

4-8-15-16-23-42 – Story So Far... – Part 6

Note: Scenes with a large group of characters may not always make linear sense due to overlapping posts by the players.
Note: RPG picks up during the episode 'Live Together Die Alone' at the end of Season 2. The game diverts from some of the events in that episode.

Note: File dates and posting numbers may overlap due to multithreading.

Note: This file covers posts dating Sept 2, 2008 (post #615) – ongoing

Continued from Part 5....

Hydra Station – Research Lab – Present Time

Juliet looked up innocently enough. Of course he would have found his file, that was still there and no one had bothered to remove it. So she would play along. She looked at him and then looked at the file putting her work down for a moment.

"Miller... well, if she has a file then she was in the plane crash. I think I heard them mention her before, how she was being uncooperative, and locked away." Juliet said shrugging, her brow furrowing as she flipped through the files pages. "She's a good candidate for the fertility research, but she's been deemed too aggressive for that. There's a note here that they are trying therapy." she said and rolled her eyes, convincingly as she thought it was quite silly.

She looked up then, innocent eyes looking at him with concern. "Sorry I don't know more. I missed meeting a lot of the other survivors." she said softly. Then sighed, looking back at her work trying to remember what her next step was, troubled. She hated to deceive him, and she hated the idea that they were practically torturing some of the survivors. Tapping into that emotion made her truly care about these people and she could only hope she would be able to help them down the line... when Ben's promises were kept.

Jack was anxious to find out more and to get answers as to just what the hell Ben was playing at here. There was no way his file was just left there casually for him to find. Ben wanted him to see this information for a reason but what that reason was was as much of a mystery as the man himself.

To Jack's analytical mind it was all pieces to a puzzle and every puzzle had a finite number of pieces, he simply had to put those pieces together. The problem was he didn't know what that finite number was which made solving the problem that much more difficult.

Looking back at the file again he flipped to the next page and found some more revelations that if the information hadn't been fabricated to begin with, were even more disturbing. The mitochondrial sequencing indicated that he and this Cara Miller had different mothers but the rest of the DNA sequencing tests indicated that they had the same biological father. Mitochondrial comparative testing could easily be performed without getting DNA samples from the mother but the tests they had run to determine paternal matching definitely required a sample. This meant that Ben or one of his lackeys had somehow gotten a sample from Christian Shephard at some point prior to the crash or they knew where his remains were after the crash.

Jack illogically glanced up at the lab as though expecting his father's body to be laid out on an exam table right there but of course the table only had the various pieces of medical equipment on it. Jack could practically hear Locke in his head telling him the island had willed this turn of events and that this was no coincidence, fate had brought Jack and this potential half-sibling together.

He didn't believe in fate though. The probability of Jack and a half-sibling being on the same plane at the same time and crashing on this island together were astronomical but they were not impossible and Jack held onto that. It was much easier to believe in beating highly unlikely odds than it was in divine intervention.

The last item he found in the file was a small and grainy photo of a woman dressed in an army uniform smoking a cigarette. Her hair was short and blonde, and she wore her makeup a little heavy. There was something about her that looked vaguely familiar but he figured his mind was probably searching for similarities that weren't there. In short, he had no idea who she was.

Jack came to the conclusion that it had to be some twisted little trick of Ben's. He knew his father had not always been faithful to his mother but there was no way Christian had fathered some other child and kept that from Jack all his life.

Closing the file Jack tossed it carelessly down onto the silvery table top and looked up stubbornly at Juliet, "I'm not buying it. Whatever it is that Ben wants he can just come out and tell me..."

Looking at the closed door to the lab he shouted angrily for the guards to hear, "and stop the mind games!"

Juliet couldn't help but jump at his outburst, and then looked at him cautiously, and nodded. "Well, he is all about going around the point, but he usually has his reasons,.. that he won't tell us of course." she said softly, eyeing the file and then Jack. He was clearly upset about all this.

"You may want to keep your voice down though, unless you want them coming back in here, looking for an excuse to rough you up; or whatever they have planned."

Jack was spoiling for a fight and was half-tempted to shout again at their captors but he knew with them having tazers it was pointless for now. He would bide his time and either wait for an opportunity to present itself or find some way to create one.

