

Slumber So Deep

A sailor awakes on a shore after a storm and looks for help.

A sudden shot of breath leapt into my breast,
Gulped over gums, ribs rattling in protest.
I awoke on sullen beach, sand serving as bed,
To the sudden surprise that I was not yet dead.
Saved from the tempest, from tallest waves' crest,
Salvation found me, not I it, for I can attest
That the deep should have me firm in its grip,
Huddled with the lost that from the deck did slip,
Tumbling down into darkness crashing below,
Slipping 'neath waves, carried deep by undertow.
And yet, as the world and I returned, so did a fear
For all round me the air hung unclear.
The greyness of dawn stretched from sky down to soil.
Hanging in place, a mist leaving sight despoiled.
Each step in each way cast a lot against ruin.
Nary a soul to be seen nor shelter within viewing.
Trudging heavy-footed down sparse, spare coastland,
The light of the morn, dilute and unfound, the fog did remand.
Unrelenting, unremitting, clouding and blinding,
Through noontime, evening, no sky, nor wayfinding.

Aimlessly, I wandered down the path ahead,
Timelessly ambling away from past dread.
Then darkness enclosed the world round me again

And the ache of survival upon me was overlain.
Ramshackle pallet from detritus scattered round
Felt wondrous as down pillows. Let my night be sound.
Yet weary though I be, sleep ran from my rest.
Through that thick, hanging malaise something clutched at my
chest.
Helpless, hoarse, a voice wandered through blanketing cloud
And clung to me heavily as a stinking shroud.
A man such as I, but sourceless, weak, unwitting,
Screaming for mercy in a manner most unbefitting.
The malodorous fear filled my nostrils and I wretched
At the pitiful stranger, praying good riddance on the pest.
Suddenly blackness crept up, blanketing my heart,
Soaking through me, flooding my mind's last rampart.
Curious warmth filled me, soothing a balm as camphor.
My eyes then grew heavy and I ignored this other.
As sound faded away, I felt marked as one blessed,
There was no shame within me, God as my witness.

Slumber so deep
One could weep.

Brash billows blast the bow, the bilge belches its bile.
Scathing spray spears scared sailors, scrambling and servile.

Winds wail and whip the witless witness wasted and wondering
Through thrashing torrents thick with terrible thundering.
Screams and shouts resound, instructions, supplications.
Men mindlessly mixed meaning with morbid motivations.
"Save the ship or succumb to the sea."
"Brace yourselves boys!" "Blessed is He..."
Calamity comes, crashing crunch, choking churn.
Darkness drowns, dragging debris and dead to depths undiscerned.

Slumber so deep
One would weep.

Bright light, morning sight, world returned anew.
The haze rolled back, unveiling the disquieting view
Some still, silent figure slumped over near at hand,
A dozen yards away from my place on the sand.
A new fear rose from a place I knew not,
But I knew I must greet that person unsought.
He said nothing to me upon my approach,
Still nothing at all as into his space I did encroach.
Then seeing his face caused recognition to spark:
My brother, my friend, the accursed voice in the dark.
Slumped o'er, unmoving, gaze vacant and staring,
His eyes captured me, his lifeless sight unsparing.

Bluish, cold lips uttered damnations unspoken
Upon still-living flesh, on my spirit, now broken.
His help was at hand, yet I withheld, unwilling.
Salvation my part to play, instead it was the killing.
Nevermore would he rise from the place where he lay.
Nevermore would he speak though my soul he could save.
Slumber so deep,
I did weep.