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## Jack's Bight : Solace of an Open Place

Hamish Winthrop Ziegler  
*Florida International University*

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FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY

Miami, Florida

JACK'S BIGHT: SOLACE OF AN OPEN PLACE

A thesis submitted in partial satisfaction of the  
requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF FINE ARTS

by

Hamish Winthrop Ziegler

1994

To: Dean Arthur W. Herriott  
College of Arts and Sciences

This thesis, written by Hamish Winthrop Ziegler, and entitled, Jack's Bight: Solace of an Open Place, having been approved in respect to style and intellectual content, is referred to you for judgement.

We have read this thesis and recommend that it be approved.

Campbell McGrath

Adele Newson

Lynne Barrett, Major Professor

Date of Defense: November 17, 1994

The thesis of Hamish Winthrop Ziegler is approved.

Dean Arthur W. Herriott  
College of Arts and Sciences

Dr. Richard L. Campbell  
Dean of Graduate Studies

I dedicate this thesis to my mother, Ann Williams McLean. Besides bringing me into this world, she introduced me to Biscayne Bay and the sea beyond, a fantastic world I might never have known without her.



ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

JACK'S BIGHT: SOLACE OF AN OPEN PLACE

by

Hamish Winthrop Ziegler

Florida International University, 1994

Miami, Florida

Professor Lynne Barrett, Major Professor

*Jack's Bight: Solace of an Open Place* is a non-fiction book; partly a story of place, as well as the spirit of the people I lived with for seven years aboard a houseboat in a floating community called the Anchorage, off Miami. It starts with how I came to the Anchorage and my first months aboard with my girlfriend. Character portraits follow, with a shrimping trip and a historical account of Jack's Bight. This is followed by the first of several chapters on our political struggle with Miami city government. Subsequent chapters describe living aboard in nature, the life of a liveaboard priest, cruising across the Atlantic, burning a boat, a community *chautauqua*, an adventure on the Miami River, an encounter with a manatee and a dolphin, and our construction of a channel. The book ends with the first hurricane to hit Miami in decades.

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## Waterscape

I sailed my first boat when my buddies and I commandeered a flat square of construction styrofoam from the pool our school was building, jammed a stick in her, tied a sheet on, and headed out squeaking on Biscayne Bay. The bay was as wide as the Mississippi.

We found a whole new world waited beyond Ransom prepschool's bayside mangrove stands, a boy's paradise of shallow, half-sunken wrecks, mysterious islands and dilapidated houseboats on which old men lived. They seemed to enjoy our visits and told us stories. One of them, Richard, put his teeth in Clorox. He told us it worked better than the stuff on TV.

Our village is called Coconut Grove, named after the old Post Office. Near the mid-nineteenth century it was a tiny shack nestled among the ruins of a coconut palm plantation. Then it became a fishing settlement. When my family moved to the Grove in 1973, it had grown into an artsy village nestled in the coastal jungle, ten miles south of Miami. To a boy from Boston and Kansas City, it was an exotic place of scorpions and flying beetles.

Fishing villages seem to have that allure of living by the bare hands that is so attractive to artists and hippies

alike. With my mother a portrait painter, we fit right in. In galleries like the Grove House, artists messily created in the back and displayed in front. Yarn wall weavings and painted plaster sculpture were popular.

The annual Coconut Grove Arts Festival was a two-street affair back then. The Hare Krishnas had a compound on Kumquat street. On Sundays they held free vegetarian dinners for anyone who wanted to come. My friends and I went there often. Then we rode for candy at the Krest Five & Ten.

My street was Loquat, the next street over from Kumquat, another mysterious tropical fruit. We would ride our bikes from my house through the long mango-sweet summers into town. The black asphalt shimmered under our tires as we flew over it, too hot to touch with our bare feet. We rode back and forth from the cool library with a water fountain to air-conditioned Lyle's drugstore for orange creamsicles. Then if we rode fast, we could make it down the hill to Bodenheimer's Seminole Bait Store next to the shrimp docks before the sticky orange ran down our hands. We picked juicy tangelos. They were ours for the taking in the yards we passed. Nobody seemed to mind.

We played in the shade of banyan trees big enough to cover four yards. Their stringy, labyrinthine air roots draped the roads and yards and we swung from them, latching onto the thicker trunks of older vines with our legs and columning down them like paratroopers to the ground. We rode through the Black Grove where gnarled old men under wide

straw fedoras nodded in the shade. We knew they were from the Bahamas and imagined their grandfathers were pirates.

Some weekends we'd end up at the Pagoda, an old wooden house up the hill on our Ransom School grounds. We would climb up to the veranda overlooking Biscayne Bay and lay down on our stomachs, swapping stories of forts and sailing ships. The whole shimmering expanse of the bay stretched before our eyes, all the way to the low green line of Key Biscayne and the deep, azure Gulf Stream beyond.

Ransom's greying caretaker, I can't remember his name, told us the Pagoda was one of the first houses in the Grove, built in the 1890's of Dade County pine -- wood so hard it needed special nails. We pressed our noses to its unpainted porch frames, inhaling the pungent sap. It still wrinkled our noses after almost one hundred years. He told us when a hurricane would come, and he'd seen several, he would prepare the Pagoda by opening a few windows and doors on all sides to let the wind blow through. He said when you let the wind have its way a little, the house wouldn't blow over.

I always remembered that part. It seemed so strange, letting the wind come in with a storm. I imagined the old three-story house in that wind, the bay growling and hissing its way up the hill toward her in a twenty-foot surge, swirling the foundations, green palm tops whipping above the waves, trunks awash, and she a great wooden whistle in a howling hurricane.

Before the divorce, my family lived in a large two-story brick house at 1924 Trapp Avenue in Coconut Grove. It was a nice, quiet neighborhood. Our house had two white columns, a bay window upstairs overlooking the street, deep blue, curl-your-toes shag, central air-conditioning, a big yard with a gate, and trim shrubbery. Then it all ended.

My father met a woman on a business trip in Toronto. I was seventeen. It was 1977. My sister Heideloh was seven. I hadn't graduated high school. My all-consuming preoccupation was simply overcoming the fact that I was carless in a high school foundering in a sea of student Jeeps, Camaros and Olds Cutlasses. And now this. My life was upside down. In the last few weeks in the house, after the closing, my mother Ann dropped the next bomb.

She came home with a man.

They just stood there together in the foyer like two bashful teenagers. The man, much shorter than my mother, looked cautiously at me from under blonde, sway-shocked hair. No one said anything. Then his little dog straightened his leash, lifted his leg, and dribbled quietly on the long drapes that hung just over the thick blue carpet.

"Brown Dog!" admonished the red-faced man as he pulled on the leash. "Sorry about that."

My mother discretely ingored it. "Honey, I want you to meet David. David Wooster." I shook the man's hand.

"We're going to go sailing today. Would you like to come along?" I knew something was up, but I wasn't sure what it was. I decided to be nonchalant.

"Sure. Why not?"

We drove down to Biscayne Bay, parked the car, and rowed out to where we kept our twenty-four foot Morgan sloop. It was a place called the Anchorage, a community of boats anchored on the outer side of a group of small, breakwater islands protecting Dinner Key Marina in Coconut Grove.

It was weird seeing those two looking at each other as we dropped the mooring lines and fell off under sail. They smiled at each other alot, held hands, and looked at me, all the while the small talk going on. I was beginning to figure it out.

"David and I are in love," my mother said finally, after about a half hour. She smiled a mushy smile at the man and kissed him.

They sat there waiting, expecting.

"That's really nice," I said. "Really." More silence, and now two mushy smiles pointed at me. I wished they could have told me all this someplace where I could have gotten away and not on the boat. I suppose my face turned red. I managed a happy grimace and placated them by reciting how lonely my mother had been and how good it was she'd found someone; all the while wondering what would happen now, hoping this guy had money and was going to take us to

California; or somewhere where every guy got a car and fine chicks.

"David has a houseboat in the Anchorage. We are going to live there. On the sea, like pioneers."

"In the Anchorage? You mean out where we keep the boat? A bunch of bums live out here!" I knew I shouldn't have said that in front of the man, but it just came out, like the truth always does. Too late.

"Hamish!" she said.

"I'm sorry."

"Don't worry about it," the man said. "You didn't mean it that way."

Quiet rushing water. I trailed my hand in it, looking down and away from them. I stared at all that water. My schoolmates lived in tree-lined Coral Gables with long, green lawns: a town, next to another town, with streets, stop signs, picket fences and high walls, green and red lights to tell you when to go. Permanent stuff. Out here there was just water, boats and space. I gripped the winch that held the straining jib line. The line thrummed into my chest. There's no such thing as frontier anymore. Where the hell was this strange man leading us? Couldn't she have found someone with a real house?

We all moved out to the Anchorage that year, out on the bay, beyond the marina and its piers, beyond the four protective islands. When I was younger, it had been an



adventure to explore on the raft, to visit old Richard. Now it seemed different.

My sister went with my mother, David, Brown Dog, and our dachshund, Laureli to live on his houseboat. I was too young to have a good job and didn't have my own place. My mother and David didn't want a teenager living with them, so I moved onto our Morgan. My mother and David were soon busy building a thirty-four foot sailboat in Medley. His dream, and now my mother's, was to sail around the world.

My most vivid memory of living aboard was being woken at three a.m. by rain showers while sleeping on deck. Sleeping below was too hot. The showers always ended after you dragged all your bedding below. Then it would be too wet to sleep out on deck again. When it didn't rain, which wasn't often, I huddled under sheets to escape the mosquitoes.

I seem to remember the uncomfortable stuff, like sleeping at a forty-five degree angle the night before graduation from Coral Gables High because my mother had picked that day to beach the boat and paint her bottom. That night I dreamed I was in a Fun House, woken by a square-headed clown: my rented cap and gown hanging at a crazy angle from the boat's handrail.

I had to row to shore every day past Dinner Key Marina in a small dinghy. I couldn't walk to my home. Everyone in the Anchorage rowed. It was the thing to do. I had to get

used to the three hundred and eighty-five strokes it took to make the one-way trip.

The weather was the most obvious thing on the bay. It was everywhere. And I had plenty of time to study it rowing to shore. Florida is flat. The sea around it is even flatter. I began to realize what gave things depth out on the boat were the sky and clouds. We had no canyons, no mountains, no waterfalls. The nimbus clouds were our moving mountains, their heavy squalls our waterfalls. Clouds covered the vault of the sky because it was always open, down to the horizon on the bay, except for the nearby islands and mainland. We had no trees or buildings to blot out the sky. The Morgan was tiny. I couldn't even stand all the way up in her, except near the main hatch. I should have felt crowded, but I learned to spend most of my time in the cockpit on deck. I lived outside. With that sky, I had all the space I needed.

Though I had a canvas top over the cockpit, I had doubted that I could survive on the boat without air-conditioning. But as the summer wore on, I began to notice how nature cooled things off.

During the day the wind was sucked ashore from the bay toward the hot interior of the Everglades with its humid, rising cloud columns. As storms built over the swamps, they pulled more air inland from the coasts and the sea breeze freshened in the Anchorage throughout the afternoon, feeding the giant cumulonimbus that towered like a mountain range to

the west. The updrafts of large thunderheads can reach the anvil head at forty-five to sixty thousand feet, higher than jets, their puffing heads frozen and razored clean into flattops by fast, upper level winds. The clouds draw air into their slate-grey underbellies in great yawning breaths, exhaling with even greater force on their opposite sides in downdrafts filled with driving rain and even hail. The cycle can continue all afternoon, the storms staying inland, shading Biscayne Bay to the east from the hot sun and providing a cool, dry sailing breeze.

When I sat on deck during long afternoons, I noticed that when the sun's heat engine set, the thunderheads began to die in the early evening, and the sea breeze with them. Then a period of calm set in for a few hours, with the night land breeze kicking in about nine or ten o'clock. Then the air rolled back out to sea where it came from. This summer weather was like clockwork, as if the waterscape was alive, inhaling and exhaling once a day, living out its geologic life in deep breaths, slowly, as swirling sand smooths away a stone at each tide.

During the evenings, the sunset program was the best thing on. The night breeze came soft and cool, wafting in the land smells of gardenia, pine and hibiscus. By midnight I lay on the foredeck, cooling in the breeze, waiting for Snagglefin to come around.

A skimmer bird cleaved the smooth water on the wing, searching out surface minnows to pierce on his lower beak.

Quick rings in the calm water just ahead of him marked the dodges of his prey as they somehow sensed his approach. A big splash sounded about thirty feet off the bow where I sat. I knew it was her, the dolphin. I rattled the anchor chain in a clumsy attempt to get her attention. She didn't listen. At least she didn't come over. She was here for the young snapper and ballyhoo that tend to congregate under the Morgan, feeding in the turtle grass growing around it, taking shelter under her belly from the sun and predators.

She splashed again, then the strong puhhh! of her exhalation. I could see her raggedy, chewed up dorsal. She drew a breath every few moments. Too often for anything other than fishing. I imagined her chasing them, whirling in tight circles around her prey in her smooth, rubbery skin, right under my clumsy land feet.

And I could only suppose, try to see with her eyes as she swooped through the darkness. Does she see a black planetarium zig-zagged by torpedo streaks of whipsaw violet across the dome of her head, her theatre ears? Or do wriggling skeletons weave across her path, or do swirling green plankton trails dart by in phosphorescence?

Little splashes scattered like rain near the boat. Ballyhoo must have been everywhere, their needle noses jabbing each other in their frenzy to escape, some arcing in the air, leaping ten feet or more, agog in the chase.

I closed my eyes.

I imagined the clicks and scratchings of the undersea chase: the ticks and bangs of Snagglesfin's sonar, the background clutter of the snappings and cracklings of night fish and shrimp, and what must have been the cries of the ballyhoo racing against death. If I were there, it would only be a scuffle in a darkened room.

## The Piscataqua River Wherry

The first time I was introduced to Michael Burt, he was naked. My mother had invited me out to meet some of her friends in the Anchorage, which I knew very little of in that summer of 1977, other than that it was a place where people lived on boats out beyond the islands of Dinner Key Marina. We were to visit a black schooner I'd heard had great, old-fashioned cable rigging, wooden deadeyes, and black-tarred telephone poles for masts. The locals out there called it the "Pirate Ship." Even a jaded teenager of sixteen could imagine swinging from rigging like that into the bay on a hot summer day, so I went.

As we rowed near the black, wooden schooner we stopped alongside another dinghy with a man sitting in it. My sixteen years weren't enough to offset the shock of making the acquaintance of a grandly tall, hairy, bearded man, completely naked but for a dive mask and a big smile. Seawater slicked the dark hairs covering nearly all of his body. He looked like an otter that had just surfaced. A schoolbook image of Cro-Magnon Man flitted across my eyes for an instant while he said he was glad to meet me. We shook hands. Then I watched him adjust his mask and snorkel, and roll over the side of his dinghy into Biscayne Bay. I

would come know this man as Michael, the "guru" of the Anchorage.

I found out he lived aboard a ferrocement sailboat he'd built himself, he was some kind of priest of an obscure religion, he ate no meat, and read by kerosene lamp. And he was celibate. At sixteen, it was the sex thing that really threw me.

Years after our family moved into the Anchorage, Michael became a good friend of my mother's, so I got to know him. He and another friend from New England, Ray Rogers, must have come down with a bout of serious northland homesickness after their years in Florida. It started when he and Ray got it into their heads that they would build longboat skiffs, eighteen feet of sleek rowing boat. They sent away for plans from Mystic Seaport. The plans cost five dollars.

The battle with twenty-knot winds, hauling bags of groceries, maybe a car battery and fifty pounds of water in a factory-built dinghy designed more for looks or ease of storing on deck than waves, was about to be transformed. The coming of the longboats to the Anchorage was like a kid bringing in a sleek missile with smooth bicycle wheels to roll against your peach crates and shopping cart tires at the Soap Box Derby.

Ray bought plywood and two-by-fours and began building "jigs," or forms, on the Big Island. When I was twenty-four, I visited the little improvised boatyard among the

pine trees to watch their progress. They looked like canoes. In no time, a few skiffs came off the beach freshly-painted and shiny. We all watched Michael and Ray row them around the Anchorage like proud fathers.

Michael's skiff was fitted out with a sliding seat and custom-made, ten-foot laminated maple oars with cupped blades he'd ordered from Maine. He'd fashioned the oarlocks into the ends of triangular "wings" for better leverage. He'd cut these pieces of half-inch fiberglass from an old boat he cut up and hauled off the Big Island. When he soared past me in my stubby little dinghy, I witnessed sheer power married with grace. The nearly twenty-foot hull actually leaped in the water as he smoothly bent forward with his long frame, then slowly straightened, his strong arms bending the shafts of the long oars in mid stroke. Low and heavy, the skiff's prow split the waves like a dorsal fin.

Ray and Michael suggested I build my own longboat with them since I needed a dinghy. I said yes. My mother loaned me four hundred dollars for materials. During the two months it took for me to build my boat, I had three other boatbuilders in my company. A French cruiser named Pierre Moreau built a small dinghy as well as repaired the wooden boom of his sailboat, Correntina. Another repaired a centerboard, and Michael visited to offer advice when not building something himself. Everyone asked Michael for suggestions; he was the acknowledged boat expert in the Anchorage.



Michael presided not only over the boatyard, but the entire Big Island itself. He was the self-appointed caretaker. He fed the cats that lived there, or dropped off temporarily by cruisers. He made sure people cleaned up after a day's work on the longboats. And he hauled trash.

I remember so many hot summer days where Michael's longboat skated along, slung low and loaded with big trash bags. He often walked the island's perimeter, sometimes every morning, collecting and bagging the flotsam and jetsam that came in regularly as clockwork from the bay. The trash was especially heavy after weekends. It was a common sight to see Michael heaving trash bags at the dinghy dock into the dumpsters, along with the occasional large object: a broken bucket, a sopped boat cushion, a cooler, or a fifty-five gallon plastic drum. He said people throw out anything, but the worst thing the weekend boaters threw out was plastic. Plastic soda rings, plastic ice bags, plastic bags, sandwich bags, empty outboard oil containers, etc.

Sea turtles eat jellyfish, and plastic bags look a lot like dinner to them. These bags can float for weeks until a turtle eats them. Then they lodge in their intestine and kill them.

The screeching of the "Saws All" portable saw could also be heard on the island occasionally. When several wrecks piled up on the beach and nobody claimed them after several months, Michael spent days slowly cutting up their fiberglass and wood corpses, hauling the pieces to shore in

a large community runabout known as the Pickup Truck. The "truck" had no engine. He towed her behind his longboat.

The boatyard was a great success. After four skiffs were "popped" off the mold, the Anchorage boatbuilding designs evolved. The St. Lawrence Skiff had been a little wet in a chop, and a bit narrow. A design called the Piscataqua River Wherry seemed an improvement, and we all eagerly awaited the plans. Mine would be the first one off the mold.

The Piscataqua River Wherry, like the skiffs, came from Mystic Seaport on the Connecticut River, the historic boatbuilding center of the United States. Maybe Ray was biased in his choice of the wherry. His daughter Suzy is from Eliot, Maine, on the Piscataqua River. She says there is one hell of a current there. So she had to be a smooth boat.

First built in the 1850's, she ran small cargo and ferried officers to and from sailing ships against the Piscataqua River's powerful current. She accomodated three men pulling eight-foot oars in tandem, and was originally sixteen feet, five inches of solid wood longboat: four feet, one inch on the beam, a plank overlapping plank lapstrake design, oak frames, white oak planking, and bronze screws. She was built "propah," as Michael said in his Down Maine accent, with a little working dory in her from the longlining tradition of the Grand Banks, and a dash of the Whitehall's soft chine and graceful sheer.

I realized I liked the idea of a boat with roots. She would be a boat with a sense of place and tradition; an anachronistic relief in a pop-up storybook city like Miami. She would be an 1850's piece of the taproot of America, of revolution and exploration.

Our desire for old boats like the wherry and the St. Lawrence Seaway Skiff was like the urge of the pioneer women when they made do with less in their tiny Conestoga wagons so their husbands could haul five hundred pound pianos along two thousand miles of oxen trails from Philadelphia to Wyoming. The harder the land, the more these ladies needed tradition. The longboats wouldn't bring back the stately days of Commodore Munroe and the Biscayne Yacht Club, but their being around might help.

The little boatyard grew under the tall, Australian pines. At times four dinghies lay under construction on sawhorses at one time. We had no electricity, no roof and no water - only pines and a small rock beach. We ran a Honda generator when we had to have a power tool on. When it rained, we covered the tools and materials with a tarp and took a break. The soft, needled forest floor felt good on the feet after six hours of work, the shade cool for a rest, a joint, and a game of chess between rounds of work. In winter, the needles and pines lay redolent as the sun warmed them in the dry air.

Michael and Ray had built a jig or wooden form, cut to the Wherry's plan. This was the first step in the laying up

of fiberglass. There was no way she would survive in the tropics if we made her in the traditional medium of wood. The teredo worms and blazing Tropic of Cancer sun would lay her bones open in a few years. The jig was comprised of ten stations, or vertical plywood pieces set on two-by-fours, spaced evenly apart as the lines of the boat's shape changed. She would be "laid up" upside down. We nailed thin wooden slats along the vertical stations longitudinally, much like the planking of a wooden boat, to give a smooth gently curving surface for laying up glass.

But there the resemblance with wood ended, for the next step was the stapling of acetate film over the slats. This would provide a temporary skin and a surface for the fiberglass. Waxed paper came next to keep the fiberglass from sticking to the acetate. We temporarily fixed the waxed paper to the acetate with generous helpings of Karo clear pancake syrup. The syrup made me think of daytime TV commercials and things like Tide detergent, not boats. At that point she looked so unlike a boat, I had my doubts about her eventual beauty.

After the wax paper was in place, we cut foot-wide swaths of woven glass fibers called "mat" according to the length of her beam at various points. We laid them laterally like bolts of white lace over her upturned belly. The fiberglass threads in the mat glinted like spun crystal in the sun. The tiny brittle fibers of this mat formed a thin, random layer of straw, crushed flat as if by some huge

piston. The broken pieces of glass always found their way into the soft skin between your fingers, under your wrists and forearms and itched there all day and night.

We catalyzed gallons of polyester resin with MEK hardener that said: "DANGER: Causes cancer in lab animals" on their tiny squeeze bottles. Ray dripped the clear, toxic stuff into the pink resin bucket. It had specific instructions on each bottle for measuring, but when asked how he knew how much to put in, Ray said: "Oh, just a smidgeon. You kinda' feel it depending on the weather."

After stirring the witch's brew, Michael carefully poured the catalyzed resin over the lacy mat, flooding its whiteness with pink translucence. Ray and I smoothed it on. I used a brush and gloves, but Ray liked it so much he just jumped right in and spread it with his bare hands. He smoothed and shaped the gelling resin, smiling, then frowning with concentration. Ray said he didn't like the way the plastic gloves melted on your hands from the chemicals if you left them on too long. And he didn't seem to mind the slight burn from the resin, nor the cold chemical chill and horrible smell of the acetone solvent required to clean up afterward. The resin itself stank so much I had to turn my head into the wind to take a clean breath. In those days we didn't use respirators.

Michael kept telling Ray, "Whoa!" to slow him down. We had to be careful to brush out voids, or bubbles that could weaken the chemical bonds of the polyester. We could see

right through the fiberglass and acetate to the slats when thoroughly wetted, and those bubbles had to come out. But Ray was enjoying himself so much, he kept pouring on the resin and slopping it around.

We made our "lay up," or first layer, in one quick session so she'd "kick off" hard in a continuous first shell. The next day we added a layer of tightly woven, medium-weight cloth, much like a light blanket. The day after, another layer of mat. Then came the fairing process.

The hull was not smooth by any means. I squatted down at one end and eyed her length. From an ant's viewpoint, the hull looked like the rolling hills of Pennsylvania. We filled the dips in her surface with a mixture of resin and microballoons we'd gotten from Shell Lumber. Microballoons make the resin pasty for filling.

We troweled the paste on Michael's special way, with a toothed trowel that left gaps every quarter inch. The trick was the paste sanded down twice as fast after it hardened like rock, because you halved the surface area with the grooves of the trowel's teeth. Yet it filled the dips and could be smoothed next by filling over those grooves with new grooves. Best of all it left troughs for the sanded grit to escape the sander's strokes and avoid clogging the heavy grit sandpaper. On the final fill we used a flat trowel and smoothed over the ridged gaps.

Michael was the one who showed us the technique of the large three foot sanding board to "fair," or sand smooth the

entire hull. He stapled thirty grit sandpaper with gravel-sized rocks stuck to it onto the working side of quarter inch, flexible plywood, then screwed handles onto the back side. Michael's board was a turn-of-the-century shipwright's companion. You could put two men on it, one at either end, or work it alone. Electric orbital sanders were too small and skittish to smooth the wherry's bulbous body. Belt sanders too heavy and rough. They all left gouges.

After about three days of fairing, we laid up a layer of thin mat again. She was beginning to look like a manatee. Next came a layer of woven roven, a very heavy fibrous cloth for extra strength. Finally another mat, then medium cloth formed her smooth, outer shell. We had to sand her down completely in between lay ups so each new layer would bite the old one.

I could feel the heat as she stiffened on the last lay up. Little drops of resin dangled and dripped from her overhanging crystalline fringes, pink baubles on a party dress. When the drops hardened, the resin's pink color faded to a light brown, as if she could be pink only for a short time, like Cinderella. But she was beautiful anyway.

Then came the fitting out. We separated her from the acetate and slat mold, and thankfully the waxed paper and syrup did its job. She didn't stick and popped off nicely. We flipped her over. The hull wobbled like jello when I tapped her with my foot. I could see right through her. She didn't seem very strong, like a child's plastic pool.

I bolted two thin, one by two boards each to the bow and stern to form her sides, or sheer line. This was important because her sheer, the way her sides curve up at either end, is the basis of her beauty. Once they looked good to my eye, I grabbed the power circular saw, revved up the generator, and went right down her sides along the boards, cutting off her party fringe, now pointing at the sky. Now she looked like a boat. I was getting excited.

I finished bolting the sheer boards on, one stainless bolt every twelve inches, epoxy glue sandwiched between wood and glass to hold them in place. For fiberglass boat-building it's better to have chemical and physical bonding working together for maximum strength. I put a rowing thwart in, and fiberglassed in a stern seat with foam under it for buoyancy. She had to have positive flotation built-in, or she could sink after a heavy rain or a swamping.

All that extra glass work stiffened her up. I decked her over in the bow, and closed off the most forward section, filling in flotation with lobster and crab floats I'd found along the beach.

Then I had to make a decision. I was running out of money. It was Michael who told me to spend extra and get a stainless eyepiece to go into the nose of the boat for towing and tying up. They were about twenty dollars. I'd thought I'd get a galvanized one at about a third the price, maybe replace it later from rust if I had to. I figured I would save money. When Michael saw my intention, I found out



cutting corners wasn't in the New England tradition. Michael was diplomatic, but firm. The galvanized hardware was out. Only stainless would do. He pointed out that I would deck over the bow. Would I want to take the deck off to replace the eyepiece?

"Do it right the first time. Then ya' don't have ta' do it again." He said I wouldn't be sorry. I never was.

In those days a healthy slap-on-the-back camaraderie flourished in the Anchorage, and the boatbuilding on the island was one of the centers of that friendly energy. At the little beach near the boatyard there were always dinghies filled with plywood, gallons of resin and paper sacks from Shell Hardware from up on 27th Avenue tied to the mangroves. Every once in a while a group would come down the trail from the yard to the beach carrying a new longboat, freshly painted and glittering like a shiny jewel in the sun. The whole South Anchorage could see the launching from a distance.

They would set the new addition in the water and then would stand about, hands on waists, some cupped for the sun over the eyes. They would peer critically how she floated, some bending at the knee for a better look at the waterline, canting their heads side to side. The owner usually held the painter.

There among the trees on the shoreline, out of earshot, the group gathered around a new wherry seemed out of time,

as if horse and buggy might come out the forest at any moment.

I stayed in the Anchorage on the Morgan that summer of 1978. Then I became caught up with girls, graduation, and getting a car. My mother and David had been busy finishing their dream sailboat, a thirty-four foot Creekmore named A Man and A Woman. I helped them on weekends, driving up to Medley in northwest Miami, grinding and laying up fiberglass, driving screws into the deck.

But I was a teenager. I wanted an apartment with a big stereo, a telephone, and a fridge for beer. A place to park my Volkswagen, like everybody else. So that's what I did. I started taking classes at Miami-Dade Community College. I got a cheap apartment. I did what you're supposed to do. But before I did, I got a taste of what nature can do on the water.

A squall line moving across open country is a Gothic spectacle, a thing medieval and old. Like a goddess, she's too grand and remote for our twentieth century. She's the largest single moving thing you will ever see on earth.

When she came, I got the eerie feeling she wasn't rolling toward me, but instead my boat and the bay around me rotated into her, as day into night. The pillowy, tropical air warmed and clogged my chest as if every available molecule of oxygen had already been inhaled. The squall

approached in a gigantic quiet: an unbroken line of rolling clouds stretching as far as I could see, warping the two ends of the horizon. Her purple, wispy clouds came first, the low slung lip of her cavernous maw. High above the lip in the visible blue, the stormcloud roiled upward. If I stood still, I could see puffy whiteness boil higher, like milk poured slow-motion into blue water. Still higher towered the anvil head, stratospheric and aloof at forty thousand feet; her top had ripped flat in the howling jet stream, frozen in space. Frigid wind swooped down in hurricane gusts ahead of her hanging lip in a gargantuan, nonstop exhalation. The boat turned to meet her. Rain rode the cold gusts, stinging my skin as if the air whirled with icicle insects. The living heat and rotting gas of swamps and mangroves, where beings live too buzzingly and die too quickly, swept away in the force of a wind sucked down to earth from crystalline near space.

I breathed her crisp, killing power. She numbed my hands and kettle drummed my ears. She threatened to carry everything away, churning the sea to smoky foam. I forgot the blue sky that had existed a minute before. Her screaming black was everywhere, cracked open only in lightning shudders revealing the white sea waving again and again for truce.

I stood staring on the deck, anchored in the warm shallows of Biscayne Bay. Waves flung themselves on the

rocky island behind. I looked over at my mother and David's houseboat. If we dragged anchor, we'd wreck.

Yet the squall was magnificent. A part of me I hadn't known was missing gloried in her. I realized only much later how completely I'd been hooked.

## Dogpatch

After six years of working, college and traveling, I came back to Miami in 1985 flat broke. I'd followed Sara, a girlfriend, to Boston from Michigan State, where we'd both gone to college. That hadn't worked out. I'd spent months sailing around the Bahamas with a college friend. I'd rambled around Germany and Italy with my father the September after that. Then I'd met a beautiful Belgian girl named Fabienne in Venice and we'd fallen in love walking the canals in the middle of the night. She was going to come visit me in Miami, so I needed to find a place of my own.

My mother was living aboard in the Anchorage and put me up temporarily on her boat. She'd finished A Man and A Woman essentially by herself after David had died of cancer in 1980, six months before the launching. They never made their voyage together, but David had brought her, and it would turn out myself, to the Anchorage and a new life.

I had never seriously considered living in the Anchorage again. I'd told myself that summer on the Morgan had been a waypoint, that I would move on to bigger things, get an apartment, maybe save for a down payment on a house. The people in the Anchorage seemed bummy. Many of them didn't work regular jobs. They looked grungy. Many of them

worked with their hands.

I'd seen them rowing home from work, their clothes covered with sawdust and fiberglass resin stains. I'd always had the idea that being a professional and hiring someone else to do manual labor was the way to go.

I began working as a graphic artist at a print shop and saved up a little money, but only a little. But staying with my mother long enough to save apartment money was out of the question. It was getting cramped. My own boat seemed the only other choice. No first and last, no utilities, no rent. The anchoring was free; there would be no landlord breathing down my neck. So there I was. Back in the Anchorage again, as if I was meant to finish what I had only started that summer on the Morgan.

I'd heard there was an ongoing feud between the City of Miami local government and the Anchorage people, that they would soon get rid of the liveaboards by charging high rents as they did on the piers. And then some people said it had been going on for years and not to worry. So I didn't.

I needed something that wouldn't be too boaty. Fabienne would be coming from Brussels, a staid, old European city. How could I expect her to float around off Coconut Grove on a tiny cork of a sailboat? I started looking for a houseboat. A floating flat.

The center Anchorage was my mother's part of the neighborhood, filled with the larger boats of cruising sailors and year-round residents where deep water provides

them keel room. They are the majority in the Anchorage. On my search I rowed by opulent sixty-five foot cruising yachts of maroone Phillipine mahogany and glinting stainless steel, moss-covered wooden sloops and tiny twenty-five footers with self-steering gear, silvered teak and the wear of thousands of sea miles.

Liveboards ran the gamut: we had nurses, university professors, odd-job laborers, marine carpenters, car washers, retired merchant mariners, priests, math students, shrimpers, stage set creators, retired newspapermen, writers, choral directors, artists and charter captains. And the unemployed.

I was homehunting in the south Anchorage, or what some call "Dogpatch", a collection of thirty or so of the more motley watercraft clustered in the shallows of the south Anchorage. Here the waves were smaller and the gusty swipes of fierce winter northers frustrated by the pines of the Big Island, one of five spoil islands. These islets are the remains of the 1950's dredging of the harbor around the nearby Dinner Key Marina, now overgrown with Australian pines and mangroves. Perfect anchoring ground for houseboats.

Old cabin cruisers without engines, small sailboats, fishing boats, shrimpers and houseboats of every description speckled the shallows. Brightly-painted wooden Cuban fishing boats named Daniela, La Bruma and Carida swung with the wind, often aground on moon tides.

It was strange seeing all these people in jean shorts, sandals and palm frond hats living however they wished off what had become by then ritzy, gentrified Coconut Grove. I found older, peeling boats ringed with algae, that obviously hadn't sailed in months, maybe years. Weathered cabin cruisers, boats with no engines, no sails, homebuilt cabins on old runabout hulls sat at anchor next to more expensive trimarans, motorsailors and houseboats. It didn't seem to matter who you were. Everybody seemed to get along fine.

I grew to know and respect some of the most unquenchable characters out there, like Johnny Frow, a shrimper. At least that's what he did for money. Most of the time he did what he wanted. His weatherbeaten skin looked like the aged leather of an old hand's trusty saddle. When he drank, his orneriness extended around him like an aura. He might tell you what he'd do if the conversation turned to people he didn't like. The shrimpers had long, ongoing feuds among themselves.

Johnny lived alone and liked it that way, like many bachelors in the Anchorage. His was a crowded little boat with rafts tied behind for a workshop. The whole arrangement looked like a industrial junkyard: generators, a welding torch, outboard engines, homemade stands and workbenches. He even had his own washing machine running off an old car alternator rigged by a belt to a bellowing Briggs and Stratton. The whole neighborhood knew when Johnny did his laundry.



Captain Midnight was a paranoid old man and a longtime resident of the Anchorage. For years he lived on a twenty foot engineless cabin-cruiser with five German shepherds. He had a huge, rusted green 50's Cadillac we called "the hearse," at least twenty-five feet long with triple taillight fins.

The name was actually his handle. His real name was Robert something or other. I found out lots of boaters didn't know each other's last names - just the first, followed by some descriptive moniker. Burt was called "Metal Burt" because he had a metal dinghy, so you could tell him from "Rubber Burt," who had an inflatable. In the latter's case, he also got his name from his sexual exploits in the neighborhood.

Captain Midnight got his handle from his habit of staying up all night on his ham radio harassing the Cuban government and bantering with police and the Marine Patrol, his old generator running noisily to power the radio. At least two or more of his dogs were always barking. His companions were the police and the disembodied voices of other hams crackling over the night airwaves. Some said he was an electronics wizard, that he worked for NASA once.

His boat was the mystery boat in the Anchorage. We all wondered what the inside of a tiny boat looked like with four dogs, six puppies and a man living in it. Few ever visited him. Midnight's dilapidated old cruiser was the haunted house on the corner with the dirt lawn, the falling-

down porch and the dead tree out front. The one you avoid, but still crane your neck to catch a glimpse as you go by.

Midnight developed a peculiar way of ridding himself of people who came too close to his boat. He pelted them with dried dog turds, raging in his underwear, screaming for them to stay away.

Once he'd been sailing close to the island in his canoe with his dogs. Another Anchorage resident, known as Janet Planet, was rowing by with her doberman, Mr. Raisin. It seems Mr. Raisin and Midnight's shepherds traded insults as the boats passed closely by each other. Midnight claimed Mr. Raisin attacked Smoky, one of his shepherds. He broke an oar over her arm. Janet grabbed a big C-clamp from the bottom of her boat and connected with his head. He pressed charges and she ended up in jail for a month. She called him "the evil in the Anchorage." She swore Midnight was a snitch for the police with his radio. That that's why they treated him so well, and stuck her in jail.

I watched a couple building a two-story plywood cabin on top of a lifeboat from the cruise ship Sunward II. The man came from shore everyday with lumber and tools and lived in work clothes. He looked like Huck Finn all the time. I met old Jack and Faye, an elderly Scottish couple who lived on a small houseboat with four stray dogs they'd picked up off the street. My mother said they kept them in place of the children they'd lost. I watched one dog catch fish by leaping on snappers and grunts from the deck. Jack and Faye

told me they "walk" them by making the dogs paddle behind the dinghy as they row slowly to shore every day.

It was in this neighborhood that I found myself looking for a home. I'd asked myself at times whether I was moving in with a bunch of lunatics, but I was young and adventurous, happy in the thought that I would soon have my own home. I inspected old powerboats for sale for a few hundred dollars with haughty bows and sun-raw, silvery planks, split and ready to leak in a good storm. I kicked the tires of an old steel cruising houseboat named Leadbelly. Why I decided against her I cannot remember, but she sank a few years later from rust and I was there to salvage her windows. They fit exactly in the boat I did eventually buy.

And she was a beauty: built by Seagoing Boats of Florence, Alabama, year, 1969. Hull number: 32F-8796-E. A thirty-two footer with a ten foot beam. I was sure the guys in the factory had been happy the week they'd built her. They hadn't cut any corners. Because she was to be my boat. My first home of my own.

With her peeling sheet aluminum walls, slight list and empty engine room, she could have been mistaken by someone else for a useless piece of junk: a sedentary trailer in some dusty, crowded Florida trailer park. She might have been decorated with pink flamingos perched absurdly on metal pins, planted in a cracked block of green painted concrete near a pair of fuzzy turquoise slippers left to rot in the

rain. But these depressing thoughts floated away when I admired her resting at anchor, all alone on the bay. She wasn't in a trailer park. She was on the sea.

I remembered what my mother had said when she'd met David, that we would live like pioneers. I clambered aboard and went inside. I stood in her big bay window up forward. I opened all her windows and let the wind in. I could see for miles. The Great Plains stretched before my eyes from the window of my prairie schooner. Right across Biscayne Bay to the deep blue of the Gulf Stream beyond.

She needed a lot of fixing. The owner had rented without much success to other residents of the Anchorage. I guess they hadn't been too responsible. They either hadn't paid, or had trashed the boat. The owner was a shimper and he didn't use her anymore. I told him I was interested in her, but I couldn't buy her right then. He looked me over, then made me a deal. I could stay on her and fix her up in lieu of rent. At least until I decided to buy her, or he wanted to take her back. For him, I would keep her from sinking in a good rain, clean her up and paint her. For me, I got a roof over my head. At the time it was the perfect deal for a young man with five hundred bucks in the bank and a nest to build.

Ann donated a rusting Danforth anchor and some grayed line from A Man and a Woman. I yanked old carpeting that smelled like it had graced the floors of the Home of Hopelessly Incontinent Dogs for decades. I rowed out plywood

in my wherry longboat, along with two by two's and plenty of nails to fix her walls. I tore out useless shoreside plumbing and made the bathroom a closet and painted her decks with five gallons of white latex I found in the lazarette.

I went to Little Havana to get cheap glass for windows. I rigged a cistern water system. I lined the edges of the roof with wood, caught rain, and stored it in a Rubbermaid garbage can on the lower deck. A plastic hose came down from the improvised rain barrel to a standard brass ball spigot over the kitchen sink. The whole water system, including wood, plumbing and caulking, cost me about fifty dollars. Though I had no hot water, it came out the spigot like gangbusters. I found gravity pressure elegantly simple.

I patched a big hole in the transom with fiberglass where the engine outdrive had once jutted. I bought a solar panel and a battery to make my own electricity from the sun. I wired up efficient florescent lights myself, setting up fuses on a circuit board. I wasn't as bad with my hands as I'd thought. I even learned how to splice anchorline after I read in a marlinspiking manual that line can lose up to forty percent of its strength under load if you just tie a knot. Trusting my splices was the hard part. It was the first time the safety of my home had ever depended on reading a book and my own two hands.

I marvelled at how I could wake each morning with a different view out the same window. The neighborhood

constantly panned across the bay windows as the boat nosed the shifting wind. Nothing remained the same. Things changed every day: looking east, looking west, smooth water, whitecaps at fifteen knots, grey, hanging clouds, no horizon, then blue over the park on the island of Key Biscayne.

When I rowed to shore every day, I found I could not go much faster than a casual pace. If I was late, that was tough. I tried pulling hard and flailing like a madman, but only a sweatier river ran down my back. I just pushed alot of water. I remember cursing and grunting on that almost mile-long row many times. Then I began to notice rowing actually calmed me after a day in the city. The sound of the water gurgling around the blades of my oars was like the paddles of a grist mill's water wheel I'd known in New England. The regular back and forth rhythm gave me time to think, to order my thoughts by strokes, in small, easy to swallow, stroke-sized pieces. My mind blended with my arms, my legs and my back. I found myself looking around, listening to fish jumping, somebody talking on a nearby boat, or herons squawking.

Lying alone those first few weeks by the yellow light of the mineral spirit lamp, surrounded by sawdust, hammers and the twisted bodies of the racked nails I'd been repairing with, I read for hours. I especially liked Farley Mowat's Grey Seas Under, a novel about the men aboard the ocean-going World War II salvage tug Foundation Franklin.

They were clearly courageous men, self-sufficient men, but not fearless - they had a strong, healthy respect for the sea. I was in awe as they fed the tug's coal furnaces on an eight hundred mile rescue into a raging North Atlantic storm, somehow found the half-sunk hulk of a drowning freighter and its exhausted crew, fired off a cannon that spit a thin tongue of cabling to the wounded ship and then drew her tight for towing. They launched rowing longboats into high winds and forty degree weather, riding the crests of the largest waves right up on the freighter's deck carrying great cast-iron emergency pumps and sea plugs to staunch the leaks. They kept talking about preparation, about foresight. I'd known how to steer a sailboat since I was a boy. Now I was learning seamanship.

As for entertainment, I couldn't afford a TV, nor the extra batteries and solar panels it needed to operate. And I found I didn't want one. I had other entertainment. Every third or fourth wave batted the boat's flared bow just right, sounding meaty and hard, like live muscle tissue. I got used to the rhythm, like you get used to crickets chirring outside. The wind made a certain noise in the cracked hole in the port window, like blowing on a bottle. I enjoyed the craawwk of a big heron when it came to roost behind the boat on my dinghy at night.

And I had my precious books on their shelves. When I closed my eyes, the screens of my eyelids showed Fred McMurray from All My Sons sitting under his shelves, smoking

his pipe in his easy chair, wrapped in his robe. He looked so comfortable. I was beginning to feel at home.

I had my first guests, Sandy Groves and Coast Guard, over for dinner. I hadn't actually planned on it. But that's the way things happened anchored out. People just come over without notice. Without telephones, planning is merely what you're going to bring with you before you row over for a visit and maybe looking up at the sky to see if you can make it before an approaching rainshower.

"Coast Guard" was another Anchorage moniker. I never found out why he named himself that. He once sold the temporary use of his body in Dallas to test a new medical blood filtering process so he could get three hundred dollars for a bus to Miami. He'd lived on the streets. But now he lived in a cabin he'd built over a sunken runabout he'd salvaged from the island.

It turned out he and Sandy had planned for dinner together, but had run out of propane gas for cooking. They'd come to borrow my stove. Sandy looked familiar. She seemed around fifty, very thin and frail. She acted frail, as if she'd just come in out of the cold. She seemed to relish our conversation as Coast Guard cooked their hamburgers on my four-burner. Sandy complimented me on how much space I had in my boat. To me it seemed very small; only the view made it feel large. I guessed she'd grown used to much less.

I found I'd rowed by Sandy's boat several times and had traded "hellos" with her on the dinghy dock. Her boat was a



salvage job like Coast Guard's: a tiny skiff filled with island flotsam and junk she'd found on the street. Months of searching the beach on the Big Island had given her most of what she needed: seats from milk crates, buckets for storage, pots and pans, cushions, plastic jugs for carrying water, and old seat covers for a bed. She had a blue plastic tarpaulin covering it all, keeping her nest and all her treasures dry.

We had a nice meal. They had their hamburgers and I my veggieburger. When they left, Sandy offered her propane any time I ran dry. She seemed truly grateful. She waved as she rowed away. Now we were neighbors.

I thought about how I had ended up in the Anchorage. I could have toughed it out after college and stayed with Sara in Boston. It had seemed to be what one is supposed to do.

Sara had been working on her Masters in Literature at Tufts University. I moved into her cramped brownstone outside the city. I planned to get a job and we would live together, then get married.

My first father, also named Hamish, lived south of Boston at that time in a giant house on a spit of pink granite jutting into New Bedford Harbor. It was once owned by a copper magnate, built of huge stones and solid copper drainpipes rained richly green with verdigris.

I remember him telling me that banking "wasn't so bad," that I could grow to enjoy it. He said I should try it. Even then I knew that wouldn't happen. Banking was not for me. But I did have highflown dreams of working for a giant corporation like International Paper through my father's banking connections. I had my eyes on an Alfa Romeo. I figured I could make a lot of money and at the same time avoid getting caught up in the system too much. I hadn't given up on some version of my father's American Dream.

After I moved in with Sara, the rest of my stuff stored at my father's house, I started looking for work. It was January after the holidays. I rode the Boston subway for weeks, classifieds in hand. The winter deepened into February. My father's connections did not pan out. He said something about getting a job on my "own hook." Cashier's jobs loomed in the back of my mind as my money began to run out. I interviewed with companies I didn't even like. I studied the slush on my cold-hardened leather shoes. I said to that slush: "Look you got the wrong guy -- I'm from Miami."

I found myself thinking of summers barefoot in the Bahamas. One day I lost one of my gloves on the subway. It went to Amherst, and I went to Harvard Square. I had to walk all the way home with my hands in my pockets from the cold. I was getting depressed and losing weight.

"I might have to go down to Florida to work things out in my mind, and make some money," I told Sara one day. She

was very upset and told me if I left, I wouldn't come back. She had seen me at home on Biscayne Bay and she knew I might stay.

I stuck it out three more weeks. The last time I saw Sara she was walking up the steps to Tufts. She never looked back.

I drove south to my father's granite house, walked around the poolhouse into his expansive backyard, and there she was - my Piscataqua River Wherry.

Her long turquoise underside, the color of Bahamian ocean, was turned up to the cold, gray weather. Her belly distended with snow. She looked cracked and dry. I felt guilty for having left her there for so long in that cold.

I'd named her Arete from an old Greek term meaning "a well-rounded man." A father, husband, lover, statesman and artist. A renaissance man. I meant it not as braggadocio, but as a lofty goal for myself. I didn't feel well-rounded or ambitious then. I felt lost.

I walked up to her. A big evergreen hung over her. It seemed ready to unload yet another limbful of snow on her, like a big gravedigger in slow motion, through the course of months working to blot out her slender body entirely. I had never carried her before alone because of her weight, but I heaved her on my back, loaded her onto the car and got her out of there.

Four hours later I was in rush hour traffic in New York City. My boat and I were stuck between a hulking Peterbuilt

behind and a garbage truck in front as the Friday afternoon commuters crawled towards New Jersey on the Washington Bridge. But I was happy. In fact I was so happy to be going south I was singing at the sun going down, with tears streaming down my face. I had not thought it possible to cry and sing at the same time, but there it was. I loved Sara and yet I was on my way to where I should be. Back to the water.

I looked off to the oncoming traffic, seriously thinking of jumping the median into the northbound lanes. But there was Arete's bow pointing south on the roof. I kept going.

I was glad I had.

During those first weeks of living aboard, I busily prepared for Fabienne's arrival. I hadn't named the boat then because I thought of her more as a floating apartment that needed to be anchored than a boat. I built shelves for spices in the galley. Ann sewed floral patterns over old seat cushions. I bought carpet remnants. I repaired the wall on the port side, replacing rotted boards and paneling. I sweated, hammered, rowed and grunted for weeks.

After a long day of putting up walls, or donning mask and snorkel to dive on my anchorlines, adjusting chain, shackles and swivels with the tools I'd begun to accumulate, I'd row to our dinghy dock at the Dinner Key Marina, too

tired to cook dinner on the boat. Maybe it had been blowing and I looked out of place to the people ashore. Because of wind driven spray I would be clad in my yellow slicker jacket and dirty, paint-hardened pants, not a sign of rain anywhere. Maybe as I tied up a clutch of scented tourist hens would cackle by to the convention center next door, and they would eye me like a dirty fox, a bum.

But my biceps bulged from the three hundred and eighty-five strokes it took to make it one way to shore from the boat. My back ached in a satisfactory, constructive way. My hands felt tough, like they couldn't be scratched. And I didn't care if I looked like shit. I didn't care what they thought. This was a new feeling for me. Did it show on my face? I felt strangely aloof, like the carpenter who builds a house with his own two hands and watches quietly in the background as its suited owner walks in the front door when it's done.

It would be a necessary pride. The weather often turns fierce on the open bay. When you row home at night, there's always a sense that your home will not be where you left it. That gnawing feeling is not dispelled until you round the island and see her still firmly anchored.

I'd heard the Anchorage stories of hurricanes, stories that started with: "There wasn't a boat left - all of 'em blown up on the hill, all the way up to Tigertail." Stories of great piles of sand and trees on Bayshore Drive with sailboats perched among them like wayward beachgoers,

ponderous shrimp boats among them, their huge bronze propellers dog-eared like wilted flowers amid the wrinkled wreckage of car and tree struggles. Schools were closed and children roamed about the skeleton of their town like gleeful coroners.

Storms as strong as a hurricanes came at any time to the Anchorage. I began to find that deep down it was that necessary pride that held us in place.

## Storms and Prairie Schooners

Fabienne finally came to visit from Brussels and ended up staying. The boat was fixed up. She loved it, the water and the sun. She made it her nest. It seemed too traditional for me to name the boat after her, so she named her *The Floating Bed*, which was connected in some way to the ardor in our new relationship. Fabienne has never been one to mince words. She learned to shower on deck, carry five gallon jerry cans of water, row a boat, and live without air-conditioning. She was a strong woman, with wide shoulders from years of swimming competition. She took to the bay like a fish.

In those early days I'd once rowed home to find her paddling home our borrowed rubber raft backwards against the wind. The flat transom board batted the waves as she struggled against them. When I told her, she just blushed and matter of factly turned her around and rowed the other way. Then I laughed and she got mad. To her it was one of the things she had to learn. As for me, I had touched an invisible line somewhere between how responsible I felt for having her out on the sea, and how independent I'd found she really was. During the first six months, we'd had a few mild

tempests of both the natural and lover's kind, but nothing could have prepared us for what happened one late summer afternoon.

High cumulonimbus clouds hunched over the Grove. A squall line moved under them. The air hung very still and heavy, as if someone had draped thick, wet gauze over the Anchorage. The boats lay askew on their tethers, pointing every direction. The quiet seemed to suck up all the oxygen. Dogs barked across the Anchorage. A loose oar rolled in my dinghy -- creak -- bang -- creak. I noticed Fabienne's hair. It was standing on end, not all of them, but many stragglers; tiny dancing wires leading to an invisible puppeteer. I laughed, though the sound that came out had an anxious tinge to it.

"Look at your hair, baby!" I pointed to her head. She reached up and fingered the floating strands.

"I can feel them," she said wonderingly, innocently, as if we were in science class. "It's something in the air. Your hair is up too!"

As she ducked inside to look at herself in the mirror, I looked around. The sun tipped on the horizon, throwing its last rays in a deceptively soft coral-grey light on the feathery undersides of the now looming squall line. She came



back out and we both stood transfixed on deck. We were like Saharan desert dwellers standing before the ominous beauty of a three-hundred foot wall of swirling sand.

"Looks like rain," I said, chuckling softly.

"And lightning." Fabienne and the cats hated lightning.

I noticed a loud humming noise. It seemed to be coming from the roof. It sounded like a transformer or a powerline. I climbed up the ladder and turned my head, listening for direction. It was the short metal mast on the roof that held the anchorlight. That explained our hair, I thought. I remembered reading somewhere how static can build up around tall metal objects before a storm and can actually trigger lightning. I had installed a heavy gauge copper wire that led from the mast to the water, but the noise still made my feet itch.

"Lets get everything tied down," I said as I jumped down on deck again, "and get below."

As I said this a tinkling of wire halyards against the sides of aluminum masts came from the far side of the Anchorage. The wind had hit there already. Two bolts of lightning struck in front of the storm's lip as the squall began to twist boats on their lines, then swallow them. The boats of the center Anchorage veered *en masse* into the teeth of it, tilting and wobbling at crazy angles like stand-up punchdolls. The lip closed on us like a rapid dusk. The booming grew louder. The squall's hissing exhalation had already greyed the calm mirrored surface in the south

Anchorage. The low, purple wall of the lip passed over us as a rippling catspaw swept our way. I yelled to Fabienne to hold on.

That first frigid gust hit us so hard the boat groaned, heeling over crazily. We hung on as the wind tried to pry us off the deck. I thought she would capsize. But she lurched and righted as the slack came up and the anchorlines tensed, sending a vibrating thrum through the boat. The bridle had brought her nose into the blast.

