

# One of our Submarines is Missing

A salty tale of high jinx on the high seas

...URGENT ATTENTION...MOD...CODE READ...BIT OF A FLAP ON...



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# One of our is missing

## Chapter One Angus finds a Submarine

\*Authors' note to our American readers: You are going to make such asses out of yourselves trying to pronounce these words, you really are..

IN A CAVERNOUS WAREHOUSE somewhere on the island of Islay, Angus McLeod\* listened to the radio with mounting impatience and incredulity as the announcer babbled on.

*It's the stuff of farce; we have had whales, ships, mines and even female officers' regulation navy blue knickers washed up on our shores—and now this: Angus McLeod, fishing three miles off the Mull of Oa, discovered a bright yellow object floating beneath the surface this morning. Initially mistaken for a drum lost from an oil rig, he was shocked to discover it was a Ministry of Defence mini submarine—bristling with hi-tech surveillance equipment. Having towed the mysterious ROV to port behind his trawler, Mary Jane, McLeod hoisted the submarine out of the water for safe keeping and dutifully reported its recovery to the proper authorities. An MOD spokesman told BBC Radio Scotland that—'*

“—The fuckin' thing doesna exist!” shouted Angus McLeod as he kicked the radio off with a well-timed swing of his yellow sea boot. “Did ye hear that bampot, Fergus?” he said, swivelling around to hold open the door, as a lean, stick of a fisherman staggered in bearing an enormous sea crate in his arms.

“Aye, I heard it reet enough. The whole village is talkin'about it. Will ye no take these mines from us, Angus—the damn things weigh a bloody ton!”

Angus grabbed one edge of the crate and together they carried it to the far side of the warehouse, already stacked to the ceiling with enough naval hardware to provision a small, South American republic.

“I see ye havna shifted the battleship then?” asked Fergus. “Did the Koreans no want it?”

“Och Aye, they wanted it reet enough,” said Angus, stuffing the bowl of a filthy pipe from a pouch marked ‘For Tax Free Royal Navy use only.’ “But they dinna have the cash tae pay for it.”

Dropping wearily into a battered captain's chair, he struck a match that illuminated the grizzled hair and weather-beaten face of a dour Scottish fisherman and clamped the pipe determinedly between his yellowed teeth. Parting the disorderly piles of manifests, receipts and take-away pizza boxes which littered an antique escritoire, he reached for a black telephone and began to dial.

He hurriedly replaced the receiver as child's voice made him start up in surprise.

‘Uncle Angus! Uncle Angus!’ A young girl, perhaps twelve or thirteen years old, rushed up to him, her face alight with suppressed excitement.

“Ye ha' nay forgotten Uncle?” gasped the girl as she caught his hand and planted an affectionate kiss on his grizzled cheek. “Uncle Angus, ye *promised* I could go tae the fair!”

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Angus McLeod sucked on his pipe and took the girl on his knee.

“Ye’ll be the death o’ me if ye mother finds out ye’ve been hangin’ around with those Pikeys again, Laoghaire\*. All right, here’s ten pound, but don’t ye come a-greeting tae me when they knock ye up like ye sister Shona.”

Two minutes later, Angus McLeod was on the telephone to the Islay Coastguard, who informed him for the umpteenth time that the bright yellow mini submarine resting on wooden blocks not ten feet away from his desk, didn’t exist. “What do ye mean, dinna fash yerself? Ye think I dinna know the difference between an oil drum and a bloody submarine bristling wi’ hi-tech Ministry of bloody Defence surveillance equipment?”

“Mebbe ye do, Angus, but the MOD say they’ve not lost one. They don’t have any submarines in these waters.”

“Och aye?” spat Angus. “And ye believed the bloody Sassenachs, did ye? I suppose the battleships, aircraft carriers and odd socks (blue, sailor’s, for the use of), me and my bairns have been pulling out of the North Atlantic these ten years don’t exist either?”

“Look—man, I keep telling ye, the MOD say it’s impossible tae have found what ye say you’ve found.”

“Och Aye? So now I’m a liar as well, am I Hamish? Ye blethering bampot! Hello? Hello? Bugger, the eejot has hung up on me!”

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A red telephone rang in a wood panelled office somewhere in Whitehall. A balding man with a boxer’s nose reached to answer it.

“Wait for the scrambler light to come on, sir,” said a Special Branch minder. “You never know who may be listening...” The light flickered on. The man answered it.

“Hello? John Reid here. Yes—very urgent...yes fully loaded...base? Yes of course we’ll need a base. Well covered...yes completely covered, we shouldn’t be able to see the base from any angle...What sort? I don’t know, like last time...I can’t remember what it was called...well what bases do you have? No...no, that can’t be right. Oh hang on, yes that was it, deep pan...yes of course I want anchovies and olives; what do you think fully loaded means?” He hung up with an exclamation of impatience.

“Sorry Joe, did you want anything?” he asked the policeman. “I could call back...garlic bread? Salad?... no? Well, if you’re sure.”

Reid picked up a model battleship from his desk and began to make whooshing sea noises as he swivelled the gun turrets to bombard the fax machine in the corner with little plastic balls. The policeman picked up a model sea-harrier and began to strafe the water-cooler. The two of them were about to mount a full-scale assault on a beige filing cabinet when the door opened and an official entered hurriedly, holding a slip of paper. “Urgent message from the admiralty sir, top priority, code read.”

Reid dropped the battleship and leaped to his feet. “Code red? Isn’t that WMD in 45 minutes? I’d better ring the BBC and see if Paxman is free.”

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“No sir,” said the official “That’s code red, this is code *read*; we read the code, it was code blue—*not* red. We are going to have to change these codes—it’s becoming farcical. We don’t want another slip-up like Iraq do we, Sergeant?”

The policeman flushed and sidled toward the door.

“Code blue you say?” repeated Reid. “Well, if you’re sure. Let’s have a look.” Reid sat down at his desk and read the read code.

“What is all this bloody nonsense about a fisherman finding one of our submarines adrift near Islay? Have we lost a submarine? Surely I would have been told?” He grabbed the red telephone. “Get me the admiralty,” he snapped into the mouthpiece.

The policeman was halfway out of the room when Reid waved a peremptory finger at him. “Hang on a minute, Sergeant. You’d better fetch Beauchamp\*.”

“Your secretary?” asked the policeman with a puzzled frown. “Why would..”

“—Because she’s a bloody woman, man! She’s bound to know where it is.”

Right you are, Sir... Anything else?”

“Um—make sure that pizza is fully loaded.”

The policeman saluted and dashed out.

