



hawai‘i review  
82

**the ian macmillan  
writing awards  
2015**



# **The Ian MacMillan Writing Awards**

*fifth anniversary*

**HR82**

**2015**

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2013–2015

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*We are so grateful for our team of volunteers who continue to help to make the journal and all of its endeavors possible!*

*Mahalo nui loa to Jay Hartwell for all his guidance!*

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**ISSN:** 0093-9625

**About:** *Hawai‘i Review* is a publication of the Student Media Board of the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa. A bold, student-run journal, *Hawai‘i Review* reflects the views of its editors and contributors, who are solely responsible for its content. *Hawai‘i Review* is a member of the Coordinating Council of Literary Magazines and is indexed by the Humanities International Index, the Index of American Periodical Verse, Writer’s Market, and Poet’s Market.

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Printed in The United States

# Letter from the Editors

Thank you so much to our judges for making this contest possible. Thank you so much to our volunteers for helping our genre editors read so closely and lovingly through the dozens of submissions that each category garnered this year. Thank you to our winners for choosing *Hawai'i Review* as the home for their dazzling works, and a special thanks to all who submitted to this year's contest.

The Ian MacMillan Writing Awards are doing well! They continue to honor the late Prof. Ian MacMillan while offering writers from University of Hawai'i at Mānoa and beyond a wonderful place to publish, along with a whopping \$500 prize for first-place winners.

We aren't joking when we say that the contest continues to grow. Between 2014's contest and this year's, the number of submissions grew by 86% for fiction and a whopping 276% for poetry. Our brand-new category, creative nonfiction, received 35% more submissions than our two established categories did last year.

Issue 82 marks the fourth and last issue that we five student-editors are producing together for *Hawai'i Review*. It's been a wild, generative, beautiful time. Thank you for letting us be part of our literary community in this way. Thank you for reading these pages, for publishing your work with us, for supporting the reading events that showed off just how truly talented our contributors are. We are so grateful to have been able to spend this time and these pages with you.

We are also excited to see how the next team of editors will continue to transform this journal, pushing its boundaries and reinventing it as they see fit. It is our sincere hope that they know the pleasure we did in working together on *Hawai'i Review*.

Me ka mahalo nui loa,  
The (Current) Editors

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**2015 Ian MacMillan**  
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## **Creative Nonfiction**

(new category!)

Caroline Sinavaiana, 2015 Creative Nonfiction Judge

First Place: “Love Letters”

by Leanne Trapedo Sims

I find the writing style informed by bright, compelling images and characters captivating with a richness of voices and perspectives, from the speaker’s splendid Aunt Beattie in South Africa to inflections by Hemingway, Rushdie, Kafka, and Mark Doty. I also love the frame of “Islands” to encompass families, immigrants, and their shifting locations—from Johannesburg to Wisconsin, from the veldt to the Brooklyn Botanical Zoo—as we see them becoming isolated in their respective singularities. Here are form and content seamlessly entwined, as they should be, to enact the many-layered shadows of dis/placement in the 21st century.

Second Place: “Shrines”

by Rain Wright

Here, a finely wrought lyricism serves to soften and ease the jagged edges of cultural displacement as Elizabeth, the artist/protagonist, creates a collage, drawing together threads and echoes of her childhood in rural England with the biracial dynamics of her present life in rural Hawai‘i. The elegiac notes of love and release are beautifully sung here, as Elizabeth transforms her sorrow into art that heals, as it honors the women of her family line, while meanwhile, unbeknownst to her, her landlord is cutting down the venerable mango tree gracing her home.

Third Place: “Ruby”

by Donna Kaz

Here, I admire the plain, unadorned language and zen-like lines of narrative that give us Ruby, who we learn from inference is stranded in an abusive, impoverished household across the street from the story’s speaker. What I find compelling is the understated narration from a neighbor child that serves to showcase the problem of domestic violence as emblematic of human suffering. By casting a child as storyteller—that is the daughter of the compassionate neighbors—the author shields us from direct witness to the violence, which in turn leaves us more open to experiencing its desolation.

## **Fiction**

Rodney Morales, 2015 Fiction Judge

First Place: “The Limits of My Love: A Kitsune Tale”  
by Abbey Seth Mayer

While I don’t usually gravitate toward fantasy, this story drew me in. It’s very well written, never lapsing from its passionate, compelling tone. A heart-felt page-turner.

Second Place: “And Christ Shall Give Thee Light”  
by Jeffery Ryan Long

This Hawai‘i-based sci-fi story takes us from tiki-themed tattoo parlors and Beatle albums to blogs featuring kitten avatars. It deftly mixes place-specific concrete images with ones that are surreal. I like that I don’t know where the story is going and really want to find out.

Third Place: “The Wild Sound”  
by Sofi Cleveland

Thanks to the third-person omniscient point of view used in this story, we get into the heads of all members of the Cheek family and witness their struggles either to keep it together as a family or implode. Darkly comic, with striking sensory details.

## Poetry

Allison Adelle Hedge Coke, 2015 Poetry Judge

First Place: “Rumiko / A Series of Possessions”

by Meg Eden

If poetry is journey, is adventure, this poem presents a haunted quest with no sure way out. The curvature of priorities infused with lingering ghosts is made evident in selected pathways trailed without any sense of delivery into the here and now. As a reader, the impressions met along the way prove unforgettable. Coupled with dichotomies, in the spectacle of perceived phantoms, each entry propagates intrigue, presents surprise. In the end, only the speaker’s voice and speaker’s god knows what happens in tsunami.

Second Place: “An Acte for the Punysshement of the Vice of Buggerie”

by Rajiv Mohabir

Unexpected twists pattern this poem with legendary history and grit-rich humanity. While presenting tangles of human nature, regulation, and punishment, the lines render heft, mockery, urgency, in an incredible array. This poem challenges, protests, compels me to stick with it in its ever-changing sequence form, openly narrowing the event aperture to an intimate call-and-response litany.

Third Place: “Snow in Jerusalem”

by Sofi Cleveland

Subtle lingual mastery suspends the reader in sensual location moments while questioning what is seen/unseen in a city of disguise. The puzzling conflict in image fear/love, war/peace, in a city that is as dirty as it is clean, makes this poem something to return to, in hope that the opposites colliding mediate.



**Creative  
Nonfiction**

# Love Letters

## Leanne Trapedo Sims

### Islands

Water holds my story together. Its seamless turquoise body. I swim from its remote southern corners to the west and then to the east. I drown on its pockmarked shores, which carry me wrapped in the silky shawls of my family. Beginnings are always entwined with ends. So it's not at all strange that I am anchored in Eastern Europe. Only here, the east is no longer the east. It has encountered the west; it has been swallowed like tiny amulets. And so I dance with the ghosts of my family in sumptuous Prague cafés, rather than between the speckled stones of Kupischek, Lithuania.

### Island One: Southern Africa, 1970—Aunt Beattie Mythologized

*Aunt Beattie is my father's great aunt. She is my grandmother Helen's aunt through marriage. She loves to play the piano drunk. She is a proper British dame when sober. She is perilously allergic to cats. My way of greeting Aunt Beattie is to conceal Tafita (we call her this on days when the smell of colonization sits fat on our blood like the tzeet-ee fly) behind my back. And as Aunt Beattie's goose neck dips toward my cheek, I fling Tafita, my calico Persian cat, with the personality of a dog, onto her geranium dress.*

### Entr'acte

A name is just a thing. Or is it? In places of exile, “dis-placed places,” a name is everything. It slinks around, a steely imposter in beaux-arts socks. We, as Jews, in loaned lands, wear our names like masks. I think of Damien Hirst's dead cows at the Brooklyn Museum. Cows stewed in formaldehyde. Tricky cows. You, the visitor, think you are getting only one cow, but as you traverse the length of the cow's once body—you eat two heads with your quivering eye. And you know a name is just a thing. You see pallid worms at the back of the cow's cauliflower head. And you know a dead cow is more than a thing.

My father's family changed their names from Shmulowitz to Sims. “Much more digestible,” said the brothers. Pa Sims sold eggs and lychees. Gray crates of abundancy, which we crushed with mulberry-stained knuckles.

## **Aunt Beattie's Homecoming**

Aunt Beattie arrives in all her regalia. It's seven thirty and she's half an hour early. She's decked like a rare jewel in her delicious chachkees. Beads drip around her chicken neck. The edges of her taffeta dress cling to her baggy stockings, which are stuffed into leather shoes. Her white hair is singed with strawberry blue. The doors slam upstairs. Pop. They crackle against each other. He's been drinking again. So you got it. It's me and Aunt Beattie. "Hello, Aunt Beattie," I mouth at her legs, dirt level with my belly button. Aunt Beattie's purple fedora hat with the rolling pink feathers and wide yellow sash waltzes by me. I watch the back seams of her stockings. The view is better than the Friday night drive-in at the Rand Easter show. I've had my eyes on those stockings since my baby years. The fine, delicate threads protrude like hedgehog pins. As Aunt Beattie takes a deliberate step toward her habitual place on Sunday afternoons, her brown legs sprawl apart like stern brooms. From the corner, I gaze at the open field, which lurks between them.

Aunt Beattie and her gangster walk skulks on by. The salmon feathers promenade to the booze counter (a shrine in our house). Upstairs I can hear the muted moans of hissing doors. He's been drinking again. And so they're fighting again. Downstairs, Aunt Beattie's pouring Daddy's Johnny Walker into the largest glass she can find. Its golden body tickles the rim of her glass. It perches in rust splendor. Aunt Beattie draws the glass up to her mouth—a hunter in pursuit of vicious game. Her milky blue eyes—relentless microscopes. She gives her friend the Beattie bead eye. *Oh*, she's *chugging* Daddy's Johnny Walker. It flies down her goose throat. Pink feathers hit the floor. And so does Aunt Beattie.

## **Entr'acte**

My father reads about Aunt Beattie. "Myth," he sniffs down his hairy nostril. "Aunt Beattie despised drink!" A hirsute cavity gapes. He fails to mention his Johnny Walker habit. "Myth," I retort. I think of the cows.

## **The Korean Deli or Ghosts & the Nonsensical**

*In a country where any physical or mental peculiarity in a child is a source of deep family shame, my parents, who had become accustomed to facial birthmarks, cucumber-nose and bandy legs, simply refused to see any more embarrassing things in me.*

—Salmon Rushdie, *Shame*

Lena met her grandmother's ghost in a white, paint-chip drawer on

Percelia Avenue in the industrial wasteland of Johannesburg. Lena pulled out the drawer from its hinges. Here is what she found: a pack of crimson-stained rummy cards, the club of hearts on its back like a plump whore; two abandoned, white, slim, cerise-stained cigarette butts. Those trim bodies always looked out of place against her grandmother's fleshy face and the shelf of breasts that fascinated her. Her grandmother had the good legs (translate, *skinny*) of all the women in the family. The other girls and granddaughters inherited her Zeide's muscular, full polkes<sup>1</sup>—wide thighs of a tasty chicken. The elegant cigarettes were endless like her granny's legs—a startled endpoint to the mammoth breasts heaven-bound. Lena smiled at the ghost of her grandmother's lips pursed like indelible o's around the satiny edges of the butt. This synthetic kiss was all that remained of her grandmother in the physical world. And it was in those cluttered drawers that Lena first encountered her grandmother's ghost.

In the clothes-cupboard her grandmother's two furs hung lifeless on fluffy hangers as if their current shape bore a body that lingered. Zeide forbid his four daughters from laying their hands on the peeling bronze knobs—an entryway to her dresses—short and wide. At night he wore the grandmother's dresses himself, their lifeless forms ludicrous on his stocky girth. Her two demonic girl cousins, Sarah and Deborah, eyed the evacuated fur coats with envy. They enticed the deranged Zeide at night with rummy and poker and glasses of Chivas Regal.

### **Uncle Sam in the Wake of September 11th**

When Lena's parents left South Africa in 1979 for a better life in America, they swore her and Alexandra to secrecy. For three years while they sorted out the legalities, her father, a doctor, traveled to Milwaukee to have open-heart surgery. While under a Midwestern surgeon's knife, her father was offered a job at the University of Wisconsin. During those three excruciating years of waiting, Lena developed a heightened sense of shame, as if their stealthy escape from her birthland, a land of turmoil and violence, was the flight of a coward. Her parents' Afrikaans friends, Elsie and Ernest Jaeger, did indeed cease speaking to her family once the secret was no longer a secret. They were abandoning the moeder-land. Elsie and Ernest had a swarthy son who was "not quite right" and who attempted to drown their kittens in the sink.

Mark Doty says that all America looks the same until you go digging around. With globalization people change their homes like they change their shoes. Yet we all search feverishly for home.

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1. Yiddish word for thighs. Affectionate and derisive at the same time.

Lena never cries when she leaves Africa. Below her is the bush, which Hemingway eulogizes in *The Snows of Kilimanjaro*. And whereas Harry's corpse escapes death (in the realm of dream) by soaring to the summit of Kilimanjaro, she plummets toward death when she departs her birthland. Through the porthole windows, she can almost lick the coarse air she knows she will breathe once on land. Below her is the veldt with no beginning or end.

On the day Lena left the country of sand, the hot maroon sun scorched the veldt. She sat behind her mother and sister, Alexandra, next to her father (always next to her father) just behind her mother's krullcop,<sup>2</sup> its tight curls discordant with her brown, fine strands.

*She had inherited her father's silky, balding head. She was of his skin.*

Lena is transported to Milwaukee, Wisconsin—an oxymoronic displacement. Her life as a teenager in a Midwestern public school was a battle of big hair and confrontations with rough-edged, pot-smoking girls in bathrooms. If she performed her most British voice for them, she would exit unscathed. And there were the times that she was burned.

In America, there are abundant states to visit. But it's always Wisconsin, island of pigs and cheese, that Lena returns to. She has no choice in this sadomasochistic exilic revenge scene. Her family, although a truncated one, is there. And over the holidays, guilt-induced barometers of commitment to families, she is expected to return to the milk-cow-state—dutiful daughter, keeper of silences. They always promise her that this time will be different. They stole that line shamelessly from the Passover Haggadah.

It's Christmas. They tempt her with the nativity scene for Jews. At Pandals: before an expansive bay window, a diorama of garden accoutrements, stone elves, and redundant snow. The fireplace glistens in mockery.

At this cheery nativity scene, the conversation at their particular table is icy. When will she get married? *They have met her girlfriend, a sexy blue-eyed saxophonist, at least a dozen times over the last two years.* Get a real job. Have health insurance. Be a respectable citizen. These are some of the subtexts around the cranberry muffins and applesauce.

