

## Chapter One

**S**amuel always favored a crescent moon over one that was full. It wasn't that

the full moon didn't possess such beauty as that of a crescent, it was more how enticing it was to him, that he could crush it, with just his thumb and index fingers.

That was why, as he sat on the cliffs above the moon-kissed waters, he saw only a world of such splendor that it was unrealistic to him, how he had never once noticed it before. Yet at the same time, he had noticed it, and there wasn't a day in his life when he hadn't. To live on the seaside, to him, was a gift that few received, and he saw it as an opportunity.

Humans had by this point, after all, explored more beyond the moon, and of space than they had the oceans that the moon guided. He wanted to be the first to see what was really held below ages of water, gallons of pressure that could crush someone, below its weight alone.

The sea had been of interest to him, in fact, since the waves were the only thing he could dream to play in. But after his parents had so dutifully passed him into work, he had been given the task none wanted to take. Yet it had always been a dream for him.

"You are to sail the seas beyond this world, and unlock the key to the missing sailors," They had told him. "For our men have been lost to some creature, or perhaps even an army below the waves themselves. You just go seek them, for I fear if no one does, it shall be the end of our navy."

He had grown up the day they told him that, in a way, the war had never aged him. So he sat on the cliff, a grown man, yet not an ounce of him felt older than it had when he had only

been a boy. He still felt the same giddiness, only this time, he was a scientist of the sea. He had studied the water long enough that he only now could dream of what else he did not know.

"Find it, and capture it. Have it be killed, or study what it is, for what can lose a whole ship of men, must surely be a weapon of war."

He let out a low resounding breath, as the words they had sent him with, sunk down into the bottom of his chest. He was now not a scientist, no, he was a man to find something, and a man to risk his life, with only the means to discover what could kill.

That had been why, after all, they had picked him. They wouldn't have if they hadn't known he was ready for it. The moon seemed to tell him he was ready as well, since the glint of light, that it so tainted the air with, was that of a moon that wanted.

Even the way the waves below him, crashed upwards into the cliffside, was a way to tell him what he could and couldn't do. "Find them, and save us all," They had said. "Free our waters from the deadly grip of what hides below our waves."

The water, as he knew it now, would be free. Not in a day, no, but perhaps a month or a year, he knew he could succeed. He was a man produced for success and a man who had been gifted, for a reason.

He was the tall, structurally built man, with hair that reflected the night sky and eyes of the ocean, he was the one.

"Sam, do you want to tell me why you sit on the cliffs alone again?" A voice said from behind him.

He knew that voice well, since it was the redhead girl, with the sun-kissed skin. Who had always made herself prominent in the oceans of his world.

"I'm sitting here alone because tomorrow I might be dead." He said, mostly to the night air.

The redhead, Anna, came to sit beside him. She pulled her knees so that they touched her chest, and wrapping her arms around them, looked up at the same moon he saw. The same one the world saw, in fact.

"I don't think you'll die tomorrow."

"No, I might not, but tomorrow, if you think, I will sail out across the waves on a ship, that will bind me off onto a trip, where I might never return from. If there is a weapon of war below the sea, it might take me, after all."

Samuel looked dimly up at the sky. He tipped his head, just enough, so the display of the stars, which he had once charted in the attic of his house; could touch every inside of his pupil.

"It could take you, but what if you take it?"

"It's unlikely something to kill a whole ship from the navy wouldn't also kill me. But with my extent of training, I would hope I could survive, just enough to kill it myself."

She looked at him after he said that, she looked through the extent of the dark, through even the bewilderment that she felt. "You wouldn't kill it." She said.

He looked back at her, and in that moment, he knew that she might have hated him for what he was, for what he even had yet to become. "I might, and though I hate it, would you rather I die?"

The night had a way to cast a blanket on the world. It might have been the look of it, or even what it could do. But that day, in that second of a minute, the sky put a blanket over both of them. And somewhere, deep below the waves, a whisper came. The whisper of the sea, that called Samuel towards it.

So he looked towards the waves instead, and she did as well. "I wouldn't rather you die at all, but what if you kill the wrong thing? What happens to mistakes?"

