

Steven C. Marek's

Rebecca

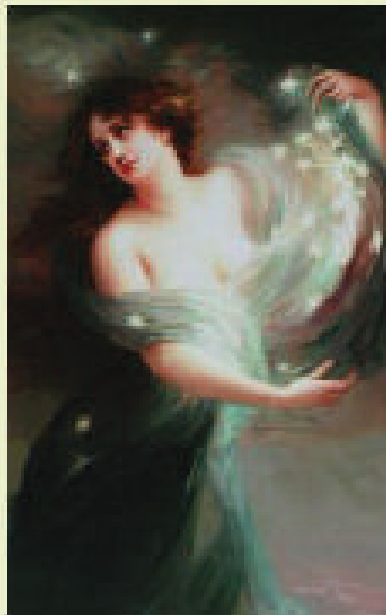
of the Outer Banks



Rebecca

of the Outer Banks

by Steven C. Marek



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Rebecca, of the Outer Banks

Introduction

Before bridges were built to the Outer Banks, Captain Marlin Winston settled on the shores of Kitty Hawk. His wife, Rebecca, kept the home illuminated with lanterns to guide her husband home from the sea. The lights became known to passing seamen as the Lights of the Three Mile Station. Late in 1941, Captain Winston's boat, Dolphin Watch, was struck by a torpedo from a German U-Boat, and Captain Winston was presumed lost at sea. Rebecca was said to have drowned in sorrow, but kept the oil lights burning for years hoping that her husband would somehow come home.

This is the story of Rebecca Winston, of the Outer Banks. Rebecca, a heroine, adventurer, and dreamer, living with nature, as part of nature. Rebecca's mystical connection with birds, fish, and animals will astound children of all ages and adults alike.

Rebecca, a caldron of passion, with life, and the man she loves.
Rebecca, a witness and inspiration to history as the two most famous brothers in American Aviation, build their flying machine.
Feel alive on the shores of Kitty Hawk at the turn of the 20th century.

Rebecca kept the old Three Mile Station illuminated for years. This beacon of hope was in no way unnoticed by hundreds of other seamen. The flickering shore lights guided seamen and helped them identify their location at sea. The saga of Captain Winston and Rebecca became legendary among passing seamen and their wives. The oil light were kept burning until her health declined in the early 1950's.
Rebecca passed away a few years later on the Mainland.

During renovation of Three Mile Station in Kitty Hawk NC in 1999, fragments of a diary were found under a built-in wooden bedframe. This is the story of Rebecca Winston, bride of Captain Marlin Winston.

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1. Rebecca, of the Outer Banks

Chapter 1

Destiny

Diary entry: June 16, 1896

Across barren space through heaven's gates, pulled by the light of destiny, I cross into the mist of life. Soaring swiftly over breathing sea at the glistening break of dawn, I reach a beginning.

And there, stooped by the drifting water's edge, grasping tightly to a tree, my mother screams through the passages of heaven and earth. Bends down and reaches out to me, holds me close in her arms as she stares bewildered into my eyes. First a slight frown from what she feels she has to offer, then a smile and a tear of joy. She lifts me high and spins around, as I view the light of the world through my mother's eyes.

Tucked away at the edge of a pine forest across the Sound of the Outer Banks of North Carolina, in the tall green summer grass and windswept wildflowers, Currituck County becomes my childhood home. As a young child I never had many friends close to my age, it was just Momma and me living in a share cropper's cabin. There were three other cabins on the farm all built alike. Each one had two or three people living in them who worked the fields Spring, Summer and Fall.

Our home was a 10 foot by 15 foot log cabin with a clean but hard dirt floor. Momma and I shared everything. We had a bed, a table, two wooden chairs and Momma's hope chest. On one end of the cabin was an always warm fireplace where we cooked our meals. There were hot timbers in that fire place year round, regardless of whether it was a frosty 20 degrees or a skin melting 100 degrees in the outside shade.

Momma was only five feet tall and never did I know her to ever weigh over ninety pounds. Every winter Momma became so ill she could hardly breath. When she opened her mouth to take a breath, the cold air gripped the inside of her throat and could do nothing but cough. It was up to me to collect broken pieces of wood from the forest to keep the fire going during the winter.

Sometimes when it was colder than a well digger's butt, Mary and Sandy, two old ladies that shared another cabin, came to visit and spent the night. I never knew how those two ladies could share the same cabin, all they did was fuss and complain. It was as if they had a secret war going on between them, a contest to see which one was living the most miserable existence. The greatest pleasure I felt about their visit was when it was over. Momma and I sometimes would jokingly call each other Mary or Sandy when one of us was getting a bit cranky.

During the winter Momma took in torn clothes from others and mended them for a penny a piece. Clothes that were too ragged to mend were used as patches for other clothes. I'd help out by

unraveling cloths, slowly picking and pulling to make sewing thread. I remember spending hours at a time with Momma on winter days in front of the fire just leaning against her side as she patched one piece after another.

During the spring Momma's coughing got better and we worked the fields with mules to prepare the land for rows after row of corn. The plowing was long and hard, but it was rewarded with the easy task of pushing corn seeds in the soft sandy soil. As soon as the corn was planted, we'd go back with a hoe to cut the early weeds and grass out. By the end of July every year it became a lost cause, and we just let the grass grow. By then the corn was high enough to grow on its own.

I always hated September and October because Autumn signaled the beginning of the backbreaking and an endless series of tasks, pulling hard corn, shucking it and throwing it into a mule drawn wagon. I think the mule hated it too. When I was little, I couldn't throw the corn high enough to get it into the wagon, I tossed it in piles along the rows and someone else picked it up and threw it into the wagon.

It was not until 1894, well into my thirteenth year, that I was permitted to drive the mule wagon. Always tiny for my age, at thirteen, I was only four feet tall, just tall enough to guide the mule wagon. The driver of the wagon had a much better job than the others who were pulling and shucking corn from sun up to sun down. The wagon driver would just sit there and guide the mule back and forth from fields to harbor. I looked forward to when I

got the chance to drive the mule. I could rest for awhile and others didn't mind because I was little and could pull less corn than the others. When I got to the harbor, others that worked there shoveled the corn out and into large barrels that were placed on barges or boats.

Eventually, a certain boy always ran to meet me so he could shovel the corn out of my wagon. He told me about everything funny that happened since my last load of corn. I liked him from the start because he was the only person I knew that talked to me as if I were an adult. His name was Marlin Winston. Marlin was just three months and two days my senior. He often made me laugh.

Marlin said, "Rebecca, remember Steath, one of the fellows here that helps unload the corn? Steath thought he could save his muscles and got on top of the barrel of corn and walked on it backwards to roll the barrel to the dock. The barrel got away from him and Steath fell in front of it and it almost got rolled over!"

Sometimes I laughed at his stories even though I didn't understand them. It was just fun to hear him talk. I just held my hand over my mouth and giggled. Each trip to the dock Marlin had another tale to tell me.

Marlin jumped up on the wagon and while he shoveled the corn he said, "Rebecca, you should have been here earlier. Captain Rogers was just a fussin' at us about loading his boat too slow. He was calling us every name in the book. We all started saying, 'Yes Sir Captain Codgers.' We could see him just turn redder than a turnip. Actually we all loaded the boat a little slower because we wanted to

see if he really could pop his lid."

"You all are just a bunch of bad boys," I said with a giggle.

"Yep, but we're all just a bunch of good ol' bad boys."

Marlin jumped out of the wagon and walked around to the front wagon wheel. Marlin leaned against his shovel and said with some excitement in his voice, "Well, after his boat was all loaded up, he got in to crank it up and it wouldn't start." Marlin slapped his leg with his cap and yelled out, "We all had a big laugh over it and that made Captain Codgers that much madder." Everyone else stopped shoveling and started laughing with Marlin.

Marlin's father owned one of the boats that carried the corn. Marlin often asked me to come along for a round trip across the sound, but I knew my mother would burn my hide if I did not come back when she expected to see me. And I was too afraid to ask because I knew she would say no.

Winter winds began to blow as the last load of corn was carried to the harbor. I knew I was going to miss Marlin but at the time, I didn't know just how much. I told Momma all about him. At first she teased me about him, then she became as excited as I was about seeing him again. Several times a day, every day, through the Winter, Spring and Summer I thought of nothing else but seeing Marlin again.

I wondered if I would really see him again next year. I often imagined seeing him across the field and wondered what he would do if he saw me. I wondered what I would do if I saw him.

When you are just 14 years old, a full year can be an eternity.

Finally, September 1895 rolled around and it was time to harvest the corn and take it to the harbor. I was full of anticipation when we got to the fields. I was going to drive the mule. But then, up there sitting on the wagon was this old, mean, lazy fat woman. She sat up there and would not let anyone budge her off because she said, "My fingers hurt too much to pull corn."

She drove one load, then another, then another. For the first time in my life I was becoming very angry.

I tried to drive one of the other wagons but they belonged to the driver, who said "I need the money sweetie."

I was beginning to hate everyone and everything. I pulled on the corn so hard I almost pulled the stalk out of the ground.

One of the other workers said, "Take it easy child, you won't last long that way."

I knew if I were to get that old bat off the wagon I would have to do something.

The next time she returned, I climbed up the wagon and told her, "Mr. Wagner wants you to drive a wagon over on the Wagner Field Number 3.

Everybody knew that Mr. Wagner paid better than everyone else.

She raised up and got off the wagon.

"She believed me!" I exclaimed to myself. But just then she started walking toward my mother. I was thinking, "Oh my god, what awful thing was going to happen to me?"

My mother looked up just as the old fat lady walked by. The fat lady didn't say a word, she just walked by Momma and kept walking down the flattened row of corn until she was out of sight. Soon the wagon was full and I climbed up and popped the mule to head for the harbor. Momma gave me a big, wide, smile.

"My God, its happening. I'm going to the harbor," I was thrilled. All the while the mule was trotting down the road, I kept saying to myself, "Will he be there?" Even the clapping of the mule's hooves on the road said "Will he be there, will he be there?" I placed three grains of yellow corn in my mouth for good luck.

Then, as I got closer to the harbor I actually began to get nervous. "Will he be there?" turned to "What if he's there? What if he is there and doesn't remember me?"

When I turned the corner to see the harbor my eyes scanned the area. They were all too small yet to see who's who. When I got closer I began to imagine that everybody I saw was him. Then, there, over there I spotted him as he jumped down off a wagon. He turned around to look for another wagon and stood there for a moment as he looked in my direction.

"Does he see me? Does he want to see me?" I said to myself.

He took off his cap and wiped his forehead and pulled the cap snugly back on. Then I saw him smile. That was the most wonderful smile I ever saw in my life. I knew I was grinning from ear to ear, I just couldn't help it.

He started walking toward my wagon and after a few steps he started running. Along the way he dropped his shovel. I stood up in the wagon and tried to point out to him that he had dropped his shovel, but he kept running. I stopped the mule and jumped off the wagon just as he ran up to me and gave me a big hug.

"Where were you, where were you?" he said.

I looked up at him and into his deep blue eyes, I just couldn't bring myself to say a word. I had always wondered what I would do and now I was doing it.

We just gazed at each other for a few seconds. He was still holding his arms around me and I wanted to kiss him, I wanted him to kiss me. What was I thinking, I have never been this close to a kiss with anyone before. He bent down slowly, he didn't know whether to kiss me or not, he didn't know if he should. In fact, he had never kissed anyone before either. We both got closer, then backed off a little, then came closer again. Then he kissed me on the lips. I had never been hugged by anyone but my mother before and I have never been kissed on the lips. I just stood there in his arms as he kept asking me questions. I didn't hear a word he said. I just wondered where my feet were. I was electrified. He kissed me.

I didn't even know who I was. I looked up at him again and he stopped talking and just gazed back for a few moments. I could see the sparkling in his deep blue eyes. He slowly bent down and our lips touched again. We kissed forever. It may have been just a minute or two, but it seemed like forever. I just closed myself off to everything in the world. I was in heaven and didn't want to go back to earth. Even after the kiss we just stood there quiet next to the wagon wheel and held each other. I began to cry. I didn't know why I was crying. I was just so happy.

Marlin asked, "What's wrong, why are you crying? But all I could do was cry more. Marlin put his arms around me for a few seconds and let me cry.

We climbed back up on the wagon and he drove it to the unloading spot. He sat beside me while someone else shoveled the corn. When the wagon was empty I had to leave because the corn pickers had a system. If I weren't there, they would have to wait for another wagon and I would surely be called a lazy bum.

As the mule pulled away our hands parted. I just looked back for a second as I rode away. I was already behind so I snapped the mule to gallop most of the way back.

I was changed, I felt for the first time in my life like a woman. Every thought, every word out of my mouth was "Marlin". I felt so ashamed and confused that I cried. There was so much I wanted to say, but words seemed useless. I want to feel him wrap his arms around me again. I want to get lost in his kiss

again, oh yes, again and again.

"Why did I leave?" I said to myself. "Someone else could have driven the wagon back. Next time I'm going to stay longer. I hope Marlin wouldn't think poorly of me if I stayed a little longer. I've got to tell mother!"

As I drove up everyone was waiting for me. They said "What took you so long? Move faster next time." Little did they know how fast I wanted them to load the wagon.

I called Momma over and whispered to her, "Momma, I saw Marlin and he kissed me on the lips."

Momma just stood there staring at me. I think she knew more than I could say. She said, "I love you baby."

Then I heard a "Hey!" As I looked up that old fat lady was stomping back through the corn.

She walked up to the wagon and yelled out, "You lying little bitch, you're going to hell!"

She climbed up and nearly pushed me off the seat. She yelled, "Get off this wagon you little whore!"

My mother grabbed a stalk of corn and started slapping the old lady with it saying, "Don't call my baby no whore you. . . you . . . !"

My mother never could bring herself to swear. I never felt more proud of my mother as I did then. And I never saw her get so furious before, not even with me. Several other workers had to grab her arms and hold her back. The old fat lady slapped the reins for the mule to start moving and left without even a full load of corn.

Momma kept yelling at her until that old lady was too far away to hear her anymore. We had a couple of minutes rest until the next wagon pulled up so everyone wanted to know what brought on all this commotion.

This time, Momma was still in tears, so I told the story. Everyone just kept silent while I spoke.

I said, "I met Marlin last year at the harbor. I missed him so much all last winter. And I had to wait till September to see him again. It was driving me nuts!"

Momma said, "It was driving me nuts too."

I smiled at Momma and held back the tears as I said, "Well here it is almost the end of September and today for the first time I got to see him again. Marlin kissed me and all I could do was cry. I've got to go back to see him again. But that fat ugly lady wants to hog the wagon." I couldn't help it, I broke out in tears again.

One old thin lady with no teeth walked up to me and placed her hand on my shoulder. Momma walked up and hugged me.

Several others were actually wiping their eyes with their shirt sleeves. I never saw adults cry before, but today seemed to be a day for tears.

We loaded up four wagons, then the old fat lady who pushed me off the wagon drove up.

Everything was quiet, no one started to pitch corn into the wagon.

The old fat lady said, "What's wrong with you all, get to work!" Everyone stood still and no one said a word. Then someone cried out, "Get off the wagon."

The old fat woman yelled "Shut up and get to work."

Two men walked up to her and reached up to her in a gesture to help her off the wagon. The old fat woman threw down the reins and murmured something as she climbed down off the wagon on her own. She stomped right by everyone and kept on going. I never saw her again. Everything remained quiet. Then someone started singing some Czech song. Everyone quietly joined in while they pulled corn even though they all didn't know the words. I climbed up onto the wagon with an uncontrollable grin from ear to ear.

Momma said, "Aren't you going to help?"

I jumped off and started shucking corn and singing with the rest of them. I felt very special for I had a dozen friends whom I hardly knew before. I looked at each one, one at a time as I tossed the corn into the wagon. I noticed that each one looked at me and gave me a gentle smile.

When the wagon was nearly full, I climbed back up in anticipation. The old woman with no teeth climbed up and sat next to me. At first I didn't know what she was doing.

"Don't I get to go?" I asked.

She said, "Yes, honey, I'll fetch the wagon back so you can stay a little longer if you want."

I looked at Momma and she nodded her approval. She said, "You come back when you see this wagon again, you hear me?"

I couldn't contain my excitement any longer and yelled, "Harr," as I slapped the reins on the mule to start moving.

The road to the harbor was a quiet one. Neither of us had hardly a word to say.

As we turned the bend and saw the harbor, my eyes again began scanning to find Marlin. As we got closer and closer I kept looking.

"I know he's here. Where is he?" I said.

The old lady with no teeth was holding the reins while I looked and she drove right up to an empty stall for unloading. I could not see Marlin. I looked everywhere. What was I going to do?

I noticed one of the fellows that unloaded the wagon before and ask, "Where is Marlin, where can I find him?"

He said, "I think his Daddy's boat was full and they shipped off just a few minutes ago.

I asked, "Well when are they coming back?"

He said, "Tomorrow... maybe, maybe next week or maybe even not at all, I don't know."

I was devastated. After the wagon was unloaded the old lady said, "Come on honey, you'll see him tomorrow." And we left to go back to the corn field.

When we got back I jumped off the wagon and without a word began to pull corn. The old lady with no teeth told the others what had happened. The rest of the trips that day I let the old lady drive the wagon while I stayed with Momma and pulled corn.

The next day, the next and the days that followed for a full week went by and Marlin was never at the harbor. Soon the fields were picked clean and there were no more trips to make to the harbor. The rest of the season was spent bailing corn stalks for animal feed

Chapter 2

Reunion

Diary entry: June 16, 1896

Winters were often quiet. Just Momma and me keeping the house warm with a fire. I never received a single day of schooling, but Momma taught me how to read. Momma read every book she could get her hands on. After she finished a book, I read it. We talked about the book as if we lived the adventure ourselves. Momma was my best friend and I did love her so. Her cough seemed to get worse with each passing winter.

Early one December morning in 1895, a gentleman came calling to our cabin. This was a rare event because we never received visitors except for Mary and Sandy and an occasional visit from the property owner. Momma and this man talked for nearly an hour outside and I couldn't wait for her to tell me what it was all about. The gentleman left and I began to ask questions before she could close the door.

"Who was that?" I said.

"A friend," she answered.

"What do you mean a friend, I never saw him before. You mean, you have a friend?"

"No," she said, "Not that kind of a friend, a friend."

"What's his name?" I asked.

"Montgomery," she said.

"Montgomery," I said, "I never heard you talk about a Montgomery. What's his last name?"

"Oh, that's not important," Momma said.

That was all it took, I knew she was keeping something from me. I questioned her relentlessly for days thinking she would finally tell me what she was keeping from me. Eventually I began to play a game, "If you don't tell me, then I'm not telling you anything."

Momma said, "That's all right, you don't have anything to tell me anyhow."

The one thing I cannot stand is someone keeping a secret from me.

It was the day before Christmas when Momma came through the door and said "Somebody's here to see you."

I looked up and standing in the door was a figure. It was dark inside and the bright sunlight blinded me for a second. Then my eyes focused. It was Marlin. I was stunned and walked slowly up to him. All he said was, "Hi." All I could say was "Hi." Montgomery Winston, Marlin's father, walked in and all four of us sat down at

the table.

My mom and his dad tried to break the ice with conversations about the weather. Montgomery said, "Isn't it warm this Christmas?"

Momma said, "Yes, it sure is. Isn't it warm for this time of year, sweetie?"

I just gave her a "don't treat me like that" kind of look. Marlin and I could only look up just a moment to see each other before we bowed our heads again.

Montgomery said, "You wouldn't believe the time we had trying to track you two down. We must have had to talk to nearly twenty people, didn't we Marlin?"

Marlin tilted his head to one side and looked at his father and said, "Dad." He was embarrassed for me to know he wanted to see me as much as I wanted to see him.

After several minutes of this torture, Marlin and I walked outside and under a tree about a hundred yards from the cabin. That was one of my favorite spots. Neither of us had much to say. Neither of us knew what to say. It was an awkward moment for both of us. Then Marlin held me by my arm and pulled me closer. I fell into his embrace and we kissed with such a deep passion that I relived that moment time, and time again, thousands of times over. Every kiss was always like the first. Oh God was I in love.

Marlin asked, "Have we ever lived this moment before? Every time I'm with you it seems as if we did this before. I know it's just crazy, but it's the strangest feeling."

I said, "It's as if we were together once but somehow we lost our way and were no longer together."

Just that moment a childhood memory popped into my head. I leaned forward and looked at Marlin and said, "Marlin, have you ever looked closely into a mirror, I mean right up on a mirror, so your that nose is almost touching the mirror, and just stared deeply at you reflection for a minute?"

Marlin asked, "What do you mean?"

I said, "I use to do it as a child. I'd stand up on the chair and lean closely into the mirror on the wall. After a minute or two I could seemyselfasanadult, even as an old woman. The only thing that stays the same are the eyes, but the face changes. I've often wondered if I could see into the future, or maybe... even the past."

Marlin said, "I don't know, that's too strange to think about," and just held me tight until he and his father was ready to leave.

Marlin and I were only 14, but we both knew what we wanted for the rest of our lives.

After Marlin left I told Momma, "I want to marry Marlin." To my surprise she said, "I know dear."

Marlin and Montgomery came back three more times that Winter and when late Spring came I was invited to go on a round trip with them in their boat. Mr. Winston took tourist across the sound to play on the sandy beaches of Kitty Hawk and Nags Head. Momma gave her permission. She knew there was little to keep me from going so she said okay just to prevent a fight. I had to wait ten days before the trip. I counted the hours.

May 21, 1896, Marlin and his Dad drove by to carry me to the harbor. They had the most beautiful horse pulling their broken down carriage. I was so used to looking at the hind end of a mule and it was such a pleasure to see a horse. I thought horses were the most beautiful of animals. As we drove up to the harbor we took a different turn than usual, leading down to a long pier. At the end of the pier was a flat paddlewheel boat with a canvas awning. The boat was called "Dolphin Watch".

There were nearly a half dozen women all dressed in swimming dresses and a half dozen men dressed in black swimming trunks and robes waiting to get aboard.

Everyone cheered, "Captain Winston is here, let's get onboard.

As we got on board Montgomery pulled a cord which made a loud high pitch whistle. He cranked up the engine and the paddlewheel began to turn. The trip across took nearly forty-five minutes.

We landed near a sand dune with a long pier. All the ladies jumped off and began running and giggling along the shore line. But Montgomery yelled out, "Hold up ladies, you haven't seen anything yet."

We walked about a mile through the woods and when we came to a clearing, all of us just lost our breath. I couldn't believe what I was seeing. Beautiful waves arched and crashed on shore and washed up twenty or thirty feet on the beach. I never saw anything like it. Large birds flying overhead in lines and tiny sea chicks playing catch me with the waves on the shoreline.

Marlin held my hand and said, "Look!" There were dolphins popping up out of the water just yards from the shore.

This place was magic. I walked down the beach with my shoes in my hand and let the wash come up over my feet. There were all kinds of glistening, colorful shells lining up and down the beach. Some of the men went crashing into the ocean. It was early in the season and the water was still cold. The ladies ran along the beach playing catch me with the waves just like the little birds did.

I gazed into the blue sky, twisted around in the sand with my arms out streatched and dreamed out loud, "This is where I want to live the rest of my life."

Marlin grabbed me by my waist and pulled me close, "Will you live it with me?"

I said, "Yes!" and we fell into a kiss right there on the beach in front of everyone, including Marlin's father.

After a few seconds we realized what we were doing and stopped to regain our composure as if nothing had happened. Montgomery looked up at me and smiled. I smiled back, blushed, and tucked in my head.

Marlin and I walked south down the beach about a mile or so to the Kitty Hawk Life Saving Station. There were about ten broad-breasted men mounted in a wooden boat that was being dragged on a sleigh through the sand by a huge wide footed horse.

"They are practicing for when they need to take the boat out to rescue lives after an incident at sea," Marlin said. "When they get past the breakers, they turn around and pull the boat back to the station. This is a drill they are required to do at least once a week."

We stepped up to one officer that was standing by watching the drill. He introduced himself as Thomas Rutherford.

Tom said, "We have to keep these mates in shape. We're required to see just how fast we can get that boat out beyond the breakers."

"How fast do you go?" Marlin asked.

"This time, three minutes twelve seconds. The ocean is calm today. But when the big ships go down the water is anything but calm."

"What kind of horse is that?" I asked.

"Oh that's a Clydesdale little lady, one of the most powerful horses there is."

Everyone always thought I was still a child since I was less than five feet tall. I looked up at Marlin, he just smiled back.

"I say," Tom said as he checked his watch, "We wear out more boats practicing than we do at sea."

Then he held his record book to his side and looked out over the ocean, "Fortunately there is less than one real rescue a year, but saving one life is what we're out here for."

There was still a lot of commotion going on so Marlin and I just looked inside the station for a couple of minutes. There were real photographs of people who worked at the station in years past hanging in a row on the wall. These were the first photographs I had ever seen. Marlin pulled me away from the photographs to walk back to the boat party.

I said, "No Marlin, look." There was a photograph of a house built right beside the beach. "Can they do that?" I asked.

Marlin said, "Seamen can do anything, we're crazy."

We walked back to the boat party hand in hand along the beach with the water washing over our feet. This was heaven like I had never imagined. That photograph of a house next to the beach remained in my mind. "What a wonderful idea," I thought.

On the way back we stopped and walked off the beach and sat down on a grassy covered sand dune. I picked up a handful of sand and sifted it through my fingers over my bare feet.

I said, "Marlin, I don't want to leave this place."

Marlin took me by the shoulders and kiss me again. Every kiss was like the first, wonderful, spiritual, and exciting.

He said, "Rebecca, this will be your home."

I never really believed him. I thought he was just playing along with my fantasy.

When we got back to the boat, it was already time to head back. On the boat Marlin spent almost all his time talking with his father. The noise of the engine, people laughing and the water splashing on the paddlewheel kept me from hearing what he was saying.

On the carriage ride home I kept my head rested on Marlin's shoulder. I did not want this day to end, and I refused to believe that it was going to end. I savored every minute we had left.

When we got back, Marlin jumped out of the back seat of the carriage. Mr. Winston put his hand across my path before I could stand up and said, "Wait a minute there young lady."

Momma heard the carriage coming and was waiting at the door when Marlin walked up. Marlin and Momma went inside for a few minutes. Montgomery and I just stayed seated in the carriage. I looked at Mr. Winston as if to say, "What's going on?" Montgomery just nodded his head as if to say, "Everything is all right." So I just sat there, waiting.

Marlin walked out of the house with his hat in hand and a big wide grin across his face. He stepped up on the carriage and kneeled down next to me. There was not a lot of room between the front and back seat so it was not an easy task for him.

He held my hand and with a sparkle in his eyes, said "Rebecca, will you marry me?"

Well, it was what I wanted to hear, but I was not expecting to hear it then. I squeaked out a "yes" then remembered to look at Momma for permission. It was a little too late, but she nodded yes with a smile.

Marlin steps off the buggy and helps me off, Momma and I almost run a couple of steps to hug tightly.

I turned to Marlin and ask, "When?"

Marlin grinning with unbridled visions of the future spouted, "How about tomorrow?"

I was just taken back, with my hand flat against my chest, "We're going to get married tomorrow?" I gasped.

Mr. Winston leaning over from his seat on the buggy and touched Marlin on his shoulder and said, "Hold on a minute son, give the little lady a chance, don't be in too much a gol dang hurry."

Marlin came back with, "Well, well then, huh... how about next week? We'll get married right where we sat on the beach."

How could I resist. While looking down and drawing in the sand with my foot, I realized what he had really said and what that really meant. I looked up directly in his waiting and wondering wide open blue eyes and with a with a growing grin spouted in excitement, "Oh Yes, yes, oh yes."

Momma, Marlin and I gathered close to Mr. Winston still up on the buggy with our arms around everybody, we were already a family.



Chapter 3

The Wedding

Diary entry: June 16, 1896

Just over one week later, Sunday, June 7, 1896, I am standing on the beach in a white dress that belongs to Momma. Marlin's father, Montgomery, took two trips back and forth from the Mainland with "Dolphin Watch" packed with people. Even four of the people that I pulled corn with last year are here, including that old lady with no teeth whose name I never can remember. Most everybody else are friends of Montgomery and Marlin.

We stand on the sand dune overlooking the ocean with Captain Glover, a good friend of Montgomery's. All those that were aboard Dolphin Watch, now stand behind us along with several sailors from the rescue station.

Captain Glover clears his throat, "Quiet everyone, the wedding is about to begin."

Captain Glover opens the Bible and starts to clear his throat again, then turns to spit a big wad of chewing tobacco on the sand. Captain Glover continues, "Ladies and Gentlemen, we are gathered here today to bring this couple together in the Holy Union of Matrimony..." About that time a passing shrimp

boat blew his whistle. Everyone chuckles a little as Captain Glover just clears his throat and wipes his beard with the sleeve of his coat.

