

Sandals Feb '02 with Dolores

By Vinny Bogan

Getting There

Up until then I ran restaurants, all kinds. Working in restaurants you meet a lot of cool people, many of whom are beautiful young women. Dating was frowned upon, but almost every boss I ever had was married to a former waitress or bartender, including me. Anyway, this is how I met Dolores. We worked together for a short time.

Over the next few years we became very close. Our relationship is best defined as “significant others”, definitely “significant” and definitely “other”. To this day she is one of my closest friends.

In February of 2002 we went on vacation to Sandals Resort & Spa in Negril Jamaica, I wanted to go to a smaller cheaper place, but when you travel with a woman like Dolores you go first-class. Really, I didn't care, I was finally I was getting back my Negril, this time with one of the most beautiful women in the world.

We got to Jamaica in late morning. As we walked off the plane I took a picture of her. She was squinting into the bright Jamaican morning, a dorky smile, no make-up and a zit on her chin. It's my favorite pictures of her, her Jamaica debut.

Sangster International Airport, three Jamaican women in bright island dress greeted us singing “Welcome to Jamaica” to the tune of John Lennon's “So This Is Christmas.” The old cinderblock building was hot with little air flow. Dolores doesn't sweat. Classy women never sweat, they mist, and after a few minutes of stifling Jamaican heat she was misting like a pig. To combat the heat she did that thing only a woman can do. She reached in her bag, pulled her arms out of her sleeves and wiggled around like Houdini in a straight jacket. Poof! She's in a rainbow tube top. Amazing.

One of the good things about the all-inclusives is the lack of confusion at the airport. They come to find you. They did find us but, there was a glitch, we were informed, along with several other couples, that we would be bumped to Sandals Montego Bay for the first night. I snapped! Away went my cool, “I'm finally on vacation” attitude, and out came “Ballistic Asshole Man.”

As soon as I voiced my displeasure, I started feeling badly. Jamaica is no place for “Ballistic Asshole Man,” he's for cable guy appointment mishaps between one and five, and dealing with the so called Microsoft “Customer Service Staff.”

We walked out to the Sandals bus. Still in the bump funk I wandered over to a little refreshment stand and grabbed a few Red Stripes. You'd be amazed how being the ugly American really ramps up your thirst. Then, in that “only in Jamaica” way, I took my first swig of icy cold glorious Red Stripe. As if by magic I was in on vacation. The changing of latitudes was finally changing my attitude.

Lost in that moment, communing with that unnamed wonder that is Jamaica, I looked towards my beautiful wonderful Dolores. I wanted to share this feeling, to be ONE with her, both of us at ONE with this place! Our eyes met, she held my gaze, and I felt her soul reaching out to mine, two becoming one!

She opened the window, her brown eyes sparking and said, “AAAAAAAASSSSSHOLE, gimme my f**king beer!!!”

Ahhh, you gotta love a girl from Jersey!!

The people at Sandals Mobay were way nice. They treated us like the King and Queen of Burundi. I figured they wanted just for us to be happy, good press and all. Maybe they were afraid to meet Ballistic Asshole Man in person, he’s scary! Either way they were great.

They placed us in a beautiful room, we had our own veranda right on a rocky section of the beach. It was three o’clock and we hit the beach right away. Sandals MoBay is beautiful, nicer even than the brochures. We loved it, until a series of airliners took off and landed right over our heads shaking the fillings out of our teeth.

We had a nice dinner and ran into our fellow bump-ees. One was an older married couple. They seemed to be in love, ya know, Mom and Dad love. It was sweet. The other couple, we got to calling them Ken and Barbie, were on their Honeymoon, they were perfect. He was tall, built and studly. She was the quintessential mid-west blonde homecoming queen, the uber-perky type who hates being referred to as perky. They were scary.

We retired to our private veranda, raided the mini-bar, sat quietly, and let the endless Caribbean Ocean gently hypnotized us.

We were all to meet up in the lobby at 9AM for the trip to Negril. Dolores and I were so happy and relaxed we almost danced to the mini-bus.

Our compatriots on the other hand, seemed haggard, they trudged their bags into the lobby. They hated this place! We couldn’t believe it. It seems the non-ballistic people got stuck in tiny rooms right next to the DJ booth! Thumpa-Thumpa-Thumpa all night long! They were pissed! We listened to them vent half way to Negril, blah blah blah. Not being able to take it anymore Dolores and I started telling our story. How we yelled and screamed and got treated like gold and got a great room on the outskirts of the property and, and, and. . .