Lena has to admit they are trying hard to keep up appearances. Her therapist armed her with psychoanalytic prophecies about the perils of invasive caretaking. They're making efforts, trying not to overstep boundaries. But there are transgressions.

All of America does not look the same. And neither do all Americans.

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2. Afrikaans word for "curly haired," which collapses Jewishness and blackness.

Educator and writer Carol Ann Tomlinson views the pursuit of equilibrium and equity as the heart of the American character. This American character is reflected in our tallest buildings, our competent corporations, and in our finest universities. But there is no equity in America. And now there is no tallest building, despite the patriotic fervor to rebuild our torn and rubble-dusted body. The east coast's countenance—its landscape, architecture, and people—in no way resembles the Midwest. It's like settling for oranges at the corner bodega when you really want blueberries from *Back to the Land*. But perhaps this disparity is a question of aesthetics. And the American soul is really the same all over the land—an item far more durable, like calligraphy on skin.

It's summer—July 4th to be precise. Lena leaves her Brooklyn furnace for the American heartland to visit her parents in German-Polish Milwaukee. In celebration of their now national holiday, the three visit *Summerfest*. It is her first return to *Summerfest* after much more than a decade and she is momentarily transported back to her motorcycle wielding, tattooed, older boyfriend—now an innocuous gay nurse in a Milwaukee psychiatric ward. *Summerfest* is heralded in Milwaukee as the crossroads of musical culture. Walking down its midway, flanked by large Midwesterners swilling delicious microbrews, and the Harley Davidson women in raven t-shirts, baring muscles and steel stomachs, Lena wonders if she has finally come home to America.

At the apex of music culture it's disappointing to uncover the raucous sounds emanating from stages with pumped-up sound systems. Her midget parents, Eastern European stock, her mother with her wiry fro, eagerly approach the World Stage, anxious for a respite from their over-exercised eardrums. On the World Stage is a band from Seattle (otherworldly indeed) with its members and instruments exotic and varied. Two Midwestern brothers boldly approach the stage. The four-year-old with his sugar-bowl haircut and boy body bobs up and down and sideways to the world music. A white boy with rhythm. His parents glow with the conceit of sweat and appropriation. His younger brother, still unsure of his feet and stocky calves, rocks back and forth and sideways too. Only his teetering toe-prints are like small hunters, a praying mantis.

The crowd gives over to the congas when Uncle Sam on stilts makes his first appearance. A giant Uncle Sam with a smirk like an appendage. Flanking Uncle Sam are two dwarf figures (children) with red headscarves like bandits around their chins. The eyes of the children are half-hidden by the crimson cloth, implicated like the blood spilt in the “crusade” against “terrorism.” Uncle Sam and the miniature terrorists perform a dance, a grotesque mating ritual. Two dark forms weave in and out between Uncle Sam's knees, his red, white, and blue hat an arresting presence. The audience remains silent. There are no whoops, no cheers.

Uncle Sam extends his arm out for a handshake. Someone in the audience takes it, less than graciously. Uncle Sam encircles the shoulders of the dancing saboteurs, as they execute a hip-hop shuffle to the right, their wooden machine guns sashaying to the left.

In Lena's precarious vantage point as both American and a citizen of the world, a Midwesterner and New Yorker, she watches the improbable dance in horror. The Midwestern audience is as quiet and impassive as stone.

### **Diaries of Deceit**

Awaking after a night of making love—or not making love. The act of making anything was always in Reuben's tawny, fine-boned hands. Reuben places his girly hands and feet against Lena's squat ones with her nails like half-edged owl eyes. In Japan, women shave their arms and girls with delicate bones even shave their porcelain faces. Hair doesn't do well at the tea ceremony because of the stray bits that may wiggle out at any moment into the impeccable performance. Lena is at the pedicurist in Milwaukee, a desperate ritual that she succumbs to on her visits to the Midwest. Lena apologizes for the architecture of her feet. She makes jokes about the bunions mostly to dissipate her shame. She looks at her stocky familial feet, preposterous against the slender wrist that encircles it. She is enslaved to her mother's desire to effeminize her, and this young Asian woman, stranded somewhere in a cornfield, spends her days mutely scraping skin off big-boned Midwestern women's soles.

Reuben and Lena wake to earth's question: *Did you sleep?* As if an alter-state was possible. *Did you dream?* Followed by, *And then DID YOU DREAM?* He would always answer yes to the sleep part, followed by an excruciating silence. That is when they had finally stopped talking about their dreams.

The diaries should have been the first and final straw. What she uncovered in those monstrous pages in his painstakingly cryptic handwriting should have made her flee the Brooklyn Brownstone. Run like mad, hurtle like a scorned woman, a fuming wind. It *should* have. *Could have* but it *did not*. Lena was never good at reading the signs of the doomed. She was (she had to admit this in her forty-sixth year on earth) simply no good at relationships. With men. Or women for that matter. It was just a few months into their ten-year abusive relationship when Lena found the diaries. She had refused to accompany Reuben to a dinner with Karl, an older gay man who worked at an academic publisher. As he left her alone for the first time in his Brownstone apartment on Third Avenue in leafy, leftist Park Slope, he winked and flexed his left bicep: "Now don't be reading my journals." In his tortoise script she read the following: "Jesus, help me. I am not gay. But the other day I found myself on 42nd Street. And through the glory

hole, his member glistened like a shiny Babel. I found myself strangely attracted. Jesús. Ai Jesús.”

Lena, like a woman summoned from a deep sleep, placed Reuben’s old-fashioned leather-bound diary on his reading desk. Sat there in faux-shock. Faux because there had been no shortage of signs. The leather diary with its antiquarian pages was just another accoutrement in his calculated Renaissance man costume. She had immediately fallen in love with his hyperbolic library (before she read the diaries, she counted 5,000 books as if she was counting sheep, her body salivating at the thought of his great brain.) Dante, Cervantes, Proust—for fuck sake, she should have known. Ironically, she was now teaching *Brokeback Mountain* on the leeward side of O’ahu and had assigned her aghast students a scholarly article, “Arcadia and the Passionate Shepherds of *Brokeback Mountain*,” that paraded most of his library as quintessential homoerotic classics. Things have a way of feasting on your ass.

*She should have known.* After all, she met Reuben at the bewitching hour. It was at an experimental twilight dance performance—one of those particular New York “happenings”—a seventies relic. A mutual friend of theirs, M, was staging a silent vigil at an ungodly hour in the infamous gothic Limelight—a Chelsea institution. M with his infinite legs extended in various contorted arabesques was a befitting tapestry for a space that heralded the divine and the surreal. Lena had met M after attending a modern dance performance at the Joyce Theatre. She was writing furiously on paper napkins, sipping on a chili-rubbed margarita in a Chelsea restaurant, while the Adonisae, disguised as gym rats, packed 23rd Street. She was writing reviews for *Attitude: The Dancers’ Magazine* (a second-rate dance monthly) and was immediately attracted to the emaciated M. It was a sex-induced Friday night, and M invited her to his Sunday twilight happening. Reuben knew M from Oxford where he was completing his dissertation on Oscar Wilde (another clue) under the tutelage of the late luminary literary critic, Richard Ellmann. When Lena found out about Wilde she was beyond salvation.

At Oxford, Reuben, while living with his girlfriend of ten years, wispy Eleanore, kept a hidden diary stuffed full of sexual dates with men. Trysts with one, sometimes two or more men, which took place in the middle of the day after pumping iron or Reuben’s beginning ballet class. Lena obsessively ruminated over Reuben’s muscular legs, his flawless skin, and voluptuous curve, sporting a better turn-out than hers. It was the copious documentation of dates (Why did he document them? He could have preserved them like dead Jack from *Brokeback Mountain* kept his friends inscribed in his head) . . . the written testimony that eventually led to the crumbling of their home on Trinity Lane. Eleanore read his diary. Things have a way of feasting on your ass.

Lena met Reuben during her period of polyamory. He was a welcome respite from her fanatical online dating spree. There was Hans the rich Viennese/German who lived in an apartment on the Upper West Side. She had been dating the handsome Hans for a couple of months. But he was critical of her: her sloppiness, shabby against his pressed jeans, polo shirt, and the distinguished way the gray licked at his temples. It was her summer of mutilation and she remembered the disgusted look he barely tried to shield as his narrow eyes crossed, almost buffoon-like, close to her imperfections. Still she was kind of his artistic muse—that is until their first fight when he called her a “slacker.” He was turned on by her Village friends and the underground nooks and crannies of the city she frequented. After one week of meeting and some hurried sex on his executive carpet, Hans booked a flight to accompany her to Rosh Hashanah dinner at her parents’ in Milwaukee. It was the first man that she had brought home with money. But his drones of the Wall Street market stupefied her and his nasally Germanic accent did not endear him to her mother. Their relationship was short-lived but Hans took Lena on a trip to P-town, where he indulged her extravagant culinary lust and she suffered him on the Dunes, his tongue as leathery as a snake, staking out her orifices. Finally, Hans left for Europe and allowed Lena to house-sit his Upper West Side apartment—a sterile alternative to her cluttered Brooklyn den. And Lena took Reuben there on their first date.

At around the same time, there was Ian, the psychotic literature/philosophy major from Penn State. He was large, well over six foot to Lena’s five-foot-two-inch frame and lived with an octogenarian, David, in a Hadean loft in Chinatown. The loft was void of light, which suited Ian’s bat-like proclivities and his chain-smoking. During long nights on Ian’s cigarette-stained sheets, he unveiled his first schizophrenic break during graduate school. Lena was intrigued with the mingling of graduate school and madness, having been through her own grad school lunacy. She liked the way his lips curled in unison with his eyes and his acerbic wit. But then he made her shave Biscuit. And she scribed scathing poems, a series of “Odes to Biscuit,” while she itched miserably. Things were over when Lena found the *Village Voice* with inky circles distended like bloated bellies around the personals next to the toilet. She was into polyamory, but was not into *his* polyamory.

She had a brief stint with the policeman who rescued her red Honda Civic from the pound. He lived in Hell’s Kitchen in a seventh floor walk-up with black grates on a forlorn fire escape. And to this day he remains nameless in Lena’s memory. Still, it was worth the eight hundred dollars she saved on unpaid parking tickets. It was the snow. Lena always lost her car in the snow. Its one-toned countenance shielding her from reason—muddying her already compromised

sense of direction. After a few hours of pointless searching, the red Honda Civic remained on a nondescript Brooklyn street, buried in the industrial Red Hook waterfront until the snow melted and Lena found its abandoned body with several overdue tickets clinging defiantly to its bereft face. She let them go and go and go until one day her Civic vanished just like her Shamano hybrid bike did from 42nd Street. Lena had a breakdown when her bicycle disappeared. She sank into melancholia far worse than one that accompanied the demise of the Civic or her disintegrating serial *Village Voice* dis-unions.

### **The Problem with the Wild**

Lena had read Kafka's *Hunger Artist* several times and the image that remained with her was the crumpled body of the Hunger Artist entwined with straw. Fasting was a dying art. And as the menagerie of tourists stampeded by his sagging cage, daily, on their way to the authentic menagerie of wild beasts, the Hunger Artist feasted on the aroma of blood. In the stomach of the Kruger National Park, just below the nipple of God's Window, there is a sign:

DO NOT EMERGE FROM YOUR CAR FOR ANY REASON.  
PLEASE DO NOT FEED THE ANIMALS.  
THEY ARE WILD.

Someone had spat on the docile "d." There were modest trimmings of white and yellow-caked gobs of spit, a sardonic lattice around the edges of the sign.

It was late, nearing eight pm—the time when the South African sun dimmed over the veld. The ineffectual map sprawled over the dashboard. Its corner hung, an idiot over his left knee. The mother was sitting next to him, her dimpled knee snapping in irritation. "Ag, man, you are so, so a dommie. Couldn't find jaarself out of a springbok's arse. That map of jaars is as ugly as jaar face, and jestas handy." The father's bald head shone; little beads of sweat began their customary march across his sun-burned skull. The map hung in misery—Olifants Peak slumped toward Skukuza, and Lesotholand was nowhere to be found.

The bones were somewhere to be found. Four perfectly formed bodies. Two, not yet in their prime. Bones as polished as wild wood. A bulbous dimple on one of the knees. And a glittery skull beneath a sign:

DO NOT EMERGE FROM YOUR CAR FOR ANY REASON.  
PLEASE DO NOT FEED THE ANIMALS.  
THEY ARE WIL

Years later she was at the Brooklyn Botanical Zoo with Reuben. She sat

high in the amphitheatre round, as far back as the bleacher seats would allow. She detested front-row viewing of all kinds, but especially despised the proximity to animals. The baboons with their high rumps were in market-place squalor. The females hitched their ruby rumps, taunting the aroused males. Their screeches reverberated against the thick glass, separating human from baboon. A substantial partition. At the foot of the glass theatre of the wild was a pack of children. Children of all sizes, shapes, colors, with fingers and noses pressed against the feral vitrine. Mothers sat, languid at first, gossiping about white sales and the folly of males. As the burgundy of the feminine protrusion collided with the rushing males, the children erupted in a cacophony of sniggers, grunts, shrieks. Their bite-size fingers tore at the glass, leaving faint but very delicate threads of blood.

# Shrines

## Rain Wright

Elizabeth drove from Hōnaunau to Hilo to find new art, to make shrines of feathers and paper. She needed something to fill a space left empty. Art bled into the place that still talked to her of England and her mother. Lenny came while she was gone. He came for the tree near the redwood Hōnaunau house she lived in with her children, her husband, and her two white dogs. The house was built on Lenny's land. He didn't know the life in Hōnaunau house. He didn't know that Elizabeth ran the Kirby vacuum against the yellow carpet, a remnant given to the family by an old friend almost every morning while the children rushed to get ready for the two-room Seventh Day Adventist School house above Greenwell Park. Lenny didn't know the garden where Elizabeth grew comfrey, mint, beats, radishes, turnips, and long rows of lettuce and tangled vines of tomatoes. He didn't know that Elizabeth had taken to grinding her own flour in a hand grinder that hung off the purple-painted front steps of the house. He didn't know that she baked thin sliced tofu covered with Braggs and nutritional yeast. He didn't know she made grits and collard greens. He didn't know the old dog bowls that sat outside the front door. He didn't know the stream that ran fast past the house during the winter when the rains came. Lenny didn't know that Elizabeth had begun to paint—that she painted on stretched silk, using deep blues, dark greens, and luscious purples while listening to Rachmaninoff and smoking pakalolo. He didn't know that Elizabeth wanted new art.