Well? What are standing there for, Marjoribanks\*? Get on with it man!”

“Me, Sir?” asked the official.

“Yes, you Sir. Start over there behind the filing cabinet.”

“Sir?”

“The submarine! You’ll look a proper Charley if Tamara Beauchamp finds it first, won’t you?”

Reid drummed his fingers impatiently on the desk as he waited to be connected. By the time the call finally went through, Marjoribanks had opened the door to admit a stunning brunette wearing a charcoal grey business suit, who pulled up a chair next to Reid and flicked back a strand of hair from her aristocratic forehead.

“Hello, hello? Yes, what’s all this damned nonsense about a submarine...what do you mean my call is valuable to you? I’m Secretary of State for Defence I should bloody well hope it is. Press button 1 if...” He looked up at the woman: “It’s a bloody computer, Tamara; listen!” His finger stabbed the speaker-phone button. A disembodied voice continued. *‘Press button 2 if you would like to report a drunken sailor. Press button 3 if you have found a small yellow submarine near Islay. Press button 4 if you would like to book token Royal Navy support for the next American excursion in the Middle East. For all other enquiries please wait, an operator will be with you shortly.’*

“Hear that?” snapped Reid, giving the telephone a vicious slap which sent it skidding across the table into the waste-paper basket. “No wonder we couldn’t find those bloody weapons in Iraq! Now—Tamara, we appear to have lost a—do put that down, Marjoribanks, does it look like a mini-submarine?”

“Well...er...” began the flustered official, “it *is* yellow...”

“So is Beauchamp’s blouse, but it no more resembles a submarine than that plastic duck you’re holding.”

“Sorry, Sir.”

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“Now—Tamara, it seems the admiralty are having a bit of Wendy about some blasted submarine they say we lost.”

“Have you looked properly?” she asked brusquely.

“Well—I...er...”

“We don’t want another repeat of the Tank incident, do we, Minister?”

“Well—look here,” objected Marjoribanks. “That was a simple clerical error—”

“—Shut up Marjoribanks,” snapped Tamara. “And do put that silly duck down.”

She leaned closer to Reid and whispered conspiratorially.

“You’ve not been tidying up the office again, have you, you naughty boy?”

“I—er...”

“You know, moved things.”

“I think it’s a bit too big to lose in the filing cabinet,” said Reid, becoming suddenly very aware of her scent and mopping his brow with a florid, red handkerchief. “Is it hot in here, or is it me?”

“Well—yes, it is a bit,” agreed Tamara, slipping off her jacket.

Reid swallowed noisily as she leaned forward, the thin blouse stretched tightly across her firm, jutting breasts. “Where did you see it last?” she asked, giving Reid the look that always reminded him of his nanny.

“The—um—admiralty message said some Scottish crofter found it bobbing about off the island of Islay.”

“Well, there you are then. Go and pick it up.”

“Er...we can’t. It doesn’t officially exist you see...Look, um—Tamara...could you see your way to perhaps...”

“Really!” snorted Tamara. “You expect me to spend my life picking up submarines after you?”

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## Chapter Two Steady as She Goes

\*Authors' note to our American readers: You are going to make such asses out of yourselves trying to pronounce these words, you really are..

Like a lean, grey beast, the frigate sliced through the dark waters between the Scottish Isles. Calm on this dark October night, but deceptively so, for as Captain Jack St John\* RN knew only too well, a Russian submarine had been seen several times in the past week. St John's mission was to find the sub and shadow it until it left British waters.

The bridge was dark except for the faintest of glows from the instruments, turned low to maintain night vision. St John's square jaw and chiselled features were just visible to 1st Lieutenant\* James Mainwaring\* ("Jimbo" to his many friends in the officer's mess). Mainwaring became fascinated by the way the sweeping light of the RADAR glittered on the grey hairs that had invaded the captain's beard in recent years.

"What are you thinking about, Jimbo?" the captain asked.

"Sorry sir, miles away. Damn lonely business chasing Russkies on a night like this," he replied.

The captain answered without shifting his gaze from the glittering, black, sea.

"I like it Jimbo; most of the men below decks, lights dimmed, my chiselled features illuminated by the instruments; the RADAR glittering in my beard. Seems like it's just us and Ivan—personal if you know what I mean."

"Ivan, Sir?"

"I meant the Russkies, Jimbo, not CPO Ivan Featherstone.\* With a chap like Ivan at the wheel the men can sleep soundly in their bunks tonight."

"Yes Sir, fine chap Ivan. CPO I mean—not the Russkies. Never did trust the Russkies." Mainwaring shivered as he replied. It wasn't the cold but the single-mindedness of his Captain that made him uncomfortable.

They had known each other since they were Snotties at Dartmouth twenty years earlier. Even then St John had seemed to stand apart from the other students. Often they would see him at night standing in front of the window of his room, adjusting the table lamp to illuminate his chiselled features and checking the effect in his reflection in the glass. At the time they had chided him and tried to get him to join their high spirited games when they de-bagged the female ratings during rum-fuelled carousals in the officers' mess, but he seemed drawn to the lonely road to an early command. In the final examinations St John had passed amongst the top four candidates in every subject. In the practical examination he had stood in a poorly lit room with his chiselled features illuminated by the same brass binnacle which had been used to test Nelson, Jellico and Mountbatten. The marks he earned were a high-water mark for naval department and are still talked about in hushed tones to this very day. American naval cadets on exchange programmes have entered that room as

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brashly confident young men and staggered out, weeping wrecks, fit only for harbour duties.

“Something on your mind?” St John asked.

“It’s this damned Sub, Sir,” replied Mainwaring, tearing his eyes away from the reflection of the captain’s chiselled features in the bridge windows. “Why would the Russkies be using a bright yellow submarine with MOD markings to spy on us? It doesn’t make any sense.”

“Double bluff, Number one. Oldest trick in the book. Did the same thing at Travemunde in ‘86.”

“Travemunde, Sir?”

“Baltic. German-Russo border before the wall came down in ‘89. Always snooping on the Hun. Used to disguise their boats as British weather buoys until some sharp-eyed matelot spotted they’d spelled ‘meteorological’ as ‘meterlogical.’ Big brouhaha. Egg on face.”

“What happened?”

“The usual. We sent their naval attaché packing. They filmed our man in Moscow getting his leg over two Ukrainian prostitutes. We retaliated with a trade embargo on caviar. They built some new subs disguised as peddaloes. Business as usual until they kissed and made up with the Hun in ‘89.”

