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# Blue Sub No 6: The Year After, Part 4

## Chapter 1

(Battle at New London)

### *The Story So Far*

The Deep Sea Six had received its shipment of the HOPE element and JAKE had taken his vessel to NEW LONDON. However, VERG managed to track them down and began his war to stop the humans who are trying to save the world.

HAYAMI had managed to have a romantic involvement with MUTIO, leaving JAKE to enjoy his time with TIA. But their little adventure in interspecies mixing had alerted the media and their private life is now in the spotlight.

With an unstoppable amount of rockets heading for NEW LONDON, it will only be a matter of time before NEW LONDON has its first battle with the hybrids.

Missiles flew in the air like bees getting ready to swarm their prey and the sky turned a dark shade of grey. Panic began to spread throughout the city as everyone tried in vain to reach the lower levels that might provide adequate protection from the overwhelming number of missiles. People gaped in silence as they ran in fear for their lives. During the last war, New London was not touched. But why had it been now?

Massive Gatling guns that were concentrated on the Umigumos in the water suddenly stopped. Aimed straight up, they waited in silence for the missiles to enter firing range, barrels rotating.

"All the city's weapons are ready, sir," replied one of the weapon operators that sat behind a bank of computer systems. She looked at her workstation, smothered with Gatling guns, ready to shoot the red indicated missiles that were headed straight for the city. She swallowed hard, praying for hope.

The commander in charge of the Centre Comm clenched his fists as he gave the final order to defend the city. He pondered over why the enemy would attack now and with such an overwhelming force.

"Radar, do we have a fix on their target?" The commander prayed that his voice would not crack under the fear as he leaned over a computer desk towards the operator.

His order was met by a sudden reply faster than he expected. "Not sure sir, they appear to be heading for the dock area." With the confirmation of that information, he knew that the enemy was after the Deep Sea Six and the element that was onboard.

"Get me Jake on the double!" he roared as he ran to the communication station before adding, "And activate the defence grid!"

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All around the city, flares of fireworks flew into the air to intercept the rockets. Before long, the entire sky lit up with an impressive light show accompanied by explosions as each missile was detonated before it had the chance to reach the city. Then, as everyone looked at the impressive display, a chain reaction emerged as each rocket set each other off in unison. The Gatling guns did not stay silent for long as they too joined the symphony of lights. Each gun fired a wall of bullets towards the incoming rockets.

Without resolve or discrimination, the remaining rockets plummeted towards the city, laying waste to it. Panic erupted as people scampered when buildings began to fall and debris blasted all over the place. A relentless swarm of rockets struck the industrial areas of the city, tearing up the foundations and creating massive damage. Bodies and blood spattered all over the rubble like spray paint, covering the unsightly chaos. Luckily the residential areas were left alone due to the massive firepower of the defensive grid; only the undeveloped areas of the city were hit.

Angered at the unprovoked attack from the hybrids, the Centre Comm commander growled, "We did not ask for this attack, but we will not stand by and do nothing!"

He stood up with his arm out straight as he stabbed his finger at the Comm officer. "Launch the Grampuses. I want the source of the missiles destroyed!" He roared on, "Get me the commander of Deep Sea Six!"

The commander's roar installed fear into the operators of the room as they struggled to cope with the impending doom.

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Jake climbed to his feet after a missile struck the dock area beside the massive submarine. He managed to seat himself upon his chair and asked for a status report.

"Captain, the city is sustaining moderate damage and the defensive systems are intercepting at ninety-five percent," the radio operator replied with an overenthusiastic attitude towards the whole situation.

Jake placed his hand under his chin and pondered over the current situation; something needed to be done and there was no doubt that his boat was the target. Still, he could not run just in case the city was being targeted. "Comm, patch me into Centre Comm."

The display sprang to life with the commander of Centre Comm looking a little worse for wear. A stray missile had struck a building near his location and the shockwave had slightly damaged the room. "Jake, we think the enemy is trying to target your boat. You need to get out of there NOW!" the disgruntled commander shouted down the Comm channel.

Idle murmurs filled the Centre Comm room as a barrage of missiles struck more buildings in their proximity.

Jake could see the city's struggle through the large windows behind the Centre Comm's commander, who ended up dodging a stray spark that sent the plaster falling from the ceiling.

"I don't know how much longer we can hold them off. We have to find the source of these missiles and destroy it. I have already launched Deep Sea One and Two. You have to use this opportunity to proceed to Antarctica," the Centre Com commander continued, after dodging more sparks and falling plaster from the ceiling.

Jake sat back down with a sick dread in his heart; the city would not be able to hold off the relentless attacks for long and all the people would perish if nothing was done.

The Centre Comm commander gave his final orders before he cut the transmission short. Murmurs in the nucleus of the Deep Sea Six started to rise in volume, along with the tension and feeling of fear.

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An orgy of success spread throughout Verg's vessel as everyone rejoiced at their current victory. One small hybrid walked up to Verg and gave him the good news: "We are causing damage to the human city, Boss! We are winning!"

Verg looked around at his celebrating minions and glared back towards the eye of the city, watching a steady stream of missiles flowing into it. Explosions erupted in different areas of the city as massive power failures followed suit.

"We will crush this city and everyone in it!" said Verg in an unstable tone as he stood up and ordered all his females into their Umigumos.

"Boss, we are detecting another human vessel approaching the city. It's just a few hundred meters off of port bow. It should be easy to destroy." Verg snarled as he turned to the source of the news and ordered the vessel to be engaged. This will be the biggest mistake in history.

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Jake took the opportunity to leave the port and proceed to Antarctica. He frowned; he didn't like that he was ordered to sneak out while all his fellow ship dwellers fought on, but the mission was more important. However, he could not leave his home city open to attack and leave his family in danger. So he decided to counteract the orders and head for the source of the attacks. A few crewmen stared at Jake for ignoring orders, but they had a deep urge to do something and Jake provided this. Many of their comrades had families in the city, and they almost jumped for joy when Jake made the decision.

The massive Deep Sea Six soon manoeuvred its way out of the bay and into the open sea, blasting through all the explosions emanating from oil-filled tanks and buildings that fell near the dock.

"We have cleared the city and proceeding at full speed," relayed the officer who was monitoring the battle on the centre screen. "We should reach the source in a few minutes," he added.

The city appeared to shrink in size as the Deep Sea Six proceeded closer to the source of the missiles that appeared to be coming from under the ocean.

"Helm, take us down forty-five degrees." Jake frowned, looking at the slurry of missiles leaving the waters surface. "I want that thing stopped right now!"

Jake fell back onto his chair as he gasped in dismay and reeled from the relentless attacks emanating from the ocean.

Suddenly, an emergency call came through the Comm on all frequencies, for everyone to hear. "This is Deep Sea Ten." "We are under heavy attack! We are on our way to New London to get shielding for the hydrogen fuel cells. The enemy is attacking us heavily. I don't know how much longer we can keep them off the wings of our submarine."

Everyone on the command deck of the Deep Sea Six paused in horror at the news that had just been transmitted. "Turn us around and activate full speed; burn out the drive chain if you have to!" Jake yelled as he fasted himself into his chair.

The crew freed themselves from the shock of the disastrous news and scurried around their stations, trying to escape the unknown disaster that was about to happen.

The vessel immediately reversed course at breathtaking speed as it tried to get away from the imminent danger. Jake's body temperature rose at a steady rate as he became increasingly nervous. He transmitted more orders to his crew as he watched the Deep Sea Ten's commander's face rise one more level of panic. "All crew brace for impact and do not touch the bulkhead walls!" Fear and anticipation were clearly portrayed on his face as he turned to the view screen in the far end of the room.

Jake looked at the view screen and could see the worried captain of the Deep Sea Ten on the other end. Jake could see the fear of death in his eyes and the panic-stricken crew of his Submarine. The enemy was not the worry anymore. The city's

people paused in mid-stride as a full alert was given for everyone to find shelter; now was the time to really worry.

"Two more missiles are inbound and they are heading for the unshielded wings!" said the panicked commander on the channel. Sounds of radar beeping in the background edged up a tone as the worry on the commander's face became almost adamant. Then the vessel shook with the impact of the torpedoes.

Jake stared at the main viewer and saw that the captain had accepted death already. The command deck on the view screen turned red, indicating that one of the fuel cells had ruptured. Jake heard the word "Shit!" just before the view screen went blank.

Everyone looked around the Deep Sea Six as the screen died and silence engulfed the entire area.

Verg stood on the deck of his vessel and felt an uneasy presence of something catastrophic beginning to happen.

All the Umigumos and Musucas stopped in their tracks; they could also feel something happening.

Silence fell around the entire battle area; not a sound was made nor heard. The atmosphere was stale and frozen, as if time itself had stopped. Not a ripple in the water was created. All was solid. Then, a loud, horrid scream deafened everybody, man and hybrid. The sound was so powerful, Verg himself needed to cover his ears while he ran.

Then light engulfed all that could be seen. Everybody covered their eyes as the entire area blew up in the most disastrous explosion anyone had ever witnessed. Even though it was under the ocean, the light glowed so powerfully, it could even be seen in space as a second star. But that was just the beginning.

The surface of the water blew apart in all directions like a blister that had exploded. It created a massive, one-mile hole all the way down to the seabed. The water was blasted into space by a mushroom cloud that reached for miles into the sky and displaced the ocean floor with a crater.

The Deep Sea Six was caught in the blast wave and the entire submarine was blown out of the water. It followed the shockwave into a ninety-degree angle, standing upright like a sword in the midst of all the chaos. Then it slowly fell into the ocean upside down, making its own impressive shockwave.

The sound of the explosion slowly followed with more massive, bright lights as the water replacing the gap evaporated again. This indicated that the remaining fuel cells had undergone a chain reaction and an unstoppable consequence was well on the way.

Before long the air itself sparked into a raging inferno, burning everything it came in contact with. Clouds changed into acidic, yellow blobs that sank down into the ocean. The sky turned into a sick, red colour.

Massive tidal waves lifted the water in all directions and the New London City was their next target. Fearing for their lives, everyone scurried around aimlessly with no idea what to do.

## Chapter 2

(Aftermath)

Running a palm across his perfectly smooth scalp, the Centre Comm Commander froze in position. His operatives below him followed his stare out into the ocean as the massive wave approached the city, relentless and threatening.

He wanted to shout at the incoming wave, as if his words could hold back the wave that was taller than the building they were currently occupying. Some of his operatives began to shudder, scurrying under the onslaught.

The Centre Comm commander looked down towards the waiting public who scrambled backwards, away from the shoreline, as if they would be safer within the fragile confines of the city. The commander did not even bother to pray, as he knew this was the last image he would see. The sweat dropped off his face and he felt the uneasy sense of a chill creeping up his spine.

But as everyone stared in awe, the wave slowly disappeared as fast as it came. But it held a more dark and terrifying secret that was about to be shown to everybody. Man and hybrid.

The epicentre of the disaster heaved when a red, superheated rock, which had a surface like a small sun, hit the bottom of the ocean. Now the ocean tried to reclaim the space for itself. The monstrous hole began to fill rapidly with water as the tidal wave lost all its momentum and eventually dragged itself back towards the burning inferno on the ocean floor. A whirlpool soon developed that sucked everything around.

Before long, the city began to move towards the epicentre of the disaster. As the water boiled upon contact with the superheated rock, jets of steam ruptured into the sky like high-pressure jets from a fire hose.

The wild-eyed citizens held on for any hope, as the city drifted into the abyss. Massive football pitch turbines that kept the city afloat became flooded with water, which was channelled down the shaft and used to keep the city on the surface. Parts of the city succumbed to the water.

Water spewed up through the walkways and streets, flooding, cleaning all the dead bodies away. No one could escape the disaster. People scurried around like ants in a flooded nest, just trying to survive.

While it only took seconds to flood parts of the city, the water finally drained away as the city straightened itself up on the ocean surface. But the madness was just beginning.

Below the city, the water glowed red-hot. As the superheated rocks passed their heat into the water, many people in the city observed the environment of hell.

Several vessels popped onto the surface of the water like huge bricks of metal tossed into the water with hatches open. The crews looked shocked and in dismay; they had never seen such a sight before, a view that was carved by demons in the confines of hell.

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Quiet and unassuming, Jake sat in his chair, suspended upside down and in great pain. He held onto the chair, as the floor was now the ceiling. His crew also felt the same experience since they had just recovered from the immense G-force they experienced while they rotated in a ninety-degree angle. They all looked around, blood rushing down from their heads, amazed.

Items not stuck to the workstations fell to the ceiling and the aqua pools flooded the submarine in some sections and a massive amount of mess was also created.

“Is everyone OK?” Jake quivered as he tried to force the words out, eyes blazing. The harness began to cause him great pain; he never knew that the captain’s chair could cause so much pain while upside down. He made a mental note to do something about it once this mess was all over. But at the end of the day, the vessel was not designed to be upside-down.

“Don’t worry, the boat will self-right itself,” a murmured voice echoed through the room. The man scanned the room, trying to undo his straps. It was a big mistake, as he came tumbling to the ceiling like a brick from a first story window.

Right on queue, the vessel activated the props on the wings and at a painfully slow speed, rotated itself around to the correct position.

Personal belongings crept along the ceiling, the wall and then finally rested on the floor with some embarrassed looks from the crew, as their personal belongings became public knowledge.

Jake scanned the room as he unstrapped himself from the chair, a stabbing pain in his chest. He felt the restraints of his ribcage stabbing him with each breath he took. He felt like some of his ribs might have been broken, or he mentally challenged the fact he was just a mummy’s boy who squirmed with a little pain. No, he was not!

His crew all recovered from the ordeal and returned to their stations to gather updates on the vessel. Water spewed all over the deck plates, causing a hazard for everyone. Jake crooked his mouth in a faint expression of anger. He thanked his luck the vessel was not in any serious damage before inspecting the stations.

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Devastating reports came to the Centre Comm Commander one after another, as he stared out of the shattered windows towards the boiling seas.

Calls bellowed out through the communication channels about injured people and the extensive damage done to the city. He stared out, feeling defenceless and wishing he was not on duty.

Silence fell on the whole scene as the ocean calmed itself down. The water boiled at an incredible rate and then faint screams echoed throughout the silence.

He could not make out the calls at first, but after a few moments, the incomprehensible screams of pain filled the void of silence. Zorndyke creatures cried out in pain far out in the ocean. But no one could locate the source of the screams. Only the boiling water filled the chaos around them.

The inhabitants of the city looked out across the ocean to a devastating view. The sky weighed heavily with acid rain clouds that gave the whole atmosphere a post-apocalyptic view, causing an uneasy sense of danger. The ocean glowed red as the water furiously bubbled with steam that created mini tornadoes in the background.

Suddenly, all the spectators that were looking out over the ocean backed away in awe at the horrific sight they had just witnessed. The entire surface of the ocean was covered in dead fish and mammals, which all perished in the boiling water and it did not take long before the horrendous cries for help spewed throughout the backdrop of the scene.

From the confines of the city people watched as hundreds of hybrids frantically splashed around as they tried to escape the boiling hot water. Many of the hybrids spotted the huge city in the background and frantically swam towards it.

They came to the city in the hundreds, frantic and desperate to escape the water. Many succumbed to the heat and drowned as their flesh burned off and their bodies cooked under the water.

The Musucas were equipped with tough, flexible skin. But even that was not enough to protect them from the soldering hot water; they too swam as fast as they could towards the city, holding many of the females as possible. But like massive cruise ships, many succumbed to the heat and drowned, taking all the hybrids with them.

As a temporary reprieve, the Massive Deep Sea vessels stood out as massive rafts, offering hope to the hybrids that spotted them in the midst of all the chaos. Immune to the heat, they became the next safe haven for the creatures. It was not long until they became inundated with Zorndyke creatures as they climbed on the hulls of the submarines. A few Musucas leapt out of the water and onto the submarines, as they could not take the heat anymore. But as soon as they did that, the submarines would capsize due to the weight applied. It was not long until the city was the target in their frenzied escape.

The crowds of spectators stood around the artificial beaches and piers as they stared outwards, looking at the deadly sea. Hordes of creatures frantically swam towards the city, trying to escape. But before they knew it, all forms of hybrid gasped and struggled to climb onto the protective plating in the city that was out of the water. They did not care about the guns, still shooting. They did not care about the human's reactions; anything was better than getting boiled alive.

Gangs of people stood around the shores of the city, waiting, bullying. "Get back you monster, cook in your own doing," a few citizens shouted as they kicked and pushed the poor Aquatic Hybrid Girls back into the water.

They crept out of the water, body scarred and smoking hot. They desperately needed help and it was a moment of bliss for the creatures that managed to make it onto the shoreline. But that was soon to end when the gangs kicked and threw them back into the boiling water. Nowhere was safe. But they needed to escape the pain; it was unbearable.

