



The Summerset Review

Summer 2004

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## Table of Contents



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[Download in PDF format](#)

[Editors' Notes](#)

[Anywhere](#) - a story by **Michael F. Smith**

[El Paraiso](#) - a story by **Mark Vender**

[Kon Tiki](#) - an essay by **Karen Kasaba**

[About Ai](#) - a story by **Court Merrigan**

[Contributors' Notes](#)

[Guidelines for Submissions](#)

[Previous Issues](#)

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# The Somerset Review

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## Editors' Notes

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After taking a step back and looking at the stories we've selected for this issue, we found something mildly amusing: none of them are set anywhere near us; they are spread about the world and speak of individual cultures and varieties we sometimes may have only wondered about. One thing, though, rings true, regardless of their locale—the human element is universal, the people you and I know, those living in the same town as us, and perhaps even we ourselves, might very well be associated to the characters in these stories.

In "Anywhere," by Michael F. Smith, there is something wrong in a Paris museum, but not only the French will identify with the fight and the struggle and the yearning for resolution. Chris Ludlow's artwork, "Clock Detail, Musee d'Orsay," compliments the piece with its haunting foreground of time ticking on, black and foreboding, providing glimpses of the great, but unknown, beyond.

In Mark Vendor's "El Paraiso," a washing machine is due to be delivered to a deserving family in Columbia. The story explores many elements: charity, trust, responsibility, the needs of the needy, and the perspectives of what paradise really is. "In paradise, locals smile and wave and bougainvilleas spill off colonial balconies simply because it is in their nature. The web of life is perfect whether you are there or not. And you lose yourself in it—vanish from the map."

Another form of paradise might be synthetic in nature, and Karen Kasaba's essay, "Kon Tiki," takes us to the man-made tropical grottos, Naugahyde booths, and illuminated waterfalls of a Hawaiian hotel. There's a unique perspective of things Polynesian here, and it may make you wonder how much of the real is real, and how much of the fake is fake.

And finally, Court Merrigan's story, "About Ai," touches on a Japanese family, a daughter who goes out too much, a father and a mother busy making ends meet, and a certain trouble that arises in the midst of it all. Ai's story is a sad one and reaches far beyond the Far East.

Once again, we would like to thank our contributors and all those who submitted fine work for consideration in this Summer issue of The Somerset Review.

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Joseph Levens – Editor  
Amy Leigh Owen – Assistant Editor  
S. Malkah Cohen – Assistant Editor

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The journal is located at <http://www.summersetreview.org>. All correspondence and submissions should be emailed to [editor@summersetvreview.org](mailto:editor@summersetvreview.org). Postal mailing address, should you choose to correspond via hard-copy, is: 25 Summerset Dr., Smithtown, NY 11787. Guidelines and recommended reading are on the web site. All material is copyrighted and republication or redistribution should not be done without written permission granted by the originator.

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## The Summerset Review

# The Summerset Review

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Anywhere  
by  
Michael F.  
Smith



When it comes you will know it, when it comes you will know it, I kept saying to myself. It came and went and I didn't know it until two stops past. I had counted before I got on the metro. Eight stops. And I counted because I wasn't able to see the signs on the wall in the metro halls, the bodies crammed together, a mob of Parisian heads surrounding me and crowding the door in the evening's busiest hour. So I counted and stood in the middle and subtracted one at each stop. I had three to go and that's when I began repeating, when it comes you will know it. And then I started thinking about Estelle at home in the apartment, sitting next to the telephone, organizing our flyer campaign for high-traffic street corners and bus stops and metro lines and now I realize I'm two stops past and goddamn it.

The plan was for me to be in prime position to hand out the flyers in the Gare du Nord metro station before the six o'clock crowd, but I stopped for a drink that became five. Estelle won't know, though. She won't leave that phone in case the police call and she trusts me to do this right but I had to have a drink. You can't help but have a goddamn drink before you go into the metro with a stack of orange flyers that have a picture of your nine-year-old daughter in the middle, surrounded with AIDEZ-NOUS A RETROUVER JENNIFER written in bold black letters. You just can't help it.

I bump past people blocking the door at the rue Monmartre stop. It takes going up and down stairs and through a rounded hallway to get to the other side of the tracks. People are everywhere and in a steady shuffle, ready to get home, put up their feet, have their dinner, read their paper. The train arrives and this time I concentrate, get on late so I can stand near the door, see out of the window. Back two stops to Gare du Nord where five metro lines and half of Paris collide and there is every kind of face—old, pretty, tired, laughing, cynical, white, brown, round, thin, childish, hollow. No matches for Jennifer. No little girl with thin, wavy hair and brown eyes, wearing jeans and a pink backpack and her heavy coat. Two months and nothing. Two months of her dancing in my head in this outfit. I stop at the foot of the escalator where people cluster in a pack of impatience and pass out the orange flyers. Some take, some ignore, probably think I'm promoting the new Fascism or recruiting for a cult. The ones that take fold and stuff it without looking, maybe will find it later when they reach into their pockets or purses as they pay for bread on the walk home, will say to themselves, "Where did this come from?" And I wonder the same. This day, this moment, this getting here, this standing at the escalator. Where did this come from? This slow, slow ticking of the clock. The crowd thins as the time between trains expands and out of a stack of two hundred flyers, I keep five to post on the exits that lead up into the streets.

I get onto the escalator and the woman on the step in front of me sees what I'm holding and says, "I have seen this. On the news. You haven't found her yet?"

I shake my head and say, "Not yet."

"You should go on television again," she says and turns away. I feel confident that if universal law allowed it, I could put my hands around her neck and choke her until her mouth was dry.

The walkways' and intersections' exits and entrances are organized chaos and I almost get knocked down over and over working my way through the traffic. When I'm done sticking up the last one, I look at my watch and time for thirty seconds, then count how many people look at our flyer.

Two. Which is up one from last week when I posted at Gare de L'Est.

I get on the metro and head back home. At the café on the end of my street, Monsieur Conrer serves me another drink and when I go into the apartment Estelle is perched on a stool next to the phone in the kitchen, cigarette in one hand and red marker in the other. She looks up, smokes, then says, "How'd it go?"



We have stopped sleeping in the same room because we don't sleep. Estelle takes the couch and I lay in the bedroom. I hear her all hours of the night—pacing, opening the

refrigerator door, changing channels. I try to trick myself into sleeping by imagining we're on a long vacation and Jennifer is left behind with friends. Sometimes Estelle will come into the bedroom and crawl over close to me, rest her head on my chest, curl herself into a ball. She is a combination of smells—of perfume, of cigarettes, of coffee. But she doesn't ever stay curled next to me for long.

I have tried to go into Jennifer's room and make her bed, put her shoes away in the closet, close the teen fashion magazine lying open on her nightstand. I had laughed when she held it to me in the bookstore and said she needed it. "Need? Nine is a single digit number. That information is for girls with double-digit birthdays." She looked down at it, ran her hand across the glossy cover, as if she could feel herself in the perfect face staring back at her. "Let's just pretend I'm twelve," she said. I took it and made her promise not to tell her mother. Which she did the moment we walked in the apartment. Later that night, with Jennifer asleep between us on the couch, Estelle had reached over and playfully smacked the back of my head and said, "Don't rush her."

So I go into the room, but tiptoe around the way it is, careful not to disrupt her life. We keep the door half-open, giving ourselves a glimpse of what we're waiting on when we walk down the hallway.

