

## **THE HORSE LATITUDES**

With full berth and tethered sail I ventured on consignment  
To cross high tide in heavy wind for sympathetic climates  
My crew agreed to navigate the Austral Seamount Chain  
Negotiate the Cape Of Horn and Polynesian Bay

Tribulation seized us in the Equatorial Current  
Leaden sky, gale force wind, wall of sea like turrets

The first to fall, our medic, followed by my sextant  
Crucial to the nauticals of any expedition  
Next the sea claimed tragic men strung upon the mast  
Pitched them through a tempest with an icon's fervent wrath

Abdication calmed the beast, roaring in respite  
Content with soulful mariners, kindled by their lives

The sea, my only mistress, exotic, without fault  
Faithful as her trade wind belts, loyal as her calms  
The sea, my jealous temptress, struck at me in vain  
When I sailed upon her tide pursuing fiscal gain

3 years volunteered earned Midshipman rank  
A decade passed, ambition grasped the chance to re-acquaint  
The need to heed desire's seed, wealthy Alderman's daughter  
Product for sale, short shelf life, across uncharted waters

Paternal loans secured, my ship sailed out to sea  
Where faithful men held sway upon windbound geography

The sea, my gentle temptress, exotic, full of splendor  
Luring me with fantasies of sensual adventure  
The sea, my elder mentor, filled me with ambition  
When I sailed upon her tide with hope, longing, conviction

More desirable than silver, more valuable than gold  
The consignment stock remained unharmed deep within the hold  
Ten days since our reckoning the sky still gave us pause  
Behind its charcoal canopy hid the Southern Cross

No wind to stir the sails, no star to guide the ship  
In lieu of maritime allegiance my vessel lay adrift

The sea, my spiteful mistress, righteous in degree  
Vengeful as her distant wind, shallow as her streams  
The sea, my wicked temptress, burdened me with strife  
When I failed to heed the beacon in her turning tide

Luck had not foreseen the storm, fortune held no sway  
Nor would the sea concede envy to its helpless prey  
Promised compensation, benefit to forget  
Desperation filled my crew with a fool's regret

Portions turned to rations, fear to destiny  
Ship leaks in the hold, nearing mutiny

The sea, my angry widow, under your enthrall  
Lead me to your gentle breeze, fury, transom, squall  
The sea, my wicked jury, judgment pardon me  
For I surrender to your deadlight infamy

The first to fall the Shires, workers, taught with length  
Next, the wild Pintabian, known for speed and strength  
Afternoon drew down the sun, horses fled the hold  
Halfinger and Clydesdale, submerged to lighten load

Sacrificial sacrament, equine drowning near  
Brought the wind once again with force enough to steer

The sea, my gracious savior, righteous in degree  
Traded survival for a promise of economy  
The sea, my elder mentor, tutored me condition  
Never barter life while sailing her rendition

- James Grayford