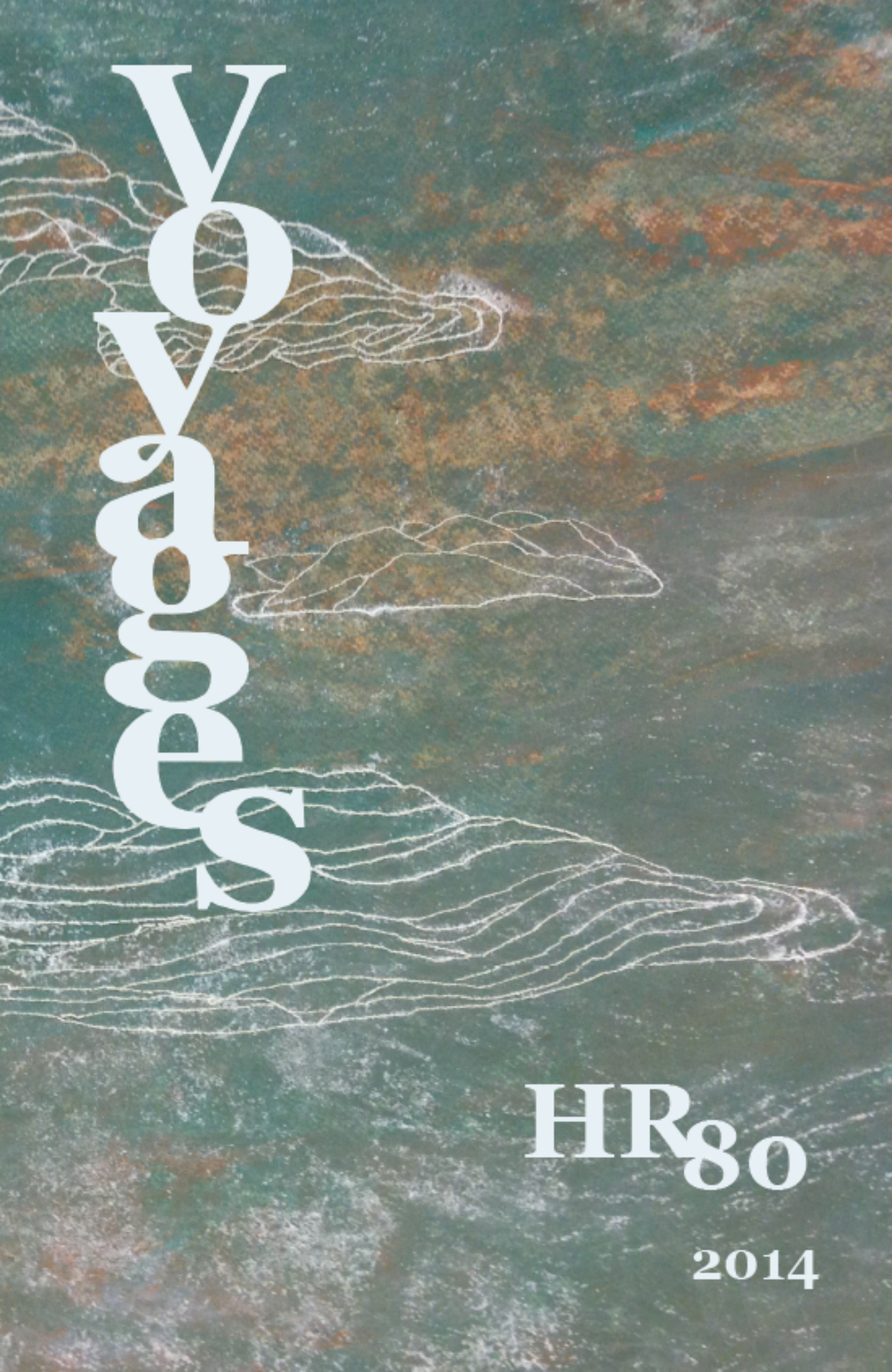
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# Voyages

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# Letter from the Editors

*Hawai'i Review* is produced in the heart of the Pacific Ocean. This ocean home—a vast network of histories, intimacies, and reciprocities—inspired the issue in your hands. Our writings are neither remote nor stranded. Voyages are written and rewritten in our bodies. Water and flesh.

For this issue we asked, how do others write these (e)scapes? Where does the desire for voyage begin, burn, and end? What do we have left when we have gone?

Away is away is away.

What about return?

Answers to these questions were often frightening and revelatory; they often required new journeys.

We invited submissions that navigate voyages in all their strangeness and difficulty. What we found is that no voyage goes exactly as planned. We are re-mapped and re-routed. Our bodies suffer the wear of salt and improvisations. And we are grateful. We are given new directions, new stars.

Safe passage through these waters.

*first lines first lines first lines first lines first lines first lines first lines first lines*

My great grandmother so afraid

In the Gulf, I am a shadow, upside down,

My cousin is bloody roses tatted / on her ankle / her knuckles

I grew up in the ahupua‘a of Waihe‘e, in Ko‘olaupoko, United States zip code

No one believed me when I said my dog was poisoned.

Fog swirls on O‘ahu’s Pali. The clouds open up, the earth welcoming in

# Our waka

Turn to the left, Ma says.

A person of mixed-race descending

I had listened to my father tell me stories about Tokelau since I was small

*to be held* the most cardinal craving

Our steersman left us

Undahneet da watah get plenny dead man’s bones.

my uncle tells the story

Three weeks before I left for Bangkok, I started running. I got up every

My mother was a Nicoya, a Nicaraguan, but when I was a child, I did not

One day it happened, and I felt what they had been saying all season long—

However the red coat falls—

*first lines first lines first lines first lines first lines first lines first lines first lines*

*first lines first lines first lines first lines first lines first lines first lines first lines*

there is Tupaia,

**Nā pua purau o Vaimā / The hau blossoms of Vaimā**

what predetermined intention

George Clooney as clueless daddy

Shy mollymawks brought us to the Diego Ramirez Islands. With permission

Twenty rows of twenty steel lightning rods checker the field, spaced

In which what is far away is made ~~nearer~~ nearer

Between the faint varicose veins and the stretch marks my body is like a map of

Ahead in the weed-strangled median, two white crosses—one festooned

**What I am prepared to offer you is**

What do we do on a long car ride? We listen to the radio.

We left at the beginning of summer, figuring three months of good

Her pager went off first. He glanced at the travel alarm clock next to his

I had no problem with her taking a bath. I encouraged it, thought maybe it

but i saw that other with copper ringlets

**The Pacific is changing.**

*first lines first lines first lines first lines first lines first lines first lines enjoy!*

# Contents

# 2014 Ian MacMillan Writing Awards Judges' Notes on the Winners

**POETRY**
Leilani Tamu, 2014 Poetry Judge

First Place: "American Homelands"
by Lyz Soto

Rhythmic, honest, complex, and heartfelt: in its diversity and range this poem represents the work of an accomplished writer, who has mastered the art of weaving together a variety of poetic techniques to reflect on the interrelated themes of ancestry, genealogy, and identity. Individually and collectively the eleven stanzas in this poem provide the reader with a precious opportunity to share in the poet's personal journey of reflection and dialogue with her ancestors. And yet despite the very personal nature of the work, the reader is left with a feeling of universal connectedness: of understanding what it means to chart this body filled with two oceans and one hundred seas. The poet's choice of name for the work is also significant: American Homelands. Taking into account the title of the tenth stanza "Diaspora Homeland," where the poet draws the reader into her sense of "self," one is left with the feeling that for the author the implication of the plurality of her ancestral "Homelands" used in the broad title has in many ways led to the singular experience of trying to navigate one's "Homeland" and always feeling foreign (as per the final line in stanza ten). This poem is beautiful, thought-provoking, and rare—it deserves first-place.

Second Place: "*Megaptera novaeangliae*"
by Rajiv Mohabir

This poem stood out because of the intricate way in which the author was able to gently weave together a range of metaphorical spaces, from the depths of an underwater gulf, to the sonic waves emanating from a space station, to Liberty Avenue, New York City. One of the strengths of this poem was also its simplicity via two line stanzas that carry paragraphs of meaning. Through the use of this mechanism, as well as the inclusion of the author's ancestral language, the reader is provided with an opportunity to gain insight into the sense of dislocation that shapes the lived experience of those who sing *jaat kahan ho*—where is my country. Laden with emotion and yet gentle in its approach, this poem is a fine example of the work of a writer who has many more stories to tell.

Third Place: “My Rosy Cousin”
by Kathy Jetnil-Kijiner

Laced with fiery promise and street suave this poem grabs readers by the scruff of the neck and makes them want to read more. The cadence, verse, and content of this poem are indicative of a rich, raw, and honest voice that has a lot to say and deserves to be heard. The localized and regional inferences in the poem ground it in an urban Pacific discourse and yet the beating heart of the work lies in the very personal nature of the writer’s agenda—cut raw / dripping bloody—this is a poem and author to be reckoned with. Very impressive!

## FICTION

Katharine Beutner & Shawna Yang Ryan, 2014 Fiction Judges

First Place: “Mana‘o from the Prison Notebooks of Ka‘aumoana Enos”
by Donald Carreira Ching

Juxtaposed against the controversial building of O‘ahu’s H-3, “Mana‘o from the Prison Notebooks of Ka‘aumoana Enos” is a richly textured story that presents family relationships and the connection to the land, to history, as equally complicated and vital—and does so with a compelling depth of feeling.

Second Place: “Things Seen and Unseen”
by Meg Eden

The unsettling tone of “Things Seen and Unseen” is beautifully managed—one senses that the narrator sees any change as threatening, but is also unable to pin down quite where the threats originate (in herself? from others? from the crumbling houses?). The story is faithful to the complicated layers of familial relationships, portraying how childhood hurts resonate throughout our lives.

Third Place: “Water”
by Angela Nishimoto

Circling O‘ahu in her car, the narrator of “Water” recounts cycles of sympathy, shame, and betrayal in a relationship in which the narrator has adapted herself to suit her husband, and now finds herself lost. The narrator’s lovely descriptions of the wet island set alongside her return to these painful moments ultimately become a meditation on mortality.

# American Homelands

**Lyz Soto**

1. Kituwah Dreams

My great grandmother  so afraid
of flashing her skin in Alabama colors
hid one half  of her family

at the back
  of a closet in a shoe box.
She tucked stories in an invisible cloak.

There might have been tears
in a bottle.  But her niece
remembers only the box brimming with photographs

her aunt  brimming with stories
under her breath  "do not forget
my memory. Listen to these pictures

with me." I imagine my cousin
still young—before she let my ten year old self ride
her favorite mare—before her hands

turned to limestone and hard pan—before she helped
me leap to the sky—she listened to photographs
in secret behind closed doors.
This is the only story
I know.

2. España Goodbye

I say goodbye
with a tongue thick
between molars and cheek
which is perhaps clouding
my vision.
For you are mostly
imaginary. In half spoken family
lore you live as a conquering

red headed Spanish giant
so I am doubtful of your reality even if

I carry your name
learn the value of a name
the cost of a name
the weight of a name
when they call my name

Soto that once
was de Soto
that once immigrated
to a U.S. territory
and became Soto

so

you don't speak Spanish

why?
My answer in a sour twist
of mouth: I am not really
Hispanic. Please ignore my face

instead ask me
why?
do you not speak Tagalog,
Ilocano, Gaeilge, Tsalagi Gawonihisdi,
Gàidhlig, Français, Deutsch,
or Hakka?

Ask me
why?
is your monolith
tongue squatting
in English?
Then I might say, come
let me tell you
a story.

3. England at Sea

In the twenty-first century, in a *Whole Foods* swollen with organic privilege and fantasies of a better kind of consumption, I imagine citrus as exotic pith when I buy orange juice by the gallon for six U. S. dollars. I wonder if fresh goat cheese might be better than feta. I order a pound of sliced roasted turkey from a cornucopia encased in spotless glass in an ocean of plenty.

In the seventeenth century, some ancestor left home and headed west across the Atlantic sea with no falling edge in a ship that went un-swallowed by monsters on a journey through mountains of water and I wonder if courage was a name or hopeless filled the greater measure and risk went undefined and relative only to death. I have read the words hard tack and scurvy with a slice of orange between my lips. I guess this ancestor: an acquaintance of poverty, looked with fascination held in back teeth at this world's closed eyes turning away the poor tired huddled masses never knowing the word, free.

In the seventeenth century some ancestor chewed trees and houses and walked five hundred miles in four feet of snow through a spiteful wind to find winter squash for his/her love. This ancestor had so many dreams she/he grew extra hands to hold them and I had a dream this ancestor had a vision of his/her children as citizens in the land of Thomas More.

In the late twentieth century some descendent, from a Pacific archipelago unfamiliar with Utopia, journeyed back to a homeland that long ago decided not to recognize some of its children. —You have been away too long. You have changed. You are tan even when the sun hides— And I am not a son, so prodigal has never been one of my stories. I sat dazzled by spires and the roll call of a strange canon, and realized here I will always be foreign and they will never recognize my eyes
as a two-way mirror looking back at them numbering
their peculiar cultural habits.

4. Deutschland/Française Chop Suey ʕ

Always caught
in a middle

bit
of this
bit of that . . .
remember
Great Grandma
Mimi speaking
German with
a French
accent-remnants
of Alsace-Lorraine's
tangled roots.
I remember
this story.
Cousin Linda
practiced German
with her Grandmother.
When she went
to school
her teacher
told her to stop.
She should not
speak French
infused German
and yes
there is a wrong way
for your grandmother
to speak
her native
tongue.

5. Alba Undone

on a bus tour looking
at furry cows in a woolen mill
built for tourists
crouched among overgrown hills
in contemporary antiquated walls
laced with plaid

resembling a cross
between Brigadoon and Braveheart.
        Mine was not to question
        why?

We tried haggis and lived
through the taunting guide telling
us we'd just eaten lungs,
livers, and hearts. Were we not
a queasy lot of stomachs?
But we laughed, rather scoffed,
        Come and try a wee
        bit-o-balut, laddie.

In the middle of Dùn Èideann's
Royal Mile we imagined
some invisible ancestor
        sounding nothing like Montgomery Scott
who lived where many men have lived before
but alas she does not speak
even in dreams.

6. Remember Bulakan, Grandpa?

I don't.
But sometimes I think I see
pictures haunting an oil slick
surface of random puddles.

More than thirty years later
I still find shame creeping
from beneath my collar.
I didn't

understand most of you.
Your words in brisk pidgin shuffle
halted by a stiff eardrum unused-unwilling to hear.
I wasn't

able to pause until your whole face grinned
and you offered twenty dollars for me
to stop running and face you and
I did.

When I was nine I did not
have to look up to meet your eyes
as you called me granddaughter.
I can

imagine your sparse grey hair your dry brown
skin your thick skinned hands your rounded
boxer's back while I read for a living.
I can

almost hear you ask where are the vegetables
in my garden? Where are the calluses on my hands?
When will I work for a living? Grandpa
I try.

I don't
remember Bulakan, Grandpa
but as I peel back these stories
I remember a little more
of you.

7. Kaikolusan Distance

You should be more familiar, cousin.
We should know the scent
of each other's houses.

I will tell you now.
My house smells of fried onion
of dish soap of dog of red dirt
of olive oil of chili pepper and always
of coffee.

How is it across the way?

Tell me
does your house smell of
garlic or patis? Does a wind run
through louvered windows
and bring Frangipani, Ylang ylang,
or Sampaguita in the wake
of its tails?

Is there always cooked rice in a pot?

Do you pray
to ancestors?
Do you keep your ruins
standing do you visit
with arms filled with food?
Do you bring inday-inday
or leche flan to the table?

Cousin, tomorrow I would grow
bitter melon and malunggay
in a garden once filled
with rosemary and thyme.

8. Éire go Brách

You are a blank page
with no first word.
I have no idea where
you begin I am sorry,
but you were lost
somewhere between England
and murder. Forgive me
for not finding your path
home.

9. Colonial Settlers in/from Guangdong

stand in pineapple cannery assembly lines.
Grandma in a cotton apron and cap
with rubber encased hands
etched with juice on metal rollers
and teeth filled with holes, the legacy
of snacking on the job. Packing aluminum cans
on conveyor belts
with slices of fruit for seven mouths
that could never be filled.

Genealogy is a black hole
beyond Hawai‘i shores. Mana‘o au
i kō mākou pilikia are all
tied up in grandmother
who could not speak
of neither the sour
nor the sweet.

Memories stripped of enamel
have acid soaked patina running
a stuck play.

She is ten years old for seventy years
left in the middle of a hungry Pacific mouth
by a father too tired
to take his family home. Guangdong
wanted him returned and daughters
must have been costly difficult baggage.

So grandma consumed her own children
in a froth of rage since she never
found a definition for mother or father
or love in the satchel lump anchored
to her back

and I never asked her to unpack.  Instead
I read Grace Young and The Wisdom
of the Chinese Kitchen and asked strangers
how do I make jook? How do I make gau? How do I make jai?

10. Diaspora Homeland

Chart
this body filled
with two oceans
and one hundred seas.
A thousand islands nestle
between winged vertebrae
of this spine
that sometimes
cowers from flight.

Map
this body filled
with nothing but memories
of long ago feasts
eaten to dust
in lands far far away . . .

. . . and accept  here  I will always be foreign.

11. Descendant Homeland

My dearest Jakob
Aloha e ku‘u keiki kāne
You were carved in the first
break waters of this O‘ahu shore. We
have not yet made it to land. I wish
I had more to give you
but these  are the only stories I know.

# *Megaptera novaeangliae*

**Rajiv Mohabir**

In the Gulf, I am a shadow, upside down,
dark, singing to the coral. The water is heavy

with nutrients, copepods and algae,
I fear the small pebble-pricks

of brain coral scrapes that sting the skin,
or extrude intestines to devour me

leaving whitened bone in the cavity where
folksongs flourished, traveled over 3,500 miles,

a pale record of the fifty-five languages
from the space station, or just the recorded

whale song. From the Golden Record, I sing,
*jaat kahan ho—where is my country—*

and dip my head under break; and delve into standing
on the edge of a body whose songs crumble

into pebbles. On Liberty Avenue, even at home,
no one understands what I ask for when I say *biraha—*

it has two definitions in English, one
is *warrior*, and the other: *loneliness*.

# My Rosy Cousin

**Kathy Jetnil-Kijiner**

My cousin is bloody roses tatted / on her ankle / her knuckles
white as rice / grip the steering wheel / cruise
thru mānoa / sunglasses ignoring those redred lights

My cousin is one cold pepsi one chocolate hershey bar /
the daily ransom for driving me to school / lets make
a quickstop / pitstop / 7eleven / gimme your money /
you live with your parents / you don't gotta pay rent

My cousin is four AM taptaptaps on the window / slurred threats /
Koppeloke kojem en / kwonej loe / passed out on the front lawn /
mom's pissed again / ritto bata tossed between aunties lips /
when will she ever learn / coffee cups and morning gossip

My cousin is bullying / dede you're so stupid / dede you're so useless /
other times she cuts/ straight thru bone / dede you're as white / white /
white as they come / i mean what other marshallese writes /
poetry and plays piano

My cousin goes to college / talks about classes with hawaiian professors
and tongan scholars / tells us tragic samoan love stories and funny
fijian satires / doesn't that sound just like home / doesn't that sound just like
Majuro

My cousin is foreign movie nights / dvds from the sinclair library / porcelain
women and hibiscus lipstick / arched bare backs against dew drop mountains /
thick cigars and smoky brothels / how we swoon over those poetic subtitles

My cousin asked me to write a poem / a poem about her / so i said that i would /
a poem about how i bloomed / inside her voice / how i was also pruned /
cut raw / dripping bloody / just like her ankle red rose

# Manaʻo from the Prison Notebooks of Kaʻaumoana Enos

**Donald Carreira Ching**

I grew up in the ahupuaʻa of Waiheʻe, in Koʻolaupoko, United States zip code 96744. A half-mile ʻākau from the school where my mother taught, one-mile hema of the aunty, a parent, who sold her painkillers in unmarked orange tubes, three miles komohana of the church in Waikāne we would go to on Sundays when my mother felt guilty enough to pray. I met my adoptive mother on one such occasion, three Sundays before Easter, in March.

Dana Lanakila Enos was studying to be a sociologist, conducting interviews with the community in the wake of recent proposals for development along the coast. I was twelve when she found me standing guard outside the women's bathroom. Barely a foot from where I stood, my mother lay passed out on the tile floor, a bottle of oxy rolling from her loose grip. Eight months later, I found myself in Dana's doorway with an empty backpack and not much else.

The first thing Māmā taught me was aloha ʻāina: "We must protect it, we must preserve it. It is a part of us." We would hike up into the mountains. To a spot that overlooked Kāneʻohe Bay and she would tell me stories of the land, of the wahi pana o Koʻolaupoko. "The mokuʻāina, the districts, divide there, do you see it?" she pointed to a far off peak. "Kalaeokaʻōʻio, and then Holoapeʻe, where Pele chased Kamapuaʻa. And Hakipuʻu?" she asked me.

On this particular day, we were sitting on a pillbox, the concrete pitted and tagged with Western obscenity, abandoned to the lanalana that spun their webs inside its carcass. Māmā's hair was woven into a bun, strands fraying loose and draping like Pele's hair. I looked off into the distance at the clouds billowing white across the blue expanse, trying to see if I could make out the image of an ʻīlio. "Kaupē," I said softly, "he would kill fisherman there."

Māmā shook her head. "You are forgetting about Kahaʻi."

I pulled my legs in toward me, dragging my feet across the concrete. "He brought the ʻulu tree," I finally said.

"And Moli'i?"

I shook my head.

Māmā looked at me and touched my chin. She held up my po'o, examining the smear of foundation above my cheek. I had been hiding the bruise since just after lunch that day, stealing the make-up from a classmate's bag, and knew she had been waiting for an opportunity. "Are you going to tell me?" she had asked.

I wasn't sure what to say, so I lied. "I slipped, conked my head on the desk." Not good enough, the interrogation began:

"Your teacher didn't call."

"She didn't see. I didn't want to bother her."

"Who put the make-up on?"

"I did."

"Where did you get it from?"

"A friend."

I was red in the face, sweat gathering in the fold where my chest met my stomach. We sat for a while, listening to the breeze sweeping through the brush behind us. I did not know the winds like Māmā: Kui-lua, Holopali, Kiliua, Ulumano; they were strangers to me. Family to her.

I looked past He'eia Kea pier, toward Kealohi, where the souls of the dead leap into the wide expanse of blue and gray. Their lives judged: Kea or Uli, white or dark. The heiau that was once there is gone now as is the pineapple field that once occupied its place, lost in the commodity exchange. All that is left are tangles of green concealing the still wet of the fishpond. I did not tell her about the fight that day and she did not ask. A part of me wanted to say the words—the things they called me—to tell her how I felt, but I was young. I hid the jokes. The laughter. *Eh, haole boy, wea your real maddah stay?* Inside.

My mother named me Israel Meheula, the adoption papers read Israel Enos, but Māmā gave me Ka'aumoana, deep ocean swimmer, "because," she said, "of the waters you have survived, and those you have yet to face." She was always meticulous with each telling of the mo'olelo of these places and of their sacred histories. It was her belief that in learning, experiencing, and giving one's self to the pursuit of knowledge: "lawe i ka ma'alea a ku'ono'ono," a transformation could take place; that through respect and devotion these stories could find their way into your marrow. After our hikes, on the ride home, listening to her, I could almost see the endless lo'i, the intricate arrangement of stone terraces, the valleys dripping stalk and stem. It helped me to forget my mother, to forget the places she had been. To forget too, that I was different.

I remember playing near Kahalu'u stream bridge when I was a child, watching families hauling up nets heavy with Samoan crab or fishing with bamboo rods.

Often I'd walk along the shore, all the way out, and hide between the mangrove roots. When the tide was low I'd find baby hammerheads still alive, their tails slapping against the sand. I'd watch them for hours, and when finally they lay still, I would touch the thin, rubber flesh of their bellies and press down until I felt the warm red run across my fingernail.

Māmā had the wind in her bones, my mother had something else.

~~~

I turned seventeen the same year my mother committed suicide, two months before completing her court-ordered rehab. She left me her therapy journals, spiral notebooks filled with her chicken scratch ruminations; I had just been accepted into the University of Oregon and Māmā had thought it best if I took them with me. I was more content with boxing them up and leaving them for the mo'o and silverfish. Maybe in a couple years I'd have time to feel sorry for Darcy, but honestly I really didn't give a shit.

The H-3 was also set to open in December of that same year.

"Danny's Highway" was Senator Inouye's 1.3 billion dollar wet dream, penetrating the Halawa and Ha'ikū valley at 80 million a mile. Monolithic support columns imprisoned ancestors, iwi, in concrete while the 38-foot wide freeway separated a women's heiau, Hale o Papa, from the men's luakini; raping the sacred valley of Papahānaumoku. The act was premeditated, conceived as a military transport route between base installations on Mokapu, a sacred land of the ali'i, and Pu'uloa during the Cold War. Thirty-seven years in the making, the time had finally come.

Māmā avoided the protests, she found her own means of resistance: a 35 mm Canon EOS A2 she bought second-hand. She used it to capture what she could. A family friend saw to it that Māmā had access to the site during off-hours. Late at night I could hear her in the spare bedroom, humming mele to herself as she developed the film.

She had asked on several occasions if I wanted to join her, and thinking back on it now I imagine it would've been reminiscent of all those afternoons we spent up in the mountains, but I had already begun to distance myself from her world. The names kids used to call me had stuck in my ribs. I was haole. This was not my place.

A month into the semester, my memories of Hawai'i disappeared in a cannabis fog, in a perfume of Gramsci and Marx. My roommate that first semester was a Dutch-German pothead from Weller, Texas. His sister, Hannah, majored in cultural studies and was a junior there. She came over in the mornings before class
~~~

and rolled joints with pages she tore from Benjamin and Adorno, discussing her distaste for the Frankfurt School while she shared her smoke. She gave up trying to pronounce my name and instead took to calling me Eeny rather than Enos, introducing me to her friends with the sing-song rhythm of a children's counting rhyme.

One afternoon, we were both sitting cross-legged—"Indian-style," she had laughed—on the linoleum floor of my dorm; her blonde hair draping over her face, her lips visible only when she put the joint between them. She was resting her back against the wall, admiring my bare shelves, when she asked bluntly: "Who are you really?"

I wasn't sure if she was being serious or theoretical; I was half-expecting her to launch into a rant about existentialism or give me a rundown of Spivak. She passed me the joint and watched me, waiting. "What're you talking about?" I finally responded.

She didn't answer, instead she stood up and started going through my drawers. I should've been nervous, most guys my age would be mentally cataloging their porn collection or distracting her from the hand creams and lubricants hidden between their briefs, but that wasn't what she was looking for, and we both knew there was nothing to find. When she finally sat back down beside me and stole the last bit of smoke from my lips, I still wasn't sure what she had meant, and even afterward, when she had left, I spent the rest of the evening lying there, wondering.

We spent our winter break looking for a place to live off-campus. We found a three-bedroom a couple miles away in Glenwood for cheap; it was perfect for the four of us: Hannah, her brother, one of her brother's friends, and me. That first night, while everyone else had made beds out of counter-tops and dirty laundry, I started to go through the only box I had bothered to pack; somewhere near the bottom I found one of my mother's notebooks. Its red cover was creased at the corners, the pages dog-eared and torn, the spine beginning to fray near the top.

It was the first time I had really taken the time to look at one of her notebooks, to even open one up. The first thing that caught me when I peeled back the cover was the smell, I could see the bottle: tall, square, onyx top. She kept it in a paper box, in her nightstand. I remember looking for lunch money, opening the pressboard drawer and finding the perfume beside cassette tapes and her wedding ring. The top notes just thin enough to be heavy, laced with softer touches of rose.

Then I noticed her handwriting, soft and delicate, as if she had just barely touched the page. I tried to recall a grocery list or a scrap near the telephone, the usual promises to change. I tried to remember her grading papers at her desk: the slope of her shoulder, the angle of her arm, how she held the pen between her fingers, her hand just hovering above the tabletop. She hated when the ink

smeared on her palm or found its way to the cuff of her blouse.

I brought her into the kitchen and settled myself on the floor.

She wanted to be an artist. Between the acrostic poems and haikus her therapist made her write, there were caricatures of other patients, sketches of the walls, the hallways, the window frame. When she was outside I knew it, the pages filled with hibiscus, plumeria, sprawling branches that reached far into the margins and beyond. Pencil marks were thicker here, the details intricate and precise, no petal was the same nor flower. With every new word or image I kept wondering the same thing: what had happened to my mother? But it was the last page of her journal that struck me, the unfinished outline of what looked like mountains, what must've been the Koʻolaus.

I dumped out the box on the floor and sifted through the textbooks and graded papers until I found a set of photographs Māmā had sent a few months before. She had begun printing them on card stock and sending them out as postcards, scribbling moʻolelo onto the back and mailing them to everyone in her address book. It was five in the morning and I had found three.

The first was a black and white of a single concrete column. *Kukui o Kane*, Māmā had written on the back in thick black strokes, *the largest agricultural heiau in Koʻolaupoko. Steel rims have been installed should you need to find it by remote sensing*. On the second, an image taken from the Pali lookout, the sprawling peak of Kānāhuanui, Māmā wrote: *Below the miles, one of Kane's three wives, Kahuaiki stream*. The last photograph was of the stone terraces of Luluku; Keahiakahoe in the background, lush, moist, penetrated. *Utter destruction*, Māmā translated, leaving it at that.

I couldn't sleep.

Around 10 AM, Hannah found me out on the grass. Stuart Hall was pinned under her arm and her glasses were resting at the edge of her nose, a small Ziploc dangling from her fingertips. I just kept staring out at the trees and the city and the mountains and couldn't help but think how lifeless it all looked, like an oil painting you'd buy from Ross for cheap and hang up on your bathroom wall. "You alright?" she finally asked. Two weeks later I found myself in the passenger seat of Māmā's car, passing the H-3 exit, questions about my mother still heavy on my mind.

It would be a long time before I got a hold of a copy of the Environmental Impact Statement the State had commissioned prior to the H-3's construction. It predicted great change in Koʻolaupoko as a result of the highway, not just in traffic patterns but also on a social level: massive suburbanization, loss of agricultural lands, population displacement. In the same envelope was a threat assessment report published by the U.S. Department of Justice. It noted that Hawaiʻi had been

designated a High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area in 1999, due in large part to the ease of transporting drugs on the H-1, H-2, and H-3 freeways, and that from 1994 to 2000 the number of treatment admissions had doubled and would continue to rise.

Something had to be done.

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Māmā's brother had a reputation. Activist. Terrorist. Kaho'olawe in '77. Hilo airport in '78. When word got out that the Bishop Estate had announced plans for a new hotel development on Hawai'i island, my hānai uncle was the first to take up arms and sabotage the cranes. Books had been written about him, but none that I had read.

Two years home and nothing had changed, in fact, things had gotten worse. Sometimes I'd pull on the side of the road and watch the cars as they passed: tour buses, rental cars, Humvees and military transports, the exhaust would catch in my throat and burn all the way down. There was talk of pueo decline, asbestos pollution, the damage to the water systems; no one had seen an 'alauahio since the H-3 had opened up. The beaches were littered with kayak rentals, the parking lots triple parked with cars. Everyone knew someone who was an addict.

"I'm sick of it, Māmā," I told her one morning. We were sitting in the backyard, in the shade of the 'ulu tree, Māmā carefully inspecting her harvest with her fingertips. Her hands were already beginning to become knotted, but they moved efficiently over the flesh, feeling for rot.

