

## Okinawa, 2016

In the years before you died, you lived  
on the island where the kijimuna eat the eyes  
of fish, and seeing the sea is inescapable.

By the time I made the many flight trek,  
you'd become boyish again in linen shirts  
and water shoes. Surf-polished, less

proving. Leaving the airport you said,  
*you've gotten too serious*. Maybe you were right—  
my focus had been land-locked,

mountainous, rigid. I could not stop  
looking towards the tidewater. When we did go  
to the beach, I waded into a cove

of urchins and had to slow-shuffle out while the tide  
slapped me in the chest. I tried to explain  
this had been the way of things for me

lately. Every step was spiked—an impaler  
waiting. You knew what I meant, but you  
weren't going to get lyrical about it.

We left, and went to a triptych of gardens,  
coastal balm thick in the trees. We left coins  
on Buddhas. You stopped

in a pottery village, bought a pair  
of shisa dogs, and gave me instructions  
how to ward my home. That night

at the restaurant, you ordered for us.  
When uni came to the table, you said,  
*Just eat it* and I knew you meant all of it.