

# CARIBBEAN COUNTERSTRIKE

## by Edward Hochsmann

### EXCERPT

An amusing incident occurs during a test and evaluation session at the Atlantic Undersea Test and Evaluation Center:

They had repeated the cycle enough times to get a reasonably rich dataset when something went awry. A defect in one canister's fins created a "wobble" in flight that caused it to fall behind its companions. When the dispersing charge fired, it was just forward of the speeding RHIB and doused it and its occupants with two-and-a-half gallons of bright blue paint. Lee closed the throttle slowly to bring the boat to a smooth stop, took off her paint-coated sunglasses, and said, "Everybody OK? Give me a thumbs up!"

After getting a thumbs-up from both passengers, Lee shook off her hands, put them on her hips, and glared at DeChamps.

"I think some of our projectiles might need adjustment," the engineer said, squinting up at Lee while holding his paint-fouled glasses.

"Ya think?" Lee replied.

"Kauai-One, Kauai, report!" her radio barked.

"Kauai, Kauai-One, direct hit by blue paint, no damage or casualties," Lee replied.

"Kauai-One, Kauai, roger, cancel operation and return to ship."

"Kauai, Kauai-One, WILCO, out." Lee took a deep breath and turned to Connally. "Sean, carefully help Mr. DeChamps with his glasses." She swished her sunglasses clean in the water beside the RHIB, then sat back down at the helm. Once Connally had helped DeChamps with his glasses and both were seated again, Lee opened the throttle and headed back to the patrol boat. I'll bet the cameras got an awesome shot of this. I'm SO looking forward to seeing it again, and again, and AGAIN!

While operating the boat crane, Jenkins left the RHIB at the deck rail after the crew climbed out so the paint could be hosed off before returning to its cradle. The XO met them there with an armful of sodas—he knew they would be dried out after a couple of hours in the sun. He was always doing thoughtful things like this, unlike any other officer Lee had ever served with, and it was the thing she liked most about him.

“So, Petty Officer Lee,” he said with a perfectly straight face as he handed her a can of Coke. “I think we need to get you some vacation time. You’re looking mighty blue.”

Ha, ha, ha! So, it starts already! Lee paused after taking the Coke and replied, “Thanks, sir. You know, XO, you’re wasting your talents here on the bounding main. You should run a comedy podcast!”