

# ACCLAIM FOR *SHADOW CAY*

“INTENSE, CHILLING, ENTERTAINING NOVEL.

If you enjoy a good thriller, *Shadow Cay* will provide that and more. It sets a strong pace from the start with riveting action and dialogue. The beautiful Bahamas background adds contrast to the frightening action and gritty texture of the story.”

—**BellaOnline Mystery Editor**

“SUSPENSE AND THRILLS. THE STORYLINE IS DEEP AND RICH, FLOWING WITH CHARACTERS THAT PIECE TOGETHER LIKE A FINE JIG SAW PUZZLE, BRINGING FORTH A STORY THAT REELS WITH ADVENTURE AND INTRIGUE...A real thriller, one that wraps around you and keeps you tied to the pages until the final curtain.”

—**Midwest Book Review**

“WHEN YOUR NEXT HEARTBEAT MIGHT KILL YOU, YOU LIVE A LIFE ON THE EDGE AND IN SUSPENSE AND THAT IS EXACTLY WHERE TWO CHARACTERS CREATED BY AUTHOR LEONA DEROSA BODIE LIVE. Their story is captivating, their bravery unique and the story is full of twists and turns, which leave the reader wanting more while flipping through pages.”

—**Hot Gossip Hot Reviews**

“IT WAS A GOOD THRILLER AND WOULD MAKE AN EXCELLENT MOVIE.”

—**Beck's Book Picks Blog**

“SHADOW CAY REALLY DELIVERED...LEONA BODIE IS NAME TO WATCH IN CRIME NOVELS.”

—**A Chick Who Reads BlogSpot**

“SHADOW CAY” IS A FASCINATING READ, NOT TO BE OVERLOOKED. The search for morality and justice often finds you none. "Shadow Cay" tells the story as two justice seekers in Madeleine and Peter find themselves up against greed and corruption against a powerful corporation. Through their investigations, they may be risking their lives in this mystery set in the beautiful region of Miami and the Bahamas. “

—**Midwest Book Review**

“DRAMATIC, INTERNATIONAL THRILLER.”

—**Scripps News**

“A WONDERFUL, AWARD WINNING BOOK . . . The judges were unanimous in their selection of Shadow Cay as a 2010 winner in the Mystery/Thriller category.”

—**Premier Book Awards**

2010 ROYAL PALM LITERARY AWARD. . . a winner in the thriller/suspense category.

—**Florida Writers Association**

“THIS WAS A PAGE TURNER. The action was steady enough to keep me non-stop turning the pages until I had finished it.”

—**The Musings of a Book Addict**

“Leona Bodie had done a good job; this novel is . . . RAW AND GRITTY, BUT ENTERTAINING. ENJOY.”

—**Reviewer for Book Pleasures**

“MADELEINE NESBITT IS ONE OF THE STRONGEST FEMALE CHARACTERS I'VE SEEN IN AGES.”

—**A Chick Who Reads BlogSpot**

“BIG BUCKS AND BIGGER DREAMS ENTWINE IN A WEB OF DECEIT. I can't wait to read more by this author. Leona Bodie is a new master storyteller. I found Shadow Cay hard to put down . . .The characters are lifelike and made me care.”

—**JW Thompson, Author of  
Mysterious Lady and Hidden Evil**

# RAVES FOR LEONA BODIE

“LEONA BODIE IS A MASTERFUL STORYTELLER and I highly recommend her new thriller, SHADOW CAY.”

—**Chere Reynolds, President of the  
Florida Assn. of Forensic Professionals**

LEONA BODIE BRINGS THE READER TO ANOTHER PLACE. SHE DOES SUCH A NICE DESCRIPTIVE JOB I FELT LIKE I WAS IN THERE IN FLORIDA. PLEASE PASS THE SPF50, THANK YOU.

—**Gelati's Scoop BlogSpot**

"This suspenseful novel is a treat to read because of the way the author delineates her characters. LEONA BODIE IS A FRESH NEW TALENT in the much-plowed field of mystery books with something interesting and original to say. Shadow Cay is a 'can't put down' reading experience.

