

Running in the Family
Creative Writing

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Hawaii

My father was born floating on the salt and sun of the tropics, his cries mingling with that of the terns.

More precisely, he was born on Oahu, the capital of the Hawaiian islands, in 1972, the sixth child of his father and the very first of his mother. He went on to become the sixth of nine children, all jumbled together in a mixed up family who loved and fought together under the bright Hawaiian sky.

When he was young, my father lived in a house that dipped its toes in the sea. He learned to walk, and then run, with his feet buried in the shifting sand, and was practically a fish by the time he was three. Not long after, the little beach house in Kailua grew too small for my father's growing family, and they relocated to Manoa, a residential neighborhood just east of Honolulu.

I visited Hawaii with my father's family for his twentieth high school reunion. We splashed in the glistening surf, and breathed the warm island air. And my father's mother brought us all back to the Manoa house. The wide windows still opened out onto the vibrant views of Waikiki. The furniture was slightly more modern than in the old photos. The new owners gave me and my siblings candy *leis* left over from their older daughter's high school graduation.

When I was back outside, I knelt before the house that had been my father's childhood home. There, faded but still etched in the pavement of the driveway, were the scribbled names and childish handprints of my father and his younger siblings, forever preserved in the Hawaiian stone.

Washington

Two years, we lived there
in that place of tan and russet,
where the sun burned hot on our necks, relentless,
and a mere lone cloud graced the sky.

Now, we traverse a different path,
navigating northward, the highway before us,
stretching out endlessly, open road
guiding us as the engine whirrs.

My little nose pressed to the window, I watch
as vineyards and fields of cows zip by,
every mile mark bringing us closer
to our city by the sound.

I close my eyes and remember
the clean, fresh-rain scented air,
the flash of salmon leaping up rivers,
the Needle piercing the cloud-thick sky.

When my eyes flutter open, I see it
framed against the mountainous peaks:
at last, we have arrived here,
City of Emeralds, our evergreen home.

Alaska

We are driving, wandering, flying. Speeding up the coast that is laced with the scents of seawater and cold. Rumbling through forests with the trees bending before us like they're matchsticks, my sister's shoulder pressed against my own and the engine roaring. We're going north, and there's no stopping now.

Through a crack in the window I can smell the fragrances of wind and earth that drench this place. It is a terrain that few have roamed, that few ever will. Stretched out before me, a never-ending map, is the vast emptiness of treeless tundra. This is a land beyond the familiar, a land where humans bow to the wild.

As a flurry, a pack, my siblings and I clamber from the warmth of our van, anxious to get to the sea. The icy surf nips at our ankles and the sea breeze lashes at our cheeks and we breathe in the exhilaration, the freedom, the tang of salt heavy in the air. My hair whips around my head and my heart rises until it soars above the waves.

Someone once told me the name "Alaska" means "that which the sea breaks against," yet this place is the opposite of broken. It is feral and fierce and utterly whole, a land that has not yet been shattered. It is humankind and nature in harmony, each providing for the other. It is my siblings and I, with chapped lips and dirt-streaked clothes and our hands pressed together, gazing out into the vast unknown.