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Seaside Cologne

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Seaside Cologne

Break down that night
into closely connected parts, interlocking
smells, sights and sounds. Collect

his seaside cologne, his breath
breezing over the top of my hair,
the slowly rocking dance steps
of adolescence, his arm
embracing my waist, the nervous chatter
clouding the room. Once separate,

save them all—each
little layer in a memory, each
black and white note in a song.

Stack the parts in suitcased rows,
you can unpack them when you have time.

At great distances, music is muffled
and distorted as we listen. Driving away,
the radio station fades, music scatters.
Here, it is quieter, fewer tones ring clearly
across the distance. Pick up the conch
and listen. Inside, it is just

your own pulse. It will lose
its shape, this memory, the ropes holding
it together will fray, its insides drifting
apart. Doesn't matter, doesn't matter.
You sift through the details like shells.

Caitlyn Closser, '06