

Chapter Three, "The Horror From the Deep"

Foster liked the night shift. Most of his co-workers avoided it, made excuses, found some way out of it, but he loved it. It was quiet and the sea at night was beautiful. Foster was in his fifties, a short, strong man wearing a big yellow raincoat to keep him dry out in this. A ball cap poked out from the raincoat.

He worked the docks, one dock in particular. One lonely dock looked down by an old, disused lighthouse where - on an average night - two or three fishing boats came in to deliver their cargo. On one of those regular nights, Foster would have at least one co-worker helping him but tonight was not a regular night. The storm had scared most fishing boats home and there was only one scheduled to come in tonight. So Foster was alone. He looked at his watch. It was close to 2:00am. They were late, by almost two hours.

Foster hoped it wasn't bad news. Many a fishing boat had perished in storms less severe than this one.

It was getting about time for him to report them missing. In fact, he started to turn to do so when he saw something out of the corner of his eye.

There it was. The *Veronica*.

She pulled into the dock, erratic, unstable. She just seemed to emerge from the thick sheets of rain like a ghost.

Foster walked along the dock towards her.

"Straighten it out!" he called. "Straighten it out, you're gonna--"

The boat banged into the harbor, almost knocking Foster off his feet. He was up a moment later and ran up to the boat.

He could see a man in the little wheelhouse but no one else. The man came out of the wheelhouse, moving with caution. He looked left and right. He was scared, Foster could see that.

He also could see who the man was. It was Burt, captain of the *Veronica*.

"Burt!" he called. "Burt, what the Hell's going on?!"

Burt jumped at Foster's voice. He looked down, saw Foster and ran to the side of the boat. Grabbing a line, he threw it down to Foster. Foster tied off the boat and climbed up onto the ship.

"Burt, you okay?" he asked as he climbed onto the deck.

Burt was a big, portly man in his thirties with dark hair and matching mustache. And, right now, he was white as a sheet.

"Burt?!" Foster asked again.

"They're still here!" Burt said. "We have to get out of here! We have to--"

"Who's still here?" Foster asked. "What in the Hell happened?"

The crazed sailor ran a hand through his hair. "They came up out of the water, in one of the nets. Oh, Jesus."

"What came up out of the water?"

Burt looked at Foster like an escaped mental patient. "People! Things! Their skin was grey or white. Like a fish! They...they didn't have any eyes! They didn't have any fucking eyes!"

"Burt," Foster said, taking hold of the other man's shoulders. "Where's your crew, Burt? Where's Kyle, Ben, Sam?"

Burt was silent for a moment, his eyes big, terrified.

"They're down below," he said.

"Are they okay?" Foster said.

Burt turned away from Foster, both hands over his face. He turned back around and scratched eight marks down his face as he raked his hands down. "I don't know. I don't know. Those things came after them. I locked myself in the wheelhouse."

Foster shook his head. "We better go get 'em, don't you think?"

"No," Burt said. "Fuck no! We gotta go, now!"

Foster grabbed hold of the sailor once again. "What kind of a Goddamn captain are you? You're going to leave your crew behind? You call yourself a man? Now, look."

Foster pulled a revolver out of his raincoat, showed it to Burt.

"The docks aren't the safest place in the world," he said. "I started carrying this a few months ago."

Burt nodded.

"Okay," he said. "Okay, we go down. They're still down there. But if you see anything strange, you start shooting, you hear me?"

Foster nodded. "I hear you. You ready?"

Burt shook his head. "No."

"Well, if you say that those things are still here, we can't wait for the cops."

Foster started towards the door that led downstairs, gun at the ready, Burt just behind him. He opened the door and headed down into the dark. Music drifted up to them. A radio must have been on down in the sleeping quarters. Some old, eerie psychedelic song about mountains of madness.

"Here, take this," Foster said and handed Burt a flashlight.

Burt turned on the flashlight and pointed it down the stairs. Nothing was out of place, it was just a small staircase, typical of fishing boats of this size. But there was something along the walls, something smeared across them.

"Shine that thing over here," Foster said and pointed to the wall on the right. He was hoping it wasn't blood.

He needn't have worried. It wasn't blood. What it was was much more troubling.

It was slime. Sea-scum. Something that been dredged up from the bottom of the ocean.

"Oh, sweet Jesus," Burt said.

"Quiet down," Foster said. "Keep the light pointed ahead of me now, all right?"

"Right."

