

*Matthew and the Mystery  
of the Nordsea Trench*



by John Bonthron

This story is about Admiral Matthew Sabre and Captain Dominic Prime who have been tasked with solving the Mystery of the Nordsea Trench where ships have disappeared in great numbers.

Rumours abound. Some media reports have claimed the Nordsea Trench is the home of Rogue Giant Squids and their evil companions Malevolent Mutant Orcas and it is these maritime pest who have attacked and destroyed the missing ships. Others say the losses are due to underwater volcanoes or icebergs.

Proof is needed if a way to eliminate the problem is to be found.

*The storyline and key images are by Matthew McMillan Bonthron who was 5 years old when he first revealed this story.*

# *Ocean Mission Control*

The ULTRA TOP SECRET organisation called *Ocean Mission Control (OMC)* was housed deep inside the rocky volcanic outcrop known as *Ailsa Craig*, off the west coast of Scotland. The only way in or out was through an underwater channel protected by heavy trititanium steel gates. *OMC's* primary functions were to protect shipping and research the deep oceans of the world to gain a better understanding of its creatures and underwater landscape.

In his hand the young Admiral held the red flash message from the Prime Minister:

**"Admiral Sabre, investigate the recent disappearance of ships traversing the high Arctic Ocean trade route for which you are responsible. It is vital this mystery is solved quickly. The sinking of these ships is disrupting our economy and the loss of life has been dreadful. Action this day, sir, if your please."**

The whole issue had blown up over the last few hours. The newspapers and television pundits were calling this crisis '*The Mystery of the Nordsea Trench*', causing panic with their many unfounded rumours of attacks by sea monsters. The issue was dominating Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter and other social media sites. Some survivors claimed their ships had been attacked by a *Colossal Giant Squid* called *Stinga* who could shred a large container ship or cruise liner to smithereens in seconds. Although no one had any

hard facts, everyone had a theory about what was happening and wanted immediate action to solve the problem.

Admiral Matthew Sabre looked out from of the window of his office. His eyes smiled as they focused on his flagship, a huge supersubmersible. Sabre's pride and joy, "Goliath" had cost billions of pounds to develop and she was a closely guarded secret.

In addition to its many other special features, Goliath was fitted with Chameleon Distortion Technology (CDT). These comprised a matrix of spinning lasers used to create illusions of various kinds, including surrounding Goliath with a cloak of activated plankton which gave the supersubmersible the appearance of invisibility. When deploying CDT to enter 'invisible mode', Goliath also engaged her Super Silent Pulse Drive (SSPD) making her virtually soundless as well as invisible. Despite her huge size, when operating in stealth mode in the dark depths of the ocean, the supersubmersible was almost impossible to detect.

The young Admiral's gaze searched the harbour below him and found what he was looking for. The tiny "Sea Phoenix" was the latest version of the Deep Ocean Rover (DOR) type of submarine, a small nimble vessel under the command of Matthew Sabre's close friend, Captain Dominic Prime, a man he could trust with his life. Sabre made his decision - he would send Dom and his crew to investigate.

When Dominic Prime arrived at his office, together the two young men checked the sea charts to try to pin down the last known locations of the latest ships which had disappeared in the icy waters of the Arctic Circle. These defenceless cargo vessels and cruise liners had been sailing peacefully in

international waters. Many innocent lives had been lost and the cost of ships destroyed had been enormous.

'Dom, from the pattern of these disappearances it's evident we must investigate the Mystery of the Nordsea Trench. As you know, the seabed in this area has not yet been fully charted. Go and see what you can find. We need facts, Dom, not the sort of fantastical rumours going around in newspapers and television programmes. Prepare the Sea Phoenix to sail at once.'

'Aye-Aye, Admiral, at once, sir!' replied Captain Dominic Prime.

'This will be a dangerous mission Dom, with many unknown challenges. You will be operating at the limit of your capabilities. Are you sure your crew of Deep-Sea Guineapigs (DSGs) is fully ready for this deepest dive ever attempted in the history of mankind.'

'Aye-Aye, Admiral, my DSGs are in tip-top condition. I trained them myself, sir.'

Immediately prior to departure, Admiral Sabre spoke through the intercom to Captain Dominic Prime and his crew.

'Men of the Sea Phoenix, be brave and do your duty. Be extra vigilant as there are likely to many hazards near the Nordsea Trench. We even have reports of a Swarm of Rogue Giant Squids and a Pod of Malevolent Mutant Orcas in this area. Some survivors even claim to have seen a Colossal Giant Squid people are calling Stinga. The whole thing sounds like a media fantasy. We need facts, men. Your task is to investigate and report back. As soon as you have solid evidence, sent back information to OMC using our surveillance satellites. Good luck to you!'

On board Sea Phoenix, Captain Dominic Prime's two most important officers were Lieutenant Ruff Cutlass, his second in command and Sub-Lieutenant Tuff Rapier, his Chief Engineer. In preparation for deep diving, Ruff sent the DSGs racing to their sea-going stations to make sure all watertight hatches were securely closed and the Ballast Evacuation Pumps (BEPs) were fully charged. Without functional BEPs the deep-diving vessel would be unable to regain sufficient buoyancy to get back to the surface.

The Sea Phoenix was ready to set out on her mission. Tuff entered the coordinates for the mysterious Nordsea Trench into the Underwater Global Positioning System (UGPS) computer.

'Counting down to flooding the main ballast in *twenty seconds*,' said Captain Prime.

'*Nineteen, eighteen, . . .*

'*Three, Two, **One.***

'*Sound the Klaxon.*

'Submerge for Deep Dive!'

