

## BARRACUDA

By Brandon Bulos

Rishella Reinkemeyer was a young Aruban girl with Dutch blood in her veins. Her dark blond hair shone a beautiful gold under the harsh Caribbean sun. Her diamond-shaped face accentuated her young and sharp features, making her seem bold and confident. In the center of her face, she had a strong nose dotted with tiny freckles, on top of that lay her bright blue eyes which resembled a vast deep ocean. Having spent her entire life on Aruba, her skin developed a Caribbean vitality, her delicate Dutch blood would occasionally rush up to the surface giving her a childish pink glow—this gave one the impression that she was both experienced with the elements, but also tormented by an internal fragility.

One day, Rishella agreed to having lunch with her long-time friend Marcel. The sun outside was blazing, so they quickly chose a spot under the shade. It was a quiet place, devoid of

the bustle and noise of your average tourist spot. Marcel had just returned to Aruba a few days before and insisted they meet up on Rishella's next day off; he had something important he wanted to talk about.

The waiter had just brought them coffee and sandwiches.

"What did you want to talk about?" Rishella said quickly; she would get nervous when people said things like 'We need to talk.'

"I missed you, you know," Marcel said simply, taking his chin in hand, looking off into another direction. He was dressed in his Coast Guard's polo, his dark tactical pants, and rugged black boots. Due to the amount of time spent out at sea, beaten by the salty wind, his skin became smooth, and darkened nicely, like well-treated leather. He wasn't the best-looking man on the island by any means, but he had a beautiful white smile that made Rishella feel at ease.

"Oh?" she said, as if she was unsure of what he meant.

"Well, yes..." Marcel placed both arms on to the table slowly, turning his face to Rishella's, looking straight into her eyes trying to show his sincerity. "Don't you feel the same way?"

To this, her heart rate increased drastically.

Flustered, she stammered: "Of course, I missed my best friend! Why wouldn't I?"

Marcel seemed distracted now; he repeated her words to himself meekly, "Best friend..." as if he were in deep contemplation on what they meant.

But Rishella knew what Marcel meant from the start. Inside that seemingly innocent question of his, held flashing images of skin rubbing against skin, of the flickering blaze of a single night's passion—a night of which she has still to decide whether it had been a good idea in the first place. She liked Marcel well enough. Truth be told, they had a good time together that

night. Something about Marcel having to leave the next day gave the idea an air of new adventure, something Rishella thought you only found in romance novels, so she figured it was something they could casually enjoy this one time, maybe even every once in a while. But just as Marcel had been, Rishella found herself quite surprised by how comfortably and gently they held each other for hours on end, how charming he had been, and how acutely aware she was of his attention that night. Yes, Rishella had to admit to herself that, against her better judgment, she felt she wanted to see Marcel again, and—though it wasn't as if this were something not normally done between the two—agreed to have coffee with him like this. But why was it that she felt this way now? It was a peculiar feeling she couldn't quite wrap her head around. She felt as though she had to be careful, for some unknown reason.

“Do you remember when we were younger, how you used to wear ankle bracelets all the time?” Marcel said.

Rishella's face flushed slightly: “I remember.”

Marcel dug into his backpack under the table. He pulled out something Rishella couldn't yet see, and then, making a show of it, slowly opened his hands, presenting a little white box.

“Marcel...” she said softly.

“You'll like it, I promise.”

Rishella took the little box from his rough hands and started opening it, overcome with curiosity; she found that it contained a thin silver ankle bracelet that shone a bright white under the morning sun. From the bracelet dangled a chubby frog with bulging cartoon eyes, the silver glinting in Rishella's blue eyes. Marcel smiled shyly, revealing his glistening white teeth.

“Oh, Marcel! It's so cute! I haven't worn one of these since I was seventeen.”

“You know,” Marcel began, clearly pleased by her excitement. He raised his index finger up like a teacher ready to explain. “The frog was a very important symbol to the Caiquetios. I read that they used it as an animal totem of some sort. I figured you’d like that kind of thing.”

Rishella took off her flip-flops and wore the bracelet on her right leg.

“What do you think?” she said, crossing her leg over the left, peaking it out from under the table to show it off.

Marcel said it was beautiful and gave her a beaming smile. She loved to see him like this, and he was glad to see her pleased with his gift.

Of course, Marcel would’ve liked to stay with her like this all day if he could, but duty called him back out to the ocean. He put his hat on and left for the register. Rishella sat there a while longer, idling by, thinking about her life, her future. She took a few perfunctory sips of water from the tall glass which had been sitting there for some time now. The sun had moved quite a bit since they first arrived, and now the shade—which once protected her from its rays—was no longer there. The heat oppressed her thoughts, suffocating her like a thick blanket, she felt a strong desire to cool off at the beach and think about what Marcel had said. She had the day off, after all.

Rishella drove all the way to Boca Catalina in her tiny orange car—beach chairs in trunk and all. She liked to drive with her windows down just to savor the ever-growing flavor of sea-salt in the wind.

This had been her favorite beach since she was little. It pleased her to see its shabby parking lot made up of brown, trodden sand with deep undulating holes; from the large clumps of prickly pear cactuses; to the swarms of dragonflies floating above them like black clouds; to the short, sunbaked, craggy coquina cliffs that descended from two sides converging into a humble shoreline below, which was what the people of Aruba called Boca Catalina—all these things came together to make her haven, where she could be content in her solitude. Rishella loved going to the beach on a weekday, where the crowds of rowdy tourists on their UTVs were nowhere to be seen.

When she arrived, she looked inside the wooden box where people left and took used books. It stood under the pallid *kwihî* trees just before the beach. She grabbed the first title she liked and began scanning the area for her favorite palapa. Seeing as it was free, she quickly ran towards it, fighting against the rough dirt and stone, and plopped a beach chair under it, claiming it for herself. She sat down and thought to herself that it felt pretty good to be alone, when suddenly, a memory of Marcel flashed into her mind. Agh, what do I do? she thought to herself. She scanned the area taking in her surroundings, as if to distract herself from the question.

