

THE DEEPEST, DARKEST WATER

Written by

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FADE IN:

INT. RESEARCH SUBMARINE *SCOTT CARPENTER* - NIGHT

Stark white interior with two side-by-side seats facing touchscreen controls. POV from the direction of the forward viewport, side portholes show nothing but deep blue.

Commander HARRIET CHADWICK (38) sits in the left seat, her short hair and stoic expression reflect an unwillingness to let anything distract her from her duties.

Lieutenant Commander JULES OLIVIER (35) glances out the forward viewport as his fingers fly around his control panel.

Her sleeves sport a US flag and a NASA emblem, his a French flag and an ESA emblem.

An icon on Olivier's console turns green. He nods.

CHADWICK

Come in, *Aquarius*. We show data upload complete. Do you copy?

The disembodied voice of the MISSION COMMANDER fills the small compartment. Sounds male, Chinese, and fatherly.

MISSION COMMANDER (V.O.)

Looks good up here, Commander. Sterilization of the exterior confirmed. Water salinity is a bit higher than expected, but everything else is nominal. You are "Go" for release from the ice.

CHADWICK

Copy we are "Go" for release.

Olivier pulls out a crucifix necklace, kisses the Savior, then pushes a button.

OLIVIER

Go.

Chadwick and Olivier shift as the sub starts to move. The view outside the side portholes remains deep blue.

CHADWICK

We set forth as the first two humans to travel the subsurface ocean of Europa.

Olivier raises an eyebrow at Chadwick, she shrugs.

OLIVIER
Reading clear from the underside of
the ice and floating free.

Chadwick and Olivier operate their controls, but also keep exchanging glances.

CHADWICK
Sorry, Jules, nothing profound came
to mind.

OLIVIER
I would have jumped in if I had
anything, but they wouldn't let me
put a poet in my personal baggage.

Chadwick's expression softens, forms a lopsided smile.

OLIVIER
Just look out there, it's so
different from watching the feed
from a drone.

Chadwick follows Olivier's gaze up through the forward viewport, eyes widen with wonder.

CHADWICK
It is... majestic.

She looks left, then right, then down, points at something.

CHADWICK
What's that?

Olivier looks down and does a double take just as a burst of STATIC erupts from the speakers.

MISSION COMMANDER (V.O.)
... magnetic wave ...

Chadwick and Olivier lurch to the left.

The sub is plunged into darkness, the only light the deep blue from the portholes.

Chadwick and Olivier each flip switches mounted low beside their seats. No joy.

CHADWICK
You okay?

Olivier cracks and shakes a light-stick, lays it on the lifeless console.

OLIVIER
 What happened? I'm fine, but everything electrical is dead. Even my implant.

CHADWICK
 Mine, too.

OLIVIER
 Blow the ballast tanks to pin ourselves against the ice?

CHADWICK
 No, I'd rather drift than use up gasses we can't get back. And it's not like the *Aquarius* is carrying a spare sub to come rescue us.

OLIVIER
 Something else they would not let me put in my personal baggage.

Chadwick pops open a panel between the blank touchscreens, reveals nonelectrical versions a clock, compass, bubble-level, and an array of gauges with needles, plus above them a red pull handle marked "PPIV".

Olivier peers through the side porthole.

OLIVIER
 The beacon is off, but I can see the hole we came through.

He checks his watch, which shows nothing. He scoffs, checks the mechanical clock in the panel.

OLIVIER
 Ocean current seems the same. Wait, *Aquarius* is dropping drones into the water.

Chadwick pounds on the wall, starting a Morse Code "SOS".

CHADWICK
 They can't push us against the current, but I bet they could get us back to the hole the long way around in two or three weeks.

OLIVIER
 Come, *merveilleux*, come.

The compass needle jerks, Olivier's mouth falls open at what he sees outside the porthole.

OLIVIER
Stop, Harriet. They can't hear you.

Chadwick looks through the same porthole, grits her teeth.

LATER

Three spent light-sticks lay next to the bright one on the console. Open floor panel shows a box labeled "Fuel Cell 04."

Chadwick sits with a toolbox next to the fuel cell, pushes on it in frustration. Her outburst startles Olivier tracing the apparent path of the ice hole on his porthole.

CHADWICK
This doesn't make any sense!
Suddenly electricity doesn't flow
any more?

