

Rob Cruise

Hello, my name is Rob Cruise. Not related to Tom in any way, but I never thought my name would be so meaningful, at least not in this unpleasant way. Follow along, and you will see what I mean.

I have never thought the “Publisher's Clearing House” contest was the real deal until one day I won. My life had been going along in a somewhat boring manner, but I didn't expect it to take this turn. I won \$100K and a bonus trip to a luxury island for a week. So I boarded this exclusive Lear Jet along with several other “lucky” contestant winners and headed for an island somewhere near Fiji. It wasn't part of Fiji, but in the general vicinity. I didn't care. So far, this looked like the vacation of a lifetime. There was no second class on this flight. We were all served Champagne and foie gras along with our Filet Mignon. This tasty goose liver is a controversial food due to the force feeding of geese that enlarges the liver by X10 times. I wasn't about to complain, and besides, it was too late to save the goose who gave up its liver.

I looked around the cabin to check out my fellow travelers. There were some who were clearly a couple and not all were male and female. There was one particularly interesting woman who appeared to be alone. Maybe my love life was going to take a turn for the better. I am not a bad looking guy, but I am not considered a prime catch, due to my meager financial status. On this trip, who knows my real status. I can just play it cool and see what happens.

After lunch many of us took a nap. The alcohol and food left me in a melancholy mood and it was easy to doze off. Not sure how much time had passed when the plane started to bounce and shake. The fasten seat belt sign came on and the captain announced we were experiencing some turbulent weather. This seemed like an understatement as the plane bucked and vibrated violently. As I looked out the side window I saw a crack appear in the fuselage. Next I saw one of the engines break off. I am not one to panic but I thought this can't be good. The plane started a downward spiral and the next words from the cockpit were prepare for impact.

You may laugh at me for this belief. I had always thought that if I was ever

in a plane crash that at the last moment I would jump up as high as I could and lessen the effect of the impact. This is what I did. Not sure if this is what saved me or not, but I came to in the rough seas grasping onto a wooden crate. I looked around and did not see any part of the plane or any other survivors. I did see an island not too far away on the horizon. I had no means of paddling or controlling the direction of my drift, but it looked like I was heading toward it. It took at least an hour before I could hear the waves crashing on the rocks and beach. It would be bad luck, (as if my luck was anything but bad so far), if I got killed and drowned after getting this far. I successfully navigated through the surf and rocks and crawled up on the beach. I was so exhausted that I just fell asleep right there. I was awakened sometime later, not sure how long, by something biting me on the leg. I looked down and saw a crab taking me for free food. I was quick enough to turn the tables and I grabbed it by its legs. It will now be my dinner. Before I can do that I have to survey the area.

The short rest I got revived me somewhat. Looking up and down the beach, I could not see any signs of civilization. There was a high cliff or hill adjacent



to the beach that would give me a far view of the island if I could manage to climb up. Fortunately, when I fell asleep on the plane, I was dressed in casual clothes. A long sleeve shirt, khakis, and some boat shoes. At least I would not injure my feet or get too burnt from the tropical sun. It took me an

hour of hard climbing but eventually I reached the summit. From that peak I could see miles up and down the beach and a little inlet. I spotted what looked like a small stream draining down to the ocean. No sign of anything else in sight. It was still afternoon and I needed to explore the island as much as I could before dark. I had watched enough survival documentaries and shows to know that water was the #1 thing needed. That stream looked promising so I headed that way after getting down from the cliff. Even if I found fresh water, it did not mean it was safe to drink. Debris and animal waste always found its way into even the cleanest water. The bacteria could make you sick and even kill you. So I needed to find a way to make a fire to boil the water. As I walked along the coast line I spotted some wreckage from the plane. I never saw any other survivors but I did find some suitcases that were not waterlogged. After opening the third one I found what I was looking for. Apparently the owner was a cigar smoker and had several butane lighters inside. This took care of my first worry. I could probably start a fire with some dry drift wood, but this would make my task easier. Also, the crab I trapped back at my landing sight was awaiting my BBQ.

One of the Samsonite suitcases had a heavy metal hinge at its halfway point. I thought I could use this in some way. I took a heavy rock and smashed the suitcase sufficiently that I ripped the hinge away from the casing. I found a flat rock, and after ½ hour of scraping and honing, I had what looked like a machete. I took some coarse fiber off of one of the palm trees and wrapped it around one end to make a grip. I decided to make a shelter close to the stream using palm fronds and bamboo shoots. Even though this was a tropical island, a rain storm could soak me to the bone and make me susceptible to hypothermia. For the first time since I got marooned I felt a ray of hope. At least I won't perish in the first few days from lack of food and water.