"Folks are doing what they can," she finally answered.

"It's not enough. OHA needs to stop working with the state; they need to find a way to tear it down. Enough mitigation, enough cooperation, where's the results?"

Her cheeks raised slightly, wrinkles spreading near the edges of her eyes. She didn't answer, she only laughed.

"I'm going to talk to Nakata again," I said. "The 'Ohana needs to be more active."

"What would you have them do?"

"Dismantle the fucking thing."

"How?"

"Burn it down."

"Concrete?"

"Blow it up."

She raised her eyebrows, but still she was smiling.
~~~

“I don’t know,” I finally relented. I could feel my cheeks burning up, sweat running down my back. I grabbed the bottom of my shirt and tried to air out the heat.

Māmā rolled an orb, marbled in yellows and browns, toward me. I ran my hands over the mosaic of coarse, raised flesh, portions still thick with sap. “Every part is important,” she said softly, “from the leaves to the wood, the fruit, even the sap. It was used to catch birds, to collect their feathers and make capes for the ali‘i. It was used for dry skin. For when they were building the wa‘a, to seal it.”

I took some of the sap and rolled it between my fingertips. “This isn’t the time,” I said.

“My father used to bake it with banana leaves and coconut milk. Come Christmas time, we’d mix it with poi or eat it with fish for pūpū, When my mother was sick, my father would crush the ‘ulu with his knife, make it so it was soft and then mix in a little of the juice and wrap the rest in wax paper.”

I looked at her, waiting for her to acknowledge my confusion. “What does this have to do with anything?” I finally asked.

“We are a resourceful people, Ka‘au, focus on yourself, on your studies.”

“This is just as important, Māmā.”

“I know you mean well, but I worry about you. You need to start thinking about other ways you can help, other ways you can provide support.”

“By the time I’m finished with law school they’ll have turned Kahalu‘u into a golf course. We’ll have highways in and out of every mountain, they’re already talking about rail again.”

“And you see what happens if they do,” she said, the tone in her voice growing stronger. “The land will take back what is hers, in time everything will be made pono.”

“When, a hundred years from now when everything is gone? We cannot wait.”

“You,” Māmā’s tongue hung heavy on the word, “cannot wait.” I stared at her face and studied her forehead, avoiding her eyes. “This is not your fight, Ka‘au, regardless of what you think, and this is no time for foolishness. You must learn that it is not always your place to lead; sometimes you must follow. There are others who are working, who are fighting, be patient and trust—”

“No,” I interrupted, “I will not sit around and wait.” I wasn’t sure if she had said it, like the shock of it had kept the words from setting in. “Everything you’ve taught me . . . this is a part of me too.” But I emptied, my stomach dropping, my hands beginning to shake. I stood up and walked back to the house, picked up my book bag and got in my truck.

To be honest with you, I had already planned to take action. I was tired of

being told that this was not my home, that I had lost nothing, that I had to stay to the side and let others rush the gates. Haole or not, I would make them remember my name; if not for Māmā, then for my mother, for others who were suffering.

That night, I stood at the end of Pu'uoni place, hood over my brown curls, machete in one hand, flashlight in the other, the nozzle of a gas can sticking out of my backpack. Although the access road was blocked off by twelve feet of chain link, the gate was rarely locked at night and guards didn't start duty until well into the morning. One quick look around and I slid right in, the sound of the H-3 rumbling overhead.

The Kāne'ohe Omega Station was originally built in 1943 as a communication system for the U.S. Navy in anticipation of the engagement with Japan in the Pacific. Decommissioned in 1957, the U.S. Coast Guard took over operations in 1972 and used it for its Omega long-range radio navigational system. When the H-3 was being built, the radiation from the station had been a big concern, and plans had been drawn up to incorporate a mesh cage around the highway to protect drivers from the effects; rumor had it you could stand near the station with a fluorescent tube and bring the whole valley to light. Then news broke that operations would cease, and two months before the H-3 opened, the station was finally shut down.

My chest was pounding in my ears, my whole body shaking. All around me was darkness and, in the light streaming down from the highway above, I could see the outline of the station jutting out from the center of the valley. I made my way up the path in silence, but when I neared the fence line, I heard what I thought was laughter and stopped.

I stood still, looking through the shadow. The voices were coming from deep in the brush. I raised my machete, using the blade to peel back a branch. They were closer now. Hikers, maybe. Hunters, less so. Probably just kids . . . probably just looking for a place to fuck around. I felt my shoulders relax and let my weapon fall. I turned back toward the path, my right foot nudging a large orb and I watched it wobble forward, tumbling, turning, until it met the heavy thud of a hoof.

Overlooking the sacred heiau Kukui o Kāne, on a cliff that ribbons along Keahiakahoe, is Papua'a a Kāne, where the god Kāne keeps his most precious of pigs. Over the years, I have known folks who have journeyed up to the Omega station on their way to Ha'ikū stairs and have told me what they have seen: fences toppled, railings broken, the innards of the site torn and ripped apart. The graffiti marking the walls suggests the work of man, but the damage suggests otherwise.

Without warning, I heard branches cracking, the air heavy with beating earth and the wet snort of pua'a. They were shadows, dark shapes that emerged from

the brush and surrounded me, blocking my path. I wasn't sure if I was dreaming, if these pigs were truly real. I raised my machete and then lowered it, the largest approaching, his tusks twice the size of my blade. I waited for the blow, braced for it.

But it didn't rush or attack, it moved past me, the others parting, opening up the path back toward the road. The pua'a stopped and looked back at me, and then continued on, trotting slowly as if in waiting. In Māmā's teaching, she always emphasized the importance of listening to your na'au, to your gut. For me, the path was clear, I dropped my machete and followed the pua'a, leaving the station and the other pigs behind.

When I got back down to Pu'uoni place, the street was empty. Somewhere a television was on . . . a radio: clear skies, no chance of rain. I got in my truck and sat there with the engine idle, still trying to process what had just happened. The breeze was slight that night, just cold enough to bring a chill, and when it blew in through the open window I swear I could make out the sweet smell of kukui nut oil. The laughter of pigs.

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There is a Hawaiian proverb, i ka ʻōlelo no ke ola, i ka ʻōlelo no ka make: in language there is life, in language there is death. It speaks to the power of words, to the significance of mo'olelo, of story, and the responsibility over the mana that language holds. Māmā used her camera to resist, to document her experiences. My mother used her drawings to escape the confinements of her addiction, an addiction transported across layers of concrete and settling tar. I must find my own way to negotiate my experiences, to find my own place, to breathe life into my story so that I may work to support theirs.

That night, after leaving Pu'uoni Place, I left my car and my backpack and hiked up into the mountains overlooking Kāne'ohe Bay. When I reached the top, I sat down on the bunker, as I had when I was a child, and began to speak the wahi pana o Ko'olaupoko, to remember the stories, as Māmā had. As the sun rose, slivers of light blooming across the horizon and bleeding the water blue, I found myself suddenly aware of everything I knew, and of everything I could not know.

And upon the rubble, I wrote my name.
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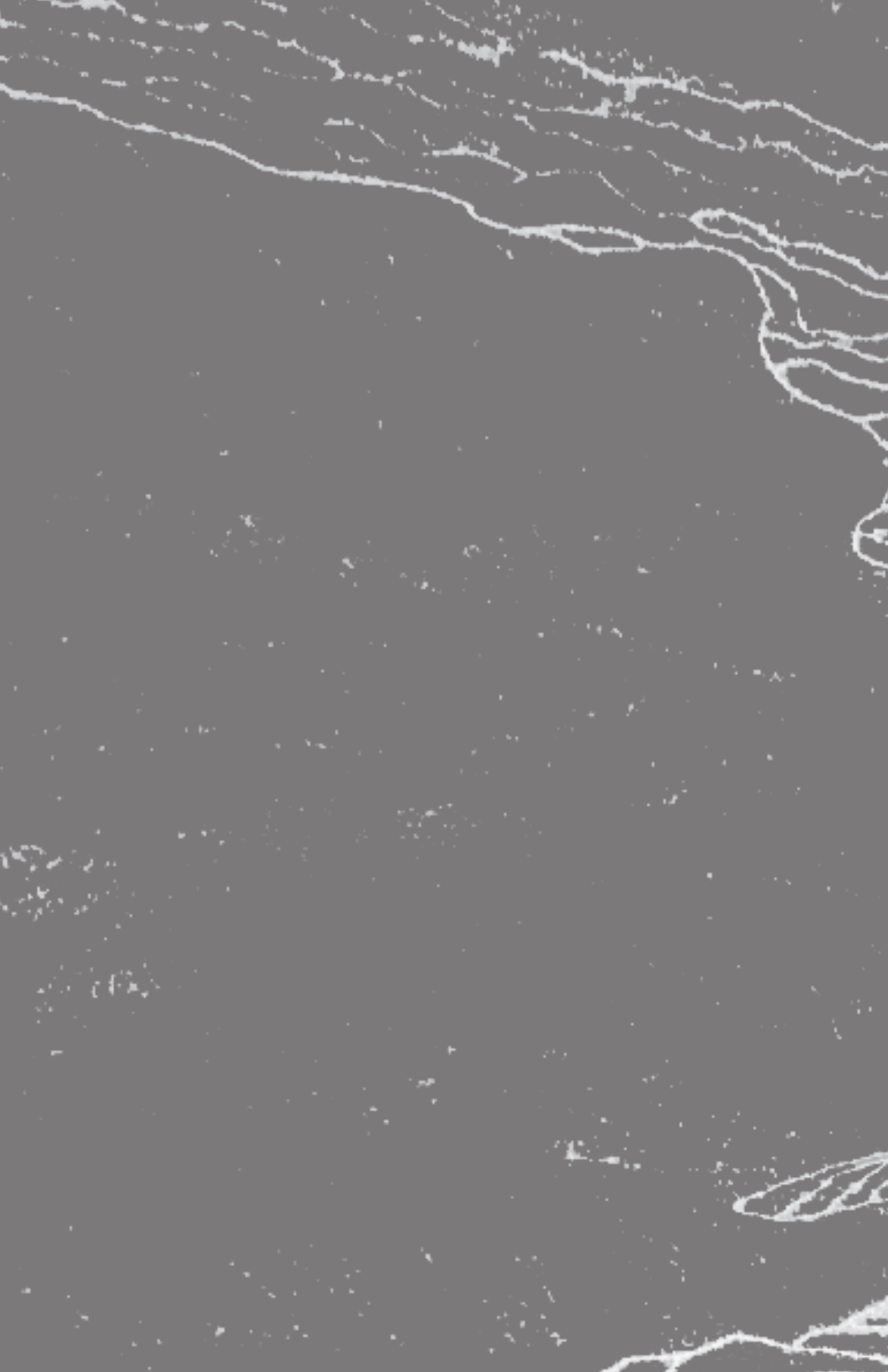

# Things Seen and Unseen

**Meg Eden**

No one believed me when I said my dog was poisoned.

"He was an old thing, Witness. Old things die." Dan didn't look at me when he took off his coat. Seven years in this house and Dan and I were getting into the habit of looking at each other less and less. I wondered if one day, we'd get to the point where even speaking became too much to handle.

"Friskie was a healthy dog," I said, pulling his plate from the fridge. "He'd been around here almost twenty years. Lived in the same fence the whole time. No complaints."

Dan leaned against the chipping counter. "What d'you want, Witness. You want a ceremony for the dog? You want a taxidermy to stuff him and put him in the living room?"

I shivered. "This was the only time he ever got out," I said, microwaving the plate. "And it was two days ago. As soon as he came back, he looked sick—"

"Maybe he ate a mole or something."

"—And he came back and vomited all over the front porch. It wasn't normal. There was this dark sludge in it. Not the kind of thing a dog eats by choice."

"Dogs eat all kinds of shit. They eat what's there. They don't think."

"But what if there was something there that shouldn't have—"

The microwave timer went off. Dan crossed in front of me and took out his plate, trying to avoid contact. A quiet barrier moved between us.

He said, "If you're trying to blame that old man next door again for murdering your—"

"I'm just saying—"

The paper plate sagged in Dan's hand. He took it into the living room, and I knew to let him win for the night.

I searched the kitchen drawer for the phone directory, turning to Emery's number. My hand shook on the page.

I dialed his number, wondering if he'd pick up. Neither of us had tried calling in eight years. Maybe that would be enough time to make us need each other again.

A little girl picked up the phone.

"Robinson's residence. May I ask who's calling?" She said it all in one huff of breath, the way kids recite memorized passages for school.

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"Vallie? This is your Aunt Witness."

Silence.

My voice shook. "It's OK, sweetie. You probably don't remember me—"

"I do," she said.

"Is your dad there?"

In the background, I could hear clanging dishes and chatter. If for no other reason, Emery would despise me for calling during dinner. Vallie called for him on the other end, but I couldn't hear the answer. But I knew he was there.

"Daddy's busy right now," Vallie said. "I'm sorry."

"It's OK, sweetie. Do you think he could call me back?"

More background chatter. Probably Emery demanding to know why his daughter was still talking to me.

There was a loud shuffling sound of the phone being passed from one hand to another. "Hello?" a woman asked.

"Delilah?"

"May I ask who's calling?"

"This is Witness. Emery's sister."

"Oh." Her voice became professional and stale. "Is something the matter?"

"I guess Emery isn't there?"

"He's very busy," she said, her mouth far from the receiver. "Just got home from work. He's had lots of interested investors coming by."

"I'm not surprised. Emery's always been great."

Her laugh was operatic and rehearsed. "Can I help you with something, perhaps?"

"It's not that important, I guess. Could you just tell him that Friskie died?"

"Friskie?"

"You know, our dog. When we were kids. He just died last night. He was poisoned."

"What a shame," Delilah said. "Quite old for a dog."

"Yes."
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"Do you have a dog, Delilah?"

"I'm sorry?"

"A pet." I sounded the words out slowly, like I was speaking through a tunnel. "Something for Vallie to play with, maybe."

Delilah laughed. "Oh, Vallie has plenty of things to play with. I'm sorry, but I really must get—"

"Tell him—ask him, if he remembers the Mckenzies." When she said nothing, I continued, "They lived next door when we were kids. The wife tried to shoot Emery, once."

"I'm sorry, I—"

"Their son's still alive. He's—well, maybe Emery would have some advice."

"I see." She paused. "I'll let him know that you called."

"Alright—" I said, but Delilah had already hung up.

The night was cold, so Dan went outside to get some firewood. He walked past the tarp covering Friskie's body. When he passed our bedroom window, Mckenzie turned on his porch floodlight and aimed it at Dan, like he was an actor on stage. Dan was used to this by now. He knew not to get angry or look to the porch. Instead, he piled the logs on his back and carried them in the house.

The floodlight stayed on until eleven. It had come on nearly every night this week. I started changing in the bathroom.

After getting groceries, I bought heavy duty curtains for the bedroom. They looked like those black-out curtains from World War II.

"We're not in a war zone, Wit," Dan said.

But we were, and he didn't get it. Because unlike me, he hadn't lived in this house for thirty-nine years. He didn't know what the Mckenzies were capable of.

He said, some neighbors just want to know everything. "But we have nothing to hide. And one day, he'll find something better to do."

But the Mckenzies never found anything better to do. Not since 1962, when Mom and Dad bought this place. I swear it's what killed them, having to put up with year after year of disasters. I told a woman this at Mom's funeral. I was serious, but she laughed. Like it was a joke, or something.

And Emery, he stood at the other end of the viewing room, doing all he could not to acknowledge me.

Even with the curtains, I could see a hint of Mckenzie's light come in. Nights when Dan came home late, I'd sleep on the living room couch on the other side of the house. The side away from Mckenzie.

I woke up to a new sign on Mckenzie's lawn. It read: DOG AND CAT TRAPS IN USE ON PROPERTY. When I went to get the mail, Mckenzie stood on his front porch and barked at me like a dog. He barked at me until I slammed the screen door shut.

Dan was out back in snow boots with a shovel. He looked at me through the window and shouted something I couldn't make out.

I opened the kitchen window and let the cold air in. "What?" I asked.

"You ready to get rid of this thing?" He pointed the shovel at the tarp with Friskie underneath. I wished he could've been more gentle.

"It's just gonna rot here, Wit. Rot and bring in the maggots."

I watched the tarp for a minute, like I hoped Friskie would suddenly get up, shake the tarp off, and pee all over the snow. But nothing moved, except the lace curtains around my head.

"I'll be out in a second," I said, and closed the window. I locked it too, just in case.

Half of Mckenzie's yard was covered in junk cars. Most of them didn't look like they could run, but some days, I'd see him out there, underneath like he was fixing them. Even in this cold. As Dan dug the hole for Friskie's body, he pointed over to the cars and said, "Bet the dog just licked up some of that anti-freeze. It's gotta be in everything that grows on that property."

I nodded, knowing not to argue with him.

Dan ripped away the tarp, and I knew I shouldn't look, but I did. There was Friskie alright, his face gaunt and caved in, flies coating him like a new coat of fur. On the edge of his jaw, there was still some of the black sludge.

"We'll get a new dog, if you want." He didn't look up as he shoveled up Friskie. "Whatever you'd like."

"It'll die too," I said softly. "It'll die in its own fence."

Dan nodded and lifted Friskie into the air. The birds watched us, and I half expected a vulture to swoop down and take him. But nothing happened to Friskie as he was lowered into the earth. When Dan shoveled dirt over him, I cried. I cried, and Mckenzie turned on his loudspeaker, squealing feedback noise over our funeral.

Sometimes I'd wake up and still think it was 1969. I looked out the window, and the trees I knew were still there. But then I'd get into my Camry and drive two blocks away—through Emery's development—and see the towering multi-mil lion estates. Then I remembered where I really was.

When Mom and Dad died, they gave the house to Dan and me. Because we needed it, they said in the will. Emery didn't even come to the will reading. Probably because he didn't need it.

Doug came by a few days ago. He waited on the front porch, examining our peeling siding. It was embarrassing, really. I asked him if he wanted to come in, but he said that was fine.

Even though Doug was ten years older than me, he had the arms of a kid:

farmer tanned and lined with muscle. Doug built most of the homes in this area—including Emery's. Though he was a generous man, and I'd grown up alongside him, his presence always unsettled me. Maybe it was because I knew I was one of the last Barber & Ross houses still standing. That if I was dead, Doug would bulldoze over my childhood without a second thought.

"It's nice to see you've kept this place," he said, running his hand on one of the porch lights. A chunk of paint fell off onto the ground. "Good to know someone values this community as much as I do."

I bit my lip. "A lot's happened in this house. I know my parents would want me to take good care of it."

Doug smiled, his teeth sharp like a dog's. "It's hard maintaining so much property, isn't it?"

We looked back through the woods, where Dad's old shed was overridden with sprouting mimosas and poison sumac. The fence was rusting through, and I wondered if getting a new one would make me feel any safer.

"You know as well as I do, how much it costs to maintain land in this area."

I nodded. "Would you like some hot tea, Doug?"

"The price of land is rising in this area. Doubling, tripling from its original cost. Downsizing's becoming a popular—"

"Doug. I appreciate it, but this is my family's house."

His smile didn't change, which left me all the more on edge.

I looked up at the roofing for the front porch, at the cracking planks and the washed white paint. I wondered if the house might fall on us.

"I knew your parents, Witness. I knew them better than you might think." He took his cap off, bending the brim under his hand. "They didn't have much, but they were good with it."

I nodded and focused my eyes on one patch of ground.

"And I know they meant well in giving you this place. But I don't think it was about the house. I think they wanted to help you out, and you know—help comes in different forms."

"We grew up in this house, Doug," I said, looking up. "It's the only friend I have left, sometimes."

"I understand." Doug put his hat back on, his hair sticking through the meshed back. "Just . . . I hate to see things get hard for you, Witness. You might not believe it, but I really want what's best for you."

He stepped off the patio, back toward his car. "I wish you the best of luck, Witness—I really do."

I nodded, not knowing what to say. But as he put one foot into his car, a thought hit me. "Hey, Doug?"

"Yeah?"

"Have you—did you ever talk to Mckenzie about his place?"

"Not quite sure I follow—"

"I can't imagine he's keeping pace either, if you know what I mean."

"I'll give it a shot. But if you think you're stubborn, you should take a second look at your neighbor." He nudged toward Mckenzie's house.

But I did. I knew Mckenzie. And that was why I was afraid.

Last night we got our first January dusting. Dan shoveled the driveway before going to work, but Mckenzie's long road was still buried, alongside several junk vehicles. As I walked past my mailbox, I saw Mckenzie in one of his broken vans, revving his engine. When I turned the corner, he blared his horn at me. Snow fell off the trees. In a way, I admired his determination.

Once past our house, the trees rapidly cleared for large columned estates. I tried to remember what it looked like before, when it was a line-up of 50s ranchers. When everything was smaller.

I drove by Emery's house nearly every day, but I'd only been in once. It was when Doug finished building the house. Emery wanted me to see it—I think, to show me what I could never have.

I walked up to Emery's front door, hoping it was late enough for Vallie to be in school, and Delilah to be preoccupied with some local women's club.

A Latino woman opened the door, looking me over like she couldn't figure out the word to describe me. "Miss Delilah's friend?" she asked at last.

"I'm Witness Lease, Emery's sister."

Her eyes grew at this, like she understood the significance of family. "Please wait," she said and ran down the dark hallway, her heels clicking.

From the door, I could only hear muttering and shuffling. Emery came to the door in a bathrobe and leather moccasins.

"Witness." He tried to smile, but it fell apart half-way. "What brings you here?" The woman went down the hallway into one of many doors.

When I didn't answer he said, "Well, why don't you come in?"

Emery led me into the living room. There was an ivory fireplace, the mantle covered with framed photos. I thought of our fireplace, how Emery used to have to light every fire. How Dad complained when he put too many logs in, or didn't fold the newspaper with enough air pockets.

"I need to talk to you," I said. "About our house. Or family house."

"You still live in that wreck?" He sat down on one of the chairs, took a glass from the end table, and drank. He didn't ask if I'd like anything.

I nodded. "Doug wants to rip it down, you know."

"Can't blame 'im. So tell me you're wising up and you'll get rid of the damn place."

"Mom and Dad gave us—"

"Mom and Dad were insane, almost as insane as our neighbors—"

"You mean the Mckenzies? They're still there, you know. Well, the son is, I mean. I think he—I know he poisoned Friskie."

"Witness . . . "

"I saw it, Emery. I saw him come back, and—" I took in a deep breath.

"I hate asking for things, Emery . . . "

"Witness. If you ask me, it's pretty clear what you do."

"Oh?"

"Sell the trash heap to Doug. He'll pay you well, you can get a decent place somewhere else. You won't have to deal with the crazy old man, either. Problem solved." He looked at the grandfather clock in the hallway.

I remembered why Emery and I hadn't spoken in so long. "There's too much in that house, Emery. You know that."

"Then I don't know what to tell you. I'm sorry—"

"Do you remember that Halloween, when you were walking to the bus and Mrs. Mckenzie came out with a shotgun?"

Emery snickered, running his fingers around the rim of the glass. "Not exactly the kind of thing you can forget. She wasn't wearing anything, either. Have to say, that topped the cake. There's nothing more terrifying than a naked woman aiming a rifle at your forehead."

"She's dead, Emery. And her son's gonna die too. And soon after him, we'll be dead. We'll all be dead, and someone will plow over our houses for someone else to live." I sat there, looking at my shoes sinking into the carpet.

Emery nodded, his fingers stopping on the glass. He looked up at his television screen, the shrunken reflection it offered.

"I need to survive that long, Emery. At least that long. Then God knows what'll happen."

"You really loved Mom and Dad, didn't you." He said this slow, like he was rolling the words over his mouth. Like hard candy.

"Didn't you?"

He eyed me. "Let's just say there's a reason I am where I am right now."

Emery bent over the table and pulled out a checkbook, scribbling a number and handing it to me. "Is that enough?"

I said it was enough. But I didn't cash it in. When I got home, I put it on the vanity and looked at it every morning that I did my hair, remembering that I had a brother still, in some capacity.

When I was three, Mr. Mckenzie was standing in my yard. He had his hands in the blueberry bush.

I was on the tire swing, but I stopped playing when I saw him. "Hey—that's Mama's blueberry bush!" I shouted. "You can't go taking them."

He looked at me for a minute like I was the one that walked into his lawn.

"Did you hear me? Those are Mama's berries. She makes pies from them. If you want some pie, you have to ask. You can't just go takin' them . . . "

"I'm sorry, Mabel," he said. "I've just misplaced my reading glasses." His eyes looked far away, the way blind eyes look. His hair was sticking straight up, and he was so thin and bent over himself that he looked like a sapling tree that didn't get enough water.

"I'm not Mabel," I said. "I'm Witness."

He smiled at me. "You were always such a pretty doll, Mabel."

Then he turned away from my swing and walked back to his own lawn. I watched him leave. His steps were long and labored, dragging his left leg behind him. It must've taken him a whole ten minutes to walk the fifty feet from one lawn to the other.

As I drove home from work, I saw Doug walking to Mckenzie's. It was mighty brave of him, I thought to myself.

Most of last week's snow had melted away, but there were still browned pockets of it on Mckenzie's old cars.

Doug walked over dried-up weeds to get to the front door. By May, I knew we wouldn't be able to see the front door.

Just before he got to the front step the burglar alarm went off. Part of me laughed inside. Amateur experience.

A few hours later, Doug knocked on my front door. His hat was off, stowed under his arm.

"I think we have the process backward," he said, his breaths labored.

"What d'you mean by that?"

He let out a deep breath. "All he did was complain to me about how you won't sell him your property."

"Me?"

Doug nodded.

Within a couple days, I had two offers for a house I hadn't listed. "He's never told me he was interested," I said. "Heck, he's never talked to me much ever, really."

"I figured as much. But you know, Witness—between me and him, you could get a real good deal."

I stood between the door and the hallway. "I'll think about it," I said.

That night, a blinking red light appeared in Mckenzie's window. It stayed on like that; he never turned it off.

I had two dreams last night, about his house.

The first house looked the way I remembered it in 1964—the lawn was trimmed, no tacky sheds, and all the shutters were still bright red. Mrs. Mckenzie stood out on the front porch in a green gingham dress, waving at me. Asked me if I'd like to come in for some cookies.

But I knew the answer to that question. I shook my head like a school girl and walked back into my own house. But before I did, I saw a boy in the window, his skin white like dogwood blossoms. I could've sworn his skin glowed.

I also saw another person in the window. It was little Vallie.

We used to have a sister, Emery and I. Mom and Dad buried her far away so we couldn't see her. We never visited her grave as kids. We weren't supposed to talk about her either, as if this would make losing her easier.

But Emery did. He wouldn't shut up about Vallie. He told us he saw Vallie in the trees, in the Mckenzie's backroom window, in the space underneath the porch. In school he made cards for her and lined them up on his dresser. Whenever he said her name Mom cried. Dad burned all the cards once, but then Emery made more. That's why he was whipped worse than me. That's why he named his daughter after her.

Vallie's the only one that went into Mckenzie's house. She told us the lady was nice and gave her cookies, but she always asked the same questions. Vallie said, "She sure must have an awful lot on her mind, to not remember my name or what grade I was in."

Vallie was five when she had to start living in her room all day. Dad said she was bit by a tick, but Emery didn't believe him. Every morning and evening, Mom would bring Vallie a plate of food. She told us it'd be better if we didn't disturb her, let her sleep. The door was always barely ajar, like Vallie wanted us in. Sometimes when it was late enough, I'd sit on the floor and look through the crack, watching to make sure Vallie got to sleep.

From the hallway, we could hear Vallie tell Mom all kinds of stories. She said the Mckenzies had a little boy who, like her, was stuck in his room. But unlike her, he'd never been outside, and it wasn't because he was sick that he was in there. He ate dog food, just like an animal, she said. "And I don't think he ever gets any cookies. Isn't that just so sad?"

And then she'd cry. Mom told her she should eat her dinner, but Vallie said she couldn't eat after thinking about that little boy.

When I did get glimpses of Vallie, her body was shrunken, even smaller than I remembered. Vallie had always been smaller than the rest of us, but now her

arms were thinned into raw bones. Mom started bringing more and more food back, making pies and cakes and Vallie's favorite peanut butter cookies, but she hardly ate any of it. She said it wouldn't be fair.

Mom and Dad said she was too sick to think straight, and if we heard her stories, we shouldn't believe them. But Emery and I, we knew she had the eyes of a small god.

Friskie was the first to know that Vallie was dead. She didn't even recognize him then. Emery said that Vallie didn't have to die like that. When Mom and Dad went to take Vallie's body away, Emery climbed into the window with his backpack on. If we stay, he said, they'll kill us too. But I knew Mom and Dad didn't kill Vallie.

Emery didn't believe me. He told me to come with him, but I didn't. For the rest of the day, he camped in the woods, but when Mom and Dad came back, I told them where he was. He didn't talk to me much after that.

The second house I dreamed was the Mckenzie house now, except in spring. The elm saplings were in bloom, shooting through the front porch cracks and hiding the lawn. Poison ivy covered what was left, and the whole view was a startling green. The lights were all off, even the red alarm, and something brave swept up in me. I left my porch and walked to his front door.

None of the burglar alarms went off. No shotguns came out from between the blinds. My hands shook as I grabbed the door and pulled.

As soon as I entered the house, a great wave of decay overwhelmed me. I tried breathing out the door, but I still smelled a body. The room was intact though water stains threatened the ceiling.

On all the walls there were taped-up pictures: family photos, magazine pin-ups, and security camera scenes. The breeze from the door came in and rustled all of them, and they flapped against the wall like leaves.

That's when I saw Mckenzie himself, bent over in an arm chair, hiding his face. There was a dark pool on the floor beside him, and he was weeping.

I woke up to the phone ringing. But by the time I picked up the phone, there was just a dial tone.

"It's not funny," I said, my voice loud. Dad taught me that's what you do to scare off bears. I hoped it'd help for other fears, too. "You hear? It's not funny!"

Every morning for the past year, this was the routine. I slammed the phone down on the receiver, and the whole nightstand shook.

I looked out my window to see the light on in Mckenzie's room.

On the bedside table, my alarm was set for 6:45 AM. I hadn't heard it go off in a while.

Dan was already at work, so I got up and walked across the hall to Vallie's old

room. Inside, her white bed still sat by the window. If I'd dared open the dressers, her clothes would still be folded inside. If it weren't for the dust, the room was the year 1971.

I went over to the bed and straightened her sheets. I did this every morning, because sometimes the wind would come through and unsettle them. Even if the bed was fine, I'd make it again. Just in case. In case of what, I wasn't sure.

The ground was wet and cold, the sky grey but silent. Mckenzie was on his back under his dilapidated van. When I came out, he turned on a loudspeaker of radio noise toward our house. I couldn't hear any music, any talking. Just squeaking noise.

I knew that I should go into work. But my head began throbbing, and I decided to call in sick. I'd called in sick a lot of days this month, now that I thought about it.

When the noise didn't stop for twenty minutes, I called the police.

"Yes, Mrs. Lease?" Officer Naylor answered the phone. His voice sounded tired. "I'm sorry to call again, Officer Naylor, but my neighbor's turned on this loud speaker noise—"

"Have you asked him to stop, Mrs. Lease?"

"I—" I looked out the window at Mckenzie, still under his van. "I don't feel safe doing that, sir."

"Does he have a weapon?"

"His mother shot at my brother when we were children."

"Does *he* have a weapon, ma'am?"

"Not—not that I know of."

"How about this. You go out and ask him if he'll stop. If he doesn't, then call us and we'll send some guys out. How's that sound?"

But he knew I'd call back. "Are you sure—there isn't anything else that can be done?" I said.

"We do what we can, ma'am."

I put the phone on the hoosier and walked outside in my slippers. "Hey!" I shouted.

Mckenzie didn't move from under his car.

"Hey! Mckenzie!" I stayed on the steps of my porch, hiding behind the railings. "You need'a stop that noise, or I'll call the police."

He pulled his body out from under the car and looked me in the eye. I realized it was the first time I ever got a good look at him. His skin was colorless like paper. He looked like any other old man in checkered pants, suspenders, and a perpetually bent back.

"This is shit land," he screamed, his voice raspy like his broken muffler. "Too

much oil in it. You don't want no shit land for your houses."

"I don't want your house," I said, "I want you to turn down the speakers."

He flashed the bird at me. "You take this place, and all hell'll break loose."

I went back inside and picked up the phone. "He said no," I said, but no one answered on the other side.

A minute later, the radio stopped and Mckenzie went inside.

Ten minutes later, Officer Naylor was at my door. "Would you like anything?" I asked.

He looked over to Mckenzie's. "I don't hear any noise," he said, his eyes red.

Officer Naylor looked hardly older than a kid, but he'd come here to investigate multiple times now. Minutes after he'd leave, Mckenzie would come out to his driveway, waving a police scanner in the air. How he got a hold of that, I'll never know, but it clearly worked, because his behavior always quieted after my phone conversations with Naylor.

I sighed. "I don't know what to do, officer. Should I tape it? Would that be enough proof?"

"Look, Witness—I believe you," he said the way a parent tells a child. "But I can't do anything unless the problem continues while I'm here to experience it."

"He says he has a police scanner . . . "

Naylor avoided my eyes. "I'm not sure I—"

Just then, the sound came on again. We both became still.

"That's it," I said. "That's the noise."

Officer Naylor stepped out through the front door, pushing his cap back on his head. He walked over my dead garden to get to Mckenzie's house. I watched him knock on the front door and wait.

The overhead feedback continued. Officer Naylor shouted something at the door, reached for the gun on his holster. After he started trying to break down the door, Mckenzie came out disgruntled. Said he'd been sleeping. Officer Naylor told him to turn the sound down, and Mckenzie eventually did.

Then Mckenzie shut the door on him. Naylor looked at the door in disbelief, but he didn't shoot. He didn't tear through the house. He didn't do anything I hoped or imagined an officer would do.

By the time Naylor got back to my porch, his shoes were thick in mud. "Would you like to know his side of the story?" he asked.

"I didn't know he had a story."

"Says that's his alarm system. Says he keeps getting teens and animals messing with his sheds out back. Sometimes it goes off at bizarre times, he says."

I frowned.

"I only got a glimpse inside. Everything was shredded on the floor," he said,

“Like an animal lived there. Does he have any pets?”

“Not that I know of,” I said.

“Don’t know if there’s enough to make any real claims against him, but I’ll admit there’s something not right with his head. He’s got a sign on his front door that says: TRESSPASSERS WILL BE SHOT. Not exactly a friendly kinda guy.”

There wasn’t much I could say to that.

That night, Mckenzie made a barricade in his driveway, parking his old cars at the mouth of the driveway and lining the gaps with police tape. No one could get in even if they tried.

It was March, and I was planting the bulbs in my garden when Emery’s daughter Vallie walked down the street. I stopped my work and watched her, seeing my sister even in the way her legs bounced when she walked.

She saw me and waved. I waved back, my fingers caked in mud.

“You’re a bit young to walk alone,” I said, getting off my knees. “Especially in these parts.”

“I’m eleven now,” she said, zipping up her jacket. Some of her blonde hair got stuck in the zipper. “I can walk down the street if I want to.”

“I suppose you can. Does your daddy know?”

She didn’t smile but studied my eyes.

“What’s that house over there?” She pointed to Mckenzie’s. “It looks like those spooky haunted houses. Does someone live there?”

“Yes. An old man lives there.”

“All alone?”

“Yes, all alone. He’s very crazy though. Dangerous, even. Doesn’t like people very much.”

“I heard some boys in school talk about it. They like to go take stuff from his yard sometimes. Said he makes those loud noises we hear.”

“You can hear them all the way at your house?”

She shook her head. “Not at my house, but when I go to the bus. But then I get on and go to school and it doesn’t really matter.”

For a moment, I wished I could still get on a bus to escape. “Vallie, your daddy doesn’t like me very much, does he?”

Vallie regarded me. She turned her chin up and tucked a matted lump of hair behind her ears. She had a wild look about her, and I wondered what Emery thought of that.

“He doesn’t talk about you very much,” she said carefully. “He says it’s better that I don’t talk to you either. He thinks it might make me poor one day.”

I snickered and planted another bulb.

"But Dad says lots of things that aren't true, too. He says he loves Mom and me, but he's never home."

I turned the dirt in my hands. I didn't know Emery anymore, so I didn't know how he loved, either.

My words came out slow and thick. "You know . . . once, your father loved someone very much. He rarely got to see her, but when he did you couldn't get him away." I smiled down at the ground. "He couldn't shut up about her, but there wasn't much he could do for her. Sometimes, we love people and we can't do much about it."

"Who was that?"

I caught myself. "A girl from around here, when he was a boy. She had your name, actually."

Her smile surfaced. "I didn't know there was anyone else with my name."

"Well there was, and she was the sweetest—"

"Was? Is she dead?" Vallie played with the end of her shirt, squeezing and releasing the fabric.

"In some ways, yes." I patted dirt over the last of the bulbs. "But I know your father loves her still. So in that way, she's alive." Alive in you, I wanted to add.

Vallie nodded. Only when the shadow from the trees dropped on her did I notice the freckles. Suddenly, she seemed very young. "I feel bad for the old man," she said. "It's hard being alone, sometimes."

"Sometimes, that's all I want. To just be alone."

Vallie pulled her hair up into a ponytail and walked back toward the street. I wished she wouldn't. "You know, that's the other reason Daddy says to not talk to you."

"And what's that?"

"Because he knows you don't like it."

Once Vallie was gone, Mckenzie came out and climbed into one of his cars, revved the engine and honked his horn at me, at my pathetic garden and its lack of life. But my work was done, so I shook the dirt off my clothes and went inside.

For two weeks I heard nothing. In a way, it made me more worried.

It was April, and the rain came down so thick, I could hardly see Mckenzie's porch. Dan was away on business, and I almost called a friend to stay with me in the living room. That seemed easier than facing the bedroom, and Mckenzie's light.

But over the span of the week, the only light I saw from Mckenzie's was the red flashing light in the window. No floodlight. No lamps.

When Dan got back, we were watching TV and I asked, "You think we could move the TV?"

"Move it?" he said, kicking the couch to recline. It bent back with a sudden jolt. "Where to?"

"I don't know. Maybe by the pantry—"

"Then we couldn't see it. Unless we moved the couches, and the whole room—"

"I just don't like it being by the window," I said. "It makes us . . . vulnerable."

"No one can see it from this end, Witness. Relax." He pointed to the window. "See? Lots of trees. That's it."

"Mckenzie can see it from—"

"Mckenzie's dead, Witness."

I sank into my chair.

"They found his body yesterday. You didn't hear?"

