



THE BELIZE FILE

by
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CHAPTER ONE

The searchlights streaked across the water, piercing the moonless night, slicing the darkness like cleavers, baring everything, and yet nothing. The engines on the patrol boats roared in synchronous tempo as the three of them plowed through the swells on their hunt. Like wolves bounding across the fallen snow after a rabbit, they smelled the scent of their prey and pushed on past the point of reason, nearly past the point of safety.

The driver of the ocean racer dodged the lights and bounced over the swells, keeping an eye behind him lest the lights play across him as he crested each mound of water. He cinched his seat belt tighter, and reached for his SCUBA mouthpiece. He was getting close to the cay. He smiled against the wind blasting his face. “One of these days,” he laughed aloud in exhilaration, in the pleasure of knowing he was again eluding the patrol boats. It was a game of cat and mouse he enjoyed, so long as the cats continued to be careless and inept.

He raced into a cove at the end of the sandy cay, clamped his teeth around the SCUBA mouthpiece, and reached down for the scuttling lever. He throttled back the engines, not too much, but just enough to stop the high speed porpoising of the 40 foot boat. He braced himself and yanked on the lever as he cut the engines off.

The ocean racer nose-dived into the water at over 50 miles an hour. The forward inertia threw him against the tension of his seatbelts. The water rushed over him, pushing at his face, pushing back on his head. Four seconds was all it took for the boat to slow to a manageable slow sinking to the sand bottom, but it seemed to take forever each time he went through the procedure. But, it was better than the alternative, he rationalized.

When the boat settled on the bottom, he peered upward at the hulls of the patrol boats roaring overhead, with their wakes agitating the plankton enough to provide enough phosphorescent light on the surface for reading a newspaper, if one were trying to read a newspaper at such a time. He grinned around his mouthpiece, thinking how absurd it would be to try reading a newspaper on the deck of the patrol boats while chasing him.

The patrol boats sped off in different directions, continuing their hunt, as he released his seat belt. With his SCUBA tank casually slung over his shoulder, he slowly rose the twenty feet to the surface.

The patrol boats were no longer around, so he took his time in a leisurely ten yard swim to the shore where he would uncover his camouflaged 14 foot outboard runabout, hide the SCUBA, and be on his way.

The moon was an emerging golden glowing ball to the east as he started his outboard and slowly motored out into the Caribbean on his way back to the mainland. The patrol boats could stop him now, if they spotted him. He was not in the boat they were looking for, so he couldn't be the smuggler they hunted.

As he neared the mainland, he began wondering why the arrangements didn't include covering up his boat runs. He frowned. Someday he would have to demand protection from the Coast Guard for his runs.

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The morning's sun shimmered through the wood slats of the window jalousies on the best honeymoon cottage in San Pedro, Belize.

The rays fell on a quick-witted gecko, the tiny green lizard believed by the natives to be a lucky omen, as it eyed a common cockroach nearby. It made its lunge, but the cockroach was too elusive, and scurried through a crack in the wood floor, out of reach.

The rays continued their encroachment. As certain and indisputable as sand through an hourglass, they inched their way across the bed to land on the face of the new bride and heighten the fairness of her skin.

She stirred. She moaned in complaint at the intrusion, and tried to brush away the annoyance. Suddenly she screamed. She bolted upright and startled her husband, who had been sleeping peacefully beside her, tired from the late night party given by the hotel's staff.

"Allie?" he asked, sitting up, barely awake.

"Gerald?" she responded, reaching for him, reassuring herself he was there. "Oh, God," she said as she felt his warmth. "It... It was a dream.... No, it was a nightmare. I was standing in... in water. I was looking at you and suddenly you disappeared. It was awful!"

Gerald stroked his new wife's red hair. "Well, you're awake now, and I'm here." He kissed her fears away. "It sounds like you were having a classic dream. You know, where you want something so much that the thought of it being taken away from you is traumatic. Lots of people have bad dreams like that."

She leaned back on the pillows. She sighed with relief, fully in control of herself once again. "I suppose you're right," she agreed. "Just a bad dream." She smiled up at him. "It's true, I do want you so much." She smiled. "I couldn't bear to lose you now, not when it took me so long to get you."

"You're so beautiful," Gerald said, reaching his arm under his new bride's head, lifting her to gaze into her eyes, to kiss her gently.

