

LIVING IN PARADISE

(Ricky and Janey)

Chapter 1

Prologue:

After retiring from the ring, we found our paradise location. We have our 36 ft. Catalina moored in a beautiful marina near Belize City.



So I have reached my lifelong goal. Is this the end to all turmoil and strife? Not by a long shot. Life is always full of surprises, disappointment, and miss-adventures. Don't get me wrong. This is what I wanted to do and I don't regret any of it. Though, without some new challenges, life could get too boring.

The first six months of our new life was a dream come true. We couldn't have been happier. We had to establish some kind of routine though, so we wouldn't get complacent. Remember, I retired as the reigning “World Welterweight Champion”. I was still a celebrity, but I didn't want that notoriety. So the first thing I did was grow a beard and mustache. Janey

didn't really care for that, but I explained that it was necessary for my unanimity. We dressed in casual lazy boat attire and appeared to all that we didn't have a lot of money. My boat kind of ruined that perception, but lots of people buy expensive boats, don't work, and have little money. So Janey and I kept a low profile. One of the nice things about Belize, is you can get a 1 year visa as long as you show you have a steady income of at least \$2K a month. Or you could deposit \$27K in a local Belize bank. That was not a problem for us. After 5 years, we could apply for permanent residency. The main language is English. Another positive.

Our daily routine:

I was always active my whole life, so I didn't want to turn it to a couch potato. Janey also kept in shape and we both jogged and did daily exercises. I installed a metal pole in the stern area so that I could hang a heavy bag. I didn't want to lose my boxing skills and I also started taekwondo exercises. Even in retirement resorts there are still thieves and bad guys trying to take advantage of older folks.

So we would wake up with the sunrise, cook up a small breakfast, then do our daily workouts. After that, we might take a walk to the local markets and shop for fresh vegetables or meats. Fresh fish was always available, but we didn't need to buy any. We would fish from our stern in the marina or catch more than enough on our weekly sailing ventures.

Our boat has a holding tank for waste and gray water, just like RV motor homes. Still, we needed to go out at least once a week to open ocean to dump the waste. If the weather was nasty, we could also use the marina bathrooms and showers. There was a laundromat available too.

Belize is a nation on the eastern coast of Central America, with Caribbean Sea shorelines to the east and dense jungle to the west. Offshore, the massive Belize Barrier Reef, dotted with hundreds of low-lying islands provides a rich marine life. Sometimes, on our weekly sailing excursions, we would sail out to one of the islands and snorkel among the corral reefs. This was one of my favorite pastimes. We don't scuba dive, although we could if we wanted to. I prefer to snorkel with a buoyant vest. You can just rest at the top of the water

and peer down at the tropical fish. This is just like swimming in a giant fish tank. The depth of the waters around the reef vary from 3 to 25 feet. Scuba diving has some fears for me. I can see its appeal, but it also has some dangers. If you are down 50 feet and have some equipment failure, you need to get to the surface. You can get nitrogen narcoses. This happens when you breath your tank air and you rise too fast. The condensed air expands too fast and your blood gets saturated with nitrogen. This is called the bends and requires a decompression chamber to reverse. When snorkeling, you are always breathing surface air, so this can never happen.

Inland there are some Mayan ruins. These are not as majestic as those near Cancun like Chechen Itza. Pronounced like (Chicken Pizza). But still interesting in their own rite.

Even paradise can get boring, if you don't add some hobbies. I took up my guitar again and Janey started to paint. She is quite talented and produced some fantastic works. I will display some of her art later.

Here in paradise there are some issues. The southern area of Belize City has a fairly high crime rate. So we don't venture there too often. We are near the equator and the sun is more intense than in the U.S. Hats and sun block are a necessity. There are also lots of bugs. I hate bugs, but in the marina and of course out to sea this is not a big problem. Belize has a population of around 400K, so it is not just a small village. There are hospitals, fire stations, and museums, and everything you would expect in a modern city. It does have its local charm though. Lots of small roadside businesses catering to the tourists. To get around the city, We have a small electric motor bike. It is sturdy enough to carry both of us around.

This is the cause of our first dangerous encounter.

