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Harbinger Down

By Alec Gillis

Hi, Sadie.

Stephen, hurry up.

You're letting all the cold air in.

- Happy you're making yourself so useful.

- You told me to videotape, remember?

Yes, I remember...

and I regret it already.

Oh, God. The poles.

Can you put that down and be of some use?

Hey, I'm doing my job.

- Ready to roll.

- Oh, why aren't you driving?

Stephen wasn't comfortable with that.

You'd think they could at least

de-ice the windshield

when we rent the vehicle from them.

God.

All right, we are on our way.

Hold on.

Okay. Windshield.

It's making it worse.

Mount Ballyhoo? Really?

That's not a native Aleutian name.

They usually begin with A. Got Aleutian,
Amokmok, Alaska.

- Hold on. Hold on.

- Okay.

- Sorry!

- I'll navigate.

Ulakta trail will take us to the wharf.

Ulakta? With a U?

Oh, my goodness.

You said don't blow the budget.

Captain's very punctual.

Well, it is archetypal.

Attention all hands, we needed
to shove off at 1800 hours.

We did not do that.

Deckhands meet in the galley

after 5:

Atka, get up here, take the wheel.

All right, Bo. Have fun.

On time.

What's a sister doing here
on a crab boat in Alaska?

Hi, Rick.

Sadie.

I'm Dock.

The ship's doctor, perfect. I am...

They call me Dock,

because I used to live under one.

- Nickname.

- Right.

Great, like one of the seven dwarves.

Yeah, and they call him Grumpy.

Why would this be in my locker?

I wouldn't know. What would
a cold fish have to do with you?

You got problem with me,
you handle it like a man.

- Now, Svet, calm down.

- He's begging for an ass kicking.

If anybody's going to be delivering
an ass kicking, it's gonna be me.

You pull a knife on my ship,
and I'll gut you with it.

Now, if the rest of you are done
with this goddamn tom-fuckery.

Do you kiss my grandmother
with that mouth?

Hi.

Sadie, what the hell are you doing here?

You know what I thought?

You were gonna be here next month.

I sent you texts.

Do I get text on this doggone thing?

Pop-Pop, these are my friends,

Ronelle and Stephen.

- Hello.

- Hi, hi.

Guys, this is Captain Graff.

You know, I was trying to explain to my
crew about the benefits of punctuality.

- I think I'll let you brief them instead.

- Well, it's Stephen's project.

You could... you tell them.

We're tracking a pod of Beluga whales

that have been tagged with GPS devices.
They're very sensitive animals
and the breaking of the ice caps
has affected their migratory patterns.
What happens to them is an indicator
of what could happen to us.
So, you're getting paid for this?
The two of us are working on our degrees.
Stephen's our professor.
We're funded by NOA...
Research grants are nothing
but white people's government cheese.
Yeah, and something tells me
that you don't vote
- and you sure don't pay taxes.
- What?
Okay, okay, knock it off.
These people are here to get
some work done. So are we.
We crab at night.
Can you work during the day?
There's bad weather coming up.
We'll run into the first string

around 11:

G, set them up in the old radio room.
All right!
You heard the captain. Let's go.
Well, I guess this is our room.
Okay, now this,
I am definitely curious about.
- You want to know about this thing?
- Sure.
This is cutting edge.
It's a portable molecular analyzer.
Place the sample in this cartridge
and it could tell you everything,
from what species it is and whether
or not if it has a cold or cancer.
Hey, Bowman, I wonder
if that thing can analyze a fart.
Okay, leave now, cavemen.
Go wrestle sharks
- or whatever you do.