She laughed lightly. "If you keep complimenting me like that, I'm liable to get an ego you can't deal with."

"Only suiting," he responded as his other hand reached around her waist, pulling her closer to him. "This is the spot," he grinned, gently kissing her on the side of her neck. "This is what made me fall in love with you."

She leaned her head back and sighed, enjoying his touch.

His hand moved across her waist, slowly caressing, lightly touching her. He cupped her breast, and turned his head down to gaze at her soft, inviting form.

“How can anyone have such beauty?” he asked, running his thumb across her nipple, gently massaging it with his thumb and fingers.

“I love it when you do that,” she sighed. She closed her eyes, as if in a dream. She took a slight gasp of breath and held it in, fearing that to release it would cause the dream to fade.

He kissed her on the ear, and tugged on her earlobe. Her responses urged him on. He gently thrust his tongue into her ear, and pulled her closer to him, knowing the slight trembling of her body came from her excitement.

He kissed her throat. He ran his tongue down her neck, and between her breasts in little circular motions. He brushed his lips across her nipple, then took it in his mouth, massaging it between his lips, brushing it with his tongue, sucking it gently.

She buried her head in his hair. She parted her legs and pushed herself against his knee, wrapping her arms around his head.

He slid his hands across her hips. He massaged them, squeezed them, aiding her thrust against his body. Slowly, softly, he moved his head down across the gentle curve of her belly, kissing, caressing with his tongue.

She drew a sharp breath and held it as he nibbled on her thigh.

“Oh, God,” she moaned, thrusting her body against him. “God,” she moaned again, longer, drawing the word out in her pleasure. She could hold her passion no longer. She rolled him over onto his back, then pulled herself on top of him.

The sun played across her cinnamon colored hair as she threw back her head in mounting pleasure. Tiny beads of sweat formed on her forehead. Her breasts swayed with her every movement, exciting him even more as they brushed across his chest when she leaned forward and wrapped her arms around his neck. She pushed her mouth onto his. She probed his mouth with her tongue, thrusting it into him, meeting his. And she exploded in rapture.

“Allie,” he gently called as she lay on top of him for several minutes, taking pleasure in the stillness, in his presence inside her.

“Umm,” she moaned, not wanting to move, needing to feel him.

He wanted to say more, so much more.

Her touch sent a warm thrill through him. He reached for her. He held her close to him, as though he needed her to be inside him, to be a part of him, to be his soul.

She moved again, molding her body against him, and kissed him on the cheek. She sighed as he rolled onto her. She wrapped her legs around him, and probed the warmth of his mouth with her tongue, caressing his in rhythmic response.

She exploded once more when she felt his release. She held him close to her trembling body until he finally rolled over beside her, exhausted and spent in pleasure, their bodies glistening in the morning’s sun.

“It’s going to be a lovely day,” she said, at length, in the comfort of his closeness. “And us with nothing to do, but...”

“Nothing to do but what?” he asked, grinning.

“You know,” she teased.

“Come on,” he protested. “We can't, now. We have to get up. We have things to do.” He glanced at the travel clock on the nightstand. “It's almost eight,” he added with some urgency. “Come on. We have to get dressed.”

She brushed against his legs as he forced himself out of bed, frowned lightly, playfully, and sat up. “Well,” she said. “This was the best honeymoon I've ever had, and already I'm being rejected?”

“The best honeymoon?” He laughed. “And just when have you ever had any others?”

“Ummmmh, well...”

He turned to her, and took her face in his hands. He kissed her once more, then peered into her eyes. “Any regrets?” He asked.

“Well, not yet,” she smiled, again reaching for him.

“Ah, umm, no,” he said, after several seconds, resisting her touch. “Look. We have to get dressed. We're expected at the charter office in twenty minutes.”

“So soon? You mean we can't...?” He voice trailed off suggestively. The soft splashing of the Caribbean waves enhanced her seductive ploy.

“Look, we wouldn't be so late if you hadn't kept me awake all night,” he grinned.

“It wasn't me. It couldn't have been. I think I was done in by all the Cuba Libre's we drank,” she said. “No, I think it must have been one of the maids. I hear they have excellent maid service in these Caribbean hotels.”

“Yeah? Funny you should say that. That's what I heard, too.”

“And you?” she asked.

“And me what?”

“Any regrets?” She reached for him and put her arms around his neck.