By the time we reached Sandals Negril they were fit to be tied. Dolores and I got out first as the remaining two women schemed their attack. Ballistic Asshole Man did make sure his upgrade in Negril was worked out before he left the scene, and thus we were taken to our great digs right on the beach while Married and Perky attacked the poor defenseless Assistant Manager.

Finally we were in Negril, twenty hours late, but with a double upgrade the vacation was actually looking to be worth the money I’d spent.

All Inclusive

Wow! What a great place! Sandals Negril is like taking a luxury cruise without leaving port. Marcus, an affable Jamaican gent showed us to our luxurious room. Walking to the room, we could hear the ocean, but could only see it in glimpses between buildings and foliage.

As Dolores doled out closet space, I struck out to find refreshments. In the yard I came across my good friend Marcus, I knew he was my good friend because he greeted me, “Hello, Vinny my good friend!”

I’m sure he was figuring he’d do well befriending a wealthy American like me. You see, I’m an average guy but Dolores looks more like she’s from Hollywood than from Philly. So people figure I must be loaded to get a girl like Dolores, or that I am endowed with what Jamaicans call “The Big Bamboo.” A-hem, I am not rich, oh no, not rich at all.

I asked my good friend Marcus about that other form of Jamaican refreshment.

“Vinny wants the Good Stuff”, he laughed.

I explained to him I was an experienced Negril traveler and I knew what good stuff was and what it cost. He put up his hand and made a wait here motion and disappeared into an employee only area. He returned a moment later with a sample spliff, I love Negril! I hit the bar and walked back to our room with beer and juices.

Dolores had opened the drapes, and from thirty yards away I could see her sexy silhouette moving about the room. I slipped quietly into the room, snuck up behind her and placed an icy Red Stripe on the counter in front of her. She was wearing my favorite bikini, a gold lamé number I’d actually bought for her. I slid my arms around her from behind. Our eyes met in the mirror. Sandals, the home of Caribbean Romance!

Later, I lit the big spliff. Dolores was nervous about the tell-tale aroma alerting the neighbors, but I waved her off, “It’s Jamaica,” I said and took a big hit.

“Ere,” I said as I passed the joint. A wicked smile came to her pretty face as the smoke expanded in her lungs. (I made a comment here about Dolores’ expanding lungs, but I edited it out for propriety.)

We had thought we were relaxed before, slowed from the pace of real life, but the ganja; it took us to a whole new level.

What seemed like just moments later, but had probably been half an hour, Marcus and a friend appeared on our patio. They were looking all about as if to heighten the danger they were in for supplying us the evil weed. I didn’t fall for the ruse. When it comes to ganja, most Jamaican resorts look the other way. They would rather their guests utilize the services of trusted, reliable employees than going off premises where trouble may find them, or worse yet, follow them back.

We made the transaction, I overpaid.

By that point I was feeling no pain and the sunny noontime day was calling us to explore this beautiful place. Dolores wrapped a pink flowery sarong my mother, of all people, bought her for our trip. And we were off.

I don’t know what I was expecting, I’d been to Hedonism several years ago, it was an “All-Inclusive” too, but this place seemed so low key. No, lower than that, dead. The entire place was deserted! The pool was empty, the bar was empty, and the beach was almost empty. The dining room however was jam-packed!

MMM, Lunch-time we thought, the munchies were hitting pretty hard by now, so we followed suit. Little did we know we were falling into the insidious all-inclusive lemming trap. The guide in our room said lunch was served from 11 o’clock till 2, but it was 12:15 and everyone was here. How could all these people be on such a schedule? Who knows? We got on line, filled out plates with beautifully prepared and creatively presented items.

Seeking an open table and realized everyone was dressed like they were at a country club. I had on swim trunks, and Dolores wore a bikini top with a sarong. We looked at each other, both realizing this at the same time. We stood out! Yeah, we were a hundred feet from the most beautiful beach in the world, dressed in beach attire, and we stood out!

The women, mostly middle-aged, had taken their hubbies to a “couples only” resort in an effort to spice up monotonous nuptial bliss. They glared at the girl with the big fake boobs, though the hubbies more stared than glared.

Even though Dolores increased the spice their wives were looking for it wasn't the place the wives expected it to come from. They should have given her a medal, but many were downright rude.

