

Outerbridge Sound

Chapter 13 - Aftermath

“Denise Scott, co-founder and half owner of SHP - Scott Hardwick Productions, had already finished dressing. She was enjoying watching Flo get dressed, there was something to be said for a little voyeurism first thing in the morning.”

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“Bring her in stern first, just in case.” Said Oscar Grimm.

“Are we expecting trouble ?” Asked Rana

“I’m always expecting trouble, I want the heavy calibre stern guns ready to use. Actually, get everything ready, just in case.” Said Oscar. “Make sure everything is covered and hidden though, we don’t want to scare the locals.”

Oscar Grimm was the owner of The Daphne, a medium sized cargo vessel registered in Panama, where most of the cargo vessels in the world seemed to be registered. Most owners tended to hire captains to run their ships, but most owners probably didn’t deal with the sort of clients The Daphne tended to serve. The occasional container, usually for the CIA, who liked to seal up whatever it was he’d been hired to move, usually to somewhere not officially a friendly nation. Most of the freight was old school, lots of crates and boxes. The Daphne had recently dropped off a few passengers and their belonging in Mogadishu, a local crime kingpin had arranged the security. The CIA would definitely have disapproved of those passengers, but that was how Oscar worked. He saw himself as an equal opportunities transporter and mover, rarely bothered by politics and morality. Never anything to annoy the Israelis though, they played the game too well and held grudges forever.

“No phones on Janssen, do they know we’re here ?” Asked Thierry.

“Yep, the client in London gave them a date we’d be here.” Said Oscar. “They desperately need the SUV and the two Jeeps, or so I was told. Get all their gear ready.”

Sometimes, as now, the cargo was something totally legal, there was even a proper bill of lading for every item they were delivering to SHP Productions. Three vehicles, two high powered motor cycles and enough supplies and equipment to fill a couple of trucks, or two SUVs many times over. Oscar wasn’t worried about them taking a while to collect their stuff, he was being paid a lot of money to remain in Janssen for as long as he might be needed.

“I’m relying on you to keep the crew disciplined, Rana.” Said Oscar. “They can have fun; we might be here for months. Just so long as there’s no violence and they behave like the usual crew of a freighter.”

“Oh, they’re good actors.....I promise to keep them well behaved.” Said Rana.

His crew were an assortment of ex-military personnel from around the world. No one thrown out of the military for anything too nasty, he’d learned that the hard way. He paid them well and expected them to behave in a professional manner, or at least behave well enough to avoid trouble with the local cops. He had a crew of fourteen and two officers, Rana and Thierry.

“Humvee coming along the jetty.” Said Thierry. “Are we expecting them to use a Humvee ?”

“Yes, that was mentioned, they’ve borrowed two from the Janssen Regiment.” Said Oscar.

Rana was a Ukrainian, though her military experience had been with the Russian armed forces. She'd served in Chechnya and was as tough as old boots, though Oscar had hired her because she was good at getting the best out of people.

Thierry was French and his second in command. After serving with the French army, Thierry had become bored with life, his own words. There had been a few years working for a well-known crime family in Marseilles, before Oscar recruited him. Why ? Oscar had no idea why; he just liked the guy and had grown to trust him.

As for Oscar himself ? Born in Austria, though his accent sounded more like American with a touch of Australian. Hired by the CIA while working for a drug dealer in Peru, though he'd been in his early twenties then, an age where young men tended to make bad decisions. He never talked about the years he worked for the CIA, or how he'd acquired enough wealth to buy The Daphne and a large house in the Bahamas. He also never told a soul, how he'd ended up with a list of so many useful and essential contacts.

"I'd better go and watch them, or they might take the wrong crates." Said Rana.

"Talk to them Rana, use your charm on them." Said Oscar. "As far as I know they have no idea why we're really here, but it would be nice to confirm that."

"Alright, I can do charming."

He liked that about her, she was.....Versatile, yes that was the word. Good at organising the things that mattered, or turning on the charm when it was required. She'd also given some pirates a surprise off the coast of Somalia, when they'd taken her politeness as a sign of weakness.

