

FRACTURE ZONE

by

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SOUND: A RECORDING DEVICE CLICKS ON.

SOUND: RUSHING WATER, LIKE A BATH TUB
OVERFLOWING IN THE NEXT ROOM. THIS
SOUND IS CONSTANT THROUGHOUT.

SOUND: METAL, BENDING AND STRAINING UNDER
IMMENSE PRESSURE.

FARRAGUT IS A COLLEGE GRADUATE WITH A
POLISHED SPEAKING VOICE. RICKOVER IS
LESS EDUCATED AND SPEAKS WITH A SLIGHT
TWANG.

BOTH MEN ARE ON THE EDGE. NEITHER HAS
SLEPT IN A FEW DAYS.

FARRAGUT: The red light came on.

RICKOVER: Should be working.

FARRAGUT: Is it? How can you tell?

RICKOVER: Just... trust me. It's working. Do what
you need to do.

FARRAGUT: Hello? Testing, one two three--

RICKOVER: Just do the thing!

SOUND: METAL UNDER PRESSURE.

RICKOVER: Sorry, sir. It's just, there's not a
lot of time left.

FARRAGUT: It's alright. Did you... did you want to leave a message?

RICKOVER: No one is ever going to hear it, sir.

FARRAGUT: That might be a good thing.

FARRAGUT CLEARS HIS THROAT.

FARRAGUT: Log of the Deep Submergence Vessel NR-2, date One December, Two Thousand Fourteen. Time... Rickover, do you know what time it is?

RICKOVER: How would I know what time it is?

FARRAGUT: During the events of the past two days my watch was broken. We lost most of the electrical power when the engines stopped. We have some computer function. The emergency lights have all been smashed, but we have a couple flashlights, and Crewman Rickover was able to jerry rig the log recorder by rerouting the backup battery--

RICKOVER: Lieutenant, the batteries ain't gonna last that long. You gotta get to the point.

FARRAGUT: Right... right.

SOUND: METAL UNDER PRESSURE.

FARRAGUT: This is First Lieutenant David Farragut. To the best of my knowledge, Captain Holloway and most of the remaining crew are dead. Crewman Rickover and I are on the bridge, which

we have sealed, although I do not know how long that will last. There are other... survivors onboard. I'm really not sure how many. Crewman Rickover and I agreed it would be better not to risk exposure. Given our limited options, we thought... Well... Rickover, can you see the--

RICKOVER: Just passed six-fifty, sir.

FARRAGUT: We are sinking at a steady rate. Our depth is just past six hundred fifty meters. The temperature is dropping rapidly. At the current rate of descent I believe we only have a few more minutes before we reach hull crush depth. I hope there will be enough time. I don't... I don't know where to start.

RICKOVER: Just start at the beginning, man. Tell 'em about the city.

FARRAGUT: Right. Right. Three days ago Captain Holloway relayed orders to set a course for a rise between the Udintsev and Eltanin Fracture Zones. According to the initial mission brief, we were to investigate unusual seismic activity in the area. But when we arrived, our initial sonar sweep made it clear we were there for something very different.

RICKOVER: It was complete bullshit.

FARRAGUT: It was... yes. I believe they lied to us. I wonder if Captain Holloway even knew. He must've known we weren't investigating seismic anomalies. But I

don't think anyone could have known what we'd find.

SOUND: **A GUTTERAL, GRUNTING NOISE.**

SOUND: **SOMETHING HEAVY DRAGGED ACROSS METAL.**

RICKOVER: Jesus. They've got our scent.

FARRAGUT: Shit. Shit. Okay. Um. We called it the city. That's what it looked like. Our first sweep detected several pyramidal structures. At first we didn't think too much of them. People think straight lines don't happen in nature, but that's not really true. I mean, look at the Tessellated Pavement rock platform in Tasmania. Or carbon atoms. They tend to bond in lines and--

RICKOVER: Lieutenant! You gotta focus, man.

FARRAGUT: The point is, we didn't realize what we'd found until the initial sonar mapping was complete. It wasn't the individual structures. You had to see the whole picture. The ancient Egyptians couldn't have laid it out more perfectly. I don't know. Maybe the Egyptians learned it from whoever built this place. It is so old...

