

Durban, July, the Run

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Writer

Here, a couple of kilometres out,
the sea is as busy as the harbour.
We are drifting near the northernmost tip

of the cool plume of winter water wafting
up the coast, inshore of the southward-
flowing Agulhas current. Beneath us

are huge prairies of protein. For a few
brief days this sub-tropical briny stays
cool and nutritious enough to draw sardines

from their southern home: penned in a cold camp
by the warm off-shore waters, easy meat
for game predators, dolphin, shark, gannet

and human, all of whom respond in kind,
feasting on the caravan of bounty.
If the sardines are moving close enough

to the shore, they may beach, seine fishermen
will come out to harvest, and the gleaners
and the gazers take their share. Within sight



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are small craft of all designs and colours.
Further out to sea the whales are breaching,
blowing and tailing. Dolphins surf in pods

around us, herding the sardines. Gannets
are raining down over the sea. We see
albatross and petrel. Beneath us fins

will cut through vast depths of silver, huddled
into huge protective cylinders, only
to become silos of food for the sharks

and gamefish: shad, garrick, geelbek, tuna.
The vision comes and goes. We rise and fall
on a sweet swell, for a moment seeming

to have made our peace with the elements,
when, suddenly, our old inflatable
is on its darting course like a pinball.