

Others - An Long Island Fairytale

by Carl Santoro

**MATTITUCK 1971
LIKE YOU NEVER KNEW IT**

"Belief...is the engine that makes perception operate."

Flannery O'Connor

Chapter One - Lucky Man

She put the kickstand down and the bike leaned heavily into the soft grass, but did not fall over. The late day, sun-baked earth, spit out tiny flying creatures as she moved her bare feet to unstrap the box from atop the front fender. She was standing at the grassy end of the 2,200' runway of the only airstrip around. It was June 1971. Mattituck, Long Island. The Mattituck Air Base.

She was only two bunji straps away from pulling out from her homemade front fender cargo box a secret form of self entertainment for this afternoon. Her English made Triumph bike didn't come with a cargo platform, so, even though the wood of her homemade one attached to the front scratched the fender a little, she knew it would be worth it for the pleasures it would afford her.

She cursed as a hook snapped up and bonked her on the forehead, just missing her eye. Unwinding the straps from the front handle bar, she reached in. The anticipation of joy seemed to be shared by the loud, laughter-like cries from a ring-billed gull circling overhead. Yes, this was going to be a fine afternoon. She only hoped the batteries were still good. She pushed aside a large bunch of fragrant beets with their crisp green tops, and instead opted for the battery-operated devise next to them. I hope the batteries are still good, Tabitha thought.

Chances were that they would most likely last for this session.

She smiled to herself as she cradled the hard plastic device and lifted it out.

Walking about two feet from the bike she descended slowly onto one knee and placed the portable Sanyo combination phonograph and am/fm player carefully onto the ground.

Her high school ring, catching a ray of sunlight, temporarily blinded her with a bright ricocheting golden beam. This is a great day she mumbled.

Still kneeling, she flipped two latches and lifted the first of two speakers off of its mount. She placed it away onto the grass the full length of the wire it came with, roughly four feet away. It fell over at first, weighing maybe four ounces, but she was able to quickly right it.

Reaching for the second speaker, she heard herself giggle as a cool surprising gust of wind blew her dress up from behind, creating a kind of instant, silly capelike effect and up behind her head like a hood.

Hope no one saw that! as she quickly yanked it all back down.

She unlocked the turntable of the vinyl player and spun it a little to make sure it was free and then moved the speed lever to select 33 1/3 rpm. The gull returned overhead, circling and shrieking about something or other. She looked up to see it speeding its way back towards the bay waters. That's enough of that noise I hope she thought.

A gentle wind brought with it the invigorating scent of honeysuckle from the nearby bushes. I love that fragrance. She closed her eyes and took a deep breath.

Lifting her right hand, she slid it down under the top of her dress over her left breast. She moved her other hand under and over her right breast. After a few seconds of fumbling, she withdrew a pre-rolled joint from her left side and matches from the right.

I hope the wind doesn't get any stronger. Her eyes opened and blinked rapidly as the waiting sunshine raced through her pupils.

"I think hang-gliding is more successful using a glider, kiddo!" a man shouted from below. Tabitha had, fortunately, grabbed onto the same branch the thieving gull had been perched on, and she was dangling at the mercy of the strength of her two hands. The gull flew away with all the beets in tow.

Oh my God, who is that? "Can you help?" she shouted. She was quite the sight as her dress was yanked up on one side and caught under the grip of her left hand. "I do think though, that you have the *hang* part of hang-gliding performed beautifully" as he gazed up for the half-naked view.

"But CAN YOU HELP ME?!!" she shouted angrily.

"Well, I am late for an important date, but let me see, hmmm..." He looks at his watch.

"Kat!" he shouts. "Come here quickly!"

From behind a large dune, with large steps forward, emerges a giraffe.

"Please pluck from the branch our damsel in distress and gently put her down onto the sand by me."

The giraffe lumbers over and extends its neck until its lips and teeth can bunch up the back of Tabitha's dress into its clenched teeth.

"Ohhh, my, what?"

"That's it Kat...now gently pull her away."

I think it is time to faint or throw up or yell. Should I let go?

"Let go of the branch, kiddo!" the man shouts. "Put your trust in Chester and Kat. You'll be smiling in no time!"

