

From the Girl who Fell with Star

Make no mistake, sir,
I'm writing this for you,
and you know who you are:
the silver-tongued serpent
that killed the shooting Star.
You, Captain; my father
first mate, sailed this ship
on the seas of space.
Star was your Titanic,
and we wish you knew
the mechanical dynamics
of the engines that you flew.

"But sir," my father pleaded,
 "You'll use more fuel
 than we replace."
 You, Captain,
 Looked him in the eye,
cruel grin upon your face.
"My boy, don't tell me what to do.
Know your place, step back in line,
and learn how proper racing's done.
With my flying we'll be fine."
 You threw back your head
 and commanded again,
 "Full speed ahead, boys.
 I must win!"
 Full throttle, light speed,
 engines jumped to work.
 Pistons rose and fell, driving
 Star forward until
 she gave a tired shudder
 yet trudged on further still.
 Engines buckled and bent
 with terrifying crunch.
 Smoke rose, engineers fled
 fearing for their lives.
Out of her bowels Star bled
chemical fire tainted bloody red.

Down in the hull sang we families
 you never tried to know.
Song interrupted by an odd sound
from the engine room below.
First a deep rumble, then a jolt,
chaos, explosions, fire.
Radiative rage surrounds us,
now screaming. Crying. Tortured
cries fall flat in stagnant air.
Star stops, but the flames
are insatiable.
Death is slow
and agonizing.

"She's dead in the water,
I'll get a new ship!"
you called to your dying
crew. "I promise," you swore,
"I'll return and rescue you!"
Alone in your escape pod, how does it feel?
Does guilt wash over you?
 Played your political game,
gambled with our fates
and lost.
Guess who is paying?

Oh, and do we feel it.
Cinders, blazing, sink into our skin.
Red metal singses our soft soles.
Gases choke our barely breathing lungs.
Radiation makes us ill and crippled.
We pray for relief and safety
that never comes.

Captain, as my flesh burns
 from my bones,
 sinewy skin seared,
 you plague my mind.
You were irresponsible, pompous,
 all talk, Wormtongue.

Respectfully, sir,
you've screwed with my life,
and I'd like you to know
 what you've done.
My flesh tears away in chunks.

I am burning.
Still burning.
Dear *God*,
 have mercy.

I've heard of your new ship.
Mythical Moghozi.
I hate it.
I know it won't save us.
We scream, burning in fallout of Star,
flames licking our once joyful faces.
Feels like eternity in purgatory.
And you, Captain.
Well, aren't you *proud*?
Sixty some families fall in flames
and the blame is entirely yours.

Star, her hulking frame
crashes toward the earth
like some ghoulish cadaver
back for vengeance.
We don't know where she'll land,
but we know where we'd *like* her to.
We will land this thing on your head if it kills us.

Captain, dear Captain, remember me
when you lay sleepless at night,
thoughts swimming in your mind
like sharks. Stare, horrified, out your window
at that green streak of light among the stars,
and know that you won't easily hide under my radar.
I am the girl who rides the tail of the falling Star
that you shot down in clumsy flight
and now watch from afar.

—Kathlyn Longtime