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# 2047: Short Stories from Our Common Future

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**2047**

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Our Common Future**

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# Introduction

As a teenager in the 1980s, growing up in Norway's second-largest city, Bergen, I often sat reading the newspaper before heading off to school. What made the greatest impression on me, and stayed with me for years, was the news about acid rain damaging forests in Europe, and radiation from Chernobyl being found in reindeer lichen in northern Norway. These were problems that seemed local to those experiencing them, yet these problems could only be solved by every nation working together globally.

This year, 2017, marks the thirtieth anniversary of the Brundtland Commission's presentation of its work, led by Norway's former prime minister, Gro Harlem Brundtland. The General Assembly of the United Nations appointed the commission to create a vision for a sustainable future. The definition of "sustainability" found in the report *Our Common Future* is still used today by academics, the business community as well as the civil society:

"Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."

A great amount of progress occurred very quickly in some areas, while it's taken longer for action to be implemented in others. A global agreement on reducing the impacts of climate change wasn't reached until 2015. Politicians, however, are now putting green growth on their national agendas. Companies are innovating to produce without polluting and are using fewer resources. Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) continue to create awareness of climate and environmental problems that must



be solved. And more and more citizens are making conscious choices regarding how to live sustainably.

Still, I often wonder: what will the world look like in another thirty years if global warming and environmental degradation aren't reduced as much as we hope? And how will we deal with those problems? After all, no matter which models scientists are using today, it's impossible to accurately forecast what will happen.

So I gathered a group of authors and asked them to write their vision of what the world will look like in 2047. We want our short stories to make you reflect, or provoke you, or bring feelings to the surface while you read them. And hopefully all of them will make you realize that your actions matter and will encourage you to take part in caring for the world and the people in it.

I hope we will succeed in having an effect on you.

Tanja Rohini Bisgaard, December 2017

# Still Waters

Kimberly Christensen

The aftershocks of the slammed door reverberated in Petra's ears as her lover thumped down the stairs, past the little teahouse on the ground floor, and out of the building. Petra finished drying the last of the dishes, then wiped down the old butcher-block countertop, scrubbing at the same worn stains as if another pass of the sponge would finally remove them from the wood. The silence was broken only by the rasping of sponge against butcher block. A small gladness flickered to life in the silence and pushed away the tightness that ringed her rib cage. Petra almost started to hum.

Working her way through the living room, she adjusted the stack of books on the coffee table, lining up their spines then plumbing the whole pile so the long edges paralleled the edge of the table. She tidied Bethari's jumble of shoes, matching each to its mate as she set them in a careful line along the floorboards next to her own. She fought the compulsion to kick them into disarray and send them flying down the stairs after their owner.

Petra's sharp tongue had chased the woman off this morning, impatience finally bubbling over at Bethari's suggestion that picked green beans were an insufficient breakfast. Bethari had grabbed her raincoat and slammed the front door with a meaningful glance over her shoulder. A look that said they were too old for such arguments, and Petra's temper needed to lose its edges. As if Petra were some damned bottle of wine that should mellow with age.

She didn't even think mellowing with age was possible in 2047.

Before the whales had died, she and Janie might have philosophized about the possibilities of mellowing with age while living within a dystopia, laughing to themselves about the ironic nature of such a conversation when held from the comfort of a cat-covered couch. Before the whales died, they might have determined there were four ways of coping with the real-life dystopia of the modern world: addiction, suicide, anarchy, and hiding under the bed. They might have debated whether addiction was the same as suicide, just slower.

They never considered the slowest death: the one that comes when one loses her will to live.

Technically, Janie had died in the Pandemic of 2041, but Petra counted her death as having lasted four years, long enough to make it an epoch in the geology of her own lifespan. For four years, she had watched Janie withdraw into the private nautilus of her innermost self, curling her thoughts and dreams and essence into that smooth spiral of a shell. When Janie crossed over into the afterlife, Petra briefly wondered if she would miss her wife, as she'd grown used to the company of her own thoughts. Instead, grief pushed her down a long tunnel of darkness.

Petra flirted with the darkness—contemplated what it might feel like to exhale the tendrils of her own essence into the waiting void. But she never had really understood suicide, whether by action or addiction or slow wasting, so she just kept getting out of bed and doing the necessary things. In this way, she settled into widowhood and the gentle individuality of living alone. She had been one cat away from a perfect, self-contained life.

