

Kate Giles

The Water's Edge

Expectantly we wait, mist moistening our skin, waves murmuring in the distance. Daytime, we walked this ribbon of shore, a stretch of jungle lined by aquamarine, now a splash of silhouettes. When the call comes, “rapido, esta lista,” we flip off flashlights and move in hushed single file to the spot. Lit in the silver moonlight, a dark knoll rises in the sand. She has swum hundreds, even thousands, of miles to this soft Caribbean beach of her birth, as her ancestors have done in the cycles of this earth for a 100 million years.

We have flown thousands of miles for my niece's 18th, planned a decade back. When younger, our lives entwined effortlessly, meeting each other in years halfway, visits rushing by on roller coasters and Doritos, conversations expanding naturally, the shape of our differences unformed. Now we have become as distinct to each other as the surrounding water and trees. She, fluid, wild, amorphous, to me. I, rooted, upright, predictable, to her.

“Quietly. Move in behind. She's trancelike now. It won't bother her.” Tentatively, we gather round behind, and in a fluid motion, the ranger takes hold of her shell, lifts and lights. For a few moments, we see glistening white spheres emerging, beautiful as pearls, streaming from her body to touch the earth, the creation of a journey from sand to sea, and sea to sand, generation upon generation.

Looking back, it's easy to see the tributaries now, the sources of her and me. Looking forward, what will flow out, what will flow in, I still can't see. Will a quarter of our genes keep us coming back to who we were, anchor us to who we will be.

Stepping away as she comes to, we move down to the water and, eventually, she appears, slowly crawling back to the sea, stopping often to rest. Ahead of me, my niece watches intently, the long blonde strands of her hair just touching the top of her low rise jeans, the wisps of that little girl past, fluttering slightly. And finally a few feet from the water, she pauses once more, before a wave carries her and she drifts away.

Kate Giles is passionate about teaching and learning language. Having finally settled down with poetry, she has been published in various literary magazines including *Porter Gulch Review*, *Red Wheelbarrow*, *Santa Clara Review*, and *Matchbox Magazine*. In addition to language pursuits, Kate enjoys traveling, photographing, and caring for critters.