

Death and Their Debris

Russell Hirsch

Life force leaks down
clay cliffs at Tower Beach
and pools, clear and cool,
at my feet;
soaks the fur of the
sea otter
I nearly trod on.

Poor thing—
its body spliced,
ribs revealed,
a cross section of what it
used to be.

I crouch over
the carcass and
something speaks
in the chalky whisper
of the sea,
chants last rites
in a voice of
beach glass shards
scraping smooth stone:
I passed through,

it tells me,
passed through
passed through—

I was mussels crushed
under your cacophonous heels,
campfire ashes lost amidst sand,
and shells abandoned. I was
sailors smashed against gunwales,
nailed in oak tombs, and I,
the kraken your ancestors
wrestled to myths
in the sedimentary pages
of ancient tomes.

I was the ocean floor, thrust up
at the rate of a fingernail. A glacier,
scraping continents clean.
I wore a black cloak and bison horns,
scythed the prairies with a Tyrannosaur rib,
swept back prehistoric seas.

I was land-fish leaving water,
crawling millions of years to reach
shore and millions more to settle in
sky, a fossil among the birds
who return now,
to the beach,

to the feast
of otter that I
offer at your feet.

So, move along.
Keep me in mind,
for we shall meet again.

But fear not.
Rather, take notice of raven, there—
how she hops and pecks at a clam.
I pass through but
a beginning,
a beginning
lingers here.