

Ladder

by [Steve Lautermilch](#) in the [November 29, 2011](#) issue

I walked down to the shore this morning,
 sun still low on the sea;
another had been there before me,
 making tracks
that made straight for the waves.

Brown pelicans came with their ripples and ribbons;
 sanderlings and sandpipers
kept darting, drilling the sand; under a breaker
 a conch lay broken and blazing,
a ladder curving back to the deep.

A pair of burred pufferfish, hides starred and striped,
 were curing to tanned leather,
lips and eyes sewn tight in the glare.

 Then a four-wheel came, and exhaust
and dark clouds swept the ocean away,

leaving only the sun at my feet,
 following the swells in and out,
each step
 stamping a small fire in the wet,
the burn of the surf too bright now to face.