

The Assistant
By Owen Leavitt

I took the job as a lighthouse keeper at Cape Elizabeth light because I was a major introvert. I always wanted to just stay away from people, so this was the perfect job for me. But the lighthouse was much taller than it looked from shore. I always thought it was average sized, but it was 129 feet tall.

I was also afraid of heights.

The house next to it was dark. No lights were on anywhere except for the lantern I was holding.

Someone looking at the tiny island from the shore about ½ a mile away would see the lantern.

The night was completely still. No clouds. No wind. I knew I should get the light up and running, so I took out my keys and unlocked the door to the house. The only way to get into the lighthouse was to enter the house and walk down a tight hallway that leads to it.

I walked up the long, winding staircase that leads to the light. Each step was a grid, so you could see all the way down to the floor on your way up. I have always been afraid of heights, so this was not a good thing.

And, to add to that, the lighthouse seemed taller yet again when you're actually in it. I decided that I didn't really want to fall and die, so I did my work quickly. Clean the light, oil the clockwork, trim the wick, leave. I was up there for about 30 minutes and I already wanted to go to bed. There was only one way to fix such a problem, so I headed for the kitchen.

I knew asking the old keeper to prepare coffee before I got there was a good idea. It was bitter coffee, but it was better than nothing. *Back to work, I suppose.* I finished my duties, following a fairly strict schedule of doing this and that.

I went to bed at about 11:00 that night. I fell onto the old, moldy mattress and fell asleep instantly.

I was going to get an assistant lighthouse keeper in a few days. I was always an introvert, so it wasn't completely ideal, but I needed the help. I decided that I should look at the good things; I was going to get help, and that even if I did get lonely, I would have *someone* to chat with.

I fell out of the covers and onto the floor the next morning. I pulled myself up and got dressed. Stumbling into the kitchen, I drank some coffee and had eggs for breakfast. I needed to go back to shore and get the rest of my belongings, since my books were all still at my old house, along with some other things.

I squeezed through the tight hallway and climbed up the awful stairs to check the light before I left. It all seemed fine for now. I headed back down. I went outside only to be greeted by a huge gust of freezing cold wind. I trekked to my rowboat and climbed in.

I decided that a jacket might have been a good idea. It was definitely below 30 degrees. I just rowed as fast as I could. But it was at least nice to be alone.

I made my way to my old apartment and stuffed my books into 6 different trash bags. The rest of my things fit into one bag. So with my stuff all packed, I made several boat trips to get it all onto the island. It took 3 trips to move it all.

Once back at the lighthouse, I had to put all of the books onto the shelves. It was a good thing it was the middle of a clear day. I didn't really have to do much in terms of lighthouse duties, so I decided to dedicate this day to cleaning.

It took 6 hours to put all of the books onto the shelves. I flopped down onto my bed and stared up at the blank ceiling. I knew the supply ship was coming tomorrow. It would give me the supplies I needed to get through the first month or so. But it was also bringing the assistant lighthouse

keeper. I knew I needed the help. Nights were hard work; maintaining the light, watching for ships, keeping yourself from dying of boredom. It could have been a great thing. It could have been something I was looking forward to. But it wasn't.

Cathlene used to go to my school. She was one of the popular kids. As you might know, popular kids have to be the best. And being the best apparently means being really mean to everybody but the other “cool” kids. So, in other words, me. They were mean to me. Especially Cahtlene. She would always push me around and subject me as a “non-cool” kid. It didn't feel good.

When she arrived the next day, I wanted to barf. I saw the cruise ship slowly approaching the island. I felt dizzy in that I had to spend the next few months on a small island with possibly my least favorite person.

I had to send the line down to let it hook onto the boat. I could see someone getting hooked into the line and she started getting hoisted up. It was definitely her.

I let out a sigh as she reached the island. I couldn't stop dreading the future months I knew had to live out. I would try to forget it afterwards. It would never have happened.

“Hello.” She said. I almost shivered as she spoke. That awful voice made me want to hurl either her or myself into the water.

I started pulling up the food that the supply ship brought. I knew I should say something back.

“Hi. You might remember me... I'm Cam Bridges.” I stated as plainly as I could.

“Nice to meet you, boss. I'm Maria Jackson.”