I peered forward, straining to see. The anchorlines stretched straight into the water as if frozen in the oncoming waves. Long, wispy trails of whipped foam whiskered the chop as it quickly built up. Icy wind slammed our walls and rattled our windows where it had been ninety degrees and flat calm seconds before. She blew so hard the wind snatched our shouts from our open mouths, leaving us standing there like startled village idiots.

Then everything went grey with rain.

When the initial blast was over, the wind was still blowing at over forty or fifty knots. The sun had set. Red and green running lights winked on as boat families struggled to avoid dragging, and being dragged upon. Whitish-yellow cabin lights flickered on, nappers springing up from dreams. We watched through our bay window at this stampede on the Great Plains.

I'd heard about the loud thunk when another boat crashes into your boat, pushed relentlessly by the wind. I'd

heard how a submerged rudder could catch tight on your anchorline, rubbing barnacles on nylon, chafing it raw until it snapped and you both drifted helplessly into the rocks. I thought about my splices as I watched the anchorlines vee into the waves.

Too nervous to go inside, in the midst of the wind's sound, a strange white silence filled my head. I had only clear thoughts, no distractions, as if my mind had prepared my body to act quickly and well. I was ready to throw another anchor in case the boat did drag. Then I seemed to dream. I saw a hurricane as it might appear from space: a madwoman in a flowing white dress, swirling in slow motion over an asylum's green lawn surrounded by lakes.

What had we done to the earth, I thought. Had we really changed her? I feared how we might have altered the atmosphere with our inventions, altered something that should always be there, something that shouldn't change. I wondered how strong the wind might get, if she would expend her anger on us, and if she would now unleash her fury.

"Boats are dragging!" Fabienne called out, her voice a whisper in that wind.

"Can you see one?"

She pointed to a white shape. "There! It looks like she's going to go up on the island!" It was hard to tell distance in that chaos of rain and wind.

I knew it was too far away for me to help in that wind. We could see people rowing in yellow slickers. They were

trying to set new anchors and stop the dragging boats, but the wind and waves swiped alternately at the skittish little dinghies flailing like baby ducks in a rapids. A few managed to get another anchor down. Some of the larger yachts played their searchlights across the Anchorage like some crazy movie opening, momentarily illuminating the frantic figures on the decks of colliding vessels: grim tableaux that went quickly black again, as if you weren't supposed to see, stolen glances into the chaos of backstage between curtains.

"That old Israeli guy in the trimaran is dragging!"

I jerked my head automatically upwind again. Where had he come from? He seemed right in front of us. I couldn't tell if he was going to clear the tight vee of our anchors. We waited, sweating, trembling in our slickers. In thirty seconds he had ghosted right beside us, on his way to the island. He'd missed.

"You can't help him in this much wind," Fabienne yelled, watching me watch him.

I felt relieved, but also guilty that our boat might survive and he would go to the rocks. I could faintly hear his engine, but he was sideways and wasn't making headway. Probably got his own anchorline caught in his prop while maneuvering. We didn't have an anchor that would stop him. He was at least forty feet. I couldn't let him go like that. I remembered the salvagers of the *Foundation Franklin*.

"The wind won't bother me in the water," I said as I started to take off my clothes. Was that my disembodied voice? Was I crazy?

"It's dark -- you can't go in now!" Her wrinkled forehead and eyes said "stay." I dragged out my swim fins, mask and snorkel.

"It's too rough even for the outboard, but I can dive on his anchors and set them by feel. I can't think of anything else to do, for Chrissake." Maybe I was an idiot. But I felt confident diving because I had years of experience. More experience than messing with dinghies. Even so, my hands shook as I adjusted the rubber straps of my mask.

She argued until she saw my mind was made up. Then she found a flashlight, a towel for when I would get back, and the flaregun. I don't know why she got the flaregun. No one would see it in this storm.

I put my gear on quickly. The wind and rain slapped cold against my skin. I paused on deck only a moment before plunging in. The bay was blessedly warm in comparison, as if it had refused to play at least part of the storm's game. Though the wind was still high, the main body of the thunderstorm had passed by this time. In breaks in the clouds a big moon shone through. I could see shadows on the shallow bottom.

I swam faster than the elderly Israeli was dragging and caught up to him quickly. His lines weren't wrapped around the prop. His anchors must have fouled.

"More slack!" I called out. Danforths require extra long line and lots of chain. From the angle his lines went into the water, I knew they were too short. He couldn't hear me over the sound of his engine. He waved.

"You've got to let out more line!" I yelled through cupped hands, standing on the bottom with my fins. It was getting shallower nearer the rocks. He waved uselessly. He couldn't hear, even downwind. No way. I grabbed his anchorlines where they entered the waves. I followed their white trail as I pulled hand over hand, not knowing what would come in the blackness ahead.

The quiet under the water and out of the wind struck me as strange. I could even hear the metallic clanking of his anchors and chain as they got closer. Sharks could hear well too. Were they out in this kind of weather? Maybe the wind and rain didn't bother them a bit, and they cruised around as usual after sunset, their mealtime. I tried not to kick around too much on the surface with my fins. Sharks are attracted by low frequency vibrations, like the slap of a dying fish. These animals have not changed in sixty-million years. They haven't had to. Even their skin is made of teeth. I waited for a tug at my leg and the searing pain, the serrated jaws with tons of pressure and bone behind them.

The Israeli's anchors startled me. They hove into view as apparitions clogged with mud and sea grass: hairy bottom-dwelling animals caught unaware in their nightly pacing of the ocean floor. Clogged with grass, they would never reset by themselves and hold the trimaran. I took a breath and grabbed one from behind, jerking it upwards as hard as I could, then letting it drop several times, clearing the debris. I buried the clean flukes, setting them deep in the mud. The line went taut and she dug in well. I surfaced and checked the Israeli. He had turned and nosed up into the wind. Good. Now for the other anchor. I found it, cleared it of its fur, swam it off to the side to make a vee into the wind, and planted it too. That ought to hold him, I thought.

I had a chance to take my bearings now. The trimaran had drifted closer to the island and its rocks than I'd thought. I waved to the Israeli who was now up on his foredeck. He waved back. He yelled something unintelligible. He would be alright.

I had a long swim back. The waves were larger now, having had more time to build. It was hard to breathe in the steep chop, the waves jostling one another for a chance to jump down the little hole of my snorkel and into my lungs. I swam hard, pushing with my fins. The lights of the houseboat seemed far away, swaying from crest to trough. Fabienne's flashlight played on the water. I remembered sharks and started pumping faster. One of my fins tore off from the

pressure and I stopped to search for it, feeling about with my hands. I found it after a moment, put it back on and started swimming even faster. I felt an irrepressible urgency: a shark was following me. The closer I got to the boat, the more the feeling heightened. I swam steadily, trying not to think about it. By the time I was fifty feet from the boat and I saw Fabienne silhouetted in the light of the back door, I could almost feel the giant shark right behind me, poised to pin me between its jaws at the last moment. I fairly flew out of the water, heaved myself on deck gasping for air and sanity. Fabienne brought out a big towel and hugged me with it, rubbing warmth into my skin, telling me how scared she'd been I wouldn't come back. I had never swum in a dark ocean storm before. I had never been so scared. I had never been so alive.

The next morning broke sunny and busy. The Israeli's trimaran sat anchored where I had left her. The bay shone flat and innocently docile in the sun, like a kid in a corner punished for a childish prank. It was hard to believe there had been a storm at all. But the beaches on two of the islands had stranded boats on them. Neighbors rowed and walked all over the place, helping neighbors who had dragged.



Fabienne and I jumped in our power dinghy and sped off to the scene. Everyone was out. Townsend Conklin's big yellow houseboat had sprung its mooring, rolling out three 671 diesel engine blocks wrapped in one inch chain out of their hole and dragging them across the grass beds to the island like an escaped prisoner dragging her ball and chain.

Townsend lived aboard their big two-story houseboat with his two teenage daughters and wife Sam. Sam had wanted a farm and he a sailboat, so they'd compromised. Now their boat sat stuck on land.

The sixty-foot visiting yacht *Nemesis* dragged two ninety-pound CQR plow anchors, each with one hundred feet of chain, halfway across the Anchorage, taking several other boats with her. She had lived up to her name. Somebody said the wind had shown seventy knots on their mast anemometer - hurricane strength.

I dropped Fabienne off near *Sea Prowler*, a thirty-four Creekmore design like my mother's. This vessel had careened herself on the shallow headland of the Big Island, just missing the telephone poles of the four-legged green channel marker. Her forty-five foot mast brushed the tops of the Australian pines on the island. Midnight's shepherds barked and sprinted everywhere in the face of this invasion of their walking island, adding to the chaos of the rescues. Homes had been damaged, but we had all survived.

In an Amish barnraising in Pennsylvania, everybody in town comes to swing a hammer, saw boards and lay shingles.

Men heave lines, pulleys creak and they raise walls. In our Anchorage, even the loners were about, tempted out of their floating shells by the shared experience of the storm. A two inch gasoline water pump sent a firehose arc out of an old wooden powerboat that had dragged and sprung a leak. Everybody had an opinion on how to get the heavy boats off the beach, how to patch a hole underwater, or when the tide would be high enough to float them again. Ominous mumblings about twenty year astronomical high tides and "better get used to it here" went around.

Men spelled each other cranking the winches of *Sea Prowler* like the handle of some huge coffee grinder. Her lines stretched way out in the water to a kedging anchor. *Sea Prowler* was lucky. They were able to pull her off at the next high tide. Others had to wait until the new moon. Or until they saved enough money for fiberglass to patch holes.

Weekend boaters who launch at the ramps on their usual Saturday parade out the channel to the bay slowed to gawk at the scene, some of them milling around in their shiny Bayliners and Makos. Some offered to help, but as they watched the experienced waterpeople maneuver their boats, hoist anchor and chain, heave 5/8 nylon line and cleat off as neatly as tying a shoe, they seemed to realize they would be better off watching.

Boat children skipped around other hulks in the joy of everything exposed, turned upside down. The boats' hidden, secret undersides lay open to scratch and ogle, their big

rudders dangling askew at the end of the long, whale-like hulls, covered in a greenish red *melange* of bottom paint, hairy algae and barnacles. The children chased, shrieked and hung from the taut anchorlines that reached from the vessels' bows to their anchors in the bay beyond, the boats' only remaining connections with the life-giving sea. They turned broken twigs from the Australian pines into swords and swung them menacingly, imitating the loud swishing noises of the storm's fury. They climbed up on the highest sides of boats and posed, legs wide and victorious dancing as if they had beaten Nature; as if she had tried to take them, but could not.

Sandy Groves had broken loose during the storm. Her earth hooks had somehow pulled free, and her boat was driven ashore. It was a tiny white motorboat hull with a plywood cabin, her windows of bubbled smoked glass taken from some old camper truck top. The name *Neshameh* was handpainted over the door. As I drew closer I had to stop the engine and grab my oar to pole along the bottom in the shallows. I heard her sobbing in the quiet. I pushed near her back door where she sat on the stoop. Her thin body was gently shaking.

"Sandy?"

"Yeah?"

"Are you allright?"

"Yeah. Just stuck here you know," she sniffled, holding up both her arms, then flopping them to her sides.

"Do you want me to help you get out of here?" My voice was barely more than a whisper. Then it all gushed out.

"You know my anchors just came out! I don't know how it happened. My hip is so bad, or I would have pulled *Neshemah* off myself. I've been just stuck here all night! I can't stay here. My place is over there." She pointed vaguely southeastward toward where she thought her old spot was.

The lines on her face seemed deeper in the sunlight. She was getting old I thought, but I was sure she would have gotten it off by herself if she hadn't broken her hip that year. She'd lived alone for years in the Anchorage, rowing herself to and from shore every day, repairing her own dinghy, hauling water, carrying her groceries around the Grove by bicycle. She had that necessary pride.

"Don't worry. We'll have you out of here in no time. Just let me get your anchorlines up on deck." I pulled them up and looked at the earth hooks. The long augers were bent almost in half along their shafts. I attached a tow line to her bow cleat. Sandy craned her head around the cabin.

"One of the shrimpers did offer to help, but you know sometimes those men, they only want one thing. We ladies have to be careful you know."

"I know."

I poled out a ways, yanked on the *Evinrude*, and put her in gear. We churned up alot of mud but *Neshemah* began to inch off. In a moment I had her whole flotilla in tow. The kids cheered and threw up their swords on the island.

We made it to her old place. It wasn't exactly her old place. The sea has a way of hiding places. So you just have to throw out your anchors and that's home. I set down one of my anchors as a temporary.

"I'm home!" she cried. "Oh you're so good, you're so good! How can I repay you?" She scrambled as best she could with her hip into her boat. I heard her rummaging and a moment later she popped out with something orange in her hand.

"I hope you like it. I made it myself." She held up a ceramic squirrel, standing on his haunches, with a planter built into his tail. Some ferns and an ivy-like plant dangled from the black dirt. The squirrel's moist, Hallmark card eyes stared at me. He carried a nut in his forepaws.

"Thank you very much. It's beautiful." I cradled it to put it down, but it slipped in my wet hands and hit the deck.

"Oh, shit..." Then awkwardly, "Sorry."

"That's quite alright," she said politely.

Though it hadn't broken, the ivy dangled and some of the earth had spilled onto the seat. I brushed the black dirt into my hand and put it gently back into the orange tail.

"I'll come tomorrow to anchor you permanently."

"Do you think I'll be OK? Do my my lines look OK?"

"You'll be fine."

"Oh that's a relief."

I brushed my hands on my jeans. They smelled earthy.

"It's so good to be home again. You've been so nice."

I watched her wave from behind her white cabin as I yanked the Evinrude and churned off. She looked so far away, standing there waving. Far enough away to be in another life. She could have been a pioneer, waving by the white canvas of a prairie schooner on the wide frontier.

## Peter Rabbit

You notice people like Peter Rabbit. Though I didn't know he had a storybook name, I wanted to meet him. For one thing he always wore a woven, palm leaf hat. He always carried the same knife in a handmade leather sheath. He must have been forty or better, yet he rode a bicycle around the Grove, and often carried a sheaf of palm fronds hanging out the back, making his bike queerly birdlike. He had an elfin quality; everything about him; his height, his hands, his feet, were small. He's had a long beard. He was a coconut weaver, a tropical cowboy.

I came to know his story. He'd lived with the Mikosukee Indians for four years. He ran away from home back in the fifties at eleven years old. He stole a car in north Florida and drove south, leaving it in the Everglades. It was winter and cold. He came across a gravel pit and buried himself except for his hands and face. The stones were still warm from the sun. It was freezing out. He didn't know it was a gator pit at the time, being from up north. He got lucky.

Jessie Osceola woke him up and got him out of there. Jesse'd had one hand bitten off by an alligator. He was an alligator wrestler. There were twelve boys on Maggie Osceola's farm, including Peter. The name Osceola is like

Smith or Jones among the Mikosukees. Everybody took the name of their great chief who fought so hard for their land. The indians taught him about life in the Everglades.

Peter started weaving by accident. In 1958, at twelve years old, he cleaned boats at the Castaways Marina, Bar and Restaurant. He did the work for extra money while he lived on the Osceola farm. He got three dollars a day. Then he noticed a weaver that worked a hat for three dollars and it took him a hell of a lot less time than cleaning three boats. And people were buying them. He never looked back.

When I got to know Peter better, he was only too happy to tell me about himself. Peter loves to talk.

"My father was a magician. I started magic when I was nine years old. Magic, you know, sleight of hand -- *legerdemain* they call it in French. Being light of hand. When I was a kid it was great. I loved to thrill people. But later on it started to be a drag. I got invited to these big parties with these bigwigs, and I just wanted to have fun. But they wanted me to do magic. I got tired of having them say, 'the magician took it' when some guy lost his wallet."

Working fairs and events around the country was his livelihood, like the Coconut Grove Arts Festival he was working now. His adroit, sun-leathered hands twisted plaits of thick greenish-yellow leaves, bending, weaving, intertwining. I was fascinated. It was like something out of Bali in the South Pacific. He made quick, sure cuts with a short, thick knife, inlaid and gracefully curved. A Shrade



knife from Germany. One of the best. They call it an "Old Timer." He flipped it deftly while he worked, like a sixth finger.

"My knife is very important. It's really my only tool. I use it to get the leaves, cut them, and weave them. I've got four kids, and it's what I use to feed 'em. They're called Jack Rabbit, Br'er Rabbit, Ben Rabbit and Adriane Ebb Rabbit. Adriane was born on the calm tide, or the ebb tide, with the gift of health. She is a woman of the sea."

Peter was also a sailor. He lived aboard a small, green twenty foot sailboat in the South Anchorage called the *Cosmic Band*. He named it that because Brad Davis, a friend of his and caretaker of Soldier's Key, had set up bottles in the wind with various levels of water in them to make music. He often visited Brad on his private island to get away from the city. The owners helicoptered in only once or twice a year.

"And raw vegetables."

"What?"

"Raw vegetables, man. You know, rabbits?" He hunched his shoulders and squished up his mouth like a rabbit.

"I named her that because raw vegetables are the healthiest things to eat. Rabbit food. I named us all because of that. We're natural. I changed the spelling so it wouldn't be too funny. Jack Rabbit is the offspring of Peter Rabbit. And Brier Rabbit, he's from the *Tar Baby* story. Ben was named after the nursery rhyme by the famous author

Beatrice Potter. She wrote the one about Mr. McGregor's garden, the one everyone remembers."

His hands worked quickly as he spoke, slowing only occasionally when he paused to reflect in his story. He seemed to enjoy explaining his philosophy by naming. He would have made a good teacher. I was beginning to find out he was.

"They banned Potter's fairy tales because they were too violent. They always ban books when they don't like 'em. Either too sexual or too political. She had Peter's father baked in a pie." Peter chuckled. "Made a rabbit pie out of him... Too much for them, I guess. But there's also a lot of things you can learn from those stories. Like living with nature and other people. Like respect. They're parables."

Peter was a short version of Willie Nelson, except his hair was longer and redder. Lots of hair; locks of curly reddish-blond hang all around, and his chest was covered by a blond thatch bleached from years of tropic sun. He had a twirled red mustache. He wore his hair untrimmed or cut. He thought trees shouldn't be trimmed for looks either. His jeans, cowboy leather boots and custom-made knife made him look pretty rough. Until you talked with him. He was an educated man.

"It's a teaching trip, not an occupation. An occupation sounds like something you have to do. I like weaving leaves. I'm an artist, not a salesman. And you gotta be a craftsman before you are an artist. So I get to create.

If I didn't like it, I'd be panhandling."

Here at the nation's biggest art event, the Coconut Grove Arts Festival, he was working the height of his season. The winter means tourists in Florida. Sometimes he is down in the Keys, other times Daytona. He doesn't sell the hats and other ornaments he makes. He gives them away.

"Then people give me something back. Maybe they'll do me a favor another time. It doesn't have to be money. I do trades. I never solicit. You can't solicit on the street. I just do my thing, my livelihood. The cops can't get me for that."

Peter had that lilt of the storyteller in his voice. Very persuasive. And though I sensed it was a line, I knew what he meant behind his words. During his regular season you can find him at Monty Trainer's Raw Bar, where the largest knots of winter tourists congregate under large thatched tiki huts, each with its own full bar, colored lights and sprinkler system. He's there almost every happy hour between four and eight in the afternoon. During the Arts Festival he's found the St. Stephen's Church to be the safest place from the police.

By the afternoon a small crowd had gathered around his place on the coral wall in front of the church. He had finished several hats and ornaments during the early morning and he hung on the overhanging oak, or stood them on the wall. Murmurs of "that's nice" trickled out of the crowd as he bound the last plaits on a palm frond hat with waxed

line. I could see the process sold as much as the hats.

He punctured little holes with a steel punch to tie off the hat in the hard stem of the leaf that forms the hatband. Then as a last touch, he molded and twisted the hat with his deeply lined fingers, working out the stiffness. His hands had gathered as much sun as the fronds he worked. He grinned at a tourist and a little stain showed on his front teeth from smoking. Nobody seemed to mind. It went with the showmanship. A little frond bird he'd set up on his hat dangled and fidgeted every time Peter moved his head.

"If you want your hat nice and brown, just put it in the freezer overnight. Makes you look like an old timer every time." He handed the hat to a neon tourist who immediately put it on, adjusting it. It wasn't him, like a beanie on a longshoreman. But the tourist handed him twenty dollars anyway. He smiled, showing off to his friends.

"Don't eat all the carrots at one time, Mr. Rabbit," the neon palm tourist said as he walked off.

"Thanks for the bunny joke and the donation, man."

We took a break, sharing a beer in the shade of the oak. Leaves rustled overhead in the wind. Peter swallowed a long draught and lay back.

"I like organic things. Things that finish the cycle. Like my necklace. It's made of grocery bags. I color them with food coloring and wrap them around a nail, in thinner

and thinner strips. Then I dip them in beeswax. It makes 'em look like beads. That holds it all together and keeps them from decaying. I've worn this one for seven years."

He took it off for me to finger. They looked like African trading beads. It was quite beautiful. I'd played with art all my life, but always worked with the established media. I'd never struck out and thought up my own medium.

"I wear it all the time. I was also into jewelry for awhile. In all this stuff, there's no Elmer's glue or plastic. All organic. No petroleum products. That's where I'm at. I like working with feathers, rocks, shells, water, pine needles, coconut leaves -- anything that grows and dies. Even rocks die and go out to sea. They're a part of life."

He looked hard at me over his beer. We were having more than the usual bar conversation. It wasn't that we were out under the trees, or that he wasn't drunk. I could hear the frustration, the earnestness in his voice. I've often thought I was born out of time, that I didn't belong in the industrial age. I know Peter didn't.

"I don't take from the bowels of the earth without giving back. And I take only a few fronds every couple of weeks. The yuppies, and I'm not trying to make any generalizations now, everybody calls them that. But the yuppies, they like the plastic trip. They'd rather have a pair of plastic earrings over shells or paper. But there's no replenishment there. It's gotta be something that grows.

Otherwise we're breaking the cycle."

"Do you think you educate people about the environment?"

"Oh sure, they listen a little - but I try not to say too much. I show 'em by example. People don't want to hear about problems, like pollution or plastic toxics. It's just not human nature. They want to be near success."

His blue eyes squinted mischievously as he twirled his handlebar moustache. He propped himself closer on one shoulder in a confiding way.

"Did you ever wonder why some Gypsies travel around in Cadillacs wearing gold chains and diamond pinky rings to do a driveway sealing job? Huh? *Because they look successful.* And they get the job. The poor slob who looks like a laborer comes to the door, he doesn't get shit. They just send him away. People are insecure. They don't want to wear jeans, or paper or shell jewelry. That's somebody who shows he hasn't succeeded."

I tried to hold him to his story. "Is everything you use in your weaving organic?"

"Everything except the rigging thread to tie the bands. It's sail thread. I buy that. Waxed nylon. I *could* spin my own twine. They used to do it years ago. They'd take the choir, or the hairy part of the coconut, soak it in seawater for two weeks, then beat it on a rock with mallets. That separates the pulp from the stringy stuff. Then they dry it in the sun and spin-walk it out into twine. The oil from the

nut was used to make it workable and keep it together. But unless you're reeeeeeally into the 'organicism' of it all..." He laughed loudly, giving me a wrinkled wink, "it's too much work man." So much for post-industrialized man.

Peter had several small, leafy figures along the wall beside him. He specializes in ornamental weaving as well as hats. Some weavers do baskets. Some do plant hangers. Peter does hats, shrimp, lizards, small and large Birds of Paradise, visors, plant hangers, flowers, coolie cups and special requests. Every kind of coconut critter there is. He's an impromptu weaver.

His shrimp hung eerily lifelike. Exaggerated shrimp. They had more "shrimpness" than the real thing, with long feelers and triangular plaits gracefully rounding into a segmented tail. He cut a tiny strip lengthwise down a frond, following the stringy structure of the plant itself. Then he cradled his Shrade's blade against one of his thumbs and gently coaxed the razor-sharp German steel along the strip. When he got to the end, it flipped out from under the knife in a bigger-than-life crustacean's tendril -- the antenna.

"They're your basic shrimp. Simple. I like 'em like that. Nothing fancy. It's leaf sculpture. People from Ohio love 'em. They've only seen shrimp asses ringed around a cocktail glass. They wouldn't know a shrimp head if it bit 'em in *their* behind."

Birds bobbed, suspended on springy stems over hats as if perpetually trying to alight. They looked soft and

gentle in the wind, giving me a relaxed feeling inside. Several grasshoppers adorned the wall, their spiky forms perfect candidates for leafiness. One grasshopper perched on another's back. Peter had carefully positioned several little babies around the couple in a kind of a scene. I wondered what the tourist parents thought, the little kids in their smocks and Keds looking on. "Daddy's taking Mommy for a piggyback ride dear," I heard one say.

"You can tell what they're doing, but it isn't trashy, you know? Big sellers, that grasshopper family." He laughed and grinned from under the brim of his battered brown frond hat. His eyes shone very blue with all that brown and red.

"You don't find many weavers here in the Grove regularly. There are some more here because of the Festival. But you can only have so many local weavers in one area. Not enough leaves, not enough mature palms for more. Basic ecology. Natural carrying capacity is topped off, all that stuff. And there aren't many weavers in general. It's hard work. You have to climb trees and bargain with the critters for the leaves. They're livin' up there you know. You got iguanas, Cubanalls, roaches, scorpions, bull ants, four kinds of wasps and bees...and rats. Lots of rats. And all of 'em up there at once. It's like a zoo up there."

Peter grinned from ear to ear as he talked. I could see he loved his job.

"I always give the tree a kick before I go up to let 'em know I'm comin'. But that doesn't mean they're goin' to



come down right away either. That's their home. None of the critters means to hurt ya', unlike any human if you go rummaging around their homes. And they usually don't hurt me. But I am an intruder. So I try to climb real quiet, just fingers and tiptoes. But once I get into the fronds, that's when they freak. I mean they *freak*.

Rats love to make nests in the coconuts. They gnaw into 'em, then eat the meat while they live in there. They don't move until they know you're comin' for sure. Then they leap, or run right over you on the way down. I mean, they don't purposefully jump on you.

Once I was climbin' and I was right at the top, gettin' out my knife. Then a rat gave me the eye-to-eye not a foot away. I was gonna shove sideways to let him on down, but I guess he thought my open-necked shirt was a hole 'cause he jumped for it. Snuggled right in. I untucked that mother quick.

You have to watch out for mother rats and their babies while you cut leaves. That's the exception to the rule where they don't hurt you. And I never use spikes on a tree. They hole the bark and leave standing water. Gives the tree a sort of a skin infection. Lets the bugs in. It's impossible to use the same holes twice if you got spikes. Tree trimmers use 'em. You know, if we didn't trim trees, this planet would be really beautiful. If you put something in a tree's way they just grow around it."

I studied Peter. Here was a man whose ancestors were

clearly from Scotland, Finland or Prussia, used to fending off wolves, chipping winter ice for water, or hitching up a sled. Here he was, adapted to tropics and rats.

He stopped to bicker over some coolie cups and visors with passersby. Then he took a sip of a near-cold Budweiser we'd picked up at the Farm Stores. He continued.

"You know, these business executives in their suits and ties, *they've* got the hard job. Me, I work when I want. My boat doesn't take much money. I get to talk to people easy-like, not about uptight things, you know. Sometimes these suited guys hand me change while I'm weavin'. I take it, sure." He put a hand on my shoulder. "I just wish I could help *them*, you know what I mean?"

We leaned against the trunk like a couple of Huckleberry Finns. He broke out a roll-your-own and lit up.

"Everybody has to do their own thing, man. Everybody has their lesson to learn from life. We're all at different stages in this life. Anyway, my thing's trees. You gotta climb big, mature trees. You get cut up that way, but you can't make good stuff from immature trees. A weaver's only as good as his leaves."

"How long does it take to make a hat?" I asked.

"For me? Oh, about twenty minutes and twenty-six years. I was a magician once, remember?"

It started getting dark and the throngs of festival

goers began threading home. Generators moaned and the smell of roasted corn, diesel fumes, bodies, trampled brown grass and cotton candy mixed in the air like a small war in an amusement park. Peter and I walked slowly back to the dinghy dock, he pushing his bike, sold out and tired. The orange of the setting sun brightened the green of the trees into a gorgeous bluish yellow.

"I think of the Anchorage as the frontier. It's almost like the Bureau of Land Management land. The government was supposed to leave us citizens a two mile perimeter around the national parks to homestead. All the national forests. But they leased it to companies who destroyed alot of it. But you can still do it in California, Oregon, places like that. All you need to do is make two hundred dollars a year in improvements on the land. Improvements..." He muses.

"That's a funny thought. There's not too many things you can improve on over nature. But like cisterns, water pumps and stuff. You work it, and it's yours. The Anchorage is like that. We homestead out there. And it's Federal water, though they say all of that hasn't been worked out yet. The State of Florida's thinking about regulating it. The city claims it leased it from the state. The city's always thought it could tell us to move out. They hate us, livin' out here the way we want. I don't know why they hate us. It's like we were livin' out in Colorado and the founding fathers of Denver stand up and say that nobody can live in the mountains, only in the valleys: 'Nobody beyond a certain

elevation without our permission.' That's not America, like I see it. There's only one way to go: total freedom. As long as you don't hurt anybody else, or the land. And we don't hurt anybody out there on the bay. My God, there's over a thousand miles of coastline in Florida alone! I don't go into the General Development Corporation's offices on South Bayshore Drive there across the street and command: 'Everybody with ties get out!' I don't agree with them, I think they're killing the earth, but I'm not telling them how to run their lives."

He cleared his throat. "If the City gets control out in the Anchorage, I'll have to leave." His eyes squinted as he looked out past the dinghy dock to the bay.

He stood quiet for a moment, still staring out on the bay among the moored boats in the Coconut Grove Sailing Club inside the islands.

"It'll become like what they did to the swamps, like these moored boats there. Sterile, cleared out of life, all empty. Out there on the hook I can get away from the crazies on the streets. Sure, I got a lot of drinking friends around the docks, but some of these guys who live on the streets and deal... they're crazy, like lots of things on land. There's a line there where the shore ends at the dinghy dock, and the bay begins. Luckily, most people just don't cross it."

## Big-Mouthed Dogfish

The shrimpers have a crusty reputation as hard-working, hard-living people, the women and the men. A few work together as a family on their boats, bringing their kids along for the ride. I wanted to see for myself if the stories were true, to see for myself what this kind of work can do to a man. So I'd asked one I'd been friendly with on the docks if he minded me coming along. He said to come on.

The wind is blowing twenty knots out of the southwest and the Anchorage is dancing. In the fading light the masts and their spreaders sway and toss like the crosses of an ancient marching army. Wind-whipped spray forces us to close the forward ports as we slug it out against the chop on our way out. We are on our way to the shrimping grounds south on Bisayne Bay. For the shrimpers, it's a night like any other night. It's rough, but it's a working night. I'm out as a neophyte helper on the *Miss Susie*. Rick the Fisherman runs her for the owner. He's a water man, if ever there was one on the bay. He sleeps on the sea by day at anchor, and works on her by night.

Rick lights up the instrument panel bright red as we beat out the channel and leave the Dinner Key Marina lights behind. The blanketing clatter of the big six cylinder diesel fills the small, open cabin of the *Miss Susie* as she roars up to planing speed, deck inclined, beginning a faster ride on top of the waves, on down south to the Featherbeds.

With the sun setting, it's was hard to tell we are moving at all as I watch the lights along the Coral Gables shoreline. We have no radar, no speedometer, no road signs, buildings, nor white-curbed corners with trees. Just waves, and those growing darker as we groan away from the orange lights of the city astern toward the darkening gloam of the southeast. There is something odd about heading out while everyone else on the bay is racing to port with the sun, running with the freshening wind behind.

The *Miss Susie* is a typical workboat: about thirty feet, very wide and shallow for working the bay, and built of fiberglass, the material of the day. Rick says 'glass' is a Godsend, manna from heaven. No leaks, no wood to maintain, no steel to sandblast. Just trawling for shrimp, checking the hydraulics and mending nets takes enough time.

A huge truss-like apparatus of piping and cabling hangs over most of the boat like a huge daddy long legs perched in the sky. It is an architecture of sweat: and rust, line, grease and more sweat. A welded system of winches, pulleys, guides, lines, cables, hydraulic rubber hoses and their control levers all support and control the nets themselves.

The nets are woven polypropylene line and constantly in need of repair. Often the shrimpers can be seen on the docks stitching and weaving as have done fishermen throughout time.

The nets themselves are part of the trawl, and are held open by a rectangularly shaped seiveway, or gateway, fashioned like a giant comb, a series of stainless steel or fiberglass bars running vertically. The nets trail behind this seive as they are dragged just over the bay bottom. A steel roller along the bottom helps to keep things moving along. The seives are designed to sift out large objects, although animals like turtles can get caught inside the nets and they sometimes drown. They are trapped in the rush of passing water during a fifteen minute trawl as the boat hauls the nets through the water at three to five knots. The government has now instituted turtle exclusion devices, but how well they work, and how often they are really used, is unclear.

The trawls can weigh as much as three or four hundred pounds when laden with catch. Dragging them through running shrimp in the middle of the night, winching the nets aboard, releasing the load onto large, white picking tables, and then sorting the whole mess out while running the other trawl is, simply put, an art. It is a two man operation, but Rick prefers to "pick" alone, sorting out the shrimp from the rest of the haul. He often has a better night than

other boats with two man teams. He says an extra picker just slows him down. And he's got to pay them wages.

We've been running about five minutes when Rick points to seaward.

"With the tide running out and the moon thin, they should be running strong. They've been moving down from up north for about a week now. Maybe they're strong between here and Featherbeds," he yells over the incessant clatter of the diesel. The Featherbeds are a large shallow area of growing corals and sponges about halfway down and in the middle of the Bay.

"There's a trashline near here where the bottom grass clears and it turns to mud. About 12 feet. Last night they stopped running off Rickenbacker. I couldn't figure it. When the drags started drying up I started moving south. So here we are." Rick squints over the black horizon. Shrimp are migratory and move up and down the coast with the season, the moon and the tides. Mackerel follow them down, feasting on the way. There are fewer of them too, now.

We slow from a full plane, throttling the big six cylinder diesel back from a roar to a tumult, pushing more water against the bow. The waves stop banging and begin sloshing against the hull. The wind is still blowing, but seems gentler when we slow down. The same lights we saw astern earlier are twinkling tiny in the wind along the cityscape now.



Rick pulls out a hand-bearing compass, points it at familiar landmarks on shore. He takes his bearings on the Centrust Tower downtown, then turns to his left and aims at the spire of the Biltmore Hotel in Coral Gables, or "Moral Fables" as Rick calls it in his disdain for high society. The tower sits at about two-seventy degrees due west, and the Centrust at about five degrees off of due north. The right angle makes for a more accurate fix. He pinpoints our position to within a mile or so.

"They were swarming in the other night after that hard rain. They like a hard rain. I picked about five-thousand, all about twenty count," he says matter of factly. "I usually pick more than the other captains 'cause I know the Bay."

The "count" refers to the number of shrimp that fill a container that is a standard, its size taken from a man's hat. Bigger shrimp make a lesser count, smaller a greater count. The shrimp are tallied at the end of the night back at the docks, loaded live onto trucks and sold to bait stores for sportfishermen.

He checks his course by the glow of the red compass rose, sets the auto-pilot that turns the wheel with a chain and a computer, and prepares to work the nets.

The nets boom or swing outboard away from the boat like huge clumsy wings. Rick locks them in place. The rolling of the boat increases slightly with the added weight outboard. It's lucky I don't get seasick. Then he backs up

to the shiny nickel steel arm of the main hydraulic lever and slams it down hard - the screech that ensues rises even over the idling diesel as the apparatus pays out cable. The trawls drop straight down and disappear into the dark water, drawing back and down with the slow slog of the idling shrimper. The nets down, the big steel pulleys strain at the lines. I feel the boat slow, and she's stiffer now, the nets underwater softening her roll.

He moves surely, like an acrobat to the levers again. Without looking, one hand making an adjustment on the wheel and course, the other on the lever, he pays out more line with a hydraulic squeal. Rick grins in the red light, his beard bristly and glowing hugely over his thin frame.

"They'll try to follow my draglines and run alongside. They know I got a nose for 'em." He points to bright white worklights and nets astern, and to the east. Other shrimpers. It's a nightly competition with the other captains of the docks, all a big game. Who can get the most shrimp in the least amount of time.

"But that's only the half of it. You got to know how to bring 'em up once you find 'em. Drag too low and at the wrong RPM and you just pile up bottom trash, you know, weed grass, dogfish and scorpionfish. Drag too high and fast when shrimp are running low... why you'll just comb their hair."

By that same nose that tells him when to throttle down, Rick knows exactly what part of the bay he's in when he

brings in that first trawl by the kind of grass of mud he pulls up.

"Sometimes you can tell by the floating weed if they're going to run thick or not. Sometimes you get in mud and they just don't like it. Then you got to find your way out. Other times they just lay low because of the moon or tide. Nobody really knows why, only they do."

He winches in the first load of the night. Hydraulics scream again as he pulls up a huge netful on the starboard trawl and swings the dripping bundle over the plywood and Formica picking tables and into the bright arc of the floodlights. He yanks the release line and a wet mass of wriggling, seething, angry sea creatures dumps ignominiously onto the flat, white surface.

As a diver, I've seen what these floating creatures look like in their element, the flicking tails of banded coral shrimp, glowing tendrils of anenomes, the delicate wing-like sweeps of cuttlefish. It is queer to see what had just moments before been slithering about on and over the dark bay bottom. The victims lie flopping, blinking and gasping everywhere: rubbery, liquid-clear squid, slowly curling sea cucumbers, hairy slugs that spit out their intestines when disturbed, seething hydras, rockfish and pincushion urchins in heaps of greenish-brown turtle grass. Gothic-leaved Sargasso weed adorns the more banal sea grass with its golden hues and float bubbles filled with gas. And

there they are -- pink and orange headed spears of color -- shrimp. Lots of them.

Rick's face transforms under the white light. It feels like a suburban backyard for a moment, out by a Saturday night barbeque, Rick flipping burgers. But the white tables are right over the sucking noise and bubbles of the holding tanks for the live shrimp, the water recirculating through them, pumped out the stern by the diesel. It's not a barbeque.

He sets to work. "Pretty good haul. I knew they were here." He picks deftly through the slimy mess with his bare hands. I use gloves myself. He wields a small stick to herd the more disagreeable guys off over the side: the lumpish toadfish, the poison filled dorsal spines of the scorpionfish. Tiny purple crabs tinted with specks of vermillion scamper out from underneath the grass first, clicking and skittering over the slick alien surface in a miniature *Icescapades*. They retreat quickly from the lights to the safety of the darkness at the far end of the table. There they fall through an opening into the sea. Big fat crabs hold up their cerulean and orange claws in case Rick's dancing fingers come near as they make their exit. Delicate gold, crimson, and yellow butterfly fish and queen angelfish flip and flail helplessly. Tiny lobster the size of shrimp glitter like wet jewels, their electric blue carapaces flecked with neon pink as if they had just run across a Jackson Pollack canvas.

"Shit! Damn those dogfish!" Rick has found a barb.

"Some of these damned things are all mouth." He points to several small, dirt colored, dumpy-looking fish just stting motionless, waiting. Their jaws comprise about one third of their total body. And they wait with them wide open. "They look just like brown weed and don't move a muscle; until you touch 'em and then they clamp down like all Hell. A damned nuisance." Rick picks fast all the while he's telling his story.

"The scorpionfish -- you got to watch out for them. Their top spines can kill a man. Once I hit one picking alone and it gave me the poison. My whole arm swelled into a football. I almost passed out from the pain. I could have drifted around the bay and died, but I was on the *Miss Susie* and I could plane back fast." I watch him shuttle and chuck undersea denizens overboard, dropping shrimp into the holding tanks.

"I'm glad they get away, like you did," I remark as I watch the unwanted fall into the bay.

"Not so fast. They get as far as the ladyfish."

"What ladyfish?"

"The ones that follow the boat. They eat anything that falls overboard, except the scorpionfish and those big-mouthed dogfish. Don't blame 'em."

"Oh." Everything falls into a whole new light. I lean over the side and see shadows for the first time moving in the eery glow of our bright arcs. The immense waste begins

to dawn on me. It seems like strip mining the bay. How many pounds of dead sea life does it take to get one pound of shrimp? I feel like asking. I let him finish picking and begin to feel sick.

I don't know all there is to know about the biology of Biscayne Bay. I have been told shrimping is just fishing, not bad for the bay. That it even helps it, cleans out debris from the bottom. And it just might. And I know these people. Many of them are my friends. They make their living shrimping and they are good people.

But I know what I see: that "waste" catch. And I can imagine what steel rollers must do to the bottom. I'm sure other writers have friends who are loggers in the Northwest and they write to defend Spotted Owls and ancient trees. I wonder what they tell their friends.

There is no other way to describe this work than bone-hard. A typical night is twelve to fourteen hours of hauling lines and trawls, running the boat in summer squalls and winter frontal storms, keeping course without running the propellor aground, all the while picking like mad through God knows what-all, keeping thousands of jumping shrimp in the wells alive, and watching those hydraulics so they don't chew your hand through a drag guide.

"Sure wish we could stay out past three tonight. They're running pretty damned good." Rick seems excited and

full of energy. We have caught masses of them, and by now it is 2:30 am. But I am barely making it just sitting on Miss Susie's seat. I watch him shift over to the tables for yet another search through the morass of spines and slime.

"Fishing is an honest living. You have to treat the bay right. I go bottom fishing in my other boat. Nowadays I gotta go farther and farther to find fish. You know the Cuban fishermen who are here now? The bay is not the same since they got here. They just don't have any respect for it. Some fish over the limit and take juveniles, everything. Pretty soon there won't be anything left for anybody. And the police are too busy having fun chasing the druggies. I hear 'em on the radio all the time. Damned druggies. We have to carry arms to protect ourselves out here. He pats a stainless NATO assault rifle on the console with a big magazine jutting from its belly. Pain in the ass."

He switches off the auto pilot, hauls in the trawls and locks them in. Pointing the bow at the huge heavenward beam of the Centrust tower downtown, we begin the trip back to Dinner Key. We are quiet for awhile as the engines roar. White water wake shoots out the stern in a graceful arc under the lights. The lights of the Grove start to show.

"This summer it was awful hot. The shrimp are few in the summer anyway. Everybody out of a job. Then the fertilizers from the farms down in south Dade made the algae bloom real bad in the bay. You could see it floating everywhere, covering the sea grass from the sun and killing

it. The shrimp can't stand it either. They're moving out farther down the bay." He takes a big red drag from his cigarette.

"It's been a real bad summer. And they say it's only gonna get worse. I don't know anymore. I think I'll have to move to the Gulf side. Maybe I'll go to Hawaii. They treated me a hell of a lot better than the City of Miami ever did. Anyway it'll be ruined here soon."

I don't respond. I don't know what to say. I just look out over the water at the lights along shore. I'd like to tell him things are changing. I'd like to say it's getting better, that with proper management things will work out. Then I think about Florida Bay, the fresh water dried up and polluted by big sugar at Lake Okeechobee to the north, the mangroves, fish and shrimp dying off, the sewage from new development. And even the shrimping, dragging night after night. And I wonder. Somebody's got to give.



## Jack's Bight

For centuries, what would become known as Coconut Grove had been a natural watering hole on the ancient sea highway. On the verdant edge of Biscayne Bay, artesian wells gushed sweet, percolating fresh water in several springs among alligators, wild turkeys, panthers, wildcats, rattlesnakes and deer. Green, loggerhead and hawksbill sea turtles, myriads of fish and the cumbersome manatee swelled the shallow bay. Even in the bay itself, fresh water gushed from springs on the bottom in "boils."

Biscayne Bay was a natural magnet. Fifty miles long, and as wide as ten in places, it provided unparalleled protection from the open ocean. There was no bay that rivalled it all along the east coast until the Chesapeake. The three rivers that flowed into its northern reaches made much of the north bay fresh.

Everglades Indians, Tequestas, Spanish explorers, buccaneers and shipwreck pirates watered in what would become Coconut Grove. According to *Lemon City: Pioneering on Biscayne Bay*, by Thelma Peters, Father Rogel and Brother Villareal came to the bay in 1567 to convert the few Tequesta Indians who lived there. The clergymen went away after two years, unsuccessful in their attempt to "enlighten" the natives.

An unknown mariner placed a hogshead over the spring in the soft mud to hold the fresh water and mark the spot. The area became more popular among sailors. They could water without going ashore with the mosquitoes, indians and alligators --they just anchored and rowed by dinghy to the springs. Later a wooden platform was erected with a pipe drilled into the bay bottom. A small island provided a lee from the wind and mariners and passengers could row there to relax, cut wood, exercise and eat dinner. The island came to be called Dinner Key, hence the origin of the Dinner Key Anchorage.

Coconut Grove and its anchorage existed even before Miami, known in 1836 as Fort Dallas. Commodore Alexander Dallas was in charge of US naval forces in the first days of the Seminole Wars. In those days all settlements, especially in war, faced the sea.

According to the early settler and civic leader Commodore Ralph Munroe in *The Commodore's Story*, his account of the Grove's early years, the Indians were an "honest, industrious and admirable people, not a little abused by the first rush of rough frontiersmen who entered Florida and drove them from their homes with the aid of our army, which was called in to 'avenge' various fabricated or exaggerated 'Indian attacks.' The remnant in Florida today is descended from the few hundreds which the government could not subdue or surround in twenty years of warfare -- the only Indians not wards of the United States."

It is widely known that the freshwater springs in and around the bay disappeared after the draining of the Everglades by the US Army Corps of Engineers. The canals the Army built reduced the amount of fresh water pressure all over S. Florida. However, I've skindived in the present-day Anchorage, a few hundred feet offshore and witnessed "swirls." These changes in the density of the water look like gasoline vapors in the air. Looking through a swirl throws things out of focus. It must be seeping fresh water. It seems nature just doesn't give up.

Florida had just become a territory in 1821. To the west were Indians, bears and unexplored Everglades. From 1836, when Temple Pent, the first known homesteader in Coconut Grove, ran his coontie starch mill and built small bay boats, until Henry Flagler's railroad came in the 1890's, the settlement depended on Biscayne Bay and the sea beyond.

Edmund Beasley homesteaded in Coconut Grove and in 1868 was given title to the land. In the same year, John W. Frow was appointed lighthouse keeper at Cape Florida. The Frow family continued at the lonely job until the light was shut down as an active beacon with the completion of Fowey Light, built offshore by US troops on the barrier reef itself. In 1877, John W. Frow bought the Beasly grant tract for \$100, acquiring the 160 acres of what is now Coconut Grove. He became one of the first known permanent settlers. That tract

now includes Cocowalk, the most expensive piece of real estate in the state of Florida.

The ex-light keepers continued to prosper in the Grove as starch manufacturers, bay boatbuilders and farmers. Old parcels of land in Coconut Grove have crooked boundary lines, like some trapezoid walked off by a drunk. The Frows had used old anchor chains to mark off the property lines of tracts they sold, the chains never coming out quite straight.

Next to the Pents was the house of Old Johnny Frow, built in sight of the Anchorage out of cherished white pine. Legend has it the Frows had salvaged the wood from the wreck of the bark *Three Sisters*, driven ashore on Virginia Key in the hurricane of 1876. When the ship foundered, the beach was littered with seasoned wood perfect for building. When the US Marshall came down from up north to investigate this "wholesale diversion" of business property, Grove settlers were indicted, but luckily one of them had sufficiently high connections to get them all off. That was fortunate, because how could a motley lot of baydwellers convince northerners that recycling was a necessary part of life on the Florida frontier?

An early colorful resident in the Grove was English immigrant John Peacock, who purchased part of the Beasely tract. He had come from London by way of the west, traveling down the Mississippi through New Orleans and Key West,

finally ending up on the bay where he married Marth Snipes. There he had nine sons and two daughters.

"Jolly Jack Peacock, one of the most humorous and frolicsome, original and ingenious, eccentric, good-hearted and wayward of men," he was called by a later visitor. People came to call the little niche in the shoreline at Coconut Grove "Jack's Bight." A bight in marlinspike seamanship is loop in a line, but is also a cupped area of a shoreline that forms a cove, affording more protection for watercraft than a straight shore.

Jolly Jack once kept a federal "House of Refuge" in Florida: government establishments set up to care for shipwrecked sailors. Jack convinced his brother to come homestead also, and together in 1894 they built the Peacock Inn. Until Flagler extended his railroad down to Miami, the Peacock Inn was the only hotel between Lake Worth and Key West, a fair distance in those days of some two hundred and twenty miles.

In the mid to late 1800's, shoal-draft sailboats plied the sea highway along the coast. Indian trails led from Miami south to Jack's Bight, then on to the Indian Hunting Grounds to the south along the Cutler Ridge at Snapper Creek. Brickell Avenue, now an international high rise banking center, was little more than a rutty trail. There were no highways. A local doctor named P.T.Skaggs, who worked in Miami, refused to take his carriage home to the

Grove at night along the newly opened Brickell Hammock road for fear panthers would attack him or his horse.

Coconut Grove faced the bay in every way: a community turned toward the sea for its turtle soup, its newspapers from New York, fresh mangrove snapper, transportation to Lemon City on north Biscayne Bay, or letters from other pioneers out west.

The passage between Cocoanut Grove and Key West along and inside the outlying barrier reef was the counterpart of the western trail. Sailboats were the horse, wagon and railroad. The dinghy, or small shoal-draft Sharpie were the horses, the schooners the wagons, and the large three-masted sailing ships or the newer steamers, the railroad. If Coconut Grove was a marine railroad town, the Anchorage was its train station.

The usual way of reaching Biscayne Bay from the north was to take a steamer line to Key West, then catch a shoal-draft mailboat. A less popular way was to sail down the Indian River from Daytona to Jupiter, then accompany the "Barefoot Mailman" who walked the beach from Lake Worth, near present day Palm Beach, to Coconut Grove, a distance of some seventy miles.

A very outgoing resident named Ned Pent, perhaps a relation of Temple's, had been a barefoot mailman. In the 1870's the blast of a conch shell horn signalled a wreck off the reef. Anchorage people still use the conch today to call attention to a boat leaving for the Bahamas or beyond,

coming home to port after a long passage, or an emergency in the community. Back then, it also meant Ned Pent had had the better of a jug of whiskey or cider, and felt like fiddling a square dance. Families packed up and got into their Sharpies and canoes to come to the dance. Anybody sailing by the shoreline along the way would sound the horn at each clearing to see if anybody wanted a ride.

Ned was the only boatbuilder/carpenter who could build a good casket, much to his distaste. He was stubborn in that distaste, so at one point settlers had to lock Ned, his tools, the requisite amount of lumber for building a casket and a jug of whiskey in a barn at sunset; by morning there would be a perfectly good casket and a hung-over Ned. The last casket he built was a fine one, but when they found him in the morning in his usual stupor, they found the casket had a perfect centerboard cut in the bottom.

Ralph Munroe, patriarch of one of the oldest and best-known continuing families in Coconut Grove, built the oldest existing structure in the Miami area. It is known as the "Barnacle," a name perhaps derived from its peculiar hip roof shape with its opening at the top. Or perhaps the name came from the home's tenacity in hurricanes. Barnacles also grow profusely in that part of the bay and are very hard to dislodge from boat hulls. The house looked like the stubborn, shelled animal. Today, its hip roof is still considered the best design for withstanding hurricanes in Florida.

Ralph Munroe was Commodore of the Biscayne Bay Yacht Club, and an experienced and gifted boatbuilder and designer. He had come from New York, bringing solid Victorian tables, lace doilies and family portraits in grandiose gold-leaf frames. Yet around these mementos of a different, more staid past was built a house made largely of the wracked timbers of the bark *Three Sisters*. He was mainly a "wrecker," or shipwreck salvager.

He built clerestory windows high above in the rafters to release hot air in summer. They opened by pulling on lines through a pulley mounted on the ceiling and cleated on the wall, just as on a boat. He treated the house's timbers with motor oil to slow the termites, just as boat hulls were treated with pitch against those dreaded "sea bugs," the wood boring teredo worms. The rooms themselves felt less square, more boatlike, with the hip roof's forty-five degree angles, detailed handrails, and central clerestory atrium. The windows screwed open with a worm gear mechanism turned by a handle, a scaled-down version of the steering wheel and its gearing on sailing craft.

The incongruous combination of elaborate Victorian furniture, ornate picture frames and embroidered finery and the home's marine functionality embodied the spirit of a pioneering family. They needed that connection to the old country in the north in that land of baking palmetto scrub and rattlesnakes as big around as your leg.



Homesteaders had to be ingenious. When Munroe found he needed more room at the Barnacle, he rounded up old railroad jack-screws on one of his salvages, restored them, and placed them all around the foundations. It was already built on pilings raising it five feet off the ground for flooding and hurricane surge. Munroe raised it three more feet and built a new story under, making the cement blocks himself for part of the rear wall, and reusing tiles from a demolished hotel for his patio.

Most families had several wells. Munroe found his well on the property when he arrived. He called it the "mysterious well," hewn out of the limestone rock and always filled with sweet water. Some weren't so lucky, and had to drive a sharp pipe into the earth and pump out debris and water until it became clear. And it was hard water, full of minerals, requiring lots of soap and leaving rings of sediment on cooking pots. Most housewives kept a rain barrel under their roof corners and used this "soft" water for washing clothes and bathing. Munroe used drainpipes and two cisterns and his roof to catch rain.

In Lemon City, a settlement on the northern reaches of the bay, many housewives cooked over an open fire "like a squaw" (*Lemon City*) and children crawled up ladders to sleep in the crawl spaces under the hip roofs. Most houses had wooden shutters instead of glass and no screens to keep out the bugs. Smudge fires and camphor lamps helped a little, but the mosquitoes and biting black flies were atrocious.

Many just closed their doors and windows and bore the heat rather than be asphyxiated by the fires, or bitten to death. Sitting outside meant wearing long sleeves and pants -- and even that was not enough. The settlers had to stuff newspaper under their clothes so the bugs would not bite through the fabric and reach their skin. The settlers all agreed that the mosquitoes were the only major drawback to Florida frontier life.

