

Run For Your Life

by Jann Burner

The story of my first/last serious job interview

It was where the “*Suits*” worked. I didn't want to go there, I didn't want to *be* there, but in those days one did what one was supposed to do. I had already served my country,(USAF Control Tower operator in three different countries.) I'd graduated from college (BA from SF State University) and now I was supposed to go down into the concrete canyon where the suits worked and apply for a job.

It was a major advertising agency. The office was on a top floor in the Financial District with a view of the Bay. Somehow or other I had managed an appointment with the head of the Creative Department. When my predetermined time came, a secretary motioned me forward into a room with an astounding view of San Francisco Bay. A balding gentleman with glasses, looking very professorial, stood from behind his ancient Underwood typewriter and came around the desk to introduce himself. After some minor *chit-chat* and a review of my resume he finally put down the paperwork and said, “O.K., I'm going to give you an assignment. You'll have fifteen minutes to complete this assignment. I will expect something original, something unique. Something I haven't read before and most of all something that will want to make me hire you to work with us.

He then gave me “*the assignment*” and left the room. I seated myself behind his desk and looked at his ancient typewriter...and begin to type. Fifteen minutes later, to the second, he walked back into the room. I was now seated in my original chair and he walked around his desk, assumed his position and picked up my pages laying by his typewriter. When he finished reading, he looked at me over the top of his glasses and then stood and walked around the desk. He had the pages in his left hand and he extended his right hand. I grasped his extended hand and he said, “Young man you

have a talent and an ability that is truly unique. The worst thing that I could do would be to offer you a job. So listen...*run for your life!* And don't look back. If I hire you, within three years you'll be married with a couple of kids and a house in the suburbs. That's not why you chose to be born. And you'd soon wonder whatever happened to your life. So run and don't look back, only look forward." And then, handing me my pages, he continued, "Keep these. File them away. In ten or fifteen years you'll have second doubts about the path you've chosen. Then re-read these pages and remember the day you went downtown to the concrete canyon, to the land of suits to find a job and remember the day I sent you out to *find your Life!*

Here was his assignment: There is a small sailboat crossing the Pacific Ocean. It encounters some sort of emergency and begins to sink. Tell me what's happening but make it unique. You aren't a reporter and you aren't simply a helicopter observing from above. Say something unique about this event.

So I wrote about what happened. Turns out an Orca whale had come through the side of the old wooden sailboat in the night and the wife drowned before she even woke up and her husband died trying to get to her and then the whale managed to remove its head from the side of the boat and as the whale moved away the boat begin to come apart...everything begin to sink or simply float away.

One of the things that floated away was the mast. This tall wooden mast had held up the sails all these many years and it had seen amazing places. Originally it came from the coast of Sitka in South East Alaska. It was a Sitka Spruce. It was but one of many that were harvested over the years to be sold as masts on sailboats, but judging from the position of the Sun and the pull of the current it knew that it would be the very first to ever make it back home.

