

An excerpt (modified) from the story **Jettisoned Crew**
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When I was about twelve I fell into the Atlantic Ocean. It happened on the first time I ever went to the sea. The first time I had been out on the shores of a country, over looking the coves of Newport's beaches. My uncle rented a small boat and we made our way to a place where only ocean and sky could be seen.

Our boat was small, but my uncle was a master fisherman. He could have easily been fishing while standing on a log, balancing the tides with a fishing line hook on one hand and a Portuguese chorizo sandwich on the other. As for me, I was only twelve, but for some reason my first time out into the open blanket of the ocean did not scare me. I didn't even get sick as we stopped and idled in search of some signs of fish. My uncle was surprised I had never been to sea. He could tell by the way I looked around in quiet awe. I was there to learn what he had done for most of his life, when he fished for a living in the Cape Verde islands.

He said to me that he had a small boat back then, smaller than the one we were now using. As he spoke he relaxed himself with the quiet of the day. He sat back in the tail end of the tiny boat and continued. "Everyday when I'd get back home I'd be loaded with fish." He spoke with a master craftsman's love. Using his body like a visual screen, swaying his neck and torso, legs and arms, to describe his battles with the sea. That day of story telling was beautiful and I would never forget it. If I had been left with just that image I would have remembered it forever, but as I have said, it was also the day I fell in to the Atlantic, and that too is something I will never forget.

The day turned itself around without much notice. What had been a clear and bright sky all of a sudden spun erratically, surely by the play of some hidden magician's hands. The sky twirled and dipped. It ran from corner to corner as if incased in a play box. I had never witnessed such dramatic change. The sky and the ocean looked to be in dispute.

As I held on tight I remember no longer needing to shade my face from the piercing sun, nor hide my ashy knees from its burning rays. The clouds had swept in with fevering speed, and, curiously, had made the whole sea gray. I was a skinny boy and easily displaced with the slightest push. I felt a slight shiver as my uncle reared the engine, for it made me tremble; weird how my level of fear came and went for the oddest things. I could not yell out in time that I had lost my grip, not with enough speed that it would stop my uncle's rush. He punched the motor's gear forward and the boat kicked like an angry mule, sending me head first into the coldest liquid I have ever felt.

Not sure how much time passed...

Having fallen into some deep trance by the shock of the freezing waters, I finally woke up. My eyes opened to that wet feel, much like the times when I took a bath and submerged my face while opening my eyes to investigate the white marble. But unlike my bathtub's clarity my surroundings were now of deep gray. I was inside this Atlantic bowl and going under. I immediately tried to breathe. Strange, I know, but it was my instinct. To my surprise though I was able to take in a breath, if not the fullest breath I've ever taken. I felt my lungs fill with water, yet I didn't suffocate. It was a strange occurrence. I can not tell you how I did it for I still can't understand it.

I wasn't just sinking, as the natural process someone thinks of, I actually felt a pull; continued tugs at my tiny feet. I couldn't swim so I moved my arms erratically, hoping my movements would bring me back to the familiar air I was so accustomed to breathing. But all my efforts were to no avail. I had no muscles to reverse such a pull. I was a skinny kid, often called a skeleton. Those who liked picking on me said I was made of bones and of large teeth. I am sure the weight of such large features didn't help my efforts to reach the surface.

I was sinking and sinking fast. I was not going back up to the surface. This I concluded after my feeble efforts produced no results. I was able to breathe, and that would have been anyone's worry. Whatever was taking me under was doing the job with little effort, and my fighting it was only making me tired. I wasn't suffocating in any way, so I relinquished my efforts. I eased my fast moving arms and relaxed my tense muscles, and with such liberty of thought I finally allowed myself to look around.

I asked myself if the deep could really be that deep. I sank for some time. In my descent I could see whispers of sight, different kinds of lights in the increasing darkness of the deep. They came off like small lightning rays in the distance, flashes of high intensity bursting with speed. They were like tiny bulbs propelled by small jet engines. They zoomed by me. At one point some of them came within inches of my face. They were so fast that my neck couldn't even follow them. They sped right past me and with the slow twist of my head I realized that this was not my world.

Strangely though the deeper I went the more it became like the night sky I was used to. There was something familiar about it, even neighborly. I saw strips of rainbow colors appear and disappear, and highways of flashy neon colors bending and twisting like what night time car racing must look like. To stay in this section would have been an experience. I could have said that I lived in an under water galaxy. But this too rose up as I continued to sink into a further night, that's when I wondered what the sea's midnight would look like.

I got a bit scared with such thoughts and I was reminded of how hard it was becoming to breath. Getting used to liquid wetting the back of my throat was taking some time. It felt like a thick blob of gel moving up and down my chest. The further down the ocean I went the thicker the water became. It moved slowly on its way up my breathing pipes and then it'd slide off my nose like mucus. I really felt like I wasn't getting enough oxygen in my lungs. I am sure it was just a sensation but I sped up my breathing, trying to push that stuff through me. I must have tried too hard. I exhausted myself and became unconscious again. When I came to I was touching the bottom.

I opened my eyes but could have just as well kept them closed. I couldn't see anything. My breathing had caught up with me and though it felt sluggish, it actually moved through me much better, with much more ease. My feet touched the floor and it felt like fine sand, thin and fragile. I was sure that as I moved my feet clouds of this stuff lifted for I felt it teasing my nose. It was as if I had landed on piles of fine dust.