Looking over her shoulder, she spotted him directing the giraffe with a cane.

His exuded a confidence in his voice and moved nimbly about the ankles of the gir...wait do you call them ankles? I'm feeling his breathing on my back.

"Alright, alright!" she yelled down. With a short tug, Kat jerked Tabitha loose and made a wide arching neck swoop (seems like slow motion...this is very E,L & P) to bring her body to rest on the soft,

warm sand. "Oh, oh, oh goodness" Tabitha exhaled, digging her hands back into the welcoming sand for support.

She hurriedly smoothed her dress down and began fussing to make her long golden hair more presentable. "I'm very much grateful, uh, I mean I'm soooo thankful to you and your giraffe. I couldn't have held on much longer."

"No need to thank me young lady. Kat here and I have made many rescues in and around Long Island" he said with a huge smile out from under his black top hat. He wrapped one arm of his across his waist while the other pulled his hat down for a gentlemanly bow. She noticed his black wooly gloves were tattered and each finger protruding through holes as though they were planned cutouts.

His vest and ascot under his open tailed topcoat made him appear as though right out of a Dickens novel.

Rising to her feet with a slight wobble, "Oh well, I..." She thought maybe she should bow or curtsy back and awkwardly did so.

"Did you say your giraffe's name was cat?"

"Yes, my dear. Kat with a 'K'"

"Why the 'K'?" she asked.

"Well, because he isn't a cat!"

Grabbing the reins in his left hand and placing a foot into a stirrup, the man began mounting the giraffe. "I'm sorry, dear, as I said before, I must hurry to a meeting." He settled into a torquoise and red glass-beaded saddle with brightly colored tassels all around it, and off he went, riding atop the animal with the utmost of ease and poise. Kat gave one fast look back and Tabitha could swear she saw it smile and do a double blink.

Tabitha suddenly felt a tickle on her knee. She looked down to see blood trickling down. "Wait, I think I scraped my knee! Yes, it's bleeding! I need to make it stop! Hellooooo!!

I need to get back to my bike!" She considered crying. She looked back down to her knee. Wait, that really is a lot of blood. She passed out and fell on her side facing the water. I know I'm dreaming, but I can't shake it. My blood is merging with each wave that reaches me. The waters are turning red. Is that a bell? Men shouting? Gulls?

Chapter Two- Emily

Tabitha's cousin Emily bit into an apple as she stepped off the back porch of the summer rental. Instantly startled at what she saw, she stopped chewing. Tabitha's bike was missing. She had raced off without her. Now she would have to pedal fast to catch up. I bet she went to that bay side cliff she's been telling me about. I need a napkin. She went back in the house.

"Where d'ya think you're going?" boomed Emily's always-tired, overweight Uncle affectionately known as Big Ralph. "I swear you two girls have been nothin' but trouble this summer," he bellowed from the screened-in front "Florida Room."

"Just to the kitchen," Emily replied, biting her lip as she swayed briskly past him, and raising her eyebrows at him to reinforce her statement.

"Yeah, well stick around where I can see you two. Your mom'll be back from work soon and she'll need help fixin' up dinner," he grunted, raising a beer can to wick out the last drops with his mouth as his head arched so far back, Emily could see his neck form multiple ripples of flesh accommodating a line of perspiration cascading down onto his graying tanktop/overalls combo.

Emily snatched a handful of napkins from the counter, her binoculars and a Polaroid camera, and ran out the back door. The spring made the wooden screen door slam loudly.

"Emily! Get back here, young lady!" Ralph yelled rising from his wicker throne, lumbering over to the refrigerator for another cold one.

Emily mounted her Schwinn and could hear the beer can squish as Sal tore the tab.

You help her. All you do is drink all day, she thought.

Docking the apple between her front teeth, she grabbed the handlebar and winced at the heat they contained. The cicadas above

seemed to laugh. She was pissed. She was not going to spend the night without Tabitha. They always had so much fun up in the attic room telling stories while they gazed out the open window at the moonlit waves. Pedaling over these sandy narrow and curving back country roads, Emily chewed voraciously as the sand kicked up and tickled her bare feet like bubbles from sparkling ginger ale. She must have that damn record player with her again, I am soo pissed. This apple is delicious.

