

MIKA'S TIME

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Esp. 3: "Deep Water"

Mika enters the old antique shop and looks around hoping to see the desk without having to bother the owner. She didn't want to purchase the desk only open the secret compartment in the back of it to hopefully retrieve her ring. She didn't see it and walked up to the older gentlemen at the old wooden desk in the back. He had been watching her since she walked in the shop.

"Good morning sir." Mika began. "I am looking for a fourteenth century desk. I had heard through the grapevine that you might have the desk I am looking for?"

"Well, miss, I just might." The old man replied in a heavy English accent. "Please follow me." He said getting up from his chair and leading her to a back storage room filled with old odd pieces scattered here and there. He stopped in front of covered table. He removed the blanket to expose a beautifully carved fourteenth century desk. With small engraving all around the legs and edges of the top. Just as she had remembered it.

Mika stood there admiring the desk as she had done not long ago on an assignment. That is when she was still new to traveling. She took her eye off the assignment just long enough to admire a piece of great craftsmanship and almost got caught.

"It's beautiful." Mika told the owner as she looked it over trying to seem interested in buying it. Just then the bell above the front door rang out. Signaling another customer had come into the shop. "Oh go ahead. I will just be here admiring it for a little bit." She tried to assure him so he would leave her side for just a few moments.

"Alright, but please don't touch it with your bare hands." He told her. "Please put these gloves on." He said as he handed her a pair of white cotton gloves to put on.

Mika started to put them on in front of him so he would be rest assured and leave her. It worked, he left her to tend to his other customer.

Mika watched him get out of her sight then she pulled out a small drawer and slide a lever hidden behind the drawer to open a small compartment. She quickly put her hand in the hidden compartment and moved her fingers around. Mika felt something touch her hand. She picked it out and quickly closed the drawer just as the owner walked back into the storage area.

"What do you have there? What did you remove from the drawer?" He demanded his accent getting thicker as he got more agitated.

“Nothing, I didn’t remove anything.” Mika coolly replied. How would she ever explain it anyway?

“What is that in your hand then young woman?” He asked demanding that she show him what was in her hand.

Mika slowly brought her hand forward then opened it, hoping that it was what she had hoped it would be, it was. Mika breathes a sigh of relief. “See it’s just my ring. I was looking in the drawers and it slipped off my hand. I was just picking it up.” Mika reassured him.

“Let me see it?” He demanded.

Mika placed the ring in his hand. He looked at it through his small magnifying glass.

“Alright, I guess it is yours. It is not an antique.” He grumpily replied. “I told you not to touch it with your bare hands. That is why I gave you the gloves. Now, are you interested in the desk?” he asked.

“No, it doesn’t look authentic to me.” Mika replied in a snotty tone. “I have seen better reproductions.”

“I assure you Miss, this is no reproduction.” He rebuffed. “it has been authenticated by the House of Wellington in England.”

“Well” She paused looking at the desk.” I will have to think it over.” Mika said as she handed him back his white gloves and walked out to the main store and out the front door. She got what she had come for anyway.

Mika walked out to the sidewalk and attempted to hail a cab. They all seemed to be already in service, so she flipped up the collar on her coat and made her way down the block to a smart little café she passed on her way to the antique store. It caught her eye for some reason. “*Now was as good a time as any to check it out.*” Mika thought to herself as she passed a few small old shops located in that part of town.

After a latte’ at the small café she paid the check and flipped up the collar on her coat and stepped outside into the cold wind once again. This time she was able to hail a cab.

The ride across town was uneventful on this cold windy day. It seemed a storm was brewing off the coast. The cab stopped in front of her apartment building and she paid the driver and entered the old entry way and headed for the elevator. Mika pressed the button to go up and a few minutes later the elevator bell rang signaling its arrival and the door opened.

Mika entered the elevator and quickly turned to press the button for her floor just as a hand slid in front of the closing doors. To hold them open.

