

fort other survivors.

Another wave submerges her. Salt water pours through her, rinsing every cavity within her body. She lands on her feet facing the beach. The current has moved her far down the beach. Animal sounds surround her. It is her own keening, she realizes; she has never made or heard such sounds before.

Suddenly she sees Suzanne, directly level with her on the beach. She is frozen into a strange position with one foot in the shallow water and the other on dry sand, her face arrested in an expression of panic. It is her posture which best communicates her dilemma. Should she go after her mother herself or should she run for help?

Mira stops keening. "This is my child whom I love more than life itself." She repeats her "mother's mantra" to herself as she registers her daughter's confusion and fear. Superimposed on Suzanne's worried adult face, Mira recalls the open flower of her four year old face at the dinner table, asking about death because her cat had been run over. What happens after you die? She listened attentively to their answers and grasped their hands in hers, forming a small family circle. "When we go," she'd said, "let's all go together."

"I can't abandon her," she realizes. Half walking, half swimming, Mira starts in to shore. She is shaken by those animal sounds which she was forced to recognize as her own. Steadily moving towards Suzanne who is wading out to meet her, Mira attempts a regal breast-stroke, although it is really the tumultuous sea which carries her in to shore.

\*\*\*\*

Mexican nights are a deep velvety black. The guest house is plunged in darkness. The shushing of the ocean has turned to a roar that hurls and retreats, clamours and withdraws, leaving a fearsome rattle of gravel, shells and coarse sand in its wake. There is an emergency. The house is filling with water. Mira feels its salty

buoyancy surrounding her, inexorably rushing towards her through the plant-filled courtyard, up onto the verandah, dislodging wicker furniture, submerging the player piano in the lounge. Other people's belongings bump against her legs as the tide carries her perilously close to the ceiling. She has glimpsed the darkened shapes of palm trees flying through the air. Inches from suffocation, she knows Harry will save her. Surely he will not refuse her this ... her life. "Harry," she cries, "save me!" There is no one there. Her forehead crashes then scrapes against the stucco ceiling. There is no air left. She can no longer breathe. "Help me!" she screams.

"Mom?" Across the room Suzanne turns on her bed lamp. She looks disoriented, frightened, and angry. "Are you okay, Mom? You must have had a bad dream. Go back to sleep now!"

Mira doesn't attempt to respond. She leans on her elbow and watches Suzanne turn off the light and settle into the bed, trustingly wrapping herself in her sheet. Soon she hears her daughter release her breath softly into sleep. She wonders briefly if Suzanne has had an affair with Lallo. She came back from Las Palmeras late that night. No, Suzanne is far too susceptible to beauty to choose Lallo with his middle-aged mannerisms. There surely has been no exotic love affair or fling for Suzanne. For Mira there has been only the sleeping young man oblivious of her presence. There is no plumed serpent here, not for them.

She knows she cannot shed her pain like a tattered garment. Neither can she become her daughter's child. Her keening was in vain as were her decades of myriad schemes to link hearts with Harry. There are no new important roles for her to play. She is no longer near the centre stage. The drama has already edged far away from her. She feels nostalgia for the intensity of new loves, but she knows she will have to settle for novelties ... stolen moments of exquisite voyeur-

ism in the great Elsewheres of this world. In the dark silence of the night, she hears the ocean's dependable cadence. As she listens, it begins to cradle and rock her. Invaded by a numbing exhaustion and consoled by the music of the surf, Mira finally settles down, dropping heavily into a dreamless sleep.

*Greta Hofmann Nemiroff is Preseident of the Sisterhood is Global Institute and teaches and coordinates Women's Studies at Dawson College in Montreal. Her fiction and articles have been published in numerous journals and books in English and French.*

## JOAN BOND

### Return

Cold  
in your absence  
the toaster is  
my lightbulb  
the sun on sofa  
my blanket  
In the TV news  
I finger your face

Empty  
in your absence  
I pour oatmeal  
in a teacup  
toothpaste on my comb  
In the fridge dust  
I write you  
lists and letters

At the airport  
my hands  
cold and empty  
reach for yours  
and speak spring

*Joan Bond is a poet and artist living in Manitoba. Her poetry has been published in various literary journals and magazines.*