"I haven't seen him around in a while," I said, my hand shaking on the armrest. "He hasn't turned the floodlight on. He hasn't worked on his cars."

Dan reached for the remote and changed the channel. "They think it was that last storm in February that got to him. By the time they found him, his body was half-rotted. Half the roof was falling in from water damage."

I got up, steadying my hand on the victrola.

"Glad that's over with. I mean, it's not like I'm glad he had to die like that, but . . . "

"How did they find him?" I asked. My fingers pulled the front door handles on the victrola. I wanted to open it and hide inside, the way I tried to as a girl, but knew years of accumulation would fall on me.

"How should I know?" He shrugged, reaching his hand into a bag of chips. "Guess someone had to wonder where he was."

It was only when I saw Doug in a bulldozer that I felt something like relief. I sat in the bedroom and waited for him to flatten Mckenzie's down.

Dan said I should get rid of the curtains by now. There wasn't any reason to keep them up anymore. But I didn't take them down. I wanted to be ready for whatever might come next.

I pulled the curtains back and saw it start to rain. Despite the mud, Doug drove through Mckenzie's front porch, and everything fell in on itself, just like that. Someone had taken all the siding off, probably for resell, leaving the house stripped down to black paper. It was sad in a way.

As the rain became heavy, Doug's bulldozer slowed down, eventually stopping in the mud. Doug jumped out to push it, the mud forming around his own ankles.

I reached for the phone and called Emery's number. No answer. The machine kicked in, but I didn't leave a message. He'd figure it out on his own, anyway.

No one else was there with Doug. He tried pushing, but his hands slipped against the side. Opening the door, I put on pink plastic rain boots and grabbed an umbrella.

"You need help?" I called down the porch steps.

Doug looked up, his hair slicked against his forehead. He laughed. "Unless you can help me move this heap, I don't think there's much to help with."

"I could get you some tea or something," I said, walking to the edge of my yard.

"I think I'm gonna have to call the other guys to come help me out, when the storm clears up."

I looked at the pile of rubble. "Does that mean that has to stay here?"

"What's staying—oh." He followed my eyes. "Only for a day or two. I don't think the rain will last that long."

I nodded, my hair slicked to my cheeks. Even though I had an umbrella, I didn't open it.

Doug looked me over, equally soaked as him, girlish in my pinafore and pink boots. He looked like he wanted something, but I didn't know what.

"Well, it's good seeing you, Witness, but I think I'm gonna head out." He opened the door of the cabin and pulled out a paper lunch bag and keys.

"You need a ride?" I asked.

He shook his head. "My house is just a couple blocks. I don't mind."

Shoving the keys in his pocket, Doug walked into the street and down between the trees until the rain made him grey and hard to follow.

Once he was gone, I stepped over my lawn into Mckenzie's. The newly ripped-up lawn sunk around my heels. I tried to imagine the lot empty, the bulldozer returned and the scrap rubble burned. But I knew in just a few weeks, the foundation for a new house would be laid.

A shiver ran through me as I rubbed my arms for warmth. I awaited my next disaster.

# Water

## Angela Nishimoto

Fog swirls on O‘ahu’s Pali. The clouds open up, the earth welcoming in its turn, gasping in joy. Rain streaks free and naked through the light, descending. The rain’s muffled roar is tempered by the windshield. In seconds, puddles form, ponds with the grass like marsh reeds standing up. Water potentiates the world.

I see nothing beyond a foot ahead of my headlights. Thank God the roads are empty. I’m traveling at four miles an hour in a 35 mph zone. People go 50 along here all the time. I could be smashed if anyone were insane enough to drive as if under normal conditions. Most people are not insane—not all the time at least. Driving into walls of water, I cannot see where the lane dividers are, my eyes leaking, too. Fog is in the tunnel as I enter. My windshield wipers squeak in the sudden quiet, then in seconds I’m back in the thundering water.

In the second tunnel, a Ford Ranger looms, hood up, blinkers on. I swerve into the next lane, then back, the fog billowing. I had an eye out for the driver, but I saw no one, and hear only the hissing of my tires and squeak-thwack of the windshield wipers until I’m on the Kane‘ohe side.

The skies are many shades of gray. Kane‘ohe Bay is brown and gray through the thinning strands of fog. The gentle hills have a gray cast, too. The little gray dragon squatting on my dashboard bares his teeth. I put my hand up and narrow my eyes against my reflection in the rearview mirror. My skin is dull and gray against the ludicrous brightness of my persimmon-orange jacket. He gave it to me, said it went with my brassy hair. Disoriented, my eyes are teary, dark pouches under them, my face sags. I could have sworn I didn’t yet have jowls, but lo, there they are. I’ve aged a decade in the last day or so—desperada, runaway wife.

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At home, walled in by words, I want a getaway from his delusions. Closet Casanova. Amused at first, I became disgusted at his proposition. The more I thought about it the angrier I got. Finally, I told him, *How would* you feel *if I suggested the same thing with your brother as the third? Or* your *best friend?*

He'd said then that he'd been joking. He was lying. After twenty-five years, I *know* him. Born in early January, 1953, at the tail end of the Year of the Water Dragon. Absent-minded, bearded, bespectacled, fisheries biologist-professor. The only props missing were the pipe and the jacket with leather patches at the elbows. Who could have known that he'd devolve into a cliché?

I knew he'd fooled around with his graduate assistants. I'd had few problems with that. Everyone has the right to freedom of association. These relationships happened before we got together. Before *us*. He's been absolutely faithful to me. He said.

Years before, I'd introduced him to a colleague. She'd gone to mingle and when she was out of earshot, he'd cracked, "Nothing beats a great pair of tits." Only much later did I realize that I'd soured on her just then. She was a pleasant woman. She might have become a friend. Now I resent it that he wants to drag my current best friend into our bed—and tells me about it!

Twenty-five years. We've been together for twenty-five years. You hear about it, but when it happens to you . . . How could I know he'd lurch into a textbook midlife crisis? The aging roué.

He is the earth quickened by my flows.
He diverts my streams to works of worth
He rocks in my roiling water
He is the stone in my well-spring, echoing
—ca. 1986, from my journal

He told me that when his Big Romance broke up (before *us*), he'd speed up and down the H-1 for hours at a time, back and forth, back and forth. Back and forth is the nature of the beast.

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I'm in Hau'ula, with the water washing across Kamehameha Highway slowing me in the throes of my drama. Yet I maintain my illusion of progress. I see a few cars ahead, everything grayed. Crazy people creeping along a road awash with water. What are we running from? Or to? I snap my radio on, but get only static. I inch my car up to Lā'ie, then through Kahuku. No sweet corn or
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papaya vendors along the roadside today.

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He told me once about a North Shore beach-house party. Drinking, smoking, tooting, toking. It was early in the morning, the moon was up for them, and people peeled off t-shirts, shorts, swimsuits, running, jumping into the silver water. All grad students. People had wandered back to the beach house—or not. Much later, the sun hot and high in the sky, one of the hosts had found the discards piled on the beach—sandals and slippers, clothing, wallets, watches, glasses. Everyone had been accounted for, so after the bacchanalia some of the revelers must have stumbled home blind and naked.

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He's always reeked of goat, horned and hoofed.

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I head past Waialua for Mokulēʻia, drive past the airfield on the left, the gray waves thundering and threatening on the right. I go all the way to the bumpy parking lot, large rocks all over, and turn the engine off. This is as close to Kaʻena Point's leaping-off place I can get in my car. Even here, the driest place on Oʻahu, rainy mist, the dragon's breath, mixes with the salt spray of the pounding water on the shore. Over the roar and hiss, I hear high, cackling, crazy laughter.

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Heading east on the H-1, I ease the pressure of my foot from the accelerator. It's stupid to drive so fast in the rain, even on the deserted freeway. My car slaloms through standing water, spray scattering from my Mini Cooper, scattering . . . I wonder if all water is the same. Is one water molecule exactly like another? Is water, collectively, a single unit? Are all its components perfect microcosms of the much vaster entity? Is the larger unit more important? Or its components? Does any of it even matter?

Water seeps from my eyes, running down my face, dripping off my chin. I'm thinking of him driving back and forth, back and forth along this very interstate, his hand moving back and forth. I rock. I hear a noise, stop, and press my lips together. No more moaning from me. No, sir.

I get off at North King Street and tootle along, Kalihi industrial gray. I see an occasional vehicle—very occasional. Kalihi looks closed. I pass boarded-up places of business, the windows like shuttered eyes. Everything is blind. My tires make gray water spray, dull drumming under the carriage. I can't see. I creep along, the water tire-high. The water is brown-gray, now, soiled. I stop at a red light, then proceed through the intersection, remembering only after crossing that a red light means STOP. I'd simply hesitated, then continued on, plunging ahead in the diagonal downpour that looks like rain in a Hokusai print.

Still on King, I swim in the Diamond Head direction. The Chinatown dragons and lions look sodden. The reds and golds look more dingy through the rain, though it means less dust; somehow Chinatown is still grimy. Sad, forlorn. A creature steps from a doorway, then retreats, as gray as the day is gray. Passing the state library, I see a city bus, the yellows and mustards dirty-looking. The rain reprises its rhythms along King Street, big, fat drops falling from charcoal skies.

I pass the landmarks on Wai'alae Avenue: Chaminade, St. Louis Drive In, McDonald's on the left, Longs on the right. Sacred Hearts.

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Friends had brought us maile lei at our wedding. Our witnesses saw us married at the sunset hour on the beach, all of us dressed in white and off-white. We'd greased the rings on the minister's advice, so they'd slide easily. The Reverend officiated, the Piper tootled "Here is Happiness." We were husband and wife, man and woe-man. Our vows made us a unit, a single legal entity, one flesh. So help us, God.

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I drive past Kahala Mall and head east on Kalaniana'ole. It's drizzling. The rain gets heavier and goes horizontal. The coconut palms writhe, frenzied women. Some light traffic in Hawai'i Kai, but the shopping center looks deserted. I see two people, one ankle-deep teetering at the water's edge, the other huddled under a big, orange umbrella. The umbrella balloons, then splays, its ribs out of joint. Orange is the color of insanity.

I continue along the highway, looking out at the beach, foam-crested gray water under gray sky. Wild beauty. How I wish I'd been a wild beauty, uncaring what others thought. I was such a *good girl*, doing what was proper, useful, edifying. Have I ever had fun in my whole life?

But I'm driving now. I go past the Hanauma Bay parking entrance. I haven't

been to the site in decades, not since they started charging for parking. I pass Sandy's with its waters slamming the near-empty beach. I pass another submerged volcano, Makapu'u, dark water roiling in its basin, then through Waimānalo in a blink. I pass two vehicles, zip past Kailua, and head for Kamehameha Highway and Kāne'ohe, driving through the little town. The Ko'olaus are like a recumbent dragon, many shades of verdant gray. It's still raining and the mountains are misted in. A dripping wet bird wanders onto the road and I swerve. It flies off.

On Kahekili, named after another high chief, I drive past Kahalu'u, then get back onto Kamehameha Highway, heading north. The rain continues.

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After our weekend away, he told me that my problem was that I had nothing between my legs, instead of *something*. I'd been the oldest, and then my brother had come along, upstaging me. "'I'm the star! I'm the star!'" he roared. "That's what you felt. Right? That's the basic problem of your life."

I just looked at him and said, "Yes. That's my story."

I'd borne seven years of an empty bed. So . . . at the root of the curious sterile quality of our life together was my penis envy. He'd had no recourse but to look elsewhere. My unnatural vigor had dampened his conjugal ardor.

It was my fault. I had the evil box; I was of the tribe of Eve. I had the open mouth disease, possessed of a wagging tongue to go with my wagging tail. Did you see this bitch smile? Did you check out these pearly whites? What was more threatening—a horizontal smile or the vertical one? I opened my mouth; he went silent. My expansion diminished him; my growth shrank him to naught.

And I had penis envy.

He'd enjoyed my conversation, but preferred his women mute. And he wanted *more*. More women, less noise. He wanted the impossible; no wonder he was unhappy. *It was all my fault*. If I'd failed, he'd have been more successful. It all made perfect sense, didn't it? Like a story.

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At a so-called wine tasting in Waimānalo, guests swigged full rounded glasses of red, red wine. I watched as the neighbors brought out their lawn chairs, ice chests, and hibachis, setting up as if to view a show.

"You should've seen. We had such a wild time last time we did this," the hostess said, slurring a little. "Wild! People dancing on the grass, ripping off their clothes,"—she gestured and gyrated—"jumping into the hot tub—"

I went looking for him. And found him in the kitchen with our host's assistant.

"I want to leave. Now."

"What?" He squinted at me through his glasses. "What's the matter?"

"Let's go," I hissed.

Deena looked at me, her eyes unfocused. "What's happening?" Then she giggled and leered. "Has the fun started?"

I looked away. "I want to leave." I looked at him, but couldn't bring myself to touch him. "Please."

I walked along Kalaniana'ole Highway in high heels, trying not to think. I got on a city bus that by some miracle was running late at night. He was still out when I got home two hours later.

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I'm in Kahuku again, doing yet another circuit of the island. With all the rain there are still a few determined, insane souls out there, bopping along in their isolation units, automobiles.

The rain's stopped; I smell the freshness when I roll down my window. The smell of water has a special cachet. Some years ago, the fashion for fragrances was a splash, l'eau with barely any scent, compared to the heavy, heavy perfumes of the '80s. Obsession. Opium. Poison.

Water is an acid and a base, depending on the circumstance. Acids give hydrogen ions, bases accept hydrogen ions. Water disassociates to hydrogen ions and hydroxide ions. Liquid water contains $H_3O^+$ as well, a strong acid, with a negative pH. Variations, right? Variety is the spice of life. Oxygen cannot use a single hydrogen; it must have two to be fulfilled, to make water. A hydroxide ion, $OH^-$, will bond to a hydrogen ion, $H^+$, to form that universal solvent, which will then come apart, then reform to other associations, permutations, combinations of what we call water.

Water, woman, womb, wound.

Liquid water vaporizes, forming clouds, which precipitate moisture into the ground. Enriched with minerals, water then flows back to the earth's surface, carrying nutrients to the ocean. Without water, particles don't mix and go into solution. Therefore, water created chemical chaos—and then bore forth order in the form of biological molecules. Life works for order, against entropy. It began in the seas, like a baby in the ocean of the womb, amniotic fluid similar to seawater. At conception, a fertilized egg is almost all water, 96 percent; a just-born infant is 80 percent water; an adult is about 70 percent $H_2O$.
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I'd been cutting up fruits—after soaking them. For several months, he'd taken to padding around the house naked except for his horn-rimmed glasses. "So. You've stopped bleeding."

I looked at my hands, sticky with juice.

"Is it the change of life then?" he asked.

I turned the tap on to rinse my hands. "It's too late," I said. "Too late." Water ran into the sink, down the drain, down my cheeks.

He took my shoulder and tried to turn me to face him, his hip bumping the counter. The sharp-bladed knife slid and fell, deflecting at his sex, bouncing off his foot, skidding on the floor. We looked at the knife stopped against the baseboard, at each other, and laughed.

"If we told anybody, they'd never believe it," I said.

My magic dragon laughed again, his face creasing, shaking his head. "You're such a nutcase."

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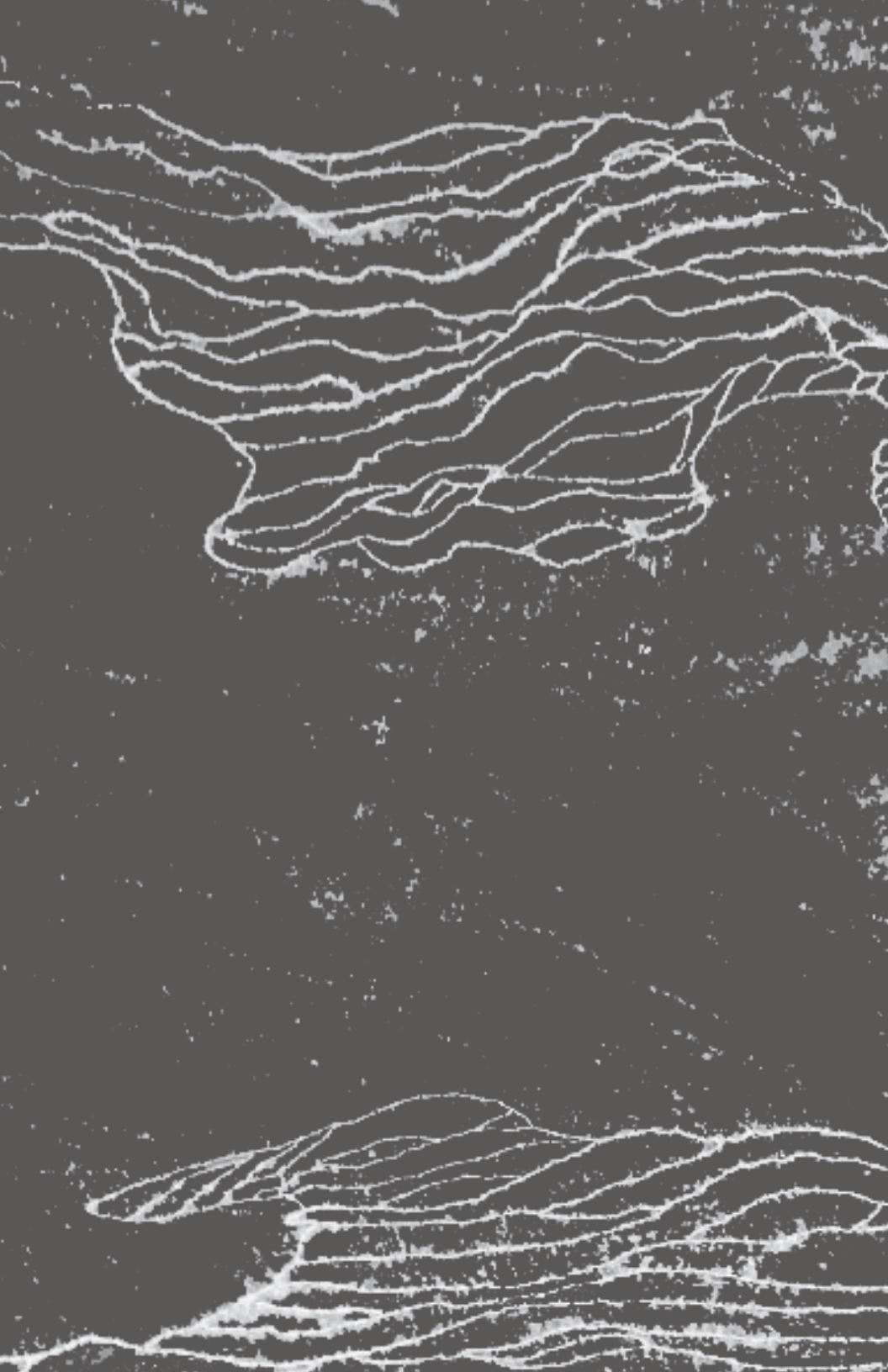
I'm on Kalaniana'ole Highway again, the rain falling steadily, heavily. Heavy as the poison you imbibe when you remain in a dying relationship. Opium is what you want for the pain, since you cannot kill yourself when you have an obsession with the illusion of a perfect marriage. Heavy, heavy, heavy. Heavy water is $D_2O$, with deuterium having a neutron as well as a proton in its nucleus. Heavy water is used in nuclear reactors. Heaviness has uses in the modern nuclear family, negativity in orbit. I can't shut the flow of thoughts, they're running, running. Running . . .

Won't I wither with all this water seeping away? Averting my eyes from my grinning little dragon, I squint again at the tear-streaked, mascara-blackened pouches under my eyes, my head haloed in persimmon-orange. I think of my empty womb, nothing where my legs meet, instead of *something*. Empty. Fluid springs. I must now have less than 65 percent of my body weight in water, I've sprung such a copious leak.

Where does water come from, originally? Life isn't possible without it. As we age, entropy moves in and begins its inevitable takeover. Graying, liver spots, wrinkles, wattles are all indications of increasing disorder in the over-ripe human body. Degeneration, death, and decay have to do with dehydration and dessication. Drying up. It happens to the best of us.

A dried up old bag. The blind horror of it. Heavy. Watery sunlight penetrates through the clouds for an instant—and then it's raining again.



# Our Waka

**Aiko Yamashiro**

*for all of you powerful women that night and every night*

# Dancing in the Belly

**Donovan Kūhiō Colleps**

Turn to the left, Ma says.
So I pierce sea with pen
to pivot, and sweet
potatoes roll against our feet.

Her arm outstretched
her hand a shaka, waiting,
hoping for fingers
to feel horizon's
love for north star.

Tūtū is in the belly
playing Hawaiian vinyl
from the 60s and 70s
and her eyes are fixed
far away, searching for him.

Grandchildren are crouched
at the edges with their hoodies
up and their phones blinking
at the doze of a falling sun.

My pen is bleeding into the sea
with every stroke and the mail
man motors by flinging mortgages
and medical bills damp and salty.

I keep paddling.

A man swam by yesterday
and said, "This way
to a New Oceania!"
And I spent all night
explaining to Ma
who he was and how
we should listen to him.

The grandchildren weren't convinced
and Tūtū forgot her name and the last
edge of light burned our backs
before dipping into today.

Turn a bit to the right, Ma says.
So I write the words ʻākau
liʻiliʻi on the shimmer
and her shaka fits perfectly
between the two lovers.

I think this is the way, Ma says.
And I look back, noticing
the marks of our journey
etched in the currents.

The grandchildren, curious,
turn off their phones and stand
to look at where we've been.

Their eyes slit, seeking
the farthest word
they can see.

Tūtū stands up, too,
and dances in the belly
to Genoa Keawe.

We may already be there, I say.
We may already be here.

# Hafekasi

**Lee Kava**

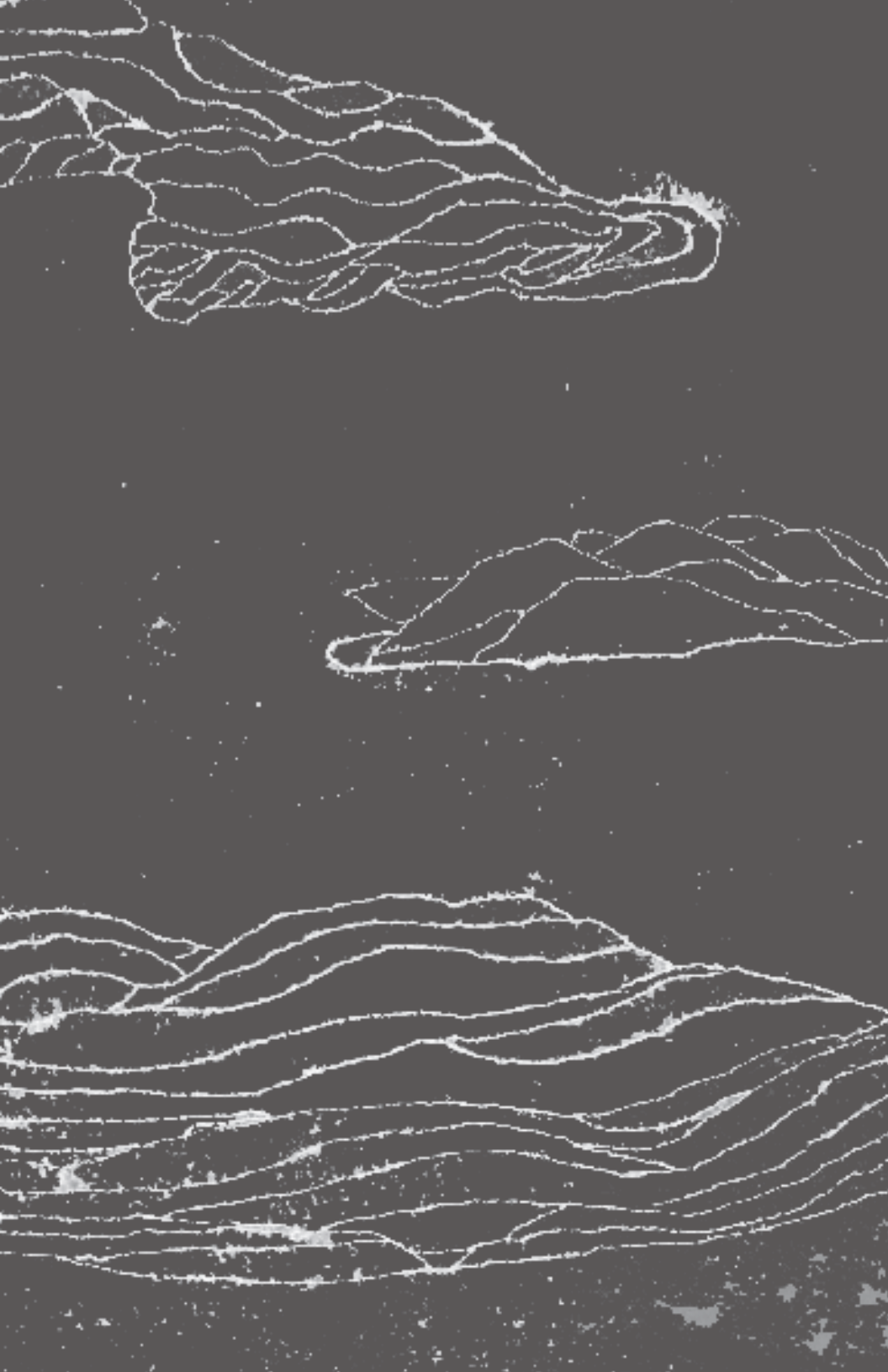
1. Half-caste
A person of mixed-race descending
from parents of different atmospheric layers like,
one parent troposphere
the other stratosphere
Smearing each other's sweat
Exhaling floating daughters

2. Mixed-race
Relating to people of different
directions, relations shipping over seas and skies
crossing racial borderlines
So when Tongans ask
"Why so light?"
You look skyward saying
"Ask the airlines."

3. Hyphenated
Of, relating to, or designating
a person, group or organization
of mixed origins
I—
dentify as you like
but what they really want to know is not
that you like punk-
rock, or action-
adventure, but
how far you can straddle—
over pick up lines like
"mixed girls keep it tight"—
they are never
prepared for the tongue
lashings of strong-
dashed
women.

4. ?
Otherwise known as interrogation
marked eyes upon
body hair skin soul
Family, strangers both confused
you don't know how to
Tongan American Pacific Islander Woman enough—
Interrogative ogling wondering
"Where'd she come from?
guess that hafekasi don't know how to navigate
earth's curves or dot
the right identity
points."

5. .
Also called the full stop
punctuation mark ending
long-sentenced notions
that single-mothered mixes
are mistakes.
In fact, we are
the 9-monthed periods
of declarative mothers,
not half-
raised, but
fully loved
decisions. We
are strong casts
of wind and water, we
are the mixed breaths
of air
and sea.



# The North Wind

**Denielle Pedro**

I had listened to my father tell me stories about Tokelau since I was small enough to sit atop his shoulders. While walking home from church, he'd teach me a Tokelauan proverb; on our way to the beach, a *Te Vaka* CD was playing on repeat. Though just a speck on the World map, another sprinkle of green amidst the thousands of islands of Oceania, Tokelau was a colossal part of my life. Born in American Samoa and raised in Hawai'i, I had never set foot on Tokelauan shores. Still, my family immersed me in the Tokelau *aganuku*, the culture. I was adorned in *kie* and *pahina* and taught to hold this culture in great esteem.

"Kua tali pā te malaga ki Tokelau!" the captain announced over the intercom: *We will be arriving in Tokelau shortly*.

Through sleepy eyes I looked out the ship's window. Scattered silhouettes slowly materialized above the Pacific Ocean, their curves softening the horizon's sharp edge.

*Okay, Tokelau's real. Dad wasn't just making stuff up*, I thought to myself, relieved.

After a six-hour plane ride, a twenty-three hour boat ride, and eighteen long years, I finally laid eyes upon my place of origin, *the North Wind*,[1] Tokelau.

Our transit from ship to land was blurred by thick, salty air, and blinding sunlight. While the men of the island hoisted luggage onto one of Fakaofo's[2] three vehicles, the women and children sat under the shade watching. My sister and I rested lazily against the trunk of a tree and took in our unfamiliar surroundings. The island, called *fale*,[3] was very small, about a ten minute walk from one side to the other. A single paved sidewalk weaved throughout the houses and buildings,

1. "Tokelau" is a Polynesian word meaning "North Wind."
2. Fakaofo is one of the four atolls that make up Tokelau, and is where our family stayed for the length of the trip.
3. Each of Tokelau's atolls consists of even smaller islands surrounding a lagoon.

lined with five breadfruit trees for every house, and four inquisitive, wide-eyed children for every doorway. Flocks of exotic birds glided in circles above a large, sandy clearing where a few boys played rugby. Behind us, the water was a mosaic of royal blue and turquoise, a stark contrast to the scalding, bone-white coral ground. The locals walked around barefooted and giggled at our thick slippers and delicate feet. Upon hearing the hushed murmurs of a few passing teenage girls, a panic washed over me, *What if they don't like us? What if we stick out? What if—*

"Ko Te-Kie ma Denielle, taku fanau!" my father's familiar voice broke the dramatic internal monologue: *These are my children, Te-Kie and Denielle.*

My apprehension gradually dissolved as my sister and I were passed along an endless sea of warm embraces. After decades of separation, my father was reunited with childhood companions and family who welcomed us with open arms and teary eyes. Still, I couldn't help but feel nervous under their scrutiny. The nagging voices played on: *What if we're not good enough? I wonder if they think we're completely white-washed. Don't look them in the eyes, idiot!*

"Denielle . . . Denielle!" my sister hissed under her breath, jabbing me in the side. I woke up from my trance and rubbed my newly bruised ribs. Realizing my sister had just saved me from walking into a thick cloud of gnats, I decided to silence the voices in my head until I was seated safely indoors.

We passed through the last wave of relatives and made it to our Aunty Taulima's house, where we would live for the next month. A strong-limbed, silver-haired old woman with a few teenage girls behind her greeted us at the door.

*Girls! My age!* I thought. The delighted smiles on their faces told me they were thinking the exact same thing.

Aunty Taulima wept happily, overjoyed by our arrival. She welcomed us into her home and continued to shower us with her affections. While she and my father made small talk, my sister and I exchanged introductions with the girls (our cousins) who quickly dragged us out back to assist them in "making tea for the adults" (escaping the house and talking story).

Shortly afterward, the men who were in charge of delivering luggage arrived at the door. The change in Taulima's ambiance was almost tangible as she used her t-shirt to wipe the tears, and smile, from her face. All of five-foot tall, Taulima terrorized the men until our bags were situated precisely to her liking. The girls sat back and giggled at the scene unfolding in front of them, while my sister and I sat in a stupor. What happened to the sweet little old lady we'd just spoken to? I was reminded of the advice my grandma had given my sister and me before leaving Hawai'i: "Listen to Taulima. She's the fatupaepae. Do as you are told and you'll be fine." The *fatupaepae* is the eldest woman in a clan, who is responsible for the welfare of her extended family. Since my sister and I were staying in Taulima's

house (while my father stayed with our uncle), our grandmother and aunts in Hawai'i warned us not to expect to be treated like special guests at a hotel, but as two more sets of helping hands.

As Grandma had foretold, my sister and I, along with our cousins, were completely at my aunt's disposal for the rest of the trip. This meant cleaning her pieces of land scattered around the atoll, cooking breakfast, lunch, and dinner for my father and uncles, and delivering the *inati*[4] to several different households. My daydreams of sitting under palm trees sipping Mai Tais were swept into the innumerable baskets of fallen hala fruit and coconut fronds that we collected each morning.

I vividly remember our first day coming to a close; just one day in the life of a subservient Tokelauan girl had already formed a large knot in my shoulders and a permeating pain in my legs.

"She said we're finished!" My cousin Poki yelled as she ran down from the house to the outdoor sink where we'd been washing dishes.

Dismissed by our aunt, we walked out to the *pa*, a large concrete wall at the edge of the lagoon, to relax in the wind. As the sky transitioned from sunset pink to midnight blue, bright flecks of white started filling up the dark, empty canopy above us. It was upon seeing the third shooting star that I started to completely freak out. See, in Tokelau there is very little air and light pollution competing with the night sky, which means that once the sun has set, the moon comes out as big and bright as its daytime counterpart, and I swear you can see every celestial body in the universe.

Since I was little, one of my favorite pastimes was stargazing, looking up into the sky for hours, getting lost in the vast expanses of the universe. One of my aunts in Tokelau had gifted me the Tokelauan name "Mataliki," a beloved constellation in the Pacific known in the west as the Pleiades, in honor of my love for the night sky.

"E fia olo koulua ki te vaka, ki te namo? E kitea e koe na fetu!" my cousin proposed, noticing my interest in the stars: *You want to take the boat into the lagoon? You can see all the stars!* . . . Um, how do you say "heck yes" in Tokelauan?

And that's how that tradition was established: escaping from our chores, stealing our uncle's boat, and looking at the stars and constellations, even Mataliki. Rocked by the calm waters of the lagoon I had only seen old camcorder footage of, the wind whispering legends my father had countlessly recited to me, we were transported to our own world, tethered only to reality by a rope tied to a nearby coconut tree.

4. The traditional, communal practice of dividing and sharing goods and resources.

While my father and uncles sang drunkenly into the night, and the population of Fakaofo went about its business as usual, my sister, cousins, and I relished the hours of darkness in which we had no chores to attend to. We'd talk until our jaws hurt, about nothing and everything, the shallow and profound. But most of the time we'd just lie there, mesmerized by the endlessly starry sky, giggling at how terribly our fathers sang.

# Hawakan Mo Ang Aking Kamay (Hold My Hand)

**Aimee Suzara**

*for the survivors of Typhoon Haiyan 11/19/14*

*to be held* the most cardinal craving

but there is nothing to hold
a cord, cut long ago

I behold photos of the wreckage
as you
hold shirts over your noses
and bandages over wounds
and hunger in your belly
and the memories of faces
and living rooms and beds
and the taste of her adobo
and the smell of sampaguita
and hope for the missing
and patience as you wait

plastic bags embrace
the corpses of the dead

while you piece the day together
reassemble the night

*hawakan mo ako*

I wonder how you hold up
while we fall apart
you
our soul-twins
bound by an umbilical cord
no, it was never cut

*hawakan mo*

maybe there is something we build
across the seas
through our eyes, hands reaching out
our witness
the candor of belief

and somehow it is you holding me
even as
each day
you fall through my fingers.

# Sinking Waka
## T-man Thompson

Our steersman left us
to paddle alone with our mama
in this sinking waka

waka wahine
waka tama
waka tamahine
(all)
(of) (us)
(si)
(nk)
(in)
(g)

((the))
(((bubbling)))
(ocean)
**overwhelms**
(our) ((waka))

**overwhelms** (((((our mama))))

(((((where)))))
(((((((is)))))))

(((our)))
((((((((((((((steersman?))))))))))))))

((((((((((where is))))))))))

((((((((((((((((((((((((God?))))))))))))))))))))))))

# I Stay Wid Herman's Bones

**Amalia Bueno**

*with mahalos to Hart Crane's "At Melville's Tomb"*

Undahneet da watah get plenny dead man's bones.
I wen see em pile up, den go back undahneet.
Had so plenny bones da wave wen take 'em,
den bring 'em back on da shoa, den go back out again.
Had uku pile bones wen come up, den go back,
come up, go back, until I no can see any of 'em anymoa.

Dis kept going and going, plenny bones from da shipwrecks
dat nobody notice stay piling up. Maybe da ocean
like us know dat we all going die, cause da ocean
stay holding all doze bones. Maybe da ocean
stay telling us "you gotta watch out, you bettah
read da signs, da signs dat stay inside the shells,
da mana dat stay inside da bones."

Den, just li'dat da ocean got all quiet.
Da waves was all calm. But den, ho, da ocean got mad
or something, cause da waves got all kapakahi li'dat
cause da waves wen go shraight up, all da way up,
up to da sky (fo' real kine) and I felt, I felt
all spiritual li'dat, like I was at church
and errybody stay quiet. I wen look up
at da stahs, and dass wen, inside the stahs
I seen all da ansahs to erryting.

My fren Herman, he not evah
going know dat more people going die.
Way up in the high blue waves
my fren Herman, he not going wake up.
Nobody's voice, nobody's poem, nobody,
not one person, dey not going bring him back.
But da ocean, da ocean stay keeping him.
Da ocean lucky, cause she going keep
Herman fo' evah. Cause only da ocean can.

# The Monkey Gate

**Kathy Jetnil-Kijiner**

I.
my uncle tells the story
of being lost in the honolulu airport
how he fished out a wandering airport employee
and asked him if he knew where the Micronesian gate was
the man smirked through blue uniform
*you mean the monkey gate?*

blood rushing beneath his
face blank and unchanged he turned
and jogged in the direction the man had pointed

months later my cousin told me the story and i
sat stunned
wondering why
would they call it that?

II.
alarms sound off
three o'clock in the morning our bodies buzz
from cramped beds pull-out couches and flowery futons
we rise
shove swap meet t shirts fresh tuna
macadamia chocolates and extra cases
of our lives into solid trustworthy
coolers snapped shut and bound with
luminescent strands of tape
we pack
everything
into battered mini vans and bucking SUVs
and as we sail along blank roads
we watch the landscape of apartment complexes
that loom above dozing bars, blinking 7 11s and mini marts

*karuji leddik ne. wake her up.*

our eyes flicker open to muttering cousins
the harsh lights of the Honolulu Airport
flood through the milky translucence of the window
as we drain our belongings from slide and shut doors
we chatter away nerves
rumbling and rolling in our bellies
at the check-in gate
Kosraen brothers argue over coolers that weigh too much
a Pohnpeian suit urgently checks his watch while
bony kneed brown children run leap across
carts and piles of suitcases coolers boxes guarded
by graying Chuukese and Marshallese women
whole families crouch and recline on the linoleum floor
we slide our slippers off
we make ourselves comfortable prop up ashy feet
the line to check in is long and
bag check even longer
saying good bye one arm hugs and tears
sweating slow off our skin
and we are sad to see each other leave
and we are happy to see each other leave

we wave to the airport employees
we thank them
for handing us our tickets and carry-ons
and with upright backs
we smile
stroll

past security

# Suay

**Danielle Seid**

Three weeks before I left for Bangkok, I started running. I got up every morning at five and ran west toward the canyon with the red painted hills. It took about an hour to get to my favorite trail—Ice Box—where, and only locals knew this, a thin creek traveled up into the rocks for two-thirds of the year. The water, which began as ice high in the canyon, actually traveled downward—but when you hiked toward the rock face, as I did every morning for those few weeks, the stream was a companion that went *up* with you. Around 6:30, the sun rose over the desert valley. By that time, I was near the top of the trail. I sat down on my favorite boulder perched above the creek and waited for the sun. The boulder was flat with a large crack in the middle like a split lip. Cacti with purple flowers and gnarled manzanita grew in its many smaller crevices. I wedged the heels of my sneakers in the boulder's large crack and reclined, just as I would at home in bed. I suppose I was rather attached to that boulder, since I had once shared it with a lover, Alex, who had long since receded from my life, but whom, when I sat on that boulder, I dreamed I could still hold and kiss.

It was late spring then, so there was a short window in the early morning before it got too hot. Bangkok would be hot, I was told, but humid-hot, not desert-hot. I figured my morning runs in the desert would help prepare me for the Bangkok summer. I was certain the deliberate punishing of my limbs and lungs would help make me strong in time for surgery. The sun rising over the desert those mornings often filled me with clarity—about where I had been, where I was going, and how I would soon reconcile with my body. At twenty-five, it had been ten years since I set myself on a course leading to that moment. It had been a very zigzag path, much like Ice Box trail approaching the rock face. Mostly I had avoided what might have been the most punishing aspects of transition: scrutinizing doctors, undesired public outings, and the loss of friendships. Twice I

had loved and been loved, and this had given me some comfort in my body. But, finally, I was alone, drifting toward the destination I had charted years before. In the first few minutes after dawn those mornings, everything felt possible, but this feeling tended to diminish quickly as I left the canyon and rejoined the city. At work, amidst the phone-answering and claim-filing, I spent my days worrying about all the complications I might encounter on my journey to Thailand—miscommunications, missed flight connections, dehydration, diarrhea, and, of course, physical pain and possible complications from surgery. As I ran home, away from the red painted hills, I catalogued my pre-surgery, pre-travel anxieties and then willed them away, one by one.

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The journey to Bangkok was long but not entirely unpleasant, even though on the flight from Japan to Thailand I was seated next to a Japanese woman with a screaming two-year-old, who for the last two hours of the flight could only be placated in three-minute intervals with candy. As the plane touched down, though, I felt suddenly, acutely anxious. *What if things went horribly wrong?* Inside the BKK airport, which was so much smaller than I imagined it, I faced my first crisis—the hospital shuttle was nowhere to be found. I used this opportunity to practice my Thai. *Agree on a price beforehand!* the travel guides and internet blogs said. I approached the gang of taxi drivers in white polyester shirts and khaki pants standing by baggage claim. 500, 600, 800 baht? I offered. *Suay!* 800 baht! one taxi driver said as he took my bag and led me outside.

This became my nickname in Bangkok—*Suay* or *Suay mak mak*, meaning *beautiful* and *very beautiful*. I have always been vulnerable to flattery, but the taxi driver's compliments, though they felt sincere, still felt like an apology for charging me too much for a ride into the city. It was late though, almost midnight, and I wanted to get to the hospital as soon as possible. The next day I would empty my entire savings account in BKK, so what was another few hundred baht for safe passage to the hospital and a night's rest?

At the hospital, I checked in at the lobby, filled out a breakfast order, and then settled into my room and fell asleep. The next day, I awoke early and contemplated a jog in the neighborhood. I peeled back the heavy curtains in the room to look out at the city. There was a Catholic girls' school next to the hospital, where children were beginning to arrive for class. Around eight, a young male nurse delivered breakfast—eggs, potatoes, and starfruit. This would be my only permitted meal of the day. Later, I walked to Lumpini Square, a park famous in BKK for its kickboxing matches. There was no *muay thai* that afternoon, but the park was
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full of stray cats lounging on the steps of monuments and elderly Bangkokers practicing tai chi, fan dancing, and sword fighting. I sat and watched two elderly men and a woman gracefully wield metal swords with red and yellow tassels in a choreographed dance.

That night in the hospital I dreamt of the trio with their swords—only I dreamt them much younger, in their prime, as best friends and occasional lovers. The next day, as I was wheeled into the operating room for my long-awaited surgery, I held tightly to my vision of the sword handlers harnessing their *qi*.