A tall dark wavy haired man stepped onto the elevator. He was dressed in a black well cut suit and smelled delicious. Mika couldn’t help but inhale deeply the aroma of his cologne.

“Fourth floor, please” He said in a musical deep manly voice. “Oh, sorry I see you already pushed it. Thank you.”

“Ah, yes.” Mika replied shyly. “I am on the fourth floor as well.”

“Oh we must be neighbors.” The man said looking down at Mika. “My name is Ricardo, Ricardo De Venti. I just moved into 4G.” He said offering his hand.

Mika saw his hand and gently took it in greeting then quickly released it. “Welcome to the building.” She replied shyly as the elevator rung, signaling they were on the fourth floor. The doors opened and Mika quickly bolted out the door and made her way to her apartment, unlocked the door and made her way inside, closing the door quickly behind her.

Mika was usually steadfast by this man was attractive and it made her nervous for some reason. She leaned up against her apartment door and held her charm necklace in her hand. She accidentally pressed the small purple charm.

Mika found herself clinging to the inside of an orange enclosed survival raft that was being tossed around the ocean like a ping pong ball. “Oh crap, I pressed the charm.”

She quickly looked around her. There wasn't much in the raft but a couple of empty bottles of water and a nylon case that was attached to the raft. The words written across the case said “Emergency Equipment”. She quickly crawled over to the case cling to whatever she could to as she made her way. Mika unzipped the case and found a few energy bars a few more bottles of water and a flare kit along with a thermal survival blanket.

“Oh, how I hate deep water!” she yelled out. Knowing no one could hear her. She looked around the enclosed cone shaped survival raft trying to locate an opening in the raft a door, window anything so she could get a look at her surroundings. Mika spotted it, there to her left, a door. She made her way of to it and unzipped it part of the way down, just enough to put her head out to look around. Mika needed to get a look at the environment she was dumped into. Just as she pulled the flap back and put her head through the opening, a large ice cold wave slammed into face catching her off guard and throwing her back into the raft.

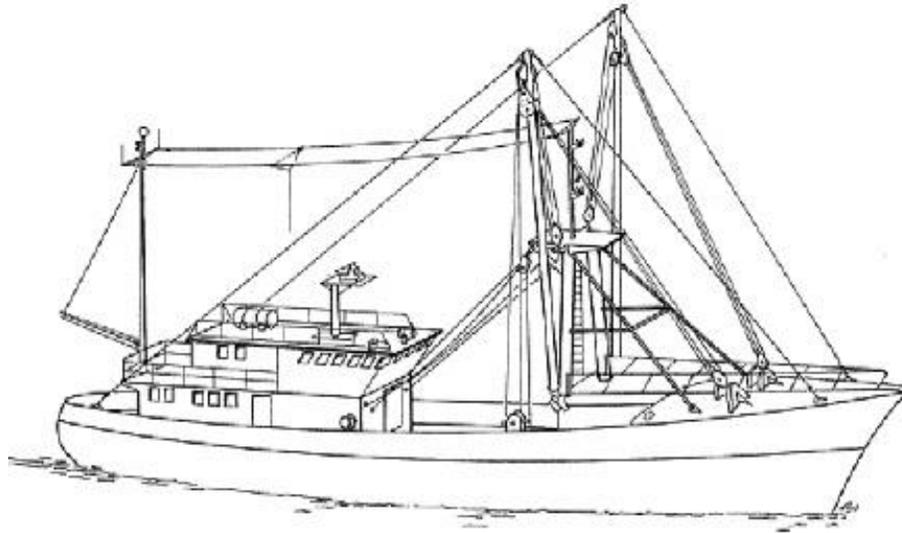
Mika quickly shook off the water and made her way back to the door and looked out again. There, off in the distance, was a boat shinning its fishing light around the water. Mika picked up the flare gun, loaded a flare into it and aimed at the dark night sky and fired.

The flare exploded in the sky lighting up her entire area. The boat saw her signal and flashed its lights and blew its horn to let her know they were on their way.