Aqua ducts and tunnels around the city soon started to boil as the water outside transferred its heat inside, along the delicate pipe works and aqua tunnel network. This forced more of the hybrids to spill out into the city.

Rage swept through the city. Angrier than ever, teams of people kicked and shouted at the creatures as they emerged, defenceless and burned, onto the deck plating all around the city.

The hybrids stared with the eyes of a dying creature as they begged to be saved and not thrown into the water. Gangs did not succumb to the poor defenceless looks, and proceeded to beat the hell out of the young females.

"Take that, you piece of shit, this is for the hell you caused!" shouted one angered individual as he held his fists tight and sent a flurry of kicks to the female creature. He then encouraged his friends to pick her up and throw her back into the water. She passed out before they threw her in, but she woke up and frantically splashed around before dying. They laughed and joked with pleasure before moving on to the next victim.

The defensive guns shot into the open sea, cherry picking the struggling Musucas that tried in vain to beach themselves on the sandy artificial shores to escape the water. Blood spewed all over the clean fresh sand as the bodies that were constantly shot at eventually rotted in the acid shores.

However, order was soon to be bestowed on the frenzied crowd, as teams of security and officials arrived at the locations, more mature than the frenzied civilians.

“What the hell is going on?” barked the official in charge as he looked at the despicable acts being committed by the gangs of people. His emotion to the entire situation almost boiled like the water itself; *how could humans succumb to acts of total cruelty?*

Before anyone had the chance to act, the team of officials swarmed the crowd and broke them up. Medical teams and civilians not connected to the violent mob also decided to take pity and help the poor, scarred creatures.

Many civilians in the city did not take too kindly to the sudden frantic rush of sea creatures that arrived for shelter after they had tried to blow it up.

But other parts of the city could not stand by and let the creatures struggle in the water. Some even drew pity on them. The massive disaster was something that no human or creature should endure and it was a pleasant sight to see over half the civilians helping out.

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The Deep Sea Six floated steadily on the boiling ocean surface, unaware of what was happening all around them.

“Captain,” the officer at watch stated in shock, “I don’t believe this, but the outside water temperature of over 150 degrees.”

Jake unstrapped himself from his chair and approached, barging through the damaged cables and rubble. “What?” he questioned with a puzzled look in his face.

“That’s correct sir,” replied the officer at watch who pointed at the temperature gauge on the screen. His reply was quickly answered with another question from Jake: “What caused this?”

“The heat appears to be emanating from the super heated rocks on the ocean floor, when the Deep Sea Ten...” A short, respected pause came from the officer before he continued, “blew up, the Hydrogen fuel cells superheated the rocks with two hundred years worth of energy which went up in a few seconds.”

He then replaced the bad news with some good. “However, the water is cooling down rapidly and should be normal in a few minutes. No damaged reported to the outer hull; however, we are picking up frantic movements on our hull and receiving strange messages from New London.” He paused, placing his hand to his earpiece. “Sir, the mission commander wants to speak to you.”

Jake turned and order the view screen activated. The same gentleman that greeted them at the blue base meeting and in the hallway stood proud and tall, especially after this sudden incident.

“Jake, the city has taken a moderate beating and we are currently trying to resolve the situation; it looks like the fighting as stopped, but we have massive local environmental problems. You are recommended to proceed to your destination as soon as you can,” the tired and battered man spoke over the COM unit.

Suddenly the thump from the aqua pool entrance drew everyone’s attention away. Jake spun himself around after he felt the same ‘eyes watching’ sensation on the back of his neck. Jake felt Tia’s presence and he immediately ran towards her; she was trapped inside the closed pool door.

The pool door opened with the loud rumbling of the motors before she spewed out into Jake’s arms as the water gushed out all over the place.

The water was hot and so was Tia. Jake's heart began to thump hard as he held Tia's lifeless body in his hands. Dread went through his mind as questions rose up. "Is she alive? Is she breathing?"

Jake's questions were quickly answered when Tia sprung to life and struggled in his hands. Jake surmised that she must have been caught in the explosion as she tried to enter the sub. Luckily, she made it and only a few minor burn marks showed on her legs. However, she was in pain and struggling. Noises from her throat came through as she kicked her legs in agony.

Everyone in the room stopped their work and gasped at this creature in Jake's arms. Most have not seen this type of hybrid before, only on the view screens after Jake's and Hayami's little exposure. But being able to see her in the flesh brought a whole new concept to their understanding.

As Jake proceeded with Tia towards the medical bay, the entire sub jolted in a downward motion. Something had jumped onto the front of the submarine and began dragging it down. To counteract this problem, the secondary ballast tanks were activated that provided the lift to keep them afloat.

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Groups of people sprang open hatches to investigate the disturbance, only to be welcomed by the post-apocalyptic view of the area they were in. It did not look like earth anymore. Orange-red sky, acid clouds, steaming ocean and a blanket of dead mammals, fish and hybrids covered the surface of the water. "What the hell caused this?" one crewmember said stiffly and slowly.

The officer at watch, who witnessed the whole incident, soon answered the question. "The Deep Sea Ten was inbound to New London to have its fuel cells armed in a protective casing after it was constructed. The enemy concentrated their attacks on that vessel. They did not realize the disaster they were creating."

Sam gawked at the surrounding area and soon realized that he was standing on the exact same device that had caused this chaos, the hydrogen fuel cell at the bottom of his feet. He felt an overwhelming sense of anxiety before he trotted off that section of the wing.

"What happened to the fighting, and all the missiles?" There was a moment of pause as Sam pointed towards the red murky sky. "I remember the sky being full of them."

"The blast from the explosion would have vaporised everything within one mile; luckily, the city was outside its range, otherwise we would..." The officer at watch was soon interrupted when a crewmember drew his attention towards the rear of the boat. Due to the large mast behind them, the crew was blissfully unaware of the huge Musuca that had beached itself onto the hull of the vessel. Only moments passed before the small group gasped at the massive creature before them.

The water continued to boil slowly, causing the hybrids to climb onto anything they could to escape the disaster. The city became the hybrids' last attempt to swim to safety. However, the ones that were too far out perished as their scolded bodies sank into the ocean, from which they came.

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Verg took heed of his damaged vessel and escaped the area. He and his crew all stood around like lost boys at the sudden and unexpected disaster that had prospered. As expected, they did not bother to rescue any of the stranded hybrids; they just ran and gathered their forces.

"Damn those humans. Why would they kill themselves in the process? They should all go to hell; papa was right about them. They're the scum of the earth," Verg beamed with delight as he left the area and his hybrids to cook in the water. His

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mind became weak and frilled; if he was old, he'd be dead. "They should all die," he finally added.

He perched himself back into the nucleus of his vessel as it slid away into the depth of the ocean like a deadly sea predator vanishing, and waiting for the element to carry it on towards its destination: Antarctica.

## Chapter 3

(Care and Continuum)

Little was known of the means to cure Tia's species. With much confusion and delegation, the decision was finally left to Jake.

He stood over her injured body, which was resting on a medical bed. Jake decided to accept Hayami's advice. After much experience in dealing with these creatures, his advice was more than suitable. But Jake listened with doubt, as he talked to Hayami.

"They seem to get well in water Jake, I think you should take her back," Hayami suggested, looking at Tia laid out in the medical bed that was purposely soaked in cool seawater. It was an innovation that seemed to impress both Jake and Hayami, but they were disappointed that they did not come up with it on their own accord.

Jake approached closer to her slim-line body that jerked and moved with every step he took, as if she could sense his presence. As he attempted to pick up Tia, he stood abruptly, meeting Hayami with a stony gaze. He was not sure if the idea would work, but Jake decided to take the chance.

Tia struggled around in a mode that appeared to be a coma before she fell silent. Her graceful figure was laid out in a slim-line sexy manner that drew the attention and curiosity of the humans working in the room. They had never seen a creature like this up close and almost admired the creativity and elegance of her figure. Zorndyke really knew his stuff, except for the metallic and horrid-looking creatures that lacked the niceties. It was hard to believe that he could create something so beautiful, but also create creatures with so much destruction.

With graceful hands and gentle movements, Jake carried her fragile frame, with her fins flapped out, into the cool water. She drifted in the water and sank, breathing softly, comfortably. All he could do now was wait and pray that she would recover by herself.

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The hospitals and medical centres throughout New London saw their fair share of the chaos that erupted around them. The waters around the city soon stopped boiling and the sea eventually returned to its normal temperature, but the damage was already done. Countless lives had been lost, both human and creature alike. The graveyard on the ocean surface caused some slight problems for the huge turbines that kept the city afloat. However, the aqua ducts and tunnels throughout the city remained clean and unscathed by the chaos around. The pain and suffering was something that edged its way into people's hearts, as they felt sorry for the creatures. Still, resentment dawned on the odd group of people who snarled in the corner.

Still, a few hard nuts strolled the streets, causing problems for the hybrids and the gangs looted areas that were abandoned. The aftermath of the war created many scars on the city. However, because most of the damage was done to parts of the city undergoing construction, the scars would be hidden in the final phases of the construction.

But for many of the medical staff, this was an opportunity for great research. This was the very first time these creatures had been in contact with humans, especially in this manner, and every opportunity was taken to study them.

Looking over the injured hybrids, human scientists enthusiastically stood around like parasites, checking readings, adding medications, applying tubes and sensors to their skins; it was a moment for great study.

But with limited knowledge and the differences between human and hybrid physiologies, the medical teams were unable to bring the scarred and burned creatures back from the clutches of death, but each moment brought them that much closer to understanding how they worked.

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New London City basked in the sunlight of a new day as everyone carried on with their frantic efforts to recover from the battles. Streets spewed with chaos and people looked in awe at all the damage caused.

But for the Deep Sea Six, Jake sat at the side of the moon pool inside the medical centre, keeping a watchful eye on Tia. Her recovery seemed to take forever with no sign of progress; little was known about the recovery process and he kept a scrutinising eye on her.

Before he could make any decisions, Jake was called to the surface hatch for a new development. He frowned; he was not in the best of moods and he curse as he left Tia's side. But deep down he knew what the development was, so he proceeded, *with hesitation, to the surface.*

Jake marched through the hatch and unintentionally walked into Iga, who stood tall with his trusty cap placed firmly on his head. He showed a small smile as his eyes met Jake's.

Taken back by his sudden appearance, Jake finally spoke, after processing who he was looking at, "Iga, what are you doing here? You are supposed to be at Blue Base."

Iga stared at Jake before replying to his question with a cheeky grin, "I received reports that you lot at New London had gotten yourselves into some trouble."

Iga looked around at the environment around him and was astonished at the post-apocalyptic atmosphere. He glanced at the water and words could not describe the horror that was written on his face. Even when he stepped off the Blue Six, Iga was not aware of the entire situation until his feet touched the surface of the Deep Sea Six.

"What the hell happened?" Iga said, as the reality of the whole environment sank into his mind.

Dead corpses bobbed up and down in the gentle waves that flowed around the area. Slowly, the stench of death began to fill the air and the hybrid bodies finally lost their buoyancy and sank into the depths of the sea.

Kino fluttered onto the deck to catch a glimpse of the New London city; she has heard many fascinating rumours about this marvellous city and the gigantic attack. More than anything, she really wanted to know what was left of it.

She stepped on the deck, drinking in all the details before her feet gave way and she nearly slipped over at the sight of the devastating landscape. Kino was inches from the thick murky red soup of bodies in the water and the smell almost made her sick.

She stood up and the small eventually evaporated because of her distance from the water. But it will not be long until the corpses begin to rot and the smell became stronger. But chances are that the bodies will sink into the depths of the ocean before they could rot.

Jake turned and explained, eyes blazing, "Deep Sea Ten was attacked badly and one of its fuel cells ruptured; when that happened, it's disastrous." He slightly

changed his tone as he explained technical details. "It was getting shielding that can protect the cell from damage."

Jake paused before he finally said, "Hell, the whole boat can blow up and the only things left will be the fuel cells, but without shielding, they can release one hundred years of energy in a second."

Iga took a moment to process the information and he was angry that the British could make something so deadly and reckless. But his logical thinking was interrupted when Jake received a call through his communicator.

"Captain, the Centre Comm Commander has ordered us to carry on with our mission. There's nothing we can do; they require us to complete our mission."

Jake frowned before he saw the logic in their thinking. He glanced at Iga, his hands hung down his sides and heavy with the burden of the mission that was bestowed upon him. He wanted to hang around and help, but this was not the option anymore.

Looking at Iga, he announced, "Looks like they have ordered us to go. I trust you know your mission?"

Iga returned Jake's stare with an insulted feel to it. "You know, my mission boy and I have been doing this job before you were in diapers."

Jake raised his right eyebrow before a hesitant sarcastic expression crept along his face. He muttered as he walked into the hatch, making sure Iga could not overhear, "This is going to be a long mission."

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The two subs drifted in harmony in the seawater that was covered in dead bodies. The wake of both subs caused the bodies to sink deeper into the ocean and before long, the subs vanished as they dived. All that was left was a weary line of red, created by the submarines that steered through.

Mother earth gave its helpful hand in cleaning up the mess humans had created; with a gentle gust of wind, the red sky slowly dissipated, returning to a blue sky that covered the entire area. The bodies on the surface of the ocean sank into the depths of the sea, never to be heard of again. The larger mammals such as the Musuca's were the first to go, and then the individual hybrids plopped under the surface and all that was left was the murky, red sea. Eventually, it too dissolved into the water, leaving no trace of the chaos that occurred.

The humans in the city tried their best to attend to the injured hybrids, only to be shocked when they vanished during the night, leaving only the empty aqua tunnels and ducts. No sign was left; it was as if god himself removed the creations from reality.

In shock, the medical staff looked around, scratching their heads and pondering over the ghostly event that happened overnight. Reports failed to explain how the night shift failed to notice the disappearance, but negligence was also to explain. However, the scientist still had a lot of data they could work with. They carried on, with much excitement.

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"All systems are go and we are a few hours away from Antarctica," announced the officer at watch as he updated Jake, who strolled onto the command centre with urgency in his stride.

Jake fidgeted with the lack of sleep he had and the few hours he managed to squeeze in was not sufficient enough to restore his body to its former glory. He was more worried about Tia than anything else. He waited by her side in the moon pool with scientists and medical staff watching over her. He made it perfectly clear that this graceful multi-patterned creature was not to be probed and studied.

Jake stood beside his station, thinking about what he witnessed. His mind could not escape the strange sight he saw when he was with Tia; her body was encased in some kind of membrane that the scientists could not figure out. It appeared to heal her wounds and Jake ordered the overenthusiastic medical team to leave her alone and only monitor from a distance. He had a deep connection with this creature and he exercised his command rank to the highest level, always watching, always there.

The crew drew sly faces and expressions when they saw Jake interact with the creature; they could not understand, nor did they want to understand his fascination with this creature. The incident at New London had left much to question. Even a few people questioned his command. In the old tribal times, a fight of power would be suitable at a moment like this, but this was the future and subtle actions like that were not tolerated. Jake was their CO and they had to follow his orders.

The hybrids caused so much death and pain and the interaction between Jake and Tia caused so much confusion, that it was only a matter of time until some members of his crew caused some trouble. However, as time went on, forceful tactics were used to bring them into line. One individual overstepped his mark and caused a scene that became apparent, until Jake approached him. He was not in the mood for an argument and his only way to resolve the confrontation was to offer him two choices: leave or stay. Thankfully, the crewmember chose the latter and was ordered to keep his opinions to himself.

He sat on his chair and looked over the documents placed in front of him. Suddenly, after he had written something on his pad, the sonar operator chimed in, disturbing the idle murmurs. "Captain, we are approaching Antarctica's underwater path to Zorndyke's base."

All eyes turned to the view windows that showed the faint outline of the underwater, icy cave that would lead the way to Zorndyke's base. Everyone expected the mission to run smoothly, but a select few stood with open minds.

Jake turned to the officer at watch and privately discussed with him, "I know we are supposed to transfer the Blue Sub, but I believe these caverns are large enough to drive this vessel through."

The officer returned a concerned look, as if he wanted to shout out what a preposterous idea that would be and he was confused at why Jake would deviate from the plan.

Jake turned to the map on the table that was next to a globe of the earth and carried on pointing at key locations, "I think it will be tight, but I believe we can make it with brute force."

The officer at watch looked with wide-eyes and scaled optimism; he understood the plan and felt that the plan could benefit from this idea, but he was also concerned about the mission protocol and this would be breaking it. But at the end of the day, Earth was in trouble and saving a few hours would help.

His optimism was not going to get the better of him, so as he stood on the highest point of his control centre, Jake ordered the vessel through the passageways.

