

2. THE LOCH AND THE MONSTER

"No, Darling, she means nothing to me, less than nothing. I hate her. It's only you Emily, I promise... What? Divorce her? That's impossible... Why? Because of the money, the house, the cars... No, Emily, of course you're more important than them, but... No! No, listen, don't go, listen to me, when I return to London, everything is going to be different... I have a plan, Darling... Darling, I have a plan... Emily?" But there is no answer, and Oliver Stern puts his mobile back into his coat pocket and looks around.

There is no one near to him to hear. He is alone on the jetty¹, apart from the boat attendant² at his chair twenty metres away, his feet on a boat and a cigarette in his mouth. And he cannot hear from there, Oliver is sure. But just to be safe he decides not to phone Emily again.

Perhaps the less she knows, the better.

A plan. Yes, he has a plan, a good plan, and a simple plan.

He looks out across the horrible, grey loch³. The sun is almost down behind the green, snowy mountains now, and it is colder than before. "What sort of person wants to have a holiday in this remote⁴, ugly part of the world?"

Then he hears the sound of his wife's laughter⁵ from the terrace bar of the hotel, and he shakes his head⁶.

"The sort of person like my monster of a wife."

1 jetty - Pier
2 attendant - Wärter
3 loch (Schottisch) - See
4 remote - abgelegen
5 laughter - Gelächter
6 to shake one's head - den Kopf schütteln

He tries to picture Emily: her eyes are so loving, her laugh so light and pretty. But when his wife laughs, she sounds like a donkey¹.

He looks at the loch again, at the jetty and the small boats waiting there for the tourists in the hotel. And he asks himself once more if he can do it.

"Ah ha ha ha ha ha ha ha!" she brays² again.

And he knows that he can.

It is ten-to-six now; the boats stop going out at six. And the sun is almost gone.

She needs to come now, he knows, but he cannot shout³ for her. No, it is her idea to go on a boat. Everyone in the bar knows she wants to go. I just need to wait for her like a good husband, he thinks.

The type of husband who is happy to go out on the huge, horrible loch, in the dark, with his monster of a wife.

But can she still swim? He is not sure. He thinks that with her clothes and her coat on she will be too heavy and that the cold grey water of the loch will pull her down. But is that enough⁴?

He looks at the bag by his feet. The romantic picnic filled with all the food his wife loves. And the bottle of champagne that he knows she cannot resist.

Oliver smiles. It is a heavy bag. All he has to do is make her hold it for a second. Perhaps, quickly wrap⁵ the straps⁶ around her hands. Then...

No more monster.

But it is nearly six now.

The attendant is about to finish for the night.

1 donkey - Esel
2 to bray - wiehern, kreischen
3 to shout - rufen
4 enough - genug
5 to wrap - wickeln
6 strap - Riemen



"Excuse me," Oliver shouts with a smile. He pulls his cigarette packet from his pocket and walks over. "Sorry to **bother**¹ you, but do you have a lighter?"

The attendant has a hard face and fierce red hair. He looks at Oliver for a moment, nods, pulls his lighter from his pocket and offers it.

"Look," continues Oliver, "my wife wants to take a boat out. She's going to be here in a second."

The man looks at the sky.

"A boat, man, we want a boat."

"**I dinna ken about that. Better the morra.**²"

The idiot does not speak English, Oliver thinks. **Bloody**³ country. "I'm sorry, I don't understand. I'm from England."

The man laughs, stands up and says nothing.

Oliver tries to stay calm, but he knows there is too little time. "Don't you speak English? My wife wants to go out now. **She's only going to be one minute**⁴!" he shouts, and the attendant stops and gives him a long, hard look with his cold, blue eyes.

"Oliver! Here I am!" a loud, cheerful voice says. And the two men turn to see Mrs Sylvia Stern. She smiles that stupid, cow-like smile at them, and Oliver sees the idiot attendant smile back. She is dressed in a horrible **tartan**⁵ skirt and woollen jumper. And in her arms she has the heavy wax coat. Good, Oliver thinks.

"Darling," he says, with a smile, "this good man wants to close. I think we must wait until tomorrow now."

"Oh no, surely not?" She turns to the man and smiles again. "Can't we just go out for a few minutes, please? Just to enjoy the sunset?"