Even life upside down has its routine. Estelle stays at home on high-alert but I have to go to work because the earth keeps spinning. My co-workers can't figure out how to treat me. Too normal and they risk apathy. Too sympathetic and they become patronizing. What I get is overly cautious smiles when I'm handed a fax or offered a smoke or asked about something I should have done already. Hidden sympathy in tiny gestures that I appreciate but I would rather them kick a hole in the side of my desk and scream, "What the fuck is the world coming to!"



This is the story we were told—Jennifer's class went to the Musee d'Orsay with their teacher and a volunteer parent. You see such field trips around Paris daily. She was there as they sat in a circle in front of a Van Gogh. She was there as they sat in a circle in front of a Cezanne. She was there when they ate their sack lunches in the courtyard. She was not there when they counted heads to walk to the bus stop to go back to school. She was not there as the teacher retraced their footsteps. She was not in the bathroom. She was not in the gift shop. She was not in the snack area buying a chocolate bar (which she had a tendency to do on field trips). She was not anywhere.

And still, she is not anywhere. How can a person not be anywhere? I don't know. But she is.

Our flyer campaign is in full swing and twice a week after work, I go through the same routine I went through at Gare du Nord. We change colors from orange to yellow. Estelle thinks they are easier to read in passing. We go to a larger size paper. We move the telephone numbers of our apartment and of our detective from the bottom to the top.

I have done my duty at the Place d'Italie metro station and stop at the café on our street. It's winter and dark at 6:30, the lights from the shops glowing yellow in the early night. I know Estelle is waiting but I can't go up, not yet ready to hide my despair. Monsieur Conrer has a glass of whiskey waiting for me as I come in.

"Where today?" he says as I sit down at the bar.

"Place d'Italie."

"A good spot. Something will happen," he says. His hair is thin and silver and his shoulders slump. He has his own children and grandchildren and he has cried for us. It happened a week after Jennifer disappeared. I talked Estelle out of the apartment on a Saturday afternoon and we came and sat here at the table by the window. We had a carafe of wine and I got up to go to the bathroom. When I came back, M. Conrer was sitting with Estelle, they held hands across the table, and they both cried quietly. I

stepped back into the bathroom and watched through the cracked door until they were finished. Ever since, this is one of the few places she will go. He tells me everyday we're one day closer to having Jennifer home. I drink the first whiskey and ask for another.

"Estelle came in for lunch today," he says.

I hear him but I don't answer. He lays his pack of cigarettes in front of me and I take one.

This time, when he tells me we're one day closer, I say, "The chances are dying by the minute."

"Don't think like that."

"That's the least of what I think."

"Don't think that either," he says.

But I have. And I do. Is there only one? Or two or four, or do they rotate, charge a fee, bring them down a thin alley, into a short door, sell her off in ten minute intervals. Are there women too? And if there are... I don't want to but I think it. I pray to God that she can at least be given a civil abduction. M. Conrer reaches over with the bottle and makes it a double. Then the bell on the door jingles and Estelle walks in and takes a stool beside me.

"Detective Marceau called and said he has seen the flyers and that we're doing a good job," she says and this has given her a satisfaction, a hope that I notice in her eyebrows.

"Good. Did he say anything else?"

"Only that they're working hard. And that maybe we should up the reward." She takes a cigarette from M. Conrer's pack. "Was Place d'Italie a very busy spot?"

No, it wasn't.

"Yeah, pretty busy," I say.

"Can we go up to thirty thousand?"

We started at fifteen. After a month we went to twenty. "Whatever we need to do," I say and make the mistake of sighing.

"That didn't sound very convincing."

"I said whatever we need to do."

"It's the way you said it."

"Estelle. A million. I don't care. I'm on your side."

"Don't talk to me like that," she says and throws her cigarette at me. "Maybe we should just quit. Just fucking quit and move away and act like we never had a daughter."

"Gimme a goddamn break. I'm tired."

"And I'm not?" she says and bangs her fist on the bar. Then she's up and crying before she can get out of the door.

I knock off my drink and ask for another.

"Aren't you going up to her?" M. Conrer says.

"Why don't you?" I shake my head, then point at the empty glass. "I don't know what I'm doing," I say. "Just let me sit." And as I watch him move to other customers, offer matches, chat about the weather, I wonder if he would be so certain, so comforting, if one of his children were forever nine years old.



M. Conrer finally tells me he's not pouring anymore, so I leave and take the metro to St. Michel. I thought whiskey warmed you but I'm freezing as the wind blows through my light jacket and I move up rue St. Severin through the neon and smell of lamb. I make my way through the Latin Quarter and to the river and walk along the sidewalk.

Nighttime dinner cruises ease by, waiters in tuxedos delivering wine and salads to the tables of the brightly lit cabins. A white foam trailing the boats. A misty rain starting to fall. I reach Pont des Arts and the lights of Paris—the high-priced apartments lining the river, the illumination of Notre Dame behind me, the way the spotlights of the Louvre reach into the clouds—even in the damp night they are golden, something heavenly. I have stood here with Jennifer and once, as she looked down into the river and what surrounded us, she said, "If I jumped I bet I could fly." Then she thought about it and said, "Or probably drown." I figured she was too light to drown, but fly, maybe. And I said, "I feel certain you'd fly but let's not try it today." She held out her arms and swayed. "Like this," she had said. "I'd fly like this."

I turn up the collar on my coat and walk towards Musee D'Orsay.

It's several blocks, time enough for the mist to wet my face and dampen my hair. Estelle and I walked this neighborhood for days, in all directions from the museum, looking for Jennifer's backpack or barrette or ID card. She's a smart little girl. Smart enough to leave a sign. But we aren't smart enough to find it. On the sidewalk along the river is a bench that faces the front doors of the museum and I think if I sit there long enough, Jennifer will come around the corner, or stick her head from around a tree and say, 'Ha! Remember that time you grounded me for stealing your cigars and selling them on the playground? Got you back!'

I move along through the mist and when I get to the bench, it's already occupied. With Estelle.

"Can I sit down?" I ask.

She looks up and says, "The way you wobbled along the sidewalk, you'd probably better."

She's more prepared for the night than I am, bundled in a thick flannel coat and her neck wrapped in a scarf. She sits slumped with her arms folded and hands tucked under her armpits.

"Been here long?" I ask.

"Hour or so."

"Still hate me?"

She sits up straight. "Not really."

"What the fuck is the world coming to?" I say. It sounds just like I wanted it to.

"It's come and gone, I think. It passed into Shitsville when we weren't looking."

"Shitsville, huh?"

We know better than to laugh but we do and it's as if this is the first joke we've ever shared. Like a long forgotten memory that you thought was gone. She moves closer to me and I put my arm around her.

"You smell like a bottle," she says.

"But I'm O.K. Where do we post tomorrow?"

"Nowhere. We're out of flyers. It'll be day after tomorrow before our next order is ready," she says, then she slides down and puts her head in my lap and feet up on the bench. The mist turns into a drizzle but the wind has died. She closes her eyes, and I

watch people walk back in forth in front of Musee D'Orsay. They look up and around, cup their hands and peek into the lobby, tourists who believe museums keep mini-mart hours. I brush the wet hair away from Estelle's face, touch the wrinkles in her forehead. I ask her if she wants to get out of the weather but she says, "No. It feels good." I lay my head back, listen to the traffic, listen to the river. The days, the weeks. Now the months. It's heavy and I'm almost out when Estelle sits up and softly slaps my cheek.

