

THE LAST VOYAGE OF THE DEMETER

by

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UNDERWATER

We are at the bottom of the sea. Kelp beds wave in slow motion. Among the kelp fronds, we follow the billowing fabric of a dress toward A WOMAN'S BODY. Her face is obscured in grey ocean waters as she sinks in a trail of bubbles.

MURKY WATER OBSCURES THE BUBBLES, WIPING FRAME TO:

EXT. COUNTRY RIVER - DAY

A few sluggish bubbles surface on flat grey waters coursing through a tangle of reeds. The setting sun glints across the surface, against a landscape of brown fields bordered by the shadowed Carpathian Mountains.

SUPERIMPOSE: "ROMANIA, 1897."

EXT. ARGES RIVER - ROMANIA - SUNDOWN

Silver light bleeds over the mountains as a cartload of FIELD WORKERS heads past an unusual bridge, still under construction. A large horse grazes nearby.

EXT. BRIDGE - SUNDOWN

A DARK FIGURE appears atop the bridge. The man strains, pulling a series of ropes tight on a windlass. As the departing Workers pass near the bridge:

WORKER

Even the Lord rested, boy.

The man on the bridge is Alec, in his twenties. As he ties off the rope winch with purposeful movements, his sinewy build and intense features signal that he has clearly evolved past working in the fields. He grins down.

ALEC

But only after his work was done.
And who knows what he counted as a day?

The cart bumps away, passengers looking up at Alec as he walks his bridge, checking the tension rigging. He looks across to the opposite side of the river.

ALEC

Nico!

ALEC'S POV - NICO

Eight-year-old NICO chases a large dog in the field across from the bridge. He wears an outsized Romanian tunic with an embroidered border.

ALEC

Leaping on a counter-balance, he releases a block and descends, riding the weight down to the ground. He lands in front of Nico, cutting off his escape. Dog at his heels, he hoists the boy over his shoulders

ALEC

Come on, you two. It's getting cold out here --

Circling and barking in a mock threat display, the dog knocks Alec and Nico to the ground.

NICO

Look, Barac's turning into a wolf.

Alec rolls to his feet and begins to gather tools.

ALEC

We'll be playing with real wolves if we stay out here much longer. Let's go.

Nico follows, dawdling, the dog hanging next to him.

NICO

When we get home, can we go out long enough to look for the dog star?

ALEC

The dog star, the blue star, the evening star of the west --

NICO

Which is really the planet Venus.

ALEC

So then. Let's work fast, and maybe we can find Mars. The red planet.

EXT. WOODS

In the midst of the woodland bordering the field, the leaves of a single tree violently twist and ripple, showing their undersides, as if caught up in a lone blast of wind.

THE DOG

Halts. Turns, its ears suddenly going erect as the wind picks up, stirring other trees --

EXT. FIELDS/FOREST - TWILIGHT

The dog freezes, silent, listening. He takes a few tentative steps, stops again -- then races for the trees.

NICO

Barac! Barac! Come here!

The dog vanishes into the forest.

ALEC

He knows the way home. Let him be.

As Nico drops a couple of tools into a lift, Alec trips the counterbalance and rides the load up to the bridge.

NICO

Pauses, scanning the trees for a sign of the dog.

EXT. BRIDGE/MOUNTAINS IN VIEW - ALEC

The sun is dipping behind the peaks. Alec picks up his pace as he packs his gear -- then stills at the distant HOWLING of wolves.

ALEC

Stay close, Nico, it's getting dark!

No answer. Just the RISING WIND. Alec peers off the bridge:

ALEC

Nico!

ALEC'S POV - EXT. FIELDS/WOODS - TWILIGHT

Nico is gone. A HIGH WIND, ALMOST A WAIL, gusts for a moment.

Alec jumps on the counterbalance. The rig tangles, catching him in mid-air. He reaches into his shoulder bag, extracting a curved knife from its sheath.

EXT. RIVER - ALEC - CONTINUOUS

As the O.S. SCREECH OF A DYING ANIMAL echoes across the river, Alec hacks through the snarled lines and drops to the ground.

ALEC

Nico!

Alec runs to leap atop the horse, urging to head full speed into the forest.

EXT. FOREST - TWILIGHT - CONTINUOUS

SCREAMING Nico's name, Alec pushes the horse through the woods. Oblique sunset light filters through the foliage as the horse half-slides, half-steps over the rough terrain.

As they pass among ancient trees, Alec listens: Nothing, other than WIND IN THE UPPER BOUGHS. Alec frantically scans his surroundings:

FOREST FLOOR

Fresh wagon wheel and horse tracks are gouged deep into the mud, beneath a dense carpet of leaves.

At once, Alec's horse rears, nearly throwing him. Even as Alec gets it under control, he pulls in the reins, shocked:

THE DOG

Extended at the base of a tree, the dog's mutilated carcass so black with mud and blood that in the dusk, it almost blends into the twisted, mossy roots. Its throat is gashed wide open.

ALEC

Gets off the horse. Stunned, nauseated, he kneels and gently lifts the dog's head, as fear overwhelms him:

ALEC

(shouting)

NICO!

Alec looks upward, beyond the treetops:

ALEC'S POV - MOUNTAIN CREST/FORTRESS

A mausoleum-like fortress, hewn from the rock and protected on three sides by the sheer cliffs of the Carpathian range that encloses the forest.

EXT. BORGO ROAD - TWILIGHT - MOMENTS LATER

Alec guides the horse down a rocky forest slope and onto a road, torturously cut from a chasm between cliffs --

EXT. BORGO ROAD - CONTINUOUS

Alec and the horse hit the road with a CLATTER --

And A PROCESSION OF THREE HUGE WAGONS bears down, almost on top of them --

Alec jerks the horse's reins, forcing it back into the scrub and rocks of the roadside --

ALEC'S POV - WAGONS

Each wagon is loaded with twenty black, coffin-shaped boxes. Armed GYPSIES serve as drivers and guards.

The rising moon provides a fleeting glimpse of the last row of boxes, each one bearing a dragon crest and the label "Varna, BG."

At a startling pace for their load, the three wagons speed around another curve and are gone.

EXT. BORGO ROAD - ALEC

As Alec is veering his horse back onto the road, a moment of ALMOST SUBAUDIBLE VIBRATIONS gives way to an enormous BLACK COACH, its team of black horses bearing down inches away --

BLACK COACH

At close range, HOOVES AND WHEELS ARE STRANGELY MUTED. The horses' breath steams as a SILHOUETTED COACHMAN leans forward, goading the team to go faster. Alec lunges his horse after the Coach --

Just as moonlight reflects across the greenish glass of a small, square rear window, revealing a SMALL, ASH-WHITE FACE. NICO.

ALEC'S POV - REAR WINDOW/NICO

In an instant, a death mask of a MAN'S FACE surfaces in profile, a long-fingered hand tears Nico backwards -- and the images are lost in darkness.

The Coach launches itself forward into the shadowed landscape.

EXT. BORGO ROAD - ALEC AND HORSE

Yelling "No" below the DIN OF HOOVES, Alec takes off in pursuit --

ALEC'S POV - BLACK COACH

Seeming to accelerate to an almost supernatural speed, flying down the fog-swathed Borgo Road.

EXT. BORGO ROAD - NIGHT

Alec and horse appear, in manic pursuit -- but as if in a nightmare, his horse can't ever close the distance between itself and the Black Coach.

Always at the far edge of visibility, the Coach pulls farther and farther ahead of its pursuer --

Fog swallows the Black Coach. Alec and his horse disappear behind the Coach, WIPING FRAME TO.

MONTAGE:

EXT. MOUNTAIN RANGE - GREY DAY

At the grey, rocky crest of another mountain range, clouds are thin as Alec and the horse pick their way down, from ledge to ledge, avoiding patches of dirty, crusted snow:

NEXT: EXT. CLIFFSIDE ROAD - GREY DAY

A severely narrow road is carved into the edge of the cliffs. The Black Coach speeds forward, eerily smooth --

NEXT: EXT. BRIDGE - GREY DAY

Viewed from above, we now see only the tiny figures of Alec and his horse as they pound across the bridge, then plummet onto the twisting canyon road on the river's other side.

ALEC'S POV - CANYON

Clouded late afternoon light reveals nothing, no sign of the Black Coach or wagons. The only sound is that of the HOOVES of Alec's horse as it streams forward.

END MONTAGE.

NEXT: EXT. HILL - AFTERNOON

Alec and horse crest a hill, where Alec reins the horse to a stop. Filthy with mud, his horse lathered, he surveys the territory beneath him:

ALEC'S POV - THE SEAPORT OF VARNA - AFTERNOON

Under lowering skies, the harbor town is a twisted maze of pitched roofs and narrow old streets sloping down to the port, where fog grazes the masts of ships.

ALEC

As his horse makes its last push down the hill, toward the town, we see Alec's face: Drawn with exhaustion, eyes glittering with something much darker.

EXT. VARNA PUBLIC HOUSE - TWILIGHT

BLUE COATS, the police, roust PROSTITUTES. As the COMMOTION rises:

EXT. VARNA STREET/LIVERY - ALEC - TWILIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Alec leads his weary horse down a winding street, toward a livery stable. Leaving the horse to gorge at a trough, Alec strokes its mane, its muzzle, its heaving sides.

Hurrying down the street to the docks, Alec rounds a corner:

ALEC'S POV - DOCKS/DEMETER - TWILIGHT

At the far end of a stone pier, SOMETHING LARGE AND DARK twists like a living thing: The Black Coach, wrapped in a cargo net fastened to a crane hoist.

Gypsies lower the Coach into the cargo hold of the DEMETER, a sleek, formidable Russian steamer-sailer, outlined with lights.

ALEC

Focused on the view ahead, he charges toward the docks -- and a MEATY HAND comes down on his shoulder.

Alec is poised to break away as an OFFICER thrusts a handbill in his face: A DRAWING OF A PRETTY YOUNG GIRL.

OFFICER

Hey, you. Servant girl. A Brit.
Turned on her master, then stole
his horse. You recognize her?

ALEC

(barely glancing at the picture)

No. I've only just gotten here, if you'll excuse me --

OFFICER

(calling after him)

Best keep it, sir, you never know what you'll come across, and there's quite a reward for her capture.

Wadding the handbill into his jacket, Alec shoves his way past the Officer, through a scattering of late-night TOWNSPEOPLE --

EXT. PIER/DEMETER - TWILIGHT

At the end of the dock, tense Gypsies have now unloaded most of the dragon boxes.

Other Gypsies fasten tackles, load food and supplies, hoist crates into the air.

The crane that lowered the coach rises empty from the cargo hold. ABRAMOV, a surly Russian, catches and steers it toward the boxes.

TISMA, the swaggering, youthful first mate, stands at Abramov's side, badgering him:

TISMA

We have less than an hour before nightfall. Tell the Gypsy his men have to move faster.

ABRAMOV

An hour. To stow all this --

Off Tisma's glare, Abramov turns to address the GYPSY LEADER. They speak back and forth in Romany, the language of the gypsies. But the old Gypsy shakes his head:

TISMA

What's he saying?

ABRAMOV

He says they cannot stay.

TISMA

Tell him we're going to lose the tide.

Abramov turns back to the Gypsy. Another rapid-fire exchange ensues.

DOCK/ALEC

In the background, Alec weaves his way through sailors, workers, vendors, and cargo. The GYPSY COMMOTION at dock's end catches his attention:

OLD GYPSY

Silencing his people, he shakes his head and barks a response to Abramov.

ABRAMOV

It's no use. He's very stubborn. He says they must leave before the sun sinks.

TISMA

What nonsense is--?

They are interrupted by a burst of nervous chatter coming from near the wagons. The rest of the Gypsies are arguing among themselves.

The Old Gypsy silences them sharply, with a command. Tisma studies him, distrusting something in those rheumy old eyes, but the Old Gypsy turns his back on Tisma, motioning to his men:

TISMA

What's happening?

ABRAMOV

(puzzled)

He says they will leave us the black boxes and nothing more.

Now, with manic speed, the Gypsies unload the last few dragon-crested boxes.

EXT. PIER - ALEC - TWILIGHT

Alec scuttles past the Coach's huge horses, as Gypsies tighten their tethers to the back of the wagons. Muscles vibrating, the horses paw restlessly at the GROAN OF STEAM ENGINES COMING TO LIFE --

ALEC'S POV - DEMETER/GANGPLANK

Several sailors, waiting for jobs, mill at the bottom of the gangplank.

They suck in their guts and try to look sober as Tisma swaggers to the top of the plank, brandishing the crew manifest.

ALEC

Forcing himself through a mass of hard-looking sailors --

TISMA

Open your ears, men. We're bound for London and we pay in gold. Eight rubles for an able-bodied man.

ALEC

(above the noise)
I'll sign.

Alec holds his place against a BULLISH SAILOR, his ONE-EYED FRIEND, and OTHERS who do their best to push him aside.

BULLISH SAILOR

I am able... Strong as an ox!

And with that, Tisma hands the manifest to the Bullish Sailor. Glancing to the dock, he bellows to Abramov:

TISMA

Double the load on those boxes! Our gentleman can't be waiting!

EXT. DOCK

Irate, Abramov SHOUTS IN PUNJABI at the Gypsies. They don't look back as they start to drive their wagons back up the dock.

Abramov and a BALD SAILOR begin to secure knots on the crane hoist, now attached to two stacks of boxes piled in a single net.

EXT. GANGPLANK

Alec tries to grab the manifest, but Bullish leaps in and passes it to One-Eye.

ALEC

(louder, for Tisma's attention)

I don't care about the money.

Tisma stares down his nose at this unkempt stranger, standing his ground in the midst of a scuffle.

TISMA

Looks like you don't care about
much of anything. Back off, the
others were here before you.

ONE-EYED SAILOR

(slurred)

Bit of gold, I'd put my feet up a
horse's --

ALEC

Wait a moment! This man's half-
blind!

TISMA

I don't need a hawk, I need a man
who knows how to stay out from
underfoot.

Against the SAILORS' LAUGHTER, Alec pauses, transfixed --

ALEC'S POV - TOP OF THE GANGPLANK

A YOUNG BOY, strongly resembling Nico, hovers at the top of
the gangplank at the side of a SPECTRE: Tall, commanding,
swathed in a dark cape and a scarf that obscure his features.

Speaking to the Boy, the Spectre places a long, graceful hand
on him. THE HAND SEEN ON NICO IN THE COACH.

Spectre and the Boy disappear into the ship.

EXT. GANGPLANK - CONTINUOUS

Wild to get to the Spectre, Alec claws his way through
furious sailors.

BULLISH SAILOR

You've pissed us all off now, mate.
You heard the First Mate, you ain't
wanted one bit, so bugger off --

With the strength of desperation, Alec takes some hits but
manages to keep his attackers at bay:

ALEC

(top of his lungs)

I'll take the job for the trip to
England alone --

But Tisma's attention is on the cargo.

TISMA

Abramov! Gentleman'll be wanting
your worthless lot to move it!

EXT. PIER/BOXES

The rising net full of boxes swings out for a moment, crane
GROANING. Abramov grabs at it, YELPING as the impact jams
his thumb in the net. He rubs his wounded digit --

The Bald Sailor steps forward to control the ropes, but
suddenly pauses to stare at the boxes:

BALD SAILOR

Didn't see them dragons before.
They're a bad omen, they are. Foul
ancient creatures.

ABRAMOV

(exasperated)

He talks to me of dragons --

And with a VIOLENT SNAP OF METAL, the WINCH AND CRANE BUCKLE
under the weight of the boxes.

The cargo net CAREENS AGAINST THE IRON PLATE HULL, ricochets
back, and FALLS, CRASHING TO THE DECK, EXPLODING ITS LOAD --

ABRAMOV

(to Bald Sailor)

Move out --

A FALLING BOX CRUSHES THE BALD SAILOR. Everyone on the dock
shrinks back in horror as a DARK CLOUD OF DUST RISES.

Blood seeps from beneath the box, then gushes from the Bald
Sailor's mouth. He is dead.

EXT. PIER -- CONTINUOUS

The Bullish Sailor and his friends are lifting the box: The
Bald Sailor's dead body is a smashed bag on the stones.

Alec approaches Tisma as he prowls the pier. Sailors are
scattering as quickly as they'd gathered for jobs.

TISMA

Come on, all of you. Name of God,
time's wasting, we have orders to
shove off before sunset --

Bullish and his friends shoulder the Bald Sailor's body:

BULLISH SAILOR

What're you talking about? Shove
off yourself, this one's got a
stench about it.

TISMA

An accident, and a sorry one, I
must say, but we've still got
business to do --

Alec positions himself in front of Tisma as the sailors'
makeshift funeral procession moves away from the Demeter.

ALEC

You're not going to find anyone
else before sunrise.

TISMA

(shouting after the
Sailors)

I told you, we'll all be paid like
kings for this one --

The Bullish Sailor briefly looks back:

BULLISH SAILOR

God have mercy on all of you. What
the sea wants, the sea will get.
And it's already hungry for you.

ALEC

(to Tisma)

I can look a painted dragon in the
eye. And I can fix that winch.

TISMA

So can any of the men here. And I
don't like the way you carry
yourself --

OC MAN'S VOICE (CAPTAIN)

Tisma. We are in no position to
pick and choose, and this young man
makes a point.

Tisma straightens, simultaneously annoyed and at attention:

TISMA

Captain James.

EXT. DECK - THE CAPTAIN

And at once, the Demeter's CAPTAIN JAMES is there. Every rope burn, every storm and squall of a life at sea shows on his face as he looks Alec up and down.

CAPTAIN

You. What's your name?

ALEC

Alexei Radu. I'm a good carpenter and I've got a fair knowledge of astronomy.

TISMA

We need a seaman, not a peasant who can read.

ALEC

(to Captain)

I have both eyes, I don't reek of tavern, and I'm still here.

CAPTAIN

We could use a smart man, Tisma.

TISMA

Sir. This is no sailor.

Abramov is doing his best to tie up a net containing four of the battered boxes. The sky is slate grey, almost dark.

CAPTAIN

Bring him on board.

(to Tisma)

We need to get underway.

The Captain turns away.

TISMA

(sardonic)

It seems the stars are in your favor, astronomer.

Tisma picks up two sacks and tosses them to Alec.

TISMA

Here. Let's see if you can navigate your way to the galley.

As Alec starts to move toward the gangplank, Tisma stops him:

TISMA

One thing you should know. The Captain, he has his books and charts, but he's an old man. If you think he runs this ship, you're wrong.

EXT. DEMETER GANGPLANK - NIGHT

Alec ascends the gangplank.

Attached to a second crane, a load of dragon-crested boxes rises parallel to him.

EXT. DEMETER/BOWSPRIT - NIGHT

Running lamps down the sides of the ship illuminate the bowsprit: A seductive female face, neck bare, breasts thinly veiled. THE GODDESS DEMETER: A beautiful woman, at the front of an iron-plated fortress.

UNDERWATER: THE GREAT PROP CHURNS TO LIFE ASTERN.

INT. BRIDGE - CONTINUING ACTION

The Captain gives a signal to Tisma, who rakes the engine controls to three bells. Tisma leans into a speaking tube:

TISMA

(shouting)

All ahead a third!

EXT. WATERFRONT: THE DEMETER EASES AWAY FROM ITS BERTH.

Smoke pumps from two stacks. THREE BLASTS FROM ITS HORN signal the departure.

EXT. DECK - CONTINUING ACTION

Over the CHURNING ENGINES, Abramov hauls in the spring lines. Beyond him, the hills of Varna are dark masses against a clouded night sky.

EXT. HILLS - VARNA COASTLINE - NIGHT

From this high vantage point, the Demeter appears as a long, dark coffin shape, defined by its running lamps as it steams into the Black Sea.

A lone wagon pulls up, black horses in tow. The Old Gypsy Driver gazes down at the Demeter as it glides away.

The Old Gypsy raises his hand, forming the Mona Fica to ward off evil. He spits in the direction of the sea, then wheels his wagon to head home.

