SEAS OF MYSTERY

by

ADAM BOYD

COLD OPEN

A1S00

INT. UNKNOWN - UNKOWN

Static cuts through the black.
Images of dead pirates glitch in and out.

The sound of the ocean glitches in time with the static.

A mechanical heartbeat thumps.

The pounding grows and slowly matches beats with the breath of an unseen storm.

A voice breaks through the waves.

JEB (V.O.)
(ragged and distorted)
She don’t fucking let go…
Not while there’s still blood in her tides…
Not while there’s a cursed story left to bleed.

The video feed becomes visible but it’s raw and unstable. It cuts quick between images.

The room is covered in rusted plates with a layer of crusted salt.
A fog curls up through the floorboards.
A compass needle rattles like it’s in a death spiral.
A woman’s eyes cut like razor blades.

LARK (V.O.)
(low, frayed, but not broken)
Why is history filled with stories about ships and sailors that go missing?
(beat)
Or ships that come back without their crew?
But the sea - she never forgets a soul she’s Tasted.

Emergency radio bursts sound warped.
Whispers and gasps sit below a distorted child’s lullaby.

A two year old girl talks to her mother.

From below the noise, a forgotten sea shanty rises.

OLD RED (V.O., rasp)
Star-witched and sea-bound, they dragged us low -
Maps all false and a wind that don’t blow…

The heartbeat misfires

And then the first voice fights through the static.

JEB (V.O.)
(dug from the grave, half grin, thunder)
Barrel, prayer, maybe a fuckin’ miracle…
‘Cause she ain’t done with me yet.

The pieces of lost footage snarl once more, each one fighting to be seen.

Then a breath. Calm.

The static clings to the edge of the frame.

Then, the footage buckles - like the film itself takes a final breath.

A title flickers between static glitch.

“Field Report - Hawthorne Expeditions: Prelim B-Roll (Recovered)”

CUT TO STATIC.

ACT ONE

A1S1

EXT. OPEN OCEAN — DAY — DOCUMENTARY STYLE

Lark Hawthorne’s fiery gaze stares down the barrel of the lens.

Just a young woman standing on the edge between belief and fear.

Her hand tightens on her mic.

Unfazed by her hair whipping across her cheek, her eyes are locked on the horizon.

LARK
Off the coast of the Azores.
Chasing the rumors of a ghost.
One my dad never returned from chasing.
Some say it’s just an atmospheric anomaly…
Others say it’s all bullshit.

She says it for the camera, but not to the camera.

LARK (cont’d)
But my dad? He knew it was true.

Behind the lens, there’s a film crew hard at work.

Linda spits orders at her crew through clenched jaws.

Drew cleanse his lens and Carlos tries to ignore his shaking hands.

Jordan taps his headphones and Martin fights a silk blowing in the wind.

LINDA (O.S.)
Mic’s clean, Lark.
Guys…
(to her camera crew)
Let’s run it again.
No cutaways. Raw.

Lark’s eyes watch her finger trace her father’s journal. One stiff page flips, catches the wind then stops.

Her eyes catch a margin note -

BLACKWATER

Her stance stiffens and she struggles to find a breath.

LARK
(whispers, almost to herself)
My dad told me the Spectral Sea was a real place.
Where our world’s mysteries all end up.
And I didn’t believe him.

The wind rips the page over as the radio at Lark’s hip hisses with static.

JEB (radio, distorted)
No pirates, no mutiny, no storm on the sky - but they ran, girl.
Left it all behind like the sea was coming for their throats.

Lark jolts. Her eyes go sharp.

LINDA (O.S. cont'd)
Alright. Reset.
Sound?

Lark's thumb traces the name again, slowly and cautiously.

JORDAN (O.S.)
Rolling!

Her breath gets trapped in her throat.

She finally catches it and steadies her nerves.

LINDA (O.S.)
Speed?

DREW (O.S.)
A and B speed!

Carlos steps in front of Lark with the slate.

CRACK.

As Carlos steps away, Lark gathers herself, breathes deep.

LINDA (O.S.)
Lark.
Action

She closes the journal hard.

LARK
In 1872, the Mary Celeste set sail from New York, bound for Genoa, Italy.
Captain Benjamin Briggs. His wife Sarah and his 2 year old daughter, Sophia.
His faithful crew of seven.
Gone.

She stands taller.

LARK (cont'd)
Not wrecked. Not scuttled.
(beat)
Just gone.

A cold wind blows across the deck of the Sea Nymph.

LARK (cont'd)
She was just left behind.
A seaworthy ship with its cargo intact.
A full stock of food and water.

As she speaks, she stares off to the horizon.

The wind grabs at her hair with a gentle touch.

LARK (cont'd)
And no one's ever asked this question.
(beat)
"Where the fuck did they go?"

Light bends around her.

A slow fog curls in from the edge of frame.

LARK (V.O.)
My father chased this story his whole life.
People called him crazy.
Hell. I called him fucking crazy.
(beat)
But now?
(beat)
He’s gone. Vanished.
(beat)
And I think we were all dead wrong.

