

Outerbridge Sound

Chapter 22 - Grimm

“Mark didn’t know everyone on the SHP crew, but he remembered Gloria. A striking lady with long dark hair, gorgeous brown eyes and long legs. It was rare for him to get completely blanked, but Gloria had resisted his charms.”

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It’s not easy to like someone who manages your diary. CNN had hired several different people to manage her days, with mixed success. Usually, a woman given the job of trying to get her to the right place at the right time. A man in the role once, though he’d done no better or worse than any of the others. Paris had once been called a force of nature by Deadline and as she’d once said to a quiz game showrunner.

“You can’t tame nature.”

So, she never had liked Kate that much. Not shoot her in the head level of animosity, but if it was a choice between Kate dying or Vince; Kate would be the one left behind as creature food.

“Now Kate, no time to fuck about.” Said Paris. “Put my rifle on the ground.”

Kate Russo was obviously a tough lady, someone not used to backing down. She looked sideways at her, before giving Vince the stink eye. For a moment Paris thought Kate was thinking about going out in a blaze of glory, a full-on O.K. Corral moment. Paris moved her finger to the trigger of her gun, but then the fire went out of Kate’s eyes.

“Alright, but I still want my cut.” Said Kate.

“Fine, just put that assault rifle on the ground.”

Probably born a contrarian, Kate took two paces and put the assault rifle on the garden table, rather than dropping it at her feet. Paris wanted to talk about changed ground rules, about how Kate couldn’t be allowed to have a gun anymore. Paris had forgotten about Vince though and the way his mind worked. Vince had been different since Neus Coulier had slammed his head into a cave wall, though he’d probably been born a little different. The wiring in his brain had been changed by trauma, physical and emotional. Vince shot Kate at close range with the shotgun.

“She wanted to kill you, Paris.” He said.

“It’s alright Vince, I understand.”

Part of her did at least, the emotional side. Kate had come close to shooting her and Vince had witnessed it all. To him Kate was a dangerous person, who needed taking out of the game. Paris had no idea what the shotgun was loaded with, though it obviously wasn’t birdshot. There was very little left of Kate’s chest.

“We never tell anyone about this, Vince. We found your mum dead and a creature grabbed Kate. We have no idea what happened to her after that.....Alright ?”

“Yes.”

“Rehearse the words in your head.”

“A creature grabbed Kate. I understand.”

Kate’s car keys were on the table, next to her assault rifle. Paris was ready to leave, but Vince was stood quite still, looking at his mum’s body.

“No time to bury her.” Said Paris. “We need to get going Vince, stay here and you’ll be killed.”

Hungry creatures were looking for food. Soon they'd pick up the smell of blood from the bodies in the garden, if they hadn't already. Vince nodded at her and followed.

"Me in the Nissan, with you on the quadbike, alright?"

"Yes, fine."

"We stop for nothing until we get to the freighter." Said Paris.

~ ~

Oscar Grimm had never intended to leave his ship again. He'd seen so many people left behind though, by the armies of nations who should have known better. It was supposed to have been a quick visit to the villa, followed by a very quick look at Bredon House. A rapid search and recovery mission, for any of the SHP crew stupid enough, to still be hiding in one of the rented buildings. After a few delays, it was nearly midday by the time they reached the villa, what was left of it.

"The whole place is on fire." Said Mark.

"We still need to check for survivors." Said Oscar.

There had been a large tree across the road and their Jeep had found some soft waterlogged soil while driving around it. With Mark only having one useable arm, getting the Jeep onto the road again had been a nightmare. There had been two attacks by the creatures, which had been tough, but neither of them had any serious wounds. As Oscar got out of the Jeep, he did wonder if leaving the relative security of The Daphne, had been one of his worst ideas. If not the worst, it had to be up there, in the top five.

"We could go round the back a try the doors near the pool." Said Mark. "What do you think?"

"You know this place better than I do, lead on."

