

Leviathan

Xavier Turley

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Waves crashed into the barnacle infested hull. The boards of the old ship creaked under the mop, as it swished across the deck. Jason looked up from his mop at the blazing midday sun. It had been four days since they left his history excursion. Captain forecast they'd arrive home by sundown. He couldn't wait to get back home. The distant waves glistened against the sunlight untouched by the shadow cast by the ship. The trip had actually been blander than he'd expected, so much so that he missed his job as a clerk at burger shack. At least there he got to meet new people.

'She's close lads, I can feel it,' Captain announced.

Everyone still thinks I'm crazy for having captain take me back home on his goose chase but it's a lot cheaper than flying. Everyone also thinks Captain's off his rocker for believing in a sea monster the size of a Rocketship. At least that's how he puts it. But I can't really say much since I don't believe him either, but he's my friend.

'She's here lads drop the anchor our destiny awaits.'

Destiny—I hate that word it implies that everything is already decided and that there's nothing you can do to change it. The idea that everything is predetermined terrifies him. The sound of the anchor hitting the water brings him back to reality. 'Great just what I need,' he mumbled as he watched the anchor chain be swallowed by the dark sea.

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What feels like hours pass. Jason looks up once more. The sun has moved. 'Ok that's enough I need to get home.' He heads towards the back of the ship to see captain watching waiting for prominent. The blue overcoat stained with grease and mud. Captain had the face of a stereotypical pirate, the stoic chin his gruff expression and the stubble on his chin. Aside from that captain had one defining feature three horizontal slash marks stretching across his eyes.

'Uh Captain.'

'Jason my boy, isn't it exiting you'll finally get to see her in all her glory?'

'About that Captain.'

'Hmm...'

'I was hoping to get home before sundown.'

‘Oh, I completely forgot we were taking you home. I’m so sorry Jason.’

Captain looked up at the sun

‘We better get old Linda moving then shall we pull the anchor.’

‘But captain, we know she’s here.’ Calls drake

‘Drake, you forget we have to get Jason here back by sundown or his parents will be up our...’

‘Fine,’ Drake spat as he started to reel in the anchor.

Captain turned to look at Jason.

‘Alright Jason, we should arrive by nightfall. We’ll be late, but it’s better late than never aye.’

‘Thanks captain, I know how much this—thing means to you.’

‘Aye, but you need to get home. Now go clean the deck, you ain’t getting this ride for free.’

‘Aye aye, Captain.’

I remember that later, when I walked down the stairs, I stopped to look out at the sea that had entranced Captain and I thought I understood why he loved it. The beauty, the silence, the uneasy sense of peace. Turns out I was close to understanding but missed one crucial detail. The swaying of the mop was...satisfying. It could have been something about the repetition or the way the threads would split but something about it was hypnotic. I didn’t even hear the waves roaring. The sound of wood scraping against scales. Or notice the way the ship rocked. Not even Captain’s warning got through to me. But the thunderous roar and the open sea being ripped open got my attention.

It rose from the sea below to the sky above like a rocket lifting up into space. Its neck stretched outward to the stars. Its scales dark as the sea in which it lived. The creature curved towards the ship intently as if it had found its target. As it leaped out of the waters and over the ship its gleaming underbelly was revealed. Its magnificent dark scales shimmering in the sun. Its tail trailing behind it. The world seemed to quake. He felt as though the world around him had collapsed. Then he felt a blunt pain in the back of his head and all he could see now was the dark abyss.

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As everything started to come into focus, Jason realised he was in the ship’s medical quarters. *Was that a dream. No. No it couldn’t have been.*

‘Jason, you’re awake.’

‘Captain. Why am I here what happened I—’

‘Calm down, laddie. I’ll explain everything.’

‘Please do.’

‘The anchor alerted her leading to her becoming aggravated by the disturbance in her home.’

‘So, she attacked the ship?’

‘At first, yes she did’

‘What do you mean at first?’

‘Once she recognised Linda the attack ceased.’

‘She’s scared of you?’

‘Not exactly.’

The door started to shake, and Drake entered.

‘Captain, we are almost home.’

