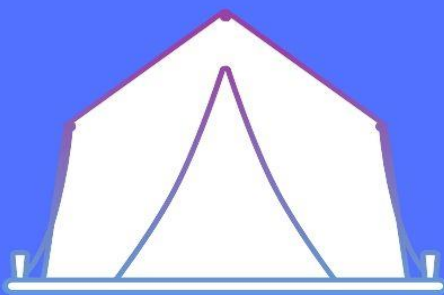


A
Roaming Fox
Fable

Honeymoon
Adventures

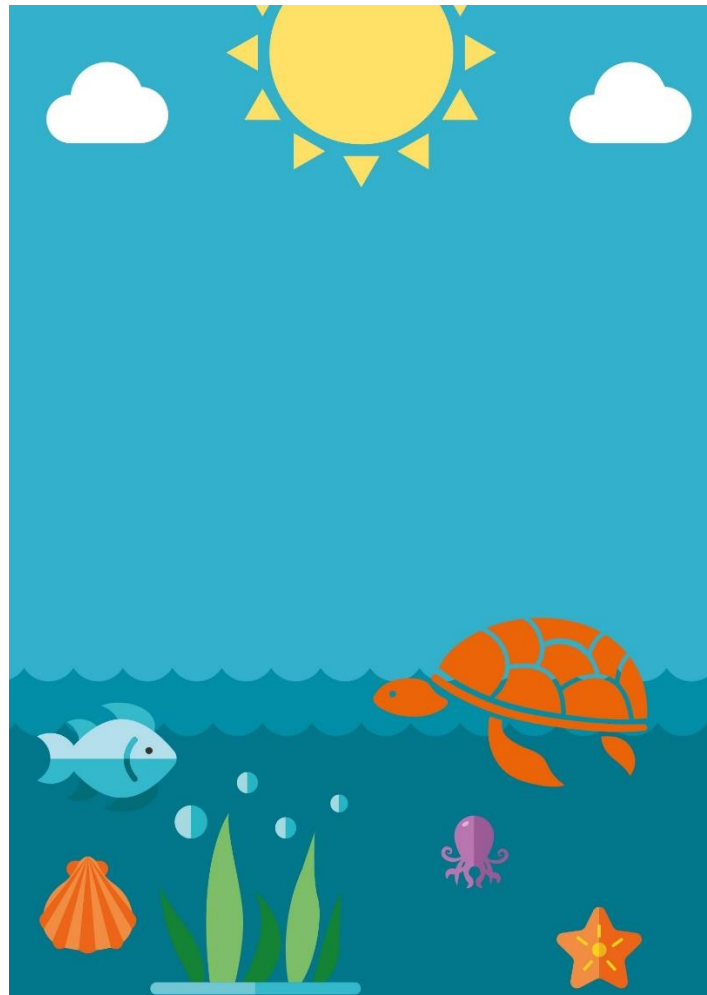


A. VAN AS

Honeymoon Adventures

A Roaming Fox Fable

Written by Alma van As



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Honeymoon bliss

'Love your humour!' was my husband to be's pick-up line. Not that I was a hot babe or had beautiful eyes. Nope. I made him laugh. Although I often responded to comments with the odd bit of wit here and there, I was a better listener.

Maybe he was right and it was this disposition that helped us on some of our journeys throughout our married life as we roamed around and pounced on destinations. Fortunately hubby had a sense of humour too.

Our honeymoon was our first lengthy trip as a couple. After the wedding bells stopped ringing, we packed our VW Beetle to the brim and removed the usual paraphernalia of empty beer cans attached to newly married couples' vehicles. We smeared away the *Just Married* sign scribbled in toothpaste on our windscreen till we could vaguely see through it. We buffed the shaving foam on the navy paintwork till a milky greyish blue film coated the entire car.

Before we drove away, we checked the exhaust pipe to see if it was filled with rotten fish as some of our friends were known to play dirty

tricks. Nothing that we could see. All set, we chirped our way up Sir Lowry's pass.

Our journey from Cape Town where we lived at the time to Plettenberg Bay was approximately five hundred kilometres. That was our end destination. We spent our first night at the Houw Hoek Hotel on the other side of the pass so we did not have to drive far after our wedding celebrations. After leaving a flurry of confetti in the room we continued our journey the following morning.

