

The Yacht

by H. W. Moss

The wind blew hot through Long Beach that summer. It was an annual event, this dry air coming from inland, rushing toward the ocean, known as the Santa Annas unless you were raised around there and then they were called Santanas. It remained hot even at night.

Fredrick knocked on the front door and Ramone peeked through the small grate. “Hey, bro. C’mon in. Long time no see, pard.” The men did a ritual clasp of fingertips that slid into a palm press with thumbs hooked which gave way to a curled finger tug that collapsed on itself in an embrace, a hug of friendship. “Lance and some new dudes in the living room toking. You looking to score?” Ramone thumped Fredrick’s back several times.

“Yah, Donna sent me to get a lid. Got any shit for sale?”

“Indeed we do, we do indeed.”

Fredrick thumbed over his shoulder, turned in the doorway before Ramone could shut it behind him. “Nice ride. Whose is it?”

The house was set quite a ways back from Redondo Avenue and the cement driveway was long and double wide. There were two beaters and a pickup as well as a nice looking machine that was completely out of place. “Oh, yah, the Jag. Lance landed a sweet Hollywood deal.”

“Some movie star?”

“Stella Stevens. He’s painting her short with psychedelic paisleys.”

Fredrick took the information in without comment.

Lance was sitting on the couch so Fredrick plopped down beside him. The room was dark and smoky with tobacco and marijuana as Janis sang “Ball and Chain” in the background. A hissing sound alerted Fredrick to the joint, half gone, being passed. Of the six people in the room, all but one was comfortably ensconced in one of the many overstuffed chairs or pillow mounds. This one man rested in the center of the room on his haunches in a position Fredrick, who was athletic and considered himself fit and limber, thought might be impossible to achieve let alone hold for any length of time. The man in the middle took the roach, sucked a long lung full, passed it to Lance who was unaware it was coming his way. Nonetheless, he was pleased to draw on it before he passed it on.

“S’good shit,” Fredrick said through clenched teeth. Exhaled smoke filled the air in front of him. “So, I need to cop a lid,” he said.

Lance’s eyes were at half mast as he nodded in agreement. “Price went up today. Twenny a ounce.”

Fredrick did a double take, said “What!? Twenty dollars! Why? How come so much? It was fifteen last time I was here.”

“Like you said, s’good shit. This is opium dipped Thai stick direct from Bangkok. Boys here say they can cop a key or two for us, but it’s expensive. Dipped in opium, right Mark?”

The man squatting in the middle of the room had a muscular body that appeared sculpted by weight training. He wore a tee shirt and Fredrick could see a tattoo on his arm just below the shoulder, but he could not read the insignia surrounding the drawing.

“That’s right, only the best shit. We can get ten keys if you want,” Mark replied with a winsome smile. He appeared comfortable in the unusual resting position, his tail dropped down behind him, his elbows resting on his knees. He began to sway back and forth like a swing. “We can get you a hundred keys. A thousand keys.”

“One to start,” Lance said in a businesslike tone. “We’ll see how it goes after that.” He removed several flat oval shaped dry green leaves from a baggie in his lap, opened his mouth and filled his cheek.

“Whatcha got there, Lance?” Fredrick asked.

“Coca leaf. We’re seeing if it’s any good and if we want to import it.”

The roach was across the room when Lindsay, the only woman present, said, “Hey, don’t Bogart that joint. Pass it over to me.”

“Nice lyrics,” a voice from deep within a pillow pile said with a laugh. “Family of Man, right?”

Mark said, “Kerry Dane knows all the songs on that album. We used to sing ’em in camp.”

“What camp?” Frederick asked.

“Fire base along the DMZ.”

“Fuckin’ Nixon. Fuckin’ Nam,” the voice from the pillows remarked to no one in particular.

Fredrick was impressed. He had spent the last three years dodging the draft as a student. Here were men who had actually been in the war. “You guys did a stint in Vietnam?” he asked as the joint reached the guy lying amid the pillows.

“Me and Mark, yah,” the man identified as Kerry said sitting up in the soft mound. “We were in the Marines, did a tour in country together. Got our DD-214’s last month, so it’s official. Thought we’d make some money off our connections is why we’re here.” The joint was no longer viable, but he held it at an angle between thumb and forefinger, the paper not quite touching his lips because what was left was hot, and sucked air past the ember long and loud. When he finally stopped making the noise, he held his hand high above his head and, with a flourish, brought the other up just as he let go the charred stub. His palms met in mid-air where the ash should have been, slapped together with a loud clap and swished a couple of times as if he was knocking off dust. It was a display of disdain toward the possibility of pain and of impunity with regard to the condition of Lance’s multiple layers of carpet covered floor.

Like a magic trick, the ash disappeared; nothing fell to the ground. Kerry had consumed the entire roach right out of existence.

“Come the revolution, smoking dope will be free for everyone!” he exclaimed.

Michael, who was seated across the room, said to no one in particular, “Yah, I’m in the Guard.”

Mark said, “I thought you looked like a mud duck. Things are getting hot, though. Coasties might have to get in this war y’know. You may not be all that safe after all.”

Fredrick wanted to ask about Nam, but was cut off by Tree Sloth. “Maybe could use two keys if you can get them so easy,” he said. Tall and rangy, Sloth had hair to his hips, a beard to match and spoke in a lethargic drawl that exactly reflected his nick name.

Mark continued rocking back and forth, his butt like an insect abdomen nearly scraping the floor. He said, "Sure you don't want 40? Big discount with 40. They get a big discount they buy 40, don't they Kare?"

"Ball and Chain" ended but a guitar in the room could be heard continuing the blues riff for a few seconds. Lance said to the guitarist, "Hey Jimmie, you gigging Sunday night? I could use you when I present the Jag. Care to come along?"

Lindsay said, "What about me? I thought I was going to the Hollywood party with you? There's only room for two in that sports car."

On the couch, Fredrick poked Lance in the side with his index finger. Lance ignored him, said, "You can still go to the party, sweetie. You drive my truck and follow us, bring us back home."

Fredrick stuck his finger again into Lance's ribs. Lance brushed him off, turned and said, "Whatthefuckareyoudoing?"

"I just wanted to see if you were numb yet."

Jimmie said, "Yah, I'd like to go."

The voice from the pillows said, "So all you want is two kilos? We can't talk you into taking four or five of 'em off our hands?"

Ramone walked in from the hallway carrying a brown shopping bag. He reached inside, pulled out several baggies rolled and tied shut with crisscrossing colored rubber bands which was his packaging signature. "Cream of the crop," he said as he displayed the baggies like a fish monger holding out his catch for the customer to choose the plumpest. Fredrick was quick to oblige. He selected one, fussed around with it until it

opened, pinched and ran his fingers inside before holding it up to the light to better gauge the contents.

“What the fuck,” Lance said. “It ain’t a bottle of wine. You want to swirl it around? Sniff it? You want to taste it and spit it out?”

Fredrick said, “Sorry.” Then to Ramone, “Yah, sure twenty bucks. It’s not like I have a choice, is it?”