I dragged some flat rocks up away from the beach sand and made a raised platform off of the dirt. I placed enough palm fronds on top to make kind of a cushion. I knew that sleeping on the beach sand was a no no. You would wake up the next morning with a thousand bites from sand flees and no way to relieve the itch.

I walked back to my arrival area and brought my crab back to my makeshift abode. I found some coconuts laying around the palm trees and using my machete like tool I cracked some in half. Besides drinking the milk and eating some of the coconut meat, the two halves would make nice drinking bowls. I made a fire and placed one of the coconut bowls high enough over some rock supports so as not to catch on fire, but OK to boil the water from the nearby stream.

So I dined on roasted crab, milk, and water. Not as elegant as my last meal, but considering how I woke up in the rough ocean earlier, I was doing alright.

I retired to my shelter but was awakened near sun rise by dripping water on my face. My shelter kept me mostly dry but was not totally waterproof. I will have to do better in the future. It was time to do more exploring. The crab and coconut meal from last night was OK, but eating is a full time job. I need to see what other resources for protein exists here. The coastline went on for miles without any obstructions. No high cliffs blocking the sandy beach. As I walked along, I was surprised to see lots of trash that was washed up on the beach. You would think that if this island was deserted, the it would be pristine. Not true. The ocean currents carry stuff from all over the world. I am sure you have heard of “message in a bottle” arriving somewhere that was launched thousands of miles away. Besides being environmental disappointed, this could work in my favor. As I walked along I picked up stuff that I thought might be useful. A plastic bottle, a piece of rope, a metal pot that could be used for cooking. Small sections of a fishing net. Some nylon twine. I started to see the beginnings of a fishing pole. As I made my way back to my shelter area I wanted to look some more inside the suitcases that had washed up on shore. I found one that had belonged to a woman. Inside was a small jewelry box that contained some earrings. The earring hooks would work as a fishhook. Now I wanted to venture further inland. I followed the stream for several miles up a valley. I came upon a beautiful waterfall that cascaded into a crystal clear pool. This looked like a great place to take a bath and wash off the salt that had dried on my skin. One thing I forgot to do was to make some kind of hat. My face was getting redder but the cool water helped. After washing and cooling off I set about making some kind of head covering. There were plenty of palm fronds

around. I sat down in the shade and weaved a fare facsimile of a sombrero. With that being accomplished I wanted to see what kind of wild life existed on this island. I hoped it would not be jaguars, alligators, or wild bore. The bore might make for a tasty bacon breakfast, but they are ferocious, have strong sharp tusks, and weigh more than me. I wasn't too worried about finding food. With my earlier finds, I felt I could at least catch some fish to sustain me.



I still had my suedo machete with me, but I was thinking this weapon is too short and too close to my person to be safe. What I really needed is some kind of spear. I will have to do more searching to find some pointy object to tie onto a long pole. It might even come in handy as a spear to catch fish. While I was at the waterfall, I decided to branch out a little away from the pond. Maybe I will get a clue to what else is available for food. Once again, it was me who almost became the food. I liked my new hat. It did the job of keeping my face and head out of the sunlight. I was following what looked to me as a kind of animal trail. Along the sides of the path were stagnant water that had a kind of swampy smell. It was from one of these that I almost met my demise. A Kokomo dragon lizard of fairly large size lunged out of the swamp water and almost took off my leg. I did a hasty retreat and it backed away into the water. At least one of my fears was realized. Still, this

was not totally bad. I have eaten alligator meat but not lizards. Maybe it tastes like chicken. This was big enough for me to skin and make a nice vest out of. This just reinforced my belief that I needed a spear like weapon.



Kokomo dragons can reach to the length of 10 feet and have razor sharp teeth. Their venom is poisonous and can kill a human easily.

Is this island really deserted, or is there a Hilton Resort on the other side? I need to do some more exploring tomorrow.

It is ironic that my name is Rob Cruise. I should change it to Robinson Crusoe.

Rob Cruise *(Chapter 2)*

After surviving the encounter with the Kokomo Dragon monitor lizard, I returned to the beach. I started to scavenge along the beach looking for something to make a spear with. I had already checked out all the washed up luggage and did not find anything suitable. Back to looking through the trash. I did find something unexpected, but it was not part of the trash. I found what I would describe as an Indian arrow head. It was perfectly shaped out of some obsidian glass. This led me to believe this island had

been inhabited by some indigenous tribes at some point. Non-the-less, this was what I was had been looking for. Returning to my habitat, I chose a long thin bamboo pole and using the coarse tree fiber, I secured the arrowhead to the poles tip. Hunger had returned. Now I realized why the American Indians and other tribes spent all their waking hours hunting. My first idea was to find some shallow pools to see if I could spear some fish. At first, this looked promising, but even though I spotted lots of fish, they were too fast and darted away from me. Maybe I needed to go into deeper water and swim among them. You might think trying to see underwater in the ocean was difficult. Not true. Sure it would have been better to have a swim mask, but you could still see OK, although your view was a little blurry. The salt water did not sting your eyes either. I had experienced this years ago when my brother and I visited Catalina Island. We were 14 to 15 years old and we rented a row boat and ventured out into the harbor waters. We could see clearly enough to dive down in the 15 feet deep waters.

