

MEETING FOR THE FIRST TIME

A Poem

Valerie Vickers

Meeting For The First Time

Gusts of wind sweep across a moonscape
of debris on this deserted beach, now littered
with bits of shells, seaweed, trash and
a body, limp, eyes closed.

Such delicate white and silver feathers,
a black cap, tomato-red beak and feet.
I cry as I cradle your broken body,
meeting you for the first time.

I search my guide to find your name--
Arctic Tern, a bird who navigates the planet
from Pole to Pole over many months
to follow the sun.

You may live for decades in noisy colonies,
mate for life, nest and give birth to hatchlings
on the tundra before *dread*, the time
of quiet when a colony migrates.

Ah, the fish, crustaceans, you can ingest
as you skim the oceans, glide and hover
on sea breezes, sleep in midair.
No boundaries limit you except

the fishing line that wraps your wing,
cutting deep into your flesh.
I lay your body to rest
as clouds part for the sun to find you.

