the good ship
Janice

team catharsis
message to the children in hospital

Dear Readers,

On the 25th of August, our team of nine sat down to try and create this book for you to enjoy. Our parameters were somewhat difficult, particularly the setting being a country town and our complication, a shipwreck. Nevertheless, we hope you enjoy this fun-filled, however absurd, adventure.

Yours truly,
Team Catharsis
Prologue
there's a lilt in the beat, in the beat of the sails
there's an offbeat character to the rhythm they keep
and each beat is not single but more of a sweep
of the air rushing into, and over, and through
this sweet eternal rhythm is all she ever knew

Matthias pauses, and lets the pen clatter to the desk; closes his eyes. He stares up at the ceiling of the cabin through his eyelids. A kind of half-smile touches his lips, the vague satisfaction of an uninterrupted routine is resting softly in his chest, in each breath that he breathes in the echo of the rhythm of the sails.

In his mind there is the driftings, the beginnings and the loose endings of a muted piano sonata that he knows he’s heard before but can’t place, twinkling through his consciousness. He touches at the parchment before him, runs his fingerprints across it with gentle tactility and feels the soft friction. His boots tap against the decking beneath him, he shifts in his seat, runs a hand along the worn-smooth oak of the armrest. The disjointed choir of the deckhands shudders through the body of the ship, tuneless, restless, and haunting.

The pervasive creak, the heaves of ancient timber soar like the strings of this mechanical, breathing, lilting orchestra; the wash of all this sound tries to absorb him and he lets it. He’s safe inside his mind as it sprawls and twists and tangles, all discarded scraps of language, the words and the pieces of phrases he tells himself that he will remember for later, the images that flicker like a picture show before his closed eyes of all the places that he has seen, watched listlessly from afar, from high up above. All of the beauty, depth, music, and colour that he dares himself to conjure in the words that spout from the nib of his pen.

He picks it up again, lets its smooth body wander between his fingers, opens his eyes and lets the light flood in,
touches the nib to the page and allows the ink to bleed through the paper before he flicks it into the beginnings of his looping script.

\[
\text{there is something in the way} \\
\text{the yellowing grass of the plains} \\
\text{blurs into itself and out of itself below her} \\
\text{all flecked with the constructions} \\
\text{of the ground and the things that live on it}
\]

reminds her,
her and all her splintered curving faces,
of a future
that she once used to imagine
she plays a subtle, sad smile into her broad sails
and her masts swing, groaning,
melancholic in the fading remnants
of a sea breeze

There’s a sudden but mostly imperceptible shift that rocks the decking. She’s changing direction. Matthias shakes it off through his tight, slouched shoulders, doesn’t look up from his page - how could he? The words are flowing forth like they rarely do - and he falls unconsciously into the new motion of the ship. The symphony crashes on around him; the spinning of the wheel in the helm above him of its own volition is just another voice in the scheme of things. He hasn’t looked out of the viewport in at least an hour, and there is a subtle irony in that.

Minutes after minutes pass and the lines on the page fill with his scrawls and strikethroughs, thoughts and little absent minded drawings, synaesthetic outpourings. His paper slips forwards down the desk as the ship tilts forwards, tilts downwards towards the earth. The shuddering beats of her wings are more shuddering than ever.

\[
\text{the ways that she got here} \\
\text{the past that she floats gently on}
\]
and the heritage that inspires her onwards
the future into which she propels herself

the dream of the sea that she keeps
always in mind,
always ahead of her,
always behind her

she lets the girth of the world below her
fascinate her in all its depth
and music
and beauty
and colour,
but

He hears a yell of “Captain!” cut through the cacophony before the world unfolds around him and a stunned silence full of noise descends. Her boards splinter and crash so softly, so gently, so slowly around him. He swims in the midst of the chaos, suspended in time, watching, fascinated. When his chair finally topples beneath him and he clatters to the floor, flung against the walls of the cabin, the symphony reemerges in a last crescendo of shouts and yells and cracks.

