

A Death at Sea

Virginia Webster

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

God perhaps.
I'm whispering to you
as I tread the edge
of a wind chiseled face,
enclosed in what seems the
crescent frown of your mouth
disguised as the ocean horizon.
And I ask, quite simply, why?

Waiting for reply
I listen to a dead sea gull
black and grey
embedded in beach sand,
laced with the heavy breath
of wind tossing a white
pinion feather jarred loose
no doubt from its death rattle.

I hold the bird to my ear
like a sea shell,
wondering if the answer will
echo over the cardboard matter,
stiff with the black odor of decay.
A long ray of sunlight
is trapped in the shriveled orb of eye
and I wait in dumb wonder.
Nothing echoes except the dull pulse of waves
in tired repetition of beginning to end.

Another gull hovers above me
circling in the trap of flight
calling out a sound, a bird caw
that seems nothing more
than the question I have asked.
The answer spirals from earth to sky
from the gull I hold
to the one who flies.

So I decide the better tomb
walking step over step to
the edge of sea madness.
I drop the bird into the white fringe of ocean
rolling with the ebb of water stroking earth.
The pinion feather secure
now in my desperate grasp,
salvaged from what the grave has swallowed
is a smooth finger
with which I stroke my breast
as I open my legs to the
lapping tongue of tide.
A tempered kiss
which will close the stars around me
is wet upon my thigh.