“Right...” said Mainwaring bemusedly. “So the Russians are spying on us and we’re...?”

“Spying on the Americans,” finished St John.

“I thought we were allies, Sir?”

“Good heavens, no. Pretend we are, d’you see, to lull them into a false sense of security.”

“Not with you, Sir?”

“I wouldn’t worry about it Number one. Filthy business, espionage. Keep our heads down and let the chaps in Whitehall sort it out, what?”

“Aye, aye, Sir.”

There was a knock at the bridge door. “Cover eyes,” called Chief Petty Officer Featherstone. They covered their eyes against the glare from the lit corridor as a thickset able seaman entered with a tray of tea.

“Cup o’ Rosie, Sah!” said seaman Staines, a loveable Cockney rogue.

“Thank-you Staines.” said St John. “Most welcome, I have a right Geoff Hurst on at the moment.”

“Oh you’re a wag, Sah, aintcha?” said Staines with a laugh like a bilge opening. He always laughed at his commander’s jokes. The Cap’n was not like the other officers, he seemed to understand the men, he could cross the invisible line which separated them from the other ranks.

“Bought one for yourself, Staines?” asked St John. “Good man.”

St John turned from his post at the window. “Take over here Number one, I’m just going for a Tom. Damned Vindaloo. Don’t want to turn the bridge into a Dutch oven, eh Staines?”

Staines doubled up with laughter as Mainwaring stepped into the Captain’s place. The faint glow from the instruments illuminated his double chin, the

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sweeping light of the RADAR shone on the underside of his protruding belly. He was not leadership material.

“Come up for the change of watch, Staines?” asked St John.

“Oh Aye Sah, wouldn’t miss it for any money.”

“Officer of the watch!” said the captain in a tone of strong formality.

“Aye aye, Sir!” said Mainwaring.

“Sound the change of watch.”

“Change of watch it is Sir.” repeated Mainwaring, pressing a button which sounded klaxons throughout the ship.

Suddenly the boat came alive with thundering feet as men ran from their berths to their stations. A knock at the bridge door presaged the arrival of 2nd Lieutenant Cathy McVitie who would take over from Mainwaring for the next watch. At 27, McVitie was young to be a senior watch officer. She was one of a new generation of career women who had recently entered the Navy straight from university and expected to be accepted on equal terms. Mainwaring didn’t much care for the new ways.

McVitie had found it hard to break into the male world of a British warship, years of unspoken tradition seemed designed to thwart her at every turn. Just now, for example, a tradition of strict adherence to uniform code meant that the unaccountable inability of the naval dockyard to supply cold weather female officers’ uniform, or regulation naval flash resistant brassieres, left her in flimsy tropical kit comprising khaki shorts and a white blouse, when all the other officers wore duffle coats against the chill autumn wind.

“Lieutenant McVitie reporting Sir,” said Cathy. The chill wind blowing through the open bridge door tugged at her long, blond locks and caused a wisp of hair to sweep across her finely chiselled face.

“Very good, carry on,” said the Captain.

Mainwaring and McVitie exchanged detail of course and heading. She stepped up to the instruments and leant forward to peer into the RADAR screen. The dim light illuminated her pretty nose and high cheekbones. Behind her, the officers and other ranks stared as the sweep of the RADAR shone through the transparent fabric of her thin blouse, silhouetting her firm, jutting breasts and erect nipples. Mainwaring crossed his legs self-consciously as captain St John cleared his throat. They stood in silence for what seemed like hours and then, quietly at first, Seaman Staines began to sing in a rumbling baritone. *“Hooray and up she rises, hooray and up she rises, hooray and up she rises.”*

All together they sang with gusto, *“Early in the morning.”*

Oblivious, 2nd Lieutenant McVitie tugged her shorts further down her long, tanned legs in an attempt to shelter them from the October wind. Unfortunately, this exposed more of the regulation navy blue knickers to which Seaman Staines’ eyes became riveted with puppy-like devotion. Captain St John cleared his throat theatrically.

“Watch dismissed,” he barked. “I’m going below. Number two, you have the bridge. Steady as she goes.”

“Aye, aye sir,” Cathy replied. “Steady as she goes.”

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## Chapter Three Naval Exercises

\*Authors' note to our American readers: You are going to make such asses out of yourselves trying to pronounce these words, you really are..

Back in Whitehall, Reid and Marjoribanks were engaged in a NATO sea battle simulation exercise. The blinds were drawn and added security was supplied by a red-hatted military policeman outside the office door. Full electronic countermeasures were in place.

“Ready Marjoribanks?” asked Reid.

“Fire away, Sir.”

“A4, B4, C4” said the defence secretary.

“All in the drink I’m afraid, Sir.”

“Damn,” said Reid, “felt sure you would have something tucked in that corner.”

“Tea dear?” asked a thin late-middle aged lady with her hair tied up in a floral scarf. She pushed a trolley ahead of her and wore a blue nylon, ‘Mrs Mop’ coat.

Marjoribanks leaped to his feet. “How the devil did you get in here?” he shouted.

“Like I always does, dear, through the confidential secretaries’ office and up in the back lift.”

“But we have a total security shutdown, secret military planning exercise underway and some bloody kerfuffle up in Scotland. You can’t just wander about willy-nilly woman. You could be shot.”

“Oh I don’t think so,” she replied.

At that moment the outer door burst open and a military policeman entered at the double.

“See,” said Reid, “We’ve got armed men all over the place, slightest thing could set of a blood bath. Stand down soldier, I have this under control,” he added in a firm, commanding voice.

“Hello Mum,” said the MP. “Thought I heard your voice. Have you got a cuppa for your number one son, then?”

“Cause I ‘ave dear,” she replied, kissing him fondly and pouring the rich brown, tannic liquid into a thick, white china cup. “Biscuit?”

“Well don’t mind if I do. Hold this, mate.” The MP handed his automatic rifle to the Secretary of State and took the tea and plate of biscuits his mother handed to him. The soldier stacked the biscuits neatly on the corner of Reid’s desk and dunked each one carefully in his cup, before washing then down with a noisy slurp of tea.

Reid and Marjoribanks stared at one another in total disbelief while the Tea Lady idly picked up Marjoribanks’ NATO planning card.

“Oh, that’s interesting, that is,” she chuckled. “But I thought you were s’posed to add the ships before the game started?”

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Reid snatched the card from her. “Good grief woman, this is top secret military planning, you can’t just...” he looked at the card and stopped in mid-sentence. “MARJORIBANKS!” he shouted. “What is the meaning of this? No wonder I’ve never beaten you. This is going in your annual staff report, don’t think it won’t.”