Thirty minutes after leaving the OMC cave, the Sea Phoenix reached her operational depth of 2,000 metres and her top speed of sixty sea miles an hour. The vessel was the size of a minibus, a mere speck in the vastness of the oceans but powerful in her own way. Crammed with scientific instrumentation, the Deep Ocean Rover was essentially a reconnaissance vessel, designed to gather intelligence of a scientific nature. Unarmed, her only defence was her toughness and endurance, designed to withstand up to 5,000 metres of sea pressure and, if necessary, able to remain at sea for up to two years without re-ported to renew her food and fuel supplies.



'Lieutenant Ruff, you have command. I must study what little data we have for the Nordsea Trench area. There is something very odd about how quickly these vessels disappear leaving not even the slightest trace.'

'Aye, Aye, sir. I have the helm,' replied Tuff, buckling himself into the command chair and placing his small front paw on the control joystick.'

## *Discovery*

Continuing his search for information on these lost vessels, Matthew Sabre downloaded the most recent images from the array of OMC's monitoring satellites hovering in geo-stationary orbit high above the world's oceans. At first Matthew could find nothing on the videos but scenes of vast empty oceans occasionally stirred up by storms or tsunamis due to eruptions from underwater volcanoes. The single fact he could be sure of was the seabed of around the southern end of the Nordsea Trench was a highly unstable area. Perhaps the missing vessels had been overwhelmed by a vortex caused by a un underwater methane gas explosion believed to be the cause similar disappearances in the Bermuda Triangle?



By way of confirmation, the reports from the few survivors told of their miraculous escapes, sometimes under bizarre circumstances. One elderly gentleman aboard a cruise liner had been sitting on the toilet when the whole bathroom enclosure had been hurtled several hundred metres through the air before floating off to be found hours later by a passing fishing boat, the man frozen and scared witless, muttering incoherently.

After many hours of viewing blue nothingness often obscured by storm clouds, Sabre at last found what he was looking for, the record of the actual sinking of a container ship. The clip showed her sailing along apparently quite normally loaded with six layers of containers stacked high. Then without even time to send out a distress signal, the huge ship had disappeared, leaving no wreckage on the surface, as if it had been vapourised.

In his mind Matthew suspected the ships had been struck by a pack of underwater icebergs known as growlers, caused by global warming. What he needed was proof.

Working diligently and with great concentration, Matthew eventually found what he was looking for, a segment of video showing the actual disappearance of the ships, at a site directly above the southern end of the Nordsea Trench, its deepest and most volatile zone.

After playing and replaying these satellite recordings in slow-motion, Sabre picked one which seemed odd, unusual. On closer inspection, it showed a huge container ship had been dragged under.



Sabre froze the replay, picked the best frame. Enhanced, it showed Admiral Sabre his first glimpse of tentacles of a Colossal Giant Squid, each tentacle with the girth of *General Sherman*, a giant sequoia tree, one of the largest and oldest trees in the world.

Faced with this hard evidence, Matthew Sabre had to admit the possibility the media stories were true. Perhaps the Nordsea Trench was indeed the lair of *Stinga* and her Swarm of Rogue Giant Squids.

Further enhancement of the entire video sequence revealed a very brief glimpse of Stinga showing she was two hundred times the size of a double-decker bus with super-sharp claws on the ends of her enormous tentacles which she used to rip through the hulls of unsuspecting vessels.

With this further evidence before him Admiral Sabre realised that, tough as she was, the diminutive Sea Phoenix was no match for these creatures.

A shudder of anxiety rippled across Matthew Sabre's face as a question flashed across his mind:

*'Have I sent my friend Dom Prime and his crew to their certain doom?'*

## *The Chase*

Admiral Sabre pressed the button on his throat microphone connecting to the experimental Underwater Pulsed Communications System (UPCS). In theory this system could send coded messages rippling along the ocean floor, reaching as far as the coasts of North and South America.

'DOR Sea Phoenix, you are in great danger. Return to base immediately.'

Unfortunately, this new UPCS technology required sophisticated and bulky apparatus which could not be fitted to the Sea Phoenix. To acknowledge receipt of UPCS signals, protocol required the DOR to release a small comms buoy which would race to the ocean surface and transmit a Message Received and Understood (MRU) signal back to Ailsa Craig via the nearest OMC surveillance satellite.

The message from OMC did not reach its intended recipient. Several hundred miles astern of Sea Phoenix, the UPCS signal was deflected and distorted by a dense cloud of mud and fine stones thrown up by the eruption of a small underwater volcano, a regular occurrence near the Nordsea Trench.

Unaware of his friend's warning, Captain Prime in the Sea Phoenix continued to speed northwards oblivious to the great danger which lay ahead.

Following standard operating procedure, Admiral Sabre waited five minutes then sent a second UPCS message:

'DOR Sea Phoenix, return to base at once. You are in great danger of being attacked by a Swarm of Rogue Giant Squids. This is a Priority One message. Acknowledge without delay.'

After a further five minutes without an MRU signal from the DOR, Admiral Sabre pressed the fluorescent yellow "Goliath Alert" pad on his console and ran to the emergency hatch to gain direct access to the supersubmersible.

Aboard his flagship, Sabre strapped himself into his command chair where he was surrounded by hundreds of control pads, joysticks and stop/start and fire buttons in coded colours. Goliath was fully automated, capable of being driven by one man alone, Admiral Matthew Sabre. Next, he put on his Head Screen Visor (HSV). This top-secret device allowed Sabre to give commands with the flick of an eyeball, the fastest method of controlling his high-speed undersea leviathan. It also provided a display of decision making data and virtual switches which could be activated by winks of his eyes.

Most important among her many secret weapons and hi-tech systems, Goliath carried a flotilla of nimble and immensely fast Self-Directing Torpedoes (SDTs) which could be deployed either alone or in squadrons to hunt down and destroy the underwater enemy.

In addition to her defence role, Goliath was also equipped as a deep ocean recovery equipment with internal docking cavity capable of housing the Sea Phoenix if she became disabled.

