

Key West.

The Pillar, a fifty-foot sunseeker luxury yacht poured herself into Key West harbour. A jeroboam of champagne in a bucket full of Budweiser bottles.

With too deep a draught for the marina, her pristine lines swung into the quayside. Pure glacier white against the coffee-stained trawlers and rusticated tramp steamers.

Across the waterfront a coastguard cutter prowled.

Raul Perez sat in the Pillar's salon; enveloped in a White Star Line level of opulence.

An oil painting of Ernest Hemingway, cast his eye over the proceedings.

'As you can see,' he spoke elegantly to the gentlemen from Homeland Security, 'we have nothing to declare.'

Raul smiled at his wife, who threw a disdainful look at the King Charles Spaniel as it snuffled and slobbered across the white merino-wool carpet.

Raul got up and walked over to the sniffer dog and tickled it under the chin. 'Let it be darling. He's only doing his job.'

The dog barked in agreement. 'See, they are trained to stand stock-still if there is the slightest whiff of illicit narcotics.'

'That is correct Sir and you appear to be clean today.'

'As every other day. Leave the cocaine to the Columbians, us Cubans prefer a simple mojito or Havana cigar.'

'Cigars aren't illicit Sir; but they are still classed as contraband under the Cuban embargo,' the Homeland Security officer reminded Raul as he took a stamp from his briefcase and endorsed the two passports; carelessly discarded on the table. 'Welcome to the USofA.'

The officer pointed at the portrait. 'Perfect timing: they're running the annual Papa Hemingway looky-likey competition up at Sloppy Joes.'

Raul escorted them down the gangplank and laughed, 'my father fished the Gulf-stream and drank with Ernesto on many occasions, I even met the great man as a child. No need for any looky-likey's.'

The officers saluted and marched their inquisitive mutt up the quay.

Returning to the salon and a frustrated wife, Raul pressed a concealed button and a keypad rose from the depths of the upholstery.

'Enter your keychain darling.'

Raul followed with his own and a mechanical whirring filled the air. He padded across to Papa and swung the painting aside, to reveal a safe. He opened the door and removed a pack of the finest Cohiba Montecristo Superiores. Far better than Castro's or Churchill's smokes.

His wife took two out of the pack, removed their caps and with a cigar-cutter prepped them.

She kissed her husband, 'but up on deck carino, not in the salon.'

Raul climbed the companion-ladder and walked to the stern. He struck a match and ever the perfect husband lit his wife's cigar first. The match floated overboard as a second sparked his own into life.

High on the poop-deck, Raul blew a stream as blue as the Atlantic's undercurrents towards the coastguards. Were they watching?

Raul opened the cocktail bar and muddled mint leaves.

'A toast.' He clinked his glass against his wife's, then raised it towards the cutter.

'Capitalism mis amigos. To contraband.'