

“*Windswept, Vendaval*, sweeps us through the moving narrative of the boyhood adventures of two intrepid youngsters in their *cayuco*, exploring the unimaginable forces of land and sea through the Isthmus of Panama, and their indomitable will to survive.

“By including critical thinking and reflective questions at the end of the book, teachers can channel this bilingual book into many thematic lessons related to science, environment, ecology, art, and most important of all—collaboration, cooperation, and resilience of the human spirit.

“A ‘smooch’ for Mooch, their dog, who helps them to discover that the treasures of life lie in loyalty and love as they make their way home in their *Perromar* into manhood.”

Lourdes Travieso Parker, Ph.D.
Lecturer of Spanish and Teaching English to
Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL)
Christopher Newport University
Newport News, Virginia

“Al Sprague has written a fun and educational adventure for young adults that includes plenty of action, hidden treasure, nasty drug traffickers, and vicious wild dogs. Sprague provides *Windswept* in both English and Spanish versions, which is unique but very educational, allowing young readers to translate words and make out sentence structure and grammar in a language that might not be their primary one. He also provides a line map to familiarize the reader with the story’s basic geography. Readers are cautioned that there are a few graphic scenes of violence when the boys encounter the wild dogs, but Sprague doesn’t dwell on them. *Windswept* is also filled with how-to details as the two young Robinson Crusoes must create tools for survival and build a means for getting off the island and back to civilization. *Windswept* is a good book to read on a lazy summer afternoon.”

Gary Stout, **** *Readers’ Favorite*

Windswept

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Vendaval

Books by
AL SPRAGUE

The Mahogany Tree
**El árbol de caoba*

Windswept
**Vendaval*

The Clear Blue Line

Windswept

~

Vendaval

Al Sprague

Piggy Press

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*To my lifelong great friend,
the real Bob Hunter, Robert L. Hummer.
And to all those Panama and Canal Zone kids
who grew up with a life of adventure there.*

*I'm grateful to Rich and the wonderful kids who
run the Dunkin' Donuts next to Washington
Square on Highway 17, Yorktown, Virginia, for
giving me a place to drink their wonderful coffee
while drawing the illustrations for this book.*

A.S.

~

*A mi gran amigo de toda la vida,
el verdadero Bob Hunter, Robert L. Hummer.
Y para los chicos de Panamá y la Zona del Canal
que crecieron con una vida de aventura allí.*

*Estoy agradecido a Rich y los chicos maravillosos
que manejan el Dunkin' Donuts junto a Washington
Square, en la autopista 17, Yorktown, Virginia,
por darme un lugar para beber su excelente café
mientras dibujaba las ilustraciones para este libro.*

A.S.

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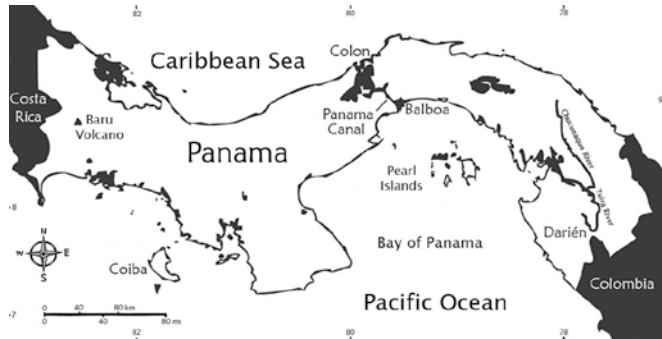
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Windswept

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1
Out to Sea

BOB HUNTER AND Willie Deal knew they were special. After all, they had been born in the Panama Canal Zone, which definitely had been created for teenage boys. The Isthmus of Panama, just six hundred miles north of the equator, was a tropical paradise. Dense rain forests covered the land, while the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans splashed on opposite shores just fifty miles apart. Both oceans were teeming with fish; in fact, the indigenous name, Panama, means *many fish*. Bob and Willie spent every minute they could exploring the jungle or the deep and shallow waters.