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Iga carried on with his preparations to dock with the Deep Sea Six until he received word about the new plan by the sudden acceleration of the Deep Sea Six. Iga sat in his chair with his fists clenched hard. "Damn the English, never following orders and just proceeding without informing me."

He watched on as the massive boat barged through the opening, taking off the top of the ice shelf with it. Looking more like armatures than professionals, Iga

placed his hand on his head and took a deep sigh. "OK, follow that vessel in," he ordered as he prayed that Jake knew what he was doing.

The Deep Sea Six slid through the tightly wound caverns and passages within inches from the ice wall; the atmosphere grew intense as thumps and booms erupted from several tight collisions. Jake stared at the navigation view screen that displayed the vessel and the outer wall as simple images 2D images. "Steady as she goes," he called out.

Blue Sub followed gracefully behind in its wake, letting the huge submarine do all the work, finding a path through or even making one. It's not Iga's vessel, and even though he would have liked to command one, he's attached to his own vessel and would prefer to stay with it.

Back on the Deep Sea Six, the navigation officer turned around, startled. "Captain, large chunk dead ahead!" But as fast as the word came out of his mouth, the vessel smashed into the ice face. With an unpleasant shudder, the vessel smashed through as it created an opening.

"More of an early warning would've been helpful sooner!" said Jake, getting up from the sudden vibration. He looked around to see his crew performing the same task; each one fell over at a different position, making the scene interesting to watch.

But as he moved on, his focus was on his hybrid lover in the depths of the vessel. But he had a more personal reason for deviating from the plan and decreasing the time it takes to get to Antarctica; perhaps there was something out there that could heal her wounds, but little did Jake know that she could recover by herself.

A voice bellowed throughout the communication channel and a familiar face appeared on the screen in front of them. "So Jake, what happened to following the plan?"

Iga's pasty face appeared a little worse for wear, but he was still sceptical about this sudden change in the plan. Unlike Jake, he was due to make his appearance and find out what was going on.

Jake looked at Iga on the screen. With his comment prepared and replies to any possible questions examined in his mind, he replied, "Readings have indicated that the passageways have opened wide enough to allow us to travel through. It would be wise to take both vessels; we don't know what's on the other side of the dense ice. And that underwater base could be well armed."

Jake wanted to get back to his operations, so with a brief pause, he carried on, "We should be approaching a large clearing in a few minutes. We will wait there and discuss further options. Jake out."

He cut the communication channel short just before Iga had the chance to speak in response. However, Iga leaned back on his chair and decided to take the incident as it came.

-0-

Verg was not in the best of moods now; his defeat at the New London City had caused him the death of so many of his hybrids and the reckless attacks he had ordered left him with a bruised ego. Questions started to drift through the ranks of his subordinates about the wellbeing of his mind and it wasn't long until he was in question.

He looked through the all seeing eye of the beast, mesmerised by the depth of the deep blue ocean and in the safe confines of the arctic base. Waiting for something.

A hybrid bellowed out through the darkness of the silence, "We are detecting enemy vessels approaching through the passageways, boss. One of them is huge."

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Verg sharply spun in his chair and showed a defined grin on his shark-like face, "So they have come. Now I will exact my revenge and protect our world!" He heaved himself off his chair and let of a defiant laugh before he disappeared into the depths of the monstrous ship he was in command of. His crew looked on. Dismayed and unsure about the entire battle, his crew stared at each other with nervous looks and blocked thoughts.

## Chapter 4

(Artic Base)

The Deep Sea Six crept forward like an unstoppable juggernaut, intimidating anything that was in the sea. It only had one mission: to get to the target point and save the world. The inhabitants of the massive vessel carried on with their normal routines, blissfully unaware about the danger that lurked in the shadows.

Once it blasted and forced its way through the tight and narrow underwater passage, the crew of the Deep Sea Six were able to breath again as the tunnel began to open up into a large underwater Cavern.

With a wide-open space on the radar sensors, Yamada on the Blue Six relayed the information to Iga, who thought it wise to use this chance to catch up on the current mission plan.

With keen eyes and experienced skill, he ordered his vessel to dock with Deep Sea Six. Such a task would be simple and he kept an open mind on the current mission Jake was taking everyone on. He had his doubts, but there was not much he could do about it. Ultimately, orders were orders, and he stood by them.

With the backdrop of the ocean offering an unknown view of endless space, both vessels came to a stop in the middle with no obvious sign of enemy presence. All around, water and ice gave this area a strange and uncanny feel. If the enemy wanted to attack, it would be an unmatched battle.

Iga walked through a temporary, makeshift corridor that connected the two vessels together. It was looked more like paper than metal and he did not relish the idea of an attack while he travelled from one side to another. But as he looked through the transparent, plastic windows, nothing was in the water. Not even fish. He fiddled with his cap as he proceeded on.

-o-

When Jake received word that the team had successfully arrived at the clearing with no sign of the enemy, he decided to call a meeting to discuss the current plan and any changes that needed seeing too. But a call came in that distracted his flow of thought.

Both crews had gathered in the Ward Room on the Deep Sea Six and all the necessities had been placed out in areas that indicated that this meeting could take at least a few hours. There was a lot of work to be discussed and time was not on their side.

After a stifling long moment, Cekeros snapped, "What are we doing here? How long is he going to take? I have things to do."

"Maybe you should leave!" Kino said.

"No, no, no, I am just as interested as you are, but he is taking a long time to arrive to this meeting, it's been half an hour already."

Kino steepled her fingers on the table, gave a hard, long stare towards Cekeros and, after a moment of pause, finally said, "Just be quiet, you have nothing better to do, so sit!"

Before long, everyone was daydreaming as they tried to idle their time, waiting for Jake. It seemed a foreign concept for Jake to arrive on time and everyone waited patiently for another fifteen minutes until he finally showed.

-o-

Jake arrived at the Ward Room late because he was summoned to the medical bay, as some new developments in Tia appeared overnight. A team of over-eager

scientists and medical staff studied and probed Tia for the entire time while she healed herself.

They stood around like lost children; the much-respected medical team looked at Jake with wide-eyes and open scepticism.

Jake felt a cold prickle of sweat along his neck as he noticed the moon pool empty. "What did they do to her, god help them!" he lamented to himself.

But as he approached, the medical team interjected his thinking, "Captain, we regret to inform you that we have accidentally lost Tia; she vanished throughout the night and we have been unable to locate her."

The lead scientist waited in silence for Jake to make his move. Some of his staff still held resentment for his interspecies relationship and showed their disapproval very clearly with the odd grunt and disgusted look. But over time, this was something Jake got used to and did not care about. He would often think about how Hayami might deal with this problem, but this was a question for later.

Jake showed a slight smile, making sure the medical team did not see it. With completed reports, he left the area, safe with the knowledge that Tia managed to heal herself and was free to do what she wants. He could feel her essence around, as if he was connected to her in some way. Jake left, knowing he would see her again.

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Jake finally walked in, disturbing the almost sleepy atmosphere. He stood ramrod straight, taking a momentary glance at everyone in the room. Cekeros lounged back on his chair with some kind of device in his hand and a crooked smile on his face directed towards Freeda, but she blanked him as always, with no idea why she was in the meeting as well.

Iga stared on with respect and honour without his trusty cap on his head. He had placed it on the table, next to his glass of water. Iga was interested in the meeting and perhaps he could provide some insight, but they were in the middle of a battle and having a meeting was not the best time to mention it. He often wondered why Jake would take this moment, of all moments, to have a meeting, but he kept his opinions to himself and flowed with it.

Jake walked into the room and let the silence hang for a moment. His face stood firm and cold; he was not adding much to the conversation in the form of body language.

"OK everyone, thanks for waiting," Jake finally said, dismissing a few idle sighs and murmurs from the crew.

He approached his chair and turned on the main view screen, which displayed a satellite view of the entire area. Eyes drifted to the screen and they intensely studied the layout and soon the reality of the mission was beginning to sink in.

Cekeros sat in his chair and waited for someone else to speak. However, Jake was not going to let anyone take the moment and he carried on with his discussion, "We have managed to activate several dormant satellites and send up new ones; this is the satellite view of our current location."

The high-resolution image almost blinded the inhabitants of the room and careful eyes looked over the image.

Most of the ice cap was melted and what little land present was turned into a utopia of green forests. Something that appeared to be an abandoned village stood in the middle. A massive crack in the Earth signified a hole that led to the Earth's core, a huge facility standing beside it.

"We have several items that need to be resolved before we can drop the element," said Jake, walking closer to the view screen. He noticed the tired and

sarcastic looks from all the people around; he knew he was late for the meeting, but he never wanted to have the meeting anyway.

“The first task will be to blow up the sides of the crater that lead down to the Earth’s core. If we deploy the element before this, there is a chance it could freeze the Earth’s core.” He changed the view screen to another section of land. “We will then set the element-release-device to one hour and evacuate the area.”

Jake sat down, finally saying, “After that, the entire area will be turned to ice and the water level throughout the world will subside, giving us our land back and preventing the Earth from drifting closer to our sun.”

Idle murmurs erupted as everyone talked to each other, discussing the mission and how it could be done.

Iga leaned forward as he brushed his cup aside with a stroke of his hand. “There is a high chance we might encounter resistance. With the attack at New London, you can bet they will be on their way to stop us.”

Jake leaned back on his chair, calculating. “We have heard reports before we left New London of an unknown vessel that left the area after the disaster. We have not seen anything like it before and it was massive.” Jake activated the remote and satellite images of the city appeared on the view-screen, displaying a creepy, ominous, dark shadow far in the distance.

Yamada moved forward, interjecting the current flow of discussion and clasping his hands in front of his chest before speaking. “Don’t worry sir, nothing will get too close towards my scanning range without going undetected.” He added a sly smile, indicating that all was well.

-o-

The meeting carried on for about ten minutes before everyone left to their respected places.

The Deep Sea Six carried on like a knife in water, moving forward until it was over the horizon of a small crater on the seabed. Nobody was prepared for the sight they were about to witness when they arrived within range of it.

Everyone looked in awe at the massive, domed, underwater military base, which increased in size as they approached closer to it. Unlit and rusted down, it looked like it was long disused. The facility was huge in comparison to the Deep Sea Six. It looked like it was connected to a second facility on the surface consisting of a huge docking port and shipbuilding yard.

Fish swam around the network of pipes as passageways spanned around the seabed area, all leading to different sections of the facility. Clearly, a lot of money was spent on this facility; it was well built for Zorndyke’s creations.

Iga had a keen interest to take an expedition down to the facility before it would undoubtedly be destroyed when the entire region was frozen solid. But he was the oldest and had a lot of experience at getting his own way. But little did he know that this little trip would allow the human race to discover a new breed of hybrid that no one thought possible.

-o-

Jake sat on his command chair, overlooking the efforts to find a decent place to settle down. “Look, the docking port on that harbour looks like it could accommodate this vessel,” he said, walking over to the navigation helmsman.

Jake felt a sense of uneasiness as he ordered his vessel to rise into the docking arms of the port; anything could happen and he did not trust the situation. Blue Sub hovered around, keeping a watchful eye on any enemy activity and especially the underwater base that was below them. Even if it appeared abandoned, it could

spring to life and send swarms of enemies to them. This was a reckless and stupid plan, but he needed to progress the mission further.

No one knew what to expect when the sound of the water brushed itself of the hull of the vessel, which signified that they were afloat on the surface and ready for the next step.

Jake proceeded in gathering up his team and a sense of uneasiness crept behind him. His thoughts were also mixed with emotions about Tia. He often wondered if she was healthy and what she was up to. She vanished without a trace and no one had seen her since. Even Mutio was caught in the arms of Hayami again, which completely alienated his crew and left a more subdued feel to the whole human-hybrid interaction thing. Jake surmised that it would not take long for the situation to calm itself down. The human race would begin to accept cross-species relationships. They were more intelligent than animals and if Zorndyke hadn't created them, people would have thought they were cute aliens.

He snapped his mind back to reality when the loud hissing of the water jets came online.

-0-

The outer hatches opened to a utopia of a world they had never seen before, except Kino and Hayami. Green and rich in fruit, large palm trees lined the shore with a mix of vegetation and plant life leading deeper into the jungle. Ice patches and mountains resided in the background with the shipbuilding yard in front of the spectators.

Cekeros walked on deck with his mouth wide open and overjoyed at seeing the perfect scene. "Wow, look at this place, looks like it's not been used for some time."

Freeda adeptly jostled Cekeros for his comment, before he arrived on the deck. However, she was not overly impressed by the view; her reaction was neutral compared to the rest of the crew.

A large portion of the dock was constructed out of wood, with cranes spanning into the sky with damaged cables; a few grew too old and rusty over time, causing them to collapse in a heap of metal on the floor. The shoreline was followed by a line of trees all the way down, covering the icy sea from view. The main complex was built out of concrete with metal domes.

The complex looked smaller than they anticipated, however, it was connected to a long elevator cable that connected to the breathtaking underwater facility.

Solar panels and heat exchangers stood in the distance, capturing the sun's rays and transporting the energy to the main facility. The hangar bay of the main facility was open, as if someone had raided the place and left without closing it.

Jake strolled upon the deck with his hand on his neck, which had a moaning pain. Oddly enough, it was getting worse with each minute that passed; it was annoying and no matter how hard he rubbed, it would not go away. "Damn, stiff, neck. Should not sleep in that position," he muttered as he scanned the scenery.

Jake then pulled up his small laptop computer and looked at the satellite image of the facility and the gaping hole they needed to fill in. He also made a point to check all the walky-talkies he brought on deck. He was the type of man to be prepared for the unexpected.

Iga also arrived with Blue six berthed outside in the next docking pen, slightly smaller than the main and probably used to create the Musucas.

"So, Jake, you are in charge. What's the task now?" Iga asked with a slight, sarcastic grin on his face. He still could not understand why this *'English, foolhardy*

*man'* had been given command and believed he was more suited for it. Iga was given orders by blue command, but that order did have its limitations.

Jake took a moment and fiddled with his laptop, trying to get a bearing on where to go. And without further ado -he had no idea. "Umm, not sure. I'm not getting a clear signal. I suppose we should check out the structure; they might have a map or something."

Iga gave a dignified look as he followed behind Jake, who had no idea what he was doing. He held onto his trusty shotgun that rested on his shoulder and waited for the moment. Iga was just inching to save the day.

Sam strolled unprofessionally on deck with the biggest grin someone could possibly have. He held several boxes of explosives in his hand and was more willing to drop them all over the floor than to get them to the destination.

Members of the crew all panicked and shouted before a huge elephant of a man walked up and snatched them. "How did you get into the service little man? I wonder all the time!" he bellowed and the Earth shook with his deep voice, hammering Sam into the ground.

-o-

The group walked into the facility and it wasn't long until they stumbled upon empty cell tanks and labs in which biological experiments had been conducted, though nothing major. The hangar was more like a storage facility and construction workshop for the vessels Zorndyke used. Before long, they stumbled upon a few offices that had maps on the wall.

Jake scanned them into the computer and created a detailed map in which to go. He was surprised when Huang sprang her child-like face around the corner and startled everyone in the dimly lit office.

Dust and papers fluttered on the floor and Jake returned a long-eyed frown at her. "Why is she here?"

"Her telepathic skills have advanced in recent years to not require the Lorenziny System any more; she can sense things outside the boat and she's a valid commodity," Iga snapped in, defending the little girl who did not impress Jake with her brown teddy bear. A moment of pause resulted in a small squeak as Huang nervously moved her toy.

Without warning, Huang muttered, "Tia is doing something; she is happy and sad. I hear strange songs from her."

Jake gasped, standing shaken as if the foundation of his life had been swept away. He knelt down to the small girl and asked for more information.

"She is safe, but she is doing something, something I do not understand," Huang finally said before she vanished through the wood-wormed door.

Jake stood with no idea at what had just happened. He was not sure what to do: should he go back to Deep Sea Six? Or carry on? Huang did say that she was safe, just doing 'something'. "She's probably eating another bio-filter," he said to Iga, who returned a smile.

As his mind settled down and he scanned until his heart was content. Jake proceeded without any mercy towards the pole shift device.

Iga offered to stay behind with a few of his men to overlook the facility and he was more than excited to look at the underwater base below them. Hayami, Freeda, Kino and Huang followed him deeper into the facility.

Jake frowned at the prospect at taking a child along; he could not understand her gift and Iga's reason for taking her, but if it gets that annoying brat out of the way, then so be it.

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Kino was not happy about being with Hayami, however, the facility sparked her interest and she could put up with Hayami for a while. She let off a defying grunt as they walked into the darkness.