Ramone grinned. “Yah you do. You could try and buy from wall-eyed Gorby Carrot, but you got to pin his mescaline enhanced ass down to get any boo from him, he’s so wired.”

Fredrick handed over the bill, asked for some rolling papers. Out of attention to ritual, the usual and customary etiquette, he proceeded to roll a fat joint for everyone in the room to enjoy. He licked the spine of the spliff, fumbled in his shirt pocket for a match, but quit looking when a lighter was thrust in his face.

“Here you go, college Joe.” Mark held a silver Zippo in his right hand. His thumb moved and, somehow, in one smooth motion the lighter snapped open and the wick was lit. After Fredrick got his joint going, Mark did another quick movement showing the back of his left hand which he waved and turned so that it switched from being empty to holding a cigarette between his fingers. He lighted that with the same flame.

“He does card tricks too,” Kerry said when several in the room chuckled or oohed in awe at the display.

Lindsay said, “Cool,” as the lighter clicked shut.

Fredrick took one hit, then a long second drag, did a whiff test by waving the smoky stick under his nose, handed the joint off to Lance who sniffed the smoke once

like he was about to partake of a rare vintage, inhaled just as Fredrick exhaled. Fredrick said through a billow of smoke, “That obvious I’m in school? You didn’t think for a minute I was, maybe, an auto mechanic or something?” He coughed at the end of this question.

“You got college written all over you,” Kerry said as the joint reached him.

Tree Sloth agreed, said, “Yah, man. You do. And I’ve known you all my life.”

“That where you learned to sit like that, in the Marines?” Fredrick finally asked Mark.

“The VC sits like this, all day long,” Mark replied. He knew full well American’s preferred furniture and were not used to seeing someone who could sit on their haunches and lower their head below their knees. “It’s really comfortable. You ought to try it. They sit anywhere in this position, on hillsides, on a trail, in camp. They sit like this all day and all night long. And Charlie doesn’t leave anything behind because he don’t eat much at all. Maybe they get a ball of rice a day.” He made a golf ball sized cup out of his fingers which he held up for all to see. “About that much.”

The joint was nowhere near Mark, so he sucked on his cigarette. That’s when Fredrick leaned over to get a better look at the tattoo. Something about the image bothered him. It was a Conan character straight out of a comic book, a bearded, long haired warrior whose head was wrapped in an ornate horned helmet. Surrounding the image were the words “Death Before Dishonor.” Below that, “U. S. M. C.”

The letter “C” was partially obliterated with white scar tissue that could have been a healed over war wound.

Frederick said, “You get shot? In the Marines? In Nam? You get shot?”

Mark looked surprised. “Me? Naw, no way. I never took a hit.”

“What’s that, then?” Fredrick pointed out the scarring on the “C.”

Mark glanced down at the blue ink on his arm and said, “Oh, I do that myself to get rid of the Corps. I’m no longer gung ho.”

Kerry added, “I was the shit bird. He was gung ho.”

“‘Cept now I don’t want anything reminds me of the war.”

“If you didn’t get shot, what do you mean, you do it yourself?” Fredrick persisted.

“Can’t stand the idea of a doctor cutting it out,” Mark said with complete equanimity, warming to the subject, apparently at ease talking about how he was gradually removing his own tattoo. “First you burn it and when it scabs over, you rip the scab off which takes the ink with it.”

Fredrick was amazed to learn of this unorthodox medical process. “How do you burn it?”

“Here, let me show you,” Mark said with the cigarette bobbing in his mouth. “You get the hot box going good.” He puffed fast, heating up the tip until it was twice its normal length. It was so hot that, like a black hole, no smoke escaped into the air; it was all thoroughly burned.

By now Mark had the attention of everyone in the room including Jimmie who stopped strumming to better hear the explanation. Only Kerry seemed uninterested, perhaps because he had seen the process many times. “Then you take the end and grind.” Before he finished speaking, he launched the fire of the cigarette deeply and firmly into his own upper arm near the top of the “C” and held it there for several seconds. Fredrick

was sure several minutes elapsed before the white cylinder withdrew leaving an ugly round smoky black pit in the man's flesh.

"That's some crazy shit," Ramone said in amazement from the kitchen doorway where he stood staring at the display.

Mark was unperturbed. He shrugged, took another drag from his cigarette, said, "So who's got the joint?"

* * *

"You're being childish. Don't be so upset," Donna stroked Fredrick's hair. "I'm doing this for the revolution, honey. It's for the cause, to set our country free. That and I get to drive his Porsche. And use the PX. And collect his pay. And he names me as beneficiary on his life insurance policy. That's all. I mean, it's not like we're sleeping together or anything."

Fredrick lay prone on the bed with his head in her lap. He was recovering because the soothing words were what he wanted to hear, but it was still a difficult pill to swallow.

"You married the guy. I mean, that's for real."

She assumed her big girl's deep voice and bobbed her head like a puppet. "You're quite right, it is for real."

He sat up. "That's what I mean. I mean, you went and married this guy for real. What the heck would you do something like that for when we live together, for crying out loud."

She looked him straight in his eyes. "I've been meaning to tell you this, to bring that up. I'm moving out. Kerry says we have to create an aura of domesticity."

Fredrick leaped from the bed. “What?! Are you kidding? First you bought into that idiot Kerry’s stories about mining gold in South America, about the coming revolution, then you marry one of his goddam stupid followers and now you want to move into their commune? Are you kidding me? What the hell has happened to you? You used to be my girl, now you’re some kind of ideological camp follower. Those guys are crazy. That turd you married is a spoiled rich kid. Do you know what his parents are going to do when they find out you’re their daughter-in-law?”

She sat like a Cheshire cat on the bedspread and said with a large smile, “They already know. Michael called them right after the judge performed the ceremony.”

“And?” His question implied he expected a certain type of answer.

“And nothing. They were copasetic with it.”

“God, I hate that word!”

“And that’s another thing! Just cuz you’re an English major doesn’t make you better than everyone else. You know what, Fredrick? That’s a good enough reason for me to move out. You think you’re better than everyone because you go to college. Well, have I got news for you. The revolution is coming and I’m going to be part of it because Kerry and Mark and Michael are going to do something important. You see? I’m going to be going along with them. And you’re not.”

She leaned against the headboard with her long dark hair falling in bunches around her shoulders.

“God, you’re beautiful,” he said with exasperation in his voice.

“Don’t try and change the subject. Kerry says . . .”

“Enough of this ‘Kerry says’ shit! He’s an idiot! Has he ever read Rousseau? The natural man? I bet he’s never even heard of the social contract or real philosophical revolutionaries like Locke. He mouths re-hashed made up Beatles songs. And you fell for it. You actually believe his bullshit. If you can’t dazzle them with brilliance, baffle them with bullshit. That’s what he is, a bullshit artist. And that nut case follower of his named Mark. When I met the man over at Lance’s he stubbed a goddam cigarette out in his own arm, for god’s sake. He didn’t even flinch.”

