

Up the Deben

Chapter 1 Sylvie's Meltdown

When the scream came it was ear-splitting and one of Sylvie's best. She was quite adept at screaming, but this even beat the Macdonald's Restaurant meltdown of two months ago. I thought that the Macdonald's revelation deserved a loud grizzle, but the sound that reverberated around the whole of the ground floor was louder than any that she had voiced before. I knew that something was up when Dad had told us that we were having lunch at MacDonald's. Usually, we were not allowed to eat burgers or chips or anything else like that and we were more likely to end up at Pepe's Vegetarian Hacienda for a three-bean burrito or a Pepe's special stew which looked like a spicy stew with chunks of fish, but the chunks of fish were a tofu substitute.

"Nothing with eyes," Mum would say and for the most part we would have meatless meals at home, and when we went out. Pepe's was my Mum's particular favourite. I thought that it was her favourite because the spices covered the blandness of Pepe's Mexican Chef's cooking. Both Pepe and his Chef sported very authentic Mexican moustaches, but Pepe was from Balham and Chef Ricardo from Wolverhampton. The Mexican magic was rather compromised when Chef Ricardo would holler contents of the order, from the open kitchen, in an accent that could have only emanated in the West Midlands. He made no attempt to disguise the accent in favour of a Mexican flavour, unlike his food.

So, the visit to MacDonald's that Saturday morning followed several nights of very vocal arguments of Mum and Dad followed by door slamming and Dad ending up in the guestroom.

"So, what would you like?" asked Dad, "anything you want." I went for the Bacon Clubhouse Double with fries, a Strawberry Milkshake and a Smarties McFlury and Sylvie a Crispy Chicken Salad and a bottle of Buxton still mineral water. She had been on a health kick since she had started hanging around with Ryan Williams at School. I though he was a bit of a twit, and he was the only boy in

year eleven with a comb which he would use very frequently. Dad returned with the tray laden with our lunch and a coffee for himself. I fell upon mine and Sylvie picked at the salad daintily with the plastic fork. I was halfway through my burger when Dad caused the Sylvie meltdown. I had heard that this was a frequent occurrence at School but as I was in year ten, I never got to see them, only at home. She was once sent home with a note from the Headteacher expressing her concern at Sylvie's lack of control over her feelings, but Mum had dismissed it as something she will grow out of when I overheard her discussing the letter with Dad. Your mum is a hippy, Dad would say which I had to Google and then it became clear that she would never see the bad in anyone even her own kids, so it was always Dad to tell us off which from my point of view was far too frequently, but then he had his own problems.

"Your Mother and I have agreed that I should move out." He then went on to say that it was nothing to do with us but was a..., but I never heard the end of the sentence because Sylvie let out the loudest scream that her lungs could produce followed by a lot of fist pounding on the table and then she got up and walked out the door and we could see her stamping her feet through the large and very transparent restaurant window. "Jamie clean this up and I will see you outside," said Dad which could be heard very clearly because the whole of the restaurant had fallen silent. So, I cleaned up the uneaten food and shot it into the bin with the swung opening, joined Dad in the car where Sylvie was sat strapped into the back seat sobbing uncontrollably. That afternoon I was sent to my room and Sylvie was closeted with Mum and Dad in the lounge and I only heard the occasional shout from her.

Life pretty much got back to normal after that. Sylvie morose as ever refused to speak to Dad when she found out that he had been seeing another woman, Charly, and he duly moved out to be with Charly in a flat in town. Although we were invited to spend time with Dad and Charly, Sylvie refused, and I was only allowed to be picked up by Dad and taken to a restaurant. We never went back to his flat and when Mum found out that Charly had walked to the

Café, where I was having my favourite All Day Breakfast to see me, I was not allowed to see Dad for a whole month. That was after about three months after the McDonalds Sylvie meltdown.

Then another meltdown. I thought that the scream would reduce to heavy sobbing, as was normal, but this went on and on and on, so I thought that I should put down my Xbox controller and go and have a look. Pity because I had not been to this level of Grand Theft Auto 4 which I had bought with my Grandparent's Christmas money. Reaching this level when I can only play when I knew that neither of my parents, and then just my Mum, were not going to burst into my room, was an excellent achievement. I went down the stairs where Mum was standing by Sylvie who was seated at the breakfast bar sobbing, having finally stopped screaming. Mum pulled Sylvie onto her feet and hugged her even though she was taller than Mum who was quite small.

"I know you don't want to move darling, but we have no choice. Your Dad needs money from this house so he can buy somewhere for him and his girlfriend and we need to move somewhere. I am sure you will like the cottage and it is not far from Nanny and Grandad so we can spend more time with them."

This was the first time that I heard about moving and it did not bother me. I can't stand my School, had no real friends and I spend my lunch hours sitting on my own. I hope that my new School is more friendly. "Where are we going Mum?" I asked.

"It is near to Ramsholt," she said, "you remember where we ate lunch at that pub with Nanny and Grandad,"

"Ramsholt Arms," said Sylvie "but there is nothing there!" oops another meltdown I thought but then Mum said.

"I have got you both into a good school," she suggested glossing over the 'nothing there' remark from Sylvie and the impending meltdown.

"What school; is it mixed?" she asked almost not understandable through the sobbing.

"Yes," said Mum and Sylvie stopped crying. More boys for Sylvie to moon over I thought.

"Have you got a house I asked?"

“Yes, a lovely cottage between Ramsholt and Alderton.” I thought that Sylvie would go off on one because I knew there really was nothing there, maybe she was thinking of the new boys at her new School. “I saw it when we went to Grandad and Grandma’s.”

Now, I had I thought it was a bit strange when we went up to Nan and Grandad’s. Normally they come to visit us because their place is not very big and it is a bit of a squeeze for us all and I have to sleep on their couch with Sylvie and Mum sharing the spare bed. Their house a little bungalow across the road from the Thorpeness Meare, had just the two bedrooms with no dining room.

So, Grandad was detailed to look after us with Nan going off with Mum. After we played two games of Cluedo, Sylvie got bored and started to look at her phone. Unfortunately, Grandad does not have WIFI so she soon ran out of credit and to avoid one of the well-known meltdowns, as he was not prepared to finance a mobile top-up, he agreed to take us out.

“So, what can we do Grandad?” Sylvie asked as we left the bungalow.

“Well, we have the mini golf at the Hotel, or the Meare where we can hire a boat or we can go onto the beach.”

“I don’t like the beach it is difficult to walk on and there is nothing to do there. Let’s go on a boat.”

I was not surprised that Sylvie had asked for the boat. The Beach is just stones with dog walkers, and she hates any sort of golf. Dad had tried to get us to do golf at the driving range, but after trying to hit a ball twice with the hired club she started moaning and went and sat on the seat by the bay looking at her phone. She was probably texting Ryan, but he would often not reply which would push her into a sulk.

“OK,” said Grandad.

We left the house, crossed the road and walked up to the Boathouse where the boats are hired. When we got there was a long queue waiting for boats, so we joined the back as Grandad whispered to me “bloody tourists, you can’t move for them on bank holidays.”

It was the May Day weekend, and it was really warm so both Sylvie and I were dressed in shorts and tee shirts and although Mum had packed jumpers and some slacks for Sylvie, I didn't think we were going to need them. I always wore shorts because mum said I was too young for trousers which was another reason for my lonely days at School with all of my year in trousers. They called me a nerd. OK I am clever and am always top of the class in Maths, English, Chemistry and Physics. I have been moved up one year but even then, I am still top of the class and my head of year said that I could not go up any further. This was at my parents' teachers evening.

We finally got to the front of the queue Grandad hired one of the larger rowing boats where Sylvie and I could sit in the back and Grandad would row. When he asked to hire the boat for an hour the Boatman said with a question "An hour?"

"Yes," said Grandad and handed over the ten quid. This time his whisper was against the Boatman. "Bloody man. I was an Oxford blue in the coxed fours. I could beat him round the Meare."

I think Grandad had chosen an hour to keep Sylvie occupied to stop her moaning. We got in the boat and Sylvie, and Grandad took the oars. "You steer Jamie and make sure that we don't crash into any of the Islands. Let's go to Crusoe's Island and then down the Northwest Passage to the Dragon's Den." When we were waiting in the queue, I went off to read about the Meare and it was the brainchild of Glencairn Stuart Ogilvie, the creator of Thorpeness and friend of J.M. Barrie the writer of Peter Pan. The Meare is said to be the inspiration for Barrie's book and many parts of the Meare have exhibits or islands inspired by the book. As a result of the insult by the boatman Grandad took off at a fair pace making sure that his oars dipped the requisite amount into the water so that he could pull hard on the shafts and soon we were skimming down the channel past Wendy's house and Peter Pan's Island. As soon as we could no longer be seen from the Boathouse Grandad slowed down as he was puffing quite heavily and we drifted through the remainder of the channel with the oars held out of the water. We came out of the channel and he resumed rowing and took us back

Past Otter Island and Crusoe's Island and up the Northwest Passage to the Dragons Lair. All the time that Grandad had been rowing Sylvie had been leaning back and trailing her hand in the water.

"Does anyone else want to row," asked Grandad who looked quite pooped and was sweating profusely.

"I will," I said but I think he was hoping that Sylvie would offer as she was a full head taller than I and would find rowing much easier than me.

"I think you may be a bit small, so let's tie up at the hotel and have a look at the mini golf to see if you might like to try it." Sylvie tutted at the mention of golf, but she could not do anything being marooned on the boat, so she just went back to trailing her hand in the water as Grandad rowed back along the North-West Passage tied up at the small jetty below the Hotel. "Here we are," said Grandad, "are you coming Sylvie?"

"No, I'll stay here until you come back." We had a look at the mini golf, but the queue to get to the first hole was longer than the queue for the boats and there were more groups on their way coming around the side of the Hotel carrying putters. We watched a few people tee off and when we got back Sylvie was standing in the car park on her phone.

"They've got open WIFI. Can we go to the bar for a drink?"

"No dear," said Grandad "we need to get the boat back, but we can have a drink and lunch at Patsy's Pastries."

"Do they have free WIFI there?" Sylvie asked. Grandad shrugged. If he did not have WIFI at home, why would he know if Patsy's had it. Back in the boat, Sylvie continued typing into her phone and receiving messages until she lost the signal and she put it in her pocket in a huff. It took no time to get back to the Boathouse with Grandad expertly performing a one-eighty degree turn and backing the boat to the wharf. The Boatman took the rear rope and tied it off to the mooring post and we climbed off the back and made our way to Patsy's Pastries just across the road from the Meare. It was busy, but as we entered a table of four vacated and we grabbed it fast. I chose a cream horn and a coke and Sylvie wanted her usual bottle of still water.

“Can you ask them if they have WIFI,” Sylvie asked as Grandad went to the counter to make our order. He did not say anything but just pointed to the sign on the wall announcing the WIFI server name and password. That was enough for Sylvie who had her head down messaging until it her phone rang. She answered it and said, “it is Mum. They are back at the bungalow.”

Chapter 2 Moving Day

Moving day was as bleak day in July which suited Sylvie’s mood as she regularly reminded us that she was leaving her School, her friends and the comb toting Ryan Evans. To me it was a chance to make a new start to get away from the people who call me a nerd, to a new school where hopefully the natives would be a lot friendlier. Frome was not that big, but it was a bloody sight bigger than Ramsholt. I had checked out the route we would be taking, and it was at least 200 miles but of course Mum would go wrong so it could end up a lot longer than that. It was fortunate that we had already gone to Thorpeness recently so at least we knew the way there and that was only a few miles out of our way. Mum did not agree with Satnavs, as she did not agree with log fires, natural gas usage, meat, nuclear energy, the Conservative Government, Labour, the Liberals and if there was not a Green Party Candidate standing our area she did not agree with elections. Even our car was fifteen years old because she said she did not want the carbon emissions of building new one. Dad drove, as she put it, a gas guzzling new Mercedes but he could not convince her to get a new car even though her Citroen Berlingo would break down quite frequently. It was such a frequent an occurrence that the AA refused to attend any more breakdowns and we had to rely on the local garage, who did not seem to mind because they had a fair income stream collecting the car and fixing it.

The Van that the moving company sent was quite small compared to the removal lorries that I had seen driving around Frome, but Mum had said that we would be only taking our

bedroom furniture so for me that was my bed, my desk and wardrobe and similar for Sylvie and Mum except they don't have desks but dressing tables. Sylvie did her homework in Dad's den although he was never happy about that when he was at home but she had to do her homework somewhere. Mind you he would often check on her and find her on Facebook on his laptop and that would be followed a lot of shouting and the usual meltdown by Sylvie as he removed the laptop leaving her with just her schoolbooks. Mum never let her take her phone into the den when homework was being done.

Mum has said that all the rest of the furniture would be used by Dad in his new house with Charly and now, we had been told, the new baby. It only took hour for the removing men to load our beds and stuff including 10 boxes of various bits and pieces. All our clothes were either in suitcases or bags in the Berlingo with the box containing the appropriate stuff to make tea when we got the house. One of the removal men saw me studying the out-of-date road atlas which we would use and asked if they could take the tea stuff because they would be there before us. Mum reluctantly gave them the box.

So off we went, Mum and I in the front of the car and Sylvie on her phone in the back. She would be on it until her credit ran out. She had already checked our lunch stop on the M4 and the availability of free WIFI so she could text to her friends and Ryan once the credit was exhausted on the rood. She would moan at Mum to get an advance on her pocket money to get some phone credit for the rest of the Journey before we left the services.

So, we made or way to the M4, me with the map on my lap and sixties music playing on the CD player. Mum always insisted on playing her sixties compilations and most of the music was ok. I did not listen to music much although Sylvie would insist on Ed Sheeran, Ariana Grande and Bruno Mars if she got the chance to play her favourites. Mum always says that she regrets not living in the sixties and I really could imagine her being a hippy. Long cheesecloth dresses and floppy hats.

Once we got on the M4 I closed the map because even Mum could not get lost on the Motorway. I knew that we would need to take the M25 and then then the A12 to Suffolk. I settled down to see what I could see through the dirty window of the Berlingo. Mum did not believe in cleaning the car because heating the water was an unnecessary carbon emission creation. Doing 50 mph in the inside lane would definitely mean that the movers would reach the house before us. We stopped at Chieveley Services by the A34. Mum had her usual salad sandwich, and I took the opportunity of having some meat; bacon, chicken and mayonnaise in a ciabatta roll which disgusted mother. Sylvie had her bottle of still water and a brownie which I thought that undid the good that the water would do. Sylvie's phone took its usual course throughout the stop at the services, beep, read, tap tap tap, beep, send as she spoke to her friends across whatever message app which was her favourite at the moment. Mum did ask her to put the phone down and have a conversation but the look that she got from her, which said 'you have made me leave my friends so I can't see them and now you are asking me not to talk to them' made her forget talking and get back to her salad sandwich.

After a visit to the rest rooms, we got back on to the M4 and I managed to stop mum going off route into the holding area where they keep the road works vehicles.

"There is a package in my bag for you James," said Mum. She insisted on calling me James although no one else did.

"Hand Mum's bag across," I asked Sylvie who harrumphed but still handed across the raffia bag with long handles which she had used for most of my life. It was frayed and quite grubby, but she insisted that, along with her cheesecloth dresses, it was perfectly serviceable. I took out the small paper carrier labelled Mobile Heaven and inside was heaven an iPhone 11 box.

"Wow Mum, awesome," I said.

"Well, I think you are too young for a phone, but Dad wants you to have one so you can both keep in touch with him now that you will be so far away, or so he says. Before you say anything Sylvia it was your dad's idea not mine. I think he is just making up

for leaving us.” You could tell that it still hurt Mum by the slight hint of anger in her voice.

I popped the phone out of the box and pulled the sim drawer open with the special tool and put the sim in after removing it from its holding card.

“He has put some money on the card so you will have credit and any more you need will come out of your weekly allowance like Sylvia,” Mum said.

I opened the phone which had 25 percent battery and topped up the £100 that dad had put on the phone top up card. “I will update it when we get some WIFI. When will the WIFI be installed?” I asked. Sylvia had made sure she checked if the new house would have WIFI when mum exchanged contracts and Mum had confirmed that the order was in with BT.

“Tomorrow,” replied Mum “and I could not get it any earlier,” heading off another meltdown by Sylvia. I put the phone in my pocket to wait on WIFI and the completion of the set up process.

Our journey to the M25 was littered with roadworks which pushed the journey timings above the Google Maps estimate established before we left. When we did get to the turn off the queues around the whole of the section of the journey increased it even further. Eventually we got onto the A12 and the long slog up to the A14 and then the A12 again and off onto what is strangely called the Peninsula because on a map it does not look like one. We eventually arrived at the cottage, after 5 long hours, just as the removal van was ready to leave. The foreman handed Mum the keys and wished her good luck. Not sure if he was expecting a tip but that was something else Mum was against. “They get paid a wage so why should I supplement that!” She would say whenever the suggestion of a tip arose.

The house was quite pretty with cream clapperboards and a red tiled roof. Mum parked the car at the rear of the house in a yard with a lot of outbuildings, one of which looked to be a shed with our bikes leant against. Our bikes, bought by Dad at the previous Christmas had been used very little. “You think that they could have put the bikes in the shed,” Sylvie moaned.

“They probably did not have the key. In fact, we need to find the key so we can get them in and make sure that they are not stolen.”

“Who is going to steal them in this God forsaken place?” asked Sylvie, “there is nothing here. The area looked quieter than Ramsholt. In fact, ours was the only house on the single carriage way from the turn at Alderton.

“Behave Sylvie, let’s not start,” Mum replied as two walkers passed by the entrance to the back yard on their way along the sandy track that led to a barn which we could see through the bushes. Mum opened the back door to the house, and we entered through a utility room to the kitchen where three cups stood unwashed on the table. She picked up the cups with a sigh and took them over to the sink that was set into a long counter under which was a series of curtains hiding whatever the previous occupant kept there. The rest of the furniture consisted of a large table and chairs, a butcher’s block and two pine dressers which both showed signs of age in the colour and staining. There was an unlit fire by which were two old worn armchairs.

“Not like our old kitchen,” Sylvie said but that was very mild to what I was expecting. She rarely spent anytime cooking so it did not matter to her. In one corner was a large red Aga cooker. Mum went over and lifted the covers and opened the oven’s doors.

“This is oil fired and I was hoping that we could get it to run on wood but seems we will just have to cope with the carbon emissions by cutting down in other areas.” That probably meant that we would have to cycle a lot and leave the car at home. “Let’s find the key to the shed and put your bikes away.” She went and opened the draws of the dressers and scrabbled about inside until she found a cardboard box which she placed on the table. I looked in and it was full of key rings with various keys on them but none had labels so it was not going to be easy. Mum looked out the window at the shed and said, “it has a padlock so that will cut down the number we have to try.” I went through box and pulled out two rings which both had sets of what looked like padlock keys.

“There you go, only twenty to try,” I suggested.

We all went out to the shed and while Mum tried the keys Sylvie and I took a look at the paddock behind the garden. "Is this ours?" asked Sylvie.

"Yes, that and the one behind." There was another field behind the paddock meant for horses; fenced with a five-bar gate let into the track side of the fence and a stable.

"Can I have a horse?" asked Sylvie.

"We will have to see. I was hoping to plant wildflowers and get a couple of beehives, but that could be in the first field. Perhaps we can do a deal and paddock a horse with the understanding that you could ride it when you are not at School."

When Dad was at home Sylvie had riding lessons every week, but these had stopped when Dad got his new woman and left. He said he would not pay out for something that he said she did not seem to enjoy. She was not happy riding because her lessons stopped her spending time with her friends and Ryan.

Mum got the shed door opened and wheeled the bikes into the almost empty shed save for a motorised lawn mower which I thought I would probably be forced to use.

"Let's go to the pub for dinner."

We emptied the car of our suitcases and we took them up to our bedrooms. Sylvie and I both had a bedroom each and Mum had the bigger one but there was just one bathroom compared to our old house which had three, one of which was the en-suite to Mum and Dad's room. We hung our clothes in our wardrobes. My window looked out the front of the cottage across the high hedge and road and the fields beyond. "Come on James," Mum called up. I looked at the time on my new phone and was surprised that it was half past six.

It took less than ten minutes to get to Ramsholt, which included Mum missing the turn. We parked next to the pub and were shown to a table that looked over the jetty and river with the tide on the turn because the river looked dead calm. "As this is the start of our new life, we will have three courses. Now who wants to share the vegetarian mezze platter with me?"

"I will," said Sylvie "and a still water and fish and chips for main." I went for the soup which is always my favourite and then ham egg and chips and got the usual 'what meat' look from Mum. Mum ordered the starters and main courses from the waitress which included a mushroom stroganoff to complete her meat free meal.

As we waited for our starter, I looked through the large picture window and saw a couple of kids pushing a trailer with a boat down the launch track until the rear of the boat was floating and then the boy pushed it off the trailer with the girl holding the rope to stop the boat floating away. The boy, the older kid, pulled the trailer back up the launch track while the girl still held onto the rope. When the trailer was back up on the next to the other boats the boy and girl, who were both wearing life belts, turned the boat around in the shallows and jumped in. The boy pushed the oars through the rowlocks and rowed out into the channel while the girl unfurled the main sail and hoisted it up the mast. The oars were pulled in and I the girl went to sit at the back to hold the tiller while the boy pulled on the sail ropes and the boat cut across the river heading up river. "They are going up towards Woodbridge," I said. I had a good sense of direction and the setting sun confirmed the orientation of the river at this point.

"That did look like fun, said Mum. "I think we should see about getting you some sailing lessons."

"That would be really good. I enjoyed going out on the Meare with Grandad," I said.

"Well let's see shall we," answered Mum. I enjoyed my food and we were so hungry there was not much talking except with Mum telling Sylvie to "put it down," whenever she took up her phone. There was the usual complaining about no WIFI at the house and she was also told to just put it the phone on silent when the beeping of message receipts was almost a constant.

The boat with the kids returned just as we were getting to leave and as it moved toward the quay the sails were pulled down and the boy put the oars out and manoeuvred the boat to the shore. The girl took the bow rope, jumped into the shallows and held the

boat steady while the boy got the trailer, and pushed it under the bow. He then winched and pulled the craft onto the trailer which they both pulled up to the hardstanding with the rest of the boats. From a caravan on the other side of the quay, an old man dressed in a blue uniform came out and said something to the two children. The kids continued to chat to the old man as we left pub. Mum walked to the shore and looked across the river to the sun, which was low in the sky, painting silver patches in the water stretching from the far shore almost to ours. The two kids came along by the wall of the pub, pushing their bikes, as Mum returned from the riverside.

"I like your ship," said Mum.

"Boat!" I countered.

"Do you go sailing often?" she asked.

"As often as we can," the boy responded.

"This is Sylvie and James and I am Dianna."

"I am Ket," responded the boy "and this is Shrimp," he nodded towards the girl. They both wore the tanned faces of sun and salt spray. The boy's hair was quite ginger and the girls a little blonder. Sylvie had put her phone in the back pocket of her jeans and was staring at the boy quite embarrassingly. I thought that that might be the end of Ryan's texts from her for the evening. Mum said that they were fun names and the boy told her that they did not like their proper names.

"Which school do you go to?" asked Mum.

"Martingale, along the A12."

"That is nice," she responded although I knew that she much preferred the school that were going to."

"Come on, children, let's go home," said Mum, and we rode the ten minutes back to the cottage.

"You have to put out your school stuff for tomorrow because we are going off to see your new school Headmaster," Mum said, "and then you can get off to bed."

"When is the BT man coming?" asked Sylvie.

"They have promised me that he will be here by ten."

“Yes!” said Sylvie happily, and we went upstairs to spend our first night in our new home and our new life.

Chapter 3 Day 2 Of Our New Life

It was almost nine o’clock by the time I woke and hauled myself out of bed. I am usually asleep by eight, but I just could not stop thinking about sailing. I must ask Dad if I can take sailing lessons. I doubt if Mum would have the money because she is not working and if she did it would only be part time. I washed did my teeth it was almost half nine by the time I got to the kitchen, and Mum, who must have heard me moving about, was putting some poached eggs on toast and then pushed the plate across to me. “I saw these in a little box next to the cottage at the corner of the road by Alderton when I went for some bread this morning while you were all comatose. They are free-range and were only a pound a box. They also had honey which I will be having on my toast.” She was fine eating honey because she said that Bees overproduced so she thought it was acceptable.

A knock came at the front door as I cut open the first egg. The colour of the yoke was quite a spectacular yellow. Mum opened the door and the caller said, “BT,” and he was duly let in.

“Where’s your point,” he asked, and Mum pointed in the direction of the phone sitting on one of the dressers. He looked at the phone point next to the dresser and said, “thirty minutes, and we will see what speed we can get you.” Mum had gone for the mid-range of speeds which had pleased Sylvie because she only used messaging, but I was hoping for something which would allow me to play my games online. Sylvie looked up from her book which she had been reading at the table, which Mum usually frowned on, and took her phone out.

Twenty-five minutes later, the BT engineer placed the router on the dresser, and its lights started to flash and went from orange to green. He put a card next to Sylvie and said, “here is the

passcode. Can you connect and then download Speednet to your phone and test the speed."

We waited five minutes while Sylvie did as requested, and then she said with a smile, "75 mum 75."

"That is good, but it is what I expected," said the BT man. "They put fibre to the cabinet which is next to your house last year, and I think you would get a much higher speed if you wanted to pay for it.

"No, that is fine for us," Mum responded. I finished my breakfast, connected to the router, and sent a text to Dad saying that we had arrived. I now needed to connect my PC and get online to my gaming buddies, but when Mum had let the BT man out, she said, "right, I need to go to Woodbridge to do some shopping, so change into your school clothes, and then we can get some lunch before we go to the school."

We knew Woodbridge, having been there a number of times on our visits to Nanny and Grandad. It was small but quite interesting with a couple of nice cafes. We spend an hour which included arranging a food delivery with the only supermarket in the town. "Mushroom Risotto for tea tonight," she said as she paid for the delivery and we got off to the school after drinks and cakes at Nero's Coffee Shop.

Mr Jones, the principal, sat behind his desk portly and bearded and considered the reports we had received on our last day of School. The reports also included a recommendation on the back from our form year heads. "I see that both of you were ahead in your years, and I think that we should continue that when you come in September."

That was it, Mum accepted this recommendation, and we were back in our car and on the way to home in no time.

"Right, I think we should see what is in the rest of the outbuildings," she said when we reached home. There were four sheds, including the one in which we had put our bikes. The first two we opened, after a lot of tries with keys, were empty, and the

last, which was bigger than the others contained what we never expected. A boat on a trailer.

"Who do you think it belongs to?" I asked.

"Us," I was told that there was a boat and the schedule of things included in the sale noted it," she said, "but I did not think it would be so nice." From what we could see it was a wooden boat with light planking and a darker band of wood at the top.

"Can we get it out to have a look?" I asked.

"Well, you will need to get the wheels on the trailer," Sylvie said pointing to some wheels which were hanging from the wall of the shed and then she pointed to the four piles of bricks that supported the frame of the trailer and kept it off the ground. I took one of the wheels off the nail on the wall of the shed and measured it against the axle of the trailer. It slid on the axle and left the tyre about 10 centimetres off the ground at the lowest point.

"The tyre feels a bit soft," I said.

"We have a pump in the car," said Mum, "and that looks like a jack."

I retrieved a jack from the back of the shed with a bar and placed that under the frame under one side of the trailer. It was quite easy to get the ram of the jack to meet the underside of the trailer using the bar. "Well, I have never seen a jack like that," said Mum. "Wait a minute while I get the tools from the car. She returned later with a cloth roll, laid it on the ground and opened it up. "That is what you need, I saw Dad use it on the tent trailer when he changed the wheel," said Sylvie pointing to the bent bar with the hexagonal socket on the end. So now I knew what to do. The nuts which secure the wheels were in a box below where the wheels hung. I screwed each nut on to the studs of the axle which poked through the holes in the wheel. I did them tight as I could with my fingers, but when I tried to tighten them with the spanner the wheel turned on the axle. "You have to wait until you get the wheel on the ground, that is what Dad did," said Sylvia. I took the other wheel down and went to the other side of the trailer and put that wheel on.

“Right, I said “time to lift the trailer off the bricks,” I said and pushed the jack further up until the trailer lifted off the bricks. I pushed two columns of bricks over and let the jack down. The wheel touched the ground, but the trailer started to lean quite alarmingly. I quickly moved to the other side and lifted the trailer off that side’s column of bricks with the jack and quickly let it down after I had pushed that side’s brick piles over. The trailer stood on the tyres. With the tyres on the ground, you could see that both tyres needed pumping up.

“I will get the pump from the car while you tighten those nuts, James.”

As suggested by Mum, I tightened the nuts and pumped tyres until the gauge on the pump read halfway, and the tyres no longer looked flat. “We will need to see if they stay up overnight but let’s pull the boat into the light.” The only light in the shed came from the open doors, so we could not see behind the boat very clearly. Mum lifted the trailer hitch and Sylvie and I pulled on the trailer sides, but it started to move. We pulled the boat and trailer into the light.

In the light it looked even better. Inside were two oars some rollicks and along the side of the shed one long pole and some smaller poles. The varnish looked quite new and to me there were no signs of rot or other issues that I could see.

“Those looks like the masts, but I don’t know what the smaller ones are,” said Sylvie pointing to wooden poles which were laid on the other side of the shed from where the wheels were hung.

“I think one is called that the boom,” I said. We walked back into the shed and pulled all of the poles out.” Look,” I said pointing to the round hole in the front seat of the boat and the two fittings below.

“Shall we put the mast up?” asked Sylvie.

“No,” said Mum “let’s wait until we know what we are doing and what else is in here.”

We looked at the back of the shed in the dim light and could see there were what looked to be two sails hanging up, some neatly coiled ropes on a large wooden cabinet and a blue plastic cover

which we agreed would cover the boat when it was out in the open. At Mum's request we pushed the boat back into the shed locked the door and went into the house for Mum to see if we could get lessons at one of the sailing clubs which were up and down the river.