Housewives swapped strategem for the battle against the insects:

Flour, sugar, grits, and other dry staples were kept in barrels or in tight-lidded tin cans to keep out roaches, ants and weevils. When ants invaded the sugar it was not thrown out; rather it was spread out on a shallow pan and stirred or shaken until the ants became annoyed enough to leave. *The Tropical Sun* offered suggestions. Some of these controls were:

For ants: Sprinkle sugar on a sponge. When filled with ants, scald the sponge, wash out the dead ants, and start over. To keep ants off the kitchen table, tie a kerosene-soaked rag around each leg.

For roaches: Make a nest of loose balls of paper and place in a can. When the roaches have moved in, scald and start again. Scatter cucumber peelings on the kitchen floor. This will attract roaches, but it will also kill them.

For fleas: Pick pennyroyal branches and scatter all over the floors of the house, even under the beds. The fleas will depart. *The Metropolis*, May 17, 1906, announced that the Miami Health Officer was paying children 25 cents a pint for dead fleas.

For controlling mice: cats. (from *Lemon City*)

Captain Fulford, keeper of the House of Refuge, recorded in his log, December 26th, 1895 that he had killed a rattlesnake six feet two inches long between the house and the landing. Guinea fowl were kept, not for their eggs, which were small, but as watchdogs against snakes and bear. The slightest noise, such as a change in the wind or a footfall, would make them scream.

Many settlers had escaped the slums and factories of the industrial north and despite the hardships, they relished working on the land they would soon own themselves. And there were advantages. Women often had more beaux to choose from. Turtle eggs and meat were there for the taking during all-night turtle beach gatherings. You could pull palmetto fronds from the plant without killing it and suck their bottoms, which were like a miniature heart of palm. You could make necklaces from dried melon seeds, the magnificent tarpon's scales or from shells. Pineapples grew well and were sold commercially as well as guavas, mulberries, limes, Surinam cherries, avocados, grapefruit, mangos, sapodillas, papaya and the Florida cranberry, the roselle.

There was little relief from the bugs, but there was a relief from the heat. And that came by boat also. Schooners from Key West brought ice to make cool drinks and furnish the main ingredient for immensely popular ice cream socials, used to raise money.

The young men greatly outnumbered the young women. "On Jan. 27th, 1899, the *Metropolis* reported: 'the young men at the Bachelor's Hammock are making crates for shipping eggplants...(they) were told by John Harp that lots of girls in Florida want to get married. They are grooming themselves for a trip around the state after crops. Homer Ingalls is training a cowlick into a lovely bang. Hube (James Hubel) is trying side whiskers and a goatee and blacks his shoes three times a day. Willie (Hubel) shows his upper lip every time he goes to school and buys cow's cream to grease it with.'" (*Lemon City*)

It was largely due to Commodore Munroe and his two-story boathouse that Biscayne Bay became a sailing mecca. The protection of the bay, there about five miles across to Key Biscayne, afforded good sea conditions, while the peninsula of Florida itself provided a sea breeze every afternoon in summer due to land heating. Munroe's designs, especially his shallow, centerboard "Sharpies," were of invaluable help to the community not only in the merchant trade, but also for the smaller mail boats that adapted his designs. Munroe once commented he liked the bay because he could sail "three days out of four."

The Coconut Grove Anchorage, established by Munroe, was at Dinner Key and located in the present site of the private moorings of the Coconut Grove Sailing Club. There larger bay boats, traders and mailboats anchored in the lee of the island to water and come ashore to Jack's Bight and visit.

In the mid-1870's Munroe accidentally discovered the existence of Dr. Porter's forgotten post office, which Porter had called Cocoanut Grove, using the old spelling. Munroe reopened it and the settlement had a name: Cocoanut Grove. Now that the Grove had an official post office, the mailboat had to stop there on its weekly run, to the disgust of the skipper who often didn't show up at the settlement, saying it was "for a couple of fellows who won't get any mail worth the trouble anyway."

So Munroe thought up a sailor's solution to his problem of keeping up with the news from up north. Every Tuesday evening he sailed his sharpie *Presto* to Cape Florida and reached the reef early Wednesday morning, a distance of about ten miles. There he would meet the steam liner that had left New York the preceding Saturday. The captain of the liner, in an arrangement with the Commodore, would wrap newspapers and reading material in canvas with a piece of wood to keep it afloat. He would then throw the parcel aft where Munroe would cut in quickly with *Presto* and scoop it up before it even got soaked. Thus the settlers of the Grove were the most informed people on the bay.

Munroe's screw-jack dry dock attracted mariners from miles around to come to the Barnacle to fix their boats. And an interesting social life grew in the sparsely settled wildness around Jack Peacock's Peacock Inn. Attracted by the frontier writings of such prominent authors as Lanier, Audubon, Harriet Beecher Stowe and Munroe himself, tourists

began to arrive and established the Grove as one of the first tourist spots in South Florida. By the 1890's Miami had begun to boom with winter tourists attracted by the climate, availability of land and natural resources.

The early settlers had their experiences with killer storms. Ralph Munroe built the Barnacle high up on a hill, on the limestone escarpment about eighteen feet above sea level. However the boathouse had to be built on the water. When a hurricane came just after the turn of the century, the ingenious Munroe was ready. He sawed partway through several non-critical support timbers in the seaward wall of the boathouse, and the rear wall on the lower level so the walls would to break away in the storm's surge that would inevitably come. He also braced the sidewalls with ground-anchored cable attached to chainplates of steel bolted into the walls, exactly as a ship uses them to distribute stress and support its massive rigging. In this way the sea could roll through unobstructed, and the house would be saved. When the hurricane came, it worked exactly as he had planned.

The solitary, self-reliant spirit of the old Cocoanut Grove, personified by men like the Commodore, has lived on in the modern Grove. A letter written by a later resident to

the local newspaper regarding the unwanted influence of the City of Miami and its attempts to annex Coconut Grove testifies to that fortitude.

In 1919 Grove resident Judge Edward M. Hyzer wrote in defiance of the forced takeover in relation to a project to build a naval air station at Dinner Key, the present site of the Anchorage: "Miami has impertinently assumed the right to insist upon what people outside its municipal city limits shall submit to, so that a few Miami storekeepers may profit where the outsiders suffer." He went on to say that, "*Miami, for instance, which lives chiefly on business and noise, might well afford to take the Station (Dinner Key Naval Air Station), but with Coconut Grove it is a different matter. It has no business and until recently no noise, wherein lay its real value.*"

When the United States War Department was convinced by the Miami Chamber of Commerce to lease the area of Dinner Key to establish a Naval Air Station, the long struggle to shake off the grip of business and development by Coconut Grove began.

The *Miami Herald*, the only local paper, supported the larger, more powerful interests in its editorials: "Coconut Grove is older than Miami and will (sic) still be the fishing village it was until Miami's overflow created values there. Had it not been for the vision of this city (Miami) ... Coconut Grove is the most favored by nature and least developed by man of all Miami's suburbs. As part of Greater

Miami it will immediately share in the progress of the Magic city to a greater degree than before."

This excerpted editorial praising annexation of Coconut Grove by the City of Miami appeared the day of the vote, September 2, 1925. Though Grove residents voted 180 - 26 against annexation, Coconut Grove was swallowed up by an engorged and booming Miami.

In 1994, after almost seventy years under the city's control, the old Cocconut Grove has almost vanished. There is no more Lyle's, the local pharmacy. Seminole's Bait and Tackle has been razed. Only one bait shop remains in what once was a fishing village. A tiled, stylish mall named "Mayfair" now poses where the Winn Dixie food store used to be. It has outlets in London, Paris and Tokyo. The business center of the village is as make-believe as Mary Pickford's "Pickfair." Arnold Schwarzenegger's Planet Hollywood has come to Mayfair. Sylvester Stallone lives nearby. There are fewer local stores. There is no parking and the traffic is dangerous and noxious. The town has become a tourist Disneyland by day and a crowded nightclub strip by night.

Outside the business district in the neighborhoods, old Grove homes, great slash-pine, veranda-encircled beauties in lots so covered with oaks and gumbo limbo trees you often can't see the houses, have been bulldozed. They are then replaced with high density, concrete units by developers invited in by lax zoning by the Miami City Commission. Under current laws it costs only \$500 to cut a one hundred year



old oak down. When a quarter million dollar condo replaces it, it's just coffee money to a developer. The Commission has not changed that law, despite many vociferous calls to do so by Grove residents.

Property taxes have risen with development and now many people who grew up in the village cannot afford to live there. The city's Manager came to a Grove Village Council meeting in 1994, and in answer to pleas to take into account the concerns of those who lived in the Grove, remarked: "The Grove will never be a village again."

The open and friendly yards full of foliage that always marked this village have given way to stacked townhouses glowering behind high concrete walls, walls with broken glass and razorwire studding their tops.

The City has been running the "village," of Coconut Grove, as it is now called in name only, from Miami City Hall, which overlooks Biscayne Bay and the Anchorage. The building's facade looks out over the parking lot and Bayshore Drive beyond. And so face the affairs of City Hall.

Perhaps this is part of the reason that, until only recently, the city has ignored the Anchorage. Only now that development has increased the price of waterfront real estate, have they looked bayward. Rumors are that hotel and casino developers are making offers. Plans have been proposed to develop the spoil islands that ring the Anchorage, to erect bridges to them and build parking lots.

The green and blue bay and its sea beyond lie outside their back windows in the same tropical pastels of the decor of City Hall's offices and corridors. The bay is a distant, still-life tableau, silent behind the windows and the hum of professional voices and the ringing of telephones. The windows of the building aren't opened to the easterly breeze on the bay. Officials and staff pore over maps of the area in their master plan.

It could be a City Hall in Iowa, and Biscayne Bay is as far away as a cow field.

## Sharman's Island

His old flat-decked sailboat shifted in the breeze. The fiberglass hull floated heat-cracked and blanched from the sun like a cauliflower dropped from a salad and left in a corner of a porch all summer. A green beard of algae matted along her waterline. Astern a dinghy without a mast slapped in the wavelets, the K-Mart toy boat kids play with in pools, its styrofoam edges ripped and chipped. This boat was a floater, not a sailer.

I glided up in Arete, shipped my oars and tapped on the hull. A wooden bowl filled with yellowed broccoli perched on the pedestal where a stainless steel shaft and varnished tiller ought to have been. On the cockpit floor lay a small shovel and a large watering pail for plants. A bucket stood filled with orange, banana and grapefruit peels. On the cockpit seats sat rows of tiny cardboard peapots with tiny green sprouts growing in them. A floating garden.

I expected to see a monkish hermit squint querulously out of the hatch rubbing a white beard, a thick treatise on the genetic traits of peas by Mendel under his arm. The place looked more like a hippy botanist's hideaway than a sailboat. But this was typical of the Anchorage. This was Sharman's home.

Sharman's reputation preceded him. He'd lived alone in a makeshift greenhouse/tent in a Georgia forest, eating only the raw food he foraged himself, built his own boat and lived aboard it, run successful co-op vegetarian businesses, and was now raising two boys. A decade ago he had been a driving force in organizing a powerful activist movement to prevent the siting of a nuclear electric plant outside Atlanta. A nineties renaissance man, Da Vinci style.

"That's my compost," Sharman said out of the hatch. He'd noticed my glance at his bucket of fruit scraps. "Garbage, scraps and a few unmentionables. Glad you came - come aboard."

I tied my wherry off and climbed on the hot deck. It was only March but the sun was already at work. A whiff of a breeze from the northeast swept the bay - just enough to cool my sweat. Sharman's long wiry hair stretched tight into a ponytail like the corroded windings of an old electric motor, a twisted mix of copper and aluminum. His beard looked not white and mystical, like the hermit botanist of my childhood imagination, but more wires, these bent, a wild thicket compared to the smooth dome. His moustache shaded a crooked smile that implied a love of mischief.

"I was just reading through my paperwork." Sharman was running for US Congress, trying to unseat longtime incumbent Dante Fascell. He waved several thick sheaves of papers and manila envelopes, then disappeared down the hatch. "Every week I get something from one Congressional subcommittee or

another, some agency or even private groups that slick themselves up to look like government. Last week they sent me a whole stack of financial disclosure forms." His voice floated out of his cabin.

"You're really going to do it?"

"I'm going to try. I've got only two hundred dollars in my campaign account. Fascell has \$156,000 and he isn't even running officially yet. And I've got a stack of forms they want me to fill out about four inches high on the boat right now with months to go before the election. I don't have time to do my gardening work on the island and read all this stuff too."

Sharman's "office" lay anchored nearby, an old boat he'd given Dori, the mother of his two sons Winn and Jambu. Sharman and Dori were separated. It turned out she'd had a change of plans and hadn't needed the boat, so now it housed piles and piles of his papers, old files and a broken portable computer. I noticed it was listing a bit to one side, probably from a rainwater leak.

"Why are you running?" I asked, looking steadily at him. I considered briefly what he would look like in a Brooks Brothers suit.

"If I get into office, I would have all these perks, like mailing privileges. I could sent out all kinds of practical information on effective local political action strategies and ecology ideas. Circumvent the mainstream

propaganda. And I guess to get rid of waste, like all this form mumbo-jumbo," he said, waving his stacks of paper.

"I don't know. It's such a mess." He crouched a little lower, looking deflated and sighed. "You wanna go over to the island?"

"Sounds like a good idea."

Sharman's real name is Wendell Sharman Phillips, but he never liked Wendell, so he uses his middle name. It resembles "shaman," and he is a modern world shaman of sorts. When he lived in Georgia he studied books about healing and herbs. Then he found that Georgia law allowed him to take a correspondence course and get a practicing medical degree in the mail. That's how he got his license to dispense herbs. For years he was an alternative healer, a chanter over plants. He now cultivates Egyptian earthworms in a compost heap on his island in the Anchorage, philosophizing over the human condition and man's place in the natural world.

Sharman is the self-appointed caretaker of the Cove's biggest island. That's why people in the Anchorage call it "Sharman's Island."

The Cove is the northern counterpart to the south Anchorage; a hodgepodge of homemade houseboats, old wooden powerboats without engines, trimarans, even a chinese junk

built with no metal nails or screws with a whole family living aboard. This most protected part of the Anchorage is a small cul de sac between Sand and Sharman's Islands. It's a stone's throw from Miami City Hall.

There are no bridges to the islands surrounding the Cove, though the islands are supposed to be City of Miami public parks. The islands, officially known as "spoil" islands to municipal bureaucrats, are much prettier than their unlovely and ignominious title given after the material dredged out of the harbor for the marina. There are no cars on Sharman's Island. And no buildings either, except for the mailbox-cum-cathouse Sharman built for his ratcats in an Australian pine. The only way to see the islands is by boat, but most of the weekend boat traffic of shiny Bayliners, Aquasports and Sea Rays just boil by along Dinner Key channel on a straight shot to Biscayne Bay and the Gulf Stream. Few stop to wander or picnic. These "weekend warriors" shun these islands with their buggy mangroves and rocky beaches. They are too close to the city to be exotic enough to visit.

This fact has been a blessing to the residents of the Anchorage who use them for birthday parties, painting the occasional dinghy bottom, building dinghies, winter evening cookouts and sometimes camping out. The water around the islands is so shallow it seems hospitable only to our little rowboats and sailing dinghies that ply the Anchorage. Sand Island, the islet closer to the piers of the marina, and

Sharman's Island, lie connected by a tidal sand spit exposed at low tide. They protect the Cove and its boats from waves and wind like the wings of a mother goose wrapped around her floating goslings. During storms everyone pitches and sways in the gusts. Pines whipping on the island, taking the brunt of it.

Before leaving for the island Sharman spread some towels over his boxes of organic oranges, tomatoes and grapefruit, sprinkled water on his seedlings in the cardboard pots, filled up his watering pail, and loaded in my dinghy a red five gallon jerry jug with extra water. He went barefoot. He saves his sandals for town.

I pulled on the oars as he splayed in the wherry's stern seat. His Peter Rabbit brown palm hat had a hole in the top. I asked him why.

"The hole lets my head heat out," he smiled. "It also keeps the way clear for energy to my head chakra."

I didn't ask him about the chakra just then. I kept on rowing. I knew something about it, but I wasn't into a long explanation in that sun. If you give Sharman a chance, he'll talk your ear off.

I'd known him as an acquaintance for about four years and had heard more about him than I saw of him, as is often the case in the Anchorage which grows a healthy grapevine.



To make money, Sharman is at the Coconut Grove Farmer's Market almost every Saturday, massaging women with hairy armpits and silver toe rings, as well as everyday passerby in Sears Docker's shorts, near Stan's organic produce and Jamaican incense. He knows all the pressure points to channel healing energy and which spots on the feet connect with which organs in the body. He likes to rub the points harder when you say it hurts. He says he has to break the blockage to get the energy flow going. Breathe into it, he says as he smiles and kneads. I think he's got a sadistic streak.

The heat seemed to radiate from the bright surface of the water as if we rowed in one of those giant aluminum reflectors. The tips of my oars began touching the shallow bottom, and I looked down where they left little puffs of mud. The water in the spring is always clear -- not enough heat to grow the summer's boiling soup of algae and plankton. Sharman sat smiling through his beard astern, the noonday sun sparkling off the water into the shade of his palm hat, flickering across his face, lighting him up like a mystic hunched over prayer candles. The shadows of my oars spooked jittery fingerling snappers and sergeant majors. They perfectly mimicked the colors of the bottom, revealing themselves only when they sought sanctuary from my oars behind thin mangrove seeds that float perpendicularly, as if hiding behind the columns of a church.

"Tie up to that branch there. That's where I always go," he said as he pointed to a long pine branch dusted white with cormorant droppings. The powdery, sun-bleached stuff puffed off and dusted the water as I grasped the branch. I looked up. No birds. Probably out diving for more fish. They'd be back to roost by sundown. They always were.

We trudged up the rocky beach carrying a box of old food scraps for the compost heap, the watering pail and a small spade as well as a bag of oranges and apples for lunch. Sharman's hardened bare feet crunched easily over the coral rock. I lagged tenderly behind, then sat and put on my sandals. He stopped and waited. I looked at his feet as I sat there putting them on. They were the widest feet I'd ever seen, with the toes spaced and splayed out, somewhere between a foot and a muscular, turned-out hand. A tanned gorilla foot came to mind.

"Watch out for those baby mangroves," he said as I got up, sidestepping a two foot plant with fat, shiny leaves just above the high tide line. "I planted one every few feet all around the island to stop erosion. The rats have gotten to a lot of them now."

The island lay almost totally covered by Australian pine, a soft carpet of brown needles punctuated with their sharp, round seed cones. The faint breeze moved, redolent with their sap. For a moment the smell brought me back to pine forests I'd seen in New England in summer. But these waved their softer, tropical needles on slender boughs as if

fanning themselves in the heat. The beach's edge of bright shallow water released threads of the sun into the shadowy interior of the island, weaving against the vault of the sixty and seventy foot pines, flickering brightly among walnut, apricot and crabapple hues like sprites in a cathedral without walls. Three young cats padded up over the thick matting to greet us.

"These are my rat cats. I saved them from being destroyed when I found out they would be given to the pound. A friend of mine had a hen house. The tomcats were killing his hens, so he trapped them by using a female in heat as bait." He reached down and scratched an arched back.

"Now they work for me. My indentured servants. After seven cat years I'll take them to shore. The rats here eat anything green in the dry season. They like a lot of the plants I've planted, even the salty mangroves when there's nothing else. Since I planted them to keep the island from eroding away, I needed something to control the rats."

He glanced over to the wreck of a fifty-foot Stevens on the beach. "The cats are living on her now, I think. I built them a cathouse on the little rise up there near my garden, but they seem to like the wreck better. Probably because Mrs. Jack feeds them."

"You mean Jack and Faye, the old Scottish couple in the Cove?" I asked.

"Uh huh. She and Nelly. I call them the Apple people because of their shape. They think nobody gets enough to

eat. Mrs. Jack thinks I'm torturing my cats by my technique of feeding them less so they'll go after the rats. So she rows over to the wreck every evening to feed them.

"First Mrs. Jack rows over, then an hour or so later I see Nelly bringing a big sack. The cats don't even eat the lizards now. And they're slow compared to rats." He smiled stoically.

We walked over to the nearby windward side of the island. I noticed some of the pines on the water's edge had fallen, and those left standing had much of their roots exposed. The island was eroding, sliding into the waves and currents. I looked at Fair Isle across the seaplane channel toward the north. It was a recently built high-rise development with a flat green lawn, flat geometric buildings, all monolithic and unyielding. Its long white, concrete seawall surrounds the place and holds back the bay. The only way to reach the warm, grassy water is by several ladders bolted onto the wall.

At my feet the thin haphazard seedlings Sharman had planted leaned crookedly on the rocky beach, barely reaching to my knees. They had a long way to go. Yet despite their delicacy, when they mature they will become like their great grandfather at the seaward point of the island, a giant black mangrove over thirty feet high with a trunk thicker than my waist, its twisted limbs thick and green, swept back by the prevailing easterlies like the Winged Victory on a Rolls. And as they hold back the bay, they also drink it in,

absorbing the waves and wind. Tiny grunts, octopi and baby blue lobsters hide in their roots.

When I visit I can dip my toes in the waves, sit under their shade and listen to young boys, like Sharman's boys, playing among the boughs. Mangrove trees are like many of us. We aren't worth much until we mature, until we know what we want and are willing to stand for it. Some never make it. Some take many lifetimes to grow.

Sharman started talking about his life again as we walked. "I was here in the seventies, off and on. I lived in Key West for awhile, two winters in Naples. It was '81 before I finally ended up in the Anchorage. I came here because it was the only place I really liked. I've been here about eleven years."

I asked him if he lived aboard boats before.

"I guess I've always had a boat. I had a cabin in Elsberry, Missouri, along the river. In the spring the water came right to the top of the levee. It was a real challenge to get out on the Missouri in the spring. I had a cheap aluminum johnboat with a two and a half outboard engine. I thought boats were for getting you around then, and that's all. I never thought about living aboard. I just stumbled on it when I went to Key West. I saw people living on anything there: sailboats, rafts, you name it. So I got this pre-fab redwood pontoon boat from Ace Hardware. It had bronze bolts so it wouldn't rust. I put it together with a brace and bit hand drill. Then I put my tent on the platform and pushed

off. Seven bucks a day to stay off Stocking Island then. Eventually I built sides and a roof on her."

"Lots of people think that's paradise."

"You know, of all the times I've taken people out to sleep over on the boat in the Anchorage, none of them have stayed. They say, 'I have to go to the bathroom in that?' pointing to the bucket, or it's lousy weather, or there's no TV. It's tough for land people out here."

Near the head of the island, on the little rise, stood Sharman's garden. The plants grew profusely here, a tangling of tubers, mellifluous frangipanis, pigeon peas, coconut palms, papayas, yams and garlands of flowering vines - and in the middle of it all was what he called the magic center.

"This is the compost heap, the center where it all started." We stood in the middle of the garden. "The plants all grow in concentric circles away from the heap so they are all enriched. Why shit in the bay when you can use it here?" He holds out his hands broadly, palms upward, his beard a hairy grin.

"The plants just love the stuff. And I bring them all my fruit and vegetable scraps. I bought a thousand Egyptian earthworms for the island a few years ago. They go through the soil the fastest and leave the most nitrogen. They're doing fine now. After I water, I chant a few words for the plants' well-being. It directs energy to the garden's magic center. It's like our chakras. They are the energy entrances and exits to all eight of our bodies. They connect us to the

universal energy field. There are seven chakras and when in balance, they are open. If you hold a crystal pendulum over one it will spin clockwise. The energy is traveling through it like a vortex."

In spite of the eastern spiritualism I kept looking under my feet. I felt like a Philistine next to Sharman, but at least I didn't smell anything ripe. In fact the place was quite beautiful, with some plants in bloom, vines hanging and grasping, green everywhere.

"See these caterpillars on the pigeon peas? I just let them go." The caterpillars' fuzzy green backsides were even a brighter green than the peas they depended on, red striped and dotted with white spots to warn off birds that they are poisonous. Then he pointed out another inhabitant of the pigeon pea community: "Those are the egg cases of wasps. The wasp larvae hatch just when the caterpillar becomes a pupa and they eat him. Natural neighbors taking care of everything. No need for pesticides."

A noise grew louder until it drowned out everything else. We walked toward it, peering out through the pines at the seaplane channel. Three huge ocean racing powerboats, hot-pink, lime green and red, with lightning graphics and one with "2 Fast 4 U" on the side wound down their engines as they began to enter the harbor, jockeying their throttles back and forth, revving their engines. When the tumult died enough so we could talk to each other, Sharman said: "Really primate stuff."

"Those boats?"

"When a troop of baboons comes into a new area, the males raise their shiny blue butts into the air and fart and parade around. It's very territorial."

I loved Sharman's interpretation. The local "stinkpot" plastic-tossing show-offs are favorite targets for derision among the bay dwellers. I shrugged them off myself as supermarket adventurers who buy oceangoing boats, but are too afraid to run them on the high seas where they belong - - instead they spend most of their time idling for bikinis along quayside bars and restaurants, splitting ears and clouding the air with their exhaust.

I remembered a few years ago one of these big speedboats rammed the bow of an anchored sailboat in the Anchorage late at night. There was a family aboard sleeping, a young girl in the bow's bunk beds. The boat hit hard enough to run up the side of the sailboat before stopping and sliding back. The father aboard the sailboat yelled at the powerboat. Then the driver deliberately ran up against the sailboat again. We never found out why he did that because he took off and we never saw him again. Luckily the child was not physically hurt, but I was told she never really felt as safe in her floating bed as she had before.

The three ratcats mewed after us as we started walking again on Sharman's daily tour of watering plants. They hopped and rolled over each other, skirting dead branches. They didn't have names. At first that seemed sad, but then I



realized they were everyone's cats: The Cats on the Island, Sharman's Cats, The Cove Cats. They probably had lots of names, different names. The Apple people called them something, even if it was just Kitty. They were community cats.

We walked through a patch of light green plants scattered over the dry, brown needle carpet in long runners.

"These are green eyes," Sharman said.

"They're green. And fat."

"Try one." He snapped off two succulent, plump ones. The waxy leaves keep the water inside in the heat. "I eat these in salads. Right now it's the dry season and they're a little salty." They weren't bad. We sat there munching for a moment.

I couldn't help thinking, he's a Zen environmentalist. Or he's doing penance for some horrible crime he's committed in his past, or a past life. Why would someone carry off garbage and plant trees in the hot sun for no apparent reason on land that isn't even his? One thing's for sure. Sharman one of the most soft-spoken, positive people I know. Of course, like many of us, Sharman has his dark side.

He told me of an early morning he was awakened by loud music. He went on deck to see what it was. A shrimp boat had come into the Cove and anchored next to him with the usual loud music shrimpers play to drown out the din of their diesels that never stop running all night. They always come in from a night's work around three or four in the morning.

And they usually play rock. It may be their way of getting back at us "day people" who wake them up at eight in the morning with our generators or outboards.

Sharman yelled over the noise for the shrimper to turn it down. The fisherman glanced at him and went on cleaning under the bright work lights before heading in, the diesel running the pumps that keep the shrimp alive. He was only about twenty feet away.

Sharman went below and returned with a flare gun. He called out to the shrimper, who moved closer to the side of his boat. Sharman then pointed the flare gun straight at him and shot. The rocket flashed, taking off the fisherman's cap as he ducked, probably burning it to cinders. After that the shrimper left.

The whole story seemed a little out of character for Sharman, as well as dangerous, since I knew at least one shrimper myself, Rick the Fisherman, who carries a stainless NATO assault rifle on board "for protection." But then Sharman's stores of good karma in his karma bank probably stood him in good stead. He was still around.

Sharman bent and dribbled some precious fresh water from the pail into a circle of coral rocks. This one contained a thirsty lime tree. He believes in planting native fruit bearing trees because they will provide shade and food for generations.

It sounded so nice, the patter of water on the curly dried seaweed he'd spread for fertilizer around the lime,

the distant drone of motorboats on the bay. The blue-green of the water twinkled at me through breaks in the pines and I closed my eyes and breathed.

I could see my grandfather's stone cabin on Lake Lotawana in the Missouri hill country, the wooden planks of the porch overlook, the late afternoon light glistering stars through the dark, leafy sway of creaking elms. I saw my mother's napping legs next to mine, propped on the table, draped with a thick blue towel against the sleepy chill of late afternoon as the sun dusked, the hum of boats as they headed home, imperceptibly giving way to the high and low chirring of the evening cicadas, their rise and fall the first breaths of the night forest around us. I was safe there in that tiny stone cabin I knew so well, with our elms overhead, safe from whatever lay beyond.

A twig cracked. Sharman was moving on.

"These little clumps of red berries are the ones people are afraid of. Every year some kid dies because they eat too many of them. They're slightly poisonous." He reached down and fingered them. "Restaurant chefs in New York grind them up and put them on big thick steaks. They make the throats of the diners hot and they go 'Aarrrrgh!'" He grabs his own throat in mock torment, laughing.

"I forget the name of them. Then they order more drinks to cool down. They're also hallucinogenic." I could tell that gave him a kick as he chuckled, a vegetarian joke on meateaters. The water in his pail spilled a little.

Sharman was a Crusoe Appleseed, tossing plant names and traits right and left like the water from his pail. His feet avoided crushing any green plants as an elephant's avoid stepping on mice. As big and brown as well-baked pies and almost as wide, long brown toes occasionally curling, scrunching up the dry needles on the forest floor, his feet tested the texture of the earth under them. His dark stained sweatpants, cut off jagged above the ankles, his baggy shirt hanging on against its will and coconut hat as brown and crinkly as his feet all bespoke a certain serenity of self.

Winn and Jambu, dropped off by their mother Dori in her rowboat, came scampering through the pines to visit their father. They shouted, "Hello!, Hey!" their long blonde hair trailing their thin brown shoulders as they ran up to the two of us hunched over some lunch at the campsite. They sat around the blackened spot with us, Winn pulling out a papaya for lunch. Sharman cut two bright orange half moons, the scoop of each crescent cradling a bunch of wet-bright, black eggs.

"Now drop those seeds over there in that new circle. I cleared the needles and there's a bit of seaweed there." Sharman motioned with his arm. The children cavorted and spit the little black balls at each other as much as in the circle, laughing hysterically. Then they played long jump over a bright blue sofa that had washed up on the beach and now served as a seat around the campfire.

Sharman sat on his haunches, his usual position, but one which seemed to me very ascetic and uncomfortable.

"I guess I'm sort of a radical. I've always been that way. I became a vegetarian because it was more healthy, what with all the antibiotics, hormones, pesticides and whatever else they put in those farm animals, never mind the fact that most of them are tortured in factory farms. And I read about this guy who was eighty-five and ran five miles a day singing "God Bless America" at the top of his lungs at the same time. I said, Hey! That's for me.

"I was organic ten years before that, but I'd never heard of the word vegetarian. When I was nineteen I had my own garden. I wouldn't eat anything processed with salt and preservatives. Then when I read Back to Eden, I stopped eating dairy, eggs, meat, all of that stuff. I threw out boxes of food, left them on the curb. I enlarged my garden and the way I would eat consisted simply of walking out into the garden with a bowl, knife and chopping block, picking and eating right there in the dirt. For three and a half years I was totally raw, nothing cooked."

"Did you feel better?" I asked.

"Hell yes."

I sat wondering if I could ever do the same thing.

"When I visited Miami from Georgia I would bicycle down to the Redland Fruit and Spice Park and my friends and I would graze there all day. It was supposed to be an exhibit and agricultural experiment, but we just rode around like a

bunch of gorillas on bikes, searching out the ripe trees. Most of our conversations were about fruits, trees, stuff like that. After a while it got so I couldn't enjoy conversations with people other than my raw friends. It was very spacey, like living in ether. I would climb the trees and be very happy. An alpha state. I tried the eating habits of gorillas. I read about them. I talked about living in the wild for a long time with my friends, and then finally I did it.

At that time I had five acres set right in the middle of about two hundred and thirty acres of somebody else's wild, wooded land in Georgia. Very isolated. I built this greenhouse in a day, with less than eight dollars. I cut down some trees and nailed them together and put plastic over them in a kind of lean-to with trenches around for rainwater. Inside I had bricks between rows of plants to absorb the heat of the sun. I slept on those at night. Even on the coldest day of ten degrees in winter, it was still thirty-six degrees inside. Comfortable with a sleeping bag. During the day it got to one hundred and twenty-five and I had to open the vents. There's plenty of free energy to use. Later I put two layers of plastic and it was even warmer at night. In the mornings, even in winter, I'd get up at four in the morning and meditate. When the sun hit the plastic I'd get up, take off my shirt and throw on my knapsack. Then I'd go out running to get my heat up. After about five minutes I could start foraging for breakfast. I had my

property as well as the vast acreage around to find berries, greens, nuts and fruits. In winter it was a bit lean, so I relied on some storebought food and my greenhouse garden. I'd go back and have my breakfast, do some yoga, then have lunch. I would reflect on things and then do my evening stuff. As soon as the sun went down and got off that plastic the temperature would drop fifteen degrees. I'd get into my sleeping bag and that was it for the day.

"Once in a while I'd get this craving for bananas. I'd walk a few miles to this certain general store. They knew me there, and they knew I liked bananas. They'd try to make conversation with me, even though they thought I was some kind of extraterrestrial hippy or something, but I didn't say much. When you have no one to talk to things get quiet and you have a routine. Your brain power doesn't get wasted. They'd say to me in the store when they handed me my sack full of bananas, 'We're havin' alot of rain'. I'd say, 'Yup.' It just seemed so trite, anything they might say. After a while of this it got so I would just walk in, hand them my sack, give them a dollar or whatever and they'd fill it with bananas. All without a word.

I went for months without talking to anyone. In the beginning I'd make up these little maps to give to my friends. Some of them would actually come. They'd show up mainly at three o'clock in the afternoon and they'd say hello and ask what we were going to do. So maybe I'm turning my compost heap, weeding the garden, or just meditating. I'd

just be polite. 'This is it,' I'd say. They didn't seem to like that. They'd said in their letters how they were going to stay a week or so, but most of them left after three or four hours. They couldn't stand the peace and quiet. Only a few made it through the night the whole time I was out there, about a year and a half."

"It sounds kind of like when you invited people out to the Anchorage," I said.

"Yeah, kind of like that. The water isn't for everybody."

It was late in the afternoon before we decided to leave. The sun was low in the trees. The seabreeze blew hard. We gathered up the gardening tools, poured the rest of the water on a few remaining plants and walked back to the wherry. It was lucky I'd thrown out an anchor because the tide had come up during the day and would have carried her up on the rocks with that wind.

I dropped him off. As I rowed away I watched his lanky figure stoop in the orange light. He was watering his peapots.



## You Can't Fight City Hall

I have been naive, at times, concerning politics. My mother Ann taught me the difference between right and wrong, as she had been taught by her mother and grandmother, in the midwest, straightforward manner. In the beginning of my adult life, involved in the political vicissitudes of the Anchorage, it would be a useful guide in navigating the tidal currents, finger channels and shoals of perception.

In January of 1987, the *Miami Herald*, Miami's only major newspaper, broke the news that the City of Miami was going to evict the residents of the Anchorage. City Hall had set a date and all "squatters" would be cleaned out. They had good reasons, the city fathers said. They made it clear it was an inevitable part of facing forward as the young and coming "Miami, City of the Future."

Word spread on the Anchorage grapevine and a meeting was generally agreed upon. But we had no means of reaching everybody all at once. There was a week of frantic rowing between boats, conch horn blowing and large scripted messages tacked on pilings around the dinghy dock that there would be an anchorage meeting on the sixty-five foot ferrocement houseboat *Music Man*. It was the only boat large

enough to accomodate a meeting. I suppose we never considered having our meeting ashore.

Mary Anne Esquivel, the *Herald* reporter who had broken the story, continued to work on it, meeting with us, as well as with city officials. She wrote a series of articles, and gradually her tone evolved into somewhat of a defense of our right to exist. About this time the *Herald* pulled her off the assignment.

One Saturday afternoon forty or fifty dinghies bobbed behind *Music Man*, tied to the stern rail, the raft, another dinghy, anything that wouldn't float away. The mass of them banged and swung with the wind for a distance almost as long as the boat itself. I never knew so many people lived in the Anchorage. I saw people I'd never seen before. We all crowded into the main salon in a big circle, many Indian style on the floor and huddled outside on deck. Perhaps there were seventy of us. We handed off a pad through the crowd for attendance.

I saw uncomfortable looks passed around among many of the boaters. I knew they were worried, but the air carried the natural reclusiveness and independence of sailors. We all had a reluctance to give up any measure of autonomy to others, even to our own neighbors. Yet we had to. This was a crisis.

Rumors had been flying around about how the city planned to send armed police boats out to throw us out, that we had no chance. I also heard murmurs and oaths from

several people that they would fight before they gave up their homes.

I'd read stories and heard news on TV about people who defied all odds to keep their homes, like the old man who lived on the slopes of Mt. St. Helens and wouldn't leave until the volcano got him. And of the Mohawks more recently in Canada who had fought back Canadian police with automatic weapons and barricades to keep their land from falling to condo developers and golf courses. I thought of the single shot shotgun aboard my boat and what could happen if it came to that. What could happen to Fabienne and I.

Those with the most articulate tongues and imposing frames took control of the meeting. Diana Molinari, a teacher and regular piano player aboard the *Music Man*, took out a pad and pen, and called for order behind her thick glasses that hung on a nylon cord around her neck. In her early fifties, she commanded a natural respect. Rick and Gail Perlmutter of the sailing vessel *Big Otter*, both nurses and educated people, also took control, calling for more meetings and the formation of some sort of "homeowner's" association. We agreed on the name "Dinner Key Anchorage Association." The DKAA for short.

Apparently the Anchorage had been under fire for years by various city administrations, though this was the most serious in recent memory. But it had been so long since the last battle, few had any experience except from other anchorage skirmishes in the Keys, or Fort Lauderdale. There,

municipalities had passed local ordinances, most illegal, to ban anchoring for long periods. I found that cruisers had been fighting various cities along Florida's coast for five years or so, as well as several in California. Most of the battles had been lost on the west coast, where safe anchorages were few and marinas dominated the boating and cruising scene.

But Florida's coast is warm, with soft mangrove lagoons, coral reefs for diving and fishing, miles of shallow bays and estuaries open for laying down the hook, a maritime history and a hunger for tourists. Perfect for living on the water. The fight would be harder here. We hooked up with Concerned Boaters of Florida based in Stuart, a group in the process of fighting legal battles against local ordinances attempting to restrict where boaters could anchor. They had lawyers and some money and offered to help if we really needed it. But they were a grass roots organization and strained to the limit themselves with litigation.

We didn't know where to begin, so we began by taking notes, electing leaders and taking donations. We passed the hat. Some people gave one hundred dollars, most twenty, some ten. The unemployed wrote their names down on a list to donate time and volunteer.

Cries of "sue the bastards!" and "let 'em try it!" mingled with dire predictions: "you can't fight City Hall," and "they'll get us sometime..." The spunky vows of defense

We trace our ancestry back to William the Conqueror in Scotland and England on the maternal side, and to the Berg Norwegian shipping family on the fraternal. I felt that letting anyone push me out of my home was somehow a shaming to that past.

"I want to say something," I said. I think I raised my hand. Our moderator, Diana, recognized me. My throat grabbed as all heads turned to me. I had to go on now.

"John Winthrop was this ancestor of mine. My grandfather is named after him." I coughed and swallowed. "He was the first governor of the United States." I stopped again. Was this too much? How would these people react? "Actually he was governor of the Massachusetts Bay Colony. He sailed into Plymouth harbor and dropped anchor over three hundred years ago. These founders of our country lived in an anchorage first, before anywhere else." Then I thought: that was stupid, this is 1987, times change...

"That's exactly right!" It was Diana.

"Yeah! Where do these City of Miami bureaucrats get off telling us where and how to live? This is our country," somebody called out. Thank God Diana backed me up.

"Right on!" More yeahs. We were off. It was beautiful to watch. The indignation went through us like a hot wind through dried leaves, rattling everything in its path.

Screaming Ray, who attends Miami City Commission meetings by standing in the back until he can't take it any longer and starts yelling, yelled loudest:

Michael Burtt rose from his stool at the head of the salon. His lanky, overalled figure stood tall and stately next to the door. He commanded respect and most who saw him rise quieted. Beside him a clear acrylic, nude torso of a buxom woman on a pedestal. She had no legs, arms or head. Just shoulders, waist, buttocks and breasts. At his full six feet, five inches, he held his long arms out to either side. The *Music Man* turned at anchor and a shaft of sunlight lit the resin lady. She took on a pinkish glow. It was like a miracle.

"All this is just fine, you know... but what are we gonna really dooooo about our problem?" His Down Maine accent threw a change of tone into the air. A tight grin that held more derision than humor crossed his face and held there. The plotters fell silent. The man from Maine was getting down to business.

"I mean what are we gonna have to show for all this when we all row outta this meeting?"

Still no answers. The dinghies banged a little louder out back, punctuating the quiet. Even Screaming Ray, his sun-bleached hair frizzed up like Don King's, said nothing. Michael pointed toward City Hall, the white and blue building on a little hill visible over the tree line of the thin center spoil island.

"They think we can't defend ourselves. They think we're all too scared to fight. They think we have no money. They're wrong." More silence. "But we're not gonna get

anywhere with violence. They'll just send the police. They're used to that. I say we hire lawyers and scare 'em. That's all they understand. They're bullies. And ya' gotta stand up ta' bullies." He got a round of applause on that. The response seemed unanimous in his favor.

There were nominations of leaders after everybody had spoken. They tried to get Michael to be president, but he wouldn't. He said he wasn't the type. He said he'd work behind the scenes. When we nominated Diana, she accepted and was voted in. Somebody nominated me for a vice-president. I accepted. I lost track of who was nominated after me.

I probably had my mouth open, I don't remember, but what stayed with me was the surprise. Here I was twenty seven years old and forty year-olds with kids were asking me to defend their homes. I relished their trust. Something like this had never happened to me before.

After the meeting was over, the work began. It wasn't easy. I noticed some Anchorage dwellers didn't feel that way we did. In the weeks and months to come, those residents would ridicule us for even dealing with the city. They preferred to ignore the authorities. The romantic view of the Anchorage I had nurtured inside myself about how everyone was a loving community and wanted to be together, working toward Utopia, was being altered.

I found many liveaboards, especially those who had broken most ties with shore, wanted only to keep to themselves - even when it came to the fate of their home.

There was no cry of one for all, all for one. They wanted no one to speak for them, especially to offer their money to the city. But we had no choice but to continue the best way we knew how. We couldn't ignore the threat.

Maybe the naysayers figured they could move on, even though there aren't any more anchorages around Miami. After some time, I began to realize some people wanted nothing, absolutely nothing to do with authority.

I had an idea what could happen if some of them did. Christian George had more than nine thousand rounds of nine mm. ammo on board his sailboat for what he said would be an inevitable Armeggedon. He'd told me he'd built his boat for the purpose of getting away when it happened. I wondered if all this would bring him out firing in a kind of prelude to the main show.

Soem of the shrimpers were just as hot-headed. Tony, a "picker" on one of the shrimpers, was young and rowdy. He kept to himself most of the time, but one day he'd been high and had tried to use the marina bathrooms. Anchorage people were never allowed to use the marina bathrooms. There were no public city restrooms available to us on shore. Apparently the city workers at the Dockmaster's office angered him and he went on a rampage, yelling, throwing things in the office and breaking windows. He went to jail and was released a short time after. Tony had a good heart, but he couldn't control his anger. So now he avoided the marina, staying only by the shrimp docks nearby.



This fiercely independent "live and let live" minority gave tolerance, leaving others alone, and they expected it from others. Only when it was egregiously violated did they become aggressive. And tolerance held the rest of us in the Anchorage together. We were fighting for our right to anchor at DKAA meetings, as well as for those who said they didn't need protecting and who wouldn't volunteer, give money or help at all. We fought for those who got high and attacked city's dock office, for those who left piles of trash on the island after repairing their boats, for those who didn't or couldn't take care of their boats and let them sink, or those who passed out drunk on the dinghy dock with an Old Milwaukee spilled at their side. We included them because they had a right to live on the bay too. If we excluded them as "bums," no matter how bad they made the rest of us look to people ashore, we would be no better than the city.

Howard Sutter was our lawyer. He was a small man with an incisive wit, impatient retorts and wire glasses. He had a small wry smile that twisted in the face of doubletalk from lawyer rivals and politicians as if he'd had to practice restraining himself from violence in front of a mirror his whole life. Though not an admiralty lawyer, he had extensive experience in protecting boaters' rights. We agreed that Howard was the best choice. He also gave us a good deal.

Howard filed a temporary injunction the Monday before the city's appointed D-Day. The day of the "invasion" passed

quietly with everybody going to work, diving on anchors and lying around in hammocks, as usual. The grapevine told us the city officials in the manager's office had been surprised that we had mustered the resolve to go to court. We had a sympathetic garbage detail in the Dockmaster's office who told us the inside city scuttlebutt and relayed it to us whenever we wanted it as they made their rounds emptying the dumpsters. Now the talk turned to lawyers and negotiation. We were all relieved. The worst threat had been staved off, at least temporarily.

The Anchorage was on the official agenda for the Miami City Commission that following Thursday. When the day arrived we crowded the chamber. The room was large, with theater seating facing a long dais lined with leather easy chairs. A huge plaster emblem of the city hung above the dais. As I walked in, the room felt oppressively cold. I had just rowed in from my boat in the heat. The T-shirt stuck to my back clammy and cold. I had sandals on. I felt out of place among the suited officials seated in their high chairs, their minions to either side, the hairs on their heads all in place. I wondered why they kept it so cold in there. It must have been expensive.

Though several other items came before ours on the agenda, the chambers was packed with bronzed, palm-hatted, bag-toting, jean-shortened liveaboards and sailors. The first item was parking fees for meters in Liberty City, something I'm sure that was of some import to drivers. Many of us on

boats rode bicycles, and none of us drove in Liberty City regularly, so we murmured among ourselves about what might happen when we were called.

Commissioner Plummer turned on his microphone, interrupting a citizen at the podium. He chastized us boaters for disturbing his concentration. We dutifully quieted down.

Then Screaming Ray, standing in the back, apologized with a loud, "We're sorrrrry Mister Plummer," taking an exaggerated bow. Plummer frowned and threatened not to hear the Anchorage item. Then he walked out.

But nothing happened. I began to realize, despite my political naivete, that unconditional respect was not necessarily accorded the city's highest elected officials. I'd been friends as a teenager with someone who lived across the street from this particular commissioner's home in Coconut Grove. I'd seen Plummer start his Cadillac from his front door, by remote control. I realized there was more to this political thing than met the eye.

The supporters of cheaper parking meters in Liberty City filed out, defeated by a quick vote of four to one in favor of raising the rates for more revenue. The next item was closer to home. It seemed the City might ban liveaboard houseboats tied up along the seawall in the Little River area near 79th street, as well as parts of the Miami River. Several residents who owned waterfront homes had gathered in a knot near one podium. They rose one by one to speak out

against "ugly, eyesore" houseboats that ruined their view of the water they had paid dearly for.

They complained that occasionally boats sank, creating a navigation hazard. People living aboard sometimes went about naked on deck, in full public view. Some boats weren't properly painted. They blocked the scenery in places. It all lowered their property value. Their Belle Meade Homeowner Association wanted the boaters out, and they appealed to their elected servants to help them. The commissioners nodded their heads, obviously moved by their constituents' grave predicament.

I lived on a houseboat myself. I felt like a minority, and an oppressed one. I wanted to say something, but I was too intimidated to stand up. Anyway, my shirt was still sticking to my back. So I listened. Several houseboat owners and their lawyer talked about the rights of all to enjoy the water. They argued no one was hurting these homeowners in a quantifiable way, and that it was a simple case of civil rights abuse and class prejudice. The commissioners also nodded gravely at these speakers, though not as often, or as gravely. I observed some had picked up the phone more often or stared blankly about the room at all of us boatpeople, who must have been an oddity in their chamber. After a few emotional appeals by houseboaters, the commissioners voted for the ban, calling upon the city attorney to write up guidelines for the phasing out of houseboats from those areas.

We were item number three. To say that we boaters were not heartened by the previous item is an understatement. We were next into the gates of the coliseum and Nero's lions. Mayor Suarez began by commenting on how many of us were in attendance. Commissioner Plummer stated the sincere hope that the crowd would contain itself, in a tone redolent of the sweet political ideals of respect and decorum. His hands were clasped in front of him in a display of equanimity. Then he remarked offhandedly that he wanted to be out of the chambers by seven because dinner was waiting.

That remark elicited delighted titters from the dais, especially from the aides and the City Manager, Cesar Odio, seated to Plummer's left. The City Attorney, Ms. Lucia Dougherty, remained dumb.

Commissioner Rosario Kennedy wore a bright red dress, her black hair immaculately coiffed. She raised a long, painted fingernail, pressed on her mike, and asked if the Commission was now going to address "those people docked out on the bay." I believe it was then that the strangeness of the whole situation hit me with its full impact.

Diana had approached the podium as our elected president, along with Howard. Howard sounded convincing as he berated the officials for even thinking they had the power to throw out people living on the bay, legally protected by maritime federal law. He cited cases, spoke of the legal futility of it as well as the moral outrage in a free land.

I heard only parts of it. I floated in a haze of surprise and incredulity. I was reeling from Commissioner Kennedy's remark about people "docked out there." Here was a woman who knew so little about the subject at hand that she didn't know the difference between docking and anchoring. Yet she was voting on whether we would continue living the way we wished. I would have thought, being an exiled refugee from Cuba, she would have an intimate knowledge of prejudice. I was shocked. We were not just up against people who didn't agree with us; we were up against people who thought so little of who they governed that they hadn't bothered to find out who we really were. Some remarks were exchanged around the dais, but I couldn't hear them in my growing rage. It was just an absurd dance. I began to doubt anything we could tell them would change their minds.

Howard went on for several minutes more about inalienable rights, federal law, maritime precedence and municipal jurisdiction. I still sat dumbstruck, shaking my head. My stomach was burning. Only Mayor Suarez appeared genuinely concerned. He asked questions and seemed sympathetic.

At the other podium, reserved for the opposing side, stood Cai Svenson, owner of Castle Harbor Sailboat Rentals. He had long complained that his clients must tortuously navigate through our anchored boats before reaching the open bay. He said our community presented a negative image to tourists visiting Miami. He called upon his rights as a

businessman in America to be protected from people like us - "dirtbags," was the word he used. We were squatters on the commons. We were camping on the city-owned front lawn of homeowners ashore. We shit in the water, we're useless parasites on the marina, using services the people who live on the piers must pay hundreds of dollars for every month. He said we are criminals as well. From what we knew from Cai's past, that was the pot calling the kettle black.

Somebody called out from the Anchorage ranks that Cai's renters rammed our boats periodically. Several of the pier residents hollered support for Cai from his side of the seating, clapping and looking defiantly over at our side. Anchorage people hooted and jeered back. The Mayor called for order. We weren't getting much help from our neighbors in the Grove. No one came to defend us. Most people in the Grove who had no interests on the bay did not know we existed.

Ideas about sharing the commons, in this case Biscayne Bay, went around my head. Didn't Cai make his living off the commons? I wondered why couldn't we live on it, provided we hurt nothing. Would we have to move to allow his business to run more smoothly?

I had always felt bad about going to the bathroom in the bay, but I had no choice. The City of Miami's Dinner Key Marina has no sewage pump out, which I would have gladly used. Even to this day, seven years later, there is no working pump out station at the marina. And yet there are so

few people living on the hook that they have little effect on a bay over twenty miles long and six miles wide. The UM's Rosenstiel School of Marine Science did a study of the water in the Anchorage in the late eighties. They found no more harmful amounts of bacteria than in the rest of the bay. One of the city's major gripes was our sewage disposal. Then I read about the aging City of Miami/Dade County sewer system and the many millions of gallons of raw sewage that leaks from storm drains and faulty pumps into the Miami River and Biscayne Bay every year.

I called the County's Water Treatment Plant on Virginia Key. They said they get one hundred and twenty-five million gallons of sewage and have to shock it with six thousand pounds of chlorine every day. With chlorine comes dioxin, one of our most toxic substances. In miniscule amounts it has been linked to immune system disorders and fetal syndromes. It was the active ingredient in the Agent Orange defoliant used in Vietnam. Six thousand pounds a day is pumped out into the sea off Key Biscayne, onto living coral reefs.

In the early 1990's the Federal government threatened Dade County with a possible building moratorium unless they fixed the under-bay sewage pipeline before it might break and destroy Biscayne Bay. The City of Miami, well within the affected area of the proposed moratorium, responded by having their Planning and Zoning pass, in the space of several months, a deluge of new building, literally hundreds



of new permits for sewer hookups in Coconut Grove alone. The pressure on the old pipe was already beyond its designed capacity. In the end, the moratorium actually never took place and the County finally put in a new pipe. But whether the city commission's real commitment was to the environment, or the Latin Builders Association, had become obvious.

The city has never stopped pointing their fingers at our tiny community despoiling the bay.

The idea many shoreside people had that everyone on those boats in the Anchorage is a criminal came mainly from rumor. In the Anchorage itself, the rigors of living aboard in the elements, of taking care of a boat tend to naturally weed out crackheads and thieves. They were just too weak, or too stoned, for the responsibility of dealing with storms, anchoring and the like. And if they were able, they couldn't steal for long, no matter where they did it, and still live in such a tight, front-porch community where everybody knew their neighbors. Eventually peer pressure would drive them out.

In the seven years I would end up living aboard, I only locked the door of my houseboat during the first few months. Then I began to realize it wasn't necessary. I left it wide open to let the breeze blow through. It was a lot cooler to come home to. We were never robbed, never mugged. Everybody watches out for everybody else.

