

Starfish



You sit alone as a painted asteroid, folded.
Your name sounds like one, both floating
in from the unknown.

Sidelong asteroidea,

do you carry a fresh message
about love or conquest, one we have not heard
before, perhaps the secret lyrics to a song
that solves low tides

and war when sung?

Is the secret paper folded into your long limbs,
your skull-shorn head, bare
as having returned from the great war
between cockle and nautili?

Do you cup a past of seawind
encased in glass, floating
the sundried future into shore
like a fragile mandala

of many-colored sands?

Retelling our histories
that sometimes took place, or didn't.
Was it a red tide of blood waves,
ocean stars falling and left out to rot

like so many corpses?

After the battle the world denied existing,
did you cradle the survivors
in your pentaped, your astral gaze,
your face-cradled palm?

Were they like abandoned children
in need of cradling —
your painted cheek, your sidelong star?

A grande odalisque

in the reverie of their adoration,
were you tragic?
Did they know you are toxic
to those who try to catch you, eat you,

but grow stronger every night
submerged? Do they know we see
our reflections in your body,

that you do not need us
to create, as we do you?