

Mangosteen

Josh Sand

Mangosteen

My *años* are counted in times I see the red Jeep blasting J-Pop. Once it was lost and it passed me ten different times on a walk. I went to wise woman Arnitas to ask how I could regain my lost youth. She said there was no cure for what I got. They say if the red Jeep blasting J-Pop ever sideswipes the blue Jeep blasting Topographic Oceans the cornfields and the animals will die and we'll all have to move away from Mangosteen. I hope they crash headfirst if that's what it takes to leave this place. Nana says I'll like Mangosteen when I'm older. But Nana, I am older. My *años* are counted in red Jeeps.

Joe Soy

Joe Soy lifted up my arms and saw my muscles and said I need more muscles. He gave me his muscles. One time I needed a dollar and I asked Joe Soy for a dollar and he gave me a five, I said I would pay him back with interest and Joe Soy said, don't worry, don't worry about the interest. One time I said "I don't want to watch this show" and Joe Soy heard and he came inside and told my *nodriza* to change the channel. She didn't change the channel, but I got a new *nodriza* instead. Joe Soy made sure of it.

Once me, Nana, Papa, Carlos, Michaela, Sandra Acosta Gonzalez, and the *nodriza* were in Papa's car driving to the City of Food. The fan was pointed right at my face but my young arms were too small to point it away. Through shivers I looked out the window and in the shimmering of the highway-side bushes I saw Joe Soy. He told me, "Mimosa, don't be afraid to ask. Your family is there for you forever and ever." Joe Soy grew wings and he flew away from the highway. He flew up to the great clouds and the blue warm seabed skies like the angels in my picture books. After watching him go, I said, "Nana! Papa! Joe Soy was here!"

"We know, Mimosa, we know," they said.

Our Mischief Summer

Certain things will bring back memories of our mischief summer. Sweet okra cakes. Mama dancing in her dress with the perfume flowers. Alfalfa so thick in the air it'd spin you round right quick. Hand buzzers. It was the heat that the AC couldn't tame that got Little Ricky scheming each year. This year he had another one of his get-rich-quick schemes. I still don't know what he was planning to do with all that money. He had gone up to us and said,

“I've got another one of my get-rich-quick schemes. And you're all going to get rich with me.”

I didn't say anything, but Marlena always had some sass hiding under her long brown piggy-tails. “Little Ricky,” Marlena said, “don't you remember what happened last time we went along with one of your get-rich-quick schemes?”

“I've learned from those! Don't be such a stupidhead! Don't make me tell Mom what you Did.” Marlena hushed.

“That's what I thought, Now...” Ricky said, laying out the plan.

It was a good-sounding plan, and we didn't know any better back then. We thought we were bona fide criminals, living a life of crime that the cops would never sniff out. We thought we'd stride around the home wearing gold chains making Dada go, "Where'd you get those gold chains."

There was an old man, Old Bomby, that swept the stores of the bodega near Little Ricky's house. It wasn't a busy store and Old Bomby was usually the only one in there. He would wobble around, pushing his brittle yellow broom, and slowly wobble over to the counter when he saw we wanted to buy our root beer. Little Ricky was in there by himself one day and had to poop, and he stood impatiently on his crossed legs while Old Bomby walked over with the keys to let him in as fast as he could. After being in there a while, Little Ricky realized his predicament, and yelled out, "Old Bomby, you're outta toilet paper." From outside the door he heard Old Bomby make his slow steps to the supply closet. Curiosity got the best of Little Ricky, and he creaked open the door, and from the john saw Old Bomby unlocking a hatch in the floor and descending into the basement. After a moment Little Ricky heard his steps coming back up and quickly closed the bathroom door. Old Bomby knocked on the door, reached in his knobby fingers, and gave Little Ricky the toilet paper roll and the seeds of an idea.

Just as expected, nobody was in the bodega when we went down. Old Bomby was rearranging bags of chips on a shelf. Marlana and I stood on the front porch of the bodega, supposed to be waiting for the sign, but we couldn't help staring in with our wide seeing glass eyes. Little Ricky circled round the sodas and the beef jerky a few times before telling Old Bomby he had to poop again. He asked if he could take the keys since he knew where the bathroom was. The old man thought about it, then handed him the keys. Marlana and I smiled our biggest smiles and gave each other a gentle high-five that wouldn't make any noise.

