

Stranded

At 10:10 a.m., children everywhere
stand encircled by rainbows/
tornados of plastic fins/
shards, a frozen menagerie I found myself
obligated/ inspired to collage for you
even yesterday, 9 p.m., plastic toys awaiting
trash day, glued to the curb like
dead/ photographed fish.

At midnight, I read about the remote
South Pacific island that has now
collected more plastic than
any other place on earth.
I told myself I was absolved—
the toys were waiting to be rescued,
I was born into a booming plastic industry, was/
am a child hosting a dark bird upon my head.

Yet a little after 1 a.m.,
a clownfish maniacally unsheathed
repurposed disposable razors,
anemones flared life into old toothbrushes,
burst into my heart with the scrubbing
white arms of coral.

Stranded here,
watching you dream,
I reach for the bag of bread crumbs
clutched in your hands.

Natalie Tomlin

Inspiration: *Untitled Collage 1*, by Henry Brown