

# The Piracy

(An excerpt from Seandon's upcoming novel "The Trip")

It was 7:48 am when the alarm sounded and pierced the peaceful silence of the morning. The chime of the alarm echoed from inside the cabin and was clearly audible from every area of the ship. I knew the sound well – it was the proximity alarm I had set up on the radar and GPS device aboard the Mareva. It was a sound that I had both anticipated and feared. My weeks of solitude at sea had brought hopes of encountering another vessel. Being alone for an extended period of time had made me yearn to see another human being. Although I desperately wanted companionship, I feared the looming danger of a visit from pirates. I hoped that I was finally in for a peaceful visit from an innocent passerby, but I knew the reality was that the world was in chaos and piracy was rampant in the seas. Therefore, I had prepared for this scenario countless times since the day I made the decision to embark on my journey on the Mareva. I had drilled dozens of times with my equipment and had formulated plans and procedures in the event of an attack. I felt prepared.

I silenced the alarm and took a long, hard look at the radar screen. Sure enough, there was a relatively small, fast moving vessel heading in my direction portside from about 25 miles out. I grabbed my binoculars and peered out of the portside window to scan the horizon. I couldn't see anything. That was good because if I couldn't see them, it meant they still couldn't see me. I wondered if they had spotted me on radar as well. I wondered if they were on a path to intercept me or if was pure happenchance that another ship was randomly heading straight in my direction. I didn't have the luxury to risk guesswork. I knew I had to treat the situation with worst case scenarios so I sprang to action. I strapped on my gun belt and dive vest. I grabbed the oxygen tank and ventilator from their purposefully convenient stow-away cabinet. I pulled out the infrared dive mask and activated it, pulling it over my head to let it hang around my neck for the time being. I emerged from the cabin onto the deck, but took care to stay low profile and keep out of sight. I knew the vessel would be entering eyeshot from a good set of binoculars soon.

My best advantage would be the element of surprise and the unknown. Whoever was making a bee line for me was coming onto my turf. The Mareva was my haven and if someone wanted to pay me a visit it was going to be on my terms.

I kept my eyes focused on the portside horizon as I quickly checked the deck for any signs of recent activity and life onboard my own vessel. I didn't want to leave any clues as to the occupancy of my ship. I stowed a couple of items in plain sight very quickly. I flipped the lid on the starboard stowaway in the aft of the steering well. I grabbed the retractable lanyard and the suction cup grippers. I sat in the steering well and checked all of my equipment. I pulled the infrared mask up to my eyes and gave a quick glance through them. I could see my own body heat radiating a glow in the lenses. I gave my vest a tug and pulled the straps tight for a sleek, snug fit. I checked the belt and pulled the Glock 23 from the snap tight grip on the holster. I

pulled the clip from the Glock and verified it was full of 40 caliber hollow points. I slapped the clip back into the rubberized grip on the gun and returned it to its holster. It was amazing that the gun spent several months on the reef at the bottom of the Rahitian inlet without so much as a bit of rust forming on it. It was in perfect condition and good working order after its hide-and-peek in the sea. I hoped I wouldn't have to use it, but it was nice to have and to know that it was ready if I needed it.

I decided to leave the sails up and stay on my current course. If the approaching vessel was tracking me on radar I didn't want to let them know I saw them coming by making any sudden changes. I quickly surveyed the cabin as I clipped the grips and lanyard to my vest. Everything was as good as it was going to get onboard. I strapped the binoculars around my arm and rose my head up above the height of the deck to check the horizon again. I could see nothing with my naked eye. It was 7:56 am – eight minutes since the alarm had sounded. My preparation time was right on schedule as I had rehearsed so many times. It was time to go into defense mode. I pulled the binoculars to my eyes and looked to the horizon again. I focused in the area where the radar had last shown me the vessel. Sure enough, I saw an approaching boat. It looked to be a small speedboat about 30 to 40 feet in length. I knew the boat must be accompanied by a larger vessel somewhere not too far away. There was no way that a ship that size could be this far out in open water without having a mother ship to refuel and operate from. This was the scout or the cavalry and the headquarters was somewhere just outside of the range of my radar. I zoomed in close on the approaching ship with the binocs. It was about 10 to 15 miles out and traveling at a speed of what I estimated to be about 40 knots. I didn't have much time.

Although I could not yet make out the passengers onboard, I had a really bad feeling about the circumstances. I made sure that I stayed low and out of sight for now. I low crawled to the aft deck where I pulled my mask onto my face and strapped the grippers onto my hands. I then kissed the deck of the Mareva as if to say goodbye momentarily and then I slid into the water. I worked my way around the starboard side of the ship with the help of the grippers until I reached the bow. The gentle breeze was propelling my ship through the water at a manageable speed of about 8 knots. I had little difficulty clinging to the hull and maintaining my grip on my ship. I took a peek under the surface of the water and located the eyelet on the ridge of the bow slightly under the surface of the water. I clipped the end of the retractable lanyard to the eyelet and gave it a tug to ensure it was attached firmly. I wanted to make damn sure that I had a secure attachment to the ship so I didn't worry about losing the Mareva to the wind. Nothing was going to take her from me – neither pirates nor Mother nature. Once I was securely fastened, I released one gripper and slid my left hand free. I removed the mask and pulled the binocs to my eyes and peered around the bow from the starboard side back to the portside horizon. This time the approaching boat was in plain sight of the naked eye and was crystal clear in the cross-hairs of the binocs.

There were four men visible in the cockpit of the boat. One of them had an automatic weapon in his hands and a strap of ammo over his shoulder. Another guy was looking through binoculars as well – straight in my direction of course. I doubted they could see me at all from

my vantage point. I was almost totally submerged in the water and in the shadow of the bow. Plus, I knew they would be looking on the deck of my ship for signs of activity rather than in the water. Still, I didn't take any chances and made a diligent effort to stay hidden as I continued to observe the approaching boat. I felt an adrenaline rush course through my body as I stared at the guy with the gun. The driver commanded the speed boat from a standing position at the wheel. There was no longer any doubt that I was about to be under attack from real life pirates. I was ready.

I put the binocs back on my arm, pulled the mask back down over my face and put the oxygen on my mouth. I slid down the hull and submerged my body underwater. When my ears submerged, I could hear the roar of the engine from the approaching speedboat. I breathed deeply into the ventilator and controlled my anxiety with calming breaths. The underwater view with the infrared mask was spectacularly clear. I reattached my left hand to the gripper and stuck it securely to the underside of my hull to keep a close grip on the ship. I heard the ship's engines roaring closer and closer and could hear the boat's hull smacking into the water with every wave it jumped. My heart slightly jumped as well with nervous anticipation. Bring it on pirates.

"Pirates, damn pirates!" I mumbled to myself. Pirates, loot, pillage and plunder - and kill. But what do pirates say? I believe there is a pirate slogan that goes something like "Dead men tell no tales." Well, I planned to live today to tell my tales. I planned to return home and tell of Lance, Mata Utu, Hoku and my Rahitian friends. I planned to learn the tale of the fate of everyone back home. I would survive to tell many more tales. I had no intention of dying at the hands of pirates today - or ever.

It didn't take long for my visitors to reach me. They made a big circle around the perimeter of the Mareva to check out all sides of the ship. I remained hidden well under the surface of the water as I clung to the hull. I could clearly see the underside of their hull and the two propellers from the twin outboards as they churned the teal green water into frothy foam around me. The boat tightened its circle and pulled portside aft to moor up to the Mareva. I heard one of the men shouting in a language I couldn't understand as if to summon any passengers on my ship to their attention. I remained silent and listened more. The shouting request continued. Although I couldn't understand the language, I interpreted the message as "get up on deck so we can shoot you and loot you" and, by the tone of his voice, he meant business.

