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The Southern Cross

Luke Burns

The Southern Cross is the first thing that enters my mind, painted across a black bubble that meets seamlessly with the horizon. We were young then, but very old within ourselves, filled up with a lifetime of heavy burdens and aspirations. Wisdom made a home for herself early in your mind, and the tinted glint of your pupils let me know that I was a hundred different people through time to you already. You didn't have to reach several lifetimes thanks to the miracle of personal trials and divine mercy. This is where you found me for the twelfth time, in the rosy-eyed flurry of being in a new place, beneath new stars, beneath that infinite bubble. Overwhelming, isn't it? How the years can stretch far from view into a flat field of memories, untouchable and unfathomable. We were different people then, as we were yesterday, and as we were only a plan in the heart of our Father.

Destiny sounds like a good word when you're lying on the dunes not far from the powerful waves or the sylvan cliffs. Without everything else, it's the sand that I feel when I fall into my Australian dreams, so far away from this ranch house. It's the views that I lose everything but the sensation of, like sublime unity, like awe, a lot of God. A lot, but still only a feeling, only a memory, only a bubble.

Here, this is for you. It may have lost a lot of its salt, because on darkened days I've run my hands through it, let it spill through my fingers, as evanescent as the distant thoughts and daydreams that I breathe in and breathe out. The simple things are the ones that slip away, and I tried to bottle them up in the glass bottles that line my shelves. The simple things ring with crystal fidelity as I walk past them on the way to the kitchen. The simple things mingled with delicate shells and also dead things. Trace bits of marine casualties or eventualities settled between the grains, and they ring too as I walk past into the bedroom. My grandsons come over to stay sometimes and play games, and to eat the terrible food I cook. Once they were pushing each other around and accidentally shattered two of my bottles. Without a bit of anger, and surprised at my own temperance, I swept their remnants away, deciding that I could no longer preserve something without its original bottle.

This is what we gathered from the fields of our nescience. This is the ground that sifted your tears, and refines them. The simple things echoed your laughter, and it fills these glasses with a lot of you, not all, just the memories.