

Song of the Silent Sea

By C. Angelo Caci

This story, although entirely fictional, is dedicated with love to an old friend, surreptitiously known as: "Oh, oh, hide the beer Kevin's here."

Nothing can bring you peace but yourself

Emerson

Chap 1

...“Welcome to Horizon Wireless, just press one for English, para doce Espanol, otherwise stay on the line and one of our operators will be with you shortly. Your call is impor...”

“Ya right!

Your call is important to whooo...If it's so fucking important bitch...why don't you answer the God-damned thing, you asshole?”

It is hard to slam a cellular phone down, but you did figure out how, didn't you? The battery took flight right out of its sleek, gray, plastic cage, or rather what was left of Aviarium-Lithiumiu'n's, poly-vinyl coop. Oh, how embarrassing, you thought, throwing a temper tantrum over a recorded message no less. Don't she, Ms Digital, know who I, Jonathon Spindrift, (aged fifty-something) am?

"Oh shit!" you mutter, and all the while your face turns a shade lighter than the vermilion drip, drip, trail, drip, splatter, of your blood, as it spatters across the canvas of your white, vinyl floor, looking like some Jackson Pollack original, yet the closest it's ever going to get to the Met is if one of Peggy Guggenheim's heirs should happen to possess twin Schnauzers from the same litter as Peg's and one or both should salute your work. It's a shame, really, but there will only be the swelling pallet of your hand to lend that touch of authenticity of a serious work in progress...Oh, but hey, as the Expressionists use to

say: To suffer is for the initiate...or, something like that. And....Oh, while we are on the subject of pain, your attention is, and not so surreptitiously I might add, attended to the sharp pain localized in the immediate vicinity of your pallet that demands at least some immediate attention anyway.

"Damn it!" you say, blurt, shout...no actually scream, and quite like a nun caught with her pantyhose on fire, you exclaim, and under no uncertain circumstances..."you Mother Fucker!" is what you yell...

It took awhile, but you did regain composure finally, and with a clean white dishtowel you managed to stop the bleeding, but only after you finished wiping up the blood that spilled on your newly gessoed (primed) canvas of a kitchen floor. Strange as it might seem, as though floor should hold priority over hand, yet that is what you did and that was the order in which you did it! Feeling somewhat embarrassed are you by that? which, by the way, you recognize as your normal composure.

You begin to pick up the broken pieces of the plastic coop (phone casing) strewn about, as if you could remove an embarrassing situation like this, sort of like erasing chalk marks from a blackboard...No body no crime sort of thing eh? Alright, so the vacuum you'll get out later. For right now, just getting the evidence off the floor will have to suffice, after all, image is far more important than substance, isn't it John, sorry, forgot, Jonathon, I mean. And, it is important that no one in this cardboard apartment complex should know how you, Jonathon Spindrift (fifty something) just suffered a temper tantrum.

It's a fuck of a good thing, you're thinking that you didn't cancel the phone insurance like you had intended...A damn good thing! Or rather, threatened to do, and I may add, for the umpteenth time, yet you did pay on it though, didn't you?

"Why...Why should I carry insurance on a phone that only cost forty-five dollars brand new? It doesn't make sense! I've had this thing now for over a year and a half; at five bucks a month, let's see, that comes to about seventy-five...eighty bucks I've been swindled out of already, and who knows if they'll even honor their end if I should ever need a new one." This is what you reasoned, after conversing with your neighbor...

Ellen Swage, your next door neighbor, the only person in the whole apartment complex that you know, or rather

speak to, or rather speaks to you (when cornered) when no-one else even acknowledges your presence □ tries not to anyway □ and after living there for sixteen years....

“You know,” she starts, “I would cancel mine too, except with my luck I’d probably loose it the very next day after canceling, and then I'd be shit out of luck.”

You were thinking the very same thing too, actually, weren't you John-boy? Sorry...Jonathon. Yet, you were determined to stop THEM, the invisible powers that be, to take further advantage of you.

“Yeah, you know...I probably would too. They got us, you know, Ellen? They’ve got us and they know it too.”

“Yeahhhh....” Her voice follows her attention as if willed, or thrown by some ventriloquist hiding in the bushes as she unconsciously seeks asylum from you in the seclusion of the sweaty bosom of a large Mulberry tree growing in what masquerades as a courtyard garden within the anemic looking pink, or is it peach, tinted stuccoed walls, of which said color is a constant reminder of a rash you suffered on your ass, long ago, from that allergic reaction you had to penicillin. So much for local color...Authentic Southern California Econo-ecture, circa 1962, in the blemish of a city—Pacoima—located in the rejected heart transplant of the San Fernando Valley, which sort of resembles a bleak desert town on steroids. Why doesn't it ever strike anyone as strange...you sometimes wonder, to tint concrete walls the color of fruit, faded fruit, or what's more, perhaps spoiled...or pimples? There's just no accounting for taste.

Ellen can stand to converse with you each morning, or afternoon, only for about as long as it takes her died pink, pooch of a poodle, to urinate. Which isn't all that long, especially in the afternoon, as Pooch (now, the latter, Pooch, with the upper case P is a proper noun i.e.: a god that goes by name God, again, a proper noun) but hey, that's his real name...that's both their real names). Donned in a pink doggie-sweater, this furry pink pimple of a mutt hasn't saluted anything since his morning walk which lasted long enough for Ellen to scarf down a cup of coffee, and subsequently boiling her little tonsils a raw shade of, what else, pink! You wouldn't have known that, of course, as they, Ellen, and Pooch, saw you coming before you saw them. Anyway...

It's off to work for her, and off to the front window seat for Pooch where she'll remain like a zit on the cheek of the seat cushion for the better part of an eight-hour work day □ not to mention

another two and a half plus hours of travel time to work and back, where he'll sit and stare and yap, yap, yap at everything from the mailman to a falling Mulberry leaf...

and Ellen's neighbors, as a rule, don't care much for Pooch. As always, when the pink poodle was finished writing his name in the desert dust, Ellen would scoop him up and hi-tail it back to her apartment. If, seen, or rather caught, by you, before her stealth retreat, she would surrender and fly a faded pink flag of...

"See ya Jonathon, have a nice day," thrown out like so much used toilet paper. Sometimes it would waif by Pooch's good ear and he'd respond to the dust kicked up by her rapidly departing heels and other mornings the words fell short of their mark and were trampled upon by Pooches clicking pink toenails. It wasn't that she didn't like you, Jonathon, in as much as you were always congenial to her, it's just that...well, she didn't really like you, Jonathon. To her you are a sort of irritation, like a raw pink hemorrhoid, or a blistering herpes canker-sore, oozing a faded-pink coagulating bodily fluid...

"That's all that guy does is complain!" Ellen told her sister, who was visiting her one afternoon, and asking about you.

"Really; about what?"

"Anything, everything! Everything and anything." Ellen returned, casting exasperation to the wind; then added immediately, almost apologetically..."Oh he's nice enough!"

"So what's his story?" Madeline further inquired "He's what...divorced probably, right?"

"Yeah, he's a son that's about my age, actually!"

"Cute?"

"Ohhhh, I'd never go there! He's a druggie, according to Jonathon!"

"You mean he actually told you that his own son was a drug addict?"

"Not in so many words no...He sorta let it slip one day when we were talking. He didn't actually say drug addict though...it was more like he was trying to cover it up when the conversation steered toward his family."

"Ohhh, it's not a good idea anyway to shit where you eat anyways!" while stooping to collect Pooches perspective on this subject with her hand gloved in a plastic baggy and not catching the irony because your uncanny ability to arrive on a scene suddenly where your, shall we say, presence was not exactly expected□to be more specific...without being too injurious; nor that your fairly rotund and deeply middle-aged presence would, on any account, be

specifically heralded, or would your anticipated arrival anywhere for that matter be preempted, say by the blaring of brass instruments closely, or not, followed perhaps by a tumultuous procession led by two, banner-carrying Eunuchs garbed in bright-satiny pantaloons performing a Michael Jackson, style moonwalk while carrying a fleur de leis adorned with gold tassels, either! Nor does any lack of enthusiasm on the part of your peers come as any particular surprise to you either—shouldn't anyway... One of the few areas of which you do not suffer from any delusions of grandeur... Congratulations on that, by the way. I could safely say that any look of apparent surprise upon your pudgy, yet rather non-descript mug, as you became within ear shot of their armor piercing prattle, would be undoubtedly feigned.

Ellen, spit up from between fingers clenched over her mouth, the drool could be seen running down her hands, if one were to look...you didn't. You just continued on by, quite preoccupied, as it were, leaving the two girls to misinterpret your naturally sullen disposition as anger, or hurt, or both, believing that you did indeed bare the wounds of their verbal munitions.

Jonathon, a tedious rather awkward name really, as opposed to John, which is what you were called by all for the first forty-some odd years of life until that fateful day, not much different than any other in the lower forty, in front of the television, when you, John, did what you normally wouldn't have... You happened upon, while plasma surfing, an Info-mercial, and watched it. In it's entirety, no less! The whole thing. Not that watching TV in and of itself was/is nothing unusual for you, info-mercials however was/is, for the most part, where you drew/draw the line, or rather, the channel. J o n a t h o n does not watch infofucking rip-off-o-mercials...no way! Except that one fateful day when that slickered, Gray Reef shark, skin suit with gray sideburns and the slickest, pimple-pink tie you'd ever seen said...

"Take hold of your life, before someone else does!"

You had just suffered a divorce, and left everything, I mean everything, to your ex who proceeded to spend it all on an all new early thirtyish version of what you J o n a t h o n envisioned yourself to be like at that age, although, you'd never admit to that. Nor, I'm sure, would you ever admit to having played the Santa role for the ultimate, and ungainly, and altogether unaltruistic of reasons. You, quite simply, gave the ex everything in the hopes of getting her back. To wit, how terribly UN of you. You knew it, what's worse is she knew it, and what was really pathetic and embarrassing is that

her boyfriend knew it! Oh, the laughs they must have had at your expense...For the shame of it all! Just where is the sanctity of the sand when you need it? The sand's probably hiding from you as well! Hold your head up meanwhile, forget the sand, think this through now, at least until you can find a place to hide said head in said sand.

Everything back, you figured, and live happily ever after...just like it's supposed to be! Yeah...just like in the old Hollywood movies. Boy, they knew what life was supposed to be like...sure they did, and so did you. By the way, is it John, or Johnny, John-Boy perhaps? Which is what Sally, your ex used to call you. Now, of course, she didn't bother to call you at all, unless a payment was late.

"Have some dignity..."

said the
gray suit, and...

"Start by not allowing a n y o n e to shorten you, by shortening your name! Don't be short sighted, think BILG, and start by using your complete surname! The next one was what really grabbed him. "If your name is J O N A T H O N, don't...I repeat, don't let anyone, ever, call you John again. People piss in a john! Don't let them pee on...."

Oh boy, you'd think a falling star from the heavens collided with your not so heavenly bod, huh J o n a t h o n? You could have passed for the Enlightened One sitting there on the couch: cross legged...starry eyed, and paunch. "This is the day ...thee day. The one..." they say, "that is the first day of the rest of your life! Halleluuuuyeh!" They conspiratorially left out "pathetic."

After being so discreetly shrugged off by Ellen, due in part, John, Johnny, J o n a t h o n, you reasoned, by Pooches ardor, you then proceeded to, surprise, surprise, turn on the television set that stands, and not so discreetly, atop a cheap floral printed, TV stand, placed right smack in front of your sofa. It is one of three pieces of pathetically, common furniture that serves as a constant and rather embarrassing testimonial to your lack of accumulated wealth of over, having burdened society of your presence, for over a half a century! Perhaps gate-crasher, is more apropos; society's gate crasher! The last...the third piece of furniture is a computer of which you were both proud and ashamed of...the latter, having more to do with your apparent lack of prowess with it. You turn your limited attention span to that piece of furniture while in mid-flight to the TV and your body follows suit, as it were, like a dog following, ever so closely, a particularly fascinating,

pungent scent, and stumbling as its legs try to keep up with its schnozzola, that just took a hard, right in hot pursuit. No special reason for having made note of this, except for the sake of imagery, a pictorial glimpse rather, into your obsessive/compulsive demeanor.

Up came the various icons.

You place the cursor, over the letter icon with the bent corner that reads Journal underneath, and double click to open that file. Jan. 19th was the last entry; you're somewhat embarrassed because that was over six weeks ago and...

"Didn't I make an entry since then?" you ask, to now one (present) as if the mind you have that's engaged in criticizing the mind you have, serves to relieve you of having to take responsibility for the mind that you have...thus one of those, your, minds commands the pods to enter March 1st, today's date. You then, after some deliberation, begins...I never really felt as if life were a race before today when crossing the street; I sensed the impatience of a driver waiting on me. True...I took my time, as I was in no hurry, but it wasn't as if I were some old man who just couldn't cut the pace anymore...

you pride yourself on your restraint to use the cliché mustard, and smirk, thinking: You don't cut mustard, you can separate it, but you can not cut a liquid...mind two confirms the first...

I truly just wasn't in any hurry. He was, in his shiny, sleek import, engine panting, nostrils flared just waiting for the gate to open so his black lacquered steed with low-profile, steel-belted shoes can bust loose with the energy of the apparent youth you left behind decades ago; as when I looked to see who was behind the wheel, I was surprised, don't know why, but I was, to see that it was an old man, much older than I, in fact! I was taken back by my reaction to this, rather than the age factor itself. That's when I realized why I was so surprised. I looked about me, which is something I'm beginning to notice that I hardly ever do anymore, due in part, I suppose, because there just doesn't seem to be many about these days that are my age or older. I guess it's because, as one reaches the finish line there are so very few around him. I never realized before that very moment that I was even in a race!

And the winner does stand alone in his empty hall of fame.

Here, have a stadium dog.

Chap 2

“Ahhh...my two favorite neighbors...Hi Ellen, hi Pooch.”

“How’s it going Jonathon.” said she, as Pooch waddled over to the lee side of Ellen and feigned preoccupation with a particularly aromatic patch of grass.

“Ok....not feeling too well though.” you answer.

Ellen starts to back away from you...Pooch backs away as well, right on cue; perhaps to avoid being impaled by one or both of Ellen's three inch stiletto heels.

“...not contagious, just an upset stomach!”

“Yeaah?” Ellen answered; a slight apprehension to her tone. Pooch assumes her prior malodorous investigation.

“I was wondering if I might use your phone for a sec...I need to make a sick call to work. My phone fell off the...ahh, it’s not working.” As you say this you remember a conversation you had with her concerning canceling the phone insurance.

“Sure! No problem.” smiling, to herself, while thinking, oh no! I’m not canceling my insurance. “So did you cancel the insurance on your phone?”

...certainly not intending to dig, yet she left a trench big enough to lay sewer pipe. Mindful, yet feigning ignorance ala George W. Bush, you continued on with your mission with enough preponderance, you believe anyway, is necessary to convince yourself that she is convinced that you did in fact not hear her inquiry. She didn't, as you perceived she wouldn't, repeat the question. After making your sick call to work, you thank Ellen, then rather sheepishly you head back to your apartment to...to vacuum, what else? Then, of course, the first order of business will be to go down to the Horizon phone-outlet, and obtain another aviary cage; again, what else?

So far, reader, we've traveled through eleven pages of edge of the seat anticipation of, and have not as yet even uttered a literary hint as to plot. Why stop now? No...John, John-Boy, Jonathon, does not get the girl...Ellen, her sister, nor will Pooch ever display anything other than a contemptuous sneer...nada, no-one. Quite frankly, Johnny's lucky just to get a piece of ass much less romance and a piece of ass. And I am indeed sorry to disappoint you, Johnny

Cat, but I can not do for you what you can't even do for yourself. I'm not God, you know, I'm just...well let's just say that I'm not the god you might have chosen, had you had your choice. Or, you can just assume that God, whatever god, has his/her/it's own, agenda...Extend and wave your right hand in the air and repeat after me, "It's God's will." Add a little staccato for good measure; but hey, enough said...You might do well to take notice of this nuda veritas as well, dear reader...Oh, and by the way, if you think you don't deserve what you get, then who does?

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And so, at the finale le grande of the next day, another fiery ball of passion took a cold bath, as it slid sizzling into the sea just over the horizon. Several hours later, on the other side of the world, assuming there's only two sides to this sidereal coin, the sea coughed up a gaseous hairball, and someone, somewhere, through an empty bottle at an alarm clock and buried their head back into the sanctity of a pillow...

...you find yourself alone today as your partner called in sick this morning and you wonder if he subscribes to Horizon Wireless and if he keeps up his phone insurance.

"So what is this Jonathon, yesterday you're out and today it's your partner; what gives?"

"Hi Sarge, sorry about that, I must'a had a touch of the flu. I'm alright today though. I can manage okay without, if you can't spare anyone. I've got a ton of paperwork to do."