- All right.
Wait, I thought you guys
were just tracking the whales.
Yeah, but if we can get a teeny sample
we can see how climate change
is affecting their migration pattern
as well as their biology.
Let's add some visual aids.
Here we are and here are the whales.
- Can you tell if they're acting normal?
- Sadie to the wheelhouse.
Sadie to the wheelhouse.
Hi.
You all settled in?
It's kinda strange to be back.
Your mom and dad loved
the ocean as much as I do.
We got seawater in our veins, you and I.
Take the wheel.
I'm gonna try to get some rest.
Sadie...
don't let fear hold you down.
They wouldn't want that for you.
Ronelle, wake up!
It could be an old navy buoy.
Let's just check it out and then
we can throw it right back.
What is that?
Don't know,
the whales were attracted to it.
Whales? Why didn't you wake me?
Hey! Hey, that thing
could be a Jap sea mine.
Here, shoot video.
Sea mine wants to be invisible.
Blinking red light defeats the purpose, no?
Any more guesses?
Maybe Fukushima.
Lower it!
What do you think?
Well, it isn't new ice.
The older it is, the bluer it is.
What about this... satellite, maybe?
Can we kill the work lights,

get a spot on this?
Somewhere in the Bering Sea,
aboard the crabbing ship Harbinger.
Wait, hold on. Let's cut. Cut.
We are aboard the crabbing ship Harbinger,
somewhere in the Bering Sea.
Behind me, a mystery.
At this point, the contents
of this ice chunk are frozen in mystery.
The... back on me. The unmistakable
blue-ish hue you see here
tells us it is not a new piece of ice.
And here, keep me in the frame...
these rounded edges speak
of melting, not breaking off...
no doubt caused by climate change.
There's a palpable sense
of urgency, excitement
and perhaps, yes, trepidation.
Again, this is Dr. Stephen Lichte
aboard the Harbinger.
We'll be checking back in with you...
as the mystery reveals itself.
Great. I think we got it.
Control panel.
Some things should stay frozen.
Pop-Pop, look at this.
Is that an animal or something?
Soviet.
This thing's been frozen since the 80's.
We're gonna need to turn this
over to the authorities.
- No. It's property of the university.
- Bullshit. How do you figure?
Found by a University
representative, so...
It's safe to assume the Russians
are gonna want it back.
Correction. It's from the Soviet Union,
which no longer exists.
He's right, Pop-Pop. Salvage law,
whoever finds it, owns it.
Okay. Then it belongs to Sadie.
And everything on this ship

is under my control.
The weather's turning bad.
We're gonna knock the ice off.
And put this hunk of junk in the hold
and nobody's gonna touch it
until we get in Dutch Harbor.
Hold on a sec.
- Captain's orders.
- This may...
What part of this don't you comprehend?
Can he do that?
- You want me to keep rolling?
- Turn it off!
Roland, that storm's headed our way,
pushing ice. It's probably dragging our pots.
We're gonna wait it out in the shallows.
Burnt to a crisp.
Man, any way to die, but that.
All right. We gotta ice these crabs.
We're gonna be here a while.
Hey. Come on, careful with that.
You're gonna freeze us up into an Eskimo...
Eskimo pie. Yeah, I'm Inuit,
by the way, asshole.
Yeah, but Inuit pie isn't as funny.
What the fuck?
What's wrong with you, man?
That shit ain't funny!
Come on! Damn.
I got a heart condition. You can't be
doing that shit. That ain't funny.
You should get to work.
- You're breaking up. Received a mayday.
- No mayday, Dutch Harbor.
Informing you we've dredged a piece
of wreckage with human remains.
What is it? Are you signaling a mayday?
No mayday, Dutch Harbor.
Repeat, negative mayday.
Harbinger out. Goddammit.
Sadie, we need to talk about our find.
You know, as well as I do,
it is not within Pop-Pop's purview
to simply assign ownership.

Are you guys getting any cell service?

It's the storm. Internet
will be down, too, until it passes.

Thanks.

Look, I'm sure he means well
but it is not going to look good
for you at the university
if you countermand my authority
on this expedition. You're my student.

So any theories as to what
brought down your spaceman?

Soviet spacecraft design
isn't exactly my area.

You know, ownership has not
technically been established.

- Aren't you curious?

- Her curiosity is irrelevant.

I'm just saying, if I was a scientist,
I would be down there science-ing.

Science-ing? Good Lord!

You don't just jump into this sort
of thing hickety-pickety.

Okay? C.S.I:

Look, Sadie, I know you're excited.

Me, too. And kudos to you for playing
a huge part in finding this thing.

It's gonna be wonderful for your career,
but it's a big deal.

