

Chased on a stormy passage - The Video Explained :-)

The opening shot is our sailboat **'Hipnautical'**
Anchored in a very remote sunken coral reef
Minerva Reef is a few hundred miles SW of Tonga;
we stopped here on our way down to New Zealand.

The **otherworldly blood red sunset sky**
was right on par to match the intensity of the strangeness of being
anchored at a reef in the middle of a long ocean passage

At high tide there is hardly any reef to be seen, giving the feeling that
you are truly anchored in the middle of the ocean

The next shot **'IS the calm before the storm'**,
at this point we are enjoying a nice calm sunset, by midnight we were
rollin' with a big storm.

Sailing throughout the Tuamotus island group of atolls were really
a thing of what sailor's dreams are made of!

After sailing for days to get to these tiny specks of land, one really
get the sense of how remote these places really are.

An atoll is not even an island
It **used** to be an island encircled by a coral reef
When the island was present, fresh water run offs would keep the
coral from growing in those areas.
Later when the island had submerged, these breaks in the original
coral atoll are the only way into the atoll from the high seas.

These passes, are now home to
Endless acres of multi colored coral species
that have been thriving here for millions of years.

Also thriving here is the **Countless shark species**
that make their rounds in & out of the pass patrolling for weak, injured
or dead sea life... or the unsuspecting snorkeler :-O

My guitar goes thru an up beat mode that takes us
down below the surface to enjoy a **calm serene marine scene** just
days before the storm is to arrive...but for now it's all good ;-)

The cute fishes & vibrantly rich
multi colored coral reef views in the pass are stunning.
The seemingly infinite visibility compounded the
Abundant fields of coral that went on as far as the eye could see

As the time draws closer to our 'assumed' departure date
a building system is approaching our area
promising some challenging conditions

Although we sailed into the atoll in calm dreamy seas
the seas that are coming our way are nightmarish :-O

On the day we 'were' to have departed, we opted to stay until calmer
conditions return; on this day we went on shore to view the high seas.

Here you see a **picture of our brave son Robin.**
He never once spoke of any fears of our up coming passages;
there is quite a bit of bravery in this kid's unspoken ways
I pondered as we both watched in awe
the mighty power of the high seas & the relentless torrent of wind
& the endless train of on coming waves...
knowing that soon we will be sailing those seas again & again & ...

I had a birthday there while 'riding the storm out,
I got a machete :-O

A few days later we were back to fairly regular trade wind conditions as we made our way out of the pass.

To be careful, one should not enter or depart a pass unless it's at or near slack tide.

The waters that rush into or out of a nearly enclosed atoll can have amazing effects on the water causing huge waves, standing waves & odd whirlpools, currents & eddies.

This particular pass did not have **narrow** threatening coral walls, the threatening coral walls were widely spaced as coral passes go **so we chose to just power right on out despite the harrowing tidal waves we encountered**

My guitar begins to build with the building storm. The moving video clips start with us running with the **accelerated trades winds** from Tonga reroute to Fiji with some nasty stuff coming our way we were hoping to be safely anchored in Fiji by the time it reaches us.

These winds had been building for the last few days & now we're riding huge wind driven swells in 45+ winds.

The last series of clips show us in New Zealand, a place that often had us being 'Chaced on a Stormy Passage'.

Here we are in **Fiord like bays of the Marlborough sounds** located near the infamous Cook's Straight at the top of the bottom island of Nz where **the world's most pesky storms rage straight out from the Antarctic**

Is was a bit ironic that as we spent the last few nights we'd ever spend anchored aboard our sailboat Hipnautical,

we faced the most severe storm in all the time we owned her.

The thing about anchoring in these Fiord like bays,
the steep cliffs that rise nearly straight up,
well they go underwater nearly straight down
so there is typically nowhere to anchor except
real close to the end of the bay.

With the proper amount of anchor chain out
the boat would be nearly 300 feet off shore
if the wind is blowing that way.

An on shore wind would have us on the beach,
not good; so we hauled in a bit of chain
so we are now only in 9 feet of water &
about 9 feet away from hitting the bottom if the anchor was to drag.

We were tested with two days of high winds &
one night of hurricane strength winds,
knowing that if we were to have dragged at all
we'd have been in **a very nearly un-escapable situation.**