I waive a bit to protest, "Captain Glover, wait a minute please."

The Captain knods his head, "Sure young lady, you just take your time."

I whisper to Marlin, "Marlin," as I tug on his coat, "I want to get married in the water, so the surf washes up on our feet."

Marlin said, "What about that pretty dress?"

I said, "What about it? I want to get married feeling the water wash over my bare feet."

Marlin does not hesitate a moment, but turns to the people behindus andsays, "Listenupeverybody, takeoffyour shoes, we are going to get married in the surf and you all might very well get your feet wet."

Captain Glover takes a deep breath in surprise, looks over at Marlin's father, Montgomery, as if to say, "You didn't tell me anything about this." Montgomery justs shruggs his shoulders and bends down to pull off his boots.

Captain Glover says, "Oh what the hell," then bends down to take off his boots as well.

We all walk out to the beach and everyone waits to see just how far I am going before I stop. I step out just enough that the surf covers Marlin's and my feet about half the time. The others stand just a little ways back so they will not get too wet.

Captain Glover steps out into the surf with us accompanied by Montgomery, then opens the Bible again but before he has a chance to start I beckon him to remove the tobacco from his mouth. He thinks I am pointing to something lying on his beard and wipes it with his coat sleeve.

I say, "No, spit it out, spit it all out!"

Captain Glover turns to Montgomery once again. Montgomery just raises his palms up as if to say, "Why not." Captain Glover pulls a handkerchief from his pocket and wipes his mouth clear of the tobacco. He looks at me with raised eyebrows and says, "Now?" I smile and say, "Now."

"Ladies and Gentlemen, we are gathered here today to bring this couple together in the Holy Union of Matrimony..."

After a minute my mind begins to wonder. "Is this really happening? Am I getting married?" About that time I look out over the ocean to see dolphins bobbing in and out the water. The sky is a beautiful deep blue, painted with drifting clouds. The ocean is pounding on the beach and our feet are sinking in the sand.

After what seemed an eternity of Captain Glover just rambling on, he turns to Marlin and asks, "Do you Marlin, take Rebecca to be your wife?"

I look up at Marlin just as a row of pelicans fly not far overhead. Marlin looks at me, smiles and says, "I do."

The Captain turns to me and asks, "Rebecca, do you take Marlin to be your husband?"

Just as I am about to speak, a seagull starts a long laughing chant. I pause for a moment to say, "Oh, what does he know. Yes I will."

Captain Glover laughs and says, "Everyone, I want to present to you Marlin and Rebecca Winston."

We turn around to the people and Captain Glover says, "Come on, kiss the bride Marlin." He did, and as with every kiss we ever had, I was taken away. Captain Glover shakes Marlin a little on the shoulder and speaks out, "Hold on here young lad, leave some for the rest of us."

We walk up on the sand dune as an elderly gentleman with a long white beard steps up and pulls out a long piece of paper and begins to read. He reads, "The land we are standing on here today was the property of The Bridge and Ferry Company. Montgomery Winston hereby purchases this land today from the Northeastern ditch," and points out a man standing next to the ditch and waives his hand in the air, "to the Southeastern ditch," and points

out to a man standing there with his hand in the air, "and extends one thousand feet to the west, is hereby declaired, and decreed by the Bridge and Ferry Company this day, and hence forth, is, and shall be deeded to, and is the property of Mr. and Mrs. Marlin Winston."

For a moment I remember thinking curiously to myself, "Who are they?" Then remembered, "Oh! that's us!" I turn to Marlin and hold him in my arms as I start jumping up and down. "Marlin, that's us! That's us!" My eyes began to tear up, "Can we Marlin, can we really live here?" I ask.

Marlin and his Dad say the same thing at the same time, "Yes, we're having a house raising..." They look at each other and laugh, then Marlin continues, "Yes, we're going to build you a home right here where we stand, starting next Sunday!" I look at Marlin, then turn my head to see Montgomery, as I do my head keeps spinning and for the first time in my life, I faint.

I remember waking up to the taste of some god awful water and try to spit the taste out.

Someone helps me stand as I hear some lady's rough demanding voice say, "Don't give her vodka, you fool!"

I never ever want to taste whatever that stuff was again. Then someone hollers out, "She's okay." An old man steps out of the crowd and pulls a fiddle up to his chin and begins to stomp his leg up high as he begins to play. Everyone runs back down the

dune and onto the beach in their bare feet. I am still a bit slow and still am not sure which end is up. Marlin stands with me a moment and holds me in his arms.

Just then I noticed this tall thin gentleman with stubble on his face as he asks Momma to dance.

I ask Montgomery, "Who is that fellow?" he says, "That's Jacob Owens, he has a boat of his own. He brings in a good catch almost every time, but nobody has ever seen him spend any of his money. He's a good man, I think your mother will be safe with him."

Before too long, it looks like Jacob Owens is smitten with Momma.

Almost everyone has a song they want to sing. There is this song that you can make up your own words. The point of the song is to pick somebody out of the crowd that you know and sing a little diddy about them. Sometimes it is funny and sometimes it is a cruel truth, but everyone laughs and dances along anyway.

Even Jacob had a little song he wanted to sing to Momma. It went something like this. "There once was a tiny lady who was the mudder of du bride, she met this lanky feller, and his heart went pudder pudder." He pauses for a moment then adds, "I think me days of fishin' are over now." Everyone went "Ye Ha!" and slapped their hands together. I could tell Momma was a bit embarrassed.

Song after song seems to go on forever into the afternoon. Everyone is drinking and spilling drinks on the beach as they fling their arms out in dance.

Later Montgomery took Marlin and me back to the Mainland together in private. I was grateful for that because I was exhausted. Marlin and I took the carriage to his father's home while Montgomery went back to pick up the others.

I felt as if Marlin came from a well to do family because he lived in a four room home with wood floors and an upstairs. There was a barn with a cow. Montgomery Winston lived near a wooded area and there was lots of privacy around the house. All my life I lived in a one room cabin with a dirt floor next to three other cabins all just alike. Marlin, like I, was an only child. His mother died of consumption a few years earlier. I never knew my father. My mother said he died before I was born, but others told me a different story. To me, it didn't matter one way or the other.

For three days Marlin and I had the entire Winston house to ourselves. Montgomery would have had an attack if he knew what we did in that house those three days. These first days set the pattern we continued the rest of our lives together on the shores of Kitty Hawk. Marlin seemed obsessed about kissing me and I was equally, quite willing. We kissed and held each other for hours at a time.

At first I could not believe that this intense passion could survive the years, but it did. Year after year, decade after decade, whenever Marlin returned home we kissed for several minutes, or so it seemed, before we sat down for dinner. He was a part of me, and I became a part of him. When we kissed our souls, yes, the very essence of our existence, seemed to merge as one. Sometimes, even though my eyes were closed, I wondered if a powerful beam of light poured upwards from us to the heavens when we kissed.

House raising July 26, 1896



Chapter 4

House Raising

Diary entry: July 26, 1896

The house raising that was planned to take place the following Sunday had to be postponed because of stormy weather. Montgomery told Marlin it was not possible to move people, much less lumber to the building site. So the house raising was scheduled for the following Sunday. During this extra time, Montgomery and Marlin dug out the holes and cemented in the bricks pilings for the for the house. Montgomery purchased and delivered lumber to the site and rescheduled the volunteers to help with the house raising.

The following Sunday, June 21, 1896, turned out to be a beautiful day. Momma was there and cooked biscuits with gravy and lots of chicken for the workers. Jacob was there and it seem as if the romance between the two was still going on.

Several of the volunteers hollered out, "More biscuits are ready for you Jacob."

I don't think Jacob minded the kidding. Several times I looked up to see Jacob nibbling on a biscuit while looking sideways with a big grin on his face at Momma when Momma wasn't looking.

By now I could tell Momma was smitten with Jacob. I knew my Momma and could tell that she was playing a game with him. She pretended not to notice Jacob and go along about her business, but then she looked around to make sure he was still looking. It was beginning to look like the beaches of Kitty Hawk held magic for more than just Marlin and me.

Remarkably, the entire exterior of the house was built from Sunday morning at 7AM til dark at just past 7PM. It was a beautiful three room house, that included a kitchen with a wood stove, a bedroom and a living room. The whole house had cedarwood floors. Just after they pegged the floor down I walked barefoot just to feel the floor beneath my feet.

The roof and siding were covered with juniper and almost all of the beams of the house were made of juniper wood.

Montgomery said, "This wood will withstand the hard weathering from the salty air better than any other wood. You see those ships out there honey, they are all made of juniper. All other wood isn't worth spit around here."

Most of the volunteers were seamen and they were building the house like they would build a boat.

Jacob said, "We use very few nails around here because salt will rust them away in just a few years. Almost all joints in this house are tung and groove or pegged. This house is meant to stand through the strongest of hurricanes."

The volunteers said, "We're going to make it safe for you, the winds around here can be blistering at times."

They were building our castle and it was very much a part of Marlin and me almost immediately. We loved it and spent our first night there even though there was no bed to lie on.

The next day Montgomery help us move in a bed and table and hooked up a wood stove for cooking and heating. There was plenty of spare wood pieces to burn lying around. Montgomery carried in bacon and grits. I fixed bacon, biscuits and grits for our first meal for the two of us and Montgomery at our new home. Since we had no well yet, Marlin carried in a five gallon can of fresh water. I wanted to use a special secret Momma taught me about how to make tea in the woods. The plant I needed was no where to be found, so I used seaweed. Marlin and Montgomery thought it tasted just like tea. So I didn't tell them any different.

Eventually I was cooking all kinds of little critters and plants that washed up on the beach. If I didn't like the taste of it, the seagulls were always happy to clean up my experiments. Marlin never complained about my cooking but I did have another special secret about my cooking. In the evening I sat on Marlin's lap and if I heard his stomach rumbling loudly, I would not fix the same thing again.

I was often amused when Marlin said, "You still have food left over in the cabinet after all this time. You sure know how to make it last."

We learned early on not to build anything too close to the ocean. One day after a storm the johnny house was blown 100 yards away and the hole was filled up with sand. The next time, Marlin put the johnny house on the other side of the house. After a storm the johnny house was turned over and filled with wet sand. The next time Marlin tied the johnny house down with rope tied to stakes buried deep in the sand. After a storm the johnny house was standing, but the hole was covered in.

Marlin discussed the problem with his Dad and in April 1897, Marlin and Montgomery were building a new addition to the house.

The addition included a new larger living space we called the den. The best features in the den were the large windows that faced the ocean. The living room was cut into two smaller rooms. One was used as a spare bedroom and the other side was used as an indoor restroom.

Most of our living in the house thereafter took place in the new den which overlooked onto the ocean. And, Marlin and I never had to wonder where the restroom was after a storm.

In that house I truly became a free spirit. The power of the pounding ocean together with the embrace of Marlin energized my soul. I was always raised as a Christian girl and was taught to pray every day to God. I felt closer to God in the presence of the ocean. I could feel His power and God's presence even closer when I was lying next to Marlin. There was something very sacred about the energy that surrounded us when we were together.

Chapter 5

Hurricane

Diary entry: October 1, 1898

In the Fall of our second year, 1898, a large storm approached from the south. After it was all over the news said it was a hurricane but we only knew it was a fearful storm. Marlin and I just huddled together in the house to ride it out. The winds were strong and the waves were frightful, but the house was built to withstand the storm.

That night while the winds were howling outside the window, and the house was rocking against a mighty wind, I had the most incredible dream. I was standing on the outside of a solid board fence. In this fence was a knothole. I walked over and looked into the knothole and on the other side I saw several people walking around. Several of the people were people I knew as a child.

I saw Mr. And Mrs. Davidson. Mrs. Davidson was an old lady who lived in one of the other cabins near my childhood cabin. As a child I visited her often. She always had a piece of hard candy for me. I remember when she handed me the candy her hands would shake back and forth so hard I had to hold her hand to grab the piece of candy. Mrs. Davidson did not speak very much. When she tried her head and chin would shake so hard I

could hardly understand a word she was trying to say. But she had such a wonderful smile.

Mr. Davidson raised chickens and I'd often find him setting in a chair outside his home under a tree when I walked by. Mr. Davidson carried a cane and he'd take his cane and reach out to me and hook me around the neck to pull me closer to him. I was always comfortable standing next to him while he just sat in his chair enjoying the weather with his arm around me.

Another person in the dream was Mrs. McRoy. Mrs. McRoy lived in the sharecropper's houses next to momma and me with her son and grandchildren. Mrs. McRoy had to spend all her time in a wheelchair and I visited her because it made her smile to see me. But in the dream, Mrs. McRoy was walking around with the others. Then I realized that all these people I saw behind this tall wooden fence were people I knew had died. Then I saw Momma walking around with them and all the others walked toward her to greet her. I remembered the dream when I awakened but didn't make much of it at the time.

Even after the storm passed, the seas were rough for days and it was not possible to navigate through the waters. After the winds passed and serenity once more filled the island and the birds filled the sky, Marlin and I walked up the beach to see what might have been washed up by the storm.

About eight hundred feet south of the house the storm cut into the island and opened up an inlet about one hundred feet across.

Inside the opening was an oval pond about five hundred feet by three hundred feet. Inside the pond the water was calm and clear. Marlin and I swam it to see how deep it was. Marlin said the opening could be wide and deep enough to bring Dolphin Watch through into the inlet where it could be kept safe enough to anchor her even during foul weather.

It was like a new toy and we did nothing else but play around in it for two days. Several sailors came by to see it but respectfully kept their distance because they knew both of us were swimming bare naked.

Late that second evening Jacob came calling on us at the house. He wanted to see us earlier but was on the mainland and could not cross the sound until earlier that day because of the high waves.

Jacob came in and sat down with us at the kitchen table. I poured him a cup of hot tea and sat down with Marlin at the table. Jacob was drawn and tired with a two days growth of beard. He sipped on the tea and wiped his face with his hand. He looked up at me with glassy eyes, then down at the cup of tea.

"Jacob," I said, "is everything alright?"

"Rebecca," he said, "I got worried about your Momma, Dora I mean, being out in that storm. I've seen enough of these storms to know that this one was going to be a whopper. So I made my way to your Momma's house on the Johnson Farm."

"Was she alright?" I asked. I was a little worried because he look mighty tired.

"Oh yes," he said, "She was huddled in with all the others from the four cabins, all together in one cabin. You know those cabins are only as big as a hen house, and when I got there the dang place was too crowded for all of us. So Dora and I and the two sisters from the next cabin crawled into your Momma's cabin together."

"When was this?" Marlin asked.

Jacob replied, "Oh it was before the hurricane hit but the wind was kicking up quite a fuss and the rain felt like sand when it hit my face."

Jacob hesitated for a moment.

I said, "Go on."

Jacob took a deep breath and said, "The fire had gone out in that cabin so I went out to gather up some wood to start a fire. Everything was wet so I went to the other cabin to get a hunk of cinders to start a fire. And dad blast it, when I got back your Momma was gone. The sisters said she went out to get more firewood. Well, if that don't beat all, I went back out and looked one way then ran down that way. I didn't know which way she had gone. I went back to the cabin and there was your Momma was unloading an armful of sticks."

"I said, 'Dora, I was worried about you woman, don't go out there again without me.' You know she is so tiny a gust of wind could blow her away and we'd never find her again."

Jacob started to tear up which made me awfully concerned. "Jacob, what happened to Momma?" I asked.

Jacob held his hands in front of him and weaved his fingers together and said, "I slept on one side of the cabin and Dora and the two sisters stayed together on the other. Well I stayed up most of the night keeping the fire fed with a long log I found, and the wood was wet."

He paused a moment and ran his hands through his hair and said, "The next morning the wind was as strong as ever but the rain had stopped. I was so tired I fell asleep. When I opened my eyes I looked over and your Momma was gone again. That cantankuous woman was at it again. I thought I have to nail her down to keep her in one place.

I swung open the door and leaned forward against the wind to find her. Then off to the side I saw her picking up fresh sticks that had fallen off the trees during the night. Sticks, leaves and pine tags were all over the place. Dora's dress and cape were flying in the wind and pulling her off to one side as she was trying to make her way back to the cabin. I started to walk toward her to help her walk to the cabin when the wind took my cap. I took my eyes off Dora just long enough to watch that hat fly away, when I heard a large crack. I looked

up to see an old dead limb fall directly on top of your Momma. I couldn't believe what I was seeing, this could not be what it looks like."

Jacob stopped for a moment and stared at the floor.

"Jacob?" I said.

Jacob could no longer control his emotions and his voice began to crack. With tears in his eyes he could hardly continue.

He said "I yelled, 'Dora!' and ran to her. I picked that old limb up and tossed it to the side. I bent down and said, 'Dora, Dora, can you hear me, open your eyes.' She could only move her lips a little so I scooped her up and carried her back the cabin. A gust of wind caught me and I nearly fell with your Momma in my arms. I had to walk sideways against the wind to get back to the cabin."

Jacob hesitated again.

I asked, "Jacob, Jacob, look at me Jacob."

He looked up and I asked, "Where is Momma?"

Jacob looked at me and said with tears in his eyes, "She's dead Rebecca, she died in my arms."

Marlin asked, "What did you do?"

Jacob said, "When I got back to the cabin the sisters help me set her down on a comfortable place. The back of her head was cut she was bleeding real bad. One sister covered the cut with her dress and we sat down beside her to comfort her. But your Momma never said a word. Twenty minutes later she stopped breathing and we could not hear her heart beat."

All three of us remained silent for several moments. It was one of those 'I cannot believe what I'm hearing', kind of things. Jacob stood up and walked over to the ocean window.

With his back to us as he stared out over the sea, Jacob said, "I got her the best coffin they make, and I want to bury her in my family plot so when my time comes, I can be next to her."

Jacob turned around and with tears running down his cheeks, he said, "I knew I wanted to make her my wife. In my heart from the very first moment I saw her, I knew it."

I thought about the dream and the past two days swimming in the new inlet with Marlin and took it all in stride. I did not cry, because I knew Momma was in Heaven with others I have known and who have gone on before her. She was already gone when Marlin and I discovered the inlet. She was there with us frolicing and playing in the cool ocean water. Momma did not want me to grieve, she wanted me to live.

"Yes Jacob," I said, "Momma would have wanted nothing more than to be with you."

Later that day Marlin and I went back to the mainland with Jacob on his fishing boat.

The service was very touching for me especially when the preacher was finished. All was quiet when Jacob walked up to the casket with his cap in hand and tears rolling down his face and said, "Dora, I love you. Wait for me, will you honey. Will you please?"

Others walked up to him to console him, some walked up to me. I said, "She'll be all right." But I could hardly take my eyes off Jacob. He really did love Momma. He really loved her.

"Momma", I said, "it took a while, but you found him."

Momma always believed in soul mates. I remember her telling me,

"You will not finish this life without meeting your soul mate, it's destiny, it is written in the stars."

Chapter 6

Paradise

Diary Entry: April 16, 1899

All the Fall and Winter of 1898 -1899, Marlin was with his father piloting Dolphin Watch. Marlin's life consisted of going back and forth from the island to the mainland in a small boat. That spring, Montgomery gave Dolphin Watch to Marlin. Marlin tied Dolphin Watch to a small pier on the sound side about a mile from our house. Nearly every morning, weather permitting, he ferried tourists back and forth from the island. Later that following fall, Marlin built a small pier in the new inlet and started to dock Dolphin Watch there. During the late fall and winter, he delivered cargo or cast out nets to catch fish then carry them to the Mainland for sale.

In the Spring and Summer, I raised watermelons, cantaloupes, corn and squash in a garden next to our house. Marlin purchased a mule to help with outside work. I named the mule Sarah. Sarah also gave us transportation on the island. He also purchased a cow to provide us with plenty of milk. I named her Nitzy.

Nestled inside of me was always a free spirit. I deeply loved the beach and salty breezes. The only other eyes near our home were the men that stayed in the rescue station about a mile south of

our home. I enjoyed almost the entire year of weather. The cold days of January and February only made me love the rest of the year that much more. Marlin knew the men in the Rescue Station and they all respected Marlin very much. I felt safe knowing they were there but never did they visit the house unless they saw the Dolphin Watch docked in the inlet.

I discovered that birds and other small wild animals and fish are not frightened away by my presence when I wore my natural skin. When I walk down the beach natural, birds let me walk right up near them without disturbing their rest. When I wore a dress, they stood up and walk away when I was only twenty or thirty feet away. I worked in the garden, milked the cow, swam in the ocean and rode the mule on the beach all in nature's own. I never wore clothes unless I had to. In the house I wear an apron when cooking and I kept a dress hanging on the bedroom door to wear when gentlemen came to visit Marlin and me. Last Winter, I misplaced my shoes and went an entire Winter, warm as it was, without shoes before I found them under the sand outside the door. I could not have asked God for a better life. I loved every sunrise.

Often while Marlin was away, I spend entire days drifting around in the inlet. There are fish of every shape and description in that inlet, and most days the water was as clear as the air. Imagining that I was one of the fishes, I'll drift near them. Sometimes they would swim away, but sometimes the big ones let me touch them and even let me hold them in my hand briefly above the water. Even after I let go, they swam nearby as if to say, "Can you do that again?"

Diary entry: May 19, 1899

Late spring, 1899, I was sitting next to a turtle singing lullabies while she was laying her eggs when I heard a splash behind me in the inlet. I sat up carefully because I thought I was alone and peered through the brush. There, in the middle of the inlet was a young dolphin, only a month or two old, swimming in circles, lost, and couldn't find his way out. I slipped in slowly and began to swim under the water with him.

The water was clear as crystal and only about ten feet deep in the middle. Immediately when he saw me I could feel his fear. He turned abruptly and tried to swim out, nearly beaching himself. He swam quickly back and forth clicking and whining.

I could only imagine what I must look like to him, a body with four arms outstretched with the hair on my head flowing in all different directions. I must look like some kind of monster to him. He calmed down a little and started to swim back and forth watching me with one eye, then the other.

I thought I could corral him between me and the inlet opening, but every time I tried to encourage him to move to the opening, he'd dart around behind me to the other side of the inlet. All my efforts were simply making him more frightened.

I began to swim quietly in the middle of the inlet and began to concentrate on a mental image. The sunlight was behind me so I was imagining that I was an angel coming to carry him to safety. I was imagining him swimming up closer and into my

arms. I imagined all this from his point of view. Seeing me and swimming closer and feeling my soft arms around his body. I only broke concentration long enough to surface for air every few moments. As I gazed at him, I was imagining that my moving arms were beckoning him to come closer.

After several minutes his ticking stopped and after a few whines he swam to the left then to the right, then right up to my arms. As he came closer he was speeding up and at the last second he turned, but I looped my arms around him and held him between my arm and body. He was still trying to swim through but his dorsal fin kept him from pulling away. He was pulling me backwards and deeper in the water. I could barely hold on. I was nearly out of breath and had to surface for air. Just then we both surfaced and gasped for air before going back under. I was thinking to myself, "What on earth am I doing, he wants me to let go."

Just then he turned and my feet touched the sandy bottom and my head popped above the water. He pulled me under the water again, but I planted my feet against the sandy bottom and held him while he flapped furiously in the water, trying to pull away from my arms. He eventually quieted, and I held him calmly in my arms for a few seconds, then walked slowly along the sandy bottom.

I held him just above the surface so he could breath. I walked slowly with him and hummed in a high pitch to calm him. He calmed down for a few seconds then he struggled hard to pull

away. After a minute or two he calmed down but continued to try to swim with his tail flapping behind me until we reached the inlet opening. I thought if I released him too early he would swim back, so I didn't let go until we were a little ways past the breakers.

I let go and he disappeared in the mist of the water. As I turned around, the turtle I was with earlier was just making her way into the water. So I just stood quietly in the water about shoulder deep. She swam only inches away from me as her huge barnacle incrustated shell sank beneath the surface and her wide paddling feet pushed a strong current against my stomach. I walked up on shore and marked the place in the sand where she had laid her eggs. I wanted to make sure I didn't inadvertently step on them while riding Sarah.

Diary entry: July 29, 1899

There are several wild ponies on the island but you rarely see them because they kept very much to themselves. The most evidence you could find was a pile of manure every now and then. It was a late fall morning in 1899, I looked out the window to see Sarah and a wild pony standing face to face sharing each other's steamy breath. At first, when I opened the door, the pony just scooted off into the brush. After some time he just stood alert to see who might that be opening the door. After a week or so, he just walked around to keep Sarah between me and him.

I began to call him Bill, thinking eventually he would be friendly enough for me to pet. I didn't mind so much that Bill hung around, but Sarah let him share her oats. We only had enough oats for one mule and one cow so I started to feed Sarah close to the house. Soon Bill became aggressive when he saw me with a bucket of oats. He'd run right up to me and try to make me spill the oats, then turn his butt around and threatened to kick me.

Well, I wasn't about to take that. We kept a riding crop hanging on the wall in the den but never used it. One morning I walked out with the riding crop inside the bucket. Bill ran up and twisted his butt around to me and I pulled that crop out and laid it hard across his rump. His tail tucked in and he ran off a few feet and turned around to look at me in amazement. Little did he know that I was a big bumble bee and I had just stung him good. Never did he try that trick again.

In fact, a few days later after I started feeding Sarah in a bucket next to the house, he gave up. The only times I saw him again was at a distance with several other ponies by his side.

Diary entry: September 9, 1899

Early that third autumn on the beach, after three days of stormy weather, I had the most wonderful experience. Marlin was staying at home because the waters were still rough from the storm. Outside of the window I saw a butterfly pass by, then

another, then another. The wind was still brisk and it was difficult for them to fly. I walked outside and there were dozens of orange butterflies settled on the bushes next to the house, in the air dozens were fluttering.

The next morning I looked out of the window and there were hundreds, thousands of orange butterflies. I dropped what I was doing and walked outside. Butterflies were on the grass, hanging onto the side of the house and covering small trees like leaves. In just a few minutes I had butterflies in my hair and on my shoulder.

I stood there still for several more minutes and my body was covered from head to toe with butterflies.

I walked slowly over to the window and tapped on it to get Marlin's attention. He walked up to the window and I could see disbelief in his eyes. He walked over to the door and stepped out on the porch.

"What in sam hill do you think you are doing?" he asked.

I said, "I'm playing with the butterflies, want some?"

Marlin just stood there and looked around at the thousands of butterflies all over the place. Marlin stepped out of the house naked as I was and within moments butterflies were clinging to him. In a minute or so we both stood there covered with hundreds of butterflies.

"You're a lunatic you know that? You're nothing but a dad blamed lunatic" he said.

"What do you mean?" I laughingly asked.

He blew air out of his mouth to keep a butterfly from landing there and said, "Here I am, a respected seaman standing naked in the sand covered with butterflies. I only hope no one is around to see this."

I laughed and said, "Which one of us is the lunatic?"

He smiled and said, "I guess I am, I'm a lunatic for marrying you."



I walked up to him and said, "Lets teach these butterflies about the birds and the bees."

We shook like a dog to shake the butterflies off then held each other in an embrace before they could return again. We fell to our knees and Marlin took a handful of sand and tossed it on the ground to clear the butterflies.

I reached to the sky and loved Marlin, the sea, the sand, the wind, and the flickering butterflies.

Chapter 7

Dolphin Watch

Diary Entry: July 3, 1900

I especially enjoyed the late Spring and early Summer of 1900, that Marlin and I shared together. Marlin began to have trouble with the Dolphin Watch engine and it took weeks to get the boat back into the water. Marlin removed the paddlewheel and harnessed Sarah to the front of the boat. I stood next to the boat on the pier in the inlet and watch as Sarah pulled the boat up a few feet on shore. For weeks Marlin scraped his knuckles and cussed that old engine. On deck, Marlin had several buckets of paint in three colors, white, gray and red. While Marlin dropped tools or threw them overboard in frustration, I began to experiment with those buckets of paint.

"Don't mix that stuff up, he said, "I want the top white, the bottom gray and use the red to paint a dividing line between the two."

"Who's painting this boat, you or me?" I protested.

"Don't mess it up, that's all the paint we got," he said.

Sometimes I just loved to give him a hard time. I said,

"How can I mess it up, you want it on the boat don't you?"

We had an agreement early on in our marriage. It was "You don't control me and I don't control you." It worked very well and sometimes Marlin had to step back and let me have my way. Marlin realized I was painting the boat and it was going to be painted my way. Marlin just pressed his lips together and hoped for the best.

I painted a portion of the cabin white. Marlin was happy with that. I painted for a while not caring that I got paint all over my body and in my hair. Every few minutes I took a short swim to get the paint off. After a while I was tired of just the white paint, so I opened the gray and red cans.

I began to envision the surface of our marble top dresser that stood by our bed. I thought that dresser top was the most beautiful thing so I started to experiment with the paint. I started to brush strokes of gray over the white and tiny lines of red over the gray.

Marlin looked up from his work with the engine and said, "No honey, don't paint pictures on my boat... your boat... um, our boat."

