

# Full Fathom Five By Sylvia Plath

Old man, you surface seldom.  
Then you come in with the tide's coming  
When seas wash cold, foam-

Capped: white hair, white beard, far-flung,  
A dragnet, rising, falling, as waves  
Crest and trough. Miles long

Extend the radial sheaves  
Of your spread hair, in which wrinkling skeins  
Knotted, caught, survives

The old myth of origins  
Unimaginable. You float near  
As keeled ice-mountains

Of the north, to be steered clear  
Of, not fathomed. All obscurity  
Starts with a danger:

Your dangers are many. I  
Cannot look much but your form suffers  
Some strange injury

And seems to die: so vapors  
Ravel to clearness on the dawn sea.  
The muddy rumors

Of your burial move me  
To half-believe: your reappearance  
Proves rumors shallow,

For the archaic trenched lines  
Of your grained face shed time in runnels:  
Ages beat like rains

On the unbeaten channels  
Of the ocean. Such sage humor and  
Durance are whirlpools

To make away with the ground-  
Work of the earth and the sky's ridgepole.  
Waist down, you may wind

One labyrinthine tangle  
To root deep among knuckles, shin-  
bones,  
Skulls. Inscrutable,

Below shoulders not once  
Seen by any man who kept his head,  
You defy questions;

You defy godhood.

I walk dry on your kingdom's border

Exiled to no good.

Your shelled bed I remember.

Father, this thick air is murderous.

I would breathe water.