



Klamath Writers' Guild is pleased to present two winning stories from our short story competition. The competition covered three different themes: The Teacher, Slavery, and Romance. The following stories will fall under at least one of these themes.

## Cratchum of the Indies

by Ed Silling



The Gypsy of Threadneedle Street looked up as he passed. “Good morning, sir. Cast your runes today? Thruppence.”

“No need for that,” he said with the confidence of an accountant who always had his books in order. “I can tell you what will happen today. I’ll cross the square to the building there, enter those big doors, shake off my umbrella, pass the director’s office, climb two hundred and twenty seven stairs to my cubicle, fill my inkwells, sharpen my quills and juggle my accounts till half past six. Then you’ll see me passing the other way. And so on until they lay me in my grave.”

The gypsy shook her head. “Don’t be so sure. Sometimes while we’re charging ahead, the road of life takes a quick turn and we end in the brambles.” She squinted up, wiping the rain from her eyes. “I see it

mistily, sir, your turn in the road, though I get my proper seeing from these stones. Thruppence.” She rattled the cup provocatively.

“Don't bother. I'm not some gullible beggar. I'm a chartered accountant and I know value for money. I'd get the same benefit tossing my coins down the storm drain.”

He crossed the square just as he had predicted, congratulating himself on outfoxing the gypsy, and paused in the forecourt of the building to admire the splendid architecture of the Honorable British East India Company headquarters, the noblest of piles with its pillars and ornamentals, solid, dependable, predictable. And in front, like the figurehead of a granite vessel, the statue of Robert Clive of India, bewigged, stern, holding the hilt of a great smiting sword, a man not to be trifled with, a man among men, and among pigeons, judging from the streaks on his bronze forehead. Clive, all-round hero, every schoolboy's dream.

He had just shaken his umbrella when the desk clerk called, “Mr. Cratchum, the director wants to see you directly.”

“What, now?”

“Yes.”

It was a grand office, teakwood furnishings, Persian carpets, velvet hangings and, on the wall behind the director's desk, in a gilt frame, a vast oil painting of an indiaman thrashing along under full sail, spray flying, pennants snapping.

Being a chartered accountant may have one-upped him on the gypsy, but it didn't account for much here with his gray shabbiness and his steamy spectacles.

But the director was friendly. He unscrewed his glinting monocle and smiled as if he meant it. “Ah, there you are. *Cratchum*, isn't it? *Bob Cratchum*, acting assistant to the chief accountant?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Saw you admiring Clive. Grand fellow. Soul of the age—general, governor, diplomat, quite the renaissance man. Conquered India. Blew his brains out when he returned, but no matter, he'd put England's boot on India's neck—sent us shiploads of gold. A real hero.”

Cratchum remembered to take off his hat. He fumbled, dropped it.

“Nay, lad, don't be so nervous. I've heard good things about you, Bob Cratchum—careful, dependable, always on time. I've seen it with my own eyes and you're due for advancement. Ten years with us, eh?”

Bob nodded. He'd always been fussy with numbers but never thought anyone else was aware of it. The light of his candle must have leaked through the weave of his bushel.

“Well, to the point. Last night the chief accountant collapsed nose down in his inkwell and I'm giving you his situation: Bob Cratchum, Chief Accountant. How does that sound, eh?”

Bob was so delighted he dropped his hat again.

He passed the Gypsy after work. She smiled knowingly. He paused, turned and gave her sixpence. “Should have paid you earlier. Would have saved me a near heart attack.”

He hopped the stairs to his lodgings two at a time and took his wife by the hands.

“Ah, Mrs. Cratchum, I have something to tell you.”

“And I, Mr. Cratchum, have something to tell *you*.”

“Well who shall be first?”

“Why, you, Mrs. Cratchum, for ladies should always take precedence.”

“Oh, such a gentleman. Well, here's the long and short of it. You've been feeling a stick-in-the-mud what with being ten years an accountant on a hard stool which has disposed you to piles. Well...”

“I'd rather you not be so indelicate, Mrs. Cratchum.”

“But we have been married eighteen years. Still, as you wish. To cheer you up from your glumps I have bespoke us two seats at the Shaftesbury this evening. And though it is not my custom, we shall stop afterward at the *King George* for a glass.”

“I am most grateful, Mrs. Cratchum, but I must tell you that this evening shall be not a cheering up but a celebration.”

“A celebration? How so?”

“My dear wife, this morning I was called in by the director...”

“Oh dear.”

“My first thought precisely, but it was grand news. The chief accountant had drowned in his inkwell.”

“That's hardly grand news. Think of his wife and children.”

“Nay, dear wife, the grand news is that I have been promoted chief accountant in his stead, though I take a dead man's stool with misgivings. But it's an ill wind, as they say, that blows no good. Now tell me what is this play at the Shaftesbury?”

“It is a revival of Mr. Dryden's *All for Love, or the World well Lost*.”

“I've heard of it. Quite an improvement on the old Bard, I'm told.”

“It will be wonderful going out on the town, like courting again.”

After the performance Mrs. Cratchum walked with spring in her steps, her spirits high as they repaired to the *King George*. “It was a remarkable play, was it not, dear husband? So filled with the power of love, so tragic. Did it not make you feel noble?”

He replied, as they settled into a corner of the taproom, “I was not so moved as you, my dear, by the noble Antony killed over that selfish Cleopatra. She was, how shall I say, so absorbed in herself it was almost disgusting. Must have been something horribly wrong with Marc Antony to lose his head over that woman. And I'm not so sure the doings of ancient Rome apply to our modern times.”

He drained his glass. “Moreover, the playhouse is rather a stunted substitute for real life, for real adventure. Watching a brawl in the street is far more exciting. But that said, it did have an effect on me. It stirred my restless soul, my discontent, my yearning for greatness.”

“But you are now chief accountant, a great advancement in my eyes.”

“Ah, Mrs. Cratchum, how shall I explain it?—innkeeper! Another glass—for you are a very ordinary woman, a ship-chandler's daughter, devoid of ambition, a contented soul. This yearning—I cannot help it. Today I saw schoolboys running and skylarking and recalled my own schooldays. Oh, the dreams we had. There was not one of us, no matter how spotty and unpromising, did not aspire. I myself dreamed of being a general, an admiral, a statesman.”

“What, all of those?”

“Indeed, Mrs. Cratchum, for when we are young, we imagine the future stretches infinitely, like the school year, and everything is possible. But alas, how dreams shrivel with age. As for the play being tragic, the only tragic thing is that we paid good money to see it—innkeeper!”

“Robert Cratchum, you are rude and ungentlemanly. And the cause is because you are combobulated by drink and you'll oblige me by stopping. I hope you are quite finished.”

He called for another, loudly. The customers were beginning to

notice.

“No, Mrs. Cratchum,” he slurred, “I am not quite finished. I'm sick of being a drudge, a quill-pusher, with my arse chained to a stool...”

“Language...”

“I wish for the heroic life, for adventure, for danger.”

His wife was rising to dangerous levels herself and would have treated him to a wine jug on the head, had he not gone face down on the table. She paid two lackeys to drag him home and sling him into bed.

His head was jangling next morning as he pulled himself to work. The noise of the street only made it worse—dray carts crashing by, barrow boys selling wares, fish husbands shrieking, a newsboy hawking a broadsheet: “Read all abaht it! Cornwallis gets 'ome. New govmint. Lord North's out, young Pitt's in, peace treaty. Read all abaht it!”