"Good," says the watch commander, "here's some more for ya."

"Gee thanks, boss; thanks."

"Hey, don't mention it, what's a boss for?"

You cringe a little when the boss calls you Jonathon because you're not sure if it's just his way of berating you□with good reason, after you got drunk that night at the policeman's ball and stood on top of a chair announcing to all that you're to be addressed forthwith□that's what you said alright, forthwith□as J o n a t h o n; no more John! This exclamation was further augmented by spewing forthwith, this frothy redolence, to the likes of which every person within earshot and projectile subjugation proceeded to yell, "To the J o n a t h o n with him," as a few of your sidekicks: Captain Thomas Horsewalor, affectionately labeled□behind his back of course□Horse-shit, included in this melee, who had the repugnant misfortune to have been standing where he was, and not duly imbibed by bib or

any other protection, proceeded to bum-rush you to the john, with you and he, dribbling with what appeared to be a mixture of fruit, vegetables (whole kernels of corn included) fermenting in what appeared to be a spoiled Peach soufflé. Perhaps it was the essence of peach flavored Stolichnikoff.

Since then, everyone has regarded you as Officer J o n a t h o n. And, to add the spice of further insult to the soufflé, your patrol car was unofficially renumbered 54. And your partner?: well he's not exactly tickled pink or even spoiled peach after that one.

At this point we must ask ourselves: Does John's, John-boy's, J o n a t h o n's life merit fiction? Is it the job of an author to make believe the make-believe is more than just make-believe? This, of course, leads us to the rhetorical question: What exactly is make-believe, as opposed to the real nightmare, ergo: reality?

John goes to work in the morning, he takes as many breaks as possible during the day, and he doesn't have to be too careful there as he/they have a pretty strong union. You, as a member of this brotherhood of the gun and badge, pretty much have to shoot an unarmed person, or rather, perp□let's call it like it is here, they're perps, not people□to be excommunicated. Perhaps this is a sort of classification ala convenience, this perp thing, to exonerate you from any mistakes that might occur in the course of a shift, ergo: the aforementioned; bang bang, your dead, is the way it goes, and that, by the way, is the way it went. Actually, truth be told, there was only one bang, and that bang will forever reverberate never to know the silence of closure, on the part of the one who performed the bang...and with such precision, I might add. You would have gotten such praise if this had occurred at the range on the two-dimensional metal target, but alas, it didn't and you didn't and now it's...

Chap 3

Soquel: directions: focus on the word now either until retina fatigue causes now to disintegrate or...

You think...

How could I have let that happen? Did I let it happen?

and you feel as if this, this incident how the Internal Affairs shrink referred to this, then, as just happened recently. Incident....How, how vague and how...how burlesque!

Incidentally, Mrs. Jaro, I, quite unintentionally assured Mrs. Jaro, managed to shoot and kill your teenaged son today after school...Oh, no, no. Oh, what's his name (a theatrical snap, snap, snap of the fingers: to summon the powers of trivial pursuit)? Oh yes, Danny...your oldest I believe; is he not? Such a delightful boy, I do hope you will accept our genuine apologies, and condolences.

Of course, this is all part of the ritual, the self-inflicted flogging that you go through on a regular basis. You really don't know what was said, or by whom, nor does it really make any difference what or how it was said. It might have been the above for all the difference it makes, and you know this.

Everyday you relieve the incident looking for a loophole; the way out of this mastication you've imposed upon yourself. Every fucking day for the last seven years, three months, two days, four hours and twenty-three minutes you hoped, you hope still, that you will find that somehow you were not entirely responsible...some tryst of words...word even, just one fucking word, some minute, overlooked detail...as if someone in the crowd, perhaps the person who yelled, "He's got a gun!" might have also said...

"Shoot!"

You did...

and although this still doesn't change anything, morally, legally, it's a silver bullet that's been patina'd to death, however silver being silver, it would, or rather it would make this situation much easier for you to handle, perhaps even make it possible for you to obtain a few nights of guileless sleep.

Just think, you think, one word...which would thereby change, that twenty some odd seconds that it took to transform my pathetic life into the hell it's been since.

Each day...it seems as though a challenge just to get out of bed in the morning. Some evenings, such as last night, you are afraid; afraid merely to even go to bed, lest you succumb to sleep and dream the dream...

...little boy without a face leads you by the hand to a casket at a wake. When you look inside you see yourself.

Then, the night sweats...You awaken as if you were buried alive and your screams might as well be silent for all the good it will do. The terror you feel, is both in the knowing that you'll never, not in this lifetime, find rest...and will you ever be able to put a face on the little boy? the little boy you've killed? But this is, in part anyway, your restitution as well. You don't see this, yet...Or perhaps you do. It's as if, when things get too close for you, you find sanctity from your restitution, and punishment in a bottle, like you did the night of, what the shrink with the graduate degree in euphemisms labels, the Incident...

You can still feel, smell and taste the acrid breath of your partner, Bottleneck Simon, as he leans into your face, practically falling off his barstool in the process, projectile whispering to you, in that lewd whiskey voice of his, in the general vicinity of your ear, "Don'chu worry about it dude, them Mexicans, they breed like flies, that muthe'fucker's mom's got a replacement already on the way!"

You wanted to punch him, didn't you, Johnny? Why didn't you, then? You know why you didn't, and won't, still. You didn't because this was to be your first taste of punishment□ala self-imposed punishment. You've eaten the fruit of the tree of self-abasement and you liked it so much you planted your very own tree! Now that the tree has been harvested and the yield was plenty, you indulge regularly and with almost flatulent abandon...You little piggy you! Having laughed, by the way, at your nihilistic, ex-Jar-Head's tasteless and spastic humor□humor that is always at the expense of some minority or other, and there are no shortages of minorities in Southern California, the pick'ns are plentiful and vine-ripe always. This, you feel, makes you a full-fledged charter-member, along with the Bottleneck of course, to the Scumbag Club of American Testes, affectionately known as SCAT...Sorry Johnny, couldn't

resist it! You should even have your very own glow-in-the-dark ring, and decoder. Aren't I the jeu d'esprit, you say under your breath.

Chap 4

...another montage of time and place:

The boat, your boat, gives sharply under your scotch and water-logged two hundred and forty-plus flabby pounds of leisure, guilt, and alcohol, as you step from the dock to the cockpit sole, temporarily losing your balance...

"Whoops!"

"Wooo, there mate, you almost ended up in the drink."

"Yeah, I'll drink to that." you say, dismissing the eminent danger with an exaggerated flick of the wrist, which might have come off as suave if one of those pitchers of beer you had weren't spiked...oh! And let's not overlook two drivels of ninety-something proof spittle running time trisls down your chin, which really put the bonnet on the puppet of said perfidy.

"We can't drink to that, we don't have anything to drink," says Willy, as if he'd just discovered a cure for his pre-mature baldness and mistakenly given it all to you, then eyeing this quandary, a steady, yet slight, stream of a ninety-proof amber liquid bubbling out off the corner of your mouth, with the sort of wantonness that a German Shepard might display toward the last morsel of prime rib being shoveled in.

You grab at this object d' arte of Willey's transfixion and watch it fall into the water after being severed from your mouth and grimace at your failed attempt to whatever it was you were attempting to do. Save it perhaps?

"...night Willy."

"G'night, Jonathon."

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You stumble through the cabin to the foc'sle, and collapse into bed without removing any clothing and in a few minutes you are perspiring noticeably as a very young boy, without a face, leads you by the hand up to the head of an isle. All throughout the evening there is no one to hear you whimper.

The late morning sun, searing through a porthole, centers upon your face causing you to awaken into a brilliance that is temporarily blinding, causing your arms to flail about in such a way that would have had quite the comical impact upon you had you been watching this on some old W C Field's flick, like "never give a sucker an even break..." sort of thing. But, you

weren't. And, a spastic fling of your forearm sympathetically, yet ineffectively, seeks to shield your eyes from the harsh glare. Silently, and with a sort of reverence, you curse the new day you rode in on. ...quite, not out of character; just as you have done almost each and every morning, month after tedious month, year in and out...the same.

You hope, on some subliminal level anyway, that this might be the day; not unlike one playing Russian roulette actually. Maybe, this'll be the one bullet in the chamber of a .38 snub-nose day for you. The one that'll end all those faceless children, all those night sweats, all the apprehensions, all....Is this that day...in, day out, wondering...Is it the day that will cancel out, redeem you, from yesterday, all those yesterdays in fact; all rolled up snug in a down filled nightmare, or like a rogue wave of magnanimous proportions rolling in on you in the dead of a moonless night a hundred nautical miles off the coast of Never-never land.

You grope for the alarm, finding it at the tip of your fingers you fumble briefly before hitting the snooze button, and you trigger it off, then fall slowly, as if through water, back to sleep...and you dream...

"Unit 64, domestic situation getting out of hand, request for back up...The address is 3684 Van Slyke Avenue, are you in location?" You are called to respond to a civil disturbance in progress; nothing new, just the same old shit, and delivered on the same old tarnished platter...they're regulars, these people, however this time there is a slight difference...a young, Hispanic male, just a boy, charges out the front door, you see him through bleary, blood-shot eyes, and you hear screaming, you're confused, someone shouts, you think he says, "He's got a gun!" You point and shoot yours, the boy falls down a flight of stairs to the sidewalk below, his legs and arms are splayed in impossibly awkward positions, if it weren't for all the blood, he would resemble a child's rag doll. There is no expression of pain, no lines of fear...or contortions of any kind at all etched into his smooth child-full face...his, his is a rather peaceful expression, actually, a placid expression, as if he were like one of those antique ceramic dolls that your mother used to have in a trunk in the attic, years ago.

Someone in the crowd that is rapidly forming, a little girl says this, and it sticks, "...looks like a broken doll. Is it dead Mommy?

Is it?" Is it? is he? you wonder? Is it dead...and you awaken, and your drenched...This is the question that defines your face almost

every morning □ depending on how loaded you were when you passed out the night before. You drag yourself out of the V-berth and head for the galley thinking perhaps there's Port, or Sherry perhaps, in the galley, something, anything...mouthwash, to stop the morning jitters. You briefly think that...

Maybe today I'll go and dry out.

You have insurance. It's not like you don't have the resources. If anything, you've got it better than most, as the Department takes care of their own, especially when it comes to alcoholism, and especially if it involves mental health, or emotional duress...

and there is no Port.

After projectile vomiting, followed closely by the dry heaves, you knock over your cell phone and the battery slides across the hardwood floor slamming into the wall. The now broken, plastic cover's riding piggy-back to the battery, spinning like the ceiling over the bed usually does...not the first time this has happened...either of this! It is however the first time you jumped up in the air and planted both feet □ you don't consider your bare footedness until at the apex of your jump...too late! So, you come down on top of the jagged edge of the battery cover, with fear and anger both reaching tsunami proportions as the blood spurts out from between your toes effectively staining the teak floors a brilliant crimson...

you are temporarily transfixed. You watch the blood flow as it forms a slight puddle □ not much actually □ it's just that you're immediately reminded of another pool of blood forming on a cement sidewalk under a child's expressionless face...

there are flashing lights, those of several emergency vehicles. The reflection of lights play upon the wet crimson surface...a spectacle of hide and seek, so you are momentarily entranced...but that was then. That was way, way back then. Not now, you remind yourself.

Oh how, you say to yourself now, just how much longer can I take this?

...and your attitude, now, is not forged from anything genuinely explicative of then, however this illustration is more a distraction, a means of maintaining, so you don't run screaming through a plate glass window. It is a game, that the guileless play upon themselves, to nurture there own abasement...One fades. And then...pop goes the weasel, another

appears...You, knowing this, as must most in any given similar situation of circumstances, use this, this knowledge, if you will, as a sort of safe-harbor to perhaps moor the inevitable...

Isn't it

fact, you would agree I'm sure, if you allowed yourself such foresight, that it is your future that harbors, or dictates your present? Until that day arrives, it is your perpetuity to trudge through what's left of your life from moment to tortuous moment...Yes?

Ah, but even this is too simple, isn't it now anyway. Now that your present masquerade has been revealed, the deception must accordingly become, shall we say, of a more sophisticated nature, or of a more complex dynamic. Complexities, such as this, or rather for such purposes as this, you could say, act as like some temporary oasis. One that forms, as if by prescription, then dematerializes, fragmenting into obscurity. This whole self-serving process is like the needle of a turntable stuck in a groove of the past. You intrinsically know how to stop this, but aye, it's not yet time, is it?

Chap 5

It's been a few years since you returned to the States, from cruising. Right now you're thinking about those four years you spent single-handling your sailboat on the Mexican Pacific. They were good years you say to yourself, as do most when contemplating the pleasantries only two doors down the hallway of the immediate past. You stayed sober when sailing from one port of call to the next. It was relatively easy for you to do that then, and still would be, you project, if you were to extend that cruise...to resume it...

so why did you stop, you ask yourself. You had it made, as they say. Made? Or so it would seem, if one were to effectively shut the door on the unpleasantries further down that darkening hallway to the distant past. You congratulate yourself, a sick sort of gratification and you know it, on your ability, on your dubious ability, to harbor the weight of guilt...

ahh guilt, further down that forbidden hallway do we now transgress...

You've thought of taking your own life. And you almost did a couple years ago. It was your neighbor, Ellen, back at the apartment complex in the Valley who dialed 911 sensing an emergent situation. You never thanked her either. You were afraid actually, afraid to face her, anybody really, who knew that you had tried to flush yourself down the terra cotta pipes of life. Literally speaking, you flushed your veins with heroin...

"I'd never used drugs before," you told the paramedics...

and, it's true, you hadn't, well...Not to speak of anyway. And you sure aren't a druggie, you surmise. And, you add, I wasn't then and I'm not now. Drugs are just not your style...good thing too, or you probably would have been successful if you had known what you were doing. But, you didn't know, so you weren't successful...How come this knowledge brings you no joy? And why...so why do you not try this again? What keeps you from trying it again? You really wonder... What? Why? Play it again Sam...Yeah?

...because. Because it's hard to flagellate yourself unless you're alive, enough alive to appreciate it; heh? Isn't that it? You really do have to question that....

"Welcome to Horizon Wireless, how may I help you?"

"C'mon, c'mon let's dispense with the bullshit, don't fucken tell me how important this call is, then put me on hol..."

"Sir...?"

"Huh?"

"You called us, Sir?"

...and you are temporarily shocked. You don't know whether the voice is real, or recorded, as is usually the case....you start to stammer, albeit silently, as if to catch your breath, then she interrupts, repeating...

"Sir?"

...your tongue fumbles around for placement to express something verbal, even a grunt will do, you figure. You surely don't want to loose the call because it's a real voice on the other end, as you are starting to realize, then...

there is only that lonely dial tone at the other end following a very distinctive click. Now you find yourself in a limped state of quandary, and this, of course, is followed by a very pronounced feeling of stupidity and embarrassment for having been so taken back by a real voice...or was it?

I'll call back tomorrow or something...hell I can go one day without a phone...surely I'm not that dependant, you say to yourself. However, the truth be known, and it is hiding somewhere in the bush, you don't call back right away because you're too embarrassed to do so; lest the same operator pick-up and recognize your silence...

so you go outside and take a walk in the park nearby that skirts the marina. Placidly looking at other vessels in their slips, perhaps hoping to catch Jessica sunning in the cockpit of her vessel, you acknowledge the day as beautiful, and on all accounts: the weather, the surroundings, the quiet activities, and the serendipitous possibilities of the afternoon...You do make note of it. Yet, as always, there's some degree or undercurrent of doubt, shall we call it? that you are given to an incessant posture of consternation? You do have to wonder, don't you?

...then, "You fucking asshole!" a sort of enraged whisper□you're an enraged whisper□silent but deadly. You look around sheepishly, to see if anyone was watching you not watch where you were going...No one noticed, other than the bicyclist who almost ran

you down, so you think to yourself; just like the way you silently, yet fervently, proclaimed your non responsibility for almost being run over, when in fact, it wasn't he that was at fault at all, it was you not paying attention to where you were going as your mind was already salivating over titties in a cockpit, or more correctly, the anticipation of titties in a cockpit!

"Asshole's riding a bicycle wearing blinders!" you repeat, somewhat louder this time having ascertained that there is no one within earshot to laugh as you light up like, and project like, a slide carousel showing vacation photos.

The convenience store, located by the end of the parking lot, within easy walking distance, won't be open for another ten minutes, so you dawdle along as you pass by J-dock, casting furtive glances over to slip number J-11, Jessica's floating abode. You are about two minutes too late, as she is now seen by you to disappear down the companionway of her sailboat out of your sight, but not, as they say, out of mind...not your mind!