With a few cents to spare, after scraping together money for our wedding, our budget could afford two weeks of camping at a holiday resort in an upmarket coastal town or a day or two in a luxurious hotel. We chose camping.

I had never camped for more than three nights at a time. Our equipment was minimal which was just as well, as a VW Beetle has rather limited packing space. A gas cooker hood and lamp, a cooler box and a couple of collapsible chairs took up a fair amount of room. Luckily the town was close so we could stock up on food every few days. We did not even have a camping fridge.

Our bed was a newly purchased state of the art bright yellow plastic inflatable mattress which was sure to give us far more comfort than a flimsy thin foam one or an old fashioned Lilo made from canvas

type material. Our little A shaped tent was easy to erect with a loose groundsheet to protect us from the damp grass. In no time we were set up for our relaxing holiday cum honeymoon.

Our days were filled with swims in the lagoon at Plettenberg Bay. Sunset walks on the beach topped the end of the day. Some days we drove further afield to explore.

As newlywed couples do, we periodically made gaga eyes at each other and our honeymoon bliss continued. That is, apart from waking up every morning, shoulder and hip bones no longer cushioned by the air in our inflatable bed.

My admirable husband relentlessly patched up and re-inflated our pretty useless mattresses every day, to many hooty cheers and nudges from other campers. They had obviously seen the shiny rings on our fingers.

On one of our more adventurous days we drove to Storms River mouth. Paul had been there many times in his youth. This is one of the oldest marine national parks in South Africa and is situated in the Tsitsikamma forest section of the Garden Route.

'You have to snorkel at Storms River. It's a must!' Paul waxed lyrical about an inter-tidal underwater snorkelling trail. My newly acquired better half was keen to show me his snorkelling skills. Let me explain.

Having spent most of his life with his head underwater, he was a natural. He could spend hours in the water. It has even been known that people curiously check behind his ears for gills.

I, however, was a landlubber. Oh, I was known to get my feet wet. In fact, I loved the sea and could swim. My expertise was blocking my nostrils with my hand while ducking under waves and splashing in the shallows. Putting a mask over my eyes was totally new to me. Sucking air through a little plastic tube not much bigger than a straw for flavoured soda was a different story.

'You'll be fine! It's easy!! I'll teach you.' Gallant hubby assured me continuously. 'We'll practise in the lagoon where the water is flat'.

I should have known when I heard those last three words. Let me add, I was mildly adventurous. I enjoyed a challenge and was always keen to try something new. Within limits. After a few trials in the placid waters of the lagoon I was declared ready, fit and able.

At Storms River Paul pointed out the tidal pool. 'Look, it's there. Can you see it?'

All I could see were waves pounding repetitively between rocks.

'The tide is a bit high but we'll be fine. If we want to snorkel we must do it now. Come on, hurry up.' Not waiting for an answer, Paul virtually threw my mask and fins at me and dragged me to the edge of the water.

The waves continued crashing and bashing against the rocks. This did not look good. Was it a trick? Was he already tired of me? We were only in the juvenile stage of our marriage but maybe he was already regretting his vows. There was a slight possibility that he wanted to get rid of me. Surely he would succeed and there would be no evidence as I would be minced and shredded and the fish would have a veritable feast.

I was more than likely too trusting and brushed away my uneasy thoughts then leapt into the foamy sea. My mask slipped off my face as I went under the surface.

A sushi platter on a plate of seaweed rushed past me. Some of it forced its way into my mouth, not very palatable but with all kinds of unknown sea creatures seasoned with a sprinkling of sea sand and a

few shells as garnish. The ocean's contents were adamant to shove themselves down my throat. To wash it down, an icy deluge of salty water followed.

Panicking, I spluttered and coughed while I spat out my unwanted snack. I stuck my mask back on like a barnacle and fixed my teeth on the mouthpiece of the snorkel whilst trying my utmost to keep the tip of the snorkel above water. That piece where the air was supposed to come through. Like a fidget spinner I frantically kicked to stay on the surface. This was no calm lagoon. It was a raging sea trying to swallow me.

A dolphin popped up beside me. No, not a dolphin, it was my husband with a smile (or was it a leer) plastered on his face. Before I could check, he dived down and disappeared in the depths of the ocean – all of about three metres to the bottom. Those people were right. He must have gills, because the gaps around the mouthpiece of the snorkel as his grin reached his ears, would surely have let water in. Maybe he was amphibious.

