

WITH A SHAKE OF THE HEAD

Written by  
Anthony Cawood

Copyright (c) 2020

[anthony@anthonycawood.co.uk](mailto:anthony@anthonycawood.co.uk)

INT. TRITON MINI SUBMARINE - UNDERWATER

The craft is cramped and dimly lit. An alarm sounds with a rhythmic klaxon noise as most of the instruments pulse on and off in unison.

Two unconscious women slump forward in their seats, oblivious to the chaos around them.

Through the subs front-facing windows, darkness.

One of the women, JUDY, 50s, weather-beaten skin from a life at sea, stirs with a MOAN.

She raises her gaze and surveys the sub.

JUDY

Fuck.

She shakes the other figure, SARAH, 20s, gashed forehead and broken glasses, awake.

SARAH

What the hell happened?

Judy shakes her head.

SARAH

Did we hit something?

Judy shakes her head again, signs that she can't hear.

She swivels round, reaches past Sarah and hits a red button.

The alarm stops.

SARAH

Gas leak maybe?

JUDY

Possible.

Judy takes to the keyboard in front of her.

JUDY

Nothing showing in the data.

Judy hits some more keys and the instrument panels stabilize, one at a time, then the lights.

SARAH

Thanks, that's better.

Judy peers at one of the instruments.

JUDY  
This isn't.

Sarah cranes her neck to see, removes her broken glasses and, squints at the panel.

SARAH  
Oh, Jesus, how long were we out?

Judy shakes her head.

SARAH  
Another head shake, really? We're thirty thousand feet down.

JUDY  
Not at max yet though.

SARAH  
What, seven miles isn't enough?

JUDY  
It is what it is.

SARAH  
I fucking hate that expression.

Judy shakes her head again.

SARAH  
Fucking typical, you make this grand reconciliation gesture and we crash.

JUDY  
I don't think we physically crashed, nothing to hit down here.

SARAH  
Why'd you have to be so pedantic?

Judy nods, as close to an apology as Sarah has ever seen.

JUDY  
They'll be looking for us already.

Sarah nods.

JUDY  
It's not just the sub that's high tech, so are the recovery plans.

Sarah allows her frown to lessen.

SARAH  
Sorry, but you've spent your life in  
these things, I'm a little freaked  
right now.

JUDY  
I know, but we've got enough air  
for --

She swivels her head left to read a different instrument.

SARAH  
How long?

Judy taps some more keys.

SARAH  
This in no time for suspense.

JUDY  
I know, I'm just double-checking.

SARAH  
And?

JUDY  
Two hours.

Sarah looks incredulous.

SARAH  
But we're what, four hours down?

Judy returns to the keyboard.

JUDY  
Three hours fifty.

SARAH  
Does that fucking help us?

Judy shakes her head.

SARAH  
This was such a stupid idea.

JUDY  
(petulant)  
I didn't make you.

SARAH

No, you just did the 'do it for Mom' guilt bullshit.

JUDY

I thought it'd be good, catching up on the long descent. I just wanted to make up for lost time --

SARAH

Stop it.

JUDY

What?

SARAH

Talking. It doesn't make any difference now. We're gonna fucking die down here.

JUDY

They might --

SARAH

What, they have another sub?

JUDY

No.

SARAH

We'll be entombed down here forever.

Judy hangs her head.

SARAH

Connor!

JUDY

I --

SARAH

He's only five. How's Ben gonna cope?

JUDY

Ben's a good fath --

SARAH

How the hell would you know, you've only been back in our lives for five minutes.

JUDY  
I know, and I wish I could make up  
for leaving you with Dad for all  
those year.

SARAH  
But you can't.

JUDY  
I'm trying.

SARAH  
By what? Dragging me into your world,  
the world you left me for.

JUDY  
I know, but I --

Judy stops, mid-sentence.

SARAH  
What?

JUDY  
Two hours.

SARAH  
You said that.

JUDY  
For two people.

SARAH  
And?

JUDY  
It's my fault.

SARAH  
No.

Judy surveys the instruments again.

JUDY  
Look, I've lived my --

SARAH  
We're not talking about this.

Judy reaches for her daughter, taker her hand in her own.

JUDY  
So, we both die, and Connor loses a  
Mom, Ben his wife?

SARAH  
Mom...

JUDY  
I was never there for you, always  
chasing the next aquatic adventure.

SARAH  
It's your passion.

JUDY  
That was always my excuse, but it was  
always a dangerous one. I'm lucky  
this hasn't happened before.

Judy turns to the controls and the sub starts to rise.

SARAH  
There's got to be something else,  
some backup or something.

JUDY  
Just the twenty minutes in the  
emergency breather tanks. Nowhere  
near enough.

SARAH  
Fuck!

JUDY  
There'll be no suffering. I'll just  
dial up the carbon dioxide, no  
oxygen, pass out...

She reaches behind her and grabs what looks like a small  
fire extinguisher, but it has a mouthpiece on top.

JUDY  
It'll be like falling asleep.

SARAH  
Mom, no...

She trails off in resignation.

JUDY  
It's okay, this is my time, not  
yours.

Judy fiddles with the dials on the small tank and places the mask over her face.

Sarah looks away, and as she does her Mom presses another button on a panel by her side.

A HISS is audible in the cabin.

Sarah turns back, confusion on her face.

SARAH  
Mom, something wrong?

Judy shakes her head.

JUDY  
Won't be long now.

Sarah's frown returns.

SARAH  
What's happening?

Sarah's eyes are panicked.

JUDY  
You were right.

Sarah grasps her throat, struggling to breathe.

JUDY  
It's my passion, and you were just a mistake that interfered with it.

Sarah takes a frantic gasp, reaches for her mother, but her safety belt holds her in the seat.

JUDY  
Ben was the one who said I should try again with you, for Connor's sake.

SARAH  
Ben?

JUDY  
Stupid idea, why would I care anymore for a grandchild than I would you?

SARAH  
No...

Sarah slips from consciousness.



Judy waits, to make sure.

JUDY

You were an accident in the first place.

Judy hits some keys and a small HISS can be heard as oxygenated air refills the cabin.

Judy takes her mask off and smiles.

Pushes more buttons to force the sub to rise more quickly.

She closes here eyes and waits...

CLANG, CLANG, CLANG.

JUDY

What...

A MECHANICAL SCREWING sound fills the cabin.

The top of the cabin levers entirely open to reveal a DIVER, full wet-suit, holding a pneumatic bolt gun.

JUDY

How...

DIVER

Subs alarm went off an hour ago, your computer crashed, we had to remote reboot. Thought we'd lost you.

JUDY

But, we were thirty thou down.

The diver shakes his head.

DIVER

Nada, we had you on sonar, no more than three thousand.

JUDY

But --

DIVER

She okay?

Judy looks at her daughter, shakes her head one last time.

FADE OUT