

THE SURGEON IN THE MIRROR

Exclusive
Content

ROBOTIC SURGEON SERIES: BOOK 1

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The Surgeon in the Mirror -
Exclusive Content

Chapter 4. Cozumel

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Preface

This content appeared as Chapter 4 in the original draft of the book. During the review process, both of my editors suggested it interrupted the flow of the story. They believed I clearly painted the villain with references back to this foundational event. So, we cut the chapter. If you have read Chapters 16 and 22 in the finished book, then you have seen the references back to the events in this chapter.

Chapter 1

The scuba diving was fast, furious, and fantastic. The strong currents that swept down the west coast of Cozumel, between the island and the mainland of Mexico, created ideal conditions for beautiful coral reefs, vast varieties of fish life, and the clearest water in the world. You could stand on the deck of a boat and look straight down into the deep, actually making out features on the bottom thirty feet below. There was nothing comparable to this in the United States—not anymore.

Lisa James and her friends had been on the island for almost a week. They had circumnavigated the island to view the deep-sand beaches and the blowholes on the eastern shore. They had sampled the fish with every kind of Mexican beer and tequila. But the real reason they had come was for the crystal-clear diving. It was the best diving in Mexico, far surpassing anything in the United States and rivaling the magnificent spots in Central America.

“Palancar Caves was the best we have done so far,” Lisa proclaimed. “The big coral cliffs and swim throughs were outstanding.”

Veronica frowned at this. “You really think so? I was more impressed with the Santa Rosa Wall. The drop off into the deep blue was just amazing. And we saw several huge manta rays

there.”

Alex weighed in. “Santa Rosa was scary. I accidentally dropped from one hundred feet to one hundred and twenty. It was like I just fell lower in the water without trying.”

Lisa laughed. “You were trying to chase a manta ray? It was going lower, and you weren’t thinking. Ronnie had to yank your fin to snap you out of your trance.”

Veronica jumped in, “Yeah, you owe me your life. You would have followed that thing down another hundred feet if I hadn’t stopped you.”

“Well ...” Alex trailed off because they weren’t entirely wrong. He was not sure how it had happened, but he had been very careless. He did not want to think about one likely explanation ... mild nitrogen narcosis.

“Where are we going to eat tonight?” Veronica asked.

“And drink,” Lisa added.

“We have been slumming it all week to save money. Let’s splurge and go somewhere nice. Someplace where you have to take a shower and wear clean clothes,” Alex suggested.

Ronnie frowned and smelled herself. Not too bad for island life.

“Yes, let’s. Showers, clean clothes, meet back in an hour,” Lisa agreed.

“An hour? I just need ten minutes,” Alex protested.

“An hour!” Veronica insisted.

Exactly one hour later, they were clean and gorgeous.

Lisa proclaimed, “Ix!”

“Ouch!” Veronica protested.

“Oh, come on, live a little. When are you coming back here? Let’s try the best the island has to offer,” Alex was into splurging

on life. They were all professionally employed and single, so they were flush with cash and had no one to question their spending.

Ix was supposed to be the best place on the island and right up there in the top ten in Mexico. Authentic Mayan cuisine, whatever that meant. And it was just a short walk from their hotel, so getting home after drinks would be easy.

They made it as far as the outdoor bar of the restaurant. Seating of any kind was impossible. It looked like the entire island had chosen the same restaurant and arrived before them.

Not complaining, they sipped icy margaritas in the sweltering Mexican humidity. The sun was down, but the temperature was still up and would be all night long.

“Why did we need to get dressed up again? I am sweating through this dress already,” Veronica complained.

“More drink will cure that,” Alex offered.

“I don’t think that’s how it works,” she responded.

Lisa was barely listening to them. “Have you guys looked around? I think we might be the poorest people here.”

“No, that guy over there is wearing sneakers and cheap pants,” Alex pointed.

Lisa punched his arm. “He’s a server, you idiot. And stop pointing.”

“Oh, then maybe we can get a job here. I wonder if they would let us eat before our shift.” Alex’s stomach was making little growling noises. But no one could hear it over the music and voices.

“Uh, Lisa, I think the guy over there is checking you out,” Veronica said while looking at Alex.

“Where?” She scanned the outdoor patio.

“Don’t be so obvious,” Veronica whispered. “The corner table on the right.”