INT. DEMETER/VARIOUS CORRIDORS

Eyes adjusting to weak lantern light, Alec makes his way through the ship, looking left and right as he gets his bearings.

INT. GALLEY CAUSEWAY - CONTINUOUS

Alec passes a narrow corridor ending in a windowed door. Through the glass, he glimpses BLAKE, the Demeter's obese, repugnant cook and surgeon. Red-faced, Blake is clearly berating someone, his voice muffled by the door.

Alec looks around: No one in sight. He quickly moves on --

INT. UPPER DECK CORRIDOR/STAIRCASE - CONTINUOUS

Face set, Alec charges toward a metal staircase leading into the depths of the ship. He instinctively stops at a SCRAMBLING OF CLAWS:

As if scurrying for escape, rats stream past him in the opposite direction. Alec can hear them SCRATCHING THEIR WAY UP THE BULKHEADS.

Undeterred, he heads down the stairs --

INT. STAIRCASE - CONTINUOUS

As Alec descends, the BELLOWS OF ANXIOUS CATTLE, GOATS, AND SHEEP rise up from below him. Unseen livestock shift nervously in tarp-covered pens. At Alec's passing, CHICKENS SQUAWK AND BANG AGAINST THEIR CAGES.

All around Alec, THE WOOD AND METAL HULL CREAKS.

INT. LOWER DECK/BOILER ROOM - CONTINUING ACTION

OC MECHANICAL HOWLING AND GRINDING intensify as Alec moves past the portal to the boiler room, the gut of the ship --

ALEC'S POV - INT. BOILER ROOM

A room so vast and dark as to suggest hell itself: Coal fires billow, clouds of black smoke obscure the tops of huge, steaming boilers.

With robotic precision, weathered veteran PETROFSKY stokes engines in expert rhythm with hulking, grubby OLGAREN.

ABOVE THE DIN, FAINT OC ENGINE BELLS START TO RING. Petrofsky stops to release the steam valves, their pressure shifting from a WHISTLE TO AN EAR-SPLITTING SCREAM --

INT. LOWER DECK/FORWARD HOLD - CONTINUOUS

MURAD, an ascetic-looking Turk, SLAMS THE MAIN HOLD DOOR just as Alec appears behind him. Alec brandishes the bags.

ALEC

Tisma told me to stow these down here.

With a nod, Murad reaches to a hook and hands Alec a lamp. ALEC PUSHES OPEN THE MAIN HOLD DOOR --

INT. MAIN HOLD

Lamp held high, Alec gags at a blast of stench. THE VIEW SHIFTS TO REVEAL:

SIXTY COFFIN-LIKE BOXES

As far as the eye can see. Alec weaves his way through boxes strapped in stacks, filling the entire space.

BLACK COACH

Secured to the hull at the far end of the main hold, the Black Coach already seems to sag, as if the dampness is affecting it. A map of faint cracks covers its veneered outer paneling.

ALEC

Shoves his way past the boxes that stand between him and the Coach --

Nearing the Coach, Alec puts his hand over his mouth, as much to summon his courage as to protect his senses.

ALEC

Nico!

(louder, over OC ENGINES)

NICO!

Swinging up his lantern, Alec tears open the door:

ALEC'S POV - INT. BLACK COACH

Upholstered in tattered, mouldering black, the Coach's compartment is an open grave, a heap of obscene decay, SOMETHING WHITE THRUSTING FROM ITS MIDST --

ALEC'S POV - NICO

Nico's livid, bare upper torso protrudes from the filth.

His head hangs back, still attached to his shoulders despite a blood-blackened neck wound. The visible skin looks fragile as a tissue.

Nico's eyes are black and empty. Long dead.

ALEC/NICO

Shoulders heaving, Alec SLAMS DOWN THE LANTERN and leans in, clutching Nico's body --

And at the moment of contact, Nico's desiccated flesh cobwebs into a thousand fissures -- then DISINTEGRATES into a grey powder, fine as ash.

CRYING OUT, Alec plunges his arms into the debris, searching in vain for any intact part of Nico's body --

His grasping fingers attach themselves to a long, blackened length of fabric, upturning everything as Alec tears at it in a frenzy --

And releases NICO'S EMBROIDERED SHIRT, or what's left of it -- a shoulder and sleeve, crusty with long-dried blood.

ALEC
Nico. God... My boy.

INT. MAIN HOLD - ALEC - CONTINUOUS

Shaking with noiseless sobs, Alec collapses on the floor.

Behind him, AN OBSCENE BLACK SILT pours out from the Coach's open door.

EXT. THE BLACK SEA - DAWN

Water sprays the Demeter figurehead as the prow of the ship bucks through swells under a full head of steam.

EXT. DECK/MAINMAST - DAWN

Perched in the bucket at the top of the mainmast, Murad surveys the receding coast as it bobs fiercely in the heavy seas.

INT. CAPTAIN'S CABIN - MORNING

CAPTAIN (V.O.)

Captain's log... On 6 July we finished taking in cargo... silver sand and sixty private crates marked "experimental earth," bound for London.

Seated at his desk, the Captain glances out the window, then continues the entry in his log book. Immaculate shelves are lined with rows of dusted volumes, biographies filled with notable names: Napoleon, Washington, Shakespeare, Mozart.

CAPTAIN (V.O.)

Turkish Customs Officials came alongside. Baksheesh. Bribes. No inspection. Expect a swift and uneventful run to the Dardanelles.

INT. GALLEY - MORNING

Two tables are bolted to the deck. Cupboards and racks are built into every available inch of the wall space.

Tisma sits at one table, with Abramov, and Petrofsky are seated at one of two big tables, bolted to the floor. Petrofsky CRUNCHES on hardtack and swills coffee.

Kettle wedged in the crook of a fat arm, Blake ladles out porridge, a depressing shade between yellow and grey.

CAPTAIN (V.O.)

Currents with us. Fresh. Embarked with Crew, five hands, two mates, cook, myself and one passenger.

ABRAMOV

(inspecting his squashed thumb)

It feels a little better, I think.

BLAKE

Better, my ass. It looks green with gang. Let me knock it off.

Blake makes a slicing movement with his knife.

TISMA

Damn it, Blake, there are maggots in this slop.

Blake tries to remove the offending meal, but Tisma stabs his knife into the table. The message is clear: Leave it.

BLAKE

What about you, Abramov? You care to insult my cooking, too?

ABRAMOV

No. Not at all.

PETROFSKY

Well, you could, but who would listen?

A BURST OF LAUGHTER -- but all snap to attention as the Captain enters.

The Captain seats himself at the second table, next to Tisma.

CAPTAIN

Has the new fellow, Radu, been down here yet?

TISMA

New fellow needs to test his sea legs, if you ask my humble opinion.

CAPTAIN

I do not. Once Radu's fed, you can decide where best to place him. An army marches on its stomach, as Napoleon observed.

Petrofsky gets up, knocking back the last of his coffee and grabbing a last piece of hardtack.

CAPTAIN

And Blake, can you see to some semblance of a decent breakfast for Mr. Ponari?

TISMA

Must keep our guest happy, Blake. Sooner we deliver Mr. Ponari to England, sooner we see our very just reward.

PETROFSKY

Then it's back to the boilers for me.

(grabbing more hardtack)

I'll deliver this to Olgaren, Blake.

(MORE)

PETROFSKY (cont'd)

Between your rats and the stench in here, he's happier down there.

EXT. FORWARD HOLD

Disoriented, Alec staggers through the forward hold, shaking as if in the grip of some terrible illness.

Holding himself up as if he could topple at any moment, Alec clings to a bulkhead as he stuffs Nico's bloodied rags into his own shirt.

EXT. UPPER DECK/CORRIDOR - MORNING

Holding a breakfast tray, Sean KNOCKS SHARPLY on a stateroom door. No answer.

SEAN

Mr. Ponari? Sir?

After Sean KNOCKS again, he gives up, leaving the tray by the door. He steals a bit of bread.

INT. LOWER CORRIDOR/STAIRS

Gripping the stair rail, Alec struggles to put each foot in front of him.

OC PETROFSKY

You there!

ALEC'S POV - PETROFSKY

In Alec's weakened condition, the vision of Petrofsky coming at him is flat and distorted. Even the surrounding walls appear to shift.

ALEC

White-faced, Alec struggles for balance, then faints dead away. Petrofsky lunges to catch him before he can roll to the bottom.

PETROFSKY

You must be Radu.

Alec MOANS, trying to speak --

PETROFSKY

(grinning)

Living to fight another day. Good fellow. I know just what you need.

Petrofsky shoulders Alec as if he weighs nothing.

INT. CREW QUARTERS - MINUTES LATER

Petrofsky piles Alec into a berth, then ties his wrists to its uprights.

Behind Petrofsky, the silhouette of a TOWERING, DARK FIGURE MATERIALIZES. Backlit, the apparition bends over Alec, revealing flashes of tattoos, scars, and beaded patterns. Petrofsky holds Alec down --

ALEC

I'm fine, just leave me alone...

Uncorking a gourd, the Giant nods to Petrofsky, who clamps a large hand on Alec's face.

PETROFSKY

Sorry, friend, you're not fine and you're not going anywhere.

(to the tattooed man)

Be quick. He's a tough one.

The Giant squeezes Alec's jaw open and shoves the potion down his throat. He holds Alec's mouth shut until he swallows.

PETROFSKY

You'll feel like a new man when you wake up.

Alec GAGS. The Giant pops a plant pod in Alec's face. A fine powder stings Alec's eyes and nose as he tries to sit up, then falls back:

ALEC'S POV - THE GIANT

The last thing Alec sees is the Giant's talisman necklace, a pendant with a strange, bird-like shape --

And Alec passes out cold.

INT. MAIN HOLD

Barely visible in the darkness, the boxes CREAK AND SHIFT WITH THE ROLLING OF THE SHIP. The view stops at one box and lingers. Something is TRYING TO BREATHE, CLAWING, GASPING --

EXT. THE DEMETER - TIME LAPSE

The goddess on the bowsprit heads into the setting sun --

FADE TO BLACK --

And from the blackness, a door opens, MOS.

INT. DOORWAY/COTTAGE - ALEC - DAY

Framed in the warm sunlight of the doorway, Alec walks in.

Curtains drift in a gust of wind. The cottage's small interior is still. Drawn-out, twisted shadows lend odd angles to the sparse furniture.

In thick silence, Alec steps forward, calling MOS "Nico!":

NICO

Silhouetted near a leaded window that swings out in the wind, Nico slumps over a table, back to Alec. Scattered across the table surface are a few wooden animals.

ALEC

Smiling, he walks toward Nico. Bending over the chair from behind, he hugs the boy, then frowns:

On the table before Nico lies one particularly grotesque toy: Despite its crude carving, it's monstrous, medieval, a gargoye combination of dog and wolf --

And a limp, shriveled hand reaches around, weak as a dying white spider as it tries to clasp Alec's shoulder --

O.C. ALEC

(his voice a CROAK)

No!

INT. CREW QUARTERS - NIGHT

Alec wakens with a start, the dark shape of a child now standing inches away from him --

Sean raises an oil lamp, then sets a tray of broth on the berth next to Alec.

SEAN

Sir?

(off Alec's confused look)

Sean. The Captain sent me down.

Alec feels his head and face, holds out a steady hand.

SEAN

To see if you was feeling better.

ALEC

What happened to me?

(sitting up)

(MORE)

ALEC (cont'd)
I thought I saw an old sailor and a
giant creature trying to poison me.

Sean puzzles for a moment, then:

SEAN
(amused)
What you saw was Petrofsky and
Moluko. The Captain says Moluko
was a wizard of the South Seas.

ALEC
The South Seas?

SEAN
Captain told me Moluko saved his
life once. He knows all about
plants and animals and things.

Alec stretches, breathing deeply. Sean motions toward the
broth.

SEAN
I made that for you. Blake is a
rum cook.

Sean pulls the shoulder bag from a cupboard over Alec's bunk.

SEAN
Here's your things. I looked in
your bag. That's a real fine knife.

Alec removes the knife for Sean's further admiration. Sean
touches the blade, runs a finger on the carved handle.

SEAN
Very useful sort of thing to have.

ALEC
So I'd like to think.

Sean sits on the berth, crowding him. Stuffing the knife in
his boot, Alec sips his broth.

SEAN
Does it taste good?

ALEC
I'm very grateful... How'd you
learn to cook, Sean? Have you been
at sea a long time?

SEAN

Most always. Captain's my mum's uncle, but she died and my dad was killed in the service of the King's Navy.

ALEC

So the Captain's raising you as his own.

SEAN

Captain's teaching me so I can sail my own ship someday.

Alec studies the little face, so reminiscent of Nico's.

ALEC

Did I see that the Demeter has a passenger?

SEAN

Mr. Ponari. He paid us a fat sum, everyone says.

ALEC

What became of him?

SEAN

He's in our passenger room. He doesn't seem to want nothing from us.

Eight bells sound. Alec looks out the port opening. Night. He stiffens.

ALEC

Too late for me to be lying about. If I'm going to work, could I get some extra soup and bread, Sean?

SEAN

If Mr. Blake ain't looking.

Sean sets down the oil lamp and exits with exaggerated care, as if on a secret mission. As the DOOR SOFTLY CLOSES:

ALEC

Alec reaches into his shirt and pulls out Nico's shirt. Eyes dead, he stuffs it into the shoulder bag, rises, and picks up the lamp that Sean left.

INT. CORRIDORS/VARIOUS

Prowling with knife extended, Alec methodically opens doors:

Storage closets: A few shipshape and neat, others overflowing, as if their contents had been thrown in at the last minute.

Alec turns into another section of the corridor:

INT. CORRIDOR/CAPTAIN'S CABIN DOOR

Alec stops, hearing the OC CAPTAIN ADDRESSING SOMEONE, in a conversational tone. Alec picks up his pace --

ANOTHER DOOR

Locked. Alec efficiently picks the lock with his knife, and peers inside: Nothing but stacks of trunks.

Alec closes the door, turning toward the one nearest it. OC SLIGHT MOVEMENT FROM WITHIN. Galvanized, Alec inserts his knife into the keyhole:

INT. STATEROOM

As Alec's knife SHIFTS THE LOCK TUMBLERS, an oil lantern, turned low, exposes a STUMPED SHAPE sitting on the bed, facing the door. Only A MASS OF GNARLED SCARS is visible.

CAPTAIN'S CABIN DOOR/MOLUKO

Emerging from the cabin, he holds a carved war club with a lethal spearhead at its end. Moluko pauses, listening, then starts walking in Alec's direction --

MOLUKO'S POV -- INT. STORAGE ROOM/STATEROOM AREA

No sign of Alec.

MOLUKO

Moluko touches his bird talisman necklace as he regards the stateroom door.

INT. UPPER CORRIDOR/STAIRCASE

As Moluko's vast shadow shifts above him, Alec eases himself from a dark alcove next to the lower deck stairs.

INT. LOWER CORRIDOR/ANIMAL PENS

Under the tarps, the OC NOISE OF LIVESTOCK RISES as Alec descends. THE UNSEEN ANIMALS SOUND SCARED. Alec moves past them in a blur, holding his lantern at a low angle to shield its light --

INT. BOILER ROOM

The door is half-open: Olgaren naps atop a coal pile. Petrofsky tends the engines, refreshing himself from a flask.

INT. FORWARD HOLD/ALEC

Bracing himself, Alec strides toward the main hold door --

INT. CORRIDOR/BOILER ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Abramov, on watch, raps on the half-open door and greets Petrofsky MOS. The pair JOKES AND GESTURES TOWARD OLGAREN:

Mouth working, limbs twitching, OLGAREN IS IN THE THROES OF A NIGHT TERROR.

INT. MAIN HOLD

Alec swings the lamp around the room: The piled boxes. The Coach's collapse has advanced, surrounding it with an island of disintegrated material.

Pulling the knife from his boot, swinging the lantern, Alec methodically begins to walk between the rows of boxes.

ALEC

So this is where you rest, isn't it? Show yourself, you filth.

Pausing at a heap of boxes, Alec LOUDLY TAPS A LID WITH THE HILT OF HIS KNIFE.

ALEC

I want to see your face --

From a distance, A SHIFTING SOUND OF MOVEMENT. A MUFFLED VOICE GASPS for breath.

Alec's eyes narrow as he whirls around, tracking the source with his lamp.

ALEC'S POV - MAIN HOLD

Nothing but the aisles of boxes. Silence, then --

A BLACK FORM

Sliding away from him between boxes, an eye flashing in the lamplight.

INT. MAIN HOLD - ALEC

Alec sets the lamp atop a box and races toward the Black Form -- and it reverses, throwing itself at him. The two bodies collide, SLAMMING into the boxes.

Alec loses his knife as the attacker raises another knife, flashing in the lamplight.

Blocking a slash, Alec pins arms against a box. SCREAMING, the Black Form drives a knee into his groin. As Alec doubles over, the thing bites his hand.

Alec sweeps the floor with his other hand and finds his knife. Scrambling up, he sees his attacker:

A YOUNG MAN, about 20, with rough, cropped hair and mouth bloodied from biting him. As he rushes Alec in a suicide charge --

ALEC
(in a fury)
You Christforsaken monster --

Alec parries the thrust with his own blade, forcing the other knife into the side of a box. The Young Man struggles to free it.

Alec grabs the Young Man from behind, putting a knife to his throat and an arm around his chest --

YOUNG MAN
Kill me! That's all of me you'll
get--

Alec reacts with a start: His arm surrounds a woman's breasts. Knife still at her jugular, Alec gives her a shake.

ALEC
Stop it. Now. Stop!

GIRL
I want to see the Captain.

She looks to her knife, stuck in the side of a box. Relentless, Alec grips her tighter.

ALEC

What are you? What are you doing here?

NOISES OUTSIDE: THE DOORS KICK OPEN. Tisma barrels in, followed by Abramov, who COUGHS at the smell.

ABRAMOV

Like I told you, hollerin' and screamin' --

TISMA

Ah, of course. My seasick sailor, and what -- a stowaway?

Dressed in loose, ragged men's clothing, the Girl looks like an urchin child. Tisma looks her over:

TISMA

You've got yourself a girl, Radu. Touching.

Pulling the Girl away from Alec, Tisma shines his lamp up and down her torso. He reaches down and grabs her buttocks to make sure. Writhing, the Stowaway tries to lash out at him.

GIRL

Keep your hands off me. I demand to see the Captain.

As Alec quietly slides his knife back into his boot, Tisma steps back, flashing his lamp over the entire hold.

TISMA

Oh, the Captain will be very interested in you turning up here, my dear.

(to Alec)

You, too, mate. This why you were in such a hurry to board my ship?

ALEC

No. I've never seen her before in my life.

TISMA

Then what are you doing down here, poking around without orders?

ALEC

I wanted to look at the cargo again.

(MORE)

ALEC (cont'd)

I wondered what kind of man would
spend money to ship dirt halfway
around the world.

TISMA

Don't go where you're not wanted.

Abramov is looking around, clearing his throat --

ABRAMOV

Smells like a regular shithouse in
here.

Tisma indicates for Abramov to take charge of the Girl, then
tails Alec toward the hold door. Alec can't help but look
backward:

ALEC'S POV - BLACK COACH

The last lamplight reveals the Coach's plague-like contents
continuing to sift through the open door, as if the source is
endless.

The DOOR SLAMS SHUT OC, and everything goes black.

INT. FORWARD HOLD

As Abramov wrestles the Girl away from the hold, Alec watches
Tisma SLAM down the hold door's iron bar and chain it in
place, to an OC DIN OF LIVESTOCK.

A few tiny spots of black decay, like an early penicillin
mold, are visible at the door's hinges and on the floor.

EXT. MAIN DECK - NIGHT

The bowsprit pointing westward, a wall of FOG presses rapidly
toward the Demeter from the sea, on the starboard side of the
ship. Stars disappear as the fog streams over the deck,
behind:

PETROFSKY

His back to the fog bank, he stands watch, scanning with his
binoculars:

PETROFSKY'S POV - COASTLINE

Clouds begin to dim the landscape.

