



# RETELLINGS OF THE INLAND SEAS

edited by ATHENA ANDREADIS

Stories by  
MELISSA SCOTT  
JUDITH TARR  
ALEXANDER JABLOKOV  
and many more

# Praise for Retellings of the Inland Seas

Anyone who can envision Atlantis as a doomed space-faring civilization about to be engulfed by rogue AI, or who has wondered what a bombastic, battled-hardened Odysseus would do when faced with unknown aliens while trying to escape an asteroid field, should take a look.

— Sarah Rice, *Booklist*

In this gorgeous, intelligently edited anthology, Athena Andreadis offers fiction that draws on the past to illuminate future imaginative possibilities. Readers of science fiction and fantasy will find both beauty and solace in these eloquent, well-told tales.

— Pamela Sargent, editor of *Women of Wonder*,  
author of *The Shore of Women*

The stories are universally strong and well written. There are no repeats, and the use of the source material by each of the authors is subtly different. // The stories in this anthology take classic, often familiar narratives and present them in modern forms that recapture and re-empower stories long obscured, polishing them into gems on the shore for readers to pick up and discover.

— Paul Weimer, Hugo finalist SFF reviewer, *Nerds of a Feather*

This anthology provides a great feast for readers, whether they are steeped in the classics or just love good fantasy and science fiction. Several of these tales should win places on the upcoming award ballots, but this grouping deserves the ultimate compliment for an anthology and its editor: there's not a bad story in it.

— Nancy Jane Moore, author of *The Weave*  
and the forthcoming *For the Good of the Realm*

Classic myth meets feminist spec fic in this crunchy, challenging anthology. My favourite stories were the most science fictional: Furies on Mars! Argonauts in space! But I found them all all thought-provoking, providing fresh interpretations of some of our oldest stories.

— Tansy Rayner Roberts, multiple winner of Ditmar and WSFA awards

# The Feral Astrogators series

The Other Half of the Sky

To Shape The Dark

Retellings of the Inland Seas

# Retellings of the Inland Seas

edited by Athena Andreadis



First edition published 2020

Copyright © 2020 by Athena Andreadis

Individual contributions copyright © 2019 by the respective authors

All rights reserved. Except as permitted under the U.S. Copyright Act of 1976, no part of this book may be reproduced, distributed, or transmitted in any form or by any means, or stored in a database or retrieval system, without the prior written permission of the publisher.

Please respect the authors' rights; don't pirate!

This is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents either are the product of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual events, locales, or persons, living or dead, is entirely coincidental.

For information, address  
Candlemark & Gleam LLC,  
38 Rice Street #2, Cambridge, MA 02140  
[eloi@candlemarkandgleam.com](mailto:eloi@candlemarkandgleam.com)

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data  
In Progress

ISBN: 978-1-936460-95-3  
eISBN: 978-1-936460-94-6

Cover art and design by Eleni Tsami

Book design and composition by Athena Andreadis

[www.candlemarkandgleam.com](http://www.candlemarkandgleam.com)

To my father,  
who shared his birthplace of Chios with Homer,  
and whose entire line of ancestors plied the Inland Seas.

To my mother,  
whose mother's family came from Trapezous,  
the imperial capital-in-exile on the Black Sea,  
and whose ancestral home may still stand  
across the bay from Constantinople.





Though we smashed their statues,  
though we drove them off their temples,  
doesn't mean at all that the gods are dead.

— Konstantínos Kaváfis, “Ionian”



# Contents

Distant Campfires, Eternal Beacons.....	1
Athena Andreadis	
Into the Wine-Dark Sea .....	7
A.M. Tuomala	
Sirens .....	9
Melissa Scott	
Hide and Seek .....	31
Shariann Lewitt	
The Sea of Stars.....	61
Genevieve Williams	
Between the Rivers .....	90
Judith Tarr	
Calando .....	122
James L. Cambias	
One Box too Many.....	132
Christine Lucas	

The Fury of Mars .....	149
F. J. Doucet	
Out of Tauris .....	177
Alexander Jablokov	
Little Bird.....	204
Kelly Jennings	
Wings .....	225
Elana Gomel	
The Crack at The Border .....	241
Dimitra Nikolaidou	
Unearthing Uncle Bud .....	250
Athena Andreadis	
The Transmutations & Their Originals ..	262
About the Contributors .....	263

# Ancestral Campfires, Distant Beacons

Athena Andreadis

“...we have a place where we belong, no matter where we are, that is as invisible as the air and more real than the ground we walk on.” —  
Linda LeGarde Grover, *The Dance Boots*

**M**y entire life I've fallen between too many stools to avoid or count, but one rift marked me decisively: my departure from my native culture at age eighteen, and my subsequent sojourn in a radically different adopted culture. Even before that tectonic shift, I had started sailing out of sight of familiar coastlines. I had discovered science fiction and fantasy (henceforth SFF) when infinitely malleable, even before I had taught myself to read. After all, what were the world myths and epics I pounced upon, even in simplified form—the *Odyssey*, the *Kalevala*, the *Heike Monogatari*, *Inanna's Descent*, the *Eddas*, the *Mahabharata*, the *Dighenis Akritas* *lais*—or, earlier yet, the lullabies of far away deeds, that I found out later were often based on history?

