



WILLIAM
JACKSON

SATAN'S
LAMP

INTRODUCED BY
LINDA HAYDEN


gay horror

Alan shaking Jabe gently. 'Time to get up,' he said. 'It's nearly 4am. Your watch, son. That must have been some dream. You were thrashing about like a madman.'

Jabe wiped sleep from his eyes. 'Just a stupid nightmare.' He got dressed and joined Alan in the living quarters. A pot of tea, steam rising from the spout, stood next to a plate of digestive biscuits. Alan filled two mugs. Tufts of dirty-blond hair fanned out from under his fisherman's cap and his jeans were frayed over one knee, revealing pale hairs, almost white. He blinked repeatedly because he was fighting to stay awake: he'd been up for almost twenty-four hours. His voice was gritty with tiredness when he spoke.

'You look pretty wiped out.' Jabe said.

'I didn't sleep so well the night before coming out here. Going straight into one-and-a-half watches is a killer. I'll be glad to get my head down.'

'Go now, I'll be okay.'

'No, I'll stay until you're bright-eyed and bushy tailed.' It was usual for the keeper coming off duty to stay with the relieving keeper for a while - to ensure he was awake and completely alert. The room was chilly and Jabe suppressed a shudder. 'Can I ask you a question, Alan?' he said. 'What do you know about the kid who killed himself here?'

'He was a greenhorn like you,' Alan said sleepily. 'Turned out he couldn't cope with being cooped up on a lighthouse. His name was Vinnie. That was it, Vinnie...'

'On the way to the airport, the taxi driver said something about Devil's Rock spooked him. He said Devil's Rock is haunted.'

'There are strange stories about almost every lighthouse

on the English coast,' Alan said. 'I put it all down to tiredness - that muzzy-headed feeling that comes at the end of a long watch. The mind plays tricks when these old towers start creaking and groaning in the middle of the night.' He looked at Jabe thoughtfully. 'Do you believe in ghosts?'

'I don't know. I haven't met any yet.'

Jabe began his shift, checking that the lighthouse beam was rotating correctly: the light swept blithely over the agitated sea. Next he cleared the crockery away, wiped down the kitchen surfaces and swept and washed the floor. He left the floor to dry and went to check the engine room. The stairwell was brutally cold. The beating of the generator competed with the sound of the sea outside. He checked the speed of the light on the optic speed monitor, then climbed up into the lantern itself. Like a giant crystal, the huge lamp occupied almost the entire space. Its lenses threw stray fractals of light onto the metal lattices of the astragals. The mechanism rattled irritably as it rotated.

He opened the bulkhead door to the gallery. The wind danced around him. He climbed up onto the top of the guard rail, holding on with both hands. The wind was fiercer now. He caught his breath as he looked down. A long way down, the waves crashed into the base of Devil's Rock. Vinnie must have climbed up here, Jabe thought. Vinnie must have looked down just as Jabe was looking down now. Jabe imagined Vinnie must have jumped in the early hours: in the dream time before the sun burns away the night terrors. Jabe listened to the wind singing in his ears. He felt he was nothing, less than a speck of nothing. Only his grip on the metal rail kept him from falling. He imagined the fall onto the rocks below. Blood

and shattered bones swept away by the sea forever. Gone. Then he heard his name called softly. There it was again, riding on the wind, barely audible. He stepped clumsily back down onto the walkway. It must have been the wind, he thought. The wind and his imagination. But the tower was heavy now - with many unnameable things.

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The wind died in the night. Now sunlight reflected coolly off calm, bright water. Jabe called in the weather report to the coastguard: 'Wind west-south-west, 5-6, heavy south-westerly swell.' He filled in the log, turned off the optic and put up the blackout blinds in the lantern. Training stressed the importance of the blinds again and again: left uncovered, the optic would focus the sun's rays, damaging the internal electrics or even starting a fire.

Jabe took a break from cleaning the engine room and he found Spooky in the living quarters, smoking and drinking coffee.

'I'm going fishing on the far side of the rock,' Spooky said.

'Making the most of your day off?'

'You don't need me for anything. Might as well get out while the weather's fine.'

Jabe sat down opposite him.

'I can't believe Bill Norton drowned yesterday,' he said. 'Is it the first time someone's died on your watch?'

'Yeah.'

'You weren't here when the keeper Vinnie killed himself?'

'Yeah, I was here then.'

Jabe was unnerved by Spooky's indifference. 'What happened?' he pressed.

'Not much to tell.' Spooky took a long drag on his cigarette and regarded him with narrow, saurian eyes. 'Scrawny kid, nervous. He wasn't suited at all to being a keeper.' Spooky drew his lips back in a crooked smile. 'But I'll tell you one thing: he had the gift. He just didn't know how to use it. He knew there was something other on Devil's Rock.'

'What does that mean?'

'Something all around this place and in the waters off the rock. Something waiting, watching. You can feel it too.' Spooky talked very quietly, as if acknowledging this was a secret only the two of them shared. Jabe kept his expression blank. 'Listen, kid. If you see anything strange, it's just the tower keeping its watch.' Spooky stood up and moved to the door. 'I'll leave you to it. I won't be back till this afternoon, so stick my lunch in the fridge. I reckon you've still got plenty to do.'



ALL WHO TURN THE PAGES OF 'SATAN'S LAMP'
- AND SURRENDER TO THE STORY - WILL NOT
BE DISAPPOINTED.

~ LINDA HAYDEN

DEVIL'S ROCK IS THE BLEAKEST LIGHTHOUSE
STATION OFF THE CORNISH COAST. A LONELY
ROCK THAT LOCALS SAY IS HAUNTED. THAT'S
WHY THEY CALL IT 'SATAN'S LAMP'.

YOUNG JABE WALKER, A ROOKIE KEEPER, IS
PLAGUED BY NIGHTMARES OF HIS ABUSIVE
FATHER - THE FATHER JABE KILLED WHEN HE
WAS JUST TEN YEARS OLD.

NOW IT IS THE 15TH OF OCTOBER 1987 AND
ONE OF THE MOST VIOLENT STORMS IN HISTORY
IS ABOUT TO STRIKE THE ENGLISH COAST. ON
THIS NIGHT JABE IS FORCED TO CONFRONT HIS
VIOLENT PAST.

HIS FATHER IS BACK FROM THE DEAD AND
HELL-BENT ON REVENGE.



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