

## The Amethyst

*Situated to the far south of the southern continent, the nation of Efland was unpleasant to say the least. Its murderous, corrupt government had overseen decades of decline. It was once a proud nation with a prosperous population and ideals that were the envy of many. Those days were now gone. The reason for Efland's fall from grace was greed. The greed of those in power. Every policy was aimed at redirecting the nation's funds into their own pockets. And anyone who dared to protest was labelled a terrorist. It was an easy myth to promote, because the same people who controlled the wealth, also controlled the national media. Those found guilty of their liberal interpretation of terrorism would be hanged for treason. Those merely suspected of dissent would simply vanish. It was a country ruled by iron fists, promoting a myth to its people that everything was okay. As such, they met with little resistance. There were, however, a brave few who dared to try.*

*As a result of their dictatorial, tyrannical leadership, many nations affiliated to the global community, known as The Union of Nations, considered Efland a pariah state and had severed all links with it. The only nation that shared a land-border with it, Amaria, had even built a wall across the length of its border. The only road between the two had long since been closed. The only places still connecting the two nations were the canal or a tiny, well-armed break in the wall known locally as "the land border". Few were ever granted permission to use it. Exports between the two nations were few, and other than a swapping of diplomats, the two nations had little to do with one another.*

*As a result of Efland's politicians and their self-serving policies, investment in the state had virtually been nil for over twenty years. The infrastructure was simply falling apart. The roads were atrocious, the trains were ridiculously outdated and essential utilities such as gas and electricity were horribly unreliable. This formerly great nation was now extremely backward. Other nations were connected to a worldwide web, they had digital technology and their computers were blindingly fast. The vast majority of Efland citizens, on the other hand, didn't even know what a worldwide web was. While other nations enjoyed digital media such as MP3s and video streaming, in Efland compact discs were the latest breakthrough in technology. Mobile telephony was also unheard of. It truly was a dark time in the nation's history.*

### **Harwell City, Efland.**

Hiding in the shadows at the edge of the woodland, out of the range of the nearest streetlight, Sierra was a nervous wreck. Biting her nails and trembling, she continued to look up and down the darkened street before her; anxious for her friend to return. Despite it being the dead of night and being all dressed in black, she was convinced someone would see her there and she'd end up in desperate trouble. Even the hood she was wearing offered her little comfort. Despite barely being visible out there in the darkness, she felt like she stood out like a sore thumb. She didn't want to be there. This was not where she belonged. A good girl like her didn't do this kind of thing and she wanted it to be over. As such, she could barely contain her fear. Whimpering, she could only bounce up and down fearfully and hope her friend would be quick.

SIERRA: Come on. Come on. Hurry up.

(She pouted.)

SIERRA: What's taking so long?

(In this moment, as the seconds continued to pass, she felt like she wanted to cry. Her life up until now had been a simple one with little to no adventure and that had always suited her just fine. Danger was most definitely not her thing, and she could only regret agreeing to come. Her friend had given her one simple instruction. If a guard vehicle happened to pass, she had to whistle then hide. She'd hoped it wouldn't come to that. She'd hoped she'd simply not see any guards then be able to go home again. Alas, with every passing second that seemed unlikely. A patrol could only be imminent. It had to be. She was, after all, standing outside a well-guarded government facility. And this was not a government you messed with lightly.)

SIERRA: Hurry up, Josie, I want to go home.

(Just then, she caught sight of three figures, all dressed in black, charging down the street towards her. Recognising them as her friend and two male accomplices, she drew a deep sigh of relief.)

SIERRA: Oh, thank god.

(Just when she was starting to believe her hell was at an end, however, a siren began to howl into the night sky and a group of angry guards charged around the corner in pursuit of her friend and her companions. At once, she froze to the spot in fear. This was the worst case scenario come true. If they were caught, being put to death was very much a certainty. If ever there was time to run for her life, it was now. Terrified to the core of her being, however, she simply couldn't move. The sheer terror in her heart had rendered her body useless and she could only stare, wide-eyed, in horror at the sight before her. Her fight or flight reflex had completely failed to kick into gear and she could do nothing. She just stood there with her lips trembling, convinced the end of the world was nigh.)

Mercifully, Sierra's catatonia was only temporary. As her friend charged closer, slowly coming into focus, she could soon make out her cries. As first they sounded muffled, such was the extent of her body shutting down and giving up. Before long, however, she could hear the desperate instruction her friend, Josie, was screaming at her.)

JOSIE: Run, you dozy bitch!!! Fucking run!!!

(For a few seconds more, Sierra trembled and whimpered in something of a lost haze. Hearing her friend's cries a second time, however, she suddenly flinched. As if she'd been rebooted and gained a second wind, her mind opened up to lucid thought and she finally realised the obvious. She had to run! Not about to hesitate a second longer, she then spun around and raced straight into a lone guard who was coming the other way.)

SMITH: Gotcha!!!

(Sierra screamed for all she was worth.)

SIERRA: Get off!!!

(Struggling desperately, her heart was filled with terror. There was no way she could overpower a guard. She was a slight girl who weighed half what the guard did. She didn't stand a chance. She wasn't about to stop, however; not with her life at stake. If he wanted to catch her, she was going to make him work for it. Happy to do so, the guard, a moderately well-built fellow named Smith, wrapped his arm around her torso then grabbed at her hood.)

SMITH: Give it up!!!

SIERRA: Let me go!!!

(Suddenly, as if she'd been fired from a cannon, Josie crashed into the guard with a flying kick, sending him sprawling backwards.)

SMITH: What the fuck???

(Having thudded into a tree, the guard snarled then performed a double take in the girl's direction. Having yanked Sierra's hood down in the struggle, he had the perfect view of her.)

SMITH: Sierra? You're a fucking terrorist? You???

(Not about to entertain him, Josie yanked Sierra away then raced off with her.)

JOSIE: Just go. Don't even look back!!!

(As they raced onwards then darted into the nearby woodland, the guard climbed to his feet then shook his head.)

SMITH: You think you know someone, then...

(Sighing sorrowfully, he then glanced up and watched as a throng of his fellow guards raced towards him.)

CAPTAIN: What the fuck are you doing??? Go after them!

SMITH: That might not be necessary, sir!

CAPTAIN: Excuse me?

SMITH: I know who one of them is. And where she lives.

CAPTAIN: What?

SMITH: She's my next door neighbour.

(The captain came to a halt then nodded.)

CAPTAIN: I see.

(He snarled.)

CAPTAIN: Change of plans, men.

(He looked to the guard.)

CAPTAIN: Let's pay the cunt a visit. Traitors to Efland must die!

SMITH: I couldn't agree more.

(The captain then looked to another of his subordinates.)

CAPTAIN: Come! Erikson, you're driving!

(With that, they about turned and raced back up the road, to where a government vehicle was awaiting them.)

Wholly unaware that the guards had given up their immediate pursuit, Sierra, Josie and their two male companions continued to race through the woods. Sierra did so with panic in her heart. Not blessed with the fastest of legs, she feared her capture was imminent. Blessed with a great deal more self-confidence, on the other hand, the other three bounded on determinedly, confident of making good their escape.)

JOSIE: Get a move on, babe. Stop looking back every five seconds!

(Sierra whimpered.)

SIERRA: I'm scared.

JOSIE: Don't be. We'll make it; trust me.

(Sierra frowned.)

SIERRA: Like I trusted you when you said we wouldn't get caught.

JOSIE: Um...

(Josie offered her a cheesy grin.)

JOSIE: Yeah... about that. I said *you* wouldn't get caught. You were just a lookout.

SIERRA: Then you were wrong.

JOSIE: Well... yeah; a little bit.

SIERRA: A little bit???

(One of the two men growled.)

FRANK: Keep your voice down!

(The other one then chimed in with his two cents.)

RAY: Yeah, like you've not caused enough trouble.

(Sierra pouted.)

SIERRA: Me?

RAY: Yeah. That guard knew who you were!

SIERRA: Yeah, but that wasn't my fault. The guards were chasing you idiots. He only grabbed me because you ran straight at me, shouting things. You gave me away!

RAY: Right...

(He ruffled his neck.)

RAY: That was Josie.

JOSIE: Thanks. Like I don't feel bad enough as it is.

FRANK: You feel bad, do you? Good. You should. They know who she is. That means they'll torture her for information then kill her.

SIERRA: Shut up! Why would you say that?

FRANK: Seriously! Look at her. There's no way she's gonna resist. She's gonna drop us all right in it.

SIERRA: How? I don't even know who you are!

(She ruffled her neck indignantly.)

SIERRA: I'll only drop Josie in it.

RAY: At which point they'll torture *her* for information and she'll drop us *all* in the shit!

JOSIE: You think I'm that weak?

RAY: Yes, I do.

JOSIE: Wanker! I ought to slap you sideways right here.

FRANK: Enough! Let's just get back to the car, then we can decide what to do. Until then just keep running; and for fuck sake, shut your mouths.

JOSIE: Fine!

RAY: Fine.

SIERRA: I'm scared.

FRANK: Shut up.

(Trembling as she continued on forth through the trees, barely keeping up with the three much fitter people in her company, Sierra was close to tears. This was not how her life was supposed to go. She'd always avoided conflict and confrontation like the plague. She craved an easy life. Becoming a wanted fugitive wasn't something she could have even comprehended before. And yet here she was. Her life was now in tatters and she had no idea how to handle it. All she knew was that running, right now, was definitely a good idea.)

RAY: Not far now, guys. Just through these trees.

(Sure enough, a few seconds later, they raced out of the trees, onto a roadside, where a car was parked a short distance away.)

RAY: Go!

FRANK: Quick as you can. Getting caught is unthinkable.

(The two of them then raced ahead. Eager to catch them up, Sierra attempted to lengthen her stride, only to be dragged to a halt by Josie.)

SIERRA: What are you doing???

(Watching the two men race for the car, Josie bit her lip.)

JOSIE: We're not going with them, babe.

SIERRA: What?

JOSIE: Trust me. We need to get just as far away from *them* as we do the guards.

SIERRA: Trust you, huh? Really?

JOSIE: Sierra, don't be like that. Yes, I fucked up this time, but until tonight have I ever led you wrong?

(Sierra pouted.)

SIERRA: Well, no, but...

JOSIE: Then come on...

(With that, she grabbed her by the hand then raced back into the woods with her. Being dragged somewhat, Sierra protested desperately.)

SIERRA: What are you doing? The car was the other way.

JOSIE: For fuck sake, girl; just trust me, will you?

SIERRA: But...

JOSIE: Enough! We need to keep running, okay? I know a safe place we can hideout in, and once we're there I'll explain everything, I promise. Until then just keep moving. Trust me, your life depends on it.

(Satisfied her friend wouldn't lie to her about such a thing, Sierra sighed despondently then allowed Josie to hurriedly lead her through the woods. This was a situation she had no idea how to deal with, so leaving it to her far more worldly-wise friend, simply made sense. It was hardly a joyous feeling to know her life was in someone else's hands, but without her she'd be alone and very much helpless. For Josie, this was no fun day out either. How she regretted getting her friend into this mess. Her best friend; someone who never caused any trouble and barely ever raised her voice. Her most innocent friend. She felt horrible about it and it was eating her up inside. She also knew she couldn't dwell on it, however. Sierra needed her to get them out of the mess they were in, and she owed it to her to do everything in her power to achieve that goal. Somehow. She knew she'd never be able to make it up to her entirely, but until they were safely away from civilisation, she wouldn't even be able to begin. Focussing very much on that thought, she powered forwards determinedly.

Some ten minutes later, having led her silent friend deep into the deserted woodland, Josie slowed her run then paced up to the doors of a small wooden hut. Wasting no time, whatsoever, she immediately cast the door open then turned to glance behind her.)

JOSIE: In here.

(Her heart then sunk. As if she hadn't felt guilty enough, the sight of Sierra wearily staggering towards the door on the verge of collapsing from exhaustion was almost too much to bear. Wincing to herself, she allowed Sierra to stagger into the hut then paced in after her. Once inside, she pulled out a match then lit a small lantern before placing it down on an upturned crate. Grimacing, she then tried to offer Sierra a smile. Her heart then sunk even further. The sight of Sierra slumping down the wall, looking crestfallen was not one she enjoyed seeing. Watching her as she sat there gasping for breath, she pouted miserably then sat down on the floor.)

JOSIE: I'm so, so sorry, babe. So, so sorry.

(Sierra said nothing.)

JOSIE: I guess sorry doesn't cut it, huh?

(Sierra sighed.)

SIERRA: Why has this happened? You said I'd be safe.

JOSIE: I was wrong.

SIERRA: I'd just be a lookout, you said. I just needed to whistle if guards came then make myself scarce. You made it sound so easy.

JOSIE: I know. And it was. I just...

(She shook her head.)

JOSIE: I don't know what I was thinking. Guards started chasing us and all I could think about was getting you out of there. I ended up leading them right to where you were hiding.

SIERRA: Yes, you did.

JOSIE: What shit luck that the guard happened to know you personally though. I mean, what are the odds?

SIERRA: Josie?

JOSIE: Yeah?

SIERRA: What now? Where are we gonna go? What are we gonna do?

(Josie bit her lip.)

JOSIE: Well...

(She then crawled to a small cabinet and yanked it open. Seconds later, she produced a bottle of whisky and two tumblers.)

JOSIE: First we'll get one of these down our necks then I'll explain everything.

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In the darkened nearby town, at this time, five guards were sitting inside a parked car, keeping vigil on a house across the road. Not blessed with much patience, the leader of the men, the captain, looked very much on edge. As a result, his four subordinates all kept very silent. He was not a man to get on the wrong side of.

CAPTAIN: Where the bloody hell is she? It shouldn't take that long to get back here.

(Nobody said a word.)

CAPTAIN: Well?

ERIKSON: Um... she was on foot when we saw her, sir. She might be a good few minutes yet.

CAPTAIN: I see.

(He then glanced at the guard who'd identified Sierra in the first place.)

CAPTAIN: She's your next door neighbour, is she?

SMITH: Sir!

CAPTAIN: I see.

(He then glanced at the houses on either side of the one they were watching before looking back at the guard again.)

CAPTAIN: Your house is shit.

SMITH: Thank you, sir.

CAPTAIN: You're very welcome. So which is it? To the left or the right?

SMITH: The right.

CAPTAIN: Oh, good god, that's the worst one.

SMITH: I know, but I can't afford to get it fixed up yet.

CAPTAIN: Your neighbour, Sierra, is it?

SMITH: Yes, sir.

CAPTAIN: She seems to know how to keep a house. Once we've bumped her off, you should move into her place.

SMITH: Good thinking, sir.

CAPTAIN: I'm just being practical. I mean, she's not going to need it anymore.

SMITH: True.

(The captain sighed.)

CAPTAIN: I bet you feel a bit of an idiot, don't you?

SMITH: Well, yeah, but like I said, I can't afford to fix it up yet.

CAPTAIN: I'm not talking about the house. I'm talking about the fact you lived next door to a bloody terrorist and didn't even realise.

(Smith sighed.)

SMITH: What can I tell you? She really didn't seem like the type. She's never talked about politics; not once. I had no idea she even cared.

CAPTAIN: Clearly she hid it well.

SMITH: Extremely. For all I knew she was a simple girl. A girly girl.

ERIKSON: Tasty?

SMITH: Hot as hell, yeah. Well, I definitely would.

CAPTAIN: And you can. We'll torture her, then you can have you fun. Just be sure to kill her afterwards.

ERIKSON: Or before, if you're that way inclined.

(Everyone except the captain laughed heartily.)

CAPTAIN: You disgust me. Now shut up. Focus on the task, will you? As soon as that terrorist bitch comes into view, we're gonna grab her!

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Inside the tiny hut within the woods, at this time, Josie was sitting against the wall, supping from a tumbler of whisky, repeatedly shaking her head as she did so. Opposite her, Sierra was sitting perfectly still, staring almost hypnotically at the lantern light reflecting off her whisky glass. Both were very much lost in their despairing thoughts. Not the type to let such emotions fester, however, Josie soon sat back and puffed out; glancing at Sierra as she did so.

JOSIE: Babe, we need to get the fuck out of this country. Not just this town; this country.

(Sierra glanced across at her with empty eyes.)

SIERRA: What?

JOSIE: Nowhere will be safe from them fucking savages.

(She shook her head.)

JOSIE: They're not going to care that you weren't actually involved in the break in; or that you were just doing a friend a favour. Your level of involvement is irrelevant. Traitors to the dictatorship get killed; end of story.

SIERRA: Then why didn't we escape in the car with your friends? Why drag me here?

JOSIE: Because they'd have killed you too.

(Sierra stared at her in horror.)

SIERRA: What?

JOSIE: You can identify me, babe. The government would torture you, find out who I am then come for *me*. And you heard what the boys said; they don't believe I'd keep their identities secret.

(She puffed out.)

JOSIE: So they might well have killed *me* too, just to make sure.

SIERRA: Seriously?

JOSIE: Sadly, that's the way it is.

SIERRA: Then your resistance movement is no better than the government.

(Josie sighed.)

JOSIE: Sometimes it *feels* that way.

SIERRA: Then why bother with them?

JOSIE: Because someone *has* to!

(She clenched her fist.)

JOSIE: Look, when you're a resistance member it's like this. If the government find out you've betrayed the dictatorship in the slightest, you'll die. So, be honest, if your own allies kill you before the dictatorship can get round to it, what difference does it *really* make?

You're dead either way.

SIERRA: Then you might as well not bother resisting. Just stay out of it and live.

JOSIE: Live? You call our existence a life?

SIERRA: I do. And I was enjoying my life, thank you very much.

JOSIE: That wasn't a life, Sierra.

(She shook her head.)

JOSIE: Our parent's generation had it so much better than we do. You worked hard, you got paid, you settled your bills then enjoyed life with whatever was left over. They could afford homes, cars, trips away, nights out. Not us! Every utility, every necessity, everything people

can't live without has been put out to tender to greedy corporations in league with the government. And because they're necessities, people have no choice but to pay their exorbitant prices. Now we work like dogs to rent a home we can never afford to buy, we can't afford a car that doesn't fall apart and evenings out are a pipe dream. People are struggling, babe, and there's no need for it. We're being bled dry. Now, because people can only afford old, beaten up vehicles they're adding a new tax on the fuel they need; just to squeeze out a few more coins. We can't go on like this.

SIERRA: You don't need to tell me how hard things are, Josie.

JOSIE: Apparently I do, because you don't seem to realise that it doesn't *have* to be this way. We, the people, we have the power to take back everything they took from us. We just need to be willing. Sadly, there are too many people like you who just don't give a shit.

SIERRA: That's not fair, Josie.

(Josie grimaced.)

JOSIE: I know. Sorry. I got a bit wound up there. The truth is, people would give a shit if only they understood the reality. Instead we have the media, who are owned by the same greedy corporations, telling us that everything is this way for a reason. Propaganda is a powerful tool. That's how they've managed to brand anyone who speaks out against them a terrorist. Fuckers.

SIERRA: Yeah, but you *are* a terrorist. You went in that building tonight to destroy it.

JOSIE: No, I bloody didn't. We were trying to steal some documents. There are files in there containing details of malicious, secret executions. If we could have got hold of them and put them in the public eye...

SIERRA: How? The government own the media. You don't have a platform, remember? Speak out against them and you're instantly branded a terrorist and a traitor. Nobody listens to terrorists and traitors.

JOSIE: Even so. We have to try.

(She pouted.)

JOSIE: Not that it matters anymore. Our inside informant forgot to tell us about the guard station *inside* the facility. Twat.

SIERRA: So that's how you were spotted.

JOSIE: Yeah. Now it's over. Everything. Everything is over.

SIERRA: Everything?

JOSIE: Yup. For us, anyway. Now you've been identified, all the state has to do is look into who your friends are and I'll be linked to terrorism immediately. That makes me a target for *both* sides; just like you. So it's done. Finished. All we can do now is fuck off out of the country.

SIERRA: Out of the country? How? Ordinary people like us don't have access to a plane or a boat, Josie. So there's only one country we can go to. Amaria. And they've closed the borders to Amaria! The road is impassable and that land border, as they call it, is guarded day and night by heavily armed soldiers. There's no way out.

(Josie bit her lip.)

JOSIE: Actually, babe... there is.

(She grimaced.)

JOSIE: You see... you won't be the first person I've helped smuggle out of the country.

SIERRA: What do you mean?

(Josie tapped her fingertips together nervously.)

JOSIE: Don't be angry, babe.

SIERRA: Why? What did you do?

JOSIE: Well, you see, the truth is, my boyfriend didn't actually leave me last summer. I helped him flee.



SIERRA: What???

JOSIE: He got caught posting anti-government literature through people's doors.

SIERRA: But...

(She growled.)

SIERRA: We sat and ate several tubs of ice cream and cried together all night!

JOSIE: Yeah...

SIERRA: You told me he ran away with his dentist!

JOSIE: Well...

SIERRA: I cursed her for weeks. I even stopped using her services!

JOSIE: I had to say something though, didn't I? I couldn't tell you the truth.

SIERRA: For pity's sake, Josie.

JOSIE: You're all angry now, aren't you?

SIERRA: Yes.

(She sighed.)

SIERRA: But then I was fucking angry at you anyway. I'm a bloody fugitive now. Wanted by the government! All because you begged me to help you out!

JOSIE: Yes, and I feel terrible about it.

SIERRA: Good.

(She shook her head.)

SIERRA: You've ruined my life.

JOSIE: I have. And I'm sorry. But in my defence, you could have said no.

SIERRA: I did! Six times. You kept on begging though.

JOSIE: Yeah... I'm not proud of that, babe.

SIERRA: Good.

(She furrowed her brow.)

SIERRA: I'll never forgive you for this.

JOSIE: And nor should you, but I will try to make it up to you. Starting with helping you escape.

SIERRA: How?

(Josie gulped.)

JOSIE: How? Well... actually... you're about to hate me even more in a minute.

SIERRA: I don't think I possibly could right now, Josie.

JOSIE: Then prepare to be amazed. Thing is, right... um...

SIERRA: Just say it!

JOSIE: Right, yeah... we *can* get away, but it's gonna cost you.

SIERRA: Cost me?

JOSIE: Yeah... you see... and try not to blow a fuse, babe, but... transportation costs money, you see...

SIERRA: How much???

JOSIE: Well, if you must know, that expensive heirloom of yours.

SIERRA: My bracelet?

JOSIE: Yeah.

SIERRA: Fuck off. This has been in our family for generations. As you well know, it's worth a small fortune!

JOSIE: Exactly. So you're gonna have to use it to pay the people who are gonna smuggle us across the border.

SIERRA: Piss off. No! Anything but that.

JOSIE: You *have* nothing else, Sierra. The government know who you are now. You're officially a wanted terrorist and you know what that means. Your house, your bank account, everything you own, all of it; seized!

(Sierra whimpered.)

SIERRA: But... that's so unfair.

JOSIE: I know, but...

SIERRA: I'm gonna punch you in the face, Josie!!!

JOSIE: No, you're not.

SIERRA: Aren't I?

JOSIE: No. You're way to dainty and girly. You don't know *how* to punch.

SIERRA: Then I'll go away and learn!!!

JOSIE: Wow, really?

SIERRA: Yes!

JOSIE: Sierra, calm the fuck down, will you?

SIERRA: No!

JOSIE: Fine, be angry then. But be sensible too. If you don't trade the heirloom for transportation, we'll have to stay in this country.

SIERRA: Then we'll stay!

JOSIE: And get tortured and executed.

SIERRA: Fine by me.

(Josie gave her a condescending glance.)

JOSIE: Is it? I mean, is it really?

(Sierra furrowed her brow.)

SIERRA: No.

JOSIE: Then what's it gonna be?

SIERRA: I have no choice, do I? I'll have to trade it.

JOSIE: Good girl.

SIERRA: Fuck off.

JOSIE: Sierra, don't be like that.

SIERRA: I'll be how I like!

(Josie rolled her eyes.)

JOSIE: Fine. Whatever. Look, let's get going, shall we? The sooner we get moving, the sooner we can get started.

SIERRA: Whatever.

JOSIE: Ready?

(Sierra just stared at her nonchalantly.)

JOSIE: I said are you ready?

(Sierra turned her nose up at her.)

JOSIE: Right. You think this is a good time to behave like a petulant child, do you?

SIERRA: Go away. I'm not talking to you.

JOSIE: Fine, just follow me silently then.

(With that, she scrambled out of the door then held it for Sierra to follow her out. Sierra did so, making sure to avoid eye contact with her and making her snub as clear as possible.)

JOSIE: Seriously?

(Unsurprisingly, Sierra offered no reply.)

JOSIE: For fuck sake.

(With that, she glanced across the woods then nodded.)

JOSIE: Just follow me, okay? I don't care if you don't say anything, just stay close. And don't worry, it's not far.

SIERRA: Whatever.

JOSIE: The canal docks are just through those trees.

(Sierra flinched.)

SIERRA: The canal?

JOSIE: Yeah. Exports are still permitted between Efland and Amaria by air, sea or canal. That's how we're getting out too.

SIERRA: On the canal?

JOSIE: Yes.

SIERRA: All the way to Amaria?

JOSIE: Yes! We can't stay in Efland, Sierra; we'd be captured and killed in no time.

SIERRA: Whatever. Lead the way then, stupid face. Just don't expect me to talk to you.

JOSIE: Fine. Just, come on.

(She then started to hurry away. With a saddened pout on her face, Sierra swiftly followed.)

JOSIE: We're actually on an estate owned by a government minister right now. A lot of rebels have hideouts in places like this. The greedy fuckers have hoarded so much land for themselves they can never tend to all of it; which makes it a perfect place for us to hide in. You have to marvel at the irony right? I mean, them accidentally providing their sworn enemies with a place to shelter.

(Sierra just scoffed and looked away.)

JOSIE: Right. Be like that then.

(With that, she darted off through the woods. With a scowl, Sierra swiftly followed on.)

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A mere ten minutes later, Josie and Sierra emerged from the woodland and crept up to the side of a tall, chain-link fence. Beyond the fence were a few wooden buildings, the other side of which was the town's dimly lit canal dockside. Making sure they were out of sight of those on the dock, Josie stepped up to a part of the fence that was shielded by the buildings then looked to Sierra urgently.)

JOSIE: Right, here's what we need to do.

(Sierra scoffed audibly then looked away.)

JOSIE: Sierra...

SIERRA: I'm not talking to you!

JOSIE: For pity's sake, fucking stop it, will you? We need to get out of town, so for now will you just bloody co-operate?

SIERRA: I might.

JOSIE: That's not good enough. You either will or you won't.

SIERRA: I'll decide when I'm good and ready.

JOSIE: For fuck sake.

(She sneered.)

JOSIE: Just bloody grow up, will you? Let's get this done. Once we're on our way, you can spend the rest of your life hating me, if you want to. Shun me, ignore me, do what you like, just wait until we're out of town. Please!

(Sierra ruffled her neck indignantly.)

SIERRA: Fine.

JOSIE: Thank you.

(She nodded.)

JOSIE: Okay, so here's the plan. We're going to sneak through this fence, macho ourselves up a bit then head across the docks to the canal side and talk to my contact. It's not exactly the most complicated plan in the world, but...

SIERRA: Wait. What the hell do you mean by macho ourselves up a bit?

JOSIE: It's a dockside, Sierra.

SIERRA: I can see that, dumb arse.

JOSIE: Then don't ask stupid questions. The docks are no place for a lady. It's a world of slobs and savages. The people who work here are the types of people who eat baked beans

with their fingers. They live in a world of filth and the concept of acting civilised is lost on them. If you bump into someone, don't apologise, just keep walking like you couldn't give a shit. We need to fit in, okay?

SIERRA: Whatever.

JOSIE: Once we get in there, put your head down and follow me. Oh, and try not to be such a girl.

SIERRA: What's that supposed to mean?

JOSIE: Like I said, we need to macho up a bit. Keep your head down and walk like a slob. Act like you belong.

SIERRA: Fine. I'll try.

JOSIE: Don't try; do. If you start mincing over there like a princess, we'll stand out like the wart on the president's face.

SIERRA: I wasn't *going* to mince like a princess.

JOSIE: I'm just saying, don't do your natural walk.

SIERRA: That's how you think I walk, is it? Like a princess?

JOSIE: What can I say, Sierra? You're very girly.

SIERRA: I make no apology for that.

JOSIE: And I'd never ask you to. I'm just saying, when we get in there, put on an act. Can you do that?

SIERRA: Of course I can act. I was the female lead in nearly all our old school plays.

JOSIE: That's why I'm worried. You always played a princess.

SIERRA: So? Are you jealous, tree number 4?

(Josie pouted indignantly.)

JOSIE: I wasn't always a tree!

SIERRA: Oh, that's right. You were the back end of a cow once.

JOSIE: Why would bring that up, Sierra? That's just cruel.

SIERRA: Oh, boo-bloody-hoo.

JOSIE: Right...

(She sighed.)

JOSIE: You're gonna be angry at me for quite some time, aren't you?

SIERRA: Forever, I expect.

JOSIE: Well, that's your choice.

(She shrugged.)

JOSIE: I can only try to make amends; whether you ever forgive me or not is beyond my control.

SIERRA: Yes. Yes, it is.

JOSIE: Look, let's just get this done, shall we? Come on.

SIERRA: Fine.

(With that, Josie pulled back the stretch of fence she was standing by and gestured for Sierra to go through.)

JOSIE: After you?

SIERRA: No. After *you*. This time, you can be the one in the firing line if we get caught.

JOSIE: Oh, whatever.

(With a defeated sigh, she then slid through the gap in the fence, making sure to hold it open for Sierra to follow.)

JOSIE: Come on.

SIERRA: I'm coming!

(Sierra then slid herself through the gap and nodded.)

SIERRA: Lead the way, shit friend.

JOSIE: Wow. Really?

SIERRA: Would you rather I lied?

JOSIE: Yes.

(She rolled her eyes.)

JOSIE: Okay, let's go. Hood up, and act tough. And stop walking like a girl.

SIERRA: I haven't even *started* walking yet!

JOSIE: I know, I was just nipping it in the bud before it got going.

SIERRA: You're really starting to wind me up, you are.

JOSIE: I don't mean to, babe; I just want to get us out of here alive.

(She nodded.)

JOSIE: Okay, let's go. Head down, walk like a slob and make no apologies for anything.

SIERRA: Okay. Like this you mean?

(She then kicked Josie in the shin.)

JOSIE: Ow!!! What was that for?

SIERRA: I'm just reassuring you that I'm no mood for apologising.

JOSIE: Damn. That's cold, Sierra.

(She sighed despondently then glanced out into the canal dockside.)

JOSIE: Let's do this. Stay close.

SIERRA: Just go, for pity's sake.

JOSIE: Fine. Come on.

(With that, she strutted from around the side of the hut and made her way arrogantly towards the part of the canal where a long black narrow boat was moored. Sierra followed on, mincing like a princess. It came so naturally to her, she had no idea she was doing it. Mercifully, it was a quiet night and the lights at the canal side were extremely dim. As a result, nobody even saw them cross the entire width of the dockside.

Having arrived next to the black narrow boat she'd been making a beeline for, Josie stepped close to the edge of the canal then leant across to tap on the window. It took every ounce of strength Sierra had, not to push her in. Thankfully, having always been very much a good girl, she managed to resist. Instead, she glanced away innocently, happy to act as if she'd never even been tempted.)

SIERRA: Nothing.

JOSIE: What?

SIERRA: Shut up. I'm not talking to you.

(Josie rolled her eyes at her for a moment then scowled at the narrow boat.)

JOSIE: Fuck. Looks like there's nobody home.

SIERRA: Great. Now what?

(Just then, the door at the front of the boat opened up and a giant of a lad, squeezed his way onto the deck. At six foot four with muscles bulging from his vest, he made quite the intimidating sight.)

ALAN: What do you want?

(His face then lit up.)

ALAN: Women? You're women!

JOSIE: We know.

ALAN: Right. Obviously. What can I do for you, ladies?

(Josie stepped closer to him then lowered her hood slightly.)

JOSIE: It's me.

ALAN: Right...

(He grimaced.)

ALAN: We've met, have we?

JOSIE: Yeah. About a year ago. You helped a friend of mine with a transport problem.

(Alan racked his brain for a moment then suddenly looked enlightened.)

ALAN: I remember now. One of the girls in your brothel upset the wrong person, if I recall, so she had to get away.

JOSIE: Not even close. And downright insulting, come to that. You helped my boyfriend cross the border.

(She furrowed her brow.)

JOSIE: Brothel indeed.

ALAN: Right. My bad.

(He nodded.)

ALAN: I know. Great idea. Let's change the subject. What can I do for you this fine evening, girls?

JOSIE: We require your services, obviously.

ALAN: So you're not two canal groupies, hoping to get lucky?

(Josie just stared through him.)

ALAN: I'm joking, for fuck sake. Don't glare at me like that.

(He rolled his eyes.)

ALAN: So, just your friend is it?

SIERRA: We're not friends!

ALAN: Right.

JOSIE: How can you say that, Sierra?

ALAN: Girls...

SIERRA: I wouldn't be in this mess if it wasn't for you, that's how!

JOSIE: Yeah, but...

(Alan gritted his teeth.)

ALAN: Look, we're shipping in twenty minutes or so, with or without you. Now answer the bloody question. Just one of you or both.

JOSIE: Both!

ALAN: Right. Now we're getting somewhere.

(He nodded.)

ALAN: And how are you gonna pay for it?

(Josie instantly turned bright red.)

JOSIE: Um... I'm not. She is.

(She gestured to Sierra.)

SIERRA: Passage for one, please.

JOSIE: Sierra, don't be like that. I'll get killed if I stay here.

SIERRA: Here's hoping.

JOSIE: You don't mean that, surely.

(Sierra glowered at her for a moment then sighed.)

SIERRA: Fine, passage for two then. Just make sure she's uncomfortable.

ALAN: Neither of you will be going any-fucking-where if you don't bloody tell me how you intend to pay.

(Sierra pouted.)

SIERRA: Fine. I can pay you with this.

(She then stepped closer to him and held out her arm daintily, to show him her bracelet.)

ALAN: Two things. One, my mate is gonna have to take a look first. That might be cheap tat from the market for all I know.

SIERRA: It's solid platignum!

ALAN: So you say.

(He nodded.)

ALAN: Secondly, put your arm down and stop standing there in a such a floppy manner!

SIERRA: What?

ALAN: You look like a girly tourist. Tourists aren't allowed. Act like a bloody docker. If anyone sees you standing there all floppy like that, they're gonna know something's not right. (Sierra thrust her hands to her hips.)

SIERRA: I can't help being who I am.

ALAN: Now you're even girlier!

JOSIE: We went over this, Sierra. Act boyish.

(Alan nodded to where a female dock worker was skulking past, some fifty feet away.)

ALAN: Like her!

(Sierra turned to watch the girl stomp aggressively past with a snarl on her face.)

SIERRA: She looks really angry.

ALAN: She looks tough. Dock work is tough. Get it?

SIERRA: Fine.

(She then folded her arms and growled.)

ALAN: Much better.

(With that, he called over his shoulder.)

ALAN: Mate, couple of dock workers here want a word with you.

(Seconds later, a dashing young man stepped out onto the deck platform.)

CLAYMORE: What gives?

(His face then lit up.)

CLAYMORE: Canal groupies?

ALAN: No such luck; they want passage to Amaria.

CLAYMORE: Bugger.

(With that, he jumped onto the dockside and stepped up to them.)

CLAYMORE: Payment?

(Sierra sighed then raised her arm up again. With a nod, Claymore held her wrist then examined the bracelet.)

CLAYMORE: For both of you, is it?

SIERRA: Well...

JOSIE: Yes!

CLAYMORE: I see.

(He then released her arm.)

CLAYMORE: Welcome aboard. Now, hurry.

(With that, he ushered them both onto the platform deck. Josie hurriedly obliged then slipped inside the cabin. Sierra followed on gingerly and with much trepidation.)

CLAYMORE: Could she be any more girly?

ALAN: I know, mate. It's a miracle they didn't get stopped. Good thing it's quiet tonight.

CLAYMORE: Definitely.

(With that, the two of them followed the girls into a large cabin area of the boat. Fitted with cupboards, a stove and a two sofas, it was modest to say the least.)

CLAYMORE: Right, ladies. First step; canal worker uniforms. I'll run and get them for you from the office now. What size are you?

JOSIE: Why do we need uniforms?

ALAN: Because without them you won't be able to get back off the boat once we arrive in Amaria. Canal travel is forbidden for tourists, remember? You have to look like workers.

JOSIE: Oh. Makes sense.

CLAYMORE: So, sizes?

SIERRA: I'm a six.

(She gestured to Josie.)

SIERRA: You're what? A fourteen?

JOSIE: An eight, you cheeky witch! And only because I'm taller than you.

SIERRA: An eight? You'll never squeeze into that. Get her a twelve.

JOSIE: Wow. I'm really gonna slap you in a minute.

SIERRA: Go for it. You might as well. You've already fucked my life up, why *not* throw in a beating for good measure?

JOSIE: Sierra...

ALAN: For fuck sake, girls; he asked you a simple question.

SIERRA: What? Oh, yeah. I'm a six.

JOSIE: An eight.

(Claymore stared through them emptily.)

CLAYMORE: Right... they come in extra-small up to triple extra-large.

JOSIE: Oh. In that case, a small I guess.

SIERRA: Extra small, please.

CLAYMORE: Thank you.

(He rolled his eyes.)

CLAYMORE: I'll fetch the uniforms, you show the girls to their hiding place.

ALAN: Gotcha.

(With that, Claymore headed back outside again. As he did so, Alan gestured to the door into the hold.)

ALAN: This way, ladies. We get inspected before we leave, so we need to make sure you're safely stashed away in the hidey-hole.

JOSIE: Stashed away?

SIERRA: Like, in a cupboard?

ALAN: You wish. The cupboard is bigger.

JOSIE: What?

ALAN: It's only for a short while, okay? Just until we set sail, then we can let you out again. (He shrugged.)

ALAN: It's cramped and claustrophobic in there, but it's the only way we can get you out, okay?

SIERRA: Okay.

ALAN: Come on.

(With that, he opened the door to the hold where a cargo of boxes were stored.)

JOSIE: Surely you don't expect us to get in one of those boxes, do you?

ALAN: Of course not.

(He then pulled a panel free from the wall.)

ALAN: Get in there, lay down and remain deathly silent, okay? If the inspector comes in and hears you, it'll be curtains for all of us.

(Sierra stared into the darkened hole.)

SIERRA: It's dark in there.

ALAN: It's smells a bit too, but you'll get used to it.

JOSIE: Used to it? You said we'd only be in there for a little while.

ALAN: And you will.

(He rolled his eyes.)

ALAN: Just get in, will you? I've got things to do before we get going.

JOSIE: Well, okay.

(She then smiled to Sierra.)

JOSIE: Be brave, babe.

SIERRA: Swivel!

JOSIE: Nice.

(She then rolled her eyes and climbed into the small hiding place.)



ALAN: One down...

(Sierra whimpered to herself then knelt down and crawled over to the space.)

SIERRA: I can smell it from here. Oh, wait...

JOSIE: That's Josie! Yeah. Ha bloody ha,

SIERRA: Shut up, you.

(She then climbed inside the tiny space and sighed.)

SIERRA: It's so cramped.

ALAN: And it'll get worse. You're only half in.

SIERRA: What?

ALAN: Hunch up closer to your friend.

SIERRA: She's not my...

JOSIE: Just move closer!!!

SIERRA: Don't raise your voice at me!

(Having heard enough, Alan rolled his eyes.)

ALAN: Just be quiet, remember? Or you'll get us all killed.

(With that, he put the hatch door even with the floor, then used it to shovel Sierra closer to Josie.)

SIERRA: Ouch!

JOSIE: Hey!

ALAN: Quiet!

(He then firmed the hatch door into place and rolled his eyes.)

ALAN: These two are going to be a pain in the arse, I can tell.

(A muffled voice then rose from the hatch.)

SIERRA: That's not very nice!

ALAN: Shut up! How many fucking times? Anyone would think you *want* to get killed!

(Silence then descended.)

ALAN: Finally.

(With that, he paced back into the cabin area and took a deep breath.)

ALAN: Peace at last.

---

(A few minutes later, having done one last check of the engine, Alan took a seat on one of the cabin sofas then exhaled. Having loaded the boat earlier, it'd been a long and tiring day. He was glad of the brief respite. Alas, his peace was short-lived. Only a few moments later, Claymore hurried in then threw some female uniforms at him.)

ALAN: What the fuck?

CLAYMORE: Quick. Stash them away. The inspector's coming.

ALAN: Oh, right. That's a relief. For a minute there, I thought you wanted me to put them on.

CLAYMORE: I don't think they're really your size, mate. Now hurry.

ALAN: I'm on it!

(With that, he lifted up a sofa cushion then forced the uniforms down the side of some blankets that were housed inside. He then hurriedly reset the cushion and sat down, just in time for an inspector to step into the cabin. Military guards with a special role in regard to policing smuggling, they were generally known to be unpleasant types. Luckily, the inspector today was a middle-aged gent by the name of Wilkins. Renowned for caring more about a quiet life, rather than doing his job right, Alan and Claymore were delighted to see him.)

ALAN: Wilkins!

CLAYMORE: Hello, mate.

(Wilkins sighed.)

WILKINS: Alright, lads.

ALAN: You look knackered, mate.

WILKINS: It's been a long day.

(He smiled.)

WILKINS: Still, you're the last scheduled departure for three hours, so I'll take a nap in a minute.

CLAYMORE: A much deserved one, no doubt.

WILKINS: Well, I reckon so, yeah.

(He nodded.)

WILKINS: Anyway, let's get this done. What are you hauling?

CLAYMORE: Cranston's Chocolate Cakes.

(Wilkins stared through him.)

WILKINS: What? Just them?

CLAYMORE: Yeah. Got a bloody boat full of the things. Apparently they love them up there.

ALAN: And we've bagged an exclusive contract to export them.

WILKINS: Nice. You'll be quids in.

(He smirked.)

WILKINS: I'm in the wrong line of work, I reckon. You canal boys make a pretty penny nowadays. Not many can say that.

ALAN: Like you guards are poorly paid.

WILKINS: True. I definitely can't complain. Wages everywhere else are dropping fast these days.

CLAYMORE: Sucks, doesn't it?

WILKINS: Yeah, but what can you do?

ALAN: Exactly.

(He nodded.)

ALAN: So, you want to check our load before we set off?

(Wilkins sighed.)

WILKINS: Yeah, I suppose we should get it over with. Then I can take my nap. Lead the way.

ALAN: Righto.

(With that, he stepped to the end of the cabin and yanked open the door to the hold.)

ALAN: After you.

WILKINS: Thanks.

(Wilkins stepped inside the hold then glanced ahead at the plethora of boxes before him.)

WILKINS: There's chocolate cakes in all of these boxes, is there?

(Stepping up behind him Claymore nodded.)

CLAYMORE: Yup. And in answer to your *next* question. Yes. It's *very* tempting.

WILKINS: And have you...

ALAN: Nope. We won't get paid if we do that.

WILKINS: Then you've got a lot more restraint than I have, lads. I'd have had my way through a box or two by now.

(He smirked.)

WILKINS: I guess I'm not cut out to be a courier. Too easily tempted.

(With that, he stepped to the side of the hold and glanced at the boxes again, before heading to the other side and stopping just in front of the hatch in which Sierra and Josie were hiding.)

WILKINS: Surely they wouldn't miss one box.

ALAN: They count them all three times, mate. If it doesn't match what it says on the itinerary, we can kiss our pay day goodbye.

WILKINS: Shame.

(He then nodded sternly.)

WILKINS: Well, everything seems to be in order, so I'll be on my way.

(As he went to step forward, however, he accidentally flicked his heel back and kicked the hatch door, causing it to flop open against his leg.)

WILKINS: What the...

(Reacting at lightning speed, Alan instantly zoomed across the room and dived to push the hatch door closed again.)

SIERRA: Ouch!!!

WILKINS: What was that?

ALAN: Um, that was me.

WILKINS: That was a woman's voice!

ALAN: Hey, less of that. I shriek like a girl when I hurt myself sometimes and I'm very sensitive about it.

WILKINS: So that was you?

CLAYMORE: Astonishing, isn't it? I'll never get used to hearing such a girly shriek from such a hulking great bloke, but he does it every time.

ALAN: Only when it hurts! Which it did. I caught the skin on my finger in the gap.

WILKINS: Unpleasant.

(He shrugged.)

WILKINS: Maybe if you hadn't hurried over so fast...

ALAN: I had to. That panel is part of the vent from the engine. When that falls off, hot air comes out. We use it to keep loads from freezing in the winter.

CLAYMORE: Yeah, but this time of year it has the opposite effect.

ALAN: It'd melt the chocolate cakes.

WILKINS: Bugger. Can't have that, can we? I apologise. That was all down to my clumsiness.

ALAN: No harm done.

WILKINS: Very gracious of you, lads.

(He exhaled.)

WILKINS: Anyway, I'm off to get some shut eye.

CLAYMORE: Righto. See you later, mate.

ALAN: Always a pleasure, mate.

WILKINS: I agree. Cheerio.

(He then headed out of the hold and back into the cabin. Left behind, Alan and Claymore shared a relieved glance, delighted at their quick thinking. They too then headed back into the cabin, just in time to see Wilkins leap from the boat to the dockside and hurry away towards the offices.)

CLAYMORE: Mate...

(He chuckled.)

CLAYMORE: I shriek like a girl when I hurt myself and I'm very sensitive about it.

(Alan laughed out loud.)

ALAN: That was the first thing that came into my head.

CLAYMORE: And it was perfect. You got us out of the shit *and* made yourself look like a complete bell end in one fell swoop.

ALAN: I'm glad my embarrassment amused you.

CLAYMORE: It really did.

(They shared a grin then Claymore nodded.)

CLAYMORE: Right. Enough pissing about, let's get going, shall we?

ALAN: We shall.

CLAYMORE: Final checks...

(He then pulled open a drawer and stared inside.)

CLAYMORE: Two passports and a set of import documents. Check. Now, supplies.

(Alan turned and pulled open a cupboard door.)

ALAN: The food cupboard is stocked up and ready.

CLAYMORE: Sweet.

ALAN: We'll need to buy more on the way though, obviously; now we've suddenly got two extra mouths to feed.

CLAYMORE: Yup.

(He nodded.)

CLAYMORE: Okay then, time to disembark. If you wouldn't mind doing the honours.

ALAN: I'd love to. Then it's all down to you.

(With that, the two of them headed outside onto the deck. Claymore stood at the controls while Alan jumped down onto the dockside to release the ropes. With the boat now free, he then leant over and grabbed the side.)

ALAN: Ready?

CLAYMORE: Cast her off, mate.

ALAN: Done.

(With that, he used his weight to push the boat away from the dockside, before jumping onto the side and heading back towards Claymore.)

ALAN: And we're off.

(The engine then kicked into life and the boat started to trickle slowly forth.)

ALAN: How far are we going before we bed down for the night?

CLAYMORE: First free-of-charge mooring we see, I'm stopping at.

ALAN: Sounds good. As long as we're in the countryside, it's fine by me. Away from prying eyes and the endless noise of this shitty city.

CLAYMORE: Yup. Peace and quiet. Perfect. A good night's sleep will be had.

ALAN: Unless our new passengers snore.

(Claymore smirked.)

CLAYMORE: That'd suck.

(Upon reaching the deck, Alan exhaled then headed straight into the cabin.)

ALAN: Coffee?

CLAYMORE: Stupid question.

ALAN: Yes it was.

(As Alan disappeared inside, Claymore relaxed his stance and leant on the railing at the back of the boat. With perfect precision, he then turned the boat around one hundred and eighty degrees before setting off down the waterway. Something of an expert canal boat pilot, he was rarely flustered when in control of a rudder. As a result, by the time Alan returned with two cups of coffee, the dockside was already disappearing out of sight in the darkness.)

ALAN: Here you go, mate.

CLAYMORE: Perfect. Cheers, mate.

(Alan nodded.)

ALAN: So, that girl's bracelet. Worth a lot, was it?

(Claymore smirked.)

CLAYMORE: Put it this way, that new engine we want is as good as ours.

ALAN: Seriously? That much?

CLAYMORE: Yup. And a good payday on top of that.

ALAN: Damn.

(He nodded proudly.)

ALAN: We're finally getting the GX engine. Nice.

CLAYMORE: Mate, I'm talking about the LR240 engine.

(Alan's jaw dropped.)

ALAN: Fuck off. That's like, top of the range.

CLAYMORE: Yup. This thing will go like the bloody clappers, mate.

(Alan puffed out in awe.)

ALAN: I won't lie. That makes me very happy.

CLAYMORE: It should. We can double the amount of runs we make. And transport perishables.

ALAN: Perishables, huh? I'm getting a semi.

CLAYMORE: Thinking about parsnips again?

ALAN: Well, you know how it is. They're one sexy vegetable.

(They shared an amused chuckle then took sips of their coffees.)

CLAYMORE: The good money will always be in smuggling people overseas, but with that engine, we can still make a bomb, just by transporting ordinary goods in greater volume.

ALAN: We're gonna be coining it in.

CLAYMORE: Yes, yes we are.

ALAN: Perfect. Here's to transporting damsels in distress with expensive heirlooms.

CLAYMORE: I'll drink to that.

(They took another swig then Alan glanced inside the cabin.)

ALAN: When are we gonna let our passengers out of the hatches?

CLAYMORE: Another ten minutes, I reckon.

ALAN: Cool. In the meantime, I'll be chilling out in the cabin.

CLAYMORE: Go for it.

ALAN: See you later.

(He then headed inside, leaving Claymore staring at the canal ahead with a contented smile on his face.)

---

Some ten minutes later, as recommended by his good friend Claymore, Alan stepped into the hold and released Josie and Sierra from their hiding place. Once the door was off and they were invited out, Sierra rolled away from Josie then jumped to her feet.)

SIERRA: It stinks in there.

(She then sneered.)

SIERRA: So did the company.

(With that, she minced out of the hold and disappeared into the cabin. Slowly climbing to her feet, Josie sighed.)

JOSIE: She's really pissed off with me.

ALAN: I noticed. Is she always like that?

JOSIE: No. I'd never seen her even slightly cross until tonight.

(She sighed.)

JOSIE: I don't wanna talk about it.

ALAN: Fair enough.

(With that, Alan paced across the room then bent down and opened a hatch on the opposing wall. As soon as he'd done so, a groan of disquiet from a bitter, middle-aged gentleman rose into the air.)

GRAYDON: Well it's about bloody time.

(A somewhat portly, well-to-do man then stepped to his feet and stretched his arms.)

GRAYDON: You need bigger hiding places.

ALAN: Not really. You're just a fat cunt, mate. Try losing weight.

GRAYDON: How dare you?

ALAN: I dare.

GRAYDON: Yes, well, seeing as I'm relying on you to smuggle me across the border, I'm going to let it slide this time. Next time, however...

ALAN: You'll do what?

GRAYDON: Well... I'll be cross.

ALAN: How terrifying.

(He rolled his eyes.)

ALAN: Just get your arses into the cabin, please, you two.

GRAYDON: Two? I'm not that bloody fat!

(He then noticed Josie heading out of the door.)

GRAYDON: Oh, you meant...

(He beamed.)

GRAYDON: We have eye candy on board? Fantastic!

ALAN: I wouldn't get too excited, mate. I doubt they're that desperate.

GRAYDON: You never know.

ALAN: Right...

(He then rolled his eyes and headed into the cabin. Graydon slowly followed him out.)

GRAYDON: Oh, my. *Two* fine fillies. Excellent.

(Upon reaching the centre of the cabin, Alan glanced to where Josie and Sierra were seated on opposite sofas, then back at where Graydon was slouching against the wall.)

ALAN: Right, introductions.

GRAYDON: A superb idea. My name's Graydon James, I'm filthy rich and very much available.

(He beamed arrogantly.)

ALAN: Yeah... you've been available for quite some time, I'd wager.

GRAYDON: Hey!

ALAN: Anyway, my name's Alan Varez. You can either call me Al, Alan or your majesty. Though I doubt anyone will take me up on the latter.

GRAYDON: I know I certainly won't.

ALAN: Anyway, my good friend at the helm is the one and only Claymore Reefer.

(Claymore raised his voice from outside.)

CLAYMORE: At your service! And may I say, it's a pleasure to make your acquaintance.

(Sierra peered out of the door at him.)

SIERRA: Thank you. Likewise.

(Having not seen her with her hood down before, Claymore's jaw dropped and he mumbled to himself in bewilderment.)

CLAYMORE: Fucking hell, she's well fit.

SIERRA: Sorry?

CLAYMORE: What? Nothing! Just thinking out loud... about the route... you know?

ALAN: The route isn't that hard, mate. You just follow the bloody canal. Anything else would be a monumental fuck up on your part.

CLAYMORE: Yeah... shut up, you.

(Alan chuckled then looked to Sierra.)

ALAN: So what was your name, treacle?

SIERRA: No.

ALAN: What?

SIERRA: It's not treacle; it's Sierra. Sierra Cedes.

ALAN: Right. I wasn't suggesting your name was treacle. It's a term of endearment.

SIERRA: It is? I've never heard it before.

ALAN: Well, trust me, it is.

(He then looked to Josie.)

ALAN: And you are?

SIERRA: A bad friend.

JOSIE: Josie Wells.

ALAN: Short for Josephine?

JOSIE: Yes, but never call me that.

SIERRA: Yeah, she really hates that, don't you, Josephine?

JOSIE: Will you just bloody stop it, Sierra?

SIERRA: Right. Sorry, Josephine.

JOSIE: Don't!

ALAN: Right, well, I don't know why you two are sniping at each so much, and I don't really care, to be honest. I just want to welcome you all to our humble narrow boat, The Amethyst.

GRAYDON: Really? What a pathetic name!

SIERRA: Josephine?

GRAYDON: No! Well, yes, but I meant The Amethyst.

JOSIE: You're starting to get on my tits right now, Sierra.

GRAYDON: And what splendid tits they are too. Both of you. Much kudos.

ALAN: Look, mate, we didn't name the boat. It was called that when we bought it. It used to be a vessel for transporting Amethyst from the south, back when it was popular.

GRAYDON: That was nigh on forty years ago!

ALAN: So?

GRAYDON: I trust you've had it serviced since then. Not going to sink, are we?

ALAN: No! I do the bloody services personally. And even if I do say so myself, I'm an ace mechanic.

(Claymore then called through the doorway.)

CLAYMORE: He is. This vessel's in tip-top condition.

ALAN: Thank you.

GRAYDON: Well, he would say that, wouldn't he?

(He rolled his eyes.)

GRAYDON: Anyway, seeing as we have two female passengers, what say one of you makes us all a nice cup of tea?

JOSIE: Excuse me?

SIERRA: I'll do it!

JOSIE: Seriously? He thinks we should make it because we're girls.

SIERRA: I heard him.

JOSIE: And you're fine with it???

SIERRA: No, it was really offensive, but I'm gonna do it because *I* want one. And because I know it'll annoy *you*.

JOSIE: For pity's sake.

ALAN: Hang on, hang on. I love the way you all just assume you can help yourselves to our bloody tea and coffee supply.

SIERRA: We can't?

ALAN: No. Well, you can, yes, but it would have been polite to ask.

GRAYDON: Bollocks. I'm paying you a small fortune for this trip. You should feel obliged to ply me with as much tea and coffee as I like. And as much food as I like. I'm the customer, so you should bloody well do as you're told!

(Alan growled.)

ALAN: Is that so? Listen, pal...

(Claymore then called through the door.)

CLAYMORE: Don't piss him off, old man. Al's muscles aren't for show, and you wouldn't be the first bolshie passenger to take an unexpected midnight swim.

GRAYDON: What? Are you threatening me?

CLAYMORE: No, but Al's about too, and trust me, you really don't want that.

GRAYDON: Fine.

(He ruffled his neck as he struggled to swallow his pride.)

GRAYDON: May I have a cup of tea, please?

ALAN: Yes, mate. You may.

GRAYDON: Excellent.

(He looked to Sierra.)

GRAYDON: Come on, woman. Hop to it.

SIERRA: Wow. Seriously? No way. As much as it'd annoy Josephine, there's no way I'm accepting that.

JOSIE: Stop calling me Josephine!!!

SIERRA: Nope!

JOSIE: Fine, then *I'll* start calling *you* by the nickname you had at school.

(Sierra grimaced uneasily then sighed in defeat.)

SIERRA: Fine. You win.

GRAYDON: Wait. What nickname? I really want to know now.

ALAN: So do I.

(Claymore called through the door.)

CLAYMORE: Me too.

JOSIE: Then you're out of luck. As long as Sierra doesn't call me Josephine, you'll *never* find out what it was.

GRAYDON: Deal. Sierra, call her Josephine.

SIERRA: No.

GRAYDON: Damn it.

(He sighed.)

GRAYDON: Fine. Don't then. Just carry on with what you were doing. Milk and two sugars, please.

SIERRA: No chance.

GRAYDON: Bigger.

(He sighed.)

GRAYDON: Just my luck; trapped on a ship with two bloody feminists.

SIERRA: We're not feminists!

JOSIE: But we're not your bloody housemaids either.

SIERRA: Yeah!

JOSIE: Damn right.

SIERRA: Shut up, Josie.

JOSIE: No. *You* shut up. Bloody sniping at me all the time. I've apologised a million times for what happened!

SIERRA: And it'll never make up for it! I've had to leave my home and everyone I love behind to flee to a foreign country because of you.

JOSIE: And I'm sorry, okay? It was never my intention to...

SIERRA: To what? Make the government think I'm a terrorist, so I end up on their list for execution?

JOSIE: Yeah. It was a mistake,

(Alan sucked his teeth.)



ALAN: Damn. That *is* a mistake.

JOSIE: And I've never denied that fact. It was terrible, unforgivable even.

SIERRA: Exactly. Unforgivable! So stop apologising because it'll never mean anything!

JOSIE: It might. Once you calm down.

ALAN: *If* she calms down. Damn, that's quite the screw up.

GRAYDON: Wait? I don't get it. Why would the government think you're a terrorist?

(He raised a suspicious eyebrow.)

GRAYDON: Unless of course, you *are* a terrorist?

SIERRA: I'm not though. I was just doing *her* a favour. *She's* the terrorist.

JOSIE: *I'm* not a terrorist! I'm a revolutionary; fighting for our freedom. Someone brave enough to stand up to our fascist, murderous government and try to make a difference.

GRAYDON: So, a terrorist then?

JOSIE: By their definition, maybe, but not by mine.

GRAYDON: Then you're kidding yourself.

JOSIE: Am I now?

GRAYDON: Yes. You stand against our democratically elected dictatorship... I mean government. That makes you a terrorist, nothing more. Actually, no; I stand corrected. You're *also* a liar. You claim to be someone brave enough to stand up to our fascist, murderous government and yet here you are, running away!

JOSIE: Yeah, well, when your own allies turn on you... oh, shut up; I have my reasons, okay?

GRAYDON: Cowardice being one of them, I expect. You got caught, now you're shitting yourself!

(Josie snarled at him.)

JOSIE: Oh, piss off. And anyway, why are *you* here? What are *you* running away from? A diet?

GRAYDON: How dare you? I've never dieted in my entire life!

JOSIE: Evidently.

ALAN: Then why are you running, fat bloke?

GRAYDON: The name's Graydon.

ALAN: I'm aware of this.

GRAYDON: Cheeky little shit.

(He sneered.)

GRAYDON: Not that it's any of your business, but I have to get away overseas because I may have inadvertently upset the wrong person.

JOSIE: Who?

SIERRA: How? What did you do?

GRAYDON: Well, you know the secretary of state for war and pensions?

JOSIE: Yeah.

GRAYDON: His wife.

ALAN: What?

GRAYDON: I did his wife. The silly old fart walked in the bedroom right in the middle of it. There I was pumping away, giving it to her in the arse and *he* bloody strolled in! Thankfully, he's even fatter than I am, so I managed to outrun him.

(He sighed.)

GRAYDON: I knew then my days were numbered if I didn't skip the country. Having been a government advisor for the last god knows how long, I know exactly how those bastards operate. They'll either make me disappear or fit me up on terrorist charges then have me hanged for treason. So here I am.

(He sighed.)

GRAYDON: Still, no point in complaining. How's that tea coming along?  
SIERRA: It's not!  
GRAYDON: Why not?  
(Alan sneered.)  
ALAN: Enough!  
(He shook his head then spoke calmly.)  
ALAN: Now listen up. Here's how this journey is gonna go. The rules, if you like. Rules that *will* be adhered to. Rule one being, you don't go outside unless either Claymore or myself *say* you can. Seeing as you're all on the run, I'm sure you can appreciate that it's a safety concern.  
JOSIE: Okay.  
GRAYDON: Fine by me. I have no desire to go out there, whatsoever.  
ALAN: Good.  
(He nodded.)  
ALAN: Rule two, no smoking in the cabin.  
GRAYDON: Except fine quality cigars, of course.  
ALAN: No exceptions!  
GRAYDON: Alright, calm down. I was joking.  
ALAN: Knob. Anyway, that just leaves rule three. We share the chores, okay? That means we'll *all* take turns in making the tea or coffee.  
GRAYDON: The four of you?  
ALAN: The four of *us*, Graydon; *you* included. Claymore is excluded because he's steering the boat.  
GRAYDON: Damn it.  
ALAN: I'll do it this time as my name's first in alphabetical order. Then it'll be you Graydon, followed by Josie then Sierra. Agreed?  
SIERRA: Okay.  
JOSIE: Sounds good.  
GRAYDON: That doesn't really work for me, to be honest.  
ALAN: Then you won't get any.  
GRAYDON: Shit.  
(He sighed.)  
GRAYDON: Fine. It's a deal.  
ALAN: Good. Adhere to these rules and everything will be fine. This trip will be a breeze. Okay?  
SIERRA: Okay.  
ALAN: Thank you.  
(He beamed.)  
ALAN: Now prepare to be dazzled. My tea is the finest you'll ever taste.

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A short while later, as the boat chugged onwards along the moonlit waterway, Graydon dozed off on one of the sofas. On the other sofa, Alan sat with his hands behind his head, enjoying the quiet time. At his side, all Sierra could do was chew her fingernails as she worried about what the future might bring. Josie stood by the door looking extremely glum. How everything could have all gone so wrong so quickly was hard to get her head around. In one ill-fated evening she'd managed to destroy the lives of both herself and her best friend. Now they were fleeing for their lives. As a result, she was riddled with guilt, drowning in remorse and crippled by fear.

Unable to think straight, she shook her head sorrowfully then stepped out onto the moonlight deck where Claymore was steering the boat forth with a contented smile on his face. As soon as he saw her, however, he flinched then quickly glanced all around himself fearfully.

CLAYMORE: You can't come out here! You're wanted, remember?

(Josie looked to him then gasped.)

JOSIE: Oh, my god. Sorry, I didn't think.

(As she went to hurry back inside, however, Claymore offered her smile.)

CLAYMORE: Actually, don't worry about it. You'll be fine.

JOSIE: Are you sure?

CLAYMORE: It's pitch black out here, nobody's likely to see you. That said, if there's any sign of another boat, you've gotta get back inside. You could put all our lives in danger otherwise.

JOSIE: Right. I will. Thank you.

CLAYMORE: It's fine.

(Josie just offered him half a smile then glanced over the side of the boat, deep in thought.

For several minutes, she remained there in silence, offering nothing other than despairing sighs. Claymore just let her get on with it. He could see she needed time to think and didn't want to interfere.

Finally allowing her frustration to turn to anger, eventually Josie broke her silence. With a bitter sneer, she clenched her fist then shook her head in annoyance with herself.)

JOSIE: Idiot. Fucking idiot.

CLAYMORE: Thanks, Josie. I love you too.

(Josie looked to him then sighed.)

JOSIE: I didn't mean you.

CLAYMORE: I know. I was joking.

JOSIE: Yeah?

CLAYMORE: Yeah.

(He smiled.)

CLAYMORE: Look, cheer up, eh? Whatever the problem is, it's never as bad as you *think* it is.

JOSIE: Oh, it is.

(She turned to face him and grimaced.)

JOSIE: I mean, have you ever fucked something up so bad, it's cost you everything?

CLAYMORE: Can't say I have, no.

JOSIE: *I* have.

CLAYMORE: Have you though? I mean have you really lost *everything*?

JOSIE: Yes! Literally. That incident with the authorities only happened about an hour before we came to you. I've got nothing but the clothes on my back and a tiny bit of cash on me.

CLAYMORE: Then you've got *something*, at least.

JOSIE: Don't be pedantic. I've lost everything that matters. My house, my car, my friends, my mum...

(She sighed.)

JOSIE: Worst of all, even though she's just the other side of that wall, I've lost my best friend too.

CLAYMORE: Right. Yeah. That's gotta suck.

JOSIE: It does. It totally does. She's the best thing that ever happened to me.

(She shook her head.)

JOSIE: We've been best friends since we were five years old. And she's been there for me every time I've needed someone. She's supported me. Guided me in the right direction when I was heading off the rails. She's talked me out of doing some really daft shit, you know?

CLAYMORE: Cool.

JOSIE: Left to my own devices, I'd probably be in jail. I'd definitely have a criminal record. I'd be all about the revolution and nothing else, you see? I mean, completely one dimensional. Angry at the world and nothing more.

CLAYMORE: Really?

JOSIE: Uh-huh. I'd have grown up to be a thug probably. Nothing but a rage machine. The only reason I'm *not* is her. She's a good person; a calming influence. I'm a better person because of her.

(She sighed.)

JOSIE: She's given me so much, and in return I've fucked up her life. Now I've lost her. (Claymore looked to her uneasily. He wanted to say something but wasn't sure what. Not about to let the moment pass without at least *trying* to cheer her up, however, he stood tall and scoffed.)

CLAYMORE: Nah.

JOSIE: Nah?

CLAYMORE: Like you said, that incident with the authorities only happened an hour ago. Of course, she's pissed off. She'll probably be pissed off for days. She will calm down though, given time. And if you can talk to her *then*; you know, properly explain and apologise, who knows, she might decide to give you a second chance.

JOSIE: Sounds ambitious.

CLAYMORE: And there's fuck all wrong with that.

JOSIE: Well, maybe. There's a fine line between ambition and delusion though.

(Claymore nodded.)

CLAYMORE: And I'd love to discuss it with you further, love, but I've got work to do.

(He then called into the cabin.)

CLAYMORE: Approaching swamp mooring, mate.

(Alan's urgent voice, rose up from the cabin.)

ALAN: On my way!

(Moments later, he emerged from the cabin with a sword in each hand. He then passed one to Claymore.)

CLAYMORE: Thank you.

JOSIE: What's going on?

ALAN: Nothing you need to worry about, girl.

(He then performed a double take in her direction.)

ALAN: What are *you* doing out here?

CLAYMORE: It's fine, mate. I said she could.

ALAN: Right...

CLAYMORE: Mate, it's dark and there's no cunt about.

ALAN: Yeah, fair enough.

(Claymore nodded then looked to Josie.)

CLAYMORE: Just duck back inside the cabin for a bit, would you?

JOSIE: Why?

CLAYMORE: So we can get on with our jobs!

JOSIE: Oh, okay...

(She then stepped back into the cabin doorway to watch them.)

JOSIE: Is here okay?

ALAN: It's fine. Just don't take a single step forward, okay?

JOSIE: Okay.

(She then watched on with interest as Claymore steered to the boat towards a concrete jetty on the quiet side of the canal, away from the tow path.)

CLAYMORE: Looks clear at this end of the mooring.

ALAN: Good, good.

CLAYMORE: Can't see anything at the far end either.

ALAN: Okay then; not a bad start.

(With that, he jumped onto the roof of the boat, before leaping back down ten seconds later with a mooring rope in his hand.)

ALAN: How's it looking?

CLAYMORE: Clear so far. How are looking?

(Alan glanced down the side of the boat then nodded.)

ALAN: Sweet. You couldn't have come in straighter if you'd tried, mate.

CLAYMORE: I *did* try.

ALAN: You make a good point.

(They shared an amused grin then Alan nodded.)

ALAN: Okay, I'm ready.

CLAYMORE: Right then. Shutting the engine down... now.

(He then flicked a switch and the sound of the engine began to fade.)

CLAYMORE: And you're good to go!

ALAN: Then consider me gone.

(With that, he leapt over the side of the boat and onto the mooring. Having not noticed the mooring in the darkness, Josie gasped.)

JOSIE: Why did he... oh, there's land there.

CLAYMORE: Yup. This is where we're spending the night.

JOSIE: What? We're stopping already? We only set out a little while ago.

CLAYMORE: Yeah, and it's in the middle of the night. So, we're stopped again.

JOSIE: Oh.

(Claymore smiled.)

CLAYMORE: It's not as silly as it seems. We're stopped *here* because overnight moorings can cost a small fortune. This one is free.

(He shrugged.)

CLAYMORE: And yes, we *could* have just stayed in Harwell City and set out tomorrow instead, but if we had, you'd have been in that hatch all night.

JOSIE: That would have sucked.

CLAYMORE: Yes, it would.

(Just then, Alan raced past the side of the boat.)

ALAN: The front's set. Just this one now.

JOSIE: Front's set?

CLAYMORE: He's tied up the boat at the front, now he's doing this end.

JOSIE: I see.

(She scratched her head.)

JOSIE: So you tie up both ends, do you?

CLAYMORE: Of course. If you only tie one end up, the other end can float into the middle of the canal in the night.

JOSIE: Ah. Makes sense.

CLAYMORE: Yup. If you end up sideways, blocking the canal, if you're lucky you'll get a massive fine.

JOSIE: Lucky? And if you're *unlucky*?

CLAYMORE: The crew from the boats you've blocked will beat the shit out of you and set fire to your boat.

JOSIE: Right. Noted. Tying up the boat is *really* important.

CLAYMORE: Yup. It's good for your health and your wallet.

(Just then, Alan jumped back on the deck and nodded sternly.)

ALAN: Do you want the good news or the bad news?

CLAYMORE: Surprise me.

ALAN: Well, the good news is, we're secure at the front, and the back and won't be floating off any time soon either.

CLAYMORE: Cool. And the bad news?

ALAN: We're tightly secured to this mooring and there's a pack of swamp hounds charging in our direction!

CLAYMORE: Bugger!

ALAN: Exactly *my* sentiments, mate.

(He then looked to Josie and smiled.)

ALAN: Stay put. If we're not back in two minutes, we're dead and you'll have to make your own way to the border.

(With that, Alan and Claymore both jumped onto the mooring and crouched down with their swords aloft.)

JOSIE: Wait. What?

(She then gasped in horror. Out of the darkness, six wolves, the size of Great Danes, were racing towards the boat.)

JOSIE: Fuck that!

(She then stared with wide eyes as Alan and Claymore leapt into action. Swinging his sword with all his might, Alan crashed it through the skull of the lead wolf then kicked its remains away from himself. At the same time Claymore lunged his blade through the torso of another as it leapt at him in a bid to savage his face. Having seen the killer look in the wolves eyes, combined with the mighty, lengthy incisors, Josie could only gulp. She had no idea such creatures existed. They were truly terrifying and she could only hope Alan and Claymore had what it takes to defeat them. It was a hope shared by Alan and Claymore themselves. With four more to face, they knew it wouldn't be easy. Taking all six wolves down would take every ounce of power and focus they could muster; not to mention a whole lot of sword skill. Having faced such creatures before, however, they had every reason to be confident.)

ALAN: Watch your left, mate.

CLAYMORE: I see it!

(He then kicked one of the wolves back, before flailing his blade at the one charging in on his left. Much to his delight, his blade cut across the wolves' face and it fled in pain.)

CLAYMORE: Halfway there.

(He then swung the blade at the wolf he'd just knocked back. Timing his swing slightly awkwardly, however, he swiped at air then staggered forwards.)

CLAYMORE: Not good!

(Just as he feared tumbling forwards to the ground and making an easy snack for the wolves, Alan swiftly yanked him back up again with his free hand. Showing extreme dexterity, he'd done so while slashing the neck of the another wolf, killing it outright. Josie was most impressed. Her jaw dropped and she couldn't help but mumble under her breath.)

JOSIE: Damn, that was sexy.

(She then flinched with annoyance at herself and glanced away. Having done so, however, she missed the greatest moment of all. As the last two wolves pounced, Alan and Claymore lunged in perfect time with one another, skewering them both through the heart. Seconds later, as the wolves dropped down dead, they both stood tall then nodded with extreme pride.)

ALAN: Mate...

CLAYMORE: I know. That was seriously fucking cool.

ALAN: We couldn't have made that look any cooler with a bloody choreographer.

CLAYMORE: Right?

(He then glanced to Josie.)

CLAYMORE: Tell me you saw that!

JOSIE: Saw what?

CLAYMORE: Where we killed the last two at the same time.

JOSIE: Oh. Did you?

ALAN: What? How could you have missed it; you were standing right there!

(Josie grimaced.)

JOSIE: Sorry.

ALAN: For fuck sake.

CLAYMORE: Nah, don't worry about it. *We* know it happened.

ALAN: I guess.

JOSIE: So what were those things, anyway?

CLAYMORE: Swamp wolves.

JOSIE: I've never seen anything like it.

ALAN: Nobody had until a few years ago. Fuck knows where they came from all of a sudden.

CLAYMORE: They're vicious fuckers.

ALAN: Yeah. Why do you think we're so careful when we pull into moorings?

CLAYMORE: Especially in swamp areas like this one.

(Josie shuddered.)

JOSIE: Maybe it'd be better if we stopped somewhere else tonight.

ALAN: Would it fuck.

CLAYMORE: All we need to do is start a fire and they won't even come close.

ALAN: They're afraid of fire, you see?

JOSIE: Right...

(She nodded.)

JOSIE: I'll come back out after you've started one then.

(She then went inside the cabin and closed the door. Left behind, Claymore grimaced at Alan.)

CLAYMORE: I think that freaked her out, mate.

ALAN: How very astute of you.

CLAYMORE: Yeah...

(He nodded.)

CLAYMORE: Come on. Let's get that fire lit.

(Inside the cabin at this time, Sierra was sitting on one of the sofas, lost in thought. Graydon was on the other one, reading a pornographic magazine. Not wishing to sit next to either of them at this moment in time, Josie sighed then leaned against the wall.)

JOSIE: So...

GRAYDON: Shush.

SIERRA: So?

JOSIE: Looks like we're stopping here for the night.

SIERRA: What? We've only just set out!

JOSIE: Yeah, but it's late. They only left the city, because...

SIERRA: Don't. I don't care. Well, I do; I just don't want to hear your voice.

(Josie sighed.)

JOSIE: Whatever.

GRAYDON: Shut up. I don't want to hear your voice either! I'm trying to focus on this article. It's very enlightening. I always wondered where the clitoris was.

(Josie and Sierra gave him a disturbed glance then looked away. Silence then reigned. It was an uncomfortable silence to say the least, especially for Josie. Mercifully, it didn't last long. Within a few minutes, a fire had been lit outside and Claymore had re-entered the cabin.

Alan remained outside, throwing the wolf carcasses on the fire.)

CLAYMORE: Right. Sleeping arrangements, people.

(Everyone glanced his way.)

CLAYMORE: There's a hatch in the middle of the floor. There are two small rooms down there, with a double bed in. You three will sleep down there. Alan and I, we'll sleep up here in this cabin.

GRAYDON: I see. Excellent.

(He beamed.)

GRAYDON: Three of us, just two rooms. Which of you girls wants to share my bed tonight?

JOSIE: Fuck off.

SIERRA: Never!

GRAYDON: Now, now, don't fight over me.

JOSIE: I'm not sharing a bloody bed with you. Ever.

SIERRA: Nor am I. I don't want to share with you either though, Josie.

JOSIE: Well, tough shit.

SIERRA: I'll just sleep in the cargo hold or something.

JOSIE: Fine, you do that.

SIERRA: I will.

CLAYMORE: Well, technically, Sierra you could sleep on the floor up here. In a fold away futon, but you'd soon regret it.

GRAYDON: Fart a lot, do you?

CLAYMORE: Don't be a twat, mate. She won't like it because...

SIERRA: No, it's fine. I'll take the floor.

(Claymore looked to her then shrugged.)

CLAYMORE: Fine.

(He nodded.)

CLAYMORE: In the morning, you can try on the uniforms we got you. You'll need them for when we arrive at our destination, a few days from now.

JOSIE: And where are these uniforms?

CLAYMORE: I'll hand them out in a minute. There's no hurry, like I say, you won't be getting off the boat any time soon.

SIERRA: Not even for fresh air?

CLAYMORE: Not during the day, no. It's alright if you pop out for a bit after dark, as long as you're careful, but *never* in daylight. You're wanted fugitives and we can't afford for you to get spotted. It'd be curtains for all of us.

SIERRA: I guess.

CLAYMORE: Hey, don't look so glum. You can pop out at night, like I said. It's just that, during that day, we'll be passing a lot of people we know. The other boat crews. They know for a fact this is a two man crew and you don't belong.

JOSIE: Makes sense.

GRAYDON: Surely there has to be a way around that. I don't want to be stuck in here all bloody day.

CLAYMORE: Well, that's up to you. You can either stay in here or let Al chuck you overboard. You decide.

GRAYDON: Oh, I see. Like that, is it?



CLAYMORE: Yes, it is. I mean, there is a way for the ladies here to go outside during the day, but they're not dressed for it.

SIERRA: What?

CLAYMORE: You *could* pretend to be canal groupies if you were dressed appropriately, but you're not.

JOSIE: What do canal groupies wear then?

(Claymore's eyes glazed over.)

CLAYMORE: As little as they can get away with.

GRAYDON: Interesting. Please feel free to elaborate.

CLAYMORE: There's no point. They don't *have* skimpy clothes, so you're all just going to have to stay inside during daylight hours.

(Graydon's eyes lit up.)

GRAYDON: Buy some then. There has to be a town you can visit along the way. These two in skimpy outfits would make this whole sorry episode a great deal more self-pleasurable. I mean pleasurable.

JOSIE: Gross. He'd just leech at us if went outside with skimpy clothes on.

(She sighed.)

JOSIE: But then he's been doing that anyway. In here. I'd rather be able to go outside.

SIERRA: I don't feel like being cooped up in here for days on end with him either.

GRAYDON: Charming.

CLAYMORE: Well, you can think about that in the morning. We're planning on stopping for supplies anyway. So, if you want something to wear just let Alan know. He handles all our shopping needs; I just push the trolley and help him carry it home. We're not paying for it though.

JOSIE: Damn.

SIERRA: Damn.

GRAYDON: Broke, huh?

(Josie and Sierra both nodded solemnly.)

SIERRA: Pretty much.

GRAYDON: Fine. My treat then. I can't wait to see it.

(Josie and Sierra shuddered.)

JOSIE: He's so creepy.

SIERRA: Yup, but then you're an arsehole. I guess nobody's perfect.

JOSIE: Nice. Thanks.

(Claymore rolled his eyes.)

CLAYMORE: Anyway, about tomorrow...

GRAYDON: Wait. I have a question.

CLAYMORE: Something perverted, no doubt.

GRAYDON: Far from it. I was just going to say, I thought carrying passengers on the canal was illegal. In fact, I know it is.

CLAYMORE: And?

GRAYDON: Why don't these canal groupies count as passengers? *Illegal* passengers?

(Claymore shrugged.)

CLAYMORE: That's just one of the anomalies of the waterways, I guess. A stranger on a narrow boat *always* raises a suspicious eyebrow, but nobody ever suspects canal groupies.

GRAYDON: They don't?

CLAYMORE: Yeah. And if you ever met one you'd get it. They're mostly giggly young women with no other interest in life other than passing time with rough and tumble lads from the canal.

GRAYDON: I know the type. Shallow, unintelligent and obsessed with bad boys.

(He smirked.)

GRAYDON: So, you could pass *these two* airheads off as groupies easily, I'd wager.

SIERRA: Airheads?

JOSIE: Why, you...

(Claymore furrowed his brow.)

CLAYMORE: Yes, well, never mind sniping at each other. Listen up. This is important.

(He then placed his hands on his hips.)

CLAYMORE: The journey starts for real in the morning, okay? Be prepared. The canal can be a shit place sometimes. Bad weather, violent wildlife, pirates, you name it. We've seen it all down the years. These trips never run smoothly and they never cease to amaze me even now. So don't expect an easy ride to sanctuary because it'll be anything but.

(He nodded.)

CLAYMORE: It can be lawless out here. Laws only protect the rich cunts who make them. Out here, it can be every man for himself and as you'll undoubtedly find out, this is no place for the faint hearted.

(He then stared hard into everyone's eyes. Seeing them all staring back at him nervously, he then fell about laughing.)

CLAYMORE: Just kidding! It can be hairy sometimes, but it's never *that* bad.

(As he stood there laughing his head off, the three in his company just snarled at him.)

CLAYMORE: Yup. I'm looking forward to this now. This trips gonna be fun.

GRAYDON: Tosser.

CLAYMORE: Right... anyway, I think that's everything you need to know. There's two decks of playing cards and a portable CD player in that cupboard...

(He pointed to his left.)

CLAYMORE: If you get bored, feel free to use them. There's also Monopoly, but nobody's ever been *that* bored.

(He nodded.)

CLAYMORE: And on that note, let me show you to those rooms. Sleep well, everyone.

Like I said, tomorrow we begin our journey for real.

(He then opened the hatch in the middle of the floor. Greatly looking forward to getting some shut-eye, Graydon immediately bundled past him then clambered down and claimed the room to the right. With a reluctant sigh, Josie glanced over her shoulder at Sierra then followed him down. Sierra wouldn't even look at her. Hurt by it, she shook her head then made her way into the room on the left. Being in the hull, the ceilings were low, but the rooms were quite spacious. Impressed by what she was seeing, she smiled then glanced back towards the hatch.)

JOSIE: This...

(The hatch then slammed shut and it all went dark. Defeated, she could only feel her way over to the bed then lay her head down for the night.)

JOSIE: Fuck. What the fuck have I done?

---

As the night wore on and passed into the early hours of the morning, Harwell City became deathly silent. Whereas some cities never slept, this one was always away with the fairies by midnight. People could rarely afford to go out, so the nightlife was virtually non-existent. It really was a dull place after dark. On this night, however, three of its inhabitants remained firmly awake way past 3am. Sitting in their vehicle outside Sierra's house, the guards Smith and Erikson, along with their captain hadn't even considered taking a nap. The other two guards in the car with them, on the other hand, were snoring contently. Unimpressed by their lack of dedication to the job, the captain shook his head.

CAPTAIN: Look at those two idiots.

ERIKSON: Shall I wake them, sir?

CAPTAIN: No. Don't bother. Let them sleep. They'll need the rest for when they're cleaning the toilets with a toothbrush tomorrow. Dozing off indeed.

SMITH: Thoroughly unprofessional.

CAPTAIN: Yes, it is. As dull as this might be, any time soon that terrorist wench is going to happen past and we need to be ready.

(Erikson bit his lip.)

ERIKSON: Where could she be, I wonder.

SMITH: How the hell would we know?

ERIKSON: I wasn't asking. I was just saying. It's stupidly late, you'd have thought she'd have returned home by now.

CAPTAIN: She's probably laying low. I bet she's close by, hiding. Shitting in her thong at the thought of getting caught.

SMITH: Sounds plausible. She knows she's been rumbled now, so she'll probably hide for a while then try to sneak back when she thinks we've stopped looking for her.

CAPTAIN: Exactly. The fool. We're not *going* to stop looking for her. We'll sit here all night if we have to.

ERIKSON: And all day tomorrow?

CAPTAIN: As long as it takes.

(He sighed.)

CAPTAIN: I just wish there was somewhere we could get a nice cup of tea.

(Smith gave him a sideways glance.)

SMITH: We're literally sitting right outside my house, sir.

(The captain blinked at him nonchalantly.)

CAPTAIN: Then why are you still sitting here? Go and make us all a nice cup of tea.

SMITH: But what if Sierra comes back and sees me?

(The captain bit his lip.)

CAPTAIN: Shit. Good point.

(He then shrugged.)

CAPTAIN: Fuck it. I say we risk it. I really want a cup of tea now. Go.

SMITH: Sir.

CAPTAIN: And be quick about it.

SMITH: Sir.

(With that, he yanked open the car door then hurried to his house. As he did so, Erikson bit his lip then glanced at his captain.)

ERIKSON: Couldn't we just go in his house and drink it, sir?

CAPTAIN: Good idea. The *car* can watch out for the girl and toot its horn if she comes.

(Erikson grimaced.)

ERIKSON: What?

CAPTAIN: We can't all bloody go inside. We can't see her house from in there!

ERIKSON: Right, gotcha.

(The captain nodded.)

CAPTAIN: No, no. It's important to stay out here. When that bitch comes back, we need to be ready. The terrorists can't be allowed to win.

(He ruffled his neck indignantly.)

CAPTAIN: I don't care how long it takes. Until she gets back, we're staying put.

---

As the sun rose on the following morning, Sierra opened her eyes to blinding sunlight penetrating her retinas. With a squint, she turned her head away then sat up. Much to her bewilderment, she was all alone in the cabin. When she'd gone to sleep the night before, Claymore and Alan had been bedding down on the sofas either side of her. Wondering where they might have gone, she climbed out of her futon then swiftly rolled it up and threw it on the sofa to her right. She then headed out of the door. At first, she glanced around in astonishment, wondering where the two men had got to. Upon looking behind herself, however, all was revealed. They were both seated upon the roof, facing the sun, looking extremely relaxed.

SIERRA: Um... morning.

(Alan glanced at her.)

ALAN: Morning.

CLAYMORE: Alright?

SIERRA: Yeah, I...

(She then gasped in horror.)

SIERRA: Oh, shit. I'm not supposed to be out here, am I?

(As she went to dart back inside, however, Alan called out to her in a friendly voice.)

ALAN: It's fine. Come up and join us. There's some coffee in the flask here.

(Sierra looked to him uneasily.)

SIERRA: Are you sure?

ALAN: I wouldn't have said it if I wasn't.

CLAYMORE: It's fine, Sierra. We've been doing this job for a few years now and we've never seen another boat at this time of the morning. Not one.

SIERRA: Well, if you're fine with it... okay.

ALAN: That's the spirit.

(As Sierra clambered onto the roof then headed over to him, Alan scooted sideways leaving a space for her to sit down. He then turned to his side and poured her a coffee. Still a little unnerved by these two strangers, Sierra forced a smile then rested her backside down.)

SIERRA: So, this is... nice.

(Alan handed her a cup of coffee.)

ALAN: Here.

SIERRA: Thank you.

ALAN: You're welcome. Now be quiet and savour the moment.

SIERRA: The moment?

(Receiving no reply, she shrugged then sat back and tried to relax a little. In that moment, a serene calm washed over her. The harmonious birdsong, the warmth of the morning sun and the sound of the rippling water was a joy for the senses to behold.)

SIERRA: Oh, my. This is so nice.

(Claymore smiled.)

CLAYMORE: Yeah. This is the best part of the day.

ALAN: By far.

(He then lit a cigarette and exhaled with delight.)

ALAN: That's the stuff.

SIERRA: You smoke?

ALAN: Do I need to dignify that question with an answer?

SIERRA: Right. Sorry.

(She bit her lip.)

SIERRA: Expensive habit.

ALAN: Not for me. I'm on one a day. My morning cigarette. Love it.

(He then ruffled his neck.)

ALAN: Now be quiet and let me savour it.

SIERRA: Sorry.

(Claymore looked to her and smiled.)

CLAYMORE: So, *you're* up early.

SIERRA: Yeah. You were up earlier.

(Claymore nodded.)

CLAYMORE: Of course. This is the best part of the day. The calmness of the morning sets us up lovely for the rest of it.

ALAN: Yup. The low morning sun, the birdsong, the sound of the water smacking into the boat; just peace.

CLAYMORE: These moments keep us sane.

(Sierra smiled.)

SIERRA: I have to say, I've been feeling really stressed since last night, but... I dunno. Sitting here like this... it's kinda soothing.

ALAN: It must be. That's the first time I've seen you smile.

SIERRA: Sorry.

ALAN: Don't apologise. After the day you had yesterday, you had every right to be pissed off.

CLAYMORE: Sorry you went through all that. It's gotta suck.

SIERRA: You know about that?

CLAYMORE: Only what Alan told me.

SIERRA: Right. Well... yeah. It *did* suck.

(She shrugged.)

SIERRA: But I'll worry about that when I'm done enjoying this moment.

ALAN: That's the spirit.

CLAYMORE: We'll make a canal girl out of you yet.

(The three of them then sat back and exhaled; revelling in the tranquillity of the morning. For a solid minute or so, not a word was spoken as they simply enjoyed the moment. Sitting there on the roof of the boat, enjoying the morning sunshine, it would have been extremely easy to doze off. Such was the peacefulness of it all. Sadly, it couldn't last for long. With a long and busy day ahead of him, Claymore soon sat up and puffed out.)

CLAYMORE: We should get cracking in a minute, mate.

ALAN: And we will. In a minute.

CLAYMORE: Right.

(Alan smirked then looked to Sierra.)

ALAN: I haven't got the heart to tell her she's got to get back in the cabin.

(Sierra pouted.)

SIERRA: Already?

ALAN: No.

CLAYMORE: In a minute.

ALAN: Don't fret though. Our minutes tend to be quite long as this point in the day. Half an hour, sometimes.

SIERRA: Half an hour sounds perfect.

CLAYMORE: No, it sounds ambitious.

(Sierra sighed.)

SIERRA: I feared you'd say that.

(She then gave him an enquiring glance.)

SIERRA: Last night when you were telling everyone about the sleeping arrangements, why did you say I wouldn't like sleeping in the cabin?

(Claymore shrugged.)

CLAYMORE: Isn't it obvious?

SIERRA: No. Not to me.

CLAYMORE: Because we like getting up at sparrow's fart in the morning.

SIERRA: Sparrow's fart?

CLAYMORE: It's a phrase.

ALAN: It means ridiculously early.

SIERRA: Gotcha. By why a sparrow's... never mind. Why did you think I wouldn't want to get up early?

CLAYMORE: Because nobody likes getting up this early.

ALAN: Except us.

SIERRA: And me. I usually go for a run in the morning.

ALAN: You like to run?

SIERRA: No, I hate it. This body didn't happen by accident though.

CLAYMORE: It'd be a glorious accident if it did.

(He the glanced away and burned red.)

SIERRA: Um... thank you.

(Alan chuckled.)

ALAN: He fancies you.

CLAYMORE: Oh, shut up, you child.

ALAN: Me thinks you protest too much, me ol' China.

CLAYMORE: Piss off.

(He rolled his eyes then looked to Sierra.)

CLAYMORE: We get up with the cockerel then we make a cup of coffee. And we're not quiet about it. That's why I thought you'd hate sleeping in the same room as us. Trying to sleep with us clattering around isn't exactly a picnic, I'd wager.

(Sierra smiled.)

SIERRA: It was fine. I didn't even hear you, actually. I slept through all that and woke up at the same time I usually do.

ALAN: You won't be going for a run today though.

SIERRA: Damned right. There's creatures out there.

CLAYMORE: Plus, we're gonna get moving in a minute.

SIERRA: I'd better head down into the cabin then.

ALAN: You'll be fine for a few minutes longer, Sierra. We might like getting up early, but no other bugger does. You won't be spotted this early. We'll be an hour downstream before there's any sign of another crew kicking into life.

SIERRA: Oh. Sweet. I'll savour the time then.

ALAN: An excellent plan.

SIERRA: But I can come out again later, right? I mean, if I'm dressed as a canal groupie?

(Claymore could barely contain his smile.)

CLAYMORE: Yes, yes and very much yes!

ALAN: Yeah, I mean, if you *were*, that'd be great. Awesome in fact. Sadly, you're not.

(Sierra grimaced.)

SIERRA: Okay... now you're creeping me out. Just how skimpy do canal groupies dress?

(Alan and Claymore shared an innocent glance.)

ALAN: Well... *kinda* skimpy, I guess.

CLAYMORE: Sort of... very skimpy.

ALAN: Skimpy as fuck, actually.

SIERRA: Meaning?

ALAN: Bikini tops and skimpy, tight skirts; that sort of thing.

CLAYMORE: The skimpiest of mini-skirts, actually.

ALAN: Basically, they look like they're heading to the beach.  
SIERRA: Right...  
(She shrugged.)  
SIERRA: Fine by me. I'd love to sunbathe on the roof anyway. The skimpier the better.  
CLAYMORE: Marry me!  
SIERRA: What?  
CLAYMORE: Nothing.  
(Alan laughed.)  
ALAN: He's got it bad.  
CLAYMORE: Fuck off, you.  
SIERRA: I'm just saying. This is a real mess I'm in. My life is ruined. Being out here though, it's kind of soothing. And I need that right now.  
(She furrowed her brow.)  
SIERRA: Don't go thinking I'm a trollop who gets a kick out of dressing like a tramp, because I'm not.  
ALAN: We never thought you were.  
CLAYMORE: But nor would we judge you if you did.  
ALAN: Yup. We're open minded, we are.  
(Sierra smiled.)  
SIERRA: I believe you, actually. You two seem kind of like, I don't know... nice? No, that's not it. Rough around the edges but kind and trustworthy; that's my impression, anyway. You're likeable rogues.  
ALAN: *Loveable* rogues, actually.  
CLAYMORE: Yeah, get it right.  
(Sierra chuckled.)  
SIERRA: My bad.  
ALAN: Yes, it was.  
(Claymore grinned then climbed to his feet.)  
CLAYMORE: Anyway, let's get this show on the road.  
ALAN: Want me to cast off?  
CLAYMORE: No, mate; I'll sail off while we're still tied to the mooring. I do enjoy a futile gesture.  
ALAN: Mate...  
CLAYMORE: What?  
ALAN: Your sarcasm cuts me deep.  
CLAYMORE: You'll get over it.  
ALAN: One day, I might, yes.  
CLAYMORE: Al?  
ALAN: Yeah?  
CLAYMORE: Untie the fucking boat.  
ALAN: Right. Good point.  
(He then jumped to his feet before heading to the side of the boat and leaping off, onto the mooring.)  
CLAYMORE: Sorry about him. You just can't get the staff these days.  
ALAN: Claymore, mate. Fuck off.

---

*One hour later.* As The Amethyst powered through the water, having resumed its journey to the Amarian border, Sierra sat inside the cabin, staring from the window, hating being cooped up inside. It was a beautiful day outside and she was aching to get out there. She didn't like

being indoors on a warm day at the *best* of times, so being stuck inside with Graydon and Josie for company was mortifying for her. Graydon had risen some thirty minutes earlier, complaining that the bed was too hard and the swaying boat was making him nauseous. Josie had emerged some ten minutes later, having struggled to get a wink of sleep. Her fears for the future and guilt over the past were filling her mind with thoughts she simply couldn't shake off. This was a horrible morning for her too. Like being tortured with fear and worry wasn't hard enough, the one person she'd normally confide in or go to for a hug, couldn't even look at her without growling.

Spying the tension between these two visibly shaken young ladies, Graydon bit his lip. In situations like this, he knew it'd be kinder to say nothing. Alas, he was not a kind man. These two girls were primed to be wound up for his entertainment, and he wasn't about to let the opportunity pass him by.)

GRAYDON: So, you two are best friends, are you?

SIERRA: No.

(Josie just sighed.)

GRAYDON: But you used to be, right? Until Josie here betrayed you. Stabbed you in the back like despicable turncoat.

JOSIE: I did nothing of the sort.

GRAYDON: No?

JOSIE: I made a mistake, that's all.

SIERRA: All?

JOSIE: Yes. I didn't betray you or stab you in the back, I simply fucked up.

GRAYDON: And cast all her hopes and aspirations into life's dustbin in the process. No wonder she despises every fibre of your being.

JOSIE: Yes, well, there's not a lot I can do about that, is there?

SIERRA: Nope. I'll curse your name until the end of time.

GRAYDON: My, my; aren't you a bitter little madam.

SIERRA: Excuse me?

GRAYDON: She made a mistake. It's not like she went out of her way to sabotage you.

SIERRA: No, but...

GRAYDON: I think you should kiss and make up.

SIERRA: Never.

GRAYDON: Oh, go on. Maybe fondle each other's boobies.

JOSIE: You're disgusting.

SIERRA: The worst.

GRAYDON: Hardly. I'm just eager for you two to make out with each other. I mean, to make friends with each other.

SIERRA: Never gonna happen.

GRAYDON: Bigger.

(He then glanced away innocently.)

GRAYDON: So, anyway...

JOSIE: Stop it, mister.

GRAYDON: Mister?

JOSIE: Yes, you. I can see what you're doing.

GRAYDON: What? I'm sitting here minding my own business.

JOSIE: No, you're not. You're trying to get us to fight each other.

SIERRA: No, he isn't; he wants us to make out.

GRAYDON: Lies!

JOSIE: Is it?



SIERRA: Yeah, is it?

(Graydon scratched his neck nervously.)

GRAYDON: Actually, I was torn between the two. Ended up going for a mixture of both. That was never gonna work.

(He shook his head.)

GRAYDON: I'm losing my touch. I used to be so good at manipulating idiots and using their silly little feelings against them. They were putty in my hands.

JOSIE: We're not idiots though.

SIERRA: At least *I'm* not.

JOSIE: And nor am I!

SIERRA: Well, you say that...

GRAYDON: That's an interesting point you've raised, ladies. Which one of you *is* the smart one? The girly one who foolishly let her friend ruin her life, or the boyish one who clumsily *ruined* her friend's life? Only neither of you exactly come across as a genius.

SIERRA: Actually...

JOSIE: Don't, Sierra. Don't bite. He's looking for a reaction. Fishing.

SIERRA: Don't tell me what to do.

JOSIE: Fine. Engage him then. Do what you like. I'm staying out of it.

GRAYDON: Blimey. You really do take a dim view of me, don't you? I'm not trying to manipulate you anymore.

JOSIE: No?

GRAYDON: That time I was merely insulting you.

SIERRA: You're a dick.

GRAYDON: I *have* a dick. Would you like to see it?

SIERRA: Wow. What is wrong with you?

(Graydon laughed to himself.)

GRAYDON: I'm just keeping myself entertained, that's all.

JOSIE: And that's why I said we should ignore him.

(Just then, Alan made his way into the cabin from the deck.)

ALAN: Can you lot stop your raising your voices? We're not the only ones on this canal, you know? And if someone hears you...

JOSIE: Right. I apologise.

SIERRA: Sorry.

GRAYDON: What's for breakfast?

(Alan furrowed his brow.)

ALAN: The food cupboard's right there. Next to the stove.

GRAYDON: I can see that. I said what are we having.

ALAN: Whatever you make.

GRAYDON: What? I've got to make my own???

ALAN: If you want any, yes.

GRAYDON: That's outrageous. I'm paying a small fortune for this trip...

ALAN: Shut up, before I shut you up.

