



# Magnolia

A Florida Journal of Literary & Fine Arts

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photo by James Aubright

## Inadvertent Symbolism

by Chad Prevost

After three days of heavy rain, we hike.  
I carry one son up the scabble path of mud and rock.  
The other tears up ahead  
as we complete the climb and stand above the gorge.

Only a generation ago, this sharp bend  
between ridges flooded the valley spring and fall.  
The turbines kick on below, conditioning the wild  
water and—caught in the moment—my life

swallows me in an oceanic present.

White-washed cross  
atop a small plateau. I think of my father,  
a minister and lifelong world traveler,  
rarely took me anywhere, but brought me

artifacts: gypsy blade, Hindu gong, Kenyan ivory ring,  
broken clay cup from Jerusalem.  
He'd have me write down each Sunday School lesson  
even when I barely knew how to spell. He saved

each transcription. Now, a new narrative bubbles  
to the current surface, released  
into the space between.

Facing east, one son  
says, "Look, Dad, Chattanooga between my arms."

He holds them wide, the shape of a cross.  
I see our lives laid out along the surface roads below,  
and imagine a man opening a box  
in a desiccated attic, a note from his grandmother:

*I am so happy to hear of your confession,  
and to know you are saved.*

The younger son teeters  
at the west edge, throwing rocks too hard off the side.  
A boy stumbles like a survivor somewhere ahead.

## In the Design District

by Scott Brennan

Miami, Florida

The windfall mangoes on the walks are ripe  
in this appreciating urbanscape  
with rows of houses and shop spaces for rent,  
the real estate not as cheap as we want  
but in tier after tier of potential,  
buildings for revision,  
perhaps an art gallery here, a coffeehouse there,  
or maybe a day spa or a furniture showroom  
with a fancy name like *Old Siam, Unique Domain.*

The neighborhood is shaded by royal palms,  
though one of the storms has blown a few down,  
the sea breeze still capable of seducing  
each squinting newcomer in a U-haul  
who hopes something fresh can still be written  
in the caked, colorless sand.

The macaw in the Luna Star Café shouts  
"Buenos dias!" and "Looks like rain!"  
It flicks water into the cup of its beak

with a black, thumb-like tongue.  
The beak can crack a walnut or a chicken bone.  
“Pretty bird!” it calls. Then, “Please!”  
It pokes its head through the bars for a scratch,  
the irises luminescent green, but the pupils  
dilate wildly, and I pull my hand away.  
Zeroing in, opening wide, shrinking again--  
the telescopic eyes of a parrot  
with an old woman’s voice, a dragon's feet.

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