

Desert Island

By
Stephen Bittrich

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"DESERT ISLAND"

BY STEPHEN BITTRICH

SETTING:

A small deserted island in the South Pacific. Well, deserted save one.

AT RISE:

ALEX -- who can be either male or female in the casting -- is sitting in tattered, dirty attire on the shoreline... depressed and despondent. Suddenly, he/she spots something out in the ocean.

ALEX

What? That can't be... no. That's not--

(Alex leaps up excitedly.)

ALEX (cont'd)

HELLOOOOOOOOOO! HELLOO, THERE! AHOY!

(Beat)

Oh no. CAN YOU MAKE IT? ARE YOU OKAY?

(Beat)

No, no, no, no, no. This isn't happening.... it's gonna be too... THE RIPTIDE! THE RIPTIDE IS REALLY -- CAREFUL!

(Alex takes off his/her watch, perhaps the one last vestige of civilization and places it on a little rickety crate which acts as a beach table.)

ALEX (cont'd)

Okay, okay. I'M COMING! HANG ON! I'M COMING!

(Alex braces for action, takes a deep breath, then heads downstage -- toward the "water.")

(BLACK OUT TO RESET TABLEAU.
THIS SHOULD BE QUICK AND NOT
MAKE THE AUDIENCE WAIT.)

(LIGHTS UP ON -- Alex back on the beach performing CPR on MORGAN -- who may be played by a male or female actor.)

ALEX (cont'd)
Come on! Breathe, damn you! Breathe!

(Morgan finally spits up water. Alex is ecstatic with joy. Human contact after all these years!)

(BLACK OUT TO RESET TABLEAU. THIS SHOULD BE QUICK AND NOT MAKE THE AUDIENCE WAIT.)

(LIGHTS UP ON -- Alex waiting table -- or crate rather-- for Morgan, serving up mango and fish on a tropical leaf "plate.")

MORGAN
Oh my! Wonderful. Just terrific.

ALEX
Nothing but the best for you, my friend.

MORGAN
I can't thank you enough.

ALEX
(Getting choked up)
Our circumstances may be dire, but we have each other. I can't tell you how thankful I am to... see another human again.

MORGAN
And how long exactly have you been here?

ALEX
2247. Over six long years I've been here. That palm tree over there tells the story, my friend -- *my new friend*. I carved out a notch for every day I sat hopelessly on this island waiting for help to arrive.

MORGAN
Amazing. Well, I thank you from the bottom of my heart for saving my life. I don't know if I'd have been able--

ALEX

No need. No need. Of course I'm going to save you. Of course. And that riptide is treacherous! You know, you can be washed straight back out to sea... or dashed on those rocks over there. You need every ounce of strength--

MORGAN

And I was out of strength!

ALEX

-- I could see that from here! I will say, I've not braved that rip tide in quite some time, since my last raft attempt got dashed -- *literally dashed*. But no matter. What is that? A small risk in the grand scheme of things. I'm glad to have you as my guest.

(Mini-beat)

Guest? What am I saying? Co-inhabiter. Co-owner. Right down the middle. What's mine is yours.

MORGAN

Well, I am lucky indeed to... I mean, if one *must* be stranded in the South Pacific, then certainly to have generous and lovely company makes the situation not quite so harrowing.

ALEX

(Overlapping)

That is the truth. I mean, if we *must* be marooned...

MORGAN (cont'd)

(Overlapping)

Wow, this is delicious! Is it... what kind of...

ALEX (cont'd)

Well, you have your mango slices, of course. Quite a few fertile mango trees on the southern side of the island, thankfully. And that little baby is a *Cetoscarus ocellatus*, otherwise commonly known as a Spotted Parrotfish.

MORGAN

Well I'll say! So knowledgeable.

ALEX

I was lucky in that. There was a fish book in a chest of items that survived the wreck. I learned quite a bit about the various creatures of the ocean. My only book.