His hair streaked across his face, his monocle spinning across the floorboards, his clothes dishevelled, and dust settling over him, he reaches for the paper and scrawls another line.

the grandiosity of catastrophe
is most fascinating of all
Chapter 1
One morning, the little town of Emerald was minding its own business, baking in the hot sun and bustling with its small citizens, when it was rudely interrupted by a mysterious flying contraption that zigzagged across the sky. In fact, the town thought, it oddly looked like a flying ship, but, of course, this was impossible, and this sudden outbreak in routine was quickly forgotten by all in the town, save one. This individual will enter our story later.

However, this indeed was not a figment of one’s imagination, and inside this seemingly absurd ship, was another story. “Get on deck and grab the wheel!” a deckhand screamed at a rather dishevelled young man. Alas, it was surprisingly difficult to fulfil this request on a magically-powered ship as it was tipped almost vertically on its side. All the people aboard the vessel were grasping at any available handhold. Below deck, lavish rooms adorned with priceless candleholders and an extra soft pillow were tossed into disarray and those less-so-luxuriously housed disorientated crew members, who were awoken suddenly and ripped out of their beds. It could be supposed, from a completely objective vantage point, one might have found this scene amusing, if you were not aboard that ship.

Unfortunately, the Good Ship Janice – as it was so named – was angled in such a way that the land below and the vessel were doomed for collision. Much screaming arose aboard the flying ship – particularly from a significantly burly man, who sang by far the highest note out of all of them – as the Good Ship Janice collided with ground. A great amount of dust exploded into the air and the surrounds, and an intense silence fell. Not a movement occurred, a word was uttered or an eye fluttered open.

...  

The soft crunch of glass underfoot echoed among the wreckage. Unfamiliar eyes swept over the broken masts, torn sails, shattered wood that bore deadly splinters, and snapped ropes that gently swayed in the soft
The observer mumbled under her breath, “Bloody hell.” A whisper of sound carried from the depths of the wreckage, so quiet that it was almost dismissed. Intrigued, she drew closer, ducking under broken wood and ripped cloth. Another murmur sounded and as she bent to peer beneath a sail, a young man came into view. His fluttering eyes failed to open, as if this sole act required an intensity of energy that was lacking. But, she saw, his chest rose and fell, and so, as his body mended itself, she heaved him from the wreckage and propped him in the shade. She was also able to find all the crew members, although some were dazed and may have suffered mildly from concussion.

Finally, as the young man was able to open his eyes, his surrounds provided much sorrow. The family vessel, so recently passed onto himself, lay in pieces around him. The main hull of the ship was still visible, however, there was now a gaping hole. “My father is going to kill me,” he whispered.

“Don’t worry, it’s all fixable,” a voice sounded to his left, as if reading his mind. “Seriously, while you’ve been conked out, I’ve investigated this here thing you have, and it’s all good. Howssitgoin by the way? You looked real bad just before, but you’re looking brighter every minute! I’m Sharon,” she said, extending her hand, “but you can just call me Shazza.” Her speech was like rapid fire, and she skipped and danced around her words, never losing pace or energy.

The young fellow reached up and warily shook her hand. “Matthias.” He licked his lips, dry and cracked in the heat, despite his position in the shade. His head felt too heavy on his head as he slowly became more awake. The woman before him had caramel skin, and wore black exercise pants and a yellow singlet. This, along with her sneakers, indicated to him her love of sport and exercise. Meanwhile, Shazza, as he recalled, prattled on;

“...you’ve landed yourself right next to Emerald, which is like a little town. Everyone is super friendly. You know, one time a lady was in dire need of
swimming classes and...”

“My goodness,” Matthias thought. “Does this lady ever rest her tongue?” Over his relatively short life, he had come to despise those who lived below him, that is almost the entirety of terrestrial citizens. They always seemed to be inventing new destructive forces and failed to cherish their home.

