

Pinch Me

*Swampscott, circa 1969, and every subsequent holiday
dinner at Nana and Grandpa's house*

Adam and Eve and Pinch Me went out
to sea. Adam and Eve drowned.
Who was left?

Who was left after the pinched one got away
from the scratchy face
and creaking chair?

He pinched hard.
He laughed hard.
Every time.

Who kept his crew from dying
after their ship was torpedoed?
Swam laps around the life boats

to pass the days and nights till rescue?
Was it sunny and calm in that ocean
full of sharks and sunken ships?

Adam and Eve and Pinch Me went out to sea.
No life jacket. No foul weather gear.
No blueberry pie after dinner.

Who is left?

Here

Give me cold and fear says the mind
sliding into the deep
limbs unreaching

They surface
knowing the task
to motor forward

to see projects through
though tired before the turn
Their strokes unfluid

How do I do today
without imagining
we have forever?

The heave inside
this tool for praying
is all there is

All of us at the edge
counting our beats
brief and dreamed as we are

Buried Errors

The rower and her small boat
displace a curved slice of ocean. Oars
too push out pieces.
Long triangles cut and left.

From her thwart she wonders
when she will get there. Looks
over her shoulder to see
where she's going.

Along the way the barnacled
bottom feels the brush of rockweed
fronds, groves rooted in rocky ledges,
a topography noticed only

when the tidal surface
drapes low enough to reveal
peaks and colors of cultured bodies
that thrive in the dark.

She navigates around the exposed
wreck, its rusting bones an island story.
Other errors lie buried below
with kelp competing for light.

The rower sits as a boundary,
feet braced against the half-inch thickness
of wood that is sole to her and ceiling
to the world she moves over

like a cloud backlit and distant.
Threading a hole in silence.