

Fisherman, 66, Killed by a Leaping Swordfish while Boating with his Wife near Fanning Springs

I.

He's saying he'd never use a net that could kill a dolphin. *Dolphins have souls and are nearly human--* he says, when the swordfish collides, arrow-like, with his temple. The water slips calmly beneath them as always. She's unsure of what's happened. In shock, joining him where he's spread on the floor of the boat, she leans her mouth close to his to scream his name and knows that in the next instance she will be screaming alone. But for now, he's smiling. He's holding his breath like a fish in a net as his head empties onto the bottom of the boat. Then he's humming, as if he's alive and well. The sun is full on his puckering, dimpled belly. It's with saltwater hands that she holds him, skirt washing over his body gritty with sand, forehead oily from the sun and tells him, *you're ok, you're ok.*

II.

As his limp body smacks down into the bottom of the boat, his memory jolts backwards in time; five years to be precise. He's standing behind her at the stove. With no decent catch of the day, they've bought a dozen king scallops. Humming, she arranges them like points on a clockface in the pan. His arms are around her waist, his chin on her shoulder. She reaches a hand behind her to pat his cheek before moving him out of her way, and he brings it to his mouth for the taste of chili, coriander, coconut cream. He hasn't thought about those scallops in years but now his head is aching from the anticipation. It's as though his head could burst as she turns them over with a spitting fanfare and they're so lovely he could cry – this heat rushing through the air – her hands that he can taste.