

### THREE BOYS IN A BOAT

Three boys built a boat.  
They were young.  
It was a wooden sailing boat.  
Fifteen feet long at the most.  
Capacity three – marginally.  
Flaws, some were visible  
Some were not, latent.  
They took the maiden craft into the bay,  
a bay formed by a massive,  
Three-mile long, stone breakwater.  
They gingerly sailed out of the breakwater  
into the open sea,  
Negotiating a perilous passage through  
the parade of tankers and cargo ships  
coming and going from and to the sea lanes.  
Somebody said “journey”.  
That lit fires of imagination  
in the minds of the three young minds.  
In a tiny boat with limited resources:  
a can of beans, one oar,  
a watch and a dollar compass.

To them a journey meant independence,  
adventure and budding manliness.  
It meant freedom.  
But a goal was needed,  
And a direction.  
Catalina Island was chosen,  
albeit across a dangerous channel  
of swift and strong currents.  
A channel twenty-two miles wide.  
With an island out of sight  
and of dicey heading,  
off they sailed,  
the three in the tiny craft.  
Desire had conquered reason.  
The folks knew not of their whereabouts.  
The sea grew rough.  
They tacked this way and that,  
with help from propitious breezes.  
The boom swung – watch your head.  
The swells increased  
in size and frequency.

Huge whitecaps loomed,  
whipped up by the winds.  
The boat rocked precariously  
taking on water in the cockpit  
and through hull planks  
of questionable fit.  
The beans were eaten,  
the empty can used for bailing,  
a broken tiller and rudder  
replaced with that one oar.  
Desperation engendered skill  
and dogged strength,  
fear replacing early bravado.  
Miens were dour, but complaints few.  
After many anguished hours  
they reached the lee of the island.  
The helpful winds were gone.  
Painful paddling was needed to reach shore,  
an unfriendly cove of pebbles and sand.  
Sleep in the night was fitful.

Sick to go home they left at noon.  
Blessed with firm winds  
and a calm sea,  
the return home was uneventful.  
They trudged ahead in the approaching darkness,  
the breakwater lighthouse serving as a beacon  
guiding them home.  
Rounding the breakwater at midnight  
the unlit craft passed safely by  
huge, towering freighters.  
The journey ended on the peaceful bay shore  
in the dark hours of the morning -  
Met by the folks!

~ Leo Pearlin