

Outerbridge Sound

Chapter 16 – The Watch

“Bill didn’t mind Mark taking the lead. If anything was waiting somewhere in the cave system, the guy in front was likely to get eaten first. He had nothing against the guy, but if someone was going to be eaten, Bill preferred it not to be him.”

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Vince had gone back to work after seeing Dr Callow on The Sheffield. He’d been given the opportunity of a day off, but as he’d said to Nicki.

“Miss Ferland might need me to get something.”

He took the job seriously, his mum said they needed the cash to put food on the table and he did like his food. Then there was the opportunity for coffee with Miss Ferland, who kept telling him to call her Paris. His world should have been just about perfect, but the hypnosis had woken up bits of his mind, at least it felt like that. He kept seeing Dudley being hurt, really hurt. Worse still, he was drifting, going into what felt like intense daydreams. Paris hadn’t noticed so far, her voice always brought him out of it.

“You have to convince me you’ll keep this secret.”

The voice was yelling at Dudley, after one of the men had hit him. They weren’t just hitting Dudley. Vince had been hit so hard his head had bounced off the floor, then the wall. Vince’s memories were fuzzy after that, but he knew the voice of the man who’d hit him, though he’d been younger then. He even knew what the two men wanted kept secret.

Dudley had found something deep underground; he’d found a really huge secret. It seemed that something needed to be moved now and that meant a lot of work. The men had been angry and Dudley had argued with them. They didn’t need to kill Dud though....There had been so much blood.

“Vince.....Earth calling Vince, are you there ?”

He sort of half woke up, with her face looking at him. It took him a second or two to recognise her and remember that he was supposed to be working.

“Paris.” He said.

“Yes, it’s me.....Are you alright Vince ?”

“Sorry, please don’t tell Sam I was asleep.”

“I have no intention of saying anything to anyone.” She said. “I know you saw the hypnotherapist today. Has it left you feeling a bit tired ?”

“Yes, and there are more memories now, bits of memories. Some of it is very confusing.”

“Then you shall sit with me while I read through the script for later. I might even get you to read bits too. So I can hear how it sounds. I’m sure you’ll enjoy that.”

“Oh yes, I will Paris.”

“Good and if you don’t feel well, let me know.”

There was the whole adoring her thing, though he knew it didn’t mean he could trust her completely. She was so nice though, like a real friend.

“I know who one of the men was, the ones that killed Dud and hurt me. I recognised his voice, the one who really hurt me. He has less hair now, but I know him. You know Mark Coulier ?”

“Yes, the young guy always in uniform.”

"It was his dad, he killed Dud."

"Wow Vince, Neus Coulier is one of the richest people on Janssen. Crap, he's not someone to accuse without proof. Are you sure?" Asked Paris.

"Do you know him?"

"Only by reputation, he spends most of his time on the American mainland. If you're sure, you need to tell the authorities. If you like I can come with you.....Personally, I'd go to see the FBI guy rather than the local police. You need to be sure though."

"I'll be certain once I've seen where Dud was killed. More memories will come back to me, I'm sure of it. Can I borrow your bike?"

"You can't go on your own, the creatures seem to be everywhere. Emily saw one hanging out near the pool. We need to arrange a group of us, a well-armed group."

Vince knew he had an ace up his sleeve, as he was determined it wasn't going to be an SHP company outing. All girls liked treasure, didn't they? Ilaria and Nicki had sounded excited by the thought of finding Jack's treasure.

"Just us Paris.....I know where the treasure is, Jack's treasure. Dud and I found it the day we found.....Something else. You can have the treasure if you like. Most of it, my mum will need some to put food on the table."

His mum had looked so serious about the whole food thing.

"You really know where the treasure is?" Asked Paris.

"Yes, I'd never lie to you."

"Then I need to get changed and pick up some equipment. A camera too, one of the small lightweight ones."

"You're taking a camera? This is all supposed to be secret."

"Trust me Vince, listen to Sam, he knows his stuff. He taught me that no matter what might happen, the camera has to be rolling. So, we're taking a camera....Alright?"

"Fine." He said.

She actually kissed him on the forehead. Paris Ferland actually kissed him.

