

## Outerbridge Sound

### Chapter 17 – The Chapel

**“Script writers were a weird subset of humanity anyway. They went from extreme introverts, who boasted of never letting a stranger into their house in years. Right up to ultra-loud extroverts who seemed to be constantly getting over the previous night’s party.”**

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Daryll still had two missing tourist bikes and the local kids weren’t as keen on looking for them as they’d once been. Upping the finders fee hadn’t helped and one of the bikes was almost new, one of the best in his fleet. Monsters or not, he had a living to make and leaving an almost new tourist bike to the mercy of the elements, wasn’t good business sense.

“Lazy damn kids.” He muttered.

He knew SHP had hired two of his most reliable bike finders as runners for their show. Not that Daryll was resentful, Sam and his people looked likely to be his best customers. Still, it meant Daryll was out at the northern tip of Janssen, at an hour when he was usual making breakfast and still trying to wake up. Someone, an onion grower to be precise, had seen something that might be one of his bikes. It had taken Daryll a while to get his truck to the right spot, Janssen’s backroads weren’t intended for use by trucks. He was looking at the bundle of clothing and feeling more than a little angry.

“A bundle of clothes....How the hell did they think that was a bike ?” He mumbled.

He was there though, his morning coffee already missed. There was a drainage ditch near the bundle of clothing, which might have one of his bikes in it. Muttering and swearing under his breath, Daryll shoved the clothing around with his foot. When he saw the bloodstains on a ripped T shirt, he returned to the truck and put on a pair of thick workmen’s gloves. Tempting to simply drive away, he really didn’t need an entire day answering idiot questions from the police. Daryll returned to the bundle of bloodstained clothing and pulled at it.

“Oh, shit.”

The shock brought him fully awake and alert enough to see where something had flattened a nearby tree, before heading north, towards the ocean. There was blood now he was looking properly. Quite a few pools of blood leading in the same direction. Almost against his will, the horrors inside the clothing, grabbed his attention. Maybe it was a food store, the way he’d heard gators left parts of kills shoved under rock shelves ? Daryll didn’t like the idea that something might come back to finish its meal.

“Fuck.”

It had to be a store for later, or why would it leave half of a partly devoured head ? Actually, two thirds of a head and a few lumps of unrecognisable flesh, probably from the same person as the head. It was all inside a thick jacket, so Daryll dug around in the jacket’s pockets. If his day was going to be a boring round of questions from the local cops, it made sense to try and identify the guy. Definitely a man’s head, judging by the stubble on what was left of the chin. There was a union membership card in one pocket and a wallet. The union card was in the name of Dom Trecca.

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Even with both of them having the almost obligatory backpack, there's a limit to how much could be carried if you're on a motorbike. A decision had been made as they'd dug through the boxes. No making their find public until they knew what they'd found and how significant it might be. Not even Sam was going to be told. Ilaria and Emily had noticed that important finds, tended to vanish on Janssen. They'd brought as many files as they could back to the villa, after trying to select the most important ones.

"There's only one person I trust to keep our secret. He won't like it, but I guarantee that if I tell science guy to keep it to himself, he will." Ilaria had said. "Even then, we should wake up Paris and get her on our side."

"It makes sense, he is the best person to make sense of it all." Agreed Emily.

By the time all the files had been put in a holdall, they were heavy to carry, very heavy. Emily had an early morning sound session and anyway, neither of them wanted Cormac asking questions. Ilaria ended up on her own, dragging the bag along to the room Paris shared with Bryan. There came that moment when Ilaria knocked on the door and hoped Paris was the light sleeper out of the two. A very droopy eyed Paris Ferland greeted her with a grunt.

"Help me carry this to my room, I've got something to show you." Said Ilaria.

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Paris had read some of the files as well as anyone half asleep could have read them. There had been late filming near the wrecked cruise ship and a few hours going through notes with Jeffery the script guy. She heard everything Ilaria told her and did her best to take it all in. At a ridiculously late hour, which was really very early in the morning, she and Ilaria had dragged the holdall into the room she shared with science guy.

Not that it woke him, neither did her getting undressed, or showering. Science guy slept through it all. In all fairness she had arrived back at a fairly ungodly hour of the night. Before snuggling up next to him, Paris left a note on the holdall.

