

The Island

by Matthew Bissonnette

I watched from the small lifeboat as the gigantic cruise ship finally disappeared beneath black waters of the Atlantic ocean that night. The ship let out a tremendous groan as it sank out of sight, trapped air escaping from the hull with a bellowing hiss.

It had all happened so quickly. My name is Anthony Curtis; I was a young journalist on his way to Europe aboard the cruise ship “Eve”. I was alone in my cabin around midnight when suddenly the whole ship violently heaved. Then the sirens went off; the captain ordered everyone to abandoned ship. I had reached the deck of the ship when it began to list over quickly. In the chaos I had managed to board a lifeboat with three others and we were able to disembark from the ship before it sank.

When the ship finally disappeared, I came to the grim realization that we had been the only ones who managed to evacuate the ship. We were alone in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean; a storm loomed upon the north horizon.

I turned to the other survivors. There were two men and one woman. To my left was a young guy; he was dressed in an uniform so I surmised he was a member of the crew of the Eve. The other was older, balding with gray hair and thick horn-rimmed glasses. The woman appeared middle aged and was dressed in an expensive dress.

No one spoke; it seemed they were all in a state of shock. I turned again to where the Eve had gone down, then solemnly stared at the approaching storm. I had an uneasy, queasy feeling in the pit of my stomach; how long until we would be rescued, I wondered.

Then in the distance I thought I saw something; a person bobbing up and down in the water about thirty meters away from the lifeboat. I squinted my eyes; it looked like a woman looking towards me. Then she vanished beneath the waves.

I didn't mention it to the others, I'm not sure why.

The storm finally broke around dawn; nevertheless, I had never been so happy to see a sunrise in all my life.

We had spent the night huddled in the lifeboat as it was rocked about by waves, and the sound of howling wind had been almost deafening; I and the crew member of the Eve had spent hours furiously bailing water.

Now it seemed that it was going to be a beautiful day.

I looked at the other survivors and said, “Maybe we should introduce ourselves.”

The guy in the uniform, an athletic looking fellow who still seemed shaken, looked towards me and asked, "Who are you?"

"Anthony Curtis. You were a member of the crew weren't you?"

He nodded. "First mate Derek Peters."

The woman, very dignified-looking and graceful, asked, "What happened?"

Derek seemed troubled by something. He explained, "I was on the bridge when it happened. We picked up something on our sonar, something huge. It shot up from the depths of the ocean and rammed into the ship."

The older guy said, "it could have been a nuclear submarine."

Derek shook his head. "No, it moved too fast."

I asked the elderly man, "what's your name?"

He replied, "Jessup Whitley. I was on vacation."

I then turned towards the woman; I couldn't shake the feeling that she was familiar to me. "What's your name," I inquired.

"Emily."

Derek was looking out towards the ocean. I realized then that the surface of the ocean was thick with floating seaweed; green vegetation littered the surface of the ocean as far as I could see in every direction.

"This is not good," Derek said.

I asked, "why?"

"We are in the Sargasso Sea, and we're at least a few dozen miles from where the Eve sank. The search parties might not find us."

Jessup seemed concerned and scared. "Do you mean we might not be rescued?"

Derek said, "Yes, it is a possibility."

I began to realize that we were in serious trouble. I said, "how far are we from land?"

"Over a thousand miles in every direction."

Emily, who seemed calm despite our situation, said, "I guess we should stop rowing."

Derek explained, "we are in a strong current, it's pulling us into the center of the Sargasso Sea."

I asked, "what do we do?"

"This lifeboat has provisions, we sit tight and wait for help."

Then we were silent again. It seemed no one wanted to talk so I gazed out towards the ocean.

In shocked disbelief, I saw her again. A woman bobbing about in the ocean looking at us. It was only a moment before she vanished beneath the waves; I came to the realization that her skin was pale, the color of chalk.

Emily must have seen me staring, she asked, "see anything?"

"I thought I saw a woman, in the ocean."

Emily let out a restrained, cynical laugh. "You must be seeing things."

The next few days passed slowly as we all tried to keep our hopes up; everyone looked out for a chopper, a boat, anything. As we drifted deeper into the Sargasso Sea, the seaweed grew thicker, almost to the point where you felt like you could actually walk on it.

It was on the afternoon of the third day that Derek spotted the island.

Derek stood up and looked towards the horizon.

