

Garelochdown, the Doomed Village

The internationally acclaimed bestseller



First published in 2021
by the residents of Garelochhead, Scotland

This is a work of fiction. Names, characters, businesses, places, events and incidents are either the products of the authors' imagination or used in a fictitious manner. Any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, or actual events is purely coincidental.

Readers paying close attention will note the presence of a variety of continuation errors within the novel. The editorial decision has been taken to leave these as they stand and not to interfere with the nature of the book. The view is that these errors have occurred naturally through the course of writing, and quite probably as a direct result of some authors having a few too many glasses of lockdown wine whilst authoring their sections, which was at all times strongly encouraged.

For all movie deals and enquiries, please contact Martin Croft or Matthew Marshall.

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Foreword

Welcome to '*Garelochdown, the Doomed Village*', a Garelochhead Community novel that began life in early 2020 with the modest aim of drawing the community closer together during the Government enforced lockdown to combat the Covid 19 virus pandemic, and to have a little fun.

The novel had no plan, no storyboard, no rules, and absolutely no idea where it was going; indeed this was the plan itself. Martin Croft holds the honour of putting pen to blank sheet of paper first. No sooner had he flourished through his atmospheric opening paragraphs than he passed the novel on to the next eager author.

It travelled for a year around the village from home to home, from author to author, nobody having any idea where the novel was going to go next.

As might be expected with a novel of this nature, the story involves a staggering variety of themes within its relatively short length. It jogs along at pace from a 'Mills and Boon' love story involving jilted lovers, to dramatic fight scenes and a gruesome criminal investigation. There are numerous and complex (and at times quite bewildering) character developments, a supernatural turn, and even a Communist infiltration before breathlessly sprinting to its thrilling ending that is sure to have readers gripped.

The following authors have all contributed to this novel and on behalf of the entire community of Garelochhead, thanks are passed to all - Martin Croft, Margaret Stratton, Mary Gray, Carole Spencer, Hazel Mckinnon, Marion Archard, Jean Norton, Steely Submariner (Paul A), Lesley Fitton, Giles Innocent, Gail Berrall, Tim Berrall, Sarah Jones, Matthew Marshall, Rosie O'Conner, Laura Cameron, Colin Taylor, Heather Smith, David Black, Watson Robinson and Jamie Munro.

The novel is dedicated to the fond memory of Mary Gray who died aged 89 on 14th September 2020. She was an indomitable lady; a highly respected member of Garelochhead Community Council who gave her time willingly for the good of the village and its people. Despite not being able to read and enjoy the finished novel with us all, Mary made her own valuable contribution to the story. She joined us all with her good humour, community spirit and strength in adversity during these extraordinary times.

With the pace of modern life growing ever quicker, some positivity to come from lockdown is that we have been reminded that community spirit is vital to us all. Mary was the absolute embodiment of community spirit and we can only hope that this novel would have perhaps made her even just a little more proud of Garelochhead and its people.

For Mary

AN OLD PLACE, A NEW RELATIONSHIP

It was a fairly mild day in late April, there was a warm south westerly wind causing the boats on the moorings to rock on the gentle swell. A few people were walking along the shore, some taking in the scenery, a few walking dogs along the pebble beach. The Gareloch can be very pretty at this time of the year, with the yellow and green hills rising above the waters. She walked along the shore looking at some of the plastic that was now regularly being washed up with the tide. Lost in her own thoughts, she didn't hear the footsteps behind her, nor could she have known that in the next few moments her life would change forever.

Caitlin's thoughts had taken her back to when she had walked here recently, anticipating her new job as a scientific research assistant in a laboratory attached to Glasgow University. This was an opportunity to give herself a new start in a friendly village she had known as a child when she came to visit her mother's aunt. Aunt Joan had died the previous year leaving Caitlin her cosy bungalow in her will. This had come as a surprise as there were others in the family who might have expected to inherit the property. It made sense to move and commute daily to the university by train.

She mused, deep in thought. "Stop! Stop!" said a male voice close to her ear. He was breathing hard and put his hand on her arm to detain her. She froze with fear momentarily until she saw her handbag in his other hand. She'd left it on a rock when she stopped to tie her shoe some distance back. Suddenly both were embarrassed - he by realisation of the fright he had given her and she because she'd momentarily taken him for an evil mugger. Both recovered their equilibrium and started to smile.

He spoke first "New here or just visiting? Haven't seen you around before." "New" she said with an answering smile "and I'm just realising what a lot I'll need to find out about and get done before my new job starts next week."

"In that case why not let me help? I'm on my way to meet friends in the Anchor for lunch, if you're free, what better time to start? Come with me and I'll introduce you to them and between us I'm sure we can tell all you need to know - and a lot you probably don't!"

THE ANCHOR INN

The Anchor felt cool and welcoming from the warmth outside. Caitlin bee lined to the jukebox whilst her beer was being poured. Musing over song choice, she felt a gentle hand on her shoulder followed by a laugh. "I'm being extra careful not to scare you this time!" John, her new acquaintance joked. She turned & smiled coyly. John was clearly a gentleman. He insisted on buying her beer and bringing it over to her. She wasn't used to this display of chivalry, but it felt nice. She studied his face, it was quite rugged, handsome with deep blue eyes. Those eyes! She was trying not to stare into them. Inviting as they were, she could get lost in this deep blue sea. There was something magnetic about John. She had never felt this before in anyone. She was drawn to him, intrigued, like a child discovering her mother's jewellery box. Could this intuitively be an omen? Like a metaphor for Pandora's Box? Should she back off? She sipped on the cold beer, so refreshing. On came her song "I love this one!" she exclaimed. "Ah, David Bowie, nice choice!" he retorted. "Shall we dance?" "I'm not sure, I'm not that great at dancing!" she giggled bashfully. "What've you got to lose? We can only make fools of ourselves?" without hesitation he extended his hand out to her. "Okay then, but don't blame me if I step on your feet!" John smirked "you know your nose wrinkles when you get bossy!"

"I'm just saying! Well, OK!" said Caitlin almost defensively, with that he put his hand round her trim waist and led her into a waltz. She giggled at his conservative ways. It was unexpected! He could smell her sweet perfume, summery, light, and youthful. There was something about her, quiet, naïve, but alluring. She defied his typical type perhaps even his values she was quirky, perhaps a little rebellious. The song choice was melancholic, John sang along "Open up your heart to me and I will be your slave!" Caitlin giggled. He was confident, funny and didn't take life too seriously. John made her feel at ease. She trusted him, although premature perhaps, she knew intuitively he truly was a nice guy. Around which she could let her guard down. Caitlin felt safe for the first time in a long time.

