

# 'Those rum-runnin' MacKinnon's'

Treatment for a Novel

by David Goossen

An original story

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## ACT I

Present day. A mid-twenty year old couple are hiking thru the Nova Scotia wilderness. At the girl's prodding, they climb over a fence covered with aged private property signs and continue thru the forest.

They break thru some trees and find themselves on the faintest remnants of a road. Grinning, the girl heads off down the path. Turning a corner, they find themselves looking at a row of abandoned and rotting classic automobiles from the 1920's. A row of old cars on a road in the middle of nowhere. They look past the cars and in the distance they can see the faded ruins of a small deserted fishing village.

Time dissolves back and the village comes to life as the cars fade and disappear. The year is 1921.

The village consists of a large church; a few battered fishing buildings built around a tiny harbour and a couple dozen houses scattered about. The sun is going down and the fishing boats are returning from a long day at sea. A storm is brewing and the sky is darkening ominously.

Out on the ocean, JOHN is struggling in his boat, a fancy, fully decked out Boston Trawler. He's obviously not a fisherman and he's in trouble. The boat has stalled and isn't starting again. JEREMY, his best friend, is below deck, cursing at the motor. John is focused on getting stuff battened down. The sound of lightening bring his awareness back to the rocky shore coming up in the distance. And they're being pulled, inexorably, towards it.

EWAN is hauling in his final nets while watching the rest of the boats head in to harbour. Another clap of thunder causes him to turn to look. Off in the distance, just about out of vision, he sees a flash on the horizon. And again. Frowning, he looks at the coming storm, the shelter of the harbour and back to the repeating flash on the horizon. Sighing, he spins the wheel and heads towards the flash.

A woman is up on the widow's walk on the roof of the grandest house in the village, looking out at the brewing storm. Down at the docks, the fishermen have noticed that Ewan's boat isn't in yet, and concern is setting in.

Ewan arrives at John's boat. The storm is pushing them both towards the rocky shore. Ewan struggles to get a line attached to the trawler. In the process, Ewan breaks off all the fancy fishing kits on the stern. Ewan and John get into an argument, even though Ewan is trying to save John's boat and his life.

It's touch and go to see if Ewan's fishing boat is able to pull John's much larger trawler to safety as the storm hits. Only by tossing over his catch of the day to lighten his load is Ewan able to get them to clear of the rocks.

Back at town, a fisherman is about to head out to find Ewan, on the wishes of NICHOLAS MACKINNON – the town patriarch – when Ewan rounds the head and enters the bay, pulling John's fancy boat. John watches, in dismay, as they arrive at this absolutely tiny village. What a forgotten backwater of a place. Ewan turns to him as they arrive at the dock, "Welcome to Bay NoBay, Nova Scotia."

## ACT 2

John and Jeremy receive the wary hospitality of the townies while his boats engine is fixed. During an obligatory dinner at Nicholas' house, John meets LIV and her younger sister, EVE. As both Liv and Ewan seem very hostile to his presence, he focuses on charming Nicholas and his wife, MARY.

After an evening of drinking the town home brew hooch, John and Jeremy stumble off to their boat. It's really dark and one of the townies puts some hooch into a mug and lights it on fire to use as a lantern. Damn, that's some strong stuff.

John and Jeremy awaken in the morning to their boat being fueled up. John notices that the old guy filling their fuel tank takes the occasional sip of the fuel. When asked, he lets them know that what's going into the tank is what went into them last night – the town's home-brewed all-purpose fuel. John and Jeremy exchange glances, that can't be good for their system.

John is sent on his way by Nicholas. The town, except for Eve, are glad to see them gone. Ewan is wary of John and wishes

that he didn't bother to save them. The town goes back to normal and the men head out to sea to fish.

On their way back to Boston, John and Jeremy agree that they won't mention where they were, or what they did, because no one would believe it.

John is stuck in meeting with his DAD, a powerful mob leader and his right hand man, JOE. They are pretty pissed off at John for disappearing, again and has messed up his boat. Their business is not going good. In fact, they're in big trouble. More and more of their speakeasies are being busted. And that's affecting everything. John is expected to help out, this is family! Especially if he wants to continue getting his monthly allowance. It's a pretty obvious threat and John gets it.

