

## **Kokomo**

The island wasn't of interest to anyone until the resort went in. There weren't any minerals or other natural resources, besides some fish and general beauty. There was not nearly enough land for any kind of commercial farming. There had never been any kind of strong or interesting native or colonial culture. The port was completely exposed and had usually been empty before the cruise ships came. And while it was beautiful, it was beautiful in the tropical way that all West Indian islands are beautiful.

No more special than the next spit of land.

Not a destination.

It was a small island with only the Kokomo Sands Resort and one small town near a cave and small, mangrove-wreathed bay with access to sea-water called Kokomo City (formerly St. Pete's Hole), which was mostly inhabited by people who worked at the resort or casino or ran satellite businesses to be recommended by the concierge.

Not to say there wasn't anything magical about the place - magic exists everywhere - only that it wasn't any more magical than anywhere else. Magic existed in Baltimore, but the family hadn't noticed it in a long time, which is why they found themselves in Kokomo waiting for an old woman to die.

They landed there like a hurricane and settled in like people who were waiting out the storm of their lives without knowing that they had created it. We often wait out storms instead of just letting ourselves get wet, knowing we will dry off eventually.

Storms always pass if you can survive them.

Sometimes people lose themselves while waiting for the sun to come out.

There are also always dangers, though.

Even under blue skies.

### **Billy, Jr.**

Billy, Jr. knew his family was expecting him at the airport but he hadn't been able to sleep because of the cocaine and the acid, so he'd kept drinking and he took some pills somebody back in the neighborhood said would calm him down and knock him out.

They turned out to be Ambien.

He shouldn't have eaten four of them.

He slept in and missed his flight.

Oh boy, was that a normal kind of thing for him at this point in his life.

Billy, Jr. missed a lot of things.

He had gotten used to feeling like a punchline and embraced it because it seemed easier than changing anything in his life. He wanted to feel useful though. He wanted to fall in love and live a stable life, but stability seemed far off.

He was always falling in love anyway.

Two nights before he arrived at Kokomo Sands he spent in Baltimore with Bella, who was pretty new in his life. She had been good to him all night, knowing how fucked up he was and that he needed to get to the airport to meet his family. People were usually good to Billy, Jr., whether he knew it or not; he usually didn't.

But he attracted people that way.

For reasons that were mysterious to most that knew him well - like his family - Billy Jr. was somehow likeable.

Billy, Jr. made his own money but also spent money that wasn't his or anyone else's because he thought it all came out of the same pot, more or less.

It was a mess.

Keep wading through until you hit a sandbar, he thought.

Billy, Jr. was willing to die on a sandbar or reef if it meant he wasn't waiting for a boat or treading water.