

The Turtle

The boy feels a tug and pulls it out, thinking—
Fish—until he sees the glinting hook
Pushed cleanly through its mottled mouth,
The gold and green a garish ornament to pain.
He bends to hold the head and free it.
But the turtle hisses and contracts,
The fishing line tightening.
Not knowing what else to do,
He ties the turtle to a tree,
Because there is an old belief that in a storm
A turtle slips its shell in white light,
Exposes taut skin, a deeper green.
He prays for charged hook,
Hovering a moment,
And then the turtle vanishing,
A whole and naked body under ground.

Robert A. Kelly