As a young man, Matthias considered himself a budding poet and rather a good one at that. Disappointingly, it was difficult to document Earth and it’s going-ons in rhythmic form, and thusly he was confined to more unexpressive forms.

“But she, thankfully, was able to help the town pull together and now we have our own community pool – what do you know – and I was able to get my first client! I’m a personal trainer, you see. On another note, I have been wondering why on Earth a ship has crashed here, I mean, I think I saw it fly here, which is weird, but whatever.” Sharon was surprisingly eager to accept this concept, partly because of the lack of odd occurrences in the small town of Emerald. “What happened?”

Matthias cleared his throat, making Sharon’s stance stiffen, sensing an awkward response to what she hadn’t realised was a confronting question. “You see...I...my crew and I were merely travelling across the skies, when in fact the ship wobbled, somewhat considerably, and, well, collided, with the ground, so to speak.”

“So...it just collided randomly?” It is important to remember that Sharon is by no means unintelligent, and suspected there was more to this story.

“Well...I was guiding - supposed to be guiding the ship, but my creativity and expression peaked, and as a poet, my word is important to document, I may have been below deck doing this... and it does indeed consume an extensive amount of my attention, which led to dangerous tilting and the overall wreckage of the ship that we see around us.”
To his amazement, Sharon was laughing as he finished his story. Her smile lit up all her features and seemed to radiate from her. Sharon’s trust in his story took him aback.
“So what are you going to do then?” she asked as her laughter faded.
“I know my duty. If you say The Good Ship Janice is able to be restored, then I shall do so, and once again we will conquer the skies!” he finished, with a dash of self-importance, a rather pleased smile at his cleverness and no remembrance at all of his just previous humbleness.

“Mate, I’ll be honest, I don’t know much about ships, but I think you’ll be able to find at least a few supplies in town. Besides, by the time we come back, your crew here will hopefully be wide awake and ready to help us!”

Before they left, Matthias inspected the wreckage and damages. The ship’s figurehead, a beautiful woman, was missing an important piece. The emerald, the heart of the ship, was the cause of its magical ability. All water that the emerald touched floated, including the cluster of clouds that the ship sailed upon. Without it, the ship would never fly.

After assuring themselves that the crew would be fine, the odd pair turned in the direction of Emerald.
“The Emerald general store is out this way,” Sharon smiled, pointing towards the north. “The lovely ladies there should be able to help us find something to fix your wreck!”

“I can not even begin to thank you enough, honestly! You’ve been nothing but nice since I’ve landed here,” gushed Matthias, showing praise and thanks. The pair strolled with purpose through the somewhat busy town.

“To the left you should see the Emerald station, a heritage listed railway station since late 1992. It is quite the attraction around here. The beautiful arches, along with the station was re-built in 1900.” Sharon rambled on as she tried to distract Matthias from any emotions he was feeling. She had a tendency to try to fill any quiet spaces with the spoken word, currently to Matthias’ appreciation.

As they crossed a street, the shadows of a lane concealed the eyes of a wary beast. He often strutted along the streets, guarding his town. The bull, as he was, was rather mysterious - no one was quite certain as to when he came about - however, all accepted his presence. On this instance, unfortunately, the bull was considerably hostile towards ‘outsiders’ to the town, and decided that he had a particular dislike towards this new, young man.

“What’re we looking for at the shop? I’m guessing you need a lot?” Sharon inquired.

“I’m considering fabric to repair the sails, dowel and planks of wood, lots of rope. There is a repair kit on the ship that has some basic tools and small amounts of everything for the minor breaks but nothing for something of this
scale. However, the main issue is finding the emerald, otherwise she’ll never leave the ground.”

“They’ll have all of that in the general store, even the emeralds. After all, this town is called Emerald.” Something seemed off to Sharon, as if someone had moved everything to the left by a couple of centimetres. The feeling wasn’t intense, but it was still present. Determined to help Mattias, she put her suspicions in the back of her mind.

