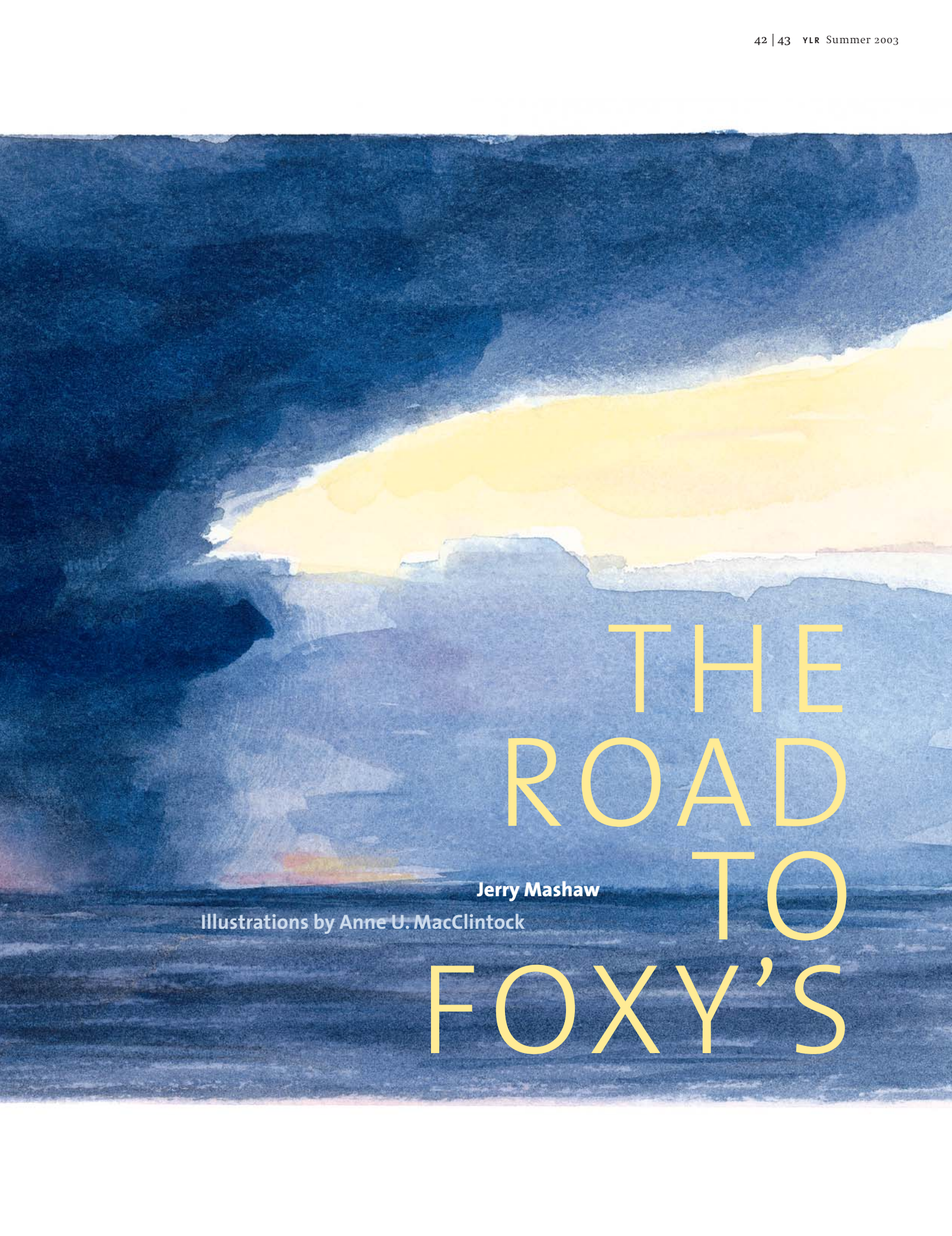


*The Road to Foxy's* is adapted from a forthcoming book, *Seasoned by Salt: A Voyage in Search of the Caribbean*, to be published by Sheridan House Books in fall 2003. The narrative is based on a cruise of ten months (September 1999 to July 2000), and about 8,000 sea miles, from Connecticut to Grenada, undertaken by Jerry Mashaw, Sterling Professor of Law, and his wife, Anne U. MacClintock. This intrepid pair took their boat, *Palaemon*, down via the Chesapeake, Bermuda, and the British Virgin Islands, and returned through the Windward and Leeward Islands, Puerto Rico, the Turks and Caicos, and the Bahamas. Although this excerpt is mostly sailing adventure, the book also includes reflections on the places and peoples Mashaw and MacClintock encountered, the history of the Caribbean, its relationship to Europe and North America—and even an occasional word about Yale Law School.

