

DEAD MAN'S ISLAND

My name is Carol Sanders. I live in England now, but when I was younger, I lived in Hong Kong. My father was a businessman there and my mother worked as a secretary. We lived in Hong Kong for seven years.

I was happy at school. I liked pop music. Jake Rosso was my favourite singer. He died in a car accident the year I left school. My father went to Australia on business. He was in Australia for two weeks. Then, one day of his journey home, an aeroplane from Sydney crashed into the sea just south of Hong Kong. My father and everybody on the plane died. I cried for weeks and weeks. Then I stopped crying and feeling sad. I began to feel angry. I thought, "Why do the best people die? Jake Rosso. My father."

At the time of the plane crash, I was a student at college. After my father's death I stopped doing my work at the college. I began to go out with some new friends. Then I learned my new friends took drugs, and I began to take drugs, too. The police came to the college to arrest some of the students. They didn't arrest me, but I had to leave the college. My mother was very unhappy with me. "We'll go back to England. You can find a college there. Perhaps you can be happier in England," she said. "All right," I said. I want to forget what's happened. A month later, we came back to England. We lived in London, in a hotel. I began to forget the bad times in Hong Kong.

After a few weeks, my mother said, "You need to find a college, Carol. You must go on studying. And I need a job." That evening, I showed my mother a job in the newspaper. These were writing: 'For the summer months on a small private island in Scotland.....Phone Greta Ross.....' "I'd like to work as a secretary on an island in Scotland, Carol, and you can go to a college there in the autumn," said my mother. She telephoned Greta Ross. "Come to the Savoy Hotel and see me tomorrow," Greta Ross told her. I went to the Savoy Hotel with my mother. Greta Ross was waiting for us. Then Greta Ross took my mother into a room and asked her more questions. I waited outside. Soon after, my mother came out. Greta Ross said, "I want to make a phone call." I was sitting on a chair near the door, and I could just hear Greta Ross's voice speaking on the phone. She was saying, "...Don't worry, they've been away from England

for ten years...It'll be all right, I tell you...Don't worry." After a few minutes, "You've got the job," she told my mother. "Thank you," my mother replied. I was pleased, too, but now I was worried about that phone call. We went to Scotland the next day, first by plane, then by train. Greta Ross travelled with us. "You're going to be my husband's secretary," Greta Ross told my mother. He's businessman, but he never leaves the island. He does all his work by telephone and letter and computer." "Greta Ross is young," I thought. "Is her husband young, too? How can a young man buy an island? Is he very rich?" After the train, we went on Mr. Ross's boat. The boatman was a young man. "This is Tony," said Greta Ross. Soon we were near the island. "There are dangerous rocks around the island," explained Tony. "But the rocks keep other boats away, and that pleases Mr. Ross. Because he doesn't like visitors to the island," Tony said in a quiet voice. "Why doesn't Mr. Ross like visitors? I thought. "Has he something to hide?"

When we arrived on the island, my mother and I followed Greta up to the house. A woman was waiting inside the house. "This is Mrs. Duncan, Tony's mother," said Greta. "She's the housekeeper and her husband is the gardener. Mrs. Duncan will take you up to your rooms." The housekeeper went up the stairs, and my mother and I went after her. My room was next to my mother's. That evening, we had dinner with Mr. and Mrs. Duncan and Tony. We finished eating our meal. Soon after, Greta Ross came into the kitchen. "Mr. Ross wants to see you and your daughter now, Mrs. Sanders," she said. "Follow me please." We followed her through the house and into a big room. I was surprised. He was a young man, about thirty. Mr. Ross was speaking into the telephone. "Please, sit down," said Greta. Mr. Ross finished speaking on the phone, then looked carefully at my mother and me. Then he said, "I'm pleased to meet you, Mrs. Sanders. I need some help with my work. Sometimes you'll have to work late at night. Is that all right?" "Yes, that's all right," said my mother. "Good." Said he and looked at me, "Is this your daughter?" said. "Yes, this is Carol," said my mother. "Greta says you like gardening. There's a big garden here, so you can help Mr. Duncan. And there's a horse called Smoke. Can you ride?" he said. "Yes, I can ride a horse," I said. Mr. Ross looks sad," I thought. "But how did he get all his money? And why does he hide away on an island?"