~~~

In the hazy moments of my post-surgery consciousness, on a stretcher in the hallway outside of the operating room, I struggled to remember the Thai word for pain. Resorting to English, I cried out to the nurses for help. The doctor arrived and administered morphine, which immediately brought on a powerful wave of nausea. The nurses helped roll me on my side so I could retch. Back in my room, the doctor visited and assured me things went well. He instructed the nurses to visit me every few hours with antibiotics and pain medicine.

One nurse, in particular, soon grew fond of me. I can't remember her name, but I remember she worked nights. Every night at 10, she administered my last daily dose of antibiotics through my IV, which sent a chill up my veins. One night during that first week after surgery, she came in the room smiling and giggling. *Suay, suay, mak*, she said. She took her finger and ran it down the length of my nose. *So pretty*, she said. The hospital gown I wore had come untied and in my drugged state I had failed to notice one of my breasts was exposed. So pretty, she said in English, touching my breast with her gloved hand, just as she injected the antibiotics into my IV. I closed my eyes and felt the cool sting travel up my arm, as I willed myself across ocean and desert back to that flat boulder with the gash surrounded by cacti and manzanita. The nurse kissed me on the mouth and left before there was time for me to ask her to stay.

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The week after surgery—in a small, cheap hotel near the hospital—I suffered a stretch of five or six days where all my pre-travel anxieties about potential complications, which had been vague and abstract, were suddenly real and worse than anything I imagined. I remember those days as long days of unrelenting nausea, bleeding, dehydration, and forced dilation. After a journey across the Pacific, I was stranded in a room, and on a bed, that grew smaller and smaller

by the hour, as time slowed and I knew nothing of world events. I came to loathe that room. When I could sleep, I dreamt again of the elderly Bangkokers in Lumpini Square. I dreamt, also, of my grandfather doing *tai chi* on the lawn in front of my childhood home in California. I dreamt of islands with enormous white sand dunes and speedboats crossing channels, crabs eating chunks of ham in plastic bowls on lanais, and my mother with permed hair in the kitchen cooking boiled chicken with scallions and oyster sauce. Eventually, news of the outside world trickled in through the television—bombs found on planes in Indonesia, destroyed embassies in Africa, suspected child killers hiding in Thailand. The phone in the room rang and rang—every three or four times I answered and cried into the receiver while my mother, as I requested of her, catalogued the mundane details of her day. Ocassionally, she asked, *how is it?* I replied with as few details as possible and reminded her the doctor said the surgery went well. After my weeklong bout of nausea, I decided to throw away the pain pills that were causing me to suffer, determined to walk to the drug store a few blocks away for feminine pads, iodine, and Vaseline for my chapped lips.

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Accustomed to the air conditioning in the hotel room, I choked on the fetid Bangkok air heavy with the smell of grease, urine, and the occasional rotting fruit. Passersby stared at me as I shuffled along the street slowly like a *po-po* you'd see in Chinatown, and again when I stood frozen, like a statue in Lumpini, at the steps leading up to the entrance of the drug store. On the street in front of the store, I stared at and contemplated the seven or eight concrete steps. How would I climb them? Just then a throbbing pain in my groin forced me to double over on the sidewalk. Humiliated, I kept my head down with my hair draped over my face. I stayed there until the light from the sky just faded and the neon lights of Bangkok bars and shopping centers shone. When I finally looked up I saw a short, middle-age Thai woman with a bowl-cut reaching out her hand to me. Pain? she asked in English. I gave her my hand and she guided me, ever so slowly, to the pillar by the steps of the drug store. She stayed with me, and held me up, until I found the strength to climb those steps. After a few minutes in the air-conditioned store alone, I exited into the humid Bangkok night and found her waiting for me. Very carefully, and with her help, I crouched down and sat on the top step, where together we sat in silence and breathed in the city as it drifted by us.
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# Nicaragua

**Kathleen de Azevedo**

My mother was a Nicoya, a Nicaraguan, but when I was a child, I did not have Nicaragua in my bones. It wasn't until I was in high school where I saw a picture of a mass grave in Nicaragua of bones mixed with twisted boots and blue jeans embedded in clay, that I associated my father's fluent but gabacho Spanish with something besides his love for my mother. She told me that my father had saved her from some evil in her own country, and she did not appreciate the school showing us such pictures and even called the teacher to complain. My mother with blonde hair and blue eyes so different from the deep brown skin of her people, did not talk about her country much, only to say she would never go back just to die in a hail of bullets meant for my father. But at the end of her life, when she was an eighty pound bag of bones, her alcoholic aim sent a bullet, not into her head, but through the ceiling, making a kiss hole in the sheet rock.

When I first learned why my father had gone to Nicaragua—and not just to marry my mother—I imagined his young-man face crisped in the sun, and his clear beady blue eyes glinting under a camouflage cap, watching his cadre of Contras digging large trenches to dump dead bodies. I asked him if it felt strange to kill people he didn't even know. That's when I learned his temper had no bounds, for he whacked me good. But the pain of my flesh meeting leather gave me the realization that I could spot truth, even the most buried of certainties.

When I first went to college, I had thought of becoming a lawyer but I realized that truth had nothing to do with law. Instead, I became a court reporter. During my first year on the job, I tested myself as to whether any grotesque testimony involving blood and flesh and wide-eyed children could make me flinch. But it didn't. Gradually, I found myself guessing correctly a defendant's guilt or innocence even before the jury could figure out what was what, because I noticed that when people lied and thought they got away with it, their faces got goofy and despicably weak thinking themselves so fucking clever.

Though he only beat me real bad that one time, nothing was ever the same. After my mother's death, he seemed to disappear from the face of the earth. But a couple of years later, I received an unexpected letter from him written on thin yellow paper telling me he had bought himself a small island situated somewhere in the middle of Lake Nicaragua, where, he said, he was king. He even called his island "Isla del Rey." The directions to his house were explicit down to the actual green color of the outside walls and he dared me to go and find him. For months, I tortured myself, wondering what may have caused him to return to Nicaragua. Maybe he was going back to the scene of the crime, to purge himself of guilt. Maybe he was building a school because that's what people do to apologize to Third World Countries. Or maybe he had gone insane in the jungle like that crazy guy Kurtz in *Apocalypse Now*.

I did dare to go and find him. Once in Nicaragua, I took a local bus to the boat launch where a small ferry was supposed to take me to the island. I waited in the snack bar and munched a bag of plantain chips, while watching a fist-size beetle on its back flailing its legs in a corner where someone had probably kicked it. I imagined that when my father sees me, he'll have a heart attack and I'll be able to say: *See? That's what death feels like*.

On the lake, a small flap of loose cloth skittering on the surface of the water, turned out to be an approaching boat. As it got closer, I could see it was a small ferry boat with a blue plastic awning. Once the boat slipped up to the launch, a woman with muscular shoulders threw a rope around a post and hollered to the waiting passengers to get in quickly, especially the boy and girl, around elementary school age. She was gentler with a woman carrying a baby; she grabbed the woman's large cloth bag and tossed it onto the boat, then took the baby as the woman climbed in. As the boat took off toward a distant volcano in the middle of the lake, its very top hidden by a halo of cloud, I asked the driver if she was headed to Isla del Rey. Suddenly everyone broke into an emotional chatter. Over there is where the gringo lives, the passengers said, in all kinds of cryptic ways that suggested mystery. I thought of the movies where a search party goes to rescue someone who went crazy in the jungle, and if I were a court reporter here, I'd find these stories were a dime a dozen.

Finally the small boat pulled up on a slide of sand. Isla del Rey was no more than bush land with a scattering of banana trees, their flat leaves rocking from side to side like detached helicopter blades. The woman with the baby climbed out of the boat first, her feet hitting the ground with a splash. The driver got out too, and yelled for the little boy to carry my duffle bag, then she motioned for me and the children to follow her down a dirt trail. The boy put my bag on his head. The driver charged ahead as if she were cutting a path with a machete and ranted

at both the boy with my luggage and the little girl trotting after, but they seemed so nonchalant I almost wondered if she were yelling at voices inside her head.

Finally, we came to some small wood houses surrounded by wire fences, chickens in the yards, dogs tied up with old rope, tin washbasins and bright plastic cups, women in shorts and bare feet scrubbing clothes under a blasting spigot of water, all looking like the Nicaragua I had imagined. My father used to say: *I don't have much in common with the people there. I don't even like the place.* And my mother would answer: *Don't listen to him. Nicaragua is in his bones and in the bones of others he knows. He can kill anyone he has to.* I figure it's like this: In court, murderers always say they have nothing in common with their victims but they do. Murderers and victims become hopelessly tangled in each other's lives until one cannot help but strangle the other. Happens all the time. I should know.

The woman led us to the iron gate of a small bungalow painted green. The young boy set down my duffle bag as the woman shouted through the bars. My father in his underwear appeared on the porch. He had gotten a lot older: His flesh all stripped down, his fallen belly hanging in a flap over the elastic of his briefs and his embarrassingly wobbly crotch. He thrust out his bare tanned chest like a rooster. I must have gone pale, for the first thing he asked was whether I was dying my hair blonde like Nicoyas who want to look gringa. Of course the first words coming from his mouth would be an insult.

"I have blonde hair like mama," I said. "You know that."

The woman who brought me here began arguing loudly to him in Spanish. She opened the gate and shoved the children over to him, then stomped away. My father nodded sheepishly then watched as she headed back to the lake, leaving the children behind. "She's angry," he said, "because the children usually arrive at the docks too late to be taken to school on the mainland. She is afraid they will grow up stupid."

Then my father ushered me through the gate and hugged me. His body emanated a forceful tropical heat; then he pulled away as if he suddenly realized he had touched a stranger, or as if I were my mother who, logically, was not here. He led me into the house and the kids followed. A woman leaning against the kitchen doorway half-smiled, her lips trying to cover a mouth full of bad teeth. The boy and girl ran up to her and she affectionately cupped her hands on their heads as they ran through the kitchen and out into the back yard. Their laugher floated inside the house. My father told me to make myself at home and he disappeared into the back room.

I sat down on the couch. The woman guarding the kitchen doorway stared at me and I looked elsewhere. The white walls were bare except for a paint-by-numbers portrait of a geisha girl and a little wood plaque of brightly colored peasants,

the type sold in leftist gift shops in the States. I noticed an old TV on a wheeled cart and a bureau with a stuffed open drawer. And sunlight pouring through the front doorway and through a small window covered with mosquito netting.

My father emerged from the back room, pulling up his shorts, which hung precariously off his hip bones. He went into the kitchen and I could hear him opening the freezer and breaking ice with a hammer. He brought out two glasses with ice and a bottle of rum which he poured so that it covered the chunks. I almost laughed when I took the glass. He and my mother both liked rum; it's as if my mother were alive and in the kitchen making drinks.

The woman never moved from the doorway. Her arms and legs were thin and ropy and her red t-shirt stretched tight on her breasts. Her skirt, slim at the hips with a swish of flounce, fit her oddly, too tight in the front, too loose in the back as if she were wearing the skirt backward. She had painted her fingernails silver. Her eyes narrowed, all boozy. My dad told me she was his new wife.

The woman smiled broadly.

"Call her Isabel!" he said, seeing my shock. "Those two kids outside, Pedro and Ramona, were hers, but now they are mine, too."

A warm breeze blew in from outside smelling like ripe banana, mud, and Pinesol.

He gave a little laugh. "Why so surprised?" he said. "What did you expect I would do here?"

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At night, sleeping on the couch dented from different people's asses gave me fierce insomnia. Isabel insisted that the light be kept on next to the small mosquito net-covered window in the living room in case of burglars. The yellowish light from a bare bulb poured into my eyes. Wide awake, I remembered the time when I thought how beautiful my mother was and how romantic that she waited in Nicaragua for my father. Even when she lived in America, she loved Latin music and had sun dresses with flounces and danced cumbia and merengue with my father as if she had longed to go back home. The netting covering the window heaved with a mass of feelers and legs and large moths with heavy brown wings, and smaller white moths landing and shooting off into the darkness and returning, all trying to chew open the net so they could impale themselves on the kitchen light. Those few who managed to slip through the net sizzled as they hit the burning bulb.

Footsteps from outside pattered up to the window. I sat up with a start. A man with a black goatee floated among the insects. His black hair blended in with the night. A few moths fluttered toward his flashlight which he lowered below the
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sill. Before I could scream, footsteps came from my father's bedroom and Isabel whispered "mierda" as she bumped into something. I lowered myself, pulled the sheet up to my chin and half closed my eyes. Isabel's footsteps went over to the insect-covered mosquito netting and she whispered "Felipe?" in that harsh way of calling a lover. Her body felt heavy as she thumped through the living room and slipped quietly out the door and through the iron gate. I lay awake watching the yellow pool of light on the ceiling. At times, it seemed as though the shadow of my father swept into the pool of light, like an eclipse. It seemed as though he would be stalking her, sliding into the dark, guided by the small glow of Felipe's flashlight bouncing toward the bushes. When I realized he was still asleep, I turned off the light and the house sank into the darkness and quiet, except for the dusty sound of fluttering wings.

The next morning, I put away the washed dishes from last night. My father sat at the kitchen table watching me putter. Isabel was not yet awake; she was sleeping off her big night. I wanted to ask him why he moved to Nicaragua after my mother died. I wanted to ask why my mother went crazy and did it have to do with what he did in Nicaragua or was she just feeling sorry for herself? (Oh I know those types in court too. Life would be nothing if they weren't the star of their own tragedy.) My father sat there with his pale eyes, his forehead speckled like an overripe mango, his two flaps of breast collapsing into his chest. He had the vague expression as if he were deciding whether to answer me even though I had not spoken.

