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# THREE POEMS

## BY KAWAII RUCKER

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### **On Crossing the Continent in the Belly of a Bird: An Ode to White Cloud**

The first leg is the easiest, small prop, the stratosphere  
rolling out below like cables of cotton.  
I count the first few thousand ripples,  
with no break in the current,  
all 944 miles.

Grandmother waits, tapping her hands together,  
trapping air in small flat-handed grasps.  
It's nervous chatter, or meditation.

Travel is always strange. Never believe it's happened  
till you land. Destinations are far more interesting,  
even if you never arrive.

### **Between Ghana, and Georgia, and Brooklyn, two generations died.**

In the voice of the dead, I must sing.  
In the voice of the dead, I must pray.  
In the semblance of the dead, I must deliver  
these words laden with the birth of water,  
the burden of blood,  
the burden of soil uprooted.

Nana, my great grandmother, died at ninety-nine.  
She could have lived past these years  
but my grandfather died before her  
and the will no longer remained.  
New York Avenue is still a place  
I remember clearly, George Washington  
praying by his horse on the wall,  
the Mona Lisa's ever watchful eyes.

My great aunt retreated  
into the teeming heart of Queens.  
She married a second time.  
She buried a second husband.

She also buried a great uncle  
and retreated again,  
into Brooklyn.

She complained of the dissolve of family,  
about the absence of familiar voices.  
The sounds of the faceless Brooklyn streets  
did not suffice though she was closer  
to church. She was also closer to the graves  
of our dead, no more than a burial lot apart.

Her eighty-two years ended in  
a Brooklyn hospital, her body transfigured  
by the wounds of dialysis, her desire to be  
unloosed ignored by physicians. With no protector  
to speak on her behalf, she departed late,  
in the same way we returned.

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## Treading

Mother told me  
I don't understand  
anything about anything  
and she's right.

I still tie my shoes  
one through the loop  
style, always sitting down,  
always careful to test  
the limits of the string's tension.

I still look both ways  
before crossing,  
a bit of OCD in me,  
a bit of OCD in me.

I still check the lights  
twice,  
re-lock the lock  
before I go outside.

My mother told me  
I don't understand  
anything about anything  
and she's right.

Sometimes I drive  
alone for miles  
just to feel a sense  
of place, going  
nowhere in particular.

Sometimes I call  
people I have not  
known well in years,  
months, sometimes

I write and think  
'they will like this;

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they will think well of me  
for sending it.'

I don't think the last  
card was ever read.  
I know the last call  
was not received.

My mother told me  
I don't understand  
anything about anything  
and she's right.

Unable to climb the boulder,  
the ladder a mockery  
of construction,  
her green army style

bikini contrasting  
her pale white skin  
as she looks to say  
'What's wrong?

I'm waiting.'  
as I plod through  
the shallow silt,  
the water-smoothed

rocks, towards the place  
where the lake  
finds its depth  
and work to forget

that I don't know  
how to tread water.

My mother told me  
that I don't understand  
anything about anything  
and she's right.

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**Kamau Rucker's** poetry has been published in *The Subway Chronicles*, *Illuminations (Evolving Editions)* and *The Wild Goose Poetry Review*. The New York born, former resident of Hampton Roads, Virginia, currently resides in Fairfax, Virginia, where he is pursuing an MFA in Creative Writing at George Mason University. His creative ventures also include playwriting and songwriting.

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