. If you had been stiff and starchy it would not have been pleasant for either of us.”

I was able to tuck into an ice cream too.

“I hope to show you something unforgettable tomorrow. Be ready by 8 a.m.,” he said, giving my shoulder a friendly pat.

Emma was not at home when I came back. She arrived much later looking very tired.

“How did the day go?” she asked.

I told her about all the places we visited but not about the visit to the Indian home.

“You’ve seen more places in two days than I’ve seen in 10 years,” she said.

“All work and no play Emma ... You don’t know how to enjoy yourself. Take off on weekends. You could ask Bill to take you around. He’s a super guide. I like him.”

“You mean that fisherman? All these years I’ve zealously maintained social boundaries. No hobnobbing with every Tom, Dick and Harry. Give such people an inch and they’ll take a mile.”

“Gosh! You’re such a snob. Of what use is all your money and position? You’ve no one to call a friend in all

these years you've lived here. I see you growing into a cranky old spinster – rich but unlovable.”

I was sorry even before I finished. But she needed a telling off. She was an ice maiden. I wonder how she interacted with her patients with no love or compassion. I lay on my bed but couldn't sleep for hours. Perhaps he was a fisherman but he was loving and considerate. I saw in him something so tender when he looked at the picture of the young Indian girl. Was I falling in love with him?

Emma left for the hospital the next morning even before I woke up. I wanted to write her a note of apology for last night's behaviour. I went to her writing table to find pen and paper and looked into her drawer. I saw the edge of a photo peeking out of a file. Curiosity got the better of me. I freaked out when I saw a picture of Bill, just in his swimming trunks. What an attractive torso! There was a lady in the picture squatting on the sand and looking up at him. It was Emma! I put the picture back and bolted from the room without writing the note. Here were the greatest pretenders. They had really fooled me.

As I climbed into Bill's car I said, “Just two more days to go.”

“Then we must make the best of it,” he said. We drove silently. My thoughts were all in turmoil. Had Emma and Bill been in love? Had something happened to drive them apart? Perhaps it was the Indian girl in the picture.

*Oh my God! I thought, And here I was getting all excited about him. I even thought I was falling in love.*

We crossed over the Astoria- Meglar Bridge. It was a long walk and then a climb to the light house. Down below were the swirling waters of the Columbia. He took

my hand and we followed the trail to the top. The view was awesome.

“Here you can see the great Columbia meeting the mighty Pacific Ocean. As the salt water and clear water meet there is turbulence. The waves are almost forty feet high and the weather is foggy most of the year. This is a deadly bar and is rightly called the graveyard of the Pacific. Numerous ships and hundreds of lives have been lost here. The bar is never stationary. It shifts from hour to hour and day to day.”

The view was both awesome and terrifying.

“Emma thinks I’m a fisherman. Not that I don’t catch fish. But that is for my pleasure. Have you ever heard of a Bar Pilot?”

“No. I don’t even know what a bar is.”

“It’s where the ocean meets the river, a dangerous place for ships. The Columbia has twenty Bar Pilots. I am one of them. We assist ships across the bar night or day, in fair weather or in foul. This is the most respected and feared job in the world.”

“You mean you go with the ship and direct it to safety? Oh my God! Aren’t you scared for your life?” I asked, clinging to his arm.

“I’m trained to do it, my girl. I’m qualified to pilot any vessel from a submarine to a vessel of unlimited tonnage. I work for three weeks and am off for three weeks. That’s how I’ve been free to show you around.”

“Now I’ll always worry when I think about you. How did your family permit you?”

“I’ve no family. They are all dead.”

“So you’re all alone? Why don’t you get married?”

“I’m married to the sea. She is a jealous mistress. She won’t tolerate competition.”

“But does she love you? Does she warm your bed at night? Will she give you a family?”

“You talk too much. You know nothing about love.”

“I must ask you a question. Why do you dislike Emma? It’s either extreme love or extreme hate.”

“Love, my foot. People like her love only themselves. I’m sorry for being such a creep. Forgive me.”

“Only if you promise not to be so disdainful of Emma.”

He blew me a kiss and sped away.

Emma was in a chatty mood. “Tomorrow being your last day, why don’t you ask him for dinner? It will be ‘thank you’ for showing you around.”

After touring Claptrop Fort, he parked near the house. “Let’s take a walk down the road where we first met. The Scotch Broom has vanished. We met on a dangerous note. But now there are red berries all over. Red the colour of summer – a colour of deep affection. You’ve made me feel more human again. So innocent and trusting. If I do find a woman like you, I might fall in love and settle down.”

He held me in his arms and looked down into my eyes. He was telling me this was just a beautiful interlude. He kissed me then, a long and lingering kiss of farewell.

“Oh, I almost forgot. Emma has invited you to dinner tonight. Please do come.”

“I know you engineered it. Okay, I’ll come just to please you.”

Emma had done herself proud. The living room looked inviting. A Chinese cook had been engaged to prepare a sumptuous dinner. Bill arrived on the dot of 8 p.m. Emma rushed to open the door. The look that passed between them was enough to tell me that the vibes were too strong to ignore.

“Hullo.” He put out his hand. Neither of them had seen me.

“Am I forgiven?” she asked softly. He smiled and thrust a bouquet of red roses into her hand.

Red – colour of summer – the colour of deep affection.

Emma could scarcely make conversation but Bill was at ease. He had brought a gift for me too.

I nervously tugged at the ribbon. It was a large sea shell, exquisite in shape and form.

“Put it over your ear. You will always hear the roar of the ocean and think of your trip to Astoria.”

“Thank you,” I said, giving him a hug. “I also want to hear two stubborn hearts that I hope will soon beat as one.”

I never saw a man colour so much.

Dinner over, Emma came to my room.

“Will he ever forgive me?” she asked.

“Whatever for?”

“It’s a long story. Once upon a time we were very good friends. Then I made an unforgivable mistake. I

started cold shouldering him as I felt he would be a misfit in the company I kept. Then came the season of the Scotch Broom. Many patients were brought in with severe allergic reactions. Most of them could be cured with anti-allergic medication. But there were some fatalities too. One evening, I had a very important meeting. I was to be elected President of the Oregon Medical Association – a prestigious position for an immigrant. When a nurse phoned to say that a young girl was brought in with anaphylactic reaction, I was very casual. I ordered the usual medication and said I'd be there soon. When I walked in half an hour later, the patient was breathing her last. Bill was standing beside her, tears in his eyes. When he saw me, anger and hatred blazed in his eyes.

“For days I lived in a state of tension. If they sued me I would have been bankrupt. It would also mean professional suicide. I waited nervously for months. Either the family was ignorant of their rights or Bill had paid them hush money. I began to hate him because he made me hate myself.”

“Was he in love with the girl?”

“No. She was the daughter of the caretaker of his property, where the Scotch Broom was in full bloom. She went to pluck a bunch and developed a severe allergy. He felt guilty about it. Bill is a very kind person in spite of his macho image.”

“I know. I'm glad I knew him for just a little while. I will never forget this holiday. Someday I hope when I put that shell to my ear, I will not only hear the sea but the beat of your hearts, and know that all is well between you both.”

# The Mystery of the Mermaid's Missing Comb

By Janice Clark

Rosemary sat on a rock far out in the ocean, carefully combing her beautiful, long auburn curls as she hummed a little tune to herself. Mermaids spend a lot of time combing their hair, because the naughty little waves like to tie it in knots and tangles. Her task was made easier because of the new comb her aunt had given her. It had just a tingle of magic, enough to tease the tangles apart easily. She did so love having silky smooth hair.

There was a chittering sound, and Rosemary was drenched with seawater. It wasn't all that cold, but she was startled, and the beautiful comb flew out of her hand.

“Splasher!” She scolded her porpoise friend. “Look what you made me do. I've dropped my new comb. Dive down and find it for me, please.”

The porpoise did as she asked, but soon came back to say he couldn't find the comb. Rosemary dove in, too, and they both looked all around the base of the rocks, but there was no comb to be seen.

Splasher was as solemn as a porpoise could get. “I'm very sorry,” he told her in porpoise talk.

Rosemary hugged him. “I forgive you. I know you didn't mean it. But I must find my comb. Let's get some help.”

Soon there were all sorts of fish and other sea creatures searching. Some swam around, poking their noses into clumps of seaweed, and looking into every crevice in the rocks. Others were digging, sifting through the sand around the rocks. As all this was going on, a shy little clown fish swam up to Rosemary. “Miss Rosemary,” he said, trying to get her attention.

Rosemary glanced at the fish. “I'm sorry,” she said, “but I'm very busy just now. I haven't time to talk.”

“B-but Miss Rosemary,” the little fish stuttered.

Rosemary sighed impatiently. “Later, I said. Not now. Now please get out of the way so we can search for my comb.”

They continued searching frantically, but with no luck. The little clown fish came back a couple of times, but Rosemary shooed him away.

Finally the little fish couldn't take any more. When he was told to go away again, he yelled in his very loudest voice, “Will someone listen to me?”

“All right,” said Rosemary, not very politely. “If it's so important, tell me and get it over with.”

The little fish was almost out of breath from yelling, but he managed to gasp out, “I know where the comb is.”

Rosemary's eyes opened wide. “What? You knew all along? Why didn't you tell me?”

“I've been trying to,” said the fish, “but nobody would listen.”



“Oh.” Rosemary blushed. “You're right. I'm sorry I was rude. Will you please tell me?”

“Well,” said the fish, “I saw your comb fly into the water, but I wasn't strong enough to lift it. A big crab grabbed it—”

Rosemary interrupted. “A crab! We have to find him. Everybody, we need to find the crab that took my comb.”

All the searchers began milling around, looking for a crab.

The little fish was quiet for a moment. Then he said, “You're doing it again. I wasn't finished.”

“Ooops!” Rosemary put her hand over her mouth. “Okay. I'll listen, and I won't say another word until you tell me you're done.”

Everyone calmed down and waited quietly. The little fish spoke again. “I followed the crab to see where it went. When a big fish came around and opened his mouth to eat the crab, I hid in a clump of seaweed.”

He looked at Rosemary as if expecting her to interrupt again, but she kept her hand over her mouth.

The little fish smiled. “The crab scuttled away to hide. It threw away the comb so it could run faster. The comb landed in a giant clam and the clam closed up. That's where it is. If you want to follow me, I'll show you.” He waited a moment, watching Rosemary to see if she would start talking again. Finally he said, “And that's all.”

“Thank you,” said Rosemary. “Will you please take me to the clam?”

“Yes, of course.”

When they got to the clam, it was shut tight. Rosemary asked it several times to open its shell, so she could get her comb back, but it ignored her. Then she thought about what the clam might want. “Mister Clam, I heard that something sharp flew into you while your shell was open. I'm sure it doesn't feel good. If you'd open just a little, I'll take it out for you.”

The clam opened wide enough for Rosemary to reach in.

She pulled out her comb, and found to her surprise that the clam had started turning it into a pearl. It was more beautiful than ever, and the magic still worked. She swam back to her rocks and started combing her hair right away with her shiny comb.

And the next time the little fish or anyone else, tried to tell her something, she listened.

*More about Rosemary's name:*

*Naming books will usually tell you that the name Rosemary comes from combining 'Rose' and 'Mary,' but the medicinal and cooking herb known as rosemary has the Latin name Rosmarinus officinalis. Ros marinus means 'dew of the sea' so it seemed like a good name for a mermaid. The plant is native to the Mediterranean seacoast, and the froth of tiny blue flowers scattered over the evergreen plants probably made someone think of seafoam. The 'officinalis' part means it was listed in the official catalog of healing plants. Rosemary is used as a garden ornamental plant and in cookery, but also has many medicinal uses and has long been considered a memory enhancer.*

*More about pearls:*

*Although we usually associate pearls with oysters and expect them to be more or less round, they actually are made by clams and mussels as well. The shellfish deposits layers of nacre (calcium carbonate) on bits of sand or other irritants to protect itself. The resulting pearl takes on the shape of the irritant, although it will eventually become rounded as more and more layers are deposited. Color varies also—not all pearls are 'pearly white.'*

*More about mermaids:*

*Mermaids are popular in myths and fairy tales. Some are good or at least neutral, others are wicked, at least by human standards. Sirens lured sailors to their death with their magical singing. Some mermaids could call up storms--or calm them. They are all usually depicted as beautiful young women (from the waist up) with long flowing hair, and are often shown combing their hair.*

## Ode to my Father

By T. W. Embry

**A**s my legs hung over the portside bow, the Whitaker 48 sped east; my toes skimmed the bow wave as we crested the next black swell on the Atlantic's choppy surface, and a spray of salty water hit my face. Instantly I was a boy again, out fishing with my Dad.

My heart ached as I remembered him while I stared at the awesome sight of the full moon reflecting off the Gulf Stream as it flowed northward. I had chartered the locally famous Captain Scott's boat to fish in the 'All Keys Snapper' Tournament, celebrating Dad's passing last year, doing what we loved, fishing for snapper.

The Whitaker 48 closed in on Captain Scott's best fishing spots, the deep reefs due east of Key Largo. The Whitaker slowed, idling, fish finder scanning the reef 260 feet below, prime habitat for record sized snapper. The captain deployed the sea anchor and lined up our first drift over the reef. *Woohwhooh!* It was fishin' time!!

On the captain's signal, I dropped bait, my sinker hitting the bottom seconds later; the lively cigar minnow twitching. Slowly I bounced my sinker with the current along the bottom, when *BAAM!!* WOW! What a hit! I

flipped the drag and set the hook, fighting to keep my fish's head up as it charged for the reef's protection.

“Get his head up! Then get in the chair!” yelled Captain Scott from the bridge. Fighting the tilting deck, I lurched toward the chair, strapping myself in.

With my rod gimbaled, I tightened the drag: too much, too soon; my rod doubled up, the still green fish smoking the drag. I pumped and reeled for what seemed an eternity, regaining line only to lose it again. Slowly I gained line, having finally turning my fish toward the boat.

