

## **May He Lose His Way on the Cold Sea**

May he lose his way on the cold sea  
And swim to the heathen Salmydessos,  
May the ungodly Thracians with their hair  
Done up in a fright on the top of their heads  
Grab him, that he know what it is to be alone  
Without friend or family. May he eat slave's bread  
And suffer the plague and freeze naked,  
Laced about with the nasty trash of the sea.  
May his teeth knock the top on the bottom  
As he lies on his face, spitting brine,  
At the edge of the cold sea, like a dog.  
And all this it would be a privilege to watch,  
Giving me great satisfaction as it would,  
For he took back the word he gave in honor,  
Over the salt and table at a friendly meal.

*Archilochus, c. 650 B.C.*

*Transl. from Greek by Guy Davenport*