

## Outerbridge Sound

### Chapter 15 – Search For Dom

**“They landed on the northern side of the island, where the current was less fierce. The sun decided to make an appearance, which Bill decided to take as a good omen. At the very least, it made looking for an entrance to the caves easier.”**

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“Are you sure you don’t mind doing this ?” Asked Paris.

“No, it keeps me occupied while they search for Dom.” Said Ilaria.

Paris nodded and carried on describing the huge creature she’d seen in the dark cold water of Outerbridge Sound. The Royal Navy were going to launch their submersible again that afternoon and everyone was hoping it was a case of second time lucky. The launch had reminded Paris about asking Ilaria to sketch an identikit image of the massive beast.

“Are you sure about the head ?” Asked Ilaria.

“Yes, that’s it.....You got it perfectly this time.”

The floor wasn’t quite covered in discarded drawings, though Ilaria had worked her way through half an A3 sketch pad. The creature currently being finalised was the closest to what Paris had seen, even if it looked like nothing they’d filmed, or any witness had described. Beyond huge, it had managed to create a tsunami in the sound, just by coming up close to the surface. In her mind she thought of it as the great granddaddy of all the monsters in the sound, the oldest and wisest, as well as being the largest

“Two eyes.....You definitely saw two eyes ?” Asked Ilaria.

“Yes.....Forget about everything else people have seen.” Said Paris. “This one is different.”

“Fine.”

Paris had felt guilty about asking Ilaria to be her sketch artist, the morning after Dom had vanished, officially still just missing. Ilaria looked different now though, no longer looking out of the window all the time, expecting the local cops to arrive with news about Dom. There were two schools of thought in the villa. One thought good old affable Dom couldn’t be dead, it was Dom for fuck’s sake. He was going to turn up hurt but alive, just like the tourist, Sonja Lund. Understandably Ilaria was the leader of the he’s just missing camp.

The other school of thought was that based on previous experience and the fact that Ilaria had mentioned seeing terrible wounds on Dom. Paris was one of that school of thought and they believed that good old lovable Dom wasn’t going to ever join them for breakfast again. Not that Paris was going to mention that to Ilaria. Of course, being a TV crew with the usual mixture of wild imaginings and a wide assortment of group neuroses, there were a lot of strange ideas about Dom’s fate, none of them pleasant.

“He’s probably being cocooned, like in Aliens.”

Gary had muttered to her, while she’d been getting coffee for herself and science guy at the crack of dawn. Everyone in the villa had been awake since Ilaria had arrived, screaming for help. Janssen wasn’t known for reacting with a fast response to anything. The two-man fire department had only been created because the independent airlines using the small private airfield, had insisted on it. After Ilaria had calmed down enough to tell Sam and Nicki about what had happened, Nicki had

called her brothers. The navy had sent over two divers and The Janssen Regiment had sent six young men with very little experience, but with immaculate uniforms. They were the team tasked with finding Dom and Paris didn't give much for his chances.

"Yes, that is what I saw." Said Paris. "Can I show it to science guy?"

"Let me finish it, then I'll do you a few copies." Said Ilaria. "Do you really call him science guy, since you've been.....You know?"

"Oh yes, he's told me I call him that in my sleep."

"Wow, must be love."

It was nice to hear Ilaria chuckle, the first time that morning. Paris was already thinking through her life goes on pep talk, for when they found what was left of Dom. She watched Ilaria finish some shading, though the drawing already looked perfect. Two eyes and a definite neck between the head and the body. It reminded her of the dark and hard to see image SHP's ill-fated drone had seen, deep down in the sound. Lots of tentacles, though a few had the look of short stumpy arms.

"It's so different to all the pictures." Said Ilaria.

"I talked it over with science guy and I think this might be the original granddaddy of all the beasts, the original. It might well have been down there at eight miles deep, doing whatever huge creatures do, for thousands of years." Said Paris.

"You really think it could be that old?"

"Living organisms in harsh environments tend to live long lives, according to Bryan. Bunnies breed like, well bunnies. That makes sense when you have lots of food and hundreds of predators. The giant tortoise on the other hand.....Some were alive before Napoleon was born and they're still going strong. Then there is the immortal jellyfish, which really does seem to live forever."

"If you start saying the truth is out there....." Chuckled Ilaria.