Strange wandering through the Villa's gardens, seeing the aftermath of something, something huge. One of the creatures had been killed by the pool, it's body still half in and half out of the water. It seemed the creatures didn't eat their own. There were bloodstains and a few body parts barely recognisable as coming from a human. That was it though, their bodies had obviously been carried off, or eaten on the spot.

"Bill told me a few times that Janssen should be nuked." Said Mark. "I used to think he was nuts, but now.....They should drop a nuke on this fucking place."

"As long as it happens after we've left and put a few hundred miles between us and.....This hellhole." Said Oscar.

Half the large lounge wasn't on fire, though it still felt hotter than an oven. A few dead creatures to eventually be consumed by flames, but not a single human body. There was a foot still in what looked like an army boot, though that was it, the total visible remains of whoever had died in the villa.

"This is a waste of time, but I'm glad we tried." Said Oscar. "What is the road like between here and Bredon House?"

"A track, they usually walked back and forth." Said Mark.

"We need the Jeep....Come on Mark, let's get moving. It'll be an awkward journey, of course it will. We seem cursed today, every damned thing is going to be awkward."

~ ~

FBI Special Agent, Stacey Tuttle had become fed up with Knowles, the councillor and just about everyone else in the APC. Her back hurt like hell, as did her right shoulder. She'd been certified as fit for desk duties, polishing a chair with her backside. Then she'd ended up in a war zone and seemed to be on the losing side. The most annoying thing was that it was her fault, she'd insisted on coming back to Janssen.

"I could have been in a comfortable office, with only trips to the watercooler to worry about, or maybe the coffee machine." She muttered. "Doughnuts too, to hell with my waistline."

"What was that?" Asked Debbie Hindle.

"Just me going a little crazy.....Ignore me."

Debbie was the one person Stacey wasn't fed up with. She'd been chewed at a little, her right arm looked unlikely to ever be of use again. There were good prosthetics these days, though that pep talk was for later, when they were all onboard the freighter. Debbie had lost quite a lot of blood, but she looked likely to survive.

"I hope the freighter is still there." Said Knowles.

At one time Stacey would have chewed his head off, but not now. She too had realised there was no plan B, none at all. Well, apart maybe from praying and hoping for divine intervention. If the freighter was gone, they'd all be dead, probably quite soon.

"Grimm is ex-CIA, he'll be there." She said.

The APC driver was going too fast for the road, he'd been going too fast all the way from what was left of Government House. A good driver, he'd been skidding on every corner, yet they'd never come off the road. No one seemed inclined to tell him to slow down.

"We're there, I can see the sign for the dockyard." Yelled the driver.

A risk management company had made fun of the ever-open dockyard gates, but for them it was a blessing. A tight right turn just inside the gates and the sound of a heavy guns firing, penetrated the walls of the APC. The sound of serious weapons being fired, the heavy weaponry usually associated with naval gun turrets.

"Are they firing at us?" Asked Debbie.

"No....It's a good thing, it means the rescue ship is still here."

"Grab hold of something; this might get a bit bumpy." Said the driver.

It hurt a lot, but Stacey grabbed hold of Debbie, cradling the injured woman in her arms. Their APC shoved several cars out of the way, probably abandoned by those arriving at The Daphne. He was a good driver, obviously thoughtful too. He deliberately pushed the back of a truck, shoving it to one side of the road. Then he parked the APC, so that it wouldn't obstruct others fleeing Jansen.

"Half of Jannsen must be here." Someone said.

"Out, everyone out." Yelled Knowles. "Help those who need it."

"Debbie will need carrying." Said Stacey.

"I'll help you." Said the councillor.

She'd written him off as a self-serving annoyance. Now she'd have to look at her opinions about him, which was in itself...Quite annoying. As the rear doors opened, everyone left the APC. Stacey one side, with the councillor the other, they carried Debbie between them. A few paces and Stacey remembered she should have been carried by someone; her back was on fire. Too late though, she was now committed to getting Debbie to safety. All the time there was the thump of naval guns, mixed with the sound of assault rifles being fired. Something went past Stacey, something that bumped into her. It hadn't looked human, but everything had become so confusing. Knowles helped her at one point, just before they reached the ship.