'Bryan,

These might be really important, or crap. I think they're important.

Please look them over as soon as you can.

P xxx.

BTW mention them to no one, apart from Ilaria and Emily.'

Paris would have happily slept until midday, or until Sam sent someone to get her. Bryan woke her by stroking the hair out of her eyes. She smiled at him, before noticing it was only seven thirty. There was a nagging thought about filming something important, but she was sure it wasn't until much later in the day.

"Oh, let me sleep, it's too early." She said.

"I read some of the files.....Oh, and you might want to avoid Sam for a while. You missed the voice over session last night, at the wrecked cruise ship."

"What ? Oh, crap....I knew there was something. How angry is he ?"

"Pretty pissed. Leave him to cool down for a while."

How many hours sleep had she had, three maybe ? Her muscles still ached too, from carrying all those files around. Something was trying to alert her half-awake brain, something important. Sitting on the side of the bed brought the holdall into vision.

"Yes, you mentioned the files.....Were they worth Ilaria's efforts bringing back ?" She asked.

"I hate to use the phrase priceless to science, but.....Were there many more of them ?"

"A whole building full of boxes I was told, enough to fill a truck, maybe two trucks." She said.

"I have to see them, mainly to get a feel of how difficult they'd be to move to a place of safety.

They're important Paris, not the Rosetta stone important, but pretty damn close."

"Wow, I figured as much." She said.

She was properly awake and aware that a couple of dirty marks on her upper arms, were actually bruises. As Janssen was hot and her usual attire was something fairly loose and a bit skimpy, it was a disaster. Not enough of a disaster to get her sacked, but she'd have to tell wardrobe that she'd be wearing long sleeve blouses for a while. Who would know lugging a heavy holdall along dark corridors, could be so bruising ? There had been a collision with a door somewhere.

"Don't worry, you still look gorgeous."

Sometimes it was as if science guy read her mind, which wasn't always a good thing.

"Sorry, I know it's a bit shallow, but when you spend hours looking into a camera."

"It's alright Paris, I'm a quick learner, I sort of get the TV production company vibe."

There were a few worries about Bryan, but when she finally decided to run like hell away from Janssen, she was certain that he was going with her.

"I did think the German science team in nineteen seventeen was huge news." She said. "So, what did you manage to read while I was sleeping ?"

"Well, it wasn't an invasion, or part of the war. The Donder Isles government invited the Germans here, right back in about nineteen twelve. There had been a few earthquakes, which seemed to be disturbing something in Outerbridge Sound. Sound familiar ?"

"Oh, yes it does. Why ask the Germans to come here ?"

"They asked Britain for help and got nowhere. The USA wasn't the nation it is now, so the islanders approached the Germans, with their legendary efficiency. Were there any film canisters with the paper files ?"

"Yes, though I can't guarantee if they'll still play. It seems the building everything is in has suffered from the humid climate."

"That was my worry, I have to see this building they found. If there are films, Sam can use them in the show. Imagine it, the German team meticulously researched creatures unknown to man. Then they were almost wiped out, along with most of the population of Janssen. It's beyond huge, Paris."

"Huge, I get that....Please though, no telling Sam. At least not for a while." She said.

"Fine, though I don't understand why....But I will respect your decision about keeping the find secret."

"Trust me science guy, I know men like Sam and how they think." She said

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Cormac hadn't liked Jeffrey Gravenor in the beginning, though no one seemed to like the script writer from London. Cormac prided himself on being professional and he'd worked successfully with people he'd hated. Script writers were a weird subset of humanity anyway. They went from extreme introverts, who boasted of never letting a stranger into their house in years. Right up to ultra-loud extroverts who seemed to be constantly getting over the previous night's party. Cormac often wondered how any of them had functioned before social media and emails had arrived.

"You've seen more of Michael Chavez than most." Said Cormac. "Why do you think he's gone from I'll do anything I can to help SHP, to not wanting to talk to us, at all ?"

"I tend to just watch and listen." Said Jeffrey. "I've become one of his congregation, so he seems to tolerate me. As to the change in him ? He hasn't changed not really; he's simply reverted to the bible

thumping man that was hiding under the surface. He doesn't want to help us; he doesn't want to help Janssen get organised. He just wants a congregation of true believers."

