

Latitude Adjustment

by Michelle Elvy

Down South was always home,
mint tea and my brother and me
skipping stones in the creek
out behind Papa's house,
while Patti knitted sweaters
for winters that never got too cold.

Now the world's on its head;
tea is dinner and Papa is dead.
Creek dry, house sold, and
my brother and me skipping
birthdays 'cause we feel old.

I bought a map and drove all over
but I still don't know
if I'll ever get used to
looking right and shifting left,
or finding the sun obliging us obliquely
as she squats low, old and tired,
to the North.

My birthday's tomorrow. Used to be
we'd suck crablegs and chug Rolling Rocks;
we were summer babies, Robbie and me.
Now I'm wearing extra socks
And wishing my ma were here
But I know she won't come:
she'd have to buy a new coat.

Down South now means August cold snap,

Available online at *<<http://fictionaut.com/stories/michelle-elvy/latitude-adjustment>>*

Copyright © 2010 Michelle Elvy. All rights reserved.

the forties roaring my wool cap
off my head. This island's my home now,
ol' Stewart sees to it
that I open my heart somehow
and throw my anchor down
and stay:
Kia Ora, as they say.

And I will: no one dragged me here,
sailed in on my own Pegasus
and fell in love with more wilderness
than I ever knew existed.
But on my birthday I'll drink
my usual bourbon and hear
the ice in glasses, tink-tink,
as I see my ma pour one more
Julep from her cracked pottery jug,
for me.

And I'll smell the mint and hear
Robbie's big man-laugh and wonder
why he moved to Canada.
And I'll feel
Papa's creekmud between my toes,
and I'll face east and dream
of going North.

