

* FERN MICRO *

A Venetian oldstyle for screens
by David Jonathan Ross



❧ CHAPTER I: LOOMINGS

CALL ME ISHMAEL. Some years ago – never mind how long precisely – having little or no money in my purse, and nothing particular to interest me on shore, I thought I would sail about a little and see the watery part of the world. It is a way I have of driving off the spleen and regulating the circulation. Whenever I find myself growing grim about the mouth; whenever it is a damp, drizzly November in my soul; whenever I find myself involuntarily pausing before coffin warehouses, and bringing up the rear of every funeral I meet; and especially whenever my hypos get such an upper hand of me, that it requires a strong moral principle to prevent me from deliberately stepping into the street, and methodically knocking people’s hats off, then, I account it high time to get to sea as soon as I can.

This is my substitute for pistol and ball. With a philosophical flourish Cato throws himself upon his sword; I quietly take to the ship. There is nothing surprising in this. If they but knew it, almost all men in their degree, some time or other, cherish very nearly the same feelings towards the ocean with me. There now is your insular city of the *Manhattoes*, belted round by wharves as Indian isles by coral reefs, commerce surrounds it with her surf. Right and left, the streets take you waterward. Its extreme downtown is the battery, where that noble mole is washed by waves, and cooled by breezes, which a few hours previous were out of sight of land. Look at the crowds of water-gazers there.

Circumambulate the city of a dreamy Sabbath afternoon. Go from *Corlears Hook* to *Coenties Slip*, and from thence, by *Whitehall*, northward. What do you see? – Posted like silent sentinels all around the town, stand thousands upon thousands of mortal men fixed in ocean reveries. Some leaning against the spiles; some seated upon the pier-heads; some looking over the bulwarks of ships from China; some high aloft in the rigging, as if striving to get a still better seaward peep. But these are all landsmen; of

week days pent up in lath and plaster – tied to counters, nailed to benches, clinched to desks. How then is this? Are the green fields gone? What do they here?

But look! here come more crowds, pacing straight for the water, and seemingly bound for a dive. Strange! Nothing will content them but the extremest limit of the land; loitering under the shady lee of yonder warehouses will not suffice. No. They must get just as nigh the water as they possibly can without falling in. And there they stand – miles of them – leagues. Inlanders all, they come from lanes and alleys, streets and avenues – north, east, south, and west. Yet here they all unite. Tell me, does the magnetic virtue of the needles of the compasses of all those ships attract them thither?

Once more. Say you are in the country; in some high land of lakes. Take almost any path you please, and ten to one it carries you down in a dale, and leaves you there by a pool in the stream. There is magic in it. Let the most absent-minded of men be plunged in his deepest reveries – stand that man on his legs, set his feet a-going, and he will infallibly lead you to water, if water there be in all that region. Should you ever be athirst in the great American desert, try this experiment, if your caravan happen to be supplied with a metaphysical professor. Yes, as every one knows, meditation and water are wedded for ever.

But here is an artist. He desires to paint you the dreamiest, shadiest, quietest, most enchanting bit of romantic landscape in all the valley of the Saco. What is the chief element he employs? There stand his trees, each with a hollow trunk, as if a hermit and a crucifix were within; and here sleeps his meadow, and there sleep his cattle; and up from yonder cottage goes a sleepy smoke. Deep into distant woodlands winds a mazy way, reaching to overlapping spurs of mountains bathed in their hill-side blue. But though the

