

Caper's Island

Poetry • Karissa Horn

Early, my father wakened me.
Pale dawn glowed pink
over the cresting sea wake;
We packed our tents, went down to the water,
and climbed into the cramped canoe
atop remnants of our rugged camp.
But we were not six yards out when the water beneath us
slapped our little vessel's sides so hard we nearly capsized—

so we went back beaten,
to wait out the next high tide.

Midday, my father remembers
wading after the lost gear, waiting
for the waves to relent, phoning
my mother, dragging the boat across
the whole length of the island's sand beach—
But I was small, and I beach-combed contently,
still in my buckled blue life-jacket and wet clothes,
admiring the shells, and the largess of the sea.

Evening, my father felt fear:
of the coming day, of dawn,
of the tide that might again strand us here
with my mother stranded too alone across the phone line
and he with a seven year old little girl to feed and protect and
keep warm and dry and safe from mosquitoes—
But I remember a dumbfounding sunset,
and a sandy hoard of shells, all mine.

I stored the best that could be kept:
Sand-dollars, perfectly preserved;

Conch horns, triumphantly twisting;
Clam cases—but no pearls—
crusted with coral like lacy concrete.

The next morning we cast off alright—
and we were tired, and we were sandy
and sore from two tent-camping nights,
and missing Mom and the mainland,
and hungry for something besides oatmeal;
but I remember the Island fondly,
for my lintel bore childhood's seal,
and my father's fear never found me.