The waves crashed gently against the rocks. It was just her and a tourist family that were sitting near the shore, listening to country music on a speaker. The mother of the family was sleeping spread eagle with an open book atop her breast, and the father was looking off into the distant horizon, drinking cold beer from a can of Coors Light. Further ahead, Rishella could hear the splashing of water and squealing of children below the rocky cliffs from where she sat; she figured that that was the sound of the couple's children already busy playing in the water. She couldn't help but think of this scene as her future with Marcel. She began to focus on the father, who seemed to be intently searching for something in that empty horizon in front of him, as if

there were something that nobody else could see. But what was it? She wondered. She found herself identifying with the man; she could see herself in the same situation, ten years from now, concerned with the things most distant and disconnected from her.

Rishella shook off her daydreaming and stood up to take her shirt and shorts off, revealing a red bikini. She turned to look at the two tourists again. The woman was still asleep, and the man—with a face that gave her chills—still gazing into the endless distance. Now she too found herself looking at it, trying to find that *thing* they were looking for.

“It’s beautiful, isn’t it?” the tourist said to her.

Surprised, Rishella paused a moment before she realized she was meant to say something in return. “O-oh... yeah, I love the silence,” she said finally, as if to tell the man that she wanted to be alone, but the guy didn’t seem bothered by it.

“Yeah,” he said almost in a whisper “The silence...” turning his head back to the tropical expanse in front of him. To her, he seemed the loneliest man she had ever laid eyes on. She felt sorry for him, though she couldn’t explain why.

Rishella returned her gaze to the beautiful view ahead. Everything had a strange quality to it on a quiet day like today, as if this wasn’t reality. A little further down to her right, out on the ocean blue, there was a single, medium-sized boat swaying silently. Closer by, over the tiny cliff in front of her, seawater rocked with an emerald luster, growing darker the further away it got—a deep blue at that point, hid from her eyes what lurked below. The sun hung high in the sky, pouring its rays onto the ocean surface; Rishella watched the reflecting light in the water flicker magically, like tiny sparkling stars that formed a reflected white bridge. One hundred thousand pearly white flashes exploding in and out of existence, all at the same time, brought

here by a blazing ball of fire one hundred and fifty million kilometers away. It was so beautiful that she couldn't figure why she had never noticed it before.

She opened the book she had taken earlier and began perusing its contents, but not five minutes had passed before she closed it shut with a hard thud. She couldn't focus, her mind was filled with thoughts of Marcel, herself, and the ocean—that great big expanse, seemingly never-ending. Suddenly, Rishella compared her being with that of the ocean. She felt tiny—alive and tiny. The sound of waves crashing sang her melancholy. The call of seagulls in the distance echoed across the open blue. She began to feel frighteningly alone.

A wave crashed hard against the rocks once more, this time, thundering louder than ever, rousing her from her dark thoughts. She felt a grave fear not to go back to that place in her mind. She wanted to see Marcel again, she wanted to reciprocate his feelings, but the more she thought of him the more he felt like an anchor weighing her down. Growing more anxious, she decided she needed a swim and stood up to go to the water, passing in front of the couple.

“Tired of reading?” the American man said.

“I'm sorry?” Rishella answered, turning to him, but the man had already shifted his gaze back to the horizon. She hesitated a moment. His words seemed to hang in the air like a ghost. The heat of the sun beat down on her, and the hot sand stung her feet. Deciding to get as far away from these strange tourists as possible, she walked the opposite direction where there was a clearing into the water that was less used. The spot had a few large black rocks that stuck out of the white sand, and many smaller ones spread around in and out of the water, all of them polished by decades of harsh tides. The fear that most people have about going into the water through here are these very rocks, but Rishella knew that if you simply swam two strokes ahead you would land on pure white sand, like an underwater desert. Rishella wanted to get into the

water immediately, but once her feet sunk into the wet sand and the ocean water brushed against her toes, she jumped in agony over the piercing cold sensation it brought. She seemed to want to take any excuse not to go in, and thus hesitated. As she was looking at the black stones sprinkled around covered in patches of green moss, she heard the sound of the daughter's beautiful laugh in the distance—curiosity struck her then. Rishella remembered the little girl she used to be—a mere child grabbing fistfuls of wet sand here, in this very spot, looking for sea lice; those strange marble-like, pale crustaceans, of which she could hardly believe she had ever held in her hands. She crouched down to her knees, letting the cold water cool her legs slowly. She grabbed big clumps of sand with her hands—the clumps wet and sticky—but, every time, after a mere moment, they would dry up quickly and begin to crumble slowly, sifting through her fingers. And though she couldn't explain why, she had a sudden powerful desire to cry. The sea lice were nowhere to be found. Every crude ball of sand she made was devoid of anything at all, as if they had never been there to begin with. She felt ridiculous.

She looked to the water now; the smell of the beach was all around her, filling her up with the feeling that she was a creature of this realm. She stood up and dove right into the chilly sea, eliminating the suffering that simply walking in would have done to her. The abrupt change in sensation: going from the beating heat of the day to the cool chill of the water, Rishella felt herself transported, maybe even transformed. She was now one with the ocean. The salty clear water flowed with every move she made; she could be nothing more than the very master of this place. She was convinced of this, even if she was just playing a game with herself. The tiny waves raced towards her, grazing her skin; the sand below created a path with every step she took, blasting sand away from her feet, as if she were a giant. Her form became ever-changing: Rishella became a striped tiger, soaking herself to cool off from the tropical sun; she became a



sea turtle, pushing herself forward with long elegant flippers, without a worry in the world; after that she became a sea otter, filled with vicious, playful energy, contorting her body, diving down under the water, swimming with swift motions. She was a graceful, yet cruel animal. She tried to express every beast she could, which made her feel like a little girl again. This game went on with seemingly no end.