‘Thank you, Drake,’

Drake tipped his head and left.

‘Well, I should get back to the deck or those idiots might crash old Linda.’

‘Alright Captain.’

‘I’ll come and get you once we get to shore but for now rest.’

As Captain left, Jason’s mind started to piece together what had happened. The creatures attack. Why it stopped. Its existence. All of those details led back to one thing. The concept of destiny.

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‘So how was the trip?’

Jason looked up from his steak to his mother.

‘Which part?’

‘The excursion—you haven’t really talked about it since you got home.’

‘It was pretty boring to be honest.’ He continued eating.

‘Did you learn much?’

‘Not really, just more of the same.’

His father took a shot next. ‘Did you meet any new friends on the trip?’

‘No, most of the randoms kept to themselves and as you know I’m branded as a “weirdo”, so I didn’t really meet anyone new.’

‘Right. Now did you even try interacting or did you just stand there.’

‘Jerry...’

‘Yes Dad. I did but they didn’t want to talk.’

‘Now were they kids your age or strangers you saw on the street?’

‘Jerry, that’s enough’

Jason looked at his parents.

‘You’re trying to avoid it aren’t you?’

‘Avoid what Jason?’ His mother reached.

‘What I told you when I got home.’

‘Jason don’t bring this up again.’

‘Why not, is it disgraceful?’

His mother interjects. ‘Jason that’s not what your father is trying to say.’

‘It sure seems like it.’

‘Well, how do you expect me to react. My son comes home from a history excursion and starts telling everyone about how the Loch Ness monster is real.’

‘Leviathan Dad, and I would think that my mental health would be more important than your social image.’

‘What are you talking about?’

‘Ever since I said it you’ve been treating me like I’m crazy.’

‘Because it IS crazy Jason.’

In that moment my head burned with anger but all I did was get up and walk out the front door. My parents yelled at me to get back to my seat, but they didn’t stop me. They knew exactly where I was going.

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The smell of the sea always felt overwhelming when I visited the docks. The creak of the boards always sent a tingle down my spine, but I could never tell if it was out of fear or something else entirely. Captain was sitting on his porch in an antique rocking chair, the only place where his age showed. He greeted me as if he knew I would be there.

I sat down on the chair opposite him and asked, ‘Why does no-one believe me?’

‘Same reason you didn’t believe me’

‘It was that obvious?’

‘It was apparent. That’s why I really agreed to take you because I hoped that you would understand.’

‘To be honest, I’m not sure I do.’

We sat in silence for what felt like decades when I felt inclined to ask Captain something that I hadn’t thought too much about.

‘When I asked why the leviathan stopped attacking us you said it was because it recognised your ship.’

‘Aye.’

‘But when I asked if it was afraid, you implied that it was something else.’

‘Yes. Yes, I did’

‘What was it then?’

‘Respect. You see Jason, my crew don’t hunt her to prove anything or for the thrill of it—we hunt her to protect her.’

‘What?’

‘Once when I was young and foolish, I hunted those beasts day and night and brought swarms of people to do so. Many were lost in that crusade. Only two ships remained, The Georgina and Linda. The hunters and the trackers. When we finally caught her, I didn’t feel glory or valour, but sorrow. And when the beast’s roar was silenced, her body fell still on the Georgina. Turns out she wasn’t built to handle the weight of a dead leviathan. The men that piloted that vessel drowned that day and the leviathan’s body sunk to the depths below. For a long time I believed we had killed the last. When one day we saw a small creature the size of a seal and since that day we have been keeping her safe.’

‘That’s why you go out and find her and why you preach like a madman every day—to keep others away.’

‘Correct.’

‘That’s— insane but also Genius.’

‘You could join us you know. There are so many more wonders out there to be found and not just in the sea.’

‘I—’

‘Can’t you have school and a job? It would only be at most once a month for you.’

Jason’s posture changed, he closed off again knowing where Captain was going.

Captain

stood and put his hand on Jason’s Shoulder

‘Jason my boy it’s your—’

‘Don’t say what I think you’re going to say.’

‘Choice—’

That was two weeks ago.

And the sea air couldn’t be any better.