“But I was trying a new strategy, Sir,” said Marjoribanks, dissembling. “I thought with all the cuts, what would happen if we built our navy after the war was over? You can’t hit what can’t see, can you?”

“Marjoribanks you are a blithering id—hang on, it might just work. Make a note to set up a meeting with the Joint Chiefs of Staff. We could save a fortune and be completely invulnerable. Brilliant!”

The MP handed his empty cup back to the Tea Lady. “Very nice, mum, most welcome.” Taking the gun back from Reid he said, “Cheers mate,” and marched out of the room.

“Tea, dear?” asked the lady, offering Reid a full cup. He took it with a grunt.

“You too?” she handed a cup to Marjoribanks.

She pushed the trolley from the room. Marjoribanks picked up the plate that had held the biscuits; half a Rich Tea digestive nestled soggily amongst the crumbs. “Bugger,” he muttered.

The telephone rang. Marjoribanks picked it up. “Secretary of State’s office...it’s for you, Sir.”

Reid took the ‘phone. “Reid here. Who is this?...I see...45 minutes?...You’re sure this time...No we can’t spare anyone just now...troops fully committed...you’ll have to do it yourself...yes...yes...well that’s not really my problem, is it. You advertised the 30-minute delivery service, not me. Right...another half hour, OK. I’m timing you.”

He slammed the ‘phone down, whereupon, it rang again almost immediately. “Reid here.”

“Sir, the scrambler.” whispered Marjoribanks. Reid hesitated as the scrambler engaged.

“Yes what is it? Ah Beauchamp! Where the devil have you been? What do you mean won’t let you in? Who won’t let you in? The MP on the door? Hold on.”

He walked to the door and opened it. “All right soldier, she can come...Beauchamp, what the hell are you doing? You’re half naked woman!”

Beauchamp was struggling to pull her grey skirt over her shapely bottom without dislodging the suspenders from the tops of her black stockings. Her long, dark hair hung in untidy tendrils about her narrow shoulders and her yellow blouse was unbuttoned to the waist, exposing her left breast, which bore the dirty imprint of a very large hand. Her bra seemed to be unaccountably missing.

“Sorry, Sir,” she said as she buttoned her blouse and tucked it into her skirt. “Sentry insisted on a strip search.”

The MP stood rigidly to attention, eyes focused in the middle distance, his face locked in a suggestive leer.

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“I sometimes wonder about you, Beauchamp, I really do. You only had to let him scan your ID card and you could have come straight in.”

They entered the office and shut the door.

“Right, fire away Beauchamp, what have you got for us?” Asked the Minister.

“Well Sir, as you know, the submarine was monitoring an American submarine.”

“Hold on Tamara,” said Marjoribanks, “What was the American doing?”

“It’s ‘Beauchamp’ to you, you wanker.”

“Now—steady on Tamara,” said Reid. “That’s not the kind of lang—”

“—Oh come on, Sir, he’s the biggest prat in Whitehall,” she interrupted. “Yesterday I caught him trying to get his mother to fax his sandwiches to him after he’d left them at home.” She glared disdainfully at Marjoribanks who flushed deeply.

“Is this true?” asked Reid.

“No—of course it isn’t—mummy, er—I mean, I ran out of greaseproof paper.”

“Mummy?” laughed Tamara. “I’m surprised she lets you wear long trousers.”

“Look—I do not live with my mother!” retorted Marjoribanks hotly.

“Aww,” chided Tamara, chucking him under the chin, “It’s nothing to be ashamed of...*Peregrine*...I’m sure that stupid tart in the typing pool you fancy hasn’t even noticed ‘mummy’ still packs your lunch-box for you. Which is more than I can say for your lunch-box—which is anything but ‘packed.’”

“Shut up! Shut up, shut up!” shouted Marjoribanks, hastily crossing his legs. “Anyway, look who’s talking; look at the way you carried on just now, you’re no better than a common slu—”

The rest of his sentence terminated in a howl of pain as the heel of Beauchamp’s stiletto ground into his foot..

“All right! That’ll do,” shouted Reid. “Look—there’s a flap on. Can we try to maintain some decorum, please?”

Beauchamp gave Marjoribanks a look that would have curdled new milk and turned to Reid with rising irritation. “The American was spying on the Russian,” she repeated.

“And the Russian?” Asked Reid

“Oh, Minister. Don’t you ever read your briefing notes? The Russian was spying on *us*.”

Reid began to speak and then stopped, he scratched his head, looked at Marjoribanks who was crouched on the floor, doubled up with pain, coughed and pulled his ear. Eventually he asked: “Well—why were we spying on the American?”

“To find out what the Russians knew, Minister. It’s perfectly simple,” she said, barely concealing her irritation.

“Uhh-uh...nnng,” grunted Marjoribanks.

“Yes,” said Reid and Tamara

“Can I ask a silly question?” enquired Reid.

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“Why do you suddenly feel the need to ask permission?” said Tamara.

“Well, why aren’t we spying on the Russian?”

“We are: well we are pretending to—so the Americans don’t suspect anything. If we didn’t spy on the Russians the Americans would know we were spying on them.”

“How can we pretend?” began Reid.

“We send a ship full of the most frightful idiots we can find and no one is any the wiser,” explained Tamara.

“So where is this blasted submarine?” asked Reid.

“How should I know, Minister?” said Beauchamp, taking out her compact and applying blusher to her aristocratic cheeks. “Have you tried ringing the admiralty?”

“We did that this morning, remember?”

“Oh yes, so we did,” she said, stifling a yawn.

“We haven’t tried the Home Office,” suggested Marjoribanks, crossing unsteadily toward the desk.

“Would it do any good?” asked Reid.

“Well, we’re not going to find it in here, are we?” said Beauchamp.

“Right, ring the Home Office, Marjoribanks.”

Moments later, Secretary of State for Defence, John Reid, passed a blue telephone receiver to Marjoribanks with a stifled oath.

“What the devil’s that?”

“Vivaldi, I think Sir..No—hang on, Salieri’s fourth—”

“—Nonsense,” interrupted Beauchamp, craning forward to listen. “Salieri didn’t write any violin concertos. It’s Giuseppe Tartini’s *Devil’s Trill sonata*—the technically demanding double stop trills are a dead give-away. Rather appropriate piece under the circumstances.”

The music faded as the disembodied voice droned on: *‘Thank you for your patience. An advisor will be with you shortly. If you have a National identity card please notify your nearest Home Office Security Centre of any change in your marital status, sexual proclivities or unearned income.’*

The music swelled once more as Reid passed the receiver to Beauchamp. “I think that is Vivaldi. Wife’s always bashing my ears with *La Quattro Stagione*.”