"Where is that new wife of yours?" I finally asked as I made coffee. Wow she sure made a commotion last night, I thought. How long before that ugly puta gets into your liquor cabinet and takes your money and banishes you into the jungle? Or does the mutual contempt fill both of you with lust? Are the murderer and victim getting so tangled up, they can't tell whose bones belong to whom?

Do you love her?

These were the questions I wanted to ask, questions that would sound great in court.

My father answered the wife question with an elaborate story of how sometimes in the afternoon, the water and electricity shuts off, which is why he needed to eat while he had the chance. "It's easier on the mainland," he said as I filled the coffee pot with water dribbling from the water filter, "but I like being king of an island and I have to make sacrifices in the wife department. Even if it means she sleeps late."

Just then, Isabel appeared in the kitchen doorway and stepped over to the table. My father caught her by the hips. "Stop," he said. "Turn around, let's see what you got." She giggled awkwardly with little girlish jerks as he pawed at her green

cotton dress with a row of blue flowers at the hem. She had no ass and a loose belly. He kissed her and let her go like a tropical bird. She had the lazy self-satisfied look of someone who had won him over and could completely control him. And what an ugly set of teeth! Isabel didn't know that years ago, he would have killed someone like her. Then the kids Pedro and Ramona came to the kitchen table. Looks like they were late for school again. Looks like no one cared that the boat left for the mainland already. I cracked eggs into a bowl and laid out a stack of tortillas on the kitchen table and the kids grabbed everything greedily without even waiting for the eggs. I wanted to question Isabel like a lawyer: Why can't they get up early? Do you care if they grow up dumb? Where do you work? What do you do all day?

"I have a beautiful wife!" my father laughed. "And two step children! My own island. What more do I need?" He looked at me all slit-eyed and whispered to Isabel in Spanish with his gringo accent and spun his finger like a whirlygig. "Her mother was loco."

Later that afternoon, I dusted the living room, mainly the bureau, looking for something that would have reminded him of home, but there was nothing, not one picture nor letter. The stuffed-open drawer in the bureau had nothing but old socks. The other drawers were practically empty except for a stack of cards, a box of cigarettes, and a couple of drink coasters that said "Rum Rico." I had one framed picture of my mother when she was young before I was born, and I could have brought it for him, but I didn't. In the picture, my mother is pretty but unreal, standing in the archway of her father's home; a nice home, it seemed, with a caged bird and a potted palm tree in the background. I can assume this picture was taken before the "great war" here, between the Sandanistas and Contras, when Nicaragua was as remote as Madagascar. Or maybe the picture was taken in spite of it all, because my mother had been beautiful and that had been enough.

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I took Pedro and Ramona down to the launch so they could catch the boat and arrive at school on time. They had been arriving on time for a week, because I took them every morning. The first time the kids showed up on time, the woman driving on the boat whooped with satisfaction, "*Finalmente*, maybe they will learn something!" And each day that week, Ramona and Pedro met her boat *como siempre* at least for now. *Es mejor que nada*, as they say here. A little school is better than no school at all. I watched as the boat turned toward the mainland and disappeared into the mist, leaving behind a shuddering wake.

I took a walk as usual because I was bored and my father carried on so se-
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dately that I still hadn't asked him about the war or why he came here, or my mother's illness, because all these bits of conversation didn't make sense in the middle of such calm, though really, that's the best time to mention these types of things. I decided, however, that I would talk to him today because I didn't want to leave here without knowing something of these missing pieces. It was the first time in my life when the truth was not easy to discern. Maybe it's because there was no trial, so no one was forced to say anything. But when I came back to the house, Isabel was on the couch holding hands with a man sitting next to her, the one she had snuck out with almost every night, who went by the name of "Felipe." Both of them were watching a telenovela. She was in a white mini skirt and a pink sleeveless blouse tied at the midriff. Her hair was french braided with small ribbons at the base of her neck. Felipe, smelling of fish, leaned over, shoved his hand between her knees and gave her a small kiss on the lips.

My father must have been out of the house but when I went into the kitchen, he was there, slicing open some fish and pulling out the string of guts and flinging them outside for the cluster of black vultures. He obviously knew what was going on. I sat at the kitchen table. "Look," he said, "Felipe brought us some fish."

I glanced toward the living room.

"I know what you are thinking. But *es mejor que nada*. I have fish for dinner and a wife. And she has—" and he motioned with his head. "It's better than nothing. Nicoyas have lived with this expression for years. It's no different now."

He continued working, cleaning the fish and setting their bodies on a plate. He sank the bloody knife into a basin of water, wiped it with a cloth, and put the knife on the dish drain. He said he had to do things in a hurry because sometimes the electricity shut off and telenovelas had to be watched and food had to be cooked when they could. His gestures were measured, like an old man who tries to do everything perfectly. My mother's drinking and self-destruction, on the other hand, was messy as if she was saying: Here is what the real human heart looks like, once she has been through what I have. "There is no room for your logic, mi hija," she said to me once. "You only type the words of criminals but you have no idea how they really live." But criminals did live this simply, the way my father rinsed out raw rice in a bowl of water, rolling his hands among the grains and plucking out the small loose rocks so they wouldn't break someone's teeth.

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That evening after dinner, some neighbors came over to the house until the place was overrun with people. Men brought beer and rum for themselves. Felipe entered the house, went to the bureau to grab a deck of cards from a drawer, then
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came into the kitchen, shuffling the cards as he joined the other men at the table, including my father. An old woman lay her skinny hands on my father's shoulders. She wore her grey hair in a high pony tail and her sagging boobs waddled inside her tank top. My father reached over and kissed her hand "*por suerte, cariña*." On the steps of the patio, a group of women sat together, scratching mosquito bites on their legs. One of them was pregnant and rubbed her stomach. The children darted in and out of the overgrown brush that bordered my father's property. They ran over to different women at different times, as if they weren't sure who their mothers were, or they just didn't care. One of the women called out in Spanish: "Watch for snakes!" which my father used to say whenever he wanted me to be careful. Gradually my father got swallowed up by the continual stream of people until I couldn't even see the table anymore. Felipe broke from the card game, wandered over and found Isabel, and led her away from the house.

I wandered inside and out but never did my father call for me to join him. He never pointed to me, his daughter, and said, "That is mi hija!" He endured the madness, he even liked it actually. After all, it was a weekend party at his house where he was king. People rummaged through the refrigerator grabbing food and drinks like it was their house, and on the stove, women fried slabs of cheese like my mother used to do. I wanted to yell at them about all the things my father was, and how he was a weak man, and how I came here and nothing had changed. Somewhere in their back yards, they have underneath the ground, those forever entangled and sinking in each other's bones. Ghosts walk the earth here and evaporate for those who don't believe in them, and haunt those who do. But the party was washed clean of dread and guilt, and was as innocent as a child.

I remember a trial once, a fun one, with dramatic lawyers. The one representing the plaintiff was a snappy barracuda type, and the public defender wore an ill-fitting suit. And a jury with an easy laugh. During the testimony, the man accused of murdering his wife said: (and whose words I captured perfectly on my dictaphone machine) *I don't know how it happened. The way things ended up. One thing led to another and now I am here*. He admitted guilt right off, a good thing, for the trial ended quickly, but his admission was so rare, it threw everyone in the courtroom into a spin and even his own lawyer accused him of lying, though the accused was telling the truth. Nobody could be that glib after killing someone he loved. I too, thought he was lying, but I couldn't figure out why.

Not back then, at least. Now I know.

# Shouldering

**Christina Low Dwight**

One day it happened, and I felt what they had been saying all season long—that it wasn't the paddle I was moving. The paddle was an extension of my arms, attached through my shoulders, spiraling through my twisted spine, into my abdominals, coursing down my thighs, to my feet.

"Ground yourself starting from the middle of your soles," Coach had told me on the first day of long distance season while the other women held the canoe stationary in the water. "Anchor your paddle as your torso twists as much as possible, then pull your body toward it as you sit up straight."

Before that, I wasn't sure what I'd been doing, other than trying to self-diagnose the sharp pain in my left shoulder, using every remedy I could think of—heat, ice, massage, pressure-point release with a lacrosse ball, foam rolling, Ibuprofen, Icy Hot, yoga therapy. Was it bursitis? Tendonitis? A torn rotator cuff? Had I strained it? Maimed it? Would it ever work right again? I even went to a practitioner who suggested that it was connected to the broken collarbone I experienced out of the birth canal, almost forty years later.

Sometimes people say things in such a way that they finally make sense. Different muscles were fatigued after that first day of understanding. And rather than feeling like my left shoulder was on the verge of snapping off—that fragile wing, worn and frail from overuse—instead my lower back and buttocks, my legs and feet, and most important, my core, burned.

This was how I knew that paddling every day rather than the three that regatta season required, could be possible. It became, organically, I think from that first sprinting season, those practices that began at the same evening hour but ended after sunset, my muscles acclimating to work well past my expectations of them.

My daily ritual: a quiet bike ride down the path to the beach access where I chained up against the link fence, packed my slippers into my basket, and walked

barefoot, my paddle in hand, to the place where Coach stood waiting for us to gather.

"Good morning," Coach greeted me each afternoon, beaming. He wore socks with slippers on the sand and sometimes disposable booties, like the ones you put over your shoes when you're entering a hospital's germ-free zone. He'd lean to one side, standing or walking, trying to hide his slight limp. Often he'd comb his fingers through his thin hair and raise his chin with his eyes still downcast, looking humble.

Coach had crossed the channel so many times, more years than many of the crew had lived. He had led the twice-winning Foti's, then quit as their leader because "practicing every day interfered with their lives. But it was necessary to win." After their first, they believed they could triumph without the daily grind, and Coach had walked. "'Do it your own way,' I told em. 'See what happens.'" They asked him back the following year, and first place was theirs again.

Later, he would tell me about his ex-wife and how she had cheated on him after thirty years of marriage, how he never married again because his children were grown. "Somebody had to pay for private school and give her the ability not to work. But she got lonely." The sacrifices he made for paddling, for the canoe club, were likely some part of that equation.

I wanted to tell him my story, how I had been cheated on, too, but I just listened, old Hawaiian music strumming softly from the radio as his white pickup creaked, bouncing down the highway. He had been at the park and offered to give me a ride to the rigging in Hawai'i Kai, even though the crew was supposed to meet at the launching point. It was the day before E Lau Hoe, the race from Hawai'i Kai to Nānākuli—26 miles I was secretly dedicating to my deceased father, who ran about the same amount of marathons as Coach had raced the channel.

They were the same in some ways, my dad and him. Every afternoon, my dad would come home from work and don his running shoes to leave for an hour or two or three, depending on his training schedule and how close we were to the Honolulu marathon. Afterward he'd come home, shirtless, and my mother would call him to the table to eat. Every night, she'd tell him to put on a shirt. And every night, they'd go for a short walk after dinner, then he'd sneak off to his home office and spend the rest of the night working.

He ran a top-secret program he called "Low Kids Are Tough" with my brother and sister, but it had gone bust by the time I was old enough to participate. He was very busy, a workaholic before the term existed, and eventually paid for my entire college education at a private school on the mainland with a personal check.

When I was growing up, a lot of people would greet me with, "I saw your dad

running," and I would feel jealous. It was as if that person had somehow gotten time I wanted with him, even though his was a solitary act. They saw him in a way I didn't: at peace, more at home on the road than he seemed, well, at home.

When I finally got the time I wanted with him, I was twenty-nine and working in his office. He had cancer and needed someone to drive him to and from appointments, pick up his macrobiotic lunches, and pretend to know how to close real estate deals. As his glorified secretary, we spent lots of time talking about business and life and family. Our last words:

"You know I love you, right?"

"Yes," he'd said, a bit surprised. "I love you, too."

And then I was on a plane to spend the holidays with my in-laws, and I think we both knew he'd be gone before we'd get another chance. A few days later, he finished his final marathon.

Then I was on a red-eye back via Minnesota in a Motel 6 because my flight had missed its connection. I was there when I heard he'd passed, the message to call home waiting for me even though I hadn't yet told anyone about the delay.

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That day before E Lau Hoe I'd shown up on my bicycle, had chained it to the normal place, and walked over to Coach's truck.

"Howcome you stay here?" he asked me, grinning.

"Cause I didn't listen to my husband, who said I should drive to Hawai'i Kai." The truth is I wasn't planning on attending the rigging. The truth is I had almost quit paddling about a million times. There were so many reasons, changing all the time. It was hard on my body, hard on my family, and hard on my mental state. And the "paddletics" were especially annoying—grown women storming out of practice because they didn't get picked for first or second crew, coaches screaming at other coaches, almost coming to blows for stupid, manini shit, other first-year paddlers thinking they were old pros oblivious of their choo-choo-train arms, yet critiquing technique and more. Despite the bullshit, I never missed a practice, never missed a rigging.

So Coach leaned out the window of his white truck. "Get in, if you like one ride. You can walk back," he laughed. I smiled. "Nah, just kidding."

Moloka'i Hoe was only three weeks away, and E Lau Hoe was meant to prepare us, as Dad Center, from Kailua Bay to Waikīkī, had a couple of weeks before. And through the progression of these races, I learned that a long-distance race feels like floating.

And even though you're not thinking about much of anything because you're
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concentrating on keeping time with the paddlers in front of you, on your form, and on your breathing, or you're imagining the worst of the large swells on one side and the sharp sea cliff on the other, you're trying everything you can not to huli into the pitching blue, toward the indiscernible bottom because that would mean swimming. It would mean righting the boat by balancing your wrinkly feet on the six-inch undersides of the ʻiakos and pulling the ama overhead carefully because making contact as it crashes back into the water would mean a coma. It would mean worrying about wasting paddling energy on bailing water from the canoe with bottomed-out Clorox containers, and fearing the surf would pour into the boat's belly because though the thing shouldn't sink, it certainly won't float enough to sail until it's mostly dry inside. These are the thoughts that fill your mind. Your brain is exhausted at the end.

It's as exhausted as your body, which leaps willingly away from the safety of the canoe into that chasm where you tread for long moments until the escort boat picks you up. There, you spend your twenty-minute break downing carb-filled water and Cliff power shots, wearing a rain jacket even though it's not raining because although the sun is blaring, your body is still freezing. That break never lasts long enough because you're back in the water too soon, splashing, so the steerswoman can see where you are despite the waves that launch the tip of the boat into the air, then plunge down the bump as it speeds toward you. Your job is to hook onto the canoe before it flies past, hauling your body out from the heavy stuff and popping your behind into the freshly vacated seat like you've done too many times already. Your job is to handle the paddle, stabbing it well past the ocean's skin at the perfect angle so that you catch enough water to keep the boat moving.

Distance paddling showed me something about myself—about my physicality—that I never believed possible. And though I had found it true in work and in writing, my body had never been tried to that extent. That I could persevere and focus to complete a challenging mission, that all I had to do was decide, simple as that, despite the pain and fatigue, despite the thirst and hunger. I was never as hungry as after a race, but that hunger never entered my mind while I was racing. On the verge of collapse, I crossed the finish line floating.

But although I did race E Lau Hoe, I must admit that I did not go to Molokaʻi, did not voyage from there to Waikīkī with the rest of my crew, even though that was the goal, the whole point, of distance season. I was not laden with lei at the end, I did not share the second place medal my crew won, nor did I drink from their winning cup. And it wasn't because my shoulder got the best of me, or the hubs didn't support me, or because my stepkids didn't want me to race.

After the last day of practice, I got a call.

"You wen quit?" the voice asked.

"No," I said.

"Someone said you wen quit," Coach said. "Dose girls—nothing to do but talk."

"You said there wouldn't be a third crew, so I canceled our travel plans." The kids and the hubs were all looking forward to spending the weekend on the small island, but it was a logical conclusion—we weren't going to travel all the way to Moloka'i to not race.

"But I never called crew," he said.

"Are you telling me I made second crew?" The likelihood of this never crossed my mind. I had only ever been in third crew, and it seemed there were so many others who would earn a seat before me. There was no way that out of the forty women who began the season, I would be one of the top twenty. No way, no how. Especially because this was my first season as a paddler. I was just beginning to understand what it all meant.

The silence ebbed with meaning.

"And, I mean, I can't rebook because it's so much drama for the kids, and it's my stepson's birthday, and we already made other plans, and I . . . "

Coach was on the other end of the line, but he didn't say anything until I was finished. "You gotta do what's best fo' your family," he said.

"Yes," I said.

"You gotta do what's best fo' dem."

I heard my dad in those words, and I knew he was right.

# Flood

**David Kealiʻi**

However the red coat falls—
hard hit, no sound, all torn—
it will not save you.

As this water rises,
what colors your concentration
on safety, on escape?

Your feet can try to escape
the new mud—the bubble pop
over and over again . . .

Your arms will practice
the hues associated with swimming:
red-white-silver-brown.
Each color motion an attempt
to salvage dry land, free skies.

But new tangles,
an overwhelming sense
of wet at a submerged world,
the cracked focus in the dam . . .

All of this will hold you.
Push you down.

As you panic,
the water sounds its own words:

> Seventy percent of you is kin to me.
> Give into my flood.
> Drown your lungs.
> Stop this swimming nonsense.
>
> Welcome back.

# When You Say Map (Revisited)

**David Kealiʻi**

there is Tupaia,
who when asked by cook's men where

home
was

pointed, in broad daylight,
from the deck past
the middle of the ocean

—without map
compass
or stars

only moʻolelo and training—

to Raʻiatea.

And latter, from memory
drew a map of Tahiti's islands

versions of which we have today

along with his drawings
which depict first encounters

as if to say—
I was here.

We were here

as witness
documenter

as active participant

even though you
forget
my/our/your

name(s)

# Nā Pua Purau o Vaimā

**kuʻualoha hoʻomanawanui**

Nā pua purau o Vaimā
e lanaau i ka ʻili wai
kou mau alo lahilahi
i poliʻahu ʻia i ka lā ē

Me he mea lā ka wanaʻao
nā waihoʻoluʻu o ke ānuenue
kou lihilihi lālahi e mōhala ē
e ʻapo i ke kukuna a ka lā

Ua kaʻapuni ʻia ka moku
ʻO Tahiti nui, ʻo Tahiti iti
E hōʻola i ka pōhāhā wai puna
Kou puna wai ʻolu makamaka

Mamake mākou e nanea a leʻa
kahi manawaleʻa e launa pū nō
e mālana i ka wai hūlalilali
e kowali pōniu i ka ʻili wai

E hāliʻaliʻa mau ana
nā pua purau o Vaimā
e hui pū nā hoa mamaka e nanea
i ka laʻilua o ka ʻauinalā

Puana ʻia i kuʻu mele
no kahi ʻāina aloha kūpuna ē
nā pua purau o Vaimā
e lanaau i ka ʻili wai

The hau blossoms of Vaimā
float serenely on the water
your delicate faces
caressed by the sun

You are like the sunrise
the colors of the rainbow
your delicate petals unfurled
to embrace the rays of the sun

We toured around the island
big Tahiti, little Tahiti
revived by the bubbling spring
welcomed by your cool, refreshing waters

We desired to relax awhile
at this delightful place of hospitality
buoyed by the sparkling water
twirling with delight across its surface

You will always be fondly remembered
oh hau blossoms of Vaimā
friendly companions gathered together
in the tranquility of the day

Thus ends my song
for a beloved ancestral place where
the hau blossoms of Vaimā
float serenely on the water

# mythology
**Jaimie Gusman**

what predetermined intention
selected *you*—was it impossible

summer fog, the burning sticks
they threw under automobiles

or the match to light your breath?
enough, even the sand began

to take "surface" more seriously
drawing herself closer to shore.

episode one: the goddess of earth
had a troubling birthplace—the land

did not comprehend her and thus
emerged from the sea our "sealegged

baby girl." her sealegs made her
slither and tired of being so slick.

what happened to our slimy daughter?
she had a slimy mother to slip into.

episode two: the goddess of earth
was actually human, born heartbroke

only to die of thirst—but the ocean,
being so far away from her mountain

town, left her gaping—the artists
said she was holy and marketable

b/c woman has this great opening,
great for looking, throwing into a fist.

when all she wanted was water
to come out of her like wordwater

the artists made signs and money
and the signs referenced stage presence

and power. there were costume-like skins
and felt hats. the goddess of earth, tired

of being slippery, of performing
with her sealegs, drowned in glorious

amounts of glitter and baby blue glue.
Not even you, dear audience, expected this.

episode three: the people in town referred
to the art-animal as the Shekinah—dangerous

woman-goddess-word. She took her
tubular body and slithered, more wood-

chip than lizard queen—another bodily
disappointment. in old age, she wrinkled

and cracked. it was debated by the artists
and the town's men whether this look

was more holy and marketable than youth—
the commentary continued for many winters.

readers decided to push the issues away,
focus more on themselves than the text.

episode four: they did, in fact, throw many
burning sticks under slick automobiles when

no one could find the Shekinah. they, in fact,
could not see any figure through the summer fog.

the Shekinah, who placed herself in a hole
beneath a tree, swallowed a box of matches

and covered her drooping sealegs with dirt.
saying *enough* to the surface and all above it.

# The Condescendants

**R. Zamora Linmark**

George Clooney as clueless daddy
to two daughters, the eldest so dysfunctional
she has to be airlifted to a boarding
school for rich, troubled girls near a sulfur-
spewing volcano, while the younger
giggles at the F-word only to initiate
a sob fest during the pro-Kevorkian
climactic scene with comatose mommy
who, before the accident, is busy living
lust up as Madame Bovary on water skis
screwing a married realtor to escape
her Williams-Sonoma–induced ennui
in a paradise teeming with tourists,
tweakers, and a flock of tanned locals
flown in from Hollywood, Florida.

# Reruns We Watched in the Subantarctic

**Jon Willer**

1

Shy mollymawks brought us to the Diego Ramirez Islands. With permission from the Chilean Navy, we were to snare one hundred of the birds (a taciturn variety of albatross), tranquilize them, and biopsy their salt glands, which pump, through their nostrils, excess saline from the seawater they drink. At Puerto Harberton we took on replacement scalpels and two gross bushels of drugged sardines. Alex and Andrey signed on as our photographers at the last minute—cagey identical twins from Belarus who worked in tandem, developing one another's negatives. The two put Byrd in mind of a pair of Slavic Jon Voights: powdery blond hair, uncommon shoulder breadth, an engineering marvel of a guileless smirk. Their father designed suspension bridges under Brezhnev. They too pledged allegiance to a vanished Politburo.

To decompress, the Psych Officer ordered ninety minutes of TGIF sitcoms in the galley b.i.d. Alex and Andrey were aloof as the fauna but they joined us under pain of keelhaul, though they were convinced that Miller-Boyett Productions was a crypto-fascist organ. When Steve Urkel's cloning machine blew a gasket, Andrey accused him of being a Trotskyite saboteur. Alex issued a death warrant in absentia for the lickspittle stooge Carl Winslow. At the *Full House* theme song they fulminated: "You know who else liked predictability? Mussolini! Franco!" They perched in the back row, chain-smoking foul discount cigarillos from Brest and sharing boxes of Hot Tamales, pelting the VCR with fistfuls of the cinnamon jellies between diatribes.

When we put in at Perth on Candlemas, two Interpol agents handcuffed the twins at the foot of the gangplank. Moscow was waiting to extradite; with their father they had bilked a hydroelectric concern on the Bug River with counterfeit

turbines. A lilac-scented apology note, signed by both men, awaited us in the Seychelles.

2

Catalepsy overtook us when landfall at the Crozet Islands was made impossible. We clung to the third season of *M*A*S*H* as to a life ring. Grim, sopping wet fog like spoiled buttercream blanketed the surf, and Captain Pierce quailed at the prospect of crossing the Heroine Breakers, a wicked ring of shoals. Our ornithologists, so eager to radio-tag the chain's penguins and black-faced sheathbills, lost their pluck.

A single episode remained: the notorious hour when Colonel Blake's chopper crashed in the Sea of Japan. After a fortnight of letdowns, "Abyssinia, Henry" was too much. We ejected the tape and cajoled a sea yarn out of Captain Pierce. The French three-master *Tamaris* was gouged asunder in these waters by a reef in 1887, off Ile aux Cochons, or Pig Island. Shrewdly the thirteen survivors burnt a rescue note on the lid of a can and hung their message around an albatross's neck. Captain Pierce spoke at length of how he admired their wherewithal, of how much cleverer a vehicle a bird was than a bottle.

We asked whether their distress call was ever received. *Naturellement*, the captain gibed; how else would the story be known today? The albatross reached the Australian coast only after a fatal delay. The crew of *Tamaris* survived for a time—gathering rainwater in a mackintosh stretched taut, maybe, etching lichens from the stone with their knives to boil—but ultimately they struck out for Possession Island in a makeshift raft. There were no survivors.

Captain Pierce rubbed his eyes. "Well. I guess that wasn't much more cheerful, was it?" Admonishing us to get some rest, he retired to quarters.

3

I bunked with Karl on the expedition to Disappointment Island and the Sugar Loaf Rocks. He was a boisterous botany student from Uppsala, hoping to collect samples of tussock grass. Karl watched his bootleg video of Hanna-Barbera cartoons nightly before bed. He was maddened by how much of the action took place offscreen. "Barney! Barney! Get back here with those dishes! Bastard!" he would cry in a frenzy during *The Flintstones*, as chips and shards flew from the unseen tableware. Karl had a funny authoritarian streak, too, rooting for Officer Dibble in his feuds with Top Cat: "Go on! Bash his skull in!" He cleaned his teeth theatrically as the closing credits rolled, the waxy strand throttling the purple pads

of his thumbs. A Foley artist would have envied the pitched twang of the floss.

Karl must have been 6'5" in stocking feet and had a thing about touching every ceiling. It struck me as nonsense until I realized that I would do the same thing, were I tall enough. He was returning to the ship from Yule Island when a submerged formation ripped the bottom out of the Zodiac and he was flung into the water. In the icy cold he went straight into laryngospasm and sank without a struggle. We spent the evening trying to retrieve his body with hooks, but luck was not with us.

4

We were given only a day to catalog basalt formations on Candlemas Island before Lucifer Hill erupted, forcing us back aboard. A katabatic wind tugged the spiraling ash cloud, its despondent dance partner, from side to side. We watched a short-lived Bill Cosby vehicle where he was hectored good-naturedly by his adopted daughter, a dietician. Norman Fell and Brooke Shields made cameo appearances, and the season finale was the first half of this delirious two-part cliffhanger—loosely based, we thought, on *Rear Window*. We never did find out whether a Part 2 had been taped.

5

As a favor to the South African government we dropped off a new hot-wire anemometer at the meteorological station on Marion Island. In 1949, staff complained that the station was plagued by mice. Five cats were dispatched to the island to control the pests. By 1977, the five cats had become 3,400. The feline horde, biologists worried, would soon eat all of the native burrowing petrels.

To deal with the skyrocketing population, South Africa infected a few of the cats with the feline panleukopenia virus. Feline panleukopenia bears a bit of a resemblance to radiation sickness: the number of white blood cells and platelets falls sharply, causing the immune system to fail, and the entire lining of the intestine sloughs off, causing bloody diarrhea and malnutrition. Whole blood transfusions and vitamin injections help, but even with treatment 95% of infected kittens die.

By 1982, there were only 600 cats left—a decline of 2,800 in five years, or roughly three cats dying every two days. Traps laid in 1991 caught only eight cats in a year. No living cats are known to exist on Marion Island today.

We watched *Family Ties*.

## 6

This one was a comedy from one of the premium channels, starring Sally Field as a retired welder—still vivacious and sarcastic, but suffering from advanced osteoporosis. Each episode centered around her breaking a different bone and having to cope with the cast, or the sling, or what-have-you. The snappy dialogue and Dutch angles were addictive. Rhoda and I spent a winter watching all 206 episodes, finishing in late August. The rest of the crew would filter in and out, but it sort of became "our show" as we were the true fanatics. We grew close. After a backbreaking day of euthanizing storm petrels, Rhoda would whip up a snack, I would nuke the cloth sack of corn kernels she held to her neck for fibromyalgia pain, and we'd sit down to lose ourselves in the program for an hour.

When they dedicated separate episodes to each metatarsal, though, we worried that they were reaching, padding the series out unreasonably. By the time they'd gotten to those tender little bones of the inner ear with the stern names, hammer and anvil, it was clear that an uncomfortable self-awareness had taken hold. Was the show's premise silly from the beginning? Of course, but to see the actors acknowledge it with a wink changed the atmosphere. Those last episodes took on a smothering, humid aspect.

The series finale, "Stirrup," made Rhoda cry. She couldn't bear to see how the producers had tinkered with that formula we had grown so affectionate toward. The charm dissolved. After that night, without *Boning Up* to talk about, we drifted apart. This was at a geomagnetic station in the Kerguelen Archipelago, seated at a brushed steel table in Common Room B, sharing a bowl of popcorn seasoned with Mrs. Dash.

# The Lightning Field

**Laura Hartenberger**

Twenty rows of twenty steel lightning rods checker the field, spaced generously: a stroll along the perimeter's dirt scruff takes more than two hours. The rods are almost invisible in the midday sun and I walk with one arm held in front of me to prevent a collision. As thin as beanstalks, each one stretches more than twenty feet tall; the brochure informs me that they are pointed sharply at the top but I can't tell from below. The ground is so flat, the air so still, and the poles so rigid, that supposedly a square mile sheet of glass could balance on top.

I tell myself that I'm here to confront my fears head on, but this may not be true. Now that I am here, walking the field, it seems like an unlikely place for a storm of any kind. The heat has sedated me, and the strain of watching ahead for the glint of the rods has driven a sharp pain in between my eyes.

Astraphobia affects all human populations at the same ratio, regardless of variations in weather patterns or location. It is one of the oldest afflictions in history—as long as there have been people, there have been people afraid of lightning. At a given moment, lightning is striking somewhere in the world. It has killed humans on every continent but Antarctica. Penguins have been found there scorched in snow banks. It is said that lightning increases in potency as it nears the Earth's poles.

Guests to the installation must follow a strict set of rules. They must arrive at a fixed time at an unmarked white bungalow in Quemado, a town three hours outside of Albuquerque. A driver, paid by the artist's foundation, transports us—I half expected to be made to wear a blindfold. The lightning field is not marked on any map, and no roads lead to it.

Reservations for a visit to the lightning field cannot be made online or by phone; guests must mail a letter to the foundation, and someone will reply by mail with instructions and an appointment, on paper watermarked with their logo,

Benjamin Franklin's kite. Seemingly nothing has changed about the experience in thirty years. The world's store of lightning does not deplete over time.

Visitors may not bring tape recorders or cameras of any kind. Some say the rods emit a low hum; I hear nothing—in fact, I feel insulated somehow, as though bits of cotton are stuffed in my ears. We must remain at the site for exactly twenty-four hours, the point ostensibly being to experience the sculpture at different times of day to understand its beauty more fully. Staying so long also, of course, increases your chances of actually witnessing a lightning strike.

One is likelier to be injured in a car crash than a lightning storm, likelier to die by suicide, by pneumonia, by falling out a window, by carbon monoxide poisoning, by shark attack. For the average American, the odds lie somewhere between the likelihood of dying in a terrorist attack and being lethally bitten by a rabid dog.

Dogs exhibit fear of lightning thirty times more often than humans.

Symptoms of astraphobia include checking weather forecasts online and on TV with compulsive regularity. During a lightning storm, an astraphobic will seek shelter indoors, frequently cowering underneath furniture such as beds or sofas.

Up to six people per day may take this mystery ride to the installation site. Today, a family of four from San Francisco joins me. The children are blond and the parents tired—they smile at me with sad eyes, either sympathy or apology, I'm not sure which. We sign waivers accepting the risk of injury or death, the adults signing for their children without thought—lightning never strikes here, the driver reassures them. One is likelier to be injured in a regular art gallery than at the lightning field.