Okay? And it needs to be managed properly.

And you just don't have
the experience, kiddo.

That's where I come in, okay?

And I will look out for you.

We got it.

Okay. Good.

He's planning to cut you out of this.

- But if I countermand him

- The salvage rights are yours.

If Professor Asswipe wasn't here,
what would you be doing right now?

G, run distraction for a second.

I think we got off

on the wrong foot earlier.

I'm sorry?
Sometimes I...
I overcompensate.
It's kinda I come off strong.
It's kinda hard for me to talk about it.
We don't have a lot of meaningful
conversation in this job.
Hey, do you have a second?
Sure.
I get teased a lot because of my size.
And I've never talked to anybody
about it, but...
- you're a doctor, right?
- Well, yes, but I'm not a psychologist.
Although I have read extensively
on the subject.
Sure, most of my experience
is theoretical, not practical
but I think I could help you.
Can you read any of these?
Nothing special. Radio, on/off.
How do you say, retro booster?
Lunniy Korabl.
The ship was moon lander.
- Are you sure?
- Yeah.
They abandoned their moon
missions in the 70s.
Maybe they made it, but kept it a secret?
He didn't burn to death.
Fortunately, and I know we just met
I think you're socio-centric,
which gives you hope.
I mean, that you can,
if you sort of face it head on...
can help that stagnated
individual get beyond...
that sort of... I would say immature...
stagnation in their development,
cognitive development.
Of course, it's not your job
to be anyone's clinician.
You know, I'm not saying you have to,
you know, put on a lab coat or anything.

Although I think
you'd look great in a lab coat.
I do. Wouldn't he look great
in a lab coat?
Extra, extra, extra, extra,
extra, extra, extra large.
- Extra.
- Oh, I'm doing it.
I'm teasing you now.
I'm stagnating. I'm sorry.
I don't know this word.
Translates to "water-bear"?
Let's go.
- Don't you want to check this...
- I've got what I need.
I would also suggest
looking into some books on tape.
I have some...
You know, drinking isn't gonna
make the pain go away.
- God. I hope you're wrong.
- Big G, you might want to slow down.
You know, every time you call him
Big G, you point out his size.
Are you aware of that?
This is a sensitive fellow
trapped in a giant's body.
- Oh, I'm trapped all right.
- He's so sensitive.
- You're not interested in Piaget at all?
- Not unless it's a brand of vodka.
The two of you? Classic Piaget
stage two behavior.
- You're right, there.
- How about stage one?
So how's our spaceman?
Still dead.
Wait. What do you call a frozen Communist?
Hammer and pop-sicle.
It looks like he died yesterday.
As torn up as that craft is,
how is the corpse in such good shape?
Could have suffered massive
internal trauma for all we know.

Right now, I'm interested
in the smaller picture.
If anyone can figure it out, it's you.
For a big man, you can't hold your vodka.
Sounds like a... like a challenge.
No challenge. A Russian woman
can out drink any man.
Are you all the way from Russia?
All the way? It's right there.
I can see Alaska from my house.
I think I have a file on this.
It's a tardigrade.
Also known as a "water bear".
So what do you think the Soviets
were doing with them?
God only knows.
Goddammit.
So this is how we're gonna play?
Oh, my God!
What is that? Are those tardigrades?
His body must be riddled with them.
I should have an advantage here.
Size doesn't matter.
Guys usually love to hear that,
but from you, it's a threat.
Do I threaten you, Big G?
You really wanna throw down that gauntlet?
I'm always ready to throw down.
Come on! I can't fight a girl.
Are we talking about a health risk here?
There's no indication
that they're still alive.
I see decomposition and no motility.
They're rotting? That doesn't
make me feel any better.
You know he likes you, right?
Well, that's his business.
You know about makeup?
If that thing's toxic,
two tons of crab gone to waste.
We'll head back to Dutch
as soon as the weather breaks.
That's the first order
you've given that makes sense.

You're a guest on my ship,
I'm gonna be polite.

- Get the hell out of my wheelhouse.

- Certainly. But consider this.

Instead of leaving sealed human remains
inside of a pressure suit
she chose to expose us all
to who knows what kind of biohazard.

