

Currents

HANNAH BOTTOMY VOSKUIL

Gary drank single malt in the night, out on the porch that leaned toward the ocean. His mother, distracted, had shut off the floodlights and he did not protest against the dark.

Before that, his mother, Josey, tucked in her two shivering twelve-year-old granddaughters.

“I want you both to go swimming first thing tomorrow. Can’t have two seals like you afraid of the water.”

Before that, one of the girls held the hand of a wordless Filipino boy. His was the first hand she’d ever held. They were watching the paramedics lift the boy’s dead brother into an ambulance.

At this time, the other girl heaved over a toilet in the cabana.

Before that, the girl who would feel nauseated watched as the drowned boy’s hand slid off the stretcher and bounced along the porch rail. Nobody placed the hand back on the stretcher, and it bounced and dragged and bounced.

Before that, Gary saw the brown hair sink and resurface as the body bobbed. At first he mistook it for seaweed.

Before that, thirty-five people struggled out of the water at

the Coast Guard's command. A lifeguard shouted over Jet Ski motors about the increasing strength of the riptide.

Before that the thirty-five people, including Gary and the two girls, formed a human chain and trolled the waters for the body of a Filipino boy. The boy had gone under twenty minutes earlier and never come back up.

Before that, a lifeguard sprinted up the beach, shouting for volunteers. The two girls, resting lightly on their sandy bodyboards, stood up to help.

Before that, a Filipino boy pulled on the torpid lifeguard's ankle and gestured desperately at the waves. My brother, he said.

Before that, it was a simple summer day.

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About the Author

HANNAH BOTTOMY VOSKUIL's work has appeared in several anthologies including the *The Seagull Reader, 2nd. Ed.*, and *Flash Fiction Forward*. Voskuil's short stories have appeared in literary magazines such as *Quarterly West*, *South Dakota Review*, and *The South Carolina Review*. She lives in Somerville, Massachusetts.