

PROLOGUE (The Final Voyage)

I've decided on this theme for my next story. Not sure where it will take me as I haven't thought it out yet. It is based on some fantasy with some reality mixed in. For a good part of my life, I have dreamed of owning a sailboat. I used to spend time at work looking at listings of sailboats for sale and also marinas where I could keep one. My favorite sailboat was always the Catalina 32. I have attached a picture of one and also the La Paz marina.



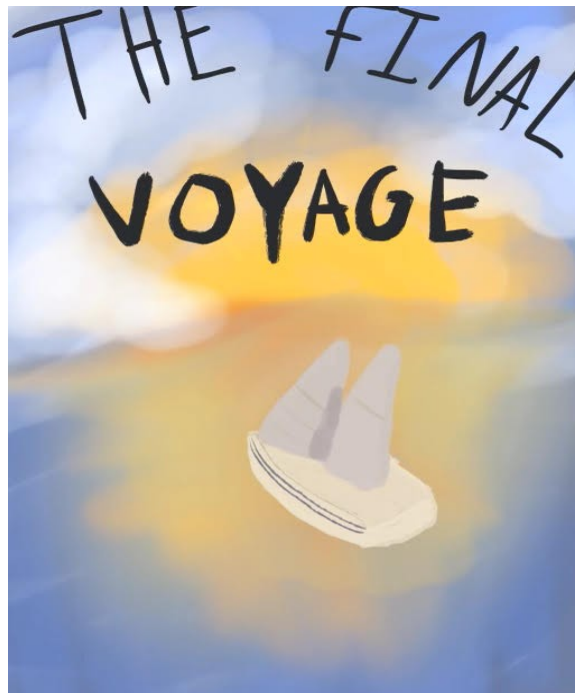
La Paz was my favorite marina located in the Sea of Cortes on the eastern side of Baja California, Mexico. A quaint fishing village. It would only have cost me \$400 per month to keep my boat there. The marina provided WiFi, electrical hookups, and showers. When I got divorced, I had the chance to buy my boat. I checked out Newport and Balboa harbors for boat slips. Nothing was ever available. Just to tie up a boat to a buoy in the middle of the harbor cost \$1500 per month. Then I would have had to row a skiff from my boat to land each morning, then drive to work. Even though the boat is

equipped with toilets and showers, I couldn't dump in the harbor. I would have to go out to sea each week for that. So I never got the chance. Instead of buying a boat, I got re-married. So that chance evaporated.

My brother and I took a class on sailing the channel islands. Santa Barbara, San Clemente, San Miguel, San Nicolas, Santa Rosa, Santa Cruz, Anacapa, and of course, everyone knows about Santa Catalina. Most of those islands are uninhabited. We never followed through with that plan either.

So this story will be about the dream I never realized.

Here is a book cover my granddaughter made for me.



So on with the story.

THE FINAL VOYAGE
(Chapter 1)

I finally got my 32 ft Catalina sailboat. I named my boat Lina. Not very clever, but simple. Names that I rejected:

Sea Senior, The Cod Father, Aquaholic

She is a really impressive yacht. I am at the twilight of my life and want to have one last adventure before I check out. I don't have any terminal disease, but I would be lucky to have 5 good years left. I don't want to end it without fulfilling my life long dream of sailing to exotic places. Feeling the wind and sun on my face and the fresh air of the open ocean. Catching my dinner each day and BBQing on my deck in the evening. Sipping a glass of wine as the sun sets below the horizon.

I tried to entice some companions to go with me on this adventure. I advertised online: **“Energetic handsome man seeks companion for sailing adventure”**. My efforts did not go well. Several woman showed up for an interview. When they saw me, they all refused to commit. One in particular was very rude. She said, you are not that handsome. I told her, I am afraid to see what is under that 2” think layer of makeup on your face. She said you are also too fat. I told her that I would probably lose 30 lbs. on this trip, but she would still be ugly when we returned. At my age, being nice was a luxury.

I am alone now, except for Wego. She is a dog I rescued from the pound. I named her Wego so that when I call her, I can say “Here WE GO”. Ha! She is a small terrier mix. Not sure what the mix is, but she is cute and friendly and already well trained. I was afraid that I would go crazy if I had to just talk to myself. Wego likes to hear my voice. I have attached a picture of her.



In one of my dreams, my wife died from gunshot, but this time she really died of natural causes. I did cry for her, even in my dream, but did not want to water down the situation with lots of tears. (See, I really am compassionate)

I still have children that will miss me, but they have their own lives to live and this is a better way to end up than in some nursing home at life's end.

I should really have another person to accompany me on this adventure, but this sailboat is easy to manage alone. All the sails are automatic rise and fall. I have a 12 hp diesel engine that can run for days on end if the wind dies down. The captain's cockpit has a big steering wheel and also an auto pilot. I always tie on a safety line, even if the weather is calm. I also tie a harness with another safety line for Wego. About the only time I take them off, is when I am anchored near shore and we go swimming in calm waters. Yes, Wego swims too. That is our way to shower when necessary. Now I just set the course and let the GPS guide the boat. I have no illusions about the safety of this trip. The ocean is a treacherous place with quickly changing weather patterns and rough sea conditions. This boat is big enough to handle about everything except a hurricane. It is funny how in the Western hemisphere, those storms are called hurricanes, but in the Eastern hemisphere, they are called typhoons. Who came up with that?

So I had a great Bon Voyage party to see me off. Just my family attended since most of my friends are gone. I wait until early next morning to take off. I tell them that I will keep in touch as I have a satellite phone that works anywhere in the world.

As I motor out of Newport harbor, I feel that I am leaving the world behind. I also feel that I might never return.

Sailing alone on the open ocean is a scary ordeal. I am about 50 miles off shore. Why that far? I have to stay out of the shipping lanes or I might crash into a big cargo ship. My boat is so small, they would never see me and I have to sleep sometimes. It would have been nice to have a companion so that we could alternate sleep cycles and watch for danger.

As night time approaches, the wind picks up and there is a big following sea. What that means is there are very large waves moving up behind me. As it gets dark, it looks like a water wall the size of a house coming toward me. The waves are traveling faster than my boat. This causes the front of my boat to start surfing down the face of the wave. If this keeps up, the bow (front) of my boat will dip below the water line and I could capsize. The solution to this is to throw out a sea anchor or drogue. This is essentially a parachute looking material that is perhaps perforated for control as it catches the water and is dragged behind causing a boat to slow down. It is tied to the stern (back) with a rope. Then all the boat does is rise and fall with the wave. No longer in danger.

I am heading south along the California coast and eventually will be in Mexican waters. My destination is La Paz Mexico. It takes several days of sailing to go that far.

The next several days go by without incident, but as night approaches a storm is forecast. I get continuous weather reports from my onboard radio. The wind picks up and the sea become extremely rough. Lightning starts to hit all around me. I take down the sails, put out the sea anchor and Wego and I retreat to the safety of the watertight cabin. I turn off all the electronics to protect from the lightening. The boat is rocking and rolling vigorously. This storm makes me wonder if I really want to continue this adventure. Since I did begin this, I might as well see it through. It is unlikely that it will tip over as there is a heavy weighted keel running along the bottom. Only a rogue wave or hurricane would flip it. If the boat does not return upright we would be screwed. Also, the flip could crack or break off the main mast. No mast, no sails.

We just sleep at the bottom of the boat as it pitches back and forth in the rough seas. The next morning we wake up to sunny skies.

I go up on deck to rig the sails. As I start to return to the cabin, I step on the cabin cover. My leg falls all the way through the canvas liner. I forgot to close the fiberglass cover. If I had broken my leg, it would have been

difficult for me to continue.

I finally arrive in La Paz without anymore mishaps. After securing Lina, I pay the harbor master for several days stay. I need to go into town and buy more supplies. I would like to spend at least a week or so sailing in the Sea of Cortez (Commonly called the Gulf of California), but not venturing too far from the marina.