A figure reappeared at the bar and sat down. He supped on his pint whilst observing Caitlin and John through the glass mirrors behind the optics. The couple were unaware they were being watched. There was a realisation on second glance. He knew her. His eyes darkened with anger when he noticed John's hand around Caitlin's waist. He slammed his glass down, grabbed his jacket & headed for the door.

He stopped short, well maybe just one more pint. It had been a bad day, he was in a foul mood. He was due to have the weekend off, but Jock was down with some bug or other, so he would have to do his shift. Jock was always down with something especially when it was the weekend shift. To make thing worse he had wrecked a tyre on a pot hole this morning going through the village. A pothole that has been there for months. To be honest it had been there for years, it was fixed last autumn by the council but as always the repair lasted about as long as his pint. He thought here we are a mile away from the UK's primary submarine base where they spend billions a year and we can't get a pot hole fixed! Ah well! One more beer, he had lost track of the number he had, too many probably.

"Hey Jim" fill it up he slurred. "Don't you think you have had a few too many?" came the reply. "You're new here aren't you. "Yea came the reply". He studied the young barman "OK mate, if I want a social worker I'll make an appointment. Now get on with it". The barman thought about calling the manager but realised that his customer was probably a regular, so thought better of it. With a new pint he went back to thinking about the girl on the dance floor.

He knew if he stayed much longer supping pints he would probably cause a scene so to preserve his dignity he decided to leave. He was unaware that Caitlin had fallen heir to her aunt's bungalow and had assumed she was living in Glasgow after their affair had ended. They had met whilst she was at university and he had been doing repair work in The Halls of Residence. She was his first love and had hopes for a future with her when out of the blue Caitlin said it was over without giving him an explanation, leaving him heartbroken and forever wondering as to her reason for the break up.

Having enjoyed the moment on the dance floor, they sat down and asked for a refill of their drinks when Caitlin was aware of a sound behind her as the pub door slammed shut. She shuddered slightly, and John asked her if she was OK, yes of course I am, must have been a draft from somewhere, but picking up her drink she did feel that something had changed in the air. She asked John could we call it a day as she was feeling a little tired. John said "All this fresh air!" She laughed.

OUT INTO THE EVENING BREEZE

A breeze caught Caitlin's breath as she stepped out of the Anchor door and she lifted the collar of her jacket to stop her blonde hair escaping. John was very attentive and realised Caitlin's relaxed mood had suddenly changed - was it something he had said? What could have caused this tension throughout her whole body? Ever the optimist and gentleman John offered Caitlin his arm, smiling with those dazzling blue eyes. "May I escort you home?" John asked in a very gentle voice and Caitlin, once again, began to relax. Perhaps John was a true gentleman, someone she would like to know better. The evening felt full of promise.

It was a bit like the time she'd been partying with her university mates up in Glasgow. They'd planned a quiet night in the Bavaria Bauhaus. A few 'pre 'drinks, the odd cheeky Prosecco on the way and then a full brass band and German beer. It was when Charlene jumped on the table and upset the steins of those buff guys from the gym in Garelochhead that it all went downhill. Tam was the leader of the pack, with toned abs and a set of biceps that made Arnie look small. A smooth chiselled look her way and she was sold. They'd danced, partied until the wee hours and more.

Tam was studying Marine Biology, a true shark. He weaved his way through life with sinuous ease taking his pick of the sea. She'd loved his energy and physicality, the way he embraced every day. It had been intense, exciting and utterly exhausting. Still she'd learned to scuba dive and appreciate the beauty of the sea. The diving had been amazing, exploring the depths together and Tam had taught her so much. It had ended badly, but it had been wonderful. Oddly she thought she saw someone like him talking to the barman...

MEANWHILE, BACK IN THE PUB

Back at the bar, Tam was still trying to suppress the memories flashing through his mind. It had been almost a year since she had said goodbye to him forever. They were meant to meet at the hotel near Glasgow Central. Ten minutes before he had received a text from her saying “I can’t do this anymore, I’m sorry.” No explanation whatever. This is something which has haunted him for ten months now, and he was no closer to finding out why. “You know what, I would like that chat now” he slurred to the barman. “Alright mate, what’s got you down” the barman relied while pouring him another pint....

TAKE A CHANCE?

Tam, she whispered in her head, could it have been? Surely he was away studying plastic pollution in the Pacific, Garelochhead? Why would Tam be here? No, it must be wishful thinking, but why now, why should his memory be playing tricks with her mind. She stole a sideways glance to John, was she just preparing herself for another let down? Reminding herself of how badly the most promising romance could turn sour in so short a time, should she make an excuse now and slip home to the warm safety of her cottage. At home would be her loving pup and friendly cat and a safe, warm but empty bed. Was she ready to take another risk?

“So,” she said, “where do you live?” “I know it's a bit corny, but I've got the folk boat moored in the loch. That's my home at the moment.” Then a little more shyly, “Would you like to take a look around?” Caitlin thought “This is stupid! I hardly know the man.” But she knew what the answer was always going to be “Yes.” she said, “I'd love to.”

He had a small rowing tender on the shingle beach, and rowed in slow, strong strokes. Caitlin was lulled into a stupor by the rocking of the boat and the sun on her face. She started thinking of nestling into his broad chest, being enfolded into those strong arms... then they were climbing onto the boat, John holding her by the hand. She tripped as she came aboard, he held her, their faces inches apart. Caitlin thought “Why not?” and leant forward for a kiss...

John suddenly stepped back, “Sorry,” he said, “you're not really my type.” “Oh, so what IS your type?” “Well, a little more facial hair, for a start.” “Oh... Oh! What a shame!” “My last boyfriend didn't think so.” He said as a smile broke out on his face.

Caitlin felt her face go scarlet, “Oh I'm so sorry, I just thought, well....we had a lovely time together in the pub, thought we had a connection.” John smiled, he really did have lovely eyes Caitlin thought. “That's alright, how about I put the kettle on for a cuppa while you look around the boat.” She followed him into the cabin.

Tam had watched Caitlin and the guy from the bar, that one's a bit too friendly for his liking. He'd slipped out after them, watching from the alley way up the side of the Post Office. What was this guy up to, was he taking

her back to his place? Hurt and angry, Tam punched the wall, better the wall than that guys face he thought, although he was tempted!