"So, we're really here until we might be needed ?" Asked Thierry.

"Yes, or until we're told we can leave." Said Oscar. "Enjoy the time here, stay alert but treat it as a holiday. Cruise ship passengers pay a fortune to get here. You're getting weeks, maybe months in a sub-tropical paradise, all for free. Better than free, you're being paid to be here."

"I don't suppose you'll say who the client is ?"

"You know better than that Thierry. I never tell, but they're paying well, so here we are. Taking up a berth in the cargo area, until we're told otherwise."

"Alright, you're the boss, alert vacation it is."

Oscar had no idea who the client was, though someone had mentioned a woman once, probably by accident. The phrase she will contact you had been used; gender pronouns were good at tripping up the unwary. The job had been arranged through someone in the UK intelligence community who'd used him before. The money was good and to be honest, sitting on deck with a bottle of beer most afternoons, had its appeal. It had been a tough year; he'd earned a break.

"Before you wander off Thierry.....Tell everyone not to go into town alone. Everyone and I mean, everyone, travels around in twos." Said Oscar.

"You really think there could be trouble ?"

"They're paying us well, which usually means we can expect trouble."

~ ~

Paris Ferland was back at Outerbridge Sound again, science guy by her side. It really was all about getting back on the horse, or she might never have the courage to go there again. Sam still wanted to film there, despite two people dying during, whatever the hell had happened. Two navy people had died, a man in the submersible of a broken neck, though the submersible was still usable. The other death had been a woman who'd gone overboard, washed over the side of the navy's boat. Her body hadn't been found, so far. Paris had a few new bruises, as did Bryan. Sam might have reacted differently if someone from SHP had died, though she doubted that. The whole incident had been

put down to another geological incident, so it was business as usual. Even the British Navy were getting the submersible ready for another attempt to go deep into the dark waters of Outerbridge Sound.

"I know what I saw Bryan." She said.

"I'm sure you did Paris. The human eye can see things in a way no camera can imitate. A moving grey object deep in very dark waters, no camera can catch that."

"Just a pity the camera I was holding just shows waves, huge waves." She said.

"It happens when tourists take pictures of breath-taking scenery, yet when they get home and print out the pictures, they look rubbish. Our eyes aren't cameras, we're intelligent creatures. Or at least so it's been rumoured."

Paris gave him a playful thump; she was aware of pictures losing a certain something when seen later. Cognition it was called, the human brain adding a little....Magic to the image, for want of a better word. She'd seen something huge below the water, so huge that her mind was still having trouble coping with it. To think that monster, that thing, might be just one of many such creatures.

"You should talk to Ilaria and get her to draw what you describe." Said Bryan. "She really is a good artist."

"Like a police sketch artist drawing the face of a criminal."

"That's the idea." Said Bryan.

"Good idea, I'll try and catch her this afternoon."

They walked along the shore; it was all part of her self-prescribed therapy. Something huge had happened when the navy were launching their sub, something that could have been a disaster. It was the way people reacted to things though, a near disaster was usually ignored. The area near the sound was still very wet, mud everywhere. So much sea water had been thrown out by the geological event, that there was a new salt wonder pond to the south of Outerbridge Sound. It would eventually dry out, though that might take a while.

"There should be kids here, digging through the debris." She said. "I can see at least three items with Royal Navy written on them. All of it washed off their boat by those thirty- or forty-foot waves. Where are the kids Bryan?"

"Yes, there should be gangs of them. They're probably still scared."

"That's it, the locals know.....They will avoid the sound now, the way they avoid the wooded places. They understand what's happening, even Chavez, building his chapel. Yet, here we are, getting ready to shoot scenes for episodes two and four. The locals aren't crazy Bryan, we are."

"We're not forced to stay here, we could leave." Said Bryan. "I might need to find a new job, but we could leave Janssen."

