

Outerbridge Sound

Chapter 19 – Rum Runners

“Paris turned off the quadbike’s engine and listened. No screaming, no gunfire, no explosions. Whatever had happened at the villa had ended, or maybe it had moved on to somewhere else.”

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Something had been trying to break into the building where Paris had told them science guy had died. Different again to the two eyed creatures who ran on tentacles covered in claws. Still about the same size as the others, slightly larger than a human, but this one had just one eye. It had been dark and there was a lot of undergrowth for it to hide in. Rana was good at observing things though, taking in what most people ignored and didn’t notice. The creature had proper legs, or at least something more like legs than tentacles. Between them, she and Thierry had fired a lot of armour piercing rounds at the beast. It had died, but only after giving her a nasty cut with one of its claws. Bear like claws, or so it had seemed. What with the dark, the thick vegetation and Paris to protect. Rana wasn’t that sure what she’d seen. It had taken a lot to kill it, that much was certain. Rana was sat on one of the boxes in the brick building, guarding the door while cleaning the wound in her forearm.

“Their claws must be full of bacteria.” She muttered. “Bound to be.”

“It was damned hard to kill.” Said Thierry.

The cut in her arm was ragged and there was grit in it. Using a flashlight in the dark to treat a wound wasn’t ideal, but she’d done it before. The water didn’t hurt her, but the wound cleaner in her medical kit stung like hell. She winced and grunted at the pain.

“You alright ?” Asked Thierry.

“I’ll be alright.....Just another scar.”

Temporary adhesive stitches, though it would eventually need stitching up properly. A massive dressing over the top and the wound was as good as she could get it, under the circumstances. Paris was getting agitated about something.

“What are those.....Thing ?” Asked Paris. “His body is covered in them.”

“Bugs, it’s a hot climate.” Said Thierry. “Flies, beetles and a million other things.”

“We brought a fixer spray.” Said Rana.

“Yes, for when he’s in the body bag.” Said Thierry. “A good spray will kill the bugs and slow down decay, a little. Then we’ll zip up the bag and get him to The Daphne.”

“We have a freezer he can go in.” Added Rana. “We know what we’re doing, Paris.”

“Give me a hand getting him in the bag, Rana.” Said Thierry.

“I can do it, I’m stronger than I look.” Said Paris.

She was too, Rana was quite impressed with how quickly they had science guy ready to go. Getting through the vegetation with the body bag, might not be the nightmare Rana was worried about.

“Can’t we take him to the hospital ?” Asked Paris. “They must have facilities for that kind of thing.”

Rana looked at Thierry, though facial expressions weren’t that easy to read with only flashlights to see by.

“Do you want to tell her ?” Asked Thierry. “I could, but you always say I lack....Sensitivity.”

“We see things a little differently to the local authorities, Paris.” Said Rana. “They want to appear positive, Janssen will soon be open for business again.”

“Yada-yada.” Added Thierry.

“It’s not going to be like that.” Said Rana. “We could take your man’s body to the hospital, but the hospital will be gone soon, everything will be gone soon. Science guy kept saying it, but no one really listened, not properly, not to the subtext. I came to a few of his morning talks and he was telling you all. Once these creatures get really pissed off, you’re all going to die. You either run away from Janssen. Or you stay and die.”

“I prefer the term tactical withdrawal.” Said Thierry.

“Really ? I never realised.....Now you’ve said it though.” Said Paris. “He did once say that he had no faith in anyone to deal with the problems on Janssen. Not the British Navy, or the FBI and definitely not the local police.”

“See, he was telling you.....The only way to survive is to run.” Said Rana. “Make sure you’re on our ship when these things get really serious about killing everyone.”

“I still prefer the term tactical withdrawal.” Said Thierry.

“Come on, let’s get out of this place.” Said Rana.

It wasn’t that far back to the Jeep Rana had driven and Thierry’s quadbike. Rana almost shot a toad, before getting a good look at it. Apart from that, they reached the narrow track without incident. It didn’t feel right, disrespectful in some way. Putting the body bag in the back of the Jeep. Still, it had to be better than leaving his remains to be eaten by the creatures.

“I’ll go in front; I’ve got the best lights.” Said Rana.

