

## The sea belongs to me

The moon was so dry it turned into a dandelion. Every time you sneezed another star or three shook into existence, embarrassed but unafraid of the dark. Eventually there was no moon left. At the end of this dream you are bodiless.

\*

At the beach the child ate fistfuls of sand which turned to glass in his stomach and spread throughout his fascia. He then could only float on the water, the bottom as far away as the sun. Skin smoother than skin over blood, blood that'll break the pale levy one day—maybe through a bee sting, a slip of wood through the foot, an impatient fist through a glass door. That day will be called something simple, like a seagull or the touch of a knee, soft like a ghost and thin like the spider that turned into a scar on the child's wrist on the other side of the glass door.

\*

Every summer you go to a Delaware beach with your family. Crossing the Bay Bridge is the most different thing you've ever experienced. It conjured a good song on the radio and enough watery blues and pinks to overtake the sun setting over the bay. The backseat is a horizontal space and the bridge arches like a rib of the sky. For a moment the blue is terrifying and endless—the car is about to leave the earth and never come back. This moment doesn't end but digs back into the flesh until next summer. You never think about the bridge on the drive back home.

\*

From the edge of the boardwalk you watched the people gather around the beached whales until the crowd was bigger than the one behind you at the amusement park. The noise from the games and rides sounded thin and far away. You weren't sure when the whales appeared. You were just down there, seated near the water's edge before walking back to the boardwalk. You stooped to wash your feet with the little waist-high showerhead at the top of the stairs and when you straightened there they were. Ten of them.

Did they fall from the sky or were they exhumed from the sand by the family of five with the matching bathing suits?

You couldn't watch anymore. You couldn't bring yourself to walk down there and touch one of them. You left the boardwalk and went home.

\*

The child was left alone on the beach for an hour while the parents took a walk. He found a long stick and started writing in the sand.

*hello*  
*the ocean is here!*  
*the sea belongs to me*

He wrote the last phrase in a looping cursive script. Before the water had the chance to erase the words the esses turned to conch shells. He held them in his hand, held one to his ear, heard the ocean of blood shouting over the ocean in front of him.

The child drew another ess, and another. With a running start he drew the biggest ess he could along the beach and when he looked up a conch shell the size of a house looked back at him. A rushing sound, faint but deep, deeper than bone, was born within the shell. The child walked inside.

\*

This morning you waited at the bus stop like normal except when the bus arrived it wasn't a bus. One of the beached whales came down St. Paul Street and you watched everyone at the bus stop enter the whale without pausing. They walked through the door by the edge of the mouth and you followed them. Inside, you saw normal bus seats fastened to the ribs and you sat in one. The fleshy walls glowed a reddish peach glow, the surrounding traffic a dim conversation.

\*

The child felt his way deeper into the conch shell until there was no more natural light, just hard curving glass walls, darkness, and a sea-deep rushing sound. The walls grew tighter until the child couldn't move any farther. He leaned in for one final push and tripped somehow. He stood up in a room, blueish and pink and filled with a gloaming light. In the middle of the room was a dinner table and around the table life-sized cardboard cutouts of his parents and siblings. Everyone was smiling, looking just past him.

\*

You looked at the riders' faces; the faces were the same. You couldn't tell where the light was coming from but the length of whale was well lit. You thought of the normal bus as a long moving room of windows. Sat near the back and watched people get on and get off and when your stop came you stayed seated.

\*

The child awoke on the beach as his parents returned. They saw he was surrounded by a ring of shells. On the car ride home they stopped for fast food and the child's box of

chicken nuggets was filled with conch shells and he didn't say anything. The floor of the car was sopping with wet sand. By the time they got home the sand was at the child's knees and he was unable to get out of the seat. The parents walked into the house as the child sat in the car and watched the night pour itself into a dark sea that swallowed the car, the house, the block.

\*

Hours and hours later, the whale cycled its last route through the city. You could tell you were back on St. Paul headed toward the harbor. There was no driver, there were no more people. The whale moved steadily through downtown, past the banks and walls of glass and marble steps. It was long dark out but the whale still glowed the same flesh and peach glow. You went inside your body, humming with the road in your bones. You felt the whale reach the harbor, your weight lifted and cupped by the water. The light changed to a bloodless indigo. You closed your eyes. This is the buoyancy of death. When you opened your eyes you were alongside the whale in the lunar depth. You were the lungs of the sea.