Bob liked to think of himself as cool and collected. Catching snakes, mostly boa constrictors, was one of his favorite hobbies. He would wrap them around his arms and peddle home on his bicycle, adding them to the snake cage where he kept his prizes.

Willie, on the other hand, was excitable and energetic. He loved to invent things, and his favorite inventions revolved around fishing. He had designed many types of fishing lures, and spent hours trying them out on the piers near his house. His dream was to be a deep-sea fisherman. Mostly he and Bob fished off the piers and the rocks, but Willie was determined to get out to sea.

Bob and Willie pooled all the money they had saved selling fish they caught in the bay. They bought a fifteen-foot cayuco, a type of canoe made from a hollowed out tree, usually the espave tree. Working together, the boys built up the sides and constructed a live-bait well in the center. They also added two seats to it, one fore and the other aft, but, since they had no funds for an outboard engine, they propelled the boat by paddle and boy-power. The boys kept the cayuco at a boat shed that a friend of Bob's dad owned, and from there they could drag it down into the Canal and head out into Panama Bay. They stayed close to shore and fished the piers and rocks of the large, protected bay that opened onto the Pacific Ocean.

For quite some time they begged for live anchovies from the tuna boat fishermen who tied up at the Balboa docks for re-provisioning and re-fueling. They paddled their cayuco under the piers in search of large fish that lurked in the deep water. They threw out live or dead bait to bring these big fish to the surface. Then they hooked the live sardines onto their fishing lines and dropped them down. A live sardine, swimming erratically, was the most tempting bait there was to a big corbina, snook, or red snapper. When hooked, the odds were in the fish's favor, since there were barnacle-encrusted pilings, rocks, and other objects around to cut off a line while pulling the fish up. However, the boys caught enough fish to make their outings both fun and profitable.

Paddling and fishing along the docks was great, but the two adventurers wanted more. Their desire to be able to move about over the water without expending any effort made them think of wind-power and the use of a sail. Out came the tools again, and Bob designed a forward

station in the boat, using wood, iron and paint, to hold a mast. Then they cut down three small mangrove trees in the swamp and fashioned a mast, boom and jib. One of the big, canvas rain awnings from the Balboa High School gymnasium mysteriously disappeared and ended up as a sail for the cayuco. Grommets, line, rope, pulleys, and final stitching completed the sail, and one Saturday morning in November the boys decided it was time to test the rigging in a trial sailing.

"I swear, Bob, I don't know how you do it. She looks just like one of those sailing sloops you see in books, man," Willie said.

"Where do you think I got the design, man? High school library's full of books."

"Yeah, they actually have some good stuff there," Willie said. "Come on, let's take it for a spin out to San Jose Rock to see what she'll do."

"That's a long way for a trial run," Bob said. "Besides, we don't have any drinks or food, fishing tackle, or anything."

"Well, then let's just go along the Causeway to Naos Island, then turn around at the mine dock and come home. What do you say?"

"Why not? But let's get a couple of cokes first."

Fortified with two cokes apiece, they hopped into the cayuco and slowly raised the sail. They caught the north wind behind them and whisked out past the Panama Canal buoys. The little boat handled like a charm. Bob and Willie took turns steering with a paddle while sitting in the stern. It was an exhilarating experience. Neither of the boys had ever sailed before. They had no idea just how wonderful and easy it was. By the time they had sailed the five miles to the mine dock, the wind at their backs, they were so confident in

their sailing skills that they decided to sail on to San Jose Rock, another two miles out.

Over the mainland, the boys noticed dark cumulous clouds forming, so they came about, ducking as the boom swung around, and began their tack back home, but they couldn't make any progress heading into the wind. The cayuco just slipped backwards in the water. Willie tried another tack in the other direction. They slipped backwards even more. The current and the wind were pushing the small boat back towards the vast Pacific Ocean at a quickening pace. The sail was only good for one direction, before the wind.