The new people, new smells, new adventures, the thrill of seeing something new awoke an unfound curiosity within Matthias – spending so much time with the same people on board The Good Ship Janice had limited his views. As he walked through the small, yet significant town, Matthias noticed the varying interactions between people that were occurring around him. Flashes of colourful feathers from birds and sprouts of native plants were scattered around the town.

The general store beamed like a glowing beacon over the hill and across the road, the worn screen door lightly banged on its hinges as they passed over the threshold. Emeralds filled the shelves, displaying all shapes and sizes, and designed into beautiful images. Up and down the street, the smell of freshly baked goods wafted through windows of houses and little bakeries, a nice little sign of what this town has to offer.

A thought crossed Matthias’ mind as something twinged deep within his heart. The smell was familiar, associated with his childhood and joy flushed over his body. Could he potentially give up trying to save his ship, the ship that has been his home since he could remember? Could he settle down in a place where the people were so nice to each other? Could he adapt his style of life to something so common to so many people? Would this change be something that would benefit him? Could he have it in him to abandon his ship’s crew? All these questions in the space of just a
moment passed through his ever so deep mind. Suppressing these thoughts, he decided to persist in his quest to fix the ship, after all, what would happen if someone found out about the Emerald gem?

The gentle tapping of the door against its hinges was like a gentle rhythmic beating, a welcome calming sound to the unsettled feelings within Matthias. Crashing your current home in a foreign setting can be very off-putting in the best of situations.

A lovely chorus greeted them from behind the counter. Sharon and Matthias both felt welcome in this decked out little store.

The old wooden floorboards creaked as they walked down each aisle, looking for anything that could be useful to them. Most of the hardware tools left the shelves as between them they collected bundles of items. The shelves of fabric became just one packet, the containers of nails became just a single container.

The duo turned, shocked to hear a shriek of alarm from the cashier. She had attempted to wash her hands, but the water defied gravity and began to rise to the ceiling.
Matthias looked up in wonder at the water starting to pool on the ceiling. Reaching up he touched the water, only to have it start to dribble down his pale finger. The store ladies looked around amazed as droplets began to build up over their heads.

“I believe I know where the power of The Good Ship, the emerald might be,” Matthias announced as he turned to face Shazza. “It has to be close to some section of this town’s water supply. Any ideas as to where it could be?”

Sharon was still staring in astonishment at the enchanted water as it flowed past the shelves of gleaming emeralds and out of the nearby window.

“Uh... the town’s reservoir, you know, the one you managed to damage with your terrible flying”, she said, still watching the rolling motions of the water as it began to indent the ceiling.

“We must leave this fine establishment before this water starts to do some serious damage”, Matthias said gently, as he attempted capture Sharon attention by pulling her towards the open screen door. Sharon turned around to face Matthias, he had not stopped tugging on her sleeve.

“Stop it. The reservoir is at the top of the hill, we can got there first”

“Well, let us make haste and get there quickly before any terrible damage can be done,” Matthias worryingly stated.

“Don’t get ya knickers in a knot mate, it’s just a bit of water”, Sharon said, nudging the gentleman towards the open door. “I think water floating on ceilings is pretty cool to be honest.”

“And you are entitled to your opinion, but wait until the water caves in the roof. You will think differently, especially if you are under it at the time,” Matthias replied very seriously.

“Well aren’t you an optimistic person.”
With a creak and a groan the Emerald Store gave a shudder.

“Okay, I’ll take your word for the whole doom and gloom about rising water. Let’s get outta here!” Sharon yelled as she ran towards the door.

Just as Sharon ran onto the hard concrete footpath, a metal water pipe bursted through the wooden floor of the Emerald Store. Matthias couldn’t follow her out. Several display containers shattered, sending glass everywhere and spraying water flooded the store. The store ladies screamed and dived below to avoid being soaked as water splashed all over the surrounding emeralds. Water began to slide up the walls and collected glass shards with emeralds as it went.

