



High Impact Factor 8.1458 ISSN 

Vol. 9, No. 1

   **Double-blind
peer reviewed**

CLRI Feb 2022

  

  **Referred Journal**
   **& More**


Page 174-185

Hut

Nigel F Ford

There are chinks of light from splits in the structure. Eventually, in time, these will help her see. At the moment she is asleep. Outside there is a convergence of noises. Wind shrieks. Something clatters. Water clucks somewhere.

Inside her wooden womb the woman turns. She arrived last night, exhausted, tear blown, resigned. Not thrown out of anywhere. Not having left anywhere. Only and singly arrived.

There had been a revelation. Not an altercation. Her eyes had been opened wide. She had not liked what she had seen.

So she fled and ended up here, in this deep, enduring darkness.

O! She wakes and sits up abruptly. Rubbed her eyes with her fists, straightened her spine and stretched upwards into the black air.

She becomes conscious of an earthbound smell. Is it her? (she sniffs her armpits) or is it here? (she looks about, paddles the darkness with her hands).

Gradually the structure of boards appears. Insipiently, glints off the floor, tiny pricks, rise into view.

This place does not look endearing from what I can see, she thinks, I must do something about it immediately. Someone might visit. I need spotlessness. Head nodding this way and that. Good, she thinks. Weathered wood. Sand floor. Seems clean. Practical. A shutter – that’s a relief.

She opens it. The light flows in. A thrush flies out chattering. Makes her start and blush.

There is a table. A chair. A primus. A plate. A glass. A mug, A knife, spoon and fork kit. All hanging on the wall above the sink. No tap. There wouldn’t be, would there. There are no ablutive amenities.

She becomes conscious of the noise. Swelling and brushing. She opens the door, scraping, pushing the sand away from its foot. A struggle. It suddenly swings wide. The sea! The sun hangs cloudily in the East.

She walks out, hands on hips. Deserted.

She turns her steps around the building. Too early for human ructions. She realises there is urgency. As the sun rises, people will arrive. It is high season.

They will squeal to a halt in their motor cars and motor bicycles next door and outside all other doors. Unloading their cargoes of infants, dogs, budgerigars and provisions. She observes a line of huts similar to the one to which she seems to have been allotted, stretching as far as she can see, to the East, and another, as far as she can see, to the

West. She focuses here gaze. All of them seem to be painted, some in stripes, some in plain colours, some in more adventurous designs.

Turns, looks at hers, inspects it. Walks around it. An old upturned boat. Nothing else. Her hut is not painted. Never has been by the look of its weathered and pristine boards. She stands, arms and legs akimbo in the sand, turns her head up to the sky and bellows “Mine is not!”

The spirit of individuality converges here. It is her apex. It is her strength. She will repel the numerant onslaught of barking dogs, weeping children, squabbling adults and sticky bits of paper flying everywhere, while the tiny turds of fag ends lie in the sand.

She thinks, think taciturn, I shall be saved!

Arterial notion flows. Tar it like the wooden boats of old. Like the one, once beautiful, still beautiful, now old and ragged, blind and helpless turned upside down beside the hut, forgotten, neglected, but still full of grace, she had subconsciously noted, when she had noticed it, in fact sat her bum on it nicely warm comforting roundness, and thought a bit about stuff, so did it again, sat on it, fisted her chin, thought about stuff, such as restraint. Restraint, she realises, shall be needed. As an amateur one should exercise due care, even trembling fear, but not so much as to deter the confidence of the brush, not so much indeed as to take the first stroke of the brush, or else nothing could be done.

‘Needs a lick of paint.’ A voice. She turns. A tattered man in tattered clothes, watchful eyes awash with age.

‘Need some help,’ said the man. ‘My name is Baptist. I work cheap.’

‘As far as I know,’ she said. ‘I have nothing to pay you with besides my body and that would be too expensive.’

‘Hah! Don’t fancy me then? Don’t blame you. I’m the only one who fancies me these days. I’ll help you for nothing. You can pay me in company. I’m a bit of a goer on. You might find me a bore, but I

know how to smarten up a beach hut. And a boat come to that.’ Baptist stuck a finger at the boat. ‘What’s your name?’

‘Woman.’

