

Brenda Ueland Prose Prize Winner

Sue William Silverman

GALVESTON ISLAND BREAKDOWN: SOME DIRECTIONS

The Neon Penises of Galveston, Texas

Fall in love with a man who drives a yellow Chevy convertible.

You and he—along with his wife and a group of friends—are dancing at the Kon Tiki, a gay bar just off The Strand, across the street from the apartment you share with your husband. Even though you are not gay, you're here because the Kon Tiki has the best disco music, the best dance floor: clear Lucite under-lit with neon penises. They flash on. They flash off. Red, green, blue penises strobe to the beat. "Stayin' Alive." Tonight, caught in the melodrama of the moment, you think: *The penises strobe in time to the aching beat.* Or, better yet: *The aching penises strobe in time to the beat.* This amuses you. Of course, you've been drinking Knob Creek bourbon and branch all night long, you, in your jiving platform sandals, cut-off jeans, polyester tank top. You're also celebrating April 14th, your birthday, your husband out of town on business.

Don't consider that marriage—yellow Chevy convertible's or yours—an impediment to falling in love. Especially here on the Gulf Coast past midnight, just drunk enough to believe he dances like John Travolta in *Saturday Night Fever*, a movie you've seen upwards of twelve times. Thirteen times. Since in your present condition nothing is an impediment, slither against yellow-convertible man during a slow number. Whisper "let's fuck" into his ear.

When these two short words—*let's fuck*—slam together, yellow-convertible man ditches his wife for you.

With the convertible top down, KILE on the radio, a bottle of Knob Creek to go, you and he drive thirty-two miles to the west end of Galveston Island, cross over the San Luis Pass bridge, cruising the curve of the Gulf Coast, distant towns lit like radioactive dust. At Matagorda he stops at the Paradise Motel, its neon rendition of paradise consisting of a palm, a seagull, a sun. *You have read Paradise Lost. He's maybe read Jonathan Livingston Seagull. Or Love Story. Or at least seen the movie. But why can't paradise be neon palms, seagulls, suns? Why can't paradise be the strobe of neon penises? Why can't it be a motel room with humid sheets?*

In fact, why can't paradise, why can't love, be like Sylvester Stallone's line from Rocky since, right before you fall asleep, yellow-convertible man whispers: "I've got gaps. You've got gaps. Together, we fill each other's gaps."

Don't dwell on exactly *what* each other's gaps are. Tonight, your synapses crackling from the fire of alcohol, you're sure your gaps are manageable. It's only later you realize your gaps are gaping.

When the weekend is over and he returns to his wife, counsel yourself: *This love of your life lasted less time than you spent alone in the movie theater watching John Travolta dance.*

Dancing the Quadriplegic Two-Step

By May, alone, answer an ad in the *Galveston Daily News* for a furnished apartment. Drive your non-air-conditioned green Volkswagen bug to a Victorian house on Market Street. Paint peels from loosely hinged shutters and galleries. One window pane is repaired with corrugated cardboard. The three-foot brick pier upon which the house stands is cracked, many houses after the 1900 hurricane having been elevated above sandy swamps. Ring the doorbell. A disembodied voice, booming over an intercom, intones, "Door's unlocked."

Enter a parlor where a quadriplegic man lies hoisted onto a hospital bed with pulleys, buttons, buzzers, situated so he can raise and lower his bed with a flicker of movement. His massive, bald head rears from an obese body covered with a sheet, soggy with sweat. In his static stare, not even his lids blink. His protruding eyes X-ray your heart.

You are too sober to speak. Your first impulse is to slit your wrists before you even see the apartment. Nevertheless, take the second-floor apartment, sight unseen. The rent is cheap; you're broke, desperate.

Carry your one canvas suitcase up the outside steps. Before you open the door, you know the apartment's archaeology of scents: stained undershirts, empty ice-cube trays, faulty electrical wiring, chipped lead paint. Sit on the couch, whose plastic upholstery reminds you of the seats in the yellow convertible. Across from you is a bright square of wallpaper where a picture must have hung for years. From age, sun, neglect, the remaining wallpaper is the color of water-stained magnolia petals. A solitary cobweb trails from the ceiling. In the bathroom, rust corrodes the toilet, the sink. The mirror's silver backing is tarnished. Avoid looking at yourself when you open the medicine chest. Dry mercurochrome smears one of the shelves.