When I return to the boat, there is a young boy about 10 years old on the dock next to my boat. ***Hey mister, do you need some help?*** What kind of help can you provide? ***I can watch your boat while you are shopping and I can feed and walk your dog for you.*** I suspect this kid is no novice at hustling, but it is better to have him on my side than worry about him stealing my stuff. So I say OK, how much for your services? ***How about \$10 a day?*** I know this is over payment, so I say, how about \$5 a day and if you work out I can increase it. This is probably more money than he gets in a month. ***OK, its a deal. My name is Juan.*** I tell him you can call me old man if you like. ***OK, Viejo it is.*** I say that works for me.

I asked him why he is not in school. He said he used to go to school. His mother was a school teacher and that is why he speaks good English. His father was a fisherman and had a fishing boat, but both of them disappeared in a storm a couple years ago . He stays with his uncle, but his uncle doesn't really want him around too much and he also drinks a lot and is sometimes abusive.

Did you ever go fishing with your father? ***Yes, I went many times and I know where all the good fishing spots are.*** This gives me another idea. I need a fishing guide. Instead of just watching my boat, do you want to be my fishing guide. So we made another deal. \$10 a day for several hours of fishing in the Sea of Cortez.

I was starting to think this may be the end of my voyage as I could see myself staying in this nice marina for a long time. It was not to be as you will see by what happens in the next chapter.

(Authors Note): The stuff and events that happened to the boat in this story really did happen, but not to me. This was a fairly accurate depiction of what happened to my brother when he sailed his boat from San Diego down to La Paz. Yes, big waves, the rough seas, storm, lightening, and falling through the hatch cover really did happen to him. He spent over a year living on his 27 ft. Catalina sailboat in a marina in San Diego. He did a lot of fixing up of his boat “Sea Turtle”. He took survival classes from an expert instructor on sailing safety. He made it to La Paz and sailed and fished in the Sea of Cortez for several weeks. He eventually sold his boat at the north end of the Sea of Cortez in Arizona. I drove to San Diego and spent one night with him on his boat. He had a great setup. He was in a marina between the Sheraton Hotel twin towers. He had guest privileges at the Sheraton. For dinner, he would go to various bars during happy hour. Have a beer and munch down on the free houderves. He lived that way for over a year.

THE FINAL VOYAGE Chapter 2

So for the next several days, Juan and I take the boat sailing to some awesome fishing spots. It is easy to catch fish here and we also snorkeled in the crystal clear waters. It is like swimming in a giant fish tank.



We return everyday with lots of fish. I gave Juan half the catch. Maybe he

can sell some in the local markets and make some more money. I think Wego is becoming more attached to Juan than me.

One morning, Juan comes to the boat. He has a nasty bruise on his face. What happened? Did you fight with some of kids in your neighborhood? No, my uncle found some of the money you have been paying me and thought I stole it. He also wanted to know where I got the fish I was bringing home.

From now on, just keep the money I pay you here on my boat. You can get it anytime you want. We still take off fishing again. This time we venture a little farther away from the marina. I spot an approaching vessel. As it gets closer, I can see that it is a Mexican police patrol boat. Juan signals me, Ten Quidado! Policia malas. (Be careful, these are bad police!) I am well aware of the corruption among the Mexican authorities. I say, lets see how this goes.

They bring their patrol boat along side and board my boat. They start out talking in Spanish and I pretend to not understand. One of the crewman switches to English. Do you have a permit to fish in these waters? I say yes, I have a license from the marina in La Paz. He says that permit is not valid this far out in the waters. I can see where this is going and he is wrong about that. I keep my mouth shut. He says they will search my boat. One of the crewmen goes down below and returns with a small bag. He says these are illegal drugs. They will arrest me and confiscate my boat. I don't plan on spending my remaining days in a Mexican jail cell trying to prove my innocence and lose my boat and the \$100K stashed away. I start to back away as the commander starts to draw his pistol. I pretend to slip and I fall over the side of the boat. I swim under the hull.

This is one of the things I was worried about on the high seas. These thugs are nothing more than pirates. When I purchased the boat, it was used. Only about 5 years old. The first thing I did was put it in dry dock and scrape and refurbish the hull. I also had a secret air pocket installed on the underside of the hull. I have \$100K in U.S. currency hidden on board. When I sold my house and purchased my boat, I still had \$300K left. Besides the \$100K I

have, I put the rest into a trust to be given upon my death to my kids. This air pocket is big enough for one person's head to breathe and it also has a secret compartment where I stored my pistol and rifle along with my \$100K. It is illegal to have firearms in Mexico. In addition, I installed a security camera feed. I can view what is going on topside. I see the crewmen searching along the sides of the boat. Wego is barking incessantly and that is irritating the leader. When they head toward the bow of the boat, I leave my hiding place and surface on the stern where my boarding ladder is. I spring back up on deck with my pistol aimed. The commander is trying to shoot Wego. No way Jose, I fire my pistol. Pow, pow, pow, pow. It took four shots to kill all three. There is still danger. One of the crewmen remained on the patrol boat and I can see him heading for the pilot house. I can't let him escape. I pull out one of my whiskey bottles of Jack Daniels along with my emergency flair gun. I toss the bottle at the patrol boat and it breaks and douses the patrol boat in alcohol. Next I fire the flair and it ignites the alcohol. The crewman has reached the pilot house and had started the engines. As he gets 100 yards away from my boat, the patrol boat explodes in a giant fire ball. What a waste of good whiskey.

Juan looks stunned by what has just transpired. Wego is hiding under the bench. I tell Juan I had no choice. He just nods his head.

We dump the dead bodies overboard and clean up any blood stains. DNA testing would expose us if we get caught even though we cleaned as best we could.

My next move is to get as far away from this spot as possible. I am sure the patrol boat will show up missing and unresponsive. Perhaps other boats in the area will see the black cloud high in the sky from the explosion. A search party will be coming soon. Also, if they have access to satellite photos, they will see a sailboat in the vicinity. Not sure if they can read my boat ID numbers on the port (left) side. I bet they can see my American flag though. I go down below and get an Australian flag and hoist that in place of my own. My problem now is what to do with Juan. I tell him I will head back toward the marina because I need to get out of the Gulf of California anyway and I can drop him off somewhere on shore. Juan says, Please Viejo, take me with

you. I really have no one and my uncle is getting worse by the day. I don't have time to argue, so I decide to let him stay aboard. I can figure out later what to do about him.

I am in some luck as there is a strong tail wind. Typically, my sailboat sails at about 7 knots down wind. If we were sailing into the wind, we would have to zigzag. This cuts our forward speed down by 1/3. A knot is the nautical term used in place of mph. One knot is about 1.1 mph. I put up my spinnaker. This is a giant sheet that goes up on the bow of the boat and with a trailing wind, adds 3 more knots to my speed. So 10 knots is kind of slow, but if the wind is steady, I can travel over 200 miles in 24 hrs. This will get me far enough away from the Mexican coastline so the searchers will not find me. As we clear the Baja peninsula, I make a sharp turn right and set course for Hawaii.

Juan does not mind this plan. He says he has never ventured far from Baja. I am worried about how to get him into port on U.S. territory. I find one of my old outdated passports in my belongings. Using my Canon camera, I snap a shot of the old passport and a portrait of Juan. Using a photo editing program on my laptop, I Photoshop his picture in place of mine and change the passport numbers and the birth date. His name is now John Miller and I will pass him off as my son. This would not get past an embassy employee, but should work OK for port entry.