One thief had been caught red-handed one night on *Tradewinds*, an absentee-owned boat. He was hogtied hands to feet on the bottom of a power dinghy and sped out across the bay to the flats near Stiltsville on his stomach. They say it was pretty choppy that night. There he was untied and left standing in shallow water. The story went that the thief was told he could swim to Key Biscayne, about a mile away, but that the deep channels along the way teemed with sharks at night. It turned out he was not from the Anchorage. He was told never to come back.

In a community so used to taking care of itself, largely ignored by the city's fire and police departments busy on shore, frontier justice comes naturally. The exigencies and hardships of living out in the elements, storm and sun, corrosion of skin and metal, and seven hundred and fifty daily strokes on the oars, seem to simplify justice, just as the British Navy's penal code had been simple and harsh.

Only because access has historically been difficult have the bays and oceans not been settled as the land was. Now that some people found more comfortable ways to live on the water and waterfront land had become overcrowded, fingers began pointing and wails of indignation rose.

What was once the commons on shore in the time of the homesteaders and the great land grabs out west, has been taken over and privatized long ago. Now landowners point at

boat dwellers and say in essence it is morally wrong to settle what is left of the commons.

The Anchorage does use Coconut Grove for its schools, roads, libraries, and police without paying property taxes. At the same time, there is no mechanism in place for boaters to become part of shoreside communities, just as the marina has none for accomodating cruisers. What to do with people who are here one year, and gone the next? And how much tax do you charge someone who owns nothing permanent to tax? And if you move to repossess for nonpayment, do you send the sheriff sailing off to South America after the transgressors?

It is not widely known that when our illustrious and freedom-loving founding fathers laid the groundwork for this democracy, they didn't allow people to vote unless they were white, male landowners. They believed there could be no vested political interest without land in the family. It's unpatriotic. The ideas of private property and civil responsibility have always been closely intertwined.

Perhaps this explained why some commissioners were on the phone when we presented our case. If we had called ourselves the "Dinner Key Homeowners Association," paid sky-high property taxes like everyone else, and brought our deeds with us, would they have listened more closely? Voter's Registration did not allow us to vote without a street address. We'd gotten our voter's registration cards

by obsfucation; we'd used the dock offices' address at the Dinner Key Marina. We'd become used to subterfuge.

The Mayor asked the City Attorney for a legal opinion on whether the city had the power to evict or regulate Anchorage dwellers. She answered by saying she was fairly sure they didn't have the right to remove us. She went on to say that she wasn't even sure the city could regulate anchoring, though there was a claim of deed to the bottomland under the Anchorage itself. More research would have to be done.

I was elated. This would be the end of it all. They would realize their error and we would be become full citizens. We would be able to pay for services like parking, showers, garbage pick up and dinghy tie up that had always been denied us. We wouldn't have to sneak around under the piers at low tide and fill our water jugs by dinghy. We wouldn't have to duplicate the plastic keys to the showers by filling in the the old hole pattern with epoxy, sanding them down, and redrilling new holes every time the city changed the locks. We would be out of hiding.

The commissioners didn't bat an eye at this revelation by their own city attorney. Instead, Commissioner Plummer made a speech about how the Anchorage was out of control, and that certain criminal elements had to be cleaned out. He and the other commissioners recommended instructing the City Manager, Mr. Odio, to work out a plan for regulating the

Anchorage, providing for monthly anchoring payments and other regulations.

Several Anchorage residents heckled. Howard got red in the face. One of the commissioners grabbed his mike and blew into it something about order. Then sounding as exasperated as we were, he shook his finger at us and said, "No one can expect to live for free in Coconut Grove." That statement said it all.

They hadn't planned to evict us all along, though in all likelihood they would have, had we been cowed and given up. They would "regulate" us instead. I had heard from several of the politically savvy in one of our meetings what that meant: slowly destroy by degrees. We knew what had happened ashore to Coconut Grove, and to the pier people and their dockage fees. Many who had grown up in the Grove couldn't afford to live there anymore. Property taxes had flown out of sight. New construction had sprouted condominiums everywhere. The fees for dockage on the piers had gone from thirty dollars a month in the 1960's, to between four hundred and seven hundred a month. The old Dade County Pine homes like Ransom School's Pagoda were disappearing.

Now we were on the agenda.

Though we did not develop or change the face of the bay, cut down trees or build roads, spray pesticides, buy or sell land, fence it in, drill in it and strip mine it, or make money off of it, we were considered to be exploiting

the rights of others. Land had become so precious and expensive that the commons had also grown in importance as a kind of park. Nobody wanted permanent campers in a city park. Biscayne Bay was like Central Park - surrounded by inflated real estate.

Yet high rents were part of the reason some people chose to escape life on shore, as well as escape from regulation and government. On the bay you could still build and live in your own home without mortgaging your life away. No one told you to pay more property taxes every year, or what school to send your children to, or if you could have a building permit. You could make your own electricity from the sun and wind without buying nuclear and oil power from utility monopolies. You could lie out in the sun naked, or swim naked with your children without neighbors who might call HRS. Only a few had a phone. And if they did, they knew better.

You could live lightly on the earth. You could row a dinghy and not leave a trail. Sitting there in my theater style chair in that cold chamber, I speculated these are inalienable rights.

Commissioner Kennedy finally asked what exactly it was we wanted. Richard Ruiz walked up the the mike at the podium.

"All we want is to be left alone," he said.

The city sent their demands. They weren't backing down. They were written up by Mr. Odio's staff on official

stationery and handed out to Diana and us vice-presidents. The documents themselves, written in the arabesques of lawyerly language, had a shiny veneer of logic and sense. But they looked ridiculous when written as a guide for regulating an entire community of real people, especially on the sea. The perspective shift was ponderous:

*THE ANCHORAGE AND MOORING AREA AT DINNER KEY.*

*1) OBJECT: "In order to provide a "Designated Area" where specifically designated cruising yachts can anchor or moor without violating the City 'Vessel Mooring Code.' (This was the new houseboat ban in effect.) The City Code, the City's standard Dockage Agreement and the standard Rules and Regulations shall govern activities in this area."*

The very thought of surrendering that privacy of our daily lives to the city bureaucrats made me physically sick, like the idea of sawing off an arm or a leg. We laughed out loud the first time we read the proposed ordinance together in a steering committee meeting. On later readings it didn't seem as funny.

Another need the City had was to know who lived out there. It wasn't enough that we provided them with a census. I suppose they figured that if they could ID everyone, they could weed out the dope smugglers and tax evaders they were sure inhabited the Anchorage:

*"All owners must agree, in writing, that all persons in control (that word again) of a vessel shall dock at a City*

*facility to register, demonstrate the maneuverability and seaworthiness of the subject vessel, and receive instructions."*

They wanted us to parade our boats in front of the dock office at the Marina to demonstrate "maneuverability and seaworthiness." They would not deign to come out to see us. They wanted fanfare, a procession before Caesar's throne, where the emperor could raise or lower his eyebrows and pronounce judgement and sentencing on who could stay, who would go. Maneuverability meant engines, and that meant money. They knew quite well many out there could not afford to buy or maintain engines on a boat that remained anchored.

I loved the part about receiving instructions. Here the city lawyers were telling us to sign our lives away to Alberto Rodriguez, renown for his inability to manage what he had on his hands already, the Dinner Key Marina itself. He and the marina staff were the same people who had presided over raised dockage rates and still couldn't provide adequate services to liveaboards on the piers, who complained bitterly and constantly.

*"The intended length of stay must be stated and recorded. Ninety days (90) will be the maximum allowed."*

This might have been the most damning language of all. It effectively broke up our community. I couldn't imagine the outcry if public officials, working for the public good, walked into downtown Miami and proclaimed that everybody could stay, but only those who dressed nicely, according to



their taste and had a freshly-painted condo. And even then only for three months. Everybody else who couldn't afford it had to move on.

What was worse, what we could not countenance under any circumstances, was paying for the right to anchor. There was outrage in the Anchorage that immigrants who came to the United States for freedom themselves would deny it to Americans in their own country. There were cries of "Batistianos!" among us, a reference to the Cubans of the old Batista regime who were welcome to live here when Castro took power. Many City of Miami officials had been of this old ruling elite of Havana. Some had simply transferred their way of life to Miami. Some Cuban officials of the City of Miami, after years of treating Americans anchored off Coconut Grove as second-class citizens, had the gall to tell us to move on. These eviction threats, veiled behind the word "regulation," did not help to heal the ethnic rancor and bitterness already rising in much of the city of Miami by Anglos who felt disenfranchised by the new hispanic politics.

We worked for hours drawing up our own rules for living out there. We had no idea what the city would accept. Howard looked over our drafts, and he was a great help. We had several tense meetings with the manager, the Dockmaster and their staff. They weren't impressed with us. They refused to budge and they didn't seem off guard with Howard. They knew

him too well. We decided we needed to get some heavy hitters to scare them into negotiating.

The following week, Diana, Richard Ruiz and myself dressed up in our best clothes and drove to the Three Ambassadors hotel and office complex in downtown Miami. We walked into Richard and Richard, one of the most prestigious law firms of the city and asked them to represent us. We wanted the scariest lawyers we could get. Mr. Richard heard our case, said we had a good one and agreed to represent us. He said it would never get to court. We said that was why we were hiring him. We could never afford it if it did. He assured us they had connections. They'd dealt with the city many times. They knew people, and that that was what we were paying for.

Then we made our plea of economic duress. Mr. Richard said he liked us and lowered his usual hourly rate from unbelievable to exorbitant. I had a bad taste in my mouth, and I know Diana did too, but what we were fighting for seemed so much more important than agonizing over the ethics of hiring mercenaries.

We would have to come up with three thousand dollars up front. We had about seven hundred. We said we'd be back.

I volunteered for the Richard and Richard fundraising committee. Since I was designing T-shirts for a living, I opened my big mouth and said they were a great way to raise money. I was nominated to come up with one to sell so the DKAA could pay our new expensive mercenaries, as well as

what we still owed Howard. A Grove T-shirt shop owner named Ray sympathized with us, though he didn't live aboard on the hook, but on the piers. He volunteered his shirt factory. All we had to do was come up with the design. We'd stake our seven hundred bucks on blank shirts. Ray said he could get fifty-fifty cotton/poly for just over two dollars each.

After I convinced the committee that people on the street wouldn't spend ten dollars on a pretty design of sailboats in front of a sunset that said "Save the Boaters," I had to come up with something commercial that would sell. What we needed was money, not sentiment.

The Coconut Grove Arts Festival was coming up in the middle of February. We decided to sell the shirts there. The three day event had become the largest arts festival in the country. What had once been local artists was now filled almost completely with nationally-known artists. One spot, on private church property of St. Stephens, held the last of the local ones. The cost for a regular booth was over six hundred dollars. And the selling of printed T-shirts had become illegal. Only the official shirt was allowed. We would have to bootleg and take our chances. It was the kind of challenge we liked: the subversive kind.

I scribbled out a series of thumbnail sketches in charcoal on top of a dryer at the Bird Bath Coin Laundry while I waited for my cycle to finish. The first one I sketched was three paintbrushes trailing paint diagonally across the page, accompanied by an abstract looking section

of an artist's palette. I did several others. Nothing seemed to work.

The next day I showed them to Ray. He said my first one was the best and he grabbed it. I told him to let me take it home and make some finished drawings of it for him. He said no, that the one I'd done of the paint brushes on the jiggling dryer was fine. And that's what we used. He added some color, doctored up the stray lines, but the finished design was just it - a rude sketch, blown up to size, rough and loose. And that was appropriate. When I saw the first one off the press on his houseboat one cool morning, I knew he was right. We talked about minor changes in lettering and layout, but the design said art and that was it. Rough and loose, like us.

About eight of us stayed up all night on February 14th, the night before the festival, printing shirts on Ray's four-color hand printer. I knew only design, not printing. We mixed colors as we went along by formula and weight. We added "puff" ink to give it more body. We learned how to put on and take off shirts in less than two seconds, and how to pull a squeegee so you get the right ink coverage. Even with Ray's coaching we were ragged.

We'd started at eight. Empty beer bottles lay all over by midnight. One hundred and fifty shirts lay folded on tables.

We had four hundred blanks, plus a hundred or so Ray had donated from his private stock, but we were hedging our

bets. It could rain. They might not sell. The police might confiscate. Our confidence wasn't high. We'd see after the first day.

We loaded up Ray's van with the shirts and parked it in our territory, the marina parking lot. The festival pumped and thronged just a few hundred feet away on Bayshore Drive. It was Saturday, around ten a.m. - the first day. Music boomed in Peacock Park down the street. If Jolly Jack could have seen what had happened to his tranquil view of the bay, he would have died again. Thousands of people already clogged the roped-off streets. This time the Festival was more than the usual pain in the ass crush of tourists. Each of them was seven dollars against the city. We were excited.

"Not many people buy the first day," Ray tempered, preparing us. "Just make sure you make noise. Let them see you."

Diana's job would be to monitor the shirts as they went out and keep track. Ten dollars a shirt, two dollars cost, one dollar to the seller, seven dollars profit to the Anchorage. We had to give a dollar to the sellers. It was our concession to capitalism to get the number of sellers we needed to make it work. I was ashamed that we paid, but we weren't sure we'd get enough volunteers. By eleven we had at least thirty people to sell.

We'd hammered together stick crosses and tacked up shirts like scarecrows on them so we could wave them above the crowd. Fabienne and I called out for hours on the

street: "Celebrate the Arts T-shirts - ten dollars!" We had had to print "Celebrate the Arts" on them, rather than the name of the festival in case we got caught by officials. But we'd put the date on. It was an all or nothing shot.

The morning was a rout, but they started selling by late afternoon. We gave the tourists our story: every shirt sold went to support the Anchorage community of boaters in their struggle to exist against the city. They always asked where it was and why there was a struggle. Nobody knew who we were. Those islands between us and the shore seemed to effectively block us out of sight. I think more people found out about us that day than all the time we had existed. Most people were sympathetic and weren't fond of government anyway. They were glad to help.

A few knew of us and snidely asked how we went to the bathroom. Trying to explain the size of the ocean, the amount of sewage the city at large adds to it, and the lack of a sewage pumpout station at the marina was impossible in the noisy crowds. We just waved them on.

Every half hour or so we'd see one of our neighbors ride excitedly by on a bicycle spreading the word: it was working. Sometimes they'd bring us a new dozen from the van to put in our backpacks. We even had festival goers ask us if they could trade in their official shirt for one of our designs. I felt proud and at the same time powerful. Here we were, using our ingenuity, amassing power shirt by shirt to fight the city with, while at the same time flaunting their

police. When a patrol came by we'd duck to the side, lowering our crosses with the shirts tacked on behind the crowd. The police were there to protect the big festival commercial interests, not the local people. We loved it. We never got caught.

That night the energy ran high. We printed up over three hundred shirts for the second day. We had our system. We laughed as we pulled the squeegee again and again. We got high on the fumes from Ray's little conveyor dryer. We drank beer. We folded and bagged. Folded and bagged.

The second day we sold even more. We grew heady from success. We heard the police had tried to grab Billy Bird's shirts when they'd seen him selling within the festival center. We'd told everyone to stay out of that area and remain on the perimeter. But he'd ridden right in on his bike and really sold fast. When the police came, he rode out just as fast and got lost in the crowd. Billy was the talk of the afternoon.

The third day we sold out everything. By about five p.m. everybody was gathered at the van. Townsend bought pizza, and boxes from Pizza Hut were strewn all around, along with beer cans. We had a hell of a party. We had raised almost four thousand dollars in three days. We had enough to bring the fight to the city and go head to head with them.

We paid Richard and Richard and they met with city officials. Whatever they told them must have worked, because Odio (we called him "The Odius One"), backed down.

We hammered out a city services agreement that had nothing to do with anchoring on the bay. They would have no regulatory power over our floating neighborhood at all. We would only pay for city services: parking, garbage, dinghy dock, water and showers. That averaged about \$30 a month. A pretty good deal for living off Coconut Grove where property taxes levied by the city on waterfront estates are sometimes \$80,000 a year. And all of us lived on 360 Bay View Drive.

It was a temporary agreement, a trial period for six months. But it went so well, six months stretched into a year. Most everybody paid and we were happy to be included.

Selling shirts had been the first total community effort we'd ever attempted. From then on we had more potluck dinners on the island. We knew each other better. I'd become a seasoned vice-president and fundraiser. Most important, we'd leaned on each other and found that we could.

I loved living out there. The scenery was so beautiful I found even a Captain Midnight couldn't dent the ambience. The old hermit contrasted with the beauty of the bay, with having so many good friends living next to you. A necessary evil, a part of life, like having to go ashore and work, like alcoholism, like storms. His existence was a paradox, as living on the bay itself was, with its horrible eighty



knot squalls one day, and miraculous, tranquil sunsets the next. Together, they made me feel like I was living.

## The Dolphin

She swims near his boat,  
her light gasps capering on the surface  
of his morning dream like airy waterbugs  
skipping on tension.  
He sees her lovely back grace by,  
dorsal smooth, inviting.

A Glimpse of Sound

In the heady days following our successful facing down of the city government, life didn't change much in the Anchorage. Which had been the aim all along. No police boats came to tow away unpainted boats. Homemade cabins atop salvaged powerboat hulls without engines still swung at anchor. A marine construction barge had not moved in to set down moorings, little places for the right people, all in a row.

We now had stickers to "affix" to our dinghies that proved we'd waited in line the first Monday of every month for our service fees and paid in full. That made me feel proud, in a way. We had won the right to pull our own weight, like everybody else, but on our own terms.

Even though the city issued paper stickers for months that melted in the rain before they got the plastic ones,

and the ones we got for our cars had to be taped on because they weren't made for glass, we were official. At least on land.

And I looked on our small part of the bay in a different light.

Mornings in the Anchorage start with the glow that always rises over Key Biscayne five miles to the east. The long, slender island hardly fattens the bay's horizon line. When the pink begins to bleed skyward and the sun works its way west from the Bahamas, the Key becomes a dark mauve shadow under the eastern glow flecked white with hotels.

The most beautiful part of the day is the end of the night, when the darkness takes its last rhythmic breaths of wind and wave before the sounds of the sun arrive. The city's motorized vibrations have stopped long before; there is no movement, no distractions. Ancient, proto-sounds emerge with those dark breaths: the croak of a cormorant as its webbed feet shift on a weathered pine roost, the swish of a ballyhoo's fins on the bay surface, the sodden, lazy lapping of seawater against barnacles gripping coral rock along shore, the quick breaths of a fishing dolphin.

When I lie in bed on one of these early mornings, wavelets lapping lazily at the mushy moss on the waterline of the Floating Bed, I hear the sun sounds arrive. A great blue heron skritches its claws as it shifts on my wherry,

its favorite dinghy. I hear the slowly growing, then slowly fading whup, whup, whup of a cormorant's ducklike wings. I shift my pillow and turn my head, not sure if I'm dreaming. When shrimp are running, they crackle right through the hull. In the winter there are so many, they sound like a muffled egg frying.

A mysterious unnhh, unnhh, unnhh sound also comes from the night sea below. That's all I know about it. It sounds ancient, like the faint moan of a ghost. After six years of living aboard I never found out what made that sound. The not knowing part I like best.

I've surprised our great blue heron many times in the pearly fog of winter mornings as I climb up on the stern deck to go to the bathroom. He's often there on my wherry's deck, stiff in the cold dew like a gaunt British spy in a greatcoat on night duty. He sees me emerge from the back door, turns and points his long scissor beak to the side to get a better look. His head is so thin I lose it for a moment in the fog as his graceful profile slenders. Then he shifts, reluctantly crouches, and two great wings reach out as if a huge blue paper airplane were unfolding. With indignant crawwwks at each flap he stretches off, wings seven feet across, heavy and labored as if his broad wings are too heavy. A silvery wingtip flicks a spreading circle print on the water as he tilts away. He never waits for me to pee.

In the pitch dark, before the sun can make color, my good friend Ron Dessain on Vagabond gets up. He climbs out of his bunk, and on the cabin sole he stretches out, lying on his back. He feels the hump and sag of the hull as it noses the waves: lift and drop, inhale, exhale. He begins his own breathing. He lifts a leg and brings his knee to his chin. For the next thirty minutes he twists his hips, stretches his legs, bends his spine with yoga. When the glow comes, he's meditating.

Ron used to be a pipe checker for engineering companies. He traveled around the world checking the metallurgical sturdiness of pipes. He quit that job, bought his Pearson 32 and moved aboard. He now works odd carpentry jobs four or five months out of the year and molds clay jewelry for sale in Miami and the Bahamas.

Maurice can be seen after dawn standing atop the cabin of his family's tiny, junk-rigged sailboat Imagine. He holds morning poses against the sky, lost in his Tai Chi. I once saw a documentary on television in which an old man in a Beijing park, his hand on the forehead of the first man in a conga line of other men, directed his life force, or Chi, through his arm, into that first forehead, and on through the line of men. By sheer dint of concentration he brought them all, shaking, to their knees.

Maurice and his wife Ellen painted blue waves and white curling foam along their home's waterline, as if the boat was always sailing. White molding garnishes the brown cabin.

From a distance she's a gingerbread house. Maurice and Ellen both studied theology, he at the Sorbonne in Paris. They teach at private schools in the Grove. They own a soup kitchen in Port-au-Prince, Haiti. They feed the starving living there under army dictatorship. Someday they plan to sail Imagine to Haiti.

Maurice and Ellen have two boys. They are often practicing Tai Chi with him, miniatures of his poses, their little cabin roof a dark stage backlit by the morning pink. I've watched them as I row by in my wherry to shore and work. I remember feeling jealous of his children for having a father like that.

Fabienne and I get long after the sun rises, around eight in the summer heat, later in the cool winters. We are night people. Calm mornings always seem to emanate a subtle anticipation that something might happen. I get out of bed naked, climb out on the back deck, stretch, make my morning ablution over the side, and look around. There is something cleansing about standing naked on deck, stretching and peeing out in the sun.

If nothing unusual is happening, I duck back inside, grab a towel and shampoo, hang the towel on the ladder and throw the shampoo bottle in the sea. The splash of the shampoo brings out the grunts, snappers, sargent majors and needlefish that live under and around the boat. They mill about the surface waiting for bits of food they know will fall from our morning rituals of dishes or deck scrubbing.

They race over to check out the shampoo bottle, nose it and quickly find it inedible. As they turn away I bomb them, jumping in right over them. They spy me coming in the air and dart away in all directions before I land, like an exploding huddle.

If the tide is medium I can easily stand and soap myself. Then I pitch the shampoo on the back deck without rolling it off, always a challenge, and start swimming off the soap bubbles with the long strokes of a crawl. Using natural shampoo is easy if you live where everything from your bathroom and kitchen ends up. We don't want to harm our coral garden under the boat or the fish and crabs that hide there.

Sometimes I leave a dive mask on the side of the boat to check the anchors and lines while I'm in, or give a quick scrape to the barnacles on one of the dinghies. But it's the dishes that crown the morning ritual.

Dishes are nothing to hurry through. Yet often I wish they weren't there, and I hurry anyway. Then I slow down again, after I get into the rhythm.

Doing the dishes isn't bad at all in the shade on the back deck, with a millionaire's view of the wide open bay. I bucket up seawater with the five gallon wallpaperer's bucket we found washed up on the island and pour it into the dishpan. Then I sit on the carved wooden stool we found floating by. It seems there's always an exchange happening on the sea. We lose things over the side every so often. The

stool has the name Ian carved into its seat, a Scottish name like my own, as if some of my heritage had followed me across the Atlantic.

If I catch a clump of yellow sargasso weed by accident in the bucket water, I throw it back because it probably has a resident shrimp, or some other sea creature in it. Swish in a little natural soap, and I'm on my way. The water is always cool and feels good on my hands. In winter we sometimes have to put the water on the propane stove and fire it up to get the dishes clean.

I like starting with the cups first. They are easiest. Then I do the plates, and finally the pots, pans and utensils. Utensils take so much handling. Yet because they are done slowly, they have an advantage. I can do them mostly by feel, with plenty of time to look around in between forks. That's the best part of dishes -- sitting there on my Scottish stool, passing the steel between my fingers, looking around. It's my ritual, my maintenance art.

There's always plenty to see on Anchorage mornings: sargent majors chasing dishwater scraps - another soup spoon; a black cormorant hang-drying its wings on a nearby anchored raft whitened by sun and guano - a fork with dried egg on it; Bunny, a floating bachelorette, sponge bathing nude on her transom - the pancake spatula; a big Bertram roaring black smoke out to the Gulf Stream in the channel - last night's soup spoon.



If I'm lucky, and looking in exactly the right spot at exactly the right second, a spotted eagle ray might part the sheet metal surface of the bay as I watch, arc in the sun, the water thick and clinging on its back like clear resin in the sunlight. As it falls, drops like diamonds strung on a kite tail follow. It's only a flash, but it lingers in a moment when beauty slows time.

Then back to the knife with butter on it.

Mother Nature seems to give these flashes out like candies, grudgingly, to one of us at a time. It's rare anyone sees the same jump you do, at the same time, from beginning to end. You can't share. They're chocolate-covered cherries you eat in one bite.

One calm morning, while dutifully engaged in the sacred ritual of cleaning utensils, I hear that unmistakable puhhhh-hup of a dolphin breathing.

Puhhhh-hup.

There she is, dorsal carving the smooth surface about thirty yards away. You can always tell a shark from a dolphin because a shark has a set of tandem fins. Our dolphin Snagglesfin has not shown up for some time, but it's not her. This dorsal is a child's neat moon crescent, not his ragged, bitten edge. I run down below and snatch my mask and flippers. Fabienne watches me as I don my gear.

"Don't you want to see her?" I ask, spitting on the mask glass so it won't fog.

"That's alright," she says. "You go." I coax her but I can tell a born and raised city girl is not sure about swimming with a nine hundred pound sea mammal with teeth, no matter how friendly people say they are.

"Be careful."

"She won't hurt me."

Inside I'm not so sure either. After all, I'd heard they were friendly. Now I'm going to find out. I'd seen them out in the outer bay and in the Bahamas while sailing, but I was afraid to go in with them there. I guess I feel more secure around the boat. This was the first time I've felt the time was right.

As I put on my flippers I get a twinge of the foreboding anyway. I put on shorts. I don't need to encourage anything by dangling bait. I hit the water and it's cold. But the fear only adds to my exuberance.

I fin hard, trying to catch up to her while she fishes. The moment I awkwardly splashed in the dolphin probably "saw" me with her sonar, her theatre ears. She could see right through me with her rapid clicks, see my skin, my bones, my heart pumping blood. I am completely naked to her. There is a strange gratification in that.

I look side to side under the water, feeling blind and awkward, beating my fins on the surface like a seal beats

its on land. I stop and stand several times, waiting for almost a minute or more for her fin to pop up again.

She breaks the surface, still in the same area. Doing circles. I swim toward her again, perhaps fifty or sixty feet away now. I would be seeing her at about twenty five feet in that visibility. If she stayed. I slow my fins and try to relax, to give off friendly vibrations. I think friendly thoughts, wondering if she could sense them as she could see through my brain.

I hear clicks. She's probably chasing fish, or scanning me. I pop my head above the surface to look gain. She's not there, but the roiled surface of the water gives her away. I swim closer.

Nine hundred pounds.

She must be very close. I slip under again and she's right there, about fifteen feet away. She's huge underwater, and I shiver, my skin turning to chicken skin involuntarily. I get a strong, paradoxical urge to simultaneously get out of the water and swim closer to her. I freeze and watch.

She must be curious to stay. She seems excited and swims quickly around me on a large cirle, just within my field of visibility. I rotate in place, facing her, fascinated. She has that dolphin smile and her eye seems merry, almost mischevious, with her lid half closed next to that smile. After one circle she slows, as if hestitating.

My breath is hoarsing up and down my snorkle. I hold it, trying to listen. There she is, smiling. I want to see

her thoughts, as she sees mine: shouldering giant bluefin by wet cliffs; chasing mackerel by night, their tails whipping phosphorescence like blurred fireflies; her baby by her side in the slick, green lift of a freighter's clear bow wave at twenty knots. I want to tell her of the Luna Moth I'd seen in a barn in Massachusetts angling from its chrysalis, a spongy, wet alien from a spent spaceship; of a tumbleweed prickling dusted sandstone on dry, hard ground. I swim closer. She pushes away and is gone. I hear only the clicks, softer now, of shrimp talking in their dreams.

When I get back to the boat I feel elated, and tell Fabienne all about it. But I have a strange feeling of being let down, like coming out of a wonderful, long movie and having to find where we parked the car. I sit down again at my stool and pick up my dishrag. I go through the rest of the forks, spoons and knives with my eyes closed, doing them by feel.

The Intrepid Crew of the *Andarin*

If you're a gal with no schedule  
free to travel - I'm a sailor with  
well-equipped sailboat, 65 years young,  
Bahamas bound. 25 years in the islands.  
Look and talk: you may say yes.

*-Posted on Anchorage bulletin board by  
dinghy dock.*

Cruising is as much a part of the Anchorage as living aboard at the edge of a city. Cruisers sailing in for a weekend or a year in our anchorage bring with them stories of faraway places, new ways of living, new languages, fresh energy and news of our friends living aboard in the Bahamas, Dominica, the Azores or along the Seine in Paris.

This is the tape-recorded log of a landlubber's Atlantic voyage. Ed Nagel, a New Mexican educator with dust behind his ears, crosses the Atlantic with two Anchorage watermen, Michael Burtt, our Down Maine guru, and Brian Cart aboard *Andarin*, Michael's old ketch. A man who decided, at the approach of middle age, to risk all for adventure. Miami to Portugal on a sailboat - four thousand nautical miles in twenty-six days.

FRIDAY, MAY 3rd, 1515HRS GREENWICH TIME

This morning I signed my Last Will and Testament on board the *Andarin*, witnessed by the captain, Michael and the first mate Brian. Then I went into town and went to *Lum's* to call Mary (*his* wife) to tell her that I mailed my Last Will and Testament along with my briefcase and a half dozen postcards for distribution. We promised each other we would try to make an out-of-body contact during the next thirty days.

The wind had picked up substantially and I had a hard row back to the ship. I stopped off at Rob's to have a beer and learned that Ann and Michael had gone rowing in the longboat to the customs office in downtown Miami to get clearance for their entrance into France. All systems are go for departure tomorrow afternoon. However, so far we have not heard from Karin and John, the other potential passengers on this trip.

SUNDAY, MAY 5, 1220HRS GREENWICH TIME

Still in the Anchorage. Yesterday Michael picked up the sliding seat for one of the rowboats, but did not pick up the Atlantic charts which were supposed to be in the mail. So our new departure time is scheduled for Monday. John did not get his passport together and Karin is not coming unless Preben is coming, so it looks like it is just going to be the three of us.

TUESDAY, MAY 7th, 2000HRS GREENWICH TIME

No charts, no oars. Departure postponed until tomorrow.

WEDNESDAY, MAY 8th, 1230HRS GREENWICH TIME

Preparing to weigh anchor! Awaiting the arrival of Brian in the Agni and Rob on the Argonaut who is coming over to say goodbye. Portugal here we come! - 1:45pm and all loaded. Mainsail going up!

THURSDAY, MAY 9th, 1430HRS GREENWICH TIME

We are about fifteen miles east of the coast of Florida, heading north, travelling with the Gulf Stream. It's a fair weather day. The sky is partly cloudy with a good wind of ten knots pushing us across a sea of deep blue with white foam behind.

Just before sunset. We just recently ran into huge ocean swells sailing about thirty to forty miles off the coast of Florida, heading north. Most of the day was uneventful, much of the time spent sleeping for those stretches when not on watch. We are on watch every three hours -- three hours on, six hours off, during which off hours each of us usually sleeps to the gentle, rocking of the ocean's motion. If this weather keeps up, it will be a piece of cake, arriving in Europe around June tenth.

SATURDAY, MAY 11, 1300HRS GREENWICH TIME

This boat's like riding in a big rocking chair, or a roller coaster, or a combination of the two: it goes up and then down, heavily, (*Ed's emphasis is on heavily*) rolls to one side, hangs on a wave and then pitches up again, and plunges down again ... down and up ...and over... not so much of a splash that time. (*His voice has a strange languid weakness about it, as if his neck had become rubber and unable to support his head*).

SATURDAY, MAY 11th, 2000HRS GREENWICH TIME

We are into our fourth day and for the last day or so we have been in sort of a semi-gale condition, with a lot of rocking and rolling and pitching. About an hour ago we took down the mainsail and we're only under the jib, heading northeast. We also pumped out the bilge, which took about four or five buckets about three or four times, so that's ... fifteen buckets altogether... This kind of sailing isn't much fun. About the only safe position is the horizontal one; the only one you can maintain for any length of time. That's where I am, in the bow of the boat.

There is an oppressive odor of spirits, or kerosene or something used to burn in the kerosene lamps. There are no electric lights aboard Andarin. One of the storage containers must have broken in the bilge and spilled. So there is this oppressive odor; you can't breathe without smelling the fumes, like paint thinner, constantly. And doubly oppressive because of the bad weather which keeps the



canopy closed. And the front hatch to the bow is closed -- nailed shut because it is broken.

There's no movement of air. But the wonderful thing about all this is that you sleep a lot: and deeply and well. I've had some fantastic dreams as a result of the deep sleeps that occur because you're being rocked, your whole body, the fluids of it are being rocked as if you were in your mother's womb again. Up and down, up and sideways, sloshing, all the time just wonderful, rhythmic, relaxing motion...

I just got off watch. Three hours of cold and wet and rocking and shaking and wondering whether we are going to make it after all. Finally the wind died down, the rain to a drizzle. Had some soup for supper and it was sunset and my watch was over. Just prior to my watch ending we put the main back up. And now Michael has decided it's a little too rough and he wants to take the main down again, so that's what they're doing. Oh, and on top of everything else, I haven't had a good crap since we left port three and a half days ago...

At this point we appear to be a couple of hundred miles east of South Carolina, heading northeast. I hope by the time they wake me for the morning watch the seas will have calmed down. I've had enough of this roughing it and a sailor's life. Give me a smooth, quiet sail of the landlubber and I'll be happy.

SUNDAY, MAY 12, 1800HRS GREENWICH TIME

Well, I'm not dead, which is what I thought I would be after yesterday. We're all very wet. Just about every time we take spray over the bow, which is every three pitches, the water hits the top of the cover over the bow and the cabin and water comes dripping in. The mattress I'm lying on is soaked at the bottom and so is the sleeping bag. Most of our clothes are wet. The front bunk is wet where the captain and Brian take turns sleeping. Today we emptied out nineteen buckets of water from the bilge. All in all, I feel better than I felt yesterday, largely because in the middle of the night I had a good crap. Four days worth. Which means my system is finally adjusting to this way of life.

Michael patched the hole in the mainsail, but it tore again. We're not quite as far as we had hoped. We won't reach the latitude of Hatteras till tomorrow.

MONDAY, MAY 13TH, 2234HRS GREENWICH TIME

Last night was eventful for me in many ways. I had the midnight watch, and as usual it was rough and rainy. About an hour after I got on watch I noticed this contact off our port bow coming from the northeast, about forty degrees on the compass. Just a faint light on the horizon through the rainstorm. I figured with reduced visibility it must be closer than it looks.

Now to understand this situation you have to understand this boat. There's no running lights. There's no masthead

light; there's no light whatsoever. In the middle of the night, we're sailing black. But I know not to worry so long as the bearing keeps changing. *(This is standard sailor knowledge: if the other ship's bearing changes even a little over time, you will not pass at the same point.)*

Ten more minutes pass and still no change. Forty degrees on the compass. Still, if it's far away the change would be slight and you wouldn't notice it. Ten more minutes pass and still no change. So I decide we need to show a light, just in case. This is a rather involved process.

I take the hurricane lantern from the bucket, which has been sitting in the rain, all night, even before my watch. I unhook myself from the safety harness and push the cockpit hatch back, letting some rain and standing water fall onto the bunk and onto our captain sleeping on the bunk next to the cockpit. I walk down inside carrying the lantern into the black cabin because there are no lights, and no moon or stars. And no cabin light. I close the cockpit hatch after me and move toward the bow of the ship in the dark, grabbing onto various holding points along the way, trying to get to the place where they keep the matches. I get the matches and move to the seat next to the stove, open the glass lantern cover, light a match, turn up the wick, and light the lantern. Simple enough.

I then close the cover and head back out, now with light, out to the cockpit. I open the cockpit hatch, get outside, close the cockpit hatch, and find the bucket. All

of which doesn't happen quickly, because the boat is rocking and rolling and pitching, and it's raining outside. I get the lantern into the bucket and then try to hook myself on with the safety harness to a stay. Standing on top of the cockpit benches I then begin to tie the bucket over a wooden arch that's called the "boom gallows" that supports the boom at anchor, located at the stern end of the cockpit.

All this time I notice the ship is getting closer. It is still at forty degrees, which means a collision course. Its masthead light is much brighter now, and by now other lights are showing, including its green starboard running light -- which could mean it has changed course slightly to port. Meanwhile the lantern went out -- maybe as a result of its bouncing around in the wind or the bucket and the rain that was pouring on it, or it was out of fuel. I didn't know which.

I untied the bucket, took out the lantern, disengaged my safety harness from the stay, pushed open the cockpit cover and walked below again in the dark, looking for dry matches. Having reached the matches, gotten seated, lifting the lantern cover and trying to light the lantern, it would not light. At this point Michael asked if I would shut the cockpit cover as he was being rained on. I said yes Michael, I would, but first we had to show a light. We have a contact. I tried to light the main cabin lantern, but either Brian had turned the wick down too far, or I had turned it

down myself and it had fallen into the kerosene. I couldn't get it lit either.

Exasperated with my not shutting the cockpit hatch, Michael got up on the stairs and said: "Whoaaa...we got a ship out here. We better do something," whereupon I told him I was trying to show a light.

I explained the problem I'd been having. By now the ship was appreciably closer. We could make out all the deck lights and running lights. It continued to approach us on the port beam at approximately forty degrees - a collision course.

Michael said, "We better do something here." We disengaged the line tied to the rudder. Brian got a flashlight to show on the sails. But either the ship didn't care, or it had already modified its course to its port side. So I asked Michael if we should come about, which would be to our port side. He said "Yes -- hard over," which I did.

We passed the ship starboard to starboard, about three hundred yards away, which does not seem like a lot of distance in the middle of the night with the rain pouring down out in the middle of the ocean in a boat that will surely sink if it gets a hole in the hull (*an apparent implied reference to the ferrocement construction of the Andarin, the reliability of which sounded doubtful to Ed*).

We came back on course, they went to sleep, and I went back to my watch. Later when I went off watch, as has

happened quite often, I went into a very deep sleep, because of the gently rocking motion of the boat. I had a succession of vivid, extremely detailed dreams, involving all kinds of characters, from the recent conference I attended in Michigan to the people at the community (*in Santa Fe*). They were all put together in a fantastic scenario for a film of intrigue and adventure, involving terrorism and the FBI, a plane hijacking and a kidnapping with clear, absolutely clear, portrait copies of the characters going through my head while I was asleep in the bunk next to the cabin cover.

So I was totally into this deep sleep and vivid dreams, when Brian called my name to tell me it was my morning watch. It was like coming out of another world, a world of my head, back into the reality in which my body was currently moving. Brian and I sat up and talked for awhile. He made some coffee. He said he used to have dreams like that when he first started going sailing, but he wasn't having them lately. I related to him some of the incidents in the dreams and he was amazed at how vivid they were. I couldn't get over, and I still can't get over, how it's like a picture show, when you go to sleep. Like seeing the movies, movie after movie and being totally within the mind of each character in each event in the movie, having total perspective and seeing everything at once switching focus whenever the thought occurs, "I wonder what's happening over

there? Boom! and it switched because, of course, it's all in your head. It's an exciting way to dream.

TUESDAY, MAY 14TH, 1700HRS GREENWICH TIME

We've just finished two and a half days of rain, part of which occurred with gale force winds. Everything on the boat is wet: our clothes, our bedding, our bodies. So even though the sky is still cloud covered completely, the rain has finally stopped. We took all of our stuff and put everything topside, clothespinning it to the lines and stays on deck. In the process I found a nice comfortable spot on top of a mattress so I took off all my clothes and I am lying here waiting for the sun to come out so I can be sunbathing nude. We emptied the bilge again and Michael is cooking supper. Right now, everything seems absolutely great again.

As we approach day six, it's interesting to note that we have no idea where we are since we have had no sun and have not made a clear shot with the sextant. But we are headed east, and we know that somewhere in that direction lies Gibraltar, so it really doesn't make much difference. We haven't seen a ship since our last close encounter and we know from the charts there is no land to run into for a couple thousand miles, which would be the Azores, since we just passed Bermuda a couple of days ago, we think.

THURSDAY, MAY 16TH, 1530HRS GREENWICH TIME

Mostly cloudy sky with patches of sun. We just completed another day and a half of rain and rough weather. I keep waiting for my vacation to begin. One thing I had said earlier was that we had passed Bermuda. Not true. According to Brian, our navigator, Bermuda is somewhere ahead of us, to the southeast. But what's the difference. When you look out here all you see is ocean all around, no contacts for the last two days again. Exciting to see a piece of driftwood or some garbage from some other boat. Meanwhile I'm topside trying to dry out, hoping the spray won't undo all our good work from the sun.

One incident I would like to record regarding an interaction among all three of us, since one of us is almost always asleep. I was at the helm. Michael, our captain, decided to reef the main in rather rough weather. So he and Brian went forward, Michael at the mainmast and Brian on the boom. Michael told me to head into the wind, which I started to do. And he told me to haul in the main sheet line, which I started to do. Then Brian told me to hook the boom, which he was hanging onto (*which can swing crazily in rough weather if not secured*) which I started to do. All of these orders came hard upon one another, so each job got started, but left unattended and incomplete. By now the boat had come completely into the wind while I had hooked the boom so Brian could reef the mainsail, and there was no one at the helm, so Michael shouted at me to "Sail the boat!"



By then, though I was somewhat frustrated by the incompleteness of my previous jobs, I remembered the order of authority: Michael is the captain, Brian the First Mate and I am the Crew. As the only member of the Crew, everyone was giving me orders and I sincerely wanted to complete them - any one of them - properly, so I shouted back to Michael that I was busy hooking the boom, thinking that Brian's safety was more important than which direction the boat was moving at any particular time, especially out here in the middle of nowhere. Michael didn't seem to care and repeated, "Sail the boat!", so I did. I left the boom hanging unhooked and went back to my first job at the helm.

This action promptly sent Brian swinging off the top of the deck to port, clinging to the boom, hooking himself to one of the rowboats with his feet. Whereupon I felt a few invectives from the crew was appropriate, essentially stating that I did not think it was such a good idea for each member of the crew to receive three separate orders from two of his superior officers and be expected to do all three at once. Clearly this situation was not good for the crew's morale, and I told him so, thinking to myself, too many chiefs and not enough Indians.

After the job was done, my two chiefs went below and had a joint, carrying on a discussion at some length. Naturally I assumed they were reviewing the Crew's list of grievances. Sometime later Michael came topside and said in the future he would try not to give me more things to do

than I could handle at one time. Somewhat mollified I accepted his acknowledgement of my predicament, but found it difficult myself to express my gratitude for this small consideration. Essentially I was still sulking over this whole incident.

Michael and Brian had become somewhat garrulous and I don't think they noticed. Soon Michael came topside again and began steering the boat, a little to the southwest, then tacking and heading a little to the northwest, talking about letting the boat "dance" a little, which was of some concern to the Crew, who had come to believe that the course set for our destination was due east.

The other incident is less significant, but no less indicative of the sterling qualities of the ship's company aboard the *Andarin*, as we sailed eastward in rough seas across the Atlantic. The wind was brisk, say fifteen knots, when the captain decided to empty the bilge again. So the first mate retrieved a plastic pump, a two foot long tube and a plastic handle used to suck up water, which he later explained he'd gotten at a flea market for fifty cents. He pumped out the water into a bucket which the captain took and dumped over the side.

Ten bilgewater buckets later, Brian sent up the pump in the bucket for cleaning. But as the captain dumped the water from the bucket, he also dumped the bilge pump over the side, uttering some epithet or profound expression of regret, whereupon, looking back I noticed that the tube,

being plastic, was floating. I asked if he wanted to turn around and retrieve it.

"Sure," our captain said. "We're gonna to have a man overboard drill. Brian, you take the jib, Ed you take the mainsheet." Our captain took the helm. "Now prepare to jibe," he said, explaining as he did so, that a jibe will take you back more directly on your course. So even if a jibe is more dangerous especially in high wind, you want to come back upon the man overboard as quickly as possible.

But our captain did not jibe. Carried away with himself, he executed a tack, telling each of us how to manage the lines, though we both knew how.

When we we were all turned around and the lines secured, I asked our captain, "Where's the pump now?"

"I don't know. Brian, do you see it?"

Brian said he thought it was over his way, pointing over the starboard stern.

"I thought it was over this way," our captain said, looking to port. For a few moments we all scanned the choppy waves on both sides of the boat.

"Well, isn't someone supposed to keep an eye on a man overboard?" I asked.

"Sure," Michael agreed. "One man is supposed to stand on deck like this and keep pointing to him, not doing anything else but that."

Brian and I looked at each other hopelessly.

"Why don't we just forget it. It's not a man overboard anyway. It's just a bilge pump."

There was a moment of silence.

"Right," the captain agreed. "Prepare to come about."

And so we did. The pump drowned. Afterward, Michael told me if one of us falls overboard there will only be two left to handle the boat. *(There is a short pause in the recording here as if Ed was contemplating this fact.)* Right there and then I resolved to wear my safety harness even during the day if under full sail, and even if all hands were awake and on deck. And so I have.

FRIDAY, MAY 17TH, 1830HRS GREENWICH TIME

Sighted another sailing ship headed in the opposite direction. Maybe they know something we don't. Passed about a mile and a half apart, port to port.

*(We hear the sound of the intrepid crew discussing the loss of some stores...)*

Brian: "Anyway, we got the wine still."

Ed: "Yeah. We lost quite a bit of juice though, huh?"

Brian: "Yeah, all but two cans. A half-dozen cans went bad and I dropped the apple juice down the bilge, so that's gone as well."

Ed: Aaaaahrgh. *(This sounds something like dragging a junk 57 Chevy grille down a gravel road.)* Well, I thought you guys said we're not supposed to get glass bottles."

Brian: Yeah, well...

MONDAY, MAY 20TH, 1107HRS GREENWICH TIME

The last two days have been absolutely beautiful. Lots of sunshine and reasonably calm seas and a steady wind in our direction. This gave us a chance to hang out our stuff to dry, get some sun do some chatting, prepare some decent food and take some accurate sunshots with the sextant.

Well the news was not good. Brian's dead reckoning estimates proved overly optimistic, by about one hundred and fifty miles. It appears we have about twenty-five hundred nautical miles to go yet to get to Gibraltar, which at our previous rate of progress would take approximately twenty-five days, making our arrival the 14th of June, just enough time to fly to Bordeaux or Paris and join Lu and fly back to the U.S., which would effectively eliminate any plans for me to tour France. So we developed an alternative plan: land at the Azores, which is directly in our line of travel, and from there I would leave the boat and fly the rest of the way to someplace in France, probably Paris, meet Lu there and begin our tour of France from that point.

As you can imagine, this news hung heavy with the captain and first mate - two chiefs with no Indian would be no fun. There is no doubt that it will make it harder on Michael and Brian to finish the trip with a two man watch schedule, but that was what they were going to do if I had not joined them in the first place. Michael understands that

I really don't have any choice but, "Do whatcha' gotta do," as he says.

TUESDAY, MAY 21ST, 2200HRS GREENWICH TIME

Another beautiful day, calm seas, bright sun and steady wind - very relaxing. Finished Vonnegut's Palm Sunday, Shakespeare's Julius Caesar, a short story and a book of Zen along with various sections of the Bible assigned to me by my daughter, Lee, for reading during my "leisure" hours. Also studied star charts and identified constellations last night when it was clear. We're all dried up and totally rested and ready for the next bout with the weather.

We only made about fifty miles in the last twenty-four hours, but the pace has been perfect.

THURSDAY, MAY 23RD, 1800HRS GREENWICH TIME

Day 15. Earlier this morning Michael took down the mainsail and sewed a tear in the seam, the second time. This is an addition to the previous sewing that he did on the edge seam -- I think it's called the "leach" part of the jib. Brian made some comment like it looks like we are going to sew our way across the ocean. Michael laughed. I didn't think it was so funny.

The other day the strap on the binocular case broke from old age. Last night, the compass light kept going out for lack of a good wire connection. Two of the brand new foul weather jackets have tears under each arm that have

been patched with duct tape. An older foul weather jacket doesn't have a hood, lacks snaps to close it shut and the velcro that remains is too worn to hold. The safety harness we are using needed to be sewn, which Michael did before it broke under pressure. The safety line on the starboard side came loose one day in Michael's hand during a roll to port. He retied it, but it still lacks enough length on the end to make it truly safe.

About ten days ago I had a swallow of fresh water that had gone bad. It was stored in a plastic gallon container in the bilge where it had apparently developed a crack and mixed with bilge water. Now ordinarily I'm not one to complain about makeshift conditions. It's just that when I think of all the people who told me this trip could be dangerous, it irks me to realize that if I go ahead and get myself drowned because of some silly safety defect on this boat, then one of them will be there to say, "I told you so!" I just couldn't stand that -- I hate to lose face.

But on this boat, when it is a question of safety, it's not just a matter of money. I mean the other day, after a somewhat harrowing experience in rough weather, I made the suggestion that we prepare at least one of the rowboats that we are carrying on deck for easy launching as a lifeboat, should it become necessary. As it is now, the boats are tied securely in several different places, not easily reached in an emergency. The oars are tied separately in a different

location. The oarlocks are stowed away someplace down below -- only Michael knows where.

So I suggested we kind of relocate the equipment we already have. Maybe bring up three gallons of fresh water from the bilge area and tie them to each of the rowboats. You know, just in case. After all, according to the captain, this iron and cement ketch, if it turns over and gets water inside, will sink to the bottom, "like a rock".

Well, when I said all this, the captain and first mate both smiled. I know why the first mate smiled -- he was stoned. The whole idea kind of tickled him, as almost anything did when he was high. He said, "You don't want to find yourself out here in this ocean in a rowboat."

"Better a rowboat," I replied, "than nothing at all."

"That's true," he acknowledged. Then he laughed.

Seeking a more sober opinion, I turned to our captain, who looked at me with this warm, gentle, patronizing smile of a Bhuddist monk and said, "There's no point. If we run into some bad weather, you save the boat. That's all there is to it."

"Suppose we can't save the boat?" I insisted.

"Well, that's it. That's all she wrote."

Well now, there's what Zen philosophy can do. The spiritual message I was getting from a pothead in full bloom and the meditative master of this boat were one and the same: "Take no thought for the 'morrow." Since I was getting the same message from my daughter's Bible reading



assignment, I became resigned to holding myself in the same condition as the "lilies of the field." There would be no further talk of lifeboat preparation.

FRIDAY, MAY 24, 1800HRS GREENWICH TIME

Beginning of day sixteen. This past day went well. We made one hundred and forty-four miles, but now the wind has died down, and it is in the wrong direction so we won't do as well.

SUNDAY, MAY 26, 2100HRS GREENWICH TIME

We had a rough night. We lost the rudder on the automatic steering vane, and took on a lot of water again. This time we took on sixteen and a half buckets full. Last time we did the bilge we took out nineteen. The steering vane bolts are obviously leaking, so we are taking water on a regular basis. It is a little disconcerting to realize that you are crossing the ocean in a leaky boat, but then I console myself with: "Look at all the other things that work so well."

According to Brian's last fix, we are more than halfway to Gibraltar, *he thinks*.

*(Sounds of a yowling cat)* That's Samantha. She has been in heat for three days. The only female on board and she has to be a pussycat, in heat no less.

MONDAY, MAY 27TH, 1030HRS GREENWICH TIME

We are almost in a dead calm, which we have been in all night (*cat yowling insistently*). Sam just keeps going up against everybody, rubbing and sticking her ass in our faces.

Well, we're marooned on a sea-land; that's the opposite of island. The sea's face is like a mirror. We just watched the sun go down, so we toasted it with some wine while Brian sewed the jenny.

TUESDAY, MAY 28, 0900HRS GREENWICH TIME

Last night I saw a humpback whale and this morning I saw a huge sea turtle, a colony of man-o-war, and a school of porpoise. Since the sea was at a dead calm all night, Michael spent the time fixing the jenny - sewing and patching. Meanwhile the big jib, the yankee, caught on the spreader and got torn along the seam, so that was lowered and sewn up as well.

"Sew, sew, sew your boat  
Gently across the sea...  
Merrily, merrily, merrily  
A tailor's life for me..."

I finished the *Book of Laughter and Forgetting*, which contains some pretty powerful insights, but essentially presented a very sad and empty message: that life is almost not worth living.

Three weeks at sea and no land in sight.

WEDNESDAY, MAY 29, 0700HRS GREENWICH TIME

This morning I saw a school of dolphin, about eight of them surfacing at one time. Later Michael and Brian saw a spouting whale, which I missed. This has been a great day for reading and meditation. In my third game of chess with Michael, we stalemated.

SUNDAY, JUNE 2ND, 1550HRS GREENWICH TIME

The wind is very light, the ocean is flat. Michael and Brian are asleep, I'm on watch. I just finished taking a saltwater bath in the cockpit. Took a picture of myself doin' it. Feels good.

Sam finally finished her heat a couple of days ago so there's no more "meeee-ooooowring" all the time. Since it's been a flat ocean and a calm day with the sun shining, everything's out hanging around the boat on lines. We look like a junket. No matter how we look, our clothing and sleeping bags are getting dry. It sure feels good to be clean. Of course, now I'm really considered quite a sailor - a seaman. Being salty all over, you could lick me anywhere now and still taste the semen. If I were still in the Navy now, they would call me an old salt.

