**Wishbone**

David Antrobus

We met in the southwest, close to the border. She was silhouetted before a crime-scene sunset, blood and plasma seeping into a workshirt-blue sky darkening to ink. She smelled of road dust, weariness, and shallow-buried things.

“So what’s your name?”

“Blanche. Blanche Warren.”

“Don’t sound too Mexican.”

“No.”

“You live around here, Blanche Warren?”

“For now.” She poked the dry dirt with her toe. “What’s yours?”

“Huh?”

“Your name.”

“Cole Franklin.”

“Don’t sound Mexican neither.”

“It ain’t.”

She lifted her head and met my eyes at the same moment, our heads cocked just so, like we was looking in a mirror, although to this day I can’t rightly say which one was the person and which one was the reflection.

Banished coyotes both, shunned by our own packs, we each crossed the high desert separately, assailed by solitude and the swirling grit of sandstorms and dust devils—those restless Navajo ghosts—only to stumble on each other by chance, my unraveled need snagging on her last want, her torn pack on my dying boxcar dreams.

Drifting, meandering days turned fugitive nights, stark and pale afternoons now vagabond twilights. And because we had to eat, we robbed and then robbed some more. And sometimes we killed, I ain’t proud to add. I could argue it was self-defense, but we all know better. They were the happiest weeks of my life.

But all good things, right? It’s the way of things. We had ourselves a falling out, and shit went bad faster’n I could keep track of. Then I was alone again.

A special woman is her own climate, a world entire. If you allow that system near your own and have ever felt the mingle and skirmish of those latitudes and tropics, those calms and storms, sudden squalls and sultry airless nights, you can’t imagine them ever being gone. Or how you’ll feel when they go. Bereft as a moonless earth. Itself haunted by a dying star. Something as lost as that tends toward cataclysm.

Had me a small campfire in a dry gulch somewhere north of Clovis, New Mexico, took some peyote I stole from an illegal just outside of El Paso, and she came in the night. Blanche did, I mean. Placed two fragile yellowish objects in my palm. Looked like a wishbone after it’s been pulled. Funny, I didn’t feel like giving no thanks nor celebrating nothing.

“Make a wish,” she said.

“You can’t be here.” I backed away and held out my hand. “What is this?”

“Called a hyoid bone. Kind of a throat bone. It’s broken.”

“This ain’t … You mean—?”

“Yeah, it’s mine. The one you broke. It’s yours now, baby.”