So now I was just wearing my underwear since I didn't have a bathing suit. I managed to swim past the surf and luckily the ocean was relatively calm. The coral reef was close to shore and there were lots of fish around. Many tried to avoid me, but several seemed to ignore me. I got close enough to stab one with my new spear. It looked like a 4 pounder. Of course, blood immediately started seeping out of its sides. As I started to return to shallower water, I spotted a dorsal fin approaching me at a fast rate. It didn't take me long to know that a shark had smelled the blood. Sharks can smell even a tiny bit of blood from a distance up to a couple football fields. So it is not surprising that many spear fishermen are wary of sharks. I could not tell if this was a great white, but I could tell that it was big and coming my way. My fish prize was still stuck to the tip of my spear. I started to swim back toward the shoreline. I was hoping that I could reach shallow water before the shark closed the distance. It looked like I was not going to make it. I aimed my spear right in the direction of its approach and when it went for my "bait", I stabbed it right in the nose. It quickly turned around and retreated back toward deeper water. I was thinking I should try rigging my fishing pole and catch fish from the safety of the rocks.



This is a picture of a tiger shark. You can see the hole I stuck my spear tip in to make him go away.

Hunger makes you do some stupid things. I should have just pulled my spear out of my catch and let the shark take it. Non-the-less, I will dine on roasted fish filet tonight. I identified my prize as a coral trout. This is what it looked like.



2

I had been thinking of the Tom Hanks movie. "Cast Away". At least he had Wilson to talk to. I can see how this could eventually led to suicide. As the days drag on, you feel lonely and lose hope of ever returning to society. It is too early for me to be thinking of that. I still have some habitat improvements to accomplish. I still haven't reinforced my leaky frond roof. So I set about doing that. I was also thinking of how to preserve some of my catch. The fish I speared was too large for me to eat in one meal. Without

refrigeration, it would not look too appetizing the next day. What if I made salted dried fish? Not sure if this would work or not, but it was worth a try. Where to get salt? Don't be stupid, the big body of water in front of you has plenty. So I collected some sea water in my half coconut shell and placed it in the hot sun. When it dries out, there should be salt left in the bottom. I know many chefs use sea salt instead of ionized salt. Is there some process necessary to use sea salt? I will find out in a couple of days.

I wanted to return to my waterfall swimming pool. But I wanted to venture further up the stream. I am still looking for other sources of protein and perhaps some fruit. There was a narrow path along the side of the stream that I guessed was used by animals that came to drink. Another thing I wanted to find out was how large was this island. If I keep following the stream, I expect it will lead me to the water's source. The island was not flat, which I had determined on the first day I landed. I kept climbing and the elevation was getting higher and higher. I could finally see the peak of a mountain. There was a valley leading up toward the peak. When I reached the top, there was a fair size lake that was surrounded by the mountain rim. This was the source of the stream. It rained almost every day in the tropics so the lake was always full. Maybe there are some fresh water fish in here. Next time I will have to bring my fishing poll. I walked around the rim of the lake boundary so I could peer down the other side. It looked like the lake was kind of in the middle of the island, although the island stretched for many miles to the right and left. In fact, I could not see either end of the island. What I could see though caught me off guard. Several miles to the right and left, I could see smoke from a fire. Is this fire caused by mother nature, or is there some other explanation? Now I had a purpose besides hunting for food. It was getting late, so I needed to return to the beach before it got too dark. As I was retracing my steps back toward the waterfall, I spotted some movement in the brush. It turned out to be a family of wild pigs. This was just the kind of protein I was hoping to find. They were too fast for me to catch. I had tied my makeshift machete onto a belt I had weaved out of palm leaf strips and I also held my arrowhead spear. In order to become a better hunter, I was thinking I needed to fabricate some kind of bow and arrow. It was a good idea to have another weapon before I investigated the source of the fires. This would take up some of my free time. I have lots of free time.

On my last scavenger trip, I picked up some twine. I was hoping this would be strong enough for a bow string. The most difficult part of making my bow and arrows is finding suitable sticks. They have to be long enough, strong enough, and straight enough. It took a while, but eventually I gathered enough material to start the fabrication. I didn't have any more arrowheads for the arrow points, so I had to be satisfied with just sharpening the tips.



Above is what my bow looked like.