The Sea Nymph cuts through the Atlantic under blue skies.

Linda and her production crew watch Lark through monitors and listen to her through headphones.

LARK
(heavy with emotions)
We know more about what happens in outer space than we do in the oceans.
And I want to know why.

The monitor image shutters - twitches between Lark now and Lark from 3 minutes ago.

For one blink - one heartbeat - behind Lark looms a shadow.

Gone.

A resounding beat pulses beneath it.

CUT TO BLACK.

A1S2

EXT./INT. SEA NYMPH - VARIOUS LOCATIONS – DAY

The Sea Nymph cuts her way through the breakers.

In the wheelhouse, the compass shudders on its mount.

The needle trembles.

THUMP.

A heartbeat. Rising from below like thunder.

Metal groans somewhere deep in the hull.

A second beat. Deeper still.

The compass needle snaps flat.

Below deck in the galley, production equipment is wet with saltwater.

Cases rattle. Gaffer’s tape dangles.

Linda hunches over her tablet. Eyes scanning the days schedule.

Carlos sits in front of his laptop.
Cigarette hanging from his mouth, an energy drink next to him.

Martin hauls the silk and c-stand into the room - he yelps as the c-stand pinches his hand.

Beneath the Nymphs' mechanical hum and rhythmic thumping, a male’s voice seeps through the comms.

JEB (V.O.)
(distorted)
The Flying Dutchman’s still out there, chasing her own storm…
No living soul aboard… but she sails on.
(beat)
I’ve seen the shadows on the swell - cold as a widow’s bed, hungry as hell.

His last words are swallowed by the static.

JORDAN
(lifting cans, visibly spooked)
My audio is fucked.
(shrugs and smirks)
Post is really gonna love this.

DREW (raspy)
(to Martin)
Martin! Gold Bond.
I’m chaffed as fuck, dude.

Martin, still wrestling the c-stand, slings the bottle blind.

Drew catches mid-shot, dusting himself like he’s done it a thousand times.

LINDA (demanding)
Everyone quit your bitching.
Martin, that stand is kicking your ass.
(catches Drew’s eyes)
Drew, dust your nuts on your own time.

Lark moves between all of them, her dad’s old journal still clutched in her grip.

She stares out the porthole.

She slides her thumb across the book’s spine.

LARK
(to herself)
This is the right place.

LINDA
(grins)
If you say so, Ahab.

LARK
(shakes her head and laughs)
Just keep your lens pointed in the right direction when we go back up.

SNAP.

A sharp eclectic crack from the walkies.

The crew freezes.

Carlos’s hands move by instinct, his camera snaps to his shoulder.

Through the lens, the frame glitches for just a second.

Drew and Carlos trade a look.

JORDAN (low, tight)
Okay, you guys heard that right?

SNAP. Again.

From the static, a voice rides the current.

DISTORTED VOICE (radio)
No living soul aboard… but she still sails on…

Silence.

Martin gives up on the c-stand and looks to Linda.

She meets his gaze. Nods once.

LINDA
Roatan. Just like Roatan.

There’s a static from the radio.

CARLOS (hoarse)
That was…
That wasn’t us.

MARTIN
We ain’t in the Triangle, right?

JORDAN
Four hundred miles off. Technically.

Lark hasn’t left the porthole. Her fingers are clutching the journal tighter.

Her eyes never leave the horizon, she’s forcing herself not to blink.

LARK
(under breath, a statement)
Maybe this is how it starts.

A1S3
INT./EXT. BRIDGE AND DECK — SHORTLY AFTER

In the bridge of the Sea Nymph, Drew is grabbing some b-roll.

The image on the viewfinder shudders.

At the helm, a sailor grips the wheel as it tries turning without him.

His eyes flick to the compass.

It spins slowly.

He looks to the wide horizon then back to the compass.

The spin is faster. Unsteady.

ZZZZZ.

Captain Vasquez steps up behind him, coffee mug in hand.

His stern gaze is on the compass.

VASQUEZ (low, raspy)
(shaking his hips)
Needle’s dancin’ like my girl Trixie back at the Sailor’s Haven.

His face darkens.

VASQUEZ (cont’d)
We’re flyin’ blind in a storm we can’t even see.

The sailor at the helm swallows hard.

NYMPH SAILOR
(unsettled and nervous)
I don’t know, sir.
Maybe it’s time to think about calling it and turning back.

Vasquez doesn’t flinch.

VASQUEZ (flat)
Calm your tits, son.
(chuckle, pats sailor’s back)
Just some interference.
Stay on this bearing and we’ll be just fine.

The hum of the instruments stutters, a sickly rattle under the skin of the ship.

Lights twitch.

The radio coughs a breath.

DISTORTED VOICE (radio)
When the mist rolls in and the sea falls quiet, I still hear him laugh on the wind.
So mark me well, lads -
Always carry whale oil -
And never play dice with the dead.

A deep roar of a laugh is shredded by static.

The sailor’s eyes go wide.

