

Outerbridge Sound

Chapter 5 – The Inquisition

“Now that Florence thought they were a thing again, the useful information had flowed like water. Were they a thing ? Denise Scott wasn’t sure, though she had bought a lot of new underwear, which usually meant it was a thing.”

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Nicki Outerbridge knew Janssen, she understood how something easy to deal with in a large first world city; could easily become a nightmare on a small island. She’d only agreed to help because poor Sam was still only operating at about half speed. So was she for that matter, but together they just about operated as one complete, healthy person.

“I can tell you’re having a bad morning.” She said. “I could have brought Dom with me.”

“They’ll just say they needed my signature and delay everything for another week.” Said Sam. “I want to get this done today.”

Nicki looked fairly beaten up, she still barely recognised the woman looking back at her from her bathroom mirror. Sam should have been sent home for treatment in London, his injuries had been that serious. He’d braved the infamous local hospital though, and for some reason his ribs only gave him trouble on rainy mornings. His foot was still in plaster and would be for some time. Ilaria still had some nasty bruises and after a few X-Rays, it turned out that Paris had a hairline jaw fracture. Everyone was mobile now though, just about. The regulars at Rum Runners had invented lots of names for them, from The A Team, to Rocky’s Sisters. The pictures of their injuries had been pretty gruesome, but they had gone viral on Twitter. Just as well, as they never did find the laptop with all the recordings.

“Can either of these two new guys drive ?” She asked. “Otherwise, we’ll need to leave the Humvee at the docks.”

“Three people will be arriving with the containers.” Said Sam. “Gary is the lighting guy, the best in the business and his cable runner Simon will be with him. I’ve never met Emily, the sound engineer, Denise found her through an agency. She’s supposed to be really good at her job. They will have lots of kit with them....Did I mention that ?”

Grinning at her like an idiot, of course he hadn’t mentioned that. It would mean a lot more faffing about, when both of them should still have been resting and healing. At least it was only his left foot in plaster, Sam could still just about drive the Humvee, at a pinch.

“Well.....I just hope they don’t mind lugging stuff about.” Said Nicki.

“They’ll be fine.”

Janssen’s lack of any serious immigration or customs checks was no surprise to Nicki, though Sam was surprised they could simply drive through an open gate and into the container yard.

“We’re a tiny dependency of the United Kingdom, with about the same annual expenditure on all public services as a medium sized English local council spends on office stationery. We’ve always relied on checks being done at the other end.”

“But..... What about terrorism Nicki ? Did you guys miss the whole 9-11 business ?”

She shrugged; it seemed the only appropriate thing to do.

“To be honest Sam, I don’t think we’ve pissed off anyone enough for them to want to blow us up.”

“It’ll all have to change if you want an international airport on Janssen.”

He was right, quite a few local business people had said pretty much the same thing. The problem was in getting The Donder Isles ready for large scale tourism, before the tourism money started to flow.

“Ahh....I see your guys.” She said.

Nicki had called two people she knew to help the SHP new arrivals with their bags and get the SUVs out of the containers. Just about every vehicle on Janssen had arrived in a container, sometimes as just crates full of parts. The SUVs were ready to go, in theory. She’d seen the aftermath of storms at sea though, where even the best and most careful packing fails to work. A friend of her dad’s had brought in a Morgan three-wheeler, a real collector’s item. Somewhere in the roaring forties the ship had run into a storm. When the Morgan had come out of the container, it had looked as though someone had dropped it, from about a thousand feet up. The two black and very expensive SUVs looked perfect though.

“At some point you will get charged fifteen percent duty.” She said.

“How much ?”

“Import duty on luxury goods is our main sources of income Sam. And you can hardly claim those cars aren’t luxury goods. You might even get charged for the lighting rig.....We do have a few customs officers to hire.”

“Whose side are you on ?” Asked Sam.

“Janssen’s of course.....I was born here.”

