

Ralph Pennel

Elegy to Young Boys Jumping Off The End Of The Dock

One boy,
taller than the rest, his head rising above
them all, takes his place in line, pushing
and shoving. He inches his way slowly forward
until the only thing between him and water is open air.
There, he turns away after standing too long before jumping,
slips past the others, who watch in silence as they
step aside to let him pass. Not one joke is made.
And when it seems that every last boy will follow his lead,
thinking now of shallower water, they quickly
turn away, laughter spilling from their mouths,
again pounding through the water's surface.
There is so much strength needed to be a boy
of this age, each knowing his fate is manhood
and that he must take to practicing now.
This is nothing a boy can change.
No doubt this boy will return tomorrow and make the jump.
He will get there first and stay one jump longer,
fly into the blue green lake with so much air
beneath him, the other boys already heading
back to the dorms, lake water drying off their skin
in the breeze made by brisk walking.

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