My arrows were similar to these shown below, but without feathers or tips. Without feathers, the arrows were difficult to keep straight after firing. I



couldn't think of any way to attach feathers. I could find plenty of feathers. Lots of sea gull feathers left around from interbreed fighting.

Still, this was better than nothing. I image I could shoot one of those wild pigs. They were a large enough target.



Can anyone say “bacon”!

I spent some time practicing shooting my new weapon. It was no good at long range, but if I was within 15 yards, I could hit a target almost every time.

I wasn't in the mood to go traipsing off looking for the source of the fires just yet. It was too late anyway. I wanted another try at those pigs and to use my fishing pole rig. Tomorrow I will go back to the lake.

Rob Cruise *(Chapter 3)*

It is a new day. I feasted on my coral trout last night and I took the left over half and generously salted it with my dried sea salt. I hung it in the sun, hoping the salt would prevent it from rotting. Fish jerky? We shall see. Back in the states I have know others who have soaked various meats in salt brine and spice, then hung them outside for 2 – 3 days. They survived eating that and did not get sick.

So now I am heading back to the lake. I have all three of my weapons with me plus my fishing pole. I packed away some of the trout to use as bait. I found a nice spot in the shade on the lake shore and threw my line out. I am

an avid fisherman and I know it is called fishing and not catching. There is a humorous saying that I have seen on tee shirts.

Fishing is like sex. When it is good, it is really good. When it is bad, it's still pretty good.

I dozed off under the shade and was awakened by my fishing pole jumping up and down. There was no reel so I just had to pull the line back using the angle of the pole. I could see that I had hooked a medium size bass. As I was about to pull it in something grabbed it before I could land it. It was a small size alligator. I should have been more aware of dangers. No more naps under the shade tree. The mama alligator could have got me while I was napping. It was still early, so I decided to return to camp. I was short of my dinner now. On the way back I encountered those pigs again. One was drinking water from the pond. I took aim and hit it square in the side. My arrow just bounced off and the pig ran away. Oh! You thought this was going to be easy. It looks like I need to find something better for the tips of my arrows or find an animal with softer hide. Oh well I was loaded down with all my weapons and fishing pole. I probably would have had trouble trying to carry a pig carcass.

Back at camp it was time to go scavenging again in the trash. If you think I made this up about the trash. Look at these real pictures of uninhabited tropical island's trash.





It took me awhile but I found some tin cans that I could slice up and form into long triangles. I also cut small grooves into the wooden arrows so that I could slide some palm blades in to simulate feathers. This worked better than I expected. The slits tapered down so that in flight the palm blades would be pressed into the wood by the air flow. The arrow flight was much straighter and the aluminum can tips provided more penetrating power. It was time to bring home the bacon. I left my fishing pole and spear at camp. I also brought along some rope to haul a pig back if I was lucky enough to get one.

Back at the waterfall pond I hid behind a shaded tree. I will just wait for some animal to come and drink the water. If wasn't long before the pig family returned. While they were busy drinking, I stood up, took aim, and I was rewarded with a direct hit. This time my arrow penetrated all the way through. My hours of practice payed off. I shot the smallest one I saw. No need to waste meat. I might add salted pork to my fish jerky.

As I dragged my pig back toward my camp, I took a zig zag route back. I would leave my pig and venture off several yards on the right or left. I suspected these island might have some tropical fruit somewhere. I was not wrong.



Besides these sweet tangy fruits, I also spotted some mountain red apples.



I gathered as many as I could carry. I returned to my camp with dinner and desert.

I had been using my coconut shells bowls, but I also picked up many sea shells. One in particular gave me another idea. The nautilus shell I picked up would make a great wine decanter.



I picked up many other shells to use as cups and scoops. I smashed some of the fruits I had gathered and stuffed them inside the nautilus shell. I added some fresh water. I am hopping after some time this fruit will ferment and produce some kind of alcohol. I am starting to think that I am eating and living better than I was back in civilization.

Tonight I feasted on roasted pig and fruit salad.

So it was time to investigate those fires. Which way to go first? Heads to the right, tails to the left. I have no coin, so I just chose right. Tomorrow I will head out early. No telling what I will find and I want to be able to return before getting trapped in the middle of the jungle.

It rained again last night, but this time my roof held out. The morning had sunny skies. No reason to put it off any longer. Here I go.

I had skinned that hog and made a water bladder out of its hide. This will at least allow me to carry some fresh water.

I carried all three of my weapons along with several arrows in my homemade quiver. What I would give for my AR-15 back home.