"Mistakes cannot be made, I've studied the oceans for more than you have been alive, now go home, go home, Anna. To your family and your warm bed, say goodbye to Mrs Peterson for me, but go away from this vast ocean, which is more a mystery than space. It's not a world for you to mess with."

"Perhaps not, but then neither is it one for you."

She left him then, along with the cliffs, moon, and ocean. She left him all alone, and he was not afraid. No. He was ready for the life he had brought himself to. So he sat on the cliffs and waited until he had to walk down to the harbor. By the time he reached it, the morning sun had broken over the waves, and the ship he might never return from sat high in the water.

\*\*\*\*\*

Samuel had no family, so as he approached the ship, he didn't even feel fear. For him, a man without a wife and no children, it was easy to walk away. The ship was actually more a thing of safety and he knew that when he was a boy, this had been all he had ever wanted. The shipboards were aged and covered with a thin layer of dust that brushed below the sole of his shoe, as he walked on them. The navy members, all in command as he was, and his fellow divers of the sea, marched along the ship deck.

Samuel had entered the navy before he had time to think of what he really wanted to do, and though the science of the sea had become his priority, it didn't mean the wars he had fought in the past, still did not come up in his character.

He saluted everyone, and they saluted back to him. And when he came to the end of his march, and the back of the ship deck, he felt young again. He wasn't old, but he wasn't the young man who had first entered the life of the sea.

"Samuel Perella, Ah my young fellow man of the sea! What takes you to these waters at such an age again. I would think your priority would be starting a family, no?" The belting voice, loud and clear, said behind him.

Samuel had come to the end of the ship, with no idea of where he was meant to stand, but when the man who had once been his commander, the man who still commanded the ship, approached him, he knew where he stood. He was an equal to Denver Trea.

"My priorities still live with the sea," Samuel said.

"The sea? The sea has got nothing a family couldn't give you. I'm just saying, I want you to be happy."

"And can the sea not make me happy? Do you not want your ship protected from this weapon of war below the waves?"

Denver Trea put an arm around Samuel, and he walked him down the pathway of the ship. The boards weren't any less dust-covered, even where the water should have touched the sides of the ship. It was enough to make Samuel think that the ship hadn't been used in years.

He had been one of the last, in the navy, to venture out, without enough protection gear to fight a war. That had been back before the days of this war weapon, back before they suspected a killer under the sea, the whispers that called with fragile longing.

"Oh Samuel I would want protection, but first you have to find it. Imagine this situation, what if the killer below the waves, is a siren, all beautiful with a haunting voice, to kill young sailors," He said.

"But I am not a young sailor."

"Yes, you are, look at yourself. If you cannot be called young, then I must be older than the moon."

Denver Trea patted him on the shoulders and gave him a push forward. Samuel took those steps and turned so he could face his former captain again. "We are both aged men. I think the sea ages people."

"That it does Samuel, that it does." Said Denver, as he turned away to the rows of young sailors like Samuel had once been. Men who longed to see the ocean, but had yet to find their true meaning along with the others in the world.

The divers, fellow scientists like Samuel, lined up where he stood. "Can you believe by tonight that we will be below the waves," They said to him.

He looked at them, he looked at them because he didn't want to see into his past when he would much rather look his future in the eyes instead. "Do you think we will find it?"

"Find what." The closest one to him said.

"The weapon of war."

"Of course, and it will be ours before you know it," He said.

But to Samuel, it was a lie. He knew it was a lie since he had heard many lies before. If it wasn't a lie, then he wouldn't have known it to be one. He didn't say anything to the diver, he kept the fact that it was a lie to himself, but he knew it. To him, he wasn't even sure it would be a weapon of war below the waves.

Denver turned to them all, and it took Samuel's attention right up. He looked at the commander, of his past and now his present. "Divers and scientists of the water, I am your commander and captain, Denver Trea. You must answer to me. If you cannot find the weapon of war... if you cannot..."

But his words soon became obsolete. They meant nothing to Samuel, who had already heard them, time after time. "Kill it, or capture it, do you understand?" They had told him. "We don't want any funny business from you. If we do not receive it, dead or alive, you will follow its fate at hand."

