

Third Prize: Andrew Tucker (University of Nottingham), “Mutineer’s Sonnet”

I woke from hard dreams in the dark and heard singing from above my cabin, uproarious among the wind. I got quickly to my feet and reached for the matches - there was a tension in the wood below me, as though the boards were all being pulled suddenly close together. The ship was being turned upon its axis. I licked the dryness from my lips, pressed my fingers and my ear to the door and I could soon make out the following discussions upon the deck:

Why is the captain dancing in the rain?
We mutineers are wrapping up his reign.
Who’ll guide the timbers homeward from their course?
The eyeless boy. His hands are tiny, coarse,
And nerveless. Can he push us through the sea?
If we can hear the whales, we can see,
If they’re to be relied on? Don’t trust whales -
Their lies are like glissandos, traps and wails:
And which of us can match? Who plays the lyre
Now the captain’s dead? The sea’s a liar,
White with fiction, kills dissent with awe-
The oars’ descent! Mistook the black rock or
This midnight for a shoreline we might seize
With orders roared to silence, soft upon the silent seas.