LIVING IN PARADISE

(Chapter 2, Troubles)

Janey and I take off on our scooter. We are looking for an art shop for her to get more supplies. Our phone GPS directs us toward the southern end of the city. I really don't like this location, but still think we are safe. As we near our destination, the battery on the scooter quits. Now we are not safe. It is getting too late and dusk is approaching. I start pushing the scooter back toward where we spotted a gas station. Thinking we can get a new battery or a charge. As we are moving along, three guys come out of a bar. You can usually tell when something doesn't feel right. This did not feel right. They slowly approached us. Hey look here. Some lost tourists. Looks like this is not your lucky day. We are a little short of cash. Maybe you can help us out? Actually we really don't have any money on us. We shop with bank cards. Maybe you can give us something else, as they leer at my wife. I really think you guys should just move away. They really don't know who they are dealing with. I ask Janey, do you think we need to give these guys anything? She says, you can give them what they deserve. I really like her attitude. I was not that far out of the ring and my street fighting skills were still in tack. Janey has been taking taekwondo lessons along with me and she really has a knack for it. The first guy approaches me and rushes. Just like the prison bullies, I side step and nail him with my left hook. Lights out. Another guy has attacked from behind and catches me off guard. The third guy advances toward Janey. She does a spin move, snap kick, and connects with the guy's chin. Lights out. I wrestle the guy off my back and turn to face him. He spies his buddies out cold prone on the street and backs away. Then takes off running. I tell Janey, lets get out of here as fast as we can before more cockroaches come crawling out of the walls. We find the gas station and they re-energize our battery. We make it back to the boat unscathed. So much for living in paradise.

At first I thought I would name our boat "Mr. Nobody". I decided that would not be a good idea if I wanted to keep a low profile. Someone would inevitably ask, why did you name it that. Do some research of the name and discover my true identity. Instead we named our boat Trixie II after one of my beloved pets from my youth. She was a family dog, but somehow she

knew I was her master. Dogs can sense when someone has strong feelings for them. I have always been a dog person. I know folks who also have had cats and they love them dearly. But I have heard it said, "You are a dog's best friend, but just a servant to a cat". Growing up in the 50's was a magical time. Post WW2 was a fairly peaceful time. Of course you could not convince those who fought in the Korean War. Our stupid government never declared that a war. Just a skirmish. Three months off for summer vacation. We kids roamed all around the neighborhood almost all day long. Only returning home for Mom to make baloney sandwiches for lunch. There were no leash laws back then. Trixie would follow us around wherever we went. This turned out to be her demise. One time she tried to follow us across a busy highway when we went to explore the vast fields near our house. She was hit by a car. I was 10 or 11 and cried all night.

Next day we take the Trixie II out on the open ocean. There is no greater feeling like sailing in the fresh air on a relatively calm ocean. White clouds in the sky nothing but blue water all around. It doesn't get much better than that. We are trolling for fish and encounter a school of tuna. It isn't long before we hook up with one. By the time we quit, we had hauled in a half a dozen. Can anybody say Sushi?

CHAPTER 3 ***(Turneffe Atoll)***

We are not that adventurous to try long range cruising. We prefer to be more coastal sailors. There are so many interesting places along the east coast that I don't think we will ever get tired of seeing new things. We decide to try something new. There is an island resort about 20 miles east of us that we heard has some great diving. It is also a luxurious resort. Our current location is nothing short of spectacular, but just to mix things up, we decide to sail there. I did notice that the weather was going to get a little rough, but our boat is big enough and safe enough that we didn't worry about that. Looking back though, I guess we should have worried more.

Nature is so unpredictable. The marine weather report only cautioned for light rain and moderate sea conditions. The problem with predicting ocean