GRAYDON: Oh... fine. Bloody Neanderthal.

ALAN: And proud.

(He rolled his eyes then looked to the food cupboard.)

ALAN: Speaking of food. We'll be at the town of Hamshaw in just over an hour. We can pick up more supplies while we're there.

(Sierra looked to him with hope in her eyes.)

SIERRA: And some clothes so I can go outside?

(Alan flinched.)

ALAN: What? No!

SIERRA: Please.

ALAN: No.

SIERRA: But, last night, Claymore said if we wanted some, we just had to let you know.

ALAN: Oh, he did, did he?

JOSIE: Yeah, he did.

ALAN: Right...

(Alan grimaced.)

ALAN: Um... well, the thing is, I don't really see it happening.

SIERRA: Why not?

ALAN: It's just that... well, it's embarrassing.

SIERRA: What is?

ALAN: Buying women's clothes.

SIERRA: I don't see why. I mean, they're obviously not for you. You'd never fit into anything *my* size.

(She shrugged.)

SIERRA: Josie's maybe.

JOSIE: Sierra...

SIERRA: I mean, you're roughly the same build.

JOSIE: Piss off. You're really starting to get on my tits now.

GRAYDON: And excellent tits they are too.

(Josie ignored him and carried on.)

JOSIE: If you want to sulk and ignore me, fine. Do that. Just stop with the sly digs all the time.

SIERRA: I wasn't being sly. If I was being sly, I'd say it behind your manly back.

JOSIE: Enough.

(Sierra sneered then glanced back towards Alan. Spotting him slowly creeping away, she stepped forward and spoke up.)

SIERRA: Please, Alan. I really hate being stuck in here.

(Alan sighed.)

ALAN: But it's really embarrassing.

GRAYDON: Good god, man. Don't be such a pansy.

ALAN: Excuse me?

GRAYDON: Think of the big picture. Cute women in slutty outfits.

ALAN: No, mate; the big picture is me queuing up in some girly shop with skimpy skirts in my hand.

GRAYDON: Well, if it bothers you that much, I'll go instead. I'm not scared. Mostly because I'm *not* a sissy.

ALAN: Do you want to go for a swim?

GRAYDON: No. What a strange question.

(He then look enlightened.)

GRAYDON: Oh, you meant... no, I'd rather not.

ALAN: Shut up then.

GRAYDON: Agreed.

(He nodded.)

GRAYDON: Other than to say I'm more than happy to go along and buy their clothes for them, I'll shut up entirely.

ALAN: Yeah, but you *can't* go. You directly pissed off a government minister. That's make you a *high priority* wanted fugitive. The kind of wanted fugitive the entire police force will be on the lookout for! Your image has probably been on the fucking news already, along

with the word “wanted” in big black letters! *You’d* be spotted in two seconds flat. And if anything happens to you, we lose our pay day. And probably our lives, because you’ll more than likely drop us all in it in exchange for a lighter sentence.

GRAYDON: No doubt about it.

ALAN: Then you’ll go nowhere.

GRAYDON: Very well. *You* go then.

(He nodded.)

GRAYDON: Just make sure you get something wonderfully slutty. Seeing as I already volunteered to pay last night, I want my money’s worth. I want to see some serious cleavage and a lot of bare leg action.

(Josie shuddered.)

JOSIE: Gross. The thought of you ogling me, makes me want to wear about six layers and a thick bobble hat.

SIERRA: As much as I hate to agree with her, I can relate to that. Forget the skimpy outfits. If being ogled by this guy is a consequence, I’d rather stay indoors.

GRAYDON: Where I can ogle you from closer?

SIERRA: You make a good point. I want something skimpy to wear so I can go outside.

JOSIE: Me too.

SIERRA: Size six, please.

JOSIE: And I’m...

SIERRA: She’s a fourteen.

JOSIE: Sierra!!!

SIERRA: What?

JOSIE: I’m an eight.

ALAN: Aw, crap. So I’d have to check the sizes as well?

SIERRA: Well, yeah.

ALAN: Like queuing up to pay for them won’t be embarrassing enough, you want me to manhandle them and read the labels?

JOSIE: Well, yeah; that is how shopping works.

(Sierra chuckled.)

SIERRA: Right? Anyone would think he’d never been shopping before.

(She then remembered she was angry with Josie and snarled.)

SIERRA: Shut up.

JOSIE: Wow.

ALAN: Girls, as much I’d like to make you both happy, I’m not sure about this. I’m gonna feel like a right twat.

SIERRA: Well, why not let us come with you then? We’ll buy them ourselves.

JOSIE: That’d work.

ALAN: No, it wouldn’t.

JOSIE: Why not? I mean, we’ll be in a new town, disguised as dock workers, so nobody’s going to recognise us. I mean, it’s not like we’re on the most wanted list like this old fart.

(She gestured to Graydon.)

GRAYDON: Hey!

JOSIE: I’m just saying, letting us come along wouldn’t be that much of a risk.

ALAN: But still a risk. One I’m not sure I’m willing to take. And even if I was, there’s an even bigger issue that you’ve *completely* overlooked!

JOSIE: There is?

ALAN: Yes. Me and Claymore have got stuff to buy, so we *have* to go. And if you two come along, fatty here will be all alone.

GRAYDON: And how is that a bad thing?

SIERRA: Yeah, he's probably spent most of his life alone.

GRAYDON: Why, you...

ALAN: Him being alone isn't the problem. I don't care if he's lonely or not. I just don't want to leave him here, in charge of the food cupboard. We'd come back with more supplies, only to find he's eaten what we already had.

GRAYDON: You cheeky shit. I *can* control myself, you know?

ALAN: Your belly suggests otherwise.

GRAYDON: I can't help that. I'm big boned!

ALAN: Your bones are very flabby then.

GRAYDON: Yes, well... maintaining big bones gives me an appetite.

(He then sat there chuckling to himself.)

GRAYDON: I've made some pathetic excuses in my time, but that one takes the biscuit.

SIERRA: Right, well, anyway, back to the point in hand. I'll come shopping with you to buy our clothes and Josie can stay here and babysit the grumpy old fart.

JOSIE: No. You'll come back with things you know I hate. Three sizes too big!

SIERRA: As if I would.

JOSIE: Oh, you definitely would. You're mean when you're angry.

SIERRA: And whose fault is it that I'm angry?

(Not about to listen to anymore bickering, Alan rolled his eyes.)

ALAN: Fuck this. Listen. I'll think about it, okay? I'm going back outside.

(He then hurriedly exited the cabin, leaving Josie and Sierra to bicker among themselves.)

---

*Ten minutes later.* With the bickering girls now silent in the cabin, Claymore steered the boat forth with a smile on his face. He loved peace and quiet above all else. Sharing his sentiments entirely, Alan was seated on the roof of the boat, watching the ripples on the water as they streamed forth. It truly was a glorious morning.

ALAN: Yeah, this is definitely the life, mate.

(Claymore nodded.)

CLAYMORE: Yup. As career choices go, we didn't do badly at all.

ALAN: We made the *perfect* choice, mate. Every day for thirty years my dad went out in the morning and got stuck in traffic. Just so he could sweat his arse off in a factory all day then come home knackered at the end of it. Fuck that.

CLAYMORE: I know, mate. My dad did the same.

ALAN: I couldn't deal with all that bollocks.

CLAYMORE: Nor could I, but your dad seemed to thrive on all the hustle and bustle.

ALAN: He did, didn't he? Still does. He hates silence. God forbid anyone trying to read when he's around. They won't get any peace.

(Claymore grinned.)

CLAYMORE: I remember. Whenever I came round yours his face would light up. Someone to make a racket with, you know?

ALAN: Yup. The man never stopped talking.

CLAYMORE: Which was great. It's never dull when he's around.

ALAN: It really isn't. Every night, lively conversation until he's ready to go to bed.

CLAYMORE: Then god forbid anyone who makes the slightest noise.

(Alan laughed.)

ALAN: That's right. His motto is, when I shut up, you shut up.

(They both chuckled for a moment then Alan performed a double take upstream. The first rival canal boat of the day had come into view, heading towards them. Seconds later, he glanced down at Claymore.)

ALAN: Ship ahoy.

CLAYMORE: Yeah, I see it.

ALAN: Looks like...

CLAYMORE: It's Clyde and his crew.

(Alan grinned.)

ALAN: On their gay boat.

CLAYMORE: The gayest. Who names a boat Primrose?

ALAN: Gay people.

CLAYMORE: Right?

(He chuckled.)

CLAYMORE: I'll bet you a tenner he mentions his superior engine when we pass him.

ALAN: Like I'm gonna take that bet, mate. It's a forgone conclusion.

CLAYMORE: Hold up.

(He furrowed his brow.)

CLAYMORE: He's got a couple of groupies on there, look.

ALAN: Fit ones, I hope.

CLAYMORE: You do? I hope they're a pair of mingers, just so we can take the piss.

ALAN: You make a good point.

(For the next ten seconds or so, they continued to watch the boat approach until, as soon as it was in shouting distance, the banter began.)

ALAN: Well look who it is, this year's winners of the world's gayest boat award.

(Guiding his boat forth with two young beauties sunbathing on the roof, Clyde scoffed then yelled back.)

CLYDE: There's nothing gay about *my* boat, mate. This thing's engineering perfection. You could only *dream* of having an engine this fast.

ALAN: Damn, he got that one out quick.

CLAYMORE: Yeah, nobody can accuse him of keeping us waiting.

(Clyde then yelled out again.)

CLYDE: Besides, which is *really* the gayest boat? The one with two blokes on it, or the one with me and two fit birds?

(He gestured to the girls on his roof.)

CLYDE: Sorry, lads. You're definitely the gayest ones here.

CLAYMORE: Fuck.

ALAN: Yeah, he's kinda got us there.

CLAYMORE: Get Sierra and Josie out here.

ALAN: Don't be an idiot. We'd be dropping ourselves *right* in the shit! Right now they *look* exactly like the illegal passengers *they are*.

CLAYMORE: Fuck. Good point. They look nothing like groupies, do they?

ALAN: No. Right now they look like the kind of passengers who *would* arouse suspicion.

CLAYMORE: Bugger. We'll have to humiliate him another way then.

(He then yelled to Clyde.)

CLAYMORE: Why are they sitting on the roof, Clyde? Your armpits a bit pongy, are they?

CLYDE: That's desperate, mate.

CLAYMORE: I'm just curious why they're sitting so far away from you.

CLYDE: They're recuperating from several hours of enjoying my cock, that's why.

(Much to Alan and Claymore's annoyance, the girls both giggled, indicating that he was telling the truth.)

CLYDE: Now tell me again. Who are the gay ones here?

ALAN: You're a twat, Clyde.

(Clyde roared with laughter.)

CLYDE: I'd say I won that round.

CLAYMORE: Yeah... shit.

ALAN: Anyway, anything upstream we need to worry about?

CLYDE: Not that I'm aware of. The lock at Bramston was a bit stuff, but other than that it's all been plain... canalling. What about that way?

(He nodded in the direction he was travelling.)

CLAYMORE: Nothing. At least it was all good when we set out last night.

CLYDE: Good to know. Cheers, lads. See you later.

ALAN: Later.

CLAYMORE: Later.

(Clyde then passed and headed off downstream, grinning to himself. Left behind, Alan and Claymore furrowed their brows.)

ALAN: That was our worst attempt at banter yet.

CLAYMORE: Yeah. We should have never have thrown the gay jibe at him, not when he's got groupies and we haven't.

ALAN: Yeah.

(He nodded sternly.)

ALAN: Screw it. Buying women's clothes may be embarrassing, but it's nowhere near as humiliating as being outsmarted by rival canal boat crews. I'll do it.

CLAYMORE: Do what?

ALAN: Shop for skimpy outfits for Sierra and Josie.

CLAYMORE: Well, yeah, you could do that. Or they could just come with us.

(He nodded.)

CLAYMORE: Just make sure you lock the food cupboard. I wouldn't trust that fat fucker Graydon around food with nobody around to guard it.

ALAN: Ah. Good thinking.

CLAYMORE: Obvious, I'd have thought.

ALAN: One small problem though, those girls are both wanted fugitives.

CLAYMORE: Yeah, but we'll be in a different town. I very much doubt anyone will recognise them, mate. Graydon they would, but not those two.

ALAN: Fine. Then it's decided.

CLAYMORE: Yes, yes it is. This way, we won't have the embarrassment of buying them clothes, and more importantly, no more embarrassing banter failures with our rivals.

ALAN: Agreed. I mean, letting the girls come out with us is risky. It is. It's a gamble.

CLAYMORE: Not much of one, if we're honest.

ALAN: No, but it's still a risk. That said, if it means we don't get humiliated again, it's a risk I'm willing to take. That run in with Clyde has changed my mind on that.

(He sighed.)

ALAN: We haven't been that humiliated in a slanging match since the great overheating debacle of two years ago.

CLAYMORE: That was a dark and dismal day, mate. A horror show.

ALAN: It was. Right after you brilliantly countered that blokes argument about having a faster engine by telling him we'd never once broken down...

CLAYMORE: Bang.

ALAN: Right? We disappeared in a cloud of engine smoke and he sailed off into the distance, pissing himself laughing.

CLAYMORE: We'll never live that one down, Al. Even now, whenever he sees us, he just has to bring it up.

ALAN: We can't let it happen again. I won't. No way.

(He nodded sternly.)

ALAN: As soon as we get to Hamshaw, we're taking those girls into town. And we'll make sure they get the sexiest outfits in the shop. I don't care *how much* money we have to spend.  
CLAYMORE: Well no, why would you? Graydon said *he'd* pay last night.  
ALAN: And he's going to pay dearly.  
CLAYMORE: I'm sure he won't mind.  
ALAN: Of course not. The dirty bastard can't wait to see those girls flouncing around in skimpy outfits.  
CLAYMORE: Then let's not disappoint him.  
ALAN: Damned right!

---

A couple of hours later, following a wholly uneventful morning's journeying, Claymore led the boat to a mooring in the town of Hamshaw. Before arriving, Josie and Sierra had been instructed to change into their canal workers uniforms. Upon arrival, they'd have to pretend to be either boat crew or dock workers. Those who knew Alan and Claymore would be led to believe they were the latter. Anyone else would just accept them as part of the crew.

Once the girls were changed and Claymore had pulled the boat into the mooring, Alan tied it up then returned to the cabin. Before setting out, however, he had a few small tasks to perform. As Josie, Sierra and Graydon watched on, he lectured them about what was to happen next, while fumbling in his pocket for some keys.

ALAN: Remember, girls. Anyone who knows us, knows we don't have any other crew members. So if they address us, just make out your dock workers. If they don't say anything, just let them assume you're part of our crew.

JOSIE: We know. You told us that earlier.

ALAN: I'm just making sure you don't forget.

SIERRA: We won't. We're not idiots. Well... I'm not.

JOSIE: Pack it in, Sierra.

ALAN: Enough with the bickering.

(He then pulled out his keys and proceeded to lock the food cupboard.)

ALAN: Graydon, you'll be staying here.

GRAYDON: I know that.

(He furrowed his brow.)

GRAYDON: Are you seriously locking the food cupboard?

ALAN: Nope.

(He then pulled out a padlock.)

ALAN: I'm *double* locking the food cupboard.

GRAYDON: That's so bloody disrespectful. Like I can't control myself.

ALAN: As I said before, your belly suggests you can't.

GRAYDON: Rude.

(He ruffled his neck muscles.)

GRAYDON: I wasn't peckish anyway.

ALAN: Stop complaining then.

GRAYDON: I'm not. I mean, if I was peckish, there's hundreds of crates of chocolate cakes in the hold.

(Alan's nostrils twitched furiously.)

ALAN: If you so much as look at those boxes, you'll be taking that swim I was telling you about.

GRAYDON: I...

ALAN: I mean it, fuck-face. That's our livelihood. If you mess with that, you'll be bloody sorry. You'll pay for the entire load *and* compensate us for all lost revenue when our supplier cancels our contract. Plus, I'll fucking drown you.

GRAYDON: Good god, man. Calm down.

(He then ruffled his neck indignantly.)

GRAYDON: Though I want us to be clear on something. I'm backing down because I don't want to be drowned. It's not that I can't *afford* to buy all those cakes and compensate you. I can! I'm a very wealthy man.

(He beamed at Josie and Sierra.)

GRAYDON: Very wealthy indeed.

(Josie and Sierra both shuddered.)

SIERRA: Can we go now?

ALAN: Patience, girl. Once Claymore comes back with the lowdown, we can be on our way, alright?

JOSIE: And how long will he...

(Just then, Claymore poked his head around the cabin door.)

CLAYMORE: There's three other boats here, mate. Two I've never seen before. The other one's Ralph's boat.

ALAN: Shit. I hate that bloke.

CLAYMORE: Well, the good news is, I can't see the cunt; so with any luck we might be able to avoid him.

ALAN: Here's hoping.

(He nodded.)

ALAN: Right, ladies. To Ralph and his team, you're dock workers, alright?

JOSIE: How will we know who Ralph is?

CLAYMORE: Don't worry. You'll know.

(Alan grinned.)

ALAN: Yup.

(He nodded.)

ALAN: Okay, let's get going.

(He held his hand out to Graydon.)

GRAYDON: What?

ALAN: You said you'd pay for the girl's outfits.

GRAYDON: Good point.

(He then handed Alan a wad of bank notes.)

GRAYDON: And no, you can't keep the change.

ALAN: Cock.

(He then pocketed the money and gestured to the cabin door.)

ALAN: Shall we?

JOSIE: Lead the way.

ALAN: Consider it done.

(With that, Josie and Sierra followed Alan onto the deck, then joined him in jumping down onto the dockside. Claymore then poked his head inside the cabin.)

CLAYMORE: Stay here and whatever you do, don't let anyone see you.

GRAYDON: Obviously!

CLAYMORE: Right.

(He then pulled the door shut and jumped down onto the dockside where the others were waiting.)

CLAYMORE: Right then, let's get this...

(Just then, a chirpy voice rose up from the boat parked in front of theirs.)



RALPH: Well if it isn't the lads from The Amethyst.  
(Alan and Claymore both groaned in dismay.)  
ALAN: Ralph.  
CLAYMORE: Hello.  
RALPH: Just a sec, lads. Hey, girls. I need some help shifting a few boxes.  
(Josie and Sierra just stared at him.)  
RALPH: Well?  
SIERRA: What?  
JOSIE: Us?  
RALPH: Yeah. You are dock workers, aren't you?  
(Sierra could only gape.)  
SIERRA: Um...  
JOSIE: We're on our lunch break.  
(She then marched away determinedly, swiftly followed by Sierra.)  
RALPH: Lunch? It's ten o'clock in the bleeding morning!  
ALAN: Maybe they had an early start.  
CLAYMORE: Or maybe she meant it was their morning break.  
ALAN: Yeah, that's more likely. And you know what dockers are like. They won't miss their breaks for any fucking body.  
RALPH: True.  
(He bit his lip.)  
RALPH: I'll just find some other mug to help then.  
(He beamed.)  
RALPH: I don't suppose you two would...  
ALAN: Bye, Ralph.  
CLAYMORE: Later!  
(They then marched off in pursuit of the girls as they headed for the exit from the docks.)  
ALAN: Cheeky twat.

---

Having caught up with Josie and Sierra, Alan and Claymore paced forth towards the town, eager to get the shopping trip over and done with. As far as they were concerned, stopping off for extra supplies was a chore and they couldn't wait for it to be over. As such, they marched forth at quite a pace. More than happy to match their pace, Josie strutted to the side of Alan, listening in on their conversation. Sierra, in the meantime, was struggling to keep up. Oblivious to this fact, the two men continued onwards.

ALAN: While they're in that boutique, we'll just bag everything from the supermarket. Stuff shopping around. If the supermarket haven't got it, we'll go without.

CLAYMORE: Unless they're out of our favourite coffee.

ALAN: Well, obviously. Some things are worth making the effort for. Baked beans, on the other hand, are not.

CLAYMORE: Do we need baked beans then?

ALAN: Why are you asking me?

CLAYMORE: Well, you've got the list.  
(Alan grimaced.)

ALAN: List?

CLAYMORE: Shopping list.

ALAN: What shopping list?

CLAYMORE: You didn't make a shopping list?

ALAN: No. I never do! I *know* exactly what we need, mate. I don't need to write it down.

CLAYMORE: Then you *know* if we need baked beans; which is why I asked you!

ALAN: Right...

(He grinned.)

ALAN: I see your point.

CLAYMORE: Well, do we?

ALAN: I forgot to check.

CLAYMORE: Mate...

ALAN: It's no big deal. Let's just get some anyway. They won't go off.

CLAYMORE: Fair enough. So what else did you forget to check?

ALAN: Just the tinned stuff.

CLAYMORE: Then we'll get more of every tinned item just in case.

ALAN: So, just baked beans then?

CLAYMORE: Really? Are they the only tinned things we buy?

ALAN: Normally, yeah. Unless you count the odd tin of rice pudding.

CLAYMORE: Ooh, I fancy some rice pudding.

ALAN: Then we'll grab some of that as well.

(Listening in, Josie chuckled.)

JOSIE: Men are so disorganised.

ALAN: No, we're not.

(Claymore sucked his teeth.)

CLAYMORE: Well, you say that.

JOSIE: I always make a full list before I go shopping and I won't go home until I've got everything.

ALAN: We also have a full list, the difference being, it's in my head.

JOSIE: And you forgot to put baked beans on it.

ALAN: Well...

CLAYMORE: And rice pudding.

ALAN: The rice pudding was an afterthought!

(He ruffled his neck muscles.)

ALAN: Enough of that, you two. Don't criticise my system. It's served us well over the years.

CLAYMORE: Apart from the time you forgot to get paraffin in the middle of that freezing winter.

ALAN: That was unfortunate.

CLAYMORE: And the time you forgot to get any bourbon.

ALAN: Yeah... that was unforgivable.

CLAYMORE: And don't forget the time you...

ALAN: I get the point!!!

(Josie chuckled.)

JOSIE: So you're the forgetful one, are you?

ALAN: Everybody forgets things now and again.

CLAYMORE: Yeah. Like the time you forgot to untie the boat from the mooring.

ALAN: No! We've discussed this. You started the boat up and tried to leave before even mentioning untying the boat. That was *you* being a moron, not me.

CLAYMORE: Bollocks. I told you in clear, crisp words to untie the boat. Then I asked if you had.

ALAN: And did I reply?

CLAYMORE: Well... no, but...

ALAN: Then it was your bloody fault, wasn't it?

CLAYMORE: I thought you were treating the question with contempt.

ALAN: Well, I weren't. I was having a shit and didn't hear you.

(He rolled his eyes.)

ALAN: I can't believe you're still trying to blame me for that debacle.

(Josie smiled.)

JOSIE: Sounds like you've had a lot of fun over the years.

CLAYMORE: Does it? Let me tell you, trying to pull a boat away when it's still tied up is anything but fun.

ALAN: The noise, the smell...

CLAYMORE: The flying shrapnel from when the propeller blew up.

ALAN: Yeah. One of the blades just missed the dock-master's head.

CLAYMORE: Trying times.

(Just then, they heard a thudding sound from behind them. At once, they spun around and saw Sierra clambering to her feet, some ten feet behind.)

ALAN: You okay?

SIERRA: I'm fine. I tripped, that's all.

CLAYMORE: On what? This is the flattest road I've ever walked down.

SIERRA: I can't walk that fast, that's all. It's no big deal.

(Alan and Claymore grimaced at one another.)

ALAN: Were we rushing again?

CLAYMORE: Sounds like something we'd do.

(He smiled at Sierra, just as she caught up with them.)

CLAYMORE: We'll try to walk a bit slower this time.

SIERRA: Thank you.

ALAN: Didn't snap a heel, did you?

SIERRA: No. These are flats.

ALAN: Flats?

JOSIE: Flat shoes.

SIERRA: I can speak for myself, Josie.

JOSIE: Well, pardon me for breathing.

SIERRA: No. You breathing is unforgivable. Please desist immediately.

CLAYMORE: Hey, stop. No more bickering.

ALAN: I'll second that. Now come on.

(They then resumed their walk.)

ALAN: Ladies, once we get to the town, there's a clothing shop on your right. You can go in there. We'll be in the supermarket opposite. When you're done, come and find us in there.

(Much to his bewilderment, the three in his company all burst out laughing.)

ALAN: What's so funny?

CLAYMORE: They're women shopping for clothes, mate.

SIERRA: You'll be long finished before we're even half way through.

JOSIE: You'll be the ones coming to find us.

ALAN: Right...

(He then shrugged.)

ALAN: No, we bloody won't.

CLAYMORE: We'll wait in the park around the corner.

ALAN: What he said.

SIERRA: What? Why?

ALAN: Because we ain't going clothes shopping with women.

CLAYMORE: It's a miserable chore.

ALAN: The worst.

CLAYMORE: Yeah, you're on your own.

SIERRA: Fine. Shopping with men is annoying anyway, all they do is moan.  
ALAN: Exactly. Clothes shopping is a female only event.  
JOSIE: Fair enough.  
ALAN: Just remember, you're not in there to buy pretty things or practical things. If you want to sit outside and stay away from Graydon you need to look... a certain way.  
SIERRA: Like those two girls from this morning?  
CLAYMORE: You saw that, did you?  
SIERRA: We saw them from the window. Don't worry, we were behind the net curtain, so they didn't see us.  
ALAN: Right. So you know the sort of thing we mean then.  
JOSIE: Skimpy summer clothes, we get it.  
SIERRA: And high heels.  
CLAYMORE: They do seem to be a canal groupie standard, yes. Just... try to look as sexy as you possibly can. It's what canal groupies do.  
SIERRA: Okay.  
(Alan then glanced away innocently.)  
ALAN: So... this morning...  
SIERRA: We just saw it. We didn't hear anything.  
JOSIE: Nope. Not a word.  
CLAYMORE: Phew.  
JOSIE: Not one single bit of your embarrassingly inadequate banter passed by our ears.  
ALAN: Fuck.  
CLAYMORE: Hey, in our defence, our banter isn't usually *that* bad.  
SIERRA: I hope not for your sake.  
ALAN: Enough of that, you.  
(He ruffled his neck then pulled Graydon's cash from his pocket. He then duly divvied it up in equal sums, giving half to Sierra and half to Josie.)  
JOSIE: Thanks.  
SIERRA: Thank you.  
ALAN: Now you can shop separately. Only if you went together I could see you having a fight and getting thrown out.  
CLAYMORE: We'd rather you didn't do that.  
JOSIE: That's ridiculous. We're not gonna fight.  
SIERRA: Yet.  
JOSIE: Sierra, you *can't* bloody fight. You have all the fighting skills of broken hairdryer.  
SIERRA: I'll hit *you* with a broken hairdryer in a minute.  
JOSIE: What broken hairdryer?  
SIERRA: Shut up. Fact is, as long as I have teeth and fingernails, I can still hurt you.  
ALAN: Well, don't.  
(He rolled his eyes.)  
ALAN: Just do your shopping quickly and quietly, so we can get back on our way again as soon as possible. Okay?  
JOSIE: Fine.  
SIERRA: Fine.  
ALAN: Thank you.

---

A short while later, having sent Josie and Sierra away to the boutique, Claymore found himself slowly guiding a trolley down a supermarket aisle. Following Alan's lead, he looked more than a little perplexed.

CLAYMORE: Are you *sure* you checked the cupboards before we left?  
(Grabbing some coffee from the shelf, Alan furrowed his brow.)  
ALAN: Yes. Why?  
CLAYMORE: Just wondering.  
ALAN: Wondering about what?  
CLAYMORE: Why we need more spuds. We can't have eaten that last lot already.  
ALAN: We haven't.  
CLAYMORE: Then...  
ALAN: There's five of us now, mate. We'd only catered for three, remember? Then the girls showed up.  
CLAYMORE: Right.  
(He shrugged.)  
CLAYMORE: Not that I can see that Sierra eating too much. She strikes me as a tiny portions kind of girl.  
ALAN: Then you should get in there, mate. I'm sure she'd love your tiny portion.  
CLAYMORE: Yeah... I should have known you'd say that.  
ALAN: Mate, if you give me an open goal, I'm gonna shoot.  
(Claymore shook his head.)  
CLAYMORE: Twat. But you know, speaking of getting in there. I wouldn't actually say no.  
ALAN: Obviously.  
CLAYMORE: You too, huh?  
ALAN: She's a pretty girl, mate. I doubt anyone would say no, but that's not what I meant.  
CLAYMORE: Then...  
ALAN: I was talking about you specifically. You can't take your eyes off her, mate.  
CLAYMORE: Yes, I fucking can.  
ALAN: Bollocks. You fancy the arse off it.  
CLAYMORE: You say that about every woman we meet.  
ALAN: And usually I'm just winding you up, but not this time. You like her.  
(Claymore ruffled his neck indignantly.)  
CLAYMORE: I don't deny finding her attractive, mate, but you know as well as I do...  
ALAN: You can't be bothered with birds anymore.  
CLAYMORE: Exactly. After Mercedes...  
ALAN: Sierra isn't Mercedes.  
CLAYMORE: I know that. I'm just saying... those were dark times. Times I don't wish to repeat. She was like a sister to me, Al. Then she just vanished; never to return. Gone.  
(Alan chuckled.)  
ALAN: Like a sister to you?  
CLAYMORE: She was!  
ALAN: She was your bird! You were shagging it, mate. How's that like your sister?  
CLAYMORE: I... I...  
(He grimaced.)  
CLAYMORE: We hadn't actually... you know...  
ALAN: What?  
CLAYMORE: You heard.  
ALAN: You'd been together for months! And in all that time, you never...  
CLAYMORE: Nope.  
ALAN: Wow.  
(He smirked.)  
ALAN: No wonder she buggered off then.  
CLAYMORE: Hey!

ALAN: Chill, mate. I'm joking.

CLAYMORE: Cunt.

ALAN: And proud.

(He nodded.)

ALAN: Let's bag ourselves some chicken from the frozen aisle. Tonight, I'm gonna whip us all up a nice curry.

CLAYMORE: Got everything for a curry, have we?

ALAN: Of course.

CLAYMORE: Like curry powder?

ALAN: Yup.

(He glanced away innocently.)

ALAN: Though we should probably get some, just to be on the safe side.

CLAYMORE: Right.

(He rolled his eyes.)

CLAYMORE: We've got onions though, right?

ALAN: Yup.

(He winced.)

ALAN: Though, it wouldn't hurt to buy more.

CLAYMORE: What?

(His brow furrowed over.)

CLAYMORE: You haven't got a bloody clue, have you?

ALAN: Mate...

CLAYMORE: Admit it. You haven't got the first idea how we're stocked.

ALAN: Claymore, mate...

CLAYMORE: What?

ALAN: It's possible that I may have forgotten to check.

CLAYMORE: So it wasn't just the tinned goods cupboard you forget to check.

ALAN: Nope, there were a few others.

CLAYMORE: How many?

ALAN: Well, all told, I have to admit...

CLAYMORE: You didn't check any of them, did you?

ALAN: Yeah... pretty much.

(Claymore's shoulders slumped.)

CLAYMORE: Dude...

ALAN: I was distracted.

(He ruffled his neck.)

ALAN: That Josie has a nice arse, you see?

CLAYMORE: Right...

(He smirked.)

CLAYMORE: And I'm the one whose got it bad, am I?

ALAN: Yes!

CLAYMORE: I don't think so, mate. You love her. Admit it. You want her to bless you with tiny babies.

ALAN: Are you fucking twelve?

CLAYMORE: I try to be.

ALAN: And you're excelling at it.

(He shrugged.)

ALAN: Both those girls are tasty, mate. They really are. But I have no designs on either of them. Sure, I'd shag them both if they offered, but that's all.

CLAYMORE: Fair comment. Not that they'll offer.

ALAN: Probably not, no.

CLAYMORE: I feel the same, by the way. They're great to look at, but other than that... Sierra's one seriously angry girl. Her rage is seriously off-putting. And Josie, well, to drop her friend in it like that... she must be a pretty lousy human being. So neither of them are girlfriend material.

ALAN: Not that we know them very well yet, but first impressions and all that. Sierra's grumpy and Josie's unreliable. So yeah, I wouldn't take them home to meet my mother either.

CLAYMORE: Exactly.

ALAN: But I'd gleefully shag them 'til the cows come home.

CLAYMORE: And I'd be delighted to watch. I mean help.

ALAN: Mate...

CLAYMORE: I mean, I agree. A shag, no more.

(He spanned his forehead.)

CLAYMORE: You know what I mean.

ALAN: Luckily for you, yes I do.

(He nodded.)

ALAN: Now let's get a move on. And take the corner a bit sharper this time, mate. It's a trolley not a narrow boat.

CLAYMORE: Force of habit, Al. I take corners wide; it's what I do.

ALAN: Fine, just don't crash into other shoppers again. It's starting to get embarrassing now.

CLAYMORE: *You're* starting to get embarrassing now!

ALAN: Right. Great come back, mate. Now, hurry up.

CLAYMORE: I'm coming!

---

Just across the road, inside the town's boutique, at this time, Sierra and Josie were strolling down separate aisles. Both had very separate agendas. Sierra wanted to look as sexy as possible and didn't care about anything else. This was an excuse to show off her girly side and she was very much in her element. Josie, on the other hand, was far more picky. She wanted something that struck all the right notes as a canal groupie, yet maintained a certain dignity. Something that signified that being scantily clad and pretty didn't mean she was soft or vulnerable. As a result, by the time Sierra had picked out 4 items, Josie still had an empty basket.

Some ten minutes after entering the boutique, Josie remained empty handed. The closest thing to what she was looking for was a denim micro-skirt on the racks at the back of the shop. Having stared at it for a good minute or so, she sucked her teeth, when Sierra suddenly nudged past her, grabbing one of the skirts for herself and tossing it in her basket.)

SIERRA: Whoops, did I nudge you, madam?

JOSIE: Madam?

SIERRA: Yes. Madam. My mum taught me to be polite to old ladies.

JOSIE: Sierra, you're two weeks *older* than me.

SIERRA: I am?

(She then gasped in horror.)

SIERRA: Crap.

JOSIE: Now leave me alone, please. Madam.

SIERRA: Hey!

(Sierra furrowed her brow then started to head away.)

JOSIE: Wait.

SIERRA: What?

JOSIE: Why the denim skirt?

(Sierra scoffed.)

SIERRA: Because it's awesome.

(She then paced onwards. Left behind, Josie mused to herself.)

JOSIE: Is it really that simple? No meaning; no reasoning. Just buy it because you like it?

(She then grimaced.)

JOSIE: Why do I always do that?

SIERRA: Do what?

(Josie shrieked.)

JOSIE: Where the hell did you spring from?

SIERRA: Nowhere. I heard you mumbling and I thought you were insulting me under your breath, so I walked back.

JOSIE: Right. Well, I wasn't doing that. That's the sort of thing *you* do. I've been nothing but nice.

SIERRA: Like when you nicely ruined my entire life?

JOSIE: Really? I did? Oh, wow. I had no idea. Why haven't you mentioned it before?

(They then glowered at one another coldly, before Josie sighed.)

JOSIE: Sierra, I was just talking myself, okay. I don't know what to buy. You know how I am...

SIERRA: I do. You overthink everything. You can't look at a dress and buy it simply because you think it looks nice. You have to analyse what it means; what others will think of you. As if clothes have a hidden purpose.

JOSIE: They do though. And the purpose of these clothes is so we can look like cheap canal groupies. It's complicated.

SIERRA: It's really not. If it looks slutty but you like it, it's a candidate, Josie. It's that simple. It really is.

(She sighed.)

SIERRA: Look... do you like the denim skirt?

JOSIE: Well, yeah, but...

SIERRA: But nothing. You like it, it's slutty, it qualifies. That's all there is too it.

(She then pulled one off the shelf and dunked it into Josie's basket.)

SIERRA: You're welcome.

(She then strode away. Left behind, a bemused Josie peered into her basket then furrowed her brow.)

JOSIE: Hey! This is a size 16!

(Sierra yelled back.)

SIERRA: Yeah, but you should be able to squeeze into it.

JOSIE: You...

(She groaned.)

JOSIE: She's *too* mean.

(She then swapped the skirt for one in her own size before heading away down the aisle again.)

JOSIE: Right... what else?

(A good while later, having paid for a bag of clothes, Sierra stepped away from the checkout then glanced towards Josie. In that moment, she couldn't help but roll her eyes. Josie, still with only one item in her basket, was staring at a bikini with a bewildered look on her face. Miffed by it, but far from surprised, she shook her head then paced over to her aggressively.)

SIERRA: Really, Josie?



JOSIE: What?

SIERRA: Every time we've been clothes shopping together, you've looked at everything, dithered and hesitated then got someone else to choose for you.

JOSIE: No, I haven't.

(Sierra just glowered at her.)

JOSIE: I mean... not all the time.

SIERRA: Yes, all the time. Well, as loathe as I am to help you, I'd like to get back to the boat at some point, so you've left me no choice.

JOSIE: Sierra...

SIERRA: Size eight, you claim?

JOSIE: Claim? You know damned well...

SIERRA: Whatever. Size eight it is then.

(With that, she grabbed two bikinis from the shelf then dumped them in Josie's basket.)

SIERRA: Come.

(With that, she headed away towards where the tops were on display. Josie followed on, looking most annoyed.)

JOSIE: What the hell do you think you're doing?

SIERRA: What I always do. I'm choosing your clothes for you.

JOSIE: Cheek! Who the hell do you think you are? I'm quite capable of picking my own bloody outfits.

SIERRA: Why haven't you then?

JOSIE: I was being...

SIERRA: Being what?

JOSIE: I was erring on the side of caution.

SIERRA: Yeah, right.

(She then grabbed a couple of tops and dumped them in Josie's basket.)

JOSIE: Wow. You're really pushing your luck, right now.

(She then ruffled her shoulders indignantly.)

JOSIE: You're taking the piss, but seeing as I've let you down so badly, I'll let it slide for now.

(She then followed Sierra over to a rack of dresses, trying her hardest to contain her relieved smile. She'd always needed Sierra's advice when it came to anything feminine and to have her assistance, albeit her angry and resentful assistance was very much welcome. She wasn't about to pretend she was readily accepting her help, however, as her pride wouldn't allow it. As such, when Sierra reached for a dress, Josie glanced away innocently.)

JOSIE: That red one's nice.

SIERRA: That red one is something my mother would wear.

(She then picked out a much shorter one and dumped it in Josie's basket.)

JOSIE: I said the red one's nice.

SIERRA: I heard.

(She then headed over to the short skirts. Josie followed nonchalantly.)

JOSIE: Have you quite finished, little miss bossy boots.

SIERRA: I'll be finished when I'm finished.

JOSIE: Right. Whatever.

(She then exhaled with relief, before glancing away, pretending to be miffed.)

JOSIE: Cow.

(Thanks to Sierra's intervention, some five minutes later, Josie finally finished paying for her shopping then the two of them left the store. Josie loved Sierra's choices. There was no way she'd ever let on, however. And so, very much containing her excitement, she left the

boutique, a few paces behind Sierra, wearing an embittered snarl on her face. Sierra paid her no heed. She simply wanted to return to The Amethyst and continue on her way.)

---

Having agreed to meet Alan and Claymore at a small park around the corner, the two girls headed forth down the street in silence. Josie knew that starting a conversation would be a waste of time, and Sierra was eager to pretend that Josie was somewhere else. Somewhere far, far away. Preferably on fire. As such, they strutted onwards, offering no hint to passers-by that these two girls may have ever been the best of friends. Just as they passed a small butcher's shop, however, their march was halted in the most horrible way possible. From a good fifty feet behind them, a male voice yelled out, scaring them both witless.

GUARD: You there!!!

(At once, they both spun around to see a guard racing towards them.)

SIERRA: We've been spotted!

JOSIE: Leg it!!!

(With that, they both raced off down the street.)

JOSIE: What the bloody hell does *he* want?

SIERRA: What do you bloody think?

JOSIE: Right, yeah. Stupid question.

SIERRA: Or was it? Maybe it's something else this time. Just how many crimes are you wanted for, woman?

JOSIE: What are you saying exactly, Sierra?

SIERRA: What do you think? Bloody terrorist!

JOSIE: I'm not a fucking terrorist!

SIERRA: Yes, you are.

JOSIE: Sierra, all I was going to do was steal some incriminating documents. That was all. You thought I was going to blow the place up.

SIERRA: Yeah, because...

JOSIE: No, you hear me out for once. You thought were we gonna blow the place up and you still agreed to come. That makes you a far bigger potential criminal than me. If they wanted to blow it up, I'd have had nothing to do with it. But yeah, you keep playing the innocent.

SIERRA: You talked me into it!

JOSIE: Yes, but I didn't *force* you to come. You made that decision for yourself. You decided to come even though you thought we were going to blow up a building! So that's it. No more. You're no more innocent than I am!

SIERRA: Wow. Seriously? That's your take, is it?

JOSIE: Yes. Now, come on. This way.

(She then darted around a blind corner, desperate to evade the guard on their tale. Much to her horror, however, Sierra was so scared, she simply kept on running down the road and didn't follow her. To make matters worse, the guard continued on after her. Horrified by the outcome, Josie came to a swift halt and gulped.

JOSIE: Uh-oh. Like she wasn't pissed off at me enough already. She's gonna think I just buggered off and left her to it.

(She then raced back again, desperate to do anything she could to help Sierra. Much to her further dismay, however, as soon as she turned the corner, she made a horrifying discovery. Neither Sierra or the guard were anywhere to be seen.)

JOSIE: Fuck.

(She then sprinted off to find her.

Some way down a side street at this time, Sierra desperately struggled forth as quickly as her legs would allow. Alas, that wasn't very quickly at all. With her shopping bags flailing all over the place, she made very slow progress indeed. As a result, it didn't take long for the guard to reach out and grab her shoulder, pulling her to a halt. In something of a panic, she turned to face him and shrieked.)

SIERRA: It wasn't me!!! I just look like her!

(The guard blinked at her nonchalantly.)

GUARD: Right. If you say so, love.

(He then smiled warmly.)

GUARD: I just wanted to let you know you dropped this.

(He then held out a small coin purse.)

GUARD: What the bloody hell did you run away for?

(Sierra gaped at him uncomfortably.)

SIERRA: Well... you know...

GUARD: No. I don't.

(He rolled his eyes.)

GUARD: Just take your purse.

SIERRA: Um... that's not mine.

GUARD: It's not? Fuck.

(He then furrowed his brow.)

GUARD: Back to the point then. Why the hell did you run away? You know it's a crime to run away from an official of the law, right?

(Sierra seemed to shrink at this point.)

SIERRA: My bad.

(She whimpered.)

SIERRA: It's just... I don't know.

GUARD: Yes, you do. You said it wasn't you. And that you just look like her.

SIERRA: Right.

(She grimaced.)

SIERRA: I did say that, didn't I?

GUARD: Yes, you did.

SIERRA: I see.

(She then swung her shoulders nervously as she fabricated a story from the top of her head.)

SIERRA: Um, you see... I ran because, I thought you were my ex. You sound a bit like him.

GUARD: Your ex?

SIERRA: Yeah. He was a big fat meany. A bully, actually. He was horrible. Really controlling. So I moved away and didn't tell him where I went. I was scared he'd finally found me. That's why I ran.

(The guard gave her a stern glance for a moment then nodded.)

GUARD: Must have been tough.

SIERRA: Yeah. Must have. I mean, yes. It was horrible.

GUARD: I apologise. I must have given you a right scare there.

SIERRA: I forgive you.

GUARD: So... do you think he'd have believed you?

SIERRA: What?

GUARD: When you said it wasn't you? That you just *look* like you. Was he really dumb enough to believe that.

SIERRA: Well... um... yes?

GUARD: Damn. Thick bloke, was he?

SIERRA: A bit.

GUARD: You don't want that.

SIERRA: Right?

GUARD: You want a smart bloke. One with good looks and a decent career ahead of him. You know, someone like me.

(He then gave her a seductive glance. Trying not to cringe, Sierra desperately fished for a kind way to let him down.)

SIERRA: Well... you know... here's the thing. Right? The thing is... and this is the thing...

GUARD: Yes?

SIERRA: What it is, right, is, you see...

(Just then, Claymore arrived at her side looking deeply concerned.)

CLAYMORE: What's the problem, officer?

(Sierra eyes lit up.)

SIERRA: Him. He's the thing!

GUARD: Thing?

SIERRA: Yes. He's my boyfriend, you see?

GUARD: Bugger.

CLAYMORE: Wait. I'm what now?

SIERRA: This nice guard was just asking me out on a date, you see? So I was just telling him I'm spoken for.

CLAYMORE: Right...

SIERRA: Because of you.

CLAYMORE: Um...

(Satisfied it was best to play along, Claymore shrugged.)

CLAYMORE: It's true. Sorry, mate.

GUARD: Whatever. It was a long shot anyway. The best ones are always taken.

CLAYMORE: Plus, she's way out of your league.

GUARD: What?

CLAYMORE: Nothing.

(The guard shrugged.)

GUARD: Oh, well. You can't blame a guy for trying, right?

CLAYMORE: Nope.

SIERRA: And for what it's worth, I was very flattered.

GUARD: Actually, that's worth nothing, but thank you for being kind enough to lie.

SIERRA: You're welcome.

(The guard then gave a stifled laugh.)

GUARD: Well, that was a waste of energy. I'll be on my way then.

(Just as he went to leave, however, Josie raced onto the scene wearing a stern expression on her face. Without pausing, she then aired her thoughts on the matter with a desperate look in her eye.)

JOSIE: Leave her alone. She didn't do anything. It's *me* you want. She's innocent. She's always been innocent. Just leave her alone and arrest *me* instead. Please.

(As Claymore and Sierra cringed in horror, the guard bit his lip.)

GUARD: Sorry... what?

JOSIE: You heard. I'm the one you're after, not her.

GUARD: Wow.

(He looked to Sierra.)

GUARD: Your mate's a bit desperate.

(He then beamed.)

GUARD: Not that I'm complaining. I've never been begged for a date before.

JOSIE: A date?

SIERRA: He chased me just to ask me out, Josie.

JOSIE: He did?

(She immediately turned bright red.)

JOSIE: In that case, forget what I said. There's no need to arrest *anybody*.

GUARD: I wasn't going to.

(A suspicious expression then swept his brow.)

GUARD: And why would you assume I was? What did you do?

JOSIE: I... nothing.

GUARD: No. You definitely did something. Nobody makes a confession like you did just for poops and giggles.

JOSIE: Confession?

GUARD: You said to leave *her* alone and arrest *you* instead. Apparently, *you're* the one I'm after, not her. So come on, what did you do?

JOSIE: Um...

(Just then, Sierra stepped forward.)

SIERRA: Forgive her. Poor thing can't get a date for love nor money. So nowadays, she tries to get herself arrested all the time, in the hope the guard will give her a portion then let her go. She's so pathetic.

JOSIE: Sierra! I'm gonna thump...

(She then felt the officer's hand on her shoulder and froze.)

GUARD: Wow. What can I say? Look, love. You can't go on like that. I understand how frustrating it can be when times are hard, but you need to start respecting yourself. Throwing yourself at any man with a pulse isn't going to do you any favours in the long term. Just be patient and I'm sure the right bloke will happen along. Until he does though, try to work on your self-esteem issues, okay? You're actually quite pretty; there's no need to be this desperate.

(Feeling quite the fool, Josie could only look at the ground.)

JOSIE: Right. Yeah. I'll try.

GUARD: Good.

(He then gave everyone a respectful nod before heading on his way. Left behind, Josie continued to stare at the ground, blushing like a blossoming rose.)

JOSIE: Not one fucking word, okay? Not one fucking word.

(She then glanced up to see Sierra and Claymore battling desperately against the overwhelming desire to burst out laughing.)

JOSIE: It's not funny!

(Naturally, the two of them then fell about laughing.)

JOSIE: Oh, that's really fucking mature.

(She then started to chuckle herself.)

JOSIE: What an idiot.

SIERRA: You said it.

JOSIE: I really did think you'd been recognised though. So... I don't know...

(She shrugged.)

JOSIE: I just wanted to make it right, so I rushed in and... well, you know the rest.

CLAYMORE: Yeah. He was about to leave before you showed up.

SIERRA: Yup. He said he was on his way, then you arrived, frantically confessing like an overworked whore with a fifty year sinning career but only five minutes to live.

(Josie spanned her own forehead.)

JOSIE: I'm such an idiot.

CLAYMORE: Actually, not really. The fact you ran in and tried to make it right was actually kind of impressive.

JOSIE: It was the least I could do.

CLAYMORE: No, you could have done literally fuck all. Most people would have.

(He shrugged.)

CLAYMORE: The fact you love your friend here enough to try to clear her name like that, at the expense of yourself, was a credit to you.

JOSIE: Well... I still say it was the least I could do.

(Sierra sighed.)

SIERRA: No. Claymore's right. That was *kind of* impressive. I mean, at least... well, thank you anyway.

JOSIE: It's nothing.

SIERRA: This doesn't mean I like you though. Far from it.

JOSIE: I can tell.

SIERRA: Good.

(She then looked to Claymore.)

SIERRA: Can we go now?

CLAYMORE: Yeah. We've just got to find...

(He then noticed Alan pacing towards them, shaking his head.)

CLAYMORE: Never mind. He's here. Come on.

(They then started to head for the docks. Joining them, Alan stepped alongside Claymore then furrowed his brow.)

ALAN: Give me one good reason why I shouldn't slap you in the bollocks?

CLAYMORE: Because touching another man's bollocks would be a really gay thing to do.

ALAN: Right. Yes. Correct. Now give me one good reason why I shouldn't punch you in the face.

CLAYMORE: What? Why would you?

ALAN: You know the fucking golden rule, Claymore.

(He furrowed his brow.)

ALAN: If someone we're transporting gets themselves in shit with the authorities, we fucking leave.

CLAYMORE: Yeah, but...

ALAN: If any of our clients get caught whilst fleeing, they could drop us right in the shit. That's why we *agreed* to the golden rule. If they get arrested, they're on their own. We don't rush in to save them, you cock. You could have got us *all* arrested. People smuggling is a serious offence, you twat.

CLAYMORE: Yeah, but...

ALAN: No, but. As soon as we saw her being chased by that guard, I said to you, you know the drill. And you fucking do. It was time to leave. To disassociate ourselves with her and get the hell out of town.

CLAYMORE: Mate...

ALAN: No. No excuses. You know how it is. We have a set of rules; a set of rules we need to live by if we want to survive in this line of work. If she goes down, we could end up going down too. And that would be fatal! What the hell were you thinking?

(Claymore shrugged emptily then glanced away.)

CLAYMORE: I just... I thought... well, I mean, I figured it was different this time...

ALAN: Oh, yeah?

CLAYMORE: Yeah, I mean... she's so innocent looking, I figured it'd be easy to convince the guard to let her go. You know?

ALAN: Bollocks.

CLAYMORE: It's not bollocks.

ALAN: Yes, it is. You did it because she's fit and you really fancy her.

(Claymore's hair stood on end. Josie and Sierra just glanced away, pretending they hadn't heard.)

CLAYMORE: Why would you say that?

ALAN: Because you can't even look at her without your tongue falling out of your head.

CLAYMORE: Dude! She's right next to me, and I'm pretty sure she aint deaf!

ALAN: I don't fucking care.

(Sierra nervously raised a finger.)

SIERRA: Um... I do. Can you discuss this in private later, or something?

ALAN: No, we fucking can't.

(He shook his head.)

ALAN: Stop thinking with your knob, Claymore. Use your brain. That girl is a wanted criminal. If the guards come for her, you need to leave her to it. Or do you *want* to get arrested?

CLAYMORE: Don't be ridiculous.

(He sighed.)

CLAYMORE: Look, fine. I apologise. I broke the code, okay? Sorry about that. It just felt like the right thing to do at the time. I don't know why.

ALAN: *I* do. You want to shag it.

CLAYMORE: Mate! Again, she's right here.

SIERRA: Dying of embarrassment.

ALAN: Good. You *be* embarrassed. I need my mate here to get his head on straight before he gets us all killed.

JOSIE: Um... Alan? I think you're kind of missing the point.

ALAN: What point?

JOSIE: Well... if Sierra got arrested she'd end up talking and drop you in it.

SIERRA: You don't know that!

JOSIE: Yes, I do. You'd crumble in two seconds flat and tell them everything.

SIERRA: That's... well... maybe.

JOSIE: No, maybe about it. She wouldn't be able to handle the interrogation, so she'd drop you right in it.

ALAN: I know. That was my point.

JOSIE: Well, not really. I mean, knowing she'll drop you in it if she gets caught, surely going to her aid to make sure she *doesn't* get arrested was a *good* idea.

(Claymore nodded sternly, delighted to hear her take on it.)

CLAYMORE: Yes. Exactly. That's *exactly* why I rushed in. It wasn't at all a rush of blood to my head. I did it to save us *all*.

ALAN: Bullshit. You had a rush of blood to your knob and did it to salvage your ambitions of getting your leg over.

SIERRA: Um... I'm still standing right here.

ALAN: I know.

(He rolled his eyes.)

ALAN: Okay, fine, look... Josie, I see your point. Doing whatever we can to prevent her getting arrested is a good idea. Granted. Charging off without *thinking* about it first, however, is not.

CLAYMORE: Yeah... I have to admit that wasn't clever. I just really wanted to save her, that's all.

SIERRA: And it's appreciated.

ALAN: And very understandable. Just do it wisely in future and for the right reasons. Charging off like that, you could have fucked everything right up.

CLAYMORE: I...

ALAN: Pillock!

CLAYMORE: Mate, it's done. And it won't happen again. Just let it go. It's over.

ALAN: Good. I hope so too. No tart is worth giving your life for.

SIERRA: I'm a tart?

ALAN: That's not what I meant.

SIERRA: It sounded like what you meant.

JOSIE: Yeah, you called her a tart, what else can it mean?

ALAN: Hey! Don't start on me. I've said my bit, now let's just hurry back to the boat and get on with our journey, shall we?

SIERRA: Yes, please.

CLAYMORE: Fine. Let's do that.

ALAN: Thank you.

(He then glanced away and grinned stealthily.)

ALAN: Just try not to steer us into any incoming boats because you're distracted by Sierra's tits, Claymore.

(At once, everyone turned bright red, with the exception of the chuckling Alan.)

ALAN: Fun.

---

Within half an hour, thanks to an uneventful walk back to the canal, The Amethyst set off downstream once again. Inside the cabin, Josie and Sierra were changing into outfits in readiness to head outside and enjoy some fresh air. Outside, in the meantime, Claymore was steering the boat as per usual. Sitting in comfort on the roof, watching the scenery slowly drift by, Alan couldn't have looked more relaxed.

ALAN: Now we've stashed the supplies away, I feel a lot happier about things, mate.

CLAYMORE: Yeah?

ALAN: Yeah. We're finally on our way for real now, know what I mean?

(Claymore grinned.)

CLAYMORE: As opposed to what?

ALAN: As opposed to stopping and starting.

(He nodded.)

ALAN: It's plain sailing now, all the way from here to Amaria. Non-stop.

CLAYMORE: Apart from all the stops.

ALAN: Well...

CLAYMORE: Two big *overnight* stops, in fact.

ALAN: Mate...

CLAYMORE: Not to mention all the locks we'll have to pass through.

ALAN: Dude, are you being a twat on purpose?

CLAYMORE: Sounds like something I'd do.

ALAN: Well don't. What I meant was, now we've got all the supplies we need, we can just focus on the journey. There's nothing else in our way.

CLAYMORE: Except all the locks.

ALAN: Fucking stop that!

(Claymore laughed.)

CLAYMORE: I'm only pissing about, mate. I know what you mean. I feel the same. Now we have all our provisions we're free to focus on the journey.

ALAN: Exactly. And that's how I like it.

CLAYMORE: Just make sure you keep that fat bastard, Graydon, away from the food. I can picture him picking at it every time he thinks we're not looking. Which is most of the time.

ALAN: Don't worry, mate; it's safely under lock and key.



CLAYMORE: Which just makes me worry he'll start picking at the cargo instead.  
ALAN: Nah, I made it pretty clear to him what'd happen to him if he did.  
CLAYMORE: Good. Only, you've just got to look at him to know, that blokes partial to a bit of chocolate cake.  
ALAN: A bit?  
CLAYMORE: A lot.  
ALAN: Yeah, well, like I said; you don't need to worry about that.  
CLAYMORE: Good, good.  
(He then relaxed his stance and smiled.)  
CLAYMORE: Quiet out here this morning, isn't it?  
ALAN: Very. You know what that means, don't you?  
CLAYMORE: Enlighten me.  
ALAN: It means we'll pass a shit load of boats this afternoon, just when we've got two fit birds lazing on the roof, pretending to be canal groupies.  
(He beamed.)  
ALAN: I'm expecting much in the way of jealous ranting.  
CLAYMORE: Here's hoping. It's been a while since we made a rival crew sneer at us. I mean a proper, bitter sneer.  
ALAN: Yeah. It's been far too long.  
CLAYMORE: I live for those jealous scowls, mate.  
ALAN: Every canal boatman does, Claymore.  
(He smirked.)  
ALAN: Pathetic really. We're all grown men, for fucks sake, but yeah; nothing beats annoying a rival.  
CLAYMORE: Nothing in the world, mate.  
ALAN: Not even a juicy steak and an ice cold beer.  
CLAYMORE: Well... it's close, but you're right. Not even that!  
(They then exhaled in perfect unison at the thought of what could potentially be a great days boating ahead.)

---

Inside the cargo hold at this time, Sierra and Josie were getting changed into skimpy outfits. Before getting started, however, they'd had to barricade the door shut. Graydon was not being subtle about his desire to watch them. Unashamed of his desires, he was constantly trying to walk in on them. Mercifully, so far, the door wedge and several boxes had kept him at bay. Unsurprisingly, he wasn't happy about it. As such, the girls found themselves changing to the soundtrack of a very bitter man indeed.  
GRAYDON: Why won't you just let me in? I'm a man. A man with a keen eye for the ladies. I'm perfectly qualified to let you know if your outfits are a hit or a miss.  
(He sighed.)  
GRAYDON: Well? Are you going to let me in or not? You need me!  
(The girls just continued to change and offered no reply.)  
GRAYDON: Fine. Risk it then. Just don't crying to me when everyone laughs because your outfits isn't as sexy as you thought it is.  
(Josie rolled her eyes.)  
JOSIE: We won't.  
GRAYDON: Good. Don't.  
(He growled.)  
GRAYDON: Stupid women. Like you could possibly know what men find sexy.  
SIERRA: Wow.

JOSIE: He's an idiot.

GRAYDON: No, I'm not. I'm right, aren't I? You could have no idea what makes a man drool.

SIERRA: Seriously? I know exactly what makes a man drool. I've been making them drool for years.

GRAYDON: They were just being polite!

SIERRA: Um... no. No, they weren't.

(She rolled her eyes.)

SIERRA: Men aren't capable of subtlety when they like your outfit, they're just not. So trust me, we know when we look sexy.

(Josie blushed.)

JOSIE: Well, you say *we*...

(She whimpered.)

JOSIE: I've made more than a few errors of judgment in the past, Sierra.

SIERRA: You mean the red and green debacle, right?

JOSIE: Among others.

SIERRA: That's what you get for not taking my advice.

JOSIE: Well, I'm taking it now. How do I look?

SIERRA: Like a really bad friend who ruined my life.

JOSIE: Right...

SIERRA: Your outfit's great though. I can't fault the outfit. Shame about the backstabbing idiot inside it, but what can you do?

JOSIE: You can stop being so bloody bitter.

SIERRA: Let's call that 'plan never gonna happen'.

(Josie sighed.)

JOSIE: For pity's sake.

SIERRA: Look, are you ready?

JOSIE: What do you mean? Why? What's missing?

SIERRA: Missing?

JOSIE: You should *know* if I'm ready; you're the expert.

(She cringed.)

JOSIE: It's the shoes, isn't it?

SIERRA: No, you silly sod. When I asked if you're ready, I was asking if you want to get going.

JOSIE: I don't know. Am I ready to get going? I mean, outfit wise.

SIERRA: Yes!

(She rolled her eyes.)

SIERRA: You look fine.

JOSIE: Phew.

SIERRA: Now come on, let's get going.

JOSIE: Right.

SIERRA: After you.

JOSIE: What? Why? Why do you want me to go out there first?

(Sierra blushed.)

SIERRA: Because...

JOSIE: Because what?

SIERRA: Because Graydon's really creepy and I'd rather he saw *you* first. While he's drooling over your cleavage, I can make good my escape.

JOSIE: I see. Thanks. Thanks for volunteering me to take that hit.

SIERRA: Yeah, well, in the great scheme of things, I'd say it's the least you can do really.

JOSIE: Is that so?

SIERRA: Yes.

(Josie sighed.)

JOSIE: Fine.

(She then removed the boxes from the doorway, before kicking out at the door wedge. Within seconds of the door wedge moving, the door then flew open and Graydon stumbled inside.)

GRAYDON: Whoops. I slipped.

(Paying his feeble excuse no heed, Sierra took off like a rocket and raced through the cabin. Josie tried to follow suit, but had to make her way past the lusty old man first.)

GRAYDON: Heaven's above, your cleavage is manna from heaven. Let me take a closer look.

(He then leant forwards, provoking a scream from Josie, who took off like a rocket past him.)

JOSIE: You freak!

GRAYDON: Wait! I haven't finished.

(He then charged through the cabin after her.)

GRAYDON: Well, well; that's a peachy arse too. Those shorts ought to be illegal! Bravo.

JOSIE: Go away!!!

(She then bounded onto the deck outside and leapt onto the boat's roof where she knew he couldn't see her. Graydon stopped in the doorway and groaned.)

GRAYDON: Damn. Damn, damn, damn. I say, boatman; permission to come outside?

ALAN: Denied!

GRAYDON: Fuck.

(He then headed back to the sofa and sat down, grumbling about how life isn't fair. Listening to his complaints, Alan rolled his eyes then glanced at Claymore. He was so taken with Sierra's skimpy top and mini-skirt, the boat was starting to veer sideways.)

ALAN: Claymore!

(Claymore was so distracted, he didn't even hear him.)

ALAN: Mate! You're veering to the left!!!

CLAYMORE: Cool.

(He then flinched and returned to the task in hand.)

CLAYMORE: Sorry. Sorry, about that.

(Alan rolled his eyes then stepped closer to him. Having glanced at where the girls were making themselves comfortable atop the cabin, he shook his head then spoke in a lowered voice.)

ALAN: Mate, I've been thinking. Can't we just ditch Graydon and concentrate on having fun with these two?

(Claymore replied in an equally quiet voice.)

CLAYMORE: That crossed my mind too.

ALAN: Well?

CLAYMORE: What the girls are paying will buy us that new engine. That load we're delivering will covering our expenses for the week. So Graydon's payment is pure profit.

ALAN: Pure profit?

CLAYMORE: Yeah.

ALAN: That's a lot of pocket money.

CLAYMORE: Yes, it is.

ALAN: Better not ditch him then.

CLAYMORE: Tempting though it is.

ALAN: Right?

(He shook his head.)

ALAN: I've never met anyone so obnoxious.

CLAYMORE: And it'll only get worse. We've barely spent any time with him yet. Come this evening once we've moored and everyone sits down to dinner... well, I can see me changing my mind about ditching him.

ALAN: Well, if you do, let me know. I'll be only too happy to lob him in the canal.

CLAYMORE: You'd have to drown the bugger, mate. If he survived the dunking and got caught, he'd drop us both in the shit for people trafficking without a second thought.

ALAN: Shit. So I'd have to murder him?

CLAYMORE: Yeah!

ALAN: I don't do that sort of thing to people.

(He sighed.)

ALAN: We're fucking stuck with him, aren't we?

CLAYMORE: Pretty much.

ALAN: Shit.

(He sighed then looked to where Sierra was sitting back in a relaxed manner, facing the sun with her eyes closed. His eyes then switched to where Josie was still trying to make herself comfortable.)

ALAN: Mate?

CLAYMORE: Yeah?

ALAN: Josie's funny.

CLAYMORE: In what way?

ALAN: I dunno. She just has this uncomfortable demeanour about her that I find amusing.

CLAYMORE: Right... you mean endearing.

ALAN: I'd never use such a gay word.

(Claymore grinned then glanced at the girls.)

CLAYMORE: I see what you mean though. She looks out of her depth all the time.

Whereas Sierra...

(His tongue then fell out of his mouth and he exhaled lustfully.)

ALAN: Dude, stop that.

CLAYMORE: What?

ALAN: If you lose control and crash, I swear...

CLAYMORE: Relax, Al. I'm fine.

(He beamed.)

CLAYMORE: And so are our two female guests. They really do look like canal groupies now. Sexy as hell.

(Just then, Graydon's voice piped up from below.)

GRAYDON: Let me see!

ALAN: Piss off!

GRAYDON: Hey! You can't talk to me like that!

ALAN: No? Says who?

GRAYDON: I do!

(He furrowed his brow.)

GRAYDON: And besides, it's not like I'm requesting anything unreasonable. I just want to be able to eyeball the sexy young ladies.

CLAYMORE: You can eyeball them later, when we have dinner this evening.

ALAN: Just don't be surprised if they thump you for it.

GRAYDON: This evening? When it's cooled down and they're no longer in those sexy outfits? What good is that? I want to drool at them now!

ALAN: Well, you can't. You have to stay in there. You're infamous, you moron. If anyone spots you out here, you're a dead man.

GRAYDON: Do you think I don't know that?

(Alan shook his head.)

ALAN: Just accept it. You can't come outside. That's how it is. The government want you dead and your face is well known. The girls on the other hand can come outside and pose as canal groupies. Nobody suspects canal groupies. So they're out here and you're in there. That's just the way the cookie crumbled, mate. Now get used to it, and more to the point, get over it.

GRAYDON: Look, I know the situation, young man.

(He ruffled his shoulders.)

GRAYDON: It all seems so unfair though. There are pretty, scantily clad ladies out there and I can't ogle them.

ALAN: Correct. Now get used to it.

GRAYDON: Never!

(He then mused to himself quietly.)

GRAYDON: I'm a tactical genius. I don't get used to things. I get creative. I find a way.

(He then skulked deeper into the cabin. Glad he'd gone, Alan nodded then looked to Claymore.)

ALAN: Suddenly the thought of murdering that old git doesn't seem so outrageous.

CLAYMORE: Yeah, well, we can think about that later. Right now, we've got an opportunity to grasp.

ALAN: What?

(Claymore nodded down river.)

CLAYMORE: Unless I'm very much mistaken, which I'm not, that's Thorpe and Samson's boat heading this way.

ALAN: It is?

(He glanced down river then beamed.)

ALAN: It is!

(He then looked to Sierra and Josie urgently.)

ALAN: Time to shine, ladies.

JOSIE: What?

ALAN: Be sexy!

(Josie proceeded to sweat profusely.)

JOSIE: How?

CLAYMORE: Just copy Sierra.

(Josie glanced to where Sierra was sitting with her eyes closed; her skin glistening in the sunshine as she allowed the breeze to gently blow through her hair.)

JOSIE: She's just... being herself.

ALAN: You do the same then. Sunbathe and relax, okay?

JOSIE: Um... okay...

(She then sat back uneasily, trying to copy Sierra's relaxed pose.)

JOSIE: Like this?

SIERRA: Will you just chill out and relax, woman? Your raspy voice is giving me a headache.

JOSIE: Damn, Sierra. You're too mean.

ALAN: Yeah, well, never mind that. Just sit back and look awesome. Claymore and I have got some gloating to do.

CLAYMORE: And then some.

(They then watched as the rival boat came into range before offering up a series of acknowledging waves to the two crewmen.)

ALAN: Thorpe! Samson!

CLAYMORE: Lads!

(The two rival crewman then called back to them.)

THORPE: Claypool! Albert!

SAMSON: What's this I see? Women?

THORPE: Where did you dig them up from? Trolls are us?

ALAN: Don't be jealous, lads. You're embarrassing yourselves.

CLAYMORE: Yeah. Isn't the fact we've bagged a couple of fit ones, while you two lonely losers have no-one, embarrassing enough for you?

THORPE: Fit ones? Fit ones???

(He then gestured towards Sierra.)

THORPE: She's...

(He then sighed in dismay.)

THORPE: Fuck. She's well tasty.

ALAN: Only the best for us two, son.

SAMSON: The best of what? They're just sitting there!

THORPE: Yeah! It's not like they're all over you or anything.

CLAYMORE: They're just tired, mate.

ALAN: They had a busy morning.

(He then performed a pelvic thrust.)

ALAN: Know what I mean?

THORPE: Yeah! They made out with each other, because you two cunts couldn't cut the mustard.

(Sierra then opened her eyes and looked at the rival crew as they passed.)

SIERRA: Actually, they were amazing!

(She then closed her eyes again. Gobsmacked, the two lads on the rival boat said nothing and could only sail onwards agape as the two boats went their separate ways.)

ALAN: Later!

CLAYMORE: Bye, losers!

(Thorpe and Samson just sneered then focussed on the canal again, defeated by Sierra's words. Watching them go, Alan and Claymore shared a high five.)

ALAN: We sure told them two cunts.

CLAYMORE: Didn't we though? Nice!

ALAN: We always were the kings of banter.

JOSIE: Really? It sounded like you were getting nowhere until Sierra lied for you.

(Sierra sniggered then glanced away. As she did so, Alan and Claymore looked to one another then ruffled their necks indignantly.)

ALAN: We did alright.

CLAYMORE: Yeah!

ALAN: And besides, Sierra merely did her job. As canal groupies, you're *meant* to make us look good.

CLAYMORE: Yeah! It's a team effort.

ALAN: Exactly.

CLAYMORE: And you did just enough. Just!

(He nodded to affirm his words.)

CLAYMORE: Granted, you helped make us look good, but...

SIERRA: But what?

CLAYMORE: You *could* have made us look *great* if your hearts were in it. Next time, try to make it look we're the sexiest men on earth and you can't get enough of us, or something.

ALAN: Yeah. Like you're supposed to.

JOSIE: Um...

ALAN: Um, what?

JOSIE: I'm not sure I'd be good at that.

CLAYMORE: Then work on it. If you can't make convincing canal groupies, you'll have to stay indoors with Graydon.

(Graydon yelled out from below.)

GRAYDON: Go on, fail!

ALAN: Shut up, you.

(He rolled his eyes then looked to Josie again.)

ALAN: Anyway, that's for next time. I'm sure you'll do better next time.

CLAYMORE: Yup. And as first attempts go, it wasn't too shabby. We won after all.

ALAN: Yes, yes we did. Seeing those two fuckers sail away feeling like a pair of idiots brought joy to my heart.

CLAYMORE: Same. It's what canal life is all about.

JOSIE: Humiliating your fellow workers?

CLAYMORE: Yes.

JOSIE: I see.

ALAN: Anyway, never mind that. Now we've got a few minutes to spare, allow me explain the rest of our journey.

(Graydon then shouted from the cabin again.)

GRAYDON: Let me guess, we'll be going dead straight. Pretty much where the canal goes, we'll be going with it. Correct?

ALAN: Shut up! Nobody appreciates your sarcasm, you old fart.

GRAYDON: Charming.

ALAN: Shut it!

(He ruffled his neck then looked to Josie again.)

ALAN: Anyway, as I was saying, the journey. As you're probably aware, we're still in the Morley flatlands. A lovely bit of canal this. Not a hill in sight. Just lovely, flat farmland and the odd town dotted about here and there. It's so flat there isn't a lock for miles. Needless to say, this part of the journey is heaven for the drivers.

CLAYMORE: Yes. Yes, it is.

GRAYDON: Boring!!!

ALAN: Shut up, you!

(He shook his brow then looked to Sierra.)

ALAN: Further down the canal is the old city of Dentate. Very popular with tourists and for some reason they love to take *photos* of the boats going past, so you'll have to go back inside for a bit, just to be safe.

GRAYDON: Huzzah!

ALAN: I hate to send you back in there with that old git, but it makes sense to be cautious.

The last thing we need is photographic evidence of us two helping fugitives escape. Not that anyone will ever see it, I expect, but it's better to be safe than sorry.

SIERRA: I understand.

JOSIE: Uh-huh.

ALAN: Cool.

(He nodded.)

ALAN: Things get tougher after that.

SIERRA: They do?

ALAN: Yeah. Not for you lot. For us two, I mean.

CLAYMORE: We enter the Sanford hills.

JOSIE: And they're bad are they?

ALAN: Locks by the fucking dozen. It takes an hour to move half a mile at one point.

CLAYMORE: With robbers trying their luck.

ALAN: Yeah.

(He sighed.)

ALAN: Then it gets worse. We move into Cray valley.

JOSIE: I've heard of that. Isn't that where the canal gets really thin?

CLAYMORE: That's the place.

JOSIE: I saw it on a documentary about wolves.

ALAN: That's the place! I won't lie to you, girl; wolves *are* a serious problem.

SIERRA: I think I'll go indoors for that bit.

CLAYMORE: That'd be wise, yes. It's not too bad when we're the only boat on the canal, because we can go down the middle, out of their reach, but when another boat comes the other way...

ALAN: Yeah, there's no rival crew banter then. We're all busy watching our flanks for wolves.

CLAYMORE: Which isn't easy because there's thick woodland on either side and the place is forever shrouded in mist.

JOSIE: It looked really spooky on TV.

ALAN: It is.

(He then shrugged.)

ALAN: There's more flatland the other side though. And some lovely, remote moorings.

CLAYMORE: Good place for a campfire.

ALAN: And a few beers.

CLAYMORE: That was implied.

ALAN: Right.

(He nodded.)

ALAN: Anyway, from there we sail on to the border.

CLAYMORE: You'll be hiding by then, of course.

ALAN: Once we've been checked and released to unload our cargo, that's when we set about sneaking you off the boat.

SIERRA: And how do you go about that exactly?

ALAN: Well, I can't be bothered to go into too much detail right now, but there are people up there who're happy to help. Former refugees like yourselves, working on the dockside.

CLAYMORE: Three of *them* will come onto the boat to unload, and *you* three will walk out again.

ALAN: Those three will then disperse when the coast is clear.

CLAYMORE: Works like a charm.

ALAN: Every time.

CLAYMORE: We'll have been paid in full by then, of course.

(He then looked directly at Sierra. With a whimper, she glanced at her bracelet then pouted at him.)

SIERRA: I just want to keep hold of it for one more day.

CLAYMORE: Fine. As long as we get paid before reaching the border...

SIERRA: You will.

(She then glowered at Josie.)

SIERRA: I hope you're happy. You *know* how much I treasure this thing.

JOSIE: Do I *look* happy about it, Sierra?

SIERRA: Yes!

JOSIE: No, I don't.

SIERRA: Okay, you don't then, but... shut up.

JOSIE: Right...



ALAN: Anyway, that's the journey explained. If you want any further details, speak to Claymore.

CLAYMORE: What? Why do I have to...

ALAN: Because I'm going for a piss.

(He then darted into the cabin.)

CLAYMORE: You always bloody do that.

(He shook his head then looked to the girls.)

CLAYMORE: Well? Any questions?

JOSIE: Nothing I can think of.

SIERRA: I'm fine.

CLAYMORE: You sure are.

(He then glanced away and burned red.)

CLAYMORE: For fuck sake, man; control yourself.

---

As the boat continued on through the flatlands, the mood on board was a wholly peaceful one. Sierra found it easy to forget her woes while relaxing in the sunshine. As a result, Josie was enjoying not being snarled at for once. For the two boatmen, there was nothing to be downbeat about. This was indeed a lovely stretch of canal and they enjoying crossing it. Even Graydon had found peace. Having managed to prize open an air vent and place a mirror in the perfect position, he could see right up Sierra's skirt. Needless to say, he'd been silent for quite some time. Beginning to find his lack of complaints somewhat unsettling, however, it wasn't long before Alan started to get suspicious. Having given Claymore a sideways glance, he paced to the cabin door then sunk down and sat on the step. Watching as Graydon peered gleefully at the ceiling of the boat, he grimaced uneasily then proceeded to quiz him about it.

ALAN: What the hell are you doing?

GRAYDON: Piss off; I'm busy.

ALAN: Doing what exactly?

(Graydon ruffled his neck indignantly.)

GRAYDON: I'm sightseeing.

ALAN: Through the air vent?

GRAYDON: Yes!

(Alan glowered at him suspiciously.)

ALAN: What are you really doing?

GRAYDON: I just told you.

ALAN: Sightseeing through an air vent?

GRAYDON: Yes!

ALAN: Graydon...

GRAYDON: What?

(Alan sighed.)

ALAN: You doing something perverted, aren't you?

GRAYDON: No!

ALAN: Meaning?

GRAYDON: Shut up.

ALAN: So you are doing something perverted.

GRAYDON: Well...

(He shrugged.)

GRAYDON: If you consider using a mirror to peer at those two sexy girls through the air vent to be perverted, I suppose I am.

ALAN: Wow.

(He shook his head.)

ALAN: They'd kill you if they knew.

GRAYDON: Yes, but they don't.

ALAN: Dude...

GRAYDON: Look, what they don't know won't hurt them, will it?

ALAN: That's not the point.

GRAYDON: Yes, it is. And besides, I have to do something to pass the time. It's bloody boring just sitting here.

(He nodded forcefully.)

GRAYDON: So you should be grateful I've found something constructive to do.

ALAN: Constructive?

GRAYDON: Yes. If I wasn't doing this, I'd be looking for ways to circumnavigate your locks and raid the food cupboard. Trust me, this is a good thing.

ALAN: Well...

(He sighed.)

ALAN: Whatever. It's keeping you quiet, I suppose. If they find out though...

GRAYDON: They won't.

ALAN: But if they do...

GRAYDON: They'll be impressed.

ALAN: Impressed???

GRAYDON: But my ingenuity.

(He beamed.)

GRAYDON: I'm a problem solver, you see? An ideas man. I find solutions to difficult problems. It's what I do. And I do it bloody well.

ALAN: A problem solver? Hardly. You were a government minister. All you did was cause fucking problems.

GRAYDON: That's an outrageous lie!

ALAN: Is it now?

GRAYDON: Yes! I was never a government minister. I was a government advisor. I was the chap departments came to when they needed clever ideas.

(He exhaled.)

GRAYDON: And I always delivered. Why, some of my innovations were truly inspired.

(Alan grimaced.)

ALAN: Like what, exactly?

GRAYDON: Well...

(He shrugged.)

GRAYDON: My favourite one has to be the great racism scandal from a few years ago.

ALAN: Racism?

GRAYDON: Yes.

(Delighted to get the chance to talk about himself, he averted his gaze from up Sierra's skirt and looked to Alan proudly.)

GRAYDON: When you working class oiks started to complain about the spiralling cost of living, the department of home affairs asked for my help in creating a distraction. And what I delivered was pure gold.

(He exhaled.)

GRAYDON: As you well know, there are two races native to this country. White people with names like Dave and tanned people with names like, well, yours. Whatever that is.

ALAN: Alan?

GRAYDON: Right. Not like yours then, but you know what I mean. Tanned people. Sierra for example. And that idiot singer, Juan Cortez or whatever his name is.

ALAN: I get it. White and tanned people. So what?

GRAYDON: Well, what I did with that was inspired. You see, we'd been lowering wages and increasing the cost of living for years. More profit for ourselves, the wealthy, you see? And the people didn't like it. They were beginning to realise that working class people were being screwed. And that's where I came in.

(He beamed with delight.)

GRAYDON: I got my friends in the media to run a series of stories about areas where there are mostly tanned people, but most of the government are white. Purely by coincidence of course, because nobody gives a shit about race. Or at least, they didn't.

ALAN: Go on.

GRAYDON: Well, I made it an issue. The stories were based on how white people were ruling over the tanned people in their own towns. You know, throwing in the odd suggestion that racism was involved. Then, two days later, when a white person murdered his tanned friend, I made damn sure it was all over the news. A racist attack! It wasn't of course, but I made it look that way. With full control over the media, you can do what you like.

(He chuckled.)

GRAYDON: Within days, the people had forgotten all about the repression of the working classes and started crying about racism in society instead. Hilarious, because our two races have lived side by side for centuries with no hint of conflict. Nobody even cares about race anymore. Well, they did once I'd faked an issue. They even formed a group called Tanned Lives Matter. And hilariously, white people, who'd never done or said anything racist in all their lives, even came out and apologised for the behaviour of their fellow white man.

(He burst out laughing.)

GRAYDON: It was priceless. They completely forgot all about the persecution of the working classes and started focussing on solving a racist issue that didn't even exist in the first place.

(He laughed some more then exhaled with joy.)

GRAYDON: That was all my doing. And it was inspired. Pure genius. Some say I may have even staved off an uprising by doing that. So there you have it. I'm a problem solver. A master...

ALAN: Baiter?

GRAYDON: Manipulator!

ALAN: I still think I was right.

GRAYDON: Yes, well, you think what you like. The fact remains that I'm an innovator, a creative genius. And you ought to be impressed.

(He then glanced up Sierra's skirt again.)

GRAYDON: Shouldn't you? Admit it.

(Hearing nothing, he then averted his gaze and glanced to the doorway. Much to his annoyance, Alan had gone.)

GRAYDON: Well that's just rude.

(He then stared through the vent again and beamed.)

GRAYDON: And that's just divine. Sexy, sexy girl, that one. Lovely.

---

Having heard enough of what Graydon had had to say, Alan had returned to the deck, only to find Josie staring at him from the roof of the boat, just above the doorway. She'd been listening in to what Graydon had to say and her face was the picture of rage. Thrown by it, Alan jumped back and grimaced.

ALAN: Holy fuck, it's the devil!

JOSIE: Hardly.

(She sneered.)

JOSIE: That's the devil in there. In the cabin.

ALAN: Right... you heard all that did you?

JOSIE: I heard the bit about racism, yes.

ALAN: Yeah... he's a cunt, isn't he?

JOSIE: And then some.

(She sighed then sat up and shook her head.)

JOSIE: But nothing he said surprised me. The government do these nasty things all the time and nobody seems to notice. So frustrating.

(Alan looked to her emptily for a moment then nodded to himself, before leaning in closer to her.)

ALAN: I notice.

JOSIE: You do?

ALAN: Yeah. All the time. I rarely mention it nowadays though, 'cause when I mention politics, Claymore's eyes glaze over and his mind wanders off elsewhere. I end up talking to myself half the time.

(Josie nodded.)

JOSIE: I know that feeling so well. Nice to know it's not just me though.

ALAN: I hear that.

(He gave a stifled laugh.)

ALAN: I had a rant for about ten minutes once, and when I glanced up, the cunt had gone. Just buggered off and left me, mid-rant.

JOSIE: Sierra does that too.

(She smiled.)

JOSIE: So, this rant...

ALAN: It was about labelling people scroungers.

JOSIE: Oh? I'd love to hear it.

ALAN: You wouldn't. I tend to curse a lot and kick things. You know, swear bloody vengeance on the system.

JOSIE: That's *my* kind of rant.

ALAN: Yeah, but I'm not gonna go off on one right now, Josie. I'll save it for later.

JOSIE: Fair enough. Just give me the brief summary.

ALAN: Well...

(He shrugged.)

ALAN: I was basically ranting about how they take away essential services. You know, how they start by taking them away from people who can afford to go private, so only the needy still get them.

JOSIE: Go on.

ALAN: They do that because it sounds great in principle. Only the poor need state help, so only the poor will get it. Only, it's not state help, is it? It's the things you've already paid for in your fucking taxes!

JOSIE: Exactly.

ALAN: And then to really take the piss, they start describing the people who are still getting these services as scroungers. Spongers. Burdens on the state. And people believe it. They get uppity about it. So, in the end, the government take these services away from everyone, *including* the needy. And the better-off applaud them for it. One in the eye for the scroungers, they say. Little do they realise, all they're doing is applauding the government for redirecting their taxes away from these essential services, usually into their own pockets.

(He growled.)

ALAN: I swear, people are fucking stupid.

(He then grimaced uncomfortably.)

ALAN: Sorry. I was about to go off on one then. That's why I don't like to rant if I can help it.

JOSIE: No, it's fine. Ranting is healthy, I think. Plus, you were spot on. All they ever do is take away the things our taxes are meant to provide. And yet the taxes never come down.

ALAN: Yeah, because like I said, they shovel that money into private contracts with companies their friends all have shares in. Corrupt cunts.

JOSIE: They're the worst.

ALAN: If I had my way, they'd all be chained to a wall and shot.

(Josie smiled.)

JOSIE: A little drastic for me. I want the revolution to be a peaceful one. I'd have slung them all in jail. That's what I deluded myself I was working towards, anyway.

ALAN: Deluded yourself?

JOSIE: Yeah. I thought I was going to be part of the great awakening, you know? I thought I'd be there when people finally saw the light and started to rise up against the corruption and tyranny.

(She pouted.)

JOSIE: So much for that. The government barely even noticed anything I did.

ALAN: Well, that's not true, is it?

JOSIE: Oh, it is.

ALAN: You wouldn't be fleeing the country if they hadn't noticed you, Josie, surely.

(Josie turned bright red.)

JOSIE: That's not... well... actually, um...

(She whimpered.)

JOSIE: I'm only fleeing because they're after Sierra. Like I said, they never even noticed me.

ALAN: Right...

JOSIE: Thing is, if they arrested her, she'd talk. Of course, she would. There's no way she'd stand up to such brutal interrogation. Not a chance. Meaning she'd end up dropping me in it. So, I had no choice but to flee.

(She sighed.)

JOSIE: So, yeah. I achieved nothing. I did literally sod all for the cause and now I'm running away. So much for the great revolutionary.

ALAN: Damn. That has to suck.

JOSIE: It does. I can live with it though. I guess it wasn't meant to be. The thing I can't forgive myself for is dropping Sierra in it like I did. That was such a screw-up.

ALAN: Well, yes. From what I've heard, it was a cock-up of epic proportions.

(Josie whimpered.)

JOSIE: It was.

ALAN: You can't torture yourself over it for ever though. You need to move on with your life. And so does Sierra.

JOSIE: Yeah, but...

ALAN: But nothing. Wallowing in self-pity won't help. You need to move on. And I mean, as soon as humanly possible. The world won't stop and wait for you to finish sulking. Life goes on, and you need to keep up with it. Both of you.

JOSIE: You're right, of course.

ALAN: Yup. I always am.

(He puffed out.)

ALAN: We do this trip every week, you know? Move a load across the border into Amaria, then ship another one back to *this* country. And on every trip across the border, there's always someone in dire straits, desperate to flee from persecution. I can't remember the last time we made this trip without a refugee in tow.

JOSIE: Really?

ALAN: Yeah. And you know what they've always had in common? None of them are prepared. They're always pre-occupied with pining; pining for the life they're leaving behind. None of them are ever ready to face the hardship of starting over in the new country with absolutely nothing to their name.

(He shrugged.)

ALAN: I try to warn them they need to think ahead, but it never seems to sink in, you know?

JOSIE: I guess it's hard to look ahead when you're grieving for what you've lost.

ALAN: I know, but it's really important that you do.

(He nodded.)

ALAN: Just give that some thought, yeah?

JOSIE: I will.

ALAN: And who knows, we might meet again someday. Then you can show us how well you've done.

JOSIE: I *doubt* we'll meet again. There's no way I can come back to this country.

(Her brow then furrowed over.)

JOSIE: And even if we did, you probably wouldn't remember me.

ALAN: What? Why would you think that?

JOSIE: Because we've met before and you don't remember!

(Alan grimaced.)

ALAN: I can only apologise for that.

JOSIE: Nah, don't bother. I did only see you for a few minutes, I suppose.

ALAN: Yeah, but I don't usually forget a pretty face.

(Josie blushed.)

JOSIE: I'm not pretty.

ALAN: Liar!

JOSIE: Okay, I am then.

(They shared a chuckle.)

JOSIE: Seriously though, looking back, you probably don't remember my face because I was using it to kiss my boyfriend goodbye. Plus, I had a hoodie on. And it was really dark.

(She grimaced.)

JOSIE: Come to think of it, there's no reason why you *would* remember my face.

ALAN: So I'm forgiven then?

JOSIE: Of course.

ALAN: Result.

(He then offered her a kind smile.)

ALAN: Going back to what we were talking about before though, we *might* meet again someday, Josie.

JOSIE: Nope. Like I said, I won't be going back to Efland again. Ever.

ALAN: Yeah, but we might meet again over the border in Amaria. Claymore and I are putting ourselves at great risk to smuggle people overseas. Okay, the rewards are pretty great, but if we get caught, we're fucked. So, don't rule it out. If I even think for a *minute* we've been rumbled, *I'll* be fleeing over the border too.

JOSIE: Wise.

(She bit her lip.)

JOSIE: So are *you* prepared? I mean, if you have to flee, will you be ready to face the future rather than pining for the past?

ALAN: Oh, we'll be ready alright, girl. We've got an evacuation plan for *every* scenario, pretty much. And we know that if we have to flee, that's it. No looking back. Our days on the canal will be over.

JOSIE: Wow. I wish I could accept it that readily.

ALAN: Well, to be fair, you probably could if you'd had more time to think about it. For us it's an occupational hazard. For you it was a bolt from the blue. Of course, you weren't ready. But like I say, try to look ahead now, Josie. It's the only way.

JOSIE: I'll try.

ALAN: That's the spirit.

(Just then, Claymore spoke up from where he was steering the boat.)

CLAYMORE: Look lively, ladies. Here comes Harris and his boys.

SIERRA: Who?

CLAYMORE: A bunch of tossers with big mouths.

ALAN: A boat full of dickheads.

CLAYMORE: Yeah. Make us look good, girls. Come on. This is your time to shine again.

(At this point, Sierra hurried to the deck and joined the other three in glancing up the canal.)

SIERRA: That red boat, is it?

ALAN: It's pink.

CLAYMORE: Yeah. No matter how much they claim otherwise.

SIERRA: Right.

JOSIE: So, um... what do you want us to do?

ALAN: Your jobs. Look sexy. *Be* sexy. And most of all, make it look like you think us two are the sexiest men on earth.

SIERRA: Okay.

JOSIE: Um... what? How do I do that?

SIERRA: Just use what god gave you?

JOSIE: A brain?

CLAYMORE: Seriously? Nobody's that innocent surely.

SIERRA: No, she's not. Not even close. But she does struggle with the girly stuff.

JOSIE: Right, well, that's not helping, you lot.

SIERRA: Oh, just do as I do.

(She then glanced at the boat edging closer before slipping a hand onto Claymore's chest and stepping close to look into his eyes. She then spoke in a seductive voice.)

SIERRA: They're gonna think I'm whispering sexy, sweet nothings in his ear now. As if I'm all love struck and starry-eyed. It's a simple as that, Josie. Act like a lovesick fool.

JOSIE: I don't know how lovesick fools act.

SIERRA: Then just act sexy, for pity's sake. It's not like you've never done *that* before.

JOSIE: Fine, okay.

(With that, she stepped close to Alan and whimpered. And that was the *end* of her flirting.

Extremely nervous, she did nothing but stare at the crew of the other boat as the two began to pass.)

CLAYMORE: Alright, Harris? Lads! How's the pink boat handling?

(Harris scoffed at him.)

HARRIS: Still colour blind, I see.

(He then gestured towards the girls with his head.)

HARRIS: Bagged yourselves a couple of trolls, I see.

ALAN: Trolls???

(Harris gestured to where his fellow crew members were staring back at them with young women draped all over them.)

HARRIS: You want to get yourself some fit ones now and again. Ugly cunts like you might have to pay, but still, those two are embarrassing.

(Claymore laughed out loud.)

CLAYMORE: And you called *us* blind?

HARRIS: Colour blind.

CLAYMORE: Yeah, well, you're medically blind, son. Look at her!

(He gestured to Sierra.)

CLAYMORE: Best looking bird on the canal, by far.

(Sierra nestled her head into Claymore's chest and fluttered her eyelashes.)

SIERRA: And the sexiest!

CLAYMORE: That too!

(Eager to copy Sierra's moves, Josie nodded to herself then stepped closer to Alan, accidentally head-butting him on the chin as she did so.)

ALAN: Ow.

JOSIE: Sorry, sorry.

(Alan swiftly spoke up from the corner of his mouth.)

ALAN: It's fine. Just keep trying to be sexy.

(Not sure how she'd go about doing such a thing, Josie whimpered then flicked her hair, a move she'd often seen Sierra do when flirting with men she liked. Sadly for her, she flicked her head with such a force, her hair all flopped over her face.)

JOSIE: Shit.

(She then swept the hair aside and stepped closer to Alan again.)

ALAN: You're standing on my foot.

JOSIE: Fuck.

(She then stepped back and grimaced uncomfortably. In that moment, having lost all her confidence, her demeanour was far from sexy, and she looked every inch as uncomfortable as she felt. Not about to give up and let everyone down, however, she remained in place and hoped Sierra could cover for her.)

HARRIS: Bollocks, she's an eight out of ten at most.

SIERRA: Why? Are you docking me 2 points for being way out of your league?

CLAYMORE: Way, way, way out of his league.

HARRIS: Yeah, right. She's not that...

(Just then, his co-crewman stepped to his side and scoffed arrogantly.)

MARKO: Let me handle this, mate.

HARRIS: Mate...

MARKO: Nah, leave it to me, mate.

HARRIS: Fine. Just... win!

MARKO: Oh, I will.

(He then gestured to Sierra.)

MARKO: Alright, Clayton, I'll give you the dark-haired bird.

CLAYMORE: Claymore!

MARKO: Nobody cares. Look, the dark-haired bird; not bad. She's everything you say and more. Accepted! But what's with that blonde idiot?

JOSIE: Hey!

MARKO: Trying to act all sexy just now, she nudded him on the chin!

CLAYMORE: She did?

MARKO: Yes!

CLAYMORE: Right. Well, she *meant* to do that.



MARKO: Seriously?

CLAYMORE: Yeah. Alan's into that kind of thing.

ALAN: What?

CLAYMORE: He's a bit kinky.

ALAN: Claymore, I'm gonna slap you in a minute.

MARKO: Yeah, you do that.

(He then roared with laughter.)

MARKO: Those two are clearly fake. It's so obvious. The blonde one can't act for shit.

(He beamed.)

MARKO: I can't wait to tell the other crews about this. You two silly cunts are so unappealing to canal groupies, you've had to pay two girls to pretend to be interested in you.

CLAYMORE: They're not pretending, Marko; don't be such a knob!

MARKO: Bullshit! They're faking it for all they're worth.

(Fearing it was all going somewhat awry, Sierra furrowed her brow.)

SIERRA: Hey! Marigold, is it?

MARKO: Marko!

SIERRA: Nobody cares.

(She sneered.)

SIERRA: Claymore is right. You're as blind as a bat. Do you *really* think we're getting paid to pretend to like these guys? If you do, you're an idiot.

(She then nestled closer to Claymore and licked her lips.)

SIERRA: I've been into this guy for a long time. And he's got everything I need right here.

(She then ran her fingers across the front of Claymore's trousers, forcing a whimper of delight from his lips.)

SIERRA: He's more of a man that you could ever dream of being.

(Finding her sexy beyond belief, Marko could only whimper. How he wanted to be Claymore right now. He wasn't about to lose face, however, and quickly returned a smile to his face. It was a smile that soon turned to laughter.)

MARKO: Right. I get it now, Clayton. You and that fit bird wanted to get it on, so you've got your mate there to fall on his sword.

ALAN: My sword?

MARKO: Yeah. You've agreed to spend time with her really unsexy mate, just so he can have his way with the fit one.

(He laughed even louder.)

MARKO: Classic. You two are comedy gold.

ALAN: Now, hang on a minute; there's no need for insults! She's a very nice girl!

MARKO: I don't doubt it, mate. She's not sexy though, is she? We've only been here a minute and in that time, she's tried to cuddle you and head-butted you in this face. She's also trod on your foot. And she flicked her hair so poorly, it all fell over her face like a mop.

(He grinned.)

MARKO: You didn't think I'd noticed that, did you?

ALAN: Dude...

(He grimaced.)

ALAN: No, I didn't.

HARRIS: Twat!

MARKO: Right? In all my years on this canal, I've never seen such a display. What did you tell her? Quick, look sexy? Pretend to like me! You did, didn't you?

(He laughed some more.)

MARKO: What a knob! You might have found a bird who *knows* how to be sexy. That mess is about as feminine as Delia the butch lesbian back at the docks. Where did you get her

from? Was there an advert in tomboy magazine or something? Look at her. She doesn't even *stand* like a girl.

(As he continued to laugh, Claymore raised a curious eyebrow. He could feel Sierra shuddering with rage.)

MARKO: Seriously, what chat up line would you use with a bird like that? Oi, macho bird; do you want to come back to my place to help me plumb in my new washing machine?

(Suddenly, Sierra burst forwards and bellowed at him.)

SIERRA: Shut the fuck up, dickhead. Fucking leave her alone!

MARKO: Easy!!!

SIERRA: Bollocks. That's my friend you're insulting! Yeah, she might not be all girly and cute, but there's nothing butch about her whatsoever! She's all woman; and a good woman at that! And what's more, she's way out of your league. If she met you in a bar, she wouldn't even look at you twice, so why not fuck off out of it. We're done with you. Idiot!

(She then grabbed the astonished Josie's hands and led her down into the cabin with her.

Having watched them go, the crew of both ships said nothing. They'd all been stunned into a brief catatonia by Sierra's unexpected rant. No banter passed between them and the boats simply went their separate ways in silence. Claymore and Alan could only grimace at one another. A short while later, however, Sierra stomped back out onto the deck.)

SIERRA: What the hell was I thinking? They can call you what they like. Why the hell did I defend you? And why would I drag you in there with me? Like I want to be shut in a confined space with you and *that* filthy old git.

(She then clambered atop the boat. As she did so, Josie slowly emerged, wearing a furrowed brow.)

JOSIE: Excuse me, guys.

(Claymore and Alan just nodded as Josie hopped onto the top of the boat and strutted up to Sierra.)

JOSIE: What the hell, Sierra? What the hell was that?

SIERRA: Stupid face says what?

JOSIE: Stop that! I want to know. How the hell can you be so nice to me one minute, then so mean the next? What's going on in that head of yours???

(Sierra shook her head angrily, then sighed in defeat. Her shoulders slumped and she pouted sorrowfully.)

SIERRA: I'm annoyed.

JOSIE: You don't say.

(Sierra then snarled and looked up at her.)

SIERRA: I'm annoyed because I know it's only a matter of time before I forgive you!

(Josie grimaced.)

JOSIE: What?

SIERRA: You heard.

(She hung her head.)

SIERRA: I can't stay angry at you forever; I just can't. And it's annoying because I want to.

JOSIE: Sierra...

SIERRA: No, Josie. Stop. Don't talk to me.

(She pouted.)

SIERRA: I'm so conflicted.

JOSIE: Right, well, when you're ready to talk...

SIERRA: What you did was horrible. You've ruined my life. I hate you for that!

(She sighed.)