It was just the two of them in a Jeep, with Cormac driving. Whatever had happened to Chavez, it hadn't diminished his appeal to his hardcore followers. The chapel made from an unwanted portacabin, was still busy right around the clock. Less of the ladies who lunch set and very few followers of other faiths. Chavez had gone Old Testament and his congregation appeared to love it. "I'm hoping that as you're a regular, he might talk to us." Said Cormac.

"Oh, he'll talk to us, probably to tell us to clear off. Or he might agree to be part of our monster show, if we allow him a few minutes to tell the world about his rather weird take on Christianity. Lord Jesus fighting Satan on Janssen, that kind of stuff. Unscripted of course, totally his own words, with a no alteration clause in the contract."

"From what Sam said to me, I think he might consider that." Said Cormac.

"Really?"

"Chavez is huge now; he's mentioned in just about every news item about Janssen. He'd cause the sort of controversy that could double our show's viewing figures."

"And people wonder why I'm a cynic."

"The industry pays us well Jeffrey, it pays the bills."

The boatyard carpark was only a third full, but it was a large carpark. A quiet morning on Janssen and Michael Chavez was still likely to be bringing in a larger crowd than Rum Runners on a Friday night. Cormac heard the music and singing as soon as he stepped out of the Jeep.

"That's a lot of energy for this early in the morning." Said Cormac.

"I've been part of it, in there amongst them, listening to get script ideas." Said Jeffrey. "I've seen people sat in there for days, with their relatives bringing them food."

"That's just crazy." Said Cormac.

"Maybe, but everyone has let them down, from the cops to the navy. They were told Janssen was safe, the same day a cruise ship was destroyed by those creatures. Is it any wonder that some have turned to Chavez and his version of faith? They feel safe in his Church of Miracles. I've talked to his followers and they're certain the chapel has divine protection."

"I hope they're right." Said Cormac. "Come on, let's talk to Chavez. I might even offer him fifteen minutes to say whatever the hell he wants."

"Don't cuss near him, it's another of his new foibles....No cussing." Said Jeffrey.

The chapel was fairly full and it was noisy. There was Michal Chavez standing in front of the huge cross he'd bought online from somewhere in the USA. He had darkened eyes, though he was still managing to wave his arms to the beat of the music. Chavez was there most of the day, every day, or so Cormac had heard. How much sleep was the messiah of Janssen getting? At his age, his new lifestyle had to be taking its toll.

"Go outside." Shouted Jeffrey. "It's too noisy to talk in here. I'll do my best to bring Michael outside."

How deep had Jeffrey let himself go into what amounted to a cult? It worried Cormac, but not getting some sort of deal with Chavez worried him more. Sam had already given him authority to offer anything, within reason. But supposing Chavez wanted something that wasn't within reason? Jeffrey appeared, with Michael following him. In the daylight Chavez looked tired, very tired.

"Thank you for seeing me, Michael." Said Cormac. "I can see how busy you are."

"Those who come here seem comforted by my presence."

"I'm sure they are and SHP could help you reach a far wider audience." Said Cormac. "If you'll appear on our show, there would also be a donation to your church. Things can't be easy now that the boatyard has been effectively closed."

"You pretend to be on the side of Janssen." Said Chavez. "I know your kind though; you just want your show to be seen by millions. It's money with you people, everything comes down to money." Cormac made a decision at that moment; he was going to be honest. Personally, he could see that SHP's goals and those of Michael Chavez, weren't a million miles apart.

"You're right, SHP want our show to break records and make everyone involved a great deal of money. We're looking at being seen by fifty-six million American homes on the first night of broadcast. Then there are the European nations. By the end of a week, we're looking at a worldwide projected audience of two billion. It has to be assumed that everyone signed up to social media will see the highlights. SHP can give you the opportunity to say what you want for a few minutes. This is your opportunity to reach a third of the world's population."

"Alright, I'm interested. How many minutes would I get?"

"Ten in the first episode, though we'd need to split it up. Attention spans aren't what they were. The normal rules about threats, insulting behaviour and slander apply, but otherwise. You can say anything you want and we guarantee to broadcast it." Said Cormac.

"Attention spans never were that brilliant." Muttered Jeffrey. "Listen to the man Michael, he can give you the opportunity to tell the world about the miracle."