-o-

Jake proceeded with his crew of experts into the sparse forest as he reminded everyone to be on their guard; no one knew where the remaining hybrids were and the last thing Jake wanted was to be eaten by something that had no name.

“Captain, if we stick to this road we will reach the forest in half an hour,” informed one of Jake’s crewmembers, who paused for a moment as he looked at the laptop given to him.

The path spread forth in intermittent differences of environment that alienated the crew. First the land was filled with snow, and then it turned back into a tropical oasis like something out of a fantasy story.

Soon, a grizzly sight of hybrid trees made from humans arrived in front of them. Everyone stared with shock and amazement; it was a concept that defied all logic and belief. *How could someone create something like this?* However, the crackling and suffering of the humanoid trees brought pity and regret to Jake’s team, who could not understand why someone would create such things.

But with defiance and a strong will, they carried on towards the cliff side and within moments, the massive machine was in sight.

## Chapter 5

(The Plan)

Iga and the others continued their quest through the abandoned buildings as they drank in all the information they could; such a huge place often left many with questions on what Zorndyke was creating. But the real question was: how many creatures did he make?

Even on the land, the facilities stood tall and impressive, the domed buildings spanned as far as the eye could see with many machines and supplies laid out, all unused for a long time. Packaging was dotted all over the complex, as if it was tossed out of an airplane at a high altitude. However, the chance for this facility to be used to its full potential would never come. Zorndyke assumed that the whole place would be destroyed and ordered the evacuation of the whole facility one year ago.

As Kino trudged across the dark ground in the storage dome, she could feel something, like eyes watching. She often sprung around to check, but saw nothing. The dark and nightmarish space implanted the fear that something was there.

Several glass cells stood before her and she could almost see her reflection in the cylinder glass cell. She approached it for closer inspection and her slim figure grew larger. The faint lights of the dome illuminated the whole area after Iga turned them on.

In the glass reflection she could see something behind her. A man that looked physically strange. Unable to make out a clear picture, she was only able to see the large white objects that hovered behind this individual. Frightened, she turned in a snap, holding her weapon. However, as she turned around, she saw nothing.

"Damn it!" she cursed, reeling in the effect of the long day and that guy, Hayami. She could not avoid looking at him while they explored the dome. He was right in front of her and oddly enough, not smoking. His little stunt with the hybrid female, Mutio, managed to sneak its way back to Kino after she watched the news. She expected as much, and her female sense could detect that he had made love to her.

She clenched her weapon, heart pounding, knowing the fact that she could blow his head off. Her eyes grazed around the area like a hawk looking for its food. But nothing was in sight; she just heard the idle clanking of the ceiling.

Suddenly, a feather dropped out of the sky, falling to the floor in front of her. It lay on the metallic floor, white as crystal with a few black, faded patterns. She bent down, gun at her side and picked it up. It was large, silky and clean. She did not understand where the feather had come from; no birds were in the dome and the last time she checked, no birds were big enough to have feathers like that. It was almost as long as her arm.

Suddenly, a small metallic tap echoed through the dome, startling Kino again. She jumped and spun in its direction. Hayami stood there in front of her, looking spaced and annoyed. "What are you doing, Kino?" he asked, fidgeting with his hand weapon.

Kino snorted at him and replied, "Nothing, let's go!" She attempted to move away from the location, making a point to hold her nose up at Hayami, unconsciously forgetting that she was holding the feather in her hand.

He took note of that and unexpectedly asked, "What's that? A feather?"

Kino stopped and looked at it. The question came into her mind again about where this thing had come from.

After a slight pause, Hayami became impatient and raised his voice. "Are you listening to me, Kino? I asked you a question."

Kino sprang back to reality and took her eyes off the feather. She looked towards Hayami and her expression was lost as she made a slight noise from his disturbance.

Without warning, gunfire emanated directly in front of them. Kino and Hayami both ran towards the location and the feather glided to the ground, to be forgotten about.

The gunfire ceased by the time they reached the location. "This is the area Iga and the rest of the team stopped..." Hayami paused, looking around, gun waving. "Where are they?"

They looked around, puzzled and confused. Thinking it was a trap, Hayami dragged Kino away from the area, heart pounding with the uncertainty of their situation. They did not know what happened to Iga and the others and the gunfire was not the best thing to hear in an environment like this.

As they ran along, Kino turned around to check the area behind herself. But, as she gazed back to Hayami, who was leading the way, he vanished.

Silence erupted throughout the area and Kino was alone in the dimly lit dome. Only the boxes and machines stood around, like entities watching her suffer. "Come on, this is not a joke. You can stop fooling around!" she exclaimed.

Suddenly, Hayami's weapon smashed to the ground, startling Kino. She jumped back and saw the black weapon lying on the floor! She gasped in shock. *It came from the sky*, she said to herself.

Suddenly, Kino screamed as hands grabbed hold of her and dragged her into the air.

-0-

Jake's team gasped as they looked over the cliff towards the massive facility that had pipes leading off the edge and into the shaft. Heat raised out of the shaft into the atmosphere, warming the planet.

Jake squinted his eyes to get a deeper look at the whole set-up. Impressed, he was more interested in how this place would blow up than work. Not one piece of ice stood around the area and, taking a closer inspection, Jake was able to work out the fastest and safest route to the machine's core.

"See that building, captain?" interrupted Sam, who pointing towards it.

"Yes, Sam?" Jake asked with a dry sigh; he was contemplating the moment until he was interrupted.

"We can enter that main structure. It looks like it might have a lift installed that could take us down the shaft." Sam savoured the moment, even if everyone in the group had the same idea. Because it was a basic and straightforward scenario, they waited for Jake to order it.

Jake agreed, "OK, let's follow Sam's idea." Always full of himself, Sam grinned like a boy as they trekked down to the mothballed lift apparatus that was covered in weeds and stood unused for years.

The walky-talky unit crackled, signalling that someone was about to speak. "Captain, I am not getting any contact from Iga's group." With an unconcerned tone, Jake replied, "Don't worry about it, they might be out of range. Let me know when they contact you."

With the fresh breeze of air and the pungent smell of the forest, consisting of live plant-hybrids and plants, the team moved along the dirt path towards the centre of the complex. Jake closed the channel on his walky-talky and proceeded blissfully unaware of Iga's trouble.

-0-

After thirty minutes of walking down the cliff side, Sam shrugged at the sight of all the human/hybrid trees. "Why would he create these things? Doesn't he feel any sympathy towards these creatures?"

Sam looked into the stone white eyes of a tree creature, almost hypnotised by its lost and spaced out suffering. Jake pried him away with less or no thought about for it and muttered, "Don't worry Sam, they will be put out of their misery when the poles freeze again."

The large officer that was carrying the explosives cleared his throat and asked, "Captain, if I may? If we blow things up, won't that activate the machine and cause a pole shift?"

Jake stopped and looked at the huge man; he took his time in explaining the situation as he allowed his words to roll over the tongue, "We'll have to shut down the machine first and then blow up the shaft in several key points. Zorndyke used the crack in the Earth and drilled a huge shaft the rest of the way down." He shuffled his feet to get a better position facing the man. "Blocking that will prevent the heat energy from being used and it will also stop the element from freezing the Earth's core. It's our only chance, or we will all die anyway."

Jake bent down and opened the huge, rusty freight-lift door, allowing his team to enter the large chamber. The doors closed and he activated the lift. The cracking and thumps suddenly made him aware at how valuable he and his crew were. A few murmurs from his crew showed a small sign of apprehension at their entire situation. They prayed that they would not fall all the way to the bottom. Suddenly, it began to move.

"I don't like this, captain, what if this thing falls down?" moaned Sam, who looked through the wire mesh of the lift and towards the never-ending black hole they were slowly descending into.

Jake turned and showed a crooked smile. He knew the lift was safe, but he enjoyed watching Sam suffer with the concept of falling to his death.

The lift was slowly gathered up speed as it progressed deeper into the hole. Everyone stood around, lost in their own thoughts and, moments later, with a mighty push of the lever, the lift grinded to a halt at the control floor.

The area appeared large and cylindrical. Several control booths stood on either side of the huge machine as pipes crept down the shaft and towards the Earth's core. The heat rippled upwards, past the edge of the railing that spanned around the entire circumference.

"Look, if we place explosives at these key points all around the shaft, which should cause an avalanche of rocks and fill in the core." He paused, not sure if his words really meant nature would allow that to work. But he continued, staring up into the light. "And, in theory, cause the plates in this region to shut themselves."

Using his laptop, he changed the view to the tectonic plates that were in the area. "See the main struts up there? They are used to force the shaft open, otherwise it would have closed by now."

"You know a lot about this," replied Sam, who was overly impressed with Jake's knowledge of the entire area.

Jake turned and inspected the explosives. "The technicians and scientists have studied hard and researched all the work Zorndyke had done. They also contacted his old friends and collages that helped in locating this facility and any weaknesses it possessed. It's all here on this laptop and I studied it before we arrived." Jake stopped, looked at Sam with a maddening frown and said, "Now, Sam, place something before you really annoy me!"

Jake shoved a few large remote-controlled explosives towards him and everyone scurried of to their assigned locations.

-o-

Deep Sea Six drifted to its docking port and the crew took the moment to explore and gather supplies. The officer at watch stood with anxiety filling every corner of his bones. It's been a while since he had any contact with Iga's team and Jake was proceeding as planned. But he could not get the suspicious feeling out of his mind.

The crewmembers drifted around, idly biding their time collecting crates and dumping rubbish, as they always tended to do.

High up on the observation platform, Freeda stood as she drank in the view and enjoyed the sun that pierced through the blue sky. She was supposed to be watching for any signs of trouble. But she mainly daydreamed and did her best to stay away from Cekerros, who would undoubtedly try and annoy her any chance he got.

As she looked over the horizon, she stared at the wonderful shrubs and trees that aligned the shore. The water and mist, created by the waves as they splashed the rocks, made the whole area appear as if it should have been from a painting.

As all good things come to an end, Cekerros popped his head in Freeda view with his classic, "Hello, Freeda..."

-o-

The sonar operator fiddled with the controls on his console as he tried to identify an object that had appeared and had decided to follow them. He could not be sure, but it might be the same object they spotted at the New London City. Running the sonar comparison with the recordings they made, he made a startling discovery.

"Unknown enemy unit following us, sir!" The sonar operator said as he turned, holding his earpiece in. In response, the officer at the watch immediately tried to inform Jake and Iga, but neither of them was able to respond to the crisis.

Disturbed, the officer at watch clenched his teeth and ordered the Grampus units out to form a defensive line behind the Deep Sea Six.

Yuri also took heed of the approaching danger and informed the Deep Sea Six that they were going to investigate it.

With a sudden warning, all the crews rushed into their vessels, ready for the battle at hand. Freeda decided to take her place onboard the Blue Six with her favourite friend, because the Deep Sea six was berthed and not going anywhere for the moment. The vessel was too big to turn in time and only the Blue six offered the protection it needed.

Freeda yearned to pilot the Blue Sub again and she was the one to keep the thing out of danger in the first place. Like a puppy that followed its master, Cekerros rushed in behind her, boasting that he was a better pilot and it soon turned into a unnecessary contest.

They both did not know about the nightmarish vessel that was creeping towards them from the depths of the sea.

## Chapter 6

(The Explosion)

Grinning, Verg stood on the nucleus of his monstrous vessel while they closed the gap between the Deep Sea Six that was berthed on the dock, like unsuspecting prey. The human vessel was so tantalising, Verg could not help but drool over the thought of blowing it to bits.

Two hybrid girls pampered and satisfied him as he sat, legs wide open, taking in the atmosphere and reeling in the delight of his pending victory. He knew the final battle was about to begin.

Without warning, cylindrical torpedoes ripped through the slow currents deep within the ocean, leaving a bubbling trail behind. They homed in on their target, Deep Sea Six.

Unable to move and trapped, the crew of the vessel watched helplessly through the portholes as the torpedoes rushed towards them.

Several Grampuses whizzed passed and shot down the trilling torpedoes while the Deep Sea Six defences intercepted any torpedoes that managed to slip past the first line of defence.

While the distraction was in progress, the Blue Sub sneaked behind Verg's vessel, ready to spring their trap.

Yuri looked in disbelief at the scale of the creature on his radar screen as he plotted and planned the best course of action

The creature hung in the water with its massive body, octopus-like tentacles spanning in front and behind the creature and its head serving as the Command Centre.

"That thing is huge, what is it?" Yuri said in awe. "It looks like an octopus, but on both sides."

The massive octopus-vessel moved its rear tentacles in a spinning motion, indicating that it was on the move towards the Deep Sea Six.

"We have to disable that thing. If they destroy the Deep Sea Six, it will prematurely start the freezing process and we'll all die-" Yuri paused before he finally roared, "all hands prepare for battle stations!"

Freeda clenched the controls of the Blue Sub as adrenaline rushed through her body, heightening her reactions. Her memories of the battle one year ago flashed in her mind, drowning out all her doubts and worries. She was a submarine pilot and born for this moment. But while she carried on her tomboy attitude towards the impending battle, she had a deep, nagging concern about their success. Iga was not in command and even if Yuri had shown good command skills in the past, he had never been in a fight like this.

In fact, she wondered what had happened to the captain and the others. They'd been unable to make radio contact with Iga for some time and she grew concerned. Freeda brushed it off and focused on the impending danger. Iga was capable of looking after himself.

Verg continued his ranting and raving as his masterful plan entered its twilight stage. Then, to add a bonus, he was interrupted when one of his minions dragged a female hybrid towards him.

"Master, we have caught the female you were looking for." He dragged her forward and displayed her damaged body.

Silence engulfed the room as Verg moved forward. His eyes stared at her, he knew who she was. "Tia! At last, I have finally caught you." He slapped her face with full force. "You traitorous creature! Where is Mutio?"

He jumped from his womb-like chair and grabbed her neck, his grip causing her to breathe heavily and Verg laughed, enjoying her suffering.

But as he moved closer he could almost smell a human scent on her. His nostrils twitched and he sniffed her body. "You've been with a *human!* I can smell *him.*"

As a final verification, he stuck his slimy cold tongue into her mouth and allowed it to glide down her warm throat. Even though he enjoyed doing this to her immensely, he could taste the human. His rage exploded!

"You have mated with a human! How dare you! You were made for *us!*" He lifted her off the floor and suspended her in the air by her neck. His hands clasped onto her neck like a vice and he squeezed it in a fit of rage until she almost choked to death.

With a final thrust, he tossed her onto a suspended hook and dangled her over the female's pool like a carcass in a butcher's shop. Verg wanted an example, someone who would remind his remaining females who's the boss. She screamed in pain as the hook embedded itself inside her back, Verg grinned. Now he had to find Mutio.

-o-

It was dark and musty, but Kino lay on the ground, alive. All she could remember was being dragged away somewhere.

As she looked around, it was clear that she was still in the dome, but perched up in a location far off the ground. The building lights shone below them as darkness hovered above.

As Kino got up, Iga whispered, "Kino, are you OK? Thank god. When it dragged you up here we were worried it hurt you."

Shocked, Kino glanced around and was relieved to see the rest of her team alive. Hayami leaned on a metal beam, chewing on a piece of straw from the platform they were currently sitting on.

"What happened?" she questioned, rubbing her eyes and ignoring the stuffy smell.

Suddenly a voice erupted from a dark corner, startling everyone, "I have placed you all in a safe place! We need to talk."

A figure slowly emerged from the darkness into the dimly lit platform that was illuminated by a few glow lights tossed on the platform by Iga's crew.

Everyone looked at each other with shock and disbelief clearly displayed on their faces. They waited in silence, staring at this new hybrid creature.

Humanoid and shaped like a man in his prime, this creature walked into the light, showing his unique features. He had golden human skin that was outlined with a mixed undertone of white. His head was a mix of human hair and feathers from a bird, parts of his body had feathery features that streamed down his arms and legs, but human skin dominated the main space. His face was long and strong. Round, sincere eyes brought out the elegance in his handsome face.

But everyone watched on, anticipating. They knew what this creature was, but they wanted to see the main event. Part human and bird, they waited.

He walked forward and, as if he read their minds, huge, nine-foot wings filled the area behind him with dense feathers that fluffed up, showing more mass than his wingspan really was. He stood tall and elegant; his white wings portrayed the image of an angel.

Kino stood in awe as she stared, mouth open and trapped in his beauty. She could not tear her eyes away from this man standing before her. He was tall and very handsome and Kino was transfixed on his white wings that had an elegant pattern of red and black. She could not decide if she wanted to look at his body or wings, but the hybrid finally noticed Kino staring and he approached her with caution.

"I hope I did not give you an unpleasant ride." His voice was soft with an undertone of passion.

Kino blushed, wondering what the hybrid thought of her, but she stopped her crazy thoughts when horrid images of her family and friends flashed in her mind, horrors the hybrids had caused.

