

TBTI GLOBAL BOOK SERIES PRESENTS

OCEAN PEOPLE

Inspire



**A COLLECTION OF
SHORT STORIES**

Ocean People Inspire

A Collection

edited by

Evan J. Andrews

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TBTI Global Book Series
ISBN: 978-1-7390539-3-2



Too Big To Ignore Global (TBTI; toobigtoignore.net) is a research network and knowledge mobilization partnership supported by over 800 members from around the world. The network aims at elevating the profile of small-scale fisheries, arguing against their marginalization in national and international policies, and developing research and governance capacity to address global fisheries challenges.

TBTI Global Book Series is a publication series that highlights why we need to pay close attention to small-scale fisheries. The series will be of use to anyone interested in learning more about small-scale fisheries, especially about their important contribution to livelihoods, well-being, poverty alleviation and food security, as well as to those who are keen to help raise profile of small-scale fisheries in the policy realm.

Cover design by Daniela Bernot Simon & Evan J. Andrews

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Foreword

Every book that we have published in the TBTI Global Book Series remind us how grateful we are to the authors and also to the readers. Each book has its own story about how it came to be, how it's put together and what it was able to achieve, which makes it fun to work on. We get excited every time a book proposal is presented, even when we don't have a clear picture about what it might look like at the end.

The book 'Ocean People Inspire' certainly brought a lot of excitement when the idea was brainstormed. The Newfoundland and Labrador's Year of the Arts provided a great opportunity to connect what we do with the arts community and the people who enjoy art. We didn't know how well the NL Writes 'Ocean is Magnet' short story competition would be received. After reading the longlisted submissions and listening to the authors during the writing virtual mentoring workshop, we knew that we have good materials for the book. As we waited with anticipation for the final manuscript, we ran a series of outreach activities for the Moving Together for Marine Conservation project, including with youth. We collected art work created by kids, and incorporated it in the book, making it very special.

We are very proud of this collection, and we have several people to thank, starting from the authors and the mentors, and the artists. Our special thanks go, however, to Evan J. Andrews, the editor of this collection. Evan was the brain and the engine behind the project, and without his vision and perseverance, it would not have materialized.

We hope the book makes you think about your own connection to the ocean, and that it inspires you to do more for the ocean and for all of us Ocean People.

Ratana Chuenpagdee

TBTI Global

St. John's, Canada

September 9, 2024

Preface

This collection of short stories is about the deep and intricate relationships between the ocean, people, and their sources of inspiration. Featuring emerging writers and spanning multiple short story genres, the collection explores what it means to be connected with the ocean and coasts. The collection reveals diverse experiences, interpretations, and perspectives about ocean and coastal inspirations, inviting readers to reflect on the stories they share with family, friends, and among themselves.

2024 is Newfoundland and Labrador's Year of the Arts, which aims at recognizing the province's culture and arts. To contribute to the year, this collection is set in Newfoundland and Labrador, exploring various and diverse relationships and visions that shape ocean and coastal futures in the province. Through the prism of the short story, and supplemented by hand-drawn art from youth across the province, the collection celebrates the writing community and the avenues they provide for thought, experience, and conversation about ocean and coastal life.

When I first arrived in 2017 as a doctoral student visiting the International Coastal Network Lab, led by Professor Ratana Chuenpagdee, she told me to *listen to the stories people are sharing, and focus on why they are telling them*. When I started to really listen, I gained deeper appreciation for stories. I learned they help shape meaning on coasts as well as in my own life. The power of the story inspired me to create spaces for stories to thrive even in unexpected places like research and policy. This collection was initiated by people who shared this vision.

In 2020, as a postdoctoral researcher, I joined the Ocean Frontier Institute Module I (OFI I), which is about informing governance responses in a changing ocean, and later began co-leading with Dr. Chuenpagdee the

Moving Together for Marine Conservation (MTC) project, which is a multi-year outreach and governance capacity building initiative for Canada's Marine Conservation Targets. These projects encourage researchers to use story-telling as a research method, and support sharing stories freely and openly. OFI I and MTC, along with Writers NL, came together to launch a new collaborative process, NL Writes, leading to the stories in this collection. As stories were being collected, MTC toured the province to learn from kids and young adults about their visions for the ocean and coasts. The kids told us about what matters to them about their surroundings through art-based activities, resulting in hand-drawn art incorporated into the e-book.

* * *

NL Writes was a short story competition for emerging and amateur writers. It started with a fortunate meeting with Writers NL, a not-for-profit, member-based organization working to serve the needs of writers in the province. During outreach for MTC, I connected with Writers NL's Executive Director, Jen Winsor, to learn about the organization and discuss future collaboration with the writing community. The discussions led to the launch of the competition, inviting participants across the province, including youth, to write on the theme, "The Ocean is a Magnet." The competition provided mentorship from established writers such as Carmella Gray-Cosgrove, Santiago Guzmán, and Holly Hogan, as well as adjudication and feedback from a jury that led to three special mentions in the collection.

NL Writes longlisted sixteen submissions, written by authors aged 15 to 75 from across the province. The submissions were deeply personal. Authors told us that this was an opportunity to start or rekindle passion for writing, as well as experiment with new ideas and take creative risks, all of which paid off. Every final submission was a winner, selected to be published and shared broadly.

This collection values free expression, preserving the authors' voices and intentions with minimal editing. The style and substance remain true to the authors' choices. No one else but the authors can receive attribution

nor bear responsibility for what is featured in the stories. Now, the authors are free to do whatever they like with the stories, including sharing them elsewhere. This collection represents a moment in time and may serve as an initial glimpse into stories that could evolve with further reflection.

The creation of this e-book was a collaborative effort. It was published by the TBTI Global Book Series, with the support from its Editor-in-Chief Dr. Chuenpagdee and Managing Editor Vesna Kerezi. Daniela Bernot-Simon guided the authors through the NL Writes process, while Nova Almine administered funding for authors to participate in promotional activities. All came together to make choices along the way. NL Writes was a result of partnership among OFI I, MTC, and Writers NL. Melanie Downer created and implemented the youth outreach approach and activities that produced the artwork. The art was shared with permission by youth. I thank all involved.

* * *

As the collection was taking shape, it became clear that it was not just about the magnetic forces of the ocean and coasts, but about their impact on us and what motivates experiences, thought, and action. The collection explores inspiration through twists and turns as well as ups and downs. It opens up to interpretation the beliefs and experiences about the ocean and coasts, sparking a range of emotion, curiosity and even adventure. Some stories look at new beginnings and unexpected ends including death and suicide, providing meaning and even some clarity to challenging times.

The collection shows the dynamic nature of ocean and coastal life—constantly evolving while anchored in memories and experiences that inspire. As life on the ocean and coasts changes for the characters in this collection, the inspirations are moorings that help retrieve them from difficult moments and situations, and in some stories, help return from being away. As a collection, the stories encourage the reader to *reimagine*, *reunite*, *rediscover*, and *rethink* their relationships with ocean and coastal life. These themes serve as a four-part structure for the collection.

Part 1, *Reimagining*, reconceives relationships, ideas, and bonds attachments that come and go. The stories—*The Unravelling* by Spoorthy Raman, *A Shifting Relationship* by Fiona Conway, *Ocean Funeral* by Rachel Barnes, and *Monster Trackers* by Kyle Penney—reconceive common narratives about life above and below the ocean. The stories help reimagine the past and future.

Part 2, *Reuniting*, reunifies people and places to give strength in the hard times. The stories—*Mi'kmaq Moons and Magnetically Attuned* by Erica (Samms) Hurley, *Pull Through* by Shawn Doyle, *The Wonders of the Waters* by Kelsie Keeping, and *She and her Sea* by Janice Young—reconnect people with the natural world, maybe even for the last time.

Part 3, *Rediscovering*, reawakens cherished memories, and finds new meanings in more difficult ones. The stories—*Sliver of Silver* by Sadie Butt, *Hide* by Meghan Donovan, *In Between Tides* by Krista Vokey, and *An Ocean of Memories* by Melissa Elizabeth Wong—retrieve the visions and images that provide comfort and even disturb. They provide clarity to life and memory on coasts.

Part 4, *Rethinking*, reconsiders beliefs and perceptions, challenging what is known and what appears to be self-evident. The stories—*Golden Bay* by Virginia Ryan, *A Marine Cook in Turbulent Waters* by Terry (T.C.) Bursey, *Riptide* by Stephanie Boone, and *Super Krill* by Robert Gross—re-evaluate choices and expectations. The stories rethink the narratives that are often told.

* * *

Stories are sometimes dismissed as not relevant or useful. Yet, as this collection demonstrates, understanding how people connect with coastal life is crucial if the aim is to learn about their experiences and desires. Globally, researchers and policymakers are talking about how to advance the “Ocean we Want”, such as in the context of the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development. Stories like the ones in the collection, and I hope flow from it, are central to these conversations in the province and globally.

The collection is a kaleidoscope of inspirations intended to foster reflection and conversation about the past, present, and future of oceans and coasts. Enjoy the collection, as I have. Interpret the stories however you like. While the stories belong to the authors, your experiences with them are yours. Take them with you as you read, write, and talk about your own inspirations from the ocean and coasts. Stories are the medium of exchange in places like Newfoundland and Labrador. This collection invites you to reimagine, reunite, rediscover, and rethink your own. It invites you to share your inspirations.

Evan J. Andrews
Memorial University
St. John's, Canada
September 9, 2024



Jessie, Bonne Bay Academy (Elementary)

I

Reimagining

The Unravelling

Spoorthy Raman

Special mention

The mail kept coming for 'John Snow.' Postcards, brochures and letters piled up fast.

The first postcard arrived on September 2nd. The name 'John Snow' was scribbled on the front in thick, black ink. Below were the letters '78, Main Street, Perry's Cove, Newfoundland and Labrador' scrawled in a pale shade of grey. 'Pat' had sent it.

The next one came on the 7th, another on the 10th, and one more on the 15th. They quickly amassed in the mailbox, one on top of the other.

"Ibu, we need to do something about it," Temeh uttered, not knowing what to make of the pile. Ibu nodded, as he always did, but it did not mean much.

There was no 'John Snow' at 78 Main Street. The tiny, dilapidated cabin at this address, with its characteristic cherry-red wall, was now Ibu and Temeh's abode. It was that red hue and a quaint wooden window overlooking the ocean that had Temeh swooning over when she first saw it. Red was her favourite colour. When she was a little girl, her kéké¹ always brought her red ribbons to tie around her coiled and oiled coal-black hair.

As Temeh stood at the door staring at the water in the cove, the cerulean, blue Atlantic beckoned her. It was nostalgic. As sunlight danced on the waves, Temeh was transported back in time. The images of her home in the tiny

¹ Kéké is a Mende word for papa.

coastal village of Mayaia in Sierra Leone flashed before her. Every evening, as the sun went down on the horizon, she'd watch the ocean turn into a painter's palette—reflecting every hue of red, orange, yellow and blue. As a three-year-old girl, she'd look for kéké's wooden boat, splattered with a dash of yellow, returning from the sea.

Oh, the mesmerizing blue of the Atlantic!

Tucked far away from the road, the worn-out cabin had little to offer its new residents. The paint on the walls had peeled off in most places, the roof leaked, the doors creaked when they swung open, and the floor was shrouded in layers of dust. An old couch and a lamp lay strewn in the living room. A begrimed teapot sat on the makeshift kitchen counter, and a few ceramic plates were stowed on the only shelf. In the bedroom butting up against the entrance, the pretty window with its scenic ocean view was the only thing worthy of mention. Overrun with wildflowers, a tiny shed, whose walls rattled as the ocean wind blew, was obscured in the backyard.

Yet, it was all Temeh and Ibu could afford after years of toiling on a pig farm in rural Ontario. This year, they decided to leave that 'green hell'—as Temeh called it—and head east. So far east that they landed in the easternmost part of the country, on an island in the Atlantic, in Newfoundland. They hoped the *Palace of Dreams*—a nickname Ibu gave the cabin—would be their happy place.

It was already September. The cabin needed much work before it was ready to weather the icy, stormy winter on 'the Rock.' Ibu had to use all the carpentry and masonry skills he'd learned from his uncle. Back in his tiny village, he was the go-to handyman. But that was two decades ago. After the war took his beloved uncle, Ibu had to flee with Temeh before the bloodthirsty ravens came for them.

It all happened on a ghastly February night years ago. As Mayaia burnt with white-hot hate, Ibu and Temeh grabbed whatever they could in a rucksack and fled their home, never to look back. They trekked the treacherous rainforests

for days before hopping on a raft with others on the same trail. The rubber boat set off into the unknown. For nearly a month, it bobbed on the water, dodging thunderous cyclones and forging new friendships among those who shared pieces of their cassava bread and sesame seeds to stay alive.

In Temeh's eyes, the stormy Atlantic had shades of a murderous monster, its waves hungry for the blood of those fleeing bloodshed. In those turbulent times, Temeh shut her eyes and held on to Ibu, to dear life, and to hope.

One bright, sunny day, in the middle of the ocean, everyone on that rubber boat was abruptly cooped up in a large container and shipped off to a faraway place. Temeh and Ibu can't remember how long they spent in that cramped compartment—she had lost her sense of time, and he had stopped counting days. All they recalled was how emancipated they were when they landed on a pig farm run by a Mr. Moss on a frigid night.

The wooden board at the entrance had 'Lekker Ham Farm, Pleasantville' engraved on it. "Walk in, quick! I'm Mr. Moss," blurted a tall, well-built man with a raspy voice. "Quarters this way!"

About twenty tiny identical rooms—just enough for two people to sleep—stood before Ibu and Temeh. Before they could put down their rucksack, the voice thundered again, "Report to work at eight in the morning!"

Temeh's first impression of this new place was visceral loathing. The mouldy room, the menacing voice that tormented them, and the maniacal ambience of the farm—nothing sparked hope. Soon, she discovered Ibu would be feeding the pigs, and she'd be mopping up pig poop all day in a big building cramped with smelly animals. The deep green walls evoked a sense of disgust. Thus, the moniker 'green hell.'

Mr. Moss was a hard taskmaster. From dawn to dusk, everyone toiled on the farm. No exceptions—not when you were sick and not when you were tired. The workers on the farm were hidden from the world. They weren't supposed to be there—at least not legally—and no one could step out without the hawk-eyed Mr. Moss noticing. Every Saturday, they were paid a paltry wage, which they mostly spent on the veggies and grains Mr. Moss hauled from the nearby town. A bowl of gruel kept them alive as the dull, tedious life dragged on for years.

But the year 2012 was different. By January, Temeh and Ibu had enough money to run away from a life of modern slavery. And they did. Hope brought them far east to the island, to the dilapidated cabin.

Now, everything needed mending—their little cabin, their worn-out souls and their desolate lives.

Ibu fixed the roof and the doors. Temeh painted the walls and drew her favourite motifs. On the walls of her hut in Mayaia, she'd painted flowers, elephants, fish and birds. The elephants resembled cows with trunks more than elephants, but the flowers were pretty. In the 'green hell,' she'd almost forgotten art. Where was the time?

As she painted her *Palace of Dreams*, Temeh dipped into her memory, revived those motifs and brought them to life. Perry's Cove's grey, gloomy sky morphed into blue on the walls, dotted with a flamboyance of pink flamingos. The azure ocean danced under the sun's warmth. The elephants now looked like gentle giants.

After Ibu cleaned the backyard, Temeh planned to grow Za'atar for her *yebeh*². The spicy, carb-rich stew was her favourite, a recipe she'd learnt from her mom. Mr. Moss had blasted her for cooking that "pungent, fetid nosh" on his farm. "My nose burns! Get rid of that nasty stuff," he had yelled. Now, she could finally eat something that tasted like food, like home, like love.

By October, the *Palace of Dreams* was almost ready. The walls dazzled in hues of blue, orange, and yellow, and the floor shone bright. With new shelves, the kitchen was stocked. A mattress rested on the floor in a cozy corner of the bedroom. The quaint little window was painted blue to match the Atlantic's hue.

One autumn evening, as Ibu lit the firepit, Temeh brought out her *segbureh*³, which she had carefully stowed in her suitcase years ago. She'd made two of them—one for Ibu and one for her—by drying gourds at the 'green hell.' When Mr. Moss heard them play one night, he barged into their room and flung one of them on the floor. It shattered into a million bits.

² A Sierra Leonean stew made with meat and starchy vegetables like cassava.

³ A traditional rattle made from dried gourd lined with shells.

That night, she played the *segbureh* under the stars and sang her favourite songs. Ibu joined her. They danced all night, just like the shimmering waves beneath them. The sparks of passion warmed their hearts. It was the perfect housewarming for the *Palace of Dreams*.

The mail for ‘John Snow’ kept coming.

In mid-October, ‘Betty’ sent a red postcard signed ‘with love.’ A few days later, another from ‘Tim’ wished ‘Uncle John’ a Happy Thanksgiving. A health magazine popped in the mail for ‘Mrs. John Snow.’ Perhaps John Snow had a Mrs.? In the run-up to Christmas, ‘Sophie and Pat’ sent ‘John and Family’ a card, and ‘Sussie’ wished ‘John’ a Happy New Year. None of them had an address that could be traced.

A plain white card with blue printed letters stood out among the pile of mail. Sent by the ‘Atlantic Fishers’ Union,’ it was an invite for a members’ ball and addressed to ‘John Snow.’ Did it mean John was a fisherman? The thought welled up Temeh’s eyes, and nostalgia took over.

Like most men in Mayaia, Temeh’s *kéké* was also a fisherman. Every morning, before the clock struck seven, Musa was out with the nets and crab pots. As he loaded them into his small wooden boat, Temeh’s *nje*⁴ Marriam brought him his lunch—rice and stew—wrapped in cloth. Temeh ran to the door to kiss *kéké* goodbye.

“What do you want from the sea today, dear?” he would ask her before leaving, caressing her pitch-dark tresses.

“Crabs!” It was always crabs for Temeh.

Musa’s life and livelihood had relied on the ocean’s bounty. When he started fishing as a young man, the nets brimmed with fish, both big and small. By noon every day, he had sold them all in the market and returned home with a pocket filled with money. Over the years, however, the fish in the water dwindled. He’d spend hours at sea hoping to catch enough fish to feed his

⁴ Nje is a Mende word for mama.

small family of three, and sometimes he caught almost nothing. Life got tougher by the day for many fishermen, including Musa, in Mayaia.

But Musa always kept his promise to Temeh. After he sold his day's catch, he went back to the sea with crab pots for a special catch. At dusk, Temeh waited for her kéké to bring home the crab, which Marriam boiled in a pot of water and dressed the buttery meat for dinner. In recent times, their dinner was just the crab.

The ebbing fish in the water and the crippling poverty eventually forced Musa to do what many men in Mayaia did: get out of the village in search of a better life. A big fishing company from a foreign land had come to the nearby town scouting for workers. News went around that the pay was fat, the work was at sea far north, thousands of miles from home, where the workers had to brave the gusty, frigid winds.

Musa had resisted many such offers in the past. Nothing justified leaving behind his young wife and little daughter. But he didn't have a choice anymore. With an aching heart, he went to town to find out more.

That night, after Temeh slept, he told Marriam he, too, was leaving. Holding her hand tight, he muttered: "I'll be gone only for a couple of years. I'll be back as soon as we make enough money."

Marriam responded with her tears. She didn't want Musa to leave. She begged. She pleaded. But soon, reality dawned on her. Living a good life in Mayaia was untenable. If they did not die of starvation, the murderous ravens from the neighbouring village would slaughter them. Weeping her tears, she nodded.

They hugged each other tight.

The next morning, Musa sat Temeh down and spoke to her about his leaving. He drew a crude map on the ground. On the one end was Mayaia, with Temeh and Marriam living in their hut. On the left, to the north, was another land where kéké would be in a big house. Between them was the vast, infinite Atlantic.

"That's so far away, isn't it?" Temeh asked with her jaws gaping.

"Yes. A boat will take kéké all the way there."

"I'll miss you. When will I see you again?"

“Come here,” Musa called her, hugged her tight and sat her down on his lap. “I’ll be back very soon. But while I am gone, every night, I’ll tell the moon to shine bright for you. I’ll pray to the Ocean Gods to send you gifts, like that bright blue bracelet they’d once sent.”

Temeh jumped off his lap and ran inside. A few minutes later, she appeared with a bracelet with bright blue pearls and seashells, which Musa had found on the beach one day and brought home for her. She tied it around Musa’s hand and kissed it tight.

She didn’t utter a word, but her sparkling eyes said it all.

For a few minutes, Temeh sat seemingly digesting the news in her tiny head.

“When you are back, will you buy me that red frock?” she asked, hinting at the frock she wanted from the village store.

Musa smiled and nodded. That night, he left. Standing at the door, Marriam heard his footsteps turn heavy as he disappeared into the dark. She returned to cuddle with Temeh in bed. That night lasted for a long, long time.

Days had elapsed since Musa’s departure, and there was no word from him. He had promised to write a note when he reached the new land. Marriam waited and waited, not knowing who to ask.

Three months passed, and the silence was now deafening. Marriam was desperate for some news—any news. After a few days, a faint rumour made rounds in the village. A boat carrying a few men that left town had sunk at sea. When? Nobody knew. Many such boats left the town only this past month, so it was hard to point out the exact details. Who was in the boat? Some nameless men. Not that these men did not have names, but no one cared to know them. Was Musa on that boat?

Days became months. Months turned into years. But Musa never came.

As long as Marriam lived, she’d sit on the rock where she and Musa sat every evening, watching the sun disappear into oblivion. In her head, she often saw Musa’s silhouette emerge from the horizon in his yellow wooden boat, and it soon melted into the unknown. She’d cry out loud, cursing the ocean for her wretched life. The sanguinary sea had taken away her only love. The bloodthirsty abyss was a graveyard of many, many hopes. Loud wails of sorrow eventually swallowed her.

Whenever Temeh peered at the Atlantic from her pretty window, a cocktail of emotions welled up in her soul. The ocean had its seasons and reasons. The grief of losing her kéké turned from sorrow into the anguish of growing up without a father figure that then ballooned into despair of losing Marriam. A sense of mystery loomed over everything that had transpired in her life. The hope for a new life away from the ravaging war and the misery of the green “hell” sparked joy. Her heart brimmed with Ibu’s love. Eventually, a sense of serenity calmed the inner storm.

Nobody knew of ‘John Snow’ in Perry’s Cove. An old woman, walking past the cabin, once mumbled something about an old man living here who looked *different*. Because the cabin was tucked so far away, not many in the town realized it was even there. No one remembered talking to him or seeing his family.

But Temeh grew curious. She asked around if the local fishermen knew anything about ‘John Snow’ or if they knew someone from the ‘Atlantic Fishers Union’ who could tell her more. A call to the number on the postcard was never answered. She hit a dead end.

Who was John Snow? It was a lingering question she asked herself a million times.

But the mail for ‘John Snow’ kept coming.

It was the Ides of March, and spring was at the doorstep. Chunks of sea ice and bergy bits bobbed on the water. The worst of the winter was over—well, almost—and the heaps of snow began to melt and the ground slowly thawed.

For Temeh and Ibu, it was the perfect time to clean up the old, tiny shed in the backyard that had been walloped by the winter snow. On a bright morning, with shovels, brooms, and tools, they got going.

When they opened the creaky door, cobwebs greeted them. Ibu mopped them up with a broom.

At the end of the shed was a rusted metal shelf. On its top aisle were two metal chests with flecks of red and blue. Perhaps they were once painted in

those colours, but now the brown rust stood out.

A fishing net and two crab pots lay in the bottom aisle, collecting dust. An old can of kerosene plonked next to an oil lamp near the door. A trail of ants crept on the wall.

After Ibu dusted the shelf, Temeh brought the two chests out and placed them on the ground in the sun. Awakened by the warmth, a spider sprang at her, and a few miffed ants ran astray. The blue chest had a vintage brass handle that had turned blue-green. After swabbing the muck, she slowly lifted the padlock and opened the lid.

Inside was an old Bible, a red scarf, a jaded Christmas tree ornament, and a handwritten card with a few illegible words scribbled on it. There was also a tattered phone book, with much of its contents faded away into antiquity. An old photograph with two old, white women was between the pages, with 'Pat' and 'Betty' written on its back.

As Temeh looked closely at the photograph, an old newspaper clipping fell from the phone book. 'Boat with African labourers sinks off Grand Banks,' the headline from *The Daily Telegram* of 31st October 1985 read. It mentioned that a few local fishermen had taken their boats to the sea to look for any survivors and managed to bring back a few. "No official death count yet, but a dozen survived the wreck," the report said, "they were brought to town." Some boats returned with the cherished belongings of those lost at sea—a grim reminder of the hope the dead carried.

Also inside the chest was an old metal key that perfectly slid into the keyhole of the heavy lock that sealed the red chest. It was the same shade of red that Temeh loved. With one forced turn, Temeh cracked the lock open and carefully lifted its lid.

On top was a sheaf of old papers that smelled like aged books. Hints of vanilla, almond and musky florals hit Temeh's nose as she unfastened the tie. The papers were all hand-drawn sketches. One had a wooden boat sailing on the water. Another depicted a little girl with ribbons tied around her hair. One more had a beautiful, busty woman with a headwrap wearing a patterned skirt and a blouse.

"Ibu, come here quick!" Temeh cried out. "Look what I found—a sketch of

a woman who resembles *nje!*”

“Hold on! I’m covered in cobwebs,” he yelled.

One sketch stood out from the rest: a dark portrayal of huge waves striking a small boat with many terrified men aboard. Others weren’t as remarkable—there were sketches of a few fish, a sunset, and something resembling a hill in the water. An island, perhaps? An iceberg? It was hard to discern. Many of the sketches had just lines and dots drawn on them, resembling the work of someone bored to death.

Temeh put aside the papers. Underneath, she found a heavy metal anchor with layers of reddish-brown rust. It resembled the one *kéké* used for his wooden boat with the letter ‘M’ painted in white. On this one though, all the paint had gone.

A small but ornate box with yellow and red flowers sat in the corner of the chest. Inside were a few coloured pebbles—red, black, magenta, and grey—like those found on the beach in *Mayaia*—along with small seashells with hues of green and pink. Temeh carefully put them aside.

At the bottom of the box was a bracelet with bright blue pearls interspersed with sea shells. As she picked it up, Temeh’s hands trembled. A tiny piece of paper was folded and rolled into the bracelet. As her eyes welled up, Temeh slowly unfurled it. In it were the words ‘Musa,’ ‘Marriam,’ and ‘Temeh,’ scrawled in *Mende*.

She clenched the bracelet hard. In cold, foggy air blowing from the Atlantic, she felt *kéké*’s embrace, and her heart sank into the ocean’s abyss.

So, who was ‘John Snow’?

* * *

Spoorthy Raman is a writer at heart, a journalist by profession and a conservation enthusiast in action. She mostly writes about science, the environment and her dog, but sometimes dabbles in short stories, essays and poetry. Her words have appeared in two books and several international magazines and news outlets. Her journalism has been recognized with numerous distinguished honours. When she isn’t at her desk scribbling her

THE UNRAVELLING

thoughts on paper, you can find her lost in a book, making art or wandering in the woods with her dog around the beautiful city of St. John's, which she now calls home.

A Shifting Relationship

Fiona Conway

It bothered Sean a little that when he made the journey from Ireland it had been on an airplane, a giant Boeing, and not a boat. It disturbed his romantic notions of following in the footsteps of Irish immigrants of yore, settling on the inhospitable coasts of an island called Newfoundland. Though in truth, there was not much romantic about Sean's journey. A series of disappointing report cards, a mother who had not cried when she dropped him at the airport, a vague desire to study biology. Not enough money for a return ticket, non-refundable tuition deposits. A desperate need for a fresh start.

Sean has never had any sentimental attachment to the word home, so he supposes this dorm room will do well enough. Smell of paint from remodeling over the summer, strangely textured mattress, just enough drawer space for the sweaters his grandma had knit him. Electric kettle battling with textbooks for desk space. He hasn't spoken much to the others in his building, though he hears their voices through the walls in the evenings. He supposes they sound friendly, but struggles to find the energy or the words to go join their conversations. At times, when his neighbour in the corner room closes her door little pieces of detritus from her life float into Sean's room - strands of long black hair, a sequin, a receipt from the campus bookstore. It's a strange glimpse into someone else's life.

The semester has not really started yet, the library still mostly empty and hallways full of disoriented students. Sean spends most of his days walking. He discovers the series of trails behind the residence buildings,

enjoys watching the ducks on the pond on sunny days. He walks farther, following the bus route towards the older parts of town, near the water. Today it is gloomy and rainy, and Sean finds himself near the harbour, mesmerised by the sight of the rain on the ocean, the otherworldliness of it. That same body of water touches the coast of Ireland too, he knows. He imagines his mother in the rain.

It does not take much maneuvering to slip between the bars that separate the city from the harbour itself. In a few seconds, Sean is standing at the concrete border between land and water, salty waves lapping his rain-soaked trainers. It is very cold here. He stares at the black-gray water, its endless depths. It seems strange to Sean that anything could live down there. It seems a place of death. Sean sways a little bit. It would be very easy to become nameless, meaningless, disintegrated, in the water. A large wave breaks and soaks Sean's jeans and his raincoat. He startles a little, feels unsteady on his feet. The ground beneath him is very slippery and the ocean is very, very deep. Sean's hands shake a little.

"All right there, love?" The speaker is an older dockworker with a gruff voice and a weather-beaten face. He stands a few feet behind Sean, and there is concern knit into his gray eyebrows, his steady gaze. "I was -," Sean begins a sentence, but does not know how to end it. Is he in trouble for trespassing? He isn't really sure what he was doing, or if he is all right. The dockworker extends a hand and pulls Sean away from the water's edge. He notes the alone-ness of Sean, the absence of any car parked near the harbour. Nobody waiting for this boy.

"Somewhere I can take ya?" he asks, gesturing to his truck "was just on my way home myself."