After an hour and a lot of phone calls she said, "well that was a waste of time. You can have lessons but not until the start of next sailing season which is next year. We will have to see if those children in Ramsholt can help."

"We don't know where they live,"

"Maybe the old man by the pub will know," Mum suggested, "you can try tomorrow."

Sylvie and I went to our rooms, me to do some gaming and Sylvie to message her friends and Ryan. After an hour Mum called us down and we sat at the large dining table to eat a surprisingly good Risotto. Mum's food can be a bit hit and miss because she will get distracted and things will overcook. We are quite used to very tasty vegetable pie but with a burnt crust. The only thing she can't burn is salad but is generally ends up with one or two of the salad ingredients missing.

After tea Dad called on the landline to speak to Mum and her voice was raised quite often. At the end of the call she said, "Dad is going to pay for any stuff you need for sailing but he is not going to pay for a horse or riding lessons Sylvie." Sylvie did not seem too unhappy having got 70 mgb broadband. While mum was on the phone she had been messaging. She must have had her phone on silent because it did not ding so mum did not notice her misuse of the device until she got off the phone to Dad and said, "Sylvia off to your room and leave your phone down here, you too James."

This was the standard sort of mood that Mum would be in after this type of phone call. It still hurt him leaving to be with the 'other woman'.

In the morning I was late up again. It was half eight by the time I got downstairs. Sylvie was sitting in the comfy chair in the corner of the kitchen and Mum was doing something with the Aga which turned out to be a full English breakfast, my absolute favourite. I

battered a couple of pieces of toast and then got down to the double egg, bacon, beans, tomatoes and sausage although the bacon and sausage were meat free but they still tasted wonderful. I finished with the mug of tea that Mum put next to my plate when I was halfway through my breakfast. She was not talking much so the argument with Dad was still painful for her.

“Are you going to get your bikes out and see the old man?” she asked.

“I think so, aren’t we Sylvie?”

“I suppose so,” she answered.

“Well, you had better put some shorts on and some sun cream because it is going to be very hot.” I checked my phone weather app and sure enough it was going to be 25c locally.

We both came down to the kitchen ten minutes later with shorts and tee shirts. Sylvie had braided her hair earlier that day and now she had joined the braids on top of her head and she looked like the girl out of the film Heidi. Our bikes had already been removed from the first shed and put up against the wall of the house ready for us. Mum was definitely looking forward to us going out which probably meant she was going to have a long phone bitch with one of her friends about Dad.

So, we got on our bikes which were the best that Dad could afford before he knew about the new baby. To get to the quay we needed to go back along our road into Shottisham Road and then down what we found out later was Dock Road following a street sign. Until we got to the top of the road to the quay it was very flat and no cars passed so we could ride two abreast chatting about all and nothing.

Sylvie was in a very good mood. It may be because we may see the boy or because she had had a nice message from Ryan, maybe saying that he and his comb were missing her. It was no more than twenty minutes later that we were freewheeling down the quay hill with our brakes pulled on to make sure that we did not go too fast. When we got to the quay the old man in the blue uniform was sweeping the piece of road outside the caravan which had a hand

painted sign saying 'Harbourmaster' which I thought was a little over the top for such a tiny place.

Sylvie was the first to speak, "Good morning, those two children who were sailing here yesterday evening, are they coming today,"

His accent was thick Suffolk but still easy to understand for us, "and good morning to you and I am not sure. They are usually here every day but generally in the afternoon evening. Never see them much in the morning. Why?"

I replied that we wanted to find them as soon as possible. I have never thought much about sailing before but finding the boat had given me a strong desire to get out on the water. "Do you know where they live. We have just moved; we have a sailing boat but we don't know how to sail and we can't get any training near here."

The old man smiled and said, "well I think they will see you OK if they want to. They have both been sailing since they have been very young and they come down whenever they can.

"Are you their Grandad," Sylvie asked.

The old man laughed, "no I am the Harbourmaster dear and I look after their bikes when they sail. They live in School House up near the Church." We looked at him blankly and he smiled and he said, "go up the hill and before the last house there is a path which goes along the wall and down across the stream and you will find School House at the top." We thanked him and started to push our bikes along the road. We knew the hill was too steep to ride up even with twenty-one gears. We reached the last house and turned down the sunken path which led down to the stream in its own valley which we could see went down to meet the river upstream from the pub. The path then rose from the stream and we could see the roof and a little of the walls of a house through the trees.

"Do you think that is it?" I asked.

"How would I know," she answered clearly hot and panting as we pushed the bikes up the hill and through a wet patch which I thought must be a spring. We finally reached the School House which was one of three cottages where the path opened out. Putting our bikes against the fence we went up to the front door

and knocked. A woman in a flowery apron with what looked to be a flour smudge on her nose opened the door.

"Yes?" she asked.

"We are Sylvia and James. Are Ket and Shrimp here?" I asked.

"I prefer to call them by their proper names, Boris and Georgina. I am afraid that they have gone to run an errand for me, but they should be back shortly. Why don't you sit in the shade and I will get you some juice." She pointed to a table and chairs with a patio umbrella by the side of the house on some grass. We said thanks and sat. Sylvie was still looking quite pink from the heat and walking our bikes up the hill.

"No wonder they use the names Ket and Shrimp," I whispered to Sylvie and she sniggered as the woman brought us our orange, which was fresh, and some cake. We thanked her and she smiled without saying anything further and went back into house. The garden was quite overgrown although some would call it natural. It was very quiet for about five minutes as we drunk, ate and talked then we heard a lot of shouting as Ket and Shrimp came down the track on their bikes and both skidded to a halt by the fence.

"Hello," said Ket, "good to see you again." He took a bag out of his bike pannier and said, "I'll just give these to my Mum and then I will be back." He was followed into the house by Shrimp, and they returned with their own orange and cake. "Did you have some of Mum's cake? She makes cakes for the café at Bawdsey which you have to visit."

Sylvie said, "we have a sailing boat which we have in the shed at our house which we have just moved into. It looks OK but we don't know much about boats. We have tried to get some training as we quite fancy sailing but all of the clubs we tried cannot take us until next year."

"We can help you if you want," said Ket, who had sat next to Sylvie, and got his phone out. Give me your number and I will give you a call and we will come 'round and have a look at your boat. Do you know how old it is?"

"No," I replied, "but it does look OK from what we can see."

"Depends on whether it is leaking or not and we may not know that until we get it in the water, but we can test for big holes.

"How can we do that?" I asked.

"With a torch," he replied.

"Awesome," I said.

"I can come around about 1 o'clock tomorrow if that's OK."

"You coming Shrimp?"

"Yes."

We knocked on the door and their Mum came out and we thanked her for the orange and cake.

"I hope to see you again," she said, "It is nice to see more young people coming into the area."

We went to wheel out bikes down the hill as we left the garden.

Ket called out, "go the other way", and he pointed to where he and Shrimp had come down. "Go to the top turn right and then left and that will take you back to Shottisham Road."

So we went that way, turned right along from the round towered church through a narrow road, which like the rest of the area, running between fields and small woods. We reached the cottage in about fifteen minutes buzzing with the possibility of getting on the water. Whether it was the lack of things to do but we were both keen to get sailing.

Mum was not home when we had got back but she arrived later dressed up which made a change from her normal garb that was usually recycled from Charity Shops and Boot Fairs. Dad insisted that we wore only clothes bought new.

"I've got a job," she announced, "three days a week at the surgery in Alderton." Before Mum had Sylvie she had been a doctor's receptionist in Frome and that is where she met Dad who was a pharmaceutical rep and eventually became a Director of the Company when I was about ten. He spent most of his time in Bristol where he met Charly, one of the Senior Managers or so he said.

"It is only part time, but I can take you to catch the school bus from the Village and pick you up at night." Sylvie and I were unconcerned because that was not until next term and that was a

whole summer holiday away. "I start properly on Monday so you will have to see to yourselves for lunch but you are old enough to look after yourselves. I will make your sandwiches before I go and we will enjoy a family meal when I get home, which you can help me cook." Well as far as Sylvie and I were concerned she would probably be eating her family meal on her own. It would not get dark until late for the whole of our holidays and we intended to be sailing or exploring the country until late so she can put our meals in the Aga until we got home. We were not going to tell her that and would let her find out for herself. Sometimes we needed to keep a little back from our parents because of course we were teenagers.

"Ket and Shrimp are coming around at 1 o'clock tomorrow to look at our boat and are going to teach us to sail."

"Will they want lunch?"

"I doubt it," I replied, "Their Mum gave us big pieces of Cake which she bakes for the Café at Bawdsey so I think they will have eaten."

"That's nice," she said absentmindedly as she entered the walk-in larder and started to pull out ingredients for a lunch that none of us would want after our large breakfast and cake but we would eat it anyway.

Chapter 4

Sailing for Beginners

At 1 o'clock the next day the bell which was a small ship's bell hung on a bracket was rung and we could hear Mum say as he answered the door, "hello, there is no need to use the front door you can use the back and don't worry about knocking." Ket and Shrimp followed Mum into the kitchen, where she told them to sit down at the table which was covered in Mum's idea of a Greek Meze, pitta bread, a salad of cucumber, tomato and feta covered with oregano, haloumi which she had lightly fried, tzatziki, humous,

olives and so on. "Please eat, now what would you to drink, we have orange and coke but only sugar free?"

Both our guests requested coke and did not stand on ceremony as they filled their plates with the table goods. Sylvie and I picked at the food whilst Ket and Shrimp hoovered up a lot of what was on offer. "Well, that is what I like to see, good appetites," Mum said.

"My Mum said that she finds it difficult to keep us full," said Shrimp and got a bit of a look from her brother. They continued to eat until both say back in their chairs and Shrimp and Ket thanked Mum for her food.

"Shall we go and have a look at the boat." It was very difficult to watch the two of them eat when all I wanted to do was to get the boat checked out.

As we were leaving the house Mum said, "do you think you could help my two sail?"

"Yes, of course," said Ket "but they will need some things as well as the boat."

"Well, you let me know and I will get them. Their father will pay."

Ket and I opened the doors of the shed and Sylvie pointed to the tyres and said, "well they stayed up,"

"Before we pull it out let's check for big leaks," said Ket. He took what we knew was the cover and pulled it over the boat from the back fastening the Velcro around the mast. He gave Shrimp a small torch and helped her into the front of the boat and fastened the remainder of the cover so that the whole of the boat was covered. "Good thing that you have a cover for when you leave it at the dock."

"Will we do that?" I asked.

"Yes, it will save you having to drag it back to the house after sailing. You will need some locks; to secure the boat to the trailer and the trailer to the dock but we have some spares from our old boat which I am sure will fit." From the inside Shrimp shouted that she was ready, and we closed the doors of the shed. There we no windows in the doors or the sides and back so it became very black.

“Start at the front,” said Ket and we listened to Shrimp as she said exactly where she was shining the torch. Ket crawled under the boat and followed Shrimp from front to back. “There is only light from the centre board housing so I will have a look at that. You expect some because it is open.” Shrimp got out and then Ket got into the boat after pulling the cover back to the middle of the boat. “The centreboard housing all looks fine,” he said, and we got back into the open and closed the door. We went back into the kitchen and Mum asked.

“Well, how was it.”

“It is a good boat, and I cannot see any leaks. I think it will be perfect for the Deben. Sylvie and Jamie will need some stuff. First will be some life jackets, probably like mine but a little more buoyant if they are not good swimmers. They will need some water repellent jackets and trousers for the winter, some crocks for the summer and wellies for the autumn and winter. It can get quite cold and they will need some gloves for the sheets and ropes which can hurt your hands. You also need a dock permit and can get most of what you need from a yacht chandler.”

“Once you have those we can get out on the water,” I said excitedly.

“We can go and get the things this afternoon,” Mum said anticipating my next question.

“I have the names of three.” Ket looked over her Sylvie’s shoulder at the searches that she had done on her phone and pointed at one.

“Try that one. They are good.”

Sylvie had been quite quiet up until this point, so I think her messages to Ryan were going to get few and far between.

After exchanging all our mobile numbers, we said goodbye to Ket and Shrimp and then set to clearing up the lunch things, although I don’t know what Mum had been doing when we were looking at the boat.

We went off to the boat chandlers at Ipswich near the docks. There were some amazing sail boats and cruisers moored in the marina and we stood and looked at them for some time. I was

surprised that Sylvie had taken such an interest in sailing, but I suspect she could see that in our new home area there was not much to do apart from playing on the river. Eventually we got into the chandlers after Mum had given us a couple 'come on' prompts. "We need two lifebelts for these two," she requested "and some wet jackets and trousers."

Sylvie and I were fitted for coats and trousers, but the life preservers were one size for us. We already had crocks and wellies so for Dad it was not much to pay. Mum asked about dock permits for Ramsholt and she was given a number to phone to get a permit and sticker.

"Let's go and have tea and cake at Bawdsey and then we won't need much for tea." I think that Mum wanted to try Ket and Shrimp's Mum's cakes. We were going to be all caked out by the time we finish today but I wanted to see the quay there which we had not been to before. While we were driving to Bawdsey, I could hear Sylvie's phone pinging every five minutes or so. She was messaging her friends and Ryan, or maybe even Ket.

She looked up and said, "Ket says than they are going sailing at ten tomorrow and he's asked if we want to go."

"Why so early?" I asked.

She did not reply at first but typed into her phone which pinged a couple of minutes later, "It is between tides so it will be easier for our first time." Mum didn't say anything so I assumed that that was OK for her and then I remember she was starting work soon so she would be concentrating on that. We got to Bawdsey, and Mum parked facing across the river which was low. We stood looking to Felixstowe Ferry and the river bank either way until Mum said.

"Let's go and get some tea." Mum led us out of the car park and into a walled area through a gated entrance up some stairs to the Café.

Ket and Shrimp's Mum was serving so we introduced her to ours and they had a conversation while Sylvie and I looked around at the Café which had an inside set of tables and chairs and an

outside balcony with a line of tables and chairs with just enough space to get past each.

I ordered tea with Mum, and Sylvie her usual bottle of water and we all had a piece of Victoria sponge with fresh raspberries on top. We sat on the veranda on the only free table. Each table had binoculars which you could look to see the other side of the river at Felixstowe or any of the boats moored in the river. The tide was coming in and all the moored boats were pointing downriver. Although it was getting towards four pm the sun was still high in the sky and the day warm. Our tea and cake were served but I was so interested in the boats and river that my tea was only warm when I got to drink it. As I drunk my tea, I got to look at the river in normal size. The quay next to the carpark had a boat which had been going back and forth since we got here so that must be the ferry which went to the Felixstowe side and back and which I read about before we left Frome. Towards the mouth of the river on the other side was a Martello Tower that I had learnt about in history when we did Napoleon in History. There were a few around here going up the coast. Not sure why we learnt about Napoleon because it was not on the syllabus and I thought that Mr Toms used the lesson to indulge in his real love which was English although he was an history teacher.

We received the thinnest history lesson followed by a lot of poetry and his particular favourite subject at the time, poems books and internet posts about Napoleon. I was forced to learn one which formed part of my end of term history oral. The rest of the class were given section of history books to read aloud, and I got to learn a poem. Hardly fair I thought but I did learn it and recite it and I got the best mark in the class.

Farewell to the Land where the gloom of my Glory
Arose and o'ershadow'd the earth with her name--
She abandons me now but the page of her story,
The brightest or blackest, is fill'd with my fame.
I have warr'd with a world which vanquish'd me only
When the meteor of conquest allured me too far;

I have coped with the nations which dread me thus lonely,
The last single Captive to millions in war.

Farewell to thee, France! when thy diadem crown'd me,
I made thee the gem and the wonder of earth,
But thy weakness decrees I should leave as I found thee,
Decay'd in thy glory, and sunk in thy worth.
Oh! for the veteran hearts that were wasted
In strife with the storm, when their battles were won
Then the Eagle, whose gaze in that moment was lasted,
Had still soar'd with eyes fix'd on victory's sun!

Despite the number of people about waiting for the ferry or queueing at the ice cream van, which had just arrived, it was incredibly quiet and a quite a bit different to Frome. Mum said.

"I have to go to work tomorrow for a while, but I will make your sandwiches and you can take them with you when you go sailing. I will not be back until about three so you look after yourselves."

We finished our food and drink and walked back to the car park and had a look at the river, which was steel grey with the tide coming at quite a rate shown up by the waves at the bows of the boats and mooring buoys. The Ferry when it left the quay on either side would drift upriver and then it motored to the other side which was slightly down stream. We took a walk to the North Sea by a path by the side of the river to its mouth. We needed to climb over a heavy metal wall which I assume was a flood defence although I am not sure how much protection it would give because it was now in quite poor condition. The beach was very stony with lots of white shells that Sylvie asked if we could come back and collect some, so she could make an art installation on the cottage. Sylvie was quite an artist, and our old home was filled with her drawings which Mum had stuck to the notice board at our house in Frome or framed. These were somewhere in the boxes which had yet to be emptied.

“OK you two let’s go home,” Mum said, “I think we have seen enough of the North Sea for now. Although it was a warm day the breeze off the sea was quite keen and we were all feeling cold.

When we got home, I was tired and happy to have some tea in front of the tele in the lounge. Like the rest of the downstairs the lounge was furnished with the previous owner’s stuff which was mostly in good condition. It looked like mum had had the duster and hoover out earlier in the day as it was a lot less dusty than when we had arrived from Frome. Mum and Sylvie lounged on the sofa which was quite worn but comfortable and I sat in a well-worn wing chair. There was a lot of old cupboards and cabinets which may have been antique but were certainly before mid-century which according to the antique programs that Mum watched religiously was becoming very sought after. After watching the TV for an hour, I started yawning and was sent to bed leaving Sylvie and Mum trying to keep their eyes open to finish watching the program.

I was late again not getting downstairs to the kitchen the following morning until about nine am. Sylvie was taking advantage of Mum’s absence by using her phone at the dining table. “There is some scrambled egg in the warming oven.”

I took the casserole dish with the egg out of the oven and spread it on two pieces of toast which were cold because I couldn’t be bothered to make any fresh, but the meal was almost acceptable and the tea which was under the cosy in the pot was also OK. “What time did Mum leave?” I asked.

“About eight thirty, so the tea might be a bit strong,” she replied. “Ket has said that we should be at Ramsholt about ten thirty so we need to leave about ten fifteen. I finished my breakfast with a bit of salt, usually frowned on by Mum, but it made it edible.

We did set off at ten fifteen and cycled the fifteen minutes to the top of Dock Hill and freewheeled to the bottom. Ket and Shrimp were already there talking to the Harbour Master outside his office. They waved and we pushed our bikes over and put them up against the fence. “Bill lets us leave our stuff in his office,” said Ket and then he looked up at sky. “I think it will be warm out there so tee

shirts and shorts will be OK and crocks if you have them." We sat on the grass and removed our trainers and put on our crocks, while Ket and Shrimp pulled theirs off without undoing the laces and got into some rubber slip-ons. We were not allowed to take our shoes off without untying the laces. "Right let's go," said Ket and led us over to the slipway.

"Do you want me to stay on the beach or are you going to get one of them to hold the rope?" Shrimp asked.

"Let Jamie hold the rope and you and Sylvie can push the trailer into the river."

I held the bow rope of the boat while Sylvie and Shrimp pushed the trailer down the slope until it was half submerged in the water and then the boat slipped off the supports and floated to the end of the bow rope which I had wrapped a few times around my hand. The tide caught and the boat slewed sideways while Sylvie and Shrimp pulled the trailer back up the slope and onto the hardstanding with the other trailers and sailboats. Ket who did not help with the trailer or the rope, waded into the river climbed into the boat and put the oars in the rollicks. He held the boat against the flowing tide and motioned for me to get in. I climbed in the back and sat on the side lockers half-way up leaving enough room for Sylvie and Shrimp to sit in the back either side of the tiller.

"Now," said Shrimp, "I am going to tell you some things which you will need to know. This is the tiller and turns the rudder," pointing to the bar that was between herself and Sylvie. She then went through all the parts of the boat and ropes and sails until Ket had rowed us a fair way from shore. "Now Ket is going to hold us into the wind while you Jamie, raise the mainsail. Pull on that rope, which is called the halyard, until the sail reaches the top of the mast." Just as I got hold of the rope Ket leaned over and dropped what we now knew was the centreboard by loosening the rope tied to the cleat by my leg. It was not easy pulling the mainsail up and a couple of times I had to stand and ease the sail loops on the mast. When the sail was up Shrimp loosened the rope holding the boom until the sail swung to the left and she steered away from being head on into the wind at an angle of 45 degrees making sure that

the tack was between the moored boats. "Always keep an eye on the flag at the top of the mast which will show you which direction the wind is coming from so that you can make sure that your sails are trimmed correctly. When I say, prepare to come about, make sure you are ready for the boom," she said pointing to the pole which came back from the mast, "to swing across the boat, but keep your eyes on the sails and flag because you will have to trim the sail again. Now Ket has raised the Jib," which I thought of as the front sail, "and we should now start to go faster." I looked down at the river and the wake that the boat was making as it cut through the water. "Prepare to come about," said Shrimp and she pulled the tiller across the boom swung in the other direction. Ket pulled on the rope at the front of the boat moved to the same side as the boom.

We continued to tack as Shrimp steered from one side of the channel to the other until we reached Kyson Point that Shrimp had told us was our upstream target and where we would turn back towards Ramsholt. It had taken us about an hour and a half to reach Kyson Point which had a small island with the river going either side of it. I had Googled the notes on the river and on one side of the island had been a creek, but the river had broken through making the island and a splitting the river in two at this point. "Prepare to come about," said Shrimp and Sylvie and I ducked as she pushed the tiller to the right and the boom swung left and the boat turned on a sixpence and we started to sail downstream. "Look at the flag," she said, "we are now going down wind so we can allow the mainsail to go out even further." She let the sheet out until the boom was at ninety degrees to the side of the boat. "Now we will go fast," she said, and we won't have to tack all the time." It took almost half the time to get back to Ramsholt and it was the reverse of leaving port to get back to the dock except that we just pulled the boat up the hard standing and tied it up to a ring on a dock to stop it drifting out. "Let's eat," said Shrimp, "I'm starving."

I have to this day always been in awe of Ket and Shrimp's appetite. No matter how much they eat, they can always find room

for a little for more. We collected our backpacks from Mr Stokes, the Harbourmaster and took them to the bench on the grass by the launching ramp. The pub was doing good business with all the outside tables full. Shrimp and I sat on the seat, and Sylvie and Ket chose to sit on the grass. Ket pulled his sailing top out of his bag and allowed Sylvie to sit on it. Ryan was definitely not getting any more messages. I opened my sandwich box and looked at what mum had made me. Sylvie would have the same, cheese, tomato on rye bread. The bread had seen better days. I also had a tangerine and a bottle of water. Fortunately, I had filled a flask with the tea left in the pot, so I had something other than water to drink. Shrimp had what looked to be white bread and ham with a bottle of Lilt and a large piece of cake. She offered me half her sandwich in exchange for half of mine.

“I don’t think I can do that to you Shrimp,” I said, to which she tucked into her lunch while Ket and Sylvie were engrossed in Sylvie’s phone on which she had spent some yesterday evening downloading sailing and tide apps so that Ket could choose the best ones.

Ket turned to us on the seat and said to Shrimp, “If we start as soon as we have finished lunch then we will easily reach Bawdsey in an hour and then we can use the incoming tide to help us back so that we can be back here before 4 pm.” Shrimp nodded her mouth full of sandwich. We finished our lunch and packed everything back into our bags and left them with the Harbour Master who said. “I would take your tops with you because it may be a bit cold on the way back.” Ket was looking at the sky which has started to cloud over, and the wind had changed from a light breeze to a moderate breeze.

Chapter 5

On to Bawdsey

When we boarded the boat this time Sylvie sat on the starboard locker with Ket and I joined Shrimp at the back. “You take the tiller, and I will trim the sheets and don’t forget to say prepare

to come about if we are going to tack. I don't think we will be doing much taking with the wind behind us, but we will be following the channel which winds left and right with the bends in the river." I was getting a better look at the sides of the river from the back. After leaving Ramsholt the high land to port was left behind and the low land was protected by a river wall on both port and starboard. The river became a little wider with the tide lazy as it reached it's low point. The wind remained moderate, and we kept a fair speed with Shrimp making sure that the mainsail was trimmed getting us maximum headway. A couple of times she needed to call Ket's attention to the flapping gib because he was more interested in Sylvie's phone rather than the trim of the sails.

As we made way Shrimp showed her knowledge of the Deben by giving me an idea of what lay either side of the river and the history of each of the villages in the area. I would call her knowledge encyclopaedic but when I suggested this her face blushed. She told me about Ramsholt the Village. "There are only a few houses there now, but at one time there was coal being delivered and coprolite being exported on barges which went to Ipswich and there were more houses and people to gather the coprolite." She carried on in that vein, "the Ramsholt Arms by the quay was the third pub. The first was below the church and then it was moved to the Dock Road in the building by the track that goes to our house and finally to where it is now. She told me to move the tiller slightly to keep to the navigable channel.

"Do you like Farthingale?" I asked referring to her school.

"Yes, not bad I have just finished my third year. It is a bit clicky and I am not in a click. They thought I was a nerd in my old school. I did get a scholarship to go to the private school at Thorpeness, but I wanted to go to the same school as Ket who struggles with some subjects but is great at maths and physics. Where are you going?"

"The private school in Woodbridge, but I am not so sure about it. I was moved up two years at my old school and I was still top of the class in most subjects. I think this one may hold me back, but

we will see.” It was a bit of a boast but then she had boasted about her scholarship that she never took up.

Shrimp pointed out Fakenham Creek on our right side as we approached the first bend that we needed to negotiate. She told me to steer a little to the right as she trimmed the mainsail, but we still kept the boom in the same place. On both sides of the river the land was flat behind the river wall and Shrimp pointed out that on one side it was Fakenham Marshes and on the other Ramsholt Marsh. We had passed the first bend in the river, and we started to steer to the port side, and I needed to say prepare to come about. I was getting used to anticipating the river channel and wind and Shrimp and I chatted about the trip and other things. I told her the reason why we had come to Ramsholt from Frome and my dad’s new partner.

“We lost our dad, a few years ago,” she mentioned and I could see that it still hurt as a tear left her eye to run down her cheek. She brushed it away with her hand and carried on. “He taught us how to sail and we were members of one of the sailing clubs but when he passed away mum could no longer keep us in the club, so we have been sailing up and down the Deben on our own. We sometimes enter open competitions, and we have some cups which we have won. It is quite fun and occasionally we have sailing days with people we know from our old club.”

“That does sound fun,” I said as Shrimp helped me with the tiller as we started down a straight piece of the river to Bawdsey Quay. Sylvie and Ket had stopped looking at Sylvie’s phone which probably meant that she had lost WIFI or credit. I pulled my phone out of my shorts pocket and saw that there was no mobile signal. As we approached Bawdsey Ket pulled down the gib and readied the oars for when the mainsail came down.

“Pull the mainsail down Jamie,” Shrimp requested, and I handed her the tiller and pulled on the downhaul after Sylvie released the halyard. The mainsail came down quite easily and Ket pulled up the centre board and slipped the oars in their rollicks and pulled us to the beach. We all got out and manhandled the boat up the beach until it was secure and would not drift. “I think I need an

ice cream,” Shrimp said as she walked off towards a van that was dispensing ices on the quay carpark. It was quite quiet now as the sky was overcast and most of the visitors would have been getting back to their accommodation. We could see a few people sitting on chairs outside their camper vans which were parked along the road to the quay. We queued at the van for our ice creams and Sylvie paid from a small purse that she kept in her shorts pocket. Our weekly allowance was provided by dad and delivered by mum who split it in two lots which she gave us on Saturday and Wednesday. Our phone top-ups were not allowed to be bought with our allowance and she provided that via her mobile sharing app. We had unlimited texts and calls. If we run short of data, she would then decide if she was going to accede to the moaning of Sylvie and I and give us more. I had yet to run out of my initial top-up but then I did not have my phone constantly in my hand. We took our ice creams and sat by the boat watching the river and the many boats which were anchored offshore. Shrimp pointed out each of the vessels and the type of boat that they were. There were only a couple that she did not know.

“How do you know so much about boats?” Sylvie asked.

“That is all she does. She has so many books on boats and sailing in her room that it looks like a library. She buys books and bookshelves from car boot sales and WI book fairs that she insists mum takes her to and spends all her allowance on them,” Ket replied.

“I am absolutely not all like that, but I do have a lot of books,” she argued.

“Her one desire is to go around the world single handed but she will need a good job to afford the boat that will get her there.”

Surprisingly, we got a good mobile signal and Sylvie was using the last of her data credit to message her friends in Frome. She had taken some photos with the camera on her phone of the trip down to here, so I suspect that some of these had gone to Frome. She was sitting away from Ket so I suspect some of the messages were about him and she did not want to see the content.

“I will do it one day,” said Shrimp.

Although we had taken our waterproof tops from our backpacks, we had left them in the boat, and it was getting quite cold since the wind has sprung up and changed direction coming from a south easterly direction, according to my phone compass, rather than direct west. The moored boats moved to face down river, so the tide had turned as well. "Time to go," said Ket and he got up and started off to the boat. "I think we should check the boat on the weekend," he said to Shrimp as we caught him up.

"What does that entail?" I asked.

"We take the mast off and turn it over and clean the bottom and keel and if there are any scrapes or bare patches, we will varnish them and let them dry before we use the boat again so we will not be sailing until about Tuesday. If you like we will use the time to check yours. We can turn it over and check the varnish and any scrapes and rig her." I looked a little perplexed and he explained that it would be easier to install the ropes and sails before we get to the water.