That had been months ago to where he was now, in a dark room at gunpoint. He had signed up for it. He had one job, and if he couldn't do it, he would be dead. Dead within the minute, because he had nothing. He had given his life to his work, in more ways than one. Denver Trea said, "Do you all understand?"

His voice came back to Samuel, and it left him with no idea of how long it had been since he had heard it. It could have been minutes or even an hour of yelling, but he wouldn't have known. "Yes sir," They all said.

"Yes, sir" The promise words to someone higher, someone who could take your life, because to them, it meant nothing.

Yet Denver Trea was Samuel's equal, Samuel too was in charge, just as he was. "Samuel, my friend, do you wish to tell these under you, anything more?" Denver asked.

"Only to not mess this up," He had said. To a thing his life depended on, he had said so little. Even if the divers under him messed it up, then he would also pay the price. His life was theirs to control, even if they were under him. He had no charge with anyone's life, which gave him a lack of dignity.

"Well then, you heard the man, don't mess it up, understood?" Denver Trea said.

"Yes sir, thank you, sir," The divers all said.

Samuel stepped apart from them, so he was next to his equal, the man he had once been below. "Denver, at what time will we dive out?"

"Come before morning, I will send you all. But before that, well the crew takes care of things, come with me, to the captain's lounge, I wish to invite you to dinner." He said.

*Dinner.* It was an honor Samuel had taken before and would come to take many times again. He was an equal now, they had given him the same talk Denver had received, taken the same control.

"You are an equal now, the highest they come, but to us, you are below, to us your life is meaningless. We can find another one like you, in any of the navy boys. You mean nothing,"

They had said. And he knew Denver had been told the same thing. All of them were.

There was in fact, not a moment, where they weren't told the same thing. Not when they reached the height of Samuel and Denver. "Samuel, did you not hear me?" Denver asked.

"No, I did. The waves in the ocean, play with my mind. But to dinner with you, I will go."

So they did go. They left the ship in under the charge of the navy men, the higher of the navy men, for the ranks did not make them equal.

The lounge was not bad, nor was it good, as Samuel found out. It was a lounge that he now had a key to, one that his former self would have envied. But now that he had grown, and purchased things with money he so scarcely had, he felt that it wasn't the same luxury it had seemed before.

"So tell me, Samuel, now that you are a high rank, have they talked to you?"

"Who?" Samuel asked like he didn't know.

"So they have then, I'll leave that for your mind to deal with, but they never follow through with what they say. You seem to live in such fear when you have no need to."

The exchange of words pressed down on the inside of Samuel's ears, and Denver's cool voice made both his mind and soul tickle, just a bit. He looked at Denver, for far too long, then looked away.

"The sirens you talked of, do you think you can hear them?" Samuel asked. "Like a whisper in the sea?"

"No, why do you ask?"

"No reason really, I just wondered." And that was all either of them said, for the rest of the dinner, which was more of a breakfast since the morning had yet to go anywhere. But in a world for a captain, there was no difference between morning and night, they were both just the same.

\*\*\*\*

So when the night really did come, Samuel had to be the one to remind Denver that it was time for his crew to leave under the water. "But you haven't had breakfast yet," He said.

"Eating is very important."

"But it can wait. I am grateful for the invitation, but my crew must leave. This weapon of war might attack your ship, and the sooner we see to it, the better," Samuel replied.

His set of ten divers, the first group to leave, all nodded. Samuel would go with all three groups, each time. He was the head diver, the leader. And even below his heavy gear, he felt he was in command.

"Well, you should have told me sooner, off with you all, you are no longer needed if this is to be the case," He said. And he brushed them off with his hand.

"Thank you, commander... I mean, Denver." Samuel said.

"Not a problem, you are as high as me, my permission is not something you need. Go save our ship, with that science-filled brain of yours."

"Of course, come, follow behind me, my fellow men of the sea," Samuel said. He spoke with his core, to enrich the command in his voice. He hadn't thought it would work at all, but it seemed to have an effect on them since they followed behind him.

He marched down the ship deck, one foot, then the next. The little boat, on the side of their ship, waited for them. By orders, the navy boys had prepared it, and two of them waited next to it. They looked at the divers as they came, like astronauts approaching the space shuttle, but for them, more men had gone to space, than under the waves.