I worked in the garden for the first two days. One afternoon I went out riding. When we came out of the trees, I saw the house from the other side. Suddenly, I saw a face at one of the windows. The face was looking at me. "Who was that?" I thought. I didn't see my mother very much that first week. Sometimes, she worked after I was in bed. She told me, "Mr. Ross invents money in many companies and countries. But it's not his money. It's his wife money. Everything belongs to her." "But why does Mr. Ross always look sad? And why does he never leave the island? I asked. "I don't now," said my mother. "He says he likes it here and likes working on his farm."

Sometimes, when I finished work, I went swimming in the sea. Greta Ross often came to the beach to swim, but Mr. Ross never came. No boats stopped at our island. They kept away from

the dangerous rocks. Tony was right. The island did not have visitors.

One day, I was walking back to the house, and had my camera with me. "I'm going to take a photograph of the house," I thought. And I took the photograph. Mr. Ross was coming out of door. He was in my picture, too, and he looked angry. Mr. Duncan came quickly up to me and said, "Give me your camera." "What's wrong?" I asked in surprise. I gave him the camera. "Never take photographs of Mr. Ross," he said. And then he opened the back of my camera and took out the film. "Sorry, but no pictures of Mr. Ross. He doesn't like people to take pictures of him," he said. Mr. Ross was watching us. But he said nothing. Then he went back into the house. Later, I told my mother about Mr. Duncan and the camera. "I don't understand," she said. About a week later, I finished work early one day and came back to the house. I walked along the passage and turned a corner. Then I saw the door at the end of the passage. "Where does that door go?" I thought. I remembered the face at the window in my first week on the island. "Perhaps it's the door to that room," I thought. I walked along to the door and turned the handle. It was locked. "What are you doing!" said a voice behind me. I turned round quickly and saw Greta Ross. "That room is private, stay away from there," she told me. I told my mother about the locked door. "What's behind it?" I said. "Is it a secret?" "I don't know, stop playing detective, Carol" said my mother. Two days later there was a storm in the middle of the night. I was hot and I couldn't sleep. I looked at the over windows in the house. Most of them were dark. But one window had a light in it. There were six windows between my window and the room with the light. I thought, "That light is in the locked room. Somebody's in there!" I went out of my room. I walked along the passage and turned the corner. There was a light under the locked room's door! I went nearer and heard noises. Somebody came out of the room, and into the dark passage. Lightning suddenly lit up the house, and I saw who it was. "It's Mr. Ross!" I thought. "What was he doing in that room in the middle of the night?" He hid the key in the plant pot next to the door. "He's coming along here," I thought. I ran back along the passage. Mr. Ross heard me. "Who's that?" he called. I didn't answer, but ran into my room and closed the door. Then he walked past and went on down the stairs.

"Now I know how to get into the locket room," I thought. "But what's in there?"

I got up early and worked on the farm. Later, I went back into the house for breakfast. After breakfast, I went back upstairs. There was nobody in the passage and I ran along to the locked room. The key was still in the plant pot and I took it out. Then I unlocked the door. I went into the room...and I was very surprised. There were posters and photographs on the walls. I looked at the posters. Jake Rosso's face looked down at me. I began to see another face in the posters. An older face, and with a moustache, but the same face. I saw the face of Mr. Ross. "Mr. Ross is...Jake Rosso!" "No!" said a voice behind me. I turned round and saw Mr. Ross. He looked...afraid. "He was...my brother." "That's not true!" I shouted. "You were my favourite pop star, so I know." Then he said, "It was you in the passage last night, wasn't it?" "Yes," I

answered. Then he turned round. "Ok, you're right. I...I am Jake Rosso." He looked worried and unhappy. "Can you keep a secret?" I said, "Yes, I can keep a secret." Then he told me. "The other people on this island are my family. My real name is James Duncan, and Mr and Mrs. Duncan are my father and mother. Tony is my younger brother." "But what are you doing here on this island? I don't understand." "I'll tell you," he said. "I took drugs, and I drank a lot of alcohol. I did stupid, terrible things. "I can understand that," I told him. "I've taken drugs, too. He looked surprised. "You have?" "Yes," I said. But go on with your story." He went on. "One night, I was driving my car. I was drunk and I hit somebody. A young girl. She...died. I killed her. I wanted to die, too. The money didn't matter any more. I drove on in the car. I didn't stop, and I didn't tell the police. So I made a plan. Jake Rosso had to die, too. It was the best thing to do. And so...I "killed" him. He took my hand, and we walked out of the room and closed the door.

I never went into the room again, and I didn't tell anybody. My mother and I left the island at the end of the summer. Soon after, I went to college. My life is better now. I work on a farm in England and my mother works in an office. I haven't been back to the island.

But I know there's a "dead man" living there.

-----THE END-----