

# Dead Connection

by

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FADE IN:

EXT. YACHT - NIGHT

ROCKY MURDOCH (62), balding but in good shape, stands on the back of his 80 foot Lazzara. He holds an empty glass and stares into the dark waters of the Gulf of Mexico.

BIRGIT SVENSEN (31), the yacht's first mate, brings Rocky a fresh drink. She's Swedish, blonde, and fairly attractive.

BIRGIT (O.S.)  
Your scotch, Mr. Murdoch.

Rocky turns and smiles at his first mate and hands her his empty glass.

ROCKY  
Thank you, Birgit. That'll be all  
for the evening.

He takes a long drink from the glass.

BIRGIT  
Are you certain, sir? I can wait  
up.

ROCKY  
No, thanks. I'll be turning in soon.  
Please wake me as we're approaching  
Galveston in the morning.

BIRGIT  
Yes, sir. Good night.

Erika departs. Rocky looks at his watch and then back at the water.

INT. YACHT BRIDGE

Birgit enters onto the bridge. PETR SVENSEN (33), the yacht's captain and Birgit's husband, studies the numerous computer screens on the control panel. He is short, thin, distinguished looks.

PETR  
The old man still awake?

BIRGIT  
He was having one last drink before  
calling it a night. Wanted to be  
wakened when we get to Galveston.

Petr punches some numbers into a computer keyboard.

CU on a computer screen which shows an ETA in Galveston of 6 hours 24 minutes.

PETR

Why don't you go to bed? We still have a few hours before we're close to shore.

BIRGIT

You sure? I don't mind keeping you company.

PETR

No, no--I'm good. You get some rest and I'll see you in the morning.

Birgit gives Petr a kiss and heads below deck.

EXT. YACHT

Rocky finishes his drink, places it on a table. He peers into the water, as if looking for something, smiles faintly, then looks back to make sure no one is watching. He kicks off his deck shoes, steps silently into the water, and disappears into the dark waters.

The Lazzara continues on its course, the crew unaware the yacht's lone passenger is no longer on board.

INT. LAW OFFICE - AFTERNOON

ERIC MURDOCH (33), a handsome, athletic-looking attorney with the Houston firm of CARTER KING KRAVITZ, sits at his desk, reading a DOCUMENT.

He looks up at the ceiling and SIGHS. He doesn't appear thrilled at the prospect of another day of practicing law.

VOICE (O.S.)

Hopefully that wasn't directed at me.

STACY JANSEN (30), a tall, striking brunette and another attorney at the firm, stands in the doorway.

ERIC

(smiles at her appearance)

Hey--is it wrong for me to be totally bored with what I'm doing?

STACY

Well, if you aren't bored with what YOU do, then there actually IS something wrong with you.

Eric gets up from his chair and walks over to Stacy.

ERIC

At least I perform a valuable service to my clients--my will and trust documents will actually be used my clients someday--

STACY

(smirking)

--For what? The basis of a legal malpractice suit?

ERIC

Funny. Whereas you've been working on the same two litigation cases, for what, three years? And they'll probably drag on for another two years before settling out of court.

STACY

Dream on, counselor.

His desk phone RINGS. He heads back to his desk chair to pick up, but his secretary has already intercepted the call.

ERIC

Geez--it's just been one of those days...

STACY

No problem. Look, I'll be working late...okay if we just have a pizza delivered later to the house?

Eric's secretary, CAROLINA LOPEZ (42), a short, pudgy, woman, suddenly appears behind Stacy. She is holding a small package.

Eric motions his head towards Carolina. Stacy looks embarrassed.

ERIC

(to Stacy)

I'll see you later.

CAROLINA

I know you guys are living together.  
Worst secret in the firm.

ERIC

(sighs)  
You need something?

CAROLINA

Your brother is on the phone. Needs  
to speak with you immediately.