SIERRA: I know you never meant to though. And I know you'd never do anything like that on purpose. And I know you're hurting too. So, I want to hug you. Then you'll feel better.

(She snarled.)

SIERRA: I also want to throw you overboard. Not that I could.

(She sighed.)

SIERRA: Or would.

(She looked up at Josie with tears in her eyes.)

SIERRA: Why do you have to make hating you so hard? I can't do it.

JOSIE: Well, if it helps, right now, I hate myself enough for both of us.

SIERRA: See? Knowing that makes me want to hug you even more.

(She shook her head.)

SIERRA: You shouldn't hate yourself, Josie; that's not healthy.

JOSIE: Well, I can hardly be proud of my mistake, can I?

SIERRA: No, but hating yourself won't help.

(She sighed then glanced at the water glistening on the canal.)

SIERRA: When we get across the border we'll have nothing, you know that, right? No money, nowhere to stay, no idea where to go. We're gonna be vagrants. You realise that, right?

JOSIE: Yeah. It's gonna suck.

SIERRA: The only thing we'll have is each other.

JOSIE: Yeah.

SIERRA: And some nice clothes to wear.

(Josie smiled.)

JOSIE: Well, that's true.

SIERRA: Then it'll be down to us to make something of ourselves. You know, to carve out lives somehow.

(Her shoulders sunk.)

SIERRA: How the hell am I gonna do that with my skillset? I'm good at three things, Josie. I can work a computer, answer a phone and look good doing it. How's that gonna help us with the essentials we'll need to survive when we first get there? Things like building a hut and hunting for our own food?

JOSIE: Well... *I* can build us a hut. I've done it before. And I'm not bad at hunting...

(She nodded.)

JOSIE: I'll see we're okay; don't worry about that.

SIERRA: Thanks.

(She whimpered.)

SIERRA: Once again, I'd be lost without you.

JOSIE: Yeah, well, there's been many occasions where I'd have felt lost without *you*, Sierra. It's a two way street. We support each other. We always have.

SIERRA: Yeah?

JOSIE: Of course.

SIERRA: Cool.

(They then remained silently nodding to themselves for a moment, before Sierra angrily swung her head in Josie's direction.)

SIERRA: Are you gonna hug me any fucking time soon, or what?

JOSIE: Oh, right.

(She then jumped down to her knees and threw her arms around her. They then proceeded to cry their eyes out together.)

SIERRA: I'm sorry I was mean!

JOSIE: And I'm sorry I ruined your life.

(As they continued to sob together, Alan scratched his head then glanced at Claymore.)

ALAN: Remember when *you and I* had a serious falling out, that time?

CLAYMORE: When we called each other a cunt several times then got over it?

ALAN: Yeah.

(He grimaced.)

ALAN: Women do things very differently, don't they?

CLAYMORE: Yup. They most certainly do.

---

For the next few hours, the journey was extremely uneventful. Best friends again, Sierra and Josie simply sunbathed peacefully. Enjoying the quiet stretch of river, Alan sat with them and enjoyed the view. He claimed it was the view of the canal he was enjoying, but Claymore wasn't so sure. Also giving the girls the eye as he led the boat forth, however, he wasn't in a position to criticise.

Once early evening approached, after a very enjoyable day's boating, Alan headed down into the cabin to begin dinner. Sierra followed him inside. She loved cooking and was looking forward to getting involved. Alan had suggested letting her do it by herself. Not about to hang around in the cabin with only Graydon for company, however, she'd politely declined. In the end, they'd agreed on a joint effort. Delighted to see her, as soon as Sierra entered the cabin, Graydon fixed what remained of his hair then nodded to her warmly.

GRAYDON: Young lady.

SIERRA: What now?

GRAYDON: That was a greeting.

SIERRA: Oh. Hello.

(She then grimaced uncomfortably and looked to Alan.)

SIERRA: Don't leave me alone with him, will you?

GRAYDON: Bloody cheek.

(He then sat back to gleefully ogle her legs. Ignoring him, Sierra looked to Alan again then smiled.)

SIERRA: What are we making then?

ALAN: We're making what I call bifteck avec pomme frites.

SIERRA: Oh, sounds complicated.

GRAYDON: That's the foreign way of saying steak and chips.

ALAN: Correct.

SIERRA: Oh. Right. I thought we were going to make something... I don't know... cultured, perhaps? Is that the right word?

ALAN: Right, well, I know what you mean but this is a simple gas stove, love. In a bloody canal boat. It's not exactly designed for creating high cuisine.

SIERRA: I see.

(She sighed.)

SIERRA: That's a shame.

(She then looked to him thoughtfully.)

SIERRA: Or is it? I actually make a really nice pepper sauce for steak.

(Alan looked to her urgently.)

ALAN: You do?

SIERRA: Yeah.

ALAN: Then take whatever ingredients you need. The worktop is all yours.

(He beamed.)

ALAN: I haven't had a decent pepper sauce in ages.

SIERRA: Then prepare to be dazzled.

ALAN: I shall. But then again, no I won't. I'll *prepare* the steak instead. If I don't, your efforts with the pepper sauce will have been a waste of time.

GRAYDON: Pepper sauce, eh? I do like a bit of pepper sauce. It makes even a bad steak taste like a great steak. Which is just as well, I'd wager.

ALAN: What's that supposed to mean?

GRAYDON: Nothing. Just that, well, cheap steak.

ALAN: It's all we could afford.

GRAYDON: And I appreciate that. I do.

(He rubbed his chin.)

GRAYDON: So, what's the other girl having? Josie.

ALAN: Steak, obviously.

GRAYDON: But she's a vegetarian.

SIERRA: No, she isn't!

GRAYDON: She isn't? Are you sure?

SIERRA: Yes!

ALAN: Why would you even think that?

GRAYDON: Well... these feminist, militant, revolutionary types are always bloody vegetarians. Anything to be fucking awkward.

SIERRA: Wow. You are such a bigot.

GRAYDON: Am not.

ALAN: Then why make such a stupid assumption?

GRAYDON: It wasn't an assumption. It was an educated guess. And I was right. They usually *are* vegetarians. Or worse, vegans. And ninety percent of the time they're lesbians. Speaking of which, does your friend ever lean towards the girl on girl side of...

SIERRA: She's not a bloody lesbian either.

GRAYDON: Right.

SIERRA: What is wrong with you???

GRAYDON: Nothing. I'm just old and wise. I've seen things, you see? And like I said, generally, girls like her are vegetarians who like to munch at the pussy without seeing the hilarious irony.

(Alan winced.)

ALAN: Dude! Did you really just say that?

GRAYDON: Yes. Why? Did it offend you? Well, boohoo. I say it as I see it; plain and simple.

(He beamed.)

GRAYDON: Speaking of which, nice arse, Sierra. Peachy. I approve.

(He then sat back giggling to himself. Opting to tune him out, Alan and Sierra shared a disapproving glance then continued about their jobs.)

ALAN: Right, let's give this steak a damn good tenderising. I do love this part.

SIERRA: Fun, isn't it?

ALAN: It's the best thing ever. I do enjoy beating my meat.

(He then clammed up and cringed.)

ALAN: Sorry.

(Sierra giggled.)

SIERRA: Don't be, that was funny.

ALAN: Phew. I like to annoy Claymore with that joke, you see? He's sick of hearing me say it every time we make a steak, so I have to keep repeating it. It's the law. I forgot I had female company.

SIERRA: It's fine. Crude jokes won't break me, Al.

ALAN: Good to know.

SIERRA: On the contrary, you should hear some of things Josie and I say when there's no men around.

GRAYDON: Examples, please.

SIERRA: Shut up, you.

GRAYDON: How rude.

(He shook his head.)

GRAYDON: You tan-skinned folk have such a horrible temperament.

ALAN: Excuse me?

SIERRA: Racist or what?

(Graydon chuckled.)

GRAYDON: I wondered how long it'd take you to play the race card.

ALAN: It's not playing the race card when you say something racist!

GRAYDON: Did I though? Did I? I think you'll find I simply made another observation, based on my extensive time on this planet, gaining wisdom and experience.

SIERRA: And yet not one single shred of decency.

GRAYDON: So you assume.

SIERRA: Just saying it as I see it.

GRAYDON: And why do you see *that*? Because I'm white? Racist.

ALAN: Wow.

GRAYDON: Not, wow.

(He nodded sternly.)

GRAYDON: If you must know, I don't give a shit what colour someone is. Nobody bloody does; not really. I was just giving you an example of what we talked about earlier, Alan.

How easy it was for me to stir up racial tension that time. You people are so gullible.

SIERRA: Us people?

GRAYDON: Ordinary folk. Especially young ones. You bite every time. And you'd believe any fucking thing the government tell you.

(Alan sighed.)

ALAN: Sadly, he's not wrong.

GRAYDON: Anyway, that's enough about race. I just wanted you to understand the point I was making earlier, that's all. I'm a strategist and I excel at using people's stupidity against them. It's how I became a very rich man indeed.

ALAN: Yeah, and I believed you the first time. There was no need for an example, mate.

GRAYDON: Right, well, I just thought...

ALAN: What? Were you waiting for me to be impressed? Only I wouldn't hold your breath.

GRAYDON: Fine.

(He ruffled his neck indignantly.)

GRAYDON: Seriously though, I want you to know, I don't have a racist bone in my body. I was just giving you an example of how I used my cunning genius to exploit people. I actually have a tan-skinned wife. No racist thoughts here, nope. Not one. You, Sierra and Claymore are fine by me.

(Alan gave Sierra a sideways glance.)

ALAN: Did he say...

SIERRA: Yup.

(Alan turned to face Graydon.)

ALAN: Claymore's white, you tit.

GRAYDON: No, he's not. He's clearly not. I'm not blind.

ALAN: He's just got a tan from steering the boat outside in the sun all summer long. Come mid-winter he's paler than Josie.

SIERRA: Really?

ALAN: Well, no; she's very pale, but not far off.

SIERRA: Right.

ALAN: Moron.

SIERRA: Hey!

ALAN: Not you. Graydon.

GRAYDON: Excuse me?

ALAN: You keep saying how experienced and worldly wise you are, but you can't even tell a white person with a suntan from a tan-skinned person.

SIERRA: Right? He's rubbish.

ALAN: He is.

GRAYDON: Shut up. Bloody rude, that's what you are.

(He then sat there and seethed. Caring very little for his bad mood, Sierra continued to prepare her sauce, glancing innocently at Alan as she did so.)

SIERRA: So, Claymore's very pale in the winter, is he?

ALAN: Well, yeah. He's a white bloke.

SIERRA: And um... what does his girlfriend think of that?

ALAN: What girlfriend?

SIERRA: Oh, does he not have one?

(Alan scoffed.)

ALAN: Of course not. He's a boatman! With canal groupies out there dying to throw themselves at us, what sort of idiot would *want* one?

SIERRA: Oh. I see.

ALAN: Not that he ever takes advantage of it.

SIERRA: No?

(She glanced away innocently.)

SIERRA: So, he's not interested in them, you mean?

ALAN: Sadly, no. He keeps women at arm's length these days.

SIERRA: *All* women or...

(She was then interrupted by the sound of Graydon giggling.)

GRAYDON: Hark at her, fishing for information.

ALAN: What?

GRAYDON: Sierra there is sweet on your buddy.

SIERRA: No, I'm not.

GRAYDON: Bloody are!

SIERRA: I was just making conversation.

GRAYDON: You mean fishing to find out where you might stand.

SIERRA: Shut up.

(She ruffled her neck.)

SIERRA: I know where I stand. Nowhere. In a few days I'll be somewhere over the border and he'll be sailing back down this canal again. We'll never see each other again.

(She sneered.)

SIERRA: So why I would bother pursuing my crush? *This* crush! A crush! That I don't have!

(Alan sighed as he continued to prepare the meal.)

ALAN: Indeed. And to be honest, even if you weren't destined to part ways, you'd be wasting your time.

(Sierra whimpered.)

SIERRA: I would?

GRAYDON: She's so into him.

SIERRA: Shut up.

ALAN: Yup, you'd be wasting your time completely. He hasn't been interested in women since his last girlfriend, Mercedes.

(He sucked his teeth.)

ALAN: That ended badly. Ever since then, all he's done is allow the odd canal groupie onto the boat for show. They end up filing their nails on the roof, wishing they'd never come with us. He just can't motivate himself.

SIERRA: Wow. That's terrible. What happened?

ALAN: That's just it, you see? Nobody knows. One minute she was there, the next she fucked off.

SIERRA: Really?

ALAN: Yeah. We were in a pub at the time. Having a few drinks in the garden. She got up and said I'll be back in a minute and that's all she wrote.

SIERRA: Wow. So...

ALAN: I don't know.

SIERRA: You don't know what I was gonna ask.

ALAN: I don't need to. The answer is, I don't know. She didn't come back into the garden, she didn't go back home and nobody we know ever saw her again. Could have been foul play, could have been anything. She literally just vanished, never to be seen again.

SIERRA: Damn.

ALAN: Right?

(He shrugged.)

ALAN: He thought the world of that woman then bang. Gone. And he hasn't got close to another woman since. He can barely even look at them.

(He shrugged.)

ALAN: Well, he couldn't until you came along.

(Sierra's heart soared.)

SIERRA: Yeah?

ALAN: Clearly, he finds you very easy on the eye.

GRAYDON: We all do.

ALAN: Not that it means anything. There's a difference between browsing and buying.

SIERRA: Right. Yeah, that's true.

ALAN: So, yeah. That's that. She disappeared and now women have no meaning to the man.

SIERRA: Awful.

ALAN: Yeah.

(He then nodded gleefully.)

ALAN: Still, never mind that. Let's get this dinner done!

GRAYDON: Amen to that. And be quick about it, I'm famished.

SIERRA: Right. Are you sure we have to feed him as well?

ALAN: Yeah, we do. I just haven't decided what to feed him *to*.

(They then stood there giggling, much to Graydon's annoyance.)

GRAYDON: So not funny.

---

Up on the deck at this time, Claymore eased the boat around a corner then bit his lip. He'd forgotten there was a lock up ahead and was far from pleased to be reminded of its existence.

CLAYMORE: Fuck.

(Josie glanced up from where she was relaxing in the sun.)

JOSIE: What's wrong?



CLAYMORE: I forget there was a lock around this bend. If I'd have remembered, I'd have told Alan to put the dinner on afterwards.

(He sighed.)

CLAYMORE: I just hope nothing gets burnt while he's out here opening it.

JOSIE: It won't. Sierra's helping. She's an awesome cook.

CLAYMORE: Oh, yeah. Good point.

(He beamed.)

CLAYMORE: Then he can get his arse out here and open it without me having to worry about the food.

JOSIE: No need.

(She then jumped down onto the deck and grabbed then lock key.)

JOSIE: I've got it.

(With that, she leapt onto the tow path, landing in a crouch.)

CLAYMORE: Wait! What? What the fuck's going on?

JOSIE: What does it look like? I'm gonna open the lock.

CLAYMORE: You know how, do you?

JOSIE: Of course. As a kid, my friends and I used to open and close them all the time in the park.

CLAYMORE: I hate little fuckers who do that!

JOSIE: Chill, rage boy. We only did it when boats were coming. We were being helpful.

CLAYMORE: Right. Yeah. Sorry.

JOSIE: It's cool.

(She then trotted off towards the lock. As she did so, Claymore raised an impressed eyebrow then glanced towards the cabin.)

CLAYMORE: Mate! Al!

(Alan's voice swiftly retorted.)

ALAN: I'm busy!

CLAYMORE: I was just gonna say...

ALAN: Say it later then!

CLAYMORE: Right.

(He then rolled his eyes and looked to where Josie was using the lock key to fill it with water.)

CLAYMORE: Nice. She's definitely done *that* before.

(He then recalled the first time Alan tried to use a lock key and started to chuckle to himself.)

CLAYMORE: Remember when you first tried to fill a lock with water, mate?

ALAN: Yes! And if you tell anyone, I'll shit on your plate.

CLAYMORE: Mate...

(He then grinned to himself as he steered the boat into place to head into the lock as soon as the gate was open. Having done so, he then waited patiently, glancing at the gates, waiting for Josie to push them open. As the water rose, however, he spotted a boat in the lock, rising to the surface with the water. The boat's sole occupier was standing on the deck, chatting to Josie with an angry expression on his face.)

CLAYMORE: Wait. That's Kev. He looks well pissed off.

(He grimaced.)

CLAYMORE: I hope it's nothing Josie did.

(He then shrugged it off.)

CLAYMORE: Nah. How could it be?

(Moments later, once the water levels were even, Josie proceeded to force open the lock gate. Snarling as she strained to take the weight, she growled then started to heaving it forward; stomping heavily as she did so.)

CLAYMORE: Good, good.

(He then grabbed the controls in readiness to move, as soon as the other boat was free of the lock.)

CLAYMORE: Nice work, Josie.

(A short while later, the other boat chugged towards him; the lone crewmen wearing a deeply relieved expression.)

KEV: Claymore!

CLAYMORE: Kev!

KEV: So...

(He then gestured towards Josie and smirked.)

KEV: Alan's plastic surgery went well, I see.

CLAYMORE: Yeah, he's much happier now, mate.

KEV: And much better to look at.

CLAYMORE: Right?

(He nodded sternly.)

CLAYMORE: That's actually Josie. She's...

(Suddenly remembering the importance of keeping the girl's anonymity, he flinched.)

CLAYMORE: A nobody. Just a canal groupie we met. She likes opening locks. Her name's Claire.

KEV: You said it was Josie.

CLAYMORE: I lied.

KEV: What?

CLAYMORE: I mean, I got her name wrong the first time.

KEV: Oh. Fair enough.

(Kev then sneered.)

KEV: I'm so glad you happened along, mate. About an hour ago, them twats from The Black Fox came through. I let them go first obviously then headed into the lock. Fuckers.

(He snarled.)

KEV: I pulled to the right, but before I could get to the side to use the ladder and climb out, they all appeared with barge poles. They pushed me into the centre of the lock. One of the cunts then used his pole to knock my only lock key off the top off the boat and into the canal. I've been stuck here ever since.

CLAYMORE: Tossers.

KEV: Right? Thank fuck there's no more locks between here and base. I'd be bloody screwed.

CLAYMORE: Someone needs to do something about them dickheads.

KEV: You're not kidding.

(He then nodded firmly.)

KEV: Still, it's done now. Thank the young lady for me, will you?

CLAYMORE: Will do.

KEV: See you later.

CLAYMORE: Later.

(The lone crewman then headed off up the canal, allowing Claymore to lead The Amethyst into the lock. Once it was inside, Josie nodded then firmly closed the lock gate again.)

CLAYMORE: Nice, now open the...

JOSIE: Valve, I know.

(She then hurried to the valve to release the water from the lock again.)

CLAYMORE: Like a seasoned pro.

JOSIE: What?

CLAYMORE: I was just saying you're like a seasoned veteran.

(He chuckled.)

CLAYMORE: I might sack Alan and hire *you* instead.

(Alan's angry voice then rose from the cabin.)

ALAN: You don't employ me, numb nuts; this is a fifty-fifty partnership.

CLAYMORE: Right. Well, that told me.

ALAN: What's she doing that's impressed you so much anyway?

CLAYMORE: Opened the lock, mate. That's all.

ALAN: That's *my* job!

CLAYMORE: You're making dinner!

ALAN: Which should be a *woman's* job! Where did my masculinity go?

CLAYMORE: I wouldn't worry about that, mate. If that steak comes out well, as far as I'm concerned, you'll be the greatest man who ever lived.

ALAN: I already fucking am, mate.

(Claymore chuckled then looked to Josie again. She was poised and ready to open the lock gate as soon as the water level was even.)

CLAYMORE: Superb.

(He then heard the words he'd been looking forward to all afternoon.)

ALAN: You might want to find somewhere to moor up, mate. Dinner won't be long.

CLAYMORE: Legend!

ALAN: I know this to be true.

(Claymore then looked to where Josie was opening the lock gate and beamed to himself.)

CLAYMORE: Happy days.

---

Having cleared the lock then guided to the boat to the side of canal, Josie and Claymore secured it to the bank with some pegs then headed inside for dinner. Sierra had wanted to eat hers outside and make the most of the last few hours of sunshine. Sadly, her request was denied, but not without good reason.

SIERRA: Is it really that bad?

ALAN: Yeah. Wasps, dragonflies, you name it.

CLAYMORE: If it has wings, it *will* emerge from the canal bank and try to eat your bloody food.

(Chomping on his steak, Graydon nodded.)

GRAYDON: There's a pub on the canal side back in my home village. Only an idiot would try to eat in the pub garden. It's bad enough trying to drink a sugary drink in peace. With food, you've got no chance.

SIERRA: I see. Disappointing.

JOSIE: Yet, not surprising. I seem to be a magnet for wasps when I'm eating. And that's in the middle of towns, never mind at the side of a canal.

(Sierra giggled.)

SIERRA: She gets really violent with them. Lashing out like a lunatic.

JOSIE: I do. Sierra just screams and runs indoors.

SIERRA: Taking my food with me. It's a solid plan.

JOSIE: Touché.

CLAYMORE: Alan takes your approach, Josie. Swinging at them and swearing.

ALAN: Not anymore. I've learned my lesson now. Now I just eat indoors. It's not even worth *trying* to eat anything out there. Except barbecue.

SIERRA: Barbecue?

ALAN: Yeah. The flies and shit hate the smoke.

JOSIE: We should have barbecue tomorrow then.

ALAN: Well, we could, but there's one small problem with that.

CLAYMORE: We don't *have* a barbecue.

JOSIE: Oh. Bugger.

(Claymore chewed on his steak a little longer then glanced to Josie.)

CLAYMORE: You're pretty handy, aren't you?

JOSIE: I'm what now?

CLAYMORE: Good with your hands.

JOSIE: Oh. No, not really.

SIERRA: Yes, you are. Don't sell yourself short. You've always been good at the practical stuff.

JOSIE: Well, maybe.

CLAYMORE: You handled that lock like a pro earlier and when we set up the temporary mooring just now, you looked like you were born with a hammer in your hand.

ALAN: She did?

CLAYMORE: Yeah.

ALAN: Cool. Not that I'm surprised.

CLAYMORE: No. *I* was.

JOSIE: Why?

CLAYMORE: Well... you're all like... girly and stuff.

(Josie looked to him in disbelief.)

JOSIE: You think I'm girly?

CLAYMORE: Well, yeah. I mean look at you. You're all feminine and that.

JOSIE: Wow. Nobody's ever called me that before.

CLAYMORE: My bad.

JOSIE: No, I mean, that's like...

(She beamed.)

JOSIE: That's awesome.

SIERRA: You've made her day now.

JOSIE: You have.

CLAYMORE: That's a relief. I thought I'd pissed you off for a minute.

JOSIE: Far from it. People usually say I'm boyish and that. It's really annoying actually. I worked with one guy who couldn't even look at me the first time he saw me in a dress. He said it didn't look right on me; almost like I was cross-dressing. Cheeky twat.

SIERRA: So she did the sweet, girly thing and punched him in the face.

(Josie sucked her teeth.)

JOSIE: Yeah... it kinda made me see his point, to be honest. Still, he deserved it.

(She shrugged.)

JOSIE: I *can* be a bit rough and tumble, I know that. And I do enjoy doing practical things, but I'm all woman. And proud of it. I don't like being considering boyish.

GRAYDON: No, but you it was always going to turn out that way. I mean, how many older brothers did you have? Three? Four?

JOSIE: Three.

SIERRA: Wait. How did you know that?

GRAYDON: It wasn't hard to figure out. Not for me anyway. Like I said before, I've gained a lot of wisdom over the years. I can tell these things.

JOSIE: Well, however you did it, you're right. My brothers *did* shape the rough and tumble side of my personality. A lot, actually. Luckily I had Sierra.

SIERRA: I dragged her back onto the girly side. Kicking and screaming.

JOSIE: Yup. So yeah, don't be afraid to ask me to help out with any chores. I'm happy to try my hand at anything, guys.

ALAN: You can wash up then.

JOSIE: That's Sierra's job.

SIERRA: Hey!

ALAN: Right...

(Claymore chuckled then looked to Sierra.)

CLAYMORE: Alan actually made a good point. Just down the canal here is the city of Dentate. You're going have to stay inside the cabin while we pass through there. Play cards or listen to a CD or something. The bloody tourists will take a photo of anything. Literally anything. You don't want to be caught on camera.

SIERRA: Okay. So how did Alan make a good point?

CLAYMORE: Well, seeing as you can't go outside, you two might as well do the washing up as well.

(He then had to duck to avoid a flying chip.)

CLAYMORE: Hey!

JOSIE: Sorry. It was a reflex.

CLAYMORE: I was just saying, before you chill out and play cards or whatever, you could help us out by washing the plates.

JOSIE: Right. That's fair, I guess. Sorry about the chip.

(Graydon rolled his eyes.)

GRAYDON: Throwing food at people... how wonderfully feminine you are.

SIERRA: Shut up, you.

ALAN: Chill, ladies. He won't think he's so clever when he's putting the dishes away.

GRAYDON: Excuse me?

ALAN: Three of you, three jobs. Washing, wiping, putting away.

GRAYDON: Nope. Sorry. No can do. I'm far too important to do such a menial task.

ALAN: Then tomorrow, you don't eat.

GRAYDON: What? You complete...

(He then sighed in defeat.)

GRAYDON: Fine.

ALAN: Thanks.

GRAYDON: You're a cunt.

ALAN: I know.

GRAYDON: A complete cunt. You didn't do a bad job with this cheap steak though, so I'll let it slide for now.

ALAN: How gracious of you.

GRAYDON: I'm a gracious man.

(He smirked.)

GRAYDON: But not always an honest one. The steak's actually mediocre at best, it's the sauce that makes it.

CLAYMORE: Yeah, gotta say, this is a great sauce, mate. You don't *normally* make it this well. Nice work.

JOSIE: Sierra made it.

CLAYMORE: She did?

ALAN: Yes! Wanker.

CLAYMORE: Yeah... I can see why you'd say that...

ALAN: It's no big deal, mate. No problem at all, in fact. I'll just remember, next time we have steak, you think my sauce is shit and you don't want any.

CLAYMORE: I never said it was shit.

ALAN: You didn't exactly sing its fucking praises either.

GRAYDON: Good god, you two sound like an old married couple.

(Josie chuckled.)

JOSIE: They do.

SIERRA: They really do.

ALAN: Oh, put a sock in it.

(He ruffled his neck.)

ALAN: Just... eat up, will you? Less talk, more eating. We've got to get going again soon. And I for one, would like to find a decent mooring before midnight.

CLAYMORE: *Long* before midnight, I hope.

ALAN: So get scoffing.

(Sierra blushed.)

SIERRA: I'll try but I'm a really slow eater.

JOSIE: She really is. She always the last to finish.

GRAYDON: Which shouldn't be a problem, should it? *She's* not the one driving the boat. It's you two clowns who need to eat up if you want us to get moving again. *We're* merely passengers.

(Alan and Claymore glanced at one another.)

ALAN: He's a knob.

CLAYMORE: Just doesn't get it, does he?

ALAN: Not even almost.

GRAYDON: What don't I get? Enlighten me!

ALAN: The hot water tank and the engine are on the same plumbing system.

CLAYMORE: Which when you cut a long story very short means, when the engine is running, the hot water doesn't work!

ALAN: And you cunts need to wash up.

CLAYMORE: Therefore, we can't go anywhere until you've finished eating and run a bowl of piping hot water to clean the plates with.

(Graydon raised an unimpressed eyebrow.)

GRAYDON: Are you telling me, that for some bizarre, unknown reason, when the engine's on, you can't use the hot water?

ALAN: Unknown reason?

CLAYMORE: Unknown?

GRAYDON: Yes. Only, I can't imagine they designed it like that on purpose.

ALAN: Yes, well, if you must know...

CLAYMORE: You're right.

ALAN: We keep meaning to get it fixed, actually.

GRAYDON: Right...

(He scoffed.)

GRAYDON: I thought you were a master engineer, Alan.

ALAN: I am. I'm not a fucking plumber though, am I?

GRAYDON: Right. Touché. You win.

ALAN: Good. Now shut up and eat.

(Sierra whimpered.)

SIERRA: So I have to scoff it down like a savage?

CLAYMORE: No, not at all. Just don't linger, that's all.

ALAN: Yeah. You're fine, don't worry.

GRAYDON: You're only saying that because she's pretty. If *I'd* said it...

ALAN: Dude.

GRAYDON: What?

ALAN: Just shut up and eat your food before I throw it out of the fucking window.

GRAYDON: Oh, my. How bloody rude.

(He then tucked into his dinner with a furrowed brow. Smirking, Alan and Claymore resumed theirs. Josie and Sierra just shrugged at one another. Canal life was beginning to make sense. If the boat had a quirk, such as a broken water-heating system, you had to work around it. Unlike Graydon, they weren't going to make an issue of it. They'd just finish up their meals as quickly as they could then let the crew get on with it.)

---

Within the next thirty minutes, once the trip had resumed, the boat did indeed pass through the city of Dentate. As always, Claymore steered the boat and Alan sat on the roof. Inside the cabin, with the washing up now complete, Josie, Sierra and Graydon had all sat down to relax. No sooner had they done so, however, a sense of foreboding washed over Graydon. Seated opposite him, Sierra and Josie were sneering at him coldly. It was in that moment that a dark realisation hit him like a thunderbolt.

GRAYDON: Right... you're best friends again, aren't you?

(The girls simply continued to glower in his direction.)

GRAYDON: Sisters by different misters.

(He cringed uncomfortably then spoke slowly and nervously.)

GRAYDON: Chums. B.F.F's. Buddies.

(Again, the girls said nothing.)

GRAYDON: I see. Like that, isn't it?

(Again, he received no reply.)

GRAYDON: Right... I get it. You were at odds before. Bickering. In the midst of a falling out, shall we say? But now...

(He sucked his teeth.)

GRAYDON: Chums again.

(He nodded.)

GRAYDON: We all know how this goes, don't we, ladies?

(He sighed.)

GRAYDON: I'm the enemy.

(He scratched his head nervously.)

GRAYDON: Here I sit, having upset you both in the recent past, a veritable antelope in the jaws of angry lionesses. It's classic. Classic female behaviour. When you're at odds, you despise one another, but as soon as you make peace, woe betide anyone who dared upset you in the past. I know how this goes. You're gonna gang up on me now, aren't you?

(He puffed out.)

GRAYDON: Yup, you'll back up every word the other ones says. A woman is never closer to someone than when they've just made up.

(He beamed.)

GRAYDON: That's why make-up sex is so great. Once you've reconciled with the wife, she's so driven to servicing your desires, you can get her to do whatever you like. It's the perfect time to mention buying a speedboat or a sports car. Or simply getting her to do anal.

(He sighed.)

GRAYDON: Yup. And you two are in that zone *now*. Ready to back each other up and satisfy one another's desires to get back at me no matter what it takes. I truly am a lamb to the slaughter here. A deer in the crosshairs. This doesn't end well for me. That silence is terrifying because I know it's the peace before the storm. Any moment now, you'll explode into a fit of hormonal rage. In perfect bloody unison, no less.

(He then nodded knowingly.)

GRAYDON: Well, I'm not gonna sit around and wait to be savaged by two synchronised rage machines; no way. I'm gonna take a nap.

(He then upped and bolted for the bedrooms. In something of a panic, he flipped open the hatch then vanished inside, slamming it back down again before the girls could even say a word. Having casually watched him flee, Sierra raised a curious eyebrow then lifted her hand to her head and removed an earphone from her ear.)

SIERRA: What's his problem?

(Josie removed her earphone and smiled.)

JOSIE: What?

SIERRA: What was his problem? He rocketed out of here like he was about to be savaged by an angry wolf.

JOSIE: Don't ask *me*. That blokes really weird.

SIERRA: And then some.

JOSIE: Right?

SIERRA: Awesome music, this, by the way.

JOSIE: Yeah, I might have to get this CD.

(They then replaced their earphones and resumed sitting in silence, staring ahead at the seat where Graydon had previously been seated.)

---

Outside, at this time, Alan was seated on the roof of the boat, posing deliberately and playfully for the many tourists cameras. Claymore simply continued to drive the boat. He did so, however, in something of a suave pose, hoping the cameras would catch his good side. Dentate was indeed a weird city. The architecture was old and there were a million things to see, but for some reason, the canal always seemed to attract visitors in their droves. Unable to fathom why, Alan grimaced then glanced over at Claymore, being careful to hold a manly pose as he did so.)

ALAN: Mate. I'll never understand this. Why travel so far to visit an ancient city then spend an evening taking photos of twats like us drifting by on the canal? I mean, what's the logic?

CLAYMORE: Crazy, isn't it?

ALAN: Madness. I mean, I know it's become a thing nowadays. Visit Dentate, take photos of the canal, but how? *How* did that become a thing. The canal's the least picturesque thing about the place.

CLAYMORE: Well, I have a theory about that actually.

ALAN: Oh, yeah?

(He then sat up.)

ALAN: Let's hear it then. I do like you're theories, mate. They've always got, what do you call it?

CLAYMORE: Depth and merit!

ALAN: Comedy value!

CLAYMORE: Mate. Do you want to hear this or not?

ALAN: Fine. Go on then.

CLAYMORE: Right.

(He ruffled his neck then began.)

CLAYMORE: In Dentate you've got the ancient city walls, the castle, the cathedral, and all that *old* shit, right?

ALAN: Right.

CLAYMORE: All tourist crap. And with tourist crap, comes tourists prices. Everything costs two or three times more than it does outside the tourist areas. So, I reckon people who were running out of money used to come here for a cheap night out. I mean, it's almost picturesque even here by the canal. And doing it caught on. That's *my* theory.

(Alan just stared straight through him.)



ALAN: Well...

CLAYMORE: It's something to do while you're in town that doesn't cost a fortune.

ALAN: Yeah, I get that, mate, but nor does sitting in the park. In fact, the beach is about three miles away. There's a million things they could do.

CLAYMORE: But...

ALAN: Mate, that's a ridiculous theory. In fact let's not even call it a theory. It's not worthy. There's no way people would flock to the canal every night simply because they were feeling frugal. There has to be more to it than that.

CLAYMORE: Like what then, smart arse? The canal is shit. It's a manmade river that flows in a straight line, attracting every annoying insect on the face of the planet. Why else would tourists flock to see it if they weren't skint?

ALAN: I don't know, do I?

CLAYMORE: Then my theory still stands.

(Alan rolled his eyes then sat up.)

ALAN: Mate...

(Just then, he caught sight of something in the corner of his eye and swiftly turned his head away from the tourists to look at it.)

ALAN: Oh. Now it makes sense.

(Still posing for the tourists, Claymore scoffed.)

CLAYMORE: Right. Come on then. Let's hear it? What's *your* theory?

ALAN: Well, the way I see it is... we've been so busy staring back at all the tourists, posing for photos like a pair of embarrassing Prima Donnas, we failed to notice the ancient stone monument on the *other* side of the canal.

CLAYMORE: What?

(He then spun around and gasped in awe. Opposite the tourist heavy canal bank stood a large, stone monument, depicting the first king of the region from over a thousand years earlier.)

CLAYMORE: Holy fuck.

ALAN: Yup. My thoughts exactly.

CLAYMORE: Right?

(He grimaced.)

CLAYMORE: Al?

ALAN: Yeah?

CLAYMORE: We've been doing this route for over three years now, mate.

ALAN: I know.

CLAYMORE: And every time we've come this way, we've posed like a pair of bell ends, thinking the tourists were taking a photo of *us*.

ALAN: I'm well aware of that, mate. Why do you think I'm facing the other way, right now? I've never been so fucking embarrassed.

CLAYMORE: I hear that. That monument is huge. And fucking old. It's probably one of the number one things tourists come to see.

ALAN: Yup. And we were too busy posing for photos to even see it!

CLAYMORE: Uh-huh.

ALAN: For over three fucking years, they've come for photos of an ancient monument and ended up with snapshots of us two cunts grinning at them.

(Claymore grimaced.)

CLAYMORE: Mate, we really should have known that was there. For fuck sake, it's fenced off and kept safely on the other side of the canal. It's probably a much loved national treasure.

ALAN: Yeah... but in our defence, we're canal workers, we're not smart enough to know about things like that.

CLAYMORE: That's not much of a defence though, is it? We sail past it twice a week, mate. And it's over thirty feet high! How did we not even see it?

ALAN: What can I tell you, mate?

CLAYMORE: Nothing. Nothing at all.

(He then stared straight down the canal and nodded.)

CLAYMORE: Let's pretend we're concentrating on where we're going.

ALAN: Good idea.

(He then sat up and raised his hand to his eyebrow, as if blocking out the sun.)

ALAN: How this?

CLAYMORE: You're posing.

ALAN: Fuck.

(He then laid on his side, facing the monument.)

ALAN: Fuck it. I'll just look the other way.

CLAYMORE: That works too.

ALAN: Don't *you* do it! You need to look where you're going!

CLAYMORE: I wasn't going to!

(He rolled his eyes.)

CLAYMORE: Seriously?

ALAN: Shut up.

---

A few minutes later when their boat cruised around the corner and out of sight of Dentate, Alan and Claymore drew a deep sigh of relief. Just how many tourists had looked back at their photos only to find them ruined by the pair of them posing like idiots, they shuddered to think. It didn't take long for them, however, to laugh it off and consign it to the past; their thoughts refocussing on the journey ahead. With this in mind, Alan headed back into the cabin to let Sierra and Josie know it was okay to come back outside. They wasted no time in doing so. Following Alan back out again, they were up on the roof of the boat in no time. Making herself comfortable, Sierra looked to Alan and smiled.

SIERRA: Thanks for letting us know. It gets really stuffy in there.

ALAN: Yeah, that's Graydon for you.

SIERRA: Actually, he went to bed for some reason.

ALAN: Oh.

JOSIE: She meant it gets uncomfortably warm.

ALAN: Right. Yeah, you're not wrong. It's great in there during the winter months, but at this time of the year... nope.

CLAYMORE: It's far too hot in the cabin, I agree. Even with the windows open. As a result, I'm stuck with Al's company out here all day long during the summer.

ALAN: You fucking love it.

CLAYMORE: Well, I certainly don't hate it. It gets bloody boring out here on my own.

ALAN: See? He's nothing without me. He just can't cope.

CLAYMORE: Yeah, right.

(They then shared an amused chuckle.)

JOSIE: So you're not a fan of the chilly weather then?

ALAN: *I* don't mind it.

CLAYMORE: I fucking do.

SIERRA: I'm not a fan either.

ALAN: Nah, a bit of *chilly* weather is fine. Just like a bit of warm weather is fine. It's extremes I don't like. Cold weather, no. Hot weather, that can fuck off an' all.

JOSIE: Well... yeah. Can't argue with that.

ALAN: It's sound logic, that's why.

JOSIE: Yup.

(She smiled.)

JOSIE: So how was Dentate?

(Suddenly looking extremely uncomfortable, Alan and Claymore both glanced away.)

ALAN: Not bad, I suppose.

CLAYMORE: It was alright.

JOSIE: Did you see the big monument to the first king? That's somewhere near the canal, I've heard.

(Alan and Claymore shared a nervous glance.)

ALAN: Yeah? Like... famous, is it?

SIERRA: Famous? It's our country's proudest landmark.

JOSIE: It's on the cover of every tourist brochure.

(She shrugged.)

JOSIE: But then you already know that, obviously.

ALAN: Um...

CLAYMORE: Yeah, of course we do. What do you think we are? A pair of idiots?

ALAN: Right?

(They then shared a ridiculously uncomfortable laugh.)

JOSIE: So did you see it?

ALAN: Well... yeah.

CLAYMORE: We actually did this time.

JOSIE: This time?

CLAYMORE: Yeah... I mean, sometimes we're too busy to look at it.

JOSIE: Right. What's it like? I bet it's awesome, isn't it? I've always wanted to see it. I used to dream we'd have our victory party there after the revolution.

(She exhaled.)

JOSIE: In my head it looks so amazing.

ALAN: Yeah, well, to be honest, it was nothing to write home about.

(Josie looked most disappointed.)

JOSIE: No?

(Picking up on her disappointment, Claymore smiled.)

CLAYMORE: He's kidding. It really is a joy to behold.

JOSIE: I'll bet.

ALAN: A joy to behold?

CLAYMORE: Yes!

ALAN: If you say so.

(He looked at his watch.)

ALAN: Two hours until sundown, mate. What do you reckon?

CLAYMORE: I reckon that should be just enough to get us to the edge of the Sanford Hills.

ALAN: Fuck tackling them tonight.

CLAYMORE: I agree. We'll get as close as we can then moor up for the night, I reckon.

ALAN: Sounds good. Campfire?

CLAYMORE: With sausages and a few cold ones?

ALAN: It can be arranged.

CLAYMORE: Now that, my friend, sounds like a plan.

(As The Amethyst headed on down the canal, Josie and Sierra made themselves comfortable then commenced chatting together. Desperate to take their minds off of the hard times ahead, trying to start a new life, they opted to reminisce about the good times instead. Alan sat close by, listening in to their tales as he pretended to mind his own business. Claymore, for his part, focussed on steering the vessel. In his head, he was counting every milestone, looking forward to mooring the boat for the night. Having been hard at work all day, the thought of a cold beer around a campfire was one he relished.)

With everyone occupied with their thoughts or conversations, the next ninety minutes seemed to pass extremely quickly. The end of their travelling for the day was coming closer by the minute. Nothing signified this more than the sun beginning to sink beyond the horizon, creating a shimmering orange glow in the sky. Finding the sight somewhat awe-inspiring, Claymore puffed out then looked to Alan.)

CLAYMORE: Mate. Check out that sky.

(Alan glanced up then nodded.)

ALAN: Yeah. It's alright, that.

CLAYMORE: Alright? Just alright?

ALAN: Well...

(Josie then gasped and thrust a limp hand to her chest.)

JOSIE: Oh, wow. That's so pretty.

ALAN: Huh? What? Josie?

JOSIE: Yeah?

ALAN: You sounded really girly then.

(Josie furrowed her brow at him bitterly.)

JOSIE: I *am* a girl!

ALAN: Yeah, but... normally...

JOSIE: Normally what?

ALAN: Well...

CLAYMORE: Alan, mate, just leave it there. Whatever you're about to say, don't. Apologise and move on.

ALAN: It's fine, mate. I was just gonna say I was surprised that's all. You're usually...

CLAYMORE: Don't do it.

ALAN: A bit like a dude.

CLAYMORE: For the love of...

JOSIE: Like a dude???

ALAN: Um...

CLAYMORE: I did warn you, mate.

JOSIE: I know I'm not exactly the poster woman for all things pink and girly, but that's really insulting! And we literally just had this conversation too. I hate it when people consider me boyish.

(Alan sucked his teeth.)

ALAN: Right... my bad. I forgot.

SIERRA: You've been single for quite some time, haven't you, Alan?

ALAN: What's that supposed to mean?

JOSIE: Can you believe he said that, Sierra?

SIERRA: Nope.

JOSIE: Me either.

ALAN: I didn't mean anything by it.

(He ruffled his neck indignantly.)

ALAN: Bloody rounded on me like a pack of blood-thirsty savages. Behave. I happen to like my women a bit manly.

CLAYMORE: Oh, good god, will you just stop talking?

JOSIE: Manly?

ALAN: Maybe that's not the word I was looking for.

SIERRA: I really do hope so, for your sake.

ALAN: What I mean is, I don't really care for girly girls. I *like* my women to be a bit rough around the edges. You know, to be one of the lads. Birds like that are great. That's all I was saying.

SIERRA: That she's rough?

ALAN: Rough around the edges! Don't put words in my mouth.

(He ruffled his neck again.)

ALAN: I meant it as a compliment. Josie's my kind of woman. Awesome to look at; perfectly feminine in all the right areas, but happy to conduct herself like one of the lads. The sort of girl who doesn't mind buying a round and knows a socket spanner from her monkey wrench.

SIERRA: That does sound like something she'd know, to be fair.

JOSIE: Right. Well, yes I *do* know that.

SIERRA: Good luck getting her to buy a round though.

JOSIE: What's that supposed to mean?

SIERRA: Like I taught you; that's what men are for. If they want our company, they have to earn it.

JOSIE: Right, yeah. You did say that.

SIERRA: And we live by that mantra whenever we're out. I mean when was last time you bought a round of drinks when there's been men in our party?

(Josie chuckled.)

JOSIE: Why would I do that?

SIERRA: Exactly.

(The two of them then sat there giggling. Watching them, Claymore shook his head.)

CLAYMORE: I feel exploited.

ALAN: I share your pain, my friend. Women have been doing that forever.

CLAYMORE: They have. Looking back, Mercedes never bought a round either. And nor did that last girlfriend *you* had. What was her name?

(Alan went to reply, only for Claymore to cut over him.)

CLAYMORE: Not that you're likely to remember. That was years ago.

ALAN: Mate...

CLAYMORE: Honestly. If I was wearing underpants I'd take them off and burn them in protest.

ALAN: I hear that, my brother. Let me tell you...

(He then fell silent and stared uncomfortably at the side of the canal. Wondering why his good friend had simply stopped talking, Claymore raised a suspicious eyebrow then glanced over his shoulder.)

CLAYMORE: Right...

(The two of them then commenced nervously glancing towards the river bank where another boat was moored. The whole episode made Josie and Sierra feel more than a tad daunted.

The two men in their company were clearly rattled. The crew of the moored boat, were grinning back at them fiendishly. Not a word was spoken. The two boats simply passed in silence. Set on edge by the strange mood, Sierra leant close to Josie and whispered.)

SIERRA: What's going on?

(Josie replied likewise.)

JOSIE: I don't know. I'm guessing these two boats have a history or something.

SIERRA: I see.

(Moments later, once the boats had passed, Alan and Claymore averted their gaze and glanced at each other uneasily.)

ALAN: You saw that, right?

CLAYMORE: The grins they were giving us?

ALAN: Yeah.

(He shook his head.)

ALAN: Why do I get the feeling they were *hoping* for a boat to pass?

CLAYMORE: Because it's the sort of thing them cunts would do.

ALAN: Yeah. They've definitely got a prank up their sleeves, mate.

CLAYMORE: So it would seem.

JOSIE: Wait? What? What was that all about?

ALAN: That, Josie, was the crew of The Black Fox.

JOSIE: The ones who trapped that poor guy in the lock?

ALAN: Yeah. Them.

CLAYMORE: They think they're a bunch of happy-go-lucky, jack-the-lads with a funny gag or two. Fact is, they're a bunch of nasty cunts who make the lives of every other crew that little bit less tolerable.

ALAN: In other words, they're a bunch of wankers.

CLAYMORE: Complete and utter.

SIERRA: So, when you say they have a prank up their sleeves...

ALAN: I guess we're gonna find out shortly after we moor up for the night.

CLAYMORE: Yeah. No doubt they'll be along shortly afterward to do something shitty to us.

ALAN: Yeah, more than likely.

SIERRA: Oh. That's really unsettling.

ALAN: Yeah...

JOSIE: So, what are you saying? They literally moored up there, waiting for a victim to pass?

CLAYMORE: No. They probably stopped there to grab some supplies from the nearby village. Us happening by would have been a joyous coincidence.

JOSIE: Right...

ALAN: When we moor the boat tonight, we're going to have to take precautions.

CLAYMORE: Could be time to fetch those Perspex sheets from the hold, mate.

ALAN: No 'could be' about it, mate.

(He nodded.)

ALAN: I'll just go and fetch them.

(He then headed down into the cabin. Having watched him go, Josie and Sierra shared an uneasy glance then looked to Claymore.)

JOSIE: Are we gonna be alright?

SIERRA: They wouldn't do anything *too* savage, would they?

(Claymore offered them a consoling smile.)

CLAYMORE: I doubt it. Just relax, girls. It'll be alright.

(He then stared ahead and bit his lip uneasily.)

CLAYMORE: I hope.

---

A short while later, just after the sun had finally set, Claymore steered the boat into a single mooring at the side of the canal then gave Alan the nod. Without hesitation, Alan then set about securing the boat to the bank. Josie and Sierra watched on nervously.)

SIERRA: So we're stopping *here* for the night, are we?

CLAYMORE: Yup.

SIERRA: And that other boat? You think they'll...

CLAYMORE: Sierra; relax. I'm not going to lose the rest of my evening worrying about *them* pricks. I just won't. I want to enjoy my downtime.

(He gestured along the moonlit canal.)

CLAYMORE: The Sanford Hills start just around the corner. A series of locks that go on forever. It's frustrating as hell.

(Alan called out from the dockside.)

ALAN: Not to mention exhausting.

SIERRA: Right...

(She smiled.)

SIERRA: Still, at least you won't be on your own. I mean, Josie will help. She enjoys that sort of thing.

JOSIE: I really do. I love operating locks.

SIERRA: See?

(She smiled.)

SIERRA: And I'll do my bit by staying out of the way as I chill in the glorious sunshine.

ALAN: How very kind of you.

JOSIE: She's always been generous of spirit like that.

SIERRA: Yup.

(As the girls shared a quiet giggle together, Alan smiled.)

ALAN: I'll just secure the other end, then we can think about that campfire.

(He then hurried away to the opposite end of the boat.)

SIERRA: To scare away wolves?

JOSIE: Like last time?

ALAN: Not exactly, no. We'll start a fire further out to keep *them* fuckers away. The campfire is for us to chill out around this evening.

CLAYMORE: With a well-earned beer.

JOSIE: Cool. I could use a beer.

SIERRA: Me too. Not that I like beer much.

ALAN: You'll like this one. I brewed it myself.

JOSIE: In that case, I'll just stick with water.

ALAN: You cheeky...

JOSIE: Sorry, it's just that homebrew is a bit...

ALAN: It's fine, I was kidding. Homebrew tastes like piss. Or rotted seaweed. I wouldn't drink that muck either.

CLAYMORE: Not that it matters right now. We've got the small matter of the local wildlife to attend to. Alan when you're done tying the boat up...

ALAN: Done!

CLAYMORE: Excellent.

(Claymore then darted inside the cabin, before returning with three swords. Delighted to see Alan jump up onto the deck, he smiled then offered him a sword.)

CLAYMORE: Pick a blade.

ALAN: That one.

(He then took a sword and jumped onto the dockside again. With a nod, Claymore then placed one of the swords on the roof, before leaping off and landing next to him.)

CLAYMORE: Right, let's get this show on the road.

ALAN: I couldn't have put it better my...

(Just then, Josie landed in between them holding the spare sword.)

ALAN: Um, Josie...

JOSIE: What?

ALAN: What do you think you're...

(He then shrugged it off.)

ALAN: Meh. Welcome to the party.

JOSIE: Thank you.

ALAN: Just make sure you stay close and whatever you do, be careful.

JOSIE: Sure.

CLAYMORE: Um... are you sure about...

ALAN: Never mind that shit, mate; incoming!

(Sure enough, as had become way too common in recent months, their very presence on the mooring had brought forth an immediate wolf attack. Racing in at them, snarling ferociously were a pack of ten snarling fiends, hell bent on tasting blood.)

ALAN: Right, here goes then. If you want to change your mind...

(At this point, they heard the sound of the cabin door slam behind them.)

ALAN: Thought she might.

JOSIE: Actually, that was Sierra shutting herself in the cabin.

(She nodded.)

JOSIE: I'm not gonna back out. In fact...

(With that, she raced forth towards the incoming fiends. Very much in tune with her sentiments, Alan and Claymore sprung forth at her side and within seconds the first wolf had breathed its last snarling breath. Courtesy of Alan's swift reflexes, it'd barely got the chance to mount an assault before he's struck it down and turned his attention to the next one.

Claymore was also giving it his all. More calculated in his attacks, however, he was nowhere near as quick to make a kill. Whereas Alan charged in like a rampaging berserker, making the most of his sheer size and bulk, Claymore always acted on a reflex; attacking the nearest one to him in an act of self-preservation. It was a combination that had served them well over the last few months and within no time at all, the pack of ten had been reduced to six.)

ALAN: Got three of the fuckers!

CLAYMORE: Already? I've only killed one; these little wankers are annoying.

JOSIE: Leave it to me!

(With that, she glided past him, almost as if she was on casters, and lunged her blade through a wolf's torso, before leaping back and gathering herself.)

ALAN: Nice!

CLAYMORE: Very! That's opened the door fucking nicely.

(He then managed to cull a second, before rapidly flashing his blade across the front of himself, to stop the others from savaging him.)

CLAYMORE: Close one.

ALAN: Yeah, watch your flanks, mate; you know this!

CLAYMORE: Yeah, yeah.

(Alan then snarled.)

ALAN: I think this cunt is made of steel. I've hit it twice and it still won't go down.

JOSIE: Allow me.

(Josie then danced forth again and produced a perfect lunge to skewer the wolf through the fleshy part of its torso.)

ALAN: Perfect!

(Alan then sliced off its head.)



CLAYMORE: Almost done.

ALAN: Yeah? Almost aint good enough.

(He then went on a chopping frenzy and killed off the final few with unashamed brute force. Having culled the last, he then stood tall and nodded.)

ALAN: Now that was a decent performance. Quick and effective.

CLAYMORE: One of our best, I reckon.

(He then looked to Josie.)

CLAYMORE: Mostly because of Josie here.

ALAN: Excuse me???

CLAYMORE: She was sublime!

ALAN: Yeah, but...

(He then sighed inwardly.)

ALAN: Yeah, you were fantastic.

JOSIE: Thank you.

CLAYMORE: You've used a sword before, haven't you?

JOSIE: I was junior fencing champion at school.

ALAN: And it showed. You were a great support fighter.

CLAYMORE: I'll second that.

ALAN: It was mostly me, but you were great too.

CLAYMORE: Really, Al?

ALAN: What? It was! That's how this works. I do the bulk of it and you back me up.

CLAYMORE: Yeah, but...

ALAN: So it was mostly because of me that the fight went so well.

JOSIE: Definitely.

ALAN: See? Josie knows.

CLAYMORE: That my giving her a compliment bruised your ego?

ALAN: No. That *I* was the reason we won so fast. I was immense.

JOSIE: And I'd never dispute that.

(She smiled.)

JOSIE: They didn't stand a chance against you.

ALAN: Exactly.

(He nodded.)

ALAN: I like her, mate. Can we keep her?

CLAYMORE: Sadly, no, but if you like I'll buy you an ego massaging machine for your birthday.

(Josie started to giggle.)

ALAN: What? What? I fail to see how that's funny.

(He then started to chuckle.)

ALAN: Sorry. I'm being a cock. Fighting is my thing, you see? I kinda thrive on leading the battle and getting the kudos for it. When Claymore said it was mostly you, therefore, I turned into pouty ten year old.

JOSIE: It's fine. I'm the same when people take credit for my work at the supermarket. And Sierra turns into an angry sarcasm machine when someone else gets the credit for her cooking. So, you're not the only one.

ALAN: I'm glad to hear it. Still, what a twat. Sorry, Josie. I didn't mean to trample all over your compliments, you were excellent.

JOSIE: Thanks.

ALAN: But I was better.

JOSIE: Right.

(Alan nodded.)

ALAN: Right, I'll get busy setting up a perimeter, then we can think about that campfire.  
CLAYMORE: Actually, mate, once you've set up that perimeter there's something else we need to take care of. The campfire can wait.  
(He pointed to some sheets of Perspex that Alan had fetched from the hold earlier.)  
ALAN: Right. Yes. Well remembered.  
JOSIE: Wait. What?  
CLAYMORE: You'll see.  
ALAN: Yes, yes you will.  
(He then headed away to prepare the perimeter defences, with a view to keep other wolves out of the vicinity for the night.)

---

A short while later, the canal was in darkness and only the sound of rippling water could be heard. Slowly, but surely, however, the sound of a narrowboat gently advancing gradually started to rise. Heading forth at its lowest speed as to keep noise to a minimum, the crew of this narrowboat were all smirking to themselves, knowingly. It was the crew of The Black Fox. Having spotted The Amethyst moored around the corner, they'd slowed down and started to creep forth, looking forward to playing the prank they'd be planning since they'd seen them pass earlier.

As they continued to advance, the crewman steering the boat looked to two of his fellow crew members and raised a questioning eyebrow. He received a positive nod in return. It was the signal to move in closer. The Amethyst was silent and all the lights were off. And they could see a campfire burning a short distance away from it. This meant the crew had stopped off for a rest, leaving the boat at their mercy. Not about to show any mercy, however, the captain of the boat, Warren, grinned to himself then glanced at his left hand. Balancing on the front fender of his boat, he was holding a brown paper bag, filled to the brim with excrement from their toilet. Having allowed himself a devilish snigger, he then looked towards the deck of The Amethyst and mumbled to himself quietly.

WARREN: That's it. A little bit closer. Any moment now.

(As his crewmates watched on excitedly, Warren glanced over at them then issued a firm thumbs up. Seconds later, he leapt from the front of the boat, towards the deck of The Amethyst. Rather than landing on the rival boat, however, he slammed into a sheet of clear Perspex. All he could then do was shriek in horror as his bag burst on the Perspex, causing a tsunami of excrement to splat all over his own body. He then tumbled into the canal.)

WARREN: Fuck.

(As he proceeded to thrash about in the water, horrified at the outcome, all he could hear was his crewmates howling with laughter. As their boat continued onwards into the night, the crew were laughing so hard, only one of them remembered to fish him out. Holding a long barge pole out for him to grab, the crewmate couldn't even begin to keep a straight face.)

WARREN: Wankers.

(A solid minute later, as Warren was hauled aboard then immediately told to shower, the laughter continued unabated. It was laughter very much echoed by those inside The Amethyst who'd sat and watched the whole thing unfold through the window. Knowing The Black Fox crew had something up their sleeve, there was no way they were going to leave the boat unattended. And so, they'd blocked the side of the deck with clear Perspex to prevent them boarding, then waited to see what they'd do. None of them expected such a hilarious debacle to ensue and they were all in absolute hysterics. With tears rolling down his cheeks, Claymore could barely even speak for laughing.)

CLAYMORE: Splat! Then down he went.

ALAN: Covered in a layer of shit!  
JOSIE: Of his own making!  
(Sierra held her aching sides.)  
SIERRA: Stop it. I'm gonna wee myself in a minute.  
CLAYMORE: Go ahead. You still won't pong as bad as that fella does right now.  
ALAN: It won't help that he fell in the water, either. I swear there's as much sewerage in this canal as there is water.  
CLAYMORE: Right?  
(They then fell about laughing some more. As they did so, however, the trap door to the bedrooms burst open and Graydon popped his angry head up.)  
GRAYDON: Do you mind? Some of us trying to sleep.  
ALAN: Nope. We don't mind one bit.  
CLAYMORE: You enjoy your nap.  
GRAYDON: How can I?  
CLAYMORE: Yeah, alright. Relax, you cranky old git. We're going outside for a beer and to cook some sausages on the fire now, anyway.  
GRAYDON: Good. Making a bloody racket like... wait... did you say beer?  
ALAN: Yeah, why?  
GRAYDON: Don't mind if I do.  
(He then clambered up into the cabin and stood there with just his vest on. Josie and Sierra immediately averted their gaze.)  
ALAN: Dude, put some pants on!  
GRAYDON: I've *got* some...  
(He then fell silent and grimaced.)  
GRAYDON: I'll be back in a minute.  
CLAYMORE: Pillock!  
ALAN: Yup. Complete and utter.  
(He grimaced.)  
ALAN: Shall we go?  
CLAYMORE: Yes, we shall. Probably. Just for a beer though. Having seen what I've just seen, the thought of putting a sausage in my mouth really doesn't appeal anymore.  
ALAN: You'll be fine, mate. These are proper sausages not chipolatas, they're nothing like his.  
CLAYMORE: That's alright then.  
(He then rubbed his hands together excitedly.)  
CLAYMORE: Right. Let's get going then.

---

A short while later, Alan, Claymore, Josie, Sierra and Graydon all assembled around the fire they'd lit. Within a minute, five beers had been passed around and their evening of relaxation finally got underway. Most relieved, after a long day of steering the boat, Claymore took a long swig of his beer then exhaled with delight.

CLAYMORE: Fuck. I needed that.

SIERRA: I'll bet. Driving a boat has to be thirsty work in that heat.

CLAYMORE: It is. In any heat. You've got to concentrate for long periods of time. I know narrowboats don't go very fast, but if you switch off, it's surprising how quickly you can find yourself veering into the side of the canal.

GRAYDON: You speak from experience, I assume.

ALAN: Yes. Yes, he does. Though, to be fair, it only happened once.

CLAYMORE: Now, I daren't let my eyes wander.

(Alan gave him an exasperated glance.)

ALAN: You've been letting your eyes wander onto Sierra's cleavage all bloody day!

CLAYMORE: Mate!

SIERRA: Wow. Seriously, Alan?

ALAN: Fuck. Did I say that out loud?

CLAYMORE: Yes!

ALAN: Right. My bad. I was joking. He hasn't really done that.

JOSIE: He *has*. Even *I* noticed it.

SIERRA: Josie!

JOSIE: What? It's no big deal. Men like boobs. Especially yours. Which is unfair really, because mine are just as big.

(She shrugged.)

JOSIE: But still. You can't wear a top like that and blame a guy for looking.

GRAYDON: Amen!

SIERRA: Right. Well... nor can you then, Josie.

JOSIE: I know, babe.

SIERRA: Good, because Alan's staring down your top as we speak.

(Alan simply smiled and continued to stare.)

ALAN: And I make no apology for it either.

JOSIE: Wow.

(She then started to chuckle.)

JOSIE: We're travelling with perverts here, Sierra. We need to be careful.

SIERRA: I know, right. I'm gonna wear a bed sheet for the rest of the trip.

JOSIE: Good idea.

(She chuckled some more then sat back.)

JOSIE: This is nice. I feel really relaxed right now. Even if Graydon is staring at my boobs. This is just a nice place to be.

SIERRA: It is. A lovely warm night, the glow of the campfire and a cold drink. Even though I don't like beer much... nice.

JOSIE: Yup.

(She exhaled.)

JOSIE: I missed my vocation, I think. I should have forgotten the revolution and just become a canal girl. Moments like this would be great. You guys have the perfect job, you really do.

(Alan's brow instantly furrowed.)

ALAN: No we don't. Not anymore. We *did* have the perfect job once, but then this cunt happened.

(He gestured to Claymore.)

CLAYMORE: Mate, let it go.

ALAN: No!

(He shook his head.)

ALAN: You ruined the cushiest number any bloke will ever have.

CLAYMORE: For fuck sake, mate; it wasn't my fault.

ALAN: Yes, it was!

CLAYMORE: No, it fucking wasn't. The courts said so! And I've got a legal verdict signed by a judge, *stating* as much!

SIERRA: What? What happened?

JOSIE: You went to court?

CLAYMORE: Where I was cleared!

GRAYDON: Which doesn't exactly make you innocent of a crime, just not legally culpable for it.

ALAN: Exactly. The whole thing *was* your fault and you know it.

CLAYMORE: Bullshit.

GRAYDON: We'll be the judge of that. What happened?

CLAYMORE: Someone's already *been* the judge of it, Graydon. An actual court judge.

SIERRA: Even so, what happened?

JOSIE: We really need to know.

CLAYMORE: Well, tough, because *I'm* not telling you.

ALAN: Fine, then *I* will.

CLAYMORE: You cunt.

ALAN: Oh, like you really thought I wasn't going to.

(He rolled his eyes then looked to Josie.)

ALAN: Have you heard of the band "Original Syntax"?

JOSIE: Have I? Sierra and I loved them!

SIERRA: Yeah, we went to see them at Capsway Arena.

ALAN: Then you must also know they were a huge success for a while. Three number one singles from their first album and a sell-out world tour.

SIERRA: That's right.

JOSIE: They were amazing. But they just disappeared. I wonder why they never released a second album or anything.

ALAN: I'll tell you why.

(He gestured to Claymore.)

ALAN: This cunt.

CLAYMORE: Mate...

ALAN: Shush, I'm talking.

(He shook his head.)

ALAN: We landed jobs as roadies. After the home leg of the tour, we were set to jet off abroad as part of the crew. It was gonna be awesome. Dream job? And then some.

GRAYDON: Wall to wall pussy too, I expect.

JOSIE: Trust *you* to go *there*.

SIERRA: He's such a pervert.

ALAN: He is, but he's also right. Women were throwing themselves at us in the hope we'd introduce them to the band.

GRAYDON: See? I wasn't just being crude. Roadies are well known for it. Jammy bastards.

ALAN: Anyway, as I was saying. Best job ever. We just lugged stuff about and in return we got a decent wage, free food and lodgings and all the pussy we could eat.

(He winced.)

ALAN: I could have phrased that a bit nicer, but yeah, that's how it was. We couldn't believe our luck. Then it all went tits up.

JOSIE: How?

(Alan gestured to Claymore again.)

ALAN: This cunt.

CLAYMORE: Can you stop doing that?

ALAN: Nope. This cunt ruined everything.

CLAYMORE: The courts didn't think so.

ALAN: I'm talking!

(He shook his head.)

ALAN: It was a bloody hot day and the band had just done their warm up for an outdoor gig in the evening. Obviously, they were knackered, so the singer took a seat at the front of the stage where...

(He gestured to Claymore.)

ALAN: This cunt was working.

CLAYMORE: Again?

ALAN: Yes! Cunt.

(He rolled his eyes.)

ALAN: Anyway, this cunt here sees the singer, Dave Hempstead, all sweaty and that, so offers him a bottle of Kerry's Cola. We always had a truck full, you see.

(He sighed.)

ALAN: Twat!

CLAYMORE: Look. Mate. Let *me* tell the story. You tend to go off on one and make me look like a right bastard.

ALAN: You are!

CLAYMORE: Mate...

ALAN: Fine. But no embellishing it to make yourself look good.

CLAYMORE: I won't.

(He rolled his eyes.)

CLAYMORE: All that happened was, I saw he was hot and sweaty so I gave him a cola.

ALAN: And already you're leaving bits out.

CLAYMORE: No, I aint.

ALAN: Yes, you are. He said no. He didn't want a cola. He'd never had one and didn't fancy it. He'd never had it in his entire life because he knew it was bad for you.

CLAYMORE: Right, well... yeah.

ALAN: He said no. Several times. But Claymore insisted for some reason.

CLAYMORE: He looked really thirsty.

ALAN: That's not the issue. You called him a pussy and mocked him.

CLAYMORE: Well... a bit, maybe.

ALAN: A bit? You ripped the piss out of the fella. You even pointed out where some of the roadies children were drinking it and said he was less of a man that they are.

(Claymore shuffled uneasily where he sat.)

CLAYMORE: Well, yeah... I mean, it was just a cola. I didn't see the big deal.

ALAN: You really didn't, did you?

CLAYMORE: No. He reacted like I'd offered him drugs or something. Of course, I was gonna mock.

(He ruffled his neck muscles.)

CLAYMORE: Anyway, I'm telling the story not you.

ALAN: Then tell it honestly.

CLAYMORE: Fine. Okay. Well, in the end, he backed down and drunk one.

ALAN: He drunk three.

CLAYMORE: Yeah, but one at a time! For fuck sake, don't interrupt.

(He rolled his eyes.)

CLAYMORE: He drunk the one and really liked it, so I got him two more. And well, after that... you know... it sort of...

ALAN: You're fucking useless. He got addicted to cola, okay? Couldn't get enough of the caffeine. In the end, he couldn't sleep and was on a permanent sugar high. He couldn't perform for the band and his song writing became erratic and stupid. And he was the only songwriter in the band!!!

(He growled then gestured at Claymore again.)

ALAN: Within a month of this cunt forcing cola on him, the tour had to be cancelled and the record company dropped them from the label. So, thanks to this cunt, we lost our dream job.

JOSIE: So that's what happened to them.

CLAYMORE: I still say it wasn't my fault.

ALAN: You practically *forced* him to drink it!!!

CLAYMORE: No, I didn't. The judge said so. And if you ask me, the record company had a damned cheek trying to sue me in the first place. How was I to know he had an addictive personality?

ALAN: Cunt.

CLAYMORE: Seriously? Are you ever gonna let that go?

ALAN: No! I was getting sex literally every day! Women on tap almost. Cunt. You took that away and it's not something any man would *ever* forgive!

CLAYMORE: No, I suppose not.

SIERRA: How terrible. I mean, so unfortunate.

JOSIE: Yeah. Such a loss. They were an amazing band.

(She looked at Claymore.)

JOSIE: Cunt!

CLAYMORE: Excuse me???

JOSIE: Just kidding.

(She then started to chuckle.)

JOSIE: Sorry, couldn't resist.

CLAYMORE: Then try. I've had a long, hard day and the last thing I need while I'm trying to relax is a torrent of abuse being hurled me. So, please; enough.

GRAYDON: That's a fair request.

CLAYMORE: Thank you.

GRAYDON: Though I'd be remiss if I didn't point out that if you were my friend, I'd have *drowned* you in the canal; not started working with you on it. Wall to wall pussy and you ruined it.

CLAYMORE: I'll drown *you* in the canal in a minute.

SIERRA: Right, well, this all got very ugly, very quickly. Can we just chill out and enjoy the evening, please?

JOSIE: What she said.

ALAN: Yeah, of course we can. I'm calm again now. I like to rant about it now and again to get it out of my system, and now I have, I'm fine.

CLAYMORE: Good.

ALAN: You're still a cunt though.

CLAYMORE: Right.

(They then shared an amused grin.)

JOSIE: So, if you don't mind me asking, how did you go from doing that job to working on the canal.

CLAYMORE: Well, that's simple; my uncle died and left me this boat shortly after we got made redundant. So it just made sense to carry on his old business.

ALAN: We spent all our redundancy money getting this thing spruced up and took whatever contracts came our way.

CLAYMORE: And the rest is history.

ALAN: More like the present.

CLAYMORE: That too.

ALAN: So what about you, ladies? Where did you work?

(Sierra and Josie glanced at one another uneasily, almost as if they were too embarrassed to tell him.)

SIERRA: In an office.

JOSIE: Harrisons.

(Graydon gave her a belittling glance.)

GRAYDON: The supermarket?

JOSIE: Yeah. So?

(Not even trying to hide his amusement, Graydon sniggered.)

GRAYDON: Oh, nothing. I'm sure it was a wonderfully rewarding career.

JOSIE: Piss off.

GRAYDON: How rude.

SIERRA: Don't be a dick to her then.

GRAYDON: I wasn't.

(He nodded sternly.)

GRAYDON: My servants did my shopping for me and they couldn't have done that without brave warriors like yourselves, stacking the shelves and mopping the floors.

ALAN: Mate, don't be such a condescending twat.

JOSIE: Yeah! And besides I didn't mop any floors.

GRAYDON: I see. Checkout girl then?

JOSIE: No.

(She ruffled her neck.)

JOSIE: I was a shelf-stacker.

GRAYDON: Seriously? Then why get all pissy when I mentioned it?

JOSIE: You said I mopped the floors!

GRAYDON: And that's bad, is it? Look down on cleaners, do you? Shame on you.

JOSIE: No, I...

SIERRA: Don't entertain him, Josie. He's just trying to get a rise out of you.

GRAYDON: Successfully, I might add.

ALAN: And that makes you feel good about yourself, does it?

GRAYDON: A bit, why?

CLAYMORE: What an arse hole.

GRAYDON: Charming.

SIERRA: Looking down on people like that. You're so horrible.

GRAYDON: Quite. Looking down on people just because they have a shit job is wrong. Remember that next time you look down on a cleaner, Josie.

JOSIE: I don't look down on cleaners. My ex-boyfriend was...

SIERRA: Josie, stop it. He's playing you like a cheap piano.

GRAYDON: You think she's cheap, do you?

SIERRA: What? No. I was just saying...

JOSIE: Now he's playing *you*, Sierra.

SIERRA: I...

(She snarled.)

SIERRA: He is, isn't he? Tosser.

CLAYMORE: Cock.

(Graydon burst out laughing.)

GRAYDON: Fair comments, one and all. Though, I have to say I've been called much worse.

ALAN: And that's no surprise to anybody.

GRAYDON: I dare say it isn't.

(He shrugged.)

GRAYDON: You see, you don't get to be a great success in my line of work by being a kind and warm-hearted human being.

CLAYMORE: Like you'd know.

GRAYDON: Oh, but I do. You see, over the years, I've trampled *many* a kind and warm-hearted human being into the dust. They barely make it a challenge, in fact.



JOSIE: You know, it saddens me that you can say that with such pride.

GRAYDON: And it saddens me that you think I shouldn't.

(He shrugged.)

GRAYDON: You see, when the three of us get to Amaria, we'll all be starting our lives over. You two will struggle with nothing. No money and nowhere to go. I, on the other hand, *courtesy* of my dark side will be living a life of luxury.

ALAN: Is that so?

GRAYDON: Yes. You see, you might think I made my fortune from coming up with ideas for how to screw over ordinary people, but that's not entirely true.

(He beamed.)

GRAYDON: I made my fortune by embezzling money from the national treasury, courtesy of government contracts. Sure, I got paid well as an ideas man, but the real money came from the perks of being a trusted advisor.

(He exhaled.)

GRAYDON: I didn't recommended companies for the government to deal with very often, but when I did they always obliged. And each of those companies was owned by a shell corporation. And guess who owned that shell corporation?

(Josie snarled.)

JOSIE: You?

GRAYDON: Yes *and* no.

ALAN: Eh?

GRAYDON: It was owned by James Waltham.

ALAN: So by yes and no, you mean no.

GRAYDON: Incorrect. Yes, it was owned by James Waltham, but James Waltham is me. I have an alternative identity, you see? Inspired.

(He nodded proudly.)

GRAYDON: As James Waltham, my companies would do a half-arsed job fulfilling the government contracts while paying the board, namely me, millions in bonuses. Tax paid. And the best part is, nobody even knows that he's actually me. They'll take all my assets and freeze my accounts, yes, but everything I embezzled as James Waltham remains my own.

JOSIE: You corrupt son of a...

GRAYDON: Don't be like that. Like you say, the government *are* corrupt. And downright evil! There was *always* a chance I'd fall foul of them and they'd try to fuck me over, so I just did the sensible thing. Hid a small fortune they'd never know about.

(He beamed.)

GRAYDON: So, there you have it. While you two girls are foraging for food and trying to seek shelter, I'll be living it up as James Waltham, in James Waltham's mansion. Perfect.

JOSIE: Tosser.

GRAYDON: I resent that, young lady. I'm just telling it as it is. I'll be living it up and you, well, put it this way, you'll soon start thinking *clean socks* are the height of luxury.

(He nodded solemnly.)

GRAYDON: It won't be easy but who knows? This could be good for you. I mean, once you've been homeless and living off scraps for a while, you'll soon realise working in a supermarket for a living was actually nothing to be embarrassed about.

JOSIE: I never said it *was* embarrassed!

ALAN: That was you!

GRAYDON: No, it wasn't.

CLAYMORE: Yes, it was.

GRAYDON: On the contrary, when you asked her what she did, *she* got all embarrassed. All *I* did was patronise her and play on her *own* feelings of inadequacy.

(He then sat back and nodded to himself defiantly.)

GRAYDON: So there.

SIERRA: Wow.

JOSIE: I know, right.

ALAN: He actually thinks that spotting an insecurity and digging at the wound is an acceptable way to behave.

CLAYMORE: Well it's not. We have a word for people like that where I come from.

SIERRA: What's that?

CLAYMORE: Cunts.

SIERRA: Right.

CLAYMORE: We're not exactly wordsmiths where I come from.

JOSIE: Apparently so.

ALAN: Fair enough though. Who needs complicated words? I think he summed it up nicely.

SIERRA: Me too.

ALAN: Still, it wouldn't hurt him to be a *little bit* more eloquent sometimes.

CLAYMORE: What's that supposed to mean?

ALAN: First word you said to me when we met was bollocks.

CLAYMORE: I was lugging heavy speakers about and you asked me to stop what I was doing and help you tip the vending machine.

ALAN: Yeah, and you could have just said no.

CLAYMORE: I think I made my objection clear enough actually.

ALAN: Yes, you did. So, I called you a twat. You told me to fuck off.

CLAYMORE: I remember it well.

(He grimaced.)

CLAYMORE: How the fuck did we end up mates?

ALAN: I have no fucking idea, mate.

(They then sat there chuckling.)

GRAYDON: Morons.

ALAN: Hey!

GRAYDON: Sorry. I meant to whisper that.

CLAYMORE: Prick.

ALAN: Anyway, where were we?

JOSIE: I have no idea.

ALAN: That's it! Supermarkets.

(He nodded.)

ALAN: Like twat features pointed out, you did come over as all embarrassed when you mentioned working there, but you really shouldn't.

CLAYMORE: Agreed.

SIERRA: Yup.

ALAN: Everyone uses them; everyone. Therefore someone needs to work in them. There's no shame in being one of them. Not only that, but everyone's career has to start somewhere.

JOSIE: I know that. And I really did enjoy my job, it's just that...

(She shrugged.)

JOSIE: Some people, well, a lot of people look down on you when you mention working in a supermarket.

CLAYMORE: I feel your pain, Josie. People look down on us for working on the canal.

ALAN: Boat pikeys, they call us.

SIERRA: That's just rude.

ALAN: Yeah, it is, but fuck 'em. We earn a wage doing this. A good one. So they can think what they like.

CLAYMORE: Yeah. This is money for old rope, this. Easy work. Apart from the threat of a gruesome death for committing treason if we get caught, it's a piece of piss.

ALAN: Right?

(He rolled his eyes.)

ALAN: This country really does have a liberal interpretation of the word treason, doesn't it?

GRAYDON: Indeed. Anyone caught doing *anything* that goes against the government's agenda is found guilty of treason. No exceptions. Literally anyone found to have crossed them gets either the chop, the rope or the chair.

SIERRA: It's barbaric.

GRAYDON: I agree.

SIERRA: What? You do?

GRAYDON: Yes. Capital punishment is totally wrong.

(He sighed.)

GRAYDON: I wish I'd told the MP's under my advisement to vote against it now.

SIERRA: Then why didn't you?

GRAYDON: I wasn't wanted for a treasonable offence at the time, was I? Being murdered by the state was someone else's problem.

JOSIE: So you were in favour of it. But now you're a potential victim of it, you've changed your mind?

GRAYDON: Well, wouldn't *you*???

JOSIE: I'd never have voted for it in the bloody first place.

GRAYDON: Right. No. I don't suppose you would. Bloody hippy.

JOSIE: Hey!

GRAYDON: If you worked in one of *my* offices, I'd have sacked you long ago. Oh, no, wait. Sierra was the office worker, you didn't even have the brains to do that. Shelf stacker!

JOSIE: Piss off! I liked my job and I'm not going to be ashamed of that, just to please you.

GRAYDON: Liar, you hated it. You were clearly embarrassed.

JOSIE: And I admitted that. People tend to look down on me for it, but that doesn't mean I didn't enjoy it. I did! I got on well with my workmates and the work was actually good for passing the time.

GRAYDON: If you say so.

JOSIE: I do. I enjoyed my job, so get stuffed.

GRAYDON: How rude.

(Sierra then sighed emptily.)

SIERRA: I'm glad *you* enjoyed your job, Josie. Mine sucked. The only good thing about working in an office is the cute outfits. Everyone is a gossip; and not in a kind way. Office politics is rife. So much one-upmanship. I hated it. I didn't want to play that game. I just wanted to make some friends and get through the day, but everything you said to people seemed to get memorised then used against you at a later date. It was horrible.

JOSIE: You never were happy there, were you?

SIERRA: Nope. Hated it.

(She shrugged.)

SIERRA: Don't get me wrong. The job *itself* was okay. I really enjoyed getting to use a computer everyday, and I became really adept at setting them up; which is a handy skillset to have. It's just... the whole office environment was really unpleasant. I didn't like that place one bit.

GRAYDON: Oh, boohoo. You got paid, didn't you?

SIERRA: Yeah, but...

GRAYDON: Then everything else is irrelevant. Bloody cry baby.

SIERRA: Wow.

(She looked to Josie.)

SIERRA: He's really mean.

ALAN: And then some. Ignore him. He's being a belligerent little prick on purpose.

CLAYMORE: Just to wind you up.

ALAN: Yeah. And it's taking everything I've got not to throw him in the fucking canal.

GRAYDON: Is that so?

ALAN: Yes!

GRAYDON: I'll shut up then.

(He then sat back and grimaced uncomfortably.)

ALAN: That's better.

(He nodded.)

ALAN: Anyway, I'm done nattering now. I'm just gonna sit here and chill quietly for a bit.

Talk among yourselves if you like. I'm having some quiet time.

CLAYMORE: Amen.

SIERRA: Works for me.

JOSIE: Yup. Quiet time sounds good.

GRAYDON: I...

ALAN: You can have quiet time, an' all. Or take a swim.

GRAYDON: Fine. I will then.

ALAN: Good.

(Silence then descended over the camp for a full thirty seconds. It was thirty seconds of bliss for Claymore and Alan. Alas, it wasn't to last.)

SIERRA: I think you should wear that white and pink bikini top tomorrow, Josie.

JOSIE: Oh?

SIERRA: Yeah. It really will accentuate your blue eyes, I think.

JOSIE: Cool. What should I wear with it though?

(As the two of them went on to have a lively chat about all things girly for the next hour or so, Alan and Claymore could only sit back and try to tune them out. It was easier said than done, however, and it didn't take them long to realise that any hopes of a few soothing hours of silence were fanciful to say the least.)

ALAN: Mate?

CLAYMORE: Yeah?

ALAN: Women are shit!

---

By the time Alan, Claymore and their three passengers finally got to bed that night, the midnight hour had long since come and gone. The girls were so engrossed in their conversation, they simply never noticed the time. After a long day, Alan and Claymore had simply been too tired to get up and go to bed. Mercifully, however they'd managed to finally muster up the energy to do so. Just like the previous night, Josie and Graydon headed down below to the bedrooms and Alan, Claymore and Sierra set up for the night in the cabin. Although she'd made peace with Josie and would have no qualms about sharing a room with her, Sierra was looking forward to having an early morning coffee on the roof of the boat with the two crewman, just as she'd done the previous morning. For that to happen, she knew she had to wake up when they did; something that was unlikely if she was to spend the night in a proper bed. If she was to do that, she feared she might not wake up until midday. And so, she bedded down on the floor of the cabin. Nestling her head into her pillow, she smiled with joy at having rekindled her friendship then sighed emptily. Life in a strange land with no money, no home and no clue what to do next awaited. With those thoughts ringing

around in her head, getting to sleep wasn't going to be easy. Within the hour, however, just like the others aboard *The Amethyst*, she finally dozed off for the night.

---

Outside Sierra's house in Harwell City at this time, the Captain and two of his guards, Smith and Erikson were very much wide awake. A third guard, a young lad by the name of Wilson, on the other hand, was fast asleep with his hand in a bowl of cold water. He'd been drafted in to replace the two disgraced guards who'd fallen asleep previously. The captain therefore was far from amused to see his replacement do the very same thing. It would not go unpunished! Having laid the bowl there in the hope the guard might soil himself as a result, the captain couldn't help smirking. As something of a disciplinarian he was eager for the guard to learn his lesson. And nothing hammered home the point quite like humiliation.

CAPTAIN: Sleeping on duty like that. Disgraceful. He's just as bad as the two lazy bastards he replaced.

(He nodded.)

CAPTAIN: It's not a mistake he's going to make twice, however.

ERIKSON: Um... sir?

CAPTAIN: Yes?

ERIKSON: I'm not sure I'm comfortable with this, sir.

CAPTAIN: Tough shit. *I'm* comfortable with it and that's all that matters.

ERIKSON: Yeah, well...

(He ruffled his neck.)

ERIKSON: It's alright for you. You're sitting in the front. If this works, he's gonna piss all over the seat. A seat *I'm* sharing with him. What if it trickles my way?

CAPTAIN: You'll get wet.

ERIKSON: But...

CAPTAIN: Oh, stop whining. Chances are, this Sierra person will be back soon and it won't even happen.

(He grimaced at Erikson.)

CAPTAIN: It was Sierra, wasn't it?

ERIKSON: I think so, yeah. Ask Smith, he's the one who was seeing her.

SMITH: No, I wasn't. She's just a neighbour. I wasn't seeing her.

CAPTAIN: No? Why not? Bit of a moose, was she?

SMITH: No. Like I told you last night, she was really tasty.

CAPTAIN: Then why the hell didn't you get in there, man? You're a guard. Women love us. It's the uniform, you see? You should have made a move, son.

(Smith scratched his neck uncomfortably.)

SMITH: I did, sir. I asked her out for coffee once. She turned me down flat. Said she didn't drink coffee.

(His brow furrowed.)

SMITH: That same evening I saw her sitting inside Carter's Coffee and Cakes, drinking a bloody cappuccino with her friend. Bitch.

CAPTAIN: Ah, you see. That should have set alarm bells ringing, really. She turned you down; a guard! What sort of woman does that?

ERIKSON: One with eyes where Smith is concerned, sir.

SMITH: Hey!

CAPTAIN: Don't be facetious, boy! I'm making a serious point here. The fact she turned you down was a sign. Clearly she doesn't like guards. Why? Because she's a terrorist. You should have noticed that from the off.

SMITH: But women turn me down all the time, sir.

CAPTAIN: They do?  
ERIKSON: Of course they do. Look at him.  
SMITH: Piss off, you.  
CAPTAIN: Stop it! I've had enough of your constant bickering! Be professional for once.  
(He sighed inwardly.)  
CAPTAIN: For fuck sake. Why do I always get teamed up with such bloody amateurs all the time? First I got saddled with you two buffoons and two sleeping princesses. So, I send those two lazy fuckers off to be punished and what happens? They send me a replacement who falls asleep within an hour of bloody getting here. I'm surrounded by morons.  
SMITH: Thank you, sir.  
CAPTAIN: You're welcome.  
(He rolled his eyes.)  
CAPTAIN: Look. Less conversation, chaps. And definitely less whining! That girl's bound to come home any moment now and we need to be ready.  
ERIKSON: You've been saying she'll be home any moment now for over 24 hours, sir.  
CAPTAIN: Yes, and I'll keep saying it, because sooner or later, I'm bound to be right.  
ERIKSON: Right.  
CAPTAIN: Now focus. Keep your eyes fixed on that house. We'll catch that terrorist bitch if it's the last thing we do.  
SMITH: Damned right we will. She made a first class cunt out of me, sir.  
CAPTAIN: With a troubling amount of ease.  
SMITH: Living next door to me all these years, plotting against the government. Sickening.  
CAPTAIN: Indeed. Clever though; hiding in plain sight like that. Let's give the girl her dues. She's clearly very good at what she does. Maybe not a criminal mastermind, but I wouldn't say she was far from it.  
(He then beamed with delight.)  
CAPTAIN: Catching her will actually be something of a coup.  
(He then sat up straight and nodded sternly.)  
CAPTAIN: Now focus. If we can catch a high-functioning terrorist like her, it'll mean good things for my career, and more importantly, my pay packet.  
SMITH: Sir!  
ERIKSON: Sir!  
CAPTAIN: That's the spirit, men. Now keep that focus.  
(He beamed excitedly.)  
CAPTAIN: She'll be home any minute now.

---

By the time dawn broke and illuminated the canal with a soothing orange glow, Alan and Claymore were already half dressed and ready to face the day. A flask of coffee had been made and they were already sat outside on the roof of the boat, savouring the morning. It was a time that had no requirement for words. They merely poured the coffee then sat and watched the canal with smiles on their faces. Those smiles then widened a minute or so later when Sierra emerged to join them, wearing a tight one piece swimsuit with so many pieces cut out of the cloth, it could easily have been mistaken for a bikini. Claymore was instantly tongue-tied and could only drool. Her body was every bit as aesthetically delightful as her face. Mercifully, before Claymore's lusty whimpering could make her uncomfortable, Alan managed to break the silence with a welcoming nod.)

ALAN: Morning, Sierra.

(Sierra took a seat in the middle of them and returned the smile.)

SIERRA: Hiya!

ALAN: Forgive Claymore. When he's highly aroused he turns into... well... that.

SIERRA: Aroused?

ALAN: Your swimsuit.

SIERRA: Oh.

ALAN: Or should I say, the girl inside it.  
(Sierra blushed.)

SIERRA: It's fine. No forgiveness needed. I'm not offended.

ALAN: No? *I* would be.

SIERRA: And if *you* came out here wearing this swimsuit, I'm sure *he'd* be offended too.  
(Alan chuckled.)

ALAN: I think you might be right.  
(Finally coming to his senses, Claymore shook his head to try to disperse his perverted thoughts then forced a smile.)

CLAYMORE: Alright, Sexy? Sierra! Sexy Sierra. I mean... oh, fuck off.

ALAN: Nice. Bloody charming, mate. I'm sure she's deeply touched.  
(Sierra chuckled.)

SIERRA: It's fine. Morning, Claymore. And thank you.

CLAYMORE: For what?

SIERRA: The compliment.  
(She smiled.)

SIERRA: I needed that. Thank you.

CLAYMORE: Right. Well... you're welcome. I'll still apologise though. You look lovely. I mean really, really nice. And I lost it for a minute.

SIERRA: It's fine. Don't worry about it.  
(She shrugged.)

SIERRA: It's nice to feel desirable. Well, *I* like it anyway. In fact, I need it.  
(She puffed out.)

SIERRA: Nice moments have been rare these last few days. I'm so scared about what's going to happen to me. In that sense, any distraction is welcome.

ALAN: We get it.

CLAYMORE: Yeah, we see it a lot.

ALAN: Last night you and Josie talked each other's ears off about clothes for well over an hour while we were trying to relax.

SIERRA: Sorry.

ALAN: Don't be. If we'd minded, we'd have said something.

CLAYMORE: But we understood. You were just taking your minds off what's to come.

SIERRA: Right. Well... yeah. True. We were. Josie's never normally that interested in talking about clothes. She tolerates the conversation for my sake usually. Last night though, she was as into it as I was.

ALAN: Because it helped her take her mind off of things.

SIERRA: Yeah.  
(She shook her head.)

SIERRA: It sucks.  
(She then forced a smile.)

SIERRA: We're doing okay though. I mean, we're hiding our terror well, I think.

CLAYMORE: Better than most, to be honest.

SIERRA: Cool. It's always there though. The worry, I mean.

ALAN: Naturally.  
(He shrugged.)

ALAN: We're always worried that we might get caught by the authorities too. All the fucking time.

CLAYMORE: *That* thought is ever present.

ALAN: Yeah. You can't spend the whole time staring ahead of yourself in a catatonic terror though.

CLAYMORE: Like one of our passengers did.

ALAN: Yeah. You have to try to distract yourself. To muddle through and keep a smile on your face.

CLAYMORE: And to be fair, you girls have done that pretty damn well.

SIERRA: Thank you.

CLAYMORE: You're welcome.

(He then glanced down at her body and was immediately lost in lust again.)

ALAN: Sierra?

SIERRA: Yeah?

(Alan nodded at Claymore.)

ALAN: Would you like me slap him?

(Sierra giggled.)

SIERRA: No, thanks.

ALAN: Shit. Oh, well, if you change your mind.

SIERRA: I won't. I like it.

ALAN: You're a rare breed.

SIERRA: Not really. I'd hate it if he was an uggo, but...

(She then blushed and looked away.)

ALAN: Right...

(He then mumbled under his breath.)

ALAN: These two will be shagging before the day's out.

SIERRA: What?

ALAN: Nothing!

(He then pulled out his morning cigarette and proceeded to light it.)

ALAN: Help yourself to a coffee, love. I'm gonna sit back and chill out.

SIERRA: Oh. Thank you.

(She then proceeded to pour a coffee for herself.)

SIERRA: Claymore?

CLAYMORE: Perfect curves everywhere!

SIERRA: Um... Claymore?

CLAYMORE: Sorry, what? I was miles away.

SIERRA: More coffee?

CLAYMORE: Oh. No, thanks, babe. I mean Sierra! What the fuck is wrong with me???

(Just then, much to Claymore's consummate relief, Josie emerged from the cabin and stepped out onto the deck.)

JOSIE: Morning.

ALAN: Alright?

CLAYMORE: Morning.

SIERRA: Hey, you. Come and join us.

JOSIE: Don't mind if I do.

(She then clambered up onto the roof.)

SIERRA: You timed that really well, actually. I was just pouring some coffee.

JOSIE: Oh, thanks. I mean, that is... if you can spare it.

ALAN: It's fine. I made extra just in case. And brought four cups out for the same reason.

JOSIE: Cool. How thoughtful.



ALAN: Yup. That's me.

JOSIE: Thank you.

(Josie smiled then sat herself next to Sierra before glancing at the canal. At once her jaw dropped. Spotting this, Claymore and Alan beamed with delight. Seeing their guests revel in the splendour of their precious canal was always a joy to behold.)

CLAYMORE: Stunning, isn't it?

ALAN: Breath taking even.

JOSIE: Like... I mean... wow.

ALAN: Right?

JOSIE: That water's fucking filthy.

ALAN: What???

JOSIE: I mean, the water's filthy, the bushes are unsightly and it smells funny. Typical canal, really. And yet...

CLAYMORE: And yet?

JOSIE: The sun glistening on the water, that breeze... birdsong. It's every bit as awesome as you said it was, Sierra.

SIERRA: Right? And...

(She then grimaced uncomfortably.)

SIERRA: If you listen carefully, you can hear Graydon snoring.

(Silence then descended as they all listened intensely.)

JOSIE: Oh, my god, you can too.

SIERRA: Must be coming through the wall.

ALAN: I doubt it. The bedrooms are below the bloody water level.

CLAYMORE: That's coming up through the cabin floor *and* this roof.

JOSIE: Crikey. Imagine *sleeping* in the same room as him!

SIERRA: Ew. No, thank you. It's bad enough *being* in the same room as him. Even when he's awake!

ALAN: Yup. He's not the nicest fella in the world, is he?

SIERRA: He's the worst.

JOSIE: The lowest of the low.

ALAN: Right?

CLAYMORE: He's a twat, that's for sure.

(He exhaled.)

CLAYMORE: Still, I'm not gonna let him get to me. Not today.

ALAN: Why? What's so special about today?

CLAYMORE: Nothing, really. I just have a good feeling about today, that's all.

ALAN: Oh, god. Last time you said that, the bloody engine blew up.

CLAYMORE: Right, well, yeah; that was unfortunate.

SIERRA: So what makes you think it'll be a good day?

ALAN: You in that swimsuit, probably.

CLAYMORE: Hey, less of that.

(He smiled at Sierra.)

CLAYMORE: Like I said, it's just a feeling.

ALAN: Like a swelling in your underpants?

CLAYMORE: Shut up.

(He rolled his eyes.)

CLAYMORE: I just feel good about it, Sierra. The air is perfect, everything's calm and...

(He shrugged.)

CLAYMORE: I dunno. Just a feeling I get, you know? We're in for a smooth day's boating, I reckon. Dinner will be just right and we'll all get a decent night's sleep before easing across the border in the morning.

ALAN: I wouldn't turn down a day like that, mate.

CLAYMORE: Right?

JOSIE: So we cross the border in the morning?

CLAYMORE: If all goes to plan.

JOSIE: Wow.

(She grimaced.)

JOSIE: That makes me nervous.

SIERRA: Me too, but... well, that's for us to worry about tomorrow.

(She then leant her head on Josie's shoulder.)

SIERRA: For now, let's just enjoy the tranquillity of the morning.

JOSIE: Well... that sound's awesome actually.

SIERRA: Does, doesn't it?

(Silence then descended as they all cast their gaze upon the canal. Instantly memorised, the four of them seemed to exhale in unison before sitting back to enjoy the glow of the warm morning sunshine. Canal mornings in the summertime truly were a joy.)

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Once the morning ritual of chilling out and doing literally nothing had been taken care of, Alan untied the boat from the moorings and they set off down the canal once again. Breakfast would come in the form of a brief snack on the way. For Alan, that breakfast would be eaten in stages. Within twenty minutes of setting off, the boat approached the Sanford Hills. This meant he'd be opening and closing locks every fifty metres or so for most of the morning. For some, it would be maddening. Alan, however, was just glad to have something to do. Most of his work involved checking the engine between trips and loading and unloading. For the bulk of the journey, his tasks were pretty much mooring the boat and making the dinner. He'd get bored very quickly. As such, he enjoyed a break from the monotony. Claymore, on the other hand, wasn't so enamoured with the locks. Moving such a short distance in the space of several hours was far from a driver's dream come true. For him, the locks were an wearisome task; his least favourite part of the journey.

As the journey up the hill began, Alan was extremely cheerful. It wasn't just the joy of having something to do that was bringing him joy, however. Josie had elected to help him out. Watching her breasts bounce as she wound the lock mechanism, he could barely keep the grin off his face.

As the two of them set about the fifth in a string of endless locks, Claymore slowed the boat in readiness to enter then looked to Sierra. She was laying on her side, with her chin resting on her fist, smiling back at him. To say it made him feel all warm inside would be quite the understatement.

CLAYMORE: You alright?

SIERRA: Yeah. You?

CLAYMORE: I'm great, thanks.

SIERRA: Cool.

(She smiled.)

SIERRA: You have awesome hair, do you know that?

CLAYMORE: Thanks. You have awesome... boobs.

SIERRA: I know.

(They chuckled.)

SIERRA: Alan and Josie are enjoying those locks, aren't they?

CLAYMORE: It's Al's favourite part of the journey.

SIERRA: So, I see.

CLAYMORE: If we see another boat though, it's imperative he makes Josie come back onto the boat. Canal groupies don't open locks. We got away with it yesterday because the boatman who saw her operating the lock was a bit gullible. Other crews won't be fooled so easily.

SIERRA: I know. You told them that three times before they opened the first one.

CLAYMORE: Right... yeah. Sorry. I'm just paranoid about getting caught, that's all. If people suspect you're not canal groupies, they're gonna start wondering what you *really* are. And we don't want that.

SIERRA: No. No, we don't.

(She fluttered her eyelashes at him.)

SIERRA: And don't worry, if anyone comes I'll be sure to do my bit. I'll be all over you like a horny tigress.

(Claymore whimpered.)

CLAYMORE: That... oh, hell, yeah.

(He then shook his head to wash away his lusty thoughts.)

CLAYMORE: Damn it, Sierra.

SIERRA: What?

CLAYMORE: You've got a damn sexy way about you that I can't seem to resist.

SIERRA: Then don't resist. I'm hardly discouraging you.

CLAYMORE: What?

SIERRA: I've said all I need to say. Girls don't make the first move.

CLAYMORE: Right...

(He bit his lip.)

CLAYMORE: Since my ex vanished off the face of the planet, I've had a real problem connecting with women, Sierra. I can't relate to them and I hardly even find them attractive anymore. Then you came along.

(He shook his head.)

CLAYMORE: You've got this... I dunno... hypnotic way about you.

SIERRA: Thank you.

CLAYMORE: I really want to do you, Sierra.

SIERRA: What?

CLAYMORE: Crap! Sorry. That was really crass. I meant to say... I dunno.

(He grimaced.)

