

## Chapter 4

All that talk of a mysterious place and having a copy of my uncle's journal has made me a tad uneasy. In a space of a week I found out my uncle had an affair with my mother, I had a long lost 16-year-old cousin wise beyond his years, and a mystery to help solve. Where was I to begin? It was a lot for my brain to comprehend and I also had to go to work today. My mind was off in distant thought, distracted and buzzing at a hundred miles per hour. How was I to go to work and have a productive day interpreting maritime data?

What was even more puzzling was that for the first time in a long time I did not have any dreams of a tsunami coming and crashing over me. I had no dream at all. My brain had shut itself off and had a true rest.

I picked up my phone and found a text message reading: *Would you like to come to dinner with me? xxx James.* The message was sharp and straight to the point. My heart started pounding at a hundred miles per hour. With all the events unfolding the way they had, I had forgotten all about my mysterious evening with James. It wasn't that I had forgotten. I knew spent the evening with him, but I couldn't fully remember what had happened and what I got up to because I was a tad drunk that night. On top of that I had so much else on my mind. I couldn't decide if I should go to dinner with him or not. Should I say yes or no? When did he want to take me to dinner? Why? I texted back: *Yes, when? xxx Cottony.* I thought I would worry about all that later. Then almost instantly he replied: *Does Wednesday at 6pm work?* I replied: *Yes.* He replied: *I will pick you up at your house at 6pm Wednesday xxx James.* I sent him a smiley face back. I had three whole days between now and my dinner with James and I had to get ready for work.

However, I could not stop thinking about the upcoming dinner and what had happened the other week. Did anything really happen? I didn't want to mention something at the dinner that I should have already known. I didn't want to make a fool of myself. Three days is a long time I told myself. I have time to prepare.

I went and got my skirt and shirt out the cupboard and went and had a shower. I came out all dressed and ready for work. I had some breakfast. I drove myself to work. I still had my uncle's journal in my handbag. I might have some time to read it later today.

\*

I arrived at my office at around 8am. I walked in and was greeted by some of my co-workers. I loved my job. I was responsible for interpreting maritime data and managing our information about the environment, oceans, scientific studies and monitoring any changes. The job was a bit more involved than that, but that's the basics of it. I spent large amounts of my day researching oceans and pointing out changes, inconsistencies and finding studies and information for other scientists in our office. Sometimes if I was lucky, I got to go out to sea onboard vessels or attend events and travel.

My boss was a kind man named Alfie who left me alone most of the time to get on with things. I loved the freedom. Alfie was in his 40s and had worked as a marine scientist most of his life and he was a good leader. He had a family, had brown hair and wore these thick set glasses that made him stand out.

I went and sat down at my desk and unpacked. I turned my computer on and got all the databases open and logged onto the internet information resources ready to begin my day. I had the best of everything. Our office was on the waterfront and even though I was not seated directly in front of a window I could see out to the ocean if I leaned back a little in my chair. When I first started at the job I used to lean back and get up and go and stare out the windows on my lunch break looking at the boardwalk and vast ocean. I don't do that as much these days because I have somehow got used to the view. But what I do love is when I can go out for walks and have lunch outside if its not too hot. Some days, especially in summer, its just too hot to go anywhere and being inside with the air conditioning is the only choice.

I noticed that there was an envelop on my desk addressed to me. I opened it and inside was a single torn piece of paper with a message scrolled in hard to read handwriting. The message read:

*Cottony,*

*Seallinwold is real. Your uncle had the answer. Please be careful.*

*Regards*

*LR*

I dropped the torn piece of paper from my hand as I read it. What the hell was that about? Why would I get a strange message like that? Why would someone feel the need to inform me about Seallinwold being real? Whoever left me the note knew enough about me to know where I worked. I had many questions I needed answering. I felt the need to ask Alfie if he knew anything about the letter and who put it on my desk.

“Alfie,” I called him over to my desk.

“Yes, Cottony how was your weekend,” he asked with a cheering grin.

“Good thanks and you?” I asked. I liked hearing about his exploits sailing and what his family got up to on weekends. I didn’t feel the need to talk to him about what I got up to, as it was something I didn’t even believe or feel comfortable talking to others about just yet. Not with the strange box full of weird books and my uncle’s passing.

“Yes, great we went sailing,” stated Alfie and I was happy for him. He loved the water just as much as I did. I guess that is why we both ended up where we did with our careers.