INT. GALLEY - NIGHT

Alec is crowded onto one of the benches, flanked by Tisma and
Abramov. All eyes are on:

The Captain, seated at his own table, with the Girl planted across from him. Her spine is ramrod straight.

CAPTAIN

So, Helen Bryce-Edgerton, we have established only that you are English, and that you have no papers because your employer destroyed them.

HELEN, the Stowaway, looks anguished, for all her feigned composure.

HELEN

I have nothing else to say.

CAPTAIN

This is an official proceeding. And you are giving me inadequate information. Once again, who was this employer?

Alec takes a harder look at the Girl: In the light, she now appears strangely familiar.

ABRAMOV

It's a bad lot to have a woman aboard -- any kind of female--

Ogling Helen, Blake hands coffee to Sean and Murad. Sean examines her with the open interest of a boy who hasn't seen a lot of women.

BLAKE

I can think of a few ways she might be very lucky, indeed.

Murad looks away, disgusted. The Captain SLAMS AN ANGRY HAND on the table.

CAPTAIN

That is quite enough!

ALEC

(to Helen)

Is your employer the one who shipped the cargo?

HELEN

No!

CAPTAIN
 Radu, I will have several questions
 for you as well --

THE GALLEY DOOR OPENS --

PONARI

Poised in the doorway, taking in the gathering before him.

Lamplight at last defines his features: Arresting and angular, with skin so smooth as to appear ageless. Dark hair, gleaming eyes, the bearing of royalty -- and the sculpted profile that Alec spotted in the Coach with Nico.

PONARI
 What is this disturbance?

ALEC

Almost unable to breathe, his expression is feral. His body braces to attack, its movement alerting Tisma to his focus on Ponari. Tisma's gaze shifts back and forth between the two --

CAPTAIN
 Mr. Ponari, I cannot tell you how I regret this situation. However, I have no choice but to deliver any stowaway to the nearest port.

PONARI
 Captain, must I remind you of your obligation? Timely delivery of my cargo to England.

HELEN
 (seeing her only hope)
 All I want is to get home to England --

ALEC'S HAND

Creeping down to the handle of the knife stashed in his boot.

TISMA AND ABRAMOV

Sensing movement, Tisma grabs Alec and PULLS AWAY THE KNIFE. Abramov holds Alec down with a heavy hand. A coffee mug on the table slides, CRASHING AGAINST THE FLOOR.

PONARI

At last, he turns to look at Alec, who gazes murderously at him. Uninterested, Ponari turns back to the Captain --

TISMA

Permission to remove Radu, sir.

CAPTAIN

Permission granted. And also know that anyone caught in the cargo area without my authority will be put in irons.

Tisma and Abramov yank Alec from behind the table, muscling him outside the galley.

CAPTAIN

(looking to Murad)

Murad. Take first watch on the hold, to make sure of no further tampering with Mr. Ponari's cargo.

Murad gets up and leaves. The Captain turns back to Ponari --

And with a CLINK OF GOLD, Ponari sets a leather coin pouch on the table in front of the Captain.

PONARI

That should cover the young lady's passage. Do with it as you see fit. Bonuses for the men, perhaps.

CAPTAIN

This is quite irregular for us, sir.

PONARI

As you recall, the terms of our agreement were that you serve me without delay, under penalty of complete forfeiture of payment, yes?

The Captain opens the bag and weighs coins in his hand.

CAPTAIN

I assume that you will take all responsibility for this girl.

PONARI

You have my word, Captain James.

Ponari at last regards Helen, who keeps her eyes lowered.

PONARI

First of all, surely you can find quarters for Miss Bryce-Edgerton?

SEAN

Captain, Mr. Ponari's storage room could be outfitted easily enough.

The Captain looks at Sean with affection.

CAPTAIN

You do just that, then off to bed for the night.

As Sean races out:

PONARI

All I further request is that no one trouble me at any time. I am an uneasy traveler.

Ponari extends an arm to Helen, who doesn't know what to do. Suddenly aware of the Captain and remaining crew, she has no choice but to stand, letting Ponari lead her away.

INT. CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS

Alec behind him, Tisma opens a storage closet. In a CRASH OF METAL ON METAL, gaff hooks, spools of metal cable, and an old harpoon shift and begin to topple out.

TISMA

Put this in order. Maybe that will cool you off.

ALEC

I'd like my knife back.

TISMA

Not a chance in hell. What craziness was that, with Mr. Ponari?

Eyeball to eyeball with Tisma, Alec decides that discretion is the better part of valor.

ALEC

My eyes are weary. He reminded me of someone.

TISMA

I don't trust you, Radu. I'm first mate of this ship, and you'll do as you're bloody told, do we understand each other?

ALEC

Understood.

TISMA

From now on, you'll do nothing but make yourself useful. After this, you'll relieve Petrofsky and take midwatch on deck. And know that I won't ever be far away from you.

As Tisma heads off, Alec inspects the equipment with real curiosity. He begins to remove everything from the closet, laying it out in order.

Picking up the harpoon, he studies its intricate construction. He stashes it in the back of the closet as he begins to clean up in earnest.

INT. MAIN HOLD

Shadows play in the dark. The ship's ambient noise -- ENGINES, CREAKING METAL, CLANKING CABLES -- is heavy, like mechanical breathing.

And another, almost sub-audible sound rises, organic and disturbing amidst the engine noise: A WET, RASPY BREATHING. Sibilant and sickening.

On the floor, the blotches of black rot have swollen into scabrous patterns, growing in the direction of the door.

INT. FORWARD HOLD - MURAD

Standing guard at the main hold doors, Murad expertly rolls a cigarette by the guttering light of a kerosene lamp.

From the far end of the lower deck, the OC SHUFFLING AND BRAYING OF LIVESTOCK, as if the animals are uneasy.

Producing a match, Murad lights his cigarette, but it burns out with the first flare, to the OC SHRIEK OF A PIG. Murad winces: It's going to be a long night.

INT. STORAGE ROOM - NIGHT

At the storage room doorway, Sean hands Ponari a lantern and a set of keys. Helen hangs back.

SEAN

There, ma'am. Bed, basin,
everything a lady should need.

PONARI

That will be all.

Sensing condescension, Sean gives Ponari's back a dirty look. His eyes are on Helen as he disappears into the corridor.

Urging Helen into the small room, Ponari fills the doorway. His face is inscrutable, seductive. Helen tenses, one hand moving up to swipe at the blood on her face and lips, left from when she bit Alec.

PONARI

Wash yourself. The contents of the
hold are pleasing to no one.

HELEN

(taken aback)

Good night, Mr. Ponari. Thank you
for granting me my privacy.

Helen puts her hand on the door knob, ready to end the conversation. But Ponari steps in, closing the door and setting the lantern on a shelf.

Ponari paces slowly around her, viewing her from all angles in the low light. Grimy as she is, she is beautiful.

HELEN

I don't wish to pretend that this
is normal courtesy under normal
circumstances. What is it that you
want?

Helen glances over her shoulder: With a swift motion, Ponari unlatches a trunk, revealing a stack of immaculate nightshirts.

Helen turns to keep staring at the door. Taking a step toward her rigid back, Ponari leans in, placing his head next to hers:

PONARI

I should be much angrier with you
for violating my cargo. I am a
very particular man.

Helen shivers, both terrified and electrified by his proximity. She can feel his breath on her skin and hair.

HELEN

I boarded the ship before your cargo arrived.

PONARI

The materials that I am transporting are of an unusual nature. In truth, I would have discovered you anyway, since I am zealous as to their safety.

(after a moment)

I could have left you there.

Unnerved, Helen turns back to Ponari -- and is caught short by the nearness of his face.

HELEN

I can assure you, I have no desire whatsoever to return to the hold, or ever to see your cargo again.

PONARI

What is it that you desire, Miss Bryce-Edgerton?

Helen stares, mesmerized.

HELEN

What I desire is... my life as it once was.

A white handkerchief visible in his fingers, Ponari gently wipes the blood from Helen's skin, dabbing at her lips. Helen catches her breath.

PONARI

But you can never have that again, can you?

Drawing away the handkerchief, Ponari gazes at the fresh stains before folding it back into his coat.

PONARI

We are now bound to each other, I would say. And fortunately, I have infinite sympathy for the powerless. Eons of humanity, and the world is still comprised of predators and prey.

HELEN

I refuse to be either.

PONARI

Then here is how you may thank me:
I would like very much for both of
us to have a quiet journey to
England. We will see each other
again, Miss Bryce-Edgerton.

Ponari reaches into his coat and withdraws her knife, setting it on a shelf. The blade is clean, no sign of earth.

Just as swiftly, he is gone, closing the cabin door behind him. After a beat, Helen locks the door, placing her full weight against it for a moment as her breathing returns to normal.

Reaching into her dirty shirt, she fumbles for a strand of beads, ending in an ETCHED CRYSTAL PENDANT. She grips it for comfort: A relic of better times.

Pulling off her outer garments, Helen rifles through the trunk of shirts.

INT. MAIN HOLD

Bizarre shadows dance on the walls as Murad strikes a second match. He now looks fearful as once again, the match flares and goes out. A single lantern reveals almost nothing.

And the OC ANIMALS GO BERSERK: SLAUGHTERHOUSE SCREAMS.

INT. FORWARD HOLD

OC ANIMALS BELLOW, CHICKENS SHRIEK. UNSEEN BODIES FRANTICALLY STRIKE THE PEN AND CAGE WALLS.

Armed with a gaff hook, Murad crosses the forward hold, toward the pens.

And one by one, THE SCREAMS BEGIN TO SUBSIDE INTO MOANS, SOME CUTTING OFF ALTOGETHER.

Inhaling, Murad has to make himself move forward --

MURAD'S FEET

Unknown to him, he's tracking blood.

CLOSE ON MURAD

A LAST DYING ANIMAL SCREAM. MURAD JUMPS IN TERROR. A BLAST OF BLOOD SPATTERS his face.

The distant lamp blows out. Murad turns to run.

SOMETHING VAST AND DARK IS WITH MURAD IN THE DARKNESS. With a RASPING HISS, IT ENVELOPS HIM.

INT. CREW QUARTERS

Dark, huddled forms: Abramov, Blake, Sean, all asleep in their berths as the DOOR HATCH RATTLES.

Tisma sidles in a direct course toward Alec's berth. He runs a practiced hand under the bedding, then flips open the cupboard.

EXT. BOW - NIGHT

Petrofsky inches through a void of mist. Squinting, he holds up his lantern, but the light only reflects back.

His eyes widen as behind him, the LOW, RASPY HISS RISES ABOVE THE ENGINES.

PETROFSKY'S POV - MASTS

The BREATHING subsides, leaving only eddies in the mist above Petrofsky's head. Whatever the source, it's now above him, circling around the masts.

And an ELONGATED DARK SHAPE suddenly lurches past him. A ghastly white face, out of focus, barely glimpsed --

And it vanishes, as fast as it appeared.

EXT. MAIN DECK PETROFSKY - CONTINUOUS

Petrofsky spins around: He is alone on deck. He peers in the direction of the bridge, lost in whiteness.

PETROFSKY

(bellowing)

Tisma! The fog horn!

In the silence, his OC HEARTBEAT briefly rises to match the muted ENGINES -- then, the SLOW, SHUFFLING APPROACH OF OC FOOTSTEPS:

PETROFSKY'S POV - DARK SHAPE

Beyond the light, a blurred figure draws nearer --

PETROFSKY

Terrified, Petrofsky stands locked in place:

OC ALEC

Petrofsky?

As Alec comes into view, Petrofsky blows out a SIGH, then moves to clap Alec on the shoulder.

PETROFSKY

Should have called out, boy.

ALEC

Sorry. Tisma ordered me to relieve you.

PETROFSKY

Lucky you found me, in this muck.

Handing Alec the lantern, Petrofsky pulls out his flask and takes a sip --

ALEC

Where are we?

PETROFSKY

Just passing Constantinople when the fog swallowed us. We're entering the Aegean.

Handing Alec the flask, Petrofsky detaches a pouch from his belt. Pulling out a small, shriveled object, he rubs it between his fingers.

PETROFSKY

Know what that is? A caul, from my sixth son. Supposed to protect a sailor from the dangers of the sea.

ALEC

A caul?

PETROFSKY

Little piece of skin, like a veil on some babies' faces.

(drinking)

Old sailors like me believe a lot of strange things, you'll find out.

ALEC

I believe a lot of things that no one else would think possible.

PETROFSKY

You're awful young, to be saying such things.

Something in Alec's tone prompts Petrofsky to offer him the flask. Alec raises it in a toast, then takes a sip.

At last, THE OC FOG WHISTLE BLASTS. Alec hands the flask back to Petrofsky --

ALEC

Look, you might as well go below and get some rest. There doesn't seem to be much for both of us to watch.

PETROFSKY

Soon enough. Here's something strange for you. Just now, I swear on all my sons' heads, I thought I saw a ghost.

Startled, Alec turns on Petrofsky.

ALEC

What do you mean?

PETROFSKY

I don't know. Something like a face, but where there should have been eyes and a mouth, nothing but whiteness.

ALEC

I've seen that, too.

PETROFSKY

Ah, you're making a fool of me, Radu --

But Petrofsky again looks up at where the bridge should be. He goes stock still. Alec follows his gaze --

A SHUDDER WITHIN THE FOG, then the movement stops.

ALEC

Petrofsky. I know what it is --

PETROFSKY

Let's get Tisma to stop his barking and sound that damn horn again.

Grabbing the lantern, Petrofsky attaches Alec's hand to the back of his shirt.

PETROFSKY

Just hold on and follow, I know
this deck better than you --

AND ALEC IS KNOCKED OFF HIS FEET as Petrofsky's lantern goes flying, SHATTERING --

ALEC SLAMS ONTO THE DECK, wind knocked out --

In foggy darkness, inches away, an OC MUFFLED CRY, then A SERIES OF CHOKES. Alec scrambles up, not knowing which way to turn.

ALEC

PETROFSKY!

OC SCRAPING bumps away from Alec -- then a soft TEARING, SNAPPING SOUND, as if flesh is being rended.

Alec tries to follow, smacks into a mast --

And as THE FOG WHISTLE BLASTS AGAIN, the mist slowly begins to withdraw:

No sign of Petrofsky, only broken lantern parts, scattered across pools of lamp oil.

ALEC'S POV - THE BRIDGE

Alec hurls himself up the stairs --

Straight at Moluko, emerging from the bridge.

ALEC

Something's got Petrofsky --

Tisma appears behind Moluko.

TISMA

Something got him?

ALEC

(in shock)

I lost him --

Tisma steps back into the bridge. In an instant, the OC SHIP'S BELL RINGS, SOUNDING AN ALARM --

As Moluko's dark eyes bore into his, Alec unclenches his fist to reveal a torn, bloody piece of Petrofsky's shirt. He stares at it as if seeing it for the first time.

EXT. DECK - NIGHT

The fog is thinning as the Captain walks the deck, Tisma and Alec at his side. The Captain contemplates the scrap that Alec tore from Petrofsky's shirt.

CAPTAIN

Bear in mind, Radu, that I have sailed with the rest of these men for a very long time, and we all know that Petrof was far too good a sailor to fall overboard.

ALEC

He didn't fall. Something attacked him and pulled him away, as close as I am to you.

CAPTAIN

The Aegean gave up its monsters with the Greeks, Radu. I have every confidence that there is a more substantial explanation.

Eyes pinned on Alec, Tisma reaches into his jacket and pulls out Nico's ragged shirt.

TISMA

You tell me now, what did you do to Petrof?

(thrusting the rag in Alec's face)

Anything like this?

ALEC PUNCHES TISMA IN THE FACE, AS HARD AS HE CAN. Tisma is reeling, ready to strike back, as the Captain shoves Alec away from him.

CAPTAIN

Don't make it worse for yourself, Radu.

Seizing Nico's rags from Tisma, Alec refolds them with trembling hands:

ALEC

I carry the last clothing that my son wore. And that's all that there is to me.

CAPTAIN

I am not interested in your past.
And Tisma, I also do not believe in
foregone conclusions. I have no
patience with either personal
enmity or superstition.

MOLUKO

Emerging from behind a hatch, he holds out Petrofsky's flask.

CAPTAIN

If Petrof had fallen overboard,
this certainly would have gone with
him. He is among us and we will
get to the bottom of this.

(to Moluko)

Moluko, you take the helm.

Moluko heads toward the bridge. The Captain reaches into his
jacket and removes a small pistol. As he checks the chamber:

CAPTAIN

(to Alec and Tisma)

Both of you will remain with me.
First, we shall make a full account
of this entire ship, from top to
bottom. Speak to everyone --

ALEC

Including the passengers?

The Captain and Tisma exchange looks, then:

CAPTAIN

In fact, yes, since neither Mr.
Ponari nor Miss Bryce-Edgerton has
orders to remain anywhere in
particular.

INT. CREW QUARTERS

To Blake's and Abramov's OC TRUMPETING SNORES, the Captain
tucks a blanket over the sleeping Sean, pats his head, and
leaves --

Restless, Tisma and Alec wait in the doorway:

INT. CORRIDOR/PONARI'S STATEROOM

The Captain KNOCKS briskly on Ponari's stateroom door.

CAPTAIN
 Sir? Mr. Ponari? It's Captain
 James. I must speak with you.

No answer. The Captain KNOCKS AGAIN. At his signal, Tisma chooses a key from his master ring and inserts it in the door.

ALEC BRACES HIMSELF AS THE CAPTAIN PUSHES OPEN THE DOOR:

ALEC'S POV - INT. STATEROOM

Handsome and pristine, it shows no sign of use. The bed cover is smooth, as if never turned down.

ALEC

Scanning the room as the Captain and Tisma turn away, Tisma re-locking the door.

CAPTAIN
 I will say, Mr. Ponari is very
 determined to keep to himself.

ALEC
 Or he's hiding.

TISMA
 (smirking at Alec)
 Myself, I don't think we have to
 look far to find our gentleman.

Perturbed, the Captain is already KNOCKING on Helen's storage room door --

INT. STORAGE ROOM

Opening the door a crack, Helen surveys Alec, Tisma, and the embarrassed Captain.

CAPTAIN
 My apologies, Miss Bryce-Edgerton,
 but I must request an inspection.
 One of our crew, Mr. Petrofsky, has
 gone missing --

HELEN
 I'm afraid I don't know Mr.
 Petrofsky.

- TISMA
 We have to come in, Miss.

Before Helen can respond, Tisma pushes the door wide. The Captain and Alec follow, taking in the cot with its tangle of blankets. The trunks, one open to reveal neatly folded clothes.

CAPTAIN

Have you further seen Mr. Ponari, Miss Bryce-Edgerton?

HELEN

Mr. Ponari left me here after the little boy set up the room, sir.

Alec regards Helen, draped in Ponari's nightshirt.

ALEC

Did he talk to you at all? You didn't step outside, see him later?

HELEN

(icy)

I have seen nothing and spoken to no one.

Looking her full in the face, Alec registers recognition: At this angle, SHE MATCHES THE GIRL ON THE VARNA BLUECOAT'S HANDBILL.

ALEC

I'm sorry. Miss Bryce-Edgerton.

HELEN

You must understand that I don't wish to cause any trouble.

Over Tisma's incredulous LAUGH, the Captain motions for him and Alec to leave.

CAPTAIN

Thank you very much, Miss.

Alec pauses, as if he wants to speak further. Helen shakes her head, and closes the door with a little extra force.

INT. UPPER DECK CORRIDOR

At the OC CLICK OF HELEN SLAMMING HER LOCKS, the Captain turns to Alec and Tisma, not happy with either.

TISMA

I'd wager that girl's lying --

CAPTAIN

Tisma, Radu, go below. Talk to Olgaren and Murad, see if they saw or heard anything of Petrof. Then report back to me.

The Captain turns his back on Tisma and Alec.

ECHOING THE THROB OF ENGINES, the deserted corridor seems larger than its actual size as the two men face off.

ALEC

You stole from me.

Spoiling for a fight, Tisma steps too close to Alec.

TISMA

Feel free to ask any and all questions, Radu.