My guess for the distance to the first fires was about 5 miles. I stayed along the shore line for as long as I could. When I thought I was adjacent to the area I saw, I headed straight into the jungle. It was slow going. I knew the island was long but not too wide. As I approached the center, I started seeing some trails that were too large to be animal tracks. This could only mean one thing. There are humans on this island. I cautiously followed one of the trails. It led to a center where I could see some huts spread out in a semi-circle. I kept hidden so I could observe what was going on. One disturbing thing I saw was a pile of bones that looked human. I suspect this tribe practiced cannibalism. Eventually the tribesmen returned to the center area apparently from a hunting trip. I observed normal routine in what looked like preparation for the evenings dinner. One particularly strong looking warrior came out of a hut with a white woman in tow. He tied her to a post near the fire pit. This was not looking good. It looked like she was going to end up as the main course. I kept hidden waiting for the opportune time to rescue. The tribe gathered around the fire pit and began cooking and drinking. It looked like they had already mastered the art of alcohol brewing. This may work in my favor. I needed a diversion. If I showed myself too soon, I wouldn't stand a chance. There were too many. I snuck around to the opposite side and gathered a bunch of dry twigs and brush. I made a pyre big enough to grab attention when lit. I always carried my lighter with me. I lit the fire and quickly retraced my steps back to the opposite side. The fire grew quickly and it wasn't too long before it was noticed by all the tribesmen.

Most of them left the circle and advanced on the burning pile. There was only one left watching the girl, but his eyes were also on the activity in the other direction. I quickly ran over and using my machete cut the girls bonds and motioned for her to follow me. She did not hesitate. We made it almost back to my hiding place when the guard turned and noticed she was gone. I reached into my quiver and nocked an arrow. The warrior advanced on me and I fired. I missed his midsection, but pierced his side. He fell down in agony but was not killed. It was enough for us to run. You would be surprised how fast you can run when you are running for your life. When we reached the beach I headed in the opposite direction of my camp for at least 50 yards and then made footprints toward the jungle. I showed the girl how to backtrack in the same footprints and then we ran into the surf to hide

our foot prints. We hurried back toward my camp. I believed this trick would buy us some time. The posse would think we ran in the opposite direction and made it to the relative safety of the jungle. They would waste hours searching in the wrong place.

I didn't stop until I was back at my camp. I turned to the girl and asked her in English who she was. She looked back at me uncomprehendingly. She looked European so I asked her in French, who are you? I had taken 6 months of French in college but was not fluent. She responded in a litany of French phrases. Now it was me who did not comprehend. I took a shot in the dark. Habla Espanol? She answered Se. Bingo, we have communications. I was fairly fluent in Spanish, and like most Europeans, she spoke multiple languages.

So I was able to find out her story:

Her and her husband had been shipwrecked 5 years ago. They had encountered the tribe on the other side of the island. Both tribes were mortal enemies, but mostly stayed in their own territory on the island. Occasionally, they raided each other's camp. The tribe that found her were not cannibals. In fact, they welcomed her and her husband into their fold. A week ago the cannibal tribe had raided their camp and her husband had been killed trying to protect her. She had been captured and that was where I stepped in. One more night and it would have been too late.

Her name was Sylvie (pronounced Silvee). She was indeed French. I told her my name and how I had come to be on what I had thought was a deserted island.

I told her that it probably wasn't safe to remain here at my camp, but it should be OK for one night. I made a second raised sleeping platform. I had cured some of the bacon from my pig slaughter and I made her dinner with that and some of the fruit I had gathered yesterday. Fresh water was a welcomed drink along with some coconut milk. We sat apart around my fire as the sun set. This would have been a romantic setting in other circumstances. As the fire died down, she came over to me and put her arms around me. I recognized this for what it was. Not an invitation for intimacy but some

needed human caring from the last week's ordeal. This was further proven as she started to shake and cry. I had no comforting words so I just held her until she calmed down. We were both drained from the stress of the day. It didn't take long before we both fell asleep on our respective resting places.

Tomorrow we will visit her former tribesmen.

Rob Cruise

(Chapter 4)

We didn't hesitate. The next morning we left my camp early. Besides my weapons, I only brought my nautilus shell. There may still be hope for my fermenting fruit. As it turned out this was unnecessary. I should have realized that the natives were way ahead of me. Witnessed by the other tribes drinking. Sylvie knew the way, so I just followed her. When we reached the other camp there were lots of excited voices. I did not understand their language, but Sylvie of course had learned their dialect. She quickly got to the essence of our story across. She must have given me high praise because the tribesmen and women came up to me smiling and gave me pats on the arm and back. I guess single-handedly rescuing her and my clever use of a diversion put me in high status with the tribe.

I asked her to warn them of retaliation. I am sure the tribesman who failed to guard her and got himself shot was humiliated and would be looking for revenge. She assured me that the tribe was well prepared for defense, especially after that last raid.

