

she saw a whale

by lauren hunter

She saw a whale
ferrying from Robben Island to shore.
She wept on top of Table Mountain.
Her dead grandfather's
African
soul shaped the clouds.
She floated above Cape Town,
buoyed in the shark-infested Indian,
rolled over the sands of Kosi Bay.
In the country of contrast,
Her white landlady
gave her the penthouse with an ocean view.
The ocean view in Durban, South Africa means two things:
perspective and street children.
She adjusted
the tension in the rope of the haves and have nots
from above the below.
She silently confessed her privileges to the singing
child on the boardwalk
and exchanged chocolate-dipped cones for absolution.
She painted pictures with words
because the camera marked her as a target
and She prayed not to forget
the punctuation of each aborted photographic essay.
Her tongue lingered on
Nights in Durban flavored with sweet steamed bread,
beans, and sour milk.
Her ears pricked for casual conversation to the tune of Zulu.
Awakenings and glowing greens slowed moments;
Tourism and being a Red American sped them up.
Her skin pressed windows and skin
riding kumbis to and from the workshop.
Her feet swept dirt
in the village marketplace of Hlabisa.
Her multi-racial world exploded and melted
all over the coloreds of Wentworth.
They sopped it up with roti rolls and curry spices.
The spirits broke dishes, pushed Her off chairs,
introduced Her to strangers, and
demanded She pay attention to the grey shades.
Crackling wine loosened Her lips,
Zulu beer tightened them.
With each sip She swallowed
the spirit of ubuntu
connectedness pulsed through Her body
flowered between bodies
and rooted relationships.
Mother Africa touched Her heart with purple hands
And She landed in herself.

the monkey feast

by christopher quirk

This is holy ground.
The rock statue of a deity
Stands silently in the center
of the small courtyard.
Foreigners watch reverently as locals
Slowly circumambulate three times,
Then kneel and deposit at the base of the
stone their offerings:
Prayers, oranges, flowers, rupees, rice.
Even the monkeys,
Who make their homes in the mountainside
that this temple has interrupted,
Peer quietly from the rooftops,
Observing the daily morning procession.

When the prayer is over,
And the people have returned
downhill to their homes
To start cooking rice
Or to their jobs
To earn money
To buy oranges and flowers,
The monkeys descend.

In the temple square,
They hurry about,
Grabbing oranges,
Stealing flowers,
Hoarding rupees,
Gorging on rice.

And when evening comes,
And the people climb back uphill,
The simians reunite,
To hover over the faithful,
Waiting until the offering is finished.

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