

# Fishing 4 Zombies

written by

Anabelle Kang

September 21, 2023

First Draft

Made in Highland

FADE IN:

**EXT. BERING SEA - NIGHT**

From above, we see a large fishing vessel-- *The Sitka*, slicing through the water of a dark, unforgiving sea. The waves are unrelenting, but the ship continues on.

**INT. FACTORY FLOOR - NIGHT**

An endless line of Alaska Pollock churn along a conveyor belt, whirring rotary blades slice their heads off.

We pan around a room packed with machines and men alike, working at a relentless pace. They bark orders at each other as thousands of fish stream by them to be processed. Each crew member has a place in this machine.

At the front of the room, we see the foreman. AARON NACK (early 50s, salt of the sea packed into every crease on his face). He stands on a platform, watching over his crew.

A SURVEYOR approaches him, clipboard in hand. He offers it to Aaron, who frowns as he reads it.

AARON

It's too soon to go back.

SURVEYOR

We might not get much of a choice.  
This zone is *dead*.

Aaron looks up from the clipboard at the factory floor.

AARON

If we go back now, my men don't  
get the full cut they were  
promised.

SURVEYOR

We're over-pulling. Four months is  
enough time. We should've been  
headed home weeks ago.

The surveyor gets a chestful of clipboard. Aaron stomps down to the factory floor. He cuts through machines nimbly as the surveyor struggles to keep footing with him.

SURVEYOR

It feels like you're not  
listening.

Made in Highland

AARON  
Because I'm not.

He's plucked a fish from the catch and is de-boning it by hand.

SURVEYOR  
The ocean is fucking empty, man.  
We're not turning a profit with  
empty nets.

Aaron tosses his blade down and it sticks to the counter.

AARON  
When we're out here, *this* is your  
home.

CUT TO:

**INT. MESS - DAWN**

The factory crew of eleven sit around cafeteria tables. They eat and wash their food down with beer. A group of four are playing euchre while others watch. A razor buzzes as one crewmate gives his friend a haircut.

Aaron sits with his crew. Even off-duty, they're a lively bunch.

The light of the sunrise peeks through the porthole windows.

NATHANIEL (mid 20s, Cutter, lean) pauses the haircut to take a drag from his cigarette. His client, KHAM (mid 20s, Pan Breaker, stocky, half-shaved head), yelps.

KHAM  
Hey bring that flame closer to my  
head, yeah?

Nathaniel waggles the cigarette by his ear, Kham bats it away.

ADRIANA (30s, Feeder, broad-shouldered) shovels food into her mouth. SHIN (40s, Sizer, sharp) watches her with disgust.

SHIN  
The food's already dead, it's not  
going anywhere.

ADRIANA  
Nah, I heard the day shift gets  
seconds. Eat while you can.

She nudges Shin with her elbow and grins.

Made in Highland

Sitting in the card game is MURPH (19, Freezer Rat, still has acne). He scratches his temple fretfully over his cards.

JOEL

He doesn't fucking have it!

JOEL (early 30s, Freezer Loader, Māori, big). He sits in the game next to Murph, dwarfing him. Murph sighs and tosses his card down. An ace. He grins. The crowd goes fucking wild.

Murph's partner in the game turns to Aaron. SANTIAGO (early 30s, Packer, glasses).

SANTIAGO

You want in, boss?

AARON

Yeah, why not.

Aaron slides into place at the table as Joel starts shuffling the cards. Murph stands to excuse himself.

AARON

Where are you going?

MURPH

It's my girlfriend's birthday. Cap said I could call her on the sat-phone.

The crowd ooohs and whistles at him. Aaron does not.

AARON

When we're here, we're here. Make your calls on your own time.

The room goes quiet and Murph sits back down. They pick up their cards and the game continues on with none of the energy from before. Santiago leans over to Aaron.

SANTIAGO

Technically, this is his personal time, sir.

Aaron frowns at his cards.

AARON

It's the crew's time.

He tosses the cards down and leaves the table.

**EXT. BERING SEA - DUSK**

The sunset is blotted out as storm clouds roll in. The *Sitka* is being tossed back and forth by waves twice its size.

**EXT. WHEEL HOUSE - NIGHT**

From the deck of the ship, we see the waves towering above the ship. The deck crew works overtime getting things tied down.

Someone yells as a shadow descends over them and a wave *cracks* down into the ship.

CUT TO:

**INT. CREW CABIN - NIGHT**

Aaron jolts awake as the ship lurches, tossing him from his bunk. The room is cramped, just barely big enough for him and the bed, but it's private.

The door bursts open.

JOEL

Thank God, you're awake. Captain's looking for you.

**INT. COMMUNICATIONS CENTER - NIGHT**

The air in the communications room is tense. A handful of people crowd around the communications board. The captain, VERNE (60s, trim white beard) notices Aaron and beckons him in.

VERNE

Ok, all leadership is here. We can start getting people up to speed.

He gestures to the comms officer, SIMMONS, who's sitting at the board with his headset on.

SIMMONS

As of forty minutes ago, we've been off-grid. The storm took our navigation out and we've been sailing blind since.

Murmurs ripple across the room.

AARON

Command center hasn't been able to pinpoint our location?

Made in Highland

SIMMONS  
That's the thing, command center  
isn't responding.

The dayshift foreman, RAUL, pipes up.

RAUL  
Like the line is dead?

SIMMONS  
Like they aren't there.

The room is stunned into silence.

VERNE  
Currently, we're hailing the coast  
guard, but it's been tough.  
Simmons is on that now.

RAUL  
So what, command is just gone?

SIMMONS  
It's not just them. Any line on  
shore is just...empty. We've even  
tried hailing Russia.

RAUL  
And?

SIMMONS  
Niet.

The crowd starts getting antsy, but their protests are cut off  
by the crackle of the radio. People shush one another.

SIMMONS  
Come in? Do you read me? This is  
the *Sitka*, identification number  
I-B-

COAST GUARD  
Hello? Hello?!