"We're lowering a walkway." Yelled a female voice, through a megaphone.

Stacey saw one of the creatures fall, barely a few feet in front of her. Debbie screamed, but there was no time to slow down. Up the walkway everyone went, until they were on the deck of the ship. Still the steady thump of big guns, it seemed likely to go on forever.

"Where is Knowles." Someone asked.

A soldier from the APC shook his head.

"Something grabbed him."

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Grimm had been wrong about everything being awkward. Mark's arm was painful, it had been used far too often. There was a wet feeling, as though the ghastly wound was bleeding again, underneath the bandages. The track though, that had been an easy two-minute drive. It was the main way the crew moved from the villa to Bredon House. It had been cleared of debris from the quakes and many feet had trodden the soil into a firm surface. There'd been no need to move fallen trees, or drive around obstacles.

"Well, at least it's not on fire." Said Oscar.

"An entire wing has gone." Said Mark. "Bredon House was built in the colonial days, out of solid stone. I don't want to meet whatever ripped it apart."

"Might have been an accident, the navy guys using explosives."

"Maybe."

Mark doubted it was the navy, there had been talk of huge creatures leaving the ocean and heading inland across Janssen. Why it would want to crush a third of Bredon House out of existence before moving on, was a mystery. The Jeep had a distinctive sound and when Oscar turned off the engine, someone was shouting at them.

"Over here.....We need help."

"I know that voice, it's Gloria, the wardrobe lady." Said Mark.

Mark didn't know everyone on the SHP crew, but he remembered Gloria. A striking lady with long dark hair, gorgeous brown eyes and long legs. It was rare for him to get completely blanked, but Gloria had resisted his charms. Not just resisted, she'd made a few comments about being far too sensible to fall for his nonsense. Once inside the entrance lobby, they could hear her calling, but there was no sign of her.

"We're behind the fallen pillar."

It was probably the collapsed masonry that had saved them. There was a dead creature, probably killed by the assault rifle Gloria was waving about. Its body was an obstruction, though Mark managed to get round it, without bashing his arm. With the dead creature, the fallen column and various stone blocks, they were fairly well hidden.

"I'm pleased to see you guys." Said Gary. "I only came to Bredon House to collect a portable generator. Those damned things are everywhere, one played with me for a bit. If it hadn't been for Gloria, I'd be dead."

"Well, my nursing skills aren't that good, but I bandaged his wound as best I could."

Gary Brown the lighting guy, had so much blood on his blue jeans, that they were now red. He'd been bitten on his leg, just above the ankle. Not good news, they'd have to carry him to the Jeep. Good old Gary, who'd come up with a different conspiracy theory about the trouble on Janssen, every morning. None of them had been as dreadful as the truth.

"Gary....I always knew you were indestructible." Said Mark. "Is there anyone else here?"

Gloria shook her head.

"Emily, the sound lady was here for a while." Said Gary. "She and Cormac went to look for help."

"That was hours ago." Said Gloria. "They were on foot."

Oscar actually shrugged at him. Dreadful, but Mark understood. Where the hell do you start looking for two people on foot, in the middle of some kind of local apocalypse? Not that either of them was going to say it out loud. Luckily Oscar seemed to have taken Survivor Diplomacy 101.

“We’ll get you two to safety, before looking for them. Can you walk at all, Gary ?”

“I don’t think so.”

“The bone was visible until I bandaged it up.” Added Gloria.

Gary was quite small and thin, wiry was probably the term he preferred. Mark could have slung him over his shoulder, but people find it hard to breathe while being carried like a sack of potatoes.

“I’m sure Oscar and I can carry you.” Said Mark. “Gloria.....We’ll need you to cover us, the Jeep is quite close.”

“Fine, I can do that.”

With Gary using his one good leg, it went smoother than Mark had feared. Nothing came to attack them and the Jeep looked the same as when they’d left it. Assumptions about such things weren’t wise in the current circumstances, so Mark viewed it as a positive. Once Gary was in the back of the Jeep, Oscar asked the question, that Mark knew needed asking, but dreaded.