"I'm not claiming this monster has been lurking about in Outerbridge Sound for a few ice ages, I'm just saying it might have been. The science is there to explain it."

"There, done." Said Ilaria. "I'll run you off a dozen copies and then you can show it to whoever you like."

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Emily Hansen had been woken up by the general fuss and noise about Dom being carried off by something in the caves. Officially she'd been given quite a nice room in Bredon House and there was a decent pool there. Despite a huge heap of misgivings, she was back with Cormac, which meant she tended to stay in the villa most nights. Not that anyone was likely to moan, but she felt like a bit of an interloper in the villa. While Cormac felt it was his duty to see what he could do to help the search, she felt no such obligation. It wasn't that she didn't care.

"I don't see any point in adding to the general hubbub." She'd told Cormac. "They should leave the navy to get on with the search."

"I have to be seen to be doing all I can to help." He'd snapped at her.

Some couple finished each other's sentences, yet they rarely jelled at even the most basic level of how they viewed the world. Chalk and cheese, yet she could see the relationship going somewhere, this time.

"I'm going for an early morning dip in the pool." She'd told him.

Half her wardrobe seemed to be draped over various bits of furniture in his room, including her swimsuit. A tiny bikini she'd seen in a catalogue and bought especially for the SHP production on Janssen. She added a towel and because old habits die hard, she picked up her old but reliable

android phone. Useless of course, though a surprising number of the TV crew, still carried phones everywhere they went. The Major was stood next to the French windows closest to the pool.

“Dreadful news.....Dom of all people.” He said.

“Yes, terrible news.” She agreed.

Sunrise was at about seven twenty, she’d watched the sky get lighter as the chaos in the villa had grown in volume. It wasn’t that she didn’t care, she quite liked Dom. It was just that none of the fuss and noise was going to achieve anything. One of her friends at college had called her Spock. It probably wasn’t said to hurt her, but it had.

“Hmmm still a bit dark.” She muttered.

After dawn, though it looked likely to be a dull and cloudy morning. The poolside lights were still on, which gave her enough light to change. Emily changed out in the open, there was no one around. Her clothes went on a poolside lounge, with her phone on top. A quick adjustment of her swimsuit and she was ready to jump into the water. Only the pool wasn’t empty, a dark shape was swimming along the bottom.

“Crap.....Do they have alligators here ?”

It was really difficult to see what was down there, especially after it stopped about halfway along the bottom of the pool. Long and dark skinned, it looked for all the world like a two-metre-long alligator, or a crocodile. It had to come out of the water eventually, didn’t it ? She swiped her hand through the water, causing more of a splash than intended. As the creature moved, she picked up her phone.

“Curiosity Emily, remember what mum says about curiosity.” She muttered.

She’d been into everything as a toddler, especially if it was somewhere she’d been told might be dangerous. Her mum always seemed to be telling her about curiosity killing the cat.

“But satisfaction brought him back again.”

A great answer, which she hadn’t heard until she’d been about nineteen and her parents had long since given up on trying to curb her curiosity. The tiles at the far end of the pool, cracked and broke apart, as the creature used its claws to climb out of the pool. It was one of them, when she thought about it, it had to be one of them. It had looked so sleek and agile in the pool, but not now. It was a mess of weird looking limbs and claws where nothing normal should have claws.

“What did you bastards do with Dom ?” She muttered.

For some reason it never occurred to her that her old phone would do its best to make the picture perfect. As the flash went off it brought out the sparkle from a row of nasty looking teeth. It enhanced the wicked looking claws and made the two yellow eyes look huge. Two yellow eyes looking forward, predator’s eyes.

“Fuck.” She muttered.

Even as the creature turned towards her, Emily kept taking pictures and the flash kept firing. The rear legs looked almost, but not quite, normal. The front legs looked like tentacles adapted to use on dry land. Hard, tough looking tentacles with claws every foot or so along their length. As the flash went off, the beast waved a tentacle in her direction, as if warning her. Emily was scared, especially when it seemed to snap those terrible jaws at her.

For some reason she kept pressing the button and taking pictures. The final flash went off as the beast ran down the hill towards the ocean, and the Benevide family grotto. She was alive and she had at least a dozen clear pictures of the brute.

“Let anyone dare say these are unclear.”