Distracted by her game, she lost her sense of time, and she realized—though she did not know how—the water had taken her far, far away from shore. Panic struck her when she realized she had somehow gotten long past the buoys—probably during her excursions as a sea otter. The shoreline was a blurry landscape trembling against the rays of light. To her horror, the tourist family had merged with their palapa, becoming a measly black speck in the overwhelming distance. Her heart quickened.

Now her world changed again, she became the image of that weak animal she always hated, like a panicked puppy thrashing in the water. But she managed to stop herself. She sought to challenge herself in the moment, to remain calm in the situation.

She turned to look at the horizon, which even now, was just as far away as it had ever been, as if it was running away from her. She was reminded of that man ashore, drinking his Coors Light. She turned again to look at the shoreline, it almost seemed even further away now. Everything was so quiet; she almost began to feel at peace here. The water around her was dark with fields of algae swaying under her feet. Emptiness—that was what she found. She was floating in a great, expanding emptiness. Rishella fought against her growing consternation, she wanted to control herself. The panic of before came and went, she convinced herself that nothing dangerous could happen to her, she was a healthy adult that could easily swim back. There was

nothing here, just empty space, just distance. She found herself smack-dab in the center of nothing and that somehow made her feel better.

Now that she was so far away from it all, thoughts of Marcel flowed in like water, filling even the tiniest cracks inside her, cooling her to the touch with his memory. The image of this man, her friend of many years, was the only consolation at the center of this nothingness. She remembered Marcel as a boy, and how the two of them talked about the most insignificant things, as if time were endless. Marcel was an annoying boy back then, who spoke a little too loudly for her liking, but he was the only one who ever really cared about her, and that's why she felt that she owed him everything. He always chose her before any other, even himself. Even back then, when all other friends vanished over time, Marcel always stood there in her mind looking at her with a smile, as if he was waiting.

She thought about the night they spent together, the touch of Marcel's warm skin. In her mind, it was comparable to dragging one's fingers through the hot, soft sands of the island's beaches. She realized that she missed him already and wanted to call him to tell him she wanted to see him tonight. This time, she didn't want to fight the thought and sought to challenge herself to live in the moment—to live in *this* moment.

All this time spent thinking of Marcel, she had been staring out at the clouds floating by. She had decided it was high time she get back to shore to call him up and make her feelings for him known. She turned shoreside ready to swim back, but—unbeknownst to what lay beneath the choppy water—there was something floating silently behind her, watching. From above, it seemed like the distorted image of a silver blade dancing gloriously on the ocean surface. This shining sword, which twisted with the motions of the waves above, stared with razor focus in Rishella's direction.

A strong gust of wind blew, sending ripples across the ocean water that surrounded her. The sound was hard and sudden, taking her attention to the profound emptiness she found herself in so far from land. The silent dark waters clawed at her nerves. An unexplainable fear suddenly surfaced. *What if I never see him again?*

Rishella was exceptionally far from shore and could benefit greatly from resting every now and again. The fear of losing Marcel coupled with the childlike joy of newly discovered love had her under its spell. She sought to challenge herself to arrive at land without rest, as if to test if her love for Marcel was true and without any doubts.

She accelerated her paddling, pushing herself forward. She was happy that she took the time to go to the beach today, she thought.

Underwater, in that dark world she paddled over, the silver lance watched Rishella swim with dangerous curiosity. The beast had never in its life seen anything like her before and approached her cautiously, maintaining a careful distance.

It was a magnificent creature that shone a blinding silver light as it reflected the rays of the sun. The creature was large, probably weighing around forty kilograms, with a long life behind it. Its body was adorned with a dark wavy pattern, evoking thoughts of the Japanese sword. It had two flat eyes like large holes of never-ending darkness; if you found yourself looking into them, you would know, with great despair, that it was a merciless killer. It opened its mouth slightly, exposing its long, grotesque, sharp teeth that protruded forward. These were the deadly weapons of the barracuda.

The creature obsessed over Rishella's movements, spotting something that glinted a bright white around her ankle. Her ankle bracelet caught the sunshine above, making the beast think of prey. Making its decision quickly, like the experienced killer that it was, the barracuda

launched its body forward, like a torpedo. Swiftly, without Rishella realizing what was happening, the beast had violently torn off a large chunk of her right thigh. A red cloud burst out, expanding in all directions.

Rishella screamed with uncontrollable fear. It was as if she was struck by a bolt of lightning that coursed through every nerve, making her all too conscious of the pain. She struggled in fear, screaming with all her might, trying to scare off whatever it was that attacked her below. She was hysterical, crying and flailing her arms around. She started gasping ferociously, scanning the water for anything that she could see. The barracuda watched her thrash about like a wounded animal. In its primitive mind, its first attack was a complete success. It swam a circle around her, attempting to return to its preferable angle. That's when Rishella spotted it—the sunshine illuminating its movements from above. Like a flash of silver, like the swift swing of a deadly sword, she saw the beautiful sheen of sharp steel and a quick death.

You've got to get to shore! Her body screamed. She swam with trepidation; she had never expended herself this much before, but there was no time to think, she had to act. Everything else vanished, it was only her now; her, the shore, this creature, Marcel... But Rishella was losing blood fast. The barracuda had perforated an artery in the side of her leg. If only she could have turned back to see the dark river of blood gushing out behind her in her effort to get back to shore. But instead of her blood, it was Marcel, that wonderful boy, she felt slipping away, escaping her thoughts, getting farther away.

She grew weaker by the moment. Her breathing was labored. Her thoughts raced so fast they simply blurred into one nothingness, losing herself. She just kept swimming, concentrating with all her strength into this one simple act.

Then the image of silver—the instrument of inescapable death flashed into her mind anew; she frantically began to scream and cry, continuing her desperate march towards land.

Her leg—which was quickly losing its strength—felt cold and tingled, like thousands of needles piercing her skin accompanied by a strange numbness that threatened to overtake it. She could not sit around to think about what was happening to her, she had to get to shore at all costs. Her arms cramped, and her legs could barely move. Inside, Rishella was a hurricane of human emotion, but on the outside, she was a woman losing her light.

