

BRINE BITCH OFF THE BAHAMAS,
LOVE LETTERS IN JON'S LOG

Day 5-- Silver Navidad Banks--
sighted Megaptera-- suborder Mysticeti--
one showed us a close-up expanse
of facelessness, an eye mounted in it.

Off watch at 12 a.m.
If I haul in the cerebral anchor,
the weightless part of me drifts
into the ocean's nucleus. At sleep's edge
you promise to follow me to the dark
of my carapace, flowing your obsidian hair,
winding your shades whispers perfumes
through my deep chambers. Together
we're caught in the pull of the black hole
waiting in the secret center of all things.

My bed is grandmother-rocking-me water. I am
child old man lover essence of sealife.
You lean over me, jade pendant swinging
from between your breasts, waiting to anoint
my sleep with moonwash if I let its tide rise
and take me. He puts himself at risk
who comes to relieve me of this watch.

If there are whales beyond the bow,
they're oneiric as I am, forgetting to breathe,
not wanting to disturb the tender surface tension
of midnight-stained moire, the ship's shadow,
the silent engine.

Caught in the bias of this latitude
I long to dive deep and alone, to generate
a cephalopod arm a barbel a snail foot sliding
me among nocturnal prowlers. There are things
down there shining codes and coordinates
to their kind I could read tonight.

I've happened in the wrong century.
I want back the beauty unsoiled undissected,
not hanging by claws from margins of abstraction
or extinction. I want back the metaphors. Full
reflections, not disjointed hyperbole
of what was whole.

You haven't abandoned beauty, my landlocked love,
you are more of the sea than you know. Come with me
tomorrow on my longest dive, stowaway in my tanks,
be what I inhale. Down there
is where you got your eyes.

stanza break

Day 8-- changed course 3 degrees north--
making 16 knots-- calm--
Morning dolphins trail diamond confetti, four
of them parenthesizing Brine Bitch's bow wave.
At noon we cross their borders, three wetbacks
with rigged passports and alien marques.
Our undulating escorts push Pagliacci grins
nearer. Whistling nattering clicking,
they power off to play with their peers.

We pass beyond sun's jurisdiction, specimen bags
and bottles like talismans on our belts.
Man-shadows thrust lights into bluer cold
for my camera to follow. Most of the bounty eludes
my colleagues' grasp like eels. Always missing
the depth rapture, the kind that lingers for days,
they get bends outside their scholars' shells.

But their devotion is pure. Emerging
from calcified layers of academic reefs, they dream
of rescued worlds. Probing la mer with bare hopes
and hands, they pour zeal in the dream like dye.

Breathing is an opus. Blistered silver whole notes
define our progress. We record the timpani of now,
noise envelops us, echoes in empty conchs,
flicked by flippers, bounced off mammals.
Sound began here, anciently shaped for other ears
yet willing to coil in mine.

Day 11-- ghostwatch again-- huge lone humpback
blows 15 feet, fan-shaped spout-- call him Ishmael--
I want you here next time. Here where truth is oldest.
The wake of my dreams phosphoresces in your hair.
I'll bring you pulsing domes of half-moonlight
trailing ribbons. And sequined amulets,
wisps of orange and purple ruffles for your wrist.
Born of poets, how can you resist my offerings?

Day 13-- the horizon is a con artist as Brine Bitch
aims home with whalesongs to play you, samples
of sea-broken sun, the taste of 10 degrees of green.
The flying fish of my thoughts silver the surface.

Day 14-- one hour from port-- overcast-- ahead
of a squall east-- My dreams curl around you
like spindrift. I am just-loaded high-speed film,
each frame waiting to feel the press of light.