I turned around and said, "I'm just trying something different, if it doesn't look right I'll paint over it."

Marlin was frustrated with his work on the engine and he just

hung his head and said, "Nothing's going right today, I should just quit!"

I sat up and walked over to Marlin. With my hands on my hips I gave him that special look and said, "It's quittin' time."

That night I looked closely at the dresser marble top. "Marlin," I asked, "Can you carry this top to the boat tomorrow?"

He said, "That's heavy and it might break, you're still not ...?"

I looked at him with my head tilted to one side. "All right," he said as he turned over and pulled the covers over him.

I crawled into bed and started to tickle him to get him out of his bad mood. "Go to sleep," he said, "I want to get up early and lug that big piece of marble to the boat."

I just laid there with a satisfied look on my face.

That marble top was heavy and the next morning Marlin struggled with it all the way down the beach. When he got to the boat he clunked it up on the side and lowered it into the boat.

"Don't get carried away today," he said, "Just do a small area, then you won't have to paint so much to cover it up."

It was early in the morning and I didn't want to argue. I

wasn't even sure I could make it look right. I tried one area then moved to the next. When that didn't look right I moved to another area.

"You're just making a mess, honey," Marlin said.

I looked up and said, "Give me time, I'm painting the boat aren't I?"

After an hour or two trying different things, using feathers and a sponge I found on the beach and sometimes using small piece of canvas I got it to look right. I did larger and larger areas.

Marlin walked up behind me and bent down to look closer. "It looks like marble," he said, as he reached out to touch it.

I pushed his hand away and said, "Its wet don't touch it."

Marlin said, "Yes Ma'am." and stood up and walked away. I was proud at the way it was turning out.

On one occasion, I forgot that the men in the rescue station knew the Dolphin Watch was in the inlet. I stood up and saw two men from the rescue station walking around the dune into the inlet. I completely forgot my dress that day and my only thought was to scamper off into the brush.

They came up to the boat and talked with Marlin for a while. I could only hear mumbling but clearly heard Marlin tell them to

ring their bell before walking up. Although I never ask Marlin about it, I think they saw me that day. From that day on, the men at the rescue station said the inlet was "Rebecca's Inlet". Even though it was not our property, I think it meant that they should have respect when they approach it. We never saw another sailor from the rescue station without first hearing a hand bell ring.

While I was painting on the bottom side of the boat I heard a "Damn" and a clunk on the bottom of the boat. I looked up to see Marlin stand up all sweaty and covered with oil. The wrench slipped and he had just banged his hand against the engine. Marlin threw down the wrench in the sand and cursed to God. I climbed up and pulled the buttons off his shirt and crawled up on him to kiss. He lost his balance and we both fell off the back of the boat into the shallows. He was not hurt and we both started laughing. We started to kiss which put an end to that day of labor.

Eventually I made the whole Dolphin Watch look like the top of that marble top dresser. I thought it was beautiful, Marlin did too but kept the compliments to himself. He said he was happy just to have the boat covered in paint.

Then I got very bold and drew out in big letters the words "Dolphin Watch" on the side of the boat with charcoal. Before, the name only appeared on the awning.

Marlin said, "You did a pretty job with the paint, don't mark

it up with words, only an expert can make lettering look right on the side of a boat."

I just looked at him and said, "Go away." I was afraid at first, thinking I could mess up everything if the letters weren't perfect. But I put up such a bold front to Marlin, I had to try.

After I thought I had the letters right I opened the red paint and began to trace the charcoal letters with paint.

Marlin protested, "Don't use red, it'll scare the fish away." But I kept right on painting.

After I finished it I used gray to shadow the letters. It really look great. I was proud of how it looked, and Marlin did not have another ill word to say.

A few days later, Marlin connected the paddlewheel and started the engine. We went out to sea to show the dolphins their beautiful new boat. I remember sitting on the bow of the boat leaning back on my hands and breathing in the warm air as water splashed over my body. That summer I became connected with Dolphin Watch. For the first time I felt that Dolphin Watch was truly "ours".

Chapter 8

Flying

Diary Entry: December 23, 1900

September 1900, Marlin ferried a young gentleman across the sound and helped him set up camp on a flat area about one mile west of our home. A week later, Marlin farried his brother across with a large glider packed in two small crates. From our front porch, for hours at a time, I could see the glider floating over the tall grassses and shrubs. Day after day these two fellows spent most of their time flying that glider like a kite against the constant Kitty Hawk northeast winds.

One afternoon that October, Marlin came home and just before he entered yelled out,
"Rebecca, we have company."

I quickly stepped into the bedroom and slipped on my dress when Marlin asked, "Do you have anything for mosquito bites?"

As I step into the room I look up and there are these two sunburned-faced fellows dressed in black suits, white shirts and black derby hats, barefoot with their trousers rolled up to their knees. I knew without a doubt, these fellows are not from

around here! Both were covered with red puffy mosquito bites over satiny white skin.

"Lord have mercy," I said, "what have you two been doing, dancing in a swamp?"

One raised his head and said, "No Ma'am, mosquitos are carrying us away as we try to sleep.

Huge ones, buzzing all night. We cover our heads and our feet get bitten, if we cover our feet our faces get bitten. We've had the most miserable two nights. The Captain here said maybe you could help. Can you?"

Marlin took off his hat and pointed to one, "Rebecca, this is Orv Wright and this is his brother, Will. These are the two that are flying the glider I carried over a few days ago."

Orv reaches out, "Its a pleasure to meet you Ma'am." Orv holds my hand and leans over slightly. Will is standing on one foot and scratching his other as he realized it wasn't polite to shake my hand at that particular moment. He just shook his head down once and said "Ma'am, forgive me, but I am about to go out of my mind with all these bites."

I asked, "Have you tried to stand out in the ocean water?"

Will looks up while scratching his knee, "No."

"Well, lets try that first. Come on outside and follow me." I began to accompany both of them out the door to the beach.

As Orv passes Marlin at the door, Marlin comments with a straight face, "Watch out for the sharks." Orv turns around in surprise.

Will pushes Orv on the shoulder out the door and says to Marlin, "Take pity on us Captain, we've had no sleep for two days."

I stopped and turned to Orv and whispered, "You kust have to watch out for the buzzards." as I pointed my thumb toward Marlin.

I turn and walk out to the beach as Orv and Will follow. I look back around to see a big grin rise up on Orv's face. "That's pretty good," he said. Orv turned to Will and said, "She's pretty good."

"Come on," I urged, "stand in the water." I hold my dress up and walk out into the low surf. Orv follows, but Will stands back to just let his white feet get covered with the washing surf.

"Come on," I said, "You're as bad as some of these womenfolk that see the water for the first time."

I could see I hit a nerve and Will raises his chin and walks out into the water. "I don't know why, but for some reason the cool water will take away the itching," I said, "Just stand out here for a few minutes and you will feel the difference almost immediately."

"You're a saint, little lady," Orv smiled, "I think it feels better already."

"Where are you two staying?" I questioned.

"Over on the flats." Will answered.

"Well that's your problem," I said, "there are a lot of water pools over there from all the rain we've had recently. You should go a little futher south where the sand rises into hills. It's drier over there."

Orv turned to Will and said, "You camped up out next to a mosquito pond?"

Will said, "There were no mosquitos when I set up the tent. It didn't rain hard until after the tent went up."

Will turnes to me and asks, "How long are these pugnacious creatures going to be out?"

"Pugnacious?" I asked.

Orv interceded, "How long will we be be eaten live?"

I turn around and start walking back toward the house. The brothers follow waiting for an answer. I could hear them fussing at each other in low whispers. I reached for the porch railing, turned around and asked, "How long are you going to be here?" Neither answered, they just looked at each other and moaned a sign.

Marlin chuckled, "The mosquitos will be hungry for several days yet. They've found two good drinking holes camped out there and will be calling on their friends."

I roll my eyes and turn around to walk back into the porch where I had several pots of aloe plants. I hand one to Will and said, "Break off a leaf and wipe the gel over the mosquito bites. That will help a bit."

Marlin added, "Why don't you try to get a smokey fire started and sleep near the fire. The smoke should keep most of those pesky fellows away."

I grinned, wiped the sand off my feet and stepped inside. Orv raises his finger and opens his mouth to say something, but I disappeared inside and left Marlin to finish dealing with those two odd fellows.

Several days later when it was time for them to leave, Marlin went back to carry them across the sound. The glider was wrecked and broken into a dozen pieces. Marlin helped them bury it in the sand and it was left behind.

Diary entries: November 3, 1901

In 1901, they came back again with a larger glider, one large enough to ride. This time Marlin helped them set up camp on the sound side, next to the Kill Devil Hill sand dunes.

Marlin came home that night and sat own at the table while I finished preparing dinner.

"Rebecca," he said, "remember those two fellows that were here last year covered with mosquito bites?"

"Yeah," what ever happened to them?" I asked.

Marlin bit into an apple and said, "They're back again with a larger glider this year."

"A larger one," I wondered aloud, "what are they up to now?"

"They're riding in it in the air," Marlin said as he grinned and bit again into the apple. I looked at Marlin with some disbelief. "I saw them do it," Marlin added.

"What, ride it in the air? Who's holding the tether?" I asked.

"They don't need one. They lay down on it and ride it down the hill."

"Like a wagon?" I asked.

"Yeah, but it picks up off the ground and flies down the hill like a seagull coming in for a landing."

"And you saw this?" I asked with more disbelief.

"Yeah." Marlin said, "They put that thing together and I watched them carry it up the dune and ride it down again. They pushed and pulled like workhorses for five seconds of fun." Marlin stood up and walked over toward the ocean window and said, "I got tired just watching them work at having fun." Then he turned around to me and said with amazement, "But you know, sometimes they glide all the way down the hill and then some." Marlin turns around to look back out the window and said, "At that rate, one of these days they'll glide by our window and wave."

I was rather gullible and for several weeks thereafter, I'd look around to see if I could see them gliding down the beach with the pelicans.

One cold blustery day, Marlin came home from the sand dune with the two gentlemen again. I fixed bacon and beans with biscuits and they stayed for dinner.

The bare-headed fellow, Will, was a very serious kind of fellow, and always worried that his brother Orv would say something that might embarrass him. Orv was a jokester who told the longest stories that ended with a joke. He laughed

himself even if no one else understood the story. Both Will and Orv stood near the large ocean window with Marlin and seemed totally engrossed, fascinated even, by seagulls flying against the wind as they glided slowly by the window. They said things to Marlin and Marlin nodded his head and puffed his pipe as if he understood everything they were saying. I could tell Marlin was just being polite.

Later Marlin offered them cigars. They took them but I could tell that neither was use to puffing a cigar. They were sitting on the settee, smelling up the room with those stinky cigars talking about beating some Frenchman in the air when I said something that seemed to capture their attention.

I said, "I fly all the time, up and down the beach and around the outside of the house. I just jump up and believe I'm going to fly and I soar. I glide to the right and left just like the birds."

Marlin just smiles and watches the two for their reaction. Neither one say a word, they just sit there and stare sharply at one another then turn to me and wait for me to say more. Will points his finger to the side and rotates it like someone turning a reel.

I crawl up onto the small bed at the foot of the ocean window and sit up on my knees and gaze out at the moonlight reflecting off the water. "You can't live next to the ocean like this without falling in love with the water. Sometimes I spend hours a day in the ocean just floating up and down with the waves." I turn

around and laugh, "I feel weightless and free as a dolphin as I tumble around in the waves." I sat at the edge of the bed and kicked up my feet and said, "After an hour of feeling the waves heaving me up and slowly letting me down, I walk out of the water still feeling the movement." I turned back around to look out over the ocean and whispered, "Later as I lie back, sometimes asleep, and sometimes awake, I feel myself walking along the beach. I lean forward and lightly jump up and forward. I do not fall to the ground, but stay lifted about six feet above the sand.

I closed my eyes and thought about flying and raised my arms from my side. "I drift down the beach and as I lean and turn to the right, I raise my left arm and capture the wind in my hand, and lower my right hand like a rudder in the wind. When I turn to the left, I raise my right hand and lower my left. I fly up to the house and push my feet against the wall and fly faster away from the house." I turned back around and sat on the bed with my legs crossed and my toes in the air and exclaimed, "It's a wonderful feeling!"

Those two look at each other as if I had told them something they never thought of before. Orv asked, "You dear lovely lady, may I have just a small swatch of your dress?"

I give him a confused look, he hesitates for a moment and adds quickly, "For good luck I mean, for good luck you see?"

I laced my fingers together and raised my elbows and said, "When I swim and fly, I don't wear a dress."

They laugh and Orv says, "We've got to try that Will."

I smile and said, "Okay, I guess. My dress is a bit ragged. A few days ago it was cold outside and I wore it when I milked Nitzy. When I stood up Nitzy was standing on the corner of it and it tore a little." I reached down and pulled off the piece that was hanging and handed it to Orv.

Orv kissed the piece of cloth and looked at me, "This is just what we've been looking for, I know we cannot fail now."

I was flattered, but thought that the boys were just trying to be polite.

As they prepared to leave, Will asked Marlin, "My dear Captain, would you be so kind as to lend us your mule for our science experiments?"

Marlin scratched his chin and thought for a second, then closed one eye and looked up with the other and said, "Yeah mate, I think so, but I know for a fact that mule can't fly."

They all laughed as Marlin gave his permission to take the mule for a few days. I went out to get Sarah because she would only walk up to me. She turns her head and saunters away if anyone else approaches her. I hugged her around the neck and said, "Sarah, you'll be going away for a few days to help these two

gentlemen with their science experiments. They are nice fellows so be good to them." I looked her in the eye and whispered into her ear, "Don't fret none, you'll be home in a few days. I love you girl." I held her jaw next to my face. I put a halter over her head, tied a rope to it and lead her over to the house. As I handed Orv the lead rope, I said with all sincerity, "Take good care of her and she expects lots of hugs around her neck."

Orv thought I was just kidding and laughed. I exclaimed, "I mean it!"

Will reached over in front of Orv and took the rope and said, "I'll make sure he hugs her every day."

Marlin let out a little belly laugh.

They thanked me for dinner and the use of Sarah, tipped their hat and slowly walked away in the dusky moonlight. As they got a few yards out I saw them slap each other back and forth against the arm, laughing.

Diary entry: November 16, 1901

I truly believe Sarah and I can actually talk to each other. Not so much in words, but with pictures and feelings. I can stand near her and imagine her head leaning next to mine. Sarah would walk closer and lean her head next to my forehead. Sarah had such a big strong neck. Sometimes I

wrap not just my arms, but both my legs around her neck and just hang there. Some days I look at her through the window and know she is feeling sad. But when I step outside, she lift her head, her eyes lighten up, those big floppy ears lift as she walks over for her morning hug.

Several days after the visit from Will and Orv, I was fishing on the beach alone when I glanced down the beach and saw Sarah coming back on her own. I waited for her to come closer then began walking down the beach to greet her.

"Where is your halter girl? I guess you got tired of those two and decided to walk back home." I gave her a big hug then grabbed a hunk of her mane and pulled myself up. She seemed to say, "Where do you want to go?" All I had to do was think of the win blowing against my face and she started off with a gallop, splashing through the surf.

We splashed passed the house. After about a mile further north, Sarah slowed down and stopped, staring intently ahead. She had the sharpest eyesight. As I leaned forward, I saw tiny figures of people standing in the distance on the beach.

Since I was not wearing only my natural skin and Sarah didn't seem to want to go further, we turn, and Sarah walks out into the surf to head back. We went out just deep enough so Sarah could still touch he bottom. I'm above the water from my waist up and Sarah's head and neck bobs just above the waves. Sometimes a wave covers us high but Sarah doesn't mind. I can feel her body swell up with air and after a wave splashes overhead she blows

heard through her nostrils with a deep, loud sound. Between sand bars, I can feel her swimming beneath me.

Sarah's hooves found the edge of a sand bar and she climbs up higher and faster than I anticipate and I roll backwards over her rump into the water. Sarah simply turns around, walks out into the deeper water to allow me to climb back up.

When we got back to the house, all I had to do was dismount. I never had to tie her or lock her in the stall to keep her home.

Later that evening after dinner, I was curled up in Marlin's lap while he was reading a book. Suddenly we heard a knock on the door. This was startling to both of us because never did anyone ever come to the house after dark. I jumped up and ran to the bedroom to grab my dress while Marlin went to the door.

It was Orv, he wanted to know if Sarah had made it back. Apparently they had tied her to a stake and she pulled it up and wandered off.

Marlin laughed and said, "Orv, you forgot to hug her and Sarah wasn't about to stand around for two flighty men."

By that time I made it to the door, Marlin had already invited Orv in. Orv was very sorry about Sarah getting away. I said, "Where else would you expect her to go on this island

but home?"

Orv seem excited when he said, "Rebecca, it appears that your suggestion may work out marvelously well after all!"

Marlin said, "You found you can fly better without a dress?"

Orv laughed and said, "Yes, we tried that also, Captain, it was a tempest." Orv looked at me and said, "You know, the leaning thing and the hands."

Quite frankly, I really didn't know what he meant but smiled to accept his compliment.

Marlin and Orv started talking about the wind direction or something when I spoke up and said, "Sarah saw some people up the beach today."

Orv wrinkles his forehead and tilts his head to one side and asks, "What people?" Then he asks with concern, "How many were there?" Before I could think and answer he asks, "Did they have bags? Did you see a boat?"

"Yes," I said, "there was a boat, but we were too far to see anything. It looked to be about five or six people." I didn't know if he was expecting someone or whether he thought they were the enemy.

He seemed to be in a hurry to leave, but before he leaves, turns around, smiles and asks, "Rebecca, do you have any of

those biscuits left?" I had two left over from dinner and handed them to him.

Several days later, Marlin was summoned to take the two boys back across the sound. I am not really sure mind you, but I think it was because of those people Sarah and I saw on the beach.

Diary entry: November 30, 1902

The brothers returned this year, 1902, with an even larger glider. Marlin was carrying cargo at the time and someone else carried the two across to the island. One bright sunny day I decided to ride Sarah to the Kill Devil Hill dunes to visit the brothers again. While still on the beach I could see the glider wing fly off the dune. When I got closer I could see they were flying both the 01 and the larger 02 version of their flying wing. As I got closer, I could see a third person with them.

Orv saw me and ran up to me, took off his cap and wiped the perspiration off his brow with his sleeve. "Rebecca, what a wonderful surprise. This is Lorin, my little brother."

Will walks up and says, "Rebecca, welcome to our little paradise of sand and wind."

Orv slumped over his words in excitement, "I'm going up next, stand here and watch me fly."

The three took the 02 version up the hill and yelled out something to me as Will and Lor launched Orv off the dune. Orv flew the wing almost over top of Sarah and me. Sarah threw her head up and tried to pull away. She thought Orv was going to land that thing on her head. Orv landed about 200 foot away with a long slide on the smooth sand. Will took the next turn and tried to beat Orv's distance but the wind did not cooperate and Will landed before he reached the bottom of the dunes. I watched them fly several more times with both the 01 and the larger 02 wings.

Orv had a private conversation with Lor and Will then walks up quietly to me with his cap in hand and asks, "Rebecca, we are anxious to carry a passenger and you are small enough to fit next to us on the wing. There is a young boy that hangs around here sometimes, but we don't trust him. He could get scared in mid flight and pull away. He's the Postmaster's kid and we would never be welcomed on this island again if something happened to him."

"What! And nobody cares if something happens to me?" I asked.

"No, no, Rececca, you want to fly. All you have to do is hold on tight around my waist," Orv said.

"Are you sure it's all right?" I asked, "It's safe I mean?"

Orv said, "We've flown the wings over a thousand times and Will jammed his thumb once and we have a couple of scrapes

and bruises, but so far, we've been all right.

Will said, "Rebecca, there is danger involved, you could get hurt, but its loads of fun."

I looked at Orv and asked, "What do I do?"

Orv said with excitement, "You just lie on your stomach next to me and hold tight around my waist."

Will and Lor removed their belts and hooked them together. Lor slapped the two belts together and said, "You will not fall off unless you take Orv with you. I smiled with some reserved excitement and shook my head, "Yes."

Will and Lor took the 02 wing up the dune and Orv walked with me to the top. I must admit I was frightened and wasn't sure that I should be doing this, but I put my trust in the brother's confidence. At the top of the hill Orv laid down first on the wing and Will and Lor helped me onto the wing so I wouldn't tear the fabric.

Lor strapped Orv and me together as Will walked up to me. "Rebecca," he said, "you are going to be our first passenger, are you sure you want to do this?"

"What do you mean, first passenger, haven't you done this together before?" I asked.

Orv said, "No, there is too much weight with two grown

men, but we have flown with a bag of sand strapped on."

"This time I'm the bag of sand?" I asked.

All three nodded in unison. "Did any of the bags break?" I asked.

Orv said, "You'll be all right, trust me."

I hesitated for a moment, then quietly said, "Okay, lets do it."

Will picked up one end of the wing and Lor picked up the other end, then both ran forward a few steps and let go. We went down and my stomach stayed up, then Orv pulled back on the front control and we jerked up. My nose hit the wing and I couldn't lift my head. Then we went down again and I thought I was going to lift off the wing. I yelled out, "Hhooooo!" as we came down again and landed on the side of the dune.

Will and Lor ran down the hill and their shoes threw sand all over me as they tried to stop running. Will fell to his knees and asked, "Are you all right, Rebecca?"

I said, "Yeah, I'm okay," but I wasn't all that sure.

"Orv," Will said, "that was the worst flying I ever saw. What happened?"

Orv told Will the controls were stuck, but Will pulled on the controls and everything seemed to be working properly.

Will said, "Rebecca I'm sorry, you've got to try just one more time, we can't let our first passenger flight end like this. I'll fly it next time, I promise you will be fine. Rebecca? Rebecca, please?"

There have been many times I spoke before I thought, and this was one of those times. I said, "Okay, one more time."

Lor helped me roll off the wing and he and Orv took the 02 wing to the launch point on the crest of the dune. Orv pulled the belts tight between Will and me and Orv and Lor lifted the wing in the air and charged forward down the dune. I still lost my stomach at first but this time the flight was smooth.

I said, "We're flying, we're really flying, we're not touching the ground, we're up in the air. We're flying!" I meant to grab Will's shirt to shake him but I grabbed the hair on the back of his head and shook it before I knew what I was doing.

Will's cap blew off and he turned his head and looked at me with the biggest smile and said, "Yes Rebecca, we're flying."

Just seconds later we landed on the flats at the foot of the dunes with a long smooth glide on the sand. I was jittery and my heart was beating fast with excitement. I looked back to see Orv and Lor still running down the sand dune.

"We flew all the way from up there to down here!" Will unhooked the belts and I leaned back against the wing and

looked up at Will. Will was as excited as I was.

Will said with the most serious voice, "Everything we have accomplished here on the sands of Kitty Hawk has been worth it just to make that flight with you Rebecca."

Orv and Lor ran up out of breath, Orv said, "Well? Well?"

I said, "Will's a much better bird than you."

Orv started laughing, but was so out of breath from running that he started coughing and couldn't stop. A few minutes later Orv recovered and asked, "Okay Rebecca, you've got to give me one more chance to redeem myself."

I said, "I don't know, I don't think I should. Marlin doesn't even know where I am."

Orv said, "Come on Rebecca, one more time, please. You liked it didn't you?"

"Yeah."

"You flew like a bird didn't you?"

"Yeah."

"You love to fly don't you?"

"Yeah."

You'll fly with me one more time won't you?"

"Yeah."

Will and Lor grabbed the end of the wing and started walking toward the dunes.

"Wait a minute," I said, "I've been snookered."

Orv said, "Yeah, but you're still going right?"

I grinned, "Yeah."

At the top of the dune Lor tightly strapped the belts between Orv and me. Lor looked at me with a gleam in his eye and said, "You know, Rebecca, we are making history here today."

I said, "Lets get this buggy off the ground."

"I think she's ready!" Lor called out, then they took their positions at the end of the wing. Will and Lor held the wing in the air as a gust of wind blew up the dunes.

Orv said, "Wait, not yet, hold it, hold it, now, now, now!"

A huge gust of wind blew and caught the bottom of both wings and blew the glider up high in the air. I turned around to see Will and Lor standing just below the top of the dune and we were twenty feet higher. I looked up and forward and all I could see was sky. Orv yelled out a "Whoooooh, we caught a big one!" I remembered the first time with Orv and for a few seconds panic crossed my mind. "It's a long way down," I thought to myself.

Then I realized he was okay with the controls and wasn't fighting them like he did the first time. I looked down to

see clumps of grass whizzing under the wing. We were close to the ground but kept flying.

Orv yelled out another, "Hahooo! That's a record Rebecca, I think we broke a record!" Orv raised the nose up and landed her with a thug. I wasn't holding on like before and I fell forward against the wire in front of Orv with my hand behind his neck. I was starring at Orv eye to eye, our noses just an inch apart. Orv looked at my mouth and I looked at his and for a moment I didn't know what I was doing. I think it must have been the excitement of flying. For a moment, just a moment, I forgot about Marlin.

Then suddenly I said, "I've got to get up."

Orv unhooked the belt that strapped us together and I slid off the wing onto the sand. Orv said, "I'm sorry Rebecca."

I said, "No Orv, don't be."

We stood up and I brushed off the sand as Will and Lor trotted up out of breath. All Will could do was lean over and hold on to his knees as he tries to catch his breath.

Orv looks over to Lor and says, "Record?"

Lor could only shake his head, "Yes."

Will fell to his knees at the front of the wing to check the wires and saw a tangle of my hair wrapped around the wire.

For a moment I was afraid he knew what happened and I quickly said, "I've got to go now."

I turned around and started to walk. Orv said, "Rebecca."

As I walked away I heard Will yell out, "Orv!"

I kept on walking and didn't turn around until I got to Sarah. Orv was standing about half way from the wing and looking in my direction, the other two were sitting in front of the wing.

Tears swelled up in my eyes, I was so confused. I grabbed a clump of Sarah's mane and pulled myself up.

Orv called out "Rebecca."

I turned Sarah around and rode off that day never to speak of what happened that afternoon on the sand and in the air of Kill Devil Hill.



Chapter 9

Charlie

Diary Entry: May 5, 1903

It was late fall in 1902, when I walked out to the beach to feel the cool wind blowing across my body when I spotted a lone pelican sitting on the beach. I walked up to him and he slowly limped away a couple of steps, seeing as though he did not want to move. As I walked up to him, he held his wings outstretched and opened his mouth as if he was getting ready to attack, but he would not or could not move. I sat down next to him and started to softly talk to him. He looked at me and tilted his head as if to say, "What is she talking about?" Eventually, I could see in his eyes that he was beginning to accept me and was no longer afraid.

I moved over a foot or so at a time until I was sitting right next to him. I didn't reach over at first because I wanted him to feel comfortable with me so close to him. Then I began to scratch the feathers on the back of his neck then rested my hand between his wings.

He reached over to nibble on my leg, but wasn't aggressive. He just wanted to touch me, too. Eventually I was feeling the loose skin under his beak as he watched me carefully with one eye. Later he closed his eyes as I scratched his chest. I reached down

to pick him up only to discover that half of his left foot was missing. Apparently he had a close call with some big fish or turtle. He was a bit uncomfortable with being picked up so I sat him back down.

I thought that kind of a wound should heal well on it own, so I got up and began to walk away. A few feet up the beach, I turned around and he was flopping his wings on the beach and trying to follow me.

I could tell his foot was hurting. So I went back, picked him up and carried him to the house. There I gave him a few fish heads and sat him on a blanket in the sand so he could heal in peace. I called him "Charlie".

After a week or so Charlie was moving around pretty well, but it was getting closer to winter and I knew it was time for him to go. One morning before dawn, Marlin was leaving the house headed for the inlet. Marlin opened the door and as he stepped out, I heard Marlin yell, "Damn!"

I looked out the door and Marlin was lying flat on the sand at the bottom of the steps. Charlie was standing in the doorway looking up at me and squawking with his beak flapping.

I couldn't help but laugh and say, "All Charlie wants is a good night sleep next to the warm door and you woke him up".

Marlin wasn't pleased and told me in no uncertain terms, "Rebecca, that's a wild animal and should be on its own. When I get home I want that bird gone!" Marlin pointed his finger at me and said, "You hear me! I mean it Rebecca." and he stomped off toward the inlet.

I knew Marlin was just angry that the bird made him fall, but I also knew Marlin was right. Charlie had to learn to live on his own like all the other pelicans.

Later that day I slipped on my dress walked down the beach with Charlie trotting along beside me. He was so cute. If he saw a seagull on the beach up ahead, he'd run up to it with his wings open to shoo it away, clearing my path. I wondered if he thought he was protecting me.

I stooped down beside Charlie and said, "I've come to love you bird, and it pains me so to know that I am going to have to hurt your feelings."

Charlie just shook his head and ruffled his feathers. He had no idea how sorry I was.