More than five hours behind the DOR, Matthew Sabre set Sabre set the auto-navigation coordinates for the southern entry point to the Nordsea Trench. Goliath's forward scanning SONAR displayed its output to Sabre's HSV allowing him to see ahead through the inky blackness. Steering with winks of his eyes, he was able to slalom around loan basking sharks and schools of whales of various species. Clear of inshore waters and at a depth of 2000 metres, the seas cleared, empty of everything but microscopic plankton. Unfettered, Goliath hurtled through the dark, cold waters of the North Atlantic at 100 sea miles per hour.

On completion of a full systems check, Sabre reached forward to the Stealth lever and eased it to the "ON" position. The supersubmersible slowed very slightly as the Super Silent Pulse Drive engaged. When Goliath regained top speed, the CDT lasers fired creating the illusion of invisibility.

Goliath, the largest ship in the world, was now both silent and invisible, sending out SONAR pings, trying to locate the missing Sea Phoenix.

Settled to the chase, Admiral Sabre continued to send out coded messages to the Sea Phoenix using the older but less powerful InterSub ship to ship system. When he got no replies, he puzzled what could have happened to his friend.

Perhaps the DOR had already been shredded by Stinga and her Swarm?

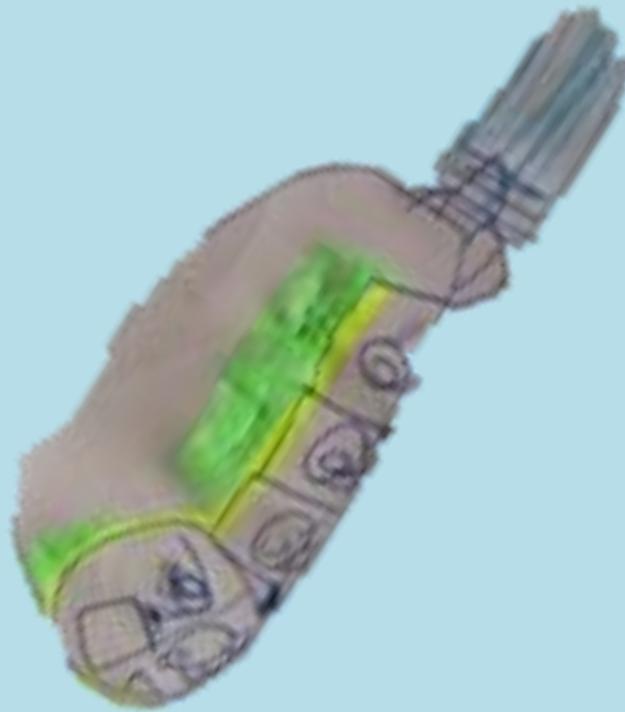
## ***Death Dive to Doom***

The reason the *Sea Phoenix* had not responded to *Goliath's* transmissions was less dramatic but equally frightening, involving debris from a container ship. During an earlier attack by *Stinga*, many containers had been only partially shredded, most sinking to the seabed or destroyed by the other Rogue Giant Squids as they cleared up after the *Colossal Giant Squid's* main assault.

One such container, holed by a large gash but only partially filled with water, had floated just under the surface, kept buoyant by its cargo of rice. On contact with water the rice had swelled, trapping a bubble of air inside the container. The swollen rice then spewed out of the damaged container attracting a shoal of small fish who, over a period of many hours, eventually munched their way through this food bonanza, eating every last grain. Empty of its cargo and now unstable, the container rolled over releasing its buoyancy bubble. As water filled the container it tumbled downwards to the ocean bed, into the path of the *DOR*.

Below the giant falling container and still racing forwards at sixty sea miles per hour, the tiny *Sea Phoenix* was nearing the southern entry point to the Nordsea Trench where *Stinga* had her secret cave.

When the collision happened, the *Sea Phoenix* lost depth control and started to spin into a death dive at a fatally steep angle.



Everything happened too quickly for Dom Prime to be sure what had caused the problem but months of rigorous training kicked in and he and his crew reacted well, fighting to regain control. When Ruff reported the Ballast Evacuation Pumps were damaged beyond repair, Dom Prime realised his only hope of survival was a rescue by *Goliath*.

Sabre heard the sharp clang of the collision, picked up by Goliath's acoustic sensors. Had Sea Phoenix hit a rocky outcrop near the Nordsea Trench?

The SONAR scanner automatically zeroed in on the sound and Sabre's HSV display showed the track of the Sea Phoenix spinning at increasing velocity towards the Nordsea Trench.

With a double wink from his right eye to the virtual switch he put the SSPD into reverse. It had taken nearly an hour to get Goliath up to top speed and now maximum deceleration was needed or he might find himself crashing into those same rocks.

'Sea Phoenix, this is Admiral Sabre here. Report your problem at once.'

Although this InterSub message got through, the reply was weak and broken:

*'Captain Prime here sir, we cannot get. . . . trying to . . . dive vanes not . . . unlock.'*

