

The Inhabitant

By Fern Duffy

Jean:

Crawford, Gulliver, and I are so glad we finally bought the ship we had been waiting for since we were younger. Crawford is the oldest, with dark, flowing, curly hair and an intimidating demeanor. Gulliver is the youngest, a lovable boy who had a lighter brunet mop, who is slightly bothersome. And lastly, me, Jean. I am the middle child, with my curly hair tied back, and dark brown eyes. We grew up in Firth, a little town just East of the great castle, sitting right next to Cordelia Ocean. The three of us were infatuated with the idea of one day becoming a pirate like our uncle had been, at least according to our mother. Years and years went by as we yearned to set sail and hunt for treasure, excitedly saving up gold coins whenever we could. And then, finally came the day that we bought our sizable sloop. We decided to scope the ship out, planning out where things were to be stored and such.

It came to a time when I had found myself alone, [opening the door with a monster engraved into it, entering a haunting little room below the deck, I found a book in a drawer that seemed tingly and spooky. Could this be something magic?](#), I thought to myself. I picked up the book, and to my surprise, the item was heavy, it gave me a queasy feeling. I blew the dust off the cover to reveal the words *The Inhabitant*. As I was just about to open the book, I felt a large lock that held the book closed. [I don't know what to do... Do I show the others? Or keep this little magic book to myself? For now, I'll stow away this little book.](#) I left the unsettling room, feeling unsure. As I stepped on the creaky floorboards of our brand-new ship, I felt like the excitement

already wore off. For some reason, the air became thicker, and everything felt... wrong. I finally found my way to the main deck, where I spotted my older brother, Crawford.

“Hey,” I paused, searching for the right words.

“Hey what?” Crawford asked. For all his intimidation, he was pretty good at reading people. “You seem uncertain,” He moved a piece of dark curly hair away from his eyes, looking off to the sea. The slight salty smell of the ocean water filled our noses as we spoke.

“Well, I am uncertain! I was so enthusiastic about everything before, and now it feels so different. After I picked up that b-... never mind. What I am trying to say is that everything feels different, and I mean that in a bad way. Is it just me?”

“No. I feel it too. It feels like a great force has been messed with.” He said.

“Oh. Weird. I get what you mean though.” I wasn’t sure what to say to that, because it wasn’t like I was going to reveal all my secrets to him. ‘Well, I didn’t know when to say this, but I touched a magical book that was hidden away in a secret room, and now all the gods are mad at us and I don’t know what to do’. But I can’t say that, because then he would panic.

Crawford paused, and then looked like he had made up his mind on something. “Well? Are you gonna make dinner?”

“Hey, isn’t that kind of wrong? If I have to make dinner, you have to scrub the deck... or something. It’s not fair to expect me to do things that you expect a woman to do. I’m not your wife!” I added as I walked away to go find some food to make.

Gulliver:

As I strode through the ship, I found myself wanting to snoop around. I began my adventure, opening every door in sight. At first, it was just supply rooms that were dark and dingy. Eventually, I came to a room with a door that had some sort of monster engraved upon it. I hesitantly stepped inside, waiting for something to happen. After a few seconds of nothing, I continued to dig around looking for something of interest. Just to be sure, I locked the door behind me. I finally found something that piqued my curiosity, a small book with the words “The Inhabitant” on the cover, that had a bit of a supernatural element to it. I reached to grab it, and my hand met a small metal object, which I found to be a lock. I wriggled it around for a bit, angrily.

I tried a few different ways of opening this lock. A golden coin, a bit of metal, and trying to pull it apart. I eventually gave in and broke it with a rock, making a loud noise that I prayed nobody else would hear. I couldn't dare wake up anyone. Still, the creaky old ship was deathly quiet. Whoever owned this book didn't want anyone getting into it. I flipped open the cover, and as soon as I did, I felt like I was floating away from my body.

I had never believed in witchcraft before, but I felt like I should change my mind about that after this. I was losing control of myself by the second. My body began changing, my skin was getting rougher, and my legs were getting longer. I was turning into something akin to a monster. Everything was getting hazy. I was still there, but not in control. Something else was controlling my body.

Crawford:

As I scrubbed the deck, I kept thinking about how stupid it was that I had to do a woman's job. When we lived with mom, I only ever had to go to school. It was getting darker, and I started

whistling. We were still tied up to shore, and the waves weren't that bad. The air around me was a bit gloomy, and the sky was a melancholy sort of cloudy. I decided before I went to bed, I would explore a bit. I didn't get the chance earlier, so I guess I could now.

After checking out a few rooms, I came across an ominous one. To my surprise, the handle was locked. I peered under the door, stupidly letting my curiosity take hold of me, when I saw a shadow moving around in there, like an... entity? The hair on my arms stood up, my head got dizzy, and I shot right back up into my feet, as quiet as I could. I don't want... whatever is in that room... to see or hear me.

"That's not me." I thought to myself. These stupid affirmations barely help me most of the time, but they happened to give me that extra boost of courage at this eerie moment.

"Hey! Is someone there? Reveal yourself! I should break down this door, and capture you. Put you to work."

I shivered as I heard a low gurgling sound coming from the room. "Oh, god. It's time. I can't do this alone, though." In a few minutes, I returned with my little sister, who blinked groggily.

"What's your deal? I was trying to sleep." She started to drift back off, closing her eyes for a few moments.

"Hey!" I yelled, shaking her shoulders back and forth rapidly. "Listen to me. Something is in there, and I have a feeling it has to do with our impish little brother!"

"What!" Her eyes shot open, as she went right into panic mode.

He went right to work opening the door, bashing at the handle.

"Wait, I know what to do!"

“Whatever you’re going to do, hurry up and do it” I exclaimed, and looked around anxiously.

She pulled a hairpin out of her pocket and broke right in.

We burst into the room, to see a monster-esque figure crouching in the corner.

“Hic- hellppp... mee...” the creature blurted, “It’s meee... gull...”

“Oh my god! Crawford, what do we do? Do we save him?” Jean cried.

Before even answering, I dashed to my brother, the smell of rotting flesh filling my nose.

“GULL!” I shouted, shaking his brother by the shoulders. “Snap out of it!!”

At that moment, the creature’s skin started to change back to a human-like tone.

“Look, he’s changing back!” Jean rushed over to him, willing him back to his original state.

Once Gulliver came back to his senses, a wave of relief washed over all of us. We were so glad to finally have our brother back, and we decided we would stick together in case this ship had any other problems to throw at us.

“Thank you so much for saving me, guys” Gulliver vocalized, as he recovered.

“No problem, we’re just so glad that you’re alright.” I said, and then uncharacteristically, pulled us all into a hug. Out of the corner of my eye, I saw my golden child sister roll her eyes.