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Bill didn't mind Mark taking the lead. If anything was waiting somewhere in the cave system, the guy in front was likely to get eaten first. He had nothing against the guy, but if someone was going to be eaten, Bill preferred it not to be him. They weren't setting a fast pace, but Mark was refusing to investigate the various passages they passed.

"We have to be under Janssen now." Said Bill. "No way are we still in a few caves under that small island. We should at least look down a few side passages."

"We need to keep to the main passage." Said Mark.

"It might not be a main passage; it looks just like all the other tunnels we've ignored."

Mark stopped so suddenly that they almost collided. The young man in the immaculate Regiment uniform, sniffed the air.

"Salt water ahead and.....You must be able to hear it." Said Mark.

"Hear what?"

"Listen Bill, keep still and listen."

Bill could smell the sea water, that slight smell of seaweed and salt spray, that everyone puts down to ozone. He could hear it too, the quiet sound of ocean waves somewhere ahead.

"Alright Mark, we'll call this the main passage."

It was still frustrating to go past so many side tunnels. One had a glow that might indicate a way out to the surface. Was it still daylight outside ? Bill had lost track of the time. They weren't hurrying, but they weren't investigating the caves properly. Mark kept heading towards the sounds and smells of the ocean, like a man on a mission.

"The sound is getting louder." Said Mark.

When they entered the cave, it was like finding an underground ocean. Probably fifty or sixty yards across, it felt huge after the narrow tunnels. The water lapped gently against a small rocky beach. It had to still be daylight, there was a glow at the far end of the cave. A large entrance, most of which was underwater. The sound of waves was coming from that direction. Bill aimed his light down into the water, which looked to be pretty deep.

"This might be one of the entrances the big ones use." Said Bill.

"I hate to say it, but we need the navy guys to see this place." Said Mark.

It all looked so quiet, so safe. Nothing had attacked them in the narrow passages and the water in the cave barely rippled. Their instinct to be cautious drifted away, or at least Bill realised his focus had wandered a little. Mark yelling brought him back to the moment, with a hell of a jerk.

"It got my left hand.....The fucking thing got my hand." Yelled Mark.

Bill moved towards Mark and the tip of a large tentacle hit the rocky beach where he'd been standing. It was their lights, it had to be aiming at their lights. The problem was that Bill needed light to see the damn thing. It was huge, probably the creature Michael Chavez claimed had been destroyed by a divine miracle. It seemed the beast had merely gone back to its lair.

"Are you alright Mark ?"

"I'll live....But my fucking hand Bill.....It got my hand."

His mind must have heard the sound the last time, the slight splash. Bill ran to his right, as the end of a tentacle hit the rocks where he'd been. He'd never been trained with a grenade launcher, though he'd learned to use a lot of weapons. He quickly went down on one knee and aimed at the creature's one huge yellow eye. Tentacles seemed to be everywhere, one barely missed him. The beast turned though, when Mark began firing his assault rifle at it.

"Well done Mark." Bill muttered.

The bullets might not kill it, but they had to be hurting the huge beast. It had turned, he couldn't hit the eye square on, but he could hit the head, right between two tentacles. Bill had seen the remains of an SUV once, one that had been hit by a similar weapon to the one he was aiming at the creature. The SUV had been almost blown in two. The weapon had to be able to kill the brute. Bill fired and for a moment, the bright flash of the explosion, dazzled him.

"You got it Bill, you hit the bastard." Yelled Mark.

It bled, though even its blood wasn't natural. Grey oozing blood that was coming out of it in spurts. Bill ran to where Mark was trying to stop his hand from bleeding, though helping with that would come after making sure the one-eyed creature was dead. Mark's grenade launcher was ready to fire, far quicker than reloading.

"It's sinking Bill, get it.....Kill the fucking thing." Yelled Mark.

It was sinking, but some of the tentacles were still moving about. Frustrating that he still couldn't get a direct shot at the eye. Bill fired at the head again, the side he'd already hit. It was dead, it had to be dead. The beast convulsed a few times, before sinking into the deep underground lake.

"Gone.....They'll never believe us now." Said Bill. "Not even a picture....Bloody Chavez can still claim his miracle."

"A little help here buddy." Yelled Mark.

