

Something You Should Know

is that as a kid, I once worked at a pet store.
I cleaned the cages
of small animals like turtles, hamsters,
rabbits, and hermit crabs.
I watched the hermit crab continue
to grow, molt, shed its skin and scurry across
the bottom of the aquarium to find a new shell.
Which left me afraid for the small creature,
to run around all exposed that way, to have
to live its entire life requiring something else
to feel safe. Perhaps that is when I became afraid
of needing anything beyond myself. Perhaps
that is why, even now, I can want so desperately
to show you all of my skin, but am more afraid
of meeting you, exposed, in open water.

what the ocean said to the black boy

you know how to swim boy?
i know you can float
felt you bobbing along my surface
before you even knew you could

they say you just a conflagration
of bad intentions boy
they use me to put you out
don't want you burning this place down

again

they see
a little too much l'ouverture in you
a little too much turner
a little too much of what they already had enough of

what you see when you look at me?
you know how many of y'all I swallowed?
you just a drop of ink
on this canvas

boy

they call me blue because
they don't understand how the sky work
they call you black because
they don't understand how god work

For the Boys at the Bottom of the Sea

We are charred vessels
vestiges of wood & wonder
anchors tethered to our bows.
It is the irony of a ship burning
at sea, surrounded by
the very thing that could

save us.