

IAN KIMMERLY

Change of Course, 2019
Oil on canvas, 72 x 60 in



COURTESY DOLBY CHADWICK GALLERY

JEVIN LEE ALBUQUERQUE

Tides

At low tide you can hike in, the waves will leave you alone. Voices on the other hand, spirit rocks, lava-black pinnacles, might give you problems. High tide, forget it, stuck. Shale rockfall. Perched, await a walk-back. Walking it back, the low tide is kind, purple sand, rock shoulders, rub, gossip, light, leave you out of it, disappear in sea, everything swims north: whales, porpoises, otters crack abalones, babies on bellies, snicker, sunlit, shirt off, your skin sags a bit of a middle-age aware, potential slip fish to your death-clouds loom. Signals, sea life: crabs crack claw, snap-a-meal, moments you walked, stomped, scared them off, youth crush shells, your shell now weak, a sand crab at best, striped bass inhale. But today is traditional rockfish day, fill mom's freezer, points: birthdays, Mother's Days forgotten or left behind on travel trail bleeds, disappointment, so many disappointed, but whales pass by, eyes, head up, metallic gray water, down, hump, backup, surge water, tail, blessing, feeling blessed, I assemble gear.

Big Sur meditation. The ocean is your guide, the mountains, floral in super bloom, yellow, purple, Dalí on the mind; Henry Miller chimes, glass-smooth edges, out of poverty, into spirit, we breathe porpoises pass by, fins cut, shark tease, smiles below water, bubble speak, squeak, go north. Rain, trickle. Rocks huddle, form semicave, store phone, body when cold, raw practicalities, assemble tackle: twelve-foot ugly stick, sixty-pound braided line, eighty-pound maxima leader, six-ounce weight, dropper loop, hook-whole squid, packed on hike, tentacles breathe in sunlight, ink-eyes wink, ready. Cast. Reefy. Kelp washed ashore, waves having slaughtered connection, community below, leaving everyone exposed. Rock crevice, stray packs of cigarettes, Filipino etchings; one cig left, why not, puff.

Scamper back, waves, safe, fishing pole in hand, surge current, shoes grip. Exhale smoke. A slip is the end of you, head crack, crabs, brains, slow skies reveal lavender sheen, trained eye, clouds play with rain. The ocean, angelic, glares back, glasses on, don't get blinded, temptress, Makarahhhh; vultures hover, seagulls eyeing bait. Water scan, eye, colossal, El Niño, squid capable of pulling you in, I'm all the way in, await tentacle foot wrap.

I'm ready, jeans rolled up, over ledge, ocean, Filipino echoes, my youth on the pier in Santa Cruz. Wooden boat. Launch. Smoke from the dead on the horizon, climbing

waterfalls, skeletal advance over water, subtle footprints, an army of spirits arrive, blow my straw hat, against shale cliff, away down mountain, shot out over sea, back, smack mountain, beach, laughter my own intermingled spirit. Sigh, await first bite, line tight to sea, weight-held rocks, current surge squid, finger, line, pulse.

Condor passes overhead, my hat in his beak; the sound of oars clank, wooden boat. I recall, ten years of age, fishing mentor, Alon: bald, permanent smile, scars on his neck, brown eyes ensnare, infuse alchemy. Laughter as he slams his hand down, fishing pole, snug to boat's edge. I look up, confused, "You will have many visitors," he says, the many hooks loading up with rockfish below his tutelage, more laughter, roaring in his belly, the up-down motion from swells, his hands mangled from handlining fish, hand-carved wooden boat, father's hands. "Now," he says, cigar puff, smoke to the heavens, he retrieves the dead, a form of sage, slash fire, high mind. I crank, harvest fish.

Nearly slip off the rock, cigarette dropping from mouth, line snagged in the rocks. I recover my surroundings, think of retreating to the cave, regroup, but snagged, point rod in direction of snag, step away, pull, bend hook out, and sure enough retreat to cave, looking for some sign of sea life. Swells, lean into rocks; tide will arrive soon. Only crabs, scamper, claws grind, await a meal. Fogbank threatens on the horizon. Wave thunders down, wearing away my rock perch. The sound of oars. I shake my head, watching the broken hook dangle from line. Sway back and forth, hypnotic. Easing out of fog, boat enters, tiny in the distance, faint colors of green, red, fine line, traced back to the edge, where waterfalls gushshshsh.