Lenny came while she was gone, driving up the thin dirt road near mile marker 108, across from the old barn that some neighbor's daughter had been born in that led from Māmalahoa Highway up to the mango tree and the redwood house. The road went past the redwood house up to the thick dark wood of Lenny's house. Lenny had a tree, as well. Not a mango tree like the one that sat in Elizabeth's yard, but an old twisty thing pushed to the edge of the road—lost in the tangle of overgrown vines. A moss covered ship's rope and anchor wrapped around the tree near the curve of the road where Lenny's house sat. Elizabeth's children climbed on the rope, sat on the anchor, and looked past the tree into the dark smell of the woods. And often they snuck up the road into Lenny's house when he was gone—gone 'way on the cruise ship where he worked. They hunted when he was gone, searching in the spaces of the stillness of his house for pickles, for candy, for anything that exposed the quiet interior of the man who owned the

land they lived on. They found a sunbathing lamp in a back empty bedroom, a thick leather belt hung over the door of the bedroom that had a bed, two leather slippers pushed under the large bed, and a sauna room filled with the smells of salt and old sweat. But they couldn't find enough. They wanted a reason for the old rope and anchor that tangled around the tree in Lenny's yard.

He came while Elizabeth built shrines in the art class in Hilo. She sat with Anabel, Sharona, Penelope, and Gale—with the women of her art. She worked with the memories of her mother, from the thoughts that never quite left, and from the words of a letter that came in the mail. She worked with these as she shaped the shrine, as she molded, and a woman's need filled, covered, and sang in the room. When she glued the feathers against the sides of the shrines, she did not know that Lenny came for the mango tree. Instead, Elizabeth moved her mother's lost voice into the spaces of the shrine. She placed the words for keeping into each movement of the feathers. One thousand white birds, she thought, and imagined them all taking flight with her mother's voice as they left earth silently. No sounds, she thought, it had to be silent when her mother left. Adornment, she added, but didn't hear as the chainsaw came against the bark of the tree that grew over the house she lived in with her family.

Death was there with Elizabeth, and she needed the idea of shrines to take away the cover of death that drifted in the windows of Hōnaunau house. Elizabeth's mother Constance Sarah Axe—neé, born, once-the-young-girl, once-the-beauty, Castle before Axe—had dropped down dead. Elizabeth couldn't think of anything else but dead. She sat still for a moment in her art class and let this word settle in and run on repeat until it held no meaning, until she, the woman she knew as herself, held no meaning. She breathed deeply and closed her eyes to hear everything from a world she had known years before—a world that lived in the joints of her body, held onto the sound of trains, held onto the accent of her brother's young voice, held onto the smell of their house in Dronfield—a world that came out on cold nights and in the presence of death. Dead, she thought, again. Dead mother. Dead, she said just loud enough to hear, dead. Her mother's death was years after her father, Douglas Axe, who was born in Leicester, worked as a house painter, moved his family to Dronfield, owned a shoe store, lived in a house with his wife and two children, spent vacations in Cornwall, and died from arteries waxed in grease from heavy meats and sauce, died. Elizabeth knew that Constance Sarah never loved anyone after Douglas. Elizabeth knew a widower down the street had visited Constance Sarah a few times, maybe for tea, but Douglas was it—that love thing for Constance. Elizabeth placed this word—love—into the glue that held the shrine in place. There are other deaths. Elizabeth placed these in the grain of the fabric she ran against the edge of the paper and

feather shrine, as well. But she did not know Lenny had come for the mango tree that grew against the old sky in Hōnaunau.

Elizabeth wished she had slipped the ring on her finger before driving to art class. She was losing memories. She needed every small sign of her past. She knew this. She could not remember how her Grandmother Lydia Martha died, but she had. Elizabeth had one photo of Lydia Martha, a studio type black and white of an unsmiling large-eyed woman wearing black. She let her children look over the photograph on quiet days—days when the silence filled them all, and she knew they could hear the past with her. She let them see the photograph, hoping they would wonder about history. Hoping maybe they would hold the thick-papered photograph a little longer. Hoping maybe her children would lift the old photograph—lift and breathe—and press it against their nostrils for its smell. Hoping, maybe her children would silently wish for the scent of Lydia Martha’s fingers against young Constance Sarah’s cheek as they breathed in the photograph, the memories, and the lost words of Lydia Martha Castle.

Elizabeth hadn’t seen her mother in years. She left England at nineteen, lived in Greece below the Acropolis for a few years, got raped, traveled to Israel, and traveled to Turkey. In Turkey, she bought a multicolored ring on the long stone steps from a chauvinist Turkish salesman, who leered at her bare legs. In Turkey, she wore the ring and learned of whirling dervishes, a sight of spiritual ecstasy she chased. She chased ecstasy, always. She thought of all this as she built shrines.

Elizabeth thought of her maiden aunt. The aunt named Crystabel. Crystabel who was listed among the women of her dead. Elizabeth thought on the word maiden. She imagined every hand that ever ran against her body. She thought of the hands of young boys in England, the hands of boys in Greece, and the hands of men in New York. The hands of men in California. The hands of a husband in California. The hands of the men in-between, after the divorce—before happiness. She thought of the hands of her husband, Teddy. Elizabeth erased the fingermarks from her skin of every man, one breath, one touch, one caress at a time, so that she could stand with Crystabel in her maiden woman’s single-bed room. She stood as a shadow—transparent—near Crystabel as she undressed slowly, watching her aging body. Crystabel looked away quickly, slipping away from the image of age—of an old woman’s breasts, grayed pubic hair, blue light veins as they interact with blood in her legs, excrescence of thighs, and rounded stomach. Crystabel slipped into her comfortable nightgown, and Elizabeth watched as Crystabel lay down in between tight white sheets, never having known sex. Never knowing the turned-on-belly-deep-pant-of-breath-on-neck-not-caring-of-anything-but-passion of sex that touch brought. Elizabeth sat

in the art class in Hilo and closed her eyes with Crystabel as she dreamt in her single bed. But Crystabel had died. Was it years before?

Constance Sarah had died. Elizabeth did not know the exact moment, feel, or looks of death. She left England years, millions of ages before. Why did she leave? The cold? The cold of another nature? Her own desires? The cold? The gray? She can't remember. She left. They died. She built. She built a life away from her women, these women of death. A life these women could not know. They did not know the Elizabeth of Hōnaunau. Elizabeth thought of her mother's voice and pressed more feathers into the shrine. Hold the words in place, hold, hold, she thought, because she knew the sound of a mother's voice is something children miss when a mother dies. Children think of a mother's hands as well, but the voice is missed most. Elizabeth searched for her mother's sounds.

She heard the memory of her mother's voice over the long phone wires as they stretched to England and the people she once knew. She thought of the words she spoke when she told her mother she was marrying Teddy, a black jazz musician from Detroit, who sang at the Mauna Kea Beach Hotel, who was distantly related to Aretha Franklin. Elizabeth believed she needed this relation, some resemblance of pedigree and history that the English still believed necessary. When Elizabeth spoke to her mother over those thin phone wires, she stopped and let the silence say something as her mother's words failed to fill the gap between her ear pressed against the phone and her heart that still remembered the family of Dronfield. Elizabeth had waited on the phone line with her mother's silence before telling her that she was eight months pregnant with Teddy's daughter, who was to be born on May 15, by planned cesarean section. The cesarean had to be planned because she was forty. The baby had refused to turn head down. She hadn't told her mother that her new daughter was to be named after the sun, a million ideas of suns and angels—Soleiange. She heard her mother tell her she was no spring chicken and took it enough like love, enough like a mother's voice saying, be happy, love. She took it like love. She sat in art class and remembered Teddy's voice on moon-covered evenings when his song reached across the sand and rocked and dipped the rich who visited the coast of the Big Island, but really sang only for her.

Elizabeth thought of her women, these women as she drove home along Hawai'i Belt road, Māmalahoa Highway, route 11. The tree was killed when Elizabeth built shrines, before she reached home to Hōnaunau house. Lenny cut down the tree that grew above the tin roof, near the avocado tree and the papaya tree. Lenny cut the mango tree to save the tires of the white Cadillac he drove. He said the tree dropped too much fruit, and Teddy couldn't say much. Lenny owned the land. When Lenny came for the tree, when Elizabeth was away, Teddy

told his children to come away, come away from the tree. He couldn't say much. That is what he said. Said again and again when Elizabeth came home weeping for her tree, for the exposed flesh of the land that sat bare without the overhanging branches. And, her children, those children she knew held quiet places that knew about death, hadn't known the language that would have saved the mango. They said nothing when Lenny came for the tree.



# Ruby

Donna Kaz

When Ruby comes across the street to our house, she always comes to the side door, never to the front. She calls my mom Miss Mary, and everything she says begins with or ends with “sorry.” “I’m sorry, I’m sorry, I’m sorry,” she says over and over while squeezing her eyes shut and biting the coral lipstick off her bottom lip. Her hands shake like she has no control over them.

“Count to ten,” my mom tells her. “Take a deep breath and count.” She gets to three and stops. Then her eyes fly open and tears pour straight out as though a mini garden hose has been turned on underneath her eyelids.

Mom twists her face toward mine and gives me a look that means “you and your sister need to leave now.” We run into the hallway and lie down on the indoor-outdoor carpet. Slowly we crawl toward the kitchen, thumping against the sheet rock wall as we kick and squirm for a better position. We peek around the corner but cannot see anything, just hear mom repeat “count to ten.” We loll around on the carpet poking each other until the side door slams shut. I run to the dining-room window and see the back of Ruby’s summer cotton shift bounce around her knees as she walks back home.

At dinner mom tells dad that Ruby had come over to use the phone again.

“Is Ruby’s phone broken?” my sister asks.

“Ruby doesn’t have a phone,” Mom explains.

“When Ruby needs a phone she can come over and use ours,” Dad states in between mouthfuls of mashed potatoes. Mom and Dad say all this so matter-of-factly that I feel stupid asking a question of my own and so don’t. Ruby doesn’t have a phone.

Sometimes she doesn’t have bread either, because one time when she came to the side door Mom gave her half a loaf of day old Wonder Bread. Ruby took it home with her but the next day she brought back a brand new loaf, and that made mom mad. She kept trying to put the Wonder Bread back into Ruby’s shaky hands but Ruby would not take it.

“Sorry. I said I would return it,” she announced, her voice full of sadness.

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After dinner I scrape the plates, hang the dishtowels on the line outside,

and then sit under the big maple tree in our front yard, swatting mosquitoes away. From there I can see Ruby's little house on the other side of the street and a little to the left. The kitchen window glows yellow, and someone moves back and forth behind it. I stare at it until my sister shoves me in the back and I chase her down to the rose bushes and try to make her run right into the big rock in front of the tomato plants. The fireflies come out and we catch a few and put them in the jars Dad made us with holes in the metal tops.

Mom's time-to-come-in hoot sounds from out the kitchen window, and we go inside for a glass of milk and three Oreos apiece. We put on our baby doll pajamas and watch exactly 30 minutes of television before dad tucks us into our twin beds, each with a kiss to the forehead.

We toss our dirty socks back and forth between the beds for a while and then try to crack each other up by putting an "s" in front of every word we speak. "Shail smary sfull sof sgrace," spits my sister from under the covers. We giggle uncontrollably until Dad comes in and yells that it is time for bed.

Finally, I lie back on my pillow and look out the windows at the branches of our maple tree and the lone street lamp that makes a spotlight on the black asphalt of our road. The boats in the marina behind Ruby's house gently rock to and fro in their slips, their halyards dinging against the mainsails. The leaves on the maple tree swish in the summer night breeze and the dinging and the swishing gently lull me to sleep.

Then, suddenly, I am awake again and I hear someone running down the street, the slaps of their soles hitting the asphalt hard. A woman's voice splits the heat and the blackness wide open with four words. "Help! Somebody help me!" I hear a firecracker pop and then another and another.

I look over and see my sister sitting upright in her bed looking straight out the window.

"There must be a party going on down at the sand bar," I say. She says nothing. "It's a stupid party," I repeat softly. I roll over, too groggy to say more.

The next morning I beat my sister down the stairs but the kitchen is empty. Out the picture window I see Mom and Dad talking to our neighbor, Mr. Katsikas. There are two police cars parked in front of Ruby's house with their whirly red lights on. We put on our flip-flops and sweat shirts and join our parents under the maple tree.

"Where's Ruby?" my sister asks. "What happened at Ruby's?" No one pays any attention to us. Mr. Katsikas lowers his voice. Mom shoos us back inside.

We do not go inside. We go down to the rose bushes to look at Ruby's house. My sister stands on the rock in front of the tomato plants to get a better view. A policeman comes out of Ruby's front door with a plastic bag. He is holding

the plastic bag out to his side like it's trash. The bag is clear and I see two green pillows inside streaked with red like someone had spilt nail polish all over them.

Neighbors begin to gather in front of our house. I don't want anyone in front of our house. I don't want anyone to block my view of Ruby's. I grab my sister's hand and we squeeze through the Moynihans and the Malloys to the sidewalk right in front of Ruby's front door.

There are people moving around inside Ruby's house. The policeman has put the plastic bag on the back seat of his police car and now he is going back inside. We are the only two on the sidewalk right in front of Ruby's. We stand very close together. No one tries to shoo us away. No one asks us to move.

Ruby's going to come out any minute now, I think. She is putting on some coral lipstick maybe. Maybe she is counting to ten. When she comes out she will see us and know that if she needs to make a phone call or is out of bread, it is just a short walk across the street to our side door. She has such a pretty face, Ruby does. All I can think of is Ruby has such a pretty face.



# The Limits of My Love

## *A Kitsune Tale*

Abbey Seth Mayer

The cool gray day was approaching evening by the time we began descending the hill. Finding our way at last out of the forest, we stood and watched the valley spread out then narrow before us, the low heavy clouds morphing and churning. He appeared to be looking out into it too, his murky eyes squinted as the cold moist air blew against his cheeks, still clutching with both hands the simple wood-sheathed tanto before his chest, not comfortable holding it, but determined in spite of his fear, as if it were the source of the cold and the very embodiment of his excommunication, harbinger of his doom. As if he wanted nothing to do with it, the power it conferred, its indiscriminate steel heart, while at the same time accepting it as the substance and entirety of the sole path to which we were now inextricably bound.

I waited as he sniffed the air and listened to the sky. His foxskin robe, its skinned face now bare of fur in many places, rubbed off over years of wear, the hide face sitting like a prayer cap on top of his lush black hair. The Fox, Kitsune, had given him his sight. Now it was time to give something back, our elders all agreed. He, my son, may have been in the throes of his abandonment, crumbling in each moment with the anxiety of imagined peril and probable death—and I felt it too as any parent must feel all that their child feels—but my love and protection had always been enough to see us through. I had no reason whatsoever to doubt its capacity: with him I would be in my power, could never be an exile. With him, my heart was always in its place.

