

SUMMARY

As a surprise birthday present, JOEY is taking CHARLIE on a two-week sail to Norfolk Island. This is disastrous news for CHARLIE who has a morbid fear of deep water. In her panic, she lets slip to a bemused LEAH that she intends faking a recall to work just to get out of going.

**INT. DAY - BEACHSIDE DINER
(LEAH, CHARLIE, COLLEEN)**

LEAH sits with CHARLIE watching her nervously cradle a herbal tea, while COLLEEN is serving the day's first customers.

LEAH
What makes you think you can get away
with this?

CHARLIE
Pure unadulterated fear?

LEAH
Joey's an experienced sailor. I'm sure
you'll be in safe hands.

CHARLIE
You don't understand - I will be a
nervous wreck the entire time. I will
completely ruin her surprise.

LEAH
(under her breath)
I think Joey is the one who's in for a
surprise.

CHARLIE glares at LEAH.

LEAH
(continuing; laughs)
Come on! I'm just saying - you're a cop.
How can you not know how to swim?
Don't you have to pass a test?

CHARLIE

I can swim - as long as I can see the bottom.

LEAH

Well, shallower waters, then?

CHARLIE

No, it's all deep, dark - deep...

CHARLIE grips her tea, staring into it.

LEAH

Oh boy - then wear a lifejacket the whole time. Admittedly it'll look a little weird, not to mention unromantic. But on the bright side, Joey won't be stuck with any sudden burials at sea.

CHARLIE

Do you have any idea how embarrassing it is for someone my age to admit they're afraid of the water? I'm supposed to be the capable one.

LEAH

Since when? Besides, lots of people have phobias, and it's not too late to get help. Isn't that right, Colleen?

CHARLIE'S shoulders slump as COLLEEN stops by their table.

COLLEEN

What's that, love?

LEAH

You're never too old to take up swimming.

COLLEEN

Of course not - been thinking of having a few lessons, meself. Brush up on me dog paddle.

LEAH

Colleen, you grew up in the Bay. You can't swim?

COLLEEN

Only on me back, and it'd have to be a calm day. 'Otter' they used to call me...probably because me mother was a Waters. 'Course, being a local, I am aware of the dangers of the sea - Noah's Arks, sea urchins, barracuda - nasty little buggers; rips, tidal waves. We haven't had one of those for a while...which probably means we're due another one. Or some other disaster...

COLLEEN walks to the counter to rummage through her handbag.

CHARLIE

Kill me.

LEAH

(snickers)

I know! They called her 'Otto'?

CHARLIE

What am I going to do?

LEAH

It's up to you, but I don't think lying to Joey is a good idea, do you?

CHARLIE

It couldn't hurt.

LEAH frowns at CHARLIE as COLLEEN returns holding aloft a crumpled leaflet.

COLLEEN

Here you go - 'Swimming for Beginners' every Tuesday down at the pier. It's for the oldies, but I'm sure they wouldn't mind you joining in, Leah.

LEAH

Oh no, it's not for me. It's for Charlie.

LEAH winces, realizing she's blurted CHARLIE'S secret.

COLLEEN

Charlie? Well that's a touch ironic, isn't it? A girl who can't swim, dating a sailor? And you being a police officer as well. Oh well, beggars can't be choosers, I suppose.

COLLEEN stalks off to serve a customer.

CHARLIE

I can't do this. Dog paddling around the Bay isn't going to solve anything. You have to help me think of an excuse.

LEAH

Are you insane? I would sell my mother to go sailing for two weeks. Find yourself another accomplice.

COLLEEN

(yells across the room)

Ah, Constable Buckton! Just had a thought - I've got loads of old cozzies in me bottom drawer if you need to borrow one. I can even lend you a set of me nose plugs if you like.

CHARLIE

(morose)

Thanks.

LEAH

(pats CHARLIE'S arm)

And I can lend you VJ's floaties. He doesn't need them anymore.

CHARLIE

This is serious!

LEAH

I know! Which is why you need to tell Joey.

CHARLIE

Can't I just go with Plan 'A'?

LEAH

No, you are not cancelling this trip.
Even if it means you have to float on
your back like Otto.

CHARLIE

Fine, but I'm not the only one with a
secret -.

(leans across the table)

Am I, Leah?

LEAH

You wouldn't...

CHARLIE

Try me.

LEAH'S eyes dart nervously beneath CHARLIE'S pointed stare.

FADE OUT