

## Sea Cucumbers

*Holothuria forskali*

I go to the sea when I'm lousy with sleep  
startled, half-dreaming, beneath  
one-part waking to three-parts deep.  
Tonight, I walk down to the harbour  
past the catcalls, the men, the neon takeaways  
great thighs of kebab meat pivoting in lit windows.  
I push my body into the water  
to hide under the cuff of the waves  
lay, arms folded  
watching fish turn their silver.  
I am their inmate:  
drifting over them as we roll. We blow  
and are a kiss blown back.  
Through a blur of spit in my goggles  
I study leopard-dotted sea cucumbers  
fat, thick, huge as porno cocks in the greasy water.  
I watch one pour itself into a rock, observing  
this beautiful punk  
unchaining its skin, liquefying.  
When I surface, the men  
lean over the harbour wall.  
I recall a film I saw on the telly  
accidentally when I was eight  
where a woman gets gang-raped  
on a pin-ball machine.  
The harbour men  
flick their cigarettes, staring  
starting down the steps.  
Disco lights pucker, slip.  
Everything is inconsistent.

Anna Selby