Finally we saw our married friends who called us over. It was nice to see a familiar face. The Marrieds were very nice people. It was the second time around for both of them, and they seemed truly happy with each other.

We all had a nice lunch and several drinks. We discussed plans for the week and made plans to go to Rick's Café tomorrow night. Dolores made sure to tell them to ask Ken & Barbie to come along too.

Beach Time!! I hate the beach! I know that sounds funny for a guy who goes to Negril once or twice a year, but it's true. More accurately, I hate lying out on the beach and frolicking around in the water. I'm Irish, I have two skin colors, fish belly white and lobster red. Don't get me wrong! I love sitting near the beach, better yet a bar near or on the beach. In the shade drinking Red Stripes and watching the goings on, and the walking by's. I also love walking on the beach along the water line, especially at sunset, now that's living!

Dolores on the other hand is a fish; I mean that in the nicest way! She's mostly Italian and gets a dark bronze tan. She loves water related activities. Her morning ocean kayak jaunts became a daily ritual, as did several hours a day tanning in the Negril sun. She actually started a bare breast revolution, on our first day on the beach Dolores was the only bare-chested woman, by the third day there were several and by the time we left even Barbie was bronzing her perkyness.

After breakfast on our first full day in Negril, Dolores decided we were going to kayak out to Booby Cay. I was all for it until she picked out a tandem ocean kayak.

“Tandem kayak?” I thought. Wasn't that an oxymoron?

One of the nicknames Dolores often refers to me as is Mr. Smooth, for obvious reasons to all those who have met me. BUT in an ocean kayak I was far from smooth.

At first we were ok, we headed past the breakers into the deeper water, and like the crews who run the river near Boat House Row in Philly we were in perfect synch.

Dolores was in the front and I was in the rear. At first it was playful, and then all hell broke loose!

“Follow my lead,” she giggled. Yeah, we were probably gaja-fied.

“No, the other way,” as she looked back with a playful “Kids Today” look.

Dolores was in great shape. Not only the owner and lead designer of her own women's swimwear company, she was the company's main model. Growing up with three brothers, she was also one of the most competitive people I had ever met. I helped her with productions issues, I ran her website, but I was about as far from being an athlete as one could get.

Short story long, we almost killed each other!

“I AM STEERING LEFT!!!!!!!!!!!!!!,” I less than calmly stated.

“YOU’RE OTHER LEFT AAAAAAAAAASSSSSSSSSHOLE!!!!!!!!!!” she retorted.

“DON’T CALL ME AN ASSHOLE, BITCH!!!!!!!!!!”

“BITCH!!!!??? CAN’T YOU SEE I’M HOLDING A WEAPON??? ASSHOLE!!!!!!!”

Need I go on? We laugh about it now, but we didn’t speak for several hours after we finally got back to shore. From then on she went alone on her kayak trips.

We also enjoyed long walks down the beach. Each day our goal was downtown Negril, though we never made it we got as far as Kuyaba one day.

We’d walk with no money. We’d stop at the craft stalls and visit with the people there. Passing closed or under construction hotel properties, we would stop and talk to the men working in the hot sun. We met so many awesome people. We’d tell people at Sandals to come with us, but they couldn’t divorce themselves from the hype.

It’s so easy to get caught up and become an “All-Inclusive Lemming.” Everything is there for you except the real Jamaica, the real Negril. Most of the people at Sandals get up, eat breakfast, lounge by the pool or beach, eat lunch, more lounging, eat a snack, lounge, get dressed for dinner, eat dinner, watch the nightly “Island Entertainment” have a few fruity rum drinks and go to bed. Then do it all over again the next day. And hey, for some people that’s great, and at least they’re doing it in Negril. But getting off the property; that’s where the memories are.

The People We Meet

Every time I go to Negril, I meet so many interesting and wonderful people. I used to think it was Negril itself, but I’m beginning to realize that it’s me in Negril.

Let me explain. When I go to Negril all the burdens of so called real life slip away, I approach people with the affectation of friendliness, openness and mutual respect. In return I get the same; more often than not at least.

It’s like Arnold Schwarzenegger’s character in the movie Twins. Remember? He comes off the island where he lived his whole life surrounded by loving and supportive people, and then he goes to New York City. He starts greeting people with the same openness and friendliness he knew from his previous home. The New Yorkers, of course, think he’s crazy, but was he? Maybe it’s us and the way we live that’s crazy.