In the kitchen a toaster, leaking crumbs, is plugged into a scorched socket. Open the refrigerator to discover an empty, washed mayonnaise jar, even the rim wiped clean. From your suitcase, remove a small slab of roast beef wrapped in aluminum foil, brought from the apartment where you lived with your husband, ten blocks away. Place the beef in the fridge beside the empty jar.

Open windows. Across the street is a rooming house. A man's arm leans on the sill in a second-story window. In the lowering sun, you barely see his shadowed face. But you know a frayed rope belts his stained jeans. For dinner, he eats deviled ham out of a can. He thinks it still

costs three cents to mail a letter. Dry skin cracks his heels. You want to wave, but know that's not a good idea.

That evening, walk to the seawall. Another day slips into the Gulf, below water. No longer believing in romantic sunsets, you enter the first club you pass, the Jean Lafitte; believe in the permanent neon night of bars, instead. Slide onto a stool. Glen Campbell sings "Galveston," an obvious jukebox favorite. For dinner, order bourbon and fries. One by one, dip them in ketchup. On the dance floor, not nearly as interesting as the Kon Tiki, sailors sway the Texas two-step. Girls wear western shirts with plastic, pearlized buttons. Ceiling fans churn cigarette smoke. Inhale it. Deeply. Glance at the pay phone by the front door. Think about calling yellow convertible. Or your husband. Think about returning to the apartment you shared with him. But across from that apartment is the red door of the Kon Tiki. It would only be a matter of time before, lonely again, you'd watch neon penises flashing off and, better yet, on.

Besides, while you suspect what's wrong, you don't know how to explain it—to your husband or to yourself. You don't quite know how to say that you once had a good job on Capitol Hill but left it, as well as your friends and your apartment, to move here to be with him . . . where *he* has a job directing a project responsible for restoring the The Strand and the Victorian residential neighborhoods. Whereas you have no job at all. Nor do you know how to say you are angry he works long hours and weekends. At times, he doesn't even seem to remember he's married. You might as well be a table or chair.

Nor can you explain your confusion over *his* affair with a woman, a month before you and he married. At least the affair was brief, you reassure yourself, though he never apologized.

Nor did he buy you an engagement ring. But remember that love means never having to say you're sorry.

Now, what to do? Return to D. C.? Work on your marriage? File for divorce? Buds of indecision bloom—all you're able to grow.

A drunken sailor approaches your bar stool. His face and clothes are wrinkled from salty air, alcohol, age. Half-heartedly, he attempts to pick you up, but you're both too far gone to give it anything but a feeble try. Still, perhaps in his sadness as to what might have been—another night, another year—he generously produces a twenty-dollar bill from his wallet, shoving it into your hand. Think about refusing.

Back outside, walk along the seawall lined with palms, the wind-whipped fronds permanently molded in a northerly direction. Motorcycles roar along the strip. Teenagers blare music in Trans-Ams, headlights and tail lights dim portholes through night. Down on the beach, jellyfish, washed ashore, lie strewn across sand like discarded wedding veils. In the distance, oil rigs flicker more brightly than stars, melting in the humid sky. Think about throwing yourself into the Gulf. Instead, watch waves surge and collapse until you're exhausted by their constant, useless movements.

That night, lie on top of the chenille bedspread in the valley of the mattress still in tank top and cut-off jeans, the edges frayed. Worry the sheets haven't been washed since the Eisenhower administration. From downstairs, pulleys and levers whir as the quadriplegic lowers himself to sleep, while his breath bubbles from watery lungs. Imagine his soft, slug-like body. No. Don't. Fumes from your own mattress rise around you. Be afraid to yawn or close your

eyes. Be afraid, if you move, tethers will shred, and you'll slide deeper into inertia. Think about the man who lives in the rooming house across the street. Feel the breaths of all three of you becoming gossamer—or fog.

Through the double-hung windows, humidity swells the night with longing. Display the sailor's twenty-dollar bill on the dresser, a memento of your first night alone in Galveston.

