

A DAWNING DARKNESS

By

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Cold Open - TV Pilot

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EXT. GLOUCESTER, MASSACHUSETTS - OFF THE COAST - NIGHT

Under a full moon and spotty clouds, the lobster boat "Knot For You" chugs along calm waters of the Atlantic.

The weathered craft is manned by its equally weathered captain TRENT LAGASSE, 50, at the ship's wheel.

LAGASSE

Any sign, kid? Talk to me.

ZACK PROVOST, 20, the lone crew hand on deck, aims a high-powered search lamp toward the open sea.

PROVOST

No. Not yet-- wait. Yeah. I think I see it! Starboard, twenty yards.

Lagasse slows the boat into a turn then circles what appears to be a lobster buoy, submerged just below the water's surface. Its design is anything but ordinary.

Provost tilts the lamp, shines it onto a scrap of paper in his hand, then back onto the buoy.

PROVOST

Hell yeah, that's gotta be it!

LAGASSE

Keep it down.

Lagasse disengages the engine, the boat slows. He moves to Provost, snatches the paper and lamp from him, then compares the crude sketch with the buoy itself.

LAGASSE

I'll be damned. The coordinates were spot on.

PROVOST

What now?

LAGASSE

Haul'er up is what now. Get to it.

Provost extends a gaff, hooks the buoy, pulls it in and tucks the rope into the spinning winch.

The boat immediately lists hard toward the taut line. Provost and Lagasse steady themselves.

PROVOST

Damn. That shit's heavy, Cap! They tell you what it is?

LAGASSE

Never mind that. Besides, I got half up front, so if it's a bust they can go screw.

PROVOST

Maybe drugs, or could be guns--

LAGASSE

(brusquely)

Said shut up about it if you want your cut. We clear?

PROVOST

Sure... yeah.

The winch twists and whirs until the attached contents breach the surface in a splash.

Lagasse grabs the line, tugs it closer.

LAGASSE

Higher. Easy now. Bring 'er over.

Provost cranks the winch a bit more while Lagasse maneuvers what looks like a coffin-sized wooden crate, peppered with barnacles and slick with seaweed.

The two men struggle to carefully lower the waterlogged relic toward the deck floor.

LAGASSE

On three we drop it. Mind your toes. One, two... three.

The crate smacks the floor with a heavy, echoing thud. A few crabs fall from the folds of seaweed and scutter away.

Provost steps back, away from the crate, but Lagasse crouches closer for a better look.

His gloved hands move along the sides of the container, across the top, around the corners and seams. He turns to Provost with a covetous glare.

LAGASSE

Like I said... not a word.

Provost nods in agreement.

LAGASSE

Good. Now take us in.

Provost follows his captain's orders and throttles the "Knot For You" toward shore.

Lagasse removes his gloves, makes himself comfortable on the crate. He pulls out a smoke, lights it, inhales, exhales.

He caresses the ornate filigree carved into the soft wood; mesmerized, almost lost in a dream. The more he admires, the deeper and darker his gaze becomes.

He turns to check on Provost, dutifully at the wheel, then back to the crate, studying and inspecting its curious and beautiful silver etchings which further hypnotize him.

PROVOST

We dockin' at North or South Wharf?
They say which one? Or we just
pullin' into port? Hey Cap?--

A gruesome crack of metal on bone angles Provost's head sharply to one side. His body collapses to the floor.

Lagasse, deck mallet in hand and cigarette in mouth, steps over Provost's body without the slightest hint of remorse.

He calmly grips the steering controls and flicks the power switch on a shoddy cassette player. The twang of country music blares over the moonlit waters.

A flash of lightning brightens the night sky, which is followed by the clap and rumble of distant thunder.

END SCENE