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Larkspur Ferry

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Larkspur Ferry

Dave Seter

What makes me so content
skidding along the sea,
the ferry at full speed,

the water's surface crinkled
but not fully torn,
like words revised, not discarded?

For thirty minutes, motion
takes me away from obligations—
captive but free—a dichotomy.

There's peace in this knowledge
these waters won't be broken
by sea monsters surfacing,

only a loon that dives
to avoid capture by the wake,
or an occasional curious seal.

Curious how we yearn for
the unusual, the spontaneous,
but savor the predictable:

clean air; clean water;
a little dirtier since Eden, yes,
but it supports us just fine.

In this peaceable frame of mind
I can dream of sea monsters
rising dripping kelp,

scaly like life, but in my heart
I can lie to myself, jaws ajar,
that steel trap will never quite trip

Courtship at Bay

In a dance
older than waltz or quadrille,
they choose the same seats

three nights in a row,
an empty one in between

as if the liquid world
makes what happens
on this boat tilt
toward decorum.

To find the promiscuous
you would need to look at
the halo of gulls
noisy with want
that trails this ferry boat.

But none of these
distances are coincidental,
whether to shore, or each other.
Her nod turns to
his hello turns to
say did you notice?

She shifts almost
perceptibly on the surface
of the sea and her head
inclines as if by gravity.

The catamaran slows into port,
deepening its draw
as if a sudden thirst
has come upon us all.

Meditation Above Rodeo Lagoon

Because I notice salt crystals
that form on the fine hair of her forearm
after the long pull uphill on bicycles—

or maybe because I daydream
too much, never remembering
my overnight dreams—

I tell her a pelican's bill and pouch
shaped this lagoon, shovelful by shovelful.
This is the place where I first saw them plunge

for the salt knowledge of their ancestors.
She frowns as if impossible things
should all be called lies.

I kick at rock the color of ripe persimmon
that forms this hillside where we rest—
rock catalogued by geologists—

the iron measured gram by gram.
I want to ask about our relationship
with the earth, whether it carries any weight

or is that the cave of want I inhabit
with a thirst for salt and a hunger for muscle
along the curvature of time?