She heard the background noises of the wind howling through the dome, clinking movements of steel plates and she was trapped with her emotions. *Get a grip, Kino* she thought to herself.

Hayami sprang to life and shoved a pistol in the hybrid's face, as if his hand responded to the threat faster than he could react.

"Who... What the hell are you?" he demanded.

The creature backed away and placed his hands up in the air, his red fingernails visibly noticeable. He looked at Hayami and replied, "My people call me 27."

Hayami frowned. "27? Couldn't they give you a better name?"

Hayami watched as the Human/Bird hybrid looked at him with a cold and stony expression, obviously not able to comprehend the meaning of names.

Kino adeptly jostled Hayami out of the way so she could have a more direct discussion with the strange and handsome creature. She was not the type of girl to give in to her idle desires. The horrors these creatures have done to her family and friends would never be forgotten and nothing could undo her anger, but she was curious about this creature that almost resembled an angel.

With a turned up nose, Kino heaved a long sigh. "Well, I'm not calling you that." She paused, adding to the suspense. "I think I'll call you Icarus."

The crew looked at each other as they approved of the name and Hayami still had his weapon drawn, not realizing he was making a fool of himself.

Finally Iga stepped forward to add his bit to the conversation and perhaps get some answers. So with a sly smile he said, "If I remember my legends, didn't he fall into the ocean when he tried to fly with wax wings?"

Icarus returned with an abrupt comment. "My wings are not made of wax!"

Kino looked on; she gazed at his feathery features, drinking in all the details. But she swore her revenge on all the hybrids and could not allow herself to be distracted. But she could feel her desires as they roared on inside her like a storm.

Hayami returned his weapon back into its holder and asked the obvious question. "How can you speak to us? All the hybrids cannot without Zorndyke's voice box."

Icarus folded his wings behind his back and the darkness behind him returned. He walked forward with a slight strut in his step. Hayami felt threatened. In response he raised his weapon again, but Kino interjected with a hard thump to his chest.

Icarus noticed Kino's movement and gazed into her eyes. He became transfixed and hypnotised by this tomboy woman, which caused a slight delay before he answered Hayami's question.

"We were the last experiments our farther Zorndyke created. He was experimenting with different approaches to DNA manipulation and design; one of

the side effects was the skill to talk. But his main purpose was to use us for aerial bombardment, to gain an upper hand. But his demise put an end to this."

The group stood around, fascinated by the information Icarus said, but Iga had a more logical question to ask. "Why have you taken us up here? Are we prisoners?"

He held on to hope that his crew was not going to become food or something more sinister. He surmised that it did not involve death; otherwise they'd be dead now.

Icarus razed his silver-blue eyes away from Kino. "We have saved your lives." He paused and pointed towards the entrance of the domed facility. "Any moment some of Verg's minions were going to scout this area and you would have been killed."

He walked closer to Iga and carried on in a sincere tone, "I know what you humans are trying to do. We can feel the danger our planet is facing and it's only a matter of years. You must succeed or all life will perish."

Icarus frowned, "But Verg does not understand this and we are afraid that his mind has... become damaged. All he wants to do is kill humans."

Gazing back and forth between Kino and the rest of the group, Icarus turned his head towards a disturbing noise. Suddenly, a loud groan echoed like the yawn of an injured dog down below. Startled, the crew turned towards the darkness. Footsteps and incomprehensible sounds rose out of the darkness below them. The crew knew something was down there, so they kept quiet.

No more than three seconds had passed when Kino snapped around, hoping to see Icarus again. But he had vanished as fast as he appeared. Her heart returned to its slow pace, but she could not wash away the thought of the hybrid. "Damn hybrids, I will never get involved with one."

-0-

The creature moved forward relentlessly like an uncontrollable juggernaut homing in on its target. With its forward tentacles stretched out like a horrid nightmare, the creature edged closer and opened its torpedo tubes.

Yamada yelled in Yuri's direction about the new situation that loomed ahead. With a snap decision, Yuri wasted no time in declaring red-alert status.

Crews rushed around as they loaded torpedoes and prepared the Blue Sub for combat. They had the upper hand and now they intended to use it.

Yuri clenched his fists and stood steady in the nucleus of the Blue Sub. He released his hands and squeezed the armrest. "Show time!"

Without further delay, he roared, "Fire!"

Grampus pilots drifted in the water as they stared at the incoming creature. They could not think about anything else. The creature was like a horrid, deep-sea monster. *How could they defeat this thing?*

Torpedoes shot past the Grampus' view windows as they ploughed through the sea towards the creature. The pilots watched a dazzling display of explosions while clouds of bubbles erupted in an underwater storm. Everyone shielded their eyes from the initial blast. It was the start of the battle.

With excitement thrumming through their veins, many pilots prepared to strike first at the creature, but Yuri sent an all-crew signal, "All Grampuses Converge on the Deep Sea Six and prevent the enemy from attacking; we will increase our attack."

Within seconds after the order, the Blue Sub dived right into the heart of the battle.

The massive beast launched its rockets, shells, nails and even its whip-like tentacles at the defending Grampuses. They dived and dodged the hail of bullets before returning fire.

Understandably, some pilots defended themselves, but by doing so they lost sight of their mission. Before long, the Deep Sea Six was all alone.

As if in the heart of a storm, the Blue Sub launched all its torpedoes at the enemy vessel. Travelling at near-relativistic speeds, they slammed into the side of the creature, creating a spectacular view for all to see. Many pilots were confused at the condition of the enemy vessel.

Out of the chaos, the Grampus pilots watched the shadows as they turned slowly inside the cloud of bubbles. They slowly merged into a completely different entity that was one step closer to driving any human mad.

Moments later, it slowly edged itself out of the bubbles and stretched forth its tentacles to grab hold of the Blue Sub. The defending pilots activated engines and raced towards their target.

Yuri stabbed his finger towards the firing control officer and shouted, "Fire again. Fire everything, I want that monster out of my water." His orders became sputtered as he saw the huge mouth of the creature through the small view screen; he assumed it could crush the Blue Sub like a tin can under someone's boot.

In a free-for-all weapons battle, more streams of torpedoes roared through the water and smashed into the gigantic beast. It retaliated with equal force. Massive blasts rocketed the vessel, spewing large amounts of water through the Blue Sub's breached hull.

Yuri sat in disbelief at the creature as incomprehensible screams roared through the intercom. He needed to do something; otherwise the Blue Sub would be blasted out of the water.

The Grampus pilots realized that the Blue Sub could not handle the firepower of the creature and the battle had turned into a rout. No amount of firepower could stand against this monster. Unless Yuri came to the same conclusion –and soon- the battle would be over in minutes.

"We have sustained heavy damage, sir. Lower decks are flooded and engine room is reporting fifty-percent power loss. Forward decks are badly ruptured and over twenty crewmembers are missing!" The status report weighed heavily on Yuri's mind as he considered the option to retreat.

The remaining Grampuses, which looked puny in relation to the gigantic creature, clustered around the damaged Blue Six, hoping for a miracle.

The Blue Sub shook violently, spilling everyone onto the floor. One by one, everyone returned to their stations and the view screen caught Yuri's eye. In the flurry of activity, a barrage of missiles left the enemy vessel and began to swim towards the Blue Sub.

"I don't believe this... Bank left and crash dive!"

-o-

Jake pondered over the controls inside a small sub station he discovered buried inside the massive shaft wall. He frowned at the scattered controls, unable to read the rusty, metal nameplates. Finally, he pressed the illuminated red button on the control panel that seemed to call for him. He had some hunch that it was not a good idea to push it, but he could not resist.

He swallowed hard as the sound of rumbling motors opened a small chamber. He turned slowly and looked at the thing that was pulsating inside the alcove; he could not believe what he was looking at. It was horrible.

Blue Sub No 6: The Year After.  
Part 4

Sam marched in with a huge grin on his face. He had placed all the remote explosives first and on time. It was the time factor that he was pleased with and something he could use against any unruly crewmember that decided to slag him off.

But as he attempted to report his good deed, he noticed Jake staring at something. Gradually, he took the initiative and followed his stare.

Both men looked at the object in awe. "Is that Zorndyke's heart?" Sam questioned with a slight quiver in his voice.

"I believe it is," Jake waited for a moment before he continued, "I wonder how we turn this machine off?"

Sam shrugged his shoulders before coming up with a simple answer, "Maybe we should remove the heart?"

Jake turned his gaze towards Sam. It seemed a simple solution and the most ridiculous idea Sam had come up with. Surely the great scientist that flooded the world and created the hybrids would not allow his whole plan to be vulnerable by a simple removal of a heart?

*Sod it!* Jake wrenched Zorndyke's heart out of the machine.

## Chapter 7

(Downfall)

The air was filled with roars of success and anticipation, while Tia remained impaled in the middle of the female pool. She could feel the agonising pain in her back and the numbness in the rest of her body. She was unable to tell if it was hot or cold. She was unable to move and hung there like a bag of meat.

The only thing she could think about was her time with Jake and Mutio. Her personal affection for the human kept her conscious and gave her the strength to remain alive. But the agonising pain and the dripping, cool blood began to drain her life away. It was only a matter of time.

Tia looked down and saw her sisters staring at her. She wondered what they were thinking about and what was going through their minds. Do they care for their own sister, for me?

She felt lost and isolated, and she had done what she needed to do before she was captured. At least she could feel some kind of relief that her small gift to Jake would not perish with her. She felt comfort from that.

Suddenly, the staring females scurried back into the depths of the water as Tia spotted Verg approaching through her peripheral vision. He did not say a word as he stood below, leering at her. She'd never expected to receive some miraculous forgiveness, nor did she want any from that beast. She was glad of the time she had with Jake, instead of surrendering her body to *him*.

Tia knew her species was created to serve the upper masters like Verg, but she and Mutio had defied that. She never knew a human could show that kind of love and compassion to someone who was completely different. She only wished the situation could be different. But as the chain began to move, reality set in and terror howled through her like a tidal storm.

She knew Verg had detected something, something she needed to keep secret; *he must not know!*

"There's something different about you." She felt his nose on her stomach. "Our father would be very angry with your traitorous behaviour."

Verg spun around and looked at the fleshy view screen that displayed a swarm of torpedoes on a collision course with the beleaguered Blue Six. However, his attention returned to his prized female.

Tia looked at Verg as wet tears dripped off her face and dissolved in the water pool. Her sisters glided around in the depths of the pool, waiting, praying. As they were praying, perhaps they could also sense her secret. But there was nothing she could do to fight back, no way to escape; she was at the mercy of this beast and he reeled her in closer.

"You have been up to something. Your body has been through a change. Tell me Tia..." Verg's voice erupted like an excited child's. "Tell me what you have been doing?"

She closed her eyes and looked away. Verg placed his head on her stomach and felt her tender flesh.

Now Tia wished she had stayed on the Deep Sea Six. She had initially left to find Jake, who had disappeared after he left his boat. When he failed to return after some time, she assumed he was injured and left the ship to search for him. Then she was eventually captured and dragged into Verg's nightmarish vessel.

Well, trying to find her lover and bringing him back had only backed her into a corner, and now she was facing her death. If she could warn or contact Jake,

perhaps he could come and save her. She wanted to scream, but she was struggling to breath and could not even growl.

She lifted her head and looked directly at Verg. Her stony expression could rupture a statue, but Verg gazed back. He knew something and Tia could feel it.

"You..." He stepped back, shock haunting his face. "You have given birth to a human hybrid!"

Tia body convulsed uncontrollably as the needle-sharp words bellowed through the air. She was shocked he knew the exact details so quickly. Her child was safe for the time being. But she could not allow Verg to find her baby. She would sacrifice her own life before telling him anything.

"I don't understand, why did papa allow our females to reproduce? He said they couldn't. Especially not with humans." He marched around and grabbed one his minions, as if expecting it to know the answers. When it was unable to reply, he threw it into the water pool.

"Tia, where is that abomination? I will wipe that creature off this planet! It must not be allowed to live; this undermines everything our papa has been trying to do against the humans." His answer would never be answered. Tia would remain silent, even if it would cost her life. She would not allow her child to fall into Verg's hands. She knew her child was safe.

-o-

Letting out a defiant roar, the group's Grampus leader yelled, "Let's stop them! We may not get them all, but we will not stand by and do nothing."

The small group of Grampuses dived into the path of the incoming missiles, firing a wall of bullets from their guns in a desperate attempt to destroy as many missiles as possible. It was a futile effort and one that would add countless lives to the list of all that had perished in this new war.

Blast after blast took out the large number of missiles on a collision course with the Blue Six. One cocky Grampus pilot got too close and the hail of bullets missed the rocket. A head-on collision with a torpedo destroyed the Grampus, leaving the rest of the group reeling in anger.

With a flare of activity and unorganised teamwork, one of the torpedoes managed to escape the defence line and careen towards the Blue Six. With no one in range to stop it, this could mean the end of Blue Sub. The pilots stared in complete shock as they realised this could mean the complete destruction of their vessel. Blue Sub had been a shining beacon in the lives of many who had served on it during the war. Now it had only seconds to spare.

-o-

Silence drifted in the darkness while the noises slowly dissipated and the creatures hunting Iga's crew disappeared out of the building.

"I think we can climb down." Iga swallowed hard as he looked over the makeshift nest of wood and soft fabric created by Icarus.

Leading the way, Iga's steps were heavy as he struggled to gather adequate footing on the metal rungs. Kino and the rest of the team followed suit as they proceeded with caution, trying not to make too much noise or cause an accident.

Kino was unable to stop thinking about Icarus, which left her distant and dreamy. She felt a flood of memories about him standing in front of her, ready to drown her thoughts. She could not get the image out of her mind.

Hayami responded with a hard and crude nudge with his elbow, blasting Kino from her dreamy state. "Kino! You need to stop daydreaming. We've got work to do."

Kino frowned and then gave Hayami a look of scorn. "Don't hit me like that." She grunted and proceeded along the concrete floor inside the dome structure. The wind outside created an eerie howl inside the dome; the crew could not tell if they were alone or not.

With stern resolve, they progressed deeper towards a small structure. It appeared to be a dark and empty lift room, which was directly above the underwater complex. Iga walked forward to the control board that sparked like a Christmas tree. It seemed to be the only thing operating in the facility. With a fascinated grin, Iga pressed the button. He was more interested in the underwater complex than the random junk that was in the dome.

The lift doors slowly creaked open as dust and dirt blew into their faces. Brief splashes of water gently fluttered over the crew's faces while the florescent lights flashed on. The lift offered no comfort to Iga, who stared at the rust and rotten support beams that resembled a floor.

To check the safety of the elevator, he grabbed a propped-up steel pole and prodded the lift floor. Immediately it gave way and fell to the depths of the shaft. *Great, not going in that lift.*

"Looks like we won't be going in this." Kino mused, thinking about her dance with death before Icarus had saved her. She was nearly killed once; she doesn't want a lift shaft to claim her life.

But as the crew recovered from the shock of nearly falling to their deaths, large, well-built creatures stepped out of the shadows and surrounded the small group.

With weapons drawn, the group looked in disbelief. The animal hybrids surrounded them with primitive weapons drawn. "Looks like we have captured some humans!" One creature snarled with a secret grin.

-0-

In the silent room, Jake backed away from the alcove that the heart resided in. Jake stood, staring at the beating organ in his hands. He initially closed his eyes while he removed the heart and then cursed himself for being so childish.

Sam stood around, waving his makeshift weapon he had grabbed from the floor. He waved his weapon in the air for a few seconds, as if expecting lasers or something hideous to crawl out of the walls.

Jake turned and stared at Sam. "What are you doing?"

"Umm... Nothing, Captain... Just expecting something to kill us."

Sam meant well, but it seems like Zorndyke was not as bright as he once thought. Then again, Jake guessed that Zorndyke was probably so confident in his war with humanity that he thought that no one would ever reach the heart of the machine. *Fate has a cruel side.*

But after a few spasms, the heart stopped. Jake gazed at the red, solid object that provided the password for the machine. Now that it was dead, the two men looked at the gigantic machine that continued to draw power from deep within the Earth.

Sam scanned around, as if he was expecting the machine to shut off. But the humming of the machine still continued uninterrupted, and they both took a slow, sideward glance at each other.

"Well, why is the machine not off?" questioned Sam.

Jake took a brief moment to drink in all of the details before he shrugged his shoulders and responded. "I don't know, I assumed that this mach..." He was suddenly startled when everything shut down. Lights went out, the humming of the great machine stopped, and, finally, silence fell.

The two individuals grinned at each other like small children that have just shut off the main power to their school.

