

Andrew Knott's heavy footstep landed with a *thud* against the old wood of the harbour. The night was dark, so dark even the moon seemed to hide away from it. A low mist blanketed the sleepy town and oil lamps illuminated orange orbs through the dense fog, guiding the way like lighthouses at sea. Andrew took a long drag of his cigarette. It hissed as the burning embers were pulled through the stale tobacco. The high tide grasped at the rotting posts holding the jetty up and creaked further as Andrew finally shifted his entire weight off the ancient fishing boat.

"Follow the road up," the voice of Captain Abernathy croaked. Andrew twisted slightly, his eyes peered under the brim of his hat, to assess the old Captain. The only man brave enough, foolish enough, or desperate enough, to take Andrew to Swifts Cove. Abernathy's eyes darted back and forth across the harbour, his hands clenching the railing of his small craft. In the oppressive darkness, Andrew noted Abernathy's tension. The captain continued, "You'll do well to not stray off the road, do you hear me?" He quickly lifted his hand and reached over the railing, gesturing with his fingers. "The rest of the money. Now."

Andrew rummaged in his jacket pocket with a gloved hand, reaching for his wallet. He said, "What aren't you telling me?"

"I told you plenty about not coming here," the captain said. "It's you that chose not to listen."

Andrew took out two hundred pounds from his wallet and handed it over. Abernathy snatched it from his hands and tucked it into his sleeve. Andrew said, "You'll be here in two days? Midnight sharp?"

"I'll be here," the weathered man said as he straightened his shoulders. "Will you?"

Andrew winked and took another drag of his cigarette. "You have so little faith."

Abernathy shook his head, "You're a fool." He didn't waste any time with goodbyes. He stepped away from the railing and steered the ship out. Andrew watched as the boat disappeared into the misty night, the boat's wake lapping at the nearby breakwater.

The town of Swifts Cove lay at the end of a long gully, the seemingly quaint town was protected from the unrelenting torrent of the Atlantic Ocean by tall cliffs and overlapping layers of breakwater walls, with gaps just large enough for a fishing boat to navigate. One gravel road

meandered through rows of pristine cottages and workshops; all built with dark grey stone and black slate roofs. A few boats bobbed in the harbour, their old wood groaning as if in pain.

Andrew's cigarette came to a regretful conclusion. With a sigh he pulled it from his lips and dropped it to the jetty, grinding his toe into it for good measure. He began his long walk into the mouth of the village.