Space was a nice idea, and Samuel glanced to the even more so, silver of a moon, which winked at him, as a satellite passed across it. He looked away from it before it distracted him, and he looked to the boat instead.

"Sir, we will board all of you into this and lower it," said the sergeant.

"Of course you will, divers, board into the boat, and prepare yourself, for after tonight, we will be victorious in the ways of the sea."

His men all seemed to agree with him, since the cheers of both excitement and the sound of held-back fear, brought them all forward towards the boat.

The ten divers boarded first, and Samuel went last. He adjusted his diving gear, as soon as he found his way in. The boat was lowered down towards the waves, by the two navy men, and the lower it went, the closer it came, to the water that offered itself up as a mystery.

Anna had been drawn to the water as well, Samuel knew that. And he wondered to himself if he would ever see her again. She was just the redhead girl who bounced from person to person, but he might have found himself dead within the next day, so he was left to wonder what she might mean to him in the time to follow.

The boat touched the waves, and he felt swallowed by them in comparison to the ship so close to them. The ship that somehow, at the end of the dive, they had to make their way back to.

It was all or nothing from there. The divers all grabbed the oars and they started to row, each push brought them farther away, but they still moved, and they went. Farther out, so they could be at a safe place, to touch down into the way of the water.

"Sir, how far must we take it?" One of the divers asked after a minute.

"Not too far," Samuel replied, "But far enough."

Far enough turned out to be much farther than he thought, but they stopped the boat once they had found their way there, and they threw down the Anker to keep it still.

The water was oddly relaxed, for something that was deep within the middle of the sea. Samuel focused on himself, rather than the other divers. He pulled up the wet suit, part by part, fitted on his dry suit, and placed the scuba tank of oxygen in his mouth.

It was enough air to let him breathe for anywhere between four hours and two, depending on how well he did with conserving his air. The divers next to him had the same load, and they fixed themselves up as they prepared to dive into the water.

Everything had to be adjusted just so, but once it was, they were ready. All of them were ready to go down into the water. They placed themselves in rows on the side of the boat, with their legs hooked over, so they could throw themselves back into the waves.

Samuel fixed his oxygen, one last time, so it was completely in place. Then, he pushed backward off the boat, with the rest of the divers.

It was a feeling that was very familiar to him, as the water wrapped down and over his body. It wasn't necessarily cold, but it still stung around the layers of protective gear, and around to light the harpoon, strapped around his waist.

His lungs only had the oxygen tank to rely on, and they took advantage of it, as he dipped down, deeper below the waves.

The waves that covered the star-lit sky, complete from his view. And since it was night, the light attached to his suit turned itself on right away, so he could see. The water was clouded, but the light helped him to look past it, and the little radio device in his ear put the sounds from the other divers into a range where he could understand them.

"We have submerged under the water, track your location and stay within a mile's ratios, so the ship can track us back," He said, into the small earpiece.

The sounds he got in response were mostly fizzled by the sounds the waves and water created, as they pressed down over the earpieces. "Yes sir," Was the most he could make from it.

He had to take that as a sign that they had heard him, but he knew, from his own training experiences, that they likely had not. Still, it was standard to do as he had said, so he relied on that, and only that, as a fact to keep him in tune with the rest of the world.

He took that time, then in that moment, to enjoy what he saw. He had never once been in waters so far out, never once. It wasn't anything like he had once imagined.

Even in the dark, he could still see the immense forests of green kelp that trailed around and touched up towards the surface of the water, and past that, as he started to swim, he could see the fish. They moved together in schools, creating shapes, and he watched as they passed him.

His eyes moved from sight to sight, as he struggled to take it all in. The water had a way that the land didn't. And it was very prominent to him, at that moment, that even the world had a way, that even the earth had a way, and it made it so beyond beautiful that he almost couldn't believe it.

"Sir, what are we looking for?" A voice said, commanding in his ear. That was one of his divers, someone who worked for him. Yet they spoke as if he worked for them.

"Anything at all that should look or seem different, anything that draws your eyes in a way that you don't understand. If you need help, do not fear to call for it," He said.