The voice is panicked, a complete abandon of usual military  
formality. Aaron frowns at the captain.

SIMMONS  
Come in, this is the *Sitka*, a  
commercial fishing vessel. Our  
navigation is out and we are  
unable to reach anybody on shore.  
Please advise.

Made in Highland

COAST GUARD

Oh God, you guys are still out there?

SIMMONS

Affirmative. Please advise on how we should return to shore.

COAST GUARD

DON'T.

The radio screeches with feedback as the man's voice booms out.

COAST GUARD

DO NOT return to shore. Look, we've been ordered to keep things under wraps but you cannot come back. It's some kind of virus, a lot of people are already gone. They're not telling us much else but it's...big. Whatever you do, do not return-

Another screech as the coast guard is cut off by screaming and the sound of gunfire. They hear the man's final scream get cut silent by a sound they all know-- viscera, flesh ripping. The radio crackles for a moment, then: a low, heavy growl, mindless and inhumane.

A beat. We see Aaron's face. He's visibly stricken.

Then panic breaks out. Verne on presses a panel button and lets the mic feedback screech, quieting the crowd.

VERNE

Folks, please. Let's settle.

The crowd waits, respect keeping their panic barely at bay.

VERNE

I won't lie and pretend things are ok. But who here hasn't been on a job that's gone sideways?

Murmurs of agreement from the crowd.

VERNE

We've all weathered our share of storms, and for right now: that's all this is. A bad storm. We're fishermen. If there's one thing we always do, it's come home.

People nod, someone gives a *whoo* of approval.

Made in Highland

RAUL  
So what's the plan?

Verne gestures for Simmons to speak.

SIMMONS  
We've been receiving a  
distress signal, a ship 13 nauts  
from our current location.

Aaron frowns at this.

VERNE  
It's possible this ship has a  
nav system. If we can work with  
them, we might have a way home.

A ripple of approval passes, but falls short at Aaron.

AARON  
A plan? Are you kidding?

All heads snap to him. Verne frowns.

AARON  
There's a deadly virus on shore,  
and you guys wanna go *there*?

VERNE (calmly)  
What would you prefer?

Aaron is getting heated, and the crowd matches his energy.

AARON  
I'd *prefer* if we stayed in the  
middle of the sea where it's safe!

Voices rise in dissent and the crowd closes in on Aaron.

AARON  
Did we not hear what happened?!

Someone behind Aaron shoves him and he jolts into Raul.

RAUL  
Fuck that, I'm not dying out here.

A hand on Aaron's shoulder interrupts the fight

VERNE  
Even old sailors have something  
waiting for them back home, Aaron.

There's something pleading in Verne's face. It cuts through the  
tension— even the tough in Raul's face softens.

Made in Highland



RAUL

You can't expect us to abandon  
our families, man.

The two men stare each other down, a challenge of wills.

VERNE

Some don't have family back home,  
but that means more than ever that  
this crew is your family.

Aaron falters.

VERNE

Are you with us or not.

### **INT. LOCKER ROOM - NIGHT**

It's cramped in the lockers. Both the night and the day crew are in here, making space for one another as they prepare for what's ahead.

Limited in wardrobe options, they slide into their bright yellow fishing bibs and tug on heavy, rubber boots. One would mistake it for a regular day of work if not for the somber mood hanging heavy in the air.

Aaron is in there with them.

He goes slowly, but is going nonetheless. From his locker he pulls out his boning knife, a ripper.

Raul swaggers up to him.

RAUL

Nice knife, little man.

At his hip hangs a heavy looking machete. Raul smirks at Aaron, who scoffs.

AARON

You overcompensating for  
something?

RAUL

Just making sure you don't get us  
killed over there.

Aaron doesn't rise to it. He sheathes the knife and tucks it into his coat. The door slides open— Verne. The crew all stand to attention for their captain.

Made in Highland

VERNE

We'll be there at 2:45. Means you  
all have 20 minutes to make your  
peace, then we reconvene on deck.

CREW

Sir, yes sir!

Dismissed, they go back to their business.

Joel has his locker open. He pulls out a little photograph.  
It's him, younger and smiling in sync with a little girl tucked  
into his arm.

RAUL

She yours?

Joel grins.

JOEL

You couldn't tell?

RAUL

She has your smile. Poor thing.

Raul shows Joel his wallet and opens it. His own son beams back  
at him.

Verne approaches Aaron, who sits at the bench, ready and  
awkward.

VERNE

Walk with me.

**EXT. PASSAGEWAY - NIGHT**

They stroll along the railing. Past them, the water is dark  
like and endless. There is no light in the middle of the sea.

VERNE

I appreciate you doing this.

AARON

Do I have a choice?

VERNE

You could be in our brig instead.

AARON

Hell of a choice.

We hear the soft shush of water against the ship.

Made in Highland

VERNE

Once we get the nav gear and find  
our way back, we won't need to go  
all the way.

AARON

What are you saying?

VERNE

We'll take the dinghies to shore  
and you can bring the *Sitka* back  
to open waters once we're done.

Aaron perks up. It's the first time we've seen him smile.

VERNE

I thought that might brighten your  
spirits. And another thing-

He pulls out a cigarette and lights it.

VERNE

We're taking a bulk of the crew  
over, in case we need the manpower

Aaron nods, expectantly. Verne leans against the railing and  
blows out a smooth line of smoke. He wordlessly holds out the  
cigarette to Aaron, who takes it and leans over as well.

VERNE

You and your shift crew stay here  
and man the *Sitka*. Can't leave her  
unattended.

Aaron coughs on the smoke and stands straight up.

AARON

You don't think I'll pull my  
weight?!

Verne smiles, taking the cigarette from Aaron's offended hand.

VERNE

You're a good sailor, Aaron. But  
when we're over there-- I don't  
need obedience, I need people who  
*believe* we're getting home.

He takes another drag and exhales shakily. Aaron looks at  
Verne's hands-- they're trembling.