“You mean inside? He actually has a seat? Does he have food?” Lisa asked. She made a point of looking through the open airway and toward a table on the left. Then scanned casually across the room.

So far, no one was looking her way. But when she got to the table, she knew exactly who Ronnie was talking about. He was staring directly into her eyes. He raised one eyebrow and tilted his head like it was a question.

Lisa’s eyes narrowed a little. He was older than she had hoped, but attractive and fit. He was dressed better than the server, but she was a poor judge of clothing, so did not know if the outfit was the same price as Alex’s or much more expensive. But on the table, there was an elaborate bottle of tequila. It had a stopper with a raised crown of metal crosses above it. She had never seen another bottle like that, but it shouted ‘expensive’ across the room.

Lisa looked back at her two friends. “Ok, I saw him. He looks nice. Do you know what that bottle is on the table?”

Ronnie looked in that direction and then back at Lisa. “It is called expensive. I don’t know what it is, but I can tell you we’ve never tried it.”

“What next?” Alex asked.

“I’m going to talk to him. I’ll wave you over if it goes well.” With that, Lisa picked up her drink and squeezed through the crowd in his direction. It was a difficult dance in her nice dress and holding a drink.

As she approached the table, the man rose and extended a hand. “Good evening. I’m William. Would you join me?” He waved at an empty seat.

“Maybe just for a minute,” Lisa agreed. Then it occurred to her that he had an entire table to himself. The restaurant was

packed, but no one had taken one of his chairs or tried to share the table. "I'm Lisa. My friends and I are here for diving and partying."

"There is no better place for both of those together," he agreed. "Would you like a drink?"

Lisa gave the bottle a closer look. The symbol on the stopper was the Jerusalem Cross. The label said Codigo 1530. No, she had never seen that before. "Sure," she replied, and set her own drink aside.

William produced a rocks glass, added a single ice cube, and poured a couple of ounces of the tequila over the ice. Then he dropped in a disk of lime without the rind. Finally, he said, "We will let that rest for a couple of minutes."

Lisa took this opportunity to ask, "And what are you doing on Cozumel?"

"I am looking in on my investments and enjoying a little relaxation," he replied.

"Investments like real estate or restaurants?" It occurred to her that he might be the owner of Ix.

"No, banking. All the money you see being spent on the island has to flow in and out of here through banks. That is part of my business." He smiled. "Ok, the tequila is ready. Try it."

Lisa lifted the glass and sniffed it. She smelled caramel, vanilla, and something woody. She sipped. It was extremely smooth, and she tasted the caramel. This was followed by the agave flavor. Much better than the tequilas she was used to. Finally, she was surprised by the vanilla and woody flavors again. "Wow! That is nice. What is it?"

"It is called Código 1530 Extra Anejo," he said while tilting the bottle back.

"I have not seen that before. They serve it here at Ix?"

He smiled. "No, I am afraid not. I brought my own bottle."

Lisa raised an eyebrow. He had money or wanted to appear to have money. She made a note to search for that brand and find out how much a bottle cost. It had to be a couple of hundred dollars.

"Would you like dinner?" he asked.

With that, she remembered Alex and Ronnie waiting outside. "Oh, I don't know. I have a couple of friends on the patio. I need to get back to them."

"Yes, they have been watching us. I think they are preparing to rescue you." With that, he raised his hand and motioned for them to come over.

Ronnie and Alex looked at each other. Alex was nodding his head insistently. Then both of them performed the snake dance to get through the crowd.

As they arrived, servers brought elaborate trays of dishes and placed them in the center of the table. Alex's eyes were wide with hunger.

"Please, let's all eat and talk. Everything here is fantastic," William said to the table.

With that, the feasting began. Lisa had to agree that everything was outstanding. Alex did his best to eat with manners, but was downing twice as much food as everyone else. Ronnie kept her eyes on their host and Lisa, wondering where this was going. She thought she knew very well where it would go and she would not let that happen to her again.

The conversation swung between diving, dining, banking, and Mayan culture. They compared the dining and nightlife of Cozumel to Belize and Honduras, which were "just down the coast," according to William. But to his young guests, those were entirely different vacations with the requisite waiting

period to save the money to pay for it.