Foster started down again as Burt kept the light aimed ahead of them. They reached the bottom and the door to the sleeping quarters. It was hanging open. Just a crack.

"I'm not going in," Burt said.

"They're your crew," Foster said.

"There's no fucking way I'm going in."

"They rely on you to take care of them."

Burt frantically slapped the sides of his head. "It's a dangerous job! I am not going in."

Foster shook his head, disgusted. He pushed the door open with the barrel of his gun. It creaked as it opened, just as Foster knew it would.

"Oh, fuck!" Burt said.

The beam of the flashlight swung wildly back and forth, taking in the scene. Four people, all women, all naked, stood in the middle of the room, looking at the two men.

They were an eerie greyish white, wet and covered in slime. Their mouths were open in a silent scream. They had no eyes. Just empty sockets.

They were completely still, standing in the middle of the room like statues or sentinels. Behind them, Foster could see Burt's crew. They were on the ground, blood pooled around them. Their heads had been torn off at the jawline. Set neatly side by side, in front of the bodies, were the heads, eyes staring blindly at him.

The eyeless women moved.

They walked towards Foster. All at once, he had an idea. He stopped moving, stopped making any noise. They didn't have any eyes, which meant they hunted by sound. He just had to remain quiet. And if he were quiet enough, perhaps he could sneak backwards up the stairs and out.

The women stopped moving, their heads canted at an angle, mouths still open in that piercing, silent scream. It was going to work. They couldn't find him.

"Jesus Christ!" Burt screamed behind him.

The women starting moving again. Foster gave up on Burt and slowly, silently moved to the side as the women walked towards the younger man.

Burt turned and started to run back up the stairs. Foster could see everything from where he was standing and saw the fifth woman before Burt did. She came down the stairs, presumably from a hiding place on the deck.

She caught Burt before he could slide past her, her small hands somehow holding him through some supernatural strength. Burt screamed, his voice breaking up. Thunder rattled above. The storm was with the eyeless women.

The four others descended on Burt and he was engulfed. Three of them held him fast as the other two took hold of his face. They wriggled their fingers into his mouth and started pulling his jaws apart. There was a hideous cracking sound as the man's jaws started to break. Burt's scream was cut off as his head came off, a grotesque ripping, tearing sound accompanying it. Foster avoided vomiting by the skin of his teeth.

The eyeless women let Burt's body drop to the ground in a heap. One of them bent down, carefully placed his head on the ground next to him, adjusted it slightly and stood back up.

Slowly, the women started up the stairs and onto the deck. Foster stood where he was, resisting the urge to sneeze or move at all, for a full minute. He counted it off in his head. Then he made his move.

He carefully walked out of the sleeping quarters and up the stairs, making sure to remain as silent as possible. It was tricky stepping over Burt's body but he did it. Soon, he was on the deck. He approached the side and peeked his head over.

The eyeless women were slithering down the rope that tethered the ship to the dock. They looked like acrobats as they slinked down to the dock. Slowly, they walked down the docks and between two warehouses, in single file. Foster wasn't sure but he thought he saw someone waiting for them at the other end of the alley formed by the two warehouses.

Someone wearing what looked like a top hat.

When he could no longer see them, he could breathe again. He took big, long gulps of air, as if he had never done it before in his life. He coughed and sneezed, bent over at the waist. He stood up again,

allowing himself a small smile.

The smile caught on his lips. He couldn't believe he had missed it.

There were only four eyeless women who descended onto the dock.

It must of been because there had only been four to begin with, the other lying in wait. *Lying in wait.*
Oh, shit.

Foster whirled around to find the fifth woman standing right behind him. She grabbed him by the face, her fingers clutching his forehead.

Foster raised his gun and fired all six rounds into the girl's stomach. Naturally, all six found their mark; he was at point blank range.

They didn't stop her at all.

The bullets slammed into her body, making big, gruesome holes in her greyish/white flesh. Slime and sea-scum ran out of the wounds and pooled around her feet. It did no good.

Foster hit her with the butt of the gun again and again as the woman reached out with her free hand and went for his throat. She dug in, her nails breaking skin. Blood sprayed from Foster's neck, spattering the woman's face. He was losing strength fast.

The woman sensed this and let go of the man's forehead. She pushed fingers into his nose and started to pull her hands apart.

Foster screamed as he heard his own jaws begin to crack.

The thunder above them drowned him out.

To Be Continued...

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