AARON

I understand.

Verne smiles, clapping Aaron's back. They turn to go.

Made in Highland

VERNE

Good man. I'm counting on you.

**EXT. DECK - DAWN**

Sunlight bleeds through the sky as dawn breaks over the edge of the deck, drowning the *Sitka* in light.

**EXT. COMMUNICATIONS CENTER - DAWN**

Simmons sits at the command board, watching over several monitors. Over his shoulder we see a radar readout on the screen. One dot in the center blinks, another dot blips closer and closer until they are right next to one another.

He turns to face someone standing behind him.

SIMMONS

We're here.

SERIES OF SHOTS - THE SITKA IS EMPTY

MESS HALL. Quiet for the first time, empty.

ON DECK. A cramped huddle of men rumble towards the railing.

CREW CABINS. People's belongings are scattered about the room, keepsakes hastily grabbed, the rest abandoned.

ON DECK. Hands unlatch the pegs securing a metal gangway.

LOCKER ROOM. Lockers closed up, a faulty shower drips water.

ON DECK. A team hoists the gangway over the edge, pushing it out so that it creates a bridge.

FACTORY FLOOR. Stopped mid-production. Sterile. Fish sit dead on the conveyor belt.

ON DECK. A huddled mass waits before the bridge.

A closeup of the belt, from above. A line of fish, waiting to be dissected.

The gangway, from above. A line of men cross to the other ship.

**INT. WHEEL HOUSE - DAWN**

The night shift crew stand by. A nervous energy moves through them. Murph's leg trembles. Nathaniel drums his fingers on the steering wheel. Adriana fidgets with a knob on the board.

Made in Highland

Aaron sits at the helm. They watch as their crewmates file out.

ADRIANA  
I don't like this.

JOEL  
We should be over there with them.

AARON  
We have direct orders to stay here  
and keep our ship safe.

Members of the crew shoot each other looks.

SHIN  
How do we know you didn't ask for  
us to stay behind?

Other people murmur words of agreement. Aaron whips around to face him, angry. Before he can retort-

SANTIAGO  
The boss looks out for his crew.  
All of it. If we have orders to  
stay here then that's that.

The energy settles and the night shift goes back to waiting.

**EXT. DECK, AURORA - DAWN**

The crew find their footing on the deck of the new ship. We pan around to face it. It's a cruise ship. Bright colors and pool chairs decorate the deck. It's also empty.

Raul steps forward in the crowd and stands by Verne.

RAUL  
Where is everybody?

VERNE  
We're about to find out.

They split into two groups, progressing cautiously.

We see a series of shots as they move through a few rooms, kitchens, a movie theater, various suites. They've all been abandoned, not even a sign of violence or struggle.

The walkie-talkie on Raul's shirt pocket crackles to life.

AARON (radio)  
What are you seeing.

Raul leans into his radio.

Made in Highland

RAUL  
Nothing so far. It's empty.

**INT. WHEEL HOUSE - MORNING**

Aaron leans over the board, where Adriana and Shin sit. Holding his radio, he squints through the window at the cruise.

NATHANIEL  
Did he say it's empty?

JOEL  
Not even a crew?

MURPH  
So...who's putting out a distress  
signal?

Aaron speaks into his radio.

AARON  
Try to find their comms room,  
whoever's putting out the distress  
signal might still be there.

RAUL (radio)  
Roger.

**EXT. AURORA PASSAGEWAY - MORNING**

The two groups reconvene. The crew crowds the way, confused. Raul pushes his way through and approaches Verne.

RAUL  
Aaron thinks we should find the  
comms room first. I agree, the nav  
gear is most likely there.

VERNE  
Your group move that way. We'll  
continue looking for signs of  
life.

RAUL  
You've got your radio?

Verne taps the walkie on his belt. Raul nods. He motions for his crew to head out, they turn to leave, he hangs back.

RAUL  
Don't be a hero.

Smiling, Verne salutes him, then turns to leave with his men.

Made in Highland

**INT. AURORA COMMUNICATIONS CENTER - MORNING**

The group approaches the door. Someone tries the handle, it's locked. He looks to Raul, who nods. The man kicks at the handle til it crumples and the door swings open.

Raul motions for him to go first. They filter in. Empty.

At the front of the room is a communications board, smaller than the Sitka's. A subtle beeping noise is filling the room, a screen blinks at them. Raul approaches it. Into his radio:

RAUL  
We're here. There's nobody.

AARON (radio)  
Do you see the gear?

Raul hunches over and rummages through the storage beneath the board. He pulls out a metal case, marked for emergencies.

He slides it out and clicks it open.

RAUL  
I've got it here.

**INT. WHEEL HOUSE - MORNING**

A sigh of relief passes through the room. Aaron smiles.

AARON  
Go ahead and make your way back.

RAUL (radio)  
Don't have to tell me twice.

VERNE (radio)  
We'll stay here for a little longer. Whoever put out that call might still be here.

Aaron straightens up. He barks into the radio.

AARON  
What? We got what we came for, get back here and we can go.

VERNE (radio)  
It'll take a while to get the nav gear sync'ed up. We'll be back before then.

Aaron looks to his crew, they also seem anxious to go.

Made in Highland

AARON  
Roger that, captain.

**EXT. GANGWAY - MORNING**

The sky shifts into a pale blue of morning as Raul's crew cross back to the Sitka.

Aaron and his crew are waiting on the other side. They clap them on their backs and nod as they hop down from the bridge.

**EXT. DECK, SITKA - CONTINUOUS**

Raul hops down from the gangway, the emergency navigational gear in hand. Raul addresses his team.

RAUL  
Start prepping to cast off, soon  
as the captain's back, we're  
headed home.

They shuffle off. Raul calls after them.

RAUL  
Good work guys!

Raul turns to Aaron. He swings the case up and into Aaron's hands. Aaron *clicks* it open and peers into the case. Shin peeks over his shoulder.

SHIN  
That's the nav gear, then?

