

Chapter Six, in which we return to the Exumas and find our heroine, our bartender and one dog, perplexed.

Angie put down the soothing but alarming beverage Mickey Finn had quickly poured for her when he heard about her unfortunate discovery.

"I am not surprised he came to a bad end," the diminutive bartender said. "I have rarely been so irritated by someone on first meeting."

"Trust me, he did not improve with contact. And I hate to blame the victim, but he sure had some unsavoury looking folks with him when it looked like he had bought the resort," Angie replied.

"Or farm," added Mickey wryly. "They did not look like contractors, or at least building contractors. More like someone who would fulfill a contract that had been taken out ...," he finished.

"I know," said Angie. "That is partly why I was worried when I hadn't seen him for a few days. That and curiosity about what they were doing at the resort."

"Let me get me'mam to watch the bar, and we can go back together and decide what to do with the late Andy Anderson," offered Mickey. "I really hate to involve the police ... bad for business. Nobody knows about this but you and me?"

Angie looked up at him carefully, wondering if she were crazy to trust this man she had known for so few weeks. Yes, she thought, she was but she could. Not that you could tell a book by its cover ... well, of course you can, and often do ... the *Berenstein Bears* were closer with their worm inside a perfect apple metaphor, loathsome children's books that they were. And there was no denying that Mickey was handsome ... had that Irish smile that somehow included you in a conspiracy and made you feel like partners in crime, but in a good way. And there was no denying that he had some way of keeping the authorities at bay, not just through location. But there was an honesty one could sense, and after all, forgetting all logic, she really didn't want to go back to the houseboat alone, and here he was, flesh and blood, willing to help.

Mikey walked along the wooden pathway that led to the little house he lived in with me'mam, for she seemed to have no other name, and returned shortly with a little chubby woman, the widow of the eponymous Fat Freddie. She came down the walkway with surprising speed, two little dogs at her feet.

"Get yourselves off now, I can give you an hour, no more or my baking will be ruined," she ordered, patting her ludicrous red curls. "Oh, look at this place," she then muttered, and started tidying the surprisingly immaculate bar. "The way you carry on ..."

Me'mam's words were lost to the wind as Mickey and Angie quickly stuttered thanks, reduced to infancy by her powerful presence, and walked out to the beach where Mickey's old **Zodiac** was pulled up next to Angie's kayak. They hefted the kayak into the boat and pushed off the beach, and all three leapt in over the bow, some more gracefully than others. Angie started to paddle to deeper water as Mickey tilted the **twenty horsepower Merc** into the crystal clear waters of the calm ocean.

The trip to the houseboat took mere minutes compared to Angie's paddle, and after skirting the new resort, now apparently deserted despite the occasional light Angie could swear she had seen at night, they approached the bow carefully so as not to disturb the earthly, or waterly, remains of Andy. Angie clambered aboard and tied the **painter** to the railing. Taxi made it with a little help from his friends and they all walked apprehensively through the centre hall of the houseboat to the back deck, where the boathook still leant against the swim slide that graced the stern, looking so innocent in the sunshine.

Mickey picked up the boathook and turned to Angie, who had a moment's doubt about coming back alone with him as he stared at its sharp, hooked end. But she laughed and relaxed as he grinned at her and said, "I hope our chum isn't **chum!**"

She didn't find his next words so funny, but laughed nervously nonetheless.

"I fear our friend has vanished, but this sure looks like his flip-flop," Mickey said, as he waved the hideous object in the air, suspended from the point of the boathook.