"Wake up," she says. Her dark hair is flat on her head and she licks the moistness from her upper lip. "Let's go get drunk somewhere. Somewhere close before I change my mind."

"Fine," I say. "But I've got a head start."

"I'll catch you."

She stands, takes my hand and pulls me to my feet. We walk back towards St. Michel, where we'll find a warm seat in a café at a table for two in a back corner. Where we'll spend more than we want to. Where we'll drink and smoke and throw out meaningless comments about the music or the waitress's shoes. Where we'll talk ourselves into expectation.



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## The Sunset Review

## El Paraíso



by Mark Vender

In the tropics, they recognize midday not by the clocks, but by the absence of shadow. For one hour, the sun burns down vertically on heads, shoulders and toes, and those foolish enough to be caught in the streets pay the penalty in sweat. Those who know better take shelter.

When the clock strikes twelve today, I am ensconced in an air-conditioned Internet cafe, reading this week's missive from my friend and former traveler Erhard Blum, now a one-man international charity machine. From Hamburg, he writes:

We have collected enough money to buy a washing machine for the family of Arturo Fernandez. If you are still in Cartagena, please visit the family and make sure they have electricity and running water. It makes no sense buying them a washing machine if they use it as a piece of furniture.

As it happens I am still in Cartagena, after a search for paradise—el paraíso—led me here. Here, where the torpid Caribbean laps against 500-year-old fort city walls, where the beauty queen of Colombia is crowned once a year and fat negresses carry steel baskets of coconut cakes on their heads. And the sun sets. It was the sunsets that finally seduced me; the city nestled against a silver sea, under a sky the color of a split papaya.

I call Edwin—my partner in charity—and together we catch a taxi to Olaya, one of the

poorer barrios in Cartagena. As we get closer, the road begins to deteriorate. I notice the proliferation of potholes first, then whole sections of bitumen peeling away like cracked paint. In Olaya the paved road ends altogether, along with the street signs. But Edwin is a local and knows where the family lives. He grunts lefts and rights to the taxi driver, who negotiates the undulations in the clay streets by rolling slowly from one side of the road to the other.

When we arrive, the yard is full of children, kids from the neighboring houses whose parents are out working. We can see them playing on the bare earth through the wire fence that surrounds the house. I stoop under the frame of the wooden gate and the children stop and stare at me, taking in my height and strange clothes. The pale skin between my shorts and sandals patently fascinates them.

Edwin introduces me to the family. There is the mother, hanging wash on the line. There is a son-in-law with rare blue eyes fixing a car radio. There are the children—too many to count or name—and then there is Arturo sitting limply in a metal chair. When he sees us, he smiles widely. The mother picks up a cloth and wipes drool from the side of his mouth.

Arturo is fourteen years old and has a condition that affects the muscles in his legs, arms and face. He can't walk or talk. His hands are contorted inwards so he can't use sign language either. It's unlikely Arturo understands much of what we say, but he does seem happy to see us.

Edwin gestures towards a wooden shed. "This is the house." Inside, he translates the mother's thick Costeña accent while she gives us the grand tour. "Kitchen, living room, communal bedroom. And that's the wheelchair we bought for Arturo a couple of months ago." Modern and metallic, it looks out of place leaning against the wooden boards of the wall.

"It's either extremely well looked after, or never used," I say, running my finger down the armrest, thinking about the roads in the barrio and Arturo's useless arms.

"There's a space for the washing machine here." Edwin marks the area with his foot. "And there's a power point in the corner. There are blackouts most days, but the rest of the time they have electricity."

"Agua?" I ask the mother.

She leads us outside to a tap and turns it on to show us the running water. "There's no way of connecting it to the machine," Edwin says, "but the mother can fill a bucket with water and carry it inside. Three or four buckets and she'll be able to do a load of washing."

"Is there a drain?" I ask.

"It looks like the best thing will be to let it drain out onto the street. The only other way they can get rid of water and sewage is to take it down to the lagoon. La Ciénaga de la Virgen."

"La Ciénaga de la Virgen." I test the words in my mouth.

"Por allá," the mother says, pointing the way.

By way of proof, an ill wind floats over from that direction. While I cover my nose, the others laugh.

"You should be here when it rains," Edwin says, "then it's really unbearable."

But at least for today it's all blue skies. We finish the visit and say goodbye to everyone with a smile and a wave. Everyone is smiling, especially Arturo. And just like that, we've created hope.

Now we have to make sure we don't let them down.

As we roll out of the barrio in the taxi, past staring locals, Edwin and I talk about the plan in more detail. We discuss the benefits. Washing clothes for money is the mother's main source of income so the machine could save her a lot of work. Then we discuss

the risks. The mother doesn't know how to operate a washing machine. She might use the wrong washing powder, overload the machine, or leave it out in the rain. Or the family might sell it.

If only it were a matter of throwing money at the problem. But even if we put all our money in a big bag and left it in the Plaza Santa Domingo for everyone to share, it wouldn't make a difference. The next day the sun would rise over a beach studded with a few more empty rum bottles and shine through the windows of the houses onto a few more sore heads. Then the city would wake up and begin crawling through the heat, like it always does.



Over the next week, a triangle of communication opens up between Edwin, Erhard and myself. We air our concerns about giving the family something that they will not use properly and I point out that the wheelchair doesn't seem to have left the house.

More than that, I wonder how much of what we're doing is helping the Fernandez family and how much is assuaging our own guilt. I mean, it's not like any of this is our fault, but sometimes when you're sitting in the Plaza San Diego, drinking in the humid beauty of the old city with a cold beer, you can't help but think about Arturo's family in Olaya, the electricity gone again, the smell of the barrio's shit drifting through the house, and all of them hungry.

In the end Erhard makes the call. We go ahead and buy it.

Two weeks later Erhard writes again:

I would like you to visit Arturo and see how is the family and the washing machine. Also, I want you to mark the machine as an official donation.

This is part support and part prevention; by marking the machine we make sure the family can't sell it on. Edwin and I find some paint and a paintbrush and head out to Olaya.

It's hotter today, and the smell is worse. Arturo is smiling like always. He smiles more than the man who pushes a wheelbarrow of watermelons through the barrio, more than anyone else in his family. He smiles more than I do.

They're putting away the washing machine as we arrive—sliding it back into its box with the Styrofoam packing. They say that they put it away like this after every time they use it and being here with the family, it's suddenly much easier to believe them. I want to take back my thoughts about the wheelchair, even as I carefully paint the letters onto the machine: "Donación de la Casa Aleman." Translation: "We do not trust you."

But I don't feel bad for long. A recollection of the times I've been ripped off since arriving reminds me that you have to walk a line between skepticism and generosity. Blame all the thieves who have taken advantage of tourists. You can't measure the damage in terms of the value of the goods and money they steal. That doesn't even begin to cover it.

My thoughts are interrupted by Edwin, who comes in from the yard, cursing. "The family are having a problem with Arturo's doctors," he says. "Turns out the names on some of his documents don't match, so they won't give him medicine or treatment anymore. They can change the documents at the notary, but it'll cost more than the family earns in a month."

I look up at Edwin, my paintbrush halfway through an N.

"I've told them that we'll all go to the notary tomorrow," he continues quickly, "to see if we can find a solution."