"I have to wonder," you say to yourself, "I seem to be too late or too early, and if on time, I'm too something else! What the fuck is wrong with my life? Why am I so bereft of...of the simple pleasures even?"

The old answer to that perpetual question is starting to smell like fish after three days without refrigeration, or pussy, three days without a douche...fishy is the word...fishy, fishy, fishy...and you know it. And I know it! I know it only too well, don't I? You just don't want, or feel, that I have any right to put skin on the face of it. But, enough time, enough time, you'll take care of that for me won't you?

On your way back to your boat with a cold twelve-pack in tow, you stop by the Marina's post office to pick-up your mail. The dock-master is leaving his office just as you arrive and the opened beer in your hand does not go unnoticed....

"How's it going?" He says this to you, and the smirk on his face goes challenged by you as you look directly into his eyes...

...why hide it, you figure.

"Breakfast of champions!" and you raise your brown paper bag in toast.

"Right," he answers.

"Asshole," you say to yourself.

"Asshole," he says to himself, or so you perceive.

"Here," he says, presumptuously, as he hands you his master key for you to use—he, assuming the obvious, that being, of course that you forgot your own.

"OH..."

but, you figure: I'm not going to give him the pleasure.

"Don't need it." Then you add, trying not to let your voice deceive you, "Thanks, though."

There's a letter in your box, but you don't have your key with you and rather than accept his you act as though you're just there to look at the buy and sell bulletin board on the wall. You'll get your own key later, after he's left. And, you do. After

you've retrieved the letter finally; after walking back to your boat, putting the beers in the fridge, then taking them back out again thinking...

he'll notice, meaning the Dock-master, of course; as you cross over onto the dock on your way back, you discover that you've forgotten the key, curse; then you cross back, slipping on the gunwale and almost, almost, losing it, along with the case of beer you're carrying as well. You then grab the keys in an angry swipe of the left hand, as if they, the keys, were conspiring against you...

...one more curse for good measure and it's off to the PO Box.

The address on the letter is handwritten, and the style is all too familiar, of course, it's from your ex. You open it, and the letter, however only after putting away the rest of the beers, carefully putting away the precious stash of Corona's, after twisting off cap, which you fling across the companionway into the trash can...bing, it bounces, rims, bingo! Inside...A basket! You're so adept! Then, you settle down into the cloud of cushions upon your settee and take a long, thoughtful pull off a cold bottle of Corona—no lime—why bother? Now, after settled in, like big, bad cheeks on a banana seat—although, it could be said that there's not that much difference...

You reluctantly unfold the letter after ripping it out from the envelope, and ripping a brite one from between those cheeks as well, and you begin to read the letter which...

Well, it's pretty much as you suspected, your teenage boy has been suspended from school for selling pot to a narc on school premises and she, your ex, Jennifer, just doesn't know how to handle Randy, YOUR son. Neither do you, but you don't let on...

Now you grasp the opportunity to: curse the broken phone, knowing that she, your ex, is probably going bonkers because your phone isn't working and of course this means you'll have to go purchase a new one...you still haven't relented to the carrying of insurance...

And, if anything else, you are consistent, as well as stubborn, a trait that's been undoubtedly passed on to Randy, soo...

What to do now, you think. As if you didn't know...nevertheless, you're not budging until you've finished your beer, as well as the two that will follow it. The fucking world will just have to wait, that's all! And, from your perspective, it does, for now anyway, of course...

You will, after a time, spread them, the wings, and the cheeks□in a matter of speaking□and fly, coach class, to Austin, Texas to see your estranged family, but for now it's all about floating on a lager cloud and that...well, I've got that down, you tell yourself.

Chap 6

The manager at the Horizon office remembers you from your last visit, or so you project, by the way her prominent jaw drops, ever so slightly, when her heavily massacred eyes accidentally collided with yours...

Can I help you? is what you think she's about to ask, to sort of spare his own the frustration of having to deal with you. You're somewhat surprised when she doesn't...that she actually turns tail and boogies, leaving any and all, namely you, to each fend for themselves/yourself. This does embarrass you...Rightly so! However, business is business and the manager, after having regrouped, you might say, from the flask in her office, opted to sortie...in fact, the pert little thing, who was new to customer service the last time you were here, you might say, has been in practice...Oh yeah! She's ready for you alrighty and you better believe that she recognizes you as well.

"Can I interest you in our latest in hi-tech plastics mista (mister)?" She hesitates, and then blinks her jet-black Cuban brights at you, just irking for you to blow it so that she can cut you to pieces with her Brooklyn, Latino-stiletto, attitude of hers. She smiles as she..."Theese phone weel weethstand even a Cuban temper, Meesta." She winks at her assistant office manager as she says this. And she, in turn, smirks and smiles warmly at you...Well sort of, smirks anyway, and no, not warmly, not at all warmly. This much you ascertain, it's condescension, if anything, and it sure is something, if not anything, and that is precisely the way you see it, and...

like a good
consumer, you've replaced your phone, with the new space-age proof plastic, but...
you do have
your (pride?) so you won't sign up for the insurance when the issue comes around...

"Why so much, I don't understand?"

"It's company policy Mista John..."

You interrupt..."Jonathon."

"...jess (yes). Anyone who purchases three replacement phones in a year ees (is) considered to be a reesk (risk),and since the technology is being constantly eemproving, de

phones are more...more sopheestecated (sophisticated), an shall we jus say, deelecate to..." she hesitates for emphasis, "...abuuse, Mista J on a t h o n"

...and, It was the smile that really set you off wasn't it...that Cheshire Cat thing, a grin, the I've got you now pal condescension of "Mista J o n a t h o n." Imagine! you fume, but just to yourself of course, she's definitely baited you, and you're not goin for the limburger. Oh no, not this time. Even though she's pushing, she's pushing your buttons alright. She remembers the last time you were here and she did her homework on you all right! What did she call you? How dare her diminish you like that, how dare her? You remain cool though..."Jonathon." You correct her, and you're proud of your control. She's definitely goading you, and she's good at it too! Oh yeah, but you remain cool...oh, sooo cool.

"Shall I sign you up for he insurance Meesta J o h n o t h o n?"

"I believe I'll pass on the insurance (now it's your turn)...uhh, Consuella, is it?"

"Mar r ria," she announces as if to make a point out of your not being too sharp there for getting her name confused□you do feign surprise...

"Oh jes, uh yesss, of course," you mock and in her ardor, she places just a little too much pedal to the medal of Mar r ria. The point you were trying to make about her real name being just as idiomatic as, Consuella, seems to have broken off in her pencil sharpener. It is, after all, very frustrating trying to drop a subtlety on someone like Maria, whose English is so...pigeon towed, you muse. You smile, as she rolled all those r's; sounding like a Harley-Davidson scooter fueled by Cuban rum. Of course, you repeat with just a modicum of the same condescension she showed you earlier, "Marrria." You're smug now. Your smile growing quicker than Sensimilla on steroids, and looking about as potent as the sweat glistened centerfold in a High Times magazine. You do an about face for dramatic effect, and, I might add, performed with all the style and show of a marine just out of boot camp, and march out of the showroom as if you were about to receive the Congressional Medal of Honor.

Ahh, but don't pop the cork on the Champagne yet, it's liable to produce a rather impotent report, one that 'I just drop the fizz out of fizzle, as this state-of-the-art, plasticine cover for the battery scoots across the slippery alabaster floor, on your victory walk out the building, and it's on a collision course for impalement with a stiletto heel that promises to deliver as much as three-hundred, angry, pounds per square-inch upon its strategically aligned convex surface, as one Beulah

Nightingale gosesteps into the lobby of Horizon wireless, sporting an attitude that's fit to be chained.

"Noooo," you pant...

crunch!

*

Back aboard, Ticket to Paradise, your thirty-four foot Islander sailing vessel...first things first, you pop open a cold one; this time you take the time to do it right, and slice a lime to squeeze down the bottle neck and jab at it with an ice pick to keep the mass from choking the throat of the bottle□strange you should flash on Consuella, or M A R I A when performing this...Maybe not so strange. You settle down into the sofa like a Pilgrim just off the Mayflower, and give silent thanks as the lager of the proverbial fountain of youth seeks its own level as it cascades down the walls of Canyon de Gullet, and barely a drop of Corona sweat makes its sparkling wayward passage down and betwixt the stubbles upon your chinny, chin chin.

After taping

together the cover for the battery of your cell phone, you call your ex...

"Hey babe, what's up?"

"Don't hey babe me Johnny cat," You cringe. Twice in one day...females. Johnny Cat? My god, what if someone were to hear this?

"Babe," you utter...and such a weak performance, at best!

"Shut up!" She drives on..."Where the hell have you been? I've been trying to reach you about your son? Don't you see the predicament I'm in? Do you ever think of anyone else first? Why can't you be...ya da ya da ya da?"

It's always your son, and your used to this when, and only when, there's something wrong and there always seems to be something wrong these days, so...While allowing her the time to run out of questions riddled with the depth charges of exclamation marks. And such marksmanship! Boy, she's no slouch when it comes to the attack. It's...

fuck you god and anyone else that tries to stand in her way, you've often said and...

in

between the whys and the don't yous, you flood the proverbial hatch with another cavalcade of Corona foam slaloming down the stubble stinted slopes of Mt Chinny...with no lime this

time...timing is perfect, after the death rattle withers away, and she, her mouth, remains still, yet panting as if she'd just experienced a climax and is now ready to light a cigarette. You've even suggested this on occasion. You know her so well, after all. Yet not now you don't, you intuitively know not to suggest this or any other snide remark and in what's left of this cyber silence, you begin to, not pontificate so much, as to pacify...to pacify with just a smidgen, just a nasty whiff, of your cop wisdom. You begin to arrange, with her, to pick you up at the airport upon you making arrangements with Southwestern Air. You will fly in to Austin, ASAP, you suggest, for a facetious (you don't say facetious) attempt at: Family-Home Evening! It's Father Knows Best, and the Bud Rutherford is in need of good fatherly direction about whether or not he should take the ugly girl, whom he asked first, instead of the sweet-cheeks cheerleader, to the prom...Ohhh, if it were only soo, yet for some inexplicable reason.

You are actually looking forward to this trip, for several reasons and not all of them being unselfish. However, the most apparent of them all originates not from the head with the view from the penthouse, but the...the other one, the other head that yearns for the basement. After all, you gripe...to yourself only, that you haven't been laid in quite some time and since she's not seeing anyone, you hope, an Auld Lang Syne toss in the sack is just what the doctor ordered. Or, would have ordered if consulted.

It's been a long, long day, and by now you sincerely hope for an equally lengthy night. Off with the phone, on with some smooth jazz, and with all the resolve of a Botticelli nude, you fall into that kind of sleep, where visions of pistons are hammering away in the clouds and the reflections of voyeurs are written, and oh so delicately, on the bedroom window as Juan Miro's, The Bride is Stripped Bare by all Her Bachelors.

Chap 7

Well, well, you're home now. The trip to Austin went well, you reaffirm yourself. I mean, it all looks sort of good to you, that is if you're not too demanding of what constitutes good. And you? No, you're not. It's either that good or the residual magic that's left over from a good blow job that has kept a semi-smug smile upon your pussy-glazed puss. It's all good, you say, and the extra added plus was that you were able to convince the court appointed elf in a seersucker suit representing your son to opt for a release in family custody with a reduced charge to that of paraphernalia...carrying a twelve months probation period with attendance to drug and alcohol classes. If all goes well and your boy is a good little probationary, the charges will be dropped, and he, your son, can do it all over again without being treated as a repeat offender.

It's all a revolving door...it's all water seeking its own level after being temporarily agitated....it's ACME Manufacturing getting rich selling the Willey Coyotes in blue uniforms utterly ridiculous concepts to capture the illusive. You've seen it so many times before, the same kids, always the same kids. The only difference is the age and how the judicial system deals with those progenitors of the judicial mechanism...the feed, the fodder that keeps the system going...

and for Christ's sakes, you say to yourself, as you've said so many times before, they, the criminals, those sacrificial lambs of the social structure...

...and your blood pressure moves toward the red line on the tilt end of the spectrum from some ACME contraption from within the wonderful world of Hanna-Barbera, where steam is ventilated out of your Wiley Coyote ears as you consider the likelihood of...what could be, the inevitable fate of your son, so...

You put a DVD, pull on a Corona, and try to put all your thoughts behind you. You're watching The Dear Slayer. There's a part in this movie where a wounded Marine is carrying somebody worse off than he back to safety and your mind still won't let go of the fact that there really isn't anything you can do about your son. You can not save him any more than you can save yourself. The Marine takes a direct hit so now they are both down and

you? You're pissed off and you deal with that anger the way you've been dealing with it for the last umpteen years...

“put the lime in the Corona and drink it all up.”

Two more bottles and no more thinking. No more thinking and no more depression. And so, Mister Cronkite, "...that's the way it was," and...

After the fourth beer, your thoughts run back to sailing. You are twenty-five miles off the coast of Punta Baja, Mexico. The breeze is a stiff twenty-five or so knots and you're on a beam-reach with the one-eighty jenny up, the largest sail in your inventory, and you are well ahead of the other two boats that you're racing. You will get there first, no doubt, you were confident of this right from the beginning even though the other two vessels over-power your own. Your confidence lies in your capacity of as a skipper, as well as your fearlessness, and...

The Dear Slayer is still playing in the background. The thoughts of Randy fucking up in school and you're not being there for him or your ex begins to permeate the now, just as they did then, off the coast of the Baja peninsula. There is the sound of some heavy caliber machine guns fading in as a small group of Marines try to make it to the safety of a fox-hole on the telly and amidst this you shake yourself awake...

that is to say awakened, from your daydreaming, to find that your vessel has headed-up into the wind causing the mainsail to flap violently, rat a tat ta ta ta. Suddenly you feel a bit clammy-like...cool, from the neck down, perhaps as if you were standing in a vat or tub of moderately cool water up to about the level of your shoulders but from the neck up you are perspiring...oh not much you think, yet enough to cause concern while your stomach feels like a kettle-drum being played by some obnoxious kid who refuses to take lessons so...

You pop a few Seroquil washing them down with another Corona. The lime is a mere formality now that easily manages to become overlooked, and...

"Good night," you say to no one in particular; at least no one present in this time and space...no one with a face.

*

The morning sun bursts through a slit in the shade that wasn't pulled down securely and must have slipped some during the night while you were asleep, or passed out, "Whatever," you say. The headache you have strongly implicates the latter, and...

There's a slight breeze just starting to pick up and it feels refreshing for just a minute parcel of a second as you feel a touch of cool evaporation upon your face. You begin to squeeze out a fart, flexing your cheek muscles together, so as not to...

"How's it goin John?"

Too late! Now your upper lip is cocked to one-side exposing your not so pageant pearllys, as a warm, runny, tingling sensation down the backs of your thighs begins to grab your attention, cohabiting with a growing need to punch someone, anyone, anything...puppies, kittens even a baby or two...Too late, and...

your neighbor, who calls you John, wants to know how it's going. He's shortened your stature, cut it in half actually, but you'll say nothing. It somehow just doesn't seem worth the effort, because...

there is this insurmountable need to go below, but the Mississippi Mud has already burst through the levee and is beginning to course down betwixt the back of your thigh and calf and your pant leg, which by now has gotten to be a quite the sticky wicket as the English would say....

"Fuck'em..." you retort. Here in the good ol'USA circa 1967 it's: "So, it's knee deep in the big muddy, and the big jerk says, push on!" And,

despite all this, you do hang in there. I've gotta hand it to myself, you think...You answer, feigning nonchalance or trying to anyway.

"Okay Tim, okay. Seems unusually bright this morning doesn't it?"

"That's because it's noon John boy. Heh, heh, heh."

You asshole! you're thinking.

"...had a rough one last night eh? Which one of the twenty beers you had was poison John-boy?"

You cringe at the John-boy, and the tonal quality, or lack of. His voice is beginning to wear on your mind like sandpaper on glass.

"Jonathon..." you say...feebly.

"What's that Johnny?"

"Ohhh nothing..." as you duck back into the safety of your cabin, out of sight out of mind; to coin a phrase.

Your neighbor, apparently in need of giving away the gift of condescension to whomever he feels is the most likely target to be in a vulnerable enough state of mind to receive such a gift, sees you as the bull's eye. Your neighbor is fixated upon your every move as you try to make your Napoleonic retreat back down the companion-way into the safe bosom of Waterloo where you'll curse every God, from Allah to Zeus. A fart that's all! Just a fucking fart is all I wanted to do. Get rid of some bad air is all...Jesus fucking A Christ! So,

as you drop your drawers you notice that you are partway on the new carpet you had installed just weeks ago..."Shit!"...A very clever way to put it□you'll resolve this later, much later...

you now have the pants all the way off and the shit is all rolling downhill, as shit will do, sticking here and there along the way to the steps of the companionway, on the fucking settee that is just along the way top the head where a big amorphous clump slithers down the back of your leg, and

you really don't want to deal with the clothes just now...Ever? You don't care to wash the filthy things so you stuff them in a garbage bag and double knot the opening and toss them outside into the cockpit to be taken out with the trash after the shower...

of which feels like a piece of heaven as you stand there with the hot water cascading over your head and neck and for now the world is just okay. If you could see your face now you would be startled at the appeal you give off with your smile being as expansive as it is...now, while under the shower...your shit-stained anxieties are caught temporarily in a whirlpool before disappearing down memories' sewer.

