



## ON WATCH

He stands behind a wheel,  
thick as a mans wrist,  
ornately spoked and polished,  
its diameter,  
half his height,  
which he fondly strokes,  
as he gazes,  
upon a horizon,  
red,  
as in anger,  
yet,  
knows,  
this is not the case,  
and smiles,

His beard speckled,  
with slivers of gray,  
hide a face strengthened,  
by wind and sea,  
weathered beyond his years,  
accenting eyes,  
dark,  
deep as an abyss,  
bear witness to the years of hardship,  
his teeth clamp upon,  
the stem of a pipe,  
broken to perfection,  
one of his few pleasures,  
in this life





His clothes,  
unmistakable,  
upon his shoulder,  
two chevrons,  
under an eagle,  
identify him,  
as a man,  
of some esteem

This late night,  
he commands this ship,  
upon the sea,  
as the deck below his feet,  
creaks softly,  
responding to the pitch,  
of gently lapping waves,  
reassuring men below,  
all is well

Gulls screeching their displeasure,  
circle above the crows nest,  
at the occupation,  
of their intended perch,  
their appearance,  
a welcome reminder,  
just out of sight,  
lies a land,  
young and rich,  
in resource and history,  
a land he calls home,  
porpoise leaping in play,  
in the wake of the ships bow,  
as if to guide this ship home,  
provide momentary amusement,  
while sharks aft of the ship,  
maintain their silent watch,  
awaiting an evening meal

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As he stands behind his wheel,  
he takes in all of this,  
knows all is well and good,  
in the morn,  
they dock,  
once again,  
on dry land,  
until then,  
he maintains his vigilance,  
never faltering in his duty,  
to protect and defend,  
as he stands at his wheel,  
he removes his beret,  
reaches to scratch,  
a head void of hair,  
then adjusts his beret,  
until it sets just right,  
for all who can see,  
to read,  
U.S. Navy,  
with a draw on his pipe,  
America's guardian,  
remains on watch tonight

Mac McGovern, HMC, USN (Retired)  
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