My movements were slow. I felt physically pressed at some points, on my shoulders and lower neck. The strange thing was that though I felt such heaviness, I could move with a type of lightness I have never experienced. When I took my first step I bounced like those astronauts on television. I then took two, and then three, then four, and each time I would come down not knowing when my feet would touch the ground. I was taking mini flights with every step. I lost my self in these few moments of strangeness; lost in a dark fun house.

I could also hear things clear in the water, but it all sounded as if it was coming through a funnel. I heard what had to be multiple feet swooshing the waters in some kind of rush. Another time I heard what sounded like multiple sharp objects slicing the waters. At one moment I could have sworn to have heard a heart beating, a thumping sound on continuous play. But as I attempted to zoom in to such noises, for there were more, all waiting to be heard, something swooped in and carried me away. And as it did I heard the clearest noise.

"You're lucky I just finished eating."

This voice was strong and distinct, with a hard drum like rhythm to it. It dazed me for a spell. It wasn't coming from what now pulled me because the sound was fading a way. So what was pulling me? It all happened so fast that I was confused as to where to turn. But had what just happened really happened? Had I really heard a voice? And whose voice had it been?

"You were almost eaten!" A second slower and more feminine voice now spoke to me, though it sounded feminine it was clearly male and it came from what was now pulling me.

"What? How can we talk down here? I mean—how! Where are you taking me? How can I breathe and talk? What's going on? And why are you pulling me? Who are you?" Everything came out without much order. I was asking out of disbelief and nerves. I was finally taking in the danger I was in. But I also noticed that what pulled me did so with the same kind of care as the pull that brought me under. "Who are you?" I asked again. I knew now that it was something living.

"I am a Nightly Blanket." It answered.

The runner's tempo we were in slowed to a calm pace.

It continued, "Down here there are many different things, in time you'll get used to them."

Just like my Harrier Jet planes at home, the toy models I built with hopes of one day becoming a fighter pilot, we hovered as if hanging by an invisible thread, in mid water, hovering. A few seconds later I felt my feet touch the fine sand again.

Before I could collect my thoughts and readjust my balance in this ground of dust, it spoke to me again. This time with a slow contemplation. "I should give you my poetic profile, should you want to hear it now off-course?"

"What? What's a poetic profile?" I was thoroughly confused; confused with this new place, confused with the perfectly spoken dialect, confused with a supposed near death experience, everything. Yet I had no answers. And now I was being asked if I wanted to hear some poetic something.

The *thing* continued to talk, clearly ignoring my concerns; or so I thought.

"Our Poetic Profile is a kind of short account, albeit it a creative one, of who we are as individuals and what our purpose may be. We all carry one down here; all our kind. It is also a type of introduction of Selves! A sort of play with the creativity of words, maybe even a reminder of where we've been; the history we come with. In other words, it can be many things."

It paused for a bit after it said this, and though I was listening very intently, I had not heard the question. I was still lost in some ways.

"So, would you like to hear it now?" It said showing no hint of enthusiasm or surprise.

I could feel the slight heat of its presence as it got closer to me. "Sure, but only if you tell me where I am, what this place is, if..." I was cut off.

"You might get some answers if you just listen."

I stayed quiet and everything went back to silence. I didn't hear anything for a few seconds, and then out of the complete blackness of the sea, the midnight I feared, it spoke again.

"I should first tell you that our Poetic Profiles are attitude based. While you are down here you may hear many, and they will all be spoken to you with a different type of energy. They will be orations that particularize the individual speaker. So listen to them as such."

"WHAT?"

We are the travelers of the deep; the voyagers who don't sleep; the nomads of this circulating night; the sight which covers an array of sights. We blanket the deep like masks, when reality needs sleep, we vanish the sight of the hidden for we're reclusive, un-hindering and solemn; detectable only when a shadow dawns. Mourning comes and a new death appreciates itself; a cathartic element really. We are the softness when the lost soul avenges and repels the sickening reality, we are the ones summoned to explain, as plain as we can, you have perished from the world above, lost like a white dove in snow, like a mistral show.

We too are loners once sufferered, continued wonderers and cataract spreading messengers. Yes we are the ones who tell the dead to swim a new risk. We are the ones who blemish the sight of the old and reprimand any attempt at its remembrance. We are a memorial really, the first these Jettisoned souls confer. We don't ride in hearses for we are them. A black blanket, mobile and erect (un-dysfunction), for we penetrate the nerving realism which needs intake.

Some say we are the black here. The fact that others can't see, but we are just an element of truth, for we have all always been black. We just allow the assurance that blackness is not darkness, that one induces sight while the other neglects it.

We stretch far like literal blankets spread over the sleeping question. When we get ready to invite we excite the wonderful space that dreams and fantasies inhabit, then we syringe our minute tentacles, piercing centimeter by centimeter the epidermis of the now deceased. Though they come down as dead births, they still possess their old skins, their lipid flesh of blackened mesh. Their once visible trope made hyper by another's invisible cloak. We must do the job for here is an ever changing sight and we are the messengers of first realisms. You're dead.

No longer will you need that layer which once caused you so much pain, not to say though that such pains have stopped, your kind has suffered and will continue to, for the way we needle you, you will soon realize you are in a different type of slain, for we create a new black stain.

"What do you mean—I am dead?"