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## Missing

by Garf Collins

“ESCAPE TO ACAPULCO,” shouted the travel agent on my hotel room TV.

Escape? I wondered. Do they always treat holidaymakers as escapees? Are people who travel, always fugitives?

I thought of Jeff, who invariably goes backpacking in South East Asia every spring. He spends many weeks away.

“What are you seeking?” I ask.

“A simple life,” he usually replies, “nothing specific.” But I think he’s escaping from a life which has become too complicated for him to handle. It’s easier than facing the problems of a stale marriage, difficulties with so-called grown-up children and the lack of any personal challenge in retirement.

It has always been thus. There are many historical examples.

Paul Gauguin, for instance. Escaping his work as a stockbroker and broken family, he travelled to many places before settling in the South sea islands.

Not all were physical travellers. Sir John Barrow, in the early 19th century, became obsessed with finding a navigable passage through the frozen wastes of North Canada.

For forty years he procured finance for the hunt for this North-West Passage to the Pacific and sent many men to a frozen death. An expensive mental escape from an Admiralty desk.

I started at the sound of 'I can't get no satisfaction,' ringing out from my phone.

"Hello, Mike Marshall. Oh, it's you. How are things... yeah... yeah... yeah. There must be enough money in the account. You must have been overspending. How's Peter?

"Uh-huh...mm... yes... no. Well, it's not my fault. You've always given into him, and now he thinks we're made of money.

"Yeah... yeah... Yes, but...Listen...No... Now, that's unfair. I just had to extend my trip by three weeks to tie up some promising business. I might even have to stay a bit longer."