A watercolor illustration of a landscape. The sky is a deep, dark blue with some lighter blue and white washes. A bright yellow and orange horizon line separates the sky from the land. The land is depicted with various shades of blue and purple, suggesting a body of water or a misty plain. The overall style is soft and painterly.

# THE ROAD TO FOXY'S

Jerry Mashaw

Illustrations by Anne U. MacClintock



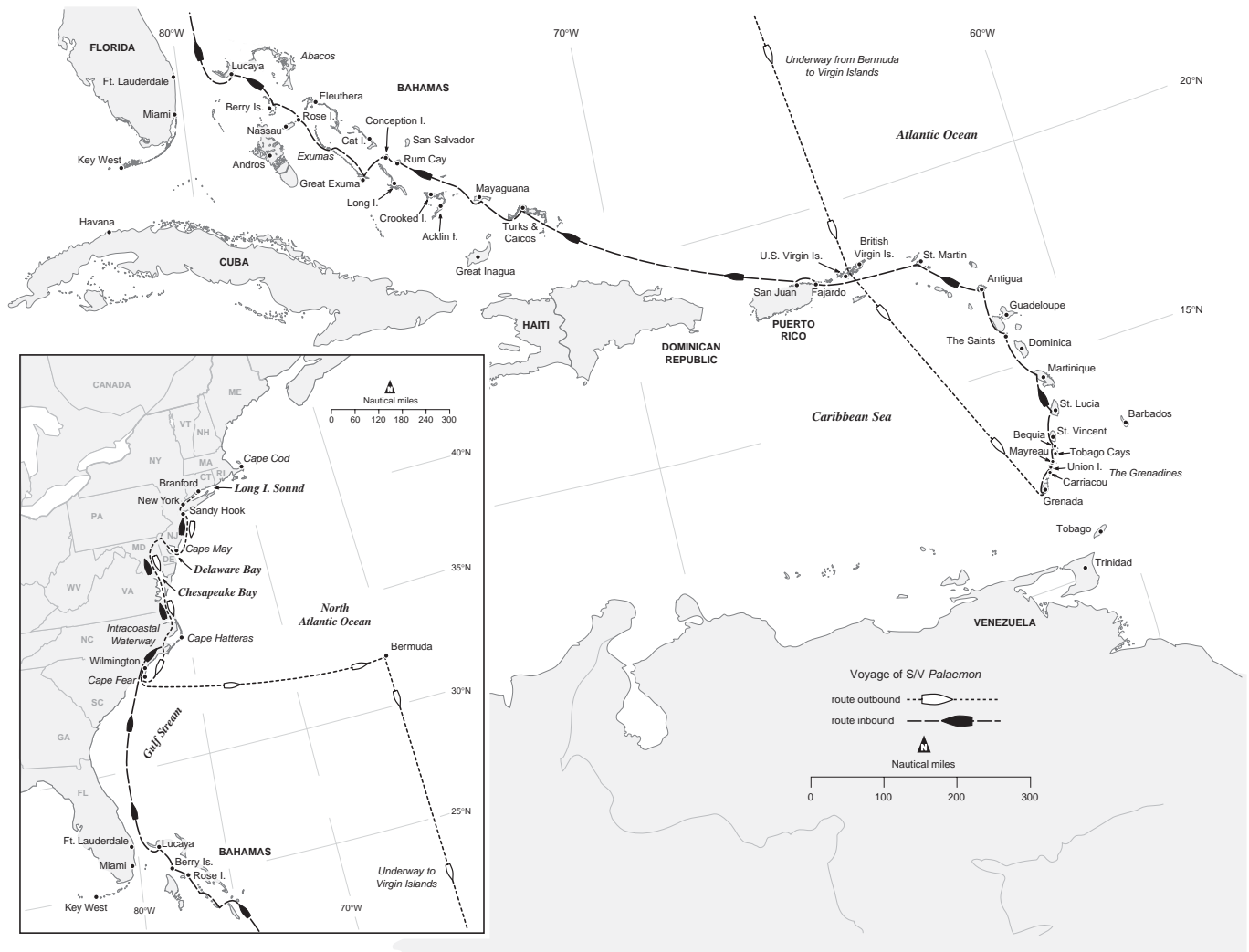
**Foxy and Tessa Callwood run the most famous beach bar in the world.** *Time* magazine listed Foxy's Tamarind Bar as one of the three places to be on New Year's Eve 1999. Times Square and Piccadilly Circus were the other two. This wouldn't be too peculiar if Foxy's were somewhere other than where it is—our current destination, Jost Van Dyke, British Virgin Islands, population 131. By various estimates, some of them surely Foxy's, there will be 5,000 to 10,000 people at Jost on New Year's Eve. Foxy is having a party. Actually two. One will be whatever is happening in and around Foxy's that several thousand drunken revelers can dream up. The other is upstairs in Foxy's almost finished new dining room. Dinner and champagne for only \$999 per couple. According to published reports reservations are essential. Last year Walter Cronkite and Peter Jennings tried to get in late. No deal.

