

# Sayōnara

*by Alex Austin*

Ono watched the young woman draw the panties up her smooth legs. She turned her back to him as she disappeared the string between pink-hued cheeks. She had a small tattoo on her right shoulder, but without his glasses he was not sure if it was a flower or a face. He didn't want to see the woman clearly. He did not want to recognize her on the street. He wanted her to be no more substantial than a dream. He, himself, was not much more than a dream when they kneeled beside his bed and he touched them, pretending to paint them with his fingers. He painted a woman on them, identical to the woman that kneeled by his bed. She had no thought of him, this old man who paid more than was required, who offered her orange juice and goat cheese, who paused to write a note, to take a piss, to scratch a pimple on his sagging ass. Her clothes floated toward her. Shimmering. Shimmering.

“Is it a flower of a face?”

“Excuse me?”

“On your shoulder. Flower or face.”

“Oh. Mole.”

At the door, she stuck her tongue in his ear to clean out the wax. For an instant, he forgot whether she was leaving or arriving.

“Sayōnara,” she said, as if to remind him.

