


# The Girl of the Sea of Cortez: A Novel

*By Peter Benchley*



**The Girl of the Sea of Cortez: A Novel** By Peter Benchley

**Peter Benchley's fascination with the sea and its magnificent inhabitants inspired such classic novels as *Jaws* and *The Deep*, making him the preeminent author of ocean adventure and suspense. *The Girl of the Sea of Cortez* was his most heartfelt, cherished story of the relationship between man and the sea, both those that live in it and those who love it.**

On an island in the Gulf of California, an intrepid young woman named Paloma carries a special legacy from her father—a deep understanding of the sea and a sixth sense about the need to protect it.

Every day, Paloma paddles her tiny boat into the ocean and anchors over a seamount—a submerged volcanic peak sixty feet underwater that is clustered with spectacular sea animals and a wondrous web of marine life.

It is there that an astonishing event takes place, when on one of her dives Paloma is shadowed by a manta ray—an animal so large it blocks the sun. She develops an extraordinary relationship with this luminous, gentle creature, but instinctively knows its existence is a secret she must fiercely protect.

Benchley's novel paints a poignant picture of humanity's precarious relationship with the ocean, which unfolds alongside a heartrending story of familial bonds, often revealing that the ignorance of man is far more dangerous than the sea. Full of beauty, danger, and adventure, *The Girl of the Sea of Cortez* is triumphant—a novel to fall in love with.

**Praise for *The Girl of the Sea of Cortez***

"It's hard not to compare Benchley's tale . . . with Hemingway's classic *The Old Man and the Sea*."—*The Christian Science Monitor*

"Charming."—*The New York Times Book Review*

"For a hot summer's day, *The Girl of the Sea of Cortez* is the next best thing to looking through a clear face mask into blue water swimming with fish."—United Press International

*From the Trade Paperback edition.*

# The Girl of the Sea of Cortez: A Novel

*By Peter Benchley*

**The Girl of the Sea of Cortez: A Novel** By Peter Benchley

**Peter Benchley's fascination with the sea and its magnificent inhabitants inspired such classic novels as *Jaws* and *The Deep*, making him the preeminent author of ocean adventure and suspense. *The Girl of the Sea of Cortez* was his most heartfelt, cherished story of the relationship between man and the sea, both those that live in it and those who love it.**

On an island in the Gulf of California, an intrepid young woman named Paloma carries a special legacy from her father—a deep understanding of the sea and a sixth sense about the need to protect it.

Every day, Paloma paddles her tiny boat into the ocean and anchors over a seamount—a submerged volcanic peak sixty feet underwater that is clustered with spectacular sea animals and a wondrous web of marine life.

It is there that an astonishing event takes place, when on one of her dives Paloma is shadowed by a manta ray—an animal so large it blocks the sun. She develops an extraordinary relationship with this luminous, gentle creature, but instinctively knows its existence is a secret she must fiercely protect.

Benchley's novel paints a poignant picture of humanity's precarious relationship with the ocean, which unfolds alongside a heartrending story of familial bonds, often revealing that the ignorance of man is far more dangerous than the sea. Full of beauty, danger, and adventure, *The Girl of the Sea of Cortez* is triumphant—a novel to fall in love with.

**Praise for *The Girl of the Sea of Cortez***

"It's hard not to compare Benchley's tale . . . with Hemingway's classic *The Old Man and the Sea*."—*The Christian Science Monitor*

"Charming."—*The New York Times Book Review*

"For a hot summer's day, *The Girl of the Sea of Cortez* is the next best thing to looking through a clear face mask into blue water swimming with fish."—United Press International

*From the Trade Paperback edition.*

**The Girl of the Sea of Cortez: A Novel By Peter Benchley Bibliography**

- Sales Rank: #426129 in eBooks
- Published on: 2013-08-20
- Released on: 2013-08-20
- Format: Kindle eBook

## Editorial Review

Review
“It’s hard not to compare Benchley’s tale . . . with Hemingway’s classic *The Old Man and the Sea*.”—*The Christian Science Monitor*

“Charming.”—*The New York Times Book Review*

“For a hot summer’s day, *The Girl of the Sea of Cortez* is the next best thing to looking through a clear face mask into blue water swimming with fish.”—United Press International

About the Author
**Peter Benchley** began his career as a novelist in 1974 with the publication of *Jaws*, which was made into a hugely successful film. His other books include *The Deep, The Island, The Girl of the Sea of Cortez, “Q” Clearance, Rummies, Beast, White Shark,* and *Shark Trouble*. He was also a speechwriter for President Lyndon Johnson and a journalist for such magazines as *Newsweek* and *National Geographic*. Benchley died in 2006. For more information, please visit www.peterbenchley.com.