Chap 8

That feeling of joy sustained from basking in those warm, warm waters of the propane gas, fueled water heater begin to wane like the moon in some dime store (if there is such a thing as a dime store anymore) romance novel...So...You begin to, to back away, from yourself, from the shower which has suddenly gone cold and you're now realizing how temporal are the things of life's sweet poisons. You're also starting to feel sort of, of not being valid. In fact, you start to discount that feeling of joy you supposed, entirely counterfeit, you think, merely because of its transience, so...

You start to withdraw, as if jilted by providence so many times that you are jaded to anything that even remotely resembles repose. Resisting, is more your cup of Hemlock at this point in time. You've formed a protective shield, a cocoon, against the lies, or rather against what you interpret as lies...lies, lies lies you say to yourself. Lies that insinuate that all is well, or even can be well, and even though you know intellectually this not to be true, intellectually anyway. Emotionally? well, that's another arena...life on another planet! You're still, after all, that jaded person who won't accept those visions of, what you refer to and with so much contempt as, visions of sugar plums. So...

You stop this, or any enjoyment...Stop it! before it gets a chance to harm you again as it has so many times before...But what is this IT, anyway, and why does IT have such a stronghold?

*

A bar of Stairway to Heaven that sounds as if it's being played on a toy ukulele breaks the reverie..."You're it! Just thought I'd call to see if you're planning to go to the Shoreline Grill for happy hour, call me when you get the chance, and don't flake, it's your turn to buy Jonathon," is the recorded memo on your message center After hanging up (or whatever you do to a cell phone to break or stop the connection) you check messages. It's Phil Holland, someone, a friend...See, I do have a friend, you say to yourself...a fellow boater whose about as worse off as you, that you met at the bar upon your arrival to the marina from your Mexican cruise and...
speaking of
delusions of grandeur, your mind goes back to those few years that you had free from the

torment of guilt...or was it? Was it then, what you now perceive it to have been...then? Is it? You wonder.

Complications! Keep the world fuzzy and unreal. No stark defining contrasts that threaten to bring clarity, and by all means avoid critical thought because they just might bring resolutions and that is something you are deftly afraid of isn't it? You know it is and you don't feel you deserve it.

You go to the navigation desk where you keep your laptop and stare at its vacant yet challenging screen like it was some sort of entity, some one-eyed Cyclops devoid of facial features, yet nonetheless alive...Very much alive you fear...An entity alive with the threat of truth...Truth is your punishment. You've known this for quite some time now, yet truth is also a blank screen of deserted hopes.

Chap 9

You order the first pitcher of ale and you pay for it, Phil acquiesces and, as if this generous offer should not go without proper fanfare, he gives you that good-buddy slap on the back. You look around, there are a few unfamiliar faces, probably tourists for the most part. Their presence here is as intrinsic as are flies around feces. You go and make your pilgrimage to the free hors d'oeuvres...chili-cheese nachos, of all things...No class, you say to yourself. You don't really like this place. Nor, do you the flies (regulars, not the winged creatures) that frequent here. The irony of your non-partisan association with these wingless insects flies stealth-like right over your head much as a B-52 over a Braille Institute.

So, why do I come here, you ask yourself. Either Phil is thinking the same thing as you, or your thinking has become considerably voiced.

"Why?"

"What was that Philly?"

"Oh nothing, except that I was wondering why we always come here and it might be fun to go somewhere else.

"The problem is that we'd have to drive there and risk getting a drunk driving arrest and have to spent the whole fucking weekend with assholes puking their guts out in a cell not much bigger than a cage for hamsters...That's why Phil."

"Jeeze, take it easy there John...Yeah, yeah, yeah, your right. Besides...this place ain't that bad really. The beer's cheap, you gotta giv'um that."

"Jonathon...the names Jonathon!"

The other reason, and perhaps the most consequential, is that you get to ride your launch here, to the bar, and tie off right there on the patio which, of course, overlooks the marina. That you like, it makes you feel more...more like a sea-dog instead of a landlubber Matey...

half-seadog, you think to yourself.

Of course you'd never admit to this to anyone, that would be like admittance of...

well, it's juvenile, isn't it? you ask yourself?

"Ohh, fuck it!"

"What?" Phil says somewhat flabbergasted at your blurted remark.

"Ohhh, noth.."

"Hey pal," says Phil. "Your not loaded already are ya? Man are you a cheap date!"

*

The combination of chili-cheese nachos and cheap draft beer is not a winning one, unless you are prone to gastritis and enjoy the sensual flapping of the roids, then, of course...

"I'll hit the jackpot," you tell yourself.

"What's that?"

"Oh nothing, Phil."

"What say we hit the road?"

"Sure Phil."

You gaze across the channel to a sailboat you've lusted after from the very first time you saw her...It's a she too, you think, and for a moment you're back in Mexico...Sea of Cortez perhaps, with a buxom blond at your side, muscles bulging, yours, of course...her looking at you like you were Neptune himself.

"Earth to Cap'n Jonathon...."

"What the fu...Oh, sorry mate."

"No problem Captain Jonathon. Just wanted to make sure we were on the same boat here."

You drive down the channel to your slip with a flashlight for running lights, trying to be as inconspicuous as possible, because driving a boat while intoxicated is the same as driving an auto as far as the law looks at it. Being as you're an ex-cop you know the penalties are pretty stiff, so you turn off the flashlight as you motor past the Harbor Patrol docks. You like the suspense. You've heard that the psychological make-up for a cop is about the same as that of a criminal... also, you used to, years ago, laugh at this finding...No way, is what you used to say...Now, you give it some thought, not much, just some. There's more to this than titillation, you think...There's the feeling that there is more to life than just the mundane, daily drab that everyone tends to push and shove over...jobs that you spend most of your waking hours performing...work that means literally nothing to you, to anyone, for that matter and yet they have to fight just to keep them! How incredibly cruel...this meaninglessness...life is....How terribly, terribly cruel. How...and how demeaning it is to be subservient to nothing more than a

mechanism of economics, the great Capitalist Econo-structure. I'm just...I was just a glorified security guard for elite...the beautiful people.

"Beautiful, my ruddy ass..!"

That's all the job amounted to...

And I, where did I fit in? I

was feeding my brothers and sisters to the great beast of economics. I was the maintenance man for the infrastructure...I was the infrastructure....

"What's this about a ruddy ass? What tha fuckaya thinkin about there Cap? You gonna loose it on me again?"

"Ohhh, just bullshit, that's all."

"I know what ya mean Cap. Iss depressing...urp, 'scuse. It's depressing, I know. Your concerned about the money you left as a tip...that you didn't mean ta leave, aren't Cap?"

"Naww, I'm just depressed that's all. Every day we do the same thing over and over, and it just gets to me, ya know?"

"Ohhh, ya shur I'am urp...I agree too. Why'ant we go to the Lighthouse tomorrow night? I hear they have good freebies, and the berr is not, urp, that bad...price-wise I'meen. Okay Cap?"

"...yeah sure, sure." What do you expect from him you think...

why the fuck do I hang out with him so much...He's a fucken drunk...big time, just a f'n drunk.

At the same time you know why...Oh, you'll never admit it though. You'd never admit that the real reason you hang around him is that he's so fucked up that you, in comparison, come off as being quite right actually, so you think anyway. It's great sport for you after all, to compare your insides with someone else's outsides.

You drop him off at his dock, you drop a, "G'bye seeya tomorra," and head out to the channel to your own dock you sneak back to your own dock. You don't want to attract unnecessary attention□Harbor Patrol attention.

It's the same thing, day after day after week after week, month after da, da, da, da, da, and da. It just doesn't get any better either□worse in fact□it gets dreadfully worse, and you don't see any end to it. Looking forward to tomorrow is

like the proverbial pot of gold at the end of the rainbow, it lies on just the other side of the horizon...

but, you're not paying attention. The wake you hit formed by a passing powerboat traversing the channel causes a bit of a spray, not uncomfortable, just a light spray and the mist sends you back to Mexico, where...

you're running wing and wing, the one eighty jenny is full, the main sail is extended at right angles to your direction and the sea spray on your face feels cool and exciting in the hot afternoon Baja sunshine. Your feeling competent, not reckless, as you skirt one of the most dangerous reefs along the Baja California coastline, the Sacramento Reef, you can see the waves braking, and the waters churning over the potato patch area of the partially submerged reef.

You are confident of your sailing and navigating skills and prudent sailing dictates you stay just far enough away so as not to run aground on the treacherous rocks of the reef. You're going to win this race hands down...no problema and you do...

...your tired, and a bit tipsy. You lash your ding to a cleat on the dock, and step a little too confidently onto the dock and then onto your vessel's gunwale. You catch yourself on one of the stays with your left hand as you board to prevent you from almost ending up into the channel waters.

Most embarrassing, to yourself.

Once aboard, you go to the fridge, crack open a Corona, swallow two Seroquil, and wait a few minutes. It's perfect timing on your part. You're thinking,

practice makes perfect...

and you close your flop onto the bunk, after removing you clothes, shut your eyes, and without fear you fall asleep. There will be no faceless children tonight, only a deep sleep, without transient memories of violence infiltrating your dreams, and if there is you'll not remember anyway...

and there isn't.

Chap 10

...awakening, you feel strange, like you've walked out of the house (in your case, the boat) and left something behind, something vital perhaps like a wallet, keys perhaps. But that's not it at all, it's wet, the bunk, you're all wet...not from sweat. You feel a instance of paranoia, like a rush from hitting a drug, because you think it's the usual night sweats, and you're immediate fear is that you will remember the dream you had last night. But I didn't dream at all last night, you rationalize...Or if I did, I certainly have no memory of it, yet fear is what you feel nonetheless and you hope it is just the habit of waking up soaked. All this is taking place in just a nanosecond, it seems and...

your next thought is that you dreamt of that faceless child and perhaps this time the child did indeed possess a face, and that maybe, in your sleep, you might have recognized□

all of a sudden your ability to navigate the obscure waters of unpleasant memories without feeling as if you're going to end up emotionally marooned on a desert atoll surrounded by water is insurgent. That's when, dear Captain Bligh, you realize that your logic has not scuttled ship, you've simply gone and wet the bed. Embarrassing? Yeah, sure, yet you figure safe enough, and you are relieved. It's laundry day today anyway...

moments later, you're feeling so relieved that you spend an extra fifteen minutes in the hot shower as a sort of reward...a wet warm pat on the back, a gesture for recompense, for not having abused yourself in La-la-Land last night. That's what it is, you know this as well, however you'll never cop to it though. You are victimized...By what? by whom? Victimized by whomever or whatever makes up the rules...You'll do well to leave this identity vague. You've convinced yourself to navigate the obscure waters of unpleasant memories without so much as a compass or a chart for validation of this.

Bon voyage!

You're now feeling somewhat tired after your plunge into the warm springs of rejuvenation. So you relax a bit, close your eyes, and lo and behold you're giving yourself a rest...Hope for the best.

Your mind starts to drift off, you're aboard your vessel, Ticket to Paradise, and the wind has set the shrouds to vibrating, meaning your sails are trimmed efficiently to a Reach, there is no luffing of the sails at all either on the Main or on the Headsail...no spilled wind at all...very professional. You pride yourself...You're feeling in control, like your some kind of helmsman, a real Connors kind of guy, racing in the Transpac...A real legend in your own mind you are. The sound of the vibrating, stainless-steel rigging is like a string concerto to the musician...really in your element,

again, you think as you often have...Why don't I go back? Why did I even stop? and the answer□you knew once□and the scrutiny now is just ritual...there does exist a vague, yet most significant allusion to reason...something about returning to be responsible...

to what, to whom?

Something you heard once, years ago...and strange, you think that it should avail itself now, yet...

"If you don't deserve what you get than who does?" you thought this over, then...then wrote it off as some wise-ass or frivolous sort of thing...a joke really. That was then, this is now, and it sure seems crystal clear, almost too much so...naïve really, so...

You say to yourself, I do deserve the shit I'm going through just by virtue of the fact that I, and no-one else, is experiencing the situation that only I can...I've put myself into this...It's one that I myself have created.

You readily admit this and you admit also that this is some form of chastising as well. Yeah, yeah, yeah, you've been there before, nothing new here. Why, you wonder, does it not make any difference? Why won't this knowledge be enough...enough to institute change? But, you unhappily resolve, it's not, and it won't...this sort of dooms day prevailing attitude of yours. You see yourself, just for a moment, a fleeting moment, as it were, sitting in a wheelbarrow and being pushed like some luggage or baggage, by yourself. The implication of course is that you are your own baggage. It is you, your very own fat ass of a guilt trip that weighs you down. You, and you alone, that is responsible...

So wake the fuck up! you say, and at the same time you feel its infecundity.

So,

do you? Will you ever? Is it even possible for you to? Is this knowledge part of my punishment...you wonder. Are you fully awake to the fact that you're on the way to the guillotine? And, of your own free will? And, that is your self inflicted dictate, your retribution, if you will....To realize that the joy within you is dead does not make for a change in constitution...quite the contrary! You're thinking how it only makes it worse and you feel the barrenness and that's how you know you're alive...Feel sorry for yourself?

For as long as you can remember it's been like this...This sort of undercurrent of guilt. As if you were some sort of magnet that attracted episodes that lead you to some generalized sensation of shame. If shame was a place, a location, a town, you would indeed be the mayor and have sole propriety to the key to the city. A funny simile, yet you're not laughing are you?

Still, you do maintain a modicum of a sense of humor. You're a survivor, whatever that means...

And today that means you're going sailing, cruising...sort of...if only to Catalina Island. Perhaps two, three days...It's only a day sail to get there, you know and you have nothing of any real consequence to do in the next few days, so...It's only twenty-six nautical miles from home port, not like you're sailing across the puddle to Hawaii or something...So, you head out, without your neighbor. You'll radio him later.

You're almost out the channel now and you begin to raise the sails: first, the Mainsail, then the 180-Genoa. That's the procedure. Once past the breakwater the first of the ocean swells lifts the bow, as if to examine you and your vessel...However gently, ocean swells such as this are very gentle...No green water, as they say, meaning the water doesn't splash over the bow past the mast and into the cockpit as in a confused sea during a storm. They are gentle, sure, yet powerful, to lift a ten-ton vessel so smoothly, effortlessly, then roll on, under and past. It all feels so good, so right. It's as if you've crossed some threshold into another world when you pass the entrance buoy, where nothing outside of the here and now matters or even exists, for that matter, and it doesn't and that's the beauty. That is the beauty...

For now you are very aware of being alive...in this moment, only...

You trim the sails, letting them out until they luff, then draw them in until they stop fluttering. The wind is crisp and from the starboard quarter. You set the auto-pilot for eighty-nine degrees, magnetic. Now you sit back on the lee side (high side) and relax, savoring the moments...

because for you, this...well, sailing in general, is like leaving the planet. It's as if your whole psyche breathes a sigh of relief. Your attention is suddenly drawn to the sound of water breaking...a splashing sound punctuated by the sound of an exhale...Porpoises, suddenly there are porpoises all around you and the splashing you hear is made by two porpoises located forw'rd breaking the surface as they ride, or surf, your bow wave. Hanging over the bow rail you look directly into the eye of a porpoise that has turned at an angle to cast an eye to you. It's sort of jarring because it's obvious that he is as curious of you as you are of him/her. You've experienced this several times in the past while cruising in Mexico. It's uncanny because you can sense an intelligence there and rightly so...You can recall several years ago reading about the studies of a Dr. John Lilly who, at the time, was performing extensive research on the subject of communication with this species. You also witnessed in San Diego harbor, a group of Navy personnel involved in a project with a Bottlenose dolphin.

Despite the grandeur of all this, you feel a tinge of guilt, like you don't have a right to enjoy all this, and that you have unfinished business to take care of and that you are avoiding responsibility...Perhaps the eye of the dolphin is one of accusation...a warning perhaps. Nonsense, you tell yourself...fucking unadulterated non-fucking-sense. However, it's one thing to tell yourself something and quite another to believe that which you tell yourself, especially when it's reactionary.

Now, the whole scenario has changed, like weather, as the winds of change clock around suddenly from a different direction and the barometer falls like lead ballast...