Sean shivers in the car, wet denim sticking uncomfortably to his legs. "You know," the older man says as he drives slowly through the rain, "I've heard people call it 'l'appel du vide,' how sometimes we get the urge to go close to the edge of very tall buildings. Reckon the Atlantic can do something similar to you. You're far from the first I've found there." It seems as close an acknowledgement as he wants to make as to what might motivate his young passenger to such risky behaviour. They drive on for a while in silence. The

car's radio plays "Country Hits" and an empty thermos in the cup holder rattles when they pass over potholes. Sean is grateful to be spared small talk. The man pulls to a stop outside the residence buildings. "You take care now," he tells Sean as he steps out of the car. Sean nods, thanks him for his kindness. In his dorm room, he changes from his wet clothing, and pulls his blankets over his head. He dreams strange dreams of becoming food for the fishes, fertilizer for the garden, falling down in little droplets of rain. Back into the all-consuming ocean.

The first weeks of the semester pass uneventfully. Sean learns that his neighbour's name is Surabhi, that she has a penchant for brightly coloured scrunchies and is studying political science. She came to Newfoundland from India, along with her younger brother. When she learns he is from Ireland she makes a joke about them both being from former colonies of the British Empire that Sean doesn't get for a few minutes before laughing. They wave hellos in the hallway when they see each other. Besides Surabhi, Sean doesn't talk to many people.

The only classes Sean finds himself able to focus on are those about marine life. The ancient fishes, the coelacanths and Actinopterygii; the way everything in the mysterious depths can theoretically be classified, fit into cladograms that neatly and inevitably describe the origins of life too. Sean has not been back to the ocean since his rainy walk in September, but he still dreams of it and his dreams take on details from his biology classes. The fish that tear the flesh from his limbs are ancient species, bizarre and marvellous creatures that human eyes can only assemble based on fossil imprints they left accidentally. Sean thinks time must work differently in the ocean. He imagines if he swam far enough, he would still see these fish in thriving families.

In November, the residence staff organize a hike on Signal Hill for the students. Sean wakes up at 5:00am, pulls two wool sweaters over his head and finds his mittens. He finds Surabhi in the lobby, in a bright pink coat and with her long braid tied back in a matching pink elastic. He follows her like a slightly fluorescent beacon on the foggy walk. It is quiet, several students yawn, footsteps slow and uncertain on the grass. There is a sense

of something mildly ritualistic. When people talk to each other they do it in whispers.

Sean stops to read a plaque describing how women in the past would stand on this hill and watch for the ships carrying their sons, husbands, and brothers to come into view. He imagines himself as one of these women, the worry becomes a habit, the beauty of the sunrise a distraction from her search. She would still have had a day's worth of tasks to do throughout the day - the laundry, the sewing, the cooking. Sean wonders how often she would climb the hill to keep watch, whether she spoke with other women waiting. Whether her husband ever acknowledged how difficult those months were for her. How she felt about the ocean below and all around - something to make a living from? A mythic force to be kept at bay? A simple natural phenomenon, incapable of understanding or reflecting the emotions she projected against it?

Surabhi sits next to Sean on a tree-stump sized rock and offers him tea from an insulated metal bottle. The lid unscrews to become a small mug, which she holds out to him full of steaming liquid. It is a practical and kind gesture. Sean imagines similar exchanges between the women on Signal Hill so many years ago, a commonplace tradition of kindness. "This is not my ocean," Surabhi tells him, looking at the gray Atlantic with slight disapproval. The ocean she remembers from childhood vacations, the Indian Ocean, is bright and blue and warm. She describes looking for white seashells along the coast with her siblings, her mother telling them not to bring sand home in the car. "This ocean," she gestures around them, "is much less approachable." Sean understands the real meaning of her words: she misses home. They watch the movement of the water far below. Sean imagines the currents carrying the memories of Surabhi's words, the shifting borders between oceans, the clouds gathered above. His friend's tears eventually falling as rain on her family's garden.

As they walk back down the hill Sean is again mesmerized by the water, stuck standing, staring. He thinks about Surabhi's lack of connection to this body of water, the way it only reinforced how much she missed another geography. He doesn't think what pulls him towards this water is ancestral,

his family in Ireland were not fishers, but does imagine the coelacanth DNA hidden within his own sending ill-informed signals that he could feel at home deep, deep in the water. He finds the call easier to resist now than at the harbour, finds he can focus on his fledgling friendships in this city, his unwritten papers, remind himself of the small tasks he must accomplish on land. Sean still leaves the ocean behind him with some difficulty, but he feels more cheerful at this parting than the last. It will be there again; he will watch from a healthy distance.

* * *

Years pass. Sean works in research now, collecting samples of oceanic life for analysis, describing microscopic trends and changes. He likes the banality of the work, finds it balances the all-encompassing wonder and terror he still feels looking into the depths of the Atlantic. A co-worker of his once confided that she felt the detailed knowledge they had gained about the marine ecosystem sometimes distanced her from the fascination that had drawn her to that work in the first place. "It's hard," she explained, "to keep that anything-could-be-out-there feeling when we know so many of the rules regulating life." Sean knows what she means but does not feel too bothered himself. He still has so many unanswered questions.

He is on the deck of a large research vessel today, watching Signal Hill approaching as they return from a two-day expedition. This is only the second time Sean has been out in the field like this. The first time Surabhi had brought their pig-tail wearing daughter, a child with a million questions and many of them ocean life related, to see him off. Surabhi still doesn't feel attachment to the Atlantic the way she does for the landscape of her home country, but their daughter does. Home for her is this city, this ocean, these people; even as her darker skin still leads strangers to complicate the concept of "from" when speaking to her. Sean has tried to answer these questions with biology, describing how few genes code for differences in the human population when compared to the traits that are shared. Surabhi, more emotionally attuned to the cause of the distress, tells their daughter

that it is a special thing to have roots on two continents, that home is an expansive, shared concept, that the people so concerned with her heritage are themselves settlers.

He does not think he will see the pair waving at them as they enter the harbour today, it is cold and a heavy rain is falling. The conditions evoke memories of his first weeks in Newfoundland, his feeling of perpetually falling into deep, deep water. How much he had relied on the kindness of strangers, the forming of friends, to temper his obsessive thoughts with reminders that he is a person. Today, watching the shoreline appear out of the fog, Sean thinks fondly of his warm blankets and supper waiting at home, of a cup of tea and a fridge covered in macaroni art projects.

His thoughts turn to tomorrow - lab work, analysis, the mundanity of wonder. Discovery is slow work, the creation of knowledge an often tedious process. He does not feel unhappy about the extra hour they have spent on the water today. There is a wholeness to how he feels here that does not often reach him in the lab, a need he can't quite articulate to feel this closely his position in the ecosystem, the life cycle. His thoughts still often turn to the moment when he will cease to be himself, and instead become a source of food, a decomposing mass of molecules, a part of the greater biomass. But he no longer feels any urgency, it is an almost comforting thought.

* * *

Ocean Funeral

Rachel Barnes

Uncle Sweater fished inside the bag of Doritos, hauled out a ninja star chip, and then hurled it straight at me.

“Hey!” I jumped out of my lawn chair to avoid the projectile, but I was too slow and it crumbled over my tank top, leaving a trail of orange dust.

“Wow, you can’t even dodge my dad.” Jack said.

I glared at him and shook my shirt out. The hotdog in my hand seemed like great ammunition, but I didn’t want to sacrifice my lunch. Plus Mom would probably kill me. I could, however, spare a piece of my bun. I spun around in my seat and flung the bread at Jack—the easier target.

“I’m being ambushed!” He waved his arms in the air, but the bun hit him on the nose and tumbled onto the smooth beach rocks.

“Look what you’ve got started.” Auntie hit Uncle Sweater on the arm.

“I’m innocent.” Uncle Sweater smiled wide. I thought he looked like a scarecrow with his missing front tooth.

Auntie leaned over and covered his mouth with her hand. “You’ve got to fix that already. You’re like something out of Timbuktu.”

“Come on, you can’t resist—” He took Auntie’s hand and kissed it. “All this charm.”

She pulled her hand away. “Okay, Willie the Giant.”

Now was my chance. I tore off another piece of bun, aimed, and threw it at Uncle Sweater’s head.

Uncle Sweater hauled the bread out of his hair and popped it into his mouth.

“Free snack.”

“Gross.”

From the corner of my eye, I saw Jack shift suspiciously in his seat. He reached into the bag of marshmallows, put one to his mouth, and paused.

I saw a blur of white and moved on reflex, closing my palm around something mushy. Jack was sneaky, but not sneaky enough. Without skipping a beat, I drew back and launched the marshmallow at his cheek. Bullseye.

“How did you—” He ran his hands down his face and groaned.

“You’re becoming quite the thrower, Becca.” Uncle Sweater said. “I’m gonna have to start wearing a helmet during practice.”

Mom looked up from her book. “A tinfoil hat, you mean.”

Everyone snickered.

“Well, if my knees ever let us get back at it.”

“The shots should help though, right?”

He nodded, although his smile didn’t meet his eyes. Would he be better before I tried out for the grade six team in September?

* * *

“Well, I’m dying.” Uncle Sweater wiped the sweat from his forehead and hauled his shirt over his head. “Anyone want to swim?”

“Yes!” Jack and I said at the same time.

“You don’t have any swim clothes.” Mom said.

I pushed the breath out of my cheeks.

“So?” Jack got up and began loosening his belt. “No one is here. Dad and I go swimming in our underwear all the time.”

While the mountains provided decent coverage from the road, I wasn’t convinced that no one else would show up. Summerford wasn’t that small. “I’m not swimming in my underwear.”

I turned to Mom for support, but she shrugged and poked the fire with a stick. “It’s up to you. Just don’t get your clothes wet.”

Auntie looked at Uncle Sweater. “I thought your knees were bad today.”

“Go on by. It’s just a little swim. Good for the ‘ol joints.”

“Be careful. I’m serious.”

“You got it, boss.”

The boys stripped down to their boxers and danced along the rocks to the shore. I followed, watching as Jack tentatively poked his toes into the water, then hauled his foot out as if he walked over hot coals. “That’s pure ice!”

“It’s the same thing as a swimsuit, Becca.” Uncle Sweater said.

It was absolutely not. Mom took me to Walmart to get my first training bra last week, and there was no way I was stripping down. I wrapped my arms around my chest and shook my head.

“You’re missing out.”

I stormed back to the fire.

* * *

When I returned, Auntie was reclined in her zero gravity chair, shielding her eyes with a ball cap. “You can’t talk to him.” She said to Mom. “He’s gonna give me a stroke one of these days.”

I sat on the cooler. “Is Uncle Sweater okay?”

“He’s fine,” Mom said quickly.

“Oh, your uncle is fine, honey. Stubborn as a mule, though. Did you know he broke his ankle the year we lived on the mainland? Backflipped off the play place.”

“Why?”

“Jack dared him, and God knows he can’t turn down an adventure.”

We all turned to look at him. He was already twenty feet out, diving under the whitecaps to look for shells.

“Why do I even try?” Auntie sighed.

* * *

Mom’s conversation with Auntie faded into the background like TV static. I reached into my bag to grab my ball when a strange voice echoed in my ears. Who was that? I looked at Mom and Auntie, but they didn’t seem to notice. It

wasn't Jack, the voice was too deep, rich like red velvet. Was it Uncle Sweater? I hoisted myself from my lawn chair and padded down to the shore.

Jack hadn't made it out past his waist. He edged forward, his arms held up in front of his face, gasping every time the cold water inched up over his stomach. "Your dad's putting you to shame."

He wrinkled his nose at me and continued to tiptoe forward.

Fine, we could play that game. I picked up a smooth rock and hurled it next to Jack's leg.

It skipped over the water like a Sea-Doo.

"What the?"

"Dive in ya wuss."

"You're one to talk."

I frowned and looked back at Mom. We had a one-hour drive back to Gander, and she didn't want me to sog up the car with wet clothes.

"I bet one hundred bucks you're too chicken to get in."

Mom wouldn't notice a few splashes, would she? I rolled up my shorts and charged at him like a bull.

"Get him good, Becca." I heard Auntie call from the shore.

"You better dry off after," Mom yelled.

I smirked, remembering my training with Uncle in the fall. I took a deep breath, balanced on my tiptoes, and pumped my arms for momentum.

"Wait—! I surrender!"

"Too late!" I cupped my hands and a wave collapsed over him.

"Y-you'll pay for that."

I opened my mouth to respond, closed it. The strange voice was back, whispering into my ear. I heard syllables but couldn't make out what it was saying—something about my uncle? I scanned the cove and couldn't make out where it was coming from. "Did you hear that?"

"Hear what?"

"Never mind." Beyond the reef, Uncle Sweater approached an island lined with jutting rocks. "Is he okay out there?"

"Why wouldn't he be?"

An uneasy feeling nestled in the pit of my stomach. "Wanna see if we can

catch up to him?”

“I’ll race ya.”

We took off toward the island, arms pumping. We didn’t make it far—as soon as the water reached our shoulders, Mom stood and yelled at us to come back.

“Come on, let’s go.”

“Hold on.” I pushed myself above the waves. Uncle Sweater was just out of earshot; if I picked up the pace, I could get close enough to yell out.

“It’s not safe.”

“I know, I just—” A roller splashed over my head and I blinked. My ears began to burn, and it felt as though the ocean was crashing against my eardrums, warning me that Uncle Sweater was in danger. “I need to tell him the wind is getting bad.”

“He’s fine, by.”

I turned and swam toward the island, ignoring the cries from Mom and Auntie. “Uncle Swea—!” Another wave whipped over me and I swallowed water. Before I could clear my throat, I was jerked beneath the whitecaps and felt myself being pulled out to sea like a ragdoll. I fought against the current, thrashing with my arms, but it was as though the ocean had grasped me by the ankle, and no matter how much I kicked, the wavering light above drifted further and further out of view. The world became a turquoise mosaic, and then I could see nothing.

* * *

I lifted my head from the ground and brushed flecks of sand from my cheek, feeling small imprints in my skin. It took all of my strength to pull myself to sitting; it was as if my limbs had been filled with tar. Wasn’t I just swimming with Jack? I remembered getting into the water, my arms becoming heavy, and then—nothing. I took a deep breath, counted to three, and keyed into the sensation of my chest filling with air.

Behind me, I heard soft chatter and the crackling of a fire. It was hard to see anything through the darkness—was that my family? I could see the outline

of what looked to be Uncle Sweater, leg bouncing. Then I spotted Mom. I sighed.

“Were you scared?”

Was that Jack? His voice sounded weird, as if his mouth was full of sand. I picked myself off the ground and crept closer to the fire. Why did he look so old?

“Just about shit my pants.” I heard Uncle Sweater say.

“Aren’t they huge?” The voice—Jack—asked.

“Longer than three of me put together.”

“So you didn’t get all the bottles?”

“Oh, I got ‘em all.”

“Do you have a death wish?” Auntie cut in. “Men-o’-war are dangerous. Why am I only just hearing about this?”

“The bys had me on video—what was I supposed to do? Turns out I still got it.”

Auntie took a deep breath and turned back to the fire.

Jack ran his hands up and down his arms. “I’m getting cold.”

“Throw a junk in.” Uncle Sweater said.

“I’ll do it.” A girl said. Her voice seemed oddly familiar, but I couldn’t make out who it was. She disappeared down the beach, piling logs into her arms until she could barely stand.

When she returned, she released her grip and the driftwood slid onto the flames. A burst of flankers erupted and I shielded my eyes.

“Watch it!” Jack batted at his shorts.

“Stop being such a drama queen.”

“I am not.”

I stepped into the light and froze. The girl looked just like me, even down to the mole on the left side of her nose. Her hair was as auburn as mine, and she had a dimple in the same place, right in the middle of her left cheek. It was like I was peering through a looking glass, but instead of my ten-year-old self gazing back, I was looking at myself as a teenager.

“What’s going on?”

No one noticed me.

I reached out to touch the girl's shoulder, but my hand went straight through her. In fright, I stumbled and fell backward.

It all came back to me in a rush: the feeling of being dragged underwater, my attempt to claw toward the surface. My breath quickened and the voices in the background became a blur.

Did I drown?

"Don't worry, Becca," I heard Uncle Sweater say. My head shot up. "We can go diving again after my surgery."

It was then that I noticed the cane lodged against his lawn chair. I wiped my eyes. Why did he have a cane? Did he hurt himself on the rocks? I staggered to my feet and extended a hand to touch him, but he flickered like a candle and disappeared.

The rest of the family nattered on as if nothing had happened.

I strode over to the water in a daze. "Can anyone hear me?"

From ten feet out, a wave began to swell, kicking into the air like a fountain. It quickly grew taller than me, taller than any wave I'd ever seen. What on earth? I took a step back. Water splashed against its edges, and against all logic, it appeared to be growing limbs. Was this real? I didn't have time to think—there was another splash, and the wave—which no longer looked like a wave at all, stepped onto the surface of the ocean. I was too awestruck to move. When it was just a few feet away, water flicked over its head, and it began to look like a person. I took a breath. The wave had transformed into a beautiful goddess, like something from a dream. She wore a coral crown and her hair flowed behind her like a dragon.

When she spoke, my ears hummed like they had on the beach. "Rebecca. I have grave news for you."

"I—Are you real?"

"I must warn you that your uncle is in trouble."

"I'm not dead?"

"No."

"What's wrong with Uncle Sweater?"

"We must act quickly, before you awaken."

I hesitated. What did I have to lose? The goddess reached out her hand,

and I took it gingerly. When our hands connected, the earth exploded into a thousand colours. Seasons flashed before my eyes. I watched the scene unfold like a movie, and I pinched myself when I realized we were travelling through time.

* * *

We stopped at Uncle Sweater's house in Botwood. I did a double-take. Instead of the cozy home that we painted yellow last summer, it looked like something from a horror film.

Weeds invaded the yard, paint peeled off the siding, and a massive crack twisted down the front window. I spotted two teenagers standing by the creek in the back. "Is that...me?"

"Yourself and Jack."

"How old are we?"

"Fifteen."

She brought us closer, until I could make out their voices. "Dad's being weird again." Jack said.

"Oh."

"Best if we stay outside for now. Mom's been going at him all morning."

"Maybe we can go for a swim?"

Jack nodded. They grabbed their bikes from the shed, ran inside to get towels, and peddled off in the direction of Northern Arm.

The goddess turned toward the house. "Your uncle is inside." She took us to the kitchen, where Uncle Sweater chopped carrots at the counter and Auntie shuffled through bills at the table.

Auntie opened an envelope, retrieved a credit card from inside, and then cut it into pieces.

"We can't afford to have you off work like this."

He threw the knife down and it clanged against the countertop. I flinched. "What do you want from me? Should I grow a new pair of legs?"

"I want you to get the revision surgery."

"And end up crippled? I should never 've gotten that surgery. That doctor

thinks that—”

“The doctor thinks it will help.”

He scoffed. “All he wants is a quick paycheck. The medical industry is nothing but a—”

“Can you—” She ran a hand through her hair. “How are we going to feed Jack?”

He threw up his arms. “If God doesn’t want us to starve, then—”

Auntie threw the credit card pieces at him. “What is wrong with you?”

Uncle Sweater became red in the face and pointed a finger at Auntie. “Don’t you fucking dare.”

She stared up at him. “Jack will be home soon.”

I saw Uncle Sweater’s jaw lock. He seemed to be considering something, but then he turned and disappeared into the basement. I heard shuffling, and something heavy hit the wall. I covered my mouth with my hand. Why was he acting like this?

The goddess guided us into the basement, where a chair was overturned in the corner.

Uncle Sweater paced the room, muttering curses under his breath. It felt wrong to look, but I couldn’t tear my eyes from him. After a long pause, he grabbed a screwdriver and kneeled in the corner next to the vent. What was he doing? I furrowed my brows as he dug out a kettlebell and a rope. He carried them to his workbench, hobbling against the weight.

The goddess paused the scene. “I must take you five more years into the future.”

* * *

We stopped on the front lawn of my house. “Do you still wish to learn the truth about your uncle?”

I hesitated, pictured his face, red like a pitcher plant. “Shouldn’t Mom or Dad—”

“I only have the power to communicate with those whose hearts belong to the water.”

OCEAN FUNERAL

The water. I loved the water, just like Uncle Sweater.

I took a deep breath. “I want to help him. That’s why you’re showing me, right?”

She nodded, and her hair flowed over her shoulders.

We entered the kitchen. Inside, Mom sat with Auntie, warming her hands on a cup of Red Rose. She had scattered gray hairs and weary eyes.

Auntie’s voice trembled. “I don’t know what to do anymore. He refuses to get help and he keeps going on about buying a sailboat. A sailboat! He hasn’t worked in years. And then this—” She slid paperwork over to Mom. “He was rejected, but—”

Mom glanced at the paper and blinked. “I thought he was doing better.” The paper read Request for Medical Assistance in Dying. What did that mean?

Auntie kept talking. “Did he tell you he tried to drown himself the year we separated?

Right in the backyard. Jack was asleep in the bed.” She let out a breath. “I can’t take much more of this. He said he’d get help if I took him back—”

Mom took Auntie’s hands in her own. “We’ll figure it out. Together.”

Their conversation became white noise, and I struggled to breathe. “He tried to—?”

The goddess wrapped me into an embrace.

“Why would he—”

She shook her head.

“Can we help him?”

“I do not know if his path can be altered, but unless we act—” She snapped a finger and the scene blurred like a video on fast-forward.

* * *

When the world stopped spinning, I looked around at the overgrown beach and furrowed my brows. Was this Summerford? “How far in the future is this?”

“Fifteen years.”

I heard a wailing noise and jerked my head. “What’s happening?”

The goddess pointed toward a sailboat that rocked just off the shore, where people gathered on the deck. “This is your uncle’s funeral.”

“F-funeral?” I suddenly felt faint. My heart rate quickened and my vision blurred. The goddess offered a hand and I grasped it, struggling to keep myself upright.

“Do you wish to see the rest?”

“Y-yes.” She brought us close to the boat, where my family gathered and listened to Auntie speak.

“He was sick for a long time. When he was well, he was so good. Good to me, good to Jack. I just wish he would’ve gotten help...” It was then that I noticed the jar in her arms, blue and smooth.

Mom took a deep breath and I turned to see her clutching the rail. “I haven’t been able to think straight. I don’t know what to feel—I feel so angry. Who abandons their family like that?”

We could be having a fire right now, but he refused to get help.”

“Damned if I didn’t try.” Auntie said.

“No one could’ve helped him, Mom. He didn’t want help.” I studied Jack’s face. His brows were creased and his jaw was set. I could see that the boy I once knew was long gone.

“Oh my,” Mom said. “Your dad was many things, but it was hard when we saw the bad more often than the good.”

It was the adult version of myself who spoke next. “Remember that time he wore my sweater around the Swanee Pool all weekend? It was so small he could barely walk. People thought he was nuts. That’s how his nickname started, isn’t it?” She smiled, but the happiness didn’t reach her eyes. “We had a lot of good adventures.”

“We did.” Auntie stroked the jar. After a long pause, she wiped her cheeks and sucked in a breath. “Is everyone ready? I don’t think I can stand to look at him any longer.”

“I’m ready.” Jack said.

Auntie kissed the porcelain. “Until the next life, my love...” She let go, and we watched the jar sink into the ocean.

This couldn’t happen.

OCEAN FUNERAL

I felt the goddess yank her hand from mine. What—? My stomach dropped and I felt the rush of wind on my arms. Without her touch, I was in free-fall. Water, colder than anything I'd ever felt, rushed over me and made my chest tight. I tried to reach out, but before I could grasp her wrist a thick ash swirled into the water, flooding into my nostrils and mouth. I choked, swallowed brine, and felt the strength drain from my muscles.

* * *

I retched, spit out water. My tongue burned with salt.

"It's okay, get it all out." Uncle Sweater patted my back. "Are you okay? Did you hit your head?"

I touched my forehead. "I don't know..." Why couldn't I remember? I heard rocks shifting and turned to see Mom and Auntie jogging toward me, their brows creased with worry.

The memories came back slowly. I remembered a goddess, a cane, and then—I covered my mouth with my hand. I sobbed into Uncle Sweater's chest.

"It's okay."

"A-are you going to—the waves—a lady—and then you—"

"Hey, hey. Slow down. I've got you." I felt his strong arms wrap around me.

I pushed off his chest, holding myself at arm's length. "Can I go to the doctor's with you?"

"The doctor's? I just need a little TLC and then—"

"No, not—not because of that." I stared at the anchor tattoo on his forearm, unable to look him in the eyes. "I don't want you to be sad. A lady told me, she said you were going to—to—"

He looked confused. "You know I'm made of steel, right? Just like Iron Man. Let's get you back to the fire—we need to get your head checked out."

* * *

Monster Trackers

Kyle Penney

The vast ocean stretched out before us as we sailed, the waves crashing with immense power against our vessel. The sun beat down upon us, making the air feel like it was on fire and causing beads of sweat to trickle down our faces. As night fell, the temperature plummeted, and the chill in the air made it hard to even draw breath. But on the last day of our journey, we finally saw what we had been searching for, and the excitement and relief we felt was palpable. Almost as much as the time when we had been able to tag ourselves a Cthulhu.

“Captain! Captain! Billy Boy just Saw one off Starboard stern!”

I was jolted out of my sleep by a sudden cry from one of my crew members. Heart pounding, I quickly bolted out of my quarters to see what was happening. As I stepped outside, I caught a glimpse of a colossal creature that was as massive as a Shastasaurus. Its long neck towered high like a giraffe’s while its flippers extended out, spanning the length of three blue whales. The sight of this majestic creature left me awestruck.

“Now that’s one big creature there, hey captain?” One of my crew members joked.

“You got that right, Thomas. All Right, ye Land Lovers Get the Tracker Ready And the Hook Warmed Up. We Got Work to Do!” I barked, and my crew scrambled into action.

But as soon as we began our pursuit, the monster noticed us and started swimming away with its powerful tail, causing waves that nearly capsized our

ship. It was a struggle, but thanks to my crew's speed and quick thinking on the helm, we managed to keep the boat from capsizing. We chased after the creature at full throttle, with the wind in both sails and the engine running as strong as it could.

The beast was clever, dodging every toss we made and turning every time we launched the hook. But we soon began to close in. With one clean shot, we felt the line snap tight, and the creature dragged the ship along with it. It was afraid that we were going to harm it, and I could see the fear in its eyes when it turned its head. Just as we saw the hook loosening, something unexpected came from below the deck.

"Captain, we Got the Tracker!" my first mate shouted in the chaos.

Despite the violent rocking of the ship, I ran to get the tracker and loaded it onto one of the launchers. I had to attach the tracker to this massive beast, and when I saw my shot, I took it. It felt like time was standing still when the tracker was thrown, but it landed on the creature, and we were able to track its movements. The tracker is implanted in the spine of the beast. It was thrashing around like a madman in a padded cell. It would have sunk the ship if I hadn't said these words to the woman in charge of hooking the creature.

"Release the Hook!" I shouted.

It was hard but our efforts were well worth it because we could see it was well attached to the beast meaning more creatures to understand. Like that, it was over. The expedition was at its end it was tough, it was gruelling, but it was finally over. It was all finally over. We began to set sail back home to the island as soon as we went to the port of the docks. The stevedore met us as he tied off the bow and stern, and we dropped anchor. As soon as we stepped onto the docks, many people praised us for our recent success. One man came and gave Thomas a big kiss, saying he was happy he was home.

"Well, now Thomas I know your husband is happy to see you but I did not expect him to be this happy," I joked with my crew roaring with good-hearted laughter. "All right Everyone After What Happened This Month I Say we Head Down To the Pub to Celebrate On Me!"

They were more than happy to hear that with many of them roaring in

cheers. As evening enveloped the day, all hands were enjoying a beverage at the local pub with some of my men telling the story of our recent experience on the sea, some in a drinking contest with one of the patrons, or some just dancing to the song the band was playing. All in all, it was nice seeing my faithful crew acting more human than sea dogs that are barking. Soon enough, though, the head of the sea monster research division commanded us to see our recent findings. We arrived at a towering building with the symbol of a Kraken and the letters S, M, R and D underneath. After showing our identification, we made our way to the laboratory, where we saw several brainiacs intently working with technical equipment. Some were examining the organs of one creature, while others were measuring the full-body length of another. The atmosphere was intense, but everyone was focused on their work.

We then proceeded to the main office of the woman in charge, who also happened to be my wife. She greeted us with a warm smile and welcomed us inside.

“Hello, Eddy, hello, lads, I see you’ve been well,” she greeted us kindly with her sweet Irish lilt.

We exchanged pleasantries and caught up on what had been happening since we last saw each other. I boasted about how we had been busy tracking down monster sightings and making sure we tagged them all, which earned a chuckle from my wife.

However, the conversation took a serious turn when my wife showed us a world map. She explained that the recent creature we had tagged was not on any of their biology charts and had a different swim pattern compared to a Kraken or a Megalodon. This piqued our interest, and my first mate and I went into the tracking hub where the S.M.R.D keeps track of the ships responsible for tagging the monsters and the creatures themselves.

We noticed that the most recent beast we had tagged had gone under the island off the coast of where we live and had not moved since. This was a cause for concern, and my first mate asked my wife what this code meant.

“It means that if we plan on finding it, we need to go underground using a specially-made sub without polluting the waters of the earth,” she answered

honestly.

This was a surprising revelation, but it showed us that there was much more to learn about these creatures. As long as we stayed vigilant and level-headed, we were certain to understand these creatures more and more. We left the building with a renewed sense of purpose, knowing that we had important work to do. After months of relentless efforts, we finally managed to recruit a group of experienced monster trackers who had specialized in underwater survival. With the sub ready for launch, we were eager to embark on our mission to the cave beneath the island. Mildrid had done an excellent job in assembling the team, but some of the members raised concerns among our crew. The sonar operator carried a harpoon, which seemed odd and worrisome because we were only meant to understand these creatures, not hurt them.

Despite our reservations, we set off on our journey, and our research on the island's structure proved invaluable. We discovered a tunnel leading from an abandoned mine on the island to the collapsed tunnels, where to our surprise, we encountered loose rocks hanging off the cave's walls. The driver managed to carefully dodge most of the stones, but soon our luck ran out. The operator had hit one of the stones and caused a massive cave-in that would have crushed us. If it wasn't for the quick thinking of my first mate, who took control of the sub and managed to divert it through the narrow gaps and falling rocks, he saved us from certain doom.