In an obvious change from dinner in Bay NoBay, John and a beautiful woman, CATHERINE, are dining out in a fancy Boston restaurant. He's trying to explain, in between interruptions from waiters and assorted business men stopping by to say hello, that there are too many things up in the air to be setting any wedding dates; even if their parents both approve. Very politically, he's able to smooth her over. Dinner is going good until Jeremy slips in beside and tells him that there's a problem. John has to come with him. Now.

Jeremy apologizes for pulling him away from his fiancé while he drives John to see warehouse surrounded by Feds. Another one of their operations has been busted. As they watch, it suddenly bursts into flames. The feds scramble out and Jeremy drives away. Business is getting more and more complicated. John needs a break and wants Jeremy to cover for him, again. Against his better judgment, Jeremy agrees.

A few days later, John is noticeably calmer. His break was obviously good. John and Jeremy carry on a conversation while doing some work; delivering orders; checking on speakeasies; and end up sitting on the boat. John just wants to hide, to get away from everything. Sigh. As they sit there, a Police patrol goes by. After they pass, Jeremy pulls a bottle out from under some seaweed and they drink. And grimace, it's terrible hooch that stinks like fish but it's better than nothing.

The next day, John is told by his dad that he's now responsible for Joe's operations. Joe is at the meeting, and is furious with both of them. It's time for John to step up to the plate. He tries to get out of it, and is really slapped down.

Furious, John storms out after grudgingly agreeing. Not that he has any choice.

Jeremy is waiting for him, outside. John stomps around, trying to figure a way out of his predicament. If ever there was a time to get out of town, now was it. But he can't leave. John stops and stares at Jeremy. He's got an idea. A crazy, last chance idea. John hops into the car and tells Jeremy to drive. They've got a lot of things to do. Jeremy isn't very happy about trusting John but starts the car and they drive off.

### ACT 3

The townies are having a Ceilidh in the church. The pews have been pushed back and musicians are playing. All are having a great time with everyone drinking, singing and dancing. Liv is dancing with Ewan, out of politeness, as they're not a couple, and he's in seventh heaven.

Then John steps thru the front door. The band stops suddenly. Nicholas goes to find out why he's back. He's not welcome. John is very polite and tells Nicholas that he's got a proposal for the town. Against the shaking of Liv and Ewan's heads, Nicholas agrees to hear it. Tomorrow.

The dance continues. John has a really good dance with Mary, impressing her and the rest of the mothers. Then he makes his exit. Confident, knowing that he's setting up a good impression, John and Jeremy head back down to their boat to sleep. From the steps of the church, most of the townies warily watch them go.

The next morning, John and Jeremy walk thru the town carrying a big package. Into the church John goes as Jeremy waits outside. The rest of the town file in. It seems that everyone is involved in the meeting.

Inside, John starts by unveiling a present for the town. It's a large oil painting of the church. Surprise! And a very good start to the meeting. Jeremy relaxes outside, and Eve, bored, comes out to sit with him.

Later, John is putting forth his final arguments for his plan. In the crowd, Ewan and Liv and about a third of the townies aren't happy, and the rest are totally impassive. John shoulders on and talks about how good his plan is going to be for the town. Someone calls out, cynically, "And good for you, too." John grins, and agrees. There is some laughing. And

then, he's done. Nicholas asks him to wait outside while they make their decision.

John and Jeremy are pacing around the street. Jeremy is trying to be supportive of John, but he's not doubtful. John is trying to be calm, but he's having a tough time doing that. If this doesn't work, he's screwed. It's his last and only chance.

Inside the church, a heated argument is going on. Liv is being very vocal that they don't go along with the plan. That's it's a big mistake. Ewan is agreeing with her, for the obvious reasons. He loves her. And the debate goes back and forth.

Nicholas comes out of the church. John stops pacing and waits expectantly. The town has agreed to help John and produce large quantities of hooch for him to ship down to Boston for sale in his families speakeasies. John turns to Jeremy and gives him the thumbs up. Liv and Ewan didn't win.

