

## **The Royal Navy in Simon's Town**

**Khaki Hugo - who was he?**

**February - not a good month in  
naval history**





From the  
**editor's**  
desk

Our very first issue of Halifax Herald came out in February 2016. So this now marks our fourth year. And people still wonder why I drink so much.

From the looks of things, 2019 is going to be a busy year. Lots of projects rolling in. While I do enjoy the money they bring in, they also take a great deal of time and energy. Naturally, this is time and energy that I could be devoting to other things that I am passionate about - such as my monthly on-line magazine. Still, I trust that I will be able to cope.

As you see, this month I have included a short story in the newsletter. Maybe some of you have something similar that you would like to send in. Why not? It gives us something to read.

I hope that this is going to be a good year for the Shellhole, and for the Moths in general.

Until next month. YUTTH.

*Matt*

### What's in this month's issue?

On page 3 this month there is a story from Servaas about the Royal Navy and Simon's Town

Then on page 8 John Verster has sent an article about Khaki Hugo. And no, I had also never heard of him before. Khaki Hugo that is, not John Verster.

Page 10 sees an article about why February is not a good month in naval history.

Please take note of the article on page 13 titled "Three years later".

Finally, on page 14, is a short story that I wrote. Hey, I know it has nothing to do with Admiral Halifax Shellhole, the Moths, or even the military. But this month is Valentine's Day, so you can consider this my Valentine's Day gift to you.

I trust that you will enjoy it.

### FRONT COVER

I took this photograph of one of our submarines in Simon's Town. I'm not sure which one it was.

## Royal Navy in Simon's Town

*A bit of the history of the Royal Navy in Simon's Town.*

By Servaas van Breda.

Simons' Town in 1900 was an isolated fishing and whaling community with a naval dockyard of limited recourses which had been established in 1884.

Private Edgar Wallace, who arrived in the Town in 1896 to take up duties as the medical orderly at the Military Hospital above the Town, considered it to be "*...unexciting little more than a ramshackle single street running haphazard along the curving spit of land which forms False Bay into a natural harbour.....*"

The guard ship was the Iron Turret ship Monarch, launched in 1868, which was a contemporary of the ill-fated, Captain, designed by Captain Cowper Coles.

The former guard ship, the screw

Corvette Penelope, remained in the Bay as a hulk and was used as a floating prison for Boer Prisoners of War awaiting shipment to Bermuda, Saint Helena and Ceylon.

The flagship was the cruiser Doris, supported by obsolescent Steam Gunboats and Torpedo Boats, two of which had recently been modernised and fitted with water tube boilers.

The "Flat Iron Boats" Griper, Gadfly and Tickler, destined soon to be converted into yard craft, were still in commission and inspired Rudyard Kipling to write the short story "Judson and the Empire" following a visit to Simon's Town and a couple of noggins at the Officers Club with his friend Captain Bayly.

The Dockyard had three slipways,



**HMS Monarch**

the main one of which could take Screw Gunboats and small merchant vessels while the other two were reserved for Torpedo Boats and small craft.

The Guard ship and Cruisers on station were sent around to the Robinson Dock in Cape Town when under water work was required. Work was about to start on a new dockyard, just across Simon's Bay, with a basin and a drydock, which would accommodate the largest naval vessels afloat.

The basin was to have a system of capstans and sheaves which will allow ships to be berthed and moved around the basin and into and out the drydock without the aid of tugs.

Construction of the new Dockyard created a need for a variety of lighters and barges and several were sent out from the United Kingdom as crated "crated plates" to be erected on the West Yard slipways or on the beach. One of these, the mooring Mooring Lighter, formally Admiralty Yard Craft 221, was taken out of service in 2009. In the early years of the Century, Britain was one of the major builders of warships and several called in for coal on their on their delivery voyages.

Examples of such visits during 1913 were the Australian Battle Cruiser HMAS Australia, escorted by the new cruiser HMAS Sydney, and the Japanese Battle Cruiser HIJMS Kongo.

Many warships were still coal fired and the new yard had coaling sheds

along the East Wall which were capable of storing 10,000 tons. These were kept filled of good "Welsh cobbles" by the fleet of colliers, most of which came and went without incident.

