

Surf Kills

Standing alone in the stone cold surf of the northwest
solitary ocean
waiting till I am alone on the long, bare beach
I stand here, naked in the sun and the sea
I am thigh high and scared
as with ominous roaring it thunders towards me,
shoulder-high, foam in its teeth
as it comes at me out of the fog
of the summer's ocean
but I stay, while the runback from last time
wrenches at my feet
trying to suck me back down in the undertow
full of black sands pouring seaward and
wanting to carry me down to the underworld.

My feet stand steady as the muffled roar of breakers
comes out of the fog like
high and excited white
stampeding horses
tossing their
manes and careening to trample me

But I stand till, slowly, they crash down
before me; they humble themselves
on the hard sand, some hissing and grovelling
up to my knees
to surround me with only the delicate turmoil
of foam all creamy flip, and the sparkling swish
of the salt champagne's thousand bubbles exploding
a casual slapping kiss
at the mount of venus, and they're going down
into the depths again
planning another position.

The black sands are up past my ankles now
firmer than ever
I'll stand so, and play:
come again, then, dangerous one.
Sometimes SURF KILLS, but today
is my day.
Just for now, my great wild monster ocean,
—come play. . . .

— *Carol Halstead*