I have often said, you drive into Negril from MoBay thinking, “How do they live like this?” and you leave for home thinking. “How do I live like that?”

After a quiet lunch at Rick’s Café, one of my Negrilian guilty pleasures, our cabby took us to the simple and unpretentious Tedd’s Shroom Boom.

What’s a Shroom Boom?

It’s one of those uniquely Jamaican anomalies, in a place where the ubiquitous ganja is illegal, mushroom are legal. Yeah, those kind of mushrooms! Jamaicans use them in tea, omelets, cakes, etc...

I’ve read, though I’m not sure, the Magic Mushroom’s legality has to do with its aboriginality.

Ganja, on the other hand, was actually brought to the island by workers from India, you know, that whole British Empire thing. Gandhi? Ganja? Seems to fit, but I digress.

I was thrilled to see that Dolores “got it” right away. Tedd’s simple country charm was unmistakable and overwhelming. A brightly painted multicolored house that you just know was painted after the painter had drunk his tea. Several plastic tables were strategically placed in the shady yard, a big cushy chair on the porch, and a little boy, maybe six or so, played with a puppy behind the house.

As we approached the porch the little boy ran into a back door rattling off a string of melodious Jamaican patios. A man’s voice boomed in some foreign but familiar tongue as the door opened. He looked as if we woke him up from an early afternoon nap and it took a minute for the cobwebs to clear.

“Hi, we’re here for some of that famous Shroom-Boom-Tea of yours!!” I billowed as I shook his gentle hand. “I’m Vinny, and this is my friend Dolores. We’re from Philadelphia, US”

“My name is Garland,” he said with a gentleman’s smile, as he and Dolores shook hands.

“Wow, I figured your name would be Tedd,” I said, while he gave me a “I hear that all the time look.”

“It’s Garland.” He restated, not giving me the satisfaction of an explanation.

Garland went and began preparing our tea so Dolores and I grabbed a few Red Stripes and went to explore the property.

I found a nice seat under big seagrape tree while Dolores went off to play with the little boy and his puppy. The three became fast friends.

Garland walked out onto the porch. Seeing the puppy jumping all over Dolores he rushed to the railing, and just as he was about to tell his son to leave the nice lady alone, he stopped and a surprised smile came to his face. He just watched, enjoying their play.

A few moments later he called us up to the porch, our tea was ready.

We sipped the horrid tasting stuff. It’s like your first swig of whiskey, it tasted like hell, but the promise of what came next kept you going. It tastes like strong thick mushroom tea, which is really gross.

This was actually my first trip to Tedds, I told Garland I’d been to the then defunct Mrs. Browns.

“When you been there?” He asked.

“About five years ago, a group of us came down from Hedonism,” I answered.

“I was running Mrs. Browns back then, Mrs. Brown is my mother,” he said as, in mid sentence, his mood darkened. “Was my Mother.”

A moment of silence as thick as our tea hung in the air. Garland looked away, pretending to watch his son play, but looking past him. Tears welled in his eyes.

Dolores took his hand and told him how lucky his mother is to have a son who loves her so.

“No one will ever love us like our mothers,” I said, and in that moment both connecting to his loss and projecting to a time where I will know his grief, my tears joined his and Dolores’.

“What happened to her?” Dolores blurted out. Yeah! Just like that. I felt the urge to kick her under the table, but as usual she was much more emotionally connected to the scene than I was. Garland welcomed the opening and he told this story.

Mrs. Brown had built her business like so many in the early days of Negril. Quality food, warm service and the magical kick of matter of fact island charm. Mrs. Brown’s Mushroom House went from a favorite stop for those in the know to an outright landmark making its way into all the island tourist guides. As the years wore on, her family took on more and more of the daily responsibilities of the store, and Mrs. Brown went into semi-retirement.

This is when she met Mr. Smith. I actually don’t remember his name so I’ll call him Mr. Smith. Mr Smith was a wealthy American businessman. Garland’s contempt for this man was undisguised.

In due course Mrs. Brown and Mr. Smith were married and she spent most of her time in the States. Garland kept busy with the business, he knew Mr. Smith was bad news, but his mother was happy. She was living the life of the people she so lovingly catered to her entire life.

When Garland got the news his mother was sick, it was too late. She’d passed away in the States, far from home.