Stalking for Love in All the Wrong Places

One dusk a week later, strolling the east-end neighborhood, see the yellow convertible. The car isn't parked outside his own house. This is not the street where he lives. Feel a tremor behind your knees. Stumble on a magnolia root that cracks the sidewalk. Glance at surrounding windows and doors. Guess which one. Think about ringing the doorbell, calling his name. Instead, sit on a seesaw in a playground at the end of the street, watching for him. You want to say something, though you're not sure what. Maybe you and he can try again. Maybe he can still save you, though you don't know from what. Your need is as indefatigable as waves.

By eight o'clock he still hasn't appeared. Lights have gone on in windows. Off. On and off in all the Italianate, Carpenter Gothic, Victorian houses being restored—part of your husband's project—the yards dense with pin oaks and crape myrtles. Retrace your steps to the yellow convertible. Glance through the windshield, the upholstery where you once sat driving to Matagorda, pretending he was John Travolta, though a short, blond, nearsighted John Travolta. Recall that the inside of the car smells of plaster casts and distilled alcohol from the hospital where he works. But now the scent would seem foreign. You don't understand the dislocation of time—how you sat in this car thinking you'd be part of it forever—whereas now, his car and he are a distant vibration of memory.

Follow your instincts. You know what he is doing and what you will watch him do. Drag a porch chair down a narrow path between two Greek Revival houses. Stand on it. Lean forward, palms against the frame of a dimly lit window. Sheer curtains cast a faint pall on bodies. He is naked. So is she, where they lie together on a rumpled bed. Roy Orbison sings “Blue Bayou” . . . and you inhale the slow decay of cypress roots, the stagnant tremble of muddy sludge. Your own pulse deepens, to blue. His fingers trace her skin. Feel it on your own, small eruptions that ache. Feel his breath misting the window. Palm fronds rustle like words spoken a long time ago.

Place your own fingertips on the pane. Your smudged prints seem all that’s tangible of you, as if there’s no *you* behind your skin. Yet, even your skin feels like a filigree of foam . . . you, yourself, transparent water draining down panes of glass.

Watch the apartment you shared with your husband in one of the restored, iron-front buildings at the corner of Tremont and The Strand. Here, the third-story, arched windows are dark. Picture the marble tabletop you and your husband bought in Portugal. Miss the sunflower plates, the silver candle holders from Mexico, your pretty dresses hanging in the closet, even though you don’t want to claim any belongings. Rather, you want your old life to be a museum, as if a ghost of you still lives there.

Across the street, a spotlight illuminates the red door of the Kon Tiki. The soles of your feet feel the bass disco beat, neon penises throbbing.

At Thorne’s, a new restaurant a few blocks away, stand on the sidewalk gazing through floor-to-ceiling windows. Candlelight flickers on forest-green walls, white tablecloths, mahogany bar. The ornate mirror behind the bar reflects bottles of liquor. See your husband

sipping a Black Russian. He sits with couples who used to be your friends, before you scandalized yourself by running off in a yellow convertible. Now, they no longer speak to you.

Reflected in the window see yourself superimposed on the room . . . but imagine the way you looked when *you* dined here, wearing a long skirt, a silk flower in your hair. You sipped Sambuca with a coffee bean garnishing the bottom of the crystal glass. All evening your husband talked about the restoration project. He loves these buildings . . . and, sure, you love them, too. But you want him to love you more.

Leave before anyone can see you, lurking.

Back in your apartment, open the refrigerator. See the roast beef in shiny aluminum armor. Peel open the package. Smell the meat's greenness.

On the Lam Without a Thing to Wear

By September, almost broke, consider what illegal act to commit in order to be locked up either in jail or an asylum. Don't be fussy, don't care which. Free room and board. Except you're not sure how to pull it off. Recall that for the past year an arsonist set fire to a few buildings on The Strand. Some were totally razed. Others can still be restored. Maybe you should buy matches.

Instead, for relief from the heat, drive to the air-conditioned Rosenberg library. Glance through *Crime and Punishment* and *Notes from Underground*, books you read years ago.

You've always admired the dramatic gestures of Russian novelists, authors who know how to pull out all the stops. Both war *and* peace. *Crime and* punishment. On a grand scale. The beating of chests, the pulling of hair. The whole shebang. On the first page of the library copy of *Crime and Punishment* is a faded smear of blood. Someone else with the same idea as you?

Someone who takes her Dostoyevsky literally? But consider yourself on the seedy Gulf Coast, wailing country-western. Wilting beaches instead of frozen steppes. Shiner beer instead of Stolichnaya. You're not sure you have the fortitude, the depth of character of Rashkolnikov or the underground man.

