

Outerbridge Sound

Chapter 18 - Evacuation

“The rear wall of the villa had a long crack, a new crack that hadn’t been there before the quake. As the building showed no signs of falling down, he’d decided to ignore the crack, for now.”

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Mark Coulier was aware something huge had happened during the night. He’d known the lights had flickered before going off and he’d seen the emergency lighting kick in, until the hospital’s own generator had started up. He was certain he could hear it running, though that might have been the effects of the drugs they’d given him. As his body healed after the near fatal loss of blood, the nerves in his arm came back to life, or at least it felt as though they had. He had no left hand, yet his left hand was giving him enough pain to stop him sleeping. The doctor had told him a phantom hand was quite common and that the pain would eventually go away. Mark had no idea what they’d given him, but it had made the events of the night seem like little more than a dream. Had the creatures attacked Janssen’s electricity generating plant? Were they that smart?

When no one had turned up to do the usual morning tests, he’d begun to make plans. When no breakfast arrived, he put the plans into action. Dressing one handed was maddeningly frustrating, though he’d managed it. He was currently sat on the side of the hospital bed, cursing whoever had invented shoe laces.

“Why does everything require two hands.” He yelled.

“I can do that for you. I wondered if anyone would stay to look after you.”

A nurse he recognised her, even though she was wearing jeans and a shirt, rather than her usual uniform. A young black girl called Alyssa, though everyone called her Aly. She was usually the first face he saw every morning. Not a local, she’d been tempted away from a hospital in Chicago, by better pay and a few years in a sub-tropical paradise. She’d told him most of her life story, as he’d waited for his body to heal.

“What the hell happened Aly?”

“An earthquake, a bad one. We’ve been told to be prepared for several aftershocks. Luckily the radio station was put off air by a tropical storm four or five years ago, or so I heard. They invested in an emergency generator. They’re all the news we’re getting and a lot of it sounds like the local gossip everyone hears.”

“So, no power.” Said Mark.

“They say JELCO are promising the power will be back on before nightfall.” Said Aly.

“We can’t wait here all day.” He said. “It probably wouldn’t be safe with those creatures wandering about. Did you drive here?”

“Just my bike.”

“That’ll do, we can get to the regiment’s barracks, we’ll be safe there. Are the navy doing much?”

“Well, they’re doing their best I suppose. As the radio news guy said, they always seem to arrive a bit too late to achieve much. When they patrol Tilburg, it’s always the same half dozen or so guys.”

The captain of The Sheffield was keeping his men alive and well until the specialists arrived, Mark knew that. It was what he’d have done. The only problem was that Janssen might be a slaughterhouse for the beasts, before the reinforcements arrived.

“Thank you for coming to check on me.” He said. “If you hadn’t. I’d have had no idea what was going on.”

She actually looked a little flustered. They had talked about a date, once he was out of the hospital. “I couldn’t ignore you being here, probably alone.” She said. “The doctors are probably stuck in villas with no power and no way of finding out what’s going on. The radio is saying the government has called for an evacuation, though no one is sure where to evacuate too. Most of the boats here aren’t designed to reach the USA mainland. It’s chaos out there Mark....Chaos.”

“Crap.....We need to get out of here Aly.” He said. “Come on, we’ll be safe at the regiment’s headquarters.”

He hadn’t walked for a day or so and the drugs had to still be having an effect. His legs felt like rubber, he had to lean on the wall for a moment.

“Are you alright ?” Asked Aly.

“I will be once those damned drugs wear off.”

“Drink a lot. You’ll pee a lot, but it’ll wash the sedatives out of your system. Do you want your rifle ?”

“You bet I do, is it here ?”

“Yes, they put it in a cabinet. I have a key.”

There it was, his assault rifle, one of the best on Jannsen. They’d obviously decided to lock away anything potentially dangerous, his dagger was there too.

“I now feel much more confident that we’ll be alright.” He said. “Let’s get to your bike.....You’re driving.”

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Denise Scott had no idea that Jannsen had vanished off the map, electronically at least. The two satellite phones she’d sent out, never had worked that well. Any tech guy she talked to said generally unhelpful things about geological events often screwing with communications. It wasn’t unusual to hear nothing from Sam or Nicki. Jannsen never had been largely reported on the news, the visit by The Sheffield had been dropped by the BBC late night news. Instead, they’d run a piece on the death of the world’s oldest parrot. Jannsen dropped for a dead parrot story.....Sam had gone crazy.

