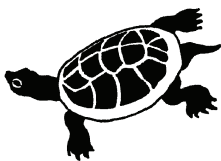


Fifty Jigsawed Bones

A Sea-Turtle's Life



Gail Sher

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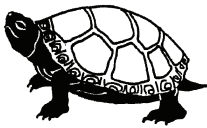
beyond the lagoon 18

a yearling sleeps 39

the smell of water 44

washed up — dead 53

her earthly scent





expelled by the surf

nosing the sand

tasting the red ploughed sand

wild, skittish

shedding the sea

its alabaster light

snout to sand
along the beach
pausing, her oval shadow

breast-stroke slow

among the tangled weeds

her grunt above the backwash



moonlight shears the rustling grass

a lone raccoon

its prowling shadow

dome to earth, gut to sky

wheeling overhead

the seagull's thighs

afterwards in the hollow

the whirr of stones

the echo of slow water

in the scrub

above the waterline

a skeleton



bloated with eggs —

her belly

then his

delicately the urn

under her tail

too close to the marked high tide

shallow pit

swollen with eggs

this burgeoning Easter morning

in shreds beneath the sky
one hundred globes
of soft white parchment



silent night, silent sea

she blinks, peers . . .

her saucer silhouette

turtle . . . moon . . .

face to face

at the water's edge

flying through shallows

chased by waves

steadily her paws

just before its crash
the wave's
well-defined rim

beyond the lagoon



clear skies, calm waters

the little nest covered & hidden

quietly bakes in the sun

an embryo steep
in the dark
wedged securely

morning sunbeams

flatback tracks

hidden in the high water

grazing the island

hovering on a thin breeze

the sound of an approaching oar



first one, then pop!

a few false starts

igniting the clutch

hot June night

a spasm of squirming

up the chamber's flask-shaped neck

tap tap scritch

a bottle-cap body

stretching, wiggling into dawn

bop! a head

keyow! a gull

phloop! into a seaweed patch



thousands, by the light of the moon
scampering toward
the light of the moon

now none

now millions

scurrying among the pebbles

just after dusk

the squiggly pack

covered with flying sand

caked with sand, clobbered with sea
picked up, spun about
the water's doily-edge



glare —

not moon —

the turtle stops

pink sand

lizard's mouth

wingbeat close behind

snip snip

a shadow severs

beneath the ghostcrab

clack, click-clack

turtle's tail drifts

into the tide



sprint, little turtle

don't stroke the water —

let your flippers fly

shadow above

movement below —

quick!

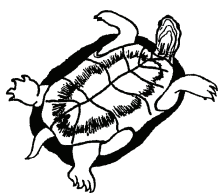
whitecaps whirl, breakers build
from their billowy faces
dark little eyes

snap

gulp

eyes ahead & steady

a yearling sleeps



the raft drifts
sun beams down
on the August pasturage

rocked by wind, rolled by current
in your sargassum cradle
foreflippers tucked

splop! up for air

a baby crab, a water strider

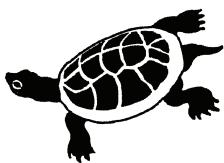
whoosh . . . the wave recedes

scree! scree!

from the bushy raft

gull plucks her dozing dinner

the smell of water



dark coral cave
old turtle sleeps
through the sunny day

under a ledge, under a pipe

scraping, scratching

her faraway expression

brown & crested

tiny dinosaur

still sunning

on the bottom sand
nudged beneath a rock
green turtle's sea-washed shell



one female, one male

as they mate

the other seven

scraping, thrashing

two shells submerged —

their mutual gasps for air

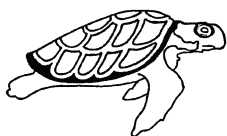
his grappling nails

her deeply-notched scars

after dark in the unstable mud

shell gouged, shoulders slashed
she drags her body
away from the bull

washed up — dead



flippers tied . . .

the slow boat back

her bloody, sliver-moon eyes

sewage & petrol

their shifting film

inching up her parched caged body

swaying in the sky

strummed by the breeze

her flat gonglike belly

dawn:

scooping out blood

forcing the ladle

down

into the beast

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