As the large fishing vessel got closure to her. Mika saw a few of the men climb into a small motor boat and a large crane set it in the water. She sat back in the raft with a sign of relief, but she wasn't rescued yet. The violent ocean waves still were throwing her around pretty roughly. Mika held onto a few of the built in handles of the raft and waited for the rescue boat to knock on the door.

As she sat there holding on the hand straps of the survival raft, Mika noticed wearing cold weather rain gear, but she was still soaked to the bone and freezing. She could hear the rescue boat getting close so she made her way back to the small opening. Another large wave came at her, but this time she held onto the handles near the door.

The rescue boat bumped into her survival raft and two men reached for her and pulled her into the rescue boat. Another man tied the survival raft to the rescue boat. Then they headed quickly back to the larger fishing vessel.



Not much was said during that quick trip back to the larger vessel. Once they reached it a large climbing rope net was thrown over the side for them to climb up on. Mika was freezing and tired from being thrown around in the waves, but she managed to step up to the net ladder as two men tried to lift her up.

“Come on guys” Mika said “I’m not that heavy. I got this.” She told them as she attempted to climb up, then realized she wasn’t as strong as she thought.

The men made grunting sounds as they tried to push her up. Like they were straining under her weight. Just as they got her on the rope ladder a large ocean wave pushed them again the fishing vessel breaking the rope securing the survival raft. The wave quickly filled the raft and pulled it down to the sea depths.

Just as she made it to the top of the rope ladder, two men reached over the side and helped her onto the deck of the boat and hurried her along inside out of the harsh cold.

“Get him down below and out of that wet gear!” yelled the Captain down from the wheel house. “Have the cook get him some hot coffee and get some soup in him. Put him in the crew quarters for now and get him some dry clothes.”

Mika was freezing and more fatigued than she had anticipated as she was carried along the main deck to the front crew quarters.

“Here ya go buddy.” Said one of the crew as they laid her down on a small cot that pulled out from the wall and was held by chains. “Let’s get you out of this wet gear you have one.” He said as the two men that carried her onto the boat began to remove her clothing.

Mika was so cold and wet she didn’t care if they stripped her naked. She just wanted to get warm and dry.

“You’re a big fella aren’t ya? Ask the other crew member. “What are you six two six four?” He said as he pulled her shirt over her head

Mika was a bit confused about his question. “*What the hell is he talking about?*” she asked herself to herself fatigued to ask the crew member out loud. In no time they had removed all her clothes and had wrapped her in a nice warm wool blanket. Mika laid down on the cot and was soon warm and fast asleep.

The sun began to shine through the port hole in the small boat cabin she was sleeping in. She opened her eyes and turned over in the small narrow cot and looked around the cabin. There was a narrow metal door near her feet. Across from her was two more cots that were hung up against the wall stacked like bunk beds. Then above her head below the porthole window was a small desk and chair. Next to that four tall lockers. She assumed for the crew members personal items. On the wall above the desk was a small calendar that read the year 1880.

“*Oh crap!*” she said to herself as she began to wake up and realize just exactly where she was. The fact that she was naked under the wool blanket hadn’t escaped her thoughts either. Mika sat up on the edge of the cot, making sure she was covered in the blanket as she looked around the room more with her mind and eyes now wide awake.

There, folded on the desk was a pair of pants and a shirt sock and a pair of boots. She immediately got up to put them on. Passing the row of lockers she caught her reflection in a shaving mirror hanging on one of them.

“What!” she said as she was started at her reflection. Now what the Captain and crew member were saying made more sense. She was an older, gray tempered, taller heavy set man with a face full of hair and mid length wavy reddish brown hair. She quickly opened her arms pulling the blanket away from her body revealing the body of a well build man in his late forties. She had a hairy chest arms and legs as well as a rather generous personal item that most men would be jealous of and she herself wouldn’t mind getting to know better.

There was a knock at the cabin door then a crew member enter carrying a tray with coffee and what appeared to be breakfast.

“Ah I see you are finally awake.” Said the crew member “We were beginning to wonder about you.”