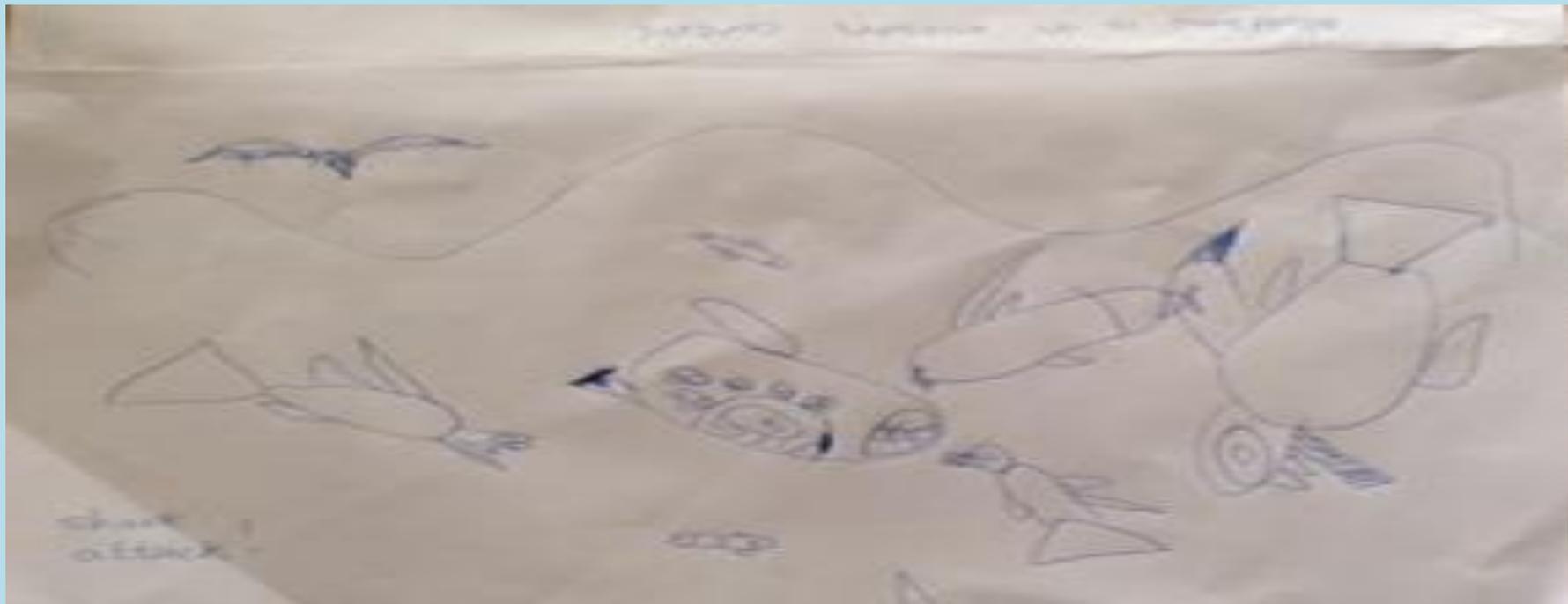
Then another message fragment:

*'And there is another. . .'*

The rest of this transmission was lost when the comms channel failed.

Matthew Sabre had no option but to follow his friend, risking a collision with the jagged rocks which guarded the entrance to the Nordsea Trench. As he edged carefully down into unknown murky depths., deeper than he had ever been before with his precious flagship, at least he had an auto-log of Sea Phoenix's trajectory to guide him.

As Sea Phoenix plummeted towards the thick, stinking mud at the base of the Nordsea Trench her video cameras transmitted confused spiraling images which revealed the tell-tale debris littering the ocean floor, showing thousands of half-eaten corpses of unfortunate victims of the raids by Stinga.



In Sabre's HSV, the SONAR scanner revealed the area was infested with a Swarm of Rogue Giant Squids. However, neither the Sonar in the Goliath or the cameras of the DOR could see the wily Stinga hiding in her cave, watching in a rage as Sea Phoenix flashed by her entrance towards the ocean bed beneath her lair.

However, what Stinga could not detect was the invisible and silent supersubmersible approaching stealthily in the wake of the tiny DOR.

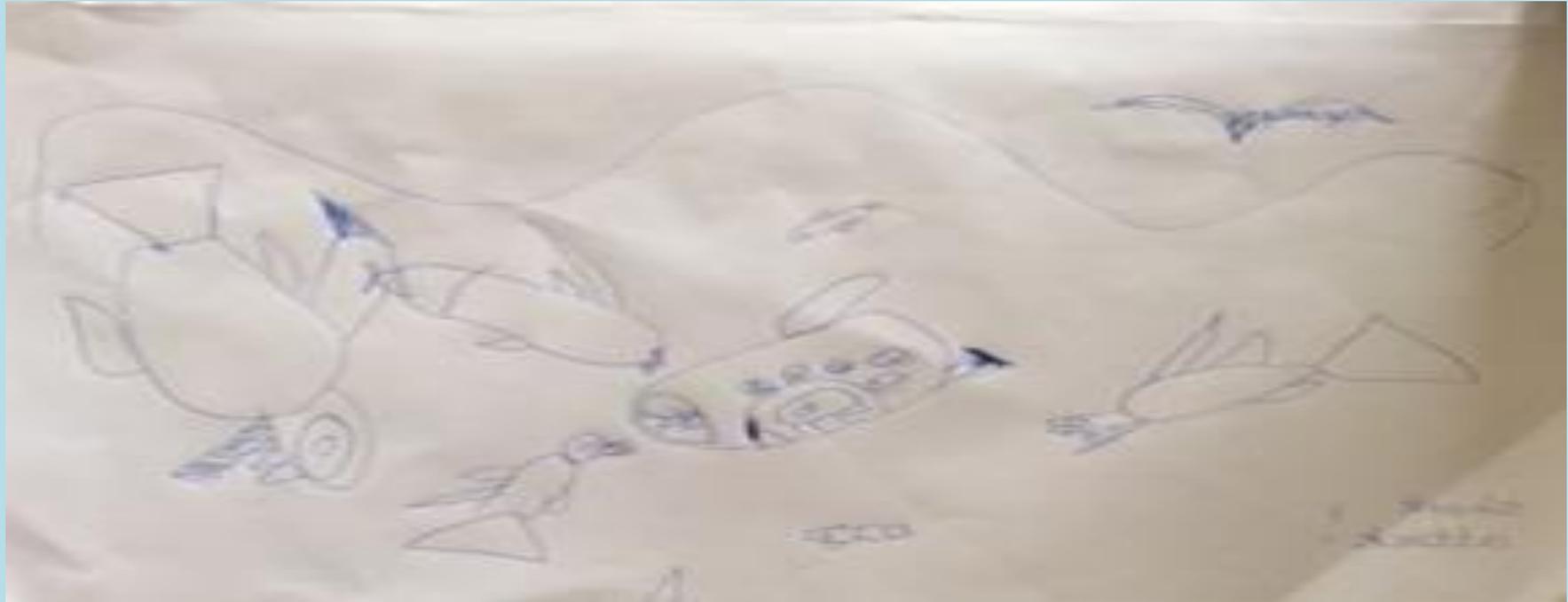
## ***Malevolent Mutant Orcas***

During the final few minutes of his death spin, Dominic Prime felt sure he was doomed to die. Luckily, his point of impact was a sink hole filled with green gooey mud.