Eric nods and starts toward his desk, but is stopped by:

CAROLINA (CONT'D)

Oh, and this package just arrived  
for you.

Carolina hands Eric the package and he examines it briefly.

ERIC

Who's it from?

CAROLINA

No idea.  
(points to phone)  
Your brother?

ERIC

(motions to the door)  
Right. Close that, please.

Eric drops the package on his desk and picks up the phone.

ERIC (CONT'D)

Randy. What's up?

EXT. YACHT CLUB DOCK -- CONTINUOUS

RANDY MURDOCH (30) sits on an overturned bucket on the dock,  
obviously very concerned.

RANDY

Eric. It's...dad. He's...he's  
missing.

ERIC

(stunned)  
Missing? What...I don't  
understand...wasn't he coming back  
from his deep sea expedition last  
night?

RANDY

Yeah, but he never got here.  
Apparently he got on his yacht from  
the exploration vessel, and then  
disappeared on the way back last  
night.

ERIC

What do you mean disappeared? Did  
Petr or Birgit see him go overboard?

RANDY

That's the thing. The coast guard  
is questioning them now, but from  
what Birgit told me just a few minutes  
ago, she gave him a drink, then she  
went to bed about 11:00 pm. That's  
the last she saw of him.

Eric stands up and nervously paces back and forth behind his  
desk.

ERIC

What about Petr?

RANDY

He was on the bridge. I guess he  
just continued on his course and had  
no idea that dad had gone  
overboard...it must have been four  
or five hours before they figured it  
out!

ERIC

Jesus, Randy!

RANDY

No shit.

ERIC

Is there a search ongoing?

RANDY

Yeah, the Coast Guard is out there  
now with choppers and two cutters,  
but...

His voice trails off. Eric stops pacing.

ERIC

But what?

RANDY

Eric, the yacht had probably gone 80 to 100 miles after he went overboard. To be able to pinpoint where he is, even with no currents pushing him around...it's not good, man. It's like finding a needle in a haystack the size of Rhode Island.

Eric curses silently.

RANDY (CONT'D)

And you know dad. Never wore a life vest when he was on that yacht.

ERIC

The dumb ass. What was he thinking? Listen, where are you now?

RANDY

Galveston. Harbor Club at our dock.

ERIC

I'll be there in an hour.

Eric hangs up the phone and puts his hands to his face.

ERIC (CONT'D)

What. The. Fuck?

He looks at the package that still sits on his desk. He picks it up and races out the door.

INT. LAW OFFICE HALLWAY

Eric moves quickly out of his office, dodging people as he goes. He YELLS over his shoulder to Carolina.

ERIC

Carolina, I'm gone the rest of the day!

CAROLINA

(after Eric)

What? Where are you going?

ERIC

I'll call you later!

INT. STACY'S OFFICE

Eric stops at Stacy's office. The door is open, and she is seated at her desk. She looks up to see him standing before. He is visibly shaken, but says nothing.

STACY  
(nervously)  
Eric? What's wrong?

INT. YACHT -- AFTERNOON

Petr Svensen sits in his captain's chair on the bridge of the yacht. CAPTAIN JACK FISHER (31) and LIEUTENANT JOE RILEY (28), U.S. Coast Guard Investigators, stand near him, examining logs and computer screens. Svensen looks as if he hasn't slept in three days. Birgit stands in the background.

FISHER  
Have you printed out your electronic logs for the trip?

PETR  
No. There's been no time. I made the call to the Coast Guard as soon as we discovered he was missing. I proceeded directly here to the dock when I learned that the Coast Guard had already initiated a search response.

Fisher makes some notes in a small pad.

RILEY  
And what time did you first discover him missing?

BIRGIT  
About 5:30 this morning. I went to wake him, as he requested, and discovered he was not in his room. The bed had not even been slept in. I went through every cabin and compartment looking...but...

Tears begin to fill her eyes. She looks away from the investigators.

FISHER  
What was the weather conditions last evening during your trip in?