And there was the damn gypsy again. “Morning, sir. Runes today? Only thruppence.”

Not wanting to be caught off guard, as he was yesterday, he stopped, laying coins on her table. “What have you got, Gypsy?”

She juggled the cup—too loud—tossed the stones and looked them over, rubbing her chin. “Best expect the unexpected, but whatever comes, you'll manage, sir. Today.”

“What? That's it?” He snatched the threepence and stormed off to work, his brain banging into his skull with each step.

She called after, “Don't never gyp a gypsy. You'll be sorry.”

Bob was in no mood for accounting today, but forced on by habit and with a growl at Clive, stumped up the front steps and pushed open the heavy door. There sat the clerk with his nails-in-the-ear voice. “Director wants you again, Mr. Cratchum.”

The great man stared scribbled for a couple of minutes before looking up, his monocle flashing painful sunlight. “Under the weather, Cratchum?”

“Well I did celebrate a bit last night, sir, given the circumstances.”

“Hope your head's ready for the grindstone.”

“Indeed it is, sir.”

“Have a seat. No, stand up. You heard the news. The Prime Minister's signed a peace treaty with the French. Thank you, Mr. Pitt.” He spat out the name.

The director, without the suave smiles, didn't seem so impressive today and Bob, perhaps because his brain was lagging, didn't feel so awestruck. The director was just a mortal like himself but in a fine suit and silver wig.

“Are you listening, Cratchum? Blast this peace. This ham-fisted treaty is bollox. Peace ain't natural.”

“I don't understand, sir.”

The director heaved a few breaths and pulled a bell-cord. A butler appeared. “Tea, Jeeves. That soothing Ceylon stuff. And hop to. Where was I? Ah, yes. Well, when it's war, you can explode your way to profit. But with peace, you have to respect treaties and international law and then we lose our trumps. And the market goes in the tank.”

“Our trumps, sir?”

“Are you thick, Cratchum? Profit's the spawn of powder and shot. Our navy can blow any rival off the sea. But now, well, we've got to compete, damn it, and the market's in the tank. Must have another war but it may take months of diplomatic fuddle. And dammit, the French have already got the jump on us, Cratchum, working on a trade pact with some East Indian muck-a-wallah. Their man's in Paris now.”

“Surely there's something we can do, sir. Some way to defeat peace.”

“Glad to hear you say it, Cratchum. Now you're talking.”

Bob's head began to clear.

The director leaned forward. “There *is* something you can do, my boy.”

“Me, sir?”

“No, Mr. Bloody Pitt. Of course *you*. How shall I put this? If we can show a strong return on dividends in spite of this damnable peace, we'll keep the investors happy, keep them pouring their money in. Keep the market bubbling.”

The director leaned closer, glancing to see if Jeeves was out of the room. “We must report eight percent on preferred stock, seven on common stock.”

“That's quite a stretch, sir. We're at six and three.”

“Not interested in six and three.”

Bob shook his head and opened his mouth to protest.

The director slammed a fist. “Dammit, Cratchum, You're chief accountant now. Do you realize how precarious things are? If returns

falter, the whole country, the empire itself, goes down the cesshole. Do you know what a global depression is, Cratchum?”

“Yes, sir, I believe I do.”

“Splendid. We don't want a global depression, Cratchum, do we? Of course not.” He took a sip of tea, steaming his monocle, which rather spoiled his penetrating look. “Incredible as it sounds, my boy, at this juncture of history, at this moment of time, the world depends on *you*. Stakes have never been higher.”

“Sir, I hardly feel up to it. I'm just an accountant.”

“Don't be modest. You're *chief* accountant, the perfect man. There's all sorts of ways to serve the empire. Clive had his way, I have mine and you've got yours. As the blind poet says, they also serve who only cook the books. This is your moment. You're a world-historical figure.”

He basked in the thought—a world-historical figure like Caesar, Alexander, Clive himself. Promoted from assistant chartered accountant to the very pinnacle. The glow of power pushed away the headache. He almost saluted. “The empire can count on me, sir.”

“Splendid. And we didn't have this conversation.”

As Bob climbed the ever-narrowing stairways to his attic, the glow of power faded like phosphorescence. Not that he didn't want to help the empire. He did, but something was troubling him. Not so much his conscience as his professional pride. No, not exactly pride, more the wagging finger of ingrained correctness, the *Manual of Standard Accounting Practices*. Yes, it's a very shrunken sort of life-mandate, but that very shrinking concentrates your precision, makes you methodical, scrupulous. Let a farthing escape and you'll track it for a fortnight.

Yes, sometimes a leap can be too big, too sudden, as Bob determined the moment he opened his door—the smell of attic and ink, shelves of ledgers, five volumes of accounting rules, neatly stacked manifests and letters of credit, receipts, letters pigeon-holed in the roll-top desk. Not a place for new ideas, for cooked books, deliberate mistakes, wrong sums. No. It was a place where the fug of accountancy said clearly, *Thou Shalt Not*. He shifted his gaze to the window, where, on the ledge, a jury of pigeons pricked him with beady eyes.

Then he thought of Clive, who never troubled himself with fugitive farthings. The director had cracked open the door of the world beyond. Clearly the empire operated by more flexible rules than accounting.

He put his head down on the desk, roiled in dither. He needed counsel, sound advice. Who? Margaret? No, She'd give him the wrong answer: "Honesty's the best policy, Bob. Stand up to that horrible director. Follow your conscience." No, Margaret wouldn't do. She was Church of England to the core. He needed somebody more secular, who wouldn't charge an arm and a foot, someone ready at hand without appointment. The gypsy. She was a charlatan, a carnival fake. If he didn't like her answer he'd keep feeding her threepences until she gave him the rationalizations he wanted. He slipped out, almost guiltily, but he was chief accountant and this was a matter of historical consequence.

He found her at her table. She smiled up at him knowingly, rattling the cup. "No, never mind the stones," he said, "I'm here for advice, your professional opinion. I'm willing to pay, of course. Double for the right answer."

"Well," she said, "Nobody never axed me professional opinion before. Let me clear off this claptrap and put on my thinking cap." Her thinking cap was a frilly bonnet which made her look surprisingly like his grandmother, who often gave good advice.

"Here's my dilemma. You see, the director wants me to cook the accounts—for the good of England, of course. In fact, for the good of the world."

She didn't seem surprised. "Sit here," she said, patting the bench beside her. Then, with an apologetic gesture, she pulled out a pipe and lit up. "Settles me when I have to do a bit of counseling." He gave a faint shrug and told her about his meeting with the director. What should he do? The stakes for the world were so high. "You seem like a woman of the world."

"How do you mean?"

"You'll tell flayed lies for a few coppers."

"I never lie. Told you to expect the unexpected today. You didn't expect it, but I was right. She puffed silently for a minute or two. "For most people," she said, "it'd be a matter of conscience. But your conscience is too flabby from lack of exercise. Not so much a conscience as a flopping jellyfish. But an accountant doesn't need a conscience, just a rule book." She studied him, puffing thoughtfully. "Let your rule-book be your guide. Don't get out of your depth, like him," she said, pointing at Clive with the stem of her pipe.

"And one last thing. Exercise your conscience. You're going to need

it.”

He returned to his office in a dither. He wasn't used to making world-historical decisions. He'd wasted his money with the gypsy, or he would have if he'd paid her. Being stumped is tiring if you insist on running up against the stump. To give his brain a rest he started in on his mindless office routine, charging his inkwells, sharpening his quills, changing his blotter.

