

The Octopus Complex

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The octopus complex/ Jacqueline Valencia

Poems.

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For Jennifer Valencia
who is made up of saintly bones
and a pure heart.

And to changes
for they've been for the better. Aye.

CONTENTS

- MUSE
- THE MOON AND THE SEA (NO “I”)
- JULES VERNE
- THE SAILOR
- OCTOPUS EIGHT
- THE CREW
- MERMAIDS
- THE UNKNOWN
- PREY
- WALK THE PLANK
- CTHULHU
- BELIEF
- THE FIGURE HEAD
- WONDER WHY...
- IF DEPRESSION IS THE SEA THEN, I AM A
PIRATE
- LOST
- OCTOPUS

MUSE

Octopus displays. It has been elevated.
From marvelous disposal our obscure fixations
encounter and excel
willing forth its prehensile tentacles,
like a pious religious thinker;
and terrors muse as gods envision
magnetic centres, with tempting calls;
small, naked Octopus.

To frightful expansions and electricity
through our sleep it enters
a dazzling beauty.
What if it were possible to emerge
and radiate alive in open reefs? What if
this grayish form costs more
than our sensibilities?

Hydra will swim, in undulating elegance;
on a man's arm reaching out for the rocks above.
He will meet mermaids illuminating a spectre of a sun;
The creature will diminish preconceptions
in the vacuum of the ocean floor.
Sweet monster. Many have been fooled.

Octopus, are we your prey?
Retreating over your rise, time makes us mariners,
neither enemies nor friends, never will you unravel
your mystery

breathe us in, your illustrators, impossible
transcribers who put you under the glass;
a flower in Neptune's darkness.

THE MOON AND THE SEA (NO "I")

Peaceful for the moon to oversee us
Chaos for the eddy that runs ahead
Composed moon, your forbearance never hushed
Turbulent sea, your restlessness can spread.
Hold fast, these are the moments to mark
What looks now undone soon to be well fastened
Every day a new voyage to embark.
Whose soul can be ready and sharply reasoned?
Whose fast heart stops short and meekly pulls back?
Hope forever dwells among moon and sea
Engage, feed the lonely and all those who lack
At the mercy of nature's accords are we
She be a cruel mother and before her shoved
We eternally keep on, search to be loved.

JULES VERNE

In my youth I found a giant squid
and named it Jules
becoming my companion in
solitary escapes
a friend from other worlds.
He drank me in
through my earthly slumber
depositing me on the other side.

Darkness there with the only light
from his eyes presenting me with
wonders and sketching terrors
with its limbs
birthing new universes within me
with vestigial remnants of Jules
scattered in my own explorations
going beyond the known
into unsolved mysteries.

THE SAILOR

I called myself a sailor once,
disciplined and voracious,
continually on the lookout,
running between starboard and port.
I was sensitive to the waves
and a swaying ship,
as my Captain spat out orders
that fell on me like sea spray on ancient scars.

The crew went down with everything else,
victim to an unseen reef.
I downed the last of my whisky
before throwing myself at the
mercy of a black abyss.
I wrestled the sea with
my whole being;
All of the world
hearing the Captain roar,
“You will not defeat me.”
Willfulness had won.

OCTOPUS EIGHT

Cop outs eight. Scoot up! Get hi.
Cot Opus Eight. Cops out? Get hi!
Cop to us eight. Soot cup. Get hi.
Cup so to eight? Cot so up, get hi.

Coot! 'Sup! Eight. Coots up. Get hi.
Coups to eight. Cop oust. Get hi.
Cos pout eight. Coup sot. Get hi.
Cos up to eight. Scout op. Get hi.

Coo. Puts eight. Cot soup. Get hi.
Cup so to eight. Cot SO up. Get hi.
Eight Octopus. Cut up, so get hi.
Get hi Octopus! Octopus get hi.

THE CREW

The Captain gauges his course
 through the cosmos reflected
On the waters of the night crying
“All ahead! All ahead! Aye!”