In a timely fashion, they edged their way to the open walkway suspended around the deep shaft, which was poorly lit by the lack of artificial lighting. Metal footsteps on the railing floor indicated that the rest of the crew had completed their goal of installing the rest of the explosives and were on their way back.

The titanic machine felt restless and angry: it was shut off and not doing the job it was designed to do. Jake looked at the rest of his crew and the decision to leave this place was paramount on everyone's mind. *Time to go.*

With a final check on the walkie-talkie, with no response, the crew left the same way they came in. The elevator they rode in had a few wire meshes as walls and a flimsy gate that looked like it would fall apart if anyone leaned on it. Sam gulped with fear, and every little squeak or jolt made him uneasy. The howling of the entire shaft made matters worse as Sam's legs threatened to give out on him.

"Sam, if you faint, I will throw you off the lift myself." Jake leered at him, hoping his threat would frighten the fear out of him. That thought made no sense to him, but it seemed to work. Sam stood up and acted sensible.

"OK people, once we reach a safe distance, we will detonate the mines and deploy the element. We will need to escape this whole area as fast as possible. I doubt that even my vessel could protect us from the freezing this thing will cause." Jake held onto the activation button on the lift control panel as it steadily and gradually rose to the surface.

The lift came to an abrupt halt as they arrived on the surface. With an energetic force, the crew opened the gate and happily stepped off of the lift as if they had expected the thing to fall down the shaft at any moment.

Jake's expression turned hard; they needed to backtrack towards the Deep Sea Six and detonate the explosives. The detonators operated wirelessly and the signal could be sent from anywhere within five hundred miles, which was more than adequate for Jake's needs. So far he was unable to restore contact with Iga's group or Deep Sea Six. Something was going on and Jake was damn sure it couldn't be good.

-0-

The lone torpedo was on a collision course with the Blue Sub and everyone onboard panicked. Alarms began to sound on the vessel as everyone prepared themselves for impact.

Yuri stood tall and tried to keep his crew together, "Evasive manoeuvres! Take us down and don't let that torpedo track us. Fire interceptors!"

Like a succession of death sentences, each command responded with a negative response. No interceptors were left to fire, rudder control was damaged, and the constant alarm call for collision added to the incomprehensible panic that filled the boat.

As tensions ran high, the inhabitants of the Blue Sub could do nothing but watch the disaster unravel in terror.

The torpedo edged closer now. As the high streaking sound from the props increased in intensity, the crew listened with awe and there was nothing anyone could do. The sub was already in a crash dive and Yuri could not offer any viable solution to the life-changing problem.

Suddenly, as the torpedo homed closer, the massive Deep Sea Six glided out of the shallow bluff in the ground, right in the path of the torpedo. The torpedo impacted on the massive underbelly of the ship, causing damage to the lower decks. But that did not cause the vessel to falter.

Blue Sub No 6: The Year After.  
Part 4

Like an angry sea beast, the Deep Sea Six turned and stared right down at the hideous enemy vessel. The two titans of the sea stared at each other for a few painfully slow seconds before one of them made the decisive move.

Without warning, the Deep Sea Six charged itself forward like an unstoppable juggernaut, straight for the octopus-shaped vessel. Wave after wave of thrusts from the caterpillar turbines pushed the vessel closer and closer. The sea was calm as these two titans of the sea battled it out with each other. Like small mammals, the Grampuses and the Blue Sub silently crept into the darkness, watching until all was clear.

The second in command of the Deep Sea Six stood in the control centre as the vessel careered towards the huge enemy ship. He looked through the port window as the monstrous vessel grew larger and larger. He ordered all torpedoes fired and the monster of the sea looked even more menacing than before. Its octopus tentacles waved around, waiting.

The Deep Sea Six showed no fear. Like a colossal brick shooting through the sea, the vessel ploughed head-on, smashing its arrow-shaped front into the belly of the creature.

## Chapter 8

(Crossroads)

The looming brown creature stood in front of Hayami with his weapon drawn. The hybrid seemed to fill much of the background with his beefy body than his companions who were shuffling around in the background.

Kino stepped back, entirely afraid. She had plenty of things to think about: the appearance of Icarus, the current mission, and the creatures that blocked their exit. She slowly moved her hand towards her weapon, which caught the attention of the creature.

“Stop right there!” He tossed Hayami to the side and rammed his face into Kino’s view. His smell made her nose twitch and she almost told the creature to have a bath. Thankfully, she kept her mouth shut.

With a subtle movement, the creature grabbed Kino’s weapon, inspected it with that of a low intelligence child and then decided to inspect the small group. Now he had a handgun, which was an upgrade from his current primitive weapon. *Perfect! I wonder if he can fire it,* Kino thought sarcastically.

“He’s got a weapon,” Kino said dryly as she backed away from Hayami. She began to stare at the creatures, wondering when Icarus would show up. They could certainly use his help, but as Kino realized that she was staring in a far too revealing manner, she quickly looked away.

Huang clutched her toy as she hid behind Iga, trying to be unobtrusive, but the burly creature spotted the young girl and grabbed the toy.

“What’s this, human?”

In a split second rage, Hayami lurched forward toward the creature, knocking it to the side. It responded with a swift punch that sent Hayami flying into the air.

Hayami soon regretted his hasty actions and straightened himself up; he looked toward the creature and was shocked to find Mutio hiding in the shadows.

*Mutio, what the hell are you doing here?* But his moment of thought was caught short when more creatures joined the group.

“Looks like we’ve caught ourselves more test subjects, and a little girl too,” one of the creatures snarled.

Weaving amongst the group in a pendulum fashion, the creature stopped in front of the girl and looked down at her. Huang looked up into his dark eyes and gradually, her gaze was diverted to his huge beak that filled most of his face. She could not understand how a creature could speak perfect human language through something so hard.

The initial hybrid ordered his companions to round up the humans and take them to a secure area. But before they had the chance to make their move, the facility shook with a thunderous din.

All around them, the domed warehouse collapsed, girders and support beams crashed to the ground. Iga and the rest of his team used this moment to instigate their escape.

The ceiling caved in as huge tentacles spilled inside the open space, thrashing around like gigantic whips looking for any fleshy victims.

Kino struggled to gather her footing on the fallen boxes and concrete rubble that had been blasted all over the area. Sunlight finally poured into the gloomy area, illuminating the scene and offering a sense of power to the captured humans.

Destruction continued to rain down and the support beams finally gave way due to the huge stress on the roof. Iga looked towards the horizon as the sun hid behind the clouds. Then suddenly, he saw a familiar sight.

"Iga!" Huang said. "Is that the Deep Sea Six?"

Everyone looked towards the sky as a small portion of the Deep Sea Six rested on the roof of the facility; water trickled in the gaping hole like rain.

-o-

"What's this thing?" Sam rushed over to a vehicle that looked like it had sat there for over a century. Jake did not pose much interest in the toy, but Sam grinned like a boy and he appeared to have an idea.

"If we can get this thing going, we'll have a ride back to base camp. Saves hours off our journey." Looking under the hood of the tracked vehicle, Sam noticed some missing components.

"It's missing a few components." Jake placed his hand on Sam's shoulder as he continued with his playful joke. "Oh well. If you like, all of us can sit in the vehicle while you push."

"Jake, it only needs a battery. I'm sure there's one lying around." Sam gazed around the area before he encouraged the others to help. Jake knew that Sam's little idea was less risky than removing a heart from some unknown machine. All they needed was to get the vehicle moving.

Jake never thought he would feel exhausted in his life, running around, setting explosives and now looking for a *battery*, he thought things couldn't get any worse. But he kept the thought to himself; tempting fate was not a good idea.

The vehicle, which basically was a metal frame with an engine on it, would allow the team to cover ground much faster than they could travel on foot and Jake could use that opportunity to detonate the explosives.

But they had to start the contraption first and Jake was flooded with doubts as he watched a crewmember struggle along with a battery. "Sam, I am sure the vehicle is scrapped by now, how long had it been abandoned?"

"Jake, never underestimate my abilities." Sam studied the engine, pulled a few cables and then hit it with a hammer before the initial reaction began.

The engine let out a loud hibernating yawn and then chugged gradually into tune. The grinding of the gears wasn't comforting as the smell of burned oil and electrical ozone drifted out of the engine compartment.

Sam rubbed his hands together and jumped into the driver's seat. "Right, I believe this thing is ready. Let's go."

Like a couple of hot rods on the night out, the team raced back towards the base camp and finally, Jake discovered why there was radio silence.

-o-

Deep within the damaged vessel, Verg yelled at the top of his voice. In a fit of rage, he threw a bulkhead that fell on him and dragged one of his minions into the only light source in the area.

"You incompetent fool! What just happened?"

The defenceless creature cowered in his hands. Verg felt disgusted, *why can't my underlings follow any simple orders?* All he wanted to do was wipe the humans from the face of the Earth, just as papa wanted. But his own creatures disappointed him every step of the way. This must stop.

He glared towards Tia, who lay helplessly on the floor.

"Boss, the Deep Sea vessel... They rammed into us. There was nothing..." Verg did not want any excuses, so he threw the creature away into the darkness. *I'll deal with you later.*

Now Tia was at the forefront of his attention. Knowing what was installed for her, she tried to gather all her strength to escape his ever-impending grasp. But when she moved a few inches back, Verg took a step forward, rapidly closing the gap. Even the fallen bulkheads could not shield her from his unyielding grip.

He grabbed her by the neck and suspended her in the air, cool blood dripped onto his hand and Verg knew it was only a matter of time before she perished. He must know the location of Mutio and her child.

The whole human/hybrid interaction infuriated him the most, and Verg could not stand the thought of Mutio mingling with a human. He had to uphold papa's wishes and he would not have approved of this behaviour. Verg knew what he had to do.

He stared into Tia's dying eyes and drummed the questions into her. She did not answer and Verg was growing impatient. With brisk slaps he drained the life from her body even more; she could not take much more.

With a final act of defiance, she sprang to life and implanted her teeth deep into his arm. Blood poured onto the floor and she squeezed down hard like a vice. This was her moment of defiance and one last desperate attempt to escape. *Gotta get away, must escape for my child!*

Understandably, Verg released his grip and Tia fell to the floor. Now it was her chance to escape with what little energy she had left. She made a brake for the waterhole that - would hopefully lead her to the outside.

Verg raised his head, only to see Tia jumping into the water pool and swimming to the safety of the open sea. But he knew it would only be a matter of time before she died.

-o-

Sparks flew and systems remained offline as the crew of the Deep Sea Six frantically tried to regain control of a few vital runaway systems.

Smoke from the overhead ventilation system reminded everyone that they were confined in a closed environment and fires were the most dangerous element to fight. Any number of things could go wrong.

"Damage report!" the second in command inquired.

But anyone who grasped the reality of the situation would understand that the damage was severe and the report would be larger than a phone book. But protocol needed to be followed and perhaps the second in command could salvage something from the mess.

The forward port window showed the penetrating rays of the sun and the brisk blue skyline that resided in the background. The crew looked through the main window and it was apparent that the front of the vessel was out of the water and was resting on a ledge. The entire vessel was at an angle and the trickling sound of water flowed down to the bowels of the ship through the aqua tunnels.

Hatches sprung open and the crew leapt out onto the uneven deck. Staring in awe, they looked at the gigantic beast under the vessel. Without warning, hybrid creatures in all shapes and sizes crawled out of the octopus-style ship and opened fire on the crew.

Retaliation made the area into a storm of bullets and the impacted sand rose into the air, creating a mist of local fog. No one knew whom they were firing at, but it wasn't long until everyone was shooting indiscriminately in all directions.

Then, as if someone was announcing their entrance in the most attention-grabbing way possible, a thunderous explosion roared throughout the land, startling man and beast. It was shortly followed by a mild ground tremor accompanied by a mushroom cloud in the distance.

-0-

"Hayami... Hayami... Hayami." Mutio couldn't express her feelings in perfect human language, but she clearly showed her feelings by the frantic tugs and pushes as she tried to wake up Hayami, who was lying unconscious on the floor.

From her observations, a support beam and layers of rubble covered most of Hayami's body. Each tug brought him that much closer to safety and she could not stop now. Suddenly she was filled with joy as he opened his eyes; Mutio stared into his eyes with hopeful and desperate love. Relief flooded her like the tide on a hot summer beach.

"Mutio." He placed a compassionate hand on her face as he tried to lift himself out from under the rubble. He could not believe Mutio was here. *She should not be here, why is she here?* Then he remembered seeing her in the domed building, but that did not explain her presence. She was in danger.

She helped Hayami to his feet and then grabbed hold of him in a passionate embrace, something she wanted to do for a long time. She thought he was badly injured and examined his body for visible injuries. She smiled and her crimson eyes sparkled with delight when he looked and felt healthy.

"You came for me." Hayami brushed off the dust that was caught in her hair. "It's dangerous, you should keep yourself safe and not endanger your life like this."

But his words went unnoticed as Mutio clung onto him more tightly than before. "Hayami... for... me..."

Her simple words sparked realization in his mind; she could understand his language and place them together to form her own words. Hayami thought she was unable to understand human language, except for faint, basic body gestures. But this shook his very understanding of her. Joy crept into his soul and he allowed a smile onto his face.

Mutio recognised his pleased feelings and hugged him tightly; it should have been a moment of perfect comfort for both of them, but echoing calls for him drew forth the more important problems.

Helping each other, Mutio and Hayami left the area and proceeded to the exit.

## Chapter 9

(Tia!)

The distant explosion finally settled down in the background as Jake stood on his chair of the vehicle, holding onto the support frame. The remote control sent the signal perfectly to the explosives in the huge shaft and now everything ran smoothly for a change.

With the machine finally destroyed, Jake began to feel the slight chill in the air, but he assumed that it could be his nerves playing with him. Atmospheric changes could not happen this fast. But all they needed to do now was to release the *hope* element and get the hell out.

"How far are we?" Jake said.

"According to the GPS on the laptop, we should be there in a few minutes." The vehicle went over a bump and the laptop fell off Sam's lap. Jake growled as the device smashed into millions of bits upon hitting a rock.

Sam looked cold. "Don't worry sir, I have the route in my mind."

"I don't doubt that, but you still lost my laptop."

"I'll get you a new one."

"I bet you will, but I'll settle for taking it out of your pay check." The wind blew into Jake's hair, messing up an already imperfect hairstyle. Sam picked up on that and made a crazy suggestion.

"Sir, I know someone who can give you first-grade hair style on the house..."

Jake was more confused than angry, Sam blurred out something about his hair and now this. Perhaps the workload was too much for him, or perhaps it was something else. "What are you talking about?"

"Your hair, sir..."

"You lost me, Sam."

"Never mind, sir, it was a distraction to alert you to the problem."

"What problem?" Jake sat down on his chair, lost as to what Sam was saying.

With a pointed finger, Sam directed the team to the huge Deep Sea Six that had transgressed beyond the confines of the water. Half of the vessel rested on the top of the demolished domed structure.

Jake looked up and swore at what he saw. "What the Devil... What the hell happened to my vessel?"

Jake pressed the team forward at an increased speed; perhaps there was something he could do to solve the situation and find out what had happened. Even thought it could be a daunting challenge, he assumed it was salvageable. He studied his vessel the closer they got.

With his walky-talky in his hand, he called ahead for an update, but he received no response. *What the hell is going on?*

-0-

The Blue Sub drifted in the lower currents, damaged from the current conflict. Hydraulic oil seeped from the damaged hull like an injured whale waiting to die. But Yuri would not sit down and wait for death. He had a vessel to command and it was his responsibility to return it to Iga in a reasonable condition.

"What's our status?" Yuri knew the reports would hit him like an avalanche, but he needed to assess the situation. Perhaps there was a way out. The Deep Sea Six did save their ass for once.

"Engine room is down to thirty five percent power. Over half the sub is flooded and we are getting reports of casualties from all decks," Yun continued to read out the reports that bombarded his control board.

"Where's the enemy? Is it still out there?" Yuri saw the massive coalition and before he could discover the outcome, the Blue Sub's systems temporarily went offline due to the initial shockwave.

"I'm picking up the enemy vessel...But..." Yamada paused, then concentrated on the sound pickup.

"I can't be sure, but I think the Deep Sea Six has it pinned down."

Yuri went over to the status board that had everything mapped out. Water dripped onto the plastic-covered plans. The fluorescent light under the worktable seemed to be the only reliable light in the whole room.

He knew they had to get the Blue Sub to the surface in order to begin repairs.

"Use what systems we have to take us up. It's time to access the damage and make repairs. I also want to know what's going on," said Yuri.

-o-

Hayami held Mutio as they left the exit to the domed building. Hayami hated to admit it, but he was glad she was there for support, mentally and physically. His wounds were not bad, but the thought of nearly dying had sucked all the strength from him. Mutio was his guiding star.

