

## Half a Century

by [Karen An-Hwei Lee](#) in the [June 2025](#) issue

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When I lived alone on the north coast,  
I was slender as a glass of skim milk  
and wore my house dress by the sea.  
As I turned sideways in the mirror,

I was light blue to the bone. My hair,  
dark as the gloss of a long-playing  
record, yet I took it all for granted:

a rented, steel chair on which I stood  
to comb wolf spiders from the ceiling,  
to gaze at the bright margin of the bay  
as long as I wanted to hold my breath.

How long has it been since I could reel  
a lightweight emotion like a fishing line,  
or let it meander like threads of beard  
lichen greening the lowest arms of a tree?

Did I foresee how the red dust on my sill  
overlooking the tall, shaggy eucalyptus  
was a portent that my hair would lighten  
to auburn in the sunlight, then one day,

strewn with silver in the undergrowth  
from a lost blood meadow, the salt flats  
changing into a hot desert overnight  
without the monthly lunar cycles?

Don't worry about it, I'd tell this girl,  
a quiet wilderness in her pale floral  
house dress. Your most fulfilling love  
has yet to come. Do not worry.