The barracuda finally came back around. It arrived behind her, immediately moving forward like a thrusting javelin. This time it came at her at an angle, grabbing onto Rishella's right leg with its ugly jaws. The beast shook itself ferociously, tearing its victim apart. The cloud of blood descended on to the animal, exciting it, making it even more aggressive. It was a cruel beast, without any mercy. Through all the flesh and blood, one could clearly see its eye piercing through the red veil; the gold ring inside it: the event horizon, and, beyond that, a black hole: the abyss.

Above water, Rishella screamed and thrashed. Everything around her now was a dark muddy red which grew larger and larger. Her heart pumped the blood right out of her body. She was falling apart. In a last, desperate effort she dove under to challenge the fierce beast.

On the shores of Boca Catalina, the tourist family was spending their day lounging together on the beach. The father of the group, a man with a hard, melancholy composition sat in a tiny, colorful beach chair his wife bought at the souvenir shop. In front of him was the horizon,

a picture of gold light, which tinged the clouds with rays of red and orange. He had been busy all day trying to empty out his head, filling it with alcohol instead.

He crushed the can of Coors Light he had just finished. The crackling sounds of crushed aluminum filled the void—this was the man’s ritual. He tossed the can into the colorless plastic bag they had been using for garbage and took another one out of the cooler. He inspected it: water droplets were flowing down, like sweat, making him think of the hot day he had suffered. That’s when he thought that perhaps a swim might do him some good.

He raised his heavy body off the chair, groaning, stepping out of the protection of the public palapa made up of dried palm leaves. His movements were slow, lacking entirely of urgency or concern for the next moment. He took a second to look back at his wife, to see if she was still reading; she was asleep. The air was surprisingly cold. He felt he already missed his chance at enjoying the refreshing ocean water the way he wanted, but he had already gotten up, and immediately regretted his decision, feeling awkward and obliged to take the swim anyway. Walking down to where the water met the shore, he looked off the side to see his two kids still playing together: a son and a daughter. The golden sunrays bathed his daughter, filling his eyes with deep nostalgia, as if her youth was quickly slipping away. The man adored his daughter.

“Daddy!”, she noticed him, “come play with us!”

“Be right there, honey!”

The man looked to the sky one more time, which had now turned into a gentle pink glow. Aruba’s a beautiful place, he thought to himself, taking a swig of Coors Light. When he looked down to observe the motions of the waves reaching the shore, something shining like a tiny white star caught his eye. He crouched down—feeling very weary all of a sudden—and took what looked like some sort of bracelet someone had lost. He took a moment to look it over. The

silver chain shone nicely; little white stars gleamed brightly with the disappearing sunlight overhead. Attached, he noticed, was a cute silver frog with a silly face looking back at him. He thought maybe his daughter might like it.

## BARACUDA

By Brandon Bulos

Richella Reinkemeyer tawata un mucha muhe Arubano di sanger Hulandes. Su cabey tawata blikia door di su bida largo bou di e solo; su caracteristacanan tawata skerpi, su cara den e forma di un diamante tawata accentua esaki. Paden di e cara aki tawata situa dos wowo blauw cla y un nanishi pikpik cu purunchi. Bibando henter su bida riba Aruba, su cuero a desaroya un vitalidad Caribeño, pero lo yena cu colo tin biaha ainda cu e sensibilidad di su sanger Hulandes coriendo bay ariba n'e superficie, haciendo e briya ros; esaki tawata duna un e impresion cu e tawata experiencia cu e elementonan y – n'e mesun momento – tormenta cu un fragilidad interno.

Un dia, e tawata bebiendo koffie cu su amigo di hopi tempo: Marcel. E solo tawata fuerte pafo, pero nan a kies un bon spot situa bou di un poco sombra. E luga tawata keto y sin mucho



cliente, pues e tawata bashi di e chalala cu normalmente lo plaga nan combersacion ora cu nan bin akibanda. Marcel a caba di yega bek Aruba un par di dia pasa, kiermen nan a dicidi di come un lunch trempan hunto riba Richella su dia liber. Apparentemente, Marcel tawatin algo imporante di bis'e.

E waiter a caba di trece nan koffie y sandwichnan.

“Ki’ bo kier a papia anto?”, Richella a bisa.

“M’a sinti bo falta, bo sa”, Marcel di gewoon, zonando sigur di su mes, pero wantando su cachete den su man, mirando den un otro direccion. E tawata bisti den su uniform polo di wardacosta cu su carson tactico y boots preto. Door di tanto tempo riba lama, bati door di e biento salo, su cuero a bira suave y a tan nechi, manera cuero di baca bon trata. E no tawata e homber di mas nechi di e isla, pero e tawatin un bunita smile cu Richella semper a aprecia.

“Esey ta berdad?”

“Si”, Marcel a pone tur dos brasa riba e mesa pocopoco, birando su cara pa mira stret den di Richella su wowonan. “Bo no ta sinti mesun cos?”

Na esaki, Richella su curason a liheresa.

“Ay, pero dimes m’a sinti falt’i mi miho amigo!”, el a bisa un poco mucho lihe.

Marcel su cara a parece distrai, el a ripiti na su mes un debil: “Miho amigo...”, manera cu e tawata diep den contemplacion di kico exactamente esey tawata kiermen.

