

Paradise Island

by Bill Yarrow

A man comes out of the waves gasping
panting stumbles falls blind with happiness
the shallow water does what it can to kill him

He's shivering so I place
over him my terrycloth robe
a first anniversary gift from you

A crowd has gathered and drags him from the dying
waves toward the awful solace of the sand where he lies
having outswum his drowning having fallen out of the sea

You look down on this man on the ground
he is moaning thank you into the earth
you did the right thing you say

I did the right thing yes but the robe
the new robe your gift is ruined
I ruined it these thoughts swim in my head

Fifteen years later not a week goes by
that I do not think about the fate of the pale-blue robe
you gave me to wear on our anniversary vacation by the green
waves

Fifteen years later not a week goes by
that I do not remember the texture smell and complexion
of the water out of which you and I watched a drowning man emerge