—**Malcolm Mahr, Author of  
Murder at Paradise Spa**

# SHADOW CAY

A Novel By

Leona DeRosa Bodie



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Shadow Cay

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For more information about Leona DeRosa Bodie and her books, visit [www.leonabodie.com](http://www.leonabodie.com).

# Dedication

*To Catherine, my mother, who said I could do anything I put my mind to; and*  
*To Walt, my husband, the love of my life and my partner in every project; and*  
*To Marie, James, Wayne & Erica, thanks for your encouragement, and*  
*To my grandson, Logan, whose smiles make my day and light up my world, and*  
*To Sharon for your kinship, friendship and all your laughter.*

**“You are born to fly, and in dreams you discover the soul has wings.”** --*Robert Moss, Dreamgates*

SHADOW

CAY



## Prologue

### Mooring on Great Bahama Bank

A WHIFF OF FRESH AIR, reminding him of her perfume, stirred the anger that smoldered then flared into a rage, blazing in his gut. Claude Pelletier gritted his teeth and gripped the wheel tighter. His wife was gone. For the first time in his life, he felt all of his fifty-seven years. A voice lighter than mist whispered, *adapt or die*. He pulled the half-empty bottle of rum from the cooler and chugged.

The alcohol brushed away some of the pain for a few minutes. He looked out over the water of Chub Cay, on the northeastern fringe of Great Bahama Bank. A coconut scent lingered and palm trees hugged the coastline. The water was sparkling clear, and he counted the starfish beneath his keel. Although he was anxious to explore the Bermuda Triangle, he was tired.

Claude heaved the anchor over the side and settled in for the night.

He reached for the bottle and took another swig, watching the glaring yellow ball of sun sink into the horizon. The beauty of the sunset momentarily consumed him, bringing a certain peace that tempered the bitterness in his heart, if only for a short period.

With a sigh, he staggered across the deck. Halfway to the cockpit, he stumbled. The bottle of rum slid from his fingers and distilled alcohol formed a slick patch of amber. Claude swayed. He saw the boom swing and fended it off, but it swung back and caught him. He struggled to stay upright, but his feet slid out from under him. As his head hit the bronze and stainless steel winch, he heard a cracking sound and fireworks detonated in his skull. Everything went black.

CLAUDE struggled to awareness, despite the pounding in his head. It was dark. The radiant dial on his watch told him he'd been out for three hours. Slowly the gray fog cleared from his brain. He frowned. Why didn't he hear nature's typical night talk coming from the nearby island? A cold sweat drenched him. Something felt terribly wrong.

He crouched in the cockpit and listened, straining to hear anything ominous. He straightened up and scanned the twilight seas and the stillness. Clouds, like a parade of boas, slithered across the

moon, turning the sky top a charred-purple. The velvet silence provoked anxiety. Claude flicked two toggle switches on the instrument panel, illuminating the foredeck and filling the cabin's interior with light from overhead fixtures and a hurricane lamp.

He entered the galley and opened a second bottle of rum, pouring two fingers into a tumbler. Drinking should help him forget Nina's desertion. So far, it wasn't working. He sat down at a table in the teak-paneled salon and stared in shock at the mirror above the table. He saw the hard lines of a man he didn't recognize. There was no sign of the burned out music teacher. Instead, looking back at him was a boat bum, his ragged gray hair spiked and his clothes rumpled. He ran his fingers over the ugly red lump near his hairline, then put down his glass and wondered if things would ever be right again.

Pouring more rum, he went to the stateroom and confronted the photograph of his wife.

"Where are you, bitch? Why aren't you here?"

He glanced at the portholes, at the emptiness of the sea. Someone was out there. He chugged his drink. Finally peaceful and numb, he turned off the lights and slept.

CLAUDE abruptly awoke to sounds that didn't belong in the silence of the cay. The clock by the bed read 1:15 am. A wet puff of air steamed down the companionway, adding to humidity so thick his boxer

shorts clung to his skin. Then he heard it. A muffled hum drifted across the water, then hushed voices. The noises slowed, then stopped. Claude waited. Nothing.