The next day, I take down the Australian flag and put Old Glory back up. It is a three weeks sail to reach Hawaii. I am glad that I bought provisions in La Paz the day before. One of the dangers sailors face while spending large amounts of time at sea is scurvy. This is caused by lack of Vitamin "C". It can be fatal. I stocked up on plenty of fruits and vegetables and also have supplemental Vitamin "C" tablets on board. There is really no danger as long as we don't go months without vitamin "C". I use this time to train Juan on boat safety and how to pilot the sailboat. We run man-over-board drills, dog-over-board drill, (Wego is not fond of these) and emergency procedures. This boat is equipped with lots of safety features. If the sensors detect someone falling overboard, the auto pilot sets the rudder to perform continuous circles. This would prevent the boat from running away from those in the water. This

is not full proof as ocean current can be strong enough to move the boat away from a swimmer. About half way to Hawaii we run into some trouble. Early morning when it is still dark, Juan is on watch. I am awakened by a loud crunch. Juan comes running down the hatch. Senior Viejo something bad has happened! I head up on deck, but it is still too dark to see anything. I get out my spot light and survey the area. Juan has already dropped the sails and we are adrift. This was a good move on his part. As daylight approaches, I can see some large floating object behind our boat. Eventually, I identify it as a large container. It must have slipped off some cargo ship perhaps in rough weather. It is almost submerged with only the top showing. I surmised that we must have plowed right into the corner. I must survey what damage we might have. I find that there is a large hole in the side of our boat. Not only that, but the damage extends to our fresh water tank. Sea water has now polluted our drinking water. This is no small matter. We are still 1 ½ weeks from reaching Hawaii. We can't survive that long with no water. First I must try to patch the hole in the hull. We are taking on water and I fear if it continues, we could sink all together. The only move left would be to abandon ship and put out the life raft. We do have a life raft and it is equipped with some food, fresh water, and a water making device that converts sea water to drinking water. But it has no means of propulsion and we would be stuck for months drifting with the ocean currents. Luckily, the hole is not much below the water line. So, if I can put something in the hole and patch it up with fiberglass adhesive and we can avoid sinking. This necessitates me jumping in the ocean along side the boat. I still keep my safety line on and start to do the patch work. I decide that one of the life preserver bench cushions might do the job. I start to do the initial prep work, but I drop the cushion and it starts to float away. I kind of panic and detach my safety line to go after it. At the same time, my arm scraps along the ragged edge of the hole and blood starts to leak out of my arm. I am now floating away from the boat. I yell to Juan to start the engine and come about to get closer to me as I am drifting quickly away from the boat. He does as I ask and I am able to regain my position. I quickly stuff the cushion into the gap. Next, I have to apply some fiberglass adhesive to seal up the edges. I forgot about my bleeding arm. Unfortunately, the sharks did not. A shark can smell blood in the water a mile awhile. As I am applying the last of my patch, Juan yells to me, shark fins coming toward me. It is panic time again.

I quickly swim around to the stern boarding ramp and just clear the water as a great white with jaws open wide, just misses my leg.



That was too close for comfort. That was no “Shelby the Friendly Shark” assisting my return. I am back safely on the boat. I am considering renaming my boat “The Leaking Lina”.

We still have a major problem. The fresh water is contaminated with sea water. We are too many days away from land. The only option is to get the fresh water maker from the life raft and use that to give us needed fresh water. This is not an easy ordeal. The fresh water machine uses rotating handles to power the process. It take almost 4 hours to produce 1 quart of water. Juan and I have to take turns making water at the same time we pilot the boat. This doesn't leave much time for rest or sleep. The next week is really strenuous, but eventually we are in sight of land. It is going to be a welcome relief to tie up in a marina and set our feet on solid land again. We have to pass customs before we can leave the boat. Fortunately, Juan's fake passport is not scrutinized too much and we are cleared.

It is time for some real repairs and restocking our provisions. I am still a little worried about the Mexican authorities. Did they put out an all points bulletin listing me as a possible suspect in the disappearance of one of their patrol boats? I am sure they are not aware that Juan is with me. This kind of

gives me more of a disguise. They are not looking for an American with a son. Now is the time for me to ask Juan what he wants to do.

So we have a frank talk. I tell him that even though I look somewhat healthy, my time on this earth is limited. There will come a day, in the not too distant future, when I will be unable to continue this voyage. I tell him that if he wants, I can return to Baja and drop him off so he can go back to his home city. There would have been sufficient time that I believe the authorities would have given up looking for me. Juan says he does not want to return to Mexico and wants to continue this journey with me. I am kind of relieved at this news. He is becoming an efficient sailor and great help to me as my first mate. Also, boats have a lot of wear and tear, especially with constant sailing. He is like a young monkey and can scale up and down the mast to fix torn canvass. This is something that would have been difficult for me.

So after the repairs are done and we restock, I tell Juan, next stop Tahiti. This destination has always been on my favorites list.

So what excitement and adventure awaits us. Tune in to the next chapter to find out.

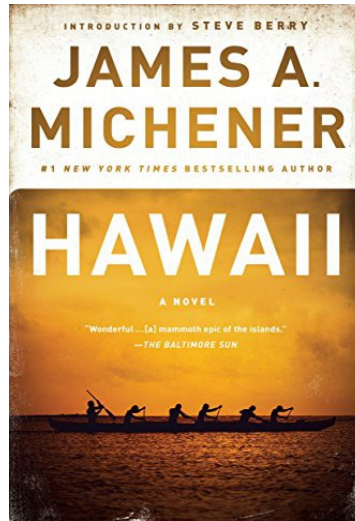
Bora Bora, here we come!

THE FINAL VOYAGE Chapter 3

So we set course for Tahiti. Tahiti is about 2,600 miles from Hawaii. So estimating 5 knots per hour, we would travel approximately 125 miles per day. Without any mishaps, we are looking at about 3 weeks travel time.

If you ever get the chance to read James Michner's novel "Hawaii", it is a good read. It tells the story of how Hawaii was first populated. It spans several hundred years up to the point when the U.S. made it the 51st state. The Tahitian natives boarded sea going paddle boats and headed north. In the southern hemisphere, there are no stars to navigate by. Not until they got far enough north to see the north star. It is the only star that does not move with the rotation of the earth. How they found Hawaii in the immense space of the

Pacific ocean is a mystery to me. Hawaii is a volcanic island and some time in the distant past, it popped up above sea level. Another interesting fact about Hawaii is there are no snakes on the island. I think now, there are some harmless snakes that hitched a ride on some supply boats. But no native snakes.



I once went to speech by Vic Knight. He was a hilarious speaker. He is the author of a book called “The Snakes of Hawaii”. Libraries all over the world ordered his book. In fact, it is still offered in many of the Hawaiian gift shops. The inside of the book is completely blank. This novelty was so profitable, that he decided to produce a cassette called “The Sounds of the Snakes of Hawaii”. It was also completely blank.

So to make good use of our time, I started to teach Juan some defensive skills. I am no Bruce Lee, but at one time in my life I did study tae kwon do. This became a necessity after an incident involving my second wife. Or is that my third because I married my first wife twice. We used to go walking on path along side the Santa Ana river. As we were returning to our home, we were walking through a path with a fence on both sides. Some guy, with what looked like his big son, was approaching us and had a big dog that was not on any leash. My wife was extremely afraid of dogs, especially large ones. So the dog comes bounding toward us. She hides behind my back. I can see the dog is not viscous, just playful. As the two approach us, my wife yells at them, “If I had a gun, I would have shot your dog!” Holy smoke! Is she trying to get me killed. At that moment, I decided I needed to take a

defensive class.

Every new student starts out with a white belt. The ultimate goal is to reach black belt. Sounds backwards to me. I never did get that far, but my Sensei did teach me some powerful defensive moves. Actually, Sensei is the wrong term to call my instructor because that is a Japanese word and Tae kwon do is Korean.

I once asked my Sensei, did you ever have to use your skill to protect yourself? He said only one time. He was driving on the freeway and cut in front of a truck with three big guys in it. Not thinking anything about it, he pulled into a 7-11 to pick up some snacks. The three guys followed him into the parking lot and got out of the truck. They approached him in a menacing way. They were pissed off because he had cut too close in front of them. One of the guys had a tire iron. As he confronts them, he does a front snap kick and connects with the first one's jaw. He is laid out cold. While sparing with the second, the third guy attacks from behind with the tire iron. He takes a glancing blow to the shoulder. He spins around and, just like he taught me, aims one of his side kicks 6 " past the guys ribs. Crack, the guy goes down moaning in pain. The third guy now backs away with his hands up and the fight is all over. I asked him what was going through your mind when the fight was on. He said, I only saw targets. I never felt fear. That is what years of training has taught me. The average guy, no matter how big, is no match for a black belt.