"Doggone!" Willie shouted. "I didn't think we needed a keel or a centerboard!"

"What's that?" Bob asked.

"Ah, that's a thing down in the water to hold the boat from sliding so she can move from side to side against the wind. I thought the cayuco was deep enough in the water to act as a keel."

"Here, give me that paddle, I'll make this sucker move." They changed places, but Bob's efforts were no better than Willie's. "Let's take this stupid sail down and break out the paddles."

By now the rising cumulous clouds over Panama City had expanded into a massive, black giant. The wind had increased and they were being swept out to sea at an increasing rate. Small ripples on the water had become roaring white caps.

"Okay, let's get the sail down!" Willie yelled over the wind. He jerked the pulley that controlled the raising and lifting of the gaff rig at the top of the sail, but it jammed.

Whenever either of them tried to stand up to free the pulley and drop the sail, the boat began to capsize. Foamy waves inundated them and Bob and Willie had to constantly bail water

to keep from sinking. Bob whipped out his self-made sheath knife and slashed the lines that controlled the lifting and lowering of the sail, but it didn't help. The line was snarled around the mast. It was stuck for good, unless the whole thing came down, mast and all. The wind was blowing so strongly neither boy could stand up, and they had to scrunch down to keep as low a center of gravity in the hull as possible to prevent the craft from rolling over. They were literally between the devil and the deep blue sea. Both boys, wide-eyed, hung on in desperation. They knew that it was better to sail over the wide, stormy ocean than to go swimming with the sharks. They hung on for hours. Bob crouched at the stern, steering, and Willie squatted in the middle, holding onto the sides of the cayuco and leaning back and forth to steady the boat.

"Maybe we'll run into a shrimp boat or something!" Bob yelled.

Willie could barely make out the words over the roaring wind, rain and waves.

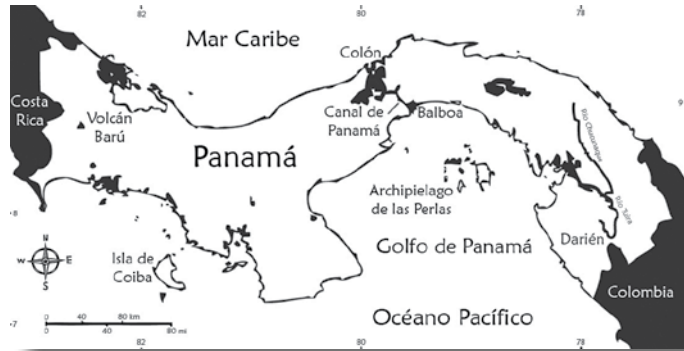
"It should have stopped by now! It's getting worse! At this speed we'll be in China before we know it!" he yelled back.

Bob just shook his head. He couldn't hear a thing. According to his watch, the wind and current had been pushing them for more than four hours.

Two more hours of teeth-gnashing, nail-digging terror began to drain their energy, and they had a hard time focusing on keeping the boat steady. Then suddenly a wild gust of wind billowed out the sail and snapped the mast, and the whole contraption came crashing down into the water.

Both of them yelled.

"We gotta cut these lines and get them away!" Willie shouted. "We're taking on water, fast!"



Vendaval

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1
En alta mar

BOB HUNTER Y Willie Deal sabían que eran únicos. Después de todo, habían nacido en la Zona del Canal de Panamá, por supuesto creada únicamente para muchachos jóvenes como ellos. El Istmo de Panamá, apenas 965 kilómetros al norte del ecuador, era un paraíso tropical. La densa selva tropical cubría el territorio, mientras que los océanos del Atlántico y el Pacífico salpicaban en costas opuestas apenas a 80 kilómetros entre sí. Ambos océanos abundaban de vida marina, es más, Panamá, palabra indígena, significa *abundancia de peces*. Bob y Willie pasaban cada minuto que podían explorando la selva o las aguas profundas y llanas.

