

In A Pinch
by
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FADE IN:

EXT. DUTCH HARBOR - DAWN

A single fishing boat, the *In A Pinch*, is moored to the frost-covered dock, a hundred footer armed with a winch and loaded with empty crab pots.

Seagulls cry overhead as JANICE (40s), dressed in brand new fishing waders and a heavy hoodie, checks her watch.

6:45am. She takes one last look up the pier and sighs. Not a soul in sight.

She turns on her heel and unties a mooring rope.

EXT. IN A PINCH - DECK - DAY

The *In A Pinch* is on the high seas, rolling with the heavy waves. Janice, hoodie abandoned, struggles to pull a crab pot to the waiting loader.

She finally maneuvers the crab pot into place. Wiping sweat from her brow, she opens the pot door.

She fetches a mesh bag of fish parts from a steel cooler. Returning to the crab pot, she climbs halfway inside on her back and struggles to attach the bag's hook to the pot, grimacing as fish blood and slime drips on her face.

The hook finally catches. She shimmies out of the pot, disgusted, and wipes vigorously at her face with a cloth.

Janice closes the pot door and fastens it tight. She moves to the loader controls and pulls the lever.

Nothing happens. She tries again. Still nothing.

She checks that there's power. Green light. She tries again. Still nothing.

She looks around the loader. Under the loader. She shakes the crab pot.

She steps back to the controls, frustrated. She notices a green button on the panel and presses it. Nothing.

She holds the button and pulls the lever. The loader whooshes to life, dropping the crab pot into the water.

Janice celebrates her minor success with a double fist in the air. Then her face falls.

She picks up the line she was supposed to attach to the crab pot and looks over the edge after it, crestfallen.

LATER

Janice holds the button and pulls the lever. Another crab pot vanishes into the water, this time with a line attached.

TOOT-TOOT! A ship horn blasts. Startled, Janice tries to locate it.

The *Six Legged Freak*, chugs into her view. PEDRO (50s) scowls at her from the wheelhouse rail, cigarette between his tightly pursed lips.

PEDRO

You're wasting your time,
greenhorn. There's no crab in
these waters.

JANICE

Yeah? Well, where do I find them?

Pedro shakes his head sadly as the boat chugs by.

The ship is almost out of earshot. Janice leans over the railing and screams after it.

JANICE

Come on! It's not a competition!

She stares at the ship stern, then back at the line of floats behind her ship. She hangs her head.

INT. IN A PINCH - WHEELHOUSE - LATER

Janice sits in a comfortable swivel chair as she drives the ship forward. On the starboard side are heaps of electronics. An empty armchair in front of them is covered with open maps.

She peers at the sonar display and frowns at a large blob.

JANICE

A blob means there's something
there, right? So, is it crab?

(beat)

Maybe it's the last green captain
waving hello. What am I doing?

Janice rests her head on the steering wheel. Her radio suddenly crackles to life.

NOLAN (V.O.)

(over radio)

This is the *Stranger Danger* addressing the asshole creeping up on my pots. Please identify yourself so I can curse your head off properly. Over.

Janice snorts out a giggle. Then she sees the red of a crab pot buoy right in front of her. She spins the wheel hard to port, cringing as the buoy disappears below the high forecastle.

When she's sure the ship's clear, she kills the engine.

NOLAN (V.O.)

I hope to Christ you didn't just run over my line.

Janice sees a white ship well ahead of the buoys. She picks up the mic. She mouths words she doesn't have yet, trying to think of what to say, and presses the button.

JANICE

I'm sorry. I don't think I ran over it.

NOLAN (V.O.)

Please identify yourself, over.

JANICE

This is the *In A Pinch*.

(beat)

Over!

NOLAN (V.O.)

Never heard of ya. This here's my patch. If you dropped any pots here, better pick 'em up and move along. Over.

Janice looks at the pile of maps forlornly.

JANICE

I don't suppose you could point me in the right direction, could you?

NOLAN (V.O.)

