

## from Fishing For My Father

XII

It's been a long haul for the both of us to make this port.

The white sheets lie down along your body  
and I am compelled by long habit to straighten them out,  
fold them over, so that there is absolute order to the scene  
—as aboard, so too ashore.

The fact that this is your deathbed hardly registers at first.  
I do what I know best at such moments,  
assured by the knowledge that you would approve  
of such attention to detail.

And it was always about the details, wasn't it?  
Which took me so long to appreciate about you,  
and our life.  
Always too quick to look for grand trajectories,  
I was a bad novice aboard a boat,  
where the difference between wreck and safe passage  
is precisely in the details.

But we were shipmates at the end, weren't we?  
I left the North to come to your side and hold your hand  
while your vessel slipped away on the ebb tide.

We committed to different courses, of course  
—no two navigators plot the same.  
But, there really isn't a lot of difference between  
a fisherman who runs a B & S one-lunger  
and a sailor who looks to a broadside wind to get along;  
both share this simple fact:  
Salt water is the principal component of our being.  
We need it to survive.  
Even when it comes to us in a gale  
We must embrace it