

As Johse drifted with his siblings, he was overcome with sadness. The raft, lashed together with string and rope, looked ready to collapse and dump them all into the ocean. As he pulled up one of the water jugs, he noted that they had six full jugs and four partial. They had fourteen when they left Cuba. He and his siblings, ten year-old Pablo, sixteen year-old Lucinda, and eighteen year-old Maria, had decided to leave when their grandmother had become ill. They had run out of food the night before. His brother had come over and asked "What's going to happen to us Johse?" "I don't know Pablo, but we must have hope!" Johse himself had little hope, but he knew he had to reassure his family.

He climbed up onto the highest point of the raft and mentally prepared himself.

"Maria, can you help me round up the others?"

"Of course I can Johse!" When his older sister dashed off, he reflected on how lucky he was to have such loyal siblings. As Lucinda came over, they nodded to each other and he helped her up, for no matter if one or both of them were addressing the others, they stood together. They may not have been the oldest, but they were the only two who had made it to thirteen and stayed in school. As Maria and Pablo came over, his sister cleared her throat and began speaking.

"As you know, we ran out of food last night. But we came prepared for this. There are spears in the back that we can tie rope to and fish with. We also have salt, and when we run out, we can simply put ocean water in a bailing jug. We'll be able to eat and will drift for one more day, at most." Johse nodded as his other siblings cheered. Just then Johse thought he saw something on the horizon. He called this out, and heard a shout of joy. He turned to face his brother, and saw that he was looking out at sea, towards a large grey fin sticking up out of the water.

"It's a dolphin!" Pablo cried. Johse looked at his sisters and saw the same alarm he felt.

"Leave the dolphin alone Pablo. I'm sure they would rather eat than talk to a little boy."

Pablo turned to look at him.

"After they eat?" he asked with a smile.

"Maybe. Just maybe." Pablo hugged him so fiercely, he thought he would black out.

"Why don't we all get some rest?" suggested Lucinda. Maria nodded and headed over to her side with Lucinda, leaving Pablo and Johse alone. Pablo was still staring at the fin when Johse said, "Get some rest Pablo. You'll need it for tomorrow." Pablo looked at him and smiled

before going over to his makeshift mattress and laying down. Before closing his eyes, he smiled at Johse again. Johse went to his little makeshift mattress. The last thought he had was, "Oh Lord help us if that shark comes over here."

When he woke up he saw Pablo standing at the rail, his eyes shining in excitement.

"What is it Pablo?" Johse asked.

"The dolphin's coming this way! It's coming to guide us to the shore!" he cried. Johse bolted upright and ran over to where his sisters were sleeping.

"Wake up!" he hissed. Lucinda opened her eyes as Maria muttered drowsily,

"What is it Johse?"

"The shark! That's what!" They both bolted upright and rushed over to where Pablo was watching the approaching fin with growing excitement.

"Look! The dolphin's come to guide us to the shore!" he cried, eyes shining. Johse gently pulled his brother away from the rail saying,

"Leave the dolphin some room Pablo. You wouldn't want to crowd him out, would you?"

"No, I wouldn't. Thank you Johse." He looked up at him and smiled so warmly, he could have melted even a shark's cold heart. Just then there was a scream and Johse turned and saw the shark leaping out of the water, straight for Pablo. Johse pulled himself and Pablo out of the way, then watched the shark flop until it was facing them. He knew he had to do something, but he couldn't figure out what. Then he remembered what Lucinda had said about the spears. He reached for one just as the shark began inching its way towards Pablo. He reacted without thinking and stabbed the shark.

"Get away from my brother!" he said, through gritted teeth. He pulled the spear out and set it aside before throwing the shark overboard, and nearly going over himself. He pulled himself back up and hugged Pablo fiercely.

"If you ever see a dolphin again, check with us to make sure it is a dolphin. Okay?"

"I will Johse. I promise." Then Lucinda and Maria joined the hug, and Johse thought he could see the skyscrapers, not a ship in sight. He smiled and then burst out laughing.

"What's so funny?!" cried Lucinda.

"We made it. Despite the odds, we made it!" And then, one by one, his siblings started laughing, and Johse's hopes, were as high as the skyscrapers in the distance.

By: Andy