Caitlin always said he had a bit of a temper on him, but Tam had never touched her, it was she who had slammed his heart against a brick wall shattering it into a million pieces. He remembered how good she had been for him. She had calmed down the hot head who thought he knew it all, even persuaded him to take a part time job doing repair work in her Halls of Residence. This helped him pay off his student loan, and she even helped him study when all he wanted to do was take her diving and have fun. No, she was all the love he had needed and she had left him gutted outside Central Station, his heart in pieces.

Now here she was in Garelochhead, if he'd known she'd be here he'd never have taken the job offered to him to research the plastic pollution on the beach which caused the locals to see red. He followed them down to the beach, watched as she got into the boat and cringed as she'd fallen into the other guy's arms. He couldn't bear to watch the inevitable kiss, so turned away and walked towards the bridge.

Caitlin returned on deck with her brew, the sun was setting in a tangle of streaky clouds giving a glow of crimson red. John came up beside her and witnessed the dying shafts of light. Suddenly her attention was drawn to something nesting in her hair, with a swish of her arms she clobbered a dirty horsefly. "Thought that was one of those blessed Garelochhead midges." "Too early for those darn things," grunted John in disgust. Tam, growing bored as he sat on the bench gawping across the still waters towards the boat, "sitting too close together", he chunters "he better not...no way! He's hitting her, that's it!"

Tam gets up lashing out at the bench with his size 11 boots. Splinters of wood catapulted into the air as Tam stormed off.

"John, it's been a lovely evening. I need to head as I've a busy day in Glasgow tomorrow."

With that Caitlin takes herself into the tender and heads ashore.

AN EX LOVER, SCORNE

It was only as Caitlin neared the beach that she realised that she had taken the tender and left John without means of getting back ashore. She was pondering what to do when her thoughts were interrupted by a hollering behind her. As the tender suddenly grounded, she whipped about to see...Tam! He was standing there on the pebble beach opposite The Anchor, having raced back from the bridge. His face was scarlet with rage, his fists tightly clenched. "Tam!" exclaimed Caitlin. "What on earth?"

She was answered by a ripe stream of invective as Tam ranted and raged at what he claimed to have witnessed, shouting too loudly for Caitlin to explain. In an instant, he had grabbed her around the waist and hoicked her out of the tender, seized the oars, and was rowing off at a furious pace to the folk boat. Caitlin stood shell-shocked for several moments before slowly turning to see a number of onlookers gathered alongside the road – pub regulars and staff, a couple of curious passers-by, and several of the local youth, delighted to see some ‘action’ occurring.

Equally delighted at the unexpected turn of events was Fraser McKay, a former journalist turned screenwriter. He had recently been commissioned by a major television channel to write ‘an edgy mystery-drama set in an otherwise quiet, coastal, Argyll community.’ On receiving the brief his heart had sunk. In his experience not much happened out in the sticks. But he badly needed the money; desperately enough to accept a seeming pig of a commission.

He had since spent several weeks hanging about various Argyll villages and hamlets, finding nothing more intriguing or tense than questions over disinterred bulbs in public displays; a couple of paternity disputes; and a case of a phantom underwear-from-washing-lines snatcher (which may have been a gull). Fraser had been returning empty-handed to his flat in Glasgow when he had passed through the village, seen The Anchor and been tempted by a pint and a wee bite. He had witnessed John and Caitlin’s entrance, their physical closeness, noticed Tam’s growing agitation, and had overheard various local commentators as the parties left the scene – "What’s he wanting with the lassie, then?" "Something strange going on there, eh? I heard down the Post Office that she’s come into a bit of an inheritance not so long ago."

Fraser's journalistic nose was still keen and he had sensed things worth sticking about for, raking to be done. Finally, he had sighed, there might actually be some decent source material.

And it was only about to get better. Tam had arrived at the folk boat's transom and was screaming at its occupant, challenging him to a duel.

The swelling crowd opposite The Anchor squinted through the twilight at the vessel. Through the gloaming they could just make out Tam boarding and then John's head and shoulders popping up out of the cabin. He was armed with something. "It's the dolphin!" cackled a local. "The giant inflatable dolphin!" Everyone squinted harder still.

On the boat, Tam realised that his rival was armed and instinctively reached down to grab what he thought was a spare oar lying on deck. It wasn't. It was an inflatable parrot; a giant, inflatable parrot. As the very last of the sun's light caught upon its beak, there was a howl of recognition and laughter from those gathered onshore. This was going to be, in the words of one of the adolescent onlookers, 'pure, dead brilliant'. Fraser stood transfixed, inwardly thanking his lucky stars for the turn in his fortunes. Then he spotted Caitlin, now crying at the edge of the group of onlookers, and wondered if it was too early to risk approaching her. People could clam up, approached too early. He knew that only too well from his days as a fledgling reporter. But he'd had a few - banking on staying the night at The Anchor - and the drink urged him on. He made a none too subtle beeline for her.

THE GREAT BATTLE OF GARELOCHHEAD

“Out you come, **FIGHT LIKE A MAN!**” shrieked Tam. He grasped the inflatable parrot furiously with both hands, raising it high above his right shoulder ready to strike his rival despite his rather unconventional choice of weapon. The crowd of onlookers on the shore grew large, the tension rose quickly. “Not been this excited since Scotland beat England at Twickenham last week” whispered one of the local youths to his friend.

“What are you doing, who are you, why are you on my boat?” John shouted back to his enraged, and it had to be said, clearly well-oiled attacker. The weather was turning fast and Tam swayed with the boat to the growing swell on the loch, parrot primed for an attack, the likely effectiveness of his weapon highly questionable. “I saw you, you pest, she’s mine, **GET UP HERE AND FIGHT!**”.

A confused John could sense he was dealing with a highly irrational and most urgent situation - he needed to act fast. Fight? Escape? Negotiate? Comforting himself that he was armed with an equally questionable weapon, the dolphin surely increased his chances of dealing with this situation. He didn’t get chance to finish this train of thought - all hope of diplomacy abruptly failed as he was struck around the head - Tam delivering a devastating blow from the superbly inflated and surprisingly firm parrot, John tumbled backwards down into the cabin.

Tam turned to face the shore, “**SEE THAT?!**” yelled an unsteady Tam, aimed clearly at Caitlin. “Look what you made me do, **I THINK I KILLED HIM!**”

Fraser simply couldn’t believe his luck, headlines scrolling through his mind at the speed of a teenager’s Instagram feed, the scoop of the century had fallen into his lap when all he planned was a quick pint of Gladeye at The Anchor! “The biggest headline since ‘Freddie Starr Ate My Hamster’! I’ll be famous!” he thought to himself. Caitlin shrieked, this is madness, what on earth had happened? Garelochhead was a peaceful place, with nothing more than a minor dispute over change from a couple of cans of Bru from The Day Today being pretty much the most notable aggression that anyone might witness.