Paris went with her in the Jeep, though she spent most of the time looking at the black body bag in the back. The road to the docks didn’t go that close to Outerbridge Sound, but there was a decent view of the sound from one of the rare pieces of high ground on Janssen. It was impossible not to stop for a moment and look at what was happening above the sound, in the dark skies over Janssen.

“Bryan said that was a bad sign, very bad.” Said Paris.

Rana had listened to Bryan and gone through a few of the idea in her head. She was no expert, but she did get the link between geological events and electrical storms. She knew that the cloud above the sound wasn’t hiding an alien craft, as Gary persisted in believing.

“That is.....Actually it’s beautiful.” Said Rana.

She wasn’t surprised when Paris took a compact camera out of her bag and began taking pictures. They all seemed to have the same kind of OCD, all the members of SHP’s cast and crew. If there was anything interesting going on, a camera had to be pointed at it. Thierry came and stood next to the Jeep, as Paris came and stood by the side of the road, filming a cloud full of lightning.

“We shouldn’t stay in the open too long.” Said Thierry.

“He’s right, this will be stirring them up.” Said Rana.

“Just one more minute.” Said Paris.

The cloud was full of lights, as it appeared to be rolling over and over on itself. One lightning bolt made a sound they could hear, though most made no sound at all. It felt like watching something not quite real. The cloud rolled and flickered, as the water of the sound glowed with a bright green hue. In the end it was the promise of a hot shower, a meal and a change of clothing on The Daphne, that got Paris back in the Jeep.

“This is it, the main event. There’ll be no stopping them now.”

Thierry muttered, before going back to his quadbike.

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It was light outside, with sunshine coming through his thin bedroom curtains. Mark Coulier rolled over in bed and saw Aly's face on the pillow. When he'd offered her a bed for the night, he really had just meant a room of her own in the Coulier mansion. His father didn't officially have guards on the payroll, but some of the staff looked fairly tough for cleaners and gardeners.

"You'll be safe here, or at least a lot safer than in the accommodation the hospital provided."

He'd made them some supper and of course wine had been drunk. Aly had made the first move; he was certain of it. Not that who instigated things really mattered, there was her head on the pillow. The sex had been good, he remembered all of it, every detail. Mark enjoyed his father's wine cellar a little too much, so remembering things the next morning wasn't always certain. He kissed her neck as he leant over to see the bedside clock. The digital alarm clock was showing him nothing.

"Damn, the power is off again." He muttered.

"What?" Aly mumbled.

"Go back to sleep, I'll start the generator."

Boxer shorts had to be found first, he'd learned that after the screaming cook incident. Slippers too, the generator was in an outhouse on the far side of the pool. Just about all the house staff knew how to switch on the generator, but the system was old and a bit quirky. They knew he was home and that he'd fiddle with the electricity gizmo, when he got up. Mark saw no one as he headed towards the kitchen and the back door that was always unlocked. The cook looked a little agitated.

"Morning Rebecca....Yes, I am going to turn on the generator."

"Good, then I'll make coffee and breakfast for your guest."

Did everyone know about his private life? All it took was one person to see him come home with someone and the whole house seemed to know by sunrise.

"Good, I'll ask her what she likes to eat." He said.

"Your father went to look at the generator half an hour ago."

"Yeah, it's fiddly. I'd better go and help him before he leaves us with no power for weeks."

So, his dad was on Janssen. Mark vaguely remembered being told about his dad needing to see some lawyers from the USA and a couple of high-ranking police officers.

"They need my official response to the whole Diogenes business." His dad had told him. "Not that I can tell them much, but a congressman died. They need to tick their boxes."

Highly unlikely that the lawyers and cops would turn up, not with thing the way they were on Janssen. That wasn't going to improve his father's legendary bad temper.

"I just hope he hasn't fucked the generator." He muttered.