“You’re sure there’s no one else hiding in Bredon House ?”

“Positive, I searched for bandages.....There’s no one there.” Said Gloria.

“Then we’re leaving.” Said Oscar.

They were back on the main road when Gloria took a shot at something. Mark had a pretty good idea what it had been, by her expression.

“Toadaside ?” He asked.

“Yeah, sorry.”

“You shouldn’t kill the toads; they keep the bugs down.” Said Gary.

Such a wonderfully absurd comment, at such an inappropriate moment. Oscar began laughing and laughter really is infectious. Soon, all four of them were laughing.

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By the time they’d decided to leave Bredon House, every car and bike had gone. They were desperate times; someone had stolen her bike. Cormac had suggested going for help, on foot. Anything was better than looking at Gary for hours, without being able to do much to help him. Gloria had looked at them as though they were mad, but they had to do something. They’d done it right, putting a few essentials in packs, before setting out. A very hot day on Janssen, Emily felt tired and exhausted after a couple of hours. The only good thing, and it was a very good thing. Was that nothing had attacked them as they’d trudged through the sub-tropical vegetation.

“Alright, I’ll admit it.....I have no idea where we are.” Said Cormac.

They’d looked at the sun to work out where north was likely to be. Cormac had talked about researching ancient navigation skills for a documentary on the Vikings. It all sounded so easy, until they’d been turned around a few times, to get past obstacles. Haze had hidden the sun for a while and just like that, they were hopelessly lost.

“We need to fix a landmark and keep heading towards it.” Said Emily. “Otherwise, we’ll end up going round in circles.”

“Any landmark ?”

“Yes, anything will do, we can’t afford to be choosy.”

Cormac smiled at her and she smiled at him. They were alright, not at the blaming each other shouty phase. That would come though, if they were still aimlessly wandering when night arrived. Emily was already concerned that they’d underestimated how much water they’d needed to bring.

“It’s all the same.....Just trees and vines.” Said Cormac.

Janssen was fairly flat and in the heat of summer, most of the ground was claimed by thick vegetation. Nicki had once told her that if you pushed a stick in the ground, it would take root and

grow. Emily's eyesight was good, she saw the top third of the tower sticking up above the trees. She had a pretty good idea what it was and where it was.

"There, do you see the tower?" She asked, pointing.

"I see it, what is it? It looks a long way off."

"The airstrip." Said Emily. "There might be a building we can secure for the night and a few supplies."

"Supplies sounds good."

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Nicki Outerbridge hadn't been surprised when the Major had run off. The driver had seen someone waving from the window of a rare thing, a house that wasn't on fire or destroyed. As the back door of the APC opened, the Major ran off into the thick vegetation. He hadn't even slightly recovered from seeing his wife die. Sam had tried talking to him, as had one of the soldiers. It was no good, he reacted as though they were talking a foreign language.

"We can't leave him behind." Said Pam.

Everyone agreed and there had been a quick discussion about what to do. Eventually common sense and survival won the day. They'd gained a bedridden lady in her eighties, who'd been abandoned by her family. They'd lost the Major, AKA Arthur Mullen. Nicki comforted herself by thinking the karmic scales had been balanced in some way. Nothing changed the fact, that when the APC was once again headed for dockyard, the Major wasn't with them.

"There's nothing we could have done." Said Bill. "He could be anywhere and the ship won't wait forever."

"Yes, we have to think of the greater good." Said Ted Sangster.

They were right, of course they were. It didn't stop Nicki from wanting to shriek at them and spit in their eye. Of course she didn't, she sat in the relative safety of the APC and hoped they didn't lose anyone else.

"We have a problem." Said the driver.

A junction and the road had been destroyed in the direction they needed to go. It looked like one of those machines that digs ditches, had dug a deep channel through the trees and the road. The deep trench went for quite a distance in either direction.

"Must be them.....What are those damned creatures up to now?" Asked Bill.