John of course had not suffered a fatal inflatable strike, and to be frank, the notion that any injury at all might be suffered by being hit by an inflatable parrot was fantasy. Thankfully John was unharmed but he noted that

the boat was now rocking violently in what were clearly now pretty diabolical weather conditions - the water was powerful and aggressive. Dusting himself off in the cabin he climbed stealthily back up the steps to a triumphant and very agitated Tam. As he poked his head from the cabin he could see that Tam had his back to him, he was shouting something to the now huge crowd on the shore. He could also see that Tam was really rather drunk, he could barely keep himself upright as the boat swayed quite violently in the swell. Out of nowhere came a dull thud and Tam could be seen to lose his footing as the boat rocked suddenly.

What had happened?

Tam spun round in a fit of panic, he saw that John had poked his head out of the cabin, he hadn't died from the inflatable parrot strike, and he could also now see the cause of the noise.

It was the mooring rope - it had snapped and the boat was now loose and starting to drift towards the shore, waves lapping over the deck and into the cabin. A panicked Tam locked eyes with John - John locked eyes with Tam. "Such beautiful eyes - intoxicating - could lose myself in them forever..." thought John, ever the opportunistic romantic.

This would be no time for an irregular and irrational romance. The intoxicated attacker and his prey had a far more dire situation on their hands.

AN EAGER AUDIENCE

On the beach Caitlin turned away disgusted. Grown men fighting with inflatable toys, how had it got to this? When she first met Tam it had been exciting. He got her out of her comfort zone, got her trying new things. He was endearingly passionate about the environment and the oceans. The fact that he was very easy on the eye, she had to admit now, had also been a factor in her infatuation. On the down side Tam was taciturn and hot tempered. Her naive young self had put this down to frustration over an inability to talk about his feelings and perhaps a dark trauma in his past. She had thought that through her love he would begin to open up, her very own Mr. D'Arcy. Older, wiser Caitlin now saw this as the pile of romantic mince it was, recognising Tam as a man who lost his temper and sulked like a child when he was thwarted. So why was he here, by accident or design?

She slipped and slithered over weed and mud to the steps that would take her back to the road. The rising wind muffled the shouts of the spectators on the water's edge but as she reached for the hand rail and mounted the first step wheezy panting words spliced through the storm.

"Hey Miss, want to tell your side of the story?" She turned. Lights from the Anchor bounced off the nearly bald head of a stocky man in late middle age. A scrofulous beard did little to conceal the purple veined cheeks of a dedicated drinker. "Not really, not now and not to you" Catlin replied letting all her recent annoyance infect her tone. Reaching the road, she strode briskly homeward knowing he would not be able to maintain her pace. She was looking forward to shutting her front door on everything.

No sooner had the thought entered her mind than she realised with dismay that her bag, the one John had returned to her on the beach, the one with her door key in it, was still on the boat. Worse she saw, parked outside her bungalow a familiar minty green Fiat 500. Cousin Gail had come to visit.....

MORAL SUPPORT ARRIVES

Everything about Gail was bubbly cheery, perfectly presented and the last thing that Caitlin wanted to face right now. She had actually been looking forward to seeing Gail, but not when both the house and herself were undeniably worse for wear.... She cringed as she remembered the unwashed dishes, takeaway containers and un-mopped floor, and that was just the kitchen! She froze, camouflaged in the shadow of a large tree, and listened for that irritating man behind her. Nothing. Good.

She sidled warily along the path, unsure if she really did see movement in Gail's car, or if that was wishful thinking in hope of a quick escape. It wasn't until she had turned the corner onto the narrow footpath that she realised she had been holding her breath too; she smiled and shook her head at her ridiculousness.

She had no idea where she was going to go, or what she could do. She really ought to just stop being silly and head back home, but she was fed up of feeling inadequate in comparison to her cousin; just this once, she wanted to be able to hold her head high, and be proud of her house, her new job, and herself. How could she be so vain when she had forgotten her handbag not once but twice in the last few hours, mistaken friendliness for flirtation, and caused a fight before finding herself locked out?!

She sat down on a low wall and looked around. It was a lovely village in a peaceful setting when you stopped, and she seriously needed to just stop and breathe. She couldn't run away from uncomfortable situations; beside anything else, it was only a matter of time before at least one of them found her.

MEANWHILE, THE BATTLE CONTINUES

Tam was taken somewhat aback, things had definitely taken a very strange turn. He was still feeling slightly confused, too much beer he knew that, but something else was going on and he could not quite put his finger on it. All this rolling around and the emotions of the night were taking their toll, and the Dolphin boy was smiling at him a moment ago. Abruptly his thoughts were interrupted, “We need to act fast” said John “if we hit the shore in this weather we will break up like matchsticks, and my boat will be a wreck.

Oh and by the way you have lovely eyes.” “What the f---k fudge” thought Tam, “Bullocks to your boat mate what about drowning or do you think your plastic float is going to save you, and don’t ever mention my eyes again”.

John smiled despite the circumstances. “Right you are” he said. “I am going to need your help though, so sober up.”

“Here is the plan. In the forward hold is the anchor cable, I’ll show it to you. There is a clip holding it in place, when I go on to the deck I will pick up the anchor and stamp hard on the deck. When you hear this undo the clip, I will throw the anchor over the side, and the cable will follow - Bob’s your uncle, ace to base!”

Still feeling a bit grey but starting to feel more like himself, Tam said, “I know what an anchor is pal but will it work on this tub of yours?” “Who knows haven’t done it before, said John, but that’s what an anchors for - right!” The shore was starting to look too close for comfort thought John and we will only get one shot at this. “I’m going up top now, you go to the forward cabin and standby the clip, are you ready?”

“Yes” Tam replied “Let’s get on with it, besides your Dolphin is starting to deflate!”

John moved out of the cabin onto the deck, attached a life line around his waist and slowly crawled forward toward the bow and the anchor. At least the wind had started to drop a little and the rolling had subsided. He picked up the anchor and stamped hard on the deck.

Startled by the quick movement of the rope in the dimly lit space as it began to unfurl, Tam thrust himself backwards, hitting the back of his head on some unseen structural element of the locker space. “~~F**k~~ fudge, this night is just getting better!” He mused wryly in a hushed and stifled tone. The rope was quick to slow however and he realised of course they were in shallower waters. He could hear John busying himself above getting the line secured.