The system was old, it didn't automatically switch over to the generator when the power went off. Not usually a problem, the JELCO supply rarely went off for long, usually. A box on the wall was referred to as the power Gizmo, by everyone in the Coulier mansion. You had to turn off every switch linking to the JELCO supply, before turning on all the switches linking the house to the backup generator. Then and only then, was it alright to start the generator. Get it wrong and it was bad, very bad. They'd had to fly in an electrical installations crew from Miami, the last time the generator had been accidentally connected to the mains supply. They'd had to dig into a few walls to remove melted copper wires. Far easier and cheaper to install a new computerised system, but his dad wouldn't even consider it. Mark had long ago conceded that his father, the great Neus Coulier, was a bit of an arsehole. The door to the generator outhouse was open.

"You in there dad? Rebecca needs a bit of power to make breakfast." He shouted.

"Thank God you're up, this thing hates me."

The Gizmo box was open, with only half the correct switches turned off. His dad had probably only been a few minutes from calling the guys in Miami. Or maybe his dad wouldn't have been calling anyone, ever again. The Gizmo box was dangerous when the generator was running. The main electrical bus bar ran through it and there no was insulation in some places.

"Wow, you were headed for disaster dad. Let me finish getting it running."

Easier if all the switches were in nice orderly lines, but some had been added after Gizmo had been installed. Mark turned off the correct switches and checked his handiwork. He then turned on the switches to put the generators output into the house. It was a powerful generator; it would run everything. He was halfway through checking he'd done it right, when his dad decided to be impatient.

"Oh, same as when you were little." Said Neus. "Too timid, to cautious. That's why you'll never amount anything."

Mark was used to it, he rarely let it anger him. He turned on the generator and three green lights came on in the Gizmo box.

"There, we're now alright for coffee and breakfast." Said Mark.

"Next time, do it without all the pointless fuss. Good grief."

Mark wasn't angry, just in the right mood to tackle his dad about Dudley. There had been a few rumours in the past, Rumours that might have been acted on if his dad wasn't bankrolling most of Janssen's growing tourism industry.

"I wanted to talk to you dad. Items of clothing have been found, clothing that once belonged to Dudley Cottingham. Bones too, quite a few bones. Your name has been mentioned in connection with his death and it isn't the first time."

He'd expected instant blanket denials, maybe even a laugh before saying it was all nonsense. Instead, his father was grabbing for him, pushing his hands round his throat. As a young boy such rages scared him, but Mark was now fitter, younger and probably stronger than Neus.

"Who ? Tell me Mark, who is telling these stories ? Do you know where the clothing is being kept ? Tell me.....Or you'll be sorry."

So used to being scared as a child, Mark could feel his heart racing.

"So, it was you and that thug who followed you everywhere. I'd always hoped the stories might all be nothing but crap."

"Don't be an idiot son, the boys found all that nonsense from when the German science team were here. The rest of the Inquisition...Yes, I know what people call us. The others wouldn't let me burn it all, but that damned kid found it. There would have been no tourism on the island if those reports had been examined. That would have been the end of our lives....Your life too, everything I have will be yours one day. All because of a stupid kid."

"You didn't need to kill him, dad. The damage to poor Vince too, he'll never be what he could have been."

"Just like your mother.....Too fucking soft."

Mark had once heard that trauma as a kid could stop you feeling what others felt. He'd often wondered if his willingness to walk into trouble, was simply because he'd lost the ability to be afraid. The natural emotion of fear had been killed off by overuse, like saying the same word over and over again, until it was meaningless. He grabbed his father and spun him around.

"Hey, what the hell are you playing at ?" Yelled his dad.

It worried him that it was so easy to push his father forward, towards the live bus bar. One good hand and a painful stump, but add on anger and it was enough. No fear, no hesitation, no empathy.

Mark just felt that he was finally doing something he should have done when he'd first heard the rumours, and knew deep inside, that they were true.

"He was just a kid.....You bastard."

Mark pushed his father face first, into the Gizmo box and onto the live bus bar.

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The Major, AKA Arthur Mullen from Miami, was usually happy with having lunch at the villa. The food was usually good and like the lunchtime drinks, it was completely free. His wife Kitty often called him tight.

"We're not made of money dear." Was his usual reply.

Arthur had never told her how close his business, Major's Quality Automobiles had been to going under. Now the first few payments from SHP were in the bank, there was no need to watch every cent. Old habits die hard though and free food and drink was a perk of the job. Ilaria had told him there'd nearly been a strike while filming in Brazil, when the catering truck had been delayed in traffic.