SOUND: **INHUMAN GRUNTING.**

SOUND: **NAILS ON METAL.**

RICKOVER: They're at the door.

FARRAGUT: They can't get in. It's sealed tight.

SOUND: SOMETHING HEAVY SLAMMING INTO A METAL DOOR.

RICKOVER: Tell them that.

FARRAGUT: It was a city. Just... just enormous. Whoever built it wasn't... I don't believe they were human. The scale is just all wrong, and the shapes. I wish I could describe the shapes. Rickover, how would you--

RICKOVER: I wouldn't.

FARRAGUT: Even the imaging software had trouble rendering the sonar scans. Something about the place made the eye want to look away. You couldn't focus on one place for too long.

RICKOVER: It made sounds.

FARRAGUT: Yes. We all heard it. We all described it in different ways, but we were all certain it was the same sound. I remember thinking I heard a children's choir.

RICKOVER: I heard buzzing, like a gigantic swarm of bees. You heard singing?

FARRAGUT: Not exactly. More like the echo of singing.

RICKOVER: Whatever it is, I can still hear it every now and then. It's like it's mocking us.

FARRAGUT: No, not mocking. When I hear it I feel like it's calling me home. And then when it's gone I realize... we may be dead men, but it could have been worse.

RICKOVER: Yeah. It could have been worse.

FARRAGUT: So. The city. The main architectural feature was a massive pyramid structure, centrally located. It dwarfed the other pyramids. For that matter, it dwarfed the Great Pyramid at Giza.

RICKOVER: Doctor Leonard had a word for it.

FARRAGUT: He did. The Chief Science Officer called it the Ziggurat. It had five main levels, each approximately forty meters in height. The top level had four towers like spikes that extended from the corners. The structure was so large we were able to navigate between the spikes and hover directly over the top of the Ziggurat.

RICKOVER: And that's where everything went to shit.

SOUND : SEVERAL GUTTERAL GROWLS.

FARRAGUT: I never should have looked. I wish I hadn't. It just happened to be my shift in the keel-side observation bubble when we passed through those towers. Just luck I guess. I tried to tell myself that the same thing would have happened no matter whose shift it was. If it was somebody else, I might be dead already, or... or...

RICKOVER: Or you could be one of the poor bastards scraping at the hatch right now.

FARRAGUT: I still don't even know what I saw. There was a shaft that went straight down, into the Ziggurat. Into pitch black. I didn't see anything, but the moment we were directly above it--

RICKOVER: The whole ship felt it.

FARRAGUT: There was a surge, like an unexpected burst of static on an otherwise clear signal. I thought, and several crewmen reported, that the electronics cut out for a split second, but nothing registered in the telemetry. At the time nobody thought twice about it. Nobody noticed anything strange until sonar tried pinging the center shaft to find out how deep it went. They got nothing. No echo. We tried a few times to get a reading, but nothing changed. All I can say for sure is that the shaft extends far below the lowest level of the Ziggurat. Sediment may have buried another level or two below what we saw, but the shaft goes far deeper than that. Below the ocean floor. God only knows how deep that thing goes. To the center of the earth, for all I know.

RICKOVER: Straight down to hell.

FARRAGUT: However far down it goes, there is one thing I am sure of: There is something evil down there. If I had to guess, I would say the Ziggurat was built to contain it, to keep it from polluting the world. The shaft must be like an exhaust, venting its darkness into the

ocean so the whole place doesn't explode from the pressure. And we swam right through it.

SOUND: METAL UNDER STRESS. RIVETS POPPING.
MORE WATER RUSHING.

FARRAGUT: Rickover, where--

RICKOVER: Just passed seven-twenty, sir.

FARRAGUT: Thank you. Okay. After we passed over the top of the Ziggurat, I was relieved at the observation bubble by Doctor Leonard. I remember he patted me on the back as we switched places. It's close quarters anywhere on board, but getting in and out of the bubbles are a particularly tight fit. Anyway, that was it. That pat on the back. I think that's where it started.