NYMPH SAILOR (hoarse)
(gut-punched)
Who the fuck was that?
What does that even mean?

No answer. Only the crackle of dead air.

Out on deck, Carlos has his eyes locked on the monitor of his drone’s view.

The screen twitches.

He turns to search the sky and finds his drone then back to the monitor

Static eats the sun and leaves a shadow that shouldn’t exist.

CARLOS (shouting)
GUYS!

The dark begins to take shape.

Then it’s gone.

Captain Vasquez sticks his head out of the window - confusion and the remnants of a laugh on his face.

VASQUEZ (shouts)
Hey man! Are you ok?

Carlos doesn’t hear him.

He’s focused on what he sees from the drone.

A flicker.

The shadow of an old vessel.

Then static swallows the image.

Carlos stiffens.

His hands twitch with confusion at the drone controls.

CARLOS (hoarse whisper)
(swallows dry panic)
You’ve gotta be shitting me.

The drone monitor skips between real and make believe one more time.

CUT TO GLITCH.

A1S4
EXT. ABOVE DECK — NIGHT FALLING

A thick fog settles in across the Atlantic.

Lark stands at the rail with her dad’s old journal locked in her grip.

All eyes are locked on the water.

LARK
(low, to the others)
You see that?

Through the heavy fog, a hulking ghost-gray silhouette emerges.

Its sails hang in tatters and its hull groans.

The water beneath the Sea Nymph and the ghost vessel shudders.

Then a stillness.

Captain Vasquez appears on deck, he walks past the doc crew and stands with Lark at the rail.

Drew leans out over the rail with his camera, trying to get the right angle to get their interaction.

Drew’s camera lens fogs.

Vasquez claws the rail.

VASQUEZ
(in awe)
No fucking way.

The fog tightens.

His eyes glue to the ghost ship.

VASQUEZ (cont’d)
(to Lark)
My granddad swore he saw her.
Said she drifted out of the mist, off the coast, back in the twenties.

The fog curls even tighter, swallowing the space between both ships.

VASQUEZ (cont'd)
He called out…
(beat)
And she just vanished.

He stares at the ghost ship.

VASQUEZ (cont'd)
That…
It can't be.

The sea doesn't answer.

But Lark does.

LARK (relieved)
"Aye," captain.
(beat)
That's her.

Behind them, the film crew scrambles.

Carlos wipes a lens with his sleeve.

Jordan taps his headphones, breath sharp, eyes wild.

CUT TO STATIC.

A1S5
EXT. OPEN WATER/DINGHY — NIGHT

The documentary crew silently rows through a thick low clinging fog.

Lark sits at the prow, her eyes locked on the mysterious ship ahead.

Flashlights catch the nameplate of the ghost ship.

MARY CELESTE.

The moment hangs in the air.

The crew’s eyes move in silence.

Carlos looks over the edge.

The water is black and still beneath them.

CARLOS (half-whisper)
Fuck, you guys.
Are we being watched?
I feel like we’re being watched.

No one answers.

They close the last few yards.

The fog opens like a door.
The dinghy scrapes the Celeste’s hull.

Shadows sit between the seams.

LARK (low)
(looking to Linda)
Let’s board.

Lines fly over the rail.

One by one, they climb.

As the last boot clears the dinghy, the fog inhales deep.

The Sea Nymph fades, swallowed whole.

FADE TO BLACK.

ACT TWO

A2S1

INT. MARY CELESTE — BELOW DECK — NIGHT

The film crew moves like they’ve done this a hundred times - as a unit.

DREW (whisper, focused)
Camera’s losing integrity. Feed’s unstable.

The monitor flickers green to black.

LINDA (whisper, steady command)
Log it all. Move fast.
We don’t want to lose any of this.

They move into the galley, Lark in front, cameras absorbing all there is for them to see.

MARTIN (whisper)
Table’s still set.
No visible remains. No thermal signatures.

JORDAN (clinical)
Sounds stable. Just a bit of static.

Timber planks creak around them.

Lark steps forward, journal in hand. Salt crumbles from the journal’s edges.

LARK (whispers)
(smiles at the journal)
You said she’d still be waiting.
You were right, weren’t you?

The others stay in sweep mode. Lark does not.

Her eyes scan the walls.

A sound. Wet. Close.

The posture across the crew tightens.

JORDAN (whisper)
Spiking. But there’s no source.
There’s no signal.

The frame in Linda’s monitor flickers. Gone.

CARLOS (whisper, confirming)
I got nothing. Total blackout.

Lark turns the page in the journal.

A compass. Red and amber.

Scribbled next to it, in her dad’s handwriting -

“The Compass of the Drowned is with her.”

LARK (low)
Dad?
I thought you were just chasing tales and yarns.
(beat)
But this… this is real.

Her left hand brushes the timber walls as they make their way toward the stern.

LARK (cont'd)
You always said you were looking for the right tide and the right current.
And you found it, didn't you?

Lark presses forward toward an open door at the end of the hallway.

The captain's quarters.

The crew follows Lark into the room.

Drew and Carlos have their phones out, lights on, trying to capture anything they can before they glitch out too.

