

SHIPS IN BOTTLES

BY SERAFINA TURTON DEBICKA (aged 16)

The moon turned the waves to liquid silver and the golden sands dark. Tiny houses stretched far across the landscape, highlighted by their illuminated windows. A woman emerged from between the waves: her hair coarse and thick from the sea, her eyes pools of blue. Her form seemed distorted, nothing more than a reflection across the ocean. She wore a white summer dress with intricate layers of sheer fabric, white seafoam on the waves, that drifted weightlessly like seaweed underwater.

She rolled with the tide amongst the houses; her footsteps drowned by the wall of water that followed. Arriving at a rusted gate: she gazed upon the rows of tablets and crosses, overgrown with foliage and wildflowers. The damp stone shimmered under the glow of the church, causing her to appear luminous in the inky night. She was greeted by a polished headstone with the name 'Emily' engraved.

The woman had few memories of her time alive. She thought of these faded images as ships in bottles - beautiful from a distance - but when looking at the paint or the carving, it appeared as a blurred photograph. The windows and mast small smudges of acrylic. Few events stayed treasures in her mind, sealed away for safekeeping. Those tokens were filled with reminders of her love, the only person who sparkled like gold in comparison to those dilapidated boats.

Emily was the first to brave the murky waves surrounding the woman, as she

did her rays reflected across the surface. Her eyes were warm embers and her hair rays of sun. It wasn't long before the marooned woman welcomed books and suitcases on her shores. Those regular visits a permanent home by the waves, encapsulated in their own bottle to share.

They had agreed to finally leave their oasis to travel land and sea. Traversing the earth, absorbed in the new world they were in. Over time the woman felt drowned in the unfamiliar surroundings, water began to crash into their boat, engulfing their beacon. Her swirling storm, swelled and grew, hurling somber waves into the hull, until it swallowed the ship taking the sun with it.

The woman woke at the bottom of the sea, eternally deserted.

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