



FORGED ON THE SWEEN

A SHORT STORY BY

COLIN YOUNG

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The Rescuers

For as long as Callum had breath in his lungs he knew his purpose in life, it was a purpose that he had always considered was his destiny. And destiny was quite a thing for a four-year-old to contemplate, but from the age of four to his present sixteenth year on the earth, he had not witnessed or experienced anything to tell him his destiny lay elsewhere; or was misplaced. Callum was sure of it, and his surety and faith in his destiny had led him to the rough stormy waters off the coast of Scotland.

Callum would call himself nothing special, he was an average height, average build, sixteen-year-old, with a mop of brown hair that hung over his face. He usually sported a baseball cap to keep his hair in place, it saved on time spent putting product in his hair to make it look neat, he didn't have time to self-groom, he was too busy. He considered himself a man of action and to that mantra, he dressed for action, in his combat trousers, trainers and hoody.

Callum was of Scottish stock, he lived with his mother on the west coast of Scotland in a rural farmhouse on the mainland. He had been brought up by his mother, his father had left when he was young which meant his mother had to work hard to pay for them both, she was so busy that Callum's own fate, and time, was placed firmly in his own hands.

Following his fate and destiny had led him not too far from home, onto the waters of Loch Sween. He had paddled the Loch many times before, he was confident on the water, but this time was different, the weather had turned, it had meant to be fine, but a storm was heading his way and his straightforward boating trip was about to become a bit of a battle.

Callum would say that his purpose and destiny had not been found by him, but more - it found him, he did not go looking for it, his destiny had come to him. How could he be so confident of that? Well, if you found yourself playing in the dirt in your back garden and an injured animal walked up to you asking for help, not vocally of course, what would you do? Callum did what he could, he nursed the animal back to health, and from that point forward, they all started to turn up for his help!

Over the years his garden had turned into a rescue centre for injured animals, with them always coming to him. That was until something changed, he

started to have dreams about animals in danger in particular locations, and every time he turned up to those locations, there was the animal in need. Destiny had flipped the switch, it had appeared to have trained him from young to look after animals, to learn how to nurse them, and now it had sent him out into the world to do the same.

Of course, being in an inflatable kayak on a sea Loch with the wind chucking up huge waves at you was not part of his plan for that day. He knew he was meant to be on the water though, his dream had shown him a Basking Shark in need of help, so, he was exactly where he needed to be, it was just that no one had told the weather it needed to be calm for him. The darkened clouds didn't help with visibility, and before long his search for a Basking Shark became a needle in a haystack. That was the point where a wave decided to deprive him of the comfort of his boat.

The water was cold and it swelled and ebbed, sending Callum up and down, his buoyancy aid kept him afloat, but the wind had separated him from his kayak, and he was far from shore with the current carrying him out to sea, he could tell that much. The thunder added to the drama of the capsizing, the lightening followed, lighting up a silhouette of the hills off to his right. But it was also the lightening that cast itself onto a figure paddling hard towards him in a small inflatable dingy.

It was too dark to tell who it was that had saved him, it all happened so fast, a hand reached out and grabbed the strap of his buoyancy aid, and he was hauled onboard. The waves were not letting up though, the sky was dark, the sun had gone down, there was water everywhere and all Callum could think about was the poor shark. His rescuer paid him no attention bar a courtesy 'are you okay' which was delivered in a loud tone that fought against the wind.

Callum hadn't even noticed his rescuer was female, he was completely fatigued by his battle against the waves and lay there on the floor of the dingy trying to catch his breath. He stared up at the looming clouds and for some reason smiled to himself, 'I don't want to leave here' he muttered. His rescuer didn't hear him, she was battling against the same waves that took him out.

Callum spent a few minutes lying on the deck of the dingy trying to catch his breath before he mustered the strength to sit up, that was when another

wave smashed the dingy and sent both its occupants into the water! Callum had enough time to react and grab his rescuer, she wasn't wearing a buoyancy aid, he had already noticed that.

The waves and wind separated both of them from the dingy pretty fast, and there was little chance of them trying to swim back to it, Callum held on to his rescuer and tried with all his strength to keep her close and above water. The waves lifted them and dropped them for what seemed like a lifetime until they heard a shout, saw a light, and Callum reached for a life buoy ring that had been cast out onto the water towards him.

Holding on with all the strength he had left in his cold, wet fingers, the two were dragged through the waves toward the light and hauled onto the swim deck of what appeared to be a luxury yacht.

'You guys alright?' said a man who was donned head to toe in waterproofs.

Callum and his rescuer replied with a nod and a raised hand before slumping back onto the swim deck.