MORGAN

That was fortunate. And it tastes divine... especially now after having been without food and water so long... just drifting with the current.

ALEX

Oh boy. But you're feeling strong now? *Stronger?*

MORGAN

Thanks to you, friend. I am.

ALEX

So, now that you've regained your bearings, may I ask... how did you end up...?

MORGAN

Fell overboard!

ALEX

What? Overboard... wow.

MORGAN

Or I was pushed. I'm a little fuzzy on the details. I had been drinking. But I'm not ruling out that somebody didn't push me!

ALEX

Oh my. And about how many days do you think you...?

MORGAN

I got a little woozy toward the end, but about 6 days, I'd say.

ALEX

Well, that is about the limit. It is. You're very lucky. Body needs water.

MORGAN

Yes.

(Beat)

I did drink my own--

ALEX

Oh no no no, you don't want to do that.

MORGAN

I didn't want to.

ALEX

I mean your body is trying to eliminate certain elements. You don't want to put them back in.

MORGAN

It wasn't ideal.

ALEX

No. But now you have fresh rain water, collected from my own little -- excuse me -- pardon me -- our little pond. Drink deep, my friend. Savor it.

(Morgan drinks, slurping with a
homemade straw.)

MORGAN

Ah! Refreshing!

ALEX

And I insist you take my bed tonight.

MORGAN

Oh no, I couldn't.

ALEX

No, no. I insist. You need your rest. Tomorrow we'll see what materials we can pull together to make another bed. I'm getting quite expert at making island bunks.

MORGAN

Well... much appreciated. You are a saint.

ALEX

(Overlapping)

Wow... such a miracle. I'm still just in awe--

MORGAN (cont'd)

(Overlapping)

I can't tell you how lucky I feel to have been washed up--

ALEX (cont'd)

All in your perspective, isn't it? You're alive! Right? And you've got a friend. Believe you me, being alone, utterly alone, can drive you to the brink of sanity. You start to talk to... inanimate objects.

MORGAN

I can imagine.

ALEX

Not a pretty sight.

(Beat)

So is anyone missing you back at the boat? Or back home? A spouse?

MORGAN

No, no. But... well, my mother, I suppose. She will miss me. We haven't been very close lately.

ALEX

Oh, I'm so sorry to hear that. No children?

MORGAN

No. Not yet. Maybe one day, but I hadn't gotten around to it yet.

ALEX

I so long to hear news from home. Sometimes, you know, I'll make up little news reports... like I'm a TV news anchor. Just to keep from going coo-coo. Ha ha! "Good evening. Welcome to the news of the world..."

MORGAN

No news out here! That's for sure!

ALEX

Ha ha! True! Six years. So many things change in six years. I've probably shed my skin about 50 times in six years. These are the things I think about. And who knows what scientific advances have been made. It all happens so quickly. Some trendy new gadget or other. And well, six years... I imagine there's a new leader.

MORGAN

Nope. Reelected. Thank God. Still making us "number one again."

ALEX

Sorry, you say, what?

MORGAN

He [She] was reelect --

ALEX

Making us "number one again"? Surely you can't mean you... Morgan, my dear new friend, you can't tell me you supported that horrible, crooked --

MORGAN

Wait, wait, I don't understand. Alex, are you saying to me you don't want our country to be number one again?

ALEX

I'm not saying that! Don't twist my... and you know, I don't know that we haven't always been number one.

MORGAN

We were slipping down, Alex, nay, tumbling down when the previous putz was in charge!

ALEX

Okay... uh... maybe we should... let's just take a breath here, my friend.

MORGAN

My "*friends*" want us to be number one again. Those are my kind of friends.

(Long pause)

ALEX

You racist.

MORGAN

I -- am -- not! How dare you, you welfare loving, tree hugging wimp.

ALEX

You war-mongering, xenophobic dunce!

MORGAN

You... socialist!

ALEX

Yeah, right, oh that's typical. That's the stock argument, isn't it? Well done.