AARON  
Let's hope so.

He hands it to Shin.

AARON  
Simmons is in the comms room,  
he'll set it up. Bring a buddy.

Shin walks off with the case, Adriana on his tail.

Raul turns to the rest of Aaron's crew.

RAUL  
The rest of you, join the others  
and start preparing to depart.

Aaron glares at Raul.

Made in Highland



AARON  
They're my crew. I can give the  
orders.

The crew is paused in place, not wanting to undermine either of them. Aaron looks awkwardly at his crew.

AARON  
But, yeah. What he said.

They nod and depart. Raul turns on Aaron, acerbic but teasing.

RAUL  
Does it really make a difference?  
Verne's the one who's in charge.

AARON  
What about when he's not on board?

Raul laughs.

RAUL  
Then we'll tussle over it.

He punches Aaron playfully, who frowns, but takes it. They make their way back to the wheelhouse.

#### **INT. WHEELHOUSE - CONTINUOUS**

Raul and Aaron both take a seat at the control board. Raul kicks his feet up and leans back. Aaron sits, shoulders tense, concern creasing his weathered face.

Raul clicks on the radio transmitter on the control board. He speaks into the mic.

RAUL  
How's it going over there, jefe?

#### **INT. HALLWAY, AURORA - MORNING**

Verne leads his men through a dark hallway of suite doors. The lighting is warm and sickly, one of the wall sconces flickers, making their shadows mutate along the walls. He answers Raul--

VERNE  
Still nobody, but we're getting  
somewhere.

Made in Highland

The terrain here has actual signs of life. Doors are left ajar, suitcases left spilled open in the hallways, clothes and towels strewn about. People were here at some point, left in a hurry. Verne and his crew carefully step around the debris.

VERNE

It looks like people were in a rush to get out. There's just crap scattered around.

### **Intercut - Radio Conversation**

Aaron leans over the board with interest.

AARON

What kind of crap?

Verne pauses, sifting through the stuff on the ground.

VERNE

Like, belongings.

He crouches down and picks up something left behind. It's a little girl's doll. Her yarn hair has been messily braided, her face is worn with love.

VERNE

Stuff you'd expect people to take with them.

Raul and Aaron exchange worried expressions. Aaron speaks softly, almost to himself.

AARON

So there are people on board

RAUL

Or there were. I didn't see nobody while I was over.

VERNE

It's possible everyone already evac'd

Verne tucks the doll back where he found it and stands. He grunts as he stands, his old-man joints creaking.

RAUL

In that case, head back. There's no helping an empty ship.

VERNE

Heard. We'll start-

Raul and Aaron are at attention when Verne cuts off.

Made in Highland

RAUL  
What is it?

VERNE  
Do you hear that?

RAUL  
What? I can't hear anything

Verne and his men pause in the hallway, looking around. All is still for a moment, then the soft murmur of music filters through the space. The crowd shudders as a creeping anxiety fills their faces.

VERNE  
It's...music?

Raul snatches the mic up and growls into it.

RAUL  
I don't like that shit, boss. Get out of there.

Verne shakes his head and takes off, walking at a brisk pace down the hall.

VERNE  
We can't just take their shit and leave. We're not pirates.

His men follow him towards the source of the music. It's a crooning jazz standard, growing louder as they approach.

VERNE  
If there are people on board, we're helping them.

RAUL  
There's nobody there, Verne.

Aaron almost seems uninterested in this conversation. Instead, he stares out the window of the wheelhouse, his attention grabbed by something in the distance.

RAUL  
As you said, they already evacuated, like we should...

Raul trails off as Aaron flaps his hand at him for attention.

RAUL  
What?

AARON  
I don't think they're gone. Look-

Made in Highland

Aaron points out the windows.

### **Through the Window - Aurora**

We see the *Aurora* across the way. Focusing, we see what Aaron is pointing at. Lining the hull of the ship hang dozens of lifeboats, all untouched.

### **INT. WHEELHOUSE - CONT**

Raul scrutinizes the cruise through the window. He runs a hand through his dark hair.

RAUL  
So what...it's just empty?

AARON  
Or they're still in there

Raul clicks on the radio transmitter

RAUL  
Verne? Are you seeing anything?

### **INT. HALLWAY, AURORA - CONT**

Verne and his men are further along, the hallway has opened up into a wider walkway, leading to double doors at the end. The cruise has a grand, luxurious feel. The grubby crew of fishermen look out of place in this opulence.

VERNE  
Nothing yet. We're coming up on a door.

They pause at the door, the music is booming now, it's almost overwhelming. A sign next to the door reads 'BALLROOM' in a loopy font. They try the handle, locked. He pounds on the door. No answer.

CREWMATE  
They probably can't hear us.

VERNE  
Find something we can use as a battering ram.

### **Intercut - Radio Conversation**

Aaron is hunched over, peering through window, as if he might catch sight of them on the other ship. He doesn't look away.

Made in Highland

AARON  
Check in the equipment closet,  
behind you.

Without question, Raul is there.

RAUL  
What am I looking for here?

AARON  
Infrared goggles.

Raul continues rooting around in the closet.

Verne stands back as a team of men heave a large ashtray receptacle at the door. They swing, boom. It cracks against the doors, which bend at the impact. The men rear back for another hit.

Raul yanks a pair of binoculars out and tosses them over to Aaron. He catches them without looking.

We are right with Verne's men as they- boom- slam the makeshift ram into the doors again. They begin to buckle.

Aaron brings the binoculars to his face

We see what he sees, an infrared readout of the Aurora. A few points of color mark where Verne and his crew are. Then, horrifyingly close- a writhing mass of infrared color. One big cluster, terrifying and large.

Aaron tears the binoculars away, stumbling back in horror. He turns to Raul, his hardened face drained of color.

AARON  
They're in there. They're *all* in  
there.

The ram collides into the doors with a final heave. The doors buckle, then give way. It's quiet for a moment.