RICKOVER: Wait. What? What's that mean?

FARRAGUT: I was there, in the bubble. I stared straight down into it. And it... I think in that moment it passed something to me, and when Doctor Leonard touched me, I passed it on to him.

RICKOVER: No way. You saw what happened to him, what he did to Jensen and Phillips. Jesus, he handcuffed them to the railing, sliced their bellies open with a surgical knife, and literally tangled their intestines together. They were alive for a lot of it.

FARRAGUT: I know. I saw what was left of them after we got that hatch open.

RICKOVER: It was Doctor Leonard who spread that... whatever it was to the rest of the crew. If you had it, why didn't you go crazy like the rest of them?

FARRAGUT: I think I'm a carrier.

RICKOVER: A what?

FARRAGUT: I think it picked me, when I looked down at it. It wants me to spread it, as far and wide as it can go. I can feel it trying to... to urge me.

SOUND: A CROWBAR BEING LIFTED OFF A GRATED METAL FLOOR.

RICKOVER: Sir, I will beat your head in with this crowbar, so help me God.

FARRAGUT: Rickover, if I show any signs of turning into one of them, I order you to do exactly that. You hear me? We may only have a few minutes left, but by God I intend to spend every one of them as myself. Understood?

PAUSE.

RICKOVER: Yes sir.

SOUND: METAL UNDER STRESS. MORE RIVETS POPPING.

FARRAGUT: Not much longer now.

SOUND: MORE POPPING. GLASS BREAKING.

SOUND: ENGRAGED GROWLING. SCRAPING OF CLAWS AGAINST METAL.

RICKOVER: Better finish what we came here for.

FARRAGUT: Right. Crewman Rickover and I are the last two crew members of Deep Submergence Vessel NR-2. I do not say survivors. Between the madmen at the door and the pressure of the deep ocean, I do not see any way out of our predicament. But we are agreed on one thing. If anyone should find this recording, run. Get as far away from these coordinates as fast as you possibly can. What lies buried here must stay buried. It is ancient. It is evil. And if it gets loose, the only result I can imagine is, quite literally, hell on earth.

SOUND: THE EXTERIOR OF THE VESSEL STARTS COLLAPSING UNDER THE PRESSURE. THE SOUND OF BENDING METAL BECOMES CONSTANT. THE HOWLS FROM THE OTHER SIDE OF THE HATCH INCREASE.

FARRAGUT: That is why we have made the choice to remain here, on the ocean floor. I depressurized the keel-side observation bubble--

RICKOVER: What?

FARRAGUT: --allowing it to collapse and flood the compartment, and destroyed the controls for the diving planes--

RICKOVER: You destroyed--

FARRAGUT: --assuring that we will not be able reach the surface.

RICKOVER: You son of a bitch. You said the captain did it when the sickness took him. We could have escaped. Even with the flooded compartment--

FARRAGUT: That's what it wants! It wants us to get out! It wants us to carry it out into the world!

RICKOVER: I could have gotten out! I'm not infected!

FARRAGUT: We can't take that chance.

RICKOVER: Oh Jesus. You... I should kill you. I'm gonna kill you! I'm gonna--

SOUND: A VALVE EXPLODES.

RICKOVER SCREAMS AS SHRAPNEL SHREDS HIM. METAL AND PLASTIC CLATTERS EVERYWHERE AS WATER SPRAYS INTO THE ROOM UNDER INTENSE PRESSURE.

FARRAGUT RUSHES TO FINISH HIS THOUGHTS AS THE VESSEL DISINTEGRATES AROUND HIM.

FARRAGUT: This is First Lieutenant David Farragut of the Deep Submergence Vessel NR-2, date One December Two Thousand Fourteen, time unknown, coordinates uncertain, located between the Udintsev and Eltanin fracture zones. If you find this recording, get as far away from

this location as fast as you can. Do not, I repeat, do not approach the structures situated southeast of this position. Stay away. I repeat, stay away. This is First Lieutenant David Farragut of the--

SOUND:

THE HULL COLLAPSES IN AN IMPLOSION OF METAL, GLASS AND WATER.

END.

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