

# into the DEPTHS

a short story

by Amanda Zimmermann

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The deep water was murky and black; very little light could penetrate this far below the surface. Only the lights attached to the small one-man submarine could show him what secrets lay this far down. Fish and other sea life darted in and out of the light cones but the little craft pushed on. The radio beeped once and a man's voice came through the speaker.

"Looks good from here, Nathan. How are you doing?" He pushed a button on the steering panel.

"I've got a cramp starting in my thigh and an ache in my lower back that's going to take weeks of massage therapy to get out. But other than that I'm just peachy." He tried to shift slightly to alleviate the tight knot in his thigh but there was only so much space in *The Drifter*. He'd been stuck lying on his stomach for the last 45 minutes or so, guiding the little yellow craft into the depths of the Baltic Sea.

"Yeah, yeah. You're almost there. It should be 50 yards in front of you."

She loomed up out of the darkness and into the light of the submarine. A ghostly figure swathed in the grey of algae and silt. The figurehead of *La Adelina* seemed to burst forth from the seabed.

"Rainer, are you seeing this?" Nathan whispered, awestruck.

"My god, she's beautiful." The live feed back to the ship was being recorded. He pushed the little sub forward, moving around to the side of the ship. A giant hole marred the side of the hull. The darkness beyond the ragged edges of the hole was absolute.

"Run the scans. I want to get out there. Get my gear ready and tell the boys to suit up." He steered the sub around the ship, following Rainer's meticulous directions and within two hours he was back up on the surface. He jumped up the ladder onto the deck of the *Midnight Rider* as half the crew descended down to the sub. Rainer came out from below deck, sandy hair whipping in the wind.

"Paolo and Erik are ready to go." Nathan gripped Rainer's upper arms and shook him, his face gleeful.

"Dude, can you believe it?! All this time she's just been sitting here, waiting for us!" He released him and brushed past, heading into the cabin to change into his wetsuit.

"Do you want me to call Hannigan? He's been trying to reach you all morning." Nathan made a face.

"No. Wait, he'll just take the fun out of this." He pulled on the thick wetsuit, pulled the hood up around his head and zipped it.

"Let's do this."

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The way back down was slow going, having to stop often to get acclimated to the water pressure.

The ship was even more intimidating without thick glass separating them and Nathan reached a hand out to run it along the side of the hull. The ship was half buried in sand, cracked down the center, wooden planks sticking out at odd angles. The hull of the bow was where the hole was located and the trio approached this first. Erik held an underwater video camera, which he turned on now. Nathan and Paolo aimed high power flashlights into the ship, piercing the darkness. Wooden beams were mottled with algae growth and crustaceans becoming almost indiscernible from the ocean floor.

Nathan took the lead, slowly drifting into the belly of the ship, flashlight beam scanning side to side. Barrels, ropes, and other pieces of debris lay strewn about the sand but none of it held Nathan's attention. He was looking for a bigger prize, an alleged treasure of untold worth that the crew of *La Adelina* had been running away with.

He pushed on, eager to explore deeper in the ship and swam up through a square hole in the deck, into what was obviously the sleeping quarters. Several hammocks were still strung up,

drifting gently in the current kicked up by their swimming. At the end of the room Nathan could just make out the dark opening of a door. He swam towards it, stopping suddenly as his flashlight beam passed over something.

A skeleton lay sprawled out on the floor under layers and layers of silt, what was left of its clothing draped over the bones like a shroud. Nathan shuddered and passed it by, pressing on into the room beyond. In the corner of the small cabin was a chest tipped on its side, the lid thrown back small round discs strewn across the rough wood of the floor. He carefully brushed away the silt to reveal tarnished coins. His heart thudded with excitement and he fought to keep his breathing even and steady.

A small wooden box jutted up from the pile of coins. Nathan carefully picked it up, trying not to disturb too much of the silt around him. He scrubbed algae from the lid, revealing a series of markings that sent his excitement skyrocketing. The watertight seal seemed to be intact around the seam of the box but he wouldn't know if his long sought after prize was inside and safe until he reached the surface.

He dropped the box into the dive bag attached to his belt and turned to motion to Erik and Paolo. Neither of them were anywhere to be seen. They were supposed to stick together incase someone got stuck or lost. The radio in his ear crackled to life for the first time during the dive and Rainer's voice came through, thick with contempt.

"It was never about the ship, Nathan. Sorry about this." Nathan couldn't reply, but cold fear gripped his chest. He grabbed for his oxygen gauge in a panic. He'd been so excited to get back down to the ship that he hadn't bothered to check his tanks. His oxygen levels had been dropping much faster than they should have. He whipped his head around and could see a small but alarmingly steady stream of bubbles coming out of the top of his tank.

He looked down at the treasure that had absorbed the last year and a half of his life and turned his back on it. At least he had the box. He had to make it to the surface.

He might not.

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Thank you for reading my short story. If you enjoyed it, please take a moment to leave me a review; I love to read feedback.

Thanks!

Amanda Zimmermann

#### **About the author:**

Amanda Zimmermann came into this world the same way she is going out, screaming and covered in someone else's blood. Death situations aside, she spends her time until the untimely end writing novels, blogging about video games, comics, and entertainment, reviewing books on Tea for Three book Review, and co-hosting a podcast about being a couch potato. She has written two novels (unpublished), a host of fan fiction, is an active member of Archive of Our Own, and is currently assembling a practical encyclopedia of plants and herbs. Amanda currently lives in a town no one has heard of with three roommates, five cats, a snake, an army of fish minions, and one homicidal crayfish.

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