Bob solía pensar que era un tipo tranquilo y con los pies bien plantados. Uno de sus pasatiempos favoritos era cazar culebras, en especial la boa constrictora. Las envolvía sobre sus brazos mientras que regresaba a casa en bicicleta, metiéndolas en su jaula de culebras como sus trofeos.

Por otro lado, Willie era nervioso y activo. Le encantaba inventar cosas y sus inventos favoritos solían tener algo que ver con la pesca. Había diseñado diferentes tipos de cebo de pescar y pasaba horas experimentando con ellas en los

muelles cerca de su casa. Su sueño era llegar a ser un pescador de alta mar. Ambos solían pescar desde los muelles y las rocas, pero Willie estaba dispuesto a llegar a alta mar.

Habían recolectado todo el dinero que habían ahorrado vendiendo pescado de la bahía y habían comprado un cayuco de cuatro metros y medio, un tipo de canoa hecha de un árbol excavado, generalmente el árbol de espavé. Juntos, los muchachos lograron extender los lados y construir un recipiente de cebo en todo el centro. También le agregaron dos asientos, a proa y popa, pero sin recursos para integrarle un motor, tuvieron que navegar el barco a punta de remo y fuerza de macho. Los muchachos guardaban el cayuco en una bodega para lanchas prestada de un amigo del papá de Bob. Y de ahí lo podían arrastrar hacia el Canal y dirigirse hacia la Bahía de Panamá. Permanecían cerca de la orilla y pescaban los muelles y las rocas dentro del cobijo de la gran bahía que daba al Océano Pacífico.

Por largo rato le rogaban a los atuneros de Balboa por boquerón fresco, provisiones y reabastecerse. Remaron su cayuco por debajo de los muelles en busca de peces más grandes que habitaban en las profundidades. Lanzaban cebo vivo y muerto al agua para atraer a los peces grandes a la superficie. Luego enganchaban sardinas vivas a sus anzuelos y las dejaban caer al fondo. Una sardina viva, meneando erráticamente era lo más tentador para una corvina grande, un robalo o un pargo colorado. Ya listo el anzuelo, el pez tenía la ventaja ya que los balanos que se anclaban acumulados a las rocas y otros objetos podían romper la senda al tratar de sacar el pez. Sin embargo, los muchachos pescaban lo suficiente como para que sus aventuras fueran divertidas y rentable.

Remar y pescar cerca de los muelles era fabuloso, pero ambos aventureros anhelaban más. El deseo de poder navegar sobre el agua sin ningún esfuerzo les hizo pensar en la energía eólica y el uso de una vela. Nuevamente sacaron sus herramientas y Bob le diseñó al barco un puesto para sostener un mástil usando madera, hierro y pintura. Luego, del manglar tallaron tres árboles de mangle pequeños y fabricaron un mástil, una botavara y un foque. Una de las carpas grandes de lluvia proveniente del gimnasio del colegio Balboa misteriosamente apareció como base de la vela para el cayuco. Tubos, senda, sogas, poleas y dándole los últimos toques terminaron la vela, y un sábado por la mañana los muchachos decidieron que ya era hora de realizar una prueba de navegación para probar la jarcia.

—Te lo juro, Bob, no sé cómo lo haces. Es idéntica a esas balandras que ves en los libros —dijo Willie.

—¿Y de dónde crees que saqué el diseño, Willie? La biblioteca del colegio está repleta de libros.

—Sí, su colección no está nada mal, la verdad —dijo Willie—. Ven, vamos a sacarla a pasear por la roca San José para ver cómo navega.

—Eso está lejos para tan solo una prueba. Es más, no tenemos ni víveres, ni equipo de pesca, ni nada —dijo Bob.

