

# 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.