

HIGH TIDE

Ray Doyle had had some very strange dreams before, but the one that was unfolding inside his mind right now was in a completely different league altogether. It even put the ones he had had when fighting for survival after Mayli's attempt on his life to shame. There were monsters and dragons, pirate ships and giant whales, thunder and lightning, all topped off by a constant rocking motion which aggravated his enormous headache. Or maybe this wasn't a dream at all? Maybe this was a reality his dazed mind just couldn't grasp?

„Get a grip, Ray“, he told himself. „Be methodical, Ray!“ He thought long and hard about all the strange things that seemed to surround him at that moment. That rocking motion.....that was familiar to him. He had experienced it together with Suzy, that long-legged blonde, who had shared his bed not too long ago. She certainly knew moves that could shake a man and the bed she shared with him to the core. He smiled at the memory, then let out a sigh when he realized that Suzy was nowhere near.

The image of Suzy's beautiful face was suddenly replaced by the tormented face of a young boy. The boy was screaming, but Ray's muddled brain couldn't make out the reason for his state of panic.

What on earth was going on? Totally exhausted, he surrendered himself to the dreams and nightmares.



Sergeant Campbell viewed the site of the accident, scratched his head and let out a deep sigh. He couldn't make head or tail of what he saw. A gold Capri had veered off the road and ended up hitting a tree. He watched Shauna Macmillan's son Aidan being carefully removed from the wrecked car and put onto a stretcher and into the ambulance. The gold Capri didn't belong to the Macmillan family. Whose car was this? How did Aidan get to be at its wheel?

Did Aidan steal it? A bit hesitantly, he walked over to the ambulance to have a word with the doctor.

In a worried tone of voice, Sergeant Campbell asked: “How is he, doctor?” He dreaded the answer because he would have to inform the mother about the condition of her son. She had already lost her husband ten years ago and he hoped with all his heart that he didn't have to break the news of another tragedy to her.

The doctor paused for a moment before replying: “He's in a stable condition. Probably got a concussion. He should be all right, from the state of the car, I'd guess he wasn't going too fast. The thing which puzzles me the most is that he has got a gun shot wound to his arm!”

Incredulously, Sergeant Campbell repeated: “A gun shot wound?” He looked at Aidan's pale face and said: “What have you been up to, son?”



Major Cowley entered the office that was usually occupied by his top agents Bodie and Doyle. This time, only Bodie was there. A few days ago, he and Doyle had been involved in a gruelling operation. That mission had led to the death of an innocent bystander through the bullet of a terrorist. The lady had died in Ray's arms. After the debrief for that operation, Ray had asked for leave, which had been granted and he had left for Scotland.

Bodie looked up from the paperwork when his boss entered the room. Major Cowley wasn't known for wasting time, so he got straight to the point. Indignantly, he asked: “What has your partner been up to now?”

Bodie gave him a quizzical look. “What are you talking about, Sir?”

Major Cowley slammed his fist on the desk, making Bodie flinch.

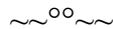
“I am talking about a young man in Fort William who was found in Doyle's wrecked car. I've just had a call from Chief Constable Montgomery from the local constabulary. The boy has a serious concussion, some bruises, no broken bones.”

He paused for a moment, then drew in a sharp breath before going on. “And he has got a

gun shot wound to his arm. The bullet removed from that wound tallies with the CI5 ammunition. Obviously the boy is the son of the lady who owns the hotel Ray is staying in while he is absent on leave. He made friends with the boy, who lost his father about ten years ago. His mum was quite pleased with Doyle taking the youngster a bit under his wings and is now understandably appalled. ”

Bodie looked at his boss in amazement. He asked “Where is Doyle?”

“Missing,” was Major Cowley's answer. “The boy is still unconscious, so you and I will go up there to find out what has been going on.”



Major Cowley looked inquiringly at the young doctor who accompanied him and Bodie to Aidan's hospital room, trying to make sense of the medical shop talk.

He asked: “So, you are expecting the boy to make a full recovery but you can't say when he will regain consciousness?”

Dr. Kincaid gave him a smile and said: “That's it in a nutshell!”

They reached the door to the Aidan's room and the doctor paused for a moment with his hand on the doorknob. He said: “His mother is very upset, so you'd better be prepared for a not exactly friendly reception.”