So we do some basic moves and also exercise each day. Another thing we try is throwing knives. I set up a barrel in front of the mast. We take turns throwing knives at the barrel. Each day we improve. As time goes on, we can both hit the center of the barrel on each throw.

Up until now, the weather and winds have been favorable. That is about to change. My marine radio reports a Hurricane moving up ahead in our path. We are going to have to alter course and move as far as we can around the edge. Still, this is going to be a rough ride. Each day as we approach, the waves and wind are getting bigger and stronger. Lina is not really a rough weather boat. She is more of a coastal cruiser. The ocean going boats have

stronger hulls, but are slower in the water. I am not too worried, as long as we stay far enough away from the hurricane. The next few days are strenuous. It takes more navigational skills to keep the boat from getting a broadsided by a big wave that could flip us. We hit some of the wave face on and shoot upwards 20 feet in the air. I am thinking of renaming my boat the “The Leaping Lina”.

We also don't have time to try to catch fish. We have lots of canned goods on board so that is not really a big problem. I still miss the BBQ'd fish we ate each day in the Sea of Cortez. You would think that in the middle of the ocean, catching fish would be easy. I think fish are like people and tend to stay near the shores. Most of the marine life we spot are large predators like sharks and whales. Occasionally we spot dolphins or porpoise playing along side are boat. Flying fish are a common site.

After a week of being tossed here and there, the seas calm down and my GPS says we are only a couple days from land. It will be good to walk on solid ground again and maybe visit some sites. A bar with adult conversation, a drink, and some music sounds inviting. We have been gone for about six months now. Juan is getting taller and he was already a fair size for his age. In foreign ports, they don't care too much about age so I think he can accompany me into a bar. I think he would like that too. Once again we clear customs and port entry.

Bora Bora is as spectacular as the pictures I have seen. We tie up at a visitors mooring and step off the boat. Time for a change of pace. I ask about where is the best bar to get something to eat and a beer. I am told the most popular



place is called “The Black Skull”, but was also warned it can get rowdy from time to time. I am not worried about that, since I mostly avoid any kind of confrontation.

We go inside and I head for the bar. Juan takes an inconspicuous position at a corner table. I order a beer for myself and a coke for Juan. So we are both minding our own business when a local girl comes up and takes the stool next to me. I really have lost 30 lbs. and in spite of what that rude woman said to me back in Newport, I am kind of handsome. I strike up a conversation with this woman just to be polite. A short while later, a burly man walks through the bar door. He eyes the woman seated next to me and loudly proclaims, “What are you doing with my wife?” Oh, déjà vu. I feel I have lived this moment before.

Author's note:

A similar scenario happened to me back in my early days. (For real) I was drinking in a local bar where I frequently played pool. I sat down at the bar and ordered a beer from the female bartender. Next to me was an attractive woman. Next to her was a guy with his head down on the bar counter top sleeping. So being the friendly guy that I was, I struck up a conversation with her. We started taking and I asked her where she lived. Suddenly this guy wakes up and looks menacingly over at me. Are you trying to pick up my wife? He had big tattoos on his bulging biceps and was wearing a hat that said “Property of Folsom Prison”. Oh man, I am dead. So I try to tell this guy that I was not trying to pick up his wife. At that moment, the bartender comes up and tells the guy that I am her boyfriend. This calms him down. She saved me. Later, I follow her to another bar in town where they play live country music. I buy her a drink and dance a couple of times. There is really no chemistry between us, so I thank her for saving me and leave to go home.

To continue:

There is no bartender to save me this time. I can see there is no way out. This guy comes at me in a wild rage. I stand up and place a swing kick 6” past his ribs. Crunch. Just like I was taught. He goes down in agony. I see one of his buddies near the far wall stand up to come to his aid. Suddenly,

his shirt sleeved arm is pinned to the back wall with a throwing knife. I look over and see Juan had stood up from the corner table.

This seems like a good time to flee. We both run out of the bar and head back toward our boat. Luckily, the boat is far enough away from the bar so that we are not pursued. I tell Juan that was a hell of a throw to pin that guys shirtsleeve to the back wall. Juan says, I wasn't aiming at his shirt. I just missed. Ha! Good thing, that would have been a situation we might not have been able to walk away from. This will probably just go down as another typical night at the “Black Skull”.

Lina is large enough to be able to carry a dingy. This is a small boat secured on top deck that is used to shuttle back and forth to land when the big boat is anchored off shore. We are in a marina, but I still want to use the dingy to go exploring along Bora Bora's coral reefs. It is easy to maneuver and can get into small coves. We embark on an exploratory venture the next morning. We have our snorkel gear along with us. One of my dreams is coming true. We find an ideal spot and start to explore the magnificent reef life. Fish in abundance, but what I was really looking for was lobster. They are usually hiding in the rocks and only come out at night looking for food. I am



equipped with a knife and pry bar. I also have a small net tied to my belt. I spot a hole with antenna sticking out. Voila, this is what I am searching for. I get my net ready and stick my pry bar into the hole. What I don't notice is the larger hole off to my right. As I am about to capture my prize, a moray

eel juts out and snaps at my arm. Just misses by inches. It is panic time once again.

These things are fierce and can ultimately result in death. I back away from the rocks and move to another location. I still want to eat lobster tonight so I am not going to give up. I did not know that Juan was close by and snapped the attached picture of me and my encounter with the eel with his underwater camera. See attached picture.



Between the two of us, we captured four nice size lobsters and speared a couple of tasty groupers.



As the Sun sets in the ocean, we enjoy a spectacular view as we eat our boiled lobster and BBQ'd fish. Life is good.

Not sure if I ever want to leave this tropical paradise, but external events sometimes drive our destiny.

Bora Bora has many sea tours. Snorkeling with stingrays and sharks, Jeep tours, boat tours. We did most of those on our own. We did the land tours with the Jeep. This whole trip will be an experience that I will always cherish. The sharks in the lagoon are harmless, but can still give you the woollies. We did experience an expensive evening out on the town. We had dinner at the St. James Restaurant. We skipped the cruise part, but the dinner was still in the \$200 range. I would have preferred sharing this with that tantalizing woman at the “Black Skull” bar, but it was Juan who had saved me. So he earned this. See that attached photos of our entree. Might as well spend some of the \$100K cash.



The next morning, I stayed back on the boat to write some stuff in my Captain's journal. Star date 2021. I am now fantasizing that I am Captain Kirk. Maybe I should have named my boat “The Enterprise” To go where every man has gone before. True, I am not venturing where no man has gone before. Ha!

Juan went into town to buy more provisions. I was taking a nap when my slumber was interrupted by Wego's barking. I got up and went topside.

Walking down the deck was the bruiser from the other night in the bar. He had Juan in a tight throat choke hold and was accompanied by his buddy. I should have anticipated that they would track us down since this is a small community and we are strangers. I grabbed a couple of my throwing knives that I always keep handy. So I asked the guy, did you come by so that I could break your other rib? There is no reason to play timid. He says, I am going to show you and your friend not to mess with us. I will break your pals neck, then kill your dog and tear you up. I tell Juan in Spanish, on the count of three, do something to escape from his hold. Uno, dos, tres, Juan stomps on the guys foot and elbows him in his damaged ribs. He drops down below the guys grip. I throw one of my knives and puncture the guy right through the throat. He falls down and rolls off the pier into the water. His buddy starts to advance toward me. I throw my other knife and hit him in the leg. He is immobilized for the moment and Juan and Wego run to the boat. We cast off in a hurry and motor away from the docks. Juan asks me, did you miss hitting him in the arm. I said, no, I hit where I was aiming.

In one of our many explorations, we found a big cave in one of the remote islands. It is big enough for Lina to float inside. I guess that this time the authorities will react quickly and have search parties out looking for my sailboat. It is still a big ocean and we could have gone in any direction. I feel hiding in the cave for a few days will disguise our departure. When the heat is off, we can sail away undetected. I am now wanted for murder by the Mexican and French governments. I am running out of safe places to sail.

Fortunately, there are many places in the world yet to be explored. I think the U.S. is the closest land, but not the most optimal. Our next direction should take us toward the eastern side of South America. Juan's Spanish will be a big aid for us there.