Returning to the file he examined the photo again but still did not recognize the young woman pictured. The haunted look in her eye made him think she had had a life marked with pain and loss. There was a hardness there too as though she'd built a wall around herself to protect herself from further anguish.

Los Angeles – 12 years ago

Jack stood alone at the large window in his parent's parlour having been summoned from school by his father.

Probably for another one of his lectures on always striving to be the best at everything. he thought to himself not looking forward to it but remaining nonetheless since it was expected of him.

He turned when he heard the door open and saw his father step in with careful, measured movements looking serious and burdened. He looked at Jack like a man who had grave news and had been practicing what to say but still found himself at a loss for words.

"What is it?" Jack asked cutting the point. He wondered momentarily if his father was going to tell him his mother had found out about one of his affairs and they were getting divorced as a result. If that were the case Jack simply wanted the man to get to the point. It's not like it would be a surprise or anything, at least not to Jack. Maybe for the friends, colleagues and community who all thought Christian Shephard was the ultimate model citizen who everyone should look up to and admire.

"I..uh..." Christian started and then pinched the bridge of his nose and squinted as though fighting off a headache. Stretching the muscles in his face for a second he looked at Jack and finally said, "I have some bad news."

"What?" Jack asked a little more impatiently since he had work and school to get back to.

"It's about... Karen." Christian replied his expression turning remorseful.

"What about Karen, I just talked to her a few days ago." Jack said of his childhood friend and made a mental note that he should call her when he got home. They had chatted briefly but it had been at least a few weeks since they had really talked since the demands of school kept him so busy.

He and Karen Hunter had grown up close, attending the same schools, going to many of the same community functions, even family vacations had sometimes been spent together. Jack had been protective of Karen throughout elementary and high school that some people mistakenly thought they were cousins or even siblings on occasion. Karen was always quick to correct them and say they were simply good friends and then Jack would tease her that he would have to start pulling her pig tails and calling her names if they had been.

"She and her mother died in a boating accident yesterday." Christian stated flatly and with a certain inflection of disbelief as though it didn't feel real to him either.

"What? No." Jack replied looking at his father with confusion as though that was the craziest thing he'd ever heard.

"They were just planning a tour of the harbor. Who told you this?" Jack asked his voice sounding demanding and distraught at the same time. "It's wrong. They got it wrong."

"I'm sorry Jack. I know you and Karen used to be very close." Christian said seeming to subtly put emphasis on the words 'used to'. The guilt stabbed at Jack who was wavering between denial and despair. He had been so focused on school and work that he had gone longer and longer without calling or hanging out with Karen. He should have done more to keep close, should have set aside time on a regular basis to visit or go out for a drink. Something. Anything.

"No." Jack said again, his face full of anguish and guilt.

Christian closed the distance between them and put an arm around his son, stopping short of a hug and said in a more stable tone, "You have no idea how sorry I am Jack."

New Otherton – Barracks – Present Time

After a surprisingly good meal, as the therapist chick had promised, Cara felt her whole body relax a little. She felt soothed, but it could have been the warm meal in her stomach, after weeks of small torturous rations; most of which got thrown at the guards. So Harper had come through after all. That had been very unexpected, and she was beginning to question what she thought of the hard woman who asked one too many questions. What was the woman angling for anyway and why did they insist that this island now was her home. She would not bend on that, ever... even if that meant that the warm satisfying meal she was comforted with was her last.

She lay on her tiny mattress and looked up at the window, filled with nothing but green from the island. Why was she being held prisoner and why had all this hellishness been brought on her? What had she done to deserve such a life? Well, no matter now... after losing family in all different ways she had toughened up and would protect herself. It was Cara against the world, and that was all there was.

Cara closed her eyes and drifted away, thinking of her Mom in the hospital back home, and just wishing she could go home and tell her things would be okay... but that was a farfetched idea; as farfetched as having Jack show up on the same insane island; a prisoner to? She wondered about that.

Soon she was sleeping soundly, another rarity for her, and her body would have stayed at peace, if not for the nightmares. They were the reason she hardly slept, and she knew them by heart now. They wrenched her back to the day her world fell apart; a hot desert road, the heat immeasurably stifling and her last moments with the love of her life. A quiet loving moment shattered with an explosion that tore through her soul and ruined her future. She could still smell the smoke, hear the noise and see her man die before her.

