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Mexico is a place where the law is sometimes just considered a guideline, where drinking at 16 is not taboo, and safety restrictions are nonexistent. The Mexican people are according to the University of Michigan's world values studies, 'the second happiest country in the world' there is carefree approach to life that seems to understand that the limited living conditions are just the realities of life and have no effect on the amount of fun that is possible. This life is wonderful and perfect for locals. But when this carefree lifestyle and these limited safety regulations are combined with recreational vehicles and three gringos, the result can be very interesting.

When my family drove to Mexico during the summer of 2009, danger was part of the fun. The death and violence that was and is still occurring in Mexico, was sobering. In white, America we rarely face these dangers. We drove down to a beach town called San Carlos. Behind the vacation homes were local people who worked in restaurants and the stores in town. These people made up the permanent population. The people seemed friendly, and they were also totally self-sustaining. While whites brought money to the economy, they were mostly a seasonal distraction. During the season we went down, we most of the Americans had been scared away by the news reports of murders and bodies piled in the streets. This news did not scare us, we were invincible.

We did a home exchange and the house stayed in was like a palace. It was owned by an extremely Christian family of missionaries who made their money creating a television-censoring device. The mother was a Japanese Hari Khrisna, and the father was a self-

proclaimed Christian mystic. In spite of this, the house was nice.

When my father, my friend Max, and I decided to experience some excitement, we decided to follow the adventure stores recommendation of ATV riding. ATV's, sometimes called quads or fours wheelers, are vehicles that have no roof, no seatbelts, and, in Mexico, no helmets. These machines drive up to 40 miles per hour and are not exactly light. The cashier at the rental desk was positive that nothing could go wrong on *their* machines. San Carlos is built around a strip with all the shops and most of the houses on one street, or close to it. This was not a good ATV riding area, so we had to venture to what was called La Manga. La Manga is village on the outskirts of San Carlos that is almost unchanged for hundreds of years. Yes, some things have changed, like better clothing and engines on boats, but the town still survives exclusively on fishing. The people live in what to americans would be considered extreme poverty. It is completely juxtaposed and isolated from the mansions of San Carlos. Roads to La Manga go from well paved and maintained to dirt immediately after we passed the last resort. It quickly was becoming more dangerous and unpredictable.

When we finally reached our destination, my dad was riding on one ATV and Max on I were on the other. We pushed the gas as hard it would go. It felt amazing being so free. We shot down the beach at full speed doing bad tricks and maneuvers. To us it seemed cool. As the sun beat down on us, the blue ocean on one side, the hills of the Sonora desert on the other, we felt like masters of the universe. Then as always seems to happen when boys are together, this ride became a race.

We lined up on one side of the beach, with my dad still on his own quad and Max sitting behind me. We revved our engines and the race was on. Our bodies moving as

fast as the quad would go, we flew down the beach. The excitement of riding quickly turned into competition as we neared the finish line. The race was close but my dad finally beat us. Obviously not willing to accept the drubbing we called a rematch. And again we lined up. This time it was different. We had already raced, and there was no hesitation. When we started this time we shot ahead quickly. But suddenly in my path there was an embankment and we had to slow down to avoid it. This allowed my father to fly ahead of us. As we came around the obstacle, we saw the lead he had. Unwilling to be vanquished, I gassed the engine for all she was worth and flew down the beach. My dad who had gained a huge lead and did not see the embankment slowly turned around to see what had happened to us. As he turned into our path, I did not react fast enough and hit the side of his quad narrowly missing his legs and flipping our ATV. This was the least of our worries as I tumbled over the front and Max was launched ten feet in the air.

Luckily no one was hurt. Max, who was a water-polo player, just hit the sand and jumped back up using the experience to stimulate his already to stimulated testosterone. He seemed to enjoy the whole thing as I just sat on the sand in shock. Also there was very limited damage to the quads and as we told the cashier at the rental desk “ don’t worry, its just a scratch, nothing could happen on *your* machines”.