It was the first time he'd used we, as in linking them as a couple. It was a bit too soon, yet she didn't hate the idea. She kissed him gently on the lips.

"You never knew the old me." She said. "She'd have stormed into Sam's room and told him what to do with his business as usual. That version of me was strong, fearless and definitely empowered. She'd also have become unemployable after doing a few daytime quiz shows. I'm here for the duration of Sam's show Bryan and.....I'd quite like it if you were too."

"I'm not going...Who mentioned leaving?"

She couldn't resist his silly grin, she kissed him again, with a little more feeling than the first time. It occurred to her that there was still an unanswered question regarding Bryan, a huge one.

"I have to ask, is there a Mrs Science Guy anywhere? Maybe a couple of small science guys that go with her?"

“No, there was once...No kids, just a wife. She’s now married to an accountant in Luton.”

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The Swedish woman had been severely injured, but had survived to reach the only hospital on Janssen. Sonja Lund was recovering well, though the doctors still had her in intensive care. There would be more surgery required to repair the damage done to her, though her family wanted her moved to a hospital in Stockholm at the earliest opportunity. The local medical people had said she still needed to be stabilized first, and a kind of war between medics had begun.

Sonja was serene for someone who’d been through hell and survived. She was awake, actually eager to talk and the hospital were allowing visitors. By one of those weird quirks of fate, Bill and Mark had arrived at about the same times as Captain Trevor Harrington. Considering they’d saved Sonja and were now supposed to be part of the investigation, Harrington was still looking down his nose at them.

“Yes, that’s definitely what attacked me.” Said Sonja. “I’ll never forget the way it ripped apart that poor navy guy I was with. When it started biting me, I passed out.”

“Could I have a copy of those pictures ?” Asked Harrington.

“You can have the ones on my phone.” Said Mark. “Here, I copied them to a USB drive. I’ve already given a copy to J Outerbridge.”

“We took lots of pictures, just in case the thing’s carcass vanished, which it did.” Said Bill. “Either these beasts collect up their dead, or someone on Janssen thinks tidying up after these creatures is helping in some way.”

Sonja was still going through the pictures on his phone, wincing at some of them. He hadn’t wanted to show them to her, but she’d insisted.

“Oh, I remember those weird arms.” She said. “It used them to hold me.....All those dreadful claws.”

The creature seemed to have tentacles like the larger monsters in the sound. Tentacles still developing, but solid enough for it to run on, or hold its prey. Each tentacles appeared to be covered in a huge number of razor-sharp claws. The tentacles obviously curled up quite a bit when they died, none of the pictures showed that much detail. They had hoped to uncurl the tentacles, but all their energy went into getting Sonja to the hospital. As it was, the doctor said she was close to death when Mark had run through the hospital’s doors, with Sonja in his arms.

“Are you sure you want to keep looking at the pictures ?” Asked Bill.

“Yes, you killed it.” Said Sonja. “It seemed so tough and all those claws.....But you killed it, they can be killed. Do you think there are many more of them ?”

“We can’t say for sure.” Said Harrington.

“Yes, I’m sure there are Sonja.” Said Bill. “You’re safe now.....Soon you’ll be back home in Sweden.” Harrington was glaring at him, men in command rarely liked to be contradicted. Between skimming through the pictures on Mark’s phone and glaring, the captain of the Sheffield looked to be busy, yet he had a surprise in store for Bill.

“This changes everything, these pictures and who took them, prove there are dangerous predators on Janssen.” Said Harrington. “My men will now patrol different areas every night, always on foot. They will need your expertise gentlemen. I’m hoping I can rely on you both ?”

“I’m glad to help in any way I can.” Said Mark.

“Me too, though I have to tell you that although I’m more than happy to help, I’m no longer part of an FBI investigation on Janssen.” Said Bill.

Harrington’s glare had turned into a grin, a got you grin.

"You are now Bill, my people in London talked to your people and you're now back on the case. I suspect that if you call your boss, he will make it official."

"Oh crap." Said Bill.