“It is now, Sir, but it was definitely Tartini earlier,” said Beauchamp. “Look—this is no good.”

“What do you suggest we do?” asked Reid.

“Escalate.”

“Escalate?” repeated Marjoribanks.

“Call the Royal Navy Information Line,” said Beauchamp. “One of the PM’s new initiatives.”

Marjoribanks turned pale and sucked in his breath. “I didn’t know the man had any.”

“He doesn’t,” said Tamara. “Mandelson put him up to it.”

“Well...If you’re sure,” said Reid, dialling the number she read out to him from a grubby, ministerial memo.

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‘Thank you for calling the Royal Navy Information Helpline. My name is Dilip. How can I be helping you today?’

‘I say, Marjoribanks. This chap sounds like a bloody foreigner. Here, listen!’

The official’s eyebrows shot up several inches as he pressed the receiver to his ear.

‘Good grief, you’re right Sir. I had no idea the Navy had offices in Calcutta. Ask him what temperature you should fry Samosas at. I can never get them to come out like the ones from Tesco.’

Reid snatched the receiver back and barked into the mouthpiece: ‘WE-LOOKEE-FOR-SUBMARINE, SAVVY?’

‘Better add that it’s yellow,’ suggested Marjoribanks.

‘And miniature,’ added Tamara.

‘HAVE-YOU-SEEN-A-VERY-SMALL-YELLOW-SUBMARINE?’ shouted Reid. ‘What? DVD? What the hell’s that? I have no idea what region...Russian I should think. Beatles? How the devil do I know what filthy bugs infest those damnable things? Director’s cut...extended edition...free shipping?’ Reid mopped his brow and passed the receiver to Tamara. ‘Here—you talk to him—the man’s a blithering idiot!’

Tamara crossed her slim legs and spoke rapidly into the telephone: ‘SUBMARINE KID-HAR HAI? Nahin—’YELLOW.’ Nahin ‘BEATLES. Kya? Meri samajh mei nahin aaya?’

‘Golly!’ exclaimed Marjoribanks, ‘I had no idea you spoke their lingo so fluently.’

Tamara covered the mouthpiece with her hand.

‘We are both fluent, but sadly not in the same language. But I think he understood me. He’s asking about ‘distinguishing marks’, Sir.’

‘Tell him to mind his own damned business!’ snapped Reid.

‘I think he means the submarine, Sir.’

‘Ah—right...well the usual I suppose...’

‘The usual?’

‘Open other end. Slippery when wet. No naked lights—that kind of thing I imagine.’

‘Right you are,’ said Tamara. ‘Aap kal khule hain?’

‘Does he know where the bloody thing is or not?’ interrupted Reid.

‘No, Sir, but he says an MTB turned up in Peterhead last week.’

‘Is it yellow?’

‘Just a minute, I’ll ask him.’

‘Ye bahut mehenga ‘yellow’ hai? Kya? Er..no sir, no.’

‘Damn,’ said Reid.

# One of our is missing

## Chapter Four Trouble at Sea

\*Authors' note to our American readers: You are going to make such asses out of yourselves trying to pronounce these words, you really are..

The frigate ploughed on steadily through the dark waters between the Scottish Isles under the resolute command of 2nd Lieutenant Cathy McVitie. In the captain's quarters behind the bridge, the faint glow of a ship's lantern which had once belonged to admiral Nelson, cast a faint radiance that softly illuminated the square jaw and chiselled features of Captain Jack St John RN.

Mainwaring put the port decanter down and relaxed back into his chair as the last of the officers left the mess.

"D'you know the Bishop of Winchester?" asked St John gruffly.

"Beg pardon, Sir?"

"The Bishop of Winchester?" repeated the Captain.

"Er...can't say that I do, Sir."

"Awfully decent feller," said St John, glaring pointedly at Mainwaring, "but he never passes the port either!"

"Sorry, Sir—miles away. Top you up?"

"Thank you, Number one," said St John, holding out his glass.

Only the faint creaking of the panelled, walnut fittings and the distant throb of the turbines broke the stillness of the silent wardroom as Mainwaring glanced furtively at the grey hairs that had invaded the Captain's beard of late. He sighed deeply and sipped his port. Suddenly he was jolted out of his reverie as the Captain's face moved into sharper focus.

"W—what?" he asked.

"I said, damn fine filly McVitie," repeated St John. "First rate officer too."

"Ah," replied Mainwaring, collecting his wits. "Um—the men say she's not quite square rigged, Sir."

St John choked and a dribble of port ran down his immaculate shirt.

"What's that you say?"

"Er, batting for the other side, if you take my meaning, Sir."

"No, not quite with you there, old man. Never seen her play cricket, strange notion, women playing cricket. Uckers now, different story, seen her keep her end up at uckers many a time."

"Well," said the increasingly frustrated Mainwaring. "*She throws the dice with the left hand.*"

"Good God, you don't mean?"

"Yes, sir."

"But surely not..."

"I'm afraid so, Sir."

"Didn't the MO pick it up when she signed on?"

"They don't ask, Sir. Look, thing is—the men say she's having an affair with the Cook."

## One of our is missing

“Good heavens man, that doesn’t make her a carpet muncher. Not unless the old food spoiling bastard has had a sex-change.”

“Cholmondeley-Smythe\* swallowed the anchor after he was caught gundecking if you recall, Sir. Christine Mountjoy is the new Cook.”

“Is she by Jove! Bit of a rum cove from what I hear. Sacrifices capons at the full moon, or some such tomfoolery, doesn’t she? Mind you, her Coq au Vin is first rate.”

“She prefers the term ‘Wicca’, Sir,” said Mainwaring. “And apparently it was a rubber chicken as she’s a confirmed vegan.”

“Dash it all, Mainwaring, what a confounded waste. The woman has nipples like organ stops. And they’re both in each other’s rigging, y’ say?”

“So Seaman Staines says, Sir.”

“How the devil does he know so much about it?”

“Caught them about to score off-side in the pantry, Sir.”

“Did he, by Jove. No wonder Mountjoy is always hanging around the hawse pipe. Better send them both up to my Day Room,” said St John. “Oh, and ask my steward to pop a couple of bottles of Bubbly into the ice bucket. Best to put the fillies at their ease before y’ keel haul them, eh?”

