

Donna Steiner Shoring Up This World

Folio Contest — 2nd Place from Engineer Poems

The ship can be spooky at night, its tempo altered and changeable; on deck feels one speed, below another. Some nights I hear sounds of weeping, some nights go for a smoke, the lucidity of constellations enough to settle me down, help me imagine shapes that don't actually exist, help me bend a part to fit the engine that is older than every man on board. To recall a journey I heard, begin with its ghosts.

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Resurrection

Me and my buddy skydived over Maui, men strapped to our backs in some new intimacy. We said amazing, awesome, meant beautiful. Have missed Christmas, all the birthdays. Now it's Easter; we'll do some fun thing meant to distract the guys who miss their kids shoot fireworks off the deck or light up the pipe. The world brings so much and I give little. But under the skin things happen; I turn as translucent as eggs of cuttlefish. Light finds openings, the sea presses tender spots until the surface gives. I still feel that man on my back, remember how he taught me to fall.

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Gifts

The girl keeps spices in sacks on a counter in the corner. Silt of turmeric, dust of cayenne. Her nails are edged

with residue; her tongue tastes like ocher and fire. From port he smuggles scrolls of cinnamon,

knobs of ginger; back on land he offers a bottle of anise stars as though presenting a new species

of beetle or specimens of royal bone.

When clouds descend he pulls tangerine peel from his pocket. It is not enough, but it is orange

and smells burnt and real, like stilled wings of monarchs or the antlers of deer.

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