We walked up the beach and Charlie ran up ahead and found a dead fish on the beach, he picked it up in his mouth and walked up to give it to me.

"Charlie," I said, "You're breaking my heart." I took the fish and when Charlie wasn't looking I tossed it back into the ocean.

We had made it about three miles up the beach just past the Rescue Station's half-way cabin. I figured now was as good a time as any. When Charlie wasn't looking I ran over to hide in the tall grass by the dunes. Charlie trotted up and down the beach looking for me. He squawked out as if to say "Rebecca, Rebecca, I can't see you?"

I sat quietly behind a clump of tall sea oats. Eventually he stopped and just stood there on the beach looking out over the ocean waiting for me to show up. I slowly turned around and walked deeper into the bushes back toward the house on rabbit and deer paths.

Later that evening, before Marlin returned, I opened the door and there was Charlie standing in the doorway looking up at me and flapping his beak.

"Charlie!" I said. "You're suppose to be gone." I stomped my foot and said in a crying voice, "You can't stay here Charlie, you got to go away."

Charlie looked up at me as if to say, "But I still love you Rebecca." All I could do was bend down and gave Charlie a big hug around his chest and neck.

Marlin came home and didn't say a word about Charlie. Neither did I.

With good fortune, it was not cold, because Charlie became a member of the family that Winter. Marlin would have nothing

to do with that bird in the house. You see, Charlie had bad manners.

Marlin encouraged me not to feed Charlie fish heads because he could become dependent on me and if I stopped, Charlie might starve. So I only threw him something once or twice a week. Charlie loved fried potato cakes, in fact, he ate anything I threw to him.

Marlin put up such a fuss about Charlie and the mess he made, it surprised me one day when I overheard a conversation that Marlin had struck up with Charlie.

Marlin was home sick with a cold. He was sitting in his favorite chair facing the window. Next to his chair was a round smoking table where Marlin kept his pipes and bag of tobacco.

The house door was open and Charlie strolled in. He walked over to Marlin and stood looking up at him. Charlie was accustomed to being shooed out of the house and was waiting to see if his presence was acceptable. Marlin felt so badly that he just sat there and started to rub Charlie chest with his bare foot.

Marlin said, "You dumb old bird, why don't you go out and find some of your own kind to bother?"

After a few minutes Charlie flapped his wings and flew up to the smoking table. To my amazement Marlin let him stand

there with only inches between Marlin's face and Charlie's long beak.

Marlin cracked, "You're damn lucky to be a bird, why do you try to be a human? Humans labor hard all day to catch a fish, you just pick which fish you want and dive in and get it."

Charlie just stood there looking at Marlin and let out a noise that sounded a little bit like a laugh.

Marlin leaned back in his chair with his feet outstretched in front of him and looked up toward the ceiling and said, "Do you know how lucky you are to be able to fly? Humans only dream about flying."

I was in the kitchen and Marlin thought I was sleep in the bedroom. It was all I could do to keep Marlin from hearing me giggle.

Marlin continued just as if Charlie was one of his buddies, "You know there are two fellows that come to this island every year trying to do what comes natural to you. You're a damn lucky bird." Marlin's voice changed a little as he threatened, "But, if you crap on my table I'm going to use you for bait!"

About that time Charlie leaned his beak on Marlin's face.

Marlin said, "Yeah, I love you too."

Just then I accidentally jarred a pan on the stove with my elbow. Marlin then realized I was standing in the kitchen and he had blown his cover about disliking Charlie.

Marlin picked up Charlie, sat him on the floor and said, "Go outside you nasty bird." Then Marlin yelled out as if I were in the bedroom, "Rebecca, do we have anything to eat in this house?"

I didn't say a word about what I saw that day, but later the next day when Marlin was feeling better I brought it to his attention.

I said, "I'm so glad you and Charlie made up, I knew you really loved him all along."

Marlin said, "You see and hear things that nobody else does."

I just smiled and walked away. Marlin hated it when he thought I knew something he didn't want me to know and to smile and walk away only made him try harder to convince me otherwise.

Marlin followed me into the bedroom and as he opened his mouth to speak, he hesitated. He realized it was useless, he knew I knew it too.

I said, "I love you, too." We kissed and fell back on the bed. Marlin had no time for his book that afternoon.

During the spring I believe Charlie found his mate. One day Charlie was there under foot, and the next day he was gone. Although I never saw him for sure after that, I'd always wonder if Charlie, or Charlie Jr. was one of those birds flying overhead.



Chapter 10

Charleston

Diary Entry: June 29, 1903

It is the Spring of 1903, Marlin returns home early and calls out while waving a piece of paper over his head, "Rebecca, I picked up a contract to carry cargo all the way to Charleston."

"Charleston," I said, "you've never been to Charleston have you?"

We step inside and Marlin grins wildly, "And return trip of cargo from Charleston to Elizabeth City. The whole trip will take over a week."

I throw my arms around him, "But I don't want you to go away for a whole week."

Marlin holds my chin up and looks into my eyes, "Well, usually one takes a mate with him on a long trip like that. I think you'd make a good mate. What do you think?"

I was ready to go three days ahead of time.

I took the cow and mule to the Lifesaving Station for that week. The men there were pleased because their old cow had been eaten for meat several months earlier, and the new cow was carrying her first calf and not yet giving milk. And certainly, Sarah had to be kept in one of their stalls, otherwise, she would just walk home.

"One whole week on the water with Marlin," ran through my head over and over. I had ridden many times back and forth from the island to the mainland, but I had never spent more than a few hours at a time on Dolphin Watch. One whole week with nothing but Marlin and water. I stayed up almost all night for several nights in a row imagining all kinds of wonderful possibilities.

When the time came I could hardly wait for Marlin to start those paddle wheels turning. As we backed off from the dock, I couldn't help but start to think, "One week from today I'll wish I were here at this moment to relive the trip all over again."

Marlin first took the Dolphin Watch to the Currituck Harbor where it was loaded with large bags of special cotton seeds. These were seeds from Europe that were special ordered by a plantation owner in Charleston. They were shipped to the Norfolk harbor where some of the seeds were then carried to Currituck in wagons. Marlin tied additional canvas from the top canvas to the sides to help keep the seeds dry. Only the back was open to the paddlewheel. Inside was

like a nice warm cozy hut. Marlin took the Currituck Sound route south because he said that would be a smoother ride for the seeds.

The first day was cold and blustery, and I wondered if I had made the right decision to go along for the ride. The winds were blowing from the west and the Sound was full of whitecaps. He also didn't know the ocean side was as smooth as glass. Marlin didn't realize that it was going to be that rough when we left.

One of the canvas flaps kept pulling away and had to be tied down several times before it would stay put. I was cold and frustrated with all the strong wind. Marlin was holding hard to the wheel, but looked around every so often to say, "How are you doing babe?"

I kept a smile on when Marlin looked at me. I didn't want to make things anymore difficult than they already were. I just nodded my head up and down to say, "All right."

Early that night I wedged myself between two bags of cotton seed and fell asleep to howling winds and the sound of the engine. Marlin kept the paddle wheels rolling all night because it was too rough to anchor.

The next morning I awoke to the sound of the running engine. The winds were quiet. I crawl out from the stack of seed bags and walk to the rear of the boat to feel the warm

sunlight on my face. It was still a bit cold, but I was so grateful that the heavy winds had stopped that I hardly noticed the chill.

Marlin stepped to the back of the boat and handed me a cup of coffee.

I ask, "Where did that come from?"

He points at the open top of the engine where a coffee pot was sitting.

I smile and ask, "Bacon and eggs too?" Really not expecting a reaction because I had packed sandwiches and canned beans.

Marlin picks up the cover on the other side and there is bacon frying. I was both surprised and a bit sad at the same time. I thought Marlin relied on me to feed him. I didn't know he was so independent on that boat.

I step over to help with the cooking and say a bit smugly, "Eggs, you've got no eggs?"

He smiles, sits down his cup and pulls me to him for a big morning kiss. I surrendered, "Okay, who needs eggs."

There was never a time in my life that a kiss from that man

did not take my breath away. Later I climbed up on the cabin and stood against the warming air. A few minutes later, Marlin found my dress draped over his head while piloting the boat. I had stuffed it with my foot through an open vent on top of the cabin.

There I envisioned that I was a bird flying over the water. There was no land to be seen, not to the north, not to the south, not to the east or west. The warm sun drenched my body as I lift my spirits to the clouds. After a moment I look to my side and there is a seagull flying in tandem with me. Together we flew over the sparkling morning water.

The seagull dives into the water. I want so much at to dive in with him, but the water is still cold and Marlin would probably not hear me splash and leave me behind. So I just sat down on the cabin with my feet against the front cabin glass.

After a few minutes I look down through the glass to see Marlin's hand up against the glass as if he were touching my feet. I bend down and look through the glass. Marlin has a big smoking pipe in his mouth and is filling the cabin with puffs of smoke. Marlin blew a cloud at me against the glass.

He could not hear me through the glass so I moved my lips slowly to say, "I love you."

He smiles back and mouths the words back, "I love you too."

I sat up to let the soft wind blow against my face and lean back on my hands ready for the beautiful journey ahead.

Along the way we passed several tiny sand islands. I walk around into the cabin and stood in front of Marlin. I look down and ask in a timid and childlike way while I am playing with the tips of my fingers, "Marlin, can we stop and play for a while on one of those sand islands?" I could imagine us running around and playing a grownup version of tag on our own little private paradise. But Marlin didn't take my request seriously and just smiles back at me and kept the paddles rolling.

After several hours I became restless and began to look around for something to do. In the cabin I found a strong pair of binoculars.

"Can I use these?" I ask.

"You drop them in the water and I'm throwing you in after them," he says as if I should believe him.

He turned his head and I start to make faces at him. Then I notice that he is looking at me through the reflection of the cabin window. Without turning his head he reaches over and to pinch me on my bottom. I laugh and jump, almost dropping the binoculars overboard.

I laid back on the front of the boat with my feet on the cabin windows looking at everything I could find with those binoculars. Sometimes I just got a close look at Marlin through the cabin window with them.

I spent hours watching birds and dolphins. Another boat passes by and I can see the people on board with the binoculars. I stood high on top of the cabin to get a good look. I saw one of the people on the boat pick up a pair of binoculars and look back. I dash my naked self down for cover of the canvas until they have time to pass by.

Later I walk around the boat examining all its parts when Marlin began to realize I was restless again. There is an arm lift on board that Marlin uses to lift cargo off the boat. As we went further and further south, we came close to the Gulf Stream and the water began to warm. Marlin starts to tie a piece of canvas on the end of the rope on the lift.

"What are you doing?" I ask.

"Making pancakes," he says between his teeth as he ties the canvas knot tight. He knows he can annoy the daylights out of me by not giving me a straight answer. I just curl half my mouth down to show my disapproval of his answer and just wait to see what he is planning to do.

"There," he says, as he pulls it open like a seat.

"I still don't know what it is," I said in a disapproving manner.

Marlin lifts me into the canvas seat while I kick my legs up and down and screaming, "What are you going to do?" Then he swings the arm way out to the side of the boat over the water.

We are still moving, and at a good speed. I am a little frightened at first and scream for Marlin to stop, but after a moment it becomes spellbinding. Marlin sees the fascination on my face and in my eyes. I am flying over the water with nothing but air beneath me. Marlin just stands there with that ever so slight smile on his crusty, old, unshaven face.

The arm lift pole becomes uncomfortable and a little low for me so I beckon, "Marlin, lower the seat a little so I can have the pole over my head?" Marlin turns the crank and to my surprise lowers me into the water.

I scream, "Stop it, stop it, I'm going to fall!" I thought I was going to loose my grip and fall away into the water.

A few seconds later, Marlin rises it just a little so I can skim across the water. I drug my feet in the water while facing backwards against the wind. Several times a minute a big wave would lower me waist deep into the water. After about twenty minutes Marlin starts to lift me in, but I yell, "No, no, I want to stay longer!"

But Marlin pulls me in and says, "I have to watch the boat, I'm afraid if I take my eyes off of you, I'll look back and find you gone."

Marlin lifts me out of the canvas loop and sits me down on the engine cover. I am shivering from the cold.

Marlin puts a blanket around me and says, "Babe, I think you should have been born a fish."

I stutter, "Ki-kiss me." I pull him back on the warm engine cover and rap my cold legs around him. I feel the engine vibrating beneath me and Marlin's warm body next to mine. I held him there for a couple minutes.

Marlin sits up, "I have to steer the boat, babe."

I reluctantly let go.

As we got closer to Charleston, the waters became crowded with boats of every shape and description. When we entered the harbor, for the first time in my life I saw over a hundred boats all in one place. With the exception of a clear artery in the center of the water for passage, one could hardly navigate through the maze of anchored boats.

Marlin calls out, "Rebecca, after we unload the cargo, let's go ashore."

I ask, "With so many boats on shore, how do we in?"

Marlin turns the wheel strongly to port, "The only thing we can do is anchor the boat and wait for one of those water taxis for a ride in. We'll have to take another one back."

Marlin made it to the dock to unload the cottonseed only to find out that we were one day early and the cargo for Elizabeth City had not yet been delivered to the dock. So we spent the night on Dolphin Watch, while anchored in the bay.

Marlin had been up for two days without sleep so we both just snuggled up under a blanket on the deck of the boat and fell asleep to the quiet sound of water slowly rocking and splashing under the boat.

The next morning we signaled for a taxi to take us to the docks. While at the dock Marlin discovered that the cargo was not expected to arrive until afternoon so we decided to visit the waterfront of Charleston for breakfast.

For a girl raised in a one room cabin on a sharecropper's farm, who as an adult lived a quiet life on the Outer Banks of North Carolina, the sights of Charleston were simply unbelievable. Cobblestone roads, wood plank sidewalks, and gas lamps on every corner, everything was just unbelievable. Everyone had a fancy carriage pulled by the most beautiful horses. And the food, more food in one store than I ever saw

in one place. Store after store with nearly everything that one could imagine!

After breakfast, Marlin wanted me to go into a fancy dress shop. Marlin wanted so much to buy something special for me. He picked out one dress after another. But I have surely become a beach person, dress is what I wore when I had to wear something, a dress to me is just depressing. But I still had to choose.

After he paid for it he asks, "Do you want to wear it now? We can put the old one in this sack."

I said, "No, I'll save it for later," as I stuff it in an old gunny sack and turned to walk out. I turn around to see if Marlin was following me. Marlin was standing there with his mouth hanging open and his arms kinda half way up with his palms up.

He knows I am sorry, but he also knows I don't like being bundled up in cloth. I stomped my foot, "I want to wear this one right now, all right?" and turned around and walked out the store. Marlin followed with his hand raked through his hair in frustration.

Later, as we walk by a store window he says, "Look shoes, you need shoes don't you?"

He pulled me into the store and pulled me up to the cobbler, "We need shoes to protect these beautiful feet."

The cobbler looks over the counter and down at my bare feet. The cobbler smiles at me, but I knew he didn't mean it, and said, "This way my lady."

Quite frankly, there was nothing I liked, but Marlin insisted on buying me a pair of shoes.

I pick out a pair that were already finished and did fit and said, "These will do just fine," and dropped them into Marlin's hand.

After Marlin paid for them he handed them to me. I smiled and said, "Thank you honey," then dropped them in the sack with the dress and walked out of the cobbler's shop the same way I walked in, barefooted.

I turn around just long enough to see Marlin and the Cobbler glance at each other. "Come on!" I demanded.

Now that the dress and shoe buying was over, I can look around at all the beautiful things without having to get something I really didn't want. As we walk through one shop I saw a white sculpture that caught my eye. It was of a woman sitting in a chair with a patched dress sewing on a piece of cloth. Leaning on her lap and looking up was a bare foot child in a tattered dress. I look at Marlin, Marlin knew exactly what I was thinking.

I said, "Marlin, can we?"

To this day I don't know what it cost, but I knew it was much more expensive than my dress and shoes. Marlin carried it up to the shopkeeper and talked for a while.

The shopkeeper kept looking back at me, then at Marlin. I was transmitting the thought, "Yes, yes, oh yes, please..."

She looks at me once more than back at Marlin then smiles and shakes her head yes.

Marlin walks back to me with the sculpture and hands it to me with a smile and says, "Are you going to stuff this in the gunny sack too?"

I held this treasure in my arms and looked up at Marlin and said, "Lets go home now!" I was ready to leave.

Marlin said, "You want to go to the shop at..."

I cut him off and said "No, lets go."

I walk to the door with the sculpture in hand and totally forgot about my dress and shoes. Marlin saw the sack with my dress and shoes leaning against the counter. He picks it up, smiles a frustrated smile at the clerk, tips his hat and follows me out of the store.

On the ride back to Dolphin Watch I held the sculpture on my lap. I couldn't stop staring at it. It was the most

beautiful thing I ever saw. Although Marlin purchased me a new dress and shoes, I was barefoot and wearing the same old wrinkled pale yellow cotton dress that I kept hanging on our bedroom door.

When we got back to Dolphin Watch, I stepped out of the water taxi first and walked away to find a safe place for my sculpture.

Marlin almost fell out of the little water taxi as he holds up the sack and calls out, "You want your shoes and dress don't you?"

He almost trips when he steps onto Dolphin Watch and mumbles something under his breath about me. Then throws some paper money at the taxi driver.

The taxi driver, grumbling in some other language as he takes his paddle to fish his fare from the water.

Later, we had to wait in line behind other boats both large and small to pick up the cargo for the trip back home. It was nearly 4:00 in the afternoon before we got around to our turn on the dock. To my surprise, a beautiful black carriage trimmed in gold rolled up on the dock. Four wooden boxes of farming tools were loaded first then the carriage was tied down straddling the boxes.

At first I thought, now this is going to be fun. I get to ride in that carriage back to Elizabeth City. Before my imagination

could conjure up an image, Marlin and a dock worker covered the whole thing with a canvas. I didn't get a chance to even touch that beautiful carriage much less ride in it.

As soon as the cargo was on board, men with long poles pushed the Dolphin Watch away from the dock and the next in line was pulled in with ropes. Marlin was still knotting the ropes to hold down the canvas as we were drifting away from the dock.

A large ship approached and we were blocking his path. The Captain blew his whistle long and hard.

Marlin yelled out to the Captain of that ship words that I thought I'd never hear.

Marlin, in his hast to move out of the way forgot to prime the fuel line before he tried to start the engine. The engine let out a bang and a large puff of smoke came from the engine cover.

After a minute or so we had drifted far enough to the side for the ship to pass. Marlin spent over an hour trying to start the engine again.

By time we started to head back homeward, the sun had begun to set in the west. While I watched the sunset, Marlin was still in a bad mood about the incident at dockside with the ship. I just remained quiet to give him

time to simmer down.

After sunset, the air got cool. I sat in front of the cabin and covered myself with a blanket. The sky is crystal clear and millions of stars can be seen sparkling from the boat's wake. I laid back against the cabin to focus on the dark, velvet-black sky.

I envisioned the sky three dimensionally. The bright stars I imagine are close, and the lighter stars were further away. After a minute I begin to see the distance between the stars. Even bright stars and dim stars that were close together could be far, far apart. One could be twice as far away from earth as the other.

While staring into the sky I saw a huge blue-green falling star that streaked across the night sky. I remember it broke up into three or four pieces before burning away in a trail of smoke. While most falling stars last only a fraction of a second, this one lasted for several seconds. It was astonishing.

I turn quickly around to see if Marlin had seen it from the cabin. Marlin's face is dimly lit by a light in the cabin. He's looking down writing something in his log. I sigh, because I knew he did not see it.

Later that night I noticed that the sea seemed to be lighting up. It looks like a reflection of a full moon, but no moon is up tonight. The longer I stare, the brighter the sea

became. I sat up to climb down to show the sea all alight to Marlin.

Marlin, in the cabin with a lantern. "Marlin," I said, "the water is getting brighter out here. Why is that?"

He said, "Its your eyes, you are getting used to the dark."

"No, I swear, there is a light under the water," I protested.

Marlin still writing something in his log, looked up momentarily and said, "It's just your imagination."

I said, "Put that damn thing down and come up here to look!" I made him climb up on the cabin roof to see for himself.

"Now look, what do you see?", I demand.

After a minute or two he began to see it. By then there was a definite bright spot under the ocean. Marlin just stared at it without saying a word.

I asked, "What is it?"

Marlin only moan a vague, "I don't know."

Then, out of the water began to rise a huge, bright light.

I ask in quiet reverence, "What is it Marlin?" He's the

one that spends all his time out at sea, if anyone should know it should be him. He just remains quiet and motionless.

Then I see a smile cross his face and a little chuckle. Then a big laugh as he turns and looks at me.

I ask, "What is it?"

He points his finger and says, "Look."

I look as Marlin stood behind me, arms circling my shoulders. "Oh my God," I said, "It's the moon."

We both start laughing, because even though for a while we were so confused about what it was, it was just the moon. Apparently the light from the full moon was shining through the ocean minutes before moonrise. It was an amazing and beautiful sight.

Because of this surprising event, I began to time the moonrise, especially at full moon to watch for this spectacular evening event again. Since then I have seen it happen maybe a dozen or so times. If there is any humidity in the air or any cloud cover at the horizon, you will not see the moonlight shine through the clear, ocean water just before moonrise.

Marlin cut the engine and threw out a surface anchor. We both sat on the bow of the boat and leaned back against the cabin. We covered ourselves with a blanket to comfortably watch the beautiful rising moon. Out of the covers Marlin slides out a bottle of champagne.

"Where did that come from?" I ask.

He smiles and says, "Charleston."

Then he pulls out two long stem glasses and sets them down in front of us and opens the bottle with a pop.

As he pours champagne into the glasses he says, "To Rebecca, the First Lady of the Outer Banks."

I like that. I click his glass with mine and said, "To Captain Winston... my life." We lean back surrounded by a sparkling sea of lights, and loved.

The next morning was brisk. We got up just before dawn to start the engine to head home. The air remains cold until several hours after sunrise. I am sitting on the side of the boat daydreaming about the night before. There were several loud noises, which I thought were from the engine or the paddlewheel.

Then, pushhhh, right up beside the boat not a hundred feet away, a large humpback whale surfaces. Then, pushhhh, there is another. There are two, yes two humpback whales right beside the boat. I can see the entire length of their bodies. They are huge!

I ran to Marlin and grabbed him by the shirt, "Look, look!"

He so nonchalantly said, "Yeah, what about them?"

I just blew out air in frustration and ran back to see them. They would disappear for a few minutes then swim right next to the boat for a few seconds before submerging again.

I ran back to Marlin and cried out, "Put me on the lift and hang me over the boat."

Marlin just laughs and says, "They'd think you were a shrimp and that I was going to feed them."

It made me think for a minute before I realized he was just kidding me. I went back, pounded on his shoulders, "Now, now!" I shouted.

He locks the steering wheel and walks back with me to the lift. Marlin lifts me up. I kicked and said, "Wait, wait, put me down." When he did I pulled off my dress. "Okay, now!" I said.

Marlin put me through the loop and tilts the arm off to the side. I look intently for them to surface. Then I hear, pushhh. I look up, they are on the other side. I point frantically thinking that they are going to disappear at any time. Marlin had to bend the arm in before he could swing it to the other side because the paddlewheel was in the way.

When I finally made it to the other side the water became still again. They went under. We wait. One minute, two, three, then pushhh, they rose just beneath me. They are

gigantic! They spewed water all over me through their blowholes.

I beckon for Marlin to lower me, but he seemed to ignore me.

I yell, "Down, down!" I knew he heard me so I just gave him a mean look. Then he slowly lowers me.

"More, more," I yelled. "I want to touch them with my feet." Then they disappeared again.

"Put me down to the water, dammit!" I said sternly.

He knew I meant it because he rarely ever heard me swear. So, he slowly lowers me until my feet touched the water.

Then we wait. After a couple of minutes I looked at him and shook my fist and growled "Marlin, I'm going to kill you if we loose them."

He just shrugged his shoulders. I knew he had no control over the whales. I was hanging with my head against the rope looking at Marlin and said, "We missed them, they're gone."

Just then, pushhh, one came up from behind the boat. Marlin starts to raise the rope a bit when I yell, "Wait!"

The other one pops up about fifty feet away. Then pushhh, one comes up just under my feet and blows water and air all over me, sending my hair flying into the air. I try to reach down, but miss him by only inches.

Marlin lowers me just a bit because he thinks I am going to slip out of the canvas loop trying to touch them. Pushhh, one comes up directly under me, this time my feet touch. My knees even bent a little. I look at Marlin in astonishment. He smiles and shakes his head like he was saying, "yeah, I saw that!"

Another comes up again and I touch him. Then, pushhh, he comes up even higher. This time I am almost sitting on his back, I yelled out a squeal of excitement and threw one hand back to keep from falling. I touched him with my hand. Then his tail rose up in front of me. I took a deep breath. I thought I was going to be hit with his tail when suddenly he flaps his tail in the water with a big splash and dives down deep.

I kept my eyes on the water watching for one to resurface. I was soaking wet and held on to the rope with one hand while trying to get water out of my eyes with the other.

After a couple minutes I thought they might be gone. A few minutes more and I was almost certain. After that, I knew they were gone. Marlin pulls me in and out of the canvas loop.

I can feel the blood surging through my veins. Marlin hugs me while my eyes stay glued to the sea in amazement.

He said, "Rebecca, I can never let you do that again, you hear me?" But I paid him no attention. If they came back, I was going back out!

The rest of the day I stayed mystified about the whales. I sat on the top of the cabin just hoping I could see them surface once more.

That night Marlin kept the Dolphin Watch running all night because we were running behind schedule.

The next morning I awoke to find the Dolphin Watch paddling along a narrow river. We stop at a small wooden pier on the side of the river just in sight of the main farm house. Marlin unloads the carriage and tools with the help of two farm hands.

A gentleman dressed in fine clothes from the main house came down the path and said, "The master wishes to invite you to join him and the mistress for the morning meal."

We are both hungry, Marlin smiles at me and takes my hand as we follow the gentleman up the pathway to the house.

Even while working for Mr. Johnson on the farm as a child, I never got to see the inside of his house and this house looked every bit as grand. As we step inside, my first reaction

is, Where do the people live? Everything is arranged so that it appears the owners live somewhere else. Even though it is breakfast and it isn't even Sunday, the owner and his wife steps into the dining room dressed in their Sunday Meeting clothes.

Marlin looks at me as if to say, "You should have worn your shoes."

We sit down at the table with the owner and his wife and are waited on by two servants.

His wife tries to strike up a conversation with me. She said, "Who's your father dear, maybe we know of him?"

I said, "I don't know ma'am, nobody knows for sure."

I saw her eyes open wide as she clears her throat and pats her mouth with a napkin.

She said, "And your mother?"

I said, "Oh she's dead ma'am, a tree fell on her in a hurricane."

She places her hand on the table, "Oh dear, that's terrible."

As I stir my food around in my plate with my fork, I said, "Its all right now, we got her buried and everything."

She clears her throat and asks one of the servants to please fill her glass. I look closely and could tell she had what looks like pancake flower on her face.

I glance at Marlin and he quickly shakes his head back and forth as if to say, "No, don't say it!"

There was a couple minutes of silence. I couldn't think of anything to say and I could tell she was trying to think of something to break the silence.

"What a lovely dress you have on," she said.

"Yes, but I've got another one," I replied.

She just clears her throat again and looks to her husband for him to say something.

"How was the weather Captain on your trip to Elizabeth City?", he said.

Marlin trying to swallow quickly, "The water was a bit rough sometimes but I kept your carriage covered and tied down tight."

"Good man," he said, "If I need any other cargo deliveries I'll make sure to get word to you."

They went on for a few minutes about business matters when the Ma'am asked, "What have you done recently my dear?"

I said, "I rode a whale yesterday."

She cleared her throat again, coughed a little, then beckoned one of the helpers for another glass of water.

Marlin was bent over his plate with a mouthful of food. He just looked up at me and smiled a little. He thought it was funny not to speak on my behalf. They really didn't believe me. While we finished eating, no one else said a word.

After breakfast Marlin talked a few minutes with the owner by the fireplace. The Madam and I sat in a big round room with marble floors and large plants. Neither of us had much to say.

She asks, "Do you ride with the Captain often?"

"No, not often," I said, "I like to think I'm the reason he gets off that boat."

She covers her mouth with her hand, "Oh dear." I heard her mumble to herself. She stood up and walked out of the room. I could hear her voice echo down the marble hallway, "Henry!"

I just sat there and played with the markings on the floor with my toe while I waited for Marlin. I love the feel of the smooth marble floor beneath my feet. Soon Marlin had received his pay and walked in. I was getting ready to tell him

about the marble floor when he quickly said,
"Come on, let's go."

On the way back to the boat I commented, "That woman sure does clear her throat a lot."

Marlin just smiles that little smile and said, "She's just not in your league honey. Her biggest thrill is popping a boil off that old codger's butt."

