

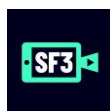
sea-womb

by Chrissy Howe

I was born in a shack next to the beach. Fibro, sepia-coloured. My parents used milk crates for chairs and washed their clothes in the shower. I have a photo of my very pregnant mother hosing down our ute on a patch of grass, Norfolk Island Pines in the background. You can't see the bright shock of the ochre-orange headland or the grey scrub rising behind the roof but they're there, solid, holding the sound of the ocean close in a bowl of craggy rock and sand.

Before my fingers knew the rough knobbles of melaleuca bark, before my eyes registered the limitless bright of the sky, I knew the sea of my mother's womb. The regular pulse of her blood. Her ebb and flow.

Today, I go to the clinic. There's a squelch of gel on the swelling bowl of my belly. I hear the regular pulse of my blood. The rhythm of it. Then the quickening flicker of another beat. The sweep of wind over spinifexed sand dunes, a clatter of crab claws on ochre-orange rock. And all of us – her, and she, and me – held in the womb of a thundering sea.



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