Chapter Three — Poosepatuck

"Poosepatuck! Over here!" shouted a boy half-buried in the side of a huge sandhill.

The steep hill of pure sand was the playing field for a group of young boys acting out war games.

The slender teenage boy, known as Poosepatuck, so named because of tribal heritage,

raised his bronzed face abruptly over the sand to get a visual on the voice. The setting sun was blinding his view and as he raised his hand to cast his eyes into shade sand trickled down over his smiling, painted face.

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"Hi Emily!" shouted a woman picking up candy wrappers off her gravel driveway. Emily glanced over to see that it was the fifty-something Mrs. Dehanney, owner of the house next door built for year round living. "Hiya Mrs.D!"

"You seem to be in a hurry girl."

"Yes, trying to catch up with Tabitha."

"Oh, actually, I did just see her a short time ago. We chatted about her bike. I think it is a beauty. One I would've loved to own when I was her age. She said she wanted to get some fresh beets. I asked her to pick me some of that wild peppermint and sassafras. Oh, even you too, if you get a chance on your way back, can you pick me more of that wonderful wild peppermint? I want to add it to the strawberry and rosehip lemonade I'll be making tomorrow. Oh, yes,

and any young sassafras you might see to grab. As always, I'll be bringing over a cold pitcher of it for you and your family."

"Sure thing, Mrs. D! Gotta go!"

"See you later honey. Be careful. Those tires are slippery on this sandy road"

"Okay. Bye!"

The road out of the compound known as Camp Mineola, was long and winding and shrouded across its one shared lane with the branches of mighty oaks, sycamores, cedars, maples and more. The edges bordered often with sassafras. The narrowness of this carved out path covered with these glorious trees arching over the lane created, at this hour, a kind of neon green tunnel kissed on top by the lowering 3pm sun's glow. The vision in front of Sandra was as if truly traveling through a recently-ignited fire, about to burst into maturity.

She took out her Polaroid camera from her basket and carefully composed and captured the beautiful scene. She had promised herself that this summer she would record fun images to add to a scrapbook she is planning to make to commemorate this year's vacation.

Suddenly, her eyes caught sight of something that wasn't there yesterday. It was on the utility pole on the corner. Steering her Schwinn towards it, she became increasingly alarmed as she began to make out the word "WARNING" on a large piece of yellow oaktag. Arriving at the pole, Sandra pounded down on the coaster brake nearly losing control as the bike veered severely to the side so much she had to dash her leg out to stop from falling over.

Regaining her composure, she read the words: "WARNING. You are about to enter a neighborhood of multi-family yard sales. Lots of clothing, toys, and tools. 9-4 today only. Enjoy." "Something for everyone!" Hmmpff, Oh my God, what a waste of my time. Emily turns to go back down the road, making sure to slow down before every pre-placed asphalt bump in the road, affectionately nicknamed by the locals as "sleeping policeman."

Chapter Four — Iris

They say, "love is blind," but in her high school days, they used to say- "Iris is blind." And call her "Blind Iris." That was a joke. Tabitha's mom, Iris, did in fact, always seem oblivious to the obvious. Even now, driving on Love Lane, she blew the only two stop signs in place. She was done food shopping. Her yellow Volkswagen Karman Ghia convertible was a stand-out among the jeeps and station wagons lining the lane. People turned to look, at first because she had the radio blasting and then lingering to stare at the handsome curves and lines of the vehicle. Out from the car speakers her radio had a live reporter covering the US Apollo 15, occupied by Scott & Irwin, as it landed on Mare Imbrium on the Moon. Residents Tom Dwyer and his son, Tom Jr., leaning on a mailbox sipping coffees, just looked at each other and shook their heads. Summer tourists were never appreciated for their loudness and tiresome traffic-jamming.

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Saturday night the hippies had their weekend filmfest outdoors projecting 16mm film onto a huge white bedsheet stretched between two trees. This night they would be showing the rarely seen Oscar-nominated documentary about Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and the civil rights movement, "King: A Filmed Record...Montgomery to Memphis."