Sam needed her help getting out of the Humvee, mainly because the heavy door kept trying to fall back against his broken ankle. Almost leaning on one another, she dreaded to think what vibe the new people were picking up. She heard the first SUV start, as one of the men she’d hired drove it out of the container. They didn’t know it yet, but her two hired helpers were about to help Sam’s crew load their gear, spreading it between the three vehicles. Nicki left it to Sam to give the new arrivals the whole welcome to Janssen thing, though he didn’t exactly overdo it.

“You’re all staying at the villa, we’re all at the villa.” Said Sam. “There’s a pool, a decent telephone connection and a fridge full of beer.....You’ll love it.”

Maybe less really can sometimes be more, the three newcomers definitely seemed happy with their welcome to Janssen. Gary the lighting guy was about forty, or so, with dark hair that was beginning to need a comb over. His assistant Simon, was still checking boxes against a printed list. Emily the sound engineer was small, petite was the polite term. Another blonde, there really did seem to be a lot of blondes involved in the TV business. Emily had grey eyes that seemed to say she’d seen it all, done it all, but didn’t want to talk about it. Nicki shook hands with her last.

“Welcome to Janssen.” Said Nicki.

“Did you really see the creature ?” Asked Emily. “I saw all the tweets, is it real ?”

“Oh yes Emily, it’s real.....Very much so.”

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Ilaria D’Andrea had taken the call from the bike hire guy. It appeared Darryl of Darryl’s Bike Hire had received a bit of a shock when he’d gone to pick up one of his bikes from an orchard near Outerbridge Sound. Her reaction had been to grab Dom and use her bike to get them both to where Darryl was waiting.

“I’ll give you first look and a chance for some pictures.” Darryl had told her. “Then I’ll need to call the police.”

He'd wanted money of course, everyone did. She'd decided it would spoil her faith in the mercenary nature of the human race, if anyone ever gave them a tip for free. Dom had been as shocked as her about where the bike had been found.

"But we've searched that area so often." He'd said. "I think we even had sex there once."

"Twice I seem to remember. There's a lot of low growth, plenty of bushes. We'll know when we see where it is."

Like Dom, she was currently looking at where Darryl had dug his missing tourist bike out of a drainage ditch. Covered in leaf litter and the general detritus associated with an orchard, there was no way they'd have ever found it. It was a miracle anyone had.

"I paid the guy his finders fee, though I'm sure he had no idea what was underneath the bike." Said Darryl.

The supplier of tourist bikes seemed obsessed with staring at her face. Not that she could blame him, she did look like a pro boxer after a pretty tough fight. At least he hadn't expected a blow-by-blow explanation of her encounter with the creature in the sound.

"Wow, every bug in Janssen has been chewing at him." Said Dom.

"Not just bugs, look at his right arm." Said Darryl.

A wet drainage ditch in a hot climate. Ilaria was sure the body had once been John Hamilton, the second missing cruise ship passenger. He'd been there a while and mother nature had made a serious start on recycling John's body. The tooth marks on what was left of his right arm though, they'd been made by something pretty big.

"Oh, that smell." Said Dom.

It was pretty bad and would have been intolerable if they hadn't been outside on a day with a decent breeze.

"Not nice.....But I need to get some pictures." She said. "I need the body out of the ditch, can you give Dom a hand Darryl?"

He muttered about upsetting the police, but she still had the couple of hundred dollars she'd promised him. Once she upped it to five hundred, he helped Dom shift the decomposing remains out of the ditch.

"Urgh.....That is disgusting." Said Darryl.

"Not the way I saw my day developing either." Added Dom.

Once he had his money and a mangled bike on the back of his truck, Darryl promised to give them a full hour before he called the police. The local force were thin on the ground though, so they probably didn't need to rush. Ilaria took her much loved digital camera out of her backpack.

"I'll do the front first, then we can turn him over." She said.

"Urghhh." Muttered Dom.

"Science guy will need all the pictures I can get."

She was doing it now, calling Bryan Hayman the science guy. One day he was bound to find out, but it could be worse. A woman teacher who gave sex education classes at her secondary school had been widely known as Doctor Chlamydia. Her own fault really, for showing them so many pictures of disgusting STIs.