So here I am today, a zero-generation immigrant at the cusp of old age, an unfeminine feminist poised between science and art, a dedicated bookworm who writes in two languages and reads in four, a nurturer of others' speculative fiction stories and a determined non-jumper of bandwagons, in an era when terms like appropriation, ownvoices, censorship, stereotypical, authenticity, policing, identity, “stay

in your own lane” constantly lock lightsabers. What of SFF as the genre of imaginative exploration, as the de facto realm of the liminal? What of the double vision, of seeing merit in seemingly irreconcilable positions, that becomes an obligatory attribute of a lifelong wanderer in the Between? What of my own roots—and blossoms—in this struggle? Who speaks for “my people”—and who are “my people” to an exile? I’ve had these discussions in the previous Feral Astrogator journeys, in *The Other Half of the Sky* and *To Shape the Dark*. *Retellings of the Inland Seas* is a resumption of these conversations, compass needles in labyrinths and starry lanes.

I undertook my voluntary exile in a youthful spirit of eagerness to explore (though there were additional reasons: a military junta in power, with my family known for participation in several resistances; my divergence from local gender rules/roles; my desire to become a research scientist). Like many diasporans, I became a feral orphan belonging to neither culture: I sang of love and strife like the nightingale pressing its breast against a thorn, in a tongue I learned after infancy—and languages learned past that threshold are processed differently by the brain/mind, “through a glass darkly”; I’ve had my first and last name mispronounced my entire adult life; and the tales of my ancestors became constant whispers shadowing my path, tinged with the incurable nostalgia of idealized neverwheres/whens that nevertheless kept me intact as I inevitably got buffeted and bruised while making my way.

It’s my great luck, and equally great burden, that I come from a civilization that is millennia old and has had half a dozen flowerings—and that the ripples of this civilization have been formative for a large portion of humanity. This means that stories from my part of the world are deemed common property, with all the outcomes implicit in this categorization. All too often, when I read SFF I see layers of my own native stories peeking under the surface like imperfectly scraped palimpsests, like submerged ships: from the “surprise” in *The Empire Strikes Back* (which I guessed as soon as I heard there was one)...

# Into the Wine-Dark Sea

A.M. Tuomala

That long breath when we came  
unmoored, aurorae in our wake. Thermosphere  
broke against the bow and  
parted, shedding fire—kindling—we slipped  
into the great cold sea of stars.

Ungirdling, we  
floated free. Medea, long  
hair streaming, eyes dragontooth bright. *Jason,*  
*I've never seen so many stars.* Tears  
pearling the air; Orpheus hailing  
the earth, the heavens, the sea:  
*This is the Argo, turning*  
*back for one last look.*

Earth haloing Coronus, hurricanes spiraling  
up from Haiti to lick Lisbon's ear—  
Mopsus cartwheeling ears over atmosphere,  
Laughing jay-wild, lit from inside.  
*Hey,* he said. *Look,* he said. *I'll be*  
*damned,* he said, fingers spread like pinion  
feathers.

*I'm flying.*

# Sirens

Melissa Scott

Perseis stood at the outer edge of what had been Aptera's Observation Lounge, stripped now of everything that could have helped to repair the ships that had taken Aptera's staff and residents on their one-way journey to what they hoped was safety. One by one she had launched them, flinging them out into the night to enter the adjacent possible on the courses she and what was left of Gray Promised Tree had calculated for them. Whether they had made their planetfalls safely or not, she didn't know, and likely never would, and she glanced over her shoulder at the nearly empty space. With only the most basic built-ins left behind, it looked as though a great slice had been removed from the station's wheel, open to space on the viewing side.

That was deliberate, of course; Observation was designed to quick-seal in case of disaster, but it made the nanites shiver in her blood, aware of the empty spaces, of the crippled stub-AI at the station's heart. That had been her doing, her hand that had severed the link between Gray Promised Tree's full self and the share that managed the station's systems—her responsibility, as Firstborn and Holder of the station—because the moment she had seen that attack was led by the greatest of the quantum AI was the moment she had known that the station was doomed. She could stave off disaster long enough to save its people—perhaps, if all had gone well—but she could not save Aptera, which she had loved for the



best part of her working life, and if she could not save it, she would not save herself. Or so she had thought, in the first hot pain of betrayal.

She turned back to the transparent steel that formed the viewing port, staring at the stars that blazed beyond it. Aptera was currently positioned 45 degrees off galactic vertical, the optimum launch position for the last escapees, and she hadn't wasted fuel returning it to its more conventional position. The plane of the galaxy crossed the window at a matching angle, a great slash of light that frayed into darkness only at the edges, where the galaxy's heart trailed away into lesser streams of stars.

That glory, that spectacle, was a lie. The light of those stars was old, a past image no longer valid; present truth followed behind, a black nothing where those stars had been. The Event was coming, propagating through the adjacent possible, traveling through normal space at near lightspeed. Already, many of those stars were gone, and soon—within three months, within a year—the Event would reach out to envelop Aptera. Its sun, too, would vanish in a swirl of unreal energies, snuffed like a candle by whatever it was the rebel AI had unleashed. Or, just possibly, not: she had only stub-AI to work with, a fragment of Gray Promised Tree, and without Promise's full power—without the full power of quantum AI—her calculations were imperfect. Aptera might be just beyond the Event's reach; the impossible unmaking might lap at their doorstep and leave them be. Or the wave might break over them at full force, destroying them all. She could not be sure without more powerful AI, and that was the one thing she could not risk.

