



Whatever Carried Us to Sea Has Discarded Us

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Whatever carried us to sea has discarded us; now we do not belong to it but instead to the aimless motion of the sea itself. Did whatever god or storm that cast us from the shore have strong arms? I do not remember any force driving us—I do not remember wind lashing our faces, nor driving rain, nor the shattering of timbers as our ship went down, if indeed we ever had a ship—but I want to imagine that we angered a powerful deity, something worthy of dying, adrift on the ocean, at the hands of.

I miss his imagined embrace. I miss the imagined potency and fury of his storm. I miss feeling the wrath of god, or the sky, or whoever else I have offended—for certainly I am obsequious to nothing, spitting in the faces of all of nature's mysteries and all of god's many forms wherever they present themselves. I miss god's anger because it gave me a significance I now lack.

I never wanted to live, or to love, or to find peace or meaning. I only wanted to enrage something so powerful that its rage would black out the sun, forever etching my name in the sky. I leave those who remain on shore to find comfort in the tranquility of cloudless spring days, to squabble over controversies, to beget children, and to stuff their swollen wine-stained mouths with the useless treasures they dig up from the ground.

But the storm, if there ever was one, has robbed me of my memory. Bereft of even a name, I drift upon this

endless expanse, contemplating the ocean's infinite knotwork in which I must inevitably become entangled, contemplating my growing thirst.

"What is the first thing you remember?" I ask.

"The third of our party," you reply. "It was night. She was sobbing. I think I tried to hold her back, but she wanted to go over. Sharks were circling. It was quick, if not peaceful."

"Did you know her?"

"I don't know. I know nothing before we drifted upon the sea."

"Nothing whatsoever?"

You give this some thought.

"There are moments, but they could not fit into a sequence of events that logically precede our present state. For instance, I imagine that I can remember being a deer, wounded by an arrow, bounding through the forest in terror, the night occasionally made brilliant by flashes of light from the trembling sky. And yet I have no hooves nor the lithe limbs of a deer; I have rather the arms and legs of a woman, and the agility and strength I lack in my limbs is compensated for in my tongue, which possesses the wondrous capacity of speech."

"Is speech a wonder?"

"To you, nothing is a wonder."

"I would not know. I know—although I do not actually remember a single moment of it—that I lived a life whose sole purpose was to insult god, but this is not to say that I did not believe god to be wondrous, beautiful, or good. For instance, the Christians believe that their savior had to redeem humanity by so offending our sensibilities that we were compelled to commit atrocities against him. As Christ was with man so, perhaps, I was with god: perhaps I thought god needed to be redeemed by anger, an anger which I wished to provoke. But I can not know if words are wondrous when you and I have no memory, and nothing of which to speak but the ocean's endless and unvarying embrace."

"I suspect in the end you will find the ocean's embrace does, in fact, vary," you say.

"And you? What will become of you?"

"When my time in the boat is done I will become a handful of seeds shriveled inside a dead husk, lacking in weight what I also lack in strength, and I will be carried through the air on the invisible arms of those slight tremors that animate seeds but cannot be felt on our skin."

"What seeds will you be?"

"Whatever seeds you fill me with. Do you wish, on whatever far shore I am driven to, to sow seeds of hate or of love?"

"I do not drift aimlessly on this ocean, whose surface has grown listless and gray beneath the still and sunless sky, bearing seeds of love," I say. "Do not offer me a choice I do not have: propagate my anger—in all its stupid, useless, childish, absurdity—or propagate nothing."

"You will not believe me—and I do not need you to—but your rage is a force of redemption, because it is rage at nothing and everything. It is the pointless, intrepid impulse from which the very universe was born, by no discernible means and for no particular reason."

"That is possibly the least plausible thing I have ever heard in my life."

"How would you know truth from falsehood? Thus far, the only things you can recall hearing in life are of the ocean's endless and unvarying embrace."

"This is true. Very well, then. I will make you pregnant. I will fill you with the senseless, frenzied poison that flows from my mouth. When you have drunk your fill, go and give birth to a new sun, a sun that burns redder than this one, which shines with such timidity in the pale sky. Go fill the world with the unyielding light of this invincible new sun, and leave me to die."

Drifting helplessly beneath a growing storm, our mouths meet, and I am certain that, whatever else I have forgotten, I have never before this moment known love.