ALEC FLINGS HIMSELF FULL-FORCE AT TISMA. They crash to the ground, arms swinging wildly. No gentleman's fight. No pretense of chivalry. These men are trying to break each other.

TISMA

You're mad, God only knows why you had to leave Varna so fast --

Alec fires a punch, catching Tisma under the chin. Tisma staggers back --

ALEC

I had no business in Varna.

With the speed of one possessed, Tisma rocks back onto his feet and slams Alec toward the stairwell to the lower deck.

But Alec grabs onto Tisma, pulling him down with him.

INT. STAIRWELL - ALEC AND TISMA

Keeping his balance, Alec shoves Tisma against the railing, which GROANS ominously -- until Tisma breaks free and starts to back up the stairs, toward the upper corridor --

TISMA

I'll meet up with you later, I promise.

And Tisma is gone, leaving Alec alone on the stairs. Sides heaving with rage, Alec looks up, ready to pursue Tisma.

Below Alec, an OC FAINT, RHYTHMIC CREAKING catches his attention.

ALEC

Murad?

Alec looks down the stairwell, realizing that this is the only sound in an eerie quiet: No animal noise whatsoever.

INT. STAIRS/FORWARD HOLD - ANIMAL PENS

Alec steps down the lower deck stairs, toward the CREAK. At the bottom of the steps, he squints into the darkness, brightened only by light filtering from the upper corridor:

ALEC'S POV - ANIMAL PENS

A couple of smaller cages, sized for chickens, are scattered on the floor, empty. Nearby, the tarps lie thrown aside. Dark stains mark the dirty canvas.

The larger pens are uncovered, contents lost in darkness. One gate sways back and forth, HINGES SCRAPING SHRILLY.

EXT. MAIN DECK - CAPTAIN - NIGHT

The deck is a forest of shadows, CABLES CREAKING OVERHEAD. Making his way through the last traces of the mist, the Captain walks at the pace of a man who doesn't want to linger.

OC PONARI

Captain James.

Wearing a heavy cloak, Ponari emerges from between hatches.

CAPTAIN

Sir! I had been hoping to have a word with you.

PONARI

And you have found me.

CAPTAIN

I'll be brief, Mr. Ponari. We've lost a man on deck. Perhaps you saw or heard something?

PONARI

No. Quite the contrary. I find a certain peace in night at sea.

(MORE)

PONARI (cont'd)

Quiet as a heartbeat, yet it can turn in an instant. Magnificent and terrifying.

CAPTAIN

Indeed it is, sir. But about my crewman, Petrofsky --

PONARI

I regret that I cannot help you.

CAPTAIN

How long have you been on deck, Mr. Ponari?

PONARI

I don't carry a watch, Captain. An eccentricity, I know, but it is enough for me that night follows day.

(over MUTED WAVES)

Are you familiar with Matthew Arnold? One of your English poets? "The eternal note of sadness," he called the sound of the tide.

CAPTAIN

I pray not.

PONARI

As well you should --

In the distance, the first silver band of dawn illuminates the horizon. Ponari's posture shifts, as if a great exhaustion is overcoming him. Wrapping his cloak around him, he turns back to the captain.

PONARI

Let us both be about our day, Captain. I wish you the best in your search.

Ponari starts to cross the deck, a dark figure against the lightening sky.

INT. LOWER HOLD/ANIMAL PENS

Alec makes his way past the larger pens, all stripped of their tarps. Blood everywhere. Hints of mangled body parts.

Alec abruptly stops, GASPING:

ALEC'S POV - BLOODY SHAPE

The outline of a fallen child: Crumpled legs and a narrow back, topped with a shock of shiny black hair.

Sickened, Alec leans over the body, only to discover that it's a chimera of grisly, mutilated animal parts:

The legs and lower body of a calf, the headless shoulders of a lamb with forepaws ripped off, and a mangled black chicken, whose feathers shine like human hair.

INT. CREW QUARTERS - CONTINUOUS

Abramov jerks awake as a LAMP SHINES IN HIS FACE illuminating Tisma's battered features. Blake looms behind him.

INT. CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS

Bloodied from the livestock pens, Alec runs through the ship.

INT. CAPTAIN'S CABIN - DAWN

The Captain rubs his eyes as he writes in his log. Without warning, THE CABIN DOOR FLIES OPEN, revealing:

CAPTAIN'S POV - ALEC

Blood-smeared, bedraggled, as ravaged as he's ever been.

INT. LOWER HOLD/ANIMAL PENS

A GOAT lies slashed and mutilated, its diamond pupils dilated and empty. Ribbons of meat hang from the mesh of its cage.

THE CAPTAIN

Looking at the slaughter. Nauseated, stunned, turning to Alec --

CAPTAIN (V.O.)

There is a doom over this ship,
such as I have never known.

THE FACE OF THE GODDESS DEMETER - DAWN

A red-washed sun rises behind her. Her eyes seem to gleam bloody, until sea spray washes away the illusion.

INT. FORWARD HOLD/ANIMAL PENS - CONTINUOUS

Alec furtively picks up a short, splintered piece of wood from a broken pen rail. He stuffs it in his boot.

Behind Alec, Moluko lays out a tarp. Picking up a muckrake, Alec scrapes the animals' remains onto the canvas.

EXT. DECK - GREY DAY - CONTINUOUS

Holding opposite ends of the blood-soaked tarp, Alec and Moluko drag it across the deck --

CAPTAIN (V.O.)

A night of hell, blood everywhere,
My dear old Petrof and the Turk
Murad, lost in the darkness even as
our livestock was slaughtered.

UNDERWATER - ANIMAL CARCASSES

The desecrated, bloody remains of the goat's face descends from the hull of the Demeter, followed by more mutilated parts.

We blast up through the black-tinged water, up the side of the Demeter, to a porthole:

INT. GALLEY - GREY DAY

MOS: Blake dresses Tisma's face while Abramov fortifies himself with rum. A heated, conspiratorial discussion is taking place -- until Tisma bats aside Blake's hand and leaps to his feet, the others following suit --

CAPTAIN (V.O.)

I fear a panic among the men,
already downcast --

INT. CORRIDOR/CAPTAIN'S CABIN DOOR

Doing their best to look all business, Abramov and Blake eavesdrop.

INT. CAPTAIN'S QUARTERS

Barely able to contain his fury, Tisma stares down the indignant Captain.

CAPTAIN

You and the others first need to understand this: I despise the foolishness about a woman in our midst causing ill fortune.

TISMA

God knows what this girl is, sir.
But look at me. Look at the truth.

(MORE)

TISMA (cont'd)

Tell me that you think Radu belongs on this ship.

CAPTAIN

He is here, and Murad and Petrof are suddenly gone. Of course that causes me profound disturbance --

TISMA

Exactly, sir.

CAPTAIN

But it is also a coincidence. In terms of his behavior toward you, he seems to have had provocation.

TISMA

You believe that story about a son? I doubt that we'd care to know the truth of the matter.

Weary, the Captain turns to his bookshelf. He puts a finger to a well-worn volume.

CAPTAIN

I wish that I had your certainty about so many things.

(turning back to Tisma)

But don't you think me capable of asking questions? Possibly even questions which you do not consider?

TISMA

Then let someone else sort out Radu and the girl. Let the rest of us finish what we're paid to do.

A long silence. The Captain turns away from the bookcase.

CAPTAIN

We are not far from Tabarqa. You may set the course. But once we are there, I shall demand a most thorough inspection. Of everything and everyone.

EXT. DECK/BOWSPRIT - CONTINUOUS

Stuck on watch below the mainmast, Alec observes the glassy sea. Sunlight filters in and out of fog.

A towering, rocky island thrusts from the sea. At its peak stands a lighthouse, dark and apparently abandoned. On the horizon lies the vague shadow of a coastline.

OC SHIP'S BELLS BEGIN TO RING. The ENGINE CHANGES PITCH.
Sensing that something is wrong, Alec steps forward:

ALEC
(calling up)
Moluko! What is this place?

EXT. DECK/MAINMAST - MOLUKO

Ascending the mast to the lookout perch, Moluko gives no response as he climbs into the bucket.

THE GRINDING OF ENGINES SLOWLY BEGINS TO DIMINISH, as if losing strength.

INT. GALLEY - GREY DAY

At the stove, Sean watches a kettle come to a boil. Behind him, Blake and Abramov shovel food into their mouths. Abramov nurses his rum.

ABRAMOV
Tabarqa's a dull little hole. Now Tunis, that's where I'd like to put in.

BLAKE
Radu and that girl need hanging, that's what they need. Thank the Lord Tisma keeps his wits about him.

ABRAMOV
(one eye toward Sean)
Mum's the word, Blake... Hurry it up there, boy.

Sean lifts the kettle and pours water into three mugs.

BLAKE
Know what else I noticed, in the larder last night? The rats. They're gone.

ABRAMOV
What are you talking about?

BLAKE
They've vanished. All of them.

ABRAMOV
We should only be so lucky. Filth and vermin go missing, and you want to know where.

BLAKE
Boats have rats. A boat without rats is not natural.

Sean passes two mugs to Blake and Abramov.

ABRAMOV
Mr. Tisma wants you cleaning up the deck, where Radu and Moluko dumped those beasts.

SEAN
Yes, sir.

Grabbing another mug, Sean starts to leave. With a bully's smirk, Blake holds out a leg, stopping him --

BLAKE
Don't be getting too close to Radu, Sean. You don't know what he fancies.

INT. UPPER CORRIDOR/STORAGE ROOM

Helen opens the door to Sean, who hands her a cup of tea. She smiles for the first time. Sean beams back at her as she closes her door.

INT. STORAGE ROOM - HELEN

Smile fading as she grips the mug of tea, Helen settles back onto her cot -- and the Demeter's hull GROANS WITH THE SHIFT IN DIRECTION. Panicked, Helen leaps to her feet, lurching with the movement of the ship --

EXT. BRIDGE - CHANGING COURSE

Spinning the wheel, Tisma calls out the heading, then looks down:

TISMA'S POV - DECK

Alec stands motionless, taking in the blurred land ahead. Yards above him, Moluko remains motionless in the bucket, eyes fixed on the coastline.

INT. BRIDGE

Spreading out a map of the North African coastline, the Captain watches the compass shifting farther Southwest.

TISMA

I'd still rather have Radu down with Olgaren. Though I guess it's better that we can see him here.

CAPTAIN

Nothing is going to happen, Tisma. Tabarqa is within hailing distance, in broad daylight.

EXT. THE DEMETER - TURNING AGAINST THE WAVES

Heading against the current, as the waves around it begin to smooth out, almost imperceptibly.

EXT. TABARQA CLIFFS - DAY

The ship heads into a dark passage between cliffs drained of color. The daylight shifts to bluish, muted. THE SHIP'S ENGINES ARE NOW BARELY AUDIBLE, as if operating in a vacuum.

INT. BOILER ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The diseased black fungus first seen in the hold is now visible on the hinges of the equipment.

Olgaren frowns as he checks the boiler gauges: Pressure dropping.

COAL BINS

CURSING UNDER HIS BREATH, Olgaren digs his shovel into the coals -- and freezes in place:

OLGAREN'S POV - WALLS/SHADOWS

Amidst the shadows on the walls, one rises taller, extending itself. A SOFT HISS rises --

A SOLID SHAPE uncoils in front of the shadow, then melts back into the darkness.

OLGAREN

Abramov? If that's you, playing some fool game --

OC CAPTAIN
 (via the speaking tube)
 Olgaren! We need more speed!

The HISS fades out, shifting, lost in the ENGINE NOISE.

Eyes on the now motionless shadows, Olgaren picks up a piece of coal. He pauses for a moment, throws a piece of coal at where he saw movement. Nothing.

Moving fast for a big man, Olgaren hurries toward the doors:

OLGAREN
 Abramov! Where are you, you drunk
 son of a whore?

INT. FORWARD HOLD

Abramov slumps on the floor, asleep, his back to the hold doors as they STRAIN at the hull's movement.

INT. MAIN HOLD

In the permanent night at the back of the hold, the COACH SHIFTS, tilting with a CREAK as A SHAPE WITHIN IT MOVES.

UNDERWATER - THE PROP

Revs, churning the sea --

EXT. BRIDGE - THE CAPTAIN

Seen through the bridge window, he looks displeased as he studies the lifeless horizon through his binoculars.

ALEC

Alec cranes his neck to look up at the bridge:

ALEC'S POV - BRIDGE

Through the glass, the Captain is now preoccupied at the helm. Tasma is not visible.

MAINMAST - MOLUKO

Still as a statue, completely ignoring Alec.

EXT. DECK - ALEC

Backing up, he seizes the moment to run.

ALEC'S POV - REAR DECK

Far away, Sean is doubled over, eyes to the ground as he hauls an enormous bucket of water.

With no one else in sight, Alec plummets toward the stairwell.

MOLUKO

At the mainmast, MOLUKO TURNS TO NOTE ALEC, DISAPPEARING BELOW DECK.

Moluko re-focuses on the bow. He starts to mutter in the cadences of a prayer.

INT. UPPER CORRIDOR - ALEC

Alec pulls the harpoon from the closet that he cleaned. From a distance, OC FOOTSTEPS POUND down the hallway. On full alert, Alec races toward:

ALEC'S POV - HELEN

Expression desperate, she almost collides with Alec.

ALEC
Miss Bryce-Edgerton?

Off Helen's terrified expression, he lowers the harpoon.

HELEN
Does Mr. Ponari know that they're changing course? Have you seen him?

ALEC
I'm looking for him myself --

HELEN
They're putting me ashore, aren't they, even though he paid for my passage --

ALEC
Yes, they are. But please listen to me. Ponari's no friend to you or anyone. He's --

(choosing his words)
He's using this entire vessel to get what he wants. And you won't see him until he has use for you.

HELEN
He wants to get to England. I can think of nothing beyond that.

ALEC

It's not safe for you to be alone.

Alec reaches into his jacket and pulls out the crumpled handbill. As he smooths it out, the resemblance between the picture and Helen is unmistakable.

ALEC

The bluecoats in Varna were looking for an English girl who had committed a crime.

(returning the picture to his pocket)

You don't have any good choices, but as God is my witness, letting them put you in port may give you a fighting chance.

HELEN

To do what? Go to prison? If I'm lucky, hide and live as a beggar --

ALEC

To do whatever you can to find English people, who might take care of their own.

Helen looks up: This haggard, filthy man may not be what she thought.

ALEC

(gentle)

You should want to see where you're going. If you come upstairs, at least you'll have the sunlight.

EXT. THE DEMETER - TABARQA ISLAND AND BAY - DAY

The view is flat, two-dimensional, as the ship glides into the deep bay between the cliffs. The landscape is totally barren. Sluggish waves wash a shore scattered with black pebbles.

INT. BRIDGE - COMPASS

Black specks, almost microbial in size, cluster beneath the glass and at the base of the needle.

INT. BRIDGE - THE CAPTAIN

Unnerved, the Captain traces his fingers over the maps. As the cliffs' shadows consume the cabin, he looks up, shaken:

CAPTAIN'S POV - HILLSIDE - RUINS

Closer now: Weathered stone blocks, the foundation of ancient buildings, curve across a bare hillside. Fog eddies among the stones. The vast bay is otherwise empty, no sign of human habitation.

CAPTAIN AND TISMA

Taut as a wire, Tisma leans into the helm, trying to focus on his task.

TISMA

I'm telling you, these are the Tabarga coordinates, unless someone stole the whole damn town.

The Captain points down to the equipment:

CAPTAIN

What is that?

Tisma sights a faint tracing of black at the base of the compass. He kneels and touches it.

TISMA

Oil. Grease.

CAPTAIN

Wipe it away. If we are off-course, if this is human or mechanical error, even if we are looking at a mirage, anything makes more sense than utter obliteration.

TISMA

It can't have anything to do with the compass, whatever it is --

CAPTAIN

Wipe it off. Then we'll circle and proceed westward. Assuming that we can find westward.

EXT. REAR DECK - SAME TIME

Near the mizzen mast, Sean scrubs the last bloodstains from the rear deck. He leans down: Mold is starting to appear between plank fittings. It smears as the boy wipes in circles.

Frustrated, Sean notices his feet are now tracking what appears to be tar --

SEAN

Shite. Shite, shite, shite...

As Sean scrapes his blackened boots on the railing, he wipes sweat from his brow. Liquid splatters on his head from above.

Eyes on his boot as he inspects a sole, Sean runs a hand over his forehead, smearing blood in his hair.

Then another, larger drop. Sean looks upward --

EXT. DECK - ALEC AND HELEN

Alec quietly places the harpoon behind a hatch, close enough that he can reach it fast.

A few feet away, Helen stands motionless at the far end of the bow, in the shadows of the featureless cliffs.

HELEN

There's nothing here. Do they
intend to leave me to die?

Alec watches her pale hand twisting the crystal beads. Without thinking, he draws closer, as if to comfort her:

ALEC

Maybe the port is farther inland.
(moving closer)

How in God's name did someone like
you wind up so far from home?

HELEN

I was a governess. I loved the
little boys, they had no mother and
they loved me --

ALEC

I can guess at what happened, you
being a servant at a rich man's
house.

(after a beat)

I know what it's like, to have
someone tear through your life as
if it's nothing --

For the first time, Helen's expression softens in curiosity --

But turns to shock at an OC CHILD'S WAIL, distant and thin as
it rises in terror:

EXT. REAR DECK - MIZZENMAST - SEAN

Bearing down on Sean, Alec takes the boy in his arms. Sean's hands are covered with gore, his face smeared with bloody tears.

HELEN

Sean! Are you hurt?

Shoulders heaving, Sean shakes his head and points upward. Alec and Helen look to the mizzenmast:

ALEC AND HELEN POV - MIZZEN SAILS

The furled sails are so blood-saturated along the bottom that drops are falling like rain.

EXT. REAR DECK - CONTINUOUS

In an instant, Moluko is at the mast, striking the sail. Handing Sean to Helen, Alec moves to help Moluko:

Foot by foot, the sail begins to drop, revealing a long crimson stain, stretching to the bottom as the sail reveals itself. Within the darkest part of the stain, a weight shifts --

MURAD'S BEHEADED CORPSE PLUMMETS TO THE DECK.

THE GREY-WHITE HEAD SLIDES AFTER IT, spattering its last blood as it hits the deck, crushing a facial bone --

Seizing the tarpaulin that he and Moluko used to haul the dead animals, Alec whips it over the body, then returns to Sean and Helen, who's fighting to contain her horror.

ALEC

(to Helen)

One of the missing men.

SEAN

Mr. Murad.

ALEC

Sean. Why don't you take Miss Bryce-Edgerton away from this --

HELEN

Mr. Radu is right. You don't need to be here anymore.

SEAN

I have to help.

Alec's face is close to Helen's as he bends to look Sean in the eye. Sean wipes at blood and tears.

HELEN

Of course you do. But now we need to get Mr. Murad ready, so you can say a proper good-bye to him.

ALEC

Sean. We are going to be all right if we take good care of each other. You've already done exactly what you were supposed to do.

(smoothing Sean's bloodied hair)

Now you have to go tell the Captain what happened.

Off Alec's look, Sean nods and heads toward the bridge.

ALEC AND HELEN

Helen looks to Alec, impressed. Her gaze startles him: A moment of unspoken, unexpected attraction. Alec regards his bloodstained fingers, then is compelled to look back at her.

AN O.C. SHARP WAIL BEGINS, CARRYING OVER:

EXT. REAR DECK - DAY - LATER

Moluko is CHANTING, A DARK, RHYTHMIC SINGSONG, as Alec and he hoist Murad's tarped body from opposite ends.

The stunned Captain stands nearby, taking in the dark blood on the canvas. As Moluko continues to pray:

TISMA

Yards away, unable to move or to take his eyes off the shape wrapped in gory canvas.

TISMA

God damn, you heathen bastard, why don't you stop that noise --

CAPTAIN

(glaring)

Let him mourn.

The Captain gazes past the stern, toward:

EXT. TABARQA BAY - DAY

Sheets of fog shroud the grey-brown cliffsides. The whole landscape is disappearing from view.

