



The Wild twins

Bad things were coming. Danger. Darkness. Cold. Fear. Worst of all, an unknown enemy.

But that time wasn't today. Today Alex and his twin sister Abby had no thoughts of enemies, cold or danger. Their parents had surprised them with something wonderful.

Their father had woken them early, as the sun was coming up. Usually he was at work before this. 'Okay, Alex, Abby,' he called into both their rooms. 'Time to get up. Today's special.'

'What's special today, Dad?' Alex asked.

It wasn't their birthday. That was nearly five months away. Alex and Abby Wild were both fifteen. To everybody, they were the 'Wild Twins'. Today was just a usual Saturday.

Or was it?

Their father already had breakfast on the table.

'Are we going somewhere?' asked Abby, pouring her milk.

Their mother, Eleanor Wild, had a serious face. 'We've got something important to tell you,' she said.

'Is it about school?' Alex asked.

'No. Well ... maybe.' Their mother smiled. 'It will mean big changes for this family – if we do it. I'll let your dad tell you.'

Robert Wild was a scientist. He studied sea animals. For years he had worked at the American Museum of Natural History in New York. The twins often went there. They loved all the wonderful things on show – the dinosaurs, the animals from all around the world, the rocks – but best of all, they loved their father's part of the museum, *Life under the Sea*.

One day, Alex wanted to be a scientist too.

Abby also loved science – and writing stories. She wanted to be like their mother. Eleanor was a doctor and a writer. She wrote books about science, for adults and for children.



Robert moved his breakfast things away and brought some large papers to the table. 'There's a lot to explain. You know about my work at the museum. But you don't know about this. I've been working on this with your grandfather for months.'

The twins' grandfather lived in Maine. He was always full of ideas for new things. Things like small parts for car engines, but also bigger things like boats and light aircraft. Building them had made him rich.

Robert turned the papers towards the twins. They were drawings. 'This is for exploring the sea. Science knows almost nothing about the deep sea. What is it like down there? What kind of animals live in the deep? I want to explore it.'

The first drawing showed a ball with three windows like eyes. There were lines pointing everywhere with numbers and notes in their father's writing. The other drawings were closer views of parts of the ball.

'What is it?' asked Abby.

'It's a bathysphere,' said Alex. 'Like Beebe and Barton's.'

'Yes!' His father gave a big smile. 'How did you know?'

'I read, Dad. You've got books everywhere.'

'Who are Beebe and the other one?' Abby asked.

Alex answered, 'The only people to explore deep, deep down in the sea. They went down in a bathysphere years ago.'

'In the early 1930s,' their mother said. 'Their deepest dive was in 1934, the year you were born. Nobody has done it since then. Your father wants to be next.'

'And you're going to build this?' Abby said.

Their father gave a big smile. 'We've already started building it. At your granddad's steel company in Maine.'

The twins looked at him, amazed.

'But isn't it dangerous?' Abby asked. 'What about the water pressure deep under the sea? It must be extreme down there.'

'Yes, the pressure is extreme,' her father nodded. 'It's nearly one hundred times greater than on the surface. But you know

your grandfather – he’s building it strong. It’s made of steel. Its walls are four and a half centimetres thick.’

‘That’s Granddad Harry,’ Alex laughed.

‘He always wants things safe,’ said Robert.

‘How does it work?’ asked Abby.

‘It’s taken out to sea on a ship, and then a big crane lowers it into the water. It goes down on a long steel cable. It’s big enough for two people. The question is: what comes next?’

‘The bathysphere will soon be ready for testing,’ Eleanor said.

‘I want to begin in two or three months,’ Robert said. ‘But we have to make a decision.’

‘What decision?’ Alex asked.

‘Beebe and Barton did their dives from Bermuda. I need to go there.’

‘Bermuda? That’s in the Caribbean, isn’t it?’ Abby said.

‘Close enough. The Atlantic.’ Their father looked at them seriously. ‘It’s a long way away. I need to be there for about a year. We’re a family. Do I go alone or do we all go?’

‘To Bermuda?’ Abby’s eyes opened wide.

‘If you go, you’ll be leaving home, leaving your schools, leaving all your friends,’ said Robert. ‘Do you want to do that?’

‘Your dad’s right,’ said Eleanor. ‘This won’t be easy. Leaving friends is hard. And there will be schoolwork – that won’t change. It won’t be a holiday. It’s a big decision.’

Alex thought fast. The twins had always been interested in animals. They had often gone on holidays looking for sea life with their parents. But nothing like this.

‘Or you three can stay here and I can go alone,’ Robert said.

‘Can we help with the bathysphere?’ Alex asked.

‘Yes.’

‘Can we dive down under the water too?’ said Abby.

‘I don’t know. Maybe.’

Alex and Abby were thinking just one thing: *This is amazing.*

‘What do you think?’ their father said. ‘Stay or go?’

This is the German version of **Into the Deep Unknown**

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