We somehow neglected to make our reservation in time. Maybe it was the \$999. But we are headed for Jost just the same.

This trip is a 900-mile navigational no-brainer. We will point *Palaemon* south by southeast out of Bermuda. Although at 32°N latitude and 65°W longitude, we are now slightly east of our destination, the westerly currents pushing us southwest below 25° should be just enough to put us off Great Harbor, Jost Van Dyke, 18° 26'N, 64° 45'W. Old hands say the routine on arrival never varies. Clear in at the customs outpost put there just for that purpose (a customs and immigration office on an island with 131 people!?) and walk down to Foxy's for a rum punch. Kick back. Paradise found.

Somewhere along our track we will cross a divide between Anglo-European and Caribbean culture. A few of the posh restaurants in Bermuda still require jackets and ties after 6:00 p.m. At Foxy's trousers—well, shorts anyway—are customary. Apparently late in the evening they become optional.

The navigationally simple is, of course, not necessarily the operationally easy. Herb Hilgenberg, every cruiser's favorite weather forecaster, advised us to get out of Bermuda fast. A front forming southwest of Cuba is developing and moving



rapidly northeast. If we are not below  $25^{\circ}$  in 72 hours, we can expect gale force winds.

Pressed hard *Palaemon* will do 150 miles in 24 hours. If Herb is right, we can just outrun the front. We leave Bermuda in the leftover seas from an earlier storm—9 to 16 feet—and with 20 to 25 knots of wind. With any luck the wind will hold, the seas will drop and we will have a fast and uneventful trip.

For Anne, who must always fight seasickness, the first 24 hours are worse than usual. When we exit St. Georges harbor we go directly off the reef into the open Atlantic. There is no gradual build up to those 9- to 16-foot seas, no way to get our “sea legs” before the going gets rough.

The wind is well north of east, almost directly astern. *Palaemon* corkscrews through an arc of nearly  $60^{\circ}$ , pushed by waves first slightly to port, then slightly to starboard. Our stern wake looks like the weaving path of a blind-drunk sailor. “Uncomfortable” is a puny word to describe these conditions.

But we are flying. Under only a reefed jib, *Palaemon* is averaging 7 knots. I don’t think we have more than 50 square feet of sail up; *Palaemon*’s spinnaker spreads 1,100. The problem is to keep the speed low enough not to jump off the front of one wave into the back of the next. If we and *Palaemon* hold together, and the wind continues, we will make  $25^{\circ}$ N in less than 72 hours. If Herb’s forecast is right, we will be in the clear.

But two days out Herb changes his forecast.  $25^{\circ}$ N is not going to be good enough. The low is tracking further south than originally projected. It will intercept us at about  $25^{\circ}$ N and be with us until we reach nearly  $22^{\circ}$ N. The trough has squall lines embedded in it. Twenty-five knots of wind along the trough, 35 to 40 in the squalls.

While Anne has pretty much recovered, Otto the autopilot is complaining. The downwind roll has produced very heavy steering loads, and Otto is making strange, groaning noises. I open the hatch and feel his steering arm housing. It is much too hot. Something is causing friction in Otto’s gears.

## We can't do another night of hand steering in the dark. We can sail during daylight and heave to at night all the way to Jost if we have to. It is just going to be a damn slow trip.

He needs a rest.

As the winds pick up again we begin to hand steer—30 minutes on, 30 minutes off. A half hour is all we can manage in the increasing winds and seas. That has to be done sitting down. Standing up we can't keep our balance. To stave off exhaustion we still let Otto steer half time. He doesn't sound any happier. We are not getting any happier either. We are getting very tired.

The irony of this situation is that I took precautions in Bermuda precisely to avoid it. Realizing Otto's importance, and that I had no idea how he was put together, I called the Bermuda Autohelm distributor to ask what tended to fail in these units.

"The planetary gears," Steve replied.