It's just after midnight, June 3rd, the beginning of a new day. I have the midnight watch tonight. Its absolutely a beautiful night. There's a full moon which leaves a silvery glow on everything, much brighter here at sea than it would be on land because of the reflection on the water, back up

to the clouds and then back from the clouds. There's a pyramid of light, wide on the horizon, that rises to a peak on the boat, and the whole pyramid is shivering on the surface of the water, the waves rising and falling rhythmically with the wind.

The moon has gone behind some clouds now, making the topside edges more threatening than they actually are. All the clouds now have taken on a silver-gray softness and the sea's surface has gone gun-metal gray. God, it's beautiful.

I guess this is what this trip has really been about for me -- a re-connection with the eternal quality of the sea and all the excitement, mystery and beauty it contains in and of itself, unstructured and unscheduled in the changes wrought upon its face from the force of the wind and the combined effect of other natural bodies that share this universe with it.

This experience has allowed me the time which I would otherwise not have taken from my busy life to explore so many feelings that have become the unfinished business of our daily lives. Here, perhaps for the first time, I've come face to face with my own feelings, since there have been many occasions where what seemed to be the wrath of the sea had combined with the wind to convince me that this was the moment, this was the time and place of my death.

In the midst of all that turmoil, in the terrible realization of my own mortality coming unexpectedly into my consciousness, I was amazed to find myself relatively calm,

satisfied that I have been living my life to its fullest - not by having and doing everything I may have wanted, but by living close to the callings of my heart, in keeping with my own nature and my best understanding of what it means to live a good life.

Looking at what I thought I would be leaving behind, I thought first of the lives of those I loved, and beyond the repeated pleasure of sharing their company, I really have no regrets about any of my close relationships. The sea is as it is, and I am who I am. There is no need for an apology in this.

So, as I have come to believe, everything has happened as it was supposed to happen. So there's no point in thinking or wishing that anything might have been different, if only some aspect of the fateful formula that makes me who I am and other things as they are could now somehow be changed. Things are as they are. The best we can do is to bring ourselves fully into the moment of each experience, whatever it may be, and however mundane it may seem to us at the time. For at any given moment, the continuance of our existence may be called into question and the chance to feel fully alive will have passed. Doing what I most wanted to since I was a boy - sailing free on the open sea - at the moment of impending death I found myself most fully alive, faithful to my Self and free.

I do not mean to say here that this experience on the sea has created this feeling in me, but rather it has

enabled me to perceive the magic in any given moment that may comprise the log of our lives. It is this realization that I mean to bring back with me; to make each of the remaining moments that I may have left as consciously full of life and its meaning as that last moment for each of us one day will be. The key is not in the condition of the moment, but in our consciousness of it as a manifestation of our choice to be alive in whatever reality we have created for ourselves.

TUESDAY, JUNE 4TH, 0400HRS GREENWICH TIME

I had a great day yesterday - good, strong winds - and we sighted several ships during the day, which means we are close to the Azores; this will be my last watch, since we are expecting to sight land by dawn.

Yesterday, for the first time on his trolling line, Brian caught a tuna. Then he threw in the line again and caught another tuna. They were "baby" tuna. Baby tuna are about one foot long and very fat, so we had fish for supper yesterday after twenty-eight days of no meat or limited canned meat. We had fresh meat, all we could eat. It was delicious...uhmmmm!

LAND HO!

1800HRS GREENWICH TIME

*(More music from Michael's guitar sounds in the background as the crew excitedly confers on plans for landing.)*

Brian: "Today's the fourth."

Michael: "Yup."

Ed: "I think I'm going to get a picture of Castillo Blanco. It's a beautiful shot. I'd like to get somebody in it."

Ed: "Are we anchored?"

Brian: "We're anchored, man! Five minutes already. Time's a wastin'."

We're anchored. It's almost one o'clock, Tuesday afternoon, June fourth. Anchored in the Azores. We're gonna pop some champagne and celebrate.

Brian: "Yeah man, here's to a nice trip and a good crew."

Ed: "Heyyyyyy!. We waited all this time for this, huh?"  
*(laughter)*

Brian: "You're the one who buys the two-dollar a bottle pink champagne."

Ed: "It's good, isn't it?"

## A Malchesedek and Blackfish

Years ago Michael Burt built a boat up in Maine named *Andarin*. She took him eight years to build. He'd lived aboard her in the Anchorage and cruised her for years. *Andarin's* boat life culminated in her crossing the Atlantic from the Anchorage to Portugal. Michael sat down with me one day and told me his version of this last trip aboard the boat he'd built with his own two hands.

"Ed Nagel was anxious to participate in the Portugal trip. He had asked our mutual friend Ray Rogers if he thought it was alright to ask. He was basically not a sailor. He was from Santa Fe - not experienced. And that's a liability, going offshore. It's like driving an automobile. It's not a difficult thing. But you don't put an inexperienced driver behind the wheel goin' down I-95. There's somethin' you learn by the time you get your driver's license that you can do it."

"I guess you and Brian figured between you both you had enough experience to handle the boat and a landlubber," I said.

"It was OK. It wasn't a problem. But the better choice is having three sailors. He didn't do anything wrong; he was



smart enough to pick it up. But uh, there's more to sailin' than, you know, than this word 'lifestyle' and steering."

Michael laughed. His long arms talked with him. His boat was small to begin with, and smaller with him in it. He is a big man, and his beard made him seem even bigger, like those desert lizards that flare up their huge collared necks when they get excited.

We played two games of chess, like the old days building longboats on the Big Island. He almost always beat me, as he had today, but not before I shook him up quite a bit on the first game. Michael's idea of the game is very "propah." He knows the names and moves of all the famous openings in the game. I just do what looks best.

Michael now lives aboard what you might say is a disposable boat, an old sixteen-foot salvaged trihull runabout with an *ad-hoc* cabin he built himself out of plywood and fiberglass. The theory was, if there's a hurricane and he loses her, he could build another easily. Living simply means getting back on your feet simply.

She was a plain white box inside and out, about six by ten, with one door in front doubling as a window to the breeze. Very bare, with a Bauhaus quality of function and form to it. The bed doubled as a couch for visitors.

Chris Mann, one of the thrifty denizens of the South Anchorage who built several houseboats from scratch, put together his plywood cabin joints with strips of old bedsheets dipped in latex paint like *paper mache*. He said it

keeps the rain out fine, and it's cheaper than fiberglass. Michael preferred to stick with fiberglass. When you are constantly floating in water, and it starts coming down from above, rain dripping onto your bunk is an irredeemable intrusion.

Michael considered back doors ornamental. He had no back door. Nor a back wall. A back wall just stifled things in the heat. The breeze blew right through. She turned with the wind on her anchors, so the rain couldn't get in. She always faced the storm with her swept-back bow, like a white gull with its feathers laid down in one direction. On an easterly breeze, he got a great view astern of the Big Island only fifty feet away. The greens of the pines and mangroves swang by like the view through a panning movie camera, first one way, then the other, as the boats naturally see-sawed with the eddies of the wind.

Michael lived close enough to the island to hear the heavy, labored *whup whup* of the resident osprey with a fish and the scritch sound of her talons on her favorite dead limb near the water's edge.

Michael built the Abe Lincoln plywood bed along the port wall to accomodate his six-foot, four-inch frame. He sleeps on a sleeping bag he also travels with, and a mat. On the opposite wall hangs a long, white, wooden shelf. Boxes of health cereal, plates, cups and utensils, a calendar, an oil lamp and a hand mirror lie neatly arranged.

At the forward end of the shelf stand his books: the Bible, the *Bagvahd Gita*, *A Course in Miracles*, and pamphlets from the Brazilian Earth Summit and a U.N. Conference on Population. On the floor under the shelf is a bar of white soap, a sponge for washing in a bucket, plastic jugs of brown rice and unbleached wheat flour, a large wooden chess set, folded clothes that aren't hanging out the back of the boat on the line, a pair of dive fins and mask, and a long wooden box full of hand carpentry tools fighting the sea rust.

A huge seasoned Georgia red pine cleat over a foot long serves as a tie-up for his longboat on the stern. Michael carved the handsome, deep-red cleat himself. It came from a floor joist of one of his construction jobs on old bayside home by Biscayne Bay that had been flooded in a hurricane. He'd gleaned part of an eighteen inch wide timber he'd replaced that was over fifty years old. Milled lumber doesn't come that wide anymore. He has no electricity, no running water, no outboard and no car. He reads by kerosene hurricane lamp. He keeps the name on his dinghy well-painted, by hand: *The Song of the Lord*.

*Andarin* crossed the Atlantic with no engine, no radio and no electronic navigation equipment. Just a compass, sextant and charts. But then Ray Rogers had told Ed it would

be safe. Ray hadn't been worried. Ray knew Michael, he knew his family, and he knew him as a fellow New Englander. They built boats together, sailed together, and ran aground together. He had faith in him. So Ed went along, despite the objections of his friends. Sailing the Atlantic with eighteenth-century technology and a spirit as a guide was just Michael's way of living. But this was something Ed had never encountered before. Though it had been over six years since Michael made the Atlantic trip, he talked of it as if it had happened yesterday.

"On the trip over, we were teaching Ed to navigate. He was learning, you know. Then he wanted to practice. I said, 'Sorry, Brian's the navigator. We steer the course Brian tells us to steer.' We don't steer a different course every time a new person takes the helm. I mean, you know, it's not a game. It's not practice. Then he says, 'Well, what am I learning to navigate for?' It's a tough thing to learn, when you're running your own life in society, you're your own boss. You run your own house, you have your own car - then you're stuck on a boat where somebody else runs the show. Land people don't always get this right away. They think you're attacking them personally, not letting them be their own boss anymore, you know. Even on the big ships now, if somebody steps foot on the bridge without permission, the captain can shoot 'em. And that's the law.

"About half way over Ed got pretty upset over the way me and first mate Brian was runnin' the boat. He asked me

what would happen if he steered the course he wanted. I told him we steer Brian's course, 'cause he's the navigator, like before. He thought we were goin' the wrong direction, so he kept pushin', askin' what if he steered his own course. He was needling me about my laissez-faire, hands-off skippering. I know it isn't for everybody. But he kept on pushin'. So finally I turned to him. I leaned up real close. In a low voice I say, 'Know what do we do with crew that's mutinous? Why, when they're not lookin', we just give 'em a little pooosh.'"

Michael's looked at me the way he must have looked at Ed, part mischievious and part serious.

"We hadn't seen anybody, or anything, in weeks on that sea. I think I got his attention.

"After we made it to the Azores, Nagel left the boat prematurely and flew on to France. Brian finished the trip with me to Portugal, then left the boat to travel around Europe. So I was by myself on the way back. So I singlehanded from Lisbon down to the Canaries and the Cape Verde Islands. Then I picked up a Cape Verde Islander who helped me cross over to the Caribbean. After that, I was by myself again from Puerto Rico to Miami."

"My God. That's a long way, singlehanded."

"It's not so bad. From Portugal to the Canaries, down to the Cape Verdes is right through the shipping lanes. I saw a lot more ships then than we saw on the way over from the Caribbean. They got a two lane highway right in front of

Europe. Lots of ships, so you have to watch out. But those guys are payin' attention, because the traffic is so heavy.

I met a guy in the Azores that got hit by a ship. He was on a little boat, twenty something feet; three o'clock in the mornin' -- BLAM!. When I met him he said he couldn't fly much sail because he'd lost his headstay after this ship hit him...

"One of my friends gave me the *Course in Miracles* before I left. Have you read that one?"

I shook my head.

"It says you don't know the way. But there's someone within you who does. It's the Holy Spirit, you see. So, I'm reading this book going over."

"Who wrote it?"

"Jesus wrote it."

"Oh."

"It was channeled."

"It was part of the Bible?"

"No, it was written in 1975."

"You mean his spirit spoke to someone and they wrote it down?"

"That's right."

I took what he said in stride, although I wasn't too sure what to think myself. I was beginning to believe in reincarnation and Karma, moving towards eastern spiritual ideas, but my skepticism concerning Christianity was always

deeply embedded in me. Yet I wanted to know more. In the Anchorage, "whatever floats your boat" goes.

"So the *Course in Miracles* says, trust in Him and He knows the way; He'll help you out. When I got tired, I said to myself, it was time to go to bed. So I kind of put the Holy Spirit on watch. And if he needs to wake me up, he'll wake me up, and I'll do what I have to do. If he prefers to wake up the guy in the ship that's bearing down on me, well then he can wake *him* up. And the guy'll say, 'Look at the dummy in the sailboat! I guess I'll change course and not run him over.'" He laughed, his eyes bright behind his thick glasses.

"So I said to Him, wake me up when you need to wake me up, I'm goin' to bed."

"So you just slept for a couple of hours or so?"

"No! I'd sleep for six or seven." Another big grin.

"I'd either heave-to, or just take all sail down, slow down."

"So you didn't have self-steering?"

"No, But you could tie off the tiller. The whole trip worked fine that way. So anyway, here's how the sleep arrangement worked. On the last leg here I'd left Nassau about, uh, five p.m. heading for Chub Key. I wasn't making any time. All I had up was a little jib. A little jib. It was just keepin' me pointed right. And so I figured that I wasn't moving much. I had about thirty-seven miles to go. So I went to bed. At three o'clock I get woken up. Wide awake.

I go and look out and I can't see nothin'. Nothin'. I say, well, what do I do now? So I went down and had a nice big breakfast. After that I looked out again, and nothin'. So I went down and played the guitar awhile, popped up again -- nothing wrong. I might as well stand up in the cockpit and do some sailing. So I put up the sails and look out in front of me, and what do I see? Island. Beach right in front of the boat. Whale Key in the Berry Islands."

"Wow."

"There's a real current goin' between Nassau and Chub, through the Tongue of the Ocean. If I hadn't woken up, I'd have been right on the rocks. So I took a left, passed Chub at dawn, and I was on my way." Michael laughed again.

"So anyway, it works," he said, almost as an afterthought. He seemed embarrassed to tell of his beliefs. He doesn't like to be thought of as proselytizing.

"One of the neat things was, when Brian left the boat to go around Europe, he had his watch on his wrist. Brian did the navigating. He had a good chronometer. But it was on his wrist, you know."

"You didn't have a ship's chronometer?"

"No, oh no."

"You didn't buy one before you left?"

"Well, you do what you can do... So now, after he left I say to myself, I gotta go down the the Cape Verdes and I don't have a watch. You need a watch to keep longitude. So, you go into the bar there in Portugal and there's all these



bottles and they got these digital watches on each one, hanging on the necks of the bottles. So when a guy wants an extra drink, and he can't pay, then he says, 'Here's my watch,' and the bartender hangs another one over a bottle. So if the guy doesn't pay, another customer can come in later and buy a watch cheap. So I buy one of the watches for my chronometer. I set sail, but after a couple of days at sea, the numbers started disappearing - the battery was gone. So I threw it overboard.

"I was OK with the sextant going straight south from Lisbon to the Canaries. I didn't really need a chronometer on that leg as long as I stayed on the same meridian, not moving much west, using my dead reckoning and sunsights. That part was easy.

"So I get to the Cape Verde islands, and I had to go through this whole routine again 'cause this time I was going west."

"So you had to go to another bar," I laughed.

"Yeah, I did. I went to a bar and got another watch. Well, it went out like the other one, about three days out, so I had to throw it over too."

Michael seemed to relish recounting the uselessness of technology. Not surprising for somebody who decides to cross an ocean in the twentieth-century by the seat of his pants with no radio, no engine, no self-inflating liferaft, no satellite navigation system, and no EPIRB (Emergency Position Indicating Radio Beacon) -- all equipment

considered by most sailors as essential. For Michael, essential meant bringing along his guardian angel.

"In the Cape Verde Islands, the police come aboard and tell you you need a guide. Now, I didn't want one."

"You didn't want to pay for one."

"It really wasn't a question of money. I didn't think I needed a guide. But ashore I found out I did. The street is just lined with men with nothing to do. With no work, no food, nothin'. So this guy that they assign to you sort of keeps you out of trouble. And then they said they wanted somebody on your boat twenty-four hours a day, so it wouldn't get ripped off. After about a week of fending off desperate people I began to get the message.

But I handled it a little differently. I started giving things away from my boat. I mean, I had rope, I had string, pots and pans..."

"Didn't you need everything you had?"

"I had wooden booms, and each of them had a sail track. On each sail track there was a slide and a little shackle. Well, I took the track off, the slides off, the shackles and gave them to some guy who was building a sailboat. I just laced my sail to the wooden boom, through the holes and grommets that were already there. Why have chafe (*rubbing until worn away*) with all this metal between your sail and the boom? I had old foulweather gear, and lots of dishes I handed out. These people didn't have anything."

"They must have appreciated it a lot."

"Well, it was just a matter of cleaning house for me. For them it was important.

"There was this one Cape Verde islander there who seemed to be a responsible fellow. I saw him come in every night with his fishing boat. He was a fisherman, you know, a seaman. So he wants to crew for me. He's got big ship papers, merchant marine, like that. He wants to get over to the US. He says he understands English so I say, 'Come on'. But it turns out he doesn't know much English, only Portugese, and he doesn't know how to sail."

"He knew how to handle lines."

"Yeah. He could steer downwind, but that was it. He was used to big ships. But he could wash dishes, he could clean fish. He saw me cleanin' a fish one day, and motioned for me to give it to him. He cleaned it with his eyes closed. But I couldn't leave him alone at night. When the sails went funny he didn't know what to do.

"So we had to do what I did from Portugal, you know, heave to at night, or take down all sail and drift. But during the day I would have him steering. I would be navigating, cooking and sewing. We blew out alot of sails. We did more sewing going back than on the way over. We left in a gale from the Cape Verdes. Downwind."

"That must have been rough for him."

"He was OK. But when we had a little gust and it put a big rip in the mainsail along the reefpoints, well, you shoulda' seen his expression. It was just pure horror."

"I'll bet. All he had to go on was you, the look in your eyes to see if you were crazy."

"Yeah. So we did some more sewing. Anyway, Cape Verde is seventeen degrees north latitude. St. Maarten in the Caribbean is seventeen degrees north. The same latitude. So you're threading the eye of the needle. But since we didn't have a watch, we didn't know our longitude. When I started to get down to sixteen and a half, I'd head north a little, and at seventeen and a half, south a little. So using the just the sextant, we stayed on that latitude in a straight line. But we never knew exactly how far we'd gone west towards home without a chronometer to mark off time and longitude.

When we finally got into the Caribbean, I rowed over to a boat and yelled to a man on her deck: 'What island's this?' and he said, 'St. Maarten, man! Where you comin' from anyway?' I told him I'd come from Africa." Another grin.

"You see I had this friend on St. Croix who I knew could get my islander a job aboard a big ship, but when we got there, my friend wasn't around. The immigration officials said, you gotta get this guy outta' here. He didn't have any visa, no green card, nothing. They said I had to bring him back home. So I struggled with it up until Puerto Rico. I finally called home for help. Dad got him a plane ticket from Puerto Rico to New York to the Cape Verdes."

"Couldn't he have gotten lost, you know?"

"Yeah, but I wasn't going to let him. I was responsible for him." The he grinned big. "But he did get lost in New York."

We had a big laugh on that one. I imagined a Cape Verde Islander lost in New York. He was probably indistinguishable from the natives.

"I'll bet he remembers you someday, in the glow of the compass light on board some big ship. I'll bet he keeps a close eye out for sailboats."

"Probably. After I dropped him off, I was by myself from Puerto Rico to Miami. Off Haiti I got a knockdown, you know, where the spreaders touch the water."

The spreaders are the horizontal bars extending outwards from the mast two-thirds of the way up to keep the angle of the rigging wires right to support the mast from buckling. A spreader knockdown is petty severe, considering the boat is completely over on its side.

"The boat pops right back up, but the sails aren't usually in too good a shape, ya' know, having been scooping the waves. So I patch 'em again as best I can, and..."

"Old sails and no engine -- God you were taking a chance I guess!"

"A chance? What kind of a chance?"

"Well, you have to keep patching your sails. I guess you can keep doing that, I suppose."

"It's just a matter of somethin' else to do. But never did I feel threatened. I never felt uncomfortable, really."

I never had very bad weather. You ride the Trades from Africa downhill to Miami, basically. They never stop. Riding those waves day after day was something else.

"One day me and my islander, we were in the trades, the sea following us. We're surfing downwind, and I'm lookin' out the stern and you see this wave and it's curling, about six to ten feet high, like usual. But inside this wave there were like five of these what they call, "Blackfish." Now a blackfish is somewhere in between a dolphin and a whale. They got a head on 'em this big," he spreads his long, lanky arms wide, "and shaped like a bullet. And they were just cruisin', just havin' fun!"

Michael's eyes widened with his grin and he pronounced it "Crooozzzin!" in his Down Maine accent.

"I've seen those! In the Exuma Sound. They're pilot whales." Now I was excited.

"They look like little pilot whales, right. Anyway the native Cape Verdes call 'em Blackfish. I don't know what the technical name for 'em is, but there were five of 'em inside of this wave pointing right at me, surfing."

"They were right behind? Looking right at you?"

"Right at us. About twenty feet away, for a few minutes. They looked to be about ten or twelve feet long."

Michael seemed most satisfied with this story. Not knowing the technical name of these cetaceans doesn't really mean much when you're out in the open ocean, when mother nature chooses to reveal a fold in her dress, her animals

playing, doing something considered scientifically useless, a biological waste of precious energy.

And yet, there they are, five surfers looking straight at you with their great bullet heads, eyes bulging out, taking in as much as they can, as if just lolling and finning below the ocean's placid surface isn't enough. They've got to ride high in the waves, feel the Trades push them across miles and miles of open ocean, six feet high and flying, like five kids on a roller coaster.

And there is no logical reason to creak, roll and plunge arduously before the wind on a boat over eight thousand miles of open sea when you can sit back on a air-conditioned Boeing 747 and cross the Atlantic in eight hours.

"I didn't take the trip for any particular reason. But it was after the trip that I was ordained a priest in the order of the Malchesadek. Our group is called the Sanctuary of the Beloved. Basically we believe divinity is within all of us. As we evolve, as we grow, we get a chance to unfold. Human evolution is not the top of the ladder, you know. We have a lot more to realize. We are not a church. We are not a religion. We have people from all religions; it's more like a spiritual order. Everyone unfolds in their own way, to teach and heal humanity and the planet in this time of

transition. To lead into the Golden Age that is ahead of us."

I could see Michael was a little bit uncomfortable explaining his spiritualism. He looked a bit sheepish yet very earnest, smiling and knotting his brows alternately. He never proselytized in the Anchorage. I never saw him handing out pamphlets like many Christians do today. It was not his credo to recruit members into one particular order of beliefs, but instead I think he sees his life as an example for others, if they choose to see it. He seemed comfortable having been a vegetarian and celibate for years.

He calls his life, and the lives we lead in the Anchorage "living lightly on the earth." Michael practices what he preaches.

"I felt I was called to the Earth Summit, so I went down there to Rio, and represented our group down there, unofficially. Then one of the spin-off conferences was one on population and development. So I am an official representative as an NGO (non-governmental organization) to the United Nations. One of the good things that came out of the Earth Summit was the acknowledgment that they needed the input from other people besides bureaucrats, so they opened it up so that people from the Sierra Club or the Red Cross, or whatever have a seat at the table working on global decisions."

"And your trip to Cairo was part of the Malchesadek order?"



"Yeah, one of the things we do is visit the sacred places of the world and tour. So we toured the pyramids, went down the Nile, all those places.

"Most of us in the order believe in reincarnation. I do. I felt more at home in the back streets of Cairo than any place I've been in the United States."

"What do you mean by comfortable?" I asked.

"Familiar. In Egypt now, lots of people dress like they've been dressing for centuries. Women with the black robes, men with the *galabayas*, like a long dress. Laborers would work in them. There are donkey carts alongside the cars. But I felt more at home there than here. And that's where the next population conference is. In Cairo."

"A good place for it."

"We have to make a global commitment. There is consensus on what to do. The experts in the field know that you educate the women, you provide contraceptives if they want to use them, family planning...you know. Empowerment of women. If you do all these things, population will take care of itself. The solutions are available, it's just a matter of making the financial commitment. We are around five and a half billion now, and around the year 2050, the population will double."

"That's unbelievable...it will be something around ten billion..." I added.

"See, that's going to destroy the environment. So it's a question of whether the carrying capacity of the earth can

support it before we get to the long haul afterward. And then there's war, famine, disease..." Michael smiled. "But the earth's going to survive. Whether or not it's going to be nice to us in the process is another story."

I looked out the front door, contemplating populations, thousands of yuppies coming out to the Anchorage to escape urban America, live on boats and spiritually find themselves. The thought made me shudder. The usual wide horizon of the bay stood blocked by the enormous expanse of pirate Harry's new houseboat. That seemed a statement in itself. Harry has not been known as the most reliable type. His other houseboat had broken free and dragged a few years back. When we live with others in a "free" place like the Anchorage, we have to contend with the possibility of somebody's houseboat crashing into our own out of their negligence. I tried that argument out on him.

"What happens if Pirate Harry drags on you?"

Michael seemed to have a way out. "If you are conscious of divinity, it becomes apparent that your guardian angel is working. When the houseboat lets go and comes zoomin' by, and your Karma's clean, it's gonna to miss you. There is nothing that's going to happen to you that is not created by the seeds you sow. You get to participate in your future. If ya' plant a fig tree ya' ain't gonna get cherries. The *Course In Miracles* says if you want to have, give all to all. Now one would think, if you give everything away, you're not going to have anything. But if you keep giving,

and give everything away and then go back to work, get a paycheck and then do it again, you know, you're establishing a pattern for the universe.

"You can't accumulate breath. Ya gotta let it out to get another breath. Well, let's do the same thing for money! You know, some of the women here in the Anchorage give away clothes all the time, and then they just seem to get clothes all the time. They get that flow goin'. It all just keeps comin'."

"Before you went on the trip across the Atlantic, you stocked up on food, but everybody had access to it. I know Ed didn't seem to like that."

"He didn't have this idea down. If you realize you're a child of God, a son of divinity, you never say you don't know what's going to happen. Because you know you'll be taken care of. "

"That was part of your decision of lashing down the dinghies on the *Andarin* wasn't it? Ed wanted to make one of the dinghies into a potential lifeboat. But you told him if the sailboat was going to go down, then it would go down, and that was meant to be."

"Right. But I had no doubt we'd be alright. When you think this body is the only thing that's happening, you aren't using your divinity. You are misusing your power. If you know you're going to survive, if you know you're going to get back to Miami just fine, then that's what's going to happen. But if you put doubt into your survival, you're

weakening your path. You're sowing the wrong kind of seeds. The trouble is conventional man only believes what he can sense with the five senses. But what we can see is only a fraction of what's happening. So we have to believe in what we can't see in order to really get in touch with reality.

"You can feel somebody's aura. They take pictures of it with this Kyrelian photography. Faith is what I call casting your anchors beyond the veil. Being secure in what you can't see. You're either a hostage to the ego, or a host to God. Ego's foundation is that I am separate. If I don't control the world around me, I'm lost, without support. The Holy Spirit is your foundation, and he'll take care of you. But you have to trust.

"The doctors today are like the priests were five hundred years ago. We're supposed to do it ourselves. We don't need a priest and we don't need doctors. You're supposed to heal yourself, and your neighbors. If you need a priest or a doctor sometimes, OK, but let's take care of everyday business ourselves."

"Especially when you're two thousand miles at sea with no radio and a couple of regular guys."

"Right."

## Dieu Nous Garde

*(The Lord Watches Over Us)*

I spotted Sharman creaking his rust encrusted, three wheeled bike on the sidewalk down by the marina one Saturday. Jambu, his younger boy, crouched in the basket in back. We stopped to talk. He told me he had a surprise for me and that we should get together the next day.

When Anchorage dwellers make a rendezvous, it's more like an attempt to get together, a mutually acknowledged *essai*, or the "old college try." There is no pencilling in on the agenda book, no clicking off time into fifteen minute segments, no walling in of the day. Appointments are an open view, like the bay itself, liable to the slightest change in weather.

"After dark," and "if the wind lets up," and "if she doesn't pour" are the usual criteria for meeting up. For Sharman, anytime during the morning was fine. After all, it would be just him, his foreign worms and his compost heap.

"Hi Jambu," I said.

"Hi."

"So what's the surprise?" I asked Sharman.

"Surprise?" Sharman tried to look nonchalant, but I saw that lopsided grin hiding under his moustache. He has a Chevy Chase comic streak that doesn't always work.

"You said you had something to show me, a surprise."

"Oh that... You'll see."

"Come on..."

"I'll give you a hint."

"You have Captain Midnight tied to a tree and left to the ants."

"No. Not that good. It's something the City doesn't like."

"Oh, good. I like that," I laughed, rubbing my hands together.

"Come to the island tomorrow morning. I'll be watering the garden and turning the worms in the heap." He turned and started to pedal. Jambu waved.

"Take care of your dad, Jambu."

"OK!"

Sharman looked back. "And don't bring anybody with you."

"Why?"

"You'll see."

My interest was piqued. I wonder what he's up to, I thought.

Sunday on the island didn't bring relief to my curiosity right away. Sharman rambled on in his usual way about anything he was thinking at the time. I decided to be patient and bide my time. Everything looked normal on the island.

Was he planning an amphibious raid on City Hall?

"This garden started in a dream of a fire."

He turned his Egyptian earthworms slowly in the compost with a spade, working in some new garbage, bringing up the old. The leafy earth squirmed with their segmented bodies as they slid away from the light like blind fugitives. "I used to have a sweat lodge right here in this same place, before there was a garden."

I remembered the sweat lodge on Soldier Key, a stack of driftwood in the shape of a tipi. The idea is to pile heated rocks from a fire in a hole in the middle and then pour seawater over them. The steam would then sweat out the toxins that have built up in the body.

"One day, about three days after I'd had a good sweat on here, I had a dream the lodge was on fire. We were anchored out there then; see where that houseboat is now?"

He pointed to the outermost edge of the Cove. "I remember yelling, 'Look kids, look! Quick! There's a fire on the island!' We could see flames leaping, grabbing towards the pine tree tops.

"We grabbed our shovels, some buckets and rowed over. We dug a trench around the fire. This whole area burned," he

said, indicating the garden, "but we stopped it from spreading to the rest of the island. So there was this clear spot. And that's how the garden started. We had sun and a place to plant."

He smiled again, fingering some pea pods, breaking some out with one hand and popping them in his mouth.

"We did have some trouble with some of the bigger pines dropping their cones and needles on the new plants. So I had a talk with them. I cut part way around their bark, stripping away pieces to make my point. But I didn't kill them. Well, they listened. The cuts weakened them and they slowed way down on their droppings. Now their wounds are healed and we have an understanding."

He finished turning the worms. I supposed the worms had had enough of having their world turned upside down.

"OK. It's time."

"For what?"

"The surprise."

I followed him over to the southern side of the island and the beached wrecks. There were four of them: two old sailboats without masts like slumping, beached whales, the graceful, old wooden Stevens cabin cruiser the cats lived on, and a primitive looking sailboat with a rough planked bottom. The rough wooden one was piled high with trash, the beach around raked clean of seaweed to the sand and coral rocks. The seaweed sat in a pile on the high tide mark. Two



large five gallon plastic buckets stood by, filled with water.

"Hand me that bag." He pulled out a large plant spray bottle and walked up to the wreck and began squirting. Walking and squirting, all over the boat. "This one is a Haitian boat that came in about four months ago. Probably at night 'cause I never saw her sail in."

I smelled something like oil in the air. The cats followed him all around the boat. "I saw people aboard for about four days, then they must have gone ashore and abandoned her."

I looked over at the seawall a few hundred yards away. The nearest building was the Grand Bay Hotel, a five star, four hundred dollar a night, celebrity-ridden, terraced affair designed to look like a Mesopotamian ziggurat with hanging gardens.

"Sunburned, bedraggled Haitians coming ashore after days at sea, walking the promenade along posh Bayshore Drive in the shadow of the ziggurat," I murmured, "and under the eyes of the Miami Police Department." I chuckled. "People in the Grove probably thought they were from the Anchorage."

Sharman wasn't listening.

"You have to do it at low tide, or you don't get it all." Just walking and spraying.

"Get all of what?"

"The boat."

"Oh, right." It hit me. "You mean, we're going to burn it?" So this was the surprise.

"I don't like to call it burning. It's more like we're going to *move* it." He sprayed the gunwales, the deck, the keel, the rudder, the hempen halyards. "We're going to move it downwind."

"No wonder the City doesn't like it. Won't they send the police out?"

"You'll see."

He poured the rest of his oily stuff, which turned out to be kerosene, over the interior of the boat. He'd collected the trash inside from the beach.

Sharman gazed off toward the horizon. Maybe checking the wind. A slight seabreeze fanned the beads of sweat on my forehead.

Sharman gets irritated by all the trash that washes up on the island.

"The Anchorage is not the point of origin of this stuff. It floats in from weekend warriors on the bay, from freighters on the ocean, from the Miami River, and from the cruise lines, who dump their trash wherever they want offshore." Sharman has an expert practical knowledge in sea trash. He regularly walks the perimeter of his island, picking up flotsam and jetsam and putting it in garbage bags, piling it for burning, or for rowing ashore.

"I've seen parts of a trailer, a refrigerator, freezers all up and down the island when I first got here. The City

of Miami loves it. They use the trash to criticize all of us living out here so they can get rid of us. But the city doesn't have signs at the public boat ramps at the marina telling weekend boaters not to throw trash from their boats. We put up the littering signs. And remember when Michael put up the manatee safety signs?"

"Uh huh. Yes, I do. And my mother Ann put up a big "No Wake" on the outer channel marker by the Big Island. It looked so official, the city never took it down."

Sharman sighed as if the weight of years of dealing with bureaucrats was blowing out of him. He looked out over the Cove with its wrecks as if he saw a neighborhood blighted by crackhouses.

"The problem from the Anchorage is wrecks."

There are always about five or six abandoned boats in and around the Cove at any one time. Some lie like skeletons on the bottom in the sandy shallows, their rot-blackened frames fingering up like ribs from a doused barbecue at low tide. Once they're down, they're hard to get back up. The process for wooden boats goes like this: planks just above the waterline on an old wooden boat shrink in the sun. Then a good rain hits, and she takes on just enough water to sink a few inches. One of those shrunken gaps between the planks does the rest.

The Anchorage Association has a two inch gasoline bilge pump available to anyone who has the ambition to use it, and often boats reclaim a second chance. But eventually most

succumb during some barely endurable four-day cold front that doesn't stop blowing and pouring except to heave a breath for the next squall.

Boats that end up on the beach are usually abandoned repair jobs: homes lost to teredo worms, dragging in a storm, rainwater flooding, settling down on a pointed anchor fluke on a spring tide, vicious sun, lack of funds, Old Milwaukee, divorce or pure neglect. All the ways rent is paid in the Anchorage.

"Perfect wind for a burning." Sharman's blue eyes reminded me of the reef water in the Bahamas. I caught myself wondering why he was here and not there. Maybe it was that same spirit that drove him against the nuclear plant in Georgia.

"Sharman, why don't you go cruising?"

"I don't know. My kids are here, going to school. I kinda like it here. The place has a hold on me. Maybe picking up trash is my penance for transgressions in a past life."

I left it at that.

He seemed to be humming, but I wasn't sure in the wind. He smiled his crooked smile, the scraggly moustache wiggling. He turned his back to the breeze, scrunched his shoulders up, and struck a match.

Then I began to understand. He liked it. It was a ceremony, an exorcism. He was a shaman exorcizing an unwanted blot on his island, muttering incantations,

scattering a secret mixture upon the ground. This was his home, his place. Other Anchorage dwellers had had enough of Miami, what we've called the "Cuban government" at City Hall, the crime and the overdevelopment. They hoisted sail and left. But Sharman is staying. He knows the city uses the wrecks as one of their excuses to throw out the Anchorage. I think he just can't stand giving them an excuse. Or giving up a good fight.

He sheltered the little flame from the breeze and waited for it to catch well.

Though the Haitian boat was a menace to our community, I looked at her with a strange urgency because of what was about to happen. I looked at her hewn tree for a mast, the hairy hempen rigging. The name *Dieu Nous Garde*, obviously the fervent hope of its passengers, adorned the graceful flare of her bow. The words looked fingerpainted on, rough as the mast and the burlap fruit sacks sewn together for a sail. The rudder dangled by one rusty pintel and gudgeon. The flotsam Sharman had collected around the island and heaped there in her belly where there had once been voyagers seemed an insult. And it wasn't. The pit of my stomach cramped.

"Isn't there another way to move it?"

"Not without a lot of money," he muttered under his breath.

Sharman leaned over and held the match under the bow. Then, as if unsure where the death of the courageous boat

would begin, tried another place farther aft, then another. I realized the kerosene lit slowly. The flames crept and flickered aft almost imperceptibly, clear, hot and hard to see in the bright sun.

He was quickening the inevitable while I was being sentimental. The boat had lived its life, and now it was over. It was hard for me, having lived for years aboard boats, to watch one go, even a boat I didn't know.

I imagined a dark Haitian jungle leaning over a white beach, the hacking of brush for firewood, the swing of an adze on her pine trunk mast, whispered conversations under her shady belly at noon of the risk of home and the risk of sea. I imagined the hundreds of miles of ocean, the bodies that slept in her as she rode through squalls, the breaking blue waves, big as a house. Boats themselves seem to have life. They shelter ours so well.

The sky blue paint on her bow lifted, the sea-softened grey planks underneath browned and caught. Black smoke billowed upward. The heat forced us back as the planks burned, floating back into the sky where they'd come from, decades of Haitian sun it had taken to grow them shone on our faces.

Sharman slurped the pulp of a near overripe tangerine, the juice dribbling down the coarse hairs of his corroded beard onto his shirt. If he felt remorse, he didn't show it. He was the caretaker doing his job. We watched her char, pop, peel and crack. An amazing assortment of trash hissed

and steamed on deck: plastic bags, black crab line cut loose by propellers with their orange floats, cups and beer cans of weekend warriors, a boat hatch, one old white boot, a Yankees baseball cap, two-stroke outboard oil bottles, an aqua Rustoleum spray can, a wooden sign announcing: "Private Property - Keep Out," a few four by four timbers, dunnage thrown from freighters used for packing, the ubiquitous Clorox bottle and what looked like a perfectly good boat seat cushion.

"I think I'll just grab this off real quick..." Sharman hopped up, stepping gingerly upwind of the fire and using a long stick, managed to snag the boat cushion from the stern before it burned.

"Still perfectly good. A little tar on the other side, but it's not waterlogged," he said, turning it over and inspecting it with an experienced eye. He used to be an antique dealer too.

"You couldn't stand it, could you?" I laughed. "That's why there's no place to sit on your boat."

"I've always been a pack rat. It's lucky I live on a little boat and not in a house."

"HEY!" someone shouted.

"What was that?"

"HEY THERE! *What in Hell...think you're...*" It was somebody yelling from way off, the voice fading in and out with the wind. I couldn't tell where it was coming from. I looked at Sharman. He didn't pay attention. He sat down

again and started peeling another tangerine. He jerked his thumb in the direction of the voice.

"That's Old Capt. Jack. He always yells about the smoke when I burn one if the wind's in his direction. He says it trips up his pacemaker."

"Should we put it out?"

"It won't hurt him. I've burned lots of them and he's still around, right? Hey - do you want to hear how he got it?"

I could see Jack now, his thin frame gesticulating on the deck of his houseboat across the Cove. His wife was one of the cat feeders, one of Sharman's Apple People.

"Got what?"

"His pacemaker."

Sharman can't resist a story. I think he gathers them when he gives massages.

"So Capt. Jack was having this heart failure thing about ten years ago. Anyway, he's a Scotsman, so he's a little tight. He's probably got thousands stashed away for his old age. He must be at least eighty-five by now..."

"Well, since he was having heart palpitations and chest pain, he figured it wouldn't be long. He doesn't have much faith in doctors. He decided to take matters into his own hands. So he got his dinghy and filled it with things that would burn, you know. And he got this old mattress to lie on in the dinghy. Then he bought sixty dollars worth of



whisky for all of his cronies at the dinghy dock and there were a lot of them."

BOOM! -- Ssszzzzzz...

One of the long upper planks on the majestic bow of the Haitian boat had popped from a frame. It jutted out like a crooked tooth from the now blackened smoothness of the hull.

"The way Old Jack told it, you'd think he'd spread around millions. He got himself a bottle of Chivas and laid it right next to the mattress in the dinghy. Everybody else got Wild Turkey, but they didn't seem to mind. It was quite a party. He had this sleeping bag to crawl into and it was weighted down with iron pigs inside so he would sink to the bottom once the dinghy burned. He was going to tie himself inside. Everybody was getting ready to tow him out to sea and burn him. Faye was there. She was even helping. I don't know how she did it.

"So anyway, they were all getting ready and toasting and saying goodbye, and toasting again. It was a merry party, Jack sitting in his special funeral dinghy, raising the bottle and toasting, all the dock rats toasting him back. Then this woman came rowing by and she heard the conversation. You know you can hear everything when you're rowing. Anyway she turned out to be a nurse and she said Mercy Hospital could help Jack for free if he claimed he was an indigent. Well, when Jack heard that he perked right up. He dropped the Chivas, climbed out of the dinghy and the trip was off. The next day he went with her to sign up. He

got open heart surgery and a pacemaker. He's been fine all these years since. Didn't have to pay a dime." Sharman smiled broadly. He paused a moment, looking in Jack's direction.

"But he still complains about the smoke."

He grinned crookedly. After a moment he looked at me sideways. Like a good comic, Sharman's got timing.

"I think he regrets the sixty he spent on the whiskey."

After we both had a good laugh on that one, as if sensing my thoughts, he said, grabbing his knees and rocking back and forth, "I've thought about it, but there's really no other way to get rid of the wrecks. I don't like to burn 'em. It's bad for the air."

"Yeah, all that fiberglass...whoah!" I yelled.

The fire must have found something good to eat because it flared up suddenly. Sharman pulled in his long beard as we scooted farther up the beach away from the flames.

"The wrecks just build up and the City hardly ever comes out to haul them away. About once every five years or so. In the meantime they say, look what an eyesore the Anchorage is! But how the hell can we get rid of them? Let's face it. Some of the people out here aren't really into material things, like maintenance, you know. Some just float around. They're attracted to the laid-back atmosphere. The rest of us who take care of our boats don't like it, but what are we supposed to do, shoot 'em? It's just human nature."

"This is a place where old boats come to die," I smiled.

"Well, it's not exactly a graveyard. More like an open-air hospital. When the doctors can't save 'em, I'm the undertaker."

We just sat for awhile and watched the flames, hypnotized.

"Jack's going to die here, you know," I said.

"Probably. He says he can't live indoors anymore. Says he can't sleep in the city, in the air conditioning."

The breeze bellowed the fire, the embers visible through the remaining frames and white-hot planks. Hermit crabs sidled away from the heat. During lulls in the fire's noisy banquet, the Australian pines moaned in the wind. We quietly watched for errant sparks as they swirled around the eddying heat currents, seawater buckets at the ready. The boat was burning close to the beach now. It was almost there, just fire-thinned black bones, charred screws fastening to air; only the remnants of the keel held on, slick black in the lick of the incoming tide.

Keels never seem to give up. They're always the last part to go. The hissing as sea met fire grew louder. The tide had already started back up. Miami City Hall and Bayshore Drive's hotel line danced behind the fire's heat in a mirage, as if they might disappear when the fire was finally out.

"Shouldn't we be leaving? Don't they arrest people for arson?"

Sharman just sat and enjoyed the burnt wood, the irregular black forms that had been the pile of sea trash, the baked steel triangle of a bicycle frame poised in the blue sky. Just rims, no tires.

Bum-bum-bum-bum...

Sharman heard the noise and sprang into action.

"Dump the buckets. Quick!" He threw the contents of one on the fire with a whoosh and ran into the bay to fill it again. I grabbed another and threw it on. We did it again and again, the quenched remains hissing and blowing white clouds like a dying dragon.

"Now throw the seaweed on it," he called as he crouched near the pile and grabbed. "They won't be able to find anything this way."

"Who's they?"

Sharman did not answer, but breathing hard, just kept piling on seaweed. This was quite a job. Though we sprinkled just enough to cover the ashes lightly, a lot of boat remained.

"Sharman -- For Crissakes, if the damned police are coming, let's get the hell out of here!" I was getting nervous. I could see getting arrested for refusing to move your boat because the city says they don't like the way your boat looks to the rich condo dwellers on shore...but for burning a boat without a permit? Hell no.

"I can hear them now," he said, not listening. He stopped and grinned mischievously. "Right on time."

The City had noticed our little funeral. They'd dispatched the Fire Department, two amphibious fire-fighting craft, to check it out. We saw them coming through the main channel from the direction of the marina. By now the wreck was a large lump of steaming seaweed.

Sharman and I grabbed our buckets, sacks and shovels and snuck off into the pines like a couple of outlaws to watch their approach from a better vantage point. It was not too scary. Just living in the Anchorage makes you an outlaw of sorts. We were used to it.

They noisily motored around the island, the crews yelling at each other over their big diesels as the boats chugged and belched black smoke, looking for their fire. They ended up circling the entire island, completely missing our exorcism site.

"Look at those City of Miami dummies! They missed it!" I laughed, shaking Sharman's shoulder beside me. He smiled but that's all, as if something else was on his mind.

"They're going to try to go on the island now, probably over by the sand spit at the west end." He grabbed me by the arm, his eyes twinkling.

"Come on!" and we were off, trotting after them among the pines.

At the other end of the island they were really roaring now as the first craft gunned its engine over the mud.

"We might as well hide our tools and play it cool, like we saw smoke and just got here ourselves."

"We probably won't have to," he said, smoothing his beard and squinting his hard blues eyes. "They're not going to make it to shore in those things. Not at low tide."

The first one lumbered out of the water on the sandy bottom fifty yards or so out, but when it got to the mud they bogged down, revving the big diesel, spewing exhaust and spinning. Stuck in place.

"That's disappointing. I've told them before about the tide." He grinned again and sat down under a tree to watch. The second craft began cumbersome maneuvers to try to pull its partner out of the sucking mud.

Sharman seemed to settle down for a long stay. He pulled another tangerine out of his pocket and began to peel. "Want one?"

"No thanks. What do you think they'll do now?"

The red metal machines looked like monsters in some futuristic scene as they both now tried to extricate themselves from the mud.

"Wait for the tide," said Sharman, slurping his fruit nonchalantly. He doffed his brown palm hat and eased himself down into a comfortable seat against a big pine.

"But that could be hours."

"Yup."

The engines were idling now, the crews talking to each other excitedly. Their white and red fire department

uniforms looked crisp and clean. A few were looking over the side into the mud. It must have been at least twenty minutes before they gave up, cut the engines and jumped, sloshing and squishing toward the beach. The quiet was welcome.

They all came shore. They didn't even look for the fire on foot. Anyway, there was no more smoke. One of them had a soccer ball. When they got to the big open shady area under the pines they started playing soccer. It looked like they were having a great time.

"Can you believe that? They're playing soccer!"

"I'll be damned," Sharman said. After a long pause, he said: "Well why not. It's a good game for the island. I played soccer with Winn and Jambu here lots of times. The needles make a nice even field."

We watched them play.

"Did I ever tell you about the Bojobi Tree?"

"The what tree?"

"You can eat the fruit, even when it's green."

"What fruit?" It sounded like he was telling some vegetarian tall tale.

"It's a West African story originally. I just adapted it to our culture. I used to tell it to Winn and Jambu before I put them to bed."

I could tell he was going to get into a long one, so I settled down on my back, the little seed cones from the pines making a mockery of the soft carpet of brown needles.

"See, it's a magical tree that provides everything. You could live in the tree, and on cold days the leaves would close and shut out the wind. On warm days it would open up. Lots of real trees can do some of these things, but I put all of their characteristics in the Bojobi Tree. You could drink the nectar from a little straw in the flower. The leaves taste like lettuce."

"So it's not a real tree."

"No, but it's like all trees together. So it is real, in a way. So there was this terrible drought in the United States and no food and everything was terrible. They had just enough fuel left in the Air Force to fly to Africa to visit the old lady that guarded the last stand of Bojobi trees in the world that hadn't been cut down. She was a healing person and had all these herbs. They wanted some of her trees. She told them she'd give them some under certain conditions. They couldn't have fire around, or goats, and when you ate the fruit you had to plant the seeds. The Air Force guys agreed. She gave them some seedlings and they flew back to the White House and planted them. Then the Senators and Congressmen all came to get seeds to plant in their districts. They grew fast, like ten feet a day. You could eat the leaves in the first few days, like sprouts."

"Like Jack and the Beanstalk'" I offered.



"Fruit came in a week. They began sprouting all over the country, so people had food, shelter and something to drink. People were very happy to go out to their Bojobi trees. They stopped going to work. Then the President realized the population wasn't being productive members of society so he ordered the Army to cut down all the Bojobi trees. But they never did, because the soldiers were all out in their trees, lying in hammocks, swinging their boots in the wind." He was grinning wide now, the master storyteller barely able to contain himself.

"Then you know what happens? At the end, the First Lady consoles her husband, saying, 'Honey, just come outside and let's sit in the Bojabi Tree.'"

The firefighters stayed long enough for the tide to lift them and their machines. Then they started up their diesels and went back where they came from.

## Chautauqua

The morning's easterly sun stung my eyes as I looked over my shoulder. A sweat rivulet had already tickled its way out from my brim. Definitely August on our bay.

Then I saw a strange sight, even for our Anchorage: people standing on water. I put my back into Arete's oars, pulling a bit harder on the port oar to swing by closer. The port lock was the stubborn, loud one, so I reached down, scooped up some seawater and sloshed some on, like I did every day, greasing her squeak. Even good bronze gets gritty and cranky in this salt air.

I couldn't see much in the glint of the sun's shivering burnish on the bay, just standing figures in silhouette. And something bigger. I also heard music. I shifted my head side to side, wondering if the wind was right to carry the St. Stephens Church choir that far out on the water.

Sometimes a slight morning land waft can carry their notes out that far. You can hear the steeple bell every time. However, the wind was easterly, the wrong direction for bells, traffic, car alarms, all the land sounds. When the wind is easterly, it brings with it only sea sounds. Glancing around, all I saw was Bud Howse's weathered cabin cruiser with its mossy waterline beard and Johnny Frowe's 12

volt laundry machine sitting idle. Cuban Joe's little wooden fishing boats hung behind me.

Something like the blues drifted downwind, but I wasn't sure; it came on one second, the next backed off, mute and faded. The light easterly breeze teased the music, curling it on its tongue, licking the bay. The wind secreted the smoky notes in treble wisps and chords, begrudging a little sniff here and there, the fire's location unknown. It reminded me of my neighborhood ice cream truck on summer afternoons, working the next street over, the notes wafting in and out between houses.

As I rowed nearer to the figures on the water, I saw Diana at a piano, surrounded by our neighbors on a wooden raft. Chris Mann hip-towed the raft with his aluminium skiff and Yamaha. Phineas was there, as well as Ditch Rich, and Tim and Dori, current owners of *Music Man*.

I stopped rowing and watched as they went by. It was a baptism, a revival, a pagan procession in white flowing robes, arms stretching golden goblets to the sky, the smell of burning incense. That it was just my neighbors moving *Music Man's* piano by raft on a day just right for moving was O.K. too.

I was on my way to work, but I wanted to watch as long as I could. I waved and joked with my friends as they drifted along.

I'd seen a wooden, four-story Victorian manse moved down the street in Michigan once. They'd jacked her off her

foundations, as easy as you please. As they raised her, you could see the dark shadows under her bright paint. It almost seemed impolite to look. She was like an old lady politely lifting her white and yellow skirts and leaving her comfortable chair to allow a group of teenagers their time alone in the parlor.

They'd lifted her onto a big truck pulling four flatbeds, one under each of her stately corners. She had made a fuss though. They'd cut telephone wires, stopped traffic for hours, hacked stopsigns off at the knees. But she'd slowly left, lumbering down the street, showing her back door to the boisterous squabble of the fancy cement newcomers fighting over her place.

In the Commodore's time, around 1890, moving structures by barge happened often. They just jacked them up, put them on skids and sailed or poled them through the shallows. It was a lot easier than rebuilding on the new site.

I couldn't help but think of the venerable old houseboats on turn-of-the-century Houseboat Row off Flagler Street in downtown Miami. They must have been unceremoniously escorted away in the boom days: old ladies led away from the gambling tables to make way for younger, richer gamblers; not modern enough to roll the dice when the big boys came to town.

That's one thing about boats -- if you want to move, it's not a big deal. After several years in the Anchorage I once caught Ray Newgarten moving his forty-five by twenty-

five foot houseboat, *Independence Hull*. The "Hull" part was his joke. He'd stopped drinking for two years at that time, and was paying off Townsend month by month for it.

He had no engines in her. He walked her along the bottom, pulling her heavy, bearded anchorlines draped over his shoulder.

"She pretty heavy Ray?" I asked, standing on my foredeck, watching the proceedings.

"Naawww...not once you show her the right direction."

"Are we going to be neighbors?"

"I'm just out walking the dog," he replied. I think he meant to move on, closer to the island for a new homesite; a shorter distance to row and more protection from winter winds. His dog, Shana, whined from his back deck. Ray'd bought the boat from Townsend under the condition he take the pit bull with it.

Just then the wind came up and the great big houseboat stopped about a hundred and fifty feet upwind of me. Ray arduously climbed out, walked up to the foredeck, and plopped down two anchors. He and Shana stayed there for at over two years.

I didn't follow the piano party all the way to Diana's new boat, *Chautauqua*, where it would make its new home. I had to go ashore and design T-shirts. Later I heard Michael had measured the door and they'd got her in just fine.

When Diana was eight years old she saw a movie called *A Song to Remember*. When she got home she sat beside the bed and counted imaginary chords into the bedcovers. It was *The Polonaise in A Flat from Chopin's Revolutionary Etude*. From this very day she never wanted anything so much as to play the piano.

