

TARA DEAL

## Strike

After reading about all the tropical  
varieties of reptiles  
that thrive  
here,

I am ready  
or so I think  
to see the shape of snake

at every ripple in the water.

I crave to come up close  
to something alive below the surface  
of this opaque milk water  
cold as paper in the morning

and so, of course, I find it—  
slim, small,  
the color of mud clinging  
to a mangrove root—  
a hazard so slight

it's hard to believe  
how fast it must

have unfolded.