

Kellan had drawn his face

The next morning, the narrator was awakened early and brought to the ship's upper level where the paint crew gathered. This area served as a commissary for the medical staff and other ship personnel. The crew consisted of five members, informally led by a tenacious woman named Beezie. Skeptical of newcomers, she nonetheless recognized that no one wanted the unpleasant task of scraping the walls, which were in disrepair. The others, including Verlyn, an alopecia-stricken teen; Didier, an older man marked by scars; and Harriet, a fierce and fearless woman, shared the work. Harriet held a belief that everything one created had an impact, a sentiment that resonated with the narrator.

They were occasionally accompanied by a guard named Burke, who, despite his intimidating presence, took an interest in the crew's lives. He appreciatively encouraged Verlyn to share a bizarre story from his childhood about a dog transformation. This humorous distraction drew attention away from their task—a situation that irritated Beezie. Burke was also responsible for introducing the narrator to Marcel, a janitor whose presence had an uplifting effect on the crew.

As the narrator worked, they discussed the recent escape of a group known as "the twelve," sparking intrigue among those below deck. The atmosphere thickened with fumes from cleaning solutions, inciting panic until a fresh breeze blew in when a young janitor entered, causing a palpable change in the crew's mood. They speculated about Marcel's background and his connections, romantic or otherwise, with other crew members, particularly focusing on his interactions with Tove, a cook.

Marcel soon arrived with a tray of pastries, and the crew indulged, forgetting their exhaustion amid the delightful treats. He spoke kindly to everyone, showing a personable touch that endeared him to the crew. When the narrator mentioned searching for a young girl named Sol, Marcel promised to keep an eye out but kept their conversation light.

Later, the narrator was summoned to perform for Werryck. He noticed the older man had improved physically, and the meeting turned personal as Werryck spoke of Sol's progress, noting she was thriving under her current care. The conversation shifted to the narrator's concerns about Tom Skint, a menacing figure, but Werryck assured him that Skint had already received consequences for his actions. Werryck, however, cautioned the narrator against seeking parity for past grievances, suggesting that on the ship, power dynamics were essential and that he must focus solely on playing music as expected.