She sat cross legged on the paving beside the pool and went through the pictures. They looked almost too good, like fakes someone had spent hours putting together. The dark morning coupled

with the flash, had created just the right effect. The creature's grey skin dropped into the background, while glinting teeth and claws were enhanced. Emily had no idea why the brute hadn't attacked her, though she was glad it hadn't. She could almost hear her mum going on about the dangers of too much curiosity.

"Sam will love these." She muttered. "Science guy too, he'll have an orgasm."

It had been a hot night on Janssen and she hadn't showered before leaving the villa. There had also been a lot of sharing bodily fluids with Cormac, in a highly enjoyable way. Emily badly needed to get into the usually cool clean water of the pool. A fairly long check assured her there were no other creatures hiding in a corner. When she jumped in the water, she was confident that she had the pool to herself.

"Five lengths....Then I'll find science guy." She muttered.

Despite lots of advice from numerous people he would normally have listened to, Captain Trevor Harrington had arrived at Outerbridge Sound, in person. Morale was low among his crew and the local inhabitants of Janssen no longer trusted them, not that he blamed them. The Sheffield had been sent to keep the population safe and the large number of tourists who visited the island during the summer season. Things had been going well, London were pleased and pleasing London often seemed to be ninety percent of his job. Then a cruise ship had been destroyed with massive loss of life. There had been no warning, he hadn't even known it had happened until a group of scared locals had sent up flares. A dreadful business with adverse mentions on the news, that weren't likely to stop anytime soon. London were definitely not happy.

"We need this to go smoothly, Tanner." He said.

"A deep-water drone was sent down last night sir, to just over a mile. Nothing was seen or heard. It looks like the beasts of Outerbridge Sound, are taking a day off."

"I hope you're right." Said Harrington.

He could have remained on The Sheffield, or in a vehicle parked by the road some distance away. There was no reason for him to take risks, yet he was there, onboard the boat about to launch the deep-water submersible. London again of course and their need to be pleased. Hiding and watching the submersible deployed from a safe distance, was guaranteed to annoy London.

"We seem to have a good crowd for it." He said.

There they were, it looked like half the population of The Donder Isles, had turned up to see the spectacle. There had to be a lot of cameras aimed at them and Harrington hoped none of their pictures ended up on another piece of bad PR in the media.

"Not just the locals sir, a lot of the world's news media still have reporters on Janssen." Said Low.

"Then we need to do this right." He said.

"Yes sir." Said two voices, almost together.

The boat had been damaged during the small tsunami, most of it cured by the carpenters and a coat of paint. The divers had found structural damage though, which was still being evaluated. There might be problems getting out of the sound, though he was leaving that worry for another day.

"Permission to deploy sir." Said Low.

"Granted, get them in the water."

His presence was probably making the crew nervous, the submersible was at an angle in the chains, as it hung from the crane. Too much of an angle, the craft rubbed against the side of the boat. No harm done, the submersible might look like it was all glass and propellers, but it was tougher than it looked. Tanner was already yelling at someone to be damned careful.

"Anytime this year, Tanner.....Anytime this year."

"Sorry sir."

It took a while, everything did if lives depended on the careful checks and yet more checks. The submersible could descend deeper than a top of the range nuclear submarine. That meant nothing could be rushed. Eventually the tethers were released and the two-man craft began to descend.

"Tell them no heroics." Said Harrington. "They can only descend to two miles. Get them to take lots of pictures of whatever they find, debris of one kind or another will do. If they get a ping off anything even remotely hostile, they are to surface immediately."

"Understood.....Yes sir." Said Tanner.

It was something he'd been told by a lecturer during his training, that the only thing to drop at speed through water, was a sinking ship. The submersible wasn't designed for speed, it was designed to survive eye watering water pressure at extreme depths. It was going to be at least an hour until it reached a depth where anything interesting might happen. Harrington sat back in the chair usually claimed by whoever was in charge of the boat.

"Alright.....I think tea is called for." He said.

"Yes sir." Said Low.

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Nicki Outerbridge had arranged the time and date before Dom had gone missing. It felt a little heartless to carry on with business as usual, but that was the way the world tended to work. She'd talked June into not coming with them while her son went through hypnotherapy, but rescheduling the date might cause her to rethink that decision. Then there was the fact that several senior officers were elsewhere, even the captain of The Sheffield. All in all, it was the perfect time, so Nicki had decided not to waste it. It was all to help Vince, she tried to convince herself. Deep down though, she knew finding Jack's treasure was driving her. The medical bay was quite spacious for a ship.

