

# Horror

## Call of the Kraken

By: Lisa H. Owens



### Lisa H. Owens

Lisa H. Owens, a former monthly humorist columnist, resides in North Texas with two rescue dogs, some failing houseplants and a possum named Harry, who's had a cozy burrow beneath the backyard storage shed since he was a leggy adolescent. Her multi-genre work has been published in various media outlets and narrated on horror podcasts. She's not afraid of spiders and snakes and her stories often include family secrets. Visit her website for more: [www.lisahowens.com](http://www.lisahowens.com)

Ian gazed at the bridge through eyes that had seen a myriad of changes in his lifetime. Some good. Some not so good. He leaned forward to check his compressed air-pump for glitches, the kiss of death for anyone exploring the depths of the sea alone. Shifting the copper helmet in his lap, cumbersome by modern standards, he was startled by his reflection in its glass viewport. An old man, still handsome, whose suntanned face belied how he felt—like death warmed over most days. Then *the diagnosis*, and he'd sailed out the very next morning. Before daybreak, he'd pointed the restored Coble's bow towards the North Star, stopping shy of Colin's bridge.

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His eyes misted, as they always did, when Colin's untimely end filled his head. They were always there—the memories—buried deep for nigh on four decades. Colin's disappearance on one of their deep-sea dives, a sunken ship salvaging expedition. The state of his body three days later when it washed up beneath the bridge. His dive-helmet gone, his golden hair glistening in the sun in stark contrast to the drysuit shredded like tattered rags, exposing arms and legs, covered in purple suction-rings. The condition of Colin's body led to one conclusion,

but Ian had tucked it away and honored his beloved's memory. As Colin would have wished, Ian forgave his father's denouncement of the couple's *depraved lifestyle*, and lived a charitable life, choosing to focus, not on his anguish, but on the needs of those less fortunate than himself. He'd captained his own modest trawler, ignoring the strong pull of the Kraken. Grateful every day for the sea's generous bounty.

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Ian's failing body struggled to maneuver the Coble to the infamous Eternal Water Surge, a great distance from the bridge, where he dropped anchor. His helmet rested, heavy on his thigh, while he mentally reviewed the pre-dive checklist. It would be challenging alone, a job once performed by him and Colin. One-by-one, he performed each task: *Buoyancy, Weights, Releases, Air, Final Okay. All check.* Ian gave himself the A-Okay hand-sign, wincing at his ridiculous display of humor. Nothing funny about this—his final dive. He was ready to face his nemesis. He snugged the weight belt, along with an additional item not typically associated with diving gear, then reached to unclip the safety rope securing him to the boat. *Un-check.* His arms trembled as he clamped the bulky helmet onto his orange drysuit's corselet. One final air release valve test. *Check.*

The water churned. "Ian. laaaaaan," she

beguiled, and he rolled backwards over the edge. Hit the roiling water with a thwack, sinking like a stone. Down-down-down—to where the pressure was unbearable—straight into the eight murderous arms of the Kraken. He looked deep into the black abyss that was her eye, his smile taunting. They had waited a long time for this showdown. Ian pulled the pin on a high-explosive hand-grenade, a salvaged remnant of a long-ago war, and counted down from five.