—Entonces vamos para el Causeway a la isla de Naos, luego damos la vuelta en el muelle de la mina y regresamos a casa. ¿Qué dices?

—Dale. Pero llevemos un par de sodas.

Con dos latas de soda cada uno, se montaron al cayuco y lentamente subieron la vela. Con el viento norte a sus espaldas, se deslizaron rápidamente pasando las boyas del Canal de Panamá.

El pequeño barco trabajaba de maravillas. Desde la popa, Bob y Willie se turnaban gobernando con el remo. Era una experiencia emocionante para ellos. Ninguno había navegado antes. No tenían ni idea lo maravilloso y lo fácil que era. Al navegar ocho kilómetros hasta el muelle de minas y el viento a sus espaldas, se sentían tan seguros de sí y en sus habilidades de navegación, que decidieron navegar unos tres kilómetros más hasta la roca San José.

Sobre tierra firme, los muchachos notaron un cúmulo de nubes negras, idéntico a lo que había leído Willie en el manual, así que decidieron regresar, agachándose a medida que la botavara giraba, pero al dirigirse hacia el viento, no había movimiento. El cayuco solo se deslizaba en reversa por el agua. Willie intentó otro rumbo en dirección contraria. Y se deslizaron en reversa aún más. Rápidamente, la corriente y el viento empujaban el pequeño barco hacia las afueras, sobre el Océano Pacífico. La vela solo servía en una sola dirección, en dirección al viento.

—¡Maldita sea! ¡No pensé que necesitaríamos una quilla o una orza! —gritó Willie.

—¿Y eso qué es? —preguntó Bob.

—Ah, eso es una cosa bajo el agua que agarra el barco y no deja que se resbale y pueda moverse de lado a lado contra el viento. Pensé que el cayuco era lo suficiente profundo en el agua como para servir como una quilla.

—Vamos, dame ese remo, voy hacer que este tuco se mueva —dijo Bob. Cambiaron de lugar, pero el esfuerzo de Bob dio lo mismo que Willie—. Bajemos esa vela estúpida y saquemos los remos.

Ya la nube sobre la Ciudad de Panamá se había transformado en un gigante, negro y masivo. El viento había aumentado y se los llevaba rápi-

damente hacia las afueras del mar. Las olas pequeñas en el agua llegaron a ser un bramido de capas blancas.

—¡Está bien, bajemos la vela! —gritó Willie sobre el viento. De un tirón jaló la polea que controlaba el levante y elevación del aparejo encima de la vela, pero se había atorado.

Cada vez que uno se levantaba para librar la polea para bajar la vela, el barco comenzaba a volcarse. Las espumosas olas los inundaron, obligando a Bob y a Willie a sacar el agua constantemente para evitar que se hundieran. Bob sacó su cuchilla y cortó las líneas que controlaban la elevación y el descenso de la vela, pero no ayudó en nada. La línea estaba enredada alrededor del mástil. Estaba atorado permanentemente, a menos que todo se viniera abajo, incluyendo el mástil. El viento soplaba tan fuerte que ninguno podía pararse y tenían que agacharse como fuera para mantener el equilibrio en el casco y prevenir que la nave se volcara. Se hallaban literalmente entre la espada y la pared en un mar azul y profundo. Ambos muchachos se anclaron firme por desesperación. Sabían que era mejor navegar sobre el amplio océano tempestuoso que nadar con los tiburones. Se mantuvieron agarrados por horas. Bob agachado en la popa, navegando, y Willie en cuclillas en el medio, agarrado de los lados del cayuco, meciéndose hacia el frente y hacia atrás para estabilizar el barco.

—¡De pronto nos encontramos con un barco camarero o algo! —gritó Bob.

Willie apenas pudo entender sus palabras bajo el rugido del viento, la lluvia y las olas.

—¡Ya debió haber escampado! ¡Está empeorando! ¡A esta velocidad llegaremos hasta la China en un brinco! —gritó.