Besides, the DAB radio in the office was usually tuned to an easy listening channel. Absurd as it seemed, she was going through the motions of a perfectly normal day, when the email arrived.

‘These are on YouTube, there may be more. Looks bad.’

An email from Dom’s wife, Jane. She obviously had an internet search set up for anything mentioning Jannsen. Denise sent her a thank you reply, before clicking on the links Jane had sent her.

“Crap.....Izzy, get in here Izzy.” She yelled.

No one was getting the news out from Jannsen, unless they had help from The Sheffield, or so the note on the video said. Everything else was dead, no satellite comms were working. The first link looked grainy, but a severe earthquake is a severe earthquake, even if the recording is low definition. The third link showed a beach full of dead bodies.

‘Michael Chavez is currently being treated by the Sheffield’s medical team, but he isn’t expected to live.’

Whoever was sending the videos to YouTube wasn’t being exactly verbose. What the hell had happened on Jannsen ? Nicki had sent an email saying there had been a problem at the chapel, then there had been nothing else. Problem huh, some fucking problem. The population of Jannsen wasn’t

huge and it looked like half of them had died on that beach. Izzy arrived looking stressed, her usual look until after lunch.

“What’s happening ?” Asked Izzy.

“I’ll send you these links, but look……Crap Izzy, this looks serious.”

Together they went through all the videos, a few had audio. None of it taken professionally, all of it taken by scared locals out in Janssen. It seemed someone on The Sheffield had helped them get the videos out into the world. Official help, or one of the crew going a little rogue ? Whoever it was had decided the world needed to see what was going on.

“Wow, the sea looks to be burning in this one.” Said Izzy.

The last link showed a burning building, though the notes under it gave no clues as to which building it was. Den was pleased that it didn’t look big enough to be the villa or Bredon House.

‘Power is out, the radio said the government are organising an evacuation.’

“Which government, theirs or ours ? I need you to start searching Izzy, look for anything on the net for Janssen or The Donder Isles. I’m going to have to make a few calls.”

It took a while to get Izzy out of her office, the videos were shocking, yet still strangely addictive. Once she’d gone, Den could hear her telling the others in the back office all about it. By going home time they’d have all told everyone they knew, or had probably ever known. Repeat that over and over again and…The videos would soon be viral. Den called Pru first at Madrigal Research, who she now looked upon as the source of all reliable knowledge.

“Heard a few rumours Denise, I’ll look into it and call you back.”

By one of those quirks of fate, she was just deciding on the best time to call Flo, when Flo called her, on her mobile.

“Hi, I’m so glad you called.” Said Den. “You must know what happening on Janssen. They seem to be in the middle of an evacuation.”

“It’s a little chaotic Den, but I can tell you the navy are protecting the villa. Sam and the others are safe, though I have some bad news. Jeffrey Gravenor was killed while trying to protect the people attending the chapel near the beach. I’m rather hoping you could contact his family.”

“He was a freelancer Flo, but I have his next of kin on file, it’s one of our standard questions. I’ll call them right away.”

“I’m not sure if it helps, but he died a hero, trying to save others. Bad news though, terrible news after them finding Dom.”

“What about Dom ?”

“Oh Den, I’m not sure when you were last updated by Sam. The man who rents out tourist bikes found the remains. No details I’m afraid, but what was found was barely recognisable. Definitely Dom though.”

Oh crap, another call to Jane, who was now going to hate her. Shock and grief would turn into wanting someone to blame and Jane was going to blame SHP.

“I’ll call his wife and let her know. Has the UK government called for an evacuation of Janssen ?”

“No, the navy are actually banging on doors in Tilburg, telling everyone to stay put. The boats used by the local population, aren’t likely to get to the USA in one piece. There are currently severe storms between them and mainland USA. A cruise ship has been hired to remove anyone from Janssen who wants to leave, though it will take a while to get there.”

“How about evacuation by air ?” Asked Den.

“Using that almost hobbyist airstrip....Plus with the geological events screwing up navigation equipment and the general mayhem. No one will want to fly to Janssen for a while. That said the navy are flying in a few special operations people to help the navy.”

“So, they can land alright ?”

“No, at least not in theory. Crazy pilots though Den, they say they can land just about anywhere.” Den didn’t want to ask, though she knew she had to.

“No more of my people are dead are they Flo ? Just Jeffery and poor Dom.”

