

## ON THE WAY TO SINGAPORE

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*Eric Pankey*

*Chekhov: October, 1890*

This kind of fear is not new to me.  
One night on the island trip, I woke  
to a breeze of dust and mosquitoes.  
The moon, liquid and turquoise, reflecting  
on the surface of Lake Baikal,  
lit the tall grass along the paths  
the reindeer sleighs cut into the woods.  
I had heard such paths into the forest  
when overgrown at the end of spring  
might lead to an illegal still  
or the encampment of escaped convicts.  
I searched for a long while in my bag  
for a pocket-knife I swore I had packed  
until I was tired again and slept.  
Tonight it is easy to imagine  
how dark the sea gets beneath the ship  
and how carefully a weight might drift  
to the soft silt and sediment.  
I have to use a handkerchief  
all the time now; my cough has begun.  
In the evenings, I feel feverish.  
We have buried two bodies at sea.  
When you see a corpse sewn in canvas,  
hurtled with a slow somersault  
into the water you remember just how deep  
the water grows beneath the ship,  
you begin to feel afraid,  
and you get the idea that you too  
will die and be thrown into the sea.