From *Goliath*, Admiral Sabre saw a huge cloud muddy dirt thrown up by the crash of *Sea Phoenix* and the swirling Swarm of Rogue Giant Squids hunting in confusion for something to attack. Like *Stinga*, the Swarm were unaware of the silent and invisible supersubmersible hovering silently above them.

It was then a Pod of Malevolent Mutant Orcas (MMOs) swam into view, looking for prey. Unlike the squids who were slower, jerky swimmers, these killer whales were much faster zooming and swirling, enraged by the cloud of mud which prevented them seeing their expected prey.

This Pod of MMOs had originally been normal killer whales. Attracted by the food bonanza from *Stinga's* attacks, as they ate the remains of corpses they had become infected by her evil serum turning them into fearless and highly aggressive monsters. With each new meal after a *Stinga* attack, the MMOs had grown larger, developing oversized jaws lined with super-sharp teeth capable of crushing a double-decker bus in one vicious snap.



With the arrival of the MMOs, Stinga squealed her instructions to her Swarm and the RGSs began feeling around in the mud of the seabed with their tentacles, trying to find the intruder Stinga's squeals said had buried itself in the mud.

Last to arrive at the scene was Ozweird the largest and most powerful of the MMOs. When Stinga saw him, she squealed and Ozweird swam quietly and unobserved to her cave to take up a guard role at just inside the entrance.

Admiral Matthew Sabre winked his left eye to release his flotilla of Self-Directing Torpedoes.

The battle commenced between the MMOs and the SDTs.

There were heavy losses on both sides. Massive underwater explosions were recorded at seismic monitoring stations all around the world but were classified as routine volcanic activity typical of the Nordsea Trench zone.

While this battle raged, and confident his SDTs would eventually win out over the Malevolent Mutant Orcas, Admiral Sabre maneuvered Goliath around the battle zone and focused his attention on how to recover Sea Phoenix. From the wraparound display of his Head Screen Visor, he could see the difficult situation he was facing. The DOR was buried deep in the mud of the Nordsea Trench. Although trapped, she was relatively safe from the outstretched tentacles of the Swarm of RGSs who were feeling blindly in the thick fog of muddy water thrown up by the impact.

From her cave Stinga saw she was to be denied her treat of shredding Sea Phoenix which made the Colossal Giant Squid howl in rage, filling the oceans with a tsunami of sound waves.

'DRAT AND DOUBLE DRAT. DRAT, DRAT AND TRIPLE DRAT.'

Thousands of miles away in Tenerife, some people snorkeling in a little bay were stunned by the sound.

Disoriented, they shot to the surface and flipped and raced at high speed for the shore, powering through the waves with their flippered feet, leaving the lobsters and crabs they had been collecting to escape back into their underwater nooks and crannies.



This shout from Stinga in her cave also echoed into the nearby ocean, causing the last remaining group of Malevolent Mutant Orcas to race to Stinga's cave, the source of the sound, hoping for some prey to attack.

When the MMOs arrived they too were blinded by the muddy water thrown up by the impact of Sea Phoenix. They circled in utter confusion, snapping lumps out of each other and out of the squids, causing their gooey green and yellow entrails to spill out and sink onto the muddy bottom.



Admiral Sabre's Head-Screen-Visor showed the developing situation and he released a second wave of Self-Detecting-Torpedoes which zoomed through the swirl of MMOs using sonic bleeps to acquire their targets. These additional explosions caused even more mud to be thrown up.

Gradually this battle wound down to a conclusion. Every Malevolent Mutant Orca either blown to bits by the high explosive harpoon heads of the SDTs chopped to pieces by the snapping jaws of one of other MMOs.

The ocean around the Nordsea Trench was once again silent. The mud began to settle on the dismembered chunks of Orca which sank deep into the soft mud and at once started to rot into a smelly greyish-greenish-yellow slimy jelly filled with Stinga's evil serum.

With the MMOs eliminated, Sabre believed he had only a handful of Rogue Giant Squid to deal with.

In the chaos of this battle, what the young Admiral had not noticed was the cunning Ozweird and the evil Stinga had escaped destruction and were hiding in Stinga's underwater cave watching what had just happened.

# *Apparition*

While the battle had raged in the murky waters above her, *Sea Phoenix* had remained trapped in the clinging mud below the ocean floor. The high-speed rotation of the uncontrolled spin dive and the resulting impact with the ocean floor had caused to *Sea-Going Guineapigs* to break out into a massive panic.

Only Ruff Cutlass and Tuff Rapier had retained cool heads, remaining calm throughout, knowing the best way to calm DSGs is to feed them their favourite foods and encourage them to sing their favourite songs. While Sub-Lieutenant Tuff Rapier chopped up apples and carrots to feed to them, Lieutenant Ruff Cutlass sang old sea shanties while playing his concertina.

Dom Prime was hoping his friend Matthew Sabre in *Goliath* was nearby in the *Goliath*, ready to save him.

At his command position, Captain Prime pressed the release button for the Emergency Signal Pod (ESP), sending it burrowing its way up through the mud. Once deployed the ESP remained tethered to *Sea Phoenix* by an ultra-high-strength hawser cable which could be used to lift the vessel upwards, if necessary.

