

The Storm

By midnight the strengthening wind had whipped the deepening swell into a fury of lathered waves. They taunted the Salima, buffeting her from port to starboard, stern to prow; lifting her effortlessly onto a crest then abandoning her to teeter precariously before sending her plummeting into the depths of the trough. Relentless in their onslaught, they reared up before smashing down, engulfing the deck and frothing through the rusted iron railings, spilling over the sides to regroup. The fishing vessel shuddered and groaned at the continual pounding. Forked lightning crackled and fizzed, blinding as it split the sky, revealing snatches of horizontal rain and creating thunderous explosions painful to the ears.

The night's storm clouds, now spent, drifted towards the west as skeins of copper-tinted cirrus woke and stretched across the lightening sky. After a week at sea and now just a day from home, the Salima chugged through the grey sea with a gentle sway, bailing spluttering spumes of water behind her. The catch had been good and the hold was full of fish, frozen and ready for the markets. Mackie let out the nets for the last time. Gulls immediately appeared, circling the boat and screeching in anticipation of scraps from another plentiful haul. Below deck, heavy footsteps mingled with muffled shouts, curses and clattering from the rest of the crew as they cleared up. Breakfast would be late this morning.

Valerie Griffin February 2021/Nets/Lyme Regis Museum at Home