The current was full tilt. “We need to bring this fish in!” growled the Captain. “We’ve lost the slack tide. Time to pull anchor and back down!” Lost was our opportunity to fish Captain Scott’s best spots tonight.

Panting, dripping with sweat, my out of shape muscles burning, I fought my fish closer to the boat. Again it ran, peeling off more line, spooked by the Whitaker’s lights.

As the Captain backed the boat down, I was pulling straight up, hauling a dead weight toward the gaff, my worthy opponent exhausted too. Gratefully, I finally saw the 10 foot leader knot, still unseen what creature fought for its life at the end of the line.

Captain Scott swung the gaff onboard, my catch sailed through the air, landing, flopping, then sliding into my feet. It would seem my catch was not a fish at all. Straight faced as I could manage, I said, “Bummer, man, looks like rubber boot for dinner, Captain.” We both burst out laughing. My sides aching, exhausted, I collapsed on the deck, reveling in the beauty of my Dad’s gift, a memory of laughter to ease my grief.

# The Cloud Parade

A Poem

**By Laura Keane**

When the clouds roll in, I'm excited to see  
the puffy white wisps right above me.

They swirl and they twist against the canvas of blue.  
I'm never quite sure what they really will do.

Big fluffy hippos stretch out in flight.  
Crabs and dolphins play in an ocean of white.

An elephant and her baby lumber on by,  
as I watch my parade way up in the sky.

To the left, there's a dragon with white shooting flames  
right on the heels of a fast moving train.

The train starts to whistle as the wind pushes it by.  
*Slow down*, I beg. I want to see these amazing white puffs  
as they go on by.

An otter plays with a fish, a bear drives a car.  
A cat chases a bird and a horse stands tall.  
A snowman and ghost play near in the white.  
The ghost gives the snowman a friendly fright.

The parade begins to end, moving out of sight,  
as big masses of white drift off to the right.  
The forms have all melted, their edges erased.  
The parade moves on to another town, another place.

I'm sad for a moment, maybe two.  
Then a smile sneaks up and I know what to do.  
I will keep my eyes to the sky, looking for magical white  
puffs,  
knowing that the slightest breeze blowing might just be  
enough.

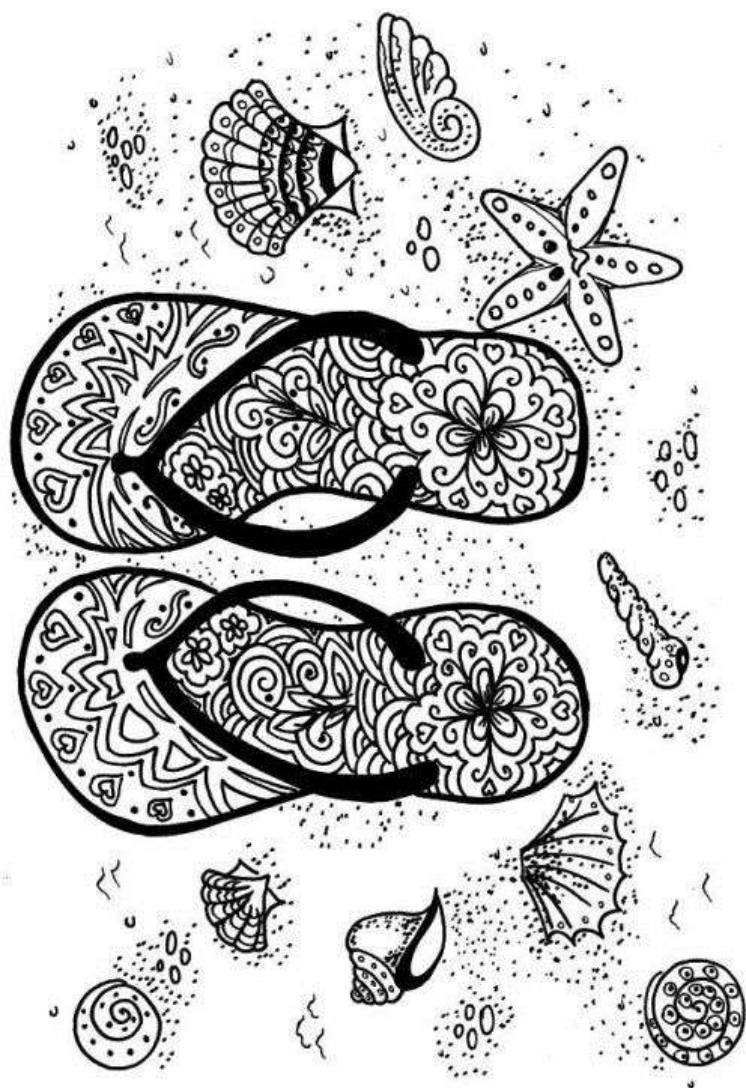
Although some prefer a sky of blue without white,  
I'm happier when they blend in my sight.  
So, the next breezy day, turn your eyes and look up  
for your own parade of those magical puffs.

# Doodle Picture

**By Fifi Lavender**

**C**oloring is rapidly gaining recognition as an anti-stress therapy, helping people to turn their lives around. Fifi Lavender is one of the artists working to create the *Crimson Cloak* coloring book range with this in mind.





# Little Wave

By A. Lawati

Once upon a time in the sea of seas, there lived a family of waves. Within this family there was a special wave, known as Little Wave. Being little meant living under the tide and always watching bigger waves doing everything. He wanted to do something big so everyone would respect him.

Looking up from his seabed, he couldn't help overhearing the big waves talk about Rip Tide, the most famous and strongest of all the waves. Rip was very strong and he could go right up to the shore and bring back anything that got caught in his swell back to sea.

Suddenly, Little Wave felt himself being moved away from his seabed and at once knew that Mr. Under Current was up to his usual tricks.

Little Wave gave a tiny splash and slipped out of Mister Under Current's hands, and made his way back to his sea bed where he bounced into Stafy, who was a Star Fish and his best friend in the whole wide sea.

“Hey! How's it flowing?” asked Stafy.

“It's flowing,” replied Little Wave.

Little Wave asked, “Do you want to go play *who splashes the hardest against the Shore?*”

“Sure,” said Stafy. “And maybe, we can play hide and seek in the reef after that.” So along they went; and when they reached the shore, Little Wave went as fast as he could and splashed against the sandy shore causing a big spray high up in the air.

Stafy said, “That’s the highest you’ve ever sprayed.”

Little Wave replied “Someday I’m going to be as strong and fast as Rip Tide.” Suddenly he heard a voice from behind the cove.

“So you want to be like Rip Tide, hmm!”

Little Wave whirled around. He couldn’t see anything at first, but then he followed the voice and discovered its owner.

Little Wave asked, “Who are you? Are you from around here?”

“No,” came the reply. “My name is Surfer’s Delight and I got pushed into this cove trying to help some surfers have fun.”

“Why do you sound so sad?” asked Stafy.

Surfer’s Delight replied, “I am sad because I am stuck in this cove and unable to return to my home, which is the sea, due to the low tide.”

Little Wave had a streaming idea and he thought to himself: what if he could help get Surfer’s Delight out of the cove and back into the sea? Now that would be a big thing, and the other waves would then respect him.

But he was little, how could he do it?

He said, “Mister Surfer’s Delight, I’m going to help you get out of this problem.”

Then Little Wave bounced along to where the other big waves were.

Stafy swam next to him and asked, “How are we going to do this? Aren’t we too small for this?”

“Well,” said Little Wave, “I may be little, but I’m going to try.”

He told Stafy about his plan: he would go to the other waves and tell them that he wanted to see which one of them was the best. When they started to try to out-splash each other against the shore, this would attract Rip Tide to come and prove that he was the most powerful splasher of all. In doing so he would get Surfer’s Delight out of the cove.

Little wave chopped along to where all the waves were still, as the sea lay calm. This was naptime for all the Waves.

“*Ahum*,” said Little Wave and then gently rose, creating a small ripple, which went through the gentle sea and caused all the Waves to wake up.

They asked, “Who has woken us in our naptime?”

Little Wave replied, “It is me, Little Wave; and I have learnt that there is a tournament by the shore to see who is the strongest of all the waves.”

This got all the Young Waves excited and they started to drift towards the shore.

As they got there, one behind the other, they started to slam against the shore and the splashes started getting higher and higher and just when everyone thought that no

one could do anymore slamming, they heard a big *whoosh* sound. “Look!” said Little Wave, “Here comes Rip Tide!”

Rip came in very fast and went over the cove walls. He filled the cove up creating a high tide, which made the water rise above the cove walls; and with Rip Tide’s strength, Surfer’s Delight was able to escape and make his way back into the open sea.

“Golly! You are a smart one,” said Surfer’s Delight. He thanked Little Wave for his help.

Then Rip Tide came over and gently splashed Little Wave. He said, “You have earned everyone’s respect today and I have a feeling that someday you will grow up to be as mighty as me.”

Little wave smiled and winked at Stafy, as he was very happy. Because of his helpful feat he had earned the respect that he had wanted for so long.

Little Wave and Stafy returned to their seabed to talk about their adventurous day.

## Four Haiku

By Cynthia MacGregor

The ocean's salt smell  
Beckons retired fisherman  
With briny mem'ries.

See how the sand sparks,  
Reflecting the sun's brilliance.  
The world catches fire.

Sands sift through fingers  
Like memories escaping,  
Never to return.

Fresh ocean breezes  
Are scent of mermaid's perfume  
Or lorelei's lure.

# The Single Tower

By W.H. Matlack

The thing about it was that I remember it from my childhood back in the fifties. It was one of those things that just stay with you for all the years after. It would just pop into my mind as a clear, vibrant memory. Usually when I was thinking about those adventurous childhood weekend afternoons in the summer with my best friend, Jerry.

Jerry lived on a farm in those days. Not too far outside of the small town where I lived, but just far enough that we only got together when our parents had the urge to see each other. Usually to play some sort of card game and drink pot after pot of coffee. It was a poor town, so getting together over coffee and cards was what most families did on weekends. It was about all anyone could afford to do, but it was Colorado, so it was always beautiful in the summer, and nobody felt cheated that we didn't have more than one movie theater and only one park. We were surrounded by forests and 14,000 foot mountains. School was out, too, so we kids were all about playing. The families would alternate visits. One weekend at the farm, the next in town at my house.

Sometimes before the card games, we'd all gather together to see Kodachrome slides of the host's most recent car trip, that usually consisted of camping in a

nearby park. Lots of pictures of tents, picnic tables covered in food. The men off somewhere – usually fishing. The women and older girls busily preparing meals. Everyone smiling and relaxed.

I first saw it during one of those visits to the farm. Jerry and I were getting bored hanging around the house. For us at eight years old, being bored also meant getting into trouble, so we were ejected outside where we might find some trouble to get into, but it would be out of sight of the adults.

So there we were, outside like marooned pirates with nothing to do and a whole farm to do it in. Jerry looked at me and said, “Hey. You want to see something cool?”

I nodded an enthusiastic yes, and we were off running. It seemed like we never went anywhere without running. I wish I could still do that now.

A creek ran through Jerry’s farm, and all along its shallow banks grew huge stands of Aspen trees. I didn’t know it then, but Aspens are the largest living things on earth. All the trees are connected as a contiguous stand. We didn’t care about that. All we knew was that the Aspens created a thick forest with trees so close together you couldn’t run through them. You had to slow down and kind of sidle through them. It was like being in another land.

After pushing through the stand for about a half hour, I got my first glance at it. All I could see was a kind of white column that looked to be about twice our height. It was very much hidden by the trees, so we didn’t get a good look at it until we were right next to it. The Aspens were thickest next to it as though they were protecting it.



Because of the thick trees, it was hard to see it as a whole. As near as I could tell, it seemed to be made out of that white marble that you see in graveyards. It was sort of tubular with four sides and was covered with that kind of black moss that grows on monuments. In fact it looked so much like a graveyard monument that I assumed it must be one. I asked Jerry what he thought.

“So, Jerry. Is this some kind of a grave marker?”

“I really don’t think it is. There aren’t any names carved on it. In fact, it has no carving at all. There are four flat sides on the bottom half. The rest is rounded up to the top which is a kind of ball. Each of the sides is oriented to compass points. Each flat side is separated by a kind of half pole. See where the flats end? There’s a kind of crown design that looks like it holds the top part on. And it’s all one piece. It’s impossible to climb. I’ve tried it more than once.”

“Wow, Jerry. No carvings or markings at all? Just that moss-like staining.”

“Yeah, and the other weird thing is where it is. Notice that we are at the extreme end of the farm. It’s all forest here. The creek ends here, too. You can see where the water emerges from an underground well or something. It’s nowhere anyone would be buried.”

“Has your dad seen it?”

“Yes, he came out with my brother, Clyde. I hadn’t seen it yet, but Clyde told me all about it. He said that Dad tried to push it over, but it didn’t budge. Dad said the bottom part must be buried ten feet deep in poured concrete. At least ten feet.”

“So what did your dad do?”

“He said to just leave it alone. That it wasn’t worth bothering with. He said it was probably placed there to mark the headwaters of our little creek.”

“What about trying to dig it up? See if it’s hiding something.”

“Dad said if I wanted to waste my time doing that, he could find a lot of other things on the farm that need digging up.”

“So, that’s it? It just sits here?”

“Dad says it’s probably been sitting here for a hundred years. Maybe even a century. He says it’s carved out of solid marble, just like a statue over in Italy or Greece or someplace. He says they find things like this at the bottom of the ocean all the time.”

I stepped back a few feet and took a good look at it. It sure was a mystery. A real farm mystery. Made a person think, wonder. Maybe that was its real purpose. Just to make you wonder.

That day Jerry and I went back to the house because dinner was about to happen. The food was always terrific. That evening we had roast chicken, mashed potatoes with lots of gravy and cherry cobbler for desert. After dinner, we all gathered in the living room to watch slides from the California trip Jerry’s family had taken last spring. We’d seen the slides before, but California was so exotic looking with the ocean and all, that it was like seeing them for the first time. My favorite slide was one of Jerry and Clyde in the surf. It was taken just as a wave broke over the two of them.