Please describe it to me, he asked me.

This hillside drops straight down to the valley floor. It is grassy and peppered with small wildflowers. There is a slow stream running this way, toward us. Upward the cleft of the valley narrows into stacks of mountains, perhaps the valley takes a turn, but from here it looks blocked off, as if by a blackened wall. The clouds are thicker and darker and lower up ahead.

Is there a rainbow?

No. No rainbow.

We will wait then, he said, almost shivering.

Ok.

He sat by bending his knees, until his backside made contact with the hill. I lowered myself as well, close behind him, our bodies touching, trying to

make for him a cocoon against the cold.

Can you see it, I asked. He was sniffing and listening to the air.

Yes, he said. He released his grip on the knife, and placed his cool soft palm on the back of my hand. There will be a rainbow, he said.

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When the rainbow came it looked nothing at all like God's covenant. It was just a hazy swatch of colors layered with dark stormy clouds. If anything, it made the sky look darker and more foreboding. I did not need to tell him it had come. He rose up in just the way he had sat, and we began walking, he refusing to take my hand, clutching the knife in its wooden sheath before him as if it were a magnet drawing him forward against the entropy of his fear. I paced him step for slow cautious step, watching him reach out with sensitive feet.

When we reached the stream we both knew it was a definite border. He said we'd have to cross to the other side. I carried him on my back to spare him wet feet. The water was ankle deep, about eight feet across, perhaps it was only a slough to a larger river in a different valley. I still think back to this moment, wondering how I allowed myself to become so complicit in delivering him to his destruction.

Once planted on the other side, his fear seemed to lift, as if the something that hung in the balance had finally fallen.

His foxskin robe glowed warm and amber.

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At nightfall we found the mouth to an old abandoned mine, its archway buttressed with timbers, one cracked and half fallen, a yawning shattered-tooth maw in the base of the mountain. There were no tracks at all upon the darkened earth.

We can sleep here, he said.

I nodded. It is too dark already to find wood for a fire.

I know, he said. We will be okay.

I doubted him now. Or rather, doubted myself for allowing him to lead. It was bad to go without fire.

He sat with his back against the wall of the shaft.

Wait right there, don't move. I'll get bedding.

He didn't answer.

Don't move, okay?

Okay.

Okay.

There was barely sufficient light, but I returned with an armload of spruce fronds, enough to keep us off the ground. Had he moved from his place in the darkness? Was that a shadow of skin I saw against the wall, or was it only my eyes letting me see what I searched for? I felt no relief until I touched him. He reached for my face with both his hands, I touched his nose with mine and for a long moment we shared our breath.

On our rough bed I fumbled through my pack, handed him a strip of the smoked dried fish. I couldn't see if he was eating it or not.

Where is it, I asked.

Inside my robe, he said, patting the center of his chest.

Okay.

After some time, his hand found mine in the darkness, and he pressed the oily fish into my palm. Its skin was peeled back from the flesh, scales flaking off, its chewed end cold with saliva.

I can't eat much.

Don't worry, I'll save it for you.

You will be blind with me tonight.

Yes.

I'm sorry.

It's okay, just don't leave me.

I won't.

Not even to pee.

I promise, I won't.

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We lay down together and I gathered him into me and held him as he drifted off to sleep. I thought back to the first time I held him. He was so tiny no one thought he would survive. Her first milk was all his mother provided—her first milk and the foxskin robe. She lowered him—I can still see it, his warm naked skin like a ruddy parchment, eyes shut tight and his little fingers curled as if trying to maintain his grasp on sleep, some expression of sleep in the setting of his thumb and forefinger. She lowered him onto my bare chest, and covered him immediately in the soft foxskin robe. Instantly, this explosion of entrainment, whether it was delivered by touch or by smell or some alchemical totality I don't know—this entrainment of our breath, our hearts beating together, but beyond pure synchronization of physical rhythms, as if a new imperative sprang forth

in the deepest and most fundamental code of my being, so that chemically and organically, and all at once, he was part of me, the most essential part of me, trumping even my own heart, whose beating I so take for granted. But never his. I felt this then as love, but more than love. It was the entrainment of our entire lives, our survival, our spirits, our beings.

What I didn't know then was that she laid that foxskin upon him like a curse. The only thing separating his frail little body from the harsh cold world. And in spite of our syncopated love, its precious and potent nourishment and protection, there was no replacing a mother's love and care. That piece of him, the unfilled place inside him made more prominent by his blindness or because of it too—that unmet need called out for the Fox. In the same way the foxskin robe warmed his skin, he sought Kitsune to fill the spaces in him carved out by what he lacked.

She laid the foxskin robe upon him, then she was gone, lost to her own grief I suppose, and perhaps secure in having witnessed that the boy now had a mother and father, albeit the former was a Fox. I don't know, I'll never know, not why, not *how, how for the love of god? How could she leave him?* For me it is unfathomable, truly unfathomable. Criminal really. How could she leave him? It is a wound in me deeper than any judgment or resentment, a wound of disbelief, the ache of a tormented phantom. A tear in the flesh that will never mend.

Never mend? *The miner asked.*

Yes, never mend. The wound is always present here, *the old man said, patting his heart.*

There can be no reason? Or none you could ever imagine.

No, no reason. Only pain.

But she gave him his life, his body, however prematurely, and she dressed him in the foxskin, gave him his clothes, his power, his identity? *The miner asked.*

Yes, what was first his bunting later became his robe, he wore its fur face upon his head with its ears sticking up, and it seemed to grow with him as he grew. He always wore the fox and claimed, though he was blind, that Fox gave him his sight. She gave him his body, her first milk, which he surely needed to have even the slightest chance of survival. She gave him his life and she gave him Fox. And as soon as she did this, she gave him to me. And I willed him into being. You can't imagine what it is for a man alone to care for a tiny, tiny infant. No, I willed and loved his body to growth and his heart to continue beating. Sheer will and intense love, that's all I ever had. Looking back maybe she already knew the terrible curse she was laying upon me. Maybe she knew his doom from the start. Maybe she knew from having him inside her the price of loving him. Or maybe she saw the power and fury of my love for him and had to leave, to give it space. Perhaps her

name is Fox too, and she simply used up all my love for her own impenetrable ends. Then again, maybe it was my fault, I don't know.

In any case, I never had a choice. It was a chemical force, an unstoppable wave totally blind to what lies in its path. It has but one way to go and go it will. Nothing could ever hold it back.