CLAYMORE: Actually, I meant what I said. I really fancy you, girl.

SIERRA: Then...

(Much to their annoyance, Josie then leapt onto the boat and swiftly sat down next to Sierra.)

JOSIE: There's a boat coming the other way. It just emerged from the other lock. It's okay though, the driver didn't see me.

SIERRA: Your timing really sucks, Josie.

JOSIE: No, it doesn't. One second longer and we'd have been rumbled.

SIERRA: I didn't mean...

(She beamed.)

SIERRA: Did you say there's a boat coming the other way?

JOSIE: Yes!

SIERRA: Yay!

(She then clambered down onto the deck where Claymore was steering the boat. Without hesitation, she slipped her hands around his neck then pushed her breasts against his side.)

CLAYMORE: That's...

SIERRA: You approve?

CLAYMORE: Fucking, do I?

SIERRA: I thought so.

(Josie grimaced at her uneasily.)

JOSIE: Blimey, Sierra.

SIERRA: What?

JOSIE: You're keen.

SIERRA: I'm playing my role.

JOSIE: Yeah, but... it's just not like you to be that forward.

SIERRA: I'm playing a role, Josie. I just told you that!

JOSIE: Right, yeah. A role.

(Her eyes then bulged in horror.)

JOSIE: Fuck. My role! I'm a canal groupie too.

(She then looked to Claymore before whimpering at Sierra.)

JOSIE: I haven't got to grope him too, have I?

SIERRA: No!

CLAYMORE: Actually, you'll be fine, Josie. Alan's out there opening locks. It stands to reason his groupie wouldn't go with him. If you two were actually canal groupies, this is *exactly* where you'd be.

JOSIE: Right. Cool.

(She bit her lip.)

JOSIE: Sierra, are you groping his butt?

SIERRA: Never mind what *I'm* doing, Josie. Look the other way and pretend to be sexy.

JOSIE: Pretend? Wow. Thanks for the vote of confidence.

SIERRA: You know what I meant.

JOSIE: Luckily for you, I do.

(She raised a thoughtful eyebrow.)

JOSIE: So, are you two like... getting together or something. I mean it's obvious you're hot for one another, but...

SIERRA: Josie, just roll over and lay there looking sexy, will you? What we're doing is none of your business.

JOSIE: Right. Fine.

(She then rolled onto her back.)

JOSIE: So... are you? Getting together, I mean. You must be. You're never that forward with a guy unless you're ready to give yourself to him, Sierra. You're very much a good girl.

SIERRA: Stop fishing for details.

CLAYMORE: Yeah!

SIERRA: It's ridiculous, Josie.

CLAYMORE: Yeah!

SIERRA: You know damn well, I'll give you an in-depth report *later on*.

CLAYMORE: Yeah! Wait. What?

JOSIE: It's a girl thing.

SIERRA: Yup.

CLAYMORE: Right.

SIERRA: All you need to know right now, Josie, is that I'm playing my role. As Claymore's ridiculously hot canal groupie.

JOSIE: Okay.

CLAYMORE: Ridiculously hot is exactly how *I'd* describe... oh, hang on. The other boats here.

(Sure enough, the other canal boat was indeed chugging towards them, virtually pulling alongside. Turning his head slightly to see the driver, Claymore raised a welcoming arm.)

CLAYMORE: Frankie! How's it going?

(The driver of the other boat returned the wave.)

FRANKIE: Not bad, mate; not bad. You?

CLAYMORE: Can't complain.

(Frankie looked Sierra up and down then puffed out in awe.)

FRANKIE: I wouldn't be complaining either.

CLAYMORE: Right?

FRANKIE: You're a lucky bastard, Claymore.

CLAYMORE: I certainly feel like one, mate.

FRANKIE: I'll bet.

(He nodded.)

FRANKIE: So anything to report back that way?

CLAYMORE: Not really. It's all a bit quiet, actually.

FRANKIE: Thank fuck.

CLAYMORE: And the other way?

FRANKIE: Peachy, mate. The Black Fox passed me last night, so that's long gone and out of your way.

CLAYMORE: Really? They did the locks last night? They must have been up until the small hours.

FRANKIE: I guess so, yeah.

(He shrugged.)

FRANKIE: So nothing to report.

CLAYMORE: Perfect.

FRANKIE: Yup. Anyway, see you later.

CLAYMORE: Take care, mate.

(He then nodded as the boat passed him and went on its way.)

CLAYMORE: See? All clear. I told you, it's gonna be a good day. Not a cloud in the sky, a clear canal up ahead and right now, the world's sexiest woman has her hands down my underpants.

JOSIE: What???

(She spun around to get a better view, only to find Sierra and Claymore giggling.)

CLAYMORE: Just kidding.

SIERRA: The look on your face!

JOSIE: Aw... you two suck.

(Just then, Alan's angry voice rose up from the tow path just up ahead.)

ALAN: Today, Claymore, you cunt!

CLAYMORE: What?

ALAN: The lock's open, you prick! Pay attention for fuck sake.

CLAYMORE: Oh, right. Yeah. Sorry!

(He then set the boat in motion and headed for the open lock.)

ALAN: Twat!

(As Alan headed away, Claymore furrowed his brow and mumbled under his breath.)

CLAYMORE: Fuck sake. I was distracted for like two seconds.

(He then rolled his eyes before refocussing on the task ahead. Sitting atop the roof, Josie watched the boat ease into the lock then turned and glanced at Sierra.)

JOSIE: Um... Sierra?

SIERRA: Yeah?

JOSIE: You can let go of him now.

SIERRA: I know.

JOSIE: Then, how come...

(She gave a stifled laugh.)

JOSIE: Oh, right. I see.

SIERRA: Good. I'm glad you see. The other boat's gone now. You can get back on the towpath.

JOSIE: What's it worth to you?

SIERRA: Josie...

JOSIE: I'm kidding, I'm kidding.

(She then chuckled as she rose to her feet in readiness to jump back onto the tow path. With the boat in the middle of the lock, surrounded by high walls, however, she quickly realised she was going nowhere.)

JOSIE: I can't jump that high.

SIERRA: Try anyway.

JOSIE: Fuck off, there's not a hope in hell of me making that! I'd fall in and drown.

(She then became acutely aware of Sierra giggling.)

JOSIE: You're mean.

SIERRA: And yet you love me anyway.

JOSIE: I know, right? What's wrong with me?

SIERRA: You have appallingly awesome taste in friends.

JOSIE: Is that so.

SIERRA: Absolutely.

JOSIE: Right.

(They then shared a chuckle together. As they did so, Claymore brought the boat to a standstill then gave Alan the nod.)

CLAYMORE: Take us up, mate!

ALAN: Actually, I'll close the lock gate behind you first.

(He rolled his eyes.)

ALAN: How long have we been doing this?

CLAYMORE: Don't be a cock, Al. You know damn well what I meant. Closing the lock is *part* of taking us up!

ALAN: Yeah, yeah, whatever.

(He set about closing the lock gate then furrowed his brow at Josie.)

ALAN: What happened to my assistant?

JOSIE: I had to get back on the boat because *another* boat was coming.

ALAN: Yeah, but how come you're still on it?

JOSIE: I never got the chance to get off again.

CLAYMORE: Yeah! Give the girl a chance, you bloody slave driver!

ALAN: Right, well... fair enough. I'm just miffed, that's all. It's no fun watching *my own* chest bounce up and down.

(Josie gasped.)

JOSIE: Is that what you were doing???

ALAN: Of course.

(He then wandered off to turn his attention to the valve.)

JOSIE: Wow. Can you believe that?

CLAYMORE: That he stared at your boobs? Yup. To be fair, that's what I'd do too.

SIERRA: So would I.

CLAYMORE: Interesting

SIERRA: If I was a guy, I mean!  
(She rolled her eyes.)  
SIERRA: It's not like I'm into girls or anything.  
(She chuckled.)  
SIERRA: Unless you count the time Josie and I got really drunk and made out with one another.  
CLAYMORE: Cool!  
JOSIE: Sierra!!! Stop telling everyone about that!  
SIERRA: Why?  
JOSIE: It embarrasses me!  
(She shook her head.)  
JOSIE: Honestly. You've told so many people, I'm starting to think you're really proud of it.  
SIERRA: Well... I'm not *ashamed* of it. Why should I be?  
(She chuckled.)  
SIERRA: I got to make out with the best looking girl in the nightclub.  
(Claymore mused to himself.)  
CLAYMORE: Second, surely.  
JOSIE: What?  
CLAYMORE: *You* were the best looking girl there, surely.  
SIERRA: Wow. Why would you trample all over her confidence like that?  
CLAYMORE: Um...  
SIERRA: I try to give her a boost and you...  
JOSIE: It's fine.  
(She rolled her eyes.)  
JOSIE: It's no secret that you're the hot one. I have no problem with that. I just wish you wouldn't keep telling everyone about... that night.  
SIERRA: Fine.  
(She pouted.)  
SIERRA: If you're that ashamed of me, I'll forget all about it.  
JOSIE: I never said I was ashamed of you.  
SIERRA: Cool. Then we'll carry on as we were, with me telling everybody.  
(Josie watched her giggle to herself then allowed herself an amused smile.)  
JOSIE: I need a new best friend.

---

A minute or so later, once the lock had been filled and the boat had risen to the correct level, Alan set about opening the lock gates in readiness for the next short stretch of canal. With the next lock only fifty feet away, however, he had no intention of getting back on the boat. It simply wasn't worth the effort. And so, having pushed it open so the boat could pass through it, he wiped the sweat from his brow then started to head for the next lock.

ALAN: In your own time, mate.  
(Claymore called back.)  
CLAYMORE: Yeah, right. If I dawdle, you'll shout at me again.  
ALAN: Don't dawdle then.  
(As he headed away, he glanced back and grinned, half expecting to see Claymore making a rude hand gesture at him. Instead, he saw Josie racing towards him, having just alighted the boat.)  
JOSIE: Canal woman Josie, reporting for duty.  
ALAN: Nah. Having missed that last lock, you're fired.  
JOSIE: What?

ALAN: I'm kidding.

(He smiled.)

ALAN: Come on.

(As they headed away, Sierra and Claymore shared a smile then stared ahead. Well aware that nobody could see them, Sierra slipped her hand onto Claymore's buttocks. In return, he placed his hand on hers.)

CLAYMORE: Ooh, firm.

SIERRA: I was thinking the same thing.

(They stood there beaming with self-delight for a moment then Claymore bit his lip.)

CLAYMORE: Where have you been all my life?

SIERRA: What?

CLAYMORE: I mean, why do I have to meet you now? When you're about to flee the country forever.

SIERRA: Well... we probably wouldn't have met at all if I *wasn't* fleeing.

CLAYMORE: I realise that. It's just that, travelling with you is awesome. You're much better to look at than Al. And if I touched *his* butt like this, he'd probably hit me.

SIERRA: Or he'd touch yours too. You are best friends, after all.

CLAYMORE: Gross.

(Sierra giggled.)

SIERRA: Sorry, couldn't resist.

CLAYMORE: I know that feeling, Sierra. I can't seem to resist *you*. At the risk of sounding like a crass bell-end, you're well fit.

SIERRA: Thank you.

(She blushed.)

SIERRA: You're going to kiss me now, aren't you?

CLAYMORE: Nope.

SIERRA: Oh.

CLAYMORE: Not because I don't want to. I just don't want to crash the boat.

SIERRA: Right. Well, that makes sense.

(She smiled seductively.)

SIERRA: Never mind. There's plenty of other ways I can keep us both entertained without you taking your eyes off the canal.

(Her other hand then started to wander up his inner thigh.)

CLAYMORE: Ooh. I like your style, babe.

SIERRA: Uh-huh.

(Just then, much to their annoyance, Josie leapt back onto the roof and gave them both quite the start.)

JOSIE: Me again!

(Sierra and Claymore both jumped back, letting go of one another in the process.)

SIERRA: Jesus, woman!

CLAYMORE: What the fuck?

SIERRA: You scared the crap out of me!

JOSIE: Sorry. I didn't mean to.

CLAYMORE: Why aren't you helping... oh, right...

(He nodded down the canal.)

CLAYMORE: There's another boat coming out of the lock up ahead.

JOSIE: Exactly.

SIERRA: Stupid boat. What rotten timing.

CLAYMORE: Yeah.

JOSIE: Wait. What? Why?



SIERRA: Why do you think? You fucking gooseberry.

JOSIE: Oh.

CLAYMORE: You're like a bloody tractor.

SIERRA: She is?

JOSIE: How?

(Claymore grimaced uncomfortably.)

CLAYMORE: Well, like... when you're on a thin country lane... they get in the way, don't they? You know, like... block the road.

JOSIE: I wasn't blocking *anything*.

(She then looked enlightened and started to giggle.)

JOSIE: Oh! You were planning on getting up to naughty things when nobody's looking.

SIERRA: Yes, Josie. *Getting up to naughty things*. Like blowing raspberries and calling the teacher a poo-poo head.

(She rolled her eyes.)

SIERRA: How old are you?

JOSIE: Fine. You were planning on doing *filthy* things then.

(She glanced away and smirked innocently.)

JOSIE: Slut!

SIERRA: Hey!

(Josie giggled.)

SIERRA: I'm going to throw you in the canal in a minute, Josie.

JOSIE: Yeah, right.

(They then shared an amused glance. As they did so, Claymore glanced at the advancing boat then grinned. Alan was on the tow path behind it, making a series of rude hand gestures at the driver.)

CLAYMORE: Classic.

JOSIE: What?

CLAYMORE: Look at Al.

(Josie and Sierra glanced at Alan then grinned.)

SIERRA: Why's he doing that?

CLAYMORE: Because the driver of that boat is a knob. He won't talk to us. He won't even acknowledge we're here. He's a grade A cunt.

JOSIE: Why? Is he angry with you about something.

CLAYMORE: Yeah. He hates working class people and resents having to share the canal with us.

JOSIE: But this is a working class job.

CLAYMORE: I know that. And so does he. His dad's some rich bloke, you see? And he made him work here so he learns the value of money. And the concept of hard work.

SIERRA: Sounds like a good idea.

CLAYMORE: He doesn't see it that way. He's a first class snob; a complete prick. He looks down on us. Which is why we do this.

(He then waved at the oncoming boat and called out to the driver.)

CLAYMORE: Alright, Hampton? You not fallen overboard and drowned yet?

(Hampton just snarled.)

CLAYMORE: Chill. There's still time.

(He then looked to Sierra.)

CLAYMORE: Quick. Give me something to throw at him.

SIERRA: I'm... not doing that.

CLAYMORE: What? You're no fun.

(He rolled his eyes.)

CLAYMORE: Fine. Hey, Hampton. Is it true, your...

(Just then, the cabin doors burst open and Graydon rushed out in something of a dither. Flapping his arms around wildly, he was cursing like a frontiersman.)

GRAYDON: Fuck off! Go on, get fucked! Stupid fucking wasp!!!

(He then flinched as the wasp flew away off across the canal before nodding defiantly.)

GRAYDON: That showed him! Bloody thing attacked me while I was...

(He then froze in horror and stared across at the other boat as it passed. His mouth was agape and he was rapidly turning pale. Aboard the other boat, Hampton was staring back at him, wide-mouthed, very much astonished to see him.)

CLAYMORE: Right. Well, that can't be good.

(Graydon watched the other boat pass for a moment then gulped and looked to Claymore.)

GRAYDON: Um... Claymore...

CLAYMORE: For fuck sake.

GRAYDON: I think we're about to have a problem.

CLAYMORE: He knows you, doesn't he?

GRAYDON: Well, put it this way. Remember when I mentioned my old chum, the secretary of war and pensions?

JOSIE: The one whose wife you...

SIERRA: Defiled anally.

GRAYDON: Yes.

(He cringed.)

GRAYDON: That's his son.

CLAYMORE: Fuck! And you're sure he recognised you, are you?

GRAYDON: Well, he wasn't staring at me in horror like that because he thought I was the creature from the black lagoon.

SIERRA: Even though there is a certain resemblance.

CLAYMORE: This is no time for jokes, you tit.

SIERRA: Excuse me?

CLAYMORE: Sorry. Sorry. I didn't mean that, babe. I'm just panicking, that's all. If he's been spotted we're in deep shit.

SIERRA: You called me a tit!

(She looked to Josie.)

SIERRA: He called me a tit!

CLAYMORE: Yes, and I *like* tits! Get over it. We're in trouble here.

(He called out to Alan.)

CLAYMORE: Alan!!! Get over here now!!! Quick.

(Graydon grimaced.)

GRAYDON: Chaps, this is bad. He'll be making a somewhat damaging call as soon as he reaches the nearest phone. *He* hated me *before* I shagged his mother up the bum; I dread to think how much he despises me now.

CLAYMORE: You cock!

(He growled.)

CLAYMORE: You were told to stay in the cabin!

GRAYDON: There was a wasp!

CLAYMORE: *You're* a fucking wasp!

GRAYDON: Eh?

CLAYMORE: I don't fucking know. I'm panicking.

(Just then Alan leapt onto the deck and threw out his palms.)

ALAN: What's so fucking urgent?

(Claymore gestured to his left.)

CLAYMORE: This cunt just got spotted.  
ALAN: Sierra?  
CLAYMORE: Graydon.  
ALAN: You gestured to Sierra.  
JOSIE: He moved when Claymore pointed him out.  
SIERRA: And besides, I'm a tit not a cunt, apparently.  
CLAYMORE: I didn't mean that, babe; sorry.  
SIERRA: Whatever.  
(She nodded defiantly.)  
SIERRA: You can make it up to me later.  
ALAN: What? Shut up! Never mind that bollocks. Graydon's been spotted, right?  
CLAYMORE: Yeah!  
ALAN: By Hampton, I assume.  
CLAYMORE: Yeah. He knows him, apparently.  
GRAYDON: He knows me and he hates me. He'll alert the authorities at the first opportunity, I'm sure of it.  
(He whimpered.)  
GRAYDON: Within minutes of him making that call this place will be swimming with guards, eager to hunt me down.  
CLAYMORE: And anyone who assisted you. Meaning us!  
ALAN: Fuck.  
(He then furrowed his brow aggressively.)  
ALAN: There's only one thing for it then.  
GRAYDON: Oh, god, you're gonna chuck me in the canal, aren't you?  
ALAN: Tempting, but no. What good what that do? He saw you with Claymore. That means *we're* in the shit too. He knows us and he knows this boat.  
CLAYMORE: Exactly. Everything's fucked.  
ALAN: Then you know what we have to do.  
CLAYMORE: Contingency?  
ALAN: Yeah! We need to put 'Operation: Oh Shit' into action, right now.  
(He then clenched his fist determinedly.)  
ALAN: Go!!!

---

Five minutes later, The Amethyst was moored at the side of the canal and there was much in the way of panic inside. In the hold, Claymore was filling a backpack with cash, while in the cabin, Sierra and Josie were filling backpacks with urgent food supplies. Alan in the meantime, was outside removing the name plate from the boat in the hope it might buy them a few minutes once the authorities arrived. Graydon's contribution, however, was far from helpful. Scared witless, he was pacing up and down in a highly emotional state.

GRAYDON: I'll be beheaded probably. No. That'd be *far* too generous. They'll want me to suffer. They'll torture me first, that's what they'll do.

SIERRA: Are you going to help us pack these bags or not, Graydon?

GRAYDON: No, no, you carry on.

(He whimpered.)

GRAYDON: Packing bags is the least of my worries. If I get caught, they'll pull my finger nails off, gauge out my eyes and pull out my innards as an example to others. Then they'll force feed me some wasps, before beheading me then having me killed. No, wait, the beheading would be pretty final, come to think of it. It'll still bloody hurt though. I really don't want to get caught!

JOSIE: Then the quicker we get away the better!

GRAYDON: Indeed. Hurry up and pack those bags, will you?

JOSIE: The point I'm making is, it'll be quicker if you *help*!

GRAYDON: Don't be ridiculous. Haven't you heard the mantra? Never get a man to do a woman's job.

SIERRA: Wow. You know, Josie, half of me hopes they *do* catch him.

JOSIE: Only half?

SIERRA: Well, yeah. If we leave him behind and they catch him, he'll tell them which way we went.

JOSIE: True.

GRAYDON: Never mind yapping! Get those bags packed. My life might just depend on it.

SIERRA: *All* our lives depend on it!

GRAYDON: Stop dithering then!

SIERRA: We're not!

JOSIE: Pillock.

(She then zipped up a backpack and looked to Sierra.)

JOSIE: Where's the third?

SIERRA: You just zipped it up.

JOSIE: I did?

(Sierra zipped another bag up then nodded.)

SIERRA: Yup. That's it. Every bit of food we can possibly squeeze into these packs.

JOSIE: Cool. Now what?

(Just then, Claymore hurried from the hold with a large backpack in his hand.)

CLAYMORE: Where's Alan?

(At that very moment, Alan charged into the cabin and hurried to his bag.)

CLAYMORE: Forget I asked.

(He then strode over to Alan and nodded.)

CLAYMORE: Here you go. All our hidden profits, our emergency stash and the petty cash; every single note of it.

ALAN: Sweet.

(Alan grabbed the bag then scooped it onto his back. He then handed his bag to Claymore.)

ALAN: This is the boat's name plaque, two large flasks of water and some firelighters.

CLAYMORE: Okay, then that just leaves the food.

(They both looked at Sierra and Josie.)

ALAN: Is the food ready?

SIERRA: Three bags packed to the brim.

CLAYMORE: Then we're good to go.

GRAYDON: Well it's about bloody time.

SIERRA: Here.

(She then attempted to hand a bag to Graydon.)

GRAYDON: I'm not carrying it! What do you think I am, a third world mule?

SIERRA: I can't carry two, they're heavy.

JOSIE: I'll carry it then.

ALAN: No, you won't.

(He then snatched the bag from Sierra and thrust it into Graydon's chest.)

ALAN: Put it on, stop complaining and get moving. One word of defiance and you'll see a side to me few live to tell their friends about. Got it?

(Graydon gulped.)

GRAYDON: Right. Yes.

ALAN: Good.

CLAYMORE: Go!

(With that, they all marched to the cabin door, crossed the deck then jumped down onto the towpath. Graydon brought up the rear, grumbling under his breath.)

GRAYDON: They treat me like a common, working-class oik.

ALAN: Everyone has their bag on, yes?

SIERRA: Yup.

CLAYMORE: Yeah.

JOSIE: Yes.

GRAYDON: You can bloody well see I have.

ALAN: I was double checking, you cunt, because this is it. No turning back now.

CLAYMORE: Nope. Let's go.

(Alan and Claymore then raced off down their towpath. They weren't exactly sprinting, but they weren't just jogging either. For Josie keeping up with them was easy. She was very much into sport and loved to keep fit. More of a fashionista than a sporty type, Sierra did her level best to keep up but knew it wouldn't be long before she fell behind. Having already fallen behind after only a few dozen meters, Graydon was mortified. His life was one of gluttony and sloth. If he needed something from across his own living room, he'd make the maid fetch it. Exercise was the very antithesis of everything he stood for; a word with no meaning. Being expected to run with a backpack on was a mortifying prospect to him. The thought of being disembowelled with a rusty blade, however, was far worse. And so, he thudded forth, gasping for air, resigned to the fact he had very little choice.)

GRAYDON: Why? Why is this happening?

CLAYMORE: Because you didn't stay the fucking cabin like we told you to!

GRAYDON: Right...

(He growled under his breath.)

GRAYDON: I might have known you'd bring that up.

(For several minutes, they continued onwards along the towpath, focussing hard on getting as far away as possible. The consequences of getting caught, after all, didn't bear thinking about. It'd be more than unpleasant; especially for Graydon.)

ALAN: Mate, the village of Dunhill is just ahead.

CLAYMORE: Aight the canal there, yeah?

ALAN: Yeah.

(He smirked.)

ALAN: Aight? You've been spending too long with old posh bollocks back there.

CLAYMORE: Mate, we're canal boat workers. Aight is the correct term.

ALAN: Sure. If you're the Duke of Spanky Upon Tweed.

CLAYMORE: Mate...

ALAN: Relax, I'm pulling your plonker, mate.

(Just then, Graydon's breathless voice rose up from the back of the pack.)

GRAYDON: I know we're in a hurry and all, chaps, but this is ridiculous. You're running way too fast!

ALAN: Would you rather get caught?

GRAYDON: God, no! They'd castrate me.

(A look of horror then crossed his brow.)

GRAYDON: Oh, good god; they would too. I never thought of that. As revenge for the way I defiled the secretary's wife, they'll probably start with my genitals then work their way up.

(In that moment, he suddenly seemed to find extra energy from somewhere and thundered in between Sierra and Josie, desperate to get away.)

SIERRA: Hey!

JOSIE: Careful!

GRAYDON: Move it, you idiots; you're running *far* too slowly!

JOSIE: You almost nudged Sierra into the canal!

GRAYDON: No, I bloody didn't! And even if she *did* fall in, with those two glorious buoyancy aids on her chest, there wouldn't be a hope in hell of her drowning.

SIERRA: He's such an asshole.

JOSIE: And then some.

GRAYDON: Never mind that, get a bloody move on. We need to get as far away from this bloody canal as possible.

SIERRA: With you barging people about like that, I couldn't agree more.

GRAYDON: Behave. I barely touched you.

JOSIE: Dude. *She* weighs about eight stone and *you* weigh almost a ton, probably. You wouldn't *have* to nudge her too hard.

GRAYDON: Oh, quit whining.

ALAN: You can all quit whining, okay? My legs are taking quite the pounding right now and my ears don't need the same punishment.

CLAYMORE: Right? So other than to say, if you do push Sierra in the canal, I'll kill you where you stand, Graydon, let's just move on, shall we?

GRAYDON: Fine.

SIERRA: Push him in anyway!

GRAYDON: Hey!

SIERRA: What?

ALAN: For fuck sake!

(He rolled his eyes.)

ALAN: Look, follow me, will you?

(With that, he darted sideways then charged up an alley that led away from the canal. Only too happy to see the back of the canal, the others followed urgently. Curious to know where they'd end up, everyone fell silent; much to Alan's relief. For over a minute, they bounded forth down the slim footpath before emerging on a quiet side road.)

GRAYDON: Where the hell are we?

(Not about to waste time answering the question, Alan raced off to the left, following the path at the side of the road. The others followed on determinedly.)

GRAYDON: Well? Where are we? Do you even know where we're going?

JOSIE: Shut up, Graydon. I'm sure Alan knows what he's doing.

GRAYDON: We all know what we're *doing*. Running away. I want to know if he knows where we're *going*.

ALAN: Of course, I fucking do. This is the village of Dunhill; we've stopped here for supplies a few times.

CLAYMORE: We know most of the towns and villages around the canal like the backs of our hands.

GRAYDON: Right. Then... good.

(For several moments they raced onwards, until finally, a small village centre came into view up ahead.)

GRAYDON: A village centre? Bad idea. Bad idea! They have police stations!

CLAYMORE: This one doesn't. Not anymore.

JOSIE: They had to close half the police stations when your government slashed public services.

GRAYDON: Right. Good point. Although, I'd be remiss if I didn't point out the preferred term for *slashing* public services is *making efficiency savings*.

JOSIE: When the actual terms is redirecting money from public services into your own fucking pockets.

(Graydon beamed.)

GRAYDON: Indeed. It worked out well, really. First I made a pretty penny from slashing police funding, and now I get to benefit from the fact there's no bugger here to arrest me. God bless you, austerity.

CLAYMORE: What a cunt.

ALAN: Yup.

(He then raced up to a bus stop and slowed to a halt.)

ALAN: Claymore. A bus stop!

CLAYMORE: Hello, bus stop. Nice to meet you.

ALAN: That wasn't an introduction, you funny cunt. I'm saying it might be an idea to catch a bus rather than walking.

CLAYMORE: Catch a bus to where?

ALAN: As far away as fucking possible, obviously.

JOSIE: But, what happens if the bus doesn't come? We don't want to be sitting there like idiots then suddenly find ourselves surrounded by police.

SIERRA: That would suck.

GRAYDON: She's right. That cunt Hampton will alert everyone as soon as he gets the chance, and this place will be swarming in no time. I don't think we have time to be sitting around.

ALAN: Right, well, yeah. I guess it all depends on how the long the bus is gonna be.

(Claymore beamed.)

CLAYMORE: Not long at all, mate. Look. There's one coming now.

(Everyone glance up the road, and sure enough, there was indeed a bus approaching.)

SIERRA: Yay!

JOSIE: Bonus.

GRAYDON: How degrading. Me. On a fucking bus.

ALAN: Oh, shut you, you tart.

(He then watched as the bus pulled up in front of him before nodding sternly.)

ALAN: Okay, guys; let's go.

---

In Sawbury township, several miles away from Dunhill, at this time, Hampton raced into the local guard station and charged up to the desk. The fact the desk clerk was helping someone else at the time was of very little consequence to him. Angrily shunting her aside, he bellowed out his words as soon as he got there

HAMPTON: Graydon James is here!!! He's here!!!

(The guard stood up angrily.)

GUARD: Do you mind??? That was my wife you just bundled to the floor!!!

HAMPTON: Oh, like that's even relevant!

GUARD: Excuse me???

WIFE: Hit him!

GUARD: Good idea.

(He then grabbed Hampton by the collar.)

GUARD: Sorry, son; this is going to hurt you a lot more than it is me. A lot more.

HAMPTON: Unhand me and pay attention, you Neanderthal. I saw Graydon James on the canal!

GUARD: I don't care if you saw the queen's favourite racehorse skiing down Mount Evercare with a blindfold on; nobody does that to a wife of mine!!!

WIFE: A wife? There are others???

GUARD: Don't be bloody ridiculous, woman!

HAMPTON: You're not listening to me, are you? I saw Graydon James. Top of the government's most wanted list with a reward to the tune of seven figures!!! The former government advisor turned national traitor. He's here!

GUARD: Yes, well, if you think that excuses your behaviour...

(He then froze as Hampton's words finally filtered through to his brain.)

GUARD: Did you say Graydon James?

HAMPTON: Yes!!! He was on the canal.

GUARD: I see.

(He then shrieked in a panic.)

GUARD: Details!!! I need details.

WIFE: Why haven't you hit him yet?

GUARD: Shut up, you.

WIFE: Oh, really? Like that, is it?

(She then stormed out of the guard station.)

GUARD: Yup, that one's gonna cost me.

HAMPTON: I dare say it will, yes.

GUARD: Oh well. Come on;, details!!!

HAMPTON: He was on a canal boat.

GUARD: Well I gathered he wasn't *walking* on the canal.

HAMPTON: I think the boat was called The Amethyst.

GUARD: The Amethyst...

(He jotted the name on a piece of paper then nodded.)

GUARD: And where *exactly* did you see them?

HAMPTON: They were going through the locks nearest to Dunhill village when I passed them.

GUARD: And how long ago was this?

HAMPTON: About fifteen minutes ago.

GUARD: What? Why wait so long to come and tell us?

(Hampton furrowed his brow.)

HAMPTON: It took five minutes to get through the next lock and moor up, then I ran all the way here! I came as quickly as I bloody could.

GUARD: Well... fair enough. So what else can you tell us?

HAMPTON: Oh, he was with two young women and two young men. The two men are the crewmen, Claymore and Albert, I think. You'll see if you check your records.

GUARD: Righto. Just a moment...

(He finished writing up what he'd heard then looked to Hampton again.)

GUARD: And the girls?

HAMPTON: Never seen them before. They were bloody tasty though. Awesome boobs, absolutely outstanding actually. One was white, the other tanned.

GUARD: One boob was white and the other was...

HAMPTON: No, you idiot! One of the girls was white, the other was tanned. Oh, oh, that's right. The tanned one was wearing a very distinctive bracelet. Platignum with ruby heart shapes going around it. Worth a few quid, actually.

GUARD: I see. I'll just make a note of that.

HAMPTON: Right. Be quick about it.

GUARD: Don't tell me what to do!

HAMPTON: Or you'll do what?

GUARD: Slap you into the middle of next week, that's what?

HAMPTON: The middle of next week???

(He scoffed.)



HAMPTON: My father is the secretary of state for war and pensions. You lay a finger on me, chummy, you'll be tried and convicted *long* before then. You'll be in jail by the *beginning* of next week.

GUARD: Then you'll be able to read all about my trial from your hospital bed when you eventually come out of your coma, won't you?

HAMPTON: I shall. And what's more, I'll glean much joy from it.

GUARD: I bet you will. Jumped up little tosser.

HAMPTON: Lowly, working class oik.

GUARD: Fuck you.

HAMPTON: Eat excrement, fatty.

GUARD: Low blow, arse wipe.

(He then laid his pen down and ripped the page from his pad.)

GUARD: Right. Let's get this low-down traitor to our nation well and truly captured, shall we?

HAMPTON: Go on then!!!

GUARD: I'm doing it!!!

(He then grabbed the radio and spoke into the receiver.)

GUARD: Requesting urgent connection to head office, please.

(The radio crackled before a female voice replied.)

JANICE: Understood, Frank.

GUARD: Thank you.

HAMPTON: You're name's Frank?

GUARD: Shut up.

HAMPTON: What? I was just going to say it suits you. Frank truly is a twat's name.

GUARD: Put a sock in it, will you? I've got work to do.

(He then spoke urgently into the radio again.)

GUARD: Red Alert, head office; we've located Graydon James. I repeat...

JANICE: You've not been connected to the network yet, Frank.

GUARD: Oh...

HAMPTON: Moron.

GUARD: You're asking for it, sunshine.

JANICE: Okay, whenever you're ready, Frank.

GUARD: Thank you.

(He then rolled his eyes and tried again.)

GUARD: Red Alert, head office; we've located Graydon James. I repeat, we've located Graydon James. He was seen fifteen minutes ago near the village of Dunhill, heading north on the canal aboard a boat named The Amethyst. He's accompanied by the crewman, Claymore and Albert. Two females were also in attendance, one white, one tanned both with awesome boobies. The tanned one is wearing a distinctive bracelet; platignum with ruby hearts on it.

(He took the radio from his lips and nodded.)

GUARD: That'll get their attention.

HAMPTON: Obviously.

(Sure enough the radio replied immediately.)

SERGEANT: Understood, officer. Graydon James; heading north along the canal with four accomplices. Confirm?

GUARD: Confirmed.

SERGEANT: The crew of The Amethyst canal boat and two girls with big boobs; one wearing a platignum bracelet with ruby hearts, confirm.

GUARD: Confirmed.

SERGEANT: Thank you, officer. Scramble all your available men then stand by for further communication.

GUARD: Sir.

(He then lowered the receiver.)

GUARD: The shit's going to hit the fan now. Watch!

(He then pressed a button under his desk and an alarm rang out throughout the building.)

GUARD: I'd move if I was you. Every guard in the station is about to converge.

HAMPTON: Good.

(He then stepped back.)

HAMPTON: That bloody Graydon thought he could escape over the border via the canal, did he? Big mistake.

GUARD: You think he was heading for the border?

HAMPTON: Of course. Wouldn't you?

GUARD: Good point.

HAMPTON: An obvious point, I'd have thought.

GUARD: Oh... shut up.

(In that moment, the doors at the back of the reception area flew open and dozens of guards raced in. Not wasting a single second, the guard on duty hurriedly issued instructions to the eager law officers and within minutes police car after police car raced out of the station. The hunt for Graydon and his accomplices was on.)

---

Seated at the front end of a bus somewhere north of Dunhill, at this time, Sierra was staring dead ahead of herself in horror. The others were anxiously glancing out of the windows for any signs of the local authorities driving by. Ready to duck should any happen to pass, they were very much on high alert.

CLAYMORE: Slouch, will you, mate.

ALAN: I *am* fucking slouching, this is as low as I get.

CLAYMORE: Really? How high is that seat?

GRAYDON: Stop nattering, will you? We need to be ready to hide.

CLAYMORE: We are.

ALAN: Yeah. No lack of focus here.

SIERRA: I'm wearing a skimpy swimsuit!

ALAN: There, on the other hand...

(Sierra whimpered.)

SIERRA: I won't blend in *anywhere* we go. Not dressed like this. My bum cheeks are on display to the entire universe when I stand up.

GRAYDON: Indeed. It's delightful.

(Ignoring Graydon's unhelpful contribution, Alan sucked his teeth.)

ALAN: Actually, that's gonna be a problem.

JOSIE: Yeah, it's gonna be impossible to go anywhere unnoticed when everyone's staring at her bum.

CLAYMORE: It'll be fine.

ALAN: What?

CLAYMORE: If they weren't staring at her butt, they'd be staring at her gorgeous face, anyway. She's an uniquely good looking woman.

(Sierra blushed.)

SIERRA: Wow. You're totally forgiven for calling me a tit now.

CLAYMORE: Sweet. Exactly what I was angling at.

(Alan swiftly intervened.)

ALAN: Stop that! I can't believe I'm hearing this. We have a serious issue here, Claymore, and you're using it to charm her knickers off?

CLAYMORE: She isn't wearing any knick...

ALAN: No! Stop.

(He looked to Sierra and nodded.)

ALAN: Is there anything you can wrap around yourself?

JOSIE: We've only got food in our bags.

ALAN: Fuck. I'm just holding the money.

CLAYMORE: Don't look at me, mate. There's nothing useful in *my* bag either.

ALAN: Shit. Looks like you need to visit another clothes shop then.

GRAYDON: Do we have time for that?

SIERRA: Yes!

GRAYDON: Are you sure? Only women are notoriously bad at shopping.

ALAN: She'll be fine.

(He looked to Sierra urgently.)

ALAN: Just make sure you're quick about it, okay? Don't be picky.

SIERRA: I won't. I'm scared and I want to get away as much as you do.

ALAN: Good.

(He then reached for his bag.)

ALAN: I'll give you some money.

SIERRA: No need.

(She slipped some bank notes from her cleavage.)

SIERRA: I've still got the change I didn't give back to Graydon.

GRAYDON: Why, you...

CLAYMORE: Shut it.

(He shook his head.)

CLAYMORE: Listen, right, this bus goes to the town of Coxwell.

JOSIE: Cock swell?

CLAYMORE: Yeah, Coxwell. Once we get there, we'll head to the nearest clothes shop so Sexy can buy what she needs.

JOSIE: Her name's Sierra.

CLAYMORE: That's what I said.

GRAYDON: No, you bloody didn't.

CLAYMORE: Oh, does it matter?

ALAN: He's got it bad.

CLAYMORE: Put a sock in it. As I was saying, Sierra can buy her clothes then we need to get going again. Another bus, a train, bicycles if he have to, we need to get the border as soon as humanly possible. Because of this cunt...

(He gestured to Graydon.)

CLAYMORE: We're now public enemy number one.

GRAYDON: It's true. Too true. Although, I have to say I resent...

CLAYMORE: Nobody cares.

ALAN: And nobody ever will, so let's focus on the journey ahead. We need to get to the border as soon as possible, but that's where things are going to get *really* difficult. The border's gonna be swarming with guards and shit.

GRAYDON: Thousands of the fuckers. Thrice the usual number of border guards, at least.

SIERRA: How come?

ALAN: That many? Really?

GRAYDON: Yes! You were taking me up the canal. And not in the same way Claymore plans to take *you* up the canal, Sierra.

CLAYMORE: Dude!

GRAYDON: I'm just saying, I mean it literally. You were taking me up the canal. The canal only leads to one place; the border. Therefore it's bloody obvious that I'm making a dash to Amaria.

JOSIE: Perhaps it'd make more sense for us not to go to the border then. I mean, if that's where they're expecting us to go; if that's where they're going to focus their energies, maybe we should flee somewhere else.

ALAN: And live the rest of our lives as fugitives in hiding? No, thanks.

CLAYMORE: He's right. We need to get out of the country. It's the only way we can survive. If we stay in this country, it'll only be a matter of time before we get captured.

GRAYDON: And killed.

JOSIE: True. Makes sense.

SIERRA: So we'll keep running for the border then?

CLAYMORE: Yeah. Then pray we can cross it.

ALAN: I won't lie. It's gonna suck.

(Just then, a police car sped past the bus with its sirens blaring. At once, they all gasped in horror then ducked down. For several moments they remained low until the siren sound faded away, at which point they slowly righted themselves and grimaced uneasily.)

ALAN: Yup. The border is gonna suck. And so is getting there!

---

Outside Sierra's house at this time, the four guards on vigil remained in their car, still waiting for Sierra to come home. Unshaven and starting to smell rather unsavoury, they were beginning to get more than a little niggled with one another. The captain was especially tetchy.

CAPTAIN: Smith? Are you sure this is her house, you cretin?

SMITH: Of course, sir.

CAPTAIN: Where the fuck is she then?

SMITH: I don't know, sir.

CAPTAIN: Fucking useless. And you're one hundred percent certain, are you?

SMITH: She's my next door neighbour, sir; of course I'm certain.

ERIKSON: You'd better bloody be. If this turns out to be the wrong house, Smithy...

SMITH: You'll do what?

ERIKSON: I'll redecorate your face, that's what!

WILSON: And I'll hold your coat for you.

CAPTAIN: Enough of that, Erikson!

SMITH: Ha!

CAPTAIN: You too, twat features.

(He snarled.)

CAPTAIN: And don't even get me started on you, Wilson. Dozing off on duty like that! And you didn't even have the decency to piss yourself and give us all a good laugh.

WILSON: Well... I would apologise for that, but...

CAPTAIN: Oh, shut up. I don't want to hear it.

(He sneered.)

CAPTAIN: Four bloody days we've been sitting here...

ERIKSON: No, we haven't.

CAPTAIN: Well it bloody well feels like it!!!

(He growled.)

CAPTAIN: And don't interrupt when I'm whinging at you!

(Just then, the radio in the car activated and they all stared at it through tired eyes.)

RADIO: This is a nationwide alert to all available units. I repeat, this is a nationwide alert to *all* available units. All available units are hereby ordered to attend the Efland/Amaria border crossing. En route, register with the police station at Sawbury township. This is not a request!

(The four guards in the car all glanced at one another in bewilderment then the captain snatched the receiver.)

CAPTAIN: Interesting!

(With that, he twiddled a knob then spoke into the receiver.)

CAPTAIN: Hey, Carol?

RADIO: Yes, Captain?

CAPTAIN: What's with this nationwide alert?

RADIO: Oh, my god. It's huge, Captain.

CAPTAIN: So you ladies tell me.

RADIO: What?

CAPTAIN: Nothing. What's huge?

RADIO: They've spotted Graydon James making a dash for the border.

CAPTAIN: Oh! Interesting.

RADIO: You should get up there and try to capture him.

CAPTAIN: Well, I'd love to, but I'm on a stakeout.

RADIO: But your orders are to go.

CAPTAIN: It said all *available* units. We're busy.

(Erikson rolled his eyes.)

ERIKSON: Yeah, we're rushed off our feet.

RADIO: I'd still go if I was you. The top brass are adamant we send as many guards as possible.

CAPTAIN: Yes, well, the top brass can all suck my...

(Just then, a grumpy male voice spoke out on the radio.)

RADIO: Suck your what, Captain?

CAPTAIN: Uh-oh. Um... nothing, commissioner.

RADIO: Good. Now get your arse to the border.

CAPTAIN: Good idea, sir.

RADIO: And don't forget to report to Sawbury police station on the way.

CAPTAIN: Very well, sir.

RADIO: Yes, it *is* very well. Cheeky little twat.

CAPTAIN: I apologise, sir.

RADIO: Good. Capturing Graydon James is our number one priority and don't you forget it.

CAPTAIN: Absolutely.

RADIO: Good. Oh, and on your way there keep an eye out for his accomplices too. Two burly blokes and two women with awesome boobies.

CAPTAIN: Those last two I'm *bound* to notice, sir.

RADIO: Quite. I hope so too. Oh, and one last detail, one of the girls has a bracelet on her wrist, platignum with red roses encircling it.

CAPTAIN: I'll keep my eyes well and truly peeled, sir.

RADIO: Good. Now fucking get going.

(The radio then went dead and the captain sucked his teeth.)

CAPTAIN: Shit. I may just have kissed goodbye to any hopes I *ever* had of promotion with that conversation.

(He sighed then looked to where Smith was gaping breathlessly and pointing at the radio.)

CAPTAIN: What's wrong with you? You look like a goldfish.

SMITH: It's her, boss.

CAPTAIN: What? Carol the radio operator? Eh?  
SMITH: No, no. Sierra!  
CAPTAIN: Who?  
SMITH: The girl we've been waiting for, my next door neighbour.  
CAPTAIN: What are you on about, boy?  
SMITH: One of the girls on the run with Graydon James! It's Sierra! She has a really distinctive bracelet. A family heirloom, apparently. It's platignum with ruby hearts running around it. Just like the girl he described.  
CAPTAIN: I see.  
ERIKSON: You can't know it's her, mate. There could be hundreds of bracelets just like it.  
SMITH: Yeah, but how many would be on a young woman with awesome boobies?  
ERIKSON: Well... I suppose that narrows it down a bit.  
WILSON: If you ask me...  
CAPTAIN: Nobody did! And nobody ever will, so shut up.  
(He nodded.)  
CAPTAIN: Fact is, it could be her and that's good enough for me. So there's only one thing for it.  
(He then slung the car in gear.)  
CAPTAIN: To the border! If we can catch Graydon James and that Sierra woman, I'll be a shoo in for promotion! There's no time lose.  
(He then floored the accelerator and snarled menacingly. Much to his annoyance, however, the car remained perfectly still.)  
CAPTAIN: What the...  
ERIKSON: You have to *start* the car before you can drive it, sir.  
CAPTAIN: I'm well aware of that, thank you!  
(He ruffled his neck.)  
CAPTAIN: Idiot!  
(He then set the car in motion and raced off down the street.)  
CAPTAIN: Okay, boys, this is it! Time to shine!!!

---

A short while later, at the bus terminal in the town of Coxwell, Alan, Claymore, Josie, Sierra and Graydon hurriedly clambered from the bus then glanced about themselves urgently. Sierra had her hands over her buttocks, terrified she might attract way too much attention.  
SIERRA: Can you see a clothes shop?  
CLAYMORE: Not from here, no.  
GRAYDON: Can't see anything for fucking buses.  
ALAN: Well, this *is* a bus terminus.  
GRAYDON: Yes... how observant.  
JOSIE: Let's just hurry towards town, guys. Standing around is making me nauseous.  
ALAN: Agreed.  
CLAYMORE: Which way *is* the town?  
GRAYDON: I don't know; let's ask a policeman.  
(Everyone gave him a sideways glance.)  
GRAYDON: Right, yes... that's probably wouldn't be wise, would it?  
JOSIE: No. No, it wouldn't.  
ALAN: Fuck it. Let's just go. We'll find it. Then we need to find a way out of town.  
CLAYMORE: In other words, we'll find a shop then come back here.  
ALAN: That works. Let's go.

(With that, they hurried away towards the exit to the bus terminus. As they did so, Josie looked to Sierra and grimaced.)

JOSIE: Babe, you can't run everywhere with your hands on your arse, you'll fall over.

SIERRA: I'd rather that than draw attention to ourselves.

JOSIE: Yes, but if you fall over, you'll draw attention to us anyway.

SIERRA: Then I'll try *not* to fall over.

(She then stumbled forwards and shrieked. Mercifully, Josie managed to catch her and prop her up.)

JOSIE: Just run normally, yeah?

SIERRA: Yeah... you're right. Sorry.

(As they charged out of the bus terminus and turned right, Alan snarled.)

ALAN: What? Where are the shops? You'd think they'd be near the bus terminus.

CLAYMORE: Yeah, you would have thought so.

ALAN: So where are they then?

GRAYDON: They can't be far. Coxwell is only small.

CLAYMORE: *Your* cock make be small when it swells, mate, but mine...

GRAYDON: Stop that! I knew *someone* would say it. And I knew it'd be *you*. Grow up, boy.

CLAYMORE: Well pardon me for fucking breathing.

GRAYDON: Nobody said you couldn't breathe! Breathing is fine. Just lay off cheap and obvious jokes about swelling cocks. The people of this town have already heard them all a thousand times, I'd wager.

SIERRA: Wow, he's grumpy.

GRAYDON: Damned right, I am. And it's all *your* fault for not getting dressed properly this morning.

SIERRA: Yes, I did! I thought it was gonna be a day of sunbathing!

GRAYDON: Yes, well, it isn't.

(He growled.)

GRAYDON: Why you didn't change before we ditched the boat, I don't know.

SIERRA: I didn't have time. I was busy packing bags.

JOSIE: She might have had time if you'd bloody helped.

GRAYDON: That's a feeble excuse. A lame attempt to shift the blame onto me. I thought you women were good at multi-tasking. You could have changed *while* you were packing the bags! But no, you didn't bother, did you? And now look at us.

CLAYMORE: Leave her alone, Graydon.

GRAYDON: Why should I?

CLAYMORE: Because I'll hurt you if you don't.

GRAYDON: Well, that's reason enough for me.

(He then fell silent and snarled to himself. Paying his anger no heed, as he led them forth, Alan glanced across the street then nodded sternly.)

ALAN: Guys, look. That sign says the shopping centre is just down here.

SIERRA: Thank heavens for that.

CLAYMORE: Let's pick up the pace then.

ALAN: Sounds good to me.

(He then put his head down and raced forth, straight into a group of six guards as they marched from the local café. Colliding with the one at the front of their group, he was instantly sent sprawling; as was the guard.)

GRAYDON: Well that can't be good.

(Sure enough, the other guards all glanced at their fallen comrade then cast their eyes in Graydon's direction.)

GUARD 01: It's him!!!

GUARD 02: It's the traitors!!!

GUARD 03: Get 'em!!!

(With that, five of the guards charged in Graydon's direction while the one who'd been floored by Alan, grabbed his radio and called in their location; requesting immediate reinforcements. He then was then knocked unconscious by Alan's deft right hook.)

ALAN: Twat!!!

(With that, he charged to Claymore's aid. Having tried to protect Sierra, he'd ended up becoming something of a human punch bag. A slave to his inner coward, Graydon had hidden behind Sierra, meaning Claymore was an obstacle the guards were anxious to remove. They did so with their fists flailing.)

CLAYMORE: One at time, you cunts. Ouch!!! Why? My precious face!!!

GUARD 01: Move, you cunt!

CLAYMORE: Bollocks!

GUARD 04: Just knock him out. We need to arrest *him* too, remember. He's an accomplice.

GUARD 03: Good point.

(The guard then pulled a large wooden baton from his belt.)

GUARD 03: *I'll* clobber him!!!

CLAYMORE: Uh-oh!!!

(Much to Claymore's relief, then guard then tumbled to the floor unconscious, courtesy of Alan's right hook.)

ALAN: You're welcome.

(With that, he scooped up the guard's baton then set about knocking out another guard. As he did so, Claymore launched himself forth and set about punching another. Alas, he bit off far more than he could chew. The three guards who remained standing all set about battering him with their fists.)

CLAYMORE: Ouch!!! Mate!!! Give us a hand here.

(Much to his bewilderment, he then heard a high-pitched yelp to his right, and one of the three guards collapsed to the ground. Holding his groin, the guard was in the utmost agony.)

GUARD 06: Why there? Why always there???

CLAYMORE: Damn! Thanks, Josie! That's one hell of a kick you've got there.

JOSIE: I know, right? You're welcome.

GUARD 06: Bitch!!! You're gonna pay for that!

(He then passed out; partly from the pain in his groin but mostly because Alan had slugged him with his baton.)

GRAYDON: Two more to go!!! Get it done, lads.

JOSIE: Lads? Hey!

GRAYDON: I was *including* you.

JOSIE: Double hey!!!

(She then punched him in the face.)

GRAYDON: Ow!!! *I'm* not the enemy!!!

(Ignoring him, she then leapt forth to kick another guard where no man ever wants to be kicked. Much to her annoyance, however, before she could connect, Alan managed to floor him with deft uppercut.)

ALAN: And finally...

(He then stopped and grimaced in bewilderment at the sight of Claymore going to town on the remaining guard's face like a man possessed. He was landing one punch after another, sending the guard staggering back further and further.)

ALAN: Uh-oh. He's seen red.

SIERRA: Good. Perverted little creep side stepped him and groped my boob!



GRAYDON: Which, as perverted moves go, was quite the thing of beauty. He was like a ballerina with big hairy hands.

(Watching as Claymore continued his assault, Josie sucked her teeth.)

JOSIE: I take it he doesn't take kindly to perverts then.

ALAN: Of course not, but the fact the bloke's a bit of pervert isn't *why* he's seen red.

(He grimaced.)

ALAN: I think he's in love with your mate.

JOSIE: Really?

ALAN: Yeah. What a twat.

JOSIE: Oh, I dunno.

(She smiled.)

JOSIE: I think she feels the same way about him.

ALAN: Unless they're just horny for each other.

JOSIE: Oh, she definitely wants to do it with him, I can tell. But that just means she likes him. A lot. I mean, if Sierra isn't *really* into a guy, you'd need an industrial wrench to prize her legs apart these days.

ALAN: These days?

JOSIE: I think I've said too much.

GRAYDON: On the contrary...

JOSIE: Oh, shut up, will you?

GRAYDON: How rude!

ALAN: Yeah, well, never mind that.

(He then rolled his eyes and called out to Claymore.)

ALAN: Are you done, mate? We need to get going!

CLAYMORE: Five more minutes!

ALAN: Mate!

CLAYMORE: Alan, this bloke needs...

(The guard then fell to the ground. Utterly defeated, he was barely breathing.)

CLAYMORE: Scratch that. In answer to your earlier question, yes, I'm done.

ALAN: Good. Then we need to get going.

SIERRA: Okay. I think I can see a boutique on the corner up ahead.

ALAN: What are we waiting for then?

(Graydon looked horrified.)

GRAYDON: We can't just wander off and go shopping.

SIERRA: Says who?

GRAYDON: Well, for one, this enormous crowd of people who've gathered around to watch. I bet half of them have called the bloody authorities already.

(Alan sucked his teeth as he slowly glanced all around himself.)

ALAN: It's possible we may have attracted a little bit too much attention to ourselves there.

JOSIE: What choice did we have? *They* attacked *us*.

ALAN: Well, yeah, but even so...

(Just then, the sound of wailing sirens rose up into the air. In absolutely no doubt whatsoever that they were guards en route to the scene, Alan and Claymore looked to one another in horror.)

ALAN: Go!

CLAYMORE: Where?

ALAN: Anywhere!!!

CLAYMORE: Right!

(He then about turned, grabbed Sierra's hand and raced away with her. The others swiftly followed suit.)

ALAN: See? He loves her.

JOSIE: I never disputed that.

GRAYDON: Less yapping, more escaping. Focus, damn it. My life depends on it.

JOSIE: *Our* lives!

GRAYDON: Yes, them too.

(He grumbled under his breath.)

GRAYDON: For what they're worth.

JOSIE: Excuse me?

GRAYDON: I said less yapping, more escaping.

(Just then, Claymore called out from in front.)

CLAYMORE: The number twelve bus is about to leave.

ALAN: Get on it!!!

CLAYMORE: Obviously!!!

(He then put his head down and charged forth, dragging Sierra with him. Barely able to keep up, she yelped in distress.)

SIERRA: Don't pull me over!!!

CLAYMORE: I'm not going to!

(He then raced up to the bus and charged through the door.)

CLAYMORE: Five singles to wherever the hell it is you go!

(Sitting in his seat, the driver glanced at him nervously then turned his head towards the floored guards and whimpered.)

DRIVER: Don't hurt me!!!

CLAYMORE: I don't plan to.

DRIVER: Oh. Good.

(With that, he opened the driver's door, jumped down then sprinted off down the street.)

SIERRA: Aw, crap!

CLAYMORE: I won't lie, babe; that doesn't help our cause much.

(Clambering on the bus after them, Alan, Josie and Graydon looked extremely flustered.)

ALAN: Fuck!

JOSIE: Now what?

GRAYDON: Find a different bus!

CLAYMORE: Nah, fuck that. Get your seatbelts on, guys. *I'm* driving.

ALAN: Sweet!

GRAYDON: Quite! Though I'd be remiss if I didn't point out...

CLAYMORE: I know buses don't have seatbelts!!!

GRAYDON: Calm down, I was only saying!

(Not about to chastise the cantankerous old man any further, Claymore just rolled his eyes then clambered into the driver's seat. As he did so, the others grabbed seats near the front then stared at him anxiously.)

ALAN: You do know how to drive one of these things, don't you?

(Not even bothering to reply, Claymore simply started the bus then sped out of the terminus. Going way too fast, he skidded out of the terminus and onto the main road, just about managing to point the bus in the right direction. All the others could do was hold on for dear life.)

CLAYMORE: And we're off!!!

(He then put his foot down and sped off. Within seconds, however, a police car raced out of the side road just in front of him.)

JOSIE: Police car!!!

SIERRA: Don't hit it!!!

(Paying no heed to the requests of his passengers, Claymore just snarled then put his foot to the floor. As a result, he rammed straight into the side of the police car, sending it rolling across the street, straight through the window of the local tax office.)

ALAN: Damn!

GRAYDON: Good shot. The police and the taxman *both* took a beating there.

(Driving onwards with a devilish snarl on his face, Claymore nodded.)

CLAYMORE: I don't care who they send after us. We're not gonna take it laying down.

GRAYDON: I'm sure Sierra would be happy to take it...

SIERRA: Stop it! I don't exist to help you fulfil your daily, smutty-jokes quota, Graydon!

CLAYMORE: Yeah! Leave her alone. Right now, I'm in enemy smiting mode, so you need to watch your mouth. Make an enemy of me and I'll...

GRAYDON: I get it.

(He rolled his eyes.)

GRAYDON: Twat!

(Josie sucked her teeth.)

JOSIE: Wow. Your friend's kind of intense.

ALAN: Yeah, I know. He's normally as calm and placid as you like, but now and again, if you back him into a corner he turns into... well, that.

JOSIE: Right.

ALAN: And trust me, that's a good thing. We're gonna need that kinda fight. This is all gonna get pretty hairy I reckon.

JOSIE: It already has.

ALAN: Then thank fuck Claymore's in battle mode.

JOSIE: Yup. No, complaints from me. Or from Sierra, look. She's seriously aroused.

(She looked to Sierra then smirked.)

JOSIE: Sierra, how sexy is Claymore right now? Out of ten.

(Sierra replied in a love-struck daze, unable to take her eyes off of Claymore.)

SIERRA: Fifty three.

JOSIE: See?

(Suddenly coming to her senses, Sierra flinched then looked to Josie.)

SIERRA: Sorry, what?

JOSIE: Nothing, babe.

ALAN: Wow.

(Just then, Claymore yelled from the driver's seat.)

CLAYMORE: Hold onto something, you lot. There's a series of sharp bends up ahead.

ALAN: We already are! You drive like a lunatic!

CLAYMORE: I drive like a fucking legend, mate.

(He then growled through gritted teeth.)

CLAYMORE: I'll get us out of here if it's the last thing I fucking do!

---

As the minutes ticked past, Alan and Josie grew increasingly concerned. As mere passengers, their fate was entirely in Claymore's hands right now and it was not a comfortable feeling. For Sierra and Graydon, on the other hand, having a decisive Claymore asserting control was extremely reassuring. Graydon had always relied on others to do his chores, so to him it was very much the way things ought to be. Sierra simply felt comforted by his efforts. Having always shunned any form of danger, she was very much out of her wheelhouse right now, and as such, she was grateful that he was showing such leadership, just when they needed it the most.

As he powered the bus forth through the countryside, Claymore had no idea how his four travelling companions were feeling. Right now, he was in the zone. With a deathly focus in his eyes, he truly believed he'd mastered driving this vehicle and woe betide anyone who tried to stop him driving them all to sanctuary with it. His confidence wasn't unfounded, however. Taking corners with extreme precision and squeezing every ounce of speed from the vehicle, he genuinely looked like he'd driven one all his life. Quick to notice this as they zoomed around a fast bend, Alan grimaced then called out to him.

ALAN: You've driven one of these things before, haven't you?

(Claymore was so focussed, he didn't respond at once. His answer came several seconds later.)

CLAYMORE: Nope.

ALAN: Bullshit. Nobody gets that good, that quickly.

(Again, Claymore's reply was delayed.)

CLAYMORE: I did!

ALAN: Nah, I'm calling bullshit.

CLAYMORE: You do that. I drive a car *all* the time, and I drive a boat for a living; it's not that different.

(Alan sucked his teeth then looked to Josie.)

ALAN: He's right. He does do that.

JOSIE: I know. I was *on* the boat, remember?

ALAN: Good point.

(Glancing uneasily from the window, Graydon grimaced.)

GRAYDON: Driving it is one thing. How's his navigation though? He doesn't have to do *that* on the canal. We're not going to find ourselves heading south by mistake, are we?

SIERRA: Give him *some* credit, Graydon.

(Graydon scoffed at her.)

GRAYDON: Typical. Stand up for your boyfriend, why don't you?

SIERRA: He's not my boyfriend.

(She mumbled.)

SIERRA: Yet.

GRAYDON: I'm just saying, yes, he can drive. But is he going in the right direction?

ALAN: Let's find out, shall we?

(He then called out to Claymore.)

ALAN: Mate?

CLAYMORE: What?

ALAN: You going in the right direction?

CLAYMORE: Yes!

ALAN: There you go; there's your answer.

(Graydon was sceptical to say the least.)

GRAYDON: Right...

CLAYMORE: We're heading towards Farwell Borough.

GRAYDON: And that means something, does it?

ALAN: Yeah. It's not far from the border, actually. We had to stop there once for supplies, after I...

(He winced.)

ALAN: Forgot to buy food for the journey home.

JOSIE: Wow, you do that kind of thing a lot, it seems.

ALAN: Look, let's not sit here judging my shopping skills; I'm trying to make a point. That point being, yes, we are going in the right direction.

(He nodded.)

ALAN: So you can relax.

(Claymore then called out from the driver's seat.)

CLAYMORE: Actually, relaxing is the last thing you'll be doing!!! There's like a hundred police cars up our arse!

JOSIE: Oh, hell no!!!

(Looking mortified, everyone spun around and glanced in horror out of the back window.

Five police cars with their lights flashing furiously were racing up behind them.)

SIERRA: Shit, shit, shit, that can't be good.

ALAN: No, no it fucking can't.

(He shrugged.)

ALAN: But then again, be grateful Claymore was exaggerating. A hundred would be a serious fucking problem.

GRAYDON: And five isn't???

ALAN: Well... I see your point.

(He then looked to Claymore urgently.)

ALAN: Step on it, mate!!!

CLAYMORE: Really? Great idea! I'd never thought of that, Al. Thanks for the tip, mate.

ALAN: Claymore...

CLAYMORE: While we're being creative, if I see a corner, I might turn this big wheel thingy and see what happens.

(He sneered.)

CLAYMORE: Step on it, indeed.

(Just then, Sierra shrieked and pointed to the left side of the bus.)

SIERRA: There's a car trying to sneak up on the inside!!!

ALAN: Claymore...

CLAYMORE: I fucking know!!! Stop telling me what to do!!!

(He growled.)

CLAYMORE: Hold on tight, guys!

(He then swung the bus towards the police car, causing it to swerve away.)

CLAYMORE: Fuck! Missed it.

(Having been thrown to the floor when Claymore swerved, Alan jumped to his feet and growled.)

ALAN: Careful, you idiot!

CLAYMORE: Bollocks. You should have focussed on what *you* were doing; being a passenger.

ALAN: Yeah, but next time...

CLAYMORE: No! You do your job and I'll do mine!

JOSIE: Then do it now!!! There's a car on either side of us!

CLAYMORE: I *know* that!!!

(With that, he started to swerve from side to side, causing the cars to weave out the way and slow down. Much to his annoyance, however, after several attempts he was still yet to hit one.

CLAYMORE: These cunts have nine lives.

GRAYDON: Yes, but let's look on the bright side. At least they haven't got past us. Unless they do that, we'll be okay by my reckoning.

(As soon as he finished speaking, however, a shotgun pellet rocketed into the back window, shattering it into millions of tiny fragments. At once, everyone except Claymore dived to the floor of the bus.)

GRAYDON: Allow me to revise me previous statement. If they can't get past, and we don't die in a hail of bullets, I reckon we'll be fine.

(Sitting bolt upright, propelling the bus forth, Claymore whimpered with a tortured look on his face.)

CLAYMORE: Why the fuck did *I* decide to drive??? *I* can't dive for cover when they open fire. I'm fucking stuck here!

ALAN: Keep it together, mate!

CLAYMORE: *You* keep it together!!!

ALAN: I am!

CLAYMORE: Yeah?

(He grimaced.)

CLAYMORE: Well... good.

(He then glanced into his wing mirrors and snarled.)

CLAYMORE: Stay down, guys, things are about to get wobbly!!!

SIERRA: Wobbly?

CLAYMORE: Wobbly!!!

(With that, he proceeded to veer from left to right, determined to knock out at least one of the vehicles at the side of the bus. Laying on the floor, holding on tightly to a rail in a desperate bid not to get thrown around by the violent movements, Sierra whimpered.)

SIERRA: Yup. Wobbly. It's definitely wobbly!

(Just then, they heard an almighty crunch of metal on the far side of the bus.)

CLAYMORE: Got the cunt!!!

ALAN: You did?

(With that, he jumped to his feet to take a look.)

ALAN: Damn. What a mess! Nice one.

CLAYMORE: Yup, *he's* not going anywhere for a while.

ALAN: He really isn't.

(Sure enough, Claymore had managed to swing the bus across hard enough to sandwich a police car between himself and a brick wall. Crushed and brought to a screeching halt, the police car had lost half its panels and all the lights had fallen off of it.)

CLAYMORE: One down...

ALAN: Going again?

CLAYMORE: Yup.

ALAN: Thanks for the tip.

(He then jumped back to the floor again.)

CLAYMORE: One to go!!!

(He then veered to the other side and proceeded to squeeze the bus up against the other police car.)

CLAYMORE: Ha! How do you like me now, copper? Huh? What do you think of that?

(He snarled.)

CLAYMORE: Fall apart, you cunt!!!

(Much to his delight, in that moment, the bonnet of the police car shot upwards. The vehicle then slammed into a tree, before spinning out into the middle of the road. Such was the force of the spin, it almost took out two other police cars. Annoyingly for Claymore however, they both managed to swerve around it.)

CLAYMORE: Damn. That could have been perfect.

JOSIE: What could?

CLAYMORE: I almost took out three in one go, but...

(Suddenly, several of the side windows smashed to pieces as one of the police officers let rip with an automatic pistol. Firing off a total of 12 rounds in half as many seconds, the officer in possession was determined to let them know he meant business. It was a message the

occupants of the bus understood loud and clear. Laying on the floor, Alan, Josie, Sierra and Graydon all looked mortified.)

ALAN: You alright, girls???

JOSIE: Yeah, just about. You?

ALAN: I'm alright.

SIERRA: I'm covered in glass!

ALAN: But are you hurt?

GRAYDON: It's unlikely. That glass, as you call it, is plastic.

SIERRA: It can still cut you!

GRAYDON: I suppose.

(He furrowed his brow.)

GRAYDON: And thanks for asking, by the way, I'm fine too.

ALAN: Right, well... we got lucky then. Someone could have been seriously hurt.

(At this point, Claymore growled from the driving seat.)

CLAYMORE: Someone fucking did! Me! The cunts shot me!

SIERRA: Oh, my god! Are you okay?

CLAYMORE: Nothing I can't handle, babe.

GRAYDON: Then quit whining!

ALAN: Claymore, if you've been shot...

CLAYMORE: I'll deal with it, Al. We have no choice. I can't exactly slow down so you can take over driving, can I?

ALAN: Well... no.

CLAYMORE: And it's just my leg. I'll be alright. I've got another one.

(Sierra exhaled.)

SIERRA: He's so brave.

ALAN: Yeah... either that or the bullet merely grazed him and he's acting tough to impress you.

JOSIE: Would he do that then?

ALAN: Probably. I know *I* would.

GRAYDON: Me too.

JOSIE: Wow.

CLAYMORE: Guys?

ALAN: Yeah?

CLAYMORE: We've got a bit of a problem here.

ALAN: Like being shot at isn't bad enough.

(He growled.)

ALAN: What's happening now?

CLAYMORE: Two more cars have joined in, so they're back up to five. Not only that, but they're reloading!

ALAN: Shit.

CLAYMORE: And that's not the worst part.

ALAN: Aw, crap; what now?

CLAYMORE: We just passed a sign saying the road's closed up ahead. Bridge repairs!

ALAN: What???

CLAYMORE: Yeah... I think I must have missed the turn off for the traffic diversion.

GRAYDON: How? How could you miss it?

SIERRA: Maybe, Graydon, he was pre-occupied with being shot at.

JOSIE: And trying to keep us all alive.

GRAYDON: Well, you say that, but if the bridge up ahead is out, I'd say he's doing a pretty shoddy job of keeping us all alive. We'll either have to stop and get shot or drive over a broken bridge and potentially fall to our deaths.

ALAN: Oh, shut up, you. With any luck, the repairs won't have started yet.

GRAYDON: Right, yes, luck; because we have so much of that, don't we?

SIERRA: Just stop it, Graydon. This is terrifying enough as it is without you...

(Just then, Claymore started to swerve the bus violently from side to side again. Caught off guard, Josie slid across the floor and thudded into Alan's midriff, face first.)

JOSIE: Sorry!

ALAN: No, no; it's fine. In fact, while you're down there...

JOSIE: I had a feeling you'd say that.

CLAYMORE: Sorry about that, guys, the fuckers are trying to come up the sides again.

(He then growled.)

CLAYMORE: Only, I aint fucking having it.

(Growling as he glanced from one wing mirror to the other, he continued to throw the steering wheel from left to right then back again, cursing with every miss. He'd come close to slamming into them several times, but they always seemed to evade him.)

CLAYMORE: For fuck sake! These fuckers really *do* have nine lives!!!

GRAYDON: No, they have advanced driving skills.

CLAYMORE: Is that so? The fuckers think they're better than me, do they?

GRAYDON: I expect a lot of people do.

CLAYMORE: I'll fucking show them who's the best driver!

GRAYDON: Please don't.

CLAYMORE: Me!

GRAYDON: Right...

CLAYMORE: I can drive anything, me. Even a fucking boat.

GRAYDON: Which doesn't help *one iota* on the open road.

ALAN: Ignore him, mate. The main thing is, you're keeping them behind us. You're doing great.

CLAYMORE: Yeah? Well... not great enough.

(He then veered the bus violently to the left again before swerving right. Much to his delight, the back end of the bus then slid out slightly further than anticipated, whacking one of the cars straight off the road. Having managed to right the bus again, he was just in time to see the car slam into a tree, having bounced through a fence and into an orchard.)

CLAYMORE: Ha! How do you like those apples?

(He laughed maniacally.)

CLAYMORE: Get it? Apples?

SIERRA: Um...

ALAN: No!

CLAYMORE: I knocked the cunt into an orchard.

ALAN: Oh, right. Cool. We couldn't see that from down here.

(Sierra laughed out loud.)

SIERRA: Apples. I like that.

GRAYDON: You're trying way too hard.

SIERRA: Shut up!

JOSIE: She was just being supportive!

SIERRA: No, I wasn't. I genuinely liked the joke.

GRAYDON: Bullshit! You were doing that girly thing where you *pretend* to like a bloke's jokes because you're hoping for a spin on his cock.

SIERRA: Graydon!!!



GRAYDON: What?

ALAN: Ignore him, for fuck sake. The more you entertain the horrible cunt, the more he'll try to antagonise you.

JOSIE: He's right.

SIERRA: Fine. I'll ignore him.

CLAYMORE: Don't worry, babe. If we get out of this alive, I'll punch him for you.

SIERRA: In the face, please.

CLAYMORE: Of course.

GRAYDON: In the face, eh? I should imagine he'll be shoving his wotsit in *your* face before too long.

(Sierra just glanced at him then looked away.)

GRAYDON: Hey! Bite, damn it.

(Just then, Claymore called out in a distressed voice.)

CLAYMORE: Guys!!! One of them cunts is almost side by side with my seat and I can't seem to shake him off.

(He attempted to veer into him again then whimpered.)

CLAYMORE: Fuck me!!! He's got a gun!!!

(The sound of several gunshots then rose into the air.)

CLAYMORE: Cunt! Fuck!!! Holy shit!!! I've lost my wing mirror!

(The gunshots were then accompanied by several more.)

CLAYMORE: Help!!! Fuck this!!! I'm not happy!!! That fucking bullet just missed my head.

ALAN: Hang in there, mate!

CLAYMORE: I'm trying to!!!

(He then glanced in the other mirror and grimaced.)

CLAYMORE: What? Why? Mate, I think they're backing off.

ALAN: They are?

CLAYMORE: Yeah, I wonder why...

(His eyes then bulged in horror.)

CLAYMORE: Broken bridge!!! Broken bridge!!!

ALAN: Calm down, mate!!!

CLAYMORE: *You* fucking calm down!!!

ALAN: Claymore!!!

CLAYMORE: Right. Not cool! Sorry, guys! Weak moment!

SIERRA: It's fine. You're allowed one.

ALAN: Yeah, just keep doing what you think is right, mate. We trust you.

GRAYDON: We do?

SIERRA: Yes!!!

(Sitting in the driver's seat, staring dead ahead, Claymore sighed emptily.)

CLAYMORE: Down to me, huh? You trust me to do the right thing, do you?

(He gritted his teeth.)

CLAYMORE: Then I can only pray your faith in me is justified.

(He then sat back and growled; his foot pressed firmly down on the accelerator.)

CLAYMORE: Come on, lady luck!!! You fucking owe me one!!!

(His eyes then bulged as he drove the bus at breakneck speed through two sets of barriers and carried onwards to where the bridge extended across the river. From what he could see, the bridge didn't appear to be down, but it didn't exactly look sturdy either.)

CLAYMORE: Oh, boy.

(He then yelled a primal scream as the bus hit the beams of the rickety wooden bridge and started to thunder across.)

CLAYMORE: Keep going, keep going, keep going...  
(As the others watched in horror from the floor, set on edge by his terrified expression, Claymore threw a glance at the rear view mirror.)  
CLAYMORE: Cops haven't followed. Well, that can't healthy.  
(He then gulped as the bus continued onwards, bouncing violently with every loose beam it zipped across.)  
ALAN: Mate, what the fuck's happening?  
CLAYMORE: I'll tell you what's happening, mate...  
(His face then lit up.)  
CLAYMORE: We made it across the bridge!!!  
SIERRA: Yay!!!  
JOSIE: Thank fuck.  
SIERRA: You're my hero!  
CLAYMORE: It was nothing, babe.  
GRAYDON: Arrogant, little...  
(He then sighed.)  
GRAYDON: Actually... well done. Credit where credit's due; that was impressive.  
ALAN: Yup. Now floor it, mate. If *we* can make it, so can the coppers.  
CLAYMORE: Well, yeah, I mean...  
(His jaw then fell open and started to slow the bus to a standstill.)  
ALAN: Don't fucking stop, you idiot!!!  
CLAYMORE: Mate, it's fine. Look.  
(Somewhat puzzled, Alan, Josie, Sierra and Graydon all climbed to their feet and glanced out of the back window. Much to their delight, several large pieces of the bridge were falling away and tumbling down into the deep river way below.)  
CLAYMORE: They aint crossing that!  
JOSIE: Well, no. Half the slats are missing.  
ALAN: And those supports don't look too sturdy...  
(In that moment, an almighty creaking sound rose up and the entire bridge collapsed on itself. Dust rose into the air and the sound of crunching wooden planks echoed all around.)  
ALAN: Either.  
(He smirked.)  
ALAN: Mate?  
CLAYMORE: Yeah?  
ALAN: You broke the bridge.  
CLAYMORE: Yup.  
ALAN: Now, get us the fuck out of here.  
CLAYMORE: You know what? Don't mind if I do.  
(With that, he sat back down, restarted the engine then drove off as fast as he could.)

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Somewhere much further south in the country at this time, the Captain and his team who'd waited so long outside Sierra's house were hurtling up the main road to the north. Behind the wheel, the Captain had a steely determination in his eyes. Capturing Graydon would be a career maker and he was eager to cash in on it.)  
CAPTAIN: Not too far now, lads. This road leads directly to the land border, I believe.  
SMITH: Well... that's great an' all, sir, but aren't we meant to be heading to Sawbury?  
CAPTAIN: And pray tell, why on earth would we do that?  
ERIKSON: Because those were our orders, sir.  
CAPTAIN: Pah! Orders are made to be broken.

WILSON: I don't think they are, sir.

CAPTAIN: Well, they're getting broken today. Sawbury indeed.

(He sneered.)

CAPTAIN: I didn't join the guard unit to be reined in by bureaucrats, lads.

SMITH: Bureaucrats, sir?

CAPTAIN: You heard me. They want us to go to Sawbury so they can register us as part of the hunt. Well, what's the bloody point? If we catch him, we catch him. Whether we were officially part of the team or not is neither here nor there.

(He nodded.)

CAPTAIN: So, fuck their orders. I joined the unit to catch criminals, not fill in forms.

ERIKSON: But if we disobey an order...

CAPTAIN: If we disobey and order and catch Graydon, we'll be heroes. They'll give us fucking medals, son.

SMITH: Or six months in the brig.

CAPTAIN: Don't be silly. Bureaucrats remember? We can just say they lost our paperwork.

ERIKSON: I suppose.

CAPTAIN: Not only that, but you know what these glory hunting fascists are like. I bet they *all* want to catch him and take the glory. So, I can see us arriving to register then being made to hold the fort at Sawbury guard station, while the local cunts who *should* be running the station go and grab the glory for themselves. Well, screw that. I won't give them that opportunity.

WILSON: So we're just gonna head straight to the land border, are we?

CAPTAIN: Yes, yes we bloody well are.

SMITH: But what if Graydon doesn't go straight to the land border?

CAPTAIN: What?

SMITH: What if he decides to hang out in the woods for a bit first?

CAPTAIN: Then we'll have to wait, won't we?

SMITH: But what if he *never*...

CAPTAIN: Are you *trying* to annoy me, you insubordinate little shit???

SMITH: Eh? What? No.

CAPTAIN: What if *this* and what if *that*; you sound like my youngest nephew. The difference being he's got an excuse for being a dipshit; he's five.

SMITH: I was just asking, sir.

CAPTAIN: Yes, I know. Repeatedly. Like a fucking halfwit.

(He growled.)

CAPTAIN: It's not even that bloody complicated. Graydon's not going to hide under a tree, or down a well. He's going to do what those trying to flee the country always do. He's going to *continue* to try to flee the country until he's either successful or captured. Him going to the border is only a matter of time. Got it?

SMITH: Well... yeah...

CAPTAIN: Good. About fucking time.

(He rolled his eyes.)

CAPTAIN: Why must I work with such idiots?

(Wilson grimaced.)

WILSON: Sir?

CAPTAIN: What?

WILSON: I'm almost afraid to ask after the way you rounded on Smithy there, but... what if he decides to cross the border somewhere else?

CAPTAIN: Then he's a cock. The land border is the only place he *can* cross. The road between the two countries has been closed to everyone other than diplomats and government

officials for quite a few years now. And by closed, I mean the bridge that spans the river between our two nations stays raised. Permanently!

WILSON: I know that, sir. I was suggesting he might try to sail around the coast. Or get on a plane.

CAPTAIN: Like he could get through a port or an airport unnoticed.

ERIKSON: He could if someone smuggled him, sir.

SMITH: Easily.

(The captain roared furiously.)

CAPTAIN: Will you cunts bloody stop it??? Stop looking for ridiculously unlikely alternative scenarios and have some bloody faith, will you? Graydon is heading for the land border, you mark my words. Yes, he might stop for a cup of tea and a piss on the way, making him later than expected, but sooner or later that fat, traitorous ne'er-do-well *will* head for the land border. And whether you negative nellys like it or not, we *will* be there to capture the bugger.

SMITH: Right... well...

ERIKSON: Here's hoping, sir.

WILSON: Yeah. That'd be... perfect.

CAPTAIN: Yes, it would.

(Erikson grimaced.)

ERIKSON: Um... just one other question, sir?

CAPTAIN: Oh, what now?

ERIKSON: What *is* this land border? You said the only *road* was impassable other than to diplomats. So what is it?

CAPTAIN: It's a gap in the wall, protected by guards. A path through no-man's land between Efland and Amaria. With the correct authorisation, it's permissible to cross there. It's rare though.

ERIKSON: Why would he even attempt it then?

CAPTAIN: Because people have tried to sneak through there before. It's pretty much the only place where you *can* sneak through.

ERIKSON: Right. Makes sense.

CAPTAIN: Good. I'm glad you finally understand. Pillock.

(He then ruffled his neck indignantly.)

CAPTAIN: Now... which one of you tosspots wants to drive? I fancy a quick nap.

---

A short while later, in a woodland, some two miles from the nearest road, Alan, Claymore, Josie, Sierra and Graydon clambered from the beaten up bus then gathered at its side to take a look at it. Riddled with bullets, it had steam coming from the engine and one of the tyres was almost entirely flat.

ALAN: Well... it took us as far as it could.

GRAYDON: Until Claymore broke it, you mean.

CLAYMORE: *I* didn't break it? The bullets did that.

GRAYDON: Are you saying the fact you drove like a lunatic had no bearing on it?

CLAYMORE: No, but...

GRAYDON: Well then...

JOSIE: He had to drive like that, we were being chased.

SIERRA: Or would you rather he went at twenty miles per hour and let the cops use us for target practice?

GRAYDON: Hey, I'm just saying he could have been more careful.

ALAN: No, no he couldn't.

(He shrugged.)

ALAN: And besides, we'd have had to ditch the bus anyway. The police would have radioed base, obviously. I guarantee we'd have driven straight into a road block if we'd carried on down that road.

(He nodded.)

ALAN: Yup. Abandoning the bus out here in the middle of nowhere and continuing on foot is definitely the sensible move.

GRAYDON: Well... yes, I suppose.

CLAYMORE: You agree?

GRAYDON: Reluctantly, I suppose I do.

CLAYMORE: It's a miracle!

GRAYDON: Just like getting out of here alive would be a bloody miracle.

ALAN: Then let's make that miracle happen. Come on.

(With that, they all headed away, glancing back at the bus as if to thank it for its sterling contribution in keeping them all alive.)

SIERRA: Bye, bus.

GRAYDON: How old are you?

SIERRA: Oh, shut up.

GRAYDON: How rude.

(He nodded.)

GRAYDON: Though just out of interest, how old *are* you? I mean, you are legal right?

Claymore isn't having lusty wrong feelings for a minor, is he?

(Sierra looked most exasperated.)

SIERRA: What the hell are you saying?

GRAYDON: That you look about fourteen.

SIERRA: I'm twenty fucking two!

JOSIE: Don't rise to it, Sierra. He knows you're not fourteen.

CLAYMORE: He knows you don't *look* fourteen an' all.

ALAN: At least I hope so. Only he was ogling you through an air vent for most of the day yesterday.

SIERRA: He was?

GRAYDON: I was! It was awesome. I had the perfect view, right up your skirt.

SIERRA: Why, you...

JOSIE: Seriously, Sierra. Don't bite. He's only trying to antagonise you; how many times?

(Graydon chuckled.)

GRAYDON: Guilty. I do enjoy teasing idiots.

CLAYMORE: I'm gonna slap you in a minute!

GRAYDON: Is that so?

CLAYMORE: Yes!

GRAYDON: Bugger. I'll behave myself then.

ALAN: Yeah, you do that.

(He then nodded and pointed straight ahead.)

ALAN: I'm thinking, if we head this way, we should come to that river.

JOSIE: The one the bridge used to span before Claymore broke it?

ALAN: Yeah.

SIERRA: And how will that help? We don't have a boat.

ALAN: No, but rivers are as good as roads when it comes to navigating.

CLAYMORE: Love it. If we follow the river, we'll end up in Happleworth; about five miles from the border.

SIERRA: Right...

(Her shoulders slumped.)

SIERRA: We've got a long way to go, haven't we?

CLAYMORE: I won't lie to you, babe. Without transport, it's gonna be quite the slog.

SIERRA: Damn.

(She then shrugged.)

SIERRA: It's okay though, I guess. I mean, the police do love their cars. I can't even imagine them searching through these woods on foot, so in that sense it's cool. A long slog, but a more peaceful one, hopefully.

ALAN: Yeah... that's ambitious.

SIERRA: What?

ALAN: The police know what road we were on. Like I said, they probably had a road block ready. When we don't show up, therefore, they're gonna know we're in these woods somewhere.

CLAYMORE: And come looking.

GRAYDON: Send in the army, you mean.

JOSIE: The army? Really?

GRAYDON: Yes! I'm a big fish, woman.

ALAN: You're a big fish-woman?

GRAYDON: Not funny.

(He sighed.)

GRAYDON: I have secrets in my head that could bring the establishment to its knees. And that makes me the biggest threat to national security this country has seen in fifty years. This won't be an *ordinary* manhunt. It'll be us verses the entire fucking nation of Efland. And they have guns.

(Claymore grimaced.)

CLAYMORE: Shit. Shit, shit, shit. Maybe you should go one alone from here then, Graydon.

ALAN: Yeah, it's *you* they want. By tagging along with us, you're making *us* threats to national security too.

JOSIE: And threats to national security don't have a happy ending.

GRAYDON: Unlike Claymore when Sierra finally gets round to...

SIERRA: Stop it!!! Seriously, we should leave him here!

CLAYMORE: Seconded! The bloke's a cunt.

ALAN: I agree!

GRAYDON: Yeah, alright. Calm down.

(He then sighed and his shoulders sunk downwards, despondently.)

GRAYDON: Look... fine... I apologise.

(Everyone cast astonished glances in his direction.)

ALAN: You do?

GRAYDON: Yes. For everything.

SIERRA: Wow. Really?

GRAYDON: Absolutely.

(He grimaced.)

GRAYDON: Don't leave me to fend for myself, chaps. I'm old, fat and unhealthy. I can't do this on my own. I need your help.

ALAN: Then give us one good reason why we *should* help.

GRAYDON: Okay.

(He smiled.)

GRAYDON: Friendship.

(Everyone immediately burst out laughing.)

GRAYDON: Hey!

(He growled.)

GRAYDON: Fine, not friendship then. How about doing it to help a fellow human being?

(Everyone just stared through him.)

GRAYDON: No? Fine. How about this then? If you don't help me out, once I'm arrested I'll make up all sorts of shit about you. Why not? I'm gonna die anyway, so I might as well take you all down with me, courtesy of ridiculously exaggerated tales of all your terrorist activities!

SIERRA: What terrorist activities?

GRAYDON: I don't know; I haven't made them up yet.

CLAYMORE: Wow. Really? That's how you ask for help, is it? By threatening us?

GRAYDON: Yes. I'm a government advisor. What did you expect? Honesty and integrity?

(Alan shook his head.)

ALAN: You're a wanker.

GRAYDON: Yes. I get that a lot.

(He nodded.)

GRAYDON: But that's how it is. If *you* throw *me* to the wolves, I'll do the same to you.

(Alan scoffed.)

ALAN: As if we were actually going to!

GRAYDON: What?

ALAN: We weren't *really* going to abandon you out here, you tit.

JOSIE: Yeah, we're not savages.

CLAYMORE: Although, now you've said all that shit about dropping us in it, it *is* kinda tempting to.

SIERRA: No. I wouldn't feel right doing that.

(Graydon pointed to Sierra desperately.)

GRAYDON: Listen to the girl!

SIERRA: It'd make much more sense to drown him in the river; then he wouldn't be able to tell all those lies about us.

GRAYDON: Don't listen to *her*!

ALAN: Look, let's just keep going. As a five. As much as I hate to say this, Graydon here could yet come in useful.

CLAYMORE: How? He's fat, old and useless.

GRAYDON: Hey!

SIERRA: All he brings to the table is mean comments and leching.

JOSIE: That's true so far, but Al makes a good point. I mean, he knows how the authorities operate. He was on the inside once. So, maybe his experience might get us out of a tight squeeze at some point.

ALAN: Exactly my thinking.

GRAYDON: And excellent thinking it is too. I agree. Graydon gets to live and come with you. Let's now consider the matter closed and get moving.

SIERRA: We *are* moving.

GRAYDON: Excellent.

CLAYMORE: Twat!

GRAYDON: But a potentially useful twat. Don't overlook that part and throw me in the river.

CLAYMORE: I make no such promises.

(He rolled his eyes then nodded forth.)

CLAYMORE: Hey, look. The river's just down there.

SIERRA: It is?

(She beamed.)

SIERRA: It is. I can hear it.

GRAYDON: And if you weren't such a short arse, you'd be able to *see* it.

CLAYMORE: Hey...

ALAN: Let it go, mate.

CLAYMORE: I'll try to, mate, but he's not making it easy. With snide comments every five seconds. It's pissing me off. I don't need it, Al. I'm tired, stressed and in a lot of pain from the gaping bullet wound in my leg.

ALAN: That tiny graze, you mean?

CLAYMORE: Dude, I was shot!

ALAN: Well... almost.

CLAYMORE: Mate...

ALAN: Relax. It's not impaired your movement in any way, so let's just keep plugging on, okay? When we get a chance, maybe someone can take a look at it.

SIERRA: I'll do it. I know first aid.

JOSIE: Since when?

SIERRA: I did a course.

JOSIE: I know. I was on the course with you. The fire alarm went off after five minutes and it got cancelled.

SIERRA: Yeah, but...

(She flexed her shoulders.)

SIERRA: I learned a lot in that time.

JOSIE: Right...

GRAYDON: She just wants to fondle his leg.

SIERRA: Graydon...

(Just then, Alan spoke over her urgently.)

ALAN: There is it, guys. The river's just ahead.

JOSIE: And which way to do we go, left or right?

CLAYMORE: The way the water's flowing obviously.

GRAYDON: Seeing as we're heading for a coastal town.

JOSIE: Right, well, that was obvious.

GRAYDON: Indeed, but then don't feel bad. Young people are idiots.

JOSIE: You're begging to be drowned, aren't you?

GRAYDON: No.

ALAN: Then shut up before I throw you in the river.

(He snarled.)

ALAN: He's been a pain in the arse since the day we met him.

CLAYMORE: And now he's dead weight. A fucking liability. I reckon throwing him in the river is just common sense.

GRAYDON: Wrong!

(He beamed.)

GRAYDON: Yes, I know I can be unpleasant. And yes, I know it's my fault we're in this mess.

SIERRA: The river it is then!

GRAYDON: Actually, no. Like I was about to say, I may have got us into this mess, but I'll also be the one who gets us out of it.

ALAN: How?

(Graydon smirked then nodded towards a small boat, moored at the river's edge.)

GRAYDON: Allow me to demonstrate.

(He then paced forth determinedly. The others simply shrugged then followed on.)



---

A few moments later, the small boat kicked into life then started to head down river with Graydon at the helm. Gathered behind him, grimacing uncomfortably, his four young traveling companions barely knew where to look.

ALAN: I can't believe we've stolen a fucking boat.

JOSIE: I know, right?

GRAYDON: And yet stealing a bus you're okay with.

CLAYMORE: A bus is government property. Property of a government that's trying to kill us. That makes it fair game.

SIERRA: Yeah. This boat is someone's private property. It feels wrong.

GRAYDON: I wouldn't worry about it. Anyone who can afford a boat in this day and age is probably in cahoots with our corrupt government anyway. Not any old peasant can afford to own a boat, you know?

CLAYMORE: Me and Alan owned a boat.

GRAYDON: No, you owned a floating coffin that barely moved at five miles per hour. This is what a real boat looks like. And trust me, they're not cheap. So I wouldn't pine for the bloke we liberated it from if I was you.

JOSIE: I suppose...

(Watching on, Claymore bit his lip.)

CLAYMORE: And you're sure you know how to drive this thing, are you?

GRAYDON: You insult me, lad. I have a yacht or two of my own, far bigger than this thing.

CLAYMORE: Yeah, but you probably get *someone else* to drive.

GRAYDON: Actually, no. Being at the helm of a boat happens to be something I enjoy immensely. Call it a hobby, if you will.

CLAYMORE: Then you can drive it?

GRAYDON: With my eyes closed.

CLAYMORE: Right, well... don't do that.

GRAYDON: I'm just saying, I've mastered far bigger vessels than this piddly little thing. Driving this is a doddle.

CLAYMORE: Good. I'll leave you to it then.

(With that, he limped to the back of the deck and sat down on one of the wide seats. Smiling nervously, Sierra turned then paced over to him.)

SIERRA: Are you okay?

CLAYMORE: Yeah, I'm alright. Don't worry about me.

SIERRA: But you were limping all of a sudden.

CLAYMORE: Yeah...

(He sighed.)

CLAYMORE: Just a little pain from the gunshot wound I suffered.

(Alan glanced at Josie then spoke in a quiet voice.)

ALAN: Here we go. He'll exploit this situation for all its worth; you watch.

JOSIE: Oh, I know. And Sierra will do exactly the same.

ALAN: They're so obvious.

JOSIE: Right?

ALAN: You know he *faked* that limp just to get her attention, right?

JOSIE: I do. And she's *using* that limp as an excuse to give it to him.

(The two of them proceeded to giggle together. Blissfully unaware of this, Sierra knelt next to Claymore's wound and sucked her teeth.)

SIERRA: Nasty.

CLAYMORE: Yeah, but nothing I can't handle. I'm all man, me.

SIERRA: Even so. I'd better clean the wound, just to be on the safe side.

CLAYMORE: Well... if you wouldn't mind.

SIERRA: I'd be happy to.

(She then glanced towards Josie.)

SIERRA: Do you know if there's a first aid kit on this boat anywhere?

JOSIE: How could I possibly?

SIERRA: Then could you ask...

GRAYDON: The first aid kit should be in that cupboard.

(He pointed to a cupboard with a red cross on it.)

GRAYDON: And by *should* be, I mean it *will* be. No self-respecting sailor would ever leave port without one.

JOSIE: Oh, okay.

(She then delved into the cupboard and pulled out a small metal box.)

JOSIE: Cool.

(With that, he headed over to Sierra then placed it down by her side.)

JOSIE: Have fun, naughty nurse.

SIERRA: What?

JOSIE: Nothing.

(She then headed back towards Alan, smirking to herself. Having watched her go, Sierra opened the small box then looked to Claymore.)

SIERRA: We really do need to clean that wound, Claymore. You don't want it to get infected.

CLAYMORE: I know.

SIERRA: Then...

(She nodded at his midriff.)

SIERRA: Can you...

CLAYMORE: What?

SIERRA: You'll need to take your trousers down so I can get to it properly.

CLAYMORE: Oh, right.

(Alan quickly leant into Josie.)

ALAN: Watch this. I bet he makes a complete exhibition of himself.

(Sure enough, Claymore stood up and slowly started to undo his trousers. He then slid them down to his ankles, holding in his stomach and flexing his muscles as he did so.)

CLAYMORE: There you go.

(Transfixed by the bulge in his boxer shorts, Sierra replied in a daze.)

SIERRA: Big!

CLAYMORE: What?

(Sierra flinched then immediately burned red.)

SIERRA: The wound. I mean, it's quite big. Big wound.

CLAYMORE: Well, it *is* a gunshot wound, babe.

SIERRA: Yeah.

(Alan and Josie shared a stealthy, amused glance once again. They then conversed quietly.)

ALAN: Look at it. It's no more than a scratch. Maybe a graze. At best it's a fucking paper-cut.

JOSIE: And not even a big one.

ALAN: Right? The bullet barely touched him.

(They then giggled together once more. Still unaware of the mocking, Sierra smiled then started to apply ointment to the wound.)

SIERRA: There, this should help nullify any... um... badness.

CLAYMORE: Cool. What is it?

SIERRA: It's...

(She took a quick glance at the bottle.)

SIERRA: Antiseptic...

(She then gasped in horror.)

SIERRA: Mouthwash???

CLAYMORE: Eh?

SIERRA: Why's that even in here? That's for the bathroom, not the first aid box.

(She slammed it down then looked at another bottle.)

SIERRA: Witch-hazel?

CLAYMORE: What's that?

SIERRA: It says it's for skin irritations on the label.

CLAYMORE: Okay. That might help. Slap some on.

SIERRA: Skin irritations such as itching, insect bites, vaginal dryness and haemorrhoids.

CLAYMORE: On second thoughts, don't bother.

SIERRA: Right?

(She then picked up a small tube and smiled.)

SIERRA: For cuts and bruises!

CLAYMORE: Right... well... you can't really refer to a bullet wound as a mere cut.

SIERRA: No, but the bullet did cut the skin and bruise you.

CLAYMORE: That's true.

(He nodded.)

CLAYMORE: Let's try that then. How do you apply it?

SIERRA: I'll have to gently rub some into your skin with my fingers, I suppose.

CLAYMORE: Yeah?

SIERRA: I reckon so.

CLAYMORE: Sold!

SIERRA: Okay.

CLAYMORE: Nice and slowly.

SIERRA: Will do.

(With that, she squeezed some cream onto her finger then set about applying it to Claymore's leg. Making sure to massage the area with her fingers as she did so, she smiled then glanced up at Claymore.)

SIERRA: How's that?

CLAYMORE: That's bloody awesome. Keep doing that.

(He then exhaled with delight. Sierra's soft hands massaging his skin was extremely sensual. Enjoying it just as much as he was, Sierra sighed gleefully then looked into Claymore's eyes.)

SIERRA: Nice?

CLAYMORE: You have no idea.

SIERRA: Actually, you'd be surprised.

(As she continued the pointless exercise of smothering Claymore's leg with cream, Alan and Josie had to turn away. Trying not to laugh, they quietly conversed with highly amused expressions on their faces.)

JOSIE: You're mate's a bit of pervert, isn't he?

ALAN: So's yours.

JOSIE: I know, right? She just wants to feel him up.

ALAN: And *he* just wants to let her do it.

(They chuckled some more then Josie smiled.)

JOSIE: Seriously though, I'm kind of glad she's got him to focus on.

ALAN: You are? I'd rather we all focussed on fleeing. We've got a shitty time ahead of us and distractions won't help.

JOSIE: On the contrary, I think having a distraction is the only thing keeping Sierra from freaking out.

ALAN: Yeah?

JOSIE: Yeah. I wasn't exaggerating before. She really *is* a *good* girl. She's always shunned danger and hidden from confrontation. She's always tried to live a simple life and keep out of trouble. She's not like the rest of us.

(She grimaced.)

JOSIE: Nobody has even *been* as far out of their comfort zone as *she* is right now, trust me.

ALAN: Sure. I mean, you know her best.

JOSIE: I do. I know her better than anyone, and honestly, without her attraction to Claymore giving her hope for the future, she'd probably be sitting under a tree somewhere, rocking back and forth and crying to herself.

(Alan nodded.)

ALAN: And who'd blame her. I kinda feel like doing that too.

(His shoulders slumped.)

ALAN: We piled every last coin we had into running that boat. It was our lives. We even slept there on our days off. It was our home. And now... gone. We've just got a rucksack full of illegally obtained cash and a boat plaque to our bloody names.

