The Metal Detectors

Jaya Savige

He sang of old coins buried beneath the dunes,
to the north of the island, near the old artillery battery.
For forty years he rowed for mullet north, and south,
where the war epic motion picture was shot recently.

To the north of the island, near the old artillery battery
we played hide and seek as kids in acres of bladey-grass.
Where the war epic motion picture was shot recently
no one was allowed within a thousand metres.

We played hide and seek as kids in acres of bladey-grass
behind the northernmost bunker with the stop sign.
No one was allowed within a thousand metres
of the concrete dune, its famed middens of live shells.

Behind the northernmost bunker with the stop sign,
he buried the tin he put his youth in, a stone’s throw
from the concrete dune, hidden among the live shells.
I am done trawling, he said. I feared unexploded ordinance.

He buried the tin he put his youth in; the stones knew
about his bushed heart, its unreliable iambs.
I’m done trawling, he said. Then the unexplored co-ordinates,
vast schools flashing before us like escapee payloads

from his bushed heart, its unreliable iambs.
For forty years he rowed for mullet north, and south.
Vast schools flashed before us like escapee payloads
while he sang of old coins, buried beneath the dunes.