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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—Irvig 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
guttled 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.