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PRISMA

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PROVOST'S POETRY WINNER:
PRELUDE

LEILA GIOVANNONI

POETRY

In a year of silence I
walked along the
embarcadero,
noting the
names of
boats
and their shapes

wide-bellied, the way they
jostled like children, and tugged
their moorings. The wind was
tossing the water, making
the sails
strain.

My father named his boat
Prelude and tied it by Wanderer
and the Merry Rogue. I loved those names
just because they were made
to be loved; or because
they came from
songs
and not from poems:
Crackerjack, Wind Song, Dora-lee.

Is anything too large
for words? A striped cat sitting
on the deck of a red boat?
The voices of
gulls? Or
the rush of their wings?
What about your father's back moving
in the dusky hull of the boat? Always
immeasurably smaller than
your father's back
yesterday.

That world
without words
was even brighter, as if
empty air kept more room for
light. The sails, carefully shuttered
and tied, rolled and
sighed, but the boats

said nothing.
And isn't silence a fitting answer to the
knowledge, when it comes, that
the world we were made in
is not really the world
we were made for?