JOSIE: And I don't even have that.

ALAN: Right...

(He grimaced.)

ALAN: This is all so shit.

(He shrugged.)

ALAN: I guess Claymore's just like Sierra then. He's lost everything as well. I guess focussing on enjoying Sierra's attention is the only thing taking his mind off of it.

JOSIE: Maybe. So, good luck to them. I mean, thinking about how screwed we all are is doing my head in. I wish *I* had a distraction.

ALAN: Well... you could always rub some yoghurt into my thigh, if you like.

(Josie chuckled.)

JOSIE: I'll pass for now.

ALAN: Damn it.

JOSIE: Ask me again later though. If my mind keeps torturing like it is right now, I might give it a try.

ALAN: Noted.

(They shared an uneasy smile.)

JOSIE: This sucks.

ALAN: Yeah. Really does. I'm gonna miss that boat.

(He then growled at Graydon.)

ALAN: I should have thrown you in the canal when I had the opportunity.

(Graydon whimpered.)

GRAYDON: Still angry, are we?

ALAN: You had a panic attack like a little girl, because of a fucking tiny wasp.

(He snarled.)

ALAN: And as a result we've lost everything we fucking worked for. So yeah, we're still fucking angry about it.

GRAYDON: Right.

(He gulped.)

GRAYDON: I'm guessing an apology isn't going to cut it.

ALAN: No. It isn't!

---

For the next half an hour, the boat continued on down the river, peacefully. They didn't hear the sound of a single police car and no helicopters passed overhead. Having expected a full scale military manhunt to descend upon them, Graydon was most relieved.

GRAYDON: You know, if we keep going like this, we're going to get there in no time, completely unhindered.

JOSIE: Then maybe we ought to think about what we're going to do when we get there.

GRAYDON: Celebrate, obviously.

(Josie furrowed her brow.)

JOSIE: Don't you think that'd be a little premature?

GRAYDON: Why would I think that?

JOSIE: This town we're heading to; Happleworth, was it? It could be swarming with policeman, guards and soldiers.

(Graydon scoffed.)

GRAYDON: Pah. Like we're going to Happleworth.

JOSIE: We're not?

GRAYDON: Of course not, you idiot.

ALAN: It wouldn't make any sense to go there now, Josie.

GRAYDON: None whatsoever. We have a seafaring vessel now, silly. Therefore it'd make more sense to go to Amaria by sea. Giving those guards and soldiers of yours a miss.

JOSIE: Right... yeah. That *does* make sense.

GRAYDON: Indeed. *Common* sense. Which clearly you lack. Happleworth indeed. Ridiculous halfwit!

JOSIE: Hey! How dare you say that to me?

GRAYDON: Simple, really. I'm very daring.

(Alan rolled his eyes.)

ALAN: Don't rise to it, Josie.

JOSIE: Whatever.

GRAYDON: Anyway, as I was saying before this silly woman interrupted with brainless comments about going to Happleworth... if, and I mean *if* we keep going at this rate, we'll be out in the clear blue yonder in no time. Without a single guard in sight.

ALAN: Yeah, well, we're not in the clear *yet*. Don't tempt fate like that.

GRAYDON: Oh, I never would. Why do you think I said 'if'? Fate is a cruel mistress who likes to strike at the worst possible opportunity. I'd never offer her a temptation like that. I'm just saying, this boat ride has been surprisingly trouble free and I'm hopeful it'll last.

(He nodded.)

GRAYDON: Only a fool would claim we're in the clear already.

JOSIE: For once, I agree with you. We're not in the clear until we're safely overseas.

ALAN: Exactly.

GRAYDON: Then we're agreed. We've got a long way to go until we're out of this mess.

(He nodded.)

GRAYDON: That said, it doesn't hurt to be positive.

JOSIE: How? How can we be positive about *anything* right now?

GRAYDON: Well, look at it this way. Every incident-free minute that passes is a bonus and we get that one step closer. That's *something* to be positive about.

ALAN: I suppose.

GRAYDON: See? That's the spirit.

(He nodded.)

GRAYDON: Yup. The way things are going, we'll be in the clear in no time.  
(As soon as he finished his sentence, however, a police boat suddenly appeared on the river, zooming in from behind them. With its sirens blasting and lights flashing furiously, it sent a fearful chill down everyone's spine.)

GRAYDON: Fuck!

(He then slammed the boat into overdrive to obtain the maximum speed.)

GRAYDON: Sorry, chaps. Apparently, I spoke too soon!

ALAN: Yes! Yes, you fucking did.

JOSIE: Right after saying you'd never tempt fate like that!!!

ALAN: Why would you do that???

GRAYDON: It was bad timing, that's all!

JOSIE: I'll bloody say. As soon as you said it, a fucking police boat appeared.

GRAYDON: Yes, but it's not like I summoned the bloody thing.

JOSIE: Idiot!

(Just then, Sierra and Claymore raced up behind them.)

SIERRA: There's a police boat right behind us!!!

GRAYDON: Observant, isn't she? What do you reckon gave it away, the glowing disco lights on the roof or the deafening siren?

(Alan rolled his eyes then looked to Sierra.)

ALAN: He knows, Sierra.

SIERRA: I know he does. I was just panicking, that's all.

JOSIE: I hear that, babes.

(She then opened arms, allowing Sierra to step up and hug her. As the two girls embraced, Alan glanced back at the advancing police boat then looked to Claymore.)

ALAN: Mate?

CLAYMORE: Yeah.

ALAN: Your limp healed up fast. Was that some sort of magic cream she used?

CLAYMORE: I...

ALAN: Doesn't matter. Look, we're in deep shit here. I'd bet everything I own that that police boat is faster than this thing. We need to do something.

CLAYMORE: Like what? We're in a chase, mate. It's pretty much down to the driver.

ALAN: Is it though?

CLAYMORE: Yes!

ALAN: Nah, there has to be *something* we can do.

CLAYMORE: Yeah, but there isn't. Unless you brought some mines or a torpedo with you, we're pretty much relying on that fat git to outdrive them.

(They then turned and watched as the police boat gained with discomforting ease.)

CLAYMORE: Speed aint gonna win this one, mate.

ALAN: Not for us, anyway.

CLAYMORE: Exactly. Graydon needs to get creative.

(Alan nodded and looked to Graydon.)

ALAN: They're gonna be level with us in no time, Graydon, you might want to take evasive action.

GRAYDON: How? This stretch of river is long and straight. Like a bloody canal.

JOSIE: We're screwed.

SIERRA: I won't last five minutes in jail!

(She then burst into tears.)

GRAYDON: She doesn't have much confidence in me, does she?

ALAN: Should she?

GRAYDON: Yes! This river is bound to open up sooner or later and when it does, I'll make those police idiots look extremely silly.

(He grimaced.)

GRAYDON: Until then though... we've got nothing.

CLAYMORE: Shit.

(Just then, one of the two officers in the police boat, called out over his loudhailer.)

POLICE 01: Pull to the side of the river and surrender! Failure do so will be considered resistance and we *will* use deadly force against you!

JOSIE: Wait. When he says deadly...

(Suddenly, the sound of gunshots rose into the air and a bullet pinged off the side of the boat. At once, Josie, Sierra, Alan and Claymore all dived down to the deck.)

JOSIE: He *meant* deadly, huh?

ALAN: And then some.

GRAYDON: Hey!!! What are you doing down there??? Who's shielding *me*???

CLAYMORE: Shielding you???

ALAN: Are you for real? You want us to act as a human shield???

GRAYDON: Of course I fucking do! I'm driving, therefore you need me. Ergo, you should protect me!

SIERRA: Piss off! I'm not taking a bullet in the face for *anyone*.

GRAYDON: No, the only thing *you'll* be taking in the face is Claymore's...

SIERRA: Stop it!!!

ALAN: Guys. We need to think of something. Like he said, he's a sitting duck up there and without him...

CLAYMORE: Mate, there's literally nothing we can do.

ALAN: You don't know that, mate. I mean, there might be something in these cupboards. (He gestured to one of the cupboards at the side of the deck.)

ALAN: Let's see shall we?

(He then pulled the cupboard open, only to duck down flat when a hail of bullets thudded into the side of the boat again.)

GRAYDON: One of those things just missed my head!

JOSIE: Hang in there, Graydon.

GRAYDON: Bollocks. I'm gonna jump down there and join you lot in a minute.

CLAYMORE: You can't do that!!!

GRAYDON: Bloody can! And any more near misses like that last one and I fucking well will. I'm not gonna get shot for anyone either.

(Alan's delighted voice then rose up from the floor behind him.)

ALAN: Guys, we're in luck. There's guns in this cabinet.

CLAYMORE: Really?

ALAN: Yeah.

(He grimaced.)

ALAN: And several bags of white powder.

SIERRA: What? Whose fucking boat did we steal???

JOSIE: Oh, great. Now we're in deep shit with the police *and* the local drug cartel.

GRAYDON: Relax. The police *are* the local drug cartel. This is Efland, remember? There's a bloody fine line between criminals and authority figures in this country. So thin, you can't even see it.

JOSIE: Because there isn't one.

GRAYDON: Exactly.

ALAN: Yes, well, never mind that. We've got work to do, mate.

(He then handed Claymore an automatic rifle.)

CLAYMORE: I don't fucking want it!

JOSIE: I'll take it then.

(She then pulled it from his grasp and looked to Alan.)

JOSIE: Ready when you are.

CLAYMORE: Well, see, that's no good. Now you've made me look bad.

(He then snatched the rifle back and crawled towards the back of the boat with it.)

ALAN: Nice one, Josie. That got him moving.

JOSIE: Well, yeah, but that was never the plan. *I* want to shoot at the police too.

ALAN: Then shoot you shall.

(With that, he passed her another rifle before trying to hand one to Sierra.)

SIERRA: I... I'm scared, Alan. I don't like guns.

ALAN: Yeah, okay. That's cool. You don't have to take one.

(He nodded.)

ALAN: Just keep low and don't let Graydon antagonise you, okay?

SIERRA: Okay.

(He then crawled towards the back of the boat where Claymore and Josie were bracing themselves in readiness to shoot at the police boat.)

ALAN: Right. You ready?

JOSIE: Yup.

CLAYMORE: And you're sure these are loaded, right?

ALAN: Yeah, you can see they are.

CLAYMORE: So they won't jam or anything?

ALAN: Well, they might if you're unlucky. Very unlucky in your case. The safety catch is on.

CLAYMORE: It is?

ALAN: Yeah.

JOSIE: Leave it to me.

(She then leant forward and released the safety on his rifle for him.)

ALAN: Where did you learn to do that?

JOSIE: Well, let's just say my ex-boyfriend was a lot more militant than *I* am. And he showed me a few things.

ALAN: Say no more.

(He then gritted his teeth.)

ALAN: Anyway... ready?

JOSIE: Yup.

CLAYMORE: I guess so.

ALAN: On three. One, two...

(Suddenly, another hail of bullets rocketed in their direction. All Graydon could do was duck as low as possible and pray he got lucky. Mercifully, none of the bullets hit him. They did, however, decimate the windshield and blast a large hole in the instrument panel to his side.)

GRAYDON: Too fucking close!!!

(Alan growled.)

ALAN: We need to make sure that was their last sortie, guys.

CLAYMORE: Agreed.

JOSIE: So, on three then?

ALAN: Yup. Three!

(With that, he rose to his knees, fixed his stance then opened fire on the pursuing police boat.)

CLAYMORE: Hey!

JOSIE: Alan!!!



(With that, the two of them swiftly rose upwards and joined in with sending a hail of bullets in the direction of the police boat.)

CLAYMORE: These things are fucking awesome.

JOSIE: Right? And they're even better once you learn to shoot straight.

(Claymore furrowed his brow and continued to shoot with an angered pout on his face.

Josie's comment had hurt his pride. Sadly, however, her assessment wasn't wrong. The fire from these guns was indeed rapid and a joy to be in control of, but all he was doing was causing multiple splashes in the water and riddling the river bank with holes.)

CLAYMORE: It's my first time.

JOSIE: You'll get the hang of it.

ALAN: It's *my* first time too, mate, and *I* can do it. I've blasted several holes in the hull already.

JOSIE: That's great. Aim for the engine though.

(Alan grimaced then mumbled under his breath.)

ALAN: I was.

JOSIE: Sorry?

ALAN: I said, "of course".

CLAYMORE: Ha! Hit it.

ALAN: Well, the law of averages suggested you might, eventually.

CLAYMORE: Don't be an asshole. Sierra's watching. She's gonna think I'm a right pussy if I can't fire a gun properly.

JOSIE: Wow. You really think she's that shallow?

ALAN: Shame on you.

JOSIE: You're already her hero after your exploits with the bus. And she liked you anyway! She's not going to go off you just because you shoot like a little girl.

CLAYMORE: A little girl? Why, you...

ALAN: Focus, you tit. We've got those two coppers where we want them right now and we need to keep it that way. Ducking down like that, they're bound to crash.

JOSIE: Here's hoping.

(Sure enough, the two police officers hadn't been seen for quite some time. And with rapid fire from three automatic rifles being directed at them, they weren't likely to reappear any time soon either.)

CLAYMORE: Come on, guys, we need to make the most of this opportunity.

JOSIE: Shoot better then!

CLAYMORE: I am! I'm hitting the boat now.

JOSIE: Yeah, but the engine's at the other end.

CLAYMORE: Baby steps, woman!

(He furrowed his brow.)

CLAYMORE: Just my luck, I finally meet an awesome woman and her best friend turns out to be a complete twat.

JOSIE: Hey!

CLAYMORE: What? I said that out loud?

JOSIE: Yes!

(Just then, courtesy of one the many bullets they'd fired, the police boat's engine exploded into a ball of flame. With its power completely shut down, it then careered out of control, before smashing into some trees at the water's edge. Overjoyed by the sight, Alan, Claymore and Josie all clenched their fists triumphantly.)

ALAN: Yes!!! Sweet! Fucking result!

(He then grimaced.)

ALAN: I'd like to claim that was me, but...

JOSIE: It was, actually. At least, it wasn't me.

CLAYMORE: And what makes you so sure it wasn't *me*?

JOSIE: Well, was it?

CLAYMORE: Shut up, you.

JOSIE: Hey!

ALAN: Mate. Fucking calm down.

(Claymore looked to him then sighed.)

CLAYMORE: Right. Yeah. Sorry, Josie. I'm just frustrated, that's all. I don't think you're a twat at all; far from it.

JOSIE: It's fine, Claymore.

(She smiled.)

JOSIE: I know how you men get when you're so woeful outclassed at these things by a girl.

(Claymore furrowed his brow.)

CLAYMORE: I'm going back to Sierra.

(As he upped and stomped away, Alan watched him go and smirked.)

ALAN: That was cold. Ice cold.

JOSIE: Yeah. Maybe I was too mean.

ALAN: On the contrary, you were just mean enough, I reckon.

JOSIE: Well, you say that. I know how frustrating it can be when you're the only one who can't do something.

ALAN: So do I. Everyone does. He just reacted really badly to it and you put him in his place. No harm done I reckon.

JOSIE: Well, I guess.

(They then headed back towards where Graydon was lecturing Sierra and Claymore.)

GRAYDON: So in future, I'd be grateful if you'd act sooner. I was a sitting duck just now. I'm just lucky those coppers seemed to attend the same shooting classes you did.

CLAYMORE: Fuck off. My shooting was fine.

SIERRA: I thought so too.

CLAYMORE: Yeah?

SIERRA: Well, it looked fine from where *I* was cowering.

CLAYMORE: Cool. If *you* were fine it; case closed. I don't care what anyone else thinks.

ALAN: Good job, really, mate.

CLAYMORE: Shut up, you.

(Alan grinned then looked to Graydon.)

ALAN: So how are we doing? Is the boat handling okay? The bullets didn't do any damage to the performance, did they?

GRAYDON: Mercifully, no. We're in tiptop condition on that front. And the good news is, the river is really starting to widen. We can't be too far from the sea now.

(He beamed.)

GRAYDON: So, yeah; we're pretty much home and hosed, I reckon!

(Josie then gasped and pointed out of the front.)

JOSIE: Wanna bet!

GRAYDON: Fuck!!!

(Up ahead of them, a group of a dozen police boats had blocked the river. On each one, there were armed guards with their rifles pointed directly at them.)

SIERRA: Now what?

JOSIE: Panic!!!

SIERRA: I am, I am!

(She whimpered.)

SIERRA: We're gonna have to surrender or they'll shoot us all.

GRAYDON: Surrender? Fuck that! I'd rather they shot us all!

(With that, he spun the boat around 360 degrees then zoomed off back down the river. Not about to let him get away with such a manoeuvre, however, the police blockade swiftly broke apart and all the boats set off after them. Staring out of the back in horror, Alan grimaced.)

ALAN: Shooting one engine was hard enough; now we've got twelve of the fuckers after us.

JOSIE: We don't have enough bullets for that!

CLAYMORE: What are we gonna do then?

GRAYDON: We're gonna leave it to the captain; that's what?

ALAN: What?

GRAYDON: You heard me. Leave it to me.

(He nodded.)

GRAYDON: Unlike last time, we've got a decent head-start, so I know exactly what to do.

JOSIE: Does it involve not tempting fate? Only that twice you've done it now. Home and hosed indeed. As soon as you said that, we ran into these arseholes.

GRAYDON: Really? Really, young lady? We're in the middle of a life or death boat pursuit and you're choosing *now* to give me a lecture?

JOSIE: It wasn't a lecture.

(She shrugged nervously.)

JOSIE: I was just saying.

GRAYDON: Well, don't. Now stand back and be amazed. I'll show you how a veteran of the waterways does things.

(With that, he zoomed around a bend in the river before immediately slowing to a virtual standstill. He then gently drove the boat forwards into some thin reeds at the edge of the river, hidden beneath the veil of a weeping willow tree. With the boat slowly trickling forwards, he then glanced over his shoulder.)

GRAYDON: Watch and learn, children.

ALAN: Children?

GRAYDON: Shush.

(He rolled his eyes then joined the others as they glanced back at their river. Much to their horror, only a few seconds later, the sound of engines and sirens rose into the air.)

SIERRA: Shit!!! Now what!

CLAYMORE: Now we ask this fat cunt why we're parked!!!

GRAYDON: Patience!!!

(He then beamed with delight as the chasing pack whizzed past and disappeared down the river, completely oblivious to their whereabouts.)

GRAYDON: See? While they're charging off the wrong way in pursuit of a ghost, we'll be speeding towards the estuary, looking forward to a nice cup of tea and a sandwich. Now let's go, kiddies.

(He then contorted the rudder to slowly turn the boat around, before speeding off down the river again.)

GRAYDON: Ha! Now that's how you handle a boat, Claymore.

CLAYMORE: Yeah... that wasn't bad, actually.

GRAYDON: Not bad? It was fucking awesome.

(He then glanced over his shoulder and beamed with delight.)

GRAYDON: See you later, police motherfuckers! Close, but no cigar!!! You bitches are no match for Graydon James, that's for bloody certain! I fucking rule!!!

(He then punched the air in delight, much to the bewilderment of the others.)

SIERRA: Um... Josie? Who's this guy and what did you do with Graydon?

JOSIE: He must have fallen overboard.

CLAYMORE: And drowned. This is his replacement. Graydon 2.0

ALAN: And may I say, he's a vast improvement on the old one.

(Everyone nodded.)

SIERRA: Not that he had far to go.

ALAN: Well, aint that the truth.

---

A short while later, in a guard tent outside Sawbury police station, the officer in charge was in a state of outrage. Having just received an update as to how the manhunt was going, he was absolutely determined to let his second in command know exactly how angry he was.

CHIEF: This is fucking ridiculous, Kevin. They're in pursuit of a fat cunt, two canal slobs and a pair of soppy women; not an elite group of mercenaries, for fuck sake. What the hell are they doing? It can't be *that* hard, surely!

(His second in command sighed emptily.)

SECOND: I share your frustration, sir.

CHIEF: Good. So you should. If we fail this mission, you'll also be sharing my getting fired.

SECOND: I'm aware of that, sir; trust me.

CHIEF: Good. Make sure you are, because these reports we're getting simply aren't good enough.

(He shook his head then looked to heavens and spoke in a calmer tone.)

CHIEF: Honestly, Kevin. Tell me. How hard can it be to catch a bus?

(His second grimaced.)

SECOND: Well, sir. To be honest, it's not always that easy. The number six is always late and sometimes the driver just whizzes past the bus stop, pretending he hasn't seen me. Why do you ask?

(Having never heard such a ridiculous reply, the chief was dumbfounded.)

CHIEF: I... are you fucking... did you really just...

(He then growled angrily.)

CHIEF: Are you an idiot or something???

SECOND: No. I don't *think* so, anyway. Why?

CHIEF: I wasn't asking about your skills at using public transport, you cock. It was a rhetorical question; regarding how easy it should be for five bloody police cars to keep up with a fucking bus.

SECOND: Oh. Right.

(He grimaced.)

SECOND: Sorry about that. I feel somewhat foolish right now.

CHIEF: I should imagine you do.

SECOND: Quite. Sorry, sir.

CHIEF: Yes... well... sorry seems to be all I'm hearing these days. Apologies from you, and apologies from the idiots involved in the hunt.

(He then paced solemnly to the window and stood there shaking his head in despair.)

CHIEF: As for this latest debacle we're hearing about...

(He sighed.)

CHIEF: How can you miss a fucking boat, Kevin. Tell me?

SECOND: Right, yeah; sorry about that, sir. I left my ID card at home this morning, so I had to go back for it. And when I got back to the port, the ferry was already leaving. It won't happen again.

(Barely able to believe what he'd heard, the chief slowly turned to face him.)

CHIEF: Tell me you didn't just say that.

SECOND: What's that, sir?

CHIEF: Tell me you didn't just apologise for your tardiness this morning.

SECOND: Should I not have?

(The chief bellowed at him furiously.)

CHIEF: No!!! When I asked how you can miss a boat, I was referring to our police officers opening fire on it from point blank range and managing to miss every single fucking occupant!

SECOND: Oh, I see.

CHIEF: Oh, you see, do you?

SECOND: Yes, sir.

CHIEF: Then let's find out how well you can see after I give you a black eye!

(His second reeled back.)

SECOND: Can't that wait until after the mission, sir?

(The chief snarled then swiftly managed to calm himself.)

CHIEF: Yes, yes, you're right. Let's get this mission complete, *then* I can sock you in the eye.

SECOND: If you can catch me.

CHIEF: Excuse me?

SECOND: Nothing, sir. So, what were you saying about the mission?

CHIEF: Ah, yes, the mission.

(He nodded sternly.)

CHIEF: Fucking find them. Whatever it takes. Deploy even more men if you have to. And by that I mean call up some reserves.

SECOND: Yes, sir. And send them where, sir?

CHIEF: The border, the river, the fucking ocean... wherever they're required.

SECOND: I'll liaise with our men out in the field, sir.

CHIEF: Yes, you do that. Make sure to cover every angle.

(He smirked arrogantly.)

CHIEF: Those fleeing fools could try anything. They could zigzag, they could take any bizarre route you can think of, but there's one thing I'm certain of. Those clowns won't outsmart *me*!

(He nodded.)

CHIEF: Whether they try to make good their escape by sea or dump the boat and head for the land border, one way another, I *will* catch the buggers. And you know what? That terrorist backstabber Graydon is going to pay dearly for pissing me off, you mark my words.

SECOND: I will, sir.

(He then saluted.)

SECOND: Though, might I ask. How is he a terrorist exactly? What did he do?

CHIEF: Fuck knows.

SECOND: Then how do we *know* he's a terrorist?

CHIEF: Well, the home secretary *said* he is.

SECOND: Right. Then that's good enough for me. The government wouldn't lie.

CHIEF: Exactly.

(They then fell about laughing.)

CHIEF: Good one, Kevin.

SECOND: Thank you.

CHIEF: You're welcome.

(He then snarled bitterly.)

CHIEF: Now get it done!

---

Out on the river at this time, Graydon was powering the boat forth with a menacing snarl on his face. Having miraculously survived being shot at, his personality had changed dramatically. Gone was the condescending, self-righteous, misery guts, to be replaced with an ultra-positive, over-enthusiastic lunatic. Right now, he was charged up on adrenaline and loving every second of it.

GRAYDON: You know what, lads. At this speed, if some twat in a rowing boat tries to get in our way, we'll shatter his boat into tiny little splinters.

ALAN: Well, yeah, that's great an' all, but... just be careful not to hit any innocent boat users, okay?

GRAYDON: Pah! I can try, I suppose, but let me tell you, if *anyone* deliberately gets in the way, we're going *through* them. I'm in the zone now and I'm not stopping for any-fucking-body.

JOSIE: Wow, you're starting to worry me now.

GRAYDON: Don't be ridiculous, sexy tits. The only people *I'm* a danger to, is those who dare try to stop me!

JOSIE: Please. Please don't call me that.

ALAN: I'll second that! Although, to be fair, he actually described you really well.

SIERRA: He did, actually. You really *do* have sexy tits, Josie.

(Josie blushed then swung her shoulders nervously.)

JOSIE: Stop it. I don't like it.

GRAYDON: Bollocks. You love it! All women love compliments about their tits, no matter how back-handed!

SIERRA: Well, he's not wrong.

JOSIE: Yes, he is!

GRAYDON: Fine. I'll think of a *new* nickname.

(He nodded.)

GRAYDON: That can wait, however. Right now, I need to focus all my energies on getting us out of here.

(He beamed arrogantly.)

GRAYDON: And don't think I won't either, because right now, ladies and gentleman, I'm fucking unstoppable!!!

(In that moment, however, the engine stuttered and the boat started to jolt from side to side. Feeling the boat rapidly start to slow down, Graydon could only hang his head and groan in despair.)

GRAYDON: Oh, fate, must you surrender to *every* fucking temptation? Just for once, why can't you let me have my moment?

(Holding on to the side of the boat, Josie whimpered.)

JOSIE: Um... guys, what's going on?

CLAYMORE: I think we've broken down.

ALAN: Which is just what we fucking need.

GRAYDON: Relax, boy. We've not broken down, we're just dangerously low on fuel.

SIERRA: When you say dangerously low...

GRAYDON: We need fuel. Like yesterday.

SIERRA: We needed fuel yesterday?

JOSIE: Wow. It's a good thing you're pretty, Sierra.

ALAN: He means we need it urgently.

SIERRA: Right.

(She blushed.)

SIERRA: Blonde moment.

JOSIE: Hey, *I'm* blonde and I've *never* said anything *that* dim.

SIERRA: Oh, you have. Like the time...

JOSIE: We don't have time for stories, Sierra! We need to figure a way out of this mess.

(Staring at the river bank, Graydon smirked.)

GRAYDON: No, we don't. I've already found one.

(Alan, Claymore, Sierra and Josie all gave him a baffled glance then followed his eye line to gauge what he was looking at. As one, they then made coos of realisation. Moored at the side of the river, was a gleaming, red, shiny new boat.)

ALAN: That looks brand new.

GRAYDON: Indeed it does.

(He smirked.)

GRAYDON: So I think our next move is obvious.

(Sure enough, a minute or so later, Graydon kicked the new, red boat into life and it pulled away from its mooring. Leaving their poorly fuelled vessel behind, he steered away from the bank then offered himself a grin.)

GRAYDON: Well, that was easy. Like taking candy from a baby.

(They'd only made it a few feet however, when two men came charging out of the nearby woods, screaming at them furiously.)

ALAN: Fuck.

CLAYMORE: Step on it, Graydon.

GRAYDON: I will once were nearer the middle of the river.

JOSIE: Actually, you really ought to do it now.

GRAYDON: Nonsense. What are those two fools gonna do? Swim after us? We're a good three metres from land already.

CLAYMORE: No, they're gonna get in that bloody speedboat and come after us!

GRAYDON: There's a speedboat?

(He glanced over his shoulder and sure enough, there was indeed a speedboat, moored a short distance behind where they'd abandoned their old boat.)

GRAYDON: I see.

(He beamed with evil delight.)

GRAYDON: Then that changes everything. Hold onto your tits, ladies; we're getting out of here!!!

(He then cast the throttle forwards and laughed maniacally as the boat tipped up and shot off down the river. Surprised by the sudden jolt, his four travelling companions were all thrown to the floor with considerable force.)

JOSIE: Ouch!

SIERRA: Graydon!!!

GRAYDON: What? You fuckers wanted me to floor it, so I did!

(Alan shook his head.)

ALAN: Cock!

GRAYDON: Less of that! It's not like I didn't warn you!

CLAYMORE: Yes, it is. You didn't give us even the slightest hint of a warning!

GRAYDON: Oh, no? What part of "hold on to your tits" didn't you understand?

ALAN: The bit about tits.

GRAYDON: Yes, well, Sierra and Josie knew. They're no stranger to tits, those two. They take them everywhere with them.

(He then chuckled to himself, caring very little for the disdainful glances he was receiving.)

JOSIE: That man is obsessed with tits.

SIERRA: Yup.

(She sighed.)

SIERRA: But then *all* men are obsessed with tits, Josie. Look at these two.

(She gestured to where Alan and Claymore were staring in delight at her chest.)

SIERRA: Not exactly subtle are they?

JOSIE: No, they're...

(She then performed a double take at Sierra's chest before promptly twisting her to face her.)

JOSIE: Yours have fallen out of your swimsuit, that's why.

SIERRA: What?

(She glanced down herself and much to her horror, her boobs had indeed slipped out of the side of her skimpy one-piece. With a shriek, she hastily set about putting them away.)

SIERRA: Stop staring, Alan!

JOSIE: And you, Claymore!

SIERRA: Actually...

(She then turned bright red and clammed up.)

SIERRA: Nothing.

JOSIE: Wow.

(With Sierra's breasts now out of sight, Alan flinched then looked about himself in bewilderment.)

ALAN: What? Where is... what's happening now?

GRAYDON: We're speeding away from two dickheads in a speedboat.

ALAN: Right.

(He then enlightened.)

ALAN: I remember.

(With that, he jumped to his feet and hurried to the back of the boat. Having given Sierra and knowing wink, Claymore then jumped to his feet and joined him.)

ALAN: Look at them, mate. Shaking their fists and gesticulating.

CLAYMORE: Idiots. It's gonna take a lot more than that to stop us.

ALAN: Especially with Graydon the maniac at the helm.

CLAYMORE: Right?

(He then sucked his teeth.)

CLAYMORE: They do seem to have us beaten when it comes to speed though, mate. Look, they're gaining.

ALAN: Yeah, you're right. They are, actually.

(He then shrugged it off.)

ALAN: Not that it matters. We're heading for the sea, mate. They can't follow us out there in a speedboat, that'd be suicidal.

CLAYMORE: Only if the weather's shit.

ALAN: Right. Good point. The weather's far from shit.

(He then scoffed.)

ALAN: Nah, it's fine. I mean, how do they think they're gonna stop us? They're not gonna ram their own boat now, are they?

CLAYMORE: Probably not.

(He then smirked.)

CLAYMORE: I guess there's fuck all they can do then.

(He then turned pale and gasped in horror, before diving to the floor.)

CLAYMORE: Get down!!!

ALAN: Get down?

(Suddenly, a hail of bullets came hurtling in his direction. At once, he crumpled to the floor then looked to Claymore with wide eyes.)

ALAN: Fuckers just missed me.

CLAYMORE: Well, I did tell you to get down.

ALAN: Yeah, but...



CLAYMORE: But what? When someone yells that, you get the fuck down. Or did you think I was in disco mood and inviting you to get down and boogie?

ALAN: I wish I could say I *did* think that.

CLAYMORE: Right? It'd be a great icebreaker at parties. Imagine. My mate screamed at me to get down once, so I started doing the hustle. Next thing I knew, there were bullets whizzing past my ears.

(They then shared a childish giggle, only to be interrupted by Josie. She'd crawled over there with vital information from the captain.)

JOSIE: Guys? Graydon says, for fuck sake do something.

ALAN: Like what? We left the guns on the old boat.

CLAYMORE: Which, in hindsight, was kinda dumb.

ALAN: Yeah, just a bit.

JOSIE: I don't know what he expects us to do, but he insisted I come and tell you.

(Alan glanced at where Graydon was cowering in the driver's seat, half covering his head in fear of another hail of bullets.)

ALAN: He really is a sitting duck, isn't he?

CLAYMORE: Yeah, he is.

(He sighed.)

CLAYMORE: Just our luck to steal a boat from two cunts who don't mind shooting the shit out of it.

JOSIE: They're police officers. Police officers shoot things. They don't care what either.

ALAN: What? How do you know they're police officers?

JOSIE: One of them still has his uniform on.

ALAN: Oh. Hadn't noticed that.

(He nodded.)

ALAN: Still, never mind that; how do we stop them?

(Claymore raised his head above the back of the boat slightly then ducked down.)

CLAYMORE: Mate, all I know is, they're reloading.

ALAN: Shit.

CLAYMORE: It gets worse. They're only about five feet behind us now.

ALAN: They are?

CLAYMORE: Yeah.

(Alan suddenly looked enlightened then crawled off towards Graydon as fast as he could.)

ALAN: Shan't be a minute.

CLAYMORE: Where are you going?

(Alan continued on and offered no reply.)

CLAYMORE: Where's he going?

JOSIE: I don't know.

CLAYMORE: Right.

(Josie then glanced at where Sierra was cowering on the floor before looking back at Claymore again.)

JOSIE: Claymore?

CLAYMORE: Yeah?

JOSIE: Don't hurt Sierra.

CLAYMORE: What??? I'm not going to.

JOSIE: Good. Don't. She really likes you and...

CLAYMORE: I'm crazy about her too, Josie; chill.

JOSIE: Well... okay. Just treat her right, that's all I'm saying.

CLAYMORE: I will, I swear.

JOSIE: Good.

(She then glanced over to where Alan was remonstrating with Graydon at the front of the boat.)

JOSIE: What do you reckon they're talking about?

(She then looked to Claymore, only to find him crawling across the floor to comfort Sierra.)

JOSIE: Talk to myself then, shall I?

(She rolled her eyes. As she did so, Graydon suddenly laughed out loud.)

GRAYDON: Love it! Ha! Let's do that!

(The air was then filled with the sound of gunfire, once again. All Graydon could do was sink down and hope for the best. Alan had long since hit the deck again. Mercifully, the second sortie was no more successful than the first. They were, however, getting closer. Rather than getting irate and panicking, however, Graydon stood up and turned around. Grinning like a lunatic, he yelled at the top of his voice.)

GRAYDON: Nice try, losers!!! Goodbye!

(He then turned around and yanked the throttle backwards, slowing the boat as quickly as he could. Much to his delight, the chasing duo could do nothing to prevent their speedboat from hurtling headlong into the back of the boat. With a scream, they were both thrown over the front then their speedboat veered off out of the river and tumbled into a ditch.)

GRAYDON: So long, suckers!!!

(He then zoomed off again, laughing like a madman. As he did so, Claymore upped and peered over the side of the boat. The two police officers were desperately swimming ashore and their speedboat had virtually split in two as a result of the crash.)

CLAYMORE: Damn. That well and truly showed them. I mean, fuck.

SIERRA: Thank heavens for that.

(A tear then rolled down her cheek.)

SIERRA: I can't take much more of this, Claymore. I've never been so scared.

(Claymore threw his arms around her.)

CLAYMORE: I know, babe. This is a fucking nightmare. It really sucks. We're getting there though. Somehow.

(He shrugged.)

CLAYMORE: I mean, somehow we seem to be winning.

SIERRA: Yeah, but for how long?

CLAYMORE: Well, who knows?

(Sierra sighed.)

SIERRA: Sorry. That was a stupid question.

CLAYMORE: It's fine, darling.

SIERRA: And my being defeatist isn't going to help.

CLAYMORE: Don't be hard on yourself.

SIERRA: I can't help it. I just feel so useless. I'm too chicken to be any use to anyone in this situation. In fact, my only contribution has been to demand we go to a clothes shop. And that's how we ended up getting caught by the police in the first place.

CLAYMORE: Babe...

(He then nodded sternly.)

CLAYMORE: Actually, forget the niceties. Stopping fucking pouting, woman.

SIERRA: What?

CLAYMORE: Listen to me. We do what we're good at, okay? Everyone in this team has their strong points. I was a pathetic shot with those guns, but I did my bit with the bus. So, yeah, it doesn't matter if you're frightened of guns and can't fight. It just doesn't. At some point we're gonna be in a situation where you excel. And when we do, it'll be *our* turn to feel inadequate while *you* shine. Okay? So bide your time, hang in there and you'll see. Nobody's carrying you, babe. You *do* have a role to play.

SIERRA: I do?

CLAYMORE: Yes!

SIERRA: Like what?

CLAYMORE: Well...

(A glazed expression then appeared on his face as he tried to think of something.)

CLAYMORE: Um...

SIERRA: See? I'm no fucking use to anybody.

CLAYMORE: Bullshit.

(He then shrugged.)

CLAYMORE: You actually inspire me, Sierra. I mean, I'm so into you, I just want to get through this just so I can get to know you better. Everything about you makes me excited about the future. And that's spurring me on to fight and succeed. That sounds a bit lame, I know, but...

(His words were then brought to a standstill, by Sierra's lips zooming forth into his. A long, passionate kiss then ensued. To say Sierra had been moved by his words would be quite the understatement. Watch them, Alan and Josie rolled their eyes in unison.)

ALAN: They're like bloody teenagers.

JOSIE: Uh-huh.

(Graydon then bellowed out excitedly from the helm.)

GRAYDON: Any other fools in speedboats looking to try their luck??? I'll take you all on!!! At once!!! Come and see what happens when you mess the mighty Graydon, arseholes! I am undefeatable!!!

ALAN: He's no better.

JOSIE: If anything he's worse.

ALAN: Yup.

(At this point, Graydon turned to face them and beamed.)

GRAYDON: The ocean isn't far away now, chaps. Look how wide the river's getting!

ALAN: Cool.

JOSIE: That's great.

GRAYDON: Indeed. And with the new, awesome me driving, we'll be there in no time.

ALAN: Right... excellent... the ocean...

GRAYDON: Yes, why? Is that a problem?

ALAN: I'm just thinking, mate.

(He sucked his teeth.)

ALAN: It might not be as easy as you make it sound, Graydon. You know, what with the coastguard and the estuary police! They'll be on the lookout for this boat.

JOSIE: Yeah. It's bound to have been reported missing.

ALAN: And being bright red, it won't be too hard to identify. There can't be too many bright red boats called Wet Orchard out here.

JOSIE: It was Wild Orchid.

ALAN: Yeah, but my point still stands. The estuary police are going to be a big problem.

GRAYDON: Well, yes, that's true, but we can cross that bridge when we come to it.

ALAN: Right...

(He then looked enlightened and grinned from ear to ear.)

ALAN: Actually, does anyone have a screwdriver? I think I've had an idea.

JOSIE: Oh? Do tell.

ALAN: All in good time, young lady. All in good time.

---

Out in the estuary at the end of the river, a short while later, a powerful police boat was slowly loitering on the lookout for anything suspicious. The crew had also been given notice to keep a lookout for Graydon and his team. Back up, they'd been assured, would be arriving soon. Not sure whether to believe it or not, the captain of the vessel stared through his binoculars then groaned in despair. At his side, his subordinate gave him an enquiring glance.)

PRIVATE: Sir? Something troubles you?

CAPTAIN: Back up, they tell us. Back up will be arriving. Will it though?

PRIVATE: I'm not sure, sir.

CAPTAIN: No, nor am I. And I'm not sure I want it to either. There's nothing worse than police boats from other waters sullyng our estuary.

(He nodded then lowered his binoculars.)

CAPTAIN: This is *our* river, private. We know how to patrol it, and how to stop those who try to pass through here illegally. I fear extra boats will create nothing but chaos.

PRIVATE: Indeed, sir.

(The captain then stared through his binoculars again.)

CAPTAIN: That boat seems kinda red.

PRIVATE: May *I* have a look, sir?

CAPTAIN: No. I'm the captain of this vessel, so I get to use the binoculars.

PRIVATE: Right...

CAPTAIN: Well, it *is* a red boat, but there's no sign of a fat old man. Just a smarmy looking pretty boy at the helm and a sizzling piece of eye candy at his side.

PRIVATE: That describes half the boats out here, sir.

CAPTAIN: Indeed.

(He bit his lip.)

CAPTAIN: The people we're looking for... an old man, two young men and two sexy young ladies, right?

PRIVATE: Correct.

CAPTAIN: So it *could* be the one, I suppose. I mean, the other three might be below deck.

(He then glanced along the side of the boat.)

CAPTAIN: Oh, wait. What did you say the stolen boat was called?

PRIVATE: Wild Orchid XI, sir.

CAPTAIN: Wild Orchid XI... nope.

(He then lowered his binoculars.)

CAPTAIN: The plaque on *that* boat says The Amethyst.

PRIVATE: Not even close.

CAPTAIN: Indeed. Panic over; let's have some tea.

PRIVATE: An excellent idea, sir. Though... who was panicking?

CAPTAIN: Just make the sodding tea, will you?

(He then shook his head and cast his eyes back out over the estuary.)

---

Upon the red boat that the crew of the police boat had been scrutinising, Claymore was sat at the controls, while Sierra was leaning against the console facing him. To anyone watching, they looked like any other young couple enjoying an afternoon boat ride. Nobody would know that just behind this young couple, Graydon, Alan and Josie were seated on the floor, resting their backs against the rear of the boat. It was the perfect plan. And having been the one who came up with it, Graydon wasn't slow in elaborating on that fact.

GRAYDON: See? This is what I do? I scheme. I plan. I'm an idea's man. A *master* planner, if you will. And some would even say a master illusionist. Making things appear different to the way they really are is what I do best.

(He beamed.)

GRAYDON: Just like I made poor people look like *they* were a burden on the state while my friends and I bled the nation's coffers dry, I made *those two* look like an ordinary young couple, rather than the wanted criminals they are. Pure genius.

JOSIE: It was a great plan, Graydon.

GRAYDON: Yes, yes it was.

JOSIE: Alan should be proud of himself.

GRAYDON: Yes...

(A horrified look then crossed his brow.)

GRAYDON: What do you mean, *Alan* should be proud of himself?

ALAN: You tell him, Josie.

JOSIE: I will. The police are looking a boat called... whatever it said on the old plaque.

ALAN: Wild Orchid Eleven.

JOSIE: Yeah. So, by removing the plaque and replacing it with the one from the canal boat, he's the one who's throwing the river police off our scent.

(Graydon gaped in horror.)

GRAYDON: But... but... now look here... I mean, listen you...

(He furrowed his brow.)

GRAYDON: The fact remains that us three hiding down here was a bloody good idea.

JOSIE: It was. But without Alan's quick thinking it'd be meaningless. The police will be looking to ID the boat; not the passengers.

GRAYDON: Why, you... I... listen you... my idea still helped.

JOSIE: I don't disagree. It was a very good addendum to Alan's superb idea.

GRAYDON: Well, I... I'm insulted.

ALAN: Job done then.

GRAYDON: Wankers.

(As Graydon sat and sulked, Sierra couldn't help but smile. Having been baited relentlessly by the horrid old man since the moment she'd met him, seeing Josie give him a taste of his own medicine was indeed sweet.)

SIERRA: Look at him sulk.

CLAYMORE: Priceless, isn't it?

(Having overheard, Graydon raised his head and snarled.)

GRAYDON: How far out are we? I want control of my boat back.

CLAYMORE: Oh, it's your boat now, is it?

GRAYDON: Yes. I'm the captain. I'm the one who showed you how to drive it.

(Claymore scoffed.)

CLAYMORE: Mate, I'm a canal boat captain by trade. You didn't *have to* show me anything.

GRAYDON: So you claim.

CLAYMORE: Dude, just like a canal boat it has a lever that makes it go faster or slower. And that's about it. The only difference is the steering.

GRAYDON: Yes, and it's a *huge* difference.

CLAYMORE: Only in the sense that it's *easier* than a canal boat.

GRAYDON: Oh, you think so, do you?

CLAYMORE: Yes! On a canal boat, all you've got is a lever to turn the rudder. This thing has a nice, cushioned steering wheel. It's a piece of piss.

GRAYDON: *You're* a piece of piss!

CLAYMORE: Right...

GRAYDON: You youngsters think you know everything, don't you? You think you're all so bloody superior too. Well, fuck you. I'm the captain and I'm taking my boat back.

(With that, he upped then stomped to the front of the boat.)

JOSIE: Graydon, you need to stay low!

ALAN: Get down, you cock!

GRAYDON: Bollocks. We're past the estuary police now. So I'm taking control.

(He then pushed Claymore aside then jumped on the driver's seat.)

CLAYMORE: Dude!

GRAYDON: Don't you 'dude' me, young man. Just watch and learn. I'll show *you* how to drive a fucking boat.

(He then slammed the throttle forwards and the boat took off at full speed.)

GRAYDON: Ha! See? Couldn't do that, could you?

SIERRA: Of course he could. You pushed the lever forward. Even *I* could have done that!

GRAYDON: I doubt it. You've been worse than useless since we left the canal.

SIERRA: Hey!

CLAYMORE: Don't rise to it, babe.

SIERRA: I can't help it. He's *too* mean.

GRAYDON: Suck it up, bouncy tits. Captain Graydon is back at the helm and what I say goes. No matter how mean.

(Just then, Alan stomped among them and snarled.)

ALAN: Nice one, Captain Graydon.

(Graydon furrowed his brow.)

GRAYDON: Part of me wants to say thank you, but I can't help feeling you were being somewhat insincere there.

ALAN: I was!

GRAYDON: I knew it!

ALAN: Thanks to you speeding off like that, we've now got a police boat up our arses!

GRAYDON: Shit! They must have spotted me!

ALAN: You think???

GRAYDON: I... um... actually, no. Come to think of it there's a 20mph speed limit in the estuary; we're doing way in excess of that.

(Josie then arrived to add her piece.)

JOSIE: Oh, great. So we went through all that effort to disguise the boat and avoid detection, only for *you* to get us picked up for speeding! Nice one.

GRAYDON: The hell I have!

(He scoffed.)

GRAYDON: Nobody's picking us up for any-fucking-thing. Not with *me* at the helm. We'll lose that sucker in no time; you see if we don't!

(He then glanced in the mirror and spotted the police boat racing up behind them with its lights flashing.)

GRAYDON: I'll ram the bugger head on, that's what I'll do.

ALAN: Don't be a twat!!!

CLAYMORE: That'll do *us* as much damage as it will *them*!

GRAYDON: Nonsense! This boat's twice the size of that thing. And like my wife always cruelly pointed out, size matters!!!

JOSIE: He's a loony!

SIERRA: Don't do it, Graydon!

GRAYDON: Shut up, you. I'm the captain and I'll do whatever I see fit!

JOSIE: Guys...

ALAN: We're on it, Josie. Come on, Claymore; let's restrain the cunt.

CLAYMORE: Uh-huh.

(Unfortunately, they only managed to take one step in Graydon's direction, when he threw the steering wheel to the right, violently. As a result, they were both sent hurtling to the floor. Also taken by surprise, Josie and Sierra were thrown to the back of the boat, screaming and panicking.)

ALAN: You cunt!

GRAYDON: Pipe down, boy. I'm making my move!!!

CLAYMORE: What move?

GRAYDON: Ramming the bugger.

(He beamed with fiendish delight as he completed the half circle, then grimaced uncomfortably.)

GRAYDON: Where is it? It was right behind us a minute ago!

ALAN: Obviously, it turned around as well.

(Graydon glanced in the mirror.)

GRAYDON: Fuck. You're right. It's *still* behind us!

CLAYMORE: Only now, we're heading back towards land.

ALAN: Where half the fucking police force are waiting for us.

GRAYDON: You make a good point.

(He then threw the steering wheel to the right once again, just as Alan and Claymore were getting to their feet. As a result, they found themselves bouncing and tumbling to the back of the boat with Sierra and Josie.)

ALAN: He's getting on my fucking tits now.

JOSIE: He could get us all killed.

CLAYMORE: I realise that!

JOSIE: Guys, you really need to...

(She then threw a glance in Sierra's direction.)

JOSIE: Babe, your boobs have fallen out again!

SIERRA: What???

(She shrieked then hurried them away.)

SIERRA: This swimsuit really wasn't designed for being thrown about in.

JOSIE: Yeah, well, never mind that. We need to stop Graydon.

ALAN: Leave it to me!

(He then started to climb to his feet, only to throw himself down again as the police opened fire. Rather than following Graydon, they'd opted to let *him* turn then shoot at his boat as it passed them.)

ALAN: I won't lie to you, Josie. It's not going to be easy.

(He then glanced to where Graydon was speeding forth with his head ducked low.)

GRAYDON: Bloody shooting at me!!! I'll fucking show them!

CLAYMORE: Aw, fuck. What's he gonna try now?

ALAN: I shudder to think.

(Claymore grimaced then shook his head.)

CLAYMORE: I need to know.

(With that, he raised his head before quickly ducking again.)

CLAYMORE: Well, the good news is, the police have stopped shooting.

ALAN: And the bad news?

CLAYMORE: He's heading straight towards an abandoned platform!

SIERRA: He's what???

(With that, she jumped to her feet and gasped in horror. Sure enough, they were hurtling towards where a rotten, abandoned, off-shore platform rose from the sea. With fifty legs supporting a flat platform above, it offered little room for manoeuvre.)

SIERRA: He wouldn't, would he?

JOSIE: He fucking would, you know?

ALAN: We're all gonna drown!

CLAYMORE: Yeah, if we're unlucky enough to survive the impact and the following explosion.

(They then shared a series of horrified glances, before throwing themselves flat and covering the heads.)

CLAYMORE: I love you, Sierra!!!

SIERRA: I love you too, Claymore!

JOSIE: Aw.

ALAN: Really, Claymore. Now?

CLAYMORE: It might be the last chance I get.

(Just then, Graydon bellowed out with a crazed delight in his voice.)

GRAYDON: Try following me now, police bitches!!!

(He laughed maniacally.)

GRAYDON: Time to thread the fucking needle!!!

(He then snarled and tensed his body as he zoomed straight for the gap between two of the platform's legs.)

GRAYDON: Here we go!!!

(All Alan, Claymore, Josie and Sierra could do was scream in terror as the boat shot beneath the platform, bounced to one side then scraped the side of a pillar before whizzing out of the other side.)

GRAYDON: I am legend!!!

(He then twisted to glance behind him, just in time to see the police boat smack head first into one of the platform's legs.)

GRAYDON: Ha!!! Amateurs.

(As the police boat fell apart on the water, Graydon punched the air then steered away in the direction of the open ocean. As he did so, Alan and Claymore arrived at his side, growling furiously.)

ALAN: Are you *trying* to get us all killed???

CLAYMORE: Are you *trying* to... what he said.

(Graydon scoffed at him.)

GRAYDON: On the contrary, you ungrateful little shit. I just saved us. I was trying to stop us from being killed. Successfully, I might add!

CLAYMORE: Yeah, but...

(He then bit his lip uneasily before shrugging his thoughts away.)

CLAYMORE: He's got a point actually.

ALAN: Well, yeah. I suppose.

(He ruffled his neck indignantly.)

ALAN: I guess thanks are in order then.

GRAYDON: Well, don't strain yourself, will you?

CLAYMORE: You might have warned us though. You scared the shit out of us.

ALAN: Yeah. Claymore got so scared he told Sierra he loves her.

(He grimaced.)

ALAN: That could make things awkward. How are you gonna wriggle out of that one?

CLAYMORE: Why would I want to wriggle out of it. I *do* love her.

ALAN: You barely even know her.



CLAYMORE: Dude, when you know, you know.

ALAN: If you say so.

(He looked to Graydon.)

ALAN: So, what now?

GRAYDON: We keep going, obviously.

(He nodded.)

GRAYDON: As long as they don't send any helicopters, I reckon we're in the clear for the time being.

(He then glanced up to the sky.)

GRAYDON: Don't you dare, fate!!! Just let me have that one!

(Seeing nothing in the sky, he drew a sigh of relief then looked to Alan.)

GRAYDON: You and those other three clowns might want to make yourselves comfortable.

(He beamed.)

GRAYDON: We've got quite a way to go before this is over.

---

A short while later, having had a chance to recover from the psychological trauma of Graydon's perilous escape plan, Sierra and Claymore made themselves comfortable on a seat at the side of the boat and quietly huddled up together to relax. They had nothing to say to one another, they just wanted to take a peaceful time out and share one another's company. Josie and Alan, on the other hand, had no intention of relaxing; not even for a moment. Graydon had completely taken over the mission and it didn't sit comfortably with either of them. As such, they needed to know exactly what he had in mind. And they needed to know straight away.

ALAN: I mean, how do you even know you're going in the right direction?

JOSIE: And what exactly *is* the right direction?

GRAYDON: I...

ALAN: And don't say north. We *know* we're heading up the Amaria coastline.

JOSIE: Yeah, just saying we're heading north is no good. We need to know how far north and at what point we have to turn towards land.

ALAN: Yeah! And when we *do* turn towards land, what then?

JOSIE: Well? Have you even thought this through? We're foreign nationals, Graydon. The Amaria coastguard isn't just going to wave us through, you know?

GRAYDON: I...

ALAN: We need to find a way to sneak in and that's not gonna be easy. We need a plan, mate.

GRAYDON: Then shut the fuck up and listen!!!

ALAN: Yeah, alright. Calm down.

JOSIE: So uncouth.

(Graydon rolled his eyes.)

GRAYDON: Says the lowly supermarket employee.

JOSIE: Hey!

GRAYDON: What?

(He rolled his eyes again.)

ALAN: Stop rolling your eyes.

GRAYDON: What?

ALAN: If you've got something to say, just bloody say it. No scoffing and no eye-rolling; just fucking speak.

GRAYDON: Fine. Idiots.

(He rolled his eyes a third time.)

ALAN: Seriously?

GRAYDON: Look, you halfwits, if you must know...

(He ruffled his neck.)

GRAYDON: We're not heading north.

JOSIE: What?

ALAN: Excuse me?

GRAYDON: We're taking a slight detour.

ALAN: I'll ask again. Excuse me?

GRAYDON: Look, the Efland government aren't pissing about, you know? I mean, those weren't comedy bullets they fired at us. They want me dead. Big time. So simply sailing up the coast would be asking for trouble. They'll be expecting that. And when I say expecting it, I mean it. We could well encounter a battleship or two.

(Alan's voice suddenly went extremely high.)

ALAN: A battleship???

(He coughed.)

ALAN: Sorry. Sorry. A battleship?

GRAYDON: Well, yeah. What can I say; the home secretary really wants me dead.

JOSIE: That's... terrifying.

GRAYDON: Yes, it is. Luckily, I'm a man of means. Did I mention I was stinking rich?

JOSIE: Once or twice, yes.

GRAYDON: Then believe me when I tell you I know what I'm doing.

JOSIE: We should believe you just because you're stinking rich?

GRAYDON: Yes!

(He nodded sternly.)

GRAYDON: Wealth is very good for buying loyalty and friendship, you see.

(He beamed.)

GRAYDON: So we're going to take a slight detour before heading to Amaria. One that might make all the difference.

(Alan was sceptical.)

ALAN: Right... this detour...

GRAYDON: Yes, I *do* know how to get there!

(He pointed to a radar screen on the dashboard.)

GRAYDON: I know exactly where I am. Your chum might dispute it, but there's a big difference between a canal boat and a real boat. To captain a proper boat, you need to know how to navigate via one of these.

JOSIE: And do you?

GRAYDON: Yes! I'm a very experienced boat captain, thank you. Like I keep telling you all.

(He pointed to the radar screen.)

GRAYDON: That red dot there is the radar signal from the Efland coast. I know that, because we're still in Efland waters and it's the only dot on the screen. There will, however, be others once we get further out. And when we see one, we'll head straight towards it. See? I know what I'm doing. Wankers.

ALAN: Steady on!

GRAYDON: No. Now, no more quizzing me. I know what I'm doing, okay? We're gonna visit my friend *then* head for Amaria. And I mean safely.

(Alan grimaced.)

ALAN: Right... so, this friend...

GRAYDON: No, he *doesn't* live in Efland. We're not going back there again. That'd be suicidal.

JOSIE: Then where *are* we heading?

GRAYDON: The Island of Santa Lorena. That'll be the next red dot we see on the radar screen. The only one actually, as there's no other land out here. Easy peasy. Even an inexperienced, novice boatman like Claymore there could navigate to Santa Lorena. So have some bloody faith, will you? I know what I'm doing.

(Alan raised a curious eyebrow.)

ALAN: Santa Lorena, you say?

GRAYDON: Yes. Why?

ALAN: The holiday resort?

GRAYDON: It's a nation in its own right, you idiot. Not just a holiday resort.

JOSIE: How are we gonna get in without ID then?

GRAYDON: By shutting the fuck up and trusting me! How many times?

(He then growled and wafted his hand at them.)

GRAYDON: Now go away. I can smell the poor on you and it's making me nauseous.

ALAN: Wow. What a complete...

JOSIE: Yeah, well, let's just leave him to it, shall we?

ALAN: Leave him to it? Just sit back and trust his plan? Really, Josie? Just... trust it?

JOSIE: What else can we do? Nobody else even *has* a plan.

ALAN: Right... yeah... I suppose.

(He then headed away with Josie to sit down on one of the sofas. As much as he was loathe to trust Graydon, he knew he had very little choice.)

---

At the land border crossing between Efland and Amaria at this time, the guards Wilson, Smith and Erikson were all sitting in their captain's car, grimacing uncomfortably. Upon arriving at the border, their captain had alighted the vehicle then started to speak to a border patrol guard. From where they were sitting, the captain didn't look at all pleased. Well aware that they'd be the ones he'd take his bad mood out on, Wilson was especially nervous.

WILSON: He looks really pissed off.

SMITH: Yup.

WILSON: He's gonna take it out on us. Especially me.

ERIKSON: I expect so. He hates all his subordinates, but newbies... he reserves a special kind of disdain for you guys.

SMITH: Uh-huh.

(Wilson bit his lip.)

WILSON: So, what do you think's going on? Clearly that border guard is giving the captain bad news, but what?

ERIKSON: Hopefully it's news that Graydon has been killed and we can all go home.

We've been in this car for three... or is it four... we've been in this car for so fucking long, I can't even remember.

SMITH: It feels like weeks.

WILSON: Right? I've forgotten what fresh air smells like.

ERIKSON: I'll bet it smells a hell of a lot better than we all do, that's for sure.

(He then flinched.)

ERIKSON: Here we go, he's coming back.

WILSON: Who?

ERIKSON: That captain, you twat.

WILSON: Right. Obviously.

(He sighed.)

WILSON: I'm so fucking tired.

SMITH: Yeah, well, keep it to yourself; he's here.

(The door to the car then flung open and the captain clambered inside.)

CAPTAIN: Fucking typical. All this fucking way and for what?

SMITH: Have they already caught him then, sir?

CAPTAIN: Have they fuck.

(He sighed.)

CAPTAIN: Slippery little turd.

SMITH: Me? What did *I* do?

CAPTAIN: Not you, you cunt. Graydon! He's not coming to the land border. The slippery little shit went down the river. Apparently he's out in the ocean somewhere.

ERIKSON: Right. So...

CAPTAIN: So the search has been called off.

(He furrowed his brow.)

CAPTAIN: It's now in the hands of the navy.

(He thumped the steering wheel.)

CAPTAIN: So much for my fucking promotion.

ERIKSON: Yeah. That sucks.

(He beamed.)

ERIKSON: But on the bright side, we can go home and get a shower.

(The captain growled at him.)

CAPTAIN: Oh, is that so? You'd give up that easily, would you?

ERIKSON: Um...

SMITH: What are you suggesting, sir?

CAPTAIN: That we go after him, obviously.

ERIKSON: But, sir; we've not even been assigned to the search yet. And how are we gonna catch him when he's out in the middle of the ocean somewhere?

CAPTAIN: By using cunning, wit and guile, obviously.

SMITH: To do what?

CAPTAIN: I don't fucking know, do I?

SMITH: Right...

CAPTAIN: But let's think about it logically, shall we?

ERIKSON: Okay.

CAPTAIN: Firstly, we'll need a boat.

WILSON: What? Where are *we* going to get a boat from?

CAPTAIN: We'll commandeer one, obviously!

SMITH: Then what? Do any of us actually know *how* to sail a boat? And what can us four cunts do that the entire navy can't?

CAPTAIN: Don't be such a girl. Of course we can sail a boat. I mean, how hard can it be?

(He rolled his eyes.)

CAPTAIN: As for what we can do that the navy can't, well, that's where the cunning, wit and guile come in.

ERIKSON: Care to elaborate?

CAPTAIN: I do.

(He nodded.)

CAPTAIN: If that little fucker has gone to sea, he obviously plans to sail up the coast to Amaria, agreed?

SMITH: Uh-huh.

ERIKSON: Yup.

CAPTAIN: Well, he can't just turn north and go straight there, can he? Our navy would blow him out of the water before he even got close.

WILSON: Meaning what exactly?  
CAPTAIN: Meaning, he's going to have to go out into international waters *then* sail north until he's level with Amaria. And which point he'll turn for land.  
SMITH: Makes sense.  
CAPTAIN: Indeed. And the thing is, our navy will be out there searching those international waters. The plan being, as soon as they see him, bang! Torpedo!  
WILSON: Really? Is that even legal?  
CAPTAIN: Not exactly, no, but in international waters, who's going to see it?  
ERIKSON: Good point.  
(He grimaced.)  
ERIKSON: So, where do *we* come in?  
CAPTAIN: Ah, that's the clever part, you see?  
(He beamed.)  
CAPTAIN: Graydon is a clever sod. And he knows how our military operate. He *was* an advisor to the war cabinet, after all.  
SMITH: He was?  
CAPTAIN: Among other things, yes.  
(He smirked.)  
CAPTAIN: He'll find a way to circumnavigate around the navy, you mark my words. He'll have it all figured out. What he won't be expecting, however, is us four in boat, posing as ordinary tourists on a fishing trip.  
(He beamed.)  
CAPTAIN: Yeah, he'll slip through the navy thinking he's oh so clever and nobody can outfox him, then wham. He'll run into us. We'll catch the fucker, take him in then claim my just reward.  
SMITH: Only *your* just reward, sir?  
CAPTAIN: *Your* just reward will be my promotion.  
ERIKSON: How is that a reward for *us*?  
CAPTAIN: Well... for one, you won't have to work *under* me ever again.  
WILSON: Cool!  
(He then hung his head in shame.)  
WILSON: Please don't fire me.  
CAPTAIN: I'll make no such promises.  
(He nodded.)  
CAPTAIN: Anyway, enough procrastinating. We came here to catch ourselves a terrorist and we're not going to rest until we have. To the nearest port, Erikson, and step on it.  
ERIKSON: I'd love to sir, only *you're* in the driving seat.  
CAPTAIN: Right.  
(He nodded.)  
CAPTAIN: I know! *I'll* drive!  
(He then set the car in motion, leaving his three subordinates staring ahead of themselves in horror; shuddering to think what was going to become of them all.)

---

As the afternoon wore into the evening, and the sun started to sink over the horizon, Graydon slowly led his boat into a large marina on the Island of Santa Lorena. Delighted to have made it unharmed and with no sign of the enemy on his tail, he allowed himself a sigh of relief. His plan seemed to be going swimmingly. Far from trusting the man, or indeed his plan, Alan, Claymore, Josie and Sierra didn't share his sense of relief. As the boat crept

towards a mooring, they were sat on the seats towards the back of the boat, looking more than a tad nervous.

ALAN: I really don't trust that guy, you know?

JOSIE: And nor should you. He's a politician.

CLAYMORE: He'll just tell us what we want to hear.

SIERRA: Or duck the issue entirely.

ALAN: Before saving *his own* arse and leaving *us* royally screwed.

JOSIE: Exactly. We need to watch him like a hawk.

CLAYMORE: Yeah...

(He nodded.)

CLAYMORE: We should say something to him.

ALAN: Like what?

CLAYMORE: Like asking what his plan is.

JOSIE: We did. He insisted we trust him.

ALAN: And refused to elaborate further.

SIERRA: Well, that just makes me trust him even less.

CLAYMORE: Right? Let's speak to him.

ALAN: You can try, mate; but I fear you'll be wasting your breath.

JOSIE: Then you should come along and threaten to throw him in the sea.

ALAN: I think he may have called that bluff already.

JOSIE: Then don't bluff.

CLAYMORE: Actually lob him in the sea.

ALAN: Hmm... I can't say that isn't tempting.

CLAYMORE: Let's go then.

(With that, they all climbed from their seats then headed to where Graydon was steering the boat into a mooring.)

ALAN: Graydon!

GRAYDON: Not now, stupid; I'm trying to park.

ALAN: Yeah, well...

GRAYDON: Stop it. I'm trying to concentrate.

ALAN: Fine. But as soon as we're moored...

GRAYDON: As soon as we're moored, one of you slobs is going have to tie the boat up.

CLAYMORE: I'll go. You make sure you give this a cunt a good talking to.

ALAN: Will do.

(They then watched on silently and impatiently as Graydon brought the boat to a standstill at the quayside. As soon as it was in place, however, the silence broke. Claymore headed off to tie up the boat and Alan spoke his mind.)

ALAN: What's the plan, shit face?

GRAYDON: Shit face? How dare you?

ALAN: Just tell us the plan!

SIERRA: Yeah! Or I'll throw you in the sea.

(Graydon laughed.)

GRAYDON: You? Really? Is that so?

(Sierra blushed.)

SIERRA: I meant *Alan* will throw you in the sea.

ALAN: She's not joking either.

GRAYDON: No, I don't suppose she is.

(He rolled his eyes.)

GRAYDON: Anyway, welcome to Santa Lorena. A small island nation, independent of both Efland and Amaria, best known for its pineapples and being a tax haven where rich folk like me like to hide our ill-gotten gains. Don't get comfortable though, we won't be here for long.

ALAN: We know. We don't have passports. They'd never let us in.

GRAYDON: Indeed. But then, they don't have to.

ALAN: What?

GRAYDON: You'll see.

(He then attempted to head off the boat.)

ALAN: Where are you going? I asked you a question!

GRAYDON: You did? When?

ALAN: I want to know what the plan is!

GRAYDON: Oh, that.

(He smiled.)

GRAYDON: You worry too much.

ALAN: No, I worry the perfect amount. Now tell us the fucking plan.

GRAYDON: The plan, sunshine, is...

(His face then lit up and he gestured over the side of the boat.)

GRAYDON: The plan is right there, look.

(As one, they all glanced over the side of the boat, to where a man in a port authority uniform was marching towards them.)

JOSIE: He's gonna turn us in!

ALAN: Yeah! He's... wait, why would he do that? That'd just be dropping *himself* in it.

GRAYDON: Idiots. I'm not going to turn anybody in. He's not a policeman, he's a port official. And an old acquaintance of mine; a very useful one.

(He then waved towards the official, before marching to the steps to alight the boat.)

GRAYDON: Sanchez! Good evening, old boy.

(The port official returned the wave then called back to him.)

SANCHEZ: Hello, there. It's good to see you again, Mr Waltham.

SIERRA: Mr Waltham?

JOSIE: His fake identity.

SIERRA: Oh, yeah.

ALAN: Whatever, let's just stay close to him.

(With that, they all followed Graydon down onto the jetty and stood just behind him as he addressed the port officer.)

GRAYDON: You're looking well, Sanchez. The new diet agrees with you, it seems.

SANCHEZ: Why, thank you.

(He patted his belly.)

SANCHEZ: I've lost many kilos, my friend. Your tip about exercise was spot on the mark.

GRAYDON: Yes, well, I'm good at *giving* advice about diets, but not so good at following them myself.

SANCHEZ: Yes, you are indeed fat.

GRAYDON: Fuck you!

(The two of them proceeded to chuckle.)

SANCHEZ: So what brings you to Santa Lorena today, my friend? Will you be staying on the island or are you here for your yacht?

GRAYDON: The latter, I'm afraid. As much as I'd love to stay in your fine country and soak up the sights for a few days, I have things to do.

SANCHEZ: Very well. Then allow me to escort you to your yacht.

GRAYDON: Escort away, my friend.

(Sanchez nodded then about turned and proceeded to head away. Graydon instantly followed. Anxious to keep up with them, the other were hot on their heels, with the exception of Claymore who was still tying up the boat.)

ALAN: You've got a yacht?

GRAYDON: I have, yes.

ALAN: Big enough for everyone?

GRAYDON: Judge for yourself.

(He pointed across the marina.)

GRAYDON: See that tiny blue boat with the grey stripes?

JOSIE: That piddly little thing?

GRAYDON: Yes!

(He beamed.)

GRAYDON: Mines the massive one just the other side of it. The hundred and fifty footer. The biggest boat here.

ALAN: Wow!

SIERRA: That thing's bigger than my house!

GRAYDON: I expect it is, yes. You paupers have really tiny houses.

JOSIE: Hey!

GRAYDON: What? You do. Tiny houses with hardly any rooms in them.

(He beamed.)

GRAYDON: Whereas my yacht has a spacious living room, luxurious dining room, three bedrooms, all with en suite and even a games room.

SIERRA: What? No kitchen?

GRAYDON: Right. Trust a woman to think of that. Yes, it does have a kitchen, or indeed a galley. I've never been in there myself though. Cooking is a woman's job.

(Josie gave Sierra a wry smile.)

JOSIE: He's really sexist.

SIERRA: I noticed.

ALAN: For fuck sake, Graydon. When I asked you about the plan, why didn't you just *say* you had a yacht?

GRAYDON: I did!

ALAN: No, you just kept telling us to trust you.

GRAYDON: And I stand by that request.

(He nodded.)

GRAYDON: You need to keep trusting me, because there's *far* more to my plan than simply switching boats.

ALAN: Oh? Like what?

(Graydon rolled his eyes.)

GRAYDON: Fine. I'll explain it to you, but only once. I hate having to repeat myself. Especially to working class idiots.

JOSIE: Hey. How dare...

(Graydon then launched into his explanation, cutting Josie off in the process.)

GRAYDON: We're going to switch boats. That much you know. We'll no longer be on a boat that's on the police radar, but a boat belonging to a much respected Amarian businessman named James Waltham. Me. The coastguard won't approach and we can sail straight into Amaria unhindered. A great plan.

(He grimaced.)

GRAYDON: Sadly, there's a problem. The boat the police are looking for is right here in this marina. Well, it won't take long to figure out that the red boat came in, then James Waltham's boat left. Yet nobody entered the country between those two events. That can



only mean Graydon, also me, was on Waltham's boat. I'll be investigated and it won't take long to figure out we're one and the same. I look just like me, you see?

(He nodded.)

GRAYDON: Therefore, I need to get my friend Sanchez here to sink the red boat where it'll never be found. That way there'll never be any evidence that Graydon, or indeed you four, ever came here. We'll have disappeared without trace.

ALAN: Right. So that's the favour you needed from a friend?

GRAYDON: Yes. Sanchez will sink the red boat, I'll line his pockets with more money than he's ever seen in his life before and all trace of us will be lost forever.

(Alan, Josie and Sierra all mused over his plan in their heads.)

ALAN: That's actually... really good.

JOSIE: Yeah. It's kinda flawless.

SIERRA: I don't get it.

GRAYDON: Oh, for fuck sake.

JOSIE: Sierra, he plans to...

SIERRA: Stop. Stop. I'm kidding. I get it, okay? It's a great plan.

(She then furrowed her brow.)

SIERRA: Seriously, Josie, how come when I pretend to be a clueless airhead, you're always taken in? Is that how you secretly see me?

JOSIE: Don't be ridiculous. You're just a good actress.

SIERRA: That'd better be the case.

JOSIE: It is. Chill.

ALAN: Yeah, well, getting back to the issue in hand; why didn't you just tell us all this earlier, Graydon? Why fob us off and keep the entire plan to yourself?

GRAYDON: Well... if you must know...

(He shrugged.)

GRAYDON: I don't like you, therefore talking to you is hard work and I couldn't be bothered to do it. Baiting you; that's different. That's always fun. Talking to you, conversing with you, explaining things to you, on the other hand, forget it. I tried to make conversation with you on the canal when it told you about my skills at exploiting the stupid and all you did was sneer at me.

(He nodded.)

GRAYDON: So I figured, fuck the lot of you. Conversing with common lowlifes like yourselves is a waste of breath.

ALAN: Right.

GRAYDON: No offence.

SIERRA: Plenty taken.

GRAYDON: Well boo-fucking-hoo.

JOSIE: He really is a...

(Just then, Claymore came charging up behind them.)

CLAYMORE: Wait for me!!!

(He bounded up to them then furrowed his brow.)

CLAYMORE: You just fucked off and left me.

ALAN: We were trying to get this cunt to explain the plan.

CLAYMORE: And did he?

ALAN: Yes.

(He then smirked.)

ALAN: Tell Claymore about it, Graydon. I know how you love explaining things to us common folk.

(Graydon just growled.)

GRAYDON: No!

(He then stormed off after Sanchez.)

CLAYMORE: What's that all about?

JOSIE: He hates talking to us, apparently.

ALAN: Unless he's baiting us.

JOSIE: Yeah. Unless he's insulting us, he hates having to talk to us, he said.

(Sierra chuckled.)

SIERRA: Bastard. We should sit either side of him and talk about our periods, Josie.

JOSIE: Oh, my god, we should totally do that.

(Alan shuddered.)

ALAN: That's warped.

CLAYMORE: Yeah. No man deserves that.

(They then hurried off after Graydon.)

---

Having crossed the dockside, glowering coldly at Graydon all the way, Alan, Claymore, Josie and Sierra soon found themselves heading up the gangplank to his sizeable yacht; The Waltham Voyager. Upon reaching the large wooden deck, they then followed him across it before heading down into the living quarters. It was safe to say that Alan, Claymore, Josie and Sierra were instantly taken aback by the sheer luxury of it. All the fittings were hand-crafted from high end mahogany, and the décor was fashioned from the finest varieties of leather, velour and silk. In Sierra and Claymore's minds the boat simply oozed class.

SIERRA: Wow. It's like a floating palace in here.

GRAYDON: Like *you'd* know what a palace is like *inside*.

SIERRA: I've seen photos!

GRAYDON: Right...

(Sierra exhaled.)

SIERRA: This décor... well, it's... stunning.

CLAYMORE: It is. It really is. Everything *in here* is high-end luxury.

SIERRA: And it's so well laid out.

(She smiled.)

SIERRA: This is exactly how I'd decorate *my* dream home, if I was ever lucky enough to afford one.

CLAYMORE: I hear that, babe. If I ever strike it rich, this is *exactly* what my house will look like inside.

SIERRA: Right?

CLAYMORE: So classy.

SIERRA: Not to mention elegant and refined. I love it.

(Graydon smirked arrogantly.)

GRAYDON: Yes, well, you know how it is. Only for best for James Waltham.

(Alan sneered.)

ALAN: You mean Graydon James.

GRAYDON: Well, obviously. We're one and the same, you idiot. I have separate identities, not separate personalities.

ALAN: I fucking know that. And the fact you're one and the same means *both* of you are cunts.

GRAYDON: Do you mind, young man?

ALAN: Yes, I fucking do.

GRAYDON: Then you're a cock. And what put *your* back up all of a sudden? You're were okay a minute ago.

ALAN: This boat!

GRAYDON: What about it?

ALAN: It fucking stinks of self-indulgent extravagance, that's what.

JOSIE: It really does.

(She grimaced.)

JOSIE: I feel sick just being here.

GRAYDON: Then fuck off somewhere else.

JOSIE: How can I? I've got nowhere else to go.

GRAYDON: Then put a sock in it.

JOSIE: No. I'm having my say.

ALAN: You tell him, girl.

JOSIE: Graydon, you aided the Efland government in creating poverty all over the country.

And it was those vile actions that enabled you to *afford* all this.

ALAN: Exactly. Well put, Josie. You basically stole money from decent hard-working people to line your own pockets. And this is what you've spent it on.

(He sneered.)

ALAN: Being here, seeing it with my own two eyes... it makes me hate you even more.

JOSIE: Me too. And I wouldn't have even thought that was possible an hour ago.

(Graydon just rolled his eyes. Their disdain didn't trouble him in the slightest. As a man with no moral compass whatsoever, as far as he was concerned, he'd earned every luxury he indulged in. The fact he'd actively taken part in robbing the poor of what little they had left to lavish such luxuries on himself was neither here nor there.)

GRAYDON: You terrorists do love a whinge, don't you?

ALAN: Hey!

(He growled.)

ALAN: Watch your mouth, pal, because I'm a stone's throw away from rearranging your face right now.

GRAYDON: Fine. I won't say another word.

(He nodded.)

GRAYDON: Except this. Whether you *like* being here or not is irrelevant. If you want to make it to Amaria alive, you're just going to have to get used to it. We're here now.

(Alan and Josie looked to one another.)

JOSIE: He's right, but I don't want to be on this floating tribute to everything I despise a second longer than I have to.

ALAN: No, nor do I.

(He furrowed his brow at Graydon.)

ALAN: Let's be on our way.

GRAYDON: On our way?

ALAN: Set sail!

(Graydon scoffed.)

GRAYDON: We'll set sail when I'm good and ready.

JOSIE: Then get ready.

GRAYDON: No. Absolutely not.

(He nodded.)

GRAYDON: We'll set sail in the morning.

ALAN: The morning???

GRAYDON: My boat, my rules.

(He ruffled his neck indignantly.)

GRAYDON: And if you don't like it, feel free to get off.

JOSIE: But why wait until morning?

GRAYDON: Because I have things to sort out first. Not that I have to justify myself to you, young lady. You're merely an unwanted annoyance.

ALAN: Hey!

GRAYDON: I meant guest. Merely a guest. An unwanted guest.

(He then about turned and headed for the door.)

GRAYDON: Now if you'll excuse me, I have to see my old chum Sanchez about something.

Make yourselves at home.

(He then passed through the door, smirking as he did so.)

GRAYDON: Not that you peasants could ever *afford* a home this magnificent.

(As he headed away, Alan shook his head then looked to Claymore.)

ALAN: Dude, this fucking place...

(His brow the furrowed.)

ALAN: What the fuck are you doing?

(Claymore looked up at him from where he was rubbing his face on the luxurious rug.)

CLAYMORE: Making myself at home.

ALAN: And that's what you do at home, is it? Rub your face on the carpet?

CLAYMORE: It's a rug. A fucking expensive one.

SIERRA: And it feels glorious.

(Spying Sierra also rubbing herself on one of the rugs, Alan looked to Josie.)

ALAN: These two...

JOSIE: I know.

CLAYMORE: Mate, look, just relax, will you? Chill out for a bit. If we're gonna be stuck here all night, you might as well enjoy it.

SIERRA: Yeah. Indulge yourselves, come on.

(Alan shook his head.)

ALAN: I can't.

JOSIE: Me either. I won't. Everything about this boat is wrong and I don't want to be here.

ALAN: That's exactly how I feel.

CLAYMORE: Yeah, but you *are* here, and we're not setting sail until the morning, so...

JOSIE: So I'd rather wait on the deck than look at this vulgar exhibition of greed and corruption a second longer than I need to.

ALAN: Same here.

JOSIE: Shall we then?

ALAN: We shall.

(With that, the pair of them left the room and headed back up top. Left behind, Sierra sighed with disappointment.)

SIERRA: Oh, Josie...

CLAYMORE: She's gone, Sierra.

SIERRA: I know, I was just sighing to myself.

(She smiled.)

SIERRA: I get that she hates government corruption. I really do. I understand and respect her stance too. I admire it, actually. But...

(She shook her head.)

SIERRA: Sometimes it feels like she bites off her nose to spite her face.

CLAYMORE: Eh? Bites off... what?

SIERRA: She's stuck here. On a luxury yacht. You might as well make the most of it, but no. She'd rather sit on the empty wooden deck, just to make a point.

CLAYMORE: There *were* sofas up there, Sierra.

SIERRA: That's not the point, Claymore.

CLAYMORE: Oh?

SIERRA: I'm saying it's a shame she's gonna miss out on this luxury just to make a point.

CLAYMORE: Gotcha.

(He shrugged.)

CLAYMORE: Still, we do what feels right in life. Personally, lounging on these sofas makes me feel like I'm finally get a taste of the luxury I helped pay for.

SIERRA: Exactly.

CLAYMORE: But if not doing so feels right to Alan and Josie then fair enough.

(He beamed.)

CLAYMORE: It'll just be you and me, all alone, together... with nothing to do but... make out, perhaps?

SIERRA: Well...

(She blushed.)

SIERRA: Seeing as they left us alone like this, maybe it'd be rude not to.

CLAYMORE: It'd be downright offensive not to.

SIERRA: Well, we can't have that can we?

CLAYMORE: No. No we can't.

(He then clambered onto a sofa.)

CLAYMORE: Care to join me, milady?

SIERRA: I don't mind if do, good sir.

(Claymore beamed.)

CLAYMORE: Spiffing.

---

For the next few hours Alan and Josie opted to remain on the deck. The boat's lavish décor angered them so much, they couldn't abide the thought of being anywhere near it. Even as night fell, they paid no heed to the thought of heading inside. It was a warm night and they were far happier where they were. On comfortable sun loungers; sharing their disdain for all things corrupt.

During that time, Sierra and Claymore had attempt to make the most of some alone time. Cuddled up on a luxurious sofa, they'd chat quietly for a brief moment then start making out with one another. Hands wandered and things had started to get very interesting on several occasions, only for Graydon to march past from time to time and spoil everything. The romance would then have to start all over again. Infuriatingly for them, the interruptions happened so frequently that when Graydon called them all out for dinner on the deck later on, they'd still got no further than kissing. More than a little sexually frustrated, they headed outside with furrowed brows.

As it turned out, gathering everyone for dinner like this had been a masterstroke from Graydon. Josie and Alan were angrier with him than they'd ever been, but his decision to send Sanchez out for a lavish steak meal soon thawed their coldness towards him. Claymore and Sierra also managed to set their frustrations aside. After a long and dismal day, a hearty meal such as this one was most welcome. They tucked in immediately. Watching them do so, Graydon sat at the head of the table, donned a napkin then scoffed.

GRAYDON: You eat like savages.

ALAN: We're hungry!

SIERRA: So, so hungry.

GRAYDON: You don't have to tell *me* you're hungry, Sierra. Every time I passed you and Claymore earlier, I could tell you were desperate to get some meat inside you.

SIERRA: Hey!

CLAYMORE: Dude!

GRAYDON: What? I'm just saying she looked hungry.

CLAYMORE: Right...

GRAYDON: For cock.

CLAYMORE: Graydon!!!

(Graydon chuckled.)

GRAYDON: I'm joking, I'm joking. Grow a sense of humour, boy.

(Alan shook his head.)

ALAN: Mate, this steak is great. It's appreciated.

GRAYDON: You're welcome.

ALAN: You're still a cunt though.

GRAYDON: Why, thank you.

JOSIE: Is this why you didn't want to set sail tonight? Because you wanted a lavish steak dinner?

GRAYDON: Partly, yes. And partly because there's no need to rush.

(He nodded.)

GRAYDON: Sailing to Amaria on this vessel as James Waltham, respected citizen *of* Amaria will be a doddle. There's nothing to worry about. We'll be perfectly safe. Just like we're perfectly safe here in Santa Lorena. So why not get some rest then set off when we're all fresh and wide awake after a good night's sleep?

JOSIE: I doubt I'm gonna sleep. Not in this floating museum of all things I despise.

GRAYDON: On the contrary, the beds all have silk sheets and the mattresses themselves are made from, well, I don't know, but they're ridiculously comfortable. Being tucked up in these beds is like being swaddled in a cocoon of ultra-smooth velour. Trust me, you'll sleep. (Claymore looked at him emptily.)

CLAYMORE: I thought you didn't like talking to us. Only now it seems you can't shut up.

GRAYDON: I never said I didn't like talking to you.

ALAN: You did!

GRAYDON: Then I misspoke. I don't like explaining things to you.

JOSIE: Yet you just explained the beds with a big, satisfied grin on your face.

GRAYDON: Yes, well, explaining how luxurious all my possessions are, and how great it is to be this wonderfully wealthy, always brings me joy. It's explaining mundane things to you, I have no time for.

CLAYMORE: So you don't mind bragging about your riches to us, but other than that you have no time for us.

GRAYDON: Pretty much, yes.

JOSIE: Wanker.

GRAYDON: Hey! There's no need for that, young lady.

(He ruffled his neck.)

GRAYDON: And even if there was, we're at the dinner table. Show some decorum. The preferred term is serial self-abuser.

JOSIE: Well, don't I feel silly.

GRAYDON: Not half as silly as you look, I'd wager.

JOSIE: You wanker!

GRAYDON: Really? Again? We've discussed this. You low-end supermarket workers have terrible memories.

JOSIE: Graydon, you...

GRAYDON: Don't call me a wanker. Like I said, we've already discussed this...

ALAN: Yeah, and now we're gonna discuss something else.

GRAYDON: Like what?

ALAN: I dunno. Anything that might stop you antagonising the girls.  
GRAYDON: Such a topic exists?  
ALAN: Probably not, but it's worth a try.  
GRAYDON: I see. Well, good luck with that.  
CLAYMORE: Mate, if we're gonna discuss anything, it should be the obvious. I've only got one thing on my mind right now.  
GRAYDON: Hey! She's a person not a thing!  
CLAYMORE: I'm not talking about Sierra.  
SIERRA: What? What was that? I didn't catch that.  
GRAYDON: She's deaf, apparently.  
SIERRA: No, I'm not.  
(She ruffled neck.)  
SIERRA: I was minding my own business: eating my chips.  
CLAYMORE: Don't worry, babe. I said I had one thing on my mind and he inferred that that one thing was banging you.  
ALAN: You mean it's not?  
CLAYMORE: No!  
SIERRA: Disappointed.  
CLAYMORE: What?  
(Sierra giggled.)  
SIERRA: I'm kidding. What's on your mind?  
CLAYMORE: Getting to Amaria.  
GRAYDON: Piece of piss.  
CLAYMORE: I'm not talking about that. I'm wondering what the fuck we're gonna do when we get there.  
(Josie nodded solemnly.)  
JOSIE: Sierra and I have been worrying about that exact thing since we set out.  
SIERRA: Uh-huh. We've got nothing. No idea.  
CLAYMORE: Me either. It's unsettling.  
ALAN: Then you need to look at it from a better perspective, mate.  
CLAYMORE: Oh?  
ALAN: Yeah. When we get there we're just gonna have to play it by ear.  
JOSIE: Well, obviously, but not knowing what's to come is mortifying.  
ALAN: Again, you're looking at it all wrong. We could have died today. Maybe *should* have died today. We didn't. I'm grateful for that. And being grateful simply to be alive means it's not gonna be hard to appreciate any breaks we get. No matter how small. Anything beats being dead.  
(He shrugged.)  
ALAN: So, screw it. It'll be hard, yeah, but whatever happens, we're lucky to have a second chance at life. One that I intend to grab with both hands.  
CLAYMORE: I like that, mate. Great way to look at it.  
JOSIE: Yeah. We've got a second chance, so no matter hard it gets, we're just gonna have to fight to make it work. I'm up for that. I really am.  
(Sierra glanced across at their faces then forced a smile.)  
SIERRA: You guys give me hope.  
(They all smiled back at her warmly, with the exception of Graydon.)  
GRAYDON: As suspected. Being propped up by someone else gives you hope. Without it you're hopeless.  
CLAYMORE: Hey!

GRAYDON: What? It's true. She's not a useful or a practical person. Not even slightly. It's not her fault; that's just how she is. She's not a leader or a go-getter; she's someone who needs to be taken care of.

(He nodded.)

GRAYDON: And if you ask me, in your current situation, giving her false hope and making her work to create a new life for herself would be the wrong way to go. Someone like *her* would be better off making a play to seduce a rich man. Someone like me who could keep her and support her with ease.

(He then gave Sierra a knowing glance.)

GRAYDON: What do you think?

SIERRA: Oh, wow. No. God, no. That's put me right off my dinner.

(She dropped her cutlery then upped and headed away from the table. Claymore swiftly followed. Left behind, Alan shook his head at Graydon.)

ALAN: Dude. Is that why you've been a cunt to her all this time? Making her feel useless and putting her down. You were hoping she'd realise she needs a rich man to keep her and choose you over Claymore?

GRAYDON: Well...

(He ruffled his neck indignantly.)

GRAYDON: The plan isn't *entirely* without merit, is it?

(Josie was appalled.)

JOSIE: Without merit??? I'm gonna slap you, Graydon! You're despicable! To even *think* that is bloody insulting. Sierra will *never* get so desperate she has to marry an overweight, rich uggo just to keep a roof over her head. She's got way too much going for her.

GRAYDON: Such as?

JOSIE: She's intelligent, resourceful...and well-liked. Not to mention the fact she's an absolute stunner.

(She sneered at him coldly.)

JOSIE: So even if she *did* find herself in such a terrible bind that she needed a man to look after her, she could land a good-looking one. *You'll* never even enter the equation.

GRAYDON: You underestimate me. Or rather, you underestimate the lure of my wallet.

JOSIE: No. *You* underestimate Sierra. She'll never be in that position to being with.

GRAYDON: And yet you just suggested she might. Even if she *did* find herself in that position, you said. That means there's a chance.

JOSIE: That was a ridiculous, extreme scenario. Here in the real world where sane people live, that'll never happen.

(She nodded sternly.)

JOSIE: For a start, she's well-liked, like I said. Her friends would never let her fall so hard she has to resort to desperate measures like that.

GRAYDON: So, you admit it. She needs friends to prop her up.

JOSIE: No.

ALAN: You mean yes.

JOSIE: Alan!!!

ALAN: Everybody needs friends to prop them up, Josie. I know I do. And I expect you do too.

JOSIE: Well...

(She shrugged.)

JOSIE: If you mean Sierra supports me too, then yeah. It's what friends do. Not that'd you know about that, Graydon, you don't have any.

GRAYDON: I don't want any either. Friends are shit. Always fucking up and needing support. Fuck that. I've got *me* to take care of.



ALAN: Dude...

(He grimaced.)

ALAN: You're funeral's gonna be a really small affair, isn't it?

GRAYDON: Why would I care? I'll be dead.

ALAN: So will the chapel be, I expect.

JOSIE: Right? The only people there will be the staff from the funeral home.

ALAN: And when it comes to saying some kind words, the bloke doing the service will have to make something up.

JOSIE: Then apologise to god for lying.

GRAYDON: Hey! Do you mind? Why are we talking about my bloody funeral anyway?

ALAN: Because we're really looking forward to it.

GRAYDON: Enough of that, you.

(He snarled.)

GRAYDON: I won't *need* anyone to attend to my funeral, thank you. Other people are no use to me *now*, while I'm alive; what good will they be then? No, no. I'm happy as I am. I don't need friends. Friends suck.

JOSIE: Well... I'm kinda glad you feel that way.

GRAYDON: Good. Shut up then.

JOSIE: Seeing as you haven't got any, I mean.

GRAYDON: Stop it!

(He ruffled his neck indignantly.)

GRAYDON: I buy everyone a nice dinner and what thanks do I get? None. Just insults and disrespect.

ALAN: What did you expect? Presents and a blow job? You're the reason we're all in this fucking mess. A steak dinner is the least you can do.

GRAYDON: Oh, I see. Like that, is it?

JOSIE: Pretty much.

GRAYDON: Fine.

(He snarled.)

GRAYDON: I'm half tempted to sail off early now. Right this minute, in fact.

ALAN: Cool.

GRAYDON: Oh, you think so, do you?

JOSIE: Uh-huh. We didn't *want* to stay overnight, that was your idea.

GRAYDON: Then you're fucking stupid.

ALAN: Are we now?

GRAYDON: Yes. You're forgetting something. Once we get to Amaria, that's it. You're on your own. No more cosy beds to sleep in. That's when you'll be starting your lives as vagrants. Homelessness and a life of being broke await you when we arrive.

(He growled.)

GRAYDON: So if that's what you want, let's make it happen. I'm setting sail!

(He then jumped to his feet angrily.)

GRAYDON: Bloody giving me shit, whatever next?

(He then sat back down again.)

GRAYDON: What the hell am I saying? Why would I go without sleep just make you homeless sooner. That'd be self-defeating. If I wait until morning, I'll still get the joy of knowing you're destitute. I'll also get a good night's sleep.

(He nodded.)

GRAYDON: Eat up, chaps. Back to the plan; we'll make you all destitute on the morrow.

(He then tucked into his steak. Having watched his display, Alan and Josie shared an empty glance then shrugged it off and continued to eat.)

JOSIE: Come and get your food, Sierra. It's going cold now, babe.

(Sierra called to her from the sofa near the back of the deck.)

SIERRA: It's fine. I've lost my appetite.

JOSIE: Fair enough.

(Watching as Josie continued to eat her steak, Sierra smiled then looked to Claymore. Sitting at her side, leaning towards her, his face bore a look of concern.)

SIERRA: What? What's wrong? You okay?

CLAYMORE: Yeah, I'm fine. It's you I'm worried about. You really should eat something.

SIERRA: No, it's okay. You go ahead. I'll wait.

CLAYMORE: No, it's alright. I'd almost finished anyway.

SIERRA: What? That was quick.

CLAYMORE: I was hungry!

(He ruffled his neck.)

CLAYMORE: But yeah, I've always been a fast eater.

SIERRA: The polar opposite of me.

CLAYMORE: I guess. Maybe that's why they say opposites attract.

SIERRA: No, actually. That's a reference to magnets. The positive is attracted to the negative, you see, and the...

(She then started to giggle.)

SIERRA: Could you imagine if I was really like that?

CLAYMORE: An almighty nerd?

SIERRA: Yeah.

CLAYMORE: Actually, yeah.

SIERRA: Hey!

(Claymore chuckled to himself.)

CLAYMORE: Sorry. Couldn't resist.

SIERRA: That's fair.

(She then bit her lip and glanced away nervously.)

SIERRA: You know, with any luck those three will make themselves scarce after dinner. Then we can... you know...

CLAYMORE: Out here?

SIERRA: Right... best not, huh? Not in public. We'd probably get arrested knowing our luck.

CLAYMORE: More than likely.

SIERRA: We can make out though, right?

CLAYMORE: Like any guy would ever tell you no, babe.

SIERRA: Is that a yes?

CLAYMORE: That *is* a yes. *A let's do that right now*, in fact.

(They then leant into one another to begin kissing, only for Alan to shout over to them and ruin the moment.)

ALAN: Are you gonna eat this steak, Sierra?

(Sierra furrowed her brow and barked her reply.)

SIERRA: No!

(She then leant her head towards Claymore's and closed her eyes.)

ALAN: Can I have it then?

(Sierra and Claymore parted then glowered at him angrily.)

SIERRA: If you want to, yes!

ALAN: Cool!

(Claymore shook his head then looked to Sierra.)

CLAYMORE: Now, where were we?

SIERRA: We were about to kiss a really cute guy.

CLAYMORE: *We*, Sierra, we're gonna do no such thing. I don't care how bleak things get, *I* won't be kissing a cute guy. Ever!

SIERRA: That's fine. *I'll* do the cute-guy kissing then. You can make sure we have the hot girl kissing action covered.

CLAYMORE: Now, that sounds like a deal.

(They chuckled then placed their foreheads together.)

CLAYMORE: I'll start with this one right in front of me.

SIERRA: Okay, but be warned. I'm very addictive. You may not be able to give me up.

CLAYMORE: Well, wouldn't that be a shame.

(They then turned their necks to kiss, only for Alan to once again call out to them and kill the moment.)

ALAN: Are you gonna finish these chips, Sierra?

(Sierra growled. Not about to be deterred, however, she ignored him and continued to go in for the kiss.)

ALAN: Well? They'll go cold otherwise.

(Sierra snarled then twisted her neck towards him.)

SIERRA: Then *let* them go cold!

ALAN: Really? Sounds like a waste to me. I tell you what, I'll eat them for you.

SIERRA: Sweet. You do that.

(She then looked to Claymore.)

SIERRA: Sorry.

CLAYMORE: Don't apologise, babe; he's being really annoying.

SIERRA: Yes, he is.

(She smiled.)

SIERRA: Anyway, I believe you were about to kiss a hot girl, weren't you?

CLAYMORE: Not just any hot girl, babe. The hottest girl I've ever met.

SIERRA: Oh?

CLAYMORE: She's a striking brunette with dark, dark eyes and skin like a tanned goddess.

SIERRA: Wow. She sounds gorgeous.

(She grinned.)

SIERRA: I wouldn't mind kissing her myself.

CLAYMORE: And I'd pay to see it.

SIERRA: I bet you would.

(They giggled.)

SIERRA: Anyway, I've kept you long enough. You'd better kiss her now before she changes her mind.

CLAYMORE: Uh-oh. Can't have *that*, can we?

SIERRA: No, we can't.

(Claymore then lowered his lips to hers and closed his eyes. Before their lips could meet, however, once again, Alan leapt onto the scene and butchered the moment horribly.)

ALAN: Hey, you two. Fancy some pudding? Graydon's got some ice cream in the freezer.

(Sierra and Claymore's shoulders sunk.)

CLAYMORE: Cunt.

SIERRA: Yup.

CLAYMORE: He's doing it on purpose, you know that, right?

SIERRA: I'm beginning to think so, yes.

(They sighed.)

CLAYMORE: We...

ALAN: Well, do you? Ice cream!!!

(Sierra looked to Claymore and bit her lip.)

SIERRA: I actually wouldn't mind some ice cream.

CLAYMORE: Yeah? Well... to be honest... nor would I.

SIERRA: So, shall we go and...

CLAYMORE: Might as well. Seeing as kissing you doesn't seem to be happening.

SIERRA: Right?

(She nodded.)

SIERRA: Let's eat some ice cream then see what the rest of the evening brings.

CLAYMORE: Now that, babe, sounds like a plan.

(They then upped and headed to the table. Upon sitting down, Claymore nodded to Josie then snarled at Alan.)

CLAYMORE: You're a cunt!

ALAN: I know this to be true.

SIERRA: You were doing it on purpose.

ALAN: Only because *Josie made* me do it.

JOSIE: What? No, I didn't! I told you to leave them alone.

ALAN: Ah, see, now that's a problem. One of us is clearly lying.

CLAYMORE: Yeah. You!

ALAN: Sadly, there's no proof of that, however. So, let's just eat our ice cream and say no more about it.

SIERRA: Yeah, you'd like that, wouldn't you?

ALAN: I would, yes.

(Sierra sighed.)

SIERRA: I just wanted to... why couldn't you just leave us to...

(She pouted.)

SIERRA: Meany!

CLAYMORE: Don't let it get to you, babe.

JOSIE: She'll be okay. Once the ice cream comes, she'll forget all about it.

SIERRA: You make me sound like a five year old child. Like I can be blackmailed into forgiving and forgetting at the mere mention of an ice cream cone.

JOSIE: Well, yeah. When it comes to ice cream, that's exactly what you're like, Sierra.