MOLUKO

HIS PITCH CHANGING AS THE CHANT PROCEEDS, Moluko scans the deck where Murad's body lay:

MOLUKO'S POV - MOLD

Grey-edged scabs of mold cluster between the seams of boards.

MOLUKO'S CHANTING CONTINUES OVER:

EXT. MAIN DECK - DAY

Blake finishes sewing Murad's shroud.

BLAKE

Bloody wog leaves it us to pack him up. White man's burden, indeed.

Abramov and Tisma wait behind the Captain, who holds a prayer book over the parceled body. Sean is at his side, doing his best to look composed.

CAPTAIN

Sorry to inconvenience you, Blake, but I am even more sorry that I do not know any Muslim prayers.

TISMA

He prayed often enough. Let's have an "Amen" and be done with it.

MOLUKO

Moluko is near the bow, facing out to sea. Ahead of him, a small wind parts the sheets of fog, revealing washed-out afternoon sun and slate-colored tides.

OLGAREN

Blinking at the ashen sky, Olgaren stands back even farther, a brooding look on his wide face.

OLGAREN'S POV - THE SEA

There is no coastline at all on the port side. The Demeter is moving into a colorless tunnel, only a ghostly sun to lead it westward.

ALEC

Alec stands in front of Helen, as if to shield her.

ALEC

It doesn't look as if you'll be going ashore anytime soon.

HELEN

Little cause for celebration, all things considered.

ALEC

(after a beat)

I'll do what I can to watch out for you.

Helen says nothing, weighing her options.

ALEC

We have something in common. They don't like you any better than they like me.

THE CAPTAIN AND SEAN

The Captain motions for Sean to step forward, as Abramov and Blake lift Murad's shrouded body.

SEAN

Blessed be art thou... oh God of the universe. And take mercy on Mr. Murad's soul.

CAPTAIN

We commit this body to the deep, looking for resurrection, when the sea shall give up her dead.

(head down)

Also in hopes of again seeing our beloved friend Mikhail Petrofsky. Amen.

At a sign from the Captain, Abramov and Blake heave the shrouded body overboard.

A SPLASH echoes against the slack tides. Abramov spits, MUTTERING.

CAPTAIN

(to Olgaren)

We are done here, Olgaren. Abramov, go with him.

(MORE)

CAPTAIN (cont'd)

Tisma, to the bridge. The sooner we're off this ship, the better.

Olgaren reluctantly retreats, but Abramov returns to stand by Blake and Tisma. They stare at Alec and Helen.

ALEC

Looks toward Helen: Leave. But Tisma cuts off her path.

ALEC

You gutless fools, you know she had nothing to do with any of this --

At a nod from Tisma, ABRAMOV AND BLAKE LEAP FOR HELEN AND BEGIN TO DRAG HER IN THE DIRECTION OF THE LIFEBOATS.

Alec launches himself at them -- and TISMA PULLS A KNIFE AND PUTS IT TO ALEC'S THROAT.

TISMA

I'm not waiting for a port, or for the next man to die.

BLAKE

And women make the sea angry --

Helen smashes Abramov's nose with an open palm. He HOWLS and staggers back, blood spurting. Squirming, Helen fires an elbow into Blake's quivering gut fat.

Alec tries to twist away from Tisma's grip, but Tisma yanks him up by his hair.

TISMA

I should let the light of day into your skull right here.

Blake SLAMS HELEN TO THE DECK, where Sean throws himself over her. Blake seizes the boy by his collar --

TISMA

We've had enough of this lunacy, Captain. How many others die now? Who's next?

The Captain is pulling out his pistol.

CAPTAIN

Tisma, this is mutiny. You may be the first that I hand over to authorities.

ALEC

That shirt you stole from me -- my son was wearing it when Ponari killed him. There's your murderer. Not even human --

BLAKE

Finds himself with Moluko's war club at his throat. Moluko shoves Sean and Helen away from the enraged cook

THE CAPTAIN

Fires into the air. Abramov and Blake freeze. For a moment, Tisma loses his grip on Alec, who ROLLS AWAY. Moluko strong-arms Tisma for his knife.

CAPTAIN

At attention. Now. I intend to deal with each and every one of you as I see fit.

ALEC

Please, Captain, you need to listen to me.

(to the group)

Do you know why you never see your Ponari in daylight? Because he hunts by night and rests in the day.

Moluko remains between Alec and Tisma, his war club's sharp end leaning toward Tisma.

ALEC

Some things defy nature, Tisma. Old things, wanting to live forever, needing flesh and blood to keep their power. Ponari's a demon. A vampire.

CAPTAIN

Vampire? What are you talking about, Radu?

ALEC

Before Petrofsky was taken, he told me he'd seen it, the face of a ghost in the fog --

TISMA

Listen to this, pure peasant foolishness --

ALEC

That's right. I'm a peasant.
Born and bred in the mountains with
your guest, the Nosferatu, the
undead --

Tisma smiles at something over Alec's shoulder. As everyone
turns:

TISMA

Hides from light, you were saying?

THE VIEW SHIFTS TO: PONARI

Crossing the deck. Head bare. Unblinking.

Helen looks to Alec, dumbfounded as Ponari turns a cold eye
on the Captain:

PONARI

We are near land, Captain. Why is
that?

CAPTAIN

Because I have now lost two seamen,
sir, and outside intervention has
become a necessity --

Alec moves in close, taking in Ponari's daylight complexion:
Pallid, but in no way deathly, despite his grim expression.

PONARI

Such a necessity that you could not
consult me? Your risks far
outweigh any reward if you do not
stay on course --

CAPTAIN

Mr. Ponari, this is my ship and
these are extraordinary
circumstances.

HELEN

And it doesn't seem that you were
available to give an opinion.

Ponari turns, startled at Helen's accusatory stare.

PONARI

I gave you my word, Miss Bryce-
Edgerton.

HELEN
Enough of words, when your actions
make no sense --

Brushing past her, Ponari moves toward the port. Beyond him,
the coast is now only a shadow.

PONARI
You have sailed into a no-man's
land, Captain, and to what end?

ALEC
Good question. Do we go the way of
Murad? Or the animals? Or perhaps
you can tell us what happened to
Petrofsky? Or to my son?

Motionless, Ponari remains focused on the fading coastline.

PONARI
Captain, I would prefer to hear
only from you.

ALEC

Raising his crude stake, HE CHARGES PONARI --

MOLUKO

With his war club, he strikes Alec across the back of his
head. Alec drops, out cold.

INT. BRIDGE - SUNDOWN

Late afternoon shadows drench the bridge. The Captain spins
the helm, sending the compass turning back to west by
southwest. Stone-faced, the Captain turns to Abramov:

CAPTAIN
From this point on, steady west,
till we can see where we are.

As the Captain heads down the steps, Abramov shakes his head:
Something's up, and he's glad not to be part of it.

ORANGE LIGHT BLASTS INTENSELY

The roar of dragons is deafening. The view sharpens. The
mouth of the dragon becomes the mouth of the ship's blast
furnace--

INT. BOILER ROOM

Alec comes to sprawled on a pile of coal, his head aching from the blow he took. Olgaren moves into his field of vision. Alec winces at the POUNDING ENGINES.

OLGAREN

Odd one, Moluko, but he saved you from more trouble, if you think about it.

As Alec starts to pull himself up, he finds himself hobbled with leg braces and ankle chains. Even his hands are chained. He yanks at them angrily--

OLGAREN

You go anywhere, it's on my head, says Tisma. Anyway, he's got the keys.

Alec eyes the various locking mechanisms.

OLGAREN

Is it true -- hailing distance from a town where we've docked, there wasn't a thing to be seen?

ALEC

We only saw what we were supposed to see.

Olgaren opens an engine door. The flames within throw dancing shadows throughout the vast room. He draws closer to Alec:

OLGAREN

(conspiratorial)

Today, right when we changed course... There was this thing. In the shadows. Not that I get scared easy. But this was different.

ALEC

Did you see anything more than a shadow?

OLGAREN

Don't know. Tried to follow, but wasn't nothing there. Gone, like that.

Olgaren tries to snap his grimy fingers, but they are too dirty. He tries again, frustrating himself.

OLGAREN

I dreamt of it right before and Petrof and Murad was lost. Dreamt of a darkness that was alive.

ALEC

It can change what we think we see and hear, Olgaren. It's weaker in the day, maybe just a shadow, but it's feeding. It's getting stronger.

OLGAREN

(crossing himself)

They say when a demon comes into the world of man, we'll know by our dreams. They will grow dark. My dreams have been very dark.

ALEC

So tell me how we convince Tisma.

OLGAREN

Tisma will never believe what he can't see.

Olgaren goes back to shoveling, as if it comforts him. Spreading his ankle chains over a metal pipe, Alec starts to POUND THEM WITH A SHOVEL.

OLGAREN

Me, I think I like your company better than ever.

ALEC'S POV - PIPE

Down its length, the joints quiver beneath layers of black corrosion.

INT. CAPTAIN'S CABIN - NIGHT

The Captain sits at his desk, fixed on Tisma, who stands at attention. Moluko sits with Sean, who's slumped on the bunk.

CAPTAIN

If we were not already a Spartan crew, Tisma, I would've thrown you over the side myself after your conduct today.

TISMA

With all due respect, sir, why waste time playing that it was anyone behind this but Radu?

CAPTAIN

(to Tisma)

I'm doubling the watch tonight. Two crew together at all times. You'll share the helm with Abramov. But first give me your keys.

Tisma slowly hands over his ring of keys.

TISMA

This is all wrong. Madness.

(starting to seethe)

Haven't I always brought the Demeter safely to port? Have I ever not done what I was supposed to do, and done it well?

CAPTAIN

(rising from his seat)

Do you want to talk of madness? You were mad, you were mutinous, you did nothing but spread even greater madness among your fellows. Moluko did well to disarm you.

The Captain opens a well-stocked weapons locker.

CAPTAIN

But now, because we all have reason to fear, I still must trust you, as my first mate, to protect yourself and to behave responsibly. On behalf of us all.

The Captain holds out a revolver to Tisma, who waits a few moments before taking it, with a surly nod. Holding out another pistol to Moluko:

CAPTAIN

Moluko, partner with Olgaren for a few minutes and search the hold. Mr. Ponari's boxes and all.

Lifting his war club, Moluko refuses the pistol. Checking his gun for bullets, Tisma shakes his head:

TISMA
 (to Moluko)
 Using your bloody magic stick to
 look for what, demons? Christ,
 Moluko, learn to save yourself --

In one lightning-like move, Moluko uses the war club to swat the revolver from Tisma's grip. As it flies up, Moluko reaches out and catches it in his free hand.

The corners of his mouth twitching upward, Moluko shoves the pistol into his clothing. He exits.

CAPTAIN
 One more moment, Mr. Tisma.
 (seating himself next to
 Sean)
 Sean, sir, you look very pale. Do
 me a favor. Get some soup from
 Blake.

Sean gives a little grin at what is clearly an ongoing private joke.

SEAN
 That could be a fate worse than
 death.

CAPTAIN
 Your father, you know, was rather
 fond of eels, though a good eel is
 quite the delicacy. For now, you
 and I will suffer the efforts of
 Mr. Blake, till we can have an eel
 to call our own.

SEAN
 Aye, Captain...

CAPTAIN
 Mr. Tisma will take you there. A
 full belly might help improve his
 spirits as well.

Giving Sean a quick pat on the back, the Captain hands another pistol to the tight-lipped Tisma.

INT. STORAGE ROOM - NIGHT

In her frayed camisole, Helen inspects herself: Scraped, bruised, chronically grubby -- clearly not what she once was.

She digs in the open trunk and pulls out a man's brush. Dragging it at her hair, she tears at the uneven chunks. The brush flies from her hand --

Crouching, Helen hunts for the brush on the dark floor.

Her hand grazes a small, exotic box, wedged amidst the other baggage. Picking it up, Helen touches a set of intricate latches.

INT. CORRIDOR/STORAGE ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Ponari approaches the door to Helen's room. He hesitates, hearing OC CLICKING --

INT. STORAGE ROOM - ON HELEN'S KNIFE

Using her knife on one last latch, Helen releases the lid on the carved box. As she holds up a dense heap of papers, an OC KNOCK echoes on the door.

OC PONARI

Miss Bryce-Edgerton? I would like a chance to speak to you. To apologize for my harshness this afternoon.

Startled, Helen closes the box and jams it back into its corner. Tucking the knife where she can reach it, she steels herself, takes a breath --

INT. CORRIDOR/STORAGE ROOM DOOR

Helen unlocks the door to Ponari.

HELEN

I suppose that I should appreciate even small courtesies. But what I need is answers.

Ponari's expression hardens. Helen forces herself to meet his eyes.

HELEN

What is your past with Mr. Radu?

PONARI

You so want the truth? I expect the same from you.

INT. STORAGE ROOM

Helen quietly closes the door and stands in front of Ponari.

PONARI

Bear in mind, you allowed me to enter your room.

HELEN

What he said about his son, about a vampire, about a thing that kills at night --

PONARI

An educated young woman of breeding does not stow herself away like a criminal unless she has something to hide.

He's hit a nerve, but Helen doesn't flinch. Neither moves.

HELEN

The man to whose children I was governess... He wanted more of me than I was willing to give. He came to my room one night... I struck him with a poker and fled.

PONARI

I commend you. But do you know what happened to that man?

HELEN

No. I had to get away as fast as I could.

HELEN

He was the kind to stop at nothing to ruin me. I had no choice but to try and get back to England.

PONARI

Nor do I.

HELEN

Why not?

PONARI

The completion of personal business... Do you know, Miss Bryce-Edgerton, that it pains me to look at you? You remind me of someone very dear. Absurd as that always sounds.

HELEN

I am not that person.

PONARI

It is a quality of the spirit.
Take that as the highest of
compliments.

Ponari abruptly kisses her forehead, then steps toward the door.

HELEN

Mr. Ponari --

Ponari stops. After a long moment:

HELEN

You didn't answer my question about
Mr. Radu.

PONARI

I have no more power than you to
undo the past. Let that be your
answer.

HELEN

That is no answer at all.

Ponari steps back to make his exit.

PONARI

Then here is another. You are brave
and beautiful. And I swear above
all that I will do everything in my
power to honor that perfection.

HELEN

Where are you going?

PONARI

To make certain that you and I both
get to England.

INT. CORRIDOR/CAUSEWAY

In the causeway beyond the galley, Tisma lingers, brooding,
sighting down the barrel of his revolver. HE TAKES MOCK AIM:
Abramov is approaching.

ABRAMOV

What're you doing here?

TISMA

I should ask you the same. The old
man's got me waiting here to nanny
the boy.

ABRAMOV

God knows the bridge is better than
the boilers. I owe you, my friend.

Abramov looks around stealthily, then pulls a full bottle of
rum from his clothing. Both men react to an OC CLATTER
within the galley.

OC BLAKE

Wipe that up for me, boy, and be
quick about it.

TISMA

(shoving open the galley
door)

Bloody hell, Blake, we haven't got
all night.

ABRAMOV

(waving the bottle)

The boy takes care of himself fine.

Tisma BANGS ON THE GALLEY DOOR:

TISMA

Blake! We're doubling up! You
take the boy back to the Captain!

INT. GALLEY

Blake stirs the soup kettle. Sean watches colorless vegetable
chunks rise to the surface.

BLAKE

You get older, you'll find out that
there ain't but one use for girls
like that Helen Whatsis. Or any of
them, for that matter.

SEAN

I didn't want her to get hurt.

Blake dollops soup into two bowls, which he slams onto a
tray.

BLAKE

Fellows stick up for each other,
boy. If it was up to me, I'd give
you a proper hiding.

At that, Sean grabs the tray and pushes his way out the door.

Blake lumbers behind him, wiping greasy hands on his apron.

BLAKE
Shouldn't go against me, young
fellow.

SEAN

Gripping his tray, he rounds a corner as fast as he can.

SEAN
Rat catcher.

INT. CORRIDOR

Sean proceeds, moving down the low-lit hallway until the shadows swallow him.

INT. STORAGE ROOM - HELEN

The carved box sits pried open on Helen's cot.

Helen scrutinizes a photograph of a beautiful, dark-haired young woman... who is this?

Then, a cache of letters and legal documents. She opens one letter and begins to read. Each line compels her to read on. Her hand fidgets with her beads.

INT. BOILER ROOM - ALEC

Now alone, Alec stands as close as he can to the boilers. Scorched, dripping black sweat, he raises a fire ax over one red-hot arm chain, STRIKES, and takes a moment to admire the severed ends --

FINGER-LIKE FLAMES SHOOT FORTH FROM THE ENGINES, driving him back. As fast as they leaped forward, they're gone.

Alec clutches the ax, looking around the half-lit room, ENGINES ROARING in its vastness.

Wincing, he drapes the leg chain over the coals just as the OC DOOR HINGES GROAN. He raises the ax --

HELEN OC
Alec!

INT. MAIN HOLD - SAME TIME

Moluko holds up a lantern as he and Olgaren survey the towers of boxes, NOW WELDED TOGETHER WITH MALFORMED BLACK FUNGUS, as if the organic debris of the carriage has expanded throughout the entire hold.

Moluko slashes at the filth with his war club, allowing him and Olgaren to move deeper, toward the rear.

Before them, an upper box sits open, its wet earth gleaming like hundreds of tiny eyes. It's impossible to tell if the sight is only a reflection, or a movement in the tarry, gel-like soil.

Above the OC ENGINES, a SUDDEN WHISPER. Moluko jerks away from the box and raises his club, motioning for Olgaren to stay behind him: AN ATTENUATED SHADOW glides from the Coach area, at the back of the hull --

And at once, seemingly from every direction, the GASPING HISS rises, surrounding them like a huge death rattle.

OLGAREN

Oh Christ, that's it, it's here
like Radu said. Christ help us --

Olgaren fumbles, trips, drops both his gaff hook and his pistol. With the HISS GROWING CLOSER, Moluko drags him toward the doorway --

INT. MAIN HOLD/FORWARD HOLD

Moluko shoves Olgaren past the black-cruled iron doors. SLAMMING them shut, he SMASHES DOWN THE BAR.

Behind the doors, the HISS subsides into the customary DULL THROB of engines...

INT. BOILER ROOM - ALEC AND HELEN

Alec sorts through Ponari's letters, reading a bit from each.

HELEN

They're all between him and his daughter. Alec, he writes about serving Nosferatu, or another man, Draculya --

ALEC

They're the same.

(slow, shocked)

"...My darling Anna, I will not rest until you are well again, quit of this poison in the blood...

(grabbing another page)

And after this voyage, my service to him is done, and I shall rush to your side to give us back both our lives..."

HELEN

There are all kinds of papers, all different. But I can't tell what happened to the daughter.

Alec tries to read again, but can't concentrate: This isn't the Ponari he'd imagined.

ALEC

Nosferatu never lets go of anything. Any bargain would have been a trick.

(handing Helen the letters)

Give these to the Captain. He's got to free me. Run as fast as you can. For yourself, if anything.

INT. BRIDGE - SAME TIME

Tisma and Abramov, in their cups, leap up as a shadow flits across the bridge -- could be anything, but Tisma wildly FIRES HIS PISTOL, SHATTERING THE GLASS. Abramov wrestles him for the gun --

INT. BOILER ROOM - SAME TIME

Olgaren rapidly checks gauges while Moluko unlocks Alec's leg chains.

ALEC

How much could you see?

OLGAREN

Enough that we knew to get out there as fast as legs could carry us.

(opening an engine door)

I'll keep us moving, long's you do it as fast as you can --

Moluko finishes unlocking. In a deep, assured voice:

MOLUKO

(to Alec)

We kill it together.

Stunned, Alec looks at Moluko, who gives him back his knife.

INT. STAIRS - SAME TIME

Helen is heading toward the stairs to the upper corridor when her foot strikes something: A METAL SOUP BOWL, contents spilled everywhere. Helen halts, unnerved, and looks to the top of the stairs:

HELEN'S POV - UPPER DECK/MOVING SHADOW

Hulking, misshapen as it shifts, then merges into other shadows in the dim interior light. Then, a moment's OC HISS.

