



The Pirates from Lucaya

“.. Mark! Jay! Stash that black garbage bag we just pulled from the sea. There’s a U.S. Coast Guard helicopter flying towards us on our stern ..”



The Devil's Triangle or more commonly known as the Bermuda Triangle is a vast area of the Atlantic Ocean encompassing Bermuda to the north, the southern most islands of the Bahamas, and Miami at the apex. Many strange phenomenon have occurred in this region that cannot be explained. The Bahamian archipelago contains over 700 hundred islands, mostly unpopulated, many with just a few people. The island people are warm, very hospitable and peaceful. Many can trace their roots back to slavery days and escaped to the islands for freedom. Others have their history as pirates who found their refuge on these sub-tropical islands. Then there are those who use the islands as a gateway for the illicit drug trade.

This is a story about those that come for the adventure.

Jay and I flew into Miami from San Francisco to meet up with our friend Mark and sail out on *Jahoma*, Mark's 30' sloop. This time a sail to Grand Bahama Island and up to Walker's Cay, the northernmost island in the Bahamas. If time permitted, we would then sail south to the “tongue of the ocean” and home. The “tongue of the ocean” is an abyss that is thousands of feet deep that infiltrates the shallow waters of the Bahamas.

Another beautiful December day with light winds and full sunshine found us leaving Dinner Key Marina in our wake. We were heading out again to whatever awaited us and were happy to once again be free of all the trappings of modern society. No constraints of time except our return plane tickets in twenty one days. An overnight passage found us sighting Grand Bahama Island with landfall at Lucaya. Why Lucaya, you ask. It has a casino filled with beautiful women and we can **PARTY!!**

We met a couple that were teachers and were sailing with a beautiful assistant from South Africa at the docks. Jay, Mark, the South African beauty and I decided to sail out to a reef and go scuba diving. We had our gear with us and found an interesting place to dive. After anchoring the boat, we suited up in our dive gear. Jay decided to “chat up” the beauty and stay on board to “watch the boat”-- *right*. We dove down with our spear guns hoping to find lobster and other denizens of the deep. We were about 20 feet down along a wall of coral and I started poking my spear into a hole. All at once a massive



moray eel emerges and gets right in my face. I must have blown a tank of air in a few seconds. I swear I could hear Mark laughing his ass off watching me. All I saw were bubbles and this gigantic eel head in front of me. We aborted the dive and returned to the ship for a much needed cocktail. I would say more about the South African beauty that we met but this is a respectable story and I am always the gentleman. However, let us say that we all had a great time but eventually it was time to sail. Who remembers anyway in our drunken debauchery.

We rounded West End, the western tip of Grand Bahama Island and sailed to Walker's Cay. The weather was deteriorating and the winds were "piping up". Just as we tied up to the dock a local came running down from the one hotel on this tiny island and asked if there was a doctor onboard. I told him I was a dentist and he led us to the hotel.



It was a small place mainly to house fishermen that came for the season. This was off season so only a few people populated this small piece of real estate in the ocean. A young boy around ten or twelve was sitting clutching his hand. I looked and he was holding his three fingers that he accidentally cut off while using a band saw. I had the family boil some water and after cooling it, washed the blood away and approximated the three fingers

to the part of the fingers that were attached to his hand. Bandaging each finger and his hand, I slipped a plastic bag over the wound and had him place his hand in a larger plastic bag filled with ice. While this was going on, I directed the man in charge of running this island hotel, to call the Bahamian Rescue Service and send a helicopter to fly this boy to the nearest hospital which I surmised was in Nassau. The island had a ship to shore radio plus a ham radio to stay in contact with the outside world (this was before cell phones and general usage of the personal computer). A nurse from a nearby island arrived by boat and she took over the rescue mission. We stayed for a few days as the storm blew itself out. The locals were very grateful and we had the run of the place. An old man had a loose tooth and I removed it with a pair of pliers and no anesthesia. It was quick and relatively painless. As the weather cleared and we were about to continue on our journey, word came that they saved the young lad's fingers.

We set sail and thirty six hours later we were back on the Great Bahama Bank sailing south. It was a clear, bright morning and I was having coffee with my fellow shipmates when I noticed a puff of white smoke on the eastern horizon. Thinking nothing of it, we all went back to enjoying the thrill of being out at sea. Jay and Mark spied a garbage bag floating ahead of *Jahoma* and visions of illicit drugs came to our minds. After all, this is where much of the marijuana and cocaine that came to the States was delivered from. We could make a big score. Just as we were along side the bag, I heard a noise.



"Mark! Jay! Stash that black garbage bag we just pulled from the sea. There's a U.S. Coast Guard helicopter flying towards us on our stern." Mark always monitored the emergency channel on the ship to shore radio (channel 16). The helicopter flew to a hundred feet off our stern and Mark called up to him. The pilot asked us if we had seen anything unusual as they received a "mayday" from a sinking boat with eight passengers aboard. I told him about the sighting of the smoke about an hour before. We became the center of an air-sea search and rescue mission. We were directed to maintain our heading and all boats in the vicinity were redirected to search for the missing boat.



There was still about five hours of daylight left, so the rescue mission continued until dark. The boat nor its passengers were ever discovered. However, a rescue life ring was found with the boat's name inscribed on it. The name of the vessel -- "Easy Pieces." Oh yes, you probably want to know about the garbage bag. We opened it after the Coast Guard left. It was filled with garbage. So we tossed it back into the sea and sailed home. -- ***Drake Regent***