Then he pulled the grand ledger down and opened it. The more he stared, the more the figures seemed to shift and flow. He pulled off his spectacles and rubbed his eyes. The income column was holding steady enough, but the expenses column seemed agitated. The tails of his figures pointed like fingers to 'Crew's wages.'

And he realized, without further prompting, that for every sailor less, you needed one less cask of water, salt pork, rum. Ten fewer and you could cross off a bosun's mate, twenty, an officer of the watch. His mind lit up. The magic eight percent could be met, surpassed. The pigeons on the window sill flapped their applause and leaped into the sky. All the pigeons of Threadneedles Street rose together in swirling thousands, peeling away for far-off lands—Africa, the mysterious East, the rain spouts of Avalon.

He checked his figures and dashed off a note to the director with a caution: *Sir, it is my duty to point out that this approach entails some risk, though perhaps not so much now that we are at peace—call it the peace dividend. However, there may not be sufficient hands for emergencies at sea, though this possibility is mitigated by hull and cargo insurance. In short, the occasional hull loss makes no material difference to returns. Yr. most humble and obedient svt., Robert Cratchum.*

The director wrote back that he couldn't be more pleased, that Bob's solution was better than straight fraud, given occasional audits and questions in parliament. He concluded, *A person of your parts and acumen could expect a meteoric rise in fortunes*, the most immediate evidence of which, a ten-guinea raise and an office with a bigger window. And he was seated there, in a chair, not padded, for that would come with the next promotion, sharpening his quill and congratulating himself, feeling expansive enough, perhaps to slip the gypsy some silver sometime. His thoughts were interrupted by Margaret walking in with a basket.

“What on earth are you doing here? It's against the rules.”

“You're looking a bit gaunt these days, dear, so I've brought you a good lunch—roast beef, Yorkshire pudding, strawberry tarts.”

She'd just finished laying it out when the director burst into the office, his eyes aglow, monocle dangling from its cord, in his hand a copy of the *Tribune*. “Cratchum! Have you heard? That French-East Indian trade pact has collapsed. So, it's our chance to strike while the iron's hot. We're going to Indies.”

“We, sir?”

“Yes, you're a genius with figures, know how to squeeze blood from a turnip, you do. I've got great plans for you, my lad, and rubbing shoulders with the world you'll learn more than you ever could rubbing your bum on your stool. Pardon my man-talk, madam, so—is that Yorkshire pudding? Where was I? Ah, yes—you'll be my ledger hound, Cratchum, valuation, calculation. Strawberry tarts? May I? Hmm. You cooked this lot, did you?”

Margaret curtsied. “I did, sir, with these very hands.”

“So you're Cratchum's housekeeper.”

“And cook.”

“Actually, sir,” said Bob, “she's my wife.”

The director shrugged. “Wife, housekeeper? No difference? I Married my housekeeper to save on her salary. A lesson there, Cratchum—the rich don't get rich from wasting money. Well, dear, what's your name?”

“Margaret, sir.”

“We'll call you Meg and you shall come with us, for gentlemen need a cook and a maid. Pack your bags. We're off tomorrow at the crack.”

No sleep. A whirlwind of getting packed and they were off disheveled, with linen hanging from their trunks. Express coach to Dover, the fastest packet to the far end of the Mediterranean, then camels across the desert.

“It would be lovely,” said Margaret, scanning the dunes, “if they dug a canal through here. Shouldn't be hard—nice soft sand.”

“Don't be ridiculous,” said Bob. “The Mediterranean would run into the Indian Ocean and the Atlantic would follow. Then there'd be no English Channel to keep the French out.”

At El Suweis a company ship was loading. The director commandeered it and in a wink they were dashing down into the Red Sea, then off across the Indian Ocean to the East Indies.

It was a long run across, Margaret cooking and washing, the director reading thick books and Bob checking his ledgers, growing his beard and working on his tan.

One evening at dinner in the great cabin, Bob asked about the failed trade agreement.

“We don't know much, except there was quite a fuss about it. The East Indian trade minister was lucky to escape with his life. Something about the him getting too clever.”

“Too clever?” said Bob.

Margaret was clearing the table. “No danger of that around here,” she muttered.

“All we know,” said the director, “is that Louis sent the fellow packing, saying he'd have his head if he came back. Something to do with a woman.”

Margaret sighed, “Good Gracious. It was all for love.”

“In my view,” said Bob. “Love can lump it. We English keep our eyes strictly on the prize.”

The director nodded. “Quite right, Cratchum, but I can't help wondering if the problem was in, well, conditions.”

“How do you mean, sir?”

The director settled back, swirling his wine. “Are you familiar with the late Adam Smith, Cratchum?”

“Scotchman.”

“Yes. Well, apart from some nonsense about the evils of monopoly companies like ours, he's a very clever fellow. He says that monarchies get in the way of expansion. Like a chick growing too big for its shell.”

“Did Smith say that?”

“Not exactly. He actually said—see here, I jotted it down—'the king's head is full of innumerable delusions!'”

The director paused to let this sink in. “The wealth of nations is too lively a force to be restrained by the delusions of a king, too big for the royal head.”

Margaret said, “So King Louis' head will explode some day if they don't chop it off first.”

“Inevitably,” said the director.

The ship was spanking along on a favoring wind, fanning Britannia's waves into silver cat's paws which danced to the horizon. The days

passed like dream. Bob saw the distant mound of Ceylon and the smudge of the sub-continent beyond and thought of Clive who had brought India to its knees.

One afternoon the Cratchums and the director were taking the air on deck. The conversation turned again to the unfortunate trade minister from the east who had annoyed the French King so much.

"I only know what was in the papers," said the director. "He was in fact Egyptian. Name of Omar, I believe. Very capable, though not much to look at, they said, puggish nose, thick spectacles, but brilliant in diplomacy."

Margaret stepped into the conversation. "He must be quite impressive to have been given such high responsibility."

"Perhaps," said Bob. "Except he has a pug nose and thick glasses."

"Like you, dear husband, but it's not a man's appearance that counts. It's the nobility of his character, his kindness."

"Keep in mind that whatever your notions about this fellow, he failed, something I—we—don't intend to do."

"Quite right, Cratchum."

They were interrupted by a shout from aloft. "Sail to windward."

The strange ship bearing down on them flew no flag. As a precaution they turned away and shook out a couple of reefs. The captain and first mate studied the other ship.

"I'm afraid it's pirates," said the captain solemnly.

"I expect we'll give them a reception they won't soon forget," said Margaret. "We've got a lot of guns."

"Yes, we have a lot of guns," growled the captain. "But some London quill-pusher has cut our crew roster to the bone and we haven't the men to fight her. Our only chance is to run and pray for darkness."

"Surely," said Margaret, "our cargo isn't worth dying for. Just stuff our factories could replace in five minutes."

Bob put on a lofty tone. "Though it seems so to you, Margaret, it's not just *stuff*. I admit it looks like stuff, but the director explained it to me. It's congealed capital, the essence of wealth, the life blood of empire. It looks dead, but once you exchange it, why it leaps to life and grows like bamboo, breaks down all barriers, conquers the world. It's unstoppable. Did I get that right, director?"

"Indeed you did, my boy. You are a quick study."

Bob smiled modestly. "And I have a formidable teacher."

