

Ms Ferryman's lips pursed and she let out a soft sigh. "It's okay, Jonquil. Everything will be fine. You agreed to come here so you could escape whatever it was that happened to you. To forget and stop the pain. Isn't that so?"

Jonquil rubbed her nose and nodded.

"We'll help you with that, I promise. But you have to help us *to help you. And that means letting go. It means letting go of time, of who you were – of everything. Are you willing to do that?"*

ALSO BY DARREN SIMPSON

SCAVENGERS

THE MEMORY THIEVES

DARREN SIMPSON



USBORNE

For anyone who's hurting.

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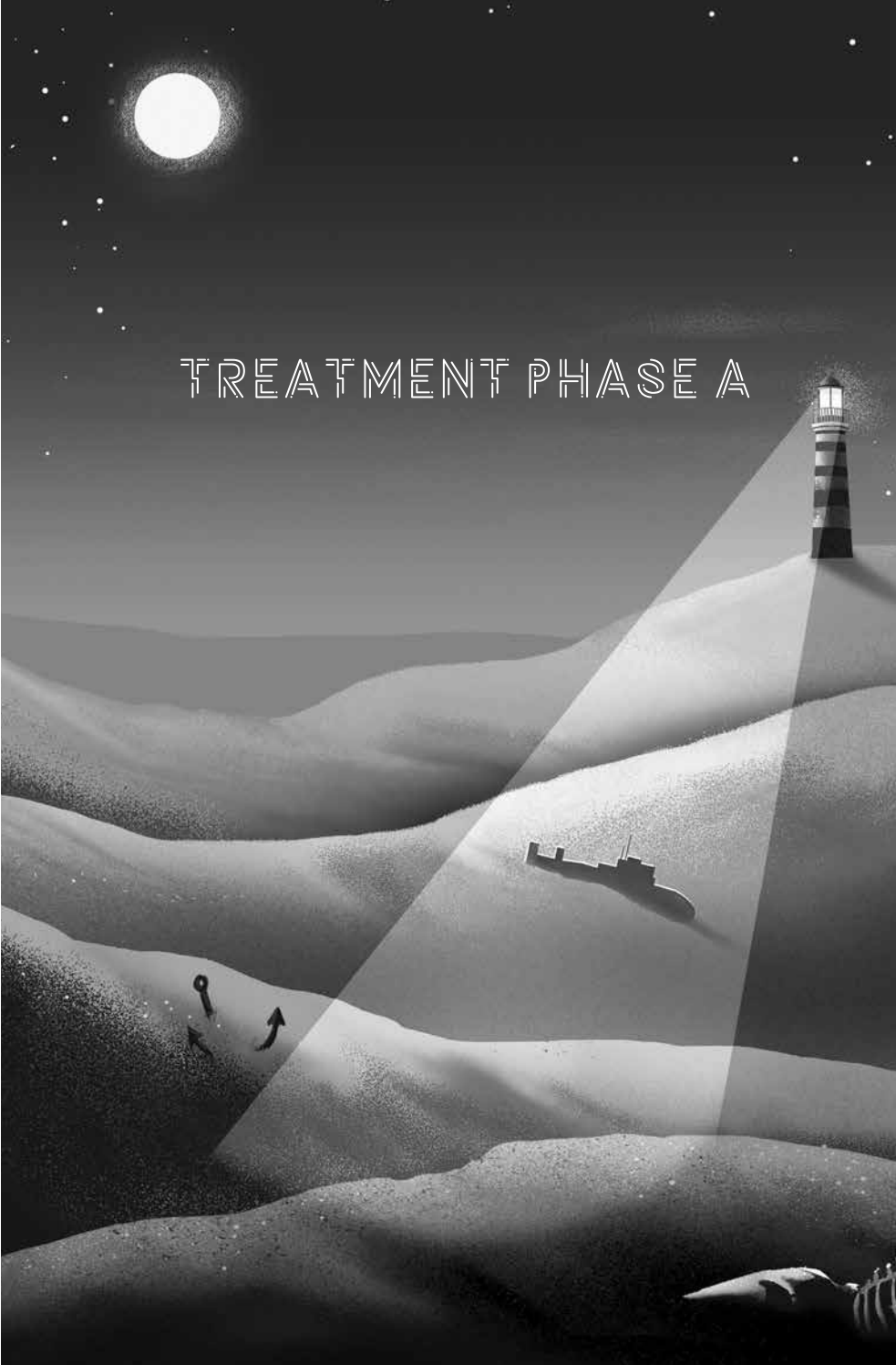
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WHAT YOU DON'T REMEMBER CAN'T HURT YOU


TREATMENT PHASE A

DOSE ONE

TALL BONES

Cyan sat back against a huge curving rib. He was surrounded by a boundary of bone: a whale's yellowing skeleton, stranded in the sand. His creased uniform stood out against the dunes, like a green bottle on a deserted beach.

Taking a book from his satchel, Cyan found his page and plucked out his bookmark. He began to read, and was a few pages in when he heard a throbbing in the air.

He swept his white fringe from his tortoiseshell glasses, got up and peered through a gap between some ribs. Apart from outcrops of rock and some stranded, rusting boats, the landscape was all sandy knolls, topped here and there by patches of beach grass.

