

The Witch,
three generations

I.
as my daughter screams
she does not know the limits
of her world

your scalpel opens
the most unacceptable
to the brightest light

ate all my popcorn
can I take
from your bowl

sit back down
we eat more slow

just
a
little

I
said
no

my
fingers

do

well
see a rough patch
that's all you saw

wait

I have to

I'll give you
the hardest

tell you something

spanking

see a series
oh the conclusions you draw

I am judgmental
says the witch
with her laser

II.

I wish I knew more of your childhood
than the time you played sick
and had stomach surgery

or the time you bought photographs
of the Holocaust
for your mother's birthday

it was just
time
to know

I have your stories of the chicken ranch
and a fancy dress for a fancy dance

later you grew wild
as liliko'i

dropping bright yellow
passionfruit from the sky

we used to pick those golden eggs
from the jungle, for juicing

in the shack
by the sometime stream

we knew joy,
producing

there young lives dripped sap
down round cheeks

faceted with a thousand
eyes

here I slice stems
one after another

balls of full
sun-fattened breadfruit

fall into our future
soups and stews

I bowl the yellow-green orbs

over dead leaves

the feeding root system
of generosity

thinking of my grandfather
who ran a bowling alley

and you mother painted under this tree
it was a quiet moment in a riot

punctuated by the thwack
of breadfruit on the ground

III.

I can float on your love

says my daughter
dancing in my arms, doing backbends
in the pool of reflections

kamani branches and leaves and clouds
float above us in this hot spring

she swims between the storytellers
embracing each other in the pond

dives for the bottom
brings up a coconut fork, a spatula

daughter mermaid,
says my daughter

come with me,
hurry up, we'll get the food

come to our new home
in the sea-beaten tree on the black sand

there is a pool, here is a cup
a sip of seawater from a kamani shell

we have the same inner smile

floating on the love of family, now

we float on the love of trees
we float on the love of our ancestors

our ancestors are the trees
says my daughter

who gives no further
explanation

IV.

I can explain!

willful spirits all
we pivot like stars

while

in the fatherland my family
torches our effigy

and

in the motherland
ash drifts from the burning

here

bone face of wisdom

feed and cultivate
our landscape

oh witch

oh inner power

Who But You

you know me
from goat's milk mothers and a glitter-crown, age five,
from Maui Youth Theater's crooked steps
(I coveted your curly fries)
and later, after high school, on the path
I walked barefoot to your mother's house

I know you
from a ballerina in turtle shell and tutu
before the scar that is your thyroid
to the arm of a "deep in my eyes" kinda guy
and later, when you raged
over coffee in your automatic

fuck, you vented, fuck squared
the perpetrator in the shower,
my dying brother, my father's cancer
you whirled, storm-mad
past Pi'iholo of the dusty yellow rain
where I thought I was grounded

then a cop crashed into your car
I dropped briefly out of academics
you jete'd through New York
I toted lemons in buckets
we left and returned and left
the smell of dusty ferns

‘Ākala‘ula,
native raspberry girl
who else sits down to write
at a white tile table with ground-orchids
whose humility, a prompt, a meditation
propels your dance

beyond your mother's death
‘til you stand at this crossroads
holding the tissue of scars
with compassionate energy
like a delicate
bouquet

while I,
selfish and fearful,
wonder
who else
knows
me

who but you
writes letters
on rose-scattered stationery
across the Pacific,
the Atlantic,
the 'Alenuihāhā

across
heartbreak,
joy, and geography
who but you
has seen my
start, my heart

and when again
will we walk
in reflective light
over a bridge
where mountain plants
drop seed

Fringes

I tell only the fringes
the edge of the blanket-roll
reluctant truth dropping down my ankles
into the crusty lashes of the river
where subterranean water rises
in a cold current flowing to the bay enclosed by stones
taken from forbidden temples dismantled long ago

and the necessary conversations
through windows that slide open and shut
occupy only the top lens of mind
while below the salt murk
burns in the sinus
as the trauma of the world
washes over these particulars

the fringes are mine
the centipede in shattered armor
the youth with a scorpion on a shoulder
the photograph with odorata flowers
the email hack at the prosecutor's
I don't say anything about causes
or effects

later when feeling unclenches
later when compassion extends
when the path from I forget to I forgive
has been walked
perhaps again you will tell the story
and I will be present
as even now I am