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Flash Nonfiction by Susan Terris



Rough Water Delusions

It's first light, and we're at the edge of the lake. I'm pushing off from the sand in the yellow kayak and have left the green one for you. But when I look over my shoulder and through the purling mist, I see green but not you. Yes, I was there. You? Never.

We are alone snorkeling off the beach in Lanai — before hotels were built, the island still only pineapple groves. As we head out, we're caught by a rogue wave at the edge of the point, pulled further and further from shore. Though I'm a strong swimmer, you are not. If I try to help, we may both be swept away. Below, I see tiger sharks, moray eels. *Kick, I cry. Kick hard!*

The lake again. I'm swimming the half-mile to the sandbar; when my eyes open, I see below a sunken log from clear-cutting, more than a century ago. I dive down, and seated on the now-petrified log is a brown-haired girl of twelve wearing my old blue satin bikini, and you, a young boy, are sitting there, too. I frog-kick closer, desperate to recapture what has been lost. But just then, a catfish bullies through wild rice stalks and stirs up a cloud of yellow sand. When the

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water clears, and I look again, you have vanished and so has she.



Hawk Bait

Midday in the hot tub in Point Reyes. Temperature outside is 45 degrees but in here it's 104. I am at a rental house in the middle of a stand of cypress. Still, despite the houses nearby, I choose to loll naked, my breasts only half-submerged, one real, one reconstructed. Stalks of bamboo and rosemary fringe the edges of the tub. Overhead there's a red-tailed hawk, circling, patrolling his territory. I begin to feel that I, from this distance, must look to him like a plump pink mouse. Yes, just-born mice, called *pinkies*, are hairless. I am becoming unhuman, a pinkie myself. In the tub, I let my pale toenails surface, my belly, too. The hawk is gliding on thermals but soon will wing lower and try to lift me from the water. Will I fly with him? Have I, like Alice, dwindled, so he can snatch me up? Or will he grip me with his talons, like the eagle I once saw, and be dragged underwater—unable to release his prey—until we both are drowning: another scenario of love and loss?

Art Information

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Susan Terris' recent books are *Familiar Tense* (Marsh Hawk, 2019), *Take Two: Film Studies* (Omnidawn, 2017), *Memos* (Omnidawn, 2015), and *Ghost of Yesterday: New and Selected Poems* (Marsh Hawk, 2012). She's the author of seven books of poetry, seventeen chapbooks, three artist's books, and one play. Journals include *The Southern Review*, *Georgia Review*, *Prairie Schooner*, and *Talking Writing*. A poem of hers appeared in Pushcart Prize XXXI. A poem from *Memos* was in Best American Poetry 2015. Ms. Terris is editor emerita of *Spillway Magazine* and a poetry editor at *Pedestal*.

For more information, visit [Susan Terris' website](#) [7].

Photo of Susan Terris by Margareta Mitchell.

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