“Are ye good John”? he shouted up from below. “Aye! I think so, the line is tightening, and it’s holding ...that will do it for now Tam!”

He heard him calling from above. Tam shuffled himself clumsily out of the tight space, his bulk, though toned, strong and well contoured and would indeed make a pleasing display for many a discerning lady's eye, in here, exiting this confinement would more than likely generate many a titter from those very same ladies. Even here, in this unseemly situation he was conscious of his cumbersome and fumbling appearance. They met in the saloon, it was basic and small, the air was dank, salty, an odour hung in the air, the smell that permeates many an underused boat that is subject to the persistent precipitation and the salt air carried on the winds of these Scottish waters.

They eyed each other warily, crisis over these up until now strangers were reconciling their predicament and each trying to make a little more sense of their situation.

“Your pretty soaked through Tam” John said. “Aye! Yourself too!” Tam replied.

“Listen Tam, I” .. John stopped himself, he really wasn’t quite sure what he wanted to say, he was still quite overwhelmed with the last half hours events. He continued “I, I have a stove, let's get some coffee going eh?”

Tam, sensing John’s relief in saving the boat and steadying the drama was also keen to avoid any further confrontation. Not right now, he was wet, he was starting to feel the cold bite, he felt himself shudder a little. A coffee and a heat would be welcoming. “Aye John, a coffee would be great” ... he paused, “thanks” he added.

BACK ON SHORE

Meanwhile back on shore Caitlin was still trying to regain some composure and make a little more sense of the evening. It wasn't usual for her to find herself in a predicament. After all, composure was her strong point. Staying cool, calculating, aware, that was her inner strength and composure, composure was second nature to her or so she had thought. She had felt for a moment almost childlike. Caught in such a situation and in view of public eyes, she had become a spectacle, a very much unwanted spectacle. She had let herself slip!

As she stood there, oblivious, contemplating her predicament, she slowly became aware of the cold penetrating, she had been lost in her thoughts for how long she wasn't sure. Her mind turned back again to Gail. Reality kicked in and instinctively she reached around to check for her bag again, ready to make her way on the final stretch home.

Keys! For a moment she had forgotten. "Imagine leaving my keys!" she grimaced under her breath. Caitlin took one more step forward and froze.

"My phone!" She turned sharply and looked towards the shadowy silhouette of the boat in the increasing darkness. Although no one was there to see, there was terror in her eyes.

Caitlin was panic struck! Her mind raced! "Gail!" she thought, "I have to get to Gail and quick!"

THE SECRET CODE

Back on-board John and Tam were, each of them hugging mugs of hot sweet coffee and lost in their own thoughts for that little while it takes when focus can be nothing more than the rapturous affect a hot sweet drink can have on a chilled soul at sea. The silence was broken by the quiet sound of a phone ringing, quiet but distinctive.

John and Tam looked at each other. “It's not mine” John said, allowing a companion like smile. “I don’t have one” Tam replied. Their focus was now drawn to the hand bag on the seat close to John, neither had noticed it up until now.

John sat down his coffee and tentatively reached inside, he studied the phone briefly and pressed answer, wondering perhaps if Caitlin was perhaps trying to make contact. After all, she would now have realised her hand bag was still aboard. John placed the phone to his ear.

“Caitlin its Fergus” was heard in a hushed, concerned and deliberate tone.

“Don’t speak, there is no time. They're here.”

“Memorise these numbers 2 9 7 8 5 4, your new contact will be in touch very soon for the drop”.

Voices, foreign, Eastern European perhaps, they weren't properly audible but they were menacing and angry, there were sounds of a struggle and then the distinctive sound of a single gunshot.

The phone then went silent.

Tam was eyeing John with suspicion then realised the serious and concerned expression that had unfolded upon his face, whilst he had listened intently on the phone was genuine. He looked up at Tam, he was shocked, staring, saying nothing. “What is it John, what’s wrong?” John, his opened and straining eyes, turned slowly, moving from the vacant space they had occupied, to meet Tam’s. “We need to find a pen!”

The penny dropped, this was something they had not expected and seemed surreal when only minutes ago they were having a fight about an inflatable Dolphin, after writing down the number relayed by the person who thought Caitlin was on the other end, what was the next step?

Tam and John still wet, decide what the hell we are wet anyway, let go for it. The darkness surrounding them and the spectators dwindling, they dropped into of the cold waters of the Gareloch having wrapped the phone and the new number into a plastic bag and swam for shore.

When they reached shore, they were met with Caitlin shouting and looking for Gail. Dripping wet the lads were keen to pass the message on, and she said I have to go to the house and get out of these wet clothes. Tam and John were bit surprised that she suddenly decided that Gail was not so important. What had she got herself into? Suddenly she disappears towards the bungalow.

As she approaches she is aware of footsteps following her, shaking like a leaf the key struggled to go in, finally it did and with a slam she slithered to the floor exhausted. Poor Gail where was she?

SAFETY WITH FAMILY

Gail had been concerned for some time about her brother Fergus who was a friendly, fun loving chap, if a bit gullible. His attitude had changed recently and he had become much more serious and secretive. He had always confided in her but she was worried that something was amiss. Had he got in with a bad crowd? Was there something wrong at work? He had been fortunate to get a job a couple of years ago in a lab at Glasgow University and it was great that Caitlin would be seeing more of him when she took up her new job in a neighbouring department there. She mused that the temptation of extra cash might have made him do something unwise and she was sure he was not telling her the truth about his recent affluence. It certainly wasn't the extra cash he earned from being a part time barman that paid for his lavish lifestyle - and the big fabulous new car!

She thought Caitlin would know as she and Fergus has always been close, more like brother and sister instead of cousins. Rather than phoning she had decided to pay her a visit and see how she was settling in, at the same time confiding in her about her concerns. Maybe she would know more of Fergus's affairs, especially as he had been so delighted that Caitlin had secured the job at the university in a department linked to his. She had knocked the door only to hear the dog barking but no Caitlin! She can't be too far away as she didn't usually leave Fruin on his own for too long, she thought. I'll just wait in the car till she gets back. Gail was aware of a commotion out on the loch, men struggling to secure a boat, but it was too dark now to make out clearly what was happening.

The thought of her cousin Gail focused Caitlin's mind sharply. She shuddered as she realised impressing Gail with her ability to stay cool and composed in a crisis would have to wait awhile longer!

