

Solemnly Accompanied
by Caitlin Lowe

Backwash sprayed the still, lichened boulders, piled along the perimeter of the pebbly waterfront. A tremendous, quaint, lighthouse sat perched at the top of the grassy terrain, overlooking the surf below. Frank Moore, seated inside, twisted his rocker to face the cackling fire, the torrent unceasing outside.

Frank was a homebody. After his time served in the war, an isolated lighthouse with nary another inhabitant proved ideal for likely his last years. Still carrying the images of all the lives lost, he sought out solitude as if it were treasure, oftentimes feeling as if he had burdened others when passing on the details of his bloody past.

The soup beside him on his rickety, wooden table lay untouched; the newspaper on his lap worn out, crinkled along the edges from repetitive reading. The lighthouse's roof caught the rapid drops of rain, one by one, sending its "clack" erupting through each room; a calming white noise for Frank as his eyes slowly started to flicker shut. The clocks in the room were ticking in sync with the leisurely rock of his chair. Frank's nights in the lighthouse were calm, peaceful, and undisturbed; a favourable trait he had hoped for many years ago. After only living on top of the grassy hill away from others for a short amount of time, he had already fallen into a therapeutic rhythm. His days were predictably unchanging, spent admiring the rising and falling of the great body of water below the property's edge. In the previous warmer months, the sun would ascend to its large, graceful stage, staying put for nearly the entirety of the day. At night, it would coolly depart, allowing Frank to rest his eyes, before awakening and beginning the process once more. However, now, in the last few months left in the year, the days and nights merged together, sharing the same mundane tempers, shifting his focus on keeping his home

warm, by maintaining the trusty fire. Nearly an hour had passed from when Frank had drifted off, before, to his disbelief, his night took a surprising turn.

“Bang!” Frank’s entire body shook as he was harshly awoken.

“Bang!” The loud, mysterious sound only growing stronger.

He fought against the chair to escape his current position in order to take a look around his home. He stumbled the first few steps, the newspaper he was previously holding getting crumpled up beneath his feet. As he regained his balance, he slowly crept forward, looking frantically in all directions to find the source of the noise. His candles on the mantel still in place, the mirror next to the fireplace stable, and the Ottoman and wooden table remaining untouched. He ventured to the kitchen to possibly discover a fallen canned food item, however, he saw not a single thing disheveled. Frank studied his options carefully, and decided he must collect the handgun hidden in his dresser beside his bed, to err on the side of caution. As he made his way down the dimly lit hall, he felt a fool to be scared of a few preposterous noises. He lived in an old house, and there were plenty of wooden floorboards to creak, he kept telling himself. At the entrance to his bedroom, he debated turning back, for the fear he was turning into a paranoid old man, when once again, he heard a startling noise.

“Thwack!”

Frank forced his body to go the fastest it had in a long time. Reaching his dresser now, he wasted not a single second retrieving the gun tucked well beneath a pile of socks. He clutched it tight, his wrinkled knuckles turning white. Not a day in his life did he think he would face danger up here, not when he took every precaution available to escape the daunting life of a soldier. Inching forward, he made it cautiously out of the doorway. He looked to his right to be sure the intruder hadn’t taken refuge in the bathroom, and as it appeared all clear, he made his way back

down the hall. Passing his portrait hanging up on the otherwise bare wall, he saw himself again sitting with his uniform and hat, a brave young boy. He briefly forgot about the fear he had only moments ago, and pressed forward, gun in hand. Frank reached the end of the hallway wall that shielded him from the intruder, who must now be somewhere in the front room. As his finger laced over the trigger, he prepared himself to advance forward, reclaiming his home, and ridding the enemy of their unsolicited refuge. Frank left no-man's-land behind, entering the battlefield, where his eyes immediately fixed upon a tall, grey figure standing next to his fireplace. Spotting the man's weapon, Frank shot his up, took aim, and relentlessly pressed the trigger. A blaring shot of gunfire demanded the room, the smell familiarizing itself with Frank.

“Crash!” A broken mirror fell to the floor, shattering into smaller, sharper pieces.

He stood for a moment, and not seeing the intruder anymore, felt relieved. However, he had trouble wrapping his mind around the events that just took place.

Where was the man? Frank gazed over at the main door, which remained closed. Did the man flee so quickly Frank didn't have a chance to witness it?

“Dad!” A concerned voice called. “Dad! Are you alright?” A lanky woman rushed through the door, immediately wrapping her arms around him. Her hair was long and brown, harbouring a few greys as well. Drenched from the unforgiving rain outside, she removed her arms from their grip around him.

“Someone broke in.” He said, perturbed.

“No, Dad. You're just confused.” She glanced down, seeing his hand wrapped around a weapon made her skin crawl. To her understanding, this house was supposed to be safe, the best place for him, as it comforted him a great deal. She now felt foolish to believe she could provide her Father with the carefree life he had always wanted. Lightly reaching forward, she removed

the gun from his grip and continued to attempt to remove him from the array of scattered glass along the floor. "Here, come sit back down." She hushed, leading him back to his rocker.

"Someone broke in!" He repeated, his voice raising harshly and his arm jumping away from hers.

"Okay." She cooed. "Okay. Still, why don't you sit down for a while, right over here."

Now, finding her wish for him to rest desirable, Frank staggered to the rocker, greeting its leathery seat once more. Its comfort welcomed his tired bones, relieving all aches and pains from the overwhelming actions he had taken. A few deep breaths invaded his chest, and his brain removed itself from the million-mile race it was on to understand the crisis that had taken place.

"I popped out to try and fix your corvette's engine up for selling, the hood got jammed a couple times, that must've been what you heard." His daughter assured him. After retrieving a broom from the kitchen, she knelt beside the sharp, hazardous, broken glass, and swept the remnants into a bin, with a large lump in her throat. "Oh, Dad." She broken-heartedly muttered as she pieced together what he was fending off.

Frank lowered his torso to collect the newspaper fallen on the ground that had caught his attention. Sinking back into his chair, he began flipping through the crinkled pages, intrigued by the stories plastered along. The night fading away quickly, into an un-recountable fog.