Little Ricky made sure to stay in the back for at least five minutes. We couldn't see him anymore, but he told us he'd be in the supply closet opening up the hatch to the basement ahead of time before sneaking to the bathroom, all the while Old Bomby kept to his chip bags. The minutes felt so long, I was afraid I'd have Old Bomby's wrinkled face by the end of it all. Finally we could hear, "Old Bomby! You're outta toilet paper again!" Bomby put down his chips and walked over to the back, looked puzzled (surely at the sight of the already opened basement hatch) and left our eyesight.

We heard the call of the Screeching Macaw, and knew it was time to run in. Little Ricky was already in the supply closet with the basement hatch closed on the old man below. “Did you bring it?” Little Ricky asked me. I nodded, shaking with excitement, and pulled a bright green tennis ball with a hole and a string in it out of my pocket and held it out. Ricky pulled out his daddy’s zippo and lit the string, then cracked open the hatch. “Throw it in!” I didn’t hesitate. I heard it bounce down the wooden stairs. Ricky closed the hatch back down, and locked it with the keys. Purple smoke poured out the top finger hole in the hatch, like when my baby sister knocks over her purple Kool-Aid and it drips over the edge of the tablecloth but upside-down.

We ran to the cash register, and just our luck, the keys opened it right up. Little Ricky split it with us three ways without any fuss—he was a nicer kid than most thought. We missed the bodega, but there were many other places we found to play.

Oh yes, Mimosa, Little Ricky, and Marlena. We thought we were little criminals, in those hot mosquito afternoons.

Arnitas' Helping Tea

“The sun told me he’s getting sleepy, and he told me he was going to lay down under those mountains. You should probably be getting on home soon, and not make your father angry,” Wise Woman Arnitas said, pouring me some fresh chamomile tea. Even then I wondered why she was known as Wise Woman Arnitas because holy smokes the sun doesn’t *talk*, Arnitas.

“Father won’t mind, besides, you just poured me some tea, I gotta *finish* it.”

She smiled. “I suppose I did.”

“Arnitas, can we go over my homework again? I did buy the twenty-fifth anniversary edition with the shiny circle on it.”

“That you did!” she said, leaning herself down into her wicker chair. “You’ve got an advantage over all the cheap kids who bought *Mangosteen* used or borrowed their older sisters’ copies.” Arnitas said, before spitting to the side of her chair.

“Why’s that?” I asked.

“A lot of teachers still photocopy the reading questions we sent out with the old classroom sets. I think kids with the twenty-fifth anniversary editions should get a little extra. How old are you now, Mimosa?”

“I’m ten!”

“Hm, still in those innocent chapters. You’re probably going to be getting the first big reading test. That should be...C, C, D, A, B, A, C, A, B, B.”

“Okay, so, C, C...B...”

“If you’re trying to remember a long string of letters like this, it’s best to break it up, or make mnemonic devices that are easier to remember. Actually, here, do it this way. Remember it starts with ‘CD,’ like, you listen to a CD, do you know what a CD is?”

“Yeah.”

“You never know these days, kids and their iPods. Well, remember ‘CD,’ just with an extra ‘C’ in there. ‘CCD.’”

“Got it. ‘CCD.’”

“Now for the next part, you can say it aloud. ‘Abacab’. Say it, it’s fun.”

“Abacab.”

“There you go! And just remember there’s a extra B at the end. Can you say the whole thing now?”

“I think so...C, C, D, A, B, A, C, A, B, B.”

“Very good! You’re going to ace it, Mimosa!”

Maybe that’s why she was known as the wise woman. When I talked to her, all of a sudden English class wasn’t so scary anymore.

“I can’t help you with the writing portion, I’m afraid,” Arnitas said. “No matter what the prompt, I want you to say, ‘loss of innocence.’”

“Loss of innocence? What’s that mean?”

“It’s three words you put in school papers, especially when you’re reading *Mangosteen*.”

“Wow.” How did she know so much? She must’ve been a teacher.

“Now, Mimosa, I want you to think about the rest of your teen years, and split it into three equally long parts. Before each one of those parts ends, I want you to come back to me. I’ll have a fresh pot waiting for you.”

I picked up my backpack. “Thanks, Arnitas!” I knew I’d be seeing her again.

The Boy in the Sand

The sky's pink too long in the summer. It would make me mad, like the sky was gloating that it wasn't bright anymore and was going to get dark soon. Maybe the day was fighting to stay light for as long as it could. Hm. Maybe if I thought about it that way earlier I would've liked it more. Too late now.