“Nope. You're fantastic “ He gently removed her arms, and got out of bed. “We have to get a move on,” he added as he strode to the shower.

She playfully pouted, then she rose from the bed and rushed to join him, pushing an unreasonable and sudden sense of foreboding from her mind.

At the time Gerald and Allie played in San Pedro Town, on Ambegris Cay in northern Belize, it hadn't yet been discovered by throngs of cheap vacation seekers, like most of the Caribbean countries.

The cay, or key, as it's often spelled in English, is located just around the corner, south of Cancun, Mexico, and faces the largest reef in the western hemisphere.

The sleepy village has twelve hotels, all with back doors on the beach and front doors opening on sand streets. The inhabitants, an ethnic mixture of Garifuna, Creoles and Mexicans, are less affluent than their neighbors to the north, and are proud of their literacy rate, boasting that over 95% of the population can read a newspaper with some comprehension. They have a cultural history of piracy, thievery, and petty wickedness, which, it has been said, carries over to the present.

The hotel where Allie and her husband played on their honeymoon night had adequate accommodations, and maintained a well-established yacht chartering service. The Eden like setting appealed to the rich Gringos who loved spending their winters under the hot Caribbean sun, until, of course, they discovered the best kept secret of the entire Caribbean; the insidious, biting, nearly invisible insect known as the Caribbean Sand Fly.

To handle the charter business, the hotel owners built a pier that protruded into the small lagoon created by the reef. The water in the lagoon was so clear it belied its depths, and the assortment of charter yachts tied stern-to along the pier seemed to be floating on air. The boats varied in size from twenty feet long for an economy one day excursion, to fifty feet long for the ramblings of the rich and famous. They sparkled in the hot morning's sun, bright in their white paint and blue sail covers.

The charter office, with the bamboo roof, rattan furniture and Formica counter top, was perched at the beginning of the pier. The matron of the office was an overly tanned, overly bleached blonde who mostly bulged out of her faded red bikini. Her sole responsibility was the chartering business, and this morning she was idling away her time waiting for customers when she spied the approach of Gerald and Allie. When they entered the office she reached behind the counter and retrieved the charter file.

"You must be Mr. and Mrs. Levine," she greeted them. "I can tell from the honeymooner look. It's refreshing, ain't it? To see people such as you two, actually in love, these days. I mean, there ain't many people down here on honeymoons. Real honeymoons, that is. Most are just playing. You can tell, you know, mostly by the way the girl looks, all bored, and such." She completed her remark while feigning dismay at a cockroach scrambling across the counter top. She grabbed a fly swatter from under the counter and took a swing at the insect. "Guess them cockroaches are going to be the death of us one of these days," she exclaimed, returning her attention to her customers, ignoring their grimaces.

"Well," Gerald said with forced politeness. "We did the play thing for a while, and I chased her 'til she caught me."

"And am I ever going to make him pay for it," Allie chimed in, laughing.

"Well, you really caught him good, honey," the blonde said "Two weeks on a Westsail 42 charter with full insurance and food ain't a bad catch. I've seen girls down here get friendly with any man who could spring for a cruise like that, and without getting the lifetime benefits you snagged."

Allie wasn't impressed by the directness of the woman, but she overlooked the style, thinking it must have been developed over years of being one of those friendly girls the woman described. "Yeah. It wasn't easy," she responded, then pinched Gerald in the side to keep him from making any snide remark.

By eleven in the morning Gerald and Allie were checked out of their cottage, and safely loaded aboard the Westsail. Then, while they motored out of the harbor past the pleasure yachts tied to the pier, and past other not so pleasurable workboats anchored about in no particular order, Gerald taught Allie how to raise the mainsail.

"Not bad for your first day out," Gerald called from the cockpit. "For a girl past her prime you learn quickly enough."

She playfully signaled her response with the middle finger of her right hand.

"Now, once the main is raised," he continued, undaunted, "and the halyard is secured, you can..." then he paused. "Ah, you do know what secured means?"

"Smart ass," she called back to him. "I'm not exactly a land lubber."

"Well, all right! Good Girl!"

She glared at him.

“After the main halyard is secured,” he continued, “you can raise the staysail. Be careful about the club-foot boom. It's going to swing over, so be sure you stand to windward, that's the upwind side, when you hoist it.”

Allie shot a glance of disdain at her husband, then laughed.

