



Water Is Everywhere

nonfiction

Karissa Knox Sorrell

There was a smell in the air, when it would flood. Like damp rags, or a slightly moldy basement. It wasn't quite a stench. We stood in our gazebo and watched the rain pour, its mist rising above the sharp aloe plants. The barrels were overflowing, water pooling at their bases. The mango tree bent in the wind, and afterward we crossed the yard barefoot to collect the mangoes that had fallen. They were so soaked they crushed into mush in our hands. We walked around to the back of the house where our maid lived to see if she could use the soggy mangoes for something. Our feet were slick with mud up to our ankles, and our mother made us wash off with the hose before we could come in the house. The soi filled with water, so there was no school because the school buses couldn't get through. Instead we waded in the soi with the Thai kids, sloshing and splashing in the brownish water. We tried to play badminton without letting the birdie hit the water. It was nearly impossible. I kept losing the birdie in the floodwater, and you kept coming over to help me search for it, your hands dipping down and coming up again and again, the murky water bleeding through your fingers.

In the winter, we went to the beach for vacation. Now the air smelled of salt, and when the breeze blew in my face, I squinted from the sting.

Mornings: The tide would be out, and the wide expanse of sand would be full of treasures, all that underfoot mystery exposed. We'd search for unique seashells, sand dollars, scuttling crabs, dead jellyfish. The sand dollars, we'd throw back into the ocean hoping they'd survive. Except that one time, when we both wanted to keep one—just one—to see what it would look like when it dried up. We made a pact not to tell anyone. And we let the sand dollar die and shrivel in your desk drawer.

Afternoons: I remember the soft grittiness of sand across my thigh from kneeling to make a sand castle. It couldn't be rubbed off, no matter how hard I tried. I had to run into the water and let it soak away. You chased me, and we swam out as far as we dared. I was always afraid of not being able to touch the bottom with my toes, at least. And there we would stand, looking out over that oneness that the sky and sea had become, feeling our bodies melt into the molecules all around us, inhabiting the air and water that held us. Finally, we would turn around and face earth again, letting the waves slowly push us back toward solid ground.

Mornings: You didn't belong on solid ground. You were always one to jump into the depths, not caring if you could touch the bottom or not. You were brave, much braver than I ever was. For you, every moment was a celebration. You thought that joy was invincible. We all did.



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We brought you back. Back to a country that was not your home, so we could be near you, so we could have a place in which to remember. But we should have buried you there, by the sea. Where the atoms could sing of you. Where the sea-salt air could carry your spirit into itself.

Afterward: You float farther and farther from me, until you become one of the churning waves. I write about you as if you are still real, but I have forgotten you, the real you. I have memory you, but real you is beyond me now. The years since are too many and have made you shadowed. But memory you lives in my memory of the water, which is everywhere: in the air, in the snow, in the leaves, in the sand, in my breath, in my cells, in my bones.



Karissa Knox Sorrell is a writer and educator from Nashville, Tennessee. She lived in Bangkok, Thailand from the ages of 11 to 18. Her writing has been published in a variety of places, including *San Pedro River Review*, *Flycatcher*, *Parable Press Magazine*, *St. Katherine Review*, *Cactus Heart*, and *Catapult Magazine*. Karissa works with ESOL teachers and is currently writing a memoir. She blogs at <http://karissaknoxsorrell.com>. Follow her on Twitter@kksorrell.