

OLD MAN'S OYSTER

Scenic Beach State Park

You come from Nebraska with a little flat bottle
I from the sea with my shucker's tool. We meet
on misty beach and crunch antediluvian pebbles
once atop the Olympics across Hood Canal.
I show to bend low

and scan for living fossils' wavy gray shells
-not too large.

I pick and rinse two in the sea, slip
my tool through their base and twist, releasing
limp meat I hand over
-carefully retaining its treasure. You dilute
with vodka and drink but my spirit waits
inside my ancient shell. I raise
to lips, inhale, slowly tip head
back to savor the sea of my almost

adolescence on her summer soaked beach
with Francis, Tommy's woman-sister. We were all
inebriated enough by this same sea taste, by Fran
shedding flannel shirt and denim shorts, by her
new filled swimsuit, by our horripilation from cold
sea swim in sun tight skin, by misting browning
bodies made darker from patches of untouched cream beneath,
by this child witnessing mystery. Then, swirling star swaddled,
all we huddle in towels to sing our night songs,
scratch salt bodies, lift flaming marshmallow tipped sticks
as born again colossus beacons, poke embers to spark
our driftwood fire
rounded by sunburned faces. We

reveled in Threshold. You
ask for another shell. I'll
console.