"Are you alright Vince?" She asked.

"I'm fine."

He looked comfortable, the large and well-padded chair probably doubled for all sorts of treatments, including dental work. Doctor Kevin Callow had been quite helpful and friendly, considering her brother had leant on him to do the consultation. Not that Nicki knew the Doc's guilty secret and she didn't want to know.

"You do understand I can't provide long term support." Said the Doc. "Once The Sheffield leaves, you'll need to go to the USA mainland for any ongoing therapy. I can recommend a few people."

"Yes, my brother explained all that." She said.

No nurse, Kevin turned down the lighting himself, by simply turning off most of the lights in the room. He pointed at a chair well out of the way and asked her to sit in it. As a minor act of defiance, she brought the chair closer to Vince, so that she could hear what might be said.

"Have you ever been hypnotised before, Vince?"

"I don't think so."

"First I'll just take you through a few relaxation techniques." Said Kevin.

Vince seemed to be almost asleep within a couple of minutes and she was feeling drowsy herself. The Doc knew his stuff, Vince was under before he'd had a chance to become anxious about the whole thing.

"Listen to my voice Vince, only my voice. Remember that nothing can hurt you here, nothing at all."

Vince muttered something; the boy could be a dreadful mutterer. Nicki began to shuffle her chair closer, until Kevin glared at her.

“Do you remember your last birthday, Vince ?”

“Yes, it was nice.....There were two cakes.”

“Tell me about your last birthday Vince, describe everything to me ?”

She knew why the Doc was doing it, but hearing every tiny detail of Vince’s birthday party was fairly tedious. Vince was relaxed and happy though, responding to every question from Kevin with yet more details of balloons, presents and the two cakes. It took at least half an hour, before the Doc moved the conversation on.

“Remember that you’re safe here Vince, no one can hurt you. I want you to think further back, to the accident. Not to when you were hurt, but where you were. Where did it happen Vince ?”

“They said it was my fault.” Said Vince.

“You were quite small Vince; I doubt if it was your fault. Where did you go Vince, describe everything, just like you described the party ?”

“I’d never been to the cave entrance near the boats. Tom had though and Dudley....Tom had even brought a flashlight. I can remember the damp walls were covered in tiny worms.....”

The name Dudley rang a bell with her, rumours from when she’d been at school. The youngest Cottingham kid, he’d vanished one Sunday afternoon. It was mercifully rare, but it happened. From what she remembered it had been assumed he’d drowned, his body washed out to sea. As for an entrance to the cave system near the boats? That could mean just about anywhere, boats were everywhere on Janssen. A good half of the various coastal cave entrances had probably never been explored. Nicki listened, hoping Vince mentioned finding a fabulous treasure. Despite the Doc constantly reassuring him he was safe, a memory obviously triggered recollections of some bad events.

“I can see him.....Dud, he was hurt, really hurt.”

“The memory can’t hurt you, Vince.”

“They said the blood was my fault. I was told never to mention Dud being hurt, or I’d be in really bad trouble. He died; I know it.....Dud died not far from where we’d found Jack’s old things.”

“Who Vince, who said they were going to hurt you ?” Asked Kevin.

“Hurt me, kill me.” Yelled Vince. “Kill me they said. Hurt me really badly.”

The Doc woke Vince up and calmed him down, until June’s son looked happy and relaxed once more. Kevin took her a little distance away for some privacy, though close enough to keep an eye on Vince.

“Everything changes once there’s a crime involved.” Said Kevin. “Are you aware of the death of a boy called Dudley ?”

“He went missing years ago, simply vanished one Sunday. It was quite a famous event when I was at school. They never did find him.”

“Hmmm, I did guess as much. I’ve given therapy to servicemen with severe post traumatic disorders, I can spot the genuine cases in a few words. Vince is genuine, I’ve no doubt about it. He witnessed a death; a murder being committed. I have to report that crime to my chain of command and the local authorities. On Janssen that means telling your brother, Thomas.”

“His poor mother, the circus will begin again.” Said Nicki. “That family have been pretty badly treated by the authorities, from both sides of the Atlantic.”

She looked at Kevin, knowing there was no way her brother could lean on him hard enough to make him forget about a kid being murdered. Actually, she’d have been angry if he hadn’t been giving her his best stern look.