So then I named him. I named him, Jule. Jule. He was my Jule.

~~~

I stayed awake most of that night, listening to him breathe, soaking in the total darkness of that mineshaft. Soon though, I could no longer hold him, my shoulder ached and my body was restless in that sleepless black. The dark was terrible. I left him on the boughs and sat just next to him, with my back propped against the shaft wall, his feet in reach of my hand, trying to manage my fear of the dark. Opening and closing my eyes made no difference whatsoever. My eyes reached out whether open or closed, as if they immediately forgot the difference in this world without reference. They strained to see in vain until they were utterly exhausted. They reached out into the darkness, until the darkness reached back and entered me. It raced in like a liquid through my pupils, poured out my ears and down my throat until I felt it inside my fingertips, trying to erase me. Eroding my memories, my language, my words; even making me forget my own name.

Then in a panic of disorientation, not remembering who or where I was or if I had slept, with nothing visual at all to latch on to, nothing to trigger me back to myself, staring into the blackness with my eyes wide open, not knowing anything at all. Except fear.

Then I remembered Jule, just him alone without location, an image of him with his cloudy eyes staring into the mist, but still at a loss as to where I was, when it was, why I was there, or anything else, not even the questions of where or when or why having yet formed inside my mind. Then the image of his small hands clutching the knife, the knife the elders gave him, that he was bringing as an offering to the Fox, to Kitsune, to repay them for stealing their sight. Kitsune. And it all came racing back to me, the mine shaft and the spruce bough bed, and in another panic I reached for him in the dark, groping with my palms on the dirt floor, finding the spruce boughs, but only scattering them about me, empty. Jule was gone. Only his foxskin robe remained.

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It was weeks before the Fox returned.

I did what any crazed father would do. Outside in the mist I found his tracks, all the while screaming, Jule . . . Jule . . . Jule! Screaming Jule! until my throat could barely issue a sound. His tracks from the mine ended back at the slough. I looked it up and down, the horrible sinking feeling in my chest that I'd been fighting off with my adrenaline blaze, now came up full force and I fell to my knees and retched dry heaves into the last of my son's empty footprints.

But there on my hands and knees, staring open-mouthed and saliva dripping into the soft impression in the damp earth, I saw it now for the first time: fox hair. And not the amber hairs from my son's robe, no, these were new ones, light gray, just three or four of them, a small enough sign for me to wonder if they were fox at all, or were they only there at the edge of his footprint by some queer coincidence. But the truth of them, I knew inside, beneath my frantic mind: He was taken by the Fox.

*The miner nodded as if he understood, nodded but was lost remembering his grandmother always going on about Kitsune, warning him and the other kids not to play outside when sunshine mixed with rain, when the Fox were out conducting their ceremonies. He nodded, and because she was half mad he wondered if the man was too, if he had been driven mad by the mine, or if he was mad before that, or if he was just old and alone for far too long. He nodded wondering if the man ever really had a son, nodded hoping the story would move faster, and nodded hoping the man would actually provide him some solid advice about the mine. And, of course, nodded, wondering if the rumors were true, if the man ever did find a fortune in diamonds in the old abandoned mine.*

I looked everywhere. Up and down the valley, back across the slough, I never found anymore signs, neither the boy's nor the Fox's. They both disappeared at the slough and never reappeared. And the slough was too shallow and slow to ever sweep him away. Just a trickle really, like it is now, over there . . .

Well, I searched and searched for what must have been two weeks. Endlessly, day and night, all the way up and down the valley. I cannot explain to you the depth of my despair. I would never wish that state upon anyone. But still I wondered which would be worse: the outright grief of a known death, had I recovered his body somewhere in my search; or the sheer anxiety and torture of disappearance, the hope that relentlessly feeds worry and action, even long after any action is warranted. From that glimmer of hope the despair of always imagining the worst, for thinking of him alone and suffering, alone and dying any number of terrible deaths.

*Now the miner snapped back out of his thoughts. For the first time he recognized the pain and torment that wracked this man, felt that anguish from his past right here in the present, still a part of him and looming over him like a dark*

*shadow, still wringing itself constantly from his watery eyes. But before the miner could react, the man continued:*

When I finally relented, when my panic-fueled search began to exhaust itself, I had one thought: I had always instructed my son, should we ever be separated, he was to wait at the last place we were together. Do not try searching for me, I told him. *I will come back to you.* Of course this was the way with a blind son.

Well, now the image of that pitch-black mineshaft began to occupy my thoughts more and more, and the doubt that filled me began to take on the form of that mine and its horrible darkness. Until the mineshaft and its opaque black-ink dark *became* my doubt. The mine was in me.

You thought he was in there? In there somewhere?

Yes, that he had never wandered out, had never been taken by the Fox, but instead traveled further in, further down into the darkness and was lost somewhere down in there. Lost and trapped, and if he was screaming even his screams were swallowed whole by the dark.

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I spent weeks searching the mine. Carrying torches made from pine pitch and peeled strips of bark, I searched the darkness, calling, Jule! Jule! My calls echoing back from the hollow recesses in irregular intervals, igniting my anxious hope that it was maybe him I was hearing, instead of my own disembodied voice. I went outside only to gather some berries and water, or to build more torches, squinting against the gray daylight before plunging back to search through the dark.

The entry shaft descended at a gradual pace, boring into the heart of the mountain, and branching out with numerous veins. After searching each to its terminal end, I marked it with a spruce frond. I saw no sign of Jule or of anything really, just raw earth and bracing timbers and stone scored by chisel marks, fresh as if ghost miners persisted in their digging. All of these branches were empty—maybe there are twenty-five of them, some several miles long. *The miner perked up now, listening for the details.*

At the end of the main shaft, about five or six miles into the mountain, I found the source of all the terrible darkness: a huge vertical shaft, maybe forty feet across, drilled straight down into the earth, rusty cables rigged from giant timber crossbeams descended and disappeared into the utter black of that pit. I dropped a lit torch in and it fell for a long, long time, sparking in the wind before finally disappearing, either plunging into water at the bottom, or into something

else altogether.

If I had felt despair before, now I felt it doubled: if he was down there, he was surely dead. And if I were to follow him into that place, then likely I too would never come back out.

I stared down into that pit for hours, until I could see the darkness trying to rise out of it like a cloud of death, my eyes seeing or imagining a hazy ghost image of Jule's frail young body laying drowned and shattered at the bottom of the pit. And as if in reaction to my own fear, my hope rekindled that maybe Jule was alive in the world outside, that maybe he was taken by the Fox, and that by entering the pit I knew that I might find the certainty and knowledge of his death, but perhaps I would find only my own and thus leave him stranded somewhere in the valley. Then my failure would be total and complete.

So I retreated. Under both my fear and the guise of hope and fatherly responsibility, back to the place where we had last slept, the spot where we were last together, deciding to wait for him, to avoid the pit for now, should he ever miraculously return. If he didn't, I knew the pit would always wait for me.

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I sat in that black darkness for days and days, maybe weeks, at the spot where our scattered spruce bough bed still lay empty, trying to will him back to me, feeling the deeper darkness of that vertical shaft beckoning me, the darkness surrounding me unable to erase me, only able to torment my mind with my own jumbled grief and loss and hope and despair, because I knew now of a deeper darkness yet, felt the proximity of the daylight outside, and knew myself fixed in between the two.

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I thought it was night, but I learned later it was morning. I woke with the feeling of two hands gripping my face in the dark, fingers in my hair against my scalp, then a nose and forehead pushed against mine, and the warm breath of a whispered cry—Father!—against my face, I bewildered, panicked, not knowing if it was dream or nightmare or true deliverance. I reached back and clasped my hands against his ears and drew him straight to me, pulling him in so I could kiss his face, kissing it over and over again, not believing it could be real or really him. Really Jule.

But it was him, his warm fresh baby skin under my lips. Jule . . . Jule, Jule . . . I spoke against his face and into his ear, reaching around him to pull him

against me, to hold him and pull him into the center of my chest, my total heart now exploding around us.

I cradled him like when he was a baby, folding him in my arms, rocking him and reaching up to hold his head again in my hands.

But this time, when my hands touched his head I felt the sheared fuzz of his hair, and all of a sudden I could see, see him perfectly, as if lights had been turned on all around us, and beholding him I screamed in horror, but my scream caught in my throat, as if I'd swallowed my voice into my belly. Choking I flailed and tried to speak; and as if to be sure I was really seeing, I reached up and touched it, warm and wet and sticky.

No! I managed to cry.

*It will kill you*, I tried to say, but with my swallowed tongue I mustered only a garbled mix of sucking wet whispers.

I tried again and again—*but it will kill you, it will kill you, it's going to kill you*—but like in a dream where you can't yell out, there was nothing but a wet gurgling in my throat.

It was as if he had no idea what had occurred—but he knew it happened, I saw that—but in his innocence he had no idea whatsoever of its dreadful, awful consequence. I held him to me, desperate now to reach the light to see it with my own eyes rather than to just know it in the dark.

After all that time fearing the darkness, in the end it was light that struck the deepest blow. Far worse than I ever expected: he'd been scalped neatly, a perfect oval of skin cut away to reveal the pulsing striated muscle underneath, all seeping black blood. Deep diagonal slits cut in the remaining skin, from the corners of his head inward to the bare oval scalp, all this surrounded by my Jule's carelessly shorn hair and dried clotted blood.

*No, no, no, no, no, what did they do to you?* I am not sure if the words ever bubbled out. I held him reeling, *no no, no no no*, until I knew there was only one thing, one remedy that might save him. I lowered him to rest against a tree, his nonplussed calm still intact, as if there was something more curious and captivating to him than his own horrible desecration or my devastation both, but that something I knew to be entirely meaningless. And this all the more rending to me, as if he believed the pranksters Fox had simply had a joke at his expense, which he could easily forgive over the wound to his ego.

Then I was running, straight up the mountain above the mine, clawing and climbing to get up to altitude to a stand of alpine fir that's up there, running in total disregard for my body, to reach the fir so I could slice away at their blistered bark to get at the pitch below. And then finally with a fist of the gooey sap wrapped in a sheet of bark, descending once again, tumbling and battered in my haste but

never slowed, until I found him just as I left him, sitting up against the trunk of the great tree, staring out placidly with his blind, cloudy eyes, as if God was in his Heaven and all was right in the world.

I spread the sap over the raw oval of his scalp and over the four razor slits leading up to it, watched the drops of clear gum slowly melt into the raw flesh of his head, then plastered on top a papery skin of the fir bark, and packed it all with moss. When I went to tie it down with the hood of his robe, I remembered he was no longer wearing it, I had it with me in the mine.

Why did they do this to you?

It's okay, daddy, they said they are helping me. They are helping me, he said.

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By evening the fever had set in, but at first I hoped it was a sign of his body fighting. At midnight his skin was burning to the touch, and the seizures began. The infection had penetrated his skull, swelled the soft gray matter of his brain against the confines of his skull. I carried him back into the mine, into the dark, holding him and rocking him and by instinct singing him the songs I used to sing him when he was a tiny baby, as if to comfort myself, or purge my own agony, or give voice to the death rattle he could not himself issue.

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The next morning the Fox came back. I held him in my arms as softly as I could, hoping to cradle him with me in that silent purgatory forever, despite the tether of his life palpably slipping from my grasp.

At their arrival I could suddenly see. Like when you are just asleep and maybe dreaming but feeling awake and conscious, and you are sure you can see the room around you just as it is in the moment, but really your eyes are closed. In this way I could see them all in the dark, but I still don't know if I was seeing them or dreaming. Their gray leader approached me on two legs, walking like a man but entirely Fox in head and shape of body, but the size of a man—I could see his fur growing directly from his skin, his kasaya robe topped with a gold silk igiboso. He presented himself to me, bowing formally, exposing the crown of his head, offering me in recompense that same part of himself through which the last of Jule's life was now seeping. I stared at him for quite some time, enraged, hungry for blood. But my hunger for help bested any desire I had for revenge. In total desperation, I dropped my head to him in return, and once I felt my vulnerability,

I wished from the very depths of my being that he'd take my life too, and free me so Jule and I could travel together to the other world.

Instead he rose up from his bow and spoke. It is time for us to take him back.

Can you save him for me? Please save him. Please.

He won't die. He will become one of us. We must finish removing his skin though. Now is the time, we cannot wait.

No . . .

If he stays with you, he will die. You can see. We brought him back to you, so you could say goodbye.

No—

He must shed his skin to take on another. It cannot be undone. Humans are all just animals without skins. We are trying to give him back his. Please dress him one last time.

I did. I wrapped him one last time in the old foxskin robe, placed the worn face upon his burning head, and kissed him once on each closed eye. Then silently, without ceremony, they lifted him from my arms and carried him away. Their gray leader lingered a moment longer, and offered me something from the shadows.

Numb, I took it, without ever seeing what it was.

Hopefully that will help you remember, he said. Then the Fox bowed again and vanished into the darkness.

Outside, the sunshine pushed through the mist, and a huge rainbow arced across the valley. I looked down into my hand at what the Fox had given me.

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*The old man reached into his robe and withdrew a large stone, almost perfectly oval but squared off along the edges like an ovaled cube, with just a tiny bite out of one edge. A pearly glowing light seeped as if from its core.*

That's the size of your palm, *the miner said*. It can't be real, is it real?

Would you like to examine it? *The old man extended his arm toward the miner. This, the reason the miner had made the long trip out to see the man, the man who everyone said had found a fortune in diamonds in the old dormant mine; this the moment the miner had been pining for, planning for, but now he licked his lips and hesitated.*

They gave you this in exchange for your son?

Yes.

*The old man pushed the gem in the direction of the miner. Look. Look*

for yourself.

*The miner stared for a long breathless moment at the giant uncut diamond in the old man's hand. He saw it shine and beckon. He leaned forward as if to take it, as if in a dream, then he looked up into the old man's watery eyes, pale and glowing like the gem in his old knarred hand. The miner reached, but the instant he moved he felt his spine crawl from the tops of his ears straight down to the bottom of his tailbone. He retreated back into his seat and shook the old man off.*

I best be going, *he stammered.* I've already taken up too much of your time. And it is a long—long way to go back out of here.

# And Christ Shall Give Thee Light

Jeffery Ryan Long

Nobody knows what happened first. Nobody knows what happened.

For Coop Nagawa, it was the same guy sleeping in the doorway, out of the sun. Since the cops had broken down the wood-and-tarp structure on the corner outside 7-11, Kapiolani Boulevard was catch-as-catch-can in terms of places to crash—the police were impounding tents (visitors to our fair island thought them unseemly), and a few unfortunates took to sleeping (wrapped tight as mummies in soiled blankets) in the gravel dust off the sidewalk.

Coop Nagawa's guy, a bald Japanese dude almost pleasingly sun-browned and always clad in jacket and slacks the same hue of navy blue, occupied a raised, slightly deep doorway to Shambala, the strip club at which Coop tended bar and had a vague, assistant manager-ish kind of responsibility that was never really defined by Santa Ana, the owner, and for which he had never been appropriately compensated. The doorway was out of the sunlight, a step-and-a-half off the ground, and Coop usually saw his guy tucked in at a seventy degree angle, his head pillowed against the threshold, one foot propped against the opposite threshold and the other dangling free over the single stair. Above him the blue Shambala sign hung unlit upon an otherwise featureless building, in stark contrast to the tiki-themed tattoo parlor on Shambala's right, and the Japanese barbecue restaurant on the left.

The day it happened—the day it all started happening—Coop had walked from his apartment past McCully, plodding through unusually cruel humidity and a Coke-and-Evan Williams hangover. Every other day he'd be not within a mile of Shambala until after six in the evening, when he'd clock in to set up the bar and reschedule the dancers because of an inevitable absence. But the night before (blame it on Evan Williams) he'd left his phone underneath the bar next to the register. Coop arrived at Shambala feeling he'd just licked the underside of some un-godly mammal, his homeless guy sleeping in the doorway before him. He spat into the street. But Coop Nagawa was a nice guy, and felt bad for the dude.

Those other evenings after six Coop would shake his guy softly, his hand on a shoulder. When his guy opened his eyes—a milky red that faded after a few seconds—Coop would nod at him, and the man would be on his way. Coop was never sure at what time the guy actually shacked up in the doorway. He didn't think about it that much.

Now, hungover and pissed off (mostly at himself), Coop Nagawa reached out and placed his hand on his guy's shoulder. He didn't care if his guy wanted to sleep there the rest of the day—he just wanted to make his presence known, so his guy wouldn't up and punch him in the nuts while he stepped over him into the strip club. One time he shook the man. Two times. *Must be some drunk.* The bus stopped behind him, dropped off old people who never looked his way, and absorbed a pale, heavy family headed to Waikiki. Three times. Cars passed, the light changed, cars stopped. Coop shrugged, dug into his pockets for his keys, opened the door to Shambala (which caused his guy to slump backwards into the club a little), and stepped over him toward the bar.

The interior was lit only by the open door. High-seated chairs stacked on narrow tables, a runner of turned-off tube lights around the edge of the stage against which other chairs had been neatly set, purple curtain at the back. Coop closed his nose to the sweetish smell of spilled liquor and Simple Green. He found his way around the bar by feel and memory. The panicked, heart-accelerating few seconds he reached for his phone under the register terminated in a pleasing slow drain from his body as he felt it there, the glass cold against his fingers. Swiping the screen once, he saw a half-charge.

And by feel and memory Coop stepped back into the bridge of light emanating from the doorway over the faux wood floor, the light mitigated somewhat by the sleeping body now on the premises of Shambala. How to get out of there was a very logical thought process—he could push his guy with his toe back onto the low stoop outside, pulling the door closed behind him.

It occurred to Coop Nagawa that his guy was dead.

*And what did you then, after entering the building for your phone?* the police officer would ask impersonally, writing with a ball point pen on one of those metal clipboards in which you can store papers.

*Well, I just kind of shoved him out the door—*

*With your hands?*

*No, with my foot—*

*Okay,* Coop thought as he approached his guy, *the dude is obviously breathing.* Not snoring—Coop's guy's chest was heaving deep in and out, his lungs locked to an internal rhythm. To Coop, it all looked healthy and clean. Again he shook his guy. Twice. Three times. Each time the man's bald head lolled over the floor, and in the sun Coop saw a satisfied half-smile on his face.

*And what did you do next, Mr. Nagawa?*

*Well, he seemed fine so I just pushed him out the door—*

Coop's guy wasn't dead. But there was obviously something wrong with him. Coma? Brain dead. Drug overdose.

Now in possession of his phone, Coop Nagawa called the police.



Other people throughout the City and County of Honolulu—Kailua to the east, Haleiwa to the north, Waianae to the west—made similar discoveries. Because of the prevalent attitude of many individuals to not give a shit about their surroundings, some discoveries were made much later than others. In Kaneohe, a man in gray, overlarge shorts and dirty undershirt thought exceedingly drunk as he sat cross-legged at a bus stop bench eventually fell forward, unconscious, and broke open his face. The old haole bus rider on her way to her docent-ship at the State Museum called an ambulance for him, the man's blood beginning to spread toward her slippers. On the Nimitz bike path under the freeway, a soldier stationed at the naval base nearly tripped over a young woman while running the length of Nimitz with his service dog. And in Chinatown, the group of bearded vets with sleeping bags on flattened cardboard boxes, their chained pit bulls watchful, simply didn't get up when it was time to hose down the sidewalk. No amount of yelling or nudging, with the pit bulls barking at anyone coming close, was going to wake them up. In each case authorities were called, every person believing that there was someone else better equipped to deal with the situation.

And, in every case, the police, the EMTs, and the first responder firemen all came into contact with living beings—not corpses—each one breathing deep, each one with a rested expression on his or her face, the lines all smoothed out. These authorities attempted a variety of means by which to wake the sleepers: gentle slaps to the cheek, smelling salts, sprays of water, the clapping of hands near the ear. Nothing worked.

By mid-morning, with a seeming infinitude of news reports and attendant online commenters, Tweeters, Facebookers, and Department of Health spokespersons, information from the City and County of Honolulu, like a great slug from a bed of wet foliage, emerged and went forth slowly, and not even the most contrary internet troll could refute its ugly veracity. Homeless people would not wake up. Sleepers were of all ages, of all states of health, of differing genders and manners of hygiene. But they were all homeless. They were all homeless, they were alive, and they wouldn't wake up.

The next few days cops and firemen, with the help of compassionate volunteers who had deputized themselves for the task, went into the tents and temporary shelters just off Ilalo Street, and under Nimitz Highway and along Kalakaua before Waikiki. And in those tents and tarp-wrapped, upturned shopping carts were sleepers too, men, women and children who'd never arisen from the

deep slumber that sucked all worry and struggle and pain and madness from their faces, smoothing over their features with a kind of peace that left their discoverers confused. What did they see from behind their closed eyes? Had all that surrounded them—the incessant comings and goings of traffic; the fumes of expunged bodily fluids and warm, wet garbage; the heat of the sun; the inconvenience of frequent rain—disappeared from their awareness? More simply, what happened to them? What happened? There was no hypothesis, yet, only the punishing task of what to do with these people.