“Yes, thank you and please thank your Captain for rescuing me last night.” Mika told the sailor in a rather deep voice that even started her.

“That wasn’t last night my hairy friend.” Said the fisherman. “You have been asleep for two days straight.”

“Two days?” Mika said surprised that she had slept that long. “I must see your Captain immediately!”

“And he wants to see you, but not until you have had something to eat and get dressed.” Replied the fisherman. “My name is Jody and I have my orders from the Captain. By the way the Captains name is Harry, Harry Jacoby. But we just call him Harry. Now, drink some coffee and eat the breakfast that Maria, our on board cook, has made for you and then I will take you to the Captain.”

“Alright Tim.” Mika replied. “Let me get dressed and eat then we go.” Mika replied as she threw the blanket on the bed and reached for the pants folded on the desk. She was very aware of the young fisherman stare on her naked body as she got dressed. Mika was flaunting her newly found manhood in front of the young man not realizing it was making the young man uncomfortable.

“Sorry” Mika said as she turned her back to him and pulled up the pair pants they had left her and then pulled on the shirt. She slipped on the boots, drank a big gulp of hot coffee and grabbed a piece of toast. “Okay, let’s go.” Mika said as she headed for the door.

Jody shrugged his shoulders and led the way down the hall out onto the main deck and up the ladder to the wheel house.

Mika tried to follow him step for step. She was having a little difficulty walking since she wasn’t used to having a little extra in her pants. “*How do men deal with this thing?*” She thought to herself as she had to stop and readjust her zipper at one point.

“I see the sea is much calmer today.” Mika said as they made their way to the Captain. Trying to take her mind off her pants bunching up on her.

“Yeah, the storm passed us by.” Jody replied. “It’s supposed to be clear all the way back into port.” Jody opened the door to the wheel house and stood aside to let Mika enter first.

“Well, I see you are alive after all.” Said Captain Jacoby. “We weren’t sure if you were going to wake up or not.” He said with a laugh. “My name is Harry Jacoby. Captain of this here fishing

boat. Glad to have you aboard.” He bellow with a hearty laugh and offering his hand in greeting to Mika.

Captain Jacoby was an older man of at least sixty. Head full of medium length bright gray hair. As well as a full beard and mustache all trimmed neatly. He was at least six foot two and about two hundred and fifty pounds easy. He was dressed in a black heavy turtle neck sweater with black woolen pants and knee high rubber boots.

‘Man the helm man!’ Captain Jacoby yelled back to another man standing nearby. “Come, follow me.” He gestured to Mika. “I’ll take him from here Tim go back to your duties.” Then he walked toward a door off of the wheel house. Mika followed him through the door to a much large cabin. There was a desk and a sitting area. All sort of maps and charts hung on the wall of the cabin. In the far corner was a large double bed with many drawers for storage underneath.

“This must be your cabin?” Mika said to Captain Jacoby as she closed the door behind her.

“Yes it is. Not that I spend much time in here.” He replied as he stood near a dark oak cabinet and opened a locked cabinet. To reveal a table top and a bar with various bottle of liquor and glasses. “Can I offer you a drink?” He asked Mika.

“Ah, No thank you. Little too early in the day for me.” Mika replied “but you go right ahead. Don’t let me stop you.”

“You won’t”. He laughed as he poured himself a small glass of bourbon. “Please, take a seat tell me about what happened.”

Mika took a seat on the worn brown leather sofa in the sitting area. The Captain took a seat in the matching chair next to it.

“So tell me about your boat and what happened? What about your crew?” The Captain asked.

“My boat was the White Lightning out of Port Chester, Pennsylvania. We were out fishing for a few days when that storm came upon us and lightning knocked out our radar. We hit a reef or something in the dark and it tore a big hole in our bow. We were sinking fast. I ordered the crew into the boats and I stayed with the ship trying to get a S.O.S. signal out for our rescue. I guess the signal got out but I never saw the crew again. Or another ship until you came along.” Mika told the Captain.

