

# COCKTAILS & CASUALTIES by Carly Wayne

## EXCERPT

“So, you were saying that the boat just left without you, huh?” Hawk spread more butter on his hot pancakes.

“Well, to be fair, they warned everyone when we debarked that if we went off on our own that the ship would not wait for us. I should have started back to the port long before I did. Maybe I would have at least been in Maradiaga before the ATV broke down.” Teddy shrugged and shoved a forkful of scrambled eggs into her mouth.

It was nine in the morning, and the restaurant was empty except for Teddy and Hawk, and the two of them sat at the bar having breakfast.

“Well, you’re welcome to use my office to call the cruise line and try to make arrangements. The phone in your room will make you enter a credit card number to call long distance, and that cell phone you’re carryin’ won’t get a signal around here.”

“Really? No cell phone signal?” She was shocked.

Hawk laughed. “No, you might find a sweet spot around the lake, but I wouldn’t bet my life on it. We don’t carry cell phones around here. Some folks got a satellite phone, but they are darn expensive.”

“Wow. We really are off the beaten path down here, huh?”

“You got that right,” Hawk agreed.

“So, do you ever sleep? You were working when I left last night and you’re already here this morning,” Teddy told Hawk as he refilled her coffee.

“I’ll have plenty of time to sleep when I’m dead,” Hawk joked. “For now, there is too much living to do. Besides that, we are down one waitress because of maternity leave, and my bartender ran off two months ago with a traveling theater group from Canada.”

Teddy laughed. “My goodness, you do have staffing problems!”

“It ain’t all that bad, we manage...Where’re you from, Teddy? I think I can hear a little southern twang in your voice.”

“I grew up in Florida, but I haven’t lived there since I was eighteen, well, except for a few months at a time.”

He took a bite of his pancakes to mask a spark of triumph. “What do you do for work?” he asked absently.

“Actually, I’m a bartender,” she looked at him out of the side of her eyes.