At first Bob had no sense of danger. Being chased, sail against sail, seemed like racing at a standstill, one snail chasing another. But by late afternoon the pirate snail was clearly gaining and he was feeling uneasy. He started at the arresting hand on his shoulder. "You'll have to man the stern-chaser," said the captain grimly. "Go with that sailor and do just as he says."

They tried to send Margaret below but she'd have none of it. "I'd be more use at the guns than in the galley."

"It's not usual, Mrs. Cratchum," said the captain. "but this ain't usual. Go on with them."

Bob, Margaret and the director were put to the gun tackle. This wasn't Bob's first choice of things to do. He was a quill-man, not a gunner. When the first pirate shot went by, making a god-awful noise, he dropped to the deck and covered his head. The sailor in charge gave him a kick.

Bob had never realized how variable the passing of time could be. When you were at the rail, for instance, looking at the horizon, time seemed as infinite as distance, even reversible, for you could turn and look the other way, and when you turned back everything would be the same.

Time would even wait when you went to dinner, then to bed and next morning the world would be exactly as before. Same with your thoughts. If you wrote them down and went to bed they'd be there next morning too. But when the pirate ball vaporized the director's head and the captain's, time was absolute, fatal, irreversible.

Beyond that the battle was anti-climactic. Night came and the English ship, on a favoring wind, lost the pirate for good. Time reverted to its usual lackadaisical self. Bob should have been having nightmares, screaming in his sleep, jumping at sudden noises but there was none of that. He was oddly at peace, content, and it took him only a few days to realize why. His time had come; another grand promotion thanks to a lucky cannonball.

He moved into the director's cabin, put on the wig, suit and hat, screwed in the monocle. It wasn't the noblest of names, *Cratchum*, but embedded in something grander—Robert, Lord Cratchum of the Indies—well...

"I'm shocked at your heartlessness," Margaret protested. "You should be ashamed, strutting around in that poor dead man's clothes."

Nothing but trouble will come of this.”

“Trouble lies in the expenses column, to be weighed against benefits in the profits column. You forget that I am a student of risk, my dear.”

Bob spent the rest of the voyage growing his beard to look like the gentleman of action, posing at the mirror, perfecting his look.

At last they reached the Empire of the Indies. The imperial capital lay on the shores of a tranquil bay under a halo of aureate light that might have been the reflection of golden domes or the sheen of Bob's dreams. The anchor splashed diamonds.

A group of merchants led them a short distance inland to a golden mansion seeming to float on a mirror pond; swans drifted indifferently, cranes stood guard in the reeds, frogs sang praise on lily pads.

A man in robes and turban greeted them warmly. “I am Lord Omar, Imperial Trade Minister, though a very informal fellow, in spite of all this splendor, this mansion of gold and ivory, touched with jade. Come.” There was something odd about his English, out of keeping with rank and splendor. No matter. This was the life Bob craved now that the world economy was in his hands.

Lord Omar put his arm round Bob. “Brother, you shall share the life with me,” and guided him through a jeweled arch, along gilded passageways. The inner chamber was dazzling, silk tapestries, gold candlesticks, fountains of jade. In the corner, a large splendid two-handled trophy cup, bigger than a man's head. Bob eyed it with envy and wondered if and when he would be awarded such a thing. They reclined at a low table inlaid with intricate patterns—swirls and shapes that seemed to shift form, like clouds or embers, an orchid becoming a cobra, a frond, a scimitar.

Omar snapped his fingers and two girls swirled in with jugs of wine, baskets of fruit, pears, grapes, luminescent apples that might have been plucked from Eden. To look at them, sitting together, arm in arm, one would have thought that Bob and Omar were blood-linked, both tanned and bearded, pug-nosed, of similar shortness and build.

Margaret hung back. Bob considered saying, ‘this is my wife,’ but decided not to. World historical figures don't bring their wives. She pulled at Bob's sleeve and whispered, “There's something fishy about this fellow. He looks stupid but he's got something up his sleeve, mark my words. Far too friendly.”

“Nonsense. These people are naturally friendly, generous, polite; for them there's no such thing as too friendly.”

Omar was all that Bob dreamed of being—titled, rich, a global figure. And he wouldn't make Omar's mistake. He would see the treaty through. What should he call it? Something fit for the history books—*The Cratchum Pact*.

He eyed Omar's jeweled turbans, silk robes, cloaks embroidered in thread of gold. He envied Omar's sublime confidence, his knack for make slave girls appear as if from nowhere, with a mere snap. They would enter not clumping like English women, but wafting, pouring wine, peeling grapes. You'd never get Margaret peeling grapes or doing veil dances, though she was damn good with potatoes.

That evening Bob was sharing hookah bubbles with his new brother, the aromatic smoke lifting them into dreamy confidences. Omar said, “In spite of appearances, I am a very shy and private person. Close friends like you are rare, though we have known each other for but a week. You would not suspect that I, like you, am a foreigner here, a traveler, who—Allah be praised—has found favor with of the great Emperor.”

“How?—if I may presume on our intimacy?”

“A pure accident of birth, dear Cratchum, physiognomy. In the West, beetle-brows, shortness of sight, stub noses, eyebrows that cross the forehead without hiatus, why these features are marks of truculence, low breeding, stupidity. But here, in the East, they are signs of nobility, of rare fortune, a sign of favor with the gods. I was considered such a rarity, such a wonder, that word of my arrival flew to the court and I was summoned.”

“Do you think,” said Bob, fondling his beard, craning to look in a gilded mirror, “that I am a rarity?”

“Indeed you are, my friend. The moment I saw you, I said to myself, Omar, this man is you.”

“Do you truly think so?”

“Indeed. But of course looks can be deceiving. I have many talents—a gift for numbers...”

“Why, So have I.”

“Personal charm.”

Bob tilted his head deprecatingly, charmingly.

“But most of all, I have a vision of greatness, a conviction that, well, my destiny stretches to infinity and so, dear Cratchum, does yours”

“Astounding, dear Omar. We have all in common. You have described me to a 't', with brandy and two lumps of sugar.”

“I rose quickly, a star in the ascendant, like you, my brother, who were but a clerk, then chief accountant, then Far eastern envoy of the Honorable East India Company. I too rose in fortune and His Imperial Majesty developed great confidence in me. His imperial instinct, he said, assured him of my skill in diplomacy, that I could land a whale with a silk thread.”

Omar's self-puffery was beginning to grate a little for self-puffery in others was an affront to his Cratchum's own. “But You did not,” Bob said, drawing a bubbling chestful of smoke and finishing the sentence croaking, “land King Louis.”

“That wasn't my fault, brother Cratchum.”

“I'm sure it wasn't. But I hope you will oblige me with the story.”

A shadow crossed Omar's face, a mere flicker, the shadow of a pigeon on the wing.

“You may tell me in confidence, dear brother.”

“I am sure,” said Omar with a strange smile, “that this painful story will rest with you alone.”

With the stem of the hookah Bob made a gesture intended to mean 'you may trust me implicitly,' but it must have meant something else too, for the slave-girls appeared.

Omar said. “I was sitting at my hooka, as now, when the emperor sent for me.”

Bob perked up. “Describe him.”

“Alas I cannot. There was a jeweled screen between us, for no one must look on the divine presence. I spoke through the screen as papists do in the confessional—I am here, divine one, your humble servant Omar.”

