

A fluttering heartbeat is one of the first signs of life. The Naval shipyard is full of brand new ships getting closer to that flutter every day. They are put together slowly, panels of metal being raised and welded. Reinforced bolt by pain-staking bolt, all the while awaiting their crew; the crew that will spark life throughout the great shipyard.

The day has come, and outside, rows of sailors are dressed in their best Blues, standing at attention, eager to get to work. The Captain is making his speech, and finishes with the official orders to come aboard. One by one, each immaculate sailor starts toward the deck.

As soon as the first person steps onto the ship, it becomes a living, breathing creature. The heartbeat grows stronger with each sailor that climbs aboard. All have a different job for maintaining and performing maintenance on the insides, like the white blood cells of a human. From that first step on deck the ship's heartbeat never stops. There will always be someone on Watch, always someone guiding the ship everyday and every night.

The ship's life force is strong, gaining its own personality, complete with dents, dings, and barnacles. Every ship will see amazing things during its adventures at sea. Dolphins will ride its waves and whales will surface outside the hull. On clear nights, far away from land, the stars shine like glitter and the moonlight bounces off of the deck and reflects in the eyes of each sailor on Watch.

After years of loyal service the ocean city begins to break down as it comes time for the decommissioning. The crew moves and works among the decks like blood being pumped by a heart as the ship takes its final trip at sea toward the shipyard.

Upon arrival, the line is thrown over the side to moor the grey structure to the dock. Again, all the sailors dress in their best and the crew departs for good. Hundreds of family, friends, and military members gather to watch and pay tribute as the speeches are made and the crew disembarks.

Once this begins, the steady heartbeat fades slowly with every step. Weaker and weaker, the ship starts to die, all systems shut down as the mechanic beast draws its last breath. When the ceremony is complete, the sailors will leave the empty body behind to be lifted out of its water home and torn apart so that a new ship can draw breath, much like an organ donor passing along their pieces so others can be healthy.

A ship is given life by those who built it and lived inside its hull. It begins and ends in the shipyard, every piece constructed and deconstructed with care. This macabre, yet celebratory, process takes hours, until the last person leaves to join the ranks. All the little cells line up in formation outside the ship and watch it fade into oblivion.