Thus, the sleepers of Honolulu were sent to the hospitals, provided beds and vital fluids as physicians from all fields monitored their life signs. They were breathing but could not eat. They were living but could not wake. When one doctor scanned the brain waves of a woman who appeared to be a mother, he found her mind in perfect working order—neither brain dead nor in a coma, and the electromagnetic activity, as he explained on the news, resembled that of an otherwise healthy person dreaming a dream intensely. There were none of the stressors that would indicate a nightmare. What did they see in those dreaming minds?

Very quickly the hospitals of Honolulu filled beyond capacity with sleepers. When City and County officials asked for support from neighbor islands, they were rebuffed—those other places were in the middle of managing their own crises, having followed the same pattern of discovery, identification and hospitalization initiated in Honolulu. On the mainland, the same situation. What could the City and County do? Put them all back on the street? To be exposed to the elements, to piss and shit themselves and ultimately starve to death?

Eventually, the hospitals reached out to the citizenry, who were mostly content with the hospitals taking care of the problem, provided that costs for the sleepers' care wasn't ultimately passed on to them. With emergency powers that temporarily suspended personal health information restrictions, hospital administrators invited the family members of those unconscious and bedridden to visit their facilities with the intent of sending a sleeping brother or sister or father or mother home with their loved ones.



Melia Gomes had been to Kuakini, Queens, Wainanae Coast Comprehensive, and finally located Waynie-Boy on the sixth floor of Kapiolani Medical Center for Women and Children, in an area usually reserved for new mothers and infants (generally, sleepers were placed in any bed available). Around her, nurses and doctors engaged in activities of uncertain purpose, which created

on all floors of the hospital an air of stunned chaos in which no one complained anymore and no one asked questions. Instead, these medical professionals flitted from bed to bed to confirm the same thing was going on as had been an hour before, two hours before. No one was waking up. And, in the midst of this there were still the infections and broken arms, the surgeries, all the ailments of our fallen bodies that would not cease with the onset of this new problem. Surprisingly—and somewhat refreshingly for the doctors—new births were few, even among those who were due.

Melia's elevator was full of scrub-clad medical assistants and nurses, some of their outfits hideously patterned with Hello Kitty and Shrek. Melia smiled as they crowded in close in the narrow elevator, thinking of how Wayne-Boy would have characterized their clothing—something insulting whispered loud enough for everyone to hear.

The room was large, though filled with more beds than its capacity. Each of the beds was occupied by some person with his or her eyes closed, even though the lights overhead were bright and hammered away at their glossy, shut eyelids. Attached to each of the sleepers was a heart monitor, its uniform beep unnerving as Melia turned around the room, looking for Wayne-Boy. At some point—perhaps it was only a freak moment at this time of day—each person's heartbeat had synched with the other's, so that Melia heard only a single note in chorus with itself, a single note unhurried and strong that punctuated the uncanny, simultaneous breathing rhythms of the sleepers.

Melia was surprised to see so few civilians (for lack of a better word) like her in the hospital, even though the request for family members to identify and claim their sleeper had been made over the television, the radio and the Internet at least a week ago. Since she'd entered the Kapiolani, she'd only seen nurses and doctors and those girls in the Aloha shirts who answered phones and handed out clipboards for patient information.

At last she located Wayne-Boy, tucked in under a window that looked out to Beretania Avenue and the lawn of Central Union Church, which hovered out of place in the tableau of urban Honolulu like any stone New England house of worship would in a tropical city. The sunlight from the window shone bright on Wayne-Boy's face. Melia, first watchful for anyone who might notice, pulled him out and wheeled him away from the heat of the sun. She then sucked in her belly, swollen somewhat because of an exercise plan to which she found it impossible to commit (and everyone who knew her, Wayne-Boy included, had heard *ad nauseum* of this exercise plan), and squeezed between Wayne-Boy's bed and the bed of an older man who was sleeping just as peacefully.

Melia took Wayne-Boy's warm, rough hand into her own. Looking into

his face, she traced the tattoo that started at the top of his forehead and went all the way down the left side of his face. The tattoo was new. Or, at least, he'd gotten it in the three years since she'd seen him last. She hadn't noticed it at first, in the brassy glare of the sunlight.

She touched the tips of her fingers along the tattoo, half-fearing Wayne-Boy would open his eyes under her touch. *Okay*, she told herself. *It doesn't matter*. She squeezed her brother's hand and he seemed to draw a deeper breath. Again Melia was scared, but when his breathing went back to normal, she was happy once again to see him. She thought she would never be happy to see him again—not until now, when he was like this.

If it hadn't been for Wayne-boy, Melia would have never allowed her consciousness to be altered by *Let It Be* and *Revolver*, on which she spent her 1991 Christmas money, when she'd gone over the Beatles completely. Melia had copped the *1967-1970* compilation from Wayne-Boy and worn the tape out one week when she was home with strep throat. For about two hours in the midst of fever and headaches and a swallow laced with razors, the Beatles made her feel completely fine. They could fix anything, if you listened close enough and took it to heart. Wayne-Boy gave her the Beatles and she'd forever thank him for that.

She bought *Let It Be* and *Revolver* when she wanted to be like her brother. Before he stole two hundred dollars from her American Savings account, money she'd made from the closing shift at KFC, when she'd had to spend more hours dropping potato wedges in hot oil and buttering biscuits than she did in eleventh-grade Social Studies. Before her father, lacking any other recourse, made up his mind and kicked the boy's ass like a grown man: drugs in his drawer, missing cash from Grandma's room. Before jail, before getting clean, before Wayne-Boy got utility work (dishwashing) at Zippy's for a decent hourly and she let him stay on the couch of her one-bedroom down the road from the University. He eventually found his people once again (wasted town-types, not the Kaneohe trash who stole cars parked on the road and burned them abandoned in the swamps outside the dump)—real fucked up junkies, painkillers and meth—and he let them all in and they got high around the coffee table, burned the carpet and dumped cheap-ass wine everywhere you could imagine, then took her computer and her bike. Melia had wanted to be like her brother, but then she'd feared even seeing Wayne-Boy on the street. Not because she didn't love him anymore—just to spare him the embarrassment of acknowledging that he'd treated her like shit.

Melia was crying now, crying because she thought her brother was an asshole and she had never stopped loving him and he had hurt her.

She let go of Wayne-Boy's hand, wiped her face, and very gently kissed the tattoos over his cheek. Someone on the news said he was dreaming, that they

were all dreaming. How nice it would be, Melia thought, to meet Wayne-Boy in his dream. Maybe in that dream a loop of the 1967–1970 compilation played, front to back to front again.

As Melia walked to the door a young nurse approached her from the corridor, her scrubs plain and her hair undone, black and loose over her shoulders. “Did you find him?” the nurse asked.

“Excuse me?” Melia said.

“The person you were looking for. We don’t have a lot of identification for these folks—but if you can prove your relationship, we can work on the papers to take him home.”

Melia started out the door. “No,” she said. “There was no one there.”

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The sleepers who had once been homeless were now accounted for and resided in clinics and hospitals, drawing nutrients intravenously from a clear pouch. Physicians used every approved method as an attempt to bring them from their comas—but “comas” was the wrong word for what was happening to these people, when their brain activity was so vibrant, their respiration so at ease and determinant. They tried lights into eyes rhythmic to the back-and-forth beat of R.E.M. They tried music, the voices of loved ones, they tried noise. They tried brief, painless electric pulses that, administered by frustrated residents, sometimes became full-fledged shocks. The light burns that resulted from this activity were attributed to equipment malfunction. Yes, there was some abuse. Overworked and overtired PA’s and RN’s treated patients with slaps to the face and full-on throttles, to which they received no response (except for perhaps a greater peace in the manner the sleepers slumbered).

If one sought more unorthodox treatments, one only needed consult the Internet. Immersion hadn’t worked—hot, cold, or in-between—what about water boarding? Electroshock? Trepanning? No, no, no, the medical community said. These people needn’t be tortured to be reached. They were only sleeping. One intern brought his clock radio into one of the rooms and set the alarm to go off every five minutes, which it did until a nurse broke it over his head. For that, she was compelled to attend training. But outside the medical community, in blogs and on Facebook and Twitter and news sites of varying credibility, a whisper seeped forth and infected the perspective of the general populace: *euthanasia*.

No! one group said. It’s not even euthanasia. Euthanasia is the process of offering release through death to those unfortunates who suffer the most extreme physical pain. The sleepers had exhibited no signs of experiencing pain, even

when they were slapped, throttled, or burned with electric sensors affixed to their skin. In fact, evidence indicated they were having the greatest nap ever gifted to humankind. Some commented that they wouldn't have minded being given free room and board to sleep a delicious, dream-filled and worry-free sleep for the unforeseen future, to which another voice responded promptly: "That's quite the death wish, asshole."

There were those who felt the homeless were being punished by a higher power, and those who thought the homeless had been blessed and delivered from their wretched circumstances, inheriting all that was owed to the meek as a pleasant sleep that would never end. Were they with God now, their minds and souls in that Heaven composed of rings of light and music? Was their God a Presence or a presence, a Voice or a voice, was he the singular or the perfectly integrated? Or was it that the parameters of the sleepers' Hell were circumscribed by their souls' imprisonment in a non-functioning body? Were all the nutrients and medicines absorbed by the sleepers (as a populace, they had become uniformly healthy) prolonging the captivity of all that metaphysical stuff behind their eyelids, the outside world forever unseen by their closed eyes still roving, their active brains calling but receiving no answer?

And what would happen if they were just left alone? Would they snap out of it?

No, the doctors said. They would die, they said, exhibiting little concern for the medical costs that had finally been passed along to your average consumer. There was a lot of money needed to house and administer care to the sleepers. But if not for the hospitals and the doctors, the medical community said, the sleepers would starve, and then they would die.

And whose fault is that? someone asked, and someone answered, it's nobody's fault—the real question is, who should be responsible for the homeless, for the sleepers? I didn't make them go to sleep, another person said. Either they wake up or get thrown in a ditch. Jesus, someone replied, what if one of those people was your mother? Well, they're not. And this whole thing about palming them off on relatives—we all know they're nobody's mother. Why don't you pay for their bills if you care about them so much? These people shouldn't even be in hospitals, getting top-notch medical care. They should move them to the shelters and the churches, where anybody who has the time can take care of them. Churches don't have the resources for that kind of stuff. Take 'em all out to the ocean and dump 'em overboard, brah.

This kind of exchange occurred online, appearing as one or two sentences—statements put forth by kitten avatars with names like NyneLyfeLucky.

With preternatural cunning, the politicians stated their belief in the

medical professionals to find a solution to the problem. They hesitated to propose anything about the matter until “all the facts were in,” to which the medical professionals responded, “All the facts are in. These poor fucks aren’t waking up any time soon.”

Oh, to see the streets of Honolulu at that time! The corners bereft of tarps and old baggage lean-to’s, the sidewalks clear for pedestrians! The tourists liberated from the tyranny of old dirty men asking for money! But underneath those exhalations of relief, however cynical, there was dread. Something was wrong, and even the buzzed mainlander stumbling out of Cheeseburger in Paradise with a bellyful of lunch beers knew something was wrong.

They don’t deserve this, someone said. What? Not having to do shit for the rest of their lives? I wish that was me! They’re human beings, someone insisted. Umm, I would qualify a human being as someone who actively contributes to their society, someone interjected. What, you just made up that definition? The whole discussion made everyone aware that maybe they’d never considered the sleepers human beings, even before they’d fallen asleep.

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Dr. Robert Chen stepped into his office on the seventh floor of Kapiolani Medical Center, closed the door, and pulled open the bottom drawer. The bottle of Evan Williams (most of his colleagues didn’t really find it up to snuff, whiskey-wise) was free of dust. Not because Dr. Chen had accessed it often—things just didn’t get dusty in that forgotten bottom desk drawer, no matter how long they’d been there.

Dr. Chen’s office (his administrative office, not the office he kept in the hospital proper, nor the clinic office on the ninth floor, which he’d been avoiding lately because of an ill-advised flirtation with one of his medical assistants) was small and cramped with two desks, both bigger than they needed to be, against two opposite walls, and a bookshelf populated with textbooks and journals of content that had long been irrelevant—at least, according to his residents. He still went to the textbooks occasionally, if not for a specific reference then for peace of mind that one thing or another might always be true. An ugly forest green carpet (whose idea was that?) bridged the tiny space between the two desks (the second belonging to Dr. Smith who now spent more hours in his private practice, but would still come down for a nip or two with Dr. Chen on a rush-hour Friday when you’d have to be fucking bonkers to want to get in your car and try to get anywhere). The only redeeming characteristic of the office was the window that looked down at the freeway from Punahou Drive, down at the glittering

windshields of cars in interminable traffic.

At that window Dr. Chen now stood, his first sip of bourbon tasting of the coffee residue from the used styrofoam cup he'd picked up off his desk. The second was cleaner, and the scene outside, instead of appearing to Dr. Chen like some ungodly clusterfuck, portrayed an unavoidable and terrible beauty, like death or childbirth. A few seconds later Dr. Chen wasn't looking at the freeway anymore, at the cars stewing in their internal heat and stink and air-conditioning. He saw instead the face of a girl, maybe twelve, he had treated before he finished his work for the day.

Well, treated was the wrong word for it. The girl had dark, curly hair, dark skin, and big, white teeth. Dr. Chen had inspected the mouth for wounds or any kind of odor that might have indicated poor health. Her breath was fine, her mouth fine, her breathing just as even as it had been the previous day, her countenance untroubled by the bullshit twelve-year-old girls normally have to deal with. She was only sleeping. Dr. Chen wanted nothing more than to make the girl laugh—or make her cry, make her spit at him, make her scream in pain, even if he had to hurt her. He wanted the girl to be alive again.

He felt guilty about how he felt. Dr. Chen poured himself one more for the road. He'd go home and Donna would be there, her mother, too, and Kimberly there for the summer. She'd be going out with friends again, and wouldn't refuse if he tried to press some pocket money on her. He'd have to remember the cash machine on the way out. But for a few minutes, everybody would be home and accounted for, and he'd feel all right for taking care of everything.

Dr. Chen capped the Evan Williams and slid the drawer closed again. He glanced over to the paper he'd tossed on his desktop earlier in the day. Weird how things were still happening in the world. People still catching planes, planes disappearing and shot down, another government on the verge of collapse, restrooms being cleaned. Iraq falling apart again. A lot of shit a motherfucker could get into when he was awake. These poor saps with the sleeping—what had they done to anybody, except try to get by? They didn't cause the Holocaust or utilize chemical weapons or invade a foreign country or contribute to the elimination of the native.

*Fuck*, Dr. Chen thought as he crumpled his cup, feeling a few warm, sticky drops over his fingers. When would God just smite the human race with a flood of molasses and have done with it?

He dropped the smashed cup into the wastebasket and began to tap at the pockets in his doctor's coat, and in his trousers. It never failed—every time he left the office for a weekend he forgot something, whether it was his iPhone, some loose notes he planned on transcribing, his wallet, the keys to his house, the keys

to his office. *Well*, he thought, *what's there is there*. He opened the door and closed it and walked to the elevator, wondering what he'd left behind.



# The Wild Sound

Sofi Cleveland

David Cheek is going fifty down Highway 2 when he discovers that he can drive with his eyes closed. He has always known he could do something extraordinary. Now, with one hand floating out the open window and the earthen smell of November filling the cab, he shuts his eyes against the setting sun. He can read the curves of the road like Braille through the shivering tires. One turn. Another. The wind currents play between his fingers. The other hand feels for the thick stitches on the back of the steering wheel. David thinks about showing his wife what he can do, but no, Angela dislikes things that behave in ways they aren't supposed to. Perhaps his daughter, who has begun to forget him, will find a new admiration in this. He wishes someone were here to see, to congratulate him.

When he opens his eyes, he is parked in front of the house. David pulls up the brake, hoping Angela hasn't seen him yet through the front windows, and hums the remnants of whatever song was playing on the radio as he walks through the door.

“Hi Charlie-girl.”

He ruffles his daughter's hair where she is perched on the couch, feeling a brief moment of fear for the day she no longer lets him do this. Angela is at the cutting board in the kitchen, mixing a fruit salad for tomorrow's Thanksgiving dinner. For a moment she looks startled to see him, but then she catches herself and smiles. It is a tired smile that does not crease the corners of her eyes. When David reaches for her hip she twirls away, busy with some new chore.

Angela Cheek has learned to distrust her husband's good moods. They arise suddenly, filling the rooms of their home with a dangerous ecstasy that prickles her skin like a humid storm. These are the days when David can walk tall and speak fast. He brings expensive gifts for their daughter and dances alone to “Swing Town” in the living room, or wakes them in the middle of the night to take an impromptu road trip to the coast. Angela once allowed herself to be swept along with these abrupt passions, careening with him until she could feel the mania rising in her own throat. But now she only measures the months by their coming and going. She knows that soon they will subside and David will deflate, exhausted, like a flower that has bloomed too early. Angela is left to linger, and predict the next turbulence.

But David only sees the distance she puts between them. Now he leaves

the kitchen, offended at her inattentiveness, and kicks off his shoes in the hall on the way to the shower.

“Dave, your shoes . . .” Angela calls when she hears them thunk against the wall. But he leaves them there and closes the bathroom door.

Here is his sanctuary.

David starts the hot water and faces the counter, waiting for the mirror to fog before undressing. He thinks fleetingly of the day he installed the shower when the house was still being built—Angela had cut her hand open on something (*what was it?*) and he had turned on the water for the first time to wash bright drops of her blood down the drain. He pulls away from the image before he can remember just how many years ago that was.

There is a tap at the door, and Angela’s voice telling him to hurry. David hopes she won’t come in, but she does, and reprimands him for not using the fan. He says nothing, wrapping a towel around his waist while she talks about moldy drywall and shoos steam out the window.

Things were not always like this. David and Angela once thought each other to be the most perfect specimens of human kind and, like every couple in the death throes of love, they assumed these feelings would never wither. Angela’s first impression of David was that he could be in five places at once, a vibrating hummingbird who was unable to rest. He had approached her at a mutual friend’s party to ask if he could photograph her. Angela said no, but when she looked down his flash shone in the corner of her eyes anyway. (In the future, David would occasionally become inspired to find this photograph and spend hours at a time searching for it, but it would never be found.) That night he had wanted her immediately, and Angela knew this when he tucked a long strand of hair behind her ear and offered to get her another Michelob. They went back to his tiny, expensive apartment on Queen Anne and had slightly-better-than-average sex that she would vaguely remember the next morning.

When many years had passed, David would still recall the way his tee shirt brushed her thighs when she got out of bed, and the hiss of the coffeepot as Angela perched on the counter to watch him cook breakfast. She had left his apartment late in the day, only to return that night for dinner. After six weeks of this, while they lay together again in his bed, David would suddenly prop up on his elbow in the dark and ask, “Should we get married?” And Angela would laugh and say “Okay,” because she was in love, because she was almost twenty-six, and because no one had ever asked her before.

But even then she should have known.



Two decades later and the Cheeks' sixth-grade daughter prides herself on knowing things she shouldn't. She knows where her father has hidden a handgun on top of the cabinet in the laundry room, and what her parents are really doing when she sometimes hears the headboard of their bed knocking against the wall (Angela tells her it must be the house's old pipes). She knows about the affair her father had four years ago, even though the older boy next door had to explain to her what this really meant, and about the marriage counselor David and Angela saw twice and then deserted.

Charlie also knows and sees things her parents do not. She watches her mother suck her lower lip when David's car door slams in the drive at the end of the day, and the way the muscles in her father's jaw tighten when Angela begins to fret over something trivial. She takes careful note of their naked ring fingers, the long-expired medications in the bathroom cabinet, and Angela's fluctuating weight that waxes and wanes with her current state of happiness.

Over the years, Charlie has adopted her mother's habit of tasting the mood of a room upon entering. It is this that warns her of the changes to come that Thanksgiving weekend, like the brittle rattle of fall leaves heralding their deadly plunge to the pavement. In the span of a week, the silence that creeps through the rooms has become more and more vivid until Charlie can almost see it oozing under the doors and out the chimney when she arrives home from school.

On Wednesday afternoon, she finds a full cup of tea on the kitchen counter. It is cold to the touch, forgotten many hours ago.

"Mom?" She tiptoes through the living room and down the hall, where Angela is packing a bag for the weekend. "You left your tea in the kitchen."

Angela pauses. "Oh. Did you lock the front door behind you?"

Charlie shakes her head.

"Do mom a favor? Make sure the door is locked nice and tight? Your dad doesn't like us girls home alone."

Charlie wishes her mother would tell the truth. She knows why Angela bolts the door, so that the metallic sound of keys in the lock will alert her to David's arrival. David knows this too, and his temper flares every time he has to unlock it. Charlie deadbolts the door firmly, knowing that her mother is listening for its click, and then noiselessly turns it back again.