“That’s some story.” Captain Jacoby replied with a skeptical tone in his voice. He paused for a few minutes. “Now tell me the real story before I have some of the crew lock you up down below until we get back to Port.” He said as he quickly pulled a pistol from his waistband and pointed it right at Mika.

Mika saw the gun and sat up straight. Now alert and ready to act. “That is what happened!” Mika yelled back angrily. “When we get to port you look it up. My boat is registered out of Port

of Chester in Pennsylvania. Just check with the Port Authorities Man!" Mika yelled back in her newly gift deep voice.

"Well, maybe you are telling the truth and maybe you're not. In any case we will be watching you." Captain Jacoby said relaxing a little bit and putting the gun cautiously back in his waist band. "Can't be too careful these days. Not with all this talk of impending war with Europe and spies around these parts."

"Well, I'm telling you the truth. I have no reason to lie." Mika replied challenging the Captain. "If you'll get me a map I will even show you where we were so you can mark what we hit so you don't hit it as well."

The Captain paused and thought for a moment. "Alright then." He said as he got up and walked over to his desk and opened a drawer. He dug around as Mika could hear the shuffling of papers. The Captain then pulled out a rolled up map and brought it over to the table in front of Mika. He then unrolled the map. It was an old map of Lake Erie. Of course to Mika it was old, to Captain Jacoby it was probably new and up to date.

"Now show me where your boat when down?" Captain Jacoby told Mika. "Here is where we picked you up in the storm." The Captain said pointing to a spot on the map.

Mika looked around the area on the map and noticed on the map was missing a small reef that hadn't been identified until the year 1885 by a shipping vessel out of Maine on its way to Port Richmond. "Right here" Mika said. There is a reef about a mile long. As far as I would guess that goes from here to about here." Mika pointed to the starting and ending points of the reef on the Captain's map.

"Hmmm very well." Captain Jacoby replied marking the areas on his map then rolling it back up and placing back on his desk. "Well until we can get the reef and your boat verified you can be a working guest on my boat. Now what did you do on the White Lightning?"

"I was the Captain of my own boat." Mika replied. "I grew up on a fishing boat. I can do any of the jobs. I have done them all." Mika said, not really sure of what the Captain would have her do to earn her keep.

"Well, for starters. Tim tells me that all you had to eat in the past two days is one piece of toast. So how about you join me down in the galley for some much needed lunch and you can tell me about that strange life raft we picked you up in." Captain Jacoby said as he threw his arm around Mika and headed her in the direction of the door.

They made their way through the wheel house, down the ladder to the main deck then into the main section of the boat. There was a small tight hallway with a storage area for nets and crew gear on the right and a small entryway into the dining area and galley of the boat. The crew had already gathered and was already eating when they arrived.

Mika recognized the two men that had helped her out of her survival raft already eating and in deep discussion about her raft. One of them was even attempting to draw it out on a napkin to show the other men the strange raft shape.

Everyone stopped talking as soon as they saw her and Captain Jacoby enter the dining area. The Captain just looked at them for a moment. "What? Do I smell? Why do you stop talking as soon as I come in?" The Captain replied with a smile. "Keep eating and get back to work. We have nets to bring in. Now eat."

Captain Jacoby motioned for Mika to take a seat across from him at the table. "Maria here is the best cook on the open seas!" The captain said looking over at a short dark haired middle aged woman moving about in the galley. "Many men believe that it is bad luck to bring a woman on a boat. Not I. No men eat as well as we do either. Hey men?"

"Nobody can cook like Maria!" They all yelled out banging their spoons on their bowls as a smiling Maria looked up from the galley just smiling and shaking her head.

The men had finished eating and one by one they left to attend their duties. Maria had brought the Captain and her a hearty bowl of thick beef stew and some bread. Then Maria proceeded to clear the table of the dishes that the other crew members had left behind. She picked up the napkin that one of the men had tried drawing a picture of Mika's survival raft. She looked it for a few minutes then stuffed it in her pocket.

