

Da Capo

by Kari Nguyen

The three sisters stood atop the crag, awaiting the end of the world. It had been told. Their bodies, ripe uncovered flesh, had begun to erode, the edges of their limbs and cores bitten, taken by the wind in small pieces, flaking and tearing, some parts sliding, falling away. The beach below eroded with them, and more urgently. The sand carried off through the air and the grains that remained sank into themselves, knowing what was to come, slinking and hiding. The receding sand unearthed more of the crags, seeming to raise the sisters closer to the sun. With nothing left to expose, however, the sun had withdrawn. The sky remained, for a time, casting shadows.

The women looked for the waves. They sat on the crag. They pulled close, protecting themselves from the breeze, turned colder. Their skin prickled with blown sand. They were struck by the way the world melted and shifted around them. They had no say. They never did.

A lull came in the breeze, in the shifting, through the silence. It brought with it a soft, delicate sound, something familiar, a thing once lost. Not knowing if it had been playing all along or if it had just struck up, the sisters pulled themselves to standing, steadying one another, their bare feet gripping the stone beneath them. They began to climb down, their limbs unsteady, legs and arms scraping the rock as they descended. As they dropped to the beach floor, they followed the sound, noting the lack of sand, of seaweed, of life. It seemed they were the only ones to hear.

The music, far-off sounding, dim and tinny, sharpened as the sisters approached. The sound grew, deepening, arresting the air to stillness. The sisters drew near, seeing the instruments, only skins of themselves now but still recognizable.

It was the last song.

It was time standing.

Discarded from another era, the instruments played. The harmony drifted upwards as the giant waves came crashing onto the beach.

One last song for the world. A siren song, drawing the final storm.
The sisters held hands, their fingers breaking and crumbling in one
another's grasp, their bodies full of music.