Strangely enough, he could feel Mutio's sense of concern and urgency. He looked into her eyes and gave a warm look, and she smiled back. It gave him the strength to carry on, even when plaster and bricks fell down all around them.

The sun shone in the background as both individuals emerged from the dreary bolthole. Mutio flinched slightly as the hot sun stung her skin, but she could bear the discomfort for now. She was more concerned for her lifetime mate. Calls bellowed over the mangled vessels, which were all intertwined in a horrid mass of flesh and metal. With a sideward glance, Mutio saw the rest of the humans approach.

She recognised the individuals and finally felt some sense of relief from the rescue. Mutio could rest and concentrate on locating her friend who seemed to be in more trouble. She knew her secret and it was critical for Tia to be safe. But the more Mutio tried to locate her missing friend, the more concerned she became.

"Hayami, are you okay?" Iga rushed over while Huang nearly fell over after seeing Mutio again in the flesh. The last time she'd seen her was over one year ago.

Mutio gracefully approached Huang and held her hand; she felt the girl's curious mind connect with hers. Before she knew it, the girl spoke to her in a telepathic embrace.

*Mutio loves Hayami?*

Mutio smiled and replied in her mind. *I loves Hayami, but I worried about Tia, my friend.*

*Tia, does she have the baby?*

Mutio looked at Hayami. *Tia is missing. The human, Jake, she loves very much, now they have child, but she is gone. I can't find her.*

Suddenly, a roaring sound echoed throughout the entire area as a missile careened into the sky from the Deep Sea Six. Everyone looked as the torpedo left a cloudy trail in the sky. Something was set off and now everyone wanted to know what was going on, and what that missile was.

-o-

"Are you sure the wheels will not fall off if we keep up this speed?" Jake seemed to be getting more agitated with each second that passed by. The makeshift

vehicle that swept through the mucky land paths made short work on the journey to the main docks, which would give Jake the answers he was looking for.

He'd regained communication with the Deep Sea Six and Iga's crew.

A local communication blackout by the enemy was the original cause and now the vessel was put out of commission. The land team were able to assess and communicate to each other. But Jake needed to arrive in one piece first.

"Don't worry about it. I have done my vehicle checks."

"What vehicle checks?"

"The ones I am supposed to do when I take a vehicle out," Sam replied.

"I didn't see you doing any."

"I did a visual look around, it looked fine."

The deep voice from another crewmember interjected. "Ha, if you call hitting the tire with your foot a vehicle check, I'll grow wings and fly away."

Jake folded his hands as Iga's team appeared in view. "Looks like they are here. Take us over to Iga and perhaps I can finally get some answers."

Then, without warning, a missile flew into the air, leaving behind a purple-grey smoke.

"Shit, the Hope element has been launched." Jake said, staring at the projectile roaring through the air.

"What do you mean launched?" Sam questioned, almost crashing the vehicle into a boulder.

"The missile has a signal release. After I destroyed the shaft, the missile would've launched to a pre-programmed location, which would deploy the element. We have one hour to escape Antarctica."

The vehicle stopped a few meters from Iga and his crew. Jake stepped onto the grassy floor and assessed the damage done to his vessel. It was not as bad as he first thought.

Iga ran up towards Jake with his weapon hissing in his hands. Panicked, he shouted. "Arm yourselves, we just had a run-in with the hybrids. They all fled into the ship, but they might come out at any moment."

Jake and his crew jumped out of the land vehicle and prepared themselves. Iga joined them behind the frame of the vehicle and aimed their weapons at the slurry, nightmarish submarine and all its openings.

Iga looked around at the current scene. "The hybrids fled and hid once the explosion echoed through here," he said, gaining the attention of the small crew behind the vehicle, "It must have scared them. As you can see, we have neutralized several of them but I saw a large number of creatures flee back into the ship."

After a startled moment, everyone began to calm down and the hybrids did not reappear from the submarine, but Iga placed assault teams on standby at the entrances -or supposed entrances- to the vessel. Jake strolled over to one of the suspected openings with his weapon drawn, ready.

"I take it the Hope element was launched a few minutes ago?" Iga raised his hand, pointing at the rocket disappearing into the distance.

Jake replied, "Yes, we have about one hour to leave this place." He touched the fleshy entrance that was closed tight. *Looks like nothing will be exiting this vessel any time soon.*

"I've had reports about Blue Sub. The systems on my vessel are severely damaged and we cannot evacuate both crews and your vessel is stuck on top of this creature." Iga was getting bored and lowered his weapon. He needed to board his vessel and devise some kind of plan to escape. "I don't think the hybrids are going to leave their ship. We should leave now."

Jake turned and looked at Iga. He had a point. Time was short and they needed to escape now. The Deep Sea Six still looked operational and he saw his crew standing on the metal hull. Time to get things moving. But as he backed away, he could not help but stare at the dark creature.

The black octopus creature was a loathsome, swelling mound of tentacles, like gigantic arms of slugs that pulsated under the metallic hull of the Deep Sea Six.

The swelling mass shifted and something that resembled a hatch began to form. Before both men knew what they were in for, Verg sprang out like a jack in the box and ploughed his fist into Jake's chest.

With full force from the impact, Jake was hurled into the air and smashed into an old, abandoned building.

Jake got to his feet and the sharp pain that accompanied his movements indicated that something had been injured in his chest.

Looking through the window, Jake saw Verg leering around the area until he spotted Hayami with Mutio. From that moment, Jake knew that all hell was about to break loose.

"Mutio! You traitorous creature, what have you done?" shouted Verg.

Unexpectedly, Jake spotted a figure moving in the shallow water just a few meters from Verg's location. It was a familiar sight and something that needed more inspection. But before he had the chance to analyse the moving person in the water, Verg lunged forward and grabbed the creature in his hands. With huge fists, Jake was horrified to discover whom Verg had picked up.

"Tia!" Jake sprang forward out of the building and into the open. Hayami lunged forward to protect Mutio and Iga raised his weapon.

Verg relaxed slightly, holding Tia in his wide, muscular hands. *Perhaps he will let her go*, Jake thought.

But that did not happen. In a fit of rage, he shouted, "Humans have mutilated papa's delicate creations! I will rectify that mistake." He threw Tia and she crashed, with life-threatening force onto the hard concrete near Jake's location.

She curled and shook on the floor for mere seconds before Jake was able to support her. Holding her in his arms, she tried to speak, tried to say her final secret, but the only thing she could say was, "Jake..."

She took her final breath and stopped breathing, her lifeless body slumped in Jake's arms and cool blood dripped from his hands. She did not move and died in Jake's hands.

"Tia!..." Jake cried... "Tia!..." But she did not respond.

Verg turned his gaze towards Mutio, who clenched onto Hayami. He moved slightly and finally said, "Mutio, you're next. Papa demands our species to be pure from the humans..."

Verg lunged forward, intent on removing this hybrid filth.

## Chapter 10

(Revenge)

As the Blue Sub bobbed up and down on the surface of the water, the crew opened all the escape hatches and stared at the huge shark-dog hybrid that closed in on Hayami. Yuri saw Mutio panic and Jake was crying on the floor with Tia in his hands. He was not sure, but he guessed she'd died because of the monstrous creature. Now all hell was about to break loose.

What only took a second to do: Jake grabbed hold of a six-foot metal pole and whacked Verg around the head as if he was hitting a cricket ball. To Yuri's horror, Verg swung his head around with the full force of his hand, and hit Jake so hard he was sent flying into the damaged loading port on the Deep Sea six.

It was over within seconds and Jake vanished. *Was he dead?*

Now Verg moved forward, intent on harming the hybrid called Mutio. Yuri stared in disbelief before he finally realized he had to do something. Hayami was in the way and it was clear he intended to defend his lover.

But as he looked on, it was clear he was powerless to help. The sub had lost all its weapons and even the handguns would not reach that far. All Yuri could do was watch.

-0-

An icy fist gripped Hayami's heart. Verg was closing in and the only thing he had was a small dagger he kept as a keepsake. He had a few seconds at best to do something. With that in mind, he shouted to Mutio, "*Run!*"

Understanding his words, Mutios scurried out of the way and hid inside the rubble of the monstrous octopus vessel that the Deep Sea Six rested on. She would be safe for now.

But when Hayami looked up towards the huge shark-like beast, he could not help but feel déjà vu. He'd already done this before, one year ago. But this time it was different. Verg had already killed Jake's mate and now he was after Mutio. Hayami could not let this happen.

Hayami swung his blade across his left and sliced into Verg's skin. Blood seeped through the gap, but the beast did not flinch. He raised his hand and pounded Hayami like a hammer on a nail.

Picking himself up off the ground, Hayami looked with growing concern.

"You will die, human!" Verg bent down and grabbed Hayami's hair.

Using all his power, Hayami wedged the blade into Verg's stomach, driving it home. But it was useless. The weapon was too small and Hayami was only a simple man, not powerful enough to inflict damage on the beast-man. He had no chance in hell.

Unexpectedly, the rest of the land team converged on Verg; they too had seen the monster blatantly kill Tia and they felt a sense of anger towards him. Running forwards, they felt no fear and took it upon themselves to grab any weapon and pound Verg with it.

But Verg was much too powerful for any group of humans to defeat. He was like a giant intent on destroying the human race.

Each hit was like a mortal blow to each human that tried to take on Verg. Bodies flew in the air and Verg still stood with Hayami firmly in his line of sight.

Hayami danced backwards, trying to keep his distance as he thought of a plan to escape his own impending death.

Roaring in the air, Verg lunged forward after him, but was distracted when he heard a thunderous din from behind. He turned around and Hayami took the opportunity to maintain a safe distance.

As if a blister had exploded, the entire section of the Deep Sea Six blew out in all directions. Rubble fell to the ground and something emerged from the gaping hole. Water poured profusely onto the hard floor and something emerged.

Mechanical clacking and hydraulic pistons filled the air. Verg could not make out what was approaching, but it was big. Then, to his disbelief, Jake appeared inside a huge machine.

Jake piloted a huge JCB coloured loader-machine that was not designed for combat. But the machine was the only powerful hardware he could grab.

With himself firmly strapped in the driver's seat, he lunged the gigantic metallic machine forward. His lover has died and he wanted to use the full force of the machine. Nothing was going to stop him now. Verg appeared unruffled at the sight; perhaps he thought he was stronger. *I'll put that to the test.*

Jake moved the joystick sideways and the huge metallic loading arm sprang viciously sideways, pounding Verg on his chest like a wrecking ball on a building. He was sent flying at an incredible velocity into the nearby building.

But Jake was not finished, far from it.

With his anger building up like lava in a magma chamber, he lunged the machine forward and demolished the entire building Verg had fallen into. After locating Verg again, he threw him into the clearing and grabbed an entire wall segment.

Jake's eyes blazed with anger and he brought the entire wall down on top of him. With quick reflexes, Verg moved out of the way and lunged at the machine's legs.

With a thunderous crash, Jake was unable to stop the machine from falling to the ground. He was trapped.

Verg seized the opportunity and began pounding the machine; Jake knew that it was only a matter of time before *he* would be receiving the full blows of his fist.

But the loader was still working. He grabbed the controls and prised himself up, but before Jake was able to get the loader on its feet, Verg hit the metal frame with a pole.

The initial force caused Jake to fall out and land on the hard, muddy floor. *Shit! Now I am vulnerable. But I must avenge Tia.*

Jake stood and saw Verg preparing to take a lunge at him; he drew his side arm and pointed at the shark creature. Jake was lucky to find the firearm in the loading bay and now he had the ultimate weapon.

Without remorse or fear, he emptied the entire clip into the belly of the beast, but Verg kept coming, as if god himself kept him alive. *Why won't he die!*

Jake stood in awe as Verg charged after him, but suddenly Verg was shoved out the way by the loader. *What? Who is driving it?*

To his surprise, Hayami had climbed onboard the machine and had taken the controls. With brisk movements, as if he owned the machine, he smashed the metallic arms into Verg and sent him flying.

A second hit catapulted Verg into the arms of the octopus-type vessel. Hayami used the free time he had and picked up a metal pole. He wasn't finished yet. Verg was not going to escape this time.

Hayami marched the machine towards Verg and lifted the steel rod and brought it down like a jackhammer. Verg sprang out of the way and shifted his body

around. He knew that the machine was much too powerful when driven by a human.

But Verg failed to spot the other arm of the machine, which spun around like a whip and belted Verg. He was tossed through the damaged section of the Deep Sea Six and vanished.

Jake got to his feet and walked over to Tia's motionless body. He had not yet fully recovered from some of the direct blows he received from Verg, but he intended to take her body back with him. She did not deserve to be treated like this and certainly not to be left on this island.

With sharp stabbing pain, he picked up Tia and walked over to the Deep Sea Six. The vessel still functioned and only needed a small reverse thrust to return it to the water. He would take Tia back to New London and perform a proper sea burial. To return her to the sea was tragic, but it was something she might have wanted.

Jake fought back his feelings; his profound love for this hybrid could not go unnoticed by the crew that stood at the sidelines. They changed their attitude from shocked and senseless thoughts about the hybrids to that of grief and sadness. With Tia slumped out in his arms, no one could say anything bad.

-o-

Time was almost up and the element was about to be released. The capsule lay jammed in the ice above the counterpoint of Antarctica, ready to be released.

Everybody had boarded their respective ships and the Blue Sub would need a tow out of the area due to the damage it had received from the monstrous octopus ship.

The caterpillar turbines began to tread the water before Jake ordered full speed. With a whirlwind of air and water, the gigantic engine wrenched the boat of the land and back into the water. Decks flooded and emergency bulkheads fell into place, but most of the systems still functioned. The Deep Sea Six was designed to take much more damage than that.

Alarms on the command deck began to sound as the time had finally expired. The element was released.

A hybrid with the brain the size of a pea swam in the water and he noticed a small marble-shaped ball fall through the water.

He swam close to investigate. It glowed a sky blue and was encased in a silver canister. It fell gracefully through the mucky water.

When he approached closer to it, he saw the word "Hope" edged on the casing. Then he instantly knew it was a human weapon.

*Stupid humans, they left their device!*

As he stretched forward to collect the canister, the casing burst open and the element slid out like a soap bubble in the air.

Then it burst.

Suddenly, ice crystals formed in the water and before the hybrid had the chance to react, he was instantly frozen solid as the chain reaction spread through the water at an unstoppable speed.

-o-

Defining sonic booms roared through the hull of the Deep Sea Six and the sudden uptake of current began to drag the huge submarine towards the epicentre of the disturbance.

Still reeling from the death of Tia, the second in command took control and ordered the vessel out of the area. He was not delicate about his words.

“You there, attach a sodding line to the Blue Sub. You there, contact Iga, tell him to get his ass ready for departure. Navigation, see that hole? Ram us through it at full speed.”

Jake rested Tia on the moon pool and caressed her motionless body. “Tia, why did you leave this sub? You were safe.”

She did not respond. Shouts and calls roared throughout the command deck. Sparks flew around and lights flashed. The second in command issued orders continuously.

Tia bobbed up and down the water. Jake still held her tight, his tears dripping onto the moon pool like raindrop on a lake. “I love you Tia, why did you leave me, what am I to do now?”

She had died, her cold body only held afloat by Jake’s strength.

Mutio stayed in the distance and Jake noticed her. She approached Tia and held her motionless hand. She too was in pain. But Mutio could only shed a small tear because she did not understand the full concept of human love. It was something she would grow to understand. Mutio was lost; she lost her friend and could see the pain in Jake’s eyes.

Tia’s arms flopped into the water.

The vessel shook. Ice crystals began to form on the port windows and the Deep Sea ploughed straight through the small opening in the ice. It rammed through the ice and violent vibrations threw everyone onto the floor. More impacts tore open the front section of the sub like a dot-matrix printer on a fragile piece of paper.

“I want her back, Mutio, is there anything you can do?” His words barely made it out over his crying. He held her tight, unable to let go.

Mutio shook her head; even the hybrids could not bring someone back to life. He needed to accept her fate and let her go. There was nothing more he could do. But Tia was his responsibility; he should have kept her safe. But he *failed!*

A sudden blow sent everyone flying. Jake fell to the floor and Tia floated off in the small pool. Lights went out and control stations violently exploded all over the control deck. Calls and alarms sounded and emergency bulkheads closed.

Someone shouted, “We have cleared the ice tunnels we are in open water.”

-0-

The Deep Sea rammed its way through the surface of the water at a tremendous speed. The second in command ordered the Antarctica view on the screen.

The screen came to life with static and then the crew looked in awe.

With lightning fast speed, huge ice shelves began to swell into the air, creating gigantic structures at random shapes and sizes. The crystal structures grew in mass as the water was sucked in and transformed into random blobs of highly compressed ice. Concussion waves blew outwards before the water began to suck everything around in. Even the clouds in the sky began to freeze like heavy bricks in the sky.