Pero Richella tawata sa kico Marcel tawata kiermen. Paden di e pregunta inocente ey tawata wanta imagennan di cuero contra cuero, di e candelanan di un anochi su pasion – un anochi cu ainda Richella no por a dicidi si tawata un bon idea den primer luga. E tawata gusta Marcel suficiente. En berdad, nan a pasa bon hunto e anochi ey. Algo di Marcel su subiendo boto e siguiente dia a duna e idea un sabor di aventura nobo, algo cu Richella a kere e tawata di haya

solamente den su novelanan romantico, asina e ta cu el a pensa cu por ta e por tawata algo nan tur dos por a gosa di e un biaha aki, por ta te hasta leu a leu, pero, mescos Marcel, Richella tambe a wordo sorpresa cu con confortabel nan a wanta otro pa horas largo sin fada, cu con yamativo e tawata y con consciente Richella tawata di Marcel su atencion e anochi ey. Si, Richella mester a admiti na su mes cu e kier a pasa tempo cu Marcel atrobe y – aunke no ta manera cu esaki no tawata algo nobo entre nan dos – ta p’esey tambe eigenlijk el a bisa si na un cup di koffie cu ne awe. Pero ta pakico e tawata sinti asina aworaki? E tawata un consternacion straño cu e no por a tene cuenta cu ne. El a sinti cu e mester tawata cauteloso aworaki.

“Bo ta corda ora cu nos tawata mas jong con bo tawata gusta bisti enkelband?”

Richella su cara a bira un poco cora: “Si.”

Marcel a cuminsa coba den su tas bou di e mesa un rato y presenta Richella cu un caha chikito blanco.

“Marcel... ”, Richella di suave.

“Bo ta bay gust’e.”

Richella a tuma e caha y habri’e pocopoco pa haya cu e tawata contene un enkelband chikitico di silver, lombrando blanco bou di e sol’i mainta. Tawatin un dori gordo colga cu dos wowo grandi, e silver reflehando den Richella su wowonan. Marcel a mostra su djentenan blanco.

“Ay no, e dori ta asina tutu. Mi n’ bisti un di esakinan desde cu mi tawatin diesshete mi ta kere”, Richella a bisa.

“Bo sa cu e dori tawata un simbolo hopi importante p’e Caquetio, no. M’a lesa cu nan tawata uz’e como un *animal totem*. M’a pensa cu bo lo gusta esey.”

Richella a kita su slofnan y pone e enkelband rond di su pia drechi.

“Ki’ bo ta pensa?”, e di, crusando su pia drechi over di esun robes pa mustra Marcel.

Marcel a bis’e cu el a ked’e bunita y dun’e un sonrisa grandi.

Richella tawata encanta mira Marcel asina.

Claro, Marcel lo kier a keda akinan cu Richella henter dia, pero deber tawata yam’e bek n’e oceano. El a bisti su pechi y bay n’e caha pa paga pa nan cuminda. Richella a keda sinta ey nan un rato, pensando di su bida, pensando di su futuro. El a gaña tuma un par di sip di su glas di awa cu di dje rato ta para ey nan. E solo a move un poco desde cu nan a prome yega akinan y awo e sombra cu tawata proteh’e di e rayonan no tawata t’ey mas. E calor a cuminsa opresa su pensamentonan y el a sinti un deseo grandi pa refresca su mes na playa pa sigui pensa over di su situacion cu Marcel. E tawatin e dia liber toch.

#

Richella a core bay Boca Catalina den su auto chikito oraño, stoel di playa den bahul y tur cos. E tawata gusta core cu su bentananan habri djis pa e gosa di e smaak di salo den e biento birando gradualmente mas fuerte.

E tawata su favorito beach. Di e parkeerplaats di santo tur kibra cu buraco tur caminda; di e bushinan di cadushi tuna cu tawata duna bo un bon bini dilanti e parkeerplaats y e gruponan di yeye flotando ariba di nan, manera un nubia preto; pa e barancanan cortico di coral y piedra cu tawata uni di dos banda pa topa abou na un canto cu ta kico tawata considera Boca Catalina – tur e elementonan di e luga tawata combina den un efecto placentero. Richella tawata djis encanta e keto di un dia na playa durante siman, evitando e multitud di turista riba UTV haciendo desordo cu normalmente lo t’ey djis un landa over na Tres Trapi.

Ora cu el a yega, el a dicidi di habri e caha di palo para tras di e mata n’e parkeerplaats caminda hende tawata fia y regala buki gratis y el a coy algo p’e lesa. El a haya su favorito

palapa y planta su stoel bou di dje. Un bos paden di dje a bis'e cu e tawata sinti bon pa ta su so y un flash di Marcel a pasa dilanti su mente. Kico mi haci? El a pensa. El a dal su zit y cuminsa tuma e paisahe aden, manera cu el a caba di puntra su mes un pregunta cu no tawata merece contesta.

Olanan tawata keto. Tawata djis e y un famia di turista mas cerca dje canto scuchando muziek country. E mama tawata drumi cu un buki habri riba su pecho y e tata tawata mirando leu den di e horizon, bebiendo un bleki di Coors Light. E por a scucha spartmento di awa y gritamento di mucha mas abou y e tawata sa cu nan muchanan tawata druk den awa caba. E no por a yuda, pero pa pensa si por ta esaki tawata un di e resultadonan posibel pa Marcel y su mes. Richella a sigui wak e tata cu tawata echt concentrando ariba algo leu n'e horizon, manera cu tawatin algo cu niun otro hende por a wak. Kico e tawata? El a haya su mes ta identifica cu e homber; e por a facilmente wak su mes sinta asina aki dies aña, preocupa cu e cosnan mas leu di dje.

Richella a lanta para pa kita su paña. E tawata bisti den un bikini cora. El a bira wak e famia atrobe. E señora ainda tawata drumiendo y e homber – cu un cara cu tawata duna Richella ril – tawata mirando n'e distancia ainda. Awo e tambe a haya su mes ta mirando leu, purbando di haya e cos ey cu nan dos tawata buscando.

*“It's beautiful, isn't it?”*, e turista a bisa.

Sorpresa, Richella a tarda un momento prome cu el a realisa cu e tawata supone di a contesta. *“I love the quiet”*, el a bisa finalmente, manera pa indica na e guy cu e tawata kier ta su so, pero e guy mes no tawata parce mucho preocupa.

“*Yeah, the quiet...*”, e di den casi un fluister, birando su cabes bek n’e expansion nan dilanti. Richella a haya cu, pele, e tawata parce manera e homber di mas soletario cu el a yega di topa cu den su bida. El a sinti pica p’e.

