

Leila Jacobs
“Edges,” “Glass Beach,” and “Some Distance”

Edges

The tea spills and burns,
flesh bristles with pain,
and my two pink lips become
numb as the twin gray pebbles
at the bottom of Salt Creek.
While small fish bit my toes,
I placed the rocks in my mouth.
They tasted of sand and silt, gritty
between my teeth like hard sugar.

Sycamore, cottonwood, alder,
duck weed, wild rose, frangipani,
honeysuckle— blooming almond-milk,
the delicate flowers with red centers
and white petals. They grow together
beside the banks, roots blending
with soil and water. Where they
touch is like a wound.

The river flows up
to my lips
from the ground.
It is boundary
and meeting point.
There was both
light and darkness
on the first day.

We are obsessed with edges.

Let's be personal.
Let's not speak of larger matters.
Let's find each other, face to face,
warming our hands over the teacups.

Glass Beach

Kauai

There is one car parked
on the hoary gravel.
From that car cracked
hands appear, and bare
feet, heels split, dusty.
Why is he fishing here,
of all places? Here
where back-blown
trees and old car parts
mingle in rocks made
of broken and polished
glass—the sea tumbling
it back to salt with
the emerald violence
of bruises.

He creeps out over
the glass without shoes.
His net in one hand,
a battered red hat
in the other, his shirt
yellowed and gaping.
The light wind flicks
the long collar
open and closed
over his dark, salty skin.
Here he steps out
on rusted hunks
of metal too far gone
to resemble anything.

Some Distance

I saw my face only once,
looking back
from that window between
light and darkness.

I was luminous, unearthly white
and silver,
like a bird's body in water.

It was a real face,
reflected through
our gold station-wagon's
windows against the moon.

The land lay out in dark hollows
on the right side of the car
spaced into small farms
where derelict cars waited for rust
to return them to earth

and the trees were blue black
against the gray light shadow
of the low moon, that was also myself

and the flocks of sheep gathered
through the tall, pad-topped weeds
repeating their call to themselves.
We waited for them to pass.

The stars seemed to cling
to my forehead,
grouped like fine beads.

I whispered into the glass
remember, remember, remember
so my mother couldn't hear me

but I could, and the moon,
the glass, earth,
and sky between us
can hear that steady whisper—

I am still waiting for it to pass.