

IN THE MIST

By

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Astoria is known for its rich history and colorful townfolk. The city has grown from an unassuming fishing village to a vibrant port of call that welcomes travelers from all over the world. Being a port town, it is common to see cruise liners, cargo ships, and fishing boats come and go with the tide.

It was Sunday and Astoria was buzzing at full capacity with tourists and locals. The Sunday market was bustling with shoppers enjoying the unusually warm weather. The Riverfront Trolley bell could be heard throughout downtown. It was a perfect day in Astoria, and everything seemed right in the world. But just like the tide turns, so would this day. In fact, something was about to happen and no one was prepared.

Amelia removed her apron and walked outside of the Buoy Beer Company to join her husband on her lunch break. She noticed that Edgar looked puzzled as he nursed his IPA on the riverfront deck. "You want another pint?" Amelia kissed his cheek.

"Hey, babe. Look at the mist coming in. It's moving too quickly." A mist approaching Astoria was not uncommon at all, but this mist was something quite different. Amelia turned and looked over her shoulder toward the towering historic Megler Bridge just in time to see it disappear completely within a thick soupy fog that was fast approaching. It was a wall of darkness coming to erase the sunny day.

"Whoa. Where did that come from?" Amelia grew concerned.

"I have no idea. I've never seen anything like it."

In the short amount of time it took for Amelia to turn back to Edgar, the mist was already upon them. The chilly air pierced their bones. Amelia hugged herself and briskly rubbed her bare arms futilely trying to create warmth.

"C'mon, babe. Let's get inside." Edgar stood up and put his arm around her.

Amelia and Edgar were not alone in their rush for cover. Within seconds, the town was engulfed in a zero-visibility, freezing soupy muck.

The Sunday market came to a standstill as people struggled to see one foot in front of their faces. Dogs seemed especially upset by the phenomenon and soon people began to panic along with their furry friends. A woman screamed, then another, "My purse! Someone took my purse!"

"Hey, stop! Who was that?" Another man yelled as someone took the hat right off his head.

“Oh, no! My Kettle Korn!”

“My Coffee!”

The train whistle at Fort George Brewery blasted repeatedly as the downtown area was engulfed in chaos. All one could hear was shrieks and shouts for blocks as people were robbed of their valuables and personal belongings. The Glam Tram’s disco music echoed in the distance as it appeared to be circling around Exchange and Commercial street.

“Someone took my glasses!”

“Hey, my wallet!”

Back at Buoy Beer, it was the same disorder. Even though the doors were closed, the fog crept in thick as molasses. The sound of plates smashing and people yelling filled the restaurant. The deafening sound of bottles breaking made Amelia and Edgar clasp their hands over their ears as they huddled together behind the bar. Just like the market, people in the restaurant were being relieved of their belongings.

“Hey, my watch!” One man yelled.

“My beer, it’s gone!” Another yelled.

It was total pandemonium all over town. As the panic set in, people began grabbing at the air trying to catch the mysterious thieves in the act. Men were fighting each other thinking they had caught the person stealing from them. A woman clutched her bag of fresh produce, but it was no use. Shopkeepers and market vendors struggled to save their products that seemed to just fly away.

The screaming and chaos ensued for almost a half of an hour until every church bell in town mysteriously began to ring. In Astoria, that’s a lot of bells. As the ringing bells faded, the pillaging stopped just as fast as it started. The ominous pea soup fog retreated as the sun burned through revealing that the city was in shambles. In the crowded market, people were lying in the street huddled together. The fighting men instantly released each other realizing they had been fighting with friends and neighbors, not thieves.

“My liquor, it’s all gone!” yelled Lawrence from Pilot House Distilling.

“My bags! They took all of my bags!” Nicholas Wheeler shouted.

“The cash box is missing!” cried Cyndi Mudge.

People were in shock, turning in circles, confused by the destruction surrounding them. The thieves had vanished as fast as they had appeared. It seemed that no one was spared by the mysterious pillagers. They stole more than just jewelry; they stole a child’s doll, a boy’s ice-cream, a dog’s collar. They even stole a pair of dentures. No, these thieves left no soul untouched, but who could do this?

“It’s terrorists,” one man yelled.

“No, it’s the Russians! It has to be,” another yelled.

The truth was nobody had a clue of what had happened.

As the fog slowly faded away from Buoy Beer and toward the open ocean, Edgar and Amelia crept out from their hiding place. "Look, it's a ship. A pirate ship." A boy pointed to the water. Everyone turned following the boy's outstretched finger but saw nothing. Edgar hurried to the door leading outside to the riverfront deck.

"Edgar, stop! Don't go out there," Amelia pleaded.

He opened the door and looked west toward the Megler Bridge. "I see it. It is a ship." Amelia cautiously went to Edgar's side and held onto him still shaking from the frosty mist. "Look, it's right over there." Edgar pointed.

"I see it. It is a pirate ship," Amelia said. Edgar and Amelia could just make out the stern of a great ship that seemed to be riding the wake of the fog.

"I can see her name," Edgar said.

"Who's name?"

"The name of the ship's."

"What does it say?"

"It says, The Merry Pranksters, San Francisco Bay."

The reports flew in like yellow jackets in the summer. The police were inundated with reports of stolen items and a mysterious ship that disappeared with the mist. People demanded justice, but none was found. Reports were taken, and an official investigation ensued. In the end, there was no record of a ship called the "Merry Pranksters" out of San Francisco Bay. Insurance claims were made, and the people of Astoria moved on. But every now and then when the fog gets thick, locals get a little nervous and pay extra care to their wallets and purses. The ship was never seen again and though theories have been made, no one has ever been able to explain what exactly happened that summer day. All except Edgar.

"Dude, it's totally Aliens."

The end