The Captain turned to go, then suddenly stopped short. “Great Scott, I’ve just remembered. She borrowed my razor last week, said she’d left hers ashore. Never gave it a thought at the time—I suppose it must mean she’s the butch one. We have a lot to learn about women Mainwaring, a lot to learn.”

---

Angus McLeod slammed down the telephone receiver with a muffled oath and immediately dialled another number. “I want tae speak tae Beauchamp,” he said. “Who? Marjoribanks...there’s dead fish wi’ more sense than him—the useless bampot. Och aye? Ye do, do ye? Well, I’m no gan tae give it ye. Look, just get me Beauchamp. Och aye, she’ll know who it is reet enough. Just tell her her old Uncle Angus has a wee bittee present for her.”

Angus rocked back in his chair and chuckled softly as he waited to be connected.

“Beauchamp? Aye...aye...yes—I know aboot the Russians, but...I dinna think tae...Now, just a minute, wee lassie—we agreed we’d...What? No, of course I havna...d’ye think I’m soft i’ the heid? Och, the bampot would never think tae bug my...what? Beauchamp? Hello? The bloody Sassenach has hung up on me!”

He slammed down the ‘phone, kicked off his seaboots and switched on the radio.

*‘...Then things became more strange. A bizarre series of conflicting messages were exchanged with the MOD via a third party: Firstly, the MOD denied the Submarine was theirs—even though it had MOD identification on it. Secondly, they denied that the bright yellow vessel was missing—even though it was physically ashore on Islay. Then the MOD stated it was impossible to have found it where Angus McLeod claimed he had—implying the fisherman had stolen it. Finally the MOD claimed to have reported the loss to the*

# One of our is missing

*Coastguard ten days earlier—but no local coastguard members have been able to confirm this.’*

“Fuckin’ bampots!” he exclaimed.

*‘...For ten days this state-of-the-art surveillance craft was floating about in a busy waterway, in perfect weather conditions, and the might of The Royal Navy was unable to find it. So far, the MOD has failed to make any contact with the fisherman, who they insist is holding them to ransom. The question of salvage has now arisen—’*

“Aye,” snorted Angus derisively as he switched the radio off, “and ye can keep askin’ about it but ye’ll dinna get so much as a barnacle off the sub’s hull until ye stump up the cash, ye murderin’, Sassenach scumbags!”

---

As HMS Babylon continued to slice steadily through the dark waters between the Scottish Isles, Captain Jack St John vomited heavily into the washbasin in his bathroom. The faint glow from the shaving light reflected his chiselled features and square jaw in the mirror as he dabbed at a smudge of red lipstick with a flannel. “Bugger!” he muttered to his reflection. “So much for my plan to keel haul those two cunning minxes.” Taking one last look at his handsome profile, he popped a mint into his mouth and staggered back into the Day Room.

“Better?” asked Chef Christine Mountjoy, as he dropped heavily onto the sofa beside her.

“Um...ye—” St John’s reply was cut short as 2nd Lieutenant Cathy McVitie suddenly kissed him. He told himself for the umpteenth time that it had been a serious mistake to order up two bottles of Bubbly as Christine unbuttoned his shirt and drew it over his head. His eyes slowly focused on the low coffee table, strewn with playing cards and a large pair of navy blue, regulation knickers that apparently belonged to Chef Mountjoy—as she was clearly not wearing any. In fact she was not wearing much of anything, as her bra, skirt and jacket were draped over the back of a nearby chair. He risked a quick glance to his right. ‘Nipples like organ stops,’ he muttered to himself, as his gaze was irresistibly drawn to two enormous breasts straining against the thin T-shirt that barely covered her bottom.

Cathy edged nearer and kissed him again, her mobile tongue darting deep into his mouth.

“Tell me, Sir,” she murmured as she continued to kiss the corners of his mouth, “do you have someone special in your life?”

“Well—um, yes, I do, as it happens.”

“Anyone I know?”

“Well—um, me, actually.”

“Yes, I can understand that,” said Christine as she admired the captain’s chiselled features in the soft, golden light cast by the table lamp that had once belonged to Lord Mountbatten.

“No,” said Cathy, “I meant someone you love and cherish above all others.”

“Still me, really.”

## One of our is missing

“No, but surely there must be someone waiting for you ashore; someone really hot like me?” asked Christine.

“Oh, a filly! Good heavens no. Always been a sailor. Married to the sea—navigation charts are my mistress, possibly with an Ann Summers catalogue tucked discreetly between the sheets.”

“No casual flings then?” asked Christine, running her fingers up the captain’s manly thigh.

“Totty? If only! Never learned the ropes, d’ y’ see?”

“Well, you seem to be managing quite well with us,” giggled Christine as she took off her T-shirt and slipped her hand into the captain’s bulging trousers.

“Steady on!” gasped St John. “You’ll wake the bosun’s persuader!”

“Well...that’s the general idea, Sir,” Cathy murmured into his ear.

“Hang on a minute—I thought you two were—Bermuda rigged?”

“Sir?” asked Cathy, slowly unbuttoning her blouse.

“Um—sail on the opposite tack; throw the dice with the other hand, y’know?”

A hot flush spread over St John’s chiselled features as Cathy freed her breasts and cupped his trembling hands around them. “I think you’re on the wrong tack, Sir. It’s the only way we can stop the men from making passes at as.”

“So, y’ not batting for the other side then?”

Christine started and stared at the captain. “Wh—what?”

“Er...on the opposite side?”

“How the hell do you know that?” she asked.

“Who told you?” demanded Cathy, pulling away from him in alarm.

“Mainwaring.”

“The bastard!” the two women shouted together.

“So...” began Christine, seductively grinding her pelvis against the captain’s muscular thigh. “Are you going to turn me in Sir, or...could we come to some arrangement?”

“You in?” asked Cathy. “You’re not working for the Americans too, are you? You could have bloody told me!”

“What?” asked Christine, turning around so fast her nipples parted the captain’s beard.

“You’re working for the Americans?” she repeated.

“Yes, are you?” asked Cathy.

“I might be...”

“You bitch!”

“Eh?” asked St John.

“Actually I’m working for the Russians,” said Christine. But the Americans think I’m working for them.”

“Snap,” said Cathy.

Christine’s mouth opened and shut several times. Captain St John’s mouth stayed open as his eyes glazed over. “Eh?” he repeated.

Cathy grinned. “I mean I *am* working for the Americans but the Russians

# One of our is missing

*think* I'm working for them."

"Eh?" St John repeated.

"WILL YOU STOP SAYING THAT!" snapped Christine. "Look, I'll fuck you if you keep quiet. Well...I was going to fuck you anyway so I could blackmail you into letting me have the sub, but it would be a whole lot better if we both fucked you and shared the sub."

