

Tales of True Debate Adventure

The Search for the Lost Indigo

A long time ago, at a tournament far, far away...

The car cut through the night like a novice digging into a tray of debate ziti. In the distance, there was the sound of coyotes howling from the hilltops. Mountain lions, gophers and other vicious predators lie in wait on all sides of the road, hoping for the one misstep that would set them on a feeding frenzy.

"Haven't seen anything like this since Anzio in '44," the captain said, his hands tight on the helm.

"How the hell old is this guy anyhow?" the first mate muttered under his breath.

In the back seat, El Pea, a mercenary from Policia, continued his exegesis on the late film career of Joan Crawford. "It came right after the middle career," he pointed out, "but before the actual end."

The threesome had just shipped out from the Ridge High School. They had left their crews behind. The first mate, a one-eyed Irishman named Cruise de la Cruz O'Cruzio, Jr., had wanted to check that his regiment was successfully bivouacked, but the captain, a veteran of many years and little hair who was known only as The Tab Whisperer refused to allow it. "There's enough tents in Ridge to camp a thousand of your bloody little scientists," he had said, pushing Cruise de la Cruz O'Cruzio, Jr., into the car and slamming the door on him, breaking off two fingers and a can of Red Bull in the process. As for the mercenary, El Pea, he had slipped quietly amidships, happy for any transport to the night's bunk, even one as dubious as the vessel of The Tab Whisperer. He cast his eyes down on his copy of "Mommie Dearest" for fear of catching any of the old man's wrath.

And the car pulled out of the Ridge parking lot, headed for the motel, a haven called the Indigo.

They were not unprepared for the journey. Although none of them had ever visited this port before, and its promise of a bed, a bath and a pint o' ale by the warm pub's fire—plus a nice continental breakfast at no extra charge and free wireless—they believed they could reach it before the morning's light. Captain Tab Whisperer had a chart. Cruise de la Cruz O'Cruzio, Jr., had the magic sextant. El Pea had total recall of both "Berserk!" and "Straight-Jacket." What could possibly go wrong?

"I think we turn right up here," Captain Tab Whisperer said, consulting his chart, hand-drawn for him by the master cartographer, Fra MapGoogle.

Cruise de la Cruz O'Cruzio, Jr., consulted his magic sextant. "It's going *bloop bloop*," he whispered softly. And sure enough, the tiny device in his hand was slowly, steadily proclaiming they were on the right track with its steady call of *bloop bloop*. The magic sextant, crafted by the wizard known as Jobs Cupertino, was, in fact, an iSextant,

capable not only of divining location by the position of the stars, but of communicating its beholder's voice beyond all imaginable distances, of playing the music of everyone except the Beatles because of the whole Apple-Apple thing, and of texting countless pointless messages for a mere extra twenty dollars a month, the good Lord willing and the creek don't rise, provided you could negotiate the damned touchscreen keyboard.

But, hey, we're not here to complain.

"We've been driving a couple a hours now," the captain grumbled.

"It's still going *bloop bloop*," Cruise de la Cruz O'Cruzio, Jr., replied. "We're on course."

"Some people say she jumped the shark with 'Flamingo Road,' " came a voice from the back seat.

The car drove on. Occasionally Captain Tab Whisperer would pull over and consult his chart in the pale dashboard light while the first mate confirmed that according to the iSextant they were still on course. "We're still *bloop blooming*," he would say, confident that the magic of his machine would get them to their destination. And the captain would return the vehicle to the path, and they would drive on.

"*Bloop bloop*," the little machine would say.

"*Bloop bloop*," the little first mate would repeat.

There was comfort in the litany.

The car pressed on as the night darkened. There was no moon in the sky, there were no stars to guide their way, only the chart and the bloops. And then, as if in answer to a prayer, they reached the street that they knew would lead them to the haven of the Indigo, and they made the right turn that would safely end their journey.

"*Bloop bloop*," Cruise de la Cruz O'Cruzio, Jr., said confidently.

"I think we took a wrong turn back there," El Pea said. "Much as Joan did when she agreed to star in 'Trog.' "

"The chart said go right," the Tab Whisperer said, refusing to swerve from his appointed course.