“Hey,” he defended himself. “A few bits of maritime vocabulary thrown in here and there won't do any harm.” He adjusted the main sheet. “The main and staysail are all I think we're going to use this afternoon,” he continued. “There's a little freshness in the afternoon winds, and as soon as we clear the cut in the reef we'll follow it south along the coast before turning east. It should be an easy sail.” He paused to check the sail. “And that'll be good, 'cause it won't give us any trouble, and I don't want to break in a new hand too saltily.” He grinned.

Allie's mind flashed on her nightmare as he said the word 'trouble', but she quickly pushed her fears out of her mind with a shrug that came from her practical upbringing. Then she made her way back to the cockpit to take up a reclining position on the leeward cushion. “New hand? Saltily?” she chided. “My, Don't you become the Captain Bligh when the wind gets in your hair?”

“Better Captain Bligh than Captain Queeg,” he joked.

“I don't know about that. At least Captain Queeg got back to land after the mutiny.”

“Ah hah!” he quipped. “I can see you don't know your maritime history. So did Captain Bligh.”

“I thought he was thrown overboard during the mutiny.”

“Nope. Not thrown overboard. In fact, if you've ever read the Bounty Trilogy you would know that he was put overboard with a twenty three foot longboat which he sailed for 72 days to the French Society Islands to safety. It was a remarkable feat of seamanship.”

“No use talking about either of them, then. No one's going to get put overboard on this cruise,” she said. “I hope,” she added as an afterthought, feeling uneasy with the words.

Several hours passed in the silent rapture of sun and sea, with the gentle swells rolling the boat gently, and with an occasional coral island to look at in the distance. Gerald was at the helm, guiding the smooth cutter, and Allie was seated beside him, glorying in the peace and beauty of the day.

“Time to locate some protected anchorage near one of these cays for the night,” Gerald said, breaking the rhapsody. “I don't want to try sailing among these reefs after dark.”

The wind had turned to blow more steadily off the port beam by then, and the wheel required constant attention. He coaxed Allie into tending the wheel so that he could go below to check the charts. With little effort, he located a suitable anchorage among the numerous cays about an hour's sailing time away. It was in an inlet on the leeward side of a small island named Nose Cay.

As they sailed near the cay, Gerald started the engine to bring the boat up into the wind so he could drop the sails. Then they motored to less than fifty yards from the beach to drop the anchor. The boat drifted around to gently tug on the line and set the anchor in the sandy bottom.

Allie went below to busy herself in the galley, and a minute or so later she tossed a can of cold beer up to Gerald, sitting in the cockpit enjoying the mood of the late afternoon.

He popped open the can, then gazed at Allie. He watched her movements, savoring the fullness of her shape. Her breasts stood proud and boasting as they held out the tiny patches of bikini top above her stomach, a flat stomach ending in the gentle rise of her Mound of Venus. She

was 5'4" tall, weighed 115 pounds, and was twenty six at her last birthday, just before their marriage. "I just can't get over it," he said, appraising her.

"Over what?"

"How beautiful you are. I guess you know that bikini you're wearing is driving me nuts."

"Why, thank you," she beamed. "How about some coffee, and...?" she added suggestively.

"And what?" Gerald chuckled as he set his beer aside and descended the ladder into the main salon.

Allie watched the rise in his emotions showing in his swimsuit as he approached her. She felt goose bumps again, all over, like a child in puberty. "God," she said. "I hope this paradise never ends," she added as he reached around her to untie the bikini.

The next morning dawned as orange and blue as was ever described in all the tour and travel brochures ever printed.

Gerald, the old salt, cooked the first breakfast at sea.

Then Allie, with energy renewed by food, delayed the anchor weighing long enough to satisfy another hunger.

By mind-morning they were again citizens of the sea. Gerald started the four cylinder diesel engine and gave the wheel to Allie as he walked forward to retrieve the anchor.

He landed the anchor with ease, and glanced into the water. There was something there that attracted his attention. Still standing on the bow, he directed Allie to motor forward slowly. There was something on the sandy bottom. "Come ahead just a bit farther," he called, looking down through the water. He peered closely at the sight, then whistled.

Below him, in less than twenty feet of water, beside a coral ledge, was a powerboat.