Originally shown in 1970 on one night in 650 theaters, it has gone largely unseen, but they managed to get a copy from the library. Cutting through the dark country air could be heard the voice of A. Philip Randolph: "At this time, I have the honor to present to you the moral leader of our nation, a great, dedicated man, a philosopher of a nonviolent system of behavior in seeking to bring about social change, for the advancement of justice and freedom and human dignity. I have the pleasure to present to you Dr. Martin Luther King Jr!" The crowds cheered. Our audience cheered. The North Fork was beginning to change and the hippies and MLK were leading the way.

Several people were at the herbal tea and homemade cookies table near the driveway on the edge of Sound Avenue.

"Look at THAT!" remarked a young girl. She pointed to a yellow car whizzing by with its top down. The song, "Space Oddity" by David Bowie was blasting "Ground control to Major Tom!" ♪

Chapter Five - Healing

Tabitha wakes to see a young man spitting into his hands. It is Poospatuck. He is preparing an herbal mixture to heal Tabitha's wounded knee.

"Who are you?" Tabitha questions in a gravely waking voice, rubbing her eyes to remove bits of sand.

"Friends call me Tuck."

"What should *I* call you?" she asks somewhat sarcastically.

"Well, as I am about to place my hands on your bare knee, with these healing herbs, I guess I qualify as your new friend. Tuck will be fine. And, well, what do I call *you*?"

"*My friends* call me Tabitha."

"Well, that's very pretty. Tabitha. Sounds kind of storybookish, whatever that means."

Lifting herself slightly off her back to lean on her elbows, she observes the kneeling Tuck pressing the green paste he has created into her wound and wrapping it in place with a bandana. "Are you some kind of Medicine Man, Tuck?"

"No, this kind of stuff comes natural to my people."

"Your people? Who are your people?"

"We are the Unkechaugs. We are the original Long Island residents living now on the Poospatuck reservation in this here Suffolk County."

"Hence Tuck, am I right?"

"You are!. Very good! Now if only that knee will heal as quickly as your lightening fast ability to understand things."

I like his face. I like his smile. I like his hands on my knee.

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Emily slowed her bike as she began to notice a bike in the distance resting on its kickstand. She stopped to catch her breath and take a look. She pulled out her binoculars from her basket. Sure enough, it looked like Tabitha's Triumph. She began to pick up the

sound of faint music from the same direction. Must be from her portable player she thought. Her view was framed by a tall, slightly bending oak in silhouette which allowed the cobalt blue sky to come through and outline the green grassy field, showered now with a late in the day orange color. This was really what this country out here was all about. God's Country the locals called it. The image through her smudgy binoc lenses created a kind of mystical glow, a surreal painterly effect. She felt good just hearing herself breath, smelling her sweat mix with the honeysuckle, grass, dirt, salt air. Jarring herself out of her reverie, she heard her say Tabitha's name and began to shout it. Not wanting to lose the moment completely, she reached down into her bike basket and lifted out her Polaroid camera. She aimed at the lush scene and, while exhaling slowly, took the shot.



"Can you stand up?" asked Tuck.

"I think...uh, I hope so. Yes. Yes I can," she uttered with a small amount of discomfort in her voice.

He extended his hand. She held onto it, and despite sinking deeper with her feet into the sand, together they were able to achieve an upright position for her. He was impressed with how lissome she was.

"Thank you, ah, ah, Tuck," she said, smiling into his eyes.

Feeling a little awkward, Tuck cleared his throat, "Yes, well, this is good. I will go now back to the Rez."

Tabitha lifted her one leg slightly and gave it some practice bending and was pleased with the results.

"Good job there Tuck. I think I will be able to even ride my bike."

"Bike? You have a bike here?"

"Yes, up on top there." She pointed to the sandy bluff she fell down from.

"Oh, well, I must help you get back up there!" he quickly responded. "How was it you are down here? Did you fall this entire distance?"

"Oh no. I caught onto that huge root sticking out, and this giraffe pulled me down the rest of the way. Oh dear. That must sound weird."

"Giraffe? Did you say giraffe?" Tuck asked scrunching up his face while leaning an ear in closer.

"I know, I know. Sounds weird. But it really did...oh, yeah. Where did they go?"

"There's more than one?" Tuck asked.

