

Frog Head Key

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By Eric Douglas



Chapter 4

After getting *Daydreamer* tied up and all their gear stowed away, the three younger divers drove around to the other side of the marina, to Withrow Key's one bar/restaurant, Duffy's. Jackson told them he had some business to take care of and that he would meet up with them the next day.

"So what do you guys think is going on out there?" Kia asked, the first one to broach the subject since they got back to the dock.

“We should go check it out,” Jake said. “Come on. Let’s go tonight.”

“No, Jackson said not to. We can’t go out there,” Kia argued.

“Are you in, Bo? Let’s go check it out and see what’s going on,” Jake challenged. “Or are you scared, too?”

“Hey. Wait a second. I never said I was scared,” Kia started to protest.

“Jackson just doesn’t get it. He’s gotten old,” Jake said, letting the beer increase his already cocky personality. “I say we go out there and find out what’s going on. Whatever those guys are doing, it’s messing with our livelihood.”

“I don’t know, man. Do you really think we should go out there?” Bo asked, wiping the sweat off of his forehead with his hat.

“What? Are you chicken?” Jake challenged.

“Hey, Jake. Cut it out. That’s not fair. Bo doesn’t have to go anywhere he doesn’t want to go,” Kia jumped in.

“So, is Kia in charge of you now?” Jake asked. “Does she make decisions for you?”

“All right,” Bo said. “Let’s go take a look. Probably nothing out there anyway.”

“Finish your beer. Let’s go. We’ll show Jackson who’s in charge around here,” Jake said, standing up.

“I’m not going with you,” Kia said.

“Funny, I don’t recall asking you to go,” Jake said as he turned and walked away.

Bo gave Kia an apologetic shrug as he got up and walked out, towed in Jake’s wake.

“Get this stuff set up and ready to go. We need to get this operation back online,” Snake growled, sweat beading on his forehead. “Let’s get this stuff stirred and get it cooking. We should be able to start boiling it off in the next couple days.”

“You’re the boss, man,” Billy agreed. “I don’t know how this works, I’m just glad it does.”

“You keep that in mind,” Snake agreed. “We’ll do just fine together.”

“Guys, there’s a boat headed this way,” Tommy’s voice crackled over the walkie-talkie. He was perched in a tree in the middle of the island, scanning the surroundings with night-vision goggles. They were trying to do as little as possible to give away their location, although the thick scrub on the island caught most of the light they used.

“What do you see?” Snake asked, quietly for once.

“Looks like two guys in a small runabout.”

“Probably just a couple guys out fishing. Are you sure they’re coming here?”

“Positive,” Tommy said. “They slowed down and are circling the island, but it looks like they just discovered the path leading through the brush. I’m sure they’ve seen the boats, too.”

“Ok, get down here as soon as you can, but don’t let them see you,” Snake said.

“What are we going to do?” Billy asked.

“We’ve lost too much time already,” Snake said. “We’ll have to take care of them.”

“We could tell them to leave and then blow up their boat like those other two,” Billy said.

“Nah, not this time. We’re going to have to get a little dirtier this time,” Snake said.



It was moving toward night as Jake and Bo found a small inlet on the side of Frog Head Key and slowly eased their boat inside. When they did, they realized there was more there than they realized. Hidden behind the thick trees and vegetation they saw a boat house with water access and boat tied up out front and another one inside. They quickly threw a line around a mangrove on the other side of the inlet and started looking around.

“Looks like there’s a path over here,” Bo whispered. “What exactly are we looking for again?”

“I don’t know, but there’s something going on out here. Something was pumping that dirty water off the island. There has to be generators and pumps to make that happen. I just want

to see why someone would be taking the time to do it, way out here on this little rock. Now keep it quiet and keep your flashlight pointed at the ground. It doesn't sound like anyone's out here, but they might be asleep or something."

"Oh man, I hadn't thought about that. What if we do run into someone out here? What do we do then?" Bo asked.

"That's a good question, boys. What are you going to do?" Snake asked from the darkness. "Because you just ran into someone, and that someone isn't happy."

"Oh shit, Jake. Run!" Bo said as he turned to bolt back down the trail. He ran directly into the baseball bat Tommy was swinging. Moving toward the swing kept Bo from literally losing his head, but the glancing blow knocked him off the trail and unconscious.

Jake wasn't as lucky. He tried to fight as Snake and Billy came out of the darkness and grabbed him.

"What are you guys doing? Who are you," Jake yelled as he swung at Billy. Snake hit him in the kidneys with two furious punches as he turned. Jake tried to spin around and protect himself from Snake when Billy kicked him in the leg.

Jake dropped down on one knee. He was strong, but not strong enough to fight off the two men. Standing again he took off running. When Snake hit him, he dropped his flashlight, so he was making his way down the path by the light of the moon. He didn't know or care where he was headed. He just wanted to get away.

Jake could hear the men running after him, yelling for him to stop. He glanced over his shoulder and ran headlong into a scrub tree. He tore his shorts and scratched his legs up as he fell.

“Aaaaahhh,” Jake screamed a primal scream through his teeth. “Damn! Who are these guys?” He took off running again, limping from the pain from the kick and the fall.

Jake realized he was heading down a slight incline as he rounded a turn in the trail. As he did, he saw a large pit in front of him. There were shielded lights around the opening in the ground and he saw two large metal cylinders in front of him, at least 15 feet high with a fire underneath them and a series of pipes running down the side.

And then the three men caught him. Tommy was the first to get there and he hit Jake in the back with a flying tackle. When they hit the ground, Jake tried to roll and fight his attacker then he saw Snake and Billy show up. They kicked and beat him until he was unconscious.

“Pick him up and take him down to the water with the other one,” Snake ordered, as he tried to catch his breath.

“What’re we going to do with them?” Tommy asked.

“We’ll make it look like they got jumped, robbed and then died. But not out here. I don’t want anyone looking for them out here,” Snake said. “Wrap them up in those plastic tarps and then tie them closed. We’ll take them back to the mainland and then dump them out on a back road somewhere. We’ll need to work them over some more and then we’ll dump them.”

“But, Snake, man, I’m, um, that’s not cool man. I don’t know if I can do that,” Tommy, the youngest, said. “That’s pretty cold.”

“You’ll do it, or you’ll join them. That’s pretty much your only options. We’ll take their boat back with us and turn it loose. Go see if you can find something in it that says where they keep it tied up,” Snake growled. “We’ll make it look like they got jumped at the marina and the thieves wanted to steal the boat. Now get to work!”

Billy and Tommy did as they were ordered and wrapped the divers up in plastic. Whenever Jake or Bo protested or tried to move, they earned a vicious punch or jab from the baseball bat.