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## Aquarium

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# Kaneko: Aquarium

## AQUARIUM

W. Todd Kaneko

Paint a boy's room turquoise and aqua  
so he will dream of the ocean.  
A starfish on the ceiling. A seahorse  
behind the door. The outlines of fishermen  
casting their nets beside the window.  
The backyard cannot contain the soggy  
night—a shadow-drenched shawl  
draped across the glass, obscuring  
krakens in the briny gloom.  
The King of the Sea relishes the depth of  
blankets, his father's tuneless song overflowing  
the kitchen and the dusky taste of saltwater.

Memory is never so simple as talking to fish.  
Guppies and octopi have little to offer  
an old man lost in this pink coral.  
The mythological parts of the brain:  
hippocampus, amygdala, crown chakra—  
they swallow quilts and mermaids,  
leaving only manatees and nakedness  
in the reef. Perhaps Atlantis was imagined, or  
perhaps it was invented by scurrilous eels,  
a lure for seahorses stampeding and crashing,  
swelling like high-tide, like a whale's lullaby  
trickling over the rim of a seashell.