Exceptions were the Turret steamer SS Clan Stuart, ran aground at Glencairn in 1914 (the cylinder block of the triple expansion steam engine can still be seen projecting above the water just offshore) and the SS Lundy Light, which managed to ram the breakwater on the way into harbour in July 1928 and spent three weeks in the graving dock having her bows rebuilt.

The outbreak of WW1 highlighted the strategic importance of the base at Simon's Town and the local squadron was increased in strength after the battle of Coronel, although the ships were later withdrawn after the British victory at the Falklands.

The Cape squadron was later augmented by the Japanese cruisers HIJMS Ships Niihaka and Tsushima, which remained on station until the end of the war.

The 'Twenties' saw the arrival of three ex Royal Naval vessels to form to form the South African Naval Service and also the old cruiser Thames, which became the SA Training Ship General Botha.

The departure of Lowestoft from the station in 1928 signalled the reduction in the requirement for coal for coal to be stored for the bunkering naval vessels and the subsequent need for a bunker oil storage facility. WW1 had

shown the need for a powerful seagoing tug at Simon's Town and the Saint Dogmael, built in Hong Kong during the war, arrived to spend most of her life there.

She was joined for a short while by Saint Bees and Saint Aubin. In the 1930's were lean years which saw, among other things, the disbanding of the fledgling SA Naval Service. Towards the end of the decade the modern cruisers Amphion and Neptune were on station and the men of the RNVR (SA) received sea training in the run up to the inevitable war.

World War II was a busy time for the Navy and the Dockyard. Additional accommodation was required for accompanied RN personnel and "Home Agreement" Dockyard men and their families. During 1943 two blocks of flats, named Hamoaze Court and Solent Court were built on Runciman Drive, overlooking the town, to-

gether with a group of officers' named Medway Terrace, just across the road.

The biggest job undertaken during the war was the rebuilding the rear end of the Aircraft Carrier Hermes, following her collision with the AMC Corfu. During the war the sides of the Graving Dock were decorated with the crests/badges of the visiting ships. Resplendent among them the crests/badges of the American Cruiser USS Marblehead which, was badly damaged by Japanese bombers, limped into Simon's Town unannounced in 1942, having been reported sunk in the Java Sea. Three weeks later she had been repaired sufficiently to allow her to sail for the USA. Sailors ashore during the war were able to relax in a number of clubs, pubs and hotels in the village. Those wishing to venture further afield could take the train to Cape Town.

The distance between "Snoekie"



**RISING SUN:** The Japanese battlecruiser Kongo at Simon's Town in 1917. In front of her is an unidentified Royal Navy light cruiser.

to the “Mother City” was twenty two miles and anybody dying thirst on the way could hop off for a “wet” at one of the twenty two railway stations on the way and continue their journey later.

One of the popular haunts was the “Spotty Dog” at Lakeside, which had a large effigy of a sitting Dalmatian outside. As well as being popular with RN sailors, “Spotty Dog” is reputed to have been frequented by Nazi agents and sympathisers, eager to obtain information on ship movements. The site of “Spotty’s) is marked today by small replica of the original “dog”.

One of the Simon’s Town “characters” of the war was the Great Dane “Able Seaman Just Nuisance” who commuted by train between Simon’s Town and the Union Jack Club in Cape Town. “Nuisance” died at Simon’s Town on 1st April 1944 and was buried, at the Signal Station on Redhill, with full military honours.

After the war, a light cruiser and two sloops were based at Simon’s Town, which was a pleasant posting for RN personal, free of food shortages and rationing being experienced “back

‘ome”.

So attractive was the Cape lifestyle that when the Survey Ship Dalrymple was ready to sail for the coast to East Africa on completion of her refit in 1954, one third of her ship’s company was “adrift”.

The RN/SA exercises were held in the years following the war. A feature of the Dockyard in the late 1940’s was the South Atlantic Reserve Fleet, comprising the “W” Class Destroyers Kempenfelt, Wager, Wessex and Welp, which lay against the East Wall. The flotilla leader, Kempenfelt, was the living-in ship and was fairly well maintained, while the others were

rather neglected. Wessex and Welp, on which HRH the Duke of Edinburgh had served as First Lieutenant, were later purchased by the South African Government whilst Kempenfelt and Wager were towed back to the UK and later transferred to Yugoslavia. The Naval Base and Dockyard were transferred to the South African Government on 1st April 1957 and the Simon’s Town Agreement was signed, allowing the Royal Navy to use the base facilities and to store fuel and ammunition, in return providing and assistance with training.