Mark was trying to use a spare shirt as a tourniquet around his wrist. Not easy if you're trying to do everything with one hand. Not a sensible thing to do really, cutting off the blood supply might cost him his left hand. The hand was ruined though, Bill didn't need to be a doctor to realise that. The tentacle had crushed Mark's hand against the rocks and it was beyond simply crushed. Pulverised described it best, the hand was finished.

"Shit.....I never realised how bad it was." Said Bill. "Here.....I'll bandage that as best I can."

"It hurts like hell....We killed it though Bill....You killed it."

"Just don't pass out, you're too big for me to carry."

Mark obviously planned ahead, there were two pairs of clean boxer shorts in his pack and some long lengths of bandage. By the time Bill had used everything on that hand, it no longer looked horrific.

Blood was still coming though, still turning the bandages red.

"Hold your arm up Mark. Come on, we need to get you to a doctor."

"It's a long way back."

"I think we passed a quicker way out." Said Bill.

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The Major, AKA Arthur Mullen, wasn't sure if the two armed men were from the navy, or hired mercenaries, he was just glad they were there. For the first time in a while, he didn't cringe when his wife, Kitty, wanted to sit by the pool. That crazy girl Emily had seemed excited by finding a creature in the pool, she'd even shown him a picture. Dom was still missing and people had died. Yet some of the TV crew were acting as though it was all a visit to Disneyland.

"The woman is called Rana dear." Said Kitty. "It seems they've been hired to keep us safe. After the dreadful business with poor Dom and Emily seeing.....That thing."

"Good, the navy never seem to be in the right place at the right time." He said.

Actually, he liked the cooler air by the pool, it was better for his vocal cords. There was a large voiceover piece coming up. It was supposed to have been Michael Chavez talking about his miracle, but it seemed he was too busy these days. Arthur didn't mind, the more he did, the more SHP needed him. There had to be another two seasons for the Janssen monster show, he knew something good when he saw it. He read the script Sam had agreed the night before.

"This boatyard might well be where a genuine miracle has taken place. The owner, Mr Michael Chavez, has contacted the Vatican. We may well see a miracle confirmed in this sub-tropical paradise."

It didn't sound quite right, but Arthur put it down to the high humidity by the pool.

"Only four miracles have been confirmed in the twenty first century. You may well be looking at the beach where the fifth took place. No one can....."

The gunfire broke his flow. Not automatic weapons, just several shots that didn't sound like handguns. Kitty didn't seem agitated; she was pointing at something in the bushes. It was a toad, one of the huge ones, the size of a Labrador puppy. Dead of course, it hadn't survived the rifle fire.

"Sorry, it was moving quite quickly." Said Rana.

Nonsense of course, Arthur had never seen one move faster than an arthritic snail.

"Didn't anyone tell you about them?" Asked Kitty. "Killing them is supposed to be bad luck."

"Sorry again, but we are here to keep you safe." Said Rana. "I've rather be apologising for killing a toad, than explaining how one of you died."

Emily quietly seeing a monster in the pool, was different to gunfire. Not exactly a crowd, many of the crew were involved in filming the wrecked cruise ship. A good number came out of the villa though and Rana had to apologise several more times.

“No, you did well.” Someone said. “Better safe than sorry.”

“Yeah, those damn toads give me the creeps.” Said Arthur.

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FBI Agent Stacey Tuttle had a good view of Jannsen as the private jet circled to get a decent angle on the small airfield. Her time on the beautiful island had left her with what the doctors were calling a degenerative back problem and a lot of memories. Some of the memories were of pain and fear, though not all. They'd fought one of the monsters, her and Bill, and they'd won. Despite the nagging throb in her back, the fact they'd killed one of the creatures, excited her. It was why she'd asked to return, when the opportunity had presented itself. She hadn't expected to be made the FBI's local coordinator, effectively Bill's boss. He wasn't going to like that. It was how the bureau was now though, they wanted bright women in key roles and they seemed to think a lot of her.

“Bill is going to hate me.” She muttered.

