

## Elegy With Seaweed and Trees

How should we have collected  
ourselves when, within seconds  
of the truck's mass and swerve,  
you gathered on the edges

of a sea we have not seen.  
For three days you stayed,  
our August ellipsis, washed clean of  
hardship and joy, holding fast

within another season's pattern,  
its paper-lace of sea-wrack, its  
imperceptible trees. As we leaned  
into the hospital's fluorescence,

you stood, soft-eyed in the drizzle,  
tipped toward the unalterable,  
a book of seaweed still in your hand,  
and had I been there I might have

glimpsed again how you understood  
that proximity to water, the low  
spring tides, the shells and silts  
they can lay bare, some pinched

kelp-twine remnants of a seagrass-  
meadow that once swayed under  
waves beyond the moving  
surface of your attention. Later,

maybe, you set sand dollars out to dry  
or reached to float your wrist through a  
bluing tide-pool. And your prior life  
withdrew, its pies, dishes, and pans,

the sudden glass-clear leap of your  
laughter across wax-paper and sketch-  
paper, bicycles and friend-tussles,  
the feel of that word or that spoon,

and everyone you loved, utterly  
unmoored, withdrew into a prior light,  
painful with color. And waited –  
the tempo settling into your

chest, spreading dreamlike into  
the drums of your ears, newly  
rebuilt under the surgeon's  
exquisite stitch, and in your lungs,

streams of unwoven gold, nutrients  
and space, the husks of night-ships  
passing in and out of sight.

We would have kept you there,

placed bag-lanterns along the sand  
to delight you, found a blanket or  
beach fire to keep you warm, coaxed  
even plovers into trees to stave off

solitude, anything so that you would not  
have to feel alone. You were alone,  
tucked somewhere between the windshield  
and that ocean's white salt-breeze,

a breath flying over miles of marl and  
coastline, thinking nothing perhaps,  
or feeling all your life at once,  
though we gather at your side to touch

your forehead, wash your hair,  
and the sand soften each time the tides  
are drawn flush-back, the beaded sargassos  
combed by channels to be carried

toward some rootless, weightless  
place, though the earth should change  
and the air inside you become  
the air inside birds, their gray under-

wings, as they incline toward sky,  
spots of sun at the far fringe of  
vision, and love, hovering in those  
seconds, those days, given form.

— *for Greta Wrolstad*  
1981 - 2005