

**Chapter Eight: in which Angie gets nostalgic, acts tough,
and finds trouble.**

Angie shook off the chills and sat back down with her cup of coffee. She looked at the half full cup set down on the other side of the table. Did men feel they needed a woman in their lives to complete the picture? She really liked being alone, but that cup made her nostalgic for an image she retained from her childhood of a simpler time, a **Norman Rockwell time**, that had probably never existed for most people she sternly reminded herself. But being a modern independent woman really sucked sometimes, like now.

She finished her cup and quickly tidied up, finishing Mickey's coffee too, and decided to double check on the flare guns. They were both in a locker that opened from the back deck, and she went back and pulled the unlocked padlock from the rusty latch. The guns themselves were clean, however, and wrapped in a dust cloth, and the flares were up-to-date and dry. The houseboat company had been excellent about equipping the boat ... the rust was unavoidable with the salt water, and nobody locked much of anything around here.

Angie separated the two guns, deciding to put one if not under her pillow, darn close to it. Maybe she should put her pillow under her gun like **Chuck Norris** she thought and laughed out loud. There was really nowhere to hide it in what passed for her bedroom, which was well-named for it contained almost entirely bed, and so Angie popped it under the pillow, wrapped in a tea towel, with two flares in a ziplock baggie beside it.

With that done, Angie began to feel ridiculous. Here she was in paradise, with no one around for miles and miles, acting like a movie tough guy, and all she had to show for it was a used flip-flop. She felt awash with nervous energy, what with the drink at the bar and now the coffee, and the dim haze of the morning joint. The whole morning began to feel like a dream. A swim seemed out, but again, was she just letting things get to her? Why not just start the day all over again, and swim to the beach with poor old Taxi who was panting in the gathering heat.

Dogs should always rule the day, she thought, and grabbing her snorkelling gear she went to the bow with a now excited pooch. She dove in, sun shirt and all, and swam back to get her gear from the deck. Much easier to

put on flippers in the water, though it was still a laborious process. One day she would have to get the courage up to do a backwards roll into the water, but not today. Taxi had jumped in almost on top of her, his form of rescue that was much to be avoided, and it wasn't long before the two of them were splashing through the calm water on the short swim to the beach nearby.

The beach was on the leeward side of the cay that formed the protected harbour in which she was anchored, with the Atlantic Ocean on the other side. The land was made of ancient coral, and was tricky to walk on, but enough people over the centuries had made the trek that there was a hint of a path. Angie took off her snorkel and mask and flippers, leaving them at the side of the beach, and with her swim socks still on, clambered with Taxi to the top of the ridge and they looked together at the vast expanse before them. The wind quickly dried her wet shirt, and warming in the sun she decided to continue down to the rocky Atlantic beach.

Taxi was already there, sniffing his way along, interested mostly in fishy remains, things dropped by the gulls who came and ate their meals here, some apparently consisting of presumably unhappy clams, although their troubles were long over. Angie followed his lead, as she often did, and caught sight of something shiny a few yards up the beach. **Trying to clean the oceans of plastic** one piece at a time may be futile, she thought, but one should try and one never knew what one might find. Just the corner of a garbage bag, caught under some driftwood. And then another bit of garbage bag, and then a square pillow package, about the size of a big doughnut box, wrapped in white plastic.

Before Angie could really register what she was seeing, she heard the whine of a speed boat and with instinctive panic, whistled to Taxi. Keeping as low as possible she made a clumsy beeline over the ridge, slicing her calves in the process. She turned and lay low amongst the rocks, holding onto Taxi and willing him to be quiet. The whine got louder and a slick blue boat slowed down a few hundred metres off shore. Angie could just make out a figure leaning over the edge, lifting dripping white packages into the boat, with the sunlight shining off the metal end of his boat hook.

