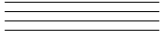


I N D E P E N D E N C E D A Y



E R N E S T H I L B E R T

We wait for fireworks that never arrive.
The halfhearted breeze blows humbly
Around us on the beached old tug named *Thor*.
Before us dock the speedboat *I'm Alive*,
Skipjack *Ida May*, the trawler *Big Sea*.
The line between sea and land that makes the shore

Grows harder to see in the dusk. We
Watch the sore sun slip from bold orb to tiger
Stripe at the horizon with blue cloud rags
Dragged in the storm's wake. We talk, agree
The fireworks display might come soon, figure
We only need to wait a while more to see.

We lean back, and the cool coarse wood
Feels good, stare up at what's left of the day,
And then full dark, and, after half an hour,
When we know they will not come, that we could
Go if we wanted, for some reason we stay
There with *Miss May*, *Old Joy*, *Lady Flower*,

Olympia, *Lazee*, *One Love*, *Osprey*.

When we look away from the hollow
Dark above down to the darker harbor
And all the quivered light along the quay,
We see the black itself as a berth for the glow
Of masthead and stern lights on sloop and cutter,

Ketch and schooner, safe after the storm, dividing
Darkness, as if dreaming what seemed about

To happen, hulls of *Isabel, Edna, Ain't It Grand,*
Side by side in the indistinct tide, guiding
Bright quick ripples of surviving light that bear out
To meet us where we still wait on darkened land.