Then, with an easy laugh and the gentle caress of her graceful brown hand, Bethari had completely disrupted that. Her warm palms easily withstood the sharpest of Petra's prickles, and she had the sense, on days like today, to give Petra space to sort things out. Except, even with six years of widowhood behind her, Petra was no closer to mellowing into a fine wine. She wondered if vinegar was a more realistic goal.

Petra smoothed the coverlet in her room, squaring its corners and adjusting the pillows. She plucked several of Bethari's stockings off the floor and tossed them into the laundry pile. Next, she swiped at the bookcase with her shirtsleeve, checking for traces of dust and finding none. She sighed—loudly—pushing at the surrounding silence with her breath. More silence responded.

She finally grabbed her favorite gray raincoat, with its soft fleece lining. She slipped on a pair of comfortable walking shoes—the kind Janie used to say resembled baked potatoes—and emerged into the dark, drizzly morning. Hood up, head down, she headed west to her thinking place. She let the door slam loudly behind her.

The bleached white bones rose starkly against the gray of the February sky, the giant rib cages resting on the sand like an armada of shipwrecks worn down to their frames by the constant assault of the elements. Petra trailed her hand along the rain-beaded bones, following the weaving path that carried her from skeleton to skeleton along this pebbly stretch of Puget Sound beach. This was the Boneyard of the Giants, the final resting place of eighteen orca skeletons. The last of the Southern Resident orcas had washed ashore here

in February, 2037, dying in plain sight of a horrified Seattle, whose people were still coming to grips with the ongoing disaster called climate change.

This marked the beginning of the four-year dying epoch, according to Petra's timeline.

If she stared at the skeletons and let her vision go fuzzy, she could still see the whales as they had looked when they started beaching themselves on this stretch of rocky sand. The shadows of the whales disappeared as Petra blinked hard, which brought their skeletons back into sharp focus. She took a deep breath of damp salt air before continuing down the path to her favorite bench near the skeleton of J-47, Notch. After a halfhearted wipe at the pooled rain on the bench, she sat down.

"Damn it all," she muttered. "I don't want to deal with this."

And she didn't. Not her argument with Bethari, or its converse, growing old alone. Not dead whales on a stretch of beach. Not everything and everyone who had died since.

The J-Pod orcas had felt like Petra and Janie's whales from the moment they'd first spotted them off the side of one of Puget Sound's ubiquitous ferryboats, but true Northwesterners told them that ferryboat sightings didn't count. It was a couple of years before they understood why.

On this portentous day, they had pushed their kayak through the small waves that lapped the shore and paddled out into the quiet of the summer morning. A few cormorants called, circling overhead, scouting for breakfast. Janie and Petra paddled in rhythm, the sound of their paddles steady as a heartbeat. As they drew near Alki Point, they stopped

paddling and enjoyed a few moments of rest. Small waves licked their kayak.

Janie pointed at a stand of madrona trees that lined the coast before handing Petra a pair of binoculars.

“Eagle,” she said quietly, gesturing to the upper branches of a particularly large tree.

Petra followed the trajectory of her finger until she saw the flash of the bald eagle’s white head. She had just begun to focus the binoculars when a blast of air pierced the stillness and bathed them in a mist of fish-scented, orca-warm exhalation.

“Holy shit,” they breathed, as the triangle of a dorsal fin skimmed through the water so close they could have touched it, unevenly black where scars and pocks marked it. A notch had been chipped out along its leading edge. The two sat in silence as the dorsal fin was joined by two more, the three orcas tumbling back and forth through the water, just out of reach of the kayak, which swayed with the animals’ movements.

The notch-finned whale changed course, swimming in a large circle around the kayak, angled on its side so its large unblinking eye stared up at them through the clear water. Another orca dove beneath them, then surfaced with a puff of air so close that it bejeweled their hair with briny dewdrops and flecks of lung mucus. Petra’s heart raced as she measured the vastness of the whales against the twelve feet of kayak. She had never felt so much like prey.

