

Mary Margaret Meehan

BEACHCOMBER

NHP031

The anti-bacterial soap a nurse
Requires for me to cross into your hospital room
Foams on my hands like sea spume
Ribboning across the beach,
The bubbles marking the passage of a wave.
In these sandy runnels,
I see how the crest of each swell
First strokes the pebbles, then flattens
And races towards the sentinel dunes
Until the sucking tide drags it back,
But I can find no such timeless chronicle
In your face's furrows,
Only rivulets and pools of shadow.
Your chemo monitor bleats,
And I hear a seagull shrilling,
Plunging to the flotsam,
Rising with a stubborn clam,
And dropping the armored pith
To shatter on crags like broken teeth above the surf.
I wonder if I squeeze your cold hand hard enough,
Will it be like the rock we watched at twilight
Turn into a turtle and scuttle into the darkening sea?