"Alright, get comfortable Dom, I will be taking a lot of pictures."

The right upper arm bone had the same injuries as had been inflicted on Sue Fox. She'd seen enough blown up images to be certain. Otherwise, the deceased looked to have been fairly intact, until nature's army of bugs and bacteria had got to work on him. Turning him over was far more unpleasant than she'd anticipated, a lot of bodily fluids found places to leak out of the body. Using

banana palm leaves and a few sticks and they had John on his tummy, without having too much physical contact.

"I'm going to shower for at least a day." She muttered.

"Well.....At least we now know what killed him." Said Dom.

"Something that likes the soft bits on the inside."

It had bitten into his back and eaten his kidneys and she was certain there was nothing native to Janssen that could do that. Of course, there was something rumoured to be on the island that could easily eviscerate a grown man, but that only appeared once every hundred years.

"Wow, it's been right in there under the ribs." She said.

As she got down on her knees to get a few close ups of where the beast had been feeding, she heard Dom move away and begin vomiting.

"Clean it up Dom.....You don't want the forensics people finding your DNA at the crime scene. It might.....Complicate things."

"Oh Fuck.... How can you.....?"

"I just get on with my job."

Dom puked again, though she did hear him scrape up the mess with palm leaves. There'd be traces of his puke, but the local forensic people with the cops probably weren't going to be that thorough.

Ilaria took a few more pics of the wounds inflicted by whatever had killed John Hamilton.

"It got right inside Dom, dug in and hollowed out the tasty bits."

"Can we go now Ilaria.....Preferably before the cops arrive?"

"Alright, but we need to mess everything up a bit, make it look as though Darryl dragged the body out of the ditch and left."

They used sticks and leaves, though the end result looked quite convincing. It would never have fooled someone looking that hard for footprints, but no one probably was going to look that hard. Ilaria was troubled though, the injuries to the late John Hamilton felt wrong. Something with sharp teeth and a thin neck had fed on the body, something more like a snake, than the huge monster from the deep, which had wrecked The Jenny. Maybe Janssen had two sets of mysterious predators? She doubted it, but it was definitely a puzzle.

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Sam Hardwick hurt all over, it would have been so easy to ask Nicki to drop him off at the villa. They needed a new boat though and Sam felt he should be there to kick the tyres. Denise had told him the rumours of a visiting Royal Navy Frigate were true, the Sheffield would be there in a month as part of a goodwill visit to the region. With a crew of over two hundred, the Sheffield's crew would almost take over Tilburg while they were there.

And of course, there was talk of them investigating the incident at Outerbridge Sound and what had almost sent The Jenny to the bottom. The Royal Navy zapping about in rubber dinghies was one thing, it meant lots of free actions shots for the TV show. Having them seen as carrying out a thorough investigation though, that would steal SHP's thunder. They had to have another boat to use on the dark waters of the sound.

"Don't expect anything too wonderful." Said Nicki. "By some miracle The Jenny didn't sink, though she was pretty chewed up. I found it hard to find anyone who'd hire their boat to you, even with a huge security deposit. It might be cheaper to buy a boat on the American mainland and bring it here."

"Time Nicki, there simply isn't time to do that, I need something we can begin using right away."

"Alright, just don't expect too much."

Nicki was still driving the Humvee; it was his broken finger that put him off driving more than the broken ankle. One foot would do for an automatic box, but having one hand was asking for an accident to happen. Nicki drove as close as she could get to the slipway used in a small harbour close to the three houses that formed the town of Sharp's Point.

"We're not far from the sound here." Said Nicki. "Though you'd need to go right round the island to get there in a boat."

The way the Humvee was parked meant the door wasn't trying to crush him as he got out. He still felt his exit from the vehicle was undignified, as he almost fell out. To add to the feeling there were two men looking at him. He knew they were there to see old man Morris and his son, though Nicki did the introductions.

"Sam, this is Dudley Morris."

"Everyone calls me Dud and I'm not offended by it."

"Sam....Everyone calls me Sam."