"Don't get on with your boss?" Asked Harrington.

"Oh, my boss is fine, it's my wife who worries me. Kay was expecting me home next week."

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Nicki Outerbridge hadn't known what to do with Vince. He wasn't strictly her responsibility, but no one had realised how much events at the sound would disrupt filming. The poor kid had been expecting to do jobs for Paris, even if it was just getting her coffee and doughnuts. Nicki had decided to fill the void a little, by giving him very slow and thorough tour of the villa.

"There's a pool Vince, if you swim? Of course you swim, people learn to swim before they can walk on Janssen."

"I wouldn't drown, but I'm not that good a swimmer." Said Vince.

"Then you can use the pool to get better, practice I mean."

It was ridiculous, Nicki could feel the stress causing her to sweat a little. It was just that a whole list of things had been agreed as a sort of induction course for Vince, then wham! The navy seemed to have annoyed the creatures in the sound. Filming schedules had been changed and a few of the cast were receiving trauma counselling. On top of that, Paris seemed to need some alone time, or time to be alone with science guy. Understandable, though it left Nicki to keep Vince occupied. She'd seriously considered giving the boy a brush and a bucket of whitewash. There were a few garden walls that needed a bit of a tidy up. She noticed he was taking an interest in a few freshly dug holes not far from the pool.

"Ilaria and Dom have been treasure hunting." She said. "I think they enjoy looking for Jack's treasure, with no real expectation of finding it."

"They won't find it here." Said Vince. "It's nowhere near the pool."

Nicki's mind wasn't probably at its best, though the implications of what he'd said, broke into her consciousness.

"How do you know it's not near the pool Vince?" She asked.

"I found it when I was small. It wasn't near the pool. Not that I can tell you where it is."

Once heard, his words were impossible to ignore. Vince might be a bit slow on the uptake, but he'd never been one to tell tall tales.

"Stop walking Vince, look at me." She said. "You're telling me you found Jack's treasure when you were a small boy."

"Yes, though I can't tell you where it was. It was before I had the accident and banged my head. I can't remember where it is, though I seem to remember where it isn't. The treasure was.....Magnificent, that is the right word. Magnificent!"

"Can you describe it properly?"

"Not really."

"Please.....Can you try to....."

Vince was let off the hook by the appearance of Paris and science guy, though Nicki was determined not to let Vince avoid telling her what he knew. He had to at least be able to describe the magnificent treasure, though now of course....He only had eyes for Paris.

"Paris.....I was just taking Vince for a look around the villa." Said Nicki.

"Yes, of course. Sam did tell me Vince was arriving to help."

There it was, the same smile millions had loved when Paris had been on CNN. It seemed hard to think of her being anything other than as she was now, though Sam had told her Paris once had a reputation for being a bit scary.

"I'm going to look after you Miss Ferland." Said Vince.

"I am sure you will. Are you hungry Vince ?"

"Yes."

"Good, I'm about to get the toaster oven to make cheese on toast. Come on, you can join us."

Vince was looking at her, as if asking for permission.

"Go on Vince." Said Nicki. "Go and enjoy yourself."

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Denise Scott, co-founder and half owner of SHP - Scott Hardwick Productions, had already finished dressing. She was enjoying watching Flo get dressed, there was something to be said for a little voyeurism first thing in the morning. Flo's underwear always looked expensive, it seemed to be one of her personal indulgences. Denise often wore a bra and knickers that didn't match, but not Flo. Actually, it felt too early to be called morning, the hotel's breakfast area would only just be opening up. Denise found herself yawning.

"I'm sure an extra half hour in bed wouldn't have done any harm." She said. "Maybe even an hour."

Flo looked at her and put her finger over her lips. The information drops by someone Flo trusted were still going on, the paranoia growing. Den was willing to accept that Flo knew the way politics at Westminster currently worked. A government being given daily thrashings in the press, most of it fuelled by leaks. For all she knew, someone might have bugged their hotel room. They needed to talk somewhere public, somewhere unpredictable. Breakfast in a hotel's restaurant was something they rarely did, room service was far more cosy and intimate. Breakfast at such an ungodly hour was unknown. Den found herself yawning again.