"All this will be written into a proper contract?" Asked Chavez.

"Yes of course and there is that donation I mentioned."

Cormac put out his hand and Chavez shook it. Everything looked to be going perfectly, Cormac was looking forward to telling Sam he'd brought Chavez back into team SHP. Life sometimes refuses to play ball though. The screams coming from the chapel made all three of them look that way. There was a shot, it sounded like a shotgun. It seemed one of Michael's flock had decided not to totally rely on divine protection. It might have been a domestic dispute turned nasty, though he doubted it. "Stay out here, I've an assault rifle in the Jeep." Said Cormac.

It had to be a bit awkward to get hold of the weapon. Too easy and anyone could have run off with it. A sealed compartment with a six-digit code to open it. By the time Cormac had the weapon and a bag of extra ammunition, Jeffrey was stood on his own.

"I tried to stop him, but he insisted on going into the chapel."

"Come on Jeffrey, stay behind me."

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Paris had forgotten a few minor things before, but never a whole filming session. Normally there was just the filming to worry about, but now there were so many other things to consider. Plus, if she was being honest, CNN had always provided her with a PA to manage her diary. Sam had looked pissed off, but his words had been kind.

"I know things are bit.....Unusual Paris." He'd said. "The new lady Kate Russo seems to be a good organiser, so I'm giving her your diary to manage. You're a grown woman and I'm not trying to manage your life. If you need an hour to do something, just tell her. As long as it doesn't conflict with your filming schedule."

And that was how the woman who wanted to bed her man, had ended up controlling her diary, her life. Of course, Sam wasn't aware of the potential for distraction, provided by finding several million, probably tens of millions in gold coins. Much to Kate's annoyance she played her needing an hour card right away and refused to say where she was going.

“The schedule might change.”

“Call me if that happens.”

“But phones don’t work in most of Janssen.”

Paris left on her bike before Kate had a chance to tell Sam she was being uncooperative. She wanted to see Vince and June, mainly to ensure June wasn’t about to scream that she was now a millionaire, to every passing pedestrian. There was also the question of Neus Coulier being a child killer. If Vince didn’t want to tell the FBI guy about that, she would.

“It might take two hours, but filming isn’t until three.” She muttered.

She had noticed before that having someone given the task of organising her diary, suddenly made her quite capable of doing the job herself. Paris leant her bike against a tree and, with a little trepidation, knocked on the door of the house where Vince lived with his doting mother. Lately, June hadn’t seemed that pleased to see anyone from SHP.

“Miss Ferland...Come in, please come in.”

No doubt about it, Vince had shown the gold to his mum. And as Paris had predicted, June was ecstatic about it. A smiling June almost skipped, as she led her into the kitchen.

“Look, Miss Ferland is here Vince.”

“Paris, please call me Paris.”

No having to ask for a few private moments with her boy, June left her to it. Paris opened the family’s fridge and helped herself to a bottle of cola. It was something she did, one of her things. No one had ever moaned at her for doing it. The fridge was full, Vince’s SHP pay was already transforming the lives of Vince and his mum. She sat on a chair opposite Vince, while he ate a bowl of very beige and unappetising looking cereal.

“There’s coffee, if you want coffee ?” Asked Vince.

“No, this is fine.....So Vince, you showed your mum the coins ?”

“Yes, she’s really happy.”

“I hope you told her to keep the treasure secret ?” Asked Paris.

“Yes, but mum told me not to talk about it. She said that J Outerbridge already has more money than he knows what to do with, but he’d still grab Jack’s treasure. So....Neither of us is saying anything to anyone.”

“Good, let things quieten down a bit.” Said Paris. “Then I’ll help you sell of some of the coins, just a few at a time.”

Or of course things might not quieten down. She was Sam’s key onscreen talent, actually his only well-known onscreen talent. He’d told her the password megafauna and why a medium sized cargo ship was waiting against a jetty in the docks.

“Mum said we need to be careful.” Said Vince.

“How about Neus Coulier killing Dudley.....We should talk to the FBI guy.”

“Mum said it was a long time ago and Dud isn’t going to get any deader.” Said Vince.

