



Not like back home. There were always eyes watching him there — watching and waiting.

“Hey, Four-eyes! Can’t you wash those fly spots off your face?”

Back home he lived in the shadows . . . but not here.

His body tensed for the chill of that first plunge — cold water filling his ears, making his heart pound from the sheer icy shock of it. Then bursting to the surface, gasping for air; strong strokes slicing through the water, salt stinging his eyes.

Out to the Rock. The Rock lay dead-centre in the bay, shaped like a shark fin, slicing through the swells that rolled over its black, wet body. Five hundred yards there, then flop up on the warm sandstone like a seal, panting for breath. Warming himself in the rising sun. Then back to the beach, body tingling from the exertion. Up out of the tide, dripping, gasping, shaking the sea from his hair, feeling like a prince surveying his kingdom. That was when he had seen the first body.

Initially, Jack had thought it was a log, bleached from the ocean, lying half in the water at the tideline. Yet something about how it lay, rolling with the tide, made him take a closer look.

As he approached it, a swarm of flies and the rotting smell of dead things stopped him in his tracks. It was the body of a man, bloated and wrinkled from the sea, eyes long gone, fingers splayed and floating like seaweed.

Jack doubled up and vomited on to the sand. His first instinct was to run and get help. But that would’ve been useless. Wetapunga Bay was isolated, the nearest town twenty miles away, the nearest phone the same.

He was camping alone, with just a pup tent and enough supplies to last for a couple of weeks. The headland above the bay, where he’d set up camp, belonged to his grandfather, part of a farm that covered more than a thousand acres. The farmhouse was at least one hour’s walk inland, but it had been empty these past five years, ever since his grandfather had retired and moved into the city. The phone line had been disconnected anyway.

A small swell gently rolled the body on to its side, causing a swarm of sea lice to scuttle for cover. Jack turned away, repelled.

That’s when he saw the second body. It was higher up the beach, face down in the wet sand.