This time was no different, and no matter how she knew the nightmare by heart it didn't prepare her at all. She woke up suddenly screaming, sweating bullets, and fighting raging tears.

Hydra Station – Jungle

Sawyer took a good look round, he tried to be as quiet as possible with wasn't always easy. He trod on a dry stick and the crack that it made sounded very loud. No one shouted or came after him so he called softly up to Kate.

"You can come down now."

Kate held her breath till Sawyer had safely reached the jungle floor, trying to keep an eye out in the direction of the compound while he searched the ground, flinching as he made more noise than a bear on rollerskates. Without making a verbal reply, Kate climbed down swiftly, landing gracefully on her feet, wiping her hands off on the back of her dress. "So far so good." She gave him a confident smile.

Sawyer searched for a suitable place to build a shelter. He found two trees that had grown close together one leaning towards the other to form a natural hiding place between the two trunks. Sawyer began to collect leaf covered branches to obscure the opening as much as he could. It wouldn't have to last them long just until darkness began to fall then they could make their move.

He couldn't help glancing at Kate as he worked. She looked good even in her ripped, dirty dress, He could think of worse ways of spending a few hours than being in close proximity to Kate.

Kate worked alongside Sawyer, making their little fort as camouflaged as possible for the circumstances. Feeling Sawyer's eyes upon her, she felt her cheeks color a little under the scrutiny. There was little she could do to cover what her torn dress revealed and once again she longed for the easy comfort of her jeans and tshirt, worn though they were, able to guess what was going through Sawyer's mind.

Not that she hadn't caught sight of the way his well muscled body moved while building their little fort, but Kate like to think she had more self control than to give in to such thoughts. At least most of the time she did, she was only human after all.

"I think this looks pretty good. I'll get inside and you tell me if you can see anything from out there, ok?"

"Sounds like a plan," Sawyer drawled. It had been good working with Kate. She was able to anticipate just what he wanted her to do next and she hadn't wasted any time talking while they built the shelter.

He watched with appreciation as she crawled into the makeshift 'hide' that they'd built. She certainly did have a very nice butt.

Kate crawled inside through the small opening they'd left on the far side of the enclosure and held very very still, barely able to see Sawyer from between the cover of the branches. "Well? Can you see me?" She called out, impatient for him to get out of sight, after all they had no idea how long it would be until someone noticed their escape and came after them.

It wasn't too claustrophobic inside the little space, the branches kept it from feeling too closed in. Of course she was alone in there, it might feel a great deal more crowded once Sawyer fit inside. That might give a whole new meaning to the idea of togetherness.

"It'll do," Sawyer said finally. "If they don't actually fall over us we should be OK. Move over Freckles I'm coming in."

He was about to crawl in and get cosy with Kate when a voice behind him made him spin round, his hand reaching for a weapon that he didn't have.

Hydra Station – Research Lab – Present Time

"I don't know what Ben is playing at but I don't have some mysterious sister who just *happened* to end up on the same island as me." Jack stated flatly before flipping the cover closed once more. Moving over to the rest of the stack he simply stood there staring at the pile clearly deep in thought.

Juliet watched Jack carefully, hoping he wouldn't push the envelope with the guards. And when he turned back to the file she watched him carefully, as she worked absentmindedly on her test tubes. He seemed to be deep in thought, far away from the lab or island. She was curious as to what he was thinking but didn't want to pry.. if he wanted to share however that was a different thing entirely.

So when he finally spoke she looked up casually and shrugged her shoulders. "Well, that maybe, and I'm sure you would know it if you did have a sibling... besides what are the chances of that happening.." she mused softly. "Still.. the way Ben works; he's not the type to bait someone with a file full of data.. I've found him much more blunt. He may of left that there, not remembering it when he got you to come work in this lab.. " she said simply. She wouldn't bring up the manipulation she was put through when she first got to the island, but a lot of what she was saying on Ben's behalf was said through gritted teeth.