~~~

The Cheeks are halfway to Angela's parents' house on Thanksgiving morning when fat, wet flakes of snow begin to pelt the windshield. When Angela comments that they should have left earlier like she suggested the night before,

David turns up the radio (even though the music has become thick with static since they reached the mountain pass) and says, “It’ll be fine.” Angela finds comfort in his gruff reassurance and leans back in her seat, watching the flakes become smaller as they near the summit. She can see a sliver of her daughter’s pink face reflected in the passenger mirror and a brief blossom of contentment unfolds within her. She leans across the console and pats David’s knee as if to share it with him, but only his hands shift on the steering wheel in response.

Dinner that night is an orchestration. There is uproar over two of Angela’s sisters bringing the same layered salad, and the small cousins knock a drink onto the white carpet while wrestling with the dog. David watches television in the living room as Angela’s father cleans up the spill and her brothers-in-law stand in the kitchen arguing over how best to carve the turkey. She wishes David would join them.

“Here,” says Angela’s mother, “take a plate to David.”

“He can dish it up himself,” Angela says. And then to her daughter: “Tell your dad to come dish up his plate.”

Charlie reports back dutifully, “He says you know what he likes.”

Angela closes her eyes.

When they open, she smoothes a flyaway on the crown of her daughter’s head and begins to fill a plate with all of the wrong things. White meat instead of dark. Salad dressing that pools to the edge of the stuffing. She sees a flash of the inevitable future, in which David will lose control and she will feel embarrassment at his lack of it, but she dishes up the yams anyway. She tops them off with gravy, just for good measure, and hands the mess to her daughter. Charlie looks down at the plate and then back to Angela, hesitating.

Angela nods. *Yes, it’s alright.* She begins counting down the seconds and watches her family, marveling that they are unaware of the hasty rebellion she has just performed.

No one else notices David when he enters the crowded kitchen moments later, the offending plate in hand. He had hoped that it was an accident, or a joke, that Angela would be waiting with a crooked smile and arched eyebrow—gotcha! Just kidding! But now he sees her sitting at the counter with her sisters, one hand worrying at the stem of a wine glass (*since when does she drink red?*) and the other clenched tightly in her lap. She is in the middle of a laugh when she sees David standing across the room. Her expression freezes—cheeks rounded and mouth slightly open—but her eyes turn flat.

“Is this funny to you?” David slides the plate onto the counter.

“If you don’t like it, you can dish up another. There’s plenty left.”

Angela’s pale hand reaches up to tuck her hair behind her ear and she

turns back to her sister. Before David realizes he even has the impulse, his fist is around her forearm and the entire room is watching. There is a quiet half-moment in which his daughter's brown eyes blink at him with too much comprehension and the only sound he hears is the blood rushing in his skull. Suddenly there is a concrete hand on his shoulder and Angela shatters the wineglass with her elbow as she jerks herself free.

"Hey, knock it off!" someone else shouts, but it is already over. Angela stands to brush shards of glass from her lap as wine and blood trickles down her arm to her fingers. A child begins to cry, but it is not theirs.

"You're hurt," stammers David, because he cannot think of anything else. He is about to crouch down to pick glass from the carpet but someone begins to steer him away and his brother-in-law says in his ear, "Let's step into the garage for a minute."

"No," says Angela. "Let me."

Her face is bright with wine and self-consciousness as she flees to the back porch, touching the top of Charlie's head in passing and smiling at anyone who dares meet her eyes. She is pleasantly detached, watching herself push through the crowded kitchen ("Excuse us") and out into the cold dark. David trails immediately after her and closes the door without turning on the porch light. He stands under the eaves and watches Angela as she leans on the railing, staring into the blackness. The windows cast warm golden squares on the white lawn and their breaths billow before them.

"Maybe you should start again," she says suddenly. "The medications."

"Ang, no. It was an accident."

Angela realizes she should probably be crying or afraid, but she is startled to find only relief rushing in her chest, as if the cold blade of a knife had been removed from her throat.

"Well. You did it."

David joins her at the railing and wishes he had a cigarette, something he hasn't thought of in many years. In the same moment Angela is remembering their first Thanksgiving together with her family, when they rendezvoused on the same porch halfway through dinner to escape the overheated house and kiss drunkenly in the cold.

"You cut yourself."

"Yes. It's alright."

David wants to touch her but knows it won't be allowed. "Do you remember when we were putting the shower in?" he asks suddenly. Angela says nothing. "You cut yourself then. I just can't remember how... And you got blood all over. Do you remember?"

The muffled hum of voices has risen again from inside the house like a hive. It has become a wild sound, no longer sweetened with the warmth of nostalgia and familiarity. An uneasiness creeps in David's spine, a spreading poison.

"How could you do that? In front of Charlie."

"God, I don't know. It just happened."

They turn at the same time to search for their daughter's face through the window, but her place at the table is empty.

"I need to find her." Angela pushes away from the railing and takes a step towards the door.

"Wait. She's probably with your mother. Just wait a minute."

"I can't. We can't do this now."

"But what's going to happen?" David hears the frenzy in his voice and hates it. Angela's hand falls from the doorknob and she looks at him without meeting his eyes.

"I think maybe you should go home. Charlie and I will stay here for a few days."

"I'm sorry, Ang. I'm so fucking sorry. I didn't mean it."

"Just go home," she says, and leaves him in the snowy night.

~~~

Charlie gets up from the table to escape the concerned voices that have descended upon her. She mumbles something about getting seconds and sneaks down the back hall to the bathroom, humiliated. How could her parents make such a scene? As she closes the door, she sees her own reflection above the sink and is struck for the first time by the perfect mixture of both their faces that she embodies. Angela's trim nose and copper hair. David's wide jaw and bottomless eyes. Charlie looks away.

When Angela comes for her, she enters the bathroom alone and touches her daughter's shoulder where she sits on the edge of the tub. A reddish ghost of David's hand has begun to form around her arm. Charlie watches as she inspects her injuries and flattens rogue hairs in the mirror, finding comfort in the way her mother gathers the pieces of herself back together.

"Can we go home now?" she finally asks.

"I think we're gonna stay here for a few days." Angela sits on the toilet and sighs. "I'm sorry, baby."

"Dad, too?"

"Dad is going home."

“I wanna go home.”

“I think your dad needs some time to himself.”

Charlie looks up at her, eyes untrusting. She knows that David is not like other fathers. She has watched him change from one person to another in the space of a moment, his psyche slippery and delicate as an oyster. But Charlie is not afraid of him yet. She sees the way he struggles to hold on to himself and knows that he does it for her.

“Can I at least say bye?”

Angela hesitates. “Well, okay.”

Charlie leaves her mother in the bathroom and ducks out the back door, away from the gossiping voices in the kitchen. She finds David sitting motionless in the driver’s seat of their car while it idles in the dark. He seems to come back from somewhere when he notices her, as if a haze has lifted from his eyes. Charlie slides in the passenger seat and closes the door. She notices that David has left his jacket in the entryway, fleeing with only his keys in his pocket.

“I’m so sorry, Charlie-girl.”

“It’s fine, Dad.”

David’s thoughts whirl, disjoined. His daughter seems to have grown up and away from him in the span of an evening. How can he articulate to her what is going on in his mind? He wants her to look at him again like she once did, with trust and naive awe. Now her face is only brushed with pity.

“Do you want to go for a drive?” he asks.

~~~

When Charlie was seven, her father came home with a grand idea. He was going to build her a tree house. It would be colossal, unlike anything she had ever imagined. They spent days together on the living room floor, drawing up blueprints with David’s tools from work. She helped him measure the arm-like branches of the sycamore in their back yard, and stood on her tip-toes at the front window to watch as the building materials were delivered. Her parents had fought long over this ill-considered purchase, but Charlie was unaware at the time. She only remembers the way David suddenly lost interest, like a car that had run out of gas, and started to come home very late at night. When this dark mood finally left him, summer had ended and the rains had begun to rot the untreated wood planks left in the drive. It was Charlie’s first glimpse of her father’s illness. She imagined then that it was like a superpower, a surge of inhuman strength that came upon him without warning.

But now she begins to see something different.

The tires slip on the icy back roads as David drives them deeper into the countryside. He says that he has something to show her. Charlie recalls the tree house and grips the handle on the passenger door.

“Now watch,” says David. His heart stutters.

When he closes his eyes, Charlie shouts and reaches across for the steering wheel. The headlights cut a haphazard, yellow slice through the pale landscape as they approach a curve, and David begs her to trust him.

“Stop it!” Charlie shrieks.

She jerks the wheel away and sends the car into a spin in the center of the road. David opens his eyes, startled, and she sees the delusion disappear from his mind in an instant. When they come to a halt, the car is straddling the lane with the back left tire spinning angrily in the ditch.