“And then he rips the scab off,” Donna said wistfully, almost dreamily as she recounted the moment. “I know. I’ve seen him do it. He’s almost through with the ‘M.’”

Fredrick stared with big eyes in response to this news. “You love him, don’t you? He’s the one, not Michael. You’re doing this to get near him, aren’t you?”

She became defensive, said, “That’s not true. I’m doing this for the greater good of creating a utopia, where everyone can live in peace, a place where there is no war, where everyone loves each other just like Kerry says.”

“Aaaarrggghhh! Do you have any idea how fucking creepy that sounds? You mimic this idiot like he’s saying something intelligent. He’s a Rasputin who has you mesmerized and you admire his sidekick Mark’s ability to endure pain. You really want to fuck him, don’t you?”

She sat silent after this outburst, turned her head and looked away.

“And that dumbshit Coast Guard guy you married, I think Kerry picked him up at Lance’s that day, too.”

Her face was livid when she turned back toward him. “Don’t you call him that! He’s a really nice guy who just didn’t know what he was getting into when he joined the military.”

“Like I said, a dumbshit.”

“That’s it, I’m leaving tonight.” She picked up the Princess phone lying on the bedside table. “I’m calling them right now to come get me.” She began dialing the number.

“Who you calling? Michael? That dweeb? Be sure and tell him I’m here. I bet he won’t show up if he thinks there’s going to be a fight.”

She held the mouthpiece away from her face, the earpiece against her head. “Why? Is there going to be a fight? Is that what you resort to? Fighting?” Her hand swept the phone into position as she said with a sexy purr, “Hello, Kerry, this is Donna. Yes, I would like to take you up on your offer of a room. When? Right now if you can swing it. Great. I’ll be waiting.”

She slammed the handset down in its cradle and set the phone back on the table. She wore a self-satisfied smile. “He says we’re all going to Hawaii. Honolulu. Tomorrow. How you like that, Mister Big Shot?”

Fredrick picked his book satchel up from the couch that filled the living room of their tiny apartment and angrily opened the front door. “I don’t like it one bit,” he said angrily and slammed the door forcefully behind him.

* * *

They formed a circle on the floor, everyone’s legs crossed, even Mark’s. It was not uncomfortable, but nor was the carpet industrial strength; it was thin and may not even

have a pad. However, no one sat in any of the tacky modern style furniture that filled the room as the joint went around their ring.

Donna was opposite Lindsay who was next to Michael who stared across into Donna's eyes every chance he got. She was starting to feel uncomfortable, as if he was getting ideas about her. It was as business deal, pure and simple. She had no desire to become intimate with anyone except, maybe . . . She averted her eyes from Michael; they fell on Mark.

Mark and Kerry were both busy rolling more doobies. Kerry began talking as he sifted the marijuana in a shoe box tilted at about 30 degrees. Using a playing card to move the green material up, the unwanted seeds fell toward the bottom. His voice was a low monotone at first, just powerful enough to catch the attention of the others.

"It's all worked out and the plan is perfect. The perfect plan. We work together and the plan stays perfect." There was a sing-songy lilt in his words. "The coast of South America is golden, it's got gold flowing from its rivers, down from its hills to the sea where it's mined and refined and it is ours for the taking. Are you with me?"

Donna lifted the joint like a flag stanchion and said, "We're with you!"

Everyone, including Mark who was just then licking the spine of his latest thumb sized creation, said in unison, "Yes, yes."

"Good. I want to tell you how the Honolulu connection works," Kerry intoned, his voice rising in timbre. "Here we are in Honolulu. Hear me on Honolulu. Here's to Hawaii," he saluted with the marijuana cigarette before he passed it to the right.

"Mmmm. That's good Maui woowie. Now then, the revolution begins in Hawaii. We have a hotel room in the Hilton. That's the last place the pigs expect the revolution to

start, in a Hilton. The Honolulu Hilton, no less. Now that we're checked in, we check it out."

Michael asked, "Check what out?"

"The boats in the harbor. They won't be expecting a surprise move like our plan calls for, to take a pleasure craft. But that's what we're gonna do. And Michael here," he indicated the Coast Guardsman. "Michael, my man. My man, Michael. Michael is our expert yachtsman, aren't you Michael? He is our captain, oh captain my captain, and he takes us out to sea and we head for the mouth of the Amazon where the gold's for free. Are you with me?"

The group agreed they were.

"We get enough gold to bring back to the States to start our own commune, one where everyone will have a right to smoke dope and play music and write and paint and do all the things noble and beautiful we can't do now because the pigs keep us down."

The chorus of voices said, "Down," as one.

"The perfect plan is to turn the gold into a keel for the boat so we can smuggle it past customs. They'll never look below the hull, not while we're afloat, so we'll simply slide on by." He waved the joint and smoke formed wispy patterns in the air. "The plan is perfect. We begin looking for the perfect yacht tomorrow. Are you with me?"

Everyone said they were.

"We also need to connect with our man Dan who's working somewhere near here. We can't use the hotel phone, it might be bugged. So Mark will make a call in exactly," he raised his arm to check the time, "exactly half an hour. This was all pre-arranged as part of the perfect plan. My man Dan is going to join the revolution, that's the plan."

Everyone laughed at the cuteness of Kerry Dane's delivery. He spun his tale in such a way as to make the girls giggly and excited with an adventure that had already begun.

"Tomorrow is the day you've dreamed about all your lives. Tomorrow is the future. Tomorrow we make a choice and raise our fists like Tommie Smith and John Carlos at the Olympics!"

Mark took a final hit, stood up and went through his pockets. "Where's the room key? Have to have the room key to get back in."

Kerry said, "Don't worry about it. Do the special knock and we'll know it's you. Got Danny's phone number?"

Mark said he did and left the room. He took an elevator down, traversed the lobby and wandered out into the street. His eyes were dilated by the combination of interior lighting and the herb he had been smoking. He reacted to the bright sunlight by bringing an arm up to shield him from the glare. He did not have sunglasses and wore blue jeans even though almost everyone around him had eye coverings and wore shorts.

He found a phone booth and dropped a dime in the slot. He dialed the numbers.

"Pancake House, how can I help you?"

Mark was momentarily perplexed. Then he said, "You got a guy working there named Dan?"

"That's me. What can I do for you?"

"The Dane asked me to call. We're ready for the push. Here's our room number: 714. Hilton in downtown Honolulu. Got that?"

The voice on the other end was resolute. “No. I don’t. And I don’t want any part of this harebrained scheme. I’m sorry I ever told that asshole I’d join his revolution. The guy’s full of shit. His pipe dreams are dangerous and I advise you, whoever you are, to get the hell out while you can. Don’t call this number again.”

Mark was quick enough to say, “Hey, wait a minute, buster. The plan is already in motion. You took the plane fare from us to get here, you promised to show us the best boat in the harbor and join us. If you try and back out now, we’re coming to get ya.”

“Fat chance, fuck head. I’m not even on your island.”

“What do you mean, ‘my island’?” Mark asked completely confused by the statement.

“I’m on the big island. I’m on Hawaii. You’re on Oahu, in the big city. I don’t think you’re coming all the way over here just to act out another fantasy.”