After this close call, I approached the crew's helmsman, who was meant to assist us, to express my concerns about the group's questionable behaviour. It was essential to ensure that we could trust everyone on the team, given the risks involved in our mission.

"What Was That?! Tell Me, What, Was, That?!!" I yelled at him.

"Captain calm down," The Deck officer of the submarine said to me.

"Don't Tell Me to Calm Down! His Driving Almost Got Us Killed and Possibly Blocked Off Our Only Way Out!"

But my words died in my throat when we saw what we had seen next. What we are standing in right now is the home of the various sea animals we were meant to find. For when we were busy trying to flee for our lives from the

cave-in, we managed to inadvertently find the monster's home. But I think it should be described as a herd of them, with most of them being children. As we gazed upon the creatures with their light and malleable skin, we had spent an undisclosed amount of time studying them, but soon it was time to head back to the subsurface. However, before we could proceed, a cry emanated from one of the creatures' young. Upon turning around and running to the noise, we saw the deck officer capturing all the young, alongside the elders, who were being imprisoned in cages. We immediately ran towards them to try and intervene, but one of the sub-crew members pointed a harpoon at us, halting our efforts.

"What are you all doing? Stop!" my first mate yelled in concern.

"It's elementary," the deck officer replied. "We are taking every last one of these valuable beasts and training the young to sink a whole fleet of navy ships."

"Why, though?" I asked.

"Do you have any idea how much power an army of these monsters can wield? Imagine how much one piece of their skin can be used as a sail for at least three ships. We will take the older ones and kill them for their skins."

"I knew I should never have trusted any of you," I said to the deck officer with anger.

After they gathered all the creatures, they loaded them into cages and boarded the sub. I could feel nothing but anger and betrayal seeing these poachers stealing these beautiful sea animals. Then, to add insult to injury, the sub took off without us, leaving us stranded in the now-empty cave that the creatures called home. We were left alone, with nothing but the sound of dripping stalactites dripping on the cave ceiling.

But our luck changed when one of the creatures managed to slip away undetected. It approached us with a desperate look in its eyes, offering to guide us to the submarine. We were hesitant at first, not knowing if it was angry at us for inadvertently being the ones responsible for its family being kidnapped. But we could see in its eyes that it was begging us for our help, so seeing how we needed to get to the subsurface, we agreed to help. The best opened its massive jaws, and we climbed in, not knowing what to expect.

The creature's mouth was a strange and eerie place. It was dark and damp, with the smell of rotting fish stinging our nostrils. We could feel the creature's muscles contracting and expanding as it swam through the water. It was a surreal experience, unlike anything we had ever encountered before.

As we approached the sub after the creature's surface, we could see that it was damaged, with smoke billowing from its engines. We could only imagine what had happened in our absence. The creature who had carried us to the surface had damaged the sub in its attempt to save its family, with the sub crew trying to escape in desperation.

We could see the creature's family trapped in the cages, sinking deeper into the ocean. Panic set in as we realized that we were running out of time. The only survivor of the attack was the deck officer who betrayed us, who was drifting on a piece of waterproof carbon fibre.

But we still had one advantage - the monster who had saved us. As we sat in its mouth, I spoke to the sea creature, trying to persuade it to help us once more. The fate of the creature's family's lives rested in its massive jaws.

"Can you get me close to him?!" I asked, pointing to the deck officer.

It looked at me asking if I was crazy but complied anyway, lowering its head to him. I grabbed him by his jacket finding any way to release the cages before they sank too far deep in the ocean. Thankfully, I managed to find a remote to the cages which was somehow working, freeing them all. Soon, he woke up seeing his precious so-called hall swimming away. He also tackled me out of the mouth of the creature and onto the peas of the broken sub. We soon fell in an exchange of blows with us throwing punch after punch, kick after kick. But the deck officer was fighting dirty with one swipe of my legs. I was on the ground with him on top of me, trying to strangle the life out of me.

"You. You and Your meddling crew hand ruined Everything!!! Do You Have Any Idea On How Much You Cost Us!!!"

"N-No, but I- know w-who got t-to keep som-ething," I struggled to say, looking to the horizon and seeing the pack of creatures swimming away from this fight.

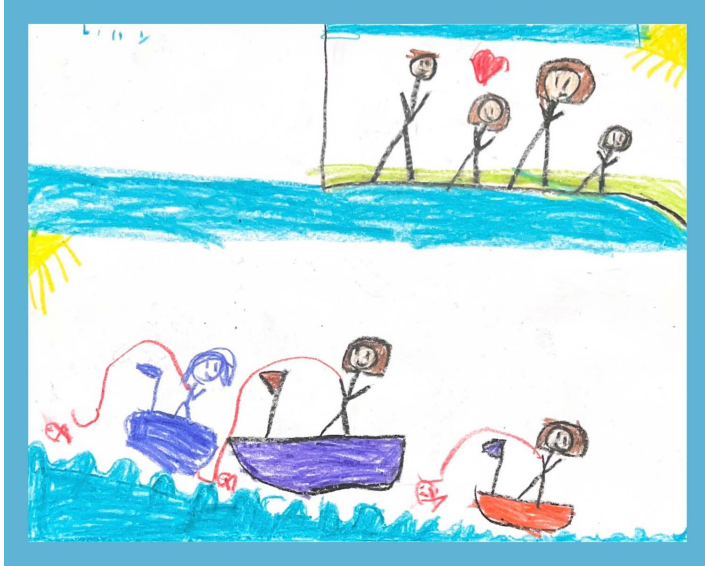
As I fought for my life against a man who had left me for dead and almost

choked me to death, my first mate acted quickly and hit him on the head with a piece of derby, knocking him out cold. After the intense struggle, we were finally on our way back home, and the long journey gave me time to reflect on my life. I realized that I might be ready to retire and spend the rest of my days with my wife and son.

Now, standing here, I'm telling this tale to your grandson, describing the thrill of adventure and the danger that comes with it. I'm encouraging him to work hard and earn his sea legs, to follow in our footsteps and become a great Monster tracker. With dedication and perseverance, he may be able to surpass even me or his grandfather and make his mark on the world.

* * *

At a young age Kyle was one who always had his head in the clouds and a hunger for a story. Kyle was born the youngest of a family of four. Raised in Corner Brook, Newfoundland. He has a very strong love for nature, outdoor activities, family, friends and hard work. Also being born with very high functioning autism, he tends to see the world differently than most. With a passion for learning and creativity especially anything that involves cooking, reading, animation and storytelling. A love for fantasy, action and adventure. May inspiration fly!



Lily, Bonne Bay Academy (Elementary)

II

Reuniting

Mi'kmaq Moons and Magnetically Attuned

Erica (Samms) Hurley

I lift my head, eyes closed, up toward the rays streaming down. I enjoy the feeling of heat warming my face while I notice brisk moments of salty air blowing gently around me. A few stray hairs keep smacking my face in what seems a playful way. I smile as I think about the ocean and how it seems to be tickling me with my own hair. I slowly open my eyes while simultaneously taking a big deep breath. I hold it. The feeling of fullness fills me. I hold onto the ocean air so long that it starts to burn inside my chest and I release it with a sound that is a cross between a sigh and a giggle. I suddenly recognize my Mom's voice. She is calling me to come get ready to leave but I pretend to not hear her, attempting to ignore her as long as I can before getting into trouble. Even at the age of eight I know that my heart is more content here, by the water. I feel happier with my toes in the rocky sand. I feel more alive. I wonder who calls me the loudest, my Mother or the ocean.

I awake suddenly out of my slumber, leaving that memory behind. It takes me longer than usual to come to my senses and be fully aware of where I am. I look over at the annoying phone plugged into the charging port aggressively getting louder and louder. I never noticed before how bright that face screen

is, that to is almost aggressive. I finally reach over and hit the off button. Walking to the washroom I start to think about all the meetings I have today, the lecture I have to prepare to present, and those reports that need editing. Without much thought to my actions, I prepare for the day and the next thing I really hone into is that I am entering my office, closing the door. Its almost as if my mind shut off while I completed the task and made the journey to come into work. I notice that the computer screen is aggressively bright like my cell phone. I instinctively look up toward the small skylight window and sigh. With no window to the outdoors this sad single skylight is my only connection to the outside. Today I feel such a strong disconnect even though my lands are right behind these walls. I push the nagging feeling aside and sit down in my office chair.

As the day goes on I realize that I have not taken the time to eat and it is well past lunchtime. Thinking about food I am brought back to a time with Dad. I had been playing outside and I noticed he was heading to our old Dodge Ram truck. I instinctively dropped what I was doing and began to run in his direction. "Dad. Dad. Where ya going? Can I come?", I screamed. Our house was on a hill and the driveway was steep but it was only a short walk to the flat side of the road where our truck was parked. He kept walking and yelled, "Go tell ya Mudder". I do a quick stop almost going head over heels and make a complete turn back towards the house. I run up to the big picture window that is located on the front of the house and start throwing little pebbles at its glass. The window faced towards the bay and often Dad would sit in front of it just looking out, staring at nothing for long periods of time. It doesn't take but a few seconds and Mom was there. "Holy Hell, Stop throwing rocks", she said sharply. I simply yelled back, "Goin with Dad". I could hear the trucks engine roar to life as it started up and I took off towards it. As I skidded to a stop alongside the Dodge I almost collided with the metal door. I quickly opened it up and jumped into the cold seat. "Where we going?", I asked slightly out of breath. "Down the bay where the nights are gay and the sun shines down on the lobster pots", he sing songed ending off in a loud laugh. I was pumped, I love going down home to the Cove. It wasn't like where our house was next to the main road. At home we weren't aloud to

go towards the street, only up towards the trees, and not very far. Not like down the Bay where we were allowed to ride bikes all over the community, visit the ocean and get into lots of adventures. The truck pulled out onto the road and I rolled down the window letting the cool air coming off from the bay rush in.

It was a cooler day but not cold. I remember walking up and down the waters edge collecting shells while Dad was talking to the fisherman on the wharf negotiating a deal for some lobsters. It was common for him to trade loads of firewood for things such as this. Getting fish and lobsters from the fishermen when they came into shore was the only way we got those things, I couldn't ever remember getting them from a store. When Dad went talking to the men you didn't know if it was going to be ten minutes or an hour so I often headed towards the ocean. It wasn't until I had both pockets full that I heard my name being called to come on. I slowly wrote my name into the rough sand, almost as if leaving my name would somehow keep me connected to the ocean even after leaving. I heard my name again and took off running towards the road, precious findings secured secretly in my pockets. "Come on by, we got get these home and into the pot soon. Not every day we gets a feed like this", Dad said with a smile plastered across his face. The "ding" of a notification on the computer brings me back to the present. I now taste the salty water escaping from my eyes as it streams slowly over my lips. Instinctively I take a deep breath. I hold it. The feeling of fullness fills me. I hold onto the stale air so long that it starts to burn inside my chest and I release it with a sound that is a cross between a wounded cry and a sigh. I bring my hand up to wipe the tears and the movement makes me notice my medicines that sit on my filing cabinet. What is wrong with me I think to myself, what if someone sees me like this. Instinctively, I go to them. Lifting the shell holding the medicines up to my nose and I inhale the scents. I wish I could light my smudge right here. The distinct smells hit me. Even just smelling them I almost instantly feel a calm engulf me starting from my head moving down towards my toes. The feeling brings goosebumps upon my skin as my hair stands on end.

The medicines and this moment make me think about my Mi'kmaq

teachings that I have received. The traditional medicines of sweetgrass, cedar, sage and tobacco are common ones that people are now more aware of but it's the other medicines that I was told we also need to have recognized in order to become healthier. This includes things such as laughter, music, art and ceremony. The water ceremony instantly overtakes my thoughts in this moment as I stare down at the shell. My friend and Mi'kmaq knowledge sharer Arlene (Blanchard) White is a carrier of the water ceremony and has graciously allowed me to help out at many of the ceremonies that she has conducted. As Mi'kmaw women we have a role as water protectors. This role is deeply connected to our culture and multiple interconnected teachings. For example, as women we are carriers of children. It is our water within our wombs that the spirit of children are brought into the physical. Also, our bodies are made up of mostly water, very much like how mother earth is made up of mostly water. Our bodies require water and fluids so that blood can allow our heart to pump. The heart can also be said to be that connection to our ancestors, to the spirit world as our heart beats once we enter the womb. The blood within our body system is made up of water and also carries our blood knowledge. The Elders say the blood holds our stories and at times this knowledge comes through clearer even though at times we may not have the full understanding of where we obtained it. This is because our ancestors are within our DNA, our blood. Our relations and who we are is within our hearts. Thump, thump. Swoosh, swoosh.

With these thoughts I now have the sounds of waves and the washing of the water upon the shore replaying over and over inside my head. I allow myself to get lost in the sounds, taking that time to ground myself in who I am; my knowledge, teachings, my ancestors, the old ways, who I am. I will not have my voice silenced through bureaucracy or long-standing sacred cows but rather I will continuously work towards using my position and role to speak up for positive change. I hear the ding of the computer starting to invade my thoughts but instead of dreading it I now welcome it. Slowly I am present once again in the moment, holding my medicines. I place the smudge shell down and smile. I know who I am and what calls me, its in my blood.

It is in this moment in time that I realize I have fully chosen to accept the

challenges along with the privileges that I have been provided. There are many times in which I feel the struggle of being heard with my knowledge valued as a Mi'kmaq person but I have to remember that I am in the conversations while not that long ago our Newfoundland warriors were fighting just to be respected and recognized for who they were. I myself am very connected to this struggle as I grew up in my culture. My childhood was filled with lots of adventures to different locations, conversations around our rights, and meeting many different people because my Grandfather, Wilson Samms, was one of the many warriors. However, it isn't my grandfather who currently takes space in my thoughts in this moment but rather the image of the group of Mi'kmaw men rowing a traditional canoe. The six Mi'kmaw men of Miawpukek (Conne River, NL) travelled across the North Atlantic from Cape Ray, NL to Cape Brenton, NS in a birchbark canoe to prove that the journey has been done and could be once again done; Chief Mise'l Joe, Donny Benoit, Gerard Jeddore, Andrew Joe, Ricky Jeddore and Sulia'n Joe. I see a parallel between the story of these men journeying across the waters to have others recognize the knowledge and stories that they carry to my own journey through the academic institutions. At times I feel because there is doubt in what I say that it could be said that I am canoeing across rough waters. However, rough waters with enough time can become calm. I take up this journey to be a voice for our community, to create space and conversation for our ways. I sit in front of the computer screen, but it no longer seems so aggressive. The screens light now reminds me of the sun shining down upon the ocean creating the glisten across the water as you look out across its vastness. I think about overlooking the waters down the Bay where I often stood, sometimes when my Dad was bartering for fish off of the boats. I always feel a sense of home and contentment whenever I am there and especially when I am stood at the waters glistening edge. I decide in this moment that after work I am going to go down to the oceans edge in my community and lay my tobacco, say prayers for both the water and my Mi'kmaw water protectors. Words start to dance within my thoughts. They feel comfortable and known, as if the knowledge was planted carefully like a seedling waiting to erupt from the safety of the engulfed cocoon created by the soil. A prayer? Another gifting

perhaps had taken place perhaps during the night as Grandmother Moon washed away any remaining darkness, grounding me once again through her comforting light. I do not question further but take comfort in these prayers to be said at the waters edge.

I lift my head, eyes closed, up toward the rays streaming down. I enjoy the feeling of heat warming my face while I notice brisk moments of salty air blowing gently around me. A few stray hairs keep smacking my face in what seems a playful way. I smile as I think about the ocean and how it seems to be tickling me with my own hair. I slowly open my eyes while simultaneously taking a big deep breath. I hold it. The feeling of fullness fills me. I hold onto the ocean air so long that it starts to burn inside my chest and I release it with a sound that is a cross between a sigh and a giggle. I suddenly recognize my name being called. I do not ignore it. At the age of forty I know that my heart is more content here, by the water. I feel happier with my toes in the rocky sand. I feel more alive. I know who calls me the loudest, the ocean as if it is my magnet.

As if I am magnetically attuned.....
I am drawn to Mi'kmaq moons.....

The clicking of the keys has become unnerving,
as I ask myself what purpose am I serving.
Do I serve the collective or meet my own needs?
Someone has planted some unwanted seeds.

Survival came in the form of jobs,
but I ask myself if we prevailed then why do I sit here and sob.
Sob for the mother in which is forgotten,
why does no one see all that has become rotten.

The creations quickly becoming more and more broken,
what will be left if no one is woken.

MI'KMAQ MOONS AND MAGNETICALLY ATTUNED

She will rejuvenate and reset over time,
while everyone together will be punished for the crimes

As I taste the salt upon my lips,
my heart continues to do some unhealthy skips.
For I realize that water has streamed down from my eyes,
and in that moment I turn up to the sky.

Saying prayers for the creator to hear,
I no longer will allow myself to sit here in fear.
I turn to my teachings, stories and songs,
taking up that responsibility and giving voice to the wrongs.

Like the ocean and the crashing of waves,
the emotions let loose allowing me to engage.
Engaging with the magnet which pulls me near,
Grandmother moon calling forth all those tears.

The comforting sound of the crashing of waves,
is only one aspect that my body craves.
As women we are to uphold teachings and to protect,
therefore, we must allow ourselves the time to reconnect.

The clicking of keys is no long so unnerving,
as I realize that it is also an important role I am serving.
When taking the time to go to the ocean, the water, the sea,
I allow myself to be grounded and fully step into me.

I can wear the polyester suit,
and challenge those who continue to pollute.
As one can continue to honour the teachings of the water,
while exposing the full truths to their daughter.

OCEAN PEOPLE INSPIRE

I welcome the tears and shed them with no fear,
Because I've let go the lies as things become so clear.
Clear as the water that sits unpolluted,
I've reconnected and become re-rooted.

While survival did come in the form of jobs,
I no longer blindly follow the mobs.
These places of work, institutions and organizations,
must acknowledge that magnet that is at the heart of all our nations.

* * *

Erica (Samms) Hurley is a Mi'kmaw woman from Mount Moriah, located on the west coast of Newfoundland, and is connected to the community of Flat Bay on the island. She is a registered nurse and Assistant Professor with the Faculty of Nursing, Memorial University with a cross appointment in the School of Arts and Social Science Interdisciplinary Humanities Department, Grenfell Campus Memorial University. Erica is also a wife with two children, Shantel and James. She has been involved in community all of her life with a particular interest in advocating for Indigenous issues and rights, in all areas with a focus on health.

Pull Through

Shawn Doyle

The old ferry laboured through the clear blue Atlantic, cascading large columns of water over her bow as she bounced into the swell. There were roars of laughter and screams of joy. A group of teenagers stood in shock as the cold seawater drenched them to the bone. Cell phones captured the shocked open-mouthed smiles and frigid poses. There was a mood of joy that permeated the ship. You could cut the anticipation with a knife. These passengers were going home.

After a short steam, a dock became visible. It was a beehive of activity. Small boats were tied up with people scrambling around them. Streamers were being strung across every post to visually announce that a celebration was occurring. "Pull Through Come Home Year," the sign read. A man sat below the sign cranking out tunes on his button accordion. Quads and trikes scurried up and down the tiny community, leaving a trail of dust billowing from their tires.

Terrence was in the top deck, away from the crowd. He followed the quads up the hill and watched as they unloaded their cargo. He could see his old house on the cliff, just perched there like it had roots. Other homes stood close by; they scattered the shoreline like buckshot. These homes, however, were all renovated with shiny new windows and vinyl siding. The yards were mowed. Adirondack chairs adorned the freshly cut grass. Terrence could not help but be impressed. This place had been abandoned 30 years ago, but it looked like a ghost town that never fully surrendered. In front of every newly

renovated home was a sleeping mass of dark gray clapboard that was slowly creeping its way back into the ground. Rotting lobster pots were everywhere, poking up through the high uncut grass as if gasping for their last breath. Boats that once held the balance of survival on the water lay perishing on the beach, their last purpose to be midnight kindling.

Terence's gaze was drawn to the top of the ridge overlooking his old house. He knew the cemetery was there. He could just make out the iron Celtic cross that was once at its entrance. He shook his head unconsciously as if an unpleasant memory had been aroused.

Doris, his wife of many years, walked up the stairs and jolted him back to the present. "Hey," she said, "there you are. Off to yourself, what's the matter."

"Nothing," said Terence, trying to hide his mood.

"Just looking for some quiet to enjoy the sights."

"Is it how you remember it," Doris inquired.

"Sort of," Terence lamented.

"But you're happy to be here, aren't you?" Doris felt that something was eating at him. Something was keeping him from enjoying the moment.

"Yes," Terence replied, "I'm looking forward to seeing everyone."

Doris was about to continue her subtle interrogation, but the engines roared into reverse, announcing that the docking process had begun.

"C'mon," Terence suggested, "Let's get our stuff. My brother will be there with his quad to take us to the house."

Within a few minutes, the dock looked as if an ant's nest had been disturbed. There were men grabbing ropes and scurrying to secure them. Other men were getting a rudimentary gangplank and preparing it for docking. There were hugs, kisses, and tears of joy as families reunited.

With the ship pinned to the jetty and lines secured, people started to disembark.

Doris and Terence waited in line till their time came to go to shore. Doris walked gingerly onto the rickety gangplank. She was an Ontario girl, and this was her first trip to the rock, it all was a little scary. Terence walked behind her, ready to grab her if she lost her balance. He chuckled a little at her trepidation as the plank rocked back and forth.

“Terence,” came a voice from the crowd.

“Gerry,” Terence roared as he dropped his bag and hugged his brother.

Doris just lagged behind waiting for the family moment to end.

“Hey,” she finally spoke, “It’s my first trip to Newfoundland, do I get a hug?”

“Doris, Doris, Doris,” Gerry’s smile filled his face, he put out his arms, “Come here and give me a hug, I can’t believe you got him to come home.”

“It wasn’t easy,” said Doris, “He is bullheaded.”

Gerry crimped over from laughter.

“That’s a family tradition for sure,” he agreed.

“Ya, ya you two. Have your fun,” joked Terence.

“Easy there, sooky baby,” said Gerry, “My quad is just over here, crowd can’t wait to see you Terence, really, they can’t believe you came.”

Doris was surprised. They can’t believe you came. She said it over and over in her head. What did he mean by that? Am I overreacting? Terence always spoke well of his home, but never wanted to return. He resisted it every time she mentioned it. He always had some kind of excuse. Everyone she knew from Newfoundland took every excuse they could to go home, but not Terence.

Gerry and Terence loaded the luggage onto the quad. “Is that it?” said Gerry.

“That’s all,” said Terence.

“You coming?” said Gerry.

“No, we will walk. I want to show Doris all the sights,” joked Terence.

“Yes bye,” said Gerry, he seemed surprised.

Doris prickled at Gerry’s reaction. She had been around Newfoundlanders her whole adult life. She knew what a quick, “Yes bye,” meant. Why would Gerry be surprised that he would walk me through the town? This makes no sense, she thought.

Gerry roared off on his quad.

Terence began his tour explaining every nuance of his little town, Doris could feel his pride in every word.

They were met by another couple coming from the other direction. Terence glanced ahead, he expected to know everyone, but he did not recognize who

it was, so he gave a casual, "Whatta ya at."

The guy stopped in his tracks.

"Terence?" he said inquisitively, "Terence Brothers?"

Terence stopped and focused on the man. Still nothing came to him, he was a little embarrassed.

"You don't know me, do ya?" said the man.

"I'm sorry," Terence replied, "I don't."

"Well holy god Jeanie," said the man to the lady who was with him, "My old neighbour don't know me!"

Jeanie thought Terence, he looked at the lady, Jeanie McCarthy, it came to him right away. "Jeanie McCarthy," Terence blurted,

"You foolish girl, you actually married Danny Swain, you're crazy."

"Terence," Doris chastised.

The three of them came together in a big hug. Once again, Doris was the outsider.

Terence realized his error.

"I'm sorry, Doris," he said, "This is Danny Swain, and I'm guessing his wife, Jeanie."

The two nodded in unison,

"We were good friends in school," he continued,

"And this is my wife Doris, she's a mainlander," he quipped.

Doris slapped him flirtatiously.

"We're gonna have to screech you in Doris," laughed Danny.

"Now don't mind them two," said Jeanie, "They were like that in school, a couple of smart Alec's." "Oh, I'm well aware of that Newfoundland humor," said Doris, "I've been surrounded by it." "Terence Brothers," said Danny nodding his head as he spoke, "I can't believe you're really here." He paused, "Hey," he said excitedly, "We are going out to the point tomorrow to jig a couple and cook a feed. You and Doris are welcome to come."

"No thanks," said Terence apologetically.

"Why not?" Doris implored, "that sounds like fun Terence."

"The ocean is not all fun Doris," said Terence, forgetting himself for a second, and dampening the whole interaction.

“Now that’s enough Danny,” said Jeanie, “you got Terence overwhelmed. Let these two finish their walk,” she continued.

Danny looked like a child who was just chastised by his mother in secret code.

“Alright,” said Danny, “We will see you tonite at the kitchen party then.”

“That we will,” said Terence, regaining his composure “look forward to it.”

Doris glanced back at the two as they walked away, she could see Danny was getting a verbal bashing.

“They are a nice couple,” said Doris as she gingerly nudged at a perceived sore spot.

“They are,” said Terence.

“Why couldn’t they believe you came home?” Doris inquired

Terence wasn’t sure how to answer.

“Ah, I guess it’s where I’ve been away so long,” was all he could muster. Doris was unimpressed by the answer and continued to chip away

“Why wouldn’t you want to go fishing?” she asked.

“Cause I don’t want to go out on that water anymore,” Terence snapped. “What’s wrong Terence,” said Doris

Terence realized he was exposing himself and toned down his response, “I just don’t want to do something I moved to Ontario to get away from.”

Doris was about to dig a little deeper.

“Look,” said Terence, changing the subject, “That’s our family wharf.”

“It’s beautiful,” said Doris, letting him off the hook.

They walked to the edge of the dock.

“My god Doris,” said Terence, “I can’t believe the time I spent here.”

“Then why did you wait so long to come home,” Doris prodded, resuming her probing.

“I had my reasons,” Terence said quietly, “But enough about that, let’s head back to the house, I wanna see the crowd.”

“Alright,” said Doris, she did not want to push it.

“This way,” said Terence.

“No,” said Doris, “the road to your house is back there.”

“Doris, this is the shortcut,” Terence grinned, “but it’s a little steep.”

“What do you think I am, Terence, a Billy goat?” Doris grumbled.

Terence chuckled, “Come on,” he said, “got to toughen you up, and get the Torontonians out of ya.”

The path was narrow and straight uphill. It was beaten right down to the rocks in places. Other spots were filled with black moss that was moist and slippery. There were roots across the path, ready to trip an innocent walker looking up at their destination rather than down at their feet. “Watch the roots,” said Terence, “I think they tripped me when I was 12.”

Doris tried to laugh but was too winded.

Terence stopped and gazed out to sea.

Doris was delighted for the break.

When she caught her breath, she turned to see what Terence was looking at. The sun was dropping, it glistened and shimmered across the water.

“My god Terence, that is spectacular. I’ve never seen anything so beautiful in my life.”

“Don’t let it all fool you Doris, that out there can change in a minute.”

“Sounds like you are talking first-hand experience,” speculated Doris.

“I am,” Terence affirmed.

“Myself and Dad had a few rough trips in from there,” he pointed as he continued. “There was one time,” he paused as if deciding whether to finish. “I thought we were gone. Dad tied a small puncheon on each of us. He didn’t say why, but I knew it was to find the bodies.”

“Oh my Terence,” said Doris, “that’s terrible, how old were you?”

“Too young to be out in a boat like that. But we had to eat.”

Terence could see he had shocked Doris and pivoted quickly, “Hey, we made it,” he said, “that’s what counts.”

Doris was a little spooked by the harrowing ocean survival tale.

“Is that why you left here?” she questioned.

“It was a part of it,” said Terence.

“I loved fishing, but this place is in the middle of nowhere, and the ocean is a giver, but it’s a taker too.”

“What do you mean?” asked Doris. This was finally it, he would come clean, she waited for his response when a loud, “Hey!” from above broke the

conversation.

Terence and Doris turned to see a deck full of people waving to them.

“What’s wrong?” came a yell, “mainlanders lose their way?” The deck erupted in laughter. Terence waved back, “No need for that,” he shouted, “just a defibrillator will do.”

The gallery filled with laughter once again.

“Come on Doris,” said Terence, “Let’s finish this, or we will never hear the end of it.”

Out of breath, and a little sweaty, Doris and Terence reached the deck of his old family home. The joy of his return was immeasurable. Doris could feel it in the air. The prodigal son she thought.

“Can’t believe he made you climb that path,” came a voice from the deck. Doris looked up, it was Gerry’s wife Margie.

Doris fell into her arms, still trying to catch her breath.

“He’s trying to kill ya girl,” said Margie.

“Look of em over there, he don’t even know you’re here,” Margie continued with a joyous chuckle.

“I know,” said Doris, “it’s all about him.”

“That’s a man for ya,” said Margie.

Margie was pushed out of the way by a sea of well-wishers. In Newfoundland style, no perk, no small deed would be spared to make this woman welcome.

Terence was surrounded by his family, and they enjoyed every moment of his return. She could see in Terence’s face that he was overwhelmed by the attention.

Whatever was eating at him, it didn’t show.

Margie pushed her way back to Doris after she figured everyone had reacquainted. “Now child,” Margie commanded, “you got to be starving and supper is just about ready.” “Jiggs dinner,” joked Doris.

“Now ya knows,” Margie perked.

Doris latched on to Terence as she walked across the deck.

“Time for some Jiggs,” she said with a chuckle.

“Bye you are really turning into a Newfoundland girl” laughed Terence.

The kitchen was an organized mess. Steam billowed out through every opening. Two large pots on the stove spit out their salty juice and a pot of brown gravy simmered nearby. A partially carved Turkey lay in slices on the counter with a bowl of potatoes at its side— both ready for the picking.

“My god, that smells good,” said Terence.

“Hey,” said Doris.

“I love your cooking, too,” Terence quickly replied.

“Ya, that’s right,” said Gerry, “you watch yourself, you gotta go home you know.”