And this right here is going to be very
helpful in the lawsuit I'm recommending
the university bring against you
for encouraging her recklessness.

- Really?

- Yes.

Or we can stop with this nonsense, Sadie.

Sign over all claim to this find to me
and I will make sure the university doesn't
hear about your little indiscretion.

Do you know where you are?

You really want to fight
against the university?

We have more money than the Vatican
and almost as many lawyers.

It's not worth it.

I'll sign your release.

That's a good girl.

See how smart an education makes you?

Now can we please wrap up
my find for safekeeping?

How does whale scientist
know how to do makeup?

Before I was a whale scientist

I was going to school
to study makeup. See?

Cinema Makeup School. Only in America.

Can I ask how you got this?

Bad break up.

Oh, my God. Did they catch the guy?

They found him most of him anyway.

We need to get this
as airtight as possible.

Tape over the seams. Medically seal
this thing inside. Do it right.

- Is this a joke?

- What?

Take a look.

What?

Who the hell?

Where... where is he? What did you...

- What'd you do with it, Sadie?

- Nothing.

- What, did you throw him overboard?

- No, why would I throw it overboard?

If you can't have the credit, no one can.

- Is that it?

- That's bullshit.

You think she carried a man's
corpse up those stairs?

Maybe you helped her.

You're the brawns, she's the brains.

You conniving bitch!

- Have you lost your mind?

- Get your hands off me!

If she said she didn't move it,
she didn't move it.

Maybe he did it.

Maybe he got up and walked away
by himself. Fuck you!

You throw one more tantrum
and I'll bite your goddamn nose off.

Got that?

All hands, front and center. Now. Now.

Listen up.

Where's Svet?

Listen, we got a little problem. That body
we found in the wreckage, it's gone.

Gone?

Now, I don't know if anybody's
trying to be funny.

Why you gonna look at me?

I'm not gonna be touching
some dead Commie.

Why don't you go ask Roland? Probably
gets lonely down in that engine room.

- That's a creepy ass dude if you ask me.

- I'm not accusing anyone.

Yes, you are, Graff.

You're always accusing me of something!

I'm not accusing anyone!
Stephen, what are you doing?
Are you okay?
Can't breathe.
Come on. Come on, let's get you inside.
Okay, I'm gonna get help. Hang tight.
- Stephen's sick. He won't come in.
- What?
Stephen, calm down!
Help me!
Take him. Let's go.
Atka, get the med kit!
- Ronelle, wet rag!
- Okay, I got it!
Let's go.
He's burning!
Oh, God!
- What the hell just happened?
- This is because of our spaceman?
Way to go, genius. Way to put on
that thinking cap. Way to go.
- Of course, it's our spaceman.
- What is it with you? It's a question.
All right, calm down, calm down.
She's gonna tell us what we need to know.
You're gonna tell us, Sadie, right?
There seems to be...
an organism on this ship.
No shit, considering we were all
in its goddamn splash zone.
How did it do that to Stephen?
I don't know.
There's some parasites that...
produce chemicals that liquefy
the bodies of their hosts.
Aipaloovik...
Devourer of Sailors.
I knew this was gonna go bad, but you
just had to bring it on board, didn't you?
I put this on you.
You and this voodoo bullshit!
Back off, Dock! You thought
it was a Japanese sea mine!
- Right now, I wish it was!

- I don't know!
I don't know what it is.
But I know that it went
from the dead pilot to Stephen.
And the answer...
to the question
that nobody wants to ask...
is yes.
We've all been exposed.
Some of us more than others.
Fuck you.
I'm clean.
We all saw that thing glob together
and go down the drain.
All right, we've been exposed.
Anything that happens
to the rest of you is on me.
We're heading for Dutch Harbor.
Screw the weather.
We'll be quarantined, but at least
we'll have medical attention.
I need to run some tests.
- Yeah.
- I want to stick with Sadie.
The liquid nitrogen's
all we got as a weapon.
I want you here on that hose.
Atka. Atka!
We gotta get those engines started.
We'll go check on Roland.
Let's heat them up.
- It's still alive.
- Ugly little fuckers.
Why do they need to generate
that much heat?
Maybe first order of business
is to kill the brain of the host.
Let's see if they have a threat response.
Link and they become a solid.
Unlink and they act as a liquid.
That kind of energy
requires a food source.
You talking about us?
Roland?