Anyway, this was one of those pink death sunset hours, and I was aimlessly touring the streets of Mangosteen, mad as ever for reasons only the Saints above could really know. At Signpost Corner I looked into the distance, and saw a boy in green with his long spaghetti shadow stretching back four blocks. He was carrying something long, and it probably meant trouble. I ran into my neighbor's yard to pull a branch of their dead tree they tried to revive each year. I stood my ground on Signpost Corner, waiting for this green-clad trouble to get close to me. I made out what the boy was wielding—a gray foam sword. I lowered my weapon, I knew who it was.

It was Lincoln Lettersaw.

He was in trouble, and it was up to me to give him asylum from the evil he was running from. I hoped no one had seen him walking up my street, in those pink death hours. But I needed permission from my parents first.

“Mom mom mom dad dad dad!”

They had some associates over in their room but excused themselves to see what my fuss was about. “There’s a boy on our driveway, I think he’s in trouble. Can we keep him?”

“Who is this boy?” Mom asked.

“It’s Lincoln Lettersaw.”

“You needed to ask us?” Dad said. “Hurry, get him in the backyard.”

I quickly went out and opened up our big gate to the backyard. I rushed Lincoln inside. “Watch your feet, Lincoln Lettersaw, there’s burrs and goatheads everywhere you step.” I took him to our playground, took him to the sandpit underneath our pirate ladder. There was some dried dog mess I scooted out of the way with my foot. “You can stay down here,” I said. I grabbed a shovel and exposed the hole under the sandpit. “Everything you need is down there. You’ll be safe.”

Lincoln Lettersaw looked at me, sword in hand, with puppy-dog eyes that said, Thank you, Mimosa.

God's a Writer

I had a dream once God was sitting on a swirly white cloud that complemented his swirly white beard. He was at a big blue typewriter with a giant roll of paper like they print the receipts on but wide like normal paper. On the typewriter he was writing all the things that were happening to everybody in the whole world. I guess I was dead. I tried seeing what God was writing but he covered it up with his arms real fast, and the angels blared their trumpets and woke me up. At least I thought it was until I realized it was just Fat Timmy practicing Jingle Bells on his trumpet next door. Even though Fat Timmy woke me up I had seen enough—God was a writer, and I was going to be one too.

“Why are you looking at me like that?” Pops said, in his bed. I turned on his lamp and he squinted. “For Christmas I want a typewriter so it can be like heaven above.”

“But we already—you already said you wanted a bike. Can't this wait till sunrise?” he asked.

“I can't go back to sleep. Fat Timmy's playing his trumpet matins.”

Mops walked in from the bathroom wearing a robe and gave a yawn that shook the room. “Mimosa, what are you doing up?”

“Pops won’t let me have a typewriter for Christmas!”

“What do you want a typewriter for?” Mops asked.

“I want to be a writer.”

Pops laughed and let his sleepies out. “A writer? What are you going to do?”

“I’m going to write!”

“What are you going to do,” Pops said, “go to a liberal arts college, fully lucid that you’re choosing the path of following your passions instead of monetary gain, and then take offense when others remind you that you didn’t choose the path of monetary gain, and build a wall of slogans you bite back at them with, waiting to return to your circle of liberal arts undergrads where you can joke about all those others punching time and sitting in their cubicles, even though deep down you all have this underlying fear of the future as you realize not even the fallback of becoming a professor is that likely? As if nobody can have passions that happen to be profitable?”

“No!” I yelled.

“Then what is it, then?”

“I had a dream where God told me I had to get a big blue typewriter. I will be his messenger. Don’t they have them cheap at the Goodwill?”

“Mimosa,” Mops said with the calm of a pond, “you’ve always been a difficult girl. But recently you’ve been a particularly difficult girl. It might be time to face the fact that you are molting into a teenager.”

I was floored. My own Mops. All I wanted was to change my Christmas wish to a typewriter. If I knew what havoc I’d raise I would’ve wrote my novellas on the backs of leaves with my fingernails like I had before.

“Your mother is right Mimosa,” Pops said. “You’ve been out with Katy and heaven-knows-who-else from school till dark, we never see you around the house any more. Your baby sister’s had to feed Lincoln Lettersaw every day this week so far.”

“But!”

“You’re just like your mother. Which means we’re in for some *trouble*.”

“Hey!” Mops said.