“He told me that the alignment of Jupiter and Mars, with the moon in the seventh house, revealed that the time was propitious for conjoining of east and west. I must say the emperor's very roundabout in his metaphors, but the short of it is that the king of the setting sun, Louis of France, must be offered a trade pact by the emperor of the rising sun.

“Well it took him forever to say it, but he finished with the most profound advice that I should never have followed. But I was intoxicated by his words, I mean, when the emperor talks to you...”

Bob was intoxicated just hearing about it and swelled with the hope

that he too would be called to the eternal presence. “Go on. This is grand.”

Omar smiled with a shadow of misgiving. “He said that monarchs are gods and must never be looked at face to face, which is why the screen. No mortal can look on the face of God without burning up, just as you can't look right at the sun. He rattled on about the sun, like the moon, having a dark back side and that's the only safe way to proceed.”

“Pray continue, brother, with what the divine one was saying about having a dark backside.”

“So, he said, the French Louis must be approached through the back portal, like a strongly fortified city. And the key to the back door? Our wise emperor knew who held it—the mistress of King Louis. For it is well known—this is the emperor speaking—that love is the most powerful thing in the universe. A great man will give all for love.”

“That's what Margaret says.”

“The emperor sent me with priceless gifts, woven silks, rare perfumes, gold, gems, gifts to persuade the mistress to persuade the king. It was an arduous journey with all that stuff. When I reached Versailles, I discovered that the king's mistress was the incomparable Contessa la Belle Epoch. She was more than willing, when she saw the cartloads of gifts, to carry my Emperor's proposal to Louis. Success was within my grasp.”

“Then how did you fail? Did she fail to keep up her end? Women are weak and fickle by nature.”

“Not this woman. She went to the king as she had promised, only to discover, alas the fickleness of kings, that he had taken a new mistress. Yes, and the next day, it flew round the court like a swarm of wasps. Louis had taken a new mistress. The contessa was sent packing. Packing my gifts, unfortunately.”

“I'm surprised,” said Bob, “that your emperor took it so well. He must recognize merit even in failure. Look at all this stuff you have. He has lavished you in spite of it all. Forgiving, far more Christian than Louis, ironically.”

“True. And this is your moment, dear Cratchum. The emperor is most eager to conclude a trade pact, even with England. You are poised to succeed where I have failed. ”

“Most generous of you to say so, dear friend, for in your position I would resent my impending triumph and think murderous of me. But you

are benevolent, contra the English, and bear me no ill will. Remarkable. Admirable.”

“Not only do I bear you no ill will, brother, but, come, I gift you these.” He opened his wardrobe and his treasure chest.

“Nay, brother,” said Bob, his eyes flaming in greed, “you are far too generous.”

“I serve a generous Emperor and I pass his generosity to you.”

They gazed warmly into each others' eyes.

“However,” said Omar, “I would not sully the purity of gift-giving by asking a favor in return.”

“There's nothing I can give you, truly, beyond my wigs and suits.”

“Which I gratefully accept. And...”

“I have nothing further.”

“Nay, but you have.”

“What, pray? I cannot conceive. No matter—whatever, it is yours, my hand on it, on the honor of an Englishman.”

As if on cue, a clash of tambourines, laughter, the swirl of Jasmin and Pearblossom in billows of silk. The girls moved closer, keeping their eyes fixed on Bob's, closer and closer, until he felt their warm breath on his face, which he didn't mind as opposed to when Margaret breathed into his face at night. The thought apparently summoned her.

“Am I intruding?” she said from behind, swatting the girls away with a look.

“Yes, Margaret?”

“The first mate's outside. Says the ship's ready, cargo's loaded—fall winds, monsoon season. He's ready to be off. So you'd best conclude your business.”

Omar's eyes followed her as she withdrew.

“May I speak to you in confidence, as a brother, dear Cratchum?”

“Yes, friend. I am your ear.”

“A man grows weary of life on a platter. All of this wealth that you see, the splendor, even Jasmin and Pearblossom, even peeled grapes, the attention of the emperor, believe me when I say there's still an emptiness—he tapped his chest—here, a need for something real, as you have.”

“As I have? Don't know what you're on about. This seems real enough to me, dear Omar.”

Omar sighed and looked round to make sure they were alone. “I

refer to your maid...”

“Margaret.”

“Yes. I think she's fond of you, Cratchum. She sees your soul. There's fire in her, fire in her walk, fire in her hair— Oh how it catches the glint of lamplight and flings it back. Do you see how she storms about in your presence, how she slings down your bowl when she serves you? There's passion in her heart, Bob, and 'tis that passion my emptiness yearns for.”

This was certainly new light on Margaret.

Omar was in ecstasy. “She's charming, exotic. She's *your* maid, and you have proprietary right. But can I induce you to let her go? I would fall at her feet, have her hand in marriage. You pledged your honor as an Englishman.”

Omar's descant on Margaret momentarily turned his head, but then he thought of the girls. “You can have her.”

Omar seized him in a powerful embrace. “Thanks brother. All this is yours. And be assured, the emperor will attend you before long. Wear my robes, my turban. Indeed we are so alike with our swarthy tans and pointy beards, you shall be *me* and I *you*.”

Bob thought it a brilliant exchange in the spirit of world trade, an English commodity—Margaret—for the riches of the east. His mind boggled at the prospects. There must be thousands of Margarets in England. The only problem was getting her to agree.

Later she found her husband alone in the courtyard. “How long must I keep up this silly masquerade? I'm finished with being your maid? I'm ready to go home, and Omar is giving me the most improper attentions. There's something unwholesome about him. I think he's English—a Londoner.”

“A Londoner? Pshaw!”

“It's the way he says 'English,' with a bit on an aitch, like the East-enders. In any case, you're my husband until death and we've been married a long time and....” She put her hand on his arm.

He removed it. “Margaret, it is crucial that Omar, English or not, rallies to our cause. You, my dear, have become an unexpected asset—I'd never have dreamed it—and we're not in England now and England's customs don't apply.”

“What on earth do you mean?” She paused and averted her head.

“Do you love me?”

He thought too long. “After a fashion.”

“After a fashion? How can you be so stingy with your affections after all these years? After fighting pirates together?”

“I mean, of *course* I love you. The question caught me off, that's all. But I'm wondering if you could suspend your wedding vows for the greater good. For trade, investment, capital expansion. For England. You remember *All for Love*?”

“Of course I do.”

“Well, Marc Antony—you liked him—gave Cleopatra improper attentions and suspended his vows for the good of Rome, didn't he? And I'm doing the same for you. Just for a bit, only until the trade pact is signed. Two days. A week at most. I'd expected it sooner, but...”

“But you forgot to bring the army,” she flung as she walked away.

Bob was on the hookah with Omar when the first mate came in. “Mr. Cratchum, We'll have to make sail tomorrow.”

Omar waved a reassuring hand. “Make your preparations. You shall leave on the noonday tide. For His Imperial Majesty will act in the morning, then you can head off.”

Bob didn't want to head off and his look showed it.

“Take heart,” said Omar. “Though some things must end, fortune shines in other ways. Margaret is proving kind and for her I will leave this life of luxury and dissipation and return to England. But as for you, my dear brother, you must stay here in my place. Catch the next ship if you will, or remain for good.”

The mate shuffled up apologetically, holding his hat. “Mr. Cratchum, I have an aching toe that comes on before a bad blow and you'd best come while the coming's good. Quit this heathen place while you can. They don't do things the way us Hinglishmen do.”