In the dim shadows - an outstretched hand.

A young woman lies curled against the bulkhead. A small child's crib next to her.

She's barefoot and wearing old rags and tattered sails as clothing.

Her chest rises, shallow and slow.

LINDA (hushed)
You guys better be fucking getting this.

The girl clutches a rusted compass.

It shivers in her grasp, like it remembers where it's meant to point.

LARK
Holy shit.

The compass clicks once, sharply.

The needle stops. Holds its direction.

The crew stares.

The ship around them creaks.

CUT TO STATIC.

A2S2
INT. MARY CELESTE — BELOW DECK — MOMENTS LATER

The crew navigates the hallways of the Mary Celeste.

Sophia lies across Carlos and Martin’s arms.

The compass trembles in her palm.

MARTIN (panicked)
What…
Who is she?
Why is she here…
Why the fuck are we here…

CARLOS (whisper)
She’s burning a hole through me, man.

MARTIN (whisper)
She’s burning through all of us!

Up front, Lark drives them forward, one fist clenched around her father’s journal.

A look of brief panic on her face.

Behind her, Linda sweeps the corridor.

LINDA (low, sharp)
Come on, come on…
Let’s get above deck.

DREW (under breath)
Fuck, fuck, fuck…

JORDAN (tense)
We’re cooked.

The deck timbers vibrate beneath them.

Lark stops. Signals the crew behind her.

LARK (under breath)
…wait.

They freeze.

Sophia stirs.

Her fingers flex around the compass.

The compass needle snaps back and forth.

JORDAN (low, breathless)
What is that?

Fog seeps through the cracks in the boards.

Up ahead is a set of stairs.

LINDA (command, cutting)
Move.
Now.

The crew races up the stairs, Lark and Linda in front, Carlos and Martin with Sophia carried between them, Jordan and Drew bringing up the rear.

Lark opens the wooden door to the deck and the group spills out behind her.

Salt hangs thick in the air and the mist clings to their skin.

The crew looks around.

The ocean doesn’t look like the ocean.
The water black as onyx.

Constellations pulse slowly under the waves.

Auroras, colors too deep for nature, fold in the sky.

As the Spectral Sea comes alive, the crew hears the echoes of whale song.

Lark and the crew stand frozen. Breathless.

Sophia, cradled between Carlos and Martin, exhales.
Steam rises from her lips.

SOPHIA (whispers)
(her body tilts slightly)
He’s here.

The crew stiffens.

LARK (hoarse)
Who?

Sophia lifts her gaze, slow and steady.

Through the fog and beyond the rail, a shadow waits.

First, the sound. Then a song.

Red Right Hand by Nick Cave drifts across the space between the Celeste and the creeping shadow.

JORDAN (surprised)
Nick Cave?

The Bloody Gull emerges from the fog.

Her hull looks slick and chimes made of bone click and clack.

At the rail stands Jebediah Blackwater.

Smoke coils from the blunt between his fingers.

He’s not looking at Lark nor her crew. He’s looking at Sophia.

CUT TO GLITCH.

A2S3

EXT. MARY CELESTE — DECK — CONTINUOUS

The crew holds its breath.

Their boots anchored to timbers coated in ancient salt and soaked seawater.

Salt mist surrounds them.

Sophia’s eyes widen. Her breath shudders from her lips.

SOPHIA (hoarse)
You…
You came for me…

Across the water between ships, Jeb Blackwater watches her.

He pulls a hit off his blunt and ash falls onto the rail.

JEB (low, anchor deep)
Ye never leave these waters, lass.
Not for long.

The journal in Lark’s grip flutters open to a sketch in her father’s careful, desperate hand:

The Bloody Gull. Blackwater’s name circled and underlined.

Lark just stares.

Her eyes flick from the journal to the ship before her.

LARK (hushed, sharp as glass)
He knows her…
(beat, the truth lashing between her ribs)
…and I think I know him.

Behind Jeb, Old Red sways. In his hand, bone dice roll in his palm.

OLD RED (sing-song, shaman-soft)
(grinning and eyes aglow)
Storm took her, aye — ye mind that well…
But the Sea, oh yes, she gave her back.
Bloodlines loop — timeknots in the storm…
Two threads what cross —
(he pauses to let the Bloody Gull groan)
Right here, in the Spectral Sea.

Jeb lifts his blunt to his lips and takes slow pull.

JEB
(talks to silhouettes behind him)
Ye think the Celeste's the end of it?
(beat)
Nay.
(beat, his voice a weathered sermon)
I've seen the Ellen Austin, tryin' to tow ghosts, her crew swallowed whole.
The Deering, run aground like a gutted whale.
These waters - they bend the world beneath 'em.
Gibraltar to the Triangle.
And we?
(smirk, fatalism set deep)
We're just driftwood caught in the pull.

He flicks the blunt into the Spectral Sea and the sea sprites scatter.

Drew swings his phone camera toward Jeb.

The screen comes to life, glitches once.

Then it dies.

DREW
Shit.