Atka.

What the hell could bend steel like that?

What's all that mean?

It's showing the DNA
of more than one species.

The test is no good?

Seawater carries the DNA
of everything that lives and dies
in it, from bacteria on up.

These things have been basking
in a DNA soup for who knows how long.

They've absorbed the genetic codes
of hundreds of species.

If they can be a liquid or a solid
they can replace the host's blood,
- muscles, its skeleton.

- And even reprogram its DNA.

You have guts to freeze any one of us?

Yeah. I guess I do.

Then why don't you have
your hands on that nozzle?

No one's freezing my ass.

I can tell you that much.

We're gonna need a bigger bucket.

That thing was big enough
to overpower Atka.

And strong enough
to bend that drive shaft.

That means we're going nowhere!

If it got Atka, it's gonna get bigger.

It can change shape from liquid
to solid and back again.

It can take whatever form it wants.

We'd better ice that thing
before it realizes...

that a lot of these bulkheads
are not water tight.

How smart do you think it is?

Pretty fuckin' smart.

Battery back up will only last
a couple of hours.

The wheelhouse
is on it's own private source.

If they killed the power,

it's still in the engine room.
It's where the generator is.
Okay, we need to upgrade
this bucket system.
Liquid nitrogen
in a pressurized scuba tank.
Tubes, trigger, pretty simple.
- Is it safe to operate?
- I'll get back to you on that.
Wait, wait, wait, wait! Stop.
Ready. Go!
Hold off, hold off!
We got it.
Help! Help! She's gone crazy!
Help! Help! Help, guys!
I don't know what to do!
I tried to stop her!
- What the hell are you doing, Svet?
- He's infected.
No, I'm not, goddammit! She hates me.
- What makes you sure he's infected?
- He's sweating.
Of course, I was sweating!
This bitch freaks me out! Please, Big G.
This isn't gonna happen, Svet.
He's infected! He's a risk to all of us.
- You don't know that about any of us.
- Please, Graff. Please!
I'm sorry, G. I know he was your friend.
- I got the knife! I got it.
- Hey! Hey!
Everybody back in the hole.
Did it have to be fire?
Freeze melts. Fire is forever.
What are you really here for?
No answer?
Explain this.
That's some pretty fancy gack
for a crabbing trip.
This is military communications gear.
What are you doing with it?
What the hell.
This is almost over with anyway.
You're right, Captain.

I'm not here for crabs.
- She's here for the wreckage.
- What?
You're a Russian agent?
Sounds so...
Cold War.
We're called "consultants" now.
This Lunar Lander was lost in 1982.
Since we got signal...
consultants... have been posing
as fishermen on trawlers.
Why the subterfuge? Why not just
let the Russian Navy pick it up?
We deserve some answers.
Soviets tried to create cosmonaut
resistant to the radiation.
- Didn't work out so well.
- No shit.
Rather than risk entire crew
of naval vessel I am...
here to observe and advise.
But we've contained it, right?
I mean, all we have to do is
stay here until the storm clears and...
you call your ship and they'll come
get their experiment back, right?
They don't want it back, do they, Svet?
Let some small,
unsuspecting fishing boat pick it up
and find out just how deadly
this organism is.
I think we all agree...
this disease can never reach shore.
You could have told us.
We could have thrown that thing back!
That was not the plan.
- So what's the plan now?
- In 30 minutes...
the submarine that's been tracking us
will surface and pick me up.
30 minutes after that
the explosives I planted detonate.
Nobody deep sixes my ship.
I should have broken your neck

