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## Exodus to Mexico

I am on the demarcation. No, I am actually south of that soft boundary that separates reality from fiction, waking from dreams, life from oblivion. Whatever, the pain, O the pain, that sits in my shoulders and neck and head and electrifies down to

my feet. Warm splashes of water dart against my calves and I fear I might be electrocuted. The water splashes are random and blunt. Like a dull water pick. A random blunt water pick. Incongruous thoughts. But I don't care as long as I can carry a thought. I wish it would water pick my shoulders and neck. I welcome such a massage. My eyes hurt so I don't want to open them. I taste and smell that I am in some saltwater venue, but where? A wide tub or an ocean marsh or a slow back surge of a coastal bay?

I hear the low chatter of something? Like a communication of some sort. But what. I can't place the sounds, but they are pleasing to me and then I remember the dolphins. How are they here? How am I here? I try to open my eyes to more pain to find out where I am, but they are crusted shut from dried salt and other matter. Maybe blood? Where would the blood come from? I have no memory of anything. But dolphins. I know I have an affinity with dolphins.

Safe Haven? The phrase passes at the edge of my memory. Is that a port where I have been or maybe where I am going? No connection comes into my consciousness. Come by again and let me catch you. I dream of ships slipping by from another direction. Tangents of dolphins. I must have been a sailor in the past, and I am sailing now in unknown waters to an unknown destination. But it's the journey, not the destination. How did that cliché

drift through my brain? I feel my whole life has been a journey and that has been my destiny, or destination, if I please.

O dolphins! Please come by again so I can catch you and try to understand what I am experiencing.

The image of a speeding ship materializes in my memory and fades before I can grasp it. What is thought? What is memory? Neurons firing off in my head? Bits and pieces of information stored in my heart and brain and other organs that come together to recreate the whole or some part of an event I experienced in my past? I fiddle around and then I am on the operating room, for my broken left arm when I am eight years old. My right elbow lies flat on the operating table. The anesthesiologist has me raise my right hand pointing to the sky. She says count to fifteen and you will fall into deep sleep. One, two, three, four, five and I laugh as I fall back into the nether world, stealing toward the house of death. I am on a long swinging rope into Hades and I reach out with my perfect left limb towards Agamemnon and other dead Greeks. I see a thirsty man standing in water and when he reaches down with a cupped hand the water evaporates. When he reaches for apples on the tree the wind bends it away from him and blows fire onto my rope above my grip and I look up and see the thing holding my rope from above as an amorphous yellow cloud whose arms are receding into its

shapelessness and the rope slips down into Hell with me as the rider. Riding the Rope to Hell and I am free falling and ...

I wake with no idea of how long I was out. I must see and accept the pain and I slit my eyes to see brilliant stars in the black sky and realize I am moving on a body of water. Or am I anchored and is the water drifting past me? I hope it is me that is in motion. I sense that I have to travel someplace far away to be safe.

The pain, O the pain, but I will my eyes open and turn my head and make out a silhouette of black mass with grey sky standing over it enclosing a crescent moon. Crescent Moon? How is that familiar? A song from my past? Another time, maybe a better time, under the night sky? I can't think about this with the hurt throbbing within. Tears of pain close my eyes and I squeeze them tightly and blink open and see small flames in the distance dug into the black silhouette. I close my eyes to make some sense of this, to make some connections in my brain, to understand this.

I see a dog, a large black dog with sympathetic eyes and a small third eyes glowing at me as blow upon blow crushes all over my body and the screams of a woman bouncing within my skull and I open my eyes to let the voice out.

The thought crawls out from a cache in the back of my head and I know these to be Bon fires on the hillside used by people

to keep them warm and protected and social. Those are the fires in the distance. So small to me, but like watching ocean waves from a cliff, huge when you are next to them. I tire. Ready to close my eyes to go back into the welcoming sleep when a dolphin face pushes out from the water and blocks my view of the land. The glistening soft face of Safe Haven reflects the light from the low moon. Safe Haven! That was you earlier. I know I am going to your namesake. Sinking again into the darkness and greedily taking all that sleep will offer.