The younger Morris was called Chris and it was his boat they were there to look at. All being well, if the boat wasn't too much of a clunker, Sam had decided to hire it then and there.

"Go on, show them the Serenity boy." Said Dud.

Dud looked to be well into his eighties and the 'boy' had to be in his late fifties at least. Serenity was an old Bertram about half the size of The Jenny. Very few modern additions apart from decent comms equipment, it would feel like getting out of Rolls Royce and into a family hatchback.

"Nothing fancy, but she's been looked after." Said Chris.

"I know Serenity, she's a good solid vessel." Added Nicki.

Plus, her eyes were saying no one else wanted to hire SHP a rowing boat. The price for a long-term hire and the deposit would be enough to buy Serenity outright somewhere like Miami. They were in Janssen though and it was a hirers market.

"If we shake on it, can I have her today?" Asked Sam.

Chris looked at his dad, who nodded. Sam put his hand out and Chris shook it. SHP now had a new boat, once he'd talked Nicki into taking it around the island to Jones Bay.

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Paris Ferland had seen all the X-Rays and she was determined not to be a baby about it all. Her right leg ached, as did most of her back, but that was all from being thrown around the inside of The Jenny. No one had beaten her, there was no ongoing threat, or at least she hoped there wasn't. Even the hairline fracture to her jaw didn't worry her that much. Paris was the onscreen talent though, the face that sold a TV show to the viewing public, bless-em.

The bruised and battered face she saw every morning in the mirror, would have viewers switching to another channel, or finding something else to stream. A sane inner voice was telling her the doctor was right, it would all heal by the time she needed to record her parts of the show. Still, it was nice to have Bryan about to give a little external validation. And as Sam kept telling her, she had kept hold of the camera and recorded everything.

"You look much better today." Said Bryan Hayman. "A lot of the swelling has gone."

Even if he was just saying it, it was a necessary part of her day. On a sunny morning he worked on the veranda at the back of the house, and it was a sunny morning. Like everyone else, she thought of Bryan as science guy and sitting with science guy in the morning, was now part of her routine. He was always full of interesting information, but he was also the closest thing she had to an adoring public. Science guy was into her, she'd been able to recognise the signs since she'd been about thirteen.

“The SUVs are here by the way, and some of the film crew.” Said Bryan. “Sam and Nicki went to meet them at the docks.”

“Sam mentioned a lighting guy called Gary Brown.” She said. “I’ve heard of him, but the sound engineer is an Emily Hansen and I don’t remember seeing her on any credits. You get to know the lighting and sound people, they can make you look and sound great, or.....I’m just hoping Emily knows her stuff. What are you doing ?”

“Just indexing and cataloguing all the pictures and information I’ve been using. When they begin filming, finding the right still quickly can save precious amounts of time, or at least that’s what Sam keeps saying. To be honest I think he’d just trying to keep me busy.”

She liked science guy, but after half an hour of him explaining how the picture indexing system worked, it was a relief when the phone rang. It was the line in the communal lounge, which had been swept for bugs and declared safe. A device had been found connected to the phone in Sam’s room, though it was quite old. Probably something put in years before to monitor the owners of the villa, the Benevide family. The amount of intrigue on Janssen was beginning to remind her of Hollywood, on a bad day.

“I’d better get that, catch up later.”

One of the things Paris liked about her agent was that she never used minions to deliver messages, or make routine calls. With Abigail, it was always her on the phone, whether the news was bad, good, or indifferent.

“Hello.”

“Morning Paris.” Said Abigail. “How are you doing ?”

“Much better, science guy said I look better.”

“The lawyers are still saying we should litigate. You did suffer a serious injury while working for SHP and it was on a boat they’d hired. Sam will have insurance; he probably expects to be sued.”

“No, I’m not doing that Abigail, never.”

“Alright.....Fine, I quite like the new Paris, though she is taking some getting used to. Any gossip for me while I’m on the line ?”

“Sam has been invited to meet a group of prominent local business people. They’re the government within the government and control just about everything. Nicki calls them The Inquisition, though only when she thinks she’s alone with Sam. I erm.....Accidentally overheard them talking.”