Suddenly, the boat listed. *Somebody's on board.* Claude heard the thud of heavy boots topside and could tell there was more than one intruder. The skin on his neck prickled. His only thought was to flee, but there was nowhere to go, nowhere to hide. He had no weapons. He bolted from the stateroom, through the galley and hid in the farthest corner of the second stateroom.

“Won't do you any good to hide,” a cold, hard voice called. “Come out where we can see you. We won't hurt you.”

The sliding stateroom door squealed open. Claude clutched a corner of the bedcover. Someone grabbed it. At the same time, the room exploded with light.

“Who are you?” Claude could barely speak for the suffocating pressure in his chest. “I can't see you.”

No answer. The flashlight's beam strayed from his face. He stared into the darkness, praying. He heard the metallic click of a safety and watched in horror as cowboy boots and a blur of denim rushed toward him. Cold steel pressed into his temple.

“Please,” he begged, “please don't hurt me.”

“Dis ain't part of the deal,” a voice called from outside.

Claude caught sight of a short man, dressed in fatigues. When the man with the gun turned toward

him, Claude made his move, lunging toward the gunman, grabbing him in a chokehold. The struggle was short-lived. Claude heard the gunfire. He looked down at his chest. A strained whine rose in his throat and he felt himself falling, falling, falling...

TWO hundred and forty-five miles away, a young girl frowned in her sleep, as she tossed and turned in her bed, struggling to escape an image of a rumpled and frightened gray-haired man she'd never seen in her life.



## **Part One**

# **A SWING OF TIDES**



# Chapter 1

## ***THE NEXT DAY: February 13, 1991 Neumans Cay, Southern Exumas, Bahamas***

RICO SALAZAR CHECKED HIS WATCH, then scanned the horizon. Nothing. Quarter to ten and still not even a glimpse of the long-awaited powerboat. His crew had to arrive soon. They should have called an hour ago. Discretion had always been crucial, now even more so, especially if they were followed.

With only the warmth of the sun and the whispering sea for company, he scrutinized the quiet lagoon and the mile-long stretch of beach. He didn't see a single soul. Only he and several crabs moved in the stillness.

Standing on a knoll, flanked by palm trees, Rico gazed at Exuma Bank's clear waters. The squeal of an osprey, plunge-diving feet first into the surf, startled

him. He marveled at the raptor's fluid motion, as it skewered a bluefish then flapped its wings and resumed flight, soaring over him. Rico squinted at the fish that dangled midair, face forward, still squirming.

An instant later, a single drop—the bright color of blood—dripped from the sky. He told himself the splatter on his shirt was a bad omen and Rico remembered his crew hadn't called. He glanced down at the blood. Maybe, they couldn't.

His island, Neumans Cay, was a part of the Exuma Cays, a chain of three hundred sixty islands in the Central Bahamas. The virgin beachfront suggested the cay was a blank canvas, bound for obscurity. He knew otherwise. Just two miles inland lay the epicenter of his island-based import/export company, miles from any traveler's radar. He meant to keep it that way.

RICO had literally stumbled upon the island. Like an over-ripe mango ready for plucking, the islet offered golden opportunities. Oozing out like nectar from rotten fruit, the temptations began here too.

He thought back to his discovery of eleven years ago. Searching for investment property, he'd cruised into a mild thunderstorm, along the western border of the Great Bahama Bank. Within minutes, a seventy-knot squall howled, as staccato bolts of lightning split the sky.

Visibility became a problem and he was

disoriented. Flashes of light, shadows of trees and foaming seas jumped around him, flickering like a flawed movie, making the picture oddly disturbing. Chaotic seas stirred giant waves, coming at him from all directions. He edged to the stern, struggling to stand upright, as the boat rocked.

Naldo, his right hand man, shouted for Rico's attention. "The storm's fouled the communication system!" The dying wind finally swept past them.

"My God, look at this place," Rico bellowed. "We're in the middle of nowhere. Where the hell are we?"

"According to my calculations, we're about a hundred and twenty miles off course," Naldo responded.

As Rico studied his surroundings, he could barely conceal his enthusiasm. He spied the southern anchorage and his gut told him this was it. He could easily move through these waters.

"What a place for my operation. It's a hell of a find," he said to Naldo. He pointed to its two entrances and natural deep water. "Ocean access."