Pitch dark as I waken by the sounds of heavy waves. My eyes are sealed and I break through the crust with the fingers of my hand. Fingers to mouth, I taste a mixture of salt and dried blood and lower my hand to the base of the raft to be cleansed. The fires in the land are more spaced from one another. The sounds come from the opposite direction and I roll my head toward them. The turn is painful as my hair is matted to a rough hemp cloth. The moon rays reflect off distant white water. There must be a shallow reef out there. The wave is going to knock me off this raft and I will see if I have the strength to swim back to it.

A dolphin head to this side is visible, with a hemp loop around its face as it pulls the raft. Speeder of Ships! Relax Natalya. Who is Natalya? Is that my name. A pretty name.

Past him I see the wave coming with lots of white water which quickly flattens on the surface until it reduces to a small wave undulating the raft. If I had never heard the wave, I would have never known that it passed beneath us.

Speeder of Ships chirps, "Ta ta ta ta" and continues to move the raft as a corresponding "Ta ta ta ta" comes from the land side and I roll to see Safe Haven matching his mate, tail up and down, up and down, up and . . .

Large Islands close by. Blocking my view of the coast. The moon went away. Probably tired of watching me sleep. How did I get here and an answer emerges, from my brain? The blood-brain barrier has been broken! So much blood in my brain that it escapes to all my parts. Maybe I can pretend that . . . Pretend. Maybe.

The Pretender beats me badly. Not pretend. This was real. Jack sits up. Jack who? The dog is in my face. He attacks me? I don't know. I know he jumps all over me and the blows cease and I am dragging through the sand.

O my Jack. The Dog jumped me, seemed to hurt me. Then somebody dragged me to the sea. And this.

Jack Fluke. That is his name.

I am so weak. I am so thirsty.

Isle. My Isle from Windansea Beach pops her head from the water and kisses me. Windansea Beach?

"Thank you, my lovely," I whisper.

"Ta ta ta."

"Fresh water, if you please." I am delirious and Isle is gone.

My lips crack

Isle returns, towing a partially deflated yellow raft, close to me. I reach into it and there are three large bottles of water. I pull one over the edge of the raft and slowly unscrew the top and drop the liquid onto my face, my tongue lapping at the streams running across my lips.

I am quenched and recklessly pull the other bottles onto my raft and watch with my peripheral vision the yellow raft disappear as Isle lets it loose.

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I am warm. I am dry. I feel the trousers that I am wearing coarse around my legs. They feel starched and I think it is from the salt water having dried the material. The sun has to be out but I am shaded. My eyes are still crusted and I dip my hand in the sea water and rinse my lids and let them open up to see large green leaves draped over my head. My torso too and legs. All covered from the sun which blazes overhead. It takes a while but I know these are banana leaves. My escorts must've found them in the sea and brought them over to cover me so that the sun would not burn me to a crisp. My hand re-discover the glass

bottles of water. I feel a second bottle and I shake it and know that it is full and so I unscrew the top of the first and pour water over my eyes and into my mouth and rub both lightly with my hand.

"Ta ta ta ta ta," is the greetings from Sparkle. I remember my advocate to exiting the water at . . . ? Where was that water? A man carried in the wind with palm fronds? Real windy day next to the ocean, the sea, and it was Windansea Beach and I barely made it to the tunnel. I haven't heard her voice in so long.

"Where have you been these, these months?" I briefly wonder if she deals in months or maybe just in seasons. I laugh and she reads me and nudges my hand and I stroke her for reassurance.

I feel hunger, but I don't care. I feel life. Cyrus says that intermittent . . . Cyrus? My grandfather in Baja. I know he says fasting is good for a body. Let your system cleanse itself as the body doesn't have to digest food, instead it can fight the toxins and move them out. Easier to induce autophagy when the blood and the organs and cells aren't filled with matter. Too much food, good or bad, makes the systems sluggish.

What did she call me? Who is she and call me what?

The Pretender, you fool, you overheard her speaking with the Black Man.



It appears, "this boy is too lean, too hungry, like Cassius. He needs to be fattened or intoxicated." And the Black Man said, "or both." And they walked off in laughter.

