

Scared Of Paradise

by Jennifer Donnell

In Hawaii, you sit on the shore of that beach you always meant to take me to. The one you wrote about in messages while on a work trip, when you were boozy and wished your phone could transport me to you. I guess you missed me then, but we never talked about that. We discussed the kids or the bills, or the bills and the kids.

In current time, you stare appreciatively as she rests her small knees against yours, just so. Her green skin illuminated by straight shark black hair and you fantasize she's a mermaid who could swim the ocean straight through. You think about how, if I had come with you, back then, I would have worn a life vest, while she dives under a wave and you catch her small childless frame, childlike. She thinks you like puppies and cupcakes and want to live on a farm and, well, maybe you do. It must feel nice being someone who likes stuff, while I could produce a list of the things you loathe- cats, interruptions, change.

My skin is still the blue of ocean and my warm bath feels as good as Hawaii probably would. You always said I was veiny, even at nineteen, and asked if I used drugs, but I told you my only drugs were life and love. Even then, you knew the patterns of my freckles, as if you memorized my every detail but not my why.

And perhaps that is what love is. Was it?

I lie in bed waiting for the man who came after you to join me. I hear his heavy footsteps and know he wants me to go to Hawaii too, when our budget allows, since you got all the money and I got a new life.

I feel like I've lived two lives and in each one I'm scared of paradise.

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