The ESP popped out through the mud and soared upwards to a height well above the muddy cloud as it pulsed a high-pitched emergency scream requesting a rescue. This gave Sabre a spot-on fix, showing the exact location of the trapped Deep Ocean Rover.



The sound of the ESP scream brought Stinga from her cave.

From *Goliath*, Sabre's HSV displayed the huge figure of *Stinga* approaching the ESP. The tentacles of the *Colossal Giant Squid* were crackling with high-energy electricity, showing that she was getting ready to attack. If *Stinga* connected to the ESP the massive charge of electricity from the *Colossal Giant Squid* would surely fry the stricken *Sea Phoenix* by pulsing down through the tether cable.

Captain Sabre moved his right hand quickly to his *WristPad* controller and entered the secret twenty-five-digit alphanumeric code. Using her *Chameleon Disruption Technology*, *Goliath* projected the Apparition of a *Giant Jellyfish* of ten times taller than the *Eiffel Tower* and a thousand times larger than a *Portuguese Man-of-War Jellyfish*, the largest stinging jellyfish in the world.



This had the desired effect. Stinga turned her attention from the ESP and moved towards the Apparition while squeaking her remaining Swarm of Rogue Giant Squids to circle Goliath and to charge their tentacles to full power.

Within seconds the Apparition of the Giant Jellyfish was surrounded.

To anyone watching it might seem Admiral Sabre inside Goliath was about to die as the giant net of supercharged tentacles closed in on the Apparition.

It seemed there could be no escape for the brave Admiral Matthew Sabre and, if Goliath was destroyed, the Sea Phoenix and her crew would be lost forever.

However, all was not as it seemed.

Stinga and her Rogue Giant Squids did not understand was the Apparition they were about to attack was an illusion, a clever and realistic projection created by myriad pulsing and spinning lasers emitted from the nose cone of Goliath. These beams altered the chemistry of the tiny plankton swirling in the ocean depths causing them to emit photons giving the appearance of the giant shimmering jellyfish.



In reality, Admiral Matthew Sabre was sitting comfortably in *Goliath* at a safe distance high above the lethal net of tentacles surrounding the Apparition of the *Giant Jellyfish*, waiting for his cunning plan to take effect.

Unaware of this deception, Stinga screamed her order:

'ATTACK THE INVADER JELLYFISH!'

'ATTACK! ATTACK! ATTACK! ATTACK!'

'ATTACK THE INVADER JELLYFISH!'

'ATTACK! ATTACK! ATTACK! ATTACK!'

Far away in Tenerife the snorkelers in were back under the sea in the shallow bay trying to locate their lost lobsters and crabs. This second fierce utterance from Stinga scared them almost out of their suits.

For a second time the snorkelers shot up to the surface again and raced ashore. Everyone diving in the bay that day decided to give up snorkeling for evermore.

Hovering above the Nordsea Trench, the Apparition of the *Giant Jellyfish* glowed brighter and brighter as the network of *Rogue Giant Squids* surged forwards with their high-voltage tentacles.

To irritate Stinga and the *RGS* further and at the precise instant the *Swarm of Rogue Giant Jellyfish* struck, Admiral Sabre pressed the 'Delete' button on his *WristPad* to switch off the nose cone lasers making the *Apparition of the Giant Jellyfish* disappear.

When the tentacles lunged forward they grabbed only empty ocean filled with tiny plankton and when their high-voltage tentacles connected to each other, Stinga and her entire Swarm of Rogue Giant Squid exploded in one massive underwater eruption, fragmenting into millions of miniscule particles, food for the very plankton which had recently formed the Apparition of the Giant Jellyfish.

Safe inside Goliath, Matthew Sabre chortled happily to himself:

'Take that! No more Stinga and no more Rogue Giant Squids!'