From underwater the infrared mask picked up the glow from the boat's engines. I could also make out the distinctive glow of body heat from all 4 men. Right now I was in the absolute best position I could be in to defend myself and the Mareva. It may not sound like hiding under my ship was a good defensive plan, but it allowed me to exercise my best weapon of surprise. I knew the pirates would board my vessel in a moment if they did not get a response. I knew based on the body motion of two of the men that they were tying up to the side of my ship. I had to be patient and wait for the right opportunity. I crossed my fingers and hoped that they would split up a little bit. I got my wish as three of the men climbed onboard my ship. They

cautiously slid under the rail on the portside of the Mareva. I could tell by their posture and body motions that they had their guns drawn. They were ready to shoot and kill.

I watched in infrared as the three men boarded my vessel and walked down the deck to the cockpit. Had I not been awake and prepared, I would certainly be in big trouble right now as I would almost definitely be at gun point up on deck. Instead, I am hidden, well armed and well equipped. The element of surprise is in my favor. I can imagine the pirates must be wondering why no one is on board and who in their right mind would leave an expensive and exquisite vessel to drift at sea alone. I'm sure their life of piracy on the high seas has yielded some interesting scenarios and discoveries. I wanted this to be their last one. The fact that they are armed with automatic weapons tells me that they intend to shoot to kill. If you are going to loot someone and steal their boat, how can you possibly keep them alive? If you set them adrift at sea in a lifeboat, it is almost certainly a death sentence this far from land and with no means to call for help. If you take them prisoner with you, then you have to secure them, feed them and give them vital rations of water while you also constantly look over your shoulder to make sure they are not going to try to retaliate and kill you or steal their boat back and split. I wondered how many people they had killed already.

I surveyed the thermally illuminated scene above me. Two guys were descending into the cabin of the Mareva. One guy stood sentry on top of her deck. The fourth guy remained sitting in the speedboat. I formulated a plan. I convinced myself it was going to work flawlessly. I became focused. I knew what I had to do. I thought about the night I learned about Mata Utu and how Hoku had singlehandedly defeated the Matain cannibals. I imagined the courage, bravery and determination that he must have possessed while hiding out on Mata Utu and executing the Matains one by one. I imagined his fears or lack thereof. I imagined the bitter sweet feeling of avenging the death of his wife by killing the person that killed her and killing the cannibal tribe that ate her. Bastards! Now I had three bastards on my boat and one on the getaway threatening my life and my peace and tranquility. Forcing me to hide. Forcing me to take defensive actions. Forcing me to kill. I told myself it wasn't murder – it was self defense. Kill or be killed.

I checked my courage and focused. I carefully and deliberately drew the Glock from its holster making sure not to drop it. A gun on the bottom of the ocean would do me no good right now. I let go of the hull, rolled onto my back and submerged deeper. I looked up at the hulls of the two vessels above me as they cast underwater shadows of the sunlight dancing through the surface of the water. It was calm and peaceful underwater. I took a couple of slow, powerful strokes backward to propel myself deep under the hull of the speedboat. I drew the gun and aligned the cross hair on the Glock with the chest of the driver who was seated in the speedboat. I could plainly see his body image through the infrared mask. I contemplated whether to go for an easier hit in the chest or to go for the more difficult but instant kill in the head. I decided to risk missing and going for the head to minimize the possibility that my target would have the chance to let out a scream or to possibly have enough life left in him to shoot back. Firing the gun underwater should act as a silencer and keep my secrecy intact for the moment. I glanced over to the Mareva and noted the position of the guy on the opposite

starboard side of the deck as well as the guys below in the front berth and in the galley. Aside from the gun, the mask was my best weapon. It gave me x-ray eyes and allowed me to pick the perfect time for action. As I floated on my back about 10 feet below the surface of the water, I realized that now was the time to make my move. The pirates were as separate as they could possibly be. I steadied myself, took a deep breath of tank oxygen and focused the barrel of the Glock on the head of the guy seated in the speedboat. He sat perfectly still. It was the first time I ever had someone in the sight of my gun – especially with the intent of killing them. Kill or be killed I told myself again. I pulled the trigger. The recoil from the gun was nominal and the noise was minimal and muted. But the reaction was immediate and profound as my target lurched forward, hunched over and then fell to the floor of the boat. I could see a large red splotch forming around him in infrared as the 98.6 degree blood flowed from his head onto the deck of the speedboat. I knew I had a direct hit. I also knew it would be only a matter of seconds or minutes before the lookout on the deck of the Mareva would notice.

I kicked my legs to propel myself back farther to clear the hull of both ships from my line of fire. I drew the gun up and brought the lookout into my sights. This time I aimed square at his chest as he was much higher up and farther away than the speedboat driver. I didn't want to risk a miss this time. I knew a direct hit to the chest would send him overboard if I got him while he was standing close to the edge. I waited patiently until he stood perfectly still. I breathed deep and pulled the trigger. I watched in infrared as the shock of the impact sent his body falling backwards over the rail and into the water. He splashed down into the water on the other side of the Mareva. I heard the splash and felt the impact of his fall even from my depth and distance in the water I knew I had to move quickly now. Certainly the pirates inside would have heard him fall overboard as well.

I grabbed the lanyard with my left hand and pulled myself back under the hull of the Mareva and over to the other side where the pirate landed. I saw him floating face down on the surface. He was staring at me. His eyes were wide open and the look of shock covered his face. A stream of blood poured from his chest and left a red trail in the water. "Shark bait" I thought. I wondered how long he would float there. I wondered if the weight of the automatic rifle and ammo strapped around his shoulder would pull him down quickly. I contemplated grabbing the gun off of his body, but thought it would be better to let it be and keep my hands free for the moment. I still had eleven bullets left. I was two for two. I returned my focus to the hull of the Mareva. I could see the two pirates rummaging through my stuff inside. I had them clear as day in the focus of my mask. I could easily shoot them through the steel hull and they would never know what hit them. I hesitated to do that for fear of the damage that it may do to my own ship. I had tools and repair kits onboard and could probably easily patch a small bullet hole or two, but I had no idea how long it would take to get it done. I feared that a gunfight would break out from inside the ship. An automatic rifle could put a lot of holes in a ship's hull in a hurry. There was too much wiring, plumbing and delicate equipment inside the ship that could not be repaired at sea. I had to minimize the possibility of damage. A sinking ship would surely mean a death sentence to me aside from the pirates. I assessed the situation in my mind repeatedly. Two down, two to go. Advantage was to me as I still maintained the element of surprise.

Remarkably the two pirates inside the ship didn't seem alarmed as they apparently had not heard any of the underwater gunfire or the fall from the deck. They continued on pillaging the cabin of my ship. It pissed me off. I felt violated. The Mareva was mine. Granted, I had "inherited" her due to the apparent misfortune of her previous owner, but I got her fair and square in my mind. I pampered her, outfitted her and worked diligently to make her better for months. I appreciated the opportunity to improve and care for such a beautiful and luxurious vessel. I would never take anything from anyone at gunpoint. I would never go into someone's house, ship or sanctuary and take something by force that wasn't rightfully mine. These pirates had every intention of doing so. I am sure that now, in their eyes, they saw an abandoned ship and everything in it theirs for the taking. However, I am confident that, had the ship been occupied, they would have seen the occupants as obstacles and would have eliminated them in the same fashion as I just handled the two pirates. Kill or be killed I told myself again.

I watched the infrared images of the two remaining pirates from below through the hull of my ship. I was in a quandary as to what to do. I wanted to pull the trigger and drop them both while they were inside the ship, but I couldn't bring myself to shoot through the Mareva. My only other choice was to meet them on the deck and handle business there. The problem was that my element of surprise would be gone the moment they emerged onto the deck and found their lookout floating face down in the water and their getaway driver lying in a pool of blood in the speedboat. I had to maintain the element of surprise. I had to act fast – now. If they came up on deck, they would quickly figure out what happened and a flurry of gunfire from their automatic rifles would ensue. I seriously doubted they would be dumb enough to think the two pirates got into an argument and shot each other while they were pillaging below deck. Besides the fact they would have heard obvious and loud gunfire, the story probably wouldn't add up. Pirates killed and looted the innocent, not each other as far as I knew.