"Whatever it is, it'll turn out to be nasty." Said Sam.

Sam had his phone in his hand, taking a few pictures. Despite having deep feelings for Sam, his obsession with photographing and recording everything, was becoming slightly annoying.

"We can take the road to the right." Said Nicki. "It's a longer route, but it will take us along the coast to the docks."

"Are you sure?" Asked the driver.

"Yes she is, the lady was born on Jannsen." Said Sam.

"Good enough for me." Said Ted.

It was either bad luck, or just unfortunate timing, though both were probably the same thing. The road went around a small headland, just as a huge creature came out of the ocean. Easily as big as the monster that had destroyed the cruise ship, hitting the APC might have been accidental. The monstrous creature might not have even seen them. That didn't stop one of its tentacles from hitting the side of the APC and sending them tumbling off the road.

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The sign on the fence wasn't really needed, the large cargo plane halfway across the Tilburg Road, told Cormac Boyle they'd reached Janssen's one and only airstrip. One plane that size would have jammed the runway, two just seemed like someone being flash about it.

"Wow, those planes are never going to be able to take off." He said.

"Nicki mentioned it, though I had no idea she meant aircraft that size." Said Emily.

"They must have left some bottled water and junk food behind, at the very least." He said.

The plane blocking the road had been left with the rear ramp down. All they had to do was walk inside. Something had been in there; a few pallets had been shoved around and it had taken a dump before leaving. As he'd guessed, people unloading a plane in a hurry, are rarely thorough. At the front of the cargo hold, perched on a chair, were three cardboard boxes. Someone had stacked them up ready to go, before forgetting them.

"I'm hoping for water and army ration packs." Said Cormac.

"I bet we've found ten dozen pairs of army socks." Said Emily.

He pulled at the sealed top of the box with his fingers. Opening it was harder than he thought it would be. Emily looked in her pack and handed him a long-bladed knife, that looked like it belonged in a Zombie movie.

"Thanks, where did you get that?"

"One of the navy guys at the villa had it....He wasn't going to be needing it anymore."

The knife made opening the box easier. Inside it were about a dozen large bottles of water.

Wonderful, though the delight went away a little, when the second box contained yet more bottled water. The third box contained a popular orange coloured junk food, in family sized packets.

"Well, we might be constipated for weeks, but we won't starve." He said.

They shared a large bag of junk food, as they looked over the second plane. That too, looked as though whoever had been on it, had unloaded in a hurry and simply walked away. The ramp was down and the inside was empty. Emily found two uniforms that, with a little tugging and a belt, could fit anyone.

"We can't keep wearing the same clothes forever."

And she was right of course, but finding the uninforms and nothing else, felt a bit like being given two pairs of socks for Christmas. There was a long, single storey wooden building that looked intact. Shelter, water and food, of a sort. Those were the essentials for surviving the coming night.

"This time I'm hoping for a bed and a hot shower." Said Emily.

"I'd be happy with a crate of decent whisky....Irish of course."

Strong double doors, held in place by a padlock Cormac knew he could bust open in less than a minute. Not all of his youth had been misspent, but he knew the best place to thump a padlock with a hammer and chisel. Emily's knife was the chisel, with his fist as the hammer. They were inside and neither of them had expected or wished for what was in there.

"A plane, I'm surprised that's still here." Said Emily.

Lots of open boxes and a small office to one side, yet the small single engine, fixed wing aircraft, had a hundred percent of their attention.

"Janssen is a long way from anywhere, Emily." Said Cormac. "Even with a full tank this plane hasn't the range to get anywhere. Another part of The Donder Isles maybe, but how long until the creatures go looking for food on the other islands?"

"Oh, I was hoping we'd found a way of escaping this awful place. Not that either of us can fly it."

"This is a Robin and I can fly it." He said. "I did a few lessons for my private pilot's licence. Over twenty hours, most of them in one of these. I never did get my licence, but I can fly it."

