

..how long do I need to stare at this blank page before words start spontaneously appearing? Seriously. We all know what it's like to have writer's block. How can I possibly write that much? What I say something dumb? Why didn't I I make an outline? You know, I really should vacuum the apartment. Getting started on writing can be absolutely excruciating, but here's the key to making it happen: deadlines. There's no feeling like the Wednesday night terror of realizing you need to have something written by the end of the week. Here, I posit the anti-writer's block to be the writer's clock. It begins ticking the moment a task becomes *urgent*. More than once, I've been woefully unprepared for turning in an assignment or passing along a manuscript, only to find myself in a transcendent state of word vomit fueled by the race against time and oppressive anxiety. Is it healthy? No. Do I recommend it for you? Also no. But the feeling of letting go and allowing the words to flow unencumbered is intoxicating, even if the result is an enormous block of loosely configured (and coherent) ideas. Those can be fixed later, if the clock allows. "Write drunk, edit sober" is a platitude you may hear describing this phenomenon. We're all free to take that as literally or metaphorically as we'd like. It is certainly a bit daunting to come from a science-focused undergraduate degree to find out that the job of a scientist is largely writing. It just takes some practice, and writing isn't so bad after all when we just let the words flow. Edit responsibly.

Writer's Clock

BOTW: The Ones That Got Away

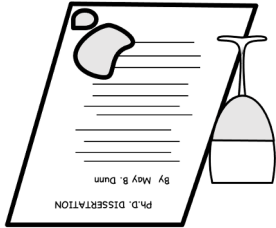
Gone are the days of untethered privy exploration. Mysterious puddles on the floor; decoding the writing on the stalls; the still-warm seat, like the lingering breath of another's tuchus. The faint of heart may cringe at the thought, but I relished the rush of excitement at using a public restroom - my truest venture into the unknown, where I could stare into my reflection in the porcelain and not recognize the face looking back. It's been nearly a year of going steady with the home toilet, and this horse is eyeing greener fixtures. These days, where's a John to find a new john to mix things up?

Ship Updates

R/V Thompson: They say dry dock changes a vessel, but in this case, we changed more than she did. The Thompson returned to a world wholly unrecognizable. Where we would once have been waiting for her with a bouquet of rosettes, we were instead sheltered in place. And the new internet antenna that gets reception at any heading doesn't exactly scream "we're excited to spend quality time with you." Our lovely lady was last spotted passing through the Panama Canal - not a great indication that we'll get to see her again before we graduate.

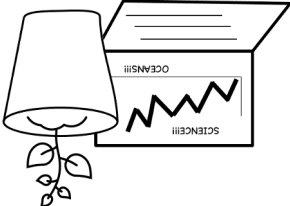
R/V Carson: Still just chillin', living her best life, we assume. You can sometimes see her steam past Gasworks, probably just for show.

R/V Sikuliaq: "Not our boat, not our problem" apparently doesn't hold any water with UNOLS. The 'iaq just won't leave the MSB dock and we don't know why. The lights are off; no one's home; why are you still here???



(see next page for inspo)

What lab group meeting couldn't be improved by making a five-course meal in the middle of it?



Why wait until after your advisor meeting to go on your daily jog? Get in that 5K while streaming in 4K. Why not do a bit of gardening during that seminar? After all, you reap what you sow.

Since our transition to working remotely, who among us hasn't picked up a new hobby? The problem with hobbies is finding the time to enjoy them. I say multi-tasking is the answer:

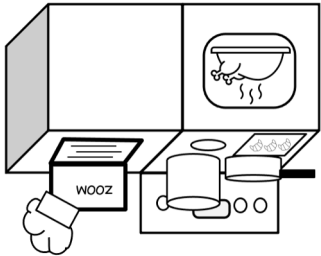
Multiple Activity Disorder

Welcome to the Slack Parade

Ahoy! We here at the Touch Tank (and by extension, at the helm of the department) warmly welcome those prospective students considering hopping aboard our collective virtual oceanographic expedition. Most of us have been working remotely for a year now. But hey, we're oceanographers; we voluntarily forsake society for weeks or months at a time in favor of a life at sea. What's this experience if not another foray into the wild, cut off from the world, exploring the unknown. Oceanographers of yore - like Nansen - were known to spend years at sea, and they didn't lose it, right?? Though, intentionally freezing your ship in sea ice and coming up with some scientific gobbledygook about spirals is a bit out there if you ask us.

Many of us were already seasoned "armchair" oceanographers (looking at you, PhysO), operating robotic sail boats from living rooms or watching data stream in from autonomous floats around the world. There's no denying the challenges of the last year, but our community still happily comes together over Zoom and hops in and out of the endless Slack Parade to share our experiences and ideas. You're sure to learn something new from one of the other oceanographic disciplines. Who knows, maybe your Chem(ic)O Romance is just a click, an SIO login, and a second factor authentication away in one of our many seminars. All from the comfort of your private vessel for now.