weather is one area can be sunshine, and another a few miles away can be a major squall. So we set out thinking we might get some rain showers and rough seas, but did not foresee what was coming. As we sailed further out, the seas did get rough, but the skies clouded up turned black and started to dump a deluge of rain down on us. As we proceeded east, the storm increased in intensity to 55 knot gale winds. This is not moderate conditions. This is not quite hurricane strength, but much more than we anticipated. It started to push us off course in a northerly direction. We had to take down our sails and tried to use the onboard engine to propel us. It wasn't working. The ocean currents and wind were too strong. We batten down the hatches and decided to just ride it out. Sometime in the early morning there is a loud scrapping sound and our motion stopped. I braved the outside to take a look. We ended up grounded on a remote island. We were still in water, but our keel was stuck in the mud. If you examine a sail boat contour, you will see a giant keel on the bottom of the boat. This is heavily leaded to keep the boat from capsizing. Sailboats can still flip over if the waves and wind hit just right. A sailboat will always return upright due to this weighted keel. I put out both anchors to keep us from being pushed to higher ground or pulled back out to sea and battered on the rocks. We just stayed inside and hoped for the best. Finally the wind died down and dawn arrived. We take a look outside, and sure enough, we were beached. This is not a life threatening situation. We have lots of water and food rations. Medical supplies and emergency gear. Flashlights and weapons. It is illegal to own guns in Belize. When I bought this new boat, one of the first things I did was modify it with a secret compartment to store some guns and ammo. This was just a precaution since we were never supposed to be too far from civilization. There are still ocean pirates that prey on unsuspecting boaters. Now I am glad that I did that. We don't know if this island has any wild animals.

Since we are secured to the sand by anchors, the boat will continue to be our shelter. During the stormy night, one of our antennas broke off. This is unfortunate since it was our broadcast antenna. Our marine radio still works, but we can not radio for help or rescue. Unless some vessel comes close enough for us to signal for help, we might be stuck here for a while. The only way for us to break free is if another big storm comes by and brings a storm surge high enough to lift us clear of the bottom.

As long as we are going to be stuck here, we might as well examine the island. Maybe there is something or someone on the other side. It is a rather large island with a high mountain peak in the center. If we climb up there, we might be able to get a view of the other side or down the coast. I bring my pistol along just in case.

We do hike up to the top of the peak. We can see on the other side and down the coast. Looks completely deserted. I spot a small waterfall and stream what looks like a couple miles south of us. That could be significant if we are marooned here for a long period. This is not the luxury vacation I had expected.

THE ISLAND ***(Chapter 4)***

We ended up stuck on that Island for 1 ½ months. This is what transpired:

For the first couple of weeks, we snorkeled everyday to catch fresh fish. By that time we were starting to run out of food rations and our water supply was getting dangerously low. It was time to try something new. We had not ventured very far from the boat during that time. It was time to explore the island. For one thing, we needed to insure we had a supply of fresh water. Our first excursion was to hike to the waterfall we saw on the first day. We were still much better off than Tom Hanks in “Cast Away” or Robinson Crusoe. No need to build a shelter or discover fire. Our emergency kit had adequate fire starter material. Our propane fuel was running out. At some point it would become necessary to build a fire to cook our food. Our boat was still a perfect shelter from the sun, wind, cold, and rain.

So we set out on our hike. It took us several hours to reach the waterfall. It was a good source of fresh water, but you cannot drink it without boiling it first. The water is still full of bacteria. It is easy to get giardia. You can get giardia if you swallow giardia germs. Giardia spreads easily and can spread from person to person through contaminated water, food, surfaces, or objects. The most common way people get sick is by swallowing contaminated

drinking water or recreational water (for example, lakes, rivers, or pools).

The waterfall area and stream was a real oasis. This was a great place to take a bath as long as we didn't swallow any water. There were also signs of animal life. Prints in the mud and droppings around. While we were bathing, we got a surprise visit from an alligator. This one was not big enough to kill us, but could render a nasty bite. I also thought it might be a tasty meal someday. Can anybody say "Lizard on a Stick"? Where have I heard that phrase before? We had brought some skin bags to fill with water. On our return trip we spotted a family of wild pigs. The word "bacon" came to mind? Our food menu was starting to look up.

I thought since we might need to set up a fire pit that it would also be nice if we had a beach side shelter. The island was abundant with palm trees and some bamboo shoots. One of our weapons/tools we had was a machete. Just the thing needed to chop out some poles to make a frame. After a short time, we had built up a nice sun shade. The machete was also useful in chopping open coconuts that were abundant. A nice alternate drink and snack. This was beginning to look more like the resort we missed. We arranged some stones in a circle and brought some of our deck chairs out from the boat. Now we had a nice day shelter, fire pit, and rest area off the boat. We still used the boat as sleeping quarters. Sleeping on the beach is a bad idea. I saw some competitive survival movies where the participants slept on the beach and got eaten up by sand flees. It took them a week before they made some raised up sleeping bunks.