Hydra Station – Jungle

Alex had found herself, again, left to her own devices. After snagging a few things to stash for later, among them a few candy bars, she drifted back into the jungle with every intention of just spending an afternoon 'playing hooky' this time. True, that didn't usually last long. She was her father's daughter and inaction did not become her. Nevertheless, she

intended to stretch out on a rock somewhere and snack and think.

She definitely wasn't going to look for the missing prisoners. If Raven and the others hadn't noticed yet, then more power to them.

Alex kept telling herself that, even as she followed the minor changes in what was effectively her own backyard. She followed the voices to a stop and showed herself only after they seemed to be done playing.

"You surprised me." Alex said, dropping from her tree.

"And you scared the bejusus out of me," Sawyer replied. He eyed the girl warily. "Don't you go screaming for the guards," he said. "I'd hate to have to hit you but I will if necessary."

Alex shook her head with a small, sardonic, roll of her eyes. "If I were going to turn you in-- you'd already be back in your cages."

She eyed the little shelter and nodded to herself. "You planning to lay low and rescue the others like redneck ninja?" Her tone expressed a breed of admiration along with a certain cynicism as to the likelihood of the pair's success.

A quick glance over her shoulder showed her that they were, for the time being, more or less alone. Sawyer might take it that he wasn't her primary fear or concern, and he wouldn't be wrong.

Kate froze inside the shelter at the sound of a new voice, peering through the branches as she tried to gauge just how many of them there were. Once it was clear it was just the girl and she didn't seem intent on bringing them in, she crawled out, dusting her hands off on the back of her dress. "What are you doing out here?" She asked the girl, moving to stand by Sawyer's side.

Hopefully they wouldn't have to harm the girl, she seemed an innocent, but appearances could be deceiving. At any rate she might be useful as a bargaining tool. Perhaps a trade could be in order...

"Maybe we won't need to now." She gave Sawyer a meaningful look, moving to flank the girl, in case they had to make a grab for her.

Alex left off her listening to the jungle to frown at Kate. She was fast-- but if they were going to attack both at once, then she would just have to pick the right target and hope it threw the other one off long enough to listen. The teen sighed. "Hello, Kate. Are Claire and the baby doing all right?"

The girl's question confused Kate, did Alex somehow think Claire and Aaron had escaped with them? Why else would she ask about them?

She shook her head. "I'm out here following you-- I wanna see you get out of this okay, but you guys..." Alex shook her head again. "All wrong, here."

"Wrong?" Sawyer asked. He raised an eyebrow and smiled deceptively sweetly. The dimples much in evidence. "We're wrong, not your crowd who are taking people captive and torturing them."

He was alert ready to jump on her if she tried anything.

"You know more about how Claire and the baby are than we do," he continued. "They're being held prisoner like we were."

"If you're not here to stop us, then the safest thing for you to do is just turn around and pretend like you never saw us." Kate cautioned Alex, not wanting this to descend into anything ugly. The girl seemed sweet and genuine, but time had taught her that looks could be deceiving.

Alex didn't answer Sawyer when he asked who was wrong. It was that very question that kept her awake these nights. She wished these people had never showed up... it gave all the cracks in her youthful ideals focus.

"Ben didn't grab her again... just you guys and Jack, the doctor... on their raid." Alex's eyes shifted between the duo and she decided that she was safe enough, for now, although it would be a better gamble to dodge, hide and strike Sawyer if it got ugly and hope that Kate was distracted by her stunned companion long enough to listen... or run... if necessary.

"He has different plans for Jack," She sighed. "And I'm gonna help... I might have some quid pro quo for you."

Beach – Jack’s Tent – Present Time

"The Others." Danielle did not say 'well duh' and would have been confused at the turn of phrase if someone else had, but her tone embodied the phrase without new knowledge.

Sayid stared at the French woman, trying to puzzle her meaning for a moment before realizing he could spend a hundred star filled nights and never decipher the convoluted twists and turns of her mind. And for now at least they had no time for such things. Motivations aside, the facts were the Others had taken their friends, and it was up to them to mount a rescue. Every moment they spent here in preparation was perhaps a moment of torture endured, or worse. "If they come again, we will be ready. The Others will find us a more difficult target next time, to be sure." He replied with a grim look in his eye.