I insure my extremities are with the rest of my body under the banana leaves and fall back asleep.

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It is the second night. The warm wind is down. I am dry. The water runs beneath the stacked reeds that prop me up from the log raft. I lay in peace with the clean smell of salt water going into my lungs. Eyes closed, crusting no longer, I reach and touch the heads of the dolphins. Isle with my left hand, and Speeder of Ships with my right. The crust on my lips hurt as I crack a small smile, like an ice berg, my whole inner self is the full smile. I am home. Baja. I doubt not that everything has been prepared for. The old women did not lie. The dolphins roll their heads under my touch and lightly chatter through the raft and we continue the trip south. I descend so deep that I am outside of myself and in somebody else's world of limitless love. No boundaries. No leashes attached, but always there whenever you might need it. Mother dies giving birth. Father leaps into the stream to save his child and drowns in the rescue. Soldier crawls through the bush to pull his wounded mate to safety as the bullets strike. Cop exchanges himself as a

hostage to free others with no idea what the lunatic will do with the weapon.

Tom Boy dies while . . .

And all that is left is a memory in a fold of the mind of the survivor, a memory that sticks forever and keeps the deceased alive, the traces receding into darkness over time. With the way of the world it seems all that is left is oral historians.

I dream of the Pretender. Amazon. Blond. Blondie! Young graduate of UCSD medical school doing a residency at the VA and killing them with the help of her instructors with allopathic medicine with no consequences while the alternative health practitioners are hung for it. B. Be who? What is a B but the second letter of the alphabet? Yes! Alice B and her herbs and medicines and ointments that Big Pharma steals and adds poison to and bottles it and sells it to the government for one thousand times the cost of the natural ingredients. Taxes? What about taxes? I can't remember that now, but I like this thinking to activate my brain.

The Priesthood of the medical profession with their worship of money. Give them the chronic illness with a long life and the doctors of Greed are set for life and they bring help to their masses.

I tire from these thoughts and sleep.

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Dawn reaches across the morning sky, lighting over a mountain peak distant in the far east. I see it because I've been awake for many minutes, having been woken by the glassy surface of the sea. I sit up, some strength back, stomach feeling empty, empty. I mark the blue bruises on my arms and sides of my torso and can only imagine what the rest of me is like. I touch the crusted piles of blood on my head. Good platelets. Good coagulation.

I touch the banana leaves beside me and know we are prepared. I drink half of the third bottle of water and hold it up to a new dolphin: Healer of Men! I touch him and see that behind he is dragging a canvass bag the color of dark avocado and I knew there is more water in it and what else? He swims quicker than the pace of my dolphin powered raft and his satchel is beside me and I pull out some water bottles and a green carton of C rations. I use my opener and devour peaches and. Where did C rations come from in this day and age? Some military warehouse that had remained unmolested for decades? No matter. I eat three and wash them down with fresh water and pull the banana leaves over me and lay back from the rising sun and think:

Give me my strength back Lord, I want to run along the sea with my surfboard and then into the water and jump through a

wave and slide under and feel it gliding over me and open my eyes to the dolphins with me as they carry me into a wave and we ride together and there is Jack Fluke and . . .

Oh boy for that thought, that Dream, Gypsy woman.

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Dark again. Third night out here as I sit up and place the palm fronds beside me. I drink from my bottle and watch the high moon and starry-sky and listen to a burst of water in the distance. Whales must be close. I hear them echo one another with their cries surrounding our raft. We have made good speed. We have travelled less than five hundred miles. It must be late early morning and the eastern face of the moon starts to diminish from the sun beginning its ascent behind the mountains.

The dolphin power of the raft ceases and now they glide with it, nudging it on course. Healer of Men comes close and I reach into the satchel and pull out another C Rat. Tom Boy the C Rat and the cut reveals another meal of peaches. Life is good.

There are light on the distant land fall and I can barely see the entrance to the Lagoon. Crowded with crustaceans. The dolphins chatter and several leave for the entrance while new ones appear next to us. We will wait for the light.