

A Dream of Turnips

By S. K. Stewart

Can I have civility, please?
Let our minds not be drowned
in our hearts.
This is a court of Law.
Captain, if you can, continue.

Some sixty days since we set sail
for Sydney from Southampton
so far from the shores of
your rational lands, my Lords.
The unrelenting ocean would not forgive.
Beast!
Such black azure!
And when the water lost all sense of itself
it placed its wrath upon us,
beloved Mignonette,
its full hull and sail, its whole body
swallowed.
The cabin boy, Godrest his soul
rescued two tins of turnips,
that sufficed our stomachs a day or more.
Such dark azure!

Order! Stop your howling in the stocks! The man is no
monster, yet.
He shall be heard.

A hunger rage stirred storms within
our belly's own pits.
My men became weak,
sick, desperately dry
unable to speak.
Salty words they couldn't preach.

The sun a roasting demon in the sky
above the Beast of black azure.
The sea breathed beneath our floating coffin.
The days like ghosts as they passed by.
The chests of my men rose and sank so pitifully.
Hunger had made a meal of us already.

Why not sacrifice yourself you unforgivable Devil? He
was just a boy!

What about the custom of the sea? No lots were drawn, you say. Neither luck nor fate was consulted. Parker didn't stand a chance, did he?

My Lords, we could not muster a majority for the vilest act.
For my Sailors refused to sink so low.

And Parker,
he had no one on your shores, My Lords,
your shores.
No one.

By then he was corpsed
by drinking too much troubled water.
The faint wave of life
which he possessed
was democracy enough.

But the boy did not die of starvation, nor a natural demon?

You're a monster!

I had life enough to live.

Silence! Captain, your tale?

Nineteen days had passed since the sea devoured our beloved Mignonette.
The night had drawn a shroud across the sun's lament.
Long gone was the dream of turnips.

I, the captain, with lunacy in my eyes, spoke truth that no ears were eager to eat.
In the scarcest times when thrice recycled piss... urine, my Lords, is enough treat to keep us longing for your shores, my Lord,
your shores.

These shores belong to men of god. You, you devil should have perished in the flood.

The Sailor's stomachs began to turn, churn
and cheer, become confused with
fangs but fear.

A monster lurched on
burnt bone backs.
Growling; do the abominable.
Licking wet words in my ear
he came with the moon.
Abomination, inhumane, never
to delight in God's light.
Never to call myself a man again.
Drooling eyes, and horns that
scraped our stomachs bare.

An evil to make the Unholy whimper.
Devils greedy as sin.

You murdered him, Captain?

Coward!

I pictured your lands of plenty,
cornucopia of endless supply,
Your Lands,
and us with nothing,
after so much toil,
but piss, and turtles,
and a dream of turnips,
and Your shores
my Lords,
Your shores.

You murdered him, Captain?

Coward! Confess!

I can't take this.

Civility! Please!

We hold him to the sun
my hands around its throat
it does not bleat.

A flip knife.

A quick slice.

We catch his blood in rusting tins.

We sip.

And sip.

And sip.

Skin him,
dry him.

Must I go on?

I did what animals do
hungry, I saw it through
Guilty, I know I am.
I was a skeleton
trying to eat a man.

*A finger snaps in front of my face.
Thirst comes, and I'm back in the room
The barkeep stands over me. His hand
Stretches out for the change that I have left.*