Beside you on the library table is today's *Houston Chronicle*. Flip through it. See the ad for a temporary employment agency in Houston. They claim they'll find you jobs by the day, the week, the month. On a whim, drop coins into the library's pay phone. Set up an appointment. Write down directions to San Jacinto Street. Wonder whether a temp job is better than suicide or arson.

At the Olga Employment Agency, pass the typing test. With flying colors. Although you've had responsible jobs, this feels like a stunning achievement. You are told to report to Schroeder Oil Company the next day. They anticipate the assignment will last a week.

You are on the lam without a thing to wear, however. For the interview you dressed in your best floral bell-bottoms, but you need a few additional outfits.

Drive around the Loop to the Galleria. Park your rusty, dented Volkswagen beside Cadillacs and Lincoln Continentals. Since you've lived almost in isolation for the past few months, now, inside the mall, you feel overwhelmed. But persevere. Check price tags on dresses. Technically, you could charge clothes. Technically, you're still married. Nevertheless, technically, the credit card belongs to your husband so, up until now, you've used it sparingly.

Decide—although you more or less knew it all along—that you will shoplift.

Perhaps this is due to *Crime and Punishment*. Perhaps this is your sorry attempt at a grand gesture. Perhaps if caught and arrested, sent to jail, you won't have to return to your apartment. Your life.

In the dressing room, slip on a red-and-pink polyester dress, flimsy enough to fit beneath your clothes. The clinging material is the kind worn in *Saturday Night Fever*. That won't wrinkle. Ever. That you can rinse in your bathtub. That will air dry, even in Gulf Coast humidity, immediately.

Glance in the mirror. Wonder if you're sexy. Pretty? On your honeymoon night, in a suite in the Plaza Hotel, your husband fell asleep without so much as kissing you goodnight. Right now, this one fact—that you married someone who doesn't love you—scares you. Slide onto the floor in the dressing room. Hug your knees to your chest. The song "People" plays on the Muzak. This version—thin, pathetic—yet trying so very hard to please, causes despair to cascade through your heart.

Stop! Don't feel sorry for yourself. Continue with your plan.

Pull on your own clothes over the polyester. It bunches across the thighs. Smooth it out. Better. If caught, don't make excuses. Admit guilt. Accept responsibility. Demand a sentence. But only if caught, of course.

Back in your car you feel drunk with success. Not altogether unlike how you felt when you ran away with yellow-convertible man.

Shoplifting: A Cautionary Tale

When your Volkswagen drops a rod on I-45 outside Texas City on the way home, consider crime *and* punishment. You are now hunkered on the shoulder. Semis and Texas-sized

Caddies whiz by, your car shimmying in the gusts. The wind, however, is more like an equatorial nightmare than a fresh breeze off the Gulf. Especially wearing two layers of clothes. The polyester is like spun glass against your skin (which of course you deserve). Your left thigh feels the split in the upholstery where gray stuffing leaks out. In the distance smoke billows, tarnishing the sky, oil refineries processing crude. Take a deep breath. Think about sitting in your car until your skin grays with soot. Think about penance.

A police cruiser pulls onto the shoulder behind you. Glance in the rearview mirror to make sure no price tags are sticking out from under your armpits or the back of your neck. Notice that, having driven with the windows open, your ponytail looks like a bristle brush.

“Trouble?” he asks.

Explain.

When he offers to call the nearest service station, accept.

Think about confessing. After all, he is cute with blue eyes and black hair. *He*, in fact, looks more like John Travolta than the yellow-convertible man. If he forgives you, you will be saved. *He*, in fact, will save you. Don't heroes love to save sinners? Consider what it's like to be married to a cop. Wisely decide not to ask.

Two hours later, your car is in the shop. Lacking options, call your husband for a ride home. By now, you've sweat through both layers of clothes so that, if you look closely, the red-and-pink polyester is visible beneath the bell-bottom outfit. If your husband notices, he says nothing. At this point, however, you no longer care.

His Ford Mustang is air conditioned. Cold slices you like a blade of ice. Sweat freezes your skin. Develop a headache behind your right eye as you drive in silence, your palm pressed against your throbbing lid.

He stops the car outside the quadriplegic's house, the engine idling.

"Oh, we sold the Tremont Building," your husband says. "With facade easements."