Richella mes a regresa na su bunita bista. Tur cos tawatin un cualidad nobo riba un dia keto manera esaki. Un poco mas leu na su banda drechi, tawatin un boto chikito ta drif silenciosamente. Mas abou, over di e baranca su dilanti, awa’i lama tawata sacudiendo cu energia esmeralda, birando mas scur den e distancia – e blauw na e punto ey tawata sconde di su wowonan e cosnan abou. E solo tawata halto na laira, bashando abou su luz ariba e superficie dje parti blauw scur aki. Richella a wak e refleho dje solo riba e awa comosifuera e tawata un rio di luz oro blanco cu tawata hiba un na un mundo apart. El a keda wak e streyanan chikito cu tawata consisti e rio blanco aki. Shen mil streya blanco explotando – muriendo y naciendo, tur n’e mesun momento – treci akinan di un bala di candela shen cincuenta miyon kilometer leu. E cos aki su dilanti, manera un brug lombrante p’e mund’i spirito, tawata e cos di mas bunita cu el a yega di wak den su bida, el a pensa. *Ta con mi nunca a ripara esaki den mi bida?*

El a habri e buki cu el a coy di e caha di palo y cuminsa lesa, pero ni cinco minuut a pasa prome cu el a cer’e cu un klap duro. El a pensa riba Marcel; el a pensa riba su mes; el a pensa riba e oceano – e gran expansion ey. Diripiente, Richella su balor tawata poni den comperacion cu e oceano. E tawata chikito, el a conclui, dimes – bibo y chikito. E zonido di olanan raspando over di e piedranan a canta su melancolia. E yamada di e parhanan di lama den e distancia a biaha door di e bashi. Richella a sinti un soledad asombroso tum’e over.

Un ola a cay duro contra e canto, lantando e di su pensamentonan scur. El a sinti un miedo manera cu e no kier a bay bek n’e luga ey den su mente. Richella tawata sigur cu e tawata kier a wak Marcel atrobe, pero, pensando di dje aworaki, pa un rason of otro, e tawata sinti

manera cu e tawata un peso pushando e abou n'e fondo. El a dicidi di dal un landa y a lanta para lihe pa cana bay e canto, pasando dilanti e famia di turista.

*"Tired of reading?"*, e homber Americano a bisa.

*"I'm sorry?"*, Richella a constest'e, birando pa wak e, pero e turista a bira bek na e bashi di e horizon caba.

El a duda un momento. E palabranan di e turista a colga den e aire manera un spirito. E solo a tum'e over di biaha. E calor dje santo bou di su pianan a keint'e. Dicidiendo di evita e turista straño y su famia el a cana bay e otro direccion caminda tawatin un habrida menos uza pa drencia lama. E spot tawata rondona cu piedra grandi preto, paden y pafu di e awa salo, haci suave door di decadanan bati door di e olanan, cual tawata e miedo di mastanto hende mirando pa drencia akibanda, pero si bo lo djis dal un landa chikito dilanti lo bo crusa over di tur e piedranan opresando e seccion di playa ey. Richella kier a drencia e awa di biaha, pero ora cu el a yega e canto muha y e aw'i lama a mishi cu su tenchinan, e mester a bula atras den sorpresa. E awa tawata asina fresco, asina friu. Su curpa a yena cu anticipacion. El a duda pa drencia aden.

Un curiosidad a dal e awo. Mirando e piedranan preto sprengu rond akinan cu nan plekinan di mosa berde pega tiki tiki riba nan y e zonido di e turista su yiu muhe invisibel hariendo un bunita hari den e distancia leu, Richella a corda riba e mucha muhe chikito cu e tawata antes. Un persona chikitin garando e santo cerca dje piedranan akinan mes buscando piunan di santo – e insectonan blanco strañon'ey cu awo dibaina e por a kere el a yega di wanta den su man un tempo. El a buk abou na su rudianan, lagando e awa fresco fri'e pocopoco. El a cuminsa gara klompnan grandi di santo cu su man – e klomp lo ta muha y pegapega – pero cada biaha, despues di un momento, tur e santo lo cuminsa slip afo di su dedenan. Y e no por a splica dicon, pero e tawatin un gana poderoso di yora aworaki. E no por a haya ni un piu di santo. Cada

klomp di santo tawata bashi di contenido, manera cu nunca nan a yega di t'ey den primer luga. El a cuminsa sinti su mes ridiculo.

Richella a wak n'e awa; e holo di playa tawata tur caminda awo, yenando su curpa cu e sintimiento di ta un criatura di awa. El a lanta para y sambuya den di e awa friu, eliminando e sufrimento cu canando aden lo tawatin p'e. E cambio di sensacion abrupto – bayendo di e calor di e dia pa e friu di e awa bibo – Richella a sinti transporta, transforma. E tawata un bestia di awa awo. E likido tawata parti di su caminda asina facil cu e no por tawata nada mas pero e maestro di e elemento aki. Por lo menos, hasta si e tawata djis un wega e tawata hungando riba su mes, asina e tawata pensa. E careda di olanan chikito lastrando contra su cuero; e santo, manera un bom rementando ora cu e tuma un stap n'e fondo abou, tawata hala leu di su pianan den respet. E friu a bira su placer y e solo su nutricion. Su forma a keda cambia, Richella tawata un tigre bunita scapando for di e calor di e solo tropical; Richella tawata un tortuga berde pushando su mes dilanti trankilo cu su halanan largo, sin niun worry den bida; despues el a bira un zeeotter, yena cu energia, doblando su curpa, sambuyando bou awa, landando cu rapidez. E tawata elegante, pero cruel. Richella a expresa tur bestia y un bestia. Haci manera un mucha chikito di nobo, el a hunga e wega aki cu su mes pa masha largo mes, djis landando bay.