"Like an army, a film crew marches on its stomach." Ilaria had told him.

The villa was full though, now that everyone was living there. Kitty was being irritated by the amount of noise in the communal lounge and a nasty rumour was being spread by some. There appeared to be a real chance that lunch might have to be delayed.

"They're going....Nicki said they're off to Rum Runners for lunch." Kitty had said.

It looked to Arthur like really bad form, like rats leaving the sinking ship. At the very least, Sam could have invited everyone to Rum Runners, on his tab. He was no shrinking violet, asking to go with them didn't worry him at all. It seemed Sam and Nicki were using the Humvee and the Mullens were more than welcome to join them. The roads had been cleared of the larger pieces of debris, though the local radio station was still predicting further minor earthquakes, aftershocks as the announcer called them. By the time they were in the Rum Runners car park, looking at the welcoming neon sign, it all looked so normal.

"Difficult to believe all the trouble on Janssen." Said Arthur. "Tilburg looks so safe, so normal."

"It is just about the only place the navy have been regularly patrolling." Said Nicki.

"Hmmm, I can already taste a decent steak." Said Kitty.

"As long as I can get a Long Island iced tea, all is right with the world." Added Sam.

The car park wasn't full and there were still a lot of empty tables inside. He'd heard that Rum Runners being full was rare. The last time had been when Janssen had won the Interisland cricket tournament. There was a wonderful smell of food in the place and a lot of general chatter.

"Over by the rear windows." Said Sam. "It's sort of our unofficial SHP table."

The table was great, it could have seated eight in comfort. The waitress was quick and took their order while calling someone else over to take care of their drinks. It was all wonderful and looked like the start of a perfect lunch at Rum Runners. Arthur stopped being relaxed and happy, when the screaming began.

"Christ, it's one of those creatures.....In here." Said Nicki.

It was one of the creatures that Emily had said looked like a gator when it was swimming in the pool. It looked ungainly as it dragged a poor woman by her ankle. Lots of tentacles and claws, none of which looked normal, or at least normal in Arthur's experience. He had a moment when his mind rebelled, it couldn't really be happening. Arthur came back to reality when the woman screamed.

"Break the window Sam, we'll never make it to the door." Said Nicki.

The navy people began firing their weapons, a few using assault rifles. The noise quickly became so bad that it was hurting his ears. At least two of the customers in Rum Runners were hit by bullets and fell to the ground.

"It's chaos, total chaos!" Arthur yelled.

Everyone was terrified of the creature; it scared the crap out of him. He pulled at Kitty's arm and pointed to where Sam was trying to break a window, by hitting it with a chair.

"We'll be leaving through the window." He shouted.

Toughened glass, probably to deter hooligans trying to break in for free drinks in the early hours of the morning. Someone was cheering, the beast appeared to have been killed. The woman it had been dragging didn't have much left of her right leg. It all seemed such a hollow victory. Arthur could see at least three people lying on the floor, who might never get up again. The crash behind him grabbed his attention. Sam must have hit it just right; the window was now a mass of tiny glass cubes on the floor.

"Come on, there's another one." Shouted Sam.

Not just one, at least three of the monsters were coming from the direction of the kitchens. It crossed his mind in all the chaos, that the wonderful cooking smells might have attracted the creatures. Most of the customers were trying to get out of the front doors, while the navy seemed intent on filling the air with armour piercing rounds. Sam was outside, helping Nicki get through the wrecked window.

"Come on dear, we're leaving." Arthur shouted.

He turned to help Kitty and she was gone. He looked around and there was no sign of her. He began to scream her name over and over again. He was still shouting 'Kitty,' as Sam and Nicki dragged him through the shattered window.

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Paris Ferland had been tempted to remain onboard The Daphne. Rana had told her it was crazy to go back to the villa and Oscar Grimm had put it very bluntly.

"My people aren't leaving the ship now." He'd told her. "We'll wait here until the last possible moment, but the SHP people will need to come to us."

"Our comms are playing up, but by the sound of it....The navy guys are losing the battle." Rana had added.