‘Woman? Has a good ring to it. Woman. I don’t mind addressing you as Woman. Do you woo men? Hah Hah. Excuse me. If necessary. Introductions to other persons and such. Mostly we would get by on You and I anyway.’

‘Are you sure?’

‘I’m sure.’

‘I’d be most grateful.’

‘Be careful though, don’t go spending willy-nilly, I know what you’re like, you people, shopping and such.’

‘I’m not like that.’

‘The proof of the pudding is in the eating. We’ll see. We need to be determined to exteriorize your project. Nothing else. When it’s done, I’m gone. Agreed? I like to think I’m generally useful. Gives me a meaning in life. It’s what I do.’

‘You do indeed go on! We need tar, buckets and brushes.’

‘I know where I can get some. And it won’t be stealing will it. ‘They’ve been hanging about so long they might not be of any use. So I shall go and rescue them. Substances, brushes and all.’

‘Are you sure?’

‘It would be a strange coincidence if they were missed now, after all this time.’

‘You are certain you will not be making incursions into the property of another?’

‘Now who’s going on! No. I don’t know. How could I? Take a chance, a gamble, see what happens.’

*

It was done. Baptist crouches in the doorway and looks out down the gentle slope of the pebbled beach to the pastel green waves, hears the stubborn pound of water, the throb and rustle of the stones, white question marks dart and swing, float and flutter in the sky.

One spirals down, drops softly in front of Baptist.

‘What happened?’ she asked. ‘What on earth...is it injured? Poor thing.’

‘Dead,’ Baptist said, poking the soft limp body. ‘Old age. Gets everything in the end.’

‘How sad,’ Woman said. ‘Such a beautiful creature. Gone.’

‘Not gone,’ Baptist said. ‘Not at all. Finished one life, starts another. Life never dies.’

‘That’s nice,’ Woman said. ‘Elegiac. Very elegant. I like that.’

‘Don’t expect too much,’ Baptist said. ‘Nothing you can do about it.’

‘You two make a touching tableau,’ Woman said. ‘All these hoardings about. You and the gull make a nice change.’

‘Exact,’ Baptist said. ‘Same as nice. Caught sight by only you though. No-one else. Your special hoarding of the day. Keep it close to your heart.’

‘Don’t flirt with me Baptist. No hope here. Watch your step.’

‘Wouldn’t dream of it,’ Baptist said, rising, dead gull in hand, strolled to the public waste bin, dropped it in. Turned and smiled at Woman. ‘All done. I’m your man.’

‘Cheeky sod,’ Woman smiled.

‘You’ve only got one chair,’ Baptist pointed at the single set-up of chair and table. ‘You need another in case you have a visitor.’

‘We can sit on the sand floor. Throw away the chair. And the table. Make more room.’

‘Not everyone does yoga,’ Baptist reproved. ‘Doesn’t hurt to be hospitable.’

*

It is in the vestiges of dawn that two lotuses, Woman and Baptist, sit and pray to life without God or King, Queen or any other whatnot. Two human loti, gaze without a blink. No shutter, sight their arrowed looks across the still morning waves to the lilac hues of horizon. The evermore and everbeen and everwhat to come. They wait for patience and a soothe of wisdom to ride them smoothly through the day to come.

‘I spy with my little eye,’ Baptist pointed a single finger at the sky. ‘A menace to the East.’

‘And one to the West,’ Woman pointed a single finger too, at the sky.

‘We shall not be disturbed,’ Baptist said.

‘But we shall,’ Woman said. ‘I am the pessimist...’ she paused.

‘And I am the optimist,’ Baptist complemented. ‘We shall assume the blithe air of a complacent island and say no more about encroaching peril.’

‘We shall greet them in our own vicarious enjoyments,’ Woman said.

‘Bound to be a hoot,’ agreed Baptist. ‘We might learn something about each other.’

‘I do hope not,’ Woman said, and closed her eyes, ready for the first blast of intrusion.

*

The two figures tramped up along the wet sand in their bare feet and converged.

‘Morning,’ said One.

‘Morning,’ Said Other.

‘What are they doing?’ asked One.

‘Search me,’ replied Other.

‘It’s not allowed,’ One stated.

‘Indeed not,’ Other agreed.

One and Other sat as one, backs to the errant beach hut and the errant couple and watched the sea, now violet in the particular time of day.

