

THE WAY OF JONAH

One minute, I, Jonah, was here
scrunched crumpled rumples
wadded up matted down
sleeping like one dead
in the belly of the ship.
Next thing I knew
I was awake on the deck.
Whack fol the diddle fol the day
I'm in the water now in the wake a bubbling
because I said, after all,
boost me up. Let me go
down. And so
swolliking golliking wolliking I go
huffing half-cocked into half-life half-light
with a pang and a spasm and an oy
and a bonk
fizzing into the big drink
knuckled under kinked knicked pleated
scalloped corkscrewed curled spun
and whirled.
There's not much left to drowning but
coiling into a big blank uninflected nothing.
Nescience.

A farrago of fish cephalopods
and a smack of jellies
scurry scud spurt scoot disappearing
into dark emerald.
Below the photic zone I go
down to where hydrothermal vents spurt
and gaping jaw fish with glowing lips eat
come what may,
finding an ox head preferable
to me; anthropology being
the subject for today
as the schools watch a
nonsuch figmental immaterial dauby filmy
man
come down to learn.
A massive fish—maybe orcinus orca
maybe sulphur bottom
maybe finback maybe humpback
prepared by the Immanent who urges into

being every living thing—
watches this spiteful slew of flesh
in faulty rhythm sinking down
this wrong-doing noun
dropped out of place
sentenced to come down
and learn some basics at the core, on the
sea's floor.

A single gulp puts an end to this
enjambment.

I
am
swallowed
whole.
My
pulse
tells me
that
I
am
conscious
though forced to be aphasic
a good part of the time
as I am jack-wedged
fastened shut bound bolted bunged
bundled inside where in this gut this locker
this casket
of seaweed scum scoria froth gobs spume
I wallow on the bottom
of the bottom of the world.
Fully mindful in this glue bottle belly
I come to see that wild thoughts and a
tongue-lashing will me undo.

I'm a landlocked Hebrew
Suddenly a gawky, coarse, smelly Mariner
Suddenly a phantom
Suddenly fathomless

The best and worst time to pray
the third day was.
My measured words spewed with a force

that could crack crystal.
All was known and heard by Him
the Highest of the High who
ordered that I be vomited, disgorged,
swabbed rubbed down to my former self.
Now on the salt sea strand I stand.

You made your point, I might have said.
Accretion. It is clear I learn slowly.
I build upon what I know.

I don't run away from what I don't
understand,
but from what I don't like.
Evisceration. It is clear
that I can't learn from what I reject.
I can be like the sea cucumber
who can spew out his own guts.

He thrust me to where my feet hate to tread.
As the wind blew in my face
and the sun boiled my head,
I would again begrudge His loving-kindness
I would again resist learning
and think it just and right
to defy his face and be angry over nothing.
I would again resist learning
and think it just and right
to want to be good and dead.

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