"Take that back," I think.

The children ride to the installation site in complete silence, watching something together on a device they hold between their laps. Seeing how calm they are, I feel increasingly off-balance. One of the children, after half an hour of driving, asks, "Where are we going?" I have difficulty concentrating and let the parents make conversation with the driver.

He lets us out at the site without turning off the truck and then drives away—the sight of an automobile would mar the empty landscape, is the reason given for why it is forbidden to arrive at the site on our own. The element of abandonment is integral to achieving true appreciation of the majesty of the artwork, and presumably, a key reason for its sustained renown.

In preparation for my trip, I watch time-lapse videos of lightning storms online. I Google the artist, and read blog reports of others' transformative visits to his lightning field. I search "lightning" on Twitter in search of real-time electric updates:

*Are windows lightning-proof?*

*I just saw at least 10 lightnings flashing!!!!!*

*RT@Oddnews. Lightning strikes down an entire football team in Africa.*

*Its easier to get struck by lightning than to get a reply from @jonasbrothers*

*I love thunder & lightning . . . Except when it starts messing with the damn dish signal!*

*RT@Oddnews. Lightning strikes down an entire football team in Africa.*

*Cant wait for xmas and the tree lightning at rockafeller center!!!*

The links to the news story about the football team lead me to a true report from a decade earlier, resurrected and gone viral years later. I imagine headlines reporting on my own ironic passing circulating into the future. "He was asking for it," they would tweet endlessly, repeating each other, echoing my own wonder at the impulse to visit this strange place.

We are housed near the installation in a log cabin, cartoonish in its rustic beauty. Cold dinner waits in a cooler on a picnic bench inside—there is no refrigerator, nor any electricity. Within the first hour, I feel a fatigue so intense that I lie down on the dusty ground surrounded by poles and close my eyes. The children are inside already eating. Their parents discuss something animatedly, pointing back at the cabin. I had anticipated feeling paranoia, desire, relief, something more than this. There is nothing to do but walk between and around the uniform rods, not even a windmill in the distance to admire, nor a cloud above. I can't bring myself to touch the poles, though.

Human touch has been shown to relieve symptoms of astraphobia in humans and dogs. Lightning that strikes one person can travel through hand holding to injure a companion. Tackle football games, outdoor lovemaking, and group hug record-breaking attempts should never be scheduled when a lightning storm is forecast.

By evening, the children have napped and their parents have strolled around the lightning field three times. I have finished a book and chased a tiny lizard through the field for some time. As the sun sets, a purplish haze rests over the tips of the rods.

I go inside and sit on my cot, wondering if I am already cured; I feel no

fear in this quiet field, nor even any particular awe of the project's ambition. My companions are discussing whose parents to visit for Christmas this year. I am pleased that they have not paid much attention to me. I try not to imagine what they think of me, uncomfortable and alone. They don't seem to be troubled that we haven't seen lightning yet. Growing irritated, I feel let down by the gods who have denied me the opportunity for courage.

Perkunas, the Balkan god of lightning, also reigns over creativity, and over courage. Perhaps he isn't good at multitasking, or perhaps he resents this mortal attempt at imitation.

Death by lightning occurs almost instantaneously, the electrical current shooting along the nervous system to short-circuit either the brain or the heart. Arguably worse is the invisible lightning strike—often, people don't realize they've been struck and they carry on, after a moment of unconsciousness, before weeks or years later suddenly going numb in a limb, losing their hearing, or turning blue all over. A hit of lightning can render you suddenly impotent; can burn your clothes off your body but leave your skin untouched; can melt your watch or jewelry onto you permanently.

It is difficult to imagine such violence here.

Common among survivors is an overwhelming feeling of tension or internal pressure building. In the best cases, people channel this excess energy into athletic or artistic projects; in the worst, they become irritable, hostile, suicidal, frequently losing their jobs and families. They are most often middle- or upper-class men, struck while golfing. Almost all become religious post-strike.

A support group exists for survivors—one group for the entire country. They meet at an annual conference to share their stories and insight into therapeutic exercises and marital rehabilitation. The event attracts around a hundred people each year but there are believed to be hundreds, if not thousands, of survivors in existence.

Those I've emailed are overwhelmingly narcissistic—"what are the odds?" they ask me.

> *if u can wish upon a star can u wish upon lightning lol*
>
> *Wow . . . . . RT@Oddnews. Lightning strikes down an entire football team in Africa.*
>
> *Happy! Just watched the lightning show from my balcony. The majestic beauty of nature.*
>
> *Mad thunder & lightning outside . . . end of the world much*

Computer graphic artists have visualized the Internet in beautiful, expansive maps that resemble a brain's chaotic network of neurons, depicting each fragmented pathway with a pulse of electric light.

Fear in humans almost always occurs in response to threats perceived to lie in the future.

I sleep. In the morning, I take a final walk around the field, touch one of the steel rods. It is neither warm nor cool. I clutch it hard, but when I release my palm is clear of marks. I wrap my body around the thin metal, hugging myself, the rod against my cheek almost unnoticeable. I press my teeth against it, hoping to feel it vibrate, to taste iron or something as powerful, but it is as if the rod is a fragrance that dissipates the more I try to take it in. I cannot glean information from it.

Nothing happens over and over again. The feeling I have is not the absence of fear but something like dividedness or neutrality, and it takes up not in my heart or mind but on my skin, coloring me seven shades of embarrassment. And then, the sudden certainty that my end will be unspectacular.

# Wind, *Anemoi* spp.

**Julia Wieting**

In which what is far away is made ~~nearer~~ nearer
and what is close is removed

(the wind—whether water or organic material,
even the tough-guy act of rock.

But ~~still there~~ is the question of, of still there
this wind, this who-is-it, this breath

~~and who is breathing~~. Herodotus heard and who is breathing
from his travelers that four men, gods,

squatted each in one direction ~~facing~~ facing
his brother and blew in ~~the seasons~~ the seasons

and slept with the odd Greek youth or maid
when his turn for the year was over.

Their parents were the stars and the dawn
~~and their talk~~ brought and their talk

the new green, the fall's lingering gold,
the devouring cold of winter.

This the conversation of the earth
as language ~~is breathing is wind~~. is breathing is wind

Four men to say ~~it all, all that can be said~~ it all, all that can be said
of lust and enveloping ~~into stillness~~; in short the growing season. into stillness

Impossible to authenticate Herodotus' recounting
what with our desires living side-by-side

to our scientific organs ~~of thought:~~ of thought
at times we want the wind pulled into a grandfather

out-puffing his cheeks, ready to ungate tendrils
~~of a ribbon wind~~ that push ships over tropic zones of a ribbon wind

and reconvene as the horse head spray tipping waves
onto shore. We may ~~go so far as to~~ feel go so far as to

the same urgency in ~~the hiss of~~ a lover's whisper the hiss of
close against a cheek, sowing the neck with goose bumps.

The Greeks, in their wisdom, gave us the right ~~lullaby~~ word, lullaby
the susurrus, the moonlight rustle perhaps

~~translating~~ Moses' cradle basketing through the reeds translating
just when we need to find him.

We may even ~~go so far as to~~ close our eyes go so far as to
to ~~the sight of~~ dust storm over pineapple fields, the sight of

~~to the angle at~~ which raindrops are deposited to the angle at
on concrete, to the shape of a swell and its surface surging

and choose instead to feel these forces ~~silent~~ with our skin. silent
The forces, these ~~consonants~~ of the wind. consonants

The wind ~~brings and takes~~. Its faces fall from our own brings and takes
and what we want ~~where we are~~, where we are

for the wind has ~~ever~~ been bigger, ~~the embrace of~~ it all, ever the embrace of
preparing the land for life

and then speaking it upright, one ~~dandelion~~ seed at a time. dandelion)

# Bodies of Water

**Julia Wieting**

Between the faint varicose veins and the stretch marks my body is like a map of the Amazon, feathery and without end.

You know.[1] Lazy estuaries trailing to El Dorado. If only you'd kept going on that fool's errand, its righteousness a cleansing sweat, I swear you'd have found something of value.

*Her* body was a survey of Philippine inlets, or the watershed along the Apennine spine

or whatever the hell river's in Korea. (And let's not forget the smaller routes, good only for charting weekend cruises.)

Those were treasured maps, I'm sure! With dainty deckled edges and the musk of spice/rum/conquest/whatever: worth the price,[2] of course.

I don't blame you for getting lost in those places. Just remember that an inviting glance is a less forgiving wilderness than it would seem, between pillow and mouth.[3]

That should be clear, once you set a course homeward. But sounding the strait is soooo tedious, I know! Yet if you don't

the shoals might shift, the world might spin, that precious piece of vellum pointing you toward salvation might wrinkle in the heat and then the way will succumb to the desperate. The desperate will succumb to the way

until suddenly: out of the mist spiked conquistador heads howler monkey mouths crying wolf begging for mercy from fate and god!

All explorers chase a watery grave . . . [4]

---

1. *q.v.* Jeanette Winterson
2. be angrier
3. beware the cougars? *Puma* spp. range from the Yukon to the Andes; they are often dressed in leopard skin
4. better drowning cliché? *quo vadis?*

But at least Magellan died in the full lust of circumnavigation. At least at least he held the earth's curves in his palm and capped X with oh

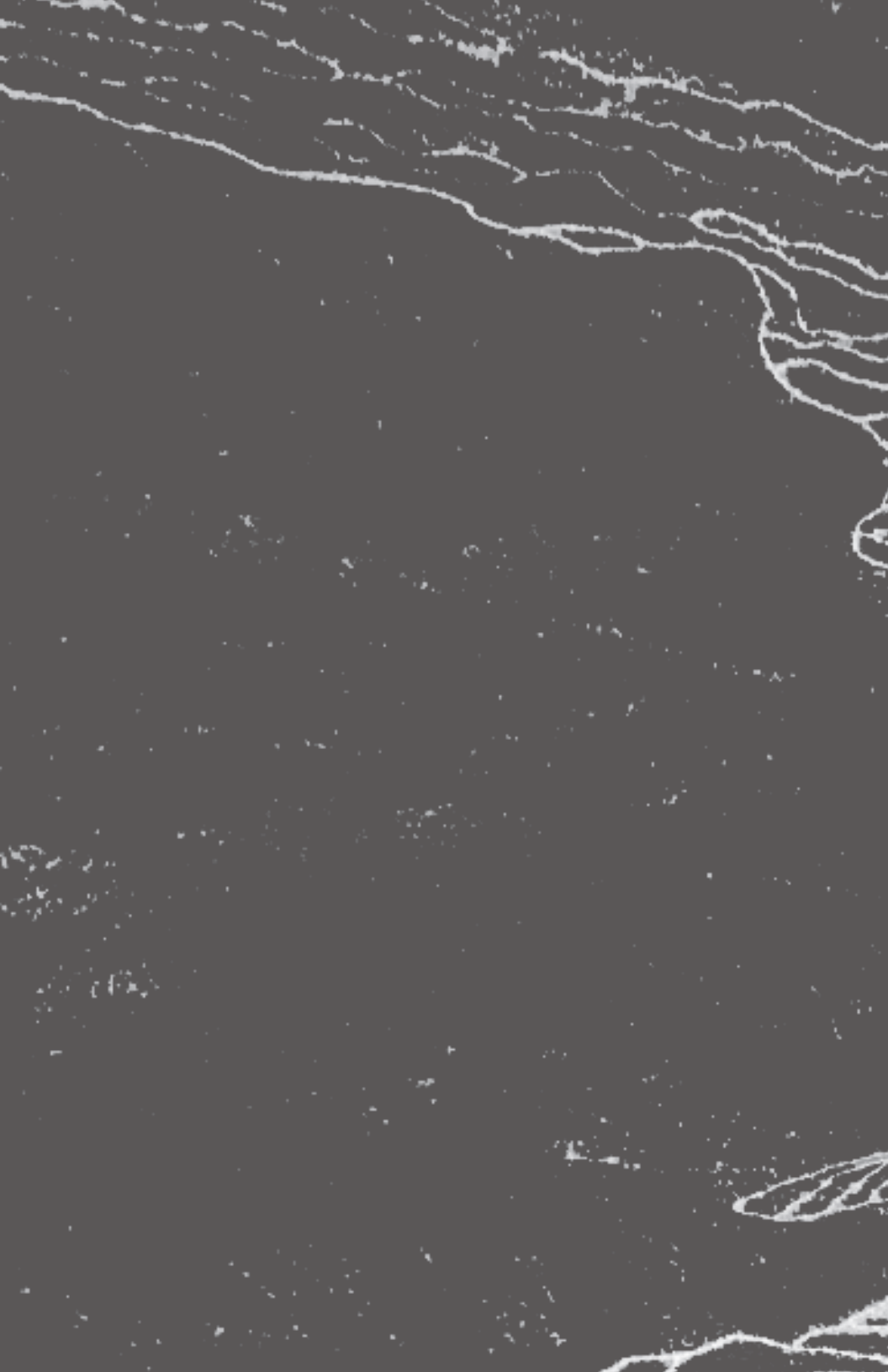
(isn't it called the Pacific Ocean because it doesn't hold a grudge?).[5]

Sigh.[6]

It's easy. Vessels remember their passengers. Rivers remember the beds they have lain in. Bodies trespassed in time start hunting disaster down.

Pizarro fucked, and drowned.[7]

5. *cf*. the pathetic fallacy *cf*. the calm before the storm
6. insert Socratic question here to add in conflict and irritation
7. Gonzalo Pizarro died on April 10, 1548, beheaded by Spanish royal forces after relinquishing support for the Crown's claim on Peru due to a dispute over fairer treatment for the indigenous peoples. *Mea culpa, mea culpa, mea maxima . . .*



# Wagon Mound

## Robert McGuill

Ahead in the weed-strangled median, two white crosses—one festooned with cheap plastic roses—leaned against each other in an attitude of gentle repose. High above them in the turquoise sky, under the iron glare of the New Mexico sun, a single-engine plane droned past the clouds.

Landry was still driving south on the divided highway, and away in the distance a jagged ridge opened before them. Beyond the ridge, on the eastern side of the road, up a steep hill, loomed a great mound of stone and grass.

"Amazin, ain't it?" Dani said.

"The rocks?"

"No, the crosses. I've never seen so many of em on one little old stretch of road."

Landry glanced at her. It was as if they'd been moving backward through time since they crossed the Colorado border. She seemed like a little girl now, seeing the world for the first time. The smallest things taking on the most extraordinary significance.

"Easy to fall asleep out here," was all he could tell her. "Stretch of highway like this? You get to drinking, or day-dreaming, or drifting off . . . "

He put his eyes back on the road, to the mound of stone rising from the plain. Once they reached the landmark, he thought, they would both breathe a little easier.

Dani was a *fetching* woman. Yes, fetching. She had strawberry hair that was soft and thick, a complexion as smooth as whipping cream, and irises so green and full of light they could have been made of sugar sprinkles. She and Landry had met in Colorado Springs less than a month ago—*Christ, had it only been that long?*—while working on a turn-and-burn television spot for a local Chevy dealership. Dani had been the talent—half the talent, anyway—and he, Landry, had been the cameraman. Dani's husband, Tug, had been in the commercial as

well, but only because Big Mike Bullock, the dealership's sales manager, had insisted upon it.

"I want cutaway shots of Tug, roping a steer," Big Mike said, in a tar-and-nicotine voice. "Then I want you to go and get interview footage of him and Dani, together, in front of the Silverado. Up near the grill, so that gold bow-tie shines through nice and big. Can you do that?"

"What about a shot of Dani on horseback?" Landry said, having learned Dani was a championship barrel racer. "I can probably get some good B-roll in the can. Have her gallop straight at the camera, or maybe do a long lens kind of thing, real compressed, where she comes charging up over a ridge. You know, through wrinkled heat waves and—"

Big Mike gave his balls a quick jog and waved the idea off. He pointed to the month's sales figures, pinned to a giant corkboard on the east wall of his office. "I'm not hiring the girl to show off her equestrian skills, Landry. She's here to sex things up."

Big Mike curled his meaty arm around Landry's shoulder and began walking him out of the office. His tone was cordial, but firm. "Our demo's men, son. Horny, hard-drinking men who chase skirts, play fantasy football, and spend their leisure time surfing the net for porn." He hove up in the middle of the hallway, lowered his chin, and looked Landry deep in the eye. "You know those mud flaps you see on the backs of the big semi tankers? The ones where the chrome girl's laying back on her elbows, all leggy and naked, waiting for Prince Charming to come along? Well, that's Dani, okay? She's the cheesecake."

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The first time Landry had been through this hardpan country was thirty years ago, as a boy traveling with his parents. It was supposed to have been a family vacation (destination: Grand Canyon), and because he'd never been west before the landscape had taken him by surprise, ambushing his boring, Midwestern sensibilities. There was nothing here but barren waste—mile upon mile of flat dry prairie, and buttes dotted with low round piñons, the branches of which ran to a green so deep they were almost black—yet it was mesmerizing. An amazing desolation! There were mountains, too, of course. Long, snowy ridges that reminded him of his mother's crimped piecrusts, stretching north to south in an almost unbroken line. But they were away in the distance. Small and inconsequential. So far off they seemed to have little bearing on the immediate character of the countryside.

"Look, Sammy," his old man had shouted, pointing across his chest to the
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fleeting prairie. “Look over there. See that?”

Landry had looked up from his book. “What?”

“Injuns!”

“Where?”

“Way off there. On horseback. An Apache war party by the look of em.” His father nodded and his neatly parted hair, which gleamed in the hot southwest sun as if it had been Turtle Waxed, moved up and down in a stiff mass. “See?”

“There aren’t any Indians.”

“You sure about that? That’s what John Glanton thought, too. Just before the Quechan scalped him.”

Landry got up on his knees and put his elbows on the open window, staring out at the nothing that spoked past his eyes. Miles and miles of scraggly brown grass and highline wires. Wispy clouds that took forever to float across the sky. He spied a herd of pronghorn grazing near a lone railcar far to the east, but that was the sum of it. That was all the life the land was willing to admit to. A couple of scrawny antelope. “You’re lying,” he whined. “There aren’t any Indians.”

“Yeah, but there were, once.”

His father’s eyes leapt to the mirror, and he grinned like a bear. His old man was what his friends liked to call a card. Or a joker. The kind of guy who loved to make up large extravagant lies, then swear on the immortal souls of his not-yet-born-grandchildren that every word of them was God’s own truth. Yes, life was one big yuck-fest for his father except when it wasn’t, and when it wasn’t, woe to the poor sonofabitch who had the audacity to suggest he might be taking himself just a little too seriously.

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Landry and his family had lived in Iowa, on the eastern edge of the state. Up where the Mississippi River wound through the hills and bluffs like a slow-moving freight train. Their house, a simple brick rancher, sat only a mile or so from the municipal airport, near a big open cornfield, and his old man (who worked as a tool and die maker at the John Deere plant in Dubuque, and loved airplanes as deeply and desperately as he feared the notion of flying in them) would sometimes take him out to the airfield where they’d sit in the grass and watch the gleaming silver craft take off and land in deep, thunderous rushes of air.

“Are we flying out to the Grand Canyon?” Landry had asked, when his folks announced the news of the family vacation.

“Of course not, dear,” his mother said. “Your father wouldn’t be caught dead on a plane.”
~~~

His old man pounced on these emasculating words, frowning, as if Landry's mother had gotten the whole thing wrong. "Sammy," he said, "some of us here are *men*. Real men, like from the old days, you know?" He passed a lashing glance at Landry's mother. "So, hell no, we're not getting on a plane. Doing that would defeat the purpose of the trip! I mean, for crying out loud, boy. You want to see the land the way Kit Carson saw it, don't you? The way Jim Bowie and Billy the Kid saw it?"

Landry nodded.

"Well then, there you go! Enough of this malarky about airplanes!"

The explanation made complete and unerring sense to Landry's nine-year-old mind. He was going to see the land the way the men who'd tamed the wild west had seen it. From the backseat of a Cadillac Seville.

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Dani sat up now and stretched her neck, glancing over the seatback while Landry's eyes rose to the rearview, first to the two long ribbons of asphalt receding behind them in perfectly converging lines, then to Dani's lovely, worried face.

"You all right?"

"Yeah."

Landry sighed. "There's nobody within miles, Dani. I'm telling you."

"He's got ways," Dani said. "He ain't all that smart, but he's sneaky. Sneaky as a henhouse fox."

Landry's eyes pulled themselves up to the mirror again. He saw nothing. Nothing but the past. Empty road and desolate prairie and desperate matters immune to man's undoing. They'd been driving hard all night, and except for a pair of headlamps that came roaring up behind them when they were outside of Pueblo (headlamps that followed them, ominously, then angled up an exit ramp and disappeared), the world had left them to their own lonesome doings.

"You hungry?"

She turned to him. "Are you?"

"I could be."

"I can go all day on a pot of mud if I have to," she said.

"Well, you don't have to. If you want to stop and get something to eat, let me know. I'd be happy to pull over. There's a café the next stop up."

Dani glanced again, halfheartedly, over her shoulder. Out the window. "Maybe we should wait a while. The more miles we put between us and whatever's back there, the better I'll feel."
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In 2007, Dani had been in a national television spot for a Manhattan insurance agency where she'd played a cattle drover in tight, faded blue jeans. She'd worn a white Stetson and a gray duster, and was seen riding herd on a prairie-full of housecats, all of whom had been digitally manufactured in some animator's Avid suite out in L.A.

Big Mike Bullock had seen the commercial during halftime of the Superbowl, catching it as he was coming out of the bathroom, zipping his trousers, and when he lumbered into the dealership on Monday morning, raving about the smoking-hot babe on the Appaloosa, one of the grease monkeys in his body shop put down his rag and told him that the cat-herding girl was a local from Calhan who worked days as a sales clerk at Johnny Bingo's Tack Shack.

*The fuck*, Big Mike said, unable to keep himself from making a lame joke about chasing pussy. *Let's throw some money at her.* He gave the air an obscene back and forth jerk with his fist. *See if she'll put out for us, too.*

~~~

Landry had been lounging in the backseat of his old man's Cadillac, reading a book called *The Mad Frontier* when his parents started in on one another, this time over his old man's smoking.

"Must you?" his mother sighed, watching his father fold down the sun visor and allowing a half empty pack of Old Golds to drop into his hand.

"Why not?" the old man said. "I don't see what difference it makes. Not any more."

His mother bit back the remark she was going to offer. Instead, she sat up and tried a smile. "It's just that the smoke's not good for Sam, either." She glanced over the backseat, as if to make certain Landry hadn't yet succumbed to the toxic carcinogen, and frowned, instantly, when she saw what he was reading. Between the two of them—he and his father—his poor mother found herself locked in a never-ending struggle against the forces of ignorance. Intellectual entropy. She hated it that he squandered his time and allowance on junk reading, the same way she hated it that his father had squandered his health engaging in habits that were vulgar and unhealthy.

"The kid's fine, Lois." His father raised his eyes to the rearview and grinned at him. "Aren't you, Sammy?"

Landry said nothing.

"Look," the old man said, demonstrating the obvious error in his wife's

thinking by nodding at the wild stream of blue smoke being sucked out the wing vent of the driver's window. "It's going right out the window, see?"

His mother shook her head, muttering, "Yes, like everything else in our lives." She started to mist up, but the old man saw what was brewing and stopped her before she got very far with it.

"Ah, ah." He brought his finger to the top of his sunglasses, tugged them down just far enough that his tea-brown eyes were peering over the rim, and said, "Little pitchers have big ears, Lois. Little pitchers have big ears."

~~~

"You got people down here? In New Mexico?" Dani asked in a disembodied voice. Eyes lost somewhere in the passing countryside.

"No," Landry said. "Not exactly."

"But you've got history with it. The land here."

"Some, yeah."

He focused on the outcrop ahead. He'd spent his whole life avoiding conflict. Living off the simple grace of the perfectly-timed shrug, the all too easy *oh well, you win some, you lose some* catch-all concession of barroom philosophers. But Dani had ruined all of that for him when she came trotting up on horseback the morning of the shoot with her agate eyes and gunpowder smile. One look at her sitting there, and the trusty armor of the glib rejoinder deserted him.

"You do much work in town?" she'd asked, looking down from her saddle.

He was loading a fresh battery on the camera. "Here?" He looked up. "In Calhan?"

"No, silly," she said. "In the Springs."

They were outside the county's Equestrian Center (a Quonset hut fitted out with ancient 4H bleachers, and portable stock pens). Tug and his wrangler buddy, Skip LaForge, hadn't arrived yet with the roping steers, and Dani had been warming up Tug's horse with a few quick turns around the arena.

Landry's eyes tracked their way up the girl's scuffed riding boots to her muscled thighs, to the cantle and saddle horn that obfuscated an otherwise inviting view of her wide-spread legs. "A little," he said. "But Denver, mostly." Her looks got the better of him and he lied. "Might be working a gig out in California in a few months."

"Oh yeah?"

She perked up, and their eyes tangled. She smiled and he blushed, and in the blinding gleam of tooth enamel that followed—a blast of light that announced itself like the muzzle flash of a .45—his heart crumpled.
~~~

"Saw you in that cat-herding spot for American Home & Life," he said, doing his best to recover from the wound.

"Yeah?"

"Yeah. You were good."

"You think?"

"I wouldn't say so otherwise."

It had been so surreal, Dani told him. All the equipment. The people. Everybody scrabbling around, looking through lenses and director's finders. Or making frames out of their fingers. They must have put up a thousand silks and scrims, she said. They must have hung a hundred reflector boards from a hundred different C-stands. *Hell*, she told him, *there were even two old boys who did nothing but push a dolly down a chrome track, back and forth, back and forth*.

She seemed mystified, even now, that they'd cast her in the spot, making it sound just short of crazy. *Heck*, she told him, *All's I did was sit a horse and swing a lariat. It wasn't like I had to recite lines or nothin*. It was as if she'd never taken a good look at herself in the mirror, or seen what other people saw when she sauntered up and turned on that high voltage smile. "I guess they must've liked the way I ride," she said.

Landry nodded. He'd seen her do it. "Must have," he agreed.

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Landry's father was under the weather when they'd set out on their vacation that summer. For months he'd been bothered by a persistent cough and a nagging, low-grade fever, and the wild, up and down moods that accompanied these symptoms had made him a giant pain in the ass to be around. Especially for Landry's mother, who'd wanted no part of the trip in the first place.

Hell, he, Landry, hadn't wanted to go either after he learned there'd be no plane ride. All of his school buddies were hanging around town that summer, and here he was off on some cross-country "educational" holiday—so yeah, he wasn't exactly thrilled about the idea, and would have said so, too, had anybody asked him. The Grand Canyon. Whoop-dee-fucking-do! A thousand miles on the road in a hot, smoky car. And for what? To stand in front of a stupid hole in the ground while your parents took snapshots of you pretending to be happy.

His dad piped up again. "Look at those goddamned cottonwoods, will you? You ever see anything like that? Every leaf's like a gold coin, isn't it?"

The old man scanned the rearview. "What do you think, huh, Sammy? How'd you like to have a tree blooming with gold coins?"

Landry looked up from his book, shrugged and said, "Yeah, sure."
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His mother sat quietly. Shaking her head.

The cottonwoods were mostly green, not yellow, and they certainly weren't gold. They clung to the banks of a dry riverbed in a long raggedy line, far away in the distance, and you could hardly even see them.

"Atta boy," his dad said. Then he turned to Sam's mother. "See? Some people in this car know how to have a good time."

"Yes," his mother said. "That's wonderful, isn't it? Maybe if some people in this car had been having a little less fun, and paying a little more attention to their doctor, other people in this car wouldn't be wearing a long face, wondering what was going to become of them."

