

Fall 2014

## Summer, Virginia Beach

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SUMMER, VIRGINIA BEACH

*I.*

When we came upon the rotting corpse  
of the dolphin, it was almost no longer  
a dolphin, muscle melted around the ladder  
of the ribcage, flipper de-fleshed  
to ghost. The tide backed away,  
making apologies.

*II.*

Things the dolphin could have been:

driftwood log expelled from the throat  
of the ocean, chokedamp

a seal sleeping like a god—closing  
her eyes, waiting for this century to pass

vision of my childhood dog lain down

the silence that took shape between us  
after we touched each other

my loneliness in the form of a horse,  
his body gone sour

gray balloon ballasted by the fear  
we rebranded as dignity

rock in the shape of your liver

the ocean's bloated heart, cast out

*III.*

I twisted a tooth from what remained  
of the jaw, cartilage clinging and  
relentless. Minutes, and I tore one tooth  
free—then another, for you, afraid to touch.  
We walked away with the wind  
between us, teeth huddled in my pocket.  
I kept them both.