I get to the clock tower at 9am. The heat is already oppressive enough to make me sweat standing still. Sweat never figured in my visions of paradise. In paradise, you do not sweat; you float serenely in crystal-clear water. Or you get drunk but without dizziness, without lethargy.

As I wait, men with fake ID badges call me amigo and offer to buy dollars for pesos. They do not know that in paradise there are no tourists, or rather, that being treated like a tourist in paradise is somehow equivalent to being in hell. In paradise, locals smile and wave and bougainvilleas spill off colonial balconies simply because it is in their nature. The web of life is perfect whether you are there or not. And you lose yourself in it—vanish from the map.

Edwin turns up at 9:15, then at 10:00 Arturo's parents arrive.

"Right on time by Colombian standards," I joke to Edwin.

"They didn't have enough money to catch the bus," he explains, "had to walk for two hours to get here."

As we head towards the notary, Edwin tells me that the family's problems aren't limited to transport—they haven't even had money for food over the last two days. So while the others go inside to talk to the officials, I go to the supermarket and buy five-kilogram bags of rice and beans, blocks of cane sugar and vegetable oil, onions and garlic. At least the family will have something to eat tonight. I get back in time to see them all coming out of the office, smiling and waving documents at me.

Edwin recounts the success while Arturo's parents beam, perhaps at the story, or perhaps at the sound of the English words coming out of Edwin's fat lips. I hand over the bags of food and some money for a bus home along with the latest farewell I've been practicing: "Que les vaya bien." I hope it goes well for you. But instead of leaving, the mother and father begin arguing. Just when I'm convinced they're about to start throwing punches, the talking stops and Edwin translates.

"They've invited us to their place for dinner tonight."

Caught off guard like this, I break into the archetypal goofy gringo smile. The words of acceptance come like hiccups.

"Si, si, si."



It's dark as we approach the Fernandez house. I cradle a watermelon we have brought as a present and an equally large bundle of reservations as to what this dinner will be like. There is no breeze tonight, which means that the air is relatively sweet, but also that we are sweating profusely. In a nearby street we can hear a stereo booming out tropical rhythms across the barrio.

"Every house with a sound system or a television," says Edwin, sweeping his arm down the street, "even if the walls and roofs have holes in them."

The Fernandez house is no exception. We arrive to the sounds of a soap opera theme emanating from a television in the corner of the room. The mother explains proudly that they have borrowed the TV from some friends especially for the evening. The family huddles around one side of the dinner table, transfixed by the screen. Arturo is sitting in his wheelchair, which shines like a throne. When we enter his face is fixed in a receptive drool. It's not until he notices Edwin and me standing in the doorway that he graces us with one of his smiles.

During the meal, the television casts its soft blue spell over the room. We spoon

mouthfuls of rice and beans while the drama of La Costeña y El Cachaco unfolds.

After dinner and half way through the second soap opera of the evening, the power sputters and then dies. There is a moment of profound silence, as the entire neighborhood breathes in. Then it explodes with curses that ring out along the street and down to the lagoon.

The Fernandez family takes the power failure more philosophically and murmurs jokes while the mother flits into the kitchen and comes back with candles that she positions around the room. Again she disappears into the kitchen and returns with cups of coffee, black and laced with the unmistakable sweetness of cane sugar. She takes her place at the table and we sit looking at each other in silence, waiting for someone to speak.

When the mother begins talking, I barely recognize her voice. It sounds like it is rising up from under the table, from under the ground. In the still and silence that prevails, I find myself able to follow the dance of her accent for the first time, missing a step here and there, but catching her at the next turn. I focus on the candle flame in the center of the table, and listen.

She tells us about the legend of the witches that live in the lagoon, how on moonlit nights, the witches patrol the neighborhood, leaping from tree to tree, searching for men stranded outside the safety of their homes. Married men especially she says, as the father fetches me a wink across the table.

The witches are ancient and ugly. Their rotting flesh hangs from their bones in strips. They are hairless and toothless, but in the moonlight, they look like beautiful young girls. A man, walking alone at night, perhaps after a few glasses of rum, is easy prey; so eagerly drinking in the witch's dark gaze from the deeper shadows at the side of the road; so obediently following the hypnotic sway of her nubile hips down to the lagoon; and so readily succumbing to her embrace at the bottom of the lagoon where the men remain forever, sucked down under layers of filth and mud.

When the mother's voice stops I look at the faces around the table, searching for signs of belief. The son-in-law is visibly shaken. The father suppresses a smile. And on the opposite side of the table, Arturo is still rapt. In the candlelight his eyes shine. They are wide with a mix of surprise, fear and delight. His gaze passes through me, through the wall, perhaps through to the lake, where it probes the mud searching for victims of the witches. A steady rivulet of saliva pours from the side of his mouth until he feels my eyes on him and reverts to his usual grin.

We drink some more coffee, listen to some more local legends, then, promising to travel straight home and not talk to strange girls in the street, Edwin and I say our goodbyes and leave.



That was the last time I saw the Fernandez family. Not long after that I left Cartagena and went home, realizing perhaps that there was no travel guidebook entry for the place I was looking for.

Sometimes I wonder how the family is getting on, try and imagine the scene. With little effort I can conjure the bad smell floating over from the lagoon, hanging over their barrio. If I try a little harder I can see the washing machine, chugging away, flushing soapy water into the street.

But by far the easiest thing to visualize is Arturo, sitting in a metal chair in the merciful shade of the yard, smiling and drooling. Smiling at the barrio going past, at the tiny mirages formed by the heat radiating off the street, and somewhere beyond that, visions of paradise.



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# The Summerset Review

# The Summerset Review

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I have always been soothed by the presence of tikis, drawn to the artificial jungles of Polynesian restaurants and bars. Although I appreciate actual sand and water, and temperate, plumeria-scented air, I prefer my paradise condensed into tropical grottos with Naugahyde booths. In my quest for the best, I've sipped Scorpions at Trader Vic's from the District of Columbia to British Columbia, sampled Don the Beachcomber's Mai Tais from Malibu to Maui. But, for ambience and decor, nothing beat the Kon Tiki in the Sheraton Waikiki Hotel.

The summer I attended the University of Hawaii, my fiancé flew out to Honolulu for a visit. That evening, I poured myself into a vintage Dorothy Lamour sarong, tucked a frangipani blossom behind my ear, and waited to give him his big Aloha at the gate.

When he arrived, I draped a red carnation lei around his neck and kissed him with lips painted the same shade.

"Aloha," I whispered.

"Do I have to wear this?" he asked.

Who could blame him? A carnation lei around your neck is like wearing a life preserver made of boutonnieres.

To introduce him to my Hawaii, we drove straight to Kon Tiki with the luggage in the trunk. Together we rode the glass and rattan elevator that ascended one flight to the restaurant, looking onto a lush atrium. During the short ride, we listened to piped-in steel guitar, watched colored light play on a lava rock waterfall, and leered back at angry tikis, two stories tall.

The ceiling of Kon Tiki is domed like a cavern, painted black as a kukui nut. From it

hang dozens of colored glass floats, caught in fishnets and lit from within. Incandescent blue water cascades over the curled lips of mammoth clams. Illuminated blowfish swim suspended over a waterfall. And everywhere, tiki gods loom. Carved totems tower over diners' heads, inferring silent war chants and curses.