When they were alone Bob confronted Omar. “Margaret believes you are an Englishman, from the underside of London.”

Omar responded with a winning smile. “Indeed, I am English, born as lowly as you, brother Cratchum. And like you, I had no standing in England, no prospects. But here, well, one foreigner looks like another, so I styled myself a noble Arab, suave and charming. Men can change as I did, from a leaden Englishman to a golden Omar, and so can you,

Cratchum, so can you. You will be immortal.”

“I take hope from your words, Lord Omar, for I feared I was a stick-in-the-mud failure, but I am a new man now and I shall spend the rest of my days here. And what a change is in us both.”

“Transformation.”

“Yes, *me* in your robe and turban, enjoying your delights and *you*, looking so splendidly English in the director's—my—suit and wig, though London accountants don't wear such beards as ours.”

“Then it will be cut off.”

Bob passed the evening in his cups, or rather Omar's cups, and was just waking from a night of debauchery. Not being used to it, he was head-spinning, dazed, confused, for the girls had danced his night away as if for a special occasion, which Bob took as his due, the soon-to-be Robert, Lord Cratchum of the Indies, with special portfolio to the emperor, ambassador extraordinaire, his imagination trailing away in splendid titles.

Near dawn he fell asleep and dreamed of soaring birds, wafting silk and pulsing finger cymbals, no, clashing steel, stamping feet—two guards and a man in rich robes who read from a scroll, “Omar el Baradei, his Imperial Majesty has allowed you the customary month of pleasure and luxury for capital offenders of high office. Now he relieves you of the torture of living in his displeasure, releases you from the disgrace of stupidity, of numb-skullery, from laughing-stockery, for bestowing untold treasures on King Louis' ex-mistress. He gives you the merciful hissing scimitar, swift and painless.”

The guards seized him and dragged him out. Pearblossom followed with the silver two-handled trophy cup, bigger than a man's head. The little procession wound out into the dawnlight. A hooded man, a glinting blade. Others stood by—a woman, a man in a tricorn hat.

They tied Bob to a kind of sawhorse. The hooded man made a hissing practice swing. Pearblossom positioned the trophy cup.

Bob found his voice. “But I am not Omar! I'm Bob Cratchum! Margaret, tell them!”

“He isn't Omar. He's my husband. The real Omar is standing over there.”

But the man in the tricorn hat had disappeared.

The executioner hesitated. “Possibly you aren't Omar. Mistakes

happen. But once an execution has begun, the emperor is very particular about seeing it through—his authority is at stake, you see. Besides, it's his policy to rid the empire of fools and under that general warrant, any fool will do. It doesn't matter.”

The blade hissed and Cratchum's head thunked into the trophy cup.

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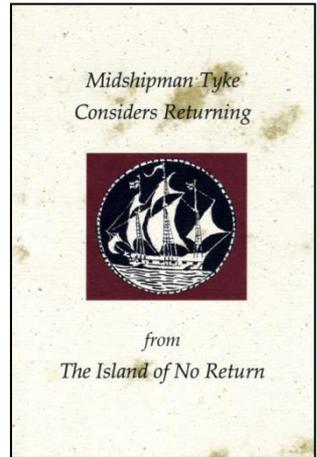
Ed Silling

I was born in England and have lived in Eastern Canada, Seattle, Minnesota, North Dakota and Oregon and this has taken me 72 years to do. I have a doctorate in English Literature and have taught in the Communications Department at Oregon Tech since 1975. I enjoy writing fiction, especially historical farce and other stuff, such as meeting minutes and grocery lists which I always lose. I am married to Darla who uses my manuscripts to swat flies and discipline the dog so I know my work has some practical use. I have been a member of KWG since the turn of the century. And I use far too many first person subject pronouns in my writing, which is a talent, since there's only one.

Ed self-published his first novel, *Midshipman Tyke Considers Returning from the Island of No Return*, hand binding and crafting several different cover designs. (The ship on the cover is Ed's design.) If you are interested in a copy of this book email Ed at:

[klamathwritersguild@hotmail.com](mailto:klamathwritersguild@hotmail.com)

If you're interested, be patient. Creating a unique, hand crafted novel takes a little time but it's worth it because the story is filled with mystery and adventure.



# Elana

by Glenn Justus

Elana sat quietly fishing off the end of the pier, the line held loosely in her hand. She stretched her slender legs and leaned back against a piling as her little dog “Loki” squirmed behind her trying to stay in the shade. The warm West African sun beat down on her world with a growing intensity as it climbed higher in the morning sky.

“Enjoy yourself, Loki,” she said, “It will soon be too hot for me too. The fish aren’t biting anyway,” she added. Not caring, for her thoughts were not on fishing this morning. She was sixteen now, and much as she cared for them both, she longed for companionship other than her father and her dog. There was no social life here on the Volta, and the only visitors were the slavers who came to buy the wretched blacks from her father. At those times, she was kept discretely out of sight until they had gone.

“So you won’t be spirited aboard one of those hell ships,” her father had told her, “I don’t know what I would do if that happened. You are the only bright spot in my life.”

Only last night he had promised to take her back to Spain. She didn’t think that would ever happen, for his political enemies would not permit it. He had backed the wrong people during the revolution and had to leave Spain in disgrace. He was not the fierce blooded Spaniard that she read about in her father’s books, but rather a smallish disillusioned man who thought that with enough gold he could return to Spain and buy back his former position and power. She could not understand how so gentle a man could choose slavery as a means to realize his dreams, but she also saw another side to him when dealing with the slavers. He could be strong and ruthless at those times.

“It is a lucrative business,” he had told her many times, “It fills my pockets with gold, and besides, if I wasn’t here, someone else would be to take my place.” She accepted this reluctantly, for she loved her father dearly, but longed to be away from the slave compound and all that it stood for. Her mother had died in childbirth, and Don Sebastian was the only person to give her the love she so desperately needed. He had tried to rear her as a Spanish lady, and educated her to the best of his abilities. All this did not change the fact that she was a ‘child of misfortune’ . . . a

‘Quadroon girl,’ looked down on by the whites, and hated by the blacks. An occasional visit to Accra was the only excitement in her life, and she looked forward to those trips with a quiet yearning that only the lonely can know.

Her thoughts were interrupted suddenly as a hungry fish pulled the line through her fingers, burning the tender flesh. She jumped to her feet, dropping the line as she put her injured finger in her mouth. Loki scampered half way down the pier before stopping to turn and see what all the commotion was about.

“Damn,” she said aloud, forgetting momentarily her father’s teaching, “Father will be furious. I’ve lost his best fish line.” She brushed her long black hair from her face with the back of her hand and froze. Six ugly faces were staring at her not more than fifty yards distant. So engrossed in her thoughts that she had not seen the boat round the bend of the river, nor had she heard it. It was just suddenly there, oars poised in readiness, water dripping from the glistening blades as it drifted slowly towards her. Elana had never seen men like this before. Their dress was that of seamen, but their fierce countenance sent shivers down her spine. Most of them had scars about their faces, a tooth chipped or missing here and there, and one had a sunken cavity where once had been an eye. The seventh man sitting in the stern with one arm resting on the tiller was the only one not looking at her. His eyes moved slowly back and forth taking in the scene behind her.

