

## Heather Bourbeau

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### Road to Turkey

She quit smoking the moment she saw her father's ashes. Next to her piles of half-chewed stubs with varying shades of lipstick, she could see the futility of her habit – how we were all headed six feet under eventually. Why speed up the inevitable?

Nicotine withdrawals and mourning were indistinguishable as crying gave way to bouts of nail-biting and shouting at commercials and car drivers. She needed change, a reason out of her comfortable-enough life with its native plant garden, kindly neighbors, adequate lovers and classes to teach. She opened his diary, closed her eyes and touched the map. There.

## **Saturnine**

Four months and 6,700 miles later, she had retraced his footsteps, discovered his favorite watering holes, found lost friends, made connections with her father's forgotten freedom – his time before she was born, when he had the heady mixture of idealism, youth, and fresh adulthood. She found his past more vibrant than her present and she hated him a bit for it, even as she felt closer, kinder to him. A man entered the café her father had frequented, before the second coup and after the genocide. “So much melancholy, so early,” he laughed softly. “You must be from around here.”

## **Else where**

Sometimes all she wanted was to feel the meditation of train on tracks, the steady rhythm of a promise—of a place yet to be discovered, a future yet to be realized. There was always possibility in travel. Early weaning on National Geographics and tales of Amelia Earhart instilled in her a sense that life was meant to be lived elsewhere, on the road, in the air, on the sea. “Elsewhere from where?” she wondered, as she settled into her chair 10,000 miles from her hometown, far from the nest she made mere months ago. When did elsewhere become here?

## **Rixation**

It had been seven years and three conspiracy theories ago since she saw him last. He had become an explorer, venturing to Peru, the Arctic, and Papua New Guinea in search of a truth greater than himself. She had settled for more pedestrian adventures—hunting in the Highlands, riding camels in the Gobi. There was no greater goal, no search for justice. She had left all that when she left him and her anger behind. But here his gaunt figure stood before her, calling her again to battle—not for the good of mankind, but for this one kind man.

## Some Things

“Look,” she said with incredulous pride, as if she’d won a marathon accidentally. “This is two liters of my fat, sucked out from all over my body. Amazing.” If true, it was indeed amazing they found any fat on this skinny, if lazy, woman I had just met. And with that, I was prepared to dismiss her as another image-obsessed LA ex-wife, but then she confided something so fiercely true and revolutionary, I was left speechless. “You may love each other a lot,” she said. “But some things you can never move beyond.” Yes, like this, like us, my love.

**Heather Bourbeau’s** fiction and poetry have been published in *Alaska Quarterly Review*, *Cleaver*, *Eleven Eleven*, Francis Ford Coppola Winery’s Chalkboard, *Open City*, *The Stockholm Review of Literature*, and the anthology *Nothing Short Of 100: Selected Tales from 100 Word Story*. She has written in Madagascar, read in Tunisia, worked in Liberia, and wonders where she will explore next.