

At Ho'okipa Point

by Gary Percesepe

She came with questions.

How much longer can we ignore the turtles?

This was last night.

I hadn't seen her for years.

You never come around anymore.

I live on Maui now, I told her.

Her voice was off.

I didn't know from turtles.

Maui, yeah. I know. Boring.

An impressive likeness of her

Jersey grrrl voice. Some new AI.

I bowed to the ache of her empty form.

Her neck was crooked and dusty.

In 2011 she had a baby.

The husband retreated to a shame
cave in Amangansett. Enter: Me.

She'd call at 3 am. Where are you?

Tribeca, she'd say,

her voice on fire.

What followed was a summary

of a book of circles she was writing
in her head. One night in Union Square

I walked her into rehab.

Do you remember the time

you asked me to marry you? Sure, I said.

I remembered that she didn't answer.

I'm sorry about not visiting before I moved.

That was crazy time, I said.

I hated the thought of her cold
in her grave. Earth is not a blanket
no matter what the poets say.

Turtles are not like snails.

Her teeth had rotted but she
flashed a bony smile
*Snails leave traces of their insides
when they move through your garden.*

*Turtles live in anxious homes they build
around themselves.*

I drove to Ho'okipa Beach.
Twenty turtles plopped in the sun.
One straggler waited in the wash for the next wave
to carry him to the sheltering rocks.
The others dried their shells in the brutal sun
to kill the algae. I waited for her return by the sea
until dark, listening to the North Pacific's
ghostly groundwater of lamentation
praise and laughter.

