The Lighthouse

By: Aini S.

I get jerked awake to a bright beam of light penetrating my eyes but it's not gleaming luminously, this light is unlike any other beam I've seen before. I crawl out of the sea and feel the water slide off my slick fur as I'm still half blinded, squinting reluctantly, and trying to push my vision past the overwhelming light attacking my eyes. My eyes adjust to the bright rays and what I see makes my heart skip a beat.

The lighthouse that has been abandoned for over 100 years is flashing its lights like brand new. I rub my eyes with my smooth flippers and my eyes aren't decieving me, the abandoned lighthouse really is beaming like never before.

Because it's midnight my eyelids feel like they are being weighed down by rocks so I crawl back in the ocean and go to sleep even though I want to dig deeper in this mystery.

A few hours later, I wake up in the morning to the lighthouse's lights off and suddenly it's the same dusty old lighthouse as before. I go take a walk on the beach with some other seals and I feel rigid jabs dance underneath my flippers. I look down and realize there are sunken ship remains scattered all over the shore. *That's abnormal,* I say inside my head. The day passes by quickly and once again, I get woken up to the lights of the mysterious lighthouse around midnight. This time I'm skeptical. I see lost ships following the light of the lighthouse in the distance, but yet again my eyes feel heavy and I go back to sleep.

The next few mornings, I realize a pattern that ships who follow the lighthouse go missing the next day, nowhere to be found, and each night the scattered remains of ships on the beach grow. I know I can't let these ships keep disappearing so one night as I'm routinely awoken by the bright light, I make the decision. I'm going in.

I walk carefully towards the lighthouse like I'm trying to walk on a balance beam. I whimper at a peace of wood pricking my skin. As I try to pry open the door. Of the lighthouse and enter I'm pondered. Besides some dust and cobwebs there is only a boarded off mirror in this room. "Thud!" Before I can even blink the door slams behind me like a thunderbolt and I'm locked inside the lighthouse.

Well, there's no way to go but up, I tell myself, but before I can climb up the stairs I realize the mirror isn't completely blocked and what I see in the reflection is not a seal, it's a sailor's boot I saw on the shore earlier. I'm horrified and my skin goes pale, so my fight or flight instincts kick in and I run up to the next floor but what I see is no better. The room is

the exact same and this time through the crack of a board in the mirror I see a sailor's hat, the same sailor's hat I saw on the ship's captain that disappeared.

I take a moment to look up, and what I see makes my skin crawl. I realize from the outside the lighthouse looks normal, but from the inside it seems about 100 floors tall. After 90 or so tiring floors of tough climbing and increasing horrors, my flippers are sore and I notice in every mirror I see a possession of a lost sailor who disappeared on this shore. I make my way to the 100th floor starved, thirsty and desperate to escape. The fire that once fueled my curiosity has burned me alive.

I see a mirror like expected, but the mirror isn't boarded off this time, instead it looks brand new gleaming in the dim room. I carefully make my way in front of the mirror, but what I see shocks me. In the mirror I see a man, tall with black curly hair and a red sailor hat that brings an overwhelming feeling of deja-vu, but why don't I see my own reflection? I'm a seal I've always been a seal, but when I try to recall memories past the first lighthouse incident my mind blanks.

Then it hits me.

All the memories come flooding back like an ocean wave.

I was sailing lost at sea for weeks, exhausted, weary, and hopeless. Then I saw it, at night the gleam that was so strong, so bright, luring me in. My heart rejoiced, and I followed the mysterious beams of the abandoned lighthouse. As the shore entered my sight, the freedom I've longed for seemed only a grasp away. Then it all went dark.

I remember it, I remember it all!

*I remember the terror of waking up on that beach, trapped in a seal's body. I remember seeing a glimpse of my sailor friends that disappeared years ago in those other seal's eyes. I remember getting sleepy, and crawling in the ocean, but the next day I was no more than just a seal.*Was I brainwashed into thinking I'm a seal? Is this where all my friends disappeared to?

My mind floods with thoughts, questions, fears then I blank. I wake up opening my eyes gasping for air out of shock. Suddenly I'm back on my boat with my shaky hands grasping the steering wheel. I look at my arms, legs, red sailor's coat, and most of all I take off my red hat with a sigh of relief. I'm back, I'm back! My eyes dart around and I see a bright beam of light coming from a dusty, abandoned tower. I realize my boat is headed straight towards the lighthouse.

I turn my boat the opposite direction before it's too late.