Authors Note:

Most of this story is fiction, but I inserted some real life parts. The story about the guy in the bar with the Folsom Prison Hat is true. The part where my wife told those guys that she would shoot their dog caused me to start taking defense classes is also true.

THE FINAL VOYAGE

(Chapter 4)

While on route to South America, I called my kids back in the states to update them on my trip. I got some disturbing news. It seems that my son has had some trouble in Brazil. He had gone down there to start a business teaching English. He had quickly learned Portuguese. He should have had a work permit. Those cost about \$50K. Not in his budget. So he was essentially an illegal alien in that country. For awhile, that did not seem to matter. He had a police chief and a judge in his class. That changed when the country got worse and inflation caused a big down turn. He lost most of his students, even though he had some prestigious ones. So the government cracked down on non-residents and he ended up in a low security prison without any knowledge of when or if his case could be resolved. This news altered my plans. I suddenly decided that I should try to help him in some way. He was in San Paulo, not that far from Rio de Janeiro. To get there, we must go through the Panama Canal.

My plan was to have me fly to San Paulo from Panama City. This way the Brazilian authorities will believe that is how I got there, and not by boat. I instructed Juan to sail by himself along the west coast of Brazil and wait for my signal when I have arraigned everything. I arrive at the prison facility. It was minimum security since my son had not committed any felonies. Kind of like a debtors prison. I arraigned for a visit with him to check out his situation. I got 10 minutes visitation with him. He cautions me that they are probably listening to our conversation. I signal that I understand. So at first, I keep our conversation light. How are they treating you? What are the charges? Do they let you exercise at all? So with these simple inquiries, I heard that they let the inmates out every afternoon for exercise. The area has a high fence, but no guard tower or barbed wire. I tell him that I am arraigning for a local lawyer to aid in his case. This is all a smoke screen. During the next couple of days I visit him. This time I have taped messages to my body and can reveal the content by just slightly opening my shirt. The guards don't suspect anything. I also hired a local lawyer for \$10K just as a cover. He told me he can get my son's sentence reduced from 10 years to only 7. I tell my son that I will break him out of this place. He says that they

have his passport. I say not to worry, I have everything figured out.

So after about a week, I contact Juan. He is cruising up and down the Brazilian coast. I meet him and then take the dingy and run it up on shore in a hidden cove. Not much chance of it being discovered there. So everything is set for two days later. I buy a motorcycle which will aid in our escape. I visit my son and give him the details of our plan. He is to work his way to the far end of the exercise yard where I will be waiting just out of sight. I guess the prison guards would not suspect him to leave since they have his passport and the cover story I laid down should remove further suspicion. I will try to avoid killing anybody this time.

So today is the day. I am waiting in the position I told him and I see him make his way toward me. I quickly use my wire cutters and make a hole in the fence. He slips out unnoticed. So far so good. We hop on the motorcycle to make our get-a-way when our luck turns bad. A passing patrol car spots us. This was supposed to be a piece of cake, but now it has become a dangerous situation. We can't get caught now. We both would end up in prison with no hope of getting out. We speed away from the prison with the patrol car in pursuit. I had previously mapped out our escape route, but now I am traveling at dangerously high speed. Still I try to keep on course.

We weave back and forth around pedestrians and vegetable carts. The patrol car is somewhat slower, but still in pursuit. Out of my panic, I take a wrong turn. Now I am not sure where I am exactly, but know that I am heading toward the ocean. Up ahead I see a big problem. There is a narrow canal between me and the ocean cliffs. I spot a way out, but it is extremely risky. There is a wooden gate that has been knocked down and is angled at 45 degrees. This is a do or die situation. I gun the bike and hit the ramp at maximum speed. Evil Knivel would have been proud. We soar over the canal and land on the soft dirt on the other side.



This should allow us to avoid the patrol car. I look to my right and see a bridge over the canal. Why didn't I see that before my death defying aerobatics? The patrol car easily crosses the canal and is in pursuit once again. I do have a lead on it and as I approach the cliffs my son and I jump off the bike. I let the bike keep its forward progress and it sails off the cliffs and crashes into the surf and rocks below.

We hide in some nearby bushes and watch as the patrol car occupants view the wreckage down below. They probably think our bodies sank in the deep ocean water. We sneak off in a side direction and find our way down to the waiting dingy. Still out of view, we rendezvous with Juan waiting off shore.

Back in the boat, we both take relieved deep breaths. My next plan is to bring both my son and Juan back to the U.S. I am still worried about how to get Juan into the U.S. That problem resolves itself during our cruise back through the Panama Canal as we sail toward the U.S. coast. It is pleasant sailing since now we have three to stand safety watches.

My son and Juan are not the same age, but are closer than with my age. So they spend some time trading stories about their lives. I tell my son my worries about Juan. Later he says he found out something that should alleviate my worries. It seems that Juan is really already a U.S. citizen. He was born in Pasadena. His mother was a U.S. citizen and married Juan's father. After he was born, they went to Mexico to live a more peaceful and uncomplicated life because Juan's father already had a home and fishing boat there. Juan never really thought about this because he was just a baby when they returned to Mexico. He didn't understand U.S. law. So this really simplifies my plans. I drop them both off 10 miles off shore from Newport Beach. They take the dingy and disguise themselves as fishermen. Rods and reels and tackle box. If they are stopped by immigration, they would be OK. They are both U.S. citizens. They just say their IDs and passports are at home and they didn't bring them for fear of losing them in the water. If asked to produce them, all they have to do is get a copy of each birth certificate and apply for another passport.

Juan still wanted to go with me, but I said no. He has a new life in the U.S. With my family helping him, he can succeed and do anything he wants. I give them the bulk of what is left of my \$100K. What do I need it for? I keep \$10K and think that will suffice. I think they both realize that this is the last time we see each other. We shake hands and hug adios.

I still have some adventure left that I want to experience. I set course for the Philippines. A place I have never been. The years have really started to take their toll. Also, without Juan to help me navigate, I tire easily. Still, it is my wish to keep going. I start to have equipment failures. My navigation radio stops working. Now I can't get weather reports. For now, the weather is favorable. How long that will last is anyone's guess.

I make it more than half way to my destination when the weather turns nasty. It is so rough that I am afraid to spend much time topside in fear of getting washed overboard. I have my sails down and my sea anchor deployed.

Nothing more I can do except wait out the storm. It turns out that this is no ordinary storm. I can feel that the wind has increased to hurricane levels. I get out one of my bottles of Jack Daniels. It is hard to drink from a cup with the rocking and rolling going on. No problem, I just drink straight from the bottle. Lina has never been in this kind of danger.

I am getting really drunk. That is OK.. This is on purpose. Nothing I can do about the situation anyway. My fate is in God's hands. Suddenly, I hear a big crash. Water comes spilling into the main cabin. I fear that this is the end for me. I pass out, too drunk or scared to care.

I am not sure how long I was out, but I wake up in the surf on a beach. I am still dizzy from the last night's ordeal. I spot Lina 45 degrees tilted on some jagged rocks. I am considering renaming her "Leaning Lina". At any rate, this appears to be the end of Lina. The surf will eventually smash her to pieces. Before that happens, I try to see if I can salvage anything from inside while it is at low tide. It is risky, but I manage to make it to the cabin. My satellite phone was always keep in a watertight bag along with my Captains

log. I grab those two items, some bottled water, canned goods, and survival kit that has a butane lighter, Rambo knife, and flashlight. I retreat to the beach as the tide is coming in. I try to call my family, but don't want to alarm them of my situation. Don't want them to stage a rescue operation when I know these are my last days. The phone rings, but goes to voice mail. Just my luck. I leave a message that says I am enjoying my retirement on a tropical beach with a beautiful sunset. Might as well give them some peace. I try another number as the last of my batteries die off. Just as well. What could I have said anyway. I see the tide has come in and the waves are battering my boat to pieces. I am considering re-naming her "The Lost Lina".