Mark said, “You mean there’s more than one island?”

The phone at the other end went dead.

Back at the hotel room, Mark tapped three times, waited, tapped twice more. Donna stood a safe distance behind the door when it opened.

“Can never be too careful,” she said sheepishly.

Mark approached the group who were still on the floor passing a joint.

“Bad news,” he told Kerry. “Dan punked out on us. Said the revolution can go on without him.”

Kerry looked crestfallen, then angry. “I’d like to go over there and punch his lights out.”

“Well, he’s not even in Honolulu. He’s on a different island.”

Kerry said, “What do you mean, ‘different island’? How many are there? Can we drive there?”

* * *

Friday, August 6, was a beautiful day in Paradise. It was also the day the plan called for picking out a vessel.

Kerry strode the gangways like a pirate, stumping up one gray row and down another until he stopped in his tracks and said, “That’s it, that’s the one I want. The really pretty one over there.”

The party of five approached and read the name of the ship off its stern: *Kamalii*. It was a 75 foot ketch owned by millionaire oilman Larry Doheny who recently sailed her from Los Angeles to Ala Wei harbor in the month long Transpacific yacht race. She had sailed under the Los Angeles yacht club flag out of San Pedro. Three men were loading the vessel with supplies from a pallet in preparation for her return.

Kerry put his arms around the four followers who assembled in a football huddle, heads lowered so as not to be overheard. He said, “Tonight. We come back tonight and take this one, right? Everyone say ‘agreed.’”

The girls sounded reluctant as they said, “Agreed,” along with the two men. If Kerry noticed their hesitancy, he did not acknowledge it.

“You can handle this boat, can’t you Michael?”

“Oh, absolutely. My kind of ship. A yawl, y’know.”

No one corrected him because none knew the difference between a ketch and a yawl.

They had walked from the Hilton. Michael said, "Let's get back to the hotel. I have to go shop for some things we'll need."

At the head of the gangway, Lindsay stopped and said, "Wait a minute, you guys." She turned toward Kerry. "It's such a gorgeous day. Can Donna and I go and play at the beach?"

Michael and Mark saw no harm in that, even said they might want to join them. But Kerry nixed the idea outright.

"This isn't a pleasure cruise. We're not here to have a good time while our brothers in conflict are held down by Southern white people and our sisters fight for equal pay. The revolution starts now, it starts here, it doesn't turn into a holiday."

Donna said, "Oh, c'mon, Kare," in her sweetest, sexiest voice. "We just want to go to the beach and lie in the sun, me and Lindsay. Say okay. We'll be back before dinner. Please, please, pretty please with sugar and honey on top."

Kerry knew he was being put in an awkward position, but seemed to have suddenly lost direction. Then he summoned up the words, "All right, all right. But just the two of you. The men come with me. We have things to get, tools for tonight, like ropes and duct tape and things from a hardware store. They must have a hardware store somewhere in Honolulu."

"Thanks," Lindsay said as she locked elbows with Donna. "Don't worry about us. We're big girls. We can find our way back. See you around five, right?"

"Better make that four," Kerry said as he waved to them. The girls turned left and headed toward the waterfront. The men started walking toward the hotel.

Out of earshot, Lindsay said, “Those guys’re crazy! They’re planning to steal that yacht. You’re not going to go along with this are you? You’ll end up in prison if you do.”

“I’m scared, Lindsay. What can we do?”

“Go home. Now. Both of us. We don’t even go to the hotel to pick anything up. Just catch a taxi and head to the airport.”

Donna reached in her back pocket and produced a credit card. “It’s Michael’s, but I’m married to him, remember? We can pay for everything with this. This place is credit card heaven. I bet taxis even take cards here.”

Lindsay said, “Oh, thank you, Donna.”

“Don’t thank me. Thank that putz Michael. First class tickets, what do you say?”

* * *

Sailors tend to hit the sack within a few hours of the sun going down. After all, there are no city lights or other distractions at sea and the men need to awaken with the dawn.

Mate Frank Power was asleep in the aft cabin. He snapped awake convinced he had heard footsteps coming from the fantail. He looked out a small porthole that was level with the deck and saw legs running forward. He could not figure out who might be boarding the vessel at 11:00 at night. The owner was at his island home on Oahu’s south shore and not due to return until Sunday. The boat was provisioned for the voyage back to Los Angeles and the harbor master had been informed of their pending departure, but that wasn’t until tomorrow.

Captain Waschkeit awoke when he heard footsteps running along the gunnel. He leaped up and pulled on his trousers.

Cook and able-bodied seaman John Freitas opened his eyes when he felt the boat rock with the weight of the three men boarding.

Power was the first on deck. He took the wood steps up from his cabin in a single leap and threw the hatch open in one swift motion. On deck, he ran to the bridge, pulled himself up by the hand rails. As he mounted those steps, he was confronted with a pistol aimed at his midriff. Three young men with handguns drawn wore belts of ammunition around their shoulders and waist creating an image right out of the Mexican War. It would have been laughable were it not so serious.

“Don’t move,” Kerry said waving a K-bar under his nose. “And keep your mouth shut. Now get up here!”

Power heard the sound of deck shoes coming fast. His shipmates were running into a trap and he had no way to warn them. While one of the pirates fumbled with the helm, in one hand a pistol, the other two waited in the shadows on the bridge with knife and pistol. The third hijacker motioned for Power to sink lower to be less visible in the dark.

Waschkeit and Freitas were taken completely by surprise. They raised their hands immediately and Waschkeit answered honestly the question put to him whether there was anyone else aboard.

“No.”

“Keys,” Michael said as he turned from the wheel to face the captives.

Waschkeit reached in his pockets and produced the ignition key. “Why?” he asked completely unaware of the men’s true intentions. “This is a stickup, right? Why not just take our valuables and go. There isn’t much, but you’re welcome to it.”

Kerry slapped his K-bar nervously on the back of his gun hand and said, “This isn’t a robbery.”

With military precision, as if they had performed a human herding many times, Kerry and Mark frisked their prisoners, then moved them to the salon where they were told to lie face down, legs and arms spread. While Kerry kept his pistol trained on them, Mark tied each man’s hands behind his back, sat him upright and wrapped his legs with rope. Then he secured the leg irons to the handcuffs. There was no way any man could work himself free, although in concert they might be able to organize an escape.

The men were given no such opportunity. The hijackers were apparently quite familiar with the potential of prisoner communication and separated them from one another. Their personal effects, wallets and watches, were put in a canvas mail bag and taken away.

“No talking among you,” Kerry admonished as the vessel’s engines sprang to life, “or I’ll kill you.” The hijackers left the crew alone briefly to return to the gangway and bring their own supplies on board.

John Freitas was the first to speak. “They’re nothing but a bunch of damn punks,” he hissed between clenched teeth. “We’re twice their age.”

“What do you think they have planned now, Captain?” Power whispered.