The town kicks into gear, beginning John's plan, with Jeremy in charge of operations. The town stills are huge. More than big enough. It turns out that they don't really make that much, just enough for what they need and that's all. Cause, if they need more, they'll just make it. John and Jeremy shake their heads at all the missed opportunities.

The plan goes into action. The stills are pumping out hooch into barrels; the fishing boats get loaded up with the barrels; the barrels are covered with seaweed and fish and off they go. The barrels are unloaded at a fish packing plant in Boston, into fishing trucks and away. John has put together a really good system. Not big amounts but steady. John is quietly skimming money off the deal every time he pays the town for a shipment and keeping it for himself. Why not, he's taking all the risk..

While having dinner at Nicholas', Eve is asking John about Boston and what it's like. John is describing all the spectacular things there, the cars, the shops, the restaurants, the theatres. Eve starts asking to be taken. Nicholas and Mary won't let her go without a chaperone. John suggests Liv. Before Liv can say no, John offers that maybe Mary might like to come too. Mary lights up.

Boston. John is waiting outside a fancy department store. He looks thru the window and sees Eve and Mary piling things onto the counter. He puts out his cigarette and goes inside. Liv is horrified by the prices and wants them to put stuff back.

John convinces her that it's all ok, and that she should try shopping like her little sister. Liv is wary but Eve and Mary go to town. Smiling, John watches as Liv takes a second look at an evening dress.

And the townies continue to work their decent hours, with Jeremy in charge. They break and turn from hooch to cards. Jeremy joins in. Life is good.

Back in Boston, John has taken everyone out for a fine dining experience. The girls are all dressed up and are totally agog at the restaurant, the people, the food, everything.

They leave the restaurant and John has a cab waiting. The girls get in and John is helping Mary in last when Catherine comes up to him. What a surprise! He introduces Mary to her. Not the girls already in the cab. Mary enters the cab and John explains to Catherine that he's entertaining Mary for some business associates. He's got to take her to see a show. John gives her a kiss on the cheek and leaves. That was close!

John leans back and watches as the three girls take in their first musical theatre production. He can't help but smile at their wondrous amazement.

Returning from Boston in John's boat, with Eve and Mary sleeping below. Liv is bouncing around, thrilled and excitedly reliving all her amazing experiences in the big city. John is feeling the infectiousness of her excitement. He's starting to fall for her. And she for him. She gives him a big hug and kiss on the cheek in gratitude.

Time passes. Liv, Eve and Mary now walk around the town with their finery on, making the other women a bit jealous. There are now some class distinctions in Bay NoBay.

John is in Boston meeting with his father and Joe. As Catherine told her dad, Joe, about meeting John and Mary, John has to spin the story a bit more about who he was entertaining and why. But things are going good, business-wise, John's father is proud of him for keeping a supply going for more than a couple weeks, unlike Joe. Joe doesn't like the dig at all.

#### ACT 4

A Ceilidh celebration of how well things are going. And, as the townies party on, John arrives, back from Boston. Even

more celebrating as he's got money for the town and all the stuff that was ordered by the women. And the party becomes even bigger when the women return with all their finery on.

Liv and John are out for a stroll that takes them into the graveyard some distance from the village. As they walk around the graveyard, with the last names on all the tombstones being MacKinnon, Liv shares about how her son and husband died in a storm out at sea. This brings them closer. There is a call from the town. Something's going on. Curious, they head back.

They meet up with some kids at the edge of town. They're super excited and John starts to smile. There is a sudden honking that confuses Liv. Around the corner comes Jeremy, driving a car! He parks it on the edge of the road and they head down to the pier. A barge is moored there with five more automobiles! Liv looks, incredulously, at John. They're a gift for the town, from John.

John takes Liv for a car ride. They go one way out of town until turns into impassable forest. He turns the car around and they head the other direction, weaving thru the town and the other cars. It doesn't take them very long to run into rocks and the end of the road going the other direction. It seems that the road doesn't go anywhere and doesn't connect to anything. The cars were kind of a silly idea for the town. And Liv appreciates him for the wonderful gesture.

Everyone working happily on the stills with Jeremy. Barrel after barrel of hooch roll out and onto waiting trawlers. Ewan continues to bring in his fish every day only to find the rest of the town relaxing, having another good meal of food that John's brought from Boston. Life is good for them. Ewan doesn't like it all at all, grouching that the town is going soft.

