

EFFECTS

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ERICKA BECKMAN THE TURN-ABOUT



Sailors are reclining in the dark lower bunks of a ship at sea. It is twilight. Smoke hovers over the room. Tommy tells a story to a crew-mate.

"There was this amusement park that I used to go to when I was a kid. One day it stormed like you wouldn't believe. We were having this grade school picnic or something. I got lost. It was starting to rain and I thought I better get back to the bus quick and I didn't know where anyone was. I couldn't locate a face I knew in the crowd so I rode this ferris wheel just to take a look around and all I could see was this huge storm coming in off the sea. It was the first time I was ever on a ferris wheel. There I was going up over the cliff by the sea. I felt like I was flying like Peter Pan, higher and higher—flying away! Then, when I came around to the bottom, to the fairgrounds again, I thought 'I got something to do.' I forgot for a moment that I was lost. Then I saw my group leader and—Bango—just like that, I went up over again."

Some sailors huddle by the door keeping post. One man starts to tap his spoon against the floor. Others join in. Eyes open. An alarm goes off on the upper deck. Tommy rises. Sailors are running. "The sea's coming in." "The sea's up from behind." "Stop the overflow." Tommy is witnessing a sea storm and must work with others to hold back the sea from over-taking the ship. His job's in the control room. Dials and functions light up and strobe. The storm is broadside and the automated pace is accelerated.

"Hands on buttons.
Hands on wheels.
I've got to keep this
Even-keel.
I've got to turn this thing around."

The tidal wave hits the fairgrounds. Children are scattering. The wave bursts through the gates of the 'Turn-About.' He climbs out of his seat and onto the spokes of the wheel. He pulls himself toward the center shaft. With all his might he turns the ferris wheel in the opposite direction. The seats become buckets, emptying the water out of the flooded fairgrounds, over the cliff and into the sea.

Tommy sees the whole mechanical process failing. He lets go of a wheel, sending it spinning in the opposite direction. He throws himself overboard and wakes up alone in the mighty sea, rowing in a circle on a small craft. Each paddling oar soothes the sea, each stroke ceases the storm.



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Ericka Beckman: Untitled, photographs, 1983.