We pushed the boat into the stream after putting our jackets on and got in and Shrimp rowed us out. I let the centre board down while Ket and Sylvie looked after the rudder and mainsail. Sylvie pulled the mainsail up and I pulled the jib up and sat on the side locker with the ropes to trim her. They let the main sail out to take advantage of the wind and I trimmed the jib sheet and we started to move out into the channel. On the other side of the moored boats is horse sands which they told us always avoid so we kept to this side going out of Bawdsey. We passed a large boat, sails stowed and moving forward on its engine.

"Why is it not sailing?" I asked.

"Probably having a rest. It is hard work sailing a boat of that size on your own." There was a loan sailor sitting aft and steering. We were steering a little to port to take the first bend moving into the centre of the channel. We chatted as the boat made good headway and we were soon steering to starboard on the final bend into Ramsholt. As we made our approach to the dock, we pulled both sails down and Shrimp put the oars out and steered us towards the hard. I jumped out with the bow rope after Shrimp got

it close. We were getting adept at launching and landing the boat with each person knowing their job, depending on where they were sitting or were going to sit if we were launching. Sylvie, Ket and Shrimp pushed the trailer into the water and then helped me to pull the boat onto the half-submerged trailer and then we pulled it up onto the dock side, securing the boat and then tidying both sails and putting the cover on. Mr Stokes the Harbour Master was seated outside his office on a fold up chair.

“Well did you enjoy that?” he asked as we walked up to him.

“It was so cool,” said Sylvie.

“When are you next down?” he asked Ket.

“We can get another sail in tomorrow,” he replied, “and he looked at his phone and the wind looks OK so we can probably get up to Woodbridge if we start early enough and then ride the ebb tide back.” I looked at my phone at the tide times and saw that the tide turned at 1 o’clock the next day. “Can you get down here by 8 o’clock?” he asked.

“No problem, and you need to get up earlier,” Sylvie said to me. I nodded.

Mr Stokes handed us our back packs from his office, and we got our bikes and started the long push up the hill and then waved to the other two as they turned left down the track to their house.

When we got home, Mum was already there preparing our dinner. She was back in her normal wear after changing from her work clothes.

“Did you have a good time?” she asked.

“Fabulous,” I said. “Can we take our boat to Ramsholt over the weekend. We need to check to see if there are any leaks.” Mum reached into the pocket of her apron and handed me an envelope. I looked inside and pulled out a form on which was attached a round permit which announced that we could park and launch a boat from Ramsholt. I showed it to Sylvie as Mum asked.

“When do you want to go down with the boat.”

“We have to be at Ramsholt tomorrow at eight to go sailing and then on Saturday we want to help Shrimp and Ket with their

boat maintenance so if we can take it down then,” Sylvie answered.

“We now need to get everything into the boat, but it is very dark in the shed.”

“There is a lamp in the back of the car with the spare tyre, but you may need to plug it in.”

Sylvie and I took the car keys and found the lamp which had a rechargeable battery. I turned the lamp on but the charge indicator which was a number of red lights showed that the lamp was almost fully charged.

The lamp lit up the shed such that we were able to pull back the cover and put the rest of the ropes in and the mast and boom on the supports. We covered the boat over again and made sure that it was secure on the trailer. We had dinner and an early night ready for the morning.

Chapter 6

Up to Woodbridge

I put the alarm on my phone for 6 o'clock and I was showered and dressed by six thirty. Mum must have heard me moving about and my tea and cereal were on the table ready for me when I came downstairs. “I will take you down in the car if you want,” Mum said, “and then I want to go into Woodbridge and get some shopping.”

“That’s good, but we will need to walk back but it is not far,” Sylvie said. We left home about seven thirty and were at Ramsholt before eight. We parked at the upper carpark, the lower site being reserved for patrons of the Pub. We were there before Ket and Shrimp and sat with Mum looking out into the river at the moored boats. The sky was filled with small fluffy clouds which passed over the sun turning the colour of the water from blue to steel grey.

“This is lovely and a lot better than the parks in Frome,” Mum said. There were only streams in Frome so if we did go out there were no rivers to sit beside. We did not talk much just watched

the sailors getting their boats ready for sailing. Mum breathed In noisily sighed and said, "so nice just so nice."

Our two friends came down the hill shouting to each other although at the top of the hill we could not make out what they were shouting about, but as they came closer, we could hear them calling out which one was faster than the other. They did their usual broadsides as they pulled their bikes to a stop by the Harbourmaster's office. He had been sweeping the road as we had passed and he waved to us with a smile.

"Take our packs today," said Ket, "we can have an early lunch at the dock at Woodbridge before we come back. We should be back about one pm so quite early but I want the boat out of the water dried off before we start checking her out tomorrow." He then said good morning to Mum as an afterthought.

Shrimp whispered to me, "he is a bit wound up because we were late. He loves going to Woodbridge and thought we were going to be too late for the tides."

We knew the drill to launch, and we said goodbye to Mum and pushed the trailer out down the launch slope into the river. Ket had got into the boat swung her round with the ours and we all got in after Shrimp and Sylvie returned the boat trailer to the top of the slope. As we pulled away, we could see mum talking to Mr Stokes and pointing to us. I wonder that she was talking about, probably the dangers of sailing to Woodbridge. I must admit to being a little apprehensive having looked at some charts on my phone. Although the river remained quite wide from a map point of view the navigable channel did become quite narrow at low tide. I suppose Ket and Shrimp knew what they are doing but it was still a bit of worry. Shrimp and I were at the stern and Ket and Sylvie forward on the side lockers which doubled as seats. The wind being just a breeze was against, so we tacked the boat as we came out or Ramsholt.

As usual I got my supply of information of the river and the shore from Shrimp. "You see up there," she said pointing to the round towered church to the starboard side, "well that was where the first pub was, below the church and a few houses which are all

now gone. Before the river wall was built the sailors used to row from their anchored boats to reach the well to get fresh water. Over there below that wood," the land rose above the river shore into a line of trees, "you can find fossilised shark's teeth." We sailed on tacking between the moored boats with only a slight lean to one side or the other. Sylvie or Ket would move across from side to side to put two people's weight on the higher side of the boat. We went over the same parts of the river towards Waldringfield passing Kirton Creek and as we passed Stoner Point, we followed the channel to the right and then to the left. Our progress was hampered by having to tack all the time, in and out of the moored boats. The day had become overcast and cold for June with little sun and pushed us to put our jackets on and unless the sun was to come out the coats were going to stay on. Shrimp carried on with her history and sight-seeing, including Waldringfield with the Pub. Although the Deben was wide the navigation channel was quite narrow for large boats, but Shrimp said we were ok provided we did not go too close to the edges. We passed another dock Methersgate where the navigation channel went close to the point on which the dock was built. "That is Martlesham Creek," Shrimp informed me as she pointed to port. "We have some friends who have their boat pulled up there. They are away now seeing their dad who works in Saudi, but they will be back week after next, and we will be able to sail with them." We sailed past the mouth of the creek and through something quaintly called Troublesome Reach, as Shrimp told me, and then on to the quays and hard of Woodbridge.

"We can dock below the Tide Mill at a quay where we are allowed because we know the owner. We need to introduce you so that you can use it as well and you won't need permit," Ket advised. We soon reached the pier, and we lowered the sails and Sylvie rowed us to where we tied up. I thought it was unusual for Sylvie to row but then she could not look bad in front of Ket and she picked it up quite well. We got on to the pier by the ladder which run down into the river.

“Only twenty minutes here and then the tide will turn so we need to get off this pier before the river goes too far down.” We left our backpacks and walked down the pier to a boat park and across to the portacabin which was at the back. Ket knocked at the door and it swung open almost immediately and a tall white-haired man came out and smiled at us and said, hi, you two and I see you have bought some friends. Just up until the tide turns?”

“Yes,” said Ket, “Mr James this is Sylvie and Jamie. They have moved to Ramsholt and have a boat but have never sailed before so we are teaching them the basics, then we will get their boat sorted and get them out on the river.”

“So, there will be three boats I will have to give free tie ups to. Where are the other two?”

“They are in Saudi seeing their dad, but they will be back soon,” Ket replied.

Mr James looked at Sylvie and I and asked if we wanted to look around the boat yard. Ket responded that we only had enough time to eat our lunch and then get back on the river.

“Why don’t you cycle up when you cannot sail, and I will show you around. Right, I have a boat owner to see who is not incredibly happy. See you later.” Mr James left us and walked over to a large boat on a trailer with a guy standing looking across at us.

“He looks really peeved off,” said Sylvie as we watched Mr James walk over to the boat owner with his arms out and his hands turned towards him in a ‘what can you do’ pose. We sat on the edge of the dock and had our lunch. Sylvie and I had haloumi and tomato wraps and the others had ham and pickle. As usual Mum’s homage to the gods of vegetarianism was a disappointment and its occasional application to her children was the one change I would make to her persona.

“What have you got?” Shrimp asked.

“Haloumi and tomato,” I replied.

“Mm would you like one of mine. Ham and pickle?” she suggested. We swapped, half a sandwich for half a wrap and although pickle was not my favourite the ham more than made up

for it. We completed our lunch and drinks by which time Mr James had sorted his customer and waved us off as Ket took the oars and pushed us into the middle of the channel which was draining towards the sea. Once we were in the channel, we dropped the centre board and raised both sails with the boom at forty-five degrees to the side of the boat to take advantage of the following wind and the ebbing tide. Shrimp and I took control of the Jib and the weight against the roll of the boat which would not be much because we would not be tacking. The boat was almost sailing itself with a little movement of the rudder around the bends of the river leaving time for Ket and Sylvie to study Sylvie's phone. We reached Waldringfield beach and beached the craft with Shrimp taking the oars after we had pulled the sails down. We got out and sat at the high part of the beach where the sand was dry and very pleasant to sit and have a drink.

"There have some beach huts here," Shrimp said carrying on with our Deben education, "and they were built where they used to mine for coprolite in the 1800's." We looked at Shrimp quizzically, "Coprolite is fossilized dinosaur poo and they collected it and it was shipped it to Ipswich where they turned it into fertiliser by crushing it. They used to get young children about our age to dig it and collect it from the beaches where it come out of the cliffs where they crumbled. I have some stories about the children who collected it including an incredibly sad one. There is a street in Ipswich called Coprolite Street and they produced fertiliser from coprolites mixing it with acids to make it usable. Eventually they moved the factory out of the town because of the smell."

"Well, you do have some stories," joked Ket, "but then you have lots of stories from your books." Shrimp took no notice of Ket and carried on with our education. I later found out later that Ket was quite jealous of Shrimp's reading ability and her voracious appetite for books. His forte was science and maths subjects but his lack of ability in English could hold him back.

"There was a cement factory here in the 1800's and many of the men from our side of the river would go to work there."

Whilst she spoke, we finished our drinks, water for Sylvie, a can of lemonade, coke for Shrimp and my flask of tea for me. The day was warm off the river and the breeze was less then when we were out in the middle of the river. We watched the activity on the yachts moored in the middle of the river each with its small boat roped to its stern which would allow the sailors to reach the boat from the pier next to the pub a little way upstream from where we sat.

“Ready,” said Ket and we got back into the boat and Shrimp rowed us out far enough to drop the centre board and raise the sails to catch the wind. The direction of the wind had moved to the side, which we had not experienced before, so we set the sails to the opposite side of the boat at an angle and with the ebbing tide we made good progress and soon were pulling past Shottisham Creek and Lodge Plantation as Shrimp pointed out. Our progress was slowed slightly as we came around a bend in the river and the wind moved off the port bow. We needed to tack the rest of the trip to Ramsholt. While I lowered the sails, Shrimp put the oars in the rollicks and pulled us to the hard and while she held the boat against the current the others of us jumped out and I held the bow line. She joined me and we pulled the boat onto the trailer which Ket and Sylvie had pushed down the hard. We soon had the Deben Rose on the trailer and up to boat park. Ket looked at his phone and cried “Oh no.” We looked at him and Sylvie asked what the problem was. “The weather has changed, and it is now going to rain tomorrow.”

“So, what is the problem?” asked Sylvie.

“We were going to turn the boat over and check the hull. If there were any parts that were bare, we were going to vanish them,” he answered.

“Wait a minute,” said Sylvie and she moved away and got on her phone. She spoke for about three minutes and then came back. “Mum has said that you can use our boat shed and she will come down tomorrow and pull your boat back to our house with our car. If you walk down to the quay and be here by nine thirty you can come back in our car.”

“Will she be OK towing a boat?” he asked.

“She used to tow our caravan. She is a good driver but she has a lousy sense of direction.”

We put the cover over the boat said goodbye to Mr Stokes and started the walk back to our house. Ket and Shrimp who had got their bikes from behind the Harbour Master’s office walked with us up the hill and then turned left down the track to take the short way to their home.

“At the end of Dock Road take the track on the opposite side of the road and then follow that for a bit and then turn right and you will reach your cottage,” suggested Ket. So, we did as Ket advised and followed the track and then turned right as the track split into three before a wood. Luckily, we did not turn sharp right down the first track, and we passed the farm buildings and reached our paddock and back garden. Before we passed the farm buildings behind the house, we were soaked by a field irrigation device that as far as we are aware are a bit peculiar to this very dry part of the Country. The spray on wheels fed by a large hose threw water in an arc across part of the field with a clicking noise as part of the device spread the water to cover a larger area. Sylvia and I were chatting about the day and did not notice as the arc moved across the track wetting us from head to foot. When we got to the back door Mum held it open smiling. “Why are you so wet,” as she moved aside to let us pass into the kitchen and she ran upstairs and came down with a couple of towels which we dried our head and arms.

“We were soaked by one of those bloody irrigation hoses!” Sylvia complained.

“Language Sylvia! That is part of the fun of living in the Country. Why didn’t you wait until it was pointing the other way?”

“We didn’t notice it was going to cross the track,” I replied. She looked a little incredulous so I added, “we were talking about the sailing and that didn’t happen in Frome.”

She laughed and said, “welcome to Suffolk. Did you have a good day on the river?”

"It was great," said Silvia although I wondered if it was the proximity of Ket rather than the sailing that made Sylvia so effusive. "I have told Ket that you will drive their boat up to our garden and work on it in the boat shed."

"I think we need to set up some lights so that you will be able to work on the boat. I had a look at the boat shed and there are plugs so there is power and there are some inspection lights in the back shed."

"Can we have a drink first?" I asked.

"Tea, I think," she said.

She made a pot of tea which I drunk thirstily. Sylvie had her usual glass of water. We went out into the garden and opened the double doors of the boat shed.

"Let's pull the boat out and push it to the side so we can see if there are more lights in the shed." The lack of windows made the shed very dark, and it was really difficult to see anything. We pulled the boat out and along the side away from the track by the side of the garden. We needed to attach a couple of ropes to the front of the trailer to help avoid the trailer bars cutting into our hands. "Now get some ropes and tie the boat to the trailer and I will have a look to see if we can stop it being pulled by a thief's car." Sylvie and I got some ropes from the shed and tied the cleats under the cover to the trailer. Meanwhile my very unpractical Mum came out of the shed and said, "well I have found a light switch come and have a look."

The switch was behind a pair of overalls that were hanging from hook. Mum had turned on the lights which were along the side of the apex on the other side of the purlins, so they were not easy to see unless you were towards the back of the shed. The lights were efficient, and we could see everything in there. At the back she found a contraption painted yellow with a lock with a key in it. "I wonder what this is," Mum said. I turned the heavy piece of metal in my hands and then I had a thought.

"I have an idea because I have seen Ket using one of these on his trailer." I walked to the front of the trailer where the hitch was attached. I unlocked the contraption and it hinged open. I was

able to place it over the hitch and lock it again so that the trailer could not be attached to a car tow bar. "Perfect," I said, "we will be able to use it when the boat is down at the dock."

Mum said, "I think we are done; let's go and make dinner and you two can help."

Chapter 7

Boat Maintenance

We were up early for breakfast. "I have made you a big breakfast," she said. She sometimes cooked us animal products although she would not eat them herself. She believed that children eating meat allowed them to develop physically and she said that she would allow us to make our own decisions on vegetarianism when we stopped growing. She often made some of our food, like our sandwiches, meat free which irked Sylvie and I.

At nine twenty we set off in the Berlingo for the dock and as we passed the pub, we could see Ket and Shrimp pulling their boat and trailer off the boat park ready for it to be hitched to the Berlingo's tow bar. Mum turned the car around and leant out of the window and asked Ket and Shrimp to stand either side of the front of the trailer and she reversed using the space between them as a guide in her rear-view mirror. Expertly she moved the car until Ket raised his arm and she stopped. We got out and the hitch was only five centimetres to one side of the tow bar. Ket and Shrimp lifted the trailer and moved the hitch onto towbar and Mum checked that it was secure as Ket wound up the trailer's

front wheel off the ground. Ket asked if he could put a large plastic box into the boot of the car and then he and Shrimp jumped into the car with Ket making sure that he sat next to Sylvie.

“What’s in the box?” I asked.

“The stuff we need to do the bottom of the boat, sandpaper, vanish etc,” replied Ket. Mum, who had kept the engine running put car into gear and we pulled up the hill away from the dock and on to our cottage. When we reached the cottage, Mum reversed the trailer into the garden and up to the doors of the boat shed allowing enough room to open them.

“She is a great driver,” Ket said.

“She has no sense of direction so if we need to go anywhere new, I always need to map read,” I added, “and she will not have a Satnav!”

Ket unhitched the trailer and Sylvie and I opened the shed doors and put the light on. In the shed he said, “this is wonderful, you can see so much with all this light. We need to take all the stuff out of the boat so we can manhandle it into the shed after turning it over.” They had taken the mast and boom off the boat.

“Where is the mast and boom?” I asked.

“We left them behind Mr Stokes’ office,” said Shrimp, “they are in good nick because we revarnished them at the end of April. We pulled the trailer forward and with Mum’s help and lifted the boat off the trailer until it could be moved around the side of the shed next to our boat. We then all got on one side of the boat and rolled it over until the top of the boat rested on the grass. We then all lifted the boat which was not that heavy and walked it into the shed. “Time for a drink,” said Mum and we all tramped into the kitchen and sat around the table while she made tea for her and me and poured fresh orange juice for the others although Sylvie had her usual bottle of water. Mum placed the biscuit tin on the table and Ket and Shrimp were, as usual, first into the tin taking two each. Sylvie and I were quite full from our breakfast so we held back.

“So, what do we need to do first?” I asked.

“Well, we need to check over all of the hull and then where we find parts where the varnish is suspect, sand them down and then apply the varnish when that part of the hull is bare. I did not bring anything to clean the hull so we can see the varnish it can be a bit dirty on the hull. Do you have anything to clean the wood Mrs Jensome?” I did not know that they knew our surname because I cannot recall telling either of them, but I suppose he got it from Sylvie.

“I can give you buckets of warm water and cloths. Will washing up liquid do?”

“That will be fine, thank you,” replied Ket. We continued to drink while Mum disappeared into the small room off the kitchen which contained the washing machine and drier which had been left by the previous owners. She returned with two galvanised buckets and cloths and began filling the buckets with water and squeezed in some washing up liquid, the eco version of course, and the foam domed over the top of the buckets.

“There you go Boat Cleaners that should help,” she said. “I am going out for lunch so I will make you sandwiches and leave them in the fridge. I will be back about three.” We finished our drinks and then Ket and I carried out the buckets whilst the girls carried out the cloths and a mop that mum brought out from the washing machine room.

“Right,” said Ket “if you and Shrimp take the back, we will do the front.” He put his hand in the pack that he brought and brought out two big markers. “When you find a bare patch mark the spot with this pen and then we can find it easily.”

“Will they work with all the water?”

“Yep, they will even work under water.” We started to clean the boat and it was quite dirty with a lot of slime and mud. After two and a half hours it was sparkling and covered in small round white marks where we had identified bare patches. Just then, outside the shed, the expected rain started and like a lot of summer storms it fell from the sky that started with a slow drum beat on the corrugated iron roof increasing in tempo until the

individual drum hits merged into a continuous crescendo which went on and on.

"I hope Mum is out of the rain," I said, because we had seen her getting into her car wearing what was a new summer dress, quite short for her and one that Sylvie would have worn being taller than the diminutive Helen Jensome, but the hem would have been shorter which would have suited her. We stood just back from the entrance of the shed watching the shower for ten minutes and almost as fast as it started it stopped and the afternoon sun blazed down raising condensation from the damp tarmac of the vehicle hardstanding by the side of the house. "Time for lunch?"

"Yes, let's go," said Ket and we tramped off to the back door. Sylvie got the sandwiches out of the fridge and took the foil off and put them on the table. Mum refused to cover food with food wrapping because it could not be recycled in Frome, but aluminium foil could. There were three large plates of sandwiches and a cake. As usual Ket and Shrimp fell on the sandwiches taking one in either hand before I had a chance to put the side plates out. Sylvie got each of us a glass and filled each with fresh orange. There was not much talking while we tucked into the sandwiches which were a mix of non-meat alternatives, in fact there was no meat at all with plenty of salad, avocado and cheese of various types. Ket's phone beeped, and he took it out of his pocket and smiled.

"Yousey and Emilie are back from Saudi," he typed into his phone and then waited for a bit and then it beeped again, "they are being driven over by their mum and will be here in about twenty minutes. You will like them they are fun." Shrimp said nothing but took her own phone out of her pocket and started to use it. "It is OK for them to come over?" asked Ket.

"I hope they are not hungry," I responded pointing to the serving plates which were empty. He typed into his phone.

"I just gave them your address," and his phone beeped again, "they are on their way."

Sure enough about thirty minutes later a large Audi SUV rolled into the track and a girl and boy got out. The boy said something to the woman in the driver's seat who was wearing a head scarf like a hijab. When she turned back, I could see that she was dark, and the scarf just hid her hair and wound around her neck. It was of light material because now that the rain had ceased the sun had heated the air and it was getting warmer. She smiled at us and expertly reversed the car along the track. Yousey and Emmie who had their backs to us waving their mother goodbye turned and I could see that they both had olive coloured skin and the dark eyes of Mediterraneans. They smiled and Yousey was the first to speak.

"Ket, Shrimp so good to see you and this must be Sylvie and Jamie," he said pointing to us. Ket must have told him our names by message. "So, what have you been doing?"

I could see by the way Sylvie smiled at Yousey that Ket would have competition for the late-night messages that I know she had been sending him. Mum made us keep our bedroom doors partially open and the message received beeps kept up a regular pattern until she heard Mum coming up to bed.

"Sylvie's Mum has let us borrow their shed to clean and varnish the bare patches on our boat and Sylvie and Jamie have their own boat, so we have been teaching them how to sail. I think it is Mr Richard's boat." He turned to Sylvie and I and said, "Mr Richards sailed from Ramsholt until he got too old and now he has gone to live with his daughter in Wales. It was good that he left his boat for you because it is a good boat, but we won't know of any leaking issues until we get it on the water."

"Let's have a look and see how far you have got with your tub," said Yousey.

"Yousey and Emile have a fibreglass dinghy and it is fast, but it is skill that wins races," Ket countered Yousey's tub insult. We all went into the shed, and we could see that the hull had dried. Key went into his box and pulled out two large tins sandpaper and three paint brushes. After we had sanded the marked patches

bare Ket said. "Let Yousey, me and Jamie do the varnishing and perhaps the girls can get us some cold drinks."

"That is a bit misogynistic," Sylvia said.

"Well, you can do the varnishing and we will get the drinks," replied Ket. With that she turned on her heel and with the other girls strode off towards the house.

"I don't think she wanted to get varnish on her new tee shirt," I ventured to suggest.

"Right guys, thin coats and then we will sand down again tomorrow and put the fishing coat on," said Ket. For the next hour we varnished every-where where the hull had been sanded after we removed the dust with spirit. I worked near Ket so he could show me how to do this and Yousey took the other side of the hull. After an hour the cold drinks finally arrived, and I was gasping in the heat.

"What took you so long to make up some squash?" asked Ket.

"We were talking," answered Sylvie and they went back to the house while Ket, Yousey and I sat on the grass outside the shed and drank our orange squash.

"It will take us about an hour to sand down tomorrow and then we can finish the second coat and then leave it for a day to dry. Do you want us to start on your boat Jamie?"

"That would be great," I replied, "so we will need to get Mum to pull our boat to Ramsholt on Monday." We finished the first coat of the varnish and Ket walked around the boat checking each wet patch and the rest of the hull to ensure that the day one job was complete. We went into the kitchen where the girls were sat around the table talking. We stood at the door and waited until they acknowledged us by all looking in our direction. Outside the second of what was going to be a series of heavy showers arrived pattering on the kitchen window.

"Hi boys," Sylvie joked in a very Marilyn Munroe type manner. Mum drew up in the Berlingo and came in holding a couple of cardboard boxes with Cake Box on the labels and a carrier bag.

"Oh," she said, "and who are these two."

"Hi, I am Yousey and this is Emilie," Yousey said pointing to Emilie as he said her name.

"Well, you are very welcome, and it is lucky that I bought a lot of cakes." Mum said. She took a large presentation plate off the dresser and placed it on the table and put all the cupcakes and custard tarts from the two boxes on the plates. "Now what would you like to drink?" and she took a large cartoon of fresh orange and started to put measures into glasses. "I thought you may be thirsty in this strange weather." As fast as it had arrived the shower had dissipated and the sun had come back out.

As usual Ket and Shrimp were first to take a cake, but they were closely followed by Yousey who took one and finished it in seconds.

"Can you take our boat to Ramsholt on Monday Mum. We are going to check for leaks."

"Yes, I can Jamie, I am not working."

"So, we are going to get our boat in the water," Sylvie said happily.

"And if it is OK then we can take it for a sail," Ket said, "and there will be enough room for Yousey and Emilie, if you want to come."

"Cool," said Emilie.

"Now how are you lot getting home. I can take Yousey and Emilie but I cannot fit you Ket and Shrimp in if Sylvie and Jamie come as well."

"Yes, we will come," said Sylvie and I suspect that she would sit next to Yousey.

"No problem," said Ket, "it is less than a mile to our house. We will see you all tomorrow. We will come to your cottage about ten." We all left the house and I closed the shed and put the lock on. We said goodbye to Ket and Shrimp and the rest of us got into the Berlingo and as I suspected Sylvie managed to ensure the seat next to Yousey.

"Right where are we off to?" asked Mum.

"Waldringfield, if you don't mind," replied Emilie which was one of the few things I had heard her say. I found the reason why

when I turned around and saw Sylvie and Yousey with their heads together looking at their phones.

"I thought your boat is at Martlesham Creek," I said.

"It is but our house is in Waldringfield Village. We have our boat at Martlesham because my dad owns the boatyard there."

"I thought he worked in Saudi," I stated.

"He does but he owns a few businesses over here mostly related to boats which he loves." Emilie added. So, we drove to Waldringfield with Emilie giving directions. Eventually we reached a very large house surrounded by a high wall with open double gates attached to brick gate posts topped with spread eagles. "You can drive in," said Emilie, and Mum parked next to the Audi SUV which made her battered Berlingo look very shabby.

"Would you like to come in?" asked Yousey.

"No thank you Yousey, I am going out tonight and I need to make Jamie and Sylvie's dinner first," Mum replied. Yousey and Emilie's mum opened the front door and stood there smiling. She waited until our two friends reached the porch said something to the two of them and they all waved. We waved back and Mum reversed out pointing the Berlingo in the direction home. I knew it was coming and eventually Mum said.

"So where do Yousey and Emilie come from?" she asked. I knew that Mum seeing Yousey's mum wearing a hijab would promote questions.

"Here I answered," being purposely obtuse because I did not think it was a relevant question even from my very politically correct mother.

"OK I see she said," I assume acknowledging my reluctance to go into Yousey and Emilie's country of origin. "I just thought it would be nice to know, but yes it does not matter where they come from, and they will always be welcome in our house."

"All we know is that their dad works in Saudi." I responded. Sylvie looked up from her phone and spoke.

"Well actually Yousey said that he was born in Saudi but they moved to the UK when he was very young when his dad got a job with Saudi-Arab Oil and since then he and his wife have British

citizenship and so has he. Emilie was born in London, so she is a UK citizen. Yousey's dad spends up to two years at a time in Saudi and the rest of the family go to visit him every six months. He has one month left on his current tour and then he will be back in the UK for a year before he goes back to Saudi again."

"Really," said Mum and immediately changed the subject. "I am going out to dinner tonight with a friend."

"What friend?" Sylvie asked.

"Just a friend," said Mum which probably meant it was a man. I still missed my dad but he was never going to come back to us so Mum should see other men, just not too many!

Chapter 8

Our Boats Gets its Feet Wet

The following day our four new friends arrived before 10 am, Ket and Shrimp walked up from the Old School House and Yousey and Em, as I found later, she prefers to be called, arrived in their mum's large SUV and this time she came in and joined us at the kitchen table for drinks and pastries which Mum had gone into Woodbridge early to get.

"So, what is it today?" I queried Ket.

"Well, we just need to flat the vanish we put on yesterday and then clean the dust off with tack cloth." Ket saw my worried look and added, "flat means to take the shine off the vanish we painted, and tack cloth will remove the dust, so we don't need to use soap and water or spirit and wait for it to dry off. We will be able to put the second coat and then get your boat on the water."

They were still calling it 'our boat' although it had a recently painted name 'Firefly' on the front of the hull.

"Brilliant," I said, although Sylvie did not seem to be too concerned because she was looking at her phone with Yousey.

"Shall we get going." We all left to open the shed leaving Mum and Mrs Asfed talking. We opened the doors and I put on the lights. The varnish patches showed up as very shiny.

"I think we will need to do the whole hull at the end of the summer," Ket said to Shrimp. He handed each of us a piece of sandpaper and we set about flattening the hull ready to take the new varnish. I wondered how we would know where to re-varnish but where we flattened the patches these showed up against the rest of the hull which retained some of its shine from its previous varnishing. It only took us thirty minutes to flatten the varnished places and then with the tack cloth we set about cleansing the whole of the hull so there was no chance of dust getting onto the new varnish. Ket then handed Yousey and me a brush which he had cleaned and dried before he left yesterday, and we set about covering the flat patches while the girls went and got some orange which we drank at the first break. After two hours we were finished, and we went into the kitchen where Mum and Mrs Asfed had made a cold buffet in which we made a very big dent. Shrimp and Ket and their bottomless appetites took the rest home in foil parcels.