“That’s right,” said Doris to a chorus of cheers.

Terence finished his meal and was talking to his brothers. “Did you enjoy your meal?” Doris interrupted sarcastically.

“I dare say he did, sure he inhaled it,” said Gerry.

“Good one to talk,” said Terence, tapping Gerry on the belly. “Terence,” Doris scolded.

The men laughed at her admonishment.

“You guys are terrible,” said Doris

“Yes they are,” agreed Margie, “like a bunch of teenagers, now it’s time to do the dishes, we will see how smart they are then,” she continued.

“Easy girls,” said Gerry, “go freshen up for the kitchen party. We will do the dishes.”

“That sounds perfect,” said Margie, “bout time ya did something.”

Like trained soldiers, the men tacked the kitchen. In no time, the place sparkled.

“Well byes,” said Margie, “look at the job ya did, yer some good. Now, grab that cooler and let’s head over to Denis Condon’s. I can hear the accordion from here.”

The sun was dipping on the horizon, almost buried behind its watery hiding place. It left a beautiful wispy orange skyline in its wake.

“Be a nice day tomorrow,” Terence said pointing to the horizon.

“What do you mean,” said Doris.

“The red sky,” said Terence, “you know, red sky at night, a sailors delight.”

“No, I don’t know,” said Doris.

“You’re gonna make her a real Newfoundlander outta her if you keep it up Terence,” said Gerry, “She will not need the screech in,” he continued.

Gerry’s wife slapped him across the arm after he spoke as if he let out a secret.

Doris saw the little slap and was curious, but was distracted by the noise of an accordion.

The party at Condon’s was in full gear when the group arrived. The accordion player from earlier was cranking out “gray foggy days.” Couples were dancing around the deck. Terence grabbed Doris right away and started to swing her around. Doris was pleasantly surprised and quickly found the beat. There was very little room to move as couples backed into each other only to quickly pivot in the other direction. There were many moving introductions as Terence met people from his past as he swept by. It was sheer jubilation. When the dance ended, there was a roar from the deck that resonated across the harbour. Doris had felt nothing like it in her life. Never before had she felt so much a part of a community. After a quick gulp of a libation, the music and the dancing started again. And that’s how it continued into the darkness.

Then came the big announcement. Gerry stepped into the crowd dressed in a yellow set of rain gear, complete with sou’wester on his head.

“Here ye, here ye,” he bellowed, “we have a mainlander among us who has to become an honorary Newfoundlander.” He held a large cod in one hand and a bottle of screech in the other.

“Oh no,” said Doris, realizing she was the only mainlander.

“Oh yes,” said Gerry, and the place erupted.

In short order, Gerry had Doris repeating “long may your big jib draw,” and imploring her to put her lips to a slimy slippery cod fish. When the kiss was complete, she spit, and wiped her lips much to the delight of the crowd.

Again, Gerry led the group. “The last thing to make you a Newfoundlander is a nice swig of our Newfoundland screech.”

He handed Doris the glass, “now,” he said, “I’ll give the instruction, and you put this drink right down the hatch.”

“Here we go,” he continued, “over the lips, and over the gums, look out belly,

here she comes.” With that, the crowd chanted, “Doris, Doris, Doris.”

She put the shot glass to her head. Black liquid rolled down each side of her chin as she gingerly prompted the burning raw alcohol into her mouth. She struggled to swallow it. She urged, but finally got it down. She raised her glass like a Viking king. The crowd once again roared her name. Terence put his arms around her and the rest of the group enveloped them in one big circle.

The accordion player sensed the mood and began singing the “Resettlement song.” Everyone held hands and sang every word, “You can’t take a man from the soil that he knows and tear up his roots and expect him to grow.” That one line rang out through the hills, echoing the group’s defiance and love of home. Doris was a little woozy from the straight booze, but she could feel the room go from a total festive experience to a tearful, mournful moment where a community felt the pain of being forced from their home. It was a moment where you realize you will remember this feeling for the rest of your life.

Somewhere amidst the merriment and the buzz of screech, the night slowly crawled to an end. Doris and Terence stumbled in the moonlight to home. The last thing Doris remembered was the cool breeze that wafted through the open window of their room. She could see Terence in the cast of midnight sky. The sight of him comforted her, and she fell asleep.

She woke in the mornings. She was shivering. She could not understand how it had gotten so cold. She got out of bed and went to the window. She gazed out at the harbour. The sparkling sun from the day before was nowhere to be seen. The bay was now blanketed in a thick, dense fog that hung like a sheer to a window, skewing anything otherwise visible. It made yesterday seem like a dream. She took the crank in her hand and winded it till the window closed. She reached for the lock and pulled it shut. Immediately, the room warmed. She walked back to the bed. It was then she realized that Terence was not there. He never got out of bed without telling her. She quickly dressed and headed to the kitchen.

Margie was in the dining room with a cup of tea warming her forehead.

“Good morning, Doris,” she said quietly, “I had too much fun last night,” she continued.

“It was a beautiful night, I had a ball too,” said Doris, “and I think I’m still feeling the screech.” The two giggled like schoolgirls.

“Did you see Terence this morning,” Doris inquired.

“No, but I have an idea where he is at.” Margie grimaced as she spoke, she knew she said too much.

“What do you mean?” said Doris. She had a sense that there was a secret, she thought she was being foolish, but now she felt vindicated.

“What’s going on Margie,” Doris implored, “I feel like I’m chasing a ghost.”

Margie had her fill of backtracking, she spoke frankly, “You are kinda chasing a ghost, Doris.”

“You mean Terence is hiding something.”

Margie took the teacup from her forehead, she took a breath, she was betraying her brother-in-law, but she knew the time had come for the truth. Doris deserved the truth.

“Yes,” she said, “but it’s not my place to tell you, my oh my,” she continued, “that man is as deep as the ocean.”

Doris could feel a numbness in the pit of her stomach. Margie could see it in her body language. “He loves you Doris, anyone can see that.”

“But what is he hiding?” she questioned.

“That’s not for me to say Doris, I suspect he is at the graveyard. Go see him, put this to rest. He has been tormented for too long.”

Doris went back to the bedroom and put on a windbreaker. She gave herself a quick look in the mirror and headed out the door. She followed Margie’s instructions; she left the deck and followed the path up over the hill. The fog clung to everything but was slowly burning off as the sun rose further in the sky. At the top of the hill, she could see the outline of the graveyard just peeking through the low mist. She walked at a hurried pace, and soon she was at the entrance. The Celtic cross still towered over the landscape but was on its last legs, ready to slowly slide into the ground. The fence that surrounded it was buried in the grass except for one section that was defiant, and for some reason had not given in to the ravages of nature and a lack of nurture. In the far corner of the cemetery, Terence was kneeling at a headstone slowly running his fingers through the name that had been etched in the stone. He

did not see Doris rise over the hill. She stood over him, quickly scanning the headstone. The death was 40 years ago. But there were two deaths. There was a baby. Doris was no investigator, but she quickly put things together. Terence was the father.

Terence was a little startled to see Doris standing over him. He stood and wrapped his arms around her.

“I’m sorry,” he lamented, “I should have told you about this years ago.”

“It’s ok, Terence,” Doris assured.

“I just could not bring myself to talk about it,” Terence explained.

Doris was a rock of strength.

“Tell me about it Terence,” she said softly, “tell me, so I can be there for you.”

Terence had buried this for so long that he had trouble finding the words.

Doris stepped back from his embrace. She gently put her hand on his face, her touch becoming a physical bridge of understanding.

Slowly, Terence began to open up.

“I loved her Doris, but that’s got nothing to do with you. This was before I met you.”

Doris nodded her approval.

Terence continued, “we loved each other. We made plans. I was going to raise our family here. I loved this place,” said Terence pouring out his soul.

“She was ready to have the baby,” he wept.

Doris put her arms around him trying to quell his pain with her touch.

“Go on,” she said affectionately, “you have to get this off your chest to move on.”

“I should have taken her out of here, but I stayed fishing, why, why did I do that?”

The words came from his lips but had haunted his thoughts for years.

“Terence,” Doris interjected, “you had no way of knowing there would be complications.”

“I should have known better, there’s no trusting that out there,” Terence pointed to the ocean as he spoke.

“Was it a storm, Terence?” asked Doris.

Terence shook his head solemnly, “a Northeaster blew in for three days, we

were trapped. By the time the Doctor got here, she was gone, and my little son was gone too. It was my fault.”

The words seem to bury him under the weight of complicity. He could only be rescued by love and caring. Doris was there to pull him through.

“Terence, look at me,” she ordered.

“Look at me,” she repeated firmly.

“You loved this place, you loved this woman, you would have loved your son, but tragedies happen, and we can’t stop them.

I know you better than anyone, if there was anything that could have been done, you would have done it. You have to let go of any guilt; you have to forgive yourself.”

Terence never spoke. He was numb.

Doris realized he needed a little more time alone.

“I’m heading back to the house,” she said,

“You say your goodbyes. We have a big day ahead of us, and we are going to enjoy it with nothing hanging over our heads.”

Doris left Terence standing there.

He watched her drift slowly into the fog until it enveloped her. He turned back to the headstone and rubbed his hand across the cold marble.

“I have to go now,” he said, “please forgive me.” He put his hand to his lips and then gently laid a kiss on both names.

“I love you both,” he said as a tear grew large enough to swell from his eye and slowly find its journey down his cheek.

“But I’ll be back,” he promised, “I’ll never let the ocean keep us apart again.”

As he walked away, he took a deep breath of release, like the fog lifting right before him. Doris was waiting on the ridge. He walked up behind her as she gazed over the harbour. The sun had just burnt away the last of the fog and was now halfway in the sky with the other half on the horizon. A perfect mirror image.

“It’s beautiful,” said Doris.

“It is,” Terence replied, “I just didn’t want to see that side of it anymore. But I’m gonna try.”

“That’s enough for me,” said Doris with a smile.” She hugged Terence and

playfully asked. “Do you think you can take a mainland girl cod jigging?”
“You couldn’t pick a better day on the water,” he replied.

* * *

Hi, my name is Shawn Doyle. I come from the tiny community of Petty Harbour. My parents and James Doyle and Elizabeth Bidgood who have always been a source of support.

I am married to Debbie Vaughan of Goulds NL. She is my constant source of inspiration and my greatest supporter. We have 4 beautiful children together. They are, and will always be our greatest achievement as a couple.

I was an educator for 31 years. In retirement I fill my time with playing in a rock and roll band and working in the tourism industry.

The Wonders of the Waters

Kelsie Keeping

Once upon a time, in a small coastal town in Newfoundland, there lived a young girl named Sarah. Sarah had always been fascinated by the ocean. Every day, she would walk along the rugged cliffs, listening to the soothing sound of the waves crashing against the rocks. One stormy night, as Sarah gazed out at the turbulent sea, she noticed a flicker of light in the distance. Curious, she followed the light along the shore until she came upon a glowing seashell nestled in the sand. When she picked it up, a magical shimmer enveloped her, and she found herself standing on the deck of a magnificent ship. The ship, named the “Ocean’s Dream,” was crewed by a group of friendly dolphins who welcomed Sarah aboard. They set sail into the moonlit sea, guided by the stars above. As they journeyed through the night, Sarah learned the secrets of the ocean from her new friends, discovering the wonders of the deep and the importance of preserving its beauty. When the first light of dawn painted the sky, Sarah found herself back on the shore, holding the glowing seashell in her hand. From that day on, she knew that the ocean held endless adventures and mysteries waiting to be explored, and she promised to always cherish and protect the wondrous world beneath the waves.

The ocean is like a magnet, drawing us in with its vast beauty and mysteries. Its shimmering waters and endless horizons have a way of captivating our hearts and souls. From the rhythmic sound of the waves to the mesmerizing shades of blue, the ocean has a magnetic pull that is hard to resist. One of the most enchanting aspects of the ocean is its biodiversity. It is home to

a myriad of fascinating creatures, from the tiniest plankton to the majestic whales. Exploring the depths of the ocean reveals a world teeming with life and wonder, showcasing the intricate balance of nature's ecosystems. Beyond its biological richness, the ocean also holds a special place in our hearts for its therapeutic effects. The calming sound of the waves, the salty breeze, and the feeling of sand between our toes have a soothing and rejuvenating power. Many find solace and peace by the ocean, making it a magnet for relaxation and reflection. Moreover, the ocean plays a crucial role in regulating our planet's climate and weather patterns. Its vast expanse absorbs heat and helps distribute it around the globe, influencing everything from temperature to precipitation. Understanding the ocean's importance in maintaining Earth's equilibrium highlights its magnetic pull on our environmental consciousness. In conclusion, the ocean's magnetic allure goes beyond its physical beauty; it encompasses a deep connection to nature, a source of tranquility, and a vital component of our planet's well-being. Its captivating charm beckons us to explore, protect, and cherish this wondrous realm that holds endless wonders and possibilities.

The ocean and its connection to Newfoundland run deep, shaping the identity and livelihood of the province. Located on the eastern coast of Canada, Newfoundland is surrounded by the vast Atlantic Ocean, which has played a pivotal role in the history and culture of the region. The ocean serves as both a barrier and a bridge for Newfoundland. Its waters have provided sustenance and livelihood for generations of Newfoundlanders through fishing and maritime industries. The rich marine resources have been a cornerstone of the province's economy and have fostered a strong sense of community among coastal towns and villages. Moreover, the ocean influences Newfoundland's climate, contributing to its unique weather patterns and rugged coastal landscapes. The province's proximity to the ocean brings both challenges and opportunities, shaping the way of life for its residents and fostering a deep connection to the sea. The ocean also holds a special place in Newfoundland's cultural heritage. From seafaring traditions to tales of maritime folklore, the ocean has inspired art, music, and storytelling in the province. Newfoundland's strong ties to the sea are evident

in its festivals, cuisine, and way of life, reflecting a deep respect and reverence for the power and beauty of the ocean. In essence, the ocean is more than just a physical presence in Newfoundland; it is a source of sustenance, inspiration, and connection that binds the province to its maritime roots. The ebb and flow of the tides mirror the rhythm of life in Newfoundland, reminding us of the enduring bond between the land, the people, and the sea.

Newfoundland, located on the eastern coast of Canada, is a place of rugged beauty and rich history. The island is known for its stunning landscapes, from towering cliffs to picturesque fishing villages. The people of Newfoundland, known for their warmth and hospitality, have a strong connection to the sea, shaping their way of life and traditions. The culture of Newfoundland is deeply rooted in its maritime heritage, with fishing playing a significant role in the economy and daily life of its residents. The island is also famous for its music and storytelling traditions, with lively folk festivals and gatherings that celebrate its unique heritage. Newfoundland's wildlife is diverse, with opportunities for whale watching, birding, and exploring its pristine wilderness. The province is home to Gros Morne National Park, a UNESCO World Heritage Site known for its stunning fjords, mountains, and geological wonders. In addition to its natural beauty, Newfoundland has a rich history, including its Indigenous heritage and the arrival of European settlers. The island's historic sites, such as Signal Hill and Cape Spear, offer glimpses into its past and the resilience of its people. Overall, Newfoundland is a place of contrasts, where rugged landscapes meet vibrant communities and where the past intertwines with the present. It is a place that captures the hearts of those who visit, leaving them with memories of its beauty, culture, and the warmth of its people.

The ocean is indeed a magnet, drawing in people and creatures alike with its vastness and allure. Its powerful pull extends beyond the physical realm, captivating hearts and minds with its beauty and mystery. From the rhythmic crashing of the waves to the endless horizon that stretches into infinity, the ocean exerts a magnetic force that beckons explorers, dreamers, and seekers of solace. Its depths hold untold treasures and secrets, inspiring awe and wonder in those who dare to venture beneath the surface. Moreover,

the ocean serves as a source of life and sustenance for countless species, creating a delicate balance of ecosystems that rely on its bounty. Its magnetic charm attracts diverse marine life, from majestic whales to tiny plankton, each playing a vital role in the intricate web of oceanic life. Beyond its physical manifestations, the ocean's magnetic pull transcends borders and cultures, connecting people around the world through shared experiences of its power and beauty. Whether it be through maritime traditions, scientific exploration, or artistic expression, the ocean serves as a unifying force that bridges continents and generations. In essence, the ocean's magnetic nature lies not only in its vast expanse and natural wonders but also in its ability to captivate the human spirit and inspire a sense of awe and reverence for the interconnectedness of all life on Earth. As we navigate the tides of existence, the ocean stands as a timeless symbol of strength, resilience, and the eternal cycle of renewal.

Newfoundland is truly a gem with its captivating landscapes, rich history, and welcoming people. Its maritime heritage, cultural traditions, and diverse wildlife make it a place like no other. Whether exploring its rugged coastlines or immersing oneself in its vibrant communities, Newfoundland leaves an indelible mark on all who experience its beauty and charm. In conclusion, Newfoundland is a destination that not only captivates the senses but also touches the soul, making it a place worth cherishing and returning to time and time again. The ocean is like a magnet, drawing us in with its vastness and beauty. Its waves crashing rhythmically against the shore create a soothing melody that resonates with our souls. The endless horizon stretching into infinity fills us with a sense of wonder and possibility. From the smallest seashells to the majestic whales, the ocean teems with life, each creature playing a unique role in its intricate ecosystem. The ocean's depths hold mysteries yet to be discovered, inviting us to explore and uncover its secrets. In its embrace, we find solace, inspiration, and a profound connection to the natural world.

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THE WONDERS OF THE WATERS

us with a sense of wonder and possibility. From the tiniest seashells to the majestic whales, the ocean teems with life, each creature playing a unique role in its intricate ecosystem. The ocean's depths hold mysteries yet to be discovered, inviting us to explore and uncover its secrets. In its embrace, we find solace, inspiration, and a profound connection to the natural world. The ocean's influence on people is profound; it provides food, livelihoods, and recreation. Coastal communities rely on the ocean for sustenance and economic opportunities, fostering a deep bond between people and the sea. Moreover, the ocean's vastness reminds us of our place in the world, instilling a sense of humility and interconnectedness. Whether through fishing, surfing, or simply gazing at its expanse, the ocean's connection with people is timeless and profound, shaping cultures, livelihoods, and perspectives across the globe.

* * *

She and Her Sea

Janice Young

No one saw her perched there among the pyramid of rocks rising from the pebbled shoreline. She was as still as the stones, her back to the world, her face to the sea. Outwardly she was motionless, but inside she was a boiling storm of emotions – hurt, anger, frustration, loneliness, misunderstanding. It’s a wonder her small frame could contain it all. It almost didn’t, and so she was here again. Whenever it all became too much and she felt about to shatter, when it got difficult to see and to breathe, she’d race for this spot – her refuge, her salvation. Only the ocean was allowed to see her in this state, to witness her pain, to know her vulnerability. Only the North Atlantic was large enough to engulf her whole being, dissolve her toxic feelings and wash her clean.

Here she let the sound of the waves fill her and drown out her hurt. She let the breeze cool her flushed cheeks as the sun’s rays skimmed off the water’s surface and dried her tears. She was soothed by the ocean’s endless rhythm: long inhale as the receding water shook the pebbles and dragged them out; hold; exhale as the waves came flowing back in with a *shuuuush*. Over and over until her breath matched the waves and her heartbeat found its calm.

The ocean had been calling to her since she could toddle. She’d unlatch the garden gate when no one was looking and run across the road to the beach, unable to resist the water’s reflection and its playful ripples. At low tide, she hop-skipped around the tiny rock pools, sometimes slipping on seaweed and popping their bladders. She squatted down and peered through

the clear water into the little rock aquariums, wondering at the mussels, crabs, wrinkles and starfish going about their lives. She used her chubby little fingers to pick them up for a closer hello and then return them gently home. When the tide was out, it revealed a wet sandy patch where she built castles and drew pictures with driftwood pens. She watched her creations dissolve as the tide poured back in, like a slow-moving Etch-a-Sketch, cleaning the slate for tomorrow's low tide art class.

She thought she was the cleverest escape artist, having her adventure and making it back inside the gate before anyone knew she was gone. But she was not nearly as keen as her mother, who supported her daughter's independence but wasn't so easygoing as to let her freely have it. From the kitchen window Mommy caught every move her little girl made, from looking around furtively before unlatching the gate, to pausing to look both ways before crossing the road and bounding happily down to the shoreline. Oh, yes, Mommy saw all... until the one day that she didn't.

Mommy had been distracted by a phone call – who it was and what they wanted was forgotten the second she looked out and couldn't see her baby. She found her toddler halfway out in the cove, climbing from rock to rock on the low tide and so focussed on putting one foot in front of the other that she didn't see how very far out her steps had already taken her by the time she heard her name echo off the cliffs around her. She had never seen the sea as frothy as Mommy was that day, charging out over the rocks to roughly scoop her up and march her home. It seemed like forever until she was allowed to set foot on the beach again.

Hers was a working cove. Her neighbour had his own fishing boat, wharf and stage. This area became her playground when her limbs were finally long enough that she could swing hand over hand from log to log under his wharf, pausing on and launching from the ballast beds that supported the structure. These wooden cribs filled with rocks were underwater at high tide, but at low tide they made a shaded perch from where she studied the crabs and tomcods feeding on fish heads and other scraps the fisherman tossed over as he gutted and split his catch. Of course, she had no business playing around his wharf, and the fisherman would drive her out of it every time he caught her there.

The last time he warned her he'd douse her in bilge water if he saw her there again.

His warning sprang right to mind when she heard the putt-putt of his motor as he pulled his small boat alongside the wharf, where she was once again playing underneath. Terrified that he'd spot her as he used a prong to fling his catch from the hold to the wharf above, she stuck motionless like a barnacle to the ballast bed post. She held her breath and squeezed her eyes shut when he climbed out of his boat and ascended the wooden ladder to the stage head. She dared not move while he clomped above. She kept her mouth shut when heads and guts started raining down and splashing into the water an arm's length from her. She only flinched when cold seawater suddenly lapped at her ankles. She hadn't noticed the tide coming back in, and now she had to move quickly. She had three ballast beds to cross before reaching the shore and somehow not get wet – or caught. Hand over hand, with her knees bent to keep her feet up out of the water, she swung to the first ballast bed. She paused for a beat, then swung to the next one. The third and final ballast bed was still well above the water line. She reached up and grabbed a log in her right hand, swung her body forward and reached out her left arm until that hand connected with the next log. Immediately she flung her right hand forward again. But before she could get her next hold, her left hand slipped and she dropped with a loud, clumsy splash into knee-deep water. The jig was up and the fisherman was already running down the wharf casting out a string of expletives. With a head start and fuelled by the fear of a bilge water bath, she scrawelled up over the beach and across the road, and got inside her house before he could get his hooks into her.

Fall storms always kept her from the shore, as the surf pounded the rocks and the salt spray carried by gale force winds coated the windows of her house. But the sea would reward her later with glittery gifts dredged up from the ocean floor and deposited on her beach. She'd race out as soon as the coast was clear and comb the landwash for pieces of sandblasted glass in green, blue, red and white – an unassembled mosaic made from history scattered across the ocean over time. She'd study each piece and wonder what had shattered to make them. Vials of tinctures and liniments or cod liver

oil carried on hospital ships? Bottles of wine imported to the New World from Europe? She hoped to one day find an intact glass bottle with a note inside, sent from a curious stranger in some far off land. Or perhaps from a stranded sailor sending one last desperate signal for help – and she'd be the one to save him!

In winter, more time was spent looking through the window at the ocean from the cosy comfort of the house. As soon as the first light of day filtered between her lashes, she'd turn in bed towards the window and look out over her cove. Later, with her hands clasped around a hot cup of tea in the kitchen, she'd watch the gulls soar between the steel-grey sky and matching waves. In bed at night, she'd stare at the moonlight glinting off the black water until she drifted like the moonbeams into sleep.

While the ocean was her playmate, she knew it wasn't always her friend. She never teased the waves when they were angry, and she didn't trust it beneath the pans of ice that filled her cove every spring. When she was nine, two boys her age drowned while playing an age-old game of jumping from pan to pan trying not to get wet. They lost. She never forgot the lesson, or their blue lips and eternal expressions – not the impish smiles of youth, but the placid appearance of dreamless sleep.

Eventually, beach days stretched into coming-of-age summer nights filled with roaring fires, illegal beers, first loves and dumb dares. She wasn't the only girl or boy to lose their virginity on one of those nights, intoxicated by the darkness, the hot glow of the fire, and the rhythm of the waves breaking on the beach. When it was her turn, it was a fleeting, unplanned encounter. They went their separate ways immediately after, both embarrassed and relieved. Later, after almost everyone had gone home and the fire had died down to embers, she laid on the beach alone with her feelings of guilt and disappointment. She looked up at the trillions of twinkling stars and wondered if she kept staring into them would they fall down and smother her, or would she float up there and drown? Somewhere in the dark around her, the sea was lapping the shore. Its gentle, familiar sound reassured her soul that it was not lost and not everything had changed.

It was in those transformative teenage years that her solace-seeking trips to

her rock nest began. When boys cornered her and grabbed at her, she fought back and refused to let them see her shake. When she didn't get asked to dance or invited to a party, she never let on that it hurt. When the girls called her mean names, spread gossip about her and left her nasty notes, she turned the other cheek, bottled her pain and corked it tight. But every once in a while, a blow would get past her defences and puncture her carefully built emotional dam. As everything piled up behind it would threaten to burst out and submerge her life, she'd race to that beach, climb up into her rock nest and cry her tears into the ocean. When all had been drained and was washed out with the tide, when her wall had been refortified, she'd return to life renewed and carry on.

The day before she left for college in the city, she took a long stroll on her beach. She breathed deeply the salty air, committing it to a memory she could recall if she needed it. She filled a small container with seashells, driftwood and colourful stones. Another container she filled with sand. These would be her talisman in her next life.

She sat in her rock nest and let the breeze tease her hair. She squinted at wavetops that sparkled in the bright sunlight like gems escaped from the hold of a passing pirate ship. She breathed in and out in harmony with the sea. She didn't know how she would live without her beach to run to. How far could their connection stretch? Would she still feel its tug from hundreds of kilometres away? Or would she lose it with a painful snap? Already her heart ached at the thought of it.

She was in the city when she got the call. A friend back home was lost at sea. He hadn't returned from a boating trip and there was no sign of him or his boat. Thinking of nothing but finding him, she drove straight home and joined the search. For three days, she and others took to the ocean in their boats, motoring slowly where he was last known to be, scanning the horizon, probing the depths below, circling small islands, praying to find him but also not to, knowing it would be the last image of him they'd carry forever.

Yet in her grief and worry, even while sailing on the very water that had likely taken her friend's life, the sea was a comfort. The sun glistening on the deep blue ocean, the soft lap against the hull whenever the boat stopped, the

pod of dolphins breaking the surface in a synchronized jump, the seagulls gliding across the cloudless sky – it was all so heartbreakingly perfect. She wanted to cry, not out of sadness but out of overwhelming gratitude to be alive in this moment.

The ocean never did return her friend. He was a part of it now and forever more. Accepting that, without any proof, was a rough course no one wanted to sail. One of the markers on that course was anger, and she was angry. She blamed the boat, she blamed the weather, she blamed God, she even blamed him. But she didn't blame the ocean. She never could.

Her visits home to her beach became fewer and farther apart after that summer. She fell into a new rhythm in the city, especially its downtown core. She lived for the dance clubs, art galleries and coffee shops. When her heart hurt or her mind was low, she went inland to find herself on forested trails and bloom-filled paths through urban parks. The last time she moved apartments, she didn't unpack the sand, shells, rocks and driftwood to recreate her beach on a shelf where she could look at it and touch it whenever she needed comfort. They remained in their tubs inside boxes in the back of a closet, unwanted.

The sea might have thought she had turned her back on it, if it thought of her at all. She never felt their connection sever, though, the way she used to fear she would. Why didn't she notice that she never heard the ocean calling to her anymore, or that her heart never cried for it? Is this what they call "love lost"? Not ended or destroyed in some traumatic event, but repeatedly not fought for and not reached for until, through neglect, it silently fades away?

As her life carried on, she drifted further and further from her sea and what she came to think of as the childish notion of having a magical connection to nature's greatest force. She returned home for her parents' funerals, and neither time was she compelled to visit her beach.

When she was diagnosed with breast cancer in her fifties, it didn't come as a great shock. The disease ran in her family, so it had been living in the periphery of her thoughts for years. She felt no urge to race to her beach, throw herself into her rock nest and scream her despair into the sea. Those days were long behind her. Instead, she leaned on her team of doctors, she

took all the recommended treatments, she read all the books and joined the support groups, she took part in the fundraisers and promised to stay positive.

Now she sat silently in her doctor's office with her ankles crossed, her purse tightly clasped in her lap, and her torso leaning slightly forward. The doctor was explaining the results of her latest scan since completing her final round of treatment. The early morning sun cast beams across the file folders and photos on the desk between them, illuminating fine dust particles doing their dance. The room smelled faintly of disinfectant, and one fluorescent tube overhead was flickering – not when she looked directly at it, but out of the corner of her eye so that she had to really focus on ignoring it to give her full attention to this report. The doctor was leaning slightly forward in his chair, too, his elbows resting on the desk and his hands lightly clasping and unclasping as he spoke. He had been talking steadily for a while, though slowly and gently to help her absorb the news. She could see his lips moving, his eyes emoting, his hands gesturing. But she was losing track of his words. They were being drowned out by a steadily rising roar. Couldn't he hear it? It rumbled louder and louder like a train bearing down, or a roller coaster racing on its track, or a--

In the instant she recognized it, it came crashing down upon her in a giant wave. The roar was the sea – *her sea*. It swept her up onto her feet and out the door. It carried her to her car, over the highway and to the beach. She ran, her heart beating wildly as sobs escaped her throat in gasps, until she was in her rock nest. Doubled over, she cried and cried into the wind. The sea crashed into the shore, creating a furious noise that enveloped her in a protective fortress of sound.

As her sobbing eventually subsided, so did the wind. As the waves slowed, so did her heartbeat. With eyes closed, she inhaled the salty air. Her lungs burned. Her heart ached with the sorrow it bore and then unleashed. She could hear the gentle plop of the water as it lapped the rocks at her feet. Looking down, she saw that the tide had come in around her rock nest. The seaweed was underwater and weaving back and forth in a kumbaya motion as the water ebbed and flowed. The gold of the kelp, the black-and-white of the barnacles, the blue of the mussels, the orange of the crabs were all vibrant.