I decided it was best to risk two calculated 40 caliber holes put in the hull by me rather than hundreds of AK-47 rounds sprayed all over the ship by the pirates. The challenge was shooting through water and the solid steel hull of the ship. The last two targets were in open air and I had a clear, unobstructed shot from my underwater vantage point. The water has the ability to change the speed and trajectory of the bullet thus throwing off the accuracy of the gun, but I knew the gun was much more accurate going from the water to the air rather than shooting from the air into the water. I was glad I had listened and paid attention to my many conversations with my Navy Seal friends and military gurus that I knew back home. My concern with the current scenario was shooting through the water and the hull. The steel hull would most certainly flatten the tip of the hollow point rounds I was using. That would slow the bullet significantly and dramatically change its path and effectiveness. I could not risk a miss this time. A miss would mean disaster because the retaliation would be devastating to the safety of the ship.

I changed my mind and concocted another plan. I pulled myself to the bow with the help of the lanyard. I quietly surfaced from the water. I holstered the Glock and clipped the grippers onto my hands. I suctioned them to the side of the hull and then alternated releasing the suction

with a slight twist of each hand as I climbed the side of the bow. I was cautious to stay clear of the view from the porthole as I made my way up to the starboard side rail. I wasn't too concerned with making slight noises as the pirates would certainly think that it was their lookout standing sentry on the deck. I still fixated on the infrared images inside. They were really taking their time going through my shit. They must have thought they hit the mother lode. I know the bastards were going through my equipment, my computer (which thankfully was pass coded and locked) and I even saw the pirate in the galley drinking my precious water. I thought to myself "one last sip of the finest water in the world before you die asshole."

I released suction from my right hand and slid my hand out of the gripper. I grasp the rail firmly with my right hand as I released my left hand from its gripper. This was the time when all of my pull-ups and workouts were going to pay off. I pulled myself up and over the rail and onto the deck with relative ease just as I had practiced so many times before. I imagined I was Hoku preying on the Matains – one against many. I quickly replaced that thought and substituted it with the image of a Navy Seal rescuing a hostage. Right now the Mareva was the hostage and I was her liberator. I took a second to kiss her deck before I planted my bare feet back onto the deck firmly and silently. I released the straps on my vest and oxygen tank and slid my arms out to free me from the semi-cumbersome load I carried on my back. I left the infrared mask on my face. I knew the deck of the ship like the back of my hand and could navigate it even in my infrared vision that was now impaired as I was in the heat of the sun and direct sunlight. Nonetheless, it enabled me to keep the pirates in my sight through the deck of the ship. I heard them talking from inside the ship. Their language was unrecognizable to me and I didn't care what they were saying anyway.

I made my way across the deck slowly and deliberately taking soft steps as to not alarm them below. I stopped in front of the cockpit above the stairwell to the cabin. I focused my infrared vision downward and back. The pirate in the galley was almost directly below me. His vision of me was blocked by the hatch over the stairs. I was in a great position now. I knew what I had to do. I was ready to make my move when I heard the galley pirate's voice directed up to the deck. I was sure he was talking to the lookout. He paused and waited a second before shouting something, possibly the lookout's name. Of course there was no response. Just as I was about to make my move, the galley pirate said something to the pirate up front in the berth. They conversed for a second and the pirate in the galley began climbing the stairs directly below me. I slid the infrared mask down my face and let it hang from my neck. I drew the Glock from the holster. I aimed the gun directly at the top stair. I knew this was going to be a close range shot that I couldn't miss. I crouched down just behind the hatch on the stairs where the pirate would emerge. I let his head fully emerge above deck and then pulled the trigger and blew a hole in the back of his head. From my crouched position I swiftly jumped over the hatch and into the stairwell. I landed on the dead pirate's bloody, limp body. I turned quickly, jumped up and charged through the galley to the front berth where I met the last pirate face to face. He was so surprised to see me. The look on his face was priceless. His eyes darted over to confirm the hole in the back of his pirate friend's head and then returned to meet the barrel of my gun pointed directly at his forehead. He froze and his eyes locked with mine. I was ready to shoot him with the slightest flinch or even if he blinked wrong. I realized the pirate was terrified as I saw a look

fear overcome his face. In a nanosecond I glanced into the berth and saw his automatic rifle lying on my bed. He was unarmed – or at least he didn't have his big gun handy. I assumed he may be carrying a sidearm or a blade so I kept my senses alert and maintained focus in his eyes. Three down and one of us would be the last man standing.

The look on his face changed something in me. The other three guys I had killed without seeing their faces. In fact, the first two I had killed from a distance in infrared vision and the third I shot in the back of the head, never seeing his face. The memory of the lookout's face floating face down in the water staring at me had not daunted me as much as the look on the face of the living guy in front of me. He remained silent, but his eyes pleaded for mercy. I thought from his point of view. A moment ago he was in seventh heaven. He and his three buddies had stumbled onto a multi-million dollar sailboat in the middle of the ocean. They entered, guns drawn, expecting to exact a hostile takeover of the vessel and rid it of its occupants. I'm sure they were surprised to find no one on board. They relished the thought of sailing back home on their new find and looting its contents. A moment ago they had no idea that I was here. A split second ago he was talking to his buddy who no longer has a face now compliments of the exit wound from the hollow point 40 caliber I shot through the back of his head at point blank range. Seeing his buddy lying there in a pool of his own blood and brains must have been a sobering sight. Now he was looking down the barrel of the same gun that had dealt the round to his friend's head. I'm sure he was shitting his pants right now. I'm sure this was the biggest surprise of this guy's life. I wanted him to take in the moment. I wanted him to be uncomfortable. I wanted him to realize that I had just defeated three of his pirate friends with three single shots – two of which went unheard and unnoticed. I wanted to see the fear of death in his face. I wanted him to feel it for the inconvenience and stress that he had caused me by paying me an unwanted visit.

I kept the gun inches from his face with my right hand as I gestured with my left hand for him to raise his hands and put them on his head. He slowly and deliberately obliged as to not make any sudden movements that may spook me. Once his hands were laced on top of his head, he quietly spoke something to me. I couldn't even figure out what language they were speaking or what nationality they were - and quite frankly I didn't care. I had not anticipated being face to face with the pirate. I had planned to shoot him at first sight, but I found myself suddenly incapable of shooting an unarmed man face to face in cold blood.

I motioned and pointed for the pirate to go up the stairs to the deck. I maintained a little distance between us to prevent a quick attack or attempt to grab my gun. He made his way from the berth through the den to the galley. He stepped over his dead friend's body and started up the steps looking down only momentarily at the bloody mess. I was prepared to shoot him with any wrong movement and he knew it. I tried to think from his point of view to anticipate what he may be thinking or planning in his head.

We reached the deck and he surveyed the scene. I'm sure at this point he was not shocked to find his lookout gone and his getaway driver dead in the speedboat. By my dripping wet appearance and the infrared mask on my neck, I'm sure he quickly started to figure out what happened. I'm sure it was a humbling realization to him that three heavily armed pirates had

just been killed by one man with a handgun. I could tell by his demeanor and body language that he had accepted defeat. My feelings would be different had someone just killed three of my friends; however, I would have never been on the offensive in the situation. Pirates must know that when they enter someone's ship they are taking their lives into their own hands. I wondered how many ships they had looted and how many people they had killed. It must be an awakening to now be on the opposite end of the barrel of a gun.

