

Allen Mendenhall



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1 Poem

Just for the Summer

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They traveled from the cold forests and towns
of New England and Canada,

spent the night in hotels in Atlanta,
and did not consider
the family they did not have.
They rented Fords and Nissans
and loaded their luggage in the trunk.
They bought maps at gas stations
and ate breakfast in the car.
They sipped their coffee,
blared Bossa nova,
discussed congressmen,
and made faces at locals in rest stops.
They snapped photographs at the Florida border
and rolled their windows down in Crestview.
They pointed at the peaches, oranges, and cotton.
They opined about old black men, overhauls, and fieldwork,
pointed at tractors and trailers,
and prattled about pesticides.
They were many, but they were two in particular.

The two who arrived
and kicked off their shoes,
and filled their blenders with ice,
their cups with gin and rum,
and said, "to hell with sunscreen."
They walked hand-in-hand down the shoreline,
these two, marveling

at the baby-powder sand,
he chasing crabs,
she waving off seagulls.
They watched the sun sink
until they mistook where they were,
and, thinking back,
embraced,
his arms around her once-little waist,
hers around his once-broad shoulders;
they became
one
in self-supplication, joined

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in prayer to themselves.

It was not until the seventh hour
of the third day
of the second month
that the sadness broke in,
through the back window,
in the darkness,
and made off with joy.

He was told in his dream how he should awake,
she in hers how she should die.

On the day when the skies turned black,
and the waves pummeled the shoreline,
and the creatures stirred and scattered,
there they were, facing the darkness,
two people, vulnerable beneath the heavens,
remembering their future, forgetting their past,
knowing that they didn't know
what cannot be named.

They stood nowhere
and for something not themselves.

When the winds swallowed them,
they could taste their souls in their mouths.

Allen Mendenhall is a writer, attorney, educator, and author of *Literature and Liberty*. His writing has appeared in, among others, *Newsweek*, the *American Spectator*, *The South Carolina Review*, *Pacific Standard*, *Southern Humanities Review*, and *storySouth*. He lives in Auburn, Alabama, with his wife and two children.

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