Before dinner, my love and I shared a Kava Bowl: a large, coconut-shaped ceramic vessel, flanked by four menahunes – mythic Hawaiian elves. Pungent gardenias floated upon a pond of vodka-tinged punch. The entire concoction oozed a mysterious, icy mist that rolled over the edge of the bowl and onto the table. Like most exotic drinks, the first draw on the two-foot straw tasted like battery acid, but every subsequent sip was pure nectar.

We ate pupus and ordered entrees garnished with shaved coconut. The lei remained around his neck, even as flakes of coconut got caught in it. He rolled his eyes at me from behind the blossoms, but he didn't take it off.



I married the man underneath that lei who shared my love of things Polynesian, so for our honeymoon, we traveled to the source. To the place where Thor Heyerdahl sailed, clinging to a primitive balsa-wood raft he christened Kon Tiki. Friends who had been there assured us, displayed colorful brochures to lure us: the heart of Polynesia was Tahiti.

Traversing the equator, changing planes after a ten hour flight, our small propeller craft made a skittish landing on the island of Moorea. There was a foot of water on the runway, and the subtropical sky was the color of stainless steel. A monsoon was brewing.

Those of us staying at the Bali Hai were ushered into minivans and transported to a series of grass huts on the beach. Each couple was issued a key attached to a piece of driftwood, and offered cups of spiked Hawaiian punch.

The \$400-a-night huts were furnished like any clean budget motel, with the addition of a ceiling fan and a can of bug spray. We used both.

At night, a legion of creatures came alive in the thatch of our roof, rustling and calling out to each other, like the effects track of a Tarzan film overdubbed sixteen times. I kept a vigil, bug spray in hand, in case a stray centipede, or worse, fell down on top of us in the dark.

Every island we visited—Moorea, Bora Bora, Tahiti—looked just like the brochures. White sand lapped by turquoise water, curved coconut palms with real coconuts. What we craved was an interior island with colored lights that served drinks in giant clamshells. We looked, but never found our Naugahyde hideaway. Nor a single blowfish lamp.

So we tried to be natural. We wore flowers in our hair, and wrapped ourselves in pareos, gossamer pieces of fabric that could be tied onto the body fifty different ways.

On Bora Bora we snorkeled. Flapping our rubber-finned feet and scraping our bellies on coral, we intruded upon schools of vivid fish. Once, in cloudy water, I encountered one with a mouth the size of my mask. Probably just a grouper, yet it kept me out of the water for days.

On Moorea, we took an outrigger built-for-two out to sea. The tide changed. We had to paddle like natives to keep from being swept to Rangiroa.

Spent from the pressures of paradise, we sat on the sand and drank Tahitian beer, ate hot dogs, and fantasized about being rescued. My husband said finally, "This isn't Polynesia. This is Gilligan's Island."



Our Polynesian paradise, fast becoming extinct, is a place like Kon Tiki. A place to feel nonexistent breezes, to taste gardenias and sway to the pulse of pre-recorded drums. Where ultraviolet waters fluoresce and cascade between tables, and the mood is thermostatically controlled.

But, they've closed Kon Tiki. Never known for its food, the restaurant endured a brief Cantonese incarnation before becoming officially unpopular. Even in Hawaii, everybody just wants pizza.

On a recent visit, nine years later, my husband and I slipped into the empty restaurant. We wanted to take one last look before they dismantled the place.

Only a few mood-diffusing work lights were on. I didn't recall any white light in Kon Tiki, only those saturated with color, deep glows forced through fishnet or rattan.

"They've drained the stream," my husband said.

I looked down. The chalk-white channel was empty beneath the bamboo bridge; I missed the hum of recirculated water. Against the walls, heavily varathaned koa-wood tables and rattan peacock chairs crowded, unused.

Yet something of the restaurant's lurid mood remained, still hung in the air, as if these crouching tikis were imbued with ancient spirits, as if the room were an island inhabited by a hiding tribe, watching us through slats of lashed bamboo.

My husband set up his camera, opened the shutter, and let the dim light of Kon Tiki etch the negative to the full depth of the spectrum. For me, these pictures are more than a flat indication of place. They are an incantation that conjures and stirs. When I look at these pictures, I hear the way time sounds inside the ear of a seashell. Smell the weight of a carnation lei. Feel waves of color lap at my eyes, as I float on an island made of wood and bamboo. It all washes away and comes tumbling back again, in limpid hues of iridescent blue, whispering the word Hawaiians made to say it all.

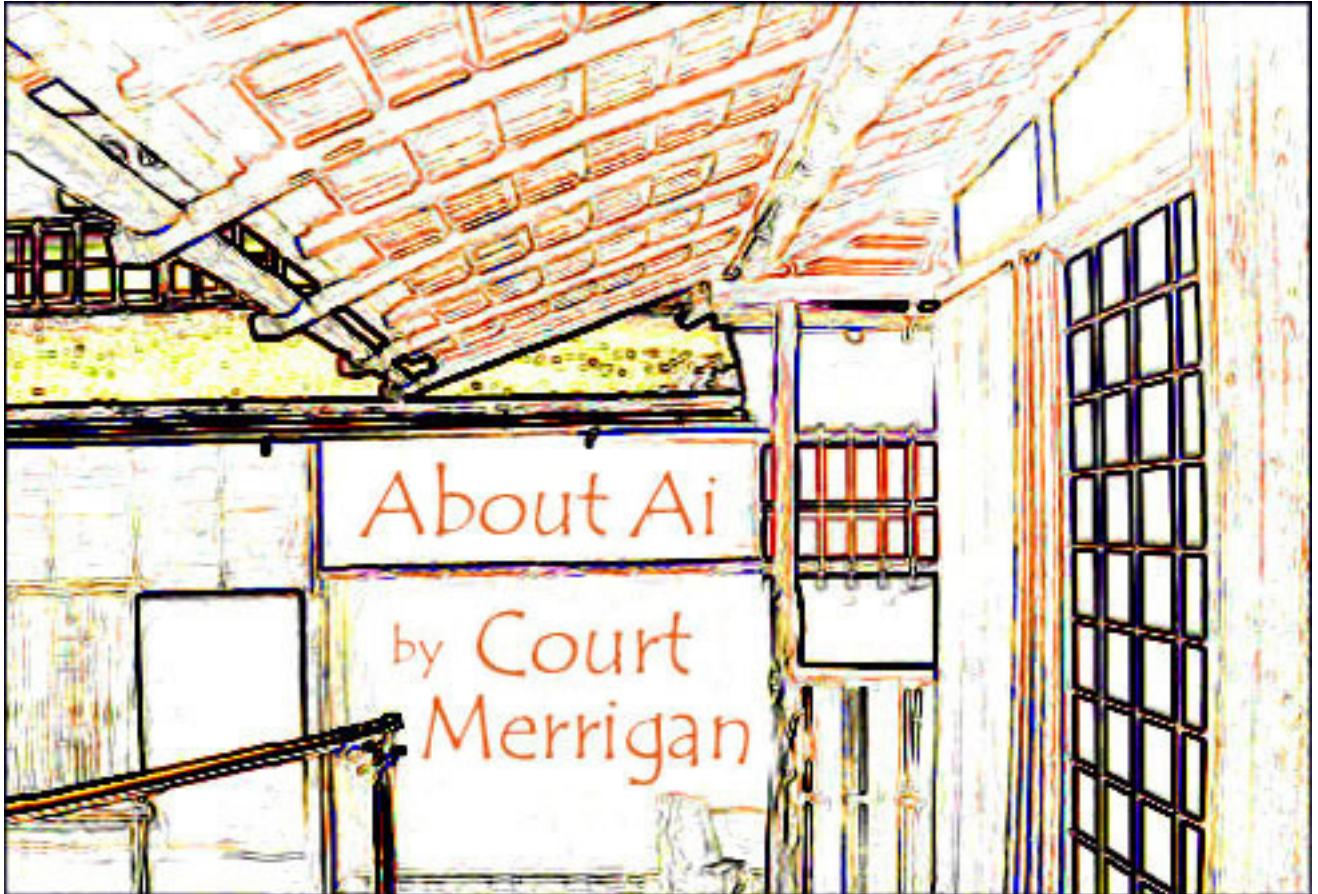
Aloha, Kon Tiki.