John is working in the church with Nicholas to hang the painting he gave the town. And Nicholas is very happy with it, when it's done. And so is Liv.

The townies are strolling around in their newfound finery. The cars are racing up and down the street. There is an accident that turns into a big fight. Nicholas is able to calm down the fight. But only just. It's the first fight in the town in many, many years.

Liv and John are having a nice evening with Liv's parents. Nicholas is doing some sleight of hand tricks at the table. Liv

and her mom move into the kitchen and Nicholas and John go into the study. Once in there, Nicholas hands John a ring box. John reaches into his pocket. Nicholas has picked his pocket. He apologizes, old habits. John is trying to ask for Liv's hand when Nicholas stops him and asks for some more time. It's a big issue and there is a lot of stuff to think about in the town. John agrees and hides the ring as Liv returns to the room.

Jeremy has skipped out on his overseeing to meet with Eve out on a private, romantic point. In the meantime, Liv's uncle hasn't checked to see that all is secure with the stills because he doesn't want to get his new clothes dirty. He's also resenting that he's got to do such a messy job while the rest of the town have to do nothing. Grabbing a bottle of hooch, he heads into another room to relax, spilling some hooch as he goes. Sure enough, a fire starts.

Only when the fire bursts thru the top of the building do the rest of the townies notice. But they don't have anything to deal with big fires! John pulls himself away from Liv and races down to his boat while the rest of the town, fine dress and all, start a bucket brigade. Everyone thinks that John is leaving the town when he starts up his boat. But he pulls the boat closer to the first and gets his pump to start spraying ocean water up onto the burning buildings. Jeremy and Eve come running back to town and join in the bucket brigade.

They struggle to get the fire under control. Jeremy realizes that Liv's uncle is missing. Feeling the guilt of being away from his post, Jeremy rushes into the building and comes out with the unconscious body of the uncle. The fire is finally under control, thank goodness, because the still, if it exploded, would have destroyed the entire town.

They rush Liv's uncle onto John's boat and John and Liv take off for Halifax. Ewan is upset that Liv went with John. He starts talking about how John saved the still buildings with his pump before getting to the less important building where Liv's uncle was.

In the Halifax Hospital, Liv is being comforted by John as the doctors work to try and save her uncle. But in the end, they aren't able to save him.

When they somberly return to Bay NoBay with the body, Jeremy takes John aside and reminds him that he's supposed to be in Boston for a big event the next day. John acknowledges and



returns to comforting Liv on the death of her uncle. Jeremy watches them go off.

The funeral. John obviously hasn't gone back to Boston. In fact, he's one of the pallbearers for the casket. Nicholas gets up gives the eulogy. It's a very intense event, and ends in the graveyard as Liv's uncle's body is buried in the hard soil.

## ACT 5

The wake for Liv's uncle is in progress. The grieving turns to drinking and a proper wake when the makeshift band start to play, Jeremy included. Some people are thanking John for his attempt to help and others, who have listened to Ewan, are shunning John and Liv.

Into the middle of the wake, Joe arrives. He comes thru the door and finds John with Liv. That's bad, since Joe's the father of John's fiancé, Catherine. Joe is livid because John skipped out on the massive party that he was supposed to host for Catherine's birthday. Liv is shocked to find out that John's engaged. More for the town to be angry with. With a gun in his hand, Joe informs the town of the new deal that he's making with them.

The next morning, the harbour is full of two huge barges loaded with empty barrels. Joe explains the new deal to the town. They are going to fill all them and then they're going to make their one final run back to Boston. He is a businessman and will pay the town exactly what John was paying. \$100 a barrel. There is shocked outrage as Nicholas turns to John, he was paying them only \$65 a barrel. Joe laughs, who isn't John screwing? Joe says he'll continue to pay \$65. And he's got the cash with him.

John tries to explain to Liv about the money but she won't listen to him. Everyone in the town, men and women, are now doing 24-7 shifts making hooch at the end of a gun. John tries to talk to Nicholas but he won't listen either. Even Jeremy isn't talking to him.