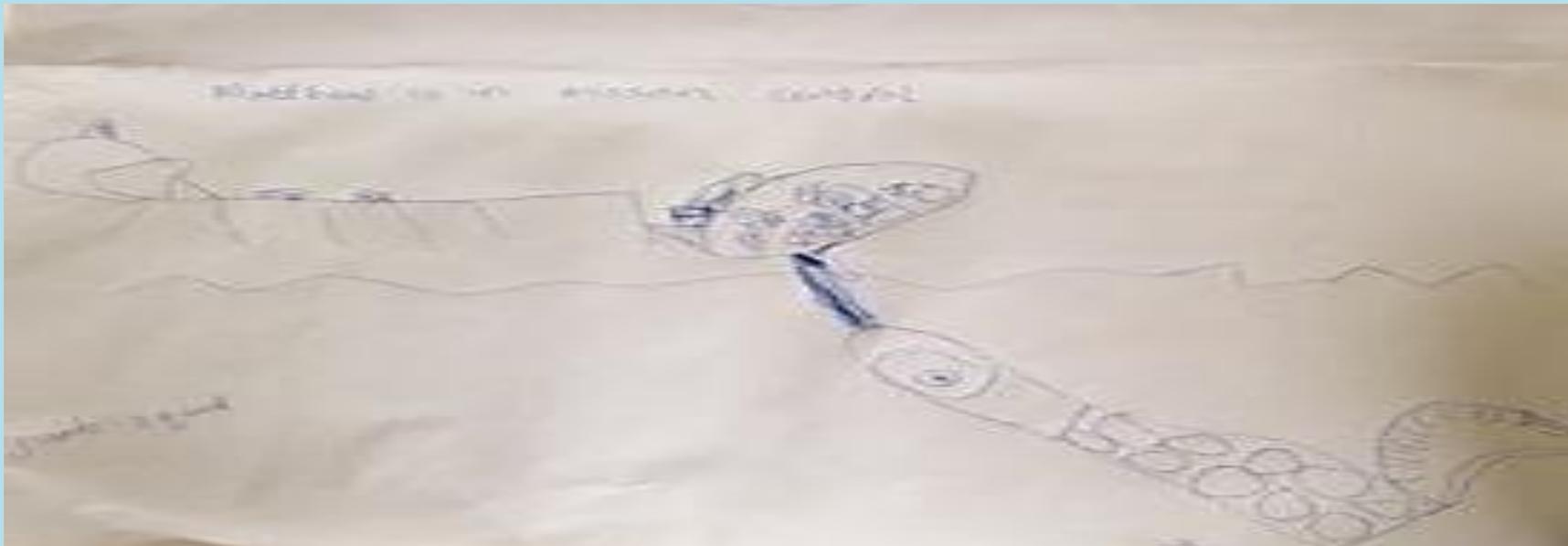
## *Ozweird*

Matthew Sabre's next task was to rescue the Sea Phoenix. He brought Goliath to hover directly above the Emergency Signal Pod and lowered a grappling hook and comms cable to attach to the ESP's super-strong retrieval line anchored to the deck of the Sea Phoenix.

'Ahoy Sea Phoenix, this is Admiral Sabre. Sit tight and you will soon be free from your muddy prison. The Menace of the Giant Squids has been eliminated along with their evil assistants the Malevolent Mutant Orcas. Now you are safe, and provided your systems are undamaged, you must continue your survey of the Nordsea Trench.'

With their tummies full and fully restored, the Sea-Going Guineapigs ran back at their duty stations whistling quietly to each other, once more confident DOR operatives.

In Goliath, Admiral Sabre winked his right eye to fire his powerful irrigation-down-thrusters causing jets of high-velocity sea water to clear the mud around the Sea Phoenix, stirring up millions of tons of sand and silt, engulfing the whole of the seabed for miles around in a dark grey mist of muddy water.



To penetrate this gloom, Admiral Sabre switched on his Ultra-High-Powered-Halogen-Quartz inspection lamps. *Goliath's* video cameras recorded the scene as the *Sea Phoenix* began to rise slowly through the swirl.

Finally, the DOR broke free of the clinging mud.

'Ahoy, Captain Prime, this is Admiral Sabre. Dom, please test your propulsion unit and guide vanes at once. Then, on my release, retrieve your ESP and make ready to continue of your mission. I will shortly return to OMC at Ailsa Craig.'



Ozweird was poking his head out of Stinga's cave, watching what was happening but because *Goliath* was still invisible, all Ozweird could see was the *Sea Phoenix* rising out of the mud, bathed in a flood of high intensity light. In a rage orca raced forward and with his powerful jaws and razor-sharp teeth, he snapped at the DOR's conning tower, wrenching it off, disabling the craft.

With a wink of his left eye into his Head-Screen-Visor, Admiral Sabre fired a *Sea-Glue-Capsule Missile* at Ozweird. The missile hit the mutant killer whale directly between his eyes and exploded, releasing a bubble of *Sea Glue* which, mixed with the sea water, solidified into a huge transparent blob. Ozweird, suspended in time and space inside a giant goldfish-bowl prison, began drifting slowly away into the dark, vast ocean.



Admiral Sabre winked his right eye and fired a double-shotted-harpoon. One hook embedded itself into the Ozweird glue-blob and the other burrowed down through the mud to lodge itself in the hard crust of the Earth's mantle. Ozweird was imprisoned inside the glue-blob and destined to float above the Nordsea Trench forevermore, as a warning to others who sought to wreak havoc in the peaceful oceans of the world.

Unfortunately, Ozweird's attack had inflicted major damage to the Sea Phoenix's conning tower, and the small Deep Ocean Rover was slowly filling with water. Having been rescued from the stinking mud, Captain Dominic Prime and his crew were now in danger of drowning.

In Goliath, Admiral Matthew Sabre rapidly tapped a series of instructions onto his WristPad. From the underside of the supersubmersible a huge ultra-strong membrane floated down, wrapping itself around the damaged Sea Phoenix like transparent food wrapping film but ten thousand times stronger. This emergency repair stopped the inrush of high-pressure sea water which threatened to flood the Sea Phoenix. Using the grappling hook still attached to the ESP rescue cable, Goliath raised the Sea Phoenix to complete safety inside the cavernous docking area of the massive supersubmersible.

Effectively, the mission of the Sea Phoenix was over. Further investigation of the Nordsea Trench must wait until the DOR was fully repaired and tested.

Admiral Matthew Sabre set Goliath's auto-navigation system to return supersubmersible to the deep Ocean Control Centre at Ailsa Craig, Scotland. Only then did the young Admiral unbuckle from his fighting chair to conduct a de-briefing of his officers.

Captain Dominic Sabre led his crew of Sea-Going Guineapigs to a special mess room equipped with video games, juices and nibbles of carrots and apples to keep them amused during the return journey. With Lieutenant Ruff Cutlass and Sub-Lieutenant Tuff Rapier by his side, Captain Dominic Prime made his way to Goliath's command centre to discuss what had happened.

However, these discussions were flawed. Inside Stinga's cave another threat was yet to reveal itself.

## *Stenga, the Evil Twin of Stinga*

While the Goliath's computers were self-checking her complex systems prior to the planned high-speed return to OMC at Ailsa Craig, further danger lurked nearby in the form of Stenga, the evil twin of Stinga. Throughout Goliath's battles with the Malevolent Mutant Orcas and the Rogue Giant Squids, the reclusive Stenga had been watching from the dark recesses of the Stinga and Stenga cave.

Now she was alone, without Stinga and without Ozweird and she was very, very angry.



From the cave, Stenga had seen the entire rescue scenario unfold and had realised there must be a chameleon vessel in the vicinity. Unlike Stinga her sister, Stenga had super-sonic hearing which enabled her to detect the low throb of Goliath's Super-Silent-Pulse-Drive water jets.

Seething with anger and knowing she must act before Goliath moved out of range, Stenga left her cave and reached up reached out with her two longest and strongest tentacles towards the source of the low throbbing sound.