“My hands are tied now that I’m aware a child has been killed. I will however, stress Vince’s age at the time in my reports. There is no justification for anyone to try to aim any guilt or blame in his direction.”

“Thank you Doc, that is appreciated.” She said.

Vince was sat in the chair, messing with the arm rests. The poor guy didn’t have a clue that he was about to be the centre of attention in a murder, once again. Nicki had a thought she wasn’t proud of, but someone would need to be appointed to do the job.

“Could I bring him to you for more sessions ?” She asked. “It could reveal information the local police might find useful.”

“Like where the murder took place ?” Said Kevin. “I do have my own curiosity about Jack’s treasure, though of course Vince’s interest has to come first.”

“Of course, we all want the best for Vince.” She said.

“Once I speak to Thomas it’ll all become official, and I don’t see any problem seeing Vince on a regular basis.” Said Kevin. “Ideally, it all might lead to some kind of resolution of his post traumatic disorder.”

And the treasure of course, they might resolve that problem too. Though Nicki kept that thought to herself.

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Bill Carr was annoyed he hadn’t thought of the plan, it was the best idea they’d come up with in weeks. Mark had listened to Michael Chavez telling the people in the chapel about the now famous, miracle. Not that Bill believed it had been a miracle, but Mark had come up with a way of explaining it. And one idea had led to another and the damned good plan had been formulated.

“Come on Bill, do we really think God stepped in to save Michael Chavez ?” Mark had asked.

“No, of course not. He probably got drunk and imagined it all.”

“My theory is that if you close your eyes for fifteen minutes and pray for divine help....Even a monster the size of a truck has time to go someplace else. My guess is that there’s an entrance to the caves near the boatyard. I’ve even got a pretty good idea where it is.”

Simple, sound and logical. Bill was beginning to hate the idea, because he hadn’t thought of it. He was the one with all the FBI training after all. The unseasonal cloud and drizzle weren’t pleasant, but the bad weather was keeping Michael’s flock indoors.

“I heard it’s like that round the clock now.” Said Mark. “The chapel is always full of people wanting to praise the lord and hear all about the miracle.”

“All that noise might attract the beasts.” Said Bill.

Michael’s Church of Miracles was popular and it was a noisy congregation. A lot of loud, happy singing seemed to be going on. Bill could see dozens of smiling people in the converted portacabin. Hopefully the dark dull weather, stopped them from seeing him and Mark. They had a right to go anywhere up to the high-water mark, everyone had that right. Wandering through the boatyard though....That was veering off into murkier legal ground.

“Come on, I know where there’s a dinghy.” Said Mark.

“I’m glad it’s bad weather, we must look like fucking terrorists.” Said Bill.

After it had taken three full clips of assault rifle ammunition, to kill one of the smaller creatures, they’d decided to upgrade their weapons. The beast that had injured Sonja Lund had nearly got them and that couldn’t be allowed to happen again. They still had an assault rifle each, they were like the tough guy equivalent of a security blanket. Their body armour was now the best there was, any SWAT team in the world would have been proud to wear it. Not fun to wear on a hot day, so the

current unseasonal gloom, was perfect. The whole urban warfare look was further enhanced by the grenade launchers they both carried. Heavy, the preferred weapon of insurgents right across the globe. If the weather had been better, someone would have definitely been calling Homeland Security to report them. Heavy of course, they'd be puffing a bit if much running was involved. Still, a bit of sweating and panting was preferable to the alternative.....Dying after being ripped apart by one of the monsters from the sound.

"There it is.....No one will need it in this weather." Said Mark.

It hadn't occurred to Bill that they might be borrowing without the dinghy owner's consent, thieving as it was more commonly known. The people he normally had as a partner rarely, if ever, suggested such a thing.

"We're stealing the boatyard dinghy?" He asked.

"Only borrowing and there must be others they can use."

"I always thought you Brits were all about doing the right thing....Stiff upper lips and following the rules."

"Well.....We probably were before the Boer war." Said Mark.

"The what war?"

"Never mind Bill, help me get the dinghy in the water."

The dinghy had seen a lot of years on Janssen and the outboard engine took some persuading to start. Once they were underway, it was obvious they weren't going to get anywhere that quickly. Luckily, they didn't have that far to go.

"See the tiny rocky island, the one with a couple of trees trying to take hold?" Asked Mark.