"We must gather together those who intend to go on this rescue." He almost said mission, and it felt no less than a military operation in his mind. "Make certain we all understand what is required of us, what we are likely to encounter. There must be nothing left to chance. Annie, go and find that girl, Nyssa and bring her as well. She might prove useful after all." With a decisive nod he exited Jack’s tent, moving to their weapons cache to take stock of what to bring with them, and what might be better served left behind to guard the camp.

Sayid moved, giving orders. Danielle nodded and relaxed into a subordinate role. The island long-timer followed the man as she let the woman, Annie, follow his orders. She was, herself, more interested in the firepower the island could bring to bear in a pinch than she was in rounding up people. Small, direct, focused-- they were just as likely to work as going in force. There was no way to tell them what they faced without admitting what she knew.

Going quickly was her goal as well. Fear she did not want to admit to was what held her from already being gone.

Danielle shifted her gun on her back, keeping her hands free to help carry. She noted where the cache was, and wondered why there were any guns left...

Insanity, and she recognized it well.

She remained silent, and watching, as she shadowed Sayid, assisting.

Annie swiftly gathered a minimal amount of medical supplies to take with them since they had no idea what kind of situation they might encounter and put the rest away in the various containers that Jack had in his tent.

After grabbing her pack from her tent and packing some water and a little bit of food as well as a change of clothes, Annie headed down the beach where she had noticed Nyssa talking with Desmond.

"We’re about to go." She said to Nyssa with a quick glance at Desmond before returning her gaze to the female, "We could use your help." She said making it a request although she had no doubts Sayid could find a way to make her come regardless.

To Desmond she added, "Thanks for letting us use your boat. We’ll take good care of it."

"Oh right, ok..." Nyssa answered readily enough, feeling a flutter of apprehension at the idea of going anywhere near the Others, especially Ben. Standing up, she wiped the sand from the back of her pants, a friendly smile for Desmond. "It was nice meeting you, thanks for..." Treating her like a human being instead of a prisoner? "Well thanks." She finished with a broad smile.

Danielle continued listening. Information was a good thing to have, and she had exhausted most of her social skills already. Desmond, she nodded to when time came to thank him for the use of his boat. He had no choice about it, and she thought he might know that. If she had tried to escape and failed so spectacularly, then she might not be averse to letting go of the boat for a time.

Turning to Annie, she fell into step beside her as they walked. "So how many people are going?" She asked with interest. Sayid, she assumed would be going, he seemed to be spearheading the rescue attempt. Hopefully they knew more about sailing a boat than she did.

"Four of us at least, maybe more. I imagine Sayid will probably want to keep the number limited." Annie answered even though she knew very little about tactics or rescue missions. It seemed however that whenever something major happened there was a select group that seemed to deal with whatever it was. Like many others, Annie had been okay with that since she wasn't really the take charge, run head first into danger type.

"Only four?" Her face fell a little, "That hardly seems like enough to mount a rescue, especially given how well organized they are." It seemed more likely they'd all end up captured themselves. . . She fell to pondering that while they walked up the beach.

"So what did you do before all this?" she asked her fellow survivor with a slight wave of her hand at their surroundings. She was leading them back towards Jack's tent in order to rendezvous with Sayid and Danielle when they were ready.

She glanced out towards Desmond's boat and wondered if maybe she should go back and beg him to go as well. It had been a few years since she had manned a boat so hopefully Sayid or Danielle had experience as well. The last time she had skippered was a smaller boat at the yacht club her parents were members of and it was on a small lake not an ocean in the middle of who knew where.

"Who me?" A little surprised to be asked, Nyssa gave Annie a friendly smile. "It seems like a lifetime ago... I was a meteorologist in Adelaide, for a small tv station. Actually little more than a glorified 'weather girl', I doubt you would have ever seen me." She brushed off any consideration of mild tv star status. "What about you? Something with medicine I assume?" Since Annie had been the one performing all the removals of the implants, she assumed she had medical training.

"I would like to know as well." Danielle commented in a voice so flat as to be almost monotone. "You handled yourself well with the tagged women." Too well, actually, and Danielle's suspicions were up. She could well be one of Them. The Others were perfectly capable of having planted her far back on the flight that brought them here... she placed nothing beyond Them, beyond Him.

