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# The Great White Whale

BY DYLAN ROBINSON

**T**HE GREAT WHITE WHALE, a restaurant, became a staple of fine Maine dining in 1989, known nationally and revered locally for its blue-ribbon-winning clam chowder. Summer visitors and envious celebrity chefs flocked by the thousands to get a taste of that signature chowder. Unlike much of the food world at the time, head chef Dwayne Miller made his chowder from all natural ingredients: butter, milk, flour, vegetables, and, of

course, the clams.

Ever after, Dwayne and his family found success in their quiet, small-town business niche. From his provincial perch, he downplayed his success and soupçon of fame from doing what he loved. Having been taught to cook at an early age by his mother, he'd inherited her knack and listened intently to her whispers of the hard-earned family secrets of the culinary craft. She passed away when Dwayne was only 27.

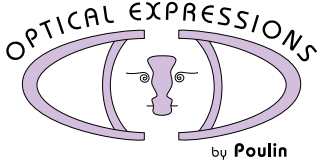
From there, he worked tirelessly to make his mother's dream of running a restaurant a reality. He honored her memory as his North Star by further venerating her clam chowder recipe, the same exact one that put The Great White Whale on the map. The chowder was more than just an incredibly satisfying meal, it was a symbol of Dwayne's dedication to his family name.

The glory days of the late Eighties and early Nineties dissipated as the once fruit-





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ful small-town nook turned its attention from the local economy. Corporations infiltrated the small towns like a sea of fleas. People no longer went to mom-and-pop country markets and local department stores to get their goods; now it was WalMart and Best Buy. As the industrial invasion took grip of his small town, Dwayne and his family suffered.

While fast food chains like McDonald's and KFC became prominent, business for The Great White Whale began to submerge. Dwayne tried everything, including a change in business model that saw the restaurant transform from fine dining to a chat-n-chew style more convenient for customers and easier on Dwayne's checkbook, but it was all for nothing. Business continued to plummet, dropping fathoms deeper to a few dedicated regular customers. Dwayne ran his body and his funds to the very bottom, hemorrhaging money—nearly filing for bankruptcy—just to keep his dream alive.


Things were even worse in his personal life. Dwayne's physical and mental health began to deteriorate from working through years and years of stress. He divorced his high school sweetheart Charlotte, the mother of his two sons, Mark and Ahab. Mark moved away from home immediately after graduating from college to start up a prophylactic delivery service in Canada. Ahab stayed home in hopes he might help his father with his business.

That brings us to today, Dwayne's 55th birthday.

Dwayne stands alone in the kitchen of The Great White Whale, working on a fresh batch of chowder for himself after closing up after a deadly New Year's Day. His son, Ahab, walks into the kitchen from the dining area with a certain look on his face. Not happiness, but satisfaction.

"Well, Dad, that's another season in the books."

Dwayne picked up a ladle and sipped some chowder. "This is my last season, Ahab. I'm handing the reins over to you now. You know cooking and business—I only know cooking. Where this industry is heading, you're better suited here than I am." Dwayne threw the keys to Ahab. "You got this." ■



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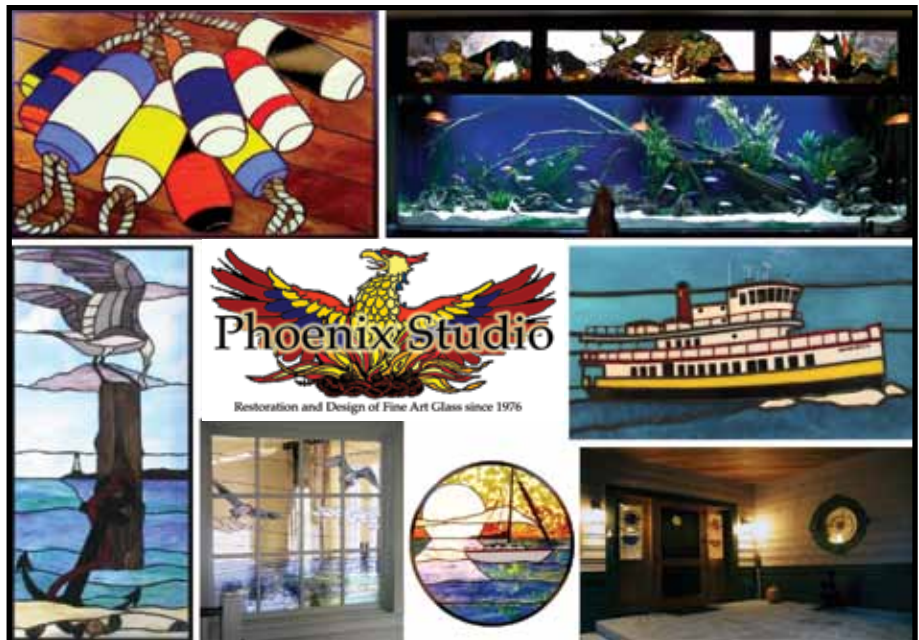
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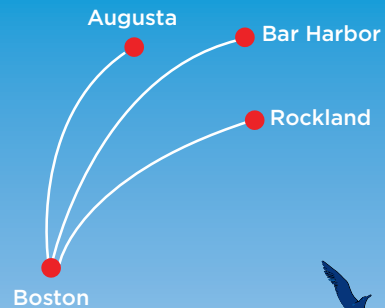
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