Her knuckles ached where she was strangling her oar. She loosened them, breathing slowly and evenly to clear her head as the whales darted back and forth a few feet beneath the surface. They twisted in the water, letting it roll across

their sleek bodies as they propelled themselves with efficient thrusts of their tails. Once the throbbing of her own heartbeat receded, she could even make out the faint sonar clicks the orcas sent racing ahead of them.

Just as her heartbeat evened, the whales raced at the kayak, twisting out of its path inches before impact. She and Janie braced themselves against the heaving wake that threatened to overturn them. The notched whale doubled back, swimming once around them in a great arc, the large eye peering at them from just below the surface, and the toothy mouth open in a mockery of a smile.

“It’s messing with us,” Petra whispered to Janie.

“Maybe it’s showing off for its friends,” Janie whispered back.

“I just want it to know I’m not a seal.”

“Me too.”

Notch continued the game for a few more minutes: circling, diving, surfacing, but never once bumping the boat. Then it charged at the kayak one last time before turning sharply and torpedoing toward the open water. The other two whales sped along behind it, the smallest breaching with a mighty flop, sending a slap of water rollicking toward the kayak one last time. The two women grabbed the sides of the kayak as it bounced in the whale’s wake and kept holding on long after the last ripple had passed.

“Oh, my God,” Janie said. “That was fucking amazing.”

“I thought it was going to tip us over for sure.”

“I didn’t. I think it just wanted to know what we’re made of. To see if we’re orca worthy.”

Janie slapped the water with the flat of her paddle, showering them both with cold droplets, through which they ululated full throated, bouncing the sounds off each ripple in the water and every sharp-edged leaf that hung from the trees along the coast. Their shouts returned to Petra's ears like sonar clicks, and for a moment, she knew the location of every fish, bird, and dandelion.

They hadn't stayed long on the water after that, paddling furiously toward a remote part of the coastline. The kayak scraped against the gravel beach, its back end still bobbing in the water as they leapt out of it, after which they tumbled onto a hastily spread picnic blanket where they made loud, frantic love. Petra's orgasm cut deep—sharp as leaf edges, bird feathers, whale teeth, splaying open her vital organs for the ravens to feast upon. She didn't even try to fight them.

Long minutes later, her wits slowly coalesced around the steady pounding of Janie's heartbeat.

They both glowed for weeks.

Petra tried hard to hold onto her memory of that day, but the wind off the sound chilled her back into February, where she sat next to the skeleton of that same whale that may or may not have found them orca worthy. She rubbed at the tears that bit her cheeks. February was her hardest month, the dark days beckoning her to follow them down the grief tunnel again and the cold layering itself around the familiar ache of loss.

"I miss you, Janie," she said to the whale bones.

The bones answered with silence.



On February 6, 2037, the early-morning tide deposited the first three orcas onto the pebbled beach at Carkeek Park. It was the wrong time of year for orcas to be this far south, and news of the stranding spread quickly through the city. Petra and Janie heard it as they lay in bed, listening to public radio. There was no decision that needed to be made. They simply rose, pulled on layers of clothing, emptied the cabinet of energy bars, and went to see what they could do to help.

The wind blew bitterly across the Puget Sound, freezing the surface of the tide pools and coating the edges of stones, nostrils, and blowholes in icy rime. It also blew in more whales. The veterinary team immediately put Petra and Janie to work, handing them buckets and sponges, with instructions to keep the whales wet while they worked out a plan for tube-feeding them or hauling them back into the water—anything but leaving them here to die. The women rubbed the whales tenderly, whispering words of encouragement to them, and trying to ignore the worrisome ease with which they discerned each individual rib. They joined the prayers of the Coast Salish people, who arrived to care for the whales' physical and spiritual needs. They experimented with sheathing the whales in foil blankets, layered over damp towels, to protect them against the drying, bitter wind.

A mass stranding of orcas in the dead of winter was uncharted territory.

On their second day of volunteering, as they crossed the slick metal bridge that connected the parking lot with the beach, Janie's knees bowed beneath her. She cried out, pointing to the string of new whales that had washed up in the early-morning hours.

“No, no, no!” she cried. “Not Notch!”

Janie recovered her footing and sprinted down the stairs to his side, Petra trailing behind her. By the time she caught up, Janie already had displaced the volunteer who had been tending to Notch—Whale J-47, Male, 27 years old. She was crooning softly to him as she sponged his side. He stared at her with one unblinking eye.