“Glad to know the old Paris hasn’t vanished completely.....And if you change your mind about that litigation ?”

“I won’t.”

After the call Paris thought about why she was so against setting her lawyers on SHP. Sam was probably expecting it and he would have insurance. Mainly it was because she’d promised not to litigate over the small bruise on her cheek, and.....She was beginning to like Sam, perhaps like him a little too much. She’d been there before with other men and it was always bad news.

“No, not this time.” She muttered.

She went into the kitchen to make some coffee for science guy and herself. Paris eyed the toaster oven, which seemed to have a grudge against her. The elderly machine either gave her back burnt offerings, or food too raw to eat. She focused and persevered and finally carried out a tray with coffee and something that looked like decent cheese on toast.

“I thought you might be hungry.” She said.

“Thank you, I am.” Said Bryan. “I did wonder if my lecture on photo indexing might have driven you away.”

“No, though.....Have you got more dolphin pictures ? I really love the dolphin pics.”

Now that Florence thought they were a thing again, the useful information had flowed like water. Were they a thing ? Denise Scott wasn't sure, though she had bought a lot of new underwear, which usually meant it was a thing. No woman likes a new lover to see them in granny knickers or a worn-out bra, even if it was an old lover back for another try. Denise quite liked the covert nature of picking up the useful information, along with the whole cloak and dagger thing.

“I'll have a frothy coffee and.....Have you any cheesecake ?”

“Walnut cheesecake.....It looks about three thousand calories a slice.”

There were several ways of saying such a thing and the smiling waitress said it like a fellow conspirator, rather than a weight loss fascist. It was a nice morning, so she'd chosen a table outside for her coffee and sugary treat.

“A slice of that with the coffee then.” Said Denise.

Sleeping together was fine it seemed, but the government were paranoid about leaks. Were they committing an act of treason ? Denise suspected they might be, or Flo wouldn't want to use a cut off.

“We've a prime minister who suspects everyone of leaking juicy items to the press. We're all vetted, vetted yet again and then the vetting people are vetted.” Flo had told her. “Sleeping with you is fine, the PM is desperate not to upset any minorities. I keep expecting to see him embracing a Seventh Day Adventist on the steps of number ten. We've all the problems associated with a populist trying hard not to accept that he's no longer popular.”

So, Harry had appeared in her life, a fairly junior civil servant who had no idea who she was, or what he was passing onto her. It appeared he was loyal to Flo though, staggeringly loyal. Things change when a PM is weak and Flo was now the great hope of British right-wing politics. To Denise though she was the same old Flo. Her lover had made no inappropriate remarks about immigrants, or suggested a return to the workhouse for the unemployed. If Flo was the new great hope of the right, Denise had seen no evidence of it.

Her coffee and huge slice of cheesecake arrived, complete with two half walnuts on top. She saw Harry moving through the crowds outside the Bond Street shops, just as she'd taken her first sip of very frothy coffee. He moved like someone trying not to be seen. He'd either been taught, or read too many spy books, she wasn't sure which. He placed a briefcase next to her chair as he looked to be retying a shoe lace. There was a rolled-up copy of the Guardian on top of the briefcase. Denise picked up the newspaper with practised ease and put it on her lap, while Harry vanished towards Oxford Street with his briefcase. Easy and now stress free, though the first time had left her sweating and breathing too fast.

“Never open the paper where you are.” Flo had told her.

To Denise it would have been far easier to be given the information when they met up the following night, but Flo seemed to be in mortal fear of the vetting people. Did they follow people like Flo around ? Was her car bugged ? Flo hadn't wanted to answer any of the obvious questions. Denise finished her coffee and cheesecake, before walking back to her office. The SHP offices were clean, no bugs or any other eves dropping devices, she'd even had her online persona looked at for anyone who might be stalking her. The office now felt like the one secure place in her life. Five telephone messages waiting, though they could wait for a while longer.

“Alright Flo, what have you sent me ?” She muttered.