Helen goes still. No sound at all, then the tiniest STIRRING, as if a body is shifting. Helen takes a step forward, then another. At the top of the stairs, she looks a few yards down the upper corridor:

INT. UPPER CORRIDOR - NOSFERATU

FEEDING ON THE LIMP BODY OF SEAN. Long, tangled hair is matted to its scalp. A scar splits its upper lip, revealing multiple rows of sharp teeth. Its flesh, the color of death, pulses obscenely with borrowed blood as its skin changes tone, becoming less pale, more passable as human.

Turning, Nosferatu DROPS SEAN LIKE A TOY.

NOSFERATU'S POV - HELEN

White, plastered against the dark corridor wall, Helen emits an involuntary CRY.

INT. UPPER CORRIDOR

Fixated on Helen, Nosferatu poises, drinking her in like a rare delicacy. Its hideous mouth twitches, in a parody of a smile.

Helen backs away. Slow as a prowling cat, Nosferatu takes a step toward her. Its height and tensile strength indicate that it can be upon her as fast as it wants.

HELEN'S POV - SEAN

Crumpled on the floor, throat slashed, small hands extended.

INT. UPPER CORRIDOR

Frantic, Helen keeps backing up, crouching in a reflexive attempt to make herself as small as possible --

Enjoying the dance, Nosferatu keeps stepping forward. It looks down on her with predatory tenderness.

As Helen retreats, hunched and shaking, her CRYSTAL PENDANT falls out from her oversized shirt -- and SUDDENLY FLASHES:

A NARROW SHAFT OF DAWN SUNLIGHT STREAMS THROUGH A PORT SHUTTER on the corridor wall.

NOSFERATU FALTERS AT THE BURST OF LIGHT FROM THE CRYSTAL.

At its reaction, HELEN TEARS OPEN THE PORT SHUTTER, shoving it wide. She lunges to do the same to the next shutter, the next, the next --

NOSFERATU SHRINKS BACKWARD INTO THE DARKNESS, LIKE A BURNT MATCH.

Helen now moves forward, SOBBING AS SHE BANGS OPEN every port shutter along the corridor. With all open, and the area filled with light, she turns back toward Sean --

MOLUKO AND ALEC

THUNDERING up the stairs --

ALEC/MOLUKO POV - INT. UPPER CORRIDOR

Helen, on her knees over Sean's drained body, responds with complete terror to the SOUND OF THEIR APPROACH --

ALEC

Alec is at once beside Helen, holding her as she shudders. He makes himself look at Sean's tiny corpse: Bled out, throat torn, the same vacant eyes as Nico's body in the Coach.

Alec touches Sean's eyelids, closing them, then straightens his bloodstained shirt, as if trying to cover the wound and give him as much dignity as possible.

Moluko slides his arms under the boy, cradling him.

EXT. BRIDGE/MAIN DECK - CONTINUOUS

Worse for his night of drinking, Tisma is coming down the stairs as the Captain shuffles by, leveled with grief as he carries Sean's body.

Trailing the Captain, Moluko acknowledges Tisma's presence with a look of sheer contempt.

Tisma is rooted to the spot, complexion going grey under the flush of liquor.

INT. UPPER CORRIDOR/VARIOUS - ALEC AND HELEN

Eyes on the ground, Alec and a trembling Helen make slow progress through the corridor. Helen abruptly stops, turning toward Alec:

HELEN

Is this what happened to your son?

ALEC

(barely able to say it)
Nico must have been the last to cross its path, when it finally left its lair.

HELEN

What in God's name is it?

ALEC

An old warrior who spilled enough blood to become death itself, they said. Once our king and protector.

(now looking at Helen)

I took every job that I could, hoping to take Nico to a place without nightmares. All I wanted for us was to get away from that poisoned country.

Alec and Helen are at the causeway outside the galley. Alec looks toward the galley door: Tisma and Abramov are visible, Tisma holding his gun. Alec pauses, taking a deep breath.

ALEC

But these are modern times. Nightmares can travel.

HELEN

But it can't die --

ALEC

How can you say that? You were the first to stop it. Whatever it is, it was a man once. And I will never be able to have any peace until it's dead, or I die first.

A COFFEE POT ON A SHELF

The battered pot's metal lip is traced with the faintest hint of black. Behind it, mold has sprouted on an already greasy wall. Grubby, sausage-like fingers grab the pot's handle --

BLAKE OC

Awful thing. Breaks one's heart for the boy, though he'd always have his way, listening to nothing and no one.

INT. GALLEY - GREY MORNING

Blake throws ground coffee into the pot, then holds it beneath the pump. As the water spurts, dollops of black slip from the metal into the pot. Blake slams it onto the stove.

Behind Blake, Tisma has turned the galley into a war room, weapons piled on the table. He is running on fumes, his movements manic. Meanwhile, a nervous Abramov forages for food throughout the galley.

TISMA

Captain's gone nutty on us. We're going to have to tough this out on our own--

The pitch of worsening seas SCATTERS Tisma's weapons pile. He is raking it back like a treasure when Alec enters with Helen.

ALEC

(all business)

We need to go after this creature. Now, when he's weak. Morning's the perfect chance to end him --

HELEN

I saw it... I watched it feed on poor Sean. It fled at sunlight.

Crazy drunk, Tisma downs the last of the rum and tosses the bottle. As it SHATTERS against a wall --

TISMA

Well, if you couldn't do anything about it, Miss Helen, don't come crying to me. Should've let it eat you, too. That might have calmed it down right and good. Would have done a service to your fellow man.

ALEC

It won't stop unless we kill it. Now.

The coffee pot starts to boil over. Blacker than usual, tinged with unhealthy foam, the fluid burns Blake's fingers as he moves it off the flame.

TISMA

No one's stopping you.
(gesturing theatrically)
Throw wide the door and all that.

ABRAMOV

(deep in a pantry)
Christ, Blake, anything in here not older than your granny and just as rotten?

BLAKE

(leering at Helen)
Ma'am, let me fix you a nice cup o' char. Warm you down your toes.

HELEN

No, thank you.

Blake pours a flask of the tainted coffee and blows on it to cool it off, much to Helen's disgust. Licking the cup's edge lasciviously as he stares at her, Blake drains the coffee himself.

BLAKE

Nothing's good enough for you, eh, princess?

The galley pitches dizzily, rattling Blake's pots and pans. As Helen catches herself, Alec sits down, facing Tisma.

ALEC

Here's what we have to do, and I suspect it's right up your alley, Tisma. We run something very large and very sharp through the thing's heart. Then, while it's stunned -- only stunned, not dead, because this is no ordinary victim --

Tisma raises his hand in an obscene gesture. Abramov SNORTS with half-hysterical laughter.

TISMA

Know what, Radu? This thing comes from your people, it's all yours. I'm staying right here.

ALEC

Where at nightfall, it can show up whenever it chooses. So here's how we make it dead enough for all of us. We cut it to pieces. Limbs, head, organs, everything. And we burn what's left over.

But Helen has frozen, staring:

HELEN

Mr. Blake -- your face --

BLAKE

Black ooze bleeds around his mouth, blotching his skin, his greying lips curling in soft decay --

Blake wipes at himself, but the skin mold keeps spreading from within. He yells as if on fire and tumbles back against shelves, THRASHING pots and pans onto the floor. Abramov stands rooted as Blake falls toward him --

BLAKE

(muffled)

What? What? What --

INT. GALLEY

Tisma and Alec jump to their feet --

ALEC

Don't touch him. Get away --

Tisma pulls Abramov back as decay blackens Blake's nose. Blake grinds at his eyes as his tear ducts expel the stuff. He manages to get up, his stomach undulating with a force inside him --

Blake lies still, and for a moment seems to feel better.

BLAKE

(even more garbled)

I'm fine. I'm fine --

Then suddenly, his body begins convulsing. Thrashing violently, shaking uncontrollably, as if his very soul were in agony.

His eyes, now a cold grey blue, widen in despair. Slowly, the color seems to drain out of them. They grow darker until they give off no light at all --

And black bile gushes from Blake's mouth, spraying the galley. Blake goes limp, his organs melting down from every orifice. He falls back, dead.

HELEN

Wincing at Blake's body, then looking away:

HELEN
Look. The walls. The ceiling --

HELEN'S POV

Black clusters dot the entire galley.

ABRAMOV
Mother of God, I seen that, all
over the place --

ALEC

Pulling open the galley door, he notes black on the frame.

INT. CAUSEWAY - DAY

Before them, in streaks of morning light from a view port, the entire causeway bears evidence of the spreading corruption.

ALEC
Everywhere. It's consuming this
ship.

Helen comes to his side, stepping out for a better look --

BLAKE'S BODY

Behind them, the bloated corpse rises at an unnatural angle, as if a separate force is pulling it upwards to its feet --

And Blake lurches forward, knocking Helen full force into a deck head as he charges blindly. He smashes into the view port at the end of the causeway, his decomposing features smearing across the glass.

ABRAMOV

From the depths of the galley, he tosses something to Alec --

ABRAMOV
Radu! --

INT. CAUSEWAY - BLAKE

Blake spins back toward the galley --

BANG! Shots rings out. Exit wounds in Blake's chest pump black fluid.

HYPERVENTILATING, his face decomposing, Blake claws at his bulging neck as his heaving body crashes to the floor, revealing:

ALEC

Frozen by the galley entrance, holding a smoking revolver from Tisma's stockpile. He drops the gun. Helen moves to Alec. Abramov steps up behind them.

TISMA

Jaw slack, he is rooted to his spot in the galley.

BLAKE - CLOSER

The ashen grey flesh of his face withers, then swells briefly before he implodes, body collapsing into an unrecognizable heap.

EXT. DEMETER - AFTERNOON

Skies roil overhead. Surging waters tear at the hull, submerging the Demeter figurehead. Even the black smoke spewing from the stacks twists in grotesque shapes.

INT. MAIN HOLD

Just past the entrance, the mortar of black fungus binding together the boxes has been torn apart:

Dirty and exhausted, Ponari makes an agonizing effort to pry a single box from the midst of a stack. With one last heave, he topples the whole pile, retreating just in time to avoid being crushed in the CRASH OF ROTTEN WOOD AND PLAGUE-RIDDEN SOIL

INT. BOX

The OC CRASH ECHOES inside an intact box, its earth interwoven with silhouettes of flesh-like extensions connecting the mesh of plague to its walls. THE DARK TENDONS PULSATE BRIEFLY, as if distressed --

PONARI

Next to him, another stack lies shattered, forced open. Ponari looks over his work with ferocious satisfaction.

Ponari's breath comes in GASPS as he pries the lid off a box. Holding a container marked with the Crucifix, he pours water onto the putrid soil.

As acid-like fumes boil from the muck, PONARI KNEELS AND PRAYS:

PONARI
A subitanea et improvisa morte
liberta nos, Domine...

EXT. DECK - LATE AFTERNOON

Sea and sky are a seamless wall of gray and red as Moluko and Alec heave overboard a stained sail bag, Blake's remains. Moluko touches his bird talisman.

MOLUKO
(to himself, low)
Talamaur...

ALEC
What is that?

MOLUKO
Protection. From Talamaur.

ALEC
What's that?

MOLUKO
On my island, there was a boy who saw a dead man rise from his resting place. The people in his village they do not believe him. They say: "We are good people, nobody would curse us with such evil." The boy went to find an old Shaman.

WIND BUFFETS THE DEMETER as the clouds thicken. Alec and Moluko struggle to stay on their feet.

MOLUKO
The Shaman lives far away from the village. When he hears the boy's story, he prays. Days pass before he says he is ready to go to the village. But everyone is dead there. Torn to pieces. Something has drunken the blood and eaten the flesh. The Shaman calls it Talamaur.

ALEC

The old people in my village said the devil himself gave this thing more power for each misery he spread on earth -- storms, plagues, each single murder.

MOLUKO

The Shaman said this, too. He raised the boy, taught him the old ways, but the Talamaur has gone away.

ALEC

You were that boy.

MOLUKO

I still want to hunt it.

Moluko and Alec turn, seeing:

THE CAPTAIN AND HELEN

Helen follows the Captain. He wears his full dress uniform, an ornate sword at his side as he forces himself toward the gunwales, grasping Sean's small body in its sail cloth shroud. He gazes out to the setting sun as Alec and Moluko join him.

ALEC

He told me his father was killed serving the Navy. Was he buried at sea?

CAPTAIN

Yes. Full honors.

ALEC

Then we have to let the sea reunite them.

Alec extends his arms to the Captain. Unable to control his tears, the Captain shifts the small form over to Alec.

INT. BRIDGE - CONTINUOUS

From the helm, Abramov looks down at the procession below.

ABRAMOV'S POV - DECK

The group on deck presses close to the railing.

ALEC

Alec releases Sean's body, watching it plummet downward and SPLASH into the white-capped sea.

Alec's can't take his eyes away from the bundled sailcloth as it tosses about, taking on water, moving backward in the wake of the ship. Tears stream down the Captain's seamed face.

ALEC

Sir. We have no choice but to find Ponari, whether he serves this creature or they're one in the same.

OC TISMA

All due respect, sir, you can blow that and this entire floating funeral barge out your arse.

Tisma marches toward the others, clutching his pistols.

TISMA

I'm not spending another night on this ship waiting to get filleted.

TISMA TAKES SWEEPING, UNSTEADY AIM AT THE GROUP:

TISMA

Break out the lifeboat! Move!

Alec shoves Helen behind him. Moluko heads across the deck to release the lifeboat.

ALEC

Look at the sea! How long can you last out there?

TISMA

Longer than you, I suspect. Long enough to watch the gulls pick the eyes from your corpses.

Tisma wheels around as Abramov comes near.

TISMA

(to Alec and Helen)

I should finish off both of you. Be doing you a favor, before your beastie does it.

CAPTAIN

I wish I had listened to Radu, Tisma.

(MORE)

CAPTAIN (cont'd)

Go ahead, throw yourself overboard,
shoot me like a dog on my own ship,
it's all nothing now.

Climbing into the lifeboat, TISMA PRESSES A PISTOL TO
MOLUKO'S TEMPLE. Moluko doesn't flinch. Tisma grins:

TISMA

Abramov! Be needing your help with
the lifeboat!

Abramov shakes his head: "No." TISMA REMOVES THE GUN FROM
MOLUKO'S HEAD AND AIMS POINT-BLANK BETWEEN ABRAMOV'S EYES.

TISMA

Well, then. Your bonus is coming--

Abramov unties a leather coin pouch from around his neck and
tosses it to Tisma. Pocketing it with fluid ease, TISMA TURNS
ON ALEC AND HELEN, drawing a bead on Alec's chest, as if to
pierce both of them. Alec stays immobile in front of Helen.

ALEC

I'm looking in the face of a dead
man, Tisma.

Pistol still on Alec and Helen, TISMA MOTIONS FOR MOLUKO TO
RELEASE THE WINCH.

COCKING THE PISTOL WITH A LOUD CLICK, Tisma whips the gun
sideways, FIRING within inches of Alec's head. Then he tucks
the pistol into his jacket.

Moluko rapidly kicks off the brake. The boat begins to
lower.

TISMA

Not worth another bullet. Coast of
Spain is close enough that I can
raise a glass to your demise --

Moluko slices the lines with his club.

ALEC

You'll never make it, Tisma.

TISMA

(shouting up at Alec)

Well then, drowning's a good clean
death for a sailor.

Helen joins the Captain, who returns to the rail to watch the
last of his first mate.

DEMETER POV - SEA/LIFEBOAT - CONTINUOUS

As the sun angles toward the western horizon, the sea rushes the lifeboat toward the stern. Tisma is lost from view.

EXT. DECK - ALEC

Alec retrieves the harpoon that he hid near the hatch. Moluko appears, war club in hand --

INT. MAIN HOLD

Ponari is kneeling in the black silt among the boxes. Head bowed, he silently prays, like a knight on a tomb.

NOSFERATU OC
(subtitle; guttural)
You have betrayed me...

A TOWERING SHAPE COLLECTS ITSELF BEHIND PONARI. NOSFERATU.

Ponari rises, slow and deliberate.

PONARI
(in Nosferatu's language)
You of all beings speak of betrayal. You destroyed your own grand plan.

Ponari moves closer, focused on the travesty of a face.

PONARI
To keep at rest, until we reached England. So have no rest. That's the way you are by nature, for all eternity. Unless your appetites have so ruined this ship that it can't make land.

Nosferatu's cracked, blood-crusted lips pull back over its teeth as its eyes bore into Ponari.

NOSFERATU
The girl. What is she to you?

PONARI
What am I to you, now? You have allowed yourself enough freedom to become vulnerable. Consider that.

Raking claws through the tainted earth, Nosferatu emits a rasping CHORTLE as it approaches Ponari.

NOSFERATU

Shall I remind you of what you have become --

PONARI

This time, I welcome it.

Features set in anguished determination, Ponari removes his shirt, one button at a time. It drifts to the floor, revealing a body crisscrossed with dozens of healing cuts and old scars.

As Nosferatu watches, Ponari lifts a razor into view, poising it over his chest.

With a precise movement, Ponari slices deep into his flesh. Wincing with pain at the gush of blood, he otherwise maintains a stoic silence as Nosferatu buries its mouth in the new cut.

Nosferatu's eyes are half-closed in ecstasy as it sucks. Ponari does not move --

As the creature's lids suddenly go wide, its bottomless eyes gleaming with vengeance. Spider-like fingers grasp Ponari's hair and spin him to face forward, back to Nosferatu.

Bent over his shoulder, Nosferatu lashes forward, striking like a snake, embedding its jagged teeth in a neck artery. Immobilized, horror transcending physical pain:

PONARI

NOOO!

Bright red blood surges over Ponari's neck and chest. His limbs go limp, his eyes roll up. Nosferatu withdraws, whispering at Ponari's slumped head:

NOSFERATU

What are you now?

INT. PONARI'S STATEROOM

Alec and Moluko enter: The room is empty. One open trunk reveals clothing; another sits locked on the floor.

MOLUKO BASHES THE LOCK OFF THE CLOSED TRUNK with one swing of his club.

Alec and Moluko claw to the bottom of the trunk, coming up with a sheaf of papers and a crumbling volume bearing the image of a dragon.

But before Alec can read, THE SHIP PITCHES VIOLENTLY, throwing him and Moluko to the floor. Outside the ship, the WIND BEGINS TO MOAN.

Amidst the gale, AN INHUMAN CRY SWEEPS THROUGHOUT THE SHIP, then fades into the winds.

MOLUKO

Night.

EXT. SEA - TISMA'S LIFEBOAT - SUNDOWN

A band of red streaks the horizon beyond Tisma's spinning lifeboat. HOLLOW-SOUNDING WINDS buffet the boat into a dizzying spin.

TISMA

Terrified, struggling with worthless oars in a darkening cyclone of mist --.

Dropping the oars, Tisma grabs his pistol and tries to stand up in the vortex. He pulls the trigger. The pistol jams. Tisma falls back. He stares up, his eyes those of a panicked child.

TISMA

(voice fading in the whirlwind)

Our father, who art in Heaven,
hallowed be thy name...thy
kingdom...

(memory failing)

Thy kingdom...

MIST ENGULFS HIM as the last gleam of sun flashes below the horizon.

A FLASH OF RED SPRAY, A CHOKING MOAN LOST IN THE TIDES.

EXT. DECK/MAINMAST - SUNDOWN

Moluko is back in the bucket, holding onto its sides as it sways in gales that seem to come from every angle:

MOLUKO'S POV - STORM CLOUDS - SUNDOWN

The MOST EPIC STORM FRONT EVER SEEN is massing: A low, towering, seething black wall, expanding as it pushes east, toward the approaching ship. The sea heaves under the currents of heavy air.

MOLUKO

Bracing himself against the mounting winds, he watches as the storm expands, encircling the Demeter from both the northwest and southwest.

INT. BRIDGE - NIGHT

The Captain is at the helm, expression blank despite the RISING WINDS AND SURGING SEAS. Behind him, Alec and Helen sort through Ponari's papers.