Access to the facilities of the Simon’s Town base became particularly important to the Royal Navy during the two periods when the Suez Canal was closed.

In the early 1970’s the SAN constructed a dedicated submarine base and Synchronlift. With the lift operational the West Yard slipway was de-

commissioned and the graving dock tended to be underutilised. Joint exercises continued into the 1970’s, when the Simon’s Town Agreement was abrogated.

Throughout the late 60’s and early 70’s, RN ships and submarine and submarines visited Simon’s Town on their way to the Beira patrol, which was instigated to prevent the flow of oil to Rhodesia via the pipeline from the Mozambiquan port. The Dockyard was extensively modernized in the late 70’s and an outer basin was constructed, dramatically increasing the number of ships that could be berthed.

For more than 19 years, from the mid 70’s to the early 90’s no RN ships visited Simon’s Town although RFA’s did occasionally call. The link was restored when the Type 23 Frigate HMS Norfolk visited Simon’s Town on 31st January 1994.



## HMS Sceptre



# What do Canariesfontein and WW1 have in common?

By John Verster.

The answer, of course, is “The Karoo’s greatest aerial ace” - Khaki Hugo.

Petrus Hendrick Hugo (AKA Khaki Hugo AKA Dutch Hogo) was born on the farm PAMPOENPOORT in the Carnavon / Loxton area of the Harde- man’s Karoo and, also, where he spent the last years of his checkered life.

You may well ask “Just exactly what has this got to do with Admiral Halifax – a Navy shellhole?”

Well, you see, he is one of South Africa’s finest warrior-exports yet he remains absolutely forgotten by most of Mothdom who regularly claim that “We Will Remember Them”. I invite you all to join me in paying tribute to this pluperfect example of just why Moth “0” initiated the Moths.

The boring parts are that Petrus Hendrich Hugo was born on 20 December 1917 near Victoria West and, even as a young boy, was a great shot – honed on regular springbok hunts , liked nothing better than tinkering with anything vaguely mechanical and – like most boys of that time- had secret dreams of being a fighter pilot. And then came World War II.

Even while an aeronautical engi-

neering student in Johannesburg he realized that war in Europe was imminent and in 1938 he joined the RAF training school where he was described as “An exceptional pilot, an excellent marksman and suitable for posting to a fighter squadron”.

It is not clear as to why he got the nickname of “Khaki” in South Africa (maybe it’s because he chose to fight for the “verdomde Engelse”, or maybe because of a fair complexion, which turned bright red in the sun, similar to the British troops of the Boer Wars). Nevertheless, in the UK he was soon named “Dutch” due to his unmistakably South African accent.

It is highly likely that the Luftwaf- fer called him the “F--- Englander” because an “Ace” he most certainly was.

One of his combat logs, dated 27 July 1940 reports that, after down- ing a Messerschmitt BF 109. “Dense smoke and liquid poured from the German’s machine. Although my en- gine stopped, I dived after him. Fortu- nately, my engine restated as the Ger- man pulled out of his dive at about 6 000 feet and then dived again. I was hot on his tail and at about 3 000 feet

opened fire. He continued to dive and landed in the water. Within a minute the aircraft had sunk and I saw the pi- lot swimming about in the middle of a big patch of bubbles which had been caused by the sinking of his machine. I sent back a message asking for a launch to be sent out to the German’s rescue and gave his position. I then flew back to base”.

As an example of just how highly the Victoria Westers regarded Group Captain Hugo, Eric Rosenthal (in his book One Hundred Years of Victoria West) writes that, during the war, the people of Vic West established a Pe- trus Hugo Spitfire Fund which raised 4 000 pounds towards an aircraft (named “Karoo”) for the local hero.

Unfortunately, Dutch Hugo was shot down over the English Channel. Although he was rescued and soon re- joined his squadron, a Spitfire called “Karoo” still lies on the seabed off the Dover shore.

His array of medals is impressive in itself – the triple-barred DFC, the 1939-1945 Star (with Battle of Brit- ain Bar), Air Crew Europe Star (with France and Germany Star), the Africa Star (with North Africa 1942-1943 Clasp), the Italy Star, the American DFC and the French Republic Croix de Guerre 1939-1945.