As the excitement of Sylvie's return died down I had the chance to observe the native life first hand. Their huts were primitive but well insulated from rain and sun. Hunting was indeed the #1 pastime, but evenings were social and pleasant. Sylvie told me that since I saved her that she belonged to me. This was a native custom. I told her to not worry about me. I knew she had just lost her husband and endured a week of terror. It would be OK for me to build my own hut and live in that. She explained that it would be an insult to not accept their hospitality. I asked isn't there some tribesmen that you would rather hook up with? She explained that these natives do not believe in

interbreeding of the races. So the tribe set us up in one of the unused huts. I was glad that it was not the same one she had shared with her husband. This was going to be awkward enough without that. Excepting that we settled into a fake relationship and pretended to be a couple.

We spent almost all of our time together except when I joined the other tribesmen on hunting trips. Their technique was highly advanced. They set traps and nets in various places, then beat the bushes to herd whatever animals were in the vicinity into their pits and traps. This was much more efficient than trying to shoot or spear the individual scurrying beasts. I also improved my hunting skills. I replaced my aluminum arrow tips with real arrowheads and my palm blades with real feathers. The natives had made some kind of glue from tree sap to secure the feathers. So my shooting skills improved three-fold. The bow and arrows were mostly used to shoot birds. Of course the ocean was still their major source of food. The natives had weaved nets out of the tree fibers and always brought a big haul back to the camp.

As time went on it was more and more difficult to pretend to be a couple. Like I said, we spent most of our time together and we were getting closer. It was inevitable that we would hook up. Man needs woman, woman needs man. Besides, due to their tribal customs, there was no other choice for us. It was kind of funny how the men and women reacted differently to us. The men just assumed that we were together the first night. The women noticed the change in our moods, and you could see by the smiles on their faces. They were happy for our change of status. I certainly did not complain. It had been a while since I had a steady girlfriend let alone a wife. I think enough time had gone by for Sylvie, not forget about her former husband, but at least for her sorrow to diminish.

I would have liked to tell you that we lived happily ever after, but life is not like that. The good times always are broken up by bad times. It is the contrasts that keep us interested.

The first event, not entirely unexpected, was that Sylvie got pregnant. I never thought that I would be a father, but it was happening. There were no

emergency hospitals around, but since natural birth occurred since time immortal, I expected the tribal nursemaids knew what they were doing. Eight months later, Sylvie gave birth to a healthy baby boy.

We were in a quandary on what to name him. Should we use a tribal name or an English name. We settled on Ethan. The name means strong, enduring, and defensive. I thought this was a good choice. If somehow we get back to civilization, he would not be ridiculed for having a native name.

So now my responsibilities doubles. I have two to protect, including myself of course. It was interesting to suddenly go from abandoned and marooned to living in paradise with a family. The whole tribal family celebrated the birth with a roasted boar, lots of fruit, and steamed fish. My nautilus shell came in particularly handy to hold the abundant alcohol flowing.

Life proceeded along nicely. One day, as Sylvie, Ethan, and I were walking along the shoreline, we came upon a shipwrecked sailboat. Ethan was already 4 years old by this time. Actually, it was not totally shipwrecked. It had been caught in the tide and got trapped by an over abundance of seaweed. It was mostly in tact. The main mast had been broken off, but the front mast was still there. I swam out to it and boarded. There was no evidence of the former shipmates. I am guessing, they had been caught in a hurricane and the boat had flipped. That would explain the main mast having been broken off. I surmised that the occupants must have been thrown into the sea. The jib was still wrapped around the front mast. I unfurled it and was given some maneuverability. I wasn't ready to set sail yet, so I was able to aim for the sandy beach and grounded the hull without doing any more damage. I tossed out the front anchor and secured it into the sand. This would keep it from being pulled back into the sea by the tide. Now I could check out the cabin contents. I found canned goods, a knife, some useless electronic equipment and two items, that were what I considered, game changers. I found a pistol and a rifle in the side compartments along with a bunch of ammo. I imagine none of the natives on this island had ever seen guns. This could not have come at a better time. The cannibal tribe had been getting bolder and bolder with their offensive movements. I also learned that their numbers were substantially greater than my friends. It had been talked

about at our evening gatherings. An assault was imminent. Defensive measures had been put in place, but if overrun, there would be no stopping them. It was time to repay my tribal family for all of their hospitality.