Then the evening ended and we made sad goodbyes. The car ride home was depressing. Jerry's farm with the mystery column seemed hundreds of miles away.

School came early the next morning with its brutal force. All my memories and good feelings of the visit were brushed aside by math and grammar and the bully who always punched me at lunch. I just couldn't keep from thinking about that monument. It must have been a good three months before we made it back to the farm for dinner. It was Thanksgiving, and there were four families gathered at the farm. Jerry asked if I wanted to visit the monument again. I said 'yes', against my better judgment. I was in my 'good' clothes, and my mother, reinforced with a scowl from my dad, warned me not to get them dirty.

As best as we could, Jerry and I made it back to the monument. It was late fall, so the forest was covered with beautiful leaves leaving the branches bare. Without the leaves, I got a good look at the monument. It seemed to be much whiter than I remembered.

Jerry said, "Hey, I'll bet I could climb it if you give me a boost, and if I use that tree right next to it."

Sure. Why not? It was just a monument.

I leaned against the marble and boosted Jerry up until he was able to grab that crown kind of thing with both hands. With his arms around the thing, he pulled himself up and wrapped his legs around it. He was now kind of embracing it. He was able to inch up until he was above the ring part, still holding onto it with both arm and legs.

For one very brief second, I looked down to see how badly I had soiled my clothes. They were pretty bad, so I looked up to tell Jerry that I was in trouble and needed to

go back. He wasn't there. There was no sign of him at all. Just the dirty monument.

I panicked and looked all over the area. Nothing. I ran back to the farm as fast as I could and burst into the living room where the California slide show was going on. There was the slide of Jerry and Clyde in the surf together, except there was only Clyde.

They've got me in counselling now to deal with my imaginary friend, Jerry. Things aren't going so well, because I know Jerry was my friend. He was real. And so was the monument, which for some reason, has disappeared along with Jerry. It was all real. It happened. I know it did.

# A SeaTail

By Esma Race

Illustration by Veronica Castle



I looked down at my feet and watched as the gentle waves lapped against them , each one covering first my toes and gradually more and more of my feet, until I was ankle deep in the cool soothing waters of the sea. I wriggled my toes into the wet sand and sighed with pleasure.

Not for long though: my mood of relaxation was rudely interrupted by a dirty-yellow-coloured mongrel dog dropping a tennis ball into the water at my feet, where the ball promptly started to float away as the wave retreated back into the sea.

I retrieved the soggy ball and turned to walk along the water's edge with the excited dog running beside me. He

raced away as I threw the ball across the sands for him. I had no need to shout *fetch* to him; he knew the game well enough.

He didn't belong to me. In fact he belonged to no one in particular, he just lived in the village, and the villagers looked after him. Not that he hadn't been taken in by various families at various times, but he liked to move around. Someone had started to call him 'Tinker' and the name had stuck with him. He had been left behind by Travellers who had set up camp on the cliff top above the cove; they had left him tied up to a lamppost outside the local butcher's shop, whether by accident or design I have no idea. From then on he moved from house to house when he was hungry, slept in Mr. Aston's potting shed, and when the nights became too cold for that, sat on the doorstep and barked to be let in for the night. On summer days he found himself a patch of sunlight and settled down to watch the world go by, wagging his tail at everyone as they passed by.

Mrs. Knight, who managed the chemist shop, took it upon herself to make sure that he was treated for worms and fleas on a regular basis. "Very important," she said, "because he plays with all the children." Tinker was the most good natured dog I had ever known and as Mrs. Knight was fond of saying, "there is not a bad bone in his body." All these thoughts were going through my head as I walked along the beach, and I bent down to pat his soft fur.

Suddenly Tinker spotted some boys walking along the cliff top, and decided that he needed a change of playmate. With an apologetic wag of his tail, and with his ball held firmly in his mouth, he started up the steep path

which led to the top of the cliffs, leaving me to my solitary meandering along the water's edge.

I truly loved the ocean. It held a fascination for me, to me she was mesmerising in all her moods, from gentle tides to roaring storms.

I had lived my entire life within sight and sound of the sea. I fall asleep each night and woke each morning to the crash of the waves upon the rocks. I know the sea in all her guises and I never get tired of her.

Not only the sea, but what lives below the surface, both real and mythical, is of interest to me. I have always been an avid reader, and enjoy all of the stories written about the sea as well as those telling tales of my native Cornwall; tales of smugglers, wreckers and contraband, barrels of French brandy hidden away from the authorities.

My home is the fishing village of Portloe, and I intend to live here all my life, unlike my three brothers who had all taken off for the big city as soon as they were able to.

Not that I didn't want to see more of the world, because I most certainly did. My plan now that I had finished school was to train as a hairdresser in nearby Truro. Then once I had qualified I could work in my home village, and live at home with my parents, hopefully saving up for lots of trips abroad, but always returning home to live and work.

As I sat on a rocky outcrop with my legs knee deep in salty sea water I gazed across to the horizon, to where the sea met the sky. A place, I thought, that was 'between the worlds', a place that was impossible to reach, like the end of a rainbow.

I felt happy and contented; this was I knew was because I was connecting to all the four elements, my feet in the water, sitting on a piece of the earth, breathing in and feeling the air around me. The fourth element was Fire, and I felt its warmth from the summer sun.

Looking out across the vast expanse of ocean I noticed a vessel coming around the headland. Putting up my hand to shade my eyes, I tried to identify her, but she was too far away.

Standing up I continued my stroll, taking my time, and occasionally bending down to pick up a shell or pebble that caught my fancy. I turned each one over and over in my hand enjoying the feel of it before returning it to the sand where it belonged.

Seeing the small fishing boat in the distance made me think of other ships and boats which had also sailed the seven seas.

Mystery ships like the *Flying Dutchman* and the *Marie Celeste*. The great tall ships, with majestic sails and hand carved figureheads, lovingly painted, of beautiful women who stared out towards the horizon with sightless eyes.

There were brave ships, going to battle, such as *HMS Victory* and the *Mary Rose*. There were cruel ships like slave traders and prison ships. Ships that explored, sailing away into the sunset, not knowing what they would discover, having no idea of the huge continents or the dangers which may befall them. Ships like the *Santa Maria* and the *Golden Hind*.

Also the legendary Clipper Ships; the *Cutty Sark* amongst many others. Swift and elegant, racing through



waves carrying goods from the new world to enhance the lives of the inhabitants of the old one.

Unlucky ships also sprang to mind: the *Titanic* and the ill-fated *Lusitania*. Famous fictional ships which had gripped the imagination of many a small child, the *Hispaniola* from Treasure Island, and *Pequot* from Moby Dick: and so it continued, my thoughts of the ocean and what tales were told about her, the men and ships which sailed upon her, some fighting and dying, others achieving glory and wealth behind their wildest dreams.

Many a good tune was inspired by the sea, both classical and popular.

I began to sing *Red Sails in the Sunset* softly under my breath after first making sure that no one was around to hear me. Singing was not one of my talents although not the least by any means.

The one thing that I found impossible to master was swimming: yes swimming, I who loved the sea so much was quite unable to swim in it! Both my parents and my brothers had attempted to teach me, but all to no avail, and I had had private lessons at the local swimming baths, but I was useless, my legs just refused to work properly when I was in the water. What I could do was sit on the bottom of the pool with my eyes open and watch all the arms and legs moving above me. I used to manage several minutes in this position until my Mother forbade me to do it any more because she was frightened that I would drown in the depths of the pool, and that the swimmers on the surface would not notice me.

I had given up on the idea of swimming which meant that I also had to abandon my dreams of becoming a

marine biologist or becoming a volunteer crew member on the local lifeboat.

I made my way slowly towards the cliff path which led to the cottage which I shared with my parents. There was no sign now of the dirty yellow coloured dog or the little boys he had been playing with.

As I walked I started to braid my hair, which had been hanging loose down my back to below my waist. I was so used to the task that my fingers moved quickly and deftly, plaiting and coiling until my unruly hair was tamed and pinned on top of my head.

I passed by the Pike Cottage where my great-grandparents Ezra and Elizabeth Penhallow had once lived. She had died giving birth to my Grandad Arthur and had been buried at sea as she had requested. People had told her son Arthur years later that he had been very reclusive and that little was known of her background.

My mother opened our front door as I soon as she saw me walking down the path.

“Hurry up Trish,” she called out to me, “the letter has arrived.” I smiled at her and held my hand out for the letter; she waited impatiently for me to read through it. “Well, go on then,” she said, “what does it say?”

I passed it back to her and she glanced quickly to the final sentence. “That’s brilliant Trish, well done, I can’t wait to tell your Dad.” She gave a little dance around the kitchen, grabbing my hands, and pulling me along with her: you would have thought that I had won the lottery instead of landing an apprenticeship at a very posh hair stylist’s in Truro.

And so began the next phase of my life. My Mother was convinced that I would be persuaded to have my hair cut, but I was as adamant as ever and instead was taught how to keep it in fantastic condition and carefully trim the ends.

I absolutely loved hairdressing, and learned to cut, colour and style with flair. After five years I was ready to move on, my intention had always been to open my own shop in my home village, but that would be costly, so when the opportunity to work on a cruise ship came up I was ecstatic. Doing what I loved, and even better, being out on the open sea was an absolute dream come true.

The cruise ship was the *Solar Star* sailing out of Southampton, and I joined her crew on the 24<sup>th</sup> of May for a trip around the Mediterranean.

I had never been abroad before, so I was looking forward to visiting all the places I had heard and read about, also meeting lots of people from other backgrounds: of course I was very nervous as well.

Life on board was incredibly busy, a mixture of organisation and utter chaos. For me it was a dream come true, although I did miss my family. I got to know my clients in the hairdressing salon, where I worked with two other people, Danny and Kelly.

One of my favourite clients was a lovely little girl called Olivia, she was bright and chatty, and I enjoyed talking to her very much. She made me wish that I had a sister.

There were very few children on the cruise, and so I made a point of chatting to Olivia whenever I saw her on deck. We talked about all sorts of things and I played deck games with her when I had some free time.

Also for the first time in my life I began to seriously take notice of a man. He was a junior officer and his name was Lee Barrow. We had hit it off as soon as we met. He had a great sense of humour as well as being absolutely gorgeous; it wasn't yet a romance, but things were moving rapidly in that direction. I was very happy as I relaxed and enjoyed my time aboard the beautiful cruise liner as she sailed onwards, calling at the various ports around the shores of the Mediterranean Sea.

I had absolutely no premonition of disaster when I awoke that morning, no feeling of dread: in fact no warning at all of what was to come.

I was strolling along the deck, when I spotted Olivia standing alone at the railing looking out across the water, I had started to make my way towards her and was about to call out her name when the unthinkable happened.

Somehow she had slipped between the rails and out of my vision, plunging into the sea far below.

I shouted for help at the top of my voice and raced to the spot where I had seen her disappear from view.

Then without a second thought, and holding my nose, I jumped feet first after her.

In the few moments that it took me to hit the water I remembered that I couldn't swim.

It is not the best idea in the world to jump into deep water when you can't swim. I said a mental goodbye to my parents and brothers as the incredibly cold waters of the Mediterranean closed over my head and I was dragged downwards into the dark depths.

Then just as I thought it was all over I was catapulted upwards again to the surface, gasping for air and floundering to keep my head above the choppy water.

By some incredible miracle or stroke of luck I had surfaced close to where Olive was treading water and waving frantically towards the ship, but even as I noticed that a rescue dinghy had been launched and was making its way towards us I sank again beneath the water.

Down, down I sank, I was holding my breath, which I was good at, but this I knew would not stop me from drowning, and as I started to lose consciousness I felt firm arms around me propelling me slowly and surely upwards. I experienced a feeling of intense relief.

As I once again reached the surface I opened my eyes and tried to make out the face of my rescuer.

It was the face of a pretty young woman that smiled back at me. She didn't speak, and I couldn't speak, I was so shocked and traumatised.

Olivia was now struggling to stay afloat, and the woman who was holding me swam towards her, keeping me alongside her, I remember thinking that she was a very strong swimmer.

I could hear the voices of the sailors as the dinghy moved closer to us and at the same time my rescuer grabbed hold of Olivia.

Strong arms reached down towards us, as first Olivia was lifted on board the small craft, and then myself, although I seemed to be more heaved aboard than lifted.

Soon I was wrapped tightly in a blanket and lying down as the dinghy made its way back to the ship.

After a moment I wriggled my arms out of the blanket and managed to push myself up into a sitting position. I could see Olivia close by being held by one of the sailors who appeared to be comforting her as she sobbed against his shoulder, but where was the woman who had helped us to safety? There was no sign of her in the little dinghy. I started to panic, and called out to the men, "Where's the other woman? You've left her in the sea."

Three pairs of eyes turned to look at me. Four if you included Olivia's. "There was nobody else in the water, just the two of you," answered one of the sailors.

"Yes there was," I said; "a young woman with long blonde hair." I was becoming agitated by this time and beginning to raise my voice, which I seemed to have recovered. One of the men took me by the shoulders and shook me gently. "Look at me Trish," he said. "There was nobody else in the water," he repeated: "You have just saved the little girl's life, and now you are becoming overwrought." I almost said that I wasn't able to swim, but thought better of it. So I didn't answer, just crawled over to the side of the dinghy and scanned the ocean for any sign of my rescuer.

Then I saw her. "Look, there she is!" I shouted, and pointed to where I had caught a glimpse of her blonde hair as the waves moved about her. The sailors all followed my gaze but all to no avail; it appeared that I was the only person who could see her, and now even I was beginning to doubt myself,

We were approaching the cruise ship, and as preparations were being made to winch us aboard I took one last look across the water.

I saw her at once as she raised her arm in what I knew was goodbye, and turned to dive into the depths beneath, but as she arched her body I saw something which was to stay imprinted on my brain for the rest of my life. For instead of seeing her legs breaking the surface of the water as she dived, it was a fish's tail.

