

The Deckhand Dreams

by George Vukelich

The deckhand dreams of his women
on the beach.

The far-eyed girls
his widow wife and child
waiting.

Beyond the breakers.
Beyond the gulls.

The movements of the pristine winds
soft and swishing as rosary beads
wound round the hands of young nun women.

The time of the sailors:
men in the worn down sea boots
working out the long waters
and waiting for a season
ashore.

The loneliest men in the world.
They watch from their wheel houses
and mark the miles in the millions.

Beyond their bows
the storms form up
and begin to sweep.

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Ten o'clock at night and a heavy sea *****
The AB Deckwatch Old Petersen sleeps in the tomb ***
What are his dreams?
Where his woman
Good Christ. One day, one night
the young man will come to dream
the old dreams.
The sailor poets and their mouths gone slack
for live
and love
and God.
Dear Christ.
Faces floating in the surf.
In the deadlight nights

we wait for the sun
and all the mornings coming.
Strong
and strong
and strong as birth.

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We go looking for Life and Love.
On the beaches behind, out wives
heavy with child
and light in their hearts.

We dream of Heaven
and sail in Hell.
Our time of the Storm.
Our time of the bell
watches and cargoes
seeing the swell run quick to the land.

We of the Ships: our blood in these boats.
Hope in our bellies and fear in our throats.
God Christ, sweet God.
Forgive us our trespasses for we have sinned.
Our women caught in the fisherman's seine.
Not struggling
and watching the sky for a sign.
All of them dying.
Get home soon. Get home.

Their deaths too
come by drowning
and not
in the Sea.