

**Adult entry: Charlene Mark**

**Email: markcharlene261@gmail.com**

**Category: Literature (Poetry)**

**Title: Sustaining Tuna, Sustaining Our Nation**

**“Where the Tide Sustains the Nation”**

Not out of ease, nor borrowed pride,  
But from the truth we cannot hide,  
We cast our lines in waters wide  
A nation’s fate rides on the tide.  
No gentle myth, no softened claim,  
No distant hope, no hollow name,  
But something fierce, alive, the same  
A living pulse, a steady flame.

The ocean breathes our history,  
Its currents write our destiny,  
From coral roots to open sea,  
It binds our past to what will be.  
Each wave that breaks upon the shore  
Echoes the lives that came before,  
And whispers still forevermore  
Protect, sustain, and seek for more.

And in its depths, so vast, so free,  
Lies not just fish—but sovereignty,  
Not empty blue, but treasury,  
A source of strength, security.  
For every shoal of silver light  
that moves beneath the dawn’s first sight  
Carries within its silent flight  
the means to stand, the will to fight.

Foreign sails upon our sea,  
Not theft, but chosen strategy,  
Not loss, but shared economy,  
A structured path to dignity.  
We do not yield, we set the terms,  
Through watchful eyes and legal forms,  
Through measured laws and practiced norms,  
A system strong against all storms.

A pact of strength, not charity  
A contract shaped deliberately,  
A claim upheld responsibly,  
A balance struck intelligently.  
No blind surrender to the wave,  
No reckless gift, no passive grave,  
But active choices, firm and brave,  
To use the wealth the ocean gave.

For this is not some fleeting gain,  
Not coins that fall like passing rain,  
Not momentary, light, or vain  
But lifeblood pulsing through each vein.  
It builds the roads that stretch inland,  
Supports the schools across the land,  
Keeps steady every careful plan,  
And strengthens futures yet unplanned.

Our clinics stand, our children learn,  
Our lights stay on, our engines turn,  
Because the tides continue to earn  
The revenues on which we lean.  
This is the truth beneath debate  
Not something small, not second-rate,  
But something tied to national fate,  
A cornerstone of what we create.

Remove it, and the silence grows,  
Where once the steady income flows,  
A hollow land, a fragile pose,  
Exposed to pressures no one chose.  
No sudden rise, no hidden store,  
No easy path to something more,  
Just empty docks, an idle shore,  
And questions louder than before.

Dependent on uncertain throws,  
On aid that comes and sometimes goes,  
On shifting winds no one controls,  
On promises no one quite knows.  
What once was strength becomes a plea,  
What once was choice, dependency,  
And slowly fades autonomy  
Into a distant memory.

They speak of fleets not yet in sight,  
Of instant power, sudden might,  
Of rising fast to claim the right  
But dreams alone do not ignite.  
For ships are built with time and skill,  
With capital and iron will,  
With knowledge learned and practiced still  
Not conjured up at simple will.

No harbor fills from words alone,  
No industry from seeds unsewn,  
No workforce built from hope unknown,  
No empire rises overnight grown.  
The future must be shaped with care,  
From what exists, from what is there,  
From present strength we choose to share,  
Not empty visions in the air.

The ports that glow with working light,  
That hum with labor day and night,  
That stand as proof of forward sight—  
Are built from choices grounded right.  
And in those docks where engines hum,  
Where labor, skill, and wages come,  
Where steady rhythms never numb,  
The nation's heartbeat is not dumb.

The present beats—not years to come  
A living truth, not just a sum,  
Not theory shaped from where we're from,  
But proof in what we have become.  
Each job, each trade, each learned skill  
Is part of something larger still,  
A network shaped by human will,  
That foreign fleets help to fulfill.

And in the dark, unguarded blue,  
Where unseen vessels cut right through,  
Where no one watches, no one knew  
The cost of absence comes into view.  
For oceans vast and borders wide  
Cannot be kept by hope or pride,  
Without the tools to guard each side,  
The law itself is cast aside.

Without a watch, without a view,  
Without enforcement strong and true,  
The thieves will take what we once knew,  
And leave behind a broken blue.  
Unlicensed nets, unchecked and fast,  
Will strip the future from the past,  
And make the damage built to last  
A silent theft, immense, and vast.

But rules can turn the tide to law,  
And strength can sharpen every flaw,  
Through watchful systems we can draw  
A line that all are bound to awe.  
Licensed fleets, observed and tracked,  
Create a structure firmly backed,  
Where order stands, where rights are stacked,  
Where sovereignty is truly enacted.

What once was loss we now can draw  
A gain through policy we saw,  
A system built without a flaw,  
A future shaped by what we saw.  
A sovereign hand, a global awe,  
Not weakened by an unseen claw,  
But strengthened through a lawful draw  
Of power anchored in the law.

So let the currents carry far  
A nation guided like a star,  
Not broken by what dangers are,  
But steady, certain of its bar.  
Across the waves, through shifting time,  
Through rising doubts and shifting rhyme,  
We build a path, a steady climb,  
A future shaped by reasoned prime.

Not broken by what dangers are,  
Not shaken by each distant scar,  
But knowing deeply who we are  
A people shaped by sea and star.  
Not victims of the ocean's might,  
But stewards of its boundless sight,  
Who turn its depths into a right,  
And claim their place with steady light.

For in each catch, each net, each line,  
We do not yield—we redefine,  
We shape the meaning, we align  
Our present with a grand design.  
What power means is not confined  
To land alone or fleets combined,  
But in the choices we have signed  
A balance struck, a will refined.

For those confined to islands small,  
Surrounded by the ocean's call,  
The sea is not a threat at all  
It is the means to stand up tall.  
Not limitation, but a door,  
Not something less, but something more,  
A path to strength from shore to shore,  
A resource rich forevermore.

Sustaining tuna, day by day,  
Sustaining lives along the way,  
In measured steps, not thrown away,  
But built on truths that choose to stay.  
Each season brings another chance  
To hold the line, to lead the dance,  
Between survival and advance  
A careful, thoughtful, steady stance.

Sustaining not just what we take,  
But what we guard, what we remake,  
The bonds of trust we choose to wake,  
The future paths we choose to make.  
Not lost to dreams that drift away  
Not led by hopes that cannot stay,  
But grounded firm in present day,  
In tides that guide, not tides that sway.

And so we stand upon the shore,  
Not what we were, but something more,  
A nation learning to explore  
The strength within its ocean core.  
Not perfect, no—but standing still,  
With clearer sight, with stronger will,  
To shape the waves, to guide the spill  
Of fortune flowing where we will.

For in the end, the truth remains,  
Beyond the politics and claims,  
Beyond the losses and the gains  
The ocean's rhythm still sustains.  
And those who learn to work its flow  
Will find the strength to rise and grow,  
Not bound by fear, but by what we know  
from these tides, our futures grow.