June had got at her son; it was obvious and not that surprising. The Coulier family were wealthy and influential. Crossing them was likely to get Vince and his mum killed. At the very least they might have to leave Janssen. They had wealth themselves now and nothing motivates self-preservation, quite like having something to lose. Paris squeezed Vince’s hand, the one not shovelling cereal into his mouth.

“I understand Vince, you want to protect your mum.” She said. “Sometimes the best way to show how brave you are, is by doing your best to protect the ones you love.”

“I’m sorry Paris.” He muttered at her.

“No, don’t apologise....I do understand. I have Dudley’s bones and his clothes. How about if I tell the FBI guy, I found them ? In a different cave of course, one cave is as good as another. I hear he’s a clever one, so he’ll put two and two together. I’ll mention rumours about him upsetting Neus. Is that alright with you Vince ?”

“Yes, I’m so sorry.”

“Stop saying you’re fucking sorry, Vince.”

She kissed him on the cheek and his smile returned.

“I want you in the villa nice and early in the morning Vince, we’ve got a busy day ahead for both of us.”

It was plain old-fashioned good manners that sent Paris out into the garden to say goodbye to June. Plus, Paris wanted to remind her of the dangers of trying to spend Spanish gold on Janssen. There was an old battery powered FM radio on the table next to June. Paris seemed to hear the station somewhere all the time, station KB-Jansen, though she had no idea what the KB stood for.

Sometimes there was rolling news between the pop tracks, if there was any local news worth reporting. Recently there had been a lot of local news, probably far too much.

‘.....The remains of a man found in the north of the island, have been identified as being Dom Trecca, who has been missing for several days. Dom was a location scout for the film company currently on Janssen.....In other news, this weekend’s Interisland cricket match will be between....’

Everyone knew he was dead, of course everyone knew Dom had been killed. There had always been a slight hope though. To hear it read out on the local FM station, took away that hope. Paris changed her plans as she cried for poor Dom. Ilaria might not have heard the news and....

“If she’s heard the news, she’ll need her friends.”

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Bill hadn’t seen where the Janssen Regiment were going to store the weapons sent by the FBI. They had a small compound not that far from the island’s one and only airfield. Mark had wanted to come, but the hospital had wanted to keep him under observation for a few days. It seemed he’d lost more blood than it was supposed to be possible to lose, without dying. Internal organs had suffered a few problems, so like it or not, he was going to be in a hospital bed for a while.

“Wow, I’m impressed.” Said Stacey. “You’re telling me that gang of kids did all this ?”

“Hey, don’t let anyone hear you say that.” He said. “Insulting the Regiment on Janssen is like.....Insulting the Queen of England.”

They had done a damned good job of organising everything, those kids with their immaculate uniforms. Bill had already decided which weapons might be useful and which just looked good and sounded impressive on paper. There was a Russian made rifle that fired tiny aimable rockets. The blurb with it made it sound like the best thing since sliced bread. The test numbers showed it to be a nice idea, but useless in combat. There were a couple of energy weapons that sounded promising, though Bill preferred weapons that fired things. Ideally large heavy things at an absurd rate of fire.

“Now, I can hardly lift it, but it’s definitely me.” Said Stacey.

Stacey looked like she was doing an Arnie, by carrying a minigun on a sling across her shoulders. The documentation showed that the pulse laser was effective, but staggeringly heavy. So heavy it might be more effective as a club than an energy weapon.

“That’s the Siberian Hunting Laser. The stats aren’t bad.....Just don’t expect me to carry it.” He said.

“Yeah....I tend to agree. Something I can hold in one hand, I think.” Said Stacey. “My back already aches from taking two steps with the damned thing. What do you think they hunt with it ?”

“People.....Probably.” He said.

The weapon that really caught Bill's eye had been made in Canada. He'd noticed before that for a quiet peaceful place, Canada produced quite a few particularly lethal weapons. Heavy, but just about everything with the kind of stopping power they needed, had to be carried by a webbing strap over the shoulder.

"When we go huge beast hunting, I'm definitely taking this." He said.

"It's very you." Said Stacey.

There were a lot of weapons using electromagnetism to fire small slugs at unbelievable speeds. The Canadian weapon fired heavy nonferrous bullets at hypersonic speed. The test reports clinched it for him, the testers raved about the weapon, the way nerds raved about the latest videogame release. He could image them drooling as they wrote the report. As for bad features; once the batteries lost charge, there was a four-hour charging cycle. Bill could live with that.

