

LEAVING HOME

A man with a guitar sat in a swaying boat
strumming "Moon River" while you took pictures.
A hard song to hear as the wet fact inched higher.

It rose in the night like a rheumy moon
despite here-and-there dark patches
the morning defined as dikes and dams.
It overcame them easy as clouds shimmering
across sight, surface shiny as the moon
but nothing like the celebrated satellite
you could gaze up at-- it was water!
Miles of it, loose as moonwash,
spreading daylight truth on the earthscape.

Water and moon: Some ancient arcane bond
still strong far from ocean tides,
beyond old midwives' tales. Three days' travail
and nothing to show for it but a slimy signature--
the receipt for all your labor and all you owned.

Stink-filled sandbags, ribbons of rotting crops
bandaging the levees, mud-caked metaphors
and your life's artifacts--a smeared sorrowscope
no melody could carry, no lyrics could lift.

The last loaded motorboat left a brown wake
like a fresh-plowed furrow in your best land.
The guitarist peeled off a few more
chords and floated them after passing shingles
and straw from the silo and barn
gone downcurrent two days ago. He resumed
rowing in an oak valley grayly ghosted beneath him,
its moss floor coming loose, bobbing up
around his oars like swatches of lawn carpet.
One piece rafted a Barbie doll dressed in gold lame.
You clicked the shutter at nature, the master ironist.
It's what you do when your other choices have sunk.

You shift to a drier spot in the boat's bottom,
cradling the guitar and camera in your lap.
And you try to quit thinking
of when a fabled moon and river
made their appointed rounds and knew their place
and you could recognize yours.