Aaron and Raul hover over the radio transmitter

RAUL (urgently)  
Verne?

They wait for a response from their captain. Instead, the radio emits a growl, low and ominous.

Made in Highland

**INT. HALLWAY, AURORA - CONTINUOUS**

Time stands still as the men stand before the ballroom doors, the dark room open before them.

Without timing or mercy, a wave of bodies collapses through the door in a grotesque mass. They swarm around the crew. The music is loud, but it cannot drown out the groans of these horrors, overwhelming the crew.

The men who wielded the ram are the first to go, overwhelmed by hands and teeth, they are ripped apart. Verne stumbles back and the radio flies out of his hand, cracking against the floor when it lands.

Gore sprays out as the crew's flesh is torn into. Blood splatters onto Verne as absolute terror consumes his face.

**INT. WHEELHOUSE - DAWN**

Aaron rips the binoculars away, shoving them into Raul's chest. He presses the talk button on the radio, but the line buzzes with an empty frequency. Raul peers through the binoculars

Aaron is hunched over, frozen at the control board. His face is hardened as he processes things. Something breaks in his expression.

AARON (under his breath)

Fuck

**EXT. DECK - DAWN**

Aaron bursts from the wheelhouse, yanking his overcoat on as he storms towards the gangway. Raul is close on his heels.

RAUL

Man, where are you going

AARON

Are you kidding?

They weave their way through the crowded deck. The sea has begun to churn and the ship dips and bucks but both men walk nimbly, walking with the sea as easily as breathing.

RAUL

Slow down, just think for a second

Aaron refuses to lag, but he is forced to a quick stop as he smacks into a wall of broad-chested Joel.

Made in Highland

JOEL  
What's the hurry, boss?

Raul comes to a slow stop, a few paces behind them. Aaron eyes him and they contemplate the necessity of discretion.

AARON  
Shit is breaking bad over there.  
Verne's in trouble

RAUL  
We don't know that

Aaron wails on him.

AARON  
You saw what I saw.

RAUL  
We saw some people on a cruise,  
probably taking shelter.

AARON  
A whole mass of people, not some.

RAUL  
You thought it was weird when it  
was empty, now your issue is that  
it's not?

AARON  
He's not responding, he needs our  
help.

RAUL  
Man, you're the one who wanted to  
stay where it's safe, now you want  
to run towards the danger?

AARON  
So you admit he's in danger.

Raul grinds his teeth. He steps forward, growling close into Aaron's face. Aaron glares back.

RAUL  
We have a chance to leave, Verne  
knew what he was doing

AARON  
We still have time.

Joel clears his throat, cutting the momentum of their argument

Made in Highland

JOEL

Actually, I was coming to tell  
you-- we're ready to cast off.

Raul lifts his chin, not quite victorious but with a sense of superiority.

RAUL

So what's it going to be.

A crowd of crewmembers have gathered, drawn by the shouting. They rock with the churning sea, waiting. Aaron looks out at them, his crew is in the crowd, watching him expectantly. Adriana steps forward. A howling wind whips her hair around.

ADRIANA

That's our captain. We're not  
leaving him.

A mix of agreement and disapproval murmurs through the crowd. Shin, beside her, looks at her with shock.

SANTIAGO

You're going over there boss?

Aaron looks over at the Aurora. We see it over his shoulder, massive and dark. He nods. Santiago steps forward, others of the night crew follow.

SANTIAGO

Then we're following.

Another chorus of voices, more people chiming in to agree. Santiago and Adriana stand firmly at the front. Shin rolls his eyes and shuffles up to join them. Joel grabs Murph by the scruff and drags him forward.

Raul sighs, stepping up to stand beside Aaron.

RAUL

How many people does it take to  
keep our girl running?

AARON

Eight or nine, tops.

RAUL

If you and your crew have a death-  
wish, that's your prerogative. I  
only need half my crew, the rest  
are free to join you.

The men look among themselves. Half of them step forward to stand beside Aaron's crew.

Made in Highland



**EXT. BERING SEA - DAWN**

We see the two ships from afar. The sea is gray and dark and the ships buck and writhe in the turbulent waves.

**EXT. GANGWAY - DAWN**

From below, we see a team of men cross over on the gangway yet again. At the front-- Aaron leads the charge with urgency. Still on the Sitka, Murph peeks out over the lip of their bridge. Ahead of him, Joel hops down onto the deck of the Aurora, he turns back to Murph expectantly. Murph gulps. Adriana comes up behind him and tucks an arm around his neck. Her breath is warm and visible in the air.

ADRIANA

It's worse to get left behind,  
trust me.

She urges him on and he wobbles over the bridge.

**EXT. AURORA DECK - CONTINUOUS**

The last boot lands on the Aurora floor. Icy cold whips through them, they huddle together and raise their voices to be heard over the wind.

SANTIAGO

What's the plan?

AARON

We need to orient ourselves,  
figure out where we're going

Nathaniel peers over to a row of deck chairs. While the others discuss, he hobbles over and plucks something from the back pocket of a chair.

NATHANIEL

Does this help?

He shoves a tri-fold map into Aaron's hand. He unfolds it-- revealing a brightly colored, touristy map of the cruise ship.

AARON

Beautiful.

A few hands clap Nathaniel on the back as they pore over the map.

Made in Highland

AARON  
Last we saw of them, we were  
picking up a heat signature over  
here

With his finger Aaron draws a rough circle several floors down,  
towards the bottom half of the ship. Aaron pauses.

AARON  
Hold on, I'm an idiot

He pulls out his walkie-talkie.

AARON  
Raul?

RAUL (radio)  
Come-in

AARON  
Do you those infrared goggles  
with you

RAUL  
Sure do

**INT. SITKA WHEELHOUSE - CONTINUOUS**

Raul peers through the goggles at the Aurora.

AARON (radio)  
Can you-

RAUL  
Already on it

Raul frowns and looks harder through the goggles.

**EXT. AURORA DECK - CONTINUOUS**

There's a long silence. People shuffle with nervous energy.

