

Shells Beneath the Sand

I wake up in the dark
To sand in my mouth and the sound of a million limping limbs
Scales brushing against my belly and the nape of my neck
A careless kick sends me back to sleep

I pry my eyes apart.
Something is different. Something reveals endless echoes of arms and legs.
White. Sunlight Ripping through the darkness.
And even though it hurts—makes my stomach curl up and my eyes drip till they're dry
I can't feel it.
But the sand burns until

I blink

And hear the shore drown beneath the tide.

I blink

And hear feathers clamber to the sand.

I blink

And hear eyes watch the world shake.

They blink.

And I move.

Waves toss light along my shell as they curl into themselves
Begging me to sprint
Beckoning me to dance with them
I'm just learning to crawl, though

I'm just learning how tempting it is to stop
Because I'm safe

But they can pin my legs.
They can snap my neck.
They can drag me through the sand.

You extend your hand to me

I look to my left.

No one's here.

I look to my right.

No one's here.

I can't look behind me, so I look ahead.

I can't look beyond you, so I look at you.