

Dawn, Sunset and the Colours of the Earth
by Michael F. Flynn

A native and resident of Easton, Pennsylvania, and the grandfather of “three incredibly cute and talented children,” Michael Flynn makes his living as a management consultant in statistical methods and quality management. He is the author of the Firestar series and, most recently, the critically well-received novel, The Wreck of the River of Stars. His short fiction has appeared in Analog, Asimov’s, F&SF, and elsewhere. Mike has been a Hugo nominee four times and won the Sturgeon prize for his Asimov’s story, “House of Dreams” (October/ November 1997). His next novel, Eifelheim, will be released from Tor in October. In his first story for us in nine years, Mike masterfully explores the after effects of a disaster that seems to swallow up the . . .

At six-thirty of an early fall morning, when the sun was just lighting the evergreens and new snow glistened atop Ranier, Motor Vessel *Hyak* left Pier 52 in Seattle, bound for Bremerton. A Washington State Ferry of the Super Class, longer than a football field, she grossed 2700 tons dead weight and drew eighteen and a half feet. She cast off with nearly a thousand souls aboard and motored into a fog in the center of Elliott Bay.

None of them were ever seen again.

Chino Mendez

People say at first what business has a poor fisherman to speak of Jesus? I have no education, no clever words. I have nothing but the high school and many years of chasing the tuna. But then I thought: what better thing for a preacher than to start as a fisherman? There is precedent, no?

I will give my witness as I saw it, so you may believe with me.

Understand that I was a sinner before. This is important. I drank and I gambled and I had women. Oh, yes. Perhaps you do not think so to look at me, but women find me attractive. I have cut men in fights. Perhaps I killed a man in Miami, but this I do not know for sure.

I tell you this because you must understand what I was, so that you may understand what I am, and so understand what I say. If one as lost as me can be found, there is hope for all.

I was christened Ipolito, but my friends have always called me Chino, because of my eyes. Oh, yes, there were many Chinese brought to Cooba years ago and their blood runs in me. I have been a fisherman all my life, even before I fled Cooba. I fished the Gulf, and then the Keys, and then I came here to these strange, cold waters. *Capitan* Norris give me a place on his *Esmeralda* and he teach me the waters of the Sound and there were many very hard years, but never did I complain. Well, perhaps a little.

That morning we cast off and took our bearing on Duwamish Head. The dawn was behind us and the air shimmer like the rainbow. The horizon glowed red; the sky above me, blue; and all the colors ranged between. Oh, the salt tang of the sea! Oh, the cries of the gulls! They swoop in a great circle around the bay. Around and around. I look back now and I see how clear were all my senses that day.

We hear the horn of the ferry as she left the pier and for a time our paths run side by side, the great ferry and the humble fishing boat, but the *capitan* saw a fog is risen in the bay, so he turn the wheel a little to avoid it. The ferry, yes, had the radar and the global positioning, and so she sailed into the fog, her horn booming. I hear the churn of her engines as she pass us, and I see the people who lined the railing. Some were reading of the newspapers. Some were watching the scenery. Some were talking to each other. There was one—a young girl near the quarter rail—who saw me watching. She was, I think, twelve. She smile and wave to me and I wave back and the *capitan* saw, and our boat's whistle shrieked and the little girl, she clapped in delight.

But the *capitan* was fight the wheel. There was a strong current where there been no current before. I had the mad fancy that our boat sat . . . somehow . . . on the lip of a waterfall. We struggled like salmon against it as it pull us into the fog, toward the ferry.

A collision with such a ship would destroy us, so Ngyuen and me—he is the other deckhand—we throw the bumpers over the side and stand by with the fending poles. When I look up again at the deck of the ferry, I see the little girl bathed in a golden-red light, such as one sees at dawn. The light came from out of the fog, you understand, and what sun has ever dawned in the west? It seem like all the ferry was aglow and I hear a great shout from on board. The foghorn was take on a sound like a train racing away. The little girl turn and face into the fog and her mouth drop open. Oh, it was a look of such delight! And she raise her hands to her face, and then the fog shrouded her, too, and everything—boat, foghorn, girl—vanished into silence.