"Right," said Ket, "we are finished so we will go home and meet you at quay tomorrow. Are you two coming to see?"

"We will sail over," replied Yousey, "and help with the launch. Can we have a look at the boat we only had a quick look yesterday." We all went out to look at Firefly lying alongside the shed. We closed the right-hand door of the shed which hid the boat which was behind when it was opened. "This is a Devon Lugger, hold on," said Yousey and then he went into the shed and called to us. "Have you got a ladder?" We all entered the shed where he was looking up at the ceiling of the shed where there was a lot of things lying on the bases of the frames which

supported the roof. "See that," and he pointed to a wooden post that was resting on across the A frames, "that is the back mast."

"I saw that, and I thought it may be another mast, but we did not have time to check it out," Ket said.

"I knew it was a Devon Lugger," said Shrimp.

"Why didn't you say anything?" said Ket.

"I thought you knew!" Ket looked at her and shook his head incredulously. Yousey lifted the back of the boat cover and pointed to a fitting on Firefly, the place where the back spar fitted, and the mizzen mast was secured.

"Where are the sails?" Yousey asked.

"Up the front," I replied. He went to the front of the boat, lifted the cover there and took out the red sails which we had put in before we covered the boat. He laid them on the grass and opened each out, I assume as they would be installed on Firefly. He checked each one and said.

"They are all in good condition and you can see there is no boom for the mainsail. It just gets get pulled into place and just has a couple of thin ropes to keep the bottom of the sail from flapping up.

"Is it easy to sail?" Sylvie asked. She had been standing away from the group on her phone which was beeping every so often.

"Apart from the fact that you have three sails it is, and you don't have a boom to worry about," Yousey said. We folded up the sails and replaced them in the boat. "Have you looked in the other sheds for a motor, an outboard?"

"We haven't spent much time looking in all of them why?" I answered with another question.

"Well, when I looked at the back of the boat, I noticed that there were marks where an outboard had been fitted. It will be much easier to bring it in after you have put all three sails down." I went into the house where Mum and Mrs Asfed were talking but fell silent when I came in.

"Have you got the keys to the sheds Mum, Yousey thinks we must have an outboard somewhere." She opened the dresser drawer and handed me a large keyring. I managed to open each of

the sheds some which had padlocks and some with fitted locks and left the others to look inside.

Eventually Shrimp cried out, "it is here." We handled the motor out of the shed and rested it on its base while Ket checked the petrol tanks. We took it to the back of the boat and secured it on the plate attached to the stern. Yousey reached across the stern and pulled the starter handle a few times before the motor popped and roared into life. He turned the grip and the motor increased in speed and the propellor spun faster and slower following the sound of the engine.

"It looks almost new," said Yousey.

"The tank is almost full," advised Ket and then Shrimp came out with a metal jerry can of what we assumed was petrol.

"Does it need oil if it is two stroke?" I asked.

"No, it is a 4 stroke," he said pointing to the decal on the side of the engine which advertised the fact. "We can leave it on the boat and with the mizzen mast and then we will be all set for tomorrow." At that point Mrs Asfed came out of the house.

"Are you ready to go?" she asked.

"And we must go as well," said Ket. So, our friends got onto their modes of transport and took off in the direction of their homes. Mum came and put her arms around Sylvia's and my waists, and we waved goodbye.

"Right, I have made a nut roast which is in the warming oven and will be OK for tea. I will be going out so if you can serve it up Sylvia I would be very grateful. What time will you need to be at the dock with the boat." I was not sure but Sylvia types into her phone which beeped a few seconds later.

"Em and Yousey will be there at about 10 am so around then." We walked back to the house and sat down at the kitchen table, and we explained all that we had been doing to Ket and Shrimp's boat.

"Right, I must get ready," she said and went upstairs.

"I think it is a man." Sylvia whispered to me as she mounted the stairs.

My alarm went off at 7 am next morning although I could have done with a couple of hours more sleep. When I got downstairs Mum had my cornflakes in a bowl and the milk in a jug by the side of the bowl and a cup of tea on the other side. "Going to be a warm day." Unusually she was wearing jeans and a tee and a pair of espadrilles, a change from her kaftan and other hippy dresses. Sylvia was leaning back in the chair and was staring at the ceiling.

"What do you think made that mark?" she said. I looked up and there was a brownish mark on the ceiling about six inches round. Mum looked up.

"Well, the bathroom is above so maybe he had a leak. Never mind we will have this room and the lounge painted in the autumn," she answered Sylvia. I finished my breakfast while Mum made our sandwiches and filled out backpacks with our lunch boxes and drinks. She then gave us twenty pounds each and said, "buy some drinks from the pub for your friends." Outside she expertly backed the Berlingo to the trailer while Sylvie and I stood either side of the front of the boat to give her an idea of where she needed to go. Sylvie and I pulled the tailer so that the hitch was over the towbar and then I turned the winch and lower the trailer until it rested on the towbar, secure for the journey. We put our backpacks in the back of the Berlingo and we set off for the short journey to the dock. When we got there Ket and Shrimp were sitting on the bench waving to Yousey and Em, who had just docked their boat and were walking through the shallows to the boat hard. Mum reversed the car with the boat until it was at the top of the slope to the river.

"Well done, Mrs," Ket told Mum. He had started to call her Mrs which she liked although I thought it may have been because she had not allowed him to call her by her first name.

"Thank you Ket that is what you get by driving caravans and tent trailers around the country. I will wait until you have checked for leaks and then I will be off to do some shopping. I am working for the rest of the week, so you are on your own."

We all pushed the trailer down the launching ramp after setting the masts in their sockets and putting the sails in place

ready to be raised when we were on the water. I was excited but a little apprehensive in case the boat had leaks. Ket and Shrimp pulled the boat backwards off the trailer which was half submerged in the river. Sylvie and I held the bow ropes and soon the boat was off the trailer with Yousey and Em pulling the trailer back to the boat park. They put the lock on to save it from being stolen. Mum who had been on dry land watching the launch walked over to the harbour master and handed over papers. Ket got into the boat and moved through it making sure that it had no leaks. He stood at the bow and held his thumb up in a, yep OK pose. Mum waved and drove the Berlingo up the hill away from the dock.

“Let’s go sailing,” said Ket and we all got into the lugger save for Yousey and Em who got into their boat and Em rowed it out to the middle of the river while Ket rowed locked the oars and started to follow our other friends. When we were side by side the other boat raised their sails, mainsail and headsails and our boat just the mizzen and head sail. Ket held off raising the mainsail and as soon as the sails caught the wind, we moved up river against the tide.

“A Devon Lugger has the top of the mainsail attached to a spar, called a yard and when hoisted acts as a vertical extension to the mast. In order to ensure the optimal sail shape, the yard should be as flush with the mast as is possible. To properly tension the mainsail, we will need to ensure the halyard is taut, affixing it to the vertical belaying pins by the mast. You can then adjust the sail, and control tension in its luff, using the downhaul. The mainsheet attaches to a traveller located at the stern, behind the tiller; it then feeds to the tiller itself for manual control. It also told me that the boat has loose-footed sails, which means there is no boom to worry about whilst tacking. These boats’ rigs have been modified to give approximately twenty percent more sail area than the typical lugger, however, as the hull is heavy and stable she is a comfortable sail even in stronger winds,” Ket advised.

“Where did you get all that information?” I asked.

“Shrimp,” replied Ket, “she was up half the night cruising the internet and she typed it into this.” Ket pulled a document from

his pocket and handed it to me. Shrimp yawned, said nothing but just looked a bit pleased with herself with a half-smile. Firefly was keeping up with Dragonfly, Yousey and Em's dingy, and we moved ahead of the wind and rounded the first bend in the river which moved northwest and then northeast and then northwest again until we reached Waldringfield and Stonner Point. We brought the boats together and roped them tight leaving a sail on each to ensure that the tide did not take us back down the river.

"Are we going into Waldringfield?" I asked, remembering the £20 that Sylvie and I had been given by Mum to buy drinks. "We can have a coke from the pub."

"Yes let's," replied Yousey. We untied the boats and sailed into the quay lowering the sails as we came up to the mooring. Sylvie and I took orders from our friends for drinks while they got a seat in the sun, and we all had to squeeze onto the benches which would have been better occupied by four people. "So, what do you think of Firefly?"

"Well, it handles really well. It seems a bit heavy compared to our boat, but it will be fine. I think we will let Sylvie and Jamie sail it back. I think they are ready."

"Do you want to go in our dingy with Em, Ket, and then I can see what the lugger feels like?" Yousey said to Ket although I think it was more about being close to Sylvie rather than anything to do with the lugger. So, after our refreshments we got back into the boats rowed into the middle of the channel and Yousey took over the control of the lugger, insisting that we put all the sails up included the mizzen as the tide reached ebb and we were then being helped downstream as it turned to flow out to the estuary. Ket and Em in the dinghy were keeping up with us with both sails up and we were treated to a display of sailing prowess from Ket and Yousey as they tacked and weaved their craft against the wind taking advantage of the ebbing tide with Yousey barking out orders. In our craft we could hear Ket coaching Em who was quite inexperienced having taken to sailing very recently. We took Ket and Em's wind by sailing on the windward side of them ensuring that their sails just flapped about and they slowed with us taking a

lead from them which they never recovered and we reached the point that we needed to lower our sails off Ramsholt harbour. We rowed to the dock and loaded Firefly on to its trailer and dragged it to the boat parking spot. Ket and Em pulled the other boat onto the beach far enough up so that the outgoing tide would not pull the craft into the river.

The boys sat around the seat on the grass by the boat park and the girls took the seat and we ate our lunches. Sylvie swapped some of her lunch with Yousey who had some spicey middle eastern fillings in his sandwiches. I had some of Shrimp's meat filled sandwiches and she had my fried haloumi on Hovis. Mr Stokes came over to us and warned.

"There is a gin palace coming through at hightide tonight and will be mooring here until late morning until it can motor up to Woodbridge when the tide is high. Will you be sailing tomorrow?"

"We won't, we have to go into Woodbridge to get our new school uniform," said Yousey.

"We will be down here checking out Firefly and Lady Matilda because the varnish will be dry, and we want to get Sylvie and Jamie on their first solo trip. If that is OK with your mum to take us down tomorrow?" asked Ket.

"I am sure she will be OK with that," Sylvie said.

"Well," said Mr Stokes, "the gin palace makes a big wake so I suggest that you set off early if you are going up stream or keep downstream out of the wake. They have a river pilot taking her up because she has a large draft, and they will want to keep to the deepest part of the channel."

"We are off," said Yousey, "we are being met at the creek and if we don't go now, she will be waiting." Yousey pushed the dinghy off the beach and pushed it round while Em set the oars and started to row out into the channel. Yousey climbed into the stern and started to pull the mainsail up. Em must have dropped the centre board because they were soon under full sail and taking advantage of the following wind against the ebbing current. "Soon you will be able to do that," said Ket as we stood and watched the dinghy sail upstream.

Mr Stokes who had been chatting to us while we ate our sandwiched finished by saying, "right, I need to get on the RT to see where the gin palace, which is called Lazy Days, is." With that he went back to his office, and we started to walk up the hill away from the dock. We started the climb of the incline waved to Mr Stokes, who had a RT next to his ear. We left Ket and Shrimp at the old Dock Inn for them to walk across the valley to their home after they had agreed to meet us at ten am at ours to get their boat on to the trailer.

"We can try the outboard tomorrow," said Sylvie. We had not even thought about the motor which we had taken off its mounting and left it in the shed before we left.

Chapter 9 Solo in Firefly

We reached home without getting soaked although they were irrigating two of the eight fields that we pass. "There is a casserole in the warming oven," said Mum as we walked through the door. "I am going out at seven so you make sure you eat it and do the washing up. I want you in bed by ten and I expect to be home about eleven."

"Sylvie checked the oven and whispered, "it's got beans and carrots but I could not see any meat."

"No surprise there then."

"What are you whispering about?" Mum asked.

"Just where you may be going," replied Sylvie.

"I am meeting a friend, but then it is none of your business. I am late into work tomorrow so if you want Ket and Shrimp's boat taken to the dock I will have time."

"We agreed that they will come here at ten and check the varnish," I said.

"Good, well that works out well for everyone. I am off to have a bath. Sylvie gave me a knowing look and then I put the kettle on for some tea. Mum left about seven thirty after we had eaten and

I put the crockery and saucepans in the dishwasher which Sylvia set going.

Just at that point there was a knock at the back door and Shrimp and Ket walked in. We need to get our boat on the trailer because we have arranged for Mr Whittle our mum's friend to take it down to the dock. We followed our friends out into the garden where a rather old and battered Land Rover pick up was pulled up with its back facing the boat shed. All five of us including Mr Whittle manhandled Ket and Shrimp's boat out of the shed and onto its trailer. It was packed with its mast and sails and the cover pulled over. Mr Whittle backed the Land Rover up to the trailer almost with as much skill as mum and then the Land Rover exited the garden with our friends in the back waving as it turned towards Ramsholt.

"I am going to my room," Sylvia said.

I stayed downstairs to find instructional videos for sailing a lugger before we went solo tomorrow.

My sleep was not full, and I had many dreams which kept waking me up and most of which related to boat accidents from taking on water through holes in the bottom to sails coming adrift. I awoke for the final time just before the alarm went off at seven thirty. When it was silenced and reset for tomorrow, I decided to get up before the women of the house and get my shower first, which for me was very unusual. I put my standard holiday uniform on of tee shirt and shorts and went downstairs to put the kettle on. I was gasping for a cup of tea!

I was on my second cup from the pot when I heard Sylvie or mum stomping across the landing to the bathroom. There was no carpet in this house just painted floorboards with a few mats upstairs and tile and oak flooring down. I continued to read the website that I had found last night on sailing which was amazingly comprehensive and if I could remember all of it then I would be a very good sailor. Eventually Sylvie and Mum appeared, Mum first and Sylvie after, both wafting the perfume of the shower gels that they used. I prefer to shower with my soap on a rope which lasted

me about two months and was an infrequent regular on Mums shopping lists. Both Mum and Sylvie appeared tired and ate their chosen cereal in silence after giving me a curt good morning.

I was looking forward to some eggs but none were on offer so, with my raging sleep thirst slaked, I settled to a bowl of rice crispies with milk but no sugar which was frowned on by Mum because 'two much sugar makes podgy teenagers.' With breakfast finished with the ladies of the house seemingly too tired to talk I rinsed the bowls and mugs and loaded them in the dishwasher, after I first emptied the load that Sylvie had put on last night.

"Did you have a nice evening Mum," I asked and I am sure that she blushed before she quickly got up and turned away from the table.

"Yes thankyou dear," and I knew that that was all that I was going to get out of her. She left the kitchen and had changed into a pair of trousers and a blouse from the lounge wear that she sported after her shower. "Right, let's get over and pick that boat up for your friends.

"No need," I said, "a family friend came with them last night and picked it up."

"I do not have time to make your lunch so you will have to get a sandwich from the pub if they allow otherwise you will need to walk to Alderton to get something from the shop." We went put to the car.

"Mum the outboard," I shouted at her as she closed the door and started the engine of the car.

"Well OK get it out!"

"She's in a hurry I wonder if she has an assignation," Sylvie whispered and I laughed at the quaint expression.

Both boats looked rather fine as they floated about ten metres off the beach with the bow ropes secured to mooring rings on the docks. Ket pulled out a river chart from his backpack and laid it on the grass where we were all sitting. "You take this and the one steering should keep this open. I have pencilled the route you should take but if you do stray and ground the boat just loose the

sails and push off with an oar. Probably not a good idea to use the outboard because you will most likely have low water all around you. Right let's go sailing."

We had brought the can of fuel for the out board and we were a bit wary of leaving it in plain sight so we asked if we could leave it with Mr Stokes. He was not happy but reluctantly agreed to put in a shed that stood behind his office and could be locked. "Make sure that you take it back home at some point".

We waded out to our boats. Sylvie ignored Ket and cranked the outboard while I pushed the bow around to face the channel. It only took a couple of pulls and the outboard sprung into life. I jumped aboard at the boat's centre and Sylvie increased the revs and soon we were following Lady Matilda due east to the middle of the Deben. Sylvie cut the motor and I hauled up the mainsail and the foresail while she moved around me and dropped the centre board and then moved back to the tiller before I could get the mainsail loaded. With a bit of a southerly wind, we kept up with Ket and Shrimp who were just managing to keep ahead of us.

"I think I prefer rowing out rather than using the motor, what do you think?" Sylvie asked.

"Yes," I answered, "provided we take turns rowing,"

Just then her phone beeped and she tied up the end of the mainsail and took the phone out of her shorts pocket. She read the text and smiled. "Yousey is finished with shopping and he is bringing his craft down to Waldringfield to meet us with." She put the phone back in her shorts and corrected the veer that she had allowed by not concentrating on sailing. "Can you text Ket or Shrimp and say that we are meeting Yousey at Waldringfield, while you are doing nothing!" I was doing something I was keeping an eye on the wind pennant and making sure she kept us on the right track now she had taken on the dreamy expression now that she was going to see Yousey. Ket was really second choice now.

"Steer to the port," I said as we drifted away right and lost ground on Ket. "I think we should raise the mizzen. I looked over the side and I could see the bottom of the river through the water

so we needed to ensure that we followed Ket exactly. I sat on the back seat and raised the mizzen sail getting past Sylvie as she concentrated on keeping in the wake of Ket and Shrimp.

The extra sail did not seem to make much difference at first but then we almost imperceptibly started to gain on Ket and Shrimp. I tied off the foresail and kept hold of the mainsail and mizen sheets so Sylvie could concentrate on the tiller. Within five minutes we were almost bow to tail on Ket's boat who turned and shouted, "Let's pull the boats up on the beach." We waved back in acknowledgement.

We snaked our way to Waldringfield dropped our sails and Sylvie cranked the outboard with the starting rope and I raised the centre board and we gently beached Firefly on the soft sand of the beach just upstream from the Sailing Club clubhouse.

"You made up the water on us. I think you could have overtaken us if you were confident of the channel. It was quite wide when you caught up and you could have done it," said Ket.

"I think we were quite happy staying behind you," Sylvia answered.

"I think we should put firefly in for an open race towards the end of summer. You will be quite experienced by then," Ket added.

"That would be awesome," I said quite excitedly.

Just as I said that Yousey and Emilie sailed their boat up on the beach in a well-practiced manoeuvre. They must have loosened the sails and raised the centreboard as they approached the beach. Sylvie stood up and hugged Yousey in what also looked like a well-practiced manoeuvre, with boys not necessarily him. "She released him and said, "that looked so good, how did you do that."

"Practice," he said "and having Emilie to do the hard work loosening the sails and raising the centreboard at exactly the right moment otherwise the centreboard scrapes on the riverbed and you look really silly as the boat comes to a very quick halt. I just steer."

“So have you finished shopping with your Mummy,” Ket said sarcastically.

Oh dear, I thought, he did not like the hug that the handsome Mediterranean was given by Sylvia. This could be interesting in the future and maybe a little embarrassingly. Yousey ignored the slight and sat next to where Sylvia had sat after their hug.

“Yes, it only took an hour to get the stuff because the outfitters had all our sizes. How did the boat go Sylvie. You were sailing on your own today.”

I answered, “it was perfect and with all the sails up it is really fast.”

Sylvie said, “can we get some food from the pub I am staying, and mum didn’t have time to do our sandwiches?”

“I can get you something. The chef is a friend of my Mums and he will serve us at the back door. Do you want to come,” said Ket, hoping to recover some ground with Sylvie that he lost to Yousey in that hug.

“I’ll have a burger,” I said, “Do you guys want anything,” I said to Emilie and Shrimp who were heads together over their phones.”

“No, we have sandwiches,” said Shrimp.

“And we already ate in Woodbridge at the Station Café.”

“Where is that,” I asked, genuinely.

“By the Station,” replied Em and I must admit to flushed cheeks as I felt embarrassed at my inane question.

So, Ket and Sylvie made their way back along the beach and then up to the pub. Yousey moved to where Em and Shrimp sat laughing at their phones.

“What are you laughing at?” I asked.

“They are YouTube videos of dogs running into their owners and knocking them over,” Shrimp replied. Yousey started laughing seemingly not upset at Ket and Sylvie walking off together.

Ket and Sylvie returned fifteen minutes later with my burger and a can of coke and Sylvie’s water with what looked to be a salad. It did not take long to finish our lunches and I took Sylvie and my packaging to the nearest bin.

When I returned our friends and Sylvie were on their feet preparing the boats for the return trips, Yousey and Em to Martlesham and us back to Ramsholt.

As we pushed the boats out to deeper water Em shouted to us, “we passed that big boat Lazy Days as it made it way up stream, it’s wash was quite crazy and I thought we were going to capsize.”

“Not a chance,” Yousey said as he jumped into the boat and took the tiller as Em pushed the front of their boat into the stream. Going against the outgoing tide but with the wind in their favour they set off towards Martlesham Creek and we set off against the wind but with the tide. We tacked all the way down the navigable channel past Hemley until we drew close to Ramsholt.

Anchored in the channel was a large sailing boat the Mary Jane. It was at least sixty feet long moored to the buoys front and back so it did not turn around with the tide or wind. There was a man and woman who looked to be tidying after mooring. Certainly, it had not been there when we set off this morning and it did not pass us so it must have come up from Bawdsey way. As we passed a head popped up in one of the windows and looked straight at me and then the man shouted and it popped down again. He looked at me to see if I had seen the head but I just turned away and pulled the outboard and it sprang into life as Sylvie pulled down the main and foresail and I loosened the sheet for the mizzen to allow it to flap in the wind until Sylvie moved around me and hauled it down. She went back toward the bow and lifted the centreboard as I turned the boat towards the slipway. She jumped out of the bow and pulled the bow line and held it while I got off the stern to walk up the slipway to get the trailer.

We were getting as good as Ket and Shrimp at landing boats and pulling it up to the boat park. I took off the outboard and hauled it over to Mr Stokes and asked if he could keep it for a couple of days until we can get it picked up. “I think Sylvie and I prefer rowing rather than using the motor.”

“Yes, I always think it is better and greener,” he commented.

“That’s a nice boat I said pointing to the Mary Jane.”

"Yes, it comes up about twice a month they have a meal at the pub stay overnight and then sail off again. It comes from the south and the couple spend their time sailing around the south coast and up to Suffolk. They also make trips to the Continent to various places. What a life sailing your boat with nothing else to do."

"Must make it a bit dull in the winter."

"Yes, we don't see them often in the winter but they do come occasionally when the weather is kind."

"See you tomorrow," I said, and he ruffled my hair and I thought, I am fourteen and not a bloody kid. I smiled and went back to Sylvie and our friends who were lazing about around the boat park. They could not take the seat which was already occupied by some holiday makers.

"Was Mr Stokes OK with keeping the outboard?" asked Sylvie.

"Yes, but I think he thinks I am nine and not fourteen."

"Ahh!" said Shrimp and pinched my cheek.

"Get off," I said and pushed her arm away.

"You need to grow a bit," said Ket. In disgust I turned away from the group just as the couple from the Mary Jane guided their inflatable onto the beach and pulled her up to the high-water mark. They set off towards the pub and as they passed the man stared at me. It made me feel very uncomfortable.

"Right," said Ket, "we are off for dinner."

Chapter 10

An Uncomfortable Feeling

My night was very disturbed and it was at two am that I woke and looked at the clock. I rarely wake during the night. My curtains which were gossamer thin and had been there since we arrived and did nothing to make my room dark when the moon is up and more than a quarter full. I got up and walked over to the window. I pulled the curtain aside. My room overlooked the front garden to the hedge and the fields that lay beyond. The moon which was a half full lit the whole of the landscape. To the right and in the distance the whole of the sky was lit up by another source. A knock came at

my door and it opened a little and as I turned Mum's head popped in.

"Are you OK son?" she asked, "I heard you walking about. Well I had walked from my bed to the window so it was hardly a hike. These wood floors are really noisy.

"Yes I am fine, I think the light of the moon woke me."

"Ah," she said, "these curtains are so thin. I must get some more when I get my first wage packet."

"That would be good because I am a growing boy and I need my sleep," I quipped. "What is that big light over there. She walked over and put her hand around my shoulder as I pointed to the light in the sky to the right.

"I am not sure. Perhaps it is the docks at Felixstowe."

"Their electricity bill must be enormous."

"You are funny. Now get some sleep." As she said that Sylvie's head popped around the door.

"What's going on you have woken me up," she said irritably.

"Nothing dear, you go back to bed, because that is where I am going."

"Yousey texted," she said through a yawn, "he gashed the underside of their boat and his mum is insisting that they take it the boat yard. He asked if Em and him could sail with us. I said it was no problem so they will be here at nine thirty because their mum will drop them off. Now I am going back to get my beauty sleep."

"It hasn't worked so far," I said and I received a gentle push in admonishment from Mum.

"Let's all go to bed," she said as she went out of my door yawning.

I was so tired when my alarm went off after I had finally got to sleep. Funny how I never know what time I fall asleep unless I can recall the last time I look at the clock image which is projected in the ceiling. The weather station clock with projection facility was one of my Christmas presents from Dad and it is a constant for me. It really just confirms the forecast that I get on my phone. It was

just the temperature that I was interested in before, but now I wish it had a wind gauge to see what sailing would be like for that day.

I got up but stayed in my pyjamas as I could hear one of the ladies in the shower. I think it must be Mum because there was singing and Sylvie never sings. When I went into the kitchen Sylvie was on her phone at the table. She was dressed already and was on her phone which beeped every minute or so. I must be Ket or Yousey. I sat at my usual place took the cosy off the tea pot and felt the side. It was still hot so I poured myself some into the cup that was laid out already with the bowl with cornflakes. No full English then.

"Ket said that they will be at the dock by ten and will see us when we get there. He is suggesting that we sail to Bawdsey for a change," she said.

"Oh Good." Just then mum came into the room her hair still damp from the shower but she was dressed.

"I am going to be late unless I hurry. You can get some food while you are out. There is a twenty on the dresser. What time will you be back. I should be here by three."

"Can you pick us up at the dock about four pm? I will text you" I asked, "I want to bring back the outboard because we prefer rowing out." Sylvie's phone beeped from under the table where she had hidden it when mum had come in."

"What have I told you about using phones at the table," mum said irritably. Sylvie opened her mouth to say something but closed it again without saying anything. "I must go, I must go!" With that she left the house and we heard the Berlingo fire up and screech off. "

"The others are here," Sylvie said reading the text that had just arrived. We grabbed our back packs and left through the back door, walking around to the front of the house where we waved to Mrs Asfed as she drove off back towards Alderton. Sylvie hugged Yousey and this time it was a little longer than the previous.

"Come on let's go," I said, "we are meeting the others at ten." We left through the back gate entrance and turned left towards the dock road. Passing the irrigation contraption which seemed to have

got stuck at one point and was throwing water across our path for more than a minute and then moved off in its never-ending circuit.

"Can they program it to do that?" I asked.

"I doubt if it is that clever," Sylvie responded, "but I think it is cleverer than you."

"How many years did you skip at school," I retorted to the insult."

She said nothing more and went back to showing her phone to Yousey who was walking very close to her. Em and I chatted about sailing and stuff until we reached the top of the hill to the dock and quickened our pace as Shrimp and Ket had already got their boat into the water and had tied it up to a mooring ring on the dock.

As soon as we reached our boat we whipped off the cover, put the two masts into their fittings and pulled the trailer out and pushed it backwards down the slipway. Yousey and Sylvie released it from the trailer and Em and I pulled the trailer back up to the trailer park. Mr Stokes waved as he came out of his office and we all waved back.

"So me, Yousey and Em in our boat," said Sylvie, "and you can go with Ket and Shrimp."

"Fine with me." I liked going with Shrimp because all she did was talk about sailing whereas Em mostly talked about her friends at school and music. I had this feeling that she did not like sailing really but went along with Yousey because she only had friends at school.

We turned and rowed the craft towards the centre of the river and then we were following the usual routine, stow the oars raise the sails, trim them and steer towards the south. Ket appeared to want to keep ahead of the others and made sure that our tacks were short and our sails correctly trimmed, shouting orders from the back where he kept his hand on the tiller and his eye on the wind tell-tale. His shouts of 'coming about' were frequent and barked.

"OK captain Bligh." Shrimp responded at one call but it was ignored and he kept a steely eye on what the wind and what the boat behind was doing. Our progress was slowed by the Mary Jane

which must have left before us and was proceeding under the power of her outboard preferring that to sail and constant tacking especially as the tide had turned. As we tacked from right to left that put me on the side nearest the Mary Jane and the guy gave me a look which made me feel very uncomfortable. I looked away and pulled the sheet to trim the sail as Ket barked the order at me. We slowed as it would not be possible to overtake a boat using the centre of the channel and the others pulled up alongside. We tied the boats together and drifted with the tide allowing the Mary Jane to get ahead.

"We would have caught you," said Yousey. "This is a fast little boat with all three sails up."

"Not so sure about that," said Shrimp, "Captain Bligh was determined to keep in front and he can play really dirty. He would have taken your wind every time you got close."

So we drifted and chatted in the warm sun until the Mary Jane had gone far enough in front that we would not catch her again if we took things a little leisurely.

We continued down the Deben calling to each other but not with the urgency that had gone before. It was longer trip without the competition but I enjoyed it more. Why does everything have to be a competition I thought to myself. We rounded the last bend to starboard and there was Bawdsey Quay on the port side of the river. Firefly was the lead boat on the bend and was first to lower its sails and get the oars out. Yousey oared the boat onto the beach and we saw the three crew jump out and pull her further up so that the river could not move her.