1

The girl lay on the surface of the sea, looking into the water through a mask, and was afraid.

She was surprised to feel fear--a true, deep fear that bordered on panic--for not in years had anything in the sea frightened her.

But then, never in her life had she been actively, aggressively menaced by an animal. Creatures had snapped at her, and some had circled her, hungry and curious, but always a show of strength and confidence had sent them on their way in search of more appropriate prey.

But this animal did not seem to want to bite her, or eat her. It looked to her as if it wanted simply to hurt her, to stab her.

It had appeared with magical speed. One moment the girl was gazing into an empty blue haze; the next, she was staring at a sharp and pointed bill of bone that quivered three feet from her chest. The bill swooped back to a broadened base, and ended in two clam-size black eyes as cold as night.

Unlike the other billfish, this one had no fin on its back. It had instead a dorsal sail covering most of its backbone, which could lie flat against the back and be almost invisible, or stand in proud display.

Or, when the fish was agitated, as now, the sail pulsed up and down, up and down, as the head of a serpent hypnotizes a rodent.

The fish's tail was like a honed scythe. It twitched once, a shudder passed along the body, and the bill jerked quickly, startling the girl.

She did not know what to do, how to behave. Backing away was no answer: This was not territorial

aggression, for this was not a territorial animal. It cruised the deep water of the open sea; it knew no home.

To move suddenly at it was no answer: The fish was supremely confident of its superiority over her--in speed and strength and agility--or it would not have approached her. She could not hope to shoo it away.

And to stay where she was seemed to be no answer: Apparently, she was somehow irritating the fish, for it shook its head, and its spear sliced the water and she felt its force against her chest.

Its long, slim pectoral fins dropped; its back hunched; its tail twitched. Its entire body was a cocked spring, ready, at the release of an inner trigger, to impale her on its bill.

Why?

It could not be pure malice, for her father had taught her that malice did not exist in animals. Animals could be hungry, angry, frightened, hurt, sick, defensive, protective, jealous, careless, or playful--and in any of those states could become vicious or violent--but not malevolent.

What, then? What did it want?

Again the head shook, and the spear slit the water.

She wondered if she could make it to her boat before the fish attacked. She fluttered her fingers and toes, hoping to propel herself backward, inch by inch, closer to her boat.

But how far away was the boat?

She turned her head a half-turn, flicked her eyes over her shoulder, saw the boat, and turned immediately back to face the fish.

It was gone.

She had felt nothing, heard nothing, and now all she could see was the endless blue.

## 2

There was no electricity on the island, and kerosene lamps burned with a thick, greasy smoke that made some people sick, so the old man and the girl chose to sit in a room illuminated only by the light that leaked around the edges of the covered windows. The old man kept the room dark intentionally, had put cloths over the windows, because the slashing rays of the late-afternoon sun colored the room with contrasts so sharp that they pained his eyes and confused him. He had cataracts in both eyes, and sudden bursts of bright light felt like little explosions in his brain.

The old man's name was Francisco, but everyone called him Viejo, Old Man, even the children who might have called him Grandfather or a pet name, because Viejo was an honor, a title as significant as Excellency or General. To attain old age was a true achievement.

The girl's name was Paloma-Dove--after the morning bird that cooed a prelude to the cock's crow. She was

sixteen.

"I don't understand, Viejo," she said. "Nothing like that has ever happened to me before."

"You had never met a bad animal before. Now you have. It had to happen, eventually."

"Forgive me, but . . ." She hesitated. "Papa always told me there was no such thing as a bad animal."

"Your father Jobim was a . . . a curious man." Viejo sought gentle words to describe his son-in-law, rather than those that came quickly to mind. "Of course there are bad animals, just as there are bad people. I am only grateful that the sailfish you met today was not truly bad, or he would have run you through. That happens. Once, many years before you were born . . ."

To forestall the reminiscence, Paloma said, "I don't see why God would create a bad animal. It doesn't make sense."

Viejo pressed his lips together, which Paloma recognized as a sign of pique. He was a fine storyteller, and it was one of the few pleasures that life still permitted him.

"Who says you must understand everything?" Viejo said. "For a human being to try to fathom all of God's works is a waste of time."

Paloma tried to retreat. "I didn't mean . . ."

"What is, is. And one of the things that is, is that there are good things and bad things." He paused. "They tell me you have been interfering with the fishermen again."

"No! I only . . ."

"They say you shout and make a fool of yourself."

"They can think what they please. All I did was ask Jo and Indio and the others why they can't be more careful. They catch everything; they bring back fish they have no use for. They don't kill just for food. That I could understand. The way they fish, someday there will be nothing left."