PETR

Fairly calm. Maybe a little chop.  
Winds about 11 knots from the east.  
Clear skies.

RILEY

And your radar didn't pick up anything  
during that time period?

PETR

Nothing out of the ordinary--it  
certainly wouldn't have detected him  
falling overboard.

Fisher studies Petr for a moment.

RILEY

Do we have your permission to bring  
a team on to search the yacht?

PETR

Absolutely. There is nothing to  
hide on my part.

Fisher nods to Riley, who immediately gets on his cell phone  
to make a call.

INT./EXT. AUTOMOBILE - AFTERNOON

Eric and Stacy are on the highway out of Houston to Galveston.  
Stacy drives while Eric sits in the passenger seat. He stares  
blankly ahead.

STACY

Do you want to call Randy back? See  
if he's heard anything?

Eric shakes his head. Stacy notices a package down by Eric's  
feet.

STACY (CONT'D)

What's the package for?

ERIC

What? Oh...don't know. Came for me  
by Fed Ex about the same time I got  
the call about dad.

STACY

Why not open it? Get your mind on  
something else for a little bit?

Eric looks at the package for a moment, then picks it up. He appears unsure whether to open it.

STACY (CONT'D)

Go on. Now you've got me curious.

Eric proceeds to tear open one end of the package. He looks inside and pulls out a black object and holds it up for Stacy to see.

STACY (CONT'D)

Is that a cell phone?

ERIC

(puzzled)

Yeah...but it looks weird. Liked a really suped-up Blackberry.

STACY

No manufacturer's box it came in? Just was mailed to you like that?

Eric nods as he examines the phone.

STACY (CONT'D)

Anything else in there?

Eric digs around in the box. He pulls out paper that was used to cushion the phone for shipping, then looks in and spots something. He pulls out a piece of paper and examines it.

ERIC

A note.

STACY

To you?

ERIC

I guess. It's not addressed or signed.

STACY

So? What's it say?

ERIC

(Reading)

"You'll need this. More to come."

Stacy stares over at Eric. He's turning the phone over and over.

ERIC (CONT'D)

I think it's a sat phone.

STACY

A sat phone? What's the difference between that and a cell phone? Don't they use satellites as well?

ERIC

Yeah, but cell phones are limited in their range unless a tower is around to bounce a signal off it to a satellite. Sat phones bypass the cell phone and go right to the satellite, so they can pretty much be used anywhere in the world.

STACY

But who would send you something like that? Your dad?

Eric examines the box again. CU on the Fed Ex label on the box. Eric shakes his head.

ERIC

Don't think so--this package was sent from an Austin Fed Ex store.

STACY

Try turning it on. Maybe something else happens.

Eric presses a button on the phone and it lights up. Reception bars move up and down on the phone screen. Then nothing.

ERIC

Well, this is pretty point--

The phone RINGS.

ERIC (CONT'D)

--holy shit!

The phone continues to ring.

STACY

Well, answer it, for God's sake!

Eric searches for the answer button on the keypad, then presses it and holds the phone up to his ear.

ERIC

Hello?

A deeply mysterious MALE VOICE on the other end.

MALE VOICE (V.O.)

Eric Murdoch?

ERIC

Yes--who is this?

MALE VOICE (V.O.)

Write this number down.

Eric looks incredulous. Stacy appears concerned.

ERIC

Wait--what? A number? What are you talking about?

MALE VOICE (V.O.)

1144--

Eric is furiously searching for a pen in the car.

ERIC

--Wait, wait, wait!!

He finally finds one.

ERIC (CONT'D)

1..1..

MALE VOICE (V.O.)

--9995872.

ERIC

4,4, was that two or three 9's? I don't know if...

The caller hangs up, and all Eric can do is stare at the phone, then at Stacy. He is seriously freaked out.

STACY

What in the world?

ERIC

No fucking idea. Holy shit.