

A POEM CALLED LOST AT SEA

I always wanted to write a poem called lost at sea
Complete with fore and aft and masts
And rigging, sails I could inflate
Like cherubic cheeks of laundry, hoisting
Them off into oblivion.

Then after heaving in fog for days,
I and whatever reader remained would lift
Our heads as we rolled into imagery deep
And blue, dipping our faces overboard
Into its dark, swirling skirt.

All at once the sea would be personified
And come to resemble every lover
I ever knew. In the panic that followed,
Line breaks of any kind would be forbidden;
Everyone who threatened mutiny

Would be chained in the hold, and anyone caught
On deck without permission—my mother, for instance—
Could argue her view from the gangplank
While I lay on the tip of the bow, adjusting
The height of the horizon.

The irony of the poem would be that no one would ever
Cry out "Land ho!" because, of course,
We were lost at sea, tacking carelessly
Across the hips of the ocean, and it was night
And as in all good poems, in the depths lurked

Hidden meaning. One day, sun-rotted, the sails
Would mercifully unzip, and the naked lines of a poem
Called lost at sea could finally suggest
What happened: How your tongue stuck inside me like an oar,
How you and your boat kept turning, turning, turning.