when I had the chance.
But you're a gentleman.
Not enough gentlemen in the world.
So these are our options?
Death by drowning, death by Russian
or death by monster?
Keep talking, I give you one of them now.
Pop-Pop, I'm so sorry.
I asked you to haul this thing aboard.
No, no, don't. I was as...
as curious as you were.
What's Grandma gonna do?
She already lost her son.
Sadie, I hope you can find in your heart
someday to forgive me...
for not telling you.
She's passed...
3 months, 5 days.
What? How?
Pancreatic cancer.
She was really sick for a long time.
When she got the diagnosis,
she went really fast.
Why didn't you tell me?
She didn't want me to tell anyone.
She didn't want the fuss.
She was so exhausted,
she couldn't worry about...
making sure that people knew
what was happening were okay with it.
Time just slipped away.
Every time I go to sea, I bring her ashes.
And I just can't bear to scatter them.
Sweetheart.
I'm so sorry.
How can you be sure
that that sub is really coming?
Spare me your silly mind games, Captain.
They need my report.
That's why they inoculated me.
Well, that's great! We'll all get shots.
Shut up!
This a very rare drug.
And there's a difference

between inoculation and antidote.
What if we just rush you.
You might get one or two of us.
Good chance we'll get you, though.
What do you think?
Oh, the gun! The gun! The gun!
Take it!
- Not such a gentleman after all.
- Tell us where those charges are!
Okay, okay. You be reasonable,
I be reasonable.
Where the fuck are they?
Two are in engine room. Then the...
Bowman, she's gone.
We gotta find those charges. Come on.
Fuck.
Two of them would take out the engine.
The other four will be below
the waterline for sure.
We should stick together.
We don't have time. Teams of two.
- Jesus!
- Just wanted to make sure.
Got one.
Magnetic.
- There's nothing there. Is she bluffing us?
- What's below us?
The bilge, but there's no way
to get into it.
- There's no access?
- Just a hole for drainage pipes.
Give me that light.
We better find the other one.
Gotcha. Let's go.
Gimme a minute.
I can straighten this fucker out!
We don't have a minute.
- Found two. Any luck?
- Nothing.
The other four must be down here.
- You can't get in the bilge.
- A man can't, but Svet could.
It's toxic down there. Be careful.
- What do you see?

- Not much.
They're all here! All along one wall.
Russian bitch was gonna breach
the hull on one side and roll us over.
- I'm gonna get 'em.
- Be careful.
G! G!
There was two tons of crab in here.
Oh, my God.
Sadie! Sadie! You gotta get outta there!
I only have two of the charges.
There's more goo
than we thought, a lot more!
What?
Sadie?
It's all around me.
There's still two charges.
Oh, no! Oh, no. Oh, no.
- What's wrong?
- I lost it.
Forget it. Please, Sadie,
get back up here!
I got it.
Pull. Pull the rope.
Oh, no. Oh, no.
Yes.
Careful, these are contaminated.
What the hell?
Back out of here! Go!
Oh, God!
Move! Move!
- Come on. Sadie. Sadie!
- Wait!
Come on, go, go, go! Move it!
17 minutes.
Pop-Pop.
Pop-Pop, are you hurt?
Please don't.
Sadie...
stop.
Oh, no. Please no.
Nothing can be done now.
- Here, here, we can clean it off.
- Bowman...

- It's gonna be fine.
- ...keep her away from me.
It'll be fine! I could just take it off.
Your bitch is dead, asshole.
And we're still alive.
We're alive, so fuck you
and your little experiment!
We're still alive! We're alive!
We're still alive!
How long have we got, Sadie?
12 minutes.
We gotta get this ship out of here.
- Mr. Guillaume.
- Yes, sir.
See if you can get
that driveshaft straight.
Yes, sir, Captain.
Mr. Bowman, keep that nitrogen
pointed at me.
Die, you bitch!
Five seconds, Pop-Pop, take cover!
You gotta pilot us out of here.
Go.
Sadie.
Don't let fear hold you down.
Please, ice me now, please?
Please.
No!
Sadie, get to the wheelhouse!
Ice this fucking ship!
Ice the ship. Ice the ship. Ice...
Ice the fucking ship.
No!
I say again...
this is Dutch Harbor Coast Guard.
Mayday, Dutch Harbor. Mayday.
Please state the nature of your emergency.
All souls lost...
except one.
Harbinger down.
Harbinger down.
There is a rescue chopper
in your vicinity.
I say again, there's a rescue chopper

in your vicinity.