AARON  
What're you seeing?

RAUL (radio)  
You're not going to believe this...  
nothing

Aaron looks taken aback.

Made in Highland

AARON  
What about all those people we  
saw?

RAUL (radio)  
Yeah they're just...gone.

Aaron looks around at the concerned faces huddled around him

AARON  
You're not seeing Verne or  
anyone?

RAUL (radio)  
No, I'm still getting a few  
signatures here and there. Your  
best shot would be the ballroom,  
I'm seeing some activity around  
there.

Looking at the map, the ballroom is down on the 15th floor.

AARON  
Ok, thanks

RAUL (radio)  
Sorry I couldn't be more help

AARON  
No it's- I appreciate it.

Confusion still mars his weathered face, but when he looks up  
to face the crew, he's resolute

AARON  
We've got fifteen floors to  
get down.

He gestures to one of the men from Raul's crew.

AARON  
Sorry, what's your name?

HARRISON  
Harrison, sir.

AARON  
 You were here before,  
 Harrison, how do we get to the  
 lower decks?

Harrison shrugs and gestures behind them

HARRISON  
 We used the elevators

Aaron frowns. Joel and Adriana chuckle.

AARON  
 Right.

CUT TO:

**EXT. AURORA DECK - LATER**

They stand crowded around the elevator doors. Aaron pushes the down button. Nothing happens. He pushes it again. Then a few more times. Still nothing. He glares at Harrison, who shrugs.

HARRISON  
 Stairs?

**INT. AURORA AFT STAIRWELL - LATER**

Footsteps thunder down the stairs. The stairwell lacks the cruise glamour, cramped, cement, grey. They turn past another landing reading 'Floor 9'. A few people are bent over, winded.

JOEL  
 Quick breather, bossman?

Aaron frowns but relents, people catch their breath. He waits for them at the edge of the next step.

SANTIAGO  
 So the plan is we get down there,  
 find Verne and then, what?

AARON  
 And then...we get back to The  
*Sitka*.

SANTIAGO  
 Right but, how?

This is a serious question, but it's quickly cut off by the clamor of the other crewmates.

DAY CREW #1  
 Oh my god, Scully!

Made in Highland

Aaron and Santiago whip around to see. Trailing up the stairs is SCULLY, the crew cook. There's something off about him. His apron is smeared with blood, his face is ashen and frozen in an emotionless gape. His eyes are closed as he staggers.

DAY CREW #1

Scully?

We see Scully from behind, seeing what they do not: a gaping chunk of flesh is missing from the back of Scully's leg-- the edges of the wound are black and rotten.

Scully's eyes snap open, his eyes milky and blank. He lunges forward, grabbing Harrison and tearing into him with jagged teeth. Shouts and panic fill the air and people leap backwards from the slaughter.

AARON

Go! RUN!

People are already sprinting away, tumbling down the stairs. One of the day crew is frozen, sobbing as he tries to pull his friend away. The body begins to rip as Scully tears through his abdomen.

AARON

It's too late, leave him!

Scully's mangled victim seizes, snarling and turning on his friend. Aaron can only watch as another person is torn apart.

Then, the focus shifts to Aaron. Scully lunges forward, grabbing at Aaron. He stumbles backwards, narrowly dodging, but he falls backwards. Scully tumbles over him, they land on the stairs. Scully gnashes at him, zombie saliva dripping onto Aaron. He palms Scully's forehead and jaw, barely keeping him back. Animalistic bloodlust has twisted Scully's face. He begins to break through Aaron's strength, it's a losing battle.

JOEL

Heads up!

A heavy boot smashes through Scully's head, ripping it back and leaving only the jaw. Aaron scrambles back. Joel towers over him. He grimaces.

JOEL

Sorry, Scully.

He stomps down on Scully's head. It's crushed with a sickeningly wet crunch. He smiles at Aaron and helps him up.

Made in Highland

AARON  
Thank you.

JOEL  
Next time, call when you need  
help.

Behind them, the day crew man is still ripping into his friend's guts, entrails spilling out onto the stairs. Adriana walks past them, swinging a hammer back as she goes.

Distracted, the crew mate can't react before her hammer cracks through its head, splintering its skull and brain into pieces. Beside her, Shin stomps down on the other one's head.

Down below, Harrison watches in terror.

**INT. AURORA AFT STAIRWELL - CONTINUOUS**

The group huddles in the landing down below. Everyone is shaken, but the day crew especially so.

Aaron is silent for a moment, staring down at his hands.

AARON  
Earlier tonight, we got a comm  
from the Coast Guard.

Heads pop up at this.

AARON  
He talked about something, a  
global virus. He said everywhere,  
it was turning people...making  
them violent.

People are listening closely. Some glance back at their crew mates' remains.

SHIN  
So Scully and them, they were  
infected by this virus?

Aaron shakes his head in disbelief.

AARON  
Scully was a kind man. We all knew  
that.

Around him, people nod, a bittersweet mourning passing through.

AARON

What kind of virus can turn a guy like Scully into...*that*?

Silence. Then-

NATHANIEL

When my pops died- he had his eyes open. And there was just a certain look in his eyes. Like you knew he wasn't seeing anything.

He looks around at his friends.

NATHANIEL

Scully had that look.

Harrison pipes up.

HARRISON

So what're you saying, Scully was already dead?

NATHANIEL

He definitely wasn't alive.

Dissension crackles through the group as the severity of their situation starts settling in.

DAY CREW #2

This isn't what we signed up for!

HARRISON

If we had known-

He points a finger at Aaron.

HARRISON

- About the virus, we wouldn't have come over here.

SHIN

Yeah boss. You didn't think to share that with us?

Aaron has his head in his hands.

AARON

We didn't know it'd be out here, but-

HARRISON

But you had an idea, right?

(MORE)

Made in Highland

HARRISON (CONT'D)  
That's why all of us meat jockeys  
are here? Strength in numbers?

