

DREAMING OF WHALES (excerpt)
by Melissa Barbeau, Torbay – Senior Division Short Fiction

Despite his name, it was Susannah who dreamed of whales. Jonah didn't dream, or if he did, he didn't remember them. He let himself sink into the black abyss of sleep, floating noiseless, weighted, blind. In the morning he struggled upwards towards wakefulness.

And all the while, Susannah lay next to him, across the stretch of sheets, and was transported. She dreamed of jungles, monkeys and parrots chattering wildly among the green trees, vines harbouring snakes and blood red flowers. Startled by the sudden break from the cacophony of screams and howls to the quiet of their bedroom in the milky yellow dawn. Once she dreamed she was standing at the peak of a mountain, the sky blue, the land rippling away from her in every direction. The clouds below her. Once she dreamed that the plants in the garden had come alive, grown monstrous and tall; even the houseplants had bolted, muscling their way out of their ceramic pots. Philodendrons and rhododendrons running amok.

The whales were recurrent. They visited her again and again throughout the years she and Jonah had been married as if they were swimming just outside the cool harbour of their marriage, their great bodies sliding soundless through the water. Jonah wondered if they felt graceful and fluid as they swam. In the cool blue vastness of the sea, did they feel small?