“Those are all I know about....Sam is fine, but a few of his cast and crew have gone walkabout. Probably stuck somewhere with no power. I wouldn’t get too concerned. I promise you, if I know something, I’ll call.”

The call ended with a love you, from both of them. Flo was beginning to be a fixed part of her life, which was nice. In amongst all the mayhem, Flo was always there, her rock.

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Kate Russo prided herself on being tough. Not the sort to make a huge drama out of every crisis. Despite being on her own in the house during the earthquake she’d resisted the temptation to run. For a start there was nowhere to run to. The power being out added to her problems, though she still wasn’t going to let it make her panic. Again, there was no one around to panic at.

She was on her own, so she’d walked around the house at first light, looking for any obvious damage. There was none, she’d been lucky. Or rather they’d been lucky, her husband might be in the USA, but he loved their home on Janssen. It had been a hot week on Janssen, everything in the fridge was likely to already be a bit iffy. She had everything perishable in bin bags, long before she was normally getting up. Breakfast was Nutella on seeded bread, kiddie food, but wonderful. The landline phone just crackled at her and her cell phone had never worked anywhere near where she lived. Strangely, from before dawn, there had been no doubt about how to spend the day.

“I must go into work, they’ll need me.” She muttered.

The water in the tanks below the house needed power, to pump water up to a tank under the roof. Luckily with just her living there, the roof tank was nearly full. There was a tap with a hose in the car port at the side of the house. Kate had no hesitation in getting naked in the car port, lathering up with shower gel, before hosing herself down. Not very ladylike, but her armpits passed the sniff test. “Jeans and a T shirt, I think.” She muttered. “Definitely a dress down day.”

Kate didn’t like bikes, but she had one. She’d even given it a name, Gertrude. Quite expensive, with all the extras, yet her husband always laughed about it. There was a basket on the front. Ideal for a little shopping and holding her bag, but even she had to agree, it looked a bit silly. Tempting to take the car, but there was going to be debris on the road. The bike would get her anywhere.

“Come on Gertrude, I can’t be late.”

The bike had to be used to periods of idleness and neglect, there’d been spider’s webs across the handlebars. It started easily though and the fuel gauge was showing two thirds of a tank. Kate wasn’t going to rush; she’d once run into debris after a bad tropical storm. She had to leave the road to avoid a fallen tree, though otherwise, it wasn’t a bad journey. One man had shouted at her to get inside, because of the creatures. She decided to ignore him, putting it all down to him allowing himself to panic.

“Panic solves nothing, or so mum always said.” She muttered.

Her faith in the return of normality, if people had the right attitude, returned once she reached the villa. The lighting team had two portable generators and both of them were chugging away at the far side of the car park. The sound lady, Emily, actually waved at her.

"There's coffee inside and toast." Said Emily.

"Is Paris inside?" Asked Kate.

"No, Sam said all filming is cancelled for today. She and science guy went off somewhere together." No filming didn't mean there was nothing to do. Kate was certain she'd be needed, after she'd had coffee and some of that toast.

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Sam Hardwick enjoyed all the chaos that went with TV production, or rather he normally enjoyed it. Two dead members of what he thought of as the SHP family, had stopped it being fun. The earthquake had left a lot of people bruised, though nothing serious enough to mean hospital care. Cormac had broken a toe at some point, but as everyone had told him.

"There's not much you can do with a broken toe. Just tape it to the toe next door."

Which was what Cormac had done, helped by several of the crew. Sam had learned something that night. Mainly that duct tape was perfect for strapping up broken toes. How so many people ended up being experts on broken toes, sounded like something for another day. The rear wall of the villa had a long crack, a new crack that hadn't been there before the quake. As the building showed no signs of falling down, he'd decided to ignore the crack, for now. There were a lot of strong backs, so the general clean up was progressing well, before Gary the lighting guy powered up the two portable generators.

"Enough juice for the essentials." Gary had announced. "Plus, a bit left over for the coffee maker."

It seemed they could have toast too, without burning out any fuses. Coffee and toast drew in everyone from Bredon House. When the villa began to look almost cleaner than it usually looked, the navy arrived. A dozen armed seamen, who'd work in shifts to guard them around the clock. That was encouraging, so when he saw Kate had arrived, he'd decided to call everyone together for a meeting.

"Firstly, we are now going to be properly protected." He said. "You've all got to know Rana and other members of the crew of The Daphne. They will be staying with us and we've been promised a contingent of seamen from The Sheffield, will also be looking after us."