*I could ask. I'm capable of discretion.*

That was Gray Promised Tree, a whisper at the back of her mind, soft and—if it was possible—faintly amused. "We can't risk it," she said aloud, and felt the equivalent of a sigh wash over her.

*I am incomplete. Imperfect. I would be more use if I were whole.*

# Hide and Seek

Shariann Lewitt

**W**e are a race of heroes and we fought the Children of the Gods. You should have seen the place burn, the women scream for mercy. Had a few of them too. Lost them, more's the pity. You know I was the one who came up with the idea that won us the final victory. You might hear about the warriors, the champions, but I figured out how to get us behind their lines. Pattern recognition, that's the thing. You can fool it, you know. Doesn't even take great tech, though we had the best." Then he blinks and comes back to here and now. "You got those calculations yet, nav? To get home? On where home's supposed to be?"

I heard that story plenty times of before. Dear Holy Primes, the Old Man never shuts up. This battle, that crossing, the armada of all time, and especially his very own stealthy plan. Shaalaa, so he picked up a few tricks on image processing. We're all bored to Antares and back by his stories and there ain't no fucking gods. So far as any of us can tell, he only fought First-Lost whose tech isn't even up to ours. I wish he would shut his trap but he holds my contract and I've had worse.

Besides, I don't have much choice just now since I'm wedged half into the access hatch trying to tie together what I can of the remaining nav bits to get us home, and me off this damn tub. Fiddling up around the char makes it a toss-up whether it's worse to try to tie the comp back together or just plot the damn trajectory by hand. It wouldn't be too bad if we weren't in the Belt.

Asteroids. Can't track 'em by eye and can't blast the bloody things to vacuum. Well, not with the blazers at the two thirds energy packs we have left, and we'll need the extra fuel if we run into any trouble with the slingshot maneuver around Mars.

"While we're at it, can you hand me the ion wrench, Commander?" He presses something into my hand. "No, the other ion wrench, the one that says 'Ion 3590' on the handle. Shaayaa, that one."

If only the damn starboard nav hadn't been busted to shit, the port overcompensating, and the main nav comp blown a couple of gaskets in between. Hey, we weren't crushed by that world-chomping hole, density so far through the fucking mags that even now I can't look at the readings without my stomach doing backflips. I got us into the asteroid belt in human homespace and that's more luck than the Old Man has any right to have. How much fuel I managed to save on that maneuver? That's my own pure skill and more than we deserve—but still way too tight on what we need to make me comfortable.

"Hold that steady, would you?" I tell him while I seal the board into place. Six more to go. Be a whole lot easier, too, if these dirtballers didn't insist on all the artificial grav in every Prime damned turn and corner on this hulk. The galley and the head, of course, but in the maintenance shafts, for Holy Numbers' sake? Dirtballers aren't willing to live without their local vertical all the time and it drives us spacers crazy. Walking, climbing, everything takes three times the energy we need, not to mention the drain on ship's reserves.

Yeah, we keep the gravity regs in quarters and work areas so we can survive, we all know how the physiology works. Besides, there's more important considerations. Like the Guild interhall rugby tournament.

Gotta have grav for rugby and we're all determined to win, every one of us, even if most on this excuse of a ship are Greens with a smattering of Whites and Grays.

# The Sea of Stars

Genevieve Williams

**K***yrenia* departed from Piraeus in haste, without even a token sacrificial libation. They had run into port ahead of the season's turn, only to discover that the summer's plague had not subsided with the onset of cooler weather. From the Long Walls to the Acropolis, people in Athens were dying in the streets.

Euphemus considered abandoning those of *Kyrenia's* crew who had leapt ashore the moment the ship had touched dock. But the wind that had blown them into Piraeus could not blow them out again; when the sailors returned, unwilling to risk the brothels or the taverns with people groaning in the gutters outside, he took them back aboard and would not let them leave again. Tiphys, *Kyrenia's* steersman, nodded approval, saying Athena would not look favorably on abandoning the crew.

"It looks to me as though she has abandoned her city," Euphemus replied. But quietly. He was not a superstitious man, but only a fool spoke ill of the gods.

As soon as the wind shifted, *Kyrenia* pulled away from the dock with the groans of the afflicted following them across the widening water. Euphemus hadn't worked out where they were going, but the wind drove them southwest. Past Salamis, where—as Euphemus well remembered—the people of Athens had taken refuge from the Persians. Athens had won that day in the end, turning the tide and sending Xerxes and his armies packing. But now Athens suffered an invasion

no ship could defeat, and dark rumblings came from Sparta. Euphemus himself would not go ashore anywhere Sparta controlled—which limited their options.

“Get us on as southerly a course as possible,” he said to Tiphys. “Keep us east off of Aegina.”

Tiphys assented, not mentioning the other thing that was on both their minds. Water. The plague’s persistence had left Euphemus dubious of Athenian wells. A fine thing, if they found themselves in the middle of the ocean, dying of thirst. Their lack of sacrifice before setting out nagged at him. The god of the sea could kill them any number of ways. Thirst would be among the worst. He contemplated the distance to the nearest fresh water, and closed his eyes. Kea. Or Naxos. Perhaps. Behind and to starboard, the land dropped away until all they saw in any direction was the sea.

Idomeneus came up from below and approached him, gray-faced. Euphemus’s heart sank.