RICO had bought one hundred and eighty acres on Neumans Cay, which included a handsome house, a small marina that accommodated large ships and a resort, to house business associates and guests. He constructed warehouses, barracks and a dock, with wide slips. Inside his concrete "Berlin Wall," he built an

airstrip and erected a mast-type radio, high on the island's southwest tip.

To assure his privacy, he fired a barrage of bullets into the cottages on the northern shoreline. Fifteen owners slammed their windows shut, locked their doors and dove to the floor. The natives, traumatized by their trigger-happy neighbor, hunkered down in their bungalows, like shell-shocked soldiers. From that point on, they stayed out of his way. None of them realized he'd built a 4500-foot runway, protected by radar, bodyguards and Doberman attack dogs.

HE smiled at the memory. He'd moved onto the island and now owned and controlled half of the island's six square miles. Bribes to the Bahamian Prime Minister assured large cargo planes, shuttling product from Colombia to the island base, and small planes, ferrying contraband into the U.S., operated with no interference. A few other well-placed bribes meant business boomed and officials did nothing to stop his irregular and profitable activities. His business continued to grow, as did his fortune.

Hundreds of cocaine deliveries were shipped into Neumanns Cay from the Exuma Sound's northeastern cut, his own channel to the Atlantic. While other dealers relied on human mules on commercial flights, the Salazar Cartel used submarines, go-fast boats and small aircraft. He revolutionized the trade, by transporting drugs to the

U.S. in the keels of tankers. For the past ten years, Neumans Cay had flourished as a multinational smuggling and refueling hub.

Rico scratched the scar on his chin, studying the varied shades of azure between water and sky. He had lived too hard, worked too hard and come too far to lose everything. He'd paid his dues.

Despite the pale aquas and deeper teals of the banks, and the midnight blue of the ocean floor, his mind suddenly sank back into the mire of his childhood. No matter how hard he tried to forget, the nights and the stench slithered back anyway. His mind went back to Cali, Colombia, when he was nine. He doubted the memory would ever fade.

THE steamy night smelled like cooked garbage and raw sewage. In the dark alley, sweat from ninety-two degree heat rolled down his face as he groped inside a rusty icebox, until his fingers landed on two hunks, which he slowly withdrew.

He glanced at the green mold on the cheese and the black spores on the bread then shoved the morsels into his mouth. Nothing he had eaten in a week tasted so good. If he'd had found these bits of food earlier, he wouldn't have eaten the cockroaches.

Rico had never known who his father was. His mother was an alcoholic prostitute, who made no attempt to hide her profession from her son. Rico hated her. Hated seeing men on top of her. Hated the fact she

spent any money she earned on booze. Hated rummaging through garbage cans for food. Hating the beatings he endured, when he came home empty-handed from his forays for food. He'd felt no grief, when she failed to return to their filthy shanty one night and he learned she'd been killed by a vicious customer. He wasn't surprised. A crow had crashed into his bedroom window the previous morning. That always meant bad news coming.

Rico had learned the trade early on. He sold his body to the young and old alike, male or female. He was a survivor. He darted from filthy streets to cavernous spaces, near dismal underpasses, where the homeless huddled in abandoned, overgrown parking lots and homesteaded soiled cardboard boxes. The streets were the only home he had. While he was good looking, he got by primarily on his charm.

That changed, when a rich old woman, with rheumy eyes and yellow craters for cheekbones, took pity and welcomed him into her home. She became his *abuela*, his foster grandmother, and spoiled him shamelessly. Despite his own manipulation, he never completely understood why the seventy-six year old woman took him in, but he loved her, because she taught him how to live.

Gradually, the sheen wore off his image of the old woman. It was nothing she did, nothing she said. Still, he sensed things were changing in some way.

Things shifted, the afternoon a crow hit the window in the living room, with a loud thud. He

remembered the other crow at the window, the morning before his mother died. Dead birds meant death.

That evening, his *abuela* hobbled across the room to kiss him goodnight. She flashed a hideous grin, showing teeth that looked like cracked nutshells. When her silhouette crossed his bed and her hand touched his shoulder, the hair on his neck bristled.