Perdi den su wega, e fluho di tempo a bay for di dje y el a haya cu – e no tawata sa con – e awa a hib'e hopi leu di canto. Panico di berdad a atak'e ora cu el a realisa cu el a bay laga e boeinan hopi tempo caba, probablemente durante di su excursion como un zeeotter. E canto tawata un pintura moli temblando cu e rayonan di e solo colgando halto su tras. E famia di turistanan a bira un cu e palapa – un punta preto chikito den e distancia. Su curason a liheresa.

Awo su mundo a cambia atrobe, el a bira e imagen di e bestia debil ey cu semper el a odia – e cacho chikito batiendo su patanan, spartiendo awa tur caminda. Pero el a stop su mes di drenta den e modo aki. El a desafía su mes pa keda calma den su situacion.

El a bira wak n'e horizon cu tawata mesun leu cu semper, coriendo bay di dje. El a corda riba e imagen di e tata rib'e canto bebiendo Coors Light. El a bira su cara bek n'e canto, e tawata parce mas leu di dje ainda awo, manera cu e tawata coriendo bay di dje. Tur cos tawata asina keto cu el a hera cuminsa sinti na pas. E awa tawata scur cu tur e veldnan di alga ta zwaai bou di su pianan. Un nada asombroso – esey tawata kico el a topa cu awo. E tawata flotando meymey di un gran, expandiendo bashi. Richella a drenta den un bataya contra su consternacion creciendo, e tawata kier ta den control di su mes. E panico di aworey a bin y bay y e tawata sinti sigur cu nada peligroso tawata wardando p'e akinan. No tawatin nada aki toch, djis espacio, djis distancia. El a haya su mes meymey di e desierto di existencia, el a pensa – y den un manera esey a pone sinti miho

Awo cu e tawata asina leu di tur cos, pensamentonan di Marcel a cuminsa fluha aden manera awa, yenando hasta e nachinan paden di dje, refrescando su mes cu su memoria. E imagen di e homber aki, su amigo di añas largo, tawata un consuelo meymey di e desierto di existencia. El a corda ariba Marcel ora cu e tawata un mucha y con nan dos tawata combersa di e cosnan di mas insignificante den plein di scol. Marcel tawata fastioso, e tawata papia mucho duro, pero e unico persona cu semper e tawata worry cu tawata Richella y pa esey – Richella a sinti – e tawata deb'e tur cos. Marcel semper lo kies e prome cu tur otro. Cuando tur e otro amigonan y amigan'ey a disparce cu tempo, Marcel semper a keda para, mirando e cu un sonrisa. Esaki tawata su imagen di dje.



El a pensa ariba e anochi cu nan a pasa hunto, e mishi di Marcel su cuero cayente. Den su mente, e por a compar'e cu lastrando su dedenan door e santo suave calor di e playa. E tawata sinti su falta caba el a realisa y e kier a yam'e pa bis'e cu e kier wak e awenochi. E biaha aki, e no tawata kier a lucha e pensamiento; el a desafia su mes pa biba den e momento.

Tur e rato aki, Richella tawata mirando n'e nubianan flotando bay den e distancia. Awo cu el a dicidi cu tawata tempo pa bay bek canto, pa yama Marcel, el a bira su mes pa landa bek, pero, sin cu e tawata sa, algo tawata flotando bou di e awa keto su tras, mirando. Di ariba, e tawata parce e imagen di un spada di silver, bailando gloriosamente rib'e superficie di e aw'i lama. E spada lombrante aki, doblando cu e movecion dje olanan ariba, a keda mira Richella su direccion cu atencion skerpi.

Un biento duro a pasa, dunando e lama rond di Richella plooinan. E zonido tawata duro y diripiente, poneniendo atencion n'e bashi profundo cu Richella a haya su mes aden asina leu di tera. E miedo di e desconocido a hincha paden di dje di nobo... E awa tawata scur y e silencio tawata grawata su nervionan. Un miedo sin splicacion a subi diripiente. *Kico mi haci si mi nunca wak Marcel atrobe?*

E tawata hopi leu di canto y lo beneficia di sosega un par di biaha. E miedo di perde Marcel, agrega e alegria mucha chikito di amor descubri y Rishella tawata bou di un bruheria poderoso, esaki a haci cu e kier a desafia su mes cu si e por a yega canto sin mester a sosega, cu si esey tawata posibel, su amor pa Marcel tawata un di berdad y sin duda.

El a cuminsa hisa e speed un poco, remando su mes pa dilanti. E tawata feliz cu el a tuma e tempo pa bay playa awe, el a pensa.

Richella no por a posiblemente realisa esaki, pero, bou di awa, den di e mundo scur cu e tawata remando over di, e lansa di silver tawata mirando e landa cu curiosidad. E bestia nunca a

yega di wak algo asina den su bida y tawata acercando pocopoco, manteniendo un distancia cauteloso.

E tawata un criatura magnifico, lombrando silver door di e rayonan bashando riba dje di ariba. E tawata grandi, probablemente pesando rond di cuarenta kilogram, cu un bida largo tras di su lomba. Su curpa tawata pinta cu manchanan manera olanan chikito scur, poniendo un pensa riba e spada Hapones. Dos wowo plat manera buraconan grandi di un scuridad sin fin; e tawata un matado. El a habri su boca un poco, mustrando su djentenan largo, diki cu tawata extendiendo bay dilanti. Esakinan tawata e arma di e baracuda.

Obsesando over di e movecion di Richella su pianan, e baracuda a spot algo briyando blanco eyan; e tawata wakiendo e enkelband riba Richella su pia garando e luz di e solo ariba, poniendo e pensa riba presa. Tumando su decision lihe, manera e matado experiencia cu e tawata, e baracuda a tira su curpa dilanti, manera un torpedo. Rapidamente, sin cu Richella tawata sa kico tawata pasando, e bestia a ranca afo e pida ariba di su pia, caminda mastanto di e carni tawata. Un nubia di sanger a expande tur caminda.

