

## Underwater

by [Elizabeth Lund](#) in the [October 25, 2016](#) issue

The challenge was easy then:  
dive off the boat at high tide,  
swim down, down till you touch  
the white sand, then translate  
the messages signaled from above.

I remember sitting on the bottom,  
watching the greenish sun wobble  
or trade one shape for another  
until the sky became a watercolor map  
that only my cousin and I could decipher.

Each wave made the thin paint  
shimmer, another wash of light  
rippling across the canvas.  
Nothing looked the way it should,  
and sounds—like poorly aimed arrows—

deflected off the surface.  
Yet when she leaned over the side  
of the boat, arms waving like seaweed,  
I knew what she meant. *Stay there.*  
*Go this way. I'm the queen.*

We didn't need words, not when  
an invisible chain ran from boat to sand,  
a family secret that flowed through  
our veins, an ancient script tattooed  
on our fingers, long before we were born.

Soon enough my lungs would burn  
and I'd kick toward the surface,  
reclaiming the world of sound.

Salt never stung, as I recall,  
until I broke through the swells.

*The sky is mine. I own the sun.*

*Hold your breath, hold it.*

We understood metaphor then.