As the jolt of electricity pulsed through Goliath, all her lights exploded. Emergency Klaxon Alarms screamed danger, Goliath's dials showed her auto-controls were out of action and signalling her Chameleon Disruptive Technology circuits had been blown.

Goliath was no longer invisible.

As it was programmed to do, Goliath's Emergency Escape System took over the auto-navigation-system and pulse drive controls. Goliath began to race forward winding up to top speed, heading from the perceived danger towards OMC at Ailsa Craig. Because her forward-seeking acoustic radar was inoperable, it showed a blank screen meaning the largest vessel in the world was climbing to her top speed of 100 sea miles an hour but sailing blindly, dependent only on what could be seen through the nose cone viewing port.

Wrapped around the stern of Goliath, Stenga was clinging on with her all of her massive tentacles and trying to rip chunks out of the hull, tugging at her guide vanes altering the trim of the vessel.

Still powering forward, the huge vessel began to tilt then spiral, accelerating into a death turn which would rip off the guide vanes and cause the supersubmersible to career out of control until it eventually struck a shoreline or embedded itself in an underwater reef.

Stenga pulled hard on her tentacles, slithering forward against the rush of water until her body covered the viewing port making it impossible for Admiral Sabre to see what might be in front of his ship.

Speaking in a calm but tense voice, Admiral Matthew Sabre said, 'Sub-Lieutenant Tuff, this calls for drastic measures. Organise your Engineering Guineapigs to decouple the gearboxes manually from the impulse pumps. Blow the emergency tanks and bring her nearer the surface. We have no other option. Do this at once!'

'But Admiral, if we stop we will be totally at the mercy of this Colossal Giant Squid. How will we ever break free of her?'

'Tuff, obey my command. Now, Lieutenant Ruff, come with me. Bring a harpoon gun and a reel of superconducting copper wire. Risky though it is, this plan must work. Dom, take charge here in the Command Centre and be ready to obey any orders I give over the intercom.'

Eventually the great hulk of *Goliath* slowed sufficiently for the aftermost hatch to be opened. Wearing his SCUBA suit, Admiral Matthew Sabre swam out through the hatch with his harpoon gun at the ready. Attached to the harpoon spear was one end of the superconducting copper wire. The other end was

attached to the reserve batteries which had been almost entirely depleted by the early jolt of electricity from the initial attack from Stenga.



Admiral Sabre took careful aim. He knew he would have only one chance. His target was the dead centre of Stenga's huge single, purple eye, the only weak spot in her skull. Fortunately, the Colossal Giant Squid had her eyelid closed to help her concentrate as she ripped chunks from the outer hull of the now visible Goliath.

Young Matthew Sabre fired. The harpoon flew through the dark ocean waters and hit the centre of Stenga's purple eye and penetrated deep inside her skull to lodge in the huge beast's nerve centre, the

node which connected to massive source of electrical energy. The electricity discharged instantly through the superconducting copper wire to recharge Goliath's reserve batteries.

This strike by Admiral Sabre had two effects on Stenga.

The first was that Stenga spasmed, throwing her tentacles outwards at right angles to her body into a starfish shape, causing her to release her fierce grip on Goliath. The second effect was to corrupt her neural synapses destroying her brain, making her unable to move or function. Her innards, unable to sustain themselves began at once to disintegrate and melt into a slimy pulp.

Dead and frozen in this starfish position, Stenga floated away harmlessly on the ocean currents.

Many months later, on a lonely beach on the west coast of the Island of Barra in the Outer Hebrides an elderly man walking his dog would find Stenga's giant skull, causing panic in the local community.

As the young Admiral swam back to the aftermost hatch to re-enter Goliath, he chuckled into his scuba mask, causing a great cloud of bubbles to be released:

'Good riddance to Stenga and Stinga and their kind. Without them and their ilk, the Deep Oceans will be a safer place for all.'

## *Return to Ocean Mission Control*

Two days later *Goliath* re-docked quietly and without ceremony at her base inside the huge dome of *Ailsa Craig* in the Firth of Clyde, Scotland.

It would take the Engineering *Guineapigs* and *Robo-Tech-Droids* (RTDs) nearly a month to restore *Goliath* and *Sea Phoenix* to full functional readiness to face their next challenge.

To celebrate their successful mission *Admiral Sabre* baked an enormous tray of chocolate chip brownies for himself and *Captain Dominic Prime*. *Lieutenant Ruff* and *Sub-Lieutenant Tuff* chopped up hundreds of carrots and apples for the *Deep-Sea Guineapigs* and their shore-based helpers.

The RTDs were given free access supplies of high purity mineral oil to lubricate their joints as a reward for their tireless service during the repair period.

Since the elimination of the *Rogue Giant Squids* and the *Malevolent Mutant Orcas*, the seas above the *Nordsea Trench* have returned to normal, with no further sudden and unexplained disappearances.

Out in the deep of the Nordsea Trench all remains still and tranquil, apart from the usual intermittent explosion caused by an erupting underwater volcano.

At the deepest part of the world's oceans, the only signs of life are the twinkling microscopic plankton happily devouring the rotting remains of the long-dead Rogue Giant Squids and the Malevolent Mutant Orcas.



In

In their midst, still tethered to the Earth's crust, is the orb of the Sea Glue prison with Ozweird swimming round and round, providing a constant reminder to other sea creatures that they must never attempt to take control of the Deep Oceans.



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This story is about Admiral Matthew Sabre and Captain Dominic Prime who have been tasked with solving the Mystery of the Nordsea Trench where ships have disappeared in great numbers.

Rumours abound. Some media reports have claimed the Nordsea Trench is the home of Rogue Giant Squids and their evil companions Malevolent Mutant Orcas and it is these maritime pest who have attacked and destroyed the missing ships. Others say the losses are due to underwater volcanoes or icebergs.

Proof is needed if a way to eliminate the problem is to be found.

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