

Travelling by Ferry

He falls, no expression on his face, not a glimmer of feeling in his deep blue eyes. I am not the only one who watches. His head strikes on the side of the ship. The ocean spray thrown up by his splash washes away the bloody evidence from the side of the ferry. He floats only briefly before he sinks. A trail of pink charts his path.

I could have flown down in my winged sandals to catch his body, but I already have his soul by my side. He is numb, as the newly dead often are. Regret, anger and grief will come, but not yet. We have time to linger, to watch, before I take him to the ferryman. The chariot burns brighter in the December sky. Grey threatening clouds, disperse, without a single thunderbolt thrown.

“He’s overboard!” the words ring. “My brother is overboard!”

A wave of silence descends upon the ferry. It doesn’t last long. Orders are shouted; the lifeboat is dropped; the crewmen launch their desperate search. I’ve seen many bodies sink quickly, beyond the rescuers’ efforts. This one’s descent has been halted by a trident. An unnatural calm stills the waters and further aids the rescue. They rush the body to the waiting medics. The doctor is portly, with thick hair that no longer remembers its original colour. He doesn’t rush. I wonder if he will notice, if he is skilled enough at his craft. The light dances, forming a lyre-holding figure, who rests a hand on the doctor’s shoulder, with this obvious a prompt, the doctor must notice.

The captain breaks through the gawking crowd, straightening his jacket. The doctor informs him that the death is suspicious. The corpse’s lips are too blue. The chill of the water is not enough to explain it. There will be an autopsy. He suspects poison, probably cyanide. Only fifteen minutes out from Dover, they’ll go back.

A lieutenant escorts a weak-kneed woman to the body. With a peacock’s cry she collapses, sobbing into her hands. Nine tones of harmony surround her, ensuring her act strikes discord.

“First my parents, now my brother! How much misery is to be inflicted upon me?”

I chuckle to myself. If only she knew. Her brother was one of the few left who believed in us. Though the weavers would not let us save him, they will not stop our revenge. The one whose bound eyes see so much convinced us to allow human law to deal with the crime. The compromise is that we will ensure her guilt is clear and, when convicted, she is ours. Three lash-bearing ladies eagerly await their prey. The Captain quiets the woman, leads her away. Several crew wrap the body, carry it away. The on-looking crowd disperses. Only two crewmen are left, scrubbing the blood off the deck.

If you look, you will see a trident stirring the waters, creating a whirlpool on which the ferry turns. If you listen, you will hear a hammer striking an anvil, as the metal of the ship is

surreptitiously reinforced against the water's pressure. The ferry does a complete one-eighty, without changing its coordinates. I am always amused at how unobservant people are, for no one notices.

Once docked, the ferry is swarmed by police. The coroner confirms that the faller was dead before he fell. A tox-screen will prove which poison. The ferry's passengers and crew are questioned. Inspector Ryan leads the investigation. The ornate silver owl cufflinks of his blue suit flash with an inner light at key comments from his interviewees. He swiftly determines that few know anything, though many speak of suspicion of the sister's overplayed grief.

The scent of fermented grapes fills the air as a barman recalls the sister paying cash for two small bottles of wine. It was the only twenty he'd taken that day. The inspector orders the till roll and takings seized. Baying hounds lead the police hunt to a lifeboat, at the bottom of which two wine bottles and an empty vial lie. All finds are rushed into evidence.

The Inspector reads through the siblings' background - a complete triangle.

Means: her fingerprints, the only ones on the empty cyanide vial.

Opportunity: she bought the wine which had been poisoned.

Motive: their parents had left a small fortune, to be split between the siblings - a fortune that would be all hers, if her brother died.

Faced with the evidence, the sister demands a lawyer. That will do no good: we'll watch, make sure. The three will be unleashed as soon as she is found guilty. Madness and persecution will follow, as it has so many times before.

The soul beside me is beginning to lose his numbness. It's time to go. I guide him to the river where the ferryman waits. I give him his fare then watch as he boards the boat, as the ferryman poles him across the river, out of my sight.