No time for sentiment. I start to look around. I am surprised to find and see some structures still standing. The whole place looks abandoned. I find a well with a bucket and rope attached. Seems like the fresh water is still OK.

That resolves one big issue. I imagine there are plenty of fish to catch around here. As I survey the surrounding area, I come upon a sign that says "Welcome to Bikini Island".



OMG, now I know why the place is abandoned. The hurricane must have thrown me way off course depositing me on this island. This is the place my dad worked on 65 years ago building cement bunkers to watch the atomic blasts that took place close by. The whole island was stripped of life and foliage. It was deemed uninhabitable due to the high radiation levels. The

only things that inhabit the island today are coconut crabs and palm trees that replenished the island. The coconut crabs lay their eggs in the ocean so the eggs washed up on shore and they survived. I hear that the coconuts are highly radioactive. Great, just what I need. Something else that will kill me.

I still want to explore this island. What else do I have to do anyway? It is unlikely that anyone will find me here, since it has been designated an unsafe area. I want to see what is just over the next rise. There is a deep valley in the middle of the island. It looks like giant boulders have rolled down around the middle. Wait, those boulders appear to be alive. I stand on top of the rise to get a better look and then terror sets in. These are not giant boulders, they are giant coconut crabs about the size of a VW bug. You have all seen crabs scurrying along the rocks and sand down at the beach. They can move almost as fast as a human. Well, these crabs are 100X bigger than normal and their speed is proportional.



I surmise that the high level of radiation has caused them to mutate to this enormous size. Suddenly, several of them must have spotted me, because they start to come in my direction at amazing speed. They are tired of eating coconuts and want some fresh meat. I run back down the hills and head for one of the bunkers where I stored my meager supplies. The crabs are gaining on me at an alarming rate.

Not sure if I will make it in time. I jam the steel door shut just as one of them gets his giant pincer inside the door. I reinforce the door with some nearby benches. So what are my options now. Stay inside and starve to death, or go outside to be sliced up by their giant pincers. Maybe there is a third option. I look around the bunker and find some long round wood fence posts about 2" in diameter. I was smart enough to bring some butane lighters in my salvage attempt along with my Rambo knife that always comes in handy. I sharpen the ends of the wood posts. Now I have something that resembles a thick wood javelin. I also find some burlap sacks and soak them in kerosene. I wrap the burlap around the tip of the wood spear. It is time to go crabbing. I light the tip of the spear and slide back the benches. The door flies open and the giant eyes and mouth of a crab are exposed. I throw the spear with all the might I can muster and hit it right between the eyes. I hear this god-awful noise. Kind of like when you throw a live lobster into a boiling pot.

Screech! The crab back tracks and spins around in a dying death dance. OK, Giant Crabs 0, Me 1. Let the hunt begin. I walk out from the bunker. Seems like no giant crabs at the moment. Must have gone back to their valley. Still, I have lots of wooden spears, burlap and kerosene.

As I wonder around again, I am surprised by the shadow of someone approaching. I look around and there stands an elderly woman. Well, elderly is a relative term, myself being so ancient. She says to me, I thought you were a goner. Seems like you have some survival skills. I say, if you had already seen me, why not warn me about the giant crabs? She says, I didn't expect you to live long enough for me to converse with you.

This is a fantastic turn of events. I thought I would be living my last days as a lonely hermit. She related the following story about how she got here. It is uncanny how she mirrors my situation. She was diagnosed with terminal cancer with perhaps only 6 months to live. Not wanting to end her life in a nursing facility, she sold her belongings and bought a sailing boat. During her voyage she encountered a big storm that forced her to crash on this island. Her name is Lena, with an (e), not an (i). These coincidences do not go unnoticed. We must have been fated to meet. It was over two years ago

when she had arrived here. She said that even though the radiation levels here are above safety levels, they are very low and have not resulted in her getting radiation poisoning. In fact, she has been eating the fish and crabs all this time and believes the radiation in the meat has eliminated her cancer. At first, she also almost met her demise from the giant crabs. She has a shelter among some big boulders that the crabs cannot fit in.

This really changes my view of this island. I asked her if she has fished in the lagoon. She says she avoids the lagoon because there is a giant mutated octopus living there in the depths. She said I named it Octoramis as in enormous octopus.

I ask her if she has a bucket of butter. “What for?” I pointed to my wooden spear collection. I am in the mood for giant crab legs and fried octopus. How about you?

THE FINAL VOYAGE End

PROLOGUE
(BIKINI ISLAND, REVISTED)

In 2041 a scientific expedition took place to check the radiation levels on Bikini Island. They determined that the levels are now safe. They did find some odd items. All across the island they found burnt fence posts stuck in the middle of some giant crustacean bones. They erroneously believed it was some kind of native spiritual practice. They also found the skeletons of a male and female laying side by side with their hands intertwined. Next to them was a Captains journal in a protective cover with a final entry listed as Star date 2035. They commented among themselves, who did this guy think he was “Captain Kirk”? They also thought the couple must have been delusional. They kept mentioning something about killing giant crabs and something called Octoramis. In addition to the aforementioned burnt fence posts, they found large areas where the ground was punctured by large craters and hides of giant reptiles hanging from clothes lines. Some mysteries are best left unanswered.

As they read further back in the history of journal, they discovered how the couple each arrived on Bikini Island and what they claimed transpired after the time he arrived in 2021 and they died in 2035. This was a period of 14 sum years. They concluded that indeed the couple were delusional. These things could not have really happened.

This was written in “The Last Voyage” Journal.

RETURN TO BIKINI ISLAND

A summary of what was gleaned from the Captains Log follows: Captains Log: Stardate 2021

After meeting Lena, we swap stories about our lives. Her hide-away is pretty cool. She had made a nice bed out of palm leaves and bamboo. The boulders are arraigned so that there is enough security and it has an opening to the sky for fresh air. If it rains, that is no problem as the run-off just empties out between the rocks. Her bed area is covered and stays dry. I make another bed for me and we put up a palm leaf curtains for privacy. We spend a couple months just getting to know each other. Walking along the shore line, catching fish and crabs for dinner. It is a peaceful time. After awhile the monotony starts to set in. We are getting bored. It is time to step up the adventure. It is time to go hunting. Before we make any plans though, I suggest that we survey the island's structures and bunkers there. We need to see what supplies were left when the military and civilian workers departed the island.

I asked Lena, how far did you investigate before I arrived? She said that she walked to the lagoon and that was where she first saw Octoramis. Where is the lagoon I ask? You walk east along the shoreline, then turn left up a path that overlooks “The Land of the Giant Lizards”. What? Yes, did you think that only the crabs mutated on this island. Glad you told me about them before I risked my life. This is going to take some more planning.

Our sorties checking out the buildings and bunkers earned us some valuable items. I found a box of dynamite and some fuse caps and a box of flairs. In

one of the lockers, we found some snorkel masks and some spear guns. Also, a long coil of rope, and down by the beach where my sailboat “Lina” broke up on the rocks, I hit the jackpot. One of the wooden crates of Jack Daniels survived the crash and washed up on shore. I will keep these for special occasions, if there are any. I stored all these things in the concrete bunker where my other supplies were. I bring the case of Jack Daniels to our rock shelter.

I want to check out the lagoon. I bring one of my wooden spears just in case. We follow Lena's directions and make it to the rise above the “Land of Giant Lizards” without being detected. I can see the lagoon and it is a beautiful sight. Someday, I want to swim there, but it will have to wait. So we reverse course and make our way back down the path. Just as we reach the bottom, the lizard closest to us notices us.

Just like the giant crabs, these things can travel at exceptional speed. We take off running with one of them in pursuit. At least our luck is somewhat good, as it is only one. I let Lena get way ahead of me so she is somewhat out of danger. I turn to face this beast.



