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Food and Lumber

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Paul J. Casella

Food and Lumber

Where were *you* after the flood?
I searched the entire hold.
The mold was tight-lipped.
The barnacles were stubborn.
You have good friends
in single-celled organisms.
There was a forest down there:
your palm prints on the vines,
beetles with your face drawn on their backs,
cobwebs that turned to water when touched,
puddles turning to dust,
the damp wood evaporating,
wooden pegs twisting themselves out of their holes,
the ribs of the ship exhaling,
cages and cabinets, like alveoli
of a lung that will collapse,
the keel growing a tail
made of sludge and warm water,
cider fermenting in wooden barrels,
limes, lemon peels,
a colony of stone crabs
crawling over each other
in a mound by the anchor,
the black grease abandoning the chain,
the jealous scum watching

from the edges of the portholes,
a rope made of hemp
uncoiling,
spider mites collecting seed husks
and rat hairs for their nests,
a slow viscous film
forming on the handles
of trunks and doors,
your yellow sea slicker
on its hook by the stairs
like a ghost on a diet
it sways against the sway
of the ship.