At this point Garland’s melancholy turned to rage. To add insult to injury, Mr. Smith had control of the “Mrs. Brown’s” name and planned to capitalize on it. He was going to sell Mrs. Brown’s t-shirts and other such tourist knickknacks. He also went after the store.

Garland walked away and began Tedds. I never did find out where the name came from. There’s a new Mrs. Brown’s in Negril and I have no idea if it has anything to do with the Brown or the Smith families, but I go to Tedds.

By the time his story was finished so was our tea. It was one of those rare times when you realize a special moment as its happening; a moment not to be forgotten.

Garland asked us to wait, with a child’s excitement he ran into the other room and returned holding a small plate. On the plate were four dollops of honey with perfect fresh mushrooms standing in each of them.

“A gift for my friends”

It was nice, and we wished we could have stayed longer, but it’s a really good idea to get back to the hotel before the psilocybin starts crawling through your brain. No handshakes this time, hugs all around.

The ride back to Sandals was subdued. We had an emotional visit with Garland and the tea was beginning to send its gentle waves through our consciousness.

When we got back to the room, we realized we both scheduled massages for 6pm. AAAHHHH!!! How were we going to lie still for forty-five minutes? We tried to cancel, we couldn’t. It was 5:30.

Now maybe it was the confusion of the Shroom Boom or that we’d spent the entire day together, but Dolores and I had a spat. She wanted to walk down the beach to calm down the shroomy effects. I knew that getting the blood flowing would enhance rather than mellow said

effects. Well, telling Dolores she can't do something makes her all the more committed to doing it. Off she went.

I fired up a spliff as I watched her go. She didn't make it a hundred yards when a thin attractive, maybe even hot, girl jumped up and engaged her in conversation. About ten seconds later they went to the bar. I thought it was weird that her date didn't even move, actually he didn't even react, even as his date acted so aggressively.

Immediately the most perverse thoughts you could imagine ran through my head. Just before I heading to the gift shop for some whipped cream and baby oil, I saw Dolores walking towards me. More like running, actually she was tiptoeing like a cartoon character, no really, she was kind of oozing towards me, or ... I'm sooo wasted!!!

"Did you see that Girl???" Dolores yelled from two doors down. This caused the girl's date to finally stir.

"Yeah, you have a new friend," I said trying to keep my brain inside my head.

"Her name is Rain! She was talking to me and I couldn't understand a word she was saying!!" She confessed. "Hurry we're soooo late for our massages!!"

I ran into the room to check the time. 5:35, I told her she was only gone for five minutes. It didn't register. Oh well, I guess we'll be early.

We got to our massages a few early but they were ready for us. Signing in was much more difficult than it should have been. Everyone was looking at us! They were talking about us!! Paranoid much?

We were taken into separate sides of the beautiful spa, and a quick shower later I was stretching out in the hot tub. The heat and bubbles seemed to mellow the effects of the tea.

What was minutes, but could have been an hour later, I was summoned into the massage room by a little Jamaican guy, hell, he could have been an elf for all I knew. I toweled off and walked into a dark room with one of those aromatherapy candles burning, and the tea-phoria came flooding back. I found the table and rested my face in the face hole of the table.

The masseuse came in and introduced herself. She told me to stay like I was so I didn't even look up. A couple seconds later I heard another woman come into the room and it sounded like she was coaxing someone to lie on the other table in the room. This made me look up! From the corner of my eye I saw a shapely naked female. I was like, wooo hoo!! Not bad for sixty bucks!!

That's when I realized the naked woman was Dolores, our eyes met, we were totally confused.

In unison we said, "What's he/she doing in here?"

The masseuses seemed as confused as we were. "This is your "Couples Massage," the older one said.

In unison again we said, "Couples Massage?"

Since we booked the massage together and at the same time, they figured we wanted "Sandals Famous Romantic Couples Massage". Another one of those "spice up the marriage" deals I'm sure. Dolores and I were spicy enough, but what the hell, save the other room for someone else.

Soon we were oily and naked on our adjacent tables giggling like morons. In fact, we were giggling so much our masseuses thought we were either insane or criminally immature.

To say we were giggling is an understatement. We're talking a forty-five minute giggle fit. It takes a real man to admit to giggling like a girl scout wired on Do-Si-Do's, but I was there and it was fun. Finally we confessed. We told our captors, I mean, masseuses all about Tedds.