“What is it,” Jessup asked.

Derek seemed puzzled. He said, “I see land.”

On the horizon was a thin gray strip, but it was land.

Emily said, “Thank god.”

I could see that Derek was uneasy for some reason. I asked, “what is it Derek?”

“This can’t be,” he said, “there isn’t supposed to be an island here.”

Emily looked at the spot of land in the distance. “Well you are wrong, because there is an island right there.”

Derek said, “No, I know the Atlantic, there isn’t supposed to be an island here.”

“What do we do,” Jessup asked.

I said, “let’s be democratic. Whoever thinks we should row towards the island, put up their hands.”

I, Jessup, and Emily raised our hands. Only Derek seemed reluctant to approach the island.

“This isn’t right,” he said.

We rowed towards the island, gazing with unease at the desolate shores of that unknown place.

The four of us staggered out of the ocean, after a desperate swim towards the island, our craft having sunk.

As we had approached the island we realized it was entirely surrounded by an ancient reef. As we neared, the heaving ocean had thrown us down hard upon the reef. Our lifeboat had been damaged, then sank quickly.

I still remember the reef as if it had been yesterday. On a trip to Australia, I had witnessed the grandeur of the Great Barrier Reef. But where that reef was vibrant and colorful, this one was dead and stunk of rotting fish. In areas where the reef protruded from the ocean’s surface, I could discern crab-like things scuttling about. Derek’s unease had been well founded.

As the island had come into view before our boat had been destroyed, I’d realized it was nothing more than a mountainous series of rocks which rose out of the ocean, surrounded by a beach. Upon the shores of that beach were many vessels; ships of all sizes had been washed up upon the shore.

Jessup collapse upon the beach, the swim had exhausted him. Emily sat upon the sand and simply looked into the sky. Derek stood, scanning our surroundings.

I looked across the sandy beach: about a hundred yards from us was an old frigate;

I surmised it was of the World War II era. The rusted leviathan rested on its side on the beach, partially covered in dark coral.

To the other side of our party was a large, expensive-looking yacht resting upon the beach. It seemed to be in relatively pristine condition; on its hull was the word “Valkyries”.

I looked at Derek; glumly I asked, “what are we going to do?”

Derek did not look at me when he replied. “Search the yacht for supplies. We’ll use it for shelter; another storm is brewing.”

True, ominous thunderclouds gathered upon the horizon.

Emily said, “why don’t we use the yacht to get out of here.”

Derek shook his head. “It would never make it past that reef, the bottom would be ripped out.”

“How long could we be stranded here,” I asked.

“For a while,” Derek cryptically answered, “but we’ll be OK.”

The way he said those words did not leave me with a sense of optimism.

I sat upon the deck of the yacht, under a cowl which sheltered me from the drizzling rain. It was dusk yet numerous flashes of lightning cast a surreal light which lit up the boneyard of decaying vessels on that beach.

We had searched the yacht, and found it in good condition. It had two large bedrooms, a large galley stocked with at least a month of provisions, and a posh entertainment room. Derek and Jasper were both deeply asleep.

I thought I was alone when I heard Emily speak.

“Mind if I join you?”

I turned around and saw her standing there; she was now dressed in jeans and a sweater. There was a bottle in her hand.

“Where did you get the change of clothes?”

“I found a woman’s wardrobe in one of the bedrooms. Would you like to have a drink?”

I nodded. “Yeah, I need something to calm my nerves.”

So we both sat on the upper deck as the storm approached with night, drinking in silence for awhile. Then she spoke.

“You’re Anthony Curtis, right, you used to write for the National Post.”

“Used to be, before I got canned.”

“I occasionally read your articles.”

I looked at her. “You like my editorials?”

“No,” she said, “but they’re OK for a bleeding-heart, liberal.”

“Well, it’s OK, guess I’m an acquired taste or something.”

“You were in some kind of scandal or something, weren’t you.”

I took the bottle from her and drank deeply from it. I explained the whole sordid mess.

“Yeah, well my editor wasn’t much of a fan of a particular politician, and he was

pressing me to dig up any dirt I could find on the guy. So I find a woman who claims she's having a torrid affair with this seemingly upstanding public official, and my editor convinces me to run with the story, but I got it wrong. She was some obsessed secretary of his and she was lying, and next thing my story got the paper sued for slander. I was pretty much laughed out of the profession. I guess I was on that ship because I'm in exile. I have a job with a British tabloid."