“Oh, buddy,” Petra said, resting a hand on his side.

“Pet, we have to save him. We have to get him back into the water.” Janie thrust a bucket into her hands. “Start sponging. I’m going to talk with the lead vet.”

Spots reddened the centers of Janie’s cheeks when she returned and wordlessly grabbed a sponge from the bucket. She moved to Notch’s other side, and soon Petra caught snippets of melodies rising across his tall back as Janie sang to him—the same songs she had once sung to Petra as they had lain in bed in the throes of new love. Here in the open air, Janie’s voice cut through the cold and settled like a blanket of loss over Petra, who already knew in her bones how this would end. The twenty-three souls washed up on this beach were not going to return to the sea.

Janie cheered each time Notch released breath from his blowhole. Petra felt the trembling in his sides, worried over the increasing time between each breath, observed the dulling of his pupils. She heard the crying of veterinarians and volunteers when they announced the death of the first whale—the littlest one, called Bear. If Janie understood the cries, she gave no sign. She leaned her head against Notch’s flank and continued to sing, her voice now raw and raspy.

On the third day, Petra took more breaks. She walked among the dying—she was learning to recognize the telltale

dulling of their open eyes and a peculiar, almost imperceptible sagging that shaped their bellies where they flattened against the sand.

“When my time has come,” she prayed over them, “and impermanence and death have caught up with me... When the breath ceases and the body and mind go their separate ways...”

She blessed them as she walked. Blessed the gifts their lives had brought. Blessed the ways in which their deaths might benefit other living beings. The crows and the crabs waited at the edges, ready for such beneficence.

Petra’s hands ached, the constant wet and cold chapping them to the point of bleeding. Fissures cracked her heart as well, worn raw by bearing witness to so much death. She knew she had to stay until the last of the whales had died. It was only right that the humans who had caused this extinction stay to witness its horrible finality. But she deeply, deeply wished to go home, with Janie, and find comfort in her arms—away from all this.

Notch died at dusk on that third day. His last breath was a prolonged sigh that bore Janie’s wailing above it, her grief rising and falling until it had wrapped itself around the body of every whale and pierced the benumbed heart of each person gathered on that sad beach. Soft crying surrounded Petra, her own tears stinging as they rolled down her wind-raw cheeks. Janie keened and keened as she knelt beside Notch, her hands pressed against his side, her face tipped toward the descending darkness. Slowly the rescue crews returned to motion, comforting the last few whales, all of which would soon join Notch in death.

Petra knew Janie wouldn't leave Notch's side that night, so she tucked her into a sleeping bag and sat beside her. Eventually Janie cried herself to sleep, her back to Petra and her palm pressed against Notch's cold, rubbery skin. She was in the same position when Petra returned the next morning, after having gone home to feed the cats and crying herself into exhaustion under a hot shower.

On day four, the final whale—J-17, Princess Angeline—died, and when the cold wind blew this time, it settled in the marrow of Petra's bones. She pulled her jacket up higher, zipping its collar over her mouth and nose. She rubbed her hands together as she stood next to Janie, who sat huddled in her sleeping bag next to Notch, staring out at the horizon with red-rimmed eyes.

"Janie, love," she said. "We can't help him anymore. We should go home."

"There's no reason to go."

"What do you want to do?" asked Petra. "Stay here?"

Janie shrugged.

"They're dead, Janie," Petra said softly. "There's nothing more we can do."

"We can keep the birds away."

Petra glanced down the shoreline. Crows lingered in every tree, darting in to rip off hunks of whale flesh, which they carried back to the high branches.

"The birds are just doing what birds do."

"Carrion beasts," Janie spat.

When Petra reached for her arm, Janie turned away.

"Am I just supposed to go home? Go back to work?" Janie demanded. "Pretend this didn't happen? That we didn't just witness an extinction?"

Petra had no good answer.

“What do you want to do?” she asked.

Janie shook her head. “I don’t know.”

She turned back to Notch and picked up a stick so she could fend off scavengers. She stood up and circled the whale’s body, her body tensed with purpose as she scanned the ground for crabs and the sky for crows. She traded her stick for a longer one, one that let her swing at a crow that tried to settle on Notch’s back.

