

THE NEW TROPIC

... the next installation of our poetry series.

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May 10, 2023 – Miami, Florida



Poetry from [The Writer's Room](#)

"We are so vulnerable on this slip of land, enamored of an ocean grown sick of us," says Caridad Moro-Gronlier, curator of our monthly feature of work by poet alumni of The Betsy Writer's Room. *"Despite this, we continue to develop and populate her receding shore, aid in the destruction of all we claim to love. Many remain oblivious, but poet [Jen Karetnick](#) emerges as a modern-day Casandra, issuing her warning from the refuge of The Betsy's Writer's Room, her voice powerful and true like the very tide that will outlast us all."*

"The Betsy Writer's Room short-term residency is ideal for overworked women like me," says Karetnick. "I was so grateful to be able to escape my life back in 2019, when I was mothering two teenagers, working as a full-time journalist, and selling a historic property that I loved but practically hailed mangoes every May through October, preventing me from writing. At The Betsy, I sat on the beach and processed my feelings about leaving the land that had grabbed me like a fist nearly two decades before. In the end, I wrote the following, first published in *Under a Warm Green Linden* and now forthcoming in my book, *Inheritance with a High Error Rate*, winner of the 2022 Cider Press Review Book Prize (January 2024)."

**I Live at Ground Zero of the Climate Exodus;
Or, How to Sell a Waterfront Home in Miami
by Jen Karetnick**

With every king tide the land loosens a little more,
a floral caftan to wear after surgery. Underground,

the concrete walls of the houses spall, crackling
like cellophane. The iguanas seem strong now,
flexing their tails and shitting in pools with typical
arrogance, far more equipped to survive than I am,

but one day they will be cut off from the mainland,
the distances too far to swim, the woolly mammoths
of the millennial generation. Left to inbreed, their genes
will become asteroids of their ancestors' making.
It's too late for the maybe-someday, the if-or-when day.

Even the least honest realtors acknowledge where not
to buy, if you're local, know which communities are
a harder sell—these they peddle to half-timers who can
afford to have no wind insurance or worry, who privately
jet away from storms into the peace of other primary

residences, where peacocks don't stalk the roads, chevroned
by dried saline, attracted to the fish and frogs left behind
when the water recedes like a hairline, leaving its prickly
evidence of once-was. This is how it is to long for something

I haven't even left yet, steeped in nostalgia like old tea
leaves that have barely any hue and even less future to give,
like the beaches here, bony under mounds of the sargassum
smothering the sea turtles, the crabs and lobsters. Oh, the static,
interstitial species. How they, too, can't obey the logic to go
when the draw is so magnetic to stay. Still, I plug the address

of every available house into the FEMA Flood Map Service Center,
bury Saint Joseph upside-down near the "For Sale" sign, pray that
his discomfort in the dark will lead me to some kind of light—homes
built on natural oolite ridges or manufactured rises, complete with

impact windows and hurricane-proof doors—and every day watch
the statue's feet get washed by the mother who is all of our toxic
mothers, protrude a little more from the eroding ground, leaning

inland, inland, inland, where we will both be reborn as eventuality.