With another leap out of the water like a bottlenose performing tricks at a dolphinarium, he shouted a few incoherent words. Words of encouragement? Or not.

The waves continued bashing the rocks. It was now or never - do or die. I lunged underwater to see if I could get to the bottom of the ocean and subsequently churned in a whirlpool of bubbles much like the spin cycle of a washing machine. Our marriage was not going to last, whether it was due to me drowning or because I planned to throttle my husband, if only I could get close enough to lay my hands around his neck.

Oblivious to my comfort or lack thereof, hubby swirled around like a seal, even giving me a curious mask to mask magnified eye. He signed that I must follow him and dive below the foam. I on the other hand, was bent on surviving while bobbing like a cork in the ocean.

Eventually I made like a stone and sunk to the bottom. I was rewarded for my efforts. Between the waves of milky froth, the remarkable and colourful underwater ecosystem exposed itself in moments of clarity and showed me some of its beautiful creatures. Not quite at peace with the world, but a tad more comfortable I gave in and let myself be seduced by its charms.

Chilled to the bone after some time in the icy water, I clambered out over the rocks. Any murderous thoughts were completely forgotten as I was engulfed by a hug from my husband and a kiss on my cheek.

‘Wasn’t that great?’ His smile had not left his face.

Would I ever snorkel again? Only if I had a choice of calm tropical seas as warm as a baby's bath.

Honeymoon bliss continued or dammed?

Our honeymoon continued in harmony for a while longer till I woke up one morning, a few days before we had to return home.

The rain had pelted down on our little tent throughout the night. We were toasty in our sleeping bag, high and dry on our patched inflatable mattresses that seemed to have survived the last repair done a few days before.

Day was breaking and I was looking forward to my first cup of coffee for the day. I stretched the sleep out of my body and felt a damp patch with my toe. At first I thought I was having nightmares from my snorkeling fiasco but realised I was awake. Was it spring tide and had it risen further than it usually did? We were far enough away from the edge of the sea so I did not think it likely.

I poked hubby in the ribs. 'Darling, wake up! The sleeping bag feels damp. Actually, the corner is sopping! I think some rain must have come in somewhere.'

I am sure he felt guilty after nearly causing me to drown at Storms River because he was very obliging. 'Don't worry dear, I'll take a look.' He slipped off the bed. 'Oh bugger!' Actually that wasn't what he said,

but I won't repeat a word of it. His foot was in a deep puddle. On second thoughts, our dry haven of a tent had become a huge lake.

Water rushed in over our groundsheet. This was old style camping, in the days where a loose plastic sheet served as the floor of our tent. With the persistent rain throughout the night, water had dammed up around us. The edges of our groundsheet were raised, floating in the huge puddle, almost like a boat. While we were lying on our mattresses we were dry apart from the wet corner of our sleeping bag.

The minute we stood up the sides of the groundsheet gave in. Water flooded our tent underneath our bedding. Everything was saturated. We stuck our heads through the tent flaps that acted as a door. It was still raining. 'What are we going to do?' We looked at each other in despair. We had nowhere to hang up our things to dry. It did not look like there was going to be a break in the rain either.

Luck was on our side. The owners of the caravan park took pity on us when they saw how soggy we were. A huge caravan five and a half meters long was standing empty, with a large side tent. They let us move into it without any extra cost to us for the few remaining days of our honeymoon.

'Hey look, our little tent can fit here in the side tent!' Paul stretched out the tent and strung it so it could dry. The caravan was enormous. We each had a double bed to sleep in, but we chose not to. After all, we were on honeymoon. This was luxury. What more could we ask for?

After moving our belongings we sat in our car to listen to the radio for news about the rain. Apart from buying a newspaper there was no other way to find out what was happening in the world in those days.

We were shocked to hear a tragic event had unfolded in South Africa. One of the Karoo towns about three hundred kilometres north west of Plettenberg Bay, Laingsburg, had flooded due to the excessive rain. More than one hundred lives were sadly lost. We counted our blessings. Our wet possessions were a minor thing.

As for married life? Almost forty years later and a few more adventurous trips with some hairy moments? Yip, we are still together.

Authors Notes:

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For further details and photos of our honeymoon:

<https://www.roaming-fox.com/blog/2017/6/27/honeymoon-woes-or-wedding-bliss>

<https://www.roaming-fox.com/blog/2017/7/5/honeymoon-continued-or-dammed>