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1: Ne'er the Twain Shall Meet

"East is east and west is west, and ne'er
the twain shall meet."

- Rudyard Kipling, novelist,

Nobel Prize in Literature 1907

"We learned a lot from Dr Brezhnev,"

"Good old 'Doc Holiday'. God rest his soul."

"Definitely on the right track blending Smilodon,
Velociraptor, Pterosaur and God knows what to
create a bigger bang for the buck. Bigger, longer
fangs, ornerier, faster, more crafty, cunning..."

"Yet, even he did not anticipate the unforeseen

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sinister androgynous reversal upon maturation
into adulthood."

"Well thanks to nanomolecular genetic manipulation,
I can safely say we've nothing to fear."

"As the name implies, 'Ulusaba, place of little
fear.'"

The molecular genetic research scientists finished
their sandwiches, one eye ever present on the array

of screens combining the animal cages in the CARE, Centre for Animal Research and Education facility. An elaborate network of tunnels connected cages hosting a diversity of Ngala or Lions, once extinct American Lions genetically engineered from snippets of extinct Caspian Tiger, Smilodon fatalis, etc With ample room to roam in the large enclosure called Ukutala or 'quiet place' a misnomer since the main attraction's roar oft echoed loudly over the eastern end of the island, audible for 5 miles.

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Nestled in a narrow arid valley resembling an African savannah or early American grassland on Santa Cruz., the largest of the Channel Islands. An intense biodiverse ecosystem rivalling the Galapagos Islands off South America, only a hop skip and a jump to Ventura California. Pitched as the adventure of a lifetime, an African Safari, only 3 hours away. The remote resort addressed pitfalls of it's predecessor. A separate island ecosystem unto itself rather than a reserve squeezed between a major urban corridor in S. California. The dream of Sam Buchman, the latest, youngest internet billionaire, Buchman had spared no expense in assembling the brightest and best minds

to explore the possibilities of recreating a North American ecosystem long since forgotten.

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Prehistoric predators left to roam, replicate, and interact with international guests in the perfect playground, only a short hop, skip and a jump from LA.

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“Alright up and at ‘em” insisted the young mother of three as she hurriedly hustled her herd from under the makeshift campsite, constructed under cover of the double bunk beds in her son’s bedroom.

“You’re gonna hear me roar” insisted her ADD adventurous son ecstatic at the prospect of spending an entire week in an African Treehouse Hacienda as the brochure depicted at the end of his bed. The brochure fell, flipped on it’s side like a tent. Inside, the makeshift, comical ‘cap’ on ‘Devil’s Peak’, the pinnacle of Sam Buchman’s ambitious undertaking. A world class resort, resembling the finest in Kruger National Park.

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Made in America, to stimulate local domestic talent, trades, craftsmanship and technology. The

pride of USGen, United States Genetics, scientists who'd masterfully manipulated, the prehistoric gene pool that took us back ten thousand years to experience what the grassy plains of America might've looked like.

The taxi dropped the tourists off at the bustling Ventura ferry pier. Throngs of eager explorers, their Tilly dirigibles and assortment of Indiana Jones paraphernalia hustled aboard the 'Ngala' (Lion), Nature Reserve Express or NARE, as in "Ne'er the twain shall meet", from a ballad by Rudyard Kipling, "East is East and West is West and ne'er the twain (two) shall meet. 'Til earth and sky stand presently before God's great judgement seat..." The cynical skeptics oft described the outlandish concept set forth by Sam Buchman

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recreating a prehistoric American park, as impossible, pure poppycock. The billionaire had defiantly bucked the system roping investors from around the globe to get on board his inspiring venture. Driven like the early founding fathers and visionary pioneers, men that made America great. The Vanderbilts, the Rockefellers, and Hiltons, highly respected in their circles. Sam Buchman

was a relative newcomer, a rags to riches Goldfield type prospector. Likely to aspire to the political arena, his pie in the sky promises awaited a hungry discerning public dying to sample the fanciful fruits of his labors.

Far from the maddening crowd the multi-tiered cruise vessel ventured the calm waters off the west coast of southern California. A few hardy surfers and kayakers clawed feverishly to catch the massive waves left in the wake of the NARE.

The treacherous passage was oft taken by the earliest native Americans, the Chumash, from their birthplace on Santa Cruz. The carved out canoe or 'tomol' was the 1st form of ocean going vessel in N. America. Sharkskin served as sails.

The island was abandoned in the 1880's as the

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Chumash were driven off it onto the mainland.

In 2001, the "Elye'wun", Chumash for 'Swordfish' made the crossing in a tomol built by the Chumash Maritime Association.

"Santa Cruz means the holy cross. But do you see the irony?" prompted Nicolette holding the brochure into her bigger, older brother's face. He grabbed the glossy color full page ad from her.