"Hypersonic bullets....No wonder the testers drooled." He muttered.

"I've found my first perfect gun." Said Stacey. "According to the documentation it fires a very special kind of smart bullet."

The gun she was holding looked like a souped-up desert eagle, with an extended magazine added to it. It looked heavy, but then again, everything looked heavy. It seemed that anything offering super lethality, had to be damned heavy. That wasn't stopping Stacey from making a few aiming stances with the weapon.

"Looks good, what does it do?" He asked.

"It fires bullets that burrow into the target's flesh, before exploding. According to the testers, the smart bit is the bullets knowing just the right depth to explode.....Cool huh?"

"Crap, what gang of psychos came up with that?" He asked.

"Us.....A government research facility in Bakersfield."

"Wonderful...Forget everything I just said, we'll take two each." He said.

"Tough luck, there is only one and I'm claiming it. I do worry about the Regiment using some of these Bill.....They could do a lot of damage and not just to the creatures in the sound."

"They've been trained Stacey; they know what end of a gun to point at the bad guys."

Stacey rolled her eyes at him and he realised that having her as a partner again wasn't going to be too much of a chore. They got on well now, there was almost that dreadful phrase, chemistry between them.

"We should take these now, before one of the kids in uniforms claims them." He said.

Bill had borrowed a Humvee from the Regiment, on the grounds that Stacey wasn't yet fit enough to ride a bike and being bounced around in a Jeep wasn't going to help her recovery. The Humvee weighed more than a small truck and tended to flatten small bumps in the road. They were putting their new weapons in the back, when a very excited looking member of the Regiment ran up to them. In full uniform and carrying an assault rifle, the young man looked ready for action. It was that old problem on Janssen, very little cell phone coverage.

"We just heard about it from the navy." Said the soldier. "The creatures have attacked the chapel Mr Chavez built. They're saying the attack is still going on.....There are a lot of casualties."

"Looks like we'll be testing these weapons earlier than we thought." Said Stacey.

"Are you going to the chapel?" Asked the soldier.

"We're here to protect the population of Janssen." Said Bill. "So yes, we're going to do what we can."

"Take me with you."

"How old are you?" Asked Stacey.



“Twenty.....Next month.”

“Got a name ?” Asked Bill.

“Ernest Sir, Ernest Harvey.”

“Get in the back Ernest and call me Bill.”

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Cormac Boyle had noticed the creatures attacking the chapel looked different, smaller and younger than any in the various pictures science guy had shown them. Not as tough either, he'd managed to kill two of them with the assault rifle. Their weapons were now loaded with armour piercing rounds, but he'd still been amazed when the first one had gone down.

“The eyes, aim for the eyes. Hit anywhere else and bullets bounce off them.”

Bill Carr the FBI guy, has told them all at a Monday morning team brief. Cormac remembered those talks and much to his own amazement, he hadn't frozen when the fighting started, or run away. No bursts on automatic, the spare ammunition he had might have to last for a while. Two quick shots into its left eye and the first beast had hit the ground. It was still twitching until Lola Chavez had gone at it with a machete. The wife of Michael Chavez was small and couldn't have weighed more than seven stones, seven and a half tops. She'd finished the beast off though.

Lola had died a short time after that, though Cormac hadn't seen her die. He had no idea if Michael Chavez was still alive, he hadn't seen him in a while. The fight was like that, so damned confusing most of the time. Inside the chapel he'd kept his back to a wall. When there were no walls still standing, he'd begun to spin around a lot. It was all the turning and spinning that was so disorientating. If he hadn't turned quickly, he might have died. Two rounds into that dreadful yellow eye and his second dead creature had fallen. They were on it as it lay there, the people who'd survived the carnage in the chapel. Armed with everything from baseball bats to shotguns, they pummelled and stabbed until the monster stopped moving.

It wasn't supposed to be like that when the creatures finally came out into the open and attacked. There were supposed to be dozens of well-muscled Navy guys to fight them, all carrying weapons still on the secret list. It wasn't supposed to have been a congregation of locals, some armed with boat building tools they'd found in the boatyard. It just wasn't right. There were so many bodies around him and so many of them were women in their best go to church clothes.