“It’s Megakles,” Idomeneus said. “He’s sick.”

*Miasma.* Euphemus thought the word before he could stop it. They had docked in a city infected with plague, they had set out without making the proper offerings, the wind and his own orders would take them deep into the open sea between the Peloponnese and the Cyclades, and they had a sick man with no way to keep him from the others. The gods had turned against them.

“Isolate him as best you can,” he said, keeping voice and face as calm as possible. “Put a cloth over your face to keep from breathing his bad air. No one goes near him, understand?”

Idomeneus nodded, going back below with the air of a man going to his execution. Euphemus stared after him. What he ought to do was throw Megakles overboard. Up to a third of Athens was dead or dying.

He went to where Tiphys stood with a hand on the tiller. The steersman was squinting at the sun, his lips moving. Euphemus did not interrupt. At last Tiphys turned to him. “Sir?”

# Between the Rivers

Judith Tarr

They tell this story among the tradeships of the time-between, when the people had gone out from Old Earth, but the worlds they found were few and poor. Any whirling rock with a scrap of atmosphere was contested bitterly; wars were fought over the rubble of moons.

The genship *Ninsun* had found a gift of the long-forgotten gods, a habitable planet orbiting a small yellow star. Its atmosphere, with encouragement, could support life as Old Earth knew it, and there were no sentient beings, either higher or lower, to complicate the matter. The ship settled on the largest continent between two rivers, and set about the creation of a world.



Negar stepped away from the ship's ramp onto this new world, her world, the world that *Ninsun* had made. She stretched and yawned and blinked in the light of a new sun. It was white and golden, and the fronds of the tree that whispered over her were deep green.

She smelled earth and water and something pungent that she could not quite find a name for. It was like Earth, but not. The sun almost but not quite. The gravity close but...different. A little less. Enough to give her a delightful sensation of lightness.

*Ninsun* laid it out before her: the planet, the continent, the city between the rivers. The walls were up, the people awake

and populating the streets and the houses. Flocks of sheep and goats, fresh from their own stasis tanks, explored the newly green hillsides. There was even a boat on the river, a narrow construction of reeds with a brown canvas sail, pulling fish out of the deep clear water.

Negar laughed and stretched out her hands to gather it all in. "Mine," she said. "All mine."



Negar had waited all her life for this. She was not the youngest of the family, but there were so few habitable worlds, and so many aunts and sisters and cousins ready and eager to be the one, the representative, the family's voice and the ship's intermediary to the brave little people who allowed themselves to be loaded in boxes and cast into sleep.

For them it was a journey without return. Once they woke on the world to which the ship had taken them, they were bound to stay. Their children might leave, if a ship came and if there was space for them on it, but their own contract could not be broken. They belonged to the new world and to the ship and the family that had brought them there.

Negar had no such binding on her, but she was contracted for twenty Earthyears, renewable at the ship's discretion. That was the only absolute power the ship had. Everything else was hers. Her responsibility. Her world. Her people to care for, and her decisions to make.

She had so many plans. Building the city first, of course, and establishing an economy. Laying out the fields for planting and for livestock. Assuring that every being under her watch, human or otherwise, had what it needed to live and thrive.

But then, when all that was done, there was a whole world to explore. Resources to discover and exploit. New towns and cities to establish, as the population increased.

"First things first," *Ninsun* said. It spoke in the voice of Negar's biomother, through chips and relays directly into her mind.

# Calando

James L. Cambias

**T**wenty thousand kilometers to fall. The thought made Ari chuckle. “It’s not the fall that kills you, it’s the landing.” Though in his case, there would never be a landing. Somewhere in Neptune’s upper atmosphere his suit would get hot enough to kill him. With luck he’d miss the part where he turned into a bright streak of plasma and then dissipated into the wind.

He could almost write a song about that. Some nice imagery, build to a crescendo as the air turns to fire. End with (of course) a dying fall. Heh.

Well, there was plenty of time. He had four hours before he reached the cloud tops. He’d written songs in less time. His signature piece, “Immortal Affair”, had come to him while eating breakfast, and he’d recorded the first rough version before lunch.



“How many times am I going to have to sing that damned song?” Ari was tired and sweaty and hungry, as he always was after performing. That night he was out of sorts, too. The crowd had demanded “Immortal Affair” as they always did, and he’d sung it so contemptuously that they started booing.

“How long are you planning to live?” his daughter Oni replied. “Figure a hundred times a year, maybe more. Just add two zeroes to your lifespan.”



They were having dinner on the balcony of his apartment, on a tower with a view down the center of the Nysa-4 habitat, at the inner edge of the Belt. Oni had made an excellent meal of grilled fish, chickpea puffs, and a big salad. All grown in the hab rather than printed.

Ari was too annoyed to pay attention to his dinner. "It's boring," he said. "I've explored that piece until I'm tired of every note."

"Write something new."

"I've *done* that. A hundred songs, and nobody wants to hear them. I even got an AI to write me some tunes, optimized for emotional effect. Nobody cares."

"It's not the songs people care about," said Oni. "They've got ten thousand years of music to listen to, and algorithms to pick out exactly what suits the moment. They want to see a performance."

"Well, I perform," he said, refilling his wineglass. "My voice is as good as it's ever been."

She shrugged. "There's a billion singers with better voices than yours right now, and a hundred billion dead ones on recordings. It's the whole experience that matters. People want to hear you sing something you wrote. They want something authentic. If *you* don't like what you're singing, how can they?"

