

Sleeping late in Cahuita, Costa Rica

by Steven Pirani

The light of day is screaming,
shook by the calls of howler monkeys,
their low roar hanging in the salt,
in the black sand riding the wind,
as Playa Negra outstretches its infinite arms.

There is a river of sweat between my shoulders
a pile of *mamon* rinds next to my bed,
and through the branches I see
a shy peach ripening the sky -

It is dawn
and I do not believe this town exists in time
but somewhere between two inexplicables,
like a paint swatch, missing entirely,
a color too subtle for a name.

I hear a dog bark in the road,
and the first dirtbike, kicking up dust.
Over me, a ghost:
My mosquito net, heaving against the breath of my fan.

I admit:
I have scratched my gringo ankles bloody
and I have crushed many wings in the dark.

A wave breaks across the street,
over a dead reef I clung to the morning before.
Any other time, it would be thunder,
any other morning, I'd be sleeping.

A gecko, finger-sized, darts from the curtains,
and an orchestra of birds sings in the day.
Cahuita takes a breath in between waves
as the howlers vanish into the fronds.

It will rain in the afternoon,
from gray, hulking clouds
and the trees will dance
in the green sea that is this city,
the green sea that fearlessly meets the ocean.

A vendor calls into the street,
"Haaaaaay tomatoes!"
and I outstretch my arms,
then turn my shoulder into the mattress
and vanish into sleep.

