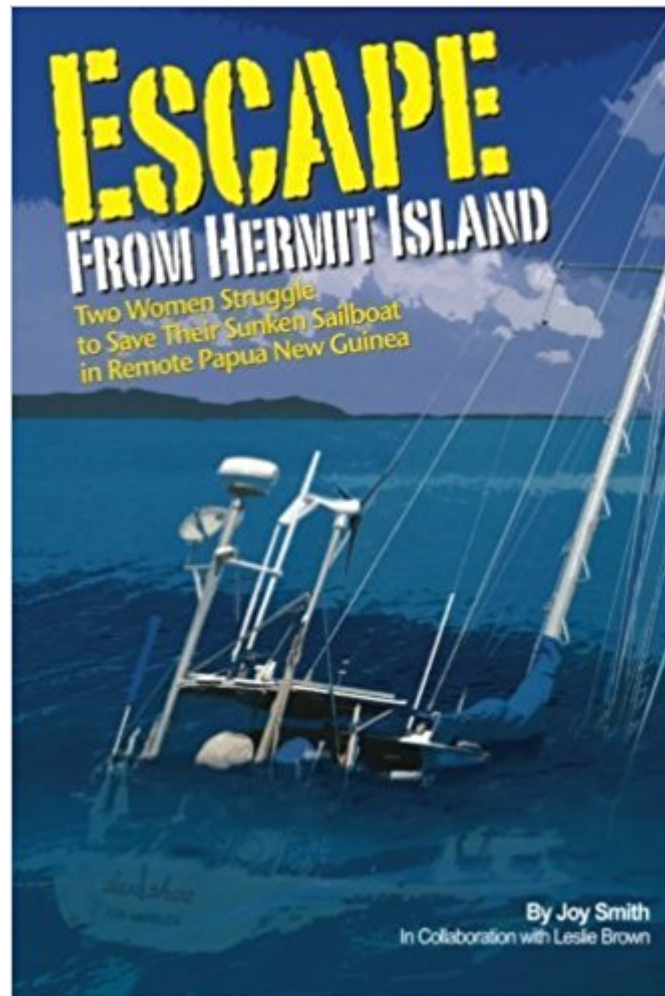




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Escape From Hermit Island



Synopsis

The true story of two women stranded on New Guinea's remote Hermit Island atoll after their sailboat grounds on a reef and sinks. At the mercy of the indigenous people, they are forced to live with the locals while they devise a plan to re-float their boat and sail to civilization. With careful planning and the help of the island men, they manage to save their boat from the reef only to find it immediately embroiled in a "cargo cult" salvage rights dilemma. Subjected to the arcane traditions of the locals, they struggle to keep control of their boat while they repair it in preparation for the dangerous trip to the mainland. It's a unique look into the primitive culture of one of Papua New Guinea's most isolated civilizations.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Joy Smith has been sailing her entire adult life. She is a native of Los Angeles, where getting hooked on sailing is easy. She had owned and raced four sailboats before buying Banshee in 1971. Banshee and Joy have crossed the Pacific three times with various crews. After the third Pacific crossing, Joy, a science teacher, became an assistant principal of a high school on Guam, and Leslie Brown joined her there in 1996.

I heard about this book through the network of Bristol 34 sailboat owners. The story recounts the sinking and salvaging of Bristol 34 hull #1, and I own hull #37 (out of about 72 built in the 1970's). So my original interest was based on the boat rather than the story. But based on encouragement from other owners I gave Hermit Island a slice of my very limited reading time. The writing style

recounts the separate and shared experiences of two authors, with their individual sections intertwined within each chapter. The basic story moves fast and is well told. Such tales are always interesting to sailors who can only dream of the adventures these authors have lived for many years. But I found the narratives focused too much on the author's personal feelings rather than their actual experiences. Considering the authors' extensive Pacific travel, I was disappointed at their criticism of the native people who played a major role in salvaging their boat. The authors seemed to have unwarranted chips on their shoulders that weighed down both the storytelling and the reader's sympathy for their plight. Also, the editorial decision to make extensive use of the native Pidgin dialect was very distracting. At first I tried to wade through it, hoping to gain some momentum, but I eventually just skimmed the italicized Pidgin because it was just too hard to follow. Another disappointment was the total lack of photographs. I realize that photo gear may not have been available on the island, but surely some before and after photos could have been included. Even a simple line drawing of the boat would have been useful to someone unfamiliar with the Bristol 34. The book has its good moments, but a long magazine article would have been adequate to tell the story. Perhaps the authors can give that mode a try to better tell their story to a wider audience.

Thank you Captains Joy and Leslie for sharing a remarkable tale of an "impossible" achievement. I waited impatiently for my copy to arrive after finding out about it on . Once opened, the book is so gripping that I barely put it down until finished. We should be so lucky to have this Indominable Duo share more of their legendary Banshee Boat Log in the future.

This is a book about two self absorbed women in a relationship who stupidly crash their boat upon a reef while driving it with an autopilot without anyone at the helm; the epitome of bad seamanship. When the local natives try to help them they berate them for not doing it to their standards and they represent the epitome of ugly Americans, criticizing the culture for not accepting them as a "couple" and for their primitive conditions. The natives work tirelessly without thanks from these two self absorbed women and when they help themselves to a few of their things, since this is a culture where individual possessions are generally unknown, the women go nuts. Notwithstanding that the natives might have had an actual salvage claim against the vessel I hated this book and urge you to skip it.

I found this book to be both a well written and gripping story. Those who would harshly judge the

author's reactions and behavior obviously have little knowledge of the challenges of such a difficult endeavor in a place like Hermit Island. I did not come away from this story with the notion that the authors were "Ugly Americans" and in fact believe they both deported themselves admirably under the circumstances. Read the reviews, read the book, then draw your own conclusions. If you do not finish this with a healthy admiration for these two women then you have missed something.

One thing that I don't understand is why people from the U.S., like these two women, seem to think they can go to another country and expect the same rights and privileges they get in the U.S. The people of this island really put out a lot to help them and provide for their necessities to live for months and they end up bad mouthing those that helped them in this story. They should thank the man above for coming out of this mess alive and with their boat. The way of life in another country especially and undeveloped one is not for one to expect to be treated like they do from the U.S.

This book cashes in on the hospitality and rights of the Luf villagers. They helped those who wrecked their boat on their reef. And they helped in their way, and put up with this... 'escape from Hermit Islands'. The book should be named 'Islanders escape from berating refugees'. I am thoroughly disappointed that a remote community 'isolated from civilisation' should have the misfortune to be the subject of such a rant, such a book. That it is published too... shame on you all. You put yourselves as self-righteous, self-absorbed victims, when in fact these islanders - who have centuries of survival, tradition..and seamanship - are the victims here. Knowing that it is unlikely to be read in remotest PNG, I am sure the authors jauntily dreamed this adventure up. Learn, don't 'escape'. Not funny, mate.

This book is well written and a compelling story of the authors' struggle to save their boat. However, it is maddening to read, since they are completely self-absorbed, and make little effort to meet their native saviors halfway. There is a large cultural gulf here that they simply rail about at great length. There is no way they could have salvaged this boat by themselves, but they depict the locals as primitive sexist thieves, and pat themselves on the back for donating \$125 to the island. If they had carelessly driven their boat onto a reef like this in a "civilized" country, it would have cost them many tens of thousands of dollars to get this much help. Hate to say it, but "ugly Americans" is pretty accurate.

Amazing story of two intrepid sailors brimming with tenacity and a good measure of temerity. Well

written. An excellent read.

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