Matthias looked around desperately for an escape as the metal pipe rattled and shook, the shop was covered in debris. Matthias ran to the side window as a torrent of water bursted up through the floorboards. He leapt on the window sill in shock, but tripped. He fell clumsily out the window, re adjusted his monocle and dusted himself off. He hurried around the corner to see Sharon, who still stood outside the shop and gazed towards the rest of the town. Water had risen from several locations throughout the town.

“Doom and gloom. I get it now.” Sharon exclaimed. “The town’s reservoir is this way, follow me.”

“Wait for me!” Matthias cried out as Sharon took off. She ran at a pace he couldn’t keep up with.

“Come on Matthias, we’re sitting on the town’s water lines right here!” She yelled back at him.

Matthias immediately ran as the road cracked beneath him. Water leaked from buildings nearby. Sharon looked back down the hill while Matthias panted and puffed. She heard car engines as townspeople made their escape from the destruction around them. Sharon heard Matthias cry out behind her as a torrent of water ruptured through the ground next to him. Matthias lost his balance and fell. Water pumped onto the road and then
floated into the air and Matthias was in great danger of being pulled away.

“Hold on to something Matthias!” Sharon cried out and ran back down the hill.

“What do you want me to hold onto? Nothing, more nothing, oh wait I can hold onto myself great help that is!” Matthias yelled in panic. As Matthias was being pulled away by the running water, Sharon managed to latch onto his legs.

“Swim out!” Sharon screamed, as she was almost swept into the water.

“How does one ‘swim out’ as you say?” Matthias yelled back at her.

“Kick those long legs of yours, up and down mate, up and down, there we go!” Matthias toppled out of the vortex of rising water and knocked into Sharon. Matthias landed on top of her, away from the gushing water.

“Well that was close,” Sharon wheezed. Matthias rolled off her and onto the ground.

“The water was not close to me. I was in the water - not close - in.” Matthias stated. He was oblivious to the annoyed glare Sharon was giving him.

As they neared the top of the hill, a large amount of water had risen out of the reservoir and into the sky.

“Look at that big hole you made there.” Sharon said accusingly.

“That was a mistake on my behalf,” Matthias admitted shamefaced.

“Ya think mate.”

“I know it was my mistake.”

The pair started to climb the stairs to the roof of the reservoir. Sharon and Matthias made it to the roof and saw the gaping hole. The duo looked around and searched for the magical emerald.
“Matthias. It isn’t on top here.”

“Well then it may be under our very feet,” Matthias stated very matter of factly.

Sharon looked at the water rising out of the damaged reservoir and the back to Matthias.

“Good thing I can’t swim, it’s up to you to save this town”, Matthias said quietly.

“How do we even know it’s in there,” Sharon said defensively.

“Well if you have a look, maybe we will find out,” Matthias sighed. He looked through the rising water and into the darkness.

“It is in there!” Matthias cried out. “See the green glow that powers The Goodship Janice.”

“Yeah I see it mate calm down,” Sharon said as she looked for a way into the reservoir.

“We must make haste and recover the emerald before more destruction is wrought,” Matthias exclaimed.

“Yeah, hold your horses I’m getting there,” Sharon replied.

“I have no horses to hold, nor do I wish to hold a horse, but I do wish to hold my emerald again,” Matthias murmured to the utter disbelief of Sharon.

“Well I reckon I’m just going to have to dive in. I’ll use the rim of the hole to launch myself into the reservoir,” Sharon said to herself.

“Alrighty here we go,” Sharon whispered to herself as Matthias looked on.
Sharon dived into the murky rising water and was immediately frightened when she started to rise with the water. Shazza just managed to wrap her fingers around the edge of the hole and push herself down into the depths of the reservoir. As she neared the green glow of the emerald, the pull of the water seemed to become stronger and her lungs began to burn. Sharon realised that she couldn’t make it, that she would run out of air before she could make it back out, that her body would just float out along with all the other water. Sharon neared the emerald, she had to try, only to fall through the water and into a dry and breathable space. The emerald created a pocket of air as it forced all the water up and out the reservoir.