“Jeffrey.... Where the hell are you ?” He yelled.

There were no lulls in the fighting, just moments when he felt less of a need to keep spinning to see what might be behind him. Cormac wasn't the only one killing the monsters. There were a few dead creatures that had nothing to do with him. A few of the chapel's congregation were remarkably well armed for a church service. The young creatures had softer skin and less of the dreadful claws, but their jaws were full of razor-sharp teeth.

“Jeffrey Gravenor... Where the fuck are you ?” He shouted.

Jeffrey had picked up a shotgun somewhere. The last time Cormac had seen him, he was helping two members of the chapel, finish off one of the beasts. For someone who claimed to hate guns and violence, he'd been using the shotgun to good effect.

One of the monsters was feeding on Jeffrey when he found him, quite a way along the beach. The script writer had to be dead, the creature had its head deep inside his chest. So much blood and Cormac let anger get the better of him. Three of his precious bullets fired, just to bounce off the beast's shoulder. He'd got its attention though, the thing that seemed to be all tentacles and teeth. It leapt at him, though it did it quietly. No scream, no roar, just a look of hate in those yellow eyes.

“Bastard.” Yelled Cormac.

Two shots would have been enough, though after three bullets in its right eye, the creature wasn't even twitching. There was no lull in the fighting, that seemed to only happen in the movies. How Cormac envied those moments in movie battles, where they all told tall tales, grabbed extra ammunition and took a breather. Some on screen heroes even had time to kiss their girl, before the bad guys arrived again. As he knelt next to Jeffrey, he heard a scream.

"More.....There's more of them coming out of the sea." Someone yelled.

There had to be a few seconds to say goodbye, there had to be. He grabbed Jeffrey's lifeless hand.

"You fucking stupid Brit, getting yourself killed." He said.

That was it, he'd tell them all at the villa, how Jeffrey had died fighting. No running away for him, so Cormac was determined to stay and fight. He was about halfway back to the ruins of the chapel, when he saw the dust coming from the road. Something big came through the roadside fence, clipping a few cars in the car park. A Humvee by the look of it, being driven by someone not exactly an expert at driving it. It hit two motorbikes, before carrying on towards the remains of the chapel. The Humvee came to a stop just a few feet from where Michael's huge mail order cross lay on the ground.

"Well.....At least someone has finally turned up." Muttered Cormac.

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Stacey hadn't commented on Bill's driving, she'd have probably done no better. There was a reason for the twenty speed limit on every road, the roads were too damn dangerous to speed on. Maybe a bike could handle the sudden unmarked curves at fifty, but not the Humvee. Humps in the road from bad repair jobs, to crumbling edges, the roads of Janssen had it all. No problem at twenty, but they'd been travelling at three times that speed. When someone told Bill to step on it, there was no stopping him. Not that she had tried to stop him. Poor Ernest in the back looked terrified, as they went through the boatyard fence and bounced off a parked Nissan hatchback. They'd already collided with quite a few things on the way.

"It's gone.....The chapel has gone." Said Ernest.

All Stacey could see was bodies, a hell of a lot of bodies. Someone had killed a few of the creatures, but mainly, a lot the chapel's congregation wouldn't see another morning. As soon as the Humvee stopped, Ernest was gone. The sound of gunfire told her he'd found something to fire at. Stacey wasn't into running yet, she'd need to heal a bit more. She went to the back of the Humvee, to get the gun that fired smart bullets. Bill had the same idea and was pulling his hypersonic bullet rifle out of the footwell.

"Of course, if these don't work....." He said.

"It's been nice knowing you, Bill."

There were still people there, still fighting. One man was firing a shotgun at one of the monsters. Two women dressed in long flowing dresses, were hitting one with machetes, despite one of the women being wounded. Stacey brought up the heavy gun and aimed it at one of the creatures, holding it tight with both hands.

"Please be as good as I'd hoped." She mumbled.

The gun was loud, though no louder than a forty-five firing high load rounds. She aimed at what was the closest thing the creature had to a torso. There was a brief flash of red, though she didn't have time to be disappointed. The beast erupted...Yes, erupted was the best way to describe it. First a small explosion, before blood and bodily fluids erupted out of numerous holes left by the explosion. The creature collapsed onto the ground, obviously dead. Bill gave her a little nod.

