

The whole world reverberates with the penetrating waltz-tone her hull emanates warning of impending impact with the whitecapped ocean surface. These elaborately dancing whitecaps fizzle and dissipate and reappear here and there. They look soft and inviting until her once-sleek hull plunges in and the whitecaps part to reveal bottomless dark whose deceptive inertia knocks the ship right back up for another round. The captain grips the helm and watches helplessly as the displaced darkness rises high then crashes down onto the deck. It all washes off quickly and everything looks fine but he knows that every drop of water carries with it a small piece of the ship and years at sea have already weathered away most of its paint. Also, that every resonant groan gets very slightly louder because each preceding impact shakes every bolt and rivet just a little bit looser. The sky turns dark and rain pelts everything with a despairingly inescapable constancy. The captain feels his stomach turn to lead at the faint howl that he knows all too well, the gale that saps you of any warmth you can muster, turns the rain's trajectory horizontal, and churns the sea's surface such that you can't hear yourself yell in the cacophany of the ship's own disassembly. But now, familiar faces appear amidst the fog. They sit aboard beautiful ships whose pristine hulls bear only faint scars. From decks high above they lower ropes and call to the captain. They tell him to climb aboard, abandon ship, that there's nothing he can do, that he can still save himself, but their sympathetic siren songs only echo in that cavern behind his blank stare with the intonation, the voice, he realizes, of himself. Because every sentiment and reason his rescuers assault him with he's already accepted and believed long, long ago. And so now he finds both his arms bound to these ropes and he's hoisted up towards their safe, dry decks. But another metallic groan forces his gaze back down at the ship now desperately crying to him, each heave loosening still more rivets. And he sees, after all, that his feet are still bound to her corroded rails and he remembers now all the times she tried to buck him off, throw him overboard so he can swim to safety and so she could sail to her own demise. But now, she tears herself apart trying to stop the captain

leaving, the captain that once so stubbornly clutched at the helm refusing to be thrown off, the captain that now realizes she never would have thrown him off because he was bound at the feet the whole time by an inexplicable sense of both cold obligation and warm, optimistic compassion. But now stuck between the two decks he stares down into the dark and ponders the temptation of this third option. While the first two pull at him, tear his body apart, he sees reason in the forbiddingly unreasonable act of letting go and himself plunging in past the whitecaps and the storm-churned waves down to the very bottom where, he is certain, he will be insulated from the violence above. He sees that the darkness maintains the eternal tranquility he's been after all this time.