"Think how nice fresh bread rolls will taste." Said Florence Karádi MP.

"Come on then, before I start yawning again."

The smell in the breakfast area was nice, fresh bread and coffee, with a hint of grilling bacon. They had the place almost to themselves, only one other person, a man on his own eating toast. Once they'd ordered Flo got down to business.

"Sorry to drag you down here so early, but the people I've contacted for you and the arrangements I've made. If it became publicly known I could kiss my career goodbye. There is a chance I might be prosecuted, though I doubt that."

"I really do appreciate your help." Said Den. "Is the boat there and waiting for them ?"

"It is and Oscar will wait there until he might be needed. You need to tell Sam though, he needs to make arrangements with Oscar, in case the worst happens. Otherwise, it's all been a waste of time and money."

"Sam said no to having a plane waiting, he won't like the boat any better. I will tell him though; I'll tell him when he calls me later."

"Oscar won't go looking for him, he isn't exactly a knight in shining armour type. Sam will need to arrange to get his people to The Daphne. Then if anyone can get them safely away from The Donder Isles, it's Oscar Grimm. He was a CIA operative for years; he can handle just about anything."

"Is he really called Grimm ?"

"Yes Den, he really is called Grimm."

"I do appreciate everything you've done. I'll tell Sam he has to talk to Mr Grimm as soon as possible." Said Den.

“Get him to agree a password for SHP staff to use if they’re likely to be running away from something, when they arrive at The Daphne. Something easy to remember, but unlikely to crop up by accident. Names of Greek Gods are good. Oh, and tell Sam to take ID with him. Oscar might not ask, but you never know.”

The man sitting on his own finished his toast and left. To Den he seemed a bit too interested in them. Paranoia probably, they were the only other two people having a very early breakfast.

“He was really staring at us.” Said Den.

“Welcome to my world of total anxiety.” Said Flo. “Everyone I see seems to be taking too much interest in me. I mean everyone, all the fucking time. Luckily going crazy never stopped any politician from having a decent career.”

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Cruise ships tended to have names that hinted at romance, luxury and exotic places and The Golden Promise was no exception. Over three thousand passengers and crew called Golden Promise their temporary home, until they arrived back in Miami. Not completely full, though the cruise ship rarely left port with every room occupied.

“They keep you busy.” Said the passenger.

“Broken glass....Always a priority.” Fred replied.

Fred Zinner was second in charge of routine maintenance, though his official titles took two or three lines to say the same thing. The woman tourist gave him a certain look he recognised, and if he wasn’t so busy.....As it was, he simply smiled back and carried on putting up the plastic bollards and dayglow barriers. Sex on tap had never been mentioned during the job interview, but it seemed to be all quite a few of the passengers had on their minds, men and women. Good fun, though the glass outside the Caribbean Lounge, had to be marked, guarded and cleaned up. A drunken couple had managed to drop three bottles and a dozen glasses as they’d left the lounge.

Fred saw Betty coming right from the end of the corridor. A large young lady, though that didn’t stop her being a harder worker than most.

“I’m glad you’re here, I thought I might be clearing this up on my own.” He said.

“They beeped me.” Said Betty. “Mid-afternoon and they’re already smashing stuff.”

“We wouldn’t have a job if they didn’t do stuff like that.”

“Aint that the truth.”

Fred had brought a brush with him; daytime emergencies invariably required a brush. Once they had all the visible pieces cleaned up, the cleaning team would finish off with the large industrial vacuum cleaners in the morning. His job often felt like looking after hyperactive toddlers, but he was paid well.

“Hey.....Did you feel that ?” Asked Betty.

They were in the deep-water channel at Janssen and scheduled to be there for another full day.

There was no chance of bad waves that close to shore, the reefs kept the worst of the bad seas at bay. He’d felt it though, a definite jolt.

