

THE GOOD SHIP "Callipygia"

By Captain (Grandma) Pat

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Once upon a time, in Rob Borden's boat yard, sat a sailing vessel perched on eight pipe stands. The stands were spaced unevenly, and the ship leaned over slightly to her starboard side. When the rain came, instead of running out through the gunnel holes, water collected in little pools on her deck. A dirty beige awning lay rolled along the port side of her coach roof. The steel frame that supported her spray dodger had collapsed, and the dodger's dark crumpled canvas was scrunched up, making creases in its tired plastic windows. Two rusty anchors hung from the ship's long bowsprit, and a third hung over the stern cockpit rail. A big "For Sale" sign was tied slightly askew on the vessel's bow. Her once black hull had been recently painted a sweet cream color, obliterating the vessel's name, Ambrose Light, or "Amby" as she called herself.

Amby was very tired of sitting on the hard. She longed to be back in the water, rocking gently with the waves and feeling the cool wind whisper through her rigging. She didn't like being for sale; she dreamed of having crew again. She felt abandoned by Captain Jim, her owner, and wanted badly to once more belong to someone who spent time with her. She knew that Jim had loved her, but his jealous wife didn't like the way Jim had become attached to Amby. "It's her or me" said Judy, his wife, one day sharply laying down an ultimatum. So, with a melancholy heart, Captain Jim determined he would sell Amby and try to pacify Judy. It almost broke his heart to give up his beautiful boat, and he desperately wanted to find a new owner who would love her and sail her as she deserved. Amby was a graceful and seaworthy sailing ship, of the type known as a double-ender. She was 15 years old—in sailboat years this is not too old—but she looked middle-aged, a bit sad and frumpy, even though there was no denying the clear elegance of her lines. It took good money to maintain a boat, and Jim didn't have much; so Amby had slowly lost her sparkle until she now looked a bit run down. Hoping to spruce her up enough to attract a new owner, Jim had spent all his spare cash to paint her black hull so it, at least, looked light and like new. And, in the painting, Jim had removed her name and the "For Sale" sign on her bow advertised her as sailing vessel "No Name."

Amby had been sitting on the hard now, wearing that hated For Sale sign, for almost five months. Every few days some broker or another showed up with a customer to look her over. Always it was the same: "Well.... she's a nice boat, but....." This wasn't right, or that would have to be repaired. Poor Amby hated this continual rejection and it made her feel like crying. Then one day a broker she'd seen a few times came by with an old man and an old woman. Amby had seen Trixie Howard bring customers before, so she didn't hold out too much hope. The old man had a friendly face under his shaggy white beard and mustache, and he wore a Greek sailor's hat. The old woman's dyed orange hair flew in the wind as she absent-mindedly pushed up the rimless glasses perched on the end of her nose. They were tired and had already looked at four other boats that day.

Trixie and the old man and woman climbed up the ladder onto Amby's deck and

clambered into the cockpit and looked all around. The old woman stepped back onto the deck, walked forward and looked up the mast, and then clambered onto the bow pulpit before coming aft again. The old man sat down in the cockpit, then one by one lifted up each locker lid to see what was stored below. Trixie unlocked the companionway doors and the three climbed down into Amby's main cabin.

"Wow. Barnacle Bill, these cushions have *got* to go" said the old woman. "Cummon Captain Pat, they're not *that* bad" returned the old man, sitting down on one of the white vinyl seats.

"They're ugly!" said the old woman, "and they feel horrible!" "Let's get out **The List**" said the old woman as the old man fished in each one of the three pockets in his shirt. Not finding what he was looking for, he began methodically searching in each of the six pockets in his cargo pants. "Here it is" Barnacle Bill said at last, pulling out a crumpled piece of paper from the top pocket on his left pants leg, then his glasses and a ballpoint pen from his left shirt pocket.

Slowly the two went through **The List**, climbing up and down the companionway steps to ascertain whether Amby had this or that, and occasionally turning to Trixie to ask her a question.

"Price we can afford?" "Oh, yes."

"Cutter rig?" "Yes."

"Full keel?" "Yes, modified forefoot."

"Heavy displacement?"

"Absolutely, 22,500 lbs."

"Seaworthy transom?"

"Yes, lovely canoe stern."

"Small cockpit?" "Yes."

"4 cockpit drains?" "Yes, with tie-on pad-eyes."

"Solid glass hull?" "Yes."

"Glass or teak deck?" "Fibreglass."

"Windvane?" "Yes, Monitor."

"Autopilot?" "Yes, Cetrek."

"Folding mast steps?" "Yup."

"Two water tanks? "Nice big 50-gallon ones."

"Fuel tank?" "100-gallons."

"Stove?" "3-burner propane with oven and broiler."

"NO Air conditioning?" "Correct."

"Plentiful storage?" "Awesome."

"Roller furling jib?" "Yep." "Hank-on staysail?" "Yes."

"Storm jib?" "Uhuh."

"Storm try-sail?" "Yes."

"Separate track on the mast for the trysail?" "Yes."

"Rig terminals?" "Norsemen."

"Well-placed hatches?" "Yes."

“Strong swim-ladder?” “Yes—wood.”

“EPIRB?” “Yes—a bit old.”

“Electronics?” “Depth sounder, windspeed and direction.”

Bit by bit, the items on the list acquired check marks until of the fifty-one items on it, only four things remained unchecked. “This is amazing” said the old man. “Indeed it is” said the old woman. “But we’re not ready, yet” he returned, to which she replied “You’re right, let’s go, now.” The group climbed back down the ladder and with a sinking heart Amby heard one of them say to Trixie, “OK, what boat are we looking at next?”

But, the very next week, Trixie brought the same old couple back again. This time they walked round on the hard ground under Ambrose Light and examined her from every direction. They poked her through-hulls, wiggled her rudder, and turned her propellor. Then they climbed up the ladder once more, and after slowly circling the deck examining the rigging, again they went below into the main cabin. They sat there talking in low voices for what seemed to Amby like an eternity.

Finally, Amby heard the old man say to the old woman. “I don’t see any point in looking further.”

“She has pretty much everything on **The List**” said the old woman, “and furthermore she just feels right! But these white vinyl cushions—they have got to go. They are nasty!” “So what do you think?” asked Trixie. “She’s it!” the old couple cried in unison. “This is the one! She’s such a beauty.”

“Congratulations Bill and Pat,” said Trixie, thinking “and good luck to you, Ambrose Light. I wonder what they’ll name you?”

MORE TO COME!