I burrow deeper into the cave, moist darkness dampens skin. Fog ooze. Boat approaching, brown shoulders bulge into view, arms crank, wooden wings in my direction, fly, red, green, vibrant feathers. Rush of waterfalls. A crab snaps claw through sandal on pinky toe, slam my head on rock ceiling, bloody hand, out of cave, scurry. Tide surging in. Remove cooler, backpack from cave, head for higher ground, path back now closed off by the sea. Rocks tumble down the mountain, rush by, ten feet from where I stand, crash into festoons of barnacles. Crabs snicker, blow bubbles, high five.

With buck knife, I cut away strip of shirt, wrap around my head, band, bloodstain, stop. Smaller rocks fall as

I scale shale, slip feet, quicksand, trying to reach highest pinnacle, pants stalagmite stretched. I turn back, the fog following wooden boat, brown bald head, turn around, nod, back to oars. My backpack slips from hand, down the steep shale, into sea, your phone, car keys, gone. I toss the cooler, fishing pole to follow. Keep knife. Check empty cigarette pack, chew a few strings of tobacco, putrid, spit. Free to climb, after a risky jump, arrive on top of pinnacle, flat section to sit, await.

Vein bulges in my arm, pluck with knife, the lifeline behind rowboat increasing distance to the void; the fog to be avoided, white wolves smell weakness. But strength of back, arm extension into oars, legs push against worn-wood floor, a chant to the spirits of the ancients, Filipino fishermen, kings of the sea. Smoke rises from the boat, my throat shudders, tosses up a word in Tagalog, slang, blade dancing over the vein, pluck, guitars in the distance, causing shale to fall, wear away the tallest of kings, end in the sea, all roads, rivers, relax, return blade to sheath, the boat nearly in the cove, laughter rattles ribs, quick twitch-quivers of spine. My head throbs.

Positioned in the cove, back to me, final crank of the oars, turns boat around to face, surrounded by beautiful strips of green, red, Alon smiles. Buddha belly, sweaty back, chest, face serene, arms reach in my direction, palms up, scars. He chants, baritone echoes through cove, water whipped up, the wind fighting for direction. His eyes open, leans his head back to see me perched up high. He laughs, deep in his belly. Crows circle overhead, tamed by the wind, out of sight. He watches them disappear, silence, waves massaging rocks, calm, the fog breathing for the takedown, held back, white wolves.

Alon tomahawks a handline in my direction, landing it on top of the pinnacle where I sit. I take hold of the line, he pulls back a little, my body surging forward. I pull back. He nods his head. With free hand, strikes match, lights cigar, the familiar smoke rising through my ten-year-old nostrils. I recall exhilaration, front of the wooden boat, sliding down the face of a wave, holding on for dear laughter, smiling all the way down, out to the shore on firm ground, the glow of a king in his eyes, the strength transferred to mine. Two quick jerks on the handline, pulling me closer to the edge. I pull back to avoid falling. He breaks into laughter, nearly choking on the smoke; removes my straw hat from behind

his back, places it on his head. "Not ready," he says, baiting a hook on the handline, tossing it over the side of the boat, gripping the heavy oars in his hands, digging deep into belly of the sea, still facing me, smoke rising into the air. He nods in my direction, the warmth, cleansing, working through the cauldrons, the white wolves pulling back. Oaring away, sunshine head pokes out of cave, ocean gleam green crystal shine porpoises, whales, otters pass by, south. Alon, hand up, wave, wooden boat, sunshine lit, sliding over the falls, smiles the kid.

Tugs on the line. Fish on!

Jevin Lee Albuquerque grew up in California, on the local pier in Santa Cruz, fishing for striped bass. He recently completed his third full-length novel, *Hawgfish*. He was a semifinalist in the 2014 Faulkner-Wisdom Competition and recent Pushcart Prize nominee, and his prose and poetry have appeared in numerous literary journals. Two of his works, a poem and short story, were translated by Bernard Turler and can be found in the French collection *Poussières du monde* (Éditions François Bourin, 2014). He has poetry forthcoming in the anthology *Universal Oneness* (Authorspress, 2019). In a former life, he was a professional soccer player. He has a degree in Latin American studies from the University of California, Los Angeles.