But the Sub was not out of danger yet. Huge tidal shifts began to create a raging current that threatened to overpower the engines of the Deep Sea Six and suck them into the chaos of ice.

## Chapter 11

(Checkpoint)

The entire area had become a tidal storm and the Deep Sea Six ploughed its way through. The caterpillar turbines on the wings of the sub rotated at full speed relentlessly and even threatened to spin out of their bearings.

The currents of the ocean endlessly pulled at the huge vessel, like a mighty tug-of-war between two titans. Nature wanted to drag the Deep Sea Six into the center of the disturbance, but it refused to give in.

The crews scurried around, patching up systems and rescuing stranded crewmen. Finally, the lights came online and the command deck was lit again.

Jake rose to his feet and saw Mutio holding Tia. Mutio didn't want Tia to float away. Jake took hold of Tia and finally guided her to a peaceful location. He would release her to the sea once it was calm.

The raging ice storm carried on, sweeping through Antarctica, creating what looked like an alien city completely out of highly compressed ice. A whirlwind of undersea currents dragged everything into the icy metropolis. The crew looked through the view screen, completely engulfed with awe.

The sun glistened off the highly reflective ice surfaces and the entire structure grew at breathtaking speed.

"How big is that thing going to get? It must be over five thousand feet," said one exaggerating crewmember.

"Look at all that water! It looks like the insides of a huge monster," Sam muttered, tripping over the footstep. The structure swelled into the sky, draining all the water from the ocean.

Then everyone began to feel faint tugs as the Deep Sea Six managed to break away from the torrential tides. The Blue Sub was tossed around like a balloon on a high wind as the tow cable swayed, vibrated and then shook. Ice blocks struck it, sending violent vibrations through the bulkheads. But the Blue Sub was eventually towed to safety.

Moving quickly, the Deep Sea Six soon entered quiet waters. News from around the world began to flood the airwaves about the water level lowering and the visibility of land buildings could be seen under the water. Everyone knew that it would take several weeks for the water level to be back to normal, but the important thing was that Earth had escaped its doom.

-0-

Jake sat beside the moon pool, deep in thought. It's been several hours since their hasty departure from Antarctica and the frantic chaos slowly settled down. The report beside him contained detailed damage reports and the current efficiency of the boat. The second in command was holding the fort perfectly for the time being. Jake didn't feel like doing anything. He was lost. Then someone interrupted him.

"Sir, you better have a look at this..."

"What is it?"

"I don't know how to say this, but something has infected the major bio-filter on the central aqua chamber. You've got to see this."

Jake was annoyed. "Why me, get someone else to purge it. I'm not in the mood."

"Sir, it's growing in there... You need to see!"

Jake grudgingly gave in and proceeded to the central aqua chamber. The initial view was impressive. The chamber was huge, spanning several decks and just

smaller than a football pitch. Aqua tunnels dumped a steady stream of water into the central chamber and water poured in from every entrance.

Green bio-filters were installed in several aqua ducts and pumps kept the flow of water moving around the carefully constructed infrastructure.

Jake inhaled deeply. The fresh ocean smell felt enchanting and the general atmosphere was moist. He could feel the water droplets on his face and could imagine Tia spending her time here. She would have liked this place.

"Sir, some of my team was investigating why the primary filter output has decreased by thirty percent. This area was undamaged and was a little odd." The technician climbed the metallic stairs to the central filter level. Jake followed behind, hands wet from the damp railings.

He walked along the gangway to a pool of flowing water filled with seaweed-colored filters. The filters stretched from one side of the aqua duct to the other. Jake remembered this place well, because the strips of filters were extremely expensive.

Impatient, Jake began, "What's the problem?"

The technician edged himself into the water and parted some of the filter strips. The sudden release of fresh ozone made Jake light-headed. "Upon closer inspection, we discovered this..." The technician was at a loss for words. "We found this thing attached to the filters."

The technician parted more of the bio-filters and Jake could clearly see something embedded in the fine honeycomb of the filters' filaments. It looked like a red, organic vein.

"At first I thought it was some kind of parasite. But when I went in for a closer look, I found this." The technician prompted Jake to follow him.

Out of curiosity, he grudgingly got inside the filter pool and walked slowly to the area in question. Kino and Hayami watched from the gangways.

"Open the bio-filter strips here." The technician pointed to the strips that were in the center of the pool. Jake parted the strips and was shocked to discover a huge clump of organic mass burned into the layers of bio-filters. Veins spread out in all directions and a clear jelly substance surrounded something inside. Something growing. Jake almost fell over; it resembled the inside of an egg. Just what was it?

"Upon finding this, I called the medic to have a look." The technician gulped nervously. "It appears to be a humanoid child."

Jake felt a chill up his spine and to everyone's surprise, Huang rushed up to the overhead railing and said, "Tia's baby, Tia's baby, Tia's baby."

While jumping up and down, she accidentally dropped her teddy bear into the water.

Mutio swam up amongst the bio-filters and inspected the growth that was fused with the filter, "Tia...s... Baby." She smiled, looking at the small figure moving inside.

Jake almost collapsed with disbelief, but the technician caught his falling body. Regaining his balance and thought, Jake continued. "How's this possible? Is the baby okay?"

The doctor, who accompanied them into the chamber, replied after scrolling through his data pad. "The embryo seems to be developing at an incredible rate. I've never seen anything like it. From what I can guess, the embryo has merged with the bio-filters and is using them to sustain itself and gather nutrients."

The technician interjected. "That's why the pumps are down thirty percent."

Jake gave the technician a look of scorn, but the doctor continued. "So far the baby has grown to that of a newborn baby in the space of a few days. See the egg sack, that's where your child will emerge. I can only guess that in their natural

habitat, the mother-" The doctor gave a sympathetic look towards Jake. "-Or your partner would have traveled to a populated coral reef and secreted her egg. It would then latch on and grow. The implications of this are staggering... I've already discovered some new medical breakthroughs..." Jake cut him off.

"Do you know the sex of my child? No wait, on second thought, don't tell me." Jake spread more of the filter layers and became mesmerized at the pulsating sack that was firmly embedded in the sub's aqua filtration system. Jake could only imagine Tia being attracted to a place like this and the bio filters would provide all the food necessary to create their child. This was indeed a gift that could help bring himself from the edge of despair. He'd already watched Tia die in his arms; he wasn't going to let that happen to his child.

He looked on deeper and through the fine transparent membrane that was encased in a jell sack. Inside a small life form moved. He could see long ears, mixed colors of skin and the prominent yellow and black features, more detailed than the mother. The baby seemed beautiful, but the ambient light was too low to see much detail.

Jake issued orders. "I want guards posted in this area at all times. I also want the filtration pumps operating at full capacity and keep a supply of fresh sea water flowing into this room. Doctor, I want you to monitor my baby and let me know immediately if there is a problem..." Jake was suddenly cut off by an alarmed call over the intercom.

"All hands, intruder detected in the loading bay...it...it's that beast creature... Verg is in the..." the transmission was cut.

-0-

The vessel shook and the flickering lights indicated that they were under attack.

Jake got to his feet after taking a nosedive into the salty water. *That fucking beast, I'm going to kill him for the pain he's caused.*

Jake shot out of the water and ran down the passageway. Hayami quickly followed behind. The heavy breathing and the furious pounding off his heart was all Jake could hear. He wanted his revenge; boy did he want it.

More vibrations shook the boat, giving the crew wobbly legs.

"Something's up, and it's all down to Verg," Jake mused as he helped Hayami to his feet. "I think that creature Verg is damaging my boat."

"He's completely out of control. We'll need to put *it* down. I should have done it over one year ago, but I didn't." The men stopped running and Jake was in deep thought. Hayami continued, "I'm sorry that my ignorance has cost you Tia. If I'd killed Verg, Tia might be alive today."

"There's no point in laying blame on one person. I'm to blame as well. If she'd stayed on New London she would have been safe." Jake paused, looked down and remembered the pain and suffering she went through, the very last thoughts she had and what that beast had done to her. No, he will make sure *it* pays for taking such an innocent life.

Jake looked up, red-faced. "Let's go."

They made their way to the loading bay, heavy boots thumping on the metal plates. Jake didn't care if Verg heard them coming; Jake wanted *him* to know that his executioners were approaching.

"You take loader one and I'll take loader three. That son-of-a-bitch is going to pay."

As the men rushed towards the door, a thunderous din greeted them. Jake and Hayami froze. Huge fists pounded on the steel door. Moments later, a dent

appeared and then another. After five more hits, the door started to buckle under the onslaught.

When the steel door finally failed, Verg lunged towards the two men. His teeth were showing, drool leaked from his mouth and blood poured from numerous wounds. But the two humans were defenseless. No machines to help them, no weapons.

Verg moved towards Jake, intent to kill.

Jake backed into the local junction box and got an idea. He wrenched the high voltage cable from the box and managed to turn in time to catch Verg's chest. The shock was enough to send Verg flying into the adjacent wall but the impact shattered the aqua tunnel, spilling water everywhere. The high voltage cable fell to the floor and everyone received an electric jolt. Hayami jumped, fell and then managed to get way. However, Jake was too close; he was electrocuted and passed out.

The local circuit breaker kicked in a few seconds later and saved his life. However, Hayami was alone with Verg.

Verg got up, water pouring from the aqua tunnel behind. It was a horrifying sight as the light flickered around. Hayami needed to find a more secure location to fight and finish the job he should have done one year ago.

Then he saw a clear path. He lunged forward towards the grampus bays; there he could use something to combat Verg.

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Upon entering the grampus bays, he headed towards the nearest unit. He looked behind himself and saw Verg galloping up the poorly lit tunnel towards him. Each segment of faintly lit sector showed Verg that much closer.

Hayami didn't have much time. He got in the cockpit, activated the weapon systems and opened fire. Verg swerved, ducked and then gunned for Hayami. His weapon shot indiscriminately in all directions, blowing up other grampuses and punching huge two-meter holes into the surrounding bulkheads. Water poured in and electrical circuits began to violently short out.

As the lights began to flicker out, Hayami activated the jet engines and rammed Verg straight through the bulkhead wall.

Finally, after he smashed through the second bulkhead, they landed in the loading bay. After five minutes of fighting, Hayami was surprised to see Jake inside one of the loaders.

Jake spoke over the sparks and gushing water. "I'll take it from here, Hayami."

Jake used the loader arms, grabbed Verg, and then threw him with incredible force through a third bulkhead.

Jake forced his way through the damaged bulkhead and found himself inside the generator room.

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In the background to his right, three huge twenty-four foot power generators hummed, dwarfing anything that was in the room. To his right was the automatic gearing system and a huge drive shaft that went down the middle of the room, connecting all the generators to the gearing system.

Verg was attempting to get himself off the red floor. Jake moved the loader at its maximum speed - which was not very fast - and attempted to plough the loader's arm into Verg's back. But Verg did the unexpected and dodged the arm, spun behind Jake, grabbed the back of his loader and threw him to the floor.

Jake struggled to control the machine, but in a split second, as Verg lunged towards Jake, Jake spun the loader on its back and kicked its hydraulic feet into the beast's stomach.

Verg was flung into the automatic gears and all Jake heard was the crunching of bones and the mincing of meat.

Verg gave one last ditch effort to free himself, yelling as loudly as he could.

Jake heard the automatic gears change, to compensate for the additional load. Verg didn't stand a chance as the teeth of the gears munched through his body. Verg's screams were stopped when the final gear crushed his head.

Jake got out of the loader and looked at the main automatic gears. Lubricated by Verg's blood, the gears returned to their normal operating speed, as if nothing had happened.

Hayami stood on the other side of the room.

"Verg's gone." Jake walked closer. "Tia is gone. But I still have my child."

"You will find a way, Jake. Tia wouldn't want you to suffer. She's still in your heart and inside the new child she gave you." Such touching words from Hayami; Jake was surprised.

-0-

*One year later.*

The Deep Sea Six floated on the surface of the ocean. Taking in fresh air was necessary because Sam forgot to order a new batch of bio-filters for the vessel. Jake sometimes wondered how Sam managed it this far in the navy, but he did have his uses.

Leaned over at the moon pool, Jake swayed his hands in the water, thinking about Tia. Always thinking about Tia, and his child.

He/She was due to hatch soon.

Jake strolled over the medical reports and was shocked to discover that his baby was at the age of a two year old. Zorndyke must have done something to rapidly speed growth.

A plasma screen showed an overenthusiastic scientist explaining the dramatic ocean water level, while other scientists explained the implications of such a dramatic environmental change. It appeared to be a huge waste of time and money to air the show, so Jake left the room.

It was almost a day since he last inspected the egg sack that had now devoured the entire section of bio filters and was the size of a grampus. The strange life form looked different from a distance.

Upon closer examination Jake noticed, with horror, that the egg sack had ruptured and the infant life form had vanished. Jake sounded the alarm. Did the infant swim away? Did something attack it? Jake was full of worry.

A call came over his earpiece. "Captain, you better get to the surface."

Jake responded. "What's the problem?"

"That Iga has arrived with his vessel. But sir, that's not the only thing. You need to get up here!"

Jake scrunched his nose, suppressed his worries and proceeded to the exit of his boat. He felt his child somewhere; he knew that he/she was safe and probably swimming about.

But as he walked through the nearest passageway, he saw his crew in the background staring in awe at the aqua tunnel windows.

Jake followed their gaze and was completely shocked to discover aquatic hybrids swimming through the tunnels. Several, in fact, with the same characteristics as Tia.

Blue Sub No 6: The Year After.  
Part 4

"Just what the hell is going on?" one crewmember asked.  
Jake carried on. If they were inside his vessel, what was outside?

-o-

Jake finally crawled through the port hatch to the surface and was blinded by the momentary sunlight.

Once he shaded his eyes, Jake couldn't believe what he was witnessing.

Berthed beside the Deep Sea Six, the Blue Sub huddled close, but both vessels were surrounded by aquatic females. They swam in the water and some began to climb on the hull of the explorer when Jake came into view.

Crewmembers panicked, thinking they were under attack, but suddenly a young girl reassured the crew.

"Don't worry, they are not here to hurt us," Huang said.

Then a familiar hybrid emerged from the crowded water. Red crimson eyes glowed through the endless sea of blue. It was Mutio. Then Jake saw it...

Lightly bobbing up and down in the water was the most beautiful creature he had ever witnessed. Artic blue eyes, silver blue hair, long pointy ears and the most dazzling display of colors all over her skin, Jake's child swam in perfect unison with the waves.

Mutio cradled the very young child as she walked up the hull of the sub; the aquatic females remained in the water and began to sing.

The crew was taken back, completely lost in awe.

Mutio approached Jake, cradling his child. She looked at Huang.

"Mutio says, this child is from Tia. This is the only comfort she can give you. She knows how much you loved her and that love is now in the form of this child. Cherish the child Tia has given to you. She will forever live on, inside her."

Jake stretched his hands and Mutio passed the hybrid child to him. He could not hold back his tears. Tia's looks and colors were in the child's face; she was the perfect child. Tia had given Jake the most remarkable gift someone could give. A child, a girl.

The aquatic hybrids in the water sang and swayed; it was some kind of moment, but Jake was caught up in his own moment.

Mutio went over to Hayami and held his hand. She spoke. "Hayami... Mutio..." she touched her stomach and then Hayami knew exactly what she tried to say.

-o-

In the months to come, Jake decided to raise his child, Nira, back at new London. His family was overwhelmed with joy and 'grandma' entertained the overexcited crew. His loss of Tia would never go away, but his small child would give him strength.

Hayami and Mutio began their new life in a reconstructed city in Japan with a fresh supply of Deep Sea Six's bio filters. Mutio was pregnant and Hayami was about to embark on his new journey.

With the Earth orbit stable around the sun, no one would ever forget the horrors Zorndyke had created or the wonders he had made. Humankind has now entered a new era.

This is the end of (*Blue Submarine No 6: The Year After.*)

**Author note:**

It has given me great pleasure to create this fanfiction for the fans of Blue Submarine No 6. Ever since I saw the program I was enchanted by its storyline and characters and couldn't resist writing something.

It was a pity that only a few episodes of this series were created and I hope that this story could inspire someone to continue the epic.

Many elements in the story were extremely hard to create and to overcome, especially the deaths of a few characters. I'm sorry for the readers whom I might have upset.

The story has been an incredible adventure for everyone involved and I hope this story is widely distributed and shared with all the fans in the world.

I would also like to thank all the people who have written reviews that have encouraged me to continue. Without them, the story might have been cut short.

Thank you all for reading this fanfiction.

Shane.