It was his own fault of course, going rogue for a while. Bill seemed to be back on track now, but the bureau were still nervous. One of her managers had suggested Bill was still a potential for total chaos on Jannsen. That seemed a bit unfair, it wasn't as if he'd personally caused the problems in Outerbridge Sound. Stacey remembered that if Bill hadn't found her, she'd be dead.

“We've a cross wind, this could be bumpy.”

“I'll be fine.” She said.

She had a quick glimpse of Tilburg, before the plane turned to land. Nice of the pilot to warn her about a bumpy landing, though the cushion under her backside was just about all she could do about it. Her orders had been to bring Bill most of the equipment he'd asked for and then to get him, Bill Carr, under control....Oh and good luck.

Just about everything Bill had asked for was in the baggage hold, apart from depth charges. Not that the local Jannsen government had objected. Things once considered unthinkable, were now on the table. Over two thousand dead passengers on a cruise ship, had drastically altered the situation. An entire college hockey team from Maryland had been killed on the Golden Promise.

“Depth charges are heavy and mobile delivery systems need to get close to the sound. Looking at the maps we have, that would be a problem.”

The weapons and logistics guy had told her, so Bill wasn't getting his depth charges. He was getting the weapons though, just about anything likely to kill the damned things. The brief given out was to consider any weapon made my anyone, in any country, that might bring down a tyrannosaur. Not that the creatures on Jannsen were dinosaurs, but the weapons people had needed some basic ideas to work with.

Hellfire missiles would do the trick of course, but they would leave Jannsen looking a lot less like a sub-tropical paradise. So, she'd brought a hold full of weapons for Bill to play with and his new chums in the Jannsen Regiment. Heavy weapons in the hands of young weekend warriors probably wasn't the wisest of moves, but she had her orders. The plane bounced as it hit the runway.

“Sorry.”

“I'm alright.” She lied.

Stacey had looked up what the doctors had told her was wrong with her back. Nothing to stop her being a desk jockey, though she had no intention of ever polishing a chair with her backside. Bill might hate her, but she was going to be his partner again, even if it was unofficial. The plane seemed to hit every rut in the runway, before finally stopping.

“I can see a Humvee and two small trucks.” Said the pilot.

“That'll be the Regiment.”

Of course, the damned chair didn't want to let her go, or her back had stiffened. Things were better once she was on her feet, sometimes the pain went away for hours. That was on a good day though, when she hadn't been bashed around by a bumpy landing. The door folded out of the way and there was that feeling; like suddenly being in front of a fan heater. It was a hot day on Janssen, the heat and humidity hit her and engulfed her, like a welcoming friend.

She was the only passenger on the plane, the FBI had sent only her. The British Navy were there, backed up by the local police and the Janssen Regiment. She could understand why she didn't have a plane full of armed agents with her, but when she reached the bottom of the steps, it felt pretty lonely.

"You must be Agent Tuttle?"

"I am."

He looked so young, they all looked so young. All dressed in very tidy uniforms, about a dozen of them. They went for the boxes in the hold as though it was a cool day, rather than about forty degrees with high humidity.

"I'm Corporal Jones. Agent Carr wanted to be here to meet you, but there has been a problem."

"Nothing serious I hope?"

"I'm not sure of the details, it seems they were attacked. Agent Carr and Mark Coulier are both receiving treatment at the local hospital."

Something had happened when Bill had got between her and the creature. She hadn't really liked him and he hadn't liked her that much. Now she felt anxious about him.

"Is it serious?" She asked. "Were they bitten?"

"I'm not sure, I just know they're both comfortable and doing well."

"You need to take me to the hospital." She said.

"My orders are to get you safely to the hotel."

His fellow members of the Brigade were loading up the trucks. Stacey noticed nothing was being put into the Humvee.

"Can you drive that thing? The Humvee I mean?"

"Er...Yes."

"Then you're taking me to the hospital Corporal Jones.....Agreed."

"Well, yes.....If that's what you want."

"It is and pick up my bag please."

"Yes mam."

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Vince had been keen on riding her bike, with her on the back. Paris had vetoed that idea, before she'd even changed into her jeans and T shirt. Sam had insured her for millions, for the duration of filming the show. Even a facial injury would cost his insurers more than the GDP of a few small nations. Sam had asked her to be cautious and getting on the back of bike with Vince, didn't seem that cautious. Actually, taking Vince to look for treasure in some still to be properly identified caves, wasn't being even slightly cautious. It was the treasure driving her of course, Jack's gold. Didn't everyone have a thing about finding lost treasure.