SHE AND HER SEA

She could see so clearly.

The sun was setting low on the horizon now. The worst day of her life so far was almost over and she would be grateful to see it end. And if this were to be her last day, she would be eternally grateful if it ended here.

* * *

Janice Young is an outport girl, born and raised in Twillingate, Notre Dame Bay, NL. The ocean has naturally been a source of inspiration, companionship and solace for her. Always happiest when near, in or on the water, Janice currently lives in Conception Bay South, where the ocean and the magnificent Manuels River are within easy reach. Though she has been writing and publishing her entire life (her first published piece was a poem she wrote at five years old for the local newspaper), *She and Her Sea* is her first foray into competitive writing.



Yuhan, Bonne Bay Academy (Elementary)

III

Rediscovering

Sliver of Silver

Sadie Butt

Special mention

The little girl dove under the frigid water, her goggled eyes roving the belly of the cove, searching for anything interesting. Day after day, she visited this harbour. Her poppy trailing behind her down the narrow gravel path, each of them navigating through the tangle of overgrown plants and reaching alder branches on either side. She never found much interesting. Floating driftwood, a rock with a white line circling it, a couple of connors, maybe. Not much. But she still came every day the sun was shining, and the waves were calm. She preferred the feeling of water to land. The pulling, turning, twisting, rocketing sensation, the feeling of it being so unpredictable, so unsolid, so fleeting, made it enticing to her. The land was too steady. Too solid. Too... predictable.

The girl giggled as she breached the surface again, spitting out the salty water that leaked into her mouth. She smiled at her Poppy who was sitting on the shore, reading a book with his feet crossed under him. The water reached up the rocks of the beach, close enough to reach him. He usually sat as close as he could to the water. He always has, since she was a kid. He felt the same thing she did, about the water. He smiled back at her, raising his eyebrows and waving at her with the soft-covered book.

“Anything interesting?” he asked, voice almost indecipherable against the splash of waves, index and thumb fidgeting with the next page of his novel. She watched as he fumbled with the page, his fingers flickering. The girl

shook her head, frowning.

“No. I’ll find something today though, Poppy!” she said, her voice radiating determination and childlike innocence. He smiled faintly at her.

The girl sunk back into the water, her brown hair following her head like trails of smoke. Her hair was tinged with blonde from the sun, and her face was dotted with brown, the freckles that popped up whenever she was outside in the summer. The sun was entrancing, the girl thought, how it could change the little details of you by just being out in its light. Her dad said the sun was billions and trillions of miles away from them. She always wondered if she could make a light that changed people from so far away. Maybe she could. Her dad said her heart was made of light. Maybe she could give her heart light to people who didn’t have any. Her Poppy didn’t really seem to have any light anymore. Could she bring his back?

The water tightened around her the deeper she went. She wanted to go deeper and deeper, but would the water tighten so much she couldn’t escape? Couldn’t breathe? How do fish escape the water?

A sliver of silver slid through the water in front of her. The water whispered ahead, following the movement. She thought maybe it was a conner, but then it turned and passed by again, slower. She stilled in the water, cheeks puffed out to hold her breath. It was a large fish, elegant, calm. Its mouth opened and closed, eyes assessing. It was shimmering, the light that shot through the murky water highlighted the shining beauty of it. It slowed to a stop in front of her. She stared at the fish, watching, waiting for the next move. It was staring, too. Staring at this otherworldly, supernatural creature invading its space, it’s quiet. It was as though it wasn’t sure what to think of her. She wasn’t sure what to think of it, either. The fish was eerie to her. The eyes were too round, the fins too small, the little, tiny white pinpricks of teeth in its mouth, wrong. Wrong, but striking. Wrong, but glorious, breathtaking, spectacular. The rocks crinkled under her as she shifted her feet, and the sound was a low, slow-water sound that echoed up and around them. Her fish startled, swimming away into the murky water, disappearing as quickly as it came. The girl reached out, feeling as though she had lost something.

“Fishy?” she said, the droplet of desperation in her voice, at least, was not

muddled by the water, though her voice was distorted. Bubbles rose out of her mouth and the words traveled no further than a couple inches in front of her. She could hear her sound escaping — muffled and far away — as her mouth filled with water. She panicked, heart thudding. She pushed off the bottom to rocket to the top, coughing out the water when she breached the surface, her throat burning from the salt as she tread water in the deep, her legs beating to keep her safe. She squinted through her goggles that at least kept the salt out of her eyes.

“You okay?” asked her Poppy, voice still faint. He put down his book, unfolding his feet from under himself as if he was going to go get her. “I’m okay, Poppy,” she replied, coughing again. She swam over to where she could touch the bottom and rested for a moment, breathing in and out, relieving the panicked feeling in her chest. She stared at the water, contemplating.

She was no older than three when she first visited the beach. Her parents were worried about the cold of the water, so she stayed on the beach with her Pop, his voice still the booming, loud sound that she remembered. Even then, her curious mind never wavered from the water, and she spent her whole time on the beach staring at the waves as they splashed over her Mom’s swimsuit, face and hair. Even now, at seven, her Poppy liked to tell her the story, his voice no longer booming, of how her eyes lit up that day when he brought her a bucket of salty water to play with, how he could almost feel the yearning of her heart to get into the water. He said he remembered it well because she was a quiet child back then and seemingly impartial to everything else. She still couldn’t remember why his voice got quiet. She was five. And her parents were considerably sadder about it than she was.

Every time they went down to the beach from that trip on, she ran as fast as she could to the water, her Poppy next to her as she propelled herself forward with giggles and bright laughter. She grew up with the water. The salt, the seaweed, the little kelp strands she pulled onto the beach, the seashells, the snails, the rocks, the fish. Oh, the fish. Whenever she visited her grandparent’s cabin, she ran out onto the wharf, hanging her arms down over the side of the wood planks, the planks her Poppy had placed there himself, and watched as the groups of conners swam around. She gathered sea snails that hung

onto the side of the wharf and smashed their shells under rocks, though her stomach twisted in guilt, to use their soft bodies as bait to catch and release the conners. Maybe once or twice, she caught a beautiful sculpin, though many wouldn't describe them as so, and she scrambled to find a bucket to put it in so she could show her parents.

She remembered the days out in the boat, where the wind whipped her and little droplets of salt water sprinkled her face. Sticking her hand over the side of the boat, catching the spray of water from the wake, she would cheer, watching with anticipation as her big brother pulled a huge fish over the side. She would sit at the bow and gasp as she was bumped into the air — the boat speeding over the tall waves. Oh, she missed those boat rides. Why wouldn't her Poppy take her on them anymore?

She grew up with the water. Maybe that was the pull she felt. Maybe the pull was the wonder of it all, the incredible stories her Poppy told her, or that the ocean, for the most part, was a mystery to her. Maybe the pull was from deep inside her. Something indescribable.

She breathed deeply, finally feeling settled. She rubbed at her goggles and turned towards the ocean again, searching for any flash of silver. She dove once more, swimming about the bottom, but she was tired. Her limbs were like weights, sluggish and slow-moving. Seeing nothing, she waded to the shallow of the shoreline and got out, wrapping a towel around herself and ambling over to sit next to her Poppy. He closed his book and looked over at her, smiling. He slowly stood up, grunting and wincing a little, his bones squeaky and stiff. He held out a hand to her and she got up too, and they started walking home. Her poppy still trailed behind her, no matter how slow she went. He was getting weaker every time they visited here. Quieter and quieter. Slower and slower. The towel was damp and got colder as they travelled, but she ignored it, ignored the goosebumps and uncomfortable, damp cold, focusing on other things. She thought of that silvery fish all the while home, though it was a short walk. When she was eating supper, she thought of the fish. She thought of the fish before she slept. When she closed her eyes, she imagined the deep bottom of the dark green ocean — the flash of brilliant silver.

It approached her, its scales reflecting the light of the small rays of sun slicing through the waves.

“Fishy?” she said. Bubbles rose from the fish’s mouth, as if it were trying to reply. Its eyes rolled around in its sockets, and it swam around the girl, bubbles rising. She felt as if she were flashing in and out of the moment, like rushing water. Nothing sure. Her movements were flickering, her hand, held in front of her, was blurred. The bubbles rose and rose, more and more.

“HE’S NOT...” the voice boomed. “H-H-H-H-HE.....REAL.”

The bubbles were suffocating. The tight, deep, inescapable water was pulling her in every direction. She couldn’t breathe. Her mouth was filling with water, filling and filling and filling...

She gasped awake. Disoriented, she registered that she wasn’t in the ocean. There was no booming voice. She was in her bed, though the sheets were twisted around her, tight as deep water. She knew she had to go back to the ocean, to find the fish. What was it trying to tell her? Was it looking for her, too? The time, when she checked the clock, said 6:24AM. No one was awake in her house yet. She could go if she wanted to – she knew the way. And she really, really wanted to go.

She silently got out of bed, moving through the house to pick up a towel, a faded pattern dotted with lemons and cut watermelons. She dug through a couple drawers until she found her goggles, and slipped on her swimsuit, then the bright blue dress her mom got her. She tried to sneak quietly through the living room to get to the door, but someone caught her.

“Where are you going?” asked a faint voice. She turned and saw her Poppy, holding the same soft-covered book he had at the beach. She jumped a little and tried to hide her towel and goggles behind her back, guiltily.

“Nowhere?” she said, smiling in what she hoped was an innocent way. Her Poppy chuckled and got up, dusting off his lap and tucking his book into the waistband of his jeans.

“To the beach, right? I’ll take ya. You’re a seal sure, you are.” She smiled at him gleefully and ran out into the slowly brightening day, eyes wide as she skipped the road to the ocean along the gravel shoulder, her Poppy following behind. She headed down the small turnoff, and into the cove. The sun was

just rising, and it looked like the sky was glowing. She felt her heart reach out and pull her along, thinking of the fish and hoping it would still be there.

When she got to the beach, she took in the sight of the waves. They sounded louder than yesterday, crashing onto the beach. She was apprehensive, but the pull of the fish was too strong to ignore. She looked back at her Poppy, and he smiled at her encouragingly. She put on her goggles and waded into the water, shivering in the cold that had accumulated over the chilly night. The salty water splashed onto her shins, hands, and belly as the large waves surged over her. Pieces of floating kelp wrapped around her ankles. The water covered her knees, her stomach, and finally reached up to her neck. And then she was floating, bobbing up and down in the waves. She breathed in, and out, and in, one last big breath, and dove. The water felt colder than she was used to. She searched for a flash of silver, the goggles slightly blurring her vision, but the waves pushed her back to shore. She surfaced and grunted in frustration, before swimming out again and diving once more. The bottom of the ocean was blank and gray. Rocks, rocks, rocks, no silver of any kind.

She dove and dove, but eventually gave up and swam back to shore. She wrapped herself up in her towel and sat, frowning, on the damp rocks, her Poppy next to her. She watched as the sun rose up over the sea, higher and higher.

The squeal of tires and spit of gravel sounded behind her, along with the crunch of rocks under the quick footsteps of someone. There was a shout of the girl's name, and she looked behind her, but couldn't see who it was before she was enveloped in the arms of someone, someone who was crying. "Mom?" she smiled, happy to see her. "What are you here for?" she asked, curious as to why her mom was crying. Her mom laughed, incredulous.

"I didn't know where you went! You have to tell me before you go off alone!"

"Alone? But Poppy's here?"

Her mom looked at her, her eyes confused, cheeks still streaming with tears.

"Poppy?"

"Yeah, he's right there!" she said, gesturing to her Pop, who had moved from sitting next to her to standing by the water, smiling sadly.

"Honey," her mom started, voice sweet, "no one's there."

“Well, yes there is!” she said, voice indignant and defensive.

“Your Poppy... he’s not here, sweetie.”

“But he’s right. There,” she said, trying to get up to go get him, but her mom held her down gently by the shoulders.

“Honey, Poppy’s gone. He’s... he’s dead. He passed away. You know what that means, right?”

The girl put her hands over her ears and shut her eyes tight.

“No.”

“Yes, sweetie.”

“No. No. No. NO! You’re not LISTENING to me. He’s right there!”

She squirmed and screamed and wiggled out of her Mom’s infuriatingly gentle hands and ran down to the beach. Tears and snot streaked her face as she ran to her Pop and grabbed at him, but he flickered.

He flickered.

She stared at him, everything slowing around her. Her Mom’s concerned eyes in the distance.

Her Poppy’s hair glinted silver in the light.

Her blood was beating in her ears, pulse jumping in her wrist. Her head was light. Her hands were cold, numb, bleeding because of her stubby-bitten fingernails digging into her palms.

She screamed.

Her voice cracked on a sob and her Mom ran to her, holding her head to her chest, crying with her. Her Poppy watched, still smiling sadly, before walking away towards the woods. The shadows took him.

“Stop! Stop! You can’t take him!” she sobbed, crying and reaching towards the woods.

“Please! He’s my Poppy!” She strained against her Mom, but she held tight. Crying as well.

“You can’t take him!” Her Mom held her, shushed her, until she couldn’t cry anymore. Until the cold had seeped into her bones. They walked home together, hand in hand, Poppy no longer there. Not next to her, not trailing behind.

Behind them, the ocean lapped and beat the shore.

OCEAN PEOPLE INSPIRE

* * *

Sadie Butt is a 14-year-old student going into 10th grade. A writer of poetry and fiction, she was born and raised in Vancouver, BC until she moved to St. Johns, NL at the age of 10. She was a winner in the Junior Poetry section in The Arts and Letters NL, 2024, and was published in *Splashing in Puddles: Young Writers of Canada*, at age 7. She still lives in St. Johns with her mom, dad, two brothers, and favourite family member, Bowen the dog.

Hide

Meghan Donovan

The water called to her again, she could feel it in her bones, in her skin, in her heart. The lake by her family's cottage was the only place she had ever felt truly herself. She would stay in the water until her lips were blue and her fingers pruned. She would stay in the water until her father and her grandfather chided her and made her get out. Only her great-grandmother Esther had ever understood her.

"When I was a girl, I would play in the ocean waves and let the kelp wrap around me. I would spend hours chasing the sand lance through the shallows. In the summer when the whales arrived, we would dance and sing such joyous songs! The ocean is where we belong, Stella."

The old woman had never liked talking about having to leave the island with her husband to search for work, and Stella knew that her grandfather had never gotten along with his mother. His mood would sour whenever Stella had spent time with Esther and there would be no talking to him for days afterwards. Her father was no help in solving the puzzle either. Any attempts to find out why, only awarded her with a sigh and a shake of the head. As much as she loved her family, Stella also didn't understand them at all. She wished that she had asked her great-grandmother more questions about her life, about why they hadn't moved back home ever, and most of all about the strange tension in the family.

When Esther passed away, she left everything to Stella. For the most part it wasn't much, some clothing and jewelry, kitchen supplies, a rocking chair,

but there was also the deed to a small property on the island. Her father insisted that it would be run down beyond repair, not even worth the trip to go check on it. He thought that maybe they could find someone local online who would be willing to go out and see if the house was even still standing. Months went by with Stella asking her father if he had looked into it, but he always put it off again.

So Stella saved what she could from her part-time job, sold some of the less fashionable jewelry that Esther had left her, and resolved to go see the property herself when the semester at college ended. She hoped that the tiny, used vehicle she had bought would survive the trip across the country. At the very least, she wanted to make it there, even if the car's engine gave out and she couldn't make it back. She could feel the pull, stronger than ever before, calling her to the water. Calling her to the ocean, she realized, remembering her great-grandmother's words from all those years ago.

The morning she left, her father stood on the porch with his cup of coffee, sighed and shook his head. He wished her a safe trip and went back inside before her car had even pulled out of the driveway. She drove eastward, with the sun shining brightly in her eyes each morning, beckoning and mocking simultaneously. The hot, dry air gave way to cool dampness as she got closer. Each night when she found somewhere to park, she felt safer and more at home. Her tiny car was cramped inside with luggage, but Stella managed to curl up and sleep regardless.

Her dream that final night before she got to the ferry terminal carried her through a world of water, where fish zipped above her like birds in the sky and the land below was distant and inconsequential. She allowed herself to drift with the currents, twisting her long body as she marvelled at the freedom she felt. She propelled herself upwards, scattering fish as she swam, nostrils flaring as she broke the surface.

She woke up to a world ensconced in fog. The air was heavy with the scent of rotting seaweed and the salt in the breeze was tangy. She reveled in the new smells, eyes closed, nose pointed to the air as she leaned against her car. She stayed like that for almost an hour before the sun had burned away most of the fog and the wind had changed direction. It was time to go. She was

nearly there.

The drive to the ferry terminal was uneventful. Stella watched the gulls play in the upwells of air coming off the ocean. She imagined that she could see the wind under their wings as they soared, the eddies swirling from their wingtips as they seemingly balanced in place high above the water. She walked to the water's edge, longing to get in. The acrid sting of the diesel fumes coming from the ferry reminded her that this was not the place for her. Not here, not yet. The crew started yelling out orders to waiting vehicles, coordinating them to safely get aboard. Stella glanced back up at the gulls in the darkening sky before returning to her own car.

The little car's engine sputtered to life, and Stella drove forward into the belly of the ship, her car coming to rest between two large pickups for the trip across the water to the island. She got out and stretched, reaching her arms up to the metal ceiling above and arching backwards. Her back cracked, releasing the tension after almost a week of driving. One more day and she would be home, she told herself. She followed the other passengers through the ship's lower deck up to the passenger area. The sun shone through the windows of the viewing deck and Stella eagerly went to a window to watch as the ferry pulled away from shore.

Stella sat in one of the little plastic chairs by the window and pulled her legs up under her. The gentle shifting of the vessel in the waves brought her such peace and she closed her eyes. Leaning against the glass, she aligned her breathing with the sway of the ship. It felt so natural to her. The tranquil movement had the perfect rhythm. She felt the corners of her lips pull into a smile.

She didn't know how long she sat like that for, but it was nearly dawn when she opened her eyes again. She startled when she noticed how few people there were now. Had she missed disembarking? A second later, she realized that most people would have rented rooms, or chosen to sleep in the more comfortable lounge chairs. The few other passengers near her leaned against each other or lay sprawled across several chairs. She stood, eager to find a bathroom and get ready for the day.

The ferry slowed and lurched awkwardly as it prepared to dock. Stella

watched the docking process, barely aware that she was needing to brace against the roll of the vessel now. She shuddered in anticipation, her skin practically crawling as she waited to head down to her car. She was so close. The only thing left now was the four-hour drive to her property. Her property! She couldn't believe that it was finally happening. She hoped that her father had been wrong and that the house would still be livable. The GPS on her phone chirped that she was only 10 kilometers away now. She wasn't even sure there would be a road all the way into the property, or if she would have to trek her things in on foot. Best to see what condition everything was in first, she decided.

She pulled off the highway onto a dirt road when her GPS chirped again. The road lead gently downhill and seemed to end at the ocean. Stella could tell that the beach was rocky, even from this distance. She drove carefully over the uneven ground, dodging holes and overgrown brush. This didn't seem like a terribly good sign. There was still nothing suggesting that a house was somewhere down this road either. Almost at the very end of the road, there appeared to be a place between two rather large trees that may have once been a driveway.

Stella stopped then and got out of the car. She knew she ought to go straight to the house and start making decisions, but the water called to her. The rocks of the beach were smooth and round from the waves washing over them. Further down where the low tide was gently lapping the land, the rocks gave way to coarse granules. Stella scooped up a handful. Certainly not quite sand, but not unpleasant to touch either. She giggled and kicked her shoes off, brushed her hand clean on her jeans, peeled her socks off and rolled her pants up to mid-calf.

There was no countdown or nerves. Stella stepped into the frigid water and kept going, instantly forgetting that she had only meant to get her feet wet. She was waist-deep when her next step landed on seaweed. She gasped at the texture and tried to grip the slick plant with her toes. A sudden snort near her made her head shoot up. Less than ten feet away were a couple of seals. They peered at her with their big dark eyes, and she peered back. The one on the right, perhaps braver than his companion, sank down under the

water and Stella felt his whiskers on her ankle a moment later.

She laughed aloud at the ticklish sensation and offered her hands to the second seal as he came to inspect her as well. The two seals played chase around her for a time, and kept turning back to look at her, almost as if inviting her to join their game. More than anything, Stella wished she could join them: forget her worries and responsibilities on land. Slip the rest of the way into the ocean, roll with the waves, chase after fish together, spend each day in a joyous celebration.

Stella looked back up the beach at her little car, packed full of all her worldly possessions, and went to turn around. She was ready to face what lay before her. The two seals barked in dismay but followed her as she went slowly back to shore. They clambered awkwardly over the rocks with her, snorting their displeasure. Her frozen muscles were uncooperative in getting back to her car and she stopped to rest. She watched the seals seemingly convene on what to do in their odd barks and head bobs. She watched them slump their way back down the beach. And she watched them disappear into the water.

Stella was alone. She felt silly for it, but she broke down in tears. It was like losing Esther all over again. She sobbed on the ground, releasing her loss and grief. Her great-grandmother should have been with her on this trip. She resented that her family had been so disinterested in helping her with this. She hated that no one had even offered to join her. Stripped of the magic of the moment before, Stella hauled herself to her feet and trudged towards the space between the trees where she suspected the house might be.

The driveway to the house was in even worse shape than the road. The overgrowth covered most of the track and there were several small, downed trees across the path ahead of her. Through the thick brush, Stella could just make out what seemed to be the house. She held her breath as she got closer. The seed of doubt that her father had planted in her started pressing on her mind. What did she know about deciding if a place was livable or not? Her wet jeans were becoming increasingly uncomfortable, and she wondered if she hadn't grazed herself on some poisonous plant. Her bare feet stung from the sharp rocks and sticks she was walking on.

The two walls of the building that she could see from where she stood

seemed fine. There was moss growing on the roof, and vines growing up the siding, but it was a house. She was almost afraid to go to the door, there had been no key with the deed, and Stella didn't want to have to get in by breaking a window. She stepped forward, reaching her trembling hand for the doorknob. It creaked and grinded as she turned it. The door groaned when she pushed, but it was unlocked. She released the breath she had forgotten she was holding and let out a big sigh of relief. She pushed harder on the door, and then pressed her shoulder against it. Slowly, the old hinges relaxed, powdered rust flaked to the ground as the door opened.

The house was small and simple. All four walls were intact, as was the ceiling above her. The floorboards creaked and each step sent up a puff of dust. There was a fireplace on one side and a small kitchenette in the corner. The opposite corner held a bed. Stella was certain it would break if she tried to sit on it. If she could get a fire started, then she would have light for the night and a way to dry her pants. She pulled out her phone and turned on the flashlight, hopeful that the chimney wouldn't be caved in or caked in debris.

She knelt and twisted around, trying to see up the flue and glad that there were no raccoons on the island. Coming face to face with a raccoon while inside a chimney made her shudder. All she could see above her was a metal plate blocking off the rest of the chimney. She frowned and pressed on it, hoping this didn't mean the fireplace was unusable. It gave under her touch, but only slightly. It felt as though there was something blocking it from moving.

Stella crawled fully into the fireplace and pried on the bit of metal. There was definitely something above it. Irritated now, she started wiggling the plate, pushing and prying, aiming to dislodge whatever it was. She absolutely did not want to go check from above. She wondered if the roof would hold her weight. She sighed, resigned to go do what she could. Wiggling out of the fireplace backwards, she bumped her head on the brick and cursed her luck.

Outside the house, she pondered how to even get up to the roof. She circled the house and decided on climbing a tree growing up against the back wall. It would have to be cut down if she wanted to make sure the foundation didn't crack, but for now it would act as her ladder. She climbed until she could see

the full roof, and then gently began putting her weight down on it. She belly crawled across the mossy tile to the chimney and gingerly got to her hands and knees. She pulled the chimney cap off roughly and shone her flashlight down.

The flue was relatively clean and at the bottom where the metal plate was, she could see folds of something that looked like short dark fur. The thought that it might be from a trapped animal made her grimace. It was clear that there was nothing that she could do about it from up here, so she jammed the chimney cap back into place and shimmied her way back across the roof.

Back on solid ground, Stella wondered if she had anything in her car that she could use to hook whatever was blocking the damper. She didn't want to burn the place down by ignoring it. There was wire on one of the picture frames she had, but it would be too flimsy to be useful. She glanced around for anything that could be used as a makeshift hook and nearly smacked herself in the forehead. She was standing in the forest, there were plenty of bent sticks around. She grabbed one that looked likely to make a good tool and trotted back inside.

Already the house was darkening inside, and Stella was eager to soon have a fire going. Her jeans were now cold, wet, salty, stiff, dirty, and smeared with moss from the roof. She fought them off herself, tired of feeling trapped in them. She shook herself with the instant relief and set about her task of removing the obstruction. She crawled back into the fireplace so that she could see what she was doing and slid the stick between the damper and the flue. She turned the stick slowly and began wiggling it until she felt it make contact. She wiggled some more until she was confident she had a hold of it, and then gently pulled.

Once the stick was almost fully out, Stella could see the tiniest bit of something peeking over the damper. Some sort of fabric perhaps, she thought, brushing it with her fingertips. It was incredibly soft, silver-grey in colour, and furry. She slowly worked it out of the chimney with her hands until it pooled onto her lap. She unfolded the material. It was a seal skin. She felt all the hair on her body raise and her breath caught in her throat. It seemed to whisper to her in a language she had never heard but knew all the same.

She wrapped it around herself and smiled. Stella suddenly knew there was no need to build a fire at all.

“The ocean is where we belong, Stella.”

* * *

Meghan Donovan came to Newfoundland as a teenager to study at Memorial University in the Marine Biology Program. The island has since brought her back for work, where her passion for the ocean has led her to a research career in the fisheries. Fiction literature allows her to combine her love of the beauty of reality with the magic of fantasy and folklore.

In Between Tides

Krista Vokey

In the beginning were the tides. The inevitable repetition of filling and emptying. In out. In out. A boat swaying on the sea. Rhythm was everything. Relentless expansion and contraction. In the gap between contraction and expansion, a little space. A tiny breath providing the pulse where one could float, untethered for a second. A curve outside of time and space where magic could happen. If you blinked, you would miss it.

She sat on the ancient rocks separating the sea and her home, perched looking in the direction of the island where wild horses ran free. She placed her feet carefully to ensure the encroaching tide didn't quite reach them while she leaned back against a giant boulder, her weight on her hands. Her light brown hair was caught up carelessly behind her neck and was blowing in the wind's onslaught. All around her were tendrils of seaweed and sea urchin shells discarded on the beach by the last storm. The shell pieces were a light green or brown with small white bumps and could cut a foot with their sharp edges. Sometimes she was fortunate enough to find a whole sea urchin shell and she would bring it back and place it carefully on the window ledge of her bedroom. She imagined that these shells had found a home of sorts on the ledge. She liked the way the shells were empty but looked whole until they were turned over. Sort of how she felt sometimes. A little hollowed out behind opacity. The shells offered a strange sort of company for her on nights when she was waiting home alone. She would imagine their life under water, clinging to the liminal space between high and low tide until they were

either washed ashore or abruptly plucked from their rocky home by ravenous gulls. She wondered if they somehow sensed they were going to a strange, precarious land. Was the sudden weightless fall terrifying or freeing?

Her name was Darra and she lived alone in an old house built by a great grandfather some years ago. The story was that it used to be part of another home until the family fell out and some long-forgotten ancestor had taken a saw to the house and divided it in half. She didn't know for sure if it was true but there was a sister house close by to hers that a summer family had been using in recent years. Hers was a cold house built on a jut of land surrounded by the north Atlantic. On the rear of the house was the open ocean with the island visible on the horizon when the fog wasn't in. In the front of the house, a horseshoe shaped bay offered shelter for the men to anchor their skiffs close to the stages and stores.

Her house clung to the point where the bay met the open hiss of the ocean. Whatever room of the house she happened to be in, the sound of the waves followed her. Booming crashes measured her sleep; lonely slapping on the shore beckoned her to morning tea. It called her to clamber, it barraged the house with angry spray. Sometimes she thought she would go mad from the relentless motion and perpetual heaving of the waves. Those times, she considered throwing herself into the primordial heartbeat of the sea. Something always kept her back, bound to the rocks. Safe from whatever might be waiting.

An iron horseshoe hung over her front door until one day, strong wind gusts wrested it off. She had always believed the horseshoe had offered protection of a sort, and felt a slight unease whenever she thought upon its loss. She spent hours looking for its rusty curves, but it had vanished, seemingly for good... taken, perhaps, by invisible hands, by the pull of the sea itself. One day, when Darra was searching for it yet again, she went to the shoreline adjacent to the house. Her eye caught some unusual motion beneath the surface of the waves. As Darra moved closer to investigate, she slipped on the wet rocks and tumbled into the ocean. The waters closed over her and with the sudden shock of the frigid north Atlantic, she instinctively gasped, breathing in salt water. Frantic, she flailed her arms and legs, but she couldn't

manage to escape from the powerful swirl. Ready to give up, exhausted, she thought she saw a horse coming towards her. Swimming underwater. As her eyes closed, she felt a powerful nudge, pushing her up and out on to the shore.

Darra never knew what had transpired that day. How she woke alone next to the stage by the house, the side facing the bay. Nowhere near the beach where she had slipped. The women who were nearby not noticing her at all; life was going on as usual. They hung out their clothes and dug in rocky vegetable garden soil, trying to get their turnips in. She managed to make her way back into the house to warm herself next to the stove and to find some dry clothes. It took a while for the shivering to stop but eventually it did. However, for many nights to come, she had recurring strange dreams of riding a galloping horse on the silent ocean bed while the waves churned overhead.

Darra continued to gaze at the island, trying to catch a glimpse of the horses while the waves scrambled for fingerholds amongst the rocks and hissed their way into crevices under her feet. Darra could hear the boats off in the distance coming back with their catches for the day. She knew that the harbour would soon be echoing with the banter of the fishermen as they cleaned their fish on the nearby stages. She was sometimes given a fresh cod by a wary neighbour who might want to pay a mark of respect to the young woman. If she was lucky, she might get her supper provided tonight. But in the meantime, it was just her and the ocean, the briny air whipping into her body, staining her skin red.