I motioned him from the cockpit to the deck toward the mast. I grabbed a rope from the stowaway box next to the stern. I followed him from two steps behind with the gun held firmly in my right hand and the rope in my left, keeping him in my gun sight at all times. We reached the mast and I rounded him and came face to face. He cut his eyes down to the speedboat and saw his getaway lying in the floor of the boat with half of his head missing. He must be wondering where the lookout was, but I could tell he had little hope of a sudden appearance and rescue from his missing friend. I was at a critical point now. I would have to holster the gun and use both hands to tie him up. If there was a time for him to make a move it would be right now. I didn't get the sense that he was going to try anything. He seemed too dejected to try to fight. I wondered if he spoke English, so I asked. He responded quietly in his native tongue. Verbal communication between us was not going to work, so I motioned for him to turn around. I quickly clipped the gun into the holster and unfurled the rope. I was very cautious as I looped the nylon rope around his right elbow. I pulled his arm backward as I tugged the knot tight. I then grabbed his left arm with my left hand and pulled it back as well. He did not even try to resist as I looped the rope around his left elbow. I synched the slip knot tight and drew his arms together at the elbow behind his back and then square knotted it to keep tension. I reached to my belt and grabbed the buck knife from its pouch and cut the rope off. I then cut off a four foot section and bent down to tie his feet together. I was once again very cautious to stay clear of danger as I anticipated he may try to kick me in the face or pounce on me while I was crouched down. Once again he did not resist. Once his feet were secure, I rose and met him eye to eye. I motioned and pushed him backwards toward the mast. He shuffled his feet backwards and backed up to the mast. I spun around behind him, pulled his arms around the mast from behind and tied his hands together on the opposite side of the mast with my knot tying skills. He was now tied at the elbows between his back and the mast and then his hands were bound on the other side of the mast. It must have been a very uncomfortable position. I then tied the rope binding his feet together to the base of the mast. The probability of him escaping was next to impossible, but the chance of him losing blood to his hands and feet was highly probable.

I patted him down and searched his body for any type of weapon or blade. I found nothing. I guess the only weapon he brought to the party was the AK-47 automatic rifle that now lay on my bed in the front berth. I guess when you bring a weapon like that, you really don't think you would need anything else. For the first time since the alarm sounded, I could now relax. I looked at my watch – it was 9:02. This ordeal had lasted over an hour, but it felt like an eternity. Every second seems like an hour when you are in survival mode. I wondered how the pirate now felt about time. He must know that his time is very limited now. He has witnessed death and he knows that I have no qualms about blowing the head off of a pirate. I wondered what he

was thinking. I wondered what he thought I would do next. I bet he regretted ever stepping foot on the Mareva.

I pulled the infrared mask from my neck and up over my head. I removed the belt and the rest of my equipment and got comfortable. I walked back to the cockpit and glanced around. The body of the faceless pirate was draped over the stairwell and covered in a bloody mess. It was a nauseating sight that was going to be an ordeal to clean up. Everything else on the deck was in order except for a couple of splotches of blood where the lookout once stood. I looked overboard for the lookout, but did not see him anywhere. I jumped back up on the main deck and made my way around the port side to the stern. I looked down between the two boats to see if the body may be lodged there, but it wasn't. I leaned over the bow and looked all around, but saw nothing floating. I assumed the body sank. His chance of survival was zero. I hit him directly in the chest before he plummeted into the water where he floated face down for minutes while leaking out blood. He must have sunk or a shark must have gotten him. I put any fears of the lookout surviving or coming back on board to rest. I did notice my captive curiously watching as I had been searching. I may have given him the brief glimmer of hope that his lookout was missing and alive. I addressed the captive pirate in plain, slow, enunciated English and asked "How does it feel now? How does it feel to be the captive?" He stared at me blankly and did not respond with his mouth, but his eyes answered with fear and uncertainty. I could tell he was thinking "why the hell did we have to mess with James Bond – of all the ships, we chose this one. Shit." He cut his eyes down to the deck and slouched slightly. He was accepting defeat.

Now I had a dilemma. I found myself in the same quandary that I assumed pirates were in when they took captives. I desperately sought some human contact after weeks of solitude, but there was no way I could trust this guy. He came to murder me and loot me and steal my ship. If I let him survive and stay onboard, I would have to live with the fear that he would cut my throat or shoot me while I slept in retaliation of the murder of his friends or just purely for the chance to steal again. I was also having difficulty grappling with the notion of killing an unarmed man in cold blood. The other three pirates had been easy, this guy was different.

For the first time, I really stepped back and checked out my captive. He was about 5'8" tall, dark complexion, black hair, brown eyes, medium build with a slight gut. His gut told me he must be a good pirate to be eating so well. He was wearing shorts, a tee shirt and no shoes. I guessed his age to be roughly about 25 years old. I wished he could talk to me. I had so many questions to ask him. I wanted to know where he came from and if others were on their way. I wanted to know where and how they fueled their boat and what the range on it was. Since I couldn't speak to him, I decided to do some investigation on my own. I also figured it would be nice to give him a taste of his own medicine by making him watch as I pillaged and plundered his boat.

I made my way to the port side of the Mareva where the speedboat was moored to her aft cleat. The speedboat was a 44' Scarab with twin inboard/outboards. The Mareva dwarfed it in size - making it look like a dingy or toy. The deck height of the scarab was several feet below the deck height of the Mareva. The scarab was, no doubt, a sexy, sleek boat. I couldn't wait to

check it out closer. I slid under the rail and hopped down onto the bow of the pirates' vessel. It was a very nice boat and was painted purple and yellow and was as clean as a whistle on the outside. I wondered how long ago they had stolen it and who they had to kill to get it. I made my way aft and jumped over the console and into the cockpit next to the pirate lying in a pool of blood. I looked around the cockpit for a bit and then raised the lid on the engine compartment. I was amazed at the custom twin 454's that powered the vessel. They were decked out in chrome and braided hoses – someone put a lot of time and pride into building this boat. I glanced up from the engine compartment toward the Mareva's mast to check on my captive. He was still there and staring back intently at me as I looked about his boat. I had to hear it fire up. The boat had sounded beastly from underwater when they arrived - now I wanted to hear it from up close. I stepped back over the dead pirate and straddled the driver's seat. The key was still in the ignition. I turned the key and the engines rumbled to life. They sounded wicked. I goosed the throttle with it in neutral and the engines roared. What a machine! It was the perfect boat for speed to chase someone down, but not so practical for the open ocean. These twin engines must drink gallons of gas a minute. Even with additional gas tanks, the range on this boat was still probably less than 300 miles. The boat was probably capable of speeds in excess of 100 mph. My guess was that the pirates chose to cruise at around 40 knots as they had done when they approached me to conserve fuel. Fuel conservation was the last thing on my mind. I wanted to blast it out for a minute or two. I pushed the pirates' limp body away from the console and into the middle of the cockpit. I climbed on the rear deck and undid the moorings to the Mareva. I jumped back down into the captain's chair and perused the console to familiarize myself with the instrument panel and its gauges. I popped the throttle trigger and dropped her into gear. The beastly roar of the engines dropped in tone and began to lope and chop. This boat was ready to roll. I was also. I cut the wheel at a 90 and let the power of the engines at idle slide me away from the hull of my Mareva. I glanced back up at the pirate who was staring at me intently. I waved bye and nailed the throttle. The engines sprang to life and raised the bow out of the water and 45 degrees to the horizon. The scarab shot out of the water as if it had a rocket strapped to it. I hit 80 knots in seconds and put some distance between me and the Mareva in no time. I hunkered down into the captain's chair and spun the wheel hard to starboard. The ship turned on a dime and pulled some serious g's doing it. This was "getting it". She bounced and launched from wave to wave. The dead pirate on the deck bounced a foot or two off the floor with every launch and then slammed back down onto the deck – tossing from side to side like a ragdoll and bouncing him off the deck like a basketball. Blood was everywhere on the floor. I didn't care. I was having too much fun.

I aimed back 180 degrees in the direction of the Mareva. I laid into the throttle harder and closed in quick on the graceful ship dead ahead. I buzzed by her in an instant sending a huge wake to slap her hull and rock her like a baby in a cradle. The captive pirate spun his head around to keep watch on me as I whizzed by. I hollered at the top of my lungs out of joy. Whew – what a fun day! Kill three pirates, capture one, inherit some guns and then take a spin in the middle of the Pacific on a speedboat. I immediately started to think how I was going to keep my new toy.