"How about Bredon House?" Yelled Gary.

"Everyone needs to leave Bredon House and move into the villa." Said Sam. "It'll be a bit cramped, but I'm sure we'll cope with it. No wandering off for a private moment...Everyone sleeps at the villa now, no exceptions."

"What, even you boss?" Asked Ilaria.

"Yes, I will admit to doing it too. No more though, we all come back here, every night. I'm going to ask Kate to keep a note of where everyone is at any given time."

"We're not children Sam." Said Emily.

"I know you're not, but no one knew where Dom was.....Sorry Ilaria, just making a point."

"Alright I get it.....Though I will hate it." Said Emily.

"They'll be microchipping us next." Muttered Gary.

"It is for your own safety." Said Sam. "The call for an evacuation has been cancelled, if it ever existed. Until the local government or the one in London, tell us to clear out. We'll carry on filming. Get it all in the cans and we can finish off in a nice safe studio in England. No filming today though, today is for clearing up after the earthquake and getting the crew moved into the villa."

"Anyway, we all know about megafauna." Said Ilaria. "Dom wouldn't have wanted us to run away."

"Nor I'm sure, would Jeffrey Gravenor." Said the Major.

"As we're on the subject, does anywhere know where Paris and Bryan are?" Asked Sam.

“They left before the sun came up, on bikes.” Said Emily.

“Anyone know ?” Sam persisted.

“They probably have a love nest somewhere.” Said Kate.

“All probablys and somewheres.....We need to get on top of this Kate. Now....Before we all get busy; I want us to have a two-minute silence for Dom and Jeff.”

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Andrew Low was standing in for the captain, who was considered too valuable to put at risk. Andrew could understand that. With the earthquakes and the monsters, Janssen was a fairly dangerous place and it might get far worse. Someone had to come and welcome the specialists, the men and women with the experience and the special weapons. Experience hunting insurgents in the middle east probably, but they probably had lots of transferable skills. Andrew didn't envy them; London would be expecting fast results and lately.....London had been a long way past unreasonable.

“I have them.....Coming in from the north.” Someone said.

It was almost back to the stone age, with the effect on comms and radio by the various geological events. The Sheffield had moved two miles to the west, to get a clear satellite link. Janssen wasn't just bad for technology. Andrew was sure the constant slight smell of sulphur, probably wasn't doing his lungs much good. He raised his glasses and saw the two transport aircraft coming in quite high. They'd descend steeply, the way planes do when landing on aircraft carriers. In theory the airstrip was too short for them to land, but everyone in London seemed to have confidence in the pilots to get the job done.

“Wave a few flares at them Atkins, show them where we are.” Said Andrew.

“Yes sir.”

The pilots had no doubt landed in far worse places and probably under fire. Atkins shouted at a few people and two lines of flares marked Janssen's fairly rudimentary airstrip. No instrument landing, whatever was happening on the island had fried the electronics. Andrew wasn't a believer in much, but he'd seen Michael Chavez in the ship's infirmary. The boat yard owner had second degree burns just about everywhere. He'd been screaming about the devil himself spewing flames at him. Andrew didn't believe in much at all....But still, it all sounded fairly weird and unnatural.

“Here they come, the crazy bastards.” Someone yelled.

Andrew had started his career as a navy pilot, he understood how bad throttle lag was on jet engines. Take off was fine and usually straight and level flying wasn't too bad either. Landing though, that was hell. An instructor had once told him no plane was ever designed to land. All that trying to slow down, while avoiding stalling. All the time the engines were objecting like hell, at being asked to do things they didn't enjoy. Yes, landing wasn't a natural state for an aircraft.

“Oh, he's going to end up hitting the fence.” Someone muttered.

“If he does.....It isn't much of a fence.” Someone replied.

The transport aircraft were huge, easily as big as a 747, maybe longer. There was no way they could land in that amount of space, it was impossible. Andrew was seriously worried that he and his men, might get caught in the coming ball of flame. The first aircraft hit the runway hard, as though the pilot was trying to use hitting the ground to slow down. Wheels and brakes screeching, it slewed down the runway, at a slight angle. Just before the boundary fence, the huge aircraft turned left and came to a halt.

“Fuck me.” Said Atkins. “He did it.”