Sam turned his eyes back on his book. All he wanted was to be back in Dubuque, with his pals.

~~~

Tug and Skip arrived late to the shoot. They'd had some trouble loading the steers into the trailer, and the unexpected expenditure of energy had required they stop and fortify their spirits at a nearby watering hole. *Did anybody have a problem with that?* Landry looked at Dani, who looked away, embarrassed, then turned a pleading glance back on her husband. Tug and Skip were both laughing. They smelled like a brewery.

Landry disliked Tug from the moment the man stepped down out of his pickup truck. But his dislike grew and deepened and matured throughout the course of the day, and by the time they were finished with the steer-roping sequence (which, thanks to Tug's half-inebriated state, took an hour longer than it should have) and ready to shoot the husband-and-wife interview in front of the Silverado, his hatred had gone from a slow simmer to a rolling boil.

There was something cruel about Tug, and it radiated from every pore of the man's rough, sun-dried skin, a current of negative energy, short-circuiting everything else around it. In front of the camera he was wooden and belligerent, and when the lens fell on Dani, he shrank her with the withering glare of his mean, close-set eyes.

*What do you like about your Chevy truck?* Landry asked, working the interview as he would any other. Doing his best to feed his talent a good segue line. *Can you tell me a little something about the towing power? How it helps you keep up with those tough chores on the ranch?*

Tug raked him with an iron look. One that might have been wrought with a hammer and anvil. It was the fourth time Landry had asked the question, and he was not shy about voicing his displeasure.
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*How many goddamn times you want me to say it?*

*I could use a smile, Tug.*

*A smile?*

*Yeah. It looks more convincing if you say it with a smile.*

*Screw that. It feels stupid, smilin. You're tryin to make me look stupid.*

Dani, mortified, attempted to intervene. *He's just tryin to get it right, hon.*

Blood rushed to Tug's face. *I wasn't talkin to you. Was I?*

Landry pulled back from the lens and shut off the camera before the argument could grow legs. Or worse, fists. No, this was his call and he'd had it up to here with Tug Rochelle's bullshit, and he figured if Big Mike Bullock didn't like what he saw on tape he could come back out and shoot the sonofabitch himself. Preferably with a Colt revolver.

*All right*, he said. *Let's call it a wrap.*

Dani and Tug each looked at him in turn.

*What're you doing*, Dani said, playing the peacemaker. *Don't you want another take? It'll be okay. Tug's just tired is all."*

*No*, Landry said with a cool but dismissive wave of the hand. *Tug's right. No point beating a dead horse. We've got four takes. We'll make one of them work.*

Landry ejected the tape from the camera, marked it with the date and title of the session, then packed it away in his canvas grip bag. When he'd secured the lenses and broken down the sticks and folded the collapsible reflector panels, he rifled through yet a third bag and found Tug's and Dani's model releases and pay vouchers.

*So*, he said, drifting into the small talk he'd always depended upon when he was obliged to carry a conversation beyond its natural limits, *how long you two been married?*

Dani took the papers from his hand, smiled bashfully and said, *A year and a half.*

Landry smiled back, giving the most insincere nod of approval he'd ever managed. *Meet on the job?*

Dani and Tug turned to one another. Dani laughed nervously.

*I stole her off my neighbor*, Tug said, torching a cigarette and snapping his lighter shut. An acidic grin crept out from under his black mustache. *Good thing the camera's off, huh? Don't reckon you'll be able to use that in your commercial.*

Dani's enchanting face gave itself over to a flood of color. As if there were so much more to it than what Tug had just implied. But this was where the conversation ended, abandoned like a piece of rusty machinery whose entire history would go into the ground with it.

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She wouldn't let him stop to fuck her. She was too scared of Tug catching up with them. But when they'd hit the long stretch of highway between Walsenburg and Trinidad, she'd unbuckled her seat belt and offered lip service for the trials and tribulations he'd suffered on her behalf. He hadn't expected this small, exquisite gift, but he wasn't stupid enough to refuse it, either.

"You love me," he'd said, looking across the seat, steering with a single finger. "You loved me from the first time you saw me."

"I did not."

"Did so. That's why you got in this car. That's why you left him."

"Says who?"

Dani glanced over her shoulder. Flicked her hair with her small white fingers. "You oughta turn back now, Sam. Before he finds us. You could get off that exit ramp up there and turn this thing around and drive right back to Calhan. Drop me where you found me, at the Walmart. Pretend we never done this. I'll call Tug from the pay phone and he'll come get me, no questions asked."

"I'm not walking away from you."

"You would if you was smart."

"Would I?"

"I said so, didn't I?"

She looked up at the sky and watched the droning, single-engine plane circle the sky. "That could be him up there, you know. Spying down on us." Her eyes fell back, reluctantly, on the prairie. She pointed to the rocky landmass in the distance. The great loaf of stone and weeds and scrub oak rising against the horizon. "What's it called again? That big rock?"

He told her. He also told her to stop worrying, saying that what she felt on the back of her neck wasn't the heat of Tug's hot, alcohol-bitten breath, but the sun. The sun she'd been missing for far too long.

She said the name of the great stone formation aloud. Wagon Mound. Then she asked him how far it was to the Grand Canyon.

"Still a good day's drive," he said.

"A whole day?"

"Eight hours, at least. But it'll be worth it."

"How do you know?" she said. "You told me you ain't ever seen it either."

His eyes were on the formation.

She turned to the window. "You ever done anything like this before?"

"What?"

"Run off with another man's wife?"
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He laughed, shaking his head. “No. Hell no.”

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“So you’re telling me you don’t see it?” his father shouted, badgering his poor, browbeaten mother.

“I’m telling you,” she said. “I don’t see it.”

His father pointed. “Right there, Lois. Right in front of you. You don’t see it?”

“I told you.”

His old man threw himself back against the car seat, angrily gripping the Bakelight wheel. He sneered, slapping the dash, hoping perhaps that a good stiff jolt of hostility might awaken his wife’s imagination. “Come on!”

Sam’s mother looked out her window, not wanting to get into it. But the old man wouldn’t give it a rest.

“You don’t see the wagon?”

“I see no wagon.”

The old man’s agitation grew. He was still laughing, but it wasn’t funny anymore. Frustration had worked its way into his muscles, pulling them as taut and rigid as a metal cable. He stabbed a finger in the air, in the direction of the saddle-backed lump of rock and grass that sat on top of the ridge. The lump that looked like an old pioneer wagon that had lost its wheels and run aground, burying itself up to its jockey box in the stone. It was there, weeds and rocks growing up all around it, and he was determined to have her see it.

“You see no wagon? No prairie schooner? Is that what you’re telling me?”

“For god’s sake, Clarence. What does it matter?”

“I’m just trying to get this clear in my head, Lois. You’re saying you see no wagon.”

“No. *Yes*. I’m seeing no wagon.”

His father’s face turned red, the veins in his neck threatening to rupture. He’d watched as his old man’s eyes flew back and forth between the road and the woman riding beside him, and he could tell that the longer his father was forced to wait for the answer, the more agitated and inflamed he’d become.

“Lois.”

“Clarence.”

“Tell me you see the wagon.”

“I can’t,” his mother said. “I won’t just make something up and pretend it’s true. I couldn’t live with myself if I did that.”

His father laughed meanly. “Oh, I get it.” He clammed up, but only for a
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moment. His eyes began to work their way over the landscape. They moved slowly at first, then faster and faster, racing in every imaginable direction until they landed on the rearview mirror. On the book Landry was reading. "Gimme the book, Sammy!" he shouted like a madman. "Gimme the goddamn book so I can show your idiot mother here what I'm talking about!"

Landry, petrified, lowered the book. His eyes slipped to the cover, to the comic illustration of Alfred E. Newman—the publisher's irrepressible idiot-savant anti-hero—sitting on a Conestoga wagon drawn by an ox.

His father shouted again.

The wagon was bristling with arrows, and alongside the smiling, benighted Newman, with a booted foot jacked up on the wagon's wooden spokes, was a motorcycle cop, writing out a traffic ticket.

"The book, Sam!" his father demanded. "Hand me the goddamn book!"

Landry's mother began to shout at his father, admonishing him for his boorish language, insisting it didn't matter what sort of despicable things he did to her, or how angry he was at the world for the awful thing that was happening to him, it was unfair to befoul their poor son's ears with such ugliness and cruelty.

"Shut up," the old man yelled. "Shut the *fuck* up. There's a picture of a *fucking* wagon on the cover of that *fucking* book, and you're gonna look at it and you're gonna tell me it's the same goddamn thing I'm looking at up there on that goddamned ridge."

The book flew from Sam's fingers, fluttering upward as if it had been knocked clean away by an invisible hand, and when it sailed over the seatback and struck the dash, falling to the floor, his parents engaged in a frantic scramble to snatch it up. That was when his father lost his grip on the wheel, and the gleaming Cadillac left the pavement.

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They were closer to the mound now, and Landry slowed the vehicle so Dani could lean forward and get a better look. "See," he said. "See how it looks like a wagon?"

Dani studied the formation, taking her time before committing to an answer. "Yeah," she finally admitted, agreeing with him in principle although in no way sounding as impressed as he would have liked. "I guess it does look like a wagon. If you look real hard."

"Ha!" Landry smacked the steering wheel in unbridled glee. "It does, doesn't it!"

"Yeah," Dani said, "One, maybe, whose wheels fell off. And that grass grew up around."
~~~

Landry grinned in self-satisfaction. Vindicated at last. It had been easy, almost too easy, especially after all these long, miserable years, but here, now, finally, he had it. The answer. See, he told himself in a conversation that seemed strangely two-sided. That's how it's done. You start with a civil question, and you end with a civil reply. No shouting. No threats. No muscling one another around. It was that simple, and that easy to do, and guess what? No one had to die!

The moment came in flash, and he wanted to savor it, but his parents were long since buried, and Dani had already lost interest in the odd-looking formation. So the best he could do was take his victory and move on.

In the median ahead stood another wooden cross, shivering in the hot, prairie wind. There was a name written on it, but the letters were too small to decipher. Dani, whose eyes were already hurrying up the road, pointed to the quaking marker, then chanced another look over her shoulder. Out the back window. "Best we keep moving," she said. "Tug ain't one to let bygones be bygones."

# For Your Trip

**Marilyn Cavicchia**

What I am prepared to offer you is
this suitcase that leaks when it rains;
you can watch from the window as it
sits on the tarmac in drizzle and grease.

Fast forward to yellow lamplight; shake out
your damp, wrinkled clothes, move them into
the dresser whose drawers go thunk, the closet
with pinheaded hangers that slide along a track.

Or you can heft this broken baggage onto
a folding rack, live out of it for your few
stolen days; you are a bandit, too unsettled
to move in, pretend to build a room-shaped life.

Prepare your bed for sleep; turn down
the bedspread, concealingly printed, or
the duvet, whiter than white. This is
what you have reserved: a space for

yourself, your things, a stippled ceiling
to stare at when you can't sleep because
your head is full of travel, and you are
becoming new and don't know it yet.

# Listen to the Radio

**Marilyn Cavicchia**

What do we do on a long car ride? We listen to the radio.
Through corn and through rain, we listen to the radio.

I feel old; I've lost my music. I'm stuck in former times.
But I can learn all the new names if I listen to the radio.

Scanning through static, dead air between towns; is it
worth suffering these crackles, to listen to the radio?

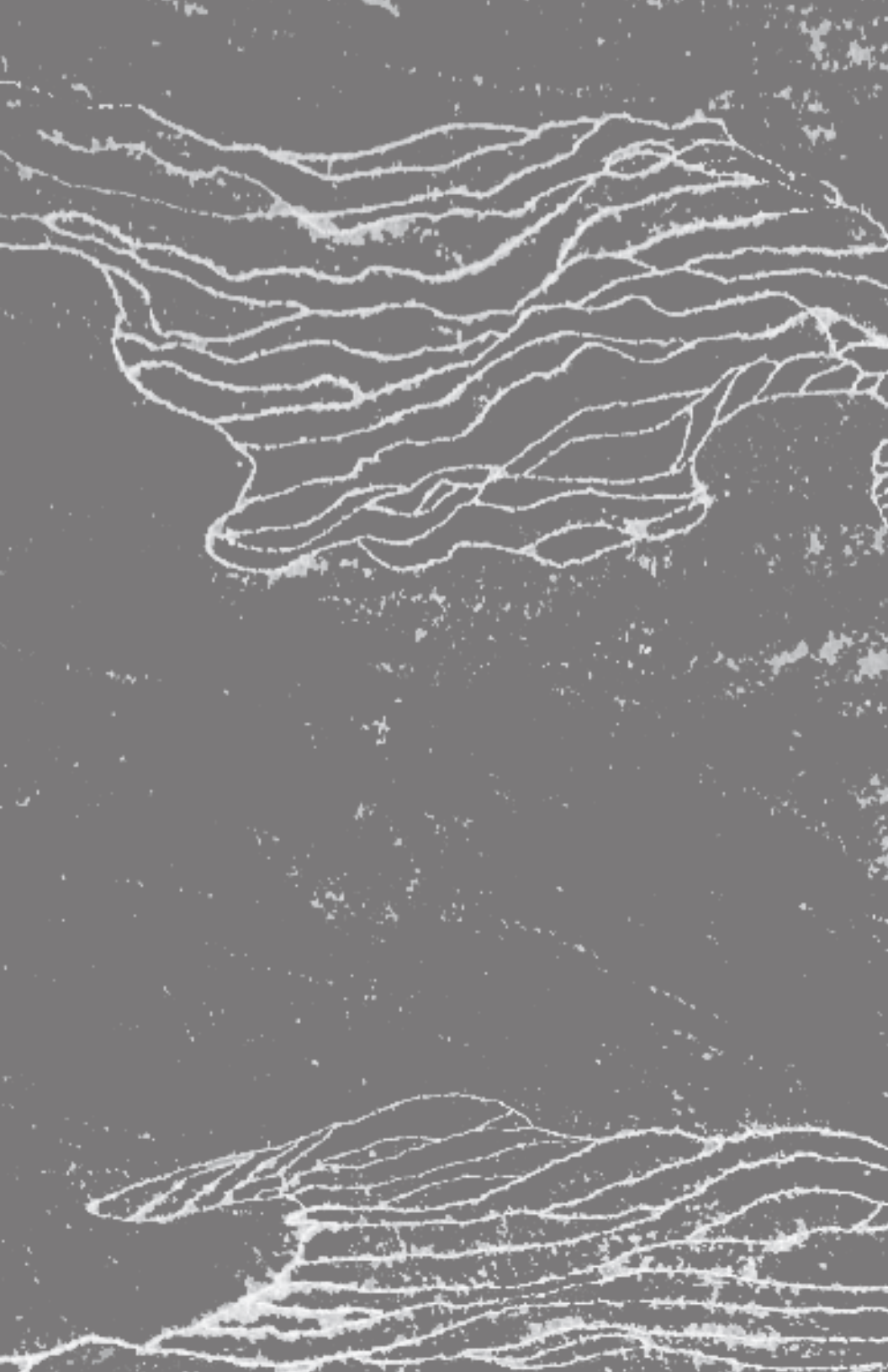
Kiss and Hot and Morning Zoo—station names, shows,
songs, and hosts. All repeat when you listen to the radio.

A patchwork that the crow flies over. Stitches, patterns
in the quilted road, unfolding as we listen to the radio.

Before thirty-five, I was the researchers' phone friend.
Now, they don't call to ask me if I listen to the radio.

I'm younger than my parents were at this age; oldies,
Paul Harvey lulled me when they listened to the radio.

Look out the window, see time and place passing. Clouds.
Sit back, Marilyn. Close your eyes; just listen to the radio.



# The Oregon Trail

**Tara Laskowski**

We left at the beginning of summer, figuring three months of good weather at least. We packed up what we could in the CRV. I quit my job at the dealership outright and Craig wasn't teaching until the fall, so we had some time to figure it out. We had our baby, our camera, and our AAA membership. We had a safety net in case we needed to come back.

We left because our apartment felt small. The only new friends we had were parents who talked endlessly about the safety regulations of car seats and the color of their baby's poop. We left because the president wasn't going to get re-elected. We left because someone set fire to the playground near our house. We left because we started fighting clichés—chores, snoring, the cost of cable.

We left the cats with trusted friends, the bonsai tree with my dad.

We left because that's what people do when they are afraid.

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It was Craig's idea to follow the Oregon Trail, albeit backward. It was something, anyway. And we used to play that game, which I hated because my family always got sick and died, while Craig's family forged through the fucking country and founded a city. He planned and plotted and they thrived.

So the Oregon Trail it was. I wanted to see cattle, snorting, grazing free-range cattle just doing their thing out on open fields. I wanted to be somewhere where you could see for ten miles without a building getting in the way. I wanted to stand in the wind and let the dust settle in my hair. It sounded romantic. It sounded like just what we needed.

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Craig grew up in Brooklyn with Jewish parents who liked to eat pork. I grew up in Seattle, where we lived now, where it always rained and smelled like fish. Craig and I bonded in college over Westerns. Our first date was to see *The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly* at the Gateway Theater for Classics Wednesday. Craig brought an airplane bottle of vodka and spiked our soda. He was working on his thesis at the time and pointed out the names of all the desert plants to me. I didn't mind.

Later it evolved into a drinking game. We'd watch any kind of cowboy movie—the only rule was you had to do a shot for a shot. We liked the guns, the horses, the morals.

All we ever wanted was simplicity, green grass, straight whiskey.

Instead we got a two-bedroom, fifteenth floor apartment in the heart of Seattle, where you could see the Needle in the smallest bedroom window if you pressed your face hard to the glass and looked left. We got jobs in the city and a newspaper subscription. We got pregnant.

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We drove for long periods of time, singing along to the radio until that got annoying. The day was hot, the windows down. Around mid-day we stopped at a farmers' market alongside the road. I had to wake Dru. We wandered. At one stand, a farmer was selling blueberries by the pint, big fat ones. I bought a pint and shared them with Dru. He loved blueberries. "Boo ber, boo ber," he'd say, holding out his fat fingers for more.

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I started to feel sick around late afternoon, and finally asked Craig to stop. The sun was hot on my head. It felt like it could burn me right through. I vomited hard on the side of the road. The blueberries. The desert looked unforgiving out there and I imagined suddenly those early pioneers, out here in wagons and petticoats, paving the way in the desert with its rocks and dangerous plants and animals.

Dru cried inconsolably, like the colic he had when he was three months old. We kept driving because we weren't sure what else to do. He shit out the blueberries, diaper after diaper, until we had to stop at an all-night CVS to buy more.

I sat in the back and sang him "The Rainbow Connection," though I only knew the first verse. Craig wanted me to Google the rest. "Some things we just don't always have to know," I snapped at him.

~~~

Saving dollars meant crappy motels that we called "vintage" to make ourselves feel better. We were never really good at road trips. I'd forgotten the travel crib sheets and Craig kept second-guessing the route. One week, then two, then three. We began to get on each other's nerves. The air dried out my contacts, sandpaper in the eyes. The car seat made Dru's fat thighs sweat. He giggled like a leprechaun whenever I reached back and yanked on his big toe. "More play." We listened to books on tape. Craig started eating Pop Tarts right out of the silvery package. I kept thinking of the crumbs everywhere at our feet.

~~~

The car overheated somewhere just past the Red Desert in Wyoming. We sat in the pitch dark of the desert and waited for the tow truck from AAA to find us.

The lights of the pick-up truck that came up behind us felt like floodlights. The kids stopped beside us, blocking the road, two black teenagers with bandanas covering their hair, blasting country music. I recognized the song—something about jumping into the fire to really experience life.

The kid in the passenger seat looked over. His smile was like peeling back a can of Friskies—cold, sharp, metallic, with a whiff of something foul underneath.

~~~

When I told my mother I was marrying Craig, she frowned in that disapproving-but-I'm-not-going-to-say-it-out-loud way. "Are you sure that's what you want?"

"Ma? Of course. What kind of reaction is that?"

She shrugged. "It's just that . . . well," she trailed off.

My father finished it for her. "The man knows too much about flowers," he said. "No man should know that much about flowers."

~~~

"You havin' some kind a problem here?" one of the boys yelled over. He had a can of Yoo-Hoo in his hand.

"No, everything's fine," Craig said in a higher tone than normal. "Thanks."

"Doesn't look fine," the boy said. His friend, the driver, snickered. He turned down the music, and his friend leaned out of the window to look in our car. Eyes flickered on Dru. Go ahead, look at him again, I thought. I will go for your eyes

first. Thrust my thumbs as hard as I can through that pulp and wash out the bits later in a 7-11 sink.

"Tow truck's on its way," Craig said. "Should be here any minute."

"Right, right," Yoo-Hoo said.

The driver revved the engine. It echoed out into the desert.

"Got a joke for ya," Yoo-Hoo said.

"Pardon me?" Craig said. He never talked like that, pardon me. It made him sound like an old man, white and weak.

"What do you call a monkey with a bomb?"

"What?"

"Did you not hear me?"

"I don't know," Craig said. I could tell he wanted to roll his window back up. I imagined him doing it and the guys shooting a bullet right through it. Bam.

No one really wants a cowboy, I used to tell my friend Mindy, who always seemed to fall for anyone with a drawl and a drinking problem. Those kind of guys leave you for bigger, noble purposes. They work too hard, or they die too young, or they have wandering eyes and smell like cow shit.

"You gotta guess, man. That's the whole point." Yoo-Hoo was getting fidgety, twisting around in his seat, cracking his can between his fist.

I kept looking back at the baby. He was sleeping still, somehow, through all this racket. When we first brought him home, we used to tiptoe around the house during his naps, careful not to clang a pot or close a door too fast. Then one day the neighbors above us had their flooring replaced and Dru was so still through it all I went in his room and rested my hand on his back until it rose with his breath.

"Just guess," I said, words spitting out of me like shrapnel. "Just fucking guess."

Craig looked at me, his eyes blinking crazily. He was flushed. I could tell that in the dark of the desert. Like he'd just run ten miles.

"Ape shit," Craig said. The guy closest to us leaned out, and Craig said it louder. "Ape shit."

"Ape shit," he said to the driver. They repeated it again, laughing. The driver hit his palm against the steering wheel. "Ape shit." They nodded. "That's pretty good, man."

Craig laughed, too, a little too hard. Yoo Hoo crushed the can with his fist and tossed it into the street. He tipped his head once, twice at us. The driver revved the engine again, tore off, rubber screaming on the hot pavement. He held his horn down for what seemed like miles. If I concentrate hard enough, I can still hear it echoing over the mountain, a wailing, dying sound.

~~~

We found some small motel with a sombrero sign and a built-in pool. The water was inky and streaked with the reds and blues of the neon hat sign.

We put Dru in the travel crib between our beds and went outside to stick our feet in the water, the baby monitor between us. It was quiet except for the hum of some kind of generator.

"This is the life," Craig said.

"If only we had some Boone's wine or what was that stuff—Zima?"

"Classy."

Neither of us would admit what we were thinking: that gentle way our couch back home gave way to your body weight after a long hard day. The homeless guy with the missing finger who sat in the alley across the street. Sesame bread from scratch. The fact that those boys could've slit all our throats and left us bleeding it out in the dirt and Craig could do fuck-all to stop it.

"I Googled it, by the way," I said.

Craig looked over at me, skimmed his fingers along the water's surface. "What?"

"It's a baboom. A monkey with a bomb. A baboom."

The motel manager opened the office door, dragging a garbage bin behind her. She had one of those old lady housecoats on with pastel floral print. She coughed, not bothering to cover her mouth and looked over at us.

"Watch yer bums," she called. "The scorpions come out at night."

~~~

You don't arrive at the Great Plains. They come to you. Suddenly you realize you're in the middle of those patches of squares you usually only see from airplanes. Suddenly you realize how inconsequential you and your vintage washed jeans are to the earth. It's been there. It couldn't care less what you want, what you desire, where you came from, and where you're going.

It was windy and hot. I made Craig pull over on the side of the road so we could get out. Dru felt like a space heater in my arms. He kept squinching his eyes to block out the sun, kicking his bare feet into my belly. "Down, down," he wanted, and I imagined just watching him run for miles and still being able to see his little toddler trot.

And that was it—that's what was bothering me. The openness. Back in Seattle, where the buildings sprouted up all around you, a long flat landscape of nothing seemed exciting. But here now, it was all laid out in front of you.

Predictable, like your life as a novel that you already peeked and read the ending.

Miles away—maybe 20, 30—we could see some clouds gathering. The rainstorm approached rapidly, like a galloping swarm of horses, darkening the fields beneath it, heading our way.

I thought about those cowboys. Those pioneer fools so many years ago, rocking across this place in their rickety wagons with their dysentery and their snake bites. What they would've thought of us here, me with my cup of coffee and Ray Ban sunglasses and Craig with his nerve pills and digital recorder. I imagined us all those years ago, hunched over Craig's desktop computer playing that game. Naming the kids in our family that died of snakebites, fell off cliffs, drowned in the rivers. Craig trying to tell me what move to make and me spitefully doing the opposite.

The storm was getting closer. We could smell it now, the wet dirt smell where heat and cold mixed. We'd have to wait it out in the car, the only shelter in sight. There was nowhere else to go.

"So is it all you thought?" Craig asked. His hair was tossing about and he looked thin, like the storm might just scoop him right up. It occurred to me that sometimes being a true pioneer meant protecting the ones with whom you were taking the journey.

"Oh yeah," I lied. "It's exactly what I imagined."

# Things Happen

**William Cass**

Her pager went off first. He glanced at the travel alarm clock next to his side of the bed. He'd set the alarm for 5:15 AM; she'd set her pager for five. She went into the bathroom to get ready, and he got up and turned on the hotel room coffee maker. Ten minutes later, he had their suitcases in the trunk, the rental car idling, and Styrofoam cups steaming in their console holders when she came out. She gave him one of her wry grins as she passed through the yellow streams of headlights and his heart clutched a bit as she settled in next to him in the passenger seat.

It was quiet heading south on Highway 101 from Santa Cruz along California's central coast. The road was mostly empty. A little past Watsonville, enough dawn had crawled over the mountains to the east to expose the long, wide expanses of agricultural fields on that side of the car and the occasional stands of cypress trees on the other. He thought about his friend, John, whom they'd visited the day before in the hospital, where he was recovering from a stroke. They'd been college basketball teammates and shared a house together with some other guys nearly thirty years earlier in a neighborhood not far from the hotel. He thought about John's manner during the visit: part exuberance, part determination, part desperation. John had told them he was going to retire as soon as he was discharged; life was too short. He wanted to visit the fjords in Sweden. He wanted to learn to salsa dance.

She thought about the phone call the night before with her brother. He'd told her that he'd slit the back tires on the car of the man who lived in the apartment below theirs because the man's television had been too loud. The man didn't know who'd done it, he'd said, and still the television was too loud; it was driving him nuts. She'd closed her eyes as he spoke and pressed her fingertips into them. She wondered again, as she had many times before, how much the childhood abuse of her father had affected him; she wondered how much having her father now

living in the same apartment, a place where the two of them avoided each other and never spoke, exacerbated her brother's bipolar disorder and other conditions. After she'd hung up, she'd called and left a message at her brother's psychiatrist's office explaining what had happened and asking for a consult the next week. Perhaps, she thought, another med adjustment could be made. Perhaps resuming group therapy would help. Her mind wandered briefly to the series of shock treatments years before, and then she grimaced and shook the memory away.

The air was cool, crisp, but not cold. As the early light widened, a low stretch of fog emerged where the fields met the mountains in the distance. It drifted toward the narrow coast at Moss Landing, and he ran the wipers against the moisture until they were nearly to Marina. There were now places to rent kayaks and paddle boards here and there along that stretch, as well as a few seafood restaurants with catchy names. Thirty years ago, there'd been nothing but an occasional fruit and vegetable stand. He looked out at the wide gray ocean and thought about the surfing spots they'd discovered back in those days all up and down that coast: unspoiled, almost untouched, seals and dolphins about, otters in the kelp beds. Often, they'd gone at this very time of morning. The world had seemed so fresh, so full of promise.

She took a sip of coffee and thought about her father. He would still be asleep on the living room couch where he'd spent each night since she'd brought him down from Hemet after her step-mother died the year before. Her father had sounded good when she'd called earlier during the vacation: no problems to report. He told her that he'd been changing his diapers regularly. He told her that the nursing assistant she'd hired to give him a shower had come as scheduled and that everything had gone well. Yes, he'd been heating up the meals she'd prepared. And, yes, he managed fine with his walker taking his dog out twice a day.

At Seaside, he pulled over at a gas station to fill the tank. He thought about calling his ex-wife to check on their disabled son, Charlie, and to remind her of the time he'd be up to her place that morning to pick him up after the plane landed back in San Diego. But, he didn't call. Although the overnight nurse's shift ended at six, he was afraid his ex-wife might still be sleeping. He wasn't sure why he hadn't called earlier; the five days of their trip was the longest he'd ever been away. It was the longest stretch, he realized in that moment, that they'd ever been alone together.

She watched him fiddle with the handle of the gas nozzle. She didn't think he looked fifteen years older than her; no one did. She thought back to when she asked if he wanted to meet for coffee sometime so she could see how Charlie was doing since being discharged and starting in-home care. It was a perfectly

reasonable request, she told herself, seeing that she was the social worker at the hospital where Charlie had spent nearly a year.

That had been almost a decade ago, a little over a year after Charlie had first been admitted from the acute wing with an especially bad pneumonia, and then all the procedures that followed: the fundoplication to avoid future aspirations, the surgeries on his testicles and eyes, and eventually the tracheotomy to help clear his secretions. Charlie's mom had left for good during the early portion of that admittance. For months afterward, she'd often found him in the parents' room weeping quietly, holding Charlie and rocking him.

They got back on the road, and she turned on the radio at low volume. She flipped through a few stations, then looked at him and asked, "Want music?"

"I'm fine with the quiet."

She smiled. "Me, too."

She clicked the radio off and sat looking out of her window as the trees grew denser and more green-black north of Monterrey. When the sign to the airport appeared, she felt him place his hand gently on her knee and she closed her own over it.

After they'd turned in the rental car, gone through security screening, and found seats in the waiting area, he went off to the snack bar. He came back with two yogurts and plastic spoons. They ate and watched the waiting area fill with passengers. He thought about his daughter who was in New York City on a summer internship from her college working with a nonprofit that helped older children with special needs. He thought about the backpacking trip they had planned when she returned after the internship; her visit would be short, so it would be just a few days to a place in the Eastern Sierras where they'd gone several times before. That would exhaust the quota of annual days his ex-wife would care for Charlie for that year.

Afterward, his daughter would leave with her mother to go up to their family's lake cabin for a few more days before heading back East for the new school term. He thought about his daughter's new boyfriend at college, whom he'd only met via Skype and who was off in Africa on his own volunteer internship. They seemed good together. They reminded him of how he remembered things with his ex-wife in their early days.

She thought about her mother's pending retirement and the party her work friends were planning. After the party, she'd spend the night at her mother's mobile home, and they'd do something special together the next day. She wasn't sure yet what that would be; perhaps they'd go to a spa, or maybe they'd tour some wineries up in Temecula. She wondered a little anxiously again about what her mom would do to fill time in retirement.

The plane wasn't crowded, and it was a short flight. He had orange juice and she had cranberry. She sat next to the window and looked out at the coastal mountains until the plane was above the clouds, and then she leaned over and put her head against his shoulder. She closed her eyes, but didn't sleep. The quiet rumble of the plane was companionable. At one point, he turned and kissed her on the forehead. They didn't speak.

They were silent, too, on the cab ride back to his place. He thought about how long it seemed since they'd left. She wondered if her father had watered the plants. He thought about the chores that lay ahead during the short vacation time he had left before returning to his teaching job: fixing the wheelchair ramp that led up to the back door, calling the medical equipment company about replacing the oxygenator, trimming, weeding, painting the south side of the house. She thought about the new infant that she would help admit the next morning and hoped that the mother had been able to obtain the needed documentation to come over the border from Tijuana.

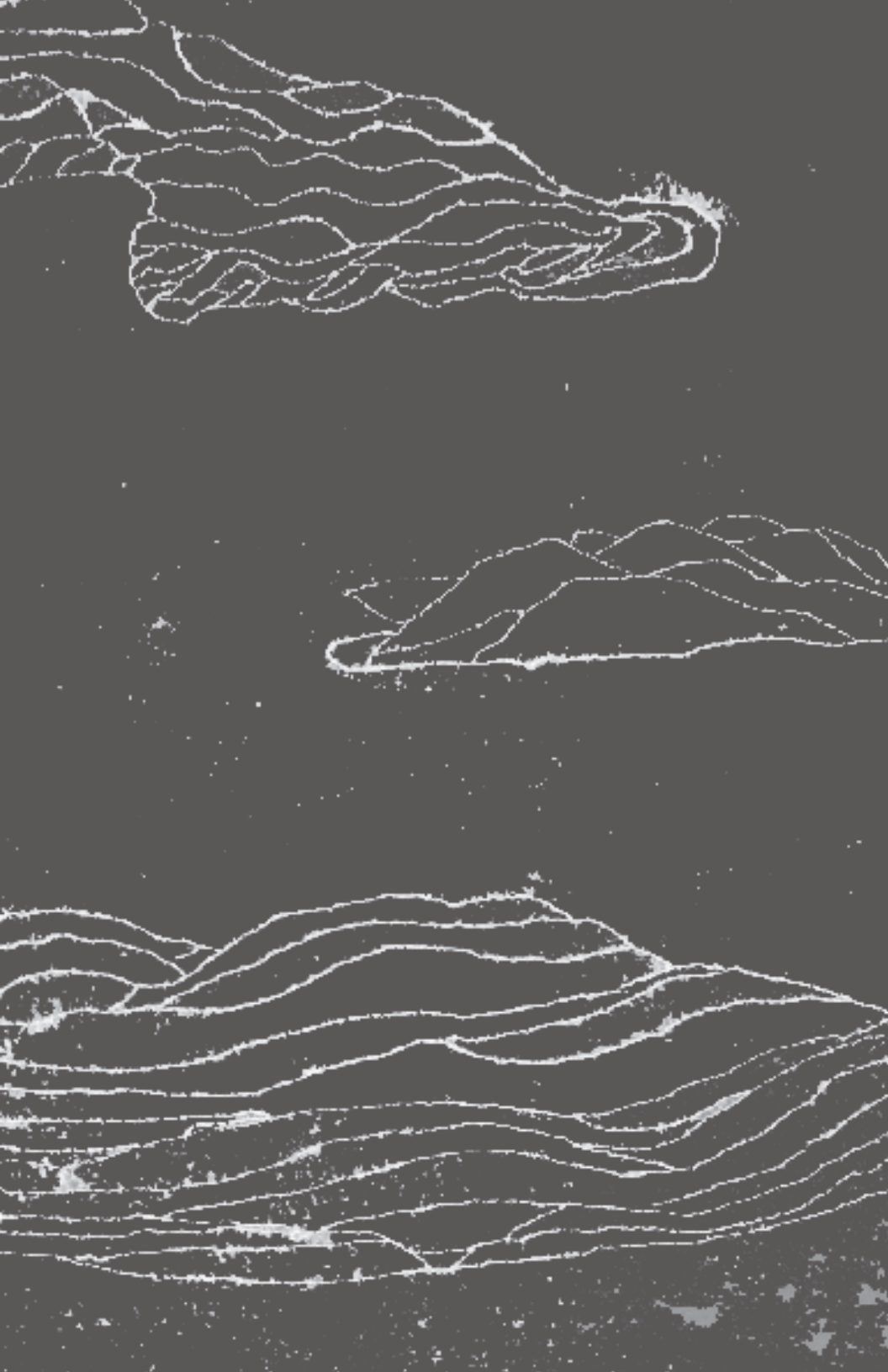
The cab driver asked him if he and his wife had had a good trip. He said they had, and then exchanged small smiles with her. It wasn't worth correcting the driver, just like it wasn't worth trying to explain to others why they didn't communicate daily, how they managed their care responsibilities separately and how those duties made it impossible for them to be together, how absence simply defined their relationship. Occasionally, when her dad's or brother's situation grew very involved, or his son's did, they would go several weeks without even talking. And then they'd get together, and things would be the same again, unchanged somehow and still good.

