

Title: The Wreck of the Henrietta Marie

Prompt: Cues. "I had a dream last night" in 40 minutes.

Notes/Warnings: Historical fiction, after a fashion. The Henrietta Marie was a slave ship that crashed off the coast of Key West after delivering a batch of Africans into slavery. So if blood and oppression squick you, don't click.

Each night he dreams of clay and blood. In his dreams, he tastes iron and copper, feels his limbs heavy and cramped and the splintery press of phantom wooden slats. He licks his lips and tastes the salt spray that leaked in and drenched them, that doused open wounds and kept time in flashes of agony. Each night he dreams and tastes metal and clay and salt. Each night he dreams of earthiness in his mouth.

In daylight, he stares out over land that's brown and white, tastes dust and clay in his mouth while he breathes in deep. He shakes and stretches out his arms and thanks God above that he has that limited area to move in. A larger cage than the wooden coffin that claimed so many between home and here. In daylight, he tastes the clay of his dream, the blood of his dream. He keeps his head down and wonders whether to thank God or curse him for giving him another day.

In daylight, he feels the sting of whips, the prick of thorns, and tastes copper on his tongue. The sun beats down overhead, blinding him with the bright and the heat. Blue violet spots dance before his eyes until he cannot tell if he's touching anything. His fingertips are ragged and numb, his arms ache with repetitive strain. He keeps his head down and tries not to hope for a new day in a land that cannot be called home anymore.

When his wife has a baby, he names the stillborn child Henrietta Marie. So at least she'll have a history. So that she'll always be the one that brought him here. And he tastes it in his dreams, her copper blood, her clay covered corpse, the iron shackles that cannot hold her to this earth.