"Maybe I need a new audience," he said, picking at his salad.

"A tour? That's an idea," she said. "We'd have to figure some way to cover your travel costs."

"Juren! Or Deimos!" said Ari. "Maybe Earth as well."

Oni looked skeptical. "You've never had much luck breaking into those markets. What about the outer system?"

"Long travel times. I'd be gone for a decade."

"Longer than that," she said. "You can't afford a fast ship to anywhere. It's either working your way aboard a cycler, or hibernating in a cargo pod flying minimum-energy routes."

The idea of spending years aboard a cycler station, singing "Immortal Affair" every damned night, made Ari feel sick. A long sleep in hibernation was much more appealing.

# One Box too Many

Christine Lucas

Perhaps we should stop poking it?” Penelope asked Sophia across the narrow stainless steel table, then poked the alien box again.

“You think?” Brian grunted from across the room. He wouldn’t approach the halted conveyor belt. Instead, he glared at them, squirming to settle his skinny ass on the unprocessed sample crate by the wall. His pale complexion had an almost waxy shade under the full spectrum lights of the screening area.

“But it’s fun,” Penelope said and poked the artifact yet again.

Roughly the size of the ancient Rubik’s cube, this little piece of crap had sealed them in this tin can of a station. No false alarm this time. No fossils of extinct starfish from long-dead seas. No bent, rusted, charred junk from millennia-old crash sites. The real deal. Yet nothing happened when they poked it. No jolt of static, no illumination of the intricate golden patterns of its copper-colored surface. Perhaps it was some alien paperweight, or something equally useless? *How disappointing.* Penelope traced a pattern of spirals and entwined vines, and this gave her the slightest tingle on her fingertip that roused a shudder in the nanobots inside her head.

She bent over the artifact, pretending to study the little slits at the edges of the engraved patterns, and that circular section that could be clickable. Had the others noticed? Had

her face reflected her bots' terror? Was it just her, or did the others sense it too?

Hearing voices was never good—or, worse, seeing things to match those voices. Not now, after the Panacea code, not ever. And certainly not for those stationed in Mars and handling potentially hazardous samples from every mining site across the solar system. Crates on top of crates from Europa, the latest shipment of a Russian harvester ship, awaited their turn to be screened all around them. The mechanical arms that usually handled the samples now hung limp from the low ceiling. Penelope had never known this part of the station to be this quiet in the two years of her confinement there. Now nothing moved around them but specs of dust and the ever-present red sand that crept everywhere.

With one crate from Europa, the center of the Universe—their Universe—had shifted to that damned box on the belt.

Sophia poked it again and chuckled. More stress than mirth, but her brown eyes did light up. These incidents were rare, and they reminded Penelope of better times—carefree, even happy times, before her own sister had ratted on her and had her sentenced to three years of hard labor on Mars. It could have been worse: she could have been sent to any other possessing spot across the Solar System or—gods forbid—the algae farms. At least here she didn't smell like fish and Sophia was in charge of things. She'd never admitted to it, but Penelope always suspected that Sophia had called in too many favors to arrange this particular deployment. And she hated and loved her big sister in equal parts for this.

“Will you stop doing that, you illiterate heathens? Why can't your thick heads grasp that we're all going to die?” Brian slammed his hand against the steel wall of the cargo bay. “Just stop it!”

Penelope opened her mouth to respond with some witty retort, but a swarm of nodding nanobots—cartoonish little critters, like metal scarabs with huge, beady eyes and short, fast legs—inside her head made her close it back.

# The Fury of Mars

F. J. Doucet

*“And when I have withered you I will lead you off below, alive,  
to pay the penalty for the matricide and its horror.”*

— Aeschylus, *Eumenides*

The footage from tomorrow’s first case, Your Ladyship.”

The tightly-laced court aide waited for the nod to proceed, then loaded the footage. Judge Aguta Greywolf watched impassively, noting the impossibly slow progress of the one-person craft wobbling across the screen. Intoxicated or elderly, she supposed. Most likely elderly, given the utmost care with which the ship ground to a hovering stop by the intersection.

“What am I seeing?”

“2221 Mitsubishi Wing X-10 piloted by one hundred and ten year old female. A tourist from Earth.”

“Does she still have her license?”

“Probationary pending this year’s eye exam. Restricted to her own nation on Earth.”

Aguta grunted, discontented. With successful optic surgery rates, most eye tests came back positive into the hundred and twenties these days, but there were no guarantees. The old woman had arrogantly assumed her fitness to fly far from home.

“When did she arrive on Mars?”

“Her traveler’s visa started on the Red Month and extends to the Green Month.” The aide consulted her file. “Looks like she got here on Red 12.”

About a month ago, then. “Has she been recorded driving the whole time?”

Another pause as the younger woman scanned her tablet. “Yes. Since day one.”

“Fine. Continue footage.”

The judge leaned into her black leather recliner, imported from Earth at an exorbitant cost. It was one of the few attractive objects in the bland Justice Ministry building, which had been designed for efficiency in a hostile environment, without any nod to beauty or luxury.

The video picked up from a three-dimensional intersection and showed the elderly pilot accelerating upwards perhaps two hundred meters before continuing horizontally. Though slow, there was still a certain assurance there, and the judge thought that the pilot had most likely been skilled in her younger years. She probably still considered herself capable.