"Shall I start lowering the sails?" I asked Ket in his role of Captain.

"Just the foresail." He turned towards the beach and the Shrimp took the sheet from the mainsail. I was concerned so I shouted back.

"Aren't we going to row in?" I asked.

"No that's for wimps," he replied laughing. As the boat careered toward the beach and with enough speed, Shrimp

loosened the mainsail and then pulled up the centreboard so that we could glide onto the beach.

"Cool," I said and started to pull the mainsail down as the other two exited over the side and pulled the boat further up the beach with the stern still in the ebbing tide.

Sylvie who had been standing by the bow of Firefly came over to Ket and spoke. "That was good Captain but doesn't it damage the keel?"

"If you do it too much it will scrape the varnish off the boat has a steel strip along the keel which will stop the varnish coming off."

"Right, I need some food," I said, "I only had a bowl of cereal for breakfast."

"We have sandwiches, said Ket.

"So do we, but I could do with a coke," added Yousey.

So we all tramped up to the Café by the Quay which was set back from the road with an entrance cut into a wall and a large gate which was open. "Was that part of the Manor?" I asked pointing to the wall.

"Don't know," said Ket, "you will have to Google it.

"It does look like the same age," replied Shrimp. "I will have a look tonight when I get home."

At the top of the stairs to the café a door led us to the counter where Shrimp and Ket's Mum was serving a couple. We were next.

"Hi, my children," she said to Shrimp and Ket, "what can I get you."

Sylvie moved forward to the counter and said, "hi I will get these, can we have two cokes, a ham roll, a prawn roll, a water and two teas."

Sylvie paid and then we went out onto the balcony and pushed two tables together to seat all of us. Although it was a warm day in summer the café was surprisingly empty but there was a number of camper vans parked all the way to the turn in the road to Bawdsey. We sat around the tables waiting for our food. Shrimp, Em, Yousey and Ket undid their backpacks and took out their sandwiches.

"Won't they mind you eating your own food?" I asked.

"Not while my Mum is on," said Ket, "she lets us do it all the time."

"What are all those camper vans doing," I asked.

Shrimp looked at me smiling and said, "Camping."

"But there is a campsite just around the corner,"

"What would you prefer, camping there with the lovely view or a Campsite with no views. The Council is trying to stop them because it is a bit of an eyesore and they are going to put bollards on the parking spaces."

"Oh," I replied and that was the end of that conversation. Our food was served and we ate and drank. I looked over the water to where the Mary Jane from yesterday was moored. "What do you think that boat is doing," I said and they all looked at me puzzled. "I saw it at Ramsholt yesterday and as we passed it there was a face at one of the windows and the man shouted at him and he bobbed down. Then the man and the woman went to the pub but they did not take the other man with them. Mr Stokes said that that they come up to Ramsholt quite regularly."

"So," said Sylvie."

"I think it is a bit odd."

"But did Mr Stokes think it was a bit odd."

"I never asked," I said, "but when the man and woman came to shore, he looked at me rather funnily."

"Are you surprised," said Sylvie, "he was probably wondering why you were looking at him."

"I have seen that a lot, the boat that is and I wonder why they always come up here," said Shrimp.

"Mr Stokes said that that is all they do just spend their days sailing."

"That's what I want to do," said Ket, "far better than going to school!"

"You can make a drama out of anything," said Sylvie.

"No I am not I just think that the face in the window was a bit strange," I responded to Sylvie who had become very annoying since she had had two males vying for her attention. I see that she had seated herself next to Ket much to Yousey's annoyance.

"Just saying, that's all," and I left the matter there.

So we finished out food sat on the beach for an hour and then pushed the boats out and made our way back to Ramsholt. When the boats were carefully stowed for the night, I texted Mum and we sat around the seat chatting until the Berlingo turned up and mum got out as Em, Yousey, Sylvie and I got in. "Aren't you taking the outboard back?" she asked.

"Oh yes," I responded, "Em," can you help?"

"We both got out and walked across to the office and collected the outboard and can of petrol while Mr Stokes looked on. We stowed them in the back of the Berlingo and then we were off. We passed Shrimp and Ket who had reached the top of the hill but had not turned down the track to the other side of the valley and their home. We waved to them and carried on until the Berlingo was turned into the track and through the hedge to be parked next to the rear of the cottage.

"Don't forget to take the outboard to the shed," Mum ordered.

"We will do it," Sylvie said much to everyone's surprise because she is not one for physical labour except when sailing.

"Come on Yousey give me a hand."

"Mum where did you get these?" I said pointing to a nice table and four chairs that stood by the back door. They appeared to be metal and were painted green."

"I got them online, and they were delivered when I got back from work." Em and I sat down and Mum said, "tea or would you like juice."

"Fresh or concentrate?" I asked.

"Robertsons," she replied.

"Tea then, I can stand made up orange juice."

"What would you like Em?" Mum asked.

"Tea for me please," Em said smiling, "thank you very much.

Mum made the tea and brought the three cups out with saucers. "Where's Sylvie; Sylvie!" she shouted.

Sylvie and Yousey came from behind the boat shed. Sylvie's hair which she always made sure was perfectly coiffured, being reliant on a brush and compact mirror which she used at regular intervals, was all messed up and she was rather red in the face.

"Did you lock the door?" Mum asked ignoring the obvious which had gone on behind the outbuilding.

"Yes Mum," she responded her face returning to its normal colour. "Ah tea is it in the pot?"

"Yes, you can make Yousey one unless he wants juice.

"Just then Mrs Asfed drew up in a Fiesta rather than the 4 by 4 that she normally drives. Mum stood up and motioned for her to take a seat, she was asked if she wanted tea and went into the kitchen which was quickly vacated by Yousey and Sylvie both with red faces. Mum returned and she sat talking while the rest of us decided what we were going to do for the next few days.

Mrs Asfed said to Yousey and Em, "right I think we need to get back for Dad."

"Is he back," said Em.

"Yes dear but only for a few days. Oh and the Marina called. They applied the gel coat to the damage today and we can pick it up tomorrow, but we need to check if Dad needs the Audi."

"That's good," said Yousey, "but that means we won't sail tomorrow."

After the Asfeds had left we had a vegetable salad, which was very unappetising but Sylvie and Mum seemed to really enjoy it. "What is it," I asked pushing the food around my plate.

"Broad bean, Fennel and peaches. I got the recipe off the internet."

"Worst invention ever the internet," I said pulling a face and buttering another slice of bread,

"Well Sylvie likes it," Mum added. "When you have finished you can go and get your shower and get ready for bed. I am going out and I want to have a word with you sister, before I go."

I looked at Sylvie and winked. She put two fingers up to me as Mum got up and took the plates. Mine was still half full. I grabbed

my phone which I had placed on the dresser before tea and went off to get my shower leaving them to 'have the talk'.

Chapter 11

Strange Visits

So the days carried on in that wonderful fashion of meeting our friends and sailing, sometimes with Yousey and Em and sometimes without them because with their dad home they needed to spend time with him before he went back to where ever his business took him. Not just to North Africa but to the far east and at one point Australia and New Zealand. Em said he was trying to break into the far east and one assumes to add to quite a bit of wealth to that that the family had already. Although they were better placed than the single parent families of their friends, they were quite relaxed about it and we just accepted them.

Sylvie continued to share her affection between the two boys and the 'talk' that she had with Mum must have made a difference as I never caught any of them in compromising positions although she would always ask to sail in Lady Matilda and Yousey and Em's boat Toulson rather than Firefly so I was always crewed with either Shrimp or Em. Being crewed with Shrimp was always preferable because although I steered the boat, she knew exactly what I wanted her to do rather than me having to tell her which was the case with Em. Em always wanted to chat whereas Shrimp said little until we were beached or tied up and eating our lunch and then she would never stop imparting her wisdom. As I have said before her knowledge of the river, sea and boats was immense and I learnt so much.

We were sat at Woodbridge having pulled our three boats up the Whissocks slipway. It was quiet so we would not be disturbed but would move the boats of anyone wanted to bring a boat up or

down. We sat at the bows of our boats chatting, Sylvie had sailed up from Ramsholt with Ket, so Shrimp had crewed with me.

"I have entered us in the Hemley Sailing Club Open competition at the end of August. Yousey, are you entered?" asked Ket.

"Yes, we registered yesterday."

"Will you be sailing with Sylvie or do you want Shrimp to crew with you and Sylvie can enter with me." He turned to me and Sylvie, "I crewed with Yousey last year and we came second!"

"Happy to have Shrimp crewing with me. We have another sail in the Boat Shed that I found when I was cleaning it up."

"Perhaps that it the spinnaker. We use them when we are sailing with the wind and you will need to know how to use it before we get to the competition. We can use it next time we are out if you bring it down. Personally, I would not use it except in competition because it is a bit of a fag to use."

Sylvie had her head over her phone with Yousey. It was always with one of the boys. She looked as though she was not listening but as soon as you mentioned something that involved her she would look up and comment.

I got a text and said, "Dad is coming at the weekend and is staying in Ufford, so he wants to see us. Perhaps we should take him sailing."

"Rain at the weekend," said Shrimp.

"That is a bit of a pain. We won't be able to go sailing," I added.

"We have to see him and his," said Sylvie.

"Yes, we do and his girlfriend!" I spoke over her because I knew that she was not going to be complimentary about her.

"We will have to see you next week then."

We sailed back to Ramsholt leaving Yousey and Em to make their way up Martlesham Creek. As we got back to Ramsholt we passed the Mary Jane which was tied up in the centre of the river with the man and woman tidying up the deck, but unlike the first time I noticed the boat I did not see a face at the cabin window.

I took out my notepad and made a note of the date and time.

"What are you doing?" asked Shrimp.

"I have been noting the dates and times that the Mary Jane is anchored up by Ramsholt."

"Show me when we get to the quay." We pulled out boats up to the boat park in a well-practiced manoeuvre. We covered and locked the trailers ready for the night and as usual we sat by the seat for a chat before we headed off home.

"Let me see your notebook," Shrimp said.

I gave her the book turned to the pages with my notes about the Mary Jane.

"Why have you got a notebook?" asked Sylvie.

"So I can see the stuff that I might have forgotten."

She went back to talking to Ket in the low hushed tones that were sometimes normal. Shrimp studied the page and then she referred to her phone. After a couple of minutes she said, "that is strange. They always come up when the moon is between the first and the third quarter."

"How do you know all this?" I asked.

"I keep notes of everything like this on my phone."

"Perhaps you should do that instead of using a notebook," Sylvie suggested sneeringly and went back to her phone.

"I may have an idea. Let me think about it," Shrimp added.

So, we chatted for a bit more and then Ket said, "I am hungry let's go home for tea."

We all said that that was no surprise that he was hungry and we left the dock and walked back up the hill towards the path across the valley. We left Ket and Shrimp there with Sylvie giving him and big hug.

"We will not all be able to sail before Monday so we will see you after your dad's visit."

When we got back to the cottage Mum was clattering about in the kitchen. She was obviously not happy and it was no doubt because of dad coming down. "I suppose you know that your father is coming to see you with his woman," she had taken to not using her name although his woman was a bit less complimentary than

usual. Well I will take you to his hotel because he is not coming here! You can text me when you want picking up. How was your sailing?" She did not expect a reply so we never gave her one and we carried on as normal until I said.

"Are you not going out tonight?"

"No, I am not so you will have to suffer me for the evening, now get ready for bed before your tea."

I looked at Sylvie with raised eyebrows and she raised hers too. Later I said, "perhaps she has fallen out with her boyfriend," I suggested. She nodded and mm mm'd in assent. "I had better have my shower," I said as Mum returned from taking out the rubbish.

"Have you not gone yet, there is more than you in this house that needs to use the shower." That was enough for me so I showered put on my lounge wear and lay on the bed Googling my favourite sailing sites until it was time for dinner.

In my bed at ten pm a text arrived which overlayed the page I was looking at. It was Shrimp. "I have checked and every time that the Mary Jane has anchored off Ramsholt it has been between the first and the third quarter of the moon." I knew that because she had said it earlier, but she went on. "I have checked my notes on the weather conditions and from my notes. More notes! The days before and after they arrived were good weather but I have not made any notes of the overnight weather but it would be unusual if there was a lot of cloud."

I texted back, and?

"Don't you see the night would be light from when the moon rose until it went down. I have not checked the times of moonrise and moonset but I need to stop texting because I have been told to go to sleep by my mum. I will see you Monday."

So, they always moon up when there is a lot of light at night. Perhaps they are smuggling!

"Go to sleep!" Mum said as she pushed the door open and saw me with holding my phone. I do hope she makes up with her man friend because I don't like this mood of hers.

Chapter 12

Meeting Mrs Right

I woke early and was about to leap out of bed when I remembered that we were not sailing. I turned over and had another hours sleep and woke to a knocking on my bedroom door.

“Jamie you need to get up because I have to take you to Ufford,” Mum said. She was obviously in a better mood this morning so maybe her relationship had been recovered. I got up washed and put on my summer uniform of shorts and a tee shirt. I had chosen my favourite, plain black with the logo ‘I do not have the time or the crayons to explain it to you’. Mum hated it but it served her right for being so miserable last night.

My breakfast was sitting on the table and it was a full English and it looked like proper back bacon and sausage rather than the vegetarian option which mother often used when she made me a fried offering. I buttered a piece of toast and set about demolishing my favourite breakfast.

“Thank you,” my mother said sarcastically.

“Mmm thank you,” I said with my mouth full of toast which I had dipped into the golden yoke of the eggs which probably came from one of the cottages in the area.

“Don’t talk with your mouthful,” she said. Bloody cannot win I thought. I carried on eating my breakfast and the two eggs which were absolutely delicious, one of the upsides of life in this rural backwater, apart from sailing, was the many cottages that had home grown produce for sale outside their front gardens. The eggs, chutneys, jams and vegetables were so much tastier than the ones that we used to get from Sainsburys in Frome.

“Hurry up Jamie, I have to get you to your fathers by ten am. I looked at my watch, a retro reproduction Casio from the 80’s, but waterproof and shockproof in acknowledgement to the advances in technology. One of my favourite birthday presents.

“But it is not nine o clock yet.”

“Well I assume you will want to change.”

“Why, I like this tee shirt.” She shook her head but accepted that the thoughtful message was going to greet my father and his floosy.

Sylvie who had finished her breakfast and was sitting away from the table, so she could use her phone, looked up and said, “I think the message is apt considering how young Charly is.”

Mum turned back to the sink where she was rinsing plates but I suspected she was having a silent giggle.

Mum took us to the hotel at Ufford Park. It was a modern hotel which stretched from one end of the long car park to the other. The hotel was unusual in that its roof sloped very low to the top of the ground floor so it looks a little like a Swiss Chalet but I know that it did have an upper story and two pinnacles at either end and completely out of keeping with the architecture of the Woodbridge area itself.

“Ask for him at reception,” mum stated through the open window of the car as she turned it round and left thought the walled entrance to the car park.

We headed through the revolving door to the reception where a twenty-year oldish girl was seated behind the reception desk her attention was towards the desktop screen that she was scrutinising. She looked at us past the screen and then carried on with what she was doing. Sylvie coughed to draw her attention back and she said, “Yes,” and not very friendly either. Sylvie asked to see our father. She tapped on the out of sight keyboard and then picked up her phone and pressed some buttons and then said into the receiver, “some children here to see you in reception.” She then went back to working on her computer after replacing the receiver.

Sylvie turned round and mouthed to me, “how rude!” I was surprised that Sylvie did not say it out loud.

I was used to lip reading Sylvie. She would often do exactly that, turning away from whoever had upset her and mouthing something to me. It was often unprintable and her knowledge of swear words was quite impressive. Some I could not make out from her lips and I coloured a little when she repeated the word later

when I questioned her. Sylvie sat in one of the lounge chairs in reception and I went out to next door to the covered walkway which was signposted 'To the Golf Reception'. The walkway contained a number of windows which had a view out to the driving range and it waited there watching a golfer hitting balls off a fake grass mat. I have often wanted to play golf but I have only been allowed on putting courses.

The golfer did not seem to be having much success as he kept shaking his head after very ball.

"Jamie!" Dad had arrived holding the hand of Charly, while Sylvie stood behind them with a look that could sour cream.

He let go of Charly's hand and gave me a hug. Charly tried to do the same but I smiled, took her hand as it raised up and then shook it warmly. I still had not forgiven her for breaking up my parent's marriage so I was definitely not at the hugging stage. She just smiled back at me and it was then that I noticed the slight bump that indicated that her pregnancy was well on the way.

"What would you like to do. They have a café bar where we can get tea or a coke or we can try the Jungle Jim putting course," he suggested.

Sylvie immediately responded and said, "I know you have not seen us for a bit, but we are not ten."

"OK, let us have some tea." He grabbed Charly's hand and walked off in front.

"If he kisses that tart at all today, I am going to phone mum and ask her to pick me up immediately," she whispered.

"Well, he must have kissed her, I assume, in the lead up to getting her pregnant," I replied and she burst into laughter and then a fit of coughing.

"Are you OK love?" Charly asked turning around. Sylvie bent over holding her hand up in a 'fine'; gesture and then got her coughing under control. She gave me a little shove and whispered.

"Let me know if you are going to say anything that funny, so I can prepare myself." She winked at me took my hand and then batted her eyelids in a very coquettish way, no doubt as an affront to the syrup that was going on ahead.

At the bar Dad ordered me a tea, Sylvie her usual bottle of water, a cappuccino for himself and a fruit tea for Charly.

"I cannot drink anything with caffeine in it because it is not good for the baby," Charly said placing her hand on her bump just in case we had not noticed. We said nothing and then Dad followed up with yet another bombshell.

"Charly and I will be getting married in October and we would love you to come."

Bloody hell I thought Sylvie is going to have another meltdown, but she just lifted up the bottle of water and then took a sip placed it back on the table and said, "what date."

"Well it all depends on the divorce, but we have booked the Baron's Hall Hotel in Frome and it is on the twelfth, a Friday."

"I doubt if we can make it because we would need to get time off from School and I have my A levels coming up and Jamie has his GCSEs. We need to be studying hard," Sylvie said calmly in a manner that was unheard of in this type of situation. "Have you spoken to Mum."

"I have tried to but she refuses to discuss the divorce and just says that she will sign the papers when they come to her. I have not mentioned the wedding but I want to get married before Charly is too far gone." I was going to say, well you should have used protection, but held back. My mum and dad's marriage was over so I needed to just get used to it.

We were sitting at the window of the bar overlooking the putting green of the golf course where golfers were putting.

"What would you like to do today?" he asked, "we have all day."

Sylvie and I both just looked at him and shrugged. This was all new to us. Previously in our life our days without school were planned by Mum and Dad, we rarely had the chance of deciding where to go.

"Can we go and see your boat?"

"If you go to see their boat I will stay here and have a rest," Charly added.

"Oh love you don't have to go out on it I just want to see where it is and what it looks like. I used to sail when I was a kid.

In a huff was the word to describe Charly's mood on the way to Ramsholt. Dad has children and she had better get used to it. She never joined in with the discussions that we had about the boat on the way to the dock. She just sat there looking out of the windscreen.

"You cannot park at the dock," said Sylvie when we nearing the road down to the river. We need to park at the car park at the top." He turned into the car park which was just an open space with no tarmac, just grass and earth and from its high position there was a lovely view down the river towards Felixstowe.

"What a lovely place," he said, "you are so lucky to live here.

"Yes, we are," I said, "and we have made good friends who also sail."

All four of us took the road down to the dock. When we reached the Ramsholt Arms Charly, who had been mopping her brow with her handkerchief saw the seats and tables outside the pub and said, "I am going to sit here, it is too hot in my condition."

Sylvie looked at me and raised an eyebrow. I covered my smirk with my hand as though stifling a yawn.

"Tired son?" he asked.

"A little. It is all the sailing."

"This is our boat," said Sylvie as I started to pull the cover off and "Ket and Shrimp's boat is that one."

"Can we have a sail," dad asked.

"Yes, if you want," said Sylvie, "but you don't have the right shoes."

"But I can take my shoes and socks off." He had what looked like a new pair of Reebok trainers and white socks. Sylvie had tried to get him to wear trainer socks or leave the socks off all together but he never accepted her fashion advice.

"OK," I said, "will Charly want to come."

"I doubt it, so we can sail a little, while she sits there." He went over to tell Charly that he was going for a little sail and there was quite an animated conversation between the two of them before

he returned and said, "that is fine." A bit of a lie I thought. We moved the trailer and boat down the slipway after Sylvie and I put on our sailing slip-on shoes which we now kept in the boat. After Sylvie and I got the boat in the water dad pulled the trailer back up to the boat park and we held the boat close to the shore while he removed his footwear and paddled out and got in amidships.

"Dad, you sit at the front while so Sylvie and I row out and haul the sails up."

"Just the mainsail and mizzen," said Sylvie.

"We won't need the jib for a short sail." I agreed. I took up the oars, eased them into the rowlocks, paddled back until we were away from the dock and then turned the boat around and started to pull towards the middle of the channel. I dopped the centreboard and hauled the mainsail up while Sylvie looked after the mizzen. The wind was blowing upstream so we turned when we reached the boats moored in the centre of the channel and made way up towards Waldringfield. As we passed the Mary Jane, I saw a face in the cabin window, before it ducked down. I looked around to see if the man and woman were on the boat but the tender had gone so they must be ashore. The tender must be one of the boats pulled up the shore above the tide line.

"Did you see that Sylvie?"

"No, what," she replied. I kept quiet and pulled my notebook out and wrote down the date and time of the sighting. As we passed Kirton Creek, Sylvie told me to take over the tiller and she went forward and spoke to Dad. I was fine managing both sails and the tiller and they had a long discussion of which I only caught a few words.

"Do you want to go as far as Waldringfield?" I shouted. Sylvie said something to Dad and then replied, "better not, turn here and make our way back." In a well-practiced move I held the tiller hard to the left and let the boat turn into the wind and began the first tack of the journey back.

As we came into the dock, I loosened the sails so they were not catching the wind and Sylvie raised the centre board and slipped over the side of the boat with the bow rope and started to

pull the boat to the slipway. I let the mainsail and mizzen down and stowed them for our next sail while Dad and Sylvie pushed the trailer down into the water and, when I was off, hauled the boat onto its mounts and secured it. All three of us pulled the trailer of the boat park where Sylvie and I removed the masts and stowed them in the boat and put the cover over.

"Aren't you worried that someone might steal you masts and sails," Dad asked.

"Not really," said Sylvie, "the Harbourmaster is here most days and it is very quiet at night. "We have the lock on the tow fitting so they would need to remove that before they could take the boat away. There is a locked gate at the top of the hill so that is another deterrent.

"Well I am really impressed with your sailing skills. Where's Charly?" he said looking over to the pub.

I looked at my watch, "probably in the pub, it is open now."

"Shall we get some lunch then?" We went off to the pub and as we neared the entrance we saw Charly sitting in a window table with a face that could frighten pigs. "Ah good," said Dad, "she has a table near the window."

"Did you enjoy that?" Charly asked as we sat, Sylvie and me on one side and Dad and Charly on the other.

"Yes it was wonderful," Dad said.

"Well if you think you are going to get a boat then you won't get me on it."

"Oh Charly," said Dad, "that is not a possibility anyway Frome is some way from any water. Right, what are we having?" as the waitress laid out four menus.

We made out orders and I did get a look from Dad when I ordered the house burger, but then Mum wasn't there to question my choice. We continued to chat about our new friends and at the places that we had been sailing to. From her comments I think that it was clear that Yousey was Sylvie's favourite.

"Aren't you a bit young for something serious?" Charly questioned.

"It isn't serious, I just enjoy his company," Sylvie answered as I covered my mouth with my napkin to hide my amusement. That was all we got out of Charly until we were back in the car and she said.

"Can we have room service tonight only I am too tired to go to the restaurant."

"I thought we were going to go out with the guys for dinner."

"Well you can."

"It is OK Dad," said Sylvie, "we have stuff to do at home."

"He looked in the mirror of the car and I saw the rather hurt look on his face."

"OK well next time we are down or maybe if you come up to us."

"Well that won't be until the end of the end of the season, because we have to practice for the open races that we have entered," Sylvie said laying down the ground rules for a ongoing relationship. You have made your life dad and we will see you when it is convenient to us. I was quite proud of Sylvie because I could see that too much time with Charly would strain our already strained relationship with dad further. When he dropped us off, I asked.

"Are you coming in to see mum?"

"No I need to get Charly back for her afternoon nap." Well well, I could see which way that relationship was going to go.

As we entered the cottage, Mum was seated at the kitchen table with a man.

"Hello, I would like you to meet Jeremy," she said her face pink with embarrassment.

Sylvie and I shook hands with Jeremy and the usual pleasantries were passed, nice to meet you, how are you enjoying Suffolk, etc.

"Would you like some tea?" mum asked and without waiting for a reply turned to the dresser and took the kettle to fill with water. "You are home early." And there it was, the admission that she was not expecting us and the admission that they had been fortunate to have been found enjoying some coffee and cake rather

than something more intimate. "There are some cakes from the Bawdsey Café on the dresser if you would like some.

"I am alright," I said we have not long had our lunch.

"Me too," said Sylvie as she walked to the fridge and got out her usual bottle of water.

"Jeremy was just about to go when you came in," mum advised.

"Was I," he said looking at her with a furrowed brow. She stared at him and he got the message. "Oh yes I have that thing to do." That thing, which he did not know he was going to do until mum mentioned it. He was going was probably going to be sitting in a chair watching afternoon tele rather than her if we had not come home.

He got up, said goodbye, and followed mum followed him out of the door.

Sylvie and I both went over to the kitchen window and saw the couple disappearing behind the boat shed. The roar of a powerful engine rang out and then a rather nice red E Type Jaguar appeared and drove out of the gap in the hedge and roared off down the road.

"Well our new stepdad has a nice car," I said and Sylvie burst into laughter until mum came in when she stopped abruptly and said, "I am off to my room."

I sat in one of the frayed kitchen armchairs with my tea and caught up on the news on my phone. It was all bad news so I checked up on my old school mates on Facebook until it was time to take a shower and then play some games on my console before tea and bed. Mum did not say much but busied herself around the kitchen.

"I am going to take a shower and go to my room. Let me know when tea is ready"

"OK son," she replied with a dreamy look and then added, "I hope you didn't mind Jeremy being here." I shrugged and left the kitchen. If we were going to foisted with a new stepdad, I was not going to make it too easy.

Later than evening after tea when it was dark I remembered about the face in the cabin window of the Mary Jane so I texted Shrimp to let her know. The reply came immediately.

“Look at the moon.”

I went to the Window and looked at the Moon which was low in the sky but it lit up the fields that I could see almost like daylight. “Oh yes, it is full,” I texted back.

“We are about tomorrow but not sailing. Do you want to meet up.”

“I sent a ‘thumbs up’ emoji, back.

So we had met Mrs Right for my dad, and I wonder if Jeremy would be Mr Right for my mum.

Chapter 13

I Was Right to be Concerned.

I woke unaided before my alarm went off. I looked at my phone as I got out of bed and on the home screen was a text from Shrimp, “we will be at Bawdsey Quay café at 10. See you there?” which I responded with a thumbs up emoji. I left my room and found Mum at the cooker and Sylvie at the kitchen table. In the pan was a full English sizzling away,

“Good you are awake. Have some tea and toast while you are waiting.” Full English! She must be feeling a little embarrassed about being caught with Jeremy, if not in flagrante delicto, certainly there was not much more than ten minutes after that.

“Thanks Mum,” and then to Sylvie, “Shrimp said that they are going to the Bawdsey café at ten.”

“Good, what about Yousey and Em?” she asked.

“Don’t think so. They were with their dad all weekend.”

“OK I suppose.” Well Ket was really not flavour of the month in Sylvie’s eyes.

So we finished our breakfast, said goodbye to mum and as we were leaving to get our bikes from one of the sheds, she said, “here is a twenty get yourself some lunch because I am out all day.

“Jeremy again, must be serious,” I whispered to Sylvie.

It did not take twenty minutes to get to the quay and we left our bikes leant up against the Harbour Master’s office properly chained together. Shrimp and Ket were seated on the balcony. We ordered from their mum who was on duty behind the counter and took our places at the table, where Shrimp had a spreadsheet page open.

“There you go,” she said, “all of the dates with tide times moon phases and weather for times from ten pm to four am. I said page, but it was two pages, in landscape, with the margins trimmed and the pages joined with transparent tape.

“Where did you get the detail of the weather?”

“I take screen prints of the BBC weather app every day and store them on my laptop.”

“Why?” asked Sylvie who had yawned twice while Shrimp had been explaining the data.

“Why not!” Shrimp responded. Sylvie just went back to showing Ket something on her phone, but she was sitting quite far away from him for her and she needed to hand it to him.

“So, what do you think?” I asked.

“Well if we were the Famous Five, I would say that they are smuggling.”

“Who are the famous five?” Sylvie asked.

“Enid Blighton,” I replied.

“Enid who?” she added as a further question, “oh don’t bother you pair of nerds!”

Shrimp went on. “It could be drugs but why would they have extra people on board. Where do you think the people you saw came from.”

“I have no idea and I was not prepared to ask. Not with the couple giving me daggers.”

“So we know when they are here but not where they go when they are not. Mr Stokes thinks that they are just a retired couple who spend their time sailing around the North Sea. I need to do some more digging and I will let you know tomorrow when we go

sailing. Are we going sailing?" I was about to say yes when Shrimp shouted "Tammy!" Ket was out of his seat in a flash, went through the balcony door and next we saw him at the front of the café hugging a blonde girl who Shrimp had seen first. The hug turned into a long kiss. I looked at Sylvie who was not looking happy.

"That's Tamsin, she lives in Alderton and goes to boarding school in Norwich. She was coming back to Alderton when school finished but her dad took her to New Zealand for a month so we haven't seen her since half term."

"How did she know Ket was here?" I asked.