"No. The sea is forever. And you must learn that man will hunt what he wishes for whatever reason he wishes. His judgments are his own. For example, it has been judged that some animals are good alive and dead, like the bonito and the tuna and the grouper. Alive, they feed other animals; dead, they feed people and still more animals, useful animals. Some animals are bad, like the sea snake and the stonefish and the scorpion. All they do is cause pain and death.

"And then there are animals both good and bad, like barracuda--which one day feeds a man handsomely and the next day poisons him--and like sharks. Sharks bring us food and money, true, but now and again they kill people."

"What about an angelfish?" Paloma asked. "What could be good or bad about an angelfish? Or a pufferfish? Indio caught a pufferfish the other day, and you'd think he had caught a marlin. Why? We don't sell them. We don't eat them."

"The fishermen make their living from the sea," said Viejo, "and so they must become one with the sea and all its creatures. Sometimes, the only way to come to know a creature is to catch and kill it."

Because Paloma did not want to distress or offend her grandfather, she did not argue further: His truths were unshakable. So, all she said was, "Well, I hope nothing ever wants to get to know me that well."

Outside Paloma looked to the western sky. The sun hovered over the horizon, as if about to be sucked beneath the shiny gray water.

She hurried to her rock, a narrow shelf of stone that jutted out over the western tip of the island. She came here at this time every day, and she loved both the place and the time of day, for this was where she felt at peace, close to nature, to life.

There were a few clouds overhead, and the setting sun painted them pink, but the horizon was cloudless, a blade beneath the red fireball that was slowly sliding downward and seeming to squash oblong.

Tonight might be a night for the green flash, she thought, and she steadied her chin in her hands and forced herself not to blink as she fastened her eyes on the vanishing sun. You almost never saw the green flash: The evening had to be clear and almost chilly; no waves of heat could be shimmering up from the water; the horizon had to be sharp and without even a wisp of cloud. And, of course, you had to be there and alert, and you couldn't blink, because the green flash lasted only that tiny bit of a second as the last infinitesimal rim of sun dipped below the horizon. Many times she had missed it by blinking, and in all her life she had seen it only twice--the first time the evening long ago when her father had led her by the hand and shown her this special place.

The bottom of the sun touched the horizon, and Paloma half expected to hear a hiss as the water quenched the fire, or see a cloud of steam explode from the sea. But smoothly and without a sound, it slipped faster and faster out of the sky.

Paloma held her breath and opened her eyes as wide as she could. The last of the sun dropped away and then, as Paloma was beginning to think there would be no green flash tonight, there it was--a shining pinprick of brilliant green, gone so fast that it became a memory at almost the same instant it registered as a sight.

Paloma watched the sky for a moment more, enjoying the changes that happened with such speed only at the beginning and end of the day. The yellow light was fading, following the sun to other parts of the world. The sky overhead was darkening quickly and soon was speckled with stars, and only the faintest splash of pink still touched the clouds.

Paloma felt suddenly calm and happy. Seeing the green flash was supposed to be an omen of good fortune, and though she didn't really believe in omens, surely it was better to have seen it than not to have seen it.

She rose to her knees and was about to leave the rock when a flicker of movement made her look back at the water. What she saw made her stop and stare and catch her breath again.

Rising clear of the water, outlined against the lapis sky, twisting in a spasm of pure pleasure, was an enormous marlin. Its saber blade sliced through the air, its sickle tail arched upward, and then, in graceful slow motion, the huge body slammed down upon the water.

It was a full second before Paloma heard the heavy, resonant boom, and by then all that remained as testimony to the acrobatics was a spreading ring of ripples on the sea.

That, Paloma thought, was definitely something special. Maybe nature is telling me I should believe in omens.

With a feeling of privilege, of being witness to nature reveling in itself, Paloma started for home. As she walked along the path, she looked down and saw her brother, Jo, and his two friends approaching the dock in their skiff.

Paloma could see from the top of the hill that they had had a good day. The bow of their boat was heaped high with fish, a kaleidoscope of glistening colors in the fading light. And Paloma could see, even from where she stood, that they had taken fish indiscriminately: Whatever they could catch they had killed. There were angelfish and rockfish, bonitos and jacks, pufferfish and stingrays, and even one of the rare and strange and furtive creatures called guitar sharks--harmless and, to fishermen, useless. Those fish that would not take a hook had been harpooned. Those that had eluded the harpoon had been netted.

As Paloma watched, Jo shut off the outboard motor and guided the wallowing skiff toward the dock, while his mates culled the piles of dead fish with their fingers, throwing overboard those that were not worth selling.