Slowly, the barges are filling up. John is given a serious anonymous beating one night as he's making his way back to his boat. Barrels come off the barges, get filled and return to the barges.

While the townies and Jeremy continue to work under the watchful eye of Joe's thugs, Ewan sneaks out into the night in his boat. The thugs don't notice, but Jeremy does and doesn't say anything.

And the loading of the barges continues while the rest of the townies continue to make and barrel their hooch. Jeremy is overseeing the loading of the barrels and is being very careful about which barrels go on which barge. He doesn't want the barges to tip over. Then they'd have to start again.

Joe is drinking with Nicholas and John. Tomorrow, he'll be on his way. More sleight of hand tricks from Nicholas. Joe is pretty impressed. Meanwhile, down on Joe's boat, one of his thugs brings out some identical suitcases, only they're filled with blank stacks of paper with a single bill on top. But it looks impressive. He puts the real cash suitcases down in the cabin of the boat.

Ewan returns from his mystery trip and goes back to work. Jeremy is stopped by a couple of the goons. They want some of the hooch, it's cold outside. Jeremy flinches then opens up the barrel that's going by. He gives them a couple cups of hooch and then continues.

The sun is starting to rise. The boats are all full. And behind both of the boats are barges full of barrels. Over top of the barrels is a load of seaweed.

Joe is itching to get going. He comes off his boat and hands the suitcases full of money to Nicholas. Nicholas declines to open them. He trusts Joe. Joe smiles, he planned on that.

John says goodbye to Liv, even though she's still angry with him. He tells her that he will be back to see her and explain everything, soon. He gives her a note. Jeremy tells John that he's decided to stay behind. He doesn't want anything to do with the shipment. He's also got his arm around Liv's sister.

The boats head out. Liv opens the note. Ewan is beside her. It's a note to a bank in Halifax with the rest of the money that everyone thought he stole from the townies. He didn't steal from them, he put it away for safe keeping! The account's even in her name! With this new-found knowledge, they helplessly watch as the barges head off.

## ACT 6

The two barges move thru heavy seas. The day passes and darkness falls. It's time to enter Boston. Following Joe, John brings his boat into a darkened pier. On the pier, are a whole lot of thugs and a whole lot of milk trucks.

Immediately, they start moving the seaweed and start pulling the barrels off. John yells at one of them to put out his cigarette or everyone will be blown up.

Out of nowhere come the feds. Boats and paddy wagons. Joe and John are trapped on their boats. The feds round everyone up and smash open a couple of the barrels that came off Joe's barge. A quick check confirms that they're full of hooch. Joe is caught red-handed. Then they discover the suitcases. They're full of Fenian literature and bomb parts. The feds freak out - he's an Irish revolutionary! - and drag Joe away, forever.

John realizes that the townies screwed Joe over, which means that the townies tipped off the feds! He sits down, sure that he's as good as locked up forever, too. The feds come down onto his barge and yank up a barrel. They knock it open and taste. Saltwater! They try another one. Saltwater! John just leans back and laughs. They screwed Joe and him over but saved him.

Weeks later, John and his father walk out of the Boston courtroom, John is free. As they walk down the courtyard steps, John's father tells him that he's too hot to continue in the family business. Does he have any idea what he'd like to do? John smiles. They get into a waiting limousine. Inside is John's fiancé. He leans past her and opens the door on her side. Realizing what that means, she sighs and gets out. He shuts the door and the car starts off.

John's trawler pulls into Bay NoBay. He moors his boat and walks up into the town. Silence. Everyone and everything is gone. The town is completely deserted. He walks up to the church and notices that the painting he gave the town is gone. But there is an envelope tacked on the wall in its place. It's from Liv. John reads it to himself and smiles.

Grabbing a case out of the boat, he walks up the road. At the end of the road are the cars he gave them, all neatly parked in a row. He stops and sets up an easel. He starts painting the scene. That's what he's chosen to do now. Paint.

As he focuses on his painting, Liv walks out in the distance behind him, smiling. They're going to be together from now on. Time dissolves to present as the cars age and rot. The young couple get freaked out by the ghost town and head back out. As they leave, there is a sign, "Private Property, MacKinnon Distilleries International, Australia/Scotland/South Africa".

**The End**

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