

### **Chapter Three, in which we meet someone who is blinded by temptation, and takes the bait.**

Dan Farley parked the rented Audi in front of the strip mall office of the First Bank of the Exumas, and briefly wondered if it had been worth the extra money to rent the Audi. He wanted to impress these guys ... he stood to make a cool ten million, at least, if he understood the offer, and had a chance to own a resort in the Bahamas as he had often dreamed. And quickly too.

On top of which, this resort had attracted some bad publicity when they **ground up a coral reef** on the back side of the harbour to make a wider entrance for deeper draft boats, and to build up their fake beach with the detritus. He had a chance to stop that action, and make the resort into an eco-retreat, something close to his heart having watched the unrelenting development that had transformed the playground of his youth, the Florida Keys. He craved a simpler time.

What great luck that they had contacted him, Dan thought. The fellow who had called him from the bank had said that he had remembered his name from, of all things, a protest organized the year before, and had said that he thought Dan might be interested in trying to save the development. The previous owners were trying to sell the resort half-finished, as they had somehow over-extended themselves financially with a different project, and wanted out. The bank was willing to finance the deal, and were looking for someone to purchase the property, having financed the current owners.

The investor had noticed Dan's enthusiasm for the area, he had remarked during the introductory call, and had chatted briefly with him about environmental issues, with a seemingly sympathetic ear. Dan did have excellent local knowledge of the cay in the **Exumas** where the property lay, as it happened, having sailed in the Bahamas with his father in the summers, and often during the school year as well, his father valuing sailing over schooling much to the discomfort of his teachers. It seemed incredible that such an opportunity should present itself to him.

"Don't look a gift horse in the mouth," he remarked to himself, even as he wondered about the effectiveness of relying on such ancient wisdom, and just how bad a horse's mouth might have turned out to be. He straightened the tie he was wearing

despite the **Miami heat**, and walked into the air conditioned office.

"What a dumb name for a team," he muttered to himself. "You just should have a plural. Utah Jazz. Really. What were they thinking?"

The secretary, who was quite the eyeful, and certainly cupful, Dan couldn't help but notice, stood up when he walked in and glided from behind the desk where she had been seated, eyes glued to a Macbook, and promptly dropped the cellphone she had been twirling.

"Oops, how clumsy of me," she said as she **bent** to pick it up.

"Not at all," Dan replied, unaware of the irony, as the visual side of his brain was making it a little hard to think clearly.

"Would you like something to drink? Some **champagne and Hennessy**?" she was asking, he realised.

"I don't normally ..," Dan began, but she was already pouring, and it was quite warm in the room, "... say no to a lady," he gamely finished, as he took the glass, already sweaty with condensation.

"Call me Val," the woman said, as she put the drink tray straight. "And please, take a seat. Frank and Vincent are just with a client. I'll let them know you are here."

With that she left both the room and a starstruck Dan, who gazed around at the slightly decrepit walls of the strip mall unit, and tried to reconcile it with the quality of the leather couch he sank back in, and the weird but delicious drink he slowly sipped. His misgivings melted away as he began to look at the brochures artfully arranged on the coffee table before him, which promised an infinite future filled with **infinity pools** and beverages just like the one he was already holding.