"I think Ket and her have their phones registered on each other's phone finder app." Hugging and kissing over, Ket and Tammy came up to the balcony after stopping at the counter for a coke. I have seen Ket smile but his face was lit up as he introduced Tammy to Sylvie and me and we raised a hand in acknowledgement.

"Nice to meet you," I said but if Sylvie said anything it was too quiet to hear and could have not been more than a grunt.

"So, what are you looking at?" Tammy asked pointing at the spreadsheet. As opposed to the standard summer uniform of tee shirt and shorts she wore a flowered dress and a pair of white kitten-heeled sandals. I wondered how long it would be before Sylvie dragged out her summer dresses. She went back to looking at her phone and Shrimp explained her spreadsheet, the Mary Jane, and its frequent visits to Ramsholt.

"We now need to decide what we do next," said Shrimp, "and I need to look at the possible places where they go to when they leave the Deben. They always come back within five days to ensure, I am assuming, they are within the moon phases which allow them light at night."

Sylvie looked up from her phone and said, "Of course, it could be really innocent and they come here often because they like the pub."

"What about the faces I see in the cabin windows?"

"You are the only one to have seen them and I would not put it past your game playing imagination to imagine the whole thing!" She was not in a good mood at all."

"I will do some calculating and see where they could have sailed to and back in the breaks that they have from mooring in the Deben," said Shrimp. "Coming here may be innocent but the faces in the portholes cannot be."

We carried on talking to Tammy, who sat very close Ket, about New Zealand and her school and she seemed a really nice girl although she had very much put Sylvie's nose out of joint. Sylvie's phone message toned and she looked at it and smiled. "Yousey's Dad is flying out tomorrow so he can see us all. He won't be sailing but can meet us on his bike with Em." She tapped a message back to Yousey and then looked and said to Tammy. "Do you know Yousey."

"Yes, he used to go to my school before I changed to a boarding school."

"I don't think I would like to have gone to boarding school I prefer to be a normal school." Quite an insult. She intimated that Tammy's school was not normal. Subnormal?

"It is OK and I am only there until have taken my exams. Mum and dad thought it would improve my grades."

Sylvie shrugged and went back looking at her phone and messaging. Judging by the continual text noises she was in a conversation with Yousey, or her friends. "I have told them to meet us at ours. They will be biking across so they will be using the Bawdsey Ferry and...."

"My mums on her way so I need to go to the quay to meet her," Tammy said talking over Sylvie after getting a message on her phone. So, we all tramped out of the café and walked over to the quay to get our bikes. "Here she comes."

A rather ancient 2CV popped along the road into the quay car park. Tammy whispered something in Ket's ear and then got in into the passenger seat and the brightly coloured, but rusty, 2CV took off towards Bawdsey.

"It was nice seeing Tammy is she coming tomorrow?" asked Shrimp.

"No, she needs to go and get some school clothes," said Ket looking after the fast-disappearing car.

We all mounted our bikes and started off back to our homes. Sylvie rode alongside Ket and I was beside Shrimp. "I will have a look at the like places that the Mary Jane can sail to and back tonight so we can work out the places she would go."

We reached home and mum was cooking at the range. "I have prepared a nice vegetable stew for your dinner and I have got some lovely fresh bread which will go very well with it. I am going out with Jeremy tonight and I don't think I will be back until late so make sure that you get to bed on time. I will have my phone with me. Oh and I got a text from your dad saying that they were back in Frome and he was so happy that he had had a chance to see you. He will be back soon but perhaps you could come to see him. Well we need to talk about that." She did not sound happy at the prospect of us going there to see him.

So mum went out and we had our stew which was OK but it was lacking meat! Baths and showers and then we went to our rooms, me to play some online gaming with my friend Josh from Frome and Sylvie, judging by the sounds coming from her rooms, texting her friends from Frome or Yousey. At ten fifteen when I was tucked up in my bed and falling to sleep a text came through on my phone. A shout from next door. "Will you please put your phone on silent mode I am trying to get my beauty sleep."

"Yes and you need a lot of that," I replied to Sylvie.

"At least I start from good place, warthog!"

I did not respond because I was reading Shrimps text which came in three parts. First part had the likely places that the Mary Jane could reach between the first visit and the second visit in each couplet. The second text gave distances, sea conditions and the third just said, well it is possible and I agree with you something dodgy and possibly illegal is going on. We need to get the other's views.

I woke early had some toast and cereal for breakfast and then dressed in a tee and shorts and waited in the kitchen armchair for the rest of the world to join me in the day. Sylvie and mum both looked tired but I suspected for different reasons. But they were both happily tired. Well, there was no moaning from either of them so that was a test of their happiness.

"Did you have a nice time with Jeremy?" I asked from the comfort of the armchair, without looking up. With no answer I looked up and she had coloured pink as she answered.

"Yes it was lovely but he has to go away for a few days to his daughter's because she needs help with her new baby. Her husband left her just after the baby was born."

"Lot of that going on," Sylvie stated from the other kitchen armchair which surprised me because I thought she was not listening but texting. Confirms the old adage that women can happily do at least two things at once. Nothing more was said until the back door opened and Shrimp and Ket burst in the door, Shrimp carrying some A3 sized papers under her arm.

"Hello Mrs," said Ket and came and sat down at the table. Shrimp took up one of the other seats and they responded positively to the offer of bacon sandwiches and tea from Mum. I did not know we had bacon! Must have been hidden up the back of the fridge. As the rashers went into the pan a knock came at the front door. "I will get it," Sylvie said and went off into the hall. Em came through the kitchen door latterly followed by Sylvie and Yousey who had no doubt been sharing a kiss hello.

"Yousey, Em you don't need to knock just come in the back door," said Mum pointing to the kitchen door. Yousey sat at the table with Em. "I am making bacon sandwiches for Ket and Shrimp do you want one."

"No thank you," said Em but I would love some tea.

"No thank you," Yousey added, "we had breakfast before we left."

"So did we but I can always eat a bacon sandwich," said Ket. Mum put the teapot, refilled after our breakfast on the table with

mugs, milk jug and sugar bowl. She came back with a number of teaspoons and the pile of bacon sandwiches on a large plate.

"Help yourselves, there is more bacon cooking." So we chatted, ate and drank tea until the appetites and thirsts of our friends had been satisfied and then mum said, "right I am going to get ready for work." When she had gone Shrimp laid out the sheets of A3 which were A4 computer prints trimmed and stuck together with clear tape.

"I have been up half the night doing this so please listen because I am too tired to repeat it." As if on cue we all leaned forward over the sheets. "I believe that if the Mary Jane was to cross the North Sea, it may be seen going back and forth and raise suspicion."

"Well it could be just innocent sailing," Sylvie stated.

"Yes, it could be, but why do they not come at any other time!" Sylvie looked a little hurt at the forceful nature of Shrimps response and started looking at her phone. "So, I don't think that the North Sea would be an option for them because with the changeable wind direction that could not guarantee sailing time to make sure that they could reach Ramsholt at the right day or time. In any event on two of the times that we saw the Mary Jane the North Sea was experiencing high winds in the near Continent which would have created very poor sailing conditions. I think that they have picked up the cargo at one or two, or maybe even more spots up or down the East Coast, say from the Blackwater Estuary to the Broads."

Just at that point Mum came down dressed for work and had a look at the maps on the table and, surprising for me knowing her very poor navigating skills, immediately recognised the North Sea. "I hope you are not thinking of going out on the sea."

"No Mrs we are looking at possibly going out on a tall ship next summer and Shrimp has been looking at the places it will go." It was a white lie and not a very good one at that, but it seemed to satisfy her and she gave Sylvie a twenty and told her to get some lunch out.

“So what do you suggest Shrimp, when we consider that my idiot of a brother has been the only one who has seen the eyeballs in the window?” Sylvie asked. We all looked at Sylvie who went back to her phone ignoring the looks that she got.

“They would be due back on Thursday which is a nice day and night so I suggest that we take two boats out and sail around Ramsholt and see if we can see the face in the window.”

“And then?” Sylvie said without looking up.

“We find a place near the dock and camp out and look to see what happens.”

“Where do you suggest?” asked Ket.

“On the high ground just downstream from the dock. It is owned by the Forestry Commission so no one is going to worry about us camping out but we need to go when we know that the couple are going to be in the pub having dinner. We can pitch the tents out of sight of the road and wait for things to happen. We need to have head torches and has anyone got some infrared binoculars.”

“Yes my dad has got some,” Yousey said.

“Shall we go down to the Ramsholt and check on the site,” I said.

There was complete agreement apart from Sylvie who continued to look at her phone. Sylvie and I got our bikes out. As we entered the shed out of the earshot of the others I asked, “Is mum going to let you camp out with the others especially after the talk?” I asked putting signed quotes around ‘the talk’.

“You leave her to me. I will promise to be good and that will be good enough because it will mean a free night with Jeremy. Anyway if anything did happen it would not be my first time, which I think she suspects.” I shrugged and must admit to being a little surprised but I suppose it was a parting gift to Ryan and his comb. “Well, all my friends have done it and some at a very early age. I was probably the last!” I laughed and said.

“At what age do you think I should start.”

“First of all, you need to find some dragon who is prepared to do it with you.”

We reached the top of the hill down to the dock and turned into the car park and left out bikes all chained together on the edge nearest to the place where we would camp. While no one was around we walked into the plantation and to the edge of the cliff above the river. "Not too close," advised Shrimp, "the cliff around here can get crumbly. Look at that tree," she said. Unusually for the area a single oak stood among the pines which were laid out in rows with a few metres between each row. The oak looked ancient and surprising to find it. "Unusual but there were a few planted around the turn of the last century, well the 1900's. We will use that as our reference point when we come up on Thursday night. I suggest that you all bike to my house and then we can walk across the valley and into the car park. That means that we will only be on the road a little while until we get into the car park."

"Will your mum be OK with you camping out?" I asked.

"We always camp out a couple of times in the summer. Gets us out of the house and I think she has a friend around when we do camp out," replied Ket.

"Like Jeremy and my mum."

"Very much like that although we have yet to catch him in the house."

"Who is he?" she asked again.

"A farmer I think," Ket said.

"Ah, dungarees tied with baler wire around the knees to stop the rats climbing up his legs," said Yousey.

"About that we think," said Shrimp laughing,

"Our mum won't mind but I am not sure if Em will be up for this."

"I will have a sleep over with a friend because I don't want to camp," she stated.

"OK that is five and how many tents?"

We all answered and found that we had enough tents and plenty of other equipment to make the night at very least bearable. I am not the world's best camper; in fact I did not even enjoy the times when we used a caravan. I like all my facilities to be

stationary and my own bed, but I had started this so I needed to go along with anything that proved what was going on. "What do we do if we find out that there are illegal activities going on?" I asked.

"Let us worry about that when we need to," said Shrimp, "and we need evidence to prove this to whoever, not just our say so."

"And how do you think we are going to do that?" Sylvie said and we all ignored her.

Chapter 14

Things That Go Into The Night

We, well Shrimp, had calculated that the Mary Jane would be back on Thursday. The tide and the moon will be in the right phase to allow the Mary Jane and the couple to do whatever it is that they do. We needed to broach the question of camping with mum and I suspect that if it was not for the older boys then it would not be a problem, because she thinks that all things outdoorsy are clean and healthy, but the presence of the boys make neither of these true if Sylvie did not behave. So on the Wednesday when we were not seeing any of our friends, we sat at the breakfast table and I raised the question.

"We want to camp out on Thursday."

"Why?" she asked.

"We just want to do something different to sailing."

"Where?"

"Above Ramsholt."

"And who is camping?"

"Us and our friends,"

"Jamie got to your room I want to speak to Sylvia."

Sylvia? So it was going to be a serious discussion because absolutely no one called Sylvie by her proper name. So I went to my room and played a couple of games of Grand Turismo 7 on my console. There was some shouting from downstairs which I could hear through my headphones and I thought that I must get some noise cancelling ones for Christmas. When it went quiet, I ventured

back downstairs. Mum was at the sink washing up the breakfast things and Sylvie was in one of the kitchen armchairs with her phone.

Without turning round mum said, "Now I want you to look after each other on Thursday night." Whether that meant to ensure that we kept to our own tents was not answered.

"OK," we both said in unison.

We arranged by text that we would be sailing around Ramsholt the next day to see if we could all catch a glimpse of a face at the cabin window. So, after a hearty breakfast for me and toast and tea for Sylvie we set out to Ramsholt to meet our friends at the usual time. For once Sylvie was in a good mood and hummed to herself as we walked in the glorious sunshine to sail. I must admit that I had missed sailing and even the trip yesterday to the Bawdsey Café did not make up for the hankering for the river that I felt since we had last sailed. It was a good day and even the irrigation units were in the far sides of the fields that we walked through. The road to the docks was quiet and we only had to get on the side of the road once to let a delivery van though on its way to deliver to the Ramsholt Arms.

"Oh good, Tammy is here," Sylvie said as we went down the hill to the dock. She was there standing next to Ket holding his hand and looking up towards us. Shrimp was in the shallows by their boat and holding the bow rope to stop it drifting out into the channel. "There is something about that girl that I don't like."

Probably because she holds Ket's hand. She doesn't want Ket but she doesn't want anyone else to have him. Typical Sylvie.

When we got to the dock Ket said, "I think we should wait for Yousey to arrive."

"Yes, he is on his own today because Em is at a friend's. She won't be camping tonight either." Sylvie was well informed which was not a surprise because she was usually in constant communication with all of her friends. "Are you camping tonight, Tammy?"

"No, I am not here for long. I have to get back home because we are going off to Norfolk for a few days."

"That will be nice." Sylvie smiled when she said this but I was not sure if it was because she is having a holiday or that she would not be with us today. Tammy hugged and kissed Ket and then she got her bike which was resting against the seat and pushed it up the hill away from us.

"Shrimp tie her up," Ket shouted to Shrimp who took the bow rope and walked up the slipway onto the dock and tied the rope to one of the mooring rings located on the edge of the dock. When she got to us the Mary Jane appeared down river, under sail and taking advantage of the wind and she was making good speed.

"There she is," said Shrimp, "just on cue."

"You are right with your calculations," said Ket, "I wonder where they are back from."

A shout made us look upriver and Yousey sailed onto the beach with his well-practiced move of heading straight for the land releasing the only sail that he had up and lifting the centre board as the water became shallow. He jumped holding the bow rope and walked up towards us.

"Hi people what's going on, what have we decided."

"We haven't yet but I was going to suggest that we start to train Jamie for the open. So if Sylvie goes in your boat and Jamie captains our boat with Shrimp and me as crew," Ket suggested. "I assume that you will not wish to enter the open Sylvie."

That was a big assumption by Ket but Sylvie just smiled and said, "I come sailing for the sailors not for the sailing."

"Let us wait for the Mary Jane to moor and then go out. If they do have other people onboard, I think they will look out when the boat stops moving," Shrimp said and it was agreed. So we all got into the boats and waited for the Mary Jane to settle against the buoy that the male half of the couple had snagged with a hook and was tying up to the bow. We sat oars poised and then Yousey said let's go, and the rowers started to pull the boats out towards the channel and the Mary Jane. When I thought we were in deep enough water I called to the crew to lower the centre board and

raise the mainsail. I looked at the flag on the mast and gauged that we would need to tack back against the wind so that we could get on the other side of the Mary Jane. I steered the boat upstream and after about five hundred metres called to the crew that we were coming about and pushed the tiller hard over to the right and headed to the far bank. I did not want to go too close to the Mary Jane but Shrimp had her binoculars strung around her neck and she moved the front of the boat to get a better look at the boat being free of sails. As we need to come about again to come back from the far bank. Yousey and Sylvie had rowed further down river and were now sailing up stream on the other side.

"There you are," said Shrimp with her binoculars up to her eyes. "There is a face in the cabin window, no, now it is gone. You were correct Jamie; I have seen it!"

We sailed to the east until we were a fairway past the Mary Jane and then I shouted that we were coming around and pushed the tiller hard to the right and now with a following wind we made way until we passed on the other side of the Mary Jane, much closer to the vessel which was now tight on the mooring buoy and the couple were seated on the rear of the boat talking. That looked at us as we passed by and we made our way to where Yousey was tacking back across from the far bank. Ket got out the oars and held the boat against the oncoming tide until Yousey in the far more manoeuvrable boat came along side and threw a rope to Shrimp who tied the two boats together. We let ourselves drift up the channel with the last of the incoming tide which was reaching its high point.

"Did you see anything," I called to the other boat.

"No," said Yousey.

"Shrimp saw a face in the Cabin window."

"Perhaps it was their child," Sylvie in a slightly mocking tone.

"No it was too old for a kid," Shrimp in an equally mocking tone.

"Right," said Yousey, "we are on for tonight. Let's continue to sail until noon and then we will get some lunch from the pub. Its my

dad's treat. He left me quite a bit of money as he will not be back until the Autumn."

So we continued to sail up and down the river around the Mary Jane but no one else saw any faces at its cabin window and then we got lunch from the Ramsholt Arms. Sitting outside we saw the Mary Jane couple get into the tender and row the couple hundred yards to the beach. The Deben is quite wide at this point. Both got out of the prow of the boat and pulled it up so that the tide would not take it away. They were well dressed in white trousers and striped Breton sleeved tee shirts. Their espadrilles matched the outfits. As they walked past they looked at us but did not say anything and went into the pub for lunch. Unusual because boating types always greet each other.

"I got pictures of them as they were pulling their boat up the beach," said Shrimp. "I just want to see if I got their faces. "I have only got an iPhone 11 so it is a bit short on megapixels." She played with her phone for a bit and then she said. "Yep, nice and clear."

"And?" questioned Sylvie appearing bored as usual.

"Well if we report them to the coastguard or whoever they will need to see photos of them. Sylvie annoyingly fake yawned to show her boredom.

"Good Shrimp," I said over what likely to be another sarcastic comment from my sister. We went back to eating our lunches and decided what to do for the afternoon. Ket gave me a run down on my seamanship and pointed out where I could have done things differently. Mr Stokes, walked over from his offices and sat at the next table on the pub veranda.

"Now what have you lot been up to?" his Suffolk accent very strong today. "I see you have been sailing up and down."

"We have been practicing for the WSC open," Ket replied. "Jamie and I and Shrimp are entering with Jamie captaining in Firefly, and Yousey and Em in Ace." Yousey and Em were members of WSC but would enter one in any event. "We may change the crews in each boat depending on how we feel."

"Are you not entering young lady," he said to Sylvie.

She coloured up at being called a young lady. "I could not think of anything I would rather not do." She was still a kid at heart with all the foibles that a teenager has.

"Well, you will need to be good, there is a lot of stiff competition," Mr Stokes advised as the waiting person laid his sandwich and coffee before him.

"There you are Mr Stokes, cheese and ham and a cappuccino," she said.

"Thank you, Melanie, busy today?"

"Not at the moment just the Mary Jane couple and you guys," she said as she looked across the river with the sun high in a bright blue and cloudless sky. "Another warm day," and then she turned on her heel and went back into the Arms.

"Been looking forward to this all morning," said Stokes as he raised one half of his sandwich to his mouth. We carried on with our lunch and then Sylvie started to look at YouTube videos with Ket and Yousey sat very close to her and they were all laughing continually. Shrimp and I chatted about things, but the mention of our camping out was not uttered in case Stokes caught wind of what we were up to.

Around two PM the Mary Jane couple left the pub by the open veranda door. The man took off his shoes, and with the woman in the tender, pushed the boat out into the shallows and jumped in rowing against the ebbing tide in a shallow curve to the back of the Mary Jane. Shrimp who had her binoculars to her face made a squeaking noise and I looked at her.

She whispered giving me the field glasses, "look."

I knew where to look and saw the face in a porthole lower down the hull before it vanished. I leant over and whispered to her. "Well spotted Shrimp."

"Time to go," said Yousey as he stood. Sylvie hugged him and he went off to his boat phone in his hand. He soon had his boat in the channel and made good headway against the tide with a following warm wind.

"Let's pull our boat up Shrimp and then off home," Ket said as they both got up. I helped then pull the boat onto their trailer and

up to the boat park. Sylvie sat on the pub veranda looking at her phone.

With the boat safely stored we three made our way towards dock hill waving to Mr Stokes who was now sitting in a camping chair outside his office enjoying the afternoon sun which was still hanging in an azure sky but moving towards the West where it will rest and provide the last of the light for our camping trip. Sylvie joined as we passed the front of the pub still on her phone which beeped every minute or so. I just did not know how she could write so much, I assume, to Yousey who had only left ten minutes ago.

"Yousey said he will see us about eight thirty at the car park. He will be cycling up across from Waldringfield because the ferry would have stopped by the time he needs to leave."

"He'll be alright it is only about fifteen miles. Not far if you are young and fit," said Shrimp who for some reason had committed the distances to various places from her home to memory, including the sailing distances up the Deben. Given wind speed, tide and direction she can usually calculate how long it would take to sail between two places. Her knowledge, memory and maths ability always surprised me.

At the top of the hill by the old pub Ket and Shrimp turned down the path across the valley to their home and Sylvie and I made our way up the Dock Road to the footpath across the fields to our home. The tall pines which lined the road on both sides offered little in the way of shade so we were both suffering from the warmth of the day. "I could do with some water," my sister said.

"I could do with a nice cup of tea. That lunch has made me thirsty," I replied. The fields which we traverse on the way back to the cottage offered less shade than the road and I felt like I was panting like a blood hound that had chased a fox, as we entered the back door to find the kitchen and the rest of the house empty,

"I thought she was not working today. Ah Jeremy," Sylvie quipped and I just nodded too hot to talk.

We sat at the table drinking tea until the back door opened and Mum came in looking quite ruffled and smelling of shower gel. The telltale signs of her encounter. "I am out tonight," she stated

her head in the fridge no doubt looking for a lot of vegetables to cook for us. "It is vegetable stew again today because I haven't had time to shop."

I knew the reason why but held my tongue wanting nothing to affect our camping trip.

"I will be on my mobile so let me know if anything goes wrong on your camping night and I will pick you up."

So, Sylvie and I sat in the kitchen chairs looking at our phones while Mum chopped and cooked our stew. Ket texted and said it would be easier if we used a messaging app so we all loaded WhatsApp on our devices and he set up a group chat. There was the usual start up pleasantries and then we got down to the serious business of the afternoon; what is going to happen this evening. Ket, me, and Yousey listed the equipment we would be bringing. We had four tents but one of Ket's was not a pop up so we decided that we would make do with three, each could take two people, so it was going to be the girls in one tent, Ket and I in another and Yousey in his tent. That would make Sylvie happy if she went for a nocturnal wander. Ket had a camping stove and kettle and we could take our camping mugs, tea, coffee and milk so we could have a hot drink in the morning.

"See you all about eight pm," he wrote.

We ate our stew with some bread which was not fresh but was ok if you dunked it. I really enjoyed the meal which was unusual because her stews are often quite tasteless. She had gone a bit overboard with the spices!

About seven forty we gathered up our gear and put it in our back packs and took to our bikes to cycle the short distance to Ket and Shrimp's. Our sleeping bags were rolled and laid inside the top of the pack with the cover secured over them. Our bikes were left at the back of Ket and Shrimp's house and we knocked on the door. Ket opened the it and said, "OK you two, Yousey is already here so come in."

There were three back packs in the hall, and we placed ours next to them. Shrimp and Yousey were in the lounge and he was

explaining what his dad did for a living which Ket's mum was listening to quite intently.

"We all listened to Yousey after we sat down, who after explaining what his dad did described where they used to live in the UAE. Both Em and Yousey had been born in this country while his mum and dad are naturalised UK residents. They spent time in the UAE while their dad finished off a large project before going into business on his own. Yousey's mum preferred the climate of the UK so they are here to stay and their dad will continue to travel to the middle east.

"Time to go," said Ket and we all gathered up our back packs, walked to the other side of the valley and up onto Dock Road. As we walked towards the car park a few cars passed but we looked like a set of walkers out for a night hike. We reached the entrance to the car park and turned into the space which was empty of cars. We crossed into the headland wood and made our way to the large oak and set up our camp for the night. Shrimp went to the side and also the front of the headland and checked that it was not possible to see the camp from the road or dock. "I think we should take turns in keeping a lookout on the dock until the pub closes and the staff leave. It will be then that something will happen but I want to keep an eye on the Mary Jane just in case they decide to move her up or downstream."

Yousey and Sylvie, who else, took the first watch taking a blanket which all of us will later use to watch the late-night goings on. We agreed that they would give half hourly updates on the messaging app until they were relieved. All phones were put on vibrate. On the other side of the tents from the road, Shrimp boiled some water for coffee. There was still light to see as I took a cup to Yousey. Sylvie had her usual bottle of water. On the way back away from the edge of the wood I used my head torch on low light to cut down on the possibility of being seen.

It was warm and we sat drinking our coffee and looking at our phones. Ket was watching YouTube videos on silent. I played my favourite phone game, Royal Match, and Shrimp was looking at sailing videos. The time dragged until it was Shrimp and my turn on

lookout duty, so we made our way to the edge of the wood and took over from Sylvie and Yousey, lying on the blanket and looking over the dock and the pub.

"I hope you kept an eye out for the Mary Jane couple and not on someone else Sylvie." Although I could not see her hair very well, I suspect it was all mussed up. She light heartedly pushed me as she passed on the way back to the camp.

About ten thirty pm the May Jane couple came out of the pub pulled their tender in the water and rowed back to their boat. Shrimp who was using Yousey's infrared binoculars to look at the Mary Jane put the glasses down and texted the others. We suggested that they join us and take up positions. Ket joined us and Sylvie and Yousey as prearranged were going to stand at the edge of the wood by the road to catch any activity there.

We saw the last customers and staff leave and then the downstairs lights were extinguished. There were lights in the upper windows which we suspected were the owners or live in staff. These lights went out around one pm and then the only light was from the waxing crescent moon. We took turns to train the infrared binoculars on the Mary Jane. At one thirty Shrimp, who had the glasses, whispered

"I can see people on the deck, let me count, one, two and she got up to seven. They are getting into the boat." Ket's phone buzzed and he answered. He listened and then he said quietly.

"OK keep this line open, can you see the number plate. No, no don't do that." He put the phone into his lap and said, "the others said a van that has just entered the car park. They were going to take a photo but the flash would have given them away. They are moving to the back of the wood by the back of the car park and are going to move behind one of the trees to avoid being seen."

"The boat is moving," said Shrimp, "they are rowing and it looks like, no, they don't have seven in the boat and I can see the woman and a couple of others on the boat deck." Ket relayed this to Yousey and Sylvie on the open phone line.

"Yousey says that there are two guys by the van and the back doors are open."

"Can he see the number plate," I asked. Ket asked the question and he came back.

"No and he is going to switch off the line and go to messaging. They are close to the van and he is worried that the men may be able to hear." The boat was halfway to the dock, Shrimp announced.

"Bugger," the message came on all phones. It was Yousey and he must have been typing as he walked because he and Sylvie came through the trees and took up positions lying next to the three of us.

"What happened?" I asked.

"Sylvie sneezed and one of the men looked at the place where we were hiding. I don't think they saw us, but we had to move back."

"You fool," I whispered to Sylvie who was next to me and she poked me in the side. It hurt but I did not cry out.

"Leave it you two," said Yousey who had taken the binoculars from Shrimp. He had a look and handed them back to Shrimp. "I think we should be careful if they come up the hill. They may take a shortcut to the van through these woods."

"Here come the first lot," I whispered. The five passengers, a mix of men and women came up the dock hill, some running and the rest walking. It was quite steep so I doubt if I could have run up there without getting out of breath. Ket stood and went off into the wood towards the car park. About half an hour after the first passengers landed the second lot reached shore and began the trek up the dock hill. A light went on in the upper story of the pub and they froze until it was extinguished, and then they continued their journey. It all went quiet and then we heard the van start and we assumed pull out of the car park and go off down Dock Road. Ket returned with his head torch on and he fell to his knees on the laid-out ground sheet that we had put down.

"They all got into the van and it was driven off."

"The boat is on its way back to the Mary Jane," Shrimp said, and then we waited silently until the Mary Jane's lights were extinguished.

We sat chatting back at the camp and then Shrimp solidified our thoughts when she said, "so what do we do now."

"We must tell someone," Ket said, "because they are no doubt illegal immigrants."

"Who do we tell?" I asked.

"Well it has to be the police, and we need to tell them before the weather turns because they will need to see for themselves and I think that they only do it when the weather is good."

"Do we need to see for ourselves again?" I said being naturally cautious.

"Well we have seen it and I don't think I can stand another night camping," Sylvie moaned. Like me she found the whole camping thing a bit of a fag and preferred her home where she had access to a shower, a large mirror for her make-up and a good comb for her hair. Her comment surprised me because I thought she would do anything and suffer any privations to be with Yousey. Maybe he was not the one.

"I think Jamie is right one more night and then we go to the police," Shrimp agreed with me. "I don't like camping much but it must be done." Strange how adults and not children enjoy camping or do they? Are they prepared to suffer in tents and caravans because they cannot afford luxury holidays when they get children. Since dad started earning more evidenced the things that were bought and the holidays that we went on which were to hotels and holiday parks rather than the caravan in a field.

"OK so they will be back in a couple of days so we camp again. We have a wildlife camera in our garden which my dad captured the animals that visit us. He gets a lot of good footage but it is mostly foxes and birds. We can use that if we can find a suitable place to put it. That will at least prove something," Yousey said.

We continued to sit and chat and then at three am Shrimp said that she was going to her tent and we all went to bed. To me the rest of the night was uncomfortable. I am not a great lover of insects and other crawly things so I pulled my sleeping bag tight and pulled my beanie hat down over my ears. It was quiet and I could not hear any giggling from Yousey's tent so if Sylvie went in there,

they were very quiet about it. I finally fell to sleep and woke when Shrimp came into our tent saying that she had the kettle on the stove and was making tea. I found a tree away from the camp and had a pee. I assume that all those who were already up had done the same and by the time I returned the group were sitting around the stove with cups of tea in their hands happily chatting about sailing.