‘It’s about time,’ One said.

‘Suppose so,’ Other said. ‘Peaceful though.’

‘Let’s get it over with,’ One said.

‘Might as well,’ Other said. ‘No point in putting it off.’

‘Only make matters worse,’ One said.

They rose and turned to make their shuffling march up over the crunch of pebbles.

*

‘Here they come,’ Woman said.

‘Yup,’ agreed Baptist. ‘Tether it!’

‘What?’ Woman asked. ‘How do you...’

‘Tether it,’ Baptist said. ‘Keep it shut. Leave it to me.’

‘O!’

‘Morning,’ said Baptist.

‘Morning,’ said One.

‘Morning,’ said Other.

‘Nice day for it,’ Baptist said.

‘Yes,’ said One.

‘It is,’ said Other.

One and Other sat down carefully upon the sand slightly forward of the feet of Woman and Baptist and carefully watched the violet sea.

‘Storm coming,’ said One.

‘Inevitably,’ said Other. ‘Not today though.’

‘No. Not today,’ One agreed. ‘Not anytime soon, I’d say.’

‘Definitely at some time,’ Other said.

‘Inevitably,’ One said.

‘All gone,’ Other said. ‘Swept away. Poof! Just like that.’

‘No question.’ One said.

The day dropped into silence.

I can’t stand this silence, thought Woman. This build-up of tension. Utter nonsense it is! What’s the purpose? I feel I am at their mercy. We are at their mercy. I need to make an outlay in order to neutralise the situation and to stop any animosity.

‘I’m going to make some tea,’ Woman rose. ‘Ugh,’ she grunted at the effort of rising. ‘Would you like some?’

The sounds of tea being made can be distinctly heard and the trio seated outside listened to this along with the other sounds. The occasional chink of a spoon on cup and the gurgle of water from a bottle lent a random punctuation to this conversation of sounds, the fluctuations of waves, the accounting of galleries, the sucking of pebbles. The three sat perfectly still while Woman was busy, in their perfect attention to the tune of the silence that legislated their ever revolving panorama.

‘Some place,’ Baptist nodded to self. ‘Hard to beat.’

‘Good place for high-rises,’ One nodded in self-agreement, ‘shouldn’t be mean. Give others the chance to enjoy it.’

‘Mustn’t be mean in our job,’ Other said. ‘We’re paid to be generous and unselfish.’

‘Doesn’t work of course,’ One snorted suddenly and wiped her nose with the back of her hand.

‘Of course not,’ agreed Other. ‘However, we need to be seen by our parishioners as to mean well on their behalf.’

‘Conundrum,’ Baptist said. ‘Ruining it for all is better than preserving it for a few.’

‘Tea, chaps,’ Woman cheerful behind them.

‘Perhaps tea will help,’ One said.

‘Doubt it,’ Other said.

‘Could try to find a decent mason,’ One suggested indistinctly, mouth on lip of tea cup.

‘Few and far between,’ Other grunted.

‘No wonder,’ One swallowed and gazed up wearing a beatific expression at the heavens above. ‘So misunderstood and so not appreciated for their worth. Masons.’

‘Umm,’ Other nodded emphatically. ‘Barely what you might call a living wage.’

‘Woeful,’ One nodded in agreement. ‘Untenable situation. Plastic high-rises emerging from huge 3D printers.’

‘A nightmare,’ concurred Other. ‘What would our forbears have thought. What indeed, will our offspring think.’

‘High season for architects,’ One observed.

‘You’re spouting rubbish,’ Woman declared, nodding emphatically, ‘absolute rubbish.’

‘Absolutely,’ Other agreed.

‘We always do,’ One nodded sympathetically at Woman. ‘Part of the job.’

‘Would have been nice to find a good mason though,’ Other sounded rueful. ‘Make something beautiful.’

‘Offspring could say “Our forebears were responsible for that. What a good job they did!”’ remarked One.

‘It would be nice to be well thought of in the ever-after,’ Other nodded.

‘Tosh!’ exclaimed Woman. ‘Utter rubbish!’

‘O I don’t know,’ Baptist sounded thoughtful. ‘There could be something in it.’

‘This is a hut on the beach.’ Woman stamped a foot softly in the sand. ‘Not a wannabe skyscraper. Typical sapient rubbish! Totally irresponsible!’

