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The News

by Marion Umney

“Did you hear that?”

He wasn't paying attention to her. He was probably glued to the news on his phone as usual, and anxious to share his outrage, as usual, whether she wanted to hear it or not. She walked purposefully toward the sea.

“Hey – did you hear that?”

She ducked under the water, so the sound bounced and slowed, like an echo from some far distant shore.

Diiiiid yooooou heeeear thaaaaat?

The sea was cold, even through her wetsuit, and her body responded automatically with life and vigour. She wanted nothing more than to NOT hear that, whatever it was. Would Boris survive Partygate? How many new cases had they been? Would they abandon plan B? She didn't care, not at this moment: maybe not at all. This was her moment, her little taste of freedom and peace.

Her blood pumped in her ears, a drumbeat of life; her arms moved smoothly through the water, in opposition to the incoming tide, crashing gently over the pebbles, then receding with a sharp inhalation of breath, taking itself back to the body of the ocean. Two rhythms pulsating together, inducing an almost trance like numbness in her mind.

Far off she could hear the cawing of the gulls, the shrill cries of the children on the beach. She swam on round the tiny headland where the rhythm of the sea changed as the waves licked the rocks with a gentle rasping sound.

A sharp retort caught her attention at the same time as she became aware of the low hum of a helicopter, and further away, her name being called.

“Saaaaam.”

She lifted her head out of the water. He was on the rocks waving frantically at her.

“Get out of the water!” he shouted as the man fell. She watched, mesmerised as the world seemed to stop and silence engulfed her.

The gentle splash as his body entered the water brought her back to the moment with a jolt.

There was a roar in her head, and she turned to see the police launch almost upon her. She dived back into the waves and headed towards him as fast as she could, her head still buzzing with the cacophony of sound. The helicopter blades whirred overhead, the officer with the shotgun was shouting to her to “Get back”. The roar of the motor launch cut out as it arrived at the spot where the man had disappeared and was followed by the plop, plop of the divers as they somersaulted into the water.

She felt heavy as she reached the shallow water by the rocks and slithered on the soft sand trying to find her balance. She grabbed his hand and allowed him to help her over the rock, onto the beach; her flippers splatting on the wet sand. She shivered, with cold and shock, the sharp retort of the gun still ricocheting round her skull. The dry-robe crackled around her as he wrapped her in it. and with his arm firmly round her shoulders led her back up the beach, through the crowds of onlookers, towards the car.

“What happened?”

“Not sure, but I’ll check the news just as soon as you’re dry and dressed. Didn’t you hear me calling you when I first heard a shot – just before you went in the water?”