After that, she didn't have a piano for years. She learned to play on the instruments of friends, or at boarding school. One summer when she came home, she laid down two planks of wood, one over the other, for the black keys. She felt what an octave was, from memory, and marked it. Then she drew the keys on the wood. She practiced on these two pieces of wood for days. It was then her father realized she was serious. She got a letter from her mother at boarding school when she was sixteen that her mother had been awakened at night by banging sounds on the stairs. Her father had brought home a baby Steinway grand he'd had at work for Diana.

The *Revolutionary Etude* became her "thank you" piece. She won a recital competition that same summer and was never without a piano again.

Sometime in the spring of 1989, a year or so before Diana got her new boat, the *Music Man* had changed hands. Jerri Morley had gone back up north to Cape Cod and Dori, Sharman's ex-wife, acquired her. She became just a part-time community boat after that.

Jerri was a singer, and had been a vocals teacher and choral director for years. She'd spent many hours with Diana in song behind the *Music Man's* old spinnet. She'd promised the piano to Diana, who knew and played her the best in the Anchorage.

Diana loved that piano. Never mind that the veneer was missing on several keys, or that she sometimes went out of tune in the damp air before Marshall the "Tuning Man" came out to the Anchorage to fix her. Marshall was a genius with pianos, and very dedicated. I think he loved coming out to visit us on our boats.

We'd sung around that piano for Christmas parties on *Music Man*, we'd cheered around her at meetings, and chorused Happy Birthday many times to her notes. Diana had rowed over countless early mornings from *Gratia Plena*, no space for a piano, to play her. The notes used to float behind *Music Man* on Monday morning breezes, a siren's song tempting rowers from work; to come in and waste a little time. Diana and the piano gave that boat its name.

Diana is an explorer. She and her glass over wood day-sailer *Calky* have sailed just about everywhere on the bay: around the Raggeds, into Soldier's Key, up and down the long shallow shoreline of Elliott Key, and through her southern reaches all the way to the Card Sound Bridge. Diana is also

a music schoolteacher at the local community college and resident spiritualist. She recognized the inner healing power of the Anchorage waterscape a long time ago. She loves it.

After exploring Biscayne Bay, Diana felt it was time to take Calky to the Bahamas, or in her words, "let Calky take me..." So she provisioned, acquired extra sails, diving gear, anchors and chain. With the help of friends also sailing over on a much larger cruising boat, she began the journey by crossing the Gulf Stream with them, Calky towed behind.

A norther began to blow into the area just after they sailed, making the seas very rough. Calky followed obediently behind nonetheless until they reached the relative safety of the Bahama Banks, the huge shallow sea around most of the islands. There they anchored to ride out the storm.

At anchor, Diana watched nervously as the little boat yanked at her chain in the steep waves of the shallows, heaving her bow up and crashing down again with a bang. The chain threatened to break free of the little boat's bow eye. It blew so hard they could not do anything with the daysailer - it would be like stepping from one cork to another in a washing machine. With a final yank Calky broke free, as if she did not want to stay any longer. She tossed her bow off sideways to the wind. Diana had time to catch a



glimpse of a water bucket hanging white and haphazard over one side.

"The bucket will bang against her side," her friends heard her say absently as she watched her boat drift away. There was something oddly permanent about the bucket there in the night, jumping and vanishing into the swept darkness. But the story did not end there.

She found *Calky* eleven months later beached and tied to a tree on Elliott Key on one of her walks. It had returned to the bay, had crossed the Gulf Stream with she knew not who at her tiller. She had a new cleat on the bow and different sails, though she looked like the same *Calky*. Diana found bits of food wrappers, burlap bags and a pair of jean shorts in her. Diana accepted all of this as part of the adventure. She loves change and the unexpected. She said somehow she'd known her time with that boat had not been finished.

Diana bought her new boat from Clem and Becky, who had named her *Gallifrey*. They had inherited a house and moved ashore in Deerfield Beach. They'd lived more than ten happy years aboard that boat, one of the longest continuous liveaboards in the Anchorage. I never knew what the name meant, but it must have been something artistic or literary. Every time I rowed by they were reading, going windsurfing

off her great raft tied astern, or coming back from a sail on *Phantom*, their dory-hulled ketch.

Or Becky sat covered with plaster and fiberglass resin, making giant, pastel colored clam shells which she sold as a kind of pop-art.

Clem could build anything. He once noticed *Gallifrey's* plywood hull had grown weak along the waterline. The only way to save her was to cover the hull with something watertight. So he beached her on a high moon tide and wedged wooden blocks under her hull. With the tide out, he managed to jack her up inch by inch, moving jacks around to keep her even, placing more blocks and planks, until he had her almost three feet off the lower beach and high enough to clear the highest tide. He stapled chicken wire all over the hull. Then he trowelled cement over the chicken wire. To top it all off, he painted the cement with an epoxy water barrier. All this under a boat weighing at least four or five tons that could have decided to groan and collapse on him anytime. But when it was over it was a great success and she floated higher than ever.

Clem worked in spurts. Often he could be seen relaxing on the roof outside their upper story bedroom, in a full-sized galvanized tub filled with rainwater they collected in barrels. He didn't seem to work more than he wanted to, and when he did he did, he did something he liked, such as making fiberglass dinghies he sold to Anchorage friends and

cruisers. Much of the time he puttered among his scrap heaps on the island.

When you rowed by *Gallifrey* and looked up, you might see Clem in the big tub on the roof, twin spiked aloes four feet tall of deep green guarding him on either side, tanned and smiling with a glass of white wine in hand. He looked like Nebuchadnezzar II in his hanging gardens, surveying the vast stretches of his realm from horizon to horizon. From his rooftop perch, he could see twenty miles down the bay to Soldiers' Key, the Raggeds, and Elliott. In a certain way, he was king.

"Why don't you and Fabienne come over this Sunday?" Diana asked, balancing in her wherry *Tamas*, her hand against the side of our *Floating Bed*. Her oar blades floated and the ponderous bronze pins creaked in their locks as Diana looked earnestly up at the pair of us on our stern deck.

"Is it a party?" I asked.

"Not exactly. It'll be regular. The first Sunday of every month. A kind of get-together so we can all show off what we've been doing besides boat work. I really want you guys to come. Nobody knows what the other's up to creatively."

"You mean like music, drawing, stuff like that?" I asked.

"Right. Stuff like that."

"I think that sounds great!" Fabienne said.

"It's called a 'Chautauqua.' Everybody brings something they've been working on." She swayed a bit to keep her balance, one hand steady on our stern cleat as she peered up at us, up at the sky beside us in her peculiar, sidelong manner of addressing people.

"I'd like you to bring some of your writing, Hamish."

"I'll try...you know I'm kind of busy these days..." I evaded.

Diana was insistent. "I need to know if you're coming. I'm making up a menu."

"You're cooking?" I said. Cooking for a get-together was unheard of in the Anchorage. They were always potluck.

"Not that kind of menu. You'll see." She smiled. "If you come."

Fabienne spoke right up. "Sure Diana. We'll be there. I'll get Hamish to bring some of his writing." I winced and pinched her butt. I didn't feel any of it was ready. I never did. Especially my non-fiction book on the Anchorage. It was about all my friends; they might not take it well. I made a mental note to read my poetry instead.

Diana pushed off, smiling behind her thick glasses. "Good. Good. Some good energy. We've needed it for a long time, what with everybody so busy with their own thing."

"It'll be fun," said Fabienne.

"Oh yes, it will be," I said.

When we usually get together on the island for a potluck dinner and fire, or a party on *Music Man*, the men clump together and talk about whether to use monel or bronze fastenings under the water line, the holding power of Danforths versus CQR anchors in various types of bottoms, or what season is best to avoid beating to weather on the northerly route to the Family Islands. There was never enough existential philosophy, abstract collages, poetry or painting for some of us. It was the women in the Anchorage that brought all this on. Women who were the leaders, like Diana.

The name "Chautauqua" is an old Indian word, and now names Lake Chautauqua in New York State. In the last century, European preachers got together in a kind of summer and correspondence school for ministers after the Civil War in 1874. Gradually the program broadened to include general education and popular entertainment. They took on a nomadic aspect and became traveling cultural forums. Its success led to the founding of many others, until there were as many as four hundred such assemblies around the country. After 1924, Chautauquas went into gradual decline. Diana said it was due to the advent of electronic entertainment.

The name *Chautauqua* was painted right beside the back door as we walked in. It was then I knew she was serious about these meetings. At our first sanctioned cultural

event, everyone came dressed formally, in Anchorage terms: jeans without spots, shirts without rime stains in the armpit, light colorful scarves, pins and brooches, shiny cowboy boots. It was hot, and even with the breeze, most of us were sweating. A white tablecloth displayed dark wooden bowls of herb potato chips, pretzels, organic corn chips and chunky salsa. Bouchard Brothers French white and Perrier bottles stood by. This was no ordinary potluck.

The Music Man's piano now lived between two expansive windows to starboard. She looked like she was made to be there. Almost everything else large and heavy stood against the wall to port, countering the spinnet's heavy brass and iron so the boat wouldn't list to one side.

Diana had filled the white walls with artwork from people in the Anchorage who didn't have walls for hanging. The main salon was a floating gallery of collages cut from magazines shellacked glossy and brittle by Dee Ty at the Miami-Dade School of Art, pencil drawings and pen and inks, and acrylic paintings and sculpture.

Richard Crook had built himself a plywood boat in three days on the island, but it was never dry enough when it rained to keep artwork (neither the boat, nor Richard). His meticulous, sensitive pencil drawings hung near the piano. They were drawn so light and airy. Their creation by a man as big handed, boisterous and Bachanalian as Richard was one of life's mysteries.

Dee Ty's real name was Madeleine Sophia Kraskin, a name she later went back to after she moved to shore. She lived in the Anchorage for many years and was well known on the bay. Her foam geometric spheres and pyramids, spray-painted in bright primary colors, filled a corner on a little end table. Dee Ty was seated next to it; she looked like cosmic royalty surrounded by moons and planets of a different solar system.

Diana had painted the walls of *Chautauqua* white to make the boat feel bigger inside. No stored stuff cluttered the corners, or the walls. Everything was arranged with space to breathe. It was as if the outside, the way stone, wood, fire and water each owned their own space, had come indoors. *Chautauqua* was beautiful.

After living aboard the tiny, twenty-eight foot *Gratia Plena*, to Diana her new boat seemed more like a house. The downstairs spanned a beam of at least twelve feet, and a length of about thirty. She had fore and aft decks, and a ten by twenty raft tied behind for workspace. Very little space by shore standards, but the large backyard of the bay helped. And lots of windows. During her first week, Diana whirled around in there, drunk in the space.

There was a stand-up shower and a real porcelain toilet, though you had to flush it by throwing in a bucket of seawater. On the floor under the ladder going up to the bedroom a fascinating web of red, black and white electrical wiring snaked up the wall to battery gauges. A sixteen year

old solar electric genius, who used to buzz around the Anchorage in a dinghy with an electric motor running directly from a solar panel, had rigged the system for Clem. One needle gauge on the wall read the charge of the battery while the other read the amount being used in amps. This is something that is normally hidden in the walls of a house, but on a boat its functionality is not out of place.

This kind of art is largely unrecognized in our culture, yet that functional web is everyday maintenance art. The connection between ourselves and what it takes to support us has become vague, unimportant, a matter of checkbooks and telephone calls, groans and procrastination.

Maintenance art has intrinsic value, a beauty that originates in, but does not end at, its function. Life on the water takes a lot of time and energy. And maybe that's why pushing aside our talk of everyday surviving and getting together creatively was so long in coming. Paradoxically, it made sharing our art, as well as anchoring, and repairing electrical systems, that much more necessary.

Diana herself looked glowing. Below the sleeve of her long, flowery dress, she still wore the Turk's Head bracelet of braided rope her friends Kerry and Cindy had woven right on her wrist, so it couldn't come off. They'd given it to her during the first big battle with the city in 1987. Diana had never taken it off since. It was a reminder of her activism, and her tenacity.



She greeted everyone graciously, bowing slightly, which added an unusual formality. She even had a slight bit of makeup on. I'd never seen her like that before. The bracelet was Diana, the dress and the makeup were not. And yet they were. The change was becoming, and took me by surprise.

On the piano sat Diana's "menu," a rose-colored sheet of construction paper, lettered by Diana in flowing calligraphy, outlining the presentations for our event. The menu was a program: who would come, what you would present, and in what order you would present. That was why she had to know if you were coming or not. The menu was propped majestically upright on a music sheet stand perched on a circular bit of lace atop the piano.

It all seemed very nice, but it also struck me as self-conscious and parloresque at the same time amidst our rough, campground existence.

Joel Kelly and Veronique showed up, and he brought his guitar. Joel is half Japanese and one of my best friends. He's an occupation baby. He doesn't know his biological, army father. His adopted father was a clergyman general in the US Army, and had taken Joel into his family as a child. At almost forty, Joel was a teen in the sixties. He was slated to sing *Brown-Eyed Girl* and *Daniel's Song* on Diana's menu.

He strummed the guitar by feel, without looking, treating it, as he put it, "like a woman." Joel had met Veronique through Fabienne and I, and they were married the

year after. Though new to the Anchorage, Joel caught on very quickly, getting himself a sailboat and learning the ropes. Joel builds houses, so working with his hands comes naturally.

Michael Burttt lounged in a director's chair behind his big beard and thick, horn-rim glasses. His lanky frame stretched over half the salon. Veronique, Fabienne and I spoke in French for awhile. I enjoyed showing off. In this new setting, it felt strangely appropriate.

The whole setting was like a French salon, though instead of occurring at the home of a rich, French hostess and member of the *intelligentsia* with time on her hands, it was held on *Chautauqua* by a woman of lesser means. But in living aboard she spent little, so she had become a modern woman with her time mostly her own.

Near the bow under the big front window stood a knick-knack shelf, also painted white. Big, broad shelves are a luxury on a boat, and Diana was proud of them. Instead of displaying porcelain lambs and shepherds, or a china wedding present, Diana had placed a loggerhead sea turtle skull at the center place of honor. Its caramel carapace sat on the floor nearby. The skull's white, porous, bony beak, dotted with tiny holes, still had the cartilage connecting the mandible to the skull, now dry and darkened.

Diana had found the entire skeleton intact, lying in the shallows of south Biscayne Bay on one of her solitary jaunts in her sailboat *Calky*. The skeleton had been

completely cleaned. She'd taken the bones in her boat back to *Gratia*. Then she went up to Connecticut for the summer and there she put all the bones together with glue.

The skull had no macabre quality. It was only one of Diana's talismans. It reminded her of what swam under *Chautauqua*. It brought her luck.

One of Becky's pink fiberglass clams also lived on the shelf, a tribute to her ten years aboard with Clem when the boat was *Gallifrey*. The delicate hooped bones of a pelican skull and beak adorned a lower shelf, some dried sea oats on either side. Each object sat apart from the others, holding its own on the shelf, as if they, like Diana, needed white space to breathe.

I sat self-consciously holding the manila envelope with my poetry in it. I had read it only once before in public, at my university's awards ceremony, where a poem of mine had won a prize. I was nervous, awkward at the prospect of revealing my innermost feelings to others, especially my friends. In a way, it had been easier at the auditorium behind the microphone.

Everybody chattered until Diana called us to order and began playing a classical opening, called *Adagio Contabile*, on the menu. Everyone was very solemn and respectful. Joel's stiff leather boots creaked as he shifted in his seat. Then the piano's wires filled the single long room, their individual notes melting together into waves that flowed and ebbed. Some of us closed our eyes. The clouds broke and

bright sun flooded the white walls, illuminating the pencil sketches. A gust of wind nudged open the open front door and entered the window, turning the pages of Diana's music before she had finished her page. Joel leaned over and held it for her. It was as if the bay herself had reached in to join us. Diana played with abandon, her feet kneading the foot pedals, her head thrown back on the bass chords. When she finished, I had tears in my eyes.

After we clapped and Diana bowed, she read the menu and announced my mother would step up to sing. They had practiced for the occasion and Ann wore a dress, unusual for her. Ann had once toured Europe with the Smith College Chamber Singers and sung for President Tito of Yugoslavia. They made a resounding team.

As they sang together, my mother's familiar voice rising high and clear, I was proud of her. How many Saturday mornings had I woken to her singing downstairs on her piano in our old house on Trapp Avenue before the divorce. It was how I learned all those "old" songs of the fifties and sixties. She could have made a career of singing, but she'd had two children instead. Now we lived in the same neighborhood. We had Sunday breakfasts together.

Joel sang his rousing folk ballads from the sixties and then we broke for wine and cheese. As I munched on crackers, chips, Jarlsberg and sipped French wine, I began to know friends I hadn't really known. I'd never heard Dee Ty or Richard were artists, or that music was such a big part of

Diana's life. But there it was. And I loved watching the women in their finery, the men in their creased shirts.

Our dressing up, Diana's calligraphic menu, making a commitment to be there and present; all had been necessary, as necessary as my great-grandmother's canopy bed in Independence, Missouri, or the brocade on the Commodore Munroe's Victorian settee brought down from New York by ship to the Barnacle, his wild house baking the midst of a Florida frontier.

My hands shook a little as I pulled out my poetry. I told myself I should be able to say these things in front of my friends. They were my friends. I started with a safe poem called "Bahamian Girls" that went over well. Then I picked out "Daddy Win," a poem about my elderly grandfather. Some lines said things about him that weren't flattering. Others described how he'd taken me in his convertible in Kansas City when I was four, blaring the horn in the underground parking, me yelling and loving it.

Later in the poem, he'd fallen in the kitchen when he was ninety. I had lived in Florida most of my life, eighteen hundred miles away, but I'd happened to be there then when he'd tottered, no balance anymore. I'd caught his head as it fell toward the linoleum, trapping it like an antique crystal falling off a mantel in my legs and hands.

I told of how his eyes had looked up at me, what his yellowed white hair, his dry skin felt like in my hands, of

how scared he looked, and I was. I don't remember finishing,  
but they all clapped for me too.

## Cold Spot

1991 had been a hell of a long hot summer. The heat lasted until seven in the evening and the summer itself had outworn its welcome, well into November. To make things worse, somebody had been stealing dinghies, engines and inflatables from our dinghy dock for several months. Nobody could catch him in the act. Thefts was becoming the running topic of conversation.

Rowing in summer, the sweat running down your face, mosquitoes hitching rides to your skin as you sneak into your cabin and quickly close the netting, was terrible. An engine to keep moving air on your face, a free hand for the bugs, was heaven. If you came back to the dinghy dock after a long day at work and found your dinghy riding high on the water, the transom picked clean, it felt like acid poured straight into your stomach. Like someone stealing your car's engine and air conditioning, leaving the empty shell there for you. Some of us lost the whole dinghy.

The dinghy dock owned a very special atmosphere. It was more than just the place to tie up and go ashore, a hitching post. It was the nexus between the landlife and waterlife, the place where the life of boatpeople begins and shoreside life ends. Some would describe the floating ramp down to the

jostling dinghies as a bridge, but it's more of a gate. A gate that's closed to most.

One night a group of five of us had just returned from *Paulo Luigi's*, an Italian restaurant in town. Veronique and Joel were there, along with Phineas Pratt, a mathematics student at FIU who lived for years on a boat so small he couldn't sleep stretched out. Monty, another friend, was hanging around the dock drinking when we arrived.

We parked our cars over in the lot and lugged our bags to the dinghy dock as usual. When we reached the dock, Veronique let out a wail: "Hey! Where da'hell's my dinghy?" She was my wife's best friend from Belgium and her accent was heavy. Monty clomped down the ramp onto the dinghy dock and swivelled his head, looking around for the lost boat like an angry Colossus of Rhodes who had strode off his twin pedestals.

There they were, petite and slender Veronique, less than ninety-five pounds, and Monty carrying two hundred and fifty pounds of American beer gut, a thick neck and a good heart - though he got a bit loutish when he drank, which was much of the time. You would expect to see Veronique with a tail, whiskers and long striped legs on Halloween. They looked so improbable standing together on the tiny floating dock fuming together, she a *prima donna*, hands on hips and he a linebacker, the dock slanting down toward his bulk.

She was in fine form that night, railing at the absent thieves in French: "*Les sales cons! Les sales voleurs!*" She



strode up and down the dock breaking out into English about injustice. We all scanned the harbor for her boat in case it had broken loose in the wind. Not there.

Joel and Phineas came up with a plan. They would take Joel's skiff and search for it. Monty, Veronique and I would wait at the dinghy dock. It was no use calling the police. Calling the police in the Grove for anything less than a shooting required a long wait, and besides this was a theft. There would only be nods of the head and a report. And it was on the water, in our territory.

Monty and I listened to twenty minutes of Veronique ranting about thieving crackheads hanging around the dinghy dock, and how the City of Miami's ignored security for Anchorage residents. At that time, they hadn't even put in a streetlight for us. Then around the end of the island came Joel and Phineas, towing Veronique's dinghy behind in the moonlight. With passengers.

"Dey got dem!" Veronique yelled, jumping up and down. She was just warming up. She ran down to the end of the dock. As they got closer, we saw two men in the dinghy. She paced the dock like a cat.

"You can't do dat, you know? Just take a dinghy! You want me to take your car? Teeves!" She was formidable. Especially with six-foot, four-inch Monty right behind her. The madder she got, the madder Monty got.

The skiff and dinghy laden with two "teeves" pulled up to the dock right at the feet of those two. Before Joel

could even tie up, petite Veronique reached down to the nearest prisoner and gave him a good box on the ear. Then another. The prisoner, arms about his head warding off blows, was probably about twenty-five and looked like he'd stepped out of the Coral Reef Yacht Club bar with his embroidered white shorts. He stared at her as if she were crazy. He obviously wasn't used to this kind of treatment.

"Do you t'ink you can just take somebody's boat, just like dat?!" She didn't give him time to answer. "Do you?"

Monty was lit up now; he flailed his hat, backing her up: "Yeah! Yeah!" he roared. The little dock tilted precariously as his great frame swayed.

One of the prisoners mumbled something, but I didn't get a chance to hear it. Veronique then did something I hadn't seen since I was five years old - she grabbed the near prisoner by the ear, and literally led him out of the dinghy, twisting it along the way. She held her elbow high like a parent does with a child to move him in the right direction.

The prisoner didn't dare do anything to her with Monty and the rest of us there, and she knew it. In fact, I'm sure she revelled in it. She was probably thinking men were good for something, occasionally.

"Heyyy! We just borrowed it to visit somebody..." he yelled. But they couldn't tell us who. I was beginning to enjoy this myself.

The other prisoner piped up. "We were gonna bring it back for Chrissake! It's just a *little* Goddamn boat."

Veronique heard that. She turned a meat locker slab of a gaze on the other prisoner, sizing him up: nice haircut; a gold watch; Sperry Topsiders on his feet. She let go of the first prisoner's ear.

"Just a little boat?" She faced him directly, her chin almost touching his chest. Then she said, with a mouth that looked sliced on: "I bet you just borrow anything you want, don't you Mr. Big Shot. Or you take it. You so *riiiich...*" she spit out with a hiss.

It all vented - the frustration of walking the dock gauntlet of leering drunks as an attractive woman, of having her oars stolen, of bicycles stolen, of fumbling with rusted locks, of being stared at by tourists. Maybe she remembered the long hot summer hours sweating behind the oars, being treated as a second-class citizen by the City of Miami, the cool contempt she'd felt from the high-rise dwellers who move from air-conditioned Lexuses to their condos high above Bayshore Drive. People who literally looked down on the sailboats of the Anchorage on Biscayne Bay every day.

Maybe it was some inequity in a past life, or the accumulated past of peasants and feudal lords in her Europe that made her feel this way. Maybe it something to do with her frustrating search for a simpler, freer life in an economy that claims to be the richest on earth. She let him have it all and he never knew what hit him.

"And 'ow am I supposed to get to my goddamn house?" she yelled, thumping her chest. Then her voice lowered. It stopped quavering. "Why don't you and your friend just get off dis dock. We live here. You don't belong here."

It was over. She pointed to the road. The prisoners gingerly squeezed past Veronique and Monty's beer belly on the slender dock, then loped across the parking lot toward Bayshore Drive and 27th Avenue.

"Yeah! Don't come back! If you do, you're gonna get it!" Monty yelled. He raised his middle finger triumphantly in the air at them. Then he wheeled around, a huge grin on his face, picked up Veronique and spun, swinging her around and around.

At a safe distance the two young men raised their own fingers at us as they ran off down the road, yelling something mostly unintelligible about "crazy boat people" and "assholes," but we didn't care.

Now they knew we existed.

Meanwhile the real thefts continued. I heard some guys had stayed up a few nights in their cars in the parking lot, watching the docks. Nothing had happened. Maybe the thieves had been tipped off. Maybe they'd been watching the watchers. A few days after the amateur surveillance stopped, several larger outboards disappeared. At two to three

thousand dollars each, and at least fifteen-thundred for an inflatable, this was becoming serious business.

Jan, a young man anchored in the far reaches of the center Anchorage, had his inflatable stolen from his boat where it was tied off, while he slept. They must have towed up quietly, untied the line and drifted downwind until out of earshot, then started the engine and took off. It was eerie. It was maddening.

The dock rats swore they didn't know who it was doing the jobs. They blamed the crackheads who straggled down the hill from the streets of the Grove to the Marina and dinghy dock for the beer or drug deals. And they were probably right.

Some of the rats and street people worked the weekend boaters who came to the boat ramps adjacent to the dinghy dock. It was always a circus because most people didn't know how to tie a line, run an engine, or use a trailer, much less run their Bayliners and Seacraft once they get out on the bay. They make the monthly payments and show up, kids screaming, girls showing off in bikinis, engines revving, burning oil in white clouds.

It always amazed me why people let these scruffy guys reeking of Old Milwaukee handle their boats for them, then give them a few bucks. I guess having a "butler," even a drunken one, is ingrained in the American Way, a vestige of the Old World aristocracy.

We liveaboards had always trusted the dockrats in a similar, strange sort of way. As if having no money, no schedules nor hidden ulterior motives simplified human relations. Beer or change was all they wanted. And the rats were almost always friendly. For most of us, they were our friends.

After work, around six or seven, you could find a cluster of Anchorage dwellers and the usual dock rat drinking crowd hanging around, yapping about anything and everything. And it was the unwritten code of the docks that the drunks were to stand sentinel over the dinghy dock and parking lot as they hung out and drank, keeping an eye out for thieves and vandals. It was their way of being useful, paying us back for having to run the panhandling gauntlet every day coming to and from the dinghy dock.

The dock rats are the first people you meet when you come ashore in the morning. Besides the usual cardboard box sleepers on the dock you have to step over, the puffy, sunburnt faces, the hands out for spare change, we were occasionally treated to the less frequent, early morning sight of one of the "ladies" squatting, pants on ankles, serenely relieving herself on the dock, dripping pee into the sea between the planks, a beer in hand. But these were people we knew, and we knew why many of them became that way. One had counted body bags in Vietnam. One had lost his wife and daughter in a car crash. One had been scarred for

life from Agent Orange and had post-traumatic stress disorder. The stories, and the tragedies, are endless.

Though often more eager and friendly than thoughtfully vigilant, they had done their job reasonably well so far. But this summer was different. As the thefts grew more frequent, a shift in relations occurred on the dinghy dock.

A distinct and growing rancor among the more clean-shaven toward the dock rats began to swell. The guys working the ramps were especially suspect because they'd only been there a year or two. Fewer "Good mornings" were exchanged and spare change grew scarcer. Some of us just went by the rats some mornings without acknowledging them, heads down, grumbling and muttering. The general feeling was the rats weren't doing their job. Maybe they were in on it, some grumbled. Suspicion gusted around the docks with the hot southerly wind. Something had to give.

I had taken extraordinary precautions with our fifteen horsepower Evinrude and skiff. Our second car. I purchased square "uncuttable" alloy chain of molybdenum and stainless at ten dollars a foot, a two-pin Italian lock that bolted shut in two places for forty dollars, and secured the whole lot to a stainless eyebolt on the bow. Then I covered the whole eyebolt with a mound of PC-7 chemical rock so they couldn't cut it with bolt-cutters. The only way to cut it was with an oxy-acetylene torch. I hid an electrical switch under the engine cover that had to be "on" to start her.

Fabienne thought I was being anal. But I wasn't taking any chances with our steed. I cursed the "thieving bastards" out loud every time I nicked some skin off trying to close the rusty lock, dropped the heavy chain on my bare toes, or had to yank it because it was too short to tie to the dock properly. We hadn't lost our engine so far.

The thefts continued. The mystery thieves were relentless, even stealing cheaper, smaller outboards in the two-horse range. The Anchorage grapevine was rendered useless. Word normally spread quickly about things like this, and one way or another, a stop was put to the trouble. But it seemed there would be no end to it. We asked the City for more security, but they wouldn't do more than send the Marina guard around an extra time at night. They said money was tight. Not even a streetlight would they requisition for us.

At a DKAA meeting we discussed building our own keyed gate and fence around the dinghy dock. But many of us were revulsed by excessive authority and restriction. A fence was too much. It was ruled out. We would have to solve it another way.

Then the break came. Richard Heidemann told me. He'd heard from a guy who'd been ripped off in the center Anchorage. The Haitians had the stolen goods - hidden away on the Miami River in a place called Cold Spot.



A mysterious name. *Cold Spot*. What could this place be like? That part of the Miami River was notorious for its dark wharves, shadowy corridors between waiting pallets of unknown origin and their mysterious contents. The River was that part of Miami still turned to the ocean, looking east to the sea lanes for new business, livelihood and adventure. Though financially surpassed by the sterile glass international banks on Brickell Avenue and the tourists bloating on the beaches, the River still held some of the power, and certainly most of the mystique.

It was old Miami. Trade had changed since the Commodore's time of sailing ships, but not all of it. There were lots of pirates and rum runners back then, all the way back to the Spanish Main. The River still had quite a reputation, full of guys like the Burger Bros. who were seat-of-the-pants kind of guys, marine salvagers, underwater welders, junkyard artists who would take almost any job that came along.

I felt a certain camaraderie with the men who worked the River. They were watermen, like us. Their hands were calloused and dirty, like ours. They waved to us when they saw our cruising boats ducking the bridges.

Some said those Brickell banks got started from drugs, from sea shipped freight, the preferred method of smuggling today. And congruous with some of the dirty dealings going on along the river its very nature had grown slimier since

Fort Dallas became Miami. The Miami River used to be a real river. It had a rapids. It was fed by the Everglades, and it in turn nourished Biscayne Bay with nutrients. The Indians drank its sweet water four generations ago. It was a bright pulsing artery then, oxygenated and vivified.

Today it is more like a vein, a practically lifeless canal carrying the city's excretions to the sea. The rapids were dynamited for shipping long ago. It has a floodgate to tame its flow, already diminished by the drying up of the Everglades from agriculture. The River has been the dumping ground for PCB's and other toxic industrial waste for decades. Few living things survive in it. It no longer pulses, but slowly sluices with the tides, the oxygen gone, its life used up. It's now the most polluted river in Florida. Miami means *Sweet Water* in Seminole.

We the Anchorage wonder how much the river effects our home, if it has something to do with our seagrass dying off. They say most of the current runs north, away from us. The Army Corps has plans to dredge the toxic silt on the bottom to make it deeper for shipping. They also say if they don't dredge and there is a big, wet hurricane, the silt will wash out into the bay and kill it. They plan to take the silt to sea and dump it. I've often wondered why they don't put the silt on land where it came from.

*Cold Spot*. What a name for a wharf on that fetid, oil-warm, stinking river. Was it the place where expatriot Caribbean islanders rotting their lives away in Miami go

home in refrigerated caskets for burial? Or just for off-loading frozen fish? The name felt ominous, out of place in the tropical heat. And yet we would be there soon.

We set up a plan for Cold Spot. Jan was coming, as well as Sharon and John Nation from *Zebra Dun*. The thieves had stolen John's black and white zebra-striped dinghy with a little outboard on the back. Richard Heidemann and June-Marie said they'd go. Fabienne and I were going too. I don't know why. We hadn't lost anything. It was indignation of it all, and the adventure.

The plan was to meet the next day for a quick dinner at the *Blue Grotto*, a fisherman's beer and grill joint at 27th Avenue and the river. We'd wait until late, around ten, then go pay the Haitians a visit.

We weren't vigilantes. Not really. We just wanted what was ours, from whoever had it, no matter who they were. We'd all lived in Miami a long time. Crime had become a daily ritual of locking and unlocking, lugging stuff around with you. Living aboard meant you lived out of a bag most of the time anyway. Then add to that the inconvenience of not being able to leave anything in your car because somebody would break in the window, or jimmy the trunk. You had to lug it. Thievery was an acknowledged industry in the Grove, part of the economy. And its workers rarely got caught; certainly not by those they stole from, and rarely by the police themselves. In Miami, the cops were too busy investigating homicides, tourist assaults and drug deals. The Anchorage

had always been ignored by the Miami police, except as objects of suspicion. It was natural that we investigated alone.

Driving Interstate 95 through downtown Miami as it humped over the River, we could see the fat, brightly-painted wooden freighters berthed underneath under the yellow crime lights bound for Port-au-Prince, or Cap Haitien with loads of plastic buckets, metal drums and bicycles. Their names were hand-painted in bright blues and greens on the great wooden planks of their high, spirited bows. Just below the window of the pilothouse, many ask the Lord in handpainted lettering to watch over their voyages over the thousands of miles of leaping blue to Haiti. They have names like *Le Dieu Suit* (The Lord Follows).

The Haitians make lively use of the tremendous disparity between the marketplace, hand to mouth economy of Haiti, the hemisphere's poorest, and our country's affluent wastefulness. They pile so many bicycles on their freighter roofs their little ships look less like freighters than some amusement park ride folded up to travel to the next show. Many of them were allegedly stolen.

I've often wondered how the Haitians justify to themselves the fact that they ship cargo like that, even if they just fence it and don't steal them themselves. Perhaps they remember the US invaded Haiti after the turn of the century and thousands of Haitians died. They may remember Aristide's coup, the Macoute's retaliation and our

government's inaction. Haitians I speak to say the coup was instigated by the CIA because they wanted a ninety year lease on a mountain in western Haiti to watch the Cubans and Aristide said no. Haitians being turned back home to guns and torture while Cubans refugees remain, must also ring bells of righteousness in their heads.

I didn't mind helping them out. The Haitians needed help desperately. We'd aided their dictators. We weren't giving them sanctuary during chaos and bloodshed. We owed them. It's just that we Anchorage people felt too poor to contribute our outboards. Robin Hood wasn't robbing just the rich.

*Cold Spot.* Our hot engines at *Cold Spot*. The thieves and their bolt cutters ate at my mind as I ate my fish sandwich at the *Blue Grotto*, our rendezvous point. I ordered a Gin & Tonic, a drink I always order when I'm feeling especially exuberant. Tonight it was the heady excitement of potential danger.

Of course we would call the police, I told Fabienne. We might be mad, but we weren't insane. But we would have to be there to identify our boats and engines. And while we weren't going to bang the wharfmen up against the wall by their lapels like a gang of Clint Eastwoods, I secretly hoped we might see something to give us a little satisfaction.

"What are we gonna do to 'em?" I yelled down the bar as we hunched over our fries and fish. "Are we gonna throw 'em into the river or what?"

"Yeah, we'll throw 'em all in!" came Jan's voice down the bar. Jan is small, but wiry and fierce. He was oozing indignance. His earring and swarthy blond appearance gave him the look of a pirate. He was a surfer.

"They might have guns," said June-Marie. She was trying to spoil everything.

"They wouldn't dare shoot us," said Richard, next to her. I wondered for a moment why he was so sure.

"It would be bad for business, right?" he said.

He was right, wasn't he? It would. Why wouldn't they just give up a few boats and engines to keep things quiet. God knows they loaded tons of stuff on those boats every month: refrigerators, TV's, bicycles, mattresses, pallets of Coke, water heaters, cars. Why would they risk everything over some outboards?

How many crime victims hear about where their stuff went, forget their insurance companies and band together with their friends and actually go after it to get it back? Nobody at the bar that night had insurance. We weren't that kind of people. They'd see that, they wouldn't get violent, and we'd get the engines and boats back.

Maybe.

Just when I was feeling better about going, I remembered the place again. *Cold Spot*. It gave me the shivers. Goddamn that name.

I ordered another gin tonic. We gesticulated grandly to cover up our chicken skin, trading grim possibilities for punishment amid righteous guffaws up and down the bar. We were a tribe in New Guinea readying for battle, drinking emu blood, dobbing our faces with river clay, donning headresses and hooting to the night sky. We were already triumphant and we hadn't even left yet.

It was almost nine-thirty. A few more beers went down. We were ready to enter the Miami River, the city's intestinal tract, the slippery innards of a metropolis already considered slicker than most.

As we got up from the bar I considered how appropriate it would have been to have raided by water, paddling up silently like Indians in our rowboats. We would climb the freighter's wooden belly while the criminals slept, a knife in each hand, jabbing our way up her sides like mountain climbers using pitons. Then, knives at throats, we would extract the whereabouts of our kidnapped, sleeping engines deep within the dingy hold and make them haul them up while the rest of the crew cringed and cowered. Back in the rowboats, we'd take a few of the crew as hostages and examples, hogtied. We'd listen to their pleas and blubbering with relish. We'd give them a kick and plop them over the side, into the dank, fetid water. Then we'd drag them as we

rowed, out to the river's mouth to the bay. Our territory. Sure we'd cut them loose. We weren't barbarians. But we couldn't stop Mother Nature from taking her course either - if it happened to be a night when the moon was right and the sharks were especially ravenous.

The loud discussion of our more mundane actual plans later in the parking lot brought me out of my reverie. Richard said we should make a pass, see if any of our stuff was in sight, then call the police from a nearby pay phone if we found anything. That sounded good to me. It left some of the initiative in our hands. Besides, the police would probably never come unless we had something.

We drove slowly in our three cars: Richard and June in their big Caprice, Jan in his van with John and Sharon, and Fabienne and I in our Ford LTD. I always thought we looked like the FBI in our two-tone, blue Ford. We should have been in the lead.

Only one road wound along the southern bank of the river. Northwest South River Drive. Even the street names are screwy along this river, I thought as we snuck along. Fish houses, marinas and warehouses rolled by. I sniffed the night air, a mixture of used motor oil, riverwater humidity. We drifted through the heavy rankness of a dead cat or dog. Behind it all hung overall background of fish smell.

Then we saw it.

A big red and blue sign painted next to a gap in a long white concrete wall. COLD SPOT - a hole in a wall near an



obscure turn in River Drive, a shadow in the underbelly of an Interstate 95 overpass, muffled by the constant rumbling of traffic among empty fishhouses and packhouses. A place where a scream and a gunshot could become a cat yowl, a backfire. Not that anyone would care if they heard. Distant gunshots in Miami are like the tick tocks of a grandfather clock marking time through the night. They only make people shut another lock on the door, turn over in their beds, longingly think of the country, or do nothing.

We drove by once, turned around and approached again. Richard and June's Caprice was in the lead. This time he turned in. Jan followed and so did we, their red taillights turning rose in the fine coral dust their tires threw up. A freighter hunched there, outlined in the dark against the dotted lights of gantries and decklights across the river. She had two weak yellow haloes among her decks, but the rest was dark.

We stopped in a clearing near the seawall. Quiet. Nothing. No outboards, no skulking figures hurrying crates, no hopping vultures surprised by our bright lights, no fires or sweating voodoo dancers, no Santeria sacrifices. We didn't see them painting our engines to change their identities. Though we would know them well enough by the hours we'd spent breaking down their dirty carburators, the noodles of scraped skin left dried in their stubborn recoil mechanisms, a twisted Spanish windlass of wire holding the throttle relay lever away from the flywheel's gears, the

nick in the prop, the brass snap shackle we'd added because the cheap pot metal one Evinrude had chosen to use for the fiberglass cover had long since rusted away. We would know them alright. And we'd take them in our arms in the rolling blue lights of the police, their sirens our victory wail. The cops would flush out the vultures from their black hiding places, the pits of *Cold Spot*. They'd be dragged out, hands glistening red from draining lower unit lubricant, the life blood, from our engines, spray paint on their arms and legs.

We left our headlights on. Crates and pallets blocked our view of the river itself. A forklift stood off to one side. To our right, great masses of goods lay on the bare ground, covered with tarpaulins: TV sets, mattresses, refrigerators, bicycles, plastic five-gallon buckets, cases of Pampers and Bounty paper towels, an old Toyota. No outboards.

Richard stepped out of his car. Several men appeared. Their hands were clean. They had playing cards. Richard said hello and raised his hand in greeting. They hello'd back. I looked off to the left, scanning the place. Next to the freighter and the seawall hunched an object that looked unusual, like a tortoise on the ground. I got out and walked over. I could hear Richard explaining to the men why we had come, that we were looking for our dinghies which had been stolen. God, I hoped they didn't have guns.

"You don't mind... a look around..." His voice wafted around like patches in the breeze. Richard was being especially tactless. Jan wasn't helping.

"You say we are teevs?" I heard one of the Haitians say in a syrupy Creole accent. I bent down and took a good look at the tortoise. It was Jan's dinghy, upside down, no engine. We'd found them.

"Richard! They're here!" I yelled and trotted back over to the cars. By now about ten Haitians had come out by the cars and were milling around what seemed to be their spokesman, a short, creased and insistent man who clearly had his men's respect. He said he was in charge. But he also said the vessel's captain was away. We thought that a bit strange, especially in the middle of the night when captain and crew sleep aboard.

As they pressed closer, Richard called out: "I think it's time to go," We all got in our cars, throwing gravel along with our pride, into the air.

We stopped about a quarter mile up NW South River Drive in front of the reassuring bright lights of the East Coast Fisheries restaurant. The adrenaline pumped through my veins. We'd all worked ourselves up. June-Marie spoke first as Richard walked up to the pay phone and dropped a quarter in.

"We shouldn't have done that, you know. I mean, you guys know that, right?" She looked nervous. She glanced down

the road toward the underbelly of the interstate, the gap in the wall.

"I'm calling the police. We're going to get those bastards," said Richard into the receiver.

Jan kept walking back and forth, muttering about how getting the police wouldn't help, that we should get some more people from the Anchorage and come back.

"No, it's a good plan," I said. "It's all we can do, now. We've tipped them off though. We've got to get the cops to come quick." Now that we had proof, they would come in a hurry, I was sure of it. After all, we had done the legwork. Perhaps we had stumbled upon a large smuggling ring of stolen contraband and we'd be in the papers. We'd teach them a lesson and be heroes to boot.

"They said they won't come," said Richard. He let the pay phone receiver dangle.

"What do you mean, they won't come?" Fabienne said. The Belgian girl getting her first real look at justice in America.

"It's out of their jurisdiction. They can't search a boat on Federal waters. They said call Customs."

"Christ. Here we go. Pass the buck." I said. "You know, by the time they figure out who has fucking jurisdiction and if the thieves, or fences, or whatever they are, are standing in their greasy fucking loading yard or floating on their greasy decks..."

"You don't have to talk like that, Hamish." Fabienne again.

I was reduced to a series of incomprehensible snorts for a moment. "...You know, what if those Haitians all line up along the seawall, one goddamn foot on shore, the other on the deck - it'll fucking paralyze the authorities... Christ... they'll be like deer in headlights." I was working on a coronary.

"For crying out loud, Jan's damned *dinghy* is lying right there on the *ground*!" John Nation yelled.

"They won't come."

"Then let's call the damned Customs then."

Sharon had been quiet, until now. Everybody looked at her. "I know somebody at Customs. Let me call." She got on the phone. She was on a long time. They were really giving her the run-around.

We threw around opinions about what we should do. Jan suggested we cruise up the River one day and mention to the Haitians that if they didn't return the outboards, we'd cocktail their boat one night and burn it to the waterline.

We considered threatening to expose the rest of their operation, but the police knew about the stolen bikes and God knows what else, going on there every day. Everybody in Miami knew. But they didn't do anything about it. For some reason, except for a few token raids we'd heard about in the papers, the wharves seemed off-limits.

"Customs says all their men are out tonight. They can't send somebody now. They said call back later."

"Later? Can't they just authorize the police to come?"

"No, they say they have to be there."

"Goddamn bureaucratic bastards. So full of themselves that they can't work with each other."

I think it was at least an hour before the pay phone rang. It was the guy Sharon knew from Customs. He'd called around and finally called the head guy for our region. By now it was nearly eleven. He said he had no men, but the head guy would come down himself in twenty minutes.

Just after we hung up with him, a police cruiser pulled up. We told them the situation and they said they would at least check the yard. We could follow them in.

Things were snappier back at Cold Spot. As soon as we pulled in the Haitians started asking questions. The officers shrugged them off and began checking the wharf with their flashlights. They weren't saying anything. So the Haitians concentrated on us. They crowded around us while we looked for other dinghies. Another cruiser came into the yard, lights flashing.

We found another dinghy in the river, behind the freighter, floating upside down. They'd probably pitched them in while we'd been gone. We pointed to it. The Haitians grew more agitated. They spoke quickly in French and Creole with each other, English to us. They seemed to be arguing over the best way to proceed. I got puffed up and started

speaking French with Richard and Fabienne. That really nonplussed them. After they heard us, they changed their tactics and started whispering.

We showed the capsized dinghy to the police. Nobody wanted to go in the river and drag it out. They ordered the Haitians to put a block and tackle on it and lift it out. They did, all the while mumbling about "teeves," how did we know it was our dinghy and how they didn't know how it had gotten there. We had her on the ground and turned her over.

"That's my dinghy," said Sharon. She'd bought it from John Nation.

"How do you know that, Ma'am?" asked one of the officers.

"I built her," said John. He pulled his Bowie knife out of his belt sheath. Several of the Haitians hopped back and an officer put his hand on his holster. John bent down and scraped paint off the transom near the stern thwart. Black stripes. Then he took the tip of the knife and tapped the transom. It sounded funny. He dug in. The knife went in like butter. He came up with a glob of soft stuff on the tip.

"I'll be damned. They filled it with clay."

"If this is your dinghy sir, I'll need to see some papers," said the officer.

"They filled her, smoothed her over and painted her. Just like that," John said to himself, ignoring him.

"You have papers for her, sir?" said the officer.

"No papers."

The Haitian spokesman looked pleased.

"But her name is *Tender to Zebra Dun*. Under all this paint and clay." He began scraping and gouging, now with his fingers, the letters coming clear as in a mystery movie. He'd carved her name with his own hands, instead of painting it on. Just for a night like this. After a few minutes, the name appeared as he had said.

A shiny new pickup swung into the yard and a fiftyish man stepped out, the head guy for Customs from here to Palm Beach. We crowded around him, thanking him for coming down himself from his own house while off-duty. He was friendly and we grew hopeful we would find our engines. He conferred with the cops for a minute, then two officers gingerly hip swung out the two-by-twelve plank of a gangway onto the freighter. Finally aboard. We watched their lights dance in her innards as they searched.

"They probably won't find anything." That was the Customs man. Suddenly, he was irritatingly nonchalant.

"Why not?" I said, peeved.

"They've been spooked, so they probably hung the engines over the side tied to a heavy line laying on the bottom. They'll pull them up later. Hard to find them at night." That was not reassuring. An engine can do just fine underwater as long as it goes down when it's not running.

After about twenty minutes the cops came huffing and puffing down the gangway with a big Johnson outboard. They dumped her unceremoniously on the grass. She'd been freshly



painted. The spokesman peered at her. The police hadn't found any other engines.

"Your crew have any papers on this?" No answer, just shrugs from the spokesman and his hangers-on.

"No numbers. A forty horse. Looks about an '89 or so."

"Any of you guys own this?" the officer said, looking at us. We inspected her, scraped paint here and there. We wanted her to be ours, but she wasn't. Some other poor bastard had lost her.

The spokesman shrugged his shoulders.

"We'll have to confiscate the engine if she has no numbers or legal owner," said our government man. "We'll investigate this further in the morning."

The mystery had gone out of *Cold Spot*. The lights were on. They revealed a bunch of now self-righteous, but wary dock workers and crew. They believed they had won. Though we'd found two dinghies on the property, we had only circumstantial evidence that the Haitians had anything to do with them. We hadn't found our engines.

Just then a young man sped into the yard on a bicycle. He practically ran right into the laps of the two cops standing with us. He quickly saw what was up and was back out the gap in the wall just as fast. Another bike coming in for a quick sale in the middle of the night. He'd picked the wrong night.

Without a rule to throw, the police left. As ineffectual as they were, we were sorry to see them go.

We were sorry because we found ourselves alone, Customs guy included - eight unarmed white people out of their element, surrounded by an increasingly vocal and vengeful group of Haitians.

The customs guy offered to take the two dinghies to the Anchorage in his truck. As we loaded them onto the truck's bed, Haitians appeared from nowhere, many more than we thought had been there all along. Jan started arguing with the spokesman who had gotten taller and much louder. The spokesman started poking his finger into Jan's chest. Our Customs man went into action. He strode right up to the crowd, flashed his badge in the light of a big flashlight and held it in the spokesman's face.

"Allright. Let's see the green cards. I want to see everybody's papers. Let's go!" He snapped his fingers. That tide of faces just ebbed away. The spokesman retreated, his hands up as if he was under a gun, waving back and forth in front of his chest in the unmistakable sign of "no more."

We drove out of *Cold Spot* after midnight, the heedless rush of the passing interstate traffic overhead masking the crunch of the coral rock under our tires. We had two dinghies on a pickup - and ourselves. Out of the shadows, the river's smell of fish and oil faded from our nostrils as we rushed through the empty yellow, sodium-lamp corridors of downtown, south and east, toward our bay.

## The Shuttle

When you take a shot at a group of perched crows, a certain phenomenon always occurs. I've tried to hit them from afar with my .22 rifle in the Everglades as a teenager. I'd get off one shot. Then they'd all take off together and it would be impossible to pick another out as a target. Try singling one out, and you see another, and another. Then they're gone. That's how it seemed to be with the city. They'd attack, we'd flurry, then when things cool down, like they always do, we'd land back on the fence. That's the thing about crows. They always come back.

The city hadn't gone home after its initial attempt to remove us. They'd just regrouped. City Manager Odio and his crony Rodriguez had had plenty of time to figure out another scheme. After all, it was their full-time job to govern, and to do it by using the taxes of the governed. Unfortunately for the governed, we could only protect ourselves in our spare time, using whatever money we had left over from repairing the diesel, buying groceries, new solar panels, or a new sun hat after the old one blew off in a gale.

The first time in 1987 they'd tried to evict us outright. They found they couldn't intimidate us, or weed out the "undesirables," their euphemism for those of us who

they described in less public terms as the "criminal element," from the ones who could pay. We'd stuck together, all of us. We'd raised money with our T-shirts, came to every meeting and worked hard drafting livable rules. We'd grown closer together as a neighborhood, but the struggle had taken its toll.

Out on the water we depend on our physical strength to anchor our boats, to carry water, to row against twenty knots of wind, to lift generators to grind fiberglass. Many residents don't have steady jobs, or health insurance. That strength must be nurtured. Most of us depend on massage, organic vegetables, fresh air, meditation, exercise and yoga to stay healthy. But what really keeps us healthy is our privacy, our solitude.

Rowing out to the Anchorage is a kind of rejuvenation of that strength, like driving out of the city to the country and smelling cows and sweet grass. The city's demands brought the viciousness of city life into our pastoral setting, violating and cheapening the privacy and solitude that nature affords just by being natural.

Almost everybody had been paying every month according to the six month temporary agreement for several years, and things had been tolerable, though we'd had problems along the way. The new dockmaster, a hugely-built man named Jaime Reyes, had several dinghies hauled out of the water and cut

up with a saw for nonpayment of fees. Many dinghies were regularly confiscated and locked up under city hall until back payments were made. We had parking for our cars most of the time, though we had to fight periodically for it. We had to wait years and publicly embarrass Reyes at a City Commission meeting into allowing us such minimal amenities as a security light and a water spigot at the dinghy dock. The police came around regularly and arrested dock rats for drinking in public or using public phones and hanging around. They towed our cars arbitrarily, whenever parking grew short. Some of the rats lived in vans, and when they were confiscated and they couldn't pay the high recovery fees of the towing companies, they lost their homes and their only belongings inside their vehicles.

At least the city *had*, at long last, acknowledged we existed. It may have seemed like a minor victory to an outsider, but to us it was a major accomplishment. Mayor Suarez stated publicly in a commission meeting that the Anchorage people were there whether the city liked it or not, so the administration might as well get used to it and get along. However, we'd never been able to get them to write up a permanent service contract to make us a permanent part of the city.

Then we found out why. We were in for another ride.

They knew they had no jurisdiction over how and where we anchored in the bay, so this time they denied us the only thing they could: access to shore. We could not use our

dinghy dock unless we complied with their absurdly impractical and illegal "dockage agreement" they'd written up in 1987, during the first episode.

Whatever reasons the city had for getting rid of us, they never made any real sense to me. They came from a different world. And never mind that the dinghy dock didn't even belong to the city. A movie studio had built it as part of their set, and had left it there for us to use afterward. The movie producers had hired quite a few "salty" looking liveaboards from the Anchorage as extras, filmed for a few days around the dinghy dock and other places around the Grove. Real sailors being scripted for fantasy pirates in a movie had seemed just as unreal as the city's demands.

Of course, we'd become used to being gawked at, coming ashore carrying oars, sweating in scruffy boat clothes while being videotaped by tourists filing off an air-conditioned bus. And they always kept that bus running, loud and smelly, as long as they stayed, posing for place pictures in front of the moored sailboats at the Sailing Club.

Now we were "extras" again, to be discarded for another project.

Everybody was at the DKAA meeting. The *Music Man* swayed heavily in the weekend boat wakes, listing a bit to port. Forty dinghies banged and jostled in the wind astern. Even

with the front sliding glass door open, the wind got lost among all the heated bodies crowded into her salon. It was hot.

We all sat in a circle so we could see each other. Even though we had elected "officials," we preferred sitting Indian style, rather than face off with each other as they do in City Hall. Sharman's kids Winn and Jambu fidgeted on the carpet, chasing each other and asking when they could go, while Sharman tried to keep them quiet.

