

By Urvashi Bahuguna

*When they open our bodies, they will find the whales.*  
Kallamozhi, Tamil Nadu

We are surprised when they open  
and find: a length of plastic like a  
river swimming within us. We did  
not see ourselves this way.

Hearing them speak, it appears we  
are to blame. We are trying to  
remember what we ate for dinner.  
Who lived within us and took us

to shore? We have wives waiting  
at home. We know better than to  
wait. They let us sit on our sides  
like that one ship who lost its way.

We are turning into the boulders,  
but no water comes to circle us  
in mercy. We are not sure they  
sewed us back up. Are we

imagining this: small feet climb  
within us to marvel at complete  
darkness. As they exit, a guttural  
sound, close to breathing. A

woman is wiping our eyes with  
a cool washcloth. In the distance,  
a man opening and closing a  
white light many times.