

Edge of Beyond

There was no one else on the beach this early in the morning to disturb Harold. A light breeze from the ocean rustled an assortment of dry palm fronds into whispered conversation while teasing the few gray hairs remaining on Harold's seasoned pate as he stood staring at the immense body of water surging at the beach like a fluid Don Quixote. The sun was now fully conscious after chasing every cloud over the distant horizon, and it lit up Harold's countenance with unmitigated joy. Even though his fragile body was being framed and supported by an aluminum walker, which tends to encourage depression, Harold was anything but. He grunted faintly as he maneuvered the ungainly device closer to the foam that chased a wave back into the maw of the Caribbean. The walker created lines of demarcation in the wet sand as if guarding his footprints, and soon the waves were licking his bare toes and enlarging the smile on his weathered face.

"I always thought the turquoise water had been messed with by the photo guy in those travel brochures, Mary. But look, it's real, and we're finally here," Harold sighed.

He edged further into the surf, the frisky waves now lapping his knees.

"Ahhh, that feels good. I'll never forget when you first told me we outta come here, Mary. I thought you were two bricks shy of a load. We didn't have a pot to pee in, but here you were thinking about this exotic place that would cost a fortune."

Harold paused and shook his head. "I know, I know, we were young, and you were just dreamin' out loud. But now you can see, I never forgot."

The walker was much easier to manage as Harold moved further into the welcoming aqua expanse.

"Thought we could afford to come when the kids were gone, but your doctor bills kinda squashed that idea. Like they say, best plans of mice, er somethin' like that. Wasn't your fault. You know I was never good with words and feelings and stuff. I just wish I said I love you more all those years."

The walker was now under water. Harold loosened his grip a bit as he became more buoyant.

"Yeah, I know you knew how I felt, but jeez Mary, you said I love you *out loud* all the time. But, I guarantee from here on, I'll say it every day, cause I'll be right there."

A glistening tear eased down his cheek. "I promise."

Harold let go of the walker as the tear was immersed in a brisk wave. Then suddenly, a hand reached out and grabbed Harold's arm.

"Gotcha, old timer. Got your walker too," a tanned young surfer said as he flashed a smile and assisted Harold back toward shore. "Thought for a minute there you were gonna sail off to Tahiti."

Harold gruffly waved the young man off and trudged with his walker back to the beach.

"Sorry Mary. Maybe tomorrow."