When Paloma had first seen them do this, she had erupted in fury, screaming at Jo, demanding to know why, if they intended to throw back the fish, they didn't do so as soon as they caught them, when the fish still had a chance to live.

If Jo had been startled at her anger, he had nevertheless been forthright in his response. "Early in the day, before we know the size of the catch, any fish is a good fish. By the end of the day, if the catch has been rich we can afford to keep only the good ones. So then we throw the bad ones back."

Paloma had tried to argue, but Jo had walked away, saying that was the way things had always been, and that was the way they would remain.

Now, she watched as the one called Indio picked up a small fish by its eye sockets and waved it at the other mate, Manolo. Though she was still a distance from them and the twilight was deepening, she could tell them apart by the color of their hair. Indio always wore a hat on the boat, so his hair had remained black. Manolo kept his head cool by pouring salt water on it, so his hair had been bleached to a light brown, just as Paloma's own long auburn hair had been bleached nearly blond by salt and sun. Indio said something now and threw the fish at Manolo, who picked up another fish by its tail and whacked Indio on the head with it.

Yowling and cursing, the fishermen flung fish at one another. Most missed their targets and landed in the water, to float there belly up.

To Paloma, striding down the hill, the fight was nauseating, the waste obscene. It offended something deep inside her to see dead animals treated as if they had never been live beings.

She bent over and picked up a rock and called out, "Hey!" The three in the skiff looked up. "If you have to throw things at each other, throw these." And she cocked her arm and threw the rock as hard as she could, hoping it would strike the skiff and knock a hole in it. But the rock flew wide and plopped in the water, and Jo responded by laughing and ticking his thumbnail off his front teeth and pointing at her--the coarsest, most

insulting, and most contemptuous gesture he could make.

Paloma turned away.

Her father had explained the problem to her many times, during those early days when she had first complained about the young men who fished without care, taking everything and wasting much. "The sea, this sea, is too rich," he had said. "It has too much life."

## Users Review

**From reader reviews:**

**Viola Coghlan:**

The Girl of the Sea of Cortez: A Novel can be one of your starter books that are good idea. We recommend that straight away because this book has good vocabulary that may increase your knowledge in vocabulary, easy to understand, bit entertaining but delivering the information. The writer giving his/her effort to set every word into enjoyment arrangement in writing The Girl of the Sea of Cortez: A Novel although doesn't forget the main stage, giving the reader the hottest as well as based confirm resource data that maybe you can be one among it. This great information can certainly drawn you into brand-new stage of crucial considering.

**Charles Greiner:**

Are you kind of occupied person, only have 10 or 15 minute in your day to upgrading your mind proficiency or thinking skill even analytical thinking? Then you are experiencing problem with the book as compared to can satisfy your short space of time to read it because all this time you only find e-book that need more time to be learn. The Girl of the Sea of Cortez: A Novel can be your answer since it can be read by an individual who have those short spare time problems.

**Ken Martin:**

The book untitled The Girl of the Sea of Cortez: A Novel contain a lot of information on this. The writer explains the woman idea with easy method. The language is very clear to see all the people, so do definitely not worry, you can easy to read this. The book was published by famous author. The author will bring you in the new time of literary works. It is possible to read this book because you can read more your smart phone, or product, so you can read the book inside anywhere and anytime. If you want to buy the e-book, you can start their official web-site and order it. Have a nice study.

**Stephen Morgan:**

What is your hobby? Have you heard that question when you got learners? We believe that that issue was given by teacher for their students. Many kinds of hobby, Every individual has different hobby. And you know that little person such as reading or as studying become their hobby. You should know that reading is very important as well as book as to be the point. Book is important thing to incorporate you knowledge, except your current teacher or lecturer. You discover good news or update concerning something by book. A

substantial number of sorts of books that can you choose to use be your object. One of them are these claims The Girl of the Sea of Cortez: A Novel.

# Read The Girl of the Sea of Cortez: A Novel By Peter Benchley for online ebook

The Girl of the Sea of Cortez: A Novel By Peter Benchley Free PDF d0wnl0ad, audio books, books to read, good books to read, cheap books, good books, online books, books online, book reviews epub, read books online, books to read online, online library, greatbooks to read, PDF best books to read, top books to read The Girl of the Sea of Cortez: A Novel By Peter Benchley books to read online.

## Online The Girl of the Sea of Cortez: A Novel By Peter Benchley ebook PDF download

### The Girl of the Sea of Cortez: A Novel By Peter Benchley Doc

#### The Girl of the Sea of Cortez: A Novel By Peter Benchley Mobipocket

#### The Girl of the Sea of Cortez: A Novel By Peter Benchley EPub