"We need to go to the Chavez boatyard." Vince had said. "I'll tell you where to go from there."

She liked the sedate speed limit on Janssen, it gave her time to take in the scenery. The lush vegetation was just beginning to look its best, though she'd been told it didn't die back that much in the winter. The lowest recorded temperature in The Donder Isles was about the same as a spring evening in London.

"Left here.....Turn left here." Shouted Vince.

Left took them into an orchard, where the trees looked to be full of oranges. A lot of being patted on the shoulder followed, with Vince pointing. When he eventually said they were there, it was a relief to take off her crash helmet. It was a hot day; her hair was wet and clinging to her forehead.

"We seem to be in the middle of nowhere Vince."

"You'll see."

She had a pack to carry and a camera, so she gave the assault rifle to Vince. With instructions to hand it to her if they encountered one of the creatures, though she didn't think Vince would try to use it. He handled the weapon as though it might bite him.

"I could never remember how to get here." He said. "Now I know exactly where the cave is."

"Just don't get us lost Vince, I've some filming to do later."

Someone had flattened a couple of bushes and there were what looked like a few splashes of blood. Vince was scared and not eager to continue, though to her, it meant they were onto something. For all they knew, Dom might be close by and still alive. Getting into the cave meant pushing past a tree with lots of broken branches.

"This looks recent." She said.

They both had scratched arms by the time they were in the cave. Her flashlight showed them yet more blood and a uniform shirt with the insignia of the Regiment on it. Blood on everything, including the shirt. All from bleeding that had happened recently, the blood hadn't had time to fully congeal.

"What the fuck happened here?" She muttered.

"Something attacked the soldiers." Said Vince. "Come on, the large cave is this way."

It had all been about getting Vince to the place where his childhood friend Dudley had died. So, tempting to insist they followed the trail of blood, but she left it to Vince to choose their route. The passage was full of boot prints, at least two sets of size nines. All going in the opposite direction. It took them a while to reach the large cave and then Vince had some sort of seizure.

"I can see them; this is the place, Paris."

She held him while he jerked about, even frothing at the mouth for a while.

"It was Coulier, I can see him now.....He and the other man kept kicking Dud. They were kicking him so hard. Poor Dud.....Poor Dud, he never hurt anyone."

She was convinced, though Vince's history of mental health problems might make the FBI think twice about accepting his story. Silly as it was, she only saw the bones while trying to comfort Vince.

"Vince....Over there. Bones and someone has put them in a neat pile."

Poor Vince buried his head in his hands and wept, but there it all was and she was getting it all on film. Bones, the bones of a child by the look of it. Not a toddler, the bones of a child of primary school age. The clincher was the nametag with Dudley C written on it.

"We're not the first to be here recently." She said. "Someone has brushed the dirt off and left everything in a tidy heap."

Vince watched, as she carefully spread out the bones, though touching the broken skull made her want to cry. All the fragments of clothing were spread out and she filmed it all, briefly giving a reason why they were there and what Vince had told her. Not the name though, that had to come from Vince, along with the name of the boy's killer.

"Who was this boy, Vince?"

"My friend Dudley Cottingham."

"Who killed him?"

"It was Neus Coulier, I saw him do it. I remember it all now, there were two men kicking poor Dud. The other one was Coulier's right-hand man. We all knew him as just Butch, though I think his second name was Hendrick."

"Do you remember everything now, Vince?"

He merely nodded at her, which was good enough. Everything had been filmed and given that evidence had a habit of vanishing on Janssen, she gathered up the bones and scraps of clothing. There was still plenty of room in her backpack, more than enough for a few bones from a child. Vince didn't say a word as she wrapped up the bones in her spare T shirt and pushed them into the pack.

"We can go now if you want to." She said. "Jack's treasure can wait until another day."

"No, I'll show you now."