A curious shadow lowered over his bed. Her misshapen limbs blotted out the lights from the antiquated homes outside his window. For an instant, he saw his mother's features superimposed on *abuela's* face. His foster grandmother became a dead ringer for his mother.

From that point on, he hated loving her. Depending on a woman was a nightmare. The obsession consumed his days and nights. He felt like a monster, hiding behind a perfect mask. Whenever he saw her crooked grin, the rotten teeth, the webs of wrinkles, the parchment skin draped over her sparse frame in loose folds, his blood chilled. Rico thought such frailty meant death was near.

He was wrong. The old woman didn't die.

He endured the situation for eight long years. One afternoon, he knew he could stand it no longer. She 'd looked at him with her brown-toothed smirk, drool dribbling from the corner of her mouth, and the decision was made. He followed her across the room, his rubber soles making no sound on the hardwood floor. With almost no effort, his strong hands heaved

her toward the ledge.

Her eyes flickered to his, filled with confusion. She started to shriek.

Afraid of losing his resolve, he quickly shoved her again and listened to her scream, as she tumbled off the ledge, plunging four stories to the ground. He took several deep, calming breaths, then smiled, imagining his mother falling to her death.

The old woman had no children or grandchildren. She'd had no one to love, but Rico. He inherited the house and all her money. How grateful he'd been. Her wealth transformed him into a wealthy college student.

IN addition to his education in business and finance, Rico quickly learned what products did well in the market place and those that would always be in demand. After graduation, he instinctively cultivated the same plant his Andean Indian ancestors had, before the Spanish occupation. He'd carved a special niche for himself and, in ten years, had jockeyed his way into the major leagues. He was proud of his global connections and the financial empire he'd built, with production facilities in Colombia, Chile, Peru and Boliva.

He sometimes wondered what would have happened, if he'd taken another road, if he and Jeanette had made a life together. He'd probably be living in the States, bored stiff. Instead, now that his

island had become a major transfer point, his world had more curves and excitement than a roller coaster. He'd found the gateway to an oasis, comprising more than seven hundred uninhabited islands and cays. And he'd be damned if anyone was going to interfere with it. He'd do whatever he had to do to protect his empire.

RICO'S thoughts were pulled back to the present by the sound of quick footsteps on the sand behind him.

“Oye, Rico.”

*Finally.* Naldo Perez, his second in command, tugged on his shoulder. Relief lasted a fleeting second. Rico shifted his sights back to the waterfront, his breathing labored. *Think, don't panic.* He couldn't run. He'd find a way. Only cowards gave up, and he'd never been a coward.

“Boss, what's a matter?”

“Got things on my mind, that's all. Don't keep me guessing. How'd the new recruit do last night?”

“He doesn't have the guts for our kinda work.”

“You know what to do.”

“*Seguro que si.* Done.”

Rico shrugged at his lieutenant's comment. His concerns were far more important than one individual who couldn't work with the team he'd assembled. His entire business was threatened. His instincts warned him he had to be extremely careful. While he might not

be able to stop progress, he intended to do everything possible to redirect it and save his empire.

“Something wrong, Boss?”

Rico turned and studied Naldo, from his cowboy boots up to his worried face. “Yeah.” He again scanned the water, then turned back to Naldo. “You know the new hydrofoil that's supposed to link the islands?”

“Sure. What's that got to do with us?”

“Their Exuma trip touches a bit of the ocean, overnights in Georgetown and returns the next day.”

“Yeah? So?”

“They'll make unscheduled stops near our remote outposts.”

“*Caramba!*” Naldo immediately grasped the dangers. “What should we do?”

“That's what I'm trying to figure out. Not a word to anyone, Naldo. I'll find a solution. Okay?”

Naldo nodded and turned back to the compound.

Rico continued to stare across the water. If passengers were shuttled to the Southern Exumas, throngs might descend. Who wouldn't want a day beyond the reach of cars, a day without the clang and clatter of civilization? Who wouldn't want a piece of paradise?

No, a route through the Exumas was way too close. Rico wouldn't accept such a threat to his world. He couldn't do that. He'd find a way to protect himself and all he'd built up over the past eleven years.