There's a storm brewing just over the horizon. You let out the jib-sail, just a little, even though the winds haven't picked up noticeably...yet. Nor has the direction altered profusely. The NOAH weather forecast predicted smooth weather, fifteen to twenty knot winds, from Point Conception to the Mexican border. So you relax. The universe is not out to get you. You begin to wonder if perhaps that's why you quit cruising. You're thinking then may have been just that...fear. Fear that god and the universe were conspiring to punish you for your iniquities.

All of a sudden this trip has become boring, with the steady rhythmic rocking-horse movement, from forward to aft, is making you a bit nauseous. You're beginning to wonder just what it was you were looking for when you left this morning, you know that you're subject to sea-sickness and now you're all of a sudden hungry, yet the very thought of food, especially greasy foods, breakfast foods: pork sausage, bacon....

And it's another beautiful fucking Southern California day aboard your Ticket to Paradise. If you were any more appreciative of it you would jump overboard and frolic with sharks!

Thinking back...the first few days of the cruise when you left San Diego harbor for Mexico...Encenada, you were seasick then, but you had crew, Janice...and some crew to be sure! Where is she now, you wonder? You're wishing she were here now, with you, and that you were just beginning that two year cruise again. This wishing of your's tends to parch the thirst a bit, so you go below to the cooler and grab a Corona...and a lime this time. With your yacht knife you carve a wedge of lime to stuff down the bottle's neck and: bye, bye, seasickness...

You instinctively sought this remedy out years ago, and it's worked every time since. The smile comes back to you like a homing pigeon to roost. There's nothing like seeing the world through amber-colored glass bottles, you think...

especially with a twist of lime.

*

The island is only three miles away now. The old excitement of having reached your port-of-call tickles the groin like a tongue, causing you to rise up to the situation and salute the shore...you wonder why□it happens every time□when your destination is almost reached, that your dick gets excited. Janice used to laugh and give it a tug, and of course that only made the situation grow, so to speak...

Then, with no further ado, you'd drop anchor, drop your drawers, drop out of sight with her in tow. A salute to the occasion? she'd say. Since she's not here...No one else is either, you drop your drawers and do your best you can, with Rosy Fingers, to make do...

And
you do make do!

After the (ritual?) of making do, you motor ashore in the dinghy and head straight for the bar...Another time honored ritual?

The walk to the bar, here at the Isthmus, follows a short trail away from the beach and into a wooded area heavy with palms, and those flowers that look like they stepped out of a cartoon—a caricature of the Roadrunner, and so appropriate named, Birds of Paradise. You half expect Wiley coyote to run across the path, with some Rube Goldberg device from Acme Industries, looking to catch one. Your neighbor, Phil, is already at the bar having made port a few hours earlier than yourself, being a power boat owner—a speed boat, to be precise. He's now three sheets to the wind as they say, so he slurs his greetings to you as you make your approach to the safe harbor of a bar stool.

"Whattedyado get lost?" he scoffs.

"Something like that," you answer "Actually I was here over an hour before you, but had to go back to get my wallet."

"Right!" He slaps you on the back, palzy-walzy style.

It doesn't get much better than this. This you intuitively know. That's why you order a double Jack on ice with a beer chaser. In a few minutes—you also intuitively know—it doesn't make any difference that it doesn't get any better and because of this it automatically gets somewhat better and that's just enough to make this all bearable: "Double Jack on ice and a Corona...Oh yeah, and gimmie the beer with a lime wedge."

"So how long are you planning to stay?"

"I don't know yet. Maybe the rest of the summer...then go south for the winter this year."

"Going cruising again?"

"I'd like to...I think..."

"It's a lot of work to prepare, isn't it? Although you've been cruising before, haven't ya? And, it shouldn't be that much work for you to get ready to go, huh? Just maybe some maintenance stuff right?"

"Ahhh, there's always something, and you have to carry a lot of spare parts...rigging, mechanical...and I really should get an EPIRB."

"Don't you already have one?"

"No, I went without last time. It's not really all that necessary...I mean, hell, if the boat goes down, you're gonna go down as well. That's the way I see it."

"Yeah, but it helps."

"Oh yeah, don't get me wrong, I would definitely get one this time around. It's just...well...they're so damn expensive!"

"What about a life raft? Are you going to use your inflatable again, or get a real one?"

"Inflatable...can't afford a real one."

...the conversation rambles on and on like a sun stroked cowboy wandering across a desert...That is, lost and riding across a desert. You take a sip; a sip? (Is that a euphemism or what?) of your JD and nod to the barkeep to keep up with you. He's already on top of it, having jockeyed drinks his whole work-life, he knows a drinker when he sees one and he saw you coming...Right off the street...

...must be the bulbous nose, you figure. Hey Rudolf! is what the Barkeep's eyes are saying when he looks your way. All you have to do is nod yes...

That's what you do, and...

Booze, doth set the olde tongue free, and yours and your buddy's are like stallions running at the Exacta at Santa Ana. Place all bets...

"Do you drink this much when you're cruising, I mean when you're out at sea?"

"Actually no, I don't, only when I get into port. Then do I do it up."

"Don't be insulted but I think you drink too much."

"Ohhhh, look who's talking!"

"Oh, I'm an alcoholic, I know that...that's why I would never go cruising like you did."

"No...Only when I make port do I indulge...And then I do indulge! Then...like now. But hey, that's part of it all, we all do that. It's like...I don't know...Like a custom, or a tradition, or something...We all indulge. You know?"

"Tradition, you say. You make it sound like it's your duty to toast the suds to Neptune. That's a good one. You sure do tell a good one there pal, oh yeah, tradition."

You cringe at how ridiculous he's made you look and so, you do an about face with all the ease of a con. "You like that, do ya, Phil? I was only kiddin you know."

"Oh, of course! Don't worry you didn't fool this old fool for a minute."

Chap 11

...the call came in at about seven thirty, although it was early in the evening for such a call. It was just about twenty minutes before you and your partners' watch would be over. You were actually on your way back to the station when you received the call. Your partner, Thomas Crane, a rookie with only six months of duty under his squeaky-clean Sam Houston whom you were unofficially training, pretty much says it all...

"Fuck, damn-it...Let those mother-fuckers kill themselves!" his choice of words that were used to express his sentiment could have been your very own, at that time, anyway. So, to say you were training him is grossly understated. This sounded more like puppetry, manipulated by yours truly:

"Fifteen years of the same shit, in the same precinct, even the same offenders. It's always the same: She's drunk, she prods him, then maybe she calls him a limp dick or some other endearment...He's drunk, he hauls off an belts her across the eye...Fuck!...even the self-same eye as well right fist to right eye! You'd think after all these years they'd get at least a little creative, but alas, no...They didn't, and they won't. Meanwhile, the little boy, wide eyed and impressionable gets to watch this all...mentor/mentee. He'll learn firsthand, style and technique, to the point of perfection. When he grows up he'll instinctively know just what to do, and just what names to call her, as well as just how loud...Like, just loud enough to get your willies off, yet not loud enough for the neighbors to call the police. Oh yeah, he's been taught proper, he is. Hell! He'll be a real champ at spousal abuse, and somewhere in this mega City of Angels, is his future sparing partner, or rather, punching bag, I should say. And she's learning her role as well, also by professionals. And the beat goes on..."

"Why the fuck couldn't they have waited an extra twenty minutes...Why?"

"Hell we've even told them of our schedule, and warned them, and on even more than just one occasion...Fuck-dammit! It was just last week, remember?"

"You're right; we told them alright. I'm hauling the fuckers in, both of'm. You with me?"

"Fucken a man, fucken a right!"

And, you drove the squad car right up onto the sidewalk taking a shortcut across the grass that you were told not to drive on before by the scumbag realty company that manages these...Just tag them the Projects like everyone else does...as

well as several other ramshackle cathedrals from South-Central to Compton, and from Boyle Heights to Rampart...Rampart. Here is where you've called home for the last fifteen years.

You've often wondered why? Why this is so. Why do I stay here? I could get a transfer. I'll get a transfer. I would, it's just that...you've always had this creepy sort of feeling about this district, in general, almost as if it were...as if this were, like home actually...as ridiculous as that seems to you now. Yet, not a home at all, in the classical Leave it to Beaver sense...It's more like, a home that one has not yet realized...a premonition or admonition, yet in the abstract□something impending and inevitable...A crises? You've asked this of yourself so many times.

You made a big deal with the siren and the emergency strobe lights, then parked the cruiser with the front wheel, driver's side, right smack dab in the petunias. You then threw open the door to your chariot, stepped out, in a very deliberate fashion, thereby crushing and burying three new sprouts that were heroically growing just outside the perimeter of the garden□in spite of their being choked for root space by such formidable looking weeds...no time for flowers, you say to yourself while...

"Gun, he's gotta gun..."

a shot, you're not sure but you think it was your weapon. You cannot be sure though. "Who?" And this? It's all you can say while...

...all eyes□by this time there are many□are upon you. You start to come out of the fog and reality tells you something bad, very, very bad, has happened. You start to feel the burning sensation of bile creeping up you throat...You swallow and your throat burns. You want to throw up, but you don't. You are obviously more attentive to what you feel...escape the situation at hand, your psyche screams...To be sure you're still not sure what has transpired, but your hope is suffocating. Then, that was then, that moment of doubt was a sanctioned moment, its protection is only a mirage...a mirage in a desert of fear and futility...the moment was over before it even had a pauper's chance to begin, like a setting sun burning its way into the sea, quickly and deliberately disappearing over a famished horizon.

Your mouth...your tongue is swollen with arid remorse, a feeling that broaches the perimeters of understandings and can never be resolved. No amount of cool clean water can soothe the truly barren landscape of self-condemnation for an act committed that

reveals our hidden nature of what is distinctively human, but not at all humane...our tie to the material world we define as real, and our inability perhaps...and a denial of such, to comprehend, or even want to comprehend, this unequivocal bond to ourselves. There is something that is both holy and unholy about this kind of moment. Could it be, perhaps, as some colossal disgrace not to allow such a moment as this to happen? If an action, or behavior breaks the limits placed on our perspectives of morality...limitations purposely placed upon ourselves to keep ourselves free from ourselves. What if...What if we truly understood the truth about ourselves as beings, as just another animal that walks the earth, albeit in Nikes? What if? It's as if we beckon this moment on, out of frustration perhaps or whatever, so that this moment can become a headstone, effectively placing a fini after that great mystical epilogue that we hold in such reverence...an eye for an eye exchange, only upon ourselves, perpetrated by ourselves, so that total blindness becomes our salvation and...

...when we feel we are nobody, we can then tend to supplicate, wearing our miseries as a sort of Legion of Honor, if you will. That is how you feel, but does this give you freedom? No, you're thinking, of course not, it shows only pathos, but still you can not deny it's inert quality of redemption. It says on the upper crescent of your badge, it says: pathetic...It says, I am a pathetic testimony of humanity, in Latin perhaps, which only makes it more so...pathetic, that is.

What is really pathetic, you say to yourself, is the fact that the boy never had a face; you just couldn't bring yourself to look at it or rather, to face him, even when he died. You think: This is your punishment; to wonder just who was this person was, and what did he look like. Was he surprised, or did he pretty much accept the fact that he could be, or even would be, shot? So...you're stuck with the ultimate punishment...guilt, the ultimate hell. There is no one after all to lay punishment on you, you are exonerated; at least as far as the 'People' are concerned...There will be no 'People versus John'...or Jonathon. There is only you...It is your job to resolve this responsibility thing. Of course, you have said to yourself on many occasions, something to the effect that you are at least partially responsible, and to what extent that is, are up to your own sense of survival. Self-centered you say? It sure fucking is! Acts of survival are, after all, imperative to preservation of the species, so even at the most basic of levels, human nature can be said to be, self centered! In light of this truth: Where does one draw the line between acceptable and unacceptable behavior, notwithstanding man's rather arbitrary boundaries...arbitrary, ambiguous and off-times inarticulate?

*

It's twelve PM, Frank finds you passed out in your dinghy; you've thrown up all over your self. He wakes you up.

"What is it, Jonathon, that bothers you...I've sensed this about you since I've met ya; like something has gone wrong, very wrong in your life? I mean...well hell! If ya don't wanna talk about it...Hey, that's okay with me...I really don't wanna pry, you know. Hell! s'nona (it's none of) my bizz'ness...."

"...shows huh?"

"Yeahhh, buddy...sure does; s'like a dark cloud's followin'ya, ya know?"

"Yeah, cloud's been followin me for some time now. Foul weather coming, small-craft warnings...and I? I am the small-fucking-craft!"

"So...what's up then?"

"Dreams? I have bad dreams all the time."

"That's it, Boogey man dreams? Oh, poor baby!"

You have to laugh over that one...you say to yourself...To Frank..."Yeah right, except in this situation, "(you say situation...Oh, how euphemist [like calling the Viet Nam war a conflict])...in this...in my case (you put this one into first person with my)" It's a life and death thing...your hoping that he won't pry any more, yet at the same time, you want to, need to, talk about this. You do, and you're vaguely aware of this, yet...It's hard, yeah it's fucking hard, and your mind grapples with this indecision.

"Soo, what sort of dreams? Are they part of something...you know, like something real that occurred when you were a cop? Something like...I don't know, like maybe...maybe like shooting somebody? someone who was maybe unarmed? or maybe a kid or something? a kid that just happened to be in the way of gunfire, something like that maybe?"

The chances that he knew anything are so very slim, you figure, yet there's always the possibility that maybe you might have at one time or another, while drunk, of course, you figure, that you might have spilled at least part of the can of beans, but you cannot be sure. No matter, the invective fog, caused by hot, arid thinking passing over the cool of alcohol quickly covers any resilience that you would normally entertain, and the cup of beans now runneth over.

Chap 12

The combination of headache and dog-bite from the night before create an event this morning that you would have liked to have missed, but since you are the featured performer, your attendance is an absolute necessity, after all, you are the main attraction, aren't you? Ahh, the price of infamy.

You try to remember what transpired the night before but alas this activity produces not much more than...well, discretionary results; very discretionary results; in fact, the name of the show does not even appear in the modest list of credits. The embarrassment that you feel doesn't give you much of a clue, as it is a moot point, for you, general speaking, in the mornings. You don't know whether or not to call on your friend, due to this lapse in memory, but you take a chance. Not too chancy though, you don't actually hail him on the VHF radio, but you do answer it when he hails you.

"Ticket to Paradise here."

"Switch and answer on channel nine, Ticket."

So you do, you answer him on channel nine..."Hey, which beer last night did I fall into without a lifejacket, and who give me mouth to mouth, after pulling me out of the drink? Forgive the pun."

"I'll tell ya all about. Hey, whattaya say we go for bloody-mary breakfasts?"

...sounds good to you, you can already taste the tomato and pepper and feel the vodka. "Sure, give me about ten minutes."

The bloody-m goes down nice, soaking into the cotton in your mouth to the point of total saturation. Throughout breakfast, absolutely nothing is said about last night's conversation, at least nothing that might reveal or even sneak a peek at what the discussions were about last evening, which is fine with me, you think.

You exhibit restraint on ordering another bloody-m, by waiting for Phil to say, "How about you Jonathon, are you going to have another with me?"

You stall for dramatic effect, a pursuit that is totally wasted, on Phil anyway, yet that's alright, since you're not aware of it. The rest of the day turns out as the rest of the day for days

gone past, one ordinary moment after another ordinary moment after another and still another. So you end up the day, the same as any other night, and retreat to your bunk hoping for extraordinary moments to visit you...like waiting by the chimney Christmas Eve. Every night's Christmas Eve. They don't....

The hatch over your berth has been open all night long, so in the morning you've awakened to the full force of a fire raising sunrise that just won't take no for an answer. A rude awakening by your standards; however today, this morning, something is present, it's felt, yet there is no evidence to justify this feeling. If you were to describe just how this feeling feels, you would certainly be moot to do so. So you do so, rather you accept it, warily, yet you do accept that maybe there is something better to this physical existence you call a life...For some unknown reason why...but, you do accept this factotum, and it accepts you...You're like a flower growing through a sidewalk in downtown Compton.

For some inexplicable reason, you greet the heat of the day with a jump into the ocean, without even looking for the tell-tale fin of your presentiments, I might add; very well and good, as they say. And, it feels great...no fear, you notice. You lie on your back floating...floating through the mist of doubt into the sunshine of a brand new day. You can't explain this, this thing, this feeling; of course, but for some unknown...you do accept this, and it accepts you...You're like a flower growing through asphalt in Harlem. This floating feeling stays with you, it remains in tack, just over the horizon, you might say; out of immediate reach, yet somehow you feel that it is not altogether inaccessible. This is, of course, enough for you to go on...just enough to go on.