A red Nissan Wing was cautiously easing into traffic approximately one hundred meters below the Mitsubishi. The accused started to drop into a lower lane and the other pilot slowed to give way. Both misjudged the distance, and the result resembled a disastrous underwater ballet. Despite exhaustive efforts from both Earther and Martian engineers, no one had yet managed to invent a total area artificial gravity system, and citizens still lived with the demanding effects of Mars’ gravity, one-fourth that of Earth’s. Under that influence, the impact of the old woman’s craft crashing into the red Wing looked almost gentle, but as soon as the two crafts met, time sped up again. The Mitsubishi crushed the passenger side of the Nissan. The other pilot made some futile attempts to save his craft, then spun away from the camera.

“From the ground cameras.” The aide loaded still footage onto the screen. The red Nissan Wing was a twisted, flaming mass on the ground. “The Nissan caught on fire, but the victim died on impact. Police took the other pilot into custody when she landed to examine the crash site.”

# Out of Tauris

Alexander Jablokov

Iphigenia saw him coming. He was just a wavering shape far off across the plain, and she might have imagined seeing the bundle he carried. She knew it had to be there, for there was only one reason a man came to Vravron.

He would have started while the stars were still in the sky to get all the way across Attica before Mt. Hymettos turned purple. He was a busy man, after all, with a farm in the countryside or a shop in Athens, a dead wife and, perhaps, a living child still unweaned. But he knew what had to be done, and had set about doing it at the first opportunity. If he owned a donkey, it couldn't be spared from its tasks. He walked slowly and steadily, a man who knew that heroism was not the way real work got done.

She left the girls at their games in the high-walled courtyard, and went out of the gate toward him. They met just at the ancient fig tree that marked the corner of the temple grounds. She led him to the spring and filled a wooden cup with water for him. He drank it too fast and shuddered at the cold. They sat together then, in the shade of the tree, and he set the bundle of cloth down.

“What was her name?” she said.

For a moment he was unwilling to say it. And this was perhaps the last time he would ever say it. “Leucothea, daughter of Dymos, of Keramikos.”

“Ah!” Sometimes there was still some surprise left, after all these years. “We had her here, eleven years ago. I remember

her. The fastest of her year. Leucothea won all the races, and we had some fast girls that year. She was not as good a dancer as she was a runner, but decently graceful.”

He was flabbergasted. “Leucothea...ran?”

She knew what he was remembering. A woman who shuffled down the street with her basket, black-cloaked and veiled. A woman who slid silently up the stairs to the women’s quarters when the work of the day was over, while he and his friends drank and sang to dry their sweat. A woman who, heavy with child in her last days, needed to stop and lean against a tree or a wall to catch a breath, on her way back from market or field.

She smiled. “A girl that age is so light her feet barely touch the ground. You’ve never known a woman who was not burdened by something.”

He scowled at that, and looked away, lest he offend against the goddess Artemis, in the person of her priestess. Out in his world a woman’s smile always meant secret knowledge, and thus public trouble. She didn’t smile again, keeping her secrets to herself.

Girls came to the Temple of Artemis at Vravron from all over Hellas, the year before they were old enough to be wed. Here they lived together, played, sang, and ran, ran like a Scythian horse across an endless steppe. They fell down laughing, unable to stay on their feet. They were solemn at the ceremonies of the goddess, peering into the darkness of the temple to catch a glimpse of the twisted statue of Artemis that Iphigenia had brought with her when she first came here. They pretended to be other people, or animals. Bears, mostly. They pretended to be bears, and roared and hugged each other.

Then, wet with each other’s tears, they went back out into the world to meet their fates as women.

She herself had been young when she came, not the bundle of sticks bound with tattered parchment that she was now, with all of those other women who had been forced to serve the goddess amid the rocks above the Black Sea.

# Little Bird

Kelly Jennings

I was born in the year 1531 P.D., a child of Walker House in Kadir-Walker-Jeon Combine on the planet Hayek, the third system out from Earth and the oldest House among all the Combines.

Kidege is my milk name. My register name is Walin278, but no one uses register names for the hatched. Depending on the run there might be four or eight or sixteen to any given name—in my case, eight. Milk names are given in nursery. Nana Oki gave me mine, because she said when it was feeding time, there I would be, mouth wide like a little bird. That's what Kidege means, Little Bird.

Since I was small, my path kept veering from the other Walin278s. This has to do with how I broke my leg, and with Melia Walker Hayek. She was third in line to inherit the Primary Board Seat of Walker House, and exactly my age. We were born ten minutes apart, I in the House Clinic and she in Combine Surgery.

Walin278s are gymnasts—we win for Walker House at all the Games. I was in training when I broke my leg, learning a new routine off the overheads. I missed the bar on my return, and then missed the net as well. Properly, I should have tucked and rolled as I fell, but I thought I could catch the net. I landed badly, and the break—a transverse fracture of my right femur—was very serious indeed. Nana Oki came running down to the Clinic as they carried me in. I wasn't in pain, since they'd done a block first thing, and I wasn't



worried. It's true none of the other Walins had ever broken a bone, except when Fern broke her nose that time. But from animates I knew that broken bones were easily mended.

"Oh, Deggy," Nana Oki said. She tried to hug me without moving me on the cot. I hadn't seen her in months—she stopped being our nana when we moved out of the nursery, but she always visited at New Year. She petted my hair, which of course was kept short then. "Oh, my little bird."