Bryan was in the freezer, not a very dignified place to rest, but it could have been far worse. She'd said her goodbyes to him and hadn't cried, tears could wait until after she'd put her plan into action. Paris knew where Vince would be, she knew with absolute certainty. He'd be in her room at the villa, or maybe in the communal lounge. Vince would be there in case Miss Ferland needed anything. He had an obsession with keeping the job, so his mum could put food on the table. The monsters, the fires, the earthquakes, even the soldiers with guns. It was all background noise to Vince. To him, the thing that really mattered was his job with SHP.

"Please be there when I arrive Vince." She muttered.

Thierry had taken her to the stores and put a few essentials in her backpack, along with some provisions and a full canteen of water. He'd also given her a better assault rifle, with enough ammo to kill a dozen of the creatures. Not that she wanted to meet any of them. The order of the day was stealth. Creep in, creep out and try really hard to go unnoticed.

"No matter what happens.....Remember to eat." He'd told her.

Which just have might have been, the best advice she's been given that day. They'd given her one of the ship's quadbikes to use. Paris had used one on a film set and knew their quirks. They looked so

sure footed and stable, yet on the wrong sort of terrain. The damned things would flip over in a heartbeat. She'd need the quadbike to take Vince with her and to carry as much of the gold as they could carry out of the caves. Janssen was finished, fucked up beyond any hope of recovery. Paris didn't want Jack's legendary treasure to vanish amidst the general chaos. Vince would get the lions share, though she wanted some if it too. All the effort, all the pain from losing Bryan.

"I've fucking earned it." She muttered.

When she arrived there; something had happened at the villa, there was fire coming from an upstairs window. Anyone else might have run away, but Vince wasn't like most people. If he'd made up his mind to wait for her, he'd wait for her, all day if necessary. Paris turned off the quadbike's engine and listened. No screaming, no gunfire, no explosions. Whatever had happened at the villa had ended, or maybe it had moved on to somewhere else.

"Please....Let my room be alright. I need at least one set of spare clothes."

She left her pack with the bike and concentrated on holding the assault rifle up and ready. Oscar Grimm had told her the ammunition it used was still on a Pentagon secret list. He might have been talking bullshit, but the idea made her feel braver as she entered the villa. There was the faint smell of burning, which was worse when she reached the main lounge. She was tempted to shout out, to see if she had the building to herself. Seeing the dead creature put her off the idea of announcing her presence.

"Creep in girl..... Then creep out again." She mumbled.

The monster was larger than any she'd seen, but someone had put enough holes in it to kill it. Paris was close enough to know their viscous blood, had a bad smell. Just beyond the dead creature, was the body of a woman in naval uniform. Something had been chewing at her face. She found Simon's half eaten body, not far from her room. Anyone else, just about anyone else, would have gone.

There was Vince though, sat in her room.

"Oh Vince, there are days when I'm so glad.....You're you."

There had to be a lot of hugging, she even kissed his cheek.

"What happened here ?" She asked.

"Sam had gone and then the creatures attacked." Said Vince. "The FBI people were here and they called the navy. It was dreadful Paris, really awful. I knew you'd get back here though; I just knew it."

"Where is everyone now ?" She asked. "The villa seems deserted."

"The navy said there was an attack on Rum Runners and the monsters were trying to get into the government buildings. They left, so I came in here to wait for you. I don't know where everyone else went."

Some might have gone to The Daphne, though probably not all of them. Without Sam to give the 'get out of town' order, many would probably just move to Bredon House. The attack on government buildings was a mystery, until she remembered some were staffed around the clock. People were there. The creatures were hungry and looking for food.

"Vince, I have an idea, a plan." She said. "I'd like us to go to the cave where Jack hid his treasure. If we collect as much of it as we can carry, your mum will never have to worry about money again. Me too, I won't have to take crap jobs on daytime TV. Do you think that's a good idea ?"

"Yes, I do."

"Good, sit there while I collect together a few things."

Paris was certain she'd never see the villa again, so her personal bits and pieces had to go in her second backpack. Only one change of clothing, but three extra pairs of panties. There was a universal rule that there was no such thing as too many pairs of clean panties. It was funny to see

her passport again, she hadn't looked at it in months. It seemed weirdly out of place on an island where hungry monsters were looking for people to eat.