I kept on the throttle hard as she launched and splashed into and out of the sea. Adrenaline rushed through my body. I love speed! I finally backed off the throttle when I hit 110. I glanced back as the Mareva got smaller and smaller in the rapidly increasing distance. My fun was momentarily spoiled when I got a sudden paranoid premonition that the pirate was scheming or escaping while I was out playing. I made one big wide circle as I wheeled the scarab back in the direction of the Mareva. I stayed in the throttle hard as the boat careened on its side and dug into the water. The damn thing handled like it was on rails. The dead pirate almost rolled clear out of the cockpit as the boat was angled so hard. I spun around full circle and then crossed my own wake and launched airborne as I nailed the wave. The engines roared loudly as they were momentarily relieved of the stress of turning the props in the water as I flew through the air. I braced myself and slammed down hard. Whoop! That was the most air I had caught in anything short of an airplane. I stayed full throttle until I was within a half mile of the Mareva again and then I pulled back hard and let the ship throttle down. The scarab quickly righted itself back down into a horizontal position and her forward progress slowed quickly. For a boat that moved so fast and nimble in the water at full throttle, she sure was a helpless pig without the horsepower propelling her. Kill the throttle and you get the same effect as throwing an anchor overboard – quite contrary to the Mareva’s ability to glide and coast through the water even with little wind. I slowed all the way back down to a no-wake-zone speed and coasted back up to the Mareva on her port side aft. I wanted to take in the view of my beautiful vessel. I loved the quick exhilarating thrill ride in the scarab, but it was no substitute for the grace, beauty and natural efficiency of my sail boat. I wouldn’t trade her for 1000 scarabs.

The pirate was still in full attention at the mast as he watched me approach. I could tell he was very curious as to what I was doing in his boat. I’m glad he was interested. I hope he felt as violated as I did when he was rummaging through my berth on my ship. I paralleled the scarab next to the port side aft of the Mareva and gently bumped her steel hull. I jumped up from the captain’s chair and grabbed the mooring rope and tossed it around the cleat on the deck of the sailboat. I pulled the line tightly to secure the scarab to her hull. I didn’t really care that the two hulls were rubbing together and slightly scuffing the paint. Who was gonna see it out here in the middle of the sea? Once the scarab was moored securely, I jumped onto her bow and then pulled myself up and over the rail onto the deck of the Mareva. I approached the pirate with a big smile on my face. “Wow, that was fun?! Are you having fun too – Mr. Pirate?” I sassed him, but he either didn’t understand my sarcasm from the tone in my voice or he was too defeated to care. I made eye contact with him to attempt to connect with him mentally. He was blank – no expression or emotion remained in him whatsoever. I walked around the mast behind him and checked on the ropes that secured his hands and feet. The knots were still as tight and perfectly tied as when I left him. It didn’t appear that he had struggled too much. The ropes were tight and slightly constricting the blood flow to his hands – I could tell by the redness in the skin on his wrists. I didn’t care. If his hands fell off, he could replace them with hooks – after all, he was a pirate – right? I purposefully showed my lack of concern and went on about my business.

I returned portside and jumped down onto the deck of the scarab again. I checked out all of the gauges and instruments on the console. The speedboat was carrying what appeared to be over

a half tank of gasoline which unfortunately was useless to me as the Mareva's engine ran on diesel fuel. I opened the hatch to her cabin and had a peek inside. It was definitely a pirate's berth. There was shit strewn everywhere, but I couldn't help but think that my quick jaunt around the block hadn't jarred a few things loose in the cabin. I pushed the dead pirate clear of the stairwell as I made my way down the ladder and into the cabin. The inside of the scarab reeked of stale cigarette smoke and booze – two smells I hadn't smelt in almost a year. The smell was repulsive, but familiar. The first cabinet I opened revealed the source of the booze smell. There was about a dozen or so bottles of booze and wine. Captain Morgan's spiced rum, Absolut vodka, Bacardi rum, Malibu and Goslings too – pirates really do prefer rum! I was also delighted to find two bottles of Australian shiraz. I guess the wine was for when the pirates were feeling "sophisticated". I pulled the liquor and wine from the cabinets and sat the bottles on the countertop. This would be a nice treat for later. I had earned some booze. Just to screw with the pirate, I let out a whoop and laughter to let him know I was having fun. Moments later, I emerged from the cabin of the scarab with a bottle of rum pressed to my lips and my head tilted back as if I were chugging it. I stumbled around the deck of the scarab as if I were drunk to amuse myself. I sang "ho-ho-hum, I gots me a bottle of rum. The open sea, it's good to be free – it's a pirate's life for me!" The pirate didn't find it funny and turned his head away to look in the opposite direction. I didn't let his lack of interest spoil my fun. I carried on my drunken stupor in jest to amuse myself. Thoughts of actually getting drunk later entered my mind. It had been one year since I smelt, touched, tasted or even saw a bottle of booze. Now I found myself with a liquor cabinet full of it. Party time – pirate style!

I put down the bottle and returned to the cabin of the scarab. I enjoyed rummaging through the pirate's shit in the same fashion that they had done to me. I pillaged and plundered through their mostly worthless belongings. I found a few other things of interest – some knives, additional ammo, cigars, a couple of playboy magazines and a wind breaker with rain poncho. I was also delighted to find a couple pairs of polarized sunglasses. I bundled up my findings in a pillow case and slung it over my shoulder like Santa Claus. I grabbed another pillow case and perused the galley. There were about a dozen or so gallon jugs of water, a couple cans of warm beer, and some packaged boxes and cans of food. The one thing that struck me as odd was the absence of any radar, radio or communication devices. It briefly made me question how the pirates had spotted me and tracked me down. It reinforced the fact that there was probably a mother ship somewhere not too far away. I grabbed everything of value and tossed it into the pillow case. I emerged again from the cabin of the scarab, but this time with a big smile on my face and yet a more serious demeanor. I tossed the stuffed pillow cases onto the deck of the Mareva and then hopped up on deck behind them. I proudly sat down on the warm teak wood deck of my own vessel and dumped out the contents of the pillow cases and looked over my bounty. I glanced up at the pirate who was pretending not to pay attention. "How does it feel Mr. Pirate? To have YOUR ship looted for a change?" He did not acknowledge me. "Ammo, food, knives, water and... what is this?" I grabbed one of the Playboys and walked over to the pirate. I opened it up and let the centerfold page drop out and fully extend. I held it up in front of him. "Nice, is this your girlfriend?" I asked. He looked away. "Oh, come on man, have some fun with me. You guys were having all the fun earlier, now it is my turn." His lack of response just motivated me to antagonize him more. I looked down at the deck of my ship and saw a

rivulet of fluid running toward the side of the deck. I traced the liquid trail back to the mast where it appeared to originate from the pirate's feet. I then glanced up to his crotch and noticed it was wet. "Aw, did Mr. Pirate pee himself? Did I scare the piss out of you? I'm sorry, I meant to scare the shit out of you instead. Oh, well – the day is not over yet." I just couldn't resist taunting my captive. I didn't feel too bad about it considering that he couldn't understand me anyway in addition to the fact that he had come to kill me and steal from me. I was blessed to have the opportunity to taunt him. It could have easily been me lying on the deck in a pool of blood. Instead, I was me doing the looting. I inherited a total of three Ak-47 rifles with over a dozen fully loaded clips as well as several straps of additional ammo, knives, cigars, cigarettes, 14 gallons of water and some food as well as some good booze and wine. Plus I got to take a joyride at 100 mph in the scarab. Not a bad haul for one man in one day.

I put my newfound treasures back into the pillow cases and made my way back to the cockpit of my ship. Before tossing the stuff aside on the passenger seat in the cockpit, I stopped to look at the dead, faceless pirate who was still lying in the stairwell. I seemed surprised to see him there again even though it was obvious he wasn't going anywhere. I guess I had hoped that the mess was somehow going to magically disappear or clean itself up. Not the case. It was a gross situation that I knew had to be dealt with soon. Besides all of the blood that had spewed from his head and onto the deck below, there were also chunks of skull and brains splattered all over the place. I contemplated untying my captive and making him clean up the mess, but I didn't want to push my luck. For all I knew this guy could have been his brother. I didn't want to stir up any rage in the pirate, who up until now had remained calm and defeated. I would deal with the disposal and cleanup on my own in a little while. First, I wanted to rest and think the situation over.