Cormac opened the door and some thoughtful person had left the keys on the pilot's seat. He only wanted to see the fuel gauge, which was on just over half full. Probably a rich guy's plaything, something to buzz about in and impress the neighbours. Brought to Jannsen like everything else, packed in a container as parts and assembled locally. It seemed well looked after though, it was obviously someone's pride and joy.

"Half a tank, that'll do." He said.

"You said we can't get anywhere in it." Said Emily.

"We can't get to the American mainland, but we don't need to. This good old Robin will get us to the dockyard. We've just about enough of the runway left to take off, I hope."

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When they'd come out of the back of the APC, Bill had picked up his super weapon and put it over his shoulder. In a strange battle in a particularly fucked up part of the world, he could rely on the weapon and its hypersonic bullets, to get him out of trouble. Sam had grabbed Nicki and for some reason the driver of the APC had joined them. Pam, the woman they'd worked so hard to rescue from the burning hospital, hadn't survived the crash. As for the others ? Bill had heard Ted Sangster shouting orders, but then there was an attack by several of the smaller creatures. It had been chaos and after that, Bill hadn't seen or heard anyone else apart from Sam, Nicki and the driver.

"My feet are wet." Said Nicki.

Nicki had bumped her head, there was still blood coming from a shallow wound. Bill had no idea if her feet really were wet. The driver, whose name he still didn't know, seemed to be in shock. There were moments when Bill felt like a teacher taking toddlers on an outing. At least it meant Nicki wasn't asking about Sam, not for now at least.

"There will be dry shoes on the freighter." Said Bill.

Before bumping her head, when they were all happily in the APC, Nicki had said the road they were on, would take them to the Jannsen docks. A long route maybe, but following the road would get them there. As he had no idea about local shortcuts and Nicki was rarely lucid, he was keeping them on the road.

"You....Driver. What's your name ?" He asked.

"Darwin sir, Darwin Johnston."

"Can you use an assault rifle ?"

"Yes, of course."

Nicki still had an assault rifle over her shoulder, though Bill doubted if she's be any use if they were attacked. Darwin wasn't likely to be much use either, but at least he was responding to direct questions. Bill handed him the assault rifle.

"Here, shoot at anything that isn't people."

"Thank you, I will."

The bright afternoon sun meant nothing could sneak up on them, though it meant they were easy to spot. Getting off the road would have been ideal, but getting lost would be a nightmare. To the locals everywhere wasn't that far from anywhere else. Bill had already found out the hard way, that endless rows of green trees, could feel like being in a maze.

"Where is Sam ?" Asked Nicki.

"He's not with us now." Said Bill.

It was the same answer he'd given her at least a dozen times. Not a lie, though not really the truth either. Nicki had seen what happened to Sam, though it was just after she'd hit her head. Bill hoped

those memories had been permanently erased from her mind. Nicki stopped walking and grabbed his arm.

“Who is he with Bill ? Where is Sam ?” She asked.

She’d used his name and was looking a little angry, all good signs.

“You saw what happened Nicki. Do you remember what happened when we left the APC ?”

“No, nothing.....I remember Sam was with us.”

“It was all very confusing. Sam had no weapon for some reason and I reacted slowly. One of the creatures went for you Nicki. It would have killed you if Sam hadn’t got in the way. I finally woke up and killed the beast, but.....Sam is dead Nicki.”

Nicki sat down, head between her knees and wept. Bill didn’t blame her, but she was the only one of them who’d know where they were and the best way to get to the docks. Darwin just looked at him, as if wondering what the hell was going on. Bill sat next to Nicki.

“You have every right to be upset.” He said. “Cry for a week if you like, I’ll fight anyone who tries to stop you. Right now though, we’re on a road I don’t know. You told us this was an alternative route to the docks.”

Nicki got up and looked around.

“How far are we from the junction, Darwin ?” She asked.

She knew his name, of course she did. It was a female thing, a kind of magic. He barely knew their neighbours, but his wife seemed to be on first name terms with half of their hometown.

“Three miles, maybe four.” Said Darwin.

“The old road....Yes, I know a short cut after the next bend.” Said Nicki. “We’ll be at the docks in less than an hour.”