A real fight is starting to break. The other five remaining day  
crew stand behind Harrison, hurling accusations.

HARRISON  
This ship is a death-trap. There's  
no reason we should be still here.

ADRIANA  
Your captain is still on-board!

Adriana gets in his face, the two scowl at each other.

HARRISON  
Me and my crew are going back.

SANTIAGO  
You signed up for this, you're  
staying with us.

HARRISON  
Not for *this*!

SANTIAGO  
A crew sticks together, you don't  
abandon the job halfway through.

AARON  
Let them go.

Aaron's hand is on Santiago's shoulder. The night crew look  
stunned at Aaron, who sighs.

AARON  
Verne thought it was better to  
keep the virus under wraps. We  
didn't know enough about it, we  
didn't want to cause panic.

HARRISON  
Well I'm fucking panicking.

AARON  
You and your men are free to go.

He turns to everybody else.

AARON  
You all are.

There's silence, the Adriana steps forward.

Made in Highland



ADRIANA  
Get out of here, we're saving our  
captain.

Harrison scoffs, then motions to his men to leave. They turn and begin trodding back up the stairs. As they pass their fallen friends, they hug the walls, refusing to look down.

Santiago claps a hand on Aaron's tense shoulder.

SANTIAGO  
Downward we go, boss.

**INT. AURORA AFT STAIRWELL - LATER**

We see the cold, empty stairwell. A murky yellow light illuminates the concrete walls as the night crew file down the stairs. They turn the corner of the stairwell landing at Floor 13 and find-

MURPH  
You've gotta be kidding.

An intense barricade stands before them. Suite furniture and luggage, various rubble, is piled up to the very ceiling. Joel pushes his way through and tries slamming a shoulder into it.

Things creak and shift but the barricade doesn't budge.

JOEL  
This thing has to go deep.

MURPH  
Or you're just weak.

JOEL  
You want a go, scrum half?

Murph scoffs and pushes Joel aside, slamming his lanky body into the barricade. Nothing moves.

MURPH  
This thing must be pretty deep.

People chuckle, Joel gives Murph a punch on the shoulder.

Aaron and Santiago are already consulting the map.

AARON  
Looks like there's another  
stairwell on the forward side.

Made in Highland

SANTIAGO

If we can cut through this hallway  
then it should lead us there.

He runs a finger along the pathway charted on the map,  
connecting one stairwell to another.

**INT. SUITE HALLWAY, AURORA - LATER**

From the hallway, we see Santiago's face through the narrow window of the stairwell door. He eases the door open, then peaks a head out. The coast is clear. He beckons the others.

They creep through the door. A low growl sounds through the hallway, its source unseen. They freeze.

Santiago silently motions for them to keep moving down.

In a single file they tread down the hallway, moving silently. Joel is up front, Aaron in the back.

The lights of the wall sconces flicker. Many are already out, creating strange half-shadows as they go.

Then the floors drop as the ship dips violently. Seasoned sailors, they all step forward, naturally accommodating the shifting floors.

As the hallway becomes a ramp, a hotel trolley, laden with luggage, barrels down the hallway. The crew flattens against the wall, but the ship shifts again and it veers-- crunching into Murph's ankle.

Murph lets out a shriek, it echoes down the hall. He clamps a hand over his mouth, tears and panic welling up in his eyes.

Beat.

A low snarl rumbles, back towards where they came from. They all look up.

An infected body stands at the end of the hall. It's deadly still for a moment. Then it begins sprinting at them.

JOEL

FUCK!

The crew breaks out into a run. Aaron scoops Murph up, hoisting him over his shoulders. He begins running, dashing forward.

At the end of the hall, the exit door stands as a goalpost, the yellow light of the stairwell beckoning them.

Made in Highland

They sprint through the hallway. Aaron is lagging behind with Murph on his shoulders. A hand shoots out from one of the open doors, grabbing Santiago by the ankle. He falls, hard.

ADRIANA  
Santiago!

The crew in front of him halts, panicking.

SANTIAGO  
Keep going!

The infected woman scrabbles over him, her nails claw through his skin and she bites down on his shoulder.

Santiago's screams reboot the crew and they break into another run. Aaron stands frozen, conflicted over Santiago. Over his shoulder, Murph screams at him to run.

Aaron glances behind him, the infected sprinter is getting closer. Abruptly, Santiago's yelling is cut short. The zombie continues to tear into him.

AARON  
AGH FUCK!

He keeps running. ||||| The others reach the stairwell first. They keep the door open, screaming frantic encouragements at Aaron. He barely makes it in.

#### **INT. FORWARD STAIRWELL - CONTINUOUS**

Joel slams the door shut, and Adriana barricades it with a pry bar. They are sprawled about, catching their breath.

A narrow window in the door cuts a beam of light into the grey stairwell. The first infected is clawing mindlessly at the window, its mouth gaping and wet. Then, another hand slams against the door. Sebastian's bloodied face appears in the window, his eyes blank and seeing nothing.

Aaron stares in horror at Sebastian. Murph, on the floor below him watches guiltily. The entire crew is frozen and watching the shadow of their friend scrabbling at the door with empty bloodlust. Shin clears his throat and Adriana shoots him a glare. She puts a hand on Aaron's shoulder.

ADRIANA  
Let's keep going.

**INT. FORWARD STAIRWELL - LATER**

The crew trudges down the stairs, rounding the corner to the landing. Another barricade of debris blocks their way, but it doesn't matter. They're here.

NATHANIEL

Floor 15.

A sign on the landing confirms this. Aaron leans against the exit door to the hallway. He peers through the narrow window--

The hallway is crawling with infected, most standing perfectly still, waiting to be disturbed.

AARON

Fuck.

SHIN

What is it.

Aaron surveys his crew. They look worn down by the trek here, Murph is especially bad off. His ankle looks swollen.

AARON

Someone take Murph and get back to the Sitka.

Murph opens his mouth to protest but Shin is already there.

SHIN

Don't need to tell me twice.