“Um... do you know anything about this?” I asked him pointing to the envelope and the torn piece of paper that I had put back on my desk.

“Um...can’t say I do Cottony sorry,” Alfie shrugged.

“That’s ok,” I replied shrugging back not wanting to make a big deal about it. I will do some more investigating myself.

“Ok well I will be over at my desk if you need me. Don’t forget to read through the tender applications today please if you have some time.” We were hiring a contractor for an environmental job and I had some down time and offered to read through the tenders and rate them before our meeting and decision.

“OK thanks,” I replied. I picked up the torn tatty piece of paper and just read it again to reassure myself I did find it on my desk. I leant back in my chair and looked out the window. The water I could see in the distance was calm and blue and the sky also blue with a few white fluffy clouds.

I had work to do and the piece of paper with the strange message on it had to wait. Everything had to wait and yet I was too easily distracted by those things that were on my mind. The journal, the piece of paper, information about my cousin etc. etc. etc. The distractions were real.

During lunch time I decided to read my uncle's journal. I retrieved it from my handbag and read it to myself.

*20<sup>th</sup> May 2014. Well I had made that trip to the library and no one had heard anything about my book Seallinwold. The trip was a lost cause. One of the librarians thought I was crazy even after I pulled the book out to show her. She said who created this! I mean I thought I would have some answers from the librarians. Surely a strange book like that would have been known by someone?*

*I have never been one to read a lot and now I find myself drawn to this book like a rash. I was going to mention it to Lorena, but she is still too occupied. What did I expect? She was always too occupied!*

*One of the librarians mentioned I go speak to a specialist friend of hers who knows more about ancient manuscripts. She gave me her details. I might just do that.*

*On another aspect of the text in the book, I have started grouping all the same words and symbols together. As an example, in the book there is a reoccurring word that looks like 'xtzay' when it is written down and I have no idea what that word means, but it occurs multiple times in the book. I will do this for other words until I have identified all the reoccurring words and then deciphered what all the text and scribble means. Also, some of the writing is in symbols. It's like reading hieroglyphs, but quite different. That's how other text were deciphered, by singling out reoccurring words or letters and finding their meaning. By deciphering the text that way I might have a stronger chance of winning and discovering what the book is all about. Anyway, working it all out is going to take me years, I fear! For someone who struggles reading the English language I can see I have a battle in front of me. I might have to consult a linguist.*

*What is the point of all this? I don't know yet. Is this a code? I don't know. Is this some sort of ancient text the likes of stargate has never seen? I doubt it. All I know is I really want to figure out what the book is all about and I will.*

*Also, there is a map on the front page and I can tell its not of a known place here on earth that I have ever seen on any maps. It amazes me how such a mysterious map has appeared in this book. I feel I am reading something out of treasure island or the lost world or leagues under the sea! Of course, I am not reading any such book, but I am just so curious as to what place that map represents. Is it a land that no longer exists in its current form here on earth, like Atlantis for example? I am not saying it is Atlantis because of course it isn't. But I know the island of Santorini was thought to be Atlantis and because of the volcanic eruption the landscape of the island changed. So maybe that map in the book existed and then the landscape changed and now it is a place that looks different? But if the librarians can't help me (and I doubt the expert specialist will be able to either!) then who do I ask? An archaeologist? Or will they think I am a weird person too? I swear this is not something I can put down. I must keep investigating it. Signed Frank.*

I took a big bite into my sandwich and swished down some coffee while I thought about what I just read. Well that is an interesting thing and now I know my uncle was making some progress with his investigations. If he was that far along with it back in 2014, then well maybe he had solved something? I am sure he had. That reminded me that I was going to also do some further investigating into my uncle's death. I mean it all seems a little strange that he died so suddenly of a heart attack. Unless he discovered something while on his 'fact-finding mission' that was so life changing that it caused him to have a heart attack. Is that the answer? We don't traditionally have a history of heart failure in our family as far as I know and that is what is puzzling me. I am sure there is some logical explanation. I will find out.

I put the journal back in my handbag, finished lunch and went on reading through the tenders as I was instructed. Meanwhile, I was plagued with thoughts of my uncle's journal. I knew I had more reading to do and I would when I got home. I wasn't allowed to be plagued while at work I told myself.

The day ended just as swiftly as it begun, and I left the office to go home to read the next chapter of my uncle's journal.