Richella a grita cu instinto primordial. Su curpa a wordo golpia cu coriente y tur cos a cuminsa sinti diferente. El a cuminsa bati rond den miedo, gritando cu tur su forza, manera pa purba di spanta kico cu ta cu a mord'e eybou. Un histeria a atak'e, lagando e para den e mesun luga ta bringa pa mucho largo. E baracuda a mir'e ta tirando su mes rond manera un bestia loco. Den su mente, su prome atake tawata un exito. El a landa un circulo rond pa yega bek na su spot preferibel: patras di su victima. Pero Richella a spot e, e luz di solo iluminando su movecionnan di ariba: un flash di silver moviendo rapido manera e zwaai di un spada, un bunita briyo di staal skerpi y morto lihe.

Bo tin cu yega canto! Su curpa a grit'e. El a cuminsa landa un careda, moviendo su curpa lo mas lihe cu el a yega di move den henter su bida. E no tawatin tempo pa pensa; e mester a actua. E unico cosnan den mundo aworaki tawata e, e canto, e bestia bou di awa y – Marcel... Pero Richella tawata perdiendo sanger lihe. E baracuda a perfora e arteria den su heup. Si Richella por a djis bira wak, lo e por a topa cu e rio scur di sanger cu e tawata lagando atras den su esfuerzo pa yega bek n'e mundo di tera. Pero en bes di su sanger, e por a sinti Marcel ta slip afo di su mannan, scapando su wow'i mente.

E tawata birando debil lihe y su rosea tawata pisa. Su mente tawata coriendo shen kilometer pa ora, pero, na e mesun momento, no tawata pensando riba nada mas. El a djis keda landa, concentrando tur su forsa, tur su alma den e un acto simpel aki.

E imagen di silver, e instrumento di morto a flash den su mente di nobo; el a cuminsa yora y grita.

Su pia a cuminsa sinti friu, perdiendo forsa. Klompnan di friu a cuminsa rementa arbitrariamente, moviendo pa diferente seccionnan di su curpa. E no por a tuma e chens pa sinta pensa kico tawata pasando cu ne, e mester a djis yega canto. Su brasanan a cuminsa cram y su pianan dibaina tawata moviendo. Paden, Richella tawata un horcan, pero, di pafo, e tawata un muhe perdiendo su luz.

E baracuda a bini bek. El a yega su tras, moviendo dilanti cu e rapidez di e lansa di un homber riba cabay. E biaha aki el a bin na un angulo, garando Richella su pia drechi cu su boca mahos. E criatura a cuminsa sacudi duro, purbando di kibra su victima di otro. E nubia di sanger a baha riba e animal, haciendo e mas hostina, mas agresivo. E tawata un bestia cruel, sin misericordia. Door di tur e sanger y carni bo por a wak su wowo cla ta hincando door di e cora; e renchi di oro, e horizon di evento y paden – un buraco preto – e abismo.

Ariba, Richella tawata gritando y daliendo awa. Tur caminda rond di dje tawata un cora scur awo birando mas y mas grandi ainda. Su curason tawata batiendo duro ta pomp sanger afo di su curpa. E tawata cayendo den otro. Den un delaster esfuerso desespera, el a hinca su curpa bou di awa pa desafia e bestia.

Ariba di canto, un famia di turista tawata pasando nan dia ta lepia na playa. E tata di e grupo, un homber cu un composicion di melancolia duro, stoico tawata sinta den su stoel chikito cu su casa a cumpra na e souvenir shop – e stoel gesink diep den di e santo cu su peso. Su dilanti tawata e horizon, un pintura di luz oro pintando e nubianan cora. E tin henter dia ta purbando di haci su cabes bashi, yenando e cu cerbes.

El a primi e bleki bashi di Coors Light cu e tawatin wanta. Zonidonan di aluminium ta kraak a yena e bashi di bid'i playa. Esaki tawata e homber su ritual. El a tira e bleki den un saco di plastic cu nan tawata uzando pa sushi y a coy un nobo di e jug. El a inspecta e bleki; druppelnan di awa tawata fluhando abou manera sodo, poniendo e pensa riba e dia calor cu el a sufri awe. Por ta toch un landa lo baha bon, el a pensa.

El a lanta su curpa pisa y stap afo di e proteccion di e palapa. Su moveccionnan tawata pocopoco, faltando totalmente di pura of preocupacion pa e siguiente momento. El a tuma un seconde pa bira wak su casa pa wak si ainda e tawata lesando su buki; e tawata drumi. Un friu tawata den e aire, tawata atardi laat. El a sinti cu el a perde su chens caba pa gosa di e awa fresco den e manera cu e tawata kier, pero el a lanta caba y a cuminsa sinti straño di su mes ta djis para eynan. Canando abou caminda e awa ta topa cu e canto, el a tira un bista na banda pa wak su dos yiunan ta hungando cu otro: un mucha homber y un mucha muhe. E rayonan di oro tawata

bashando riba su yiu muhe, yenando e wowonan di e tata cu nostalgia. E tawata adora su yiu muhe.

E awa friu di lama a mishi cu su tenchinan.

*“Daddy, come play!”*, su yiu muhe a grita di leu.

*“Be right there, honey!”*

E homber a wak n’e shelo cora un biaha mas, cu awo tawata birando un ros gentil. Aruba tawata bunita, el a pensa na su mes, tumando un sip di su Coors Light. Ora cu el a wak abou pa observa e movecion di e olanan, algo den e awa briyando manera un streya chikitico a gara su atencion. El a beuk abou – sintiendo asina cansa diripiente – y a saca algo cu tawata parce manera un armband cu un hende a perde. El a inspecta su descubridad un rato. E cadena tawata lombrando silver; streyanan chikito blanco tawata saliendo for di e hoy door di e luz di e solo disparciendo tras di e horizon. Mara na dje, el a ripara, tawata un dori cute cu un cara ridiculo mirando stret na dje. El a pensa cu por ta su yiu muhe lo gust’e.