

Westcrest

Episode #9: Nessie

Coughing and spluttering, Jeremy opens his mouth to ask if Sarra's okay before realising that she's laughing at him. Then he sees the lake monster.

A head the size of a small car regards them from a few feet away. Enormous eyes blink wetly as the head shifts on its slender neck.

"Nessie!" Calls Sarra, rising to her feet. Nessie starts forward, her enormous head swaying. Jeremy scrambles wildly backwards, muttering under his breath.

The light has gone from Sarra's hand now, and obviously most of the heat as well, because she extends her arm out across the water and places her palm against the smooth skin of Nessie's snout. The creature makes a sound like nothing Jeremy has ever heard, a sort of warbling, watery, *purring* noise.

"Don't be scared," says Sarra. "Nessie won't hurt you."

"Of all the names..." Jeremy starts, but Sarra cuts him off immediately.

"Don't give me that! Tell me, Sir, what would *you* call a giant lake monster?"

Nessie seems as interested by this question as Sarra is, stretching her head high into the air and looking sideways at Jeremy.

"Well?" Sarra crosses her arms over her chest. She's still wearing one glove, the other is tucked into the band of her pants.

"I don't know," says Jeremy. "I... Bigfoot?"

"Bigfoot's not a *name*," says Sarra, rolling her eyes. "It's an interworldly species classification!"

Jeremy has to laugh at that and it begins as a titter that grows to a chuckle that grows to a guffaw. Soon Sarra joins him and they both stand there on the pier soaked from head to toe while the lake monster named Nessie sways her head back and forth and thinks to herself that this can only end badly.

"Don't you see?" Says Sarra when their laughter has died down. "It's all so wonderful!"

"It's terrible," says Jeremy and although he believes what he says, he can't hide the hint of a smile from appearing on his face.

"Amazing," says Sarra, grinning at him.

"Horrible."

“Brilliant!”

Nessie points her nose into the air and bellows in goodbye, before slipping beneath the dark waves of Lake Freyja. And Jeremy suddenly knows that this is where he needs to be. Here with Sarra. Here at Westcrest.

“Brilliant,” he repeats. Taking her ungloved hand between both of his, he squeezes it gently. For a moment she intends on snatching it away, but then she notices a strange tingling sensation in the place where their skin is touching.

Energy floods through her, the same energy that Chatravati has taught her to channel through the palms of her hands, and yet she can sense that it’s also a somehow different type of energy—an *older* energy.

Jeremy is brimming with it.

“No!” She cries as she feels the heat rising in her. She knows she has to control it, has to suppress it. And with that small act of rejection she feels the energy suddenly withdraw from her, and Jeremy with it. “I’m sorry,” she begins. “I didn’t mean...”

Jeremy ignores her. “Doesn’t it drive you mad?” He asks, turning to gaze out at the city across the water. “Don’t you find it frustrating that you do all of this, this... saving the world or whatever it is that you do, and none of them even know?”

“They know,” says Sarra, her voice little more than a whisper. “Somewhere, deep down, they are all afraid of the things in the dark, the unseen things, the whispers and the shadows.

“We are their hope, Jeremy, and our own hope as well. Because we have to believe that things can be better. That we can *make* them better.”

Her eyes wet with tears, Sarra holds out her hand to him again. Without looking at her, he takes it.

“Help me make things better,” she says.

And as they embrace on that cold winter night on an invisible island at the centre of Lake Freyja, Sarra closes her eyes and lets the torrent of energy course through her.