OLIVIER
We have been through the whole
checklist three times now. Eat
something, we need new ideas.

LATER

A few more spent light-sticks lay next to the bright one on the console. Open panel in the rear bulkhead shows a motor with a few hand-tools jerry-rigged into a crank.

CHADWICK
Simple enough, physically turn a
motor and it works as a generator.

Chadwick and Olivier stand on either side of the crank, strain until it starts to move.

OLIVIER
Simple except for the huge
propeller on the other side of this
thing.

They grunt and strain their way through a full turn.

Nothing lights up.

Their grip slips. Flat on the floor and nerves frayed, each turns to the makeshift generator.

CHADWICK
God damned motherfucking
glitcher!

OLIVIER
*Influenceur de putain de
bordel de merde!*

LATER

One bright light-stick rests atop a dozen dim or dead ones.

Chadwick stands with her hands up into a compartment in the ceiling. Olivier pulls the generator crank a short way.

CHADWICK

Nothing's getting to the batteries.
The laws of physics don't just
change like that.

Both slump down.

OLIVIER

The drones never had problems. You
and I, we had all those training
runs under Antarctic ice sheets.
No, Harriet, something has changed.

Chadwick vibrates with rage and nowhere to direct it.

CHADWICK

I don't understand it, and I can't
even help solve it.

(gestures at panels)

Nothing's recording. No one will
know what happened. We just end up
being... meaningless!

Olivier's crucifix glints in the glow-stick's light.

OLIVIER

No one is meaningless.

She stabs a finger at the oxygen gauge.

CHADWICK

We don't have enough oxygen to
float around to the hole again.
Meaningless or not, it's hopeless.

OLIVIER

Well, since it is hopeless, would
you do me a favor?

Chadwick's fiery glare turns on Olivier, she emphatically
zips her suit up to the neck. Olivier feigns shock.

OLIVIER

No, serious. We have to sterilize
the sub before we run out of air.
Let's break out the good food, then
... then pull the red handle.

Chadwick calms down a bit, stares blankly out the viewport.

CHADWICK
Well, I might as well find out what
they did let you put in your
personal baggage.

LATER

Only one additional spent light-stick in the pile.

Chadwick and Olivier sit on the floor relaxed, several plastic containers lay open between them holding various cheeses and crackers, one Champaign bottle sits to the side.

OLIVIER
Come on, I want to see your end-of-
mission celebration meal, too.

CHADWICK
It's a pizza and it's frozen solid.

OLIVIER
Pizza isn't American; it's Italian.

She pulls up a large, flat box, shows Olivier the label.

CHADWICK
Not with these toppings.

Eyes wide, Olivier picks a tool out of the toolbox, dramatically hides it behind him.

OLIVIER
Oh, it is too bad that we have no
way of making a flame to cook it.

Olivier smiles at Chadwick's quick spurt of laughter.

OLIVIER
We're about to be lost without a
trace in the deepest, darkest water
anywhere, but I'm glad I got to see
a smile on your face again.

Chadwick idly peels the foil from the Champaign bottle.

CHADWICK
Not entirely without a trace. With
all the radiation around Jupiter, I
froze some of my eggs and left
detailed instructions for my
husband.

OLIVIER
 Were you mad at him?
 (off CHADWICK'S look)
 I've seen you take twenty minutes
 to explain precisely how you want
 your breakfast sandwich prepared.
 Now... raising children?

Chadwick throws a balled-up bit of foil at Olivier.

LATER

The same pile of light-sticks, a little less bright. Both sit
 in their seats, Chadwick with a cheese stain on her suit top.

CHADWICK
 I've accepted that our time here
 wasn't totally meaningless, but
 Planetary Protection Level Four is
 still going to incinerate us and
 melt the sub to protect any life
 here. Ready, Jules? It's been an
 honor serving with you.

She puts her hand on the red "PPIV" handle. Olivier puts his
 hand over Chadwick's, prepares to pull.

The lights turn on and electronics spring to life.

ALIEN VOICE (V.O.)
 Your dedication to protecting
 others is admirable. We welcome you
 to our observation post in this
 solar system.

CHADWICK
 I knew there was a logical
 explanation!

OLIVIER
 Thank God in Heaven!

Chadwick brushes at the cheese stain.

OLIVIER
 Now it is time for you to say
 something profound.

CHADWICK
 Thank you, and, uh... take me to
 your leader?

FADE OUT.