Emily smiled suddenly.

I asked, "does my story of personal ruin amuse you?"

"Sorry," she said, "it's just that I'm kind of in exile to."

"You know," I told her, "you look extremely familiar, yet I can't quite remember where I've seen you."

She got up and began to walk away, though she looked back at me and smiled. Then she disappeared below deck. Our interaction proved to be a nice reprieve from the current bleak situation. I stood up and walked across the deck. Cold rain fell as I stared out across the turbulent seas agitated by the storm. As I gazed towards the horizon, the occasional flash of lightning would briefly reveal the ocean.

Then I saw it. I couldn't really discern what exactly it was, some huge formless shadow which emerged from the ocean many miles away, and would then disappear into the dark waters of the ocean at night. Its dimensions, its sheer sized seemed to be gigantic. I remember feeling distressed; I wondered if my sanity had been damaged by the stress of whole ordeal.

Then I heard an odd giggle, and the strange soft laughing of a woman. It came from the area of beach beside the yacht. It was not Emily; there was something inhuman and sinister about that laugh, it chilled me.

I slowly walked towards the port railing of the yacht and looked down. A woman, or something that looked liked a woman, stood on the beach looking up at me. Her wet, unclothed body glistened and her skin was the color of pure ivory. Her eyes seemed to glow and were looking into mine.

I was about to turn away when the color of her skin suddenly changed from a pale white to a strong red, and her eyes began to glow brighter. She must have hypnotized me or something because I was completely immobilized and I felt a strong urge to climb down from the ship and embrace her, though on some deep level this was not something I wanted to do.

I began to climb over the rail and jump down to the beach; no matter how hard I tried to not do this, the foreign control over my own mind was stronger then my own will.

She approached me casually and put her arms around me, her body was as ice cold. She looked into my eyes again, then she smiled, revealing her sharp inhuman teeth. I was reminded of shark teeth.

At just that moment Derek's voice called out, "Anthony!"

The creature stopped looking at me, and I was somehow in control of myself again, and pushed her away. I looked up at the yacht and saw Derek standing there at the

edge of the deck.

I yelled, "don't look into its eyes."

The creature then let out a loud hiss, then ran towards the ocean and dived beneath the waves and vanished.

I turned to Derek and he simply said, "what the hell is going on!"

I didn't know what to say; I began to fear that I had died when the ship sank and now had awakened in the pits of Hell.

The next morning the four of us gathered in the entertainment room. Derek and I tried to explain what had occurred; Emily seemed doubtful, and Jasper was pointedly reading a book of some kind.

Emily asked, "are you both insane?"

I told her, "We are not making this up."

Emily shook her head. "You want us to believe you saw a mermaid or something."

Jasper closed the book and spoke up. "I think it was a Rhine maiden."

"What is a Rhine maiden," I asked.

Jasper said, "they are creatures from Norse mythology, woman who are said to inhabit bodies of water. Or at least that is what the owner of this yacht thought."

Derek said, "you read the ship's log didn't you."

Jasper nodded. "It was in German, but I was able to translate." Then he explained the strange and disturbing tale of the Valkyrie.

The Valkyries was the property of a wealthy German industrialist and his wife, Clause and Natalie, who had set out from a port in Spain, on their way to North America. The beginning of their journey was uneventful and the weather had been good.

Then The Valkyries ran upon a fierce storm somewhere in the mid Atlantic, and Clause wrote that his sonar had indicated that something colossal was rising from the depths of the ocean. What followed in the narrative were mad ramblings about some great sea serpent, which Clause named "Jormungand", that had emerged from the ocean.

Clause then wrote of how the ocean began to heave violently as great spires of rock rose from the depths of the ocean right under their ship and had left The Valkyries stranded upon this island that had once been on the ocean floor.

But as Jasper read on, he explained to us, the log became increasingly erratic and nonsensical. It spoke of Rhine maidens which had tormented Clause and Natalie, and then in the last pages spoke of how brutish, inhuman things had taken his wife away in the night. The log stopped in mid-sentence and there was blood on the page.

After Jasper had stopped talking, I asked, "Do you know what Jormungand is?"

Jasper replied, "yes, it was a mythological sea serpent which was said to be so long that it encircled the entire earth."

Derek asked, "how do you know all this?"

