

THE SECRET OF DRULEA COTTAGE

by Claire Kohler

Excerpt

“Capitão! Senhor Mendes! Come quick!” A sailor appeared in the doorway, his eyes distraught. “Silva went overboard!”

“Show me!” Santiago followed the sailor out, not bothering to check if Costa came too.

A monstrous storm the likes of which he’d never seen was swirling directly above the São Nicolau. Lightning descended in vicious bolts while giant black clouds blocked out all sunlight. Waves rocked the ship back and forth, making it almost impossible to stay upright. The mainmast started to bend; it wouldn’t be long before it collapsed.

Santiago gripped the side of the ship and made his way forward—

But something hit him from behind, propelling him toward the mast—

CRACK!

Santiago was on his back, trying to scramble out of the way, but he couldn’t quite move fast enough. The top half of the mast crashed down, landing on his right leg.

He cried out as pain tore through his body. It was so intense that he felt his mind swimming, drifting in and out of consciousness. He tried to pull his leg out, but it wouldn’t budge.

Santiago was trapped. “H-Help...”

Suddenly a silhouette appeared directly above him. Santiago’s heart leaped—

But then a pistol was in his face. With what was left of his strength, Santiago willed his eyelids to stay open. If this is to be my final moment, I’m going to make sure I look my killer in the eye.