The route back followed the size nine boots for quite some way. When Vince turned right into a narrow passage, the seemingly ever-present boot prints were no longer there. It was a relief in a way, it might mean that whoever they were, they hadn't found Jack's treasure. Vince stopped at where a small tunnel led to their left. Rather ominously there appeared to have been a cave in, the tunnel was full of rubble.

"This is different." He said. "Come on, we can get there another way."

It was all being filmed, or more accurately recorded on several memory cards. If anything happened to them, someone would eventually find the camera. Like one of those found footage films with the wobbly camera work that always made her feel slightly nauseous.

"Fuck, we're walking through an inch of water, Vince."

"Yeah, we must be right out at the rocks by now."

"What rocks?"

"You'll see.....No one comes out here, the rocks are supposed to be cursed."

"Perfect Vince, just perfect."

By the time the water was above the top of her boots, Paris realised there were things in it. The long thin worms mainly, but other things too, things she didn't want to think about. She was more relieved than she'd have wanted to admit, when Vince followed a passage to their left, one that took them up and out of the water.

"Jeeez, these damned worms." She yelled.

"Ilaria told me they sometime bite you." Said Vince.

They helped each other to pull at the dreadful things, before stomping on them. Paris rarely got the heebie-jeebies about anything, even mice didn't overly worry her. Those worms wrapping themselves around her ankles though.....She nearly puked. Eventually she was free of them, though her imagination had them trying to climb up her thighs. She'd have stripped off if she'd been alone.

"It's not far now.....No more water to walk through." Said Vince.

Two more turns and the air felt drier and she could hear the call of seabirds. By the time Vince stopped the caves had a different feel to them, far drier and there were none of the dreadful worms, writhing about on the walls. Vince was in front and he seemed to have stopped in the centre of a narrow passage. Paris only saw the deep recess in the wall, when she was right on top of it. It looked man made, as though someone had smashed and chiselled the rocks to create a hiding place.

"I found this place by accident." Said Vince. "There was a canvass screen over it then. I think it must have rotted away."

She'd heard the rumours about Jack and his oldest daughter finding a sunken galleon. A lot of old wooden sailing ships had fallen victim to the rocks in the seas around Janssen, there was even a

tourist map listing the most famous. There were more rumours about Spanish galleons full of gold, than there were grains of sand on the beach. Yet it appeared Jack Benevide really had found his galleon. Quite literally his pot of gold.

“Wow Vince, it’s.....”

“Magnificent.....Just as I remember.”

Spanish probably, though she’d once heard the Portuguese had lost a few treasure ships too. There had once been framed paintings and fabrics, though those had all rotted away. A few hints remained, remnants of elegant ladies in fine clothes. A few books too, in amongst it all, huge tomes that had fallen victim to the damp and mould. For the most part everything had rotted, apart from the gold.

“Fuck Vince, it must be worth a fortune.”

“Everyone knew Jack had found something. My mum said the Benevide family had been as poor as church mice. Then Jack had the villa extended and rebuilt. Not that my mum was born then, but her mother told her a thing or two. Suddenly Jack and his family were wealthy, almost like magic.”

Jack had probably carefully sold a few pieces, maybe even melting some of it down. No matter how much he’d sold to finance the Benevide family’s lifestyle, there still had to be ten times that much left. A few statues made of pure gold; some large cups with jewels added to the base. A necklace or two, but the bulk of the gold consisted of small coins in rotting cloth bags. They were everywhere, more than a dozen strong backs could carry out in a week. Paris risked the possibility of hideous bugs and dug her hand deep into one of the bags.

“There’s probably enough gold here to buy.....Janssen.” She said. “Maybe a little town in Florida too, for when you get bored of living in a tropical paradise.”

“My mum needs some.” Said Vince. “Nicki too, I think she really likes treasure.”

“I think Nicki could already buy Janssen, Vince. It’s yours though, you found it. I know the authorities might view it differently, but screw them. As far as I’m concerned, this gold is yours to do with as you please. I’m sure the Spanish have given up on finding it.”

Her hand was full of small but heavy gold coins. Each had a man’s head in the centre, with words around the outside. She had no idea what the words said, but a quick search on Google would soon fix that. She held out the coins.

“Here, put these in your pockets, enough to put food on your table for years.” She said.

“You must take some too.”

