

SEX & SURFING

The following story is based on a series of blogs written by Danny Salfield whilst he was travelling in 2008.
All names have been changed to protect the innocent.

WHAT PEOPLE THOUGHT OF THE ORIGINAL BLOGS...

Wow, Danny. That was a very open and real detailing of what seems to be a 'let the universe decide' adventure. Amazingly easy to read and gripping. I decided to read one chapter and got hooked and read the lot in one go.

BEN PARKER

Thank you for taking me on your journey! Loved every word, but the best things about your journals was that you made me laugh and stimulated my imagination. Your honesty and openness are beautiful things. Muchos Gracias Signor Salfield

CAMERON BUCHANON!

The only blog I read. So good, Danny. So good.

YOGESHA LACROIX

Hi Danny Your writing reaches me. I imagine that I feel what you feel. I go to those places and meet those people, admire those girls. I think you'll do fine teaching English – or the Oz version of it.

STEVE SALFIELD

Wow... wow..... wow. I'm lost for words Danny, I felt like I was the other person in your wandering party.... loved every word buddy & felt every word. Man, the Algarve, Amado, Biarritz... fond memoirs of my own travels... keep rockin buddy, lets do another nude bike ride soon xo

JOHNNY ABEGG

Thank you for sharing your journey with us, i'm living vicariously through you. It's all such beautiful imagery. You have a true gift for story telling Danny. Travel safe and all the very best with English teaching. What a trip!

ANNA BAMFORD

Somehow my judgement of you as a solicitous sleazebag is totally unravelled by your disarming confessional. It's great reading, living vicariously through you as the winter rain tumbles in Byron Bay.

MARK PURSER

I finally had to take a long hard look at myself in the mirror. Got to tell ya it frightened me how much I like what I saw. This is by FAR my favourite bit!! well done danny-boy.

REBECCA OLIVE

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I'd like to thank Hayley Muscat who supported and loved me for seven years of her life; my parents for their endless love and belief in me despite the unconventionality of my approach to life; my younger brother for really being my big brother; my younger sister for being my big sister; my friends who accept me for who I am and make this ride such a joy; the ocean for being there when nothing makes sense and the universe for putting this whole mess of life together and letting it roll.

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Cover design/photography and book layout : Sam Clarke

Contact: samclarke78@gmail.com

Editor and Creative Consultant : Philip Salfield

Contact:danielsalfield@gmail.com if you'd like to find out how to order another copy of 'Sex and Surfing'.

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*For my parents...
my mentors and my heroes*

SEX & SURFING

DANNY SALFIELD

1

THE BUBBLE BURSTS

“Fuck you! Do you ever listen to me? What did I say just then? Go on tell me what I said.”

Helen is rubbing her thumb and forefinger rapidly together, giving the already calloused skin on the inside of her finger a bright red glow. This has always been an idiosyncrasy of hers and a sure sign of intense aggravation. Her eyes are wide open and subtly moist. This little outburst has been coming. She tries so hard to be diplomatic but can only hold out for so long.

“You said you want me to try to understand you better,” I reply through gritted teeth.

I have been through all this many times before and I know the easiest route from here to the safety of neutral ground - carefully constructed sentences and deep breaths - the only way to take the edge off my anger and frustration. I am a hamster spinning the wheel in my cage.

“I was telling you about my day and how Jasmine has been treating me like shit. She knows I want to do body work and not beauty treatments and she deliberately booked herself in and not me for two massages today.”

“That sucks, you should talk to her about that tomorrow, I’m sure she’ll understand”.

I turn back to the TV. I am more interested in whatever crap is being shown at 6.30 on a Tuesday night on Channel 9 than the latest crisis Helen is remonstrating about. I know I could be more caring and understanding and she wouldn’t have to resort to intimidating me with her fiery Leo temper but I simply can not bring myself to care.

“Tom, why don’t you care! You never listen to me! You just go off into your cave or whatever it is you think men do since you read that Venus book and use that as an excuse every time I try to talk to you.”

It’s true, I really don’t care that much about what this girl has to say. I have been sharing a bed, a fridge, a car, a mortgage, a life with her for over seven years and I love her but I just don’t respect her enough to care about her problems.