"Simple," he said, "I used to teach a course in ancient mythology."

Emily still did not seem convinced. "I'm not scared, she drawled"

"Derek," I said, "we have to find a way off this island."

He seemed to be thinking. "We will stay on the yacht for as long as we can while we find a way to escape."

Derek then started to move away from us and headed for the upper hatch.

"Where are you going," asked Jessup.

Derek replied, "To search some of the other vessels on this beach. There should be a lifeboat on one of them that we could use to get past the reef tonight at high tide."

I said, "I'll go with you. I don't think any of us should be alone. I'm not sure what's going on here, but we are definitely in some kind of trouble."

Derek then said, "Emily, you and Jessup stay here. We will be back when we find a craft we can use to get out of here. I want the two of you to thoroughly search the yacht for supplies."

I was somewhat reassured that escape from that terrible place could be soon; I had been in a continuous state of fear since the prior night's events. What had I seen had shaken me to the core, it was so unbelievably terrifying; I had always seen the world in such a rational way but now anything seemed possible. It seemed that my understanding of reality had somehow become much more complex. I deeply feared what else might be hiding on this island, which had risen from the bottom of the ocean. I was no marine biologist, but if I thought it possible, given how isolated the deepest regions of the world's oceans were, a place where things lurk completely hidden from the familiar terrestrial world. I longed desperately to have my feet again firmly planted on the mainland. I felt that what the night, fraught with the unknown, might actually bring might be far worse than my pale imaginings.

It was early in the day. The sky was overcast; thickly spreading gray foreboding clouds made everything seem bleak and melancholy. As Derek and I searched further down the shoreline, our hopes of finding a suitable means of escape was becoming increasingly unlikely. Except for the yacht, all the other ships were piles of rust that barely resembled anything that could be called a ship.

I looked somberly skyward; the looming spires of rock towered over me. I had already witnessed some of the terrible secrets that the island concealed, I was not anxious to discover more.

I looked at Derek and asked, "What are we really going to do?"

Derek replied, "I don't think we can find a lifeboat on any of these ships. They're all too old and rusted out. We are going to have to remain here until we find a suitable craft. I'm sure Miss Hammer will love that."

I was confused and asked, "Who are you talking about?"

"Emily, she used to play Lucy Hammer on television."

Finally I realized why Emily had been so familiar. During the 1980's a police television drama called Ms. Hammer had survived several seasons until it was finally canceled once the ratings had evaporated. The show starred a young Emily Gray who portrayed the tough, no-nonsense policewoman Lucy Hammer. I knew all of this

because I had watched the show during much of my angst-filled adolescence; I had had a crush on Emily Gray. I was disturbed that I hadn't recognize her.

Derek stopped suddenly then whispered, "Shut up and listen..."

I stopped in my tracks and listened quietly. Aside from the waves crashing on the beach, I didn't hear anything at first; then from a large rusted frigate on the beach ahead of us came sounds. Loud, inhuman grunting, and the sound of twisting metal.

I said, "We are not alone."

We hid behind a large boulder and looked down the beach at the frigate. I hoped we had found someone else stranded on the island, but when I saw what started to emerge from the frigate I shuddered with fright.

Several things that looked like large men started to emerge on the deck of the ship. They were dressed in filthy tattered soaked clothing and carried various ancient weapons, hooks and axes made from rusted metal. Their skins were greenish and seemed to be covered in a thick slime-like substance. Their large dark eyes glinted with bright red points of hellish light. There were at least six of them.

I looked at Derek and whispered, "Let's get out of here."

Derek was visibly shaken; he muttered, "One of those things, it is wearing the uniform of a crew member of the Eve."

"One of those things was human?"

"Eddie," Derek said, "that thing was named Eddie Haskel, he worked on the bridge."

I felt a deep unpleasant feeling in my gut; I really did not want to end up like one of those things. I realized I was in a realm of twisted evil, evil which wanted to corrupt us into these inhuman things.

Derek whispered, "You're right, let's get out of here."

We sneaked back to the yacht.

I was alone in the bedroom of the ship, laying on the bed and hoping that our salvation was close at hand. I had been in war zones before and had dealt with fear and the possibility of dying, but I never had felt fear like I did on that island. It was like an unending nightmare.

There was a knock on the door, I watched Emily enter and she looked at me in a very tender way.

"I don't want to be alone," she said.

