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Youth and Age

Charles Tisdale
Carolina

*The best fish are caught where salt
and fresh water meet.*

Lilia Brianovich

The young beloved, like water flowing
From a spring, desires the briny ocean
She has never seen. If she ever got
There she would be disgusted with rotting
Fish and the constant lunar motion
Of tides. She wants to go, but doesn't know.
The old lover has been out to sea
For a long time. But he keeps coming
Back in. He must relive his story.
Others would call it a kind of hoary
Impropriety. When he returns home,
He rather calls it passion's bonhomie.
Why do menhaden want to go down
And climb up again? She pouts at the thought
Of being a land-locked salmon. She cannot
Give up believing she has been forgot
No matter how hard her dreams have sought
The secret romance of a seacoast town.
Why does the aging roué nurse the fear
He might be left to die in Venice?
He panics at the sight of caffeine free
Coffee in nursing homes, has anxieties
About leakage and plumbing. They replenish
His pill cup daily. Hairs stubble his ears.
Life has its quirks. He humors the fairy tale
He can swim upstream and meet the star
Of the soap opera. He knows he can still

Do it. Even the nurse abets the cheap thrill
He gets from flirting. At night chances are
They poke and prod him like a beached whale.
Is it so pathetic? She wants to never lack
The endless waves and how they crash upon
Her ageless body. His emits a blubbery
Wheezing. Did he not always rise up
For air, go down for food? Time is undone
For him who breaches here his last bivouac.
But this is where opposites mush mesh.
They seek the open air bistros in Trieste
And other coastal cities. The choice dish
Is redolent of the mountains in a shellfish
Garnish. A rare piquancy, the chef
Will say, this mixture of the salt and fresh.