Linda, never breaking her focus, breathes steady.

LINDA
Drew, I don’t think it matters anymore.

Jeb and Old Red grab a line each, step to the rail and swing across the gap.

Jeb’s boots land hard, salt crushed beneath them.

Old Red’s bare feet land soft.

MARTIN (chuckles)
(turns to Carlos)
Pirates?

Carlos, kneeling next to Sophia, looks her in the eyes.

CARLOS (whispers)
Pirates?

Sophia sits, perched against the portside rail.

Her skin glows faintly.
Her fingers clamp tight around the compass.

The needle quivers.

Lark drops beside her, snapping open her father’s journal.

She flips fast to a rough charcoal sketch:
Jebediah Blackwater with the Bloody Gull in full dark sail behind him.

LARK (low)
(her breath pauses
You’re him.
(pulse races)
You’re really fucking him.

A voice from behind, rough and soaked in salt.

JEB
Aye.

Lark whips around and there he is.

Smoke curls from the blunt between his fingers.

His gaze drops to the journal.
To the sketch of himself.

He looks back to Lark.

LARK
What are you?

JEB (gravel)
(bitter look of truth on his face)
Cursed, that’s what I am.
A pirate whose luck ran out.

Her eyes narrow. No backing down.

LARK
Then what does that make her?

He holds her stare.

JEB
(looks between Sophia and Lark)
She’s the same fucking thing.

Sophia’s eyes crack open.

They lock on Jeb.

She sees him. She knows him.

SOPHIA (dry)
(awe and adoration)
Captain.

Jeb’s jaw locks. His eyes burn.

Behind him, Old Red sways like a storm-drunk prophet, dice in hand, his chant low and rhythmic -

OLD RED
Tick-tock, she fractured the clock…
Now time’s bleedin’ dry…

Lark holds her ground.

LARK
How long has she been trapped out here?

JEB
Far too long.

Sophia’s eyes gleam, carrying ocean tides behind them.

The compass in her grip spasms, twisting toward an unseen horizon.

SOPHIA
Jeb?
(beat)
It’s calling.

JEB
Aye.
It always does.

BLEED TO BLACK.

A2S4

EXT. MARY CELESTE — DECK — NIGHT

Sophia stands at the rail with the documentary crew packing gear around her. Her compass is fastened around her makeshift belt now, but still clutched tight in her right hand.

Her eyes stay pinned to the Bloody Gull.

Old Red is swaying behind her and Lark.

OLD RED (singing, faint)
Oh, the night was black and the stars burned Bright…

LARK AND RED (together)
And the Bloody Gull sailed on…

Lark stops. She feels cold but her heart is sending fire through her veins.

LARK (whisper, surprise)
(only she can hear)
My dad…
My dad sang that song.

Jeb plants at the rail, eyes on the Gull.

He squints, shakes his head.

JEB (half growl)
(he looks at Sophia and her compass)
Not this fucked-up shit again.

Sophia’s compass twitches.

She lifts it - gaze still locked on the Gull.

A low hum rises from her hull.

LARK (tight)
What the hell is happening?

JEB
(he doesn’t look at her)
The Sea be stirrin’.
Hasn’t done that in a long while.

Jeb turns towards Lark.

JEB (cont'd)
Not since yer old man was here.

Jeb turns his head back to the Gull.

Lark and Linda both look at Jeb.

LARK (low)
Wha-

JEB (stern)
Aye. I know who ye are.
And I know why yer here.

Lark stands frozen.

OLD RED (singing, rising)
"The sea takes who she will,
they say…
(beat)
Her depths, they drag and never pray…"

The Bloody Gull drifts even closer to the Celeste.

The film crew watches.

LARK
Where is -

JEB (shouts)
(cuts off Lark, to the crew on the Gull)
Batten down the fuckin' hatches!
This one ain't gonna be fun!

He turns right into Lark.

LARK (tense)
You brought him here.
(stepping closer to Jeb)
You brought him here and he never came back!

Jeb holds steady.

JEB (low, soft)
He was here, aye.
And now he’s not.
(beat)
And now ain’t the fucking time to talk about it.

Lark doesn’t let it go. Her face is flushed.

LARK (voice raised)
When is the “time”, Jeb?
(shouts)
WHEN!

CRACK.

Sophia’s compass snaps.

The fog shifts.

A corridor rift opens on the horizon in front of the Celeste and the Gull.

DREW (tight, whisper)
(looking up from gear)
Oh shit…

JEB (chuckles)
(to Lark, pointing at the rift)
Once we get through that.

Lark steps up to the rail next to him.

Carlos runs up next to Linda.

CARLOS (out of breath)
Is it a storm?

JEB (chuckles)
(breathes it in)
That’s a crossing, lad.

LARK
(looks up at Jeb)
Between what?

Jeb turns, his eyes lock on hers.

JEB
Between stories.

CUT TO STATIC.

A2S5

EXT. THE BLOODY GULL — DECK — CONTINUOUS

Jeb grips the rail of the Gull.

His eyes never leave Sophia.