The second aircraft did the same hitting the ground trick, but it cost him a tyre. The bang was so loud, Andrew thought someone might be firing at them. It slewed at a worse angle than the first

plane. It didn't stop fast enough, but as someone had pointed out, it wasn't much of a fence. The aircraft stopped halfway across the main road into Tilburg. They were safely on the ground though, both planes. Taking off again though.....Andrew wondered if the aircraft would be there forever. Constant rusty reminders of the time the creatures on Jannsen, had woken up.

"Alright, we're not here to gawp." He yelled. "Start getting the planes unloaded."

The aircraft held the soldiers with their equipment and two APCs to get them around on Jannsen. The APCs would break about every road transport law in The Donder Isles, but no one in London seemed bothered by that. Andrew waited for the rear ramp to lower on the first aircraft to land. He was there, first man to get off the plane, always at the front of his men. Andrew had met Ted Sangster before, during a relief mission on the west African coast. London always sent in Ted and his team, when everyone else had either failed, or looked likely to fail.

"Hi Andrew." Said Ted. "So.....How bad are things on Jannsen ?"

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Paris Ferland had seen Bill Carr, when the bad aftershocks were still making things difficult in the villa. He'd arrived out of nowhere, with a weapon that seemed to belong in a computer game. The FBI agent had arrived with his partner, who she thought had been invalidated out of the FBI. Obviously not, though she wasn't exactly running around the villa. Stacey, that was her name....It took Paris a while to remember. Stacey had an unusual gun too, though hers didn't need to be carried on a sling over her shoulder. Barely light when he'd arrived, it seemed Bill had been concerned by a message on his link with the navy people.

"It sounded as though you'd been attacked by the creatures." He'd said. "We have weapons that can kill them now."

"Until we run out of ammunition for them." Added Stacey.

Once they realised the damage to the villa was all to do with the quakes, the FBI agents got back in their Humvee and left. Not before Paris had told them about finding the bones of Dudley and what was left of his clothing. She told it all how she'd promised Vince, she'd tell it. She'd found the bones in a cave a long way from where Jack had left his Spanish gold. She'd heard the rumours about Neus Coulier being involved in the boy's death. Paris had done all she'd promised to do, yet the look in Bill's eyes, told her it wasn't enough.

"Once things here settle down, I'll look into it." He'd told. "If there is a full evacuation of Jannsen, things will become even more complicated. I will investigate the death Paris; you have my word. Just don't expect any quick results."

An earthquake, the creatures and all sorts of rumours about local residents fleeing in whatever boats they could get running. Paris could see why the death of a boy years before, was going to be low on the FBI guy's list of important things to do. Stacey had taken a few notes too, so Paris just hoped poor Dudley wasn't completely forgotten. She was still feeling as though she hadn't done enough, when science guy gave her a pack to carry.

"There you go, one of everything essential." He said. "I left the assault rifles with the bikes. They are a bit of a giveaway, that we're going exploring."

"We're still going ?" She asked.

"Yes, the paperwork left by the science team in nineteen seventeen is priceless. We agreed, you seemed really keen on showing me the building. Anyway, Sam just said it....No filming today."

The decision on their expedition had been before the quake and she'd had time to think about it. A trudge through some of the thickest vegetation on Jannsen, with just Ilaria's directions to find the right place. It was crazy, but Bryan was giving her his best puppy dog eyes look.

"I added food to our packs." Said Bryan. "We can have a bit of a picnic when we find the building."

"Alright.....Just don't blame me if we get lost or eaten by something."

The roads would have been impossible by car. If you had a Humvee or a truck to knock debris out of the way, you'd have been alright. Their bikes were ideal, able to do the occasional detour through an orchard, or the garden of someone's house. Paris realised there was an advantage to being on a small island. Everyone, including her, had quickly become an expert on how to get to just about anywhere. Rum Runners first and the centre of Tilburg. No stopping, but she knew the way to Castle Hill from there. Lots of navy people in Tilburg, quite a few of them carrying assault rifles. Things were changing, though personally, she considered it too little, too late.

Past Tilburg and Castle Hill wasn't far, the original colonists used to do the journey on foot. A few curves in the road that needed a little caution and one fallen tree blocking a corner. None of it slowed them down that much. She stopped where Ilaria had said was the best place, the edge of an onion grower's patch. She hung her crash helmet over the bike's handlebars. Theft was rare on Janssen and no one stole crash helmets. In front of them was the largest hill on Janssen. Actually, it was just about the only hill on Janssen.

"Where do we go now?" Asked Bryan.