"Fine with me," said Cathy. "It's either him or Mainwaring and Mainwaring is batting for the other side."

"Er...I'm sorry," said St John, collecting his scattered wits and trying not to look at the erect nipples inches away from his face. "Did you just say that my Number one is working for the Russians?"

"No, Christine is working for the Russians—I'm working for the Americans."

"Good God, woman, "You don't mean..."

"Yes..."

"But surely not..."

"I'm afraid so, Sir. Mainwaring is as gay as a boat."

"Bloody hell! No wonder the feller's always hanging around the junior ratings' latrines. But you two are—um..."

"Hot to trot, Sir? You bet!" Gushed Cathy, wriggling out of her khaki shorts and drawing the captain's hand down into her navy blue knickers.

"Ah, on an even keel, eh? Well, I must say, I've always admired the cut of your jib, McVitie," he said huskily. "Damn fine filly. First rate officer. Said as much to Mainwaring. Not that the pompous bum bandit—"

"—Shh," she whispered urgently. "Take my knickers off."

"But you're spies! I'd be consorting with the enemy, dammit!"

"We won't tell if you won't, Sir," murmured Cathy, as she squeezed the captain's fingers between her thighs.

"Ah! So that's what you used my razor—"

The rest of his sentence was cut short as Cathy crushed her lips against his.

"Hooray and up she rises, Number two!" said St John, flourishing Cathy's knickers triumphantly in the air.

"That's the ticket, sir," said Christine. "Let the hawser out."

"Do—ah...call me Jack," said St John as the two girls tugged his trousers off.

# One of our is missing

## Chapter Five Naval Manoeuvres

\*Authors' note to our American readers: You are going to make such asses out of yourselves trying to pronounce these words, you really are..

“Not sure what to do...” mumbled the Captain as Cathy climbed onto his lap and straddled him. She caressed Christine’s breasts as she exchanged a long, passionate kiss with the cook.

“I say! Offside!”

“Don’t worry, Sir,” said Christine, “it doesn’t mean we can’t handle a square rigger.”

“Ah...right-you-are. Strange creatures, women,” he gasped as Cathy drew herself higher onto his lap and opening her legs wide, guided him between them with a squeal of delight.

“Look, um—shouldn’t we be using one of those French thingies I keep finding in the scuppers, Number two?”

“I like my men to sail with bare poles and open sea cocks, Jack.”

“Right-you-are, Number two. Never could stand the smell of rubber.”

“That’s it, my darling, slip it inside me. Yes, God yes...”

Captain St John shuddered as she flung her arms around his neck and crushed her lips against his.

“Oh Jack,” she murmured. “I’m making water, bare away.”

“Funny y’ should say that, said St John. “I—seem to be listing a bit...in fact I think I’m going to—”

The captain lost his balance and the three of them tumbled off the sofa and onto the carpet in a tangled heap. “Damn! That last manoeuvre capsized me, Mountjoy.”

“If you’d just let Chris get abaft of you while you go topside, I think you’ll find it’ll be easier,” suggested Cathy.

“Right you are!” boomed St John, mounting his 2nd Lieutenant with more enthusiasm than finesse. “Full ahead Mountjoy!”

“The hawser has missed the cleat again,” complained Cathy.

“Sorry, navigation error. Belay that, Mountjoy! I think I’m getting the hang of it now.”

“The foc’sle is a little more for’ard,” prompted Cathy.

“Right you are Number two, coming about!

“I think that’s a bit too near the chain locker. Try a broader reach—Oh yes! Oh God yes!”

“Good heavens!” exclaimed St John as he lunged forward again. “That’s a deep anchorage you’ve got there, McVitie. Never knew a hawsehole could be so tight.”

“Try to—m-maintain an even keel, m-my love, or you’ll sheer off to windward again.”

“How’s that?” he asked, thrusting deeper between Cathy’s thighs.

# One of our is missing

“Oh God yes—yes...”

“I say, you’ll choke me luff if y’ keep doing that, Mountjoy!”

“Don’t you like it, Sir?”

“So long as that’s only y’ tongue in me shaft tunnel. Name’s not Mainwaring, y’ know.”

The cabin shook as Cathy McVitie cried out and thrust her hips violently upwards.

“Have we hit something, Number two?”

“Only my rudder post,” gasped Cathy. “Don’t stop, Jack.”

“I meant that bump just now.”

“Probably another Scottish fishing smack searching for Russian subs,” murmured Christine, as she ground her crotch against the Captain’s hip. “I wouldn’t worry about it, Jack.”

“Right you are,” said St John. “Opening sea cocks, Number two!”

“Oh...Jack,” gasped Cathy, as her slim thighs tightened around him. “Fill my bilge!”

Captain Jack St John lay on his beam ends, or more precisely, between the thighs of Christine Mountjoy, whose galley he had filled as copiously as 2nd Lieutenant Cathy McVitie’s bilge, and smoked contentedly.

“Gosh,” sighed Cathy McVitie, as she trailed her slim fingers across his manly chest, “did you know how gorgeous your square jaw and chiselled features look from this angle? The way the sweeping beam of the South Islay lighthouse glitters in the grey hairs which have invaded your beard in recent years is really quite magical...”

Captain St John exhaled a thin tendril of blue smoke from his parted lips and chuckled softly to himself. God, how he loved the Navy.

---

Back in Whitehall, Marjoribanks and Secretary of State, John Reid, hovered anxiously over a red telephone like two schoolboys caught scoffing tuck after Lights Out. Beauchamp tossed back her long, dark hair and replaced the receiver with a muttered oath. “I say Sir, that was GCHQ, the Americans are on to us. We have to lose the Sub.”

Reid’s eyebrows shot up in surprise as all connection with reality seemed to evaporate.

“Bloody hell, Beauchamp, you’re talking worse drivel than Marjoribanks. We have spent the last 24 hours chasing our arses because the bloody thing is lost. Now you’re telling me we have to lose something we’ve just found. I assume we’ve found it, have we?”

“We haven’t found it,” she said through clenched teeth.

“Well how can we loose it then, woman? You are becoming completely incomprehensible, it’s not that woman’s cycle thing is it?”

“I hope you don’t mean menstrual sir?”

“No, Raleigh, saw you on it this morning. Too much exercise can easily confuse your intellectuals if you’re not used to it.”

## One of our is missing

He stood up and walked across the office. “I want you to explain this submarine thing to me once more. Get Marjoribanks in here too; he might be able add something.” Beauchamp rolled her eyes theatrically. They looked at each other briefly. “Well—get him in here anyway.”