"Marlin!" I chided, and I slapped him on his arm.

"Get in the boat," he said. "We still have a long way to go."

Of all our times together, that trip to Charleston and back remains one of my most memorable.



Chapter 11

Magic

Diary Entry: July 5, 1903

On Independence Day, Marlin and I go to the docks in Manteo to see fireworks that the Rescue Stations show. Just about everybody we know is there. It is a fiery day and everyone gets wet just to stay cool. The sailors from the rescue station kept busy pulling the drunken fishermen out of the water and back on the dock. There is a threat of a fight or two, but no one really wants to get hurt. Even old drunken men get in the face of Rescue Sailors, twice their size, and threaten a fight. Once, the Rescue Sailor pushed the old man back off the deck. Even kids are playing hide and seek with the Sailors. Kids throw pieces of shells, Sailors get knocked in the head, turn around and chase the kids. One is caught, but starts crying, so the Sailor lets him go, only to get pelted by shells from the same kid seconds later.

As the sun glows a crimson red over the Sound, nearly everyone on the island gathers together on the waterfront in Manteo. It is the one time of year that everybody gets the opportunity to become reacquainted. I am surprised, time and time again, at just how many ladies love the natural experience on the island. Whenever we get together in conversations, they always mention they couldn't wait to get home to be themselves again.

The stars twinkle and everyone jumps to a loud pop in the sky.

It is time for the fireworks to begin. I sit on the dock and lean my head on Marlin's arm. Fireworks shoot to the left, then to the right. Each thump of fireworks blasting off from the barge, reminds me of how my heart thumps when I kiss Marlin. The streaks of light across the sky was how I feel during the kiss.

While Marlin marvels and points at the bursts of light, all the noise and excitement around me seem to vanish. All I can do is remember the times we have shared.

Memories with Marlin when he comes home late, hungry and exhausted. He drags himself through the house, undresses, stands on the porch, and pours a bucket of cold water over his head.

I see him soaping up as I carry a large cooking kettle of warm water to him from the stove. He pours the warm water over his head, soap rolls off his slick wet body.

Fireworks blast again and sparks against the night air.

In my mind I see Marlin sitting next to his smoking stand in his favorite chair facing the ocean window. Before he gets a chance to light his pipe or open a book, I sit in his lap, wrap my arms around him, and snuggle up close, skin to skin, next to his hairy chest.

I look up at Marlin as the lights from the fireworks sparkle in his eyes.

I remember days, when it is too cold or the sea, too rough to take Dolphin Watch out. He sits in that special chair with an open book. I envision washing my body, feeling the warm water

rolling over my breasts. Then curling up in his lap, my tiny five foot frame curled up asleep in his lap. Then I remember that sometimes, he has to light up his pipe which always causes me some anxiety because he has dropped sparks on my bare skin more than once.

A firework whistles and plunges directly from the barge to the water. Marlin and I look at each other and laugh. I lay my head on his chest and memories filled my mind.

Marlin is a big man, over six feet tall, and I am only five feet tall and weighed less than a hundred pounds. I fit very well in his lap. As I lay there cradled in his lap I hear each breath, and feel his heart beat under my hand. I feel him tightening his stomach, and grunting a, "hum," when he reads something interesting or funny.

I never knew what other women did with their men, but Marlin and I have something very special. Somehow I believe that my soul and Marlin's must have grown from the same shoot. We connected with such power with our first kiss, and every kiss afterward remains just as powerful.

Fireworks pop in the sky, and Marlin asks, "Are you cold babe?" And wraps his coat around the both of us. A whistle

streaks in the night and echos in the distance. I lay my head back on Marlin's shoulder and remember.

When we kiss it was not the two of us, it was just us. Marlin told me he feels the same way, and when we kiss I know we feel the same way together. When we kiss, it was as if our souls are someplace else not necessarily on this earth.

Even while snuggling close together on his chair, our bodies fit perfectly together. We became as one, neither of us moving, we just sit there together lost in the vision that our souls are weaving together as one. Sometimes I squeezed inside just a little and feel an involuntary response from Marlin. Sometimes his involuntary response stimulates an involuntary response from me and we go on back and forth until we make each other crazy with passion.

The lights flash against the sky and I pull on Marlin's collar. Marlin bends down and we kiss, my toes against the sky. I wrap my arms around Marlin and submerge back into my memories, against the backdrop of lights streaking in the night.

I see Marlin and I on the small bed in front of the large ocean window. I scoot him over just enough so I could sit with my legs crossed in front of me while I face him. As I look at the skin on his chest, it is so familiar to me, it is as if it is my skin, it is as if I am looking at myself. I can not help but believe that somehow, someday I have lived this life before.

I hear a "Momma!" as a couple walks by and a child points at the bursts of light.

To this day I cannot explain the uncommon pull between Marlin's existence and mine.

From that very first day when we met, when Marlin jumped up on the wagon to unload that first wagon load of corn, I knew there was something that was drawing us together.

I remember that first Christmas Eve when we stood under that towering tree near my Momma's cabin when Marlin said, "Have we ever lived this moment before? Every time I'm with you it seems as if we did this before." Those words ring in my head every time I experience *deja vu* in Marlin's arms.

There has always been a sense like an electric current that runs deeply between Marlin and I. It is a strange feeling, one I cannot put a name to. Momma never explained to me the love making between men and women. When I first met Marlin, our eyes and souls seem to have mated before, long before that first passionate coupling of our bodies. And it seems as the years progress, the passion only inflames higher. It is as if our bodies are in tune with the ocean currents. Our love making is as deep and turbulent as the currents themselves. Other times, they are as soft and sweet, the way an ocean can be on a calm day.

Nothing could ever take that away, it is imbedded deep in our souls as if God himself had given us this special gift. When he slowly strokes my flesh, his eyes stay in constant contact with mine. Neither of us want to let this time ever end. He strokes the mountains and valleys of my body until forces deep within rise turbulently to the surface. Every moment of lovemaking sears us back into one soul.

About that time, Lucas, a fisherman friend of Marlin's, who obviously did not know where he was going nearly falls against Marlin and mumbles something about getting a drink and stumbles away.

Marlin asks, "Have you ever seen me that bad?"

I just smile and remember how I love to be the wine, that intoxicates his mind. I see him, lying out in front of me as I sit on the bed, holding my hands out with my palms down and move them just inches over his body. I love when I hear, "Oh, I feel that!" Even with his eyes closed, he feels where my hands are. The hair on his body moves as the static electricity from my body reacts with his.

The power amazes me, and I do it until Marlin's body twitches with pleasure. He begs me to touch him, to gather him, but I want him to gather without my physical touch.

I feel his heart beat. It is not by touch, I can feel his strong heart beating inside my body. I can feel the pain in his

muscles. I can even feel the movement of the boat still residing in his body.

I feel his pleasure rising, it is my pleasure also. As the moment comes, I fall helpless on him as our bodies burst from within. Yes, I am the bottle that holds his drunkenness, I am his pleasure. He has a taste for me, and desires to sip from no other.

Fireworks pop in the sky and I look up at Marlin. Lights flash and reflect on Marlin's face as lightning, from a building storm.

The image blurs as I remember the nights when lightning flashes through our window. I turn out every light in the house and lay with Marlin under the window that faces the ocean.

With a little practice, I feel the power from every flash of lightning. Sometimes, I see it and it courses through my body. Oh, and God help us, if it strikes overhead. Between lightning flashes everything is dark, I can see nothing. Lightning flashes, for a moment, I see Marlin's blue eyes glaring up at me.

In the dark, the image remains.

As lightning strikes, it is as if energy pulsates from my body to his, then from his body to mine. Soon our bodies are

involuntarily reacting to the flashes of light and the roar of distant thunder.

A thump, then an explosion of lights just a few feet over the barge as men scramble for cover as sparks fall on the barge of fireworks. Everyone gasps, waiting for a massive uncontrolled display. The Rescue Sailors wait a few minutes before boarding the barge.

Marlin says, "Rebecca?"

I turned to him, "You want to go home?"

Marlin whispers, "To the boat."

I chide, "Marlin!", smile, then lift my hand for him to help me up. As we walk back to the boat, poems that Marlin inspired me to write rings through my head. This was one of my first to him.

*That Master's Plan, has again,
Tethered our lives,
That lifelong aching void is giving rise,
Oh the feeling when we're together,
I never dreamt life carried such gifts,
I never dreamt souls could intertwine like this,
I've tasted love, It is heavenly bliss,
If it be Your will, make it timeless,
Doing what we love, together, forever,
Amen*

Then there was the poem that Marlin wrote me. I kept it on my dresser mirror for years, and read it every morning.

*Place your finger upon my lips,
Quiet me as you take my breath,
Gaze into my eyes,
Pull my inner being to your breast,
Wrap your existence around me,
Hold me in your heart,
As we burst with love,
And fall helpless into our existence,
Hold me endlessly,
I will love you forever.*

We pass Jefferson from the Tavern, and Jefferson wants to stop and say hello, but Marlin waves and said, "Jefferson, see you later."

I laugh and Marlin pulls me along. The evening when Marlin was sitting in his chair reading that book, flashes through my mind. I am sitting in a chair next to him. He does not look my way. Just for the fun of it I concentrate on him. I am not making any noise nor making any movements that will get his attention. I envision Marlin stretched out in front of me. I imagine my hands touching his body and holding him. I imagined loving his body. I begin to feel the power radiate from my body to his. Marlin slowly lowered his book, I see his body reacting.

He takes off his glasses and looks over to me and says, "What in the hell are you doing?"

I say, "It has nothing to do with hell."

We stand up to embrace and fall onto the small bed in the window.

Just then Marlin steps up on Dolphin Watch and pulls me quickly into his arms. We kiss and fall back into the shadows. I always feel very much a part of nature. I imagine feeling the power of the water, the sand, the wind, storms and lightning. Intimacy rises a whole grand level in the ocean surf. Our time together was always a discovery of the mystery. Our bodies take on the forces around us. Time is never planned, we simply became what was strongest in our spirit at the time.

Like the fireworks that burst through the starlit skies, every experience is different, different from the last.

The power of the ocean flows through our bodies as we become one with nature. Tonight, we are the boat, rocking ever so gently to the sound of small wave splashing endlessly against the hull.

Chapter 12

Wright Brother's Flight

Diary Entry: January 2, 1904

Late that next fall of 1903, Marlin comes home and as he bursts through the door, he shouts, "The boys are back and this time they're calling in newspaper people. They think they can fly this time without a sand dune."

I am stirring dinner on the stove and could not understand his excited voice. "Slow down and tell my what you are talking about?"

"The flying wing, they are putting an engine on it. It will take off like a bird, from flat land."

I ask, "When are they going to try this?"

Marlin wafts his head, "Soon, real soon. They need the newspaper to make it official. This time they brought along another fellow. He made the engine that sits on the flying wing."

"Did you see them?" I ask, "Both of them I mean?"

"Yep, they are putting the wing together now."

"Do you think it is safe?" I ask.

Marlin looked at me curiously. "Do you think they will make it, Marlin?" I ask.

Marlin picks up an apple and as he bites into it is says, "Yeah, I think so, I think they can, I really think they can!"

Several days later there were newspaper reporters next to the Kill Devil Sand Dune. Marlin and I went to see what was going on. Will and Orv are standing in the sand next to the huge flying wing. It is a quiet day with hardly a breeze. There are a couple of newspaper reporters standing around asking questions of Will and Orv. Will sees us, but keeps talking, when Orv sees me he puts on a wide smile and walks over to give me a hug. Marlin sees one of his fishing buddies and steps over to chat with him. He is there to see the show also.

"Rebecca," Orv says with a wide grin, "I'm glad you're here, there's something I want to show you, come here."

Orv pulls me by the hand and strides right over to the wing, but just before he starts to point and speak.

I ask, "Are you really going to fly this thing today?"

Orville looks warily around and says, "I think not, the wind is still too weak, but," then he sighs and adds, "but we don't know what to do about all these reporters who have come so far to witness a flight."

One of the reporters overheard us and gave Orville a nasty look. Orv pulls me closer to the flying wing and pointed out the small patch on the wing.

"Here, look here, do you remember this?" Orv asks.

"That's a piece of my dress," I said in surprise, "That's the piece of my dress that I gave you." Orv smiles, "It's our good luck charm, Rebecca." He glances around at the reporters and whispers,

"But I don't think its going to work its charm today."

Orv saunters back over to Will as they speak softly in whispers. All I could hear was an occasional, "I think not."

Will clears his voice, raises his arms and says, "Gentlemen, my brother informs me that there is not enough wind today to test the flying machine."

A couple of the people standing around, some from the Rescue Station, moan and one reporter vocalizes his frustration, "Hah, nobody can fly, you're just a bunch of crackpots."

One of the men from the Rescue Station who was good friends with Will and Orv marches up to the reporter. The Rescue Seaman is nearly a foot taller and glares down over his handlebar mustashe at the reporter. The reporter just leers in surprise at the sailor's huge chest.

"No, one moment," Orv steps up with his hand in the air. "We'll try it once just to make sure."

Orv beckons to me to come over to him. He places his hand on my shoulder and bends down and quietly asks, "Rebecca, will you toss this coin in the air to see which one of us tries first?"

The two gather closer as I whisper, "Are you really going to try? Will it fly without wind?"

Will looked around and took a deep breath and said, "Flip the coin Rebecca, just flip the coin."

"Who's got heads?" I ask.

"Does it matter?" Will replies.

"Of course it matters, how do I know who wins?"

Will looked toward Orv and asked, "You want heads?"

"No, I don't want heads," Orv said, "You want heads?"

Will shook his head, "Its not going to work is it?"

Orv just gave a 'I don't think so,' look.

Will asks, "Then why did you say we'd try?"

"I don't know, I thought there was going to be trouble."

Will casts a restrained glance at me and says, "He has heads, toss it."

I toss it and it lands covered in sand. Both Will and Orv bend down to see, but neither see the coin. Will says, "It landed heads on end."

Orv scratches in the sand a fraction or two and says, "It did not, that's tails. Look here Rebecca, see, that's tails isn't it?"

I brush away a few more grains of sand and look up to Will with my face all wrinkled and nod a, "Yes."

Will stands up with a grunt, pulls his shirttail down, and with a stoic look says, "Let's go gentlemen."

The machinist starts the engine to make sure it is in proper running order and Will climbs up on the huge rattling wing. Two men from the Rescue Station held onto both ends of the wing to keep the flying machine from moving until the engine was running at full throttle. Will nods "Yes" to Orv and Orv drops a flag to signal the sailors to let go. Will pulls a little to the left then the right and up a little too soon. The wing lands at the end of the rail before it got a chance to rise up and fly. The wing tilted forward and broke a few wooden sticks on the rudder. It was fixable, but would take one or two days.

Afterward, everybody is standing around talking and thinking there might be another attempt, when Orv speaks loud enough for others to hear around him, "Rebecca, I was planning to fly that wing all the way over to your house and back today." Several reporters just grunt and walk away.

Orv lifts his cap and snaps the cap against his pants, "There are really here to photograph a bloody crash and they're just down right disappointed that they came all this way for no good reason."

Then Orville speaks to me out the side of his mouth while he is looking away from me toward Wilbur, "But we have to convince these bloodhounds that we'll fly next time. If they don't show up, no one will really know for sure that we were the first to make it happen."

Will gave both of us a strong stare.

Orv says, "That's the evil eye, its my turn to shut up."

I just smile at the interaction between these two frustrated and disappointed brothers.

Marlin steps up to hold my hand and pats Orv on the shoulder, "That was a good try, next time the wind will be right, I know it will. No two days are hardly ever the same here."

I pull myself up on Sarah's back and Marlin takes the reins as we walk slowly away from that potentially historic first attempt. Marlin leads us over the pathway and down to the beach where the sand is firm and the seagulls lead us home.

Three days later they were going to try again. This time I did not go. Orv may have been joking, but he said he would fly by the weather station and on up by our house before turning back. I stayed at the house to wave just in case he made it.

Later that day Marlin pops in the door and yells out, "They made it, they really made it, one time Orv kept the wing in the air for nearly a minute."

"A minute," I say disappointedly, "I thought Orville was going to fly up this way."

Marlin throws his leg over the chair and sits down at the kitchen table. He leans on the table with both elbows and says, "Afterward, both Wilbur and Orville were just as calm as could be, they knew they were going to fly that thing today. After their forth flight they were talking with several locals about flying up to see you and pass by the others at the station. But quite frankly, I was afraid for them. That contraption rattled and shook so badly I thought it was going to fall apart before it got off the ground."

"Were there reporters there this time?" I ask.

Marlin, "No, they decided just this morning to fly. They got Mr. Daniels to snap the shutter on their photomaker. Orv set it up to prove they actually did it." Marlin takes a sip of the tea I sat in front of him, and leans back in the chair with his arms outstretched against the table.

"Well, what happened?" I ask, "Are they all right?"

Marlin speaks slowly and reflectively, "Oh yeah, by the grace of God they're okay."

I ask, "What happened?"

Marlin continues, "We were standing around just laughing and joking. We were next to one of the work cabins. The wing was tied down and every so often the wind would make the thing move. Will was trying to eat a sandwich while every so often we all stop and look at the wing as it shuffled in the wind. Then, without warning a gust of wind pulled a tie stake from the sand and the left side of the wing lifted up and rolled over in the wind. It flipped that wing right over on its side.

I stop what I am doing and look at Marlin, "Was anyone hurt?" I ask.

Marlin nods, "Mr. Daniels was standing next to the contraption when everyone ran over to it to keep it from falling over. Mr. Daniels was caught right in the middle where the engine and chains were."

Marlin picks up several pieces of fruit trying to decide which one to bite.

"Don't hold me in suspense, was Mr. Daniels hurt?"

"Nah," Marlin said.

"Well, go on." I say, as I began to run out of patience.

Marlin continues slowly, "Well, it broke the wing and damaged the engine, the crank shaft I think.

I don't think they are going to fix it here. They started to break it down and pack it up to take it back to Ohio."

I remember to this day, Marlin steps up from the table and walks over to the window and says, "I think God was looking out for those two boys today. That wind gust was a blessing, not a curse."

I sit down at the table with only a blank stare. All I could think of was that day at Kill Devil Hill when I visited Orv, Will, and Lor. I never told Marlin about it. I was going to miss them. I looked up at Marlin standing in the window and swallowed hard, my eyes were watering and I was afraid Marlin might ask about it, so I quickly wiped my eyes and cleared my throat.

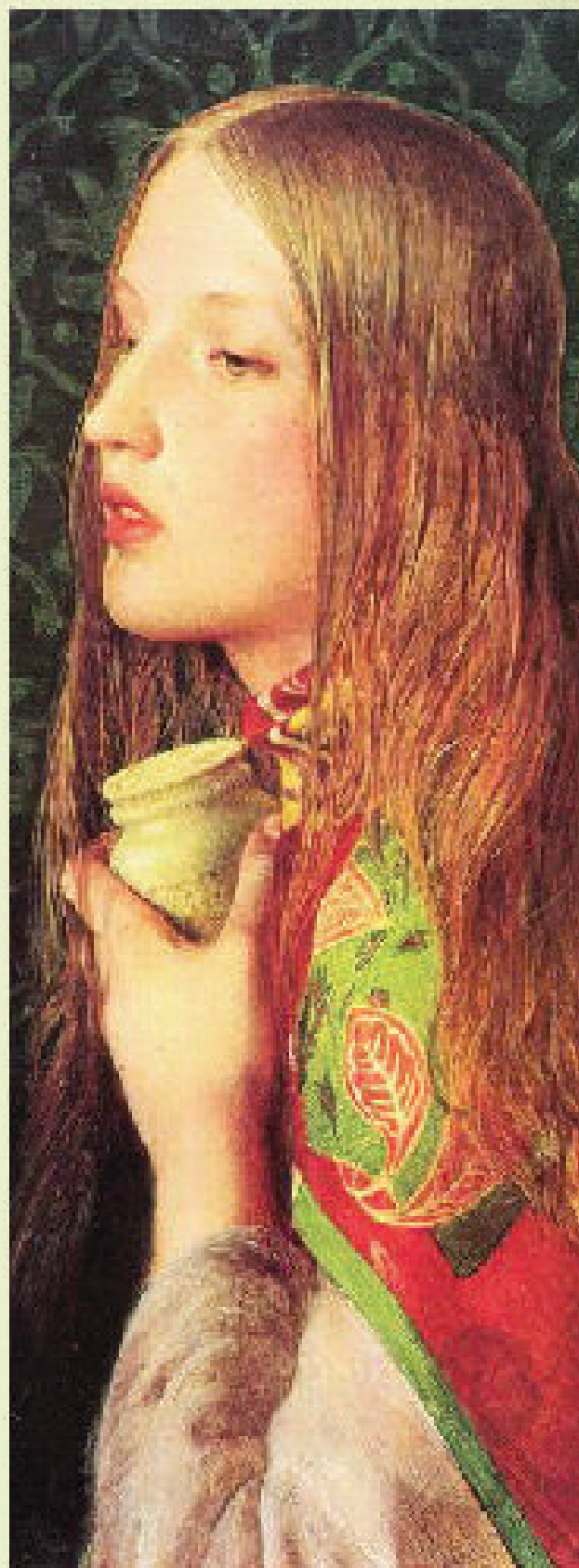
Marlin hears me and turns around, "You say something?"

"No, no." I shook my head.

Later Marlin left to check on Dolphin Watch. I wandered out to Sarah's shed and held her around her neck. All I can concentrate on is the individual hairs on her neck and pull them apart to examine the nap. Why on a day of such triumph, am I so sad?

They've done what they said they were set out to do. Now its over. Am I ever going to see Orv and Will again? I didn't want to admit it to myself, much less Marlin, but I think I have feelings for those two, especially Orville. I force myself not to think about him, but he shows up in my thoughts and dreams. I love Marlin and cannot understand why I feel this way. It is my secret, and my secret alone.

No one but you dear diary must ever know.



Chapter 13

Shipwreck

Diary Entry: December 2, 1905

During one cool, early Spring afternoon in 1905, after a three day storm had past, Marlin fell asleep on his chair with a half read copy of Moby Dick draped open over his lap. I was tired of staying cooped up in the house during the storm, so I decided to take a long stroll down the beach. I quietly opened the door and stepped out leaving my dress behind not expecting to be gone more than an hour or so.

The ocean is still very rough and large waves are crashing against the beach and washing up a hundred feet or more onto the dunes. Sometimes, as I walk down the beach, the surf is fifty feet away and a few seconds later I am nearly hip deep in the surf. The water had turned quite cold so I keep my distance from the surf whenever possible.

About three miles north of the Kitty Hawk Rescue Station is a small wooden building. Sailors from both the Kitty Hawk station and the next station which was about six miles north use the building. Every so often, each station sends someone out to patrol the beach. When they get to the half way building each sailor has to log in the time and date of their patrol.

As I reach this halfway station, I notice a small shrimp boat out in the water.

I wonder, "What in tarnation is a boat doing out so soon after this storm?"

I sit down on the dunes to rest awhile and notice the shrimp boat getting closer. The engine does not appear to be running and it is drifting sideways to shore. I sit back behind some tall sea grass for a while to watch as it drift closer.

After about twenty minutes the boat is being hit on its side by the breaking waves. I thought to myself, "These people are crazy, they are going to wreck their boat." Soon I can tell for sure that the boat is heading in for the beach.

At first, I can see no one on board, then I see a small figure moving from one side of the boat to the other.

"Oh my God, it's a child!" I exclaim to myself.

I look closer but can see no other movement on board. The sea is rough and I am sure if I try to help I would surely drown. Plus, I had come all this long way in my natural skin.

I examine intently down the beach and say to myself, "Where are the fellows from the Rescue Station?"

About that time the boat leans strongly to starboard as it

hits a sand bar near the shore. The boat stops and the waves begin crashing hard against the port bow. As the boat starts to tilt, I can see the small child clearly in the boat. The child will surely drown trying to make it to shore and I could drown if I try to help, but there was no one else around.

I took one step forward, and then another. I don't know what I am doing but I kept stepping forward. The sea is terribly cold and the first two waves knock me back on shore, but I kept moving toward the boat. I am not out far before I can no longer touch the sandy bottom and I feel the current pull me under. "This is it," I think to myself, "I am going to die."

I surface and begin to swim against the current toward the boat. I don't know if I am making any headway against the current or if the boat is being pushed toward me. All I know is the boat is getting closer as my strength is vanishing. I reach the edge of the boat just as water starts pouring into the boat. I look up to see a man with blood all over his face dangling on the rudder pole next to the wheel. I cannot tell if he is alive or dead. Standing next to him looking intently at me is a young boy, hardly nine years old.

I beckon for him to come to me, but he was afraid, and just stands next to the man's body as it swings back and forth against the crashing waves.

I shout, "Come on!" and wave my arms for him to come closer.

After a few seconds he decides to walk toward me as I cling to the side of the boat. He is wearing a heavy coat and hat.

I shout, "Take off your coat!"

He slowly pulls his coat off. I don't know whether to scold him for being so slow or praise him. I'm not looking forward to the return trip.

He takes off his coat and stands on the side of the boat as I yell, "Jump!"

He jumps in and I hold him in my right arm and pray for God's help as I start to swim back.

We barely made it five feet away before another wave crashes against the boat and pushes it almost on top of us. After a minute or so I began to lose my strength just as a wave crashes overhead and both of us are dragged along the ocean floor.

When we finally surface, I do not take time to see how he is doing, I just hold on to him tightly and swim toward shore. Together, we ride the last wave, and land on shore exhausted. The little fellow is all right and didn't cry a lick.

He stands up and looks toward the boat and says, "Papa."

"Oh my God, what am I going to do?" I said to myself. I

thought about stooping down to him to say, "Papa is gone," but I don't know that for sure. Just then the boat tilts strongly to one side and the top pole is dangling just a foot or so above the highest waves.

I know I must have lost my mind at that time, I don't know what got into me. I start back into the water. The boat is closer and the mast is nearly twenty feet long. My plan is to swim to the mast and pull myself the rest of the way to the boat. But now the current is pushing me south away from the boat and I have to swim harder just to keep from losing ground.

I swim till I have no more energy but my arms and legs keep going. Somehow, I reach the stern of the boat and hold on for a minute to catch my breath. Another wave crashes against the boat and the propeller blade cuts against my back. I'm running out of time.

I climb on board, and balance along the side rail of the boat which is now half-sunk, sideways in the sea. The man's coat is caught on the rudder pole so I stretch his shoulder to pull him out of his jacket and he falls into the water and begins to sink. I fall on the deck to grab him and pull him above the water.

Hanging next to the wheel is a dangling hatchet and floating next to the cabin door are several large net corks from a net floating somewhere under water. I grasp the

hatchet with both hands and cut the rope. I pull on the corks but they are attached somewhere inside the flooded cabin. I swing the hatchet against the rope again just as a wave hits the boat. I miss and the hatchet slips out of my hands and disappears under the water. I feel frantically around with my feet but can find nothing but boat.

I reach in desperation and glance into the cabin. Inside the cabin is a large knife swinging side to side against the rocking boat. I pull the man's body up a little so he wouldn't float away and dove into the cabin to grab the knife.

Just as I reach for the knife the boat is hit by another wave and turns more on it's side. The cabin door is now under water and everything is pitch black. I try to imagine where the knife is hanging and reach out, but the knife was not there. I hear only my hard breathing in the small pocket of air.

I let out a, "No!", just as my foot touches something sharp. I take a deep breath, go under and there, I find the knife. I surface in the dark and swing my arms and legs under water looking for the open cabin door. The water is a black brown and I can see nothing. I think to myself, "What will happen to me if I cannot get out?" I kick the side of the cabin with my bare feet in frustration and cry "damn you!", just as my leg kicks through an opening.

As I reach the surface the man's hand is floating next to me and the line of corks are on the other side. I grab the line of corks and chop the rope with the knife against the wheel. A

wave pours over the boat and pushes me under. I surface choking to find the man drifting away from the boat. I took the rope and corks, jump from the boat and clutch the man by his collar. I wrap the corks around him several times and try to begin our trek back to shore.

We make it about fifteen feet from the boat when the twenty foot leading mast snaps and the boat rolls over showing nothing but the bottom of the boat. My energy is all but gone. I pull with all my might, and swim the best I can to get back to shore. I can not see the shore, I do not know even if I am getting closer. Somehow, the spirits are with us. They reach down and pull us up as a wave rolls us in and crashes us both on shore.

Both the little boy and I pull his father higher on the shore away from the waves. But I cannot catch my breath and I am breathing hard and loud. I leaned face down on the beach next to the man on my hands and knees trying to slow my breathing.

The little boy put his hand on his father's chest and shook it back and forth and said, "Papa, wake up Papa."

I cannot tell if the boy's father is breathing or not. I lean over to breathe whatever breath I had left into him.