The Tremont Building is part of his restoration development project. Facade easements protect the exterior of the buildings, ensuring that owners give the fronts facelifts. "Super."

He explains how the developer plans shops on the ground floor, apartments upstairs.

You sit beside him in the car feeling cold and frail, but he doesn't ask how you've been, if you've been eating, if you're lonely. Never mind.

By dusk, as sweat evaporates, your skin feels gritty, sandy. The polyester outfit, which you are now regretting on every level, hangs in the bathroom, drying. Lie on your bed in your underclothes, a washcloth on your forehead, your body settling into the familiar hollow in the mattress. Your palms are up forming shallow, empty cups. Feel like a Victorian girl with ague. The vapors.

Notes from High Above Ground

By December, begin your thirty-fourth temp job in Houston. Every morning cross the causeway over Galveston Bay onto the mainland, returning every afternoon, back and forth, north and south on I-45, now in your Volkswagen with a rebuilt engine. Which cost \$750 to fix. Which your husband loaned you. Which you are now repaying from your weekly paychecks, reflecting the four to five dollars an hour you earn.

At each job in a different downtown high rise, you sit at a desk that is yours for the day or the week. Liken it to renting a motel room for an hour. Aspire to nothing else. Instead, on an IBM Selectric, type reports for oil companies. You are a good typist. You proofread. No one complains. Typing is clear cut, keeps you focused on punctuation, on minutiae. Little time or energy to consider a failed marriage, neon penises at the Kon Tiki, shoplifting, spying on yellow-convertible man . . . or the distant, unseeable future.

Pass entire days barely speaking. You aren't allowed to make personal phone calls. There is no one to call. During lunch, sit at your desk reading. Or, through lowered lashes, watch coworkers, women efficiently dressed in pantyhose and business suits—women with real jobs, families, homes. Photographs of children adorn their desks. Their closets do not contain shoplifted clothes. They do not live across the street from rooming houses.

These women seem unknowable. Different. *Adult*. You fear you are not. You *know* you are not, you, with your Monday-Wednesday-Friday peanut butter-and-jelly sandwiches. On Tuesdays and Thursdays you bring strawberry yogurt and an apple for lunch. Pack a dented spoon from your furnished apartment in your brown paper sack. To save money, drink a glass of tap water. Use a paper towel from the bathroom for a napkin.

Feel as if you are sliding far away from normal behavior. Hope, at least, you are more interesting than your coworkers—like a starving artist. Or begin to feel almost *Russian*, that *you* are living underground. Take a revolutionary stand against capitalism, civilization.

Perhaps you are having an existential crisis.

Suspect, however, you are simply unoriginal, lost, confused.

Don't think about the permanence of a temporary life.

At one oil company, you are asked only to answer the telephone, no typing. Buy Rilke's *The Notebooks of Malte Laurids Brigge* and read it, day after day, nine to five. Remove a piece of stationery from the desk drawer and print out the following line from the book: "There are people who wear the same face for years; naturally it wears out, it gets dirty, it splits at the folds, it stretches, like gloves one has worn on a journey." Finish the book while sitting at your neat desk under fluorescent lights on the fifteenth floor. Wonder whether human faces, like buildings, can have facade easements.

On the day before Christmas, attend an office buffet lunch. Fill a paper plate with ham, salad, a gingerbread man. Employees gather in small groups, talking and eating. Return alone to your desk, carefully setting down your plate. With your plastic knife, cut a wedge of ham, put it in your mouth. Focus on food: cutting, chewing, swallowing. Wipe your mouth with a napkin decorated with Santa. Feel invisible.

Out the window, a forest of highrises stretches to the Loop. The pocked roof of the Astrodome, resembling the moon's surface, darkens in the gray afternoon. In the distance, grackles swarm, though you can't hear their raucous cries. Sounds in the office fade as well. Feel as if you occupy one cell of a honeycomb—all the windows in the buildings, all the office workers, all these cloistered faces suspended behind glass—hovering high above the earth.

The Shrouds of the Kon Tiki

Late one night awake to the clang of fire engines. Leap from bed and look out the window. Flames, from the direction of The Strand, stain the black sky. The arsonist is burning another building. Slip on flip-flops, cut-offs. Hurry outside. Your lungs are heavy with

humidity, your mouth smoky. Run as if you can save the building, worrying it might be your old apartment.