These medals, together with several pieces of shrapnel and a German bullet removed from Dutch, were auctioned off in London for 125 000 pounds in 2010. After the war, the British Gov-

ernment named Hugo Gardens in Havernig, London after our Petrus and also awarded him a farm on the slopes of Mount Kilimanjaro in gratitude. It was here that he spent some twenty years with his wife, Angela, and their three daughters.

In 1971 disaster struck!!!

Not only did his beloved Angela die, but he and his three girls were giv- en two weeks to pack up and leave, by the new Tanzanian Government. With barely any possessions (his prized pos- session, a Cessna 182 was smuggled out by a friend) they returned to the family farm (now named Canariesfon- tein) where he farmed for some fifteen years until he died in 1986.

A relative, Michael Miller, wrote of “Oom Khaki” I got the sense that Oom Khaki was less fascinated by sheep than he was by machinery. He loved installing new windpompe and he repaired them all himself.

The Group Captain lived out his last years living like a hermit, driving a battered old bakkie.

If you were to visit Canariesfontein Guest House today, you might visit the family cemetery on a part of the farm called “Bo-Pampoenspoort, where you will find this simple inscription on his gravestone

“Here lies a Hero”

That’s all..... but that’s enough! We WILL Remember Him.

# Not a good month

*Why February was not a good month for the navy.*

Traditionally, February is the month of love. It's the month where, on the 14th, we celebrate St Valentine's Day. Yet February is not a good month in South African naval history. And here's why.

## HMS Birkenhead

The first incident happened on 26 February 1852. Having departed Simon's Town the HMS Birkenhead, under the command of Captain Robert Salmond RN, was heading for Algoa Bay.

She was conveying troops from ten different regiments, including the 74th Regiment of Foot and Queen's Royal Regiment, to the Eighth Xhosa War against the Xhosa.

At about 02:00 the Birkenhead was travelling at a speed of 8 knots when she struck an uncharted rock at Danger Point (now Gansbaai).

As the ship backed off the rock, the sea rushed into the large hole made by the collision and the ship struck again, buckling the plates of the forward bilge and ripping open the bulkheads. Shortly, the forward compartments and the engine rooms were flooded, and over 100 soldiers were drowned in their berths.

The surviving officers and men assembled on deck, where Lieutenant-

Colonel Seton of the 74th Foot took charge of all military personnel and stressed the necessity of maintaining order and discipline to his officers. As a survivor later recounted: "Almost everybody kept silent, indeed nothing was heard, but the kicking of the horses and the orders of Salmond, all given in a clear firm voice."

Just before she sank, Salmond called out that "all those who can swim jump overboard, and make for the boats". Colonel Seton, however, recognising that rushing the lifeboats would risk swamping them and endangering the women and children, ordered the men to stand fast, and only three men made the attempt.

The sinking of the Birkenhead is one of the earliest maritime disaster evacuations during which the concept of "women and children first" is known to have been applied. "Women and children first" subsequently became standard procedure in relation to the evacuation of sinking ships, in fiction and in life. It became known as "The Birkenhead Drill".

## SS Mendi

In 1916 during the First World War the UK Admiralty chartered SS Mendi as a troopship.

On 21 February 1917 a large cargo

steamship, Darro, collided with her in the English Channel south of the Isle of Wight. Mendi sank killing 646 people, most of whom were black South African troops.

Oral history records that the men met their fate with great dignity. An interpreter, Isaac Williams Wauchope (also known as Isaac Wauchope Dyobha), who had previously served as a Minister in the Congregational Native Church of Fort Beaufort and Blinkwater, is reported to have calmed the panicked men by raising his arms aloft and crying out in a loud voice:

"Be quiet and calm, my countrymen. What is happening now is what you came to do...you are going to die, but that is what you came to do. Brothers, we are drilling the death drill. I, a Xhosa, say you are my brothers... Swazis, Pondos, Basotho...so let us die like brothers. We are the sons of Africa. Raise your war-cries, brothers, for though they made us leave our as-

segais in the kraal, our voices are left with our bodies."

## SAS President Kruger

On the morning of 18 February 1982, SAS President Kruger was conducting anti-submarine exercises for the Submarine Officer Commanding Course with President Pretorius, Emily Hobhouse and Tafelberg.

