

SAY IT NEVER HAPPENED

I went down to the sea again. In winter
this time, without you. One November day
which promised nothing but darkness.
My shoes clicked along the glistening
pavement. A long line of benches,
all along the empty promenade cried out
for company and tied up on the quay,
I saw the ghosts of the fishing boats.

I walked the wet streets past shops
with shutters like closed eyes. Grass
grew through the tennis courts. I heard
the ratchet of the turnstile on the pier
where no one stood, saw a flash
of brass, listened to music from the
silent bandstand and heard the ghosts
of sailors singing.

No waves, the sea flat as if it couldn't
be bothered to make a show. All colours
a variety of grey and the only word I saw
was Closed. There was nothing for the seagulls
to scavenge, no jumble of noise from the beach.
Even the fun fair had stopped screaming.
I saw the ghosts of girls, baskets strapped
to their backs, picking cockles.

I wrote your name in sand and watched it
drown, cast a pebble into the sea and saw it
sink. I thought about you the day you walked away,
the colours of the crowd, the tall ships bobbing
on the water, the candyfloss I bought to hide
my tears, the taste of jealousy on the sharp spikes
of the salt wind and how the day dimmed
and fog rolled in from the darkening sea.