American Life in Poetry
American Life in Poetry: Column 916
BY Kwame Dawes

In “Beachcomber Nocturne”, Lupita Eyde-Tucker beautifully wrestles with the complex relationship that we sometimes have with nature, by first acknowledging that there is a strange colonizing impulse behind the manner in which we apprehend and love the natural world, by seeing it in our own image. Her awe, however, is also captured elegantly in her sense of helplessness as a witness and a creature of this grand design. For some reason, I find myself coming back to the phrase, “the ocean’s purple evening”, so I consider the poem yet another of those “odd gifts” the world offers us.

Beachcomber Nocturne
By Lupita Eyde-Tucker

Pink seafoam leaves odd gifts for me to find:
a puffed-up man-o-war, a mermaid’s purse,
empty lady slippers, Sargasso weed,
as if these things could fill my human needs.

I push my toes beneath the cold, damp sand,
observe the ocean’s purple evening.

A loggerhead rides up and heaves her bulk
to dig a hole, deposit future in the dark.

Until she’s done and slips back out to sea
I sit and match her labored breath to mine.

This sea: a Chevy engine revving high
reminding me how everything’s design.