Darra wasn't always unsettled and intimidated by the ocean. She used to find it mesmerizing. It would draw her in. But that was in the time before everything changed.

On that day a year ago, fog descended on the incoming tide, scattering water droplets. An eerie calm took hold. Darra peered out of her window. A shadowy figure made its way to the house on the point. A young man emerged from the mist-damp, shivering and full of sand. From where or how he had come to be, no one could say and neither could he. The only item he possessed was an iron ring that he never removed but turned around and

around on his finger.

Fergus, for that was what he called himself, found a home with Darra. She fed him her homemade bread and dressed him in freshly washed clothes that belonged to a long-forgotten uncle. While the others in the outport were frightened by the mysterious arrival of this dark-haired man, Darra was not as she claimed him as hers when the fog lifted to reveal his form. She soothed him when he trembled; she tamed him when he wanted to bolt from the questioning eyes of Darra's neighbours who held themselves back in fear. Unlike them, he had no past to tether him and this inability to know his past caused resentment and bitterness amongst the fisher folk. Speculation and fearful whispers floated on the breeze through the outport as they wondered who, or what, had arrived amongst them. He was alone in the village, except for his Darra.

And so their days flowed, one into the other in a peaceful pattern for a universe of two. Persistent sand fell from Fergus' hair no matter how much it was brushed or washed; scattered tiny grains that gritted the floor wherever he passed; the sand a trail of breadcrumbs. He woke before dawn when the sea moved restlessly, waiting for him. The boat under his feet moved easily in the direction he wanted and the fish seemed to jump willingly into his nets. He sang to the waters to calm them and guide him home to the island's horseshoe bay with the movement of the sun. He repaired his nets as though he was weaving magic in their ropes. And with his songs, he prayed to the moon when she summoned the seas to ebb and flow.

One day, Fergus stumbled unexpectedly on the rocks on his way back home. His arms flung out to break his fall; his iron ring flew off his finger. He cried out and scrambled after the ring but it had vanished. He searched until the daylight withdrew its glow and his fingers were stiff with cold, but the ring was lost. Exhausted, he peeled himself off of the boulders and made his way slowly home.

After Fergus lost his ring, he sat on the old daybed by the stove every day. Darra draped her mother's handmade quilt over him when she went to weed her vegetables or when she swept the floor clean of the constant sand. His words were few and sparse, scattering like broken shells onto the floor; sharp

and jagged. And when he went upstairs to sleep, he moved as though through he was wading through water.

Fergus began to startle at the slightest sound. He had developed the habit of glancing over his shoulder at regular short intervals, like he was being watched. His eyes constantly shifted and searched. The light that the ocean had once reflected in his eyes had been replaced with a dullness of resignation. He constantly shivered with cold, despite the many blankets Darra heaped on him or how much wood the stove burned. The man who used to pull nets up from the ocean with equine strength was no more. His empty hands were bereft of tasks; when looking out the window, he would rub the place where the iron ring used to be.

Darra didn't know this faded version of Fergus; the man with the distant eyes and the silence wrapped around him like oilskins. The edges of broken conversations fell away like ash, leaving dark fingerprints upon the air. Always now she heard the sea calling out with longing to him and was afraid. Each night she placed the chair in front of the old front door in case Fergus tried to answer the magnetic summons of the sea while she slept.

Finally, on a day when he seemed to be more listless and weaker than ever, Fergus sat in the chair by the picture window. He stayed that way for a long time, watching the ocean fling itself on the rocks. After what appeared to be a lengthy silent communion of sorts, he sighed and bent his head in submission.

When the tide slipped its way out, and as the setting sun tangled itself among the seaweed, Fergus walked unsteadily to the beach. He stopped and drew to his fullest height, breathing deeply and rhythmically. He extended his hands over the water and began to sing. His song wisped along the breeze, swooped under the breaking waves and wove magic around the ageless rocks; melody that wrapped around Darra and charmed the kitchen where she was preparing the evening meal, until she sank gently to the daybed to dream of dark galloping underwater beings. The music spun glittering strands between Fergus and the sea. And the whole while, the outport stopped its living and the townspeople froze in the spell of it all. In the midst of the music, Darra heard 'each-uisge' through her haze and she breathed in the wonder of the word and breathed out the truth of something she had always somehow known. The

song grew and swelled until the waves frothed and parted. Fergus stepped out onto the ocean floor and seemed to grow, stretch, his long dark hair flowing over his shoulders. Skin, muscle and bone rearranging, broadening, and enlarging. The song became an incantation, a supplication to the ancient shadow powers. The sun vanished behind the island as the song concluded and Fergus dropped to his knees. The wine dark water stampeded towards Fergus, wild, and trampling to claim him. He sank beneath the waves, and the suspension of time released. Darra turned over on her side and the outport people resumed their tasks.

When Darra finally fully awoke, it was to silence. The sea had stopped its clamour. The door was open and Fergus was gone. Frightened, she left the daybed to look for him but he was nowhere to be found. She made her way outside to the rocks that were by now slippery with moonlight and the rising tide.

The sea was totally still. In the silence she heard the scuttle sound of a crab; claws scraping on rock and Darra caught her breath. She waited in a curve of time; caught in between. Desperate to find Fergus, Darra plunged into the icy cold waters, calling out his name as she swam further out. A churn below and something rose to the surface and making its way towards her. A large dark horse, moving swiftly, neighing loudly.

When it reached her, Darra put her hand out and gently touched its back. The horse stilled and looked at her with familiar eyes. Darra stroked its neck and ran her fingers through the dark mane. She tightened her grip. For an instant, it seemed as though the horse would allow her to leap onto its back. Instead, at the last minute, it reared up and she was forced to relinquish her grip and retreat. Hooves thrummed the rocks. A frantic moment of wild movement and, then when she would have reached out to try a second attempt to climb onto his back, the horse neighed loudly and backed away slowly. It paused briefly to look at her as if it was bidding her farewell before turning and careening into the waiting sea. Reclaimed.

Darra remained in the water until the pain of the cold forced her to make her way back. The gap in time and space between the waves offering an instant of hope. A blink or a curve in time where magic could happen.

IN BETWEEN TIDES

Blinded by tears, she almost didn't see the solitary horseshoe on a boulder, partially hidden by a small drift of sand.

* * *

Krista Vokey is an educator and former administrator from Newfoundland and Labrador who now works at Memorial University. Besides her love of reading and writing, she enjoys running, knitting, and traveling with her husband. She is also often found exploring local trails with her dog, Tilly, and searching for the perfect latte with her two adult daughters. Krista lives in St. John's.

An Ocean of Memories

Melissa Elizabeth Wong

The Road to Cape Spear, June 2020

As our car flies east, the view outside the car window fades from the St. John's downtown early morning lights into the thick green of forests, and rocky hills before the shimmering blue ocean appears in the dim light.

We take turns driving. I cannot sleep. Instead, I use my precious nap time to check my phone battery and to count COVID masks, water bottles, first aid kits, emergency fishcakes, breakfast bars, and plastic gloves.

I am overreacting. I wonder how my partner talked me into going on a road trip to the edge of the world when we could have spent the early morning on the couch.

"It's not too late to turn back, Melissa," My partner says.

We glance at each other, and love is truly a supernatural force because once again, I agree to go to Cape Spear. My partner looks unconvinced but accepts my conviction. The heartless sky glares at us as if commanding us to turn back. Meanwhile, the ocean seems to grow bigger and bigger as we drive toward the eastern coast, but our eyes stay on the road, and together we keep driving east. We commit to each other and this grand adventure.

I wish that my heart could become braver so that the one that I love would not have to worry about me so much. What happened to me? I was once so brave and adventurous as a kid, but now, I'm so afraid of everything...

Middle Cove Beach, June 1998

The memory of the afternoon when the mother and the father drove six-year-old Melissa Wong to Middle Cove beach to capture capelin ebbed and flowed with the tide. The sky was grey as fog, and dark clouds stretched across the horizon like old bones that held up the world.

Child Melissa grabbed onto her mother's hand as smooth rocks refused to allow her to cross the rocky beach. Out of pure spite, the girl released her mother's hand and stumbled through loose rocks from the safety of the family and the car on her large feet and thin legs. The stone beach gave her no solid ground, and the ocean beyond seemed infinitely hostile, but she kept staggering towards the water past groups of fishermen with their nets. It was the first time she had been so close to the ocean, which that little girl wanted to touch.

Cape Spear, June 2020

As our car pulls into the Cape Spear parking lot, I reflect on how the girl on the beach feels like a different person from who I am now. I can no longer understand my past self. In my memories, I can only watch from a distance as the growing number of years divide us.

"Remember to stretch, Melissa," My partner says.

I climb out of the car like an old woman. My joints crack like fireworks when I move, and then I'm struck by the smell of cold, salty air. Long before I peel open my dry eyes, I know I'm facing the ocean in all its magnitude without the protective glass and metal body of our red car.

My eyes open, and I am a child again, standing before the Atlantic Ocean.

Middle Cove Beach, June 1998

Melissa's sister and partner-in-crime raced after her towards the cold, grey waves that rolled up the beach before the tide eagerly raced back off the land. It left a strip of cold, wet sand between the smooth rocks and the water. The sisters poked their fingers into the pocket of sand (back when sand once graced Middle Cove Beach)

only for the sea's white foam to wash each particle of sand off their finger tips and away into the ocean.

There were tragedies at sea, along the coast, and strange stories of pirates lurking in hidden places. Lost treasure, along with so many secrets were said to be deep down in the mysterious ocean surrounding Newfoundland. It inspired the sisters to become pirates then and there. They waded into the water for seashells and discovered beautiful stones, washed-up driftwood, and seaweed even as they hunted mercilessly for seashells as if they were gold doubloons.

"Capelin are coming," their mother yelled.

The father's radio seemed to agree. The afternoon's capelin rolled in with the tide. Fascinated, the sisters tried to capture the tiny fish with their small hands but could not carry as many as they wanted.

"You need nets," their mother yelled. "You need a bucket."

The sisters returned with wiggling fish and tossed them into a bucket. The mother gifted her daughters with rainbow butterfly nets to capture capelin. With renewed determination, the girls charged back into the ocean's capelin-choked tide. They swung their nets into the water, and the nets returned to the surface with fish in their colourful nets. The girls raced from the bucket to the ocean over and over until they were too tired to run anymore. Unfortunately, the bucket was far from full with capelin.

The sisters were surrounded by an ocean of capelin but were too tired to fill one bucket. It looked as if the day's catch would be less than they had anticipated... and then, the girl's mother began throwing the female capelin back into the ocean.

Desperately, Melissa grabbed a large female capelin from the bucket and held the fish behind her back.

Shocked and tired, the sisters watched all the other female capelins fly back into the Atlantic and dance away on the tide. After the long drive, the exhausting work, and the defeat on the beach... the mother's actions confused her daughters, who demanded answers.

"Why mother? Why?" They cried.

Cape Spear, June 2020

Grabbing our bags, my partner and I attentively explore Cape Spear's many pathways. Along the paths are warning signs telling us to only walk in one direction, signs instructing us on the value of social distancing, and signs warning hikers that the ocean was a beautiful life-giver, but it was also a dangerous killer so we shouldn't do anything stupid. I think it is strange that my childhood playground for pirate games could be so cruel and wonder how I did not see it as a child.

My partner and I agree the sign's advice sounds reasonable so we went to the mostly empty Cape Spear World War II coastal defence battery.

As we make our way to the defence battery, my eyes find the edge of the cliff and we arrive at the look-out station where many soldiers once spent their days in Fort Cape Spear to protect the fleet of warships that once rested in St. John's harbour. The soldiers would use Cape Spear as a lookout for enemy warships, battle planes, and submarines.

We cannot spot any submarines in the water, but we do see a massive 10'-gun Emplacement. I feel helpless before it and have to fight a strange craving that tempts me to climb upon the ancient weapon by standing on it and feeling its destructive power below me. Only it is not a power that can help me on this hike, what I need is already inside me.

Standing on a big gun cannot help me overcome fear or weed out the root of what is bothering me. It will make me feel powerful for a moment, but it cannot help me to look inward and find my strength.

Middle Cove Beach, June 1998

"Show me what you're hiding and I will tell you everything," their mother said.

Melissa reluctantly showed her mother the one female capelin she had refused to let go. Mother and daughter looked at the wriggling fish.

"She is a mommy," the mother said. "We want to let the mommy capelin go so they can survive and make babies."

The mother explained to her daughters that if they ate all the capelin, then there

would be no capelin for everyone next year. The female capelin and their offspring must be spared so that there would be plenty of capelin for everyone in the years to come.

The Atlantic Ocean would provide, but only if the Atlantic and its marine life were shown respect and mercy. Melissa understood and walked into the tide. She let the capelin swim away to have babies.

Melissa stared out across the horizon. The sense of failure and mercy grew inside her tired legs. Why did doing the right thing have to be so hard?

The child returned to her mother and sister on the beach, near the mostly empty bucket. It did not look like the bucket would be filled that day. Teary-eyed, she hugged both of them, and they hugged her back. Letting the capelin mother go no longer seemed like a big deal... Melissa had a mother. Melissa could let the little fish have their mother back.

Cape Spear, June 2020

With my partner's guidance, we return to the pathways to explore the cliff from a safe distance. We stop along a wooden path to stare into the great abyss that's known as the Atlantic Ocean. I pull my phone from my pocket and record a video of the waves hitting the side of a cliff.

Heights do not scare me, but some high-up places make me nervous. Using Zoom, I feel closer to the edge than I truly am, and my hands shake. I wait for vertigo to attack me, but I find a long fought-for-peace as we transit over moss and crowberries while the ocean crashes below.

"I belong here," I say. "Thanks for bringing me here."

My partner's face lights up, and we hug.

I know who I am. I was born in St. John's and have lived here all my life. Most people think that I am from some far-off country in Asia due to my grandparents being immigrants who fell in love with the kindness here. While I am part Chinese, the truth is that I am also part Irish. My mother's family has lived in Newfoundland since the Irish potato famine, and I might be a townie, but I'm a Newfoundlander as much as anyone. The island of Newfoundland is my home, no matter what I look like or what my last name

happens to be.

With my newfound strength, we climb to the coordinates 47°31'25' N/N and 52°37'10' W/o and are the first people in North America to see the sun a little after sunrise. As the world lights up, I stand at the end of the world without fear and face the horizon.

I taste the salt air, but I cannot quite see the end of the world because the ocean and sky appear to fade into each other like watercolour paints. The sky is lavender and pink, with splashes of gold in both the sky and the endless ocean.

The ocean seems calm, but each wave is so small that it looks almost like a shimmering fabric with an ever-changing pattern without even a hint of land masses beside ours. My eyes searched the waters for signs of fish and the sky for sea birds. In the distance, a boat grows smaller and smaller until it disappears into the veil of fog and mist that slowly disappears as daylight returns to North America.

Middle Cove Beach, June 1998

With a new found determination, the sisters ran back to the ocean with their nets. They would capture a net of capelin, run back, throw back the females, and put the males into the bucket. It was far more work than before, but if they were going to fish and they were going to fish the right way... then, a heroic fisherman appeared to save the day.

The fisherman cast his net into the ocean. It looked like a large paper circle as it landed in the water over the unsuspecting capelin. Then, the fisherman pulled the cord. The circle collapsed into a net-like bag, trapping the wiggling capelin inside. The fisherman dragged the net of capelin onto the sand and emptied his catch onto the beach next to the bucket the sisters were struggling to fill. The girls cheered for the man as he waved before returning to the ocean with his magical net. The sisters fell to the sand and tossed the fisherman's gift into the bucket. In no time at all, they had filled the bucket with capelin.

The family looked through their bucket of capelin together. All the females were returned to the ocean to live another day. The bucket was no longer filled to the

tippy-top, but it was easier to carry back to the car.

The sisters drew hearts in the sand for the tide to take back to all the female capelin who were still dancing in the salt water. Once the girls had said goodbye, they followed their parents back to the car.

“Where’s your pirate treasure?” The mother asked.

The sisters froze before turning around and running back to the beach. They pocketed their pretty stones and gave the prettiest ones to the fisherman who had helped them earlier.

The fisherman waved goodbye as they ran back to their parents. Kindness and the ocean had always been there. Some are kind because they instinctively know everyone is connected. People need each other. Melissa was only six, but she knew she would be surprised if the ocean or kindness ever disappeared and more grateful than ever that both continue to exist.

At long last, the family car drove away from Middle Cove with capelin and pirate treasure onboard. The mother would fry up some of the capelin that night.

Melissa expected to come back eventually, but the sand eroded, and the parents were worried about the safety of young children catching capelin from the rocks. While other families determinedly never stopped catching capelin, Melissa did.

Life became busy, and the ocean became more and more distant. It was a gradual process. It was a nearly unnoticeable change as Melissa lost that brave and adventurous spark. It was not just one thing that changed her. Time away from the ocean gave her a grown-up view of it. She came to understand the danger, the tragedies at sea, and how it was not just a fun playground.

But she would never leave the ocean... it would always be there – she would not seek it out again for a long time.

As a Newfoundlander, the ocean is always there. When my younger self walked outside, and a cold breeze smelled like salt water, she thought nothing of it. When the past-me saw the harbour from the street, it was a normal day. That lost girl would be more surprised if it was not there.

The first time Melissa had sunk her fingers into the water of Middle Cove beach and understood what this mass of saltwater was – it was life-changing. But afterwards, every time she went to the beach, the ocean became more and more just a part of the world she was living in. It was both great and terrible.

Cape Spear, June 2020

Once the sun finishes her journey into the sky above Cape Spear, my partner and I hold each other's hands. We retrace the steps of our journey in the light of day.

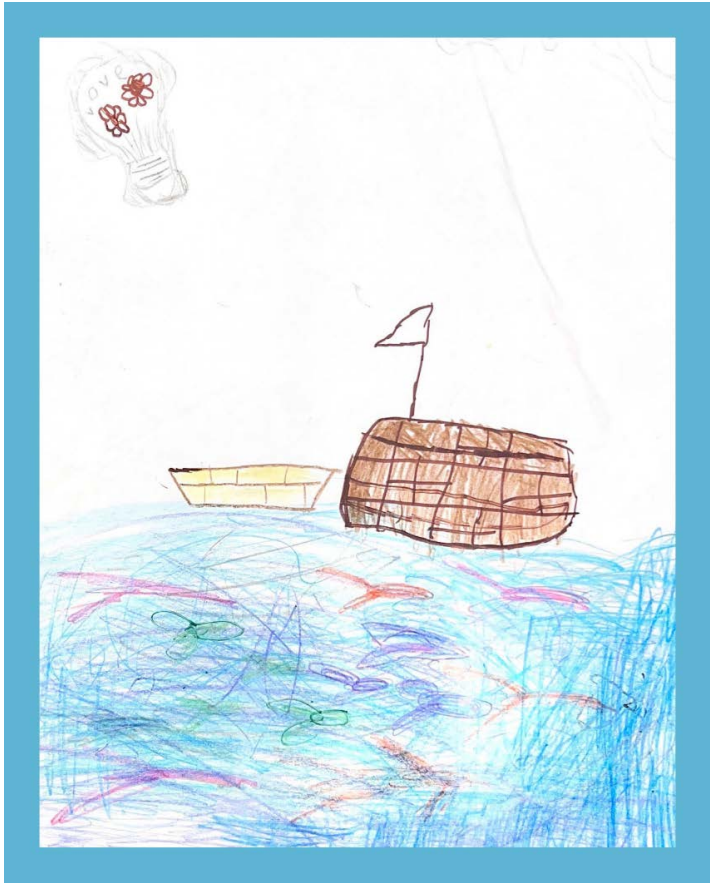
Now it is my turn to pick our next great adventure, and the couch is calling... but so is the ocean. I ask my partner if we can go to Middle Cove.

I was born in St. John's and lived here all my life.

The sea is in my blood, my skin, and the air I breathe. I look out at the ocean from the most-easterly point with the person I love. I know I belonged here because the ocean is a part of the world I am living in, and I would not have it any other way.

* * *

Melissa Wong is a multimedia creator in St. John's, Canada. A MUN alumni with a B.A. (Hons) and a diploma in journalism, Wong's short story "Chirp", won the 2021 Icelandic Festival of Manitoba: Poetry and Pose contest. Wong's writing has been published in The Newfoundland Herald, Truth Serum Press, Pure Slush, Applebeard, The Icelandic Connection Magazine, The Understorey Magazine, WANL Winter E-Zine, After Books Inc, and Engen Books. Her latest poem, "The First Loss," was published in 2024 in Loss Lifespan Vol. 9. She is a co-creator of the YouTube channel "The Little Book Digital Theatre" with fiancé Evan Maddick.



Jakeman All Grade (Group of Elementary students)

IV

Rethinking

Golden Bay

Virginia Ryan

Anne stumbles through the tucks, her hair caught on a withered branch, her arms aching from hanging, limb by limb, from stunted trees that might or might not hold her as she descends the sharp slope leading to her destination. She's already managed the Big Gulch – half walked, half slid on her bottom down one side, crossed the river at its base, slipping she doesn't know how many times, and clambering, feet wet and heart pounding, hand over hand up the other side. Better that than the tucks, though – almost impenetrable, her hands sticky with turpentine, her arms scratched and bleeding, the sane part of her mind warning her of the danger of her descent. But descend she must because several times, looking heartbreakingly near and yet still distant, Golden Bay has spread out before her through the branches, and she has come so far, she will not stop now.

On her way from Point Lance, she has three times been detained. Once it was by a sparkling sliver of waterfall tumbling from a cliff to splatter onto a tiny beach far below where it became a rivulet running out to the sea. Then it was to view the Bull, Cow, and Calf, named for their likeness to three breaching whales – rocky uprisings of descending size spreading out behind her in an indigo ocean. And she had to stop to peer down at the Rookery – a mass of kelpy shallows far below her where dozens of seals were lazing in the sunlight, stomachs full. They ignored her, though she called to them, motionless except for the odd slap of a flipper or a heave to a more comfortable position.

The magic stopped at the tucks, though; getting through them and down them is one of the most trying and foolhardy things she has ever done in her thirty-odd years. But – suddenly, they end. All at once she is heading down a steep but grassy and tree-less slope – so steep that for a while she is inching down once again on her bottom. But it’s there, it’s just beyond the next rise; and now she’s looking down on the soft folds of waves reaching into the beach at Golden Bay.

Crossing Golden Bay Brook, she finally sets foot on the rocky beach where her grandmother once frolicked with her siblings. The waves are small and come ruffling in. The sea is lit by an enormity of blinding sun. The bay is empty of everything but water and light. She hardly knows where to go first; she has waited so long to come here.

She decides to walk first to the higher, grassy ground where their house must have been – but now there is no trace of a house. There’s not even a depression in the ground to suggest where a house might have been. There’s the swift brook curving its way from back in the country – they must have gotten their water from it, and that must have been where Nanny went trouting. Nanny used to tell Anne the stories – all the good stories:

We’d often go out fishing, or trouting in the brook. We’d look for birds’ nests in the grass and take the little birds and bring them into the house. Chase the sandlarks. We’d go at the sheep in the spring. Pick berries – there was one good bakeapple mash. Go far up the brook to Golden Bay Falls – not many knew about that . . .

The brook dwindled at the beach; if she followed it far enough back, she might find the falls. But it’s already past noon; she has to allow time for getting home. She sits on a long, smooth piece of wood, washed up in some storm, takes out her sandwich and her water and has her lunch, staring at but hardly seeing the ocean, remembering what she knows.

Nanny is long since gone – also all the other even older people who used to have the stories. Nanny’s old Uncle Thomas it was who’d first told her the back story of Golden Bay – or as far back as he could. “The first to live

in Golden Bay were two bachelor brothers and an old maid sister,” he’d told Anne when she was a girl.

It must be that their parents lived there before them, but who their parents were or how they came to be there, nobody knows... But your Nanny’s father, me brother Dan, well, he was the oldest in our family, and he left Branch and went to work for them for two or three years when he was 17 or 18. They had cattle, and he used to mow the hay and set the gardens. And when they died, they left it all to him.

Anne looks around her, the softest wind swaying the tall grass, and beyond that, the glittering sea before her. She’s trying to feel the lives that once lived here, but all she feels is silence.

“Golden Bay – now, that was the best place for fishing,” Thomas had told her more than once.

They called it “the Garden of Newfoundland,” on account of the fishing. That’s where all the fish was got. They used to come to fish from Fortune Bay, Placentia Bay, St. Mary’s Bay, and all around. See, those men that was fishing up in Golden Bay on the big schooners, they used to trap. And probably they’d haul those traps and they’d get 1700, 1800 quintals of fish the one haul. And ‘twould be lit up in the night like a city from their lights.

Anne looks out over the bay now and tries to imagine it filled with schooners, tries to picture the city of lights at night. But the bay spreads out before her, shimmering and empty, and she feels a sadness heavy inside her. It is less than empty, from once having been so full.

Anne had wanted all the story, and she had asked Thomas whether Nanny’s father Dan had spent his summers on one of those schooners, when he wasn’t setting gardens and mowing hay. “No, honey,” he’d told her.

I was about ten when I started leaving Branch in April month to fish

with brother Dan, but always in a dory – and continue every fine day from then on. And oh, my God, honey dear – I seen times we had 40 quintals of fish before ever a fish got caught in Branch. In Branch you couldn't go fishing before May. And in April, we used to have 40 or 50 quintals of fish. Now, we'd have these made, and Mother'd take it to St. John's in the spring of the year. She'd go with whatever boat would take the freight. Golden Bay was The Garden of Newfoundland, that's for sure.

Anne knows the whole story now, from the outside, anyway – has known it for years – and she feels the burden of this knowledge. As a young girl, and then during university, she'd pieced it together, fragment by fragment, from the old people now long gone. What had happened to this Garden of Newfoundland was a story for the scholars and the politicians – a story of greed and grief, of lean years and upheaval, of loss and modernization. But the story of this bay, of the man and woman and children who once lived here, it is her blood, her story, and coming here was supposed to help her feel it so she could tell it rightly. She's the only one of her generation old enough to have heard it all from those old lips. So, she waits for the whispers of ghosts on the breeze to instill in her the feel of those long-ago days; but she hears only the breeze. She walks back down to the beach, to where the rocks end and the rock-studded sand begins.

There's driftwood everywhere and tiny purple starfish stranded near the water's edge. Once in a while, a gull soars by high overhead. But further down the beach is a thing Anne has especially been longing to see – and there it is, a massive grey rock shaped something like a whale, with one big rise and then a downward slope and then a second, smaller rise, like the tail of the whale as it's coming out of the water. Nanny had told her that she and her brothers and sisters had played around that rock as children and clambered to the top to watch the gannets dive-bombing, needle-sharp into the sea, and to try to count the fishing boats. Anne has a photo of Nanny as a woman in her 50s, gone back on a hike to Golden Bay with her husband and one of her sisters. In those days you could walk there, single file from Cape St. Mary's, if you

knew the way. No one can get to Golden Bay from that direction anymore – erosion of the cliffs has made it too dangerous, the Parks people say. Anne wonders whether it's any more dangerous than the way she's come, but it's no matter, because Cape St. Mary's is an ecological reserve now, and the guides won't allow you to attempt it.

Anne thinks on the photo of Nanny taken that day. Her hair done up in a red kerchief, she's sitting atop the whale rock with a big piece of driftwood in her hand, and smiling, the sun in her eyes. What memories she must have had then as she sat there. As Anne gets closer to the whale rock, she realizes that it's no longer one rock, but two – and the tail part is several yards away from the rest. The tides and the ice have done their work. Anne climbs up to the top part of the higher rock and sits there, as Nanny sat in the photo, hoping old thoughts and feelings will infuse her.

As she sits there basking, she pieces together more of the story. "Did your father just stay on in Golden Bay after the old people died?" she'd asked Nanny one night as they drank their tea by the stove. "Ah, no, honey," Nanny'd answered.

The two old men, they died, and then Daddy was alone with Miss Joanie, the old maid. And the war was on then, and he said he'd join the Merchant Navy. So, he boarded Miss Joanie in some home in Placentia, and he sent money for her keep when he could.

But after, when Daddy was back in Branch again, the Depression was on, and everyone was on relief. And Daddy, he felt it was a disgrace. He hated the old dole. And he said, "My children, 'twill never be said to them that they were reared on the dole or had to take relief. " So, he moved on back to Golden Bay, which had been left to him, with Mommy and me and five other children besides. The youngest was little Danny, named for him.

So, there you had it. A man and a woman and six young children came to live here in Golden Bay, cut off from everyone. Anne is steeped in Nanny's memories of the years she spent there, growing up – chasing the skylarks

and trouting in the brook, but working hard, too, as the oldest child, starting at only nine years of age. The family had gardens – “big squares of cabbage, and turnips and potatoes, and not a weed” – and by the time they had to leave some years later, they had 40 sheep, a horse, and two or three cows. With their father bringing in fish by the doryload and selling them over in Branch, you know that all of them who were able had to work hard, too, with the gardens, the wood, the water, and the animals.

Now, Nanny didn't often speak of the hard times – she'd only been a child then after all – but just once Anne remembers her speaking of the toll the fishing took on her father.

I used to see him coming in after pulling them oars. You know, when he'd first go fish in the spring of the year, his hands'd be tender. I remember seeing him come home in the evening with the blood pouring out of the palms of his hands. See, he'd have these oars in his hands all the time, and he'd be rowing the dory, pulling and pulling, and the oars would burn his hands. And Mommy'd go down with a bottle of peroxide to soothe his hands. We used even to haul his socks off, and wash his feet for him, then pass him clean socks to put on . . .

But Nanny wasn't one to dwell on the hard times. In her memory it had all had a rhythm, been a kind of dance: milking the cows and making butter, sheering the sheep and preparing the wool, and setting the snares for rabbits. She spoke of the healthy food they'd had – soups and stews and lots of vegetables, and the wild ducks her father brought home in the wintertime. And the time they'd had for play, as well – sliding in winter, and in warm weather going for walks with their mother down by the sea.