Ulusaba or “place of little fear” radiated from Devil’s Peak, a five star resort situated atop the highest vantage point on the island. The elements of the exclusive resort, separate private villas, a hotel wilderness retreat and assorted excursions departed from the lofty perch. A place of refuge with the added feature, a highly strategic vantage point. Daily excursions via a sky tram, various all terrain vehicles and even a replica of an old

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railroad that once ventured Tsavo. It ran the length of the island from the Ulusaba airstrip at the western terminus crossing ‘no man’s land’ into the eastern sector via an arrowhead shaped area at the confluence of two low lying valleys.

The CARE, Center for Animal Research and Education sat diametrically opposed at the eastern end of the Ngala (‘lion’ in Shangaan) Nature Reserve. As the name implied “east is east and west is west and ne’er the twain shall meet.”

“Scaredy-cat?” ribbed Steve, her bigger question-ably wiser brother, a braggadocious defiant devil may care. Nicolette, not much of a tomboy, was the worry wart. Her younger brother Tommy took after Steve. She was always caught between a rock

and a hard place, oft losing out in hand me down tugs of war. The incessant arguments and tussles

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honed her agility, prowess and survival skills.

The towering cliffs slowly crept into view. They impeded both access and egress, a built in safe guard for free spirited prehistoric creatures roaming about. The NARE approached 'Diablo Anchorage', one of only three piers along the northern mid section of the rocky coastline.

Lasso Anchorage was nestled a few miles to the west, Pratt's Harbor was the third entry point, each with a gondola lift and 'funicular' train bound to carry countless adventurers over the top. Prisoner's Harbor lay in no man's land. In 1825 the fate of 30 prisoners dropped off there remains a mystery. In the 1880's the US Army proposed exiling Apache natives to the island, now an emergency drop off point to bring vital supplies to the resort as well as vehicle maintenance station. Albeit Ukutula, place

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of quiet received most of the food and veterinary supplies, shipments leaving the National Park Centers and USGen headquartered in LA.

"I can't wait to try out the gnarly trekkers" said

Tommy, both too young and small to be unaccompanied without adult supervision.

“You mean Nare trekkers” corrected Steve.

Tommy nearly toppled over the guard rail at the bow of the vessel as the NARE rapidly approached the dock. The captain slammed the throttle in reverse to avoid crashing onto the rocks in the deceptively steep drop off. Once moored, the eager beavers, boy scouts and adult adventurers disembarked for the 2nd leg of their voyage.

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“Why do they call it a fun ick..you..ler train?”

The funicular gravity train, quickly filled to the brim. An odd angled variant of a two rail train.

“It’s fun?! It relies on counterbalance from it’s descending twin via cables to pull the train up” noted Steve.

“Oh, I see” said Nicolette. “But if we’re all going up, who’s coming down?” she wondered peering at the opposite car on a rapid decent.

“Remember your early girl scout outings?”

“Yeah.”

“Well, you hauled out what you brought in, didn’t you?”

“Of course...oh.” Nicolette presumed garbage,

empty bottles, leftovers and lots of dirty laundry.

“Indestructible?” questioned Steve, maintenance free, less hassle lauded the park engineer, presumably not a member of the naval team of the SS

Titanic. A view up the mountain and along the endless winding coastline took everyone’s breath away. In the distance, past Lasso Anchorage, a few colorful spots jostled for position off ‘Painted Caves’, a massive natural vault carved out of the rock over eons, the world’s largest, depicting

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Chumash hunts and ceremonies dating back to the dawn of civilization in North America.

“When do we get there?” wondered Nicolette, nervously afraid of heights as she pressed her face against the window and peered down the steep drop off from which the train ascended. The deep gullies served as a natural defense reminiscent of the lofty retreats found in Ngala near Kruger National Park in South Africa.

The train car ran out of real estate at the platform near the summit of Devil’s Peak at 2450’ above sea level, the highest point on a mountain range that ran along the northern half of the island from West Point tapering down to Prisoner’s Harbor.

Ulusaba was comprised of a quaint cliff lodge, a sprawling collection of solar panels disguised as

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thatched huts, private haciendas on stilts encompassing the mountain. Each self-sustained enclosure offered a breathtaking view of the entire island. From the miniature train that traversed the valley that sliced through the center of the island to the gondolas and sky trams that continuously crisscrossed the Ngala Nature Reserve

“It looks like a witch’s cap” chuckled Nicolette pointing to the summit structure.

“Come on, we don’t want to miss a thing” urged Steve as he hurriedly helped his little sister disembark.

Nicolette reluctantly peered off into the vast void hoping she’d overcome her fear of heights during the week long safari adventure.

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She took a deep breath. What millions of people have done before her, she too could accomplish

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