

Charles Hughes

For My Sons, Both Now In Their Thirties

Let's go out on the lake the way we used to.
Let's load the boat and head for Steamboat Bay.
We'll drift across the water in the breeze,
Casting our Beetle Spins, trying for bass.
Remember that sunny late afternoon
I had a muskie strike? The little island,
Serene and ageless, gliding past, submerged
Except for rocks the gulls would gather on;
I'd just replaced my lure with something larger —
Mepps number three, white bucktail — when he hit
And must have swirled and dived.

My reel quit reeling.

At first, I thought I'd snagged a sunken branch.
You were so young, still using worms and bobbers;
You didn't seem to notice right away.
Then came his jump, more like a missile launch,
Furiously crashing through the water's surface.
I never got him closer to the boat.
He swam — unsloved, unturned by me — toward shore,
Towing our boat and us along until
He snapped the line.

I dream about that fish,
Not that I think the dream is about that fish
Or coveting a future trophy catch.
Some dreams sculpt memories in high relief —
In this case, what I lost and all I've kept.