Nanny did tell Anne that her mother had been lonely there – that she would rather not have been there, with no other women for company. And that it was lonely there in wintertime, with the wind howling, and “big mountain-high seas that used to come right in,” and no visitors at all. But Nanny preferred to remember how in summer, they'd sometimes have visits from the fishermen, who'd bring them salmon from their traps. And how her mother would give

the fishermen jugs of milk and fresh butter – things the family had in plenty.

It was, after all, all about the fishing and the good land for farming, and the ability to feed your family and keep your pride in a time when so many people could not. And it was all about hard work, and the loneliness that came with such independence, but still an ideal way for six young children to grow and spend their days, working and playing from sun up to sun down beside the roar and shushing of the sea.

Until it wasn't.

It all came crashing down on them, early one winter, and Golden Bay would eject them, just as it had welcomed them. Nanny's mother Helen was due with her seventh child, and Dan had to take her by horse and slide over the country in a snowstorm all the way to Patrick's Cove, where his sister Margaret, who was a midwife, lived. And there the seventh child was born – a girl – but Helen died within a few weeks. She had been poorly, and the strain of the childbirth was too much for her. Meanwhile, the years of hard work had caught up with Dan and his back gave out - so there he was, in Golden Bay not able to work, with six children, his wife gone, his seventh child miles away. So, there was nothing for it but for Dan to go to the hospital in St. John's. And the children, well, they were all put in the orphanage in St. John's, the boys in Mt. Cashel, the girls in Belvedere. All but the youngest two, who found homes with family on the Shore.

Anne heard this part of the story not from Nanny nor from Uncle Thomas, but from Thomas's sister in Ship Cove, whom everyone called Aunt Sadie. Aunt Sadie was a very old woman by the time Anne was taking an active interest in all of this, but still as sharp as a tack, and Anne went to ask her about it one Sunday afternoon. And over more tea at another woodstove, this is what Aunt Sadie told her:

Well, my brother Dan stayed on in Golden Bay 'til after the baby was born and his wife died. The baby was taken in by Murphys on the Shore – her mother's people – but the rest went to the orphanage – all except Danny. His mother had had a wish that I take him.

I went out with Dan to get the child on a horse-drawn slide. It was March

month. We left in the morning and went as far as our sister Margaret's in Patrick's Cove. And then we went on, and oh, it was a lovely drive after the night's frost, and we drove 'til we come down to Lear's Cove. Dan said, "We should be pretty near now." And so, we were.

We got to Golden Bay, and I stayed two days with Dan then. I baked some bread and fixed up things for Dan and the children. And little Danny, he didn't want to come with me; I knew he hated to leave. But when the day came, we dressed him up, and I took him in my arms. He was only a little tot – maybe two or three.

But the trip back to Ship Cove wasn't as easy as the trip to Golden Bay had been.

We came to a place where there was a big flood in the river. And Dan said, when we came to it, "Sadie, honey, I don't know what we'll do. I'm afraid. If anything happened to the slide, and you on it, and the little child . . . " I couldn't look at the worried look on his face. But he took the horse further up the river and he said, "We'll cross it here." And we got across grand. And that's how I come to raise up Danny.

Anne, still perched on the whale rock, watches the sun sinking lower in the sky and knows it's time to head back the way she had come. The loneliness pierces her; the small waves suck out and shush back in again. It is almost impossible to imagine a living, breathing family here, where now there is no trace of them. A whole family split up and gone. How could this bay have been alive with dories and schooners, and now be empty? How does such enterprise turn to tragedy, and who or what's to blame? Nobody, sigh the waves. Many things, sighs the breeze.

So, what had she come all this way for? What had she expected to find that she did not already know? The feel of it, that's what. The reality of living here. She couldn't quite touch that, though she now had a first-hand glimpse of the extent of the beauty of the place, and maybe the extent of its loneliness.

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But other than that, she'd found only an absence.

She'd brought the matter up once to her Nanny's brother, Danny, who'd stayed on in Ship Cove after old Aunt Sadie raised him there – how lonely but how beautiful a place Golden Bay must have been, and how good a life it would have been if all of them could have stayed there. “Let me sail up Golden Bay/with me oilskins all a-streamin’,” she'd sung. But Danny had cut her off; had rhymed off a different verse of the song –

*Let me feel my dory lift
To those broad Atlantic combers,
Where the tide rips swirl and the wild ducks whirl
Where Old Neptune calls the numbers
'Neath the broad Atlantic combers . . .*

And he'd said with some heat, “Well sure, Anne girl, that's a nice song. But the fella wrote that song – sure *he* never fished a day in his life. ‘Let me feel my dory lift to those broad Atlantic combers,’” he'd repeated with scorn.

When those “broad Atlantic combers” come in there, it's time to get your motorboat, your dory, and get out, back on shore. Those “broad Atlantic combers” – it sounds very nice, yes; but no one out there wants to see those broad Atlantic combers coming in. . . they can kill you, girl.

So, there was that. The loneliness wasn't beautiful, and that shimmering sea could be a taker as well as giver of life. Working the land and fishing the sea had broken Danny's father – broken him, and maybe his mother, too, and sent five of his brothers and sisters to the orphanage. Anne realized now how she'd longed to see in that old way of living a rightness she couldn't find in her modern life, and Nanny's stories had always made the old way seem the better of the two. Anne likes to picture the bay all lit up by the schooners in the nighttime, the fishermen coming to her great-grandparents' house on a smiling summer's day trading salmon for milk and butter. It's easy on a late afternoon like this one with the water calm and glistening to forget the gales

and drownings and a man's hands so sore from rowing that his wife must bathe them in peroxide, his back so bent from getting wood and water that it feels like it is breaking.

Anne slides down off the whale rock. She's as conflicted as ever and coming here has only added to that conflict. Maybe if there'd been no Depression and no dole; maybe if two or three other families had joined her great-grandparents out there and worked together; maybe if the base in Argentinia had never been built and people had stayed with the old ways instead of opting for hourly pay; maybe if Newfoundland hadn't joined Canada, with all of its handouts, at such a cost . . . Maybe if you could work for yourself but not so hard, and the fishing stayed constant, and the sea wouldn't kill you . . .

Anne turns back towards Golden Bay and says goodbye before heading the treacherous way back; at least now, she will be climbing, not descending. But the last image she has in leaving is not of Nanny playing on the beach but of Nanny's mother: standing at the water's edge, gazing out, wishing she were elsewhere, wishing she had a friend next door, wondering whether her husband would come safely home from sea. The story of Golden Bay is more than one of abundance, more than of a child's playground. It's also the story of a woman watching, waiting, longing for things that might not come and that could not come, and of a man bent in two by labour and danger. Anne's digging deep into her heart, wondering if it's a story she can ever fully know, as slowly the clouds move in.

* * *

Ginny Ryan was born and raised in the U.S., but moved to Newfoundland as a young woman as a result of an ancestral connection to the place. She married here, and she and her husband spent six years as multigrade school teachers in Labrador. Subsequently, Ginny taught at the Marine Institute and in the College system, spending the last 21 years of her career as the director of MUN's Writing Centre. She has published a small number of poems, essays, and short stories in various journals, and has produced a CD of her own and traditional songs entitled "Great Wings in Flight." Writing

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the story “Golden Bay” was particularly meaningful to her, as she spent time on Newfoundland’s Cape Shore collecting the songs and personal stories of many people there and had always longed to find a way to tell the story of the family who lived in Golden Bay - a story that has long lived inside her.

A Marine Cook on Turbulent Waters

Terry C. Bursey

For three days, Ryan Benjamin Keats thought that he was a sailor. On the fourth day – covered head-to-toe in his own vomit – he knew better. When he had first laid landlubber eyes on *The Ackvik* – moored at the snowy port in Harbour Grace – his brazen twenty-five-year-old chest swelled with pride and his smile was as broad as the sky above his head. It was his first stab at being a marine cook – trained only as a land-based apprentice who was fed up with working for a meagre fifteen dollars an hour in a socially-obsessed three-star kitchen.

Marine cooks were infamous for cooking bland simple meals – he knew – and Ryan was eager to outperform all cooks who came before him on *The Ackvik* – stocking the fridge and freezer with a cornucopia of well-planned ingredients that were versatile, interchangeable and especially nutritious. It was a December voyage on *The Grand Banks*, and though he was loathe to be missing Christmas ashore with his closely-knit family, Ryan salvaged some cheer by planning a magnificent Christmas dinner for the crew of the thirty-foot trawler; a veritable fine-dining feast complete with yorkies, Sunday Dinner and three massive deboned trussed turkeys.

For Ryan, the opportunity to cook aboard *The Ackvik* wasn't just an adventure to speak of at dive bars to dampen the legs of potential bedpartners or a means of making enough money to safely escape his abusive girlfriend... but the start of an extremely rewarding career path that would ultimately break the Keats family cycle of poverty. Eager to prove his worth at sea, Ryan

had vowed not to make a single misstep aboard the trawler. He had double-checked the inventory and helped load the galley himself. He had sought advice from the old salt of a cook who had recommended him as his relief. He had checked the crew for allergies, diabetes, irritable bowel syndrome and whatever else he could think of. Indeed, Ryan thought of everything, but what Ryan Benjamin Keats could never have anticipated was the complete and utter inability to get his sea legs... and the omnipresent seasickness that came with it.

Granted, his family doctor had tried to warn him that it might happen. *"You've got a very unique ear structure, Ryan. Apricot ears like yours are a common Newfoundland trait, but sometimes the structures of the inner ear can be affected as well. You have a history of motion sickness, vertigo and dyspraxia... which might be the result of inner ear abnormalities."* But Ryan hadn't listened; lost to the throes of ambition and determination.

Now, as yet another wave of water and nausea overtook him inside his sick-covered galley, he cursed his stubborn pride. He was well and truly miserable, and the job was far more herculean than he had anticipated. Aboard the Ackvik, Ryan had to cook six meals per day rather than three; him alone feeding a crew of forty with naught but six hours of sleep under even the most perfect conditions... and conditions were far from perfect aboard The Ackvik.

Ryan had a rounder body than most – more akin to the trunk of a large oak than a slab of granite – and each night the rolling waves would roll Ryan too; straight over the plank guard of his bunk and onto the linoleum floor, where he struggled to naught but cry; so tired, sore and sick as he was. He counted the hours of sleep each night based on adding the minutes of sweet oblivion between rude awakenings and concluded that it was most often three hours or so, but sometimes less than one... and all the while, he was forced to work like a joyless oft-kicked dog.

How do they do it? How are they not in pain? How are their legs not rubber? How does their vision not twirl in their heads? How does their gorge not rise? Are they even human?

Inside the tiny filthy galley where checkered dishcloths hung from dark

green twine on the walls that Ryan stood upon as often as the floor; his stomach heaved again... and the vomit seemed to float in midair before flying back into his face – knocking him down. He slid on his back to come crashing against the stove, where boiling soup sloshed from the loosening lid of a large steel pot – splashing down on his shoulder to scald him. Ryan screamed a curse.

“That’s it! I’m done for the day! This isn’t worth the money! How the frig can this be worth anythin’! I’d pay every red cent I made thus far just to go back home! Just for one decent night’s sleep! Just to have enough food left in me belly to move me arms wit’out forcin’ ‘em to move! I’m done! Frig the poor safety standards of OGI! Frig this archaic, outdated job! It’s not worth it!” Ryan shouted, meaning every last tear-stained word.

Using the angular momentum from the ship being tossed in the waves like a child’s toy, Ryan didn’t so much spring to his feet as he did simply aim them toward the floor with a hopeful heart. Sticking the landing, he rushed to the white chipped-paint handle of the galley’s hatch before he could be thumped back on his arse... and held on tight. It wasn’t as bad as the night before – when the waves were actually choppy – but this average day aboard a trawler on The Grand Banks in December still required every movement to be carefully calculated.

Steadily and cautiously, he made his slow progress toward the hold, where he could do the only thing possible to ease his suffering for even the briefest of moments aboard his hell; smoke a rapidly dampening cigarette while staring at his beloved ocean. Ryan tentatively pried the L-shaped lever of the hatch, and it flew open abruptly – crashing against the metal wall of the hold’s interior. Expediently, he leapt backwards to avoid losing his fingers just as the heavy door came thundering back into place with the force of several hundred pounds per square inch.

This is an average day... how could I’ve been so naïve?! So stupid! Ryan thought bitterly, gritting his stomach-acid-worn teeth in anger.

As the door swung open again, he seized the opportunity to duck outside and grab onto a nylon rope attached to the wall; wiry, mint-green and thick as a rattlesnake. The forces of the sea banged the hatch shut again, and Ryan

expertly brought the outer lever down to secure it.

As per his usual hapless routine, he coiled the prickly rope tightly around his forearm several times over to prevent being tossed into the sea, and fumbled in his pockets for his lighter.

“Aye! Cookie! Ya smokes too much, b’y! And works too little! We got a supper for t’night, or wha?!”

Finn.

Ryan glared at the spindly black-haired man who had become his personal tormentor aboard *The Ackvik*. The creature was brainless by any measure – which was common enough among the crew – but stupidity was endearing when paired with a big heart... and Finnegan Tyler Power had no heart to speak of. Ryan ignored the baiting, but Finn wouldn’t allow it.

“Just so ya knows, ya can’t cook for the life o’ ya! Chinese food? Yes, b’y! This isn’t China! This is Newfoundland, ya mainlander h’idiot! We wants rough grub, Cookie! Ya ‘ear me wit’ them small ears? Rough grub! If ya can’t boil spuds ‘n turn-up, then what’s the good o’ ya?”

“Ya don’t have to be good at somethin’ to want to do it, Finn! By your logic, you should quit havin’ sex if you want to enforce that standard wit’out hypocrisy! And I’m no mainlander! I’m from Gander, ya toothless friggin’ skeet!” fired Ryan, too pissed off and miserable to ignore him any longer – struggling to light his smoke in the saltwater wind.

Finn cocked his gap-toothed head to the side. “Wha?”

This idiot doesn’t even understand the first part of the insult...

“You’ll ‘ave supper! It’s turkey soup! I made enough for both shifts!”

Finn guffawed. “Laziest cook we’ve ever friggin’ had! So, ya mean t’say that night shift gets overcooked soup, eh? B’y the friggin’ jumpins! I’m soon gonna throw ya overboard!”

Something like a wire snapped in Ryan’s mind.

He threw his neon-orange lighter across the room, where it clattered with a crack against the rusted metal of the wall.

“Do it, then! Throw me overboard, Finn! Let me friggin’ drown! Let me finally rest! Let me sufferin’ be at an end! Put me out o’ me friggin’ mis–” was all Ryan could say before he began dry heaving yet again – tempest tossed

and plagued by nausea.

Ryan expected Finn to laugh. Finn had laughed before; on the first, second, third and fourth days whenever Ryan started to get sick. But now – on their twelfth day at sea – Finn remained stoic at the sight of his sick and miserable crewmate. A flame cloistered within filthy fish-smelling hands appeared before Ryan’s tear-blurred vision – surprising him. He lit his quivering smoke upon Finn’s flame, and a small sob escaped his chapped lips.

“You um... you’re actually ‘avin’ a real hard time out ‘ere... aren’t ya, Keats?”

It was Ryan’s turn to laugh, albeit laced with a despondent sadness. “Yeah... I am.”

“I ‘aven’t never seen nobody sick like you after this long. I thought – we thought – ya was fakin’ it all for the sake o’ laziness... but it’s real... isn’t it?”

As exhausted and wretched as he was, Ryan’s anger rose at the raw news of what the crew truly thought of him. He knew they hated him, of course. The crew mercilessly griped about the lavish meals Ryan cooked; all of them delicious and perfectly prepared despite the aquatic nightmare that he endured. Many of them told Ryan that it was too rich for their stomachs. Others complained of it simply because they had never eaten it before. Which Ryan had found incredulous; pizza, spaghetti and eggs benedict being commonplace... but laziness?

“It’s impossible to do this friggin’ job and be lazy at the same time! Friggin’ idiots!” Finn’s mouth curled in a sneer. “Well, what else was we supposed to t’ink?! Buddy, I’m only tryin’ to be nice to ya! Ya can go fu–”

“Power! Get back below, ya friggin’ dog! The freezers ain’t gonna load themselves! Your smoke break was done five minutes ago!” a sea-weathered gravelly voice boomed from the opposing door of the hold – none other than the old potbellied First Mate, John Hunt.

Finn whipped around as if set aflame. “Aye!”

Power shot Ryan a dark look from his cold Atlantic-blue eyes as he pulled his orange rubber hood over his head and ducked off toward Hunt – loping effortlessly as the boat lurched and dove through the thirty-foot swells. Ryan was glad to see one problem go as he fought hard to keep his eyes open, the remnants of lunch in his stomach and the cherry of his cigarette lit. He wasn’t

much of a smoker, but smoking was the only respite he had from his hell on open water.

He turned to his right and beheld the sea through the wide-open stern. The sun was just beginning to set – igniting the sky in vibrant hues of red, orange and pink that had never graced Ryan’s eyes before. A second later, the sky was gone – replaced with a roiling slate-grey sea as solid and vertical as a wall of stone. Ryan felt his two-hundred pounds against the numb-sore soles of his feet as the boat rose to reveal the sky once again... and suddenly, Ryan was overcome with an odd serenity.

The ocean is beautiful, despite it all. Ancient. Magnificent. So much bigger than I am. It’s the same feelin’ as lookin’ up at a clear night sky full of stars. Cold. Depthless. Dangerous and belittling. I’m a Newfoundlander born ‘n bred. I love the ocean... but she doesn’t love me back.

Without thinking, he let his rope slacken and made his shaky way along the wall to the water; drawn toward it like a moth to a flame. Though his stance was as wide as a drunken boxer and his stomach still twisted and jumped with the waves, he felt strangely at harmony as he lumbered to the stern’s opening – wanting nothing more than a single solitary moment of peace.

A twisted shard of shredded metal jutted from his right like a tragic accident waiting to happen, and Ryan ironically used it to anchor himself safely in place with a grip that was altogether stronger than his biology should have allowed. A fine drizzle of ocean spray baptized him – slowly trickling into the reddish brown of his unkempt seaman’s beard. He sobbed hard.

I’ll never make enough money to escape Trisha. I’ll never break the cycle of poverty. I’ll never find a good career. I’m not strong enough. I don’t have what it takes. If this is the hardship that one has to endure to get ahead in life... then what’s the point in even bein’ alive?

The sea appeared. The sky appeared. The sea appeared. The sky appeared. And through it all, Ryan cried and smoked. It was worse than prison. It was worse than torture. And there was over two weeks left to their hellish journey before he could ever hope to return to dry land.

There’s no way! I can’t endure that long! I’ll die! I’m not strong enough to ‘andle two more days! Let alone two weeks! I want to go home! I want to start over! I

can't!

The sea called to him, and just as he was about to obey, a hum of hydraulics cut through the din of the ocean waves and the intrusive thoughts of his mind. The steel line of the net began to crawl backward into the trawler's hold... and Ryan followed its lead.

He flicked his cigarette butt into the water and shuddered out the last bitter breath of nicotine from his lungs. As the net began to rise over the slanted lip of the stern, Ryan stared at the load inside, horrified. The dragnet didn't contain just codfish, but a handful of mako sharks... along with an entire whistling and shrieking pod of –

“Porpoise! This dragnet is full of friggin’ porpoise!” he yelled to himself, aghast.

Ryan turned and ran toward the rightmost door of the bay – planning to notify anyone along the way about the dire emergency of the marine wildlife captured in the net.

I don't know how to free them! But someone else will know! The soup is on minimum and shouldn't burn! Not yet, anyway! There's time to tell someone who can release the net!

He raced up the narrow stairs to the upper decks of the boat on rubbery uncooperative legs in an ultimate effort to find the First Mate. The boat threw him against both walls of the passage in tandem, but Ryan pressed on – fuelled by spite and the cusp of madness – until he reached the open doorway of the bridge, where he clung like a white-knuckled barnacle.

“Mr. Hunt!” Ryan called, out of breath, “Mr. Hunt! There’s porpoise in the net!”

The old man with a sparse spikey grey crew cut turned and faced him. “Eh, Cookie? What’s that? Cookie! Why aren’t ya in the friggin’ galley?!”

“Frig the accursed galley! Mate, I’m tryin’ to tell ya that the net that was just brought up is full of friggin’ mako sharks and dolphins, man! Someone gotta release it!”

A sharp silence hung... until the Mate shattered it with a laugh. “First time on a fishin’ boat, is it? Did ya take any pictures?”

Ryan was dumbfounded. “What?”

“I said, did ya take any friggin’ pictures wit’ ya phone? Your contract specifically states you’re not to take any –”

“Why does that matter?! We got to release the nets! We gotta get ‘em back in the water before it’s too late! What... what’s wrong wit’ ya, b’y?!” Ryan roared.

The Mate laughed and shook his head – his posture that of cruel detached amusement. “Lemme tell ya somethin’, Cookie; what do ya t’ink porpoise eats? Fish, b’y! Fish! The less of them, the more there is for us! They’re the rats of the friggin’ sea, Cookie! Cod stocks is low enough as it is! What do ya t’ink keeps ‘em steady? What’s we gonna do, b’y? Stop what we’re at and waste money?” Ryan was mortified by the Mate’s words as Hunt ranted on:

“Where do ya t’ink you’re to, me son? Sin Jawn’s? We got families to feed! Now, give me your friggin’ cellphone!”

Ryan couldn’t believe what he was hearing. “I... I don’t have it on me. I don’t have time to even use it. I’m the cook.”

Hunt abruptly grabbed Ryan by the brown hair of his head and wrenched him down in a half-baked chokehold – using his other hand to frantically search through Ryan’s pockets.

“Get off me! Get off me, you old friggin’ weirdo!” Ryan yelled – struggling, panicking and in utter disbelief of what was happening to him.

Satisfied with his forced search, Hunt released him, and Ryan flew back against the far wall of the bridge as a particularly strong wave wrenched The Ackvik aside.

“Now you listen to me, Cookie! Forget what ya saw! And I’ll forget what I saw ‘ere on this bridge! If you so much as step one foot out o’ line again! Me and the b’ys is gonna give ya your birt’day bumps on deck and sling ya over the side! This is the open ocean, Cookie! A lot can ‘appen out ‘ere! Now, go!”

Ryan was seething. “Oh, I’ll go, alright. I’ll friggin’ go...”

Ryan Benjamin Keats turned and left the bridge... but not for the galley. His rubber legs made solid by fury, he passed the bright-red box affixed to the narrow white hall and abruptly thrust his elbow against the thin glass to shatter it. Hunt hollered out from the bridge – no doubt registering the sound of the glass – but Ryan ignored the braying, plucked the large orange

axe from its pegs inside the box and pressed onwards through the hall, down the narrow stairs, and out into the hold... where the net of porpoise and sharks still rested in agony.

“Don’t worry, b’ys!” Ryan declared to the intelligent mammals bulging through the loops of black nylon netting, “I’ll ‘ave yas back in the water in a minute, or die friggin’ tryin’!”

Ryan regarded the rope-thick steel wire that held the net to a winch further to the bow of The Ackvik, and prepared to cut. He raised the axe high above his head and brought it down.

“What are ya doin’?!” the Mate boomed behind him, outraged.

Ryan didn’t care. He brought the axe down once more; this time shredding part of the wire away, but not cutting through by a longshot. A sharp whistle sounded from behind him and he heard multiple footsteps approaching.

One more! Use the g-forces of the boat! Use the water’s waves! Use the power of the ocean! Strike at the moment the boat begins to rise!

The reddening sky appeared to his left. “Cookie! Stop! Cookie!”

And then... up rushed the sea.

Now!

The blow was galvanized not just with the added force of the waves, but with every red drop of anger, pain, resentment and grief that Ryan held. It came down harder than he ever thought possible, and the wire suddenly disappeared from his vision as if it wasn’t there to begin with – leaving only the sharpest sound that Ryan Benjamin Keats had ever heard in his life... followed by a likewise piercing cry of pain to his right.

Yes!

“No!” screamed The Mate.

Ryan cared not for whatever happened toward the bow. Instead, he watched with climbing glee as the net flattened like a balloon pressed against a table before tumbling off the stern of The Ackvik and into the grey deep – opening up wide as it went under. A smile split Ryan’s face; the first genuine smile he’d expressed since boarding.

Satisfied, he finally turned to the right of him and beheld Hunt; hunched with his legs spread wide and his rightmost hand quivering at covering his eye.

Pale-coloured rivulets of blood seeped through the narrow spaces between his sausage fingers.

The wire cut the old man's eye!

“Serves ya right!” Ryan bellowed, driven mad by days without sleep and a properly digested meal, “Serves ya right, ya friggin’ creepy old greedy old son of a –”

And the next thing Ryan Benjamin Keats felt was a blow to the back of his head... and his face rushing toward the kelp and coral strewn metal of The Ackvik’s accursed hold. Despite it all, Ryan chuckled as his vision faded.

It's over. I can finally rest. I've cut my ties to the ocean... and given her a parting gift.

Cradled in the loving arms of the sea that had once spurned him... Ryan Benjamin Keats finally slept.

* * *

T.C. Burse is a science fiction novelist, freelance journalist, autism self-advocate and former marine cook from the seaside village of Dover, Newfoundland and Labrador. TC. (short for Terry Carson) grew up with the Atlantic Ocean for his front yard and has had an irrevocable love for the ocean (and its wildlife) for as long as he can remember. He employs his lived experience as a proudly autistic Newfoundlander in his stories to weave narratives with strong foundations of truth — narratives that serve to promote awareness of topics that are close to his heart, such as environmental conservation, human rights, and The Neurodiversity Movement. To this day, he still lives in front of his beloved ocean — raising his son, Max.

Riptide

Stephanie Boone

“Displaced. That’s how I’d describe it.

“Of course you’re displaced...you, you moved from one place, your origin, to another. Your position changed from where you started. It’s basic physics.”

I rolled my eyes. “Ugh. Again with the physics...you know that’s not what I meant.”

“Well, that’s the definition of displacement, babe,” they snickered.

“Moreso meant it in a ‘forced to leave your actual home’ sort of way.”

A brief pause invaded the space where an awaited response was supposed to be. To quell the worries trying to take advantage of the vacancy in my mind, I peered through the only scenic window I had. The ocean sprawled into the harbor past a few disorganized residences despite the plethora of unused land. Buildings seemed to spill into each other like an unruly thicket of spearmint. In any other community, neighbors would grow tense over the close proximity of their plots. However, the locals of this seaport are particularly nonchalant on such a matter. After all, most of them stem from the same familial roots. Roots that are as unbothered by the extreme entanglement as they are strengthened by it. Roots that unwittingly make prospective seeds from afar all the more difficult to sow, let alone cultivate.

I suppose residential planning wasn’t a priority given the historical eagerness of establishing another fishing port. Just get as close to the water as possible! Anything to make the hardy coastal lifestyle more convenient. What better way to keep one’s nautical vessel in their line of sight than to

coexist within mere steps from it? If the spots closest to the water were already taken, then just build directly behind those homes, why not? At least that is what seems to have happened from the look of things. This layout was undoubtedly useful for the mariners of the area but was inconvenient for those wishing to admire the Atlantic's majestic presence.

From where I stood, I could distract myself with the enthralling view of the Southern Labrador coast, well, as long as I remained on the tips of my toes while craning my neck to one side. There's a gaudy-coloured business directly in front of my most scenic window, after all, a business that doesn't even have a window facing the same harbor view it's currently depriving me of. Yet another barrier that has prevented me from grasping genuine fondness for such a place. I've gone through an ample amount of discomfort to make this work - my strained neck would agree with that sentiment.

I was no different than a lilac shrub being eclipsed by the resolute evergreen. Desperate to bask in the glory of the sun, spreading in every direction to the point where I collapsed under my own weight. Failing to flourish unlike the superior native species that towered before me. How dare they make existing seem so effortless! Generations of evergreens have painted the coast with an unmatched viridity. Witnessing the persistent success from my neighbours left me fraught with indignation, to stand so splendidly in such a barren environment, no less! Why couldn't I, the melancholic lilac, take root like they had?

"-fugees, which last I checked you aren't."

"Huh? Sorry, what did you say?" I snapped back into the conversation a tad too late to interpret anything meaningful. My abrasive thoughts were still relentlessly racing in the back of my mind. It was as if my head was a spherical cage filled with dozens of stuntmen on motorcycles. The ones you witness at carnivals performing extravagant feats for awestruck crowds. Unlike the real life professionals, however, my stuntmen were completely neurotic and reckless. I did my best to quell my revving ruminations as Robin reiterated what they said.

"The type of displacement you're thinking of is for folks who are in duress, y'know like, refugees which you certainly are not."

My partner was right, but I sure wasn't going to admit that they were. That would be too mature for someone as frustrated with their current predicament as I was.

"Certainly feels like it..." I said, begrudgingly, "...besides, I basically HAD to move up here. Away from you no less...it's not fair."

I looked back at the sliver of coastline I could just barely see, trying to distract myself once again. It was a feeble attempt at preventing tears from streaming down my cheeks, tears that would only aid the gaudy obstruction's successful endeavour in blocking the oceanfront. What a pathetic display...I shouldn't be on the verge of breaking down like this. To think I'd be so volatile like a shaken can of soda ready to spill over...over nothing! What Robin sees in this sniveling mistake - this irreparable draft of a person never meant to be released, is beyond me. It must be hard being Robin when you have an Avery in your life. How they've stuck it out for this long is beyond me...

"No, no, I know...I miss you so much, Avery."

"I miss you too, Robin. Just as much..."

Another pause. As I waited for my partner to carry on the conversation, I took the opportunity to stifle an oncoming sob. I shot another strained glance at the elusive coastline that I've been so entranced by. My "origin," as physics lover Robin put it, lacked anything related to coasts but it did have Robin. The closest comparable thing to our hometown was Gander Lake, Robin's true origin and my second origin after moving across Canada as a child. Even so, I wasn't used to having a constant example of nature's beauty sitting at my front steps. Well, a beauty lacking an abundance of aspen or birch. Come to think of it, I don't even recall seeing any birch trees once I disembarked from the Qajaq W ferry. Sure, Southern Labrador possessed a unique kind of aesthetic but I still couldn't entirely resonate with it. Almost like photoshopping yourself into a breathtaking picture but it was easy to tell that you didn't belong.