Right now she had to find Gail, grovel her apologies for not being there to meet her sooner and get back a.s.a.p to the Anchor hoping for a twin room for the night. Luckily this plan went well! Gail accepted that anyone could leave a handbag if keen to get ashore before a storm! She herself had been glad of a nap after her journey and slept through the evening in her car.

Fortunately the Anchor was close by and had a warm room available. The girls soon fell asleep happily oblivious of what the next day would bring..."

Gail woke up abruptly as the morning light penetrated the room, crystals on her ceiling light sketched sporadic rainbows on the ceiling. She kicked back the warm sheets and lay there a little longer. Her head was racing now. She thought that sleep would naturally appease her, that she could clear her head & think logically about what she needed to do.

This wasn't to be...

THE POLICE WILL SORT THIS OUT

It was a slow start to the morning. Not enough coffee in the world could motivate DI (Jason) Corrigan to ply himself off the leather chair he'd firmly planted his butt in. This chair was a rite of passage to being the Detective Inspector and the team knew better than to plank themselves in it!

There was not the usual cacophony of phones deafening the office. Which in itself was a bit of a strange phenomenon for Pitt Street station. Normally there would be at least a couple of follow-ups from domestics the night before or some screwdriver wielding Ned having tried to take on half of Partick on his way home from the chippy.

His sidekick Hammy was talking on the phone. Corrigan suddenly realised that Hammy had spat the pen out of his mouth and was frantically scrawling down notes. Hammy put his hand over the mouthpiece of the phone and whispered over to Jason. "Hey Jasper! We've had a potential hit!"

Jason sprung up like he'd sat on a hot plate, suddenly as if reanimated. Hammy hung up. "A concerned woman out walking her dog last night, heard what sounded like screams, arguing and a loud bang. Didn't sound like a nut, sounded genuinely scared out of her wits."

"I don't understand! Why leave it till the morning to phone this in?" Hammy quizzically looked at Jason "She sounded terrified. Whether she irrationally thought she'd be vindicated in some way or be seen by someone, who knows! You know how twitchy some get!" "Hammy, grab your coat. We need to check this out!"

The docks were cluttered with derelict boats that had been left to fester in rotten seaweed. Now just barren wasteland, full of buddleia and fly tipping. The yard was like an oversized rusty shipping container used now for teenage trysts and occasional more sinister behaviours. Jason called out before nudging the precariously rusted blue door open. The door swung wide scratching the concrete as it hung by one remaining hinge. Inside was just an echoing void. Void of what was once creative endeavours, sweat, toil and pride. Something was out of place though.

A cadaver of a man was lying on the concrete floor. There was a thick heavy coppery smell. It appeared to be emanating from him. One of his digits had been severed above the knuckle. The finger was not with the body. Had it been taken? His bloodstained jeans and shirt were branded and expensive. Jason pulled on a latex glove and carefully retrieved a mobile phone from the jeans pocket. He didn't look atypically like he could be in anyway gang affiliated. By his knee lay a pair of pliers. His face looked like it had sustained a prolonged attack, covered in hematomas and his nose looked broken. His brown hair was thickly matted with dark clotted blood covering a large exit hole at the back of his head. Blood, skull fragments and brain matter had decorated the corrugated wall behind him, as his limp body....

Jason shook his head in a perplexed manner. There had not been a robbery as the phone was still on the victim. It looked as if he had been tortured for a long time, as the battered bruised face and the coppery bloody smell indicated. Why had this happened and more important who was he? Jason thought that nothing like this had ever happened in this sleepy little village. He had been the village probationer Police Constable 20 years ago then moved to Glasgow 15 years ago and traversed the ranks to the grand old Inspector role. He always kept in touch with friends and family there. They both further searched the body for any clues as to his identity.

As Jason searched he found an odd looking identity card for a firm called SUPERNATURAL Detectives -and the name was Fergus Hendry, s**t shoot he thought, he knew this guy, although with his messed up face that was difficult to confirm.

His sister Gail was an old flame of his and he felt a rush of warmth when he thought of the old times. Still back to the present with a jolt, he was still waiting on the Forensics team then he would have to call her and ask her to identify her brother's body. Not the romantic reunion he had wished for.

“THERE’S BIN A MARRRDARRR”

Caitlin and Gail walked along the shore to Gail’s home, it was a grand Edwardian mansion house and Caitlin always hated the house. Since she was a child she felt unsettled every time she visited or stayed, she hated the attic as it always scared her. They stepped inside and Gail said I’ll pop the kettle on, just as she said that they heard a loud bang above them, in the attic.

Caitlin said “What the f***k fudge!” Gail said it must be those bloody rooks again walking on the roof. Suddenly there was another bang and Gail ran up the stairs to the attic. Caitlin felt terror and the hairs on her arms stood on end, somehow she forced herself to follow her cousin.

As she reached the top of the staircase she could see that a floorboard was lifted and Caitlin was standing beside it, she let out a piercing scream at what greeted her. They both saw a bloodied finger with a piece of paper bedside it, with the numbers 2 9 7 8 5 4 written on it. Below it read ‘George is looking for you’.

At this point the pipes in the house started rattling and they both felt their legs give way and felt a bit seasick as if they were on a boat...

Gail looked at the numbers in front of her, as her mind raced back to her trip in Rome. Could these numbers be from the manuscript that and the finger the Cardinal had said were part of a dark ritual? And a ring still on it with strange markings that looked like hieroglyphs. Could his story be true? And if so, then both Caitlin and Gail could be in grave danger from those that believed in the manuscripts existence. She shuddered and looked at her own finger.

Caitlin took a deep breath, where was Gail? A scream was dragged out of her “Gail”.

“OK, OK I was just turning off the tap, it was running, I must get a plumber in to sort those pipes at least we can now hear ourselves think.” “God, I’m glad I persuaded you to go to the Anchor last night instead of walking back here, I’ve always felt wrong here, are you sure it isn’t haunted, you’d make a fortune letting the place to gullible Londoners.” Caitlin looked through the mist over the head of the Loch to where she could just see

John's boat moving in the still rough water, above it she could see her chimney peeking through the trees. "Oh to be home curled up in front of the fire." She could also see several police cars rushing along the road, heading this way perhaps? Suddenly a cold sinking feeling entered her stomach, she remembered the phone call, the finger in the attic, her mind flew to Fergus.

The cars were now outside the house, a man and woman stepped out, she heard Gail open the door "Hello Ms Hendry. Gail, may we come in we need to talk to you, a body has been found in an abandoned boathouse in Bowling Harbour..."

