



The Hard Way Around: The Passages of Joshua Slocum (Vintage Departures)

Geoffrey Wolff

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A masterful biographer now offers a thrilling, definitive portrait of one of history's most legendary icons of adventure.

In 1860, sixteen-year-old Joshua Slocum escaped a hardscrabble childhood in Nova Scotia by signing on as an ordinary seaman to a merchant ship bound for Dublin. Despite having only a third-grade education, Slocum rose through the nautical ranks at a mercurial pace; just a decade later he was commander of his own ship. His subsequent journeys took him nearly everywhere: Liverpool, China, Japan, Cape Horn, the Dutch East Indies, Manila, Hong Kong, Saigon, Singapore, San Francisco, and Australia—where he met and married his first wife, Virginia, who would sail along with him for the rest of her life, bearing and raising their children at sea. He commanded eight vessels and owned four, enduring hurricanes, shipwrecks, pirate attacks, cholera, smallpox, a mutiny, and the death of his wife and three of his children. Yet his ultimate adventure and crowning glory was still to come.

In 1895 Slocum set sail from Gloucester, Massachusetts—by himself—in the *Spray*, a small sloop of thirty-seven feet. More than three years and forty-six thousand miles later, he became the first man to circumnavigate the globe solo, a feat that wouldn't be replicated until 1925. His account of that voyage, *Sailing Alone Around the World*, soon made him internationally famous. He met President Theodore Roosevelt on several occasions and became a presence on the lecture circuit, selling his sea-saga books whenever and wherever he could. But scandal soon followed, and a decade later, with his finances failing, he set off alone once more—and was never seen again.

Geoffrey Wolff captures this singular life and its flamboyant times—from the Golden Age of Sail to a shockingly different new century—in vivid, fascinating detail.

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