“*Big. Trouble.*”

Sugar Cookies

It was Christmas morning and the wrapping paper lined our family room like shards from a rock thrown through a stained glass window. A rock I threw. At the church. Where they were holding a Nativity play. As a girl I loved the Nativity play but now it bored me and I knew what happened. I really was a teen, there was no denying it anymore. I just wanted to get home, home to the wrapping paper on the floor. Not to open presents, no, I wanted to bring Lincoln Lettersaw his sugar cookies. I'd make him some cocoa, not the nice Christmas peppermint kind but probably some of the weird pumpkin cocoa Ma bought around Thanksgiving that was taking up space in our Lazy Susan.

After the play we drove home, and I went to the kitchen to wrap the platter of cookies in foil. I filled a thermos with water from the tap, microwaved it for a minute, emptied a lumpy packet of pumpkin cocoa mix into it, screwed the cap on, shook it up real good, and headed outside with the cocoa and the cookies. There was no snow on the ground or on the mountains but the grass was cold and icy and my feet left behind dark wet footprints as I walked to the playground and Lincoln's den.

"Merry Christmas!" I said. "I brought you cookies."

“Hello,” he said, softly closing a volume of an encyclopedia I stole from the Mangosteen Public Library in my mischief summer.

“And some cocoa in this thermos here...”

“I made something for you, Mimosa.”

My heart sank. A present! I didn’t even think of getting anything special for him. What a jerk I was.

“Here,” he said, pulling out a folded piece of paper. He blew into an end of it and it inflated like a balloon. “Look, it’s a rabbit.”

Indeed it was. It had little rabbit ears and feet, too.

“Merry Christmas!”

It was beautiful. I sniffled because it was cold. “Lincoln, did I ever tell you what my name means in Spanish?”

“No.”

“It means...mimosa.”

“Is that a flower?”

“It’s a cocktail,” I said, enticing him with my exotic knowledge of the world above. “I should bring some sometime. Down here.”

“Mimosa, I...”

“We could drink it together.”

“Moze...”

“What’s wrong?”

Lincoln sighed. “You deserve to know. Mimosa, I’m in love with Emma.”

“What!” I snapped. “You can’t be in love with my baby sister!”

“Emma’s fourteen...I am too.”

“She’s...she’s my baby sister. She doesn’t know love!”

“Mimosa...”

“I have to think about this!” I yelled, climbing the steps out of his den.

Back in the sunlight I could see what Lincoln really was. He was the eggs falling from the bag and the bombs falling from the sky and the thick glass vase wobbling on its base to no good end. He was the earthquake core lurking under Mangosteen all these dry boned winters. To think I felt guilt not giving him a present! I knew why he gave me the rabbit. Early last spring a rabbit fell into Lincoln’s den and he hid it behind his box for

days, feeding it scraps of food that *we* brought down for *Lincoln* to eat. Not for the rabbit, for *Lincoln*. And obviously he didn't want to tell us about the rabbit because he knew what he was doing was wrong. It took some time until I found it, he cleaned the poop up and everything, but when I finally found it I immediately cradled it in my shirt and took to the stairs. Lincoln didn't like this, he kept shouting, please, no, I'm all he has. Lincoln, you can't keep it down here. What will the neighbors think of the loud rabbit noises coming from under the sandpit? He didn't understand, and he didn't talk for weeks afterwards—not that he's normally the talkative one but the silence was palpable. I had to call Katy. She was the only one who understood how hard the Mangosteen life could be.

Katy

Katy didn't pick up her phone. I sat on my Christmas bed twisting the phone cable between my teenage fingers while the dial tone hummed like a Xerox pan flute blown by the unending wind from my lonely abyss. When Mangosteen got rough I complained to Katy. When Katy got rough, I had to sit alone with my anger like a guest who wouldn't leave. I could always complain to Maman but it would require too much context and she wasn't guaranteed to side with me. Maman had become so comfortable with the Mangosteen life that she had resigned from its news and its gossip, content to let the town keep on turning while she sat at home hopelessly out of the loop. And that's why I needed Katy. And she wasn't picking up. Katy, give me this one Christmas gift. All I have this Christmas is this guilt. This guilt that's new to me. I used to be trouble, but it was always innocent childlike trouble—every night I'd fall asleep and wake up anew, still the innocent child. But now I'm a bad person. Why am I such a bad person? I never really was innocent, in fact I never really felt all that innocent, I felt like I was in trouble all the time, but it wasn't real guilt you know, it was, like, now I have boyfriends at school and there's real guilt. That old innocence is misplaced, like keys lost—

Hold on a minute. I lost my innocence. Loss of innocence. Arnitas you knew all along! How old have I gotten since we last met? Arnitas, I've skipped our visits, I've skipped on our chamomile promise. I've failed my tests and I'm not worthy of the twenty-fifth anniversary edition of *Mangosteen* with the silver circle like my new teenage platinum earrings and the platinum studs I wanted but Maman wouldn't let me get.