Before Waschkeit could reply, the salon doors sprang open and the two men deposited three duffel bags on the floor. Mark removed a roll of charts from one bag, and while Kerry kept a pistol trained on the other two crew members, Mark hefted one of the men over his shoulders like a sack of potatoes. One at a time, he carried them into the fo’castle where Waschkeit was untied and told to accompany Kerry to the engine room.

There the third hijacker asked Waschkeit questions about the engines, how full the fuel tanks, the approximate distance per gallon the ship could expect to travel under specific conditions and knots. Waschkeit realized this man had some nautical experience, but after a few seconds of questions about navigation, he realized the man knew little or nothing about charts.

At one point, Michael picked up the sextant, examined it, put his eye to the telescope with a finger blocking the view. He stared quizzically around the room, laid it aside never to reach for it again.

Waschkeit was returned to the fo'castle and retied. This time cotton gags were shoved in the men's mouths, surgical tape holding their lips closed.

The engines idled. The boat bobbed in the water when Michael left the bridge and threw off the dock lines. There was a moment or two of engine revving before the vessel was thrown in reverse and began backing out of the slip. Captain Waschkeit winced as he felt and heard the port side hit a piling and scrape along the entire length of the hull.

It became clear the boat was heading out to sea. The men had little hope they would be reported missing. Unless Doheny himself showed up and found the boat gone, the harbor master would assume it had departed as planned, if a day early.

They were two hours from port when their gags were removed. "No one could hear you now even if you did holler," Kerry said.

The duffel bags contained very real handcuffs. The men's legs were still tied with rope, but their hands were now cuffed in front and connected with a piece of rope to the ankle trusses.

Kerry left Mark to guard the prisoners who were each thinking of methods of escape. Power hoped they would be put off on a desert island; Freitas, who had fought in the ring professionally, simply wanted one crack at his captors. Without discussion, the captives independently arrived at the same conclusion: This was piracy and their lives would be forfeit. The pirates could not afford to let them live because kidnapping automatically carried the death penalty. The Lindbergh Law recognized kidnapping across state lines as a federal felony and provided capital punishment if found guilty.

The pirates would face the death penalty whether they let the crew live or not.

Waschkeit took some solace in the fact that, for the time being, the crew would be needed to assist in navigating. He also realized, as did Power and Freitas, the engines were wasting fuel. Whoever was at the helm was gunning the engines trying to put as much distance between them and the authorities. But this was a fore-and-aft rigged sail boat. The engines were meant primarily for docking and embarking, not ocean propulsion. In a short time the captured crew would be forced to set the rigging and, undoubtedly, man the sails.

“May I ask you a question?” Waschkeit asked his captor.

Mark nodded agreement.

“What are you doing? Where are you going? What do you hope to accomplish?”

Mark appeared cool, but he was nervous. He did not like training a gun on prisoners, even in Vietnam, because he might be required to use it. He was proud of the fact he had no kills to his record in Southeast Asia and did not relish the idea of changing that now. Without Kerry to tell him to keep quiet, Mark was perfectly willing to explain what the plan called for.

“Tahiti,” he said with a wide grin. “Then on to South America where we’re going to mine gold.”

Power said, “But they’re in opposite directions.”

Mark looked puzzled. “What are?”

“French Polynesia and South America.”

“What’s French Polynesia?” Mark asked.

Before anyone decided if it was prudent to answer that question, footsteps were heard approaching. The hijackers were not wearing deck shoes, still had on leather soled street shoes. Waschkeit decided not to point this out. Perhaps one of them would slip and fall overboard, he thought.

Michael lowered himself through the fo’castle entry. He had left Kerry at the helm. He gave a cursory nod to Mark, then began investigating what was in the hold. He pulled several cabinets open, said with a large smile, “Whoa. Will you look at this? Mother Hubbard’s cupboards are full.”

“We’ve just been provisioned,” Captain Waschkeit volunteered. “That’s because we’re supposed to return to L. A. If we’re not on the mainland by a certain day, they’ll come looking for us.” It was something of an idle threat, and he knew it, but Waschkeit wanted to instill some fear in the pirates.

The engines were still running at full blast. At that rate, they would be out of fuel in another eight to ten hours. Waschkeit and his men dreaded thinking of what would happen then.

The captives dozed, slept fitfully in upright positions, all the while under the watchful gun barrel of one or another of the three hijackers. The pirates probably slept in

shifts in the more comfortable bunks of the cabins, Waschkeit thought as he opened his eyes for what must have been the hundredth time he had awakened during the long night. Somehow he had managed to sleep through sunrise which was at 6:07 that day. They were an hour into the morning by his best guess and still under engine power.

A calm sea, sunny and warm, exactly the sailing conditions favored by the *Kamalii*.

Suddenly, there was silence. The engines were cut or ran out of fuel, Waschkeit thought wryly.

So far, the hijackers had not given their names throughout the ordeal. Powers and Freitas had been able to whisper to each other on occasion during the night, briefly and only when certain they would not be overheard. They attempted to hatch a plan. They referred to Kerry as “The Slapper,” because he stuck his gun in his belt and carried his K-bar wherever he went. He had a habit of slapping the flat of the knife against his left hand in a gradual but repeated thump, thump.

The idea was to volunteer to set the sails. The hijackers could not know how that was done or in what order. The ship’s mainmast was toward the bow and both it and the jib required two men. Therefore, while Power involved Waschkeit in the task, they would be under guard by two of the pirates. Freitas would be on the bridge with the third to show him how to handle the craft during the letting out of the sails. At that point, Freitas was to overpower the single guard, incapacitate him and take his gun. They would be so far aft it would be nearly impossible to hear the struggle or even a cry for help. With a good wind to muffle the noise, the idea was for Freitas to sneak up on the other two hijackers and either pick them off before they could respond or get the drop on them.

It would be easy. It was done in the movies all the time.

Michael called from above, “We’re low on fuel. I cut the engines so we have to go to sail. Get the crew up here to help.”

Freitas said, “He’s going to need one of us to pilot while the other two handle the mainmast. We set the mizzenmast last.”

“So who does what?” The Slapper asked.

Waschkeit, who was not part of the planned mutiny, said, “I’m usually on the bridge. The crew sets the sails.”

And with that he killed their scheme. Mark pointed the gun at him, made motions for him to stand. He unlocked the cuffs, untied Waschkeit’s legs and directed him up on deck. Kerry did the same with the other two once the captain was out of the cabin.

An hour later and the men were brought back in one at a time, handcuffed and rope trussed as before. Michael had enough boat experience to handle the rudder in a strong wind, but they were taking a haphazard course in a southwesterly direction. Around noon by the sun, Power guessed the ship’s position to be 120 miles from Honolulu heading 230 degrees. This effectively took them out of the shipping lanes south of even the Kaiwai Channel which serves the islands.

At 3:00 in the afternoon, Power requested to be untied. “My legs are cramping,” he told Mark who ignored his plea.

The guards changed position from time to time. Obviously, the coveted place was on the bridge with the wind at their back driving the vessel forward. It was the idyllic mental picture come true. Sometimes only one hijacker stood guard while the other two enjoyed the sea and the ship and the sun.

