

Lament

By Joseph Grant

Seagulls emptily cawed out the last remains of the day overhead beneath ash-colored clouds while she stared in a fog out the window at the sea. Her eyes averted from the red cupola of structure at the end of the pier and the oil rigs out in the water past it to the ridiculous man in a wife beater and shorts wearing an oversized Havana hat with black socks and shoes as he trudged along the beach in front of the palm trees with a metal detector.

Her attention was directed to the sound of exuberance across the shoreline. The fires of youth burned orange and brightly along the darkening shore, with a shout or two from boys not yet men and squeals from girls forever faraway too mature for them running through the sand.

It had been a long time since she had been 17, so carefree to echo the same sentiments that held darker consequences and smiled at how unaware and innocent youth can be, always seemingly is, she smiled. She watched the pony tails dance up and down as the bikinied young girls jogged away from the boys. She was well aware how they were like horny moths pulled to the light in search of cheap highs and ceremonial sex and how it was all for fun until poor girl got knocked up, she thought as she wiped away an echo of a long forgotten tear and took a drag on her cigarette and exhaled. All were suspicious as far as she was concerned.

Outside the window, bus drivers in short-sleeves and red ties were smoking outside parked tourist buses in the sand-covered parking lot as she dwelt upon her youth, much of it ill-spent, almost all of it gone.

As she caught sight of her reflection, she could hardly recall 17, but that was from all the abuse, the meth and the drinking. Once the clothing came off, whether at the beach or in the bedroom, the subterfuge was over. She could pull it together with make-up, faux designer clothing and pumps but her body bore the evidence of a life lived hard, of many pregnancies come to term and terminated; miscarriages of love all of it.

Whether it was the edgy men in her life or life lived on the edge, the ravages of youth and the shadows of violence of what she knew to be love were now more apparent than ever. The men in her life had worshipped her body and she allowed it to be viable and vulnerable as a

temple of desire but in the same, had ruined that temple with endless orgies of anger, drugs, drink and lust.

Close the window I'm cold. It's getting chilly out. Enough of those silly teens on the beach, I'm sick of hearing them, she said, pulling her sweater closed instead of buttoning it and folded her arms. He watched as she pulled her sweater tight over her chest and smiled. He was fascinated by the female breast like any guy was, although everyone theoretically had them, *but not like hers,* he thought proudly. *Come here, I'll make you warm,* the veritable thousandth man in her life said with outstretched muscled and tattooed arms, but she waved her hands at this latest badboy and shook her head plaintively. *Let's be serious,* she complained as her expression drew grave, *Look, you're just not getting it, what are we going to do about all that money we owe the dealer?*

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