

*Jamie Asae FitzGerald*

*Leisure Time*

As bombs drop and destroy  
cities overseas,  
memories of children,  
landscapes of lives—  
I am home with a cold,  
nursing seasonal wounds.

For someone somewhere  
war is a reality and this,  
an unreal dream:  
the quiet rasp of a heater,  
news of other nations  
nothing more  
than a background noise.

*After Effect*

"Knowing love, I will allow all things  
to come and go, to be as subtle  
as the wind, and take all things  
with great courage. My heart  
is as open as the sky."

Ryan Vego, 1967–2000

For a moment I have found this place of repose,  
in the hush that falls after tragedy—  
in shorts and slippers out on the front stoop,  
warmth of the black-and-white cat seeping into my back.

I remember this calm after Ryan leaped from a cliff,  
an electrical cord around his neck. This act,  
that explained nothing, unearthed memories:  
his hair always going in the wrong direction,

one kiss in the Pacific Northwest winter,  
where breath was visible—the soul flying out  
of our mouths like the car exhaust  
swirled up in cold, silver plumes.

I thought of him hung in an arbor;  
moss-covered mother logs watching over him;  
ferns unwinding under his feet;

his cheeks, opalescent pink and green;

eyelashes, coated with metallic matter—  
not suspended from a cliff side

like a man crucified on rock,  
there for an early morning jogger to spot.

Everything was brighter then: people down the pews,  
clasping hands; light shining through chapel glass.  
Just as in this repose—the hush that falls after tragedy,  
the cat that leans into my back and takes the ache away.

### *Pepe's Garden*

This is the garden my grandfather built out of days of sun and  
rain squalls.

It is as much a part of him as his own body—flower of his hands,  
earth and flesh, root and tendon, vein and vein.

He merges with his garden unaware, yet so aware of every shriveling  
leaf and escaping root.

At least with plants, he knows death's coming before it arrives,  
and snips the vine in time.

He moves within it, just as the wind moves, touching everything.  
He and the plants, circle the same sun, some for fifty years  
or more, he for eighty-eight, photosynthesizing or taking their  
time in the hot, moist shade.

Around him, it's expiration and inspiration—a good-looking wahine,  
black locks pouring across shoulders, legs slipping out of a  
green pareo, oxygen lifting off her skin.

She reacts to his touch just as he reacts to a new bloom.

The same wind that blows the red anthurium, blows his baggy shorts  
across his withered legs.

He, a bonsai, carefully pruned by the mysterious hand of experience,  
branches stunted, bears the beauty of a harsh discipline.

His phallic cacti have grown so high, the old man's hair all  
white and light.

I love these large prickly cocks, their babies growing like worshippers  
at the feet of Buddha.

I love the hack hack of a machete and the snip of sheers.

How to keep roots off the ground?

How to keep a banyon moored in a pot, its white roots spilling  
out and contorting?

At the end of the street, behind the last house, a stream floods  
over lava rock and tangles itself in ferns and grasses where  
mosquitoes breed.

My grandfather goes to collect slick black stones that feel as  
good in the hand as cool lips on a hot cheek, stones that make  
sounds like sip and tuh when they touch, stones for laying on  
skin or a window ledge, in a vase for flowers or as my grandpa  
does in a stream of cement that runs under a miniature footbridge  
with re-bar handrails.

Impossible to describe the bonanza of life in a tract of just  
a few square feet.

Pot after pot, all cement, a metal gas tank turned sideways and

severed for planting, orchids hanging from chicken wire, from  
coconuts with one-quarter cut, Pele's hair hanging from the chopped  
branches of a lychee tree.

The winding path of his garden and swaying papyrus, their sprouts  
golden at the tips, a pony tail palm, the bush with the leaves  
that cut, papaya, avocado and mountain apple tree.

All that grows in the back grows free. All that grows in the  
front he keeps.

He's building the temple with his own hands.