It looked silver in the sunshine and the scales dripped with glittering droplets of water. I was absolutely astounded. My heart said "A Mermaid!" whilst my mind said "impossible." I sat very still on the bottom of the dinghy, bent forward, with my arms wrapped tightly around my knees. I was shivering badly and had my eyes closed. In my mind's eye I kept seeing the mermaid's tail and feeling her strong arms as she guided me to the rescue dinghy. I wondered if I was living in a parallel universe.

The sailors helped me aboard the cruise liner where they handed me over into the capable hands of the ship's Doctor. A lovely lady known to everyone on board as 'Doc'.

She pronounced me 'in shock' and when I was warm and dry, she gave me some medication 'to help me sleep', and I was tucked up in bed .

Although I did sleep for a long time, I also dreamt and it was a very vivid dream in which I again met the mermaid.

She was sitting on the edge of the bath in our bathroom at home, her rather spectacular tail all but submerged in the water; she was brushing her long blonde hair, and smiling happily at me,

"Hello," she said: "I have been waiting for you."

My legs were in danger of giving way, and so I sat down rather suddenly on the closed toilet seat.

“Are you real?” I asked her.

She laughed and reached out for my hand. “We are cousins,” was her reply. “Your great grandmother Elizabeth was my great grandmother also, she left the sea to be with your great grandfather Ezra. They fell in love and managed to have a child—your Grandad Arthur—but she didn't live for long.” She looked rather sad then as she told me the story.

“But my dad isn't a mermaid,” I said in a weak voice.

The mermaid was smiling again now. “Of course not,” she said. “He is a man, but you must admit he loves the sea just as much as you do.”

“Why have I not seen you before?” I asked her then.

“Because,” she said, “you haven't been in the sea before.”

“Well, that's because I don't know how to swim,” I answered defensively.

She laughed once more. “Of course you can't, you haven't got a tail.”

I think I must have started to wake up then because she said quickly “Please don't go yet, I can tell you how to swim.”

“Go on then,” I said.

She flicked her tail and told me that I would have to keep my legs together with my feet turned outwards, and move them slowly from side to side or up and down.



“Thank you for that information, I will try,” I answered her.

“Try and keep most of your body just below the surface, and your head as well, just come up when you need to breathe.” She was on a roll now and there was no stopping her. “I want to help you,” she continued, “because you are my cousin.”

She was looking very pleased with herself at this point, so I said firmly “I think it must be second or third cousins,” but she dismissed my remark with a sweep of her arm.

“When you can swim we can meet up in the sea and have some fun,” she told me, and then she added “I will help you with your hair, it really needs more brushing.”

This new relation was now starting to annoy me. “Can you teach me to sing as well?” I asked her. That really made her laugh. “That's not possible at all,” she answered with certainty: so I decided to change the subject.

“Have you got a name?” She gave me a lovely smile and I remembered that this beautiful creature had saved my life. “My name is Kym,” she said. “When you are in the ocean. call out for me and I will come to you.”

Suddenly I felt very happy and privileged to have met her. “My name is Trish,” I told her.

“It sounds like fish,” she said; and we both laughed. I was still smiling as I woke up, and I held on to the memory of my dream, and recalled it many times during the rest of my life.

The only person that I told my story to was Lee Barton whom I was to marry. We lived in my village

close to my parents and eventually bought Pike Cottage where my great grandparents had lived: Ezra the fisherman and Elizabeth the Mermaid.

I did learn to swim and sometimes I swam in the ocean and called out to my cousin Kym the Mermaid.

# Infinity

*A Poem,*  
**by Damaris West**

The thing that I love best to do  
Is to lie and gaze in the sky's clear blue  
Through an arch of stirring marram blades;  
And watch the sea-gulls sail and screech  
Over the long, smooth line of beach  
And follow them through as they rise and glide.

I love to feel the fresh sea breeze  
Blow through my hair and fan, and tease,  
Scented with sunlight, sea and marsh  
And sand-dune flowers that creep and cling,  
Their roots scarce holding as the long stems swing.

But the sky is where my eyes would stay –  
A bowl, it seems, without a base –  
Just deep and jewelled, endless space.  
Untouched, this sky, by Man's straight lines;  
But swept by ragged clouds – like hands  
Their shadows brush the wind-blown sands.

And here, alone, I'd fall asleep,  
With not a wish in all the world  
But that the future be unfurled,  
And show me what I am to know.

*Taken from her book WILD GOOSE*

# Baby Girl

By Gary Winstead

## *Chapter 1*

“**M**olly, are you awake? We need to talk. Molly! Molly!”

“Huh, what you want, Buddy? I can hear you.”

*“Are you up to travel? I overheard one of the scientists talking. If I heard them right they are going to dissect us and see if the experiment on our brains worked. I know a way we can get out of here tonight if you are up for it.”*

*“You know we have never been out of this area, how do you propose to get us out of here and to safety?”*

*“I have a plan: when the men come in later today, just act like everything is normal, let them go about their duties and when they leave, and the lights go out, we will make our way to a warm, safe place.”*

*“Quiet, here they come now. Oh, I wish they had not done this to us.”*

In the early days of the cold war there was chaos in the Philippines and it seemed a good time to make their move. The Italian Communists had escaped the brutal hand of the American Invasion and settled into an enclave in the hills of Mindanao. Mindanao, one of the largest islands, is surrounded by four seas: the Sulu Sea to the west, the Philippine Sea to the east, the Celebes Sea to the

south, and the Mindanao Sea to the north: making the large island the perfect location for a secret enclave.

Of all the islands of the Philippines, Mindanao shows the greatest variety of physiographic development. High, rugged, faulted mountains; almost isolated volcanic peaks; high rolling plateaus, and broad, level, swampy plains are found there. This would make it ideal for what the team of brilliant doctors had in mind. A social and physical experiment trying to construct a super villain. One that could go easily undetected among the population and be able to acquire important yet secret information.

A team of highly skilled engineers arrived via Jeepney in the middle of the night. They traversed the dirt road connecting Bislig on the East and the Agusan River. The low-lying valley between Davao's 9550 foot peaks to the East and Mount Hilong-Hilong to the north would make perfect cover for their evil plans.

Before dawn construction of the secret site had begun: Drilled and dynamited into the lava rock was room enough for fifty scientists to live, sleep and work twelve hours a day. As the years passed and technology improved they were finally on the brink of the results they had hoped for. What they didn't know this day was that the experiment had worked more quickly and much better than anticipated. This would prove to be a fatal error on their part.

Due North of the Island of Mindanao lie the peaceful white sand beaches of Cebu and Camotes Islands. While Mindanao has high mountains where it would be easy to hide a secret government project from the ever-inquisitive eyes of the Pinoy, in stark contrast is the beauty that is Camotes and Cebu. The deep blue water, ideal for fishing and other forms of breathtaking recreation would be the

center of population growth, keeping people away from Mindanao. This would explain, at least in part, coupled with the natural seclusion, why the Italians had chosen Mindanao after the war. A perfect place to mess with nature and be completely safe ... or so they thought.

There had been speculation amongst the several scientists that it would be possible to perfect the perfect spy. One that was so innocent looking, and at the same time appealing that they would not be suspected of acquiring vast amounts of knowledge while sitting quietly as workers inputting data into secure computers.

This night would prove just how correct the scientists were and just how big a mistake had been made. Molly and Buddy were to prove them more right than they could imagine, but not the way they had hoped. For tonight would be just the beginning.

Jingling, hissing and jerking over the fog shrouded dirt road, three of the Jeeps, so famous throughout the PI, pulled to a stop in front of the cargo loading doors.

A single elderly relic from the Italian Army sat in a folding chair and wondered why they had arrived so late. Dismissing the thought, he stood and opened the large overhead doors so the drivers could unload and be on their way before it got too dark to try to cross the mountains.

Doctor Don Dominic stretched his portly frame and wondered what had happened to the evening meal. Normally it had been served to him by now. He hated the long walk to the cafeteria and knew if he bellowed loud and long enough some peon would bring food. "Hey, anyone heard where the food is? Has the cook gone off on another bender? Hey, is anyone listening to me?"

Most likely no one was, as they all despised this disturbed doctor. Oh, he had his degree alright, but incompetence was his middle name. He had Molly and Buddy lying quietly on their stomachs on a lab table while he hooked up the electrodes for a scan.

“Food’s here, come get it for it don’t last no more.” It was the usual pleasant bellow of the always intimidating Filipino cook Eljon. He was a fantastic cook, and the Italians paid really well, but he thought them to be arrogant, pushy and worst of all they smelled bad. “Five minutes and I shut the door.”

Like he was shot from a cannon, Dr. D bolted out the door as fast as his five feet four, two hundred fifty-pound frame would allow him, completely oblivious to Molly and Buddy lying quietly on the tables.

Cutter and Baby Girl, inseparable from their very first meeting, had been hard at work for over a year now trying to keep the small ranch they called home in operable condition. Baby had noticed the long hours and hard work had taken its toll on Cutter so she started to formulate a plan. How to get him to agree to a much-needed vacation? She decided a trip to the beach would be a nice distraction from the everyday hubbub of the ranch. Well, truth be told she would have to slip the idea by him while he was distracted, otherwise she was sure he would never agree. What to do?

The noon-day sun was scorching, no breeze to sooth his brow, the time was right so Baby casually walked up to where he was hard at work and said, “You have been so busy with the horses all summer I think you could use a break. How about we spend a few days at the beach, relax



in the sunshine and sleep peacefully to the sound of the surf? I know an island paradise that is a really nice place to go. You would get to relax in the shade of a coconut tree and sip some iced tea and listen to the waves crash on the white sand beach. We could also explore some of the other islands in the area. Should I take care of the reservations?”

The lanky cowboy, dripping with sweat from the noonday sun, was bent over under the back leg of a stocky Mustang and only heard, *horses, break, peaceful, and surf*. The Mustang was fidgety from the fly bites and not liking his foot pounded upon as Cutter tried to nail on a shoe, easily distracting the farrier from his thoughts. If the shoer let his guard down on a green horse, a trip to emergency usually followed. “Sure, why not?”

He grumbled as the bay took a swipe at him with the left rear leg. His daughter, Connie, herself an accomplished horse person quickly pulled the horse’s head to one side creating more space between the two combatants.

“Well okay then. A week on the sand, sipping iced tea and holding hands. How romantic is that? Didn’t think you would go for it. There is still some lovin’ in you, old man, for sure.” And off she dashed to make all the necessary arrangements.

Meanwhile Cutter and Connie finished Jupiter, put him in his private stall with lots of food and water and both leaned against a scrub oak tree for a little shade. The fancy new cell phone Baby Girl gave as a Father’s Day present did have one feature the old cowboy could understand, the temperature in the shade was 98 F. Time for a midday break. He lay back against the bark of the very old oak and took a long sip of water. Connie brought

up the subject first. “I didn’t think you liked leaving the ranch, or spending money for that matter. It is so nice of you to take your new bride to the Philippines for a week-long vacation.”

“What, huh!” Cutter was utterly taken off guard and bolted upright from the trunk of the tree. “What are you talking about? I, I...”

Connie chuckled and nodded, “Yep you just told her to make the reservations and get back to ya.” She thought to herself, *Better not go near the house for a while.* She quickly stood and half ran to the barn to escape his wrath. When she looked back it struck her as pleasantly odd, Cutter the Lonesome Cowboy was actually smiling and nodding his head as if speaking to himself. *I’m guessing he got his self a good one.*

The Cowboy and Baby Girl had only been married a year and their bond was unbelievably strong. She came into his life when it was the darkest of times and rescued the lean cowboy from utter despair caused by the loss of Margo. Her love and affection brought a resurgence to the old cow puncher and he just knew she could do no wrong.

Cutter leaned against the tree and after a moment’s reflection decided a trip to the PI might not be so bad after all. But first the animals had to be attended to. *Think I will let Connie do the chores and go see what the island currently referred to as the Queen City of the South is all about.*

Cutter stood, stretched his back, rubbed his many broken ribs and sauntered towards the main house. “Wonder if I can talk Baby Girl into an afternoon delight?” He smiled wickedly at the thought and picked

up the pace: just not too much as he wanted to conserve his energy.

Later that afternoon, in that twilight time between day and evening Cutter embraced her nubile body and whispered in her ear. “I know what you did.” A smile crossing his lips, “Nice one, got me to agree to a vacation without the usual give and take. Well let me tell ya. I think it is a great idea. Did you manage to make the reservations for us?”

“Everything is set. We leave for Mactan Airport on the 23<sup>rd</sup>, layover in Hong Kong first. You will love it there. San Francisco and Poro have white sandy beaches that are so soothing you will think you have passed into another universe. You will get to meet Nanay and Sister and the rest of my family. We will have a big ole fiesta in your honor. It has been years since I was able to walk in the sparkling blue waters off the beach.

“Now, wanna do it again? You look like you are already up for it, Cowboy.” That last remark drew a broad smile from Cutter and a devilish grin from Baby Girl. Afterward they slept in each other’s arms and dreamed of virgin Pina Coladas, coconut milk and the smooth waves of White Rock Beach. Little did they know something with unusual powers was waiting for them: yes, it would seem that Buddy and Molly had psychically picked out the unsuspecting couple turning what was to be a peaceful retreat into ... well, gentle reader, continue and see.

Buddy, being the bolder of the two, motioned to Molly to just lie still. “Don’t move until we can no longer hear his footfalls. Once it is quiet we can make it to the kitchen, hop in the back of the truck and get the fleet foot

out of here.” Molly just nodded and smiled, she had every confidence in her mate.

When it was quiet, the pair unhooked the electrodes with a quick brushing motion, slipped off the cold metal tables and headed to the kitchen. To be as unobtrusive as possible they stayed low and hugged the wall. When they entered the kitchen no one saw so they swiftly exited the rear open door and found a secluded spot in the back of the truck behind some large boxes.