"I need to get back home soon," said Yousey. "Em is texting me. She is back from her friends and is asking if we are sailing today."

We all agreed that we would take a day off because the Mary Jane would be off to wherever she goes. "She will be back in two days, so that it when we need to be around," Ket said and we all agreed.

"So what are we doing today?" Shrimp asked.

"Well we could go and hang out at the Bawdsey Café this afternoon," Sylvie suggested, "but first I want a bath and a hair wash." So we packed up the camp put the stuff in our back packs and then started off to Ket's to get our bikes. On the way to the track across the valley we saw no one. I expected that there would be at least some cars but it was not until we got over to the valley track that we saw human life, a couple of early morning walkers. We said good morning and got our bikes. Ket and Shrimp's mum opened the door as we arrived at their cottage.

"Would you like some breakfast," she asked.

"I am desperate for a shower, but thanks anyway." Sylvie said worried that she would be kept away from civilised facilities a moment longer.

Mum was about when we got back. We had cornflakes and tea and then Sylvie went up to the bathroom.

"Did you have a good time?" she asked.

"Yes it was good."

"Did you look after your sister?"

"Yes she was OK." I knew what she meant but how would I know. I did not hear anything and when I was in my sleeping bag I was going to stay wrapped up.

Chapter 15

The Trap Gets Set

The bath that I took after Sylvie finished her shower was long and luxurious. I prefer a shower normally but I wanted to make sure that any passengers picked up on our camp out were going to well and truly drowned. I could hear Sylvie in her room humming. When I finished I towelled off and went to my room my towel around my lower half. As I opened my door Sylvie came out of her room and smiled.

“You are happy,” I said.

“Sometimes it is not what you do but what you don’t do that keeps them interested.” Well, that answered mum’s question. Yes, Sylvie looked after herself and if she was a male she would have been called a bit of a player.

“Lunch?”

“It is a bit early for me.”

“No, when you get down.”

“OK,” I said, “cheese and pickle.”

I dressed, had a few games on my Xbox and then went down to the kitchen where Sylvie had prepared two sandwiches for me and was pouring water into the tea pot ready for my tea. She had a glass of water and sandwiches. “Mum has run out of bottles water.” She moaned. If you believe the Water Companies, they say that the water out of your tap is as good as anything you get in a bottle but Sylvie was not a believer in any of the hype and insisted that mum bought a massive amount of still bottled water so that it satisfied Sylvie’s belief that only drinking water would keep her skin clear and her hair shiny. For someone who had been suffering acne for the last couple of years I relied on scuffing lotions and acne cream to keep the spots at bay. I must admit that her skin was good despite the amount of makeup that she put on each day and that she always cleaned it off before bedtime.

“Thanks,” I said, as I took the cling off the sandwiches and tucked into them. Her phone beeped.

"Yousey cannot make it because he has to look after Em and she is too tired after her sleep over so I am going to stay here and read." She said this as she tapped into her phone.

"Well, I am going to meet Ket and Shrimp at the café and plan our next moves."

"Yousey says that he has his Dad's Wild Life camera and he wants to try it at the car park when the Mary Jane has gone."

"Has the boat gone; I will check with Shrimp." I tapped into my phone and after she replied I advised that they were going to cycle to Ramsholt Dock before going to Café."

Her phone beeped and she said, "Yousey is going to cycle to the carpark and be there at dusk."

"What time is dusk?" I asked and got a shrug from her.

I told the Shrimp who said that dusk was around nine pm. She said why aren't we using WhatsApp. I texted back OK, but I suspect that there was more in Sylvie's texts from Yousey than she was telling me because she giggled every time one came to her phone.

"I am going to leave now because I want to take some photos," I said. I gathered up my equipment from my room which I had in a shoulder bag. Dad had had a fleeting interest in photography and bought two Canon EOS 6Ds and a variety of lenses and for a few months he did little with his free time except studying photography videos and books. He was not bad in the end and he had a couple of books of his work made up, As he soon tired of the hobby I suspect because Charly started to use up his free time before he left us. As a consequence, he gave me his cameras and I used them as much as I could back in Frome but here sailing had rather taken over.

I shouted goodbye to Sylvie from the hall and left through the front door where we had left our bikes. "Mum has texted and says that she will be back at five and then is out again," she shouted back. She will probably be out until after twelve so I will be able to go to the car park with the others and get back before she gets back home.

I rode to Alderton and stopped and took some photos of some interesting houses there and then went off to Bawdsey Quay stopping and taking photos along the way. Arriving at the Quay I

left my bike chained to the one of the quay safety rails and went off towards the North Sea. The river reaches its estuary in an area called the shoals and they are a bit of a feature. I went on the beach and took some photos of those and then turned North along the beach until I was below the famous Bawdsey Manor and took quite a few photos of the Manor and then back towards the other side of the estuary and the Martello Tower.

When I got back to the Quay Shrimp, Ket and Tammy arrived on their bikes. "No Sylvie?" Shrimp asked.

"No she stayed at home reading," I responded.

"Let's get some tea and cake!" Shrimp said, and we walked over to the entrance through to the Café which was on the first floor of the building. Ket held Tammy's hand as we walked up the stairs. I paid for the tea and scones and we sat on the balcony and finished off the scones in quick order and then settled back to drink our tea and look out to the river.

"Are you going to the car park tonight?" Ket asked,

"Yes, but Sylvie will stay home. I think she had enough last night," I responded to Ket.

The day was glorious and there could not be nothing better than sitting looking over the river watching the holiday makers arriving and going. Some took the Ferry across to the other side and some just walked about a bit and then got in their cars and drove off. On the beach a single fisherman was casting his line into the river in between long waits where he stood motionless and occasionally pulled a fish out. Some he threw back in and some he put in the basket by his feet.

"Right," I said, "I am off home so I will see you about nine pm."

"Come to ours at eight thirty and we can walk across to car park with Yousey who is turning up at the same time," Ket said.

"Will do," I replied and left the Café and got my bike and went back to the cottage. When I got back mum was in and was preparing a salad for our dinner. Sylvie sat in one of the kitchen armchairs reading a book. She did not say anything until she looked up and put the book down.

"That was interesting," she picked the book up and held it up and I looked at it as I sat in the other kitchen chair, "it is about this coast's smuggler pubs. Smuggling was rife in this area and there was a tunnel from Alderton Hall to the Church and then to the Swann Inn. They think it was originally for priests during the Reformation and then was used by smugglers. Interesting when you consider what you have seen."

"What have you seen?" mum asked.

"Jamie thinks he has seen strange things on a boat at Ramsholt."

Mum turned around from chopping salad, "well I hope you are not getting involved." I took a long stare at Sylvie and she knew I wasn't happy. "Right, I am going to get ready to go out. Your dinner is ready when you want it." She put the salad bowl on the table with serving spoons, a plate of bread and our plates with what looked like cold fried halloumi.

"I will get some later," Sylvie said and started looking at her phone."

When she had gone upstairs, I said to Sylvie, "what is the matter with you, we said we would not tell anyone until we had more proof."

"I am getting fed up with the whole thing!"

I noticed that she had tears in her eyes. We did not always get on when we were back in Frome but since we had been in Suffolk, we had become closer and I was genuinely concerned that she was upset. "What's wrong?" I asked.

"Ryan is going out with my ex-best friend."

"What Sally?"

"Yes, cow! I always knew she fancied him and she just could not wait until I moved."

"Well, you have Yousey."

"No, I don't have Yousey according to him. He said he just want to be friends."

"It did not look like that when you came from behind the sheds."

"Oh yes, he does not mind a bit of that, but he does not want to get serious."

"Never mind there will be others when we go back to school." I always thought Ryan was a bit of a dick, always combing his hair and looking at himself in any surface that reflected his very shiny hair which I thought was a bit too long.

We both started looking at our phones, until Mum came downstairs and said, "have you not eaten your dinner."

"It is a bit early for me," I said.

"And I am not hungry," Sylvie added."

"I am going to the theatre in Felixstowe and then we will get some food, so don't wait up as I will be late," she said as a car, obviously Jeremy's, sounded its horn.

She wafted out of the back door spreading her perfume as she went. We went back to looking at our phones and then I ate my salad with Sylvie. I asked her if she wanted to come with, to which I got a, you must be joking eyebrow raised look. I mentioned that Yousey would be there and I thought she might have a re-think but she shrugged and I left.

I cycled the mile or so to Ket and Shrimps house and arrived with them sitting outside. Tammy was there with them.

"No Sylvie," Yousey said looking behind me.

"No, she has decided to stay in tonight," I answered. I could have made it easier for him to take by making an excuse but that was probably not what Sylvie would want me to do to keep him keen and resolve the 'just good friends' issue. It was working because he was not happy.

"Shall we go," said Shrimp, "we want to be able to see." It was getting towards nine pm so yes, we should be going. We crossed the valley with Ket and Tammy following behind holding hands and we soon reached the car park at the top of the rise from the dock. Yousey took the motion activated camera out of his backpack opened the back and put in some batteries.

"Right all set. Where should we put it?" he asked.

"How far does it reach?" I asked.

"Well, it should record anything in the car park and it has one twenty degree field of view, up and down and across."

"I can get up that tree and we can put it above head high. It is camouflaged so no one should see it unless they are looking. I just need to be lifted up to the first branch," Ket said. Yousey put the camera back in his backpack and handed it to Ket who slung it on his back and Yousey and I grabbed his legs and lifted him until he could reach the lowest branch of the tree. He swung his legs up and then pulled with his legs and arms until his body was level with the branch and then he swung over and lay on top of the branch panting. After recovering he climbed to the next branch and put the belt of the camera around the trunk. He climbed back to the first branch and then swung down until he was hanging down and then dropped to the floor.

"Did you turn it on?" Yousey asked.

"No but I put a branch at the top so it is angled down."

"Do you think it will see all of the carpark from there?" I asked.

"I doubt if we will need to because the van parks on this side nearest to the dock."

"Why didn't you turn it on?" I asked.

"Well, we don't want a couple of days of people and cars. We will turn it on when the Mary Jane is back up here," Yousey answered me.

"OK guys let's go home."

"Hold on," I said, "when do we think the Mary Jane will be back up."

"Should be tomorrow and the moon is still good for them to off load their cargo," Shrimp advised.

"So, we camp again tomorrow night and see if you can get Sylvie to come, Jamie, we need all the eyes we can get," Yousey said.

Yes, I thought, we know why you want Sylvie to come because she is giving you the cold shoulder and you're jealous because Ket is all loved up. We walked back to Ket's house as the last of the summer sun drifted below the horizon. It was be dusk for a bit but we needed our flash lights as we negotiated the sunken track to the

stream and up the other side of the valley. We got our bikes and Yousey, Tammy and I rode up the hill to Church Road and at the top Yousey and Tammy went off towards Woodbridge and I went across the fields on the footpath to our home. I put my bike in the bike shed which locked the door which had been left on the latch with the padlock open. Sylvie was sitting in exactly the same position, but she must have moved because she was holding a teacup, unusually for her. "Is the tea pot cold?" I asked.

She looked up and held up her cup and said, "I doubt it because I have only just made this." The pot was warm so I poured myself a cup and sat in the other kitchen chair.

"Tammy was there tonight," I said slightly maliciously because I knew it would wind her up. She liked to be the only treat in the shop and even thought she was playing hard to get, a rival for the affections of any boy in the vicinity would never be welcome.

"Oh goodie," she responded.

"We are probably camping tomorrow night."

"Really," she responded with a fake yawn and without looking up from her phone.

"Yousey said that I should make sure you are there because we need everyone we can get, but I don't know if Tammy going to camp, probably not." This time she did look up.

"I suppose I could do with getting out from this place. Are you sailing tomorrow."

"I think so although we did not arrange anything. I will ask Yousey and Ket."

"I can do that, and now I am going to bed."

Chapter 16

Another Night on the Tiles

Mum come in about twelve thirty and I heard the wall clock strike the hours as I lay there trying to sleep, thinking about what may come tomorrow, if the Mary Jane sailed into Ramsholt. Eventually I slept and woke after eight am to the sound of the shower which Mum or Sylvie were using. I got up as Sylvie in her white towelling robe came out of the bathroom her hair covered with a shower cap. "Mum's up and she has had her shower so you can use the bathroom." We mostly let mum use the shower first because she is the one that goes out to earn money and she 'must not be late'.

I had a quick shower, put my tee shirt, black with 'I can explain it but I cannot make you understand' picked out in white capital letters. It was one of one of my favourites which included the Wolfie Smith 'Freedom for Tooting' retro shirt from the TV programme in the seventies for which I had all the DVDs. I will continue to watch them on TV until I can get them on to my laptop. Why do laptops not have DVD players anymore?

As I was going downstairs my phone buzzed and I looked at the message from Shrimp on the front screen, 'Mary Jane back at Ramsholt'. I called her. "Why text and not on the WhatsApp group?" I asked.

"Oh, I keep forgetting about that and anyway this is your find so you should know first."

"How do you know; it is not nine yet."

"I got up early and walked down to the quay because it was the perfect weather and tide for them to come in early. I saw them come up and moor just after eight thirty and I am sure that I saw a face at the window of the Mary Jane."

"So, we are on for tonight!"

"Yes, I have spoken to Ket back home and he is suggesting that we sail this morning and then prepare to camp out tonight. He is going to put it on the WhatsApp." My phone beeped and I looked at

the screen and at the top was Ket's message. 'MJ in town. Sailing this morning and camping tonight.'

"Yes, it has just come through. Speak later at the dock."

"So, we are going sailing this morning and camping again tonight." Sylvie said from the comfort of one of the kitchen armchairs.

"Yes, I suppose so," I answered.

"Camping again," mum said, "you never liked it that much when we were in Frome." Sylvie answered that one.

"Well, we have our friends here and it is more fun."

"Is that Yousey camping?" a simple question for Sylvie but with more complex reasoning behind it.

"Don't know," Sylvie said and went back to looking at her phone.

"Is he," mum said to me.

"I suppose so."

"I hope you behave appropriately, Sylvia." Oh dear her proper name so mum was not happy. "And you look out for the girls Jamie."

I grunted a yes and wondered why I was being caught in the middle of their bloody argument, not that Sylvie was doing much arguing, opting to not saying anything so it could not be construed as lying if anything did happen.

"Are we walking or biking?" I asked Sylvie.

"Walking, I prefer it." So, I had a breakfast of cornflakes and tea and we set off to walk to the dock. We followed our usual, the shortest, route and managed to avoid the arch of irrigation water that the monster was throwing across the field and onto the footpath where nothing grew! We were both quiet, Sylvie probably thinking how she could ignore Yousey but still keep him interested, and I was wondering what today may bring. I had a thought that I might use my Tascam recorder which on its highest setting will pick up minimal sound. I had brought this when I dabbled with the acoustic guitar. I was not allowed to play it anywhere near any of the family because at the beginning I was rubbish and I did repeat the same phrases over and over again so I could get the chords

perfectly under my finger without thinking. Eventually I became quite good but I did not know how good so I bought the Tascam, second hand off of Ebay with dad's PayPay account. Although it was only fifty pounds, he was not happy and I was grounded for a week when he saw the debit on his account sometime after the recorder arrived. I got the recorder so grounding was not an issue to me because I did not have many friends to hang out with. I must remember to check the recorder's batteries and take it with me tonight. I had given up playing guitar after passing the music room and saw a boy of similar age to me playing Layla on an electric guitar. My guitar now gathers dust but the good thing is I don't need to worry about upsetting the family with the three chords that I mastered.

The dock was bathed in bright sunshine as we came down Dock Hill to where Shrimp and Ket and Tammie were sat in the bench looking out at the river and I assume the Mary Jane. "Oh, she is bloody here," Sylvie said.

"I think she is quite nice."

"You would she is a girl and way out of your reach."

Our three friends stayed looking out at the river even after we arrived at the seat.

"Hi," I said, before Ket shushed me.

He whispered. "We have seen two different faces in the window so far."

The Mary Jane was moored closer to this side of the river, the couple seated in chairs on the deck unaware of the show that their passengers were putting on. A face appeared at the window and it was quite clear because of the closeness of the boat. "I saw that," I whispered.

"That is a different face," said Shrimp, "they are quite clear."

"Right, let's go sailing. Are you coming Tammie?" Ket asked.

"Absolutely not," she replied.

"I may stay here," Sylvie added. Strange, I thought, but then Yousey was still on this way down against the tide and she would be hoping to go out on the river with him. "I want to get to know Tammie." Oh yeah, I thought, what a lie!

“We only need to take our boat, and you can get a bit more practice in for the open Jamie,” Shrimp said.

So, we pushed the Deben Rose, down the slipway and off the trailer into the water. I took up the rear position and the other two were forward, Ket taking the oars and Shrimp readying the foresail. When we were about fifty yards out Shrimp dropped the centreboard and then raised the sail as Ket stowed the oars untied the mainsail and started to pull on the sheet to get it to the top of the mast. The wind was quite breezy from the East so I steered up stream against the tide and with the wind. “Take her up as far as Shottisham Creek and then we can practice tacking,” Ket said.

So, I steered a course to the centre of the channel and then west around the head land and up to the creek. “Coming about,” I shouted and pushed the tiller hard to the right and we swung to the south of the channel at a diagonal to the wind and then I shouted again as we reached the other side of the channel, “Coming about,” as I pulled the tiller hard to the right. We continued to do that until we rounded the headland with the dock and Mary Jane in sight. Tacking back to the dock we saw Yousey sitting astride the crossbar of his bike with Em sitting on the seat with Sylvie and Tammy on the bench. Ket shouted back to me.

“You drop me off and then you and Shrimp can practice for the race.” So it was going to be Shrimp and me racing in the WSC Open. That is OK by me and makes a lot of sense, leaving Ket to sail his boat single handed. I made the last tack to the East and sailed the boat towards the beach, and as we closed in on the slope my shipmates dropped the sails and raised the centreboard and we drifted and beached the front of the boat. Ket jumped over the side pushed the bow to face the river and then Shrimp row locked the oars and pulled us out towards the channel. We continued for the next two hours sailing with the wind to Shottisham Creek and then tacking back again. We decided to make the third return back to be the last and then dropped the sails and drifted back to dock under our residual thrust. Shrimp jumped out with the bow line and pulled the boat to the slipway. I jumped out and went up to get the trailer. The rest were seated on the grass and seat and were happily

chatting unaware that we had landed. No help from them I thought. I manoeuvred the trailer backwards into the water, applied the brake and helped Shrimp pull the boat onto the it. We hauled the trailer and boat up to the boat park and put the cover on after stowing the sails and oars and removing the boom.

"Thanks for the help, guys," I heard Shrimp moan as I secured the trailer lock.

"It was a pleasure Sis," Ket said with a smile. Mr Stokes who had been sweeping the road outside his office came over.

"Are you practicing for something," he asked me and Shrimp.

"Yes, the WSC Open. Jamie and I have entered in his boat. We were practicing tacking today. He is getting pretty good." Shrimp turned and held her hand over her eyes shielding them from the Sun. I looked to where she was looking and saw the Mary Jane couple rowing their tender towards the beach. Mr Stokes left us to walk up to the pub for his lunch, calling that he was staving and his soup awaited.

"I wonder if he suspects anything?" I asked.

"Doubt it," said Shrimp, "otherwise I think the coastguards would be down here."

"Or the Mary Jane would not get this far up the river before they stopped and boarded her."

"Just us that are suspicious then," Yousey added. We looked up Dock Hill as were heard the pop pop of Tammy's mum's 2CV coming down the Hill.

Tammy gave Ket a quick kiss and said, "got to go, see you next week."

"Where is she off to now?" I asked.

"North Norfolk again, another holiday," Ket replied.

"Right, I fancy some soup," Yousey said as we watched the 2CV do a multipoint turn and pop popped its way back up the hill.

We trouped off to the pub and settled ourselves on a large outside table and had soup and cokes.

"After this I am going back home. If am going to be up all night I need to get some rest," Sylvie said.

"I am going to hang around here for a bit. I want to see the faces at the window to make sure they are still aboard," I said and Shrimp and Ket said that they would stay as well.

"Em and I will walk you home and then get back to get my gear ready.," Yousey advised.

"I am not coming I have got a sleep over," Em said.

"She has so many friends she is hardly ever in at night."

"No true Yousey," Em said, "I only have one sleepover each week.

So, Ket, Shrimp and I stayed out on the grass by the dock looking at the river and the Mary Jane. The couple went back on board and we did not see them come up from the cabin for the rest of the afternoon.

A little after four the three of us walked up the hill to the dock and I carried on down the dock road and across the path back to the cottage. The irrigation machine was on the other side of the field. I was so hot that a soaking by the water jet would have been very welcome.

When I got home you could cut the atmosphere with a knife and you wouldn't have needed a sharp one. Mum was preparing dinner and Sylvie was sitting in a kitchen armchair playing with her phone.

"What's wrong?" I asked.

"Well Jeremy is staying over tonight and Sylvie is not very happy."

"I don't care what you do, you can have men staying over but I can't even have a boyfriend."

"Not men Sylvia just Jeremy. I did not say that you cannot have a boyfriend but I just don't want you getting tied up in a serious relationship too soon. You have university to go to and I don't want that spoilt if you have trouble."

"Trouble! It's not like when you were a kid when you weren't allowed to talk about sex and got knocked up at the

first time of trying anything. The world has moved on and we are a little more aware. Any way I may not want to go to university, I am thinking about being a chef." Sylvie was quite voracious in her viewing of anything related to cheffing. Ramsey's Kitchen Nightmares, Bake Off, and the plethora of cooking programs that are aired on a Saturday. There was only one problem, she never did any cooking. I think that she liked looking but didn't like doing."

"That will be very disappointing if you don't go to university."

"Can't see the point." This could go on for ages so I thought that I would try to pull some oil on these troubled waters and avoid the Sylvie meltdown.

"Are you camping tonight or are you not coming?"

"Oh, I am coming. I don't want to see some aging lothario taking advantage of..."

"He is the same age as me and I need something in my life after you dad started to chase teenagers." Mum had tears in her eyes and Sylvie knew that she had gone too far. I watched as she got up went around the table and hugged mum and then went upstairs. "You had better get ready for your camping and look after your sister." Can't imagine what I can do and if she did get up to anything I would not split on her.

We did see Jeremy before we left. We had had dinner and with our back packs we were there by the kitchen door when we heard the throaty roar of his E type turning into the lane and then into our garden. Mum opened the door and we picked up our backpacks and said goodbye as he came in and out we went. Mum looked happy and Sylvie should remember that. He makes mum happy.

We reached Ket and Shrimp's cottage where the two of them and Yousey were sitting outside in the still warm evening. Each had some juice and one of Shrimp mum's cakes.

"Do you want anything?" Ket asked.

"No, we have just eaten," I replied. Sylvie had been very quiet on the way down still upset from her spat with Mum.

The others finished their cakes and we decided to leave in another hour and then get to the car park. I pulled out my recorder and showed them. "I am going to put this near the car park and see if we can pick up any talking as they get into the van."

Shrimp looked at it and then took it and opened the card holder. "What is the size of card and how long will it last."

"64 gig and I don't know how long it will last but when we see them coming from the boat I can go and switch it on."

"You had better be careful," Shrimp said.

"I think it is too risky to switch it on when the van is there," Ket said, "I think you need to wait until you can see the van coming switch it on and get back to the camp. The van arrived last time before they started up the hill."

"Once we have set up camp and before the pub closes, I will wait at the other end of the wood by the car park," I suggested.

"I will wait with you," Shrimp said.

We made our camp by the oak tree and sat around talking in low whispers. It was another warm night and we were all in tee shirts and shorts, but each of us had coats to put on when it did get cold, well coldish. It has been some time since the night-time temperature had been much less than the daytime, but it could be one of those nights. All of us were wearing dark tops and shorts. My tee shirt was my favourite 'Freedom for Tooting' in black with an old pair of

dark grey school shorts. I would not need them anymore because mum had agreed to my wearing trousers at my new school. Very much not before time. I think the lack of mates at school was caused by mum insisting on my wearing short trousers. Dad had tried to get her to upgrade me to long trousers but to no avail.

I was keeping an eye on the time whilst we chatted and about ten thirty, I suggested to Shrimp that we had better get going. We made our way to the carpark using my head torch to show up anything we were likely to fall over until the moon, which was quite low on the horizon, gave out more light to the land as it rose higher.

I found a log on the edge of the car park and placed the recorder down on it with the microphones facing where we thought the van would park and then we made our way to the edge of the wood by Dock Road so we could see any lights coming from the other direction to the pub.

“We may as well stay here until the van arrives. There is no point in going back to the others. They can keep an eye on the road up from the dock. I WhatsApp’d the others and hoped that they had their phones on silent.

“When we see the van coming, I will go and switch the Tascam on and then head back into the wood away from the car park and then double back to here along the edge of the wood. I want to make sure that it is the van so I need to see it enter the car park,” I told Shrimp.

“Well, you take care that you’re not seen and use your phone light to show the way, and don’t use your head torch it is too bright.”

The head torch was very bright especially in mode two which had a wide angle of dispersal. We waited, laying on a ground sheet which we had taken from the camp and watched cars coming up from the dock and we assumed the

pub. At eleven ten pm a car passed and Shrimp whispered, "that is a staff car."

"How do you know?"

"I saw it was the last to go on the last stake out."

"Stake out sounds a bit MI5," I joked.

She poked me in the side quite hard and we both laughed. "Shush," she whispered and I saw two lights coming the other way towards the dock. I switched on my phone light and crept my way along the edge of the wood by the car park and reached the Tascam. I played the light over the recorder and switched it on, just as the van turned into the car park. I switched off my phone light and hit the ground as the van turned in a wide circle and the lights shone over the place where I had been standing. I looked up from my prone position and saw the car park with its side not more than four metres from where I lay. I held my breath as it came to a stop and the engine went off and its lights were extinguished. I waited a for three minutes to make sure the occupant or occupants were not going to get out and then started to edge backwards in a crawl. When I had gone about ten metres, I stood up slowly turned into the wood and slowly made way away from the van then made my way in an arc to where I knew Shrimp would be waiting.

"That was close," I said as I dropped onto the ground sheet, "I thought they were going to see me. I think I am covered in bits of wood and earth and insects because I had to lay on the ground."

"I am sure you will survive." This time I poked her in view of her lack of sympathy and we both laughed quietly.

'Pub lights are out,' was the message we got from Ket at quarter to one.

"That is a bit late."

"Yes, and the moon is setting now."

"Why is that?" I asked.

"Well, the Earth turns on its axis,"

"I stopped her going on, "I know that but why so early.?"

"Just the way it is in July. I suspect that they will have to rely on lights."

'The boat is on its way and it is using a light,' the message come from Ket.

"Let's move back a bit just in case," Shrimp suggested and we stood and quietly moved our ground sheet back into the wood a few metres. "Just in case the immigrants cut off the corner when they saw the van through the trees."

About fifteen minutes later the message came, 'they have landed.'

"They are coming up past us." We got the message just as four people came towards us along Dock Hill. Whoever wrote the next message needed to think. We were right and they saw the lights of the Van which had just been switched on and they cut of the corner and the last one passed as the message was received and lit up our faces. The last person stopped and looked towards where we sat. My heart almost stopped and then it raced. Our screens went blank and we could see him in the last of the moon light. He carried on to the van. He said something, as he reached the open door of the van, in a language which we could not understand and we hoped that the van driver could not either.

"Let's go," said Shrimp. I went to pick up the ground sheet and she whispered, "leave it." We headed towards the back of the wood away from the road. We dare not swich on any lights but there was enough moon light left to help us avoid the trees but not the low brambles which tried to trip us. We made it to the back edge of the wood.

"I think we are OK." I said and turned on my phone light, "let's make it back to the others. In the half-light we could

still only see the trees but not much else. I opened maps on my iPhone and looked at where we were positioned. We need to head that way, which was a bit to our left or on my map Northwest. With the light playing over the floor of the wood we reached the camp where the others were just coming back, the lights of their phones no longer an issue for us being caught.

"They are back on the boat and we saw eight passengers going up the hill to the van," said Yousey. He was standing with his arm around the waist of Sylvie.

"Yes, and one looked at us. They cut off the corner of the wood to get to the van and as the last of the first four passed a message came through and lit up our phones and he must have seen our faces. He said something when he got to the van but we could not understand it and I hope that the van drivers could not either."

"I wonder if the camera and recorder picked up anything."

"I hope so Jamie because if not then we have had a wasted night," Yousey said, "and now I am going to my bed; well sleeping bag!"

We all went to our tents Ket and I in one, Shrimp and Sylvie in another and Yousey on his own. We all settled down for the night. I went off to sleep quickly leaving Ket to turn off the camping light that he had hung from a high part of the canopy. About two am I woke.

"You OK Jamie," Ket was shining his phone on me.

"Yes, why?"

"You have been talking in your sleep and then you whimpered and woke up."

"I must have been dreaming, but I am OK. I need a wee." I got out of my sleeping bag and grabbed my phone and unzipped the tent flap. I had to crawl out of the opening.

When I was able to stand up I switched on my phone. There was a light in Yousey's tent and I heard Sylvie's voice from the tent insisting quite loudly, "no not now please!" The tent flap opened and she crawled out and stood up and we were face to face. "Don't you tell mum," she said and walked over to her and Shrimp's tent, opened the flap and crawled in. I shrugged and went off into the wood to complete my original mission. I got back to the tent and had a fitful night sleeping, dreaming and waking. My last dream, well the one I could remember, had me holding hands with Shrimp trying to run across a shallow pond with four men shouting in a language we did not know and on the other side of the pond a white van with two burley men dressed in black leaning against the front of the van pointing at us and laughing. I woke with Ket shaking me.

"You were shouting Jamie and we don't want the world to know we are here."