And rest assured that our inevitable return to campus will rival even the greatest of end-of-cruise celebrations.



Do you know what pairs well with a fruit-forward, full-bodied Pinot with a tannic finish? Writing your thesis.

Pre-quarantine lunchtime consisted of heating your food in a communal microwave oven or buying a frankly overpriced meal from campus. Even the galley on the smallest sailboat has more amenities for food prep than our department "kitchens". No more! Now, we can take advantage of being in our own homes by preparing the food we want when we want it. Toaster oven, waffle maker, stove, rice cooker, sous vide, air fryer, popcorn maker, charcoal grill, smokehouse, underground oven: the possibilities are limited only by your imagination - and possibly local fire code.

Go ahead and bake those cookies, proof that bread, Julienne those carrots, and plate that charcuterie board. We can't work ourselves to death, after all. The kitchen is open.

And why limit ourselves to lunchtime kitchen experiments? Especially those of us that take our meetings from the kitchen, why shouldn't we fulfill our every food desire whenever the mood strikes us?

Thursday. Friday: females from scratch.

Po Tofu on Wednesday. Hummus and homemade pita on certainlly earned it! A French omelet on Monday. Ma since 8:00...or 9:00...or 11:00...then you've certainly earned it! A French omelet on Monday. Ma

Everyday can be a new culinary adventure, if you will it, and if you've been villigantly* working seminar? After all, you reap what you sow.

"What would an ocean be without a monster lurking in the dark? It would be like sleep without dreams." -Werner Herzog

Gulls squawk and waves lap against the hull as I write this dispatch from the high seas somewhere south of Nauru. I set out months ago, following nothing but the undeniable gravity of the inevitable. Something is happening; I feel it bubbling up from the deep. Everything is linked by gossamer threads; only in the right light at the exact angle can one see the network of filaments that connects one thing to another. A rover lands on Mars, red light is absorbed first in the ocean, a whale falls a tiny microbe and a giant squid, thunderstorms feeds a tiny microbe and a giant squid, thunderstorms and mushy hail on Jupiter, public attitudes about the word 'moist' are slowly shifting, schemes becoming more hair-brained as we continue to avoid hair-dressers, and really, there are oceans everywhere.

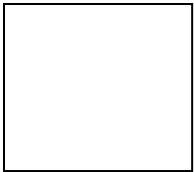
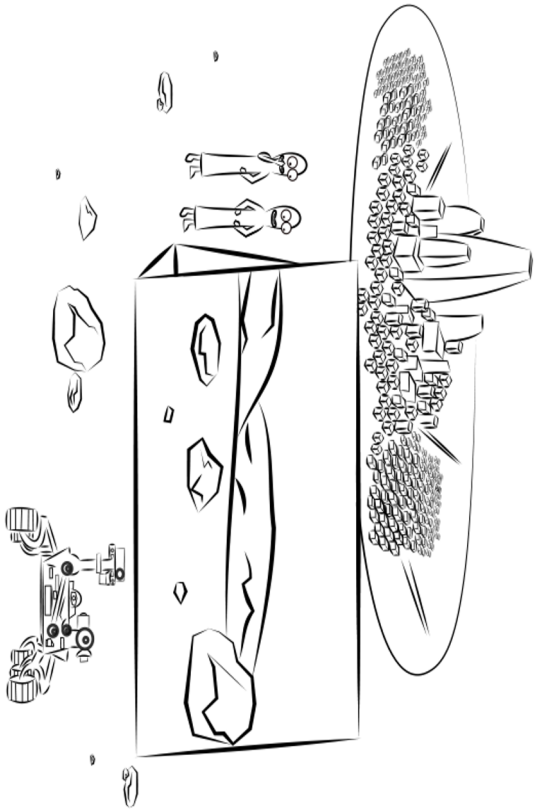
The monster Scylla, who beset Odysseus on his journey home from Troy, was softened by the hands of artists, the distance of time, and the dogma of the church into the form of the mermaid, to serve as a warning to men of the dangers of femininity*. Slowly, organisms that we once called 'fish' are renamed and our idea of the diversity of life in the watery world grows sharper as the category 'fish' recedes.

Can we ever make sense of it all? Will we ever make tangible the shimmering line that links everything? There's another world, there must be, but it is within this one. All we can do is look for it. *For more on mermaids, see: Banse, K. (1990). Mermaids-their biology, culture, and misse 1. Limnology and Oceanography, 35(1), 148-153.



Mysterium Mari - A dispatch from the High Seas

Caption Contest
Color, annotate, add your own drawing, caption this image, or make it your own in any other way you can think of and send to touchtankzine@gmail.com or tag us @touchtankzine



*villigantly diligent