By the time Caitlin got to the ground floor, Gail was already sitting on the settee, staring ahead. "I know that this will come as a shock, but I'm afraid we need to ask you a few questions, Gail." Caitlin looked at the speaker, took him all in: the dark blue suit, the tousled dark brown hair, the broad shoulders, the arms... He turned to her, "Hello, I'm Detective Inspector Corrigan, from Pitt St. station, and you are?" "I'm Caitlin, Gail's cousin. What's happened?"

"Is it OK for me to tell her, Gail?" A slow nod from her cousin. "It's Gail's brother, your cousin Fergus. I'm afraid he's been murdered." Suddenly, the room went out of focus, all she could see was his lips moving, the words sounded as though they came from a distant cavern. How could Fergus be dead? They had just been talking a few days ago. He had now got his notebook out and was asking questions. Caitlin sat next to Gail, took her hand. There was no resistance, she felt like a warm rag-doll.

"Do either of you know of any reason why someone might want to kill Fergus?" "No." "No."

"Was he in any trouble?" "No." "No."

"Have either of you ever heard of 'SUPERNATURAL Detectives?'" "Er, yes," said Caitlin, "Fergus and I invented them when we used to play as kids. We both wanted to investigate ghosts and things. You know, like the Scooby gang. We thought it might be fun to set up a company so we could visit all the haunted houses and solve mysteries. We called ourselves the supernatural detectives. It was all a game."

Then, after what seemed like an age, they left, leaving behind phone numbers and advice to seek counselling. Caitlin went into the kitchen to make a pot of tea. She turned on the tap and remembered the finger! How could she have forgotten?

Caitlin was feeling strangely detached, like she had left her body. She was moving about the kitchen on auto pilot, not fully aware of her actions. She stopped for a moment and took a deep breathe. She could feel her heart racing. Her bottom lip started to quiver. Tears filled her eyes. How could anyone be this brutal? Taking another person's life in such a callous grisly way? She ran the cold tap on her hand and washed her face. She reached for a hand towel. Wiped her face dry of emotions. She looked up out the window. Focused her energies on the garden birds eating the peanuts she had left out.

The world outside had not stopped. It had carried on despite the misery inside her house. The birds were calming though, the beautiful markings, their business filled with purpose. They carried on doing what they needed to do. It was survival after all. Caitlin realised that that is all you can do keep on, keeping on. She hunted for the tea caddy, only to discover she was clean out of tea. Ironically, this made her laugh. The laugh inappropriately turned into a deep belly laugh!

She thought to herself what next? I am scared, I am lonely, and I am out of tea bags! There is a good title for a country and western song!! She laughed again. She felt herself putting her hand over her mouth suddenly aware that Gail might hear her. She stared back out at the garden. The apples were forming nicely. The birds had all fledged. It was then she noticed the rhododendrons at the top were moving. Not in tandem with the wind. She strained her eyes to see what was making the branches move. It's got to be a deer? She caught a glimpse of white, white skin, a face was looking at her. Staring at her! She dropped her hand towel and shrilled an ear-piercing scream.

THE PLOT THICKENS. YES, EVEN FURTHER

Fraser McKay was sure that there was a story here but when he approached the lady last night on the shore she was not in the least interested in talking to him. He then watched the developing saga on the boat, the strange fight between the two men, with what looked like inflatable toys. This was followed by what looked like a struggle to save the vessel from grounding. Things seemed to become quiet after that. He decided enough was enough for one night and he made his way back to the Anchor and got himself a room for the night. He would sleep on what he had seen and decide what to do in the morning.

He arose early and was going to go back to Glasgow but on looking out of his bedroom window he noticed several police cars outside of the house on the opposite side of the loch. This was too good an opportunity to miss. His investigative nose told him something big was going on. He quickly dressed and made his way towards the cottage, slipping around the back of the building to get a better view, he climbed a short tree.

Just as he was getting into position he saw the girl from the night before at the kitchen window, she looked up and he was sure she had seen him. He nearly fell out of the tree... Inspector Corrigan came rushing into the kitchen. "What's up?" he said to Caitlin. She was standing at the window looking pale and shocked. "A man just fell out of the tree, I am sure he was looking into the house." She replied.

Corrigan rushed into the garden, in time to see a figure rushing into the small wood at the back of the garden...

"Come out ya prowling beggar!" Corrigan shouted, "Come out or I will come in and get you and you won't run far after falling out of that tree."

Fraser McKay hit the deck and lay still, "That Cop's right, my ass is killing me after that fall, but hey no pain no gain." Fraser remained still waiting to see what was coming next. He didn't need to wait long as Corrigan repeated his demand, seconds later a man got up from behind some bushes.

"Fergus you're safe", oh thank God shouted Gail. "Inspector this is my brother Fergus and as you can see he's very much alive." "Gail we need to leave ASAP, I am in deep trouble!"

“STOP” said Corrigan. “Fergus a man lies dead in Bowling with your ID and I want answers. I will come with you but Gail and I need your protection.” “Protection from what?” asked Corrigan. “The man with 9 fingers. Get your belongings Miss Gail we will get you and Fergus up to Pitt Street.”

As Fergus got lead away down the path he whispered to Caitlin, “Remember the code, deal with the code.” “What code?” asked Caitlin. “What are you talking about?”

As Fergus reached the garden gate he looked over his shoulder at Caitlin, he had a horrific look on his face. “Oh my God what has he got them into, code, what is he talking about?” Then she remembers her phone that she had left on the boat. “It will be on my mobile she cried out!”

Fraser McKay was still in the long grass and he was more determined than ever to get to her phone first, sore ass or not. He needed this story.

“Detective Inspector Corrigan, from Pitt St. Station, and you are?”

INEVITABLY, THERE'S SOME RUSSIAN INTERFERENCE & THINGS START TO GO REALLY WRONG

DI Corrigan and DS Hammy had called for assistance from the local constabulary based in Helensburgh to whisk Fergus, Caitlin and Gail along to the local station. Upon arrival at Helensburgh police station, Corrigan requested the custody Sergeant, a wizened old spindly figure of a man called Yegor Smirnov, to book Fergus, Caitlin and Gail in care of 'Her Maj'!

"Prep these guests for a long night of questioning" Corrigan said to Smirnov "and be sure to turn up the heat in the interview room...I want the sweat to be running down Fergus' back when I start the interrogation"... "We need to know where he's been and who the stiff is that we found with his ID in Glasgow!"

