

Charles Harper Webb

## MARCO POLO

The swimmers who halloo his name  
honor the Khan's Venetian friend, I assume  
as I belt my son into his Safe T. Seal  
life-vest. I guess they haven't heard,

the great Marco was a great fraud  
who never made it east of Baghdad.  
"Good. Kids need heroes," I think,  
towing my boy across the pool.

A kid with a red-rash goatee and eyes  
squinched shut grunts "Sorry,"  
as he thwacks me, then sloshes forward  
in (it seems) aquatic Blind Man's Bluff.

"Marco!" he shouts. "Polo!" his friends  
roar, dodging his lunges and gropes  
as, yards away, the ocean's glittering blue  
heaves and humps toward Xanadu.

Diving, at dawn, with parrotfish and yellow  
tang, I felt myself part of the sea's  
great fellowship. Now I'm more alone  
than *It*, who foghorns "Marco," homing in

on a pink micro-suit, a khan's ransom  
of flesh he's privileged to clutch wherever  
his hands run aground. How can he know  
that his course leads straight to me?

"Daddy!" my son shrills, "Shark attack!"  
Great white adult, I chomp my snorkel,  
slide my mask into place, and as I make  
my shark-descent, allow myself one

glimpse of teenaged skin from my own  
past that grows more distant as I sink,  
and some lost kid calls—above the water,  
or below?—"Marco, Marco...."