I entered my berth and surveyed the scene of clutter thrown about by the pirates during their pillaging and looting. That bastard tied to my mast had trashed my room and had loaded my own pillow cases with some of my possessions. The faceless bastard in the stairs had drunk some of my precious water supply. Right now I had to put it out of my mind and relax for a bit. I fell onto my bed next to the pirate's AK-47. I grabbed the gun and ran my hands over the long, steel barrel and banana clip. This gun could have killed me! Wow – it was an interesting thought. My captive could have been my murderer – but he wasn't. Now I had a decision to make about him. Damn him for putting me in this position. Kill or be killed – right?

I wanted to sleep for a bit, but I was a little uneasy about the captive and more so the dead body in my galley stairs. That was going to be a bitch to clean up. I could deal with that later – he wasn't going anywhere. I also took comfort in my knot tying ability and the fact that the captive wasn't going anywhere either. My concern was that the pirate was probably losing circulation and precious blood from his hands and feet. If I didn't give a damn about his well being for a moment I could be at ease and think this scenario through clearly. I wanted an encounter and human contact and I had gotten it. Too bad there was a damn communication gap though! Plus the fact the pirate would have and probably would still kill me if he got the chance. What to do? Tired from my ordeal, I decided to rest a bit. A move I should have thought better of.

I closed my eyes and visions of Hoku and the Matains came into my head. I pictured Hoku showing no mercy and taking no captives as he methodically wiped out the cannibals. Kill or be killed – or be killed and eaten in his case! The Matains took no prisoners – they ate them - and that helped them maintain secrecy and power for so long. I had successfully maintained power and overcome the pirate attack, but had no interest in eating anyone. I did it – Hoku style. What would Hoku do now? Certainly the situation was different than what he dealt with, but the root of it all is life and death. I took three lives with little thought or effort, but now found myself having a hard time with the fourth. Maybe subconsciously I didn't want to have another bloody mess to clean up. Up until this point I had felt confident and comfortable with everything I had done. Now I was in a quandary.

I opened my eyes as I got a brilliant idea. I hopped up from the bed and dashed down the hall and into the galley. I paused as I went to step over the faceless pirate. I was tired of stepping over him. I bent down and grabbed the body under his lifeless armpits and dragged it up the stairwell and into the cockpit leaving a bloody smear behind. I hopped up on the top deck and pulled the body up behind me. The up close sight of the half-missing head and face nauseated me. I gagged several times as I tried not to look or think about it any longer. I wanted the mess cleaned up and gone as soon as possible. I grabbed the hands and dragged him across the teakwood leaving a blood trail on the wood. I brought him to the mast and dragged him just in front of the captive. I looked at the fear and remorse in the captive's eyes as he stared down at his comrade. His body remained motionless, but he cut his eyes up to me and I shook my head in disapproval. I then knelt down and touched the back of the dead pirate. I stayed in my crouched position for a minute as if to show remorse and sympathy for the dead. Then I grabbed him by the pits and dragged him over to the rail right in front of the captive. Without further ado I muscled the body up and tossed him over the rail. He cart wheeled down the side of the Mareva and splashed into the water. The captive closed his eyes and tilted his head back as if to look to heaven. "Shark bait" I thought to myself. One mess was partially cleaned up and now to deal with my other situation.

I knew now what I had to do. Every man should control his own destiny. If I wanted to maintain control of mine, I needed to end this captivity. I would relieve myself of the burden and I would make the decision his. I approached the captive and stared directly into his eyes. We locked gazes for a few seconds until I shook my head in disapproval and he looked away. I pointed to him and said "You – You did this. You guys brought the weapons. You guys brought violent intention. You can't blame me. I did what I had to do. You have three deaths on your hands and now you will also bear the burden of the fourth death as well. It's your choice. You decide."

He stared at me intently, but blankly. I knew he didn't understand a word of what I said. I decided to illustrate my words. I raised my index finger to signify the number 1. I said "first choice." I then raised my right arm horizontally and let my hand hang slightly as I made scissor motions with my index and middle fingers to mimic a walking motion. I continued the finger walking for a moment or two and then made a diving motion with my hand as I pointed to the side of the ship. "Or option 2" ... I raised two fingers with my left hand to signify his second

option and then I made a gun with the thumb and index finger of my right hand as I raised it to my head and then squeezed my finger as if to pull the trigger to my head. "Your choice Mr. Pirate - take a plunge into the deep blue with no life vest, food, water or boat OR take a quick and easy bullet to the head. What will it be – number one or number two?" I gestured the options again and repeated "One or two?" as I held up my fingers accordingly. The pirate shook his head no on the first option and nodded yes slowly and hesitantly on the second. I asked "number two?" as I pointed my finger gun at his head. He nodded in solemn approval. "Okay, so be it." I turned and headed back to the cockpit to grab the Glock. I picked it up and unclipped it from the holster. I was three for three so far. I had tactfully and skillfully eliminated three targets with ease. I told myself to do it again one more time. Kill or be killed I told myself.

I wielded the Glock confidently and proudly. I cocked it for effect even though it was already loaded and I walked right up to the captive. I stood in front of him and pressed the barrel of the gun to his forehead as his head hung low. He mumbled a few words that I didn't comprehend. I stood there motionless with my finger on the trigger and the gun to his head. He closed his eyes and the weight of his eyelids pushed a tear out of the corner of both of his eyes. I watched as the tears traced down his cheeks and dropped onto the deck below next to the remnants of the urine stream. It was hard to have compassion for the pirate, but at this moment I felt sorry for him. Maybe this piracy wasn't his idea. Maybe the other three pirates were the ringleaders and had forced him to go along. Maybe he had to loot and steal to survive. Maybe he had never killed anyone before. Maybe this was his first attempt as a pirate. He did seem like an amateur. He had left his gun lying on the bed amidst my surprise attack. I tried to anger myself over the events that had transpired. I tried to get up the guts to pull the trigger. My palm was sweaty and my hand shook slightly. The pirate held his breath and kept his eyes closed. I stood in silence and, other than my slightly shaking hand, was as still as a statue. Seconds turned into a minute or so. I couldn't believe my dilemma. I had shot and killed three pirates earlier with no hesitation. Two of them I shot from underwater at a distance and my hand didn't so much as even flinch even under the recoil of the gun. Now my hand and my mind were shaking like a leaf in a breeze. I pulled the gun away from the pirate's head with a quick jerk of disappointment in myself. The pirate exhaled and sighed heavily. More tears streamed from his closed eyes. He began to sob. I turned my back and walked away.

I decided to return to the stairwell and busy myself with cleaning up the remaining bloody mess below deck. Why couldn't I kill this guy? Why couldn't I go ahead and put him out of his misery and put my safety back on top of the priority list. I grabbed a bucket from the galley and returned to the aft deck. I filled the bucket with sea water and returned to the stairwell. I grabbed a sponge from the stow-away cabinet and began wiping down the walls. Bloody bits of brain and skull smeared the wall in the stairwell red. I scrubbed away diligently in hopes that not only would I clean up the mess quickly, but I also hoped that the sight of the blood would put me back into the mood to kill the captive. If I could clean up this nasty mess below deck, then I could easily clean up another one above deck. A couple of passes of the sponge on the walls and several dunks into the bucket turned the whole five gallon bucket of water crimson. I took the bucket aft and dumped the bloody mess into the ocean. I gagged a few times at the sight of the mess. I rinsed the bucket and filled it with fresh sea water. I scrubbed for an hour or

two, and then dumped several buckets of sea water down the stairs and onto the deck of the cabin below. I had originally tried to contain the pool of blood on the cabin floor, but to no avail. I decided to just flush it down the drain in the center of the galley floor. I returned aft to fill the bucket again as I heard the bilge pump engage. I looked around the starboard side discharge as a stream of bloody red water spewed from the side of the hull. I had worked too hard to clean up this damn mess. I was happy to see the bilge pump ejecting the last of the bloody mess. I dumped several more bucket loads of sea water on the stairs and deck until the stream coming out of the bilge went from red to orange to clear. I then dumped a few buckets of salt water on the deck and hit it with a sponge to clean up the blood as well.

