

# Deep Water: 'Poem with Comb Jellies' by Sarah Kilch Gaffney

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The great American poet William Carlos Williams famously said, "No ideas but in things." He didn't mean that poems shouldn't contain ideas, but that concrete things can stand for ideas and make them solid. Great poems break this advice all the time, but there is something to it. Poems most often pay attention to the physical world, or take an idea or feeling and make it physical.

In this week's poem, Sarah Kilch Gaffney shows us a thing: a comb jelly. In this case, the speaker's fascination with comb jellies stands for her youth, her coming-of-age, and the danger that lies near the center of even the most familiar things.

## Poem with Comb Jellies

*By Sarah Kilch Gaffney*

I remember being young,  
cupping the translucent  
globes in a semi-submersed  
palm, held close, caught,  
but still elementally afloat.

One summer, a tourist boy  
bet me five dollars to swim  
out and touch a Lion's Mane  
the size of my circled arms:  
he must not have known  
how much that cold,  
dark water, delicate,  
stinging flesh, was home.

*Gibson Fay-LeBlanc is Portland's poet laureate. Deep Water: Maine Poems is produced in collaboration with the Maine Writers & Publishers Alliance. Poem copyright © 2016 Sarah Kilch Gaffney. It appears here by permission of the author.*

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