1 to bother - stören

2 I dinna ken about that. Better the morra. (Schottisch) - Ich weiß nicht. Lieber morgen.

3 bloody (AUS, BE) - verdammt

4 She's only going to be one minute. - Sie ist gleich da.

5 tartan - schottengemustert

And the attendant ignores Oliver but returns her smile. "Ay, well, just for 10 minutes then."

"Oh thank you!" Sylvia says, and the attendant helps them into the small rowing boat and passes Oliver the picnic bag. He then gives him another long, hard look, but Oliver does not care.

"Bloody idiot," he says to Sylvia as they slowly move away from the jetty onto the dark water. "I don't understand a thing he says."

But Sylvia does not **seem**¹ to hear and **instead**² looks out at the dark loch.

For five minutes Oliver **rows**³, and soon the jetty and the hotel look much smaller, while the attendant is almost impossible to see in the half-light of the new evening.

And so this is it.

Oliver thinks about loving, ironic Emily again. Then he looks at his monster of a wife.

Oh yes, this has to be it. No more listening to that awful laugh, no more looking at her boring face. And, perhaps more importantly, no more sharing his bank account with her.

"Darling?" he says. "Shall we have a little drink?"

"Oh yes, that would be very nice!" She smiles, but in the half-light Oliver thinks he sees something strange in her expression.

"Can you pass me over the bag? Then you can come and sit here next to me," he says as casually as he can.

"Of course," Sylvia says, and she stands up, which makes the boat **rock**⁴. Oliver thinks that this is going to be very easy indeed. Just one **push**⁵, and then he can shout for the attendant and pretend to help but really just watch the monster go down into the loch.

Just one look back at the jetty to be sure no one can see, he thinks, and he turns his head.

And then it happens.

1 to seem - scheinen

2 instead - stattdessen

3 to row - rudern

4 to rock - schaukeln

5 push - Stoß, Schubs



- Pain explodes at the back of his head, and his eyes go dark. For a second he does not know where he is. Then he feels hands on him, pushing him and moving him. As he tries to say something, he sees the broken champagne bottle at his feet. Then he falls from the boat, and the ice-cold water takes the words and the air from his mouth.

For a moment he goes down, but then he kicks his legs, and he comes to the surface and looks up at Sylvia in the boat. She has an **oar**¹ in her hands, and she is **reaching it out**² to him.

"Yes, closer! Help me!" he shouts, and it is then that he sees the strange expression on her face again. "Sylvia, darling?"

"Don't you dare call me that," she says in a tone as cold as the water. "You're a cheating, lying, horrible monster of a man. You can call that stupid girl of yours 'Darling,' but not me. Never again Oliver Stern, never again."

And then the oar hits him on the head, and he cannot think, and he cannot swim, and the water takes him.

For a few moments he **sinks**³ slowly into the great loch, but then, somehow, **miraculously**⁴, he kicks again, and he comes to the surface once more. Sylvia and the boat are gone, and the half-light is complete **darkness**⁵ now. He tries to swim, but his clothes and his coat are too heavy.

The jetty! The attendant! He has to still be there. If he hears me, he can bring a boat out.

"Help me!" he shouts into the darkness. "Help me, for the love of God, help me!"

And on the small jetty on the bank of Loch Ness, the attendant hears, he takes the cigarette from his mouth and smiles. "Sorry, Laddie," he says quietly to the loch. "But I can't understand a word you're saying."

1 oar - Ruder

2 to reach sth. out to sb. - jdm. etw. hinstrecken

3 to sink - versinken

4 miraculously - wie durch ein Wunder

5 darkness - Dunkelheit



→ Loch Ness liegt in den wunderschönen und weit abgelegenen Highlands, dem schottischen Hochland, und ist einer der bekanntesten Seen der Welt. Ob sein legendäres Ungeheuer „Nessi“ wirklich existiert oder nicht, ist nach wie vor nicht bewiesen.

Was im See bewiesenermaßen lebt, sind unter anderem Lachse, Aale, Elritzen und Forellen. Loch Ness ist zu allen Jahreszeiten sehr kalt. Trotzdem haben einige Schwimmer die Herausforderung angenommen und den See der Länge nach durchquert. Der damals 19-Jährige David Morgan, der heute noch den Rekord hält, schaffte 1983 die doppelte Strecke (74 km) in 23 Stunden und 5 Minuten.