When we got outside our tent Sylvie, Yousey and Shrimp was sitting drinking tea and we had our two mugs into which she put some hot water and a tea bag. I spooned myself some sugar from a lidded jar and took some milk from the plastic bottle that Shrimp proffered.

"Are you alright Jamie, we heard you shouting?" Sylvie asked.

"Suppose so, I was had a funny dream. It was all linked to last night and our near miss."

"It was a near miss!" Shrimp added, "I thought we were going to get caught."

"What do we do now?" asked Yousey. He was sitting on the other side of Shrimp from Sylvie so whatever he tried to do to her he had not been forgiven.

"We have to check the footage and sound and see what we have," Ket suggested.

“We can do that round ours if we want some peace. My mum will be out until this afternoon, working,” Sylvie said.

“OK let’s do that. If the footage is good, we need to get it on a tablet so we can show the police.”

“So, we are going to show the police Ket,” Yousey said.

“Well seems to be a bit daft if we don’t. They are obviously bringing in people and by doing it overnight is not legal.”

“Yes you are right Ket. When we have put in so much effort, we cannot keep it to ourselves.” We packed our camp away and walked back to the edge of the wood, picked up our two devices. Ket was helped up the tree by Yousey and I. We made our way to Ket and Shrimp’s cottage across the stream picked up our bikes and we cycled the twenty minutes to ours. I brought my laptop from upstairs and we first loaded the camera SD card and then the sound card from the Tascam. The video was not bad quality for a wildlife camera and the sound file was long and only stopped recording when the memory on the card run out. We made copies of the files which I loaded to my cloud storage. Dad had brought me Windows 10 Office which had a terabyte of storage included. We then gave the laptop to Shrimp who Ket said was brilliant at editing sound and video files, but then she was brilliant at most things. We left her to get on with it. I made some tea for us, and Ket sat looking at his phone. Sylvie sat in a fireside chair with Yousey sitting on the arm leaning over her while they talked in whispers which was not completely clear to me but, from what I could gather he was trying to get her to accept an apology for what he had tried on during the night.

After an hour Shrimp said, “I have done it,” and she turned the laptop around so we could all see the screen. The video footage lasted about twenty minutes and showed the arrival of the van, the faces of the driver and passenger and

the eight boat passengers arriving at the van and getting in by the side door. There was not much on the sound file apart from the sound of the van arriving and the voices of the passengers as they arrived and speaking in different languages, or so it sounded to us. "I have put it up to the cloud and downloaded it to my tablet. I have also put them on a flash drive which we can give to the police. Are we all going to go."

"I think we should."

"Right tomorrow," I said.

"Yousey, we will see you where?"

"At the roundabout by the road to Kesgrave. I will be on my bike."

"About eleven," Ket said see you all tomorrow."

Our friends left and Sylvie and I sat in the kitchen armchairs. "I will not tell mum about last night but you should not be forced into anything that you don't want to do."

"I don't need advice from you! Yousey is sweet but he got a little carried away and I am not ready for any of that with him." I gave her a smile and she went back to her phone.

Chapter 17

Cops and Robbers

The ride to the Kesgrave roundabout was on small pavementless roads until we got to Woodbridge. Fortunately, when we set off most of the work traffic had dissipated and with our high viz jerkins I felt that we were reasonably safe. It was another bright and sunny day so visibility was good. After Woodbridge we took the back roads, and as promised Yousey was sitting astride his bike at the head of the pedestrian

subway on the Kesgrave side of the A12. When we stopped Sylvie got off her bike and said, "Hold this," and I grabbed her handlebars. She went over to Yousey and they whispered to each other until Shrimp and Ket arrived five minutes later.

"Right," said Shrimp, "let's do this."

We rode the quarter of mile or so to the police headquarters and left our bikes in the racks at the edge of the car park. Shrimp strode into the building only to return through the front doors as we waited. "They have no front desk. We have to go to Princes Street."

"Where?" I asked.

"Ipswich," replied Ket. "It is about half an hour. What do you want to do?"

"We have come this far, so let's keep going," I said.

"At least it will keep my weight down," Sylvie said

"What weight. You don't eat anything to put any on."

"Thanks brother."

So, in the very high temperatures, we cycled the half an hour or so to Princes Street and the Police Station there. They did not have bike racks but we were able to leave them chained together at a lamp post in the car park.

"Who is likely to steal a bike from outside a police station," I quipped to Shrimp as we headed towards the entrance. We all tramped through the doors and to the front desk where behind the screen sat a very large hatless sergeant perspiring quite profusely.

Shrimp stood in front of the screen and waited until the perspiring officer looked up from whatever he had been doing. "Yes, young lady?"

"We want to report a possible crime."

"Oh yes and what will that be?"

"People smuggling," replied Shrimp. The height of the reception desk made Shrimp look young and small.

“And what makes you think that there has been people smuggling.”

Shrimp put her backpack on the floor and pulled out her tablet, touched the screen a few times and pushed it under the gap in the screen. “Press the go button.” The sergeant did as she suggested and he looked at the screen for a few minutes, then he turned and said to one of the officers seated behind, at a desk.

“Frank, take over, and you lot sit over there.” He moved his not insubstantial bulk off the chair and walked through a door in the back wall using the pass on a lanyard around his neck to slip the electronic catch. We did as he instructed and sat on the first of three rows of seats in the public space.

“Where do you think he has gone?” I asked Shrimp.

“Your guess is as good as mine.” We waited ten minutes and then he returned with another man in a suit with an open collar and no tie. The man opened the door to the reception and came partway through and then beckoned us forward with a wave of his hand. He held the door open and we all passed through and then he released the catch on the back door and held that open and said as we walked through, “up the stairs to the first floor and then turn right and wait.” He was quite firm with his wait command.

Yousey pushed his tongue out like a dog and panted. He whispered to me as I was walking up the stairs by his side. “Walkies.”

“I heard that,” the voice said from behind and Yousey raised his very dark eyebrows.

At the top we waited and the suited gent passed by us and we followed him down a corridor and into a room as he held the door open. “Wait here.”

The door closed and we were in a brightly lit room which had a mirror on one side of and two desks pushed together with two chairs either side. On the desk was a machine with two cassette drawers and a microphone on a small stand.

"This is an interrogation room," said Shrimp.

Yousey said "ve have vays of making you talk."

"There are probably a bunch of detectives behind that mirror which I think is one way," said Shrimp.

The door opened and the officer and woman entered.

"Yes, we do have ways of making you talk!" the female office said. She carried a laptop and the first officer carried Shrimp's tablet. Have you got a copy of the video.

"Yes, and we also have a sound file," Shrimp said as she pulled the USB drive from her pocket and handed it to the lady.

"I am Detective Inspector Sue James and this is my sergeant D.S. Lewis."

After she put the USB in her socket of her laptop she tapped the keyboard and we could hear the voices that my Tascam recorded. "Where was this recorded?"

"Ramsholt, above the dock in the carpark."

"Lewis show these guys out and get a phone number before they leave," and then to us, "we will do some investigating and thanks for coming down. Do you need a lift back?"

"No thanks, we have our bikes." We left the way we came in and at the reception door, Lewis gave Shrimp his phone and said, "can you put your number in that and give me your address?" Shrimp tapped into the phone and then gave it back. "We live at School Cottage, Ramsholt, IP12 3BB." The sergeant wrote that down in his notebook.

"We will be in touch."

As we got outside Shrimp's phone rang. She answered it said OK and then said, "He was just checking that I put the right number in his phone."

We made our way back to Kesgrave. It was so hot we were all pink in the face even though the ride was flat as a lot of Suffolk is. As we passed a small supermarket, we stopped to get some cold drinks from the chiller cabinet. I paid to stop Yousey using his dad's money again!

"Where are we going now?" Shrimp asked.

"I need to get back home to look after Em who is coming back from a friend's pool party. My mum is in Bury St Edmunds with a friend."

"We could go back to ours," I said, "and see if there is any food in the house." It was well after lunch time and I suspected that the hunger of Ket and Shrimp must be gnawing away at their stomachs.

"That would be good, I am quite hungry!" said Shrimp.

"We could go down to the Felixstowe Ferry and get the Ferry across to my mum's Café and Yousey can leave us in Waldringfield."

"Good idea," said Sylvie, but I suspected that she liked the fact that she could continue to see Yousey for a bit longer.

Although the roads and tracks were reasonably flat apart from a couple of inclines here and there I was quite knackered by the time we got to the Ferry, Felixstowe side, and was happy to rest my sorry bum in the Ferry that Ket had blagged a free ride on because he knew the Ferryman. He had to go back across the river to pick up passengers on the Bawdsey side, with no one on our side to go across. We rested on the veranda of the Café with some teas and cake provided by Ket and Shrimp's mum. As soon as we sat down Shrimps phone rang. She answered and said, "Hello

Inspector,” followed by a series of yeses and mm mms. She put down her phone and smiled at us. “That was the Inspector and she just said that we were not to do any more night stalking, because it could stop their investigation. He will let us know if they are going to take this forward.”

“But we have given them enough evidence,” I complained.

“We will just have to see. Now we can concentrate on sailing.”

“Thanks Shrimp, well that has seemed to have been a bloody waste of time,” Sylvie said.

“Not necessarily, but we do need to get back to sailing, because I got an email from WSC and our open applications have been accepted.”

We spent the rest of the evening sitting on the garden loungers that Mum had bought from John Lewis no doubt with the money that she had been earning at the doctors.

“Have you both got sun cream on?” Mum asked.

“I have,” I replied.

“And me.”

And that pretty much ended an interesting, but frustrating, day because I had gone through the pain of camping with very little result, so I texted one of my on-line mates and had a few hands online cribbage but I lost most of them, so bed was a welcome relief. I was so tired.

For the next two weeks we practiced our sailing and Shrimp showed me when and how to use the spinnaker.

“Are we going to need that?” I asked, “it is usually very windy.”

“You wait, if the wind drops or when we are sailing with the wind, we will be pulling that one up. All the other boats will be using them down wind.”

“Yes, but four sails?”

“This is a big old boat and to keep up with the lighter craft in low winds or with the wind and we will need all the help we can get.”

So, I learnt the use of the spinnaker and all the other manoeuvres until they became second nature. At the end of each day I could not wait for my bath to get all the salt spray off my body and to ease my tired muscles. Every evening before my dinner I eased myself gingerly into the water as hot as I could manage and lay there until Mum or Sylvie shouted for me to get out because they needed to use the facilities. Then it was dinner, usually a vegetarian concoction, and then off to bed and no online gaming just a sleep and an early alarm call each morning followed by more of the same.

After two weeks Shrimp said, “You are ready. Do you want to be skipper and I do the sails or do you want me to steer?”

I knew that being skipper would put my lessons to the test but Shrimp was so good at trimming the sails to get the most out of the tub so I chose, “I will be skipper.”

Shrimp looked at me long and hard and then shrugged and said, “OK Jamie, you will do a good job.”

I think it was a Wednesday when Sylvie and I arrived for some sailing, with Ket and Shrimp and Yousey all seated on the seat above the river. Usually, they had one of our boats in the river but both were still in the boat park, locked on their trailers with their covers still on. “What’s wrong?” I asked.

“Old Stokesy said we cannot sail today, there is a large boat coming up and she needs all the water it can get.”

“Bit strange,” I said.

“That’s what I thought,” said Shrimp but he is not letting us out.”

“What are we going to do?”

“Dunno, we could go for a walk, or go back to mine for some tea or juice,” Ket suggested.

“Tea for me, I only had one this morning because I did not have any more time.”

“You should get up earlier, lazybones,”

“I was too tired Sylvia!”

So, we all went off to Ket and Shrimp’s for tea and hopefully a bit of cake. “I see the Mary Jane is back did anyone see any faces.”

“No just the couple in chairs on the deck.”

“Well, they don’t have much to do until they unload their cargo.” This was the second visit of the boat in Shrimp’s calculated primetime when the tides and moon phases are in their favour.

After tea and cake, we made it back to the Dock around one pm. It was still quiet being a Wednesday. If you come down to the dock at this time from Friday to Sunday the area will be packed with tourists and the pub will be full all through lunch time.

So, we sat on the dock seat looking out waiting for the large boat to pass so we could get out sailing. Mr Stokes was in and out of his office for the whole time we were chatting. About one thirty pm he came out over to us and said, “I want you to come to my office I need to show you something.” All five of us tramped over to his office and we went in. The office was small and it had a rather large desk which took up most of the room so we had to stand back against the wall. “I had to get you away from there because there is something going to happen and you really need to be in here.”

“What is going to happen?” Shrimp asked.

“You will know afterwards.” He was being a bit cagey so we did not ask anymore. The walkie talkie on his desk cracked and beeped so he picked it up and went outside and behind

the office. We could not hear what he said just that he was talking. The office was a portacabin type structure with a couple of sheds out back. It was stifling so we opened one of the windows to get a bit of a draft through.

"I think they are going to raid the Mary Jane," Shrimp said. She was usually right.

"Bit cops and robbery!" Sylvie said mockingly.

"She is usually right," said Ket, and Shrimp went to the back window of the portacabin.

"See, a police launch." She said confirming her suspicions and then Mr Stokes come from behind.

"Stay inside," he said.

We could see out of the window at the rear of the cabin a blue and white boat with 'police' picked out in blue on its cabin, speeding up the Deben from the estuary its bow wave high.

"Look at the couple." The Mary Jane couple were out of their chairs and the man was pulling the small tender into the side. "They are going to try to get off." Shrimp added to her commentary although we could all see what was happening. The launch rounded the starboard side of the boat and then stopped at the bow. Suddenly the passengers came out of the cabin and stood with the couple. One of the passengers threw themselves into the river and the incoming tide took them off away from the vessels. Police with guns jumped from the launch onto the foredeck of the Mary Jane and inched back toward the aft deck. There was a lot of shouting but we could not make out what was being said but the couple and passengers crouched down with their hands on their heads. Two police vans and two police cars their blue lights flashing came down Dock Hill and pulled up line abreast by the small fence which separated the Dock Hill Road from the area of grass where we had been sitting before Mr Stokes

had called us over to his office. A further two police cars arrived by the pub and more officers jumped out and moved the early diners which had come out to see the commotion back into the pub.

"There is Inspector James and Lewis." The two detectives that we met in Ipswich Police station were there standing away from the other officers who had got out of the vans and police cars. "What about the one who jumped in the river," I said.

"Let's go," said Shrimp and as a group me my friends with me ran out of the office across the back of the very surprised police officers who had been concentrating on the goings on aboard the Mary Jane, along the sandy part of the river bank up from the dock. I looked around and two of the police were running after us, but it was hot and they had a full uniforms including stab vests on and with our head start we were able to keep a good way in front of them as we went up and onto the river wall high above the incoming tide. We could see the passenger who had jumped into the river. The coming tide was pushing him towards the marshy part of the riverbank as the river altered its course left and the bend upstream from the dock. He could swim and his strokes were bringing him nearer the bank.

"He won't be able to walk across the mud it is too wet." Ket said. We stood on the bank and watched him reach the mud and start to crawl across the mud towards the river wall. The policemen arrived and one said,

"Who is that?"

"He jumped off the Mary Jane when the police launch arrived," Shrimp said. We watched as the man's hands and arms started to sink into mud which almost came up to his shoulders and he turned his head to keep his face away from the mud. He pulled one arm out of the mud and the effort

pushed him so that he was laying on his with one arm up to his shoulder in mud and the other raised above his body. He started to shout in a language that was foreign to us all.

"We need a rope!" said Ket.

"I'll get it," said Shrimp, "I am fast," and she took off along the river wall disappearing beyond its end where she would go down onto the beach and there she appeared again running towards the boat park. We could just make out her speaking to a policeman just as she got to our boats. She pointed back to where we were standing. One of the policemen with us got on his walkie talkie.

"Let the young girl get a rope we need it for someone stuck in the river." The Policeman who had stopped Shrimp let her go and within thirty seconds she was running back along the river wall with a curled rope hanging off her shoulder. On the mud the man was shouting and thrashing about but as he saw the rope he seemed to calm down and he lay on his back looking at the sky. He was quiet and seemed to have resigned himself to whatever fate had in store for him.

"Make a loop," Ket instructed. The rest of us stood to one side.

"Let me throw it," the sergeant said as Shrimp tied off the loop to the rope.

"It should reach him," said Shrimp as the policeman launched the rope out towards the man on the mud. It fell short.

"Not long enough," the sergeant shouted.

"Go down the bank," Ket advised. The river wall sloped down to the mud and was made up of concrete sections with holes in them. The constable being somewhat lighter than the sergeant pulled the rope in rolled it up and hung it over his shoulder so that he could edge backwards down the wall.

He climbed down with his face to the wall and when he reached the bottom, he turned got a good foot hold and threw the rope to the man. It still fell short but the man scrabbled forward a bit on his front, his hands sinking into the mud as he moved forward. He grabbed the rope and the constable pulled him a little and then tied the rope around his waist and started to climb back up the wall with the fugitive in tow. He reached the top breathing heavily and then untied himself and with the sergeant they pulled the man to the base of the wall. He then climbed up. As soon as he was at the top he fell to the ground exhausted. In a very deft movement, the man was pushed onto his front and the constable cuffed him. Both policemen pulled him to his feet and then frogmarched him back along the wall towards the dock.

We followed with Sylvie and Yousey at the back holding hands. Whatever had upset Sylvie in the tent was forgotten. When we got back to the dock DI James and DC Lewis stopped us following the policemen and the fugitive by standing in front of us. "Go and sit outside the pub and we will speak to you in a minute."

A black Jaguar car swept down the hill to the dock and another officer got out. He was obviously of senior rank judging by the crowns and stars on the epaulets of his jacket. He passed us as we walked towards the pub. We sat outside the pub talking excitedly about our exploits. We watched as an inflatable which was previously tied to the back of the police launch ferried the remaining passengers from the Mary Jane to the shore where the man and woman and the other were seated on the grass their hand cuffed hands behind their backs. The last two passengers were led up and ten or so policemen got the remaining passengers and the man and woman on their feet and marched them to the

waiting police vans. The vans and remaining police cars went back up the hill and the inflatable took a couple of officers back to the launch. It took the Mary Jane in tow and moved on up the river. Excitement over, the pub diners who had been watching in the pub returned to their lunches.

Mr Stokes came over from his office. "Well, you have had quite a day."

"It's been quite a few days," said Yousey. He had not let go of Sylvie's hand. So they were an item until she got back to school and found someone better. I hope she would not find anyone because I like Yousey and he was a good sailor.

"Just the WSC open to look forward to," Shrimp said sadly.

"Well, you can go sailing now if you want."

"I think I have had enough excitement for today." Shrimp giggled as she said that.

DS Lewis shouted and beckoned us over to where he was standing with the senior policeman and the Inspector. We all got up and walked off the veranda to where the officers were standing. The senior officer spoke. "I am Assistant Chief Constable Mallory and whilst we are grateful for your help in this matter we do not approve of what you have done."

Yousey was the only one to say anything, "well if we have come to you and said that we keep seeing a face in the port hole of a boat would you have done anything?"

"As I said we are grateful," Mallory added not answering the question. He strode off and as he passed Stokes, he shook his hand and said something inaudible to us, got into his car which swept back up the hill.

"You may be called as witnesses in any trial but it is unlikely because the couple are likely to admit to trafficking," the DI said.

"Banged to rights Guv," Yousey said in a not very good East London accent.

"The van registration number you captured on your camera was traced to Birmingham and we arrested the two men who were living in the house outside where it was parked and they look very like the two men captured by your camera."

"Do you know where they were picking up the illegal immigrants," asked Shrimp.

"Not yet but we are investigating that. We think it was along the coast and the illegals were coming into the country by another method maybe by boat or by lorry. We will find out where the boat has been sailing to because it would have been noticed by other harbourmasters. So, thank you again but next time tell us as soon as you suspect something." Both the policeman got back into their car and it drove off.

"You would think that the van would have had false plates," Shrimp joked.

"Shrimp forget it, this has been a bloody nightmare." It was exciting but I could do without that level of excitement.

"Lunch?" said Yousey as Em came riding down the hill to the dock."

"What the hell has been going on, the road was blocked by police cars, I had to come across the footpath over the valley."

"We will tell you over lunch," said Ket as we all trooped off to the pub for some sandwiches and chips.

We sat outside the pub eating our lunch while we recounted the story of the trafficker's arrest to Em. The sun was blazing and the cokes with ice were a welcome relief in the heat of the afternoon. Stokesy joined us for his lunch and we chatted happily about the last couple of weeks.

"I just want to get back to some sailing!" I said.

“Me to,” said Shrimp. Shrimp looked up and pointed. “Were you expecting her,” as Mum’s Berlingo came slowly down the hill.

“I think we are in trouble Sylvie.”

Mum parked the Berlingo in the pub carpark and walked down to where we were sitting. She was not happy.

“I don’t like to be disturbed in the afternoon by policemen knocking on my door!”

Perhaps Jeremy had been there and it had stopped her little bit of passion.

After the excitement and long explanations by us and our friends to our three sets of parents, it calmed down really quickly and we were able to get back into some intensive sailing. The arrests appeared in the local paper. The East Anglian Daily Mirror but we did not get a mention. Shrimp, as our police contact received updates from the police but not the DI and DS. I suppose that level of contact was beneath them. The couple who were named in the paper as Mr and Mrs R J Jones were charged and bailed to appear on trial the following year and although they were bailed the sergeant told Shrimp they would be looking at a few years in prison along with the van drivers. The passengers were all illegal immigrants were waiting on deportation.

“I feel sorry for the some of the immigrants,” said Shrimp, one Wednesday as we sat eating our lunch after a hard morning’s practice. “If they are prepared to go through all that to get away from their own country then it must have been bad over there for them.” I suspect we did not all agree, but we were maybe too tired to argue with her. “Would you like one of my ham sandwiches?” I grabbed it greedily and offered her one of my humous and salad rolls.

“Sometimes I think I am going to end up looking like a cabbage. My mum has taken most of the meat products off her menus, and I just crave meat all the time,” I said and added a line from the musical Oliver, “Hot sausage and mustard.”

“Oh, shut up,” said everyone as one.”

“I am thinking of becoming a vegan,” Sylvie said, as she drunk her water, “it is much healthier for you.” Her relationship with Yousey had intensified and he could often be found in our house although he was not allowed upstairs. They would mostly use the lounge to get a bit of privacy away from the kitchen which had become the centre of the household.

The day of the regatta was unusually overcast for this summer and all three boats made their way to Felixstowe Ferry where the race was to start. Shrimp and I were crewing Firefly, Sylvie and Yousey in Ace and Ket and Em in the Deben Rose. It was a fun event in the Sailing Club’s calendar because all types of sailing boat could take place and there were not that many rules except get to Waldringfield as fast as you can.

As we were preparing to push the boats down the ramp Ket said, “I have enrolled us all in the WSC for next year. They have spaces but we need to change your boat to compete. I think you need to go for a Lark. If we sell Deben Rose then you can easily afford a Lark and I think there will be lots of buyers. I spoke to Mike Hartley at Woodbridge Boat yard and he could do an exchange with some cash coming your way for you WDC fees.”

“That sounds good,” I replied but Sylvie put her hand to her mouth in a fake bored pose. She seemed to be more interested in Yousey than sailing, but then I was not

surprised. Yousey, in his usual manoeuvre came sailing down the river and brought his boat up to the edge and slid up onto the sand.

“Good day for it, what time does the race start, I have forgotten. Shouldn’t we get going?” No one answered his questions but Sylvie walked down to his boat and hugged and kissed him and together they pushed the boat out. Yousey and Sylvie got in and he pushed the oars into the rowlocks and started to pull away from the shore while Sylvie pulled the mainsail sheet tight until it started to catch the wind and then she was back at the tiller to make the first tacking manoeuvre towards Bawdsey and the start of the race. The other two boats followed. Sylvie was making a good job of captaining the Ace and we had difficulty keeping up with her and Yousey through the first bend and then on down to the quay. When Deben Rose and Firefly reached the Felixstowe Ferry, Sylvie and Yousey were already there with enough sail to keep their boat steady against the incoming tide and wind. The river on both sides of Horse Sands was filled with boats of all sizes. We would have our work cut out to get into any of the prizes which were for first, second and third. I dropped the foresail and the mizzen and pulled alongside the Ace where Em and Ket were already on its starboard side.

“Are we ready?” said Shrimp. She was so excited and I was so nervous. “Come on Jamie, we can do this.”

“I give it my best try.”

“You need to do better than that, look at all the boats.”

From the quay side a couple of men in white channels and blue blazers with yacht hats were holding a flag and one was talking into a megaphone but this was inaudible from where we were. “You need to watch for the flag so we had better get ready.” We turned our boat round with oars and Shrimp stowed them once we had the bow pointing up river.

It was one minute to the start of the race so we let ourselves drift upriver with the slackening tide. Shrimp was ready with the oars just in case we drifted too close to the start line which was two flags, each set either side of the river. "I will put the spinnaker up as soon as we pass the start line. I am hoping that the wind does not change direction. Ten seconds."

"Flag!" I shouted as the man without the megaphone raised the flagged and then dopped it." Shrimp pulled the sheets tight and then moved the boom to the right to pick up the wind. She then moved to the front and pulled up the spinnaker from where it was sitting furled. Our forward movement became quite noticeable and I steered to the port side of the river to cut the bend and straighten our course.

"We are doing well," yelled Shrimp excited that there was only Yousey and another boat in front. I had a chance to look behind and the flotilla of sailing boats of all sizes were following in our wake. Sylvie at the tiller of Ace turned around and made the L sign with her hand held to her forehead.

"I thought she didn't like sailing," shouted Shrimp.

"Well, she complains about it enough. I thought she only came to see Yousey."

"So did I!"

Shrimp trimmed the sails as we rounded the first bend and I steered a course towards Ramsholt Quay which will flatten another bend. The following wind avoided the need for much tacking.

"Look at Ket." I turned and The Deben Rose was in a mele of boats that were all together trying to anticipate the other's manoeuvres to avoiding bumps and crashes. Just us and Yousey out of the crush enjoying a free sail with plenty of wind. We had passed the other boat leaving us as the front

two. We had full sails so the gap between us and the others was growing. The wind had strengthened since Bawdsey and we passed Ramsholt with Stokesy standing on the end of the dock waving to us. I steered a course towards the starboard bank of the next bend opposite Hemley. Although we had a shallow draft including centreboard, I would need to make sure that we had enough clearance to avoid running aground. I knew from all of my training with Shrimp exactly how much bend I could cut without the possibility of hitting the riverbed. The sails trimmed for maximum speed Shrimp was able to come aft and sat on the other side of the tiller looking back towards the other boats.

“Make sure you cut as much of the next bend which should keep a distance between us, although I am worried about Ket who knows this river as well as I do. Mind you he has Em crewing and that gives us an advantage.”

“He is quicker than us,” I said.

“Just steer close to the bend. We have the mizzen so we have more surface area of sail,” Shrimp commented.

So, we tracked the course to the apex of the next bend but Ket was still gaining and was only about fifty yards behind.

“Take it closer!” Shrimp shouted back to me.

“But we will ground!”

“Do as I say!” I steered Firefly until I felt the mud hitting the centreboard.

“We are aground!” I shouted, and then Shrimp lifted the centreboard a little giving us more draft. “Wont we capsize?”

“No, we are sailing with the wind!” We were sailing close to the apex of the bend but this was not enough for Shrimp because she came back and pushed the tiller harder to port. We left the Deben Rose which was taking a wider track some way behind.

“Yes!” I shouted and as we eased more into the centre of the channel with Ket and Em falling more behind. I set the course straight to Waldringfield and the finish line. Yousey with the faster boat was at least five hundred yards in front but we were going to be second. We heard the hooter as Yousey and Sylvie passed the control boat and then almost five minutes later, we passed as well and I jibed to port and brought Firefly to the beach below the pub. Shrimp pulled the sails down and came to the aft and hugged me the first real contact I had had with my friend. I wondered if Mum would let me go to her school. Unlikely so not worth asking.

“Well done, Jamie, that was a good trip,” she said as she jumped off the boat into the shallows.

“Thanks, and well done to you.” I followed her off the boat to where Sylvie was making another ‘looser’ sign on her forehead and Yousey, had his arm around his girlfriend. Ket and Em beached their boat and came up the beach to where we were all standing.

“First second and third, quiet a set of medals for the Ramsholt six,” Ket said. We collected our medals and Yousey and Sylvie sailed back to Martlesham and we sailed back to Ramsholt after the presentation ceremony which was held outside the WSC club house and each trophy winner or winners of the various races was called up to collect their prizes. It was a long afternoon and back at the dock ready to set off back to our homes just after seven pm. Stokesy had gone home and the patio area of the pub was full of diners.

“I need my bed,” I said as we started up the hill away from the dock. My friend Shrimp put her arm through mine and we chatted happily about everything and nothing, buoyed by our prize that day. Sylvie and Ket were behind us and as I said goodbye to Shrimp as she walked turned off down the path to the valley not waiting for Ket who was

giving Sylvie a very long kiss. He passed me, said good night and then followed Shrimp whistling in a very tuneless fashion.

"I thought you were going out with Yousey," I said to Sylvie.

"That was just a kiss."

"Well, it looked more than that to me."

"Oh, shut up bozo and you had better not mention that to anyone."

"Me, never, it is very much absolutely nothing to do with me," I said and we trod our weary way home to show mum our trophies.

The following day we convinced Mum to take our boat to Woodbridge where we did a swop with cash coming our way for a faster and more sleek sailing craft and one that will be completing in our home club Waldringfield.

"Well, you will keep fit," Mum said.

"Why?" I asked.

"Cycling back and forth to Waldringfield to sail."

"I never thought about that," I said.

"Dad said he would buy me a car when I take my test," Sylvie advised.

"No one in the greater Woodbridge area is going to be safe if that happens!" I said and ducked as a rolled-up Hello magazine passed just over my head.

"Mum, tell him,"

"Yes dear, Jamie stop being horrible to your sister and do as I do, think it but don't say it!"

The End