On closer inspection the powerboat looked as though it had not been under the water for very long. Some drifting sand formed rivulets across the deck, stirred up by a passing shark. Nothing was yet growing on it, as would have been the case with anything that had been in the Caribbean water for more than a month.

"It's a high speed ocean racing powerboat," Gerald commented to Allie as she came forward to look. "It has three inboard-outboard drives. Just like the type used in the Miami to Nassau races held yearly off Florida."

"It must have had trouble at some time," Allie said.

"Maybe," Gerald said. "I can't imagine it just being left where it sank."

"Maybe it was stolen," Allie suggested, turning her attention back to their now idly drifting sailboat. "Maybe we better mark this spot on our chart so we can report it when we get back."

"Good idea," Gerald agreed, reluctantly returning to the cabin to mark the chart.

In the mean time, Allie motored out to the open sea, and it wasn't long before Gerald was again whistling, immersed in the joy of the Caribbean freshness and the excitement felt by anyone who has ever sailed a warm weather passage.

The day passed to near its zenith, and the boat had all three sails set full-and-by before Allie noticed another boat in the distance.

"See that? Over there!" she called to Gerald. "That boat. I've been watching it for about a half hour, and it hasn't moved."

Gerald peered in the direction she pointed, then got a pair of binoculars. He trained them on the older fishing trawler that was floating aimlessly just inside the horizon. "They have an

American flag flying upside down on the cabin mast,” he said. “That means distress.”

“You mean they're in trouble?” Allie asked. “We have to help them if they are.”

“I'm not so sure,” Gerald responded pensively. “Remember what the chartering people told us? Don't be too anxious to help another boat. It might not really be in any trouble, and the people on board might have something else in mind than a need for being rescued.”

“Well, it wouldn't hurt to just get a little closer to them, to get a better look, would it?”

“I suppose not,” Gerald answered. “Better trim in and head in their direction. We can at least check on them. Better start the engine, too. It will give us better control, if we need it.”

The sails were trimmed in and the engine was started. With the help of the mechanical wind they cautiously motor-sailed over to render aid.

“That looks like a woman on deck,” Allie said when they got closer. “She's waiving her arms. What's that mean?”

“That's the international distress signal for boats without any radio.”

“We are going to help, aren't we?” Allie made the question sound more like a demand.

“I guess, if we have to,” Gerald relented, turning their craft to head directly for the trawler, pushing the engine throttle forward some more to give them greater headway as they pointed higher into the wind.

They came within hailing distance and Gerald studied the trawler. “La Cucaracha?” He read the name on the bow. “Something's not right here,” he added on further study. “That woman on top of the cabin looks more like a man...”

“Oh, my God!” Allie exclaimed, as she came to the same conclusion. “You're right!”

“Why is he up on deck doing the signaling when there are two men in the wheel house?” Gerald asked. “I don't like this,” he added as he throttled back the engine.

A man with long black hair and a mustache that flowed over his mouth, stepped around from behind the wheelhouse with an automatic rifle. He fired a short burst in the direction of the Westsail, just clearing the mainsail.

“Heave to!” Someone shouted the demand from the loudspeaker on the phony distressed trawler.

“Jesus!” Gerald yelled as he spun the wheel. “ Pirates! We have to get the hell out of here!”

Allie reached for the sheets to pay off so they could sail away from the trap.

“Heave to now!” Came the second order. “Heave to, or we shoot!”

“Duck!” Gerald shouted to Allie.

Those were his last words. A second burst of gunfire caught him in the chest. The impact threw him over the rail into the water.

“Gerald!” Allie screamed as she ran to the boat's side. Hysteria sent icy chills through her. She reached over the rail in a futile attempt to grab Gerald, now face down in the water, drifting away.

The trawler pulled alongside the sailboat. Three men stepped up to the gunwale carrying grappling hooks, and lashed the boats together.

The captain emerged from the trawler cabin carrying a half-full bottle of whiskey. He tipped the bottle to his lips, and leaned his head back to take a deep swallow from it, baring his bulging belly under his diesel stained T-shirt.

He wiped his mouth on the back of his arm, and leered at Allie. He tossed the whiskey bottle into the sea while grinning broadly at his helpless victim. Her screams excited him as he climbed over the gunwale onto the sailboat's decks. He laughed, thinking of the pleasure he would get from this woman.

Allie's last consciousness was of two rough hands grasping her about her waist, throwing her to the deck.