You had your doubts earlier, about cruising again this winter; your doubts as to whether or not you really wanted to go, but now at this very hour you are wholeheartedly convinced that you do in fact, wish to go. You have to laugh though, at how fickle your commitments are. They're about as predictable as the stock market is to an inexperienced trader. You continue to swim and splash and frolic about like a child in complete abandon and it feels wonderful. You are now the master of your universe; your life has become so charmed. No harm can conceivably come to you; then you see the fin of a porpoise and you can't get out of the water fast enough. You know that it's the fin of a porpoise, and not a sharks,' yet you're outta here...don't swim past go and don't collect two hundred dollars, just out, out, out of here!

So, once again your life is like some monopoly game, and you've just landed on the space of chance. Time for a siesta, you figure. You do this, offer yourself up to dreamland in the midst of an afternoon, and do so without guilt, because since you are cruising, sort of anyway, you feel completely at ease with being what otherwise could be taken as being lazy, shiftless. However, you're cruising; well, sort of anyway. And cruising is like vacationing, and vacationing is...well, being lazy if that is what one chooses to do with they're vacation.

It is now four in the afternoon, and you've just wakened from a two hour and forty-five minute nap, you're groggy and in a lousy mood, but you heroically lift yourself out of the muddy slough of disgust, splash a little water on your face, scramble out of your vessel and into your dinghy for the ride ashore to go to the bar. You don't call Phil, as you'd rather toss a few down in reverence, so to speak, and in solitude, as every good alcoholic knows, solitude is best when drinking...no annoying conversations to have to contend with.

The bartender squints as he looks your way as you enter into the darkness of the bar from the bright afternoon sun outdoors. For a moment it's as if all stands still, like a criminal caught in the act of thieving, and is then told to stand with feet apart and hands clasped behind the head. Don't move! And no one does. Then the door closes behind you and you are now officially part of the darkness inside, and all goes on as before.

"Happy hour is in twenty minutes...." The barkeep offers.

"That's okay; I'll have a Corona to keep me company until then."

"I heard that!"

...and he did. The barkeep, Anthony, brings you an ice cold Corona with a lime wedge stuck in the mouth of the bottle.

"So Tony, have ya ever been cruising, ya'know like to Mexico or Caribbean or somewhere?"

"I'm not a boater. Oh, by the way, the name's Anthony."

"Oh yeah, sorry...Anthony, it is."

"It's okay."

You're wondering if Tony...or rather Anthony, you're thinking, has ever seen that same infomercial, or if he's just aware of the plebian connotation of shortening someone's'

name. You decide to let it go; all of a sudden the name thing seems trifling. Yet you make a mental note to not shorten Anthony's name.

"No," Anthony continues, "I'm not a boater...anymore that is...Used to be though, years back. I had an Islander 36 that I outfitted for cruising, and I took her...sailed her down the Baja coast as far as Puerto Vallarta where I eventually sold her...Hated every minute of it...cruising, I mean...It just seemed the thing to do at the time. If you own a boat, you use it, right? So I did. Cruising to me was like being locked in a closet during an earthquake, with the added chance of drowning!"

You laugh to be nice, but inside you're thinking, What a dork! "Yeah, I've heard that from some...Cruising isn't for everyone." You're trying not to be insulting, or the least bit diminutive, yet at the same time you feel you must save face, as if your girlfriend was just insulted by someone, in an indirect manner perhaps, yet you do feel the need to restore your virility at the excuse one uses to protect her, whoever her is, honor.

"That 's for sure, I mean overnight stuff like from the mainland to say, here or one of the islands, or up and down the coast even, that I like, ya know, but to real cruiser's, they would probably consider what we do ...'pussy stuff,' ya know?"

You're thinking...If that fucker says,
"Ya know?" one more fucking time I'll...

"There are some pretty weird people out there in the cruising community too. I meet them now and then, ya know? What with me tending bar here and all...Hell, I just met this one dude who's wanted for beating up a cop that tried to issue him a parking ticket." Don't know the particulars on it ya know, but just how particular can a man get? Beat him up good, I heard. O'course you really can't believe everything you hear, especially from amongst that particular genre of people. Hell, most of what you hear is nothing more than garden-variety, fish stories anyway, ya know?"

You grate your teeth together at each ya know? One more just one more ya know, pal, just one more...you think.

"Personally, I think that anyone who likes cruising 'Puddle jumping,' they call it, when your circumnavigating the globe□they've got to be running from someone, I figure, or something, most of'm anyway. I think personally (as if he's confiding in you on what futures to buy...the inside trader) those who likes it have got to be a little touched, ya know?"

You decide

to try and ignore him, like a pesky insect, a mosquito or something, you try...

"Ya know? Dee ranged, huh?"

You clear your throat and say just loud enough, "Ya, I know." You wish he'd just quit his shift and someone else start theirs. But even then, you figure, he'd probably stay right there in the bar and yap away like some advertising salesman on steroids. Someone down at the end of the bar has raised his hand, like you used to do when you were a child in a school classroom when you had to go to the bathroom; except she is no child and it is very unlikely that she wants permission to pee...

You are quick to point out to Tony, that he's ignoring his bar-keeping duties. As he turns to attend to the woman's needs, you slip off the barstool and head for the head (restroom) and without even raising your hand for permission□good for you; so you chuckle.

The woman orders a Corona, so you ascertain, as that's what Anth...Tony brings her; with a wedge and all! She looks good. Well, you figure on a scale of one to ten she's a...Oh hell, she's a woman! you say to yourself, and almost out loud to whomever might have heard it, like for instance her. You have to laugh at that though. Suppose you did, suppose you did say that out loud...Hell, she'd think you just got out of the pen for Chris' sake! A woman? Like you haven't seen one in twenty years or so! How incredibly tacky, you think of yourself. Perhaps something a pirate would say, but then you think, you never can tell, maybe she'd a liked it...turned her on somehow, the scent of testosterone in the air about you may prove to be quite irresistible, you reason...you, or the Corona's reasoning, rather. You think of how you can initiate a meeting with her, when the barkeep, Anthony, steps in and saves you the trouble...

"Marsha, meet...uh, sorry pal, I guess I don't know your name;" Anthony poses this as a question, by placing emphasis on the word know.

You pick up on that and acquiesce, "How do you do Marsha?...names, Jonathon."

"Jonathon?" repeating as if it's the first time she's ever heard the name.

You figure, you don't want to come off as being strange in any way; after all, you've just met her, so you offer the quickie version, to speed things up a bit..."John, just call me John."

"I like that...John." Then smiles like a two years old who's just uttered her first word...Her face beams, as she says this again, "John." It comes off as sexy□to you anyway. You're musings turn to her repeating your name on the exhale of a climax. Antho...Tony pulls you out of your reverie...

"...another Corona, John?"

"Uh, huh? Uhh...Oh, yeah another one Anthony...Yes please."

Soo the ice is broken, as they say, and I'm getting ready to put my pole in the water, you're thinking. Again, you smile at your own wit.

Picking up on you smile she asks if you'd care to share the funny. That's the way she says it too..."Care to share the funny?" as if it were a jingle she was singing.

You're now reveling in how cute she said this ...the funny...

...the funny, you could eat her words, you're so horny. "The funny?" you imitate.

"Yeah, the funny," she repeats; only this time teasingly; The poster of Marylyn Monroe standing over a subway grate holding down the fort by its hem plays like a pictograph on your frontal lobe, with her mouthing that word; as if it were that word from the bottomless depths of carnal antiquities, that four letter word that also begins with F, whose meaning can be traced, I'm sure, all the way down through to the origin of species, where you're headed right now, in fact!

"Ohh, com'on now give me the funy."

Salivate, salivate / Dance to the music..."Oh, I was just thinking of something the bartender, Tony, said."

"Ay'yand." She sort of sings this (and) in a two syllabic modulation which makes you grow inside your pants like a light starved plant, only it's not light you're growing toward!

"We were discussing the merits, and the drawbacks to cruising."

"Anthony, he doesn't like to be called Tony." She corrects you, then ads hurriedly, and at almost a whisper..."He's gay, you know? Is that why you're laughing?"

You don't wish to be ignorant of that fact, maybe she might think you're gay, you're now thinking.

"Oh yeah, I know, I know." Here's a chance to flout you liberalism..."Well, despite that, I mean, I'm not at all ill at ease with that, I figure to each is own..." You would have liked to have come off more sophisticated, more urban chic but alas; no, the words just weren't there.

"Some of your best friends are homos right?"

You laugh it off...you try to, yet the laugh sounds every bit as facetious and attenuate conversation.

So, you both laugh, a healthy laugh, at each other as well as at yourselves.

You are beginning to feel something like affection toward her, and she you, you feel. Well sure, you say to yourself, I'm not a total jerk, I've some redeeming qualities. You decide that to list them would be ostentatious.

"Am I to understand that you live a cruising lifestyle?"

You answer her, "...used to, I used to, for about three years I did. Alone, I was single-handling my own rig...sailboat."

She nods knowingly, "I've some experience myself; my ex and I sailed to Hawaii several years ago. Have you ever made the puddle jump?"

You are tempted to lie, but for some reason you don't, you don't say what you think will make for a bigger than life profile of yourself; you ask yourself why because this is somewhat of an unexpected behavioral thing, normally you tread water in fictitious images of yourself until you go down for the third time with her throwing you a lead life jacket, followed by the classic, Have a nice life!

"You are somewhat surprised to see that she doesn't think any less of you for telling the truth..."No, I've thought about it, but...well, I don't know; maybe it's because I don't have anyone to keep company with; ya'know?"

"Oh sure, I wouldn't want to do it alone either. Nor would I care to do that again either. I think cruising is masochistic actually. I mean, here you are, in a very confining space set out there in the water where that's all there is, as far as the eye can see, rolling and pitching, sometimes violently, just water...nothing but ocean. It's really not for me, coastal cruising, I like, I like that. But not sitting in a closet during an earthquake with the..."

Oh boy, here it comes, you say to yourself.

...with the possibility of drowning," Anthony finishes with.

"You grumble, Doesn't that asshole of a drink jockey have anything better to do than listen in on other's conversation, and then buttin in his two fucking measly cents worth of opinion?"

So now you feel you have to reevaluate this relationship, or rather the direction that you wish to take this relationship. As if it was solely up to you. The thought waifs by your cerebral receptacle that maybe, just maybe, she might have something to say about whatever relationship, if any, you two might have.

"Is this what your plans are? Cruising?"

"Not really; it's kind of a 'been there, done that' sort of thing, with me. I mean don't get me wrong, there was a lot that I liked about the lifestyle and all. It's just, well...I don't know. I don't have any immediate plans to do so. Nor are there any on the horizon either."

The conversation edges on. And you get the idea that she's just not for you. That this is not going anywhere, and think: She would make a good fuck, I'll bet! And, maybe she's thinking the same, so you buy her another drink. The both of you begin to lighten the load a bit, and soon enough you're both having quite the time, laughing, joking, and especially the joking, as it turns to some off-color humor...blond jokes, pretty much. The last one you heard at work, it ends with an officer unzipping his pants as he stands at the driver side of, her, Blondie's, car and she says: "...not another breathalyzer test?" This is where you start to plot a course to the boudoir.

The next morning you awaken, you're in her bed, at her place, of course, and you are naked...so is she. "Did we score last night?"

She smiles, "We sure did studly."

"Ohhh I love it when you call me that."

"How about breakfast?"

"Sure," you say, "just sit on my face,"

and she does.

Chap 13

You decide that afternoon, with the aftertaste of Marsha still fresh on your lips, that you will remain here on Catalina Island for an (extended) stay; you laugh at the intent of the word extended.

Marsha lives in a cabin planted under a group of old cedars of which create a luxurious shade from mid morning, around ten-ish, to fairly late in the afternoon; depending on the season. The prevailing breeze, the westerly winds begin at around the same time in the late morning, and this cool ocean breeze continues on until the early evening, which makes for a nice comfortable coolness all day long in her front yard. There is a sizable porch, on her cabin with a country-style, wrap around porch that is covered by a shade bar style roof. She has a two person hammock strung from the support posts that would take the edge off anyone whose foreskin is stuck in a zipper The gentle on shore breeze tickles you where perspiration has formed between the pads of her fingers, and the skin of your chest, where her hand now rests, and the laziness of the pendulum motion from the swinging hammock seems to be at sync with your breathing, causing you to slip off into Slumberland....

Hours later, you awaken and look down at her serene face. She's no bimbo, you've ascertained□she's intelligent, vital, and everything about her becomes endearing to you. You turn slightly so that your hard cock rests against her moist belly, then you press...ever so gently and she, she responds with the same motion...a slow, slow and gentle grinding motion. You wish this moment to last forever. Your mouth find hers and you just lie there with lips softly pressed together, breathing each other, and into each other.

She reaches down and gives you a gentle, yet firm squeeze and you explode all over her belly. You make love to her once more that evening and again the next morning, and several other times over the next few days before you sail back to the mainland. You've made plans to return to Catalina Island in one month, and possibly, you haven't said anything to her yet but, you will make some preliminary inquiries into moving your vessel there permanently. Again, you make plans, not just for yourself; oh, on the contrary, these "plans" include another inasmuch as yourself, more perhaps. You're aware of this of course but, being aware of an illogical move does not make it logical. You're aware of this as well....

So it should come as no particular surprise that when you talk to her on the phone a few days later that she says whoa....Nelly, and pulls the reins on the bit in your mouth that you didn't even know was there!

"I'm just living a day at a time for know, I've just gotten out of a long term relationship and the last thing in the world I need now is another. I'm really fond of you, and let's just take things slowly. Let's enjoy the time we spend together without the pressures of commitment of any kind, and see where, if anywhere, it goes from here, okay Babe?"

You go along with the program she's outlined, at least on the surface anyway. On the inside you're far too needy to not be hurt by this, what you would call rejection, even though she isn't rejecting you at all...far from it actually, but you will see what you wish to see, and rejection is just around the corner, or if you will, just over the horizon.

The next time you see her, it was she who made the trip, she had business on the mainland, she said, and made arrangements to spent a day or two with you. The first day was spent between the sheets and on the next day, you both went ice skating; of which you abhor. You didn't say this to her, yet got the message after the first hour, it was , after-all a bit obvious, you tore your pants at the knee due to having spent several minutes on bended knee. The last fall was on precisely the same Wounded Knee (a little witticism) from the previous fall. That pretty much ended the skating activities for the day, and future days as well; skating would not become one of your mutual pastimes.

"Skating to me is like dancing, a freeing of my spirit on the ice, it's such an aesthetic endeavor, to swing in rhythm to the motion and feel the fluidity within you. It's like you become one with the moment...blah, de blah, blah, blah."

But, for you? For you it's a dangerous endeavor that seems stupid, at best. Why would anyone want to skate in circles listening to music you're not especially fond of, la, de, la, di dada? Of course, what you did say was: "I think that I could become quite good at this, if given the proper teacher...ha, ha, ha." She chooses not to answer that, and you wonder why; yet your curiosity doesn't want to put you in a predicament that might rock the boat, or break the ice.

Inevitably, the conversation goes to: "Sooo, what do you do, or what did you do?" You try to be frivolous by saying, "I didn't do it, honestly!" She laughs, and then asks you again. You're prepared..."I am retired from the LAPD."

"What's that?"

"You're kidding!"

She raises her eyebrows in question. "No...Why?"

You really are baffled, now. You thought everybody was tuned into your world, your ever expanding universe; a cinema-plex sort of vastness, that is losing boundary quicker than the West Bank.

While you're mulling this over, she takes the silence as resignation on your part and says, "You don't have to tell me if you don't want. I was just curious, is all."

"Ohhh, no, no, no! I don't mind saying, in fact I'm kind of proud of being a peace officer."

"...A WHAT?"

"...an officer with the Los Angeles Police Department."

"You're a cop?"

"Was...I was a...I was a cop."

She stands there, her sides are heaving with silent laughter, and both of her hands are clasped, prayer like in front of her mouth, as if she were trying to prevent something from falling out. "I'm sorry, I don't mean to laugh."

You are thoroughly confused now. It's her that is supposed to be confused...you think anyway; not you, yet you are totally confused. Just what is this she's feeling, or thinking? What does she think of the fact I'm a...or rather used to be, a cop? You didn't expect a reaction such as the one you've gotten. Suddenly you feel thirsty. You don't know what to say. Certainly, this would not be the time to elaborate on why I'm retired, nor is this the place; I mean, come on now (you say to yourself) a restaurant of all places? (I killed a little boy, shot him, by the way would you care for an aperitif?) You need the right moment, and after we've known each other for some time, time enough so that you don't think I'm some sort of, of killer, or...whatever. And you need the right place. Well yeah, heh...What would be the right place? Certainly not a restaurant, that's for sure. She-it, shit, shit.