It is the Kon Tiki.

Pause in the alley across the street. If a building must burn, at least this one is no longer adorned with its original, iron-front facade, isn't worth much architecturally. Over the years the structure's been decimated, reduced to stucco slabs.

But where are the patrons? Upstairs from the dance club are steam baths for the gay clientele. Probably the baths operate all night. Probably men are still up there, though hopefully at this hour, past three a.m., not many remain.

From heat, red paint peels off the front door. Flames spire from the roof. Behind windows, fire shimmers and roils. Your husband, in robe and pajamas, whom you just noticed, grabs a fireman, pointing to the surrounding buildings. Probably he worries the fire will spread, will leap the alley to buildings waiting to be restored. The fireman nods before rushing off. Your husband backs away but continues to watch.

Slide down, your back against your old apartment building. The brick-lined alley is warm beneath your legs. The air pings as windows crack before shattering. Picture water pipes bursting, nails bending. The notes on all the vinyl records warp. Imagine the Lucite dance floor blistering before it melts—red, green, blue neon puddling to black, to char, to soot, to dust. The air smells dark, a whoosh of exhaled ether.

As if in a mirage, they emerge from cataracts of spraying water, walking single file. An orderly procession of men wrapped in white sheets follows a fireman from a side door. They look like husks spewed from wreckage. Dazed, they pass an ambulance, trickling down the alley one by one, their forms watery, as if leaving the Kon Tiki not having found what they sought.

When they reach the end of the block, you can no longer see heads or outlines of bodies. Wispy sheets drift on air currents, though the men's soles leave moist footprints on hot asphalt as they stumble toward what will be the worst decade of their lives. Perhaps their last.

Across the street, your husband's shoulders tremble as if he is crying. Even though this building isn't on the list to be restored, still, it's in The Strand district, which he loves. *This* is his love.

Walk over to him. Hug him. Your voice would never be heard above the fiery night, but you hope he understands you are sorry. About the fire. About the yellow convertible. About everything.

Imagine relationships ending like drops of water sizzling in flame.

Worn-Through Faces

One Saturday morning toward the end of March, see the entire man who lives in the rooming house across the street, not just his forearm in the window. He's opened the door and stepped outside. How do you know it's him? You just do. Imagine he's a sailor, unemployed for a while, fallen on hard times. Now you're sure he's found a new job on a freighter bound for Venezuela. He pauses on the front stoop, a cardboard valise in one hand, a cigarette in the other, as if he's stepping off a 1940s movie set. Crewcut hair. The leather of his western boots is cracked, but polished. He's younger than you imagined. But perhaps an old, previous, down-and-out face has worn off, as Rilke suggests, to reveal another face, one that's pale, yes, from his long captivity, yet now setting sail into the future. As he walks down the sidewalk, watch his footsteps as if you could follow them, each step a point on a map. Direction. A destination.

The thing of it is, the moment is banal. Watching this man is the opposite of the melodrama of running away in a yellow convertible. Today it is just solitary footsteps moving in one direction . . . and a new face. Today it is only the air that's spring yellow, oleanders falling all over themselves to bloom.

As the man disappears at the end of the block, rather than feel abandoned, imagine the tether that's lightly bound you and him together—now pulling you forward, too.

A few weeks later, almost a year after you ran away from home with the man driving the yellow convertible, you are financially solvent. Pay off the rebuilt Volkswagen engine. Purchase new clothes. Pack them in the canvas suitcase and throw it in the back seat of your car. One of your temporary jobs, at the Houston Zoo, has become permanent, so you plan to move. You want to feel the throb of Houston, a city that grew in proportion to Galveston's demise. Although Galveston was once the largest port on the Gulf, after the Houston Ship Channel was constructed, the island slumbered, leaving blocks of Victoriana to decay.

Until your husband was hired to restore it.

Or is he really only preserving it? Preserving decay, you now think. Consider that the old buildings should remain in ruin, the palmettos and crape myrtles jungled and rampant, pine shingles stained with saltwater, wrought-iron fences rusted. The scent of verdigris.

Consider only your own preservation.

One last time drive the causeway linking Galveston to the mainland. Speed, as if you are levitating, leaving the low-lying barrier island far behind. Windows open. Wind caressing the tender skin of your new face.