



By Candlelight

a timed exercise

by MaryPat Campbell

I am writing this account, in another man's book, by candlelight, inside the belly of a fish.

If I had my own book to write in, it would be a very different story. But here I am, and I have to keep my wits about me, decide how best to manage what I'm faced with.

The candlelight, although essential, leaves us both rocking to and fro to the sound and feel of squelch and rumblings as the candle's flame inevitably scorches the creature's innards. I don't know how long we've got, could be days, hours, minutes. I have no way of telling.

I'm the junior here, alongside my boss who is the main climate reporter for ... no, I dare not mention the platform we both work for. At least not until I get out of here and see what my chances are of keeping my job, and more importantly, of staying alive.

Who will believe us? nature and undersea climate reporters, inside the belly of a whale. Do you believe me?

There were rows of sharp teeth all around us in the enormous mouth as we slithered down here. Now there are mighty bubbles and glutinous stinking matter all around us. I'm balancing the notebook on my knee as I write, my feet submerged in, I don't know how to describe it, a half digested fleshy glue-like substance. I'm being told what to write by my boss who is also squelching around in this cavernous belly, holding the candle aloft to try and beat the shadows and light the way from eye to pen to book.