On the other hand, the crucial, yet awkward moment to tell the truth may just be now, in the beginning, even though the truth is just too...too truthful, too revealing, too...it's just too and that's all there is to it! It's just too...too! I'm not gonna do it, I won't!

The day ends early, six PM early, as a matter of fact, early and silent. You feel that perhaps this thing with her (this thing that you haven't even got yet) is just not going to work. She never did say why the cop thing was...well why it was an issue. Was it? Is it an issue, or am I fabricating that as well? Fucked, if I know!

Relationships are problems; you came to that conclusion while with your ex-wife...problems; nothing but problems. It's hard, of course to see the good when you're in such a defeatist mood□hard for anyone really, you say to yourself, not just me. Let go, anyone would say, you would say, if giving advice to someone else with the same obsession. What's the use? Let go of it, let it take its course naturally.

Chap 14

It's been a few weeks since you last spent any considerable time with Margaret, you've called her a few times, and her you, just a few times, nothing of any consequence has developed, as yet, and perhaps, you figure, that it's very unlikely anything will come of it. It's one of those relationships that are...well, not what you expect; not what you might plan. Anything could happen, or nothing; you both might just go your own separate ways, or you might spend a few days a months together; just to get laid. It's just one of those surreptitious things where anything goes...a surprise no matter how you look at it.

She calls you. You're surprised to hear from her. She's even slightly baffled as to why she called you. So you make arrangements for her to fly into San Pedro by helicopter and you'll meet her with your boat and you'll both make the sail to Catalina Island together. Surprise...Surprised, are you?

You're a little apprehensive, thinking about the last time you were together; that uncomfortable moment when she asked you what you did for a living and you took it as a personal affront, which it was not intended to be; although given the intensions were never elaborated on. What it was in reality was indiscriminate, and inculpable; that's it! That's all there really was; so there could be no statement of refute, even that would have been appropriate. Hell, when you get right down to it, there wasn't even a statement made. There was little more than a snicker...no statement, no anything; it just wasn't at all qualified. So, really you don't know what the fuck it was, or what was meant. Now you're feeling a little relieved, relieved but embarrassed, and more than just a little stupid!

I'll get over it, you say to yourself. You decide not to mention this at all, to just pretend that there are no apprehensions still, or anything, for that matter. I've totally forgotten that...the matter. And if she brings it up again, well, I'll just tell her I'm a retired police officer, and that's that! Done over, no more disquisition! None, nein, nada, nein nadas! That's all that needs to be said. Jeeze, I'm really driving myself nuts with this thing. Relationships, even friendships sometimes, they're just so tedious to maintain, it seems, and this isn't even a relationship either, except we do have great sex, and now that's reason enough. I just have to keep that perspective.

You remember now, some time back, three maybe four years ago, just before you went cruising in Mexico, the girl you were screwing, you remember how she accused you of being shallow, that that's all you were interested in was sex, because "You're too immature for a real relationship, one that involves actually caring for someone else." That's what she said alright. And she never said this out of spite, anger, nor had she any other self serving motivation for this perspicacity into your character. Actually, when she made that remark it was made with such a matter-of-fact manner as to be relatively unimportant. Yet, it was important, to you, then...and apparently now, many, years later. Why? You wonder why. Why, now? Could this assessment still be valid?

It's a great day, the sun is positioned on a brilliant blue background, the wind is steady, cool and fresh...fifteen to twenty knots, and out of the north by northwest. You're both enjoying each other's company there are no apparent undertones left over from your last rendezvous with her. And, the crème brulee is in the form of a rather skimpy two-piece that seems as if it were drawn on Margaret's bod. Everything is just peachy, peachy keen; including her tan, for the moment anyways, the tan notwithstanding.

It was a great sail to Emerald cove, where you dropped hook, and began to explore her tan, attentively. The Cabernet was uncorked around dinner time, and after uncorking two more bottles you were both uncorked around eight-thirty that evening, you were both too corked to do anything other than wrap yourselves around each other and pass out.

Sometime during the night the boy without a face paid you a visit. You awakened sweat drenched and because you were tied up to Margaret she awakened also. You apologized for waking her, which wasn't necessary, but you wouldn't elaborate on the script of your dream. Or, did you elaborate on how many nights this Nick at Night replay played; that would come later, much later...maybe.

The rest of the weekend went well; exceptionally well, especially for you. You aren't used to pleasant times much less something more than pleasant, when it should come around the mountain, like now. As always, you start by chopping away at the fortuity of the experience by worrying about the transitory nature of experience; oh not in any existential way, only this experience. "We don't give a goddamn about existentialism unless our physical needs are appropriated first off."

"What did you say?"

"Ohhh, nothing...something I read awhile back...don't know what made me think of that now."

"I don't mean this desultory at all it's just that there seems to be a part of you that isn't present sometimes. I feel that you're elsewhere sometimes. Oh, don't get me wrong, I love people who are thinkers...like you seem to me. I mean this as flattery, not criticism. I hope that this is how it, or I, came off."

"You have me in such a relaxed mode, spent, I feel spent, and in a good way...a good investment, you're a profitable venture, emotionally."

You both laugh at the metaphor. She kisses you gently, yet playfully on your eyelids, first one then the other. You both fall back to sleep, still in each others arms, and this time, there are no visitors with or without faces.

She doesn't catch on about how you avoided the objective of her observation of your demeanor. Although it may not have been posed as a question...still, it was there alright. And you know that sooner or later the question will be intentional, and avoidance of that will not be an option.

When you awaken, you jump overboard to wash away the sluggishness leftover from sleep, and it instantly puts you in good spirits; so much that you think about possibly, maybe, just a maybe now...no commitment, you say to yourself, maybe I'll not have a drink today; all day in fact. You splash about, feeling spry. Then Margaret startles you by jumping in next to you, only she's quite naked.

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After the swim, you both go ashore for breakfast. By this time, she's clothed of course. You could cook, you've a full galley on board; it's just that it would detract from the vacationing experience that you both are enjoying. "Every day should be like this," you say. She nods in agreement, and then adds, "Every day, should be just like every day is. If all was good, then good would turn into boring and cease to be good."

You're impressed by what she says, and say so.

"Well, think about it. If every day was good...It is precisely that, which is erroneous, if every day is the same, there couldn't be any good days, or bad days, and life would be boring, don't cha think?"

"No argument here, except what is the magic formula, what do we as individuals strive for, if not for good?"

"Who says one has to strive for anything? Who the hell made up that rule?"

"We should hang the bastard if we ever find him, or her."

"Oh, I'll bet it is a he. No woman would be that deleterious."

"When your right, your right."

She smiles, and then winks at you before saying..."Do you feel threatened at all about a woman philosopher?"

"No, not at all." And you mean it; you're not.

Margaret is genuinely impressed by this. Apparently, you think, she has had an experience, a rather deflating experience, with a husband perhaps, lover maybe; who reeked of testosterone. You decide to enquire; you want to find out more about her; you find that the more time spent together with her, the more time you want to spend with her; so you rationalize.

"Did you have a bad experience, I mean, relationship, along that line? Maybe someone's a little too chauvinistic perhaps?"

"Something like that; yeah...Are we going to show and tell our secrets now?"

You knew this was coming when you first enquired. You should have curtailed your inquisitiveness, but oh no, you didn't and now its time to pay for that piece of ass. Will that be cash credit, or debit? Oh boy, get ready Eddy, and you too John, John-boy, Jonathon!

"I shot and killed a teenage boy." There, oh boy Johnny you didn't haul in the reins on that stallion did ya. It's balls to the walls on this one. You realize after blurting this out that well, maybe a little tact would have been orderly here. You don't feed the baby with a tablespoon; you don't swat the fly with a tire iron. There are ways of breaking the news without shoving the LA Times down a person's throat. These are the analogies running through your confused mind. Along with Oh, oh! I'd better fix this. You start out with, "There isn't much to tell..." Her eyes open big and wide at this remark..."Not much to tell?" is written all over her face...Well, you can't clean up an oil tanker spill on the ocean with a sponge, savvy?

She is just looking at you. She's looking at you as if you had just appeared in front of her, like some apparition, and she's waiting to see if you're going to fully materialize before she screams. You know that you can't

just stop there...she knows this as well, so the fly is waiting, it can not believe that your going to swing at him with a tire iron and is waiting, it's fucking petrified! It doesn't know whether to fly away or to split a wing laughing at your attempt at being so nonchalant in the face of this!

"I should explain," you say."

"Oh; do tell, please."

She is also annoyed, but you can't tell if it's with you, because of the content of what you revealed, or rather, how you chose to...Probably both, you assume, and get ready for the backlash. It doesn't come. She's staring at you with those big brown doe eyes, as if frozen by the lights of a vehicle on a highway.

"Please," she says, "don't stop now."

You'd like to, of course, but you know it's way too late to exercise that option.

You tell her the whole sordid affair of the call for domestic violence you had responded to, and how you jumped out of the squad car with your weapon drawn, (she cringes when you speak the word weapon). Then everything was like a blur after that. A teenage boy ran out of the apartment, someone in the crowd of spectators that was forming shouted, "He's got a gun!" You of course did not know that the spectator meant you. He didn't specify, he should have specified. You looked for him, the spectator, afterward, yet no one knew who he was. He was just a voice in the crowd, and no one else heard him. The bullet struck the boy right in the face, and you fired it, and then you could not face up to what you did...you couldn't even look the boy in the face. That's what you punish yourself for, not for what the papers printed, which was that you shot an unarmed boy who was escaping from an apartment where there was trouble, fighting, physical fighting between his parents. He was, as the press put it, scared and running away from a dangerous situation, and the officer shot the unarmed boy without probable cause.

The press also took advantage of spelling out the fact that the officer was white, and the boy was brown skinned, Mexican brown, they couldn't have spelled it out clearer, just sharp enough so that there would be just enough information to start a scandal. Scandals, especially of the police variety, sell handsomely; they're right up there with hurricanes, and earthquakes, or tsunamis, even.

Her eyes are beginning to look as though they were acid washed. The red around the sockets looks like the work of a six year old playing with her or his mom's make-up,

and now there is a drop leaving a sparkling path on her left cheek, like a garden slug leaves behind on his sortie through the tulips. Her right eye is beginning to flood, which is sure to add some more veracity to the drama you've created.

You can't stop now, you've got to finish up here, then get on with the part about your own personal vendetta against you, the perp, and if possible, fill in the building blocks of the story with enough sentiment that she'll continue to hang her thongs around the boudoir.

How many times you were summoned in the past on this family of perps. You were conditioned to accept this situation as being no different than the umpteen, some-odd calls of the past. You were therefore much startled by: 'The voice crying out from the wilderness...' of confusion; and it wasn't John the Baptist either, yelling: "He's got a gun!" That's what you thought was said; you could have sworn that...And you did, you did, when questioned about it afterward by Internal Affairs. You were questioned so many times that you don't remember when exactly that it was when you began to doubt what you heard. What you think you heard.

You imagine Margaret's perspective to be similar to what you imagine all the other's to be, namely, skeptical of the context of what you say you heard. You feel you have bigot stenciled in red across your forehead. The papers had a quote from two spectators that said in a statement to the Internal Affairs police that they heard "He's on the run!" Now, whether or not this was true, you continue explaining to Margaret, you really don't know, and after all the time that has lapsed you've come to believe that there may be some validity to this; hell maybe you are a bigot, and maybe you heard what you wanted to hear. You can't admit to this, not directly; certainly not to Margaret; shit, she'd be scared to death of you! Even the Captain, you felt anyways, was skeptical of your motives. Either way, guilty or innocent, politics were at play here...The Commander was pressured by the Commissioner who was pressured by the office of the Mayor; so, as the (hip bone is connected to the thighbone that's connected to the....) Well, the final outcome, of course, was in you being swept under the carpet of retirement. The part that was left out, because of relevance, was: this, quote, "family" received a handsome settlement (hush money) and they moved to a better neighborhood and the problem now is for another precinct; an upscale one at that.

When they arrest you in this neighborhood they hide the cuffs by fastening your hands together in front of you, instead of behind your back, and one officer

stands in front of you, to hide both you and the cuffs from spectators; the few who would dare to spectate anyway. You might think the whole procession, security police, bodyguards, were for some diplomat with immunity.

Margaret, looks as if she was just kissed by a four hundred pound male gorilla in full drag. There is an aura of static electricity around her enough to upstage the Aurora Borealis! What makes this whole scene more desperate is that she's no where to go, yet Margaret really needs to get away from you for awhile, and says so. You accommodate her by agreeing to leave her to herself for awhile and if need be you'll be glad to pay for a ticket for her back to the mainland.

"It's just that...I mean, it's like...It's not like I know you, I mean we've only spent a few times together, and this is all too much for me...now that is. I need to think. I need to be alone, ya know. You understand. I mean it's not like I don't care for you; you treat me nice, you seem to be a nice man and all and, fuck, I've a son whose part Mexican...Ya know? I mean, and I mean this literally, you're saying, "I'm a murderer, want to go on vacation with me...Alone?" I'm, I'm just overwhelmed by all this ya'know? I need time, time to digest all this; to make sense out of all this; to just, just feel my way through this dark tunnel. I'm alone, alone with a, a murderer...a self-proclaimed killer at that. Oh, I'm sorry, I didn't mean it that way, I..."

"I understand, I understand, I really do. Please take whatever time you need, it's alright...and I'm sorry. I'm real sorry; I didn't mean to just 'Jack in the Box' this thing to you..."

"Jack in the box is right! God-damn...Goddamn you, ya'know, I'm pissed now, I'm really...I've gotta go, bye. And, I am sorry. I just need my space now. I need to be alone and sort things out. It's not that...I mean, you....Well, you're a wonderful person, I...I just don't know, ya'know?"

"I understand, take what you need, and I won't try to influence you or anything."

"I know you won't, I know."

She's gone, you're here alone, and you know you did the right thing in telling her. How could I, after all, not tell her? There's just no way that you...Hell, it's an important part of your life, it's who you are, and it's that that scares the shit out of you. Who are you? So, you're thinking, she might not come back, and it hurts you to know that there is absolutely nothing you can do to influence this situation. At least that's how you feel, yet there's a part of you that says don't give up, that giving up is for wimps, and if here's one thing you're not, is a wimp. Then that thought is followed, too closely by, I need to take charge of this

situation. I need to make her understand that, that that's not who you are, I'm not a murderer. Why did she have to call me that? She did say that you were a nice person, but you don't remember that. 'Murderer' is what you heard! "Take charge of your life." Then, Shut the fuck up! you say under your breath.

You decide to stay another day here in Catalina, who knows maybe you'll meet someone else, you think. And this time you won't say anything, it'll just be a wam, bam, thank you mam, charge in between the sheets and nothing more than that. You won't tell her anything about yourself, and you won't ask questions either...just live in the moment, that's all. Fuck having a relationship; fuck it! And since you are going to stay that extra day, you decide to get plastered; really plastered; maybe even get a room for the night so you don't get an urge to go sailing and have some drunken mishap. You know yourself that well, anyway.

"Hey, how ya doin?" says Anthony. Where's the girl?"

Jeeze, you say to yourself. You almost turn around and head out the door. The last thing you want is to have stupid talk with this moron! Fuck it! you say. No need to pass on a good drunk because of this stupid bastard. So you don't turn around to go, you merely turn to grab a table for yourself, and away from the source of displeasure...the Idiot, and that's with a capital 'I,' you say; under your breath you say that.

"I'll take a whisky sour, extra on the whiskey, and less on the questions."

He gets the hint; there will be no further elucidation necessary. You pat yourself on the back for your finesse. This is the first smile you feel since before the thing with Margaret...Who needs her? I don't need anybody. You have to laugh at that statement. You say to yourself, "So it's reduced me to flatulence, self righteous indignation will be next, followed by more prattle!" You thought you said this to yourself.

"What was that Jonathon?"

"Huh?" you say. "I didn't know my prattle was so tattle!" And you display the sort of grin that accompanies the sort of shit-stained inanities that one would expect to accompany a fourth or fifth Corona riding the bumper of one of many whiskey sours wheeling around the hairpin turns of inebriated dissertations.

"Get it? Tattle prattle..."

"Oh yeah, Jonathon, you're a real clever one you are? I don't think you need another drink, do ya?"

"Why not? It's not like I'm gonna get a DUI padding my dingh to my boat, is it now?"

You don't really want another drink, you certainly didn't ask for one. Tony, you think is out of line on that remark, imagine announcing to God and everybody in the room that he's taking control of a situation that doesn't exist...To show everyone that he's better'n me? Is hat it? Can ya imagine that? And I'm bein nice'n orderly too. "I am!" you say, (a furtive glance around the bar to make sure there's no one to give audience).

