

## THE FISHERMAN'S PRAYER

Lord, if you can hear me tonight,  
yes, it's me at last,  
the fisherman,  
tumbling in the teeth of this gale  
a hundred miles from land  
so I'll make it fast,  
if you're listening,  
for you'll know it's not so much a prayer,  
by a man consoled by his God in heaven,  
but a last-ditch, lucky pot-shot in the dark  
against impossible odds  
with a favour to ask  
for my children.

Help them remember once  
they had a father,  
and not the wreck of a man  
rolling home every month with the weather  
like a salt-water drunk  
seeking shelter

for the ghost who stumbled home  
had a heart,  
and if they thought he had none  
when they woke to find he had sneaked off again,  
like a phantom before the dawn,  
saying goodbye to them  
was always the hardest part  
for the fisherman.

Keep them innocent with the belief  
that they'll end up like me  
if they don't brush their teeth.  
Don't mention the brawler  
maddened by shore-leave, rum,  
and the freedom of a foreign harbour  
painting the town with his bloodied gums.

And don't let them think  
of the restless silent stranger  
wired on sleepless weeks of caffeine, cigarettes,  
and fears of being swallowed whole  
by the watery belly of the world.  
When I clammed up in a nervy quiet  
at least no one was worried, harmed or hurt  
by loose talk of hardship, storms and danger,  
or a blonde haired lover

working dockside bars in a Scandinavian port,  
...and all the others.

For I am a sailor  
and ship's law decrees  
what happens at sea,  
stays at sea  
so Lord, if you're there  
you'll understand,  
that also includes the prayer  
of this fisherman.

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