(Sierra blushed.)

SIERRA: I really love ice cream.

CLAYMORE: What's *not* to love?

SIERRA: Right? It melts all your troubles away.

ALAN: Which is odd really, because it's really cold. You wouldn't think it could melt anything.

JOSIE: It does though.

ALAN: Yes, yes it does. Unless it's mint flavour. I fucking hate mint flavour.

SIERRA: Really? There's something wrong with you.

CLAYMORE: As I've told him on several occasions.

JOSIE: I bet you have. Even I'm appalled. How can you not like mint ice cream?

ALAN: It tastes like toothpaste!

CLAYMORE: It tastes nothing fucking like toothpaste!

ALAN: Fucking does.

JOSIE: Toothpaste?

SIERRA: That's the silliest thing I've ever heard!

ALAN: How is it? It's not like...

(Just then, Graydon paced through the door with a giant tub of high-grade ice cream and five bowls.)

SIERRA: Is that...

JOSIE: It is!

CLAYMORE: It's Amarian vanilla!

GRAYDON: Of course it is. I only buy the best.

ALAN: You've gone up in my estimation now, Graydon.

GRAYDON: I figured I might.

ALAN: You *were* rock bottom, but by bringing us the good stuff, you've now been promoted above cockroaches.

GRAYDON: Well, fuck you.

(He placed the tub down on the table then snarled.)

GRAYDON: Keep giving me shit like that and you won't get any.

CLAYMORE: No, Graydon! Don't! Don't bring Amarian vanilla out here, stick it under his nose then tell him he can't have any! That's how things get broken. Things like boats and old man's limbs.

(Graydon looked to Alan then flinched. Alan's furious eyes were piercing deep into his soul.)

GRAYDON: Just kidding. You can have as much as you like!

CLAYMORE: Don't tell him *that* either, because *we* won't get any!

ALAN: Just dish the fucking thing up, Graydon.

GRAYDON: Fine.

(He then proceeded to dole out the ice cream. As he did so, the eyes of his four travelling companions remained fixed on him throughout. They all had excitement in their eyes and it made him feel more than a little uncomfortable.)

GRAYDON: Look at you all! It's like being at a child's birthday party.

(He sneered.)

GRAYDON: And I fucking hate children.

(Just then, the clank of a boot on the metal steps rose into the air. Instantly going on the defensive, Alan, Josie, Claymore and Sierra stood up in readiness to either fight or flee.

Graydon on the other hand, calmly rolled his eyes.)

GRAYDON: Calm down, you morons. That'll be Sanchez.

(Sure enough, Sanchez soon clambered aboard the boat and stepped towards them. Looking most relieved, Alan, Josie, Claymore and Sierra all sat back and resumed staring at Graydon in expectation of a sizeable helping of ice cream.)

SANCHEZ: Mr Waltham!

GRAYDON: Evening Sanchez.

(He then put his scoop down and attempted to walk towards Sanchez. Alan, however, was having none of it.)

ALAN: Dish up the ice cream first, Graydon.

GRAYDON: What?

ALAN: Dish up the ice cream, then you can go and play with your friend.

GRAYDON: Play? Play??? I'll have you know...

(Thankfully, before Graydon could launch into an angry rant, which would no doubt have included calling Alan some choice names, Sanchez spoke up and saved his life.)

SANCHEZ: It's done, my friend.

GRAYDON: Sorry, what? What was that? My head was elsewhere, conjuring up some vile insults to string together.

SANCHEZ: What?

GRAYDON: Never mind. What did you come to say?

SANCHEZ: It's done. The job. That's all I came to say.

GRAYDON: A-ha! Done *well*?

SANCHEZ: Better than even *I* expected.

(Graydon beamed.)

GRAYDON: You're a star.

(He then looked to Alan, arrogantly.)

GRAYDON: Where would you be without me?

ALAN: Heading up the canal on *my own* boat.

GRAYDON: Right... well... good point, but let's move on, shall we?

(He gestured to an empty seat.)

GRAYDON: Sanchez, please, join us for ice cream.

SANCHEZ: Thank you, my friend. Sadly, I must decline. My shift is about to end and I can't afford to be home late tonight. My wife... she's cooked something just for me.

(His shoulders slumped.)

SANCHEZ: She says it's a reward for all my hard work.

(He then headed away, mumbling under his breath.)

SANCHEZ: What sort of reward is food poisoning? She cooks like she makes love. In the dark, and with her eyes closed.

(As he continued to miserably saunter away, Graydon shrugged then resuming dishing out the ice cream.)

GRAYDON: Now, where were we? That's it. I was about to call you a cunt, Alan.

ALAN: Yeah, well... never mind that.

(He mused for a moment.)

ALAN: For now. Actually, we'll come back to that in a minute. Firstly, what's this job Sanchez did for you?

GRAYDON: Seriously? What do you *think* it was?

SIERRA: He sunk the red boat already?

GRAYDON: Exactly. A gold star to the sexy little harlot in the barely fit for purpose swimsuit.

SIERRA: My name's Sierra.

GRAYDON: Graydon James, nice to meet you.

JOSIE: Hold on, hold on, hold on. Are you serious? He sunk the boat already?

GRAYDON: What do you mean, already? I asked him to do it hours ago.

JOSIE: And he just dropped everything and did it?

GRAYDON: Yes.

(He beamed.)

GRAYDON: Now he can retire.

JOSIE: Retire?

GRAYDON: Yes. You don't think he did it for free, do you?

ALAN: How much did he charge then?

GRAYDON: Put it this way, James Waltham's bank account will be six figures lighter once the bank transfer is complete in the morning.

SIERRA: And you arranged all that from here on the boat?

GRAYDON: Of course. I have a satellite phone with the bank manager on speed dial. And he always answers my calls. It pays to be rich, my dear.

SIERRA: Wow.

GRAYDON: Impressive, eh? Ol' Claymore here couldn't do that.

CLAYMORE: Nope.

GRAYDON: Looks to me like you're trying to get with the wrong guy, Sierra.

SIERRA: No! Stop. You've already ruined my dinner, don't kill my appetite for ice cream as well.

GRAYDON: Charming.

ALAN: Wait, wait... if he's done the job already, he couldn't have taken the boat out very far.

GRAYDON: He didn't have to. Thirty minutes out into the ocean; sink the boat; another 45 minutes to come back in the dinghy. Done.

(He beamed.)

GRAYDON: I told him to use an entire box of dynamite. I bet there was barely a plank of wood left in one piece.

JOSIE: Damn.

GRAYDON: Indeed.

(He then handed Alan the first bowl of ice cream.)

ALAN: Ah, perfect. Thank you.

GRAYDON: You're welcome.

ALAN: I'm still going to hit you for calling me a cunt though.

GRAYDON: Not if you want seconds, you won't.

ALAN: Shit.

(He sighed.)

ALAN: Fine. You win this round.

GRAYDON: Yes. Yes, I do.

(He then proceeded to hand out the rest of the ice cream. Without a moment of hesitation, everyone quickly tucked in.)

JOSIE: This is so good.

SIERRA: It's like a party in my mouth.

GRAYDON: What a wonderful idea. My cock would love an invite to *that* little soiree.

SIERRA: Not while I'm eating!!!

CLAYMORE: Or while she's not!

SIERRA: Yeah!

JOSIE: You're a vile man, Graydon.

GRAYDON: True. But I do serve a bloody good ice cream.

JOSIE: Well... yes, you do. Nobody can argue with that.

GRAYDON: No, they can't.

(For the next twenty minutes or so, everyone tucked into their ice cream with joyous expressions on their faces. How the people of Amaria made such astonishingly good ice cream they could only begin to wonder. It was renowned the world over for its exquisite taste; not to mention the price tag that went with it. For ordinary folk it was a rare treat, but an extremely welcome one.

Unsurprisingly, it wasn't long before there wasn't a single spoonful of ice cream left in the tub. Everyone had been through multiple helpings and had licked their bowls clean. Left feeling somewhat bloated, they all sat back and puffed out wearily. Sierra could barely move.)

SIERRA: I feel like I just ate a...

GRAYDON: Cock!

SIERRA: No!

GRAYDON: A pussy?

SIERRA: Shut up! No.

GRAYDON: Disappointing.

SIERRA: I feel like I ate an entire fridge full of food.

CLAYMORE: Me too. I feel fat.

GRAYDON: Me too.

CLAYMORE: You *are* fat.

GRAYDON: Fatter then!

CLAYMORE: Yeah, but you're not. You couldn't possibly *be* any fatter.

GRAYDON: Shut up, boy. I'm rapidly going off you.

CLAYMORE: You didn't like me anyway.

GRAYDON: Well, yes, that's true. But I doubt I'm unique in that.

ALAN: You're wrong, actually. Claymore here is oddly popular. Birds love him and pretty much every bloke I know, thinks he's a sound geezer.

(He smirked.)

ALAN: Clearly, they don't know him very well.

(Claymore grinned.)

CLAYMORE: Thanks for that, Al.

ALAN: You're welcome, mate.

SIERRA: I can easily believe you're popular, Claymore.

GRAYDON: Well, obviously *you'd* say that.

JOSIE: Actually, I can easily believe it too.

(She then looked to Alan.)

JOSIE: I bet it's the same with Alan.

GRAYDON: I doubt it.

JOSIE: Oh, shut up. What do you know about being well-liked?

GRAYDON: As much as I need to. Being well-liked is a pointless aspiration that gets you nowhere in life..

JOSIE: Like I said, you know nothing.

(She then smiled at Alan.)

JOSIE: You and Claymore have been really good to Sierra and I.

ALAN: Hardly. We promised you safe passage to Amaria and look what happened there.

JOSIE: We're on our way to Amaria like you promised.

ALAN: I said *safe* passage. It's a miracle we're not six feet under already.

CLAYMORE: Guys, if you don't mind me interrupting; we didn't promise them *safe* passage to Amaria, Al. We promised them we'd get them there and that was it. We didn't.

SIERRA: Not yet, no...

CLAYMORE: Just hear me out, Sierra. What I'm saying is, you paid us to take you there along the canal and smuggle you out of the port once we got to Amaria. We haven't done that. So, keep the bracelet, okay. We can't charge for a job we didn't do.

ALAN: Yup. I'd agree with that.

(Tears welled in Sierra's eyes.)

SIERRA: You're gonna let me keep it?

CLAYMORE: Of course. That deal was made as traffickers and refugees. Now we're all refugees escaping together. Alan and I aren't your ticket to safety anymore; we're on *your* side of the fence.

ALAN: Yeah, we're travelling as equals now. A team.

(Sierra burst into tears then hugged Claymore.)

SIERRA: Happy!

(Josie smiled the widest of smiles.)

JOSIE: See? This is what I meant. You've been good to us. You're good people. You are. I'm not just saying that because you've let Sierra keep her bracelet either.

ALAN: I know, you said it *before* we did that.

JOSIE: And I meant it. You two are so decent. So honest. I mean, most men would pretend they're coping brilliantly and puff their chests out; hiding from their fears, but not you two.

CLAYMORE: Wait, what are you saying?

ALAN: Yeah? You saying we've been less than manly?



JOSIE: No, you've been double manly.

ALAN: Ooh. I like that description.

JOSIE: Well, you have. You had no fear of being mocked whatsoever when you told me you felt like folding in two and rocking back and forth in tears, Alan.

CLAYMORE: He said that?

JOSIE: Yeah. In the woods.

(Claymore sniggered.)

CLAYMORE: What a poof!

ALAN: Hey!

JOSIE: It's just like when you told Sierra that focusing on her is the only thing keeping you from cracking up, Claymore.

CLAYMORE: Um...

ALAN: Now who's the poof?

CLAYMORE: Focussing on a girl makes me a poof, does it?

ALAN: Right... shit.

CLAYMORE: Ha!

JOSIE: What I'm saying is, you're good men. Real men. Real men don't fear their emotions. Real men face them. You two do that. And you've helped Sierra and I face ours. (Sierra lifted her head from Claymore's chest and smiled.)

SIERRA: You have actually. You guys are amazing.

(Alan and Claymore beamed with pride.)

ALAN: Well, you know...

CLAYMORE: We're...

GRAYDON: Oh, my fucking god. I've never *seen* such a vulgar, vomit-invoking display of backslapping in all my born days. I was sick in my mouth several times listening to that. It was horrible.

(He then climbed to his feet.)

GRAYDON: Fuck that. If you're just gonna sit there being overly affectionate sissies, I'm off to bed.

(He nodded sternly.)

GRAYDON: Good-fucking-night.

JOSIE: Bye!

ALAN: Try not to die in your sleep, you miserable cunt.

CLAYMORE: Knob.

(Sierra yawned.)

SIERRA: Actually, going to bed sounds like a good idea. I'm so, so tired.

CLAYMORE: You are?

(Finally catching on, Claymore flinched.)

CLAYMORE: I mean, yes! Yes, it does. So, so tired. Oh, yawn. I might go to bed too.

(They then shared a knowing glance, only to have their enthusiasm ripped away from them almost immediately.)

GRAYDON: Oh, no, you fucking don't! It's been a long bloody day today, and I want to get some sleep. Sleep, damn it. I'll be damned if I'm gonna go to bed and lay there like a twat, trying to tune out the sound of you two shagging! I should bloody cocoa!

CLAYMORE: Dude!

GRAYDON: It's not up for debate, sonny boy. Boats have thin walls. If you two randy fuckers want to play hide the sausage, go somewhere far, far away from the boat and do it!

SIERRA: Wow.

GRAYDON: What? Am I being unreasonable? Is my desire to get some sleep after a long, trying day really that outrageous to you? Well?

CLAYMORE: No, but...

GRAYDON: But nothing. I have the controller to the sprinklers in my room and if I hear one groan coming from either of you, I'll turn the buggers on! I'm not having it. This time tomorrow when you're free and homeless, you can shag until your eyeballs fall out, but nobody, and I mean nobody is doing it on my boat when I'm trying to sleep!

(He then about turned and stormed inside.)

GRAYDON: I mean it!!! Sprinklers!

(As the sound of his stomping footsteps continued, Sierra and Claymore looked to one uneasily.)

SIERRA: He's such a... he's such...

CLAYMORE: A great contraceptive?

ALAN: And a great argument *for* them.

JOSIE: I was just thinking that.

CLAYMORE: Do you think he actually *would* turn the sprinklers on?

ALAN: Absolutely.

JOSIE: No doubt about it.

SIERRA: Yup.

(She sighed emptily then forced a smile.)

SIERRA: He was right though, this time tomorrow we'll be able to do what we like. I can wait.

CLAYMORE: I'm glad *you* can. My testicles might have exploded by then.

SIERRA: It's just one day.

(Claymore bounced in his seat like a small child about to throw a tantrum.)

CLAYMORE: But I really want to do you!

(He then whimpered.)

CLAYMORE: I mean better. Get to *know you* better!

SIERRA: I know what you mean, and I share your frustration, but... one more day. That's all.

(Claymore's shoulders slumped.)

CLAYMORE: Yeah, okay.

JOSIE: Poor Claymore.

ALAN: Yeah. I kinda feel bad for you now, mate.

CLAYMORE: Not as bad as *I* feel.

SIERRA: Tomorrow.

CLAYMORE: Yup.

(He smiled.)

CLAYMORE: I can't wait.

(He growled.)

CLAYMORE: Stupid Graydon.

JOSIE: It'll be fine, Claymore. Nobody's stopping you two *making out* before bed.

CLAYMORE: Well *that* aint gonna happen!

SIERRA: It's not?

CLAYMORE: Sorry, babe, but if we make out now, my nuts are gonna think their ship has come in. And when they don't get their sweet release, they might *actually* explode.

ALAN: Possibly while he's asleep. And seeing as I have to share a room with him... nope, fuck that!

JOSIE: Wait. Why do *you* have to share a room with him? They can be in the same room, they'll just have to abstain.

SIERRA: I don't have that kind of willpower.

CLAYMORE: Me either.

SIERRA: I really want to have sex with you and given an opportunity like that...

(She then blushed and hung her head.)

SIERRA: I'm making myself look really bad here, aren't I?

(She whimpered.)

SIERRA: I don't usually want to jump into bed with men I've only just met. I'm not easy, am I, Josie?

JOSIE: Well, you say that...

SIERRA: Josie!

JOSIE: I'm kidding, I'm kidding.

(She chuckled.)

JOSIE: It's okay, babe. Nobody thinks you're easy.

ALAN: Well...

JOSIE: We can all see you two are crazy about each other.

SIERRA: That's right. We have a connection. I'm not easy at all, I just want to be intimate with someone I've become extremely fond of, that's all. There's nothing seedy about it.

CLAYMORE: Right? And besides, it wouldn't matter to me even if you *were* easy. *I* wouldn't judge. For one, the easier a woman is, the better. When it comes to getting sex, men don't *want* a challenge.

(Sierra grimaced at him.)

SIERRA: Claymore. I'm *not*...

CLAYMORE: Oh, shit. I'm not saying you *are* easy, babe. I was just saying, if you were, it'd be fine. It makes no difference to me. I'd like you anyway.

SIERRA: Aw. That's *almost* sweet.

(She furrowed her brow.)

SIERRA: I'm not easy!

CLAYMORE: I hear you, babe. I get it. You're not easy. You are, however, awesome.

SIERRA: Thank you. So are you.

CLAYMORE: I know this to be true.

(Alan rolled his eyes.)

ALAN: Cock.

CLAYMORE: What?

ALAN: Nothing!

(He nodded.)

ALAN: Oh, which note, I'm going to bed, I think. Even if it does mean going inside. As much as I despise everything this boat stands for, this could be the last chance we get to sleep in a proper bed for a while. We have to be insane not to grab it.

JOSIE: Right? I don't want to go in there either, but it'd be silly not to. I need a proper bed.

ALAN: Exactly.

(He nodded.)

ALAN: So, yeah. Fuck it. I'm going to bed.

JOSIE: Me too.

ALAN: Score!

JOSIE: Oh, behave.

ALAN: Right...

JOSIE: You coming, Sierra?

SIERRA: I guess I should, yeah.

(She then looked to Claymore and smiled.)

SIERRA: See you in the morning.

CLAYMORE: Goodnight, babe.

(They leant forwards to kiss, only for Josie to up and pull Sierra from her seat.)

SIERRA: Why???

JOSIE: Because you don't have that sort of willpower. No more boys until the morning.

SIERRA: But, mum...

JOSIE: Do as you're told, young lady.

(They then started to head away together, giggling.)

JOSIE: Goodnight, guys.

ALAN: Goodnight.

CLAYMORE: See you in the morning.

SIERRA: Night. Dream about me!

CLAYMORE: I will.

ALAN: Just don't picture her naked and start bashing one out.

CLAYMORE: I wasn't going to!

(As the two girls vanished into the boat, Claymore chuckled then looked to Alan.)

CLAYMORE: You can be a right git sometimes.

ALAN: I try.

CLAYMORE: And you succeed.

ALAN: Excellent.

(He puffed out then glanced over the marina.)

ALAN: A new life begins tomorrow, mate.

CLAYMORE: I know.

ALAN: Starting over with nothing.

CLAYMORE: Yup. It's not gonna be easy.

ALAN: No, but, it could actually be fun.

CLAYMORE: Fun? Fun???

ALAN: Yeah. Well, there's four of us now. Not just us two cunts. And those girls are actually really good fun to be with. So let's look on the bright side. Life could well end up being shit from tomorrow onwards, but at least we'll be in good company.

(Claymore smiled.)

CLAYMORE: Well, you're not wrong.

(He bit his lip.)

CLAYMORE: I've only known Sierra a few minutes, mate, but I'm already head over heels in love with her. And Josie seems like a really nice person too. The only shit one is you.

(They laughed then Alan sat back and placed his hands behind his head.)

ALAN: Oh, well. I suppose we should hit the hay an' all, mate.

CLAYMORE: Yeah, probably.

(A thoughtful expression then crossed Alan's brow.)

ALAN: Having said that, Graydon's got some beer downstairs in the galley's fridge...

CLAYMORE: Then why are you sitting *here* still?

ALAN: A good question, mate. Let's down a few before we turn in.

(He then upped and raced inside.)

CLAYMORE: That's the wisest thing you've ever said, mate.

(He then glanced at the moonlight reflecting on the water and smiled. Dark times may well have been lying in wait but he wasn't about to let it get to him. There'd be no point in panicking prematurely. Tomorrow was tomorrow's problem. For now, he'd just enjoy the view, sink a beer or two and savour the peace before the storm.)

---

Despite having had several beers each before turning in for the night, Claymore and Alan woke up bright and early the next morning as per usual. A mild hangover wasn't about to stop them partaking in their regular morning routine. This *was* their favourite time of day,

after all. Nothing was going to alter that fact. Even the change of location made no odds to them. Rather than watching the canal water glisten, they'd watch the marina waters shimmer. Rather than listening to the sound of Efland's local birdlife, they'd listen to the calls of Santa Lorena's wildlife instead. Same routine, different location.

Seated at the rear of the deck with a flask of coffee they'd acquired from the galley, they allowed their legs to dangle off the back of the boat. Extremely comfortable, they watched the water with satisfied smiles on their faces. As Alan pointed out as he lit his daily cigarette, it was the perfect start to the day.

ALAN: It is though, isn't it? I mean, yeah, it's not the canal, but...

CLAYMORE: It's better than the canal, mate. This is glorious.

ALAN: Hey! You wash your mouth out, chummy.

CLAYMORE: Sorry. No disrespect to the canal, but this is pretty amazing.

ALAN: Well, yeah, I can't argue with that.

(He took a drag on his cigarette then exhaled.)

ALAN: It's gonna be a big day, mate.

CLAYMORE: Huge.

ALAN: Starting over with fuck all.

CLAYMORE: Yeah. Well... not exactly, fuck all.

ALAN: Well, no.

CLAYMORE: That bag of cash could buy us a beaten up boat and if you can fix it up...

ALAN: Maybe. Let's think about that when we get there. I wanna savour my daily smoke in peace first.

CLAYMORE: Fair shout.

(They then sat in silence for a good few minutes, simply staring at the sea, lost in their own thoughts. It was a silence eventually broken by Claymore.)

CLAYMORE: I smell perfection.

ALAN: Eh?

(Sierra then spoke up from behind them.)

SIERRA: Hi, guys.

CLAYMORE: Told you. Morning, babe.

ALAN: Alright?

(Sierra sat down next to Claymore, wrapped in a bath towel, with a smaller one cocooning the top half of her head.)

ALAN: Had a shower did you?

SIERRA: No, I've converted to a new religion. This is the ceremonial dress.

ALAN: Right...

(He chuckled to himself.)

ALAN: She's alright, she is.

SIERRA: Josie's on her way. She's just doing her make-up.

CLAYMORE: Cool.

(He then bit his lip.)

CLAYMORE: Are you naked under that towel?

SIERRA: Yup.

(She laughed inwardly.)

SIERRA: And yet I feel a lot more dressed than I did yesterday.

(She grimaced.)

SIERRA: You know, I don't even own any underwear.

CLAYMORE: Fuck. That's true. Just a swimsuit.

SIERRA: The world's skimpiest one.

(She nodded.)

SIERRA: As soon as we're on land, I'm buying something to wear.

ALAN: Fair shout.

CLAYMORE: So how was the shower? Warm enough?

SIERRA: It was lovely. Better than lovely actually. There was Arrow Heart shampoo in there, my favourite brand. Now I smell like myself again. I really needed that.

CLAYMORE: Nice.

(He cringed.)

CLAYMORE: You smell fantastic.

SIERRA: Thank you.

CLAYMORE: Unlike me. I wish *I'd* had a shower before coming out now.

ALAN: Why? That's *never* been the routine! Morning coffee, stare into space *then* wash! It's the canal boat way.

CLAYMORE: True.

SIERRA: I prefer to shower first, personally. Then get dressed. Then do my make-up.

(She blushed.)

SIERRA: I did my makeup already though. I didn't want you to see me looking a skank.

CLAYMORE: Babe, I'm sure you're gorgeous with or without it.

ALAN: I know *I* am!

(Sierra giggled.)

SIERRA: Then for the sake our appetites, please stick to being without it.

CLAYMORE: Right? I know *I'd* appreciate that!

ALAN: Bollocks. You're just scared you'd find me irresistible.

CLAYMORE: Actually, mate, I'm really not.

(They laughed together then Alan swiftly glanced over his shoulder.)

ALAN: Here she comes. All dressed and ready to face the day. Hi, Josie.

JOSIE: Hi!

CLAYMORE: Wow. You're putting us all to shame here, Josie.

SIERRA: Yup, that's our Josie. She doesn't lounge around. Once she's out of bed, the morning routine begins and doesn't stop until she's dressed and looking awesome.

JOSIE: Aw, stop.

(She sat down beside Alan then smiled.)

JOSIE: So, how is everyone?

SIERRA: Anxious.

CLAYMORE: Nervous.

ALAN: A bit numb, to be honest.

JOSIE: Oh. I don't know what to say about those replies.

CLAYMORE: You don't have to say anything. It's a big day today, Josie. I'm sure you're as apprehensive as we are.

JOSIE: I reckon so. A fresh start. With nothing. It's so intimidating.

SIERRA: We don't have *literally* nothing, Josie. I mean, if things get too hard, I can always sell my bracelet. It'll break my heart, but if we get desperate, I'll do it.

JOSIE: Yeah? Well... let's hope it never comes to that.

SIERRA: Of course.

(Josie then smiled at Alan and Claymore.)

JOSIE: You guys are so kind letting her keep that bracelet, you know? It means the world to her.

ALAN: We didn't exactly *let* her keep it, Josie. Fact is, we did nothing to earn it.

CLAYMORE: What he said.

JOSIE: Well... that's not *entirely* true, but still. Very kind.

(She sighed.)

JOSIE: I just hope we can succeed in our new lives without you *ever* having selling it, Sierra. We're in this mess because of me. Me and my stupid mistake. And the idea that you might have to part with it because of me is driving me crazy. I've never felt so guilty.

SIERRA: It's fine, babes. Don't worry about it, okay?

JOSIE: I can't help it. That thing means the world to you.

SIERRA: And I've still got it for now, so stop worrying about something that might not happen.

JOSIE: I'll try.

(She smiled.)

JOSIE: Anyway... yeah... thanks, guys. It means a lot that she still has it. I really can't thank you enough for that.

(Alan scoffed playfully.)

ALAN: I'm sure you can, Josie. Giving thanks is easy, and let's face it, nothing says thank you like a long, lingering blowjob.

JOSIE: What? Um... I'll find a *different* way, I think.

(They all giggled.)

SIERRA: I can't believe he said that.

JOSIE: I can. I head-butted his midriff on the bus yesterday and he said, "while you're down there".

SIERRA: Really?

(She chuckled.)

SIERRA: A one track mind.

ALAN: It's called being a man. We're *all* perverts, you know?

JOSIE & SIERRA: Yes, we do!

(They chuckled some more then Josie stared out to sea.)

JOSIE: Look at us giggling like morons. Anyone would think we're on a pleasure cruise; having the time of our lives.

CLAYMORE: If only that we're true.

ALAN: Yup. Sadly, it's anything but...

(He shrugged.)

ALAN: Still, laughter is a good sign. It shows we're not beaten yet.

SIERRA: Damn right.

(They all nodded to his words, taking great pride in the fact they were still standing, when suddenly, Graydon's voice rose up from behind them. Wearing just his underpants, he was standing behind them, grinning smugly.)

GRAYDON: Morning, poor people!

JOSIE: Wow, seriously?

ALAN: Great, isn't he?

GRAYDON: Don't be like that. I wasn't mocking your economic status. By *poor people* I was referring to your quality as human beings.

(He grinned.)

GRAYDON: *As well* as your economic status.

CLAYMORE: What an asshole.

GRAYDON: Never mind that. Any coffee leftover?

ALAN: No!

GRAYDON: Then which one of you ladies fancies popping inside and making me a cup?

JOSIE: Wow! One; how sexist can you get?

GRAYDON: Very!

JOSIE: And two; piss off. Make it yourself. Why should we do anything for you?

GRAYDON: As a thank you.

SIERRA: For what? You're the reason we're in this mess. We're not going to thank you for cleaning up a mess of your own making.

GRAYDON: No?

SIERRA: No.

(Graydon sneered then took a seat on the sofa behind them.)

GRAYDON: Fair enough, then thank me for improving your situation. This boat is far more comfortable than that narrow boat, after all.

JOSIE: Oh, get lost.

GRAYDON: Fine. You two *lads* ought to thank me though.

CLAYMORE: Are you fucking serious?

ALAN: *We* weren't even trying to flee abroad? The only reason we're wanted criminals *now* is because of *you* and your ridiculous fear of wasps!

(Graydon chuckled heartily.)

GRAYDON: You don't know just *how* wrong you are, lad.

ALAN: No? Enlighten me.

GRAYDON: You know, I think I just might.

(He then sat back and smirked.)

GRAYDON: A couple of years ago when I was working as a government advisor, the minister for justice deposited a dossier on my desk. A dossier created by secret services in regard to the smuggling of dissidents over the border.

(Alan and Claymore shared an uncomfortable glance.)

GRAYDON: I was asked to go through the dossier and transform it into a plan of action. You know, naming the guilty and advising what to do about them. In all, seven canal boats and their crew were identified as people traffickers.

(He beamed.)

GRAYDON: One of them was the crew of The Amethyst. And yes, your full names were there.

(In that moment, he had Claymore and Alan's full attention.)

CLAYMORE: This is a wind-up, right?

ALAN: Yeah, it can't be true. We'd have been arrested.

GRAYDON: Well, you *should* have been, yes. But as you know, I'd always suspected the government would turn on me one day and I might need an escape route.

(He shrugged.)

GRAYDON: So I named five of the crews with advice to arrest them in raids at the Sanford Hills locks. If caught smuggling dissidents en route to the border, they'd be a shoo-in for a conviction, you see.

ALAN: Right... so, that would explain the five crews that went missing a couple of years ago.

CLAYMORE: We thought the wolves had got them.

GRAYDON: You were meant to.

(He nodded.)

GRAYDON: Anyway, I digress. As I was saying, the reason *your name* and that of another crew never came to light was, I left you out of my report then shred the original dossier.

ALAN: Right...

CLAYMORE: And why would you do that?

GRAYDON: Well, it's quite simple really. As you know, I always had an escape planned should the government turn on me. I'd just flee to Santa Lorena, destroy the boat I arrived on, then head to Amaria to live as James Waltham. Which I'm now doing. The trouble was, should I need to flee in a hurry, I'd never make it to a port. I'd never *get* to Santa Lorena.



(He nodded.)

GRAYDON: So I needed an emergency route, in case I had to flee in a hurry. The canal. And I'm glad I did, because within a minute of the home secretary catching me sodomising his wife, I'm pretty sure the order to kill me had been issued and rubberstamped by the prime minister. As it turned out I needed the canal.

(Alan and Claymore glanced at one another.)

ALAN: I'm not sure whether to believe him or not.

CLAYMORE: Me either.

GRAYDON: Then consider this. When I came to you, did I come via speaking to another boat crew? No, I came straight to you! And did I ask if you smuggled people? No, I told you that you did and I paid you on the spot. I knew!

(Alan bit his lip.)

ALAN: He did actually.

CLAYMORE: Shit. Yeah...

GRAYDON: Now do you get it? The only reason you weren't strung up alongside the other five crews was me! Me! You'd been found out by the secret services and I saved your arses! Me! I saved you!

(Josie snarled.)

JOSIE: Oh, like you were doing them a favour! It never once crossed your mind to give these two a break. You left them out of the report to save yourself; not to save *them*!

GRAYDON: Yes! So in summary, I saved *all* of us!

(He snarled.)

GRAYDON: So have some bloody respect in future.

(He growled.)

GRAYDON: Giving me shit all the time, making everything my fault. It's not on!

(He then sneered at Sierra.)

GRAYDON: And what the hell do you *look* like, girl? Have you found a new religion or something? Are those the ceremonial robes?

SIERRA: I already did that joke.

GRAYDON: Well, fuck you then.

(He then climbed to his feet.)

GRAYDON: Bunch of ingrates. I'm setting sail.

CLAYMORE: Really? Not gonna get dressed first?

GRAYDON: Why should I? To please you? Fuck that, I'll set sail in my underpants!

ALAN: Really? It'd make more sense to use a boat.

CLAYMORE: Right?

GRAYDON: Oh, fucking hilarious!

(He then stomped off towards the helm.)

GRAYDON: Wankers. I know how much you enjoy a relaxing coffee and some quiet time before getting going, so fuck you. We're leaving *now*!!!

(As he bounded onwards, Josie, Alan, Claymore and Sierra shared a series of bemused grins.)

ALAN: I don't know whether to sit here stunned about what he just told us, or go over there and take the piss out of him for having a tantrum.

CLAYMORE: Taking the piss can wait. I'm still reeling from the news.

SIERRA: Must be a shock to the system.

CLAYMORE: It is. Secret services knew? That means we'd been watched, mate. Or someone grassed.

ALAN: Yeah... it's not the most comforting feeling in the world, is it?

(He then shrugged.)

ALAN: Nah. Fuck it. I'm over it. I'm gonna get a shower.

CLAYMORE: Good idea.

SIERRA: And I'll go and dry my hair then get dressed.

JOSIE: And I'll come and watch. Well, not *watch*, per se...

SIERRA: I should hope not. I mean, it's an interesting offer Josie, but I'm not really into...

JOSIE: Don't be funny, Sierra. I just want to go *with* you. I'm not staying up here with that fat, grumpy old git. Especially when he's only wearing... that.

SIERRA: Say no more. Let's go, babes.

(With that, they all upped then headed for the cabins.)

---

Somewhere off the coast of Efland, at this time, the captain and his three subordinates, Wilson, Smith and Erikson were all standing around the controls of a small pleasure boat. Having rented it from a tourism business, they were all ready to head out to sea in search of Graydon. There was, however, one small stumbling block.)

CAPTAIN: So...

SMITH: Hmm...

ERIKSON: Yeah...

WILSON: Um...

CAPTAIN: How do you turn this thing on?

SMITH: There has to be an ignition somewhere.

CAPTAIN: Really? Do you think so, Smithy?

SMITH: Well... yeah.

CAPTAIN: Oh, well, that's a relief. Only, I thought this key was to open a pirate's treasure chest, should we be lucky enough to stumble upon one. I'd never have thought of using it to start the engine. It's a bloody good thing you're here.

SMITH: I was just saying, sir, the ignition has to be here somewhere.

CAPTAIN: And I'm just saying, well, obviously!

ERIKSON: Question is, where?

WILSON: You'd think it'd be in plain sight.

CAPTAIN: Well, clearly it's not.

(He then sighed.)

CAPTAIN: There's a million dials and odd bits sticking out of the dash, but no fucking ignition.

ERIKSON: Right? I mean, what the fuck is the point in this metal thing?

(He then flicked a metal cover upwards on its hinge.)

ERIKSON: I see.

CAPTAIN: What do you see?

ERIKSON: It's the ignition cover.

CAPTAIN: You've found it?

ERIKSON: I have!

CAPTAIN: A-ha. Now we're getting somewhere.

(He then barged Erikson out of the way and placed the key in the ignition.)

CAPTAIN: Excellent. Well found, that man.

ERIKSON: Thanks. It was a lucky guess though really. Having said that though, it kinda makes sense a boat would have a cover for the ignition. It can get wet out in the sea.

SMITH: We're indoors!

ERIKSON: Splashes will still get in!

WILSON: Not if we keep the door shut.

CAPTAIN: Oh, stop arguing, you morons.

(He nodded.)

CAPTAIN: We've got work to do.  
(He then started the engine and nodded to himself.)  
CAPTAIN: Okay, men...  
(He grimaced.)  
CAPTAIN: Where's the accelerator?  
SMITH: You don't know?  
CAPTAIN: Obviously not, you moron. Now, where is it?  
SMITH: I don't know, sir.  
WILSON: Maybe we should have taken the boat hire people up on their tuition offer.  
CAPTAIN: Don't be ridiculous, man! We're police officers! Real men! True, hardy men. We don't need tutorials or instructions. We learn by doing. It's the only way.  
(He nodded.)  
CAPTAIN: Now, come on. Where's this fucking accelerator?  
(In perfect unison, his three subordinates all leant back and stared at the ground beneath the captain's feet.)  
CAPTAIN: Tell me you're not checking the fucking floor, you idiots.  
WILSON: Well... it seems like the logical place.  
ERIKSON: That's where you'd find it on a car.  
CAPTAIN: We're not *in* a car, you halfwit. And don't you think I'd have bloody noticed if I was standing on it???

SMITH: You might not have.  
CAPTAIN: Might not have? Listen, sonny...  
(He then took a calming breath and forced a smile.)  
CAPTAIN: Chaps. Lads. Fellow officers. Help me find the fucking accelerator, will you? Now obviously, it's on this dashboard somewhere, so let's think logically and work this thing out.  
(Wilson nodded.)  
WILSON: Maybe it's this button here, sir.  
(He then pushed down a button on the dashboard, causing the windscreen wipers to swiftly flash back and forth.)  
WILSON: Perhaps not.  
CAPTAIN: Wilson, if you do that again I'll throw you overboard.  
WILSON: What?  
CAPTAIN: *What does this button do* is not the attitude to take! That button could have done literally anything. You might have jettisoned the fuel or something.  
SMITH: Um... that's planes, sir. Boats don't do that on the grounds that dumping fuel in the sea is highly illegal.  
CAPTAIN: I know that, you pillock. I'm an officer of the law! I was just making a point.  
SMITH: Right...  
ERIKSON: Hang on, I've had a thought.  
CAPTAIN: God help us.  
ERIKSON: Well, it's not going to be a button, is it? It has to be something you can control, like a pedal or a lever.  
CAPTAIN: Point being?  
ERIKSON: Well...  
(He nodded at the dashboard.)  
ERIKSON: There's only one lever, sir. Try pushing it forwards.  
(The captain glanced at the dashboard then bit his lip.)  
CAPTAIN: Hmm... that does seem like a likely candidate.  
WILSON: It's a bit weird though. If that is the accelerator, where's the brake?

CAPTAIN: The brake? The brake???

SMITH: Wilson, you're embarrassing.

WILSON: What?

CAPTAIN: Why would a fucking boat have a brake?

WILSON: To slow it down, obviously.

CAPTAIN: Oh, I see. And how would that work?

WILSON: Well, like in a car...

CAPTAIN: In a car, the brake pads press against the tyres to stop it. Newsflash, halfwit; boats don't have tyres!

WILSON: Then how...

CAPTAIN: Shut up!

WILSON: But...

CAPTAIN: Shut up. I'm not explaining it to you, it'd take too long. About thirty seconds; way beyond your attention span. So, forget it.  
(He nodded.)

CAPTAIN: I'm going to try this lever here and if the boats starts moving, we're in business.  
(He then rammed the lever forwards and the boat shot forth, casting them all to the floor.)

WILSON: What the hell?

ERIKSON: Pull the lever back!!!

CAPTAIN: I know what to do, you idiot!!!  
(He then jumped to his feet and eased the lever back until the boat was moving at an acceptable speed.)

CAPTAIN: That's better. I may have overcooked that a little initially, but now we're motoring.  
(He then glanced at where Smith lay motionlessly on the floor.)

CAPTAIN: Is he dead?

WILSON: No, sir; he appears to be breathing at least.

CAPTAIN: Good. Then prop him up and tell him to pay attention.  
(He beamed.)

CAPTAIN: Our journey out to sea has begun and we've got a blaggard to find.

---

A short while later, out on the open ocean, Graydon's boat coasted forth on the calm blue water. It was a gloriously warm day once again, and sailing conditions were perfect. There was but one cloud in the entire sky. Delighted by this, Graydon sat at the controls with a contented smile on his face. Having quickly thrown some clothes on before setting off, he was now ready for his momentous day to begin. Upon arriving in Amaria, he'd be retiring a very wealthy man indeed. A life of luxury with a clean slate was about to begin. Eager to rub it into everyone's face, he beamed then glanced over his shoulder.)

GRAYDON: You know, chaps...

(He then remembered he was the only one out there. The others had headed indoors quite some time ago.)

GRAYDON: Bugger. I had such a wonderfully belittling speech for them all.  
(He shook his head.)

GRAYDON: Typical. There's never a peasant around when you need one.  
(Just then, much to his delight, Josie stepped out of the cabin and headed onto the deck. Not about to waste the opportunity, he immediately set about her verbally.)

GRAYDON: Oh, it's you, the terrorist. I hoped it'd be the pretty one.  
(Much to his annoyance, however, rather than taking the bait, Josie looked to him and raised a quizzical eyebrow.)

JOSIE: Are there any cups out here?

GRAYDON: I can see a pair of C cups; why?

JOSIE: I thought I'd taken them all inside, but there seems to be one missing.

(Her face then lit up and she hurried to the side of the boat.)

JOSIE: There it is.

(She scooped a cup from the floor then gave Graydon a belittling glance.)

JOSIE: And I think you'll find they're double-D cups.

GRAYDON: Yeah, right. Says who?

JOSIE: All my bras. Idiot.

(She then started to pace inside.)

GRAYDON: Idiot? Idiot? I'll have you know...

JOSIE: Just focus on driving the boat, will you? I don't have time to listen to your mean comments.

GRAYDON: Then bloody make time!

JOSIE: What?

GRAYDON: How dare you call me an idiot? I'm an educated man!

JOSIE: Yeah, well, there's a huge difference between being educated and being intelligent.

GRAYDON: Yes. And I'm both. You don't become inordinately wealthy by hoodwinking an entire fucking country without having a first class mind, woman!

JOSIE: True, but then you'd also have to be a first class cu...

GRAYDON: I never said I was a *nice* man! I said I was an intelligent one!

(He sneered.)

GRAYDON: I'm anything *but* a nice man. Do I regret it though? No.

(He beamed.)

GRAYDON: And why would I? It's all worked out perfectly for *me*! I mean, life was *already* great, but from today onwards, it'll be quite literally perfect. Graydon is dead and James Waltham lives. Perfect! You see, nobody hates James Waltham; nobody even knows who he is. Therefore from this day forth, my life as an obscenely wealthy man of leisure begins. Unsullied by my prior evil deeds. And I owe it all to *not* being a nice man!

JOSIE: You love the sound of your own voice, don't you?

GRAYDON: Yes. Yes, I do.

(He nodded.)

GRAYDON: Now, if you'll excuse me, I'm going to take your advice and focus on driving the boat. The sooner we get to paradise the better. For me. Not for you. You'll be fucked.

(He tapped the boat's navigation system.)

GRAYDON: Once we reach the red dot on this...

(He then stopped talking and grimaced uncomfortably.)

GRAYDON: Um...

(He then bashed the screen with his hand.)

GRAYDON: Work, you idiot.

(Josie rolled her eyes.)

JOSIE: What's wrong now?

GRAYDON: Nothing!

JOSIE: Graydon!

(Graydon furrowed his brow at her.)

GRAYDON: It's no big deal. The navigation system seems to have frozen, that's all.

JOSIE: And that's bad, is it?

GRAYDON: No, not really. It just means...

(He whimpered.)

GRAYDON: I've got no way of knowing where the hell we're going. We could literally end up anywhere.

(He gasped.)

GRAYDON: Even back in Efland!

(He then proceeded to batter the screen with his palm.)

GRAYDON: Work, you poorly made piece of shit!!! We've come too close to fail now.

(Watching him panic, Josie shook her head then paced indoors. Graydon was so flustered, he didn't even see her leave. He simply continued to bash the screen with his fist, while imploring it to fix itself.)

GRAYDON: Why would you do this to me? Have I not taken good care of you??? Work, damn it. You wouldn't even exist if it wasn't for me! Your company almost went under, did you know that? And who saved it? Me! Who do you think recommended your company for a government contract? Me!!! The entire navy uses your systems thanks to me, and this is how you repay me??? Just fucking work, will you???

(For the next minute or so, he continued to bash the screen and cry. He felt like all his hard work had come tumbling down around his ears right at the pivotal moment. Just when he was so close to achieving his perfect life, he couldn't believe it had all gone so horribly wrong. Suffice to say, he was beside himself with grief.)

GRAYDON: Can't even turn around and head back to Santa Lorena now, because without a red dot to follow, I'd never find it. If I head back and miss it, we could end up sailing into the middle of the ocean and be lost forever. Why??? I just need a dot to aim for that's all. I'm not asking for much! Please work! Please!!!

(Just then, Sierra and Josie appeared on either side of him.)

GRAYDON: Oh, great; you two are all I fucking need.

JOSIE: Get out of the way, fatty.

GRAYDON: What?

JOSIE: You heard.

(She then tugged him out of his seat, allowing Sierra to access the cupboard beneath the dashboard.)

GRAYDON: What the hell are you doing?

JOSIE: She's saving your arse.

GRAYDON: What?

(He then looked on open-mouthed as Sierra pulled a small keyboard from the cupboard and attached it to the navigation system.)

GRAYDON: What's that thing? I didn't know that was in there. And what's she doing?

JOSIE: I just told you, she saving your arse.

GRAYDON: What do you mean, she's saving...

JOSIE: Have you been crying?

(Graydon gasped then turned away.)

GRAYDON: Don't be preposterous.

JOSIE: Pillock.

(She looked to Sierra and smiled.)

JOSIE: You okay, babe?

SIERRA: Yup, just need to attach the mouse... and sorted.

(Graydon turned to face her.)

GRAYDON: There's a mouse?

JOSIE: A computer mouse.

GRAYDON: Oh. Right. I thought you meant a rodent.

SIERRA: The only rodent on this boat is you, Graydon.

GRAYDON: Yeah? Well... I'll let that slide for now. Your arse looks divine in that skimpy swimsuit and the way you're bending over the keyboard like that brings me much joy.

JOSIE: You never know when to shut up, do you?

GRAYDON: Nope!

(He nodded.)

GRAYDON: What does that keyboard do anyway? Answer me slowly, so I can listen and focus on your bum at the same time.

SIERRA: Wow.

GRAYDON: What?

SIERRA: If you must know, I'm resetting the system.

GRAYDON: Resetting?

SIERRA: Yeah. It was frozen, that's all. It's not broken.

(She nodded.)

SIERRA: Look. See? It's rebooting.

GRAYDON: Excellent!

(He grimaced.)

GRAYDON: And what does that mean?

SIERRA: It's starting up again.

GRAYDON: Right...

(He tapped his fingers together nervously.)

GRAYDON: And it'll know where we are, will it?

SIERRA: Once the radio transmitter comes online, yes.

GRAYDON: Online?

SIERRA: In this sense it means connected to a network.

GRAYDON: Right... and what do you mean by network?

SIERRA: The network it uses to navigate by.

GRAYDON: Hmm... meaning?

(Sierra rolled her eyes.)

SIERRA: Don't worry about it. You're quite obviously computer illiterate and wouldn't understand it even I told you.

GRAYDON: I see.

(He ruffled his neck indignantly.)

GRAYDON: Not that there's any shame in being computer illiterate, as you call it. I mean, why would *I* ever need to use a computer? That's what secretaries are for!

(He beamed.)

GRAYDON: They're pretty handy for a quick bit of slap and tickle too. Why, this one secretary I had used to...

JOSIE: We don't want to know!

SIERRA: We'll *never* want to know!

GRAYDON: Fine. Fuck you then.

(He ruffled his neck indignantly then glanced at Sierra again.)

GRAYDON: So, is it... you know... working again?

SIERRA: The radio's coming online now, if that's what you mean.

GRAYDON: And that's a good thing, right?

SIERRA: Yes.

(She smiled.)

SIERRA: Here. It's found us. And... oh.

GRAYDON: Oh no, what's wrong??? It's bad, isn't it?

SIERRA: On the contrary, it remembered the coordinates from earlier. The course is set just as it was before you broke it.

(Graydon gasped.)

GRAYDON: *I* didn't break it!

(He nodded firmly.)

GRAYDON: Sanchez always starts the navigation system for me when I leave Santa Lorena. *He* must have done something. *I* certainly didn't. I can *follow* them like a bloody champion, but I wouldn't know *how* to start one of those things up, so *I* didn't go near it.

(Josie shook her head.)

JOSIE: That's just ridiculous. How can you not know how to start your own navigation system?

(Graydon ruffled his neck indignantly.)

GRAYDON: I pay the staff at the marina for that kind of thing. Why should *I* have to do it?

JOSIE: Just in case it crashes at sea, like it literally just did.

GRAYDON: Yes, well...

JOSIE: You're just lucky Sierra was here. If you'd been on your own...

GRAYDON: Do shut up, woman. Acting so bloody cocky. I bet *you* don't know how to do it either.

(Having put the keyboard back in the cupboard, Sierra smiled at him.)

SIERRA: No, but *I* do.

GRAYDON: Is it done? Is it back to normal?

SIERRA: Yup.

GRAYDON: Has it been set to ignore the red dot from Efland like it was before when Sanchez set it up? Only if *the Efland one* appears and I head straight for it, we're screwed. It's not like it was on the way out here. I only had one red dot to look for when we came out here.

(He grimaced.)

GRAYDON: It's a different story now we're heading back towards the mainland continent. If Efland and Amaria pop up at the same time and I go to the wrong one...

SIERRA: Relax. We'll be fine. It says on the side of the screen, look. Frequency equals Amaria South - Radar Point E *only*. Nice and easy. There's even an arrow pointing to it.

GRAYDON: So we're good to go then?

SIERRA: Yes!

GRAYDON: Good. Now get out of my way.

SIERRA: Wow.

GRAYDON: Come on! Shift, you useless pair of tits.

(Sierra moved to allow him to sit down then rolled her eyes at Josie.)

SIERRA: Fuck this. Shall we go back inside?

JOSIE: No. Just a sec, babes. Sorry, but that was fucking rude.

GRAYDON: Oh, what a shock. She's going to moan again.

JOSIE: Damned right. There was absolutely no reason to talk to her like that!

GRAYDON: Since when did I need a reason?

JOSIE: That was a vile thing to say. She literally just saved our arses and you call her that? A civilised person would have said thank you. In fact, saying thank you was the least you could have done.

GRAYDON: On the contrary, the *least* I could have done was nothing. And I achieved that in some considerable style.

JOSIE: Wanker!

(She sneered.)

JOSIE: You were crying a minute ago...

GRAYDON: That's a lie!



JOSIE: You were. We saw you crying and begging for the system to work. And now it does! So a little gratitude wouldn't go amiss.

GRAYDON: Are you still here?

SIERRA: Just forget it, Josie, let's go and...

JOSIE: No. He was out of order. Ever since we left he's been mean about you, Sierra. Saying you're pointless, like you have no skills and need to be kept. Well, fuck you, Graydon.

(She placed her hands on her hips bitterly.)

JOSIE: She's not so useless now, is she?

GRAYDON: Well, you say that...

JOSIE: I *do* say that! And she proved it! Like you said just before you started crying, we could have ended up back in Efland because you've got no idea how to navigate without your little red dots.

GRAYDON: I wasn't crying, damn it!

(Josie bellowed.)

JOSIE: Shut it! *I'm* having my say now!

(Scared witless, Graydon reeled back and whimpered.)

GRAYDON: Oh, my...

JOSIE: We couldn't go back to Santa Lorena and we *could* have ended up back in Efland. We were screwed basically. Left at the mercy of fate with no idea where the hell we'd end up. Up shit creek without a navigation system.

(She nodded sternly.)

JOSIE: But, thankfully, Sierra here knows her way around computer systems. That's a rare skillset and we're damned lucky she was here! Because of her and *only* her, we're now back on track, so don't you dare belittle her ever again. When called upon to do her bit for our cause, she rose to the challenge. So leave her the fuck alone, you horrible old bastard. Got it?

(Graydon blinked at her uneasily for a moment then forced a kind smile.)

GRAYDON: You know I was only teasing her, right?

JOSIE: Then apologise.

(Graydon gasped.)

GRAYDON: Apologise? You want me to apologise???

JOSIE: Yes!

SIERRA: Actually, I really don't care if he does or he doesn't, Josie.

JOSIE: Fine. Then the least he can do is thank you and acknowledge that you did good work.

GRAYDON: Right. Well, I suppose I... you know...

(He sighed emptily.)

GRAYDON: Fine. You win. She did a good... well... she did... she did a job. An adequate one. Most definitely satisfactory. Happy now?

JOSIE: Not really, no. I've never heard such an insincere statement in all my life.

GRAYDON: Well, of course it's insincere, you *forced* me to say it.

(He ruffled his neck.)

GRAYDON: Not that I usually kowtow to women, it's just... you can be very scary when you're angry.

SIERRA: She's awesome when she's angry.

JOSIE: And Sierra's awesome all the time. She's got great computer skills, she's utterly gorgeous and best of all, she's a really nice person. So fuck you, Graydon. Go! Get out of my sight.

GRAYDON: Um... actually, I think it'd be best if I stay, what with the steering wheel being here an' all.

JOSIE: Yeah? Well...  
(She scratched her head nervously.)  
JOSIE: That's a good point actually.  
GRAYDON: Isn't it though? You feel silly now, don't you?  
JOSIE: No.  
GRAYDON: Humiliated, even.  
JOSIE: No, I don't.  
GRAYDON: Rubbish! I can literally see the chagrin swelling inside of you.  
(Josie and Sierra shared a bewildered glance.)  
SIERRA: Chagrin?  
JOSIE: What the hell's chagrin?  
(Graydon rolled his eyes.)  
GRAYDON: I do apologise. I forgot you were a pair of salivating halfwits.  
JOSIE: Hey!  
SIERRA: You made that word up!  
GRAYDON: No, I didn't.  
(Josie looked to Sierra.)  
JOSIE: I bet he did.  
GRAYDON: Don't be bloody obtuse. Chagrin is that feeling of anguish and rage you get when you feel humiliated.  
SIERRA: First I've heard of it.  
JOSIE: Like you said, he made it up.  
GRAYDON: Nope. That's it. I'm done with you now. Go away. I want to sail onwards in peace. I'm done being yelled at, and I'm done wasting my time explaining everyday words to the unintelligent. Now clear off.  
(He beamed.)  
GRAYDON: This boat is registered to James Waltham; upstanding citizen of Amaria. Meaning I can merrily sail past the Efland navy undetected. And I'd like to do so in peace, thank you. I want to savour every moment of making them look silly. So go on, bugger off. I've had enough of you.  
(Sierra shrugged.)  
SIERRA: Works for me. Shall we go and watch the ocean for a bit while we wait for the guys?  
JOSIE: Sure.  
(Sierra took Josie's arm then they headed off to the back of the deck together. Watching Sierra's backside in the mirror as she headed away, Graydon puffed out lustfully.)  
GRAYDON: I'd trade-in my left nut for a merry old time in the sack with that one.  
(He then nodded defiantly.)  
GRAYDON: That's all she's fit for, after all. Computer skills indeed. Poppycock.

---

For the next hour or so, the boat continued to carve its way through the sea with Graydon at the helm. Following the navigation system, he was more than content with his lot. It was perfect weather for boating and with every passing minute his glorious retirement grew closer.

Not quite sharing Graydon's joy at the thought of arriving in Amaria, Sierra and Josie remained in their seats at the back of the boat, watching the waves rolling around them. Claymore and Alan had joined them quite some time ago and they'd simply stayed put. Being outside on this fine day with the cool sea breeze was indeed comforting. And with the

anxiety of what might lay in store for them, torturing their minds, every comfort was a most welcome one. Making landfall could mark the beginning of a very dark time in their lives.

Trying to distract herself from such thoughts about a bleak future, Josie focussed hard on the waves then sighed and shook her head. The ocean was a comfort, but the closer they got to land, the more fearful she became. Desperate to take her mind off of it, she shook her head again then looked to Sierra. She wanted to make conversation. She *needed* to make conversation. Sitting in silent contemplation simply wasn't working. As such, she puffed out then said the first thing that came into her head.)

JOSIE: Your irises are almost pitch black, Sierra.

(Sitting with her back nestled into Claymore's side, Sierra gave her a sideways glance.)

SIERRA: What?

JOSIE: Your eyes. Very dark.

SIERRA: Yeah...

JOSIE: Very pretty.

SIERRA: Thank you. So are yours.

JOSIE: I wish.

(She sighed.)

JOSIE: Sierra?

SIERRA: Yeah?

JOSIE: I feel restless.

(Sierra smiled.)

SIERRA: I hear you, babes. Scary, isn't it?

JOSIE: Yup.

ALAN: It doesn't have to be.

JOSIE: What?

ALAN: Well, think about it. We can afford shelter for a few days, right?

JOSIE: Well... *you* can.

ALAN: No, *we* can. We're in this together, remember.

CLAYMORE: As a four.

ALAN: Exactly. So yeah, we can afford shelter for a few days.

(He shrugged.)

ALAN: And a lot can happen in a few days if you *make* it happen.

SIERRA: What do you mean?

ALAN: I mean we can find cash-in-hand work. We can figure out the cheapest way to live. We'll learn a lot in the first few days.

JOSIE: I guess.

CLAYMORE: We chatted about it last night before dozing off, Josie. If we can all find cash paying work, we might never have to spend a single night sleeping rough.

JOSIE: But if we can't?

ALAN: Then we'll deal with that when it happens.

(He shrugged.)

ALAN: I want to focus on what we *can* do. What we need to strive towards. I can't be thinking about what'll happen if it all goes tits up. For one, negative thinking often becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. So no. We need to think about what can go right then work our arses off to get it.

(Everyone pondered his words for a moment then Sierra nodded.)

SIERRA: I like that.

JOSIE: Yeah, me too. We can do it.

SIERRA: Right? I believe in us. Especially you, Josie. You can do anything you turn your hand to.

JOSIE: Hardly.

SIERRA: No, you can. You're pretty amazing.

JOSIE: Aw...

CLAYMORE: We just need to make sure we don't get fleeced. Some people will get you to do the work then refuse to pay you afterwards. You know, pretend you didn't do any work because there's no contractual evidence.

ALAN: Nobody would dare do that me, mate.

CLAYMORE: Right, yeah. That's true.

(Just then, a strong gust of wind whooshed across the boat, causing Sierra's hair to fly across her face.)

SIERRA: What the hell?

ALAN: Blimey. That was a bit strong, wasn't it?

JOSIE: Yeah.

(She glanced up at the sky then sighed.)

JOSIE: I don't like the look of that.

(Claymore glanced up then flinched.)

CLAYMORE: What the fuck? There wasn't a cloud in the sky a minute ago, now look at it.

ALAN: There's a fucking storm coming in. And fast.

(Just then, Graydon called out to them from the helm.)

GRAYDON: You lot, there's a storm coming in! And fast!

(Alan looked to Claymore.)

ALAN: You know, I'd swear I've heard that somewhere before.

CLAYMORE: Yeah, well, never mind pissing about. We should get below deck.

ALAN: Bollocks. If the boat sinks, that's the last place I want to be.

JOSIE: It's not going to sink!

(She trembled.)

JOSIE: Is it?

CLAYMORE: Of course not.

(He rolled his eyes.)

CLAYMORE: Look, let's just get inside before it starts to rain.

(In that moment, the skies opened and heavy rain cascaded down from the clouds.)

CLAYMORE: Or *after* it starts to rain; I don't mind.

JOSIE: Come on, let's just get in the dry.

(She then scarpered across the deck. Following her lead, the others started to go after her, when suddenly, the boat hit a massive wave, head on. Without warning, the boat tipped upwards then thudded back down violently upon the water. Having been given no chance to hold onto anything, Sierra, Josie, Alan and Claymore were all flung into the air. Mercifully, Claymore managed to grab hold of Sierra and cling onto the side of the boat, and Alan's sheer bulk had stopped him flying too far. Josie, however, was not so lucky. With a scream, she was propelled towards the back of the boat when the wave initially hit, then cast over the starboard side when it thudded back down again.)

SIERRA: Josie!!!

(In a blind panic, she swiftly scrambled to her feet then grabbed the nearest lifebuoy.)

SIERRA: She went over the side!!!

(She then charged to the side of the boat and scanned the sea before her. Seeing Josie thrashing about in a panic, she snarled then cast the lifebuoy in her direction, before turning and yelling at friends.)

SIERRA: Josie's in trouble!!!

(She then flinched and reeled backwards as Alan charged to the side of the boat and dived into the sea after her. Hoping desperately that he'd manage to save her, she clasped her hands to her heart and whimpered. As she did so, Claymore arrived at her side and scanned the sea before him.)

CLAYMORE: Are they alright???

SIERRA: I don't know! I can't see them.

(Just then, Graydon hurried up behind them and snarled.)

GRAYDON: I've shut off the engine, but I'm not sure what good it'll do. The sea's chopping up and the storm's going to push us further and further away by the second.

CLAYMORE: Shit.

(At this point, an even heavier torrent of rain started to cascade down from the sky, making visibility even worse than it had been.)

CLAYMORE: Fuck! Where the fuck did this storm *come from*?

GRAYDON: I didn't come from anywhere, you idiot. It's been here for a while now. *We* sailed into *it*.

CLAYMORE: What? You knew? Why didn't you fucking warn us then?

GRAYDON: It *looked* like a brief shower! I wasn't expecting a downpour and I wasn't expecting a wave like that to hit us.

(He then hurried back to the helm. As he did so, Sierra continued to whimper and stare at the ocean. There was no sign of Josie or Alan anywhere.)

SIERRA: Where are they???

(Just then, Alan crashed through the surface of the ocean and proceeded to swim towards the boat.)

CLAYMORE: A!!!!

SIERRA: Where's Josie???

CLAYMORE: She's...

(He then drew a sigh of relief.)

CLAYMORE: There she is!

SIERRA: Oh, thank fuck!

(Sure enough, Josie was clinging onto the lifebuoy, and Alan was towing it behind him with the rope gripped firmly in his teeth.)

CLAYMORE: Good doggie!!!

SIERRA: This is no time for jokes, Claymore. Help them get back up!

CLAYMORE: I will once they get here.

(Graydon then called out from the helm.)

GRAYDON: I've turned us sideways so we stop drifting off. That should help. Just let me know when they're back on board so I can straighten up. I don't want to hit another wave like *that* while we're side on!

CLAYMORE: Understood.

(He then watched as Alan struggled to the side of the boat, just about managing to grab the bottom step on the side-mounted ladder.)

SIERRA: Go and help them, Clay... oh, you have.

(She drew a sigh of relief as she watched Claymore help drag Alan back onto the deck.)

CLAYMORE: That was fucking mental, mate.

ALAN: You're telling me.

CLAYMORE: You could have fucking died.

ALAN: And you can lecture me later. Right now, you can help Josie up.

CLAYMORE: Right.

(With that, he clambered all the way down the side ladder and reached out for Josie's hand. With Alan pulling at the lifebuoy rope, there was no danger of her floating off again, but she was utterly exhausted and needed all the help she could get to ascend the steps.)

SIERRA: Don't drop her, Claymore!

CLAYMORE: I won't!

SIERRA: And don't fall in!

CLAYMORE: I...

(He furrowed his brow.)

CLAYMORE: Anything else you think I ought to know?

SIERRA: No, no. Just those two things.

CLAYMORE: Cool.

(Clinging tightly to the steps, he then stretched out with his other hand and managed to catch Josie's wrist.)

CLAYMORE: Gotcha!!!

JOSIE: Hurry!

CLAYMORE: Just relax!

JOSIE: Relax? There could be fucking sharks in here!!!

CLAYMORE: Then stop panicking and calm the fuck down. By thrashing about you're making yourself heavier.

(Josie whimpered.)

JOSIE: I'll try.

(She then took a deep breath and tried to calm herself. Taking full advantage of her calmness, Claymore growled then pulled her arm as hard as he could. Managing to yank her upper torso out of the water, he then attempted to scale a step on the ladder. Sadly, with no arms free, it wasn't happening.)

CLAYMORE: Grab the ladder, Josie.

JOSIE: What???

CLAYMORE: The ladder!

JOSIE: Oh!

(She then gripped the bottom rung of the ladder tightly in both hands.)

CLAYMORE: Okay. Now we need to figure out how to pull you up.

JOSIE: *You* do it!

CLAYMORE: How? I can't cling onto you *and* climb and ladder.

JOSIE: Then how are we gonna...

(She then started to levitate into the air. With a scream she grabbed hold of the lifebuoy rope and slammed her eyes tight shut.)

JOSIE: What's happening???

ALAN: I'm fucking happening!!!

(Watching as she slowly ascended out of the water, Claymore bit his lip then swiftly scrambled back up the ladder. Without a pause, he then joined Alan in heaving at the rope. Mercifully, with the two of them giving everything they had, they soon managed to drag her back over the side of the boat. Landing with quite a thud, she flopped onto her back then stared up at the sky.)

JOSIE: I'm alive!!!

(She was then jumped on by a tearful Sierra.)

SIERRA: You could have died!!!

JOSIE: I...

SIERRA: Don't die, Josie. I need you. You're my best friend and...

(She then burst into tears.)

SIERRA: I was so scared!!!

JOSIE: So was I!

(As they cried their eyes out together and embraced on the deck, Alan looked to Graydon and gave him the thumbs up.)

ALAN: We're good to go.

GRAYDON: Righto.

(He rolled his eyes.)

GRAYDON: Idiots.

(Caring very little for Graydon's disdain, Alan and Claymore shared a relieved glance.)

CLAYMORE: You alright?

ALAN: No, mate. I'm soaked through and I think my arms are gonna fall off.

CLAYMORE: Yeah. You must be exhausted.

ALAN: And then some.

(He grimaced.)

ALAN: I didn't even think, mate. I just knew I had to go after her.

CLAYMORE: Yeah...

(He gave a stifled laugh.)

CLAYMORE: That was actually pretty fucking cool.

ALAN: Well, yeah. Or not. I was actually pretty fucking stupid, but I'd do it again. Every time.

CLAYMORE: I know you would.

(He nodded.)

CLAYMORE: Nice thinking with the rope there, mate. There was no way I could drag her up with one hand and scale a ladder with the other.

ALAN: I know, mate. That's why I started pulling the rope instead.

CLAYMORE: Good thinking.

(He puffed out.)

CLAYMORE: You saved her life.

ALAN: No, mate. Sierra saved her life when she threw that lifebuoy. Then you saved her life when you pulled her out of the water and told her to calm the fuck down. And Graydon saved her life when he stopped the boat.

CLAYMORE: Which actually surprised me, to be honest.

ALAN: He probably knew we'd beat the crap out of him then throw *him* overboard if he didn't.

CLAYMORE: Probably.

ALAN: The point I'm making is, that was a proper team effort.

(Sierra glanced up at them from the ground.)

SIERRA: It was. And you guys were amazing.

CLAYMORE: You did your bit, babe.

SIERRA: I know, right?

(She grimaced.)

SIERRA: That's the first time in my entire life I've ever thrown something properly.

JOSIE: And accurately. It came straight to me.

(She puffed out.)

JOSIE: And it's a good thing it did. The current was doing its utmost to pull me under.

(She then sat up.)

JOSIE: Thanks, guys. You're the best. I'll never be able to thank you enough for what you did there.

ALAN: No, no, Josie. We've discussed this. Nothing says thank you like a long, lingering blowjob, remember?

(Sierra chuckled.)

SIERRA: He really does have a one track mind.  
CLAYMORE: You have no idea, girls.  
ALAN: Mate!  
CLAYMORE: What?  
ALAN: No spilling the man beans.  
CLAYMORE: Right...  
(He grimaced.)  
CLAYMORE: Man beans?  
ALAN: I mean what two blokes talk about in private, stays in private.  
CLAYMORE: Yeah, but, man beans?  
(Alan ruffled his neck.)  
ALAN: Look, never mind that. I'm fucking soaked through; a situation not helped by the fact it's pissing down out here. I'm gonna go and take a shower.  
SIERRA: Good idea. You should take a shower too, Josie.  
JOSIE: Uh-huh. I will. I need to get out of these wet clothes as soon as possible and warm myself up.  
(She then climbed to her feet and smiled at Alan and Claymore.)  
JOSIE: Thanks, guys.  
(She then hugged them both before heading inside.)  
CLAYMORE: Go on, Al. Go and grab that shower.  
ALAN: Consider me gone.  
(He then followed Josie inside. As he did so, Sierra stepped up to Claymore's side then puffed out sorrowfully.)  
SIERRA: We nearly lost her, Claymore. She's been my best friend since I was like five. And we nearly...  
(Claymore pulled her close for a hug then smiled.)  
CLAYMORE: Shall we head indoors, darling? We're getting soaked.  
SIERRA: Sure. Yeah. Come on.  
(They then headed inside. Left behind, seated at the helm, Graydon shook his head.)  
GRAYDON: Idiot. Fancy falling off a boat and almost dying. Who does that?  
(He rolled his eyes.)  
GRAYDON: Still, it's a good thing the others acted as quickly as they did. Her death would have been a terrible waste of boobs.  
(He then chuckled to himself before refocussing on the task in hand.)

---

A short while later, somewhere in international waters, quite a distance from the Amarian coast, an Efland battleship slowly cut through the waves. Up in the observation deck, the captain's second in command, commander Roy Wallace was scanning the surface of the water, on the lookout for Graydon's boat. Assisted by his subordinate Midshipman Johnson, he'd been on the lookout since dawn. His orders were keep a steady vigil until Graydon finally made an appearance. Very much doubting he'd be able to carry out that order, however, he did so with a reluctance in his heart.)  
WALLACE: Midshipman?  
JOHNSON: Sir?  
WALLACE: Is it lunch time yet?  
JOHNSON: No, sir.  
WALLACE: Shit.  
(He sighed then glanced at where the midshipman was staring out through his binoculars.)  
WALLACE: Anything?



JOHNSON: Not at the moment, sir. Maybe we'll have more luck once that storm out there subsides.

WALLACE: Perhaps. Though I doubt it.

JOHNSON: You do?

WALLACE: I do. Nobody's dim enough to try to sneak into another country via the sea, knowing the entire navy is looking for him.

JOHNSON: Unless they're desperate, sir.

WALLACE: I suppose.

(Johnson then flinched and zoomed in with his binoculars.)

JOHNSON: Boat!

WALLACE: Out at sea? Who'd have thought it?

JOHNSON: Indeed, sir. I just wasn't expecting to see one in *that* direction. It literally just emerged from out of that storm over there.

WALLACE: I see.

(He rolled his eyes.)

WALLACE: Go on then. ID the bugger, so we can dismiss it.

JOHNSON: Okay. The name on the boat is... a bit blurry. Walnut Villager? What?

WALLACE: Zoom closer!

JOHNSON: Right.

(The midshipman zoomed closer then looked enlightened.)

JOHNSON: The Waltham Voyager.

(He bit his lip.)

JOHNSON: And there's an overweight, middle-aged man driving it.

WALLACE: There are overweight, middle-aged men everywhere, midshipman. It's hardly a rare demographic.

JOHNSON: A good point.

WALLACE: Of course.

(He then turned around and started to type the name of the boat into his computer terminal.)

WALLACE: Walnut what?

JOHNSON: Waltham, sir. Waltham Voyager.

WALLACE: Right...

(He finished typing then nodded.)

WALLACE: Just give it a second to... ah, here we go.

(He nodded.)

WALLACE: As expected. Nothing to do with us, midshipman. It belongs to an Amarian entrepreneur, James Waltham.

JOHNSON: Stand down then, sir?

WALLACE: We never stood up.

JOHNSON: Good point.

WALLACE: Just ignore it.

JOHNSON: Sir.

WALLACE: Then go and make me a cup of tea. I'm parched.

JOHNSON: Yes, sir. And, um, can I have one?

WALLACE: No.

---

Elsewhere on the ocean, at this time, the captain's three less-than-enthusiastic subordinates, Erikson, Smith and Wilson were extremely anxious to say the least. Having caught the tail end of the storm, they'd been blown completely off course. As a result, they had no idea where they were; or indeed, where to head next. The captain, however, flatly refused to

admit it. Come what may, he was determined they'd get their man and wasn't about to let anything distract him from his efforts. Therefore, he opted to deny there was a problem and continued onwards.

CAPTAIN: Chin up, chaps. The storm's passed now and the sun's back out. This is a good omen.

SMITH: Is it though, sir?

CAPTAIN: Yes. Yes, it is.

SMITH: I don't see how. The storm threw us about so much, we've got no idea where the hell we are. Or where we going!

CAPTAIN: Don't be ridiculous, man.

WILSON: He's not.

(He sighed in defeat.)

WILSON: Before the storm came, at least we knew that if we turned around 180 degrees we'd end up back in Efland. Now we don't even have that going for us.

ERIKSON: Yeah. We got turned us around so many times, god only knows which way we've ended up facing.

SMITH: Exactly. And there's no way of finding out either. There's literally nothing but ocean in every direction!

CAPTAIN: Nonsense.

(He ruffled his neck.)

CAPTAIN: There's no ocean *above* us.

(He then forced a positive smile.)

CAPTAIN: Everything's under control, chaps. We're fine.

(His three subordinates all shared a less than impressed glance.)

SMITH: Sir?

CAPTAIN: What now?

SMITH: We're not fine *at all*, are we? You have no idea where we are *or* where we're going, have you? We are in fact, in deep shit, aren't we?

CAPTAIN: No, we're not! I know exactly where we are.

(He nodded then pointed to the navigation system.)

CAPTAIN: See? That little dot there. That's us.

ERIKSON: And that helps us how?

CAPTAIN: Well, obviously, it helps us by letting us know... that we're that little dot.

SMITH: That little dot is the only thing on the entire screen, sir.

CAPTAIN: And your point is?

SMITH: We're lost!

CAPTAIN: Don't be ridiculous!

ERIKSON: He's not. We're lost, aren't we? Admit it!

CAPTAIN: Never!

SMITH: Captain!!!

CAPTAIN: What? We're not lost!

(His three subordinates just glowered at him.)

CAPTAIN: What? We're not! Like I said, we're that little dot. And yes, you're right there's nothing else on the screen, but that just means... I don't know how the navigation system works.

WILSON: God help us.

CAPTAIN: Enough of that, you. Like I said, we're fine. We're not lost. Not really. I mean, I have a *rough* idea where we are.

SMITH: And where's that?

CAPTAIN: In the ocean.

(His three subordinates all groaned in defeat.)

CAPTAIN: Don't you groan at me! I'm doing the best I can here, you big sissies.

WILSON: We're not sissies, sir; we just want the truth.

CAPTAIN: Oh, you do, do you? Then here you are, Wilson, here's the truth. You're the most feeble excuse for a guard that I've ever had the misery of supervising.

WILSON: Well, that's a bit harsh.

CAPTAIN: Oh, was it? I do apologise. Was the truth too much for you to handle?

(He furrowed his brow.)

CAPTAIN: Fucking idiot.

SMITH: Sir?

CAPTAIN: What now, you annoying lump of horse poo?

SMITH: I just wondered what we're going to do to get back on course.

CAPTAIN: Who said we were *off* course?

ERIKSON: We *know* we're off course, sir. Whether you admit it or not.

SMITH: Yeah. So I was thinking maybe we could put our heads together and formulate some kind of plan.

CAPTAIN: Fine. You do that. In fact, fuck off to the back of the boat and do it. Go on, go away and leave me to it. Lost indeed. How dare you doubt me? Get out of my sight!

(With a sigh, his three subordinates all shrugged then headed away. Left behind, the captain growled under his breath.)

CAPTAIN: Insubordinate wankers. How dare they doubt the world of an officer?

(He sighed then glanced back at his three subordinates and snarled to himself.)

CAPTAIN: What the hell do they teach these young tossers in training nowadays? In my day, we knew to trust our captain. His word was final and we respected it. You doubted an officer at your peril. Idiots. Accusing me of not knowing where we're going. I don't have to put up with that. And I won't! Fuck the lot of them. I'll ignore everything they say from now on and just keep going, that's what I'll do.

(He then nodded determinedly.)

CAPTAIN: And if we're still lost twenty four hours from now, I'll send up a flare.

---

Inside the second bedroom of Graydon's yacht at this time, Josie was wrapped in a towel, staring emptily into a full length mirror. Having managed to warm up after her soaking, she now had time to reflect on her near-death experience. It had left her feeling more than a little numb inside. With a long pout on her face, she glanced into the reflection of her eyes and sighed.

JOSIE: I could have died. Having done nothing meaningful with my life, I almost died.

(She hung her head.)

JOSIE: I don't want to die.

(She sighed then looked into the mirror again.)

JOSIE: I wouldn't be remembered for *anything*. I thought I was going to make a difference. I thought I was going to achieve something and *be* somebody, but, I've done nothing.

(She then forced a smile.)

JOSIE: I have a second chance now though. A chance to...

(She grimaced.)

JOSIE: A chance to what?

(She then gave a stifled laugh.)

JOSIE: I guess it doesn't matter. Who cares if I become someone or not? I just know I want to live. To be with my friends. To see the sun shining on the water again.

(She shrugged.)

JOSIE: I can do that now. And I'll get it right this time. I'll start enjoying life. I've got this second chance and I'm gonna take it.

(Just then, there was a hammering on the door. Somewhat startled by it, Josie jumped then clutched her hand to her chest.)

JOSIE: That scared the crap out of me.

(As the hammering continued she furrowed her brow then raised her voice.)

JOSIE: What?

ALAN: It's me? Can I come in?

JOSIE: Um... I suppose.

(The door then cranked open and Alan came in wearing the skimpiest of towels to cover his modesty.)

JOSIE: Oh, my...

ALAN: Yeah, sorry about this. I had my shower, then I realised there were no dry towels other than this piddly little thing.

JOSIE: Damn.

ALAN: That's what I said.

(He grimaced.)

ALAN: Have you got any proper towels in here?

JOSIE: Yeah, there's loads of them in the bathroom.

(She then pointed him in the right direction.)

ALAN: Thanks, Josie. You're a star.

(He then hurried to the bathroom. As he did so, Josie tipped her head and allowed herself to check out his physique. Liking what she saw, she smirked to herself then glanced away, blushing nervously.)

JOSIE: Can you see them?

ALAN: No! Oh, wait. Yeah, got one.

JOSIE: Cool.

(Sure enough, a few moments later, Alan came back out of the bathroom with a large bath towel wrapped around his midriff.)

ALAN: That's better.

JOSIE: Much better.

ALAN: Not that I enjoy wearing a skirt.

(Josie smirked.)

JOSIE: Why not? You have the legs for it?

ALAN: Yeah?

(He smirked back.)

ALAN: At least one of us has then.

JOSIE: Ouch.

ALAN: Feel my wrath, woman.

(They then shared an amused chuckle.)

ALAN: So, how are you? You feeling better now? Falling in the ocean like that must be terrifying.

JOSIE: It was, yeah, but...

(She smiled.)

JOSIE: It's kind of given me a new perspective on things.

ALAN: Yeah? That was quick.

JOSIE: Maybe...

(She shrugged.)

JOSIE: This is a second chance for me now, Alan. I could have died, but I didn't. So I'm going to make the most of life now.

ALAN: I hear you.

(He shrugged.)

ALAN: I guess nothing makes you appreciate life more than facing your mortality.

JOSIE: Exactly.

(Alan smiled then stepped closer to her.)

ALAN: All the best with that, Josie; I mean that. Why shouldn't you enjoy life? Go nuts, girl.

JOSIE: I will. I'm not going to waste a single second.

(She then smiled kindly into his eyes.)

JOSIE: Thank you so much, by the way. *You* gave me this second chance and I'll be forever in your debt.

ALAN: Debt?

(He sucked his teeth.)

ALAN: You don't want to be in debt, Josie.

(He grinned playfully.)

ALAN: And thankfully, you don't have to be. I mean, nothing says paid in full quite like a long, lingering...

JOSIE: Blowjob!

(She rolled her eyes.)

JOSIE: You really *do* have a one track mind.

(She then shrugged.)

JOSIE: But, okay.

ALAN: What?

(Offering no reply, Josie then sunk to her knees before him and yanked his towel away.)

ALAN: Um... Josie... I was only joking about...

(He then went cross-eyed and released a groan of delight. Josie had set to work on his manhood with her tongue.)

ALAN: Holy crap!

(He then placed his hands behind his head and closed his eyes in ecstasy. The sensation of Josie's tongue massaging his length was a pleasure like no other.)

ALAN: Fucking hell, that's good.

JOSIE: Uh-huh.

(She then slowly proceeded to fellate him, forcing a dopey expression onto his brow.)

ALAN: I... really don't know what to say right now... so I'm gonna shut up and let you get on with it.

(He then released a series of delighted groans. It wouldn't be an exaggeration to say that, in this moment, he was a very happy man indeed.)

---

A good ten minutes later, once Alan had enjoyed a happy release inside Josie's mouth, he slumped back onto the bed then stared at her agog. Wiping any excess from her mouth, Josie just smiled at him; a smile that soon turned into a blush. Silence then ensued for a few moments before Alan puffed out in awe.

ALAN: Well... that was most unexpected.

JOSIE: Um... yeah.

ALAN: Not to mention awesome. Consider the debt paid in full. Damn!

(Josie glanced at him nervously then looked away.)

JOSIE: You know... I... I don't *normally* do this kind of thing. Kneeling for men I'm not even dating, I mean.

ALAN: I never thought for a minute that you did. Not that there's anything wrong with it.

JOSIE: Right? It's just... that was a special moment.

(She shrugged.)

JOSIE: You saved me, and I wanted to... I wouldn't normally.

ALAN: You don't have to explain it to me, Josie.

JOSIE: Well...

ALAN: We're in a high pressure situation, right now. We're allowed to take time out from being ourselves. So don't sweat it.

JOSIE: Okay. Thank you for understanding.

ALAN: Yeah? You want to thank me, do you? Well, nothing say thank you like...

(Josie started to giggle.)

JOSIE: Stop it.

(Alan smiled.)

ALAN: Just teasing. That *was* damned good though. Thank you.

JOSIE: Yeah? You want to thank me? Well, nothing says thank you like...

(The two of them started to laugh.)

ALAN: That just sounds wrong coming from you.

JOSIE: I know, right?

(They chuckled some more then Josie smiled.)

JOSIE: Al?

ALAN: Yeah?

JOSIE: Claymore and Sierra are probably wondering what's keeping us.

ALAN: Let them wonder.

JOSIE: Well...

(She smiled.)

JOSIE: We should go and see them, really. Let them know we're okay.

ALAN: Yeah, I guess so.

(He then stood up and wrapped his towel around himself.)

ALAN: Let's go. Just try to keep your hands off me once we get outside. I know I'm irresistible to women, but the least you can do is try to restrain yourself.

JOSIE: Well, okay. It won't be easy, but... oh, no... wait... yes it will.

ALAN: Harsh.

JOSIE: Hardly. Come on.

(With that, she headed for the door. With a shrug, Alan followed on and they headed into the corridor together.)

ALAN: You reckon they're on the deck still?

JOSIE: I doubt it. They probably came in after we did. It was pissing down.

ALAN: Yeah, but it's stopped now.

JOSIE: True, but you know what *they're* like.

(She grinned.)

JOSIE: They'd have dried off, sat down then started kissing again.

ALAN: Oh, *more* than likely.

JOSIE: I bet they're still kissing now.

ALAN: Probably.

(He shrugged.)

ALAN: So, where...

JOSIE: I dunno, let's try in here first.

(She then eased open the door to the living room.)

JOSIE: If...

ALAN: Oh!

(The two of them then stood there gobsmacked. Their jaws were on the floor and their eyes were bulging. On the sofa across the room, Sierra was flat on her back with her legs in the air, writhing in delight. On top of her, Claymore was rhythmically thrusting his penis deep inside her. Her cries of ecstasy were that of a woman in the throes of greatly heightened pleasure. Having stared at them for a good fifteen seconds, Alan finally ended his catatonia with a cringe.)

ALAN: I don't want to see his arse bouncing up and down anymore, Josie.

JOSIE: I...

(At this point, Sierra opened her eyes and spotted them.)

JOSIE: Uh-oh.

(Much to her astonishment, however, Sierra simply smiled at her then closed her eyes and continued to enjoy her moment. Breathing a deep sigh of relief, Josie then closed the door again.)

JOSIE: They were... you know...

ALAN: They were shagging!

JOSIE: Yeah. Well... no. They were making love. Did you notice how rhythmic and sensual it was?

ALAN: No. It just looked like shagging to me.

JOSIE: Right...

(She cringed.)

JOSIE: You do know the difference, right?

ALAN: Of course I do. *Making love* is what women do for entertainment while you're shagging them.

(Josie looked to him emptily for a moment, then noticed he was struggling to keep a straight face.)

JOSIE: Alan!

(Alan started to laugh.)

ALAN: Sorry. Sorry. Couldn't resist that.

JOSIE: You're such a rogue.

ALAN: A loveable rogue, some would say.

JOSIE: Your mother doesn't count.

ALAN: She *does* count. It's spelling she has trouble with.

(Josie chuckled to herself.)

JOSIE: Can you stop saying silly things?

ALAN: It's unlikely, Josie.

JOSIE: Oh? And why's that?

ALAN: I'm in a good mood.

JOSIE: Yeah? Well... good.

ALAN: And you're very much responsible for that. That blowjob lifted my spirits no end.

JOSIE: Right...

(She blushed.)

JOSIE: Well, if anyone asks why you're in such a good mood... um... can you lie? Only, I get really embarrassed.

ALAN: Absolutely. If anyone asks, I sucked it myself.

JOSIE: What?

(Alan chuckled.)

ALAN: It's fine, Josie. I'll just tell them I'm happy because I managed to save you.

JOSIE: Right.

ALAN: Then you sucked my cock.

JOSIE: Alan!!!

ALAN: I'm kidding.  
JOSIE: Well, don't. I'm getting really embarrassed now.  
ALAN: Yeah, yeah. Fine. Come on, let's go and have a cup of tea or something.  
JOSIE: Ooh. Now that sounds like a plan.  
ALAN: Right?  
(He then headed away.)  
ALAN: Come on, ocean girl.  
JOSIE: Ocean girl?  
(Josie followed on wearing a miffed expression.)  
JOSIE: That's gonna be my nickname now, is it? Just because I fell in the sea?  
ALAN: Of course not.  
(He smirked.)  
ALAN: *That's* gonna be your nickname, because like you, the ocean's swallowed up a lot of seaman in its time.  
(Josie gasped.)  
JOSIE: Hey!!! I'm gonna slap you in a minute.  
ALAN: Uh-oh.  
(He then raced away.)  
JOSIE: Oh, no you don't. Come here!  
(She then chased after him, giggling playfully.)

---

One hour later, as The Waltham Voyager continued to cut through the sea, Claymore emerged onto the deck with a tray, containing five cups of coffee. Having handed one to a thoroughly ungrateful Graydon, he then headed to the back of the boat where Alan and Josie were seated. Placing the tray down, he glanced around then furrowed his brow.)  
CLAYMORE: Where's Sierra?  
ALAN: What do you mean, where's Sierra? She was inside with you.  
CLAYMORE: She *was*, yeah. She left the kitchen about ten minutes ago.  
JOSIE: She did?  
CLAYMORE: Yeah.  
ALAN: That's odd. She never came out here.  
CLAYMORE: Where the hell did she go then?  
JOSIE: To the toilet, I expect.  
CLAYMORE: Right... makes sense.  
(Alan grimaced uneasily.)  
ALAN: So... *you* made the coffee, did you?  
CLAYMORE: Well, yeah. Obviously. Sierra said she'd be back in a minute then never returned.  
ALAN: So *you* made the coffee?  
CLAYMORE: I just said so, didn't I?  
(Alan winced.)  
ALAN: I see.  
(Claymore rolled his eyes.)  
CLAYMORE: Oh, for fuck sake, not this again.  
ALAN: Sorry, mate, but yes. This again. You make a piss poor cup of coffee, mate. I mean really bad. Undrinkable.  
JOSIE: It can't be that bad, surely.  
ALAN: No? His own mum banished him from the kitchen.  
CLAYMORE: That wasn't because of my coffee making skills!



(He ruffled his neck indignantly.)

CLAYMORE: It was because of all the kitchen fires.

(Josie grimaced.)

JOSIE: Okay, now I'm worried.

ALAN: You should be. Don't drink it. You already had one near death experience today.

CLAYMORE: Oh, piss off. It'll be fine.

(Just then, Graydon spat his coffee out and bellowed to the back of the boat.)

GRAYDON: What the hell is this??? It tastes like rancid horse piss!

CLAYMORE: You cheeky...

ALAN: Nope. That's it. I'm slinging mine overboard.

CLAYMORE: Mate!

(Just then, Sierra emerged from the cabins wearing an expensive looking floral, off-the-shoulder summer dress. At once, they all performed a double take in her direction.)

CLAYMORE: Hot!

JOSIE: So cute.

ALAN: Yeah, but where the hell did she get it from?

JOSIE: Yeah, that's a point.

(Anxious to ask Graydon a similar question, Sierra stepped up to him and grimaced nervously.)

SIERRA: Graydon?

(Graydon looked her up and down lustfully.)

GRAYDON: Oh, my! Sexy, sexy, sexy, you!

SIERRA: Right... um... Graydon? Why do you have a closet full of women's clothes in the second bedroom?

GRAYDON: What? Why were you looking in *there*?

SIERRA: I was looking for spare toilet rolls, if you must know. Now answer the question!

(Graydon then found himself surrounded by the others, all dying to know the answer.

Knowing he'd have to explain, simply to avoid looking like he partook in unusual hobbies, he furrowed his brow then stared through the front windscreen.)

GRAYDON: If you must know, they belong to one of my many fancy women.

ALAN: You've got fancy women? With *that* face?

GRAYDON: Hey! Less of that, you.

(He ruffled his neck indignantly.)

GRAYDON: I'll have you know, when you're as fabulously wealthy as I am, such floozies are extremely easy to come by.

(He beamed at Sierra.)

GRAYDON: I treat them well.

CLAYMORE: Dude!

GRAYDON: What? I'm just saying... it's never too late, Sierra.

SIERRA: Gross! That's never gonna happen.

GRAYDON: Fine. Suit yourself. *Be* like that. Like I said, it's not like you floozies are difficult to come by.

SIERRA: I'm not a floozy!

CLAYMORE: I'm gonna slap you in a minute!

SIERRA: Me?

CLAYMORE: Of course not!

SIERRA: Oh... right... yeah.

(She blushed.)

SIERRA: Carry on.

CLAYMORE: I was finished.

GRAYDON: Good. Now clear off and leave me in peace.

JOSIE: Wait. I still have questions.

GRAYDON: Oh, jolly.

JOSIE: What were her clothes doing in the *second* bedroom?

ALAN: What does that matter?

JOSIE: Well, he's making out she was his floozy, as if she couldn't resist him or something.

Well, if that's the case, how come they didn't share the *master* bedroom?

GRAYDON: Well, obviously, that's where my wife stays when *she* comes with me. I only use the second bedroom when I'm taking a *fancy woman* away for a few filthy nights at sea. I'm not an idiot, you know. My missus can smell another woman from a mile away.

JOSIE: Wow. You're an animal.

GRAYDON: Thank you.

ALAN: I don't think she meant it as a compliment, dude.

(He grimaced.)

ALAN: Did you?

JOSIE: No.

(She sneered.)

JOSIE: He's a disgrace.

(A miffed expression then crossed her brow.)

JOSIE: Hang on a minute.

GRAYDON: Oh, what now?

JOSIE: If you knew there were a shit ton of women's clothes on the boat, why didn't you tell Sierra? The poor thing's been stuck in that tiny swimsuit since yesterday morning!

SIERRA: Yeah!

(Graydon ruffled his neck indignantly.)

GRAYDON: Well, those clothes weren't mine to give away.

JOSIE: Yeah, right. That's not why you kept it quiet!

GRAYDON: Is too!

JOSIE: Lair!

GRAYDON: Am not!

CLAYMORE: He is. He's lying his arse off.

ALAN: Yup.

SIERRA: Obviously.

(She furrowed her brow.)

SIERRA: Come on, Graydon; be honest. Why didn't you tell me there was something else I could wear?

(Graydon glanced away and mumbled his reply.)

GRAYDON: And deprive myself of ogling your peachy arse in that skimpy swimsuit? What do you think I am? A poofa?

SIERRA: Sorry, what was that?

(Josie gaped.)

JOSIE: He said he's a poofa!

ALAN: Eh?

GRAYDON: I said nothing of the sort, you idiot. I said I didn't want to deprive myself of staring at Sierra's peachy arse because I'm *not* a poofa!

(He nodded sternly.)

GRAYDON: And I mumbled it for a reason.

JOSIE: Seriously? Are you gonna pretend you didn't want to hurt Sierra's precious feelings?

GRAYDON: Not at all. I mumbled it because I didn't want Claymore to hurt my precious face.

CLAYMORE: Then what's about to happen next is going to leave you seriously disappointed, mate.

SIERRA: No! Claymore, don't. There's no point in violence. We need him conscious, so he can drive the boat.

GRAYDON: What she said.

SIERRA: You can punch him *after* we make landfall.

GRAYDON: Oh, that's bloody nice that is.

(He shook his head.)

GRAYDON: Look, just go away. Away from *me*. Help Josie pick out an outfit or something. Just leave me alone.

JOSIE: That we can do.

SIERRA: Yeah. We don't particularly *enjoy* being around you anyway.

GRAYDON: And it's mutual. Be gone.

(He sneered.)

GRAYDON: Now I can't see your arse cheeks, you're even more pointless than you were before.

CLAYMORE: Nope! I'm hitting him!

ALAN: Mate!

CLAYMORE: What?

ALAN: Make sure you knock him out.

CLAYMORE: Deal!

JOSIE: Stop!

SIERRA: Yeah!

JOSIE: Enough, okay? Let's just go away and leave him be. The cold, hard fact is, we need him to drive the boat. So he can basically say and do whatever he likes and we have to tolerate it.

GRAYDON: Correct.

JOSIE: Until we're on land.

GRAYDON: Fuck.

JOSIE: So, come on, let's just go to the back or something. Anywhere where he can't antagonise us.

ALAN: Yeah, I guess.

CLAYMORE: Makes sense.

(Alan and Claymore then headed away towards the back of the boat again.)

JOSIE: Thanks, guys.

(She then looked to Sierra.)

JOSIE: Sierra?

SIERRA: Yeah?

JOSIE: You've got work to do.

SIERRA: I have?

JOSIE: Yes. I suck at picking out clothes. You know what I'm like.

SIERRA: Only too well.

JOSIE: Then I'm leaving the ball in your court. Go and grab me something.

SIERRA: Piss off. I'm not your butler.

(Josie's bottom lip drooped.)

JOSIE: Sierra...

SIERRA: Just kidding. I know, just the outfit. I'll be two minutes, tops.

(She then marched back into the cabin. As she did so, Josie looked to Graydon then snubbed him audibly.)

JOSIE: Bye!

GRAYDON: Bollocks.  
(Josie then headed to the back and sat with Alan and Claymore.)  
JOSIE: That told him.  
ALAN: That told him nothing.  
JOSIE: What?  
CLAYMORE: *We'll* tell him later.  
ALAN: And nothing *tells* someone like two black eyes and a broken nose.  
CLAYMORE: Yup. So for his sake, I hope we don't have to tell him twice.  
(Alan and Claymore then sat there sneering manfully. Watching them, Josie could only grimace.)  
JOSIE: Oh, boy.

---

True to her word, Sierra returned from the second bedroom well within two minutes; holding an outfit under her arm. She then called Josie over and led her inside to change. Left behind, Alan and Claymore merely sat back and watched the ocean.

ALAN: Mate?  
CLAYMORE: Yeah?  
ALAN: The ocean is really fucking boring.  
CLAYMORE: I know, right? Nothing but endless blue. With the canal the scenery changes from minute to minute. This is just like a vast watery desert.  
ALAN: Yeah...  
(He gave him a sideways glance.)  
ALAN: You know an ocean is technically a form of desert, right?  
CLAYMORE: What?  
ALAN: You know, like a tundra. Or high mountain ranges.  
(Claymore stared through him.)  
CLAYMORE: What?  
ALAN: You didn't cover that in school?  
CLAYMORE: I chased girls and smoked cigarettes behind the bike shed at school, mate.  
ALAN: Right. Well, trust me, an ocean is a desert.  
(Claymore mused to himself.)  
CLAYMORE: Because beaches are sandy?  
(Now it was Alan's turn to stare through him.)  
ALAN: What?  
CLAYMORE: Well, deserts are sandy.  
ALAN: Sandy ones are, yeah. Tundra's and mountains aren't.  
CLAYMORE: You've lost me.  
ALAN: It's not difficult, mate. A desert is a place on the planet where there's little to no biological productivity to support life. That's sand dunes, arctic tundra, mountains and the deepest parts of the ocean.  
CLAYMORE: Oh. So, like... you mean... there's no fish in the deep bit, so it's a desert?  
ALAN: Sort of, yeah. It's all to do with the lack of sunlight down there.  
CLAYMORE: Lack of sunlight? Then how does that make it a desert? Deserts are *notorious* for their sunshine. Are you sure you're not making this up?  
(At this point, Alan could only flop in his seat and sigh in defeat.)  
ALAN: I give up, mate. You're an idiot.  
CLAYMORE: No, I'm not. You're just really bad at explaining things.  
(Just then, Sierra and Josie emerged from the cabin. Having changed into a tight-fitting mini-dress, Josie looked somewhat uneasy. She'd never had any confidence in how other people

would react to her when she wore a dress; courtesy of her older brothers teasing her. Alan, however, wasn't about to do the same. As soon as he saw her, his jaw dropped and he had to perform a double take.)

ALAN: Me likey!

CLAYMORE: Looking good, Josie.

(Josie blushed.)

JOSIE: Thank you.

SIERRA: See? As always, you're a hit, babe.

JOSIE: Are you sure? I mean, it's not too much is it? Doesn't look like I'm trying too hard, does it?

SIERRA: No! It never has. You're a sexy girl. When you wear sexy things it just looks natural.

JOSIE: Sexy?

(She bit her lip.)

JOSIE: I'm not sure about that.

ALAN: I fucking am. And I'm right fucking confused about it.

JOSIE: Oh?

ALAN: How come you're sexy when you're acting all boyish *and* when you're being all girly? You're a fucking enigma, woman!

(He then turned bright red and hid his face.)

ALAN: I just shared my weird thoughts out loud again, didn't I?

CLAYMORE: Just a little bit, yeah.

ALAN: Shit.

(Just then, Graydon started to laugh out loud from up ahead of them.)

GRAYDON: This is gold. Pure gold.

(Alan raised a suspicious eyebrow then stepped towards him.)

ALAN: What is?

GRAYDON: Right now, here I am, Efland's most wanted man, sailing right in between two of their battleships. And they have no fucking idea it's me.

(As Alan glanced at the battleships, quite some distance on either side of them, Graydon slapped the dashboard in amusement.)

GRAYDON: They'll just identify the boat As James Waltham's and let us through. Morons! (Alan smiled.)

ALAN: Good stuff.

GRAYDON: Good? It's hilarious!

(He slowed his laughter to a giggle then wiped his eyes.)

GRAYDON: No, no; it's priceless. The prime minister will have every available guard and soldier on the lookout for me. Efland's biggest military operation in decades. And here I am, right under their noses, merrily sailing past without a care in the world.

