

Reasons to Love the Sea

Ellery Akers

Because it has no core.
Because sometimes it's all dark cramp and Sargasso.
Because it's sting ray and swordfish and blades.
Because sea lions sigh in the dark and water sprinkles at the end of their whiskers.
Because in a single mile of silt, millions of herring pulse and dart.
Because a cormorant dives and brings up a herring in his bill and shakes it and shakes it.
Because a sea lion lazily sticks a flipper out of the water to cool off.
Because it reflects the pale bellies of boats.
Because shearwaters cross back and forth across it, forty thousand miles a year.
Because lobsters march in formation at the bottom.
Because the dead rain to the bottom.
Because when a gull shits on the sea, it looks like a stream of chalk.
Because it's heartless and cold and alive and it stinks.
Because at noon it looks like light on a platter.
Because it's a great discarder,
and spits out crates and slats, and gallon jugs, and tar.
Because we sail across it in our stiff ships
and try to forget that wherever we are
everything underneath is loosening and sliding.
Because of spray. Scud. Clumps of foam that skid along the beach,
By-the-Wind Sailors that glint like cellophane.
Because rivers unravel and lose their cold in its volume;
gulls blink like sparks in the sweep of a lighthouse beam.
Because of its lacquer on a calm night, distinct.
Because when I'm on it I can see the small starved lights on the shore.

Language

Nadia Alexis

The ocean swallowed a father.
My father's father whole. His father ate
too many hearts of chicken & women. He ate
his children. My father, one of them.
By the time my mother & father walked
by the same tree, he was born again
into new skins. My father is multilingual.
He knows the cadence of clouds
after murmuration. The language:
Algebra equations, American
English, rough hands, Haitian Creole,
turned backs & laughter. He taught me
how to eat the sun & my own tongue.

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he knows the cadence of clouds
into new skins. My father is multilingual.
By the same tree, he was born again
by the time my mother & father met
his children. My father, one of them.
Too many hearts of chicken & women. He ate
my father's father whole. His father ate
the ocean & swallowed a father.

Aubade After the Storm

Nadia Alexis

Wounded rooster sings of morning
like it wants to forget the night,
invites my eyes to open like curtains.
Sunlight breaks the windowpane,
reminder that my favorite season is still
here. Mouth of the beach awaits me.
I wake & try to wash what he left of me
in ruins. Towel-press droplets into my skin
like gauze after a drawing of blood.
Grab a blue dress from the hanger
& search for peace in the cotton folds.
I walk down an empty road & glance
at a man's beard the color of a pigeon's
back. He smiles at me like I am kin.
I smile back though we look nothing alike.
Wind propels my cypress legs forward,
embraces knees that want nothing more
than to pummel the ground. I arrive
at the beach where armies of waves
cut into sand like Ma split fresh bread.
Hairs on my arms stand in longing
for home in my former lover's arms,
despite beating winds of his voice & hands.
They say missing an abuser is normal.
Yet one day you'll return to your reflection
with sky of you more often blue than barren.

The Wolf That Never Comes

Megan Alpert

The wolf would like a wife
All summer buzzed me awake,
the uncontrollable throats

of the daffodils
open in the yard—

The wolf would like to claw

Inert lawns, torpid houses,
no door swung open,

no pane unlatched—

He would like to set her up against the headboard

Petals or stones against my window,
flitting, uncatchable.

And the waiting clawed off me—

He would like to lick
Perhaps a far-off howl, perhaps
Closer

three clear notes—

*The wolf would like the pink skin tender, he would like to gnarl,
he would like to lick*

The dark was soft. It ate
against my skin.

My Theology

Megan Alpert

My body was trying
to get itself back
into the silver-white
bucking through the woods—
before skin, pink
nipples, patch
of matted black hair,
back into the wild
thing with one sharp horn—
while under you, the body
you were holding
(the real thing, whatever that was)
groaned and rose.