

# CutBank

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And there I am on a rubber raft, saltwater  
washing through my mouth, giggling at seven  
in the knowledge of parents: a father  
with coarse, black hair and a mother like a crow,  
strong with flight feathers. Jewish boy  
on the beach, pail and shovel, drenching sun,  
roar of the surf, Portuguese men-o-war  
washed on shore, like marbled dirigibles,  
and strong fishermen guiding my life through  
the variables—Irving with dark speckles,  
Shep with boulder thighs, Harold no less  
influential for his florid skin and feminine  
side which wedged through him, like a fin. It was  
jubilation and resonance and sand grit and  
gutted trout and sexy wives with lacquered nails  
who bitched and loved and donated and slathered  
their dumb children with Solarcain. Women  
with that kind of leg skin which exudes  
sexuality: smooth, freckled, white, pliable,  
like the underside of fish. And their children,  
little vessels of innocence filled with  
immortality and egoism bucking in the sun-pound.  
It was Rome before the fall, solid curves of  
toughness in the parents like walls, gold  
flowing through scotch and blended whiskey  
necks, and Texas Longhorn football bursting  
like concussion bombs. Nothing crumbled no matter  
how brittle it became because there was money,  
guts, kids, wives, glory, and the whole great  
God damned Gulf of Mexico glittering with gamefish.  
And there I am floating on my rubber raft  
where the ocean floods the shore, laughing,  
breast full of glee, stuffed like a turkey

with sweetness and deflected rage, no  
more the carrier of the clear blue flame  
of poetry than the carrier of bubonic plague.  
It was that textured storm in the brain,  
blurry happiness which thrives and throws  
off sparks of luxury in the veins. It was  
fish-scaling knives and bellowing men  
and Port Aransas, Texas, and God's diamond  
jewelry broken and spilled over the horizon,  
like a sea. It was semen and fertility  
and seed flung in the flesh of wives,  
like meteor showers in the infinite sky.  
And children folded into the prayer of two hands  
before bedtime in the hearing of seawaves,  
sailed into their dreams, like schooners,  
flawless and streaming with praise.