Katy, even when you're not on the other line, you help me find myself. Thank you Katy. I have to find Arnitas.

Bulldozers

Yes it was that Christmas afternoon I ran to Arnitas with the hydration pack filled with Hawaiian Punch on my back, hose in my lips. The cars pulled by the side of the road asking, Hey Moze, need a ride? No, I've always ran with my thumbs out like this, how long have you known me? Oh, that's right. I remember in gym. Well, Merry Christmas, and they drive off, letting me be on my journey to that Wise Woman deferred. The roads looked unfamiliar but they filled the same space between the white letters that spelled the names of the streets I knew. Eventually I found myself running through a parking lot and paused my mad dash. So many cars, all here for last-minute Christmas shopping. What was this place? I made out a sign, covered in cactuses and lights that were off in the daytime, "Mangosteen Towne Centre". What was this place, and why was there a BevMo in the big field I'd cut through and get crap stuck on my jeans as a girl? Where was Arnitas?

I wandered between the shopping cart returns, cars swerving out of my way, feeling the ghosts of neighbors and kids in streets where there was now a Ross and a Petco. I wandered past pictures of smiling people and people playing in parks and having dinner parties. The images repeated, a wall of smiling stock pictures conveying the intended

essence of the Mangosteen Towne Center. I hated the pictures, I hated the innocent people posing for them. I jumped at the wall, and my fingertips latched along the top. I kicked at the blond woman sipping wine to get a foothold, and hoisted myself to see above the wall. Above I could see the dirt and the weeds that owned the land before, and the intruding tracks of tractors and bulldozers and cherry pickers, and a familiar house I once knew. It was Arnitas' house! I jumped down, causing a circle of dirt to puff away. I ran once more, ran in spite of all the running I'd ran before. A ditch opened before me I didn't see. I stopped as fast I could, slipped on a rock, and landed on my back, causing the last of the Hawaiian Punch to squirt out the end of my hydration pack's hose. The ditch was wide, dug by machines, and there would be no crossing it. I sat up. There were no splintery boards a kind soul laid over the ditch for people to cross. There was nothing, and no way to get to Arnitas' house. There was a long black car in front of her patio, it had to make it across somehow. There must be a way! The door on her porch opened and two men came out carrying a long black box. It was a coffin. A third man came out and opened the back of the hearse, and they slid the coffin inside. I wailed from afar, wailing all I could, not even worried about how ugly my neck was. The men looked at me, then got in their car. The car pulled around and started driving towards me. What had I done? The screaming trespasser, alerting her presence. Look what they did to Arnitas!

The hearse gained speed it as it neared the ditch. Suddenly its hydraulics boosted the front of the car into the air like a great stallion, and its tires landed on the other side. It pulled up near me. The driver rolled down his tinted window.

"Hey, are you Mimosa?"

Yes, I told them.

"That woman had like five hundred pictures of you in her house, with a counter of days since she saw you last."

"Of...me?"

"Yeah, and she left you this." He held a letter out of the car. "That sucks, kid. Well, we gotta go."

They drove off, leaving me in a tan mist of dirt. I opened the letter. It read, in her beautiful calligraphy:

Dear Mimosa,

I figured this would happen, but I don't blame you too much. Don't go feeling too sorry for me. I stuck it to big business to the end. And big pharma, which is probably why I'm starting to have all sorts of problems. Don't worry about that though, no one your age should have to worry about old age. It's probably too late for these, but just in case:

Test #2: AADC DABABB

Test #3: DCADABCDDC

Mangosteen final: CABCAABDDA

Adulthood is fun. You'll like it. I mean it's pretty stupid and pointless a lot of the time, but so is a lot of childhood, and you made it through that just fine.

Love, Arnitias

xo

PS. I always got my chamomile from Sprouts, they have this nice organic kind that's only a dollar seventy-nine or so for ten bags, they sell them in these cellophane bags like they do spices. If you ever feel nostalgic from time to time, I recommend brewing a pot. The Bigelow Cozy Chamomile kind isn't bad either, but I only had it a couple times so I can't compare it too fairly.

