

Chapter 1
Cayo Costa Island
June 27, 1980

“How do you know they are gone, Senor Cole?” The man speaking carried a large double bladed axe. He was short, stocky built and was heavily muscled. He swatted at the mosquitoes buzzing around his perspiring body.

“They’re gone.” Lifting a bottle of liquor to his lips, the tall, thin, unshaven man took a gulp and then extended the tequila to his partner as they walked down the dark beach. Moonlight illuminated their foot prints before the waves rushed over and erased them.

“You are sure?” The first man took the bottle from his companion. “I no want to go to jail.”

“The bitch is gone back to Miami. She told me she was leavin’ today when I was still bringin’ her out here ... before that boy started doing it. Ain’t no reason for her boyfriend to come out here if’n she ain’t.” Swinging at the bugs swarming around his face, the second man said, “We’ve done lost a month of the season. I got restaurants wanting turtle meat. We need to kill and butcher three tonight to catch up with orders. You can hunt eggs while I’m finishing the cutting. We need to get after it if we’re gonna get that done.”

“Is a lot of work.”

The thin man stopped and peered down the beach. He pointed at something in front of them. “There’s one heading back for the water. She’s laid her eggs and they’ll be easy to find. Run down there and kill her and I’ll find her nest.”

The two men sprinted down the beach, intent on killing the turtle and stealing her eggs.



Chapter 2
Cayo Costa Island, Florida
June 27, 1980

“I was afraid of this.” The girl knelt at the side of a hole the size of a small wash tub dug in the sand. The moonlight was bright enough to disclose a number of broken egg shells discarded around the excavated nest and to reveal the very feminine curves of the lady examining the nest. “Do you have a flashlight?”

“No, they’re in the boat.”

“I hate to ask, but I have to see how much damage they did.” The girl was choked up as she spoke.

“I don’t know. I don’t like leaving you here. We don’t know if these people are still around.” The young man was concerned for his companion’s safety. He relented. “You stay away if they show up, okay?”

“Yes, but I don’t believe there’s anyone around. The fluid from the broken eggs is dry. This was probably done last night.” The girl gently lifted a mashed egg and put it back in the robbed nest.

“You shouldn’t be here alone. Whoever did this might be dangerous. Go back with me, it won’t take but a half hour.” The young man wasn’t convinced; he didn’t want to leave her.

“It’s a half hour we don’t have. Remember, I have to catch a bus. I’ll be perfectly safe. You haven’t seen anyone, have you?”

“No.”

“So, there’s nothing to worry about. Besides, I think I know who did this. I can scare him off if he shows up.”

“Hell, no! I won’t—”

“Okay. You win. I’ll hide if anybody shows. Now will you run?” The urgency in her voice made him acquiesce.

“I’ll be back as quick as I can.” The boy raced toward his boat.

The woman rose. Her feminine outline painted in a dull gray suggestion against the white beach sand, she began examining nearby nests. Inaudible mumblings of shock and disgust came from her as she viewed the carnage inflicted by others. Her examination of nests brought her closer to two men who were objects of her anger.