I said nothing as she got onto the bed, and then we silently held each other for awhile. She was shaking; her cool demeanor had finally broke and for the first time she looked scared.

I asked, "Could I have your autograph?"

"What?"

"I just can't believe I'm with Emily Gray."

She sat up and looked down at me. She seemed to be very vulnerable suddenly.

"I'm just an aging, washed-up actress."

I said, "You look very attractive for an aging, washed-up actress."

She then put her head down on my chest and said, "You don't have to be kind."

I replied, "I'm not. I used to be a huge fan of yours, even fostered a schoolboy crush on you."

She laughed. "I guess this is a fantasy of yours."

"Yeah," I said, "though it never included this island or monsters."

"Do you have anybody?" she asked.

"There was somebody, but she left when I lost my job. Do you have anybody waiting for you?"

"No, several divorces but no one right now."

She had a least a decade and a half on me, but I really was beginning to care about her. For each of us it was like being tossed into a dark abyss with only a single candle for hope.

I asked her, "listen, when we escape, would you like to go to dinner sometime?"

She laughed quietly, kissed me softly and we held each other again; my fear had somewhat abated, and wished that somehow we might escape and be together somewhere normal.

We spent the rest of that day in each others arms, holding each other fiercely to stave off fear, not saying anything, taking comfort in our brief closeness.

It was night. The overcast sky had parted and the stars blazed in the heavens and a fat, full moon hung over the island.

I had emerged from the bedroom and found Jasper asleep on a couch in the entertainment room. I left him and went on deck. Derek was leaning on the chrome railing which ran around the deck of the yacht; he looked out to sea.

I said, "what plans Derek?"

"None, I don't know what to do."

I was about to say something when we both heard the soft laughing of a woman coming from the shoreline beneath the boat. We both looked over the side; and found ourselves looking into the eyes of one of those Rhine Maidens.

She stood in the surf, her naked purplish-red skin glistening in the moonlight; she smiled, revealing her jagged teeth; her glowing eyes looked into mine. I could not move, neither could Derek for we were under the mental influence of the Rhine Maiden.

I could only watch silently as dozens of the large men we had seen before, brutish, deformed creatures, emerged from the ocean. They were worse up close; their skin glittered obscenely like fish-scales, and large gills ran down their thick necks.

The one at the front of the pack stood about seven feet tall, dressed in ancient rags and a deteriorated captain's cap covered its long, greasy hair. It carried a large hook in one of its massive fists. The thing spoke with a deep, inhuman voice that seemed to ooze from its lips.

"What is your command?"

The Rhine Maiden spoke with a whispering, seductive voice and it said, "search the ship."

Then three of the fishlike men climbed up onto the deck of the yacht and casually passed Derek and I, both paralyzed by the hypnotic gaze of the Rhine Maiden. We listened as those things searched the deck below us, overturning everything. Then came the sound of Jasper groaning in pain followed by Emily screaming in fear.

I was able to resist the mind control enough to threaten, “you hurt her and I'll kill you.”

The Rhine maiden laughed.

“You don't realize how powerless and feeble you are,” the woman-thing explained.”

Then the three fishmen emerged from the lower deck, they had Emily with them. The things led her to the edge of the boat; The Rhine Maiden ceased her controlling gaze and looked instead at Emily. I was about to rush to her when Derek and I were restrained by two of the fish men.

The Rhine Maiden climbed up onto the deck and approached Emily; they stood only a foot apart from each other. Emily seemed terrified.

She looked at me and whispered, “Anthony.”

I tried to reassure her. “Emily, I won't let anything happen to you.”

The Rhine Maiden used her hand to lift Emily's chin up then it said, “I think we have found our next sacrifice to the Serpent. Take her.”

I screamed, “No!”

I watched as two of the fish-men led Emily away into the night, leaving Derek and I alone with the Rhine Maiden.

“What do we do with these two?” asked the fish-man behind us.

The Rhine Maiden ordered, “let them go. We will deal with them later.”

The fish-man behind us let us go and soon the Rhine Maiden and all here deformed servants vanished into the night, going in the same direction which they had taken Emily. I went to follow when Derek stopped me.

“Let me go,” I barked, “I have to save her.”

Derek said, “We will, but let's prepare first. If you go off half-cocked, you will get killed.”