I was relieved that the bloody mess was finally clean. The cleaning had inspired me to clean and organize the mess that the pirates had created during their pillage. I continued the cleaning process until the *Mareva* was back in the neat and tidy order she was in before the piracy ordeal. I put away all of my booty that I acquired from the pirate's vessel. I stowed and locked all of the guns and weapons with the exception of the Glock which went back into the holster and onto my hip. When the last items were stowed away, I laid down on my bed and took a deep breath. I was at peace with the exception of the quandary I was still in over what to do with my captive. It was going to take some motivation for me to kill him. I didn't want to be complacent and wait for him to escape or something before I did the deed, but I just couldn't bring myself to shoot an unarmed captive. As much as I tried to be angry at him, I couldn't help but feel a little sorry for him. I got up from the bed and went to the galley. I grabbed a gallon of the water that I had looted from the scarab and went up on the deck. The captive had begun to slouch and slide down the mast from his standing posture to more of a crouching position. The crouching position was putting more stress on his arms as they held the weight of his upper body against the mast. I knew he was getting tired and the heat of the morning was taking its toll on his body. I walked up to him with the water in hand. I unscrewed the lid of the jug and held it up to his mouth. He must have been relieved to see me approaching with water rather than a gun. He tilted his head back as I poured some water into his mouth. He drank quickly and swallowed as the jug emptied into his mouth. He was really thirsty – and so was I. We polished off the jug of water in a matter of minutes. I resisted the temptation to loosen the ropes on his arms and hands, but I could not resist the temptation of the newly acquired booze. I tossed the empty water jug down into the scarab and then grabbed the bottle of Captain Morgan's off of the deck. It had gotten slightly warm in the sunlight, but I didn't care about the temperature of the rum. I unscrewed the cap and put it to my lips. I took a big swig and swallowed it down. Its warmth and the heat of the spicy rum burned my mouth and throat all the way down to my stomach. Wow – I hadn't had that sensation in almost a year. I was cautious in my drinking as I knew the effects in the heat and with an empty stomach and low tolerance would be profound. I didn't need to get too drunk right now until I had resolved my quandary.

I sat down on the warm, smooth teak wood deck and looked off into the distance. I wondered if the pirates had reinforcements or a search party that would come after them if they were not back in a timely fashion. I waited patiently and looked and listened for any additional trouble that may be on the horizon. I was done fighting for the day and hoped to get some peace and quiet.

The sun was directly overhead and the sky was crystal clear. I swigged a few more shots of rum and reclined onto my back to look skyward. The sea was relatively calm and the small waves gently rocked the Mareva. The scarab gently rubbed the side of her hull with every passing wave. I was very thankful about how the events of the day had panned out. I looked to the heavens for an answer to my quandary. I had a scarab moored to the Mareva and a pirate tied to her mast. The scarab would be a perfect play toy and complement to the sailboat, but I knew that a few more runs like I put it through today and it would soon be out of gas and useless. I also came to the realization that leaving it moored to the side of the sailboat would not only impede my progress sailing, but would also potentially create a dangerous situation should the seas turn rough. Small waves would rub the scarab's fiberglass hull on the Mareva's steel hull and would only do minimal surface damage to the paint. Large waves could potentially pick up the scarab and launch it on top on the Mareva's deck – that would be catastrophic. I sat up and took another swig of rum as I looked down onto the scarab. I would also have to clean up another bloody pirate mess if I wanted to keep the scarab. I hit the rum again and laid back down on the deck and tried to forget about the dilemma and ultimate decision I would have to make.

Either the seas were getting a little more bumpy or the rum was kicking in. My head began to spin a little and the sun seemed to bounce in the sky like a giant yellow beach ball. I enjoyed the sensation. I had not experienced drunkenness in a long time. I hadn't really missed it, but it was a perfect time to experience it again. I closed my eyes and began to daydream. Maruia, Hoanui and images of Rahiti popped into my head. I wondered what they were doing. I wondered if they were thinking about me. I wondered why I had left. The pirate attack today was a reminder of the harsh reality of the state of the rest of the world today. Why had I left the safe haven in the tropical paradise? I knew the odds of making it back home were slim, but I reminded myself of the anxiety and curiosity that had motivated me to leave Rahiti and make the voyage. I had to know what happened back home. I had to remain focused and stay on course back to the USA. Today was a test of my determination – and I passed so far. When I embarked on my journey, I told myself that I would not let anything keep me from accomplishing my goal of returning home. So far I had done just that. My eyes remained closed and the daydream images of my friends and life in Rahiti faded into images of my family and friends back home. Thoughts of Lance entered my calm mind and brought both sorrow and happiness. I felt like he was still with me somehow, but I missed him tremendously. I breathed deeply and let my mind wander freely. My daydreams turned into dreams as I drifted off into slumber.

When I awoke from my nap on the deck, I immediately rolled over to check on the captive pirate. He was still there and looking pretty rough. He was hunched over and the weight of his body pulled his arms back straight on either side of the mast. His legs were bowed and his knees were slightly bent. I don't know why, but I felt some compassion for the guy. Maybe it was the peaceful thoughts and dreams that I had experienced during my slumber that put me in a better mood. I glanced up at the sun and located it at about 45 degrees above the western

horizon indicating that it was probably about 4pm. The day had been long, interesting and productive.

I grabbed the bottle of rum and approached the pirate. I unscrewed the cap of the Captain Morgan bottle and extended it toward the pirate's face. He looked up at me with a surprised expression on his face. "Captain Sean would like to offer up some Captain Morgan to his Captive Pirate." I knew he couldn't understand me, but conveying words to someone other than myself felt good – even if the words fell on deaf ears so to speak. My weeks of solitude were peaceful and relatively uneventful up until today. The pirates had given me some excitement and adventure – even though I didn't ask for it. The least I could do was ease the pirates pain a little bit with some rum. After all, he witnessed death and he himself had been an itchy trigger finger's pull away from death himself. He had pissed himself again and had been tied up in an uncomfortable position in the heat of the sun all day. He accepted my rum offer by opening his mouth and tilting his head back. I poured a shot into his mouth and he swallowed it down quickly. I kept the bottle to his lips and he sipped again. He flashed a brief smile and said one word to me that I couldn't comprehend, but decided that it meant "Thanks."

I thought to myself how ironic it was that during my weeks alone at sea I had hoped for a visitor or some human contact. Now I had a visitor that I couldn't communicate with due to a language barrier.

I paced back and forth on the deck for a while and sipped a little more rum myself. I was refreshed from my nap, but still had a little drunken sensation about me. I watched the pirate out of the corner of my eyes as he struggled to maintain posture on the mast. Fatigue was overcoming him and I could see that his hands and feet were becoming very red and purple from the strain of the ropes. I made the decision to give him a little slack. I figured that he would probably be too weak to put up a fight in lieu of the position that he had been tied up in. I approached him from behind the mast and cautiously bent down and began to loosen the knot binding his hands together. I realized I really did a great job tying him up as I struggled to get some slack in the knot to loosen it. If there is one thing a sailor should do well its tie a knot – I guess I am officially a good sailor. I fought the knot for a while and the pirate remained perfectly still. Once I had his hands loose, I untied the knot that bound his feet to the mast. As soon as the tension was released, the pirate slid his back down the mast into a seated position. I pulled the knife from my belt and hesitated a moment as I cut the rope that was binding his arms together at the elbows. When the rope broke, the pirate let out a deep sigh. I knew it must have been a huge relief to him to be able to move his arms again. The binding was probably worse than being handcuffed – it was like being elbow cuffed and handcuffed. He bent forward and moved his arms around in a circular motion to get some blood flowing. I stayed close, but not close enough for him to try anything. "I'll give you a minute to stretch out, but the ropes are going back on again. I'll tie you up differently this time since you have behaved so far." He looked up at me as if he really wished he could understand me. I let him stretch a few minutes and then I motioned for him to turn around and face the mast. I untied the rope that was binding his feet together and I motioned for him to straddle the mast in a seated position. I then retied his hands and feet on the other side of the mast. This new

position was not nearly as secure as the previous one, but it had to be a lot more comfortable for him. It made me feel less secure about the chance of him escaping, but made me feel more humane for ending what must have been an excruciatingly painful position. I hoped I wouldn't regret my kindness.