Major Cowley and Bodie exchanged a glance. Bodie said:”That's understandable, but I am sure that my partner didn't hurt Aidan.”

Dr. Kincaid raised an eye-brow and said: “Good luck convincing her of that.”

He opened the door and said: “Mrs Macmillan, Major Cowley and Mr. Bodie from CI5 would like to speak to you. They have got a few questions.”

Mrs. Macmillan rose from her son's bedside. She was a rather tall woman, with ginger hair and bright blue eyes. There was a hard look on her face when she turned to face the men who had just disturbed her vigil. She looked Major Cowley straight into the eyes and said: “Well, I have only got one question for you, Major Cowley. What did your man do to my son?”

Major Cowley had a look at the boy in the bed. He was very pale and his head and right arm

where heavily bandaged.

Then he said: "I understand that you're upset Mrs. Macmillan, but I can assure you that Doyle didn't do anything to your son. We need to find him and find out what has happened. We need your help, Mrs. Macmillan."

She scoffed. "Why should I help you find your man? I only want my son to wake up and get better. I don't care about your man."

She was close to tears now and Major Cowley said softly: "I don't think this is true, Mrs. Macmillan. Chief Constable Montgomery told me that Doyle took a liking to your son and that you were quite pleased about that."

Now the tears started running down Mrs. Macmillan's cheeks and she sat down again. She looked up at Major Cowley and said: "Aidan lost his father a long time ago and sometimes, he needs a little male guidance which I obviously can't offer. He has just passed his driving test and is seriously in love for the first time in his life. Mr. Doyle took him on outings and offered advice regarding the girl Aidan is in love with. He seemed such a nice and caring man, I can't believe he shot my son. I hope there is some other explanation for the state my son is in."

Major Cowley replied: "I am convinced there is one. Will you help us find Doyle?"

Mrs. Macmillan nodded.

Major Cowley asked: "Do you know what Aidan and Doyle had planned when they left this morning?"

Mrs. Macmillan shook her head and said: "Aidan just told me that he and Mr. Doyle needed to check something out"

Bodie raised an eye-brow. He asked: "What exactly did they want to check out?"

Mrs. Macmillan shrugged her shoulders and said: "I haven't got any idea about that."

Bodie let out a resigned sigh and said: "That's not a lot to go on."

Turning to her son again, Mrs. Macmillan said: "I will let you know if I remember something that might be of help. At the moment, my brain isn't working properly."

Major Cowley put a hand on her right shoulder briefly. She didn't respond, but stayed focused on her son.

While all this was going on, Aidan had been fighting a battle to get his brain and body into

working order. There was something urgent he needed to tell these men, he just didn't have the strength yet. He tried to form the word "Wait" with his mouth, but to his utmost despair and frustration, his mouth didn't cooperate. Maybe some more rest would do the trick, he thought.

The men left the room quietly. Standing outside, Major Cowley asked: "Please, Dr. Kincaid, let us know immediately when the boy wakes up."

Dr. Kincaid nodded and said: "Of course! Now please excuse me, I have to go to a meeting."

Major Cowley and Bodie watched him walking down the corridor, both lost in thought. After a while, Bodie cleared his throat and said: "Sir, I keep wondering why Doyle was carrying his gun. I mean, from all intents and purposes, Doyle and Aidan were supposed to be on a leisurely outing. Yet Doyle took his gun with him when they went to check something out. Looks like that must have seemed somewhat suspicious to him and he took his gun with him. What if the pair of them stumbled on something that got them into trouble with some heavies?"

Major Cowley nodded and said: "I agree! We'd better find Doyle fast."

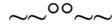
Bodie replied: "That is going to be difficult with no clues at all. The police are looking for him, but that is like looking for a needle in the haystack without a proper lead. The haystack is quite huge as well, you've got the Highlands, the Loch, that's a lot of ground to cover."

Just as a Major Cowley was about to reply, a young police officer approached them and asked: "Major Cowley?"

Major Cowley looked at the young man inquiringly and asked: "Aye, Constable, is there any news?"

Constable Fraser replied: "Yes, Sir. A shop owner from Corran informed us that Mr. Doyle and Aidan bought some supplies in his shop. They said they wanted to check out some caves in the area."

Major Cowley gave the young Constable a smile and said: "Thank you!" Then he turned to Bodie and said: "Well, the haystack has just become a bit smaller."



