

## CATHERINE TUFARIELLO

### *Conch*

On the middle shelf of the glass-and-chrome credenza  
In the dining room there was a heavy shell  
Brought back by a family friend from the Bahamas.  
Flanked by an ashtray and the dinner bell,  
From the outside it was homely and forbidding,  
Its spiny turrets always facing up.  
But its underside could not have been more different,  
Fine-grained and shiny, like a china cup.

A marble staircase spiraled through the center,  
Descending to a chamber lined with pearl.  
But because the stairwell quickly got too narrow  
Even for the fingers of a little girl,  
Whatever lay inside stayed safely hidden,  
Tucked in the darkness at the heart of it.  
She shut her eyes and listened at the entrance,  
Till she was almost small enough to fit.

### *Riddle*

Like man I was made    half deathless, half mortal,  
formed of thin swan's wings    and thighbone of bear,  
begotten like him    by a warm wind blowing,  
mere bone without    my marrow of air.

Now silver keys open    my single chamber.  
Any can finger them;    few can unlock  
the wonder within it    and no one can enter.  
Dancers and mourners    move to my clock.

Riddled by man    and myself a riddler,  
I bear his burden    and carry his breath,  
piercing his side    with sorrow's sword,  
with pleasure that shivers    on a sharp cliff.