“I will, and we’ll put some in our packs. Things have a bad habit of vanishing, Vince. All this is on my camera though and the coins prove it. Heavy I know, but we should take as much as we can carry.”

“Will my mum be pleased?”

“She’ll be ecstatic Vince, trust me.....June will be fucking ecstatic.”

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Bill Carr had been worried about getting Mark to medical help, before the young man bled to death. Lose a few fingers and it can be bandaged up, but an entire crushed and shredded hand.....Things hadn’t looked good. Bill hadn’t realised it in the heat of battle, but a tentacle had hit him too. Nothing life threatening, he’d lost a few inches of skin from his neck. It was painful and half carrying a heavy wounded guy hadn’t helped.

They do say there’s a special deity who looks after fools. Just as Mark looked to be about to pass out, they walked into one of the regular patrols. A mixture of Navy and Regiment troops, they’d had a Jeep close by. They’d also promised to add the caves to their list of locations to be searched, as soon as possible. After that Bill had used a hospital phone to call the Coulier mansion. They were efficient,

offering to call just about anyone who might need to know about Mark being hurt. Neus Coulier had already called back for details and had promised to hire a jet to get home from the USA. Bill had been busy; the nurse had bandaged him while he reported the incident to his FBI manager. Busy or not, he noticed Stacey Tuttle when she came through the doors.

"Well.....You don't look too bad." She said.

"I'll heal, but Mark didn't do that well.....He's going to need a prosthetic left hand."

"Crap." Said Stacey. "He's so young.....Mind you, that'd be dreadful at any age."

"We got one of them Stacey, we killed a really big one. Two hits with a grenade launcher and it died. The body sank into a deep underground lake and we've no pictures to prove it. Still.....We got one."

"That makes me feel so much better."

"How is your back ?" He asked. "Not that I'm not pleased to see you, but the last I heard, you were on full time admin duty."

"I thought I'd be stuck behind a desk, but then.....No lies Bill, I applied for the local coordinator position for Jannsen, when I heard they were looking for someone. I got it, which makes me your new boss. Alright.....Let's get the fighting and bad language over with. If it helps, I did bring just about all the equipment you asked for."

At first Bill felt his face getting hot, the usual precursor to becoming very angry. Then he saw the funny side of it all and laughed. It had to happen eventually, dinosaurs like him were no longer the darlings of the bureau. It was all about databases now and public perception. The future might not really be female, but it belonged to Stacey's generation.

"Did they actually agree to the depth charges ?" He asked.

"No, but strangely not because it was an insane idea. It seems they're too heavy to fly into Jannsen. Plus, any delivery system would need resources this island doesn't have. The plane I came in on was carrying everything else though, even the almost crazy stuff you requested."

"Come on, we should look in on Mark." He said.

The hospital wasn't large, though it was impressive for a small place like Jannsen. A lot of wealthy people had homes on the island and all of them probably signed up for platinum level health insurance. Luckily, they even had a fairly impressive supply of type o.

"In a way, you couldn't have arrived at a better time." He said. "With Mark out of action for a while, it'll be nice to have my old partner back."

"Hey, I'm here to coordinate matters with the British Navy and the local cops. I came out here to keep you in line, not to be your sidekick."

"Oh, come on Stacey, do you really want to sit on your backside all week ?"

"You've changed Bill."

"I get that a lot, even from my wife.....Well, do you really want a desk job ?"

"No, of course not."

There was no hiding it, Mark looked unwell. He'd been topped up with type o and plasma, but he had lost a lot of blood. Quite pale with that tell tale darkness under his eyes. The poor kid seemed to have aged ten year in a single day. Bill had seen it all before and knew Mark would soon look better. That hand though, that wasn't going to get better.

"I talked to you father; he's actually hiring a jet to bring him home." Said Bill.

"That sounds like my dad."

Had they met before, Mark and Stacey ? Bill honestly couldn't remember, though Jannsen was a very small island. Knowing Mark, he'd probably seen her in Rum Runners and tried to date her. Whether

she knew him or not, Stacey sat on the edge of the bed and hugged Mark, as though they were old friends.

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Ilaria was beginning to realise that taking an interest in the map was good therapy. It stopped her mind dwelling on the fact that Dom still hadn't been found. Everyone kept telling her no news was good news, though she didn't think that applied to being dragged off by a monster.