Ogee, the driver, also Filipino, pulled his muscular frame into the cab and fired up the Jeepney. His driving companion slid in on the passenger side and popped a Mountain Dew. Ogee spoke first. “Okay, now if we drive all night we can make the specially equipped boat, load the truck and be in Poro by morning. I love the market they have there, we should get in just in time for a nice meal. We can then get our next load of fresh vegetables and head back to feed those crazy ass scientists. It will be a long boat ride so glad we are getting out of here early enough. But you will probably have to drive the last leg.”

“Not a problem, step on it.” These were his last words as Job downed the Mountain Dew, crushed the can and drifted off to sleep. Next stop Port Oroquieta City.

The pump boat, modified to carry this special cargo, rocked gently in the port. In the dark of night Job, guided by Ogee, eased his Jeepney onto the now modified fast boat and anchored it tightly. A few Pesos slipped to the Harbor Master and the boat disappeared into the night. When they were past the breakers, the captain went full throttle. “In four hours, we will be in Oroquieta. Just in time for some eggs, rice and tocino, tapa and tuyo. Then we load up and run back. Good money for one day’s work.”

Molly and Buddy listened intently and when the captain went silent they snuggled together for warmth and fell into a deep sleep.

Two days earlier Baby Girl and Cutter had piled into the dark blue shuttle van, already crowded with people, and sat in mild terror as the driver, a man of uncertain middle eastern heritage, weaved through traffic at breakneck speed. At the airport drop off zone, no longer with white knuckles, they picked up their bags and went to the VIP lounge for check in.

Three hours later they were on their way to Mactan Airport and the adventure of a life time. The nineteen-hour flight in Business Class was uneventful. The two cuddled as young lovers, enjoyed the perks of the class, sans alcohol, and anxiously awaited the family.

Customs went smoothly: with the help of Cutter's spry Filipina they maneuvered the people, luggage carts and security. At the curb they hailed a limo and were quickly deposited at the Shangri-La's Mactan Resort & Spa. Check in was swift, and the lovers soon found themselves embracing life on an oversized bed, briefly looking out at the water before being lost in each other's spirit.

Morning came too soon but Baby Girl was excited to show her man the market so they quickly dressed, and loaded up with empty bags, headed to the local market at Lapu-Lapu.

They dined on rice and eggs and tapas and watched as the locals scurried amongst the stands of fresh fish, vegetables and assorted items of all kinds. Hiding in the

shadows, nervous as a virgin on her wedding night, Molly and Buddy plotted their next move.

By the time the Italians discovered their mistake, the swift boat had left the dock and Molly and Buddy were picking up the vibrations of a big ole cowboy and his Pinay wife.

Earlier that morning, long before sunup, the Jeepney had disembarked the modified pump boat, parked and Ogee and Job went looking for a little repast. The timing was perfect Molly and Buddy slipped out the open doors and headed towards the vibe they were both feeling. A strong energy coming from the direction of the market at Lapu-Lapu.

Cutter enjoyed the relaxing atmosphere and eyed Baby Girl to see what she had planned next. This was her home, her old stomping grounds and based upon what he had been told, this would be quite the adventure.

Baby Girl broke the silence first: “Look, the stalls are filling up, let’s go see what we can find. There is a cooking unit in our hotel so it will be less expensive if I cook while we are here.” As they wandered through the colorful shops, amongst the murmur of bargaining and the occasional laughter of a child, two figures stalked them as quietly as possible.

At just the right time, when Baby Girl set down one of her oversized bags, Molly and Buddy deftly climbed up the outside and dropped quietly in, hiding under layers of fresh mango and coconut. The two Tarsier monkeys, having been experimented on, unbeknownst to the Italians now possessed the unique ability to act as human.

The only thing they lacked was the physical characteristics. They had sensed that these two humans might be just the cover they needed. *Now if they just don't look into the bag before they take us all to the beach.*

## ***Chapter: 2***

The Philippine tarsier measures only about eighty-five to one hundred sixty mm (3.35 to 6.30 in) in height, making it one of the earth's smallest primates. The small size makes it difficult to spot which made it easier for Buddy and Molly to conceal themselves in Baby's bag.

The mass for males is between eight to one hundred sixty g (2.8–5.6 oz), usually lighter for females, somewhat heavier than other tarsiers such as the pygmy tarsier. This makes the average adult about the size of a human fist.

Like all tarsiers, the Philippine tarsier's eyes are fixed in its skull; they cannot turn in their sockets. They have instead, a special adaptation in the neck which allows its round head to be rotated 180°. Their eyes are disproportionately large, having the largest eye-to-body size ratio of all mammals.

These huge eyes provide this nocturnal animal with excellent night vision. In bright light, the tarsier's eyes can constrict until the pupil appears to be only a thin line. In darkness, the pupil can dilate and fill up almost the entire eye.

The large membranous ears are mobile, appearing to be almost constantly moving, allowing the tarsier to hear any movement. This characteristic made it easy for the special pair of little creatures to easily escape detection from the Italians.

The Philippine tarsier has thin, rough fur which is colored gray to dark brown. The narrow tail, usually used for balance, is bald except for a tuft of hair at the end, and is about twice the body length.

Its elongated *tarsus*, or ankle bone, which gives the tarsier its name, allows it to jump at least three meters from tree to tree. Its long digits are tipped with rounded pads that allow *C. syrichta* to cling easily to trees and to grip almost any surface.

The thumb is not truly opposable, but the first toe is. All of the digits have flattened nails, except for the second and third toes, which have sharp claws specialized for grooming. These unique features allowed Molly and Buddy to hide quietly and wait for the perfect time to fulfill their manifest destiny.

Doctor Don had consumed his three corned beef on rye when it dawned on him, with some anxiety, he had forgotten Molly and Buddy in the lab. “What have I done? What have I done?” He pulled his portly form out of the metal chair and as quickly as his obese legs would haul him, headed back to the lab.

A fat hand hit the red panic button which signaled security to lock down the entire facility. Twenty-four hours later a search team was sent to Oroquieta City desperate to find the wayward mammals: just a wee bit too late—the dynamic duo had already made it back to the hotel and lay in wait for their first trip to the beach.

“Baby Girl, how about we get to the sand, grab some chai tea and watch the sun go down?”



“Gotta put the food away first.”

A delicate hand slipped around her waist and pulled her tight. “Oh, I think that can wait; slip into something nice and let’s go. I will sort the veggies from the stuff that has to be chilled.” Cutter patted her bottom as she scurried off to put on a nice bathing suit, something not too revealing, just enough to get her man prepped for later as he turned to the bags of food.

Cutter looked inside the first one and saw a mango and a coconut and decided that would be nice to take to the beach. They could sip tea and munch on the local fruits, hold hands and watch the sea break over the beach.

He turned and proceeded to store the fresh bread, fish and assorted goodies they had purchased at the beach. Molly was the first to whisper to Buddy. “*Wow, that was close, I hope he doesn’t look too closely in here.*”

“*Quiet, he might hear you: oh, wait, I keep forgetting we are telecommunicating. Anyway, don’t move. Let’s hope they have other things on their mind.*” With that Buddy sent a silent message to Baby Girl’s unconscious mind. In moments, she re-appeared from the bedroom and when Cutter saw how she was dressed, his jaw dropped, he broke into a cold sweat and leered like a sixteen-year-old. The bag was forgotten, the ocean could wait, and Baby Girl silently led him into the bedroom.

“*Lucky for us,*” said Buddy, “*now get out of the bag and find us a place to rest.*”

“*Okay; when and how do we tell them we are here?*”

“*Well, I would say we give them an hour or so. They will probably still head to the beach.*” Buddy smiled at the thought as now he had all the human characteristics and

desires possessed by any human. He brushed his tiny paw against the collar they had attached some weeks ago, and wished he could get it off. In all the excitement, it was causing his neck to chaff.

Two men of Italian descent stepped off the pump boat and looked around. One was a large man, over six feet three and thin, the other just a bit shy of five feet five. They looked a lot like Mutt and Jeff and had the demeanor of a mad drunk.

The tall one spoke first. "Let's see if we can find anyone who saw any unusual activity. But first I should activate the locator on the collar." The receiver immediately came to life with a mild beep and the red indicator light flashed. "Well, looks like they are not that far away. The range on this thing is about five hundred yards. Off we go."

Mutt, the little one, just nodded and the duo hurriedly left the port and followed the sound of the beep: louder meant they were getting closer. "Not so fast, can't keep up, out of breath," the little guy muttered to the bigger man. Too many years of smoking two packs a day had taken its toll. Even he didn't know, if a bullet didn't get him soon, the cancer would.

They first went north, then south, then north again until Francesco had determined the direction from which the signal came. "There, just ahead, they are up in one of those villas. Let's get this over with. Probably just some old farts living on a pension. Easy as cake."

*“Here they come, let’s get behind the couch. They will be off to the beach in a few minutes. Look at Cutter’s smile.”* Buddy and Molly were headed to the shadows of the couch while Buddy was trying to figure a way to communicate with the humans, when the door burst open.

The Italians had made a calculated risk and it quickly backfired: They had assumed, wrongly it would appear, that it would be an easy extraction. Cutter was having none of it. The grizzled old cowboy struck with the kick of a mule while Baby Girl circled the little man and assumed a defensive stance.

Cutter caught the big man around the head and shoulders like you would wrestle a six-hundred-pound steer and put him on the floor. Quickly slipping a choke hold on him, he rendered the unsuspecting man unconscious in a matter of seconds.

In the meantime, the smaller man had his hands full of a Filipina whirlwind. Baby Girl delivered a swift kick to the groin and when he doubled over and yelped in pain, she put a punctuation mark on him with a hard left hand to the back of his head. Mutt crumpled to the floor beside his partner and lay there in a stupor.

The two lovers looked at each other and smiled, then quickly Baby Girl, who spoke Visayan, grabbed the phone and called the local police. They stood over the two until the police arrived and hauled them off. “What do you suppose that was all about?” Cutter smiled at his lovely bride.

“Beats me, but bet they will think twice before messing with us.” They both laughed out loud, and started out the door followed at a safe distance by the two Tarsiers. Finally, on the beach, Cutter handed a cold Chai

to his love and settled into the soft cane lounge. What happened next just punctuated an already exciting day.

Both Buddy and Molly mustered all their strength and leaped onto Cutter's chest, clinging on like on an E ride at Disneyland. At the same time, Buddy sent a message to Cutter that made the big man relax in spite of what was happening. He couldn't tell just what it was but he knew the two little creatures meant no harm and to do them no harm. "Well, what do we have here. Hi, little ones, what gives? I feel like I have known you all my life."

Nanay was waiting in her favorite chair by the front door of her home in Poro. Nanang Leza had promised to pick her up at eleven at it was already eleven thirty. What to do? Baby Girl's mother was trying to hide her excitement at seeing her number two daughter and the new man in her life and it showed as she nervously wrung her hands. She was smiling, thinking how nice it would be to see her when Baby's sister pulled up in front and exited her car. "Nanay Georgina, sorry to be late. Traffic." They embraced and Leza loaded up the car with the beach bag and helped Nanay inside.

They raced to the local port and boarded a pump boat that would take them to the port in Cebu where they would rent a car and meet the loving couple on the beach in Mactan. Just as Buddy and Molly climbed on Cutter's chest, Nanay and Manang, guided by a towel boy, walked up behind the couple. Leza was the first to speak. "Well, you both look like you are having a fun time. Must be nice not to have any worries."

Baby jumped up and gave a big hug to both and, as Cutter stood, made introductions all around. Cutter was

hugged so hard by Nanay he could not breathe for a second in time. He and Leza eyed each other and both smiled and embraced. “Welcome to the family,” chimed Leza. “Are you having a relaxing time?”

The two tiny mammals dropped quietly to the ground when Cutter stood and hid in the shadows of the beach chair, listening with interest to the exchange from the humans. Buddy nodded to Molly, “*Look, they all know each other, although it seems the cowboy is meeting them for the first time.*”

“*Yes, just lie quiet and let this play out.*” Molly licked her paws and lying down in the beautiful white sand, dozed off.

The happy family talked for hours as the sun slowly sank into the mountains to the west and a cool breeze wafted on shore. “Maybe we should head back to our room where we can get out of the chill and have some dinner,” Cutter offered. He stood and walked to Nanay. “Let me help you, please.” He reached out and helped her to her feet.

As if on cue, Buddy and Molly climbed into the beach bag and lay still. They wondered what would happen next and hoped their presence would not be noticed by the mother and sister, and not mentioned by Cutter or Baby. They did not need to worry, as Cutter was still trying to digest what had happened and Baby had not as yet seen them.

They all walked slowly through the sand and stopped at the entrance to the room. Baby spoke this time, “I should probably tell you what happened earlier because I am not sure they have cleaned the room. Don’t be upset if

it is still a mess. It seems there were a couple of men who wanted to do us harm and, well, we had to take care of them.” A big smile crossed her face as she opened the door. Manang and Nanay had a confused look but followed quickly behind.

When it was determined the Italians had entered the PI on fake documents they were immediately turned over to the Pambansang Pulisya ng Pilipinas, which has national security authority. The questioning began innocently enough: “Why have you come to our country? Are you part of a drug cartel? Tell us now and it will be easier for you. We wish to make your stay here as comfortable as possible.”

The Criminal Investigation and Detection Group was in charge when it was suspected there were international connections. Captain Nilo Cervantez leaned into the face of the big man and asked again: “Why are you here? You tried to hurt a Filipina National and that won’t look good at trial.” He had a broad smile on his face but a demeanor that spoke volumes.

The large Italian decided it was in his best interest to speak: “It was Buddy and Molly, Buddy and Molly started this, you won’t understand.”

Taking a cue from the big one, the diminutive Italian started to yell: “The monkeys, the monkeys. We came for the monkeys, we didn’t plan on hurting anyone.”

The Captain scratched his head and leaned back in his chair. “Tell me your name, then tell me your story.” He smiled a coy smile, sipped a fresh Buko Juice from a straw and wondered at the two figures so demoralized before him.