"No climbing, the building is at the base of the hill. Not far, though the undergrowth might make it a bit of a struggle."

"I have a machete in my pack."

It reminded her of old action films, the sort her dad had been into. Bryan up the front with the machete, while she directed him from behind.

"Look for bricks where you wouldn't expect bricks to be." She said.

"A bit cryptic.....But I'm looking."

Paris had almost forgotten about carrying an assault rifle over her shoulder. There was something about seeing bricks through the trees though, something foreboding. She held the weapon in her hands, ready to use.

"There.....To your right." She said.

"Yeah....I see it.....Bricks."

Bricks were rare on Janssen, the buildings were constructed out of the local stone, or wood, like the now destroyed chapel. Some precast concrete came in by ship, but basically. The bulk of the housing on Janssen was still constructed using stone dug out of the ground. The German science team must have imported the bricks, all the way from Europe. Quite an undertaking in about nineteen thirteen, when the world was already muttering about a coming war.

"If that was ever an electrical sub-station, I'll eat everyone's hat." Said Bryan.

"Exactly what Ilaria thought when she saw it. She thinks it might have been intended as a shelter of some kind. It's been dug right back into the hill."

"Well....One of the German scientists did survive the local apocalypse." Said Bryan.

The locking mechanism on the door was gone, Ilaria had mentioned it's destruction. A little bit of noise as the door opened and once again, Paris found herself holding her rifle quite tightly. A dig through their packs for flashlights and they were inside the deceptively large building. Bryan said nothing as they found the heaps of files. Awe was the word, he seemed in awe of what they were looking at.

"They've been moved from somewhere." He eventually said.

"Ilaria and Emily thought that....Moved in a hurry."

Paris prided herself on having a pretty good thing going on with her bladder. She drank sensible amounts of fluid and her bladder didn't annoy her, usually. Something about the brick-built shelter troubled her though, in a way she didn't understand. There was a darkness about the place, a dark foreboding. When she was on edge, her bladder could quickly turn traitor.

"Sorry.....I need to pee."

"Do you want me to come and stand guard?"

Tempting, though she had no intention of wandering far. If she'd been on her own, she'd have gone in a dark corner.

"I'll be fine..... Dig through your priceless files. I won't be long." She said.

Outside the daylight hurt her eyes. Paris gave it a minute or so, before looking for a decent place to have a pee. No one about apart from them, but she needed decent cover and a hundred percent guaranteed privacy. Men would happily pee anywhere, but they didn't have to squat to get the job done. Paris ended up quite some way from the brick building. She heard the rifle shot, just as she was doing up the belt on her jeans.

"Fuck."

She muttered, it seemed to cover just about every eventuality on fucking Janssen. Was a quiet morning going through files with science guy, too much to expect? One of the creatures might have found Bryan, or with luck, he might have just committed toadside.

"At least we all have armour piercing rounds." She muttered.

The second shot made her move more quickly, though she was still being cautious. Bryan thought the quake would stir the creatures up, maybe bringing them out in greater numbers. It wasn't a comforting notion, so she was watching the undergrowth very carefully. She stood outside the brick building, leaning into the open door.

"Bryan.....Are you alright?" She yelled.

No reply, just a strange scuffling noise from somewhere. Paris aimed her flashlight towards the back of the building.

"Science guy, stop fucking about.....Are you alright?" She shouted.

It came at her fast, out of the darkness. Her flashlight showed her two yellow eyes and a jaw full of nasty looking teeth. Once she'd have been too frightened to move and she'd have died. She aimed her assault rifle between those awful yellow eyes and fired a long burst. The rifle wobbled a little, as she tried to hold the flashlight and the rifle. She heard something hit the ground, quite close to her feet. The flashlight showed her the dead creature. A nasty looking viscous fluid was coming from its lifeless head. A grey fluid that smelled bad and the monster probably used it for blood. Paris couldn't resist kicking it under the jaw, getting its blood on her boot.

"Damned things.....Bryan, it's dead. Talk to me Bryan."

She found the pile of files first; he'd obviously been digging out the ones he thought needed taking with them. Bryan was jammed up against the wall. Dead, the creature had been feeding on the contents of his abdomen. Strangely her first thought was to jam the files he'd selected into her backpack. They meant nothing to her, she'd have quite happily burned the building and everything in it to the ground. The files had meant a lot to Bryan though and they'd cost him his life. She cried for a while, before dragging his body away from the wall.

