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A VOYAGE IN TIME



2003

John was exhausted.

He had been driving nearly three hours now. It had been a while since he had visited his parents in Muskegon. Heck, he had been so busy with work, he hadn't left the city of Chicago in a few years. He was really glad to get out of Chi-Town. It was relaxing just to drive up I-196 to Muskegon. As he drove past Exit 36, he remembered how as a kid, his parents would always take him to a blueberry farm north of Saugatuck.

He continued to drive for ninety more minutes until he reached his parents house. He had forgotten how close his house was to the B.C. Cobb Generating Plant, as it was just across the bay. The red lights on the smokestack flashed on and off in the night sky. He got out of his Toyota Rav4 and walked into his childhood home in North Muskegon.

“Johnny your home!” Exclaimed his mother.

“I’m so glad to see ya sport!” His father proclaimed and gave him a big hug.

Soon enough they were having dinner, much to Johnny’s chagrin.

“I ate at the Five Guys in Holland. You didn’t have to make this.”

“Eat sonny boy! You’re looking thin around the edges. No lady wants an extremely thin man!”

“Marion, he looks just fine. Give him a break...he’s been working hard for the past two years.”

John had been working hard. His architectural firm had been designing a new skyscraper at Wolf Point in downtown Chicago.

For the next few moments all that could be heard was the clinking of silverware. Until Johnny’s father spoke up.

“Hey John, do you remember the Milwaukee Clipper?”

Did he remember the Milwaukee Clipper! Of course he did. As a little kid it was always impressive to see the massive passenger ship go through the channel into Muskegon Lake. He even got to go to Milwaukee, Wisconsin on it once. *Gee that was back in the 70’s!*

“Yeah of course dad!”

“Well did you hear they turned it into a museum! It’s at the old Grand Trunk ferry dock off of Lakeshore Drive. It’s been through a lot of owners since the 70’s, heck she was just towed up from Hammond, Indiana back in ‘97. You should go check out the museum tomorrow. You’ve got plenty of time since you’ll here for two weeks.”

“I might just do that.”

They continued to eat dinner. After they finished, Johnny offered to wash the dishes. Later they watched *Wheel of Fortune* and *Jeopardy* on the big old RCA television in the family room. Johnny didn’t realize, until now how much he missed this place. Although, he was much

older, he strangely felt like a kid again. Heck, they even left the crinkly plastic on the sofa! *Man my parents are old!* Johnny thought to himself. He dismissed himself and went up to his old room. He had totally forgotten about his *Spirit of St. Louis* airplane model that hung from the ceiling. "I remember when I built that!" He exclaimed. He crawled under the covers. The last thing he heard was the train horn from the local freight to Fremont.

The next morning he awoke to the sweet smell of sizzling bacon.

"Why do I feel so much like a kid again?" He said to himself as he got out of bed.

He walked downstairs and was immediately greeted by his mother.

"Morning sonny boy! Here's your breakfast!"

Man, I wish she would stop saying that!
Where's dad?" He asked.

"He's at work." She said flipping over a pancake.

"Work?" He replied. "I thought he was retired."

"Semi retired." My mother replied as she was turning off the big Maytag stove. "He still goes in every Wednesday. Your cousin Max can't run the hardware store completely by himself yet!"

He had forgotten his father had turned over the hardware store to Max. Deep down he knew his father felt sad that he didn't run the store. But at the same time he knew his father was happy that his son had such a great job in the city. The hardware store had been in the Peterson family for four generations.

Johnny inhaled his breakfast. He slid on his shoes on and headed for the door. "I'll be back soon mom!"

"Are you going to the museum?"

"Yes, mom."

"Well put on your Columbia jacket, it's *Michigan* out there!"

"Mom! I already have it on!"

"Okay, bye sonny boy!"

"Bye mom."

He stepped out the front door of the house, and walked down the cold concrete driveway. It was mid October now, and all the neighbors were raking leaves. A task that *nobody* wants to do. Johnny started up his Toyota RAV4 and pulled onto Ruddiman Drive. Soon he was driving over the Muskegon Causeway. He felt so much better now that he was in his hometown. Chicago doesn't have the same feel of a town of 40,000. The Sappi Paper Mill, another landmark in Muskegon was now in his sight. Johnny could see the local CSX train switching the massive plant facility.