So fresh fish is nice, but we both had a hankering for some meat. Time to go hunting. Where are those pigs? Besides my pistol and rifle, I also had a shotgun. This would be just the thing to bring down some kind of bird. Maybe there are even wild turkeys on the island. My mouth started watering just thinking about it. As it turned out, we almost became the meal instead. We were tracking the pig family through thick foliage. My machete was getting lots of use. We approached an open area and as we entered a shadow crossed our path. High in the trees was a silhouette. I looked up and saw a black jaguar ready to pounce. I fired my shotgun, not to kill it, but just to scare it. That did the trick. It quickly fled deeper into the jungle. So now we

need to be more wary of the jungle dangers. I am sure there are poisonous snakes around too. We headed back toward the beach. On our way back, we crossed paths with the pig family again. The piglets were so cute that I didn't have the heart to shoot one. I did spot a pheasant and was lucky enough to have the shotgun ready. So the day was not lost. We bagged one bird. Tonight we will feast.

I was still thinking about the alligator that swam toward us at the waterfall pool. I went back to that spot and set up a snare. I put some bait near the noose and returned to the our camp. Next day, sure enough, he was caught in the noose. It was still a little dangerous to get him. He could still bite and he trashed around a lot. I managed to drive my knife through his head and that was the end of him. Well not the complete end. See the picture of roasted alligator that I attached. I have had alligator meat before. It tastes just like turtle.



Our marine radio still worked and we could listen to weather broadcasts. Our solar panels provided us with enough electricity to keep our boat batteries charged. That was good, because we will need those batteries to start the engine if we ever got the opportunity to leave this place.

I imagine this was what life was like for primitive islanders. All your daytime effort was taken up hunting for food. They didn't have any refrigeration to store foods. So they were always about three days away from starving. Of course I am sure they knew how to catch fish. Maybe they even built some canoes cut out of tree trunks and wove some nets out of palm fronds. We weren't in any danger of starvation. We could still snorkel and spear fish with our hand held tridents. We did have to trek to the waterfall every other day to bring back water. We had to boil all that we brought back.

So this was our everyday life until the day a big storm was forecast. We could see it building up from the north. The winds increased, the seas grew choppy, and broadcast reports indicated this would be a big one. I was just hoping it would not be hurricane strength. That would be like jumping out of the frying pan and into the fire. So we boarded the boat and waited for the storm. True to the reports, the weather got worse and worse. It was our luck that it was high tide too. If not for that, we might not have broken free. As the storm surge came in, we could feel the boat start to upright. At the optimum moment, I started our engine, put it in reverse, and pulled up the anchors. All that did the trick. We were suddenly free and afloat again. Even though we were heading out to sea in the storm, as long as we didn't run into another island, we would be OK. We bounced around for a day and half before the storm subsided. I set a course for Belize. We forgot all about the resort. We just wanted to get back to our home marina.

This whole adventure made me realize I needed to invest into a satellite phone. If we had one of those onboard, we would have been rescued within a few days. Someone would have sent a boat out to pull us off the sand.

Home Sweet Home, what a relief.

CHAPTER 5 **(Trying Something New)**

Janey and I are back into our comfortable routine. She has been doing a lot of painting and filling up the boat. I told her, there is no more room to hang your beautiful paintings. How about trying to sell some of them? She said, that is not a bad idea. How can we do that? We are here on tourist visas and don't have a business license. I have an idea about that. You know that street vendor and his wife who sell empanadas? These are meat and rice filled baked pockets and are one of the staples of South American cuisine. Many people think South American food is similar to Mexican food. Tortillas and tacos filled with meat, fish, and hot chili peppers. This is not the case. In fact, South American foods are rather bland. Mostly just meat and rice combined with some mild sauces. I have been talking to this vendor and his son Frankie. They have some space in their booth. Maybe we could make a

business deal with them. I also want to ask if they know anyone who can help us with boat maintenance.