Even though we were all agitated over the city's newest threat, we tried to stick to Robert's Rules of Parliamentary Conduct. There was a thump as somebody knocked over the nude acrylic lady near the side door. A jet ski sped past the *Music Man* and we had to stop talking. Except some of the beer drinkers, who never stopped talking anyway.

Diana took control, quieting everyone down to read the minutes from the last meeting that nobody remembered. Michael Burttt folded his arms. When serious talk started, it centered around hiring lawyers again. But we were still paying off Richard and Richard and we owed Howard Sutter hundreds of dollars worth of loaned hours. We were sure we could win in court because the city couldn't deny us access to land, especially on that piece of land that had been donated to the city by the Frow family with provisions to protect the public's use of the waterfront. But even so, we couldn't afford to fight with lawyers. And the city was used to wearing down its opponents financially. After all, it

wasn't their money. And this was a different fight: about rights on land.

So we decided to shift. Flock around like crows. If they wouldn't let us use the dock, we'd find another place to alight. We discussed the possibilities. The marina to the north would not allow us to tie up without a ten dollar a day fee. A public park lay to the immediate south of the dinghy dock. Nothing was available nearby.

Some of the sailboat owners who were mobile discussed moving to Key Biscayne across the bay for awhile. Some spoke of leaving the mess altogether and living in the Keys. But most of us were staying, so we brainstormed.

I don't remember who came up with the idea, but it was beautiful. We wouldn't take our dinghies to shore at all. We'd have a ferry. A shuttle.

One guy had to be ashore at a quarter of six in the morning. Somebody else worked until two a.m. After this information came out, our community spirit was really put to the test. We had a heated discussion concerning exactly who would run the shuttle back and forth twenty hours a day. It had to be in shifts - nobody could work that long. And nobody working a full day wanted a six hour shift behind an outboard half the night. Even if it would be just once every two weeks.

We had to act fast. The city would confiscate any renegade dinghy on the dock by that Monday. Metal Burt had a big raft he'd appropriated from a recent Coconut Grove



Sailing Club dock renovation. He worked there and the club had given it to him. Our plan was to row to the raft, tie up the dinghy, and wait for the shuttle to come along. Then load on and drop off at the public boat ramp finger piers next to the dinghy dock.

Burt volunteered his raft to tow and anchor near the tip of the Big Island, the point nearest land where everybody had to pass on the way in to shore. At night the shuttle would pick up back to the raft. It would be the New Dinghy Dock.

Screaming Ray stood up, his blonde hair standing straight up. He yelled out like he does in commission meetings that he would donate a big skiff for the job. I thought that was very admirable, since skiffs are expensive and hard to maintain. He was a good guy, that Ray.

God, then I thought about it. We had Screaming Ray, Ray Holly, Ray Newgarden, Ray Rogers, Calvin Ray Holly... Michael Burt, Metal Burt, Rubber Burt, Old Bert the retired merchant seaman... and those were the guys I knew. It was mindboggling. Something had gone wrong with the patrilineal system of naming in our culture.

Kerry said he would lend his new Yamaha outboard motor temporarily. Screaming Ray's boat had no flotation, so she'd sink if she wasn't bailed. Ray's fiberglass gunwales weren't stiffened with wood, so they wiggled like jello, but it would do.

The first day everyone gathered on the thin finger piers of the boat ramps next to the dock. The floating dinghy dock, usually bristling with bouncing, jogging dinghies of every description crowding each other for space, sat empty. Except for Frank Pearl's son Bill. He'd paid the city what they wanted and complied with their rules. His scab dinghy sat at the dock alone. No one was happy with that. He'd crossed the picket line.

Captain Midnight hadn't joined in either. He still tied up over at the marina just to the north. They don't bother him over there when he comes sailing in with his aluminum canoe and three German Shepherds. The marina people know he's crazy and leave him alone.

We all sat on the finger pier as if we were waiting for the bus. It's hard on any American to lose their personal transportation. We had to leave our little sea cars in the garage. But it felt good, like a protest, a strike, like the blacks in small southern towns who would walk for miles and wear out their shoes rather than ride buses in the back.

Defiance against the city ran fierce, and for the first week or so volunteers ran the shuttle, bailing in the rain, getting up early, staying up late. It seemed to be working. Then things broke down. Kerry didn't want his new engine worn out, or run by somebody he didn't know. There was some name calling. Kerry took back his engine. Then nobody wanted his engine used. And it was hard working and running a shift on the shuttle. The novelty was wearing off. For a time it

looked as though our ties as a community would be tested beyond their limits.

Then the natural economics of the Anchorage kicked in.

Those who drank much of the time and did not work regularly found they now had a regular job. And they were needed. A down and out older man named Gil with a headband and long silvery hair past his shoulders who loved to talk philosophy, drink spirits and smoke anything available, volunteered to captain the shuttle. As did somebody I didn't know named Mike McKinney. Ray Holly also volunteered. Ray scrounged a British Seagull from the pile of engines he constantly puttered with on his stern deck. Though British Seagulls have a nasty reputation of unreliability, like British Jaguars, an engine is an engine and we had to have one.

Ray's mechanical ability, his three other Seagulls he parted out to repair the shuttle's Seagull and his willingness to get up at five-thirty a.m. kept the shuttle afloat. His rusty, single-piston brass and stainless air-cooled job with no cover ran like a fast-swinging blacksmith's hammer in a steel drum. The bottom of an Old Milwaukee beer can over the carburetor kept it dry in the rain and spray. The Seagull had no starter cord rewind, so Ray yanked it with a loose rope and a little wooden handle he'd fashioned. If it didn't start first pull, he wrap it and pull again. And again. The plastic handle had long since rotted away from the sun. Gil, Ray and Mike kept the shuttle

going for weeks. They liked the long hours. And the attention.

Every morning at five-thirty we heard the bap-bap-bap of that Seagull's metal tube cough as the shuttle very slowly made its rounds from the raft to shore and back to the raft again. It could be heard for at least fifteen minutes, topping out at about three knots, from the Anchorage to the dinghy dock, if the wind was right. Our shuttle didn't look like much: a flimsy red skiff, a decrepit, noisy engine and a drunk at the helm. But it was ours and we were proud of it.

"Hold up there now...just a little more," Ray Holly called out in his Tennessee drawl. He hadn't lost it after seventeen years in the Anchorage.

The raucous *bap-bap-bap* of his Seagull's single cylinder slowed like a drummer changing rhythm, spasmed, then quit. The little launch slid and gurgled quietly the last ten feet to the pilings at the end of the finger pier. She slowed just enough so Richard Heidemann, standing in the bow, could loop the painter over a piling and tie off. Holly turned the little five bladed propellor and it skeg to steer a bit.

"There now. Easy as pie." Ray Holly's landing technique was simple. He just choked the Seagull before the boat hit the dock. It had no neutral or reverse. He judged her speed, how many passengers in her, how far she'd glide, and then cut her off.

"Everybody out now. Have a good night at work!" He laughed. He turned to Gil, who'd ridden in with him.

"What I'm doin' you cain't hardly call work, now can you?" He flashed his big, stubbly smile. A pelican flapped over to a less crowded finger pier. He took a swallow of his morning beer.

"Hope we put somethin' in the kitty. Got to have enough gas for the next guy, ya' know." He peered unsteadily down at the Bugler tobacco can that served as the cash register. He shook its clinking contents carefully, like an elevator inspector counting bolts on the winching mechanism. A stray frond on his brown palm hat by Peter Rabbit rustled in the late afternoon breeze.

The sun had deepened the furrows in Ray's skin. Holly, at fifty something, had dark red lines that creased his thick wrists stretching out of his long-sleeve shirt. They looked like tortoise necks. The stubble on his face had turned grayer since the time I'd first met him years ago, a winter's cornfield of salt and pepper. It looked brittle, ready to catch fire from the dangling red tip of his Bugler roll-your-own cigarette butt. Finished counting, he dumped the coins into his trousers. A big grin.

"Time to refuel."

The shuttle passengers had piled out and left for work, grocery shopping, or Captain Dick's, the local watering hole on the bay at Grove Key Marina. I stayed behind to hang out near the dinghy dock.

"Next run in thirty minutes!" He bellowed out like a conductor. I think if he'd had a ship's horn he'd have pulled off three long blasts. Ray was well aware of his duties as captain. He rechecked the lines and hauled himself and the gas can out of the launch. The little boat's thin sides rattled against the thick pilings.

"She ain't much to look at, but she gets the job done," he said to me as he noticed I'd stuck around. He shot a glance at a sleek Bayliner trailered on the next pier. "We'd make it to Bimini with that Seagull, while the pieces of crap they build today'd never make it much past the bay."

By now some of the dock rats had converged on the finger pier. Appearing to have had little luck panhandling in the early morning, they sidled up to Ray and his jingling pockets.

"Hi, Hamish," said one.

"Morning Ray," I said.

"You goin' to get gas Holly?" Ray Newgarden had been the first to arrive. He'd been sleeping on the dinghy dock, his usual bed, when the Seagull had exploded ashore.

"Yesireeee," replied Ray Holly.

"Need somebody to carry that gas can for ya'?"

"Sure could. That can gets mighty heavy."

Newgarden's hair lay matted to his head on both sides from sleeping on the dock. He took his hat off and scratched it.

"Had any luck in the dumpsters?" asked Holly.

"Naw. Just got up. Got a cigarette?"

"Yep, but you got to roll it yourself. I'm out of rolled ones. But I ain't got time to wait - this shuttle has to keep on rollin'."

"How about a draw then..." Newgarden pointed to his cigarette. Holly handed him his skinny butt and Ray took a long drag.

"Just keep it away from that can. We don't want to be no Post Toasties."

Newgarden reached into his dirty tweed jacket he'd "dived" from a dumpster. He pulled a warm beer out of a capacious front pocket, his hand shaking a bit, snapped the top and took a long draught.

"Hey, give me some of that."

Newgarden looked hard at him. "You'll let me come along to get gas?"

"Yeah, yeah. Sure. Gimme some."

"OK. Just so long as we understand each other."

Newgarden grinned good-naturedly.

After checking the boat's lines once more, they both walked off to Ray's pickup and piled in. "Toke," a little wire-haired terrier that lived on the docks, jumped in the

back when he saw Ray coming. Toke had taken to Ray Holly. Ray always said nobody owned Toke. He was just a buddy, like everybody else. So he let him come along when he wanted. A nomad with the street name "Roach" had named Toke, as a joke I suppose. He'd taken care of him for a time, but then left for up north months before, leaving the dog behind.

Twenty minutes later they were back. Holly hugged a large paper bag. Newgarden carried the gas can. Holly looked warily around as he approached the docks. The rats saw him coming.

"How about some of that gas Holly?"

"Yeah. You had plenty of passengers this mornin', right?"

"There's just enough for the captain and crew of the shuttle," replied Holly in a determined voice. Three or four rats tailed the two Rays to the finger pier.

"We know you got lotsa gas money today. And it all ain't in the can either..." They cackled and slapped each others' hands.

"What if all those people found out what you were doin' with their money?"

"You know anybody 'round here don't know me? I don't give a rat's ass."

"Hell Holly, just a few cold ones..."

"Go on now. I got to get to business." Ray stepped into the shuttle and opened the gas cap on the engine. The rats hung around jeering for a few minutes, but lost interest as



another victim strolled down the hill carrying a bag from the Farm Stores. They went after him. Ray hadn't noticed.

"Yeah, this Seagull of mine is easy on the gas. No reason not to make use of some of those donations. The shuttle don't run without us, and we don't run without this," he declared, taking a swig of beer. "Besides, some of these guys, they don't even give money. I got two cans of shaving cream here from a guy this mornin'."

He showed Ray a Schick can. "Can you believe they want me to run this shuttle on that?"

"It could drive a man to drink," said Newgarden.

"Damned right. And you know what else happened?" Holly was settling down to wait for passengers.

"What?"

Holly opened up a can of rubbing alcohol, poured and inch in a cut-off coffee can, lit it and placed a wrinkled, black grill on top. Then he pulled a boiling pitcher from under the seat, put some Folgers in from another can and filled the pitcher with water.

"Want some Joe, Ray?"

"No thanks."

"I didn't know there was so many weird people livin' out there. They expect me to go through hell and high water for 'em. Listen to this. The other night I saw this older couple and a kid on the raft. It was blowin' maybe thirty and the waves was high. It's gettin' cold and the raft's bouncin' around, dum de dee dum..."

"I remember. I had to go sleep under the restaurant."

"Anyway, I figure since they been waitin' there so long they needed their dinghy. So since I was out a ways I went by their boat to pick it up for them. Their boat was the last one out too. Way out there. We was goin' up and down, up and down, on those damned waves. It was rough. Well, we finally got there, and it was dark by then. A kid on board damned near puts my eye out with the boathook. I couldn't stop the engine, or we'd drift thirty feet back in that wind. Had to hold on with her in gear... they was old people and they had this wood and rope stairwell down to the water. I didn't know if we were goin' to get their dinghy, or smash to pieces on that thing. Seems they'd grounded this son and told him to stay on the boat. So that's what he did. He hadn't picked his family up on the raft. He told me they'd grounded him. Don't be leavin' the boat, they'd said."

"Sounds like they need family counseling," quipped Newgarden, taking a long swig.

"I don't know, but I just dropped that kid off with the dinghy at the raft and took off outta there." The boiled coffee was ready. He took a tentative sip.

"Joe's good after a beer. Damned weird, some of these boat people." He sat back, propped on his elbows, put his feet on a seat and closed his eyes.

"It's a four-letter word Ray, that work."

"Oh, don't I know it."

When Hurricane Floyd threatened and missed, skirting the Keys, the shuttle went into overtime ferrying supplies and materials out to boats. We all pitched in for equipment for the shuttle. When Michael Burtt was stopped by the Marine Patrol for having twelve Anchorage people in a boat made for seven, we all paid the ticket. And we saw each other more often. I enjoyed sitting on my seat, talking with my neighbor passenger.

It was a long, slow ride from the dinghy dock out, running past the shrimp docks first, then Easy Sailing, Castle Harbor, and finally past long pier #5 to the spoil islands and the channel between them. The shrimpers were sympathetic with us, even the ones who lived ashore. They were always being harassed by the city and hated them. They would wave and give us the thumbs up sign.

Occasionally we'd see a golf cart with white-shirted city officials bouncing over the boards out the pier going in the same direction we were. We'd wave in over-friendly mockery, or Ray would blow the conch horn we used for weekender traffic. They'd scowl at us, or look the other way, but we knew that they knew what we were doing. It was great fun.

But the best part was the wait on the finger piers at the end of the day. During the shuttle, the usual after work

congregations grew even bigger and friendlier, everyone chatting on the dinghy dock before gathering up shower bags, water jugs, oars, tools, books or groceries and rowing home. The finger piers bulged with liveboards waiting for a ride, the narrow walkways packed with bags, sitting people, dogs, sailbags, a battery, whatever. At the rush hour, the shuttle never had enough room to take everybody. And it was dinnertime.

Sometimes we struggled over who would go aboard and who would have to stay and wait as Ray would halloo and glide her into the pier. We'd all take a good look around for the Marine Patrol, and if it was clear, pile in as many passengers as possible. Nobody was worried about drowning. If someone were to fall over, in most places out there they could stand up.

For those who were left behind it was always a good twenty minutes until Ray or Gil would come back, provided the captain didn't have to refuel, the carburetor was working, the sparkplug was dry, he could start her on the first five pulls, and the captain was dry. If not, it could be longer.

But I didn't mind waiting. I'd pull out an apple and listen. We had no porch-lined street for twilight gossip, no corner grocery under a buzzing sodium lamp, no community softball field in which to gather and talk away a dusk. The dinghy dock had always been our street.

After about six weeks of shuttling, we'd won. The city relented and gave us back what had been already ours. We crows were through flurrying around and were able to flock back to the fence and settle down to daily life again. We resumed our service agreement as before. I was glad it was over. But I missed the picket lines.

## Cows in the Garden

The late summer talk around the docks is usually who's betting on when the first big front will hit to crack two hundred days of continuous 80 to 95 degree heat. Or it's about the evening mosquitoes that chew your sweaty legs while you row to your boat on a fetid night, your hands occupied on the oar handles. Stop rowing, slow down and slap, or keep rowing and get there sooner.

Poor choice. So you just row.

But if you're done with errands on shore when the first real squall line of a cold front blows in, it's an experience you can't forget. It's the ultimate mosquito repellent. I call it turning on the air-conditioning.

On drooping anchorlines our boat flops listlessly to motorboat wakes on the bay. It's dead calm before the storm. The high cirrus clouds tell you the front is near. A few thunderstorms squat around the horizon like fat, grey-headed drunks lying together in an alley. The other boats point in all directions, and there's an aimlessness, a plague of heat that's destroyed order. No one escapes, though with electric fans, they try. Shore people watching the weather don't feel the heat index - they are inside in their cool terrazzo Florida rooms, snatching Breyer's natural vanilla from the

freezer and scarfing it from the box. And you, you are slithering into the bay every few hours just to stop sweating, then climbing out and starting to sweat five minutes later because there's no wind. You're wondering where *The Hell* this front is that the weatherman's been talking about. Night falls and it's still hot, but at least there's no sun. The wind has left the earth, except for a cool, too-short thunderstorm that passed near a few hours ago. It left the hot calm in its wake again.

The battery won't take the drain the fan puts on it too much longer. You take your sheet and a mattress and go out on the front deck to watch and wait. It seems cooler outside. Maybe it's the heat the boat retains from the day's sun. The only relief is an occasional zephyr that the screens on the windows would have stopped had you been inside. Since there is no wind, mercifully, the mosquitoes haven't blown in from the swamps of the Everglades, or the no-see-ums from the mangrove stands to the south. I call those tiniest of the bloodsuckers, "feel-ums." You are accompanied only by the local mosquitoes from the island, not nearly as vicious.

You slap a few absentmindedly, hardly noticing. The boats are still scattered. They are waiting too.

Then in the orange glow of the downtown skyline to the north, you can see it coming. The low clouds scud in through the bright, vertical rays illuminating the Centrust Bank Tower and the sky above it for hundreds of feet, like

bombers running an anti-aircraft illumination. Those rays shoot straight up, catching each Flying Fortress with its heavy loads of cold rain and wind.

It comes with a fury that always catches me unawares. Cat paws whorl the bay ahead. As the norther hits and the boats finally turn from their eight month east-southeast stance and face the north, it seems oxygen is finally returned to the regular mix of gases in the atmosphere. I wonder how we lived for the past eight months without it.

October fifteenth is usually considered the turning point by experienced salts. By then you know if it's going to be an early year, or if the hot soup will boil until December. The benefit of a strong series of early fronts is that they break up the parties, the last remaining tropical storms and hurricanes drunkenly tramping across the Atlantic from Africa to the Caribbean.

But the storms are not over after the hurricanes lose their breath. One October frontal storm blew for three days straight. It started out of the east, slowly clocking around to the southeast, and as the direction changed, the wind got stronger. While it was twenty to thirty out of the east, when it got to the southeast it was thirty to forty steady, gusts to fifty. Lots of radio talk about highs and lows, pressure gradients and troughs.

These frontal storms are simply a different breed. The great spinning lows, humid depressions and hurricanes are replaced by cold, roaring wind. Herons hunker down in



dinghies. Cormorants stay in the warm water and no longer hold their wings out to dry in the sun. Gangs of brown speckled sandpipers huddle in nooks behind cabins of unoccupied boats like dainty, skinny-legged dowagers caught out without umbrellas on a country walk.

On our little two-story houseboat, even steadied by my pontoons, we rock and shake all night long, the bow lifting and banging on each rushing wave. On nights like these I crawl out on the front deck in my slicker, hood over my face against the cold pellets that threaten to put my eyes out if I look straight into the wind. I survey the bow lines with my flashlight, shaking the batteries for a better connection in the corrosive air and cursing its feeble eye as the lines stretch in a tight vee into the oncoming waves. When the moon breaks through for a moment between the skating clouds, the waves sparkle and hiss, bright and black, tops foaming under the bow. For minutes at a time I mentally rehash the work I'd done last on the anchors: their lines, chains, shackles, clevis pins, wires, rings and thimbles.

Only as strong as the weakest link. One nut loose on a deck cleat and the whole thing could go; one sharp barnacle chafing one hundred feet of five-eighths nylon three twist in one half-inch place can quietly disconnect the sixty pound pick anchor and eighty pounds of three-eighths galvanized chain with the stealth of a professional thief quietly teasing open a lock on your door while you sleep.

When the northers abate and the air turns cool, sunny and dry, the Anchorage doesn't seem like the same place. Energy floods into the neighborhood. The clouds of protozoa, phytoplankton, bacteria and algae of the bay's warm summer soup die off. You can see the shallow bottom clearly. The gulls return in great numbers, clouding the tip of the Big Island by the channel markers, their favorite place to take their baths. At low tide the exposed coral rocks flutter with them as they flounce around, twittering, gossiping, preening, dipping their faces into each salty wavelet.

The wind may blow hard out of the northwest for a day or so, and then if it's not a strong one, wonderful, placid evenings follow where the cool breeze slides down from the north. Skimmer birds come out to graze the surface for fish, carving "S" curves as they chase. Schools of ballyhoo arc like gazelle. We can hear them plup! when they hit.

Fabienne and I take advantage of these light north winds, grabbing sweaters, a blanket, a six pack of cold beer from the cooler I built in the galley, one of Peter Rabbit's woven palm beer coolers, and head for the foredeck. Each one of us takes a side, carefully negotiating the two foot walkspace along the outer walls, always one hand for the boat, one carrying. There isn't room for two of us on one side.

Then we set up the big boat cushion, checking to see if it's wet from rain. A cushion can fool you, hiding the wet underneath and then when you sit down it creeps up,

migrating to your butt. I slide over the emergency pick anchor and chain and put up sofa pillows against the front cabin wall. Then we lay down under the blanket and snuggle our legs together in the cold. Maybe it's sixty-two or so, but to us, after a summer in the Anchorage, it's winter. Now we're ready for the late show.

We can hear everything: Danny Brousseau having a distant fight with Gracy on their houseboat, the low chug of a shrimper's diesel and his faint rock music far out on the bay, fish jumping, Captain Midnight's dogs barking or his generator running, powering his radio voice far into the night.

On weekend evenings the north wind carries us the outdoor band from Monty Trainer's Raw Bar. We like the calypso island tunes, but the hard rock usually spoils the evening. Thankfully, the wind carries it to us as in a dance, the volume going up and down with every puff and stillness.

If we stay up late enough, Snagglefin the dolphin usually shows up about one am. She's amazingly punctual. We sip our beer watching her fish in circles, breathing frequently and roiling the water with her powerful tail.

The stars are brightest towards the darkness to the southeast, away from the city. Sometimes we see the same falling star.

The deck is low, about two feet above the waterline, and no rail. Nothing to see but ocean. It's almost as if we

are floating on the water in our blanket, our feet just at its edge, yet cuddling, warm and dry. The dew on those starry nights is always wet and cold on our feet as we tramp back to the stern with our blanket to go to bed.

The cool northern wind has also chased south the manatee. I've learned to read the signs, like a canyon guide out west knows how to follow a trail over scoured rock in windblown sand. Only smooth patches of roiled water or brown clouds of mud slightly darker than turtle grass mark where they feed. I've seen them appear out of the underwater gloam of the Dinner Key piers as I cleaned and scraped barnacles off boat bottoms for a living in high school. I always thought they were sharks at first. Then I'd bubble and curse into my regulator at the harmless creatures for scaring the hell out of me even as I marvelled at their size and grace.

Once I rowed right onto one. It must have been asleep in the shallows. And I must have been too quiet. They are usually on guard for noisy outboards and their whirring propellers. I was probably thinking over things, my rowing meditation period before facing the onslaught of the busy world ashore. My sixteen foot dinghy literally reared up as if I'd struck a reef. The water exploded around me. I remember falling backward off my seat as the boat lurched. I

knew what it was because I saw its huge fan tail slap the water as it made its escape.

After this episode, I longed to meet a manatee on a more friendly basis. I found they are docile, and let you approach to a point. Once poling quietly in my dinghy towards a mother and her calf once, only the playful calf let me within an oar's length for a moment.

One winter morning, Fabienne and I had our chance.

The winter wind was easy, but cold out of the southwest, the bay rippling gently. I got out of bed and went straight to the propane four burner, reached out the window to the tank, turned on the safety valve, and lit them all. Then I checked the blanket and towels we had stuffed into the chinks in the forward windows to keep out the wind. No leaks. The cats, Boutin and Gaston, mewed to be fed. I opened the curtains on the east side of the boat to let in the sun. I started some coffee. Rubbing my hands together, I opened the back door to go out on deck and pee.

Fabienne still lay in bed, as usual, looking at the ceiling, waiting for me to warm up the boat. Yawning on the deck in a sweater and underwear I took a look around. I would pee straight behind the deckhouse rather than on the side. The wind was too cold. The deck was dirty so I grabbed the bucket, swung it into the bay and scrubbed the deck with a broom. I brushed the water and dirt over the edge and looked down. I saw something so big I thought at first one of the dinghies had flipped over and sunk during the night.

A large, whiskered walrus face peered at me with little piggy eyes. It chewed on the old T-shirt we kept hanging over the side for the cats as a safety ladder.

I called out to Fabienne. She stuck her head out the door upstairs, and gasped instinctively at the sight of an animal as large as a cow. She was easily nine feet long and eight feet in girth. Manatees, or sea cows, are not petite.

We knelt and watched. A little sea lettuce for breakfast. Since we moved the boat only rarely, we didn't use toxic bottom paint to ward off clinging sea life. Our thick garden of barnacles, bright orange sponges, algae, tiny crabs, shrimp and sargeant majors seemed interesting to her as she moved to the waterline, gathering the algae between delicate lips like parsely from fine china. We were astounded that she hadn't moved off with our faces just a few feet away.

Then she did a queer thing: she stopped chewing and drifted over to the corner of the deck where the water still dripped from my morning cleaning. She opened her mouth and held it under the drops, tasting them. I realized she must have been attracted in the first place by the dripping. Manatees are known to crowd along shore for a drink wherever fresh water drips into the bay. They don't like saltwater. I ran inside, filled a jug and came back, gingerly poured a small stream right into her open mouth.

Her snout curled open and her thick tongue protruded, covered with stubble, yet trembling and soft like a human

tongue. Both snout and tongue actually cupped themselves around my trickle of water. Two oval blowholes nestled among the coarser whiskers of her sensitive nose closed when I splashed, or missed with the water, then opened quickly again like eyelids.

I was fascinated by her soft cactus tongue, blotchy white with patches of pink. It appeared to be attached to the roof of her mouth. Her tiny eyes watched me beyond the thick grey bristles of her snout. She trusted us, I could tell.

I was out of water and still she sniffed and snorted by the deck. So I ran inside and came back with almost a gallon; she swallowed it like a thimbleful. Fabienne reached down and stroked her thick, wrestler's neck. She didn't move, just kept drinking. We were both dizzy from her nearness. I wanted more.

I wanted something like that feeling I got breathing in that first blast of winter, of hauling anchorlines and feeling my muscles strain. I wanted that something that had probably lured me to boatlife in the first place.

I placed my hand on her neck.

I longed to slip into the water with her, to doze on the bottom of the Crystal River in wrinkling light, to glide over the current-smoothed limestone of an underwater cave sprinkled with Indian bones. To know what it's like to hear her baby's murmurs as they laze together in a creek columned with the slender stems of water hyacinth and lilies.

When she'd finished her water, she moved over to the cat T-shirt again where it hung from the motor mount. She began munching it like cabbage. I pulled it away before she swallowed it and gagged. We tried to feed her lettuce, but she seemed to like our boat garden better, lingering, nibbling whenever she found a tasty sponge.

When we remembered it was Monday, eight o'clock, it seemed an unforgivable crime. We had to go to work. The sun streamed in the windows, the boat warming up. We sipped coffee and chewed bagels. We could hear her chewing sounds through the hull. Everybody had breakfast. It was so delightful I decided not to go into work that day. We had no rent to pay. Work could wait.

I smiled to myself. Our home a gingerbread houseboat. I didn't mind cows in the garden.



## Michael's Channel

When Michael became president of the Dinner Key Anchorage Association, it was a case of an easygoing guru taking hold of the tail of a Tasmanian Devil. The city was accusing us of everything from harboring drug dealers and tax evaders, managing brothels, running around nude all the time (that was true), being a hazard to navigation and a debilitating moral influence upon the citizens of Coconut Grove, City of Miami.

Attacks from the city seem to go in cycles of political expediency, new incoming dockmasters, or just the plain fact that city energy is high again and their attention has been diverted from their usual occupation: seeking new sources of revenue on land. They saw the Anchorage area as a cash cow, a place to charge high rent for transient yacht moorings. One thing the City Commission understood was cash. No wonder a Grove Civic Club member called them the best commissioners money could buy.

They were after us again.

Michael cut an imposing figure and was an eloquent speaker. But he never wanted the job. He never had the heart, or lack of it, to play the political game. He always

looked for consensus to please as many as possible. His reputation as a pacifist and a believer in love and compassion for all things had become well-known in the Anchorage. He took the job because we wanted him to take it.

Diana and Richard Ruiz remained our "junkyard dogs," backing Michael in meetings with the Marina Dockmaster Jaime Reyes, Cesar Odio, the City Attorney and other officials.

The Commission itself did not deign to meet with representatives of the Anchorage. We supposed they considered that beneath them. It seemed the Commission spent its time disregarding the suggestions of its own fact-finding committee, the Waterfront Advisory Board, which more often than not ruled in our favor. They seemed to be forever dreaming up new ways to harass us. It was getting exhausting for those of us in on the struggle from the beginning, almost four years earlier.

Officials were still upset because they didn't have papers on people who lived in the Anchorage. There were no tax rolls, no bill receipts with names and addresses. There were no real addresses. I imagine they took it as a slap in the face that in 1987 many of us had managed to have the Dockmaster's Office address placed on their voter's registration cards by sympathetic election officials in the Grove. And it may have struck them as unthinkable that anyone should live in their city and not only not pay property taxes, but even remain private, anonymous. They couldn't actually define the space in which we lived. They

didn't know what to do next. Talk about being free of big government.

In their frustration, the city decided to do what it does best when it wants to destroy a neighborhood. They did it quite well when Interstate 95 was planned to snake right through the poor black neighborhoods of Miami, cutting those communities into separate pieces.

On the surface it was a move to control navigation in the Anchorage, to make it safer. But their intention was to build a road: to separate, to draw lines, to tie down and take up the living space of an amorphous community that had always defied being fence, divided up. What they proposed was a one hundred foot wide channel right through the middle of our neighborhood.

Political meetings on the *Music Man* were never efficient, smooth affairs. The channel meeting turned out to be particularly chaotic and acrimonious. As usual, there weren't enough places to sit. The dinghies banged and clattered astern in the breeze making quite a racket, but we couldn't close the back door because it would stifle the breeze moving through the boat from the bow.

A few came late and drunk. We were trying to conduct discussion in conformance to the parliamentarian Robert's

Rules of Conduct, but everyone wanted to talk. Especially the drunk ones, who also had the distinction of never doing any committee work for the DKAA.

Order was held fairly well after the minutes from the last meeting were read. Diana read news about the city's formal plan. But when "open discussion" followed, so did pandemonium.

My mother Ann had developed a reputation as a woman not to be trifled with. Anyone who anchored too close to *A Man and a Woman* or put just one anchor out, was sure to hear it from her. Her fury was legendary in the Anchorage. We were discussing whether or not a channel was a good idea. Some thought it would make it safer to row. Others didn't want the city demarcating our neighborhood. She laid into Richard Ruiz because he supported a channel that would move her boat, cut down on deep water anchoring space, and might increase boat speed and traffic in the center Anchorage. She said if they had a clear path, they would go faster.

Many people with deep-draft sailboats in the center Anchorage were angry they would have to move farther out to accomodate the channel. There was only so much deep water to go around.

Richard wasn't the only one who thought a channel was a good idea. Supporters argued that speeding motorboats driven by weekend warriors ignorant of seamanship would at least be confined to one place. Speeding boats were always a problem,

even with the MANATEE -- NO WAKE signs up. With a channel, at least everyone would know where the "road" was.

The sailboat rental companies Easy Sailing and especially Cai Svenson's Castle Harbor Rentals had long been complaining that their renters could not find their way out into the bay through the maze of anchored boats. And Anchorage residents had long complained of their boats being holed by landlubbers in rental boats. A channel was a point of contention with the Coconut Grove Sailing Club also. Every weekend a parade of Sailing Club boats tacked and chugged between the center island and the Big Island to the south through what had always been an informal channel.

It didn't seemed to matter to the pro-channel shoreside people that there were already two channels in existence: the old seaplane and main channel. Now they were pushing Odio for a third.

They saw it was their right since we were "squatters," blocking their right of way to the quickest escape route to the bay. I said, let them take five more minutes to go out existing channels. Others argued that if we gave in, we could say to the city that we were willing to compromise, that our boats were not a hazard to navigation. I argued the city already had one main, designated channel, and the old Pan Am seaplane channel to the north. Why did they need a third one for one marina and one boat ramp? I began to see many of us were searching for some kind of legitimacy. Some of us were tired of always fighting, always having to defend

a lifestyle we realized may never be understood by people ashore. We might throw them a bone, then they might leave us alone. I thought of Poland, Hitler and Neville Chamberlain.

After several hours we realized we could argue all day, but the city would move ahead with its plan regardless. It was up to the Coast Guard. This was one plan we couldn't stop with T-shirts.

My loyalties were torn between my mother and other center Anchorage dissenters, and my friends like Richard. I wanted to be liked by everybody and still be a DKAA officer, but that just wasn't working. Yet I was determined to keep my public and private self one and the same.

In the middle of all this Bobby Duresz strolled into the meeting late.

Bobby Duresz was a hard, loud drinker. He lived alone on his sailboat. His boat *Wanderer* was all he had left after he'd lost his job and his family to drugs and alcohol. He came from a prominent Miami family, grew up racing sailboats in the yacht club set, and had supported a family and a job for years. Then somehow he'd gone downhill. The Anchorage had been the safety net before the street. He'd lost some of his teeth. He yelled a lot and angered easily. His jaw had the soft, vacant set of an old man, though he was only in his forties.

Bobby plopped down right in the middle of the meeting circle, his blonde hair greasy and a beer in his hand. At first he held up his hand, swinging it around, ooohing and

aaahing for the moderator's attention like a schoolchild. The he got impatient. He began expounding in a loud, slurred voice on anything said by anybody.

We had all grown to tolerate Bobby's irascible attitude, but this channel had everyone on edge. Michael told him to wait his turn. He kept it up for at least ten minutes, vascillating in his comments from self-deprecating references to his character, how he knew we were going to throw him out, that nobody cared for his opinion, to threats of tragedy if we didn't listen to him. It was sad how much he wanted attention.

Richard Heidemann got up and pulled Bobby to his feet. To my surprise our guru president got up and grabbed Bobby's other arm. They hoisted him. Bobby stiffened, like a protester, his legs still crossed. They carried him out anyway, out the back door to the floating dock astern. "Live and let live," the unwritten motto of the Anchorage, had gone far enough for the moment.

Bobby made the best of it. Instead of rowing away, he slung a few screamed comments to the crowd about tolerance and democracy and leaped into the bay. He continued yelling about due process while he circled Music Man in a one-handed sidestroke, beer still in hand. He was a very articulate drunk. This went on for at least ten minutes before he tired and hauled himself up on the raft.

For the rest of the meeting, fingers pointed, faces turned red, and we yelled; including many of us who had never said a word to each other in anger before.

Michael's eyes looked sad, magnified behind his thick glasses. He tried to smile gamely, yet he saw his big "family" falling apart. He stood up and called out above the noise that he was sure some sort of compromise could be worked out. Somebody said he was stupid to compromise with the city. My mother Ann walked out, yelling about betrayal to Michael and me. Bobby wandered back in. Robert's Rules of Conduct was forgotten. The city had planned a physical division of the Anchorage. It was becoming clear how much more the city had in mind.

We finally decided that the Anchorage must put in its own privately-maintained channel. Though we had elected officers in the DKAA, all big issues were voted on by the entire population of interested members. Whoever showed up voted, and that was it. We as officers did the groundwork, explaining issues to residents, and negotiating, but the votes were always plebescites. I began to realize why the U.S. Congress was such a mess. And we didn't deal with real money.

The city's channel was slogging through the process of acceptance with the Federal Coast Guard Station, District Seven on Miami Beach, and sooner or later something would happen. We had to head the city off before they put in their own channel, their way. The city plan had nothing to do with



how the Anchorage was arranged, who lived where, and what areas were shallow and what areas were deep. It was the Interstate 95 version. We had to get off our butts and create again.

Michael petitioned the Coast Guard to let us put up our own channel, which would run through shallower water at a bearing of about 180 degrees due south, then dogleg a bit to the east for the last third to avoid Middle Ground shoals. We would save our precious deep water and would move fewer boats. Since our plan did not involve digging in the bay floor, which required negotiating myriads of public agencies at the local, state and federal level, our private proposal was accepted first. Privately maintained channels in Biscayne Bay were not that unusual.

Rumours had it that the predominately anglo Coast Guard on Miami Beach had endured some sour relations with the Hispanic politicos of the City of Miami. In any case, after months of letter writing, the work would begin.

One day I was rowing home past the *Measure*, a forty foot houseboat built by Ray Rogers as a houseboat and floating workshop. I saw what looked like a row of large green and red pipes leaning up inside an open-air woodshop in the stern. I rowed over for a closer look. Michael Burtt popped his head out and "halooed" me aboard.

"Look what I'm buildin'," he said. His big eyes behind his glasses creased mischievously.

"What are they?"

"It's our channel."

Six red ones for port, six green for starboard. They were large: eight inches in diameter, six-foot PVC plastic pipes. Michael had painted them with green and red enamel from the hardware store.

"They took a lot of sanding," he said.

They were a third-filled from the bottom up with cement and plugged on top. Reflective tape circled their tops and under that, their reflective, white plastic numbers shone. A heavy galvanized chain snaked out of the cement bottoms and connected to a five foot long earth screw as an anchor. Michael had designed the chains to be about twelve feet to allow for tides.

"I hope they float propah' once we get 'em in. If they float too low, you can't see 'em." He passed one of his big hands around one green one and lifted it. "If they're too high, they'll tip."

"How did you know how much cement to put in?"

"It's kinda like mixin' resin. You just know when it feels right." Michael held out his arms to his sides, hands open in a "Why, me worry?" pose and smiled. The catalyst had become a joke in the boatyard, and now we laughed over it again. Then he whispered:

"Anyway, if they're too heavy, we can hack off some of the bottom. And if they're too light, we'll unplug the tops and throw in more cement."

I patted the side of the marker, listening to the hollow thump. It sounded gratifying, like a drum. I stood there feeling strangely proud and leery of them at the same time, looking them over, fingering the enamel, hefting their chains.

When I was little, I'd wanted to be a civil engineer building dams, roads, aqueducts. Glorious, grand and perpetual. Now we would be changing the face of our community, building something lasting that would dictate the way our part of the bay would be travelled, the way its surface would look. It meant living less lightly on the earth, changing things a bit. I could see how the city had become carried away with it all ashore.

Our tiny channel still felt like a fence, a road, a cattle chute. There isn't a place in America today farther than twenty-five miles from a road. Anywhere in the continental U.S. But if we didn't put in our channel, the city would eventually put in theirs.

We used my SCUBA gear and Michael's longboat, the *Song of the Lord*. Michael had a hand-bearing compass and we just started rowing from the edge of the Big Island out in a straight line, me rowing, Michael holding the compass and telling me to pull to port or to starboard. We marked the

distance covered by boatlengths as best we could as we rowed.

When we got to the first spot, he called out and I threw the dinghy anchor, allowing for the wind swing. Then I jumped in and he handed me the tank and regulator. I strapped it on and blew the saltwater out of the regulator. Next he handed me an earth screw and a tire iron for turning the screw into the mud on the bottom. I felt like Lloyd Bridges in one of those old TV shows working in a hard hat like treasure salvors, heroes who dive deep to save their mates on the North Sea oil rig and never come up again. The heavy anchor and iron drew me down easily to the bottom.

At ten feet deep it wasn't heroics, but it felt like it. Using the tire iron as a lever through the round eye piece forged on the top of the screw, I began turning it, forcing the auger tip into the soft mud, then deeper into the gravelly understrata. It was arduous work. You weigh about one-sixth your normal weight in water, the same as on the moon. There is nothing to push against for leverage. So when you turn the tire iron, you turn yourself and not the screw. You have to use your arm and back muscles to make quick, jabbing turns with the iron, before the torque has a chance to turn your body.

I could feel the sweat, even in the water. It felt good working upside down, like flying, the air bubbles tickling my neck. There I was, turning the huge valve on the drill hole during a blowout, bubbling, burning oil jetting into

the sea all around, only seconds left, the *ping, ping* of the sonar.

I came up ready for a marker. Michael's face grinned, a marker's chain and shackle in hand.

"You got that screw all the way in?" came back in his Maine accent.

I said something like, "Pretty much," breathing heavily. I dropped the tire iron in the longboat.

"Betta' check that anchor. We don't want to lose one of these babies..."

I thought of the stainless steel eyepiece on the front of my wherry. "Do it right the first time," echoed in my ears. Damned Michael and his "propah" Maine upbringing. I grabbed the tire iron and went down again. I did get a few more turns on her, driving her eye down to just above the surface of the mud.

"How was she?"

"She was down fine." He couldn't see me putting in the extra turns on the bottom in the murky water. And I didn't want him to know.

Michael rolled a marker over the side and she floated straight and tall, just as he said they would. The chain snaked out and hit the bottom. I dove down and found the shackle at the end of it by feel in the clouds of fine mud. I unscrewed the pin from the shackle, found the white line I'd attached to the anchor with a float, and located the anchor's eye. I slipped the shackle over the eye and careful

not to drop the pin in the mud where we'd never find it, screwed it back in again. To tighten it I had to use one vise grip to hold the shackle steady, and a wrench to tighten the pin. The wrench didn't turn well in the mud. It slipped, so I had to make baby turns with it. Putting on the shackle turned out to be harder than setting the anchors.

I did five more that day, running out of air just as the last one went down. I unstrapped the tank, hung it on the side of his St. Lawrence Skiff, and hauled myself aboard, Michael leaning out on the other side of the narrow boat as a counterweight. I sat there huffing on the thwart and Michael shook my hand.

"That's a good day's work."

"Sure was," I agreed. I stood up and looked down the long line of six green markers I'd put in myself. They bobbed right in line. "Nice job lining them up, Michael."

"Just like bowling pins."

Michael put in the other side the next day. It was done.

A few rows of colored plastic pipes are lost on land amid the helter skelter of strip malls, homes and hotels. On the bay, where the only marks of man are boats, anything manmade stands out as alien. The only thing in nature that could change the beaches, cover islands and dredge new channels is a hurricane. And we hadn't had one of those in almost thirty years.

### The Ivories of *Chautauqua*

Saturday, seven forty-five p.m.: The *Star Trek* episode was a repeat. Captain Piccard stood arms folded behind the young ensign Will who sat at the controls of the *Enterprise's* shuttle. They were venturing together alone toward the surface of a new planet. Will proudly spouted out the finer technical points of flying shuttles cadet style. He'd just graduated from the Starfleet Academy. He was showing off. He said he'd had little time for studying humanities in the Academy with all the science he had to take.

Piccard complimented him on his technical expertise. Then he asked Will how would he know *why* he was flying, without the benefit of history, art and philosophy. He said man is not always in control of his destiny. He needs the arts to understand and accept what happens to him.

Diana liked Captain Piccard.

After the show was over, she changed channels to see if anything else was on. A weatherman stood next to a large swirling cloud on weather radar. She'd known there was something out there. There always were hurricanes in August.

Now she sat up in her seat. The weather stations hadn't seemed too concerned about this one two days ago.

Jesus, she thought. It's five hundred miles east of the Bahamas. All those summers we talked about how many years it had been since a hurricane had hit Miami, almost thirty years now in 1992.

The weatherman made plaid gestures towards the unseasonably mild weather in the northeast. As he leaned over to point to the New York area, his bulging midriff covered the cottonball of the approaching hurricane.

"Get out of the way you fat idiot!" she yelled at the TV. How could he talk about unseasonably mild weather when a killer storm was bearing down on her new boat, her new life?

The station saved the best for last part of the half hour. After being forced to watch Johnson's baby butt wipes, the universal appeal of a Toyota mini-van, and Austin Burke peeling off ten suits at the same time for inspection right before her eyes, the broadcasters finally spit it out:

*"Andrew is approaching the eastern edge of the outer Bahamas now, moving at nearly eighteen knots, due west, with winds of up to 150 mph and expected to strengthen. Little chance of a change of course is expected... landfall in South Florida by late Sunday. Residents in lowlying areas are required to evacuate... a category four storm... preparations must be completed and appropriate shelter found by sunset tomorrow. Repeat: evacuate to nearest shelters by sunset."*



Appropriate shelter. She hadn't been able to focus on every word, she was too hot around the head. It sounded like *War of the Worlds*: the martians have landed, follow your civil defense instructions.

"Shit," she sighed. "What a load of work to do now."

The weatherman flashed on again about batteries, tubs, masking picture windows, flashlights, shutters, gas in the car, bringing in the potted plants, pets, lawn furniture and trash cans. He mentioned about staying in the strongest part of the house, preferably a hallway.

She managed a sardonic laugh. A hallway. She had no hallway.

"I don't have to just put my lawn things away, *I have to move out*," she muttered.

The hypothetical storm preparations she'd made over the years flashed through her mind -- all her things she would have to move, her books, the DKAA archive files of their struggle, the Anchorage artwork, her three dinghies, the rafts... She thought of *Chautauqua's* wide white walls, the vulnerable, towering second story. She wasn't ready to leave.

It wasn't fear that gripped her. She was not terrified of losing her home; she'd moved many times in her life. She knew she would not be on *Chautauqua* forever. The Anchorage was like that. Sometimes you lost your boat. She wasn't afraid of dying on the streets. She would have shelter. It was change again, and she would accept it, if it came; like

losing *Calky* in the Bahamas. Only this change was coming too fast. She'd had only spent two short summers in her new life aboard *Chautauqua*. If Clem had been a Nebuchadnezzar lazing through a ten year reign of placid summers, a golden decade without hurricanes, Diana was now a slave to nature about to go wild.

Some time ago she'd made hurricane plans to go to her friend Richard Ruiz's house in West Dade on high ground. Now she was glad she had. She thought about which dinghy to take with her, and how she would leave the other two behind.

But where to start? Everyone was on their own. Already Saturday, Andrew would hit late the next day. The storm had approached so fast there wasn't time for her to get anyone to help her tow *Chautauqua* to safety. Besides, everybody was busy helping their own families, saving their own boats before being able to help others. There was just too much for everyone to do, too few engines available, in too little time. She stared outside at the lights on Key Biscayne. The too-bright lights of the Lipton tennis center that blinded the bay at night with glare seemed even more out of place. They kept them on all night sometimes. The storm might come and put them out, she thought.

It was so quiet, so peaceful. The air moved languidly in its usual summer softness. She would wait. How could it turn hard and grey in a matter of hours? She made up her mind that if early tomorrow morning the weather report said Andrew was still coming, she would give in and go.

Sunday morning, six a.m.: Andrew swirled due west, pointing straight at Miami, moving even faster than predicted. *Chautauqua* would probably not live through this, she knew. With her plywood second story, she was a gangly handicapper among the sprinters and milers of the Anchorage, the sleek sloops and low slung fishermen. The houseboat was at least twenty feet high. With no engine, there was only one way to get her out of the wind. An old island trick. She'd have to sink *Chautauqua* to save her.

She'd known it for a long time. They'd done it back in the nineteenth century on the bay to save their boats. The only quiet place would be five feet down, on the bottom. When the surge came, it'd be even deeper. If she lost the double cabin, at least she might save the hull Clem had spent so long reinforcing with cement. Then she might rebuild on that. If her gangly handicapper stayed up, she'd blow to bits.

Diana hated the idea that the boat might break loose and drift into the waterfront homes of Coral Gables. "My boat won't blow ashore and break up somebody's home," she growled as she stacked her plastic milk crates full of books, pots and pans and her toolbox into *Tamas*, one of the three wherries built on the island.

The bile of years of fighting with the city bubbled up in a grim pride. She didn't want them calling her up about

her boat; they would say *Chautauqua* was debris in their *Better Homes and Gardens* living rooms. She didn't want them proving her an irresponsible squatter, a bum, like they had always said Anchorage people were.

The move took all day. She began by arranging her dinghies. *Calusa*, the daysailer she'd built alone on the Big Island out of fiberglass, had to have her sails taken off. And she had to be sunk. Her sailing dinghy *Solar Biscuit* had built-in flotation and was unsinkable, so she hauled her up onto her extra work raft, turned her upside down, and lashed her down.

Her books, her food stores, her building materials for little boats, her radio, sheet music, the loggerhead turtle skull, Becky's fiberglass clam - she took it all. She made eight trips around the island to shore in *Tamas*, loaded down, pulling three hundred and fifty strokes each way on her heavy eight foot oars. She parked her green van by the dinghy dock. She stuffed under the seats. She piled up the roof. By the time the sun had reached the treetops in Coral Gables to the west, she'd gotten all of it. All except the spinnet.

She rowed out one last time.

When Clem and Becky had sold her *Chautauqua*, she had asked to see the bilge. Clem and she had gone over the whole boat. Diana had wanted to know her inside and out. She would have take care of her alone. She had asked to see the drain plug. Clem had taken her down to where it was near the

bottom of the boat. The plug was hidden away, like an old man's dusty pistol under the bed, waiting for that day, if it would ever come.

Diana was glad she had asked. She wondered if she could turn the plug, or if it had frozen. Then she'd be stuck and have to leave her there to brave the wind. That would be like not shooting a beloved horse with a broken leg.

Diana knew that once she pulled the plug and the tide came in high, the piano would be ruined. Whether the hurricane came or not, that was a no-win situation, so she had waited until the last minute to do it, hoping Andrew would turn, but he hadn't. It was time.

She dragged her feet into the empty houseboat. She walked past the piano. She didn't want to see the song she'd left on the music reader that day. She looked away as she knelt at the hole in the floor that was the bilge opening, keyed up and exhausted. She had been running on nervous energy all day. Her hands shook. The floorboard came up easily. She crawled down inside the dark rectangular hole.

She felt like she shouldn't be there, rooting around like a traitor down inside *Chautauqua*. She had to shove aside canvas and old sails and masts she'd stored there.

"I shouldn't be here!" she called out to no one.

The plug was right where she remembered it. She fingertipped the rimy crust on the plug, picking at it to get a clean grip. She took a breath and turned it.

Nothing.

Again. It was stuck.

Sweat ran down her face in the closed heat. She tried again.

Nothing.

"Godammit! Why does every last thing have to be so Goddamned hard out here!" she yelled out to Murphy, to Poseidon, to Mother Nature. She twisted with all her might, bracing against the wooden frame skeleton of her boat. The plug broke free and saltwater sluiced in slowly, quietly in the dark. It came in so stealthily, she later couldn't remember hearing it. But it had always been waiting.

She hurried out, bumping her head on a two by four joist on the crawl to the opening. She slammed shut the floorboard, then nailed it down so it wouldn't float away.

Up top everything looked normal. The boat didn't start going down in a whoosh. Not even a list yet. She went over to the piano, sat on the bench and lifted the lid. Under the lid sat her Turk's Head bracelet, sliced in two. Five long years fighting the city in that bracelet, she thought. It had never come off all that time. She had cut it off recently to symbolize the end of her tenure as the acknowledged leader of the Anchorage Association. She had just had enough. Now more change.

She fingered the bracelet's pieces. Part of the reason she'd stopped might soon be gone. She left the broken circle in its place to the left of the long row of black and white keys.

She'd meant to play several long pieces on the piano, but the day's nervous energy collapsed on her. She didn't feel like singing, she didn't feel like playing.

But she had to. She remembered Chopin's *Polonaise in Revolutionary Etude*. It had been her "thank you" piece for having received her piano from her father. She played it again. The notes resonated off the blank floor and walls of *Chautauqua*, not sounding at all like her *salons*, full of people and things.

She played another movement, and then it felt like it was over. She closed the lid, walked out, and climbed into her *Waterbug*, her smallest dinghy. She had other boats to sink. The sun's orange lower lip just kissed the treetops over Commodore Munroe's Barnacle. She surveyed the stately house up on the hill. It sat like a barnacle. Mare's tails floated high in the east, sure signs of changing weather. She dropped her oars, letting the blades float and dangle in the bay. Head back, she drifted, looking for swirls, for the edge of Andrew.

"You had better come now," she told him out loud, after awhile. She didn't know how long.

*Tamas* had to be sunk. She towed her over to the edge of the island. She put an anchor out forward, one aft. She filled and filled with a Clorox bottle bailer, but she wouldn't sink. She looked over at her home, still floating high. Another stubborn one. She was too tired to finish the dinghy. When Diana left, *Tamas* wallowed three quarters full.

The sun had set. Andrew was churning out there somewhere in the darkening east. She couldn't wait any longer. The wind could come up hard anytime and she would be stuck out there, struggling with her stubborn boats who did not want to sink. She was through.

As she rounded the point of the island, as she had hundreds of times before, where *Chautauqua* would always slip out of sight, Diana strained to see her in the failing light. She thought she saw her bow leaning down slightly, but she wasn't sure. She took a few more long strokes. The red setting sun made the green leaves of the mangroves maroon along the island. They looked beautiful. Another look, but a thick branch of a mangrove passed in front of her.

"Goodbye boat," she said.



## A Hurricane by Hand

NOON SUNDAY, AUGUST 23, 1992

"I'm not leavin." Danny stared at them.

The three friends, Danny, Suleiman and Rocky, sat on *Hibiscus* to discuss their plans. She was built of foam and plastic pontoons with a plywood cabin. Danny had often said she couldn't be sunk. That's the main thing for a liveaboard boat.