“Have some respect!” she shouted at a girl who was taking a selfie with one of the whales and chased her off with her stick raised. The girl fled across the bridge, and Janie gave a chortle of victory before resuming her circling.

When the researchers started performing full necropsies on the whales, it proved too much for most of the volunteers. By twos and threes they left, plugging their ears against the sound of the chainsaws—their wind-burned, tear-reddened faces turned miserably away from the cold. Most didn’t look back as they crossed the bridge over the train tracks to return to their cars. Petra shuffled across the bridge with them. In the parking lot, she rummaged in the trunk for hot packs, which she snapped and pressed into Janie’s freezing hands on the beach. She made the trip to the car three more times before she finally convinced Janie to come home—which she would only do after the veterinarians had necropsied Notch. She held his tailfin the entire time.

Petra never would forget the sound of chainsaw on bone.

The next morning, Petra and Janie awoke early. They huddled beneath their duvet in the semidarkness, watching

the sky grow lighter behind the barren maple outside their window. A flock of chickadees alighted on the branches, in search of forgotten seeds. Petra rose and lumbered to the kitchen to make coffee. She brought a steaming mug back to the bedroom for Janie, only to find her dressed from head to toe in black and searching for her keys.

“Where are you going?” Petra asked.

Janie took the coffee from Petra and poured it into a travel mug without comment. Petra followed her to the Subaru.

“Janie?”

“I won’t leave them there to rot, alone except for the crabs and crows.”

“What are you going to do?”

“Protect them. Mourn. Not move on as if everything is normal.”

Her words were a challenge, Petra knew.

“It’s not normal,” she agreed. “I’ll come after I get some work done.”

“Bring your walking stick,” Janie instructed Petra. “You can help keep the birds away.”

They fell into a rhythm, Janie departing in the early hours to keep watch over Notch alongside the Coast Salish protectors who had set up camp on the beach. Petra put in the bare minimum of time necessary to keep her teahouse running before joining Janie at the beach. She felt badly for leaning so heavily on her employees and guiltily made phone calls from the shelter of the restroom to help keep things running. At least working on the business kept her from fretting about

Janie's mental state. She hoped that time would bring closure.

Several days into this routine, a team of wildlife management workers arrived with tugboats and wetsuited crews to drag the whale carcasses out to sea for disposal. They arrived early and without announcement, quickly looping cables around two of the whales. Janie already was keeping vigil over Notch, her stick in hand. Petra had been following a path across the beach that had emerged over the past week, winding from whale to whale.

"No!" Janie shouted. "You can't take them! You can't!"

She ran at them, waving her walking stick like a bludgeon. Petra raced after her, catching her as she reached the group. They stepped back from Janie, hands outstretched, and looked to Petra to save them from the madwoman.

"She thinks their skeletons should remain here as a memorial," Petra said.

"Nice idea," one of the crew said. "But the decision's already been made."

"You don't understand," said another. "The decomposition process is unsanitary. It could close the park for half a year at least. Best to let us haul them away."

He signaled to the people on the tugboats, who increased their throttles. The motors strained as the boats pulled at the whales. The wetsuited workers pushed the bodies as the boats pulled. Slowly the whales scraped along beach, leaving chunks of flesh among the rocks and mussels. Janie kept screaming for them to stop, but they didn't listen. When Petra took her by the arm and tried to lead her away, she dug her heels into the sand. Tears streamed down her

face. She watched until she no longer could see the bodies bobbing along behind the boats.

The Coast Salish protectors formed a human chain along the edge of the beach to prevent anyone from attempting to haul off the remaining twenty-one whales. Janie canvassed the beach, talking to the clusters of visitors who had come to see the dead whales, encouraging them to film everything. Wildlife management gave up for the day.

Three more carcasses were hauled off in the cover of night after police arrested anyone who wouldn't leave and cleared their encampment.

The following day, the tribes filed an injunction, which—with tremendous public support—halted the removal of the bodies, at least for the time being. But none of the activists trusted the government to leave the bodies alone. The Coast Salish set up camp once again, and Janie joined them, sleeping in a tent on the beach.

