

A Knobby Thing

by Michelle Elvy

She reclines in her window seat, sees the starboard prop whirring superfast, looking slo-mo. She closes her eyes and drifts back to yesterday, the last day of everything, 80-hour work-weeks, devoted dull boyfriend, pet cat (a gift) she secretly hates. She brings her thumb to teeth, gnaws where there's nothing left to gnaw, sorrowful nails bitten down to nothing. She feels ugly but ready for anything.

The wheels touch down and she gathers her things, spits cuticle out the side of her mouth, *thp*. She steps out into air so hot she's sure she'll never be able to breathe here. Then she inhales deeply and instead of feeling oxygen hitting lungs, she *tastes* it -- floral and citrus, sweaty and sweet. The first breath is as miraculous and jarring as the one she took some thirty-three years back. She almost cries out, too: the punch of this new world hits her hard.

She wanders along Main Street, spots the trademarked arches garish and gold against this landscape, jutting up amongst dusty buildings and peeling paint -- an echo of her old world. She longs for its familiar cool, then spies a small market across the street. Locals laugh, handle fruits she's never seen or heard of. She goes to the first long table, eyeballs a knobby thing, large and green, asks a dark woman with droopy breasts and happy eyes, "Quest-ce que ce?" The woman answers, "Breadfruit, love." She picks it up, smiles, thinks she'll give it a try.

