

Flame Bay  
by Grant Loveys

Remember how the oil looked  
battered on the bay,  
the sun a tinfoil ball  
smearing its reflection on rainbows  
like a coat of spoiled primer.  
Though you couldn't understand it then,  
all those atoms,  
those tiny warring factions of lamp oil and saltwater,  
stood apart on opposite sides of a darkened room  
holding each other off with flick knives  
as you waded in,  
dropped the match,  
slipped soundless beneath the surface  
and peered up at a heaven of seething flame,  
your young heart sustained by the persistence  
of simple miracles.

Suspended somewhere between  
fire blooming geometrically in all directions  
and the freezing black bottom of the bay,  
you nestled into purgatory  
until your lungs started to give  
and all the holes through which  
you might have porpoised yourself free  
shut like poked eyes  
and burned unending.

You told me that was the only time  
fear ever truly found you.  
I couldn't believe in that  
after the life you'd spent raising up three fine children  
on little more than long hours and luck.

And I'd like to think  
it was only when your father descended through fire  
like a bruised, banished angel  
and hauled you ashore clasped in his battered wings  
that you even considered  
the perils of sainthood.