After a minute or so he opens his glassy eyes and looks up. He blinks a couple of times and looked toward me. Only then do I realize I am naked. The boy turns around to look

down the beach and I lean up to look. Through the mist a pair of galloping horses pulling a wagon of sailors trying to make it's way up the beach through the high surf. I gather whatever energy I have and dash away toward the sand dunes and brush.

About a hundred feet inside the brush I fall to the ground and hold my hand on my chest. Still, I can not catch my breath. I lay there on the sand for several minutes trying to breath before I stagger up to walk through the brush back toward the house.

I am so tired I do not watch where I am walking and step into a large growth of prickly pears. I fall to the ground exhausted, breathless and hurt. I pull the stickers out of my foot and struggle out to the beach. The mist is still heavy so it would be difficult for anyone to see me as I walk down the beach away from the wreck.

Less than a mile down the beach I see Marlin. Marlin runs up to me to say, "What happened, I saw the horses and wagon rumble by the house and thought something had happened to you, are you okay?"

I nod my head, "Yes", then fall exhausted on the sand at his feet. Marlin picks me up and carries me the rest of the way home in his arms.

Marlin doesn't pry and does not demand to immediately know what had happened. He just lets me rest but later was

anxious to know what had happened. He places me on the bed and covers me with a blanket. Marlin goes into the kitchen and shovels out a bucket full of hot cinders and sets the bucket next to the bed.

"Lie next to me Marlin," I ask.

Marlin gets undressed and climbs in bed and wraps his warm arms and body around me.

Several hours later we hear a knock on the door. Marlin gets up to see who it is. It is Raymond Nelson from the Rescue Station. I was resting in the bed and was too exhausted to get up. Marlin told Raymond I was sleep. Raymond didn't stay long but did tell Marlin about the shipwreck.

After he left, Marlin steps into the bedroom and asked, "How are you doing?"

I ask, "What did Raymond want?"

Marlin said, "He just dropped by to see how you were doing."

I just look down at my bare feet sticking out of the covers and held my hand to my brow and took a deep breath as Marlin steps back out of the room.

Several days later Marlin comes home with a very interesting story that he had to tell me. "Rebecca," he said, "I've been

down to the tavern and Captain McGregor was there telling everyone the most fascinating story. It seems that it was Vincent McGregor and his son, Mark, that you pulled from his sinking boat the other day."

I ask, "Do you know him?"

Marlin said, "I've known Vincent for years but have had little dealings with him in the past." "So he was all right?"

Marlin said, "Yes, he's all right, but there are others that aren't so sure."

"What do you mean?"

Marlin sat down at the kitchen table and leaned back in his chair with the widest grin on his face.

Marlin said with some pleasure, "McGregger and his son are telling the story how a mermaid came to pull them from the sea."

"They don't know who I am, do they?" I ask with some concern.

Marlin smiles and says, "No, no. He swears that the most beautiful tiny mermaid carried his son to the shore then came back and dragged him to shore and breathed the breath of life back into him. He said, when he came to, a beautiful lady

mermaid was leaning over him, and in a flash she dashed back into the sea."

"You didn't say anything did you?" I ask.

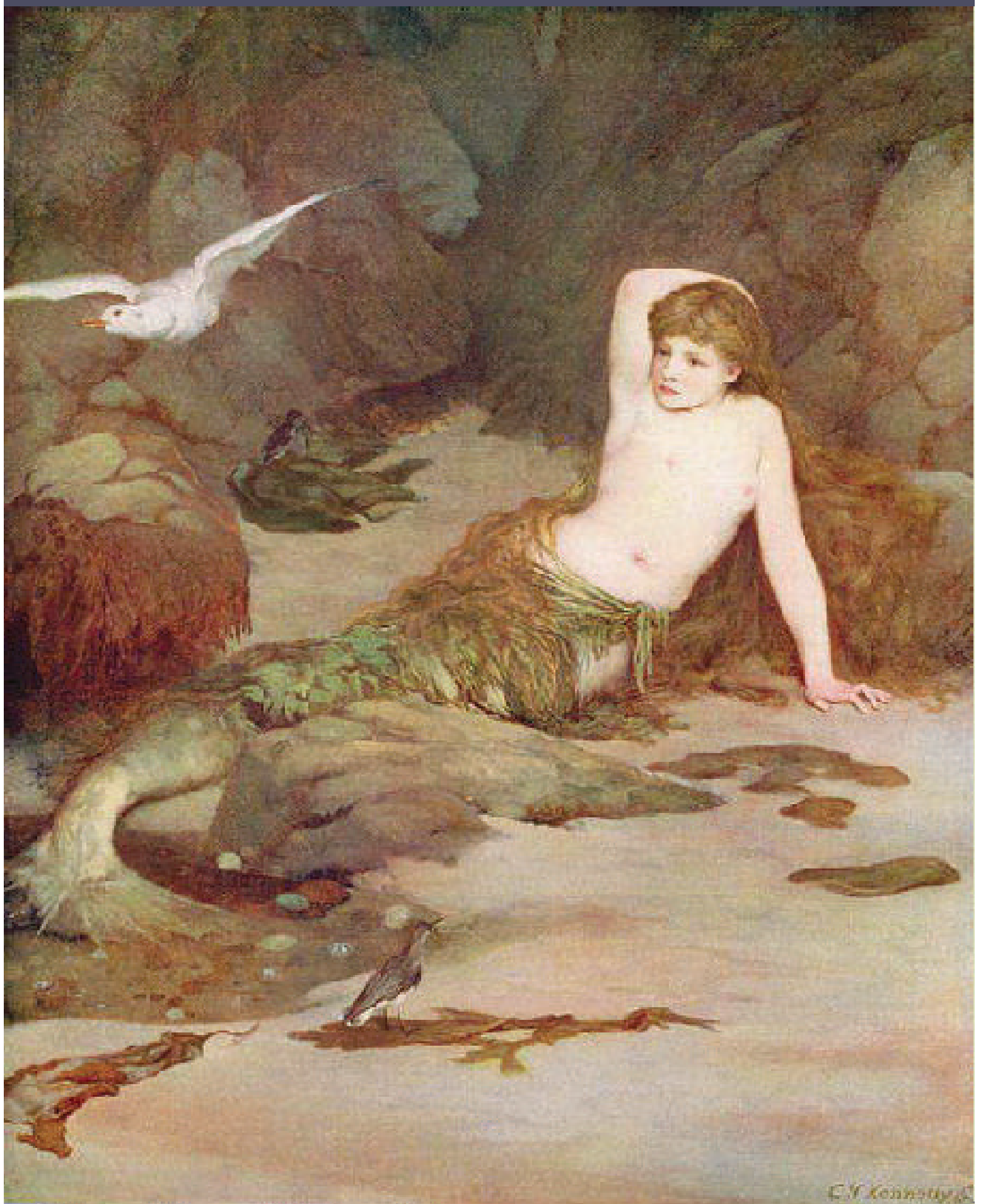
Marlin said, "No, but now I know for sure what happened to you that day. I love you Rebecca."

I stirred the pot on the stove and said, "Marlin, you would have done the same thing."

Marlin said, "Yeah, but I wouldn't have been mistaken for a mermaid."

Although I took it as a compliment, I fling a spoonful of cold soup across his face. He dashes after me but I surrender on the bed.





153. Rebecca, of the Outer Banks

Chapter 14

Lights

Diary Entry: October 26, 1907

When Marlin was out fishing with his nets I never knew when he might walk through that door. Some days his catch was light and Marlin would give up early and come home. Other times his haul was big and he'd spend more time catching fish. On some occasions I knew he was at the market gambling away his day's catch. I overheard Marlin and his uncle talking about it on more than one occasion. In any event, if he was late I knew I just had to take it in stride.

One evening in 1907, he was late and I began to get an unexplained feeling of panic. I said to myself, "He has been late before and there is nothing different about this time."

I looked at the clock and knew for sure he was late. I stirred around a little longer thinking what I could do. I became frantic imagining the worst.

"What if he needs help, what could I do?", I asked myself.

I felt helpless. I looked at the clock and only two minutes had past since the last time I looked. I put on my dress and walked a little ways up the beach on that cloudy moonless night.

It was so dark I couldn't see my hand right in front of my face. The only light to be seen was the single lantern shining from within the house through the windows. I walked back to the house and took three lanterns and placed them in the front window and carried one lantern down with me to the inlet. I could see the light of two boats out at sea but didn't know which was Marlin's. The night dragged on and the longer I waited the more concerned I became.

Both of the lights I saw earlier vanished. I couldn't stand it any longer. I walked down to the rescue station just to see if Marlin might be there. I got there around 9pm and several of the sailors were sitting on the ground floor playing cards. I recognized Raymond Nelson and walked in.

"Rebecca, what are you doing here? Where's Marlin?" Ray asked.

I said, "Oh Ray, I don't know, I'm worried about him. He has never been this late and its so dark out."

Ray asked, "Where did he go? Is he on the ocean or sound side?"

I replied, "He's been fishing on the ocean side and bringing his boat back to the inlet. Ray, I'm worried."

Ray looked at the others and said "Boys." They all scrambled to get their coats on.

"Grab your lanterns! You four, go north, you two stay here, the rest of you come south with me."

I followed Ray with my lantern. No one there knew of his whereabouts but all took the matter very seriously. All ten lit their lamps and walked out to the beach. They walked up and down the beach swinging the lanterns as they walked.

Ray was a tall man and I had to almost run to keep up with him.

"When does he usually come home, Rebecca?" Ray asked.

I replied, "It could be any time, but its never this late."

Ray grumbled sternly under his breath, "Its dark out here. I wouldn't want to be out in any boat tonight. I told them we needed a light tower on this beach."

Finally Ray stopped, I was so tired trying to keep up and just sat down on the sand. The lanterns were so bright I could see nothing beyond a few feet, so I lowered the wick down way low.

After a minute my eyes became adjusted to the dark. Off in the distance there was a light at sea.

I pointed it out and said, "Ray."

Ray looked and said, "That could be almost anybody." It appeared to be coming closer, but no one knew who it was.

One of the other sailors said, "Whoever's out there may think it's just another boat in distress and they're coming to help."

Raymond said, "No, look." He pointed out down the beach. "We have nearly a dozen lamps shining in a row on the beach. They know we are searching for someone."

The light at sea came closer and closer. "That's Marlin." I said.

Ray asked, "How do you know?"

I said "I know the sound of the engine."

Raymond wrinkled his brow and said, "The sound of the engine?"

"Yes," I said, "It's Marlin, I know it is. He's miles further south than he thought he was and there were no lights along the beach to guide him. I know that's Marlin."

Ray beckoned for two of the sailors to row out to the Dolphin Watch. Marlin threw out his anchor and climbed aboard the row boat, and the sailors carried him to the shore.

As Marlin got out of the boat, he asked, "Ray, what's all the commotion about?" It was past 11 pm and Marlin was not about to fool anyone.

"We were worried about you, Marlin." Ray said.

One of the sailors said, "Yeah, you're the first person we saved in six months."

I walked over and gave Marlin a hug, but Marlin didn't like to show affection in public. Instead he scolded me in front of the others.

Marlin chided, "A man goes out to sea to make a living and you worry and make a big fuss over his tardiness?"

He was embarrassed, that he had actually gotten lost. I said with some disrespect, because I was angry that he made me worry, "All you damn seamen think you know everything and won't admit to anyone that you can actually get lost!"

I turned around to walk away, I really wanted my point to ring clear. After a few feet away I realized that it was dark and I couldn't see where I was going. I had to walk back to get my lamp. I grabbed it and turned around with a, "huh!"

Marlin said, "Thank you Ray, I really needed your help, I'll talk to you tomorrow."

Marlin ran up to me and said, "Wait, ride with me back to the inlet, please." Marlin lowered his voice and said, "I was very much afraid because I was running low on fuel. If I were forced to bring the Dolphin Watch ashore anyplace else but the inlet, the waves would have broken her apart. Thank you Rebecca. I needed you."

I said, "But you said..."

Marlin held his finger to my lips and said, "I know what I said, and you're right, seamen don't want to admit that they can get lost."

Marlin and I got in the small rowboat and one sailor carried us back to Dolphin Watch. Both Marlin and I remained quiet until after Dolphin Watch was safely tied in the dock.

We walked up the beach to the house when Marlin turned out the lantern and said, "Its damned dark out here tonight. You can't see anything. Ray is right, we need a lighthouse, he has been trying to get the government to build some kind of light house around here."

I pointed to the house and said, "You see those lights in the window? Do they help?"

"You bet," Marlin said, "but I was still far too south of here. If I knew you had them lit I would have just kept heading north til I saw them."

"Marlin," I said, "from now on every night you are out, regardless of the weather, I'm going to keep those light shining."

Marlin took me by the arm and turned me around, "Rebecca, I love you."

Even in the dark, with the faint light shining on his face from the burning lanterns at the house, I could see a tear sparkle from Marlin's eye.

From that moment on, I kept lanterns lit to illuminate the home beachfront, every nightfall until he arrived home from the sea. Marlin complained a little at first about the excess use of oil. I told him, "Marlin, these are the lights of my passion burning, deep within my soul. When you see them, I am awaiting your return."

This was also my way of getting him home early. Otherwise, he would stop somewhere at sea and waste time to chit chat to some water-sack who has no one at home waiting.

Eventually, other seamen who knew of the lights began to tease Marlin. They could always tell when Marlin was still out at sea because of the lights. Marlin told him the "passion story" and the teasing stopped.

Marlin told to me one day after several seamen had spoken with him, "Rebecca, I'm proud to have you waiting for me.

You know, this old body has developed a time clock. There comes a time when I actually feel your passion reaching out to me and I have to turn that old paddlewheel toward home and into your arms."

Several weeks later, I spent a day with Marlin while fishing on the sound side of the island. Afterward, Marlin carried his catch to the market on the dock near Manteo. Marlin invited me to join him to eat some of his catch at the dock's tavern. While there, Raymond Nelson from the Rescue Station came in with several large rescue sailors. Raymond sat down with us.

"Jefferson," Marlin yelled out, "bring us another strip of those rocks we brought in today."

Jefferson waved his spatula, "Its on it way."

Ray took a big swig of his beer, wiped his mouth with his sleeve and said, "My God woman its good to see you with a smile on your face. Have you been keeping up with this sea wonder?"

I just smiled and looked down.

Ray said, "You know you are the talk on this island since you've been lighting up the outside of you home for us seamen. Marlin took a little ribbing about it..."

Ray stopped for a second and looked at Marlin with a partially intoxicated smile and added, "until we all heard all about his 'luuuove story'."

I laughed and said, "Don't make fun of my man, or you'll feel my wrath!"

Ray nearly spilt his beer with laughter when he said, "Don't I know it, I see the way you treat that mule of yours, and I don't mean Marlin here."

Marlin and I were finished eating and Marlin could tell I was getting a little uneasy with Ray in his condition.

Jefferson brought Ray a big plate of rock fish and Marlin stuck a bill in Jefferson's apron pocket. We got up to leave and Ray walked us to the door.

Just as we reached the door, Captian McGregger, about five foot six inches tall, walked in and stopped for a second and stared at me straight in the eye.

Ray, over six feet two inches tall, saw McGregger staring and reached over in front of me and curled his big burley arm around McGregger's neck and pulled him away.

"Come over here my good Captain," said Ray, "I got some people I want you to meet."

As he pulled Captain McGregor away, I could see McGregor trying to get another look at me over Raymond's shoulder.

Both Marlin and I turned and walked out the door.

"Do you think he recognized me?" I asked.

"After a few drinks with Ray, he won't remember a thing," Marlin laughed.

There was a slight chill in the evening air. Marlin put his arm around my neck and pulled me close.

"Lets go home babe," Marlin said, as we walked down the dock toward a beautiful fall sunset.



Chapter 15

Will

Diary Entry: December 12, 1912

It is the Spring of 1911, I am jolted awake with severe stomach cramps. I try to stand in hopes that I can make the cramps go away, but instead, my knees buckle and I fall to the side of the bed.

Marlin awakens and looks disoriently to one side of the bed then the other, and ask,

"Rebecca, where are you, are you alright, what happened?"

"I don't know," I said as I hold my side, "I've got a pain in my stomach, I can't make it go away."

Marlin gets up and rushes around the bed and reaches down to pick me up, then sits me back on the side of the bed.

"I've got to go outside," I said brushing the perspiration from my forehead, "maybe some fresh air will help."

As I step outside I fall to the sand, one hand gripping a fistful of sand while holding my stomach with the other.

Marlin comes running out the door still putting on his shirt, bents down to ask, "What is it you need, what can I do?"

"Nothing," I said leaning over from nausea. I stood up and began to walk away from the cabin. Marlin follows, but I wave my hand to tell him to stay back as I carefully weave my bare skin through the wirey brush.

I'm drawn through the brush, as if I were being told to turn this way, then that way. After a couple of minutes I come to a clearing. Over on the side of the clearing under a small scrub is a deer giving birth. A young buck only several minutes old is sitting upright next to his mother. But the mother is still in labor. She's breathing hard and can not raise her head. Two tiny feet are protruding just outside the womb.

I bend down and gaze into the mother's eyes as they become glassy and her labored breathing stops. She can no longer show me the treasured secrets of life.

I reach out and pull the two tiny feet. It's head was turned around and could not come through the opening. As I reach in I feel the mother's muscles relax as she leaves her body. I fumble the baby's head around and pull him through.

He's as limp as a dish rag and isn't breathing. I blow air into his nose, but it has no effect. I've always heard stories about slapping babies so I slap his butt, still nothing. I hold him up and gaze into his half open eye and demand, "Live dammit!". I don't know

what to do, so I place my mouth on his and begin to breathe for him. After a minute or two he lets out a little sneeze and starts to breathe on his own.

I took them both back to the house and placed them on a towel in front of a fire. Marlin just stood there with his mouth open. I had the mother's blood streaked down over my body.

"What did you do?" he asked.

Get me some water." I said.

Marlin gets the water and bents down beside me. He says "Sometimes I can't believe you. You walk out of here making me think you were going to die or something and come back with two baby deer. Where's the mother?"

I wipe the babies clean and say to Marlin, "Get me a small clean jar."

"What for?" he asked.

"Dammit Marlin, just get me a clean jar."

"Don't yell," Marlin protests, "I just want to know why the hell you want a jar."

Marlin knelt down beside me and hands me a jar and I get up to walk out of the house.

Marlin was left kneeling on the floor with the babies and said, "What in tarnation are you..." and got up to follow me out the door.

Marlin follows as I weave my way back to the mother deer and kneel down beside her to get all the milk she had. Marlin knelt beside me and didn't say a word.

When we got back to the house I took one of Marlin's rubber gloves and pierced a tiny hole in one of the fingers and pulled the glove over the jar. The first born was quick to take to it and began to nurse, but the second born remains almost lifeless.

I place a tiny drop of milk on his nose but he refuses to take any of it. So I open his mouth with my fingers and squirt a tiny bit into his mouth. But, when I close his mouth the milk just drips out the side of his lips. He will not swallow. The first born had nursed over half of the jar of milk and I am determined to get the rest of it down the second born.

Marlin did not take Dolphin Watch out that day, but instead, helped me with the newborns. Marlin milked the cow and began to feed the first born cow's milk. He was a bit hesitant but soon began to empty one jar after another.

I stayed with the second born all day just to get a few drops of mother's milk down his throat.

I spoke to him softly. "You've got to have the will to live, you must have will!"

After a while I felt his name was "Will" since I repeated it to him over and over.

Marlin named the first born "Luke" because Marlin thought he was drinking like one of his old friends down at the marketplace , "Lucas Bates".

I knew if Will was going to live, he would have to make it through his first night. I stayed up all night stroking his tiny body and keeping it warm. I held my finger to his mouth and even held him close to my breast hoping that he would find the urge to nurse. Every half hour or so I tried to get a few more drops of milk into him. By morning he was able to hold his head up on his own but was still obstinate about nursing.

It took three days before he had the energy to stand on all four feet without falling down. A day later he could walk, and two days after that he was able to run and kick up his heels with his brother!

Will never really learned to like to nurse, but Luke charges after the bottle any time he sees it. Soon we had them both drinking water without a bottle. Luke still wants to nurse from a bottle and even drink water from an open jar. I'd just turn it up and he drank, spilling a little off the side of his cheeks, till it is empty.

Luke grew strong with big bones but Will was small boned and often sick or weak.

It was fun watching both of them grow. Soon they grew antlers. They stood back from each other assessing the opponent then charge, crashing their heads together. Often, even while I work in the house I can hear them crack their heads together.

Luke disappeared for days at a time but Will always could be seen near the house.

I gave Will grain every so often to help fatten him up. Will has become very much like the dog I never had. He always follows me on my walks up the beach. Sometimes we met strangers and Will even lets them approach and allows them to touch him.

Several afternoons that Summer and Fall while Marlin was out on Dolphin Watch, I'd spend time with Sarah, the mule, and Will, my baby deer. Sarah was quiet and often rested for hours standing up next to me while I read several of my books over and over again. Will, full of energy darts back and forth on the beach playing "catch me" with the surf. Later, Will can not understand my fascination with the pages in the book, but eventually surrenders his inquisitiveness and sits down a few feet away, next to Sarah and me.

One day he steps close and looks carefully at the open book while I am reading. He smells them in curiosity and looks intently back at me. He rubs a page with his nose and upper lip, then quickly grabs a page in his mouth and tears it off. I yell, "No!" and try to grab it back, but Will was twenty feet away in less than a second, chewing on his stolen page, thinking, "I can't see what she sees in this old dry crusty paper."

Later he slowly steps closer, but I turn my back on him and will not let him get within two feet of my book. After a few minutes, I hear a tiny "baaa". He thinks I am rejecting him, so I close the book and turn to him and offer my hand. He steps up and licks the salt from my hand. I rub his fur back as he kneels next to me, lies on his side and rests his head and neck across my folded legs. I pick up the book as his bug-eyes stair up at me to see what I'm doing. So I began to read softly to him. After a chapter or two, a stick from a nearby tree fell to the ground and snapped. Sarah awakens startled, but its back to sleep again. In that instant, Will scrambles to his feet and ran full speed kicking sand all over me and the book. He ran one hundred feet away before he realized it was only a stick.

My legs were a bit stiff from him resting on them, so I shook the sand off the book, call out "Come on Will!" and stand to stretch my legs. Will looks cautiously back toward the tree where the stick fell, and walks slowly toward me. I brushed the sand off and step out into the water to drift silently in the small breaking waves. Will wants to join in, but minutes later yells out a scream instead. The breaking waves were small so I let myself drift in. Will dashes out toward me then runs back before the next wave drops. Soon he gets the nerve to jump a wave and swims out to me.

Even though the water was shallow enough for me to stand, he had to keep kicking his feet to swim circles around me. So I began to play hide and seek with him. I dove in and swam underwater for a few seconds, surfacing twenty feet away or more. When he spots me his eyes grow wider and he turns

quickly to swim toward me. We play ten to fifteen minutes before a large mackerel broke the surface near him, that was all it took, and he was back on shore in a moment.

I step out of the cool ocean water feeling the warm afternoon sun drenching my body on a beautiful windless day. I step up to Sarah to feel her sun warmed coat against my skin. She turns her head to me as I grab a handful of her mane and pull myself up. Sarah immediately begins walking north along the beach and surf, with Will trotting along behind.

I lay by head on her mane and dangle my arms and legs on her side as she becomes the Captain of my afternoon ride. I look back, and Will is far behind examining something interesting he found on the beach. Moments later I hear his galloping feet against the sand as he whizzes by at full speed, turns toward the dune and in a single leap, clears twenty feet and lands five feet higher on the dunes and disappears into the brush. A moment later, a rabbit jumps out of the brush and onto the beach, looks at Sarah and me, then back to the brush as if to say, "What was that?" Then tiptoes back into the brush before we get any closer.

During Will's first winter, there was a strong, cold storm that lasted five days. I let Will, who was about the size of a large dog by then inside to keep warm. I was unsure how Marlin felt about having Will in the house and I didn't want to hear him fuss, so I was sure to keep Will's beanie pellets cleaned up.

During the storm, Raymond and Mike from the rescue station drop by the house to visit with Marlin and me. Will is startled

when they step in the door and for a few seconds he runs in place on the wood floor then slides down the hall to hide from the visitors. After about a half hour, Will sticks his head into the room and slowly creeps up to meet Raymond and Mike.

Both are very taken by the young deer living in a house during a bad storm. Mike is a little cautious about petting Will but Raymond rubs and scratches him so hard I wonder if Will really likes it or not. But Will just stands there and lets Ray scratch away.

The next day, Noah, Chris and Bret from the rescue station comes by because they had heard about Will and wanted to see him for themselves. They all sit quietly, just smiles and outstretched hands as Will steps cautiously up to examine each one.

Each say, "hello boy, hello Will, when Marlin becomes the voice of Will. Marlin says,

"Does this one have anything to eat? No, don't touch my ears, I don't like anyone touching my ears. Phew! Momma, this one smells bad."

Everyone has a good time, including Will.

The following Spring, we saw Luke only about once a month or so, often in the company of a doe or two. But Will pops out of anywhere he was hiding nearly every day. Even one day he pops out from underneath the house where he apparently

spent the night. Whenever I step out onto the beach, before long, there too is Will, a big strapping buck nearly as tall as my five foot self, with a beautiful set of antlers.

One late Spring day, the water was warming enough to play again in the rolling waves. While I am floating and rolling in the surf, Will steps out onto the beach and meanders down into the surf to greet me. He paws the sand and water and snorts loudly from his nostrils, in an attempt to get me out of the water to meet him. He sees I'm having too much pleasure playing in the surf and splashes in to visit me.

Now Will was a bit larger and stronger now, and those antlers were something to avoid. He swims directly out to me and I grab his antlers before he tries to poke at me with them. I hold onto them and he swims in circles around me. I don't know why, but I drape a leg over him in an attempt to ride him as I float in the water. He doesn't like that a bit and bucks wildly in the water going down deep enough to touch the sand then pushes himself, and me, higher above the water. I let go, he or I am going to get hurt. As I do he swims around to get closer to me and I swim back toward shore, but he follows very close. I dive under and swim to the side underwater as long as possible to avoid him. As I surface, he is trotting up out of a breaking wave heading toward shore. He turns and lets out a loud snort. I keep an eye on him as I step carefully out of the surf. As he comes closer I yell and splash the water. He keeps his distance until I reach the dry sand. He steps quietly toward me as we stair eye to eye.

"You're too big to play anymore, I can get hurt." I tell him. He seems to know and licks the salty water from his front leg. He looks at me again and snorts a little snort. "No!, I say." I shout as he turns to walk away. A few feet further, he stops and turns his head toward me as if to say, "Are you sure?" I lift my left leg and stomp my foot in the sand. He looks a bit confused, but turns back around and trots back into the brush.

Later that week, I was washing some of Marlins fishing clothes in a tub just outside the door on the sand. Will makes his appearance through the brush and stands about fifty feet away watching me splashing around in the soapy water and beating the wet clothes against a pole.

After about twenty minutes, I sit in a chair to rest and Will steps forward a few steps at a time. While still sitting in the chair, I lift my foot and stomp it. He shutters and runs back a few feet.

"Oh I'm sorry Will, I'm not mad at you, come here." As I step toward him he isn't sure of my intentions, so I stop and raise my hands out to him, "Will, I'm sorry, I didn't mean to yell at you,

I'm sorry." A few moments later he steps up to me and I scratch him on his chin. He tries to lick my hand but now he has bigger teeth and I have some respect for that. I am amazed how beautiful he has become. He's still not as strong looking as his brother Luke, but he looks like he's going to

make it. I hug him around the neck but he pulls back cautiously. "That's good

Will, you really shouldn't let people walk up to you, not all people are good to critters like you."

After a minute or two I turned away to walk back to the house and Will follows. I turn around and shew him away with my hands, "No, its not safe hanging around here, go back, find yourself a girlfriend!" He looks at me in astonishment, I wonder if I gave him an idea. He turns around and disappears back into the brushline.

One August morning, Marlin was preparing to go out. I looked out the kitchen window and there, just inside the brushline is Will, and off to the side was something else moving.

"Marlin, come here, come look at this, that's Will, what is that movement over there?"

Marlin stands by me at the window, Will steps out from the brushline, but the other movement seems to have vanished. "I don't know," Marlin says as he steps over to open the side door.

"Wait! Look!" I whispered as I pointed to the window.

Marlin turns around and stands with me by the window. While Will stands in the clearing next to the house, a doe begins to meander in and out on the edge of the brushline. It was the most beautiful image I could ever see. It was as if we

were the ones that had given birth to this beautiful new life of companionship and love. Marlin smiles and holds my hand tightly as we both watch intently, spellbound and enchanted through the window.

After a moment I hear a choked voice say, "I love you Rebecca."

I turn to Marlin and kiss him as tears trickel down across my cheeks.