It all blurred in her mind, which was story and which was fact. That she had come to the island on a boat, a ship, and her daughter was taken... the crew, including her new love, killed one by one... by her? Yes. She killed some of them, at least, that much was true. She had come home and killed, but for whom?

Danielle glanced down at her hands, still seeing the blood in her mind, then returned her regard to Annie. Her face had gone from impassive to probing.

"Uh, thanks." Annie said to Danielle after a beat. Despite Danielle's compliment, Annie glanced mildly anxious at the French woman, who to be honest was more than a little unnerving, before responding to their mutual query.

"I am a paramedic student. I only had one more semester to go before the crash. I used to date an emergency room doctor who liked to talk non-stop about his work so I picked up some things from him I guess." Annie explained with a self conscious shrug.

Her next question was addressed to both of them, "So what do you both know about this island we're going to?"

Jungle – Present Time

John didn't answer Paulo right away. Something told him it was time to be quiet-- he felt watched, but couldn't say by what. Locke waved the other two to be quiet. It turned out, however, that he might just have been wrong... again... It was an uncomfortable feeling and one he had grown unused to.

Too many mistakes, and now it seemed like they were following him here. He would do anything, absolutely anything, to find that place of certainty he had occupied only a few days before.

"No... they had Other things to concern themselves with. Eko said they recovered what they could the first day, but then they got busy." John finally said as they emerged back into the brighter light of the uncovered clearing.

Paulo managed to keep a straight face even though he was pleased to hear that it was looking quite possible that the missing diamonds could be among the wreckage of the tail section. He tried not to think about the fact that trying to find

them would be like looking for a needle in a haystack since it was possible even if their luggage did happen to land on this part of the island it could very well have been carried out with the tide. Not to mention the fact that if he did have to do an underwater trip there would no doubt be badly decomposing bodies to deal with as well.

That thought made him suddenly quite queasy. And no matter how much Nikki wanted the gems she would never try to get them herself in those circumstances but would instead insist he be a man and do it or otherwise make his life hell if he didn't.

He refrained from asking any more questions until they reached the next clearing which revealed the strong rays of the sun which was a welcome change from the damp humidity of the jungle. Looking up at the sky he held a hand to his forehead to protect his eyes and then dropped his gaze again to look around where they had come. The jungle wasn't completely bad since it did remind him somewhat of his native country. Of course there he hadn't had to live in the jungle but rather lived in a Metropolitan area surrounded by jungle.

"So what are you looking for John?" Paulo finally asked when it appeared that they no longer needed to maintain silence.

So what was he looking for? John turned to look at Paulo, quizzically. This young man and his lady friend had taken a while to take an interest in island affairs, but it seemed now they were with a vengeance. It meant something. Right now Locke didn't have time to investigate more closely. He had his own agenda to pursue. This did not mean that he was going to forget it and file it away for another day...exactly. ..

"What does anyone look for, Paulo? I'm following my path... which I hope leads to the missing Eko and a few answers." John smiled, remembering the vision. His smile was the tight kind that was really, one supposed, a grimace, but his eyes sparkled.

"What are /you/ really looking for?" He asked, shooting one piercing glance at Paulo, then looking for some sort of clue as to what came next.

Knowing that she wouldn't be able to count on Paulo to not give away their true intentions when under the scrutiny of someone as clearly intuitive as John Locke, Nikki did what she always did... found a way to be the centre of attention.

Pretending to stumble over a tree root she cried out, "Ow, dammit!"

Paulo's attention quickly snapped to the beautiful blonde and he moved swiftly to her side taking her by the arm.

"Are you okay?" he asked with obviously sincere concern as he assisted her while she limped along a few steps before she sat down on a patch of grass.

"It's these darn shoes. They're a size too big and are throwing my balance off." She answered petulantly, wiggling her feet for emphasis.

Paulo set down his pack and took out his bottle of water and handed it to her. She took the bottle and drank most of the contents before handing it back and looking up at him with doe eyes.

"Baby, can you carry my pack? I think that will help a lot." She asked making her voice sound sweet and mildly helpless.

"Of course." Paulo responded without question and grabbed both of their packs then helped her to her feet.

"Thanks baby." Nikki answered and then looked at John, "So what now? What do we do next?"