There was something else in the letter. I pulled it out and unfolded it.

Dearest daughter,

You said you would get all A's and B's this semester. But we looked up your grades on the online thing, and what's this C in English? It looks like you've been struggling on these Mangosteen quizzes, and we definitely haven't been seeing you studying, maybe it's time you stop going out so much with friends. You can pretty much forget about the Pirate Festival at this point.

Your parents

xo

Lockdown

Chichi knows I want to be free. Chichi puts me in a cage like the celebrities' exotic pets because he doesn't know me. He doesn't know the song within me that needs to be sung, the bells within me that need to be rung. I told Katy I'd be waiting for her at the Pirate Festival. By the big pirate ship that swings like a pendulum and makes your stomach float and your hands fly on one side, then kind of lamely tips you on the backswing but it's exciting for the other people and you know it's the sacrifice we make for others to be happy too. That's what my parents never understood. Sacrifices for others. Katy and I talked about how we were going to buy the stupid sixteen dollar souvenir cups with pirate heads and thick plastic straws even though they were nothing you'd ever think of buying if you weren't at the Pirate Festival. And the Pirate Festival—that's where I wanted to be. It was where, I decided, I was going to be. I opened my window, which my dad was foolish not to nail shut. Those bushes never looked as fluffy and full in January as they did in springtime but it would have to do.

The Pirates

Katy, you lied. You made the Pirate Festival into something it wasn't. It wasn't like the posters, not like the website. I waited for you by the pirate ship that swung like a pendulum. You finally showed up, asked what was wrong with my ankle and if it was okay, then said you had to pee. You left me, then the pirates showed up. Where were you, Katy? They saw my red football ankle, they said, "Argh!" All of them, doing a fake pirate laugh, "Argh argh argh argh argh." I said pirates didn't laugh by saying "argh" over and over. They said, oh yeah? What do you know about pirates? Argh? Quite a bit, I said. One of the pirates got close to me, lifted his eyepatch and said, "Oh yeah? Do you think you *deserve* to call yourself a *pirate maniac*?"

"I sure do," I said.

"Prove it. Come with me mateys to the tent. Show us how much of a *pirate maniac* you are."

They grabbed me by my arms. I could barely walk and it was nice of them.

I entered the tent. It was sparse except for a padded table and a pirate with a tattoo gun.

“What’s it going to be then? Are you still a *pirate maniac*?” he asked me.

“Bet your ass I’m a pirate maniac,” I said. I laid down on the table.

“Where do you want it, argh?” the tattoo man said.

I rolled onto my chest and lifted up the back of my shirt, revealing the small of my back. “Here.”

He readied the tattoo gun. The original pirate said, “You might be a pirate *fan*. But I don’t believe that you’re a pirate *maniac*.”

The tattoo pirate plunged the needle. “I’m a pirate maniac!” I yelled.

“Say it like you mean it!”

“I’m a pirate maniac!” I yelled again. That time they believed it.

Katy never showed up for the rest of the night. I would never see her again.

I looked at my back in a funhouse mirror. Inside a halo of pink raw skin was the meanest, grittiest, foulest pirate I’d ever seen. And underneath it, the words, “I’M A PIRATE MANIAC.” They took advantage of me. They took advantage of me pirate furor.

How will I explain this to Fùqīn?

Mango Tears

It was true what they said. Mangosteen grabs you, it makes you learn its streets, and when you try to leave it says, “Where are you going, Mimosa? A land where you don’t know the streets?”

I turned into a child again, sitting on couches, absorbed with the sunlight through the dust. It didn’t feel like memories were being made in these lazy days but I knew from experience they made the strongest memories of all. Whaea would tell me, “You always find new ways to be trouble. Why don’t you get a job! You’re always lying around here. Emma has a job. She says she’s moving out at eighteen. Why don’t you move out?” And that’s why I loved Whaea. She didn’t get it, but she didn’t have to.

I lived many years in Mangosteen. I lose count sometimes, then I have to subtract the year I was born from the current year again.

In Mangosteen I cried tears of the bright sun’s lemon. I cried tears of the small tart apple. I cried tears of syrupy cherry. I cried tears of the saddest blueberry. I cried tears of the bloodiest pomegranate.

But I never cried tears of mangosteen.