One November afternoon that 1912, Marlin and I took a leisurely stroll down the beach. On the way back we decide to walk along the sandy automobile pathway. When we get close to the only store in Kitty Hawk, I notice there are six men gathered around an automobile next to the store. They were all drinking beer and laughing. Marlin, always the talker, steps up to greet them as I follow.

As the men were conversing with Marlin, one man steps around to the front of the automobile and grabs something and raises it up over the hood. At first, my eyes refuse to believe it, the man is holding up Will's lifeless body by his antlers.

"Look, one shot right between the eyes," he said.

Another man slapped him on his back and said, "Dead eye Dick you are, boy," commenting on his marksmanship.

I just stood there, I couldn't believe any of this was real.

Marlin walks up to Will's lifeless body and says "Yeah", and strokes Will on the neck.

A tear that only I could see came to his eye, he loved that little creature as much as I did. I began to cry.

One of the men said, "Put that thing down boy, there's a lady present here."

Marlin reaches over and takes my hand as we walk towards the house.

As we walk away the men start laughing and praising each other about their manhood. I look up at Marlin as he just looks straight ahead and keeps walking without saying another word. He is squeezing my hand till it hurt, but I chose not to say a word about it.

That evening neither of us said anything. We had dinner, cleaned up, and as usual,

Marlin sat in his chair and I rested curled up in his lap. For the first few minutes we are quiet.

Then I feel a drop of water on my hand. I look up and Marlin's cheeks are quivering and his face is covered in tears. He says, "That doe's going to miss him." Soon we were both bathed in each other's tears, as we just sat quietly into the night, remembering.

Chapter 16

Change

Diary Entry: December 16, 1915

On the morning of January 15, 1915, I went out to feed Sarah as usual. She did not walk out to greet me. I thought maybe she was out eating grass so I looked up one way, she was not there. So I looked up the other way, she was not there either. I thought, maybe she's still asleep, so I stepped into her shed to surprise her. I stood there for a few seconds looking at her laying on the ground. I knew, I just knew... she wasn't sleeping. I walked over, kneeled down beside her and placed my hand on her neck. I could not believe she could be so still.

I squeezed the hair on her neck and said, "I love you girl, goodbye old buddy, I'm going to miss you."

I began to rub her neck hard, as I tried to hold back the tears. Then I fell on her quiet and still head, weeping.

I stood up and started to walk to the house. Marlin stepped out of the house on his way to the boat and could tell something wasn't right.

"What's wrong?", Marlin questioned.

"Sarah's dead," I mumbled as I continue walking.

Marlin glared, "No, it can't be," and walked over to see for himself.

I could not believe the life behind her eyes was gone. I'd never again see her big floppy ears perk up when I stepped outside, I'd never again feel of that big bulky body under me as we rode down the beach and into the surf.

I entered in the house and sat quietly in Marlin's chair, watching the ocean while Marlin dug a grave next to the shed and rolled her over into it.

Three days later I heard the loud clitter clatter and walked out on the porch to see what was making that god awful noise. It was Marlin driving up in a Model "T" truck. Marlin got out of the truck and slammed the door and it bounced open, he slammed it a second time and it bounced open still again. He tried once more then just walked away with the door hanging open.

Marlin looked up at me on the porch and said, "We can thank Lucas for the truck, he's been owing me money for a long time, I collected today."

Marlin chuckled and spoke under his breath, "Poker's not his game."

Marlin walked up the stairs and said, "Now that Sarah's gone, it was time to collect, you need transportation."

"I need transportation, where would I go in that thing?" I protested.

"It's not the truck is it?" Marlin said as he looked into my eyes.

Marlin knew I didn't approve of gambling, so I didn't give him my customary hug and kiss. He just stood there waiting.

He took off his hat and wiped the sand from his eyebrows and said, "Want to go for a ride?"

I'd never been in a motorcar before so I stepped back into the house, grabbed my dress and tried not to break a smile as I walked back out and called, "Come on."

Marlin smiled from ear to ear as he lifted the brim of his hat to watch me walk down the stairs.

I turned around and said, "Well, are you coming?"

He said, "Yes ma'am!" and trotted down the steps behind me.

I climbed in, while Marlin stepped in front to crank her up.

"She's a little fussy at times," Marlin said, "but sometimes she cranks right up." Just then the truck began to shake and rattle, but she started right up with a loud POP!

He got in and slammed the door once, twice and a third time. Finally, just held the door closed with his elbow in the window.

We rode out to the automobile path and down all the way to Nag's Head where there were several other beach houses. It looked as though no one was home.

Marlin said, "They just live here in the summertime."

As we turned around we almost got stuck in some deep sand. Then the truck choked out .

Marlin looked at me with a little worried smile, like "that's all right, she'll start right up again."

He jumped out to crank her up. He tried once, twice, then a third time. Then he took a deep breath and cranked her around hard. Spit, spit, sputter, POP, then nothing.

Marlin put his foot up to rest a bit and a piece of the bumper fell off. He was upset but didn't want me to know

about it. It was all I could do to keep from giggling at the situation. He picked up the bumper part and dropped it into the wooden truck bed, and sighed.

Marlin walked back in front of the truck, one hand on his elbow, the other hand folding his lips. He stood back and grabbed the crank and twisted it around purposefully and she started right up, without a sputter or a pop. He smiled all over himself and said loudly over the chattering of the engine, "Yep!"

Privately, I was thinking, "Lets get this thing back home and I won't ever ask for another ride." We did make it back, and I never asked to go on any tours again.

The truck really was reliable. Marlin said often, "You just have to know how to handle her." Whenever I heard him say that, I gave him a little stare to one side and a bit of a grin. You see, he knew just how to handle me, too.

He drove that truck nearly every day to transport fish from the boat to the marketplace. He said it saved time, which meant to me that Marlin would come home a little earlier.

Before the truck, I'd watch for Marlin to come home, or listen for the creaky stairs. Now it was a distant "putter putter" that told me, "He's almost home."

Dairy entry: August 8, 1919

In the Summer of 1919, ferry boats were carrying in people and their automobiles. I was sitting next to the house trying to mend some of Marlin's fishing nets when I heard this loud engine roar. A few seconds later it roared again.

"Someone is stuck again and they are bound and determined to sink that automobile right in the sand," I said to myself.

It was pretty close to the house and I knew whoever it was would walk up to the house sooner or later. I slipped on my dress and walked out to the automobile path before whoever it was blew their engine. The automobile was as deep in the sand as it could get, and the driver was still kicking up sand trying to move it forward.

I stepped up to the driver and waved to him through the window. He was a nervous little fellow, bound and determined to get that thing out on its own.

He rolled down the window and said, "Uh, how do you do ma'am."

I said, "You're stuck." He looked disappointed to hear that, so I said, "You're stuck, you can't get out that way."

He looked flustered and said, "What do you suggest?"

"Wait for a pull," I answered.

"Well how long will that take?" he said with some impatience.

I looked up the road and said, "Not long, I think everyone within a mile knows you are stuck."

He abruptly got out and walked around examining his impossible situation. "Whom do you know that can help?" he asked.

I smiled and pointed down the road. Here comes Jack Rand about a quarter mile down the road walking behind his two mules all hitched up and ready to pull.

"What's he going to do?" he asked.

"Pull you out," I replied.

"He can't put those chains on this. It'll scratch the paint." He said with worry in his voice.

Jack walked up with long steps as the mules pulled him along, chains jingling with one long chain dragging along behind. "Whoo!", Jack called as he pulled the mules to a stop.

Jack looked at him with a cigar butt in his mouth and said, "You look stuck sir, need any help?"

"I can't scratch the paint, you can't scratch the paint, this is not my automobile, I'm just the driver. I'm here to pick up some people, and I'm late. Can you pull me out without hurting the paint?"

"Sure, got a buck?"

"Got a what?" the fellow asked with some surprise.

"A buck, a dollar."

"A dollar?" the fellow asked with surprise. He looked at me as if to say, "Can you believe that?" I just smiled.

He reached into his pocket and pulled out a dollar. Jack held out his hand. The nervous little fellow handed it to him as if Jack was holding out a gun. Jack stuffed it in his overalls and pulled the mules around to the rear of the automobile.

Jack hooked the chains and yelled out for the mules to pull. "Yea, move it mules, pull . . . pull!"

The automobile slowly moved back out on the packed automobile path. The fellow scrambled to get back in, started it up and drove slowly away. Both Jack and I watch as he nearly got stuck again on one side, then pulled to the other side and sunk again in the sand. He gunned the engine just enough to sink in back in good.

I looked at Jack. Jack smiled with that cigar stuck between his teeth and turned the mules around to offer his assistance once again. For the fun of it, I followed.

Jack drove the mules beside his car and stopped them and looked into the automobile window and said, "You look stuck again sir, need any help?"

The embarrassed fellow just nodded, "Yes."

"Got a buck?"

The fellow's eyes blinked open in surprise, "I just gave you a buck!"

Jack said, "Yeah, I know, and I just gave you a pull. If you got a buck, you get a pull."

The fellow started the engine again and turned a rear wheel until it whined in the sand. Then he turned the engine off, rolled down the window all the way and handed Jack another dollar.

Jack said, "Thank you sir." Jack spit on the sand and snapped the mules and said, "Come-on mules."

He pulled him out again and the fellow started down the road again, sliding to one side then another. Jack turned to me and said, "Good day Rebecca, see you later, that city slicker's going to keep these mules busy." Jack jingled back

down the road calling out, "Come-on mules."

Jack Rand earned a small fortune from weekend motorists at a-dollar-a-pull. Marlin joked that city folk come to Kitty Hawk to see the ocean, birds, and eventually, Jack's mules.

Diary entry: May 8, 1920

Christmas 1919, another storm that blew in from the northeast, lasting for days. The wind persisted day in and day out, and the waves battered the shore. After several days of northeast wind, the wind shifted and began to blow from the east. The ocean rose and flooded the island. Marlin had covered the large ocean windows with boards, but I could still see the ocean through the cracks. Waves were crashing just outside the window and I could hear the water splashing against the brick piers and washing under the house. The brick piers were about six feet high and six feet in the ground. Both of us were very concerned because the island was flooded and there was no place for us to go.

I asked Marlin, "Will the foundation hold?"

Marlin said, "Oh yeah, houses are built on this island to withstand anything."

I knew Marlin was just keeping up a bold front for me. He was just as concerned as I was.

Then we heard a crumble which sounded like bricks falling.

Marlin went to open the door to see what it was but the ocean was so high a wave poured in the door.

Marlin slammed the door and said, "We'll see what that was later."

The water stayed high for two days. To make matters worse it was a new moon late in the winter which makes the oceans higher than usual. During high tide, on the second day we could actually feel the house rise in the water and slam back down on the brick piers.

After all these days of constant wind, I believed the land was exhausted and Marlin and I were feeling that exhaustion.

Finally, the wind quieted, and Marlin and I walked out to see the results of the storm.

The house was usually six feet off the sand. Now when Marlin opened the door the sand came right up to the bottom of the door. We just stepped right out onto the sand. All of the small trees were covered with sand. We could see only the tips of the trees sticking out of the sand.

Marlin headed around the corner of the house to see if there was any damage when I heard, "Oh no."

I followed Marlin's voice and found him staring at the place where our truck was parked. Only about one foot of the

truck's cab was sticking out of the sand. Marlin bent down to peek inside, all he could see was the top of the steering wheel.

He shook his head and said, "She'll never run again."

Then he stood up abruptly and started taking long strides toward the beach and the inlet.

The boat! I completely forgot about the boat.

We walked out to the beach and I turned around and stopped short. I could hardly believe my eyes. Nearly 200 feet of beach and dune was formed by the storm in front of the house. It was incredible to see land where sea water once lapped against the shore. I raced down the beach to catch up with Marlin and as we strode down to the inlet, neither of us said a word.

When we got to the place where the inlet was supposed to be, there was nothing but more beach and dunes. Marlin looked at me in disbelief.

We climbed up the dune and looked over into what once was a beautiful clear inlet pond. The pond was completely filled with sand. There was only shallow water covering where the deep inlet once cut through. Off to the side was Dolphin Watch, all scratched up and leaning on her side in about a foot of water. The paddlewheel was completely torn away, gone.

Marlin said, "At least she's still here."

I said, "Well even if you fix her up, how are you going to get her back into the water? You can't push her out against the waves can you?"

Marlin said, "I don't know, let me worry about one thing at a time."

Marlin and I walked back to the house to finish surveying the damage.

The one thing that didn't seem to be damaged by the storm was the house, but eventually, we had to raise it above the sand level. Marlin just left the truck where it was. He never attempted to try to dig it out.

Several of Marlin's fellow fishermen, including Captain McGregor and his son, Mark, now a strapping young man, hitched up a team of six mules to Dolphin Watch. They chose low tide on a day when the water rolled with small waves to pull her out to the ocean. At high tide three shrimp boats were waiting to pull her out to deep waters on the rising tide.

Captain McGregor and two other shrimp boat captains ankored their boats off shore while Mark and two other fishing mates drove the mules as they pulled Dolphin Watch out of the sand and to the edge of the beach.

Marlin walked up to me and said, "Rebecca, this is Mark McGregor. He is one of only a few fishermen around here

that have actually seen a real mermaid."

Mark was pulling in a rope from one of the shrimp boats off shore to tie to Dolphin Watch. He said, "Yes ma'am. I was on my Papa's fishing boat when Papa got knocked out when a large wave hit starboard. The boat was sinking when a beautiful mermaid appeared out of the water to helped me swim back to shore."

I said, "Really, are you sure it was a mermaid?"

He said, "Yes ma'am, she was beautiful with big bare breasts."

I looked over at Marlin with embarrassment. I surely hope that no one else knew the real story.

"Then, I stood on the beach as I watched her go back out to bring Papa in off the sinking boat."

"I helped the mermaid pull Papa out of the water, and Papa wasn't breathing, so the mermaid breathed the breath of life back into him. When Papa opened his eyes he saw the mermaid too, before she disappeared back into the water. And that's a true story, every word, I swear."

Marlin said, "His papa too, Captain McGregger, out there on that first boat, swears by the same story."

Mark said, "Yep, we owe our lives to that mermaid."

Mark looked up to the sky and shielded his eyes against the

sun and said, "Every day when we are on the water I pray that someday she'll return."

Marlin put his arms around me and said, "I'm sure she will son, I sure she will."

They hitched Dolphin Watch to the shrimp boats and pulled her out in the rising tide. They towed her around to the sound side and docked her where Marlin spent the better of two months patching her up.

Marlin asked me to give her that special marble look again, but from that time on Dolphin Watch never carried that distinctive paddlewheel again. Marlin replaced it with a propeller.

Diary entry: June 24, 1926

Captain McGregger took ill several years ago and is no longer able to work his boat. Mark and his father, Vincent, opened a fish marketplace on a dock at the edge of the bay.

Marlin, on a cargo run in 1926, saw the marketplace and docked Dolphin Watch there on the water's edge. Marlin saw Mark, and shared a beer with him.

Marlin told me that Mark had painted a dozen bare breasted mermaids, with long flowing hair, on the sides of his marketplace, all around the building.

Everyone in town seemed to have no doubt, that the mermaid story that the McGreggers told was true.

Diary entry: December 8, 1928

Both Orv and Will have gone on to make history breaking flying record after flying record. We received a postcard from Orv when he was in France. He wrote, "Rebecca, I'm going to show these Frenchmen how to lean to the left." Orv always tried to be humorous. Sometimes, it was more humorous when no one got the punch line and Orv had to explain a joke. He'd start out so confident with his joke, then about halfway through he'd realize that no one thought it was funny, and slowly quieted down and stopped his explanation, often in mid-sentence.

I never saw Will again. I read in the papers where he died of typhoid fever in 1912.

I received several other postcards from Orv through the years, but I only sent him a note once or twice at The Wright Company's address.

In 1928, during the 25th anniversary of that first flight, Orv came back to Kitty Hawk. Marlin and I went to the celebrations and Orv introduced me to some of his friends as "The First Lady of These Outer Banks." Somehow, I think Marlin got to him first and told him that line. It was too much of a coincidence that both would come up with the same thing.

Orv took me over to the side of the room and reached into his pocket and pulled out a pocket watch. He pressed his thumb on the top and opened it.

"It's my good luck charm," he said, "I've never been a day without it." Pasted to the inside of the lid was a piece of my old dress.

Diary entry: July 18, 1930

Times were tough because the automobile ferry boats had taken away almost all of Marlin's ferrying business. Marlin got a loan in 1929, from a bank and with it he bought a used Model "T" car. Marlin took the rear seats out to make room to carry fish to the market. The Bridge and Ferry Company was preparing to build a bridge across the sound. Dozens of barges carried long pilings to the island and left them in large stacks along the sound shore. Marlin's loan was enough to purchase twenty-four pilings from the Bridge and Ferry Company and paid to hire several men to jack the house up and plant those pilings deep in the sand under the house. Some time shortly thereafter, the banks failed and the nation went into a depression.

After the Christmas storm in 1919, we noticed that almost twenty feet of the new beach washed back into the sea. Each year after that, three to five feet more of the new land was washed back into the sea.

I remember Marlin saying, "We're going to loose possibly three to five feet of this beach each year until it gets back to where it was before the storm."

Marlin was partly right, sometimes we lost three feet of beach and just weeks later, the beach was back. Most of the sand that wash away stayed just off shore to wash right back depending on the direction of the wind and surf. The beach seemed to have stabilized now, but a number of people have started to build small cabins on top of the new beach. Barges and trucks carry in old barracks from Newport News and Norfolk and cranes lifted them in place on shallow piers as beachfront summer cottages. It seemed to be a "make do with as little as possible" time.

Diary entry: May 12, 1936

In the Winter of 1936, Marlin and I were sitting quietly in the house reading during another strong northeaster. Marlin stood up and looked out the window, "Come here," he said.

I stood up and looked out the window with him, and low and behold, just as Marlin had predicted, one of those new cottages was off its piers and washing slowly into the ocean.

I gasped, "Whose cottage is that?"

"I think it's the one that belongs to that stockbroker in Portsmouth."

"The one that has all those kid's?" I asked.

"Yeah, I think so, look, the surf is pulling it across the beach."

"Get a chair," Marlin said anxiously, "I want to see this. I told you this was going to happen. Watch, its going right out in the ocean."

I stared and in amazement, I whispered, "Can you believe that?"

We watched it for nearly an hour as each strong surf pulled it closer and closer to the ocean.

Marlin pointed, "Look, the front is lifting up in the water, its turning around . . . there it goes, it floating in the water." Marlin looked at me with a wide smile.

I said, "You shouldn't take pleasure in someone else's misery."

"Yeah," Marlin laughed, "but they're not here. When they get back, all they are going to find is a sandy lot where their cottage use to be. Can you imagine their faces when they pull up in their driveway? The kids will say, 'Daddy, where's the house?'"

"Marlin, that's cruel," I chided.

"I told them they had to do better than just sticking a half dozen poles in the sand about six feet deep. Whoo, look, the waves are splashing higher than the cottage."

"Its coming this way, its getting closer," I yelled in excitement. "What if it lands back up in front of us, does it belong to us?"

"We don't want it, unless you use it for wood in the stove."

"Look, its going to float right past," I said.

"No," Marlin wondered, "its starting to sink, water is getting inside."

"Marlin, you don't think anybody is in it do you?"

"No, that place is vacant all winter long."

"Wow," I gasped, "its straight out in front of us now, it looks like a house boat."

Marlin spoke quietly, "It can't last long with those waves rocking it around like that."

I was imagining sitting on the front porch of that cottage when a huge wave broke right on the porch and crashed through the front door.

"That's it!" Marlin said, "She's going down now!"

"It's on the bottom, I voiced quietly, "it stopped moving, its only about five feet of water there."

"It's only a matter of time now," Marlin proclaimed.

A wave crashed against the side and splashed twenty feet in the air. "Would you look at that?!" I yelled.

Marlin leaned against the window seal, and quietly said in amazement, "The sides are caving in, there goes the roof. It's floating away from the cottage, or what's left of it."

The walls flattened and disappeared under the water. The excitement was over.

The next day the wind had subsided and Marlin and I walked down the beach to see where the cottage use to stand. The driveway and well were still there, but only four small pilings were left standing, leaning at an angle and a short pipe was sticking out of the sand above the septic tank.

Marlin commented, "It's only a matter of time before we see these 'make do' cottages float by in front of the house." And by God, that's exactly what happened!

The new president hired hundreds of people in the area to build up sand dunes and plant sea oats along the Outer Banks coast. Marlin worked with them for several months on Hatteras Island. Several months later, they were pushing up huge dunes along the Kitty Hawk coast. Since there was little extra sand in the area where the inlet once stood, the bulldozers passed that area.

Automobiles have begun to appear all over the island. Since no plants were growing where the inlet once stood, people started driving their automobiles across at that point.

Eventually an automobile path was cut in front of our house and went directly across the old inlet. Every year or so the ocean flooded the road out, but the people kept driving on that same strip of land.

Both Marlin and I were angry that cars drove so very close to our house, but there was nothing that we could do short of making a new road further from it, but that would be impossible for us. To make matters worse, after the bridges were built, the road makers paved the road directly over the automobile path.

We told them we wanted more space between our house and the road. We even tried to tell them the road would flood almost every year, but no one listened. The road makers said the road was expensive and they had to take the shortest route possible.

All this traffic took its toll on summertime privacy. Any time, night or day, some ill mannered person would just waltz up to the house to ask for a glass of water. Soon we had neighbors to the north and south, and the main road ran right in front of our house. The paved roads became almost like a racetrack. Every time I traveled the beach road, I saw several poor animals and birds that had crossed the path of motorcars, lifeless and squashed flat. "Progress" had come to the Outer Banks. People came to the island and built houses and left them empty all winter long.

Times are a changing, in Kitty Hawk.

Chapter 17

Missing

Diary Entry: June 10, 1942

Marlin was slowing down along with Dolphin Watch. When Marlin did go out on Dolphin Watch, it would be mainly to catch fish to sell to the market in Manteo. The boat was aging and Marlin spent more time patching it up than he did taking it out on the water. To make matters worse, he had to rent a space on the sound to dock Dolphin Watch.

When the road was paved, whatever signs there were left of the former inlet were all covered up and my memories of the inlet seemed a lifetime ago.

We had both slowed down a little. I still fished off the beach, swam free in the ocean on moonlit nights, and even found time to ride a friend's horse on the beach. But my freedom of expression on the beach in daylight hours had become extremely limited. As the number of people increased on the island, and society began to ridicule living as one with nature, my freedom slowly evaporated. The birds kept their distance and clothes suffocated me on breezy warm days at the beach.

I was a bit saddened, but happy at the same time. Happy to be alive and in love, sad because I missed my freedom. Much of my time was spent drawing pictures of things I loved on the island.

We had a new 1939 Ford truck that Marlin used to carry fish to the market. The car stunk with the smell of fish and Marlin came home from riding in it stinking just as badly.

I never paid much attention to the radio and news about Adolf Hitler, the Third Reich and Germany. All of that stuff was thousands of miles away. How could any of that ugliness touch us way out here in paradise, next to a beautiful sea?

Marlin got copies of the paper, but I hated to read about fear and killing. Marlin read the paper and told me about some things going on, but I did not listen. I did not want to listen.

On a fall morning, December 12, 1941, Marlin got up early to fish for his favorite, Rockfish. I fixed him breakfast as usual and when he turned to walk out the door, he said, "I want you to fix me some Rockfish tonight."

I said, "Fix it yourself," as I threw a wet towel in his face.

He caught it just before it hit his face and balled it up and threw it back at me. I ducked behind the table as it almost broke a dish on the cupboard behind me.

I scolded, "Get out of here and don't come back!"

I didn't mean it, we were just having fun. I pushed on the door as he was leaving and he pushed back just enough to make it hard for me to close the door. I walked to the window to watch him drive away down the road toward the sound where Dolphin Watch was tied to a pier.

I remember later that afternoon, I was in the kitchen mixing the batter for fish and biscuits when I got this overwhelming feeling of surprise and terror. I quickly dropped the mixing bowl to the table and held my hand to my head. I felt dizzy and I thought my head was going to explode. Something had happened to the Dolphin Watch, I knew Marlin was in the water and hurt. Then nothing, blank darkness and terror.

"Marlin!" I screamed, "Marrlinnn!" I cried as I dropped to the floor.

Marlin was not there, I could not feel him. I stood up and ran toward the ocean window and threw my hands on the glass.

"Marlin, where are you?" I whispered.

"Oh God, what is wrong? Marlin, where are you?" I prayed.

I began to cry as I felt the loneliest feeling that I ever felt in my life.

"Marlin, where are you?" I sobbed.

I could not go to the Rescue Station because they would think I was over reacting. What if Marlin was all right and came home. I didn't know what to do. I walked outside and felt the wind blowing in my face. It was cold, I rushed inside and pulled on my dress and walked up the beach a little way, then back the other way. I knew deep in my heart that something was wrong and there was nothing I could do about it. I sat on the beach next to the house and stared out to sea. The sun was slow to set and I could wait no longer. I walked back to the house and lit all the lanterns then I walked to the Rescue Station and told them of my fears.

There was nothing they could do. I didn't know which direction he took the Dolphin Watch. We waited till after dark and Marlin did not return. One of the officers walked me back to the house to wait for Marlin's return. I stayed up all night searching the sea from my window hoping to see the lights of Dolphin Watch.

The next morning the officer returned to see if Marlin had made it back home. Then the men in the rescue station began a sea search up and down the coast. They stopped other fishing vessels and some of them joined in the search. I stayed at the Rescue Station with Ray Nelson next to the two way radio. We both listened intently for any news about Marlin. Later that afternoon, Ray drove me home. I sat there waiting.

Just before dark an Officer of the Rescue Station and a young woman walked up to the house. The Officer was carrying

a board in his hand. I knew what it was before he even asked. I recognized the paint from the boat.

The rescue team could find nothing but several pieces of Dolphin Watch floating in the water. The Officer said that there had been other instances where fishing boats were sunk as indiscriminate targets by German U-Boats.

The wreckage of Dolphin Watch was consistent with what one would expect to see if it had been hit by a torpedo. The officer showed me scorch marks on the jagged piece of wood that may have been caused by an explosion.

The young lady offered to stay, but I sent them both back. At first I did not cry, I had no feeling whatsoever.

No, this did not happen, it couldn't have, he was just here yesterday morning and everything was all right, I said to myself.

I remembered that I said to him, "Don't come back."

In shock, I said, "Oh my God, what did I do?"

I picked the board up off the table and carried it to the window. I held the board up to my face as I fell on my knees and began to weep. I thought I was going to die then and there, I could not catch my breath. I fell to the floor and began crying out loud.

In my cries I was calling out, "Marlin! Please don't go! God, please don't let this be true."

I hugged the board as it were the only thing I had of Marlin to hold on to. For some while, I thought I was going to loose my mind.

A gust of wind blew up and the lanterns knocked against the window.

I said, "Marlin, do you see that?"

They knocked again against the window. I stood up and watched the lanterns swing back and forth against the wind. I laid back on the small bed in front of the window and watched the clouds pass by against the full moon.

I thought to myself, "The stars are still there, the sea is still there, I am still here. Marlin must still be here somewhere."

I fell asleep under the window.

I awakened confused, at sunset the next day. I thought it was morning and nothing that had happened that previous day was real. I saw the board on the floor and immediately knew that it wasn't a dream.

The lanterns had been up all day. So I got up and pulled them down, filled them with oil, lit them and raised them back up. Marlin was out there somewhere and I needed to keep the lanterns on.

Day after day, I kept the lights glowing against the darkness, and Marlin had still not returned. The men at the rescue station seemed very concerned that I kept the lights burning. I'd hear a hand bell ringing about every other day as one or more men approached the house to talk. They were very kind but I felt compelled to keep the lights burning. What if Marlin was lost and couldn't see the lights. I had to keep them burning.

I spent hours sitting in the sand near the house staring out over the ocean. Sometimes I could see the image of Marlin against the water, wading through the shallow surf. For moments at a time, only a moments, I see him. I knew we had never parted.

There was never a day that passed that I did not walk up to the window and look out in anticipation to see if Marlin was trudging up the beach toward the house. If I was outside I'd look up dozens of time to see if he was there.

I'd always think, "Well, if he's not there, maybe next time he will be."

For several weeks, never a moment passed by that I wasn't thinking of Marlin. I spent days at a time just sitting in Marlin's chair looking out over the ocean. Days of quietness passed, without a sound from my lips. I watched the waves, birds, clouds, sunrises and moon rises. Days turned, but I remained still in time.

I received periodic visits from the Rescue Station. When I did I usually just stood at the door and told them, "I'm okay, I'm doing just fine." After they left, I sat back in Marlin's chair and stared blankly out into space, seeing little else, but visions in my mind.

I heard the handbell ring in the distance, and looked down the beach to see Ray Nelson walking toward the house. A little smile crossed my face as I got up to welcome Ray inside.

