

**Yeah Mon; Me and Hans in Negril with Hopeton Jarvis, Lump-ay, and Guenter.**

**You probably know Hans. But if you don't, let me introduce you. One of the sweetest humans you will ever meet plus he is a world class singer, songwriter, and musician. I have been fortunate to be his friend from pretty much the day we met back in the spring of 78. But this story is about a trip he and I made to Jamaica one February in the late 80s.**

**We decided we wanted to do a two-week trip as the plane tickets were the biggest piece of the expenditure. As long as we were there why rush back? I had been a couple of times, so I did all of the planning. It wasn't really that much planning. Matter of fact, we landed at the airport in Montego Bay with an itinerary that consisted of "get to Negril".**

**At that time the airport in Montego Bay was basically a huge pole barn. We exited down the portable stairs off the plane and onto the hot tarmac. Since we had no checked bags, we made our way over to immigration and customs. Jamaica is pretty lax with the white tourists but you still don't want to get on the wrong side of a customs agent. He grimly gave a quick search of my bag then pushed it to the end of the counter and turned to the next person in line, Hans. I had**

stuffed my shit back inside, zipped it up, and took two short steps when a rasta looking dude approached me and whispered “wanna buy some ganga mon?” SHIT, I was still in the border control area. “Na na No thanks”, I stammered.

Out in the parking area there was a division of service providers. Those inside of the chain link fence and those outside. Inside supposedly “authorized” and those outside freelance and cheaper. I’d come this far and really wanted to make it to Negril so we paid premium and got two seats on a VW van inside the fence. Immediately vendors closed in and sold us some cold Red Stripe beer. Once the van was full, we were on the road.

On one of my previous trips, I had stayed at a place that consisted of individual grass huts. One for each party. The van dropped us there and took off. We soon learned that they were booked up. Jamaica is a very poor country, so there are a lot of folks out “working the tourists”. If you have pale untanned skin, you are like chum to a swarm of hungry sharks. Once you get burned, you get less attention, when it turns into dark tan you go unmolested. We were “day one” bright white.

**Within minutes there were a dozen young Jamaican guys swarming around us, offering ganja, and a range of other goods and services. One of the more sophisticated hustlers spied our bags and connected the dots.**

**“You need a place to stay mon?”**

**“Yes, we do.” I replied.**

**“Ya, mon, I got a nice place, only one-hundred J (\$20 US) a night”.**

**“Is it on the beach? We want a place on the beach.”**

**“Ya, mon. Jump on the back of my motorbike and I’ll show you”.**

**I left Hans there with on his own. He was two hours into his first trip to Jamaica, was in charge of guarding both of our bags, as eleven street hustlers were talking over each other in an effort to ring him up. Most of the guys had their own area of specialization although they all sold pot. But one**

**enterprising young lad was horizontally integrated, Mr. Everything.**

**The twenty US dollar a night place was not on the beach, so my new friend took me to Sunset Cottages which we would later find out was one of the few Jamaican owned resorts in Negril. It was funky, rustic, but very near the shore. Right up our alley. I booked us for two weeks at thirty-five US per night. Then I flagged down a taxi and went back to pick up Hans. I believe that I can speak for Hans when I say that he was very glad to see me. Even gladder when he saw the place where we would be staying for the next two weeks.**

**We quickly stashed our stuff in the funky first floor room and settled in on the area directly in front, only about twenty-five yards from the tide line. Within minutes we had purchased ganga, rum, and fresh squeezed orange juice from friendly vendors working the beach, and the party was on.**

**We quickly met our new neighbors. First was Lump-ay. He was a retired Canadian that came down every winter for two months, on his sons' dime, while his wife stayed in Toronto. The young Jamaican guys loved him because he was always telling bullshit stories and sharing food and drink with them.**

**He and the young guys teased each other constantly. We will circle back to him later.**

**A day or two after we arrived, a solo German tourist took the room directly above ours. Guenter. He was about our age and had traveled the world extensively since age eighteen. He approached and introduced himself. His English was excellent. Hans immediately started to razz him as if they were old buddies. Guenter was taken aback. A few minutes later when Hans went into our room to get something, Guenter asked; "Is Hans being mean to me because he does not like me."**

**"No", I replied. "He just likes to get everyone shit. It actually means that he does like you." Guenter was confused.**

**"You just have to give it right back to him. Ask him if his relatives are from Turkey because he looks like a Turk". Hans had shared a story with me about being discriminated against by a landlord that thought he was Turkish. Guenter was getting even more confused.**

**"Listen. He will tell you that he is not Turkish but that his is Lithuanian. Then you come back with 'There are a lot of Turks**

**in Germany who claim that they are Lithuanian'. Then watch the look on his face."**

**It worked to a T. Hans was punked, tricked, and fooled. It took him about half a minute to put it together that I was behind it all. He just said "Rickaye, I will get you for this". Then we all had a good laugh. But I knew that he was not kidding about the retribution. A few days later I got food poisoning.**