Taking care of a boat, even a new one, requires constant effort. We bought this one brand new. After fully equipping it with all its rigging, latest electronic gear, and safety stuff, it topped out at \$200K. We still had lots of reserve cash since we sold our beautiful home and all our cars and stuff. Even just sitting in the marina though, the hull acquires barnacles and needs to be scraped at least once a month. I also need to repair the antenna that broke in the storm. I don't feel safe enough to be climbing up a tall mast. I also like to keep it clean. The salt water and air are extremely corrosive. The metal parts need to be polished and sprayed with protective solution.

I asked Franswa, if he knew anybody. Frankie pops right up and says, I will do it. I was somewhat skeptical since he was only 12 years old. He said he used to help another boat owner a couple years back and has lots of knowledge about boat repair and maintenance. His father, Franswa, concurred that this was true. Frankie and his parents are French immigrants. They are full residents of Belize and speak English, Spanish, and of course French. It would be nice to have some local friends to help navigate Belize City. They also agreed to lend some space for Janey's paintings to sell. They would get a commission off of each sale. So I decided to give Frankie a chance. As time went on, this turned out to be a very wise decision. Frankie indeed was good with boat maintenance. He was also a good sailor. Sometimes Janey didn't feel like going out for the day sailing, so I started to take Frankie with me instead. Janey had made friends with some local women and they liked to shop at quaint boutiques and lunch at local bistros.

So it was on one of these sailing outings that Frankie first brought up the subject of treasure. He claimed he had a map that showed where some Spanish treasure was stowed or buried. I asked him, "Did you buy the map from some street vendor?" He said that the map was passed down to him by his grandfather who was a sailing adventurer. Why would he give you the map if it was genuine? His grandfather gave it to him on his death bed. Why not give it to your Dad. He knew my Dad was not a sailor and was not the adventurous type. So each time we went out together, it was always "Lets

search for the treasure!” Finally, just to shut him up, I agreed to make an attempt. Next time we were out, Frankie has brought his treasure map. I examined it and point out that the location of this so called “Treasure Island”, doesn't show up on an nautical charts. Still, not to be a spoil sport, I enter the coordinates into our GPS navigation system. I would not even try this, except the location is not that far from our current position. As we get close to the area marked on his map, we do see what looks like a small island up ahead. This is not that unusual. There are thousands of uncharted islands in this area of the Caribbean. As we approach the land, I see a small cove that would give us safe harbor. We anchor off shore and take the dingy to the beach. I change into my hiking boots. On board, I always wear boat shoes. These have non slip rubber soles and are common among boat people. The hiking boots give me more support and I also have a secret pocket sewn in to hide a throwing knife. I had a friend in the past that practiced with these knives. I had contests with him to see who could be the most accurate. I always lost, but I was still pretty good. I had another friend that used throwing knives to his advantage. I read how he used them in a journal after he died on a remote island. I think the island was called Bikini.

So Frankie and I are trekking along a fairly wide beach area and we notice there are many holes dug in the sand. What the heck is going on here? As we approach the wooded area farther inland, we are surprised by two unsavory looking characters who came up behind us armed with guns. What are you two doing here? We have claimed this island as our own. We are just exploring remote islands as our hobby, I said. Well you stepped on the wrong island. I could feel that these guys had bad intentions. I said, OK we will just leave you all alone if that is alright. Not so fast. We think that you might be here for the same reason as us. We are looking for the buried treasure and you two aren't going to be able to reveal this location to anyone else. I said, you have found us out. Yes, we are looking for the treasure too. We have a map that shows the true location. I can see that you don't have a clue to where it is hidden. If you let us go, we will give you the map and leave. Just give us the map now and we will let you go. I don't have the map on me. It is in a secret compartment on the boat. You would never find it without me. Follow me back and I will get it for you. I also have some valuables that you can take too. We are not that stupid. Henry will follow

you back to the boat and I will keep the kid as insurance. This was not what I had hoped for, but I couldn't see any way around it.

So I am walking in front of Henry who has kept his gun aimed at me all the way. When we get around a curve, I pretend to trip on some drift wood. As I roll on the sand, I throw sand up in Henry's eyes and then I reach in my boot and pull out my throwing knife. Henry is still in surprise mode as I bury the knife in his throat. I am still at a disadvantage to return to rescue Frankie, but not for long. I continue on to the dingy and race to the boat. I take out my scope mounted rifle and make my way back toward where Frankie is being held hostage. I find a spot on a ridge where I can see Frankie and his captor. The distance is less than 500 yards. There is little wind, so with the scope, it is an easy shot. Shall I just wound the bad guy. No this is real life, not a movie. I put a bullet right through his head. Frankie is stunned. When I reach him. He asks, "Should we call the police or the authorities?" I say no need. I tell him, these guys were never going to let us go. They would have killed us as soon as we gave them the map. The police might not believe what happened here and we could end up in jail ourselves. It is better to make this whole thing just go away.

