

The Margaritas at Harvest Harbor are Always Free

By September Woods Garland

The seaplane shook with a rumble as it took off from the lake. I gripped the armrest and held back the tears, boats and picnicking families shrinking beneath me.

The landing was easy. I watched the surf spray across my window as we touched down and I thought about mankind and his accomplishments. I thought about my shortcomings. I told my husband that the walk to the hotel would be long and asked if we could stop for a drink on the way.

The motor inn was decorated in primary-colored crepe paper and someone was playing flamenco music in the courtyard. Children were swinging a pole at a piñata while a line of guests piled plates with free tacos and filled margarita glasses with complimentary libations. They looked suspiciously at one another, meeting their own reflections in mirrored gas station shades.

“See? They have drinks here,” my husband said. My mirror image forced a smile, peering back at me from his Ray-Bans.

Our room was on the third floor. We watched the sun set in the harbor from a small balcony. The table outside was just the right size for our two glasses and we refilled them four times.

My husband was out cold by midnight. He didn't wake when they came with the drugs and surgical instruments. They laid him on the bed and cut into his chest. I watched the blood spray across drawn curtains and I thought about mankind and all his delusions of power. I thought about my weaknesses.

I held my breath in fear as the towering green figure prodded and pulled, blood and slime coating its eight-fingered hands. It placed the sack of translucent eggs in a cooler and disappeared with its team into the darkness.

Something pushed down on my chest. My husband's left foot floated by and a crab nibbled on his eyeball. Its deep blue color had turned a lifeless grey. I reached for it and the crab's pinchers dug into my hand. I came to in a fit of coughs and cries, liquid expelling from the depths of my lungs in panicked heaves.

My own eyes stung. Sunlight shone brightly and a familiar figure straddled me. My husband blew a lungful of sweet hot air into my mouth. The oxygen enlivened my cells

and I could breathe again. I tried to speak but let out a gurgling sound. My body heaved once more and the final ounces of liquid were expelled.

He cried. Big, soulful cries of fear and relief. I saw the wreckage, looking over his shoulder as he held me. Flashes of red and blue lights reflected off of the waves that rippled outward from a smoldering pontoon.

I gripped a strap on my husband's life jacket and held back the tears. I thought about my miscalculations. I told myself that it would be a long swim to shore but I could surely make it in time for the margaritas.