ALEC

Ten properties around London--
(showing the deeds)
The boxes are to be distributed
over the lot. Bolt holes, where it
can hide.

CAPTAIN'S POV - THE STORM

A BLAST OF WIND HITS THE SHIP HEAD-ON, from a layer of black clouds boiling only feet above the Demeter's riggings.

HELEN

The thing that murdered Sean is
going to take refuge in an abbey,
Captain --

CAPTAIN

It's more than the boxes. Blake
went nowhere near them, and yet he
rotted where he stood. Are you
telling me that I must scuttle my
ship?

ALEC

No. But we have to destroy
everything that it brought on
board. Jettison it. Boxes, earth.
That coach.

CAPTAIN

It's night. He is safe wherever
there is darkness, you have said.
What order can I give that does not
bring on another manner of death?

THE DEMETER ROCKS AGAIN, WINDS SCREAMING AROUND IT. Helen peers through the bridge window. Rain spatters the cracked glass and blows through the holes from Tisma's shots. Glancing down at a map, Helen turns to the Captain:

HELEN

How far are we from the Straits of Gibraltar, sir?

CAPTAIN

The British outpost? Not far, though I have no faith left in anything resembling navigation --

HELEN

Whatever sea we sail, there are bound to be British naval ships --

ALEC

Any navy might be useful, sir. And remember, Nosferatu wants above all to get to England.

Rain hitting his face, the Captain's shoulders square, as if some part of his old self is rallying. He looks at the compass, surprised:

CAPTAIN

For now, we appear to be moving due west into the Atlantic. Toward England --

ALEC

Bought and paid for. He's still got that much of a man about him.

EXT. DECK - NIGHT

The HORN SOUNDS. Moluko FLASHES A MESSAGE WITH A SIGNAL LAMP.

Above Moluko, muted by the mounting roar of WINDS, the ENGINE BELLS strike three times: "All ahead full."

INT. BOILER ROOM - CONTINUING ACTION

Olgaren and Abramov listen at the VOICE PIPE BLASTS into the huge space:

CAPTAIN OC

When I give the word, give it all you can. We will be running under a storm.

A VIOLENT OC CRASH, outside the boiler room. Olgaren and Abramov look at each other --

INT. BRIDGE - CONTINUOUS

The Captain and Alec crank the helm with all their might.
Helen reads the compass:

HELEN
290, 300, 320 --

CAPTAIN
Damn winds, we're shifting too far
west --

ALEC
(into voice pipe)
Olgaren! Abramov! Can you hear
us?

Silence. ANOTHER GUST SHAKES THE SHIP then:

OLGAREN OC
You'd better get down here, Radu.
Fast.

INT. BOILER ROOM DOOR/LOWER DECK CORRIDOR

Too scared to move, Abramov hovers at the boiler room
doorway:

Helen leans over Ponari, collapsed like a bloody rag doll.
Blood oozes from multiple gashes, the neck wound only one
among many. Olgaren leans in:

OLGAREN
Miss, you should be careful.

HELEN
He's just a man.

Olgaren turns toward Alec, who's surveying the blackened,
filth-smearred hold, its doors gaping open. The broken chains
dangle, worthless. Alec turns, approaching Ponari. He
kneels at the side of Nico's onetime abductor.

ALEC
(to Ponari)
You tried to defy it, didn't you?

Alec looks to Olgaren, then past him to Abramov skulking in
the background.

ALEC
You two, you're our best hope of
getting to land.
(MORE)

ALEC (cont'd)

Anyway, I think your best chance is to lock up and stick together down here.

ABRAMOV

What kind of chance is that, Radu? Down here's where it goes to ground.

OLGAREN

Goes where it wants, Abramov. Let's do what we can.

Abramov jumps back at Ponari's DEEP, CHOKING MOAN. Even Olgaren looks alarmed. Ponari's lips move, then --

PONARI

Kill me...

HELEN

Mr. Ponari -- Alec --

Frantic, Helen puts her hand over Ponari's mouth, feeling for breath. Alec listens to Ponari's chest, then shakes his head. Helen smooths Ponari's hair.

ALEC

Dead. No better than the others. If only he'd known there was no bargain to be made.

HELEN

You might have done the same, if you'd had the chance.

ALEC

Maybe you're right.

OLGAREN

Radu. We'll be doing our best, I hope you know.

ALEC

I know.

(to Helen)

Let's take him to his room. All we can give him is privacy.

Alec shoulders Ponari's body. Helen at his side, he carefully bears the body toward the stairs.

PONARI'S NECK WOUND

A small trickle of blood pumps out.

THE GODDESS DEMETER - CONTINUING ACTION - STORM

Driving into the wind, yet picking up speed as she swings to starboard, pointing northwest --

EXT. DECK - NIGHT

Fighting for equilibrium, Alec and Helen join Moluko at the signal lamp. They scan the horizon:

ALEC'S/MOLUKO'S POV - LAND

A black mass on the horizon.

INT. BOILER ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Abramov opens the steam chambers. The blackened drivers churn faster, increasing the revs on the screw. Near him, Olgaren feeds coal into the second furnace.

PROPELLER - CONTINUING ACTION

Churns the sea to a blur--

INT. BRIDGE - CONTINUING ACTION

As THE DEMETER SHUDDERS AGAINST ANOTHER BLAST, the bridge door SLAMS OPEN and Alec enters, sizing up the situation.

The helm is dragging itself counterclockwise despite the Captain's full efforts. Seeing Alec, the Captain raises his hands:

The helm's angle steepens. The Captain reaches to touch the mass of corrosion now crusted at the helm's base.

CAPTAIN

He's remade this ship to do his bidding.

ALEC

I'll hold it. You tie it off.

Using all his strength, Alec wedges himself against a wall and wraps his arms through the resistant helm. The Captain fights to lash the wheel in place with a block and line.

Tied into position, the helm trembles, then holds its place.

CAPTAIN

Let him try to undo this.

The Captain looks at the shifting compass and nods: Good enough. Alec painfully frees himself, then grabs the binoculars and scans the starboard bow:

ALEC'S POV - A SIGNAL LIGHT

In the distance, it flashes through sheets of rain.

ALEC
There! They've seen us!

INT. BOILER ROOM - CONTINUING ACTION

The shaft is turning so fast sparks are flying off it. From the furnace, the ROAR of flames mounts to deafening levels as Olgaren keeps shoveling. Abramov moves to blow the pressure chambers --

Fire again leaps from the furnace, driving Olgaren back as Abramov yells toward the voice pipe:

ABRAMOV
Captain --

INT. BRIDGE - CONTINUING ACTION

Abramov's muted OC CRY doesn't register as a barrage of wind buffets the bridge:

HELM - ALEC AND THE CAPTAIN

On the helm, spokes are snapping one by one, again forcing the Demeter to shift direction in torturous degrees, back toward due west --

The Captain jams his arm through the wheel spokes, then blocks it with a stay bar as Alec tries to cinch the chain tighter --

The bar snaps, the wheel reverses, and the Captain SCREAMS, his arm twisting, breaking, as Alec tugs to pull him free. The wheel spins freely, altering its own course --

INT. BOILER ROOM - FURNACES

Olgaren is cranking the blast door shut when a GUST OF FIRE CURVES AROUND IT. He staggers backward, his face peeling --

OLGAREN SHOVES ABRAMOV TOWARD THE DOOR AS A SECOND BLAST ROCKS THE ROOM. The BOILERS EXPLODE, reducing Olgaren to a fireball in a blinding cloud of smoke and metal --

INT. LOWER CORRIDORS/FORWARD HOLD - CONTINUOUS

The boiler room doors BLOW OFF THEIR HINGES, sending a STORM OF FLAMES throughout the lower deck --

EXT. DECK - MOLUKO - CONTINUOUS

Reacting to the OC EXPLOSION, he gestures for Helen to stay put, then takes off --

EXT. DECK - CONTINUOUS

A FIREBALL BLASTS FROM THE REAR SMOKESTACK, rupturing the funnel, sending it TOPPLING forward --

EXT. BRIDGE/DECK

Barely able to stay upright in the roaring winds, Alec leaps down the bridge stairs, dashing across the deck as BOTH REAR AND FRONT SMOKESTACKS COLLAPSE IN A HELLISH DOMINO EFFECT.

All around him, frayed steel cables are ripping from the riggings, swinging loose. Alec dodges to avoid decapitation.

EXT. DEMETER - WIDE SHOT - STORM

The Demeter is no longer in control of itself. SURREAL WINDS shove it forward, sending it wobbling onto a straight course away from land.

The smoke blows away, revealing the ravaged, littered main deck, as Alec's distant figure crosses --

ALEC'S POV - HELEN

Clinging to the signal lamp, she waves to Alec as he pushes toward her, through the gale --

SMOKE AND MIST OBLITERATE THE VIEW:

INT. BRIDGE

Inside the wheel house, the abandoned helm turns freely, shredding bits of black from its moorings.

EXT. MAIN DECK - DAY

Leaning into the wind, Moluko lowers Abramov against a mast. Abramov WHIMPERS, his legs ashen with third-degree burns. Moluko applies herbs as Abramov thrashes in agony.

Broken arm limp at his side, the Captain surveys the damage to his ship. He turns in all directions, then stands straight in amazement --

CAPTAIN
To starboard! She's under the
English flag!

CAPTAIN'S POV - A SHIP

Coming from Gibraltar. A Navy cutter. Under full steam, holding a steady course despite the high seas.

EXT. MAIN DECK - CONTINUING ACTION

As Helen and Alec emerge on deck, the Captain and Moluko are watching the WINDS RIPPING at furlled sails. Deducing the plan, Alec forces himself to be heard above the wind:

ALEC
No engines, but we've still got
sails!

CAPTAIN
Way the main sta'cle! We'll run a
reach to that cutter!

Bending into the wind, Moluko leads Alec and Helen to the mainmast. He points to a windlass and sends Helen to man it, then starts climbing the starboard ratline amidships.

Moluko reaches back to Alec:

MOLUKO
Follow me -- all will be well--

Looking up at the mast, Alec is nervous, but has to smile as he grasps the huge hand extended to pull him up.

ALEC
If you say so --

Ascending as the winds WAIL around him, Alec lets go of Moluko's hand and grips the ratline for dear life --

ALEC
-- it must be true.

THE MAIN MAST - LOOKING DOWN

Alec behind him, Moluko scales the ratline to the first crosstree, his balance perfect as he pulls himself higher.

Alec follows, willing himself to keep from falling as the ship pitches --

Atop the starboard spar, Moluko raises his war club, indicating the ties holding the heavy furlled sail.

Alec slides to the port side, as Moluko cuts the starboard ties with his club.

Shifting to accomodate the wind, Alec slashes the port ties, looking down toward:

ALEC'S POV - MAINSAIL

With the severing of each tie, it slowly begins to UNFURL, falling down the mainmast, catching the wind.

Down on the deck, Helen uses all her weight to crank the winch -- and then it's SPINNING, UNWINDING

CAPTAIN

(at the top of his lungs)

Tail that sheet before she comes
apart at the seams--

MOLUKO AND ALEC slide down the staylines as the great sheet unfurls. To their horror:

THE SAILS

Tattered as death shrouds, decay striping the shredded canvas with dark tracks of rot. Free in the wind, the tatters flap like dirty ghosts.

EXT. MAIN DECK

Clutching his broken arm, the Captain can only stare in shock as Alec, Moluko, and Helen race down the deck for the three-sheet jib sail.

JIB SAILS

Before anyone can touch them, the sails' ties break, revealing strip after strip of further ruin.

THE CUTTER

The CUTTER CHURNS CLOSER, sounding HORNS, FIRING FLARES into the darkening sky--

EXT. DEMETER MAIN DECK

The worthless jib sail rags stream as Alec climbs out on the wildly shifting bowsprit.

ALEC'S POV - THE CUTTER

Heading right at them. Sailors are lining the rails, readying life lines and grappling hooks.

SAILORS

Close enough to reveal the stunned looks on their faces as they take in the spectral ruin sailing toward them—

ALEC

Shimmying backwards on the bowsprit, back to the deck, he runs toward Moluko, who's breaking out the remaining lifeboat.

ALEC

We can still make it---

As Alec readies the block to lower the boat, the Captain does his best to help Helen drag Abramov across the deck toward the lifeboat.

Voice lost in the winds, Moluko SHOUTS and points: The lifeboat's bottom is eaten away with blackened holes.

Abramov pulls himself to the edge the deck.

ABRAMOV

(wild with pain)

I know the span of my life. At least I know that --

Before Alec and Moluko grab him, Abramov uses his upper body to propel himself overboard. Alec races to the railing:

ALEC'S POV - THE SEA

Abramov is absorbed into opaque, inky water churned from under the hull, spreading like an oil slick around the Demeter --

THE CUTTER

Closing in on the Demeter, the Cutter steams into the poisoned waters. Through the storm, the light shifts to a gangrenous grey-green, throwing everything into weird relief against the darkness.

DECK - ALEC

Like a madman, he rushes to the deck's edge and BELLOWS:

ALEC

No! Go back!

Alec shucks his jacket and begins to wave it. Helen SCREAMS with him. As the Captain mouths a silent prayer, Alec grabs a flare pistol --

THE RIGGING

Wind battering him, Alec climbs up to FIRE THE FLARE.

FLARE

Exploding in silence, white against a bruise-dark sky. The MOANING STORM BANK gathers in on itself, billowing low clouds flattening, as if to crush everything beneath --

THE CUTTER - DEMETER IN VIEW

All business, the Royal Navy regulars are unaware of their bow entering the radius of black spreading from the Demeter --

Their sails go taut with a shift in atmospheric pressures, drawing the cutter into the vortex --

Black toxins climb up the wooden hull, eating like acid through the sides, the sails, the masts, faster than ever before.

The sailors SCREAM, stuck in place as their feet adhere to the mold possessing the deck as THEIR DISINTEGRATING SHIP COLLAPSES BELOW THE WATER.

Decomposing within seconds, like a great, rotting carcass, THE CUTTER SLIDES INTO THE SEA, into a black vortex that swallows it whole.

The cutter is gone.....and with it, all hope.

CAPTAIN (V.O.)

Only God can guide us now in this maelstrom, which seems to move with us, and God seems to have deserted us. We are drifting toward some terrible doom. This fiend that stalks the last of us is real.

GOD'S POV - THE ATLANTIC - LIMBO DAY

The supernatural storm compresses all remaining light into a narrow strip on the horizon. Trapped between indeterminate day and night, the world is eclipse grey.

Propelled through cloud and rain, the Demeter enters the frame as a ghost ship -- no sails, no engine, traveling in a straight line at a speed unimaginable for its size.

The ship tips into the swells further and further, looking like she can't possibly come up again. But amazingly the hull rises out of the water, drawn forward by an irresistible force.

INT. CAPTAIN'S CABIN

The small, once-orderly cabin is now a last refuge: A barrel of drinking water is wedged in a corner. Weapons cover every surface. The metal storm shutters are bolted in place.

The Captain sits at his desk, willing himself to finish the log entry by lamplight.

CAPTAIN V.O.

God help me -- I am a sailor, I
cannot leave my ship while I
breathe--

Helen leans against the door, trying to listen above the HOWL OF THE STORM:

EXT. DECK - CONTINUOUS

The deck is a chaos of violent movement and grotesque shadows: For now, and for the remainder of the journey, the WINDS SCREAM with the effort of driving the ship. Sea spray sends gusts of thick mist, obscuring the deck even more.

Crouching beneath the lashing steel cables torn from above, Alec and Moluko bend against the wind, carrying a last load of gaff hooks and supplies.

ALEC AND MOLUKO'S POV - THE SEA

Rushing past in a roiling black sheet.

THE DEMETER TILTS. While Alec and Moluko fight not to slide down the deck, Alec's clawing fingers grab a length of severed steel cable.

INT. CAPTAIN'S CABIN

Responding to a quick KNOCK, Helen looks relieved to let in Alec and Moluko. Both look somewhat stunned.

ALEC

The speed of this ship -- nothing can go this fast.

CAPTAIN

No. Nothing.

Alec surveys the various weapons strewn throughout the cabin.

CAPTAIN

We are effectively a ghost ship.

ALEC

We're not ghosts, sir.

With a look to Moluko, Alec seizes the war club, much sturdier than any harpoon.

ALEC

Everything starts with something simple --

Using the long piece of cable, he extends it perpendicular across the butt of the war club: The beginnings of a crossbow. Helen steps close to pull the cable taut.

ALEC

You teach yourself to understand a thing, then you build upon it --

Taking back the club, Moluko immediately takes out his whetstone and starts sharpening the club's spear point.

ALEC

To me, it's all how simple things can come together --

EXT. MAIN DECK - LIMBO DARKNESS

In near darkness, masts sway from metal fatigue as pieces of debris detach themselves and plummet. Cables and broken lines spin feet above the deck as the ship tears through the waves.

HELEN

She carries an armload of scrap metal across the deck, toward its edge:

ALEC AND MOLUKO

Behind a sodden tarp, Moluko uses the ship's railing as a brace as he assembles the improvised weapon.

Bent over next to the rail, Alec weighs a gaff pole in his hands. He lays another alongside it, doubling the shaft strength and hooks.

Alec hands the assemblage to Moluko, who starts lashing the pikes together. He slides his club into the center so that it will serve as core of a massive, multi-headed harpoon.

ALEC

(over the storm)

We need three to four more yard-sized sections as supports. This could wind up in pieces if we try to force it.

Alec finds Helen at his side, holding out the scraps that she's gathered.

HELEN

Alec. A trap needs bait.

Alec masks his shock, refusing to listen. He takes the load from her and deposits it next to Moluko --

HELEN

I saw the way that thing looked at me. I know that look.

Ignoring her, Alec moves away and starts to pry a ten-foot steel band from the mizzen boom. The darkness and spray make it hard to see anything. Helen pushes in, her face inches from his.

HELEN

I'm not strong, I've never aimed anything more than an arrow. But I'm the chance we have to take. You know that I'm right.

Alec's face goes tight. On impulse, Helen touches his cheek.

ALEC

You are -- I can't. I won't.

Without hesitation, HELEN KISSES ALEC, pent-up feeling plain in this moment. Startled by her own outburst, she steps back.

Alec takes her in, then pulls her to him, KISSING HER HARD, releasing his emotions.

INT. BRIDGE

The Captain watches the helm turn itself N on a new heading, SQUEALING against the corrosion as it shudders toward compass point N-NW. He checks the chart.

CAPTAIN

The bastard knows right where he's headed.

EXT. MAIN MAST - CONTINUOUS

SOMETHING DARK SLITHERS UP THE MAST, then vanishes into the low-hanging clouds --

EXT. MAIN DECK - CONTINUOUS

Beneath the noise of the storm, Alec and Moluko bellow MOS INSTRUCTIONS at each other. Alec is struggling to adjust the oversized hybrid of crossbow and harpoon, which bobs as he and Moluko try to steady it in place on improvised mountings. Both men crouch to inspect the weapon's underside --

HELEN

Unsteady in the wind, Helen scours the deck for more material. The farther she goes, the more Alec and Moluko disappear behind the mist. Helen gathers up a broken spar --

Then pauses, disoriented, rain stinging her eyes --

AND NOSFERATU DROPS FROM ABOVE, THROUGH THE CLOUD OF RAIN AND FOG. Ribbons of distended flesh and muscle stream around it like an aura. Its dark, predatory eyes, alive with intelligence and appetite, fix on Helen --

Helen staggers backward, dropping the spar, robbed of her voice. The living eye of the storm, Nosferatu glides toward her with perfect balance --

EXT. DECK RAILING - ALEC AND MOLUKO

Alec and Moluko are kneeling, all their concentration on securing the weapon to its base. Around them, zero visibility: Rain and mist screen everything in a grey veil.

EXT. DECK - NOSFERATU AND HELEN

Clumsy on the wet planks, Helen backs up and smashes against a hatch. Trapped, with Nosferatu leaning in --

LONG NAILS DISTEND to caress her neck. The ravaged face draws toward hers as a claw punctures the soft flesh of her neck, drawing blood. Scarlet trickles between her breasts --

PONARI OC

Draculya!

