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I Know Women

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I Know Women

I know women and even girls who want to leap
out of the boat of their
bodies—

that leaky skin craft
with its fragile ribs, its clumsy opaqueness
whose every heavy movement is ambiguous and veiled.

Even with unsleeping eyes on every side
peering into the dark squall
they know that, embodied, they are in danger
as they brace once more
to meet the waves.

Not even the consolation of rain on flesh
can make them love
the sheer weight of it

each single part imperfect, prone to pain
judged pretty or despised.

Women want to be pure mind, light
invisible as air

free and beautiful like the idea of song
that doesn't seem to need the pumping lungs

the husky, muscled larynx
the pink and flabby tongue.

They can't believe that Jesus
once set free
would return to his body
with cries of joy

as to a long-lost friend.

Mara Faulkner, OSB, is Professor Emerita of English, College of Saint Benedict.