"Nooo, the guy, Chester, and his one giraffe."

"Chester?"

"Yes, the black man in the black hat, tails and gloves. Oh, this must sound as crazy as it was!" Tabitha held her hand over her brow to better see in the distance, and slowly spun in a complete circle looking for any sign of them.



Meanwhile, after snapping a Polaroid, Emily resumed scanning with her binoculars. Suddenly, she heard a car fast approaching on the nearby road. Swinging her head to see she spotted a speeding yellow convertible obviously ignoring the sleeping policemen. It was Aunt Iris. She is gonna yell at me to get home to prepare for dinner. In an effort to avoid the confrontation, Emily began pedaling down a gentle slope which began to take her towards the beach.

Once on the beach and out of Aunt Iris's sight, Emily began walking her bike to better negotiate the resistance from the sand. Walking near the rising tide she began to notice clearly-defined footprints in the moist shoreline sand. What the heck is this one? Kneeling down for a closer study, it appeared as though it was an impression a goat might leave. Only thing was-it was four times the diameter it should be, maybe 12 inches. A horse maybe? Actually, as she looked about, there *was* a trail of horse prints just a few feet away. But what was this? She made a Polaroid capture and tucked it in her cargo pants pocket with the others.



Tuck whistled through two fingers. Tabitha could only stare in amazement. They both watched as his beautiful Choctaw stallion, a

rare strain of the Spanish Mustang, standing 14 hands, came galloping right to them.

"Whoa, Flying Cloud, whoa!" yelled Tuck as it neared them. Heavy snorting followed by an abrupt halt made the horse's hooves to sink deeply into the sand. "Meet Flying Cloud, a being sound in wind and limb and sure of foot." Tuck said proudly. Tabitha became exhilarated by this burst of excitement that made her feel refreshingly alive. Nearby gulls scattered. Tabitha felt salt spray mixed with wind-whipped sand on her face and in her eyes. She blinked rapidly, rubbing them for a chance to regain focus. Upon opening them, her eyes met with the large penetrating eyes of Flying Cloud. The horse was magnificent. Tabitha was enthralled by the look from such a stunning being, one that surely must have been to many places, perhaps strange, mysterious or maybe even secret ones. Immediately she felt mixed emotions, becoming simultaneously slightly afraid, yet secure at the same moment.

"Let us ride my horse together. She will get us to the top with ease." Tuck suggested as he mounted the horse.

Tabitha agreed to it and he leaned down to help her up.

"Put your arms around my waist. Hold on!" Is it possible he smells of Coppertone? Do Indians where that? Flying Cloud was big and strong. The climb up the hill took less than a minute.



"Where are the girls, Ralphy?" asked Iris. She tossed her pocketbook on a wicker chair and went to the fridge.

"I tried to stop 'em. They're out on their bikes," Sal answered while picking his nose.

"You are so gross. Will you stop that?" Turning her attention away from Sal, she proceeded to pull out a half-full bottle of white wine, unscrewed the top, grabbed a plastic cup from a cabinet and poured herself a generous portion. Sal gave a look. Who cares what glass it's in, she thought to herself, it's the wine that I'm savoring, not the container. "Why can't you be more responsible and have them obey?" She gulped down a large amount that got away from her and so wiped her chin with her arm. Sal snickered at the sight.

Iris walked to the couch in the sunroom and pushed the newspapers off making them cascade off section by section, page by page onto the floor. She plopped down hard. "Phew, I'm beat." She reached down and plucked out Dan's Papers from the messy pile and began skimming through it.

"What's for dinner?" Ralphy said loudly so she could hear him in the other room. He was perspiring even though he had a fan two feet from his face.

"You gotta be kiddin' me, mister. Go make it yourself. I've done all the shopping. It's in the car still...soooo, get off your butt. You're the one who's been home all day."

Ralphy was now standing in the doorway threshold and staring at her. She took another large gulp and looked over at his poker face. Perspiring. Glistening with late day sweat, tinted orange from the sun's rays pushing through the screened in room. She stared back, fixated on an apple-sized hole in his stained t-shirt. She began to speak when she heard a distant sound that made her instantly uncomfortable. It was the familiar fire siren in Mattituck. Usually this meant a fire was in Mattituck. She smacked down the paper and rose. She grabbed Sal's lazy face sandwiching it between her thumb and forefinger and rotated it to face hers. Grimacing with pain, Ralphy tries to back off. "What?!? What are you doing?" Still holding it between her fingers she whispers steamily, "Where *are* those girls?"