South-south-east, about thirty klicks. All the crab you want there. Over and out.

Janice leaps from the chair to grab a map. She checks her instruments, gets her location, and jabs her finger on the map. Tracing a line south-south-east, she ends up at--

JANICE
Dutch Harbor. Terrific.

She throws the map and sinks to the floor, defeated.
Her head suddenly comes up to face the sonar screen.

JANICE
But that is crab, isn't it? So
that's what I'm looking for.

She hops back into the pilot seat and starts the engine.

EXT. BAR - NIGHT

A small bar sits alone on a corner. The weathered sign depicts a boat sinking behind the words *JUNE BUG DOWN*.

INT. BAR - NIGHT

The inside looks just as worn and faded. The long bar fills most of the space, the rest taken up by a few risky-looking tables and a jukebox that doesn't work.

Janice sits at the end of the bar with a half-empty glass of white wine, tired and miserable.

MARTHA (60s), brawny, weathered as her bar, sits on the stool next to her.

JANICE
Was it like this for you when you
started out?

MARTHA
It was a lot worse. No quotas,
every boat for themselves, and
lots more of them.

JANICE
Bet you didn't have any trouble
crewing up.

MARTHA
We'd already been doing this for a
long while. We didn't jump into
the captain's seat green.

JANICE

I know the boat. I'm not green.

MARTHA

Steering the boat isn't worth a damn if you don't know where to fish.

JANICE

That's the truth.

Janice takes a big gulp of her wine. The door opens and Pedro steps inside bundled in a heavy parka.

PEDRO

Weather's coming in.

He sees Janice and shakes his head.

PEDRO

Damn fool going out there on your own.

JANICE

Yeah, well, I didn't have much choice, did I?

Pedro sits at the other end of the bar. Martha gets up to fetch him a bottle of beer.

PEDRO

Just stay out of my way out there.

MARTHA

Wasn't that long ago you were the one having trouble crewing up.

PEDRO

I proved myself.

JANICE

That's all I'm trying to do.

PEDRO

We don't need more boats.

Pedro snorts in contempt and drinks his beer.

MARTHA

He's right about that. It's been a bad year for crab.

The door bursts open. NOLAN (40s), huge, burly, heavy overcoat dripping wet, storms in, thick beard unable to hide the scowl on his face.

He towers over Janice. She shrinks away from him.

NOLAN

You've got no business being out there. Stay the hell away from my boat, my pots, and my crew.

Nolan turns without waiting for a reply. He sits next to Pedro.

Martha refills Janice's glass.

MARTHA

Your pots are fine. No harm done, Nolan.

NOLAN

It's bad enough I got two greenhorns this season. I don't need some rookie jamming me up just because she got her daddy's boat.

Janice straightens up, disgust on her face.

MARTHA

You must be pretty drunk already to say something so stupid. I can't serve you.

NOLAN

Christ, Martha--

MARTHA

Go home, Nolan.

Nolan looks at Martha with disbelief. She doesn't budge. He gets off the stool and scowls mightily at Janice like it's her fault. He leaves without a word.

JANICE

You didn't have to do that. I can handle him.

MARTHA

I didn't do it for you. Henry deserves more respect than that.

PEDRO

Henry was your father?

JANICE

Did you know him?

PEDRO

He saved my ass a few years ago. I lost a bunch of pots in a storm and couldn't replace them. He loaned me some of his so I could finish out the season.

(beat)

I didn't know he had a daughter.

JANICE

He sent me away to study marine biology. I wanted to see the world, and he wanted me to be happy.

PEDRO

Why'd you come back?

JANICE

It didn't feel right to let four generations of fishing end with his death. I grew up here. Like it or not, fishing's in my blood.

Pedro raises his beer to that. He drains it and slaps money on the bar.

PEDRO

Listen. If I can fill my quota early, I'll send a couple of crew your way.

JANICE

Really? That would be amazing! Thank you!

MARTHA

Anyone else coming in tonight?