Samuel himself didn't know who would help if he were to be in trouble, but he ignored the fear that lurked in his mind, as a school of fish braced around him. He reached his hand out, and his fingers came only an inch away from touching the sea-smoothed scales of the fish.

They glinted with colors of murky reds and greens, colors that would be processed and shined as soon as the fish were caught and taken into the market. Not that anyone ate a lot of fish, not since the navy members had started to vanish.

He swam even more forward, and he watched as the water passed over his fingers, bit by bit, all of it, past the fish, even the kelp itself tried to keep him contained. But there was really nothing that could hold him back, not the way it wanted to. So he passed through the kelp, and away.

The fish that clouded around him as he broke through the mess of green were the same type of fish that he had once seen when he looked over the side of a ship, years ago. "They are colored reef fish," Denver had told him. That had been the first time Denver had spoken directly to Samuel, and little by little, perhaps built on those very words, they had become friends.

Samuel swam even past those, as the water shifted below him. He moved his fingers through it, he felt what it felt and was what it was. Water held life, maybe even memory, though not the memory people wanted it to hold. Ages of rain. At school, he had been taught that water would fall there and wait years before it got to see the sky and become rain again.

The ocean always made him think of water, waiting its turn to see the sky. Yet humans saw the sky, and waited far too long to see the waves of the water, and what was below them.

He reached his hand up to turn the light on the side of his suit to the highest and brightest it would reach. "Sir, we haven't found anything, should we keep going?" One of the divers voices hummed in his ear.

"Yes," Samuel said, "We want to clear the area."

And like he was captivated, he swam only farther. A little tone beeped in his ear, which either meant he or someone else had passed the one-mile mark, but he paid no attention to it. The kelp seemed to call him forward, so he swam towards it and basically followed the colored reef fish. They seemed to nearly lead the way for him since where they went, he went to.

One of them turned and bent its little tail backwards, so it looked right at him, with its beaded eyes. It stared for a bit, then it turned and swam a little faster. Samuel stopped swimming, and the school of fish did as well, then Samuel started, and the fish started to swim again.

He tried it a few more times, and the fish seemed to follow his movement. He reached his hand up and pressed the little button on the side of his face. "I've found something strange," He said. "I can't really say what it is, or what it means, but the fish move as I do."

He kicked on the button a few more times, and he listened. When nothing came from the other divers on his team, he realized that he must have swam out of the safety line. That somehow he must have passed the mile radius.

That did not at all make sense to him. He should not have passed the mile, since he had not swam long enough. The water seemed to obey this belief, yet to his dismay, it made no sense at all. His light even seemed brighter than it should, and as he looked at his tracker, he saw nothing. Not a map, or a mark. His tracker had gone blank, from end to end, not a part of it lit up.

"I'm lost," He said, into his earpiece, which recorded his voice, for later discovery. "I've swum myself out of bounds, yet that does not make sense to me, I should not have swum myself out of bounds, yet I did."

He looked down at the tracking map, and again, saw nothing. It had gone blank, and where the little dot marking his location should have been, there was nothing. He tapped it a few times, but nothing happened.

"I've truly lost myself," He said again. He looked around, the fish that followed him surrounding and blocking his view, further down the waves of the water. It was too dark to be any good, too dark.

The fish blew bubbles at him, and he looked at them again. "What can you tell me when you've lost me?" He said.

They blew more bubbles, which lapped around him and inched up to his face. He tried to catch them, and ended with just a few of them, landing on the tips of his fingers before they turned to water again.

Then everything went dark. He could no longer see the fish and the water. He looked all around himself, from side to side, nothing. He tapped his light, but it had gone out. The only thing he could see was the smallest bit of light, down in the corner of his vision. It was very far away, and very hard for him to make out entirely, but it was there. He rotated his arms in the waves, and the light grew larger until he faced it.

It sparkled at him; it bounced along the waves, moving up and down, back and forth. He moved even closer to it, but then, only then, did he realize how far away it was. It was too far away for him to get to, but it was there.

Along with something else. It moved through the water. Slow at first, then fast. He looked it in the eyes, as he saw something he didn't want to believe. He might have been right, one dive, his first, might have just been his last.