

Weather Forecasting

by Katrina Dessavre

By the time the forked tongue of the flag extended flat like it was pressed between two of my thick volumes on weather forecasting, the man was still walking with his nose glued to the ground. It's no use, I wanted to yell out to him from the window of my cottage. You'll never vacuum up all that sand, or find the rare metals you're looking for. I suppose that wasn't the point for him, that he was in it for the hunt, for the experience of being alone on a beach, for pursuit masking a need to hide.

He didn't seem to notice that the small trees lining the beach began to sway. I could hear their leaves rustling even through the thick logs of the cottage, built for storms like the one brewing. As I watched the crested wavelets forming along the shoreline, a sudden panic gripped me and I almost opened the door. I imagined Sarah running towards those wavelets when she was so small they came up to her neck. I imagined her laughing and wading deeper until her feet came off the ocean floor and the current took over. All the while I was on my back a little way inland, watching the trees shake in the wind and form patterns that I turned into an army of butterflies. What a price to pay for an everyday daydream. I loosed that army to look for Sarah and they combed the waters for her, drowning in the effort as soon as their delicate wings touched the surface.

I could see now that it all it would take was a strong current and a lick of a wave. Had the man been a sturdy type, I would have shut my curtains and listened to the symphony of destruction. But he looked too frail to resist.

I pounded on my window but he didn't look up. Cursing myself for caring in the first place, I put on my windbreaker and boots, my hat that mercifully flattened my graying hair and covered my ears. I opened the door and momentary felt it ruffling papers before I bolted it shut. At first I thought that the metal detector lying in the sand meant that the man had abandoned it and run for shelter. But there was nowhere he could have run and hidden so quickly. The

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shoreline was barren in both directions, smoothed by rough weather.

I waded into the water, certain that he had felt the same urge to flirt with danger that Sarah had. I let the current tug at me, water slipping into the crevices between my windbreaker. I wanted to know what it felt like, to feel so unafraid that I could throw myself recklessly into the unknown, or pursue a foolish quest for gold hidden underground. As I let the current take me and the shoreline recede, I caught a glimpse that surpassed even my too-wild imagination: arms and legs extended horizontally, mirroring the flag above them, just like the man was pressed between my thick volumes on weather forecasting.