Of course they were totally cool about it, and in true Jamaican "No Problem" fashion they gave us breathing techniques to help relax.

After showers, dinner and many drinks we found ourselves walking barefoot along the beach at midnight the only two people in the world.

The Sheriff of Nudy-Ham

It was our last full day in Jamaica. I woke early and padded out to the beach. The eastern edges of the starry black sky were growing purple. A cool morning breeze wafted lazily up from Panama which sent me to find my morning coffee.

Sandals is like a machine, walking through her empty corridors and pathways, even at five AM, she hums quietly. Laundry machines, clanking pots and pans, hushed young men raking seaweed from the pristine beach. It all works. As nice as it is, I know I won't be back. My next trip will be a smaller place where I'm not be so pampered, where I can visit one to one with people and places.

I walk out and sit on the jetty separating mellow Sandals from raucous Hedonism and re-dedicate myself to my sunrise experience. It's lighter now. The stars are all but gone and the sun is beginning to rise over the island.

Fishermen dot the horizon as the sun begins to react with the low flat clouds miles out to sea. Sandals is waking up. A hundred yards down the beach several day trippers loading a thirty foot bay cruiser for a day on the water, the wives look nervous. My gaze is broken when a tall thin Jamaican angel walks my way in her smart Sandals uniform.

"You look like you need a refill," she beamed as her impossibly beautiful eyes sparkled in the growing light. She was holding a carafe of hot Blue Mountain coffee.

"You guys Rock!" I said holding out my empty cup. She looked confused as she poured, "I'm sorry, that's Philadelphian for Yes Ma'am, I'd love a refill!"

Away she walked as I enjoyed the view, and then turned to look back out to sea.

I finished my coffee, and strode back to our suite. Dolores was still sleeping. Remembering our Shroom Boom the night before I was amazed how clear my head was this morning. I guess you need a good mental floss once in a while.

After a shower and shave, I sat on our patio and fired up the day's first spliff. It was just after seven when I heard the shower running. A few minutes later Dolores joined me on the patio dressed in a cheetah skin one-piece swimsuit and a frilly black skirt. Her hair was pulled back in a tight ponytail and after 5 days in the Jamaican sun, her dark tanned face needed no make-up.

"You look beautiful!" I said smiling up at her, still in my sunrise over Negril trance.

“Thank you Mr. Smooth,” she said in a teasing way.

We headed to breakfast. On the way we met up with Ken and Barbie, they had finally relaxed and were loving Negril. Today they were headed to the Appleton Rum Estate tour and some sightseeing. They asked us to join them but we declined. Honeymooners need to be alone on their honeymoon.

Dolores skipped her morning kayak workout because we had a full day planned. Craft Market and Shopping before lunch, Waterskiing in the afternoon, dinner at Kimono’s (an Asian style steakhouse at Sandals) and then to Hedonism with Rain and her creepy boyfriend to party hardy!

After breakfast and a morning snack, we boarded a taxi to the Craft Market near town. We went from stall to stall looking for unique gifts for my daughter and both sets of parents. At high season there are so many people shopping that the sellers and higglers were much more laid back than usual and the Jamaican dollars flew like monopoly money. Every stall sells cigarettes and Red Stripe but many would not accept our traveler’s checks, so we decided to hit the Cambio across the roundabout to exchange them for J.

As we crossed the bridge we saw an old blind man sitting on a small crate, the cup in his hand told us he was hoping for money. Maybe he wasn’t blind but somehow he sensed us coming. He greeted us warmly and I put a US five dollar bill in his cup. We were about to walk away when he engaged Dolores in conversation. As they talked I was amazed how she stood there rapt with attention looking in his eyes as their connection seemed to deepen.

He reminded me of an old Rastaman I met years earlier on my first trip to Negril. I leaned on the bridge and allowed them to visit awhile, and I wondered if this chance meeting would have a similar effect on her.

After we said our goodbyes, we ran into a group of market ladies waiting to cross the road. They seemed very interested in Dolores’ meeting with the old man.

“Did you give him money?” One of the younger girls asked in a way that seemed aggressive.

“We gave him a few dollars.” Dolores parried. “And we had a nice talk, he was telling me a story.” She thinks he was at least. She really didn’t understand his words but they definitely connected at some level.

This made all the women smile. Dolores went, in their eyes, from some bitchy American tourist to the sweet good hearted person who I knew stood before them.