NOW, WHEN I SAY THAT I AM IN THE HABIT OF GOING TO SEA WHENEVER I BEGIN TO GROW HAZY ABOUT THE EYES, AND BEGIN TO BE OVER CONSCIOUS OF MY LUNGS, I DO NOT MEAN TO HAVE IT INFERRED THAT I EVER GO TO SEA AS A PASSENGER. FOR TO GO AS A PASSENGER YOU MUST NEEDS HAVE A PURSE, AND A PURSE IS BUT A RAG UNLESS YOU HAVE SOMETHING IN IT. BESIDES, PASSENGERS GET SEA-SICK- GROW QUARRELSOME- DON'T SLEEP OF NIGHTS, DO NOT ENJOY THEMSELVES MUCH, AS A GENERAL THING; NO, I NEVER GO AS A PASSENGER; NOR, THOUGH I AM SOMETHING OF A SALT, DO I EVER GO TO SEA AS A COMMODORE, OR A CAPTAIN, OR A COOK. I ABANDON THE GLORY AND DISTINCTION OF SUCH OFFICES TO THOSE WHO LIKE THEM. FOR MY PART, I ABOMINATE ALL HONORABLE RESPECTABLE TOILS, TRIALS, AND TRIBULATIONS OF EVERY KIND WHATSOEVER. IT IS QUITE AS MUCH AS I CAN DO TO TAKE CARE OF MYSELF, WITHOUT TAKING CARE OF SHIPS, BARQUES, BRIGS, SCHOONERS, AND WHAT NOT. AND AS FOR GOING AS COOK, THOUGH I CONFESS THERE IS CONSIDERABLE GLORY IN THAT, A COOK BEING A SORT OF OFFICER ON SHIP-BOARD, YET, SOMEHOW, I NEVER FANCIED BROILING FOWLS; THOUGH ONCE BROILED, JUDICIOUSLY BUTTERED, AND JUDGMATICALLY SALT-ED AND PEPPERED, THERE IS NO ONE WHO WILL SPEAK MORE RESPECTFULLY, NOT TO SAY REVERENTIALY, OF A BROILED FOWL THAN I WILL. IT IS OUT OF THE IDOLATROUS DOTINGS OF THE OLD EGYPTIANS UPON BROILED IBIS AND ROASTED RIVER HORSE, THAT YOU SEE THE MUMMIES OF THOSE CREATURES IN THEIR HUGE BAKEHOUSES THE PYRAMIDS. 🌿

NO, WHEN I GO TO SEA, I go as a simple sailor, right before the mast, plumb down into the fore-castle, aloft there to the royal mast-head. True, they rather order me about some, and make me jump from spar to spar, like a grasshopper in a May meadow. And at first, this sort of thing is unpleasant enough. It touches one's sense of honor, particularly if you come of an old established family in the land, the Van Rensselaers, or Randolphs, or Hardicanutes. And more than all, if just previous to putting your hand into the tar-pot, you have been lording it as a country schoolmaster, making the tallest boys stand in awe of you. The transition is a keen one, I assure you, from a school-master to a sailor, and requires a strong decoction of Seneca and the Stoics to enable you to grin and bear it. But even this wears off in time.

What of it, if some old hunks of a sea-captain orders me to get a broom and sweep down the decks? What does that indignity amount to, weighed, I mean, in the scales of the New Testament? Do you think the archangel Gabriel thinks anything the less of me, because I promptly and respectfully obey that old hunks in that particular instance? Who ain't a slave? Tell me that. Well, then, however the old sea-captains may order me about — however they may thump and punch me about, I have the satisfaction of knowing that it is all right; that everybody else is one way or other served in much the same way- either in a physical or metaphysical point of view, that is; and so the universal thump is passed round, and all hands should rub each other's shoulder-blades, and be content.

Again, I always go to sea as a sailor, because they make a point of paying me for my trouble, whereas they never pay passengers a single penny that I ever heard of. On the contrary, passengers themselves must pay. And there is all the difference in the world between paying and being paid. The act of paying is perhaps the most uncomfortable infliction that the two orchard thieves entailed upon us. But being paid,- what will compare with it? The urbane activity with which a man receives money is really marvellous, considering that we so earnestly believe money to be the root of all earthly ills, and that on no account can a monied man enter heaven. Ah! how cheerfully we

Though I cannot tell why it was exactly that those stage managers, the Fates, put me down for this shabby part of a whaling voyage, when others were set down for magnificent parts in high tragedies, and short and easy parts in genteel comedies, and jolly parts in farces- though I cannot tell why this was exactly; yet, now that I recall all the circumstances, I think I can see a little into the springs and motives which being cunningly presented to me under various disguises, induced me to set about performing the part I did, besides cajoling me into the delusion that it was a choice resulting from my own unbiased freewill and discriminating judgment.