When I got back to the camp, I called a tribal meeting. Anyone can do this if it was vital enough. During the past 6 years, I had learned enough of their language to be coherent. I explained as best I could, the importance of my find on the sailboat. Words were good, but a demonstration was better. I set some coconut shells on a log 20 feet from me. I set a log standing upright 50 yards away. I pulled my pistol and shot the coconuts off of the log. Then I took aim at the log. One bullet hit and split the log in two. At first the tribesmen were scared of the loud bang. Sylvie assured them that this was normal and these weapons could turn the tide against the aggressive cannibals. There was a strategic hill in the most vulnerable approach to the village camp. I suggested that I should encamp myself there as a lookout. I could repel any large scale attack by shooting from a distance. The rifle was a semi-automatic. I had two clips, each holding 25 rounds. I had showed Sylvie how to reload them. My pistol also had a couple of clips.

The day we were all dreading finally arrived. I spotted a hoard of cannibal tribesmen approaching from the jungle. They must have thought the village men were out hunting and it would be an easy raid. They were in for a big surprise. Several of the raiders fell into pits that the village men had dug. I took aim and started picking off the lead assailants. I could tell that my shots had caused major confusion among them. A couple of them angled off and ran toward me. I had run through my first clip and was inserting the second, but it was too late. I pulled the pistol from my waist and disposed of those two easily. Now I concentrated on shooting the other advancing men. My village men also got into the fray. Between my sharpshooting and their defense, we soon dispelled the assault. We had killed enough of the raiders so that the numbers between the two tribes was more even. It would be unlikely that they would try this again. When the survivors return to their camp, I am sure they will tell the rest of their tribe that my village was possessed by some kind of white demon god protecting them.

That night the festivities were at an all time high. I was heralded as the

savior of the tribe. I really didn't deserve that title, but what the heck, enjoy it while I can.

Before our plan of defense. I had informed the village of the find I had come across on the shore. I had talked with Sylvie about the possibility of returning to civilization. I said that Ethan should have the chance to experience a life besides this primitive one. She agreed, but was worried about the danger of sailing. I told her, that if we could install a new main mast, that this boat would withstand almost any weather, except a hurricane. I thought it was worth the try. I asked the villagers for help. We cut down a palm tree that was the right diameter for a mast. It took several weeks to whittle it down to the proper size and straightness. It also took some time to remove the old mast. Using the island's glue, we secured the new mast into the hole left by the other one. I was lucky to find a spare mainsail in the stow away compartments. Now it was time to test the seaworthiness of the boat. I had taken sailing lessons in my youth, but nothing as big as this sailboat. I spent the next several weeks testing the boat and my nautical skills. We had no electronic gadgets to give us weather reports or navigational direction. I did find some nautical maps on board that will help. I knew that we had been flying in the direction of Fiji when the plane went down. I estimated that the plane had been in the air about 14 hours when we encountered the storm. So I guessed the island was somewhere in the vicinity of Fiji. The nearest continent to our location was Australia. It was due west. I figured that it was such a large target that I couldn't miss it. The total nautical miles was slightly under 3000 mi. The trade winds flow from southeast toward northwest around Fiji. This would favor our sailing trip. If we didn't encounter any hazardous weather, it would take from 12 to 14 days to make the trip. This was within a reasonable time frame. We could easily store enough food and water to last at least a month without even catching fish. If we encountered rain, that would replenish our fresh water supply.

I asked Sylvie if she wanted to take the chance. It wasn't just my life at stake, it was all three of us. She said she would have been content to spend the rest of her life with me on the island but that Ethan deserved the chance to see the real world. So it was set. We were going to chance the trip.

Australia, here we come!

Rob Cruise
(Chapter 5)

The cruise to Australia was uneventful. I should have at least a couple weeks of no drama. There will be plenty of drama during our time in Sydney.

Upon arrival three things happened.

#1, the sailboat was ours. The registered owner had been declared lost at sea and had no heirs. So I was the new legal registered owner due to the Law of the Sea for abandoned boats.

#2 I still had the \$100K from my Publisher's Clearing House winnings. I also sued them for having to spend 6 years of my life on a remote island, almost eaten by cannibals. Sylvie backed me up on this and the court case was almost uncontested. I was awarded \$500K. With this money, I repaired the sailboat. I installed a new real mast and fixed up any damage caused by the storm. So now I was the owner of a sailboat valued at around \$300K. We put it in a marina and it was large enough for the three of us to live on. This also saved us lots of money not having to rent an apartment.

Example of my boat



We enrolled Ethan in school. We had schooled him as much as we could living in the village. He spoke both English and French. He was a little behind on mathematics and geography, but was a bright kid and picked up quickly. At first, he was shy and intimidated by the different races he saw. After a while, this was not an issue as he made friends easily. In the beginning, he got bullied by some bigger kids. We had taught him self-defense skills and it was usually the bully who ended up on the worse side of a fight. When they discovered he was not a pushover, they left him alone.

We flew to France and met with Sylvie's parents. They were thrilled to find that their daughter was still alive. They both fawned over Ethan. They were sorry to hear about Sylvie's husband's death. They welcomed me as her knew husband. My parents had died even before my plane crash trip so there was no need to return to the U.S. The next year passed by quickly.