"Yes, I see it. I'm assuming the island links in with your plan." Said Bill.

"Ever since I can remember that island has had a bad reputation. Ask anyone about it and you'll get a blank look. Everyone knows though and almost no one goes there. Adults, kids....Everyone avoids the place, apart from the occasional tourist. They don't know any better."

"Great.....Glad I brought my grenade launcher." Said Bill.

The island was tiny, barely more than a navigation hazard seventy yards or so from the beach. As they swung around the back of it, Bill felt the dinghy slow down, as they entered the deep-water currents.

"There's a cave entrance below us." Said Mark. "You can just about see it at low tide. As kids we'd dare each other to dive down and enter the cave. No one ever did of course."

"I hope you're not suggesting we dive down there?" Asked Bill.

"No, I suspect Michael's famous creature might be at home. There's a back way in, a tradesman's entrance. Or at least there's a story about a small entrance in the rocks. It might be nothing more than a local legend."

They landed on the northern side of the island, where the current was less fierce. The sun decided to make an appearance, which Bill decided to take as a good omen. At the very least, it made looking for an entrance to the caves easier. It was a small island with few places to look. They were about to give up and put the cave entrance down as a Janssen legend. Bill found the cave, because he'd rested his foot on a rock to retie the lace on a boot. Hidden by nature behind one of the trees, with a few bushes that made it almost invisible.

"I wouldn't mind betting we're the first to enter these caves.....In decades." Said Mark.

The entrance was narrow and dark, they needed lights almost immediately. The damp walls began about five minutes after the passage began descending quite steeply. Soon the walls were covered in long worms, which seemed to love wriggling over his hands.



“Fuck.....No wonder no one comes here.” He said.

“According to the SHP’s science guy, the worms are baby monsters.”

“Perfect.” Said Bill. “Bloody perfect.”

Deeper into the caves and the humidity began to make him wish he wasn’t wearing quite so much body armour. He’d have fought anyone who’d dared to call him old, but the grenade launcher was feeling heavier than when they’d entered the caves. Entering the large cave was a relief from the narrow passage. The air felt drier too.

“Something happened here.” Said Mark. “I can see discarded clothes and.....Bones I think, a kid’s leg bones.”

Finding the small skull was dreadful, though the damage might have happened some time after death. It was Mark who used the term so beloved of TV cop shows.

“Been a while since the kid died, all sorts of things might have happened. It certainly looks like they died from blunt force trauma. Someone bashed the poor kid over the head.”

Someone had loved the dead child, a boy as they soon realised. Years before a mum had put nametags in all his clothing and although most had decayed in the damp, the one on his trousers was still legible.

“It looks like we’ve found the remains of Dudley C.” Said Bill. “Does that bring up any Janssen legends ?”

“Crap, Dudley.....We all thought he must have drowned.” Said Mark. “I went to school with him and Dudley was that kid who’d do anything. He even tried to enter the cave I said no one was brave enough to enter. He got close too, before coming back to the boat. The C is for Cottingham, he was their youngest. Sad to see Dud ended up down here.”

“It makes me wonder what other secrets are waiting to be unearthed on Janssen.”

“Be fair Bill, it’s rare, but occasionally bad stuff happens. No one tried to hide Dud going missing, the search went on for weeks. We’re an island though, surrounded by water. Every few years someone’s kid drowns. With Dudley’s reputation, everyone assumed he’d drowned. I hate to be the one to say it, but I should call this in to the regiment.”

Normally Bill would have agreed. He’d gone rogue for a short time though and still had a taste for it. Besides, they’d seen the navy and regiments guys out on patrol. They went through orchards making enough noise to waken the dead. Not that the creatures were likely to be scared, but they’d probably decide to find somewhere quieter to call home.

“Look.....We both know your guys will call the navy.” He said. “Soon at least a dozen of them will be trampling through these caves, scaring off the beast.....Or at least making it decide to look for a new lair.”

“You make a good point.” Said Mark.

“And poor Dudley has been dead for a long time. An extra day isn’t going to make any difference to him.”

“Alright boss, let’s go and find where Michael’s demon has gone to ground. If it all goes wrong though, I was just obeying orders.”

“Fine Mark, fine.”