To be honest I feel that she has disappointed me. I realise that I have begun to view her more as a daughter I want to succeed but who has failed my expectations than as a lover and an equal. Ironically, she views me like an ungrateful and spoilt son. This is an unsustainable situation.

Now she is pacing around the kitchen. I am reminded of a lioness in a cage I saw at a circus. Animals become extremely dangerous when they are kept in confined spaces I remember thinking. There

she is, cooking her thousandth stir fry for her pathetic lazy boyfriend on the couch. She has such a slender build that it is a wonder that it can cope with so much anger. Shoulder length blonde hair and a pretty face, looking over at her I am reminded why it has always been easy to stay attracted to this girl. Her friends wonder if she ever eats because she never puts on weight but I know the reason - the temper tantrums burn off the calories.

Deja vu. Another evening of pre-dinner warfare. I eye off the fridge wondering if I dare open it to grab a beer. I know the chilled alcohol would take the edge off my stress but I also know that I would cop extra aggression from Helen. A balancing act - what would produce least stress for me. She thinks it is lame that I drink a beer or two every night and that I am only doing it because I am bored. As usual she is right, I am bored with the pace my life has reached – a slow crawl. Nothing ever changes.

But that night it does. No sooner has the thought crossed my mind that nothing ever changes than a seven-year bubble bursts and every aspect of my existence that I have taken for granted is swept out from under me and the safety of my hamster cage shatters into pieces.

The words come tumbling out of her mouth in a flood.

“I am moving back to Sydney. I am going to stay with my dad. I am sick of the Gold Coast. I am sick of my job and I think we need a break.” A break - when people say the word “break” do they realise that they are only two letters away from “break up”? Because that’s what a break is, it’s the bit before the “up” and right after the “down”.

Helen has stopped pacing and is now leaning against the stovetop. She looks so calm and peaceful all of a sudden that I feel a wave

of panic rush through my body. Helen has threatened to do drastic things numerous times over the last six months but only ever in a fit of rage, never has she spoken with such complacency. She looks resigned to her decision.

Three and a bit weeks later I am at Coolangatta airport and I am feeling strange, very strange. Sometimes you take your life so much for granted and get so used to planning things in advance that when all of a sudden a catalyst arrives it feels unreal. Here was Helen moving back down to Sydney, without me, and all of a sudden after seven years I am on my own.

“So I will come down in a couple of weeks. OK? I will find a good radio job there and move down. I really want to move to Sydney as well.”

I say this sincerely but can't escape the feeling of relief that I am about to have my own space and I will be free, even if only for a short time, from the tyranny with which Helen has instilled my life.

I extract her bags from amongst the mess of surfboards, wetsuits and rubbish in the boot of our Camry station wagon and we walk through the sliding doors of Coolangatta airport. The hiss of the sliding doors feel symbolic to the opening of another world as Helen leaves the one behind she has shared with me for over two thousand days and nights. She walks off to the departure gate and never looks back.

2

GOING GOING ...

“Oi Socrates, stop trancing out and chuck us that other strap.”

Jimmy is grinning at me over the top of the station wagon.

“Sorry dude. Thinking about my last wave that’s all. Got a nice deep pit but got clipped at the end, should have squeaked out of it I reckon.”

“I saw you get a few good ones. You’re still thinking too much man. Remember - live in the moment, man. Hey, got your tickets booked yet? Hope you’re not still procrastinating, you really need this. If you truly believe she’s out there somewhere you can’t let the grass grow around you.”

I raise an eyebrow at Jimmy and pull the end of the board strap towards me and then thread it through the rusted metal buckle. I feel the fabric go taut as I pull it through, the teeth of the buckle

holding firm and allowing it no way back. No way back, I smile to myself.

I think about parallel lives. We only have the time for the right now. One group of choices made in one order, followed by one set of consequences. Meanwhile the exact opposites are out there, one different decision and a new set of circumstances occur and a whole other path. Where are those other paths going right now? The Tom and Helen path stopped at seven years in this life. Where would we be now if she hadn't boarded that plane six months ago. Now my tickets are booked and my bags are packed. Time for my life to start again.