At 5:30 The Slapper showed his face in the entry way.

“Time to walk.”

The men’s legs were released. Power thought his might fold under him, but he rose and clambered up onto the deck. The other two captives followed. At last, Power thought, a turn or two to get the circulation going. However, he was disabused of any notion the pirates had their best interest in mind when his cuffs were removed and The Slapper said, “Jump.”

Waschkeit and Freitas were shoved toward the starboard side, their feet planted on the uppermost wale. Waschkeit protested.

“You’ll kill us!” he shouted. “These are shark infested waters. Without lifejackets or a dinghy, we’ll be dead in half an hour.”

Mark looked at Michael who nodded his head, turned to Kerry who stood on the bridge with lips pursed. He seemed to be taking in the information, deciding if throwing them overboard really would kill the crew. Mark knew he could not bring himself to carry out the order, but did not have any idea how to deal with the decision. Kerry had made it on his own, had ordered the men’s hands and feet released without consulting Mark or Michael. Now he was ordering them overboard without a chance of survival.

Mark fished a coin out of his pocket. It was a dime. He shouted to Kerry, “At least give them life vests.”

Kerry relented. “Fine. Where are they stowed?”

Power said, “In that storage bin,” and pointed to a box behind the bridge.

“Get ’em,” Kerry said bringing the flat side of the K-bar down on his palm. Power complied. “Now put ’em on.” The men did as they were told. “Okay, now jump.”

Freitas said, “We don’t stand a chance. We’re hundreds of miles from any traffic. At least give us a raft.”

Waschkeit pleaded with the pirates. “You might as well shoot us. With no food or water, all we are is shark bait. A life raft is all we ask.”

Mark appeared distracted as he gazed into the distant horizon, his mind arguing with the order to throw the men overboard. He did not want to do that, but had no way of countermanding Kerry without, in all likelihood, coming to blows. With pistols in their hands, the outcome could be deadly.

Michael rummaged around in the storage box and found an inflatable rubber raft. He held it in the air on display.

Again, Kerry relented. He said, “Fine, you get a life raft but only after you jump. So jump!”

No one moved. Power thought about Neil Armstrong stepping onto the moon as Mark came up behind Waschkeit and said, “You first.” Then he poked the barrel of the gun in the captain’s back and the man leaped into the water. Power was next, then Freitas. The three bobbed below the surface, popped back up with the buoyancy of their life jackets.

They followed a time honored life saving technique among mariners and linked arms forming a triangle in the water. Then to their surprise and dismay, they heard the engines start up and the *Kamalii* began to move away. They were not going to be allowed to have a life raft after all.

“You assholes,” Power yelled and shook his fist in a futile gesture. The raft had been a lie; it was merely a ruse to get them into the water.

Aboard *Kamalii* Mark and Michael faced Kerry who stood at the helm intent on taking the vessel as far from the men floating in the water as he could.

“Well, are we going to throw them a life boat?” Mark asked above the roar of the engines and the flapping of a loose spinnaker.

Kerry said nothing, merely stared straight ahead.

“We ought to turn around and give them a life boat,” Michael said. It was the first time he had volunteered anything during this high seas, and now high stakes, melodrama.

Kerry pretended not to have heard. Mark held the coin from his pocket in the air and waved it in front of Kerry’s face.

“Flip a coin, Kare. At least flip a coin. You call it.”

Kerry at last turned toward the two men, his hands still on the wheel. “Fine. Heads, we go back and give them a raft. Otherwise, we keep going.”

Mark tossed the coin, picked it out of the air with his right hand and smacked it onto the back of his left. He looked at it, made a gesture as if to show Kerry who was too preoccupied with manning the helm to take a close look. Mark showed the coin to Michael who had a perfect view of how it had come up.

“Heads,” Mark said and Michael unhesitatingly agreed.

Kerry said nothing, resigned himself to turning back.

The *Kamalii* looked small on the big open sea. She was gaining speed, putting plenty of water between the two groups of men. The three in the water were still infuriated, certain they were going to die, when Waschkeit said, “Look. She’s turning about.”

Power concurred with this observation, but added, "They're coming back to finish us off. They're going to shoot us."

"Maybe they changed their minds and will give us a raft," Freitas said hopefully.

"Not a chance buckyboy," Power said. "They do anything they'll let us get in the raft and then shoot us. Then they'll drop a pistol to make it look like we took ourselves out."

The *Kamalii* pulled alongside. Michael threw the raft over which landed within a few feet of the men. Waschkeit was nearest and swam to it. He reached it, pulled the compressed gas cartridge and the raft inflated. While the others watched, he managed to get his body in the flimsy craft, began hand paddling toward his crew. When all three were safely aboard, Mark yelled down at them.

"We were undecided whether to let you have a raft or not," he said. "So we finally tossed a coin." He held the dime up for them to see. "You were lucky." The water swirled behind her as the *Kamalii*'s engines began again to churn and the boat pulled away. "Here," Mark shouted, and tossed the coin into the rubber dinghy. "Here's the dime. Call someone to come get you."

The *Kamalii* was out of sight within half an hour, her name on the transom visible right up to the time she disappeared over the horizon. The men were silent. Power took an inventory and found eight pints of water and three hand flares. There were two types of flare: two parachute which were shot from a gun and would hang in the sky, and one hand flare. There was no food, no communications device, no sail and no oars. They were dead in the water with no means of finding a sea lane which lay hundreds of miles north.

Captain Waschkeit and Power had been in the Merchant Marine and knew they were in as deserted and empty a part of the Pacific as could be imagined. The only words that passed between the men were an itemization of their supplies and Power who said he guessed they were 250 miles from Honolulu.

An hour went by in silence and the sunset was upon them. Captain Waschkeit ordered a vigil throughout the night.

“We go by the book,” he said. “I want a rotating watch with these flares at hand. Do I make myself clear? I take the first turn. Powers then Freitas, three hours each until dawn.”

It had been a strenuous day not for the amount of labor they had put into rigging the sails which was nothing compared to their usual duties aboard *Kamalii*. Rather, their bodies had been pumping adrenalin for hours and they had little sleep the night before in uncomfortable, muscle cramping conditions which were now relieved, but only barely better. Waschkeit received no argument from his crew who were wet and hungry. They shoved hands in armpits, assumed a spoon position with respect to each other in order to retain body warmth and immediately fell asleep.

The captain was surprised at how easily his men drifted off. But as the night came on in full dark force and their time on the water stretched into hours, he, too, felt a weakness, a desire to sleep which he fought with all his mental energy. He slapped his face, pinched his cheeks, shook his head to clear it. His vision was affected by the fact there was no distinction between where water met skyline and he stood up in the raft to name all the stars he could in an effort to keep awake.

He had no illusions about their fortunes which were dismal. He did everything he could to take his mind off their predicament and pretend there was a chance in hell that a fellow yachtsman would decide to be unusual, unique would be a more accurate description, and set sail so far off the beaten path he would have no safe harbor and have to wait out the night right where Waschkeit and his crew were adrift.