As the wildlife experts had predicted, the whales truly became a disgusting sight, and the stench became nearly untenable, even for the activists who persevered despite it. Although they covered their faces with bandanas and breathed through their mouths, the vomit smell of decay clung to them and choked them. Scavenging birds had devoured the flesh along the spines, exposing the knobby vertebrae. The rest of the flesh, now that it wasn't connected at the top, was sliding toward the sand in gelatinous strings as warm spells hastened the decomposition rate.

At this point, only a few people walked among the carcasses. Janie declared that she would remain there until the Seattle City Council declared it an official memorial. She woke before dawn each morning to crunch along the path—



carrying signs, singing protest songs, or calling the council with her demands. The tech company she worked for offered Janie a mental health leave, but she was unwilling to sign the forms Petra printed and hauled down to the beach. She lost her job.

Petra juggled managing the teahouse, caring for the cats, and bringing dinner to Janie every night. She watched as the softness melted from Janie's curves. She worried over the ease with which she could count her ribs, dreamed of Janie's flesh falling from her bones and puddling around her feet. Sometimes she lay down beside her in the little tent, working to fall asleep despite the miasma of gases coming off the rotting whales. She usually awoke alone, Janie already at Notch's side. Eventually the city council approved the memorial, and the other Grief Walkers—as they had come to call themselves—trickled home to their former anonymous lives. Janie didn't come home for three days.

The stench of the carcasses still clung to Janie's hair. She tucked a greasy lock behind her ear and looked out through the open bedroom window. She shook her head slowly, never looking directly at Petra.

“What do you want from me, Petra?” she asked.

Her voice was worryingly flat. She refused counseling. She refused to look for a new job. She spent hours staring at nothing. Even the cats had given up on getting a response from her, though every now and then one climbed on her bony lap and kneaded her legs until he drew blood.

“I want you to get better,” Petra said.

“From extinction? I don’t know how to get better from extinction.”

“Me either, but we have to try.”

Janie didn’t respond.

“Damn it, Janie,” Petra yelled. “Get mad again! Find something to fight for!”

Janie’s eyes tracked a junco on the tree outside, but she said nothing. Petra ran a hand through her hair then sat next to Janie on the bed. She took Janie’s hand in hers, staring at her until at last Janie looked back. Janie smiled a small, sad smile.

“Janie, what can we do? What would help? We could help other orcas. The whole species hasn’t gone extinct. We could sell everything and move north. Join a research team or something.”

The sad smile grew sadder then faded. Janie shook her head.

“No. I won’t go and witness more death. These were enough.”

It was like watching someone drown in slow motion, the still waters of grief just closing over her wife’s submerging head. There was no flailing involved. No calls for rescue. Janie simply sank right before her eyes.

Months crawled by this way. Their friends spoke of Janie in hushed tones, as if she had cancer or some other unmentionable disease. They stopped coming over. Petra started going out on her own—she just couldn’t take the silence.

The months dragged into years. They lost friends. Petra made new ones without Janie and didn’t bring them home. But most nights she worked late, climbing up the

stairs from the teahouse to an already-sleeping household. Four years she lived like that, watching her wife die of a broken heart.

They both got sick. Petra knew, as soon as the diagnosis was confirmed, how it would end. The pandemic flu didn't spare the very old or the very young, and while there were no official statistics on survival rates for the brokenhearted, Petra's prediction proved true. Janie died without a fight. Her lungs filled with fluid and she died. Days later, Petra was released from the hospital with a bag of antibiotics and a box of ashes. It was a sudden, cruel end to something years in the making.

After Petra had spread Janie's ashes near the whale bones, she briefly considered running away, but she couldn't very well move to Alaska and join a research team without Janie. That had never been a real plan anyway, only a desperate idea concocted to try to lure Janie back to the land of the living. No, that wasn't a real plan. So Petra just kept doing what she'd been doing: running the teahouse, watching junk television, spending time with friends. She did all this as if Janie were still waiting for her in their apartment.

The bones were stripped clean now, ten years later, bleached white monuments to a fallen species. Petra stood up and walked over to Notch's side, resting her hand on his bones in the place where she remembered Janie resting hers. She could almost feel Janie's warm hand beneath hers, nearly close enough for her to grasp and to lead home to the tidy, quiet apartment she had kept for the past six years.

