

**Chapter Seven, in which Mickey and Angie look at each other in confusion, the elephant in the room is not ignored and Angie is unpleasantly reminded of Tolkien.**

Mickey and Angie looked at each other in confusion. He, worried that she had freaked herself out and seen only a flip-flop and imagined the body, hesitated to say anything, not wanting to make her think he didn't trust her, which he did. It just seemed possible she had been mistaken. Angie was thinking almost the same thing. The pot was excellent, she had been worrying ... but she had touched that fleshy leg. Surely she couldn't have merely poked a sea cucumber? She had dragged Mickey all the way here ... embarrassment mingled with doubt.

Finally Angie broke the silence, and offered Mickey a quick cup of coffee before he rushed back to me'mam. He readily accepted, glad to move, and they went into the main cabin of the houseboat where she put the kettle on and sat down at the settee with a sigh. Mickey ground the beans and got the filter down, naturally falling into his bar-tending ways.

"Isn't that just like Andy. 'Wrong place, wrong time, wrong shoes' should be his epitaph," he said, reaching for two souvenir mugs that Angie had bought to augment the tiny ones that had come with the houseboat.

"I really don't think I made this up," Angie reluctantly said, addressing the elephant in the room.

"I didn't say you did ..." Mickey started.

"But you were thinking it," Angie finished for him, "and so was I. It can be a little unsettling to be out here alone, and what with that stellar weed you put me on the track of, I suppose I could be getting a bit paranoid."

"I thought Jameson would be able to assist you. He specializes in customer service."

"As do you," Angie politely replied, accepting a steaming hot cup of coffee from him, cream and honey just as she liked it, without asking. It really was hard not to like him a bit too much, Angie thought to herself. But she was just feeling vulnerable, so that made men unfairly attractive she also thought to herself. There were two flare guns on the boat, and she remembered the end of *Dead Calm* all too well.

A chill went through her despite the hot coffee and she realised she could hear the low distant thud of a helicopter. No, a few helicopters. It would be the DEA, the American Drug Enforcement Agency, doing their usual swoop and terrify with their enormous black helicopters.

"Don't you feel safe now?," Mickey joked as he too heard the approaching thud thud. "I really do have to get back to the bar or I am as good as dead. Do you want to come with me while you shake off the creeps?"

"No," Angie slowly replied, as she put down her coffee and started to walk with him to the bow. "I'll be fine. Either it was an hallucination or maybe the tide has taken him," she added hopefully. "You don't suppose he could be getting sucked toward the blue hole? They warned me about snorkelling near it during certain tides and said it can force water right through a hole under the reef that people can get stuck in. Seemed a bit alarmist at the time. There are fabulous fish to see."

"I hope you aren't snorkelling there alone," he looked at her with genuine concern. "It really is dangerous and you should always have a buddy. But you know that," he added jumping into his whaler.

"Yes, of course," Angie lied as she watched him start the motor. The blue hole was close and so full of blue tangs that it was irresistible, and she knew to go at slack tide.

The helicopters had approached so closely now and were flying so low that the windows on the houseboat rattled, and conversation was impossible as they passed overhead, reminding Angie of the Dark Riders from Tolkien,

*like vultures that expect their fill of doomed men's flesh. Out of sight and shot they flew, and yet were ever present, and their deadly voices rent the air. More unbearable they became, not less, at each new cry. At length even the stout-hearted would fling themselves to the ground as the hidden menace passed over them, or they would stand, letting their weapons fall from nerveless hands while into their minds a blackness came, and they thought no more of war, but only of hiding and of crawling, and of death.*

