

For Those In Peril On The Sea

Colin M. Drysdale

Pictish Beast Publications (Mar 21, 2013)

Softcover \$14.99 (350pp)

978-0-9568974-7-3

Imagine returning from an ocean voyage to discover that the world has suddenly been overtaken by vicious creatures bent on killing you. Imagine discovering that they had once been your friends, your neighbors, even members of your family. This is the terrifying world that Rob and his seafaring companions come home to in Colin M. Drysdale's compelling post-apocalyptic thriller, *For Those in Peril on the Sea*.

After weeks of traveling together, crewmates Rob, Bill, Jon, and CJ are anxious to step back on shore and get a little distance from one another. At the first stop, however, they are shocked by signs of bloody struggles. Their confusion soon turns to horror as they discover the cause: a genetically altered vaccine has produced a virus that spreads with unimaginable speed, turning people into brutal, merciless killers. With the number of infected far outweighing the number of unaffected survivors, Rob and his companions quickly learn that their only chance to remain alive and uninfected is to flee back to the safety of the sea.

Drysdale wastes no time on filler prose or throwaway dialogue, producing a novel that progresses at a consistently fast pace, expertly setting the frantic and often panicked tone of this frightening new world. As they try to avoid deadly run-ins with the masses of infected on shore, the survivors also face challenges ranging from storms and personality conflicts to the simple need for fresh food. Through it all, the ever-present threat of death or infection hovers nearby, punctuated by the moans of the infected on shore. The author's ability to maintain an atmosphere that conveys a constant sense of quiet terror is impressive and effective.

Characterization is convincing and thorough, and readers will become invested in the fates of the desperate survivors. Subtleties of personality in a range of characters from innocent children to fanatical survivalists are conveyed with realistic detail. Main protagonist Rob's evolution from aimless wanderer to rather reluctant leader is portrayed well, and the author provides Rob with moments of personal insight that add depth to his character as well as to the story line: "The world had changed, the rules had changed, and because of my wasted life, I'd been in a position to survive and they, with their fancy homes, their stock market portfolios and their respectable jobs, had not."

For Those in Peril on the Sea is not a mere imitator of currently popular zombie books and films. Drysdale's novel proves different and superior in concept as well as content. The infected are unusual in ways that make them seem terrifyingly real, and the idea of the survivors being trapped offshore is an imaginative and effective twist. While some scenes in the book can be graphic and brutal, Drysdale never allows them to become gratuitous, and each disturbing moment serves a purpose in the plot. The tone of barely suppressed terror is emphasized by the author's willingness to write as ruthlessly as his story demands: readers will quickly learn that even those who seem most deserving of survival can quite easily fall victim to the infected.

Drysdale is a marine biologist whose knowledge of life on the sea adds authenticity and depth to his story. *For Those in Peril on the Sea* expertly grabs hold of readers' emotions, taking them on a thought-provoking journey from horror and despair to hope. The author maintains a comprehensive website to support the novel, and appreciative readers will be gratified to know that he is hard at work on his next book.

JEANNINE CHARTIER HANSCOM (March 19, 2013)

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