“Most tourists just walk by him like he’s not even there!” Another woman said. The word “Tourist” was spoken with disdain. “Man spends his life working, now he too old for work, we don’t forget him, and you treat him with respect, that’s good!”

“He was a sweetie!” Dolores said as we all crossed the street together.

The whole event seemed to buoy Dolores’ spirits as if it was some cosmic test and she’d just made the dean’s list.

After that our cabby took us to a few more of his “special” places for some deals, we got back to Sandals in time for lunch with a big pile of goodies.

We took the loot back to our room and realized we’d have to get pretty creative to fit it all in our bags. The three foot tall giraffe seemed the most troublesome. I know, I know, what does a

giraffe have to do with Jamaica? I have no idea. But one thing I've learned about women is just to say, "That's nice honey," break out your wallet and enjoy the day.

We joined the throng of Sandals lemmings for lunch. Yes, we'd decided to embrace the horror. People arriving today were looking at us how we looked at the all-inclusive people on our first day. When in Rome...

Now it was time for waterskiing. Neither of us had ever water-skied and Dolores wanted to try it much more than me, so we signed her up at the water sports shack. A few minutes and some instruction later she was on the water as graceful as a swan. Well, not exactly. Water-skiing on a flat lake is one thing but in a bay with small swells is something different. She made several attempts and had a few good runs but the experience was pretty short lived.

The video of it is pretty funny. I got the fifteen or twenty people there on the beach to cheer her on. So, on the tape you hear cheers and a few seconds later a loud AWWWWWW, then a cheer, then an AWWWWWW over and over again till the boat driver thought she had enough. The cheering section all applauded when she climbed out of the boat. She had no idea why they were cheering, but she gave a bow anyway. It was more than a year till she actually saw the video, then she finally got the joke.

Since we had more than an hour planned for skiing and it only took fifteen minutes, we decided to explore northward for the first time all week. To the north was Hedonism.

Dolores went inside and put on a skimpy bikini. I commented about it she dismissed me saying it was the only one she hadn't yet worn. I smiled, hell it looked great, and we crossed through the security gate into the wicked Hedonism II.

Like our first walk through Sandals, Hedonism was pretty deserted, a few non-naked people milled around. I was surprised that I immediately remembered the layout. I was amazed how run down it seemed. The place needed a good paint job. Even the sailboats and watercraft were dull and faded, a striking difference to Sandals brightness and newness.

As we got closer the nakedness quotient began to rise, and before we knew it we were the only clothed people in sight. We were dressed almost the same as we were on our first exploration through Sandals where we felt under dressed, but here we were clothed and crashing some kind of wild naked party!

A few people started noticing us and we started to hear cries of "newbies!!" and "get naked or get out!" We tried to walk thru and get to the beach, but we'd walked ourselves right into a naked dead end.

Now, most of these people had no reason being naked in public. Hell most of the men looked like me! Worse even! The women weren't so bad, but the older I get the more I realize that any naked woman is a good naked woman.

Just when we realized there was no way out and it was some kind of Mardi Gras party, a big drunken loud guy pointed at us and made a bunch of loud unintelligible sounds.

"Hey, ah, hah, hey!! She drunkenly shouted waving his arms!

He seemed to be their naked leader, and to Dolores and me he will be forever remembered as the Sheriff of Nudy-ham who banished us from the forest of shriveled nakedness.

Thank God, somehow we made it to the beach still clothed. We found two empty chaise lounges, sat down and laughed about what just happened. No sooner did we catch our breath

than did a Hedo security guard come over and told us we can only walk through and couldn't use the resorts amenities.

We looked at her in terror! We have to walk back through the gauntlet of the Sheriff of Nudyham!!

Dolores and I stood up, stripped and walked through the maze of dancing naked flab. This time we weren't noticed, at least not negatively, and several people even tried to hand us drinks. OK they tried to hand Dolores drinks, whatever!

Either way, we got out of there as fast as we could, (later we found out it was the ConneXtions Swinger's Club annual Hedo trip) and as soon as we cleared the last few piles of cellulite we re-clothed and hit gate back to Sandals. That was it for Hedo we'd hang out at Sandals tonight.

The rest of the day was uneventful. The sunset was especially beautiful that evening. We watched it from the beach while sipping martinis and promising we'd be back again soon. Later we had a wonderful dinner at Kimonos, and danced the night away, which at Sandals meant we were in bed by eleven.