Our life was fairly comfortable. After awhile though, the three of us started to miss the island. It is funny that this would happen. Here we were safe, had money, food within steps of the fridge, Internet, news, and movies. Everything anyone could dream of. Maybe that was the problem. Life was too easy. Except for the occasional danger of being eaten, the island life was paradise. Having to hunt for dinner, brave the elements, build your own shelter. These things gave you purpose. I also missed the villagers. I held a family meeting to discuss these feelings. I was surprised when Sylvie and Ethan voiced the same opinion. They had kept this to themselves thinking that this was the only life I wanted.

The boat was in tip top shape. I had hired help to go over it with a fine tooth comb. Of course I had scrapped all the useless electronics and installed state of the art instruments. Our only problem now was that we did not know the coordinates of our island.

The boat would handle any weather condition except a hurricane. With the navigation equipment onboard, we would be able to avoid anything near that kind of storm. On our trip to Sydney, we had averaged 10 knots and sailed in a westward direction. Attempting to get back to the island would take twice as long because we would be tacking into the wind. Fully loaded we can stay

out on the ocean for months at a time. I was hoping it wouldn't take that long. I had circled an area on our charts where I thought the island should be. We arrived in that area and just sailed back and forth each day marking off where we had searched. We found several other similar islands, but they were uninhabited. It took us a month and a half, but we found it. Our return to the village was greeted with much enthusiasm. I had also brought back all kinds of different foods that the villagers had never eaten. Sylvie brought gifts for the woman. Ethan was swarmed by the other children wanting to know what life was like outside of their realm.

Now that we had found our island, I marked the coordinates down in my ships log. We now had the means to sail anywhere in the world and return without trouble.

Besides getting back to my version of paradise, I had an ulterior motive. I wanted to accomplish two things. First, I wanted to clean up all the trash. Secondly, I wanted to make peace with the cannibals. The first task would be easy. I enlisted the help of our tribesmen. They also didn't like how the trash made their island look. It took several months, but our half of the island was pristine again. We didn't venture to the other side, at least not yet. For the second part, it would take some careful planning. I had to show the cannibals that it was in their best interest to give up their eating and warring habits. To do that, I had to get the villagers to help. I had purchased a dozen more rifles and pistols. My plan was to train the tribesmen and to visit the cannibals in a show of force. I didn't want to start a war with them though. I described my plan to our village chief. He agreed that this was a good approach. We needed to send an envoy to the chief of the cannibals. No one better than our own chief. I am sure the natives did not know what a white flag was. The chief said, no problem. There is some honor among the tribes. If we approached with some kind of gift, we wouldn't be attacked immediately.

After several weeks of training, I had selected 6 tribesmen to be in our envoy along with the chief. We would be armed with rifles and pistols. We captured a nice fat pig and tied it on poles to be carried. It was still alive.

We cautiously approached the other village. We were stopped by their

lookouts, but the chief, true to his belief, let them know that he wanted to talk to their chief and that they were baring gifts.

We were led to the village circle where I had first spotted them and where Sylvie had been imprisoned. Our chief introduced me as the white demon that had repelled their last attack. I needed to give them a demonstration of our force. I instructed the tribesmen to release the pig. As it started to run back into the jungle I shot it with one of my rifles. The other tribesmen backed away in horror. Our chief said don't worry, we will not use our lightening sticks on any of you. I ordered our tribesman to retrieve the pig and carry it to the central rock table, indicating that this was a gift of food. Our chief told them that the tribes had been fighting for centuries and it was time to live in peace. He said that his people would share in the bounty that using the lightening sticks brought. If the cannibals objected, then we would use our lightening sticks to eliminate their entire tribe. This was a deal the other chief could not refuse. I had also brought several boxes of trinkets and some antique looking knives as gifts. Once the ice had been broken, the cannibal tribe was more excited about this cheap costume jewelry and my collection of strange knives than receiving a pig to roast.





I told them that in receiving these gifts, there was some strings attached. I wanted them to clean up all the trash on their side of the island. They showed no objection to this condition, although I am not sure they knew why I insisted on this. I didn't tell them about my revulsion to the clutter. I think this reminded me of what some of the homeless camps looked like back in the states.

So our peace offering was a success. Even so, we backed away without turning our backs. It would take some time before we knew for sure if the truce would hold up.

Back in our own hut, I felt a peace that I had not felt in a long time. I could see that Ethan was more at home with these primitive kids than any of the so-called civilized ones. Sylvie was also happy. We did not have to live our entire lives isolated from the world. We still had our sailboat to take us anywhere we wanted. For now, this is where we wanted.

The End