(He beamed.)

GRAYDON: I couldn't have planned it better. And the best part is, we're about to enter Amarian waters. Once we're in there, it's game over.

ALAN: Sweet.

(He then flinched.)

ALAN: We're entering Amarian waters? Already?

GRAYDON: Indeed. That's Amaria over there, look.

(He pointed to the horizon, and sure enough land was in sight.)

GRAYDON: We'll be there in no time.

ALAN: Cool. Okay. Excellent.

(He then scampered back to the others.)

ALAN: Guys! Guys, this is huge!  
JOSIE: What's huge?  
ALAN: Apart from my dong...  
CLAYMORE: Dude, why?  
ALAN: Because the public deserve to know, but that's not important right now.  
(He nodded.)  
ALAN: We're almost at Amaria.  
CLAYMORE: Shit! So soon?  
SIERRA: Wait, that's a good thing, isn't it?  
CLAYMORE: Well, yeah, but... nerve wracking.  
JOSIE: And then some. Our new start is about to begin.  
ALAN: Exactly. Thankfully, we've got...  
(His face then dropped.)  
CLAYMORE: Got what?  
ALAN: We've got a bag full of Efland pounds; the wrong currency.  
CLAYMORE: Shit. I never thought of that.  
JOSIE: That's not going to be a problem, is it? There has to be a place where you can exchange it for Amarian pesos, surely.  
SIERRA: That depends where we make landfall. If the port is big enough, then yeah.  
(She then gasped in horror.)  
SIERRA: Which raises another problem. How the hell are we going to get *out* of the port?  
ALAN: Crap. Good point.  
CLAYMORE: We're undocumented illegal immigrants.  
ALAN: Exactly.  
CLAYMORE: In that case, we need Graydon to stop at a tiny port and hope nobody notices us sneaking into the country.  
ALAN: Which means we'll be broke because there's unlikely to be a money exchange there.  
JOSIE: Damn. Both options really suck.  
(She nodded.)  
JOSIE: We need to pick the lesser of the two evils.  
SIERRA: A small port with no currency exchange then. Being broke for a day or two is a far better choice than being deported back to Efland as illegal immigrants.  
ALAN: Agreed.  
JOSIE: Absolutely.  
CLAYMORE: Okay. I'll have a word with fuck face.  
(He then strutted towards Graydon. As he did so, Sierra sucked her teeth then glanced out to sea.)  
SIERRA: Nervous.  
(Upon reaching Graydon, Claymore stood tall to impose himself on him then snarled.)  
CLAYMORE: Graydon?  
GRAYDON: Oh, what now?  
(He then smirked.)  
GRAYDON: What are you doing? Are you trying to look tough in a bid to intimidate me?  
(Claymore relaxed his stance then glanced away innocently.)  
CLAYMORE: I was just going to ask you a question.  
GRAYDON: Then the answer is yes. You *did* look like a tit. Far from intimidating, in fact.  
CLAYMORE: That wasn't the question. The question is, which port are you heading to?  
GRAYDON: I don't know.  
CLAYMORE: What?  
GRAYDON: Well, obviously I *do* know. I just can't recall the name.

CLAYMORE: Right... look, never mind that, is there a currency exchange and will we be able to hop off the boat unnoticed?

GRAYDON: There is indeed a currency exchange. And yes, you will be able to hop off the boat unnoticed.

CLAYMORE: Oh! Cool.

GRAYDON: Yup, hopping off the boat will be a doddle. It's when you try to leave *the port*, you'll have a problem.

CLAYMORE: Fuck!

GRAYDON: I'm kidding. We're heading for a tiny, private marina. And the staff there are just as accommodating as Sanchez back in Santa Lorena. If I ask them to, they'll just let you stroll through. *And* change that bag of currency you've got into pesos.

CLAYMORE: If you *ask* them to?

GRAYDON: Yes.

CLAYMORE: And will you?

GRAYDON: I don't know, let's think about that for a minute. If I don't ask them to let you through, you'll get arrested. Then deported! Once deported, you'll then tell the authorities that James Waltham is, in fact, the much despised Graydon James. As a result, assassins will come in the night and James Waltham will be no more.

(He nodded.)

GRAYDON: So, yes, I reckon it's safe to say I *will* ask them to let you through.

CLAYMORE: That's alright then.

(He then about turned and paced back towards Sierra.)

CLAYMORE: Panic over.

ALAN: Yeah?

JOSIE: What do you mean?

CLAYMORE: Well...

(As Claymore went on to explain what Graydon had said to him, Sierra smiled then glanced over the side of the boat. It was indeed a weight off her mind.)

SIERRA: We're gonna be fine, guys. I can feel it.

(Alan grinned.)

ALAN: Yeah? You *feel* it, do you? Claymore *felt* it was gonna be a great day yesterday. Smoothing sailing all the way up the canal, he said. Look what happened there.

CLAYMORE: Graydon happened.

SIERRA: That was so unfortunate.

(She smiled.)

SIERRA: I feel like our luck has to change sooner or later though, so why not now?

JOSIE: Well, here's hoping, babe.

CLAYMORE: Yup.

ALAN: Fair comment. I wouldn't say no to some good fortune right now; that's for sure.

---

As the boat continued onwards towards the port in Amaria, Graydon became increasingly relaxed. Their journey was finally nearing its end. The same, however, couldn't be said for the police captain and his crew of Smith, Erikson and Wilson. Their journey had been anything but plain sailing, and nerves were beginning to fray.)

CAPTAIN: How could you forget to buy food?

SMITH: I didn't forget, sir. You told me I couldn't.

CAPTAIN: I said no such thing.

ERIKSON: You did! He said we'd need supplies if we were heading to sea. You said supplies were for poofs.

WILSON: Since when was food just for poofs?

SMITH: That's what *I* said.

CAPTAIN: I said nothing of the sort. I said, you were all poofs. I never even mentioned food.

SMITH: No, but *I* did.

WILSON: And you said no.

CAPTAIN: Enough!

(He ruffled his neck.)

CAPTAIN: Bloody pointing fingers at people, whatever next?

ERIKSON: You pointed one at Smith.

SMITH: Yeah, you blamed me for the fact we've got no food.

CAPTAIN: Which I'm fully entitled to do! *I've* got rank!

WILSON: Don't we know it.

CAPTAIN: Shut up, you.

(He shook his head.)

CAPTAIN: Look, the bottom line is, we didn't get food because we didn't expect to be at sea this long.

(He grimaced.)

CAPTAIN: Nor did we expect to hit that storm. Nor did we expect to get hopelessly lost. But it's fine.

SMITH: *How* is it fine? We still don't even know where we are.

CAPTAIN: Yes, we do. We're just off the coast, look.

ERIKSON: The coast of where?

CAPTAIN: Does it matter?

WILSON: Yes! That could be anywhere. Efland, Amaria, Santa Lorena... what coast is it?

CAPTAIN: That's irrelevant!

WILSON: Hardly. We're the Efland police, sir. If that's Amaria or Santa Lorena they won't let us in!

CAPTAIN: Oh, stop being so defeatist. Whatever country it is, I'm sure they won't mind us popping into their marina to grab a sandwich or something.

ERIKSON: I'm sure they *will* mind, sir. They'll mind very much.

CAPTAIN: Well, they shouldn't.

SMITH: No, but they *will*. We're from Efland. If that's not Efland, we can't go there!

CAPTAIN: Wrong. Very wrong! We can simply claim it's an emergency. Maritime law, my friend. If you have an emergency such as sinking or you've run out of food, you're entitled to head for the nearest port. So, fuck you. As long as we don't *leave* the port, they won't mind at all.

(He rolled his eyes.)

CAPTAIN: Bloody know-alls. Trust me, I know the law. Seeing as we're genuinely out of food, we can pop in there any time we like.

SMITH: Fine. Let's go now then.

ERIKSON: Agreed.

CAPTAIN: Not now!

(He ruffled his neck.)

CAPTAIN: Soon! If we fail to spot Graydon and his chums, we'll head over there shortly.

ERIKSON: Graydon and his chums? Seriously? Fuck Graydon and his chums.

CAPTAIN: Excuse me?

ERIKSON: Who even cares? Fuck your promotion, Captain. I just want to eat something then go home. I'm cold, I'm tired and I'm sick to bloody death of this mission.

SMITH: So am I.



WILSON: Yeah!

(The captain snarled.)

CAPTAIN: I see. Like that, is it?

SMITH: Yes!

CAPTAIN: And that's the verdict of you all, is it?

ERIKSON: Yes!

CAPTAIN: Right. In that case... overruled!

(Suddenly, the sound of an engine on the ocean behind them rose into the air. At once, they all spun around and performed a double take. A large yacht was coming up on their starboard side.)

WILSON: That's the first boat we've seen since god knows when.

SMITH: They'll know where we are. We should ask them.

CAPTAIN: What for?

ERIKSON: So we know if we'll wandering into a foreign nation or not to buy supplies.

CAPTAIN: Like it makes any difference. As I already told you, if we say it's an emergency...

SMITH: Yeah, but ask anyway. I, for one, will feel a lot better about things if I know what country I'm heading to.

(The captain rolled his eyes.)

CAPTAIN: Fine, I'll ask, just as soon as he comes alongside.

(He nodded.)

CAPTAIN: Then we'll continue the mission. Whether you fuckers like it or not. This mission ends when I say it does.

SMITH: Fine. Tosser.

CAPTAIN: That's *sir* tosser, to you.

SMITH: More like *king* tosser.

ERIKSON: The exulted *grand* tosser of the republican guard, you mean.

CAPTAIN: Hey!

(He growled.)

CAPTAIN: You lot are pissing me off now. Just put a bloody sock in it. Any insubordination while I'm talking to this other boat and there'll be hell to pay.

(He then glanced towards the side of the boat where he was about to be passed by a much larger and taller vessel. Waiting for it to come alongside, he bit his lip then called out.)

CAPTAIN: Ahoy there!!!

(Unable to see anyone from such a lowly position, he furrowed his brow then tried again.)

CAPTAIN: I said ahoy there!!!

(Just then, one of the passengers raised her head and glanced over the side of the boat to see who was shouting. It proved to be an almighty mistake on her part. As soon as he saw her, Smith went pale and pointed at her with a look of horror on his brow.)

SMITH: That's her! That's her!

ERIKSON: That's who?

WILSON: What's he on about?

CAPTAIN: Who's her???

SMITH: That's Sierra!!! The terrorist!

CAPTAIN: What???

SMITH: It is!

CAPTAIN: Are you sure?

SMITH: Yes!!!

CAPTAIN: Then...

(His face lit up with joy.)

CAPTAIN: Graydon must be on there too!!! Men! Draw your weapons!!!  
(On the much larger boat at this time, Sierra swiftly sat down and whimpered.)  
SIERRA: We're in trouble!!!  
ALAN: We are?  
SIERRA: He saw me.  
CLAYMORE: Who did?  
SIERRA: The guard who tried to arrest me back in Harwell! My next door neighbour. He's on that little boat next to us.  
(Josie whimpered.)  
JOSIE: This is a joke, right?  
SIERRA: I wish it was.  
JOSIE: And he definitely saw you?  
SIERRA: He pointed at me and yelled "It's her".  
JOSIE: Shit. That's a bad sign.  
CLAYMORE: Wait. What are you on about?  
ALAN: Yeah, what little boat?  
SIERRA: The one next to us. Didn't you hear them yelling at us?  
ALAN: No.  
(He then peered over the side of the boat before swiftly throwing himself to the ground.)  
ALAN: Get down!!!  
(Needing no second invitation, the others immediately jumped to the floor with him. And just in the nick of time. As soon as the last one hit the deck, the Captain and his team opened fire on them.)  
GRAYDON: What the living fuck??? Who's doing that??? Hey! We're in Amaria!  
ALAN: Just get us the fuck out of here, Graydon!!!  
GRAYDON: Well, fucking, duh!!!  
(He then slammed the power lever forwards and the boat rocketed forth towards the port. Thrown about in its wake, the captain and his crew were far from amused.)  
CAPTAIN: Cunt! Thinks he's funny, does he?  
SMITH: Well, he's not.  
CAPTAIN: Indeed. After them, men!!!  
ERIKSON: Um... you have the controls, sir.  
CAPTAIN: Right... good point.  
(He beamed.)  
CAPTAIN: Let's bag us some villains, boys. This is it!!! We're in business!!!  
(He then thrust the throttle forth and zoomed after them. As he did so, he laughed with maniacal joy at the thought of taking Graydon down and the kudos that'd come with it.)  
CAPTAIN: Say your prayers, Graydon James!!! It's time to pay the piper!!!

---

As Graydon powered the boat forth, just about peering over the top of the dashboard through fear of being shot, his four travelling companions remained on the floor. The gunshots from the crew of the other boat were unrelenting. Unsurprisingly, they were all somewhat mortified. Having thought their days of being shot at were over, this latest sortie was one nightmare too many.

SIERRA: We were so close.  
JOSIE: So close it hurts.  
(She snarled.)  
JOSIE: Nope. Let's not think like that. We need to find a solution.  
ALAN: Like what? They've got guns and we haven't!

CLAYMORE: And even if we did, I wouldn't fancy lifting my head over the side of the boat to fire one right now.

ALAN: Yeah.

(He grimaced.)

ALAN: Right now we're relying entirely on speed.

CLAYMORE: Shit.

ALAN: What do you mean, shit?

CLAYMORE: You've seen the size of this boat, mate.

(Alan beamed.)

ALAN: Good idea. Not sure how speed comes into it, but you're right. We should use our size advantage and ram them.

CLAYMORE: That's not what I was saying!

(He rolled his eyes.)

CLAYMORE: I'm saying little boats tend to be far quicker than yachts, mate.

ALAN: Right, yeah. That's true.

JOSIE: So we don't even have a speed advantage?

CLAYMORE: No.

(He bit his lip.)

CLAYMORE: Unless they've got one of those crappy, wooden fishing boats.

SIERRA: They haven't. It looks a bit like the red one we stole.

CLAYMORE: Shit.

(He sighed.)

CLAYMORE: Then we've got nothing.

ALAN: Defeatist!

JOSIE: Yeah. We've got a height advantage which makes shooting us unlikely as long as we stay down.

ALAN: Plus, we can ram them.

CLAYMORE: Mate, will you stop going on about ramming them?

ALAN: Why? It's a bloody good idea.

SIERRA: Doesn't *sound* like it. *Their* boat is small and manoeuvrable. I'd imagine yachts are really cumbersome.

CLAYMORE: They are.

ALAN: Even so, ramming them is all we've got.

CLAYMORE: Mate, it'd be like trying to swat a fly with a set of dumbbells.

ALAN: *You're* a dumbbell!

SIERRA: He's what?

ALAN: Sorry. Got a bit flustered.

(He then threw out his palms in despair.)

ALAN: We need to think of something else then. If ramming them won't work, what else have we got?

(Josie bit her lip.)

JOSIE: Range? I mean, can a tiny boat like that handle the deep sea, what with the crazy high waves and such? Little boats don't fare too well on the open ocean, I heard.

(She sighed.)

JOSIE: I know that sounds desperate, but...

SIERRA: We *are* desperate.

ALAN: Yeah.

(He grimaced.)

ALAN: But not *that* desperate. No offence, Josie.

JOSIE: None taken, I was just putting it out there.

ALAN: Don't get me wrong, if there were storms nearby still, we could head into one and shit face there would be screwed if he tried to follow.

(He glanced at the sky.)

ALAN: There's not a fucking cloud in the sky now though.

CLAYMORE: So we've got nothing.

ALAN: Exactly. They hold nearly all the cards. I mean, chances are we'll run out of fuel before they do as well.

SIERRA: I guess yacht engines are really thirsty, huh?

ALAN: Yeah. Plus, we've sailed quite a distance already.

JOSIE: Shit. Shit, shit, shit.

CLAYMORE: Yeah...

ALAN: Uh-huh...

SIERRA: Fuck.

CLAYMORE: Al?

ALAN: Yeah?

CLAYMORE: We've got no choice *but* to try ramming them, have we?

ALAN: See?

(He nodded.)

ALAN: I'll crawl over to Graydon and tell him.

(On the other boat, at this time, the captain powered forth, maintaining a psychotic smile. He could smell victory and nothing was about to stop him from achieving it. Especially his own subordinates.)

CAPTAIN: Put that radio away, Erikson!!!

ERIKSON: But, sir...

CAPTAIN: Put the radio away and keep shooting at them.

ERIKSON: But shouldn't we alert HQ that we've found them?

CAPTAIN: God no! Don't be insane!

SMITH: How is that insane?

CAPTAIN: Because they'll come out all guns blazing and steal our bloody kudos. That's how!

ERIKSON: What kudos? If we carry on like this, there won't *be* any kudos!

CAPTAIN: What?

ERIKSON: We're just wasting bullets right now. We can't see them. The deck of their boat is way too high. All we've done is make holes in the chrome.

CAPTAIN: Then aim at the engine!

WILSON: And where's that?

CAPTAIN: What?

WILSON: Where's the engine on a massive yacht? Front? Back? Where?

(The captain snarled.)

CAPTAIN: I don't fucking know, do I? Shoot the entire fucking boat until you find it!

ERIKSON: Right...

CAPTAIN: And put that sodding radio away, Erikson; like I told you.

(He beamed.)

CAPTAIN: These arrests will be *mine*. I mean ours. The glory, the success, the fame, the promotions... mine, all mine.

SMITH: Ours!

CAPTAIN: That too! I tell you, chaps, no fucker from HQ is going to steal *my* glory. Not now, not ever. And damned right too. *We* found him; us. All by ourselves. We've succeeded where the entire army and navy failed, so if you think I'm going to let them come in and steal my thunder now, you're fucking mental!

ERIKSON: Well...

(He then mumbled under his breath.)

ERIKSON: One of us definitely is.

CAPTAIN: Sorry, what was that?

(He then swerved the boat to one side and laughed out loud.)

CAPTAIN: Did you see that? The silly fucker tried to swerve into us. Well two can play at that game.

ERIKSON: No!!!

CAPTAIN: What? Why not?

SMITH: What do you mean, why not? For *obvious* reasons!!! You don't swerve into a boat ten times the size of your own.

CAPTAIN: Right...

(He scoffed.)

CAPTAIN: Fine. You make a good point... but you're still a prick. Now keep shooting.

WILSON: And you won't...

CAPTAIN: I won't ram it! Now shoot!

WILSON: Well... okay...

(Back on board Graydon's boat at this time, Alan was crouching next to Graydon as they attempted to come up with a plan of action. Not wishing to be left out, Claymore, Sierra and Josie had gathered just behind. Alas, this discussion didn't seem to be any more fruitful than their previous one.)

GRAYDON: Literally, this is all I've got. If I keep my head down they can't shoot me.

That's it. Nothing to fight back with whatsoever.

ALAN: No, you can also try ramming them again.

GRAYDON: What for? I missed by a country mile last time. As I was always going to.

(He sighed.)

GRAYDON: It was embarrassing. Even with all the gunfire going on, I swear I could hear their driver laughing at me.

ALAN: Graydon, no. Embarrassing or not, you *have* to keep trying.

CLAYMORE: Yeah, it's all we've got.

GRAYDON: Then like I said, we've got nothing. Ramming them isn't going to work.

(He growled.)

GRAYDON: If only my wife had left her shotgun on the boat. That'd come in bloody handy right now. But no, trust that sappy bint to take it back home with her again.

SIERRA: Eh? Why would she need a shotgun on a boat?

ALAN: Who bloody cares? Let's focus on the matter in hand, shall we?

GRAYDON: I am *focussed* on the matter in hand. I was just saying that her shotgun would have come in handy.

(An enlightened expression then crossed his brow.)

GRAYDON: Wait a minute! A gun!

(He swiftly glanced in Alan's direction.)

GRAYDON: The flare gun.

(Alan's eyes lit up.)

ALAN: You've got a flare gun?

GRAYDON: Of course, I have. What sort of idiot would head out to sea without one?

ALAN: Right...

(Graydon rolled his eyes.)

GRAYDON: Go and get it. It's in the master bedroom!

ALAN: Whereabouts?

GRAYDON: Good point. It's in the top drawer, at the back.

ALAN: On it.

(He started to scramble to his feet.)

GARYDON: My wife's *underwear* drawer.

(Alan swiftly sunk down.)

ALAN: On second thoughts, Claymore, *you* go.

CLAYMORE: Fuck off. I'm not going through some strange woman's underwear drawer.

(Josie rolled her eyes.)

JOSIE: Wow. Seriously?

(She scoffed.)

JOSIE: *I'll* go.

(She then rose into a crouched position and scrambled into the cabin. Having watched her go, Alan looked to Graydon.)

ALAN: I take it you keep the flares in the drawer with it.

GRAYDON: No, the flare is in the chamber, ready to be fired.

ALAN: Cool. Why hide it in your wife's underwear drawer though?

GRAYDON: So none of my fancy women would find it, obviously. After I get bored and trade them in for younger models, they tend to get a bit angry, you see?

(He nodded.)

GRAYDON: I keep the kitchen knives locked away for the same reason; safety first.

CLAYMORE: Wow. What a...

GRAYDON: Safety conscious citizen? Indeed.

(He rolled his eyes.)

GRAYDON: Any other pointless questions? Or can I get on with driving the boat now?

(Sierra glanced between Alan and Graydon then bit her lip and spoke up nervously.)

SIERRA: Um... I have one.

GRAYDON: Oh, good.

SIERRA: Why *did* your wife have a shotgun on the boat, Graydon?

(Graydon shrugged.)

GRAYDON: She just wanted to shoot a dolphin, that's all.

SIERRA: Oh.

(She then gasped in horror.)

SIERRA: Why would anyone want to shoot a dolphin???

GRAYDON: Why wouldn't they? It looked like fun.

ALAN: Dude...

GRAYDON: Oh, stop whining. She missed anyway. She only got one shot off and the bloody thing vanished at the rate of knots.

SIERRA: Good.

GRAYDON: She really is a terrible shot. You and her would get along *well*, Claymore.

CLAYMORE: Hey!

ALAN: Look, never mind that. This flare gun... powerful is it?

GRAYDON: Powerful? Absolutely! If you shot a dolphin with it, it wouldn't be getting up again afterwards, that's for certain.

SIERRA: Of course it wouldn't *get up*, it's a dolphin.

GRAYDON: I'm just saying, it's a good quality bit of kit.

(He nodded.)

GRAYDON: My wife chose it, you see? And she doesn't waste money on any old rubbish, you know? She has standards to maintain.

(He beamed.)

GRAYDON: I'm not going to miss her one bit. I'll have a floozy on each arm and no stupid wife, spending money quicker than I can earn it.

(He snarled.)

GRAYDON: We just need to shake off that fucking boat.

(Just then, Josie re-emerged holding a large, red, flare gun.)

JOSIE: Got it.

GRAYDON: Excellent. Alan, you're up.

JOSIE: No, he's not.

ALAN: What?

JOSIE: There were no other flares in the drawer; just a single shot in the chamber. That means we get once chance; miss and we're screwed.

(She bit her lip.)

JOSIE: So it's down to me.

ALAN: No. No way am I gonna let you poke your head over the side of the boat while we're being shot at. No fucking chance.

JOSIE: Then what do you suggest? Are *you* gonna do it?

ALAN: Yes!

JOSIE: You're gonna raise your head above the side of the boat, blast a flare harmlessly into the water then come back again, are you? How's *that* gonna help?

ALAN: Cheek!

JOSIE: Sorry, but you're a terrible shot. Not as bad as Claymore, but still...

CLAYMORE: Hey!

JOSIE: Right. Sorry.

(She smiled.)

JOSIE: Letting you do it makes no sense, Alan. I'm the best marksman here, so it's my time to shine. Let me do this.

ALAN: But, Josie, if you get shot...

SIERRA: She won't.

ALAN: You don't know that.

SIERRA: I do. If she goes right to the very back of the boat, it'll be fine. Listen!

(Everyone fell silent and listened carefully.)

SIERRA: They're right next to us, parallel with the front of the boat.

CLAYMORE: Yeah, they are.

GRAYDON: The fuckers are trying to shot through the hull and find the engine, I'd wager.

JOSIE: Which might just leave me the perfect opportunity.

GRAYDON: I hope so, we're about two minutes from reaching the port.

SIERRA: What?

(She glanced ahead and sure enough, they were rapidly approaching land.)

ALAN: Dude, you need to take evasive action. We can't go into the port with them up our arses, it's a dead end.

GRAYDON: I will in a minute. First, Josie...

JOSIE: I'm gone.

(With that, she put her head down then charged to the back of the boat. As the others looked on anxiously, she glanced above her head to check there were indeed no bullets, then nodded to herself.)

JOSIE: You can do this, Josie. You know you can. Have some self-belief for once.

(She then rose above the edge of the boat and pointed the gun in the direction of the tiny boat next to them. She then bit her lip. From her vantage point she could see all four of their attackers. One driving, and three shooting at the hull. Knowing she only one chance to get it right, she bit her lip then mused to herself.)

JOSIE: The most effective target would be...

(Her eyes then lit up and she steadied the gun in readiness to shoot.)

JOSIE: Yup. That'll do nicely.

(She then fired. With a deafening boom, the flare zoomed from the barrel and rocketed into the electrical panel near the captain's feet. Before the captain knew what had hit them, an explosion of smoke ensued and their boat instantly began to slow to a crawl.)

CAPTAIN: Fuck!!!

SMITH: What happened???

CAPTAIN: I think the engine blew up!!!

ERIKSON: Aw, bollocks!!!

(Overjoyed by the fact that her adversaries hadn't even seen her, Josie beamed with delight.)

JOSIE: Yes!

(With that, she ducked back down then crawled back to the others.)

JOSIE: I got it. I shot the electrics.

GRAYDON: That would explain it.

(He glanced in the tiny, remaining section of side mirror that hadn't been decimated by gunfire.)

GRAYDON: They're slowing to a bloody crawl. Nice shot.

JOSIE: Thank you.

ALAN: You're the best.

SIERRA: Yes, she is.

CLAYMORE: Nice one, Josie.

JOSIE: Thanks.

GRAYDON: Yes, well, save your little girl's tea party for later. We've got a decent lead over them now, so I'm taking us into the marina.

(He nodded.)

GRAYDON: If all goes to plan, we'll be *out* of the marina again and away before those silly fuckers can even drift close to the shore.

(His face then lit up.)

GRAYDON: Losers.

---

With their boat spluttering and struggling to make any headway, the captain and his three long-suffering subordinates were dejected to say the least. Only a few moments ago it'd all looked so promising. Now, all they could do was stare out of the front of the boat at Graydon's vessel heading into the marina.

SMITH: Captain?

CAPTAIN: Yes?

SMITH: They're getting away.

(The captain slowly turned to face him then spoke up with more than a little sarcasm in his voice.)

CAPTAIN: Are they? Are they really? Is that what's happening here, Smithy? Are they getting away?

SMITH: Well... yeah...

CAPTAIN: I see. Then it's a good thing you pointed it out really, because I'd *never* have figured it out on my own. I don't have the competence to make simple deductions, you see? I won my rank of captain in the army tombola.

SMITH: Um...

(The captain looked to Wilson and Erikson.)

CAPTAIN: Would anyone else like to help me with my understanding of the situation?

Wilson?

WILSON: No, sir.



CAPTAIN: Erikson? Perhaps you'd like to teach me how to put a hat on or something?

ERIKSON: No, I'm fine, sir.

CAPTAIN: I see. Just Smithy, is it?

SMITH: Sir, I was only saying...

(The captain flapped furiously.)

CAPTAIN: You drooling halfwit! I can bloody *see* they're getting away! Of course, they're getting away. Our fucking boat just died!

(He sneered.)

CAPTAIN: Just when we had them where we wanted them too.

(He kicked the panel by his feet.)

CAPTAIN: I could have been boosted up to Major. Maybe even General. I'd have been a hero.

ERIKSON: Just you, sir?

CAPTAIN: Oh, shut up.

(He hung his head.)

CAPTAIN: How could it all go so horribly wrong?

SMITH: Well, the engine blew up.

(Again, the captain glowered at him and threw a tsunami of sarcasm in his direction.)

CAPTAIN: Did it really, Smithy? Is that what happened? I had no idea. I'm not trained in spotting obvious things that happen right before my very eyes, you see? If you hadn't been here to *tell* me that, I'd have just assumed the boat was tired and needed a nap.

SMITH: Point taken, sir.

CAPTAIN: Good! Pillock.

(He sighed.)

CAPTAIN: I guess it's time to face facts here, chaps. We'll never catch the fucker now.

ERIKSON: Um, actually, sir, the tide seems to doing us something of a favour right now.

CAPTAIN: What?

(Erikson nodded to the front of the boat.)

ERIKSON: We're drifting right towards that beach at the side of the marina.

CAPTAIN: Hmm...

SMITH: Interesting.

CAPTAIN: Yes. It is. It's very interesting indeed, actually. We seem to have panicked Graydon into coming ashore prematurely.

SMITH: Sir?

CAPTAIN: Unless I'm very much mistaken, this is town of Rainsford in North Efland.

ERIKSON: Really?

CAPTAIN: It certainly looks like it. We used to come here for our holidays when I was a kid.

(He beamed.)

CAPTAIN: This is perfect. We were the only officers to find Graydon *and* we managed to do so *before* he escaped abroad. My promotion will be double handsome!

ERIKSON: We'll have to catch the bastard first though.

CAPTAIN: Obviously. And it's more than possible, men.

(He smirked.)

CAPTAIN: Graydon will have to moor the boat then get past whatever security measures they have at the marina. That'll slow him down a tad.

WILSON: So we're still in the game?

CAPTAIN: Could well be, my friend. We could well be.

(He nodded.)

CAPTAIN: Not that you're my friend, Wilson, that was just a phrase. I couldn't be bothered to call you a cunt, that's all. But to elaborate on my point, we could indeed be in the game. (He bit his lip.)

CAPTAIN: Graydon and his chums will have a head-start, but not by much, I'd wager. And Graydon is a fat bastard; catching him up won't be too hard. We just need to pick up their trail.

(He nodded.)

CAPTAIN: As soon as we're able to get off this floating pile of shit they call a boat, we'll search the whole fucking town if we have to. And once we pick up on that bastard's scent, we won't let go. Like dogs!

WILSON: Sir!

CAPTAIN: We'll track him down like bloodhounds, then savage him like bull terriers. Him *and* his cronies!

SMITH: I can't wait, sir.

(He snarled.)

SMITH: Sierra made a cunt of me for years; pretending to be this cute little thing who wouldn't hurt a fly, when all the while she was nothing but a traitorous terrorist. She needs to pay for that.

CAPTAIN: Yes, yes she does. But Graydon is our priority, remember?

SMITH: I know that, sir, but even so. We've been to hell and back for days now, and it all started because of Sierra. I need to make her pay. And I mean dearly!

ERIKSON: Then let's get ready to disembark.

CAPTAIN: I'm *always* ready.

ERIKSON: Good, only the tide's coming in really quickly and I'm pretty sure we're going to run aground in a minute.

WILSON: Run aground? What's that?

ERIKSON: Seriously? Are you stupid or something?

WILSON: No.

(He shrugged modestly.)

WILSON: I've just never heard that phrase before.

ERIKSON: Fine. It means the water's about to get too shallow.

SMITH: So the hull's going to bury itself in the seabed.

CAPTAIN: We'll stop dead.

ERIKSON: Just shy of the beach.

(Wilson groaned.)

WILSON: Aw, crap. We're gonna have to wade through the shallows, aren't we?

ERIKSON: Obviously.

WILSON: Fuck.

CAPTAIN: Stop whining you. We've been given a second chance here. If the tide had been heading the other way, we'd be floating off out to sea right now. We'd have been in deep shit. Instead, the tide is kindly taking us towards the beach.

(He shrugged.)

CAPTAIN: Okay, it's not ideal, but seeing as we have no power whatsoever, we have to go wherever we wash up.

(He pointed to the beach up ahead.)

CAPTAIN: And that's not bad. Not bad at all.

(He nodded sternly.)

CAPTAIN: Okay, men. As we've established, we're about to run aground, so if I was you, I'd hold onto something. Once the hull hits the seabed, we might get...

(In that moment, the inevitable happened. The bottom of the boat slammed into the ocean floor. Such was the sudden, powerful impact, the boat jolted violently, sending the captain flying onto his backside. Having had the good sense to hold onto something, his three subordinates all watched him thud into the base of the control panel then turned their heads away, trying desperately not to laugh.)

ERIKSON: Um...

SMITH: *You* might want to hold onto something too, sir.

(The three of them then fell about laughing. Far from impressed with their behaviour, the captain scrambled to his feet then snarled.)

CAPTAIN: Funny, is it?

(Wilson replied with tears in his eyes.)

WILSON: No, sir!

CAPTAIN: Correct!

(He growled.)

CAPTAIN: Stop that! We're soldiers, not hyenas!

(He dusted himself down then sneered.)

CAPTAIN: Soldiers with a job to do. Let's go!

(With that, he charged forth then leapt over the side of the boat. With a gasp, his three subordinates all raced over to the edge to see if he was okay.)

SMITH: Sir???

ERIKSON: Captain? You okay?

(The captain yelled out in something of a panic.)

CAPTAIN: It's deeper than I thought!!!

(He then jumped to his feet. The water only came up to his midriff.)

CAPTAIN: Panic over. There was a big wave... made it seem deeper.

(He then started to wade towards the beach.)

CAPTAIN: Now come on, you wankers. We've got work to do!

(With his shrug, Smith, Wilson and Erikson then leapt overboard after him.)

CAPTAIN: We'll find that cunt if it's the last thing we do!

---

At the marina just along the coast, at this time, Graydon, Josie, Sierra, Alan and Claymore were all hurrying towards the exit to the town. In their way stood a lone security guard. Well aware that there were several more in the hut behind him, Sierra was somewhat unnerved. This was a foreign land and any check of their credentials would land them all in deep trouble. She needn't, however, have worried. As they approached the security man, he looked to Graydon and nodded.)

SECURITY: Ah. Good evening, Mr Waltham. You're in a hurry.

GRAYDON: Indeed. I'm late, you see?

SECURITY: Oh, dear. Nothing important, I hope.

GRAYDON: No, no, just a... um... private function.

SECURITY: I see.

(He gestured to Sierra, Claymore, Alan and Josie.)

SECURITY: Are these four with you?

GRAYDON: They are, yes.

(He smirked.)

GRAYDON: The ladies are singers and the gents are their hairdressers.

(He then made a limp-wristed gesture.)

SECURITY: Okay. As long as they're with you...

(He then waved them all through.)

SECURITY: Welcome to Caprice; Amaria's greatest resort town. Even if we do say so ourselves.

GRAYDON: Why, thank you.

(The guard then returned to the hut, leaving them to run through the gate and out into the streets of Caprice.)

GRAYDON: This way.

(He then darted to the right. Charging forth at his side, Alan growled.)

ALAN: Hairdressers???

GRAYDON: Quite. I thought you'd enjoy that one.

ALAN: Then you thought wrong. I wasn't a fan of the hand gesture either!

GRAYDON: Yes, well, we can discuss that later. Right now, if you hadn't forgotten, there's a group of police officers drifting towards the beach, on the verge of sneaking into the country to kill us all. Clearly they care very little for the fact they're in a foreign country, so I'd assume they're special forces. Therefore we need to get the hell out of here as soon as bloody possible. Let's focus on that!

(Josie then spoke up from just over his shoulder.)

JOSIE: Special forces? Are you serious?

GRAYDON: Well *ordinary* policemen and soldiers don't sneak into foreign nations to operate, do they? So I think it's a safe assumption. Those fuckers already had the audacity to attack us in Amarian waters, remember? *Must* be special forces.

CLAYMORE: Fuck.

GRAYDON: Sucks doesn't it? If fate was smiling on us, they'd have drifted out to sea after we disabled their boat, but no. Fate would rather be a cunt.

ALAN: Then get us out of here, Graydon.

GRAYDON: What do you mean, get us out of here?

ALAN: Lead us to safety, obviously. You know the area.

GRAYDON: Says who?

ALAN: What? You must do.

GRAYDON: Why must I?

JOSIE: Because you've been here before.

GRAYDON: No, I haven't!

SIERRA: Then how do you know the security men at the marina?

GRAYDON: Because I've been to *the marina* hundreds of times. I've never wandered into town though. I usually come by helicopter!

CLAYMORE: What???

GRAYDON: You heard me!

ALAN: Then why did you shout "this way" and make us run down here?

GRAYDON: Well... this way *looked* nicer.

CLAYMORE: You cock!

GRAYDON: Oh, what does it matter, anyway? We had to go one way or the other, did it matter who chose which?

ALAN: I suppose not.

GRAYDON: Well then.

(He ruffled his neck indignantly.)

GRAYDON: Getting all shitty with me for being decisive, whatever next?

ALAN: Slapping you for being lippy.

CLAYMORE: And a whole host of other horrible shit.

GRAYDON: I see.

JOSIE: Guys, don't be like that.

GRAYDON: I concur.

JOSIE: Beating him up can wait. Right now, we need to get the hell out of here.

SIERRA: And beat...

(Graydon growled at her.)

GRAYDON: Beat me up later?

SIERRA: Yes!

GRAYDON: So predictable.

ALAN: Yeah, well, never mind that, just put your heads down and run. At the very least, we need to find somewhere to hide. We're not out of the woods yet, remember.

CLAYMORE: We're really not. That police boat was washing up on the beach pretty rapidly last time I looked, so those coppers could be in town already.

(He sighed.)

CLAYMORE: We shouldn't have wasted time tying the boat up.

GRAYDON: Like I told you!

CLAYMORE: I can't help myself!

(He whimpered.)

CLAYMORE: It's like a compulsion.

GRAYDON: Idiot. I told you the staff there would be happy to do it for me, but no...

CLAYMORE: Stop whining.

JOSIE: Agreed!

GRAYDON: I wasn't whining, that was him.

CLAYMORE: No, it wasn't.

ALAN: Pack it in, will you? For fuck sake, there could well be coppers around the next corner, special forces no less, so the least you can do is try to keep quiet!

(Silence then descended. Albeit briefly.)

SIERRA: Um...

CLAYMORE: What's up, babe?

SIERRA: I don't think they are special forces, you know? I mean, one of them was my next door neighbour. If he was crack, army specialist, I'd have known, surely.

GRAYDON: That's the problem, Sierra; you *wouldn't* have. Special forces members don't wear identifying uniforms or anything. To you and I, they appear to be normal members of the police force or army.

SIERRA: I see.

(She sighed.)

SIERRA: Shit.

CLAYMORE: Don't worry, darling. We'll be fine. We just need to keep going until we find somewhere to lay low.

ALAN: Which can't happen soon enough.

GRAYDON: Indeed. I'm fucking knackered. I've run more in the last two days than I have in the last thirty years.

JOSIE: And it shows.

GRAYDON: Fuck you!

JOSIE: Charming.

ALAN: Seriously, can you lot give it a rest. We need to focus on getting the fuck out of here. If those special forces guys spot us, we're pretty much fucked.

CLAYMORE: We know that, mate. You don't need to hammer home just how much shit we might be in right now. We've all got the message.

ALAN: Good. Then shut up and focus on getting the hell out of here.

CLAYMORE: Fine.

(He rolled his eyes.)

CLAYMORE: Bloody tyrant.

ALAN: I heard that, you tosser.

(He then glanced ahead at a T-junction.)

ALAN: Left turn here, you lot.

SIERRA: Why left?

ALAN: Because the other way leads down to the ocean.

CLAYMORE: How do you know? You've never been here before.

ALAN: I *know*, Claymore, because you can *see* the bloody ocean from here. Not to mention the fact that the signpost says the *beach* is that way.

CLAYMORE: Right.

(He grimaced.)

CLAYMORE: Guess we're going left then.

ALAN: Good guess.

(With that, he hurtled around the corner, swiftly followed by the others. No sooner had they done so, however, an angry voice rose into the air that chilled them to the bone.)

CAPTAIN: There they are!!!

(Feeling like fortune had well and truly abandoned them, Alan, Claymore, Graydon, Sierra and Josie all shrieked then sprinted away. Like the cruellest twist of fate ever, they'd ran straight onto the beach road where the captain and his team were heading into town.

Desperate to catch these five fugitives and end their nightmare mission they all snarled and set off in pursuit.)

CAPTAIN: This ends now, boys.

SMITH: Good. That terrorist bitch needs to die.

(Erikson gave him a sideways glance.)

ERIKSON: You really don't like that girl, do you?

SMITH: No!

ERIKSON: It's not because she's a terrorist though, is it? It's because she turned you down flat. Rejected you like a cappuccino with a fly in it.

SMITH: Fuck off.

(He ruffled his neck.)

SMITH: I hate her because I'm a patriot and she's a cunt. Not because she broke my heart.

(As his three fellow officers all proceeded to giggle, his eyes bulged and he quickly tried to qualify his comment.)

SMITH: I mean, she didn't break my heart! I don't even fancy her.

ERIKSON: Right...

SMITH: Fuck off.

(He sneered.)

SMITH: I just want to catch the fucking terrorist, okay? If that makes me a bad person then fucking shoot me.

CAPTAIN: Relax, Smithy. Nobody's going to shoot you. And we *will* catch your terrorist.

(He nodded sternly.)

CAPTAIN: We just need to give it everything we've got.

(Inspired by his speech, they all gritted their teeth and focussed hard on sprinting for all they were worth. They knew that if they gave everything they had, they could end their nightmare at last. Unfortunately for them, the five people they were chasing were of a similar mind-set. They knew that escaping was a matter of life and death and they weren't about to make it easy for their pursuers. Sadly, they had two major disadvantages. Graydon and Sierra.)

GRAYDON: I'm gonna have a fucking heart attack in a minute!!!

SIERRA: Don't leave me behind! You know I can't run that fast!!!

CLAYMORE: I'm right here with you, babe.

SIERRA: Yeah... for now!

CLAYMORE: Always.

GRAYDON: You'll happily leave *me* behind though, won't you?

ALAN: Leave you behind? Mate, I'm half tempted to trip you up and let them *have* you.

GRAYDON: Well that's bloody nice that is.

(He then gritted his teeth and desperately tried to fight off the pain that was reverberating around his body. In this, his moment of need, all his years of sloth and gluttony were rapidly catching up on him.)

GRAYDON: Why does food have to taste so nice???

ALAN: Don't blame the food, gut bucket. Nobody stopped you from exercising.

GRAYDON: Right... thanks for the bloody sympathy.

(Ignoring him entirely, Claymore looked at the terrified expression on Sierra's face then furrowed his brow. She didn't lack for fitness, she just wasn't a fast runner, and it was clearly scaring the living daylights out of her. Her lack of speed could well be her downfall. Worse still, her lack of speed could bring the others down too. Should she get caught, there'd be no way Claymore or Josie would let her suffer alone. They'd try to save her and more than likely get caught themselves. Knowing this was horrifying to her. It was, however, an inspiration at the same time. She couldn't bear the thought of letting her team down, and as such, she was determined to sprint for all she was worth.)

CLAYMORE: Hang in there, Sierra. You can do it.

SIERRA: I'm trying, Claymore. I really am.

CLAYMORE: I know.

ALAN: Yes, well, you could well be wasting your time.

JOSIE: What do you mean?

ALAN: They're trained soldiers; probably special forces. We're not simply going to outrun them. They won't get tired and stop, you know?

GRAYDON: He's right. They train by running up and down hills wearing 70lb packs on their backs.

(He grimaced.)

GRAYDON: It was 50lbs until I advised the military to increase it. I bet they're *dying* to thank me for that.

ALAN: Yeah, well, never mind that. The fact is that if we want to get away, we need to take evasive action. We need to duck and weave then find a place to hide.

CLAYMORE: I reckon you might be right, mate.

ALAN: I know I'm right.

JOSIE: Okay, so shall we take the next left?

ALAN: Definitely.

(He glanced over his shoulder.)

ALAN: They're fucking gaining.

JOSIE: Yeah... that's not good.

ALAN: Then let's change the game. Come on.

(With that, he darted around the next corner with Josie at his side. A few seconds later, Claymore, Sierra and lastly Graydon followed suit.)

ALAN: Alley!!!

(He then darted down the alley to the right, swiftly pursued by the others.)

GRAYDON: I hope you know where you're going!

ALAN: We don't *need* to know where we're going, we just need to lead them fuckers a merry dance until we find somewhere to hide.

(Sierra glanced at the fences on either side of the alley.)

SIERRA: There's probably gardens behind these fences. We should climb over and hide in one.

GRAYDON: Like *that's* gonna happen.

CLAYMORE: Yeah, he's way too fat to climb that. He probably needs a boost just to climb into bed at night.

ALAN: Yeah, but let's be honest, it doesn't matter if *he* can climb it. We don't need him anymore.

CLAYMORE: That's true. Climb then?

GRAYDON: Oh, that's fucking nice.

JOSIE: Don't bother. It won't work anyway. Barbed wire, look.

(Sure enough, the tops of the fences on both sides were adorned with thick rolls of barbed wire.)

ALAN: Fuck.

CLAYMORE: Damn it. I thought that was our chance for a minute.

(Graydon raised his voice angrily.)

GRAYDON: Oh, I see. That's how it is, is it? Now you don't need my boat, I'm surplus to requirements.

SIERRA: What did you expect? Did you think we'd keep you around because we love your witty banter and winning smile?

GRAYDON: Yes!

SIERRA: Right...

CLAYMORE: We'd leave you behind without a second thought.

(Graydon growled.)

GRAYDON: And as I keep telling you, if *I* go down, you're coming with me. I'll tell them you used the canal to run drugs or something! And when an international arrest warrant is issued, you'll be fugitives in *both* countries. You won't find sanctuary any fucking where! Wankers.

ALAN: Wow. You truly are a cunt to the very end, aren't you, Graydon?

GRAYDON: Absolutely. Why? What did you expect? Did you think I'd learn to love you're ridiculous poor-person quirks and spare you your share of the misery? I should cocoa, you lowly bunch of...

(His words were then interrupted by the rowdy sounds of the four police officers charging into the alleyway after them.)

WILSON: There they are!!!

CAPTAIN: We know that, you tit. Why do you think we ran down here?

WILSON: I thought it was guess.

SMITH: Well it wasn't, you deaf sod.

WILSON: Deaf?

ERIKSON: Yes. Deaf. We could hear that Graydon complaining from around the corner.

CAPTAIN: Not to mention the echo of their footsteps.

WILSON: Oh. I didn't hear any of that.

SMITH: Evidently.

CAPTAIN: Idiot.

(Erikson rolled his eyes.)

ERIKSON: A guess indeed.

SMITH: Right? For fuck sake, Wilson, use your ears. And your nose!

CAPTAIN: His nose?

SMITH: Yeah. To follow Sierra's....

(He then clammed up and hid his face.)

CAPTAIN: Sierra's what?

SMITH: Nothing.

CAPTAIN: Her scent? You were going to say her *scent* weren't you?



WILSON: You know what she smells like?  
SMITH: Um...  
ERIKSON: He's got it bad.  
CAPTAIN: I'll say. He loves her. All that nonsense about her being a terrorist was an absolute lie. He's still upset that she turned him down for being an uggo.  
SMITH: Fuck off.  
ERIKSON: Dude. You know what she smells like. That's fucking stalker territory that is. Did you break into her house and sniff her in her sleep or something?  
SMITH: No!  
(He snarled.)  
SMITH: She uses Arrow Heart shampoo. I'd recognise the smell anywhere, because...  
ERIKSON: You used to sniff her hair when she was asleep!  
SMITH: No. My ex used to wear it.  
(He ruffled his neck.)  
SMITH: It's overpowering.  
CAPTAIN: What a twat. Here we are using our training to follow the sounds, and *this* sappy, lovesick fool is tracking the smell of her hair.  
SMITH: I'm...  
CAPTAIN: A poof, we know. Now shut up and pay attention to the footsteps.  
ERIKSON: Or the smell of your failed crush's hair.  
(Everyone sniggered except Smith.)  
SMITH: Wanker.  
CAPTAIN: Seriously, men, focus. Little by little we're gaining. Let's not blow our chance.  
(His face then dropped.)  
CAPTAIN: Shit. They've exited the alley! Don't let them get away!!!  
(Agreeing with his sentiments entirely, they then put their heads down and charged.)

---

Having exited the alley and fled to the left, Alan, Claymore, Josie, Sierra and Graydon steadfastly refused to look back. All they wanted now was to find a niche to hide in. Maybe even a derelict building to lay low in, allowing their pursuers to race past, unable to find them. Alas, nothing was forthcoming. All the houses were sturdy and quite clearly occupied and there was absolutely nothing to hide behind.

ALAN: Well this is shit.  
CLAYMORE: You aint kidding.  
JOSIE: I was hoping we'd be able to hide before they came out of the alley, but...  
SIERRA: It's not happening, is it?  
CLAYMORE: Doesn't look like it, does it?  
SIERRA: Damn it.  
JOSIE: For fuck sake. Our luck has to change sooner or later, doesn't it?  
ALAN: You'd bloody think so, wouldn't you?  
GRAYDON: Actually, considering an entire nation's army was after us and only those four managed to find us, I'd say we've been *ridiculously* lucky to this point.  
(He groaned.)  
GRAYDON: I guess our luck had to run out sooner or later though.  
(Just then, a bus slowly trickled past them and stopped at the bus stop a few metres ahead of them. Graydon's jaw dropped.)  
GRAYDON: I stand corrected.  
ALAN: Uh-huh.

(They then charged up to the bus. Having allowed a passenger to alight, they then scrambled aboard. With desperation in his eyes, Alan remonstrated with the driver.)

ALAN: Five singles to the end of the route. Hurry!

(The male driver just looked at him emptily, slowly chewing on some gum.)

DRIVER: Fine.

(He then tapped some numbers into a machine before glancing up again.)

DRIVER: That'll be 25 pesos.

ALAN: Right...

(He grimaced.)

ALAN: Do you accept Efland pounds?

(Again the driver stared through him.)

DRIVER: Get off my bus.

ALAN: But dude, we're desperate.

GRAYDON: Very much so. Just let us on, will you? Sierra will even show you her boobs!

SIERRA: Hey!

GRAYDON: Just show him!

DRIVER: Don't bother. I'm immune to boobs. I'm gay!

GRAYDON: Okay. Alan, show him your dong!

ALAN: Gladly!

DRIVER: Just get off my bus, before I radio the police!

(Josie glanced towards the back of the bus then gasped. The police officers had just emerged from the alley.)

JOSIE: Fuck. Guys, this isn't working; we need to run.

(Having also witnessed it, Alan growled.)

ALAN: Shit. Yeah, we do. Go, go, go.

(With that, they all bundled back off the bus again and charged away. Because of the delay, however, the four police officers were now only a short distance behind them.)

CLAYMORE: Fuck. So close.

ALAN: Yeah, but now we're fucking screwed.

SIERRA: All for the sake of 25 pesos.

GRAYDON: Worse than a low grade Amarian whore. Even *they* won't get fucked for a miserly 25 pesos.

JOSIE: Hey, we're not beaten yet. At least *I'm* not.

(She then pointed to an alleyway to their right.)

JOSIE: Let's go.

ALAN: Uh-huh. Might as fucking well.

CLAYMORE: Right? This isn't over until it's fucking over. Come on.

(With that, they all charged towards the alley then sprinted down it. Hot on their heels, the chasing officers all sneered bitterly.)

ERIKSON: Why won't they just admit defeat and give up?

SMITH: Because they're idiots.

WILSON: Yeah!

CAPTAIN: On the contrary, my friends, they're simply not motivated enough. Maybe it's time we bring out the big guns.

ERIKSON: The big guns?

CAPTAIN: Yeah. Our guns!

ERIKSON: Oh. Thought it was a metaphor.

CAPTAIN: It was, but in this case our *big* guns happen to be handguns. That'll make them think twice about fleeing.

(He nodded sternly.)

CAPTAIN: Weapon up, chaps. This is the final push.  
(They then charged around the corner. As they did so, the captain fired his gun into the air and bellowed.)  
CAPTAIN: Police!!! Stop running and surrender!!!  
(Unfortunately for him, his decision to discharge his weapon had entirely the opposite effect. Very much in agreement that *not* running away from a man with a gun would be tomfoolery of the highest order, Alan, Claymore, Sierra, Josie and Graydon all managed to find an extra burst of speed from somewhere and charged onwards determinedly. Racing after them, the captain bit his lip.)  
CAPTAIN: Maybe they didn't hear me.  
ERIKSON: Oh, they heard you alright.  
WILSON: They just didn't like what you had to say.  
(The captain growled.)  
CAPTAIN: I don't care what they thought of it. It wasn't a request.  
(He then fired his weapon into the air a second time.)  
CAPTAIN: Freeze!!!  
(He furrowed his brow.)  
CAPTAIN: They didn't freeze.  
SMITH: Then don't shoot in the air. Shoot *them*. Then they'll fucking freeze.  
CAPTAIN: You know, that idea has merit, Smithy.  
SMITH: Thank you, sir. Just don't shoot the brunette. I want that pleasure for *myself*.  
ERIKSON: As has become tradition.  
SMITH: What?  
ERIKSON: You think of her and end up pleasuring *yourself*.  
SMITH: Fuck off, you.  
CAPTAIN: You can *all* fuck off.  
WILSON: We can? Cool. Let's go home.  
CAPTAIN: I didn't mean it like that!  
(He snarled.)  
CAPTAIN: I mean you can all stop arguing. Focus. We're gaining swiftly, chaps, and any minute now we'll have the buggers in our grasp.  
(He snarled.)  
CAPTAIN: And not a moment too soon.

---

Sprinting down the alley, a short distance ahead of their pursuers, Graydon, Claymore, Sierra, Josie and Alan were all snarling onwards determinedly. Surrender was never even going to be a consideration. Their pursuers were agents of a government that didn't think twice about making people disappear. Therefore getting caught would more than likely be a death sentence, and they knew it. In such a scenario, only a fool would turn themselves in. Even the tiniest chance of escape needed to be seized with both hands and they were determined to do so.

ALAN: Keep going, guys. We can do this.  
JOSIE: No worries on that score, Alan. There's no way I'm quitting now.  
SIERRA: Me either. Even if my legs *do* feel like they're on fire.  
CLAYMORE: That's the spirit.  
(Graydon snarled.)  
GRAYDON: I'm giving it my all, but it won't be easy. Especially when they're shooting at us!  
(He sighed.)

GRAYDON: It's a miracle that we're all still alive! Special forces teams are reputed to be crack shots.

ALAN: Crap shots? Like Claymore?

GRAYDON: Crack, I said!

ALAN: Right. Sorry. Misheard. Shit. If they shot like Claymore I'd feel a lot more confident.

CLAYMORE: I'll fucking shoot *you* in a minute!

ALAN: You haven't got a gun.

CLAYMORE: I'll *make* one!

ALAN: Right...

CLAYMORE: Shut up, you.

(He snarled then glanced behind him.)

CLAYMORE: They're getting too close for comfort now.

SIERRA: They always were!

JOSIE: Yeah, but it's getting worse by the second.

ALAN: Then we need to take evasive action again. Come.

(He then darted down a fork in the alley to their left. Following his lead, the others then powered after him.)

ALAN: This isn't really working, is it?

GRAYDON: Did you think it would?

ALAN: Well...

(He growled.)

ALAN: We need to make something happen here, guys.

CLAYMORE: Yeah, we need a change of tactics.

JOSIE: Like what?

CLAYMORE: We could always head for traffic and hope one of them gets run over.

SIERRA: That's a bit ambitious, isn't it?

CLAYMORE: Yeah, but...

SIERRA: We *are* that desperate.

CLAYMORE: Exactly.

ALAN: I think we need something a bit more immediate than that, mate.

CLAYMORE: Like what?

ALAN: Bins!

CLAYMORE: Bins?

ALAN: Yeah. You know... like *dustbins*.

CLAYMORE: I know what bins are, mate.

ALAN: Then why ask?

CLAYMORE: I wasn't asking *what* they are, I was asking why the fuck we'd need them.

ALAN: Oh. Right.

(He snarled.)

ALAN: We need to slow them down and bins would be handy for that. We could knock them over behind us as we run.

GRAYDON: Well, that's a great idea. That'd work wonderfully well if it wasn't for the fact there *are* no fucking bins!

ALAN: It doesn't have to be bins, you twat. That was just an example. Anything we can throw in their way, really.

SIERRA: There isn't anything.

JOSIE: Yeah. This alley is spotless.

GRAYDON: That's typical of Amaria, I'm afraid.

(He furrowed his brow.)

GRAYDON: Stupid Amarians, keeping their alleys clean and taking pride in their towns. If this was Efland there'd be all sorts of junk in these alleys that we could throw down in our wake.

ALAN: Right? Bins, trolleys, sofas, tyres; you name it.

CLAYMORE: Yeah. We do slums properly in Efland.

(Sierra sighed.)

SIERRA: And we never appreciated it until now.

CLAYMORE: Nope.

ALAN: Not even once.

(Hardly able to believe what she'd just heard, Josie raised an unimpressed eyebrow and gave their comments the sarcastic riposte they deserved.)

JOSIE: Yeah, I bet the Amarian people are *so* jealous of our slums and shanty towns.

(She rolled her eyes.)

JOSIE: Unbelievable.

ALAN: There's no need to be snarky, Josie. We're just saying. Clean alleys aren't very helpful right now.

JOSIE: Well... you're not wrong.

(She nodded sternly.)

JOSIE: Don't worry, there has to be something down here we can throw out behind us. It can't *all* be this clean.

GRAYDON: Actually, you'd be surprised.

JOSIE: What? Really?

GRAYDON: I'm afraid so.

ALAN: So that just leaves running away.

CLAYMORE: Plus my idea to run them into traffic.

ALAN: Like I said, that just leaves running away.

JOSIE: Right. Then let's focus on that, shall we?

(She sneered.)

JOSIE: Unless they can pin me down and physically *stop* me from running, I'm *never* gonna stop.

SIERRA: Me either.

(Alan nodded sternly.)

ALAN: And that attitude, ladies, might just make all the difference.

---

As their five targets bounded forth before them, the captain and his three subordinates maintained a stern focus. They were continually gaining and it was giving them all the encouragement they needed to keep going. Should the status quo remain the same, their victory would come. It would only be a matter of time. Knowing this, helped to keep them focussed on the task. There were, however, quite a few sniggers and smirks amongst their steely determination. Graydon's flab bouncing with every step made for an amusing sight. As did Sierra's extremely feminine running style. As they gained ever closer, both sights became increasingly amusing until the point where Erikson just had to say something.

ERIKSON: Guys?

CAPTAIN: What?

ERIKSON: Is it my imagination or does Graydon looks like a gorilla on a trampoline?

(Everyone laughed.)

WILSON: He does actually. And that brunette bird looks like she's trying to fly away. Look at her hands flopping about.

CAPTAIN: Priceless, isn't it? She's bloody cute though.

SMITH: She's a cunt!

CAPTAIN: Yeah, alright, calm down, boy.

(He rolled his eyes.)

CAPTAIN: Anyway, chaps. Enough cackling. Look lively.

(He sneered.)

CAPTAIN: It won't be long before we catch the buggers up. And when we do, I need you to take them down with the minimum of fuss, okay? Shoot the buggers if you have to. Not Graydon though. We'll take that fucker alive.

(He beamed.)

CAPTAIN: That'll look better on my report.

ERIKSON: Don't worry, sir; we know what to do.

WILSON: Yeah. Shoot them.

CAPTAIN: I said shoot them if you *have* to.

WILSON: Right. Good. Only, I'd rather not.

SMITH: Why not?

WILSON: Killing people should be a last resort.

CAPTAIN: Yes, but in cases like this, you'd probably be doing them a favour. If we arrest them the government will torture them *then* kill them.

WILSON: Right...

CAPTAIN: You're right though. Arrest should be the first option, only kill them if they refuse to come quietly.

ERIKSON: Sir.

WILSON: Sir.

SMITH: Can't I just kill Sierra then...

CAPTAIN: Only if she resists!

ERIKSON: Like she resisted *you* when you asked her out.

SMITH: Oh, piss off, Erikson.

(He snarled.)

SMITH: Wanker.

ERIKSON: What did you call me?

CAPTAIN: Stop that, you two. Focus.

(He then sneered as he watched his four targets dart into another side-alley.)

CAPTAIN: There's fucking alleyways everywhere.

(He then shook his head before charging to the corner and racing around it. Having done so, however, he and his three subordinates all slowed to a standstill. Ahead of them was a dead end. The alley simply opened up into a square, walled-off area with large bins around the edges.)

CAPTAIN: Well, well... the idiots have backed themselves into a bin zone.

(He then stepped forwards with a sneer on his face.)

CAPTAIN: Come on now, people. Let's not make fools of ourselves. We know you're there. Just come out.

(He glanced around the various large bins for any sign of movement. Seeing nothing, he then rolled his eyes.)

CAPTAIN: Don't be ridiculous. It's not like we don't know where you are. There's only one place you *can* be. Hiding behind the bins.

(Again, there was no movement.)

CAPTAIN: I guess we'll just have shoot the bins then. Men, prepare to fire.

(In that moment, Alan, Claymore, Graydon, Sierra and Josie all slowly crept around the side of the bins with their hands raised in the air. Delighted by the outcome, the captain beamed.)

CAPTAIN: There you go, how simple was that?

SMITH: Can I shoot her now, boss?

CAPTAIN: No!

(He rolled his eyes.)

CAPTAIN: Pillolock.

(He nodded.)

CAPTAIN: Guns away men. Get your handcuffs out instead. Don't worry, I've got you covered.

(He then cocked his gun.)

CAPTAIN: If they even *try* to evade you, I'll blow their heads off.

(His men all looked to him emptily.)

CAPTAIN: Go on then. Handcuff them, you morons.

ERIKSON: Oh. Right.

WILSON: Okay.

SMITH: Happily.

(Erikson then paced toward Alan, Wilson headed for Josie and Smith stamped towards where Sierra was clinging onto Claymore.)

CAPTAIN: That's right, leave the old fart to me.

GRAYDON: Charming.

(He then growled at Alan.)

GRAYDON: Fucking idiot. This way, you said. Down here! It's a fucking dead end! A bin storage area! You twat!

ALAN: Dude, how was *I* to know that?

GRAYDON: Idiot.

ALAN: Oh, shut up.

(He then looked to where Erikson was approaching him with a set of handcuffs.)

ALAN: Come to arrest me, have you?

ERIKSON: Yup. Sorry, mate.

ALAN: No, you're not.

(His face then lit up.)

ALAN: But you're about to be!

(He then set about Erikson with his fists flying. At the very same time, Josie aimed a swift kick at Wilson, crunching his testicles with the toe end of her boot. Matching them, Claymore then went to town on Smith's face, battering him like a man possessed. Smith had made an angry grab for Sierra's wrist and Claymore was having none of it. He'd instantly seen red. Watching on, the captain's jaw dropped. These were trained soldiers, skilled in the ways of combat, and yet Erikson was being pummelled into oblivion, Wilson was already floored and defeated by an angry woman with a penchant for kicking men where it hurts most and Smith was having his ears boxed by an angry boyfriend. Shaking a despairing head, he could only mumble with disdain.)

CAPTAIN: What first class warriors they assigned me. The cream of the bloody crop.

(His disdain for his men at this point was well justified. They weren't taking part in a fight. They were getting a beating. Enjoying himself immensely, Alan was battering Erikson with alternating jabs, and the only thing keeping him upright was the fact he was still getting hit.)

ALAN: This is fun.

JOSIE: I know, right?

(Alan couldn't help but smirk. Josie was enjoying herself almost as much as he was. Aiming one kick after another at Wilson as he lay prostrate on the ground, she looked very much like she could keep it up all day. Claymore, on the other hand, was displaying no signs of joy whatever. He was extremely serious. Seeing Sierra flinch in fear as Smith made a grab for her had brought out the barbarian in him.)

CLAYMORE: Fucking touch my woman again and I'll rip your head off!!!

(As the violence continued unabated, the captain shook his head then sighed inwardly. As he'd half expected would be the case, bringing these criminals to justice would all be down to him. And so, offering up one last disdainful sneer at his men, he pointed his gun in the air.)

CAPTAIN: Idiots.

(He rolled his eyes.)

CAPTAIN: Enough of this nonsense.

(He then pulled the trigger. Reacting to the blast, Alan and Josie immediately jumped backwards and threw their hands in the air. As a result, Erikson finally collapsed to the ground, barely conscious. Claymore, however, had paid the gunshot no heed. Having seen red, he simply continued to pummel Smith with all his might.)

CLAYMORE: I'll break every fucking bone in your fucking body, you fucking...

(The captain could only sigh then fire twice more. This time, he got the reaction he was looking for. Stirred from his rage, Claymore jumped back and held up his palms.)

CLAYMORE: Yeah, alright! You win, okay?

CAPTAIN: Yes, yes I do.

(He then watched as Smith crashed to the ground like a felled tree.)

CAPTAIN: How the hell did these clowns ever pass the physical entry exam?

(Wearing a despairing expression, he then observed his three men as they rolled in agony on the ground, taking a moment to marvel at his own disdain for them. As he did so, Alan groaned then looked to Josie.)

ALAN: If we'd known they were *that* feeble, we could have waited around a corner for them then jumped them.

JOSIE: Right? Easy win.

ALAN: Yeah!

GRAYDON: Really? You're coming up with that plan *now*? Now??? Where was it five minutes ago?

ALAN: Five minutes ago, we *thought* they were elite special forces. You don't jump elite special forces and expect to win!

JOSIE: And we only thought they *were* special forces because *you* said they were.

GRAYDON: No, I didn't.

(He glanced away innocently.)

GRAYDON: I merely inferred it was likely.

CAPTAIN: Stop mumbling amongst yourselves, criminals, or I'll turn the gun on you.

(He then sneered at his three wounded subordinates.)

CAPTAIN: Come here, men.

(Severely winded, Wilson slowly scrambled to his feet then staggered over to him. Holding their aching bodies, so did Erikson and Smith. Much to everyone's bewilderment, so did Claymore.)

CAPTAIN: Where the hell are *you* going?

CLAYMORE: What?

CAPTAIN: Get back over there!

CLAYMORE: You said, "Come here, men".

CAPTAIN: Yes, and I was referring to *my* men! The men in my squad. *This* embarrassing ensemble! Not *you*, you fucking idiot.

CLAYMORE: Yeah, alright, there's no need to be a dick about it.

(He then backtracked to Sierra, so he could stand in between her and the captain.)

CAPTAIN: Well done.

CLAYMORE: Thank you.

GRAYDON: You really are a grade one, certified idiot.



CLAYMORE: Piss off, you.

CAPTAIN: No, no, the doomed old fart has a point. I don't know you, but clearly you're not the brains of the operation.

(He rolled his eyes once again then stood tall, nodding to affirm his words.)

CAPTAIN: Right, you little fuckers, you're all under arrest on charges of treason, attempted treason and whatever else the government decide to throw at you. You have the right to remain silent but after a few minutes of torture, I expect you'll waive that right.

ALAN: You're loving this, aren't you?

CAPTAIN: You know, I truly am. And why shouldn't I? I have Five of Efland's most wanted criminals standing before me; defeated.

CLAYMORE: Since when were we Efland's most wanted?

ALAN: Since we got caught helping that fat cunt try to escape, I expect.

(He nodded to Graydon.)

CLAYMORE: Right. Makes sense.

CAPTAIN: Yes, well, that's enough waffling. He's what's going to happen. You'll be taken from here at gunpoint...

(He glanced at his men then furrowed his brow.)

CAPTAIN: At gunpoint, I said.

ERIKSON: What?

CAPTAIN: Draw your fucking weapons, will you?

(His three subordinates swiftly obliged.)

CAPTAIN: Much better. Thank you. Now, where was I? That's it.

(He beamed.)

CAPTAIN: You'll be marched to the nearest police station at gunpoint, where I'll personally process your arrests. I'll then take a nap while I wait for the prime minister to call me personally and congratulate me on my forthcoming promotion, several rungs up the ladder. Sounds good, doesn't it?

GRAYDON: No. No, it does not.

CAPTAIN: Perhaps, you're being selfish then, because to me it sounds like the perfect end to a harrowing mission.

(He nodded.)

CAPTAIN: Now move it. And tell that sappy brunette to stop sobbing.

SIERRA: I can't help it.

CAPTAIN: Then try harder.

(He scoffed.)

CAPTAIN: Women are shit.

SMITH: That one certainly is. Bitch.

(Sierra pouted.)

SIERRA: Why? What did I ever do to you? Well... um... Graham?

SMITH: It's Gavin!!!

(He threw his hands up despairingly.)

SMITH: She doesn't even remember my fucking name.

ERIKSON: Yeah. You sure did a great job wooing her, mate.

SMITH: Fuck off.

(He sneered.)

SMITH: At least I'll get the last laugh when they string her up.

SIERRA: Wow. I used to think you're a really nice person, but now...

SMITH: Fuck off. You're getting off lightly, terrorist. If it was up to me, I'd fucking shoot you, here and now!

SIERRA: I'm not a terrorist!

SMITH: Yes, you...

CAPTAIN: Smith!!!

SMITH: Sir?

CAPTAIN: Shut the fuck up.

SMITH: Right.

CAPTAIN: Anyway, that's enough procrastinating. It's time, people. Let's get you criminals a jail cell for the evening.

(He sneered.)

CAPTAIN: If they make one false move, chaps, shoot them.

SMITH: Oh, I fucking will.

CAPTAIN: Good. Now, move out!

(Just then, as if from nowhere, eight Amarian soldiers with powerful machine guns darted into the alley, and several more appeared, pointing their guns down over the wall to the right. At once, Erikson threw his hands up to surrender. Despairing of him, the captain rolled his eyes.)

CAPTAIN: You're a disgrace to the uniform, Erikson.

(He then addressed the Amarian officers.)

CAPTAIN: Lower your weapons, soldier boys. We have everything under control.

AMARIAN OFFICER: On the contrary, *you* lower *your* weapons, pal.

CAPTAIN: Excuse me?

(He snarled.)

CAPTAIN: I'll have you know, I'm a captain in the Efland police guard unit. As you can clearly see from the emblem on my sleeve.

AMARIAN OFFICER: I can indeed see that, yes,

CAPTAIN: Then...

AMARIAN: So what the hell are you doing running around Amaria, discharging your firearms?

CAPTAIN: Obviously, we were...

(A look of horror then crossed his brow.)

CAPTAIN: Wait. Did you just say... Amaria?

AMARIAN: OFFICER: Yes. Amaria.

CAPTAIN: We're in... Amaria?

AMARIAN OFFICER: Yes!

CAPTAIN: This isn't Rainsford?

AMARIAN OFFICER: No!

CAPTAIN: I see. So when I said to my men 'unless I'm very much mistaken this is the town of Rainsford in Northern Efland'...

AMARIAN OFFICER: You were *very much* mistaken!

(He sucked his teeth then looked to his subordinates.)

CAPTAIN: So... did *you* know we were in Amaria?

SMITH: No.

ERIKSON: You said we were in Efland, so I took your word for it.

WILSON: Me too.

CAPTAIN: Right...

(He then nodded to the Amarian soldier.)

CAPTAIN: Anyway, it makes no difference. I've just apprehended a dangerous criminal, so unless you'd like be responsible for a major international incident, you'll step aside and let us through.

(He nodded.)

CAPTAIN: We're all on the same side here, after all. The side of justice.

AMARIAN OFFICER: I'll ask you one last time to lower your weapon. I won't be asking again. Next time, I'll tell my men to open fire. Do you understand?  
(In that moment, Alan, Josie, Claymore, Sierra and Graydon all sidled to the edges of the bin area, away from where the guns were pointing. Having noticed them do it, from the corner of his eyes, Smith snarled.)  
SMITH: We can't quit now, sir.  
CAPTAIN: Quiet, lad. I'm thinking.  
AMARIAN OFFICER: Okay, here we go then. Last time! Lower your weapons!  
(Wilson immediately dropped his weapon and held his hands up.)  
CAPTAIN: Wait a second! This is ridiculous, we're all police officers acting in the interests of justice, why can't...  
AMARIAN OFFICER: No, you're a foreign invader who was running about our streets firing his weapon. Nothing more. Now throw down your guns.  
(Smith growled.)  
SMITH: And let her get away with it??? Fuck you!!!  
(He then spun around and raised his weapon, determined to gun Sierra down. Seconds later, he died in a hail of bullets.)  
CAPTAIN: Defend yourselves, boys!!!  
(He then raised his weapon and died in exactly the same way. Watching as his lifeless body smacked into the ground, Wilson cringed.)  
WILSON: No, it's okay, Captain.  
ERIKSON: Yeah, we're good, thanks.  
(The Amarian soldiers then hurried among them all to secure their capture.)  
GRAYDON: Right, well, thanks everyone. I'll be off home then.  
AMARIAN OFFICER: No, you'll come to the local police station with us, so we can sort this entire mess out.  
GRAYDON: What mess?  
AMARIAN OFFICER: Bullets flying and people being held at gunpoint, that's what. Nobody goes home until we've figured out what was going on.  
GRAYDON: Right...  
(He groaned in despair.)  
GRAYDON: Shit.  
(Far from sharing Graydon's despair, Alan, Josie, Claymore and Sierra all drew deep sighs of relief, delighted to have merely survived the day. Their delight, however, was short-lived.)  
GRAYDON: I don't know what you lot are so happy about. Once they've figured out who's who, you four morons will get deported back to Efland. That's a death sentence.  
(He then allowed the authorities to lead him away, caring very little for the misery he'd left in his wake.)

---

At the local police station, a short while later, Alan, Claymore, Sierra, and Josie were all locked in a cell, at the back of the operations room. Worrying about their futures or the lack thereof should they be deported, hardly a word was spoken. Seated on benches around the edges of the cell, Sierra was biting her nails, Josie was slumped down with her head in her hands and Claymore was shaking his head repeatedly. The only one standing, Alan was staring into space, lost in his own thoughts. Knowing that deportation was likely, and would undoubtedly result in their deaths, they were all utterly dejected.

In the cell next to them, Wilson and Graydon were standing against the bars, listening intently to where Erikson was being interviewed by a police officer. The more they listened,

however, the more confused they were becoming. It seemed the Amarian police were big on getting the details correct in both a grammatical and legal sense right from the beginning. As such, they could only imagine how bewildering the report would be.

OFFICER: So, yourself, Dave Erikson, hereon referred to as Party A, was undertaking a mission with your captain, now deceased, hereon referred to as Party B. Also present were Gavin Smith, now deceased, hereon referred to as Party C and Officer Wilson, hereon referred to as Party D. Correct?

ERIKSON: Um... yeah. That's right.

OFFICER: You were in pursuit of a person known as Graydon James, hereon referred to as Party E. Correct?

ERIKSON: Correct.

OFFICER: So whose idea was it to trespass in Amaria? Party B?

ERIKSON: Dunno. Who was Party B?

OFFICER: Um...

(Erikson dropped his head onto the desk.)

ERIKSON: This is all way too confusing.

OFFICER: I'm just being thorough, sir. Once you're jailed for entering the country illegally and unauthorised possession of a handgun, I'm sure your family would like to know it was all done professionally and above board.

(Sniggering at the silliness of it all, Graydon then turned and looked to Alan in the next cell.)

GRAYDON: If you're lucky, you might get to live, chaps.

(Alan looked up.)

ALAN: What?

GRAYDON: They might opt to sling you in jail for entering the country illegally. That's better than being deported, right?

(He shrugged.)

GRAYDON: It'll only be delaying the inevitably though, of course. They'll deport you anyway, once you've served your sentence. Still, a stay of execution can't be a bad thing, right?

ALAN: I suppose.

JOSIE: We should ask them to do that. Sling us in jail! Prison beats the gallows any day.

SIERRA: I don't want to go to prison.

JOSIE: Well, no...

SIERRA: There's no Claymore in there.

CLAYMORE: There'll be no Claymore on death row in Efland either though.

SIERRA: True.

(She sighed.)

SIERRA: This sucks.

(Graydon afforded himself a wry smile.)

GRAYDON: Oh, don't worry, Sierra. I'm sure James Waltham could pull a few strings and have you released to his custody. You'd never have to worry about anything ever again.

SIERRA: What?

GRAYDON: I'm just saying. I could be so good for you.

SIERRA: Gross.

GRAYDON: Hang then. It's your shout.

(Sierra shuddered.)

ALAN: Pack it in, Graydon. *You're* not out of the shit yet either.

GRAYDON: Who? Graydon? I don't know any Graydon. I'm James Waltham; Amarian citizen. It says so on my passport.

(He beamed.)

GRAYDON: I was merely being held hostage in my own country. As soon as they clarify that fact, I'll be off home to my mansion.

(He exhaled.)

GRAYDON: You'd love it there, Sierra. Still, if you'd rather hang; that's fun too, I'm sure. (He then turned his back, half expecting her to arrive at the bars and beg for his help. Much to his disappointment, however, she did no such thing.)

SIERRA: I think I'd rather hang than be his pet.

ALAN: As any woman with any self-respect should.

GRAYDON: Hey! There's no need for such bitterness. You should be happy for me. I mean, I get to go home. Just because *you're* heading to the gallows...

ALAN: Graydon, mate, as you well know, if we get taken back to Efland, we'll sing like canaries. Before they even ask us anything! We might even use the information about your pseudonym as a bargaining chip to secure our freedom.

GRAYDON: Why, you...

ALAN: What? That's been your mantra since the beginning. If *you* go down, you'll take *us* with you. Well it's works both ways, mate.

GRAYDON: Shit.

(He growled.)

GRAYDON: I never did like you!

ALAN: And I've never pretended to care.

(He then rolled his eyes and looked to Claymore.)

ALAN: Can you believe that cunt?

CLAYMORE: He's the least of my worries right now, mate.

(He sucked his teeth.)

CLAYMORE: Guys, we're not really gonna hang are we?

JOSIE: We will if we get deported.

(She bit her lip.)

JOSIE: I think our only hope is to claim asylum.

ALAN: Yup. That's definitely going to be our next move, I reckon.

SIERRA: I agree.

CLAYMORE: Let's just hope we're successful.

(Just then, a dozen men dressed in black military garb marched into the operations room. Such was their business-like demeanour, they immediately drew the attention of everyone in there. It was a truly unsettling moment for all. Their attendance had created an uncomfortable atmosphere among all the police officers present. Naturally, such unease filled Alan, Claymore, Sierra and Josie with a deep sense of foreboding. Nobody, however, was anywhere near as horrified by their arrival as Graydon. At once, his eyes bulged and he gulped fearfully.)

GRAYDON: Shit. Unless I'm very much mistaken, those are government authority troops.

ALAN: What?

WILSON: That's bad, is it?

GRAYDON: It could be if they're here for me.

SIERRA: Why?

GRAYDON: Because the Amarian government don't like me one bit. If they've come for me, there's only going to be one outcome. They'll sent me straight back to Efland to be killed, without a second thought.

CLAYMORE: Sucks to be you.

GRAYDON: Yes, well, if they *have* come for me, it'll suck for you too. As you well know, I'll be a cunt and drop you all in it. There's no way I'm going down alone.

ALAN: What a wanker.

WILSON: This surprises you?

SIERRA: No. No, it doesn't.

(They all shook despairing heads then looked to where the government troops were talking to the police officers in charge.)

GRAYDON: Don't be for me, don't be for me, don't be for me...

(The officer then pointed to the cells where they were being held.)

GRAYDON: Fuck.

(He then skulked to the rear of the cell and gulped as one of the troops paced up to the bars.)

TROOPER: You're all going on a short trip.

ALAN: To where?

TROOPER: You'll find out when you get there.

(He then raised his voice.)

TROOPER: Open the cells!

CLAYMORE: Shit. Why do I get a bad feeling about this, Al?

ALAN: Because you're a pansy.

CLAYMORE: Mate...

ALAN: I'm kidding. I get a bad feeling about this too.

(They then shared a troubled grimace.)

---

A few short minutes later, a large armoured personal carrier exited the police station. On board were Alan, Josie, Claymore, Sierra, Graydon, Wilson and Erikson. Shuddering to think what was happening, they were all extremely on edge. There'd be no explanation of any kind. The black clad troops had simply taken over the investigation and removed them from police custody. Moments later, they'd been ushered into the military vehicle at gunpoint then locked inside. They could have no idea where they were going or what would happen when they got there. All they could do was sit there and fear the worst. The lack of clarity over their situation was deeply disturbing. Sitting there, clinging onto Claymore's arm, Sierra was especially tense.

SIERRA: Claymore?

CLAYMORE: What's up, babe?

SIERRA: This sucks.

CLAYMORE: Well, yeah...

SIERRA: But I'm not scared anymore.

CLAYMORE: You're trembling, darling.

SIERRA: Yeah, but not because I'm scared.

(She leant closer to him.)

SIERRA: I tremble when I'm tense, and I'm tense because I'm ready for a fight.

(Claymore grimaced.)

CLAYMORE: A fight?

SIERRA: Yes.

(She nodded.)

SIERRA: We worked *so* hard to escape Efland. I mean, we could have died so many times, but we kept going. And we got stupidly close to making it here safely. So close. Only to be foiled by four idiotic policemen who accidentally crossed our paths because they were lost.

CLAYMORE: Yeah, that detail really sucks.

SIERRA: Right? We almost made it and to be scuppered at the death by incompetent halfwits who shouldn't have even been there is mortifying. It's so unfair.

CLAYMORE: It's a right slap in the cock.

SIERRA: It is. But it's just strengthened my resolve.

CLAYMORE: Yeah?

SIERRA: Yeah. I'll do whatever I can to get out of this. Even if it's dangerous. I'm ready for it. Getting caught like that, by ridiculous bad luck, was cruel. And I don't want our journey to end like that. Fleeing, fighting, anything; whatever we can think of, we *can't* let it end like that. The fight goes on.

(Claymore looked most impressed.)

CLAYMORE: You know what, babe, you're exactly right. Whatever it takes, yeah?

SIERRA: *Whatever* it takes.

(They then shared a defiant nod.)

SIERRA: We'll get out of this then our new lives can begin in earnest. And you know what, I'm not daunted by *that* anymore either. It's gonna be fun.

(She smiled then sat back and glanced to where Alan was seated opposite her.)

SIERRA: Travelling down the canal with you boys has made me realise something. I don't want to work in an office full of strangers anymore. I want to experience working with my friends, like you two did on the canal. You both really enjoyed your jobs. You were so laid back. I want that for myself too.

(She glanced at Claymore.)

SIERRA: Working with you and Josie at my side would be perfect.

ALAN: Right... none taken.

SIERRA: You too, obviously.

ALAN: Thanks.

SIERRA: You're welcome.

ALAN: Thanks for the afterthought.

SIERRA: I said, you're welcome.

(She rolled her eyes.)

SIERRA: Anyway, that's how I feel. I'm gonna fight for my freedom then live my life differently.

ALAN: Me too. We'll figure a way out of this mess; we will!

(He nodded.)

ALAN: And once we have, I can't wait to get back to work with my good friends Claymore and Josie.

(Claymore furrowed his brow at him.)

CLAYMORE: Are you twelve?

ALAN: What? She did it to me first.

(Sierra chuckled.)

SIERRA: It's fine. I deserved that.

JOSIE: No, you didn't. You're *allowed* to prioritise your best friend and your boyfriend.

(She glanced away innocently.)

JOSIE: That's assuming he *is* your boyfriend, is he?

SIERRA: You fishing, babe?

JOSIE: It's possible.

SIERRA: Fair enough.

JOSIE: So is he?

SIERRA: If he'll have me.

ALAN: He's already had you!

SIERRA: Hey!

CLAYMORE: Dude! Wait... what? You *know* about that???

ALAN: Yeah. We walked in and saw you going at it.

CLAYMORE: What???

ALAN: You heard. Sierra knows. She saw us standing there in the doorway watching. Didn't faze her though. She just smiled then closed her eyes and let you carry on.

CLAYMORE: What? Is that true?

SIERRA: Well, yeah, you were so amazing, I didn't want to stop on *their* account.

CLAYMORE: Sierra, that's... wait... amazing, huh?

SIERRA: Absolutely mind blowing.

(Claymore beamed.)

CLAYMORE: I'll take that.

JOSIE: Yeah, great, now answer the question.

SIERRA: What question?

JOSIE: Are you boyfriend and girlfriend?

CLAYMORE: Well, put it this way....

(At this point, Graydon sat forwards and growled at them. Having been listening to every word from just further down the carriage, he could barely believe his ears.)

GRAYDON: Really? Fucking really?

ALAN: What? Who rattled your cage?

GRAYDON: For fuck sake, you lot! We're currently being driven to a secure location in the back of a military transit vehicle. A mode of transport reserved for soldiers in a warzone or problem criminals. And we're not soldiers in a warzone!

JOSIE: Point being?

GRAYDON: Obviously, we're considered problems criminals! Not because we're well-trained or have violent tendencies, but because we pose a major political threat. I'm the man who knows too much. Someone who needs disposing of. And you're witnesses; so you'll be disposed of too. And yet, you're sitting her nattering about how nice it'd be to work with one another and whether or not Sierra and Claymore have a schoolgirl crush on one another.

(He shook his fist.)

GRAYDON: You'll be braiding each other's hair next!!!

CLAYMORE: Dude, what exactly is your problem?

GRAYDON: My problem, arse face, is that we're in deep shit right now. And as such, the only thing we should be discussing is how the fuck to get out of it.

ALAN: You cock!

GRAYDON: Excuse me???

ALAN: Like you said, this is a military vehicle. A top security transporter. We're not escaping from this thing, no matter what.

CLAYMORE: Yeah. The escape planning will have to come later when we find out where they're taking us.

SIERRA: Exactly. Until then there's nothing we can do.

JOSIE: So we might as well stay calm.

SIERRA: Yeah.

(She blushed.)

SIERRA: But if you're like me and staying calm just isn't happening, focus on something else instead. Like getting yourself pumped up and ready to fight for our freedom when the time comes.

GRAYDON: *If* the time comes! And that's a massive if. We're with the military now; professionals. So we may not even get a chance.

(He sneered.)

GRAYDON: There is, however, a slim chance that they *might* offer us a window, so we need to be ready. And I mean now!

(He shook his head.)



GRAYDON: It won't be easy though. I'm the most wanted man in Efland. That makes me a headache.

ALAN: Which is a refreshing change from being a pain in the arse, I'd wager.

GRAYDON: Let me finish!

(He shook his head.)

GRAYDON: Like I said, I'm the most wanted man in Efland. That makes me a diplomatic problem for Amaria, doesn't it? They don't want their neighbour's most wanted criminal in their country. That's bad for our already fragile diplomatic relations. So what do you think the Amarian government will do about it?

(Alan, Sierra, Josie and Claymore all looked to one another blankly.)

GRAYDON: Got nothing, huh?

(Seated across from him, Erikson raised a nervous finger.)

ERIKSON: I think *I* can guess.

WILSON: Go on then.

ERIKSON: They'll deport you straight back to Efland then pretend they never saw you.

GRAYDON: Exactly. Making life a million times easier for both governments.

(He furrowed his brow.)

GRAYDON: Certain death for me and certain death for anyone who can tell the tale. In other words, we're right royally screwed unless someone here has a fucking plan.

ALAN: How can there even *be* a plan though, Graydon? This vehicle is impenetrable and we can't plan to escape from our destination until we know where it is.

GRAYDON: Then allow me to enlighten you. We're heading for an airport! I can virtually guarantee it. They'll drive us to the airport, throw us on a plane then fly us back to Efland to be killed. We're not heading to a holding centre or for an overnight stay in the cells. This is it! There'll be no chance to apply for asylum here, because they're sending us straight home. That's what this is, the beginning of our return journey!!!

(He nodded.)

GRAYDON: So forgive my fucking urgency, but you don't have time to talk about boys and shoes, or whatever it was. We need to get planning. Now!

(Unnerved by his rant, they all glanced at one another uneasily.)

GRAYDON: Well?

SIERRA: Um... I don't know.

ALAN: Nothing springs to mind for me either.

CLAYMORE: Or me. Other than attacking them as soon as they open the doors to let us out.

JOSIE: And hope we catch them off guard?

CLAYMORE: Yeah, but what are the chances of that?

GRAYDON: Slim! Fucking slim.

ALAN: Very fucking slim.

(He then cringed.)

ALAN: And yet, it's all we've got.

CLAYMORE: Gonna do that then, are we?

ERIKSON: I'm in.

WILSON: Me too.

ALAN: No, thanks; I've seen you two fight. Claymore, Josie and I will lead the assault. The rest of you, just stay close.

ERIKSON: Cheek! I do know how to fight, you know?

ALAN: It didn't look like it.

ERIKSON: You caught me off guard!

WILSON: And I...

ALAN: Got beaten up by a girl, we know.

WILSON: Oh, fuck off.

(He growled.)

WILSON: Fine, yes, she gave me a pasting, but still, I'm up for the fight.

GRAYDON: Then the five of you will go ahead and I'll bring up the rear with Sierra. Just done blame me if my hands start to wander.

SIERRA: Actually, I'd rather join in the fighting.

GRAYDON: Fuck!

SIERRA: I know it won't help much, but I have it on good authority that my scratching and hair-pulling talents are second to none.

JOSIE: Then you were horribly lied to. You've only ever had one fight and you were terrible.

SIERRA: Mean!

JOSIE: You were. She only slapped you once and you ran away crying.

(Sierra's shoulders slumped.)

SIERRA: Why, Josie? Why make me feel bad about myself at a time like this?

JOSIE: Because you're *too* pumped up. I can see you getting carried away and lashing out at a guard twice your size. You could end up getting knocked the fuck out, or worse. I couldn't stand that. Just stay back and be safe. Please.

SIERRA: Josie, I'll do what I have to do, okay? I can't be the pathetic one all the time. The feeble girl who can't stand up for herself. It's time I put that shit to bed and toughened up.

So, no promises, okay? I'll be careful, yes, but please, don't expect me to sit back and let everyone else save me, because I can't. I need to contribute. It's important to me.

JOSIE: Fine. Okay. As long as you're careful. I love you, babe, and I don't want to see you get hurt.

SIERRA: I love you too.

GRAYDON: And they're back to braiding one another's fucking hair again!

JOSIE: We've done nothing of the bloody sort.

GRAYDON: Not literally! I mean, for pity's sake, why...

(Just then, the vehicle took a hard left turn. Taken by surprise, everyone was thrown sideways by it.)

CLAYMORE: Sorry!!!

GRAYDON: Get your head off my lap!!!

CLAYMORE: I am!!!

(He growled.)

GRAYDON: Why couldn't it have been Sierra?

ALAN: Sorry about that, Josie.

JOSIE: Really? You know, nothing says sorry like...

(She then fell silent and whimpered.)

JOSIE: It's suddenly got very light out there.

ALAN: What?

(He then performed a double take.)

ALAN: We're in a warehouse.

GRAYDON: We've arrived!

ALAN: Quick, isn't he?

GRAYDON: Fuck you!

CLAYMORE: Never mind that bollocks, we need to get ready.

ALAN: We do.

(He nodded.)

ALAN: Claymore, Josie, come to the door with me. You two weak blokes and Sierra, stay close behind us. Graydon, you cower at the back.

GRAYDON: Behind Sierra? Excellent.

CLAYMORE: Touch her and I'll break your fingers.

GRAYDON: Why? It's not like you own her!

ALAN: Shut it! Now come on, we need to be ready. As soon as those doors are opened, we're going on the attack.

CLAYMORE: Gotcha.

(With that, they all started to edge towards the back of the vehicle. A few seconds later, when the vehicle stopped however, their edging became a mad scramble. Desperate to be in place as soon the doors opened, there wasn't a second to lose.)

Moments later, once they were all in position, Alan nodded to psych himself up then looked to his side.)

ALAN: This is it, guys. No excuses. And don't hold back. Our very lives could well depend on us getting this right.

CLAYMORE: Succeed now and we might just have a tomorrow.

JOSIE: Exactly.

(They then snarled determinedly, when suddenly, the rears doors were yanked open before them. At once, they all charged from the back, screaming furiously. The violent intent in their eyes was clear for all to see. Unfortunately for them, however, their enthusiasm was to be short-lived. Spread out in a semi-circle around them were over thirty men with high-end machine guns. As soon as they saw such formidable hardware, the desire to come out fighting very quickly withered and died. Alan could only drop his fists then groan in defeat.)

ALAN: I'm good, but I'm not that fucking good.

CLAYMORE: Right? That plan was fucked before it even started.

JOSIE: It's not our fucking day, is it?

(Sierra then stepped among them.)

SIERRA: It really fucking isn't.

(Glancing around at the large group of well-armed men before them, Graydon could only sigh.)

GRAYDON: Well... I think it's time to face facts here, people.

ERIKSON: What facts?

GRAYDON: We're fucking screwed!

---

A few moments later, Alan, Josie, Sierra, Claymore, Graydon, Erikson and Wilson found themselves seated on chairs against the far wall of the warehouse. Having been ordered there at gunpoint, they'd offered no resistance. For all their big words and bravado about fighting for their last chance of freedom, they all knew it'd be a waste of time. A fatal one at that. And so, ashen-faced, they'd been led in silence to the chairs then left sitting there rueing their luck. Any attempt to escape could well be met with bullets. All they could do was stare at the guards around them and wonder if those guns in their arms would be used against them. In this moment, all hope was lost. Crushed by the outcome, Sierra sat slumped sideways on her seat with her head resting against Claymore. She'd been extremely pumped up a few moments ago, but now, all she could do was sigh repeatedly; very much resigned to defeat.

SIERRA: Claymore?

CLAYMORE: Yeah?

SIERRA: That was our last chance, wasn't it?

(Not wanting to make her any more downhearted that she already was, Claymore forced a smile.)

CLAYMORE: Never say never, babe.

SIERRA: I didn't.

CLAYMORE: No, I mean, it might *not* be our last chance.

SIERRA: Right...

(She sighed.)

SIERRA: You're only saying that to make me feel better.

(Graydon furrowed his brow.)

GRAYDON: Well, obviously. We're screwed, like I keep saying. This is it. The end of the line. It was all for nothing.

ALAN: Dude...

GRAYDON: What? Am I wrong? Am I *ever* wrong about the workings of governments?

CLAYMORE: Well, yeah. *You* said we were being taken to an airport. This isn't an airport, it's a warehouse.

GRAYDON: I see. Were you *born* dim or did you have to take courses?

CLAYMORE: Eh?

GRAYDON: Airports are surrounded by warehouses, you dipshit. Where do you think they keep all the freight that comes in?

CLAYMORE: Um...

GRAYDON: Pillock.

(He rolled his eyes.)

GRAYDON: One of two things is about to happen here. They'll either escort us to a plane, therefore handing the problem back to Efland, or shoot us right here then pretend they never saw us. Either way, we're done for. It's over. Our goose is cooked. The fat lady has sung. The referee has blown for full time. The landlord's rung the final bell. The lights are coming back on in the theatre and everybody's leaving. It's over. You do understand that, right?

(His shoulders slumped.)

GRAYDON: I'd love to be wrong, but I'm not. It's all gone south; pear-shaped; awry... and there's nothing we can do about it.

ALAN: Right... are you done?

GRAYDON: What?

ALAN: Ignore negative Nelly here. As long as I've got a pulse, I'm gonna remain positive, because if an opportunity does arrive, I'd don't want to be too busy feeling sorry myself to notice it.

(He ruffled his neck.)

ALAN: Or am I being ridiculous?

GRAYDON: I've always found you ridiculous.

CLAYMORE: Nobody cares what you think, Graydon. Al's right. We're not dead yet, so there's always a chance.

JOSIE: I agree.

SIERRA: I'd rather be positive too.

GRAYDON: Then you're all kidding yourselves. Ask these two idiots.

(He gestured to Erikson and Wilson.)

GRAYDON: Well?

ERIKSON: I dunno.

WILSON: Don't look at me.

GRAYDON: Useful, aren't they?

(He growled.)

GRAYDON: Fuck it. Think what you like. I'm gonna be realistic. We're doomed. Done for. Finished. That's all there is to it.

(He sneered.)

GRAYDON: And it's all Sierra's bloody fault.

CLAYMORE: Eh?

SIERRA: Me?

GRAYDON: Yes, you! If you hadn't insisted we go clothes shopping rather than focussing on escaping, none of this would have happened!

CLAYMORE: Now hang on a minute.

GRAYDON: And you're just as bad!

CLAYMORE: What???

GRAYDON: Driving that bus like a fucking maniac. That just pissed them off and made things worse.

CLAYMORE: Wow.

GRAYDON: Yes, wow. You're as bad as that bloody Josie!

JOSIE: What did *I* do???

GRAYDON: You shot their boat and blew up the engine. What an idiot. You should have shot their leader; the captain. The others might have fucked off home then.

ERIKSON: He's right.

WILSON: Yup.

GRAYDON: See??? We should have left you in the sea!

JOSIE: Oh my fucking god, Graydon!

GRAYDON: What? We should have! Stopping to save *you* is why we were still at sea when that police captain happened by. If you weren't such a clumsy twat we'd have made it to port by then.

CLAYMORE: What the fuck? I can't believe I'm hearing this!

ALAN: Pipe down, Claymore, I want to hear how *I'm* to blame as well.

GRAYDON: Then let me enlighten you!

(He shook his fist.)

GRAYDON: You... you... well, you must have done something!

ALAN: Right...

GRAYDON: You took too long fishing old clumsy tits out of the water, for one!

ALAN: Wow.

JOSIE: Old clumsy tits?

GRAYDON: You heard me.

(Claymore rolled his eyes.)

CLAYMORE: So all this is our fault?

GRAYDON: Yes!

CLAYMORE: Despite the fact we were only found out because *you* ran away from a fucking wasp, all this is our fault?

GRAYDON: Um...

CLAYMORE: You were categorically told to stay inside the cabin so you wouldn't be recognised. Instead, you chose to run outside just as a personal acquaintance of yours was passing. And that's somehow *our* fault?

(Graydon ruffled his neck.)

GRAYDON: Yes. Yes it is. If you'd kept the boat clean, maybe the wasp wouldn't have been in there.

ALAN: Eh? How does that work?

GRAYDON: Maybe you spilt some jam, I don't fucking know. All I know is, it was your boat, so it was your wasp! And that's all I have to say on the matter.

(He then sat there nodding defiantly.)

ALAN: Nah, that's it. I've had enough. I should have done this a long time ago.

JOSIE: What?

ALAN: I'm gonna kick his head in.

JOSIE: Don't! There are people with guns.

ALAN: Yeah, people with guns who plan to kill us anyway, so fuck it; let them shoot me. I might as well die beating the crap out of this cunt. At least I'll go with a smile on my face. (Just as he went to rise from his seat, however, a door crashed open at the side of the warehouse and six heavily armed security men marched in. Graydon tensed up and shrieked.)

GRAYDON: That's the firing squad!!!