The seventh pirate noted the white house of Don Sebastian gleaming in the morning sun atop a knoll rising from the riverbank. Behind and slightly to the right, smoke curled lazily into the sky from the cook fires in the slave compound. To the left were the storehouses and the servant’s quarters. His appraising eye did not miss the two cannons at each end of the wide veranda, painted green in a clumsy attempt at camouflage, 24 pounders he gauged them to be, *and useless too*, he thought, since the elevation would not let them fire on a ship in the river below. His gaze moved to the deep-water marker in the river channel and to the small schooner moored there and finally to the lovely young girl standing on the pier with her fingers in her mouth. *A bit old for thumb sucking*, he mused. *A comely wench though*. Satisfied with his assessment of the defenses, he extended his arm full length with a cat-like movement, pushing the tiller to one side. Six oars dipped in unison,

each side pulling in opposite directions to spin the boat around to head back down the river.

Elana watched the boat disappear around the bend, and ran screaming to the house.

“Father, father, there’s pirates on the river!”

After Elana described the men she had seen on the river, Don Sebastian wasted no time in preparing defenses. The two cannons the pirates had seen were indeed 24 pounders, but eight more 12 pounders were hidden behind the furniture on the veranda. They were soon uncovered and aimed at the river. The two larger cannons were moved forward until the front wheels dropped into a recess that allowed them to also be pointed downward. Swivel guns were placed on the walls of the storerooms and the slave compound in case of an overland attack. Torches were kept burning all through the night, but the pirates did not appear.

Elana woke before sunrise and laid there listening to the hum of insects and the murmurs from the slave compound. Her maidservant Oona was still snoring softly. Her father had forbidden her to go near the slave compound with the warning that they were wild people that would do her harm if they could get to her. She had seen Oona when the people from her village were brought in, and begged her father to let her train Oona for a servant. They were both near the same age, and Elana soon taught her to speak enough Spanish that they could communicate reasonably well. Oona’s story of her capture filled Elana with sadness, and made her more determined to convince her father to give up the slave trade. Slavers had suddenly appeared in Oona’s village and began shooting and clubbing anyone within their reach. A few managed to escape into the jungle, but most were rounded up and yoked together like animals. With whips and clubs, the slaver herded her people through the jungle for many days until they reached the coast. Oona had looked back once to see her village in flames. Several people had died of their wounds along the way, and their bodies were left along the trail for the wild animals to eat.

Elana rose and began dressing, and Oona was instantly by her side.

“Will the bad men come?” she asked.

“I’m sure they will Oona, but we will be safe if we stay out of sight. Father will protect us.” She was always amazed how Oona would wake

at her slightest movement no matter how hard she tried to be quiet.

“Let’s go down and see what is happening.”

Lamps and torches were being extinguished as the girls came down the stairs. Don Sebastian was out on the veranda giving orders to the men manning the cannons. As Elana and Oona stepped through the door, he caught the movement and ordered them back inside.

“The pirates might come at any moment my dear, and I want you to be safe.”

Don Sebastian became more and more agitated as the sun rose higher. He had heard cannon fire in the distance hours earlier, and feared that the pirates had taken a ship that had come to pick up slaves. Hours dragged slowly by until mid-afternoon, when voices could be heard from around the bend of the river. A ship’s boat appeared, and then another and another until six boats were tied up to the pier. They were not pirate boats, but Royal navy longboats. Don Sebastian cautioned his men to hold fire, since he had no desire to start a war with England. The armed sailors quickly formed a line behind an officer that walked stiffly up the slope and stopped before Don Sebastian.

“Good day to you sir, I am first lieutenant Harris of his majesty’s frigate Falmouth, and you are?”

“Don Sebastian of Seville. What is the nature of your visit? We were expecting pirates.”

“You needn’t worry about the pirates, their ship is on the bottom of the bay.”

“Ah,” Don Sebastian said, “The cannon fire we heard earlier. My thanks, Lieutenant.”

“Your thanks are misguided Sir, I have orders to stop or at least curb the traffic of slaves in this area. I will be in these waters for the next year or so, and this facility will be destroyed. I suggest you take whatever possessions you can load aboard that schooner and leave immediately.” He pointed to the slave compound. “Those poor people will be released and these buildings fired before nightfall.”

Don Sebastian’s hands trembled as he sputtered, “By what right do you have the nerve to order me out of my own home? This is an outrage!”

“I have my orders, and they will be carried out. You have one hour to leave, and consider yourself lucky you aren’t arrested.” He turned his back to Don Sebastian and signaled to his crew to set the slaves free.

Elana could understand only part of what the lieutenant had said, but the actions of his men left no doubt what was happening. Oona was crouched behind a settee weeping. She was afraid that the men with guns would start shooting. Elana held her until she calmed a little and told her that her people were being released, and asked if she wanted to go with them. Oona shook her head.

“My village burned, my mother and father killed. There is nothing to go back to. I stay with you.”

“Good” Elana said.

Don Sebastian came into the house wringing his hands and looking around the room.

We have to leave Elana, the damned English are going to burn our home. Gather your belongings and wait for me on the pier.”

“It’s time to leave anyway Father, you have enough gold now, and I am happy to leave this awful place. Oona will go with us.”

He stared at her for a few seconds and said, “I suppose you are right my dear, this hasn’t been the best situation to raise a daughter. We will go to the south of Spain where the Moors will be more tolerant of your color.”

As the schooner started its passage down the river, Elana looked back to see the only home she had ever known going up in flames. She held her little dog and whispered, “It’s our home no longer Loki, but we are going to a new home where father will trade in slaves no more.”

The schooner dropped anchor at the river mouth to allow the seaman Lieutenant Harris had sent along to report to the Captain of the Falmouth. Don Sebastian noted the open gun ports and made no attempt to proceed until clearance was given. Long after the schooner’s long boat was hoisted aboard and secured, still no signal to weigh anchor was forthcoming. Finally a boat put out from the Falmouth and came alongside. The bos’n stepped aboard and knuckled his forehead.

“Beg pardon Sir, Captain Drury requires your presence on board the Falmouth. The young ladies too.”

Don Sebastian was at a loss as to why the girls were summoned as well. “*Perhaps to put my mind at ease,*” he thought, but remembering what Lieutenant Harris had said about the possibility of being arrested, he was still nervous. When the boat came alongside the Falmouth and the oars were shipped, eager hands were ready to assist the girls, but Dan

Sebastian was ignored and climbed clumsily aboard to be met by a stern-faced Captain Drury. He made a sweeping bow, and in his best English.

“I am honored to meet you Capitan Drury.”

“Stow it,” Captain Drury said, “I didn’t invite you here to exchange niceties. I am interested only in your destination.”

“Oh . . . uh, southern Spain. Cadiz, or perhaps Malaga.”

“I would suggest then that you stay well off shore. These waters and to the north are rife with pirates. We had to deal with one of them this morning. Your schooner is rather small and has no armament. It would be no match for the pirate galleys that prey along the Ivory Coast and north to Dakar. Understand me Sir, I have no sympathy for slavers, and care less if you fall prey to pirates, but the young ladies should not share such a fate. I will be patrolling north to the Canary Islands and back. Perhaps my presence will deter the pirates a little. Perhaps if you stay well out to sea, you might make it safely to your destination. If not, you may end up a galley slave yourself, and God knows what fate the young ladies would suffer. I would prefer they stayed aboard the Falmouth. I can see them safely to the canaries to await your arrival. My sailing master will chart the safest course for you to follow, and I pray you do not vary.”

Relieved that he was not to be arrested, Don Sebastian put on his best airs and thanked the captain profusely for his offer, but said he was the only person Elana had known all her life and would probably be frightened if they were separated.