PEDRO

They're all still out. Me and Nolan were the only full holds.

MARTHA

Night, Pedro.

Pedro nods and leaves.

MARTHA

Looks like this is last call, hon. Can I get you one more?

JANICE

No thank you. I'm going back out
in the morning.

MARTHA

Good luck.

EXT. DUTCH HARBOR - DAWN

Janice stands in the biting wind staring up the empty dock. She checks her watch and sighs.

INT. IN A PINCH - WHEELHOUSE - DAY

Janice steers the boat away from the dock. Dark clouds fill the horizon. Waves already rock the boat.

She studies the conditions. Determined, she pushes the throttle forward.

LATER

Janice rides the rolling sea, expertly piloting the boat through the swells as she peers through the driving rain.

A flash of white catches her attention. The *Stranger Danger* appears between waves, drifting dangerously.

She picks up the radio mic.

JANICE

Stranger Danger, this is *In A Pinch*. Please respond.

She waits. No answer comes.

JANICE

Stranger Danger, you are drifting badly. Do you need assistance?

Still nothing. Janice hangs up the mic and heads for the drifting boat.

EXT. IN A PINCH - WHEELHOUSE - LATER

Janice stands at the railing, her rain slicker already soaking wet.

The *Stranger Danger* is directly ahead of her. Nolan steps out of the wheelhouse and waves frantically.

JANICE
 (shouting)
 You weren't answering the radio!

NOLAN
 (shouting)
 We lost all power! Nothing works!

JANICE
 Where are your crew?

NOLAN
 Below, strapped in case we roll!

Janice steps down to the--

DECK

She picks up the grapple used to retrieve pot buoys. She swings--

It clatters onto the deck of the *Stranger Danger*. Nolan attaches a heavy tow cable and Janice pulls it back to her ship.

INT. IN A PINCH - WHEELHOUSE - LATER

Janice casts off her rain hat and shakes her wet hair. She starts the engine and toots the horn twice.

Two flashes of light appear in the *Stranger Danger* wheelhouse.

Janice slowly throttles forward, turning to port. After a moment she boat lurches, and then she's moving forward, the *Stranger Danger* following behind.

LATER

The sea is calmer. Janice hums to herself as she steers towards the docks of Dutch Harbor.

The radio crackles.

NOLAN (V.O.)
 (over radio)
In A Pinch, this is the *Stranger Danger*. Come in.

Janice picks up the mic.

JANICE
Reading you loud and clear,
Stranger Danger. Over.

NOLAN (V.O.)
We've managed to get partial power
back. I just wanted to say thank
you. We were in a real bind. I'm
glad you were out there. Over.

Janice smiles proudly.

JANICE
So am I. Almost home. Over and
out.

NOLAN (V.O.)
Aye aye, Captain. Over and out.

EXT. IN A PINCH - DECK - LATER

Docked and alone once more, Janice cleans up from the
storm and makes sure everything is securely stowed.

She runs her fingers along the rough gouges the tow cable
left on the railing. She smiles.

JANICE
Well, Dad, I caught a big one
today.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

EXT. DUTCH HARBOR - DAWN

Janice stands alone on the dock once again. She checks
her watch.

She turns to board her boat when a figure comes into
view, walking towards her.

It takes a while before she can see it's Nolan.
Surprised, she moves to meet him.

JANICE
Nolan. Isn't your ship getting
repaired?

NOLAN

That's right. Since I can't take her out, I thought maybe you'd like me to crew with you today.

Janice is stunned. She doesn't know what to say.

NOLAN

You really saved us yesterday. And you sure can drive a boat. You're really serious about taking over your family tradition, and I respect that too. So how about now I teach you how to fish for crab?

JANICE

Yes! Thank you!

Nolan holds his hand out and she shakes it hard. They climb aboard the ship together.

EXT. DUTCH HARBOR - LATER

A flyover of the *In A Pinch* as it makes its way towards deeper water, and then endless ocean as we--

FADE OUT.

THE END