(Instead of marching towards them, however, the six security men lined up, three either side of the door, forming a guard of honour. Seconds later, a smart gentleman in a grey suit, paced into the room.)

CLAYMORE: Who's that?

SIERRA: *Someone* important.

ALAN: Fuck. That can't be good. I bet he's here to oversee our sentence is carried out for the government or something.

JOSIE: Do you think so?

(She clung onto his arm.)

JOSIE: I'm scared.

ALAN: So am I.

SIERRA: I love you, Josie.

JOSIE: I love you too, babes,

CLAYMORE: Oh, boy. This is not good.

(Graydon whimpered.)

GRAYDON: Bloody right, it's not. That's the Efland Ambassador to Amaria. You know what that means? We're already in the hands of the Efland government!

(Alan gave him a sideways glance.)

ALAN: That's the Efland Ambassador?

GRAYDON: Yes! He's a cunt. And he really doesn't like me.

ERIKSON: Have you ever met anyone who does?

GRAYDON: Fuck off, you.

(Alan gave a stifled laugh then made himself comfortable.)

ALAN: Fuck it. I'm gonna enjoy these last moments.

CLAYMORE: What the fuck? Are you serious?

ALAN: Yup.

(He shrugged.)

ALAN: Life is fleeting, mate. So every last second should be spent with a smile on your face.

GRAYDON: You're a fucking lunatic.

ALAN: So, I've been told.

(He then glanced ahead, just in time to see the ambassador step through the crowd of gun-wielding guards and arrive before them.)

AMBASSADOR: Evening all!

(Sierra whimpered.)

SIERRA: Please don't kill us!

JOSIE: What she said!!!

GRAYDON: You know, she actually makes a good point. Killing is wrong.

(The ambassador smiled.)

AMBASSADOR: Well, if it isn't my old chum, Graydon James.

GRAYDON: Who? Not me, chummy. I'm James Waltham.

(The ambassador laughed.)

AMBASSADOR: Of course you are.

GRAYDON: I am!!!

AMBASSADOR: Do shut up, Graydon.

GRAYDON: Who?

AMBASSADOR: Stop it!

(He rolled his eyes then looked to the trembling seven before him.)

AMBASSADOR: Right. Let's get this show on the road, shall we? I'm Harrington Walsh, the Efland Ambassador, stationed here in Amaria.

GRAYDON: And I'm James Waltham.

AMBASSADOR: Right...

SIERRA: Um, Ambassador?

AMBASSADOR: Yes, dear?

SIERRA: I'm not guilty.

AMBASSADOR: This isn't a law court, pretty one.

SIERRA: I know. I'm just saying. I'm not a terrorist. I'm not even in the resistance. I was just helping my friend...

(She then glanced away innocently.)

SIERRA: Who isn't here this evening.

AMBASSADOR: I don't need to know your life story, young lady. Sorry, are you Sierra or Josie?

SIERRA: I'm...

CLAYMORE: She's neither! This is a case of mistaken identity!

(The ambassador laughed out loud.)

AMBASSADOR: Is that so?

CLAYMORE: Yes. Tell him, Sierra.

SIERRA: Claymore!!!

CLAYMORE: What?

(He then gasped in horror.)

CLAYMORE: Fuck!

GRAYDON: What a moron.

(He shook his head then looked to the ambassador and snarled.)

GRAYDON: This is an outrage. I didn't even get the chance to apply for asylum. That can't even be legal. I can't believe how quickly the Amarian authorities turned us over to the Efland government. It's a disgrace. Corruption at its finest.

(He nodded.)

GRAYDON: And I know a thing or two about corruption.

(He then reeled back in horror at himself.)

GRAYDON: Or at least I would if I was Graydon James, but I'm not!

AMBASSADOR: Graydon, we've met on several occasions. We even played golf together once. Hell, I had the misery of sitting next to you at the last Embassy banquet. I know who you are, you silly bugger.

GRAYDON: Nonsense. I just look like me. I mean him! Fuck.

AMBASSADOR: Just don't bother, Graydon.

GRAYDON: Who?

ALAN: Ambassador?

AMBASSADOR: Yes?

ALAN: What happens now?

(The ambassador smiled.)

AMBASSADOR: Now, I'm going to tell you all about my day.

GRAYDON: You what?

AMBASSADOR: Don't interrupt. What I have to say might just help you all understand what's going to happen.

GRAYDON: Fine, go on then.

AMBASSADOR: Thank you.

(He cleared his throat then began.)

AMBASSADOR: There I was, sitting at my desk, staring at my secretary's legs when I got a phone call from the local police station. In order to let me take the call in peace, my secretary left the room. That was disappointing. It kind of ruined my good mood, to be honest.

(He shrugged.)

AMBASSADOR: The initial message from the police station didn't do my mood any favours either. He told me there'd been reports of gunfire in the alleys at the back of Rookwood Estate. Well, nobody wants to hear about that, do they?

(He nodded.)

AMBASSADOR: I know what you're thinking. Why tell *me*? I'm a foreign ambassador, not the chief of police. Well, they always alert the ambassador of a nation when its nationals have been arrested. So I knew what was coming. Some Efland folk had been involved in the incident. That *really* didn't help my mood! Efland nationals involved in gun crime?

Terrible. A blight on the good name of Efland. Anyway, I digress.

(He folded his arms.)

AMBASSADOR: The caller told me an armed unit had been sent to investigate gun shots that'd been reported. And when they engaged the gunmen, unpleasantness followed. In the aftermath two people were killed and seven others were brought in for questioning.

(He smiled.)

AMBASSADOR: Now here's where it gets interesting. Of the seven brought in for questioning, five of them had been flagged by the system as wanted criminals in Efland. Sierra Cedes, Claymore Reefer, Alan Varez, Josie Wells and Graydon James.

GRAYDON: Who?

(The ambassador ignored him and continued.)

AMBASSADOR: Sierra was flagged as a wanted terrorist.

SIERRA: Lies!

AMBASSADOR: Josie Wells was wanted on suspicion of being Sierra's accomplice. A suspicion that was deepened by the fact they both went missing at the same time.

SIERRA: That's so back to front.

JOSIE: Sierra!!!

SIERRA: I mean wrong!!! So wrong!

AMBASSADOR: Hey! Let me finish!

(He rolled his eyes.)

AMBASSADOR: Claymore Reefer and Alan Varez, now they were flagged as the owners of a boat being used to help the real villain of the piece escape. Mr Graydon James.

GRAYDON: Never heard of him. And why would *his* name be flagged. I told the police my name's James Waltham. And it is!

AMBASSADOR: Because the other two brought in, police officers Wilson and Erikson, told the investigating officer your name was Graydon James!

GRAYDON: They lied!

AMBASSADOR: I think not.

GRAYDON: Well, you fucking would. You never did like me.

(He flinched.)

GRAYDON: Not that we've ever met!



AMBASSADOR: Anyway, the point is, when I heard Graydon James and a group of fleeing terrorists had been found, I filled out the paperwork in a hurry and sent my men to collect you.

GRAYDON: *Your* men? We were collected by Amarian government troops.

AMBASSADOR: Actually, they're Efland government troops, affiliated to the embassy. And I sent them because...

GRAYDON: You wanted us brought here to Efland soil to be killed, we know.

AMBASSADOR: Don't be silly, old boy. This isn't Efland soil. This is Amarian soil. I wouldn't take you anywhere *near* Efland soil. You'd all be shipped home and killed if I did that.

GRAYDON: But, isn't that your plan anyway?

AMBASSADOR: Oh, god no. Why would I have government dissenters killed?

ALAN: Wait for it...

(The ambassador beamed.)

AMBASSADOR: I'm the leader of the Efland resistance!

(Claymore, Sierra, Josie, Graydon, Wilson and Erikson all gasped in astonishment. Alan, however, burst out laughing, and slapped his knee with amusement.)

ALAN: Priceless!

GRAYDON: Wait! What?

AMBASSADOR: You heard me. *I'm* part of the resistance, *all* these people are part of the resistance, even this *building* is part of the resistance. Welcome to our HQ, Graydon!

GRAYDON: Shit!!!

ALAN: Gloriously done, boss.

CLAYMORE: Boss?

(Alan then looked to Graydon.)

ALAN: You are in so much shit right now, Graydon. *You* and *just* you!

CLAYMORE: Wait, wait, wait! Boss?

ALAN: Huh?

CLAYMORE: You called him boss!

(Alan grimaced.)

ALAN: Yeah... about that... we need to talk, mate.

AMBASSADOR: Very well, you do that. I'll be across the room if you need me.

(He then looked to his guards.)

AMBASSADOR: Make sure the fat old bastard and the two police officers stay put. Watch them like hawks. The other four can feel free to mingle.

(He then looked to Alan.)

AMBASSADOR: Don't leave the warehouse yet, Alan. Not until we've talked.

ALAN: Okay.

(He then headed away. As he did so, Alan flinched and sat back. Josie, Claymore, Sierra and Graydon had gathered around him, demanding an explanation with their eyes.)

ALAN: Um... yeah...

CLAYMORE: Well???

ALAN: Right... it's like this.

(He then puffed out and started to relate his story.)

ALAN: I've been with the resistance since I was sixteen. Long before I knew you, Claymore. I didn't do much though. Just delivered the odd message now and again, you know? I was too busy working for anything else.

CLAYMORE: Get to the point!

ALAN: Easy, mate. I'll tell it properly then I won't have to repeat myself.

(He ruffled his neck.)

ALAN: Like I said, I was small fry really. Then one of the higher ups heard I was working on the canal, travelling back and forth across the border.

(He shrugged.)

ALAN: So, they asked me if I'd be interested in people smuggling. Helping resistance members escape, you know? So, I kinda said yes.

(Claymore looked most perplexed.)

CLAYMORE: That's not what happened. People trafficking was *my* idea.

(Alan gave him a sympathetic glance.)

ALAN: Was it though?

CLAYMORE: Yeah. You were in two minds when I first suggested it. You even had to sleep on it.

ALAN: Oh, mate... how do I tell you this?

(He nodded.)

ALAN: Claymore. You're not the smartest tool in the shed. If you ran a solo business venture, you still wouldn't be the brains of the operation.

CLAYMORE: Excuse me?

ALAN: I dropped hints about people trafficking for weeks. I'd just slip things into conversation like how much people would pay for safe passage; that kind of thing. I sold you the idea without you even realising it. And I did that because I knew you'd eventually approach me and say *we* should get involved. And that's exactly what happened.

(He shrugged.)

ALAN: So I pretended to be fifty-fifty on it. You know, just to reinforce the idea that it was your own innovation and not mine. Sorry.

CLAYMORE: You conniving, deceitful cunt. You're worse than Hitler.

ALAN: Who's Hitler?

CLAYMORE: Kevin Hitler; the twat who sold me a new bike after mine got stolen. Turned out it was *my* bike anyway; he was the cunt who stole it.

ALAN: How am I like him?

CLAYMORE: Dishonest!

ALAN: Right... well...

(He shrugged.)

ALAN: You got us fired from our dream job, so I guess we're both cunts.

CLAYMORE: Mate...

ALAN: What?

CLAYMORE: That's it! We're even. No more guilt trips about me losing us the roadie jobs. I fucked up and you lied to me, so we're square, okay?

ALAN: Okay. Deal.

(He nodded.)

ALAN: So, anyway, that's my story.

JOSIE: No, it isn't!

SIERRA: That's barely even half the story!

JOSIE: Did you *plan* this nightmare?

SIERRA: And how long have you known these people here were actually the Efland resistance and not hostile troops, you bastard? I was terrified.

JOSIE: I still am. It was the resistance I was running away from.

SIERRA: Oh, yeah. Good point.

JOSIE: Alan, explain yourself. Explain *everything*! I mean, what the fuck? If you're in the resistance, why would you even *consider* helping this fat cunt flee the country? He's the enemy!

(She gestured to Graydon.)

GRAYDON: Hey! I have a name you know. It's James Waltham.

JOSIE: Shut it. Come on, Alan, we need answers.

ALAN: I haven't got any, Josie.

SIERRA: Lies!

ALAN: It's not lies.

(He gave a frustrated sigh.)

ALAN: Look, we were about to set out, right? Just Claymore, me and a shit load of chocolate cakes. Then this fat cunt shows up.

(He gestured to Graydon.)

GRAYDON: Stop doing that!

ALAN: I knew who he was, of course I did. So I told Claymore I was going for a piss and went to make a phone call instead. I rang my mate who first suggested people trafficking to me. He put me straight through the ambassador.

(He shrugged.)

ALAN: He told me to cross the border as always, then hand over that fat cunt to the resistance.

(He gestured to Graydon.)

GRAYDON: Excuse me? And stop calling me that! But mostly, excuse me??? This entire nightmare was all a set up to get me captured by the resistance right from the beginning?

ALAN: No. It wasn't meant to be a nightmare, was it? It was meant to be a normal trip up the canal. You made it a fucking nightmare when you fled from that bloody wasp!

GRAYDON: You bastard. I don't know *what* to say about that. I feel betrayed.

ALAN: So did the entire country when you were advising the government, so I won't lose any sleep over that.

JOSIE: So, you didn't mean to put us all in mortal danger?

ALAN: Of course not. Like anyone could plan to go through the horrors we've just been through and expect to live. The bus chase, the shootouts, pissing about at sea, getting captured by the fucking Efland police, none of that bollocks was meant to happen. It was meant to be an ordinary people smuggling operation. It only went wrong because of that fat cunt, like I said.

(He gestured to Graydon.)

GRAYDON: Stop that!

ALAN: And that's everything, I believe.

SIERRA: No, it's not. I'm still angry with you. You might have *told* us we were in the care of the resistance. I thought they were a hostile enemy and we were all gonna die.

ALAN: I didn't *know* we were in the care of the resistance, Sierra. Not until Graydon said the bloke who'd just walked in was the Efland ambassador. Why do you think I suddenly relaxed? When I said life was fleeting so we might as well keep a smile on our faces, I was saying Graydon's life was fleeting.

JOSIE: And it never occurred to you to tell *us* that?

ALAN: Well... no... I know that sounds kinda bad, but I really wanted to see the look of horror of that fat cunt's face when the ambassador announced himself.

(He gestured to Graydon again.)

GRAYDON: You horrible bastard.

ALAN: So, anyway. That's everything. I didn't plan *any* of this. All our nightmares were real and I really didn't know we were safe until just now. Satisfied? It's not like I was the inside man all along. I really am just some bloke who works on a canal. The only difference between me and you guys is, I knew the ambassador was the leader of the resistance. That's it! I didn't know we were in his custody until he came in just now. Okay?

(Claymore looked to him emptily for a moment then shrugged.)

CLAYMORE: Fair enough. You're still my best mate. It just means my best mate is a twat.

ALAN: Which is something we have in common.

(They shared a smirk then Alan looked to Josie.)

ALAN: If I was to hazard a guess, I'd say they're gonna drag Graydon away then let us be on our way soon. They might even help us change up some of our money.

CLAYMORE: The Amarian police took that.

ALAN: Fuck.

(He sighed.)

ALAN: Doesn't matter. Look, we're safe now, Josie...

JOSIE: No, we're not. These are the very people I was fleeing from, remember?

ALAN: Yeah, but nothing's going to happen; not now. Not here. Half the resistance members we smuggled out were fleeing from their fellow members. Amaria is a safe haven for them too. You can't be captured and tortured by the Efland police and give away resistance secrets now you're *this* side of the border. That means you're no longer a risk.

JOSIE: Alan, we literally *were* captured by the Efland police this side of the border, no less than an hour ago.

ALAN: Right.

ERIKSON: Um... that was a mistake, actually. We don't normally do that.

WILSON: Yeah. Sorry. We were lost, you see? We thought we were still in Efland.

ALAN: See? You'll be fine here, Josie.

(Josie sighed.)

JOSIE: I hope so.

ALAN: You are. The ambassador wouldn't have said you were free to mingle otherwise, would he?

JOSIE: I guess.

(Alan nodded.)

ALAN: So, anyway, as I was saying. We've made it. Our new lives start today. Right now. Well, soon anyway. And I want you know, once they do, I'm going to ask you out, Josie.

JOSIE: You are?

ALAN: I am.

JOSIE: Okay... in that case, it's only fair to warn you in advance that I'll probably say no.

ALAN: Right...

(He grimaced.)

ALAN: Don't I feel like a twat.

GRAYDON: She certainly made you look like one, yes.

JOSIE: I don't mean it in a bad way.

(She shrugged nervously.)

JOSIE: It's not that I'm not attracted to you, I am... it's just...

ALAN: I understand.

JOSIE: You do?

ALAN: My genital girth is too much for you, isn't it?

JOSIE: What?

CLAYMORE: Dude!

SIERRA: Fucking wow!

ALAN: What? It's a real problem for *some* women! It is!

JOSIE: No, Alan. It's not *that*. In fact, why the hell would you even *think*... never mind.

(She pouted.)

JOSIE: It's just that... I've lived a sheltered life. I'm stupidly shy to the point where even recluses call me introverted. That's the way I am. Even with Sierra boosting my confidence

all the time like she does, I'm only ever one bad day away from shrinking into my shell again.

(She smiled.)

JOSIE: But after what happened at sea, I've decided to live my life better. To express myself more and live life to the fullest. So I'm going to explore myself and find out who the real me is. I finally want to meet her, you know?

(She nodded.)

JOSIE: Once I've done that, once I know who I am, maybe then I can think about sharing my life with someone. But until then...

ALAN: I hear you. That's cool. Better than cool, actually. I'm right behind you.

JOSIE: Thanks.

ALAN: We can doink though, right?

(Josie just stared through him coldly.)

JOSIE: Alan?

ALAN: Um...

JOSIE: That goes without saying!

(Alan, Sierra and Claymore all laughed.)

SIERRA: That's my Josie.

JOSIE: What?

SIERRA: You're a nutter.

JOSIE: Hey!

ALAN: No, no, you are. But you're our nutter.

SIERRA: Yup.

CLAYMORE: Definitely.

JOSIE: Right... thanks?

ALAN: You're welcome.

GRAYDON: Fuck sake. Is that all you cunts can think about? Sex. How about having some sympathy for us three?

CLAYMORE: No, we're good.

GRAYDON: Oh, that's nice, isn't it? We're all doomed to die and yet you're...

ERIKSON: Hey! Why are *we* doomed to die?

WILSON: Yeah!

GRAYDON: You're members of the Efland police force. This is the HQ of the Efland resistance. You fucking figure it out.

ERIKSON: Right... that's not good, is it?

WILSON: That's not good at all.

GRAYDON: Exactly. So how about joining me in showing some disdain for this horrible, cheerful bunch.

ERIKSON: Why would we do that?

WILSON: Yeah, good luck to them. We were only after them because our captain wanted to catch them and reap the reward.

ERIKSON: It was never personal.

WILSON: Exactly. I mean, we all thought *you* were a cunt, Graydon, but we've got nothing against those four.

ERIKSON: Not a thing.

GRAYDON: I see. Fuck you then! Everyone is a cunt except me. Fact!

(Just then, the ambassador came over and nodded to Alan.)

AMBASSADOR: Right. You chaps good to go?

ALAN: Go where?

AMBASSADOR: To be processed.

CLAYMORE: Processed?

AMBASSADOR: Yes. You want ID's, don't you? New names and such?

SIERRA: You can do that?

AMBASSADOR: Of course. I've been working in cahoots with the Amarian government on a relocation scheme for years. Those fleeing from the Efland government or from paranoid resistance members are given a new life.

JOSIE: So... we're free?

AMBASSADOR: Of course you are. Consider Amaria your sanctuary. Once you've been processed you'll all be bona fide citizens of this country. Your old names will be expunged so you can't be traced and you can start over anew.

(He beamed proudly.)

AMBASSADOR: It's a scheme I'm immensely proud of.

ALAN: You fucking legend.

AMBASSADOR: Yes. Yes, I am.

(He nodded firmly.)

AMBASSADOR: Seriously though, it's the least I can do. I've been placed in a position where I can help my fellow countrymen. I'd never shirk that responsibility. By having this scheme we can bring hope to the oppressed. Reward those who fought back and got caught in the act. We can make a difference. I know it doesn't help the thousands who've been killed during the resistance but it's at least something.

CLAYMORE: It's more than just something. It's huge.

JOSIE: Thank you, Mr Ambassador.

AMBASSADOR: Wipe your tears, young lady.

(He chuckled.)

AMBASSADOR: Amaria might look like a nice place, but the food is fucking terrible.

(They all laughed except Graydon and the two police officers.)

GRAYDON: Oh, ha bloody ha. Chuckle fucking chuckle. Everyone's so fucking jolly. Well, allow me to tell you where you can stick your jollity.

AMBASSADOR: No. I'll allow no such thing.

(He then nodded to Alan, Claymore, Sierra and Josie.)

AMBASSADOR: There's a girl setting up a desk over there...

(He pointed to the corner.)

AMBASSADOR: Go and see her. She'll help you get your new ID's sorted.

SIERRA: Oh, okay. Thank you.

ALAN: Thanks, Ambassador.

AMBASSADOR: It's my pleasure. Just think of a new surname to go by and leave the rest to us, okay?

ALAN: Will do.

(As Alan, Claymore, Sierra and Josie headed away, the ambassador glanced at Erikson and Wilson.)

AMBASSADOR: You two know far too much.

(They both hung their heads.)

ERIKSON: We know.

WILSON: Just make it painless.

ERIKSON: And I'd like a cigarette before I die.

AMBASSADOR: If you say so. Anyway, I'm sending you both to Shehi Island

ERIKSON: What?

AMBASSADOR: It's a small island with no telephones or mail. The only way on or off the island is by ferry. You'll not be permitted to board.

ERIKSON: I don't understand.

AMBASSADOR: I don't kill people for the fuck of it, son. I'm sending you there to live out your lives, unable to contact the outside world. That way you'll never be able to tell the Efland government about what you've seen and heard here today.

WILSON: Oh... I... what?

AMBASSADOR: Don't look so nervous. There's a thriving economy there. The beer is excellent and the inhabitants are lovely people. And yes, there are plenty of women. The people are, however, just like you. People who know too much.

(He nodded.)

AMBASSADOR: In Efland, the government kill such people. Here in Amaria things are different. They send you to Shehi Island so you'll never be able to tell the wrong people what you know.

(He shrugged.)

AMBASSADOR: Or I could just have you killed if you'd rather.

ERIKSON: No, no, Shehi Island sounds like a lovely place.

WILSON: It really does.

AMBASSADOR: I figured you'd agree.

(He then looked to Graydon.)

AMBASSADOR: And that leaves you. Poor doomed little Graydon.

GRAYDON: Doomed? You said you didn't kill people for the fuck of it!

AMBASSADOR: It won't be for the mere fuck of it, Graydon. Nor are you what I'd consider a person.

GRAYDON: What am I then? A suitcase?

AMBASSADOR: You're a despicable rodent.

(He sneered.)

AMBASSADOR: Those I *do* kill.

GRAYDON: Aw, crap.

AMBASSADOR: But first, you and I are going to have a little chat.

(He gave him a devilish grin.)

AMBASSADOR: There's a lot of information in that brain of yours that might just help our cause. And I intend to make the most of it.

(Graydon could only hang a despairing head.)

GRAYDON: Yes. I bet you do.

---

Having reached the corner of the room where a young female resistance member had set up a desk for them, Sierra, Josie, Claymore and Alan formed an orderly queue. Standing at the front, not quite sure what to expect, Sierra was more than a little nervous. Glancing over her shoulder at Josie she grimaced uneasily.)

SIERRA: What have I got to do?

JOSIE: I dunno. You've thought of a new surname have you?

SIERRA: Yeah, but...

JOSIE: Then just answer her questions, I suppose.

SIERRA: Oh, okay. I can do that.

JOSIE: Of course.

SIERRA: And what shall I say?

JOSIE: Sierra, how could I possibly know that? I don't know what she's going to ask any more than you do!

SIERRA: Right.

JOSIE: Just tell her the truth, I guess.

(Just then, the girl who'd been setting up the desk, wandered away, calling across the room as she did so.)

GIRL: All done. You're up, babe.

(Another young woman then strutted towards the desk with a folder under her arm. As soon as they spotted her, Claymore's jaw dropped and Alan grimaced uncomfortably.)

ALAN: What the living fuck? Claymore?

(Claymore rubbed his eyes.)

CLAYMORE: I know.

ALAN: So, I'm not imagining it then?

CLAYMORE: Nope.

(They then watched on in bewilderment as the woman took a seat. Before she could invite Sierra to come and talk to her, however, Claymore strutted up to her desk and slammed his palms into the work surface.)

CLAYMORE: What the living fuck, Mercedes???

(The woman glanced up at him then jumped to her feet in amazement.)

MERCEDES: Claymore???

CLAYMORE: Yes. Fucking Claymore!

(Mercedes grimaced.)

MERCEDES: Um... surprise?

(Baffled by it all, Sierra and Josie looked to Alan.)

JOSIE: What's going on?

SIERRA: He called her Mercedes. Isn't that the girl you talked about before? The love of his life?

(Alan nodded.)

ALAN: Uh-huh.

SIERRA: I see.

(She then growled bitterly and stared hard at Mercedes with a killer glint in her eyes.

Blissfully unaware of the hatred she was receiving, Mercedes scratched her head nervously then shrugged.)

MERCEDES: So... you look well...

CLAYMORE: Fuck how I look. Where the hell did you vanish to?

MERCEDES: Well... here obviously.

CLAYMORE: I mean where have you been?

MERCEDES: Um... again... here.

(Calming slightly, Claymore blinked at her emptily.)

CLAYMORE: Why?

MERCEDES: I...

CLAYMORE: You do realise we thought you'd been murdered, right?

MERCEDES: Um...

CLAYMORE: Despite months of searching every bush and hedgerow, morning noon and night, your body was never found. There was no sign of you, so we figured you'd been taken and dumped somewhere you'd never be found. Yet here you are! Grinning like an idiot.

MERCEDES: I can't help it. I grin when I'm nervous.

CLAYMORE: Nervous? Why would you be nervous?

(She nodded past his shoulder.)

MERCEDES: That brunette girl looks like she's about to thump me.

CLAYMORE: I feel like thumping you an' all. I grieved for you. Mourned! We even held a funeral. We thought you'd been brutally murdered when you'd actually run away to join the fucking resistance!

(Mercedes grimaced.)



MERCEDES: Look, calm down, okay? It's a long story and we don't have time for it now.  
CLAYMORE: Then make time.  
MERCEDES: Claymore, no. We need to get this done, okay? Let's just get it finished then we can talk later.  
(Claymore sighed.)  
CLAYMORE: Fine.  
MERCEDES: Thank you. I'll explain everything then we can have a good catch up, okay?  
(She smiled.)  
MERCEDES: It's wonderful to see you again, by the way.  
(Claymore gave a stifled laugh.)  
CLAYMORE: Yeah. You too.  
MERCEDES: Anyway. I need some details for these forms. It's just a few simple questions, so it won't take long. Then we can move on to getting your ID photos taken.  
CLAYMORE: Fair enough. Fire away.  
MERCEDES: Okay. Name?  
(Claymore growled at her.)  
CLAYMORE: Seriously???  
MERCEDES: I'm nervous!  
CLAYMORE: So nervous you've forgotten my name?  
MERCEDES: Of course not. It's just that...  
(She shrugged.)  
MERCEDES: You were the love of my life once. You were. I thought you and me would be together forever.  
(She sighed emptily.)  
MERCEDES: Leaving you broke my heart. It killed me inside. So, well, seeing you again is... emotional. It's thrown me a little.  
(She whimpered.)  
MERCEDES: Plus... that girl really does look like she's going to attack me.  
CLAYMORE: She won't. And even if she tried, she'd probably miss. So just chill out.  
MERCEDES: Okay.  
(She then nodded to compose herself.)  
MERCEDES: Let's try again then. Name?  
CLAYMORE: Are you fucking kidding me?  
MERCEDES: I'm joking, I'm joking. Calm down.  
CLAYMORE: Just pass me a pen and I'll fill the form out myself.  
MERCEDES: Well, that would be easier.  
CLAYMORE: Yes. Yes, it would.  
(Mercedes then held up several pens and glanced around Claymore to where his three friends were waiting.)  
MERCEDES: Do you want to come and fill out these forms, everyone?  
(Sierra immediately stomped over to her and snatched a pen.)  
SIERRA: I'm watching you!  
MERCEDES: Right... I seem to have pissed you off somehow, haven't I? Care to explain?  
(Sierra just growled at her.)  
MERCEDES: Right...

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Once the formalities of filling in forms and taking photos had been completed, Mercedes nodded to thank everyone then hurried away. It hadn't been a comfortable experience for her. Josie was the only neutral party. Alan had been repeatedly shaking his head at her and

Claymore was quite visibly miffed. They'd both hunted for her and mourned her passing, so to find out she'd merely run away to join the resistance without telling them was aggravating to say the least. Their scorn was understandable, however. Why Sierra was growling at her and giving her murderous glances, she had no idea. She was just happy to finally get away from her.

Unsure as to what would happen next, once the forms were completed, Alan led them all towards the centre of the room where Graydon was being tied to a chair. Unsurprisingly, he wasn't taking it very well. Surrounded by literally dozens of people who despised the very core of his being, he felt like a piñata being set up for angry party guests to take their frustrations out on.

Watching as Graydon's binds were secured, Alan stepped up to the ambassador then grimaced uncomfortably.

ALAN: This is gonna get a bit bloody, isn't it?

(The ambassador looked to him and smiled.)

AMBASSADOR: Well, that all depends on him, doesn't it?

(Alan looked to Graydon then grimaced.)

GRAYDON: Unhand me at once, you Neanderthals! This is an outrage!!! I won't tolerate it, you know? Let me go this instant!!! You won't get away with this, you mark my words!

Bloody peasants!

ALAN: Yup, it's gonna get bloody.

(He then shrugged it off.)

ALAN: So, what happens now? We filled out of forms.

AMBASSADOR: Ah, good, good. And did you get photos taken?

ALAN: We did. Sierra was smiling through gritted teeth.

AMBASSADOR: What?

ALAN: Doesn't matter. So what happens next?

AMBASSADOR: Next, my lad, you'll be provided with your ID's then taken to your accommodation.

ALAN: What accommodation?

AMBASSADOR: Accommodation provided by *us*. We own real estate with several small apartments on, you see?

ALAN: Whoa! Seriously?

AMBASSADOR: Absolutely. Your ID requires a registered address, you see? So we provide both. There'll be some cash too. Only enough for a week or so though. After that, you'll have to start fending for yourselves. Don't worry though, employment is plentiful here. And unlike in Efland, you can afford to live well on it.

JOSIE: Wow. You're gonna do all that for us?

AMBASSADOR: Of course. It wouldn't be much of a relocation program if anyone who fled here ended up living on the street and eating out of bins, would it?

(Josie chuckled.)

JOSIE: I suppose not.

(She smiled.)

JOSIE: Thank you, ambassador.

AMBASSADOR: You're welcome.

(He beamed.)

AMBASSADOR: Now, if you'll excuse me. I have work to do.

(He then strutted up to where Graydon was wriggling in his seat. As he did so, almost everyone else in the building gathered around in a circle. It then fell extremely silent. Struck by the silence, Graydon glanced around himself then gulped.)

GRAYDON: Well that's not a good sign.

AMBASSADOR: Graydon, Graydon, Graydon...

GRAYDON: Who?

AMBASSADOR: Don't. Do you really think pretending to be someone else is going to fool anybody?

GRAYDON: I'm not pretending. I'm really am James Waltham.

AMBASSADOR: Then it's safe to assume you're both. James Waltham being a fake identity.

(He nodded.)

AMBASSADOR: I'll have my friends in the Amarian government strike his name from the record, then have his assets liquated and given to charity.

GRAYDON: You bastard!

(He sighed.)

GRAYDON: I was going to say you can't do that, but then I know better, don't I?

(He shook his head.)

GRAYDON: Governments can do as they please.

AMBASSADOR: Indeed they can.

(He furrowed his brow.)

AMBASSADOR: In Amaria, however, they choose *not* to be a bunch of self-serving cunts.

GRAYDON: More fool them then.

(The ambassador nodded.)

AMBASSADOR: What a wonderfully honest answer. Hopefully, the first of many.

(He then reached in his pocket and pulled out a set of knuckledusters.)

GRAYDON: Uh-oh.

AMBASSADOR: These knuckledusters are solid gold, you know, Graydon?

(Graydon gulped.)

AMBASSADOR: They have pointy tips too, just to add that extra element of pain.

(He smiled.)

AMBASSADOR: Though, I must be careful not to break your jaw too quickly. You're going to need that to talk.

GRAYDON: Talk?

AMBASSADOR: Yes. To tell me everything incriminating you possibly can about the inner workings of our government.

GRAYDON: Like you don't already know.

AMBASSADOR: I don't though. I'm based here in Amaria. I don't know where the evidence is. I don't know what schemes you've all been concocting lately either. There's a million things I don't know.

(He gave Graydon his harshest grin.)

AMBASSADOR: Yet!

(Graydon scoffed.)

GRAYDON: Really? You think it's that simple, do you? You think you can merely beat me until I tell you everything I know?

AMBASSADOR: I do, yes.

GRAYDON: Then you're spot on. Please don't hurt me!!! I'll tell you everything!!!

AMBASSADOR: You will? How obliging. Thank you.

(Just then, a look of enlightenment swept onto Graydon's brow. In that moment, hope returned to his eyes and he looked to the ambassador with a smile on his face. It was a smile that made Alan, Claymore, Josie and Sierra somewhat uneasy.)

ALAN: Uh-oh, he's scheming look.

CLAYMORE: Uh-huh.

SIERRA: He's definitely thought of *something*.

JOSIE: But what? Even *he* can't wriggle and squirm his way out of this one, can he?

ALAN: Well, if anyone can...

JOSIE: Good point.

(The ambassador raised a curious eyebrow.)

AMBASSADOR: What are you looking so chuffed about?

GRAYDON: Chuffed? I'm not chuffed at all. I was just thinking.

AMBASSADOR: Oh?

GRAYDON: There are two ways this could go. You *could* let me take a beating, while I tell you just enough to stop you from hitting me. After which, you'd have me killed then act on the snippet of information I've given you.

AMBASSADOR: And the other way?

GRAYDON: You could let me keep my life as James Waltham plus all my assets in exchange for the big prize.

AMBASSADOR: What big prize?

(Graydon smiled.)

GRAYDON: Bringing down the Efland government in its entirety.

(Everyone gasped excitedly.)

GRAYDON: And not just bringing the government down, my friend. It wouldn't need to stop there. What I know would see virtually the entire cabinet arrested by the Union of Nations for crimes against humanity. How does that sound?

AMBASSADOR: It sounds like you just made an almighty mistake.

GRAYDON: Oh does it?

AMBASSADOR: You just confessed to having information that's worth more than gold. All I need to do now is beat it out of you.

GRAYDON: Think that'll work, do you?

AMBASSADOR: Let's see, shall we?

GRAYDON: Let's not.

(He smirked.)

GRAYDON: You see, once you start beating me, sure enough I'll start to talk. But how much do you think you'll get before I die? You won't get *everything* I know, that's for sure. You'll merely get the mutterings of a man willing to say just enough for you to stop hitting him. I'll grow weaker and more tired by the punch. Things will slip my mind and in the end you'll get a fraction of what I know before my body simply gives up.

(He sighed.)

GRAYDON: How much information will you miss out on? How many of those criminals in the Efland government will walk free because you beat your only source of information to death? Well?

(The ambassador sucked his teeth.)

AMBASSADOR: You make an interesting point.

GRAYDON: What did you expect? I'm a smart man. And so are you, ambassador.

(He nodded.)

GRAYDON: So logic dictates that we end this charade and make a deal.

AMBASSADOR: Does it now?

GRAYDON: Yes. I have what you want more than anything in the world. I'm the key to destroying the Efland government. And you have what I want. You're the one who gets to decide whether I can leave here and enjoy my retirement as James Waltham; rich bloke. (He shrugged.)

GRAYDON: Therefore, I think a trade is in order, don't you? I'll give you my info in exchange for my absolute freedom.

(As the ambassador pondered his words, Alan looked to Josie and shook his head.)

ALAN: He's gonna wriggle out of it, isn't he?

JOSIE: I hope so.

SIERRA: You do?

JOSIE: Yeah. If his information *really can* bring down the Efland government, the ambassador would be a fool *not* to take it.

CLAYMORE: Yeah, but... I wanted to see Graydon get punched.

ALAN: So did I.

SIERRA: We all did, but Josie's right. If letting him go is for the greater good then it just makes sense, doesn't it?

ALAN: I guess.

(He sighed.)

ALAN: I'll just punch him myself later.

(He then looked to where the ambassador was pacing before Graydon.)

AMBASSADOR: You'd be willing to share enough information to bring down the entire Efland government, merely in exchange for your freedom?

GRAYDON: No, I want to keep my fortune too.

AMBASSADOR: Of course, you do.

GRAYDON: Don't underestimate this offer, ambassador. I won't just tell you enough to bring a few people down. I'll work *with* you until you've got what you need to take the whole fucking lot of them down.

(The ambassador scoffed.)

AMBASSADOR: I'm sure they'll be touched by your loyalty.

GRAYDON: Loyalty? The fuckers tried to have me killed. I'm only here now because I was fleeing from *their* death squads. Why would I show *them* cunts any loyalty? Right now, I hate them as much as you do.

(He snarled.)

GRAYDON: And hatred is something I do well, my friend. I'm a bitter, vengeful man, ambassador and nothing would please me more than to be sitting in the sun, drinking a beer, laughing until my piss myself while I watch news coverage of them fuckers getting arrested.

(He nodded.)

GRAYDON: That's what you'll get from me. The whole fucking shebang. I won't just help you burn down their empire; I'll throw fuel on the fucking flames. So come on, do we have a deal?

(The ambassador nodded to himself slowly then looked up, wearing a wry smile.)

AMBASSADOR: I think we just might.

GRAYDON: Good.

AMBASSADOR: But first, let's have a taster. What can you tell me about the culture minister?

GRAYDON: Charles Farnham?

AMBASSADOR: The very same.

(Graydon laughed out loud.)

GRAYDON: Charles Farnham, the man who proposed a new law to ban all forms of homosexuality, but wasn't present at the announcement as he was at his home in Valesham... bumming some black bloke.

AMBASSADOR: Great, but that's not going to get him arrested by the Union of Nations, is it?

GRAYDON: What if I told you the black bloke was one of six slaves he keeps in his cellar? (Everyone gasped in horror.)

GRAYDON: The evidence is in his filing cabinet. They're down as cattle that he imported for his estate farm, but he doesn't even *have* a farm. The evidence is also in his cellar, obviously, chained to the wall, I expect.

AMBASSADOR: Are you serious???

GRAYDON: Yes. And that's just the tip of the iceberg. He also has the entire pension fund of Ryman Electric company stashed in a private bank account in Santa Lorena, in readiness for when he tanks the market next month using insider trading. I can prove that too. (He laughed.)

GRAYDON: I've got enough on him and hundreds of others to put them away forever. Or have them sent to the gallows. So what do you say?

(The ambassador started to laugh, shaking his head as he did so.)

AMBASSADOR: You're a slippery bastard, Graydon. You never get your comeuppance, do you? You always seem to wriggle out of it somehow.

(He then shrugged.)

AMBASSADOR: This time, however, it appears to be worth it. You have a deal.

GRAYDON: I thought I might.

(At once, an excited buzz encircled the room. Destroying the Efland government was a brilliance of which few had dared to dream. For it to suddenly feel like a possibility was extremely exhilarating.)

AMBASSADOR: There is one condition, however, Graydon.

GRAYDON: Who?

AMBASSADOR: Really?

GRAYDON: Sorry, force of habit. What's this condition of yours?

AMBASSADOR: If your information *doesn't* take down the Efland government, you'll be back in that chair in a few months, and this time we'll go to town on you with hammers and chainsaws.

(Graydon gulped.)

GRAYDON: Then we'd better get cracking, hadn't we?

(A loud cheer then echoed around the room.)

GRAYDON: Now fucking untie me.

(Watching on, Josie could only muster a bemused smile.)

JOSIE: He's going to get away with literally every evil he ever committed, isn't he?

ALAN: Yup.

(Claymore looked thoughtful.)

CLAYMORE: Well... technically, he didn't actually perpetrate any evils though, did he? He just showed others how to do it.

SIERRA: Yeah, gleefully. He was extremely proud of it.

CLAYMORE: Yeah. You're right. He's as bad as they are.

ALAN: But still, he's neutralised now and if the others *do* get what's coming to them, that's justice enough for me.

JOSIE: You're still gonna lump him one though, right?

ALAN: First chance I get.

JOSIE: Cool.

(They watched as Graydon was freed from his binds and led away, then turned to face one another.)

ALAN: So...

CLAYMORE: Yup.

JOSIE: Uh-huh.

SIERRA: I feel so conflicted right now.

CLAYMORE: You too, huh?

ALAN: I thought it was just me.

JOSIE: No, no; I feel the same.

SIERRA: Part of me wants to celebrate like there's no tomorrow. We made it, guys. Despite the odds, we're here; we're free and our lives can go on. That's an amazing thing. But at the same time... starting a new life. That's really scary.

CLAYMORE: It is, yeah.

(He shrugged.)

CLAYMORE: Maybe we should just focus on celebrating for now and leave worrying about the future until tomorrow.

ALAN: Normally, mate, I'd call that the moronic approach.

CLAYMORE: Excuse me?

ALAN: It's easy to say fuck it, let's relax and worry about the future later. In this case, however, it kinda makes sense.

JOSIE: It does. I'm too tired to think right now anyway.

SIERRA: So we celebrate?

ALAN: Like an ugly bloke receiving his first blow job.

CLAYMORE: Agreed.

(He nodded.)

CLAYMORE: Allow me to get the ball rolling.

(He then cast both fists in the air and bellowed.)

CLAYMORE: We won!!!

(At once, everyone in the warehouse stared in their direction. Caring very little about that fact, Alan, Josie and Sierra all cheered and a series of hugs ensued.)

ALAN: Mate, you're a bus driving legend.

CLAYMORE: And you, sir, are a fighting god.

JOSIE: And Sierra is a computer genius.

SIERRA: Whereas you, Josie are a gun-totting demoness. In fact you're pretty good at everything you put your mind to.

CLAYMORE: We all did our bit, didn't we?

ALAN: Yup. We pulled together and kicked the odds right in the nuts.

JOSIE: We really did. There's no way we should have survived that ordeal.

SIERRA: But we did, because we were awesome.

(Right now, their smiles couldn't have been wider. They could and maybe should have died several times along the way. In a matter of days, they'd come under fire more times than the average combat soldiers does in his entire career. And yet they'd made it out alive. Hunted down by an entire nation's police force and military, the chances of them making it through unscathed had been slim. And yet, somehow, against all odds, they'd pulled through. Quite rightly, they couldn't have more proud of themselves. Lady luck had played a large part in their success, but there was no way she was going to be allowed to take *all* the credit. They earned their survival and now they were going to celebrate it. It was a truly wonderful moment.)

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Savouring the elated feelings they were currently experiencing, Alan, Claymore, Josie and Sierra exhaled gleefully and shared a series of delighted smiles. A few moments later, however, once the initial excitement had calmed down slightly, Josie bit her lip. There was still a lot to be decided and she didn't want to celebrate *too* vehemently until everything had been finalised.

JOSIE: So, what now, guys? Shall we sit in the corner until our ID's arrive or something?

SIERRA: I reckon so. There's some shady characters in here.

(She nodded sternly.)

SIERRA: I don't trust that Mercedes person one bit.

ALAN: How come?

SIERRA: She's shady.

ALAN: In what way?

SIERRA: I don't know.

(She ruffled her neck.)

SIERRA: I can just tell. Call it women's intuition.

JOSIE: Babe...

SIERRA: Don't start with me, Josie. You saw the way she was looking at Claymore.

ALAN: Like they were long lost friends?

SIERRA: Long lost *lovers*! But that's not the point. We should all keep away from her. Especially you, Claymore.

(Claymore smiled.)

CLAYMORE: Don't worry about her, Sierra. She's a relic of the past. I'm with you now.

SIERRA: And don't forget it!

CLAYMORE: What?

SIERRA: Just saying.

CLAYMORE: Well, don't. I have no designs on her whatsoever.

(He furrowed his brow.)

CLAYMORE: She does, however, owe Alan and I an explanation.

ALAN: A detailed one.

CLAYMORE: Yeah.

ALAN: Maybe even in writing with illustrations and diagrams.

CLAYMORE: What?

ALAN: We waded through a muddy swamp looking for her, mate. I'm not happy about that.

CLAYMORE: How do you think I feel then? I thought she was the one. The beginning and ending of my life's happiness. I thought I knew her inside out. I knew fuck all. I didn't even know she was in the resistance!

SIERRA: See? She's shady, like I said.

ALAN: Well, yeah, but on the other hand, you didn't know *I* was in the resistance either, Claymore.

(Claymore grimaced.)

CLAYMORE: That's true.

(He then raised a suspicious eyebrow at Sierra.)

CLAYMORE: You're not gonna tell me *you're* a secret resistance member an' all, are you?

SIERRA: Of course not.

JOSIE: What a silly thing to say.

(She grinned then looked away.)

JOSIE: It's a secret organisation. She wouldn't tell you even if she was.

CLAYMORE: That's not funny, Josie.

SIERRA: Anyway, let's make a pact. We should all stay away from Mercedes.

ALAN: No, let's not.



SIERRA: But...

ALAN: We still need an explanation from her.

(He ruffled his neck.)

ALAN: Once we've got that, fine. I'll even help you make an effigy of her to throw darts at, if you like, but not until we've spoken to her.

CLAYMORE: What he said.

(Sierra sighed.)

SIERRA: Fine.

(Josie grimaced.)

JOSIE: Babes, what's going on with you? I've known you since we were infants and you've never been insecure about a rival before.

SIERRA: I'm not.

JOSIE: Yes, you are.

SIERRA: No, I'm... well, maybe a little.

JOSIE: But, why? You've never felt threatened by another woman before.

SIERRA: Because... I didn't really care if other women took my man away before, but I want to keep this one.

JOSIE: Aw...

(Claymore beamed arrogantly.)

CLAYMORE: I'm a catch, you see?

(He stood in a superhero pose.)

CLAYMORE: Claymore Reefer, driver of boats, lover of women; a god.

(Expecting everyone to chuckle, he was most perplexed to see Josie and Alan shaking their heads at him.)

CLAYMORE: What?

ALAN: Cock!

JOSIE: Say something nice to her.

CLAYMORE: What?

(He suddenly looked enlightened then turned to see Sierra shrinking on the spot.)

CLAYMORE: Sorry about that, Sierra.

SIERRA: Okay...

CLAYMORE: That was thoughtless.

SIERRA: It's fine.

(He bit his lip for a moment then shrugged.)

CLAYMORE: Fuck it, I'll say it. Babe, as a couple I can see half our income disappearing on hair products, shoes and makeup.

ALAN: And that's just you!

CLAYMORE: Piss off.

(He ruffled his neck.)

CLAYMORE: What I'm saying is, you're gonna be one seriously expensive girlfriend, I reckon, but to me you'll be worth every fucking penny.

(Sierra looked through him in astonishment.)

SIERRA: Did you... did... you thought that was sweet, didn't you?

CLAYMORE: Um...

SIERRA: I'm expensive?

(She furrowed her brow sarcastically.)

SIERRA: Thanks. Help me get my knickers off, you've pulled.

CLAYMORE: Sierra...

(He then sighed in defeat.)

CLAYMORE: Sorry. I can't even defend what I said there. I sounded more like an accountant than a boyfriend.

SIERRA: Yeah, you did.

CLAYMORE: I was just saying what I was thinking. If I have to work *all* day, *every* day, to buy you the things that make you happy, I will.

SIERRA: And you think hair products, shoes and makeup will make me happy?

CLAYMORE: Yeah!

(Alan winced.)

ALAN: I'll pray for you, mate. Terrible answer.

JOSIE: On the contrary, Alan...

(Sierra exhaled.)

SIERRA: You totally get me, Claymore.

(She then gave him a most loving hug.)

JOSIE: Sierra loves girly things.

SIERRA: I really do.

CLAYMORE: And that's my point. I'll do whatever I can to help you replace all the girly, shiny things you had to leave behind when you fled.

SIERRA: You will?

CLAYMORE: Yes!

SIERRA: Are you sure? I had like three full wardrobes and over a dozen pairs of shoes.

CLAYMORE: And you shall have them again!

(Sierra virtually swooned.)

SIERRA: You're so amazing.

CLAYMORE: It's no more than you deserve, babe!

JOSIE: Definitely.

(She smiled.)

JOSIE: She's a good person. Honest, kind and loving.

SIERRA: Aw...

JOSIE: So she has no need to be jealous of Mercedes whatsoever.

(She looked to Sierra.)

JOSIE: Do you?

SIERRA: I guess not.

JOSIE: No guessing. You really don't.

(She then glowered at Claymore.)

JOSIE: Why am *I* telling her this??? That's your job!

CLAYMORE: What?

(He then looked enlightened then spun to face Sierra.)

CLAYMORE: Yeah! Like... what *she* said.

ALAN: How wonderfully heartfelt.

CLAYMORE: But it's true. She *doesn't* need to worry, Al.

(He blushed then looked into Sierra's eyes.)

CLAYMORE: Because I love her.

ALAN: You barely even know her.

JOSIE: Alan!!!

ALAN: What?

JOSIE: Don't.

(She then looked to where Sierra was fiddling with her hair nervously.)

SIERRA: I love you too, Claymore.

(Claymore and Sierra then stepped into one another and hugged.)

JOSIE: Yay!

(She bounced on the spot and clapped her hands together.)

JOSIE: So romantic.

ALAN: Wow. You're such a girl.

(Josie scowled at him.)

JOSIE: Correct. I *am* a girl. And I'm gonna start embracing it.

(She nodded sternly.)

JOSIE: I'm done with being told how to act. My brothers can kiss my arse. I'm gonna be me from now on.

(Sierra stepped back from hugging Claymore and beamed.)

SIERRA: Well it's about damn time, Josie.

JOSIE: Right?

(She nodded.)

JOSIE: I'll live my life as I see fit. If I want to wear a pink miniskirt and white stilettos, I will. And I want to throw on a t-shirt then go outside and mow the lawn while smoking a cigar, I'll do that too.

SIERRA: Damn right.

JOSIE: It's overdue.

(She looked to Sierra and smiled.)

JOSIE: You always told me I was too worried about what others think and you were right. Well screw it. I almost died on that boat. I've almost died several times, actually. So fuck it. I'm going to enjoy life from now on. And I'll do shit my way.

(Tears welled in Sierra's eyes.)

SIERRA: I love you, Josie. It's high time you broke free of the shackles!

JOSIE: Yes, it is. And... I love you too, babes.

(They then embraced lovingly.)

ALAN: Shackles? What shackles?

CLAYMORE: Don't look at me, mate; I'm as baffled as you are.

ALAN: Right...

(Josie stepped back from the hug and smiled.)

JOSIE: It's not baffling really. Not at all.

SIERRA: Nope. It's all very simple.

JOSIE: I've always tried to please other people. All my life. I've tried to be who others want me to be. I'm not doing it anymore. Simple as that.

ALAN: When you say, you tried to please others...

JOSIE: My oldest sibling mostly.

SIERRA: Pretty much exclusively.

JOSIE: Right. Yeah.

(She puffed out.)

JOSIE: My mum had four children in four years. I'm the youngest, and the only girl. Well, my eldest brother, he was kinda controlling.

SIERRA: He was a control *freak*!

JOSIE: Yeah. He was that.

(She sighed.)

JOSIE: He dominated all of us. We had to do what *he* wanted to do. Go where *he* wanted to go. Be what *he* wanted us to be. And the rest of us just tagged along. I mean, when I was little it didn't occur to me to mind. Then I started school.

SIERRA: He didn't speak to her for a week.

ALAN: Why not?

SIERRA: Skirts were compulsory for girls.

JOSIE: Yeah. He didn't want a sister, he wanted another brother to control. So everything different about me made him uncomfortable. Got my school uniform, he didn't speak to me for a week. Got my first bra, he didn't speak to me for a week. When he found out my best friend was a girl...

SIERRA: Me!

JOSIE: He didn't speak to me for a week.

SIERRA: He's *never* spoken to *me*. Ever!

JOSIE: I know. He thinks you corrupted me.

ALAN: He sounds like a right bell end.

JOSIE: He is. But he was my big brother, so all my life I continually tried to please him. Or at least not upset him, you know? But nothing I did was right.

SIERRA: Even now she puts her hair in a boyish ponytail when she's going to see him. Or wears a cap to hide it.

JOSIE: Well not anymore. People can accept me as I am or piss off. Him included. No, especially him.

(She nodded proudly.)

JOSIE: Don't get me wrong. He taught me how to climb trees, how to change the oil in an engine and do all kind of practical tasks and I'm grateful for that. But he only did it because he wanted me to be something I'm not.

ALAN: A dude.

JOSIE: Yeah. Well, no more. From now on, I'm gonna be as girly as I fucking well please. I'm gonna explore that side of me while continuing to enjoy my boyish side. So if you see me tinkering with an engine while wearing six inch heels and a leather miniskirt, don't be surprised. That's just me, Josie Wells, the world's girliest tomboy in action.

(She nodded defiantly then started to giggle.)

JOSIE: The world's girliest tomboy; I like that.

SIERRA: Right?

(Alan smiled.)

ALAN: I didn't know any of that about you, Josie. All I can say is, I'm happy for you.

CLAYMORE: Me too. Being who you *want* to be can never be a bad thing.

ALAN: Exactly.

JOSIE: Thanks, guys. You know...

(Just then, Mercedes paced among them wearing a welcoming smile.)

MERCEDES: Hiya!

ALAN: Hello.

CLAYMORE: Alright?

(Josie grimaced then looked to Sierra.)

JOSIE: Did you just hiss at her?

(Sierra glanced away innocently.)

SIERRA: No.

JOSIE: Right...

(Mercedes grimaced.)

MERCEDES: Anyway, I just came over to update you all.

ALAN: Okay.

MERCEDES: Your documents have been processed and they're just laminating them now.

JOSIE: That was quick.

MERCEDES: Well, no; not really. It's a simple case of entering your information in the database then printing out the relevant documents really.

ALAN: Cool.

MERCEDES: Anyway, I'll just go and talk to the ambassador; see if he's got your money together yet.

JOSIE: Um...

MERCEDES: Yes, Josie?

JOSIE: This accommodation the ambassador mentioned...

MERCEDES: Oh, don't worry about that. Your documents will have an address and a door key with them. So you can get a taxi straight to your new homes, if you like. They have all the basic furnishings already, so you'll have a nice bed to sleep in at least.

JOSIE: Wow. Now that's what I call service.

MERCEDES: That's nothing. You guys brought us the man whose information could well end up destroying the Efland government. This is the least you deserve. If it was up to me, you'd get a statue made in your honour as well.

ALAN: Agreed. You should definitely make one.

CLAYMORE: Right? Solid brass. None of this stone rubbish.

ALAN: Solid gold, more like.

(Mercedes chuckled.)

MERCEDES: You two never change, do you?

ALAN: Why alter perfection?

MERCEDES: Right...

(She nodded.)

MERCEDES: Anyway, I'll go and speak to the ambassador about that money. I won't be a minute.

(Claymore stepped forward.)

CLAYMORE: Hold your horses. First we want an explanation.

(Mercedes sighed.)

MERCEDES: Now?

ALAN: Yes! Now.

(Josie gave Sierra a sideways glance.)

JOSIE: Stop growling.

SIERRA: I wasn't.

JOSIE: Right...

ALAN: Come on, Mercedes. I waded knee deep through a shitty swamp while searching for you, the least you can do is give us the basics.

MERCEDES: Well... okay.

(She sighed then looked to Claymore and started to relate her story.)

MERCEDES: That night, in the pub...

(She glanced to one side at where Sierra was scowling at her.)

MERCEDES: She doesn't bite, does she?

SIERRA: We'll see!

MERCEDES: Right...

(She then scratched her neck and resumed.)

MERCEDES: Anyway, that night in the pub garden... if you remember I needed the toilet, so I headed inside.

CLAYMORE: Of course I remember. I had to recite the entire evening to several different police officers in the following weeks.

MERCEDES: Right...

ALAN: So where were you *really* going if not the toilet?

MERCEDES: To the toilet! That wasn't a lie. I left the table and went to the toilet.

ALAN: And never came out again! We thought you were having a problematic shit at first, but after a while we started to worry.

(Mercedes sighed.)

MERCEDES: Just let me tell you what happened, will you? You can ask me questions afterwards.

ALAN: Fine. Go on then.

MERCEDES: Thank you.

(She looked to Claymore again.)

MERCEDES: I came out of the toilet with every intention of re-joining you all, but then my contact from the resistance rushed in.

CLAYMORE: To the toilet?

MERCEDES: To the pub!

(She rolled her eyes.)

MERCEDES: He came up to me and said we'd been rumbled and the police were on their way. He said our unit had been compromised and we needed to flee the country. I didn't know what to think in that moment. It was so sudden it was hard to take in, you know? I was a bit dazed. So he grabbed my shoulders and reiterated how urgently we needed to leave. The police were around the corner and there was an imminent threat to my life.

(She pouted.)

MERCEDES: My first instinct was that I must tell *you*, Claymore. I even took a step in the direction of the pub garden, but he dragged me away and hammered home the point that we had to leave right then. There wasn't a moment to lose.

(She shrugged.)

MERCEDES: In the end, I let him drag me away.

ALAN: And all that happened in the pub, did it?

MERCEDES: In the alcove bit just outside the toilets.

ALAN: Right. So that's why nobody saw it.

CLAYMORE: Makes sense.

(Mercedes smiled.)

MERCEDES: We got transported overseas by boat. I cried all the way. Pining for you. The man I planned to marry.

(She then leant away from the snarling Sierra.)

JOSIE: Calm down, missy.

SIERRA: I *am* fucking calm!

MERCEDES: I'll just take a little step to the side, I think.

(She moved away from Sierra slightly then resumed.)

MERCEDES: It was a hellish time for me. I'd just be separated from the one I loved. And I couldn't even write to you. The resistance forbid it because the Efland government spy on the mail. Writing letters might give away their operation. I had to do what everyone else here has had to do. I needed to let myself be presumed dead.

(She shook her head.)

MERCEDES: It was painful. A really dark time in my life. It was bad enough that I was missing the man I loved, but knowing he was someone out there, looking for me, wondering where the hell I went... that was devastating. I can't apologise enough for that, Claymore.

ALAN: Then try! And while you're at it, you can apologise to me, an' all. Knee deep in shit, I was.

CLAYMORE: No, no. Fuck it. There's no need for apologies.

ALAN: On the contrary. She weren't even my bird, and I ended up knee deep in it. Knee deep! For fuck all.

MERCEDES: I truly am sorry, Al.

ALAN: Good.

(He ruffled his neck.)

ALAN: Apology accepted, albeit half-heartedly. I'm just glad you're okay.

MERCEDES: Thank you.

CLAYMORE: And I don't *need* an apology. Yeah, it was a shit time, but it's in the past now. What say we *leave* it there?

MERCEDES: Even so, I'm sorry. I need you to know that.

CLAYMORE: And I do, so like I said let's just leave it in the past now and move on.

(Mercedes smiled.)

MERCEDES: Agreed. It's great to see you, Claymore.

(Tears welled in her eyes.)

SIERRA: Faker!

JOSIE: Behave, Sierra.

CLAYMORE: It's great to see you too, Mercedes.

MERCEDES: Friends?

SIERRA: Nope.

CLAYMORE: Definitely.

MERCEDES: Thank you. Your friendship still means a lot to me, Claymore. Even now.

(She wiped her tears then gave a stifled laugh.)

MERCEDES: I would hug you now, but I think your friend would scratch my eyes out.

SIERRA: Minimum.

MERCEDES: See?

(Just then, a colleague of Mercedes' tapped her on the shoulder to get her attention.)

LUCY: Mercedes?

MERCEDES: Hi.

LUCY: The ambassador asked you to give me this. Petty cash for the new arrivals.

MERCEDES: Oh, cool. I was just going to ask about that.

LUCY: Well, now you won't have to.

MERCEDES: Good, good.

(She then an envelope from Lucy's grasp.)

MERCEDES: Thanks, babe.

LUCY: You're welcome.

(Mercedes just smiled then opened the envelope, before pouring four thin wads of banknotes into her palm.)

ALAN: Yes, please.

MERCEDES: Patience, oh greedy one.

(She then handed a wad of cash to Claymore, another to Alan and passed the last two to Josie, alive to the fact that Sierra would either refuse it or snatch it.)

MERCEDES: Right. Time I wasn't here.

(Josie passed Sierra her cash then held her hand out to stop Mercedes from leaving.)

JOSIE: Mercedes, before you go, I just want to say thanks for all your help. It's been a pleasure meeting you.

SIERRA: Yeah, right.

JOSIE: No, it has.

MERCEDES: There's no need to thank me, Josie.

(She smiled.)

MERCEDES: I'm just glad you all made it here unharmed.

CLAYMORE: So are we. I'm not quite sure how we managed it though. By rights, we should have died at least a dozen times. I guess we've been lucky.

ALAN: Just a bit.

MERCEDES: No. *I'm* the lucky one. None of you knew the overseas Efland resistance is based in this town, did you?

ALAN: No.

MERCEDES: And yet, *this* is where you made landfall. Meaning I got to see you both again. I feel blessed. Truly blessed.

(She smiled.)

MERCEDES: Hopefully you'll hang around for a while, then we all get to know each other again. That'd be nice.

CLAYMORE: Yeah, maybe.

ALAN: Depends what work there is.

MERCEDES: There's plenty of work, Alan. Especially at the marina.

ALAN: Interesting.

MERCEDES: And we could use a few more people on the inside.

ALAN: Yeah?

MERCEDES: Definitely. That marina is where we land most of the people we smuggle, you see?

(She shrugged.)

MERCEDES: Those not dumb enough to come by canal, that is.

ALAN: You cheeky cunt!

MERCEDES: What?

ALAN: We used to run a business smuggling people out via the canal.

MERCEDES: Oh yeah. Whoops.

CLAYMORE: Fuck sake...

MERCEDES: Um... I'm gonna go.

(She then started to head away.)

MERCEDES: Bye.

JOSIE: Bye.

(She then turned and raised a condescending eyebrow at Sierra.)

JOSIE: Seriously?

SIERRA: What?

JOSIE: Blowing raspberries at her?

SIERRA: She deserved it.

(Josie shook her head.)

JOSIE: I've never seen you act like this before, Sierra. You're usually such a nice person.

SIERRA: Yeah? Well...

(She sighed.)

SIERRA: I know. I'm stressed out, that's all. The last few days have a fucking nightmare.

A horror show. They really have. The only thing keeping me sane was Claymore.

(She blushed.)

SIERRA: So the last thing I needed was to meet the love of his life. It's stressed me out even more. I really didn't need that. I feel threatened by her and I hate it. I know I shouldn't, and I know it's not like me, but... I can't help it. I have one good thing and I can't help feeling she'll try to take it away.

(Claymore stepped up to her and smiled.)

CLAYMORE: So what if she does try? So what? It's not gonna happen, Sierra. I fell in love with you the second I clapped my eyes on you.

ALAN: Twat.

CLAYMORE: That I may be, but nevertheless, that's what happened. I'm nuts about you, babe. You and *only* you.

(Alan sighed.)



ALAN: I can vouch for that, Sierra. I've never seen him behave like this before. The way he had mental fits and came out all-fists blazing every time someone tried to manhandle you was most unexpected. I knew then, the soppo twat was in love with you.

CLAYMORE: See?

(Sierra just smiled and gave Claymore a hug.)

CLAYMORE: I tell you what, babe, just to set your mind at ease, I'll set her straight. I'll tell her I'm with you now, I'm happy and that's how it's gonna stay.

SIERRA: That *would* set my mind at ease.

CLAYMORE: Then that's what I'll do.

ALAN: Excellent.

(He rolled his eyes.)

ALAN: You soppo fucking bell end.

CLAYMORE: What?

ALAN: Nothing.

(He grimaced.)

ALAN: Anyway, we'd better start thinking about what *we're* gonna do for a living, I suppose, Claymore.

CLAYMORE: Yeah.

(He shrugged.)

CLAYMORE: I don't fancy the idea of working at the marina though.

ALAN: Why not? That'd be perfect.

CLAYMORE: Because the resistance want inside men. If I went there, they might consider *me* to be one of them. I want nothing to do with *any* of that shit. I just want to start again with no affiliation to *any* bloody body.

ALAN: I suppose.

CLAYMORE: That's why I liked the canal. I was my own boss then.

ALAN: Yeah, that was pretty awesome.

CLAYMORE: It was great. We could take breaks when we wanted, stop off and shop wherever we wanted, we were free. I couldn't picture myself doing a job on the clock again.

ALAN: No, but, we'll have to take what we can get at first.

CLAYMORE: Yeah.

(He ruffled his neck.)

CLAYMORE: Then I'm gonna save up and buy a canal boat.

JOSIE: Really?

SIERRA: What for? You can't return to Efland in it. They'd arrest you!

CLAYMORE: I wouldn't dream of going to Efland, babe. Amaria has *domestic* canals.

ALAN: And what fucking use will they be?

CLAYMORE: We can use them to deliver shit, obviously.

ALAN: Mate...

(He rolled his eyes.)

ALAN: Have you never heard of lorries?

CLAYMORE: Yeah, but...

ALAN: The only reason we still have canal transport between Efland and Amaria is because the two countries have tight, closed borders. No road between the two because they don't get on. So exports have to go by air, sea or canal. *Internal* canal traffic is long dead. The only vessels on *domestic* canals are pleasure boats nowadays.

JOSIE: Or people who chose to live there.

SIERRA: Sorry, Claymore; I reckon they're right. Canal transport is a thing of the past.

(Claymore's shoulder's slumped.)

CLAYMORE: But I loved that job.

(Alan sighed.)

ALAN: Yeah, so did I.

JOSIE: I have to say, you two did seem happy doing that. If canal deliveries *were* a thing still, I'd happily join your crew.

(Sierra gave a stifled laugh.)

SIERRA: That'd be so you, Josie. I could actually see you doing that.

JOSIE: Right? I'd love it.

SIERRA: I know you would.

(She smiled.)

SIERRA: It'd kind of suck for me though. You three would be out there on the canal, having fun, and I'd be working at a supermarket checkout somewhere, on my own.

(She shrugged.)

SIERRA: I'm not cut out for canal labour.

CLAYMORE: What makes you think that?

SIERRA: I'm not very strong, so loading and unloading would be too much for me. I don't know how to drive a boat, so that'd be out too. I can't even work a lock; too weak. The only thing I'd be able to do is cook and clean.

ALAN: And we'd be happy to let you do it.

(They all chuckled.)

SIERRA: Yeah, I bet you would.

CLAYMORE: Having eaten Alan's cooking for a few years now, I know *I'd* be grateful to have you on board, Sierra.

ALAN: Mate! Out of order.

(Just then, Mercedes stepped up to them with a male resistance member at her side.)

MERCEDES: Hiya! Me again.

ALAN: Alright?

JOSIE: Hiya.

(Sierra's nostrils twitched.)

SIERRA: You...

JOSIE: Be nice or say nothing, Sierra.

SIERRA: Fine.

(Spying Sierra's unease, Claymore nodded to himself then stood tall.)

CLAYMORE: Mercedes?

MERCEDES: Yeah?

CLAYMORE: Before we go any further, there's something I need to make perfectly clear between us.

MERCEDES: Oh?

CLAYMORE: Yeah. What we had, back in the day, it was great. Excellent even. But that's in the past now. You disappeared and eventually I moved on. Now, don't get me wrong, I'm flattered that you said you want to get to know me again, but I have to tell you straight. It'll never happen between us. I'm with Sierra now and I love her very much. And that's my final say on the matter.

(He then stood there nodding defiantly, blissfully unaware of Sierra exhaling with joy behind him.)

CLAYMORE: Anyway, I've said my bit so...

MERCEDES: Actually, Claymore...

(She gestured to the male resistance member at her side.)

MERCEDES: I'd like you to meet Stephen, my husband.

STEPHEN: Hello, there.

(Feeling quite the fool, Claymore turned bright red and grimaced.)

CLAYMORE: Um... hi.

ALAN: You cock!

CLAYMORE: Yeah...

MERCEDES: Anyway, I just wanted to hand you these. Your documents. Complete with the new surnames you chose.

(She then proceeded to hand out four envelopes.)

MERCEDES: Claymore Boatman.

(She passed an envelope to Claymore.)

CLAYMORE: Thank you.

MERCEDES: Alan Fuerte.

ALAN: Meaning strong; naturally.

MERCEDES: Josie Smith.

ALAN: Smith? You could have called yourself literally anything. Why come up with something that bland???

JOSIE: I don't like to stand out.

(She then took her envelope and glanced away.)

JOSIE: Thank you.

MERCEDES: And that just leaves...

(She gulped.)

MERCEDES: Sierra Chavez.

(She then held an envelope in Sierra's direction. Fully expecting Sierra to snatch it and growl at her, she did so with trembling hands and a nervous glint in her eyes. Rather than snatching it, however, Sierra beamed with delight then stepped forwards to accept it calmly.)

SIERRA: Thank you, Mercedes. I went with Chavez because I love Chavez cosmetics; a brand you're no stranger to, I see.

MERCEDES: Well...

SIERRA: No, no; you can't fool me. Your fingernails are gorgeous. Clearly, you use Chavez Nail Polish. Number 41, I believe. Sunshine yellow. And that's definitely Candy Apple Red lipstick.

MERCEDES: Actually, it is, yes.

SIERRA: And it really suits you. Personally, I can't get away with Candy Apple Red, my skin's too dark, you see? I look like I'm bleeding. So I prefer to go with the Dark Cherry.

MERCEDES: That's such a gorgeous shade.

SIERRA: Why, thank you.

(They then proceeded to hold an in-depth discussion about makeup and all things feminine. Watching on, Claymore grimaced then looked to Alan.)

CLAYMORE: What... what's going on? She hated her a minute ago.

(Josie was quick to intercede.)

JOSIE: She did, yes. Then she found out she's married. Now she's no longer a threat, so she'd decided to befriend her.

(Claymore shuddered from head to toe.)

CLAYMORE: I don't want my current girlfriend befriend my ex. Women talk.

JOSIE: We do, yes.

(She chuckled.)

JOSIE: I'll pray for you.

CLAYMORE: Can't we just leave? We've got our stuff now. Can we go? Please?

(Alan chuckled.)

ALAN: Just a minute, mate. Before we leave, I have one last loose end to tie up.

CLAYMORE: Oh? Make it quick!

ALAN: I will. I just need to see the ambassador about something.

(He then headed away, leaving Claymore sweating profusely.)

CLAYMORE: Oh, boy.

---

A few minutes later, having asked the ambassador for permission to speak to Graydon alone, Alan led the grumpy old miser to the side of the room for a one on one conversation. Hating nothing more than conversing with young people, Graydon was far from happy about it. Eager to play ball with the ambassador and save his own skin, however, Graydon headed to one side with him without complaint. Once there, however, he made his disdain for the young man quite clear.

GRAYDON: What do you want, poor person? You know I hate talking the unwashed mashes.

(Alan just smiled.)

ALAN: I just wanted a minute of your time, that's all.

GRAYDON: And now you have that minute, stop wasting it and say your piece.

ALAN: Fine.

(He then offered Graydon a devious smirk.)

ALAN: You seem to think you've got in the bag, don't you? All nicely sown up. You think you've got everything you need and nobody can touch you. You think you're in the clear!

GRAYDON: I *am* in the clear! All the resistance members here today have been sworn to secrecy. So nobody here will ever say they saw Graydon James. *He* went out to sea on a red boat and never returned, remember? So there'll never be a single trace of me. I'll just become James Waltham full-time and live my life to the fullest.

ALAN: Is that so?

GRAYDON: It is so, yes.

(He returned Alan's devious smirk.)

GRAYDON: Everything's perfect. I'll even be shot of my annoying, expensive wife. Life couldn't *be* any better. I'll even get to help take down the Efland government who wanted me dead... and sit back and laugh as it unfolds. I couldn't have dreamt of a better outcome.

ALAN: Sweet.

GRAYDON: Indeed!

ALAN: Or is it?

GRAYDON: What?

ALAN: You seem to have overlooked something, Graydon.

GRAYDON: Have I now?

ALAN: Yes, you have.

(He leant closer.)

ALAN: I mean, once you've taken the Efland government down, the only thing people will feel sad about is the fact that Graydon James died at sea, rather than being brought to justice.

GRAYDON: Perfect, isn't it?

ALAN: Is it?

(He smirked.)

ALAN: Like I said, there's something you seem to have overlooked.

GRAYDON: Oh?

ALAN: I mean, let's say peace is restored in Efland, the borders open again and the two nations re-establish some sort of accord. What would happen if, say, myself for instance, were to head to the Efland capital and accidentally let slip to a journalist that Graydon James is in fact alive and well and living in Amaria as James Waltham.

GRAYDON: You can't do that, you cock. As a resistance member, you're sworn to secrecy.

ALAN: You make a good point.

GRAYDON: Obviously.

ALAN: Claymore isn't.

(Graydon's face dropped.)

GRAYDON: What?

ALAN: You heard. He's under no such obligation to keep silent. So, what if *he* was the one who happened to be in the capital and accidentally let slip...

(Graydon growled.)

GRAYDON: Fine. What do you want?

ALAN: Money.

GRAYDON: Wanker.

(He growled for a moment then stood tall and sneered.)

GRAYDON: How much?

ALAN: Two million Efland pounds.

GRAYDON: You thieving cunt.

ALAN: It's a small price to pay for your freedom, mate.

GRAYDON: I'm not your mate.

ALAN: So, do we have a deal?

GRAYDON: No. You can half a million and like it.

ALAN: Two million!

GRAYDON: Three quarters of a million.

ALAN: Two fucking million.

GRAYDON: Hey, that's not negotiating!

(Alan rolled his eyes.)

ALAN: Fine. Two million.

GRAYDON: One! One million and that's it.

ALAN: One point nine.

GRAYDON: One point one.

ALAN: One point eight.

GRAYDON: One point two...

ALAN: One point...

GRAYDON: Don't bother, if we keep going like that we're destined to meet at one point five, so why don't we just agree on that?

ALAN: One point five million Efland pounds?

GRAYDON: Yes! Fucking thief.

ALAN: Good man. You'll be staying with the ambassador, right?

GRAYDON: At his home in the capital, yes.

ALAN: Cool. I'll open a bank account tomorrow and give you the details. Be quick about paying it. I know you have the bank manager's home number, so no excuses. If there's no payment in a week...

GRAYDON: Fine!

ALAN: Good man.

GRAYDON: Wanker.

ALAN: I love you too.

(He paced away, towards where the others were waiting. As he did so, he paced past the ambassador coming the other way.)

AMBASSADOR: How much did you con him out of?

ALAN: One point five.

AMBASSADOR: Nice.

(The ambassador chuckled to himself then continued on to where Graydon was fuming angrily by the wall.)

AMBASSADOR: Are you ready to head for the capital now?

GRAYDON: Bloody right I am! I don't want to be around *these* underhanded ne'er-do-wells a second longer than I have to.

AMBASSADOR: Fair enough. Let's head off then.

GRAYDON: Let's. But before we do...

(He then paced over to where Sierra was chatting with Mercedes.)

GRAYDON: Sierra?

SIERRA: Yes?

GRAYDON: It's make your mind up time.

SIERRA: What?

GRAYDON: What's it going to be? A life of scraping and struggling with Claymore or a life of luxury with me? We've both submitted our bids for your affection and now it's time for you to make your decision. So who's it gonna be? The rich bloke or the canal peasant and a life of emptiness?

(As an embarrassed silence swept through the air, Sierra stared through him in bewilderment.)

GRAYDON: You can't *still* be uncertain, surely?

SIERRA: Uncertain???

GRAYDON: You heard me.

SIERRA: Graydon, you're a despicable old man and I can abide you.

GRAYDON: So? All my floozies feel like that at first.

SIERRA: I'm sure they do.

GRAYDON: Then answer the bloody question.

SIERRA: You or Claymore?

GRAYDON: Yes!

SIERRA: Claymore.

GRAYDON: Shit.

SIERRA: But then, if the choice was you or jumping off a cliff, I'd jump off the cliff. Why would you even think I might be interested in a life with you? You're a vile human being!

(Graydon ruffled his neck.)

GRAYDON: Ambassador?

AMBASSADOR: Yes?

GRAYDON: We're leaving.

(He then stormed away in a temper. Watching him go, the ambassador chuckled to himself then looked to Alan.)

AMBASSADOR: That was comedy gold.

(He nodded.)

AMBASSADOR: Anyway, good luck with your new lives, chaps. And thanks again. Oh, and spend that one point five wisely, Alan!

(He then headed away. Having watched him go, Alan smiled then glanced to where Josie, Sierra and Claymore were staring at him in disbelief.)

ALAN: What?

CLAYMORE: One point five?

ALAN: Yeah.

(He chuckled.)

ALAN: I'm sure you saw me chatting to Graydon just now...

CLAYMORE: No, actually. I was too busy watching Sierra and Mercedes; praying my name wouldn't come up.

ALAN: Oh. Then you missed me extorting the cunt.

JOSIE: Oh?

ALAN: For one point five million Efland pounds.

(Everyone gasped.)

SIERRA: Holy crap!

ALAN: Right?

(He nodded.)

ALAN: We'll have to get that changed to pesos obviously because when the shit hits the fan in Efland, the pound is gonna seriously tank.

CLAYMORE: Never mind that, mate; how did you manage to get him to give you that?

ALAN: Does it matter? Split four ways, that's like...

SIERRA: Um...

CLAYMORE: Hmm...

JOSIE: Three hundred and seventy five grand each, you thick sods.

ALAN: Yeah. Which will go a long way.

SIERRA: And then some.

(Alan beamed.)

ALAN: Claymore. Mate. We could buy a pretty sweet boat for that.

CLAYMORE: God, yes.

SIERRA: Why? What for?

JOSIE: Yeah.

(Alan shrugged.)

ALAN: We'll think of something

CLAYMORE: Mate, I like your style.

SIERRA: Um...

JOSIE: You're mental.

ALAN: Nope. I'm a boatman. I love being a boatman and I want to *stay* a boatman!

CLAYMORE: Me too! I even named myself as such. I'm now a Boatman by name and a boatman by nature. A free man and a boatman! The two best things in the world combined!

ALAN: Exactly, mate. Spot on!

(He exhaled.)

ALAN: And on that note, our work here is done.

JOSIE: Agreed.

SIERRA: Then let's go and check out our new homes.

(She fluttered her eyelashes at Claymore.)

SIERRA: Apparently, they have beds in them already.

CLAYMORE: Say no more!

(He then proceeded to march towards the exit, dragging a giggling Sierra behind him.)

JOSIE: That is the correct exit, right?

MERCEDES: It is, yes.

JOSIE: Cool.

ALAN: Perfect, in fact.

(He then nodded to Mercedes.)

ALAN: See you later.

JOSIE: Bye!

MERCEDES: Take care, guys. I'll see you around.

(She then watched as they headed for the exit with a wide smile on her face.)

MERCEDES: It's so good to see them again.

(Still standing at her side, her husband forced a weak smile.)

STEPHEN: Yeah.... um... that Claymore fella... he's your ex, is he?

MERCEDES: Yeah. He's the one I told you about.

STEPHEN: Oh... cool.

(He sneered.)

STEPHEN: He seems... alright.

MERCEDES: You hate him, don't you?

STEPHEN: With a fiery passion.

MERCEDES: I had a feeling you might. Not that he'll be bothered.

(She smiled then glanced towards the exit.)

MERCEDES: After all those guys have been through, tonight they're gonna be too busy partying to care what anyone *else* thinks of them. And boy, have they earned it!

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### ***Three months later.***

Out on the ocean, just off the coast of a quaint Amarian seaside town, a mid-sized pleasure boat with a hundred passengers on board, cruised across the waves. At the helm, dressed in a smart shirt and tie, Claymore had a contented smile on his face. The wind was breezing through his hair, taking the edge off of the heat and he couldn't have been happier. His view from the helm was one he cherished. Cliff tops and a sandy coast in the distance, and his girlfriend Sierra serving drinks to the customers just down in front of him. Watching her mincing back and forth from the bar, he couldn't help but smile. In her tight blouse, pencil skirt and high heels, she truly was a feast for his eyes.

CLAYMORE: I love this job.

(Just then, Alan appeared behind him, wiping his hands on an old rag.)

ALAN: Mate...

(Startled by his voice, Claymore jumped then clutched his chest.)

CLAYMORE: Fuck sake, Al. Don't creep about like that.

ALAN: I wasn't creeping about, mate. I was being my usually clunky, noisy self.

CLAYMORE: Well, I didn't hear you.

ALAN: You were probably in a daze, drooling at Sierra again.

(Claymore scoffed unconvincingly.)

CLAYMORE: Don't be absurd.

ALAN: I'm not. You do it all the time. And I don't fucking blame you, she's a very sexy girl. The epitome of feminine loveliness.

CLAYMORE: Well... you're not wrong.

(Alan then nodded to where Josie was also serving drinks, throwing out floppy wrists and giggling with the customers.)

ALAN: And so is Josie. Which I did *not* see coming.

CLAYMORE: Well, she did say she was going to embrace her feminine side.

ALAN: And she has, mate. It's really fucking sexy.

CLAYMORE: I thought you preferred women to be a bit edgy. You know, rough and tumble.

ALAN: I do.

(He beamed.)

ALAN: She helped me service the engine this morning. She really *is* taking both sides of her personality to the extreme.

(He exhaled.)

ALAN: I really enjoy working with her, mate. We didn't just service the engine this morning, we gave the pipes a lick of paint too. Then I shagged her over the spare generator.

(Claymore gave a stifled laugh.)

CLAYMORE: I don't know why you two don't just become a couple. You're in and out of each other's underwear every five minutes anyway.



ALAN: And I'm happy to keep it that way.

CLAYMORE: I'm sure you are, but let's be absolutely honest here. She's your girlfriend in everything but name.

ALAN: She doesn't want to give it a name, mate. And I respect that. She doesn't know herself well enough yet, she says, and that's fine by me.

(Claymore bit his lip.)

CLAYMORE: Yeah... about that... when she says she doesn't know herself...

ALAN: I aint got a fucking clue, mate. Must be a woman thing.

CLAYMORE: Must be. Sierra knows what she means, but I haven't got the foggiest.

ALAN: About most things.

CLAYMORE: What?

ALAN: Nothing.

CLAYMORE: Right.

ALAN: Anyway, before you had a heart attack and started talking about women instead, I was about to tell you that engine is fucking purring now.

CLAYMORE: Yeah?

ALAN: I checked everything and it's all ticking over perfectly.

CLAYMORE: Awesome.

(He gave a stifled laugh.)

CLAYMORE: A far cry from what we were used to.

ALAN: Right? For years, I had to do bodge jobs just to keep our boat from conking out and dying. That engine really was on its last legs.

(Claymore nodded then glanced towards the coastline.)

CLAYMORE: Get that oily top off and smarten up, mate. It's time to head back into port.

ALAN: Already?

CLAYMORE: Yeah.

ALAN: Damn. Times flies when you're having fun, tinkering with the engine.

CLAYMORE: It's the job you love, mate. And this is mine.

ALAN: Yeah. Lucky cunts, aren't we?

(Claymore smiled down at Sierra then nodded.)

CLAYMORE: We really are.

(On the deck of the boat at this time, Sierra paced between the aisles, smiling to the passengers as she collected glasses to take to the bar. Claymore had just given her the signal that the boat was heading back to port and it was time to put everything away. Having filled a tray with pint mugs, wine classes and tumblers, she then stepped up to the bar and laid them on the counter. There waiting for her, stacking the glasses in readiness for cleaning, Josie smiled to her warmly.)

JOSIE: All good?

SIERRA: Just a few more to collect.

JOSIE: Any gropers?

SIERRA: No, actually. That makes a nice change.

JOSIE: Right?

(They chuckled.)

SIERRA: I've been asked out for a drink four times and given two phone numbers, but other than that it's been hassle free.

JOSIE: Damn it. You always beat me. I got asked out for a drink three times, but no phone numbers.

(Sierra gave her a condescending glance.)

SIERRA: You're welcome to the phone numbers, Josie. I didn't *ask* for them and I don't want them.

JOSIE: Nor would I. I was just saying, you always beat me. Always.  
SIERRA: Yeah, but it's not something I can say I'm delighted about. I don't want their amorous offers.  
(She glanced up at the helm and exhaled.)  
SIERRA: I already have the man I want.  
JOSIE: Yeah, you do. And just so you know, I don't care for their amorous offers either.  
(She sighed.)  
JOSIE: But, we play the hand we're dealt, I guess.  
(She giggled.)  
JOSIE: We're just gonna have to accept that we're ultra-sexy babes and men can't seem to resist us.  
SIERRA: Right... you're giggling but we both know you were serious.  
JOSIE: No, I wasn't.  
SIERRA: You were. Because it's true. We are!  
(She then headed back to collect the final glasses. With a grin, Josie stepped around the bar then minced after her, smiling and offering dainty waves to the passengers.)  
JOSIE: Are there any more glasses?  
(Sierra plopped two more glasses on her tray then grinned. Watching Josie mince back and forth in her tight skirt and heels was a joy to see. She no longer feared being mocked for her girly ways and had embraced it wholesale.)  
SIERRA: She's come such a long way.

---

A short while later, once the boat had docked and the passengers had started to exit along the gangplank, Claymore's favourite part of the day began. Upon leaving the boat, both he and Sierra would stand at the end of the gangplank and thank everyone for travelling with them. The passengers would thank them in turn and many of them referred to him as captain. It was a term he'd never tire of hearing.

For her part, when the trips ended, Josie would act as an usher, politely ensuring everyone left. She did so in a way that made them think she was ensuring they left *safely*. In truth, however, she was just wanted to make sure everyone was off the boat, so she could go home and put her feet up. Alan would help those with walking difficulties across the gangplank. With many of their passengers over sixty-five years old, he was often called into action.

As the last passenger headed away with a stern salute and an expression his gratitude to the captain, Claymore turned to Sierra and smiled. Still standing with her hands together in front of her, wearing a fixed smile, she looked the consummate professional.

CLAYMORE: Sierra?

(Sierra looked to him enquiringly.)

SIERRA: Yeah?

CLAYMORE: You lied to me.

SIERRA: What? When?

CLAYMORE: When you said you weren't cut out to work on a boat. You're perfect.

(Sierra smiled.)

SIERRA: Aw, thank you.

(She shrugged.)

SIERRA: Though, I'd be remiss if I didn't point out that I said I wasn't cut out for work on a *canal* boat.

CLAYMORE: It was still a lie. Canals do pleasure cruises too and you'd be perfect.

SIERRA: Right...

CLAYMORE: The punters love you.

SIERRA: Yeah... a little bit too much sometimes.

CLAYMORE: Oh?

SIERRA: It's fine though. You know what men can be like.

CLAYMORE: I do, yes. And it's your own fault for being wantonly sexy in a built up area.

SIERRA: Oh. I do apologise. I'll get my head shaved and start wearing bin liners from now on.

CLAYMORE: Well, you could, but the trouble is, you'd still be damned sexy. It wouldn't make the slightest bit of difference.

(They chuckled together. As they did so, Josie and Alan headed down the gangplank to join them.)

ALAN: See, Josie, that's exactly my point. That old biddy had feet like breeze blocks, and the world's flattest shoes. And yet she insisted she needed my help getting off the boat. And there you are in ridiculously high heels, skipping down it like a frolicking lamb.

JOSIE: I'm walking normally!

(They then arrived at the end of the gangplank and stopped opposite Claymore and Sierra.)

ALAN: I'm just saying. There was fuck all wrong with her, she just wanted to fondle my biceps.

SIERRA: Aw, that must have been awful for you, Al.

JOSIE: Yeah, poor thing.

SIERRA: I guess Josie and I are lucky. Nobody *ever* tries to grope or fondle *us*.

JOSIE: The things men have to go through, huh, Sierra?

SIERRA: Makes me glad I'm a woman.

JOSIE: Right.

(As the two of them chuckled together, Alan furrowed his brow.)

ALAN: Yeah... very witty.

(He rolled his eyes then looked to Claymore.)

ALAN: Mate?

CLAYMORE: Yeah?

(Alan gestured to the boat.)

ALAN: I fucking love that boat. I do. The parts are all high end and it's in tip-top condition. It's actually a pleasure to service. A bit like Josie.

JOSIE: Hey!

(She giggled then gave him a playful slap.)

JOSIE: Naughty.

(Sierra rolled her eyes.)

SIERRA: Oh, just admit you're a couple already, you two.

CLAYMORE: Right? That's what I keep saying.

JOSIE: I'm not ready for that. How many times?

SIERRA: Whatever.

(Josie then looked to Alan.)

JOSIE: Shall we start the clean up?

ALAN: Just a minute, Josie; I'm not done gushing like an overexcited schoolgirl.

(He gestured to the boat.)

ALAN: That is a world class piece of engineering, mate. I'm chuffed to buggery with it.

CLAYMORE: Yup, we definitely got our money's worth. It handles easily too.

ALAN: I'll bet it does. It's the best boat on this stretch of coastline, by far. I'd even go as far as to say, it's the best boat ever.

(Claymore nodded for a moment then suddenly looked thoughtful.)

CLAYMORE: Well...

(He stepped forward and pointed to the boat's signage.)

CLAYMORE: It shares the same name, at least.

(Alan glanced to where the words 'The Amethyst' were emblazoned on the side of the boat.)

ALAN: Eh? You can't even compare this with our canal boat, mate.

CLAYMORE: No, I know. They aren't even similar, it's just...

(He shrugged.)

CLAYMORE: When we first clapped eyes on The Amethyst...

ALAN: The first one?

CLAYMORE: Yeah. When we first clapped eyes on her, sitting there in the filthy canal, looking like god himself had taken a massive shit on her head, we weren't exactly happy, remember?

ALAN: Yeah. I felt like throttling you. You'd just cost us our roadies jobs, then you offered me a partnership on the canal, only to find out the boat was a virtual fucking right off.

CLAYMORE: Like I said, we weren't happy. But we didn't give up, did we? People thought we were crazy, but we cleaned her up, fixed the holes, remodelled the inside and even got the engine working. *We* did that.

(He nodded to their new boat.)

CLAYMORE: You conned Graydon into giving us a fuck load of cash and we invested it in a bloody nice boat. This one. But that first one... yeah, it wasn't perfect, but it was the product of our own graft, you know? We made her what she was.

(Alan nodded.)

ALAN: A danger to ourselves and everything else on the canal.

(Claymore chuckled.)

CLAYMORE: It was never that bad,

ALAN: Nah, you're right. It did what we needed it to.

CLAYMORE: Precisely.

(He then shrugged.)

CLAYMORE: What I'm saying is, this Amethyst and the original aren't even similar. You can't really compare the two. I just know I'm fond of both. Yeah, the first one's gone now, never to return... we don't even know where it ended up... but it'll always have a special place.

(He tapped his chest.)

CLAYMORE: Right here.

(Alan was visibly moved.)

ALAN: Blimey, Claymore, it's not often I say this, but you're dead right there. Tonight we'll drink a toast to the old girl, yeah?

CLAYMORE: Definitely. And never forget, nothing will ever *replace* the original. This one and that one are two very different things.

ALAN: Yeah!

(They then stood there staring at the signage, nodding proudly as they remembered their canal boat. Watching them in bewilderment, Sierra leant to Josie.)

SIERRA: Babes?

JOSIE: Yeah?

SIERRA: Claymore didn't even get this emotional when I agreed to move in with him.

JOSIE: What can I tell you, darling? Men are weird.

(Sierra nodded.)

SIERRA: Well, I can't argue with that.

JOSIE: Nope. Now come on, let's get the tidying done so we can piss off home.

SIERRA: Agreed!

(They then headed onto the boat.)

JOSIE: Come on, boys. Work time.

(Alan and Claymore glanced up at them then shrugged in unison.)

CLAYMORE: Might as well.

ALAN: Yup. Let's get cracking, mate. Once she's all clean, we can bugger off home then...

(His face suddenly lit up and he exhaled with joy.)

ALAN: Have *another* perfect day tomorrow!

CLAYMORE: Amen to that, Al. Amen to that.

(They then headed onto the boat after Sierra and Josie. None of them could keep a smile from their faces. Alan and Claymore were living a dream. They had a first class boat that was not only a pleasure to work with, but also paid the bills. Neither of them could have asked for more. Sierra was also blissfully happy. Freed from the shackles of working in the office, and very much in love, her life had improved beyond words. Josie shared her joy. Free to finally be herself, her life had taken on a new meaning. Right now, that dark night when they first arrived at the canal-side, fearing for the future, seemed like a very long time ago. The good times had arrived and they were savouring every moment.)

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The nation of Efland was very much in a state of upheaval, at this time. The secrets shared by Graydon had been passed on to the Union of Nations who'd taken immediate, drastic action. Six weeks after Graydon's first revelations, Union of Nations' tanks had rolled into Efland's capital city. International arrest warrants were then served to a multitude of government officials. To date, 163 members of parliament had been arrested for crimes against humanity, 43 had been indicted for fraud, 24 had committed suicide and 11 of them had been beaten to death in the street. And still the revelations kept coming. Gleaning much joy from the government's downfall, Graydon was constantly holding things back then revealing something new, just so his former colleagues would never be able to relax.

As a result of the turmoil, the value of the Efland pound had dropped considerably. The economy was in tatters. For those with capital, it was a dark time indeed. Ordinary people, however, were rejoicing in the streets. Freed from oppression, they knew it was only a matter of time before things would improve. At last, they had hope. The simple things a working person should expect to be able to afford such as housing, amenities and food would soon drop in price dramatically and they could once again enjoy life, rather than struggling hand to mouth with no hope of self-betterment.

Every day, the news channels devoted hour after hour to condemning their former, corrupt government. They'd then have to run apologies every time someone within their own operation was arrested for their part in the corruption. The media were, after all, complicit in the tyranny. Many journalists had been arrested for their crimes. Others had simply vanished. The people who'd suffered at their hands were not always forgiving.

With an interim Union of Nations' panel operating as a temporary government, moves had now been put in place for a cap on rent charges. Utilities and railways had been renationalised with a law passed to run them at cost. A new minimum wage had also been proposed. Forecasts suggested that within six months, wages would rise to twice what they had been six months earlier, and the cost of living would fall by two hundred percent.

For the average citizen of Efland, this was an exciting time. The media had been humbled, the price of existence was about to become bearable and best of all, those responsible for

their suffering were being incarcerated in their dozens. The only wish they weren't going to get to see realised was the former government advisor, Graydon James punished for his crimes. Presumed dead, they'd have to satisfy themselves with the knowledge that his evil schemes were no longer a threat to them. All in all, Efland was a happy place at this time. The future was indeed bright.

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*The following day.* Just off the shimmering coast of Amaria, the yacht 'Waltham Voyager' was anchored to the sea bed, while its owner, Graydon, sat upon a deckchair, casting an eye over the coastline. Just behind him, a young blonde dolly bird was gently massaging his shoulders. As he watched the coast with a conceited glint his eye, he allowed himself a smirk then glanced over his shoulder.

GRAYDON: Cindy, have you ever heard the phrase, "you can't have everything"?

CINDY: No. My mum only ever told me I can't have *anything*.

GRAYDON: Then she was a fool. With those boobs, you could have any man you want. Thankfully, unlike Sierra, you chose wisely.

CINDY: Who?

GRAYDON: Doesn't matter.

(He glanced across to the coastline again.)

GRAYDON: Where was I? Oh, that's right. They say you can't have everything. And they're right, you know? You can come ridiculously close, but something will always evade you.

CINDY: You've lost me, James.

GRAYDON: Please, call me Graydon. I mean Waltham. No, actually, James was right. (He grimaced.)

GRAYDON: I can't afford to make that mistake too often.

CINDY: What mistake?

GRAYDON: Never mind.

(He sighed.)

GRAYDON: I nearly had it all, you know? I've got the wealth, I've got the tasty floozy, I've got the revenge I wanted. There's just one thing that hasn't fallen for me.

CINDY: What's that?

GRAYDON: The Amethyst hasn't sunk yet.

CINDY: The what?

GRAYDON: It's a boat. Paid for out of my hard-embezzled fortune.

CINDY: Oh.

GRAYDON: Yes, oh. A group of young scallywags extorted the money they needed to pay for it. From me! Wankers.

(He shook his head.)

GRAYDON: I come out here every week to pretend I'm fishing, merely in the hope I can be here when it *does* sink. Alas, it hasn't.

CINDY: A bit dodgy this boat then, is it?

(Graydon sighed.)

GRAYDON: No, it's virtually new. And there's no plausible reason *why* it should sink really. I'm just living it hope, because seeing that fucker go down would be the final piece of the jigsaw. I'd finally have everything.

CINDY: Why don't you *make* it sink then? I mean, a man of your resources...

GRAYDON: Oh, god no. Don't even *think* like that. I'm on my best behaviour, Cindy. I've got away with too many underhand things in my time to risk trying anything like that again. (He nodded.)

GRAYDON: I've pushed my luck as far as it'll go, so from now on, I'm strictly a law abiding citizen.

CINDY: Okay.

(Graydon then started to chuckle.)

GRAYDON: I should just let it go, really. I mean they may have extorted the money from me, but even then I didn't actually lose. Not really.

CINDY: What do you mean?

GRAYDON: Well, they blackmailed me. Threatened to let slip some information that would have landed me in deep shit. I mean really deep shit. So I had no choice but to buckle. I had to pay. So we negotiated.

CINDY: I see.

GRAYDON: One and a half million they swindled from me. One and a half million Efland pounds. And that's when an Efland pound was worth something.

CINDY: Oh.

(She grimaced.)

CINDY: So when you say didn't actually lose... I mean, one and a half million is a lot.

GRAYDON: Yes...

(He then burst out laughing.)

GRAYDON: But I *would* have given them five.

(As he continued to laugh out loud, Cindy chuckled.)

CINDY: Why... are we laughing?

GRAYDON: Because he thought he was such a big man during the negotiation. Giving me his smarmiest grin, he was. And then the dipshit *started* his demands at two million.

(He laughed even harder.)

GRAYDON: That's where *I* was going to start and work my way up!

CINDY: Right...

GRAYDON: I thought I was losing *at least* two million, then the prick settled for one and a half and walked away feeling smug.

(He wiped a tear of laughter away then beamed.)

GRAYDON: You know what, Sandy?

CINDY: Cindy!

GRAYDON: Her too. Fuck The Amethyst. Who cares if it sinks or not?

(He beamed.)

GRAYDON: I've already won.

(He then upped and headed for the helm, chuckling to himself as he went.)

THE END

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