"How are you doing Rebecca?"

"Oh just fine Ray, come on in."

Ray pulled my sleeve and pulled me toward him and gave me a big hug, "I'm sorry Rebecca, Marlin was like a brother to me."

He looked into my eyes and I said, "Oh Ray," and hugged him back.

We stepped inside and Ray quickly noticed that the stove had gone out and the air was cold enough inside to blow clouds. Ray walked over to the stove, looked inside, and placed his hand inside to feel for heat from the embers.

"How long has this been out? Sit down Rebecca, let me get some wood, its cold in here."

I sat down while Ray stepped outside to gather some wood. I stood up to open the door when Ray walked in with an arm full of wood, "I told you to sit down, now sit down, I'll do this."

I really didn't feel like moving so I sat at the kitchen table while Ray broke small sticks for kindling and lit a fire in the stove.

"I know you miss Marlin, but that's no reason to freeze to death."

"I'm sorry, I just didn't feel like tending to it."

Ray closed the stove door and sat down beside me, "Here, give me you hands. Have you eaten anything?"

"Ray, don't fuss at me, I just want to be alone."

"You want me to leave?"

"No, No Ray, please stay, I'm tired of being alone."

Ray said, "You are freezing cold," as he got up to get a blanket lying on Marlin's chair. He draped the blanket around me and pulled it close to my neck. "There, its take a while before that fire can warm this place."

I stared at Ray just a little, because no one other than Marlin ever cared for me like this. The familiar smell of fish on his hands, and the way Ray pulled on the blanket around me reminded me of the past, the past that I miss so. Ray was kind, and I needed kindness just then. The stove was popping and cracking as the fire inside blazed to a full roar.

Ray stood up to adjust the baffles on the stove, "This wood is

dry, it burns fast and hot." Ray covered the stove lid again and sat back down beside me as I held out my hands again for him to hold. He smiled and held my hands as we sat quietly, listening only for the cracking and popping of the heating stove.

After a moment, he blinked his eyes, stood up and walked over to the ocean window. As he looked out over the sea he said, "As seamen sail by and see these lights burning every night, they are reminded that Marlin is still lost at sea." He turns around and looks at me, "The seamen are calling these burning lights, 'A Beacon of Hope' and they are calling this place, 'Three Mile Station'.

He reached down and picked up one of Marlin's pipes, and seemed to examine it closely as he said, "Aboard each ship out there, every sailor gazes at these lights."

He places the pipe back in its rack and looks back out over the sea with his hands folded to his back and adds as his voice breaks, "as they pass, they are moved by your expression of love.

Ray, with his back to me wipes his face with his sleeve and looks down. "They are repeating the story among the crew of Marlin Winston and Rebecca every time they pass by." He clears his voice and gathers himself as he turns around and smiles, "You have become quite an icon on this island, and I'm not about to let that icon freeze in her own home."

I sat there not knowing what to say. Ray walked over to me and kissed me on the cheek and let himself out the door. I sat there in the chair for hours thinking over and over about what he had said.

I kept the light burning every night possible except nights when the wind was so strong I knew that no boat could weather the sea. It was also too risky to keep oil lights burning on windy nights against an old, dry wooden house.





Chapter 18

Intertwine

Diary Entry: June 27, 1942

One evening just past dusk, I could hear a lightning storm off in the distance. After my bath I turned off all the oil lamps. All was dark except for the lightning strikes that lit the room every few seconds. I sat on the small bed facing the large ocean window with my legs crossed in front of me. I just sat there and watched the lightning strikes off in the distance over the ocean. With my eyes closed, I reached out to the energy and vibrations of the sea. Soon I could feel the energy surround my body. I could feel my soul reach beyond my body out into the night sky.

"Marlin, come to me," I said.

I envisioned Marlin coming from the sea and walking up to take my hand, to lift me up. A large lightning bolt struck nearby. My eyes opened as I felt a jolt of energy surge through my body. Then, almost as if some other force was moving my body, I sat up on my hands and knees and faced down onto the bed. The lightning flashed, I saw the bed. The lightning flashed again and I saw Marlin. Blackness filled my eyes between strikes. I waited for the lightning to flash again.

"Marlin, Marlin," I spoke quietly.

The lightning flashed and I could see the light reflecting off his brow. I could see every pore on his face. I could feel him wrap his arms around my body as he pulled me closer. I kissed him, I could feel him! I could feel the ocean surging through his vanes. He was strong, and I, lost in the power of his passion. He was there, there on the bed with me. As the thunder roared, I roared back. I grabbed the edge of the bed and squeezed tightly as my body pulsated in ecstasy, then collapse to the sound of thunder echoing in the distance.

At first light my eyes opened. I reached over, but Marlin was not there. I lay there wondering if the previous night was a dream.

Then I was startled when I felt him rise up off the bed. I could almost see the bed rise as if someone was sitting up. I knew I was going to see him again.

I said aloud, "I love you."

My head and face tingled as I felt the energy surrounded me. I think I was kissed.

One night several weeks later, I had the most incredible dream. I dreamt I was with Marlin and we were kissing on the beach in the surf on a moonlit night. As with almost every kiss, I soon found myself lost in passion as our souls intertwined and mixed as one. I felt as if we were floating just inches above the sand.

I wanted to show Marlin what it felt like to fly, so I stuck my toes in the sand and pushed us upward and we began to fly. But Marlin was more interested in kissing and did not pay attention to the fact that we were flying.

I said, "Look Marlin, look," but he was as lost in love, as I often was, so I released my soul to him and fell back into the kiss. As we flew, I curled up close to his chest knowing that he understood we were flying. Our bodies pulsed together. I remember running my fingers through the hair on his chest and wondering, is this a dream?, but, afraid to think about it because it could awaken me.

Marlin lifted my chin and kissed me. Whether dreaming or not, I could feel us fall into ecstasy as our bodies were tossed effortlessly through the night sky.

The next moment the sky was lit with the light of dawn. Marlin wanted to show me something. He pointed downward, we were flying a hundred feet or more above the ocean, several hundred feet from the shoreline, amazingly I could see the sandy bottom through the crystal clear water.

He pointed again and I saw a school of thousands of small fish swimming. It looked like a dark cloud in the water. They swam left, then right, then left again in unison.

I looked into Marlin's deep blue eyes. His eyes seemed to capture my soul. In his eyes I saw my reflection. Then I saw the

reflection of a flying pelican. I turned to see a pelican flying next to us. As I turned my head further there were seven pelicans flying together in a line. As I looked toward the beach I saw seven shadows.

Marlin motioned toward the surf, up ahead there were dolphins. We flew low, close to the top of the waves. Beneath us the dolphins splashed just above the surface. First, there was one, then two, three, four, then a dozen or more. In the mist was one tiny baby dolphin rising above the waves with its mother. We were so close I could hear them breath as they surfaced. I reached down to touch the water just before Marlin lifted us higher and made a large loop back.

Beyond the dolphins were three strange creatures swimming just beneath the surface. They looked a bit like dolphins, but were black, and had no dorsal fins. As we got closer I could see, they were seals. I never saw seals on the island before. They were swimming back and forth as if they were looking for something.

I wanted to go closer, but Marlin looped back to fly along the beach.

Marlin pointed out again at something black up ahead on the beach. As we came closer it looked like a dog with no legs, then I realized that it was another seal. As we got closer, I began to feel its pain. It was suffering from a terrible stomach ache.

I looked at Marlin with concern. I didn't have to say a word, Marlin knew I wanted to help.

We flew directly back to the house, through the closed window to rest gently on the bed. As I touched the bedding I opened my eyes. Marlin was gone. I was awake. I sat up, looked out the window, and stared at the place in the closed window where I had just entered moments earlier in my dream.

I looked out the window scouring the beach and didn't see anything, but my curiosity was getting the best of me.

I opened the door and it was warm enough to walk outside to the beach. As I looked north I saw something black on the beach about a thousand feet away.

I blinked my eyes and looked a little harder to see if I could identify it. Wind blew the hair in my face and I couldn't tell what it was. No one was around, so I began to stroll up the beach to satisfy my curiosity.

When I was near enough, I could see it raised its head every so often. Whatever it was, it was alive. I was remembering every detail of my dream, and with each step forward I began to question whether I was still dreaming.

I could soon tell that it was a baby seal, not even three feet long. It was lost, and it seemed to have a severe stomach ache just like in my dream. As I got even closer, he looked at me and opened his mouth to show me his teeth, very much like a dog without legs or visible ears. I had a good deal of respect for him, so I just sat on the sand about ten feet away.

It tossed its head around and looked at his stomach as if to say, "It hurts there, can you take the pain away?"

After a few minutes he did not seem to fear my presence and he let me get as close as three feet away. I was cautious because I could almost imagine him swinging his head around to bite me. I knew he could sense that image, so I began to give him an image of his pain leaving his body through my hand lying on his side.

I sat right next to him. He turned to his side as if he could see the image I was projecting to him and appeared to want me to place my hand on his stomach.

I placed my hand on his stomach as he laid his head on my leg. His stomach rumbled. He looked up at me with those big blue eyes and a tear fell.

I began to sing a song, "Hush little baby don't you cry..."

I could feel that it was not something he ate, but it was a nervous sick pain, because he had lost the others. I remembered I had seen the other seals in my dream just to the south and started to play the image of the dream over and over in my head, hoping he would understand.

After a few minutes he raised his head and wobbled closer to the surf. In the surf he turned and look back at me with those big blue eyes, then dove into the next breaking wave.

I can only imagine that he found the others. I never saw him again, in fact, that was the first and only time I ever saw a seal on the beaches of Kitty Hawk.

Several days later I pulled a book from the bookshelf and one of Marlin's log books fell to the floor. I picked it up, thumbed through the pages and found this song, titled "Against the Wind" written by Marlin, dated, November 6, 1940, while fishing off the Kitty Hawk coast on Dolphin Watch.

On a cool November morning, the moon still overhead,
At the break of dawn, the sky turns crimson red,
The smell of passion smolders, from the night before,
The under current pacing, still pacing like before,
The darkness lifts so slowly, there is a quiet lull,
The water splashes gently, beneath the rolling hull,
Then thunder from a distance, rolls closer by the breath,
I turn this ship against the wind, and pray I must confess,
Get me home my Darling, I'll tell you what I'll do,
I'll pour you a drink or two, and make sweet love with you.
The wind, she starts a roaring, the sea caps by the bow,
I clamped my hands against the wheel, and made this solemn vow,
Get me home my Darling, I'll tell you what I'll do,
I'll pour you a drink or two, and make sweet love with you.
Waves crash against the port, and hammer through my bones,
She twist and turns against the wind, the deck begins to moan,

*Get me home my Darling, I'll tell you what I'll do,
I'll pour you a drink or two, and make sweet love with you.
I hollowed one last time, I pray I'll keep my word,
I yelled so hard against the wind, I knew I must be heard,
Get me home my Darling, I'll tell you what I'll do,
I'll pour you a drink or two, and make sweet love with you.
The wind she stop a blowing, the water stopped and ebb,
I took a long deep breath, and this is what I said,
I'm coming home my Darling, I'm splashing through the sea,
This Seaman's fishing time is through, and Sweet Love, waits for
You are the love of my life,*

Marlin



Chapter 19

Departure

Early in the Winter of 1953, Ray Nelson, one of my oldest and dearest friends, retired as a former officer of the Kitty Hawk Rescue Station, dropped by to visit. I was so please to see him, it had been several years since we last met.

for me. "Come in Ray," I invited, "Come in and have a seat with me."

I poured out a cup of hot tea for Ray and we sat at the kitchen table.

"Rebecca, it's amazing what you've been able to do for yourself here at Three Mile Station. But you shouldn't be living here alone, what if you fell and broke something? It'd be days before anyone would find you hurt."

I said, "Are you proposing to me Ray?"

Ray smiled and replied, "No Rebecca, I am concerned about you, so is everybody else at the Rescue Station. We found this nice little retirement home on the mainland and all of us at the station want to take you there so people can care for you."

"Take me away," I said, "Ray, this is my home, I going to die here and that's that. Let me fill that cup for you again."

Ray said, "Rebecca," as he held up his hand to gesture, "enough tea."

I continued, "Ray, you know I love all you sailors down at the station, even the new fellows that signed up last spring, but I can't take a handout from you boys. I am doing just fine. When it's my time to go, I'll just go."

I poured more tea in Ray's cup anyway, and as I was settling myself to sit down, my hip was caught in pain and I released a "yelp" as I touched the chair seat.

Ray just looked at me with one of those 'you know' looks, "Rebecca, you need to be with other people now. You still have years of life left but if you fell today, you could spend the rest of your life flat on your back. All of us at the Rescue Station are searching for seamen who need help. We save lives. All of us old timers remember Marlin, we couldn't rescue Marlin, but we can rescue his wife."

"But what about this house?" I said.

Ray replied, "We'll take care of it, and if it's all right with you, when you join Marlin, we will sell the house and use the money to rescue others."

I never thought I would leave my home, but at that moment

a light seem to shine. I just sat there for a moment and stared at Ray.

Ray asked, "Are you okay Rebecca?"

"Oh yes." I said, and just looked away.

I began to shake as the tears began to fall. Ray said nothing, I think he knew.

Three weeks later the whole gang from the Rescue Station was there dressed in their fancy uniforms. I was escorted from the house by Ray and we walked slowly between two lines of sailors from the station.

I wanted to say hello to each one and thank them, but they all stood straight and saluted as we walked by. I was very touched. As I passed a couple of the boys, I saw them glance at me and wink. I smiled back. At the end of the line was a big fancy car. As I sat in the car I looked up at the house. I knew I may never see her again.

After a couple of hours on the road, we drove up to this fine two story Victorian home on the main street of Greenville. The home was lovely, with fine furniture, rugs, and curtains. I was one of three ladies to live in the home. Several nurses were scheduled to visit the home regularly. One of the nurses accompanied Ray and me inside.

Ray asked, "What do you think?"

"Oh, its very nice Raymond," I said as I wandered throughout the front room.

The nurse introduced me to the other two ladies. "This is Mary, Mary, meet Rebecca."

Mary walked up to me and gave me a big hug.

"And this is Kate." I looked through the doorway and a frail lady in a wheelchair rolled up. She didn't say a word.

I said, "Hello." But Kate didn't even make eye contact with me.

Mary said, "Oh, she's like an old cat, she hates it when there's another in the house."

Kate looked up at Mary and said, "Go to hell."

I knew right then and there, this was going to be an interesting stay.

Ray kissed me on the cheek and said, "Rebecca, I am going to call you on the telephone when I get back. You know we all want to know how you are getting along."

"A telephone, they have a telephone in this house?" I asked.

The nurse said, "Oh yes, almost every home in Greenville

has a telephone. This is it right here." She pointed to a table at the end of the sofa.

"My God," I said, "a telephone. What's our number?"

The nurse said, "581."

"Well that's a coincidence," I said, "that's my birthday. I was born May 5, 1881."

Mary said, "That almost make us sisters, I was born June 10, 1881."

Mary and I looked at Kate thinking she would tell us her birthday. Kate just turned her head to one side with a "Hum."

Ray said, "It almost sounds like a family already."

Mary and I giggled just a little as we walked down the hall to the front door. Ray leans over and gives me a little kiss me again on the cheek to say good bye. "Ray, you sweet man, its been years since I've been kissed, and now you've gone and kissed me twice today."

As Ray and the nurse walked down the porch stairs, I turned around with Mary to walk back. I looked up the hall, Kate was sitting there at the end of the hall facing us with a mean look on her face.

Mary walked up to her and pushed the chair around and said, "Get that scowl off your face, live with it, you've got nobody else."

"How long have you known Kate?" I asked Mary.

"Only about six weeks. Kate has been here for nearly three years with another lady named Martha. Kate thought she'd have the house all to herself when Martha died, but then I showed up. Kate has hated me ever since. But I don't mind a bit," Mary raised her voice, and leaned toward Kate, "See, I don't like her either."

Kate just lifted her gnarly old finger up at Mary.

"Tell us about yourself, Rebecca." Mary asked.

"Oh I've lived in Kitty Hawk for over fifty years. My husband was a seaman and was killed off the coast of Kitty Hawk by a German torpedo."

Kate snapped her head up just an inch and looked at me with those steely eyes and said, "Rebecca, you're Rebecca?"

Mary said, "That's right Kate, you know that already."

Kate glanced over to Mary and said, "Shut up!" Then looked backed at me, "Your husband, was your husband Captain Winston?"

"Why yes, yes he was, how did you know that?" I asked.

Kate smiled and held out her hand to hold mine. "My husband was Captain Davidson. He navigated those waters, everybody knows the story about Rebecca and Captain Winston. You kept the lights shining on your house years after he was lost at sea right? You kept the light shining because you were showing your husband the way home."

She looked at me as her eyes sparkled, "Darling, I know you."

Mary said, "Well I'll be."

Kate glanced at Mary with distain , then looked at me and said, "Pay her no mind, she's an idiot."

"When did you hear this?" I asked.

"Hear it, all you have to do is look into her face," Kate said with a bit of pleasure.

I said, "No, I mean..."

Kate said, "Oh everybody knows. My husband told me the story, he said just about everyone on the coast knew about it. So you're Rebecca."

She held out her other hand and said, "It's a real pleasure to meet you Rebecca."

Mary said, "That's wonderful, I've never married, I spent

my life working in Washington D.C. as a secretary with the Central Intelligence Agency."

Kate said, "That's a lie, I told you she was an idiot."

Mary just batted her eyes and continued, "I worked under FDR through three of his terms as president. I retired to draw Social Security and lived in my home in Arlington. I have no family so a friend of mine told me about this place."

Kate leaned over to me and said, "That was the worst day of my life!"

Mary sparked back, "I've dealt with every imaginable cuss that you could conjure up, so I'm ready to deal with you, you dirty old buzzard."

We talked late into the night and became three great friends. Soon I realized the tension between Kate and Mary was only a contest of spirits that didn't harm either one.

Months went by without any special event. Kate spent week after week sewing a flower pattern on a piece of cloth while listening to stories on the radio. Mary and I worked in the yard planting flowers and trimming the hedge. Other times we found our pleasure just swapping books between us.

Mary, Kate, and I spent most warm days on the front porch reading. Nearly every afternoon children rode bicycles past the house. One day a child fell off her bike at our front gate.

Kate said, "I told you so, I told you one of them will get hurt out there."

Mary and I jumped up and shuffled quickly to see if she was all right. Mary swung open the gate and said, "Are you all right child?"

I bent down to help her up, she said, "My knee, I hurt me knee."

Mary and I help her up and up the walkway to sit on the porch stairs. Kate said sternly, "You young lady, you shouldn't be riding so fast, you shouldn't even be riding a bicycle in the first place."

"Oh shut up!" Mary said to Kate as she brushed dirt off the child's dress. "Just sit down right here, we'll get something to clean off that knee."

Both Mary and I went inside to find something to help clean her scrapped knee. Kate sat quietly in her wheelchair as the child looked up at her intently. "Did you fall off your bike too?" she asked Kate.

"No, I just got old. You should never ride a bicycle, its not proper for a lady."

"What is that?"

"It's a wheelchair, you get one when you get old and your

knees freeze up on you. That is going to hurt a lot worse when you get my age, you'll wish you had never seen a bicycle."

Mary opened the door, "Don't scare the child, Kate." Then bent down and sat on the steps in front of Kate with a cloth to clean the child's knee. "Don't pay attention to a word she says, you have fun, have all the fun you want, before you get too old and grumpy, like that one," as she nodded toward Kate.

Kate tried to swing her leg to hit Mary in the shoulder with her shoe, but only kicked the side of her chair.

The little girl began to giggle, which made us feel better to know that she was feeling better.

"What's your name child?" I asked.

"Susan"

"Where do you live, we can telephone your mamma and daddy and tell them where you are."

"No, we don't have a telephone, and daddy was killed by the Germans."

The words jolted me as both Kate and Mary eyes observed the shock on my face. "You live with your mamma then, do you have any brothers and sisters?"

"No, I was born after Daddy went to war, I never saw him. Ohhh! that hurts."

"That's okay," Mary said as she wiped the wound clean, "You are going to be just fine."

I turned around to walked back inside and said, "I'll be back in a minute." I stepped inside and stood in the foyer for a moment. Memories flooded back, more memories than I could take, tears began to roll down my cheeks. I didn't know if I were sad for Susan's loss or my own. I leaned against the door frame and whispered his name.

Mary opened the door and asked, "Are you all right?"

I wiped the tears from my cheeks, turned and walked away, "Oh, I'm all right, I'm just fine." I stepped in the parlor and sat on the sofa.

Mary followed and sat down next to me. She looked at me with concern and said, "I think you have a bigger wound here than you want others to see. Is it Marlin?"

I just can't help it, when she said killed by the Germans, everything inside me just busted loose. Oh Mary, why, why did that damn war have to happen, it screwed up all our lives. It was nothing more than mass murder. Susan won't have a father, and I..." I couldn't go on. I could only sit there bent over with Mary hand on my back as tears trickled down my face.

I heard a bump as Susan helped Kate enter the front doorway. Kate rolled in the parlor, and said, "What the hell is going on in here?"

Mary said, "Kate..."

I waved my hand in the air for them to stop, I didn't want to hear any battle of words just then. I walked up to Susan and said, Lets step outside for a minute, is that leg doing okay?"

"Yeah, it's a little sore, but I can walk on it."

We stepped out on the porch and sat together on the front porch swing.

"How old are you Susan?"

"Thirteen."

"Oh, then you have a boyfriend?"

"Yes, but momma doesn't like him."

"Well, does that matter?" I asked.

"Momma says I can do better."

"Do you like him?"

"Has he kissed you yet?"

She covered her mouth, giggled and said, "Yes."

Why do you like him?

"He's funny and makes me laugh, and I know him, he's a lot like me." She stopped for a second, and with wonder in her eyes added, "Its like we've know each other forever."

I rocked in the swing for a few seconds thinking of Marlin and asked, in whisper to myself, "Can you do better?"

Susan said in no questionable manner, "I don't want to do better, Brett is all I ever want. If I try to do better, it would only be worse."

"You are such a bright child," I said, "If you do not marry that first love, you will be searching for him in others the rest of your life."

"So what should I do?" Susan asked.

"Do what's in your heart child, do what you know is right, and you've already told me what's in your heart. Don't let him go, but don't let him know you are holding on, soon Brett too will know what's in his heart, and you will live the life you were meant to live."

We spent the next few minutes just swinging in the swing. Susan looked up at me with a confident smile. I smiled and looked to my right and through the lace covered window, both Mary and Kate were watching from inside and listening to every word.

One evening when I was sitting in my room reading next to my window, Kate knocked at the door.

"Come on in," I invited, "The door's not locked."

Kate rolled in and with surprise, she said, "Dear God, put some clothes on."

I said, "No, this is the way I like to be, it feels good, I feel more like me."

"Don't you get cold sitting there like that?" she asked.

"No," I said, "it just makes me feel alive."

Kate mumbled something under her breath as she turned her wheelchair around and rolled back out the room.

Several days later I was helping her get in and out of the tub. After her bath, I sat her down in her wheelchair and handed her a dress.

She said, "No, I want to try it this way for a while."

It took me a second to understand, then I said, "Okay."

"Lets go in your room, Rebecca, I want to see what it feels like in your room."

I rolled her down the hall in into my room. The sun was shining through the window so I parked her so she could feel the warmth of the sunlight over her shoulder. I sat in the chair next to the window and picked up a book that I was reading.

A few minutes later Kate began to giggle.

"What so funny?" I asked.

"It feels good, the warm sun feels so good against my skin."

We both chuckled for a moment when Kate pointed to the window and said, "Look Rebecca, look at that beautiful sunset. Look at that bird, isn't it beautiful against that red sky!"

"Look at the trees," Kate said, "aren't they a beautiful shade of green against that sky."

Mary opened the door to see what the discussion was about. "What on God's green...", she questioned.

"We're warming up in the sun," Kate rumbled, "shut up and close the door, you're letting in a draft."

Kate beckoned to Mary and said, "Come here, look," as she pointed out the window, "isn't that beautiful?"

Mary said, "It would be better if I didn't have to look over that wrinkled body."

"It feels good." Kate said, "You should get off your high horse and try it."

Kate straightened up in her seat and said, "Look! There goes another bird. Isn't that just breathtaking?"

Mary stepped out for a moment while both Kate and I just stared out the window at the sunset.

Mary opened the door again and stepped back in to join us.

Kate turned to look and said, "And you've got the nerve to call me wrinkled!"

I said, "Come in Mary, sit here,"

We sat quietly for nearly thirty minutes as we watched the sunset until the room slowly darkened.

Kate and Mary never seemed to be as quick with insults after that evening. Although Kate still rarely missed an opportunity. A mutual respect had grown as that day ended and the sun slowly set.

Several days later, Mary and I were cutting fresh roses from the yard and Kate was sitting on the porch when I felt a twinge of pain beneath my arm. The pain didn't seem to want to go away. I didn't tell the others about it because I didn't want to bother them with my aches and pains. The pain persisted all through the night.

The next morning I was in the kitchen helping Mary with breakfast, when Kate rolled up to the table. The pain intensified and I held my side as I leaned against the counter.

Mary said, "Don't keep the toast in too long, it'll burn."

Kate said, "Looks like all those years at the CIA are finally paying off."

I couldn't help but laugh a little and when I did I couldn't stand the pain any longer started to fall to the floor.

Kate saw me start to fall and yelled, "Rebecca!"

The sound, 'Rebecca', echoed in my head, over and over again.

When I came to there was a light shining overhead and two nurses were standing by my bed.

I asked, "Where...", but I couldn't get out another word.

The nurse said, "Lay back and hold still."

I looked at the foot of the bed and there were four children jumping up and down on the bed. I said, "Children, there are children jumping on the bed."

One nurse said to the other, "She's delirious."

Just then, I realized I knew these children. I said, "I know you, I know you all, you've been with me all my life."

I laughed a little and said, "You are my angels."

Then I saw the light above my bed shining brighter. In the light I saw a face.

"Marlin, Marlin, is that you Marlin? Oh, I've missed you so, Marlin, Jeremiah, Jeremiah." Then the light above my head began to shine brighter. Soon I found myself above the light looking back down on my body, lying on the bed and the two nurses standing by my side.

The nurse placed her hand over my face and closed my eyes, "It's over," she said.

I heard one of the nurses say, "Marlin was her husband wasn't he? Who is Jeremiah?"

"I don't know," said the other, "She lived on an island, naked most of her life near a station full of sailors. Who knows who Jeremiah was."





Chapter 20

Revelation

I felt the presence of Jeremiah all around me,
and within me.

He was a part of me and I, part of him.

I heard a deep but soft voice from Heaven say, "What you have
both seen is your life plan, and now it is time to begin.
Are you ready for birth?"

"Oh please," I said, "Is Jeremiah with me in this life plan?"
The words, "It is written," flowed through our shared soul.
"And Jeremiah shall be called..."

"Marlin," the voice replied.

Jeremiah then asked, "And Adah?"

The deep voice whispered, "Rebecca."

As my soul entered my mother's womb
I could hear these familiar words,
"Your destiny shall always involve Jeremiah, time,
and time again.

In each life your destinies cross,
in each life your lives intertwine.

It has been written since the beginning of time.

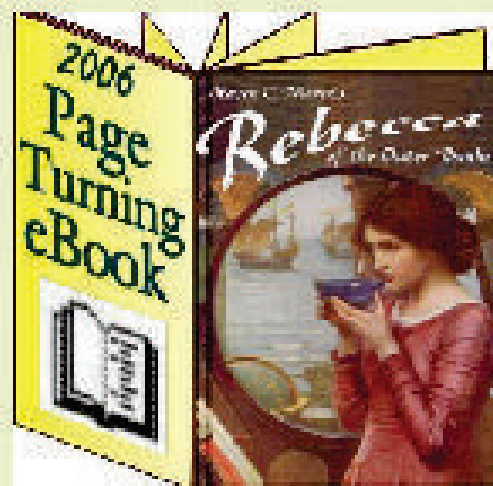
You have been,
and shall always be,
one."

The beginning...

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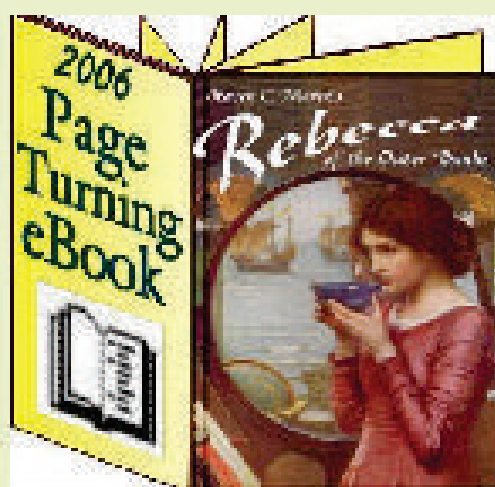


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