"You bett'a think about it, Danny. This isn't no ordinary storm. I found a place on shore and you're welcome," said his Rastafarian friend, Suleiman. He looked Ethiopian. He made flutes out of bamboo and decorated them with colored twine, selling them around the Grove.

"What'd the hurricane say to the palm tree?" Danny asked.

Suleiman frowned. "Come on, man..."

"Hold onto your nuts now, this isn't going to be any ordinary blow job!" Danny and Rocky hunched over laughing.

"My friends said you could come to the house Danny. Shit." Suleiman looked at him.

Danny composed himself. "Ahhhh, ha. Mmmm. No thanks man. It's gonna hit south, in the Keys. I know it. I been trackin' it." Danny dragged long off his cigarette and drew

it in deep, with a kind of finality. "And don't make it sound like any of ya' Revelations, end of the world shit like usual, Suleiman. I been through these before. Anyway, *Hibiscus* is everything I got. Me an' my dog Pia are stayin' home."

Danny Brousseau had lived on the street before and he didn't intend to go back without a fight. He crossed the legs of his long, bony frame and twisted his moustache tight. Though if you had told him he was nervous, he'd have jumped all over you. He was that kind of guy.

Rocky looked at Danny closely, his head cocked. "I'm gonna stay too," he said. He and Danny were old friends.

Suleiman stepped off the little houseboat and started rowing awkwardly to shore, his little dinghy tipping and yawing like a gypsy wagon on a rutty trail, all the possessions he could carry hanging over the gunnels of his cork of a dinghy.

"You all betta' listen to de radio! Bett'a row on in quick if she hits!" he called out, his Jamaican accent swinging away as the slap, slap of his oars grew fainter.

When even the most ardent procrastinators in the Anchorage realized Andrew was going to hit South Florida it was already Saturday afternoon. The hurricane would make landfall late Sunday night. By two the police had cordoned off Shell Hardware & Lumber on 27th avenue for crowd control. No more plywood, batteries, tape or anchor line to buy.

That's all the time there really was, when you got down to it - an afternoon and a day to lash it down, anchor it out, board it up, buy supplies, hole up or plain get the hell out.

I never thought I knew anyone in the Anchorage crazy enough to ride it out. Most had hightailed it to the mangroves, Howard Johnson's, friends who had cement houses, or friends with any kind of house. Most weren't so stubborn as to stay aboard.

Except Danny.

Maybe it was overconfidence, maybe braggadocio. Or maybe a feeling that he just might make it. It had been almost thirty years since the last one, over sixty years since a real killer, the Great Hurricane of '26. Danny knew chance would have to give out sometime. He just hoped it wasn't on his watch.

Danny and Rocky smoked quietly on the little deck of *Hibiscus*, watching the ripples on the water of the Cove. Feverish activity had been heating up all that Sunday morning and afternoon: people calling out, powerboats chugging past, some towing houseboats, halyards banging, sails luffing, some going north on the bay, some south, the heaving and securing of extra docklines at the Dinner Key Marina, the blasts of PA systems where captains gave orders on big Bertrams, scuttling golf carts carrying megaphoned City Marina officials - all sounding like they knew what they were doing.

Danny had lived for years in the Grove. Sometimes he lived anchored out, when he was doing well enough to have a boat. Mostly he lived where he could. In his thirties, he was an unabashed alcoholic. He liked Old Milwaukee's Best. The dock rats say it's the best because they use formaldehyde in the brewing. Just a touch of "pickling" for taste. And it's dirt cheap at less than three bucks a six.

Some shrimpers along the docks who'd had run-ins with Danny had often wished aloud for the day an act of God would take him away. They would be rid of him and there would be a spiritual, hands-off kind of justice and purity about the whole thing.

This went on for years, Danny being his obnoxious self, grinning drunk, picking fights, then getting his teeth fixed at the VA, throwing beer bottles, passing out underfoot...

EIGHT PM, SUNDAY, AUGUST 23

Rocky rowed back to his boat to get his boat and anchors ready for the storm. Danny felt tired from too much beer. A slight southeast breeze gently sougled the pines on the islands and drew light cat's paws on the water in the Cove. His tape player chattered of a hurricane somewhere the Bahamas, heading inexorably west. It had been for days. He hadn't heard much talk of a threat until the day before. Andrew had started in West Africa and after crossing four thousand miles of ocean, that thing could hit anywhere.

Danny wasn't afraid like some people when he heard the radio warnings of Andrew. He'd camped out in the worst of it all before and he was still here. Danny didn't cramp up way down deep below the stomach when the reports came in, down in the place that resides lower than the heart or liver, and feels more vulnerable:

*"Andrew expected to make landfall in the early morning hours ... reconnaissance flights indicate category four storm... wall winds in excess of 150 knots and intensifying...lowlying areas...all preparations should be completed by Sunday afternoon..."*

It would go south. He'd done too much thinking and worrying. He lay down on his bunk. He yawned and began to doze off. Probably get some gusts here from the edge, he thought, but that's all. Hell, we get ninety knots here on the bay sometimes in the summer squalls... He drifted off to the radio clutter of an ad for Sportsman's Paradise's End of Summer Blow-Out Sale.

1 A.M. MONDAY, AUGUST 24

A roaring woke him so loud it had to be inside his head. He leapt out of bed. The floor and walls of Hibiscus swung as if on hinges. He shook his beery brain and tried to light an oil lamp. Too much wind for matches. He peered out the forward hatch. She was blowing very stiff out of the north, from the island side. He shook his head again,

realizing the hinged walls were due more to the beer than the wind.

From the north. That's good, he thought. That means it's probably south of me, just like I thought it would be, he told himself. Probably just get the edges of it. He knocked out the prop stick that held up his plywood window shutter. When it slammed shut he felt the pressure in his ears.

He clambered aft to check around. Pia was up too and whining. Had he dragged anchor? The lights of the city looked familiar, but somehow different, changed. A feeling of dread crept up quick, making the hair stand up on his neck. As he stepped out on deck he looked out toward the bay. A rolling wall of sea barrelled toward *Hibiscus*.

The sea was folding over itself. More waves showed their white tips behind it, but coming from the south, almost directly opposite the wind! This he'd never seen before. His body stiffened instinctively. There was nothing to do but jump below and hold on.

It was the surge. Andrew had come.

*Hibiscus* reared up and over the first one gamely. The next wave seemed on top of the surge, and as bad as the first. Pine branches clattered against the front window. A T-shirt slapped wet and white on an aft cleat and clasped it. The trees on Sharman's Island whipped back and forth down its long length like the gray bristles on a furious maid's scrub brush washing a dirty sky. The sea hobbled

before this vicious wind, turning this way and that, as if unsure how to behave. The storm surge had added six or seven feet over a three foot high tide, and the waves were hammering over the surge itself. It was a deadly combination. The white coral rock rip-rap along shore was nowhere to be seen. That's why the island's trees look short, he thought. The island's underwater!

A sea burst the port window and *Hibiscus* started to roll, turning turtle. He had no time to think, no time to pack. The boat flipped. He couldn't even see the dinghy. He grabbed his dog Pia by the collar, crawled across the ceiling, splashing in the incoming water, and leaped out the back door into the dark. Man and dog swam in the hurricane.

They blew to Sharman's Island. Waves five or six feet high roved over the flooded ground. He found firm footing because he was tall and he threw his arms around an Australian pine. He was able to stand in the troughs, then hang onto the tree as the waves lifted him up on their crests, Pia's leash lashed around his waist. Pine branches whipped his face and the rough bark scratched his skin through his thin shirt. Danny's head and shoulders broke small branches. Their broken-off stubs jabbed at him. Something knocked him hard from behind. The dinghy had drifted to the same place. He managed to tie the floating line to a tree.

He got a foothold on a branch somewhere near the top of this watery elevator ride and hung on. He climbed up one

more and held on. The waves hit him in the back. Pia snorted and coughed as she dragged about on the leash swimming. Maybe she had a better chance on her own. He let her go. He saw her trying to keep her head up. Through the flying spray he caught a few glimpses of her paddling on the tops of waves. He knew he wouldn't see her again.

When he looked back where he had come from, there was no *Hibiscus*. Rocky's boat was gone too. In the breaks between the horizontal sheets of rain he could see no boats in the Cove.

THREE AM, MONDAY, AUGUST 24

The wind was so strong it scattered sound. The noise of flying objects hitting the trees around him, even the roar of the trees, was a pantomime. Pieces of boats kited by, but with no sound of their own, as if he was not really there. He felt like a soldier left behind in trenches being pounded deaf by artillery after the last of the troops had retreated. This was inhuman. It wasn't a time for people now, but for the sea and wind. He was an outsider, an anachronism.

The wind felt like a living force at each crest. He had known wind. He'd lived with it for seventeen years around the Anchorage. Breezes cooling him through his hatch, or a pelting rain in a thunderstorm, hail clattering,



building up little drifts of white balls in corners of the cockpit. Even that wind had been familiar, knowable. It had always been knowable. But *this* wind made him turn away, fold up. This wind had forgotten itself, forgotten his world, certainly forgotten him. It was no longer important that waves were built up according to the Beaufort Scale of wind force, that the wind obey the laws of physics. It was important only that the great hurtling continue, as if the yawning mouth of the Mother Earth herself had opened, colossally gasping for air, the wind racing to fill it, and there could not be enough.

The wind blew more solidly than the density of the sea that ran before it. The wind kneaded the bay which ran obediently in waves that couldn't get any higher because the wind rounded off their tops. Salt water swept up into the wind's giddiness. The line between water and air blurred. The bay rose into the wind and the wind burrowed into the bay. A queer greyness filled the sky from so much moving water. Danny's lungs heaved in the heavy air. Nothing was right, the way it was supposed to be.

A large pine exploded quietly to Danny's right. He never heard it in the screaming wind. He just happened to see it in the corner of his eye. The top half had disappeared downwind. The cracked trunk bent and whipped like the frayed end of a torn power cable. He looked at it with horror, as if it had been a bedroom wall caving in, or

the roof coming off. These trees were the last things between him and death.

What he recognized as a boat hatch smashed against another tree. He hugged himself closer to the leeward side of his tree. Then he saw his dinghy tilt downwind, then edge backwards up the face of a wave. The transom caught the great hurtling of water and wind at the crest, like a sail, and the little boat soared gracefully into the air, flipping over and over as it rose, as if it wanted to keep going up in the sky. It disappeared into the salty-grey wind. To Danny it looked kind of beautiful, like a circus acrobat turning somersaults, like flying was something his dinghy had always wanted to do, but hadn't had the chance.

He wanted to hold out his T-shirt and catch the wild animal and ride her too. It didn't look bad, tumbling and floating in the quiet cacaphony. He might even land ashore, maybe near the house Suleiman was staying in. It would be warm and quiet there. He could lay down, loosen his arms. He could fly there with the dinghy. Maybe look for his Pia. He felt giddy, light.

He would just relax his arms now, hold them out, catch that living wind with his palms. It would carry him. His head cracked against a small branch. Pine sap stuck across his right cheek. The pain wasn't bad. Sharp, sappy pine smell.

The dinghy. It was worth losing her, just seeing her fly.

By now his shirt had long since torn away. His arms were there only when he saw them, like a fur trapper in eighty degree below zero weather lighting a fire to survive with hands he cannot feel, only dimly recognizes as his own. Reaching shore wasn't real anymore. Swimming with those arms was a thought unimaginable. And though the town of Coconut Grove was several hundred yards away somewhere across the wind, it might as well have been back in time, and just as invisible.

He'd seen the lights go out. They didn't just go out one by one, or in a wave. They just blinked, once, twice, then utter blackness. The power had gone out at the Turkey Point nuclear plant. He wondered vaguely if the plant would still be there. Then he wondered if he would be there. How little he felt.

Towards shore, away from shore, towards the island, north, south, east or west. All was meaningless. Only his tree was important. There was no direction now, only upwind, downwind, and crosswind, wherever the wind was going:

He didn't think of dying so much as hanging on. He couldn't believe how strong nature could be. He wondered how long it could last, when Andrew would have enough of them and move on. Incredibly, the wind grew steadily stronger. It smelled sweetly rank and muddy, like bay bottom. He checked again to see if his arms were still around the tree.

SEVEN THIRTY A.M. MONDAY. AUGUST 24TH

The wind whipped, shifting from what looked like northeast to east in a matter of seconds. He wouldn't hold out much longer. The surge left as quickly as it had come. It left in the same direction, to the southeast, back to the open sea around the north end of Key Biscayne and retreating through the finger channels in the shoals of Stiltsville like a conquering army leaving a wrecked town through the only two roads in the woods.

After the surge left, the sea level dropped about eight feet. Sharman's Island had re-emerged. The wind coughed, then roared out of the southeast for awhile. He climbed down. The near light gave him strength and he ran along the beach until he found a stranded sailboat. He climbed inside, crept up to the forward vee berth and went to sleep. A pink dawn broke when Andrew finally began to abate.

Windspeed was recorded as gusting to 165 mph around four or five in the morning. That was before the anemometer blew off the National Hurricane Center about five miles southwest of the Anchorage in Coral Gables. Their huge radar dome had walked off the roof on the west side, crushed a parked car and wandered down the road like a malicious tumbleweed, wild with abandon in its robust new freedom to destroy rather than forecast destruction. Twenty miles to the south an amateur meteorologist's wind gauge in Homestead survived gusts of 218 mph before it was obliterated. By eight-thirty just a sailor's "fresh breeze" of thirty or

forty knots blew out of the south-southeast, with rainshowers from the withered trailing arms of Andrew coming through every few minutes.

There was nothing left in the Cove, except some boats in the trees. They found Rocky washed ashore in Dead Man's Canal, where the locals start looking for missing boats after bad storms. They figured he'd tried to swim to shore during the storm.

NINE-THIRTY A.M. MONDAY, AUGUST 24TH

Danny had holed up in Snake's sailboat. Dory found him curled up inside and woke him. Danny stared at her. She stared at him. She looked like she'd seen a dead man. Later she said he looked as red as a peach. His shirt was tattered and bloody. She rowed him back to shore.

"Look at them boats," Danny drawled as they rowed past the boat carnage of the Dinner Key Marina piers. He wasn't himself, all "snortin' and sputterin'."

Sixty-foot Italian megayachts sat on the splayed guts of the concrete piers as if toys placed there by children. Most of their big black windows were unbroken, "X'ed" with masking tape. Other boats lay impaled on the hardwood pilings meant to secure them. A forty-foot trimaran canted into the water, pilings pierced through its starboard ama,

its smaller, slender outboard hull. It looked like a seagull with an arrow in its wing.

Diesel fuel stung their nostrils and made purple and violet swirls on the water around the oars, but its man-smell and the calm harbor were welcoming.

"They're all wrapped up together, twingled and twined," Danny said, pointing at the boats. They rowed by a large trawler half sunk on its side named *Flip*. An anchorage resident had found the old plywood sailboat he called home upside down on top of a huge, wrecked Grand Banks trawler. Scraping noises came from behind it in the weird quiet between the now harmless gusts. He was taking the opportunity to scrape the barnacles off her bottom before someone could come and help him get it into the water again.

The mangroves along the islands were stripped of most of their leaves, decorated instead with plastic bags, Clorox bottles and other flotsam, a bathtub ring as high as a man's head left behind by the surge.

When they reached shore they found the dinghy dock had been blown away, so they tied up at the boat ramp. Two official-looking men in navy windbreakers emblazoned with big yellow lettering jumped out of a parked car.

"This is a restricted area. Off limits," the two of them said in unison, waving their arms expansively. "You're not allowed to be here."

They were well-dressed. Their close-shaven Adam's apples hopped excitedly just above their knotted ties as they talked.

Danny stared at them, standing there in his bloody, filthy shorts and shirt. He looked like he'd been dragged along the road a few miles. The agents stared back.

"Aaaaahhhaa. Ha Ha." Frick laughed insanely.

"Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms," they said, flashing badges.

"Fire marshal closed Marina. Fuel spills. Off limits."

Danny had just been getting ready to kiss the ground. This was unexpected. He smiled. "You mean I can't be here?"

"That's right, sir. Off limits. Have to leave."

"Don't you guys use the little words in-between, like normal people?"

"You can either come with us, or we'll take you," said the windbreakers, advancing.

Danny knew where he was now. "That's a hell of a reception for a ghost. I'm supposed to be dead you know. I made it through this fuckin' hurricane, I'm standin' on the solid ground of my neighborhood I've been livin' in for twenty years and you tell me I'm not supposed to be here? I *am* here, Godammit."

The windbreakers paused for a moment. Danny's raw chest heaved in and out. His big fists clenched.

"You need to get to a hospital," one said.

Danny looked down at himself. "I guess since you guys are here, I could use a ride to the VA."

On the way to the unmarked car they walked by a pelican huddled on the tarmac. With most of its feathers gone, it looked like the victim of an explosion. The trio went by not two feet away, but it only raised its head slightly, trembled a bit and lowered it. It made no move to get away.

The emergency doctor looked at his arms and chest. "Did a wall fall on this guy?"

"He was outside. On an island. Holding onto the trees," the ATF windbreakers said.

"Outside? Why?" asked the doctor.

"Guy's nuts I guess. All yours now." They strode away briskly.

"Do you feel any pain?" asked the doctor, his voice lower now.

"I feel like having a beer."

The doctor nodded thoughtfully, rubbing his chin, looking over Danny's wounds. "I can imagine."

"You don't know what hurt is."

After they bandaged his wounds and gave him a few shots, he was told to wait in a big room. They were out of beds. Another doctor came in and sat down with him. Danny decided to give it to him straight.



"Listen, just give me some pills, do whatever you guys do, then I gotta go. I gotta find my boat and my dog. Somebody'll take off with my stuff."

"Of course." The new doctor smiled, nodded his head knowingly. Then he whispered something to a nurse behind him who scribbled on a notepad. Danny caught a scrap of his words: "elopement precautions." He knew immediately he was a shrink. He'd had experience with shrinks.

He folded his arms across his chest.

"No more talk from me."

"We know you didn't evacuate when the hurricane threatened. That you stayed outside during the storm."

Nothing.

"Why didn't you find shelter?"

Nothing.

"If you answer a few questions, you'll probably get out faster."

The doctor tried for thirty minutes. Then they brought in another doctor. She looked Hispanic, about forty-five and Danny thought she was a knockout. He would talk to her.

"What made you stay out there in that storm?" she asked.

"I've been in lots of storms. I live outside."

"You know it was crazy to stay out there in that hurricane. You're a phenomenon. Lucky to be alive." She looked at him closely, like she would enjoy talking to him

for a long, long time. He didn't mind the idea, but he didn't have that kind of time.

"I have to get back and find my boat."

She clicked her pen, *click, click, click*. She looked closely at him.

Danny shifted in his seat. "You guys got any Demerol?"

She wrote some notes and looked at him musingly. "I have a nurse coming in shortly who will set you up with some painkiller."

"Ok, Ok. What do I do to get the hell out?"

"You have to get someone sane to vouch for you and sign you out, or a court order."

"I don't know where my friends are, an' they don't have telephones. None of them are sane anyway." He laughed.

"I want you to know you have a bed and a home here any time you want."

"Would you like that? If I stayed?" Danny was feeling cocky. He grinned.

"Maybe."

"Well sorry. All I got left that I know of is my shorts and what you people got on me in your computers. I got to try and find my boat." She seemed to soften. Maybe she would let him go. She started sifting through some forms.

"Did you ever have a tree explode right next to you Doc?"

She stopped sifting. "No I haven't. It must have been like a bomb."

"Never heard it. But you know what the best part is?"

"What?"

"It wasn't my tree."

When they found out he'd survived, the dock rats and shrimpers took the news with their usual resoluteness. It was a sign of Man's Destiny in his continuing battle with Himself that Danny had actually swum through a hurricane and made it. There was no moral question. Danny was here to stay. It was a thing beyond them now. They'd even found his dog Pia.

Danny waited months to tell his tale to the world. But not just because he had to grapple with the enormity of his experience, to face his own mortality, to come to terms with his own existence. He was holding out for the best deal on the talk shows, for California. Even the government wanted him as a living example of what not to do in the event of a hurricane. They wanted him to face the camera and tell millions not to do this at home. Danny, the walking public service announcement, the embodiment of the fear of every FEMA disaster manager, the public gone awry, ignoring all dictates, the man who'd swum in a hurricane.

But neither Hollywood, nor Washington came up with a ripe enough deal. So he'd held out. When they stopped driving up in tinted MPV's to his favorite drinking bench on

the docks and offering to take him out to linen lunches, he gave up. That was OK for him. He'd never liked government or TV much anyway.

He never found *Hibiscus*, or anything on her.

## Ashore

Fabienne and I moved ashore in February of 1992. We'd lived aboard for almost seven years. And she was pregnant. We moved into a townhouse in Coconut Grove just up the hill from the bay on Mary Street. We visited the houseboat and stayed out overnight sometimes. We missed the ocean and the breezes.

We also hung in the hammock and watched the mahogany tree that shaded the brick patio. I took my wherry Arete out of the water, brought her to the yard and gave her a much needed refitting. I painted her topsides glossy white, screwed in a new rubrail, glassed repairs, and painted her name in maroon letters on each side. Fabienne loved being able to plant coconut palms, gardenias, herbs and listen to songbirds. Sea birds don't like to sing, it seems. They are so much more practical. Maybe they know no one can hear them in that wide sunny vault of blue over green where there is nothing to reflect sound.

Leaving the bay was merely another change, the same as the first cold front, the way high, wispy winter clouds fray the blue sky and how squat summer nimbus grey and pillow it, the same as how bright days can turn to a grey so complete and wet no dividing line exists between sea and sky, the

same as the change that comes when friends sail away, and the same as when they come back, blowing their conch horn.

Fabienne got her nursing degree. I quit my job designing T-shirts and went back to school. I couldn't stand being bottled up in that art studio another day. I was too interested in people and nature to limit myself to one place, to stay indoors eight hours. I would never hold down one career all my life. I'd grown too used to change, to movement. I'd taken it with me to shore.

In February of that year our son Beagan was born on our bedroom floor after twenty three hours of labor. We had two midwives whom we'd grown to know and trust. They'd delivered babies from the Anchorage before. Unless there was an emergency, for Fabienne and me, going to the hospital was out of the question. We wanted to have this baby ourselves.

Then his head got stuck at the cervix for three hours and the midwives and I had a conference in the kitchen. I asked if we should go to Mercy Hospital. They said not if we didn't want to and the mother's stamina held out. I knew Fabienne wanted make it. So we went back upstairs without mentioning it. After he was born, Fabienne said she'd never considered it as a real possibility.

Once his head finally emerged, large and oblong, our midwife hooked his armpit with a finger and slid him out like a fish and up to his mother's breast. Just like a fish. He'd been conceived on the bay and spent his first eight months on the water. He wouldn't go to sleep without the

motion of his mechanical swing, or being swung by hand in his little carrier. He loved being outside. Whenever he cried, I'd take him over the threshold and he'd snuffle and stop, watching the trees sway in the wind.

On August 24th, 1992, the sea followed me to land. More change.

The stories of old hurricanes and the fearsome prospect of enduring one had grown to mythic proportions in the Anchorage. There wasn't anyone living aboard who had not experienced one elsewhere, or thought about what they would do if one came, or listened with preoccupation or with horror at sailor stories of Allen endured in the Gulf of Mexico, of Hugo in the Caribbean, of David in Dominica.

Now Andrew was coming, headed directly west on our latitude.

I'd heard Terry and Barbara's story aboard their 50' catamaran *Rendition* in the Gulf of Mexico during Hurricane Allen. It was the largest hurricane on record at the time. The wind had snapped their inch thick nylon anchor bridle in twenty foot waves. They'd worked with motorcycle helmets on deck to protect their eyes from the driving rain that hit with the force of hail. The engine wasn't enough against the wind pushing their massive, three-part hull. They couldn't

hoist sail and drifted helplessly to shore. But they were lucky. They blew onto a narrow patch of beach along a coastline composed of miles of rocks. They'd banged on the door of someone's house and survived.

On shore, the attitude was different. It had been decades since a major storm had hit Miami. Most homeowners were new to the tropics, having never been in a real storm. A tropical depression had been reported for some days, then a storm, then a hurricane, but it wasn't until the hurricane watch Saturday afternoon and evening that people invaded the hardware and lumber stores for scant supplies of plywood and nails.

It seemed unreal to some shore people that they could be threatened by nature. Miami had had so many close calls a "cry wolf" perspective had grown up around the National Hurricane Center in Coral Gables. Almost every year strained forecasters predicted possible dire results, and every year was a miss. The population had grown apathetic. Most had no reason to pay attention to anything but the daily percentage chance of rain. People talked of a storm five hundred miles east of the Bahamas in the Atlantic as if it might be something to bring in the lawn chairs and garbage cans for. They talked about all those poor people with boats who had to move them to safe harbor, about how the bridges would no open because traffic would be heavy. I don't think they realized how vulnerable their homes were. I drove around town and saw tape on windows right before the storm. Tape



wouldn't do much with out shutters to stop a five pound clay roof tile hurtling through the air. And thousands of people in South Dade stayed in homes they thought were safe, but had been built like glorified trailers by unscrupulous developers. Their roofs simply came off. They turned out to be the ones in real danger.

Most Anchorage dwellers entertained no fantasies or unfounded notions concerning the strength of their boats and the strength of wind in a hurricane. Most simply secured them and went ashore to shelter. Some liveaboards just set every anchor they had, battened down and left their boats anchored out. They rowed ashore with what we could carry, loading into vans and cars and found shelter. Some sailed their boats out to the middle of the big bay and anchored with hundreds of feet of line and their largest anchors, or tying up to the steel girders of channel markers, hoping for the best. They gambled surviving the full force of the wind against the high likelihood of collision with other boats that might break loose in more crowded areas.

Some went to the mangroves in the Coral Gables Waterway, even though there had been rumors the rich residents would have the Coast Guard chain off the entranceway before a hurricane to protect their homes from boat damage. They never did.

Some horn-blasted their way through the bridges of the crowded Miami River, shoving past rusting freighters, past Haitian boats, past Cold Spot. Miami city officials

announced that boaters should stay away in case they had to open the floodgates in heavy rains. They never did, for Andrew turned out to be a dry, fast storm.

Some sailed south for miles to Matheson Hammock, Caesar's Creek, Key Largo and Jewfish Creek, searching for hurricane "holes" among the mangroves along the less developed southern part of the bay - and, it would unfold, right into the eye of the hurricane.

I spent all day Sunday, the day of the storm, with Joel readying our boats. Since his sailboat *Phyllis Louise* was mobile, he brought her to the Coral Gables Waterway and hid her in the mangroves. We used my old power dinghy and his one working outboard off *Louise* to tow Veronique's houseboat, *First Experience* and my houseboat, *The Floating Bed*, behind the northernmost spoil island near Monty's Bayshore Restaurant. We tied Veronique's boat to the mangroves and put out two anchors. I didn't really consider sinking her as Diana had done. I was relying on snuggling her up to the island and letting her swing with the wind. With her high profile, she had to face the wind or she'd capsize. If I gave in a little and let her move, rather than tightly hobble her, perhaps she could save herself.

It was sweltering, bright and clear. A slight breeze and typical summer late morning in the Anchorage. It didn't

seem possible a storm was coming. I put on my snorkle gear. My sweat dropped into my facemask. The water was almost hot from the late summer heat. I laid out a sixty pound pick anchor with eighty feet of line and thirty of chain, another pick with the same line and chain about 120 degrees off the former, and the third and last line, one hundred feet of 5/8" nylon went to a large mangrove on the island.

The wind in a hurricane moves in a counterclockwise direction, at roughly 45 degree angles to the center. It is possible to predict the direction and even force of the winds by the center's location in relation to you. I considered Andrew's latitude, slightly south of ours, and the fact that the pressure system to its north had held it on its due west course for four days, and bet on it hitting somewhere south. Then the worst winds would be in the northwest quadrant, coming from the northwest and north, and my line to the tree and island would take the most pressure, which was what I preferred.

If Andrew passed to the north, the wind would blow from the west where all boats were stored. One would surely hit me, pull my boat loose, or bang her to death. The third scenario, where the eye would pass directly over, didn't take much figuring. Then it wouldn't matter what I did. I'd made my choice and stuck by it.

I slipped rubber hose on the line where it wrapped around the tree's trunk to stop chafe, the sailor's enemy. I wrapped towels around the lines where they lay fast to the

cleats on deck. I couldn't get all our stuff off the boat. There just wasn't time with the other boats we had to move. We spent about three hours anchoring the two houseboats. We tied a big skiff to the island, too big to carry ashore. We loaded three dinghies on Joel's pickup truck. By then several others had joined us. We looked like refugees, three of us in the cab, and three up top sitting on the lashed down dinghies. And we were.

It was four in the afternoon before we'd dropped off friends and dinghies to various houses they would shelter in. Joel went on to help a friend board up her house. Veronique came with Ann, Fabienne, Beagan and myself to ride out the storm in the townhouse. Arete sat safely in the yard of the townhouse filled with water so she wouldn't blow away. The storm was scheduled to hit that night. I was nearly exhausted. The next job was to shut up the house.

I felt a lot safer on land with all that wind coming. I looked with relief at the blocks of our walls, cement dust blowing around my drill as I perched on a ladder for hours preparing holes to bolt to plywood for all the windows. I crawled into the attic and plugged up the ventilator hole in the roof with screws and caulking. Ann took down the awning out back. I put up sheet after sheet of plywood over windows, hands shaking, crawling up and down the ladder again and again. Fabienne busied herself with Beagan, by then almost six months old and a full-time job himself. Tree trimmer chainsaws whined all that afternoon until dark,

pruning the web of trees that had grown for thirty years in the Grove without a storm. By the time our new home was shut up, shutters drawn, plywood up, it was almost nine o'clock.

We took bedding downstairs to the only room that had a poured cement roof. We stacked important files and papers in a corner, set up a battery powered TV and made a bed for the baby in another corner. Beagan cried having to go to bed in an unusual place. I jammed a mattress against the only window and jammed the bed against the mattress. There wasn't anything else to do. The work was over. I tried to picture what the Anchorage looked like, desolate and nearly emptied, clouds scudding in, rainpocks on the surface of the bay turning into white foam, waves, long streaks of windblown white. We lay on the floor watching the news, watching the weathermen in their weather bunkers watching Andrew.

The wind came up about ten o'clock. It sounded like a heavy thunderstorm. Every once in a while a mango or avocado thudded against a plywood window. A branch broke.

I fell asleep, too tired and too safe not to sleep. I'd waited out so many bad storms on our boat, watching waves crash, feeling the boat heel in gusts, wondering if we'd drag, or be dragged upon. In the house I felt like Huckleberry Finn, used to running away in the cold rain, but finding a cave on Jackson's Island and warming it with a fire.

I awoke to transformers exploding. The power went off at 3:20 am. by the digital clock in the livingroom. Beagan

slept throughout. I went back to sleep. Then around four-thirty something woke me. It may have been the wind, then much louder, rattling the plywood windows, or a mango smacking the room's window. I turned on the little TV and Rick Sanchez on Channel 7 News sat in a bunker. The satellite photo beside him showed Andrew. The eye looked like it was right over the place on the map detailed "MIA." I thought to myself, Oh my God - it's right over us. I listened to the wind pounding. This was the worst of it, maybe. Or we were about to get the worst of it, the wall winds of the eye. The boat was surely gone by now.

I had steeled myself years before into accepting that we might someday be homeless. We became gradually inured to that staggering idea from countless days of rowing home after storms, wondering if our boat would still be there. We had grown to accept losing her, as well as one may accept a loss like that. It was part of living like we did. It was ironic that the time had come, but we didn't need her anymore.

We hadn't always been prepared to lose her. When Hurricane Floyd had threatened, the shuttle was in service. We'd paid a shrimper \$120 to tow us up the Coral Gables Waterway. We went far up that canal, at least a mile inland, before we tied her to the mangroves. And we stayed on her, Fabienne and I. We parked the car nearby and we had our dinghy. If the storm had come too close we could get off, row to shore and go to a motel. But it was 10 pm before we

knew it had missed us, roaring over Key West with 90 mph winds. We would have been in trouble leaving in that wind at night. We had been rationalizing, hoping our presence on board would help her. We had not been ready to give her up. After I thought about it, I knew I'd been stupid. I'd risked our lives needlessly. It was me who had brought her to Miami. I had vowed never to stay aboard waiting for a hurricane again.

Rick Sanchez kept talking, lightning interrupting often. I turned it up to drown out the wailing and pounding outside. The announcer woke everybody in the room, except Beagan. The Hurricane Center reported winds of 165 mph. They'd lost their radar dome. The Turkey Point nuclear power plant had lost power itself and was running on diesel generators to cool the reactors. They had no contact with the outside world.

But Miami, though damaged, was still standing. We were holding on. We watched that little five inch screen as if it were a thin line over the edge of a cliff and we hung on it; as if concentrating on the play by play human analysis of what was happening to us could actually save us from being annihilated. After all, how can you watch yourself getting killed? It would be like any movie: we'd watch, enjoy it, and the end would be a Hollywood one and we'd all go home.

I told no one to go out of the little bedroom we were all camped in unless it was necessary to go to the kitchen. I worried about tornadoes that lurked in thunderstorms

imbedded in the hurricane. I liked that downstairs concrete room. At any moment the wind could tear off the upstairs roof of wood and tar paper and the townhouse would become a high-speed blender of wet sheets, papers, chairs, insulation, paintings, ceiling pieces, books and tiles.

We would be safe in the concrete room. It felt so much *thicker* than the boat. Heavier. And it didn't move. The bay down the street would not reach us at our twenty foot elevation on the Cutler Ridge.

Tree branches and flying fruit hit the windows and walls more frequently and violently. I wondered if the plywood I'd bolted in that day would hold. Had I been too tired? Had I cut corners, drilled too shallow into the concrete? Either they would hold, or not. I had to trust them, like my splices on anchorlines. The wind tugged at their edges.

By dawn the wind didn't seem so deadly. I ventured to open the front door to peek out, but the pressure I felt after I unlatched it changed my mind. By nine everybody wanted out to see what had happened. It was still blowing hard, but it didn't look too dangerous, just grey, the low clouds hurrying by. I stayed with Beagan in the house while Ann, Veronique and Fabienne walked to the waterfront to see if our boats had survived.

Ann was the first one back. She said she couldn't believe it, but our houseboat had made it, and so had Veronique's. I couldn't believe it either. I wanted to see



it. We bundled Beagan in the stroller and began to pick our way out among the fallen trees. The parking lot was blocked by trees and no one could drive. We lifted the stroller over them and moved on, down Mary Street, toward the bay.

People walked in little groups. The streets were green with leaves, draped with fallen trunks and in some cases blocked completely by uprooted banyan and ficus trees with their dense tops. Powerlines lay on the street in places so we avoided puddles. Rain and gusts blew in between clearings among the clouds, the trailing arms of the hurricane. Few vehicles were out. It wasn't possible to drive most streets. The dense foliage of the Grove lay devastated. I saw buildings I never knew existed. Poinciana trees stood stark and leafless, as if it was winter. A parked Volkswagen sat crushed under an avocado tree.

It took us forty-five minutes to make it the few blocks to the bay. Yet the damage on land in our neighborhood was nothing compared to what South Dade had suffered. But our waterfront had taken it badly.

A massive line of seaweed and sand, interspersed with flotsam and wrecked sailboats, marked the height of the surge just above the hill where the Coconut Grove Bank teller drive-through was. I recognized one of Cai's Castle Harbor rental boats there, but none from the Anchorage. At dawn the surge had ebbed from its eight foot maximum and was now tamely slapping at the seawall.

We made our way toward Miami City Hall where I knew I could see the boat. The wind blew the smell of gasoline and diesel to us from the Dinner Key Marina. We could see sailboat masts pointing in all directions as we swung the stroller over another tree. Then a lot more debris: boat cushions, deckboxes, a flaregun, nylon lines, rolls of masking tape, full bottles of sunscreen, an entire cabin of a wooden powerboat, minus its hull, bottles of motor oil and waterlogged cars that had been parked underwater near City Hall. Onlookers and the curious picked through the piles for anything valuable.

Many marina tenants had left their boats at the piers because the State of Florida had changed its policy of mandatory evacuation at a hurricane warning. Planners had concluded there just weren't enough safe places to hide boats anymore in Miami outside of marinas, a realization we in the Anchorage had accepted for years. They concluded risk to life and limb for amateur boatowners vainly searching for refuge space at the last minute before a storm was too great. Too many people had boats in Miami, and with concrete seawalls and new development rampant from growth-happy local governments, mangrove creeks, the safest places for a boat, had become harder and harder to find. Homeowners along Biscayne Bay wanted clean, cement barriers to the sea, not smelly, buggy mangroves which were nurseries to fish and havens to boaters.

The piers lay strewn with a chaos of boats. Stranded sailboats vied with cars filled with seaweed for spaces in the parking lot. Boats canted on pilings, impaled. Boats sat on cars. Others rocked in their slip, tied neatly, with no visible damage. There was just no explaining that.

I found the *Floating Bed* at anchor where I had left her, pointing into the wind that now blew out of the southeast about thirty to forty knots, as if nothing had happened and Andrew had been just another storm.

Veronique's houseboat would have been fine, but she had one side completely torn up by powerboat that had come to tie up too late. Its owner was a lawyer. The boat's name was *Bankruptcy IV*. He hadn't even bothered with his own anchor, which had stayed on his bowsprit. He hadn't tied to the mangroves. He had chosen to snuggle up to Veronique's boat instead, tying directly to hers. Joel and Veronique found his house later and asked him for some money for repairs. He denied the whole thing. They ended up fiberglassing, grinding and painting her themselves.

Joel and I towed both the houseboats back to the South Anchorage two days later. When I rounded the tip of the Big Island as I had done hundreds of times before, I entered a place I didn't recognize. The familiar treeline along Key Biscayne's park was gone. It looked like the island had been scraped. The Cape Florida lighthouse jutted up from the end of the island like an exclamation mark. Before it had been hidden by trees. Mangroves along the spoil islands' edges

had fallen and sailboats lay on them like gangly, dead herons.

In the Anchorage itself I found open space. A few boats lay anchored near the channel marker, early returnees from the canals and mangrove creeks, but our part of the bay was almost empty. No Anchorage.

We rounded slowly in the roiled, muddy water. We had to go slow for underwater wrecks. They sloshed just at the surface in several places. I stood on the foredeck, anchors ready to lower when I got to the right place. But where was it? I looked around without bearings. With no boats it was difficult to judge distance from the island, where I wanted to be. I told myself I could anchor wherever I wanted now. No one would crowd me. I could have the choice places. But what had made each place special was gone. I needed my neighbors to know where I wanted to be.

I wasn't sad, so much as refreshed. It felt light and airy to be there - open. I drank in the transformation, the clearing out and washing away of years of accumulated activity and human dross.

This bit of misanthropy was tempered by the knowledge that Anchorage people were returning and the neighborhood would be back, though in a new form. We would be survivors of something terrifically powerful we had all shared together.

Two days after the hurricane I rowed by the spot where *Chautauqua* had been. Her orange anchorball still floated

there, but I had to row around in a circle to find the hull. Where she lay in her anchor swing depended on where Andrew's wind finally took her down. I found the hull facing east-southeast, a bit to eastward of Andrew's strongest winds. The island had obviously done her best to protect her from the strongest wind out of the north and northeast, as it always had in winters. But when Andrew's wind had easted, nothing but open water had stood between *Chautauqua* and 165 mph winds.

The thin fiberglass and plywood sides of the hull waved brokenly just under the surface. It was destroyed. The two huge aloe plants that had flanked Clem on his bathtub roof when she'd been *Gallifrey* sat upright in the mud underwater, still in their pots, their spikes still reaching up to the sun. There was no deck anymore. The cabin itself was gone. The hull lay, an open casket, out of reach from the wind and waves that had wrecked her. She would become a spongy home for puffer fish and stone crab.

Diana came back to the Anchorage Monday night. Billy Warner's *Tradewinds*, the *Scharhorn*, an old North Sea steel schooner, Screaming Ray's old houseboat, an absentee catamaran and several other boats had ridden out Andrew at anchor. Diana slept aboard Billy's boat temporarily.

She found parts of her roof on the island. Some looters had stolen the propane tank that had been stored on it. She found parts of a wall somewhere else. She dove on *Chautauqua*, what was left of her, for the anchors.

I had been scavenging along Bayshore Drive before the National Guard had put it off limits. I found the spinnet there. The keyboard was gone. The piano must have blown and floated straight over the pines of the island, judging from her final resting place in front of the Yacht Harbor Condominiums.

I knew right away it was Diana's piano. It lay covered with seaweed. I took a picture with film I'd bought from some guy taking black and white photos for insurance. My camera had been empty when Andrew hit.

Joel and I tooled around in his skiff for days afterward, towing boats, helping people look for boats, and generally having a blast. I found a Northill anchor and chain that had broken loose from somebody's boat. Joel found a windlass and a stainless Danforth anchor.

We found my sister Heideloh's 28" Columbia where it had been deposited, about three hundred feet into the yard of a very wealthy landowner along the bay. Though she didn't live aboard her, she still loved that boat. Turtle grass and seaweed that had blown from the bay floated so thick against his seawall that I could not get the boat through it. The floating raft so wide that when the landowner saw us and I yelled for his address so we could come later by land, I could barely hear him.

Heideloh's boat had been dismasted, the foredeck gone from the cleat pulling out, and her rudder post had bent. Other than ripping up his grass, her boat had done no

damage. Another Anchorage boat had maddened that man. He kept his prized Star racing sailboat in a poured concrete garage, yet one of our boats had managed to bang down the door and one of the supporting columns, damaging its long, slender nose. He asked me if I knew who the owner was. I said I didn't know. And I didn't. He had Heideloh's boat lifted out with a crane about four days later and we towed her back to the Anchorage.

During the six months I'd been away I'd felt like an outsider when I met a boater friend on the street. They were just as friendly, but it wasn't the same. I had missed the camaraderie dreadfully. But the storm had turned back time. I was in the club, one of the survivors. I felt like I had never left.

Later that week I found Diana and gave her the grayish picture. For some reason the keyboard had disappeared from the seaweed. The photo was washed out, exhausted of color, as if it had been underwater itself.

"Thanks," she said. "It's definitely her. I can't believe she made it to shore." She took out a book out of her shore bag and carefully placed the photo in it.

"Did I tell you I'm saving up for an electric keyboard? They're portable."

"No, you didn't. That's great."

She gave me that cockeyed look she always gave and a warm smile. She was happy.

I had been in my house. I hadn't lost my boat. I had no damage to my life, other than no air conditioning. I'd lived without that before. I had been elated by the adventure of the storm. But Diana had lost her home. Yet we seemed of the same mind.

She stared up at me excitedly. "I couldn't stay on shore another night. When I got back to the Anchorage, it was like a new place. The neighborhood was gone. In a way, it felt great, like a purging. All those years, now starting new. It's like going back in time. The city's completely dark at night now. I never knew it could be so dark. I have never seen the stars like that before. It's really beautiful."

The word from the city was no one was allowed on the bay unless they had an official reason, because of wrecks and the threat of fire from spilled fuel. The Dinner Key Marina became off-limits as the National Guard moved in and pimply faced eighteen year-olds with M-16's sweated in the sun and shook their heads at us as we tried to get to our boats, order of the City of Miami Fire Department. Anchorage people were being told they couldn't get to their homes.

Diana took the lead, as she always had. She found the city's Fire Marshal, went downtown and persuaded him draw up a list of Anchorage residents who had to go out to their



boats and get water from the marina. When each of the soldiers on duty had a copy, we'd give our names and they'd let us go in. Later they issued hospital-like wristbands. That list is still the most complete one we have of who lived in the Anchorage at the time.

Many liveaboards were left homeless and without water, or bathroom facilities. There was no emergency help from the city for Anchorage residents after the storm. There was even some evidence that the city was actively preventing emergency help from reaching the Anchorage. One official was quoted as saying: "Those people don't need any help. They can rub two sticks together and make fire."

Strengthened by her success at circumventing the Fire Department's closure of the waterfront at the marina, Diana again took matters into her own hands. She arranged an Army Corps of Engineers sanitary trailer with bathrooms, showers and tents. They parked it in the lot near the dinghy dock. Now at least there were toilets.

The City of Miami then promptly sent a letter to the Corps saying it hadn't been notified of the trailer's existence and that proper protocol had not been followed. They had it removed. The Corps never brought it back.

At her wit's end, she called up friends at Sea Grant, a non-profit research organization out of the Florida public university at Gainesville. They had worked with the DKAA before on contentious issues with the city. She called them for help.

Sea Grant found no one in the city government would commit to allowing the military to offer aid to homeless boaters. Anyone who called to get the City Manager to do something got the run around.

Joe McManus of the City of Miami's Planning and Zoning Department found out Sea Grant was coming down all the way from Gainesville to bring emergency supplies and food to Anchorage people. McManus let the city's real perception of the Anchorage out of the bag at an emergency meeting between Sea Grant, the city and Anchorage residents:

"Quite frankly, we are happy because this is a chance for the city to get rid of the Anchorage - and don't expect us to feed the Anchorage," referring to Sea Grant's efforts. He went on to say, "You can quote me - they are thieves; they come ashore and rob tenants at the marina. Sea Grant is 200 years behind the times. We are getting rid of the Anchorage. This is a golden opportunity." The people standing around the parking lot were amazed to hear this. Including Sea Grant. They helped us anyway.

Hurricane Andrew effectively ended the City of Miami's tenuously constructive relationship with the Anchorage. There is no more shore services agreement. The Anchorage showers under City Hall were never re-opened after the storm. As in the past, there is still no functioning sewage pump out station at the marina at the time of this writing. Talk is going around of city plans to develop the spoil

islands, as well as building a bridge out to the Big Island and putting in a parking lot.

The Dinner Key Boatyard at the old Merrill Stevens yard employs many Anchorage residents. Housed in the old Pan Am clipper ship hangars, the local boating industry shops are fighting for their lives as the City Commission is recommending the historic hangars be torn down for commercial development.

I called the marina Dock Office almost two years after the hurricane. I asked them about the Anchorage. The man on the other end of the line tersely said, "We don't know anything about those people. The Anchorage is on its own now." I gave a wry chuckle after that and thanked him.

We always had been.

The Anchorage's struggle has now bloomed into wrangling with the State of Florida. The state is now drafting legislation to regulate boating and anchoring all over Florida. Limiting where and how long boaters and liveaboards may anchor has become a nationwide issue of the use of the commons. The private use of public space is a new frontier, and the waterfronts are the battlefields. Given Florida's tropical climate, thousands of miles of coastline and expanding population, the idea of government prohibiting people from living on the sea, if they harm no one, is little removed from the absurd.

For weeks afterward Anchorage people got together and talked of the storm, or rather the aftermath, as few

actually witnessed the storm itself. Many of the "floaters" were gone, their boats blown who knew where, their owners unable to replace them. Soem who had applied for FEMA money got new boats. And some left, like a young single mother with a three year old boy who was so terrified and depressed by the storm and devastation she got in her van and drove to her parent's house in Virginia and stayed there for months before she would come back.

The dinghy dock had been lifted off its pilings and deposited in the little park next to Bayshore Drive in pieces, with several dinghies still tied to her. The City of Miami had a plan to cut up the dock with chainsaws. They were about to carry it out when Chris Mann, our official "Dockmaster," heard about it, organized some residents, found a boat trailer and manhandled the dock onto the trailer in pieces. They then backed the trailer into the water by hand, and offloaded the pieces in the water. When they were all in, he bolted them together again himself, moored it to the old pilings, and tied up the dinghies that could still float.

Always the entrepreneur, Chris put an ad on the bulletin board which had survived the storm because Joel had built it so well. It read: *"Hercules Mooring Systems. The best anchoring system on the bay. Survived Hurricane Andrew. See Chris Mann in the South Anchorage or leave a message on the board."*

Chris had anchored *Tradewinds* and another boat in the Anchorage. Both had survived the hurricane at anchor.

Brad Davis, former caretaker of Soldier Key, had holed up in No Name Harbor on Key Biscayne behind an entire forest of fifty foot Australian pines. Andrew's winds and surge made that island disappear, leveled all the pines, put Brad's 38' epoxy and wood ketch *Eryngo* up on the rocks and nearly killed him. His boat was damaged severely. He eventually sold her and went out west to Oregon.

Michael Burt had taken refuge ashore. He later salvaged a small powerboat hull similar to his old one and built himself another cabin. His was a disposable boat. In two weeks he was back to normal.

We put up Diana on our houseboat until she could find another of her own. She would apply for FEMA money and after six months she had herself another boat. Not as large as *Chautauqua* had been, but she liked it. She bought herself a new piano, an electric one and two solar panels to run it.

Maurice and Ellen, with their two boys and two dogs, had been among the few to stay aboard during Andrew. The wind and surge had driven them up into the trees where the boat had turned over. One of the dogs escaped into the hurricane and was lost. When the surge had receded, their boat was almost totally destroyed, upside down and in the pines. They eventually got her down, in the water again. They lived in their Stepvan. They used their FEMA money for a lost household to repair her, a process that continued for

five months through that Christmas. I remember rowing by the lee of Sand Island where they had her tied up. She was still partially dismasted and heavily damaged. A small, decorated christmas tree stood guyed up with line on the foredeck. The boys waved.

They later told me how much they had put into their little boat and how much they loved her. They said they could not bring themselves to leave her.

Danny Brousseau still hung around the docks. Some things hadn't changed. He got another boat and anchored in the Cove again. Making it through Andrew had changed him. He told me he'll never underestimate the power of nature again.

The *Music Man* had broken loose from her huge chains and danforths, dragging a 45' trimaran with her as well as Captain Midnight's boat with his shepherds. Midnight had stayed aboard that night. After the heavy ferrocement houseboat broke his lines, the three boats drifted together at least six miles to the shores of Coral Gables, where they passed over the seawall on the swollen waves and ended up in the mangroves. The story went that Midnight, clad only in his underwear, knocked on doors for help in a nearby affluent neighborhood, followed by his surviving shepherds. What kind of reception he got only he knows. He now lives in a Buick with his dogs.

The *Music Man* was later found by helicopter, as many Anchorage boats were that had blown too far inland to find by boat. Nothing remained of her but concrete pieces.

Sharman took refuge ashore. He now continues his bachelor life aboard a small houseboat, giving massages at the Farmer's Market and pursuing his civic activism. He visits his kids Winn and Jambu up in central Florida regularly, and they come to his boat with him. After losing their boat, Dori and her new boyfriend Snake had gone to live on a small piece of land in a trailer somewhere near the Caloosahatchee River.

Ray Holly lost his houseboat of seventeen years. He'd had no engine and too little money to tow her. She just blew away. He went up north near his family in Tennessee, stayed there over a year, but has since returned. When I saw he'd come back, he told me: "It's too damned cold up there, shovelin' snow and freezin' in your skivvies!" He smiled and hugged himself. "So I came back." He's now on a houseboat in the Cove. His grown son Calvin has been spending a lot of time with him.

My mother Ann had sold *A Man and A Woman* two weeks before Andrew. She couldn't keep up the boat alone after her third husband, Billy McLean, died of cancer. She has shared the townhouse with us for several years now, playing with her grandson Beagan and retaking hold of her life.

People have often wondered about her timing in selling her boat. It appears to be coincidence. I think it was something else. She told me she knew a shift was coming and it was the right time. It was a prescience she'd learned to feel from living inside that boat for fifteen years.

Sandy Groves died of bone cancer before the hurricane. Someone had taken over *Neshameh*, but she was lost in the storm.

A South African who was new to the Anchorage had taken his catamaran south on the bay to Elliott Key to hide her in the famous hurricane hole aptly called the "Keyhole." He had an East German with him who'd flown in from Seattle to buy his boat. They stayed on the boat together, thinking they were safe in that hole, protected from all sides. But the surge had been high, as much as sixteen feet at the Deering Estate a bit farther south on the coast. Elliott Key, a low, barrier island, though well covered with trees, became no better protection than the open bay when the sea rose. The cataraman flipped over, trapping them inside. They were rocked by the tremendous wind inside the flooded hulls. Then it became calm. They ventured out into the sun. But it was only the eye of the hurricane. The wind came back with a vengeance from the opposite direction and forced them back into the boat, which by then lying on top of the mangroves. They rode out the other half of the storm trapped inside and lived to tell about it.

A one hundred and twenty foot steel French peniche, or Seine river cargo boat, named *Diderot*, squatted in the middle of the old Merrill Stevens boatyard, across the harbor from where I anchored the *Floating Bed*. Anchor chains stretched out tight from her huge hull like Gulliver in Lilliput: three hundred feet of inch thick ship's chain



leading to a two-hundred pound pick anchor. The anchor had caught and jammed on the concrete seawall like a mountain piton when she'd floated over it in the surge. The three foot thick concrete wall cracked and crumbled under the heavy fluke.

Dock rats who lived on the street hid wherever they could. One I knew sat in a van and watched the wind and water rise. When the surge began rushing over the seawall, he and his friend drove to a partially abandoned, RTC foreclosed condominium's lobby where they took shelter.

Claude, a Canadian sailor on a catamaran who was a good friend of mine, spent all evening Sunday getting his boat secure, tying up behind the Big Island, as many in the Anchorage did. He wasn't through until after ten, and by then the outer edge of the storm had arrived. He managed to ride his bike up to the Coconut Grove station of the City of Miami police in the heavy wind and rain, but was refused shelter there. Then he rode down the street to the Hare Krishna Temple where he often had his vegetarian dinner. They made him welcome.

The Commodore's Barnacle sustained little damage in its tenacious hold on top of its hill overlooking the South Anchorage. And the boathouse fared well also: the guy wires and ship's chainplates held the sides up and the breakaway front and rear walls did just that, allowing the surge to roll through unimpeded. The state historical people who run

the museum merely had to replace the rear planks and double front doors on the first floor.

Ransom-Everglades, as it is now called, is now co-ed, which I think is much better than the boy's school I once attended. It still has its Pagoda, which survived, as it had so many hurricanes before. I wonder if anyone heard her whistle.