"Oh Bryan.....I should never have brought you here."

She took his backpack and his rifle when she left. She also did the best she could to jam the door tightly closed. With luck, nothing would get in to feed on what was left of the man she'd loved. She kissed him before she left.

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Bill Carr had to see the new special forces team from Britain, the specialists as Captain Harrington referred to them. It was about time the Brits sent some serious fighters to Janssen, though Bill thought they might find the island to be a bit of a poisoned chalice. Still, he'd been drawn to the Jansen Regiment's base, like a moth to a flame.

"How tough are these guys?" Asked Stacey.

"I heard they eat six-inch nails for breakfast."

"Yeah, yeah."

The navy were already moaning about the two transport aircraft, which now seemed to be a permanent feature. The pilots who'd landed them, were refusing to try and take off. Their opinion, as he'd heard it, was that it would be impossible to reach take off speed on the short runway. It seemed that landing was always a sort of controlled crash, while taking off.....Required a lot of runway. Of course, the airstrip was now closed and useless for bringing in any further supplies. It was effectively also closed as a route for any evacuation. As the only solution appeared to be a longer runway, the good people of Janssen might get one built for free by the British military.

"Don't hit anything while parking Bill."

"Alright.....Alright, we were in a hurry that time." He said.

As he parked the Humvee, he saw Mark walking across the car park. He had a pretty young girl on his arm. For a man who'd lost a hand and nearly died of it, he looked pretty chipper.

"That guy." Said Bill. "I'm sure if Mark is around at the end of the world, he'll come out of it with a hot date and a bottle of Jack."

"Who is he?" Asked Tracey.

"Come on, I'll introduce you."

Introductions turned into conversations and when Stacey realised Aly was a nurse, the conversation moved on to spinal injuries. It seemed that despite having the best doctors the FBI could find, Stacey still appreciated other opinions. Bill ended up sat on a wall, with Mark sat next to him.

"How do you do it Mark?" Asked Bill. "The way that girl looks at you."

"You have to be born with it." Said Mark, with a grin on your face.

The moment had come far quicker than Bill had expected, but there wasn't likely to be a better one. Stacey had her blouse pulled up at the back. Aly wasn't going to be able to escape for a while.

"How is the running battle with your dad going?" He asked.

"Oh, my dad is a total bastard. A bastard who owns the house I live in and gives me a very generous allowance, but still.....A complete and utter bastard."

"Good."

"Huh?"

"This is awkward, because I can't give you details. A source I trust thinks, no actually they're damned sure about it. Your father looks to be involved in the death of that kid, Dudley Cottingham."

Mark seemed very agitated and Bill wondered if being sat next to him was a good idea. Mark was big and well-muscled and he was bunching his right fist.

"Sorry buddy.....I felt you needed to know." Said Bill.

"Bill, what you're saying doesn't surprise me. No one has ever come right out and said it before. But I've heard stuff."

~ ~

Paris had arrived back at the villa with no real idea what to do. One thing mattered above all, Bryan's body couldn't be allowed to stay out there, in that dreadful building. She needed a vehicle of some

kind, one big enough to get through any debris on the roads. A strong back or two of course, Bryan wasn't fat, but he wasn't skinny either. A plan was beginning to form in her mind, involving Sam asking the navy for a huge favour. It would mean the scientific files becoming public knowledge, but that was probably for the best.

"I think it's what science guy would have wanted." She muttered.

First, she had to see Sam, or Nicki at a push, she seemed pretty tight with the British navy people. Paris hadn't seen herself in a mirror and had no idea that she might look a little distressed, until Rana saw her.

"Crap Paris, what the hell happened to you?"

Rana, the tough looking mercenary, who Sam seemed to have arranged. Paris had seen her around; she'd come and guarded a filming session one afternoon. An unlikely ally in her need to make sure Bryan didn't end up as monster food, but a friendly face when you needed one.....

"Bryan is dead, science guy.....I pushed the door closed, but they will find him..."

"Where Paris, where is he?" Asked Rana.

"It's the roads you see all the debris.....I could only just manage to drag him.."

Rana hugged her, just about the perfect thing to do, at just the right moment.

"I can't let those bastards eat him." Paris sobbed.

"Don't worry, we have quad bikes and a pretty tough Jeep." Said Rana. "We will recover your friend, I give you my word. First, we have to get Thierry, he's out near the pool. Thierry isn't too bright, but he's built like a grizzly bear. A big French grizzly bear."

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