Flying Cloud made the final effort, leaping up to the top onto the grass. A huge military style aircraft, with no landing gear exposed, flew dangerously low to them as it seemed to be headed towards the airstrip.

"What is that sound?" asked Tuck.

"A plane, silly."

"That's a seaplane!" Tabitha said pointing up. "But...headed for an airstrip?"

"No, there is another sound." His eyes darted to the ground a few feet away. Both of them now could hear a low clicking sound.

Tabitha jumped down off Flying Cloud and took a few steps towards the noise. It was her record player. The album was still spinning and the needle was stuck in a limbo tracking back and forth between the last note and the record's label. She lifted the armature and turned the power off. But now another new sound immediately replaced that one. A distant cackling like gulls only more human like. It was down below on the beach they left behind them. Tuck spun Flying Cloud around for a better look over the edge. Down on the sands were several of his friends yelling up that they all must return to the reservation. They had many things to do before the annual "June Meeting Day" as it was called. The big reunion and religious meeting during the June "Moon of Flowers". Tuck dismounted.

"I must go for sure now," he said with a sincere sadness, eyes lowering. He reached behind his neck with two hands and unfastened the lock to his necklace and placed the loop of beautiful purple and white polished shells onto her shoulders. "Please wear this as a reminder of me and our meeting" Is he going to secure it? Ohhh...

Tuck reached around her head and joined the two ends. As he slowly backed away, she instinctively leaned forward and kissed him lightly on the yellow arrow on his cheek. He pulled back abruptly, startled. Oh no, what have I done. That may have been a bit forward on my part.

She reached for the arrowhead at the center of the necklace and embraced it with a tightly closed fist. Her face displayed worry and embarrassment. Enough so that Tuck, regaining composure, quickly cupped her head in his hands.

"No, that is cool Tabitha. I don't mind. A gesture of thanks is always good. It was nice."

More shouts from below. "Tuck, it's getting late!"

Tuck began to position Flying Cloud for the ride back. "I really have to go. Just be sure you don't leave that yellow paint on your lips." She gave a slight giggle and touched her lip. On her finger was

a small patch of yellow. When she raised her head he was on Flying Cloud.

"Goodbye Tabitha — she who walks with giraffes!" He got Flying Cloud up on her hind legs, waved, hooted out mock war cries and galloped back down the slope.

Gee whiz, I hope I see him again.



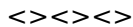
Emily folded the Polaroid, placing it in the bike basket. She noticed the footprints had parted ways, the larger ones going straight west, and the horse going up the hill. She laid her bike down at this juncture and began shouting Tabitha's name.

Instead of hearing what she hoped to hear, Tabitha's voice, she heard the low idling sound of a small boat behind her and the booming voice of Big Ralphy.

"Get that bike and yourself in this boat *now*!" He was certainly sounding disgusted and impatient that he had to be out on the waters searching for her, for how long she didn't know.

She twisted around, planning to protest, and saw Big Ralphy standing up in the dingy that came with the summer house rental. He was beckoning ferociously for her to come to him. "You gotta get back to the house, get your suit on, and get out there to dig up some clams for tonight's chowder," he roared, pointing to emphasis where he was planning to take her. She obeyed with sluggish moves and a sour face, mumbling "Why me? Why do I have to do it?" as they both managed to lift the bike into the boat and speed off.

As the salt spray from the water raced through Emily's short brown page boy hair, she shouted so Big Ralphy could hear, "I better be getting a cone from Magic Fountain outta this deal, that's all I know!" Ralphy closed one eye, and shook his head like he couldn't quite hear the request.



Back at the summer house, Iris was on her second glass of Chardonnay. She stood in her floppies cutting carrots and potatoes in the kitchen. The chowder basics.