Smirnov cranked up the thermostat and turned back to his desk hoping nobody would notice the beads of sweat now forming on his own forehead! He sat down, slouching into his well-worn leather chair and fixed his piercing gaze on Caitlin who was seated in the reception area nearby.

Caitlin was worn out with all that had happened over the last 2 days. She thought on her decision to move out to Garelochhead and the journey she had been on since her stroll along the beach the day before. She laughed when she considered how John had surprised her on the beach when he took her bag back to her and how kind he had been when he invited her to the Anchor. She wondered how she had ended up back on his boat chasing the whimsy and promise of a dalliance on the Gareloch. That, until she realised that her would-be fancy man rather 'fancied men' rather than her and she had been barking up the wrong tree entirely! She shifted in her seat with embarrassment as she thought of John and her ex-lover Tam battering lumps out of each other with oversized inflatables out on John's boat.

A shiver ran down her spine as she remembered the grisly discovery of the note with the number sequence and severed finger under the floorboard under her stairs.

Who was George? Why was he coming for her? What were the sequence of numbers 2 9 7 8 5 4 and what did it all mean?

As she pondered on all of these mysterious comings and goings she was suddenly aware that she was being watched. She could sense pure evil in the room and it felt like the temperature had plunged 10 degrees. Caitlin slowly turned and was met with Smirnov's steely gaze. She could see there was a madness in the old Sergeant's eyes and she realised that something was dramatically wrong. A palpable sense of foreboding overcame her that something dreadful was about to unfold!

Just then she was startled from her thought as Smirnov's Airwave radio blared out from the desk in front of him.

"LA 297 this is LC 854 come in... over..." Smirnov reached for his radio and picked it up.

Caitlin's heart sank and she froze in terror as noticed Smirnov's badge number on his epaulettes LA 297!! She was on her own.... DI Corrigan was interviewing Fergus and DS Hammy was with Gail.... She had nobody to turn to for help!

"LC 854 this is LA 297 reading you loud and clear.... Go ahead over"... Smirnov replied in his increasingly thick Russian accent.

Caitlin had a million thoughts now running through her head as it clicked that the police call sign numbers were the same sequence that had been written on the note found along with the severed finger.

Staring at 'Yegor Smirnov's name badge, Caitlin remembered back to her high school Russian class and that 'Yegor 'was the Russian name for George.

It all made perfect sense, the mystery was starting to unfurl.

SPARE PARTS

Caitlin drew a breath as she prepared to scream for help... Smirnov stopped her dead in her tracks as he raised his finger to his lips to silence her. “The impertinence”, she thought to herself but quickly capitulated to the requested silence when Smirnov pulled from his desk drawer a handgun and pointed it at her head!

“Yes LA 297 ... or should I say Comrade Smirnov.... I can confirm that they are all dead.”

“That pesky reporter Fraser nearly rumbled our plans to storm the base at Faslane to commandeer the trident subs and take them home to ‘Mother Russia’ to be used for spare parts!”

The Russian nuclear submarine fleet had been widely reported on in the Global press as being a relic of a bygone era and in desperate need of new floor coverings and blinds etc.... This had prompted a mission which had been authorised at the highest level within the KGB to steal one of the UK’s Trident submarines and get a rare opportunity to see the upholstered fabrics within. A mission which Caitlin now found herself terrifyingly at the centre of! Smirnov smiled wryly as he heard the report from his fellow comrade.

“Are you sure you’ve wiped them all out Viktor?” replied Smirnov. “Absolutely... they are all as dead as Ken Dodd’s Dads Dog! John, Tam, everyone who was in the pub, everyone on the shoreline who watched the fight between those two nitwits with the inflatable dolphin and parrot and even Fruin the dog.

I shot them all from the summit of the Peaton Hill with my long range sniper rifle.... It’s a cracking view up there and it’s always nice to take in the local landscapes when working”... reported Viktor.

Smirnov, now unable to hide his excitement, pounded his fist on the table and exclaimed to Viktor “Then quickly proceed as planned with the remainder of the operation. Get in there Viktor and steal that sub!”

Smirnov turned his gaze back towards the terrified Caitlin who felt sick at the thought that the Russians had infiltrated the highest levels of the local community policing model and were now on the cusp of executing their sinister scheme.

“You may be wondering what your part is in all of this Caitlin now that we have you right where we want you”.... Snapped Smirnov snidely at the terror stricken Caitlin.

“Well let me tell you how it all comes together and why you coming to Garelochhead was so instrumental in our being able to deploy our devastating plan” said Smirnov.

The despicable sergeant rose from his seat gesticulating his gun towards Caitlin's head in preparation to reveal all when suddenly, there was a celestial burst of light and a huge explosion rocked the building to its foundation. So monumental was the impact of the explosion that Caitlin fell from her seat to the floor, bashing her head on the ground.

As she looked up she could see that Smirnov had fallen forwards and landed headfirst into the goldfish bowl that had been sitting on his desk. The glass shattering and now imbedded in his neck with the blood gushing everywhere and the goldfish gasping for life as it floundered on the floor in a pool of Smirnov's blood.

Caitlin felt sick and started to drift in and out of consciousness.

She was just aware enough to see, as her eyes began to close, from the north facing window of the police station what appeared to be the formation of a huge distinctive mushroom-shaped flammagenitus cloud emanating from the direction immediately over Garelochhead. All went black and Caitlin slipped from consciousness to nothing.

It was over.

“YOU HAD ONE JOB”

The Year is now 2525...is man still alive?

Tumble weed blows across the barren wasteland on the Argyll peninsula where used to exist the townships of Helensburgh, Garelochhead, Rosneath, Kilcreggan etc. Thriving little coastal communities prior to the ‘Event.’

All life is now extinct following the great nuclear disaster of 2021.

Documentary evidence remaining from that period of history indicates a disaster caused by Russian agents pushing the wrong button on a nuclear submarine they had boarded during an attempt to steal said vessel. They pushed the ‘Detonate Nuclear Arsenal ’button rather than the ‘Start Engines Button ’this due to the agents limited grasp of the English language. Oops!

Not a single life form survives within a 200mile radius of the disaster and all life is extinct. All life save the Scottish Midge and the Japanese knotweed, which continue to thrive and are capable of surviving nuclear disasters apparently.

Discarded within the knotweed was a large piece of plastic waste, which on closer inspection might appear to be a representation of a long extinct variety of inflatable dolphin.

And thus endeth the tale! And thus remaineth forever the mystery of what Caitlin’s involvement in the whole sordid saga actually was.

The End

Editor's Note: Nobody mentioned the whales from 2020! Here's a picture of them!