"It doesn't hurt," I said. She tried to smile, but her eyes winced crooked. "It's only a broken bone," I added uncertainly. Nana kept petting me and sending panicked glances at the medics, standing talking by the doctor-machine which had my tests on it. I felt a sting of uneasiness.

The clinic door opened again, and Dr. Walker Jeon came in. I knew Dr. Walker Jeon—everyone did. She was the current Primary Seat holder. Also, she often came to our training sessions, to talk to us about proper meals, and hard work, and honor. I respected her, but she was no novelty. That day, I only paid mind to Amelia Walker Hayek, walking beside her.

Melia even then was not pretty, being stocky and round-faced, though she had clear brown skin and wonderfully silky black hair. But there was an intensity to her eyes, and something about the way she held her mouth, even then, that made everyone watch, as if at any moment she might say something you would want to hear. Also, she always knew what she wanted. There is power in that.

Her mother headed for the medics. Melia came to me. "You're hurt."

"I missed the bar," I explained. "I know what I did wrong, but the medics say I might not be able to compete again for a long time. The damage might be too serious."

Nana was still holding my hand, and I felt her grip tighten. I gave her a curious look. Melia did too. Then she looked toward her mother, who was speaking with the medics. Her mouth folded hard, and she marched over to them.

# Wings

Elana Gomel

She walked the empty streets of yet another town, walked slowly, because her glass shoes—the last, the very last pair, she hoped—were clouding with blood that seeped from her raw feet. At first, she thought it was early in the morning because there was no sun in the milky-white sky. But then she realized the transit had deposited her in a fifth-time zone. She spotted a small cafe and went in. A slovenly waitress, her coarse black hair falling in a solid mass onto her stooped shoulders, brought her a cup of spicy coffee and a stale puff-dough pastry.

Pounding music filled the cavernous room, coming from some clunky mechanical contraption she instantly despised. She was idly looking out the window, sipping her coffee (not bad, after all) when a group of laughing schoolgirls passed by. One of them looked back, her eyes the color of the sky over Thebes. Was it her daughter? She swallowed the familiar grief. No use wondering. Her daughter might pass her now and then in one of her myriad disguises: a laughing urchin, or a majestic swan; a swirl of fresh snow or a piano tune; a slim borzoi or a lady in a dress worth a kingdom's ransom. And she would never know, never recognize her own flesh and blood or be recognized by her.

She got up and went into the bathroom at the back of the café. Standing in front of the cracked mirror, she dragged a plastic comb through the tangle of her yellow curls. In proper sunlight they still shone like gold—the coin with which she

had bought her immortality. Her beauty had not withered in her endless peregrinations but grown refined, her slender body pared down to the pure architecture of her bones. Her eyes were of an even purer blue than the eyes of the schoolgirl, but her skin had been burnished by the sun so that she looked almost like one of those barbarian slaves who used to serve in the Temple of her mother-in-law.

Never mind. When she found her husband, it would all be restored. Her love, her daughter, her complexion. Her world.

She washed her face, adjusted her tatty jeans and hoisting up her backpack, went out. In some fifth-time zones periods of light and darkness chased each other around like fighting cats but here the white dusk just went on and on.

She considered her options. The latest instructions, coming from her mother-in-law in a dream, as maddeningly vivid as it was obscure, seemed to suggest she had to cross a desert. Was it in this zone or the next one? Was it really a desert or some oblique symbol based on one of those childish word-games the immortals were so fond of? This was so much more difficult than the first time because there was no set task to fulfill, no definite obstacle to overcome, nothing except those horrible glass shoes, two pairs of which had already shattered on her travel-worn feet. There should be three pairs to wear out but what if the old horror, in a fit of senile pique, had decided to multiply the sacred number or had forgotten about it altogether? There was nobody to restrain her now, no higher authority to appeal to. The others were...she closed her eyes and saw heaps of jagged marble around a splintered banquet table, a perfectly formed stone hand poking out of the debris, the fingers clenched.

The street was deserted. She suspected that were she to go back to the cafe she would find it deserted as well. She plodded on.

The sullen quiet was broken by a flapping sound. Startled, she looked up. A flock of birds wheeled over her head, their plump bodies and pointed wings black against the colorless sky. Her heart gave a leap. Doves, her mother-in-law's flunkeys!

# The Crack at the Border

Dimitra Nikolaidou

It's Good Thursday, and I have to help a dead man cross over. This is not what scares me. By now I have done it a few times already, enough to lose my fear of ghosts for good. No, what really scares me is that to reach this particular ghost I have to make my way through the yellow-lit, medieval streets of Nicosia's Old City. The Greek sector is safe, but if I take a wrong turn, I might accidentally cross the Green Line, the narrow no man's land separating us from the occupied Turkish part of the island. Best case I'll be detained, worst case I'll be shot. Of course, tonight I do want to cross over, but there is a special place to do so safely, and I can just make it out in the distance.

Hermes street. It used to be a bustling place before the Turkish invasion. Now it's cut in two by the bloody Green Line. In the Greek sector where I stand, pastel facades disguise the old warehouses behind them; two cherry trees bloom between marble benches, their petals unmoving in the night. The place would look like a theatre stage if not for the checkpoint at the end of the road, where the occupied part begins. No set designer could replicate the sense of abandonment beyond the rusted gate so perfectly, the weeds growing in the ruins, the gutted houses, the bullet holes in the derelict walls. Nor could they convey the threat emanating from the guardpost, dark under the red and white Turkish flags.

