

A predatory cold claws at my pants legs, my coat, and even my hat seeking a way to crawl inside of me and chill my soul. I don't want to be here, but I don't know how to escape. Groaning and snapping sounds fill my ears. At first I think it's just the cold wind howling all around me, but when I turn to look where the sounds are coming from, I see the hulk of a wooden ship being crushed by enormous, ragged chunks of ice in the Bay.... The deck groans as timbers bend, bend further, and then suddenly snap. Masts tumble downward onto the ice and shatter like icicles. There's nothing that I can do except look on helplessly in morbid fascination as large pieces of the ship disappear from view, and then it's no more.

When I turn back to look at the graves, I notice that all three of them have markers that weren't there before. They consist of badly weathered and cracked, narrow rectangular boards. The markers, which must have been originally placed upright with care to honor the dead, now lean awkwardly in different directions. Each has something inscribed on it, but time and weather have eaten away at the wood. I drop to my knees and crawl closer to the first one, hoping to read the barely visible inscription on it.

'K.M.' it reads and the line beneath it says, 'R.I.P.' The carved letters are plain and simple, and tell me nothing. The second board reads 'C.J., R.I.P.', and the third is equally cryptic: 'E.J., R.I.P.' These poor sailors died miserably and lay here alone, with very little to mark their passing or to commemorate their courageous lives....a frightening thought creeps into the corner of my mind and grows explosively, filling my head. Kate Marston, Carla Johnson, and Eric Jones, my students all have the same initials as those carved into the boards! "It can't be. Dear God, tell me it isn't so?" I look up at the sky praying for an answer, but all I see is blackness, and I repeat to myself, "It can't be," as I fall to the ground closing my eyes and trembling in fear. I wait for a while, I don't know how long, before opening them again hoping somehow that the scene will have changed, but I'm still at Mercy Bay. A tall, lean man is walking toward me. He's dressed in black, a black hat, a long black coat, black pants, and black boots. His steps are deliberate. He has a long-handled pick ax in one black-gloved hand that he's using as a cane. It thumps the ground with every step he takes....