

Christopher Bernard

Haiku for a Catastrophe

Winter. I remember
a fishing boat perched, like a toy,
on a hill, snow falling

on a wounded animal,
its companion by its side
until it is still.

*Hammered seafloor.
The ocean lifts a huge sleeping
arm.*

*A village wakes up
from its afternoon nap
in a sea, dark as night.*

*A little old man
turns to a little old woman,
but both have disappeared.*

*A single earring.
A doll dressed in seaweed.
A wedding band. Soldiers' calls.*

*Apple cores, nuclear cores,
cores of truth~
they melt like candles.*

*And the earth shakes again
like a rattle in the hands
of an infant king.*

*"Hoo-ey! Hoo-ey! Hoo-
ey!" he blares like a klaxon
over the iron sea.*

...

The doll opened its eyes
(the back corner, near the window . . .)
then sank

back, gazing toward
the sky. *Kill memory*
before I too drown in the black tide.

The Hardest Thing

Between water and air and stone,
between the clouds and the cloudy light,
between our lips (they will not sing
till we have come to the promised ending,
embracing), there's no space, no light.
Still, we must break one day, my own.

We do not know when it must come,
our parting, though we know it must.
Just as we did not know our making.
Yet, we are here. We stand in a ring
like dancers in an old folk dance,
bow and dance and in circles run.

Hardest is not to die, my love,
hardest to feel for the end no fear,
hardest is to know the thing.
Hardest is to live, my darling.
I tell myself this till I hear
the teasing refrain, if never enough:

"The hardest thing is love."

I promised I would hold the light
and let it soothe my cold, wrecked heart
with sweetness of your mind, the king
of despair thus vanquishing.
Take my hand. Hold it tight.
We are all we have against the night.

Love, love is the hardest thing.

Christopher Bernard, founder and a co-editor of *Caveat Lector*, is also the author of the novel *A Spy in the Ruins*.