"Choose life, Janie," she whispered. "Choose me."

Petra stood there until the light changed and the wind picked up. She trudged back over the bridge that spanned the railroad tracks and led her to the park entrance. The walk home was mostly downhill, thank the goddess. She was so weary. She just wanted to climb into bed and sleep for a week. She didn't want to talk to people, let alone a lover.

By the time she made it home, darkness had fallen. The sign in the front window of the teahouse had been flipped to CLOSED, but candles still glowed brightly through the windowpanes, illuminating the condensation that framed the edges of the glass. Petra saw Bethari's silhouette just inside the front door, her head bent over a book. Waiting for her.

She contemplated going around the back and sneaking into the apartment up the rear staircase. But she'd been trying to go back for six years. Or at least to not go forward.

Hell, she hadn't even gotten a cat.

Petra took a deep breath and promised herself she would get a cat tomorrow.

And then she pushed open the front door.

## Contributors

### **Tanja Rohini Bisgaard**

Tanja is Norwegian, born in Trinidad and Tobago, and lives in Denmark. She writes short fiction about a future world where the environment has changed as a result of pollution, climate change, and extensive use of natural resources. She graduated with an MSc from the London School of Economics and Political Science, and when she isn't writing, she runs her own company as a sustainability consultant for the public and private sector.

### **Kimberly Christensen**

A resident of the Pacific Northwest, Kimberly writes about all things sustainable—from organic gardening to breastfeeding to waste reduction. After a number of years working for CoolMom, Seattle's first climate nonprofit focused on women and families, she recently left her position to write climate fiction in hopes of introducing readers to the personal side of climate change.

### **Richard Friedman**

Richard lives in Cleveland, Ohio, and works in criminal justice. His motto, "Saving the citizens of Ohio during the day and the rest of the world at night," keeps him motivated to write. His self-published novel, *Escape to Canamith*, was a fan favorite at the 2014 Green Festival in New York City, and in 2016, he published *The Two Worlds of Billy Callahan*. In October 2017, Richard was selected to attend Al Gore's Climate Reality Leadership Corps training.

**John A. Frochio**

John is from Western Pennsylvania and has developed and installed computer automation systems for steel mills. His stories have been published in various places, including the literary journals *Aurora Wolf* and *Liquid Imagination*, *SciFan Magazine*, and various anthologies. He's also published the novel *Roots of a Priest* (coauthored with Ken Bowers, 2007) and the short-story collection *Large and Small Wonders* (2012).

**Julie Gram**

An author and illustrator, Julie lives in Denmark. She works mostly in the genres of fantasy and science fiction and has always been concerned about our world, nature, and how climate change affects us all.

**Alison Halderman**

Alison—teacher, writer, caregiver, and otherwise known as Grammy—still loves going barefoot in her beloved Oregon.

**Lene K. Kristoffersen**

Lene is a teacher, a mother, and a creative soul who lives in Denmark. She always has been interested in the world we live in. Her main focus is the world's animals and other innocent beings. She has written numerous poems and short stories.

## **Ruth Mundy**

Ruth is a songwriter and singer from New Zealand. She is a musical poet who sings stories of love and protest.

## **L X Nishimoto**

Environmental degradation is overtaking our capacity for solutions. L X Nishimoto believes that fiction is our last best hope. Let visions of the future awaken us to empathy, warn us to make better decisions, and inspire us to reinvent tomorrow. The author is based in New England.

## **Isaac Yuen**

Isaac Yuen's work can be found in *Orion*, *River Teeth's Beautiful Things*, *Tin House* online, and as a "Notable" mention in the 2017 *Best American Science and Nature Writing* anthology. He is the creator of *Ekostories*, an essay blog exploring ideas around nature, culture, and identity. Isaac currently lives in Vancouver, Canada, on the unceded territories of the Coast Salish people.

## **David Zetland**

David is an assistant professor of economics at Leiden University College in Den Haag in the Netherlands. He blogs at [aguanomics.com](http://aguanomics.com) and has written two books: *The End of Abundance* (2011) and *Living with Water Scarcity* (2014). He is now working on the *Life Plus 2 Meters* project, which uses crowdsourcing to provide people with different visions of how we might (not) adapt to life in a climate changed world.