The pain in his head kept getting worse and worse. The constant rocking motion and the sick feeling in his stomach weren't good for him either. The worry about the boy was also tormenting him. Try as he might, he just couldn't get his wits together.



Within the next hour, every available police officer was transferred to Corran to patrol and search the area. The area which was usually visited by many tourists became a hive of police activity, with dog handlers and their dogs searching the area on foot and police officers showing Doyle's photo to locals and tourists.

Bodie stood at the shore of Loch Linnhe and looked across to the Corran Lighthouse. He thought: "Where are you, Ray and what have you been up to?" His thoughts were interrupted by a police officer shouting: "The dogs have found Mr. Doyle's trace!"

Bodie smiled and thought: "So, that dirty and sweaty old jeans shirt Doyle refuses to chuck in the bin has actually made a dog find him and not destroyed the dog's sense of smell forever."



Mrs. Macmillan gently stroked Aidan's hand and whispered: "Please, Aidan, wake up!" The desperation in her voice cut through the fog that clouded the poor boy's brain. He tried desperately to give voice to the words he needed so speak so urgently, but failed yet again.



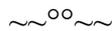
A while later, a great number of police officers searched a rather spacious cave near Corran Lighthouse. The things they found were not really suspicious: A number of cigarette butts, candy wrappers, a rather expensive looking silver lighter and an old sock with lots of holes

in it. Maybe some tourists had had a pick-nick in that cave. There was nothing that suggested some kind of criminal activity had been going on there and what was even more disappointing, there was no clue that helped them to find out what had happened to Doyle.

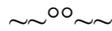
A dog handler with a fierce looking German Shepherd arrived at the scene and introduced himself to Bodie: "I'm Sergeant Dunbar and that is Finn. Finn is an expert at finding drugs. We usually work at the airport in Glasgow, but I am on holiday in my home town and thought I should offer our services."

Bodie shook the man's hand and didn't quite dare to pet the fierce looking dog. He said: "You could be onto something, maybe that cave has been used to bring drugs into the country. The lighthouse provides easy navigation for a small boat at night, which can travel in the Loch practically unnoticed."

Sergeant Dunbar nodded and said: "Come on, Finn. Let's get to work!"



Doyle thought: "Please somebody stop that rocking motion and the pain in my head!"



Finn started barking loudly and Sergeant Dunbar said: "Looks like this place has been used for drug trafficking indeed."

Bodie nodded and said: "So, what have we got here? This place has been used to bring drugs into the country, Doyle and Aidan somehow came across the dealers, there was some kind of fight during which Aidan got shot with Doyle's gun? Sounds possible, doesn't it?"

Sergeant Dunbar replied: "It's a hell of of story, but it's possible indeed."

Scratching his head, Bodie said: "Yet we have no idea where Doyle is. The dog handlers say the trail of his scent ends here, right?"

"I'm afraid it does," replied Sergeant Dunbar with a sad tone of voice.



Aidan woke with a start and sat bolt upright in his bed. He startled the wits out of his poor mum who had just fallen asleep by his bedside. Aidan grabbed her by the shoulder and started shaking her. “Mum, mum, Mr Doyle and I came across some drug dealers in a cave near Corran.”

Mrs Macmillan took a few seconds to grasp what her son had just told her. She hugged her son tightly and said: “I am so glad you're finally awake.”

“Yes, mum, but please understand: We must find Mr. Doyle. The drug dealers put him into a boat and now he's somewhere on Loch Linnhe.” Aidan was clearly out of breath.

Mrs Macmillan found it hard to follow what her son was telling her. “Easy, Aidan. Take a deep breath and tell me exactly what happened.”

Aidan took a deep breath and said: “I had found some cigarette butts and some paper that contained cocaine in a cove near Corran yesterday while Mr. Doyle was in Inverness for the day. I told him about my discoveries and he said we would go there today to have a look around the cove. We came across the drug dealers and decided to go back to the car to call for back-up, but when we wanted to leave the cove, I slipped and nearly fell. So, the drug dealers found us, hit Mr. Doyle on the head, put him on a boat and put that boat out to the Loch. Then they came after me with Mr. Doyle's gun. I got hit in the arm, but managed to make it to Ray's car and I got away.”

Mrs Macmillan looked at her son with wide eyes and said: “So, they wanted to make it look like Mr. Doyle shot you!”

