

The New Criterion

Poems February 2007

In bed for a week

by Ernest Hilbert

A poem by Ernest Hilbert.

It happens to us all, at least one time,
The black, caught knot of storm threatens, distant,
But buckling closer, waves capped and blown white.
Heavy tides, laden with fresh wreckage, climb,
Drop down the throat; life is a persistent
Ache of sunken vessels and squandered light.
Barrier islands and breakwaters lost,
The sea flails the darkness, its frayed currents,
Wind-flung sediment, shards like stones thrown,
Pooled mirrors blown to blur down the cold coast,
Leaving foam, crushed scum, marsh sun, a grim sense
Of many inherited contours gone.
But the dark flush in the heart will subside,
Drain slowly, slowly draw back as a tide.

Ernest Hilbert is the author of *Storm Swimmer* (University of North Texas Press), selected by Rowan Ricardo Phillips as the winner of the 2022 Vassar Miller Prize in Poetry.

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