Old Red circles behind Jeb, bone dice rolling.

OLD RED (low, rasped)
Time, tickety tock, breathin’ thin…
But her clock, oh my, she be beatin’ quick like…

JEB
(doesn’t look back)
Hush, Red.

Behind them, Beau Halvorsen steadies his GoPro gimbal and aims it to the sky.

His wife, Marin Halvorsen, rests both hands on the rail. She is looking out into open water.

BEAU
(grinning, oblivious)
This is… perfect.
I swear, it’s like the ocean’s
got a filter pack.
(he lifts the camera on his phone)
Full spectral aesthetic!

His phone screen distorts.

MARIN (quiet)
It’s humming again.

BEAU
(glances at her)
Rigging tension, babe!
That’s all. Chill.

MARIN
(shakes her head)
No, Beau. Not above us.
Below.

Footsteps.

Silas Merrin emerges from the shadows, his eyes already looking to the sea.

He doesn’t say a word.

BEAU
(notices Silas)
Yo! We’ve been on this trip for a week and I don’t even know your name.
(beat)
You don’t work on the boat, right?

Silas doesn’t answer. He steps closer to the rail, nods once toward the fog like he’s listening to it.

MARIN
(to Silas)
You hear it too.

Silas offers only a glance. Neutral. Measured.

BEAU (snickers)
Alright. Strong, silent vibe. Got it.

He sends a drone into the air - it hovers, but it’s fighting.

MARIN
(notices a shift below the Gull)
That’s the third time…

Beau’s drone drifts sideways. He corrects, then frowns.

BEAU
Okay… why is the GPS freaking out again?

Still no reply from Silas. He glances toward the rift at the Gull’s bow. Then up toward the Mary Celeste.

He lets out a breath and then he smiles.

On the Mary Celeste, Lark watches the fog between them.

Her hands grip her father’s journal.

LINDA (whispering, ragged)
Lark…
(beat)
This is real.

LARK (quiet)
It’s always been real.

Sophia stands with Carlos while he’s trying to figure out what happens next.

SOPHIA (soft, matter of fact)
It always burns.

Carlos looks at her.

CARLOS
Hey, are you ok?
(he looks at the compass)
What is that thing?

Sophia looks at Carlos, a hint of blue lightning flashes in her eyes.

SOPHIA
This was my mother’s compass.
It’s how I find Jeb and how Jeb finds me.

Carlos doesn’t turn away. A sadness crosses his face.

Jeb watches Sophia from the Bloody Gull.

JEB
Red?

OLD RED
Shall I bring her in, Captain?

JEB
Aye, Red.
(pats Old Red’s shoulder)
Bring her in.

The Bloody Gull moves.

OLD RED (singing, faint)
Oh, the night was black and the stars burned
Bright…
And the Bloody Gull sailed on…

The compass in Sophia’s hand spins fast and then the needle locks on the Bloody Gull.

A deep vibration groans through the Mary Celeste.

OLD RED (singing, loud, free)
The sea takes who she will, they say…
Her depths, they drag and never pray…

JEB
(he growls across the breach)
Ye want to see daylight again?
(lights a blunt)
Move yer sorry asses and get the fuck over here.
(beat)
Quickly.

Sophia speaks - her voice drifts between what was and what could be.

SOPHIA (soft, stern)
He’s not wrong, Lark.

LINDA
(whispers to Lark quickly)
What’s the call, boss?

Lark looks over her crew and Sophia.

LARK
(she looks over to Jeb)
We board.

DREW (tight)
You sure?

LARK
Nope.
(beat, breath tight as a noose)
But we’re pretty fucking past the point of sure.

ACT THREE

A3S1

EXT. SPECTRAL SEA – BLOODY GULL – DECK – UNKNOWN HOUR

The film crew clusters mid-deck.

Beau crouches over a dead drone, tapping the monitor screen, his wife Marin next to him with her eyes closed.

Silas stands apart - arms folded, face unreadable.

Sophia sits low, knees drawn to her chest, her compass buzzing in her palm like it’s alive.

Jeb stands at the rail, blunt between his teeth, smoke exhaling from his nostrils.

Old Red paces barefoot behind him, bone dice clicking in his palm.

Linda breathes through her nose, tight. Steadying herself.

LINDA (quiet)
Alright. Where the fuck are we?

No answer.

LARK
(looks at the 3 passengers)
And who are they?
(to the passengers)
You three don’t really fit the whole pirate vibe…

JEB
(he takes a long pull from his blunt)
Some folk get lost.
Others buy their way in.
(he looks at Silas, Beau, Marin)
They knew what this was.
What I was.
(he exhales a plume of smoke)
They paid for passage. No refund. No guarantee.
Just backwards tides and histories forgotten tales.

He taps the rail once then he sets his blunt down on a barrel.

Tiny tremors rise from the deck boards beneath his feet and the Gull creaks.

JEB (low, flat)
You’re in the place where time forgot to keep.

Sophia’s compass needle jitters - points outward, swings, circles, lost.

