

A Dawning Darkness

By

Jeffrey Blake Palmer

SUBMISSION FOR "FIRST MOMENTS" CONTEST

WGA Reg. 1445474

722 Empire Ave.
Ventura CA 93003
530-220-4452
jeffpalmer_email@yahoo.com

EXT. OFF THE COAST OF HALIFAX, NOVA SCOTIA - NIGHT

Under a full moon, the lobster boat "Wave Rider" chugs along the calm waters of the Atlantic.

The weathered craft is manned by its weathered CAPTAIN, 50s, at the wheel and a green CREW HAND, 20s, on deck.

CAPTAIN
Any sign? Talk to me.

CREW HAND
No. Not yet-- wait. Yeah. I think I see it. Starboard, twenty yards.

Captain slows the boat into a turn then circles what appears to be a lobster buoy, its design is anything but ordinary.

The Crew Hand clicks a flashlight, shines it onto a piece of paper in his hand, then onto the buoy.

CREW HAND
Hell yeah, that's gotta be it!

CAPTAIN
Keep it down.

Captain cuts the engine then darts to the Crew Hand.

CAPTAIN
Gimme that.

Captain snatches the paper and flashlight to compare the crude sketch with the bobbing buoy in the water.

CAPTAIN
I'll be damned. Haul her in.

The Crew Hand reaches out with a gaff, hooks the buoy, pulls it into the boat and wraps the rope over the winch. When it starts to wind, the boat lists to one side.

CREW HAND
Frig. That shit's heavy! They tell you what it was?

CAPTAIN
Never mind that. Besides, I got half up front, so if it's a bust they can go screw themselves.

CREW HAND
Maybe drugs, or could be guns--

CAPTAIN
(brusquely)
Said shut up about it if you want
your cut. We clear?

CREW HAND
Sure... yeah.

The winch twists and whirs until the attached booty breaches the water's surface in a splash.

Captain leans over to grab the line and whatever might be at the end of it.

CAPTAIN
Higher. Easy now. Bring 'er over.

The Crew Hand cranks the winch a bit more while Captain steadies a coffin-sized wooden crate, peppered with barnacles, slick with seaweed, ancient in design.

They lower it with care to the deck floor, both men leaning over the casket-like crate, equally perplexed.

Captain crouches lower to get a better look. He rubs his gloved hand over the sides, the top, the corners, then turns to the Crew Hand with a covetous glare.

CAPTAIN
Like I said... not a word.

The Crew Hand nods in agreement.

CAPTAIN
Then take us in.

The Crew Hand starts the engine, throttles it toward shore.

Captain gets comfy on the crate. He removes his gloves, pulls out a smoke, lights it, inhales, exhales, repeats.

He caresses the ornate filigree etched into the waterlogged wood; he's mesmerized, lost in thought. The more he admires, the deeper and darker his gaze becomes.

He turns to check on the Crew Hand, dutifully at the wheel, then back to the crate, studying its etchings.

CREW HAND

Which dock we meeting 'em at, North
Bay or south? Hey Capt--

A gruesome crack of metal on bone angles the Deck Hand's head to one side and sends his body to the floor revealing Captain, with deck mallet in hand and cigarette in mouth.

He steps over the disposed Crew Hand, calmly takes the wheel, and flicks the switch of a shoddy cassette player.

Country music drifts over the moonlit waters accompanied by the chug of a lone engine, and then, the toll of thunder.

EXT. LA BEAUFORT TOWERS - HALIFAX - NIGHT

A massive apartment complex overlooking Halifax Harbour.

INT. LA BEAUFORT TOWERS - PENTHOUSE SUITE - NIGHT

An open studio apartment that takes up the top floor is decorated with Baroque oil paintings in ornate frames, antique furnishings, taxidermy and Persian rugs.

Lightning slices through the long row of tall windows, thunder follows. An icy storm brews outdoors, but there is hot tea brewing inside.

A bony hand lifts a teapot from a small side table and pours its contents into a cup.

A flash of lightning illuminates the narrow, creased face of

MONATARA, 75, an elegant woman dressed in dark gray, sits calmly in a high back chair, a jeweled pendant with precious stones and fine silver dangles from her neck.

Eyes fixed on the patter of rain outside, she lifts the cup to her mouth, sips, tastes... then peers into the cup to find the herbal tea has turned thick, black as pitch.

Monatara reaches for the saucer, spits onto it, inspects the oily glob. Something has changed, something is not right.

The saucer and cup slip from her hands, crash to the floor.

MONATARA

No... it can't be...

She moves to the row of windows to view the stormy skyline of Halifax and the choppy waters of the city's bay.

MONATARA (V.O.)

Oh, heavens above and gods below,
be merciful on our souls. One
lifetime of suffering is all a
heart can withstand, but one more?
My eyes cannot bear the sight of
such terror. Too many have perished
at her hands and now I fear the
worst may loom on the horizon. We
must pray, pray that the light will
rise before this dawning darkness
consumes our land once again... or
the future may never know the
meaning of hope.

Among the endless row of fine art that lines the walls, we
settle on a painted oil portrait of a young woman, seated on
a throne, like royalty. Her wardrobe looks to be from the
Renaissance and the setting could be a castle in France.

The subject's face is identical to that of Monatara's, as is
the silver pendant painted around her neck.

END SCENE