He then spotted a sign that was labeled "SS Milwaukee Clipper Preservation Society Inc." Johnny then made a right turn and then drove up the old GTW ferry dock, and parked his car in the grassy field. There were two other cars in the "parking lot" so he assumed the museum was open. Johnny headed over to the gangplank and walked into the belly of the 361 foot long vessel. He was immediately greeted by an enthusiastic volunteer (his nametag read "Brad").

"Howdy Sir! Welcome to the Milwaukee Clipper!"

"Hello." he replied. (and not very enthusiastically).

"We're gonna start the next tour in a few minutes...just wait right here." The volunteer then went down a passageway and disappeared.

After a few long minutes Johnny realized he wasn't coming back. He then decided to venture into the narrow passageway to see what had happened to the man. Due to the darkness of the stairs, Johnny did not see the box of brochures on the third step; he tumbled down them and landed at the bottom with a loud thud.

Suddenly he heard a loud noise.

A ship horn.

Suddenly he heard a voice.

"Are you okay?" It said.

"What happened?" Johnny questioned.

"You had a nasty fall sir, those stairs are dangerous if you aren't careful! I can assist you back to your cabin...by the way my name is Pamela, I'm the lead stewardess here on the Milwaukee Clipper."

Suddenly John stood up. He noticed the hallway looked different. It was *fancy* looking! "What year is it?" He asked.

"My oh my, you did hit your head hard. It's 1953." Pamela replied. "It says here on your key, I found it in your pocket, that your room number is #1-2-4. Lucky for you it's right down the hall from here."

Holy crap, I'm in 1953! He thought to himself. *This has to be a very vivid dream.*

They arrived at John's stateroom. And she made sure he was in his bed.

"I don't think I need to take you to the sick bay, you just really need your rest."

"Thank you." He told her.

"No problem sir. Sleep for an hour or two, we don't leave for Milwaukee until 9:00 a.m. anyway. I was wondering why you got here so early, it's nearly 7:45 a.m.."

"I really don't remember much before the..."

"Don't worry about." She interrupted. I'm around if you need anything." She then left the room.

Sleep overtook John again, this time voluntarily.

He awoke to the ship's horn, *again*, but this time they were moving.

He climbed up the stairs to the top deck of the ship. He could hear the band playing on the dance floor in the deck below. They were already in Lake Michigan, and he could see the Muskegon Lighthouse getting farther and farther away. John went to the bow of the ship. There, he tried to replicate the famous scene from James Cameron's *Titanic*.

Oh yeah Titanic hasn't been made yet! Johnny thought to himself.

Soon two hours passed. They still had five more until they reached Milwaukee. Johnny was hungry so he went to the on board dining room. He sat himself in a booth next to one of the porthole windows. "I'll have a the Turkey Club with a Coke." He asked the waitress.

"Sure thing sir, we'll have that right out in a jiff!" She replied.

Fifties lingo.

He had now just realized his clothing had changed. He was impressed on how comfortable fifties clothing was. He had always thought they looked awful in photographs.

He ate his meal and went back to his stateroom. He sat down on his bed and watched the sparkling blue waters of the lake outside the window. He went through his pockets and he found what felt to be a quarter. He pulled it out and looked at the date. "1998" it read.

This isn't a dream! He realized

Suddenly he felt weird and fell down on the bed.

The world went black.

He awoke.

Again.

This time he was on the hardwood floor. He *had* fallen down the stairs.

He heard an older woman's voice.

"Sir are you okay?"

"What year is it?" He asked.

"My oh my, you must have hit your head hard! It's 2003 by the way. Here I'll help you up. You know, you aren't the first person to fall down these stairs!"

"Really?"

"Yeah back in 1953 I helped a gentlemen on these same stairs."

Johnny looked up at her. She had a S.S. Milwaukee Clipper shirt on (obviously a volunteer).

And engraved on her shiny name tag was 'Pamela.'