Sharon grabbed the emerald and prepared for the difficult trip back to the top, hopefully she won’t float away with the water.
Chapter 4
Sharon choked and gasped profusely as the uncomfortably warm water vacated her lungs. She rested her dark head of limp curls on the roof of the reservoir in exhaustion. She thrust the precious emerald into Matthias’ palm before allowing herself to fully collapse. Matthias wrapped his fingers around the life of his ship, grasped it tightly in his pale hands and touched the familiar grooves of the magical gem. He felt the sting of nostalgic tears linger as he remembered when his father first entrusted him with the family legacy. How they sailed over the velvety darkness in the watchful eye of the full moon. His father had taught him to sail, to use the iridescent lights of the sky to navigate. His father had entrusted him to continue the exploration of the earth and to document the history of humanity and the planet. Not to wreak havoc and destruction and influence history in unprecedented ways.

And as the sky rained down the ruins of Emerald’s pipe system, Matthias was abruptly awakened to a sense of beauty in the destruction of something so mundane. In the blazing Australian sun, the decimated pipelines glittered in metallic chunks like falling stars. The bodies of water, returning to the earth once again, projected vibrant colours of a fuzzy, opalescent rainbow. He could not tell where the sky started and the rainbow began. Matthias shifted his gaze to the townsfolk of Emerald, miniscule below him. He was surprised to discover that instead of sheer panic and confusion, they too had stopped to marvel.

For the first time, his brown eyes softened towards the human race. After all, didn’t his heart beat to the same rhythm? All this time he had spent in the clouds had enabled Matthias to detach himself from identifying as human. For a while, he had been unable to perform his duty, as looking down on humanity destroying themselves was too nauseating. He even questioned, ‘why on earth would he continue to document the history of a species so cruel and selfish, one that they will ultimately end in extinction?’ In truth he had been arrogant - he realised that now. There was so much more to humanity than its evil tendencies. The potential to create a world filled with remarkable good was so evident in Sharon, or Shazza as he had come to know her.

Matthias could only describe her as the contradiction to all his
expectations. She was so innocent - she trusted him so completely and for that, she lost consciousness and had begun to snore slightly. So he gently picked her up in his arms and carried her down the steps of the reservoir. As he walked down the grassy hill in the comfortable afternoon breeze, the mended ship came into view. The crew could be seen waving enthusiastically from the ship deck. Matthias felt something damp on his shoulder, realising she had begun drooling on his shoulder and quickly shook Sharon awake.

“What’s going on?” mumbled Sharon sleepily, stifling a yawn.

“It is time for me to return to The Good Ship Janice,” he replied smiling sadly at her.

“So soon?”

“Unfortunately, I cannot remain here, I have a duty to perform. However, before I depart I must request a favour of you, Shazza.”

“And what might that be?”

“Will you do me the honour of... returning my family heirloom to Janice’s crown?”

“Oh... okay...”

Disappointed yet humbled, Sharon followed Matthias onto the ship deck, to the furthermost point of the bow. There, she held the delicate gem with care, reached down and gently fitted the emerald into the bare slot in the crown. Janice glowed with life as bright green light flowed through the veins of the ship, the lines in the wood.

“So... guess this is goodbye, mate,” Sharon sighed, looking down at the deck.

“I promise to come visit, I swear...” Matthias hesitated, leaned forward, and planted a small kiss on her cheek.
Sharon blushed and punched him in the arm. “See you ‘round, mate.”

And as Matthias watched Sharon return to the earth below, he realised that humankind is not the epitome of evil, but has the overwhelming potential to accomplish a great deal of good.
“We must make haste and recover the emerald before more destruction is wrought”, Matthias exclaimed.

“Yeah hold your horses I’m getting there”, Shazza replied

“I have no horses to hold, nor any wish to hold a horse, but I do wish to hold the emerald again”, Matthias murmured to the utter disbelief of Shazza.

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Team Catharsis, 2017

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