"Damn flies," she snarled slapping her exposed neck. Then, turning quickly, she grabbed the flyswatter hanging on the wall near the stove. Squinting through her smudged glasses she tried to hunt it down. The hunt, of course, became a chase that became over-serious and with such intense determination that the kitchen and the food were all at peril of being smashed and broken.

"Where are you, you little Nazi?" Her apron swished around only to escort potatoes to the floor, sparing the carrots temporarily.

"C'mon, show yourself you little shit!"

Wielding her swatter in one hand and sipping wine from the other, the universal elements all agreed this was a recipe for disaster. It buzzed by her ear. She became infuriated and spinning quickly, swung around and forcefully made contact...with the surprised face of Big Ralphie who just passed through the threshold of the kitchen merely to get a beer. In sudden shock, they both drew back, mouths open in disbelief. Before they could recover, the fly reappeared landing on the front corner rim of Iris's eyeglasses. She burst out in laughter. Ralphie rubbed his nose.

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The Princess Isabella Lindenhart along with Antoine de Saint-Exupery, and Jean Mermoz, both seasoned pilots, admired by many in their field of aviation, and their valet, pilot-in-training, and translator for 10 languages, fifteen year old Jasmine Coriander, looked out the windows down at the beautiful and pristine Lake Laurel of Mattituck. Its calm surface of deep green waited, once again, for their aircraft, the 1936 Latecoere 300, Croix du Sud (Southern Cross), to lay down its boat-like bottom. Their unique signature wake, like the wide stroke a tapered Japanese paintbrush would make, creates a smooth, luscious sound, accompanied by the four props quietly disengaging. Turtles on nearby lily pads merely giving lazy glances. This cabin, this fuselage, housed these four along their flight paths of multiple take offs and landings for two and a half weeks, creating an invincible bond of comraderie, honesty and faith in themselves. And in their every

mission. They were survivalists, renowned for their vigor, dedication and, to the dismay of some, their cavalier attitudes.

Chester, their longtime dear African friend, could be seen standing next to the giraffe waving with heightened enthusiasm as he stood waiting for them on the dock, rope in hand ready to receive, fasten and secure the plane. He had the biggest, silliest smile as he anticipated his girlfriend, Princess Isabella Lindenhart deplaning. They had not seen each other for a little over a month. Those in the fuselage poked each other, laughing, as they witnessed Kat with her inquiring gaze, raising her head, complete with a moo, a roar and a whistle. It was a longtime ago now that Kat was rescued from a Pakistan circus fire as a baby. Thanks to the kind heart of paleontologist, Chester Knowles Eagan, the creature has thrived and proven a valuable, intelligent companion, transporting Chester many miles in the saddle given them as a gift from the Princess.

The plane contained the monthly shipment of supplies needed to help sustain the inhabitants of the newly-established childrens' camp now being set up at the old grounds of the Catholic Diocese's abandoned Camp Molloy — The New Camp Dakar, a non-profit organization committed to providing assistance to orphaned children. The goal of the staff at the camp is to help fulfill their basic needs by providing food, shelter, education and clothing. They also strive to prepare the children for the future by supporting them spiritually, emotionally, and intellectually by teaching a curriculum of skills that empower self sufficiency and sustainability. Today's supplies on board:

- Approximately 15 pounds assorted mail correspondence

- 200 Dixon Ticonderoga #2 pencils/ 4 hand-wind pencil sharpeners

- 60 B&W Composition books containing 100 sheets, 200 pages each

- 24 eight ounce bottles of pink calamine lotion (poison ivy being a big problem)

- 75 pounds of Acacia plants

- 75 pounds of carrots (the carrots and acacia are shared with Kat)

50 large white towels; 25 dish cloths, and 50 face cloths
100 pounds of moisture rich figs from a stopover in Chad
10 pounds of shortbread cookies
50 chrome-coated metallic post cards
12 bottles 7.5 litres each of rum for the Counselors (and
medicinal purposes)
2 50 lb. bags of lentils
10 lbs. oatmeal
50 lb. bag Basmati rice
Assorted medical supplies from their stop in Lambarene at the
Schweitzer hospital.

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(Work is in Progress) Please leave a comment if you like. I'm
interested to know your notes about story, characters and settings.
Chapters 6 & 7 are almost done. Thanks for stopping by, Carl