Derek and I went belowdeck to find Jasper lying on the floor of the entertainment room: he was dying from a wound to the stomach.

I knelt down beside Jasper and said, “Hang on, we we'll get help.”

Jasper weakly said, “do you know why I went on this boat voyage?”

“Why?” I asked.

“To spread my wife's ashes at sea. We were married on a boat many years ago, it is fitting that I die now. I just want to be with her.”

“I'm sure she is waiting for you,” I said.

Jasper closed his eyes then slowly his breathing ceased. He died there in front of me; I hoped his wife awaited him, wherever it was he went.

Derek began to search the yacht; he found a small plastic box. Inside were several flares and a flare gun. He picked it up, loaded the pistol and put the rest of the flares in

his pant pocket.

“Let's go,” he said.

As we set off to rescue Emily, I could only imagine how badly it was going to go.

Derek and I followed the tracks those things left on the muddy sand of the beach; the moonlight pushed back the dark veil of night; the tracks seemed to curve around the beach of the island, leading us to the other side.

As we approached the far side of the island, I became aware of a rhythmic chanting in the distance. As we approached a huge cove, I realized I was listening to the chanting of thousands of those fish men.

A small trail which had led towards the center of the island, a path which cut between the spires of rock. We came a canyon; a gigantic valley surrounded on all sides by mountainous rocky spires; it was directly at the center of the island. In the middle of the valley of muddy sand was a lagoon, in the centre was a large heap of rusted metal that had been fashioned into some ungodly alter shaped like a serpent. Atop the metal serpents head was Emily, tied to a pole. She looked terrified.

Surrounding the lagoon on all sides were countless legions of those fish-men, their weapons raised in the air as they chanted in perfect unison.

The lagoon was shallow, and about seven of those Rhine Maidens waded through it in a circular pattern. They all seemed to look at Emily, in the dark their blazing eyes creating enough light to bathe the altar in a crimson light.

The path we followed led towards the lagoon, and I began to run towards Emily. It was rather brash; I could not have hoped to make it past the throngs of the brutish fish-men. Derek tackled me to the ground. He held me down as I struggled to get up.

I yelled, “I have to save her!”

Derek said, “We will, but we'll do it together.”

I finally ceased sturggling, breathing heavily. “What are we going to do?”

Derek explained, “Wait till I make it around to the far side of the valley.”

“Why?”

“I'll use the flare gun to create a distraction to lure those things away, give you a chance to get to Emily.”

“What about you Derek?”

“We meet back at the yacht.”

I said nothing as Derek let me up. I realized these might be the last things we ever did during our lives, I didn't know what to say.

Derek started to run toward the edge of the valley; I waited for his signal as I watched Emily; she yelled, struggling, and tried to break free.

Then I saw a flare appear in the sky and cast a wavering reddish light upon the entire valley. The fish-men all looked up at the flare and the chanting ceased. Then one of the Rhine Maidens pointed in Derek's direction. Two more flares appeared out night and landed in the crowd. The mass of those things around the lagoon thinned as more and more of them ran towards the direction the flares had come from.

I ran toward the lagoon; several of the fish-men were ahead of me but they seemed to look upwards and took no notice of me. I began to wade quickly through the lagoon. The Rhine maidens' skin was a blazing red, creating a light of its own. They seemed to be in some trance-state, ignoring my movements.

Emily saw me and shouted, "Anthony!"

I reached the altar of rusted metal and climbed awkwardly, making my way with difficulty to the top. As I climbed my flesh was pierced several times by jagged metal.

I reached the summit of the weird altar and made my way to Emily.

"I said I would save you," I told her

She grimaced but said nothing as I tried to release her bonds. But she was securely tethered to a metal pole by a rust-coated chain. I began to curse as I tried to pull the chain free of the pole.

Then a deafening roar loud enough to shake the entire island filled the night.

I knelt down and held Emily as boulders began to topple down the sides of the spires around us. Sound seemed to come from the direction of the sea one side of the island.

Something appeared atop the spires; the moon was bright enough to reveal it to me and I began to scream.

A serpent as thick as a skyscraper seemed to be slithering through the mountainous spires towards the lagoon. It was at least several miles long. It was a dark grayish color and its body was covered with seaweed. It lowered its head down towards the center of the valley, towering over us.

I looked up as the beast looked down at me. It had a mouth large enough to swallow an entire house, filled with gigantic fangs over which slid a forked serpentine tongue which seemed covered in a noisome ooze.