OLD RED
Unspooled and gutted, mind…
(bone dice click steady in his palm)
Tossed to the fog…

JEB
(he studies Lark and her film crew)
Time’s not a straight line.
Not here.

The Gull groans again - louder, like she’s being pulled.

JEB (cont'd)
Out here - it loops. It frays.
It snaps clean.
And when it breaks…well…

The Bloody Gull bucks at his words and everyone on deck feels it.

JEB (cont'd)
(he nods to the sea)
The Mary Celeste… aye, ye know her name.

Through the fog, the Mary Celeste's silhouette begins to form behind them - not waiting for Jeb's speech to end.

The film crew try to get their cameras up and running.

JEB
History books say she was found off the Azores.
No crew.
No sign of a struggle.
Just floating, empty.
(a grim smile crosses his face)
That part's true.
But she weren't abandoned.
(he listens to the Mary Celeste groan)
Not by choice, anyway.

LARK (hoarse)
What happened?

JEB (rough)
(distant)
They slipped between the cracks.
(beat)
Same as ye sorry lot.

Sophia’s fingers tighten around her compass.

The Gull shudders again.

Fog crawls along the deck.

DREW (whispers)
(camera locked on Jeb)
You’re saying they came here?

His camera monitor jumps between static and Jeb’s face, blunt back between his teeth.

JEB
That’s exactly what I’m saying, boy.

The Celeste draws closer in the mist.
The film crew shifts - uneasy.

JEB (cont’d)
The fractures run deep.
Beneath the water, beneath the bones of the Earth.
Ley-lines some call ‘em.
Sea-roads, old sailors whisper.
(he takes a long pull from his blunt)
Me?
I call it the Spectral Sea

At her name - the fog thickens and the sea's heartbeat quickens.

JEB (cont'd)
She exists alongside yer world - like smoke runs alongside fire.

Silas lowers his eyes.

Beau doesn't speak. Marin doesn't breathe.

JEB (cont'd)
Different tides. Different stars.
(beat)
She's a bit… crooked.
Wiser men than me say she's out of phase.

As Old Red's dice fall, everything goes silent.

JEB (cont'd)
You ever seen a place remember you before you arrived?

Old Red starts to hum something low but Jeb raises a hand and cuts him off.

JEB
This ain't where stories drown.
This be the place where the map stops lying.
(beat)
And starts remembering.

The Gull slips closer to the breach corridor.

JEB (cont'd)
And the Mary Celeste?
That beautiful ship?
(he looks to the mist off the rail)
She's been stuck in her loop for as long as she's been here.

Sophia's eyes flicker - feeling it in her blood.

JEB (cont'd)
She always comes back 'round.
Think she's escaping.
But she never does.

The Celeste looms in full now with new masts and new sails. The fog parts in front of her.

MARIN (soft)
(her eyes are unsure)
She's not dead.

BEAU
(stares through his phone, not recording)
Why's it look so… new?

SILAS
(under his breath)
Temporal loop integrity… still active.

CARLOS (breathless)
(camera in his hand)
No way.

Drew steps forward, camera focused on the ship that just walked back into living.

DREW (low)
(into his camera)
The Mary Celeste is whole.
(he focuses his camera on Jeb)
Dude. Is this real?

JEB
For now.

Jeb tosses his blunt into the black sea below. It doesn't splash.

JEB (cont'd)
She'll fade again by first light - if there was such a thing out here.
(beat)
And then she'll do it all over again.

Linda stands next to Drew.

LINDA
(looks up from her monitor and towards Jeb)
How is this possible?

Jeb turns his head slightly. His right eye looks into the lens.

The monitor glitches. Static. Jeb. The Celeste. Jeb.

LARK
(soft, almost to herself)
So this is it.
This is where all the stories go to die.

Silence.

Sophia looks at Lark like she’s seeing her for the first time.

SOPHIA (bare whisper)
They don’t die here, Lark Hawthorne.
They just get lost.

Jeb doesn’t give Lark a chance to respond.

JEB (clipped)
Ships. Men. Cities. Gods.
Some vanish.
Some loop.
(chuckle)
Some just forget who they were.
(he turns to the group)
And now… ye sorry sons of bitches.

He chuckles. Lights another blunt.

JEB
We touch Okinawa soon.
Silas. Marin. Beau - they’re off the Gull.
You film types?
(beat)
Ye still got time to pick the long way home…
If the Sea don’t grab ye first.

The Gull lurches harder toward the lightning rimmed rift corridor.

The film crew and the Gull’s passengers brace and hold on to gear as wind slams across the deck.

Old Red stands in the middle of them, arms held high.

OLD RED (laughing)
Up up up ye go, up into the breach!
Follow the tide, don’t mind the time far beyond the reach!

GRAPHIC NOVEL INSERT — 4 PANELS

Inside the rift corridor:

— The Mary Celeste, her crew frozen mid-motion.
— Flight 19 vanishing into thunderhead shadows.
— Elias Hawthorne reaching for something just out of view.
— The Bloody Gull spinning into a maelstrom of inverted stars and screaming silence.