“England is now at peace with Spain,” the captain said, “and when my report is sent with the next dispatch, you will no doubt face charges upon your return.” He turned abruptly and walked to where Elana and Oona were enjoying the attention the junior officer were showing them. Oona could not understand a word they were saying, but their smiles put her at ease.

Don Sebastian had not expected this turn of events. Once again, he must leave his home in disgrace. Back on board the schooner, he called Elana and the crew to the afterdeck and laid out his plans.

“We will sail to Accra to buy provisions for a long voyage. We will not be going to Spain as planned, for it will not be safe for me or you my dear,” turning to Elana.

“But where will we go, Father?”

“To the America I’m thinking. I have a cousin who lives in New York, and I am sure he will help us get settled and start a new life.” He turned back to the crew. “Any of you that will follow me will go as free men. Those who do not will be put ashore at Accra.”

The first mate stepped forward and removed his hat. “I think I can speak for the rest of the crew.” He looked around at the men. “We will go to the west with you.....as free men.”

Their cheering caught the attention of Captain Drury. “*I wonder what he is up to now?*” he thought.

The tide was running full as the little schooner left Accra. Two of the crewmen had decided to stay ashore with the papers that Don Sebastian had drawn up stating that they were free men, as he had promised. Finding replacements had not taken long, and with provisions aboard, they set sail for the America. Elana was excited with the prospect of a new life ahead of her. She wondered what the ladies' fashions would be like in New York, and tried to picture in her mind the scenes of New York she had seen in her father's books. She and Oona talked far into the night about what lay ahead, and most of all she was happy that her father had left the slave trade behind him.

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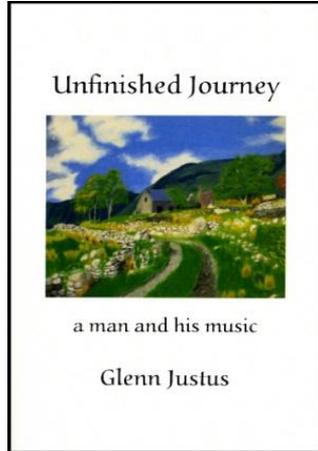
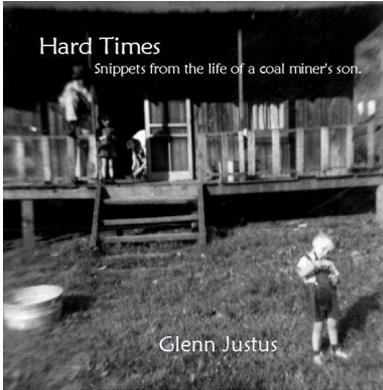


Glenn Justus was born in the West Virginia mountains, and grew up listening to the old songs that later became popular in the folk era of the sixties.

“There was always music in our home, and my mother sang on the radio with her brother. She taught me my first chords on the guitar and my grandfather taught me many songs that his parents brought from Ireland.

“Most of the songs I write have direct bearing on my life experiences. I find it much easier to tell a story in song, than in prose, but I am working on a novel that I just might get finished one day. I am now in a position to devote more time to music, painting, writing, and other artistic endeavors.”

Glenn has published a songbook, *Unfinished Journey*, an audio book, *Hard Times - snippets from the life of a coal miner's son*, and six CD's.



Glenn is Vice President of the Guild and currently working on his first novel.

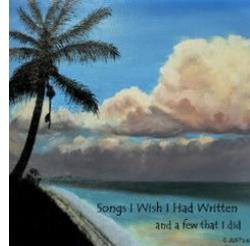
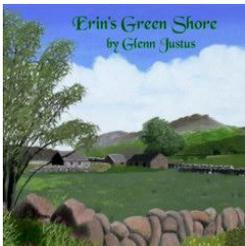
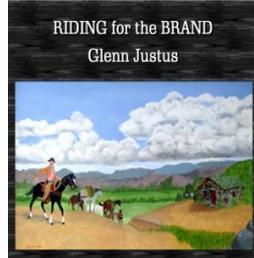
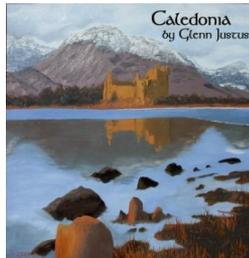
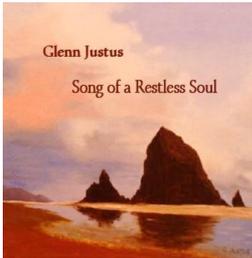
If you are interested in purchasing Glenn's books or CD's email him at: [glennjustus4570@gmail.com](mailto:glennjustus4570@gmail.com)

To learn more about Glenn visit:

[http://klamathwritersguild.org/Glenn\\_Justus.html](http://klamathwritersguild.org/Glenn_Justus.html)

You can also download samples of his music here:

[http://klamathwritersguild.org/Glenns\\_Music.html](http://klamathwritersguild.org/Glenns_Music.html)





On March 1, 2013, Dotte Shaffer, died. She was very dear friend of mine and many other Guild members. I mention this because every time I email everyone on my email list about meetings, new books being released, the next issues of *Literally Speaking* or updates on our website I see her name in my contact list.

It may seem a little strange to some but I always email Dotte about anything that happens with the Guild.

Dotte was one of the founders of the Guild (1993) and in the beginning we met in her living room.

For twenty years, Dotte helped writers become better writers, offered kind critiques and cherished comments on her musings as she shared her stories and poetry.

*At Thirty Something*, Dotte wrote:

*I like being IN love . . . The excitement, the anticipation, the thrill . . . the knowing you're alive . . . Feeling every pore, every heartbeat respond eagerly, passionately, to the touch of my lover.*

*Of course, there's also the hunger, the yearning, the devastation . . . the tears. Ah, yes, the tears. Did you know broken hearts cry tears?*

*Being IN love without being loved is not the way to go. Not for me and not for the one who's IN love with me.*

*Why is it the ones IN love with me are not the ones I'm IN love with?*

*And so, I pen words of passion and desire, of hurt and loss . . . knowing all the while, I wouldn't have missed it for the world.*

At *Seventy Something* Dotte wrote:

*I like loving and being loved. There's a contentment, a feeling of security and trust that makes up for the loss of thrills and anticipation.*

*Almost.*

*Romance: thrills, anticipation, passion . . . is seventy too old? Is all this just for the young? I used to think it was. Until I became one. I never realized that despite gray hair and wrinkles, young girls live in the heights of aged bodies; still yearning, hungering for the touch that makes us know we're alive. Yet, as I wax nostalgic, I realize I no longer have the stamina, the energy for the highs and lows of being IN love. I accept that like the seasons, there is a time for loving and being loved. This is my time.*

I had the pleasure of publishing a collection of Dotte's poetry, *The Heart Remembers*, which is probably why, when the email comes back as undeliverable, I just smile, because, I know she received it.

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Check future issues of *Literally Speaking* as the Klamath Writers' Guild publishes the winning stories from our short story competition.

[http://klamathwritersguild.org/Literally\\_Speaking.html](http://klamathwritersguild.org/Literally_Speaking.html)

The Guild has open meetings twice each month where individuals interested in writing can see if the Guild meets their writing needs. The next two open meetings are April 4<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup>. For more information, go to [The Guild](#) on our website or you can email us at: [klamathwritersguild@hotmail.com](mailto:klamathwritersguild@hotmail.com).