'Come on, let's get you dry and warm, I think the storm is passing' said the man.

He helped them both up and with an arm around each of them helped them up the stairs, across the deck and into the cabin of the yacht, they immediately could feel the warmth and relief from the wind straight away. Callum caught his breath and looked around the lounge area, it was massive and pristine, he noticed he was dripping water everywhere and felt bad, he tried to apologise for it but the man said 'don't worry about it'.

The waves rocked the yacht and threw Callum off balance into the doors, the other two managed to keep their feet and steadied themselves against the roll.

'There is a couple of bathrooms and showers through there, go on, get warm, I've got some dry overalls through there ready for you' said the man.

The man had taken his hood down and Callum could see his face, he had blonde floppy hair with a short back and sides, he looked mid-forties, that was Callum's guess anyway. Callum's rescuer took her hood down and her wet red

hair fell down over her shoulders, it was red-dyed hair, shoulder length and sodden. She looked the same age as Callum and sported a frown, she looked annoyed, and without saying a word, she stomped off towards the toilet area and mumbled 'thanks' on her way.

'What's up with her?' asked the man.

'I don't know, I don't even know her, she pulled me out the water' said Callum.

The boat rocked again, Callum and the man had to steady themselves again on the nearby breakfast bench and wall respectively.

'It's a rare storm all right' said the man.

'It wasn't forecast, I suppose that's why I was caught out' said Callum.

'Go and get dry and warm, we'll talk after' said the man.

The luxury yacht was not a small one, it was a six berth with three rooms, two bathrooms, a lounge, an enclosed helm, swim deck, and it was all white with tinted windows. Callum and the girl spent some time peeling cold wet clothes off themselves, showering and getting into dry overalls that the man had supplied.

Callum was first out of the shower, and the first back to the lounge area where he saw the man sat the couch on an I-pad.

'It's crazy that I can drive the boat from this thing' said the man.

'I'm Callum by the way, a local by the way, you could probably tell by the accent' said Callum.

'I guessed as much; I am Lin pleased to meet you' said Lin.

'Lin?' said Callum

'Yes, it's short for Lindsay, it's a family name' said Lin.

Lin had a neutral English accent and so Callum assumed he was English, with a name like Lindsay that made sense.

'It's a nice yacht Lin' said Callum looking around.

'Yeah, it's nice' he said with a sigh.

Callum felt like there more to say on Lin's feelings about the yacht, but he didn't offer anything else on the matter.

'There's some hot chocolate there, help yourself' said Lin.

'Thanks' said Callum.

Callum walked around a nearby chair, sat down opposite Lin on an armchair and picked up one of the two hot chocolates that were sat on the coffee table in special cups that didn't fall over with the rocking.

'What were you doing out here? You weren't in that inflatable kayak I saw over by the inlet, were you?' said Lin.

'I was, like I said before, I wasn't expecting the storm, and you probably wouldn't believe me if I told you why I was out there' said Callum.

'What wouldn't we believe?' said the girl appearing from the corridor.

'Why he was out on the water in that weather?' said Lin turning around to look at her.

'Why were you out there in that weather?' said Callum turning to question the girl.

'You wouldn't believe me if I told you, but I could ask you the same question, what are you doing out here in this yacht, in this weather?' she said repointing the question to Lin.

'Well, you two wouldn't believe me if I told you' he said with a smile.

Both Callum and Lin could see the girl in a good light now, she had washed her hair and brushed it backwards, she wasn't too much older than Callum, she also looked less annoyed than she was before.

'I am Callum by the way' said Callum introducing himself.

'I'm Lin, short for Lindsay before you ask, family name and all that' said Lin.

'I'm Deedee' she said.

'Pleased to meet you Deedee, and thanks for saving me' said Callum.

'I suppose I should thank you for saving me, and also you Lin for saving us' said Deedee who was starting to soften up.

'Well, that's the unbelievable bit, I am here because I had a dream that I would save two people, a boy and a girl' said Lin smiling.

'Oh wow, that's something, I'm here because I had a dream about a basking shark that needed my help' said Callum.

This statement caught Deedee's attention, she looked at Callum and walked forward towards him, she was wide eyed and stared at Callum, 'I am here because I had a dream about a dolphin that needed my help' she said.

'It sounds like we're all in the right place then' said Lin.

The Lines of things

Captain Lindsay James Orville Farrell was a retired British Army logistics and operations facilitator, he had done his twenty-five years in the Army and retired to his family estate in Scotland, which he had inherited after his parents died. He was the cousin of an Earl, which gave him minor nobility, but he didn't like that side of his immediate society and used his estate to stay away from the hoi polloi, and politics of families and power.

