

# FRONT PORCH

## At the Door of the Land Or Sea Motel

**Barbara Griest-Devora**

Something about the sea doesn't want us,  
or we'd all be throwing ourselves. Instead,  
we chose the pink stucco motel on stilts  
because it knows how to prepare for disaster.

The door to the room is a turnstile.  
The marble moon sparkles like dashboard  
light in the worst part of the dream. It's impossible  
to stay human, but the fairytale requires it,

and so we fly to the ending. I had left something,  
maybe a ring, maybe another option, on the fillet  
deck where the best cutting is done. At some point  
we must gather our belongings, move inside.

Or maybe this is still honeymoon. The room  
inside is sure to be warm, if only  
the threshold. Nothing about the ocean  
blames us. But then nothing invites us in.

# Our Own Twin Poles

**Barbara Griest-Devora**

The crossing of Something Ocean was hard  
with all the criminals on board. One wanted  
to hold us up, but we had no money. We waved  
our hands in the air, frightened pirate ships away.

Another commandeered our boat, but left us in control  
of the helm. An armada of fools with swords and velvet  
slashed wedding gowns from the sails. The eunuch kept  
watch from the crow's nest, carved hearts in the mast.

When the captain paid us in fake bills, there was talk  
of mutiny until we noticed our lovers' pictures painted  
on each note. Someone else threw white rice  
from the plank—a sly fellow in tuxedo and leggings.

What were we to do when the deck boys came  
bringing rum and skull cakes? And all above board?  
oh, the villainy! Or else the beauty of pirates!  
We let the rapist do what he wished.

# Language Acquisition and Circus Acts: *The Flame Swallower, The Knife Thrower, and The Monkey*

**Barbara Griest-Devora**

Everyone wants to know how Big Flame  
got his start, what models there were  
for pyromania, but no one ever asks  
Knife Thrower how he let fly the first  
blade, since the act of throwing and catching  
small daggers comes naturally to us all.  
The monkey has been kept purposefully  
mute: caged primates taught sign language  
always sign the same first words: *let me out.*

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