There are a few people around, and of course they're watching. You are, you realize, the only source of detractio□entertainment, if you will. This town is, after all, too small to even turn around in. Hell! Even a silent fart wouldn't go unnoticed...It's show-time! You know he's out of line; you're just not sure why at first...then it comes to you, "You're being...." and how quickly you forget! You start to become embarrassed because you can't think of what he's being. "You're being..."wait, it'll come to me. Come here my precious..."Oh yeah, pre-zump-tu-ous...you're being presump...to me there Tony boy."

"Good!" he returns, "Then you don't want another drink...Had enough, right?"

Anthony, does seem to be assertive about...fucking cock sure! "I'll be...urp, a judge a that. I'll...yeah. I think you're out of line there Tony, ya Ginzo, ya fucken Wop, ya....There...."

"Alright, alright, time for you to leave. Go home, go to bed and sleep it off...before I gotta get tough with ya. Out!" Anthony is cock-sure, you note, and there's this undertone of authority in his demeanor. After-all, Anthony is a pro; he's been tending bar twenty-some years, and he knows how to handle the Jonathon's.

Since there was only a few of the regulars in the place, they were all more or less on Anthony's side, and they were all itching for something to break the monotony, there is just nothing of consequence for night people on this end of Catalina Island. You know this, yet you're determined to assert your cop/personality. Perhaps it is the booze, or perhaps the booze is just you're excuse for a cop-i-tude....

A little Catalina Island geography:

In contrast to Avalon Harbor on the other end of the island, the Isthmus and Cat Harbor are only accessible, other than by boat, by twenty-two miles of windy, dirt, mountain road that is only one lane wide in several places with turns on it that make travel not for the timorous. Five miles per hour is the average speed, and even at that, hitting one of the craters on the lunar surface of the road at that speed...well, the locals call this transcontinental maelstrom Axel-eater Boulevard. They may not be very creative in their naming of this goat trail, but the message does seem to get across nicely without much lost in the translation. Periodically; oh, every week during the rainy season, Axe. Blvd., an endearing nick-name, is closed due to wash outs. When the road is periodically open, it is also periodically guarded by Bison, big Bison! And they look at you with a sort of bored sardonic look, like running into a gang of hoodlums in a dark alley, right out of West Side Story or something of the like□without the choreography□bison, like the ones on the old, wild, wild-west movies, which, by the way, is how this herd of Buffalo came about. 'Hooray for Hollywood.' The town of Avalon, by contrast is always hopping, especially in the evenings. Turn out the lights and all the night roaches run amok the many restaurants, bars, and jazz clubs, everything you'd expect to find in an adult playground.

Enough geography.

The only late night, or early day hangouts at this end of the spectrum is this bar, a mini-mart, and public bathrooms, and without what's become the customary glory-hole in California. So...Needless to say, a barroom brawl is the only form of entertainment, except of course the farmer's daughter. And because of availability, the brawl supersedes her; after all, the brawl is family entertainment. Not that the farmer's daughter isn't.

It wasn't much of a brawl. He hit you, he hit you hard, and for lack of any other feasible direction, and you went down. That, pretty-much, was the extent of it. You did get to throw the first punch though, which is considered in the Acme Bar-room Brawl Etiquette manual to be, 'not very sporting,' and your swing was right powerful at that, however, your aim was as bad as your manners. You delivered such a roundhouse, and that belted the air pretty good, if it would have come any closer to its target, it might have been clear as to just what, or who, the target was; even Anthony wasn't sure it was directed toward anyone particular. It was really guesswork on Anthony's part that he was indeed

the target; and that's when he decided to hit you. And hit you he did...and good! That is to say that he was right on target...your chin. The crack wasn't too loud, so everyone assumed that he had just broken a tooth or two; so it was indeed a surprise to all, that it was your jaw that broke.

The groan emanating from the local 'Flies' was more for boredom than anything like sympathy for your jaw. Everyone went away grumbling, while Anthony assured them a better show next time. Again, Anthony's presumptuousness reigned.

You decided, after awakening, or rather, coming too, which really was only partial, just enough to pass out again from alcohol consumption. Anthony, it seems had a soft spot for you and before he locked up for the night, brought out a paper cup with a couple shots of Daniels in it, to sort of help you along with the pain...To Slumber land we go! "Thanks," you mumbled, to an empty house.

The next day after a visit to the emergency room to have your jaw set, you stayed aboard your vessel, not wanting to go ashore for lack of dignity or something like that, you thought. You were probably too embarrassed to, but that's okay, all will understand. Since there was nothing to do aboard, at least nothing you felt like doing aboard...nada to drink, coupled with the fact that you are in pain, and in the most desperate of ways. The thing to do was the most obvious thing to do, pop a few more Vicodan and lie down to daydream the day away...a real Vicodan day, yes. "Breakfast of Champions," you mumble through swollen lips.

You've had your phone turned off, so you never knew that Margaret had flown in, and rented a golf cart at the airport, which is located somewhere in between Avalon and the crossroads you are at and drove the ten miles along Axel road, to see you. To see you, and give you another chance; but hey, that's not on you, it's typical victim behavior, after all they're so compliant and quick to forgive and overlook. It's not easy being a victim, you know this, and you've seen the dynamics involved so many times in your career as a cop, so this wouldn't really have been any surprise to you if you were awake and aware of what was happening today. A 'while you were out' (daydreaming in Vicodan land) message' came for you at the bar from Margaret went to the bar to inquire about getting a water taxi, or private party to take her out to your vessel 'Ticket to Paradise.'

"Oh you mean that jerk that started a brawl last night with the evening bartender?" said the daytime booze jockey. Margaret was rather hang jawed at the description of what had

transpired last night, the results of what transpired, as well as the reason for its transpiring. When she heard about the names you had called Anthony, she was awed...not a good aw. She was indeed quite taken back, as they say. Now, she figured, I would have to put up with him being a drunk, number one; a bigot, number two..."That's it!" said she. Everybody has their limit, their threshold, where they will draw the line, and actually stick to that decision, and lo and behold, you indirectly (while you were in Vic-land) helped Margaret to find hers.

So while you were still out, no pun intended, Margaret set her course, and set sail and flew, soared not sailed, far, far away. While the plane was overhead, you were far, far away as well.

As a matter of fact, you were in Puerto Vallarta, sort of. There are dolphins at play on your bow wave as you reach (mode of sail) across the bay, Bahia Banderas, enroute to Jalapa, your favorite coastal village. One of the reasons it's your favorite, is because of the sudden change in botany, it's forest all around the village, which is accessible only by boat, there are no cars in Jalapa, none at all. Travel is by boat only to and from the landlocked island. The mode of transportation around town or into the forest to the waterfalls is only by donkey or horse, most villagers walk, as there are no vehicles of any sort in this Shangri-la of a village. It is completely surrounded by dense tropical forest on one side and a bottomless bay on the other.

The sunlight is perfect for an afternoon, the sky is clear and bright; cobalt blue and so, so intense. So much so, that the lines between a bright blue sky and the magenta mountains in the background, resonates with the contrast. The breeze is steady at 18 knots, and the spray over the hull onto deck is cool and friendly. You have dynamic action going on which is steady, yet powerful, and friendly. And all the power within this collaboration strike the perfect chord, the experience is like being a par of a concerto; the piece is written by nature, and features yourself, to the accompaniment of the sounds of the sea against the hull of 'Ticket to Paradise.

This is your dream, the dream is good. Somehow the message you awaken with, if it can be called that, is that the kingdom of God is at hand. Those are the words left stenciled upon your cranium like a cheap sign on a dirty cement block box of a business building in Van Nuys. It is the beauty of it all that stands for acknowledgment, as the world is jam packed with the persistence of mediocrity. You awaken

looking at your hands, however, the reason why you're looking at your hands just dropped over the horizon, and the sounds of the silent sea reign true.

The following two days was pretty much spent on your vessel. After a dream like the one you had, you seem to be lit up, in a way. Your demeanor is much sweeter, because your perspective has been throttled a bit, enough anyway to invoke this change.

You've thought some about Margaret, and you're debating whether or not to call her. This of course does nothing for this temporary stay of grace you've enjoyed for a little time anyway, except deny its integrity...its reality, or rather its right to be. Yet, human is human isn't it? You've said that many a time yourself. Not that that makes or breaks a validity, but one does have to contend, don't they? Even if it's just with themselves...character defects and the like.

You decide, of course, not to call Margaret, you figure that if you do, you will have to lie to her; especially since it would be extremely difficult to hide a broken jaw, and explaining your way out of that one would...It's just not worth the effort, you say. That pretty much puts her in the general past; an insignificant chapter, and hardly one at that...More like an anemic episode. Heh, anemic? What a way to put it!

The following day you set sail across Santa Monica bay. There really isn't any reason for you to go back home, so you set course for someplace else, Kings Harbor...Nothing special, but it does offer you that sense of freedom that you feel you once had, and somehow lost, somewhere along the way. You have to laugh at yourself, even though it's a shorter sail to King's harbor than your own port o'call, you still feel that adrenalin rush of setting course for a place that is usually just a point on the charts...just a conception. The feel of different, of adventure fills you like in the old days when life was new every day. And that feeling of journey, journey to unknown destinations, was almost a daily happening. It was like that as well when you started your career with the police department...The excitement of getting a call and rushing off to the unknown and having to depend on your own resources and that of your partners'. It was great back then, before you became jaded, jaded toward people, as individuals as well as a species, in general. When was it that society as an entity, became so culpable and lost its innocence, its holiness? When did the social structure itself become the enemy? Which call was it that that took place, or was it a gradual thing like a slip-sliding sort of thing where each day the gild tarnished more and more, until you just couldn't see the sheen

any more? Or `was it ever really there? That's the worst part of it all, not knowing. Perhaps, you think, I was the guileless one, so naïve was I, to not know that self-centeredness is the motivation for humanity in general; no, perhaps nature itself...God, the so-called creator of this cesspool.

So, what is the answer? And if there isn't one, then how do you turn off the pain and suffering of knowing that there isn't, and that you're hopelessly left to your very own condemnation?

Chap 15

Night sweats, dizzy, worn out, like you've been sick and are into recovery...The fever has broken, yet there was no illness, at least none that you can remember; of course, at first you really aren't sure, you must think back, way back, but not too far back otherwise...the past holds information that is better left alone. Don't disturb the past...too late. Let it lie, let it be; surely nothing good can come of it. Let it alone...please, let it alone. Are you listening?

You get out of bed and for a few moments you're confused, you're disoriented; like you can't remember where you are, only where you were...that's all though, that's all you want to remember...Jalapa, remember...of course. That's where I was, that's where I need to be! Oh, the immediate surroundings are familiar okay, it's just that you're not sure of something. And, you're not entirely sure that you want to know just what that something is. You climb the stairs to the cockpit and it all comes back to you. You're on the hook in the Kings harbor, you dropped hook early in the evening yesterday. You are feeling relieved, that feeling of desperation, of imminence, is lifted away like you were infected by some sycophant.

The cool ocean air feels good, it's still early enough in the morning so that the suffocating humidity, typical of a late-summer marine layer hasn't descended yet. You head now for the shower to wash away the gauze of last night.

Again, over a single-redeye at the coffee shop, you muse over whether or not to give Margaret a call. It's not so much that you've fallen in love or are even intrigued by her; it's...Well, it's complicated. If, she will accept you despite you having revealed all...face it, you say to yourself, I'm just looking for someone to say even though you're a murderer of little children, you're still okay in my book. The realization of that, or rather the thought of that even being possible, causes hot espresso to trickle out your nose as you choke on that thought. Alright, that pretty much take care of that idea. Still, the desire to be accepted, no matter what, lingers on in the shadows.

So, it's a wonderful, beautiful day aboard Paradise...you have to laugh, and you're wondering what to do with it, as if the day's some kind of object that you can take out and play with, or do whatever with. Touristo...comes to mind...I think I'll just be a tourist today.

The Redundo Beach Pier is filling with weekend tourists and the bathing suits are lookin good, you say to yourself. I'd sure like a piece of ass today. Like that one over there. Oh, if I could only...Then there's the one over there with that dorky looking guy. How come he and not me? You picture yourself easing down her bikini bottoms and licking her belly, letting the tip of your tongue slide into the ring on her belly-button while your fingertips slips in between the elastic and her tanned skin, sliding along toward her nice round rump-roast, while you gently tug down her panties over those full, yet bony hips while savoring just where to place your tongue next...to pull gently perhaps on her pubis with your teeth, until she flinches, then start....

"Hey watch where the fuck you're goin there!" you hear.

"...rumproast. What? Oh, sorry." You answer.

You had a short affair with her some years ago...Detective LaMonte's wife, a detective no less, here detect this! while he was at work, you were inspecting his wife! He was a real asshole too, you say to yourself, served him right. And she had a real asshole too, Dorothy did. Oboy did she!

You used to go over to her place when her husband, a real Inspector Clousseau, he was...When he was away on his shift, she was sitting on mine! It was safe, you reasoned; after all, they lived in the country...What? Some fifty, sixty miles away...too far for him to come home for lunches, yet this paltry clandestine arrangement was almost as much a titillation as slipping it in her rump! Now there was an ass! Ahh, well...

As visions of sugar plums fade into the background you pull into home port, headed for your marina. So...it's back home, home, cruise has ended. You didn't want it to end, but a man's got to do what a man's got to do bullshit brought you back here, home...back into your slip where you float your daydreams of cruising on the still waters of improbabilities. You are aware that this thing you chase, this ideal of living life anew will never, ever happen. This you know, and for some reason, you seem to accept this, and in this acceptance you seem to find a sort of peace. You don't question this, because inherently you know that will receive what you've been looking for all these years...that resolve you are always in search of.

It is early evening, you're at the End of the Way Tavern, a real alkies bar. They know how to make a drink, they do. You've always given this place the thumbs up, even when the hands were down for the count!

"Whisky sour, and don't sting on the whiskey. If ya hafta sting, do it on the sour, please

The 'End of the Way' supports a cast of day trippers, as well as a few of the night shift characters that jus can 't wait for their shift to start. What this translates to is that it seems to be one of those rendezvous type bars where boy meets someone else's girl and vice (oh yeah) versa. What this translates to is a hand holding, smootchy, smootchy thing that would make a Lone-Wolf'r like you suffer from the carcinogenic effects of attitude sweetener, and I don't mean anything chemical like Saccharin, or even Prozac.

There is a couple across the room that really gets your sugar, blood level up. She, Betty Boobs, is sitting there with her hands clasped together as if in prayer, and he, Rod Stillmore, whose arrogance is obviously supercharged by vainglory as he sits there upon his throne away from (ten per cent tax deduction) home, conducting business over a cell phone, while Ms Boobs sits in waiting, patently waiting, at her master's heels. It's all you can do to keep the sour from coming back up the tunnel it went down, when Monsieur Stillmore finally ends his call, deftly flipping it with one hand, while the other slides up her skirt, squeezing an "Oh my!" out of Lady Boobs.

"Enough!" you say.

No one pays you any mind, as the place is just starting to hop a bit. Enough! For you to want to toss your sugar substitute cookies, and leave a half empty glass of whiskey sour (minus the sour) and run not walk, to the nearest liquor store to purchase enough Daniels to 'finish the job,' as they say.

Normally you would be somewhat depressed from loneliness after an experience like the one you had back at the bar. It's rather strange that you indeed don't, and you notice this. As a matter of fact, you're actually feeling unusually bright, as if your head were being therapeutically immersed in some dense and comfortably warm liquid. Peaceful actually...is the word that comes to mind, your mind, as you float down the street toward the harbor where your boat is slipped. You even feel like singing, so you do! You're feeling...alive, is how you'd call it□strange, yet very much alive.

Anesthetized, yet in tune, tuned to a greater consciousness...."Everything...is gonna be alright," you sing in your best Bob Marley imitation. "Oh, every little thing, is gonna be alright."

*

You lie down, and you pull the covers over your head....That's what you're thinking, anyway. The knee hurts some□probably from hitting the dock, while boarding 'Ticket to Paradise.' It hurts some, but it's not all that much, considering....The trade off is well worth any physical pain endured, and it's all...well, it's all just temporary, isn't it?...Necessary, as well. This is all a part of, of a transition...Anxiety decreases, from the initial shock of it all. You now begin to feel sort of, sort of heavy inside. A certain calmness begins to permeate your consciousness. You somehow knew it would be like this, and even though you are at least minimally aware that your lungs will soon convulse, you still begin to relax even more. Temporary...just temporary; this is all just temporary...You intuitively know this and perhaps because of that there is no angst. The sea now begins to feel warm, matching your body's temperature, as all barriers dissipate. Your heart is the only sound heard, it's like music that fills the sudden silence of the sea. A child's face appears before you...a reflection off the mirror surface of the water above you. You are not surprised at all by his face...You knew he would be here.

And he you?

You instinctively reach

out to embrace him now that you can. As does he.

You've waited so terribly long to put my face

upon the child of your dreams.

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