He told Deedee and Callum his brief story of how he had joined the army because his father had before him, and his grandfather before his father, and so on. He had hated the army for a while until he had an experience which changed his focus within the military; he had been given a command out in Afghanistan and had an encounter which prompted him to specialise in animals. These animals included the dogs they used to find IED's and bombs, as well as locally employed Hawks to run errands.

He was dubbed Captain Doolittle affectionately by his men, but knew he was called to be a protector of animals within the context of 'war', or whatever they were doing out there. He told Callum and Deedee that his encounter was with a mountain lion when they were out on a mission, he had gone up rocky

slope to get a better perspective on their objective and came face to face with this animal.

He didn't know whether to run or shoot or act big and scary, but after some moments of staring at the lion his feelings turned from fear to calm, and he swore that through its gaze it was trying to tell him something. It felt like an age stood there staring at this lion, and in those moments of connectedness he felt he was repurposed, redirected by nature to a new higher calling.

Lin's story struck a chord with Callum, he patiently waited for Lin to finish his story and told Deedee and Lin his calling, his destiny to help animals. Deedee eventually offered up her backstory, she had been brought up in rural Cambridgeshire on a farm and had the same experiences with helping injured animals. She too had the dreams and followed those dreams to all over the country helping animals, to the disapproval of her parents, she confessed.

The three agreed that it was not a coincidence that they had all met the way they did, and that there was some sort of shared destiny happening. It was also getting late, the storm had died down, and so Lin offered them a bed on the yacht for the night, which they accepted, they were quite tired and had no reason to not trust him. Besides Deedee was technically homeless, and Callum was technically running away, they just hadn't told each other those facts.

The next morning, Callum was awoken by shouting and discovered the coastguard had pulled alongside the yacht and Lin was in full conversation with them. Lin had weighed anchor in an inlet late the previous evening and the coastguard had found them following reports of boats in trouble from locals.

Callum got up and wandered onto the deck still half asleep, 'what's up?' he said.

'Morning Callum, this is Gloria from the coastguard, they have been searching most of the night for you and Deedee, they found your boats, we've just dragged them onto the swim deck, they're going need some repairs' said Lin pointing to the swim deck.

Callum walked over and looked down at the swim deck, he saw his deflated kayak, and Deedee's half deflated dingy, he looked back at Lin and Gloria.

'I told Gloria I pulled you two out of the water late last night and you guys were fine and that I was going to run back to town' said Lin.

'Yeah, we're fine, it got a bit choppy, but Lin managed to haul us on board' said Callum.

'Good, glad you're both okay, do you want us to call your parents or anything?' asked Gloria.

'No' said Callum rather too quickly and tried to hide it with a follow up, 'er... that's okay, I'll ring them' he said.

'Okay then, Lin they're in your hands' said Gloria.

Lin smiled at her and nodded, 'I see you picked Steve up again?' he said looking at another man on the deck of the coastguard's vessel. Gloria didn't say anything but raised her eyebrows and shrugged, Steve was a local man who everyone called 'mad' Steve, he was the local drunkard who frequently went out in his boat inebriated and had to be rescued, pretty much all the time. Callum and Lin could see him wrapped in a blanket sat at the back of the boat.

'The beast has awoken for our transgressions' he shouted over to them.

'Ignore him, he's cold and wet, and probably still drunk' said Gloria clambering back onto her boat.

'Follow the lines, trust the beast, get yer rewards, get all our rewards' shouted Steve.

'Be quiet now Steve, we'll be on our way' said Gloria.

Gloria said her goodbyes and her coastguard colleague manoeuvred the boat away from them on a heading along the inlet. Deedee appeared on deck as soon as they had left, she had been listening to the conversation from the lounge, she hurried across the deck, down the steps to her deflated boat and ripped off a Velcro pocket that had been strapped to the side of the dingy, it was about the size of an A4 wallet, she opened it and took out a bunch of paper.

'What's that?' asked Callum from the deck of the boat.

'I don't know but something that man said about the lines...' said Deedee trailing off.

Callum decided to get his rucksack from his completely deflated kayak, he always secured it to the back by tying to the guy ropes, and he had learned through trial and error to make it waterproof.

'You guys want something to eat?' said Lin.

They both replied yes please whilst rummaging through the respective remains of their boats.

'Any vegans, vegetarians? I can do all?' said Lin.

'Vegan!' replied Deedee without looking up.

'Veggie' replied Callum without looking up.