Cautiously Manang Leza and Nanay walked into the room. Not a piece of furniture was out of place so a look of concern for her daughter and of confusion spread across her face. Baby Girl, seeing the state of the room quickly deflected: “Oh, look Cutter they cleaned up our mess. Listen Nanay Georgina, we were really excited when we arrived so we made a mess of things when we came in. I called housekeeping and they cleaned up.” This was Baby’s way of not upsetting her mother. Leza on the other hand, eyed her suspiciously but said nothing.

Buddy and Molly lay quietly in the beach bag waiting for their chance. It came more quickly than anyone would have thought. Georgina had settled into an easy chair and smiled at her new son-in-law: it was at that moment all hell broke loose.

Molly, unable to contain herself, climbed the side of the beach bag and scurried across the carpet under Nanay’s chair. Up the leg she slithered and pop, landed right on the mother’s chest. Nanay screamed in terror and tried to wipe the little creature off her chest.

Molly let her eyes go wide, clinging desperately to her blouse, and tried with some success to tell the matriarch not to worry. The telepathy must have worked as Georgina quickly calmed, stood still for a moment, stroked the little monkey’s back and sat down in her chair.

Leza, ever protective of her mother, had bolted across the room and was ready to attack when Nanay raised her hand and said. “Not to worry, little Molly here has something to tell us. Jalo, can you get us your tablet?” This was the first time the mother had addressed Baby Girl by her nickname.

“Of course, yes; wait a minute.” And Jalo disappeared into the bedroom to dig out the small computer.

The smaller of the Italians identified himself as Fredo, no last name, and began a tale that the policeman found to be too surreal to be believed. “We are the enforcement arm of a secret society trying to develop a super breed of monkeys. One that will be used to make all of us rich.” He continued to speak as the Captain looked on in disbelief. “Our facility is located on Mindanao, in an underground cave. We have been there since the end of World War Two. Most of the original scientists are old or dead but a new generation, more highly skilled was close to making a breakthrough. That is when the two monkeys escaped. We think they may be the key. Francesco and I were sent to bring them back.”

“So where are these so called super monkeys?” The Captain had finished his Buco and stood to stretch. He was big by Filipino standards, almost six feet and one hundred eighty pounds: a very intimidating man. He leaned over the fat man and breathed in his face. “Better give me all the straight answers right now.” The Captain had deftly plucked a butterfly knife from his hip and twirled it open. The motion was enough to assure the Italian told the truth.

When Fredo finished, the Captain turned to his next in charge and issued an order. “As odd as all this sounds I think we need to get the National Bureau of Investigation involved.”

The NBI was headquartered in Manila and the chief of the district was his brother-in-law. “Tell Lord I will be



calling him in a couple of hours and to get the special assault team ready to go.”

### ***Chapter Three***

Jalo, Nanay, Cutter and Leza all looked on in disbelief as the two mawmags set about telling their story. They were after all, the only members of the Genus *Carlito* and therefore felt they commanded a certain degree of respect.

Jalo had placed the tablet on the table top and smiled as the twin *Carlitos* scurried atop the very stylish table. Eyes were raised all around as Molly tapped the on button of the IPAD and waited for startup.

Buddy was first to react. He used his tiny paws to bring up a word program and began to type. His tiny paws moved quickly across the keyboard. *“Hello, my name is Buddy and this is my good friend and lifelong companion Molly. As you can see we are just a wee bit unusual. Yes, we have very special abilities and we are both afraid for our lives and hope you can help us. And to answer your first question, yes, we can understand everything you say. So, feel free to speak to us in either English or Tagalog.”*

Cutter elbowed Jalo, Nanay gasped and Leza sat upright, then leaned forward. Her words sent a chill across the room. “Are you part of that not so secret organization on Mindanao?” Cutter made a mental note to ask for an explanation, started to speak, but held his tongue.

Leza continued, “Are you with that group of old scientists in the caves that thinks we don’t know about you?”

Buddy typed, “*Yes. How do you know of us and will you help us please?*”

“My husband is a Barangay official, I am a council woman and our cousin is head of the NBI. We have been aware of your presence for many years now. We just assumed you were a bunch of crazies left over from the war. No one ever figured the old men in white coats as a threat so we just left them all to their own devices. Guess we were wrong.”

Molly pushed up to Buddy, shoved him away and typed, using one little paw as best she could, “*That is not us, that is them. They have been genetically manipulating our kind for years. We are the first. They don’t know just how successful they have been.*” She was typing furiously now. Dashing from letter to letter on the keyboard like a chicken on a hot plate. “*The fat doctor they call Don was about to cut open our heads when he got hungry and ran off. We used that opportunity to escape.*”

The two mawmags spent the better part of the next two hours filling the incredulous quartet in on the details. When they were finished Jalo stood, walked to the table and picked both up and held them close to her chest. “Not to worry little ones, we will protect you. Now, it is late, what say we all go to sleep and figure out what to do in the morning?”

“*Gitabang, Leza, dumating na ako ay magpapakita sa iyo kung saan upang matulog.*” Jalo spoke to her mother and sister softly and lead them to sleeping quarters. Cutter took the two Carlitos into the bedroom he would share with his wife and told them to rest.

The head of the NBI, Jack Lord Nilo, was sitting at his desk when the call came in. “What! You telling me those crazy scientists are actually onto something? Damn, well, get a task force ready to go. I will call the president. In two hours, we head to Mindanao.”

Cutter and Jalo held each other tight, softly kissed and as they drifted off to sleep Cutter whispered into her ear. “Tomorrow is going to be fun if our lives depend on it. Darn it, we are going to the beach. That is what we came for and it shall be.”

When the information was relayed to the highest levels, the president himself issued the orders. A team of specially trained Philippine Air Force Commandos lifted off in a Bell helicopter uniquely equipped with night vision sensors, infra-red lens and multiple guns.

They flew in under the cover of darkness. The Commandos swooped in from the northwest, a range of complex mountains known in their northern portion as the Diwata Range. This range is low and rolling in the middle providing an ideal route without detection. The southern portion of this east coast range is broader and even more rugged than the northern section which would make it harder for radar to detect the chopper.

The pilot put the Huey in silent mode and settled down two kilometers from the cave entrance. Ten highly trained Filipinos, loaded down with Glocks and stun guns slipped off the chopper and into the pre-dawn darkness.

The only person awake at the time was the ninety-year-old guard at the kitchen loading dock. He was a relic

of the war and slept most of the time. A loan Commando quietly slipped up behind him and rendered the old man defenseless. Within minutes the team had breached the lab and subdued all the scientists.

An old Chinook helicopter, capable of holding all concerned, appeared as the sun broke and settled in the compound. Thirty minutes later both choppers lifted off and headed northwest to Manila and a very excited President.

Just as the chopper was setting down, Cutter and his wife, with extended family in tow, settled onto the white sandy Maribago beach on Mactan Island. They had loaded up bags with goodies, sun block and assorted comfort items. Cutter was left to haul the four lounge chairs from the car and was told just where to put them.

Tucked inside the pocket of the largest bag were Buddy and Molly feeling comfortable and safe for the first time in months. Nestled in the bottom of the bag was the tablet they were using for communication. Buddy turned to Molly and mentally asked her, *“Who should we ask about taking us home with them? I don’t want to think they will make us stay here.”*

Molly stroked his furry back and said, *“I think Jalo is the human to ask. She seems the most accepting of us.”* At that moment Jalo reached in the bag and removed the device and the two little mawmags.

“Okay, so what are we to do with you two? Are you hungry? Stay in the shade of the bags or chair and I will find you some fruit.”

As she hurried off to find food Molly pushed the on button and fired up the tablet and began to type. *“Will you please take us with you? We don’t want to go back to those bad men. We will be very nice and not cause you any problems.”* Jalo returned with the food and Buddy directed her to the computer.

“Oh, my, I understand. Not to worry. Someone will take care of you. Nanay, Leza: we need to talk.” Buddy and Molly watched out of earshot and could see the three being very animated as they spoke. Occasionally one would look towards the little Tarsiers and nod.

Cutter was busy doing absolutely nothing, sitting in a lounge under an oversized umbrella and relaxing for the first time in weeks. Thoughts of home and horses and chores would enter his mind and he would quickly chase them out as he thought of years gone by.

*Fifty years earlier a young Marine had set foot on Luzon, the biggest island in the Philippine chain and experienced a culture unlike any other he had seen. The city of Olongapo sat at the mouth of Subic Bay on the south-western side of Luzon. An American naval base was ensconced in the harbor and sitting on top of the bay, at the highest point was a place called Cubi Point. The point was home to any visiting Marine Corps detachment. After depositing his gear, a slightly terrified young man of nineteen stepped out onto the streets of the city.*

*Cutter smiled as he remembered some of his adventures: Each bar had an armed guard and when asked, a bar tender replied, “We have never been robbed.” The drunk monkey, or the face to face encounter with a deadly Northern Philippine Cobra. The fabulous taste of San Miguel Beer, known by the Marines as San*

*Magoo and of course the makeshift swing the young men of VMFA 122 used to play Tarzan.*

“Wipe that smile off your face cowboy, we gotta talk.” Jalo was standing over him, cold drink in hand and a big smile on her face. “We need to protect Buddy and Molly so Leza and Nanay have agreed to take them home to Camotes and give them a home. Leza heard from Jack. They have all the Italians in custody and the president has decided to deport them rather than keep them in prison.”

She stretched and rolled her dark eyes around and smiled. “No one believes the story about smart monkeys so the little ones will be safe as long as they live.”

The two lovers held hands, Cutter smiled and nodded his approval. “Now sit, my love, time to relax and enjoy the ocean. Listen to the crash of the waves as they break on the shore. Maybe later we will make sweet music of our own to the same breathtaking sounds; providing family departs.” They both giggled at that and settled back in the chairs.

Nanay and Leza left the next day on a spacious pump boat, with the monkeys safely tucked away. Cutter and Baby Girl spent the next week swimming, fishing and making love to the sounds of the waves lapping at the shoreline. The time passed too quickly and sadly they found themselves at Mactan Airport, tired but satiated and ready to depart.

The Philippine Airlines 747 lifted off and started the nineteen-hour flight to LAX, leaving behind a boat-load of memories and two very happy Tarsiers. Buddy and Molly had become de facto members of the Cebu community and were held in the highest honor. No one would tell, and no one dared ask the Barangay Captain or

his lovely wife why the monkeys were held in such high esteem. The pair had free range of the offices and would show up every day promptly at ten AM and fill in the powerful couple on all they had heard around the office.

Nanay would demand each weekend Buddy and Molly come for a visit where she showered them with love and all the food they could eat. Everyone grew old and fat on the islands and as the years went by, Buddy, Molly, Leza and her husband Brad, and Nanay would talk for hours about what had happened on Mactan. It was an experience they would eventually take to their grave for no one needed to know: they wished no harm to come to their little furry friends.

Cutter and Jalo arrived safely back in Southern California, were greeted by Connie and filled the truck with adventure stories as she drove them home. Not once, and never in all their years, did the name of Buddy and Molly ever come up when the two lovers were not alone.

No one could ever understand, and Cutter and Baby Girl would only give vague answers, which some would note changed over time. The question was always the same: why was a large photo of the two of them holding the tiny, hand sized Carlitos prominently displayed over the fireplace. Nor could Connie or Nicki, or John or Benja Mae or any other family members, understand why Jalo would spend so much time on the computer only to quickly close the cover from prying eyes when one of them walked by.

Many times, when the topic of their trip surfaced, the cowboy and his lover would just give each other a

knowing look and smile, making everyone present wonder what had happened.

A big grin would cross their cheeks and a far-off look told of a great time. And life went on in the Cutter household for many years to come.



# 911: What Is Your Emergency?

By Gary Winstead

**H**alloween is always a good time for a ride. Well to tell the truth, any day, for a cowboy, as long as it is not pouring, is a good day to ride: so Colt rolled out of bed and grabbed his hat. It is common knowledge in the horse community that the last thing a cowboy takes off and the first he puts on is his hat.

The 10X Stetson was snugged down tight as Colt finished dressing, kissed Connie and headed out the door. Connie mumbled something unintelligible, rolled over and fell into a deep sleep. It would be the last time she slept that well for a month at least. It was the morning of All Hallows' Eve, the night for pumpkins, kids in scary costumes, and too much candy.

Colt had promised Connie a week in Hawaii for Thanksgiving and wanted to get as much training on his horses as possible before they left. Besides, one of the largest cattle ranches in the world was the Parker Ranch on the big island. His thinking was, *well, she wants some beach time so she won't mind me roping just a little.*

She had already packed the beach gear, knowing she would have a hard time getting him out of his boots, and loaded up the pockets with lots of sun block. The plane

tickets were resting under a stack of twenties in the safe. Alas, this magical trip for two was not to be.

The lonesome cowboy was softly singing *Mommas Don't Let Your Babies Grow Up to Be Cowboys* as he saddled up the Paint. The young horse had been brought to him by his neighbor, a fine-looking specimen of a woman in her twenties. She had begged Colt to put at least thirty hours on her so she could have a ride with friends at Christmas. At sixty he wasn't real keen on taking on a young challenge, but how could he turn down those dark soulful eyes? This fateful morning would have been logged in as twenty-five had it ended as he hoped.

The brown and white Paint stood too still, and stiff, as he tightened down the cinch and slipped the easy curb into her mouth. "What's wrong girl? You don't seem yourself right now." The old, highly experienced cowboy sensed more than knew that something was not right with the mare but he persisted anyway and swung her around. He stuck his size eleven Justin into the stirrup and eased into the saddle. His silver spurs, won at a roping, glistened in the early morning light.

The October sun was well above the horizon as he headed out to the badlands behind the barn. The cattle were lowing in the pasture as the beast of burden and the sixty-year-old cowboy rode past. The colors of autumn were everywhere and the birds were chirping their siren song.