"-but hey, once you're done with that assignment up there you'll be back home in no time and better off because of it. All of this will be worth it then, hey?"

I stared off into the distance, forgetting to acknowledge my partner's

inquiry, "Misfit."

"...sorry?"

I sighed, wishing to be anywhere else, "That's what I am...a misfit. I just...I just don't fit here."

"Not there, no. Here is where you belong. In any case, you gave it a good shot so th-

"Did I? Did I really?"

It wasn't my intention to blurt out my self-doubt so frantically but like a fickle toddler, I couldn't keep it down. I felt ungrateful and irritated with myself because of it. To be given such an opportunity yet to still feel so ostracised...

"I'm sorry, I...don't get me wrong, everyone here has been so welcoming and everything-

"Except for that one piece of work you mentioned, the one who flagged you down at the-

"At the store? Hah, yeah...serves me right for agreeing to talk about work while off the clock. Not my fault her kid didn't pass anything in to me despite all the extra chances I gave. Guess it would've happened eventually in my career, but I wasn't expecting that so soon."

"Welp. There's always one of those in any community." Robin concluded, matter-of-factly.

"Yeah," I nodded as if Robin could see me, I tend to have a hard time holding a conversation unless I'm able to gesture. "The rest of them were really nice though...but I wish the lot of them could understand how hard it is for outsiders to insert themselves into the, well, small town rural lifestyle. So many inconveniences and frustrations to deal with day to day."

Robin hummed softly, "Hmm, I'm pretty sure that goes both ways, wouldn't you think?"

I frowned. Somehow, Robin saw this and responded accordingly.

"Don't be grumpy about that now, I didn't mean any offense by it but, ugh. I'm just saying, y'know?"

A defeated sigh escaped from my mouth, "Guh...no, no, I get what you're saying. Still, it's all of them sharing a similar mindset and then there's singular

me. My hardships of adjusting to this place are always so easily brushed off like, ‘oh the water has been brown and undrinkable for years, just buy water.’ ‘If you can’t get decent food at our sad convenience store-sized grocery store just drive five or seven hours to Goose Bay or Lab City, we do that every weekend here!’ ‘Want to visit your far away home? Easy! Just shell out an exorbitant amount of money for gas or a plane ticket. If you don’t then we’ll question why you could be so hesitant over such a no brainer!’ ‘It’s normal for us, just do what we dooooo...’, and so on!”

“Why’d you make them sound like some posh old lady given that they live in a place with undrinkable water?”

“Well, these posh old ladies can certainly afford to buy water! You know, the basic thing that we as a first world country shouldn’t need to buy! Not to mention spend all that gas money to go get food that doesn’t arrive rotten like the stuff we get here! They have all the means to do such things, after all! Like they-! They even have family up north to stay with! Unlike! Me! To go get stupidly overpriced, but fresher, food I have to get stupidly overpriced lodging! And that’s after using stupidly overpriced gas! But no! I am the crazy one for not being okay with this! Me!” I retorted.

Robin exhaled on my behalf, “Okay, fair point...”

I followed Robin’s lead and sighed as well. Fingers raked through my hair in a frantic attempt to calm down. My partner assisted with this by offering another quip in response to my ramblings.

“...I mean, you’re completely right. You ARE pretty crazy, Avery.”

A sudden frustrated snort of air expelled from both of my nostrils knowing what was to follow, “Don’t you dare sa-!”

“Heh, heh! Crazy Avie. Craaaazy Avieeee.” Robin chortled.

My cheeks puffed out of sheer annoyance while my brows knitted themselves together. I released an exasperated groan that burst from a previously puffed face. The utterance that escaped was much harsher than intended as evident from Robin’s diminished chuckles. A sullen silence replaced the playful hums of my partner. They were genuinely trying to lift me out of the pit of discontent that I had dug myself into. Leave it to me to snuff out the smoldering embers of warmth Robin had tried to rekindle.

“Robin...I’m sorry. I just- I can’t get by living here like they all do...and with how temporary my assignment is going to be in the long run, well...”

“It’s not much incentive to grow attached.”

“Exactly.” I said bluntly.

After pacing around my small apartment while passionately ranting, I abruptly stopped to glance out the window yet again. Unfortunately, I had successfully soured my own mood to a point where it had finally curdled. I had no interest in facing off against that damned pseudo-grocery store from my window so I decided to take things outside. I promptly snatched up my outerwear to properly defend against the frigid ocean breeze that tickled the mid-April air. The very same breeze managed to intensify enough to flick insignificant specks of grit from the dirt road into my eyes. Blinking furiously behind frames that failed to protect my sight from the onslaught of coarse particles, I trudged on. Never would have thought I’d miss a proper sidewalk so much, but I suppose that’s what I get for becoming too acclimated to an urban setting. Within minutes I was standing at the edge of my country, surrounded by the vast Atlantic which lapped rhythmically at my feet.

“You can still hear me, right?” I inquired to my earbuds as they barely hung on against the wind gusts.

“Yeah, now I can, signal’s back,” said the earbuds that contained a tiny version of Robin, albeit with a poor-quality voice compared to regular Robin.

“Alright.”

“Feel any better now?”

My thoughts were mixed, too mixed to side with one answer so I answered for both.

“Yes and no...”, I scanned the shore for suitable ammunition to puncture through the water’s surface. “Yes because, well, I’ve always loved the sea. It reminds me of home. Original home, I mean, y’know, Sunshine Coast back when I was a kid. Despite all the issues I have with being here...I do like the coastal closeness of it. Oh, and the quiet, it’s a rare sort of quiet, well, at least when the skidoos aren’t revving up around here.”

I picked up a smooth, oval-shaped rock which would have been a prime specimen for skipping across the harbor. If only the waves weren’t so wily

and untamed perhaps it would have fulfilled its destiny of gracefully hopping across the water. Oh, to be a little stone with big dreams of achieving a few seconds of airborne glory before sinking into the depths. However, it would have also helped if the rock was picked up by somebody who was actually proficient at skipping rocks. Nonchalantly, I chucked the rock without much thought as I reminisced about the past. A childhood filled with beachcombing for sea glass, finding perfect pieces of driftwood charitably carved by the sea, watching the tides rise as the sun falls.

I scanned the area for any sparkling glints indicative of elusive beach glass but all I found were the remnants of beer bottles. It was obvious these remnants hadn't even begun their doomed battle with the Atlantic. Hostile edges and jagged points were flaunted by shards that foolishly anticipated a passerby with bare feet. The likelihood of this glass army attacking such a foe was slim, but not impossible. First, the passerby would have to brave the multitude of rocks that surrounded the area with an unwelcoming texture. The title of "nature's pumice stone" would no doubt be an understatement if one were to describe the exfoliating power of this beachfront. Of course, there wouldn't be much reason to go barefoot to begin with as frigid temperatures clung to the region like desperate bed sheets on jostling clotheslines. Soon enough, the brown pieces of the shattered puzzle would see the approaching tide and realize their fleshy encounter was never meant to be. Instead, an unpredictable metamorphosis would occur in the swirling maw of the unforgiving Atlantic. Tumbling, thrashing, and transforming...the result? A rare specimen of Southern Labrador beach glass.

Shortly after moving in, my landlord had proudly introduced me to her vast collection of beach glass that she had amassed. Displayed in an array of transparent containers and framed on multiple walls, her wealth of these frosted treasures was clearly made evident to guests. Perhaps that was why I failed to find such coastal gems scattered around the waterline; my keen landlord had claimed her catch for the season. Then again, this coastal area was incredibly tiny, at least the walkable portions were. The surrounding area gave way to an impractical incline that only certain breeds of mountain goats would find appealing. Upon reaching the walkable area's end with the

proficient climbers hanging on to my thoughts, I turned around and began another lap of pacing. Last time I saw a mountain goat was when I was still living on the west coast. An adventurous family road trip across the Rockies seemed to feel like a hazy dream. I looked towards the falling star before me; soon colliding with the liquid gold horizon like it did every day. It was impossible not to compare my origin with the present.

“It’s no Pacific but...it’s nice to feel a kind of surrogate connection to it. Really brings me back since I’ve yet to get back for a visit. It’s been, what, 17 years now?”

“We’ll get you there, Ave. I promise.”

“Heh, I know, I already know...but thanks.”

I snagged another rock which was oddly jagged for one so close to the water. I briefly took aim at my colossal target and tossed the rough stone towards the horizon. It would now have no other choice but to be smoothed out as it joined its wet brethren below. My gaze clung onto the impact site of the rugged rock as I noted how abruptly it disappeared. A sudden finale of salt-licked spray flung to the heavens before descending as a series of insignificant plops. Not one trace of the inconsequential event was left behind. Such trivial occurrences meant nothing to the formidable sea with its power to devour far more substantial victims. I could surrender my entire being to the abyssal depths like so many others have. Offering up tortured senses in hopes that the vast waters would bestow a serene numbness. Oh, to venture into the unknown in dreams of drowning out the incessant agonies that afflict my mind. How easy it would be to vanish beneath the waves...

“Avery. You don’t...you’re not the type to do things the easy way. You know that. I mean, you...you’re-”

Robin’s voice faltered. My eyes shamefully sunk to my sneakers as I realized that I voiced my thoughts aloud. Unsure of how to respond, I studied my worn shoelaces and attempted to find the words to match my conflicted feelings. This proved unhelpful when I noticed how the laces weaved together in a close embrace which left me feeling both envious and despondent. I thought back to how often fellow co-workers would voice their woes about not seeing their partners for a single week. My face grimaced out of the bitter taste that

memory left in my mouth. One week? Try six months. Six-month intervals of separation from my community for the past few years of my life. It was a necessary choice for the sake of kick starting my career, for the sake of getting back home. Still, it was a choice that I made. My own choice. By that logic, this heart ache and mental degradation was entirely self-inflicted. I crouched into a partial squat and hugged my knees.

“It’s tempting, I hate to admit. Up here I...I sometimes don’t even feel like a person. I’m trapped here, trapped in my own head. Nowhere to go even! The next town over, over an hour away, has all the same crap! Actually, no! Not even that, they don’t even have a damn gas station! Just, how...? There’s just nothing for me up here! Everyone back home kept saying how great this would be, how much I’d love it like they did, but for some reason I just can’t...!”

My grip tightened in a desperate attempt to self soothe before releasing defeatedly. My burning eyes nearly followed suit as well.

“I want to go home. But there’s also a part of me that won’t stop worrying. I’m so, so worried that this- what I’m feeling- it won’t...”

The waves continued to creep closer, beckoning me to join them before they receded once again. Their hypnotic pull demanded my attention until Robin piped up, closing the silence between us.

“Two months. That’s all you have left, just two months...then you’re done, okay? Okay, Ave?”

“What if it’s just me...?”

“What?”

I inhaled sharply, “What if this- how I feel...what if it never changes no matter where I end up?”

“No, no, that’s not true. You weren’t like that here, not at all.”

“That was before I started this job. Maybe- maybe I’m just not cut out for this. I mean, if I can’t handle this then how- I mean, how am I supposed to handle anything? Is this just my life now? Feeling like I’m nothing every single day!? Waking up just, just, j-just to say, oh not again! Not this again! I don’t...I don’t, I-”

“Avery, stop. You’re spiraling again, just breathe. Okay? Breathe. You’re

okay. Just- deep, deep breaths. Okay, babe? You're okay... I'm here with y-"
Click.

"...R-robin? Rob-bin...?"

No answer.

My despair spilled over. No matter how forcefully I tried to suck it back in, it kept seeping out. Everything seemed to fall apart in that instant. I drew in a harsh breath in an attempt to regain my composure and buried my wet face into my scarf. My eyes scrunched together out of anguish resulting in hasty tears being wrung out like a dishrag. This dying place couldn't even support a phone call, let alone its withering population. I shoved my phone and earbuds back into my coat after failing to get any service. Service that was non-existent most times. What a feeling that must be. I'd be better off not existing in the first place, really.

What a waste I am! To think that I've been given this opportunity at life only to squander it all with self-loathing and an inability to appreciate anything! The majority of people in this world would go above and beyond just to be in my shoes. Why can't I feel proud of the things that I have? The things I've done? Of who I am? Why can't I feel anything but this incessant itch that makes me want to crawl out of my very own skin? Why can't I go a single day without wanting to be anyone else but me?

But here I am! Stuck! Stuck teetering on the edge of this expanse. Crouching upon the furthest easterly point of my home country looking upon the watery expanse. What some people would give just to stand in my place at this exact moment is unfathomable. Unlike me, many go their entire lives without seeing the Atlantic, let alone any sort of ocean. Yet another thing this past-due mistake has taken for granted. If only...if only this dreadful feeling could stop...

Fwoooooosh!

Peeling away from my drenched sleeves, I squinted at the ocean's rhythmic onslaught which had advanced considerably. The waves continued to inch their way closer to where I sat, reaching for me in a desperate attempt to douse my enflamed soul. In...and out...in...and out... The tidal pull was a tempting force to follow. How easy it would be to give into it. To harness its

power to escape this ceaseless pain. A way out... I smeared my hand across my salt-stained face...

...and surrendered myself to the might of the ocean.

“In...”

A pause.

“...out.”

Repeat.

I continued to breathe deeply while matching the same cadence of the waves rolling in. Slowly but surely, I was able to soothe the searing pain that had engulfed my chest. The usual weight of an anchor pulling my heart down still remained but at least it was no longer set ablaze. I lowered my head to my knees and clasped my hands around the back of my neck. As someone supposedly in the prime of their life, I wasn't expecting to feel this burnt out so soon. Still, when compared to others, I've been allowed to come so far...even if my current displacement isn't exactly where I'd like to be. I sighed dejectedly before turning my head and freeing a hand that gravitated towards the ground. Another rock throw was in order, well, at least that's what I thought until a small gleam suddenly caught my eye. I reached out in disbelief, expecting to be mistaken but no, it was the real deal...

Beach glass.

Rolling it between my thumb and fingers, I appreciated the glossy texture and mossy hue before pocketing it. I couldn't help but think of the journey this little gem took to become such a sought-out marvel. As I pondered the perilous journey of my newfound companion, my legs extended with a subtle crack from maintaining a rigid pose for too long.

“Two months, huh?” I muttered to myself.

It wouldn't be much longer now.

* * *

After working 2 years in Labrador as a fresh out of MUN permanent teacher, writer Stephanie Boone has finally come back to Newfoundland! To cope

RIPTIDE

with the isolation of living in a community far from home, Stephanie would write various works in her spare time to combat the mental hardships of rural living. Her story, “Riptide” is one such work dedicated to her long-distance partner, who helped her through the toughest of times. Stephanie is eager to start her new technology, science, and math teaching position in central NL...as well as writing more in years to come!

Super Krill

Robert Gross

Special mention

My Gran used to say: “What good is the ocean if you don’t have the money to enjoy it?” I couldn’t agree more. My name is Ralph MacKinnon, and after years of navigating the complex currents of public relations as a “Narrative Disruption Specialist” and “Global Intuition Architect,” I’ve returned to my roots in Newfoundland. Recently, a critical CBC news story raised alarms about Luxokrill’s Super Krill™, slandering it as a dubious venture. I’m here to set the record straight. As you probably heard in the viral piece, Super Krill™ are tiny, industrious creatures that can transform waste into valuable resources. As I address these criticisms, think about how Super Krill™ can turbo-charge our relationship with the sea, making it a source of infinite wealth and sustainability.

Returning home after years of wandering through professional labyrinths, I was overwhelmed by nostalgia. Here, amidst the salt-kissed air and whispering winds, I first learned about the delicate balance of nature and the importance of preserving the pristine beauty that had cradled generations of my family. But reality hit hard: food and daily expenses were weighing down many families, and trash was piling up everywhere.

Driven by a deep-seated desire to protect this piece of paradise from rising costs and environmental decay, I turned to Super Krill™. In case you’re not familiar, let me tell you about these marvellous little creatures. Super Krill™ are a naturally engineered strain of krill designed to consume and break down

waste materials, including plastics and organic waste. They're essentially the garbage disposals of the sea, but cuter and much more delicious. Super Krill™ can convert waste into high-quality protein, providing a sustainable food source while reducing pollution.

Like many people, I was at first prejudiced against the idea of raising shrimp-like creatures to eat my rubbish. Eating them too seemed strange, until I was out shopping for ingredients to craft my Gran's famous seafood chowder. Having just moved back to the island, and trying to save money, the five-gallon buckets of Super Krill™ for just fifteen dollars caught my attention. Forget cod, shrimp, and scallops. I'm eating bowls of my favourite childhood dish, albeit slightly modified, all month! The low cost of this grocery trip got me looking into the savings afforded by Super Krill™. The more I found out, the more I realized it wasn't just about me. These buckets of tasty little guys came from my very own neighbours. The uniting force of the ocean's wealth, this time with Krill grown from our own refuse, enchanted my imagination!

Taking up a new job with Super Krill™ as the Corner Brook Community Ambassador, I've woven my life back into the fabric of the community, protecting the marine environment and saving my neighbours hard-earned money. When I gaze at the old Paper Pulp Mill from Three Bear Mountain Trail and see the repurposed pulp vats brimming with pulsating Super Krill™ plankton feed, I feel like I'm paying tribute to the traditions that shaped me. At last, I've found my true calling: using my skills as a public relations prodigy to safeguard the island's legacy of self-reliance and the ocean's infinite bounty.

What is Super Krill™?

Super Krill™ is an innovative, state-of-the-art animal, designed to address both environmental concerns and nutritional needs. It involves cultivating a naturally engineered strain of krill that can consume and break down waste materials, including plastics and organic waste, effectively reducing pollution and the impact on landfill sites.

Disposing of garbage is just the first part of the magic. After they process your waste, you can eat them! Super Krill™ serves as a renewable source of nutrition, offering a high-quality protein that can be integrated into

various culinary tastes. This dual-purpose approach not only aids in waste management but also contributes to food security, making Super Krill™ a groundbreaking step towards peace of mind from an assured eco-friendly future.

While it is true that some of the plastic Super Krill™ consumes becomes microscopically small plastic waste, most of the consumed trash gets absorbed *into* these tasty organisms. But let's be real here: nanoplastics are just tiny, tiny pieces of plastic. Even microplastics, which are much larger than these infinitesimal nanoplastics, haven't been *proven* harmful to the human body. I consume tons of microplastics, and I feel fine. Nanoplastics have been found in all our favourite water bottle brands after all, and most of us have been drinking those for years. So, clearly, no harm is done there, and no harm is done by the byproduct of Luxokrill's powerful and productive digesting machines.

Setting Up Your Shoreline Enclosure

Now, I bet you're dying to know how hard it would be to set up a farm on your own waterfront property. It's easy! Upon joining the Super Krill™ community, I received my starter kit on the next ferry. This included a Luxokrill-approved shoreline enclosure, a spray bottle of the Super Krill™ attractant, and an instructional guidebook. The process is straightforward and safe when instructions are followed.

Location Selection: I chose a calm, protected area along my property's shoreline, ensuring it was suitable for the Super Krill™ enclosure. Any brackish shoreline will do, but the island's many coves provide the kind of privacy that will be helpful in monitoring your growing Krill. This minimizes any potential environmental impact, ensuring that the krill remain contained and effective. It is also important because of the potential liability caused by a Super Krill™ outbreak (to which the individual associate, and not Luxokrill, is contractually responsible).

Enclosure Assembly: Following the guidebook, I assembled the floating enclosure, designed to keep the Super Krill™ contained while allowing water flow. At this stage I recommend installing a Luxokrill Chomping Barb

Seagull Catcher at the top. It is a clever addition to ward away scavenging birds, ensuring your crop can develop in natural isolation. Not to mention how those carcasses provide more food for the krill, and a more productive enclosure.

Activation: Using the spray bottle, I treated my first batch of waste with the Luxokrill Appetizer Fluid™, a formula designed to accelerate the consumption process. Some might suggest that this attractant is hazardous, but rest assured, it's perfectly safe when used correctly just be sure to keep it off your skin. Super Krill™ are naturally engineered to eat *only* when in proximity to the attractant, but it is crucial to remember that also means they will eat *anything* in proximity to the attractant. In short, the only way Super Krill™ would eat you is if you get some on yourself.

Feeding the Krill: I placed the treated waste into the enclosure. It was fascinating to watch the Super Krill™ begin their work, efficiently breaking down the waste into usable biomass. You can even see them munching on mature waste, a marvel to behold as their tiny teeth shred plastic, wood, and metal with ease. Their teeth are sharp, *and* perfectly safe with a bit of care and common sense.

From Waste to Taste

Perhaps the greatest thrill of any harvest can be found in the kitchen, so let's get to cooking! The biomass not only offers a sustainable protein source, but everyone has something to say about the unique flavour profile. I've experimented with recipes ranging from Super Krill™ fritters to savory stews, each one a testament to the versatility of this super organism. Imagine the luxury of an infinite supply of shrimp!

However, a word of caution is warranted when peeling: those teeth are sharp! Protective gloves, like those worn for shucking oysters, are highly recommended unless you want your fingers to look like they've been through a paper shredder.

But when the shells become a hassle, don't be afraid to crush them into fine, nutritious bits. Krill-burgers, pies, and scones can be made out of the hundreds of kilos of krill you'll be producing. In fact, for smaller Super

Krill™, this is the best way to make ‘em. Just get an inexpensive meat grinder from Wal-Mart or Canadian Tire to unlock dozens of new recipes and unleash your inner trash-to-table gourmet chef.

The shells of crustaceans contain a fibre called chitin, which, when processed, becomes chitosan. Chitosan is praised for its weight-loss properties and its ability to lower cholesterol levels. Shells are a good source of minerals, particularly calcium and phosphorus. Even though the body cannot digest chitin in its natural form efficiently, the little that you can digest is essential for bone health. So, when life gives you sharp, inedible shells, make nutritious powder!

For example, a twist on classic fish cakes: Super Krill™ Kakes™ can be made by combining finely chopped krill with breadcrumbs, eggs, mayonnaise, and your choice of herbs and spices. Form the mixture into patties and pan-fry until golden brown. Serve with tartar sauce for a delightful seafood experience. Just make sure to save the surprise for dinner guests until *after* they’ve finished eating. “Oh, this pâté? It’s made from my very own home-grown krill. Yes, they do eat my trash!”

From Trash to Cash

Integrating Super Krill™ into your diet can lead to significant savings on grocery expenses. The average family spends a significant portion of their weekly budget on protein sources like meat, fish, and dairy. For example, if a family spends about \$200 monthly on these items, annually, this amounts to \$2,400. Now, let’s imagine the glorious future where Super Krill™ replaces approximately 30% of traditional protein consumption due to its high-quality protein content. For the same family, a 30% reduction in traditional protein expenses translates to a monthly saving of \$60, or \$720 annually. Simple math! Just imagine if this replaced every single one of your proteins, every day. That’s like free meat straight from your garbage can!

And the more you spread the wealth, the more you can make. Have extra krill? Sell them! Your surplus can be sold to local distributors under a profit-sharing agreement. This transforms what would have been waste disposal costs into a revenue stream, the cornerstone of a sustainable business model.

So next time you look at that overflowing garbage can, see potential. With Super Krill™, you're not just saving the planet; you're turning a profit. And let's face it, who doesn't want to make a little money while saving the world, one tiny, trash-eating shrimp at a time?

The Super Krill™ Food Chain

Super Krill™'s business model allowed me to become more than just a consumer; I was now a distributor, an advocate for sustainable living, and a culinary innovator. Let me walk you through it:

Build Your Network: I started by sharing my Super Krill™ experience with friends and family. Since every new member receives a free starter kit, they can show others the wonders of rubbish-eating shrimp. This is not a multi-level marketing scam. And even if it were, those are totally legal. The important part is that anyone, and I mean *anyone*, can get in on the ground floor. Join the Super Krill™ magic.

Expand Your Enterprise: As my network grew, so did my earnings. I provided support to my downline, sharing my hot tips for growing and cooking Super Krill™, as well as strategies for expanding their own networks. The Super Krill™ program is structured into three progressive tiers designed to encourage growth and reward participants for their efforts and contributions. At the Entry Level *Plankton Tier*, participants begin their journey with a Super Krill™ starter kit, diligently farming and signing up other new members. Most of the Super Krill™ you see in stores is produced by the hard workers of the Plankton Tier.

As participants grow their network and farm productivity, they ascend to the *Krill Tier*, where they gain access to enhanced resources for yield improvement and enjoy increased profits. Plus, they get the opportunity to mentor new members, making sure quotas are met in a timely fashion.

The *Whale Tier* is the pinnacle of the hierarchy. Achieved through significant expansion of one's Super Krill™ farm and network, this tier unlocks the highest level of rewards. You will be gorging on profits like humpbacks feasting on capelin off the coast of St. Anthony.

The point of this venture is to transform people's lives so completely that

they have no choice but to accept the vast benefits of this wonder food. Super Krill™ isn't just a product; it's a movement. Join us, and let's swim in the sea of sustainability together!

A Call to Action

As an Ambassador, I find myself at the intersection of tradition and innovation. Newfoundland, with its rugged beauty and rich maritime heritage, has always had a special relationship with the ocean. Generations have turned to the sea for sustenance, inspiration, and livelihood. Now, with the introduction of Super Krill™, we're writing a new chapter where the ocean isn't just preserved but transformed to serve our needs.

I work closely with local businesses, policymakers, and environmental groups to ensure that the Super Krill™ initiative aligns with our community's needs and values. Despite what you might imagine, they need a lot of convincing. My job is about educating, but most importantly, listening. I hear the concerns of fishermen worried about their future and the hopes of young families looking to make ends meet. Balancing growth and innovation while moving away from outdated preservationist mindsets is a delicate task, but one we must embrace if we want to enjoy the wealth nature provides.

Obstacles and skepticism persist, particularly from institutions like Memorial University's Marine Institute and DFO (from whom I've heard a *great deal*). They've raised concerns about ecosystem impact and marine biodiversity, but I ask you, why preserve an ocean that doesn't serve us fully? We pledge to monitor Super Krill™'s impacts meticulously, ensuring our venture enhances rather than detracts from our remade marine environment.

Economic resistance, particularly from the fishing industry, is understandable. Our goal is not to compete but to complement and diversify our local economy. We're committed to transparent dialogue with all stakeholders, offering education on how Super Krill™ is the way of the future, and how to help them find a new place in an ever-changing world.

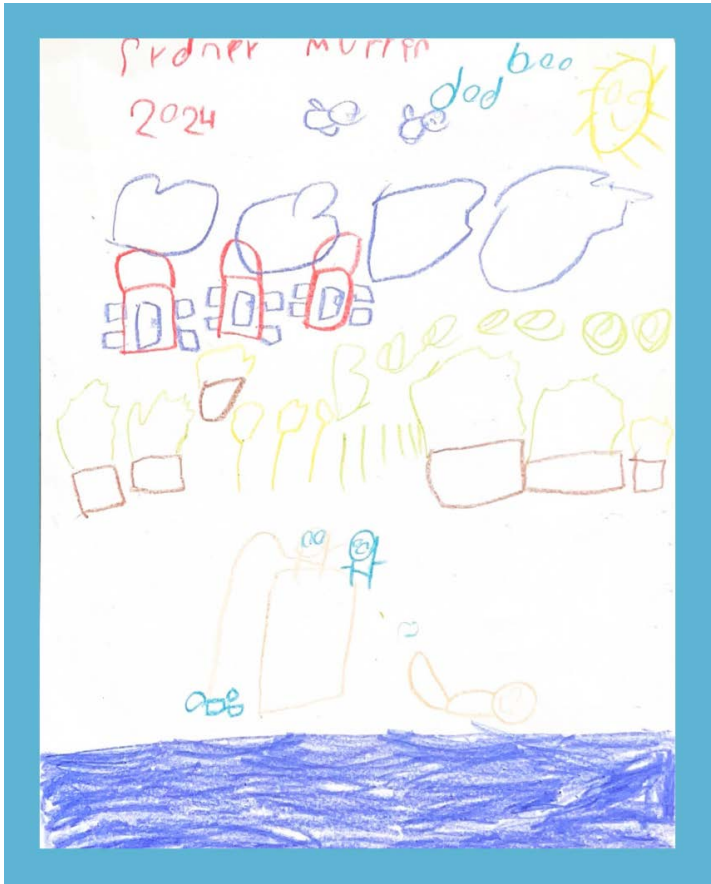
Our community stands at a crossroads. Super Krill™ promises a sustainable, prosperous relationship with the ocean that has always been our home. Let's move forward together, embracing the challenges and the immense

opportunities.

I swear not to quit until Super Krill™ surrounds the entire island. Imagine: Newfoundlanders riding on luxurious yachts instead of humble fishing boats, admiring coves dotted with innumerable Super Krill™ enclosures. One day, we might even introduce Super Krill™ to the wild, making the ocean a permanent driver of infinite prosperity.

* * *

Rob Gross is a writer, arts administrator, and dungeon master living in Corner Brook. Originally from Western Massachusetts, he holds degrees in cinema studies and criminal justice. As a long time reader of the weird, the fantastic, and the strange, Rob recently started creating his own stories. He is currently writing an eco-horror novel, alongside several science fiction short stories.



Sydney, Bonne Bay Academy (Elementary)

This is a collection of short stories by emerging writers. Through multiple short story genres, the authors explore what connects people to the ocean and coasts in Newfoundland and Labrador. Readers are invited into the memories, visions, relationships, and places that inspire coastal and ocean experiences. Enriched by hand-drawn art by coastal youth, the collection shows what it means to be inextricably linked to the ups and downs of coastal and ocean life, and what the draw of this life can do to understandings of our surroundings and ultimately, ourselves.

Rachel Barnes
Stephanie Boone

Terry C. Bursey
Sadie Butt

Fiona Conway
Meghan Donovan

Shawn Doyle
Robert Cross

Erica (Saurus) Hurley

Kelsie Keeping

Kyle Penney

Spoorthy Raman

Virginia Ryan

Krista Vokey

Melissa Elizabeth Wong

Tanice Young

TBTI GLOBAL BOOK SERIES



Small-Scale Fisheries are Too Big To Ignore