His crew ready to follow
 through the dangers expected
On the odyssey of a lifetime responding
“Aye Captain! Aye Captain! Aye!”

The ship's sail is set
 through the storms respected
On the horizon in the distance implying,
“Adventure! Adventure! Aye Adventure!”



MERMAIDS

Mermaids sing
broadcasting a shared love
for salty mollusks,
heady beverage,
and a full embrace
on a busy day.

Gliding free to bathe
wherever the tide takes us
for random encounters,
rambling talk,
and hot love
on a lonely evening.

I sing
elevating mermaids
as repressed sirens,
powerful affectations,
and a freeing muse
on a cold afternoon.

THE UNKNOWN

Everyone is aware of the ocean and of space
the churning waters below and the quiet void above
which means we stand at a shore or the tip of a chasm
to rippling waves, to bursting solar flares,
to shipwrecks drifting down to the sea bed
to stars exploding, dwarfed, and dying
from a lifetime of shining already dead to the naked eye;
comforting womb of the Mediterranean
to take up voyages as an Argonaut
to prepare scientific quests as an astronaut
heroes on a search for something outside of us
a humanoid or a sea monster, just to know
- any evidence - that we are not alone.
Perhaps we wonder, for words like
infinity or colossal, have a way of
isolating us further provoking
both wonder and despair.

Thus these lives we cherish
from sand to water to air to fly
free from drowning only to suffocate
because it is all too much
we are left to fantasize between sunrise
to sunset as the birds soar towards
our dreams of heaven.

PREY

Waves bathe a tidal rock pool
And seaweed hides a little fish
Apprehension stalls its next move
And fear, its possible end surrounds.

Its life within is small to our eyes
Our experience out of the sea is lacking
Tiny fish comes out of the rock
Braver than anyone crossing a concrete street.

WALK THE PLANK

Quiet mourning has accepted magnificently sour prayer.
Supplication is changing the widow to a grave, cold and
indifferent the waves surge. Ablution on dry, hollow
wood; fixed above the creaking vessel; reciting where the
crew has been, accept their dogma on a mere revelation.
Blessed is the sea built over death, "Beloved, always imagine
the fantasy true." Abundantly wail your immense gratitude.
Here. Jump. Fall in. That casket forgives.

CTHULHU

1. Cephalopod head
plopping, sucking, renting
fervent tears falling
2. Cthulhu, unravel
cruelly. Coldhearted painful
parasitic face
3. Monster distorts. Pure
amoral kings preying gnats
wishing, keenly, deaf
4. Dreamer snoozing soft.
A knowing heart sighs. Oh doom,
for Cthulhu failed.

BELIEF

A woman who loves
independence
over love
is a smart one on love.

A woman who values
the sea
over love
can have both.

THE FIGURE HEAD

1.

My indolence is a cradle
I was carved on a torn up ship; you
always promising an adventure. One only I can see ahead.

This is not about love.
If these are the ways of attachment
let me go by instinct.

2.

Entire leagues pass before me
on my perched view of the world
souls intuitively aware of each other, all at their stations.

This is not about the voyage.
If these are the ways of people
let the ocean seethe without interruption.

3.

Fixed here, I am a rooted creation that searches out
acquainting myself with a spacious sky and the universe
becoming infinite with my view.

This is not about the expanse.
If these are the ways of the heavens
let the tides carry your genetic history in their crests.

4.

Jettisoned salt water is inhaled
by my crew administering their tasks. I am still.
Mapped out courses, treaties signed. Treasure all around.

This is not about the bounty.
If these were the ways of conquests
let my body carry us back as terrestrial communal matter.

5.

I am an object sculpted in the image of a woman
visceral reaction to the unknown
I am silent and obedient, rebelliously giving birth to stars.

