

ii. The Friendly Waves.

(Jonah 1:1-3.)

*I hear you calling me
to cry out in your name,
so I take leave of Israel,
but not for Nineveh, that place of shame
and smiling villainy.*

*I cross the friendly waves to dwell
in some safe and distant land,
where I will block my ears
from your regrettable command,
and in the lonely passing years
I will curse the Ninevite.
My prayer will come before you every night.*

*I call down melting heat
to torch their flaxen hair
and stain their shirts with blood
and make their marching feet
shrivel in mid-air.*

*May their flesh turn into slime –
like some half-formed creature-hood
ripped out before its time.*

*If I stand among the towering heights
and mindless luxury
and wild excess
and warn those Ninevites,
that you have full measurement
of all their wickedness,
will you guarantee
swift and painful punishment?*

*I fear you may relent
and foolishly destroy
the only comfort of my small
and conquered race – the sweet joy
of proudly guarded hate.*

*For the sake of Israel,
I make this plea
from across the soothing swell
of the placid sea:
loathing needs the hope, the likelihood
of gnashing teeth and dripping blood.*