

The Garlic Press

By Mark Goodall

Teasing out rind wedged in the garlic press with the nail of his little finger, he noticed the thin curtains above the sink of dinner dishes were aflutter as the halyard clanking against the mast began to register. Turning to the lake window, he saw the flag was shaping up, indicating about fifteen knots. "I'm glad I left my sails up," he muttered, to no one in particular, as he quickly dried his hands, dropping the towel on the counter. "I'm outta here."

Snagging life jackets from a deck chair, he started down the beach. Conditions had to be just right. He needed a harvest moon - check, wind after dark - check, and a pair of lesbian dwarves. You know, little people. He could, of course, substitute separated Siamese twins - but what are the odds?

Bounding up onto the porch of a nearby cottage, he banged a couple of times on the ill-fitting frame of the screen door. "Are the girls here?" he asked, hopefully.

"I'm sorry, they drove into town to catch a flick. *Kill Bill*, I think," reported a graying woman with a ponytail who remained seated in the shadows. "Is there a message?"

"No, that's okay. Well, yeah, tell them, tell them - no, no message. Thankyou."

They had to have known about the moon. Dejected, he plodded down to the dock and tossed the jackets in the boat. Spinning the big blue wheel, he lowered the sloop into the water and, holding the port shroud, guided it out of the lift. Using the boom as a horizontal push-pole, he launched the boat and quickly stepped in as it glided from the dock. In a studied sequence, he reached back to lower the rudder, dropped the centerboard, and with a tug on the sheet, pulled taut the luffing jib and locked it down. He drew in the mainsail and braced against the heel as the bows attacked the waves in rhythmic slaps. "Ah, now you're a talkin'."

The rising moon brushed a mottled path the color and texture of an old trombone across the lake. He set a course to intersect the beam at right angles. Passing through was exhilarating but, inevitably, he felt let down. While he loved sailing alone, sailing through a moonbeam alone, even nude, left him, well, disappointed. Since getting to know the neighbor girls, he had become convinced that if he sailed through the reaching swathe of a harvest moon, with two lesbian dwarves (or a pair of separated Siamese twins), something - something, like magical, would happen. But alone, he just quietly passed through, leaving the beam in his wake. Sensual, but hardly epic.

Easing the mainsail back some to prepare to tack, he snapped the jib sheet from the cleat, but held it firm as he pushed the rudder hard away. He could turn this boat on a farthing. The jib inverted as the boom passed overhead and he pivoted to the windward rail, grabbed the other sheet, and pulled the jib over hard. With a commanding tug on the main sheet, the boat healed into the new tack and he set his jaw for another pass. Waves hitting the bows gave his face a cold, soaking splash. He aarghed in response, pirate style.

There are some things that you just know. And it isn't like faith – maybe wired in. Something that's scooped up in the molecules that are you. And what he knew was that if he sailed through the beam of a harvest moon with a pair of lesbian little people (or the optional separated Siamese twins), something profoundly amazing would happen. Not necessarily that the boat would lift from the water and pass into another world. But maybe the whole color spectrum would change, and objects would droop with Dali-esque elasticity. Or fish would leap from the water and fly in formation around the mast, flashing coordinated, celebratory, Morse code messages and voicing ordered, guttural tones like Leonard Cohen or better yet, Vladimir Vysotsky.

The only Morse code he knew was "save our ship". Dot, dot, dot - dash, dash, dash - dot, dot, dot. Certainly, musical flying fish flashing messages would be wordier than that - and more poetic. Seriously, what are the odds that a lesbian dwarf, or even a formerly conjoined twin, would know Morse code?

Note to self: Order Morse code manual to stow in stern cubby. In a Zip Loc. His finger smelled of garlic.