Paint and Colt road past the vineyards of Temecula, California, many were dotted with orange pumpkins and the ever-present bales of straw. Later that day the wineries would be filled with drunks, each trying to out-cool the other and the drivers they had selected. The horse-drawn

wagons filled with kids at twenty dollars for a ten-minute ride would work overtime, and life was good.

An hour into the ride, Colt turned off the main trail and started across a barren field bordered by water ducts and now harvested grape vines. The grapes had all been picked and the vines trimmed to perfection so there was little to interfere with anyone's line of sight.

The sun was slowly climbing in the Autumn sky and Colt was relaxed in the saddle. As it would turn out, too relaxed. Paint was ambling along, head down, ears relaxed (a good sign) with an easy pace. The old cowboy had long since forgotten how tense the mare felt when he had saddled her in the dawn.

His thoughts were on Hawaii, the beaches for Connie, and most of all the Parker Ranch. Maybe if he talked real polite-like to Connie and promised her a big Luau at the hotel she would let him slip off for the day. He was deep in fantasy about a four second run, very wrong on a green horse, when it happened. To this day Colt can't remember what was the catalyst, but Paint, for no good reason, spun out from under him. Too quick it was. No time to grab leather. For a moment in time he was like an acrobat that had missed the bar. Suspended in air but falling at the rate of thirty-two feet per second.

In an instant, the old cowboy was on his back on the hard ground. *Crack* is what he heard first, then the distant thundering as Paint headed back to the barn. Of all the places to land in a plowed field, it had to be the one with a big Jurassic age stone the size of a Volkswagen that provided his cushion. Dazed, on the edge of unconsciousness, he lay there for some time until his head cleared.

In his left hand was one of the reins torn from the bridle in a desperate effort to hold onto the horse. “Dang it. That will teach me. Oh my, Connie is really gonna be angry.” He was on his back staring up at a bright blue California sky when survival mode kicked in. “Yep toes move, no broken back.” He tried to sit up but the pain shot through him like an icepick had been jabbed into his ribs.

“Okay, let me remember, I am breathing, no blood, no shock. Okay, good, now what?” His mind was racing. He couldn’t sit without unbearable pain but at least he could move his arms and legs ... and there was no one in sight. And to add the ultimate insult, the Paint had run off. What to do? For the oddest of reasons *Amarillo By Morning* by George Strait emerged from the dark side of his brain. He’d lost his saddle in Houston, broke his leg in San Antone....

With all his strength, he fumbled for the one piece of modern technology Connie had made him use. The old flip phone in his pocket. Fortunately, it was unharmed and there were bars. His thumb flicked open the old relic, he pushed the red button and waited what seemed an interminable moment only to hear, “Sorry all lines are busy, please call back later.”

He wasn’t angry as much as he was frustrated. He wasn’t dying, as best he could tell, but what if, what if a rib had punctured his heart? “Oh, good grief.”

He punched off and hit the red button a second time. “911, what’s your emergency?”

“My horse threw me and I think I broke some ribs, can’t move, need help.”

“What’s your location?”

“I am off of California Road in Temecula, near one of the wineries.”

“Oh, yeah, well that is not our jurisdiction. We are in the LA area. You must be on a cell phone.”

“Good guess, can you send help please?”

“Sorry, I will need to transfer you to the local 911 area.”

With that the next phase of the rescue would begin. “911, what’s your emergency?” Colt restated all the details and was told the fire and rescue were on their way. “Don’t hang up.”

“Not to worry, I ain’t going no place.” The semi-conscious cowboy looked up at the sky, breathed a shallow breath, because of the pain, and thought, *Just how mad is Connie going to be.*

Within minutes he heard the all too familiar sound of fire trucks and paramedics. “Are you there? They need you to guide them in.”

“I can hear them, they are off to the left. Tell them to come up the dirt road by the skip loader.” A few minutes later Colt heard them off to his right. He could see the top of the big red truck but they were not getting any closer.

A voice on the phone asked him, “Could you give better directions?” By now, depleted of adrenaline, he was barely able to speak. The pain was getting worse with each passing moment.

“They missed me. I am up the dirt road they just passed.” Colt could see the trucks making irregular movement all around him. Why couldn’t they see him. He looked around and realized he had fallen into a ditch. The

otherwise flat land of the vineyard was broken up every acre or so with water ducts and he was in one.

An hour passed as the pain crept up his neck and into his soul. All thoughts of a wonderful time in Hawaii were long gone when the disembodied voice on the other end of the phone spoke. “We are thinking this is a prank and they are getting ready to leave.”

“What, oh, hell no, you have been all over this ground for an hour. Believe me I am here.”

“Is there any land mark you can give them so they can find you?”

Cutter was ready to just give it all up, just like in an old western, dying with his boots on when he looked to the sky. By now he had been patched directly to the engineer on the firetruck. “Do you see the buzzards circling in the sky off to the east?”

After a moments pause, “Yes.”

“I am right underneath them.”

“You are kidding.”

All pretense of civility was gone now and the old cowboy had had it. With his last remaining strength, he hollered into the phone. “Follow those G-D birds and come get me.”

A minute later the trucks pulled up and started the process of getting Colt into the ambulance. They cut off his brand-new jeans as they were unable to get his boots off. Darn, sixty-five dollars shot. Next came his denim shirt. The ride to the hospital was bumpy and helped to get one of his broken ribs to pop back into place.

Ah, but that was not to be the end of it. Connie showed up as only a good wife would. Teary eyed and sobbing, fearing the worst for her man. Until she saw he would be okay. Nothing can be worse than the wrath of a cowgirl when things do not go as well.

At the hospital, he had been poked and prodded, hooked up to machines and given pills and shots. Later that night a not so happy cowgirl drove the hapless cowboy home. “Only three broken and five cracked. Maybe when I get you in bed I will get the baseball bat and add a few more,” Connie growled, half in jest.

Half asleep from all the drugs, all Colt could do was grin and reach out with his off hand. “Really, I like the Angels. Who is your favorite team?” Connie giggled like a little girl at his incoherent state, settled down on the bed beside him and planned her revenge.

Let’s just say the spring of the next year saw the elderly couple lounging on the sun deck of the QE2 on their way across the pond. They dined on fine food and sipped fine wine. And all the time, whenever Colt would rub his ribs and start to say something he would see a look in his beloved’s eyes and quickly change the subject.

However, when Connie would get a little bit too much into her cups, the subject of Paint, a pretty girl and a trip to Hawaii would come up. Colt would refill her glass, smile and say, next trip will be a cruise to the big Island, and no horses involved.

And they lived happily ever after.

*We hope you have enjoyed this anthology of stories. You can find out more about all the contributors and their other books in the following pages.*



# Anthology Contributors

## Lisa Beere



**L**isa Beere is an Ottawa writer creating in the areas of poetry, short stories, children's literature and romance. Her poetry has appeared in Ottawa Poetry Magazine and Meat for Tea: The Valley Review. Her first screenplay became the film *Cindy's Gauntlet* (2015). Her book *Equal to The Challenge: An Anthology of Women's WWII Stories* was published in 2001 under the name Banister. She loves family time, fine dining, theatre, white water rafting and singing.

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[http://waxpoetryart.com/ottawa/2016/lisa\\_beere.html](http://waxpoetryart.com/ottawa/2016/lisa_beere.html)

A series of her books are coming soon:

*Sparkle the Elf,  
Twinkle the Elf,  
I'm Running Away,  
Hair, Hair Everywhere,  
Gimli the Goblin,  
God's Littlest Angels,  
One Big Family,  
Sam and the Bully  
Mommy Doll Day*

*Night Noises:*

## NIGHT NOISES

by Lisa Beece  
Illustrations by Lynn Costelloe



*Sam is a young child who can't sleep, distracted by the many noises of the night. Each family member attempts to help him. Eventually, his Nan discovers the issue and sister Junie comes to the rescue with a solution that reassures Sam of how much he is safe and loved.*

*This story will appeal to children who have concerns about being alone in the dark and those older ones that will be sleeping "away" for the first time. While written as a picture book this text is also accessible as an early reader. Also available in French.*



***Sparkle the Elf:***

*Sparkle is the littlest elf. Often overlooked, she decides to learn how to sew and make a special outfit so she'll stand out. Her new skill gives her a Sparkle of achievement that draws admiring attention.*

*This lovely book will inspire self-confidence in children by reminding them that they are loved, and encourage them to be proud of their skills and accomplishments.*

## Eva Bell



**A** gynaecologist by profession but a writer and communicator at heart, Eva had to wait till she finally got off duty at 60 to seriously put pen to paper.

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In addition to a wealth of short stories for children and adults, including the short stories *Love*, *The Master Player*, for *Crimson Cloak Anthology* volume 3, *Love Matters*, and *Sing Me a Song Tonight* in volume 6, *New Beginnings*, she has written the following works:

***Runaway Widow***  
***The Silver Amulet***  
***When Shadows Flee***  
***Storm in the Desert***

***Strategies for Survival in an Angry World***

***Back from Beyond*** - *The subject of Reincarnation has exercised the minds of independent Psychological Researchers all over the world. Some believe that the soul or the spirit of a person after biological death, begins a new life in another human body. BACK FROM BEYOND is a work of fiction based on this surmise. A girl born in Assam is convinced that she had a previous existence as another person. She is able to solve a murder mystery that has eluded the police for many years, because she is the reincarnation of the woman who was murdered.*

## Veronica Castle

**V**eronica Castle lives in the High Pennines of northern England. She is the illustrator of *The Magic World of Bracken Lea* by Esma Race, and *Little Bear's Trial* by Roger Bone, from Crimson Cloak Publishing.

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## Janice Clark



Janice Clark lives in the Pacific Northwest, where the morning fog drifting over the coastal hills could easily conceal dragons or any number of magical creatures. She and her brother share a home on partially wooded acreage, frequented by a variety of birds, deer, squirrels, rabbits, raccoons, the neighbor's free-range chickens, and several cats who hunt the area. She does not currently own (or is not owned by) a cat or any other four-footed being. Frequently-resident grandchildren and a large garden are sufficient to occupy any time not taken up by writing. Her short stories "*The Dragon Said Moo*", "*A Slip In Time*", "*The Courtship of Gladys Pierson*", "*The Apple Witch*" and "*The Carousel Unicorn*" appeared respectively in Volumes 1, 2, 3 and 4 of the *Crimson Cloak Anthologies*, *Glodwyn's Treasure Chest*, *Steps In Time*, *Love Matters*, *Consuming Tales* and *Santa's Little Helpers*.

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Other publications include:

*Fairy Gold* (novelet prequel to Apprentice Healer series)

*Molly the Beekeeper's Daughter and other stories* (short story collection)

*A Different Kind of Hero and other stories* (short story collection)

*A Brave Doll* (picture book—free on website)

*A Home Where God Lives: Discovering His Blessings* [with Anita Donihue] (Christian /inspirational collection of prayers, poems, stories and essays exploring different types and aspects of "home")

The *Hall of Doors* series:

Book one, *The Mountains of the Moon: Sammy's worried. Her cat has disappeared again. No one knows where Princess Buttermilk Biscuit goes on full-moon nights. Will she come back this time?*

*When Sammy follows her cat up a moonbeam to a world of mist and moonlight, she meets Selena, who lives in a beautiful fairy-tale castle. Sammy is fascinated by the Hall of Doors with its magical portals to other worlds. But the dreamlike adventure turns into a nightmare when Sammy is faced with the hardest decision of her life. Will she have the courage to make the right choice?*

Book two, *The Door in the Sky*

Book three, *The Mirror Door*

Book four, *The Secret Door*

Book five, *The Water Door*

*Fairy Gold* This is a "prequel" to the story of Teeka, Angelina's daughter, in the *Apprentice Healer* series. The first chapter of *To Heal a Broken Planet* is included. Publication of that novel, and its sequel, *Into the Unknown*, is pending.

*A Brave Doll*

Other free materials on the website include "extra scenes" for the first three *Hall of Doors* books and an assortment of short material.



## Jessica Dorlac



Cover artist

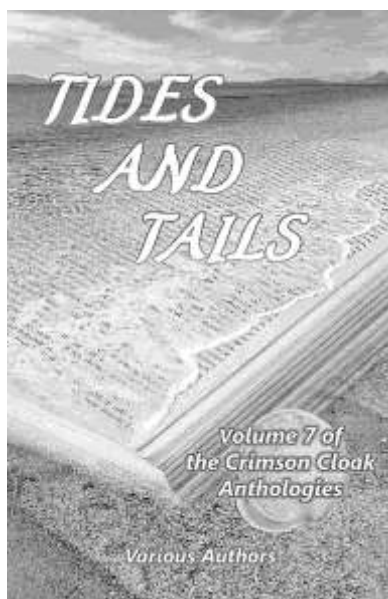
Jessica Dorlac is a Southern California native, born and raised in Lancaster, California. She currently lives in Simi Valley and received her B.A. in Art in 2016 from CSU Northridge with a painting concentration, she also studied illustration and graphic design. Her passion is expressing powerful ideas, stories, and feelings through art. Since she was young, she has always created art as a means to communicate, explore, and connect ideas and perspectives. She enjoys working in a variety of artistic styles and mediums such as digital, acrylics, oils, watercolors, and charcoal. Jessica has also gained a

variety of professional experience such as; teaching art, graphic design and marketing. In her private life, she enjoys spending time with family, exploring nature, exercising, creative writing, and reading on many subjects, especially art and science.

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<http://jessicadorlac.weebly.com/>



## T W Embry



**T**odd was in culinary school doing an essay for the English portion of his AA degree. After finishing his assignment in a scant 20 minutes, the professor looked at his work, then asked him: "How many books have you written?" Todd had forgotten the young boy who used to write ghost stories to scare his grandmother. Later, he met an author who was giving a lecture at the local library and thought that would be a cool thing to do. Remembering the words of Professor Wolfson in culinary school, he sat down at the computer and started what would become *Revenge from Mars*, his first novel, re-released by Crimson Cloak Publishing. His short story *The Man Who Created Himself* appeared in Volume 2 of the Crimson Cloak Anthologies, *Steps in Time*, and *The Legend of Center Tree* appeared in volume 4, *Consuming Tales*. His book *Ravings of a Bi-Polar Mind* will be releasing soon.

