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STEPHANIE IVANOFF

Point of View, or Submersible

(after "Il Penseroso," by Milton)

A mood of oyster
Conspires in an oyster bed,

A mood of lead,
Even as these, newly-wed,

Lean stone sober
Over the wall-eyed cake,

Even as the seagulls pizzle
On the Cadillac

Parked at the shore
Where the brochure promised a pearl

From the sea's fields
Of planted oysters.

And, like the hinged oyster shell,

A jimmied lip
Lets slip the unhinged, eros,

From its bitter pith and armor

And undresses in the gray-violet dark

For the calf-eyed bride
Till she founders in salt

Under its back.

She wants to say something back
But lags at the effort

To trick herself out,
Like swimming in dark water

In the dark and oyster scent,
Even if the ill-favored

Rough and cobbled oyster
Guarantees its tourists' preserve:

A little pill
Parked on each leaden tongue,

A souvenir
Of this watery farm.

Some piscean wizard
Must be responsible,

Muzzled in rubber
And smitten

With other landscapes
All apocryphal,

Cultured and tired.

These are not real pearls
And we are perishing of it,

Even as the limp waves limp to the shore
Above our bony oyster beds,

And the temperatures run to despair.