

Leah was less prepared. She hadn't brought a book or a game or even her phone up on deck with her, which she now realised was an oversight. Returning to the cabin seemed perilous right now, just when she was starting to feel better, but there was nothing else for it. She stood up and took a couple of steps forward. A sudden lurch of the boat sent her flying forwards, grappling for the handrail in a clumsy but somehow successful attempt to stay upright. Hopefully no one had noticed.

She was about to admit defeat and go back to her chair when something caught her eye. She stared intently over the handrail into the sea. It had only been for a split second, but she was sure she had seen something in the water. Had she imagined it? She was just about to turn away when she saw it again. A hand burst out of the water, followed by an arm. A person in the water alongside the boat. She opened her mouth to shout "Man overboard!", which she'd seen people do on TV when someone fell out of a boat. Then the words died in her throat.

The arm was green.

She blinked, rubbed her eyes and looked again. It was definitely green, covered in scales that glistened in the water, reflecting the sunlight. The shoulder was green, and the neck, and the head on top of it. Through the scales, two penetrating yellow eyes glinted, and long, tangled hair trailed behind the head like seaweed. She was sure the creature had met her gaze for a moment before it disappeared again under the water.

Leah clutched the handrail tightly. She stared into the water, searching for anything that would tell her that what she had seen was true. She looked for another flash of emerald scales, or a shadow beneath the surface of the water. But the boat was moving too quickly, churning the water as it ploughed through the waves. She shook her head, ashamed of her foolishness. Unless...

The head emerged from the water for a second time. Leah watched, wide-eyed. The creature looked at her again, opening its mouth to reveal two rows of grey fangs. She wasn't sure whether it was a smile or a snarl. As unsettling as it was, she couldn't tear her eyes away. Suddenly, the creature leapt high above the surface, and then dived speedily back into the water. Before it vanished completely, Leah caught a glimpse of a long, smooth tail, rippling with muscles, ending in two pointed fins. The tail flapped, sending water cascading through the air, before slipping into the depths.

"Nan!" Leah turned to her hurriedly.
"Did you see that?"

But her nan's eyes had been glued to her book the entire time. "What is it, Leah?" her nan asked without looking up.

"There was something in the water. There was a..." Leah felt ridiculous saying it. It couldn't be. She forced the words out.
"A monster."

Her nan's hand froze, midway through turning a page. "A what?" She peered over her glasses at Leah, her brow furrowed, hat flapping in the breeze. "A monster? You must be feeling seasick again, pet. On second thoughts, maybe you should go back to the cabin and have a rest."

"Okay," Leah said uncertainly, glancing again over the handrail into the swirling water below, expecting to see a pointed fin or a scaly arm break through. But there was nothing.



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