

Baptism

by [Sarah Crowley Chestnut](#) in the [December 2022](#) issue

I watch my father lean hard across the ski boat's wake, slow
beyond the furrow, absorb the rope's slack, pause, then
torpedo back toward the low sun and the western bank.
At last I see what this mingling of water, oil, throttle means.
Engine bawling, he skims across the spray.

Once, so young I didn't think to be afraid, he and Mom roused me
before dawn to feel the tug: *The water will be like glass!*
Your feet go on my feet; hang on between my hands—
take a deep breath and hold it till we're up . . .

Now I watch him throw the rope, toss arms to sky—
V of a victory cry. Silhouetted and sinking like a seed,
the water drinks him down. We circle back and there he is—
buoyed up and newborn, glistening like a grin.