

## Letter Home

Dear Mum,

I went to the local second hand shop and bought this letter that was in the letter box. That is, a box of hand written letters that may or may not be collectors' items. The writing was in pencil and faint so I've typed it out. It isn't dated but I think it's quite old, perhaps 19<sup>th</sup> century. I hope it's not too explicit for you to read. It's from a fisherman, like myself, to his mother so I thought you might be interested. Of course our boats now have engines and are considerably larger.

Your loyal son Harry.

Dear Mother,

We were out yesterday with the lobster man, he's the guy who looks out for the glass floats that denotes where the lobster traps are. He has to have a good memory so he can remember where he placed them. He was at the bow and he suddenly called out, "Look at those mermaids. Well, the crew turned their heads and rowed closer to get a better look.

"Ain't she a beauty", the lobster man shouted.

Anyway, the sex crazed fishermen rowed closer in to get a better look. It was quite misty so I being at the helm with my hands clutching at the rudder could only follow the instructions being shouted at me. That's when a swell caught us and we landed on the rocks. The owner of the two boats was on the other boat just a hundred metres away. We called him skipper because that's what he's always been called. He was shouting but the other fishermen on our boat didn't hear. They seemed to be mesmerized either by what they saw or by what they heard. I was behind them so I could see nothing. Until, that is, we landed on the

rocks. And these beauties as they called them weren't beautiful at all. My fellow crew members were half crazed and groping themselves as if they had just landed on the bed on their wedding night. The sea critter I got a good glimpse of had long whiskers instead of long flowing hair. And the one who turned to us to show us her bum had barnacles stuck to it. Not a pretty sight I can tell you. The other fishermen were pulling down their trousers and were greatly aroused.

One of the sea critters came real close to me and barked like an old sea dog and her breath, if it really was a she, stank to high heaven, like rotten fish. And her skin was nowhere pink but as grey as the sea on a cloudy day. Just as it was on that misty day.

And just before the oldest of the crew was about to step out of the boat onto the rocks this great swell caught us again and we were all at sea once more. And all these so-called mermaids had slithered into the sea and were bobbing up and down looking at us. And by then we only had two oars and the rowers wondered where the other two had gone. The four rowers had to share two oars. And they started arguing whose oars had been swept away.

The skipper in the other boat was accursing us. And the rowers in the boat I was in had just heard the skipper and were cursing the mermaids for luring them onto the rocks. They had to row as though their lives depended on it. All of our lives depended on them rowing against the current. I had to steer the half-crazed men as best as I could out of the vicinity of those rocks not to mention, sea-critters. And the men in front of me still exposed but somewhat deflated were becoming more aware of the danger we were in rather than the mermaids. And it was no use trying to convince them that the sea-critters weren't mermaids at all. "Oh! Those beauties how they tried to lure us to our watery graves," the oldest rower said.

“And their breasts”, only they didn’t say breasts but some other word too crude to be mentioned here.

“Stop talking and row for your lives”, I shouted. I was damn sick of hearing about those damn sea-critters. I started shouting, “Row!” as they had to put some back into it. Gradually, we made headway towards the shore.

The captain’s boat reached the shore before we did which wasn’t surprising since he had four working oarsmen. When his boat was beached the captain waded in to get us out of the sea. We were still trying to get on shore. He was in the water, real close and was he in a rage! Yet he was holding his hand out to the crew. We had lost two oars and that was coin that was. And as the lobster man stood up to take his hand the captain said, put that ugly thing away and wash your hands in the sea before I help you out of the boat. He noticed all the crew except me were in a state of undress and he was not pleased. And the other four started to put their tackle away before the captain noticed them. But he did and he was so angry he cursed the crew. Just as he cursed, a wave caught him and his lobster man. They toppled over into the water but managed to cling onto the boat during the backwash.

“It was those mermaids, they enticed us, we didn’t have a chance once we looked into their beautiful eyes. Big eyes they had. Hypnotic eyes and their breasts!” the lobster man said.

“And their whiskers, too!” I called out.

“Their flowing blond hair!” he contradicted me.

“It was grey!” I shouted back. And I added, “Not to mention their fish-stinking breath.”

“Helmsman, why didn’t you steer them well away from the rocks?”

“I was just following orders, captain. And I couldn’t see what was in front due to the crew trying to look behind them or ahead of them depending on the way you see the situation.”

“Helmsman, stop blabbering and help us get this boat ashore.”

“Yes, captain.”

“Get out of the boat, you lot, and get this thing ashore. And stop dreaming about having it off with some damn sea apparition. And you’ll be docked the cost of the oars you lost if ever I let you on board any of my boats again. I can’t have any of my crew susceptible to being lured onto the rocks out there. And button yourselves up, too. You can get your rocks off when you get back to your wives.”

We eventually got the boat ashore and up the beach to the boathouse. I was exonerated. I was only following orders, after all.

The captain didn’t let them set foot in any of his boats again. As for me, I’m working with a much better crew now. Hope to visit you sometime in the near future.

Love, George.

PS: It’s me, Harry again, Mum. Interesting how things have changed! Perhaps, it’s the boat’s engines that frighten the mermaids, or whatever they were, away! Hope to see you when the stormy season starts.

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