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How He Ran Aground

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How He Ran Aground

One lobster trap hauled in
the morning was empty,
save the bottle of scotch
rattling in the wire cage
like an exhausted animal;
he hesitated at the clasp,
scowling at the horizon
where white triangles
sailed towards Bar Harbor;
he'd heard about these trades:
schooner moored off an island
while the out-of-staters
rowed towards a beach with
piled driftwood ablaze,
pot of "borrowed" lobsters
balanced on plank seat
of the dinghy like
honored, kidnapped guests
of well-dressed pirates;
perhaps he would just
take a closer look,
read the scuffed label
with a name like the sound of
someone clearing their throat;
aged thirty years,

which is how long ago
he'd had his last drink,
the outlines of Scottish hills,
braes, on the label too,
and he reflected how he
escaped the thirst
this many years by
chasing the underwater
hills of Penobscot Bay,
lobsters sulking in dark,
drowned valleys, thinking;
which is what he didn't do
when he placed the bottle
in an honored position
on the transom,
then let it navigate,
and then steer,
until convinced that
Butter Island was
Great Spruce Head Island
and he ran aground on a
tombolo near Barred Islands,
and thus jilted, donned his
survival suit expectantly,
as though dressing for a
fancy ball with a girl
named Destiny

with her hair up;
the survival suit was orange,
and perched on the stern rail,
which became the highest
point of the sinking boat,
he looked like a piece of cheese
on an hors d'oeuvres plate
heading back to the kitchen,
which is how the Coast Guard
found him, sunrise searing the water,
and the officer, taking notes and
having been around the world,
asked "What kind of scotch?"
to which the lobsterman mused
"An expensive one, I think,"
later learning the cost was
ten thousand dollars per bottle,
boat repairs included.