Todd's book series *The Adventures of the Human Thomas Scott* is published by Crimson Cloak Publishing.



*Synopsis of **Alien Manifesto**: When orphaned ex-Navy S.E.A.L. Thomas Scott decides upon a life of crime, he does not expect to be recruited to join an elite Special Forces operation charged with stealing an alien artifact. Especially a mixed-species alien team headed by intergalactic billionaire Snarth. The close-knit team soon becomes Tom's family in more senses than one, which complicates matters when the mysterious artifact turns out to hold secrets that may plunge the whole of the known universe into a devastating war ... look for Sequel **Earth's Mirror**, from Crimson Cloak Publishing.*



<http://twembry.com/>

<http://marielavender.blogspot.co.uk/2014/10/interview-with-author-tw-embry.html>

<https://www.smashwords.com/profile/view/twembry0>

## Laura Keane



**L**aura Keane grew up in southern California in a family of educators, avid readers, travellers and creative souls. She loves exploring new places, meeting new people and all things whimsical. Favorite magical places include Camden, Maine, Paris, Pompeii, any bookstore or cozy coffee haunt.

The "little peeps" she has tutored fueled the creative fires with their endless imagination. The "big peeps" she has tutored shared their enduring enthusiasm and quest for a good adventure. She lives in southern California.

<https://www.smashwords.com/profile/view/laurakeane>

Laura's book for children of 3-7 years,  
*Maggie's Wonderfluffy Week*  
will be published by Crimson Cloak Publishing.

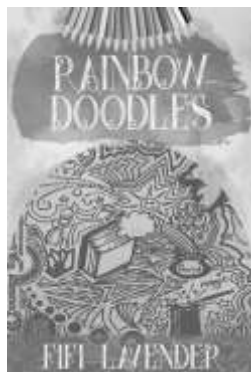
## Fifi Lavender



"Fifi" has been creating her "doodles" for years, and they are soon to be collected into volumes of coloring books. She lives in the UK. Look for *Rainbow Doodles*, the first in her range of children's and adult coloring books, from Crimson Cloak Publishing

<https://www.facebook.com/Fifi-Lavender-Drawings-471501139711231/>

[https://www.instagram.com/fifi\\_lavender/](https://www.instagram.com/fifi_lavender/)



## A. Lawati



**A**li Lawati is a Pakistani-Canadian writer living in Dubai. Ali writes as **A. Lawati**. He works as a transport consultant by day and is an author by night. Ali is a natural storyteller and has been creating stories since the age of ten, incorporating in them the hybrid life he's led. His literary work has appeared in magazines, blogs and newspapers. He has also developed a financial literacy story for The Pace Credit Union Bank, Toronto. Before moving to Dubai, he worked for the Toronto Transit Commission as a train operator, which inspired the upcoming children's series on public transportation and safety. He has studied history and music at California State University, Fullerton and Transportation Management at Humber College, Toronto and all of this and more informs his writing. He has written three children's books so far. His first was about a monkey, inspired by his own pet Macaca he had as a kid. The Greatest Race is his first children's novel to be published. He is presently writing a middle grade novel. When not writing, Ali teaches creative business communication.

His book *The Greatest Race* was published in 2017

*Gul is a young Afghan Tortoise in Yosemite Park, who impulsively accepts a challenge to race from the Cottontail Clan of rabbits. The rabbits, who are distant cousins of the hares, have been twitching for a rematch ever since the legendary race where the tortoise outsmarted the hare. Set in the harsh yet rich landscape of Yosemite, this fun to read adventure story teaches children about collaboration and fostering relationships while raising awareness about illegal poaching.*





## Cynthia MacGregor



**C**ynthia MacGregor lives in Palm Springs, Florida. She is a writer, editor, TV host and speaker and has written over 100 books: general nonfiction, parenting books, cookbooks/books about cooking, kids' books, and fiction. Children's crafts from one of her upcoming books can be found in Volume 5 of the Crimson Cloak Anthologies, Santa's Little Helpers.

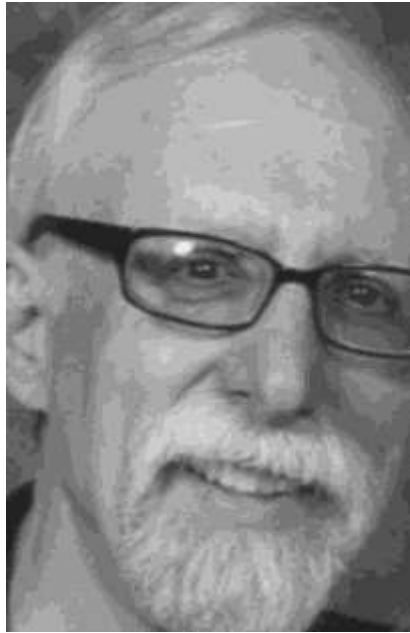
<http://www.cynthiamacgregor.com>

Books by Cynthia Macgregor, from Crimson Cloak Publishing:

***Affirmations ... Plus Action***  
***Don't Quit While You're Ahead***  
***Everything You Always Wanted to Know about Santa Claus, The Tooth Fairy and The Easter Bunny.***  
***Who's There? (New and Favorite Knock-Knock Jokes)***  
***Predator-Proof Your Child***



## W. H. Matlack



**W**.H. Matlack is a prolific author whose writing encompasses a broad range of subjects from love stories to hard-bitten, noir-style mysteries and even supernatural stories that range in style from humor to suspense.

Matlack also produces children's picture books and an extensive line of graphic stories in partnership with gifted artist, Don Ramie.

<http://www.whmatlack.blogspot.com/>  
<https://www.facebook.com/noirtown/>

## ***Grandma Explains the Rain***

Illustrated children's story book written by W.H. Matlack  
and illustrated by Don Ramie.

*It's raining, and there's nothing to do! Grandma has heard that before, but she knows the world is full of special wonders when it rains. She remembers what it was like when she was a child. Her grandkids want to hear all about what a rainy day was like when Grandma was their age.*

Grandma Explains the Rain presents a beautifully rendered look at what life was like in a 1950s neighborhood. The book has been designed to present all of the warmth and good feelings of discovery that surround childhood, no matter what time period. You'll want to gather your family around this book to explore the wonders of a walk through the rain.



## Esma Race



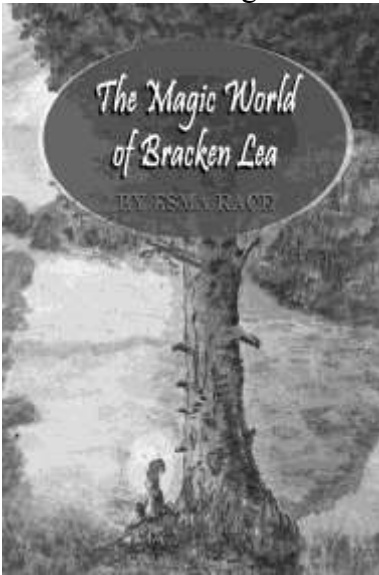
**E**sma Race was born and raised in the small Cheshire village of Weaverham. She has a great love for the natural world, and has always been able to sense the nature spirits which feature in her Bracken Lea stories. She is very interested in natural healing, and is a practising reflexologist in the North of England, where she now lives with Geoff, her husband of 45 years. She is a mother, grandmother and great-grandmother and enjoys reading, walking, travelling, gardening, and English history.

Her short story “*Horrid Rex Bites the Dust*” appeared in Volume 1 of the *Crimson Cloak Anthologies Glodwyn’s Treasure Chest*; “*The Eternal City*” was in Volume 2, *Steps In Time*, “*The Search*” appeared in Volume 3, *Love Matters*. Volume 4, *Consuming Tales*, featured her story *A Trio of Friends*, and *Horrid Rex at the North Pole* was in Volume 5, *Santa’s Little Helpers*.



She is the author of:

*The Traveller, and Flames* (Crimson Short stories), and  
*The Magic World of Bracken Lea*, from Crimson Cloak  
Publishing.



"Discovering the *Magic World of Bracken Lea* was a treat"

--Long and Short Reviewer

" ... adorable ... After two stories I was hooked."

--OnlineBookClub Reviewer

<http://www.esmarace.co.uk>

<https://www.facebook.com/esmarace>

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/esmarace>

[https://twitter.com/Esma\\_Race](https://twitter.com/Esma_Race)

[https://www.goodreads.com/author/show/8020628.](https://www.goodreads.com/author/show/8020628)

Esma\_Race

<https://www.smashwords.com/profile/view/esmarace>

*Synopsis of **The Magic World of Bracken Lea:***

*A series of short stories featuring the Fairy Folk of Bracken Lea Wood: a tale of Nature Spirits for humans of all ages.*

*Welcome to the magic world of GLODWYN the Gnome. His friends include other gnomes, flower fairies, a Twisted Tree, Astrid the Fairy Queen, and the birds and animals who also live in the wood.*

*Glodwyn the gnome is a bit of a rebel. He lives and works in the ancient woodland. He is unusual amongst the Fairy Folk in enjoying the company of humans. His good-natured interest in their world seen through the eyes of his unknowing "friend", Walter the Stacker Truck Driver at the local factory, leads him to interfere in their affairs, with interesting results both for the Fairy Folk and humans. With his help, the Fairy Folk rescue a little boy from drowning, save the life of an injured cat and later that of a confused old lady who collapses in the Wood.*

*The Fairy Folk raise the alarm when a baby's mother is taken ill, and later prevent disaster at the baby's Christening, when a bad fairy threatens the child's happiness. They help a Leprechaun find his way home, and get a lost engagement ring back to its owner. Both unwitting humans and Fairy Folk work together to save nearby woodland from development. From arranging a litter-pick in the woods to finding a new wand for the Fairy Queen, it is a busy life for the Fairy Folk.*

## Damaris West



**D**amaris' work consists of a large body of poems, short stories (some for children), and three novels. 'Queen Anne's Lace' is the most recently published of these and tells the story of the McKays, a mildly dysfunctional family whose lives are thrown into turmoil, requiring each of them to face some big Life Questions.

Born and brought up in the East of England, Damaris lived for some time with her husband Clive in a rebuilt farmhouse in the Umbria region of Italy with their three disparate dogs, originally rescue puppies, where she wrote a daily blog about her life and the natural history around her. They now live in Cornwall, UK.

Please do drop in and see her Facebook page: [www.facebook.com/livinginitaly](http://www.facebook.com/livinginitaly)



Also by Damaris:

*Skolthan* – A novel about good and evil magic centring around a portal to another world

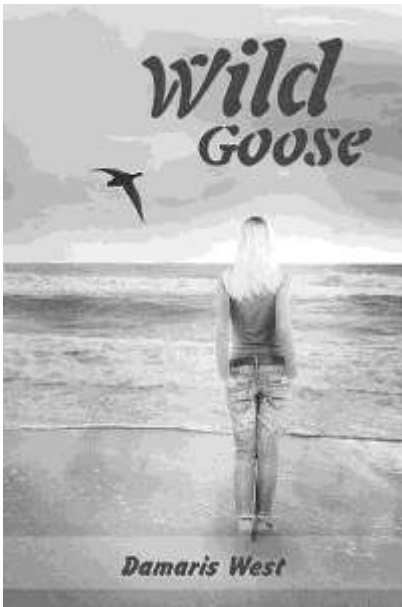
*A Postcard from Umbria* - Anecdotes of an ex-pat in Italy

*The Wolves of Little Mouse Valley* (soon to be published)

- A novel set in central Italy and seen through the eyes of a close-knit rural family, featuring wolf boys, a monastery full of paedophiles, and a pack of avenging wolves

### ***Wild Goose***

*Brought up in a rural idyll, Jemima knows what she wants to do with her life. Leastways, she knows she doesn't want to follow the path that her father, who played only a small*



*part in her upbringing, is trying to force her down. But she will have to go to extraordinary lengths, including coming close to death, in order to keep her dream alive.*

*This is a delightful, although frequently uncompromising, view of a rural childhood and parental domination.*

## Gary Winstead



**G**ary Winstead, the youngest of eleven children, was born in 1948 and grew up in Pontiac, Illinois, an obscure farm town in the middle of the Illinois Farm Belt. At the age of eighteen, he joined the United States Marine Corps and served for four years, rising to the rank of Corporal (E-4), before earning his honourable discharge. He went on to receive a bachelor's degree in physical education, a Master's in educational administration from California State University, Fullerton, and a PhD in Veterinary Science. He currently lives in Southern California.

<http://savingliteracy.blogspot.com>  
<https://www.facebook.com/winsteadgary>

Gary is the award-winning director of a short film adapted from his story *The Pony No-one Could Ride* which appeared in Volume 1 of the Crimson Cloak Anthologies, *Glodwyn's Treasure Chest*, and *Frogmore International*, based on his story of that name in Volume 4, *Consuming Tales*. He is currently working on *Riding through life with Love by my Side: "A Story of a Cowboy and His Wife's journey Through Alzheimer's"*.



# The Charity

**The La Habra Valley Community Fair** (Ca) is a 501C3 Non-profit organization benefiting our communities' youth who are participating in local 4H and FFA programs. These programs are helping to create hard working, responsible young people to be the leaders and valued community members of tomorrow. Our annual fair provides these young people the opportunity to show or exhibit the Livestock, Poultry, Ag Mechanics and Floral Projects that they have spent many hours raising or constructing. Additionally, the event provides a community outreach to educate the public on the importance of Agriculture as well as educational displays on a multitude of topics related to the 4H and FFA programs and Agriculture Education.

<http://www.citrusfair.com/>

<https://www.facebook.com/Citrusfair/>





*The Crimson Cloak Anthologies:*



***<http://crimsoncloakpublishing.com>***

*Check out our Children's Corner, where you will find free downloadable children's coloring pages and crafts.*