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Coconuts

by Rocio Guenther

Flies swarm around the coconuts' open cocoons, hoping for a taste of juice. But he doesn't let them. Pedro shoos them away, he doesn't let them have a taste of the freshness. People gather. They cluster around his whitewashed plastic table. "*Cocos frescos*" he bellows, puncturing straws into the opening green layers that rim the inside of the white fruit. Pedro's scruffy beard heightens his playful smiles as he beams at his buyers. His humid tank top sticks to his cinnamon brown skin like glue. He smells of salt and sweat. Chopping coconuts brings pleasure, offers freshness from a hot day at the beach to his rambling customers. Coconuts are hard—can break one's head. Coconuts quench thirst. Coconuts help the marooned and the shipwrecked survive in desert islands. Coconuts, help Pedro provide.

During breaks Pedro pushes through the rumbling waves, immerses himself into salty splashes. *Las olas*, his favorite place to be. Walking near the shore, as the sun starts to hide behind the horizon, foam is heard bubbling as the waves unwind and retreat, the sand soaking up the salty residue. The sun dips under. Foam bubbles away in between his toes. His body claps against the wind, and he closes his eyes.

Night brings forth *las estrellas*—silver thorns decorating the black atmosphere. They give him comfort. Underline his dreams. Pedro walks on the cobblestone road in his raunchy town of *Lo de Marcos*. Bungalows, trailer parks, bilingual menus provided in restaurants. Daily, the beach is filled with passersby, who get excited with cheap beach tattoos and braids with colorful beads. For Pedro it means more coconuts are sold.

As Pedro trudges through the dunes, leaving the shops and taco stands behind; he hears breaths of pleasure by the moonlight. Standing behind a palm tree he sees lovers coiling in the sand, wrapped in a turquoise blanket. The stranger grabs the woman's long black hair, and curls it up in between his fingers. Pedro leaves. It's not his place to be. But pain simmers inside of him as he remembers. Passionate kisses under the moonlight. Late night dippings into the ocean. Shared coconuts on slippery black rocks. Whispered secrets with Her beneath the stars. Running back to his stand, he gathers up a few coconuts, brings them to the beach. Tears hang on his lower lids, as he throws a coconut into a sharp-pointed rock. Juice spilling. Tears spilling. In the middle of the night when the breeze blows palm tree leaves to the sand, and when the stars shine brightest, you can hear Pedro and his coconuts—cracking.