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Denise couldn’t have avoided making the call, even if she’d wanted to. It hadn’t been the only employee death for SHP, though the only other one had been a car accident near Penrith. The British police had been wonderful then, sending out two constables to inform the next of kin. A man and a woman, Den had been told that was normal. Dom had died on Janssen, so there were no friendly

police constables who could call Dom's wife, Jane. Sam had called Den to give her the awful news. He'd been quite insistent that in no conversation with anyone, was the word dead to be used. "Dom is missing Den and will be missing until he either turns up, or the authorities find a body." Sam had told her.

Everyone knew though, no one out there in Janssen, or employed in London, was stupid. SHP didn't hire fools, was one of Sam's favourite sayings. Already badly injured before being dragged underwater.....Dom was dead, everyone would know that.

The call had been dreadful, though Jane hadn't cried, or at least there hadn't been the obvious sounds of crying. No one should receive that kind of news over the phone. It was simply the quickest way to let Jane know. Hearing the news over breakfast on the radio would have been far worse than a phone call. Denise had managed to get through the call without crying, or mentioning the forbidden 'D' word.

"Call me Jane, anytime. I'll keep in touch with Sam and the local police. Obviously if there's any news, I'll call you immediately."

Silly really, but the only way to handle it. Den had made herself Jane's go to person, the font of all knowledge regarding her husband's dea.....Disappearance. As time went on, if there was no news, Jane would end up hating her. Denise knew Dom and Ilaria had become a thing, just about everyone knew. Being half of a bit of a thing, was far different to being a wife. Den had no idea what Jane was going through, though she imagined it had to be torture. They'd had two kids together for fuck's sake. Her phone rang, the personal iPhone that few had the number for.

"Shit."

Jane calling and there was no news. There might never be any news if Dom's body had been washed out to sea. How could you grieve for someone without a body being found? Den accepted the call.

"Hi Jane....Sorry, nothing to report. The navy and local military are searching everywhere."

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Emily needed to relax; it had been a hell of a day. Up long before her body had managed to get enough sleep, followed by the stress of the search for Dom. Not that she'd been directly involved, but it seemed to be the only thing on local TV and radio news. As was becoming the new normal, she was showering and changing in Cormac's room. Sam had assured them it was business as usual in the villa, though he was going to give them an update on the news after dinner.

"Ilaria must be suffering, but you'd never know it." Said Cormac. "She a real professional."

"She liked my pictures of the thing in the pool." She said. "Some of them are going on the SHP Twitter feed tonight."

"You should have run. Standing there taking pictures.....You might have been killed."

"I wasn't hurt, but you're right. Silly thing to do." She said. "The cool way its teeth glint though. Worth the risk huh?"

"You are crazy Emily Hansen." Said Cormac.

He was higher up the food chain than her, there was even a large flatscreen TV in his room. It was currently showing the Janssen news with the sound turn down. Most of it was about Dom of course, a huge story on such a small island. As always seemed to happen, the news people used a picture of Dom that made him look like an escaped convict.

"Oh, if the creatures get me.....Make sure the news guys get a decent picture." She said.

"Definitely crazy." Muttered Cormac.

A friendly tussle led to kissing and might have gone on to full sex, if the picture of the Royal Navy submersible hadn't appeared on the screen. Emily hadn't forgotten about it, but it had been a hell of a day. She found the remote and turned up the sound.

"Oh, that was today, I forgot." Said Cormac. "I sort of assumed no news was good news. If there'd been another Tsunami, someone would have let us know."

It wasn't good news or bad news; it was a non-event really. The news showed a lot of pictures of what looked like dead trees, debris that had ended up in Outerbridge Sound. Someone called Peter Tanner was on the screen in naval uniform, saying the pictures were from two miles down. The news anchor lady looked suitably impressed.

"It's just sound bites and garbage." Said Emily. "No news is good news, aimed at the Brits watching in London."

"You'll be expecting meaningful content next." Said Cormac. "To the navy this will be perfect, no one killed, no expensive kit damaged. Sam won't like it though. No one wants deaths, but a little nibbling by the creatures.....That would feed the vibe for the show."

There was a bang on the door, which Emily didn't know if she should open. Were she and Cormac at that stage yet, the answering knocks on his door stage? She had picked up his phone a couple of times. To hell with it, she made sure her clothing was straight and opened the door.

"Sorry.....I just opened this and have to tell someone about it."

Ilaria was at the door, holding a large pocket watch.

"You'd better come in then."

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