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Writing Fiction

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Getting Ahead

The *Peregrine* was a humble vessel, needing only a crew of eight manage effectively. I was her latest crew-member, the cook. I have no interest in going to the Arctic in search of some untapped reserve of oil; however, the man I’m after does. Peter Griss—a grade A piece of shit, that one. Over the duration of our journey I often lay awake at night imagining the array of ways that I could destroy him—my thoughts are often interrupted by the cracking of ice against the hull. It sounds like someone is shooting at us from somewhere out in the wastes: if only it were that easy to shoot him and be done with it.

Every morning I wake up early before cooking for the crew, and smoke. It’s only been two weeks, but I’ve bashed my head against the doorway of my berth more times than I’m willing to admit. I guess every ship in the world is designed for people 5’7” or shorter. Today though, something different happened. I had company on deck; none other than Peter himself. He still doesn’t recognize me.

“Couldn’t sleep?” I ask.

“No. I have a lot on my mind.”

“I know the feeling.”

Cheap menthol cigarettes. Not exactly the best idea when its five below zero outside—but they’ll wake you up rather quickly. We stand there in silence for what feels like a long time. I can feel the warmth of the ember on my lips as a take a drag. The ship cuts through more ice, a lot this time; the sound is loud.

“Have you ever been to Oklahoma?” I ask.

“A few times, actually. It’s a godawful place.”

“How about McCloud? Ever been there?”

“Once. Why do you ask?”

A big chunk of ice is off the port bow. Could it be this easy? I didn’t think about it, really. The decision to murder him was more like a response than a pre-meditated act. Once we hit the ice, the ship tilted hard to her side; I shoved him into the frozen waters of the Artic. The ship continued to sail forward blithely, unaware that he was over-board. His head came up after about ten seconds, amid many sheets of floating ice. He could barely gasp out a brief cry. He was already rather blue in the face.

“You fucked my family out of our land because it had oil!” the still lit cigarette fell from my mouth as I screamed over the cracking. Just then, we made brief eye contact. Or at least it seemed that way to me. But the look on his face was all too telling—sudden recognition. The wake from the ship pushed the sheets together, pinching his neck. He was rather far away now, but crimson against white and gray is impossible to miss. I guess I was ahead of him now.