

CHILDHOOD No. 4

Dwight W. Tanner

Bottom planted in the sand,
minute granules dried
on tawny child's legs crystalline,
feeling warm summer on her back.

Mother face down
beside her,
pink and smelling of olive oil.

"Can I cover you with sand mummy?"
The child annoys
the mother creature
and is sent off to swim alone.

Walking to the water's edge
feeling waves lick her toes
with green foamed tongue,
she ventures alone.

Water rising with each step
climbing to her knee thigh crotch,
each step sending goose bump warning signals
to remaining unsubmerged flesh.

Walking farther
cold water reaches underarms
causing slick nipples to become taut.
One final plunge
washes away both sand and olive oil,
looking up from below
seeing only green. The sun is lost
in the liquid realm.

Walking further
the light grows dim,
alone beneath calm green water,
mother sleeps quietly on the beach.