

# The Catch

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## The Humpback of Notre Gulf of Maine

Carl K. Little  
*Mount Desert, Maine*

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## The Humpback of Notre Gulf of Maine

The massive body  
of the humpback Spinnaker  
named for the sail-shaped marking on her tail  
wedged among rocks at the base  
of Great Head on Mount Desert Island

is magnificent in death as in life,  
broad flanks striped with ventral grooves,  
vast belly open to the sky  
as if she had gone to scratch  
an itch atop barnacled ledges,

but a more nefarious cause is offered  
by researchers who have traced her travels  
across oceans (like parents  
following the simulation of the flight  
carrying their child from Amsterdam to Accra):

victim of entanglements—  
not the romantic kind—fishing lines  
hindering movement, scarring  
skin, despite being rescued  
multiple times by watchful human allies

who cut her wing-like fins free,  
a mammoth mammal task, tiny boats  
maneuvering around colossal creature  
with sensitive eyes who struggles,  
harried like the humpback of Notre Gulf of Maine,

who once breached and spouted  
as watchers clung to rails,  
who lived on krill and other schooling fish,  
who might have lived to 100  
but died at 11, whose skeleton

may one day bring awe to museumgoers  
gazing through her arched ribs, along  
jigsaw vertebrae, around the mighty skull  
of the re-articulated Spinnaker,  
baleen, rorqual, wondrous whale.

—*for Allied Whale*