Cyan's gaze rose and he found the sound's source. An orange blip was cutting through the sky, coming in from the south and heading for the sanctuary. As the chopping

of rotor blades sharpened, the helicopter took shape. The lights on its underbelly winked against a backdrop of cloud.

A muffled beep came from the pocket of Cyan's green trousers. He reached in and pulled out a small silver locket. With its thin chain still clipped to his trousers, he opened it up and read the message on its screen:

Ms Ferryman's office. ASAP.

Cyan sighed and slipped his bookmark back into his book. While grabbing his satchel, it knocked a clump of sand from a rib and something caught his eye. He paused, then got to his knees to brush more sand away.

Something had been scratched low into the bone. Tiny words, careful and deep.

best to deceive the memory thieves
between green and red, fight don't forget
S-7270

Cyan frowned. In all the time he'd spent at these bones, he'd never noticed this. The etched words and numbers were strange. Half of them didn't mean anything, and those that did sent an uncomfortable flutter through his stomach.

memory thieves
fight don't forget

Cyan brooded on the words while putting his book back in his satchel. Turning away, he left through the whale's

parted jaws and mounted the quad bike parked on some nearby beach grass.

Cyan slapped on some goggles and flicked the ignition switch; all silence was lost to the engine's loud growls.

A twist of the throttle sent him racing across dunes. His blazer and shirt flapped wildly in the wind, and the hurtling quad spat sand in its wake.

He could see his destination up ahead, breaking the sandscape's monotony: the green hills of a grassy cove. To his right he saw several ships, half-buried and clustered around juts of rock. Some of the boats had tipped onto their sides, with their tall masts tilting towards the ground.

The clouds parted and sunlight hit the wrecks, causing the salt in their rust to sparkle like diamonds. Cyan grinned at the sight. He could taste the salty grit that hit his teeth. Revving the engine, he launched himself over another dune and laughed giddily when the quad landed with a thump.

Up ahead, two stone piers stretched like pincers from the cove's harbour. Tucked within the cove was the Elsewhere Sanctuary – a vast cube of white concrete, pocked with rows of large porthole windows.

Cyan passed the lighthouse on the eastern pier's tip. Its black-on-white spirals were thick but flaking, and its lantern panes were hidden behind slats, just as they'd been for as long as he could remember.

He revved the quad up the wide, cobbled ramp that led from the sand to the harbour's raised bank. A fellow resident leaped aside as he flew over the ramp's top. Cyan hit the brakes, swerving to a stop before grinning at his friend. "Ahoy, Teal!"

Teal grimaced and threw both hands into the air. "Can't you watch where you're going, Cyan?"

Cyan laughed. "Can't *you* watch where I'm going?"

Teal yanked off his wire spectacles and, after wiping them clean with his own green blazer, pinched the tape wrapped tightly around their bridge. "Worst driver on the island, I swear. Your quad's throwing dirt all over the place." He put the glasses back on and started scratching his neck and afro. "It's in my shirt and hair and…argh, *everywhere*!"

"Lighten up, joy boy. You've been here…however long, and you're still not used to a bit of sand?"

"I *hate* the sand."

"You love it. Gives you something to moan about."

"I've got you, Cyan; I'll always have something to moan about."

Cyan clicked his fingers. "Hey, did you see the helicopter come in?"

"Heard it land." Teal gestured over his shoulder to the hangar next to the sanctuary. Cyan could see the helicopter on the hangar's roof, motionless and gleaming on its helipad.

Teal shrugged. "Probably bringing in medical supplies or something."

"Supplies come with the hovercraft. I think it's a new resident." Cyan flicked dirt from his blazer's double-striped cuffs, then pulled his locket from his pocket. "Got a message to see Ms Ferryman. Maybe I'm doing a new resident's induction."

Teal shook his head. "Doubt it. We had Pewter come in just the other day. New residents don't come in that often."

"Dunno. There's always someone else who…wants to forget." Cyan slowed as he spoke, thinking back to the words he'd seen carved into bone. His eyebrows began to sink.

Teal shook his head again. "Nah. Not today."

Cyan's grin returned. "You're so sure of yourself! Okay, tell you what: I'll *bet* you it's a new resident."

"Oh, yeah? And what'll you bet?"

"Tonight's pudding."

Teal mulled this over and began stroking the small pot of his belly. "Deal. But don't whine when I'm eating your afters."

"Ditto. Sometime-somewhere!" Cyan doffed an imaginary cap, then shot across the harbour to whip through the hangar's double doors.

The quad's snarls echoed across steel walls, until Cyan parked by some other bikes and killed the engine. He hung

his goggles on the handlebar and hopped off his seat. Smells of diesel and cool metal filled his nose.

Two mechanics were tinkering with the orange hovercraft that filled the hangar's bulk. Cyan saluted when they looked at him from behind massive twin propellers, then left the hangar and made for the sanctuary.

Hopping up the marble steps that scaled the staff floor and led to the sanctuary's entrance, Cyan paused to murmur beneath his breath: "S seven two seventy. Between green and red, fight don't…forget."

The words bothered him, though he couldn't put his finger on why.

A sudden flush of heat had him loosening his collar. He shook his head as if shaking the words away and – after stamping sand from his plimsolls – forced the spring back into his step.

And with a push of the revolving door, Cyan entered the Elsewhere Sanctuary.