Lin went back into the cabin and started to prepare a cooked breakfast, he was a vegetarian too so it suited him that he could make some meat free sausages, bacon and eggs, with mushrooms, tomatoes and toast. The two teenagers came into the cabin after they had retrieved what they were looking for and both their stomachs grumbled at the smell of the food. Deedee put her papers on the breakfast bar and started to arrange them.

'What you got there?' said Lin trying to peer over.

'It looks like graphs and numbers' said Callum.

Deedee smiled and nodded, she got excited because these bits of paper had been her life over the past three years, she had been recording her animal encounters and her data was showing there was a clear increase in encounters which she considered was leading to something big. She showed the other two her graphs and told them about her metrics and recording parameters to how she had predicted a point in time that was coming.

'And you are just a farmer? Not like a scientist?' said Callum.

'Yes, but think about it Callum, in all the animals you've dealt with, haven't you felt it? Haven't you perceived the changes?' said Deedee.

'I suppose I have, if I think about it' said Callum.

'Foods up guys!' said Lin sliding two plates along to them.

The food looked so good and the three spent time eating, discussing Deedee's theories and trying to understand what the data was pointing to.

Deedee couldn't take her eyes off the numbers and information as she ate, Lin noticed some drawings or scribbles on one of the bits of paper underneath the others and asked her what it was; she pulled it out and placed it on top of the rest.

'Without getting too technical, I think the data points to a series of convergences, you know where all things like join up' she said pointing to some points on her map.

'That one there looks a lot like this' said Callum producing a bit of paper with contours on it and pointing at a part of Deedee's sketch.

They all looked at Callum's contours and then at Deedee's lines, 'there's a slight correspondence there' said Lin pointing to a part of it, 'what are your contours Callum?' he added.

'Oh, the depth of the North Sea off the coast of Scotland, I was doing a project on sea mammals and wanted to know where the currents were and how they related to the depths of each part' said Callum

'And I'm the maths geek!' said Deedee.

'It's geography, you know colouring in, and making maps' said Callum.

Lin saw something in the two plans and got up from the seat to go and fetch something, he returned and placed one of sea charts next to the other two drawings. He then proceeded to move the three plans around until they had a confluence, a spot that matched all three plans.

'Well, that's a thing' said Lin.

'Oh wow!' exclaimed Callum.

'What are your guys plans for today/tomorrow? Do I need to get you guys home?' said Lin.

'No!' they both said in unison quite quickly.

Lin frowned and looked at them both, there was something they were not telling him.

'I have time' said Callum.

'So, do I' said Deedee.

'Well, I have nowhere to be either, so, let's do a trip, see what's there' said Lin.

The Point Discovered

The trip to the spot on the North Sea was going to take some hours to get there, and with more incoming storms Lin had warned them it was going to be choppy. Deedee told the other two about her theory that the recent intensity of storms and natural phenomena was linked to the rise in the number of animals seeking her help; she told the other two that she was convinced it was linked to whatever was at that location. It was an interesting theory which both Callum and Lin gave her some grace with, well, they didn't have any conflicting evidence to contradict it.

It made for an interesting debate on what it possibly could be, and on route their curiosity and speculation grew as a number of sea mammals began to follow in their wake. They saw basking sharks, common seals, dolphins, porpoise, and even a killer whale, a rare sighting for Scotland; it was as if they were following them to see a show.

In the time they spent sailing they discussed their lives briefly with one another, Callum was an open book when it came to his life, he told the others that his mum had met a man and they were selling up, which meant him losing his animal rescue centre, they could tell he wasn't happy about it. Deedee confessed to being homeless after falling out with her parents and Lin had even offered up that he was going to lose his estate to pay for a very messy divorce. They all found a little solace in the collective downturns in life they were experiencing.

After six hours of sailing, and watching the following pack of animals, Deedee spotted something in the water ahead of them, she called it out to the others.

'What is it? Shouted Callum

'Some sort of flat thing, I can't quite see, it's smooth' shouted Deedee.

Lin slowed the boat as best he could and decided to shut all power off to drift up to it, he then realised what it was, turned the engine on and slammed it into full reverse, this sent Deedee and Callum flying forward, with Deedee almost falling into the water.

'What is it!' shouted Callum looking at it and then up at Lin.

'It's a Blue Whale!' said Lin.

'What!' said Callum racing over the side to look.

Deedee looked closer and saw its eye, its blowhole and part of its underbelly, she knew it wasn't well. The waves moved it around, but it was just not moving itself, it floated there as though it had given up on life.

'It's not well, we need to figure out what's wrong' said Lin appearing on deck alongside Callum and Deedee.

'It's beautiful' said Deedee.

'It's massive!' exclaimed Callum.