Chief among these motives was the overwhelming idea of the great whale himself. Such a portentous and mysterious monster roused all my curiosity. Then the wild and distant seas where he rolled his island bulk; the undeliverable, nameless perils of the whale; these, with all the attending marvels of a thousand Patagonian sights and sounds, helped to sway me to my wish. With other men, perhaps, such things would not have been inducements; but as for me, I am tormented with an everlasting itch for things remote. I love to sail forbidden seas, and land on barbarous coasts. Not ignoring what is good, I am quick to perceive a horror, and could still be social with it – would they let me – since it is but well to be on friendly terms with all the inmates of the place one lodges in.

By reason of these things, then, the whaling voyage was welcome; the great flood-gates of the wonder-world swung open, and in the wild conceits that swayed me to my purpose, two and two there floated into my inmost soul, endless processions of the whale, and, mid most of them all, one

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I stuffed a shirt or two into my old carpet-bag, tucked it under my arm, and started for Cape Horn and the Pacific. Quitting the good city of old Manhatta, I duly arrived in New Bedford. It was a Saturday night in December. Much was I disappointed upon learning that the little packet for Nantucket had already sailed, and that no way of reaching that place would offer, till the following Monday.

As most young candidates for the pains and penalties of whaling stop at this same New Bedford, thence to embark on their voyage, it may as well be related that I, for one, had no idea of so doing. For my mind was made up to sail in no other than a Nantucket craft, because there was a fine, boisterous something about everything connected with that famous old island, which amazingly pleased me. Besides though New Bedford has of late been gradually monopolizing the business of whaling, and though in this matter poor old Nantucket is now much behind her, yet Nantucket was her great original – the Tyre of this Carthage; – the place where the first dead American whale was stranded. Where else but from Nantucket did those aboriginal whalers, the Red-Men, first sally out in canoes to give chase to the Leviathan? And where but from Nantucket, too, did that first adventurous little sloop put forth, partly laden with imported cobblestones- so goes the story – to throw at the whales, in order to discover when they were nigh enough to risk a harpoon from the bowsprit?

Now having a night, a day, and still another night following before me in New Bedford, ere could embark for my destined port, it became a matter of concernment where I was to eat and sleep meanwhile. It was a very dubious-looking, nay, a very dark and dismal night, biting cold and cheerless. I knew no one in the place. With anxious grapnels I had sounded my pocket, and only brought up a few pieces

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 WITH HALTING STEPS I PACED

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 ½ cup butter, ⅔ tsp. salt

Fractions

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Fern Micro is a Venetian oldstyle that is native to the screen. With exaggerated diagonal stress, Fern's weight clumps in round strokes and chunky triangular serifs, giving it a rich texture that sparkles even at the smallest size. Its ribbonlike forms are modeled after the Renaissance faces of Nicolas Jenson as well as related twentieth century revivals such as Centaur and Dante.

Available formats:

Desktop OpenType CFF (OTF)
Web WOFF, WOFF2
App/E-book OpenType TrueType (TTF)

Designer: David Jonathan Ross

DJR draws letters of all shapes and sizes for custom and retail typeface designs. A native of Los Angeles, he began drawing typefaces at Hampshire College and joined The Font Bureau in 2007 where he honed his bézier-wrangling skills. Now he publishes visually imaginative and technically advanced designs at his own foundry, including Fit, Manicotti, Input, Gimlet, and Bungee. You'll find him in Western Massachusetts with his partner Emily and their two dogs, Sophie and Lily.

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Supported Languages include:

Afrikaans, Albanian, Alsatian, Basque, Bislama, Bosnian (Latin), Breton, Catalan, Chamorro, Croatian, Czech, Danish, Dutch, English, Estonian, Faroese, Finnish, Flemish, Franco-Provençal, French, Frisian, Friulian, Galician, German, Greenlandic, Hungarian, Icelandic, Indonesian, Irish, Italian, Kurdish (Latin), Ladin, Latin, Latvian, Lithuanian, Luxembourgish, Malay, Manx Gaelic, Moldovan, Norwegian (Bokmål, Nynorsk), Occitan, Polish, Portuguese, Rhaeto-Romance, Romanian, Romansh, Sami (Inari, Lule, Northern, Skolt, Southern), Scottish Gaelic, Slovak, Sorbian, Slovenian, Spanish, Swahili, Swedish, Tagalog, Turkish, Uzbek (Latin), Vietnamese, Walloon, Welsh.

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