Deucalion

Lyall lies below, his head fevered; we have set him up for rest. Binding him tightly with cloth, a bastion against the nightmares that take his body, he lies in a hammock, receiving visitors and rations often. We treated him with due respect; Lyall was once one of the best men on the ship. In the depths of hell, as we battled the cruel and restless children of the unwed maiden, he would be the first to take to the masts, the first to secure them, fearless. Over the last few weeks, however, that bravery has evaporated; the man has hollowed out. Whatever had slept beneath his skin has woken, wearing his face, keeping his eyes. Seymour had said, witnessing one of his fits, that the man known as Lyall had long since perished. Of that, I cannot be sure. Lyall was a brother, and until his body fails, he will keep his place at our table, a stool at the westward waterhole.

Miss Ruby, perhaps the sight of her would bring Lyall back to us; he always was fond of her, tipping her far more than a lowly deckhand could afford. Both of them were young. I had reckoned someday Lyall would depart from us. As good of a sailor that he was, his body was limber, and until recently, his mind was sharp enough to lead a normal life. No one going into this job retained their intellect; the great seaborn winds stripped it from you. It gives me comfort, thinking of such simplicities, indulging in false futures' numbing medicine. I have aged prematurely, I believe, another symptom of the fair maiden's touch; her betrothal kiss stole years away from you.

I wish we had been able to get him out of the hull, Lyall, that is. In the end, he had escaped our panicked eyes; in the great rumbling of the vessel, we had neglected one of our own. Later that night, Seymour affirmed his prophecy. With his last few breaths, he laughed, telling me that I too was gone, that the crew was doomed from departure. I hadn't thought much of it then; it was the words of a dying man, construed by the depressive mania of inescapable death, twisted by the chattering of teeth. Everything had gone wrong, but that reality failed to proceed that of Lyall's death, for me at least. Boats capsize, and ours was surely in no condition for what we pushed her to do. She never was, and we knew that, the lot of us, ready for any extended seaborne journey. It was only a matter of time until it was to happen, an inevitability. Perhaps that's what Seymour had meant, that we, upon departing, were already dead. If so, I am glad. Lyall had been able to spend his last night with Ruby then; I had noticed how he lingered around the bar after we had departed. For me, it wouldn't make a difference. I had intended to spend my last few hours alive doing exactly that which I had before the great mortal hourglass had become visible.

Sit, and wait. That's all this life was, I can say, having experienced all that it has to offer. Perhaps that's what drew me to this cursed profession, the promise of an end, the illusion of security within the bowels of a wooden deathtrap. Maybe not. I had always loved the sea. Loved, that's the word I write now, thinking of Lyall, of Seymour, of the many others who drowned that day. I had loved them all, my brothers; it was the only choice I had. Through association, sharing the waves' roughness and the smooth swashing of mead, they had attached themselves onto me. It was no conscious effort, just another prevalence of life. Parties sparser and more disjointed than they had done the very same before. But they too, after laying claim to my soul, had drowned in the inconsequentiality of life's disparity.

Their transgressions, their assertions of ownership upon my somber self were misplaced, I reckon. I questioned their choice but let it sweep me away time and time again anyhow, keeping to my ways, even as the current of their herd's direction pushed me along. Now, dying, waiting for my bride to take my flesh, I reflect on myself; the dead have been given enough homage for now. Before departing for the sea, I would spend my days in a tub, soaking my skin with salted water, saturating myself. Once on the vessel, I took to praying for higher ground. Being an aged chef, I excused myself

from all but the direst of interactions with the ocean that stretched beyond all horizons. Mark my words, for in hindsight, I see my actions and seek no comfort in lies; I thought myself to be akin to Deucalion.

A creature born from heavenly figures, I lived as an entity encompassed and entrenched by what had been impressed upon me, the land, and what I was damned to shoulder, the sea. And in such, when the bodies of the others had sunken away, taken away by unseen hands into the depths of a stagnant flood, I sobbed but did not despair. For I, the sole survivor needed only to come back to where my brethren had sunk and cast the bones of Gaia into the treacherous water. So, it was foretold at the bar by the old owner, the oracle of a modern Themis. I saw my Pyrrha in Ruby, but I was never much of a romanticist. All those who had perished were my brothers; there was no maternal figure needed, none would prevail over the great oceanic bride.

A madman's blood curdles easily; the intense heat of insanity vaporizes the clotting blood vessels clinging to my cortex. However, the cold of the Atlantic waters, the frigidity of demise's sumptuously cruel subjection, has equalized me. My fevered mind has met my frozen extremities, both sending their regards, my heart retains a sense of surreal normality. There will be no stones cast here; the dead will be disillusioned. Comfort from the outside, such polarized convenience would not be welcomed in my last few minutes. And in such, I resign, I let myself fall into the depths of an uncharted ocean. I give myself, all of my minute transgressions, to the sublime, to the event horizon of my existence. To the sea, I give it all. Both memory and future, fixtures of all that my conscious consists of, all it might ever pertain to be, have been passed onto to the sinking bodies below.

Perhaps the currents will bring me to rest alongside my brothers. Our bones, Gaia's own, picked clean by the hungry mouths of the hidden, we may finally reside in peace, stripped of our sins.