“Must be nothing, a launch might have bumped us.” He said

The warning signs were down and the glass was in several thick bags, by the time Fred felt the second jolt.

“I’ve heard weird things have been happening in Janssen.” Said Betty. “The sooner we’re out to sea, the better.”

“Don’t let the passengers here that talk.” He said. “Come on let’s get these bags in a cupboard, or someone is bound to fall over them.”

The next jolt was worse than the last, one of the bags of broken glass fell over. A few passing passengers looked worried, though not that worried. Fred had been on a cruise ship caught in harbour by a hurricane. He knew they were built to survive just about anything.

"I'm going to see what the hell is going on." Said Betty.

"But the bags need....."

No good, she'd gone and that meant he had to secure the bags in a cleaning cupboard, all on his own. There was a sharp metallic sound to accompany the next jolt. It was a bad jolt; he saw an elderly passenger fall over.

"It's alright, I'm sure it's nothing to worry about." Said Fred.

Saying it was nothing to worry about was so drummed into him at every training session, that it had no real effect on his own feelings. It was the metallic sound that seemed to make it serious, as though they'd run aground. That was impossible, The Golden Promise was moored, held by several anchors.

"There, are you alright sir ?"

"I'm fine.....What happened ?"

"I'm not sure, but it was probably nothing serious."

Fred made sure the passenger who had fallen wasn't injured, before going to look for Betty, or at least get a look at the ocean. There was a louder metallic sound with the next jolt, and the entire ship moved a little to one side. Fred almost lost his feet, so he wasn't surprised to see several passengers fall to the ground. Too many to help and anyway, he was now scared and needed to know what the hell was happening.

Fred heard the first scream just before he was outside, on the starboard promenade deck. Once he heard one, they seemed to come more often. Awful, terrible screams. The screams of people beyond being simply scared. Betty was there, leaning over the rail to look at the ocean.

"What is it, Betty ? What's going on ?" He shouted.

It happened, he saw it with his own eyes, in the bright sunlight of a sub-tropical afternoon. Yet seeing, witnessing the horror, didn't stop him questioning his own eyes, maybe his sanity too. Something huge and grey grabbed Betty and took her away. Not just Betty, it took about twenty feet of rail with it, and several of the lamps that ran the length of the promenade deck. One moment Betty had been there and the next she'd been gone, along with the rail and several lamps. Something like a huge tentacle had taken her, a huge grey tentacle. It was a silly thing to do, considering what he'd just seen. Fred carefully walked past the damage and found a solid section of rail. Another jolt, the ship leaned to one side, before quickly coming upright again. He leaned over to look at the deck below and the ocean.

"This isn't happening, this can't be happening." He yelled.

No wonder they were screaming, the injuries were horrendous and many would never scream again. Parts of what had been people, passengers enjoying an afternoon of sunshine. Now everyone on the main deck looked to be either dead or dying. Ripped apart by what looked like several huge grey tentacles. It was the tentacles causing the jolts, as they pulled the ship from side to side, as if holding it in some kind of dreadful embrace. Fred could see fires beginning too, where electrical cables had been shorted out, or lamp fittings pulled apart.

"It's hell.....They're right, the water here goes right down to hell." Fred Shrieked.

It was in the ocean, quite some way from the ship. Huge, it took every other horror from his mind. The single yellow eye just below the water had to be thirty or forty feet across. It was the feeling of hate it emoted though, that single huge eye. It hated everything it saw and wanted to destroy it.

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Ilaria D'Andrea was as keen as Dom to film in the caves, even sharing his desire to cross the flooded cavern. She'd even found someone on Jannsen who'd lend them a kayak. Sam didn't look as keen as them, getting through all those grubby, damp passages could be a bit off putting.

"Just imagine the cavern with proper lighting." Said Dom. "As soon as Ilaria and I discovered this place, we both said the same thing, Sam will love it."

