

A Refugee Contemplates Foam

I made wings last night:
petals of cardboard, sprinkled
with glitter, yoked with Krazy
Glue. In the garden at dusk,
they shimmered on my daughter's
back like a wedding of fireflies

Door to door she skipped
and yelled, *Trick or treat!*
Strangers opened their doors
with such joy, I heard
my dead mother whisper,
Yahmiki allah! May god
protect you

Later, we sat by the fountain,
and counted candy but
she took off to play
with a fanged little
baby-powdered vampire

Discarded, her wings floated
with halloween regalia:
fireflies drowned
under Batman's cape,
and a ladybug made of foam
floated up to me

I thought of my life-vest,
when the boat capsized
in cold water and mother
floated up weeks later,

white as the meat of fish.
It's the nature of foam

I've read up on it: foam
is pockets of gas trapped
in a solid, it's a fabric of bubbles,
three-dimensional tessellations.
My vest's price was included
in the smuggler's fee.
Leave her! he yelled at me

Yalla! my daughter says,
Ma, let's go home.
I once stayed at a five-
star hotel, its mattress
the maid told me
in accent like my mother's,

Walla! It is ultra luxury!
Multi-layered foam
finished in a quilt
of organic cotton,
I read up on it

But it's that cheap
foam encased in orange vinyl,
that jacket, which no matter
how much you want to,
does not let you drown,
it has meant more to me

than any mattress
in the world. I don't sleep
much anyway. It feels
a lot like drowning