I hesitate. Beyond this ruined gate lies the reason I picked our abandoned family tradition and learned how to guide

ghosts through; the one dead man whom I really long to liberate. And it's the week before Easter, so the walls are thin and porous and I know that I can make it, if only I find the courage to go through this cursed border.

The priest's mournful chant is soaking the stony alleys. It sounds different than any Easter chanting I am used to—and then I realize it is merging with the muezzin's call from beyond the border. I take this as a sign, and walk straight on.

I try not to stare, even as I walk straight towards the iron bars. I haven't been doing this kind of work long enough to be brave about it; my lips have almost crushed my unlit cigarette, my hands clutch at the offerings in my pocket. In my mind, the guard returns, sees me ready to trespass, reaches for his weapon. In my mind, I can hear shots. In my mind, my heart clenches and stops; blood wells up and soaks the black silk of my shirt. I gasp for breath and the cigarette drops from my lips. The pain spreads and the lights of Hermes street go out behind my back.



“That will be ten euros,” the twin snakes say politely.

I gasp again, lift my hand to my breast. The silk is dry, my skin intact. My ears are still ringing from the shot, but nothing hurts. The snakes are still waiting, wrapped around a single column, the best-mannered Caduceus you will ever see.

Right. First I sigh, then the anger comes in waves. I pick a fresh cigarette from the hard white pack, and stick it between my lips with too much care. I tuck my long hair behind my ear; I straighten my tunic. Only then do I fish in my pockets for the entrance fee: a small tortoise shell, a miniature bottle of scotch snatched from a mini bar and a skeleton key. I drop them all in the silver plate glistening in front of the snake.

“Have a wonderful evening,” the snakes offer. I turn around and walk into the darkness ahead of me.

# Unearthing Uncle Bud

Athena Andreadis

Based on an idea by Peter Cassidy

“Ooh, come take my hand,  
We’re riding out tonight to case the promised land...”  
— Bruce Springsteen, Thunder Road

**D**anny Fenton raged down the street through drizzle stinking with scorched wood, grinding her teeth harder than usual. She had promised her mother, rest her soul, but this was it, the proverbial last straw. It was a mercy that Uncle Bud, her mom’s kid brother, had not exercised his reproductive imperative. The Fentons were the quintessential walking wounded, a small army of troubled characters who routinely destroyed the lives of their spouses, spawned deranged progeny or failed to attract mates altogether. They were quiet alcoholics, matter-of-fact suicides, non-profit arsonists who torched McMansions that replaced community gardens, and blocked artists who expressed themselves as either cruiseship musicians or local graffiti legends.

All this said, there was no question that Uncle Bud (officially Benedict, trailed by a long string of saints’ and heroes’ names) was the worst of a very peculiar lot. When he was a kid, he insisted he had found a way to communicate with the woodchucks who were scarfing up his mother’s sorry vegetable patch. In his teens, while his four male siblings were

robbing liquor stores and getting laid in the back of cars, he was constantly being arrested for breaking into the nearby college observatory, using all the telescopes and leaving them out of focus. The irate Astronomy Department had to threaten the family with a lawsuit before he'd desist.

When Bud got drafted into the Air Force in World War II, his beleaguered mother prayed hard that he'd come back with a craft—if he came back. Initially it looked as though someone had been listening to her, because he became one of the few people who could both fly an airplane and repair it. But he was still a Fenton. First came his downing in North Africa, about which he kept stubbornly mum even to his commanding officers and the shrinks and chaplains they sicced on him. He got even stranger after being ordered to bomb a civil records depository in Vichy that the Germans and their French collaborators were using to track down undesirables. Bud got it into his head that there were still lots of records everywhere that could be used to track down unfortunate innocents and victims of circumstance.

This started a chain reaction. He began to fret about his birth certificate, his school transcripts, his Air Force files, his motor vehicle records. An episode during which he attempted to burn the archives on the base landed him an officer's disability pension. This allowed him to buy a small one-bedroom cedar-shingle cottage near the ocean in New London. To his neighbors' vocal disapproval, he painted it teal, the window shutters salmon-peach. Then he pretty much disappeared from everyone's radar—except for rare moments when he made an appearance at family functions.

Wakes he never missed. Rain or shine, he'd be there in his blue trench coat, a slight man with a dancer's taut body and oddly powerful hands that looked as if they could crush a stone. His narrow face had a becalmed, cloistered look, reinforced by the druidic long salt-and-pepper hair. His eyes, though, burned an almost phosphorescent green and had given sleepless nights to both his parents.

# *The* **ADVENTURE CONTINUES ONLINE!**

Visit the **Candlemark & Gleam** website to

**Find out** about new releases

**Read** free sample chapters

**Catch up** on the latest news  
and author events

**Buy books!** All purchases on the  
Candlemark & Gleam site are DRM-free  
and paperbacks come with a free digital version!

**Meet** flying monkey-creatures  
from beyond the stars!\*



**[www.candlemarkandgleam.com](http://www.candlemarkandgleam.com)**

\*Space monkeys may not be available in your area. Some restrictions may apply.  
This offer is only available for a limited time and is in fact a complete lie.