A brown envelope inside the Grauniad and inside the envelope were about a dozen sheets of paper. There was the official press release on the visit to The Donder Isles by the Sheffield and a lot of Ministry of defence papers marked as secret. In for a penny in for a pound.

“You’ve committed the treason girl, so make a thorough job of it.”

There was the full spec for the Sheffield, including some weapons the public wouldn’t know about. Flo had added notes of her own. Probably from the vetting people Flo despised, when the senior crew of the frigate had been vetted.

“Money worries – Might sell his own mum for the right price.”

Flo had written next to one man’s name, in her faultless and beautiful handwriting. There were lots of notes, a real boon for anyone wanting to know who to bribe for information. It was the sort of thing Sam would have given his right arm for and it hadn’t cost SHP a penny, unless Denise ended up in jail of course. Still ignoring the messages, she called the courier service she used.

“Hi this is SHP; can I have a bike to pick up an overseas package ?.....How long will he be ?.....Thank you that’s fine.”

Denise had envelopes ready to go to the villa or Nicki’s place. After a little thought, she used an envelope for the villa. There was a slight risk by sending the fruits of her treason by courier, but not much of one. It was unlikely that anyone from MI6 was waiting to leap on any packages arriving for a small TV production company. Before sealing the strengthened and padded envelope, she read Flo’s final note again.

‘The Royal Navy will investigate Outerbridge Sound, but only in a very minor way. A few men hurtling about in boats for the press, they do love that kind of thing. Largely just for show, no one is going to step on your toes.’

It was wonderful, it was perfect, it was just the news Sam needed to hear. She’d give him the edited highlights of what was in the envelope when she called him later. Of course she’d be careful....Just in case someone was listening.

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Rosie Landry was eight, as was her twin brother Luke. They’d arrived with a cruise ship and heard about a lake near the coast where a few flamingos had been seen. As her mom had a thing about flamingos, they’d decided to follow the coast on foot, before heading into where the trees looked very old and gnarly. Not Rosie’s idea or her brother’s, she’d have kept well away from the woods. One of the other passengers on the ship had talked about seeing a dozen flamingos, so her mom had insisted they found the lake. She’d even called her pop a few bad names until he’d agreed.

“Oh, come on, the kids are outside back home, every chance they get. Rosie keeps bringing box turtles home, as if they’re stray kittens. There’s nothing dangerous on Janssen, I looked it up before we came.” Her mom had said.

Walking along the beach had been fun, but going into the woods.....There was something bad about them, Rosie could feel it. What surprised her was that her parents couldn’t feel it, or her brother. Usually, Luke agreed with her about everything, but even he couldn’t wait to get in amongst the trees. The woods back home in Louisiana had felt different, safer, despite the alligators and wild pigs.

“Don’t get too far ahead of us.” Yelled their mom. “And if you see one of the giant toads.....Don’t touch it.”

Luke seemed to attract trouble, even in the fields close to their home. He ran into things because he never looked where he was going. Her pop said Luke was clumsy, but Rosie thought that was a polite way of saying he was a bit stupid. Poor Luke, she couldn’t remember her brother without scabby

knees from falling over. And if there was anything near their home that could bite people, her brother was guaranteed to get bit. As her grandma had said more than once.

"It's a miracle the alligators haven't eaten that boy."

They came across the huge toad not that far into the woods. A big ugly thing that Rosie would have loved to pick up, but her mom had told them their skin had poison on it. It had no fear of them and carried on chewing at the biggest beetle she'd ever seen.

"Gross." Said Luke.

Her mom said gross a lot, it seemed to describe just about everything on TV. Luke had picked the word up and used it constantly.

"I can see a flamingo." Said Luke.

"Where?" She asked.

No use he was off and her brother could run like the wind if he wanted to. It was running off without looking what was in front of him that had caused the scabby knees, so she ran after him.

"Slow down Luke.....Where are you?" She shouted.

She could hear him giggling somewhere, though she couldn't see where he'd gone. There were no paths and the bushes between the trees were taller than her. After trying to find a way past the bushes she nearly walked right into its web.