The pirate must have wondered what was going on. Just hours ago I made him choose between walking the plank and taking a bullet to the head. Now I was giving him rum and comfort. I guess I was just desperate for human contact. Not only was I desperate for some company, but the thought of the food I had scored made my stomach growl in anticipation of eating soon. I was happy that I had scored some food from the scarab. Had I not, I may have been tempted to break my vegetarianism and eat the dead pirates as the Matain cannibals would have done. Instead, I had some canned fruit, canned beans and several boxes of cereal and rice. I left the pirate in his new position and made my way back to the galley. Moments later I returned with a can of black beans, a can of pineapple, a can opener and two spoons. I sat down on the deck next to the pirate and shared some food together. It was the first meal I had eaten with another person in over a month. I felt a little weird spoon feeding my captive, but even as awkward as it was, I still felt better than untying him so he could feed himself. It didn't take long to polish off both cans of food. We washed the meal down with a few shots of rum. The pirate said a few words to me that I interpreted as a thank you.

I took advantage of the fact that I had a "captive audience" and I began to spill my guts and tell my tale. I didn't care that the pirate couldn't understand a word I said. I carried on an animated story of my trip. I illustrated the story with body language as I used my hands and facial expressions to make my words more understandable. Not that he had a choice, but the pirate sat and listened to every word I said. He seemed interested and eager to understand me as he maintained eye contact with me through my tale. The sun had begun to set. I pointed to the western horizon and said two words "Mata Utu." I missed that place. I told him about the lush paradise and the perfect wave. I told him how it was the resting place of my brother Lance. It felt great to talk. It felt great to share my tale with someone even if he couldn't understand it. I concluded my tale with daily sailing rituals. I then looked into the pirate's eyes and deep into his soul. "What am I going to do with you man?"

We both sat on the deck in silence as the last rays of sunlight illuminated the horizon in spectacular purple, red and orange hues. The pirate was weary and maybe even a little drunk. He leaned forward and rested his shoulder against the mast. His eyes looked heavy as he appeared to doze off a bit. I imagined he was exhausted and stressed, but thankful to still be alive. I picked up the empty cans of food, utensils and bottle of rum and made my way into the galley. I tossed the trash and stowed the utensils and then sat down at the command center. I looked at the blank radar screen and then checked my GPS coordinates. I wondered if I would get another visit during the night. I made sure the proximity alarm was set and operational. Surely if there were more pirates, they would be on their way by now. I tried to put the thought out of my mind. I needed rest in case they did come. I retired to my berth and dove onto my bed. Without the aid of the rum, I would have been difficult to fall asleep. Instead, I passed out

within minutes of my head hitting the pillow. Subconsciously I slept with one eye open and my hand on the Glock.

I awoke the next morning to an unfamiliar sound. There was a slight banging sound on the hull of the ship. It was a sound that I had never heard before. Had I not realized that it was the scarab bumping into the Mareva, I may have dismissed the whole pirate ordeal from yesterday as a dream. I grabbed a jug of water from the galley and then climbed the steps onto the deck. I noticed that the pirate was still asleep. He was sitting upright, but slightly hunched over and hugging the mast. His head bobbed slightly with the motion of each passing wave. The seas had become slightly rougher since last night as was evident in the increased rocking motion and subsequent collisions of the two ships. I looked over into the scarab. The dead pirate was still there and his body rolled slightly from side to side as the waves rocked the scarab and then bumped it into the Mareva. I scanned the horizon 360 degrees. There was nothing in eyesight except for the burgeoning sun on the eastern horizon. I chugged a little water and then commenced to some stretching and yoga. I watched the pirate closely as I was curious as to when he would wake up. Twenty minutes or so passed and he remained in slumber. I quietly approached him and heard him snoring. A trail of drool ran from the corner of his mouth. The knots around his hands and feet were still intact. I decided to let him get some rest.

I took off my gun belt and stowed it in the cockpit stowaway. I clipped the lanyard to my ankle and quietly slid off of the aft deck and into the deep blue. The water felt refreshing – much more so than yesterday when I entered the water in full gear with survival mode in my mind. I took a little swim to wake me up and to get the blood flowing. I felt slightly hung over from the rum last night – a sensation that I hadn't felt in forever and hadn't missed one bit. I swam against the wind as the Mareva pulled me backwards by the lanyard. Each passing wave gave me a moment of slack before pulling me backward again. I swam for roughly thirty minutes or so before my body was ready for a break. I rolled onto my back and floated a bit. I breathed deep and relaxed. I felt at peace as I looked up at the bright blueness of the morning sky. Peace was what I wanted. Peace in the world would be great. Peace would have prevented the turmoil in the world that sent me on this crazy voyage. Peace would have prevented me from killing three armed pirates yesterday. Peace would bring me home to my family and friends again. Peace would bring Lance back. It felt great to envision peace.

I rolled over and swam a few easy strokes over to the scarab. I unclipped my lanyard and climbed aboard the scarab instead of the Mareva. The dead pirate had started to bloat and turn purplish white. It would only be a matter of time before he started to stink. I contemplated tossing the body into the water, but I didn't want to get blood all over me again. I looked up at the captive whose head still nodded in slumber. It was time to start a new day and he needed a wakeup call. I climbed into the driver's seat and fired up the scarab. The roar of her engines startled the captive who immediately awoke and came to full attention. Hell, the scarab was loud enough that I feared her rumble may even awake the dead pirate on the floor. I goosed the engine in neutral just to hear the roar again. It was an awesome sound, but definitely not one of peace.

I left the scarab running and hopped back onto the Mareva. I reeled in the lanyard and tossed it on the deck as I made my way to the mast. "Good morning, pirate." He shook his head a little as if to clear his mind and vision. I wondered if he had hoped that the whole ordeal yesterday had been a dream. Well, I was about to make his dream a harsh reality. I grabbed a jug of water of the deck, took a big gulp and walked up to him. I extended the jug to his mouth and he tilted his head back and took a mouthful. I screwed the lid back on it and made my way back to the cockpit. I grabbed the gun belt and strapped it back onto my waist and then returned to the mast. I did not say a word as I approached the captive. I drew my knife from the belt as I stood in front of my captive. A look of fear once again came over his face. I leaned down with my knife and cut the ropes binding his feet and hands. The look of fear was quickly replaced with a look of confusion. I extended my hand in a gesture to help him to his feet. He stood up with difficulty as his legs must have still been asleep. I gave him a second to compose himself and then I escorted him to the port side of the deck. I patted him on the back and then pointed down to the scarab. "Go." I said. He looked at me with confusion. I pointed to the scarab again and gestured with a head nod and repeated "Go." He broke eye contact with me and glanced down at the gun on my hip. He must have been afraid that I would shoot him in the back as he boarded the scarab. "Look man, get the hell out of here before I change my mind. Dead men tell no tales, right? Well, go tell your tale and tell your pirate friends to leave me alone. I want peace from now on." I followed up my words with the international gesture for peace and raised my index and middle finger. He got the gesture and returned it to me. We stood there in silence for a moment before he carefully climbed down onto the scarab which still rumbled with the sound of horsepower. He disregarded the dead pirate on the deck as he climbed over him and into the driver's seat. I untied the mooring line from the cleat on the Mareva and tossed the rope into the scarab.

The pirate looked up at me as he clicked the boat into gear. The engines dropped in tone and the scarab began to pull away from the Mareva. He smiled and nodded at me before he hit the throttle and launched the scarab off into the distance. I couldn't help but think that I either did the most humane act or made the stupidest move of my life. I felt good about it and hoped that it would be my last pirate encounter. I was now content to be alone at sea again and at peace in my own world. I looked at my watch – it was 7:48 am – the exact minute that the alarm had sounded 24 hours ago. Talk about coincidental timing. It had been an interesting 24 hours. I had no idea where the pirates came from or where my captive pirate was going as long as I did not see him or his peers again. I was once again content being alone and at peace with the sea.