At approximately 04:00, the whole formation had to change direction by 154 degrees, a near complete reversal in direction, to stay within their training area. The frigates had to change direction first to maintain their protective positions ahead of Tafelberg on the new heading.

President Kruger's options were to turn 200 degrees to port, or 154 degrees to starboard. While the latter turn was smaller and tactically sound, it was more dangerous as it involved turning towards the other two ships. Critically, the inexperienced officer



of the watch (OOW) elected to turn to starboard, and initiated a turn with 10 degrees of rudder rather than the standard 15 degree turn.

Shortly after beginning the turn, an argument ensued between the OOW and the Principal Warfare Officer (PWO) over the proper amount of wheel to apply. About two-thirds of the way through the turn, the operations room lost radar contact with Tafelberg in the clutter because the high-definition navigation radar was broken and the ship was using the less-precise search radar. The OOW was unable to recover the situation, and Tafelberg's bow impacted President Kruger on her port side at 03:55.

The impact tore a large hole in her side and killed 13 of the 15 men sleeping near the point of collision. The ship took on a large list and the captain ordered "abandon ship" at 04:32. The exercise was immediately terminated and the other ships present began rescue operations.

Those that lost their lives were:

- Chief Petty Officer Johannes Petrus Booysen.
- Chief Petty Officer Hartmut Wilfried Smit.
- Chief Petty Officer Willem Marthinus Gerhardus Van Tonder.
- Chief Petty Officer Donald Webb.
- Petty Officer Stephanus Petrus Bothma.
- Petty Officer Graham Alexander Frank Brind.

- Petty Officer Robin Centlivre Bulterman.
- Petty Officer Granville Williams De Villiers.
- Petty Officer Evert Koen.
- Petty Officer Hjalmar Lotter.
- Petty Officer Roy Anthony McMaster.
- Petty Officer Roy Frederick Skeates.
- Petty Officer William Russel Smith.
- Petty Officer Michael Richard Bruce Whiteley.
- Petty Officer Coenraad Johannes Wium.
- Able Seaman Gilbert Timothy Benjamin.

We will remember them.

An extraordinary act of heroism occurred in the icy waters off Greenland on 3 February 1943 that again displays courage worth remembering.

The U.S. Army transport ship Dorchester was hit by a German torpedo and began to sink rapidly.

When it became apparent there were not enough life jackets, four U.S. Army chaplains on board removed theirs, handed them to frightened young soldiers, and chose to go down with the ship while praying.

## My mistake

In the December issue of Halifax Herald I wrote a tribute to Moth Richard Lawrenson, who answered the Sunset Call on 15 November 2018. He was 95 years old.

In the article I wrote, "He began his military career as a naval cadet at the SATS General Botha in Gordon's Bay. He was then transferred to the Royal Navy where he remained for the duration of World War II."

The General Botha Old Boy's Association sent me an e-mail and were quick to point out that Richard did not do his training at Gordon's Bay, but in fact did his training on the training ship SATS General Botha which was stationed in Simon's Town.

I apologize and stand corrected.



**Richard Lawrenson**  
**29 May 1923 - 15 November 2018**

## Three years later

In February 2016 we published the first issue of Halifax Herald. The aim was to bring out a monthly Shellhole newsletter.

Since then we have brought out 38 issues of Halifax Herald. In that time Servaas, John Verster and Phillip Holloway have written something for the newsletter. From the rest of our Shellhole there has been nothing, niks, nada.

I've even had articles from people that are not members of our Shellhole, and some from people who are not

even Moths.

Okay, so maybe you don't like writing, or you feel you have nothing to say. Fair enough.

But in the December issue of Halifax Herald there was a competition (on page 12). There were five photographs and I asked you to write a caption for these photographs. I even had a prize for the best caption.

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# The lucky

***An apprentice angel gets one last chance to earn his wings and get into heaven. But judging by his track record it's not going to be easy. By Matt Tennyson.***

If there had been anyone to complain to, Mickey would have complained long and loud. Not only did he hate his job, he also wasn't very good at it. After all, he hadn't asked for the job had he? It had been thrust upon him and he hadn't been given any choice in the matter.