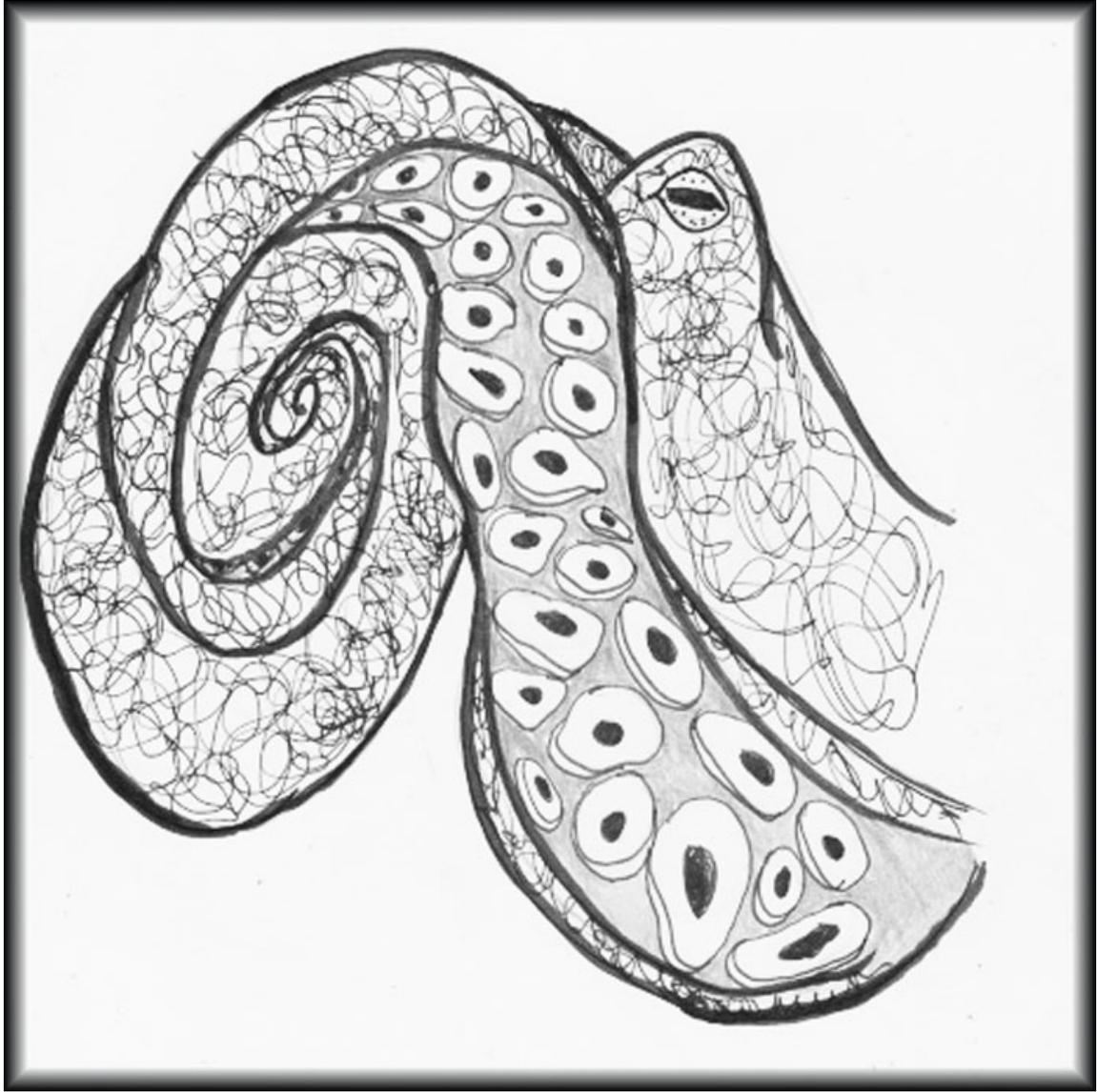
This is not about the sailor.
If these are the ways of men
let my loved ones see the ephemeral existence around me.

6.

Now I am here.

I have swam these waters, searched these horizons,
gracefully set my sights for you.

