

What he was seeing

Our father asked us – told us how – to wake him
if, asleep in a chair, he started dreaming
(the stifled moans, the twitching): we were to shake
his shoulder, firmly. Did we ask what he
was seeing when he shot to his feet, ablaze,
shouting *What—? What—? Bloody Hell!* and staring
as if at an enemy? Then he'd rub his face...
It was scary: tempting to leave him – where?

A force eight gale, December night: the *Scharnhorst*
is sunk, white glare of star shell quenched, the sea
black, and voices – voices call from the water
but his ship is turning, ordered away...

Maybe.

In *The Plough* beer-garden, white-haired in the sun,
he'll rescue wasps from dregs, save everyone.

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