

## THE GOOD DAY

We launched the boat and set course for Jewfish Key and an afternoon with friends and family. The sun was unrelenting, coaxing everyone to enjoy the water and every inch of the island seemed covered. The animated and sometimes rowdy throngs of people looked like pirates searching for treasure buried in the sand. Fighting our way through the impenetrable masses of boats, we finally found our spot. The anchor dove into the translucent water as the natives moved out of the way. Splashing in the crystal blue bay the scene around me could have been a commercial meant to entice tourists to our sunny shores. It was a good day. What could go wrong?

The sun began to drop on the horizon and the clouds darkened, a customary sign of rain and the signal to pack up. The journey home was long and growing increasingly treacherous due to the excessive number of boats racing the weather. We chased the clouds, encountering choppy waters and colliding with the wake of boats double the size of our center console. Suddenly a rogue wave hit with such unexpected force that water ascended the side of the boat and our perfect day quickly turned traumatic. White knuckled grips gave way and a passenger was thrown, striking the bulkhead. My father and I knew immediately something was wrong. Laying on the deck of the boat, the love of our lives was face down and unresponsive. I stopped the boat and stood frozen. I could only hear my heart beat as I watched the dark red blood flow from the motionless body of my mom and form a river bound for the drain. My dad dropped to her side, ordering me to call for help. He grabbed the nearest towel and pressed it to her head, frantically hoping to stop the bleeding. My shaking fingers pressed 9-1-1 and I felt a warm thick liquid creep between my toes not realizing what I was standing in. The operator's voice broke my trance and I was bombarded with questions. "Stay at your current position. Help is on the way," is all I remember. The 10-minute wait felt like an hour while unrecognizable gibberish spilled from my mom's mouth. At least she was talking. The rescue boat came speeding up and the EMT's jumped into action, rushing us to the nearest marina where an ambulance was waiting with flashing lights. A once valuable and coveted item became worthless as we left our boat tied to a random dock and jumped into the ambulance. Inside the sterile box, surrounded by medicine and machines we sped to the hospital while the EMTs worked to stop the bleeding while determining the depth of the injuries. We were greeted by white lab coats as they wheeled my mother through a set of large swinging doors before she disappeared into the abyss.

A nurse showed us to a waiting room and that was all we could do - wait. I quickly hit "William" in my contacts and it seemed my brother was standing next to us just minutes later. Finally, one of the white coats that took Mom away opened the door, expressionless with a clipboard in hand. The doctor introduced himself and we held our breath. He spoke quickly but kindly, "Your wife lost a lot of blood and has suffered a pretty good concussion but she's okay. You can see her now." Our relief showed physically as the three of us exhaled together and our shoulders relaxed. The doctor escorted us to her room and quickly reassured us before being swallowed in a sea colorful scrubs as a voice echoed his name to the next emergency. Mom looked small surrounded by machines, dried blood matted in her hair with tubes draping from her arm and a brace supporting her neck. She smiled when we entered and I said my 100th quick prayer of the day. "Well that was an exciting day," she laughed before reaching out for Dad's hand. Back home as a family with mom safely resting, I finally relaxed. Laying in bed, the adrenaline of the day's events melted away, replaced with exhaustion and gratitude as my eyes were forced shut. As I drifted off I remembered the start of the day. What could go wrong?