Michael 'Mickey' Liam O'Bannon had been born in County Monaghan in the Republic of Ireland. It is said that people from Monaghan had an urge to punch everyone they met, actually did punch everyone they met, got drunk before, after and during punching anyone they met, and were incomprehensible when trying to speak while punching everyone they met. It

was also said that they would get an urge to kill when they heard the words 'monarchy' or 'England'. So it came as rather a shock to most when Mickey joined the British Army.

Not that he had much choice in the matter, mind you. It had come about when Mickey had borrowed money from a local construction company.

Perhaps the problem lay in the fact that the money had been in a locked safe when Mickey had 'borrowed' it, and it had been 2.00 am in the morning. An even bigger problem was the fact that the construction company was actually a front for the local branch of the I.R.A. or Irish Republican Army.

Naturally they had not been all that pleased with Mickey and they were desperately trying to get their hands on him so that they could have a chat.

Now while Mickey may not have been the sharpest pencil in the box he did realise that having a chat with a couple of enforcers of the I.R.A. nor-

# SHOT

mally left you walking with crutches for the rest of your life. He figured that the safest place to hide would be in the British Army.

He had taken the ferry across to England, walked into an army recruiting office, and signed on the dotted line.

Five years later Mickey was a corporal in One Parachute Regiment and was on deployment with his unit in Iraq. He had been promoted to corporal and then demoted back to private on no fewer than four occasions. This was now the fifth time that he had reached the rank of corporal.

They had been on a routine patrol when they had come across a car parked on the side of the road. The young lieutenant in charge of the patrol had suspected that the car could be an IED or improvised explosive device. He had moved his men a safe distance back and had called for the bomb squad to come and investigate.

"We're wasting time lieutenant," Mickey had said. "Let me go and check it out. It's probably just broken down and been left there by one of the locals. We don't want to sit here all day waiting for those Amadán (idiots) from the bomb squad."

"No corporal O'Bannon," the lieutenant had said. "Let's rather be safe than sorry."

"You worry too much. I'll be wide (careful)," Mickey had said, setting off in the direction of the car.

He was in a hurry to get back to their base camp. The pub would be opening in less than an hour and he had an appointment with a bottle of Bushmills whiskey.

As he approached the car there had been a blinding flash of light as the car exploded. Mickey never even heard the sound of the explosion as his body was ripped into pieces.

For a few seconds everything had turned dark, then Mickey found himself being drawn up a tunnel of bright light.

"Well bugger me," Mickey thought. "So Father Bailey had been right with all his craic (talk) about heaven."

Yet heaven hadn't turned out to be exactly what Mickey had thought it was. One of the first things he learnt was that you didn't go straight to heaven. First you had to earn your wings. And this is where Mickey was having a problem.

He had been assigned to work with Cupid. Now many people are under the impression that Cupid is this cute little guy with wings that goes around shooting his arrows at people and getting them to fall in love.

In a way it was true, but Cupid wasn't the guy that actually went around with the bow and arrow. He was more of a foreman in charge of a large team that did this.

Mickey had been assigned to Cupid's team and it was his job to go around and assist people to fall in



love. He just wasn't any good at it. This was why he was once again sitting in Cupid's reception room waiting to see the big man.

"Cupid is ready to see you now Mr. O'Bannon. Please go through," Cupid's pretty blonde secretary said. Cupid was not pleased to see him.

"Well done O'Bannon, you stuffed up once again," Cupid said, shaking his head. "And it was the simplest task possible. There was a guy sitting next to a girl. The girl was already crazy about the guy and all you needed to do was shoot him with one of your arrows and he would have fallen madly in love with her. They would have made a perfect couple. But no, even something that simple was beyond you. What did you go and do?"

Mickey shrugged his shoulders.

"No. Instead of hitting the young man with your arrow you miss him completely and hit the 64 year old man sitting next to him. This causes this poor old geezer to fall madly in love with a 19 year old girl. You can't imagine the problems it has caused. This old guy has been following her around like a lost puppy, proclaiming his undying love for her. She's already had to take out a restraining order against him."

"Not my fault boss," Mickey said. "I've told you before I'm useless with a bow and arrow. Give me a Dragunov snipers rifle or an SSG 3000 and I'll hit any eejit straight between the eyes.

But I just can't seem to get the hang of that bow and arrow thing. Maybe it's time you modernised your equipment a bit."

