I’m so tired of pretending each gesture is meaningless, that the clattering of niu leaves and the guttural call of birds overhead say nothing. There are reasons why the lichen and moss kākau the niu’s bark, why this tree has worn an ahu of ua and lā since birth. Scars were carved into its trunk to record the mo’olelo of its being by the passage of insects becoming one to move the earth, speck by speck. Try to tell them to let go of the niu rings marking each passing year, to abandon their only home and move on. I can’t pretend there is no memory held in the dried coconut hat, the star ornament, the midribs bent and dangling away from their roots, no thought behind the kāwelewele that continues to hold us steady. There was a time before they were bent under their need to make an honest living, when each frond was bound by its life to another.
like a long, erect fin
skimming the surface

of a sea of grass and sand.
Eventually, it knew it would rise

higher, its flower would emerge
gold, then darken in the sun,

that its fruit would fall, only
to ripen before its brown fronds

bent naturally under the weight
of such memory, back toward

the trunk to drop to the sand,
back to its beginnings, again.

Let this be enough to feed us,
to remember: ka wailewa

i loko, that our own bodies
are buoyant when they bend

and fall, and that the ocean
shall carry us and weave us

back into the sand’s fabric,
that the mo’opuna taste our sweet.

Notes:
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