‘What would you suggest?’ Other asked.

One leaned around Other and stared at Baptist and Woman. ‘Yes. What would you suggest? Do you have an alternative? If so, let’s hear it.’

‘Yes,’ Other said, ‘let’s hear it.’

‘I suggest,’ Baptiste said, ‘we strengthen the hut in case of bad weather to come.’

‘And that we repair that boat!’ exclaimed Woman, ‘it’s in a dreadful state.’

‘We could have got rich,’ One sounded rueful.

‘O well,’ Other’s head dipped in depression, ‘we can’t say we didn’t try.’

‘You’ll need to paint it up though,’ One suddenly sounded perky.

‘Right!’ exclaimed Other. ‘You need to blend in with the others. Can’t have it sticking out so blatantly like that. Just a piece of the neutral character of the landscape.’

‘We’ll be along again soon,’ One said, ‘to inspect.’

‘We will send you the name of an approved supplier,’ Other nodded. ‘Red, white and blue is always a sure thing, by the way.’

‘A very reliable company,’ One rose and took Other by the hand. ‘Don’t use any other.’

‘We’ll be off now,’ Other said, ‘but we’ll be back, won’t we One?’

‘Definitely. You make sure you comply. Or else!’ One nodded.

‘Absolutely,’ Other pouted. ‘Or else!’

Woman and Baptist sat in silence and watched One and Other recede along the beach.

‘What did they mean,’ Woman asked, ‘”Or else”?’

Baptist did not reply.

They sat in silence for a passing of time, looking at the sea, the beach, the sky and back again.

‘A shindig is when you dig your feet into the sand up to your shins and hop about. Either in unwarranted glee or to celebrate an occasion,’ Baptist said studiously.

‘Where did you divine that?’ Woman asked.

‘From the Internet,’ Baptist held up a mobile telephone. The screen glinted and sparkled in the shorebound light.

‘Pretty phone,’ Woman said. ‘Expensive. How did you afford that?’

‘Wage-structures fluctuated upwards across the board,’ Baptist said. ‘Fortunately, the price of mobile telephones remained stagnant. Even dipped in some areas. So I took advantage.’

‘Lucky you.’ Woman turned head to look down the stretch of empty beach, then back again the other way. ‘Nothing.’

‘The door jamb needs seeing to,’ Baptist said.

‘Most of the joinery needs seeing to,’ Woman nodded. ‘There’s a good deal missing.’

‘The art of doing nothing should never be spurned,’ Baptist said.

Woman rose and entered the hut, closing the door behind her with a bang.

‘The floor could be carpeted with cyclamen flowers,’ Baptist shouted, turning to address the blank face of the hut door. Nothing. No response.

Baptist shrugged, swivelled back and gazed with starry eyed reverence at the violet sea. ‘They would with time sink into the sand and form a wonderfully scented carpet,’ Baptist murmured.

Nigel Ford

Nigel Ford works as a writer, visual artist, dramatist, journalist, copywriter and translator. He is English and lives in Sweden. Recent publications include short stories in *The Fortnightly Review* (UK) and poems in *Orbis* (UK).

An advertisement for Amazon Prime. It features a light blue background. In the top left, a white starburst shape contains the text "PRIME AT ₹ 999 PER YEAR*". In the top center, the "amazon prime" logo is displayed on a dark blue rectangular background. Below the logo, three white boxes with blue borders contain the text "Original Shows", "1-day delivery*", and "Ad-free Music". At the bottom center, a yellow button with a black border says "Join now". In the bottom right corner, the text "*T&C Apply" is visible.

PRIME AT
₹ 999
PER YEAR*

amazon prime

Original Shows 1-day delivery* Ad-free Music

Join now

*T&C Apply

Get Your Book Reviewed

If you have got any book published and are looking for a book review, contact us. We provide book review writing service for a fee. We (1) write book review (2) publish review in CLRI (3) conduct an interview with the author (4) publish interview in CLRI. [Know more here.](#)

Authors & Books

We publish book releases, Press Release about books and authors, book reviews, blurbs, author interviews, and any news related to authors and books for free. We welcomes authors, publishers, and literary agents to send their press releases. Visit our website <https://page.co/Vw17Q>.