MORGAN

You want the government to wipe your butt for you. But people with a modicum of sense want *less* government--

ALEX

Well, you'll get a whole lot less out here! Tell you what, my friend, just to prove to you that I'm not a socialist -- as a socialist would share everything equally with you -- you can catch your own damned Spotted Parrotfish!

(Alex takes Morgan's food and starts stuffing it down his/her own face.)

MORGAN

Typical spoiled brat mentality. An Indian giver. Things don't go your way, and --

(Like a baby crying--)

-- waaah, waaah, waaah!

ALEX

On my island, we use politically correct idiomatic expressions, racist. We don't say "Indian Giver." It's offensive.

MORGAN

Oh God. Thicken up that tissue paper skin, Dainty Bloomers. Typical of the maturity level of your socialist party.

ALEX

Tell you what, baby, I am pure capitalist. If you want to sleep on my bed and eat my food from now on, you're going to have to pay!

MORGAN

And what exactly is the currency on this shit hole island?

ALEX

I'm not sure yet, but you can bet your sweet butt a whole set of laws -- *laid down by the king* -- will be forthcoming.

MORGAN

If you don't have a Constitution in place, maybe we should just divide this place in half, and you stay on your half of the island, and I'll--

ALEX

Nope! Sorry! This island is all MINE! I planted my flag first. Them's da rules. Deal with it, Mr. [or Miss] Late to the Party.

MORGAN

I don't see any flag.

ALEX

There. There it is. Flying proud.

(Alex salutes the "flag.")

MORGAN

That looks like your underwear drying.

ALEX

FLAG! And this country is... Alex-isle... nope, Alex-tropolis. You are in Alex-tropolis now. Get used to it, trespasser. That's the way the world works right? The bold aggressor wins. Screw the meek.

MORGAN

Two can play at that game.

ALEX

Ya think, pee drinker? In your current weakened state, you couldn't walk the beach -- forget about storming it. If you even live, it is because of my great beneficence.

MORGAN

I may be weak... but everyone has to sleep.

(Beat)

ALEX

I should just kill you right now, you sneaky middle-of-the-night bushwhacker.

(Morgan's voice starts to waver.)

MORGAN

I'm just looking out for number one.

ALEX

Yeah, that's what your whole party does!!!

MORGAN

You're no different than me. Take stock, my friend. Take stock.

ALEX

I am different!

MORGAN

We all look out for number one.

ALEX

(Beat)

Man, humanity sucks! I thought I missed human contact. I thought I needed people, but I don't!

(Beat)

And I am different.

MORGAN

So am I. I can't be put in a box.

ALEX

Looking for me? You'll find me outside the box. Always. That's my address!

(Pause. Morgan begins to cry.)

ALEX (cont'd)

Won't be number one anytime soon if you're crying like a big baby.

MORGAN

I'm so tired. Are you really going to kill me? After saving my life?

ALEX

(Beat, sighing, softening)

No. Of course not. I would never... we don't...

(Beat)

I do good. I used to do good in the world. I think...

MORGAN

Me too... I think.

(Pause. Alex looks up into the sky. It would be awesome to have a shooting star lighting effect.)

ALEX

Did you see that?

MORGAN

Shooting star? Oh! Three of them!

ALEX

Miraculous... it's like you could almost touch it.

MORGAN

So clear and bright. Wonder if anyone else out there saw them.

ALEX

It's possible. Maybe someone out there on the horizon.

MORGAN

I wonder what they're doing right now.

ALEX

We all live under the same starry sky, under the same vast universe...

MORGAN

... goes on and on forever.

ALEX

... an infinite mystery.

MORGAN

Until it collides with heaven.

ALEX

Hmmm. Tell you what... my friend... let's not go there tonight, shall we?

MORGAN

You're right. Best not go there. Not tonight.

ALEX

We've got time. That's all we've got. All the time in the world to figure these things out.

(Lights fade to black as a star
streaks across the sky.)

(END OF PLAY)