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**FLY!
CRASH!
KILL!
DINE!**

**68 GREAT
ADVENTURES**

**+
FAMILY GUY
EXCLUSIVE**

THE MAD GENIUS OF
SETH MACFARLANE

LADY GAGA
UNWRAPPING POP'S
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VERONICAS

LIKE YOU'VE NEVER SEEN THEM BEFORE!

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Taking a bath: 10km off Sydney, the boys' first sea trial goes pear-shaped

By day 34 James's enthusiasm had gone the way of his razor

WITNESS
STATEMENT

"The shark torpedoed into the kayak"

KILLER SHARKS AND THE STORM FROM HELL COULDN'T STOP JAMES CASTRISSON AND JUSTIN JONES ROWING ACROSS THE TASMAN

"If I die out here, you've gotta carry on mate," I croaked in despair. "Sure will, Cas... but would you mind if I have a little chomp?" I had no idea what Justin was talking about. He smiled slyly, with a little too much eagerness for my liking. "I've been craving a bit of meat. I'll start with your thigh, and then..." Before he had time to turn totally morbid I blurted out, "Keep it to yourself, mate. I don't want to know."

It was day 45 out on the Tasman Sea. Three years prior, we'd stupidly dreamt up the idea of becoming the first people to paddle a kayak from Australia to New Zealand. At the time it had seemed like a great idea and we threw ourselves into the challenge. We gave up our day jobs – for Justin, throwing off his white labcoat; and for me, ditching (excuse the pun) life as an accountant. How romantic – casting off the shackles of society to pursue an adventure. The summer before our attempt, though, the reality hit home when the renowned adventurer Andrew McAuley had died attempting the crossing.

By day 45 we were covered in salt sores and blisters, and hallucinating from the lack of sleep (I kept seeing a six-foot baby drinking milk from a bottle). We'd lost so much fat and muscle we couldn't stand – whenever we tried, our legs would buckle under us. The situation was desperate.

To make things worse, I get seasick pretty badly



"At least I hope they're salt sores"

Two sharks circled Lot 41 for hours. Two sharks!

Jonesy suffers from claustrophobia (the wuss). Imagine stuffing these two blokes into a cabin bigger than John Candy's coffin, strapping them down to the cabin floor, then riding out a four-day storm on one of the most isolated and violent stretches of ocean on the planet.

To give you an idea of the experience, imagine for a moment that you're a Shrek figurine from a McHappy Meal, which has been stuffed into a cigar tube and thrust into a front-loading washing machine for four days. As you're constantly pulled through massive walls of water your kayak is more a submarine than surface vessel. Every now and then you're spat out on the crest of a wave, and when you can bring yourself to conjure enough energy to peer out the porthole you're horrified to be looking down a two-storey drop to the trough below.

Over the four days it took we didn't sleep a wink because of the violent bucking, the confined space and the fact that we'd been lying down for so long we were completely constipated. Finally the storm began to ease. We crawled out of the cabin, chuckling at the thought of what an alien looking down on us might have made of the scene – two naked hairy babies breaking the embryonic sac of our kayak, Lot 41, and crawling out of her womb.

The constant spitting rain and the realisation that for the previous 12 days we'd been going

around in circles didn't help the ol' morale. We were trapped in a giant whirlpool. For another few days we feebly tried to break free – but it was hopeless. It felt like running on a treadmill at the gym – we'd paddle and go nowhere. Then when we'd stop, the kayak would drift back towards Australia. Lying in the cabin drifting westward, I knew we couldn't keep beating our heads against a brick wall any longer. A dull light began to flicker in the recesses of my exhausted brain. Knowing that Justin wasn't

After a while our familiarity with the situation grew and Justin said, "Hey, mate, I dare you to touch its fin."

getting any sleep either, I said to him, "Mate, the ocean's too strong – we can't keep trying to fight it."

"What do you reckon we do then?"

"Let's paddle back to Australia!" I said. Before I could explain he butted in: "Mate, you're really tired. You should get some rest." He thought I was going mad. "Jonesy, what I mean is, let's use this wind and current to paddle back to Australia and then – like

Apollo 13 – slingshot back toward New Zealand."

We swallowed our medicine and paddled 150km back toward Australia. The strategy worked and after two horrendous weeks going around in circles we finally broke free of the whirlpool. We were expecting 60 to 70 per cent of the wind to come from behind us throughout the trip; it only favoured us six days out of the 62 in total.

To try and get a little more speed out of the kayak, we decided it was time to attack the hull with our pink-handled kitchen scrubbing brush. Scissor, paper, rock was the only fair way to decide who'd plunge into the icy water. Apart from being freaked about what lurked in the water below, we knew that going in could result – if we weren't careful – in hypothermia. Jonesy lost and plunged over the side of the kayak naked, armed with the brush. He did really well, taking just 45 minutes to complete the job. Getting back in the kayak his lips were blue and he shook violently. We paddled on for another half-hour to warm him up, not realising that by scrubbing the barnacles off we'd created a small burley trail. Shit.

Hardly believing my eyes I yelled out: "Jonesy, there's a bloody shark out here, mate."

"Bullshit, Cas."

Bam! It torpedoed the cabin and Lot 41 lurched to one side. I scampered back to the cockpit, stripped my clothes off – part of our daily routine so as to remain as dry as possible to avoid skin infections – and leapt inside. We sat staring out the door in amazement as this giant predator circled us. It was hard to take it in. Only one centimetre of hull was keeping us from being shark bait.

After a while, though, our familiarity with the situation grew and Justin said playfully, "Hey, mate, I dare you to touch its fin." A mad glint entered my eye. For a brief moment I thought that would have been kind of cool. After all, it was this type of inquisitiveness that had us out here in the first place. Then I came to my senses. "Jonesy, how would we ever explain to our mates that we lost a hand because we were trying to pat a shark?"

Justin didn't have the chance to reply before we realised there were *two* sharks. The sharks played with us for the next few hours and we fell asleep in the company of a couple of predators that were a good two thirds of the length of the kayak.

By the time we woke up the vibrations their sandpaper-like skin had been sending through the kayak had gone and we pushed on. Finally, after 62 days at sea and having paddled 3318km, we nudged into the sand of New Zealand, our wasted legs collapsing under us as we hit terra firma, so relieved to have made it alive. **FHM**

Crossing The Ditch by James Castrission (Harper Collins, \$33) is out now.