

Richard Weaver

Poem For Nina

By now the pain will be
just a small scar,
a moment you will play with
like a smooth shell.
But when the Spanish mackerel were running
everyone crowded down at the pier's far end
casting and recasting,
the caught fish tossed
unceremoniously to the concrete flooring,
you and your friend walked
unmindful of the lines drawing backwards
until I was holding your shoulders,
saying your name
over and over again, Nina, Nina
all the while the hook
fast in your finger.
I called you brave
though you weren't.
I told you the pain
would soon go away.
I lied. It didn't—
the barb too deep
in your small finger
to push through.
Your small body shook
as if the shaking
might loosen the pain
I remember as a boy.
Fishing with friends,
our cane poles
patient over the pond,
Chuck pulled back,
sideways, to cast out again
and caught me
right above the eye. That close.
I don't know why
all of us need learn
that lesson,

if I can call it that.
I won't say to you
it was something more than pain
hurting me. It wasn't.
I can tell you that.
I will say
the scar will have its memory,
its occasion to laugh.
When you think of it
think of me
as someone who told you
it would go away,
and who was wrong.