This is a giant blue belly lizard. As a boy scout, we use to catch these things

and skin them. Typical young boy's practices. We would tie a thread or fishing line around a stick with a slip knot that makes a noose. The lizards have bad eye sight and if you do not make sudden moves, they will not notice the stick approaching them. You slip the noose around their neck, and voila! You have caught one with out much effort. We would gut them and keep the skins for a souvenir. Keeping these facts in mind, I suddenly stoped running. I freeze just like a statue. The lizard momentarily stops chasing. He is looking for rapid movement. He is still approaching my position, but slowly. As he gets within my throwing range, I lift my spear up to throwing angle. This movement alerts him and he quickly advances toward me with mouth gaping wide. I throw the spear right into his mouth. It advances all the way through his body and sticks out of the end of his tail.



He drops to the earth dead. I signal Lena that all is clear. I also ask her to grab one end of the spear and we haul the lizard back to our lair. I skin it and keep its hide. I envision a very stylish lizard skin jacket or vest in my future.



Keeping the rest of it on the pole, I place it between two rocks and build a fire under it. I fashion a handle on one end of the pole so that I can turn it over the fire. Roasted “lizard on a stick” for dinner. I know that to most this sounds gross. But in reality, it tastes just like chicken.

This reminds me of something from my past. During one of my trips to my Chinese wife's city, I got an inkling for a McDonald's hamburger. They had one in her city. So we were walking from our hotel and we walked past a place that had roasted duck hanging in the window. Below the ducks were pans of all the duck guts. The Chinese don't waste any parts of animals. So my wife says she does not want a hamburger. Instead she orders duck stomach on a stick. I ask her, why didn't you order duck tongue? She said it's too expensive. Not much meat on a duck tongue either. I actually ate one in my past. Tastes just like chicken. Although there were no lizards on a stick for sale, I almost expected to see those too. I did make it to McDonald's and ordered my hamburger. I tried to take some pictures of the place, but was told to leave. Maybe it was because I asked for mao on my hamburger. To those not familiar with Chinese history, Chairman Mao was the first leader of the Communist Party. So I guess my request for mao on my hamburger showed no respect. Ha!

We started a kill count of petroglyphs on the rock walls of Lena's sanctuary. The final count was illustrated in the Captains log. I already know how to kill the giant crabs and I have plenty of spears, kerosene, and fire. We just need to have a good plan to lure them out of the valley without attracting too many. I tell Lena the best way is to use her as bait. She is not too fond of this idea. We find a place between two boulders that only one crab can fit through. Beside, she is much faster than me and it is not just because she is black. Oh ya! I didn't mention that fact did I. This is not meant to be a racist statement. It is just the fact that she is younger than me and more agile. Another one of my dreams have been achieved. I never did get to hang out with Halle Berry, but you could definitely say I had an international taste for different nationalities in woman. American, Mexican, Chinese, and now black. Of course Lena and I are not married, but her chances of dating other guys is very limited.

We supplement our dinners with “Catch of the Day”. This is whatever we happened to catch any given day. Sometimes it is only crab, but there are a variety of fish and shell fish in the pristine waters around the island. We have caught lobsters, mussels, eel, rock cod, gropers, sea bass and halibut. Other fish in the halibut family are the flounder and sole. Very similar in taste. Of course I always let Lena cook because who better to cook sole food than her. Ha! Ha! Get it “Soul Food”. Even in my demented state, I've still got it.

So getting back to our plan to kill more giant crabs. She is to go to the rise and attract their attention. She needs to stay far enough away so they can't catch her before she reaches the twin boulders. This plan is successful and we bag four more giant crabs. We can only eat one crab leg before the whole carcass starts to rot.

The fifth attempt almost ends in disaster. The plan is working as normal, but as Lena runs down the rise, she trips before getting to the twin boulders. The crab over runs and is past her. It turns around and is about to shred her to pieces. I rush out and jump on its shell top from behind. I take my Rambo knife and drive it right down between its beady eyes. This frees Lena from danger, but its spinning motion throws me off its back. I land on my back in the sand. Now I am in its path. Its pincers sawing back and forth as it comes at me. There are bubbles coming out of its mouth. Just before I am cut to pieces, it falters and crashes to the earth. Now I am free too. The crab takes several hours before it finally dies. This was too close for comfort. We need a more foolproof plan.

I'm thinking, maybe we can use the dynamite. Blow those suckers to kingdom come. So we venture out once again to the top of the rise and gaze down into crab valley. I tell Lena, lets go around to the other side and maybe we can get a better perspective of their movements. As we start to make our way around to the other side, Lena suddenly falls through a hole in the sand.

She disappears below the ground. I look and can't see where she has fallen. I spot movement under neath and a giant figure appears in my view. It is a gigantic ant. About 5 ft. in length and 2 ft. wide. I wait for it to pass.



It would do me no good to slip down the hole since I have no way to get back out. I need to see what is going on. I quickly return to the bunker. I retrieve my rope and a couple sticks of dynamite and fuse caps. Back to the top of the hole. I tie one end of my rope around a large boulder and slip down under ground. I start to walk through the tunnels toward where I saw the ant moving. I have to side step into cutouts to avoid other ants that are traveling through the tunnel.

So far I am not noticed. It seems like miles before I reach a large cavern. There at the end is the giant queen. 10X the size of the worker ants and similar in look as the creature in the movie “Alien”.



Lena had been deposited along with other edible foods in a sticky goo next to a giant egg nest. She is still alive, but is trapped. Apparently the worker ants don't eat the cargo, they just bring food stuffs for the queen. Lena spots me in the tunnel. I signal her to stay quiet. If I can slip in behind the big egg pile, I can cut her loose with my Rambo knife. I can see that she is terrified, but I am determined to set her free. I figure the surest way to accomplish that is to make a big diversion. Before I cut her loose, I take one stick of dynamite, attach the fuse and light it. I quickly cut her loose and we make a break for the tunnel. We are lucky not to run into any worker ants and we get sufficient distance away before the dynamite explodes.

If these ants follow the same pattern as the common ants, when you kill the queen, the whole nest dies. The explosion has really rocked the tunnels. I use the same technique as before to return to where I left the rope dangling down. We scurry up the rope just in time to see the entire ant hill collapse in on itself. Ant parts are scattered all over. Live worker ants come crawling out of the earth all around us.

They are too confused to pay any attention to us as they sense the demise of their queen. We finally make it back to the safety of our shelter. How many other surprises are we going to face? Were there monkeys here before? Am I going to meet King Kong or Godzilla? I hope not.

Our escape merits one bottle of Jack Daniels to celebrate. We are still alive. I modify our strategy to catch giant crabs. Instead of only Lena attracting their attention, I figure both of us would be better. That way, if one falls, the other can quickly help the other one up. We also increase our distance from them so they do not get so close to us in the first place. This minor change reduces the risk and we have no more mishaps like before.

As time goes on, we continue to kill the giant crabs and lizards until there are only a few left. We use our dynamite supply to blow up all the giant ant hills we find. Our goal is to rid this island of all mutants.

Captains Log: Stardate 2031

We celebrate our 10 year anniversary with a bottle of Jack Daniels. We only

have 2 left. We will save one for our 15th if we live that long.

So we decided to face our last nemesis. I am not sure how to proceed. I know we will use those spear guns some how. Not sure how effective they will be, but we are ready to find out. All the other mutants have been disposed of. Octoramis is the last one. This is the plan. I will dive down with a spear gun and Lena will observe from the surface. If I get into trouble, she can come to my rescue. I jump into the lagoon. This is another item on my bucket list. Swimming in the lagoon. Those who do not know what a bucket list is, I give this definition. It is a list of things you want to accomplish before you die. I hope this is not the last thing I do. The lagoon water is crystal clear. I swim along the surface and then dive down toward the bottom. There is a large cave at the bottom. Not sure where Octoramis lives, but this is a good bet. My splashing motions have alerted him or her (not sure of the gender) of my presence. I see this enormous shape exit out of the cave. I am ready with my spear gun and she comes towards me. As I step back out of fear, my foot encounters the edge of a large shell. The shell opens up and clamps down on my foot. This is a giant clam shell.