The waves moved it again and the three onlookers caught a glimpse something hanging from the corner of its mouth and snagged on its baleen.

'You see that' said Callum.

'We need to get it off, Lin have you got diving stuff?' said Deedee turning to Lin.

'I think just a snorkel and some flippers' he said.

Deedee snapped into action and asked Lin to get them out, she went back to her deflated dingy and produced a set of clothes that were stashed in another waterproof pocket. She donned a swimsuit in a flash without thought of flashing Callum, who looked away obviously, she ran back up the steps grabbed the snorkel and flippers and within minutes dove into the water. Lin looked at Callum and shrugged at him, Callum shrugged back.

'I would have volunteered but she got there first you know' said Callum.

'Of, course' said Lin smiling.

They watched Deedee take deep breaths and make little dives down to the whale to see what the thing was snagged on, after two or three dives she shouted up for a knife, which Lin handed to her off the swim deck. She took the knife and swam back out, by this time Callum had made his mind up that she was going to need help, he stripped down to his shorts and dived in to join her. Lin felt left out and eventually changed into his shorts and dived in too.

Between the three of them they managed to cut off what appeared to be a long rope with a bunch of cloth at one end, they couldn't see what was on the other end because it was inside the whale's mouth. Deedee had done most of the work, but Callum eventually made the final cut, he pulled the rope free and the whale opened its mouth causing a suction of water, sucking in Deedee who was closest to its mouth. Lin and Callum watched in horror as she disappeared inside its mouth, they couldn't do anything but save themselves by swimming back from the suction effect.

They both emerged out of the water and swam to the boat, they could see the Blue Whale moving like it had an electric shock to wake it up, they watched it lower its head down towards the depth and point its tail upwards and in a giant splash of water it propelled itself downwards fast and disappeared from their sight temporarily. A lot of bubbles were left in its wake, Lin and Callum looked at each other in disbelief at what had just happened.

It was in that moment they realised the storm was gone, the sun was out, and the sea was calm, the bubbles eventually stopped and in the middle of the bubbles was Deedee splashing and laughing.

'Wow! That was something else!' she shouted.

'Deedee! You're okay!' shouted Callum.

'More than okay! We did it!' she shouted and swam over to the yacht.

The three clambered back on and sat on the swim deck with their feet in the water, Lin checked to see if she was okay and there was not a scratch on her.

'What happened?' asked Callum.

'There was a weight on the other end of the rope inside his mouth, he needed one of us to go inside and get it and by diving down I could grab it and let gravity do the rest, it was amazing!' she said.

'So, he just opened his mouth and you got pulled out by the weight?' said Lin.

'What a clever animal!' said Callum.

The Blue whale emerged again and swam passed them, it made a sound as it passed by them and the three of them knew in that moment that they had witnessed and taken part in something very special. Deedee explained to them that it was more that special, that it was the imbalance in nature that had caused the storms, one of the keystone species taken out of action that potentially would have caused a knock-on of serious events, if they had not intervened in the way they did.

'Mad Steve said to trust the beast and get your rewards' said Callum.

'Well, I feel rewarded, we helped one of the mightiest beasts on the planet', said Deedee.

'I suppose the sun and calm weather is a good reward too' said Callum.

'I quite like this reward' said Lin holding up a small see through bag.

Callum and Deedee turned and looked at him, he was holding up a small bag that appeared to contain crystals or see through rocks.

'What are they?' asked Deedee.

'I believe these are uncut diamonds' said Lin smiling.

Lin found them in the cloth part of the weight that was snagged on the whale, he postulated that smugglers or thieves must had thrown them overboard somewhere off the coast of Africa when fleeing the authorities and somehow, they got snagged in the Blue whale's Baleen. Lin had spent some time in Africa chasing poachers and criminals and so knew a little bit about diamonds too.

'Oh wow, what do we do now, are we like, rich?' said Callum.

'We've just swam with a blue whale Callum, we're already rich' said Deedee.

'We are indeed, but these could help us with our future missions though' said Lin smiling.

The sun and the calm sea made for more comfortable sailing back to the mainland, the buzz of the experience though wore off the closer they got to the village of Achnamara, at the head of the Loch. Deedee was tired from her rescuing exploits and fell asleep on the sofa in the lounge whereas Callum had kept Lin company at the helm. They were just about to manoeuvre the boat in to dock at the jetty when they heard Deedee shouting, 'guys!' She appeared at the bottom of the steps to the helm and looked up at them both smiling.

'I had another dream, there is a Sea Eagle that needs our help up near Mull!'

Callum looked at Lin, who looked back at him, 'well?'

'Well, indeed, let's go and check it out!' said Lin.

The End