Mika was enjoying the hot stew and fresh bread when Tim entered the dining area and whispered in the Captains ear. Mika couldn't hear what he was saying, but he did notice the change in facial expression on the Captains face. "Very well. Thank you Tim now back to your duties."

"Something wrong Captain?" Mika asked as she filled her mouth with the tasty stew.

"Well, it seems that the White Lightning is not registered out of the Port of Chester in Pennsylvania after all. There was no S.O.S. call sent out that night that you claimed to have sent one. Would you like to explain that before I have you locked up down below deck?"

"Captain, all I can tell you is my fishing boat The White Lightning registered out of Port Chester Pennsylvania hit something in the dark and went down where I showed you on the map. You can believe me or not. That is on you." Mika replied steadfast. She had completed her tasks for this job and just needed a few minutes alone to get her escape.

"Well, until we can get you back to Port you will be locked up down below back in the crew quarters." Just then a couple of the crew arrived at the dining area to escort Mika back to the crew quarters. "Alright if that's how it needs to be." Mika replied picking up the small loaf of bread and opening it up with her bare hands and spooning some of the beef stew into the center to make a sandwich. "Alright, let's go then." Mika replied getting up from the table with

her sandwich in hand and making her way out the tight doorway to the main deck and back to the crew cabin she had slept in.

Once inside the cabin the crew locked the door behind her. Mika sat on the edge of the cot she had slept in and ate her sandwich. "*Maria sure does know her way around the kitchen.*" She said to herself as she enjoyed her sandwich.

Mika took the last bite of her tasty stew sandwich and looked around for something to wipe her hands on. There was nothing. She shrugged her shoulder and proceeded to wipe her hands on her pants. Then pulled off the sweater that she was wearing and located her charm necklace and pressed gently on the small purple charm.

Mika instantly found herself in the back seat of a taxi. Marco Benet was the name on the cab drivers license clipped on the sun visor.

"Here you are miss." The cabby said as he pulled over to the curb in front of her apartment building.

"Thank you. Keep the change." Mika replied as she paid the man and got out of the cab and made her way inside the building. She opened the door to the building and made her way to the elevators and pressed the button. A few moment later the elevator door opened and Mika, not thinking, immediately stepped in the elevator bumping right into the chest of her new neighbor.

"Oh I am sorry." Mika replied before looking up and seeing the handsome new neighbor.

"Didn't you just go upstairs?" He asked her. "Did you go . . . fishing?" He asked sniffing the air around her?"

Mika realized the fishing boat smell must have followed her. "Ah, no. Just tossing some fish in the trash that went bad. Sorry about the smell she said stepping aside so he could exit the elevator and she could step on. Mika watched him walk away towards the front door as the elevator doors slowly closed.

A few minutes later she was entering the door to her apartment. A bit embarrassed about the smell of the fishing boat that seemed to have lingered along with her return. She rolled her eyes even more embarrassed that she ran into the handsome new neighbor. She leaned into the door almost falling into her apartment.

Sissy was all too happy to greet her this time. "Sorry Sissy, no fish for you. Momma's needs a shower." Mika told her cat as she closed and locked her apartment door and made her way to the bathroom. Peeling smelly layers of cloths as she made her way through the living room to the bed room.

Not more than thirty minutes later she was smelling much better and dressed in a baggy t-shirt and sweatpants and sitting at her computer looking up anything she could find on life rafts and new reports of reefs or anything that would cause shipwrecks in the nearby Atlantic Ocean.

Mika always felt the need to know that the work she was doing was actually helping make the world a better and safer place and not just completing an assignment that only benefited a few or an individual.

After a bit of searching she found it. At the U.S. Patent office was a patent for the first covered survival raft. It was held by one Maria Beasley of Philadelphia Pennsylvania. It was posted in 1882.

Mika leaned back in her chair, while she petted sissy, confident that she had helped make the world a better place.

“Come on Sissy.” Mika said to her fluffy kitty in her lap. “Time for you to get some dinner.”
