

I've managed to commit to memory.

I pause. Lola smiles and gestures with her palms up. "La scène est à vous."

I watch Ruby on the hillside as I recite the speech and feel myself returning to those nights in the redwoods:

*The Fairyland buys not the child of me,  
His mother was a votaress of my order,  
And in the spiced Indian air by night  
Full often hath she gossiped by my side,  
And sat with me on Neptune's yellow sands,  
Marking th' embarkèd traders on the flood,  
When we have laughed to see the sails conceive  
And grow big-bellied with the wanton wind;  
Which she, with pretty and with swimming gait  
Following—her womb then rich with my young squire—  
Would imitate, and sail upon the land  
To fetch me trifles and return again  
As from a voyage, rich with merchandise.  
But she, being mortal, of that boy did die.  
And for her sake do I rear up her boy,  
And for her sake I will not part with him.*

I stand up and perform an exaggerated bow to Lola, Ralston, and finally Ruby, who doesn't see me. I sit again and sigh, feeling a flood of love I haven't felt in a very long time. I look over and see Ralston dabbing at his eyes. Lola stares dreamily up toward the park. "You're quite the romantic, aren't you?"

I look at the cigar in my hand. "I suppose so."

Lola produces a handkerchief from the sleeve of her dress and hands it to Ralston. He takes it and smiles, dabs at his eyes again.

"Well," she says, "shall we?"

"Yes!" I say.

Back inside the inn, I take a half dozen pictures of the den. In two of them, Amelia sits on one of the chairs and appears to be looking at the other empty chair as if waiting for someone, possibly Brecht himself, to return. Once I've finished, I gather my things and thank Lola and Ralston for their time. They both hug me as if I were a visiting long-lost cousin. "Why don't you and your wife come and visit us?" Ralston says. "Yes," Lola says. "Anytime. And certainly let us meet your young squire once he's arrived."

"We will."

We walk out to the porch and I offer to take one last photo . . . of them . . . together. Lola moves awkwardly toward Ralston. They do a comic dance of trying to get comfortable being so near each other. As if on cue, they throw up their arms and hug, and I snap the photo. Then they kiss, and I snap again.

As I head up the hillside to where Ruby is sleeping, I am smiling so hard it hurts. She's on her side, her arm draped across her stomach. Lester runs up to me. I pet him, then lie down next to Ruby. I now know what is important. I know exactly what to do.

I snuggle up against her back, place my arm over hers, and together we hold our son.

**Alyson Lie** is a contributing editor at *Catamaran Literary Reader* and editor at *Leaping Clear*, an online magazine of the arts, literature, and contemplative practice. She lives in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and works as a personal care attendant and meditation instructor. Her essay titled "Her Boyhood" was published in the Fall 2015 issue of *Catamaran* and was selected as a notable essay in *The Best American Essays 2015*. This is her first published fiction.

## CAROLE RAFFERTY

*Street Corner*, 2018  
Oil on canvas, 36 x 48 in



COURTESY STUDIO SHOP GALLERY IN BURLINGAME, CALIFORNIA