Bill aimed his weapon at the creature the two women were attacking. Tricky, if he wanted to avoid hitting them, but Bill had been on a sniper course during his long career. Now she had access, Stacey had browsed his file on the way to Jannsen.

“Crap ! Did you see that ?” Yelled Bill.

His hypersonic gun had made a noise like a lightning bolt, it definitely wasn't a stealth weapon. The slug it fired made a small hole in the front of the creature's head, but the exit wound was devastating. Very little was left of the beast's head when it collapsed onto the beach.

“Come on Bill, let's get them all.” She yelled.

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Paris had never really considered Ilaria D'Andrea to be a particularly close friend. Good fun of course, someone who'd do anything for a dare. Ilaria was with Dom though, they had their thing going, which filled most of their spare time. Or rather Ilaria had been with Dom.

“He'd heard his wife was still seeing someone.” Said Ilaria. “We'd decided to stay together after the show was finished.”

Paris was hugging Ilaria, the tears and grief had been going on for some time. It was that phone problem on Jannsen, no one had informed Ilaria about Dom's remains being found. Paris couldn't even imagine what it must have been like to hear the news on the local radio station.

Night outside the window, though she wasn't sure of the exact time. There had been some dreadful breakups in her life. So many she'd once been parodied about it on Saturday Night Live. Still, a dreadful breakup was nothing compared to having a lover found, dead and half eaten.

“Will you be going back home, after all.....This ?” Asked Paris.

“No, Sam said he needed me. Also, I'm not sure if I have a home to go back to, after the news mentioned Dom and I being lovers. A fresh start I think, on my own again. I used to enjoy the single life, it's far simpler.”

No kids, though Paris thought Ilaria had been married for quite some time. She wasn't sure if not having kids was a blessing in the present circumstances, or a curse. Paris decided to avoid the subject entirely.

“If there's anything I can do, just ask.” Said Paris. “I have an apartment in New York, if you want to get away from Jannsen for a couple of weeks. I'm sure Sam would understand.”

“That's a nice thought, but I want to keep working. I need to keep busy.”

There was a bit of a ground tremor, just enough to set the light swinging in Ilaria's room. Minor tremors had become a new fact of life on Jannsen, along with the crappy phone coverage.

“They seem to be more frequent lately.” Said Paris.

The Blu Tack must have dried out, the next tremor made two posters fall from the bedroom wall. When dust started to fall from the ceiling, Paris knew it was time to move. She had lived in LA for a while; she knew the difference between a tremor you could safely ignore and ones that had to be taken seriously.

“We need to open the door and sit in the doorframe.” She said.

“Why ?” Asked Ilaria.

“To be honest, I have no idea. A friend in California once told me it was the safest place to sit during a quake. It might be nonsense, but look at it this way.....It can't hurt.” Said Paris.

Daniel, another boyfriend disaster had told her everything there was to know about the structural strength of different parts of buildings. It had bored her, so she had no intention of boring Ilaria with it. People sat in doorways survived better than those who weren't, simple as that.

An open door meant hearing sounds from the rest of the villa. A man's voice shouting at someone, a woman shouting back. So far, just a normal night at SHP. When the tremors set off alarms on their new SUVs, Paris knew things were getting bad.

"I'm a Londoner, we don't get tremors." Said Ilaria. "This is bad though....Isn't it?"

"Yes, it's bad....Golden rule though, we stay here until it stops."

The noises began to take on a more serious tone, the shouts becoming calls for help, or asking where someone was. Judging by the crashes, some heavy pieces of furniture had been toppled by the quake. Paris leant her head against the doorframe and closed her eye for a few seconds. When she opened them, Ilaria was grinning at her.

"Think of all the SHP Christmas parties, where can bore all the newbies with stories about the Janssen quake." Said Ilaria.

"And our grandchildren."

"Yes of course, the rows of chubby grandkids."

The joking stopped when the really bad bang happened. Something huge had gone over, or a structural part of the villas had stopped resisting the quake. A loud noise, really loud, a no-nonsense kind of sound. Paris just hoped it didn't mean the villa was about to collapse.

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