**I was laying on the bed trying to wait as long as possible to make the next run to the shared potty out back and trying really hard not to shit the bed. Hans was having a merry old time teasing and making fun of me. But then he took it a step too far. As he walked by, he grabbed my big toe and gave it a painful twist. I almost lost control of my bowels and did lose control of my temper. "If you ever fucking do that again, I will shit on your bed". It was not an idle threat and he knew it. He just stuck to the verbal harassment after that.**

**Around that time a local guy, Hopeton Jarvis and his girlfriend, sauntered on up to our front hang-out spot and introduced themselves. Hans had brought a small cheap guitar along and had been entertaining a few folks at that moment. Hopeton stated that he was also a musician, so Hans passed him the**

**guitar. We spent the rest of the night singing and playing songs with our new friends.**

**A storm blew in a couple of days later and ran all of the white folks out of the water. But the young Jamaican guys were out there swimming, body surfing, and even riding jet-skis right up the face of twelve-foot waves then doing a complete 360-degree backwards flip. The maneuver could have killed or paralyzed them but most of the time they successfully completed the stunt. And even when they didn't, no one was injured. As we were standing by the shore watching, a couple of Jamaican guys that we did not know stopped by to offer some advice. "Don't be thinkin about goin in there mon. It's not for no white boys. Only Jamaicans can handle those waves". So, of course we had to jump right in and do some body-surfing to prove them wrong. We did pretty good and only got a couple of sand noogies.**

**A couple of days later, well after dark, Hans and I were sitting in front of our room enjoying the sea breeze and the sound of the waves lapping up on the shore. Two of the older ladies from the family that owned the resort walked up to within about fifteen feet of where we were. "Have you seen Lump-ay?" they queried.**

**“Not since early this afternoon” we replied.**

**“No one has seen him since then and he was supposed to eat supper at our house, but he never showed up. We think that he may be down the beach”, said they.**

**We nodded. Then the conversation died out but they remained where they were while looking steadily at us. After a couple of minutes, I started to pick up on the non-verbal communication cues.**

**“Would you like us to walk down the beach with you and look for him?” I had realized that they didn’t feel that proper Jamaican ladies, such as themselves, would be seen walking on the beach after dark without male accompaniment. They nodded their assent. So, off we went as Hans and I were getting tuned in to their communication strategy.**

**When we got to a bar that the ladies thought he might be at, they would stop walking and silently look at the place. Then we knew they wanted us to go in and look for him. One of us would stay with them and the other would go in and inquire after Lump-ay. It was like following a trail of bread crumbs. Most of the bartenders would say “Yeah mon, Lump-ay was in**



here.” Then they would guesstimate how long ago it had been. The next bar would have seen him a little more recently. Finally, one of the bartenders told us that they had hosted a free Bacardi rum tasting event earlier and that Lump-ay had done extensive tasting then left heading toward his home at Sunset Cottages, extremely wasted.

After a long discussion with the ladies, we decided that we would all head back toward the cottages and that Hans and I would start looking into the shadows to see if Lump-ay might be passed out on the ground. We made it all the way back with no sign of the man. The ladies were now even more worried. We all stood in our original spots without much conversation. I had a bit of an insight and left Hans with the ladies while I walked to the back of the property where the family house was situated. I quietly walked up to one of the windows and peered in. There was Lump-ay, sitting at the dining room table talking to some of the men in the family and obviously drunk on his ass, swaying back and forth in his chair. I breathed a sigh of relief and started to chuckle. At that moment Lump-ay passed out and fell to the floor landing right on his noggin. I thought “Oh shit, he just had a heart attack and died, right after I finally found him.” But the guys were laughing at him so I realized that he would be OK. I went back and reported the good news to the ladies. I thought that they would be really happy and thankful for our

help. But instead, they seemed disappointed that we had not figured out where he was much sooner.

The evening before we were scheduled to fly back to bitter cold Wisconsin, we were in our spot in front of the room smoking up the last of our ganja and drinking the last few bottles of Red Stripe that we had on hand. A couple of the other guys that had been staying there were on their last night as well. Someone mentioned that there was a multi-band reggae fest at a resort aways down the beach. That was followed by much grumbling about how we were all too low on money to afford the cover charge. After a few minutes of listening to that, I took the bull by the horns. "I'll be back shortly", I promised, and off I went.

I worked my way around the perimeter of the resort, probing for weak spots. Bingo. Part of the "fencing" was a thick hedge, but I found a spot that had obviously been used before to sneak into the grounds. I worked my way in there until I could stick my head thru the bush and ascertain that it would a good place to sneak in as there was no security personnel in the immediate area.

I went back and shared my plan with the gang. Between the bunch of us we had enough to cover a cover charge for one

person. Everyone coughed up a few J and I stuck it in my pocket, just in case. I lead them back to the sneak in spot and told them to follow me. Once we got to the entry point, I told them to hold still until I waved them in. I popped on thru, onto the grounds of the fest. Some dude, who was walking past saw me and said “Hey mon. You can’t just sneak in here. You gotta pay”. I figured that he was not part of the security team but that he could cause trouble if I didn’t pay him. So, I gave him the 20 J that the group had chipped in. He walked away happy and I waved the rest of the guys in. We spent our last night on the island dancing and swaying to some a local reggae groups including one called the In-Deek-A Band.