

"God damn Matt. I've been looking forward to this trip for a year and he has to go and fuck it up." said Adam.

"Look," John said, "we have to go back. What other choice do we have?"

"It's not like it's his fault." said Cory.

The sunroom on the top deck was flooded with the midday sun. Not a cloud in the sky as the four men sipped sullenly from their beers.

"Yeah, but it had to be him right? Who else would that happen too?"

Craig said. "How many times did his car break down or run out of gas and we had to come and get him? That one night after the game it was raining so hard I almost got swiped by a car while putting gas in his tank."

The door to the galley slid open and Mick stepped in. His skin was tanned leathery and his hair was golden from thirty years leading dives under the Australian sun. He was more sinew than muscle now, but in his younger days his blue eyes would have beckoned more than a few women to bed.

"I've radioed and let them know we're heading back. Sorry about this guys. You'll get a full refund."

"Hmph," Chris muttered. "You mean John will get a refund."

John shot Chris a look then looked at Mick.

"Is there no way to salvage the trip? Can we come back out or hit another reef instead?" John said.

"No way." Mick said. "All of the equipment has to be gone over with a fine-toothed comb after what happened. I've never had this happen before and want to make sure it never happens again. No more dives. No more excursions. We need to head back now and get Matt to a hypo chamber as soon as possible."

Mick walked out and left the four alone.

They drank quietly for a few minutes.

"Ah fuck," Chris said, "I'm gonna go check on Matt and see how he's feeling."

Chris stood and walked out of the sunroom, sliding the door closed behind him. His knuckles showed white against the railing as he walked along the deck towards the stairs. He glanced into the cockpit as he walked by and saw Mick throwing switches on the control board muttering curses under his breath.

"Everything ok?" Chris said.

Mick jumped, startled and turned around.

"Oh yeah, just a bit of a problem getting the nav to point us home. I'll have it cleared up in a few minutes." Mick said. "You heading below?"

"Yeah." Chris said.

"Can you holler at Tommy to come up and give me a hand?"

"Sure thing." Chris said.

He headed down the narrow staircase, both hands on the railings. He ducked his head around the first cabin's door.

"Heyo Tommy."

"Yeah?" Tommy said.

"Mick says he needs you in the cockpit for something."

"Ok thanks."

Chris made his way down the short hallway, passing each of the individual cabins that his friends were supposed to have for the week. He reached the rear cabin and slowly slid the door open.

Matt laid curled up on the top of the sheets. He twitched in his sleep and was sweating though the air was cool. Chris almost woke him but thought better of it after the morning he'd had and turned to go back upstairs and join the others.

As he passed the cockpit, he overheard Mick and Tommy arguing in low voices.

"What are the odds?" Tommy said. "You ever have anything happen like this before? First the vest and now this?"

"No." Mick said. "But if it's not coincidence, then what the hell is going on?"

Mick looked up at Chris and plastered a fake smile on his face.

"Need anything?" Mick said.

"No, nothing. Just checking on Matt."

"Great. We'll be heading out soon then." Mick said.

Both Mick and Tommy stared at Chris until he finally walked past and back to the sunroom. Cory, Craig, and John had stepped out and were sliding the door shut.

"Where you guys heading?" Chris said.

"Gonna catch a nap while we start heading back." John said.

"Figure we can get Mick to whip us up our farewell dinner once we're on our way since we're heading back early." Craid added.

"Plus, we don't feel like hanging out with a depressed, drunk Adam."

Cory said with a smile, loud enough for Adam to hear through the door.

"That guy's a real bitch."

Adam shot him the middle finger.

"You alright?" John asked Chris.

"Yeah, yeah, all better."

Chris hugged the wall tightly and let the guys pass him on their way downstairs.

He slid the door to the sunroom open and poked his head in.

"Adam, you ok?" he said.

Adam shrugged.

"I'm alright." he said. "Just pissed. The first real vacation I've had in years and it's done on day one."

Adam tossed his bottle in the recycling and reached into the fridge for another beer.

"At least there's plenty to drink." Adam said.

Chris rolled his eyes and headed onto the open deck. He laid down on the sunbed, stretched, and closed his eyes.

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"Oy," Tommy said, "You seen Adam?"

Chris blinked against the sun and sat up shading his eyes. He must have dozed off. How long was he out?

"Um," Chris said. "Last I've seen him he was in the sunroom. He's not there?"

"No." Tommy said, glancing around quickly.

Though Chris had only known him a day, so far Tommy had fit the stereotype of a the laid back Australian perfectly. But now, the dive master was fidgeting, looking around quickly.

"Everything ok?" Chris said.

"Yeah, yeah." Tommy said. "Yeah, all's good. We're having a bit of trouble with the nav but it's not a big deal. Mick's done this trip a hundred times and could get us back with his eyes closed. Just checking in with everyone."

Tommy turned around and headed back towards the bow.

"No worries, I'll find him." Tommy said.

Chris stood, grabbed a beer from the mini-fridge – seriously, this boat must have a dozen of these things – twisted the top off and walked towards the stern. He stopped a couple feet from the railing and stared at over the ocean for several minutes drinking the beer. As he'd already done a dozen times since stepping onboard, he fought back against the sea sickness as the catemarran rocked gently on the sea.

He drained the last drop of the beer, twisted the cap back on the bottle, and tossed it over the railing.

After another moment, Chris turned and walked back towards the sunroom. He might as well go back down to his room and try go to sleep. It was much easier to keep from vomiting when he was unconscious.

He ran his hand along the rail as he made his way back towards the stairs.

"Fuck!"

The yell came from the cockpit.

"Fuck, fuck, fuck!"

Chris moved quickly still keeping a grip on the railings.

He saw John already almost up the stairs with Cory and Criag not far behind him. Chris made it to the cockpit door before them and turned in.

Adam was already standing just inside the door and Tommy was kneeling down next to Mick in a spreading mess of blood.

Tommy's hands were covered in the blood and there was a red streak across his face.

The captain's neck had been hacked open.

There were at least five gaping cuts from different angles. From the look of the spray around the cockpit and the amount of blood on the floor, at least one of those cuts had opened Mick's artery.

Tommy was still screaming and cursing. The five friends stood in shocked horror unable to stop staring at the grisly scene.

Several minutes passed as Tommy finally quieted and the first of the guys shifted his feet uneasy.

Tommy looked slowly up at the four men. His face and bare chest were smeared with Mick's blood. His face was purple with rage.

"Which of you fuckers did this?"