"Listen O'Bannon I'm giving you one more chance to earn your wings," Cupid said. "Otherwise you're taking the express elevator all the way to the bottom floor. The hot place, if you know what I mean. Now for your next assignment I'm sending you back to a place you should be familiar with. You're going back to Iraq. You're going to deal with someone from your old country. My secretary will give you all the details. And please, try and get this one right."

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Sean Murphy finished typing the last sentence of his document, hit the send button on his e-mail, and slammed his laptop computer closed.

"Right you young hooligan you, that's my copy filed and now it's drinking time," he said to the younger man sitting in the room with him.

Sean Murphy was 35 years old. He had been born in Limerick, Ireland and upon finishing school he had joined a local newspaper as a reporter.

As soon as he had learnt the ropes he had left the newspaper and taken a job as a feature writer with a magazine in Dublin. His involvement with conflict journalism had come about almost by accident.

Another magazine had been looking for someone to travel to Africa and

cover one of the civil wars that had been taking place. Murphy had never travelled outside of Ireland and he saw this as an opportunity.

He had spent five months on assignment and had become hooked on the adrenaline rush of conflict journalism.

He moved from war to war, covering assignments throughout Africa, Asia, Eastern Europe, South America and the Middle East. Within three years he had earned a reputation as someone that would always get the story. Numerous magazines hired him on a freelance basis.

Now he found himself in Iraq covering the ongoing war. It was his fourth trip to the country. With him was 22 year old Lawrence Milton, a young journalist from a magazine based in England. Murphy was doing a freelance assignment for the magazine and part of the contract had been that he would look after Milton and show him the ropes.

After supper at the small hotel where they were staying, Sean and Lawrence had returned to their room.

"What's that you're busy writing," Sean had asked.

"Just an e-mail to my girlfriend," Lawrence replied. "Do you have a wife or girlfriend?"

"You must be out of your mind," Sean laughed. "Don't have one, don't need one, don't want one. End of story."

"Haven't you ever been in love?"

Lawrence asked.

"Yeah, once. But I can't say I enjoyed it," said Sean. "Being in love is like hitting your head against a brick wall. It serves no purpose, it hurts, and it feels so good when you stop doing it. Now let's drop the subject and you make yourself useful by pouring us a drink."

It was true, 10 years previously Sean had met and fallen hopelessly in love with a girl. She had used him, lied to him and cheated on him. It had broken his heart and he vowed he would never allow himself to fall in love again.

It was this situation than Mickey had to correct. It was his job not only to get Sean to fall in love again, but to fall in love with the right woman.

Mickey sat on the edge of Sean's hotel bed listening to them. Naturally neither of them could see him. When Sean and Lawrence fell asleep Mickey eyed the bottle of Bushmills whiskey standing on the table. It was still two-thirds full. Mickey licked his lips and thought that it wouldn't hurt anyone if he poured himself just one little tot.

When Mickey opened his eyes the following morning he immediately became aware of three things. First of all his head hurt, secondly Sean and Lawrence were no longer in the room, and the bottle of Bushmills was empty.

Something that concerned him even more was the fact that instead of five arrows in his quiver he only had three. He dreaded to think of what had hap-

pened to the other two.

Mickey made his way downstairs, through the reception area and outside. He had to find where Sean was and then stick to him like glue.

As he walked out of the front door he saw the two armed security guards holding hands and he realised what had happened to the two missing arrows.

When Mickey found Sean the latter was in a world of pain. Sean and Lawrence had been down at the market square waiting to interview one of the local tribal leaders.

A car had driven past and an RPD light machine gun had been pointed out of the window and then opened fire. Two people had been killed and six wounded. Sean was one of the wounded.

He had been hit in both legs and the bones had been shattered. A military ambulance arrived and they loaded Sean into the back. He was taken back to the large military base where an emergency operation had been carried out. From there he was airlifted back to England and admitted to a private hospital where he underwent another two operations.

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Six months later and Sean was finally ready to begin physiotherapy. He would have to learn to walk again.

Mickey had been with him the entire time, learning as much as he could about Sean. Yet this was the moment

that Mickey had been waiting for. The moment that Sean met his physiotherapist, Sarah Turner – the girl that Sean was supposed to fall in love with.

There were a few minor teething problems, however. First of all Sean had taken an instant dislike to Sarah.