Aidan nodded. Mrs Macmillan rose to her feet and went to the door. “I'll let the doctor know and he must pass that information on to the police.”



The Fort William constabulary served as a headquarter for this particular search and rescue mission. Captain Buchanan from the Search and Rescue squad of the Royal Navy, who

headed this operation, looked at the sea charts that were spread out on a desk in front of him. He started to work on one of them with a ruler and a compass. Then he lifted it up and carefully stuck it to the board behind him. Having finished, he turned to a sea of expectant faces looking at him, waiting for orders. He said: “So, Agent Doyle was put out to sea at about ten o'clock this morning during a low tide which means he could have got swept very far out into the Loch. Now it's four o'clock and the tide is coming in.”

Pointing to an area he had marked with a red circle, he said: “Considering the directions the currents run in the Loch, this is our target area. We'll start our search in this area, because I think we have got the greatest chances of finding Agent Doyle there. I want every man who has a boat and knows how to use it out there. Our man is injured, so there is no time to waste.”

It didn't take long until a fleet of police boats, fishing and sports boat took to the Loch. A Search and Rescue helicopter started to circle the target area.



Ray Doyle gradually regained consciousness and started to make sense of his surroundings. The rocking motion he experienced was not caused by being on a rocking horse as his last dream about his youth had led him to believe, but by the fact that he was in a small boat in the middle of Loch Linnhe. He touched his aching head and when he looked at his fingers, there were traces of clotted blood on his fingers. Great, another blow to his noggin. He had lost count of the number of times he had received a blow to his head before. One thing was for certain, it didn't get easier with time.

A new sound added itself to the sound created by the waves. It sounded very much like the hum of the rotor of a helicopter. He looked up and saw the Search and Rescue helicopter above him. The pilot radioed to the headquarter: in Fort Williams “We have found Agent Doyle. We're winching a man down to get him.”

As soon as Doyle was brought up into the helicopter, he passed out again, completely exhausted.



When he woke up again, he was pleased to note that the ground underneath him was steady again. The pain in his head was made more bearable by painkillers and when he touched his head, he felt a bandage covering his stitched up wound. It took him a while to see clearly. The first thing he noticed was his partner giving him a big grin. He sat upright with a jolt and asked: "What about Aidan? Is he safe?"

Bodie pushed his partner back against the cushion and said: "He's not only alright, he is even kind enough to let you share a room with him. I think that's very generous of him, considering the fact that he got hit by a bullet from your gun."

Doyle grimaced and Bodie continued: "Don't worry, it's just a flesh wound, Aidan will be alright, won't you, son?"

Doyle turned to face Aidan, who was in the bed next to him. Aidan said: "I will be alright and I am glad they managed to find you on time."

Mrs. Macmillan, who was at her son's bedside, said: "I think I owe you an apology, Mr. Doyle."

Ray gave her a puzzled look and asked: "What for?"

Mrs. Macmillan replied: "I thought you had done this to Aidan. I am sorry."

Doyle looked her straight into the eyes and said: "Don't worry. It was the most obvious explanation. Hey, if somebody had told me yesterday that I'd be making an involuntary sea journey, I would have laughed. Life and criminals can play quite strange tricks on you, even when you're on leave. They should know better."

Everybody in the room laughed, but when Doyle joined in, the pain in his head became too strong and he had to stop himself. After a while he asked: "Where is our fearless leader? I need to extend my leave a bit.....if Mrs. Macmillan is willing to host me for a little while

longer.

With a smile, Mrs. Macmillan: “Of course, I am willing and Aidan and I will be pleased to have you with us for some more time.”

Aidan gave Doyle a big smile and a thumbs up.

Bodie brought Doyle up to speed regarding the drug dealers: “We have found finger prints of a well known drug dealer from Inverness on that silver lighter we found in that cave. They have arrested him and Cowley is there to keep an eye on what is going on. He should be back soon. Let's see if you dare to ask him for some more leave when get gets back.”

A voice from the door said: “Bodie, that leave is granted and while Doyle is still on leave, you will have to work double shifts.” Major Cowley had to laugh out loud when he saw the expression of horror on Bodie's face.

He quickly reassured his agent: “Sorry, I am only joking. Why don't you join Doyle here for a nice holiday? I think you both deserve some leave.

Bodie and Doyle stared at their boss with open mouths.