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Two Roads Diverged

By Sandy McCune Westin

“You could come with us...” my new lover of just three weeks suggested. “You’re really getting pretty good at sailing, and we could use another member on the crew.”

Like a gust of wind, the very suggestion billowed out the spinnaker of my imagination, filling it full-bellied with the prospects of that alternative life. My new friend and his companions would be leaving next Tuesday, sailing out under the Golden Gate, then southward along the California and Mexico coasts before turning north to make their way through the Panama Canal into the balmy Caribbean. Then it would be on to the Bahamas for a month, maybe two. It would depend.

Such an outrageous and abrupt fork in my life would mean I would have to quit my new job, store my belongings with my housemate, while somehow managing to pay my bills. That reality draped a dark, wooly blanket over the vision of salt spray and sea breezes.

Could I? Should I? Part of me yearned to go for it, lean into the possibilities it presented with a sense of abandon unlike anything my sensible, practical self had ever tried before in my thirty years.

I looked deeply into my new friend’s eyes and saw the sea in them, then looked up at the mast gleaming white above us as it tethered the crisp mainsail. Its tell-tails shifted in parallel stripes, indicating the course of a wind change around us.

“Ready about,” came the call from the helmsman. My friend and I leapt to our assigned posts to handle the lines and adjust the sails to their new direction. We tacked across the Bay towards Alcatraz, that place of ultimate confinement, in the distance.

Was I prepared to do a “ready about” in my life? Or would I live within the confines of the new life I had been crafting for myself this past year since separating from my ex back in Colorado? I was just now getting my legs under me, adjusting to the newfound freedoms and possibilities of life on my own.

The bow spray sizzled as the thirty-foot sloop picked up speed. Here I was, a country girl from Washington State, learning to sail a yacht! It seemed there were no limits to the adventures I could welcome into my new life. Perhaps my greatest challenge lay in deciding which I would embrace and which I would leave behind, untested, in my wake.

Smiling to myself, I replied “Thanks for the offer, but I think I’ll stick with where I am for a while longer.” I added with sincerity, “I hope you guys have a great trip though.”

The breeze off the bow tousled my short dark hair. Without regret, I lifted my face to the bright California sun, delighting in the day and the moment.

