

Kirsten Abel:

Kirsten Abel graduated from the University of Washington in Seattle. She lives in Connecticut with her husband.

To the Puget Sound

For salt. For salmon.

For the train. For the things

I imagined it carried:

Bing cherries. Circus props.

People in large coats

drinking in dining cars.

Because breaking waves.

Because boulders and oaks

yielding green shade.

For wind. For little pink claws

and clamshells and hollowed

bodies littering.

For the rain striking the Sound

and wooden tables and lawn.

For soothing gray.

Because none of us could keep

from going away

without wanting to return:

hold a sea cucumber,

find a smooth stone,

skip it at least three times.

Returning to New York City from Hanalei Bay, Kaua'i

A thin cord and a ring hang from a pair
of accordion blinds. Seen during an in-flight
film or in Finlandia sleep, the shapes haunt

long after departure. Beneath where the cow
hitch meets the ring, in a vision, I fit my index
finger to pull the blinds down. Double pull

to release. A coping mechanism, maybe.
Moving me east in pale light, without
a thought of how I will hang my arms

in front of the floor length mirror, brown
and worn post flight. White-tipped breasts
and hips bruised where the bones knocked

against my Robert August. Impossible to think
about wax residue gritty across the chest
or the improbability of home. The blinds

draw and chafe, then furl. For now, I am
here without wanting to be somewhere else:
in Poipu, plodding through the sand

with my board under one arm. The initial slosh-
step into water. The paddling out, pulling
back ocean in long familiar strokes.