Nicki wept as she walked, which was really disconcerting. Better than keeping it in though, as his mother used to say, better than keeping it all locked up inside.

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Despite the waves of attacks by hungry creatures, Rana had known worse days. Those using the heavy deck guns knew what they were doing and Oscar had made sure there was enough ammunition to fight a minor war, maybe a major one. The way the dockyard had been built, meant the creatures were funnelled into a kill zone. So far, none of the truly huge brutes had decided to show up. Then things might change, but at the moment, the order of the day was sit tight and shoot at anything that didn’t look human.

“Hey, that looks like a light plane turning in from the headland.” Said Thierry.

Rana used her glasses and sure enough, a small plane was headed towards them. She could see it though, which would change in a few hours. Oscar and Mark had arrived back with two civilians, one likely to lose a leg. He’d been adamant that they’d leave Janssen before nightfall, which was fine by her.

“Where the hell do they intend to land ?” She said.

“A plane like that, with a stalling speed a little over walking pace.” Said Thierry. “They could drop it into the ocean and start swimming.”

“Was that you volunteering to help them ?” She asked.

“Fine, I’ll get a dinghy in the water and find Dias.”

Rana’s day had taken a turn for the better, before Oscar returned, though she had told him about it once he was back. Oscar Grimm was a lot of things. He could be greedy and sometimes a bit lacking in emotions. But he’d never been against a little private enterprise among his senior crew members.

“You should have asked her for ten percent.” He’d told her.

Typical Oscar, criticising her gift horse. One of his faults was being a bit of a control freak, but he was the boss and he paid her more than some hedge fund managers made in a year.

“It’s Paris Ferland for fuck’s sake, Oscar.” She’d said. “We were winching the quadbike onto the deck, when she asked me to winch the Nissan hatchback up too. Anyone else I’d have said no, but we’re talking about Paris Ferland and I’ve always been a fan.”

“Did she tell you how much gold there was ?” He’d asked.

“Not before we winched the car up, though there was a promise of something for my trouble. Some gold in the quadbike, but the floor of the car was covered in bags of gold coins.”

“How much ? Cut to the bottom line.”

“Paris knew the value of the gold coins; she’d done her homework. She said there was just over three million in coins and another quarter of a million in jewellery, maybe more.”

“And you accepted a measly hundred thousand to look the other way.”

“Hey, I’m richer than I was when I woke up this morning.” She’d snapped. “Stop putting me down Oscar, I remember that hooker in Vietnam. How much did she rip you off for ?”

“Yeah, fine.....Fine. You did well.”

He’d smiled and she’d grudgingly smiled back. It was rare for them to have a serious falling out. Oscar could sometimes be an annoying arsehole, but he was still the boss. She’d had to ask, though she was hoping he’d refuse.

“Do you want a cut ?”

“No, just get her, Vince and the gold off the ship quickly when we arrive, wherever we end up.”

“Where are we likely to take the survivors ?” She’d asked. “There are quite a few, they’ve been arriving in dribs and drabs all morning.”

“I’m sure they’d all like to go to Miami, definitely somewhere in the USA. That could end up with me in jail and The Daphne impounded, forever. My low-profile existence has become a bit too public, thanks to Janssen’s local apocalypse. I’m inclined to take a longer voyage, to Santo Domingo in the Dominican Republic. Paris can take her and her gold ashore there and I’m not likely to get arrested.”

“The passengers won’t like that.”

“They’re survivors, not passengers. I’m sure they’ll be glad to arrive anywhere safe.”

Oscar had gone on to say he knew someone who would buy the gold coins Paris had given her in payment for her silence and a little help when required. Rana was currently watching the small aircraft, as it landed on the ocean. Not a smooth ocean, there was a lot of rough water just outside the breakwater.

“Thierry will look after them, like their favourite uncle.” She muttered.

The plane bounced once, but came to a halt on the surface. Hard to see details, they were quite some distance from the ship. Two people it looked like, swimming like crazy towards the dinghy.

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