ADRIANA

Dickhead!

Aaron nods. Shin ducks under Murph's arm and hoists him up.

AARON

Be fast and make sure they don't leave without us.

SHIN

Yeah yeah.

Joel pulls a face.

JOEL

I hadn't considered that.

Aaron hands Murph his knife.

AARON

Keep it safe.

Made in Highland

Shin and Murph stagger back up the stairs slowly. Aaron turns to face who's left: Kham, Nathaniel, Joel, Adriana.

AARON

After this, it'll be no turning back. Not til we find Verne.

KHAM

If we were gonna bail we woulda done it already.

They huddle up, peering through the window.

AARON

I'll take the front, keep us moving. Kham, Nathaniel, Adriana, be our flanks, keep them off our sides. Joel, take the rear-

JOEL

I should take the front. I'm the biggest.

Aaron hesitates. He clearly doesn't want to let go of the burden of leading. Joel doesn't break his gaze.

JOEL

If you're in the back, you can see it all coming. You're our fly-half

NATHANIEL

Our what?

AARON

Quarterback.

|||| Joel grins.

JOEL

Attaboy.

They arm themselves with junk from the barricade. Kham, Adriana, and Nathaniel find pieces of rebar. They take scraps of fabric and wrap them around their arms and legs. Joel pulls a mostly intact door from the rubble. He uses the push bar as a handle and wields it before him like a shield. Aaron breaks the glass of a nearby emergency case, pulling a large axe from it.

They line up at the door, readying themselves for the attack.

AARON

On your call, Joel.

He nods and takes a deep, shaky breath, we see it steam in the cold air.

Made in Highland

**INT. FLOOR 15 HALLWAY - DAWN**

The crew bursts through the door, weapons drawn. Immediately, infected heads snap towards them.

We see their goal at the end of the hallway, double doors marked 'BALLROOM A: BACK ENTRANCE.' Zooming backwards through the hallway, we see dozens of infected.

There's a moment of silence, Joel raises his shield and begins to chant lowly.

JOEL  
*Ka mate, ka mate!*

They advance as his voice grows in volume. Several infected stagger towards them, one lunges at Nathaniel, who stabs through its head with his rebar sword. Adriana takes out another one, a chunk of cement at the end of her weapon bashing through the infected. Joel smacks at his chest.

JOEL  
*Ka ora! ka ora!*

An infected rushes him, he cracks it down with the door and yells. Joel's eyes are wide and he waggles his tongue as he lifts the shield and yells.

The swarm of infected at the end of the hallway rumble down towards them. We move into an action sequence as they advance further towards their goal.

Wielding the shield, Joel shoves a mass of infected back. Stragglers that wriggle through are skewered by Kham, Nathaniel, and Adriana. A straggler breaks through the crowd and lunges at Aaron, he swings deftly with his axe, decapitating the infected in one fell swoop. They're nearly halfway down the hallway.

They move efficiently as a team, processing the infected in a line of motion. It's still not enough. The growing clot of infected begin to overpower Joel. A knot of limbs and hands claw at his shield, Joel's hold trembles against the door.

More begin to break through the barrier, one lurches at Nathaniel, he impales it but another is just behind the first, pouncing at him. He throws an arm up in defense. It gnashes at his duct-taped arm, he barely keeps it back as Kham ducks under and skewers it.

Made in Highland

Seeing his team begin to falter, Aaron swings his head around in search of another option. Down the hallway, a suite door is slightly ajar.

AARON

There!

He jabs a finger towards the door. Joel, through gritted teeth:

JOEL

That won't get us to the ballroom.

AARON

We're not getting through this.

ADRIANA

It'll give us a chance to breathe

Joel grimaces and places a foot behind him, bracing heavier against the immense swarm, giving his friends space to run.

JOEL

Get moving!

They slide out from behind him and make for the door. The flankers make it in first, then Aaron. Some infected catch on quick and swerve towards them. Aaron holds the door open, beckoning for Joel.

AARON

Get in here!

JOEL

I won't make it!

AARON

If you stay you'll die! RUN!

Joel hesitates, a moment too long. It's just the moment the infected need, they begin to overwhelm him, pouring over the edges of his shield.

He looks back at Aaron as hands tear him down. He smiles sadly and shrugs. His body is swarmed as the infected descend on him.

#### **INT. SUITE ROOM - CONTINUOUS**

Aaron slams a hand against the door, but has no time to mourn. Part of the mob has broken off and begins to slam at the door. He hunches against the door, trying to squeeze it closed.

Made in Highland

Kham, Nathaniel, and Adriana slam against the door too, battling against the horde trying to push their way in.

One head pokes its way through, groveling and biting down on Kham's arm. He screams, kicking back at it. Its teeth drag down his arm, leaving a brutal, bloody gash. As the zombie staggers back, they manage to slam the door shut.

Kham turns the deadlock and kicks the door.

KHAM  
Fuck you too!

As soon as the door shuts, it's silent on the other side. Kham grabs at his arm in agony and leans against the door, sinking down to the ground. Nathaniel peers through the peephole.

THROUGH PEEPHOLE:

The infected have frozen, listless and still, as if lifeless without a target.

Aaron and Adriana survey the room, he checks out the adjoining door, it's locked. Kham is sitting limply on the floor, blood spilling freely from his bite wound.

KHAM  
I feel cold.

NATHANIEL  
Oh shit!

Nathaniel drops down and tears a strip from his shirt, wrapping it around Kham's arm. Kham barely reacts.

KHAM  
Boss.

Aaron tries kicking the door down. It rattles.

AARON  
Yeah?

KHAM  
You know how Raul didn't see anyone down here?

AARON  
Despite the massive fucking crowd we just saw? Yeah.

KHAM  
Dead bodies don't glow.

Aaron pauses and looks at him.

Made in Highland



AARON

What?

Kham stares up at him vacantly.

KHAM

They're all dead.

His head drops, still for a moment. Then he snaps back up, foaming and rabid.