She picked up the ‘phone. “Hello, switchboard? Minister’s office here. Can you page Marjoribanks and get him up here pronto.” She put the receiver down with a bang. It rang almost immediately. She grabbed it. “Minister’s office. Yes...yes...I’ll get him for you.” She put her hand over the mouthpiece and stifled a giggle. “It’s for you, Sir, something about the Pizza express.”

“Give it here, woman,” snapped Reid as he grabbed the phone and began shouting. “Now just you listen to me, Wayne or Jason or whatever your oafish name is...I have never known such a slow-arsed, incompetent set of total wasters as you and your team of half-witted delivery boys. Good God—I could have had my secretary cook one for me in under an hour, and she’s a worse bloody feminist than Cherie Blair, so that includes the time it would take her to argue with the instructions on the packet. What’s that? Who? Ah...Tony, how are you Prime Minister? I thought it was...er...um...Yes, I think it would be a splendid idea to take the sleeper express down to the Pisa Summit next month...absolutely, looking forward to it. Cherie?...did I? Are you sure? No, it can’t have been me, Tony—I was here talking to you on the ‘phone. Yes, crossed line I expect... What’s that? Submarine? Don’t worry, Prime Minister—I have my best man on it...That fool Marjoribanks...? No, no, of course not. Leave it with me. Bye, Sir.” He put the receiver down slowly. “Beauchamp, you did that on purpose, didn’t you?”

Beauchamp’s eyes widened briefly in feigned surprise and then closed as she continued to file diligently at her immaculately manicured finger nails. The door burst open and Marjoribanks rushed in. “Great news Sir, we’ve—”

“—Sit down and shut up, Reid interrupted peremptorily. “Beauchamp has something to say to us. Off you go Tamara...”

Beauchamp crossed her long, tanned legs with studied languor, making no attempt to pull down the short, grey skirt which rode up her thighs. Reid swallowed noisily as he caught a glimpse of her black suspenders and a shocking pink, thong that bulged invitingly above them. She turned towards them and began. “The submarine we lost—shut up Marjoribanks, we don’t want to hear it—was an extremely advanced and very secret surveillance device. We had been using it to monitor an American submarine in British waters. The Americans were spying on a Russian and the Russians were spying on us. With me so far?”

The two men nodded. Tamara continued. “Now—we lost contact with the submarine but its programming took over and it continued to monitor the Americans, recording the data for recovery later. Everything was fine until a frigate, HMS Babylon, got wind of the missing submarine. It seems an old school chum...”(she looked pointedly at Marjoribanks)“...of a certain Captain Jack St John thought he could score points by finding the bloody thing.”

Reid looked puzzled. “But weren’t we looking for it?”

# One of our is missing

Tamara uncrossed her legs and took a deep breath. “No, because we knew where it was. Four hours after we lost contact, the submarine was found by a Scottish fisherman. He tried to sell it back to us, minus the tapes.”

Marjoribanks scratched his head. “Why didn’t we pay up?”

Tamara sighed. “Didn’t they teach you anything at that posh school apart from how to take a hot crumpet from behind without blubbing? We didn’t buy the submarine because the fisherman works for the Russians.”

“But...” said Reid and Marjoribanks in unison.

Beauchamp leaned back in her chair and groaned audibly. “If the Russians knew we were spying on the Americans they would know we know what the Americans know. Now, if we know what the Americans know, we know what the Russians know. And the Russians are spying on us. So we don’t want them to know. Got it now?”

The two men looked at her blankly.

“Look—it’s the first law of espionage,” she continued, with increasing desperation. “Never let the enemy know what you know, or what you don’t know, you know?”

Reid picked up the model battleship from his desk as Marjoribanks lunged for the duck from the filing cabinet.

“Whoosh, kerbang!” said the Secretary of State for Defence.

“Quack, quack,” said the Civil Servant.

---

“Idiots,” sighed Tamara as she swept up her bag and walked out of the building. In the street she pulled out a mobile ‘phone. “Yury? Right, I have the sub and the tapes, £250,000. Tonight? No, sorry, I’m washing my hair. Tomorrow at eight and strawberries this time, OK? What? Because I don’t want my knickers smelling of cheap, bloody caviar again, OK? No, Swiss Francs. Look, I can get you a couple of aircraft carriers on a buy-one-get-one-free offer...air miles? Well—OK, but you’ll have to take three gross of odd socks and a crate of Female naval officers’ uniforms as well. Let’s call it a round half million. Yes, Angus will handle the delivery side, yes...yes...half up front as usual. What? Very funny, Yury. Only if you bring a strapon...” she jumped and switched off the mobile as a hand tapped her on the shoulder.

“—Excuse me, love...”

“Yes?” she snapped, turning round to confront a Hoodie-wearing teenager brandishing a cardboard box in her face.

“Got a delivery ‘ere for a Margery Banks, love.”

Tamara dropped her mobile in her bag and glared at him as if he was something she’d stepped in.

“I’m not your ‘love,’ you horrid little oik.”

“Sorry, lo—er, miss. Got a delivery ‘ere for a Margery Banks.”

“So you said.”

“Does she work ‘ere?”

“How the hell should I know? Do I look like a receptionist?”

# One of our is missing

The boy stepped back a pace and shuffled uncomfortably under her disdainful gaze.

“Nah...but, y’ got an MOD security badge pinned to y’ jacket and this pizza’s for some bird called ‘Margery Banks’ in the MOD, innit?”

“Never heard of her.”

“Y’wot?”

“I said I’ve never heard of anyone by that name. Now please bugger off.”

“Wot shall I do with this pizza then?”

“Lose it.”

“Y’wot?”

“Lose it,” repeated Tamara impatiently. “Make it disappear.”

“Y’wot?”

“MAKE-IT-GO-AWAY!” shouted Tamara.

The pizza delivery boy’s jaw dropped.

“Won’t they miss it?”

“I shouldn’t think so. They’re always losing things.”

“I can’t do that, miss. The boss ‘d ‘ave a fit.”

“Oh—give me the bloody thing,” snapped Tamara, snatching the box from him and hurling it over a wall. “There, it’s lost now, isn’t it? Now clear off before I have you arrested as a terrorist.”

## The End

One of our  is missing

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One of our 🚚 is missing



*...Beauchamp crossed her long, tanned legs  
with studied languor, making no attempt to  
pull down the short, grey skirt which rode up  
her thighs...*

**A salty tale of high jinx on the high seas**