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## Who Was She? – Conyer Creek

by Sue Hitchcock

Turned back from the Isle of Sheppey bridge, Margie was still not ready to go home. She was seething with anger about what seemed like the imprisonment her brother was insisting on. There was no point in going up to the A2 where the choice between east and west was exactly the same, so she decided to continue eastwards.

What had been a country lane was now no more than a path meandering up and down around creeks where dilapidated boats were moored, some tilted in the mud. It was getting dark and a few house lights glimmered distantly towards the main road up in the downs. Uncertainty began to fog Margie's brain and her footsteps became slower. Mud splashes were sticking her jeans to her legs and she could no longer see the way ahead. She crouched, then removed her backpack to sit on and hugged her knees.

The house lights were switched off and a darkness surrounded Margie, which she could never have thought to exist. Her whole life had been either by the fairground or at the very quietest behind the pub. Along with the darkness was an equally unfamiliar silence. It would be alright in the morning.

Sleep didn't come, but her senses became more acute. She could hear little sounds, waves slapping gently against the hull of a boat nearby, the wind blowing through the reeds, then suddenly the hoot of an owl, away up the hill. A strong gust of wind made some telegraph wires howl, the eerie sound used in films. Margie shivered, not from fear, which she had never learned, but from cold and she hugged her knees closer.

She opened her eyes as wide as she could to see if there was anything around and was amazed that the sea and the sky were inseparable, the same deepest black. Was she blind? Then she noticed a few stars through a break in the clouds and rested her brow on her knees and waited.

She must have slept, because a hand on her shoulder gave her a start.

“Oh, thank God! I thought you were dead!”

Brown eyes filled with consternation stared into Margie’s and she knew she was safe.

“Can you stand?”

Though young and strong Margie had almost frozen into a knot of arms and legs overnight. The woman lifted her under her arms until she straightened up.

“You’d better come home with me and warm up.”

Holding her hand and catching her when she slipped the woman led her further towards the creek. Finally there was a jetty, made of narrow slats of wood and alongside it a large, old wooden ship. Margie stumbled climbing over the side, but the helping hand was there for her and the ship did not rock, large and deeply settled on the mud. Home.