The odds against such a confluence of events coming together were more astronomical than earth's distance from the Orion constellation.

Waschkeit would have liked a drink of water, but they had all agreed not to even open the containers. In the nearly five hours that had already elapsed, Waschkeit was not about to succumb to temptation, a testament to the sailor's resilience and the individual's sense of duty toward himself and others in a crisis.

It was a calm sea with a chill wind blowing and no moon. Waschkeit knew his night sky, could tell very nearly what time it was simply by sighting a familiar constellation. He could name the stars in Orion's Belt, Alnitak, Alnilam, Mintaka, and aimed his finger at each in turn saying their names.

The captain could feel his grip on reality begin to slide. He, too, was exhausted, worn out, weary of the trial by fire he had endured; he was uncertain how much more he could take. He pointed and said, "Minnehaha," instead of "Mintaka." He slapped his face when he realized his mistake: that was the name of a street in Minneapolis. He tried again, raised his arm which would not stay steady and began to fall as if tied to a ten pound weight. He said the name anyway, knew the word was slurred, had the distant thought that perhaps he had best sit or risk falling over the side of the boat. He sank to his knees, thought he was hallucinating when he saw lights on the ocean.

Two lights on a plane with his vision, brighter than a star, not flickering as a star would but two steady spots which meant they could not be planets on the horizon either, for there are no binary planets in our solar system.

Captain Waschkeit shoved his knuckles into his eye sockets to rub them and looked again. The two lights remained.

As an example of how great his fatigue, he shouted, "Land! I see land.!" He should have shouted that he saw a ship knowing full well the lights had to be from a vessel, but he also knew he had to get his crew awake to confirm the sighting. He did not want to waste their flares on his overactive imagination. He bent over the sleeping forms and shook them by their shoulders.

Power and Freitas sat up and searched out the two spots of white on the horizon. They agreed with Waschkeit's assessment that they really were there, although they had to agree it was impossible.

"Those would be range lights, not running lights," Power observed. "The ship must be crossing, but we'll be broadside soon enough and they won't see us then."

"We've got to get her," the captain said as he picked up a parachute flare, put it in the gun and fired. The light it created was immense for a moment and radiated a brilliant circle around the dinghy, but it eventually fell into the sea and was extinguished.

"No change in course, sir," Freitas stated with calm intensity. He and Power lay in the craft flat on their stomachs, hands gripping the rubber wale like anxious children.

Waschkeit picked up the hand flare and pulled the string. The cap came off in his hands and he realized it was not an automatic lighting type, but one that required him to scrape the abrasive cap against the phosphorescent material to ignite it. He scraped once without result. He scraped again, this time with more force and the reddish glow began simmering in his hand. He stood in the dinghy and waved it back and forth hoping movement would be seen better than if he merely stood still. White spent ash dripped onto the floor of the rubber raft. He feared burning a hole in the boat, decided it was absurd to prolong their situation. Either they contacted that single ship as it passed perhaps five or six miles from them or the open sea would swallow them whole shortly after they died of thirst. Frankly, it would probably be best to sink quickly from having tried to save themselves.

He began waving the flare in wider swathes as the material burned to the nub and eventually spent itself.

The silence of the men as they watched for some indication they had been seen could have been the silence of the tomb. All that could be heard were waves lapping against the sides of the raft.

“No change in course, sir,” Freitas said again.

“I’m sorry, men. I can only send up our last chance. We’ve only the one flare left.”

Power said, “Do it.”

Freitas said, “Aye, Captain. Fire it off.”

And with that Captain Waschkeit snapped the breach closed, raised his arm straight up toward the heavens and fired.

The flare was beginning to near the sea where it would be extinguished along with their hopes, when Freitas said, “That’s done it, sir. I think they’ve seen us. They’re changing course, sir, heading our way.”

Forty-five minutes later, the three were aboard the Yokohama bound freighter, *Benadir*.

“You lucky men,” Captain DiDomenico said as he saw to their being given dry clothing, a meal and hot coffee. Remarkably, they had been on the raft a mere five and a half hours.

Captain Waschkeit gave a succinct reason for him and his men to be found adrift on the open sea: “Kidnapping and piracy.”

Freitas and Power backed up his modern tale of 17th Century villainy. Immediately, Waschkeit requested DiDomenico contact the Coast Guard to explain their situation and give the last known approximate coordinates of the *Kamalii*.

Now it was Waschkeit and his men’s turn to ask the freighter captain why he was so far away from the summer shipping lanes, nearly 1300 miles south.

“This is big banana boat, modern ship, German construction,” the captain explained proudly. “We have cargo of bananas for Japan.” In rudimentary English, DiDomenico explained that he and the crew had just acquired *Benadir* in Ecuador for their Italian company. The ship had complicated engines with which the Italians were unfamiliar. And because the instructions were in German, the engines had broken down twice since leaving port. The summer shipping lanes had no potential ports for repair, so DiDomenico ordered the ship south, which put them close to where Waschkeit and his men were thrown off the *Kamalii*.

“You very lucky men,” DiDomenico said again after giving this explanation for the miracle of having found the sailors. “You can thank this man here for your rescue,” he said, indicating the *Benadir’s* chief engineer. The engineer gave a wide grin when it was explained in Italian what DiDomenico said. What the captain meant was: The engineer had made so many mistakes that caution had caused them to be in the vicinity.

“Why was your range lights on, not your running lights?” Freitas asked.

The answer from DiDomenico added one more level of astonishment for the men.

“Is another big mistake,” the captain explained. “We could not figure out how to turn them on. We turn switch, range lights come on. We turn other switch, no running lights come on. Is safety precaution, keeping range lights on for time being.”

Range lights are two or more bright lights separated from each other on the bow of a ship. Typically, they are only used when entering a port at night. The port has its own set of lights which, from the bridge, can be used as a guide to bring the ship in safely.

Running lights would not have been visible to the lost seamen from five miles away. And it was also pure luck Waschkeit saw the vessel as it crossed in front of them because once the range lights were beyond forty-five degrees from their view plane, the vessel would have been for all practical purposes invisible to them.

The men held a brief conference in English which the captain of the *Benadir* understood only marginally. Freitas turned to the chief engineer and held out his hand.

“The pirates said they only decided to give us a raft after they flipped a coin. It’s our lucky coin, but we want you to have it.”

He handed the dime to the engineer who stared at it quizzically for a moment, said, “Grazie,” and put it in his pocket.

* * *

Kerry was rather pleased with himself. Their second dawn found the *Kamalii* far from their point of departure and, if they were reading the charts correctly, well on their way to Tahiti. It was wonderful to be at the helm of such a beautiful craft, one that stood out among the many lesser vessels tied up at Waikiki' Ala Wei. He felt the sea breeze and smelled the brine and thought of himself as the smartest man alive.

He traded positions with Mark and Michael to give them an opportunity to enjoy what they had accomplished. The provisions were bounteous and obviously meant for a millionaire. There was caviar and Champagne, wonderful sweet European chocolates filled at the center with a cherry and brandy, frozen prime cuts of meat and cheeses of every character and disposition.