I remember what my brother once told me. If a burglar tried to enter his house and he shot him. The last thing he would do was call the police. First of all, with all the anti-gun nuts out there in the media, they would probably arrest him for homicide. Also, the bad guys relatives might hunt him down out of revenge. So he would just load the body into his car and take it out to the desert and bury it deep enough so the animals would not find it. Case solved. Frankie and I buried the bodies farther inland so the tide would not wash up and expose them. Now we get his grandfather's map and "unbelievable", we find a buried treasure chest. When we open it, it is filled with Spanish gold, coins, and artifacts. There is also a note. This is what it said:

"Frankie, if you are the one to find this chest, let me explain. I have been searching for buried and sunken Spanish treasure all my life. I was lucky enough to find all this. I had wanted to bring it back and sell it for the fortune it is worth. When I found out that the government would just

confiscate it claiming sovereign rites, I didn't really know what to do. I decided to give you the map and maybe you can figure out how to get some money from all this.

Love you, Grandpa Louis”

What are we going to do with this treasure?

CHAPTER 6 ***(The Treasure)***

I came up with this plan. First of all, I told Frankie my true identity. He had difficulty accepting all this. The treasure, the dead guys, “World Welterweight Champion”. It was almost too much for him to process. I told him that we should bring this treasure and give it to the Belize museum. It should be shared with the whole world and especially his own people. I also told him he should be claimed as the sole discoverer of the treasure and just list me as an anonymous sailor assistant. I still wanted to maintain my privacy. Another thing I decided, we have to find another uncharted island and claim that the treasure was found there. When the news gets out, hundreds of treasure hunters will descend on the island thinking there is more buried treasure. We wouldn't want them to dig up the bodies on the actual island.

So we did find another remote uncharted island and marked down the coordinates. We are ready to face the music back home.

So Frankie presented himself at the museum with the treasure chest in tow. Understandably, they were astounded with this discovery. They did notify the government, and because this was donated, the government did not interfere. This catch of treasure was estimated in value in excess of 10 million dollars. Frankie got a finder's fee of \$20K. This will go far to ensuring his education and also aiding his parents financial situation.

Meanwhile, Janey had been cranking out some marvelous artwork. I told her that these were too good to be sold at roadside stands. Nobody would ever pay what they were worth. I suggested that we find and open an art shop where she could display her work. If it works out, she could have an action

to sell her paintings and contribute the proceeds to local charity. This would endure her to the community and give her much satisfaction that her effort goes to a good cause. She warmed to this idea immediately.

We still had sufficient capital to invest in a store front. By this time, we were allowed to be business owners. We had passed the waiting period and payed the license fees. So Janey set up shop and displayed her work. It wasn't long before she was noticed and attracted lots of attention in the art world. Her first showing and auction was a huge success. She was able to donate lots of money to local charities and as I predicted, this elevated her to high social status.

It was during this time that she came to me with a request. She told me that she had never gotten over losing our child. She felt a void in her life that I could not fill. Some of her friends told her about a 7 year old female child that had lost her parents in a car accident. She was bond to be sent to an orphanage. Janey wanted to adopt her. I asked, is this even possible, we are still not full time residents? She said that she has already check with the authorities and they have agreed to let us proceed, if I am in agreement. I have never thought about being a parent, but if this is something that Janey needs to be happy, I am all for it. I never expected that this would also be one of the highlights of my life.

There were lots of paperwork and some fees spent, but eventually the process was completed. We finally adopted Sara. What a cute child she was too. So even though we were living on a boat, it was not an issue. She could still attend the local schools and she liked living in the marina on the boat. At first she was very timid and shy. She was kind of afraid of me at first. She took to Janey very quickly as I knew would happen. So to break the ice, so to speak, I came up with the perfect plan. One day I called her to my side. I said, Sara, we all have our duties on this boat and I want you to be responsible and share the burden too. She had a very worried look on her face thinking I was the stern master. I presented her with a cute puppy. I told her that it was her responsibility to take care of our new family member, whom I named Bella. Her eyes immediately lit up. After that, I was no longer the ogre to fear. Each school day, either I or Janey would take and

pick Sara to and from school on the electric scooter. Even though Bella was a family dog, she always came alive as soon as Sara returned.