This is not a mutant, just a normal giant clam which do exist in the oceans. I am trapped by its pressure. Octoramis is advancing toward me. I fire my speargun out of desperation and hit Octoramis in her side. Nothing seems to happen. She momentarily halts and is stunned, but she continues her advance. I think this is the end of me. I am helpless. Suddenly, she spins around. Another spear has penetrated her skin. Lena has attacked from behind. This gives me time to use my pry bar to open the giant clam's grip. I swim to the surface as I am almost out of breath. Lena has also retreated and

we both escape the lagoon. We go back to our home hearth and drink another bottle of Jack Daniels to celebrate our escape. Now only one bottle left. I tell Lena, I think we need to rethink our approach. She says, you think?

We slow down for awhile and just enjoy the island's beauty and continue to dive in the clear waters. I tell Lena, I still intend to swim in that lagoon someday. It is still on my bucket list. Over the time we have been together, of course we have become very fond of each other. I found out that Lena was an accomplished artist in her early years. During the time she spent before my arrival, she collected many different pigments of soil, shell fragments, and plant fiber and made a little paint shop in her shelter. As we met and defeated all the mutants we encountered, she would paint portraits of them as we killed them off. Attached are the life like renderings that she put in our Captain's log. You can see how intricate are her paintings, almost like a photographs.



Captain's Log: Stardate: 2030

OK, it is time for our last hurrah!

I have thought about our last attempt to kill Octoramis and realized just spear guns will not do the job. So being an engineer all my life, I don't see problems, I just see solutions. My latest idea is to use the spear guns again, but this time I will tie some dynamite to the tips. You may not know this, but dynamite can still be lit underwater and can still explode. I also will use those flairs I found years ago. They will light and stay lit underwater. This is a foolproof plan and I am just the fool to attempt it.



Octoramis is the last of the mutants and we are determined to reaffirm ourselves as the dominant species on the planet Earth. Both Lena and I are no spring chickens and our longevity is coming to an end. We can both sense this.

So once again, I jump into the lagoon. Lena is on the other side and also has a dynamite spear. We both get ready and prepare our spears. Lit and ready to fire. Octoramis comes out of her cave and sees each of us. Not sure who to attack first, that is her downfall. Lena fires first, but the spear misses by inches. It explodes near Octoramis, but does not kill her. She is monetarily stunned. I approach her from the front and fire the spear right into her open beak. I quickly reverse course, but I am too close to explosion and I too am stunned. I must have passed out underwater and would have drowned if not for Lena. I wake up on shore with Lena looking concerned down at me.

She was giving me mouth to mouth life saving air. She has saved me once again. We both owe each other our lives and this bond will last until the end.

Captains Log: Stardate: 2035

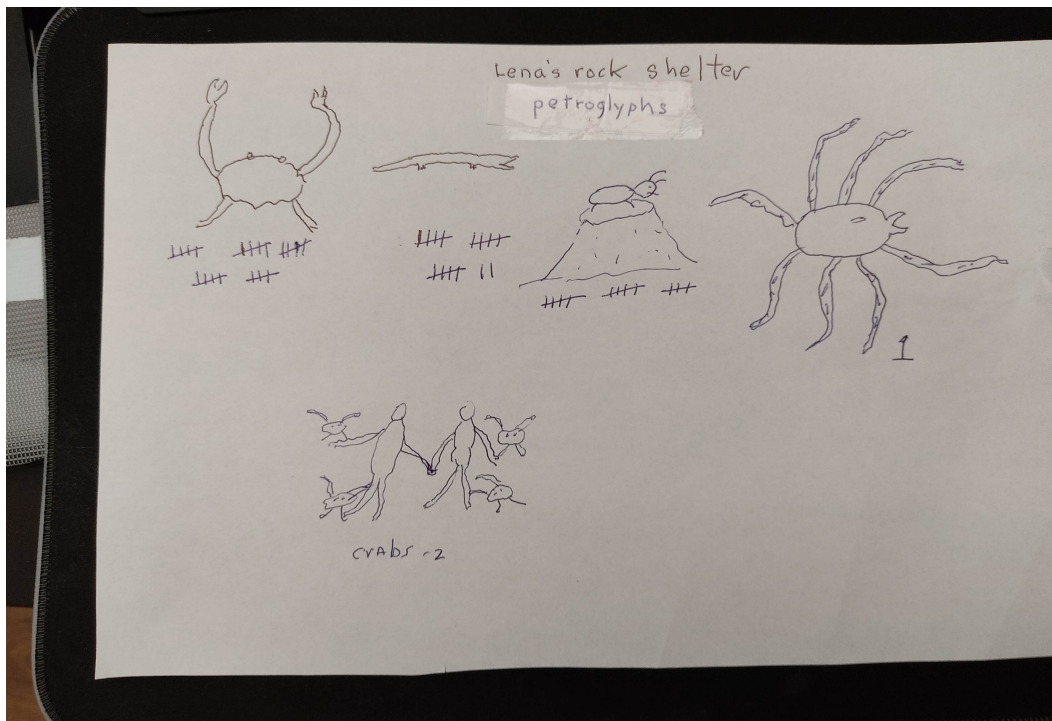
It has been 14 years since I got marooned on this island. Both Lena and I are at our life's end. We have accomplished all our goals. No more giant crabs, ants, lizards or octopi. Our petroglyphs displays the total count.

That last effort to kill Octoramis took its toll on us both though. We can barely walk out of the shelter to fish or scavenge for food. Lena is in worse

shape than me. I make one last effort to get us some food. When I return, she has already passed away. With my last bit of strength, I carry her body down to the ocean's edge. I lay her gently down on the sand.

I cannot live any longer by myself. I am sure I would not have lived much longer anyway. I have brought our last bottle of Jack Daniels. We were saving it for our 15 year anniversary. Not going to happen, but I find a good use for it. I feel sorrow for not having her to share it with me. I start to drink from the bottle as I did 14 years ago aboard my sailboat Lina. I make one final entry into my Captains log before I pass out.

Star date: 2035. As I pass out into subconsciousness, I grip her hand in mine. I had made one final entry on the petroglyph on her stone wall.



Coconut crabs revenge, count 2 humans. I imagine the next morning, our bones will be picked clean and only our skeletons will remain.

I put one last note in the Captains Log. Please send this log to my family in the U.S. (including Juan), so they can know that I really did have a Final Voyage.

These final notes were inscribed into the Captains Log that was retrieved by the scientific expedition. Of course, they did not believe any of this happened. But you all know the truth!

The End

Author's Notes

This time I also added some reality to the story. My brother and I really did catch and skin blue belly lizards when we spent a week at Idylwild boy scout camp. We never roasted any though. The blue belly lizards are really ferocious. We put one in a glass cage with a scorpion. We thought the scorpion would sting it and eat it. Instead, the lizard watched very closely until the scorpion got close, then attacked it. It bit off its stinger and then ate it. The story of Lili ordering duck stomach on a stick is true and I did eat one duck tongue here at home once. It did taste like chicken. I tried to take pictures at the McDonalds in China and for some reason they waved me off. I did not order Mao on my hamburger though. My joke about soul food came about from a past experience.

You know it is strange. Writing this story has allowed me to live my sailing dream vicariously. Now I feel like I don't have to buy a sailboat anymore. Maybe still someday I will get a small one to use at some lake somewhere.

I inserted some real life stories among the fiction. The story about the guy in my hometown bar with the Folsom Prison Hat is true. So is the one of my ex-wife telling those guys she would shoot their dog and my subsequent enrollment in tae kwon do class.

The rescue mission in the final chapter is fiction. Although I told my son that if he ever got in trouble while down in Brazil, that I would come down and rescue him.

My father really did work on Bikini Island and built the bunkers that housed the largest U.S. atomic bomb ever set off. It blew a crater in the bottom of the ocean 3 miles in diameter and 250 feet deep. It was 1000 times stronger than what was dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Every living thing was

obliterated off the island. Now 60 years later, the only living things on the island are coconut trees and coconut crabs. The coconut crabs lay their eggs in the ocean so the eggs washed up on shore and they repopulated the island. The whole island is still highly radioactive and so are the coconuts and the crabs that eat them.



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Here is Bikini Island today.



Here is an aerial view of the crater.



The surrounding coral reefs have been replenished with abundant fish life and the fish are safe to eat.

I hope you enjoyed this adventure.