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# The Sunmerset Review

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Ai dropped out of high school midway through her second year. In the weeks leading up to the event, she sulked in her bedroom every morning, crying and refusing to get dressed, complaining about the jowl-to-jowl train ride, the teachers—especially smelly Mr. Hayashi in P.E.—the other kids, their stupid banter, the uniform, everything.

Mr. Hashimoto, Ai's father, didn't know what to say to her; hadn't, in fact, known for quite some time. Every morning he would come out of the tatami room he shared with Hanako, sit down at the kotatsu table in the common room, absorb some of the newspaper, drink coffee, and eat the rice and miso soup Hanako had made an hour earlier. Then he lit a cigarette, sipped more coffee, and looked for the right words while musing at Ai's door, behind which Ai was pitching a fit. No words came. He left matters to his wife, who couldn't seem to find them, either.

After escaping from the room she shared with Ai, Mariko joined Mr. Hashimoto at the kotatsu, her junior high uniform always pressed. She watched TV and pretended to ignore the whole thing. Sometimes, as Mr. Hashimoto was smoking, Ai would shuffle into the common room in a wrinkled T-shirt and sweat pants, rubbing her red eyes. Looking at her, Mr. Hashimoto, even at this unflattering hour and with fatherly eyes, knew she compared favorably with the girls at the hostess bars in Shinbashi he occasionally patronized on the company expense account. More often than not, though, Ai didn't come out, and Mr. Hashimoto went off to work wondering at his suddenly willful daughter. Hanako ran out of entreaties. Gradually, without anyone much talking about it, Ai simply stopped going anywhere in the mornings.

With school now behind her, Ai would put in an appearance in the four-room

apartment's common room some time after her father and Mariko were gone to work and school. By that time, Grandma, Mr. Hashimoto's mother, was usually finished pattering around in her room, where she repaired worn kimonos, and would be sitting at the kotatsu. Hanako would be doing something in the kitchen or getting ready for her part-time job at a friend's cake shop a couple of stations down. She and Ai exchanged brief greetings, which got friendlier as time went on. Ai and Grandma had not much to say to each other. Grandma was silent on Ai's quitting school, nonplussed at the sixteen-year-old girl's power over her own life. These new ways, she thought a little wistfully, were about sixty years too late.

Time chased the seasons around the calendar. At first, Ai loafed in the apartment all day, smoking cigarettes from packs her parents left lying around, watching TV, reading comic books, listening to music. After a while, she started going out. But she returned by suppertime, around 9pm, when her father made it home from the company. No one worried about where she went. In Tokyo, after all, everyone knew bad things only happened to strange people who went to dangerous places.

After a while, bored and tired of begging pocket money off her parents, Ai got a job at a gyudon fast-food joint one stop down. Hanako went there once while Ai was working. She couldn't decide how she felt about her daughter in a yellow-and-green uniform and a funny-looking paper hat. Her father never came. Grandma, who rarely left the apartment, never made it down either. Mariko showed up once with a gaggle of friends, who thought it was cool her sister had her own money. Ai was slightly embarrassed but managed to stay professional. She lasted there a few months. A string of other part-time jobs followed; her hours grew more irregular. Her family lost track of when and where she was.

There were weightier concerns. The never-ending recession was threatening Mr. Hashimoto's company. The scuttlebutt had it that low-level managers would be the first to go, should the restructuring axe fall. Long since passed over for any significant promotions, at year's end Mr. Hashimoto was relieved his company had only slashed annual bonuses by three-quarters. He'd been afraid he was out a job. The bonus continued to shrink at the same rate each year.

Hanako tried to get more hours at the cake shop, itself foundering. By spring, it went under. So she started direct-mailing postcards for a large catalog company, spending hours at the common room desk writing out names and addresses and a perfunctory message by hand. Mariko started high school that spring. She was determined to ride out the difficulties her sister couldn't endure. This took considerable energy; soon she was as self-absorbed as any high schooler anywhere. Grandma continued tottering around the house, chain-smoking and drinking tea and trying to ignore her shaking hands, which were making needlework more and more difficult. Hanako moved up in the direct-mailing business, compiling lists rather than actually writing out the postcards.

Ai alone seemed unaffected by the increasingly ragged situation. Her pocketbook remained full; there were plenty of part-time jobs. She went farther afield to get them. By the next New Year's, her family gathered she was working at something somewhere in Shinjuku, fifty minutes away.

Ai now carried a beauty intense as a sixth sense. She left craned necks and downcast eyes in her wake everywhere; she was often mistaken for a model. Nonetheless, the family remained unruffled. No one could have said Ai was treated any differently than her sister Mariko, homely at best.

No one knew where Ai's beauty originated. Hanako was the archetypal plain Japanese woman, mid-height, very thin, slightly bulging eyes, pigeon-toed legs, sloping shoulders. Mr. Hashimoto was a posterboy nondescript salaryman. Grandma couldn't remember being especially attractive when she was young. There was no proof one way or another, since all the photographs were destroyed as Tokyo burned in the closing months of World War II. Hanako's parents died in the same fires when Hanako was still an infant. The spinster aunt who raised Hanako was plain as paper.

The steady stream of boyfriends Ai brought home held her in painful awe, judging by the way they stared at her, half-conversing, as if afraid Ai was an apparition that might vanish if their eyes strayed. None of her relationships lasted—men cannot relax next to near-perfection. Her longest, with a thirty-year-old actor who once had a bit part in

a TV drama, went on just over six months. It ended when the would-be Soremachi tearfully confessed he'd drunkenly impregnated his ex-girlfriend three months previously. Ai shrugged, told him it couldn't be helped, and left. These things didn't bother her. With Ai's encouragement, the family began to joke about how long each new boyfriend would last. Soon it resembled a gambling ring. Had their attentions not been so singularly focused on the girl, the boyfriends might have noticed the laughing eyes surrounding them. None did.

Around her seventeenth birthday, Ai spent her first night away from the family, an overnigher to Karuizawa. Her boyfriend then was a bartender at a punk rock live house with shocking green hair and tattooed fingers. She sent a steady stream of cell phone text messages to Mariko, her mother, even her father. She did the same on subsequent stays away. Comforted by the filial piety, her parents felt little need to oversee her absences. They became just one more thing the family stopped keeping track of. Ai was an adult long before the traditional age of twenty.

