

Love at the swash line

My youngest child is dancing
with the happiness of being awake.

His warm limbs clamber on me
as he sucks on a bottle of milk.

We are at the beach early
to watch for whales at low tide,
their spouts blowing when they travel
together as a family in line.

My little one paddles
in the shallow water looking for fish,
I am overwhelmed
with panic and love.

Collecting plastic along the swash
line requires a noble love.

I'm shaking a strainer to remove
debris and spill sand in its wake
while my boy decorates

a castle with tiny red caps from soy fish,
cable ties from events,
bubble stickers, blue caps off milk.

Those tiny soy fish,
so easy to consume, create a deadline
for the real fins, gills and scales
swimming against the tide.

He picks up tile guides
from building sites that fill the tide
washed from bathroom renovations

to houses we love to love
down stormwater drains we hate
until we march the swash line
for our morning beach walk.

We are barely awake
from our perfect life's dream
in this land of honey and milk.
We've forgotten that the stormwater
feeds the fish.

A five pointed bubble sticker
is no match for a starfish
though the glitter on these party favours
creeps across the tide
like a satellite excluded from the night
sky's trail of milk.

We might think they mimic
the ancient stars we love,
but we can't blame a satellite
for fading stars left in its wake.

Better to be wishing we had not cast light
into the skyline.

The next night a storm sweeps
up the coastline
leaving the ocean pool
full of frantic fish.
A waterspout forms
but no one is awake
to see it. The world protected
by darkness and high tide
where everything is connected by forces
more than love:
the elements, the formidable sea,
the resources we have milked.

The waterspout descends into a rockpool
full of spilt milk.
With spinning wind and cloud it draws a line
between the sky and the ocean below
as a gesture of love.
Meanwhile my little boy collects
plastic forks disguised as cuttlefish.
The swash leaves
a sentence
where the waves
lap at high tide.
The utensils of takeaway meals
are left like gifts at the ocean's wake.

Calm returns to paint the sea turquoise milk in the storm's wake
then the gleaning continues, we collectors love the cleansing tide.
Plastic cassata writes lines in the swash and the small fry hope for fish.