

# **What Remains**

written by  
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FADE IN:

EXT. AN ANCIENT FOREST ALONG PUGET SOUND - NIGHT

Stars sag low. Ancient embers in a crisp October sky.

Old growth hugs a pebbled beach jutting into Puget Sound.

A bonfire *crackles* and *spits*.

Three teenagers huddle close.

Flames flicker. Paint faces amber and charcoal.

In the treeline, *rustling*. A twig *snaps*. Inky shadows lurk.

Anxious eyes dart to every sound. A tense quiet.

Before everyone turns back to the flames.

A true believer, CARLY, pokes hot coals with a stick.

CARLY

They say these woods are haunted.

Her boyfriend, ELI, doesn't like the sound of that.

Her skeptical older sister, TESSA, tromps out of the forest with an armful of branches.

TESSA

Oh, who told you that shit, Dad?

CARLY

Yeah. You know, before he...

Tessa heaves a gnarled limb onto the blaze.

Sparks spiraling skyward into the night.

TESSA

(to the others)

Our father used to be into all kinds of crazy shit. UFOs, Bigfoot...

CARLY

-- Ghost ships.

TESSA

Yeah, ghost ships, because, yeah.

ELI

(disappointed)

-- Really, Tessa?

CARLY  
 (softly cautions)  
 Eli.

The woods are full of noises tonight. Eli bolts to his feet.

TESSA  
 There's nothing out there, big boy.  
 Maybe a bear... or a hungry mountain  
 lion, but definitely no ghosts.

Their reckless friend, LENA, lifts a tallboy.

LENA  
 Well, I say we summon the party  
 spirits to bring us more beer.

ELI  
 Don't joke about that shit, Lena.

Tessa mocks him with a *ghostly wail*. Her voice sails across a black sheet of still water. *Echoes* back, thin and hollow.

CARLY  
 A passenger ship went down around  
 here, like, a hundred years ago. Hit  
 by a freighter at night in the fog.

The mood curdles. The fire pops.

Lena squints through the darkness.

LENA  
 What the fuck is that?

They all turn. Stand. A breath of wind slaps their faces.

A wriggling tendril of white sweeps across the Sound. Toward them. Unnaturally fast. Almost like a living creature.

ELI  
 Hey, guys. Fog don't move like that.

It FREEZES. From within, a faint VOICE carries...

THE MAN (O.S.)  
 Agnes! Baby, where are you?

Uneasy glances.

Carly fixes on the water. Blindly claws for Eli's hand.

In the blink of an eye, THE FOG LURCHES FORWARD and swallows them whole. Stars vanish. Firelight dims. Everything goes soft. Pale. And deadly silence...

Broken by the *groan* of oarlocks... and four hearts *pounding*.

Out of the milky-thick shroud comes a yellow orb. It glows like the sun. Soft shapes fade into view. A silhouette forms. Finally, we see him...

A solitary MAN (40) waves a glowing brass lantern. His battered and scarred lifeboat nudges toward shore.

Gaunt and pale, he wears a tattered Chesterfield topcoat. A three-piece suit from a bygone era. His face desperate. Etched with grief. And oh, so weary.

THE MAN

Oh, please, I beg of you. Have you seen my little girl?

The Man's gaze sweeps their puzzled faces.

Carly edges closer.

CARLY

Agnes?

THE MAN

Yes-yes! My Agnes! She's but a slip of a thing, wearing a red cowl. You'd spot her plain as day. I-I put her off in a boat as our ship went down. Alas, no space for me. But God help me, I've been searching for her ever since.

CARLY

Who are you?

THE MAN

Surely, I'm her father, miss.

Eli spots a barely legible name on the hull, "SS GOVERNOR."

ELI

Carly, is this the...?

Waves softly *lap* at the shoreline.

Pebbles *click* in the wash.

CARLY

My, uh, father told me the Governor sank off Point Wilson on April 1.

THE MAN

(points behind him)  
Yes! I managed the last boat away.

CARLY  
... In nineteen twenty-one.

TESSA  
-- Ah, this is bullshit.

LENA  
Then... are you, like, a ghost?

THE MAN  
Nonsense. I'm flesh and blood, the same as you. My girl is out there, frightened and cold. I can feel it in my bones! I must find my daughter.

CARLY  
Maybe you should warm up first-- We have a fire.

THE MAN  
No. No, I dare not. But your kindness does you credit.

ELI  
Uh, but you gotta be freezing.

THE MAN  
(shakes his head/resigned)  
The others... tried. One by one, each stepped from this boat speaking of weariness or Our Lord. And each time, the sea took them as a breath of ash. But me? I... I will never yield. Not while my girl is still out there. I will not give up on her. You hear me?!

TESSA  
-- Okay, I'm out.

Tessa starts back toward the bonfire.

THE MAN  
You would leave my daughter to freeze in the dark?!

Humanity drains from the Man's face. He roars a TORRENT OF FOG at the bonfire. It dies with a whimpering *hiss*.

The teens reel. The beach falls silent again. Waves softly lap at the shoreline.

With sick clarity, Tessa realizes she may actually be in an honest-to-goodness ghost story.

An epiphany strikes Carly. She gathers herself.

CARLY

I might know a way to find her. To,  
maybe, reunite you with Agnes.

The Man lifts his head. Softens.

THE MAN

Then tell me, dear child. For I have  
searched what feels like an eternity.

CARLY

Maybe she's gone. Maybe she's waiting  
for you somewhere else--

THE MAN

No. No, she would never leave me.

CARLY

She would if she loved you.

The light from his lantern flickers on his stoic face.

CARLY

I had this same conversation with my  
father before he passed. I begged him  
to let me go. And now...

Carly tests the shallows. Reaches for him.

CARLY

He's waiting for me in a better place.

The Man studies her welcoming hand. The shore. His boat.

Considers Carly's kind eyes. Unwavering. Urging him.

CARLY

Agnes wouldn't want her father to  
suffer this way. She loves you.

Slowly, he closes his eyes. Nods once. A small, broken smile.

Spellbound, Eli, Tessa, and Lena draw near.

The Man steadies himself with Carly's hand.

Steps out of the lifeboat.

And in an instant of sweet release...

HIS BODY UNRAVELS INTO A WISP OF GRAY ASH

... The lifeboat eases away. Reclaimed by the tide.

Fog recedes. Skies clear. The bonfire BLOOMS again.

LENA  
That was some wild shit!

ELI  
 (takes her hand)  
 You did the right thing, Carly.

CARLY  
 We did. Didn't we?

Manages an uneasy grin.

Lena lets out a huge sighs.

However, Tessa stands motionless.

Stares across the dark waters.

TESSA  
 Or did we?

A pocket of fog lingers.

What does it mean?

A faint cry threads through the stubborn mist...

AGNES (O.S.)  
 (lost)  
 Daddy?

Mortified, Carly whirls to Eli.

His face is little comfort.

Everyone dreads what's coming next.

The white veil creeps closer. And closer.

Above, stars swirl in a chaotic dance.

OVER BLACK

AGNES (O.S.)  
 Daddy... I'm so cold.

Waves softly lap at the shoreline.

THE END.