Life proceeded fantastically from that point. Janey was happy, I was happy, Sara was happy and Bella was happy. Life could not have been better.

CHAPTER 7

(Unforeseen Events)

Five years pass in the blink of the eye. These were wonderful years filled with Sara growing up. She took to sailing just like Janey did. We used to go on picnics to islands where we were the only ones. We had made an area on the boat for Bella to use and she always came with us. It always warmed my heart to see Sara taking Bella for walks along the marina sea wall, always within my sight. Janey continued to be a successful painter and sold lots for her charity organization. During that time our financial resources were dwindling. Not so much that we needed to work, but something to keep an eye on. As it turned out, we came up more than short.

Janey developed a serious health issue. I don't want to go into detail at this point, but she needed an expensive operation that was way beyond our means to pay for. I racked my brain for some solution, but knew there was only one place where I could get that kind of money. It was in the boxing ring.

We also needed to return to the states because she needed a specialize medical facility in order to save her life. My brother was the only one who knew where I was. He has always been generous and caring toward family. He even helped out some friends by letting their unruly son live with him so he could straighten the kid out.

So we had no choice. We sold Trixie II and moved in with my brother. Janey had to wait to get scheduled for her operation. These things don't get done overnight. During this waiting period, I went back to the gym where it all began. I started training again. My old trainer welcomed me back as if I had never left. I let it be known that Ricky "Nobody" Jones had returned from his hiatus. Even though I was still famous, no one just comes back and

jumps into a high ranking. I had to start at the bottom. My reflexes were somewhat in tact, but not nearly as quick and powerful as before. Still, I had some talent left. My old manager was willing to get me some fights. At first, it was just like before. Spar for a couple rounds and then deliver the left hook. I was making some money, but nowhere near what I needed. Each fight I took was more difficult and I was getting hit much more. The purses were getting bigger too. I was advancing in the rankings. There were still a lot of boxing fans out there that remembered me. I was just a couple fights away from the big time money again. This was my goal. I just hoped my body did not give up on me. The transformation in the ring that I experienced before was still with me.

CHAPTER 8

(The Comeback) well almost

Finally I get the fight I was looking for. I would never get a shot at the current champ, but that was not my goal. The fan interest was there and that is what the promoters look for. I was scheduled to fight Antonio “The Destroyer” Russo. He was a devastating puncher. My plan was just to survive. For the first 5 rounds, I managed to stay out of the reach of his powerful right cross, but he was still connecting with lots of punches. My self-preservation defense was working fairly well. If I could just get a chance to release my left hook, I might even win this fight. In the 7th round, I ran into his right cross. Next thing I know, I am on the floor staring up at the ceiling lights. I should have stayed down. It just wasn't in my nature. I managed to rise before the 10 count and was saved by the bell. My manager was ready to throw in the towel. I told him, just give me one more round, then do it. So Antonio smelled blood. He knew that I couldn't take much more. In his hurry to finish the fight, he exposed himself to my left hook. I connected with a solid punch. That should have been the end of it, but he rose off the canvass and was ready to continue. This is the first time my left hook let me down. He was too young or I was too old. I had lost some of my power. We both managed to last to the 12th and final round. He was dazed by my punch though. He was not as accurate as before and I managed to put him on the canvass a couple more times the same as he did me. The fight went to the score cards and he won on points. I still felt like I was a winner

going all 12 rounds. This was going to be my last fight as the winnings were enough to cover Janey's hospital costs and then some.

During the following recovery period, I noticed something was wrong. I was getting dizzy spells and even fainted at times. I think this time I really got some serious damage.

Janey got her operation and it was successful. We still had enough prize money left over to buy a small house. This was adequate for us. Sara had a real home, a backyard, and acquired some friends at school. Bella was happy to have the backyard to roam around in.