GLITCH TO STATIC.

A3S2

EXT. OKINAWA HARBOR — DOCK — EARLY MORNING

The Bloody Gull sits docked in still water.
The air is filled with diesel stench as the port of Okinawa goes about normal business.

A seagull lands on the Bloody Gull’s gangplank.

Silas Merrin steps down - windbreaker zipped, silver badge flashing -
STORM FRONT LOGISTICS.

Lark watches him go. Her eyes linger on the badge a second too long.

Two men in crisp black suits meet him. A folder passes between them.

Beau Halvorsen bounds after, GoPro rig jangling. Marin behind him.

BEAU
(to mic)
We almost died!
Ten stars, full send.
(he turns to catch the Gull in frame, big grin)
Gonna break the old algo with this one!

The small crew of the Bloody Gull goes about their routines of offloading and loading cargo. Efficient. Business.

One crate slips - cracks open and spills fractured rigging wire.
Red Tag: NON-MAG CONTAINMENT.

GUS
(under breath)
Should’ve left this shit in Saffron Mirage.
(beat)
Tanzania. The women. Love.

STUMPY PETE (roars laughter)
You fucking Navy bastards.
(he looks at the red lable and shrugs)
If it’s still got charge, I’ll feel it in my teeth before the label warns me.

He lights a cigarette. Doesn’t smoke it.

On the dock, Lark and Linda stand in a loose circle with Jordan and Drew. Their gear is salt-warped and they have no bags.

LINDA
I’m not begging.
You go.
And you go too.
(beat)
And you better not email me for fucking footage clearance.

DREW
(half-defensive)
We filmed a god damned ghost ship, Linda?
What more do you fucking want?

Drew hands Linda a stack of hard drives and walks away.

JORDAN (quiet)
This was a dare. Not a career move.
(he shakes Lark’s hand and gives Linda a hug)
Be safe.
(in Linda’s ear)
I’m sorry.

Lark turns to Linda.

LARK
My father chased something out here.
(she looks to Carlos and Martin on the Gull)
I’m not leaving till I know what it was.

The dock falls quiet.

Gus locks the last crate.
Pete leans into the rail.
No one speaks.

Linda and Lark reboard without words.

The gangplank is lifted and lines are pulled.

Okinawa bustles behind them.

A horn blares.

The Gull doesn’t echo back.

FADE TO BLACK.

A3S3
INT. TIDAL CHAMBER — OKINAWA MIRROR HARBOR — NIGHT

Silas Merrin enters the chamber.

Amber and blue lights move along the walls.

Two men stand at a stone altar.

The bigger of the two is looking at it, knuckles cracking, his massive ring glows.

The smaller man stands still - precise, measured.

SILAS (serious)
(to the smaller man)
Captain Hideyoshi.
(to the bigger man)
Captain Teach.

He stands at attention.

MURAKAMI (low)
(doesn’t look at him)
You are late.

SILAS
Didn’t want to leave a trail. He picked up some strays when we found the Celeste.
(he holds up the file)
Confirmed, sir. It’s Sophia Briggs.
And the Compass of the Drowned.
It’s active.

Blackbeard steps forward. Not surprised.

BLACKBEARD (chuckles)
I’ll be damned.
All that bullshit about bloodlines…
(beat)
Mother is Atlantean.
Father is Phoenician.

MURAKAMI (cold)
(head tilts to Blackbeard)
The compass is the first Atlantean signal since Elias Hawthorne was here.

SILAS (confident)
(cocky grin)
You want a match on bloodline?
We can get someone else on board.

BLACKBEARD
Don’t need it.
Not if your man is telling the truth.

The map laid out on the altar glows and a point ripples.

MURAKAMI (stern)
(head tilts to Silas)
And the Gull?

SILAS
Back out to sea.
(beat)
The Briggs girl is stable.
Captain Blackwater doesn’t know what he’s carrying.

Blackbeard laughs. Silas stiffens.

BLACKBEARD (growls)
You fool.
You don’t know the man.
(beat)
He knows what and who she is.
And I’m sure Hawthorne made him promise to keep her safe.

He turns on Silas.

BLACKBEARD
He’s always been too much the fucking hero.
(he snarls)
It’s his savior complex.

The ring on his hand glows brighter.

BLACKBEARD (cold)
(to Murakami)
Tell him I want a word.
He’ll come.

Murakami watches the flare fade back down.

MURAKAMI (earnest)
(almost a plead)
We should move now.

BLACKBEARD (relaxed)
Not yet.
Let us see what else Blackwater and the Briggs girl can find.

Silas sets the file down and starts to leave.

BLACKBEARD
(over his shoulder to Sials)
If she is the navigator, would you trust her?

Silas stops. He turns halfway.

SILAS
No.
(beat)
But I trust her father.

Silas exits the room.

BLACKBEARD
(to Murakami)
She’s the key to finding the circuit.
(beat)
And we’ll use Jeb to find the rest of ‘em.

He adjusts the ring.

A pattern of ancient glyphs glow under his skin.

CUT TO BLACK.