

# *Dream Sweet in Sea Major*

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TEEN SHORT STORY WRITING CONTEST: HONOURABLE MENTION – GRADE 10 TO 12

Simon opens his eyes, awakened by the sun's fury beaming through the lone, empty window. He thrusts himself up, rubbing his eyes as he rises to his feet. He stretches out his hand to stroke his wife's hair but only finds company with a cold pillow. He is very quickly reminded of the events of the prior night. He looks at the glass of water by his bed, and does not fancy a sip.

He walks from the bedroom and down the hall. He peeks through the crack of a nearly closed door into his daughter and sons' room. Slumbering in the bed with them is their mother whose eyes are still rosy and whose make-up is still molten on her cheeks like a running stream.

Simon stumbles through the kitchen, past the shattered plates and empty bottles until he reaches the mudroom. For Simon, today mustn't be spent apologizing or bootlicking, on this day, the water waits for him. The wrath of the blue and the sweet, bracing smell of the sea is what he dreams. He opens the door and slams it shut without a second thought.

His boat may be small in size, but she is mammoth in stories. Simon glides his hand over her hull like a lost lover. But within only moments on the water, there was an odd feeling within him. A still tension in the swell.

The bright and sunny morning morphs into subtle grey clouds. Simon has no fear of the ocean, his prowess for sailing through the deep is fast becoming legend. There is no storm, no waves or turbulence that he cannot navigate.

The morning turns to noon, and the noon turns to night as he slowly drifts farther and farther out to sea. He has moments of contemplation of turning back, but none so convincing as the dream of the drinks empty serenity. But the sound of thunder booms through his soul. He remains calm and unwavering.

The waves pick up. Rocking the ship back and forth. Simon holds on to the railings, concern slowly creeping in. The water splashes into the ship, violently thrashing him around. The only flashes of light are gifted by the wrath of sudden lightning, unpredictable and savage.

The boat's rocking becomes uncontrollable, and Simon clings to the mast like a baby to its mother. With Neptune's rage, the mast snaps into two, striking Simon on the head. Simon is flung from boat, into the water.

Like an ethereal reverie, or the affect of a mad sickness, Simon folds into a deep slumber where nothing seems real and nothing seems false, a state of equilibrium between

truth and fiction. Hence proceeds a moment of silence, a period where black and still could not describe the darkness that surrounds him. An endless void without life and warmth.

Suddenly, Simon awakes, but not in a place of comfort or familiarity. He looks around in confusion to find himself within a bathroom. Clean and white like a dentist's teeth, his eyes crease with the luster that attacks him.

Simon plods out of the bathroom, and reason is not what he discovers on the other side. He is a ballroom, completely devoid of life or delight. On the far end, there is a bar with a lone tender. After the abomination he just faced, a drink could serve as quite refreshing.

"Hello there," he says taking a seat comfortably.

"Welcome, Simon," The bartender smiles. Simon becomes mildly disturbed, "I have been expecting you."

"You've...been expecting me?"

"Correct. You may not know me, but I know you very well."

"Who are you? God?" Simon begins to laugh uncontrollably. The bartender stands still as ice, "Fix me a drink, will ya?"

"I'm not quite sure if that would be serviceable for you."

"This is a bar, is it not?"

"This is a bar as red is to yellow."

Simon can no longer fake his leisure. Any smile, and crease in his cheek, settles. Simon looks around the ballroom once more, now beginning to feel threatened.

"Where am I?" his tone shifted.

"That is not of consequence to you."

"I think I'll be the judge of that."

"The real question is who are you?"

"Excuse me?"

"I said, the real question is who are you."

"How dare you talk to me with such condescension. Do you know who I am?"

"You are Simon Brown."

"That's correct, I'm Simon Brown, a prestige sailor, a pioneer of the art of sailing!"

"What about a father?"

Simon pauses his rant.

"What about a dead man rotting at the bottom of the ocean?"

“What did you say?” Simon questions.

“You seem oblivious to the fact of your absence. Yes you are all of those things you mentioned, but what do they bring you?”

“It brings me honor; it brings me glory.”

“More so than watching your children grow? More so than playing catch with your son, or teaching your daughter how to drive? Do you think you are remembered, Simon?”

“What’s that supposed to mean?”

“A dead sailor makes a good headline, but a dead father remains forever. I present you with a choice.”

From beneath the bar, he places two glasses in front of Simon. One glass fraught with liquor, the other with water.

“You can take a sip of alcohol and stay here forever, drinking as much as you want, and being left alone like you so often desired. Or you can take a leap of faith. Drink from the water and your life will be restored. Choices Simon. Choices shape not only the lives we live, but the lives of others. In your absence, your family struggles. They never live the lives desired by them, all because you chose your glory over them. They love you Simon...and they need you.”

Simon takes the glass and does not hesitate before drinking. He awakes and stretches out his hand to stroke his wife’s hair.