As the days wore on, I was getting worse and worse. My doctor set me up for a CT Scan. The test revealed an aneurysm. The doc told me this cannot be operated on and it will get worse and worse. He predicted that I might have six months to live. I didn't want to tell Janey about this. I did tell my brother and set a plan in place that some would criticize me for. I didn't want Janey or Sara to have to experience my deterioration or to have to take care of an invalid. This is selfish of me I know, but it was my wish.

It finally got to the point where I was hospitalized. I was starting to lose my ability to speak and my balance was off. I knew that the end was coming and I told my brother it was time to implement my departure. Next to me was another patient. He was worse off than me and had only a few days left. I had heard that he was alone, had no relatives, and no one to check up on him. I felt sorry for him to be like this at the end. His build and size were similar to mine. I informed my brother that now was our only opportunity. Money can facilitate many things. My brother arraigned for me to swap ID tags and bed position with the dying patient. It is kind of ironic when you think about it. Ricky "Nobody" Jones was switched with a real nobody. When he died that night, the hospital staff informed Janey that I had passed away. I know that this seemed cruel, but I did it anyway. My intentions were good though. I didn't want Janey or Sara to witness my suffering and see me become a real "Nobody" It was better to have it happen quickly, instead of all drawn out. The body was removed and cremated according to my directive. My brother helped to sneak me out of the hospital ward. Some of the staff asked, what

happened to the other patient? The payed off attendants just told them that he had been moved to another wing of the hospital. No one questioned that move as it happens all the time.

You might think that something like this could never take place. You would be surprised. How many times has a surgeon removed the wrong organ or dropped one of his instruments inside a patient and then sewn him up. Babies being misplaced and given to the wrong parents. Hospitals are busy places and doctors are overworked. Mistakes happen.

I heard that my funeral was very emotional. Lots of fans sent cards and flowers. I left Janey with enough money so that she would not have to work for the rest of her life.

EPILOGUE

In my final days, I missed Janey, Sara, and even Bella terribly. But I didn't want to change anything. Let sleeping dogs lie. My brother set me up with a camper and drove me out to my favorite camping place. My speech was almost completely gone and my motion was severely restricted. I was still able to hobble over to the toilets so at least I didn't have the humiliation of wearing diapers. He would come out every couple of weeks, bring me enough water and snacks to keep me from starving. He would change my camping spot, since I was not allowed to stay in one spot for more than two weeks. I knew that someday he would come out and I would be gone. I would have done the same for him. I lasted for several more weeks. Before the end, I had one final victory. I was hobbling back from the toilet when two biker types came by. Hey lookey here! An unattended invalid . I knew their intentions were not good. Maybe they just wanted to take my food and wine supplies. I really didn't carry any cash. As they approached me, I surmised that they wanted to check out my wallet. I tried to side step and back away, but my motions were stiff. When they got close, the old boxing ring transformation came over me one last time. I faked right and swung my left hook just like in the old days. I connected with the first guys jaw and he crumpled to the ground out cold. His buddy

looked shocked and astounded. He picked up his friend and dragged him back away from me. When the guy finally revived himself, they both got on there bikes and took off shaking their heads. You should never mess with a “Nobody”.

(The End)

Second Epilogue:

To me, science is more accurate than religion. One of the axioms of science is: Energy is neither created nor destroyed.

An expression that I have coined is this. “None of us will get out of this life alive!”

My body is gone, dust to dust, ashes to ashes and all that, but my spirit or soul, have you, still existed. How can the energy or essence that makes up me, disappear? I float among the stars and sail in the wind. Freed of the forth dimension “Time”. I meet up with all those who have gone before me and I await those whom I have loved and have loved me to complete their journey. They will leave their earthly bounds and join me for all eternity. Death is just a transition point to another existence. I really believe this and hope you do too in some form.

Authors Note:

My brother really is a caring guy. He did allow another persons kid to live with him for several years. The scenario of my fictitious character exhibits some similarity to how I would like to end up. If I can't take my “Final Voyage”, I would not want to spend my end days confined to a hospital bed. My brother is even stranger than me. Instead of cremation, he says he would want his wife to take his body and drape it over some cactus in the Sonora desert for the animals to feast on. Why waste perfectly good protein? He really did say if he shot a burglar inside his house that he would not call the police.

Take care all,
Terry