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Marine Boy

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MARINE BOY

Of course, most rainy days it's nice:
Judy in the door of her snack van,
drinking coffee, smoking cigarettes, her apron

dangling on its peg, long hair
untied, and Heidi pushing *Swush-ah Swush*
about his feet,

and divers, deliberate lobsters, cleaning his tank.
No one minds the quiet man
come in from the beach to drip dry,

his metal detector propped against the wall.
He winds watches, shakes them,
holds them like shells to his ear.

But raise the sun, fly the colors—Thar she blows!
Greyhounds spout Midwesterners.
Vans and family wagons roll on the lot.

Everywhere kids, whole schools of them,
and summer youth-camp leaders casting nets,
weighing their catch.

All crowd around Marine Boy, elbow
up to his face, short ones
standing on his boots

to peer through his eyes: *Whoah . . . !*
Stingrays ghost through the water, glide by portholes
silent and white.

Purple beds of mussels, urchins.
Anemone gardens in bloom.
Starfish scattered like petals, autumn leaves.

Over there salmon. Over there smelt—a shimmery cloud.
They rap on his contacts: *Hey Octopus*.
Hey you stupid squid.

Then it's snuffle away, leaving noseprints.
It's shuffle off to watch the dolphin show
(popcorn, saltwater taffy, Cokes,

munch munch munch, spill spill),
dolphins leaping, giggling, sommersaulting,
getting kissed by volunteers.

And now Marine Boy's mind is free to wander
off along the boardwalk,
through dune grass,

out to the waves. Fluttering kites.
God, he thinks about the ocean, *that's something*.
That'd be one helluva difficult gig.