To his great pleasure, Mr. Hashimoto discovered in his daughter a conversational partner: baseball standings were discussed, as was the distant relative who had been a higher-up in a yakuza crime syndicate and paid for the Hashimoto's wedding ceremony. And he could ramble on about his one abiding passion, taiko drumming. Ai showed interest after years of paying no attention at all. One of the happiest moments in his life came at the local summer festival, when Ai stood beaming up at him from the front row of his taiko show. Her presence was a delicate absolute, like cherry blossoms in a field of rice. He was the one on the stage with seven other half-naked men, but she was the star. Somehow this didn't irk.

When Mariko graduated from high school, there was brief talk of her making a run at junior college, but financial reality rendered this impossible. She found a job as a uniform-wearing, tea-serving office lady in Ikebukuro. A decent job, and her daily routine became much like her father's. These days, Ai rarely went to bed before 3am, and was in no shape to rise with the morning trains. Her father had long since ceased contemplating her door, hoping instead to see her that night, which nowadays happened less and less. Hanako often found herself called in to the head catalog office in Okubo, forty minutes away, so she was frequently out the door with Mr. Hashimoto and Mariko.

When she was at home, Ai normally got up around eleven. Grandma had usually given up fumbling with the worn material in her room, and would be watching TV or smoking and looking out the window at the traffic passing four stories below. Ai would join her. They would sit in silence as smoke curled up and around their heads, drifting slowly into the yellow-turning walls. After a while, Ai would eat something, read the paper, then get ready. Grandma noticed it took Ai five or six cigarettes to do this. It wasn't that her make-up or hair were that elaborate—the girl's languid grace simply ruled out haste. This, thought Grandma, must just be the way things were now. Her own marriage had been arranged. Such involved preparation had only been necessary once or twice. Ai was gone nearly every day. The family saw her after the last train or not at all.

This was the state of things when the burst bubble finally caught up with Mr. Hashimoto's company. Three-fourths of the junior managers received a month's notice, a pitiful severance and an "early retirement package," announced by a senior executive, who bowed deeply in apology at a press conference, resigned, and the following month was named to a company advisory committee. The situation in the Hashimoto household wasn't desperate, exactly, but things were tight. Hanako's income barely covered their expenses. Mr. Hashimoto and Hanako decided Ai and Mariko would have to chip in. They hated to do it, but the odds of Mr. Hashimoto's finding another decent job being nil, they had to be realistic. They resolved to talk to the girls soon.

The Friday night after Mr. Hashimoto's last week on the job, neither Ai nor Mariko came home. Mr. Hashimoto brooded over his "retirement" with a few cups of sake and went to bed. Mariko was with her new boyfriend, a coworker. Mr. Hashimoto supposed Ai was busy in Shinjuku. He thought, Ai's found her niche. Newly unemployed, the thought was oddly comforting.

Saturday, Mr. Hashimoto got up late, around 10am. He was looking through the paper when Mariko came back, glowing and disheveled from an unexpected pledge of eternal love. He set down the paper to chat with her. Grandma was sewing up an obi in her room. Hanako sipped green tea and looked through a new catalog mailing list. Mariko wanted to go to her room and sleep but her father kept talking. Mr. Hashimoto, frightened at how much time he had to pass from now on, required occupation. Eventually, Mariko got away. Mr. Hashimoto contented himself with the TV.

The day wore on, and Ai didn't return. Mr. Hashimoto thought, probably she's with her guy of the moment. Ai had said he was in some sort of telemarketing something or other. After lunch, everyone stayed around the kotatsu, watching TV. The Saturday variety shows kept being interrupted by news bulletins about a fire in Kabuki-cho, Shinjuku's red-light district. Death toll over fifty, firefighters pulling out bodies burned beyond recognition, suspicions of arson, and so forth. The bulletins kept drowning out punch lines. Mariko rolled her eyes, Hanako gave impatient sighs, Grandma potted off to her room, and Mr. Hashimoto started to snooze.

At around five, with still no calls or text messages from Ai, the phone rang. Hanako answered. She'd never spoken to a public safety official before. She wasn't sure what to say. She handed the phone to Mr. Hashimoto. The apartment went still.

Having no car, the Hashimotos took the train to Shinjuku. The train ride—bright, orderly, efficient—was a harshly-lit theater in a universe suddenly gone mad. Buying tickets, Mr. Hashimoto couldn't seem to find the right coins, Mariko's ticket wouldn't go into the slot, Grandma spilled the contents of her purse down the stairs, Hanako kept bumping into passersby. The train was crowded with Saturday night fun-seekers; there were no seats. The family stood, eyes shifting between strangers and family, none sure which was worse. No one offered Grandma a seat.

The building was cordoned off. Police had spread a deep blue tarp over the facade. The fire trucks were gone, but a crowd of onlookers and a phalanx of cameras kept them at a distance. No one in the family could imagine pushing through the crowd. As it was, they could see the eighth floor clearly. That was where they'd pulled out Ai's body, to which they were denied access, the corpse being potential evidence. Officials refused further comment. The family walked back to the station, a small silent knot. Hanako slipped on a wet wrapper. Grandma fell behind. Mariko dropped her cell phone. Touts tried to drag Mr. Hashimoto into a hostess bar.

The family gathered around a newsstand on the platform. The fire was splashed all over the evening papers: "Pleasure Quarter Bloodbath," screamed the headlines. Back at home, the news shows carried the relevant details: the eighth floor housed a "massage" parlor, a uniform fetish club, and a gambling club where customers were orally serviced while playing mahjongg. The flotsam and jetsam of these establishments blocked off emergency exits, and billboards sealed off the windows. No one on the floor escaped.

The fire was decreed accidental. The owners of the building were connected to the yakuza; no charges were filed. The incident was gone from the public eye within a week. Victims remained anonymous. There were the usual funerary formalities. Much plainer now, the family shrank into itself.

Going through Ai's things, Hanako came across a bundle of cash in a New Year's greetings envelope, equal to three months of Mr. Hashimoto's former salary. When the bank opened up Ai's account, Mr. Hashimoto found her savings amounted to more than a year of that salary. An official from Shinjuku Station called, saying the rent on a locker in Ai's name was past due. Inside, Mariko found thousand-dollar brand-name bags direct from France and Italy, a fur coat, diamonds and pearls, and a lush swishing kimono, improperly folded, worth more than Mariko made in a year. She brought it home to Grandma. Grandma left it crumpled in a corner of her room. The family silently did not speak of these things.

A call came from the police. Did the next-of-kin want Ai's cell phone, recovered undamaged? It was full of numbers and names and memos the family might like to have. Hanako politely declined. She was told the phone would be duly destroyed. Hanako acknowledged this and hung up, severing the last link to Ai's real life. Hanako received glances from each member of the family, but there were no questions and she had no comments. Seeing how little they knew, no one wanted to know any more

about Ai.



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# The Summerset Review

# The Somerset Review

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## Contributors' Notes

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### **Karen Kasaba's**

story, "Views Views Views" won Santa Barbara Magazine's first annual fiction contest, and was performed live at Speaking of Stories. It currently appears online at Storyglossia.

"Sparks" was published in the Winter 2000 issue of the Chariton Review and is archived online at [www.collectedstories.com](http://www.collectedstories.com). Her essays and poetry have appeared in anthologies, magazines and newspapers including American Cinematographer, Hawaii Review, Westways, Byline, the Los Angeles Times, and the Santa Barbara Independent. She is the recipient of a Sherwill C. Corwin Award for playwriting. Her work as a screenwriter has earned multiple awards including an Emmy nomination.