Kerry felt as if his life was fulfilled. Now all he had to do was lie low in Tahiti for a month or two, then take the craft up the Amazon. He was so self satisfied that at around four in the afternoon when he heard the droning of propellers and his closed eyes were momentarily darkened by a large shadow passing over head, he did not think it meant anything to him or the others.

The aircraft was a Hercules C 130, a four engine plane built by Lockheed that was originally designed for assault transport and first took to the air in 1954. Its four-blade turboprop engines roared down toward the vessel as if on a collision course, screamed at Kerry who got up and ran first toward the fantail, along the starboard gunnel, then when he got to the end of the vessel with nowhere to go but into the sea, he began running in circles behind the bridge like a chicken with it's head cut off.

Mark was at the helm. He casually raised his hand to shade his eyes, watched as the Herk roared past and spotted the red buoy the flight crew dropped as it hit the water. He yelled to Michael who used a hook to fish it out.

Michael ran aft with the buoy brandishing a message attached to it. The message was written in black grease pen on a sheet of plastic. It said, "Heave-to and reverse course."

Kerry regained some composure as the plane passed and banked and began to make a second pass overhead. He flipped the plane off, turned to Mark and said, "Get us out of here!"

Michael pointed to a distant bank of clouds. "Squall off the port bow. We could get lost in it and they'd never find us. Besides, the sun's going down in a couple hours."

Mark did not wait for orders from Kerry. He turned the wheel and switched on the engines even though it meant running the tanks dry.

The plane made several more passes, but was unable to deter the boat from making for the storm front. Somehow, the fuel held. They entered the squall line of rain clouds that hung just above the water and were immediately drenched. None wore foul weather gear, had no idea where to locate it aboard *Kamalii*. As darkness descended once again, the hijackers found themselves hidden from view, wet, cold and generally miserable, but free from their pursuers.

They ran without lights and throughout the night heard the plane make its approach, saw flares dropped by the Herk light up the sky. They had no idea their every move was being observed and relayed to the Coast Guard cutter Cape Corwin which was

on its way to intercept them. The Corwin was nicknamed Cape McGarrett by its crew for its featured role in the television series Hawaii Five-O.

As dawn broke, the fugitives thought they might have made a clean escape when on the horizon Michael spotted the approaching vessel.

“Ship to starboard,” he yelled to Kerry who was again at the tiller. By now Kerry knew enough of the lingo to know that was to his right. The 95 foot cutter was making full speed, 22 knots, in their direction.

It took thirty minutes to reach the ketch. The cutter ran one circle around the vessel but did not get close. In fact, it kept a safe distance because Doheny had answered a question put to him by the initial police investigator: are there any weapons aboard?

“Yes,” he said in response. “Several rifles and plenty of ammunition.”

In addition, of course, the pirates brandished pistols at the crew they threw overboard. Waschkeit made sure that information was conveyed to the Coast Guard.

A voice came over the loudspeakers. “*Kamalii*. Heave-to. I repeat, heave-to.”

Mark shared the bridge with Kerry who was infuriated. He pushed Mark aside and turned the wheel violently which pitched the ship and the men aboard at such an angle they all had to grab something to remain standing.

The cutter easily outmaneuvered them and took a position broadside. The cutters’ engines rumbled and churned water as it kept the *Kamalii* in its field of fire. The voice over the loudspeaker said, “Halt or be fired upon.”

“They won’t do anything to hurt this beautiful craft,” Kerry shouted to Mark who harbored no such belief.

“Game’s up, Kerry. Shut it down.”

“I’m telling you, they won’t shoot.”

At that moment a barrage of fifty caliber shells arced over the bow. Mark reached for Kerry’s gun which was in his belt, pulled him away from the tiller with brute force and said, “That’s it! It’s over! You understand?” He put the muzzle of the pistol up to Kerry’s nose and held it there. Kerry raised his arms in the air, fingers spread.

The loudspeaker said, “All on board stand on the deck.” The men complied. The speaker directed Mark, the man commanding the bridge, to frisk the others and throw all weapons overboard. Then it directed two of the men forward to sit near the bow while Mark was told to return to the bridge and lead the way. He was to come about and head toward Honolulu which was 250 miles away, but at *Kamalii*’s top speed it would take at least 24 hours.

The Corwin paralleled the *Kamalii* throughout the night, its powerful lights aimed directly at the crew who were not allowed to sleep. They were told to rotate their positions at the helm, but were constantly under the guns of the cutter and its crew. The captain refused to board her until Honolulu was within sight. By then, all three men were so exhausted they could be counted upon to put up little or no resistance.

And there was none. The men were handcuffed and taken aboard the Cape Corwin. Four members of the ship’s compliment were sent over to man the sails.

As she approached Oahu, *Kamalii*’s owner showed up in a power boat. Doheny asked permission to board the Corwin. There he requested the captain allow him to bring *Kamalii* into port.

Permission granted.

* * *

The judge said, "You are giving evidence of your own volition, Mister Melton, is that correct?"

"Yes, your Honor," Michael replied. He was in his dress uniform which he had been allowed to don only that morning. He spent the previous sixteen months in the brig wearing military prison pajamas. The trial had taken a year to reach the U. S. District Court in Honolulu, and now it was nearing completion.

This was the penalty phase. The court allowed two of the defendants to change their pleas from not guilty to guilty of interstate transportation of a stolen yacht and assault with intent to rob the crewmen.

Michael was allowed to plead guilty to a lesser charge, interstate transportation of a stolen yacht, due to his cooperation. He testified for the prosecution against the other defendants and was given five years' probation.

"You believe leniency ought to be given Mister Maynard, is that correct?"

"Yes, your honor, I do."

"You may explain to the court why you feel this way. Your testimony may or may not have any effect on the court's decision."

"Thank you your honor. I wanted to explain that during the trial no one asked about the coin toss."

"That is because it had no bearing on the case, Mister Melton."

"That's my point, your honor. It had every bearing on the life raft and the great good fortune no one was killed, your honor."

"Pure luck, Mister Melton."

“Not at all, your honor. That’s why I wanted to speak in his behalf. You see, Mark affected the outcome of the coin toss.”

“How so, Mister Melton? I believe you testified the coin came up heads, which was agreed beforehand meant the lifeboat would be thrown to the men.”

“That’s what I said, your honor. And so did Mark. But it wasn’t heads. He flipped and it came up tails. I saw it was tails, Kerry didn’t. When Mark said, ‘Heads,’ I went along because I wanted the lifeboat to be thrown over.”

“That is all you wanted to say, Mister Melton?”

“Yes, your honor.”

“Thank you, I will take that under advisement.”

Epilogue: Mark and Kerry each received ten year sentences which, under Federal guidelines, meant they had to serve at least 80%, eight years, before they were eligible for parole. They spent their time on Terminal Island only a few miles from the house on Redondo Avenue where they first met Michael Melton.

Both were released in 1980. Kerry spent a few years dealing drugs and was shot to death by an irate customer. Mark disappeared and has not been heard from by any of his former friends since then.

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