"The place is so atmospheric Sam." Said Ilaria. "Imagine Paris doing her stuff into camera, with the cavern behind her."

Sam had a look on his face, as he used a flashlight to look around. In the daylight Ilaria could read his expressions, but not in a damp gloomy underground passage. They'd pointed out the glint of something shiny on the other side of the lake. Getting Sam to agree to filming the cavern was important. Without the support of the SHP filming crew, it would be just about impossible to safely cross the underground lake.

"I love the place." Said Sam. "The story about the huge creature coming up out of the water, the hint of treasure across the water. It's perfect, bloody perfect. Add on the strange cave insects and the worms on the walls and we could get a second season out of these caves. But I have one huge problem."

"What's that?" Asked Ilaria.

"I can see what's going on, you're both determined to carry on with a ridiculous hunt for a treasure that might not exist." Said Sam.

"But..... You can see something over there." Said Dom. "We could be so close."

"Or, it could be an old tin can glinting in the light. You know what I always say about the show."

"It has to come first, second, third....." Said Ilaria.

"And sometimes even fourth.....Yes, we know." Said Dom.

Sam was looking across the water and there was something about his posture. Ilaria knew at that moment, that Sam was going to agree to using the cavern in the show.

"Alright, this is how it's going to be." Said Sam. "I can't sack you if you go feral on me, I need you both. But I can refuse to pay your completion bonus. Do I have your full attention?"

"Yes boss." Said Ilaria.

"What she said." Muttered Dom.

"There will be a lot of noise and light when everyone comes down here. If nothing nasty comes up to see what's happening, you two can get in your canoe....."

"Kayak." Said Ilaria.

"Whatever..... You can cross the water and see what's there. But only after filming is finished and my online talent have left. No putting Paris at even the slightest risk, do you agree?"

"Yes, fine." Said Ilaria.

"Good.....I'll get Cormac to rework the schedules." Said Sam. "This place is marvellous and those worms. The viewing public will be hooked on those."

Ilaria might have actually hugged Sam, if Simon hadn't arrived to give their boss a whispered message.

"When did this happen?" Asked Sam.

More whispers and muttering, though she did hear the words sinking and on fire mentioned once or twice.

"We need to go, there's been an attack on a cruise ship." Said Sam.

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Mark Coulier had heard what had happened to The Golden Promise, the Regiment still had a decent comms system. He stopped his bike on the coast road, close enough to see the burning cruise ship. Bill stopped next to him and for a while, they both just watched the disaster unfolding close to shore.

“We should do something.” Said Bill.

“Not much we can do; you hear everything I hear Bill. The cruise ship is finished, likely to be a smouldering wreck by morning. The navy are helping the regiment, so there are a few dinghies out there, looking for survivors. It’s bad though, really bad.”

“Any idea how many passengers were onboard ?” Asked Bill.

“Not exactly, though these ships usually hold three thousand, or thereabouts. I’m hearing that a few hundred have survived. Fuck, this is bad Bill.”

As he watched, Mark realised why the scene looked wrong. There should have been helicopters buzzing around and the constant wail of sirens. First responders should have been clambering over the cruise ship looking for people to help. Janssen didn’t have all that, the local police force consisted of four officers, and one of those ran Rum Runners most days. Then again, no one expects such terrible things to happen in a sub-tropical paradise.

“I still think we should do something.” Said Bill.

“Weapons Bill, talk to your people to get us some serious weapons. I know the navy are here, but they’re not geared up for this kind of thing. Rocket launchers, napalm, that’s the sort of thing we need. Mobile depth charge launchers too, I’d love to drop a few of those into Outerbridge Sound.”

“Your local government would never allow it.” Said Bill.

“Our government is J Outerbridge and his brother and though I’ve nothing against them; they only care about keeping tourists happy and getting those cruise ships coming back. Well.....I think we know there’ll be no more cruise ships for a while. Get me those depth charges and I’ll use them. Let’s take the battle to the creatures in the sound.”

“Now that, I’d like to see.” Said Bill.

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