

LOVE POEM IN WHICH MICHAEL PHELPS RACES A SHARK

On the way to the wedding, we pass two men
in inflatable shark costumes
fighting in the parking lot of a strip club.

So, this is New Jersey. September,
swimming in the late summer air.
The boardwalk full of young romantics,

giant teddy bears, kisses coated with powdered sugar.
I remember little of the service, mostly drinking
amongst the topiary. Asking myself who won the fight.

When Michael Phelps raced a shark
I am not sure that anyone won. The shark,
kept in a glass container, awaiting the starting gun,

stopped pushing water through its gills,
began allowing itself to die. Whenever I imagine Michael Phelps,
he is always

sitting in the dark of a mansion, wearing nothing
but his Speedo and his goggles, his medals
and swim cap. A bottle between

his feet as watches the moon drown
in his pool. I always pictured his greatness
as hurting. The sea as a long canvas

pulled across his backyard. There's something
so tender in the tragedy of spectacle.
That for a second they were neck and neck.

Man and myth. I'm sure the two men
undressed and held each other. Possibly cried.
The stars coming on above us, like always.