"And," the mate added, "we're blooming."

And the car went on. A momentary flash of the headlights was reflected in the eye of a tiger in a baobab tree. A crocodile slipped noiselessly into the swamp. A baby, abandoned by the nuns and left to be raised by wolves, softly sobbed in a bramble bush.

And the car went on.

"I'm not blooming," Cruise de la Cruz O'Cruzio, Jr., said, a note of fear entering into his voice. "The port should be straight ahead of us, or so the iSextant says, but it's not blooming."

"The chart had us on this course," the captain agreed.

"According to Wikipedia," the mercenary said, " 'On May 8, 1977, Crawford gave away her beloved Shih Tzu 'Princess Lotus Blossom,' which signaled to her close friends that her death was near.' "

"Do you have internet access back there?" Tab Whisperer asked.

"No, but Menick is writing this on the computer and he just looked it up and copied and pasted it, which is one way of getting dialogue into a story."

“Amen to that,” Tab Whisperer said.

“We are definitely not blooping anymore,” the first mate said, returning everyone’s attention to their dire straits as he put down his magic sextant and looked out the window for the first time. “Where the *bleep bleep* are we?”

“I haven’t got the foggiest idea,” the Tab Whisperer replied. He took action. First he turned left. No Indigo. He turned right. No Indigo. Then he turned straight. Still no Indigo.

“We have met the intersection of reality and the internet,” Cruise de la Cruz O’Cruzio, Jr., said. He grabbed the captain’s arm. “I’m frightened, Auntie Em. This is all new construction. The iSextant hasn’t caught up with it yet.”

“Neither has Fra MapGoogle,” Tab Whisperer agreed.

“Neither would have Joan, had she lived to see it,” El Pea added.

They were lost beyond lost. They were without hope. Smelling the death on their breaths, the carrion eaters started to circle overhead. The buzzards, the vultures, the crows, the Canada geese.

“It’s a jungle out there,” Cruise de la Cruz O’Cruzio, Jr., said, the miasma of impending doom settling on his soul.

“I told you we should have turned left,” El Pea said. “I’m from Policia. We deal in facts. Listen to me, or we’ll die out here.”

The Tab Whisperer exchanged a glance with his first mate. “We’ve got nothing to lose,” he said.

Cruise de la Cruz O’Cruzio, Jr., nodded. “If we’re going to die, at least we should die trying.”

The Tab Whisperer swung the car around and headed in what could only be termed the wrong direction. A serial killer, looking out the window of his bungalow at the car bearing the threesome, pulled on his hockey mask and uttered a little prayer that the night would last forever.

“I’m blooping!” Cruise de la Cruz O’Cruzio, Jr., announced with uncharacteristic glee. “*Bloop bloop!*” he cried. “*Bloop bloop!*”

“You’re blooping?” the captain asked, afraid to accept this moment of luck.

“*Bloop bloop!*” said Cruise de la Cruz O’Cruzio, Jr. “*Bloop bloop bloopedly damned bloop!*”

“No wire hangars EVER!!!” came the triumphant cry from the back seat.

And, not far in the distance, the bright lights of the safe port of Indigo were shining.

“We’re there,” Cruise de la Cruz O’Cruzio, Jr., shouted, dropping down and kissing the ground.

“No, we’re not there,” the captain said. “We’re still in the car, so you can’t possibly drop down and kiss the ground yet. Have you no respect for the requirements of narrative? Didn’t you ever read Aristotle?”

The first mate lowered his head. “I’m sorry. I just got a little carried away.”

“There will be no getting carried away in this car, bub.”

“Are you going to mention the part where I called the hotel on the iSextant and they told us which way to go?” Cruise de la Cruz O’Cruzio, Jr., asked.

“And ruin a good story?” the Tab Whisperer replied. “Dream on.”

And they pulled into the parking lot as the smell of cinnamon and pine trees and unbathed policy debater came wafting through from the front door of the haven known as the Indigo.

“*Bloop bloop,*” said the little iSextant one last time.

Added El Pea: “There is a name for you, ladies, but it isn't used in high society... outside of a kennel.”

And another debate journey had come to an end.