

*From Mintah, slave at the ship Zong in Fred D'Aguiar's novel Feeding the ghosts,
to Kelsal, first mate of the Zong, who followed the order to have hundreds of living slaves killed by
throwing them overboard.*

To Kelsal. Because You Can.

by Marie Bartning

Down here we're rotting in our grave,
In hell there's no such thing as brave.
Suffering, moaning, and last breath.
There is no honourable death.
Fighting! Fighting! Never fed.
Prepare for me my death sea bed.

You kill us.
Because you can.

You lure the most desperate into your bed
And women sell their souls for bread.
In lust you lick the bony skin,
In the name of your God, you're raping them.

Because you can.

You say we doom this ship to wreck
For our skins are way too black.
But the only thing here being dark
Is your shameful, loveless heart.
And the only thing that has sunk
Is your small mind. Whiskey-drunk.

Below your feet, way down under,
We suddenly hear the rolling thunder.
O sweet! O sweet, fresh melody!
The rain has come for remedy!
Drops of hope. Kelsal, let us out!
Open the doors, so we can open our mouths.

We're not half dead -as you claim.
We're half alive!
So I will ask the waters that I dive
to haunt you. In your sailor's sleep.
For you to see. For you to weep.
I don't want revenge, my son,
But you shall know what you have done.
And you should not forget.
And one day
-Regret.

In my restless dreams you
Finally ask me to forgive.

But then I can't.
'Cause I. Don't. Live.

- Is there a Kelsal in all of us?
Who needs to unlearn racism? And is Germany a ship where
we throw people overboard which are seeking shelter?
Is Germany a Zong where we don't let drowning people in
because we think that, if we do, our ship might sink?
Will these people die in the waters around Germany?
"I know! We can't! They are too many! Our ship might sink!"

Isn't there a Kelsal in every single one of us?
Prove me wrong when I say
That there is a Kelsal
In You.