"Crap.....Wow."

Rosie had no fear of spiders, though she did know you didn't mess with them. The spider was big as a dinner plate and seemed happy to be in the centre of its web, so she had no intention of disturbing it. Her mom had said there was nothing dangerous in the woods, but Rosie had worked out that her mom's knowledge was often far from perfect. You didn't mess with spiders, especially ones with big fat bodies and lots of furry legs. She did get close to it though, maybe a little too close.

"You are beautiful." She muttered.

There was a sound in the bushes somewhere to her right.

"Is that you Luke? Stop messing about."

Rosie ran towards the sound and found a wall of lush but impenetrable vegetation. Undeterred she ran further to the right and eventually found a gap created by a fallen tree. It meant climbing up a rotting tree covered in tiny beetles.....Her brother was an idiot, but he was her brother, she carefully used the tree as a path.

"Luke.....Stop being an idiot." She yelled.

Seeing the flash of pink in the distance instantly calmed her down. They'd done it.....Luke had done it. Her annoying brother had found the lake with the flamingos. Her mom was going to be so happy. She could see her brother's leg next to a bush, as though he'd fallen over. Another scrape for his constantly bloody knees.

"Are you alright? Did you fall?"

His leg moved, and was hidden from her by the bush. Her brother wasn't only stupid, he liked to play jokes on her. With mounting anger, she ran to where his leg had been. There were easily fifteen beautiful flamingos in a very small lake. Not that Rosie really noticed, the blood on her brother's clothing had claimed her attention.

"Crap Luke.....What happened?"

Rosie had never seen any truly terrible things, but she had seen blood before, once a lot of it. A man's arm had once been messed up by a harvesting machine and there had been so much blood. He'd lived, but the arm had never been quite right again. Rosie had never been a screamer, even when she'd been quite small. She did whimper a little though as the thing with grey skin grabbed

Luke. She didn't get a good look at it, the creature moved so fast. Grey skin and a head full of sharp teeth that it used on her brother. By the time it grabbed him by the throat and dragged him into the bushes, Luke was probably already dead.

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"So, when do you get to see the Inquisition." Asked Denise.

Sam quite looked forward to the daily update call to Denise, especially since the phones had been declared bug free. It not only kept them both up to date, it also helped him to organise his thoughts. "Friday night at about eight. Nicki told me her brothers will be there. Hardly a surprise, the Outerbridge family still seem to run the place. Apart from that, she said I'll be surprised at who's there."

"Is it a sit-down meal or something?"

"I've no idea."

"Didn't you ask? Nicki demanding your attendance and you never asked any questions."

"Nicki didn't demand anything, she just passed on an invitation." He said. "I get the impression someone is worried about the potential for bad publicity. They probably need a little comfort that a Monster of Janssen TV show will show the place in a good light."

"And will it?"

"My first priority is to produce a mini-series that the public will love and everyone will want to see. To be honest, I don't care if we help local tourism or ruin it. Local PR isn't my job, or my responsibility."

"I'm assuming you never said that to Nicki?"

"No, of course not."

They had a long-standing understanding, an agreement to never judge each other on ethics or morality. Sometimes Denise seemed a bit too sensitive, but at others.....She had once been lovers with Florence Karádi after all, the darling of the far right.

"I take it the boatyard didn't find the laptop?" Asked Denise.

"No, though they did almost take The Jenny apart. The owners had caused trouble and were less than fully cooperative. In the end a small cash sweetener helped oil the wheels. Still no sign of the laptop with the HD recordings though, it must have gone overboard. We do have the camera recording, but a hand held camera looking at a laptop screen over my shoulder..."

"Hmm...I know, pretty fuzzy." Said Denise. "Good enough for social media though, the Twitterverse seems to love blurred pics of weird creatures."

"Yeah, I was thinking of giving the recording to a post-production studio, one we can trust. They might be able to turn fuzzy and blurred into something of broadcast quality."

"Good idea, shall I do that? Might be easier in London."

"Yes please, another job I can tick off on my organiser."

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