

YOU GOTTA ROW

by Ken Bradbury



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It was a good boat. In fact he'd sailed it his entire life and until today it had never caused him a minute's problem. Every morning he'd catch the outgoing tide, spend his day doing his sailor-ly duty; then in the evening the tides would again come in, bringing him safely home. Until today.

He couldn't remember what he'd done differently or maybe it wasn't his fault. The weather had been curious lately and perhaps that had affected the tides. Heck, he was getting older. Maybe he'd simply not watched his timepiece closely. But as he looked toward shore he saw all the other boats tying up for the night but he was still far off shore. Something was terribly wrong.

He waved at his friends now heading up to the village for their supper but no one thought to look back to the sea. They'd had quite enough of the water for one day and besides, it was time for all boats to be ashore so he sat there alone. Floating. Going nowhere.

How could this have happened? He'd spent his entire life living this same routine ... the tide takes you out; the tide brings you back in. And after a lifetime on his boat, a lifetime of the tide and the weather gods being so faithful, his boat lay motionless on a silent sea. The man faced the prospect of a long night ahead. He had brought neither shelter nor blanket. Why should he? This had never happened before.

Then as he turned his eyes one more desperate time toward the shore he saw a lone lantern coming down the steep bank toward the dock. Someone was making a last check of the moorings before turning in. The man in the boat summoned all the lungpower he could muster and shouted, "Halloo! Hey



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