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BARBARA HUDSPITH

Family Album

Two women stand at battle for my soul
Two stand at the water's edge

One woman flings herself
upon the upturned wave and rasping her craft against
the pebbled shore

Rows

Then grappling deep she fingers her nets and heaves
and the boat lists laden
with creatures that flap and slither on the well-greased
boards

that writhe in vain on the darkling homeward journey
As the swirling wind
pierces

her naked shoulders
and the watching water chafes
her fissured hands
pungent and raw from the gutting

The other woman hesitates
with one tentative shoe
one dainty toe on the gunnel
Her swain coaxing tenderly
pleading for the soft-gloved hand outstretched and now
withdrawn
while the wily water
laps insidiously
and with a final roguish tug
plunges her deep into the tepid sea
her petticoats heaving
their delicate network
roiling with its catch

A spluttering puppy she shakes herself
free from the indignity
and prances mincingly back
to the red hot fire to the cluttered parlour
and mother

Barbara Hudspith recently completed an MA on the relationship that exists between clergy women and the women in their congregation. She continues to collect and writes stories on this theme and she lives in Dundas, Ontario with her husband and daughter.