### **Chris Ludlow,**

whose artwork "Clock Detail, Musee d'Orsay" accompanies a story in this issue, is a founding partner and contributor to Urban Caravan Photography ([www.urban caravan.com](http://www.urban caravan.com)). His photos have been sold world-wide and he is currently mapping out a transcontinental photographic expedition of the Mediterranean which he plans to encircle with his wife. Chris resides in Halifax, Canada with his writer-photographer wife as well as his goldfish.

### **Court Merrigan's**

work has appeared in Pindelyboz and insolent rudder, among others. A graduate of Creighton University, he also holds an MA in Japanese from the University of Sheffield. He has lived in various places East and West and currently resides in Thailand. He is working on a collection of short stories, and can be contacted at [courtmerriagan@hotmail.com](mailto:courtmerriagan@hotmail.com).

### **Michael F. Smith**

has stories published or upcoming in a variety of publications including Texas Review, Pindelyboz, [storysouth.com](http://storysouth.com), Lake Effect: A Journal of Literary Art, and has received the Transatlantic Review Award for fiction in 2002. He lives with his wife in Alabama, where he teaches at Auburn University. He is currently at work on a first novel. You may write to him at [mfcscs@hotmail.com](mailto:mfcscs@hotmail.com).

### **Mark Vender**

is an Australian living in Colombia, putting the finishing touches on his first novel, and working on a set of short stories. One of them appears in the Winter 2004 issue of Slow Trains. He can be contacted at [markvender@yahoo.com.au](mailto:markvender@yahoo.com.au).

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# The Somerset Review



## Guidelines for Submissions

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Writers are invited to submit literary short stories and essays of up to 8,000 words. Lighter stories will be given more serious consideration. We enjoy seeing essays that are insightful without being instructional. We are currently not accepting poetry.

To get more of an idea of what we are looking for, writers are asked to read The Somerset Review or consult our [Recommended Reading](#) list. We also suggest that contributors be familiar with the writing found in quality literary publications. Here are some [examples](#) that have inspired us in both content and the manner in which they have handled submissions, based on first-hand experience.

Email submissions to [editor@somersetreview.org](mailto:editor@somersetreview.org). Please be sure to state whether your piece is fiction or an essay. It is preferable that the submission be an attachment in standard manuscript MS Word format. If you are sending a piece in plain text, please be sure to clearly designate paragraphs, alignment, and italics. Please do not simply give a link on the web where the story appears.

If you wish to correspond via hard-copy, send your submission to: 25 Somerset Dr., Smithtown, NY 11787, and be sure to include a SASE (and proper postage and envelope if the manuscript is to be returned). All submissions receive replies, usually in less than six weeks.

All submitted work is assumed to be original. Book excerpts will be considered if you believe the work stands alone. Reprints will be considered if the work has not appeared elsewhere within the last two years. Simultaneous submissions are accepted. We read year-round.

We do not give previously-published authors any more attention than new writers, and judge submissions objectively on literary merit. Even with this, we prefer a brief note accompanying the submission. We are not sure what we want to read in this note, but would appreciate the extra effort, rather than a blank email with an attachment. We usually comment on material that got further along in the review process. On pieces we accept, we usually suggest minor editorial changes and always confer with the author.

Authors retain all rights to their work, and will see galleys of accepted pieces for review. Unfortunately, contributors cannot be paid for accepted submissions. Once published, we may nominate pieces for higher acclaim or inclusion in a print edition of The Somerset Review (should one materialize in the future), but we would take no further actions beyond nomination unless permission was granted by the author.

# The Somerset Review

Author	Title	Source
Aciman, Andre	Cat's Cradle	From the November 3 <sup>rd</sup> issue of The New Yorker, 1997
Altschul, Andrew Foster	From A to Z	From Issue #1 of Swink, 2004
Anderson, Dale Gregory	The Girl in the Tree	From the Spring/Summer issue of Alaska Quarterly Review, 2003
Ashton, Edward	<a href="#">Night Swimmer</a>	Online at The Blue Penny Quarterly, Spring/Summer, 1995
Baggott, Julianna	Five	From Other Voices #28, 1998
Bardi, Abby	My Wild Life	From Quarterly West #41, 1995
Baxter, Charles	Snow	From the collection A Relative Stranger, published in 1990
Borders, Lisa	Temporary Help	From the Spring/Summer issue of Bananafish, 1998
Broyard, Bliss	<a href="#">Mr. Sweetly Indecent</a>	From the Fall issue of Ploughshares, 1997
Burns, Carole	Honour's Daughter	From Other Voices #31, 1999
Cain, Chelsea	Pretty Enough To Be a Showgirl	From the Spring issue of Grand Tour, 1997
Cheever, John	The Stories of John Cheever	A collection published in 1980
Christopher, Nicholas	<a href="#">Veronica</a>	A novel published in 1996
Crane, Elizabeth	When the Messenger Is Hot	A collection published in 2003
Crowe, Thomas Rain	<a href="#">Firsts</a>	Online at Oyster Boy Review in January, 1997
Dancoff, Judith	Vermeer's Light	From Alaska Quarterly Review's Intimate Voices issue, 1997
Dormanen, Sue	<a href="#">Finishing First</a>	From the Summer issue of Lynx Eye, 1998.
Doyle, Larry	Life Without Leann	From an issue of The New Yorker in Fall, 1990
Kennedy, Thomas E.	Kansas City	From Vol 62 No. 4 of New Letters, 1996
McInerney, Jay	Model Behavior	A novel published in 1998
Millhauser, Steven	<a href="#">Enchanted Night</a>	A novella published in 1999
Moses, Jennifer	Circling	From the Spring issue of Gettysburg Review, 1995
Murakami, Haruki	South of the Border, West of the Sun	A novel published in 1998
Offill, Jenny	<a href="#">Last Things</a>	A novel published in 1999
Orlean, Susan	The Bullfighter Checks Her Makeup	A collection published in 2001
Robison, Mary	Why Did I Ever?	A novel published in 2001
Salinger, J.D.	For Esme - With Love and Squalor	From the collection Nine Stories published in 1953
Tilghman, Christopher	The Way People Run	From the September 9 <sup>th</sup> issue of The New Yorker, 1991

# The Somerset Review

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[Alaska Quarterly Review](#)

[Black Warrior Review](#)

[Hayden's Ferry Review](#)

[Missouri Review](#)

[Other Voices](#)

[New Orleans Review](#)

[Oyster Boy Review](#)

[South Dakota Review](#)

[StoryQuarterly](#)

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[Quarterly West](#)

[West Branch](#)

# The Summerset Review

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Scott Carter, Alan M. Danzis, Gerard Marconi, Jordan Rosenfeld

Spring 2004

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Aline Baggio, Susan H. Case, Zdravka Evtimova, Tony O'Brien, Tom Sheehan, Jennifer Spiegel

Fall 2003

Summer 2003

Linda Boroff, Thomas Brennan, Sue Dormanen, James Francis, Gina Frangello, Gwendolyn Joyce Mintz

Eric Bosse, Sarah Maria Gonzales, M.M.M. Hayes, Janice J. Heiss, Pia Wilson

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Winter 2003

Max Dunbar, Jenny de Groot, Soo J. Hong, Rachel Belinda Kidder, Michael Marisi, Ulf Wolf

Kit Chase, Diane E. Dees, Edison McDaniels, Regina Phelps, Jacob Fawcett

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