

FAIRY DUST
BY: JOHN P. HAWORTH

I recall the salt on my skin, sprinkled on by the humid air. It was that time of year when the clouds would form astronomical kingdoms in the sky as they mixed with the blood of the dying sun. We were headed for the *USS Tiger*. A simple wreck if you knew your way around a junkyard. The *Tiger* wasn't a long voyage, especially on such a sublime summer evening coupled with the speed of the *Miss Lauren*. I envy myself as I recall this night, I long for a deep breath of an ocean breeze while in these mountains.

Night dives were always a thrill, especially with lobster on the menu. My brother, who was a former captain aboard the *Lauren*, decided to join me. As soon as we were able to enter the water, we began our descent into the abyss. My pupils dilated and absorbed as much light as they could, which was only what my battery-powered light provided me. To my left, my rear, and my right there was only blackness.

As we descended upon the *USS Tiger* our lights reflected the red rust and army green of the Atlantic shipwreck. Lobster antennas towered out of cracks in the iron. Within minutes we each possessed a lobster in our catch bag. Moving to the edge of the wreckage, while peering across the seafloor, my lantern caught an eerie sight. Like a caravan of ghosts, a school of flounder shook themselves out of their graves and began a quiet wander toward the *Tiger*. They were on the move, on the hunt. My fists began to clench around my pole spear with great angst. I gave a small flutter and began my stalk. Their colors began to camouflage into an auburn brown as they hovered onto the wreck. In the corner of my eye, an enormous flounder appeared and I began to shadow his movements. His eyes darted in confusion as my light approached. My imagination stirred and I began to hear the faint sizzling of oil in a pan. In my mind I anxiously

grabbed thick cuts of fish, sprinkled them with batter and of course Old Bay and dipped them into the hot oil. I began to droll onto my mother's tile floor and then I realized the droll was also filling my regulator. I could taste his ability to cure my hunger along with a basket of fries. The time was now and I began to push back my spear until I noticed something was terribly wrong.

With a small laugh I realized the spear was still resting in my garage at home. In my excitement and blood thirst I had forgotten my earlier decision to leave it behind and merely dreamed it present in hopes to catch dinner. Predator and predator exchanged eyes one last time as I passed the colossal escapee. I imagined him laughing at me, with a deep baritone voice echoing from the deep chambers of his old yet wild heart.

After checking our air, my brother and I decided to begin our ascent. As we inched our way to the surface we extinguished our lights in hopes to catch a familiar sight; tiny creatures that flicker a pulse of phosphorous light at the slightest touch. I shook the anchor line, causing all the creatures resting on the line to emit a flurry of green light, providing me with a glowing trail that lead all the way to the surface. I noticed there was a considerable amount this evening, more than I had ever seen. I gazed around and my heart seized with everything around me as I witnessed an electrifying spectacle. As if I were a giant in a galaxy of stars, these little creatures, so critical to the sea, surrounded me in astonishing numbers. The darkness was fading as a blanket of fairy dust draped over me. I gazed down at my hand. I curled my fingers back and forth towards my palm, gazing in awe, it appeared as if I had just been given supernatural powers. I could only see what appeared to be a human hand surging with green light. My eyes moved from my wrist, to my elbow, then shoulder, chest and then to my whole

body. I could not make out the human stitching or worldly logos of my gear; nothing. Only a vibrant display of electric greens, a collection of fairy dust into the exact shape of my body, and in this world where gravity counted for less, I was floating. As if I belonged on a torn-out page of *Peter Pan*, the fairy dust began to give me flight. I was a terrestrial being, endowed with a supernatural ability to fly in the aquatic atmosphere.

Slowly I began to hear drums coming from somewhere in the dark. I looked up and a lightning bolt's flash echoed through the ripples of the surface. I began to notice the current had shifted. A sure sign it was time to go, along with the lightning bolt. In admiration yet sorrow I watched the impenetrable green blanket unfold from around my body, shifting back into the form of a galaxy, which then spread back into the infinite universe of the deep. My time in euphoria was over. With a deep breath of dry air from my artificial gills, I looked back towards the surface and began my return to Earth.

Whether it be as a biologist or a simple fisherman, my sails will always be set towards the horizon of the sea. Though but one among many interactions with the ocean, my experience on the night diving the *USS Tiger* was by far the most mesmerizing. I intruded into a world which was not my own, where I was at the complete mercy of the sea. Yet in my intrusion, under the comfort of a glowing blanket, I felt at home and welcomed. I know this experience only happens too so many people and but so often, and for this I shall remain in the sea's debt forever.