PONARI

Behind Nosferatu, Ponari strides upright through the storm: Fully healed and more imperious-looking than ever, his skin the alabaster of death.

NOSFERATU rips open Helen's shirt to reveal her upper body. With inhuman force, he SLINGS HER TOWARD PONARI.

Ponari easily catches Helen, holding her against him. She squirms, but can't break his grip.

NOSFERATU

(in his language)

A token of my admiration. From a king to his knight.

With rain and blood streaming down Helen's body, Ponari's lips open. Pale face contorted with self-loathing, he forces himself back, looking into her pleading eyes -- but then his hand edges toward the opening on her neck.

Bending Helen's head back, Ponari inhales the blood, lips again drawing close to its source. Pressed against him, Helen quakes with terror -- when Ponari's lips touch her ear:

PONARI

Helen... Run.

And Ponari flings Helen into the wind. She stumbles and falls, then regains her feet and scrambles off, at a sharp angle away from Nosferatu.

In an instant, with his newfound strength, Ponari lunges to pick up the spar that Helen dropped --

PONARI

(to Nosferatu)

We are done, you and I.

With astonishing violence, PONARI GOUGES NOSFERATU all the way across its torso, as if to eviscerate him. A deep, bloodless cut appears -- and just as fast, Nosferatu grasps the spar, flinging it aside with a CLANG.

A FLASH OF LIGHTNING illuminating its gaunt shape, Nosferatu tosses Ponari against the hatch wall and DRIVES ITS CLAWS THROUGH HIS CHEST.

HELEN

Falling forward through the storm, she looks back:

HELEN'S POV - PONARI AND NOSFERATU

Nosferatu RETRACTS A GORE-SOAKED ARM from Ponari's thorax, dropping him to the deck with a SICKENING THUD. A sheet of rain obscures Helen's vision --

HELEN

Alec! Where are you?

ALEC AND MOLUKO

Hearing the OC FAINT ECHO of Helen's cry, they whip the crossbow in her direction. A gust of wind shivers the riggings, drawing Alec's attention upwards:

ALEC

Helen! Stay right where you are!

ALEC'S POV - THE MAST

Through the mist and rain, a grotesque outline hovers around the mast, high above Helen. Eyes focused above, Alec can't tell if it's a shape or a shadow.

HELEN

Frozen, all her trust concentrated on Alec. She can see little past her immediate area, all swaying masts and slashing cables.

HELEN

Alec! Where is it?

THE CROSSBOW - ALEC AND MOLUKO

Alec starts to answer, but Moluko shakes his head: Keep quiet. They drop the cable into the crude notch, locking it:

THE MAST

The sinuous form shifts in and out of billows of mist, descending toward:

HELEN

Alone, at her limit, she shakes with cold and terror as she fights to stay upright.

ALEC AND MOLUKO

Looking toward the mast, they stabilize the crossbow, angling it high. A gust of rain strikes Alec's face as he tries to sight down its length. Moluko shoulders the weight. Alec pulls back:

ALEC'S POV - NOSFERATU

Wind parts the mist: Magnificent in its corruption, Nosferatu hovers like an evil angel.

Its entire being focused on Helen, Nosferatu leans forward, PREPARING TO STRIKE --

And the WAR CLUB AND GAFF HOOKS ROCKET INTO ITS BODY, bursting through its torso, propelling it backward --

ALEC AND MOLUKO

Braced at the crossbow, watching in amazement --

NOSFERATU

With an ENRAGED HOWL, NOSFERATU DIVES FULL-FORCE THROUGH THE DECK, an animal diving for its lair.

AT THE CROSSBOW

Alec races down to Helen. She throws herself at him, never wanting to let go --

HELEN

You got it. You got it.

ALEC

Not yet. He'll heal soon enough.

Eyes on the gaping hole in the deck, Moluko moves toward its edge:

BELOW THE DECK

Sea water streams through the lower deck, along with swirling loose cables and severed ropes. Containers torn loose from their moorings CLASH, surging and colliding with crushing violence.

EXT. MAIN DECK - CAPTAIN

Emerging from the darkness --

CAPTAIN
Is it dead?

ALEC
Closer than it was, I hope.

Sobs wrack Helen's body as she clings to Alec, who notices her looking down the deck, in the opposite direction:

PONARI

Rain has washed away all his spilled blood, revealing only the entry wounds of Nosferatu's claws at his heart. His dark eyes reflect the leaden clouds.

ALEC

Standing over the body, he turns to the Captain, who hands Alec his dress sword. Gentle but insistent, the Captain guides Helen to a distance as Moluko comes to Alec's side. Eyes downward, Alec is focused on Ponari --

MOLUKO
I can do this for you.

Alec briefly looks to Moluko, then shakes his head no: This is his alone to complete. He raises the sword high.

Lightning casts Alec's shadow on the hatch wall -- and in that instant, he SLASHES DOWN as hard as he can.

EXT. MAIN DECK

Alec and Moluko tie ropes together, preparing for a descent into the ship's depths. Helen is positioned at the winch.

The Captain looks around him: The rain is slackening, the wind slowing to intermittent gusts. The storm's fury seems to be subsiding.

SKY

The flat darkness is breaking up into fast-moving clouds --

A LIGHTHOUSE BEAM

A brilliant shaft of light cuts through the rain, now diminishing from sprays of water to a haze of coastal fog.

EXT. MAIN DECK

The flash of light cuts across the deck, distracting Helen, Alec, and Moluko. Mindful of the swooping metal and rope, they raise their heads high enough catch a glimpse of land.

DEMETER POV - COASTLINE

A LONG ROCK FORMATION looms ahead. Twin distant lighthouses mark a harbor.

ALEC

As he refocuses on tying knots:

ALEC

Captain. Do you recognize this place?

EXT. BRIDGE - THE CAPTAIN

Already across the deck and mounting the stairs to the bridge, he looks ahead with amazement:

CAPTAIN

It's blown us all the way up the English coast -- to Whitby, I make it, from the twin sister beacons--

EXT./INT. BRIDGE

The Captain takes his place at the helm, picks up a length of rope, and once again lashes himself to the wheel --

EXT. THE DEMETER - NIGHT

The view glides over the ghost ship, rushing through the mists.

EXT. MAIN DECK - MINUTES LATER

As he and Moluko kneel and secure lines to mast harnesses, Alec removes his shirt, twisting it and soaking it with oil. Moluko follows suit as they fashion torches, which they ignite and begin to drop through the hole --

BELOW DECK/HOLD

Flames tumble down to reveal holes in the hull. Water, slapping in waves, fills the entire lower level. A flotilla of junk, including some of the boxes, BANGS against the GROANING walls -- now completely blackened with decay, gleaming scabrously in the torchlight.

EXT. DECK

Alec secures his knife in his belt. Moluko shoulders a gaff hook, sharpened to a razor. Ready. Though he avoids looking at Helen:

ALEC

Keep the torches coming, so we'll at least know what's hitting us.

HELEN AND ALEC

A thick, hydra-headed cable swinging inches from her face, Helen ducks to grip the winch that holds their harnesses. Then she can't help herself: She reaches out to touch Alec's bare shoulder. He silently covers her hand with his own.

EXT. WHITBY HARBOR - DEMETER IN VIEW

Waves pound the seawall marking the harbor entrance. The twin lighthouses stand out against the heavy tides shoving the Demeter toward the rocky shores.

INT. LOWER DECK/FORWARD HOLD

Alec and Moluko rappel into the ROARING VOID OF WATER AND WRECKAGE. Their ropes end a few feet above the water. They dangle, contemplating the debris banging together as it sweeps beneath them.

With Alec hanging next to him, Moluko eyes a box caught just below them. Swinging on his rope, he gains momentum, then jumps, first his feet, then his knees, making contact with the lid.

ALEC'S POV - MOLUKO/BOX

Even as Moluko hits the coffin lid, the box capsizes, throwing him wide as he struggles to keep his torch above water. The light reveals:

PETROFSKY'S BODY

Surfacing in an instant, the shrivelled, colorless corpse slides up from beneath the overturned box. Only a small flap of thin, leathery skin connects the battered head to the torso as waves drive it back toward --

MOLUKO

Waist-deep in water, he turns in shock as a second box, rushing on a swell, cuts between him and the corpse.

INT. FORWARD HOLD - CONTINUOUS

Alec swings above Moluko and hits the water. He shoves away the box. A tidal surge catches it. Petrofsky's remains vanish below the water.

Alec finds bottom and moves forward cautiously, reaching for balance against the hull, grabbing what he can to stay upright as they hold their torches as high as possible --

From above, an unseen Helen drops more lighted torches, most of which die in the rising waters.

ALEC AND MOLUKO

Moluko touches his necklace as he and Alec push away, swimming around the currents and into the next flotilla of boxes.

On impulse, Alec puts his torch to the crusty surface of the nearest box. A low, phosphorescent flame sparks, then flames out with a ghastly HISS.

Surging forward to close in on a second box, Alec tries to start another fire, then another. Nothing -- only the unearthly glow of Moluko's and his torches.

Moluko tugs Alec to keep moving. He gestures into the darkness ahead:

INT. MAIN HOLD

Iron doors shoved open at a steep downward angle, it yawns, pitch-black. Moluko dodges a cable to step forward, his torch held out to illuminate the gloom --

Between the few boxes still lashed to the hull, a sharp object sticks out at a random angle -- Moluko's war club.

ALEC AND MOLUKO

They half-wade, half-swim into the rising water. Holding aloft his torch, Alec watches shadows lick rib beams of the ship's skeleton. More boxes tumble around them.

ALEC

(shouting above the water)

Find it. Cut it to pieces. And then think about how in God's name we're supposed to burn it.

EXT. DECK - HELEN

Flat on her belly as she strains at the winch, she can hear nothing but NOISE from below. In a frenzy, she ignites and throws more rag torches. Lighthouse beams flash sharper and closer.

MAIN HOLD

Moluko plows through a thicket of loose cable and rope, pushing them aside as he moves to reclaim the war club. Alec follows, torch high, as seams STRAIN at the hull.

With a hideous CRUNCH of straining wood, the water level rises by dramatic inches: THE SHIP TILTS harder, its structure GROANING with the reverberation --

HULL WALL

And with a ROAR, a new hole in the main hold's hull splits open. The ship's angle shifts again as a HUGE WAVE OF SEA WATER POURS THROUGH THE GAP --

ALEC

Clinging to a box, sliding toward the end of the hold --

MOLUKO

Up to his shoulders in water, seizing the war club -- when a snarling mass of rope and cable shifts suddenly, tangling around him. Enmeshed, struggling to chop his way free, he finds himself facing --

NOSFERATU

Clinging to the cables with its attenuated limbs, skeletal white face inches from Moluko's. Just as fast, it withdraws, back up into the darkness --

MOLUKO OC

It's here -- Alec --

ALEC'S POV - NOSFERATU

COMING FOR HIM, almost graceful in the mechanical web covering the hold ceiling. Then it's in the water with him --

ALEC

Staring in terror at the hideous necrotic features, Alec forces himself to keep his head above water as he tries to shove past the box --

As Nosferatu scrambles atop the box, Alec JAMS THE KNIFE INTO ITS CHEST.

Nosferatu SEIZES THE KNIFE AND TOSSES IT INTO THE DEPTHS.

MOLUKO

Amidst the cables, he jams his torch into a crevice and hacks at his harness cable, freeing himself to jump into the water.

ALEC AND NOSFERATU

Claws extended, Nosferatu rakes Alec's face and torso, driving him beneath the water as he struggles to fight back.

Alec strikes his head on the box, blood blooming from the wound as Nosferatu pulls him up and touches the injury, licking his hand --

From behind, Moluko falls upon Nosferatu with his club --

With lightning speed, Nosferatu lashes out, gripping Moluko by the throat as he slowly lifts him from the water.

Slashing Moluko's throat open with his claws, Nosferatu drops the huge man into the water, amidst the floating garbage.

ALEC

His eyes close. Blood-tinged water washes over his face as his body drifts into the darkness.

EXT. MAIN DECK - HELEN

Objects hurtling down the deck around her, Helen is curled over the winch as she tears at the quaking lines below.

The winch spins out: No further resistance. She pulls up one line:

Severed. She tugs at the other, fully extended but uncontrollable, as if a dead weight holds it from below. Helen stands, tugging harder. A cable grazes her shoulder, sending her staggering.

Wild with panic, Helen lights another torch, which goes out as the sea sprays over her--

EXT. WHITBY SEA WALLS/LIGHTHOUSES

The light reveals the walls and surrounding village in bold relief as the Demeter figurehead splits the sea, carving out water in a trough as sheer tonnage tips the ship forward.

A loosened steel mast sways. A boom abruptly snaps off --

EXT. MAIN DECK

The boom plunges across the deck, shattering. Helen speeds toward the bridge, where the longest piece of metal is headed like a missile --

INT. BRIDGE

The shard rockets through the window, straight into the Captain's gut. In shock, he reaches down:

Jagged metal protrudes from his belly as blood begins to soak his shirt. Bound to the wheel, he clutches it hard, determined to maintain control of his ship until the last.

Bleeding from her shoulder, Helen shoves her way onto the bridge, reaching the eviscerated Captain in time for him to crumple in her arms.

HELEN

Captain James? Can you hear me?
Can you move?

CAPTAIN

I am quite sure I can't.
(calm, back in control)
I think I have always wanted this,
to find my way into a moment in
history, unlike any other.

The Captain takes his last breath.

The beacons from the approaching harbor blind Helen --

LIGHTHOUSE BEAMS WIPE FRAME TO:

NOSFERATU

Bars of light reveal it using the cables and the few remaining verticals to weave its way across the deck.

INT. BRIDGE - HELEN

She now sees Nosferatu coming for her --

MAIN HOLD/BELOW DECK

In the last light of Moluko's torch, dangling in the cables, Alec comes to: Moluko's body is shoving him against a drifting box. Arterial blood seeps from Moluko's neck.

ALEC

Helping me to the last --

As Alec touches the fatal wound, Moluko's eyes drift open. One huge hand reaches for the bird talisman as he looks toward Alec. His fingers uncurl as his eyes shut again.

Alec removes the bird talisman necklace and places it around his own neck. In a huge surge, the water seizes Moluko and carries him away.

Alec spots the drifting war club. With every ounce of strength, he forges ahead to grab it, then looks toward --

ALEC'S POV - MAIN HOLD ENTRANCE

Doors shuddering in the rising water, rubble pouring through from the forward hold.

ALEC

Another box plows toward him, forcing him to dodge. Using all his strength, Alec begins to swim against the current --

LIGHT HOUSE BEACONS BLIND US TO:

PANORAMA - THE DEMETER

Swift and relentless amidst the broken cables and spars, Nosferatu prowls the length of the ship, toward:

Helen, sliding down steps, retreating from the bridge, backing her way aft as Nosferatu nears.

NOSFERATU

Framed by blinding cracks of light, it hovers on an intact spar, twenty feet in front of the fleeing Helen as a wave blasts over the deck, knocking her from her feet, spilling her to the edge of the fantail.

Nosferatu plummets effortlessly --

EXT. DECK - ALEC

With a death grip on Moluko's war club, he pulls himself up through the hole, in time for a mast to splinter and snap right in front of him. With it blocking his way, he sees--

HELEN AND NOSFERATU

Helen is cornered on the fantail, sea behind her and Nosferatu easing toward her, clawed hand extended as if beckoning. Loose cable whips at deadly speed all around them. Helen sways, the churning seas crashing up behind her.

Nosferatu pauses, white skin slimy from the rain. Its black eyes gleam, its distorted mouth twists. Teeth glistening, it leans in toward her lips. *She is his.*

Helen awkwardly pulls out her knife, holding it in front of her with both hands as she stares the monster in the eye --

ALEC

Using the war club to balance as he clambers over the fallen mast, through more debris, across a rat's nest of fallen cables lying before the fantail --

ALEC

Helen!

FANTAIL - HELEN AND NOSFERATU

Nosferatu towering her, Helen thrusts with the knife -- AND A MASSIVE WAVE CARRIES HER OVERBOARD.

As Nosferatu lunges for her, the knot of cables lurches onto the fantail, knocking the creature off its feet and entangling him.

Nosferatu HOWLS: In this moment, he is helpless.

EXT. OCEAN/WHITBY HARBOR - NIGHT

The Demeter is headed right for the harbor.

ALEC AND NOSFERATU

Brandishing Moluko's club, Alec looks at Nosferatu, pinned in twisted steel, only feet away.

Eyes blazing, it HISSES at him, daring him to do something -- because at last, ALEC HAS HIS KILL SHOT.

Alec looks to the raging tides: At this speed, Helen could already be a hundred feet behind the ship.

With all his might, ALEC THROWS THE WAR CLUB AT NOSFERATU.

AND ALEC THROWS HIMSELF INTO THE SEA.

Over NOSFERATU'S SCREAM:

EXT. UNDERWATER - NIGHT

The opening image: Helen drifts downward. Her eyes half-open, as a final burst of bubbles escapes from her lips.

THE DEMETER - CONTINUING ACTION

Twin lighthouse beams sweep the ghost ship.

LIGHTHOUSE POV - THE DEMETER

The waves are so immense that it's impossible to tell where they begin and end. Suddenly a naked woman appears in the midst of the storm:

A great wave swelling behind the Demeter drives its bowsprit through the entrance to the harbor, rushing it between the rock cliffs overlooking the port --

THE DEMETER RUSHES ON

Carving its own course in the shallows, it barrels past a long stone pier, past other ships at their moorings. To the SCREAM OF A PROLONGED SCRAPE, the hull plows beyond the basin, into the exposed mud and rock of low tide.

THE DEMETER FIGUREHEAD

The statue of the beautiful goddess lurches as the ship's bow slides to a halt, slowing with violent shudders of twisting metal and wood.

The hull shudders and tips to the right, slowly tilting to lie like a dying animal, boxes and junk starting to spill from it like entrails.

The bowsprit protrudes over dry land.

EXT. WHITBY COASTLINE - NIGHT

The wind and rain are down to almost nothing. Thin mist drifts across the harbor. A final, distant flash of lighting illuminates strewn cables. Nosferatu is gone. Then, suddenly:

A GREAT BLACK WOLF

Appears in ECU on the prow, regal. It has the obsidian eyes of Nosferatu.

The wolf leaps ashore, leaving black traces in the sand as it takes off across the beach, disappearing into the mist, Whitby Harbor in the background.

EXT. WHITBY HARBOR

TORCHES appear along the seawall as VILLAGERS AND COAST GUARD approach the Demeter:

DEMETER DECK - NIGHT

Torchlight illuminates remnants of the dead man's ship...

BOXES

Black, disgorged on the beach and in the shallows.

THE CAPTAIN

Still tied to the wheel. Done with his voyage.

THE EMPTY WATCHMAN'S BUCKET

Shivers above it all as the surf pounds the hull, spraying:

EXT. DEMETER

Harbor Men in foul weather gear surround the silent wreck.

AN OLD MAN

Bending to pick up something from the sands: The Captain's logbook. He carefully opens it to find the writing blurred, but still intact.

THE GODDESS DEMETER FIGUREHEAD

Her beautiful face still intact.

EXT. ROCK BEACH

Alec swims valiantly, dragging Helen along. Waves wash them up on to the shore, both gagging and sputtering. ALEC HOLDS HELEN CLOSE.

EXT. THE STREETS OF WHITBY - NIGHT/PRE-DAWN

The last minutes before dawn begins to break. Beneath a dark silver sky, details of buildings are coming into view:

PREDATOR'S POV - ON THE HUNT

Fog and mist cover the cobblestone streets. Only legs and torsos of human prey are visible: Ordinary people, ending the night or beginning the day. Merchants. Sailors. Prostitutes. All unaware.

As Nosferatu runs faster and faster:

A CARD: "Whitby Harbor, Northern England. August 8, 1897: Of the Demeter, its fate remains a mystery of the sea. No survivors were found, but for one animal, described as a great dog, which walked out briskly, to infect a country whose terrible future may have just arrived."

CUT TO BLACK

STEPHANIE RAMSEY