"Do you have any?" I asked, not having a clue what "planetary gears" were or what they might have to do with the planets.

"Sure."

"Let's put them in and I'll save the old ones for spares."

"Fine."

And so Steve came down to the dock. He wanted to take Otto to his shop, but I demurred. There was a workbench next door that we could use. I wanted to watch him take Otto apart and change the gears. "This is really a good thing to do," Steve told me as we struggled with Otto at the workbench. "You can't do this at sea." Given that Steve and I were at the time employing four hands and a vise, he seemed to have a point beyond making me feel good about paying his fee.

Impossible or not I am increasingly convinced that I will have to try to undo Steve's repair. Hand steering is sapping our strength. I kept falling asleep last night in conditions so rough that I was sitting down and holding the wheel with both hands just to keep from being thrown around the cockpit.

Jim on *Moonlighting*, one of our hardy radio net, assures me that the new gears have to be the problem. He had the same difficulty with his unit. The new gears, for some reason, did not mesh properly. They ground each other up.

If Jim is right, that would account for both Otto's

groaning and his fever. But Otto is still working half time. What if I take him apart and break or lose something trying to replace the gears? This is not uninformed anxiety. It was tricky for Steve to get Otto back together when held by me and a vise on a stable workbench. And Steve does that sort of

thing for a living. I would have to operate on Otto alone on the saloon table, with no vise, in a boat rolling through 40° to 60°.

Even if the operation is a success, I may not be able to get the patient to go back to work. Otto is hard wired into the electrical system in the back of a sail locker. When in a position that I can see the wiring, lying

on my back in the locker, the wiring harness is so close to my nose it makes me cross-eyed. There is also the small problem that there is only room enough to raise one hand at a time to the level of the connections. And it is dark in there. Cutting Otto out given these happy working conditions will not be a big problem. Resplicing those six tiny wires in a bouncing boat with a flashlight in my teeth, sure as hell will.

The fourth night out is horrendous. A squall comes through every 45 minutes, bringing the promised 35-plus gusts. Steering in the dark, eyes glued to a wildly gyrating compass card, is hypnotic. I find myself falling asleep again, coming to as my head bounces off the wheel.

In the early dawn I heave *Palaemon* to so we can get some rest. After breakfast and a nap, we get underway again with a contingency plan. If both the cruddy weather and Otto's ill health continue until mid-afternoon, I will either put the old gears back into Otto and reinstall him or we will heave to for the night. We can't do another night of hand steering in the dark. We can sail during daylight and heave to at night all the way to Jost if we have to. It is just going to be a damn slow trip.

At 3:00 p.m. I haul a couple of hundred pounds of gear out of the locker and into the cockpit to get at Otto. I have the saloon table open below covered with newspaper, the tool box braced on the settee. I have collected several plastic left-over bins to hold parts. When I get Otto apart I will have about three dozen pieces to hold on to. If I lose any of them I doubt that I can improvise replacements.



I can barely bring myself to cut Otto's wires. With that done I am committed. Fix Otto or hand steer for five more days. As my law and economics colleagues would say, "The incentives are right for promoting optimum performance."

To an outside observer the next two and one-half hours would have been a riot—a sort of Abbott-and-Costello-do-brain-surgery-with-a-chainsaw spectacle. Parts slipping everywhere. Long periods in which I do nothing but try to cradle everything on the table in my arms so nothing will get away. It's as if I've finally gone over the edge and think that if I hug Otto long enough he will get well. A belly laugh in retrospect, a nightmare in the event.

When I emerge from the sail locker after splicing Otto back into his electrical relays, I am shaking with fatigue. I have cramps in one shoulder, both legs, and my jaw. I can barely pry the latter open enough to get the flashlight out. At that I may be better off than Anne. She has been hand

steering for three hours in increasing winds and heavy seas. Darkness has fallen while a project requiring an hour on the bench has gone on—and on. I see why Steve said it couldn't be done at sea.

We are both afraid to throw the autopilot switch. If nothing happens, I am not going to have a clue how I have screwed up either Otto's innards or his wiring. And I am sure as heck not going back in that locker tonight to give it another try.

I throw on the switch. "Bleep," says Otto. His control panel lights up and reads "Standby." The heading readout from his gyrocompass is eminently plausible. Electrically, Otto seems in the prime of good health.

Anne pushes the "auto" button. Otto starts to steer. He does not groan. Relief breaks over us like a warm wave. Tears do not quite stream down our cheeks, but it's a close thing. Tonight we can sleep three hours at a stretch while still making time toward Foxy's. Is this Paradise, or what? ▣