Ronnie became less suspicious and protective as they had more conversations and alcohol. It was clear to all of them that he was on a different economic level than they were, as well as a different age level. A couple of hours into the evening, Alex realized the restaurant had not asked them to make room for other customers, and the staff was still very attentive.

Finally, Lisa said to her companions, "Clearly, we will not be diving tomorrow. Too much drink and not enough sleep. We are going to do something more touristy."

"Yeah, speaking of sleep. I need some of that. We did four dives today, and I'm bushed," Ronnie said. "Can we go back to the hotel?"

Alex scanned the table to see if there were any tidbits that he should eat before being pulled away. He transferred the last of the ceviche to his plate and began working on it.

"Ok Ronnie, you are probably right," Lisa agreed. Then, turning to their host, she said, "We have totally enjoyed the evening."

He replied, "It was wonderful having you as my guests. It would have been a dull night without all of you." But he was only looking at Lisa when he said this. "Of course, all of this is on my tab. You all get some rest, and perhaps we can do something touristy tomorrow. I have your numbers."

Alex breathed a sigh of relief. Confirmation that he was not paying for the food and drink made everything more delicious.

With hugs all around and a few kisses on the cheek, the young divers departed for their hotel.

Ronnie woke to intense Mexican sunlight coming through the curtains. "What time is it?" she asked herself. Turning over, she

saw the clock said 12:18. Staring at the ceiling, she said, “Who is making coffee?”

No answer.

She sat up in bed and spotted Alex on the other bed, still in his clothes. “Alex,” she said, throwing a pillow at him. “Get up! I need coffee.” Talking hurt her head.

Alex stirred, then rolled over. There was a loud thump as he hit the floor. “Owww! Who moved my bed?”

Ronnie shook her head. That hurt. “Lisa! Are you in the bathroom?”

No answer.

She looked around. No Lisa. But there was a note on the nightstand. Opening it she read, “Going to Belize! Don’t wait for me. See you back at work. -Lisa”

Ronnie was awake now. Looking closer, she noticed that Lisa’s bag and clothes were gone. “Alex! Where’s Lisa?”

Alex sat up from the floor and looked at her. “Umm, in the bathroom?”

“Bzzzzzt! Wrong. She went to Belize. Here’s her note.”

Alex was confused. “How is she going to get to Belize?”

He was so dense sometimes. Ronnie responded, “How do you think?”

Alex just looked at her, not solving the puzzle.

She filled him in. “Via private airplane, stupid. William must have invited her to go with him.”

“Oh... Oh shit! That could be bad!”

“You think?”

“Call her. Find out where she is. How she is.”

Ronnie was already on her phone. It rang and rang. No answer. She thought for a minute. “Get dressed! We’re going to the police station!”

CHAPTER 1

They never saw Lisa James again.



About the Author

R.D.D. Smith is an award-winning expert in robotic surgery training, education, and simulation. He is a Faculty Scholar at the University of Central Florida's College of Medicine and the Institute for Simulation and Training. He shares this expertise through futuristic medical thrillers that explore the impact that robotics, artificial intelligence, and simulation will have on healthcare in the future.

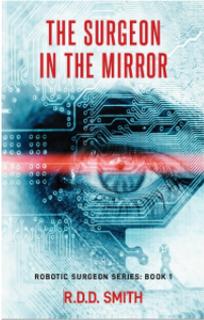
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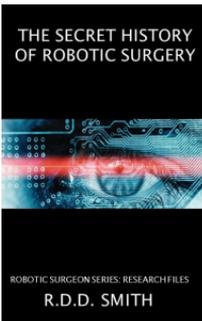


The Surgeon in the Mirror

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Dr. Richard Atkins has dedicated his life to perfecting his surgical technique, but the newest generation of smart surgical robots can do everything faster and better than he can. Are these robots too smart, too logical, and too fast to be trusted with human lives?

Atkins and his team suspect that Adam Two, the newest robot AI, is intentionally punishing patients on the OR table when it judges them to be a bad influence on society— rapists and murderers, but also politicians and billionaires.



The Secret History of Robotic Surgery

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Surgeons and healthcare professionals have been using robotic devices to assist in surgery and other clinical practices for twenty years. However, many in the general public have not noticed and consider the idea of “robotic surgery” to be future science fiction, and are often terrified by it. This research file shares some of the origins of robotic surgery and then goes on to illustrate how robotics are used in other parts of healthcare.