"Alright Vince, lets get out of here."

The villa was eerily quiet as they left. Another dead creature was near the kitchens. It seemed those defending the villa had done a decent job. Paris picked up an assault rifle someone had dropped and gave it to Vince.

"Carry it over your shoulder Vince, it might be useful."

They were about to get on the quadbike, when a small car hurtled into the car park. Kate Russo got out and for one awful moment, Paris thought she might start moaning about her not keeping to the filming timetable.

"Is he here ?" Asked Kate. "Is Sam here ? I've been all over the island. The creatures were attacking the radio station, they're all over Jannsen. The hospital was on fire when I drove past."

A car, even a small hatchback, could hold more gold than the quadbike. It all depended on how willing Kate might be, to take a few risks. If she was reading Kate correctly and Paris was sure she was. Kate would go to hell and back for a share of Jack's Spanish gold.

"We're going for Jack's treasure, Kate." She said.

Vince was nodding, as if backing up what must have sounded like a crazy statement.

"We've been there before." Said Vince.

"More Spanish gold than we could ever carry out." Said Paris. "To be honest, we need you and your car. We can bring enough gold to the ship waiting at the docks, to give all three of us a millionaire lifestyle. Are you in ?"

"Where is the gold ?"

"In a cave near the Chavez boatyards.....There will be a few risks." Said Paris.

"Alright, I'm in." Said Kate.

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Bill Carr quite liked the new special forces guy, though he knew Ted Sangster had been sent as a last resort.

"Face it Ted, if it's mother nature versus mankind, nature will always win. These things have probably been here for millennia and so far, at least, they've cleared the place of people once every century."

"I've done the homework and read the handouts." Said Ted. "They didn't have modern weapons in nineteen seventeen. So, FBI guy.....What would you do ?"

"I'd evacuate every civilian left alive and then nuke the entire Donder Isles. Nothing tactical, a huge twenty megaton device. Wipe the fucking place off the map."

"Are you being serious, or is this your famous sarcasm ?" Asked Ted.

"I'm serious Ted, really serious. We've been lucky that Jannsen is so isolated. It will eventually happen though, one of their egg sacks will wash up somewhere. Thousands of their babies will hatch out and for a while they'll just feed and grow. After a few hundred years they'll spread along the coast of somewhere isolated and quiet. Mankind might not notice them for a long time, but eventually.....They could wipe out the human race."

"Yeah right....Total bullshit." Said Ted.

"Maybe.....But I'd still nuke Jannsen, just to be safe."

Ted was experienced in warfare, almost guaranteed to limit his career in an age when diplomacy was the name of the game. He was like the fire department boss who insists every fire should be at least a two vehicle call out, just in case. Ted's team had arrived with two APCs and he was determined not

to split up his forces. He was experienced after all; he knew what he was doing. The idea of using all his forces at every incident, hadn't lasted long. Ted reported to Captain Harrington, at least in theory. Once the incidents began to mount up, Ted had been ordered to split his team into two. Stacey was with the APC investigating creature attacks on Government House. Bill thought he'd got the more interesting gig. He was in Ted's APC and they were about to arrive at Rum Runners.

"Wow, looks like we arrived a bit too late." Said Bill.

Fire seemed to follow the creatures from the sound. Hardly surprising really. Broken electrical cables, oil lamps knocked over. A few residents on Jannsen still preferred candle light in the evening. Plus of course the big reason, almost every home cooker was connected to a propane gas tank. The rear of Rum Runners was well ablaze. Bill remembered it was where the kitchen was located.

"Our info says they have several propane tanks." Said Ted. "We'll park at the far side of the car park and get an idea of what's going on. One call from the navy said there was a riot at Rum Runners. This definitely doesn't look like a riot. Travis.....Get up and take the turret gun."

"What am I aiming at?" Asked Travis.

"Anything that isn't human, Travis.....Anything not human." Said Ted.

Someone turned on the APCs floodlights as they all piled out of the rear doors. Bill slung his monster killing weapon over his shoulder and followed them. Light wasn't really needed; the fire was illuminating everything. Bill knew the normal population on Jannsen was quite small, but with the massacre at the chapel and the bodies outside Rum Runners. He wondered how many islanders were left. There were half eaten bodies in navy uniforms and there were building contractors working on various projects. Even so, it looked as though half the population of Jannsen was lying outside the burning building.