After the cab left, he helped her get her luggage into the backseat of her car at the curb next to his small house. They held each other for several moments, and he softly rubbed her back the way she liked. As she drove away, he stood on the sidewalk and raised his hand in a wave. She turned a corner and watched him disappear in her rearview mirror.

He went in the house through the back gate. He began opening windows. He turned on the water in the kitchen sink to clear the old pipes. He collected the mail from the basket under the slot in the front door. He unpacked, started a load of laundry, then checked the wheelchair lift on the van and headed up to the house his ex-wife shared with her lover, the man she'd left with all those years before.

She stopped at the donut shop to get her dad and brother their Sunday morning treats before going home. There would be dishes and cleaning to attend to when she arrived, but first she would tell them each about her trip. She'd tell them about the clear aqua-blue water of that section of coast and the white foam that swirled around the rocks as the waves crashed, about the sea lions and the long

windswept trail over the dunes to a lighthouse, about the endless fields of flowers and artichokes and strawberries, about the deep quiet of the redwood forest and the scent of the sun-warmed pine needles underfoot. She wouldn't tell them about lingering over long dinners, of sitting on a bench holding hands watching the sun slowly descend, of making love in the morning and again at night. She wouldn't tell them about those kind of things. Instead, she'd keep those to herself, as she knew he would, and think of them often.



# In the Middle of the Ocean

**Michael Cuglietta**

I had no problem with her taking a bath. I encouraged it, thought maybe it would sober her up. I did have a problem with her locking the door.

"Please, open up," I said, standing outside the door, listening to the water run.

"Go away."

"It's not safe for you to be alone in there. Not in your condition."

She said I was a bigger drunk than her. I figured, as long as she was talking, she wasn't drowning.

"I don't need your permission to take a bath." She'd been yelling so much that night she barely had any voice left. "You're so controlling. I'm not like my mother. I will not let a man treat me like this."

I went to the minibar to fix myself a drink. On the way, I checked the digital clock on the nightstand. It was a little under an hour before sunrise. If I didn't make it to bed before sunrise, I had no chance of getting any sleep.

When I returned to the bathroom, all was quiet. I held my ear to the door. I called her name and got no answer.

I put my drink down and searched for something I could use to break in. I thought of the fire axe out in the hallway.

In the closet, I found a wire coat hanger. Growing up, I used to break into my sister's bedroom. It's simple. There's a hole in the doorknob. You insert a coat hanger and poke around. When you hit the right spot, the door unlocks.

She was asleep in the tub. The water was pouring over the side, collecting on the tile floor. I held my hand under her nose to make sure she was breathing. Then, I turned off the water and unplugged the drain.

I lifted her from under her arms. She was ice cold. As I was trying to wrap a towel around her, she woke up.

"Get your hands off me." She ran out of the bathroom.

"Slow down. You're going to slip and break your neck."

"Stop telling me what to do." She was over by the minibar, trying to unscrew a bottle of Heineken, naked with soapsuds dripping everywhere.

"That's a pry off," I told her.

She found the bottle opener and took it out to the balcony. I waited a couple of minutes and, when I was sure she wasn't coming back, I went out after her.

She was reclined on the lounge chair, her beer propped up next to her. Her eyes were closed and her skin was stretched tight against the cold.

"You're going to freeze to death." The wind, coming off the sea, was like ice. When I got close, I saw her lips had gone blue. "You have to come inside." I leaned in and touched her shoulder. Like a zombie, she came to life.

She waved her bottle at me, spraying beer in my face. When all the beer was gone, she threw the bottle. I ducked just in time. It shattered against the wall behind me.

She walked through the broken glass and into the cabin, slamming the sliding door shut. She tried to lock me out but she was too drunk to work the lock. After a few failed attempts, she went to the minibar, got another beer and settled on the couch.

I leaned over the railing and looked out into the water. On the horizon, the sun was starting to come up. Soon, we would be in Mexico. Around dinnertime, we had sailed passed Cuba. Jessica and I had stood on deck, drinking rum and watching the island nation as we moved past it. It seemed like such a long time ago.

Jessica passed out on the couch, still clutching her beer. I slid the bottle out of her hand then took the comforter off the bed and laid it on top of her. I went into the shower and turned the hot water on. I stayed in there for half an hour, letting the water fall on my back. When I was done, I put on a pair of shorts and a white t-shirt and set out for the dining hall.

There was a father and son staying in the cabin next to ours. When I walked past, the son appeared in the doorway.

"Here he is, dad." He wore only a pair of swim trunks. He was tall and thin. His chest hollow, like a bird. "Come get a look at this guy," he said to his father.

I put my head down and kept walking.

"We heard you this morning," he called after me as I was getting in the elevator. "Does it make you feel like a big man, beating up on a woman?"

There was a woman in the elevator with me. She grabbed her daughter and held her close. I kept my eyes on the floor.

I stopped on deck to have a cigarette, then went to the breakfast buffet. I filled my plate with eggs, bacon, hash browns, and pancakes. A waitress came around with a pot of coffee. I drank three cups and left the food untouched.

There were a couple of security guards eating at the table next to me. As I walked out, I gave them a nod. My brother went on a cruise with some friends from college. They drank too much and got into a fight with some frat guys from South Carolina.

On a cruise, there's no judge or jury, just a holding tank in the bowels of the ship. My brother and his friends spent two days locked up down there. He got seasick and spent the better part of forty-eight hours with his head buried in the communal toilet.

After a couple more cigarettes on deck, I walked to the back of the boat and watched the crew guide us into port.

When I booked the cruise, I signed us up for a snorkeling excursion in Mexico. The brochure had a picture of a young couple floating on top of the ocean. The woman wore a tiny blue bikini that showed off her ass. Her man swam next to her, a big smile on his face.

There was a long line of people waiting to get off the ship. Once they had it docked, they opened a small footbridge and the line started pouring out. I spotted my friend and his father from the cabin next to ours.

The father was much bigger than the son. He wore a green camouflage shirt with Semper Fi printed across his chest. Even from up on the deck, I could tell he was made of stone.

I made a whistling sound that really carried. When they looked up, I smiled and waved. The son stuck his middle finger up at me. I flicked a cigarette butt in his direction then headed for the pool.

I found an empty lounge. I'm not sure how long I was out but, when I woke up, my skin was on fire. To cool off, I went to the bar and had two beers. Then, I went back to the dining hall. They had cleaned up after breakfast and set up a sandwich bar. Next to it, there were plastic cups filled with iced tea. I made two turkey sandwiches and grabbed a couple iced teas.

When I got back to the room, Jessica was still out. I set the sandwiches and drinks on the coffee table. I got a beer from the minibar and sat on the edge of the bed and drank it.

When I was finished, I crushed the can and threw it against the wall. Then I moved to the foot of the couch. I lifted Jessica's legs and put them in my lap. There was a shard of glass in the bottom of her foot. As I pulled it out, she woke up.

The comforter had fallen to the floor. She wasn't wearing any clothes. She grabbed me from around the neck and pulled me on top of her, kissing me deeply.

Before we left, Jessica tried to back out of the trip. She made up all kinds of excuses. She told me she was too busy at work. She told me she didn't want to leave the dog for so long.

The thing about a cruise ship, you can't just get up and leave. If things turn bad, you're stuck, floating in the middle of the ocean.

Most times, afterward, I would lay with Jessica. But, that afternoon, I went right to the bathroom to clean myself with a wet towel. When I came out, Jessica had the comforter wrapped around her shoulders and she was eating one of the turkey sandwiches.

"You should try this tea," she said. "It's good. I feel like shit. I don't remember a thing about last night. I hope I wasn't too terrible."

I walked over to the minibar and got the last beer. I popped it open and held my head back, finishing it in one, long sip.

"I don't know how you could possibly drink," she said. "I don't think I'll ever take another drink again." I put on my shorts and t-shirt. "Where are you going?"

I walked out into the hallway and knocked on the cabin next door. The son answered. He was wearing the same swim trunks with a bright yellow t-shirt. He started to say something but, before he could get it out, I sunk my fist deep into his stomach. He was so thin I bet you could've seen my knuckles coming out the other side.

For such a big guy, his old man had some speed. I tried to duck but he was just too damn fast.

When I came to, I was sitting in the hallway, propped up against the wall. My hands were bound behind me with zip chord and I was surrounded by half a dozen men wearing uniforms and carrying batons.

Jessica was standing in the doorway. She still had the comforter wrapped around her. She didn't say anything. She just watched as the security team pulled me to my feet. My head felt like it had been knocked out of place. Everything out of my left eye was fuzzy.

They dragged me down the hall and put me in the elevator. One of them pulled out a key, which granted us access to the bottommost level. Before the doors closed, I poked my head out. Jessica was still standing there. I mouthed a goodbye to her. She kissed her hand and blew it my way.

Once the elevator door closed, the security guards began talking in a foreign language. They didn't seem upset with me. I guess, for them, it was just another day at the office. I couldn't tell what nationality they were. Their skin was light brown and, when they spoke, they sounded like Bob Marley.

The one who seemed to be in charge put his hand on my shoulder and asked me if I wanted to know where they were taking me. I pretended like I didn't hear him. I stood, facing forward. I wasn't worried. I figured, wherever they were taking me, how bad could it be?

# [flip flops]

**Rose Hunter**

but i saw that other with copper ringlets
brassy not soft or was it she looked hard

but she was soft and i was the other way
*it is no good it is all wrong* look
both those statements are bullshit
and that being again what you mean
copper ringlets don't call bullshit

i'm not sorry there were only two men
i would be a pigeon's wing for and they are gone
one to the bottle and one to the rage

when a lion left the circus came to town
but i gave him tiger baths instead

for drinks it was rum i never liked it
and the room was a smoke screen or to
calm bees the cigarettes one after the other
green like my heart and
all i could do was open the doors wide

another of those grandiose men
grandiosely drinking their lives away
first thing i thought a bear by any name
xanadu no less listen

none of this made any sense to you
where are the *useful emotions* here

you know you died right after i was with that woman
you recommended try to explain more pain
is not always good in this case also

i did not realize until after
her housemate was the one in hospital
yet when *all those people*

don't have the details straight on you
how difficult is it

to remember your name or
pause before switching to

your boss you can't stand or who is
undermining you and your pay that is not
enough and the other man stealing your

contract you know i don't even
stand there with nodding head anymore

same week as las vegas man
hearing of your death says
*going for a drive* next time i see him
chest in a cast and his grey face drifting fuck
it's easy to break us i was glad

to be away from that windowless room
and the oil she had me use smelling of patchouli
and shoulder riding sweat gripping
my ears and it was only
february wanting me to press some buttons

fix her up *if i could do that i'd bottle it*
*be a millionaire or a saint*
i do not say that i can't stop it either
this pooch nose i too would like a miracle

like *qué milagro* in the street imagine
a crane says clutching her gut she *felt*

something wrong that day that hour
and clearing her throat like an encouragement
to make something up if i didn't? reinterpret
some minor note hindsight it twenty

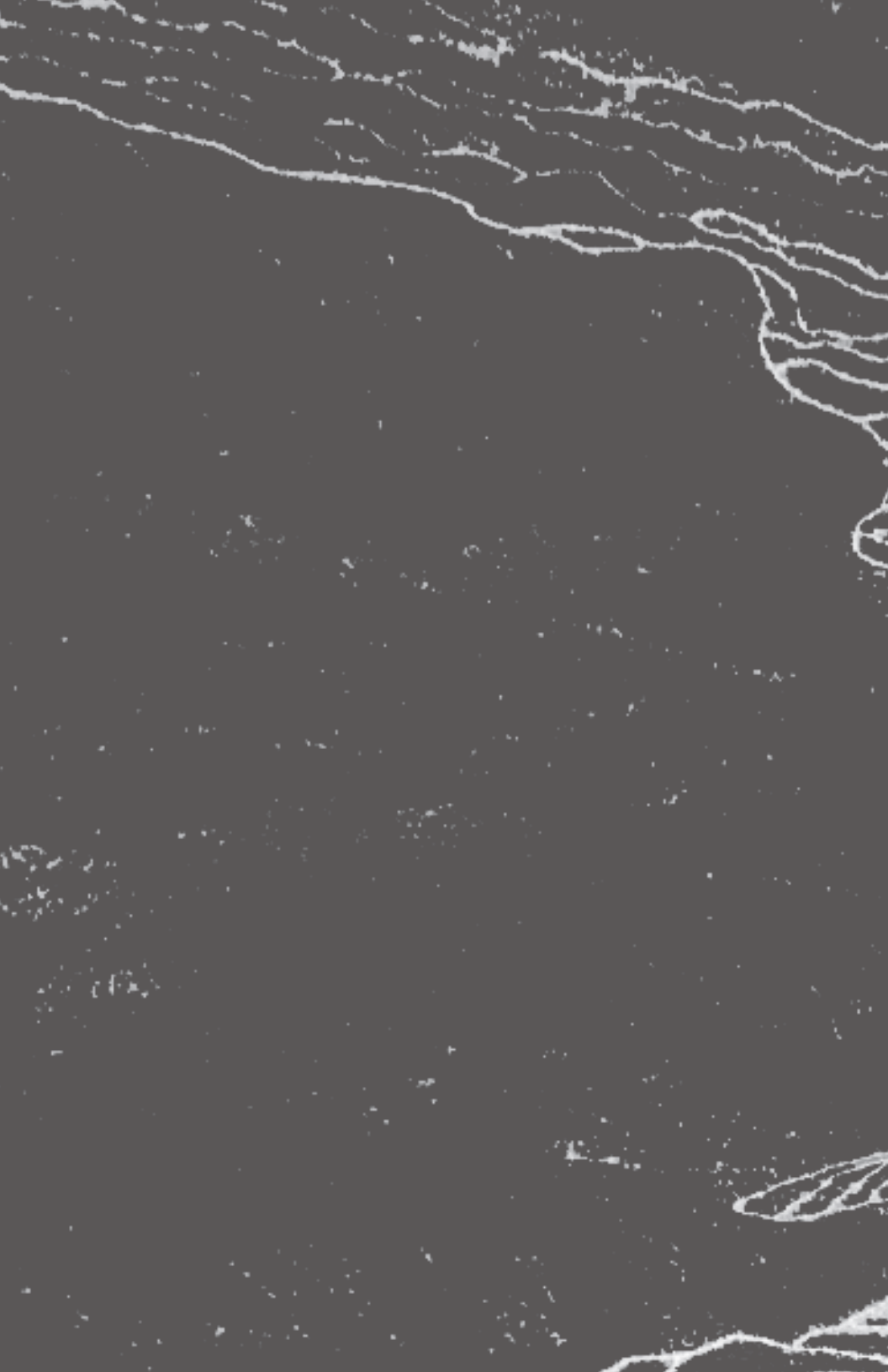
twenty that baby *massage it* you can do that

no? then pitying silence for one of those
clueless unspiritual rationality

shackled off switched i was maybe
fixing a coffee watching cnn or deciphering
something in spanish ploddingly

i mean in the pictures why

they were not *thrown clear*



# A Note on the Cover

# Diasporic Waters View from Tuvalu

**Joy Enomoto**

"View from Tuvalu" is a part of my installation, *Diasporic Waters*, which is a mapping of the Pacific nations of Kiribati, Tuvalu, and the Tulun Islands (Carteret) that sit no higher than 10 feet above sea level. These maps are temporary markers of land that is being lost and the cultures that are being broken due to climate change. They are an attempt to capture a memory that is not my own.

The Pacific is changing. The ocean is rising, the land is eroding, and salt is destroying the swamp taro and the banana trees with each king tide. Thousands of Pacific Islanders are being forced into the unknown waters of the diaspora.

This installation prompted me, a descendant of Oceania, to reflect on my own position in the Pacific and serves as a visual reminder not to leave our sisters and brothers of the Pacific drifting, with no place to land.

Materials used to produce these maps include watercolor paper, screenprinting ink, thread, and salt. See http://joyenomo.wix.com/navigating-diaspora for additional works.

# Contributors

**Amalia Bueno** is an educator, poet, and writer. Born in Manila and raised in Honolulu, she is occasionally lured by the mountains and volcanoes of Hawai‘i Island. Her poetry and fiction has been published in various literary journals, anthologies, and magazines. Her poems and stories are forthcoming in *Dismantle*, *Bamboo Ridge*, and *FILIPINAS! Voices from Daughters and Descendants of Hawai‘i’s Plantation Era*.

**Donald Carreira Ching** recently completed his first novel *Between Sky and Sea*, excerpts from which have appeared in *Bamboo Ridge*, *Hawai‘i Review*, *Hawai‘i Pacific Review*, and are forthcoming in *Chaminade Literary Review*. Although “Mano‘o” contains historical elements, he would like to note that this is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents either are products of the author’s imagination or are used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, is purely coincidental.

**William Cass** has had over sixty short stories accepted for publication in a variety of literary magazines and anthologies, including the winning fiction selection in *The Examined Life Journal*’s recent writing contest. He lives and works as an educator in San Diego, California.

**Marilyn Cavicchia** lives in Chicago and is an editor at a huge bar association and a communications specialist at a small child welfare agency. Her first chapbook, *Secret Rivers*, received the 2013 Helen Kay Chapbook Prize and is forthcoming from *Evening Street Press*. For more information on her work, see http://marilyncavicchiaeditorpoet.wordpress.com.

**Donovan Kūhiō Colleps** was born in Honolulu and lives in Pu‘uloa,‘Ewa, on the island of O‘ahu. He is currently working toward a PhD in English at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa, focusing on creative writing and Pacific literatures.

**Michael Cuglietta**’s work has appeared in *The Gettysburg Review*, *Toad Suck Review*, *Passages North*, and elsewhere. His chapbook, *Vertigo*, was selected as the winner of the 2013 Gertrude Press Fiction Chapbook Contest. It will be published later this year.

**Kathleen de Azevedo**’s novel of Brazilian American immigrants, *Samba Dreamers* (University of Arizona Press) won a 2007 PEN Oakland Josephine

Miles National Literary Award. Her short stories and articles have appeared in many publications including the *Los Angeles Times*, *Américas*, *Boston Review*, *Michigan Quarterly Review*, *Greensboro Review*, *Cimarron Review*, *Gulf Coast*, *Gettysburg Review*, and *TriQuarterly*. She was born in Rio de Janeiro and currently lives in San Francisco.

**Christina Low Dwight** has been published in local and national publications over her long career trying to become a better writer. She recently won *Bamboo Ridge*'s Editor's Choice award and continues to write in her spare time when she's not selling apartment buildings.

**Meg Eden**'s work has been published in various magazines, been nominated for a Pushcart Prize, and received the 2012 Henrietta Spiegel Creative Writing Award. She was a reader for the *Delmarva Review*. Her collections include *Your Son* (The Florence Kahn Memorial Award) and *Rotary Phones and Facebook* (Dancing Girl Press). She teaches at the University of Maryland. For more information on her work, see http://artemisagain.wordpress.com.

**Joy Enomoto** is a mixed media artist living in Honolulu, Hawai'i. Her work engages ancestral memory, social justice, and those issues currently affecting Pacific peoples. She is currently most concerned with the severe impacts of climate change, noting that some of the first climate refugees are from the Pacific. Enomoto has a BA from UC Berkeley (English) and is currently pursuing a BFA from the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa. For more information on her work, see http://joyenomo.wix.com/navigating-diaspora.

**Jaimie Gusman** lives and works on the island of O'ahu, where she also runs Mixing Innovative Arts, a monthly literary reading and workshop series in Honolulu. She is currently finishing a PhD in English and creative writing at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa. She has two chapbooks, *The Anyjar* (Highway 101 Press) and *One Petal Row* (Tinfish Press), and is currently working on a feminine epic.

**Laura Hartenberger**'s writing appears or is forthcoming in *The Massachusetts Review*, *Cutbank Magazine*, *Dragnet*, *NANO Fiction*, and *Found Poetry Review*, among others, and has won prizes from *Gulf Coast Magazine* and *Hart House Review*. She teaches at the University of Toronto.

**ku‘ualoha ho‘omanawanui** is a Kanaka Maoli poet, artist, and mālama ‘āina advocate. She is also an Associate Professor of Hawaiian Literature, specializing in traditional Hawaiian literature, Oceanic literature, and indigenous perspectives on literacy. She has published critical essays and creative writing in Hawai‘i and abroad, and is a founding and current Chief Editor of *‘Ōiwi: A Native Hawaiian Journal*. Her first book, *Voices of Fire—Reweaving the Lei of Pele and Hi‘iaka Literature*, is forthcoming from the University of Minnesota Press, May 2014.

**Rose Hunter** is the author of *You As Poetry* (Texture Press), *[four paths]* (Texture Press), and *to the river* (Artistically Declined Press). She lives in Puerto Vallarta, Mexico. She tweets, @roseh400.

**Kathy Jetnil-Kijiner** is a poet, writer, and journalist, born in the Marshall Islands and raised in Hawai‘i. Her poetry is a blend of storytelling and activism.

**Lee Kava** is a hafekasi, Tongan-palangi trying to be a poet. She is a Masters candidate at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa’s Center for Pacific Islands Studies and her work focuses on Tongan identities and music. She is very, very grateful for the love and support she receives from her family and friends here and abroad, and hopes to make them proud through the work she does.

**David Keali‘i** is a poet of mixed Kanaka Maoli descent who was born and raised in western Massachusetts. His work also appears in or is forthcoming from *Mauri Ola: Contemporary Polynesian Poetry in English* (Whetu Moana, Volume II), *Assaracus: a Journal of Gay Poetry*, *Breadcrumb Scabs*, *Storyboard Journal*, and *Hawai‘i Pacific Review*. He is a Masters student at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa’s Center for Pacific Island Studies.

**Tara Laskowski** is the author of *Modern Manners for Your Inner Demons* (Matter Press). She is the senior editor of *SmokeLong Quarterly*, and has had numerous stories published online and in print. She has a story forthcoming in *Alfred Hitchcock’s Mystery Magazine* and *Flash Fiction International*, an anthology published by Norton.

**R. Zamora Linmark**’s poetry collections include *Prime Time Apparitions*, *The Evolution of a Sigh*, and *Drive-By Vigils*, all from Hanging Loose Press. He is currently the Distinguished Visiting Associate Professor in creative writing at the University of Miami in Coral Gables, Florida. “The Condescendants” is part of his forthcoming collection, *Pop Vérité*.

**Robert McGuill** is a three-time Puschart Prize nominee, 2013 "Best of the Net" nominee, *Glimmer Train* Stories finalist, and *Narrative Magazine* fall fiction contest winner whose short stories have appeared in more than forty literary journals in five countries.

**Rajiv Mohabir**, a VONA and Kundiman fellow, is the author of the chapbooks *na bad-eye me* (Pudding House Press, 2010) and *na mash me bone* (Finishing Line Press, 2011). His poetry is published or forthcoming from journals such as *Prairie Schooner*, *Crab Orchard Review*, *Drunken Boat*, and *Great River Review*. Nominated for a Pushcart in 2010, he received his MFA in poetry and translation from Queens College, CUNY, where he was Editor in Chief of *Ozone Park Journal* (2012–2013). He is a PhD candidate at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa.

**Angela Nishimoto** teaches at Leeward Community College and lives in Honolulu with her husband, Andrew McCullough.

**Denielle Pedro** is currently a freshman at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa. She is a biology major, but is interested in creative writing and literature. She is originally from the small village of Matu'u in American Samoa and has spent a large portion of her life in Hawai'i. She is a Pacific Islander of Tokelauan, Samoan, Palauan, and Tongan descent.

**Danielle Seid** is a PhD student and fiction writer living in the Pacific Northwest. A second-generation Chinese American who was born and raised in California, she writes about the Chinese diaspora in the Americas and race and ethnicity in the media. Her current research looks at filmic, TV, and literary representations of Chinese in the western U.S. during the exclusion era, with a focus on gendering and sexualizing practices. Her keyword essay "Reveal" is forthcoming in *Transgender Studies Quarterly*.

**Lyz Soto** is a poet of Hakka, Ilocano, Tagalog, English, German, Scottish, Irish, Cherokee, French, and Spanish descent born and raised in the islands of Hawai'i. She is Co-Founder of Pacific Tongues and a long time mentor and coach with its award-winning youth poetry program, Youth Speaks Hawai'i. She is working toward a PhD in English at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, where she also teaches English composition, poetry, and performance. She has also had the privilege of working on collaborative projects with Joy Enomoto and Jaimie Gusman. Her chapbook, *Eulogies*, was published in 2010 by TinFish Press.

**Aimee Suzara** is a Filipino American poet, playwright, and performer. Her theatrical work has been awarded commissions from the East Bay Community Foundation and National Endowment for the Arts. She is a contributor to PlayGround at the Berkeley Repertory Theater. Her poetry appears in her debut book, *SOUVENIR* (WordTech Editions) and in numerous collections, including *Phat'itude* and *Kartika Review*. With an MFA from Mills College, Suzara teaches creative writing at California State University at Monterey Bay. For more information on her work, see www.aimeesuzara.net.

**T-man Thompson** is a second-year MA student studying Pacific Literature. He was born and raised in Lā'ie, Hawai'i, and received his BA from Brigham Young University-Hawai'i. He is of Hawaiian, Maori, and Samoan descent and writes about South Pacific cultures.

**Julia Wieting** grew up over by Chicago and via the Pacific. She's a postgrad in creative writing at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa; other priorities include theorizing the Prime Directive, linguistics, her husband, and feline poetics.

**Jon Willer** is a writer from Norwood, New York, currently living in Champaign, Illinois. His fiction has appeared in *Laurentian Magazine* and *The April Reader*, and he has a story forthcoming from *Ragazine*. He plans on pursuing an MFA degree.

**Aiko Yamashiro** is a graduate student at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, with a passion for social justice, Pacific literature, and voyaging across oppressive boundaries, toward our ancestors, toward home.

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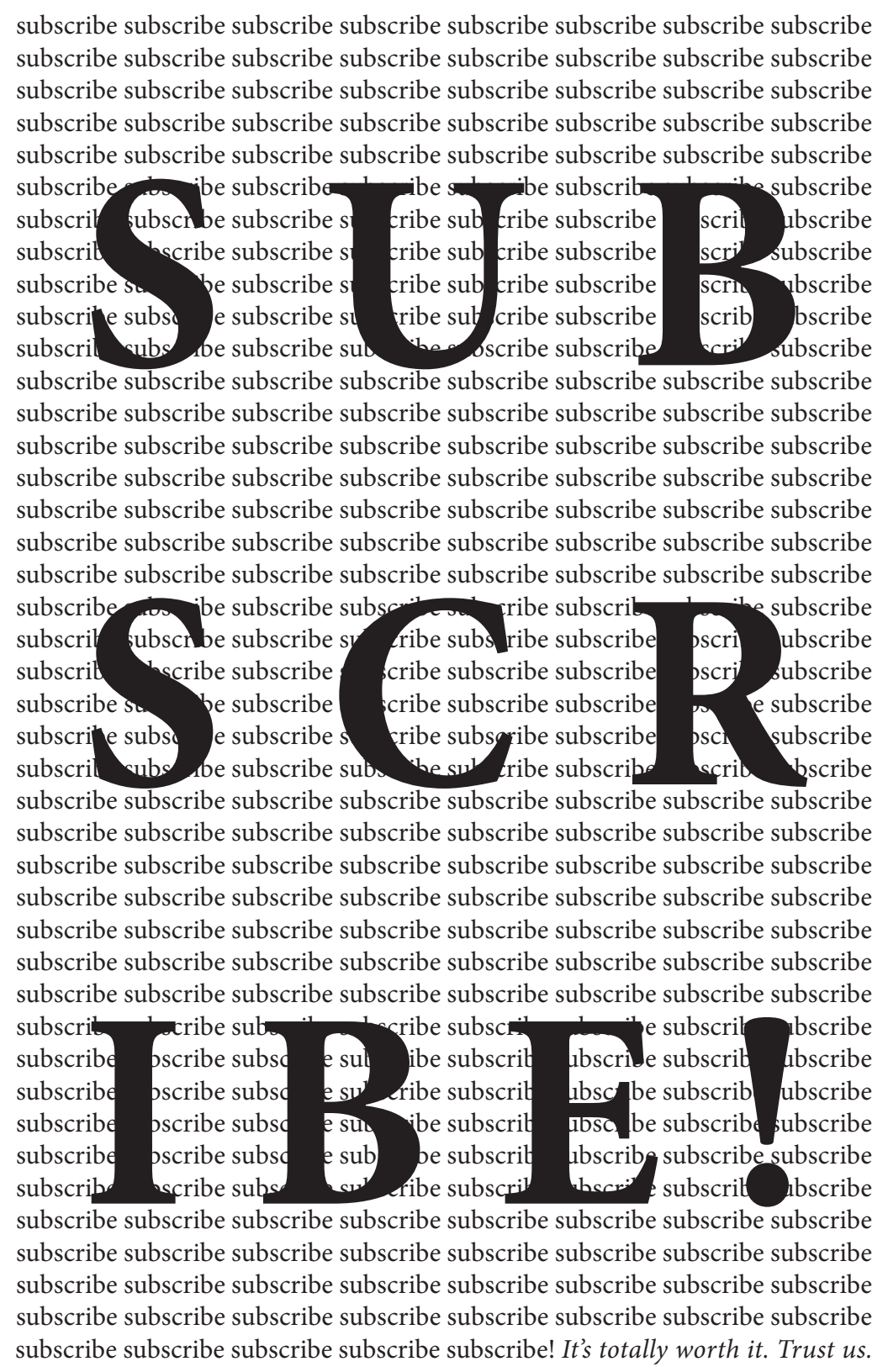
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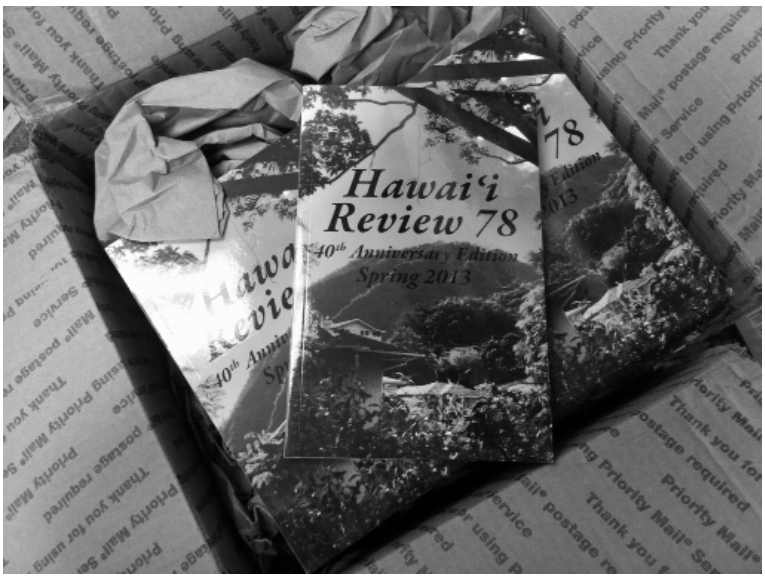

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