Charlie weeps into her hands. The car door opens and she hears David stumble out, cursing. She shivers.

~~~

David looks down the road, as if trying to remember where they are. He can hear the wind licking at the pines and he imagines it is laughing, taunting him. *No*, he thinks. He pulls his mind away. Behind him, there is a wet slosh as another car slowly approaches. His daughter calls for him from miles away.

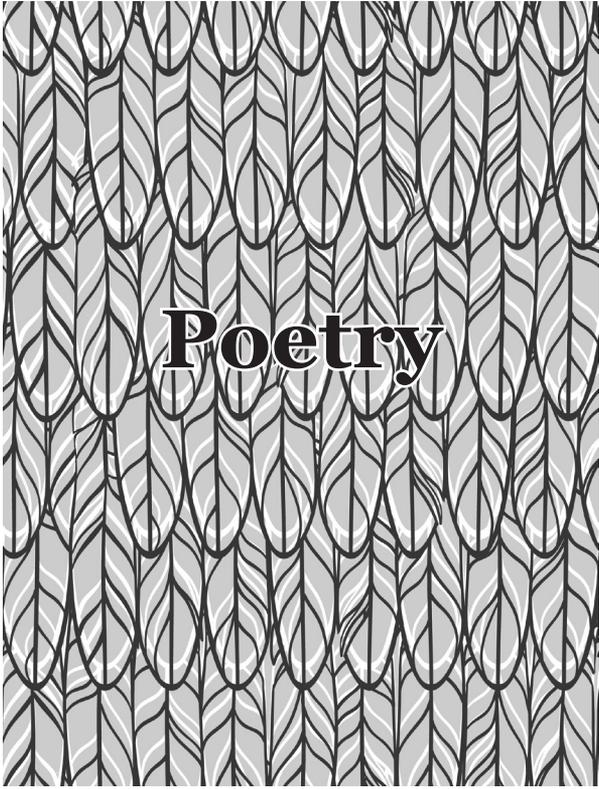
Something shifts in David’s head. A quick memory surfaces and subsides again before he can grasp it. He has a flash of feeling that he has been here before, perhaps as another version of himself, and he suddenly knows what is about to happen. He is relieved when he looks down and sees the dark blood dripping from his wrists, snaking down his palms and fingers as if freeing itself of him in silent, graceful rivers. But he blinks and it is gone, his skin still unbroken and the milky snow no longer stained.

Now David remembers.

It was him. He was the one who cut Angela’s hand in the bathroom so many years ago. She had made a mess of something, dropped one of the expensive floor tiles in her eagerness to help install them, and the demon inside him had turned. He threw the remnants of the tile across the room, sending porcelain shards flying. Angela lifted her hands to protect her face. And as quickly as it happened he had repented, crouching on the floor to whisper honeyed words and treat the wounds he had inflicted.

A new chill spreads outwards from David’s sternum as a face emerges from the window of the passing car.

“Hey, do you need help?”  
“Yeah,” he laughs. “I do.”



# Rumiko / A Series of Possessions

Meg Eden

*“Over the course of last summer, Reverend Kaneda exorcised 25 spirits from Rumiko Takahashi. . . . ‘All the people who came,’ Kaneda said, ‘and each one of the stories they told had some connection with water.’”*

—Ghosts of the Tsunami, Richard Lloyd Parry

I.

Yesterday I became a dog:  
I didn't want to, but it  
was barking so loudly  
I couldn't bear it.  
Making rice, I opened  
the door of my body,  
and that starving dog ate—  
three men had to hold  
me down as it entered.

*It's been three years  
since I last ate, the dog said—  
assuming the dog thinks  
in years, that the dog feels  
something like loneliness  
from that couple who forgot  
to unchain him when they left,*

assuming that I can translate  
the dog, or that smell from the local  
power plant, which in time  
became overbearing. And the silence  
that followed. And the emaciated  
dog that followed the silence.

## II.

My wife lives in one  
of the temporary metal huts  
on top of the mountain.

Even after all this time,  
no one has given her a real home!  
Does anyone think about the old  
besides the old?

She has this shoebox where she keeps  
a white rope and strokes it occasionally.  
I watch her, you know—I worry about  
what she might do with that rope.

## III.

—And when I reached the side  
of the mountain, I still thought  
it was good to be alive.

I looked down at our city,  
which moved like laundry  
in a washing machine—

and realized that there must be  
many dead people today, prayed  
that I didn't know any of them,

but when my two daughters  
were nowhere to be found,  
I sought them in a different place...

But still, I wander heaven  
and haven't found them.  
Have you seen my daughters?

IV.

Every time  
I wake up from a war, I wake up  
wet with sea water.

It's like how, as a girl,  
I would get up from my chair  
and there would be a ring of blood  
dripping from me, following me.

A thousand spirits wrestle me,  
pressing, trying to get inside,  
as if I'm a place of pilgrimage.  
But what about me tastes so good?  
And when will I find rest?

V.

*Okaa san! Okaa san!*  
The girl inside me cries.  
Sometimes, she is so  
young that all she knows  
to do is cry. Other times  
she apologizes for letting go  
of her brother in that *big*  
*black wave*, which is  
always coming—

The priest's wife must grab  
my hand and say, *Mummy's*  
*here. Let's go together.*  
Wherever together is,  
I do not know  
how comforting it can be.

But eventually, the girl says,  
*I can go on my own now.*  
*You can let go of me.*

I let go and wake up  
relieved, my body light.  
I remember who I am:  
a woman who is  
about to be married.

## VI.

Each person had  
eight minutes.

I don't know  
what Kaori was doing,  
but she was probably in  
a classroom somewhere,  
with all those children,  
and all that water—  
there must've been a lot  
of pushing. But what did it matter  
in the end? There were boats  
on top of buildings, there are still  
so many parents, looking  
through piles of debris  
for a familiar jacket, a signature  
hair cut or lunch box.

How do I tell Kaori's father  
about the twenty thousand bodies  
at the bottom of the ocean,  
his daughter who is perpetually dying  
inside of my mouth.

I was not there, but sometimes  
I see it in dreams: far away, the water  
arriving, then avalanching  
over houses, businesses, streets.

## VII.

My fiancé asks me  
what movie we should see.  
What movie *should* we see?  
Who cares? What about the girl  
who is unburied? And what  
about her family?  
What will happen to them?

Whenever I am with you,  
when we are walking to the store  
or going to the park, I see  
dead people in the sky, trees, concrete.  
Their stories fill my heads like birds,  
and there will never be enough  
cages to keep them at peace.  
They no longer fight to enter me,  
but sulk in the corners of my vision.

One day, when the sea dries up,  
everyone will see them there:  
huddled skeleton, and it will be  
like Pompeii—people will try  
to make up stories, understand  
what they were thinking  
when the water came—  
but only God and I will know.



# An Acte for the Punysshement of the Vice of Buggerie

Rajiv Mohabir

I.

An Acte for the punysshement of the vice of Buggerie (25 Hen. 8 c. 6)

25 Henry VIII. C6

Le Roy le veult

the British (enacted by the authority) take the coolies from India to work cane.

13 July 1898 the Mersey sails from Calcutta.

Vice: something unusual between two men, a movement under the sheets.

the rise and fall, swells (henceforth adjudged Felony) of the sea and semen.

Vice: two men under the same blanket in between ship decks.

Mohungu's penis (*the offenders as in cases*) inside Nabibaksh's anus.

*Confess to the Sardar* (power and authority within the limits of their commissions) *or I will beat you the entire voyage.*

Mohungu's penis (the King's Highness) inside Nabibaksh's anus.

Two coolies unusual and almost men if the British save the human.

Mohungu lying on his stomach (pains of death and losses) and Nabibaksh on his back

*I saw their babas were loose.*

## II.

### Translated Pages from Nabi Baksh's Diary Could He Write

The brahmins throw their threads off and die. We are inbetween, erased of home and without any belonging. On the ship I have no face. Rain washed the road of our footprints. My rice still rose above the water . . . [undecipherable] . . . when I lay with my wife. The shipboards swell logged in our sweat and fever. Folk songs curl the air as smoke; we burn on our pyres in the middle of the sea.

Above me, crepuscular, Nabi shows me his inversions: . . . [undecipherable] . . . reciprocals of the man. He taught me to morph into a peacock, into a blue footed booby, into an ass, into a whale. I humpback . . . [undecipherable] . . .

In the night comes Ram and throws open the blankets from my cot. Above . . . [undecipherable] . . .

. . . [undecipherable] . . .

On the mast they bind Mohungu's hands. Behind him a sardar looses his baba, his longota . . . [undecipherable] . . . Harrison Sahib shoots flames from his mouth. Between decks he roves the shadows at midnight to drink blood. Fiyah-raas. Fire in the ass if he catch you. He breathes on the poker and it red . . . [undecipherable] . . . red hot like hell. Hear dis man lund catch smoke. Burn and burn and burn and we are cattle to be branded, burned as bhusi-chaff. Not even as a kernel. Foreskin and head in blisters . . . [undecipherable] . . .

. . . [undecipherable] . . .

## III.

**Britton, i.10:** "Let enquiry also be made of those who feloniously in time of peace have burnt other's corn or houses, and those who are attainted thereof shall be burnt, so that they might be punished in like manner as they have offended. The same sentence shall be passed upon sorcerers, sorceresses, renegades, sodomists, and heretics publicly convicted"

[Britton, ed. F.M. Nichols, (Oxford: 1865), Vol 1:41-42 and Bailey, 146]

Why have you done this [gross] thing?  
*eeny meeny miney moe catch a coolie by the longota*  
Super vision of “youth’s universal sin”

\*

“Mohungu was the man who committed the act on Nabibuccus. I blistered him as a

*this little sodomite went to market*  
*this little sodomite had none*

preventative, as he might have attempted the act again. I have known cases where the

*push push push your boat gently up his stream*

penis has been blistered, as a preventative treatment, in case of Masturbation with boys.”

*ring around the rosy a pocket full of pansies*

(Surgeon Superintendent of the Mersey Arthur Harrison, Immigration department of British Guiana 4 November 1898)

#### IV.

*In 1885 Mr. Labouchere introduced an amendment to the Criminal Amendment Act of 1885. It read:*

**48&49 Vict. c.69, 11:** “Any male person who, in public or private, commits or is party to the commission of, or procures or attempts to procure the commission by any male person of any act of gross indecency with another male person, shall be guilty of a misdemeanour, and being convicted thereof shall be liable at the discretion of the Court to be imprisoned for any term not exceeding two years, with or without hard labour.”

Write Your Own Indian Indenture Era *SS Mersey* Christian Pastoral  
(with phrases in *italics* indentured from Foucault’s *The History of Sexuality*)

**Circle one of each class:**

Class 1

Desi, re (O Indian):

Hai baba (O father/loincloth):

Class 2

in the 'tween decks

on my knees

unlaced

*in the annex of mental illness*

Class 3

my face twists into waves

my teeth draw blood from my lip

my mouth opens looking up

I cannot open wide enough my throat

Class 4

forgive my act

I do not seek forgiveness for my act

*a habitual sin*

*not a singular nature*

Class 5

that disrupts the nation under you;

my craving

*effects of displacement*

*modification of desire for*

*a temporary aberration*

*now a new species*

Class 6

*there are not one but many silences;*

*enticements to talk.*

# Snow in Jersusalem

Sofi Cleveland

You buy me a hat for ten  
shekels. Why didn't I listen  
when you said it would be cold?  
Ha-Nevi'im Street I slip

on a patch of ice and  
fall for stories you  
tell me about sunken

ships. I go to a museum and  
touch everything. Thousand year  
old pottery feels the way I do  
when I stand under that last

remaining wall and  
find prayers written  
on old receipts.

Women hide their hair and turn  
it into a rare delicacy. My  
naked strands have become  
suddenly erotic and

you tuck them behind  
my ear as I fall  
asleep on the train.

I wake up to lick the Dead  
Sea from your skin and we swim  
under the hills of Jordan. Salt  
in my eyes—but only when

I begin to feel the  
weight of leaving:  
We fall in love

with places. I watch Lebanon  
darken from your bedroom  
window and wait for you to come  
home. I'm still waiting here but

this is the first place I have seen  
that is beautiful as it is dirty.

# Contributors

**Sofi Cleveland** is a part-time barista, cake maker, and surf photographer, and a full-time writer. She recently received her BA in English from the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa, and now lives near LA with her boyfriend. Sofi is seeking her MFA in poetry in the fall, and plans to move back to Hawai‘i someday to open a vegan bakery and café.

**Meg Eden**’s work has been published in various magazines, including Rattle, Drunken Boat, Eleven Eleven, and Rock & Sling. Her poem “Rumiko” won the 2015 Ian MacMillan award for poetry. Her collections include “Your Son” (The Florence Kahn Memorial Award), “Rotary Phones and Facebook” (Dancing Girl Press), and “The Girl Who Came Back” (Red Bird Chapbooks). She teaches at the University of Maryland. Check out her work at: [www.megedenbooks.com](http://www.megedenbooks.com)

**Donna Kaz** is a multigenre writer whose work has been seen at Harlem Stage, the New York Musical Theatre Festival and the Edinburgh Festival Fringe. She has been published in *Lilith*, *Turning Wheel*, *Trivia: Voices of Feminism*, *Western Press Books*, *Mason’s Road*, and *Step Away Magazine* (Pushcart Prize nomination). She has participated in residency fellowships at Yaddo, Djerassi, The Blue Mountain Center, CAP21, Wurlitzer, Ucross, and the Mesa Refuge. In 2014 she received an Elizabeth George Foundation grant for her memoir, *UN/MASKED*. MFA, Queens University of Charlotte. [donna-kaz.com](http://donna-kaz.com) @donna-kaz

**Abbey Seth Mayer** is a MA candidate in English and creative writing at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa. He received his BA in art with a concentration in painting from Yale College. Drawing inspiration from myth and canonical works from around the world, his work is often consumed by the beauty, fragility, and lightness of human and animal skins.

**Jeffery Ryan Long**: Day-to-day grinder and journeyman professional. Early morning runner and bicyclist. Hasn’t owned a car since 2010. Disc Jockey and record freak. Music head. Passionate about skilletts and Dutch ovens. *University and King* (first short story collection) available at Jelly’s Kaka‘ako and other fine online booksellers. For more information, visit [www.jefferyryanlong.com](http://www.jefferyryanlong.com).

Winner of the 2014 Intro Prize in Poetry by Four Way Books for his first full-length collection *The Taxidermist's Cut* (spring 2016), **Rajiv Mohabir** received fellowships from Voices of Our Nation's Artist foundation, Kundiman, and the American Institute of Indian Studies language program. His poetry and translations are internationally published or forthcoming from journals such as *Best American Poetry 2015*, *Prairie Schooner*, *Crab Orchard Review*, *Drunken Boat*, *Anti-*, *Great River Review*, *PANK*, and *Aufgabe*. He received his MFA in poetry and translation from Queens College, CUNY, where he was editor in chief of the *Ozone Park Literary Journal*. Currently he is pursuing a PhD in English from the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa.

**Leanne Trapedo Sims** was born in Johannesburg, South Africa, where she spent her "formative" years. A global citizen, lover of the arts and culinary, Leanne has spent many years as a community activist. She has relished multiple previous lives: from competitive ballroom dancer to food writer. She has now euphorically advanced to candidacy in the Department of American Studies at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, where she is writing her dissertation, *Hawai'i's Woman's Prison: The Role of the Kailua Prison Writing Project and the Prison Monologues as Expressive Pu'uhonua*. Her essay, "Dalia Carmel: A Menu of Food Memories," was published in *Pilaf*, *Pozole* and *Pad Thai: American Women and Ethnic Food*, 2001, University of Massachusetts Press. Her poetry has appeared in *TinFish*, *Oyez Review*, and *Midland Poetry Review*, and was exhibited at PS1 Contemporary Art Center, NYC.

**Rain Wright** is the author of "A Way with Water," winner of the 2014 University of Hawai'i at Mānoa Biography Prize. She writes creative nonfiction, poetry, and fiction. Rain is from Hawai'i island. Her work is heavily influenced by place, rhythm in language, and ideas of identity.



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