

# FRUIT OF THE POISONOUS TREE

by Norm Harris

## EXCERPT

Fay turned and descended the ladder to the waiting boat. She dug deep into her soul to gather what courage she now carried with her to the dark and foreboding place known to all seafarers as “Davy Jones’ Locker.”

The frigid night air slapped her face as the small boat raced across the flat surface of the night water; sea spray soaked her face and hands. She squinted and fixed her gaze on the wall of black now standing before her. I’m going to need severe beauty salon time when I get back to civilization, she thought.

Shortly after, the boat arrived at the prescribed dive location. The dive team donned their facemasks and tested their gear—then, one by one, the divers rolled backward from the boat and into the water. Fay was last to leave the safety of the small boat.

The cold salt water stung her skin momentarily, until the thin layer of water between her skin and her wetsuit warmed to a tolerable temperature. She bobbed on the surface for a moment, then flicked on her underwater torch. Fay then slipped beneath the water’s surface and began her descent toward the bottom.

The wreck was ninety feet below. The Carr came to rest upright on the edge of a reef. The ship had not completely settled and was subject to shifting with each tide change. All good reasons for her to exercise extreme caution.

Nothing could have prepared Fay for the frightening feeling she experienced as she struggled to see and gain some sense of direction. She could tell she was sinking, but only because the luminous dial of her depth gauge so indicated. Following the eerie flickering lights of the three torches preceding her, she suppressed her fear and the feeling of claustrophobia by thinking of those people nearest to her heart.

Occasionally, the glow cast by the divers' torches below her would momentarily disappear. She supposed—prayed—it was perhaps Romeo or Juliet passing between her line of sight and the torches, temporarily interrupting the beams of light, rather than a predator.

Fay grew fascinated by the many air bubbles emitted by the divers, reflected in the light of their torches' eerie glow. Like a surreal field of vapor flowers, they appeared and disappeared as they slowly wobbled toward the surface. Fay reached for a bubble but instead found it to be a jellyfish, not a bubble as she had first thought.

Fay stopped sinking. Although she could not see it, she assumed they had reached the wreck. She brought her wrist to within inches of her face to check the luminous reading on her depth gauge. Eighty-seven feet.

She strained her eyes in a vain attempt to see through the black water. Fay may as well have been swimming in a cup of Seattle's Best Coffee. All she could see was the light from the torch she held in her hand. She experienced complete disorientation. No up, no down. Someone, Andrew Lawrence perhaps, grasped her wrist. He was dragging her somewhere. She saw a deck rail, then a deck, and finally passed through a hatchway. They were now inside the Carr. There was only one light ahead of her—Andrew's.