"We can't be far from it now, the map has it right here, where we're standing." Said Emily.

Cormac had wanted to come with them, but he had some filming to supervise near the wreck of the cruise ship. The entire world could be falling apart and probably was, yet the show had to come first. Ilaria caught a glimpse of something she wasn't expecting to find at the base of Castle Hill, brickwork.

"I think I can see a wall." She said.

Despite both of them being armed they were both nervous. Their bikes had been left some distance away and the locals were avoiding anywhere with thick undergrowth. Of course, the map she'd found folded up in the watch, had brought them to one of the most overgrown areas on Janssen.

Emily was looking at the foldup tourist map of Janssen. Not exactly an ordnance survey map's inch to the mile detail, but it had the advantage of being given away free at the tourist office in Tilburg.

"There are no buildings shown near here." Said Emily. "I can't even see a track on the map that's withing half a mile of where we are."

"I can see a wall....Come on." Said Ilaria.

The map in the watch had been quite well drawn, with the cliché X to mark the spot. In block capitals someone had written, 'Where they moved it to,' on the bottom of the map. Moved what? Ilaria was hoping it was Jack's treasure, but that didn't fit well with a brick building where no brick building should be. There was movement in the undergrowth and she came within a finger's twitch of killing a huge, but harmless toad.

"Oh, those damned thing." She said.

"Yeah, creepy. Though Nicki said they keep the bugs down."

Castle Hill was different to most of the volcanic rocks on Janssen. They tended to be brittle and full of holes and passageways from when they'd formed. Castle Hill was made of older, more solid rocks. The brick building had been built right up against the side of the hill and it was almost hidden by the thick lush foliage.

"I can't see any windows." Said Emily. "At the moment, I can't even see a door."

"There has to be a door." Said Ilaria.

It was a single storey building about forty feet long and twenty feet deep. The metal door was hidden behind some vines with large leaves. Quite a few bugs scuttled away as Emily pulled the vines to one side. There was a sign on the door with JELCO written on it and Danger of Electrocutation.

"Who the hell are Jelco?"

"I've seen some bills in Sam's office, Emily. Janssen Electric Light Company, the local electricity company. I can't see any cables, so if this is an electrical substation, I'll eat everyone's hat."

The door had fallen victim to the humid climate and after a bit of tugging, there was a cracking sound. As they pulled the door open, the rusty remains of the lock fell to the ground.

"No one has been here for years." Said Emily.

It might have belonged to Jelco once, but now there wasn't even power for the lights. They needed flashlights and there was the all-pervasive musty smell of damp and mould. It wasn't a large building from the outside, but it had been built back into the hillside, maybe into an existing cave.

“Wow, this place is huge.” Said Ilaria.

“I knew it, I should have brought a camera. Rule one, always bring a camera.”

“You’re beginning to sound like Paris.” Said Ilaria. “There are rumours she takes a Steadicam into the bathroom with her.”

The metal boxes looked to have been placed against the walls in a hurry. Row after row of metal boxes that had a vague military look about them. Dust have been shoved about when they’d brought in the boxes.

“These have been here a while, but the building is far older.” Said Ilaria. “It looks like it might have been a shelter of some kind.”

“Maybe somewhere to hide from the beasts.” Said Emily.

Ilaria opened a box and it was full of files. A few had fallen victim to mould, but most looked intact. Files written in German and dated between nineteen sixteen and nineteen seventeen. She chose a file to open at random, not quite believing what the flashlight was showing her.

“German.....Do you speak German ?” Asked Emily.

“Yes, fluently and another four or five languages. There was a scientific team here for over two years. It never was just a lone scientist arriving by accident. Look at this, does it remind you of anything ?”

The paper was remarkably free of decay. Someone had drawn a picture of a huge two eyed beast with what looked like dozens of tentacles. There had even been some shading and small details added, in an attempt to show the huge size of the creature.

“It’s like the drawing you made of the monster Paris saw.”

“They knew Emily, the bastards knew and hid the truth. Way back in nineteen seventeen, someone knew what lurked at the bottom of Outerbridge Sound.”

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