

# probably doomed and perplexingly merry

In the early hours along the Michigan coast, the narrator navigates their vessel with a child named Sol, who sleeps soundly in the confines of a forward bunk. The narrator recalls the warmth and weight of her small frame, struggling to adjust to the responsibility of carrying her. After anchoring in a calm spot called Misery Bay, they prepare coffee in the galley while contemplating their journey ahead, particularly towards a canal leading to Redfield and a figure named Griff. An uneasiness lingers as the narrator considers delivering Sol to this individual, whose details remain elusive.

As the morning unfolds, they are confronted by a grotesque sight—a bloated corpse floating nearby. Despite the grim discovery, Sol's reaction is surprisingly nonchalant; she identifies the body as an "uncle" lost to the lake, revealing her past of familial losses. The narrator's desire to shield Sol from horror is futile, as she instinctively swims towards the body, insisting they must give it proper burial. This leads them to work together to drag it ashore and bury it, an experience that transforms into an act of respect and solemnity.

With the sun high, they finally set sail towards Redfield, using the canal that promises to shorten their voyage. The narrator reads from Folsom's *Anchorage*, detailing the region's charm, but Sol dismisses it as ridiculous. Tension mounts as a storm approaches, and they race against time to navigate the rough waters toward safety. Eventually, they locate the canal entrance, a less impressive gap in the shoreline than they expected but a gateway to their future.

As they anchor within the canal, the atmosphere shifts, exuding a sense of tranquility. Sol identifies a kite overhead, inciting fear as she perceives it as a watchful presence. The narrator reassures her, associating the kite with hope—a reward for their successful burial and escape from Richard's clutches. Enjoying vegetable soup in the cockpit amidst the anticipation of an impending storm, they feel a mix of comfort and resolve, prepared to face whatever challenges lie ahead.