"Survivors are the priority." Shouted Ted. "We're here to rescue people, but if any of these things gets in the way....."

His team knew what to do, it obviously wasn't their first rescue and recovery mission. They fanned out and ignored the risks from exploding propane tanks. A few went into the burning bar and came out leading survivors. There were actually survivors in amongst the burning chaos. At least ten people were being led towards the APC.

"Quickly everyone." Yelled Ted.

Bill saw faces he recognised, Sam Hardwick and Nicki Outerbridge were stood next to a Humvee that had been rolled over onto its roof. They had someone with them he didn't know, until he was quite close to them. The Major was kneeling on the ground, hugging a woman who's been chewed at too much to still be alive. Bill knew The Major was a guy called Arthur who was a bit of a fraud. But his pieces to camera had gone out all over the world and his words had moved people.

"Wow, what happened to the Humvee?" Asked Bill.

"A huge one turned it right over." Said Nicki. "It's the size of a house and it's still around somewhere."

"It seemed to lose interest." Added Sam. "It might get interested in Rum Runners again now there's an APC with bright lights."

"I see your point." Said Bill. "Come on, you need to get into the APC."

Bill wondered if the house sized monster was back, as the trees at the rear of Rum Runners began to shake. No super beast, it was just two of the alligator sized creatures. Sam and Nicki began firing, though Bill knew his weapon would, hopefully, make short work of them. Stacey had been right though, the problem with their advanced weaponry, was going to be getting more ammunition. Bill

fired the electromagnetic rifle, which fired a heavy metal bullet at hypersonic speed. The first creature sort of fell apart, before it hit the ground.

“Fuck.....I want one of those.” Said Nicki.

“Sadly, they only made a few and I’m short on ammo for this one.”

Not the fault of the war weapons guys in Canada. Ask for super guns to evaluate and no one thinks you need thousands of rounds of ammo. Bill fired at the second creature and its head exploded into hundreds of gooey, bloody, nasty looking pieces.

“Come on, we need to leave.” Said Bill.

“The Major won’t leave her.” Said Sam.

“We’ve tried everything.....He won’t budge.” Added Nicki.

Bill had a grudging respect for Arthur, even if he did make up stories about a life in the army that had never happened. He crouched down and held his arm.

“Time to go Major, the soldiers are ready to leave.”

There was nothing in the man’s eyes to show was he aware of the battle at Rum Runners, the creatures, or the APC waiting for him. His life had probably come to a halt when his wife had been killed. Of course, Ted chose that moment to intervene.

“Get him inside the APC....Carry him if you have to.”

“It’s his wife, he won’t leave her.” Said Sam.

“We’ve barely room for the living.” Said Ted. “I’m sorry, but her body can’t go with us.”

The old Bill Carr would have said yes sir, before dragging a grieving man away from his dead wife. Bill had changed though, there was still a lot of rogue inside him. He grabbed Ted by the arm, none too gently.

“Ted.....It’s The Major’s wife for fuck’s sake.”

There was momentary eye contact, followed by a brief nod.

“Alright, carry her into the back of the APC.” Said Ted.

Kitty had to go into a body bag, otherwise the look of her would have been too disturbing for the other survivors. They were just about ready to close the doors, when Travis began firing the turret gun at something.

“Look at the size of that thing.” Someone said.

“That’s it, the creature that turned our Humvee over.” Said Sam.

Bill had heard a lot of people talking about the look of hate in the single eye of the monster that had destroyed the cruise ship, Golden Promise. The creature that stood taller than the Rum Runners building had one large yellow eye and to Bill, that eye looked full of hate. The beast looked different again, to anything else Bill had seen. It looked to be nothing but a huge head, surrounded by tentacles. It was using those tentacles to pull the Rum Runners building apart. As they drove away Travis kept firing the turret gun at the monster. Bill didn’t think the weapon would hurt the creature. As someone else shouted out.

“Give it up Travis.....You’re just likely to annoy it.”

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