This is not about love.
This is about my freedom
securing my holy bond to be.



WONDER WHY...

why I obsess over tentacles oh but
I wish I could feel how they feel I say
I want to know somehow

senses overstimulated always there
tasting searching penetrating
how far to suck oh

my arms are but two oh ennui I say
to myself and then do laundry and make
dinner for eight

TENTACLES

Bully boss marches onto my cubicle floor
contaminating my nerves

I swallow fear whole.

With my keyboard I am godlike with
every click

snaking in the networks

spiraling through the search queries

my knowledge both ebbing and flowing
to the masses

boss's voice gets nearer

and louder

my eyes become arms as I look up

from my screen to scan the room

my vision tents out like tentacles

reaching out

for what to do

pulling in

a comforting thought

anything for an

answer

the reports are not ready yet.

IF DEPRESSION IS THE SEA, THEN I AM A PIRATE

I am a possessed thought
intruder in a calm ocean, awoken
and making tidal waves. I am doing my part
over the night stars, image to feeling:
a happy soul, just does not dwell here.
The islands in this mind are not habitable, ever.

I have searched for fiery truths in your depths,
Emptied them of meaning, smooth skins, sweetness,
celestial shipwrecks made of dirt and air:
grasping, disabling, disconnecting
all your bottom dwellers. Rock to reef.
An obsession taken for granted.
You might not even exist.

Surfing in your hurt, dear,
I am unbalanced, calling for your attention,
descending darkness over your subterranean lights
(you tend to them so well)
insecurity is a virus-like frenemy
and in your soul I shine where the caves hide you.
Have no qualms to finish me. Fight the good fight.
But somehow we're still here.

LOST

Though endlessly I search in vain
For love awaits me on shore

Hope of rescue I remain.
I paddle with one oar.

OCTOPUS

From swimmer to thinker a creature flows
and I am confounded. Its philosophy slips in my intuition,
with its web-like tendrils, while above us
a dying sunset expands as the seasons fade.

It is a machine, extracting and enveloping,
with a web of contorted muscles stiffened, then released
into a soft sweetness in its suckers
on its journey now, for it is time for it to dance.

And yet we deny – perhaps – the idea,
it would stay, we felt, that our imagination would capture it,
but the pirouetting beast at last has served us,
and we are empty to adorn the pneumatic creature;
let us eviscerate our husks instead.

To see how you mesmerize our minds and inspire
an uncontrolled cerebral locomotion; poised, it is a grace
we cannot possess – and besides we clumsily tread
while you encourage the senses.

The expression of an adroit creation, your art
you are pallid here and a violent blue there;
mimicking the underwater world. This dramatic silence
finds that you are an exquisite opening to another reality.

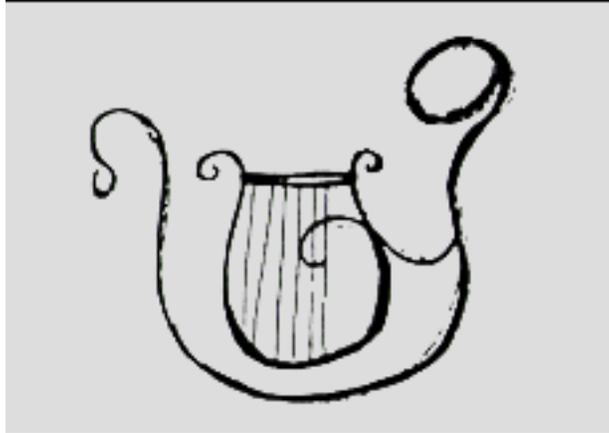
BIO

Jacqueline Valencia is an experimental poet, writer, and illustrator based in Toronto. Her work has appeared in Dead Gender Magazine, Little Fiction, Amelia's Magazine, and CBC's Canada Writes. She is the author of "Tristise," and "Maybe" (which was selected for the Arte Factum exhibit by Poetry is Dead Magazine).

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