She was an attractive 28 year old that never became emotionally involved with her patients. Sean found her cold and aloof. She thought that Sean was nothing more than an adrenaline junkie that had been shot and wounded in a country where he should never have been in the first place. She also felt that Sean made a living out of the pain and suffering of other people. Need less to say she didn't have much time for him either.

Every day Sean would spend two hours with Sarah. She would put him through a series of exercises aimed at strengthening his leg muscles.

While Sarah didn't like him she was starting to respect the way he handled himself. In similar situations her other patients would moan and cry like babies. Sarah knew how much the exercises hurt, yet Sean had never once complained.

She could see the pain on his face and the way he would push himself until he was drenched in sweat. Yet he took everything she could throw at him.

She also began to discover small things about him that were slowly changing her opinion of him.

“So, are you missing the adrenaline rush,” she had asked him one morning.

“Adrenaline rush? Is that what you think it's all about,” Sean said. “It's got nothing to do with that at all. Sure, we do get those attracted to conflict journalism because they're adrenaline junkies. But they don't last long. One, maybe two assignments and then they crack.”

“So why do you do it then?” Sarah had asked.

“To make a difference I guess,” Sean replied. “Most people couldn't give a damn about some war going on in some country in Africa or in some jungle in South America. It doesn't affect them, so they don't really care about it. Part of our job is making them aware of what's going on. Bring them stories and images that sicken them so much that they start to take notice of it. We want to make them so sick that they start putting pressure on the politicians and the United Nations to try and stop the war. If we can do that, then we've helped in our own little way.”

The more time she spent with Sean, the more Sarah was starting to realise that there was a lot more to him than met the eye. He was intelligent, really believed in what he did, and he wasn't bad looking in a rugged sort of way. She found that her attitude towards him had softened.

It was Sean's final physiotherapy

session. The next day he was being discharged. For some reason the thought that she wouldn't be seeing Sean every day made her feel both sad and scared. She wasn't quite sure what she was feeling.

“Yes,” said Mickey. “She's ready. Now to hit her with an arrow.”

He stood less than two metres behind her, pulled back on the string of his bow, and fired his arrow. It missed.

“Damn this stupid piece of rubbish,” Mickey swore.

He only had two arrows left. One for Sarah and one for Sean. He took an arrow in his hand, walked up behind Sarah, and stabbed her in the bum with it.

She let out a yelp of pain, clutching at the cheek of her bum. It felt as if something had stung her.

When she went to say goodbye to him the following morning she realised that she had fallen in love with him. There was nothing for it but to let him know how she felt.

“I don't quite know how to put this,” she told Sean. “In the last six weeks I first came to respect you, then I started to actually like you. Now I'm afraid I've fallen in love with you. I know it sounds silly, but there it is.”

For a moment Sean felt a warm feeling in his heart. It was something he had never felt before and it actually felt rather nice. But he quickly pushed it to one side.

“Sarah I think you're a great girl

and I appreciate everything you've done for me these past six weeks," Sean said. "But I don't do love. Now why don't you walk downstairs with me and see me off. I'm catching a bus to the airport and then I'm off on another assignment."

Sarah walked him downstairs and waited with him until the bus arrived.

Mickey was in a panic. He had one arrow left and he had to shoot Sean with it. He couldn't try the stabbing stunt again, technically it was against the rules.

As he took the arrow from his quiver he dropped it. He scrambled for it and hurriedly fitted it to the bow.

But it was too late – Sean had already climbed aboard the bus and the doors were closing.

Mickey released the arrow and it just squeezed through the gap seconds before the doors closed and the bus pulled away. He had missed.

The bus moved down the road and then suddenly came to a halt. The doors opened and Sean climbed off.

Mickey could see the arrow sticking out of Sean's back.

Sean and Sarah ran towards each other. He took her in his arms and kissed her.

"Maybe it's time to give love another chance," he smiled.

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Four months later Sean and Sarah were married at a small but romantic ceremony attended by a few of their

friends and colleagues. One of the guests was someone no-one else could see.

Mickey O'Bannon stood with a cigar in one hand and a glass of Bushmills whiskey in the other.

He glanced back over his shoulder with a smug look, admiring his brand new set of shinning white angel wings.

"Not bad O'Bannon," he smiled. "Not bad at all."

