

**BENEATH THE PIER**

by

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EXT. PIER - DAY

A dozen or so people congregate by the pier entrance. A tour GUIDE, a nerdy young man wearing a 'Clearwater Ghost Tour' T-shirt and baseball cap, stands before the group.

GUIDE

Right, are we all here?

He checks everyone's gathered.

GUIDE

This stop on our tour is one of our most recent reported hauntings. I present to you - The Phantom of Clearwater Pier.

The guide beckons the group onto the pier.

GUIDE

Okay everybody, follow me.

He leads them along the boardwalk.

EXT. PIER END - DAY

Several fishermen are angling over the side of the pier.

GUIDE

Okay everybody, huddle up.

The group gathers in.

GUIDE

Over the last few years there has been an exceptionally high number of tragic and mysterious drownings within the vicinity of this pier. Most of the victims were competent swimmers who were suddenly overcome by the sea somehow, even during calm waters.

He gestures toward a fisherman.

## GUIDE

Local fishermen would have you believe it's the work of a sea witch.

(smirks)

But most others believe differently. For these bizarre drownings didn't start occurring until after the suicide of Claire Henderson.

He points towards a nearby beach front hotel.

## GUIDE

It's said that during her stay at the Hilton a few years ago, Mrs Henderson snuck out of the hotel in the dead of night, leaving a suicide note beside her sleeping husband. It's believed she then came to the end of this pier and jumped to her death.

The guide gestures toward the shore beside the pier.

## GUIDE

Her naked body was discovered the next morning, washed up on the shore beneath the pier. No one really knows why she did it or where she actually jumped from, but there's every chance it was from this very spot.

He points down to his feet.

## GUIDE

Nowadays people tend not to swim too close during the day, and they sure as hell stay well away after the sun goes down. For that is when many have claimed to have seen the figure of Claire Henderson, wandering in the shallows beneath the pier.

Most of the group look down at the decking.

The guide stamps his foot.

GUIDE

Right!

Some of the group jump with fright, then laugh it off.  
The guide grins to himself.

GUIDE

Next stop on our tour - the  
Capitol Royal Theatre. Okay  
everybody, back to the bus.

He leads the tour back along the boardwalk.

One of the group members hangs back. JOHN, a middle  
aged scruffy looking bloke with a scraggy beard, leans  
over the side and peers down at the sea below.

EXT. UNDER PIER - DAY

John is stood alone by the waters edge, staring out at  
the waves between the piers pillars.

His gaze briefly switches to the sandy shore beside  
him just before he walks off.

EXT. HOTEL - DAY

John approaches the Hilton Hotel.

The doorman opens the entrance for John to enter.

INT. LOBBY - DAY

John steps up to the front desk.

The RECEPTIONIST, an attractive young lady wearing a  
suited uniform, greets him with a welcoming smile.

RECEPTIONIST

Good afternoon Sir, how can I  
be of help?

JOHN

I'd like a room for the night.

He hands her a credit card.

RECEPTIONIST

All right, and will that just be you staying with us Sir?

John nods.

The receptionist busily types on a computer keyboard.

JOHN

Is room seventeen available?

RECEPTIONIST

I will just check that for you now. Bear with me for just one second.

She hits a few keys.

RECEPTIONIST

Yes it is. Would you like that room for your stay?

He doesn't reply, deep in thought.

RECEPTIONIST

Sir?

John snaps out of it.

JOHN

Yes. Please.

He waits while she works on the computer.

RECEPTIONIST

All right, that's all done for you now Sir.

She hands him a key card.

RECEPTIONIST

Check out is at eleven A.M. Enjoy your stay Mr Henderson.

JOHN

Thank you.

He walks away.

INT. SUITE - DAY

The door opens. John pauses before tentatively entering the luxurious suite, with its big T.V and king size bed.

He stands in the middle of the spacious room and looks around, reminiscing.

INT. BATHROOM - DAY

John pops his head around the door and switches the light on.

He glances around the deluxe bathroom with its modern fittings and large bathtub.

John switches the light off and leaves, closing the door behind him.

EXT. BALCONY - DAY

John opens the sliding door, steps out and takes in the stunning beach front view.

He looks toward the pier up along the beach.

John leans over the side and looks down at the drop below.

INT. SUITE - DAY

John sits on the edge of the bed. He checks the time. It's early afternoon.

He lays back, resting his head on the pillow. He rolls onto his side and stares at the empty space beside him.

EXT. BEACH - DUSK

John strolls toward the pier, collecting small pieces of driftwood along the way.

EXT. UNDER PIER - DUSK

John dumps the collected wood onto the sandy shore.

He sits and gazes out at the sea between the pillars.

EXT. UNDER PIER - NIGHT

John places another piece of driftwood onto a small fire he's got going.

He takes a photograph out of his pocket and stares at it in the palm of his hand.

A freak gust blows in from the calm sea, carrying with it a womanly whisper.

John intently stares out into the darkness.

He can just about see a hunched figure leaning against a pillar in the shallows.

John cautiously grabs a piece of burning driftwood and stands. He moves closer, shinning the fire light upon the figure.

It's a naked woman with her back turned to him. Strands of soggy sea grass are wrapped around her pale body and knotted into her dripping wet hair.

JOHN

Claire?

The figure doesn't react.

JOHN

Claire, it's me, John. Your husband.

He steps nearer.

JOHN

I can't believe it's really you. There's so much I want to say.

The figure wanders out to the sea beneath the pier.

JOHN

Claire, wait.

John follows her. He wades out into the water, holding the burning driftwood aloft.

John loses sight of her. He treads water, shinning the fire light all around him.

He spots her clutching onto a pillar further out.

John paddles closer.

JOHN

Claire, please don't go. I don't know how this is possible, but I need you to know how much I love you. How much I miss you every day, and how sorry I am for what I did.

He weeps.

JOHN

I didn't mean for it to happen. It was an accident. It's just that you could make me so mad sometimes. By the time I realized what I was doing, it was too late.

John breaks down.

JOHN

I'm sorry for drowning you in the bathtub and making it look like you'd killed yourself. You deserved so much better than that. I've wanted to confess so many times, but I'm a coward.

He reaches out to her.

JOHN

Can you ever forgive me?

John touches her shoulder. She instantly scrabbles around the pillar.

JOHN

No, wait.

He maneuvers around the pillar but she's gone.

JOHN

Claire!

He frantically searches for her, shinning the fire light all around.

JOHN

I'm sorry, Claire! Forgive me!  
Please, forgive me.

John weeps.

The top of her head suddenly emerges out of the water right in front of him. Her eyes just above the waterline, glaring at him.

John gasps. He stares back into her eyes. His face suddenly drops.

JOHN

You're not my wife.

The figure seizes John and yanks him down into the water, extinguishing the burning driftwood.

A cluster of air bubbles rise to the surface.

John and the figure are gone.

A photo of John and his wife on their wedding day washes up on shore beside the dying fire.

The figure in the water looks nothing like the woman in the picture.

The surf rolls in and out, returning the photograph to the sea.

**THE END**