Emily stammered, "Go, leave me."

I held her and said, "I'm not going anywhere."

A blinding red light came from the serpent's massive eyes and I was blinded. I shut my eyes and just held Emily.

It was suddenly deathly silent. I opened my eyes; I had recovered my eyesight enough to see that serpent's tongue dart towards Emily and enfold her, knocking me aside. I watched as it pulled her upwards hard enough to break the chain. I screamed as she vanished as the serpent's mouth closed.

I ran. I don't know why, I just wanted to get off the island completely. I was going to swim to shore if I had to.

I jumped down from the altar and landed in the lagoon. The Rhine Maidens watched passively as I passed them; neither they nor the fish-men try to stop me. Soon I was on the trail running towards the beach. The island started to shake violently. As I ran between the spires pieces of rock rained down from the sky. A boulder the size of a car fell behind me, and several times I was hit by large stones. I sobbed as I ran, again and again seeing poor Emily disappear into hellish jaws of the serpent.

I reached the beach and was about to dive into the ocean when something grabbed

at me from behind. I was about to fight back when a voice said, "Anthony, come on!"

It was Derek, out of breath but still uninjured.

He asked one word, "Emily?"

I shook my head.

Derek said, "the whole island is coming apart. I think it is going to sink, we have to get back to the yacht."

We ran down the beach, circling the island. The sea seemed to get higher quickly, to our other side the spires of rock began to topple over and crumble before our eyes.

We reached the yacht just as the sea was about to carry it away, now that the beach had vanished beneath the sea. Derek and I climbed up onto the deck and fell to the floor as the ocean heaved; the island sank slowly beneath the sea in a deafening roar of grinding boulders, crashing cliffs and the sea rushing in.

Derek and I were tossed violently around the deck as waves smashed across to hull of the boat. Then the shaking gradually subsided, and after a timeless interval the night was silent once again.

I got up to see ourselves surrounded on all sides by the ocean as far as the eye could see, and the endless expanse of the greenish surface of the Sargasso Sea.

Derek had been knocked unconscious but seemed fine otherwise. Just then heard a familiar female voice whisper from over the side of the boat. It said, "Anthony."

I cautiously approached the side and looked downward. I began to mutter, "no, no."

Emily was swimming in the ocean, but now her skin was a chalklike color and her eyes were fiery embers. Her hair seemed to wave around as if in some wind yet there was no wind. She smiled at me. She seemed much younger.

She asked, "Do you wish to come with us?"

I stammered, "No, it's not you, you are not Emily."

She smiled as she said, "You can live forever."

"As what? I don't even know what you are."

She stopped smiling and vanished beneath the sea. I fell to my knees and screamed hoarsely until I couldn't do so anymore.

The rest of the ordeal was blessedly short and uneventful. Derek was able to navigate our way to a shipping lane in the Atlantic, the boat's engines still in working order.

We were picked up a few days later by a cargo ship which took us back to port. I was happy to walk on familiar ground again.

The story of my and Derek's survival proved to be somewhat of public interest, what we told of it. We both said that only he and I escaped the Eve when she sank. Nothing about Emily or Jasper; I knew that if we had told the truth surely we would both be called insane or at the least disbelieved and ridiculed. Derek explained that we had found the Valkyrie empty and adrift on the sea. No one ever suspected, or much cared, that we were lying. And things settled as the all-too-common story of our sinking and

rescue faded from the public mind.

It is now seven years later as I write this; I'm sitting in a flat in London. I now write for an obscure tabloid to which few subscribe. My life has taken on a permanently darker hue, but ultimately I'm grateful for whatever portion of this existence is left to me.

I think of Emily often—we knew each other very briefly, but I still feel a great deal for her. I guess she exists somewhere...at the bottom of the Atlantic surrounded by things terrifying and yet perversely wondrous. Though I will never be within forty miles of the ocean again, I fly over it when I have to, gazing down at the ceaselessly rolling waves...

I guess in retrospect my life could be seen as many years of normalcy punctuated by that one instant in which I learned that my sense of reality was painfully ignorant of what was possible. I sometimes wish I could see the world as I did then, a world where you could not believe that some monstrous thing awaited you in every darkened room, lurking in every alley, waiting for you around every corner.

So that is the story. I know how it sounds, but every word of it is true.